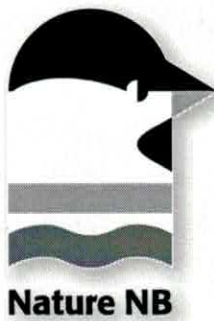


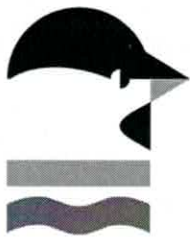
Vol. 40 No. 1 2013



Naturaliste du **NB** Naturalist



Shorebirds Along the Lower Saint John River • Le pin Wollemi
Killdeer in Decline • Watching Raptors



Nature NB

924 rue Prospect St.
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Fredericton, NB E3B 2T9

Nature NB is a non-profit, charitable organization whose mission is to celebrate, conserve and protect New Brunswick's natural heritage, through education, networking and collaboration. (The former name of Nature NB – New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists / Fédération des naturalistes du Nouveau-Brunswick is retained for legal purposes.)

Nature NB est un organisme de bienfaisance à but non-lucratif qui a comme mission la célébration, la conservation et la protection du patrimoine naturel du Nouveau-Brunswick par l'éducation, le réseautage et la collaboration. (L'ancien nom de Nature NB, soit « Fédération des naturalistes du Nouveau-Brunswick / New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists », demeurera le nom légal de l'organisme.)

Nature NB (NBFN/FNNB) is a provincial affiliate of Nature Canada (formerly Canadian Nature Federation) and the Canadian Nature Network (CNN).

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Chignecto Naturalists' Club, c/o CWS, Andrew Macfarlane, Box 6227, Sackville, E4L 1G6, 364-5047; meets Sackville Public Library, 7:30 pm, 3rd Mon., Sept.-June.

Club de Naturalistes de la Péninsule acadienne, 1521-4 chemin Cowan's Creek Pokemouche, E8P 2C6; réunions au Club de l'âge d'or Landry, 1^{er} mercredi, sept. à juin; Le Gobe-mouche, mensuel.

Club de Naturalistes Vallée de Memramcook - inactive

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Club les Ami(e)s de la Nature du sud-est Inc., a/s Normand Belliveau, CP 26024 Moncton, E1E 4H9, 532-4583, ami.e.snature@gmail.com; http://picasa-web.google.com/Ami.e.snature; réunions alternant entre Dieppe et Shédiac, 1^{er} mercredi du mois; excursions 3^{ième} samedi ou dimanche; La Plume verte.

Fredericton Nature Club, Box 772, Station A, Fredericton, E3B 5B4, 366-3079; meets Stepping Stone Centre, 15 Saunders St., 7:00 pm, 1st Wed., Sept.-May; newsletter.

Kennebecasis Naturalist Society, c/o Ms H. Folkins, 16 Meadow Lane, Sussex, NB E4E 0E6; meets St. Mark's Anglican Church, 2 Needle St. Sussex Corner; 7:30 pm, 4th Mon., Sept.-June; quarterly newsletter.

Miramichi Naturalist Club, President: Leonel Richard, 773-3774; lrichard@nbnet.nb.ca; www.miramichi-naturalistsclub.ca; meets 6:30 pm, 2nd Mon. in the Friendly Neighbor Senior Citizen Centre, Sutton Rd.

Nature Moncton, PO Box 28036, Moncton, NB E1C 9M1, Info Line: 506-384-6397; www.naturemoncton.org; Meets Rotary Pavilion, Mapleton Park, 3rd Tuesday September – June; Monthly newsletter.

NB Botany Club / Club botanique du N.-B., c/o Richard Fournier, Faculty of Forestry, Université de Moncton, 165boul Hébert, Edmundston, E3V 2S8, 737-5050 ext 5258, organizes 5-8 outings/year, AGM in September. www.macbe.com/botanyclub/home/html.

Restigouche Naturalists' Club, c/o Mike Lushington, 214 Rosebery Street, Campbellton, E3N 2H5, 684-3258; meets Village-Campbellton Nursing Home, 7 pm, 1st Monday.

Saint John Naturalists' Club, P.O. Box 2071 Saint John, E2L 3T5; meets N.B. Museum at Market Square, 7:30 pm 2nd Mon., Sept.-May, elsewhere in June; monthly newsletter
www.saintjohnnaturalistsclub.org.

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Please submit articles for the next issue by **October 30, 2013.**
 S.v.p. soumettre les articles pour le prochain numéro avant le **30 octobre 2013.**
 To / à Janet MacMillan, janetmac@nbnet.nb.ca

Sincere thanks to our many volunteers who contributed to this publication.
 Merci beaucoup à tous les bénévoles dévoués qui ont contribué à cette publication.

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Team / équipe : Ron Arsenault, Gart Bishop, Joel Butler, Warren Coleman, Sabine Dietz, Cheryl Gass, Roger LeBlanc, Janet MacMillan, Paul Mansz

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 **naturenb.ca**

Naturaliste du NB 1

Notes from the Editor

Paul Mansz
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A warm, summery welcome to everyone! I was reflecting on the long history of the NB Naturalist as this, the long overdue (and I hope highly anticipated) Vol. 40 No.1 issue of the NB Naturalist, is presented for your interest and edification. It is now well over 40 years since the first issue, Vol. 1 No. 1, was published in January 1970. Curator David Christie described in his introduction that the NB Naturalist would be "a newsletter for all those interested in the natural history of the province." Although the frequency of publication and subscription price have changed in the intervening years – originally 6 issues for \$1 yearly! – I hope that you continue to find this journal a worthwhile read.

With this issue, I would like to resume a tradition of writing a few words of introduction, highlighting some of the themes we expect to pursue in the coming issues, as well as to explain some of the processes behind each issue's publication.

I begin by thanking my Editor-in-Chief predecessor, Sabine Dietz, who is now the president of Nature NB, for setting such a high publication standard. You, our readers, have much to expect of our volunteer team as we move forward, and we look forward to the challenge. I welcome your feedback if you have any suggestions for improvement, would like to contribute an article or picture, or to volunteer.

I can be reached at my personal email paul@mansz.com or (506) 636-0744.

A number of you noticed a few oversights in the last issue, Vol. 39 No. 4; although I might light-heartedly suggest that they were included to test your attention to detail, instead I must take full responsibility for them, and I hope that the next

few issues prove the worth of my renewed diligence. For that reason you will see two French messages in this issue from Gart Bishop, who is now the Nature NB past-president. Unfortunately, in our last issue Vol. 39 No. 4, rather than the appropriate translation of Gart's message, we inadvertently included the translation of a previous message. So in the present issue, to make sure nobody is deprived of Gart's always interesting thoughts, we have included two French translations, one of his previous message and one of a new communication he penned while locked in the cold of a Sussex winter, which we include here as a reminder to what we will enjoy in a few short months when the current warmth of summer is passed.

We hope you enjoy this issue. The prevailing theme is a focus on the province's shorebirds, including a personal perspective offered by our provincial gem, Mary Majka. We also take some time to explore Ayers Lake, an amazing natural area, and visit a prehistoric botanical specimen that may be viewed at the spectacular Kingsbrae Gardens. Opportunities to contribute to citizen science initiatives are highlighted in a 4-year review of the Greenlaw Mountain Hawk Watch, a very worthwhile project from which we hope to learn more about the raptors in New Brunswick by observing them in migration. We have an article introducing to us to newly observed denizens of the Bay of the Fundy, and close with a review of a bird songs and vocalizations.

I close with a heartfelt "thank-you" to Leonel Richard, Holly Frazer, and the members of the Miramichi Naturalists' Club for welcoming the province's naturalists for a very informative and engaging

2013 Nature NB Festival of Nature. We will include an update and pictures from that event in the next issue of the NB Naturalist. 2014 will see the Nature NB

Festival of Nature held in Fundy National Park and the town of Alma, June 6, 7, and 8. Please mark your calendars for another unique and interesting experience!

Le mot du rédacteur

Une chaleureuse bienvenue estivale à tous! Alors que le présent numéro du Naturaliste du N.-B. Vol. 40 No.1 vous est enfin livré après une attente un peu trop prolongée (quoique remplie d'anticipation, je l'espère), je me plais à penser à la longue et illustre histoire de cette publication. Cela fait maintenant plus de 40 ans depuis la sortie du premier numéro Vol. 1 No. 1 en janvier 1970. Le responsable de l'époque, David Christie, notait alors dans son introduction que le Naturaliste du N-B serait une « source d'information pour tout ceux et celles intéressés à l'histoire naturelle de la province ». Alors que le rythme de sortie et les coûts ont changé depuis l'époque - à l'origine il en coûtait 1 dollar par année pour 6 numéros, j'espère que la pertinence demeure tout aussi forte qu'au début. Et en parlant de tradition, je voudrais renouer ici, avec l'habitude d'offrir au lecteur une introduction où je mettrais l'emphase sur les thèmes que nous comptons aborder dans les numéros à venir ainsi que sur l'approche suivie pour vous les offrir. Mais permettez-moi d'abord de remercier celle qui m'a précédé comme rédacteur en chef. Sabine Dietz, qui est notre toute nouvelle présidente de nature NB, a su établir un très haut standard de qualité pour notre publication. À vous chers lecteurs, qui êtes en droit d'attendre beaucoup du groupe de bénévoles qui

anime cette publication, je vous assure que nous ferons tout en notre pouvoir pour relever ce défi dans l'avenir. Ceci dit, Il me ferait plus que plaisir de recevoir vos commentaires, suggestions d'amélioration ou même propositions d'articles et/ou de photos. Et si le cœur vous en dit de nous donner un coup de main comme bénévole, n'hésitez pas. Je peux être rejoint soit à mon adresse courriel personnel paul@mansz.com ou par téléphone au (506) 636-0744.

Quelques uns d'entre vous m'ayant fait remarquer un certain nombre d'erreurs et omissions dans le dernier numéro, Vol. 39 No. 4, j'ai presque envie de faire un peu d'humour et de vous dire que ces coquilles étaient volontaires pour vérifier votre attention aux détails, mais non, j'en accepte plutôt la pleine responsabilité et vous assure que je ferais tout en mon pouvoir pour que les prochains numéros en soit exempt. En ce sens vous aurez l'occasion de lire, dans le présent numéro deux messages en français de Gart Bishop, qui est à présent le président sortant de Nature NB. Malheureusement, lors de la publication de notre dernier numéro Vol. 39 No. 4, plutôt que la traduction appropriée du message de Gart, nous avons inclu par inadvertance, la traduction d'un de ses messages précédents. Donc, dans le présent numéro, Vol. 40 No. 1, vous trouverez à la fois un nouveau message de Gart sur les plaisirs de l'hiver (et oui inévitablement à venir malgré la chaleur

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estivale actuelle) avec sa traduction, ainsi que la traduction de son message précédent. Donc, 2 traductions pour que personne ne manque rien des messages toujours tellement intéressants de Gart.

Nous espérons que vous prendrez plaisir à lire le présent numéro. Son thème principal tournera autour des oiseaux de rivage de la province avec une vision très personnelle offerte par notre trésor vivant, Mary Majka. Nous vous offrirons aussi l'occasion d'explorer avec nous le Lac Ayers une zone naturelle impressionnante, et de faire une visite auprès d'un spécimen botanique préhistorique qui se retrouve au magnifique Jardin Kingsbrae. Et si l'occasion de participer à des initiatives de sciences citoyennes vous intéresse, vous serez servi par un compte rendu des 4 premières années du Project d'observation de rapaces de Greenlaw Mountain qui devrait nous permettre d'en apprendre plus sur les

rapaces de la province et de leurs mouvements migratoires ici. Nous avons aussi un article sur une toute nouvelle observation d'espèce dans la Baie de Fundy et terminerons en jetant un regard sur les chants et vocalisations d'un oiseau.

Je m'en voudrais de vous quitter sans offrir un bien gros "merci" à Lionel Richard, Holly Frazer, ainsi qu'à tous les membres du Miramichi Naturalists' Club qui ont si bien accueilli les naturalistes de la province lors du Festival de la nature de Nature NB 2013. L'événement qui fut certes rempli de plaisir et d'information, fera l'objet d'un compte rendu en texte et photos dans le prochain numéro du Naturaliste du NB. En 2014, le Festival de la nature de Nature NB se tiendra au Parc national Fundy et dans le village avoisinant d'Alma les 6, 7, et 8 juin. SVP prenez-en note dans votre calendrier car cela promet d'être une autre expérience nature unique et enrichissante!



President's Message

Gart Bishop
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Winter's Sunny Shadow

I don't know how many of you have a bookshelf or two, perhaps even a room in your house where you store reference books for nature, maybe some dried plants, a fossil, an old skull or bird nest. Perhaps nearby is where you keep your 'bush' hat, fly repellent, binoculars, hand magnifiers, sketch books, paints, pack sack and hiking boots.

These are the things that bring a comfortable smile to my face, especially now in the middle of winter. I am lucky my interest in plants has allowed me to have sufficient dried plants from years past to keep me occupied for many winters to come. But what makes this a special time of year for me, is starting to plan

just where I'd like to go this coming spring, and who I might cajole to accompany me. So far, I have about 4 outings I hope to experience; one near home, a couple on the lower Oromocto River, and one possibly mature forest nestled in amongst the Minto coal tailings along the shores of Grand Lake.

Amazingly, naturalists never seem to run out of places to go. Some are old favourites that are visited every year and others are new places where new discoveries might be lurking. I hope that as you look around your home and see nature paraphernalia quietly resting, you will also have a warm glow for the spring, summer and fall that lie just ahead.

La promesse de l'hiver

Mot du Président

Gart Bishop
Sussex

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Certains d'entre vous ont probablement à la maison, une étagère ou deux, ou même toute une pièce où vous rangez vos livres de références sur la nature. Peut être aussi, qu'il y trainent des plantes séchées, ou encore un fossile, un vieux crâne ou un nid d'oiseaux. Et un peu plus loin, divers objets semblent attendre le départ en randonnée, tel votre chapeau de terrain, de l'insectifuge, vos jumelles, une loupe, un cahier à dessin, une palette de couleur, un sac à dos ou des bottes de marche.

Voilà un portrait qui apporte un chaleureux sourire à mon visage, d'autant plus que nous sommes au plein cœur de l'hiver. Heureusement, à cause de ma passion pour les plantes, j'ai accumulé aux cours des années, une impressionnante collection de plantes séchées qui suffira largement à m'occuper pour bien des hivers avenir. Et puis, si mes sorties sont limitées par la météo, il s'agit par contre, du moment idéale pour commencer à planifier mes aventures du printemps tout

en pensant à quel compagnon je pourrais tâcher de convaincre de m'accompagner. À date, il y a au moins 4 voyages que j'envisage de faire. Un premier pas très loin de la maison, deux autres sur le cours inférieur de la rivière Oromocto et possiblement un autre dans un reste de forêt mature nichée au beau milieu des champs de résidus miniers de charbon près de Minto, sur les rives du Grand Lac.

N'est-il pas merveilleux qu'en tant que naturalistes nous ayons toujours des endroits que nous rêvons de visiter. Si certains sont des veilles connaissances qu'il nous fait toujours plaisir de retrouver, d'autres nous sont encore inconnue et nous rêvons évidemment d'y faire de passionnantes découvertes. J'espère que comme moi, en jetant un regard près de votre demeure, sur la nature dans son paisible repos hivernal vous sentirez vous aussi un peu de la chaleur du printemps, de l'été et de l'automne qui ne vont pas tarder à nous revenir.

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The Wollemi Pine

Relic from a Forgotten Age

I first heard of the Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*) in 2006 when I watched a documentary on its discovery on television. It piqued my interest because I had been to Australia a few months earlier, in late 2005. I thought it amazing that the trees were so rare and valuable, and that scientists would be flown in by helicopter while blindfolded, not to reveal their exact location.

Soon after, I heard on CBC Radio that Kingsbrae Garden in St. Andrews had gotten a young tree. Jay Remer, an innkeeper from St. Andrews, purchased it for Kingsbrae at an auction at Sotheby's. Kingsbrae now owned the only Wollemi Pine in Canada. Since then, others have bought

this rare species, but New Brunswick was always the first.

The story of the Wollemi Pine is interesting. The Blue Mountains National Park in Australia is an incredible place to visit. They are called the Blue Mountains because in the heat of the day minute droplets from gum and eucalyptus trees evaporate into the air and produce a bluish haze over the Park's valleys. The Park is host to a wide variety of birds and animals as well as plants found nowhere else in the world.

The Wollemi Pine was first discovered in 1994 and deemed the "botanical find of the century". A bushwalker found the stand of 36 trees in a remote area of the Blue Mountains, 150 km northwest of Sydney in New South Wales, Australia. Presumed extinct, the Jurassic Age species is a dark green conifer with pendulous bottle-brush foliage and bark resembling bubbling chocolate. It can grow to 40 meters and have a trunk a metre in diameter. The oldest tree in this small stand is estimated to be as old as the Norman Conquest (11th century). It is affectionately known as "King Billy".

The Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Australia, has a fact sheet on the Wollemi Pine. They state the following:

The Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service have been studying the Wollemi Pine since 1994, and the trees are posing many more questions than answers.

Genetically speaking, our tests cannot detect any differences between the trees. It's as if they were all exactly the same plant! How could a living species with such a limited gene pool have survived hundreds of millions of years? The fact that they are capable of "coppicing" (where multiple stems grow from buds on the trunk) may be their secret to survival.

Scientists have been amazed to discover that these possibly genetically identical trees produce seeds that can germinate. However, it's puzzling that many small seedlings and adult plants grow at the site but no juveniles. It's like a human population made up of babies and seedlings only get the chance to reach maturity when there's some disturbance which causes the death of a mature tree

The bark and the leaves are unique and have an air of the Jurassic period. They reminded me of the fossils I have found along the Joggins Fossil Cliffs.
Photo by D. Mercier-Allain



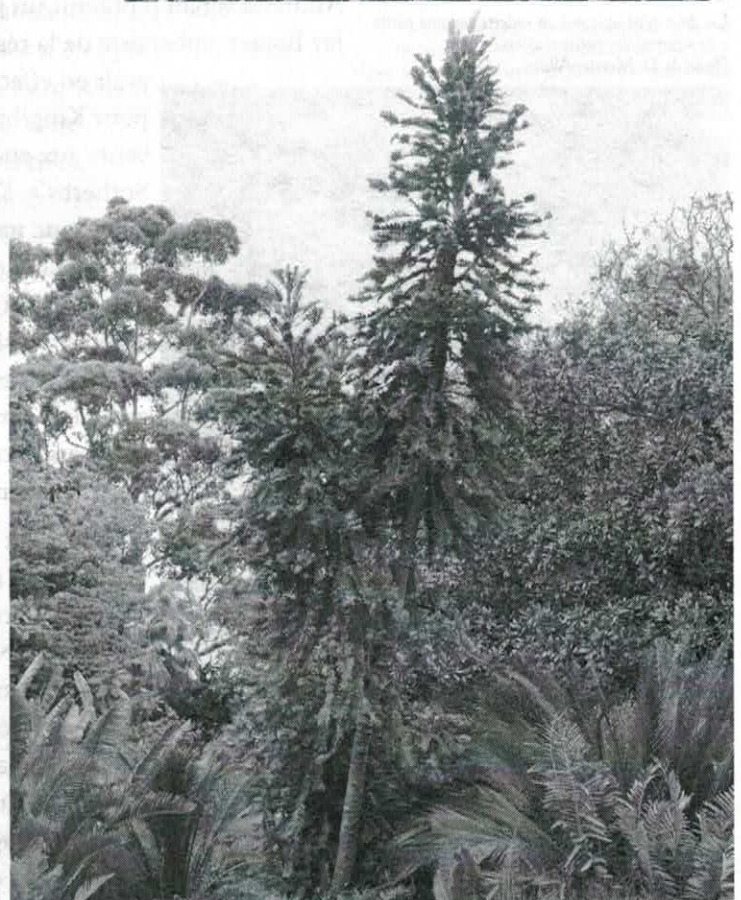
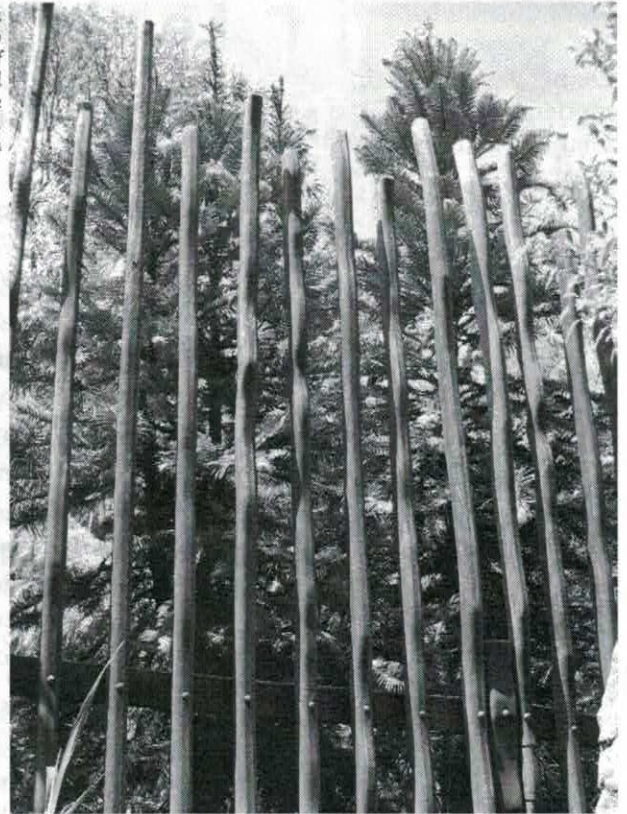
and a break in the canopy. The greatest puzzle is that the Pines haven't spread beyond the perimeter of three isolated sites despite similar conditions around them.

Our horticultural research shows that under the right conditions Wollemi Pine seeds germinate readily and plants grow from cuttings. Plants grow well in pots under a variety of conditions. Some have been planted in the ground and only time will tell what sort of trees they will become. In the wild, multi-trunked trees are common.

Tests have revealed that the site around the Wollemi Pines is rich with fungi, including a previously unknown one that produces the anti-cancer drug Taxol. Who knows what other extraordinary plants and animals – and medicines – are still waiting to be discovered?

I saw my first Wollemi Pine in November 2005, at the Taronga Zoo in Sydney, Australia. I did not know the significance of what I was looking at. In October 2011, I returned to Australia. One of my goals was to return to the Royal Botanic Gardens to see the Wollemi Pines growing there. I was successful at seeing them with a different appreciation. I took several photos. If you get the chance to go to Australia, look for the Wollemi Pines. If you aren't so lucky to travel so far, have a look in our backyard. You won't regret it.

The Wollemi Pines at the Taronga Zoo are behind a fence for security reasons. At one time, the value of these trees on the black market did make them a target for would-be thieves and collectors.
Photo by D. Mercier-Allain



The specimens at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, have grown well.
Photo by D. Mercier-Allain

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Le pin Wollemi

Une relique d'une ère oubliée

La première fois que j'ai entendu parler du pin Wollemi (*Wollemia nobilis*) c'était en 2006 en regardant un documentaire à la télé au sujet de sa découverte. Cette histoire a piqué mon intérêt puisque je m'étais rendue en Australie quelques mois plus tôt, vers la fin de 2005. J'ai trouvé ça incroyable que ces arbres étaient si rare et précieux que les scientifiques qui les étudiaient, devaient être emmenés au site par hélicoptère en ayant les yeux bandés pour ne pas dévoiler leur emplacement exacte.

Pas longtemps après, en écoutant un reportage à la CBC Radio (anglophone) j'appris que Kingsbrae Gardens à St. Andrews venait d'obtenir un jeune arbre. Jay Remer, aubergiste de la région, en

avait en effet acheté un pour Kingsbrae à une vente aux enchères de Sotherby's. Kingsbrae était donc maintenant propriétaire du premier pin Wollemi au Canada. Depuis, plusieurs se ont procuré cette espèce rare mais Kingsbrae Gardens seront toujours les premiers.

L'histoire du pin Wollemi est très intéressante. Le parc national Blue Mountains National Park en Australie est un endroit incroyable à visiter. On appelle ces montagnes les Blue Mountains (montagnes bleues) parce que la chaleur de la journée fait évaporer les

minuscules gouttelettes d'eucalyptus et de gommiers, produisant une légère vapeur bleue dans les vallées. Le parc national abrite une grande variété d'oiseaux et d'animaux ainsi que des plantes qu'on ne retrouve nulle part d'autre au monde.

La découverte du pin Wollemi a été faite en 1994 et nommée "la découverte botanique du centenaire". Un «bushwalker» a découvert un peuplement de 36 arbres en se promenant dans une région isolée des Blue Mountains, à 150 km au nord-ouest de Sydney dans le New South Wales, en Australie. Longtemps cru disparu, le conifère vert foncé de l'ère jurassique avec un feuillage ressemblant à une brosse à bouteille et dont l'écorce rappelle un bouillonnement de chocolat. Le pin peut mesurer jusqu'à 40 mètres avec un tronc d'un mètre de diamètre. On estime que l'arbre le plus vieux dans ce peuplement, date de la conquête normande (11e siècle). On l'a nommé affectueusement « King Billy ».

Le Royal Botanic Gardens de Sydney, en Australie a préparé une fiche d'information sur le pin Wollemi. Ayant obtenu leur permission pour la reproduire, voici ce qu'ils disent:

Le Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney et le NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service étudient le pin Wollemi depuis 1994, et les arbres présentent plus de questions que de réponses.

Génétiquement, nos tests n'ont pas détecté de différence entre les arbres. C'est comme s'ils venaient tous de la même plante! Comment une espèce a-t-elle pu survivre des centaines de millions d'années avec un si petit bassin génétique? Le fait qu'ils sont capables de produire des « taillis » (quand

Les deux pins sont mis en vedette sur une petite « île » parmi des petits sentiers.
Photo de D. Mercier-Allain



plusieurs tiges poussent de bourgeons sur le tronc) peut être le secret de leur survie.

Les scientifiques ont été étonnés de découvrir que ces arbres, possiblement identique génétiquement, peuvent produire des graines qui germeront. Ce qui est aussi curieux c'est qu'on retrouve plusieurs jeunes plants et des spécimens adultes qui poussent sur le site mais aucun juvénile. C'est comme une population humaine composée seulement de bébés et d'adulte et les plants on seulement l'opportunité d'atteindre la maturité quand il y a une perturbation qui cause la mort d'un arbre mature et qu'il y a un bris dans le couvert forestier. Le plus grand mystère est que les pins ne se sont pas répandus au-delà du périmètre des trois sites isolés malgré les conditions environnementales semblables toutes autour d'eux.

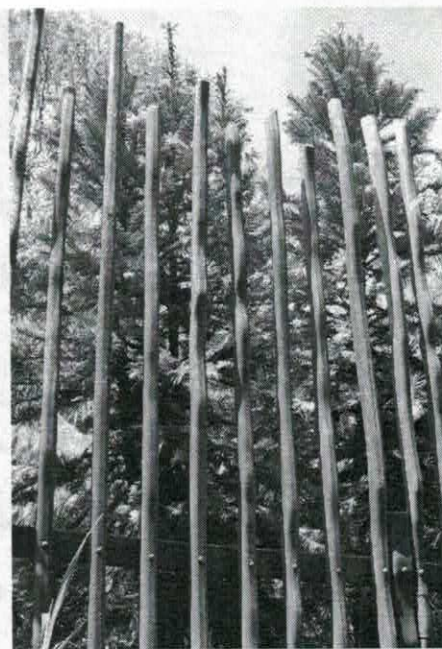
Nos recherches horticoles démontrent que dans les conditions idéales, les graines de pin Wollemi germe aisément et que les plantes peuvent grandir de greffes. Les plantes poussent bien dans des pots, dans une variété de conditions environnementales. D'autres ont été plantés dans le sol et seulement le temps déterminera à quoi ils ressembleront. En nature, les arbres à plusieurs troncs sont communs.

Les tests démontrent que le site autour des pins Wollemi est riche en champignons, y inclus une espèce inconnue auparavant qui produit la drogue pharmaceutique anti-cancéreuse Taxol.

Qui sait quelle autre plante ou animal extraordinaire – et quel médicaments – attendent toujours d'être découverts?

J'ai vu mon premier pin Wollemi en novembre 2005 au jardin zoologique Taronga Zoo à Sydney en Australie. Au début, je ne comprenais pas la signification de ce que je regardais. J'ai fait un autre voyage en Australie en octobre 2011. Un de mes objectifs était de retourner au Royal Botanic Gardens de Sydney pour voir leurs pins Wollemi. J'ai pu les voir mais maintenant avec une différente appréciation. J'en ai pris plusieurs photos.

Si vous avez la chance d'aller en Australie, prenez le temps de chercher pour les pins Wollemi. Ça ne coûte rien pour visiter le Royal Botanic Gardens et ce n'est qu'une courte distance de marche du fabuleux Sydney Opera House. Si vous n'êtes pas si chanceux de voyager si loin, vous n'avez qu'à regarder dans votre propre cour arrière. Ajoutez le Kingsbrae Gardens de St. Andrews à votre calendrier de voyage. Vous ne le regretterez pas.



Les pins Wollemi au Taronga Zoo sont derrière une barrière pour des raisons sécuritaires. Il fut une époque où, la valeur de ces arbres sur le marché noir était si haute qu'ils étaient une cible importante pour les voleurs et collecteurs. Photo de D. Mercier-Allain

L'écorce et les feuilles sont uniques et donne l'impression d'être des survivants de l'ère jurassique. Ça me fait beaucoup penser aux fossiles que j'ai trouvés le long des falaises à Jogjins. Photo de D. Mercier-Allain



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Killdeers in Decline

It is sometime in late March. There are still patches of snow against the forest edge across the field. Suddenly I hear Kill-dee!, Kill-dee!, Kill-dee! Ah! - it's the voice of a familiar bird announcing both its presence and identity, a signal that spring had at last arrived. Soon Killdeers would spread throughout the province, often to be happened upon, perhaps until the very end of November. Since their fairly recent establishment in New Brunswick in the 1940s they became a common element in the province's avifauna, expanding their summer breeding range towards the northeast. Somewhat atypical shorebirds, they will be known to anyone with even a casual interest in the surrounding world of nature. One hopes that may continue but, to introduce a negative note, I report here a disturbing decline in the abundance of Killdeers that seems to have taken place in our province, probably mostly since the turn of the century. Other birdwatchers may have noticed it too.

Time was that through the 1960s, to the 1990s, I might run across a post-breeding gathering of Killdeers 60 strong at a sod farm here, 40 in a pasture there, 30 in a gravel pit elsewhere. Not anymore. If one spent any time at all in open habitats in any season but winter, Killdeers were almost certain to be seen or heard. Not so surely now: In 2012 I doubt if I noted many more than a dozen of them despite spending an average year afield. To me, "uncommon" would best describe their provincial status today.

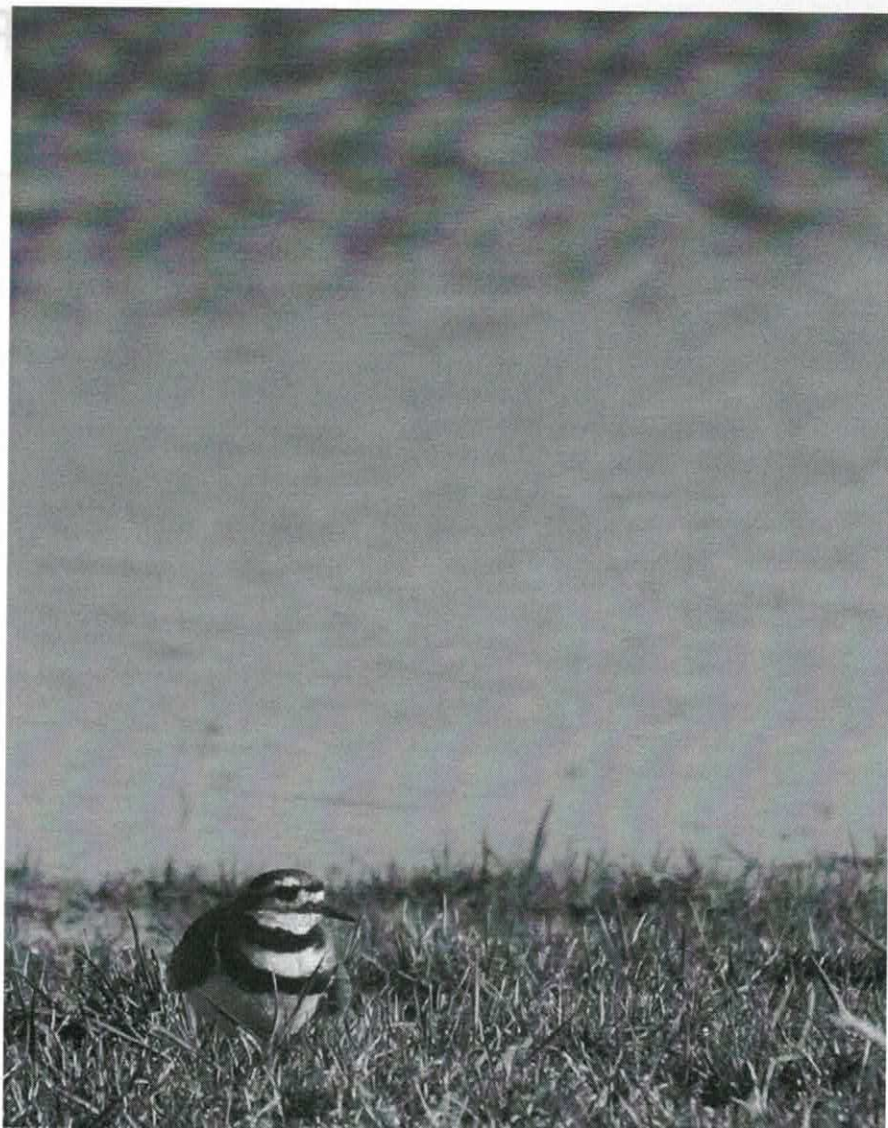
For a quantitative context to my view that the Killdeer has become relatively scarce, I turned to the North American

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). The BBS is a continent-wide roadside count of birds done annually, largely by skilled volunteers, now for about 45 years. During the period 1970-2009 the Killdeer population trend (average annual change) was -3.2% in Canada as a whole, -3.6% in the Atlantic Northern Forest (ANF) bird conservation region (essentially the Maritime provinces and the Gaspé peninsula), and -5.5% in New Brunswick. (A trend of -5.5% annually would mean that about only one-tenth of the birds detected at the beginning of a 40-year period would be recorded at its end.) My contention that much of the decline has occurred recently - say over the last decade - seems to be supported by BBS data for the period 1999-2009 which show a trend of -8.3% annually in the AMF and -16.3% in New Brunswick. So it will be interesting to learn what the BBS reveals in the next few years, and also whether the second Maritimes breeding bird atlas suggests any range contraction of regional Killdeers. (Such a change would, however, be counter to the northward range expansion now being demonstrated by quite a number of birds in response to climate change.)

One can only speculate as to the causes of this evident decline in Killdeer abundance. Habitat loss - such as the reversion of farmland to forest - may be involved. But it doesn't seem likely, given the birds' ability to use such a wide variety of open spaces, both natural and unnatural. A decrease in the birds' food resources, largely comprising a safely-broad diversity of insects, may not be of significance either. A complex of many factors is

probably responsible, perhaps including adverse environmental change in the birds' winter range (Central America?).

Striking in appearance, voice, and behaviour, the Killdeer can hardly escape detection. For the same reasons, its absence is just as noticeable. Can the Killdeer regain its status as a common summer bird in New Brunswick? If it is able to do so, its call when first heard may, at least for this observer, reliably continue to be the herald of spring.



Killdeer
Photo by B. Noel

Mary on Mary's Point

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As a child I often spent my summers on the Polish shores of the Baltic Sea. I still remember the wondrous things the tide would bring in, and the birds that, in small flocks, ran along the waterline picking on something that was, to me, invisible.

Many years passed, and I find myself living on the Bay of Fundy in Canada. I still wonder if it was destiny that led me here. Was it meant to be that I landed here? It would perhaps be interesting to hear how I discovered Mary's Point, and how it became connected to me.

It was on a beautiful August Day in 1963 that I drove to visit a friend on the shore of the Bay of Fundy.

"You are interested in birds," she told me. "Let's go down to the beach, there are thousands of them."

To say that I was overwhelmed would be an understatement! I never expected to see one hundred thousand birds in huge waves, to dance and pirouette over the waters and then fall like a dark cloak onto the beach, then to lift again into the sky

in wave after wave of shimmering and then almost vanishing, graceful bands.

This fantastic vision never left me, and it haunted my mind to find a way to protect this place.

It took a while but I was successful! Not only was I able to acquire a portion of the beach, essential to the shorebirds' safety, but also to protect them and interpret the life of the birds and the bay.

Soon after, the Canadian Wildlife Service took possession of the area, creating a large protected reserve.

My mission became one to allow the public to view the marvel of migration without disturbance, and to learn more about this annual "Festival of Nature." Again I was lucky to receive grants to be able to build a Nature Centre, develop trails, a boardwalk, interpretive materials and to erect informative panels.

Living and working close to this special place I also realized how special it was personally, to my own "migration" to Mary's Point!

I remembered the birds on the shores of the Baltic Sea and discovered that the food they were feeding on was a unique marine organism (*Corophium*). Curiously enough, this tiny animal is only found on the Baltic shores and nowhere else, except in the upper Bay of Fundy. Even the shorebirds on the Baltic shore, though not so numerous, are also in the same genus (*Calidris*) as are ours, here.

The *Corophium* is the main source of food for smaller shorebirds that migrate through the bay. But yet, because of its small size and mud burrowing ability, it is easy to forget it's considered the

Semipalmated Sandpipers and
Semipalmated Plovers
Photo by D. Christie



major reason why the great streams of migrants wing their way to the upper bay and how, in nature, one link so strongly depends on another.

During the winter the *Corophium* drastically declines in number. Therefore, in spring we see hardly any shorebirds at Mary's Point. The birds migrate instead through the interior of the continent, to feed on insects in the many sloughs and ponds of the prairies. After a short breeding period in the northern tundra, and just as the numbers of *Corophium* reach their astronomical numbers of as many as 60,000 in one square metre of mud, the shorebirds begin their southward migration!

The birds gorge themselves on this bounty, consuming up to 16,000 of those tiny "mud shrimps" a day, until they double their weight. To accumulate a storage of body fat is necessary: it will all be used during the nonstop flight of 4,500 km over the Atlantic to their wintering grounds in South America, taking these small birds from 4 to 5 days to fly without food or drink. One realizes perhaps better of what great importance the stay of 10 or so days of feeding and resting on our mudflats and shores, and why it is of such importance to their surviving this dangerous migration.

It is the tiny, almost invisible, amphipod that makes this fabulous journey possible, and it's only in the exposed mudflats of the bay that these marine crustaceans can thrive. In turn, the mudflats which are only exposed during low tides depend on the pulse of the gravitational movements of the sun and the moon. How important are all those links in nature have to be in order for a bird to survive? My thoughts go back to my childhood: was it my good fortune to watch as a child something I would be so deeply

involved in life much later on? Was there some inner call that led me to a place that even carried my name?

I often wonder ...



Birds, with Mary's Point in the background
Photo by D. Christie



Birds feeding on exposed mud at low tide
Photo by D. Christie

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Shorebirds Along the Lower St. John River

As befits a Maritime province, shorebirds constitute one of the glories of New Brunswick's avifauna. Attracted by two long and distinctly different coastlines, many of those birds are passage migrants, hurrying along in spring to breed at higher latitudes, some drifting back at a more leisurely pace on their way south in summer and fall. They may also favour natural corridors such as river valleys. There is an appreciation, supported by evidence presented below, that a modest number do in fact follow the pathway provided by the valley of the St. John River. For the present purpose, the area covered is the lower reach of the valley, and its hinterland, somewhat arbitrarily chosen to stretch from Woodstock, roughly the midpoint in the New Brunswick part of the river's passage to the sea, to Oak Point, on the Long Reach.

Important records may have been missed in this article which, it is hoped, may bring them to light. It should be noted that a few of the cited records have not been accepted as confirmed by the New Brunswick Bird Records Committee, and that where no observer identification is given, sightings are those of the author. For the sake of completeness and the accommodation of readers, this update incorporates much information reported earlier in publications (see References) perhaps not readily accessible to many.

The Rarities

The 15 species identified in the following annotated list have been reported in the subject area six or fewer times. Most of them represent passage migrants but included are vagrants and a couple of species – Piping Plover and Willet – that

breed elsewhere in the province.

PIPING PLOVER. PLUVIER SIFFLEUR

One seen at what was then known as McKinley Ferry, at the head of the estuary below Mactaquac, was reported by Rudy Stoczek on 14 September 1974. The only other record is of one observed, with Semipalmated Plovers and other shorebirds, on Ox Island, at Lower Burton, by Dwayne Sabine on 26 August 2001.

BLACK-NECKED STILT. ÉCHASSE D'AMÉRIQUE

The single record is of three reported by Georgette Thibodeau and Jemma Ouelette near Woodstock on 29 April 1982.

AMERICAN AVOCET. AVOCETTE D'AMÉRIQUE

The only record(s) refer to one discovered at Fredericton by Don Gibson on 10 June 1984 which remained there for two days. What may well have been the same bird was noted at Sheffield by Jeremy Forster on 12 June.

WILLET. CHEVALIER SEMIPALMÉ

Two records are of one seen at Woodstock by Wally Hale on 20 October 1961 and of two noted at McGowans Corner by Jeremy Forster on 4 May 1982.

WHIMBREL. COURLIS CORLIEU

One was collected at Woodstock on 29 August 1943. Another was seen at Fredericton by Gilles Belliveau on 3 August 2005 and an individual of the nominate European race was discovered by Moira Campbell on 28 May 2001 at Woolastook Provincial Park, Longs Creek, where it remained until the following day.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT. BARGE HUDSONIENNE

There are three records, as follows:

Two were collected at Gagetown on 25 October 1881, one was seen at Douglas by Beverley Schneider on 24-25 September 1974, and one was observed at Fredericton by Don Gibson and others from 26 August to 5 September 1995.

RED KNOT. BÉCASSEAU MAUBÈCHE

One was seen at Grand Point on 1 August 1968. Much more notable was a flock of 16 observed by Henrik Deichmann at Evandale on 10 October 1972.

WESTERN SANDPIPER. BÉCASSEAU D'ALASKA

The single record is of one reported at Douglas Harbour on 22 October 1964.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER. BÉCASSEAU DE BAIRD

There was one at Fredericton from 13 to 17 September 1967. The only other record is of one seen by Henrik Deichmann at Grand Point on 26 August 1972.

It or another individual was observed there on 27 September of that year.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. BÉCASSEAU VIOLET

Single birds were noted at Fredericton on 5 April 1969 and at Grand Point on 24 October 1964. Quite remarkable was the flock of 15 seen by Jim Edsall at Mactaquac on 2 March 1988.

STILT SANDPIPER. BÉCASSEAU À ÉCHASSES

One was reported by Nettie Moore and Willa MacCoubrey at Lower Jemseg on 1 May 1975. (Although there are several May and June records for Nova Scotia, this remains only the second spring report from New Brunswick, there being an earlier observation of one at Saint John on 12 May 1970.)

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER.

BÉCASSEAU ROUSSÂTRE

One was at Fredericton on 11 and 12 September 1966. Another was seen by Brian Dalzell at the Fredericton airport on 10 September 1992, two by Jim Wilson at Sheffield on 19 October 1993, and two by Owen Washburn at

Grand Point on September 1975.

RUFF. COMBATTANT VARIÉ

Single birds, Eurasian visitors, were noted at Mouth of Keswick from 30 April to 5 May 1995, Fredericton on 18 May 2009, McGowans Corner from 2 to 7 May 1977 and 3 to 7 May 1982, Jemseg on 31 May 1995, and - a Reeve - at Lower Jemseg on 18 and 19 April 1987. All were subsequently seen by observers additional to the author.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER. BÉCASSIN

A LONG BEC

One with a group of six Short-billed Dowitchers was identified as this species at Fredericton by Jeremy Forster on 14 October 1984.

RED PHALAROPE. PHALAROPE À BEC LARGE

One was found dead by Dick Renouf at Nashwaaksis (Fredericton) on 29 October 1969. The only other record is of one seen with three Red-necked Phalaropes by Jeremy Forster at McGowans Corner on 13 May 1984.

THE REGULARS

Five not-uncommon species of passage migrants that occur, and are expected, annually each spring, summer, and fall are listed below. (Excluded are other regulars - four common summer breeding species, viz. Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, and American Woodcock, representatives of which, perhaps excepting Killdeer and woodcock, may move beyond the province to breed farther north.)

GREATER YELLOW-LEGS. GRAND CHEVALIER

The peak spring migration occurs in April and May, the earliest records being of one

Spotted Sandpiper
Photo by B. Noel



seen by Harold Bunner at Jemseg on 9 April 1976 and one noted by Don Gibson at McGowans Corner on that day in 2004. Highest counts are of a gathering of mixed yellowlegs, about 80 strong, noted by Don Gibson at Mouth of Keswick on 13 May 2003. Forty were at Jemseg on 11 May 1980 and 25 at Mactaquac on 3 May 1988. Several June records include one of 15 individuals seen by Scott Makepeace on the Mistake Intervale, near Upper Greenwich, on 3 June 1988. Usually much smaller numbers are seen in fall but ten were noted by Harold Peters at Fredericton on 5 November 1941. One was seen by Barry Monson at Burtt's Corner as late as 16 November in 2003.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS. PETIT CHEVALIER

Occurs in small numbers with its greater cousin, affording opportunities to compare the two species. The earliest spring record is of two seen by Don Gibson at McGowans Corner on 25 April 2007. The latest fall report is of one noted by William Moore at Scotch Lake on 28 October 1901. Seven were observed by Henrik Deichmann at Jemseg on 17 July 1972. Ten were noted at Fredericton on 31 August 1968 and on 7 August 1989.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER. CHEVALIER SOLITAIRE

Nearly all the spring observations were made in May but exceptionally early individuals were reported by Margaret Pacey at Scotchtown on 8 April 2008 and Kermode Parr at Lower Jemseg on 26 April 1970. Reports often refer to single birds, appropriately enough, but there were nine

at Fredericton on 12 May 2005, and Don Gibson saw seven at Tripp Settlement on 13 May 1984. Observations of one at Pokiok in late June of 2006 June suggested the possibility of breeding. Fall records extend to mid-October, e.g. Mark Phinney noted one at Jemseg on 12 October 1990 and there was still one at Grand point on 15 October 1971.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER.

BÉCASSEAU SEMIPALMÉ

There are usually a few spring records each year spanning the period 11 May (when Rae Brown saw one at Jemseg in 1960) to 3 June (when there was one at Fredericton in 2004). More numerous in fall, most records are for August, largest flocks, all at Fredericton, being 150 on 17 August 1965, 115 on 31 August 1968, and 60 on 24 August 1963.

LEAST SANDPIPER. BÉCASSEAU MINISCULE

Most of the spring birds were observed from mid-May to mid-June. A scattering of July reports are followed by increasing numbers in August. One seen at Fredericton on 10 October 1966 seemed late. Observations are usually of one or two birds but 18 were seen by Don Gibson on 29 May 2003 at Fredericton where there were 19 on 27 May 1996. There were flocks of 75 at Fredericton on 11 August 1966 and 50 on 17 August 1965.

The Occasionals – neither rare nor regular

Identified below are a dozen species of passage migrants of widely differing abundance and frequency of occurrence in the area under consideration. Excluded are rarities and those species seen annually. Included are two – Upland Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope – known to have bred.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER. PLUVIER ARGENTÉ

About two dozen records in spring (mostly May) and fall usually refer to single

Solitary Sandpiper
Photo by B. Noel



birds, but there were ten at Fredericton on 22 August 1964 and several on 5 November 1966. Dates of occurrence range from 5 May to 15 June, and 18 July (when one was seen by Alan Madden on Gilbert Island in 1966) to early November.

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER. PLUVIER BRONZÉ

Four spring records include an early individual seen by Don Gibson at Jemseg in 14 April 1991. A dozen or so fall records, nearly all in September and October, include flocks of 25 seen by Owen Washburn at Jemseg from 4 to 10 October 1984, 12 seen by Don Gibson at Fredericton on 21 October 1984, and seven discovered by Enid Inch at Lower Jemseg on 8 September 1974. The latest fall report is of one at Fredericton on 1 November 1998.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER. PLUVIER SEMIPALMÉ

Most of at least two dozen reports refer to May but there was one individual bird at Fredericton on 28 June 1997. The few records of fall occurrences range from 20 July to 12 October. Usually one or two birds together was the norm but there were eight at Fredericton on 21 May 2005, and 40 at Sheffield on 7 September 2002.

UPLAND SANDPIPER. MAUBÊCHE DES CHAMPS

About a dozen records were usually of single birds seen at various places from Fredericton to Lower Cambridge from mid-April to late October. Five birds observed at the Fredericton airport by Brian Dalzell were confirmed as breeding. There is also a record of birds breeding at Maugerville. Don Gibson's sighting of an individual at Base Gagetown on 7 July 2002 is perhaps suggestive.

RUDDY TURNSTONE.

TOURNEPIERRE À COLLIER

Of about a dozen sightings only two were made in spring when there was one at Jemseg on 4 June 1995 and one on Goat

Island, Grand Lake, on 12 June 2012.

Most fall sightings were at Grand Point but five were noted at Fredericton on 27 August 1961, and two were seen by Scott Makepeace on Oromocto Island on 24 August 2001. A curious record refers to a tame bird that frequented a vacant building lot in downtown Fredericton during the first half of September in 2011. Identified by Heather Wilson, it attracted the attention of many passersby.

SANDERLING. BÉCASSEAU SANDERLING

Nearly all the eight sightings, none recent, were made at Grand Point, involving one to eight birds, from 20 July to 20 October. The largest flock, of 15 birds, was seen by David Christie at Fredericton on 12 September 1966.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER.

BÉCASSEAU À CROUPION BLANC

Most of about 15 records were from Fredericton in spring, nearly all of single birds. Dates range from 15 May to 18 June, 11 August to 11 November.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER. BÉCASSEAU VIOLET

A handful of spring records are all of single birds, spanning a period from mid-May to mid-June. About 20 fall observations were mostly in October, but from 9 July (when Chris Sanders saw one at French Lake, near Grand Lake, in 1961) to 6 November (when Nettie Moore noted one at Grand Point in 1978). The largest flocks were 40 seen by Mark Phinney on Gilbert Island on 18 October 1990 and 29 at Fredericton on that date in 1964.

DUNLIN. BÉCASSEAU VARIABLE

There are about a dozen records, mostly in spring and usually of single birds. One at Jemseg on 18 April 1998 and one at Grand Point on 25 June 1976 represent spring extremes. Three were at Marysville on 20 May 1974 and 12 at Fredericton on 25 June 1976.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER. BÉCASSIN ROUX

Nearly all the 15 sightings were in May. The largest flocks were as follows: 15 were seen by Jim Goltz at Mactaquac on 17 May 1986, 30 were found at Oromocto on 24 May 1976, and there were 40 at Upper Hampstead between 18 and 22 May in 1974. There was one on Hog Island, at Upper Greenwich, on 5 July 1971.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE. PHALAROPE DE WILSON

There are at least 20 records, all in spring, of birds mostly in the Jemseg area but also at Sheffield, Fredericton, and Mouth of Keswick. Reports were often of single birds but two pairs were noted at Jemseg on 22 May 1982. Scott Makepeace and colleagues discovered several nesting pairs on Grassy Island, near Oak Point, in 1986. A few birds frequented that site at least well into the 1990s.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE.
PHALAROPE À ÉTROIT

There are about a dozen records, none recent. Spring sightings were all in May, south-bound birds being noted from 4 August to 8 October. Most observations were of single birds but three were seen on 19 May 1970 at Lower Jemseg where Jim Goltz found three on 7 May 1989.

So, in conclusion, it is clear that a wide variety of shorebirds follow the lower – and presumably upper – reaches of the St. John River during their annual migrations. One has the strong impression, however, that the number of birds

involved has declined appreciably in the last decade or two. That is probably a function of local habitat changes and a reflection of recent wide scale decreases in shorebird populations. For example, Fredericton's Carleton Park used to be an exciting place for shorebirds to visit, especially in summer and fall. It is likely that better management of domestic wastes and the impact of the Mactaquac dam on river levels there have rendered the site less attractive to the birds than formerly, and that consequently it has become less scrutinized. At Wilkins Field, also in Fredericton, extensive topsoil removal for several years created ideal conditions for visiting shorebirds. One could expect to see ten or more species there on a good day. However, the site has been reclaimed by vegetation and few shorebirds visit now. (Interestingly, the Fredericton Wildlife Refuge does not boast much particularly good shorebird habitat but nevertheless has attracted 19 species, but that surely is because of the sustained attention it has received over the past 50 years.) Finally, the landscape around McGowans Corner and the Grand Lake intervale towards Jemseg has been changed by highway construction, market gardening, and sod farming, making it less important to passing shorebirds. But on the positive side, "traditional" shorebirding sites such as at Mouth of Keswick and Lower Jemseg have remained essentially unchanged. They may continue to furnish rewards for the diligent observer yet hoping for a Curlew Sandpiper if not an Eskimo Curlew.

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Greenlaw Mountain Hawk Watch

Four Years In and What Have We Learned?

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About five years ago, avid hawk watcher Todd Watts of Bocobec began reading maps and climbing hills in the southwest corner of the province in search of a very special place. Todd was looking for an elevated location with unobstructed viewpoints on a likely raptor migration route. He knew that the Bay of Fundy would act as a barrier for most raptors during their southward migration in the fall, and that many would eventually have to pass over the upper St. Andrews peninsula. He also recognized that the birds would be looking for updrafts and rising thermals off the land in order to gain altitude for their flight across the St. Croix River and beyond. Todd found all these attributes at Greenlaw Mountain.

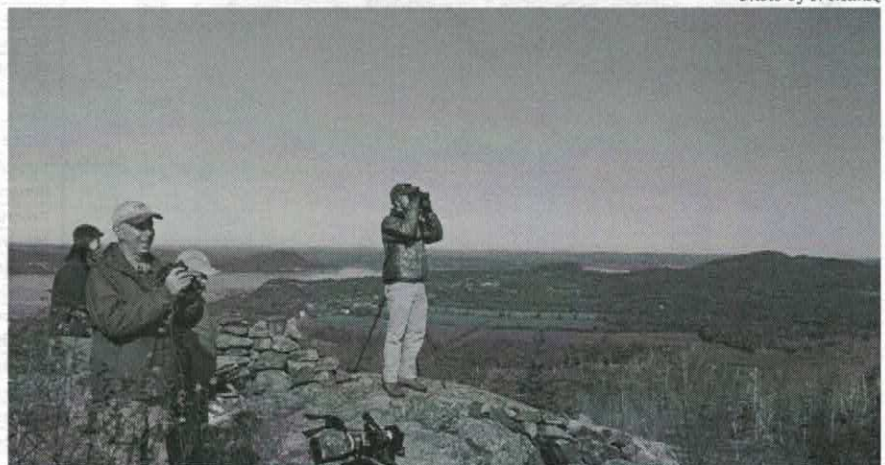
Todd began to spend time on the mountain and quickly came to realize that this new hawk watching site had potential to provide valuable information on species, numbers, migration routes and timing of raptor movement out of New Brunswick and, quite likely, from other parts of Atlantic Canada. He also knew that for the site to be truly effective, he would need some help, particularly in the form of volunteer observers. In 2009 Todd and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, with support from the Saint John Naturalists' Club, were successful in an application to the New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund, and Atlantic Canada's first structured and professional hawk watch was initiated. Since 2010, the project has been conducted under the auspices of the Saint John Naturalists' Club. In the four years of the Greenlaw Mountain Hawk Watch (GHHW), Todd has

logged over 1,000 observation hours and submitted data from some 180 highly detailed daily count sheets to the publicly accessible hawkcount.org database. Volunteers have contributed over 2,000 hours in support of the project.

SO, WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- We have learned much about the species (currently 16 in total) migrating out of south western New Brunswick, their relative numbers and the timing of the migration by each species.
- We know, for example, that Broad-winged Hawks are the most numerous migrants, making up 65% of all raptors recorded. We know that, typically, a majority of Broad-winged Hawks move through in great flights through a three- to five-day window in mid-September.
- We have come to recognize that Red-shouldered Hawk and Cooper's Hawk may be more common in the province than previously believed, averaging 6 and 12 sightings each year, respectively.

*Todd Watts scans the horizon from his perch atop Greenlaw Mountain, with the help of volunteer hawk watchers.
Photo by P. Mansz*



Another season of observations at the Greenlaw Mountain Hawk Watch will start in August. To volunteer at the GHHW, simply contact the Official Counter, Todd Watts, at fishbird@xplornet.ca, or 506-529-4656. More information can be found at <http://saintjohnnaturalistsclub.org/GMHW.htm>, or by searching for Greenlaw Mountain Hawk Watch on Facebook.

The Greenlaw Mountain Hawk Watch project would not be possible without the support of the New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund, private donors, and its many volunteers.

- We know that yearly flights can be strongly influenced by weather and we are now learning how these effects play out in the New Brunswick context.
- We can now identify quite specific flight paths in the area of Greenlaw Mountain and come to some informed conclusions about how they link up with those identified by neighbouring hawk watches in Maine.

We have learned that there is a widespread interest in the province about raptors and in supporting raptor conservation. A Raptor Identification Workshop held in Saint John in August of 2012 quickly sold out its 42 seats. Almost daily flight reports and forecasts posted on the naturenb listserv draw considerable feedback and numerous questions.

- We know that people with a love of birds and the outdoors will dedicate themselves tirelessly to citizen science projects they believe in. Many travel significant distances and make the steep hike up the

mountain several times a season and in all kinds of weather. Several volunteers have become very skilled at spotting and identifying distant hawks and, as a result, are making the GMHW ever more effective.

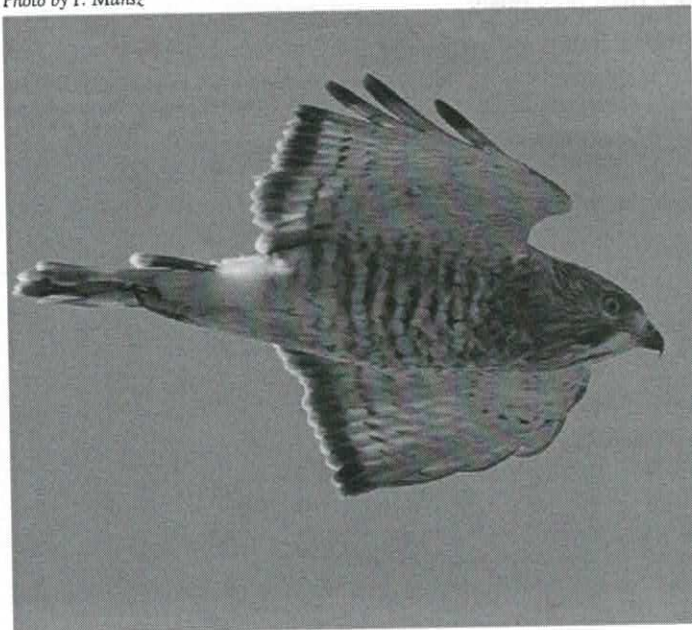
WHAT HAVE WE YET TO LEARN?

In a word: lots! We do not have a long enough data set to yet draw conclusions on the health of raptor populations. Many seasons of observation will be necessary to separate out the annual variations resulting from the effects of weather conditions on raptor migration. Perhaps, in time, we will be able to link weather conditions during the breeding season with breeding success. As well, we may eventually be able to correlate population shifts resulting from a warming climate.

ONE MORE LESSON LEARNED

We have learned how much of a difference one passionate, dedicated and determined individual can make in support of conservation. The GHMW's success in providing crucial information for the future protection of raptors and in

Broad-winged Hawk
Photo by P. Mansz



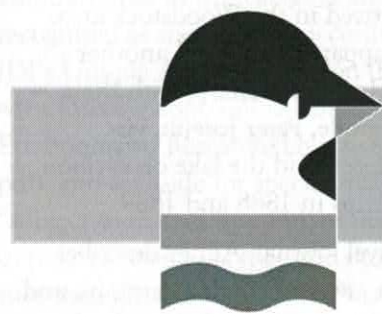
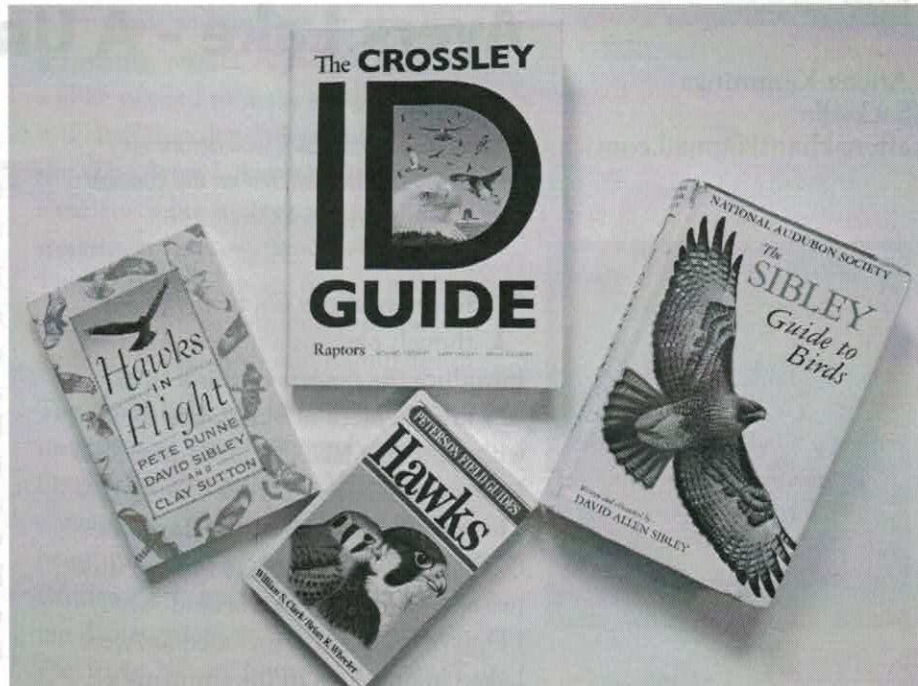
Greenlaw Mountain Hawk Watch

Yearly Count Totals

Species	2012	2011	2010	2009
Turkey Vulture	239	144	90	99
Osprey	245	132	151	111
Bald Eagle	50	44	52	46
Golden Eagle	0	1	0	0
Northern Harrier	61	60	76	39
Sharp-shinned Hawk	602	848	661	593
Cooper's Hawk	13	11	14	11
Northern Goshawk	9	19	11	13
Red-shouldered Hawk	5	7	10	5
Broad-winged Hawk	2100	5835	2240	1457
Red-tailed Hawk	332	241	222	152
Rough-legged Hawk	0	0	0	0
American Kestrel	173	199	193	129
Merlin	48	33	43	38
Peregrine Falcon	23	24	24	13
Gyr Falcon	0	1	0	0
Unidentified Accipiter	3	2	5	1
Unidentified Buteo	2	4	5	3
Unidentified Falcon	4	2	3	1
Unidentified Eagle	1	0	1	3
Unidentified Raptor	69	65	88	55
Total	3979	7672	3889	2769
Hours	257	258	266.25	256.75

engaging many people in New Brunswick and abroad in this valuable conservation project is due in huge measure to Todd Watts. We can all take inspiration in this shining example of "the power of one."

There are many resources available to help the novice or support the expert hawk watcher. A new one: The Crossley ID Guide series, Raptors, was recently released. It is a very different, educational, and informative take on raptor identification, and a review will be presented in a future issue of the NB Naturalist.



Festival of de la Nature

Book your calendars now and join us for the 2014 Nature NB Festival of Nature and Annual General Meeting to be held in Fundy National Park and the town of Alma on June 6, 7, and 8!

Prenez note dans vos agendas et joignez-vous à nous pour le Festival de la Nature 2014 et l'assemblée générale annuelle qui sera tenue au Parc national de Fundy et dans la ville d'Alma les 6, 7 et 8 juin 2014!

Afiena Kamminga
Sackville
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In JDI's Unique Areas internet publication, the company states that "frogs and salamanders are generally recognized as indicator species due to their sensitivity to a number of environmental factors; areas with a variety of amphibians are considered unique by this program."

Ayers Lake - A Unique Area

A forest as primitive as it was before ever William the Norman landed on the coast of Kent. - George Frederick Clarke, 1963

The quote above is a fitting one – though perhaps a little quirky – to introduce the readers of this journal to a unique piece of old-growth forest with a pristine lake in west-central New Brunswick (Carleton/York County). This site, approximately 800 hectares (2000 acres) was recognized in the nineties as a special site by the landowner, J.D. Irving Ltd., and included as Ayers Lake Unique Area in the company's voluntary special management program.

THE PLACE

Artist Aleta Karstad, of Bishops Mills, Ontario, wrote in an essay (published July 9, 2013, in the Woodstock *Bugle-Observer*) about her visit to the Ayers Lake Unique Area:

"Everywhere I looked were different textures, nothing was like anything else, and the slower I walked, the more I saw.

It was as if the forest magnified life, and immersed in it, I became smaller and smaller, until I began to see mosses and lichens, and mushrooms glowing like lavender lampshades sprouting from the mossy coat on a tree trunk, and sharp little spikes pointing outward from the upturned tip of a pale, braided-looking moss. Farther underneath each of these mossy branches, I found spore-bearing structures hanging downward like tiny orange cowbells."

IN EARLY DAYS

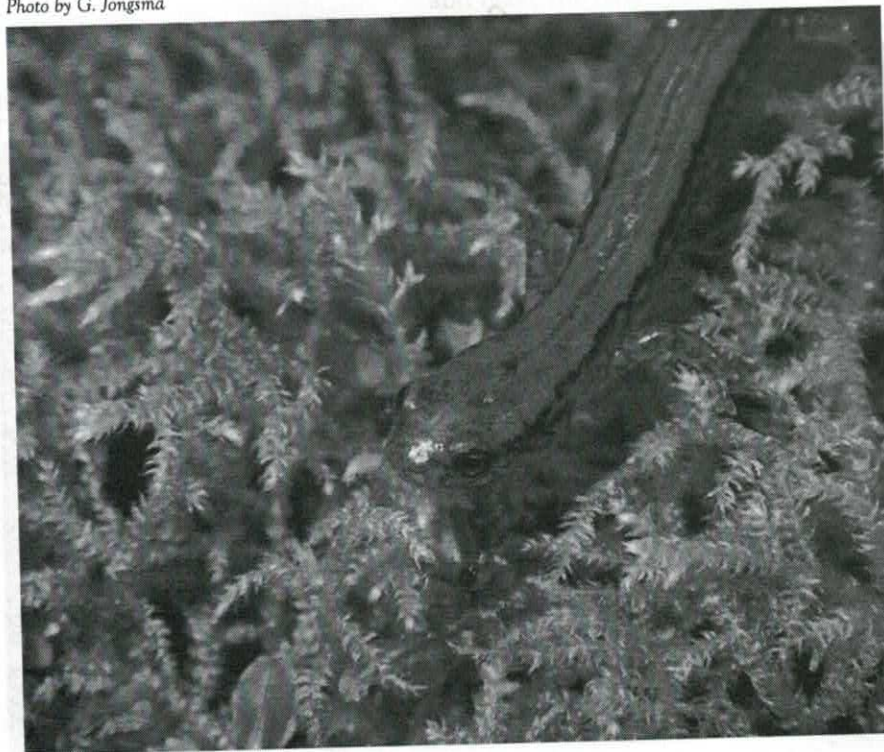
As early as the 19th century, Ayers Lake's forest, pristine lake and water courses were appreciated by visitors from elsewhere as a special place, a source of wonder and admiration.

Newly arrived in the Woodstock area, Edwin Tappan Adney, and another hunter, Humboldt Sharp, with their Maliseet guide, Peter Joseph, visited the forest and the lake on caribou hunting trips in 1888 and 1889.

In his travel journal, Adney describes the forest area with Oak Mountain, and Sowback Mountain (called Sowback Ridge to-day) in detail. He noted the lake as "a source of wonder," owing to the elevation (it's eerie to be walking from the surrounding forest, up a gentle incline, to the lake....), and its unusual depth, in which lake trout could be found, that "ran to two feet in length."

Robert Speer and Norman Prentice, who surveyed the area in 1975 for the Department of Natural Resources (as a candidate for New Brunswick Ecological

Northern Two-lined Salamander
Photo by G. Jongsma



Reserve status) mentioned the exceptional old hardwood and coniferous stands they encountered. This area had, in their opinion, "not received any major disturbance for at least 200 years," and must be "among the oldest undisturbed forests in the province."

PRESENT STATUS

The 2000 acres of old-growth forest that remains at Ayers Lake today, was acquired by J.D. Irving Ltd. (JDI) in 1941 as part of the former holdings of the New Brunswick Railway Company.

In the nineties, it was felt that, although the land and lake were privately owned by the company – and because of that, not eligible for inclusion in the province's Protected Natural Areas program – its natural qualities merited some form of protection. Talks between JDI and an informal local group, Friends of Ayers Lake, resulted in the establishment of the lake and surrounding old-growth Acadian forest as one of JDI's Unique Areas.

Landholdings in this category are recognized as special sites, according to JDI's Unique Areas publication (<http://www.jdirving.com/uploadedFiles/Environment/Research/UniqueAreas.pdf>), and set aside for special treatment, "subject to management plans designed to preserve elements that give these sites their significance" (...) "This program serves to compliment (sic) our company's many other efforts at addressing important environmental issues by recognizing the multitude of lesser-known, yet significant or 'unique' elements found in our working forests."

At the time when the Ayers Lake site was included in JDI's list of Unique Areas, surveys of the local flora and fauna were far from complete. Since then, other 'reconnaissance' surveys have

taken place with promising, sometimes surprising, results. Although more time will be needed to make a full inventory, it is clear that this indeed is a unique site. The Ayers Lake area has sheltered a variety of life in its shady forests, streams, springs, wetlands, and lake. These life forms range from microorganisms, fungi, invertebrates, reptiles, and amphibians to birds and mammals.

The Ayers Lake site has already been noted for its wealth of amphibians. Gregor Jongsma, Nature NB (2012) concluded, "This is one of the most beautiful places I have been in New Brunswick. It has incredible amphibian diversity (about 95% of all the species in NB are found at this site.)"

ANOTHER VISITOR'S IMPRESSIONS

"A vernal pool hides like a black diamond set in the most vivid green sphagnum moss I've ever seen. Across the pool leans a living yellow birch, a branch of which arches like a Bonsai tree, back toward the mossy sculpture of its roots and dead branches, elegance reflected in the eye of the forest. Here is where I stopped to paint.

When we reached the lake, the heart of this ancient and venerable forest, the king and queen approached – the Ayers Lake resident loons, gliding on their reflection to see who had come. The wide space of the lake revealed the forest in a different light, and like our view from the lookout before we entered it, we could see the texture of the Old Growth, the dark mossy patches of ancient Hemlock and Red Spruce, and the standing dead trees that still play a part in the life of the forest." (Aleta Karstad, June 2013)

NATURAL ASPECTS THAT CREATE AND MAINTAIN AYERS LAKE AND ITS FOREST

The plant life in the site has already

Interested in learning more about other areas in the province like Ayers Lake, or entering into a dialog regarding the preservation of this unique, special area? Visit Nature New Brunswick on Facebook and join the discussion.

yielded a surprise during the limited explorations done so far. The identification of a rare grape fern (*Botrichium oneidense*), discovered by Brown, was confirmed by botanist Jim Goltz.

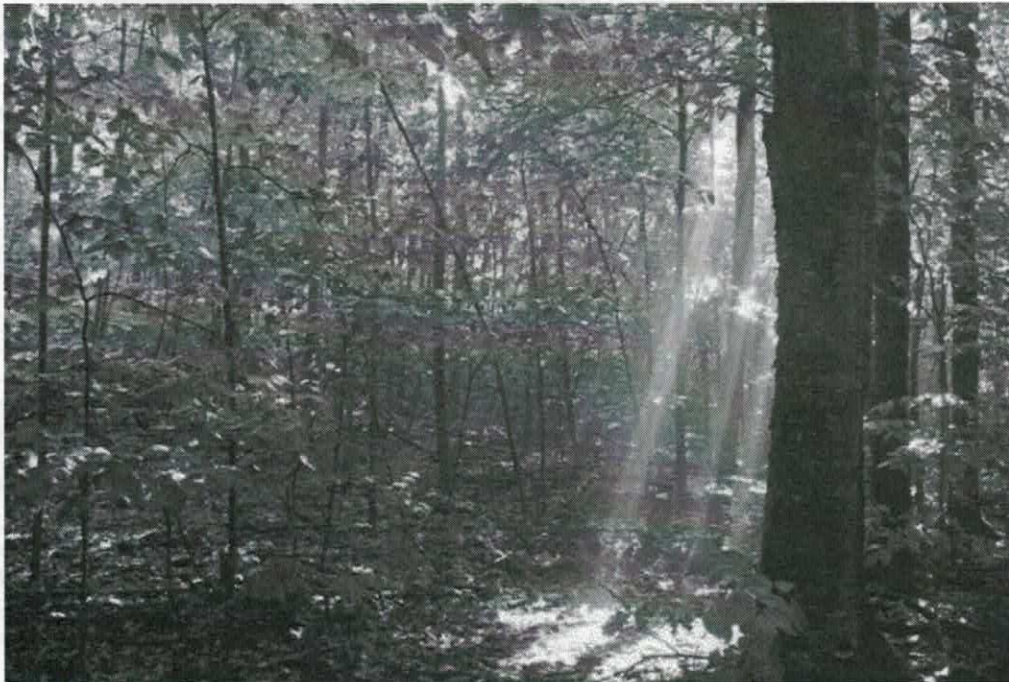
Other exploratory surveys indicate the area's geology is in strong contrast with that of the nearby hardwood forest west of the St. John river, which are largely calcareous sedimentary rock and base-rich soils. At the Ayers Lake site, most areas are on a bedrock of hard intrusives, such as gabbro and diorite, which are low in calcium carbonate and support a very different plant community. Owing to the low calcium carbonate content of the soils at Ayers Lake, the heavy forest cover was left more or less undisturbed over the centuries. However, across the river, the forest was cleared for agriculture to a much larger extent.

Casual observation of tree species shows the dominant species in this forest to be: Sugar Maple, Eastern Hemlock, Red Spruce, Yellow Birch, and White Ash. Balsam Fir and Striped Maple are present in the understory. Hop-hornbeam, Black

Ash, Paper Birch, Red Oak, and White Pine are found less frequently. The scarcity of White Pine is thought to be a result of selective removal in the past. A dendrological study will be needed to get a full picture of the age of the trees. A botanist, counting 220 rings in the stump of a random Red Spruce recently cut to make way for a forestry road, observed that there seem to be much older trees in this forest.

The forest floor in many places is dominated by species such as shining club moss (*Huperzia lucidula*), Evergreen Wood fern (*Dryopteris intermedia*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis montana*), Bluebead Lily (*Clintonia borealis*) and Wild Sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*). In richer soil, Christmas Fern (*Deparia acrostichoides*)*, Indian Cucumber-root (*Mediola virginiana*) and Sweet Cicely (*Osmorhiza claytonia*) are common. The richer soils of the Oak Mountain summit plateau (and perhaps elsewhere, as more study may bear out) support communities of Millet Grass (*Milium effusum*). White Ash and Hop-hornbeam are represented more frequently there, as well as mature Red Oak.

Sunlight dappled forest floor
Photo by G. Jonsma



During a brief botanical field trip last year, 105 species of lichens were collected or observed in the forests at Ayers Lake. It is thought that a more extensive survey could easily double this initial number. Even at this point, in the very first stage of exploration, 18 indicator species found on hardwoods and conifers in old, relatively undisturbed Acadian forests

*Editor's note: *Deparia acrostichoides* is more commonly known as silvery glade fern, whereas *Polystichum acrostichoides* is also known as Christmas fern; we invite comment regarding the presence ~ or absence ~ of either species at Ayers Lake.

(of the 40 indicators listed by Dr. Steven Selva of the University of Maine) have already been found at Ayers Lake.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This area represents a rare, still remarkably intact, piece of Acadian old-growth forest. In a recent publication (Edman et al. 2008), the authors concluded that in New Brunswick in recent years (since the late 1980's) "the remaining, relatively unbroken, mature hardwood and mixed forests are rapidly being replaced by selection cuts. Old stands with closed canopies and large trees are becoming increasingly rare, but they are essential for sustaining large, sexually reproductive populations of *Lobaria* species. These old stands may serve as source habitats from which lichens can disperse into the selection cuts, thereby increasing the chances of lichens persisting in the managed forest landscape. As second-entry

selection cuts are starting to take place, the negative effects reported here can only increase. Thus there is an urgent need for conservation measures to be taken in this region to safeguard the last mature, closed-canopy deciduous forest (...) This would not only be beneficial to lichen populations but also to lichen-dependent species and all other species closely associated with mature hardwood forests."

The Unique Area status of Ayers Lake old-growth forest and the lake is at the centre of the area's web of life, with most of NB's native species of mammals, including marten, otter, and fisher, represented. More surveys will be needed to fully evaluate what is here.

For a visual impression of the Ayers Lake Unique Area which includes photos, and a video by Mark Brennan, search the Internet for Ayers Lake, New Brunswick.

"Even the air itself has a special quality, saturated with oxygen and refreshingly cool due to such deep shade; only the rays of occasional sunbeams penetrate the older groves. On a still evening at dusk, it's so quiet that it's possible to hear water droplets falling from a loon's beak." (Barb Brown, 2012)

"Even if I never return to Ayers Lake, it will be important for me to know that it exists, and that any change that happens will be the kind of change that takes centuries." (Aleta Karstad, 2013)

"Ayers Lake and the surrounding forest is full of wonders.Being surrounded by trees that are over 200 years old, seeing how lush and full everything is, and knowing that a place like that exists, reminds me that the world is still a beautiful place." (Anne Marie Drost, 19 yrs, visiting Ayers Lake in May 2012)

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Message du président (Vol. 39 No. 4)

Même après quarante ans d'exploration du Nouveau-Brunswick il m'arrive encore d'y découvrir de nouveaux trésors. En octobre dernier, j'ai vécu deux brèves aventures sur le cours inférieur de la rivière Oromocto. Cette portion de la rivière, dotée d'un courant plutôt lent, est d'une largeur d'environ 80 mètres. Elle s'élargit ensuite en passant par une série de terres humides qui s'étendent sur environ 25 km au sud vers Fredericton Junction. Le canotage était aisé, les paysages merveilleux et les découvertes botaniques agréables.

Avec un de mes bons amis, nous avons mis un canoë à l'eau où la rivière croise le chemin Lincoln, juste à l'est de l'aéroport de Fredericton. De là, nous avons remonté la rivière alors que les feuilles commençaient juste à tomber. On aurait dit des flocons de neige multicolores tombant sur l'eau calme qui les emportait lentement vers le fleuve St-Jean. Une de nos premières observations fut d'une énorme population de Wolffie de Colombie (*Wolffia columbiana*), la plus petite plante du Nouveau-Brunswick (plus petite que la tête d'une épingle), une plante que nous n'avions jamais observée auparavant. Plus tard, nous avons surpris, à seulement dix mètres de nous, un jeune cerf dont la tête dépassait tout juste les quenouilles. Nous nous sommes promenés sur les berges d'argile rouge de la rivière en y ramassant plusieurs spécimens de mousses et de

fleurs sauvages, dont certaines, vérifications faites, allaient se révéler comme étant des trouvailles importantes.

La première journée, nous n'avons réussi à parcourir que 3 km. La deuxième journée, avec l'aide d'un moteur de 2.2 chevaux, nous avons remonté la rivière sur 4 km, puis avons pénétré dans le large complexe de terres humides que sont les Prés Holden. On y accède via le Ruisseau Kinney, qui poursuit son cours de canaux en labyrinthe sur 3 km jusqu'au Ruisseau Irvine. Ces terres humides ressemblent beaucoup à celles, mieux connues et plus explorées, des Prés du Grand Lac qui se trouvent au nord du fleuve Saint-Jean. Par contre, dans la région des Prés Holden, on retrouve plus de changements d'élévation, ce qui favorise une plus grande variété de végétation riveraine. Cette zone est pratiquement inaccessible autre que par bateau et la présence humaine se limite à quelques caches de chasse au chevreuil. Le peu de déchets d'origine humaine favorisait la sensation d'être en pleine nature sauvage, abstraction faite du bruit des avions à réaction au-dessus de nos têtes et du ronronnement de la Transcanadienne au loin.

Mon expérience sur le cours inférieur de la rivière Oromocto a été unique et j'espère bien y retourner. Je rêve déjà aux nouvelles découvertes qui se cachent juste de l'autre côté de la prochaine courbe de la rivière.

Bird Songs of Eastern Canada

Book Review

Roger Burrows

Grand Manan

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This 2-hour, 2-cd set of 156 bird, 5 amphibian, and one mammal species is a welcome addition to John Neville's bird recordings, which cover most of Canada from coast to coast. As usual, John has divided eastern Canadian species into different habitat groupings, making it easier to find individual species in the field. CD1 covers urban, forest, grassland and barren habitats, while CD2 is devoted to wetland and coastal habitats. Each species has a short introduction and typical call notes and/or song, and the quality is very good without the extraneous noises often associated with field recordings. Examples are brief but easily recognizable, and the inside cover lists tracks by their English and French names.

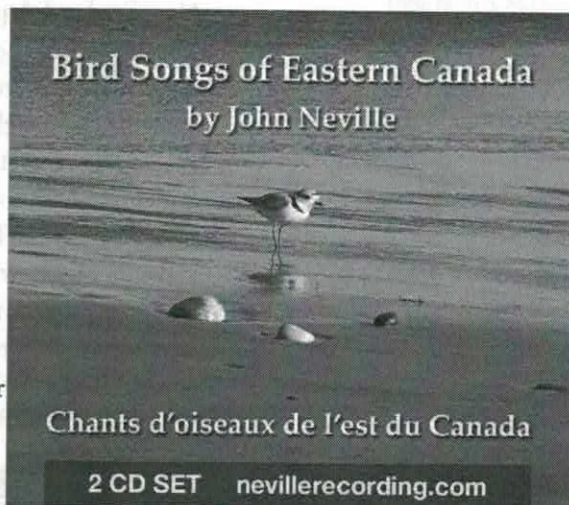
The coverage is very extensive, although some widespread nesting species, notably waterfowl, raptors and hirundines, are omitted, while rarer species, such as Eurasian Wigeon, Gyrfalcon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Yellow Rail, Purple Sandpiper, and Northern Wheatear are included. This is perhaps because the recordings were made in Atlantic Canada in a single season, and some species may

not have been co-operative. However, the omission of such nesting species as Great Cormorant, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Goshawk, American Kestrel, Spruce Grouse, Least Sandpiper, Arctic Tern, Common Nighthawk, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-headed and Warbling Vireos, Gray Jay, Barn Swallow, Purple Martin, Eastern Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Nashville Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Baltimore Oriole, Pine Grosbeak, and Red Crossbill is regrettable. This is a minor quibble given the time and effort put into this project.

I had the pleasure of helping John plan his visit, and used his Bird Songs of the Arctic when driving the Dempster Highway this past summer. If you are looking for a Christmas present for a birding friend, this would be gratefully received.

Bird Songs of Eastern Canada (NR17)

By John Neville, 2 CD Set
www.nevillerecording.com



Coincidentally, I was provided with a copy of Mr. Neville's CDs to review, but received Roger's independent review shortly afterward. Rather than duplicating Roger's fine perspective, with which I agree, I would like to offer the following for your consideration: for nearly 40 years, including many since moving in 2001 to live here in New Brunswick, my family and I have made a tradition of visiting Point Pelee to enjoy the spectacular spring migration that occurs there. My family would patiently let me hijack the car stereo on the long drives to the point so that I could listen to recorded bird calls and songs, re-familiarizing myself with what the migration might bring. It was often a bit of a test, as all of the recordings were of the song or call only, with any descriptive narrative stripped. When I popped John's CDs into my car stereo for an extended trip to northern New Brunswick earlier this year, I was transported back to those wonderful days, with one caveat: John's short, descriptive and somewhat anecdotal introductions are to be embraced, and each makes for a wonderful segue to the high quality recording that follows. I highly recommend this set, and am now inspired to seek out John's earlier recording to complete my collection. Enjoy!

Paul Mansz, Editor-in-Chief, Rothesay (formerly, and some would say a reformed, Upper Canadian)

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Cetacean Firsts for the Bay of Fundy in 2012

With increasing water temperatures it is expected that species not usually seen in colder waters such as the Bay of Fundy may be found as the temperatures rise. This has certainly been the case for ocean sunfish, *Mola mola*, and leatherback turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*, with increased sightings the last few years. To find an Arctic species may be less likely. However, in August 2012 a bowhead, or Greenland right whale, *Balaena mysticetus*, was seen several times in the Bay of Fundy. The first was by the New England Aquarium in the Grand Manan Basin, then a second sighting was by whale watchers off Nova Scotia, a possible third sighting from the wharf in Hall's Harbour (though photos were not conclusive), and a last sighting off Grand Manan Island. This is the first known sighting of a bowhead whale in the Bay of Fundy. There may have been bowhead whales ranging much further south during and after the last ice age, but their exact range during that time is not known.

Bowhead whale off the coast of Nova Scotia
Photo by: C. Callaghan



The bowhead whale was quite elusive, which would be expected from a whale that spends most of its time in the relatively vessel-free waters of the Arctic Ocean and is not habituated to constant engine noise. These whales are also hunted along the shores of Greenland, and occasionally Baffin Island, by Inuit as part of their traditional hunts, possibly increasing their aversion to vessels. Having spent time studying bowhead whales in the Arctic in the middle 1980s, it was still thrilling to see this very lost whale. Ironically, there was a sighting of right whales off Northern Newfoundland in the summer of 2012 - possibly part of a whale exchange program (©)!

The second new cetacean species for the Bay of Fundy was a striped dolphin, *Stenella coeruleoalba*, which unfortunately was found dead on White Head Island, a small island off Grand Manan Island. The circumstances of the stranding are not known at this time. The male dolphin was collected December 26, after being on the shore for a few days. The cold temperatures prevented deterioration, with only a small amount of scavenging. The dolphin has been stored in the freezer of a local fish plant until a detailed necropsy can be performed in the future. Many thanks to the White Head Island fishermen who helped lift the dolphin onto the trailer, to Sarah McDonald, and to the fish plant (MG Fisheries) for storing it.

Striped dolphins are more usually seen in warmer waters to the south but have been seen off the Scotian Shelf, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and even off Newfoundland, but no known records exist

for the Bay of Fundy, with the closest other stranded striped dolphins being found near Yarmouth and Shelburne, NS. The Bay of Fundy never ceases to surprise.



Photograph taken December 25 that spurred the recovery of the male Striped Dolphin from White Head Island.
Photo by: by S. McDonald

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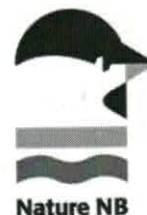
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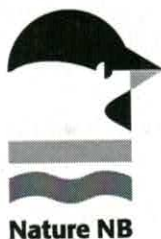
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