



Miramichi Wildlife

By Harry Walker

622-2108

The spring peepers serenade

The Red Squirrel has a wide distribution ranging throughout most of Canada, north of the tree limit. It is absent from the island of Newfoundland and is also absent from the western prairies.

The Red Squirrel does not hibernate but stores food for hard times. He may remain in his nest for several days during winter storms, but may be out and active when the temperature is as low as -30 degrees F.

He may make his home in a tree cavity, a bird house, a rock pile, or an underground tunnel, or he may build a nest composed of leaves, twigs and similar material.

VARIED DIET

The Red Squirrel eats a wide variety of food but the mainstay of its diet are the cones of evergreen trees. Other things it eats are nuts, seeds, fruits, flowers, buds, insects, bird's eggs, young birds, and mice. It is fond of mushrooms and even eats the fly agaric (*amanita muscaria*) which is supposed to be very poisonous to humans, but which apparently does not harm the Red Squirrel. He in turn is eaten by a wide variety of creatures.

The Red Squirrel is a good swimmer and has been known to cross quite large lakes. It can jump 10 feet from one tree limb to another and has been known to fall 120 feet out of a tree when engaged in a scuffle and land on the ground below without sustaining any injury. Occasionally the Red Squirrel carries its half-grown young to a new nest or den. Paul Stewart of Matthew Settlement said that he once saw a Red Squirrel do this. He said that the mother carried her young like a cat does and that she sat up on her haunches after short sprints and looked all around.

FROGS

The first frogs have awakened from their winters sleep. I heard some Wood Frogs croaking in a small pond near Black River on April 29. The Wood Frog is the first frog to emerge in the spring and can often be heard croaking from a pond that still contains large blocks of ice.

The Spring Peeper, a small treefrog, emerges very shortly after the Wood Frog, and it in turn is followed very shortly by the Leopard Frog and the Toad.

The Spring Peepers voice is higher pitched and carries much farther than that of the Wood Frog, and the frog chorus that you hear on spring evenings is made up mostly of the songs of Spring Peepers although few people ever see this tiny treefrog unless they go and look for them with a flashlight while they are singing.

Thirteen year old Chris McAllister of Boom Road told me that he

located one in this way last spring and saw it sitting on the twig of a small shrub. He said that its throat was blown up like a balloon.

The Spring Peepers vocal sac is always extended in this way when it sings. The Spring Peeper is only about an inch long and its vocal sac when extended is almost as big as the rest of the frog.

FROG CHORUS

If you are close to a frog chorus you will hear the low pitched croak or bark of the Wood Frogs mingled in with the songs of the Spring Peepers. You will probably also hear the long trill of the Toads. Each trill will remain at the same pitch but the next trill may be at a higher or a lower pitch.

There are likely to be a few Leopard Frogs present also, but the low snoring or purring sound that they make will likely be drowned out by the others. There also could be some Pickerel Frogs around but they like the Leopard Frogs are not very vocal.

I think that if you stand beside a swamp on some calm evening this spring, and listen, that you will be able to pick out the voices of the Wood Frogs, Spring Peepers and Toads, just from what I have written in this article. Try it.

The Green Frog, which is very common in our area, and the not very common Mink Frog are not likely to be heard until the late spring or summer. The Green Frog's song has been quite aptly described as sounding like one pluck on a banjo string.

OIL SOAKED BIRDS

Ed MacDonald of Point Aux Carr phoned me for advice on how to take care of an oil soaked waterfowl that had turned up at his place. I have had no experience in caring for such birds, and if any of your readers of this paper have had any experience with such birds then I would like to hear from you.


Ed cleaned the bird with detergent and set it in a box behind the stove to dry during the night. The last word that I heard concerning this bird was that it appeared to be well and healthy the next morning, and was given a good feed of bread and a drink of water, and was then released outside.

For some reason the bird did not attempt to fly but simply walked down the road and was seen later in the morning by a neighbour. How long it would take to restore the natural oil to the birds feathers I do not know. From the description that Ed gave me, I think that the bird was probably a Merganser.

There will be a meeting of the Miramichi Naturalist Club tonight, May 11 at 8:00 p.m. in the Miramichi Valley High School. A film entitled "A Plea for the Wanderer" will be shown.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA

 National Museums Canada

RED SQUIRREL

TAMIASCIURUS HUDSONICUS

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Wide distribution and diurnal habits make this active little squirrel one of our most frequently seen wild mammals. Its loud, rolling "Tcher-rr" and scolding chatter are familiar sounds in the northern forests.

The red squirrel constructs its nest in the branches or cavities of trees or stumps. In winter it lives on food diligently stored up during late summer or fall. A single cache may contain several hundred spruce or pine cones.



Miramichi Wildlife

By Harry Walker

622-2108

May 18/77

A goal for school trustees

The **Razorbill** or **Razor-billed Ark** and the **Common Murre** are both sea birds living off our coast. Both of these birds are about the size of a small duck and live entirely at sea except during the nesting season.

The **Razorbill** is called "**Tinker**" by some seafaring people and is called "**Le Gode**" by the French.

The **Common Murre** goes by the French name "**La Marmette**" and is known as "**Turr**" to the Newfoundlanders.

Both birds have much the same habits and distribution. They both nest in large colonies on rock cliffs and rocky islands and both species are often found nesting in the same colony.

They make no nest and lay only one egg which is strongly tapered to one end so that it will roll in a small circle rather than roll over the edge of the rock ledge on which it is laid.

These birds use their wings underwater as in flying and they live on small fish and crustaceans.

UNUSUAL PETS

Mrs Margaret Johnston of Newcastle has always been interested in wildlife and she has at times had some very unusual pets including bats and skunks.

Whenever she has found an injured bird or animal she has always been ready to care for it until it was able to look after itself.

However, she was not so gentle with a fox that tried to steal one of her roosters when she lived in Curventon. She says that the foxes around there were very bold and would come into the door-yard in broad daylight.

One day she was working in her garden when she heard a commotion among the chickens. She picked up a stick and ran to the chicken house where she found a fox trying to make off with a large rooster.

She grabbed the rooster and clubbed the fox who had to let go and run for the bush. The rooster had a sore hip but he fully recovered in a short time.



FROGS EGGS

Before **Mrs Johnston** was married she lived in Maple Glen and here she went to school. At this time she was Miss Margaret Mullin. She says that on the way to school she used to collect frogs eggs in an old pickle jar, taking just a few eggs from each clump of eggs that she found.

She had a similar jar at school in which she kept her slate water, so she would put her slate water into her desk and leave the jar with the frogs eggs on top of her desk where she could watch them develop.

Eventually her teacher discovered that it was not just slate water that was on her desk and apparently Margaret's teacher did not share her enthusiasm for nature and did not believe in giving it a place on the school curriculum.

SYMPATHETIC TEACHERS

However, today, most school teachers are more sympathetic and lenient in this respect. Recently I had the privilege of showing slides on nature to some of the students in **St. Mary's School**. I was pleased with the response. The children were very enthusiastic and attentive, more so than I had hoped for, and I found it an exhilarating experience. I showed these slides to **Mrs Guptill's** and **Mrs Martin's** classes on one day, and showed them to **Mrs Forrest's** and **Mrs Daigle's** classes a couple of days later.

I think that most children are just naturally interested in nature but I also give credit to these teachers as I believe that they have helped to instill and cultivate this interest. After one of these showings **Laurie Hare Jr** of Newcastle took me around the classroom to show me the wildlife pictures that he had drawn and which his teacher had hung on the walls.

Children need to be given more opportunity to learn what they are interested in, encouraging their natural curiosity instead of allowing it to die through lack of encouragement. Maybe our newly elected school trustees will work towards filling this gap.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

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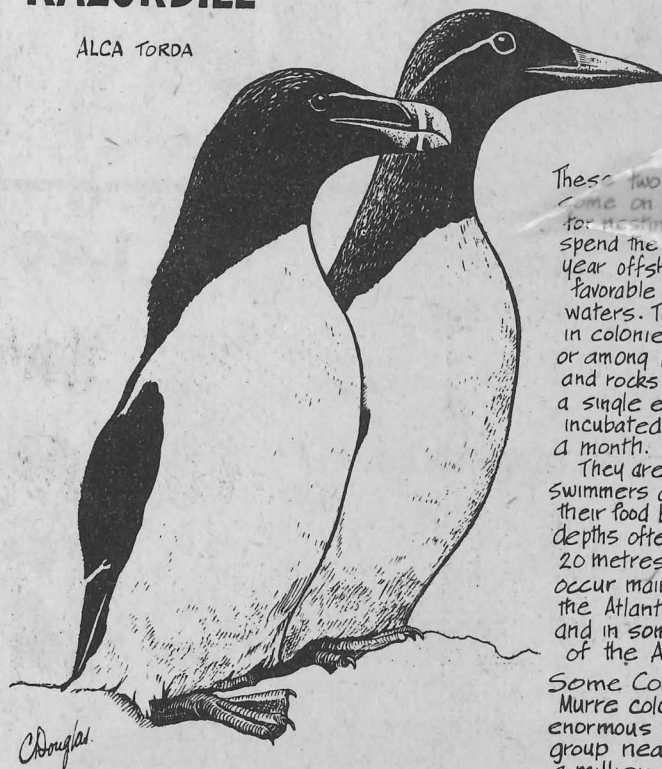
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COMMON MURRE

URIA AALGE

RAZORBILL ③

ALCA TORDA



These two birds come on land only for nesting and spend the rest of the year offshore in favorable feeding waters. They nest in colonies on cliffs or among boulders and lay a single egg that is incubated for about a month.

They are good swimmers and obtain their food by diving at depths often reaching 20 metres. They occur mainly along the Atlantic coast and in some parts of the Arctic.

Some Common Murre colonies are enormous and may group nearly half a million birds.

May 25/77

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA



National Museums
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ARCTIC WOLF

CANIS LUPUS ARCTOS ④



Smaller and lighter than the southern wolves, the arctic wolf ranges year-round over most of the islands in Canada's Arctic.

Roaming singly or in small packs, wolves hunt co-operatively, using strategy to outwit the swift caribou - their major prey species.

A large wolf can bring down and kill an adult caribou with a single crushing bite to the neck.

Survival of pups depends on food supply and many die young, thus wolf numbers are adjusted to fit the availability of prey.

Though wolves were once shot on sight at Arctic bases, now only the Inuit hunters kill them. The furs are sold or used for parka trim.

Miramichi Wildlife

Harry Walker 622-2108

May 25/77

N.B. wolves were small and dark

Biologists recognize only one wolf species as existing in Canada, the Grey Wolf or Timber Wolf, but divide it into about 14 subspecies. A few other subspecies have become extinct. These subspecies differ from one another mainly in size and color. The Arctic Wolf is one of these subspecies.

N.B. WOLF

Another subspecies that once existed in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia was a small dark variety, but it disappeared from New Brunswick almost 100 years ago. This variety still exists in Ontario and southern Quebec.

A large whitish subspecies that lived in Newfoundland was exterminated in the early part of this century.

There are no records that the Grey Wolf ever existed in Prince Edward Island, but otherwise it ranged throughout practically all of Canada as well as through much of the U.S. and Mexico, and most of Europe and Asia. Though called the Grey Wolf, it varies in color from black, through all shades of brown, yellow and grey to pure white. It varies in size from 60 pounds to 175 pounds.

The coyote or Brush Wolf is not recognized as a true wolf but rather as a species of wild dog. However, the wolf, coyote, and dog are all very closely related, and domestic dogs can and sometimes do cross with both wolves and coyotes.

A wolf pack may contain anywhere from 2 to 14 wolves and is made up of close relatives such

as parents and their cubs and sometimes aunts and uncles. All members of the pack help in feeding, protecting and training the pups, and if a nursing mother is killed, another mother may adopt her pups. Each pack has a territory which it defends against all other wolves.

A very interesting book about wolves is Farley Mowats "Never Cry Wolf".

ALGAE PROBLEM

Herschell Stewart of Trout Brook has a pond in his front yard. He keeps trout in this pond but it is getting covered with algae. Herschell wants to know how to get rid of the algae without harming the fish. If you know the solution to this problem phone either Herschell or me.

If any commercial fertilizer from the lawn or garden washes into such a pond, or if any dishwasher containing detergent finds its way into it, these will encourage the growth of algae. Also algae needs light to grow and a pond which is in the sunlight will have more algae than one that is in the shade.

WILDFLOWERS

Many wildflowers are coming into bloom now. The Mayflowers have been in bloom for some time and my son Lyle says that the Trout Lilies and Bloodroot are in bloom. According to my notebook, last year, during a canoe trip down the Barnaby River on May 15 we saw Dutchman's-Breeches, Wood Anemone, Spring Beauty, Blood-

root, and Yellow Violets all in bloom.

If you are interested in getting a book on wildflowers, then "A Field Guide to Wildflowers" by Roger Tory Peterson and Margaret McKenny is the best and most complete one that I know of for identifying them.

One wildflower that I have been asked about and which will be in bloom very soon is the Rhodora or Rhodora Azalea. This is a low shrub which blooms before its leaves unfurl. Its flowers are pink or slightly purplish and you will sometimes see patches of these plants along the side of the road which give the appearance of a flat solid mass of pink blooms. They usually grow near bogs, are quite common in this area, and you can't miss them when they are in bloom.

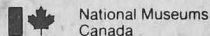
The Leatherleaf, which is a low woody heath like the blueberry, should be in bloom now as I have a note in my book a few years ago to the effect that most of the Leatherleaf was in full bloom by May 20. The Leatherleaf covers the wettest parts of our bogs.

It retains its tough leathery oblong leaves all year round. These leaves are never bright green but are very brownish in color. When in bloom, it has a string of little white bells hanging from the underside of each twig. This flower will not show up at a distance like the Rhodora, but is easy to find although you may need rubber boots to get to them.

Eagles, bears and mosquitoes are hoary marmot's foes

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

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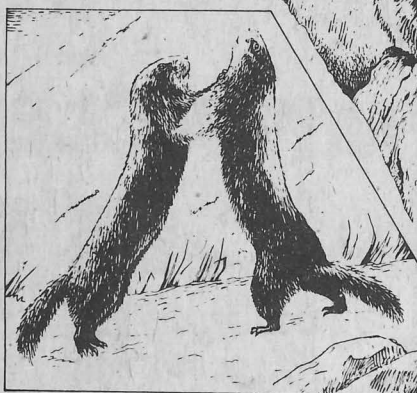
HOARY MARMOT

MARMOTA CALIGATA (5)

The Hoary Marmot, so called because of the mantle of white fur which covers his shoulders and back, is well known to hikers in the western mountains of North America. A high-pitched whistle often welcomes visitors to the alpine country and warns the members of the colony of approaching danger.

Fattened by a summer of feeding on lush alpine plants, marmots, like some other members of the squirrel family, spend the 7 winter months in hibernation, far beneath the snow.

These animals, sometimes called "whistlers" are slightly larger than their relative the woodchuck and can weigh up to 30 lb.



In early summer Marmots spend hours engaged in playful wrestling matches. Though the pushing and grappling can be quite vigorous, Marmots, like Olympic wrestlers, have only to give the right signal—in this case a sharp yelp—to end the bout and prevent injury.



The Hoary Marmot (*Marmotte des Rocheuses*) usually locates his burrow under a large boulder in order to protect himself against the Grizzly Bear who will otherwise dig him out. Hoary Marmots have look-out rocks from which they watch for danger. Golden Eagles, Grizzly Bears, Black Bears, and Wolves are enemies of the Hoary Marmot.

Another enemy of the Hoary Marmot is the mosquito which in some locations forces him to stay underground during calm warm days. In southern British Columbia and Alberta, Hoary Marmots usually live at high elevations in the mountains but at the northern limits of their range, in Alaska they live at low elevations where the vegetation is similar to that at high elevations farther south.

SHOVELER

On May 15, Doug Underhill of Newcastle came to my door and told me that there was a Shoveler (French—Le Canard Souchet) down on Strawberry Marsh. He drove me down and showed me the bird, a brightly colored male. This is the first time that I have ever seen a Shoveler in the wild.

Bob Allen of Newcastle, who also keeps an eye on the birds of Strawberry Marsh, saw this Shoveler during various trips to the marsh and eventually reported seeing a mate for it on May 19.

The Shoveler is a puddle duck whose bill widens out considerably at the end, thus suggesting a shovel. The Shoveler is primarily a western bird and is only occasionally seen in New Brunswick. It has been known to nest near Sackville and Saint John in recent years. The spring male has a dark green head, white breast and shoulders, and chestnut colored sides. The female is a brown streaked bird but its shovel bill is distinctive.

CANOING THE NEPISQUIT

On May 21 and 22, John and Vernon Goodfellow of South Esk

and my sons Lyle and Ian made a two day canoe trip down the Nepisquit River. At Indian Falls they saw two Harlequin Ducks (Le Canard Arlequin).

This is quite a rare sighting for according to W. Austin Squires book "The birds of New Brunswick" there are only two recorded inland sightings of Harlequin Ducks in New Brunswick; three were seen at the mouth of the Keswick on December 7, 1966; and one was seen by Henrik Deichmann on July 30, 1969, at Indian Falls the same place where the canoeists saw them on May 21. Harlequin Ducks are occasionally seen on the Bay of Fundy during the winter.

PARULA WARBLER

On May 17, Alcide Allain of Newcastle phoned and said that he had a small bird which his wife had found in front of their store on Petrie Street. Mrs Allain said that it was lying on its back on the ground and appeared to be dead until she poured some water on its head and then it came to.

She thought that perhaps it had fallen against the store window. It was a Parula Warbler (*La Fauvette Parula*). This is a beautiful but tiny bird being little more than four inches long. It is bluish gray on the head, wings and tail; white on the belly; and yellow on the breast and throat and has a yellowish patch in the middle of the back. The male has a red and black necklace which the female lacks.

These birds winter in Mexico, Central America, and the West Indies, and arrives back in our area about the middle of May and this one had probably just arrived from the south. These birds are not usually seen in town but live in rather swampy bush country. They usually stay in the tree tops and have a song which ends in a zip that is easily distinguished from other bird songs. They always hang their nests in a large piece of Old Man's Beard Moss (*Usnea Licken*).

miramichi wild life

by harry walker

The Nighthawk, Mosquito Hawk, or Bull Bat is not a hawk at all and is not related to the hawks. Needless to say it is not related to the bats either.

The Nighthawk (L'Engoulevent Commun) and the Whip-poor-will (L'Engoulevent bois-pouri) both belong to the goatsucker family. The family got its name long ago in Europe, where goatherders seeing them flying among their goats in the pasture, thought that they sucked milk out of them when actually they were catching insects that were attracted to the goats.

The Goatsuckers have tiny bills but big mouths that extend back to about their ears. They have weak feet and therefore when they alight in a tree they usually land on a large limb and sit lengthwise along it rather than crosswise as other birds do.

Nighthawks range all across southern Canada and are commonly seen flying above Newcastle and Chatham on summer evenings when there are lots of flying insects to be caught. Autopsies have revealed as many as 500 mosquitoes in a single Nighthawk's stomach.

Nighthawks are easily recognized by their long pointed wings and by the white patch on the underside of their wings as shown in the picture. It's call notes, a harsh "peent" is easily recognized and sounds much like the call given by a Woodcock when it is sitting on the ground.

GIANT WATER BUG

Mel Scott of Strathadam reported that some giant sized bugs were being attracted to the lights at Heath Steeles No. 5 shaft head-frame. On the nights of May 16 and 17, he said that he saw 20 or 30 of them.

Mel's diagram and description of them fits that of the Giant Water Bug and this is undoubtedly what he was seeing. I have occasionally seen lone specimens of this bug at the Heath Steele Concentrator

myself but never in numbers like Mel described. He said that they were a good 2 inches long, were of a single dull brown color all over, and had two large strong arms for grasping things. Mel said that some of them had fallen on their back on the ground and had had considerable difficulty in getting onto their feet again.

This is the largest bug in our area or at least the largest one that I am aware of. These bugs fly much like a June Bug. They can fly okay in a straight line, but if anything gets in the way, they often slam right into it. After Mel told me about these bugs, I tried to find as much information as I could about them. Among the things I learned are—

These bugs live in ponds but on some evenings they take to the air to find new ponds in which to live in. While in the water they lie in wait, half buried in the mud at the bottom of the pond, ready to grab any creature that might pass by. In this way they catch other insects, small fish, tadpoles, etc; and if anyone happens to step on one of these bugs he may get bitten. For this reason he has been given the name Toe Biter. Another name given to him is Electric-light bug.

EDIBLE BUG

Another thing that I learned about this bug is that he is good to eat. Just pull the legs and wings off him and eat the rest, either raw or toasted, at least that is what some of the natives of South America and the East Indies do with some closely related species that live in those parts of the world.

Some of these species reach a length of from 5 to 6 inches. That is one wild food item that I think that I will pass up.

The Miramichi Naturalist Club will be holding a field trip in the Mill Cove area tonight, Wednesday June 8. If you are interested in taking part, be at the gate of the Miramichi Cemetery at 6:30 p.m.

Mosquitoes night hawk's diet

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA



National Museums
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COMMON NIGHTHAWK

CHORDEILES MINOR ⑥

The Common Nighthawk is easily recognizable all across southern Canada as it flies high over city streets and roof tops, or open country areas on summer evenings.



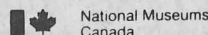
A hollow, booming sound is produced by the wings as the bird pulls out of a steep dive while in pursuit of flying insects. Nighthawks catch mosquitoes, flying ants and other insects on the wing. Their enormous mouths, with surrounding bristles, are ideally suited for aenal capture.

Nighthawks build no nests, but lay their eggs on the ground, or, in cities, on flat gravel rooftops.

LOOK AND LISTEN FOR NIGHTHAWKS OVER THE CITY SOME EVENING. in the summer.

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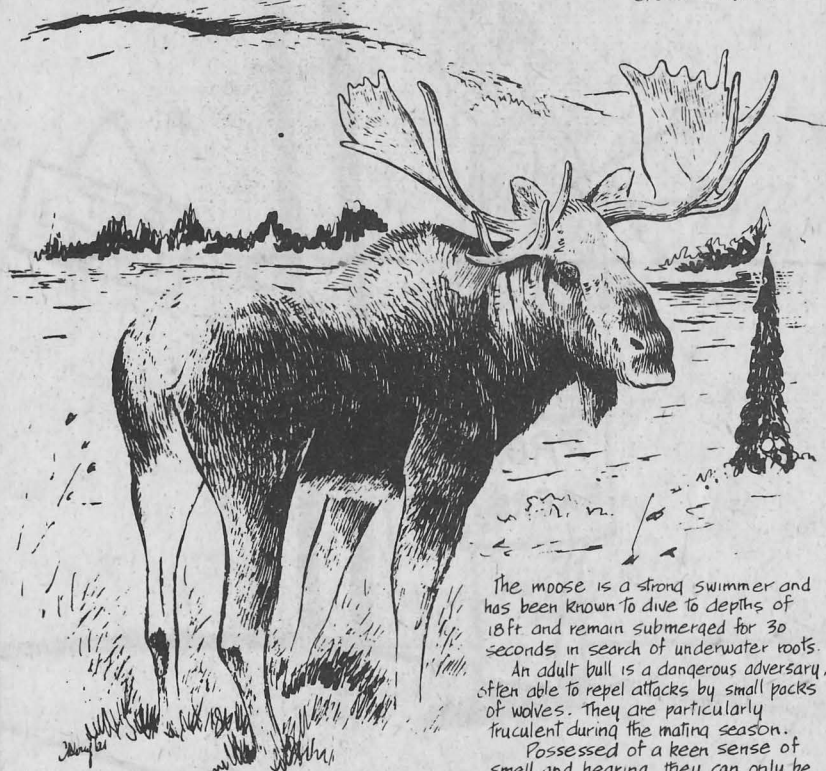


MOOSE

ALCES ALCES

7

The largest member of the deer family, this animal is found in northern North America from Alaska to Newfoundland and Maine, and in northern Europe from Scandinavia eastward to the Pacific coast. An adult bull averages about 1000 lb. in weight, with a larger species from Alaska and the Yukon attaining weights in excess of 1500 lb.



The moose is a strong swimmer and has been known to dive to depths of 18 ft and remain submerged for 30 seconds in search of underwater roots.

An adult bull is a dangerous adversary, often able to repel attacks by small packs of wolves. They are particularly truculent during the mating season.

Possessed of a keen sense of smell and hearing, they can only be approached from upwind.

Moose tosses Chatham man

Since I am not a hunter, there are no doubt many people living on the Miramichi who have much more first hand knowledge of moose than I have.

Moose have very keen senses of hearing and smell but apparently their eyesight is not so good. According to A.W.F. Banfield in his book "The Mammals of Canada", the crack of a twig will alert them and hunters can only approach them from upwind. Banfield says that moose will react to movement but will not respond to a stationary object upwind.

MATING SEASON

During the mating season which runs from the middle of September until late in November, bull moose are unpredictable and can be dangerous. Frank Landry of Newcastle once told me, that if you are confronted with a moose, just throw a stick into the bushes to one side of him. The noise of the stick crashing through the bushes will draw his attention away from you and give you some time to get out of sight. Frank pointed out that as a moose is just a dumb beast and therefore is not very hard to outwit.

I once read something about rhinoceros in Africa. The writer said that rhinoceros were easy to dodge if they did charge at you. He said that if you stepped aside, after the rhinoceros had lowered his head and started his charge, that he would invariably go crashing right past you. I don't know whether this works with moose or not as I have never had an opportunity to check it out and really I am not especially anxious to have such an opportunity.

I have never heard of anyone being seriously hurt by a moose but Robert D. Baker of Chatham told me about some very rough treatment that he received from a moose. He said that he and a bush pilot named Gene Manion flew into the headwaters of the main river that flows into Sop's Arm in Newfoundland.

Along the side of the river was a large bog with islands of trees

scattered through it. They saw a moose and shot it. The moose fell down but got up again and ran into one of these islands. They waited for about 10 minutes and then followed the moose.

The trees on the island were short and tangled and as difficult to pass through as is a Cedar hedge. Bob said that he was in the lead with his rifle crossways in front of him and using it to push the underbrush out of the way. Gene was coming along behind.

Suddenly a moose burst out of the bushes, picked Bob up with his horns, carried him right over Gene, threw him into the bog, and then disappeared into the trees again. While he was being carried, Bob said that his rifle was lying across the moose's horns and underneath his own body. Apparently the moose that they had shot was lying dead in among the trees and this was another moose that had charged out at them. Bob said that they saw nine moose there in an area of about one quarter square mile.

Despite such isolated incidents, moose generally avoid human beings and it is only when someone unexpectedly runs right into a bull moose during the mating season that he may get into some trouble with them.

HEATH STEELE MINES

Another strange moose story was related to me by the late Osborn Stewart of Silliker's. At that time he was a watchman at Heath Steele Mines. He said they were going to work one morning when they came upon a moose standing in the middle of the road.

They stopped the car and the moose came and stuck its head through the open car window. Osborne said that he gave the moose a punch with his fist and ordered him to take his head out. The moose staggered off of the road and into the ditch, then fell down and died.

Osborne told me that Doug Chapman of Newcastle could confirm the story so I contacted Doug before I wrote this article.



Operation
Lifestyle

Did you know that you must ride your bicycle for 45 minutes to burn the calories contained in a simple piece of apple pie?

JUNE 29/77

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA



National Museums
Canada

STAR-NOSED MOLE

CONDYLURA CRISTATA ⑨



Like others of its kind, the Star-nosed Mole is very powerful in relation to its size. Using its paddle-shaped hands together with a twisting motion of its compact body, it constructs a network of tunnels a foot or two beneath the surface, but above the water table. Its nests are made of dried grass and other vegetation.

Found over most of eastern Canada as far north as James Bay, this animal is about 8" in length, approximately 1/3 of which is tail. The tip of the snout is expanded into a naked pink disc which supports 22 finger-like tentacles or feelers and which give this creature its name.

Active for 12 months of the year, it spends a good deal of its time in the water where it is an able swimmer, and has often been observed swimming under the ice in winter. The Star-nosed Mole prefers wet, swampy ground and subsists on a diet of worms, insects and crustacea. It has few natural enemies but sometimes falls prey to the Great Horned Owl and to some of the larger fish.

Two features of the Star-Nosed Mole's anatomy are quite unique. The first of these features is located on the end of his long nose. His nose flattens out at the end to form a naked disk and extending from the edge of this disk are 22 tenacles. These tenacles are sensitive and are used to feel around in the damp earth in which the mole burrows in search of food.

The second unique feature is the moles tail. Its tail is long and thick and fat is stored in it during the spring so that it expands to three or four times its normal diameter at this time of the year. It is thought that this phenomena is in some way connected to its reproductive cycle.

SYSTEMS OF TUNNELS

These moles construct systems of tunnels a few inches below the surface of the ground in swamps, damp woods, or stream banks. They hunt day and night and are active at all seasons of the year. They often come out of their tunnels during the night to search for food on the surface of the ground or in small bodies of water. They are good swimmers and eat many aquatic insects.

The only place where I personally have seen these moles is in manure piles. I grew up on a farm in Southern Ontario, and occasionally, when we cleaned out the barnyard, we would find these moles burrowing in the manure.

These moles are distributed throughout New Brunswick according to the authorities on this subject, but I have not received any reports of anyone seeing them around here. The French name for this mole is "Condylure étoile."

SCARLET TANAGERS

During the latter part of May I received a number of reports of sightings of Scarlet Tanagers (French name Le Tangara écarlate). Among those reporting this brilliantly colored bird were Lem McDonald, Ian Robichaud, Bob

Calhoun, Mrs Nora McKenzie, Mrs Jackie King, Mrs Doris Hansen, and my wife, Winnie, all of Newcastle; and Mrs Gladys Mullin of Boom Road.

Scarlet Tanagers are most often seen during their spring migration, although a few of them do stay to nest in our area. Cindy Sweeney of Exmore said that a pair nested at Lewis Hare's place last summer.

Mrs McKenzie said that she has been seeing Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in her yard this spring and that she has never seen them there before.

Although it was a rather cool day when Mrs Hansen saw the Scarlet Tanager in her yard, nonetheless she said that the bird life in her yard that day was so exotic that she thought that she must be in the tropics.

Not only was there a Scarlet Tanager in her yard that day but also a Baltimore Oriole, a Yellow Warbler and a Purple Finch.

SAP SUCKERS

Gladys Mullin once raised a family of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. She said that her husband Wilson, found these young Sapsuckers in a tree that he had cut down.

Mrs Mullin fed them bread and milk, and out of the original five birds, three survived until they were able to look after themselves. After she let them go, they would come back and tap on her window for food, or if she was outside, they would come and alight on her head or shoulder.

After being away from home one day, she returned to find that they had left for good. She never saw them again, but a Sapsucker lit on her mother-in-law, Mrs Mary Mullin, a short time after this. Since her mother-in-law also lives at Boom Road and only a short distance away, it is presumed that this was one of the Sapsuckers that Gladys raised.

AUG. 3/77

miramichi wild life

Phone 622-2108

by harry walker

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

National Museums
Canada

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA

FLYING SQUIRREL

GLAUCOMYS SABRINUS

8

These appealing little creatures are found throughout most of the forested areas of Canada, but are rarely seen because of their nocturnal habits. A furry membrane uniting the front and back legs enables them to glide from higher branches to lower ones with great dexterity. A sociable little animal with strong maternal instincts.



Their large, dark eyes give the flying squirrel a look of lively intelligence, and, indeed, they have been known to make affectionate and playful pets. The males and females frequently occupy separate nests in the summer, but in the winter months they often live in "communes" in hollow trees or stumps. Their fondness for maple sap has often led to their tumbling into the sap containers in the spring and drowning. Principal enemies are owls & cats.

More on flying squirrels

The Northern Flying Squirrel is a small mammal weighing only about a quarter of a pound, or little more than half as much as a Red Squirrel. It is light brownish gray above and white beneath. It sleeps during the day and is active during the night and for this reason it is not often seen. A few people, living in out of town areas along the Miramichi have reported them coming to their bird feeders.

Donald Shaddick of South Esk Road says that they were very plentiful in the bush along Cow Brook, near Maple Glen, when he worked there 7 or 8 years ago. He kept oats for his horses in a steel barrel and both Red Squirrels and Flying Squirrels often got trapped in the barrel. They would go into the barrel for the oats and then be unable to climb back up the smooth sides of the barrel. He would find them there in the morning, rescue them, and let them go free again.

He says that he could pick the Flying Squirrels out of the barrel with his bare hands but that the Red Squirrels would bite. If there was both a Red Squirrel and a Flying Squirrel in the barrel together, the Red Squirrel would sometimes kill the Flying Squirrel.

One time Donald took two of these Flying Squirrels home to show to his family and along the way he stopped in at John Robertson's barber shop in Newcastle for a hair cut. John wanted to see the Flying Squirrels. Donald had left them running loose in the back of his van, so went out and caught them and carried them into the barber shop in his hands. Donald later let these two squirrels loose at his home but says that he never saw any sign of them afterwards.

Bob Lefebvre of Cassilis says that he often caught Flying Squirrels in the traps that he set for other animals. He says that the Flying Squirrels were not only fond of the meat that he sometimes baited his traps with, but that they were also

very curious and would investigate any disturbance of the environment around their homes such as the little shelters that he built over traps set for Bobcats.

Bob says that he has often found Flying Squirrel nests or cut down trees containing their nests. He says that their winter home is usually in a hollow stub or an old woodpecker hole and that one of these nests will sometimes have as many as 10 Flying Squirrels living in it. He says that they will have from one to five gallons of food stored in their nest and that this cache of food will consist entirely of edible material as all the nuts and seeds are shelled before being stored.

This cache will consist mainly of Beech Nuts and Hazel Nuts provided that there is a plentiful supply of these nuts available, but in other cases it will consist mainly of Yellow Birch buds and Hemlock seeds. Bob says that there is always a few bitter tasting seeds in their cache which look much like beet seeds but which he has been unable to identify.

Bob says that once, while he was tending his trap line, in November after some snow had fallen, that he stayed overnight in a deserted bush camp. In this camp, the Flying Squirrels had filled a large kitchen pan with nuts and seeds and had then covered them over with a three or four inch layer of chewed up cedar bark. The squirrels were living outside the camp but during the night they came in to get some of their stored food from the pan.

Periodically I will be running shore bird surveys from now until the end of October in the Point Aux Carr area. On these surveys I will be covering a different stretch of shore than what I covered last year in similar surveys. A survey involves a walk of about four miles. If you are interested in taking part in one of them, get in touch with me.

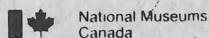
miramichi wild life

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NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

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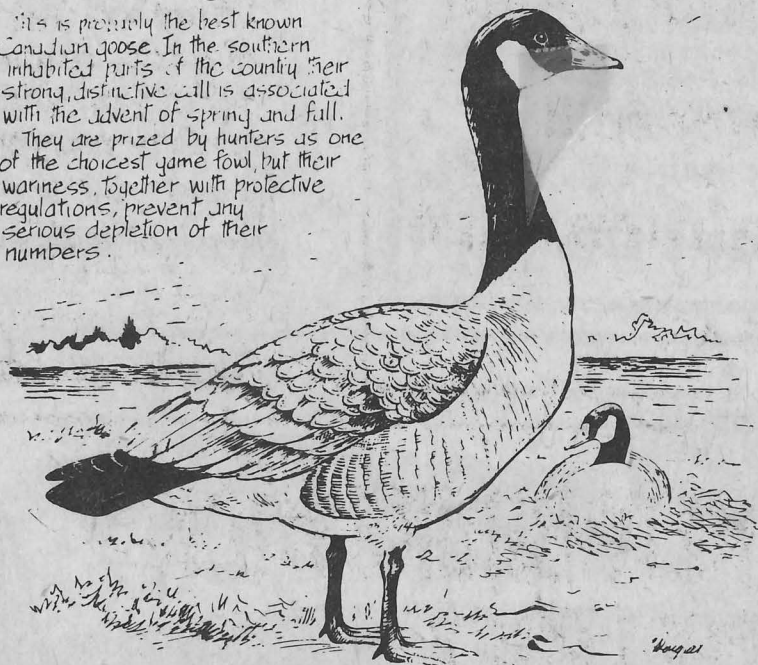


CANADA GOOSE

BRANTA CANADENSIS (10)

It is probably the best known Canadian goose. In the southern inhabited parts of the country their strong, distinctive call is associated with the advent of spring and fall.

They are prized by hunters as one of the choicest game fowl, but their wariness, together with protective regulations, prevent any serious depletion of their numbers.



These birds mate for life and the family group remains together for several months after hatching the young. A gander protecting the nest makes a very formidable adversary, and his wings are capable of delivering a blow of surprising force, sufficient to rout foxes and similar predators, not excluding man.

The Canada Goose is undoubtedly one of the best known and one of the most loved birds of Canada. In the birdworld, a flock of geese headed north ranks second only to the return of the robin as a sign of spring; and a flock of geese headed south in the fall ranks second to none as a sign that summer is over.

Many species of birds live in our country or pass through it unnoticed except by the most avid bird-watchers; however, many people are alerted by the faintest honkings of a flock of geese as they fly north in the spring or south in the fall.

With training, people can become equally aware of many other happenings in the world of nature; happenings which generally go undetected. To a very large extent, we see what we have trained our eyes to see and we hear what we have trained our ears to hear.

Once, while on vacation, I drove into a service station for gas and a mechanic there, informed me that there was something wrong with my valve lifters. I had driven the car for miles without noticing anything wrong, whereas, the mechanics trained ear recognized the developing trouble right away.

On another occasion, while living in Kingston, Ontario, I went for a walk in the heart of the city. When I returned to my room, my roommate asked me how a certain construction project was coming along. When I asked him what construction project, he told me exactly where it was located. I had walked right beside it. My roommate could not understand why I had not seen it. However, I was not interested in construction projects; there were already too many buildings in Kingston anyway.

On the other hand, I have walked down the busiest street in Kingston after dark and been aware of the fact that many small birds were migrating south. Despite the noise

of the traffic on the street, I could catch the odd twitter from the birds as they passed over in the darkness although I doubt that anyone else on the street heard them.

MATE FOR LIFE

Now let's get back to the Canada Goose. The Canada Goose is recognized as one of the most intelligent birds. It also has very strong family ties. Canada Geese mate for life and the young migrate south with their parents and stay with them all winter and usually do not separate from them until they return to their breeding grounds the following spring.

Some Canada Geese winter regularly in Nova Scotia, and on rare occasions, small flocks have wintered in New Brunswick. Also, on rare occasions they are reported nesting in New Brunswick. Early records indicate, that about 150 years ago, Canada Geese nested in large numbers on Miscou Island, but now they rarely nest south of the St. Lawrence River.

CAKCLING GOOSE

There are about 10 subspecies of Canada Goose and these vary greatly in size. The subspecies that we see in New Brunswick is one of the largest, while the smallest subspecies, sometimes called the Cackling Goose because of its high-pitched voice, is only slightly larger than a Mallard Duck. The Cackling Goose nests in the far north-west and migrates through British Columbia.

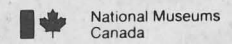
Another goose that migrates through New Brunswick is the Brant. Unlike the Canada Goose, Brant are seldom far from salt water. They migrate somewhat later in the spring than do Canada Geese and they do not fly in a V formation.

A few Snow Geese also migrate through New Brunswick but never in large numbers.

Aug. 17/77

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA



LEAST WEASEL

MUSTELA NIVALIS. (11)



Occupying most of Canada with the exception of the Maritimes, Southern Ontario and Quebec, this fierce little carnivore is scarcely larger than the mice on which it preys. Total body length seldom exceeds 8".

Incredibly quick and agile, these tiny predators are seldom trapped except by accident. The coat, which is brown above, with white under-side, turns completely white in winter throughout most of its North American range.

Living almost exclusively on mice, shrews and lemmings, they also use the fur of these animals to line their underground nests. The Eskimos in particular look upon this small hunter with great respect and the capture of one was considered a good omen.

Weasel is nuisance to trappers

The Least Weasel is not found in the Maritime provinces nor in that part of Quebec which is south of the St. Lawrence River but it does have a very wide distribution throughout the rest of Canada and south through the United States half way to Mexico. In build and coloration, it is much like the Short-tailed weasel found in these parts but it is considerably smaller being not much bigger than the mice that it eats. It lives almost exclusively on mice and takes over a mouse's nest and tunnels and uses them for its own home.

The common weasel found in this part of the country is the Short-tailed Weasel, Ermine or Stait Bob Lefebvre of Cassillissays this weasel is a nuisance to trappers because he sets off traps and prevents the trapper from catching more valuable animals.

TRAPPER'S TRICK

To prevent this from happening Bob puts a little twig under the pan of the trap. This twig will support the weight of the larger animal such as a mink or a bobcat. This procedure also prevents other small creatures such as moose birds and blue jays from springing the traps.

Bob believes that the DDT budworm spray was very hard on a weasel. He says that weasels almost disappeared from this part of the country for about five years but that they have become a little more plentiful again during the past two years.

The short-tailed weasel ranges through almost all of Canada, even to the northernmost tip of Ellesmere Island. The only parts of Canada that it is absent from are Anticosti Island and small section of the prairies in southern Saskatchewan and southern Alberta.

LONGTAILED WEASEL

Another weasel that is found in these parts but which is very rare here is longtailed weasel. This weasel is bigger and stronger than the short-tailed weasel and its tail is only slightly longer. This weasel is a more southern species than either the Least Weasel or the Short-tailed Weasel and here in New Brunswick were on the northeastern extremity of its range. It occurs only in the most southern parts of Canada and ranges from here right down into South America.

Gene Harris of Sevogle says that he has trapped some of these Long-tailed Weasels as well as the Short-tailed variety in the Mullin Stream area.

LAKE BROOK

Warren Manderville of Bryenton has been trapping since he was a boy. He says that he has caught as many as 150 weasels in a season but has only caught about half a dozen Long-tailed weasels in his entire lifetime. He says that this half dozen were scattered throughout this area but the first one that he caught was at Lake Brook formerly known as the south branch of the North Renous River.

He says that the largest one that he ever caught measured 24 inches from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail. Warren, like Bob thinks that the DDT spray caused a drastic decline in the number of weasels in this area. On the other hand, he says that otters and fishers are very plentiful at the present time.

In the colder parts of their range weasels turn white during the winter, but in the warmer parts of their range where there is little snow, they remain the same colour all year round. This is true of all three species of weasel mentioned above.

WHITEWINGED DOVES

Recently I received a letter from David Christie of the New Brunswick Museum telling about two sightings of White-winged Doves along the north shore of the Bay of Fundy.

This is the first time that these doves have been seen in New Brunswick and therefore this will probably mean that another species will be added to the "New Brunswick check-list of birds."

This check-list now contains about 340 species and includes all the species of birds occurring naturally in New Brunswick. Of course, if a new bird is sighted which is believed to have escaped from captivity then it does not go on the list; and sometimes it is difficult to determine whether a bird has escaped from captivity or whether it has come on its own.

"It's simple," I said
"To hammer a tack!"
... Never dreamed I'd get
Such an aching back
And one corner doesn't
Lay so well
But in a dim light
You can hardly tell.
Had we known
What I now know,
We could have employed
A "pro" for the cost of
What I destroyed!



Phone 622-2108

miramichi wild life

by harry walker

Pothead whale seen near Chatham

The White Whale, which often goes by the Russian name Beluga, is a small whale and only rarely reaches a length of 17 feet. The adults are creamy white in color. Calves are dark slate but gradually become lighter until they attain the adult color at 4 or 5 years of age.

They have a blunt snout and their mouth is so configured that they appear to be always smiling. Their maximum swimming speed is about 9 knots and they can stay underwater during a dive for a maximum of 10 or 15 minutes.

A mature female normally has one calf every two years.

White Whales are migratory and generally travel in small groups. They spend the summer in shallow Arctic bays, but move into deep open water when the bays freeze over. They are common in some areas of the Arctic, but completely absent from some other areas.

They are an important resource to the Eskimo as they supply him with food, leather and lamp oil. Though they are primarily an Arctic species, some White Whales live in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and they have occasionally been reported as far south as Cape Cod.

White Whales frequently ascend large rivers entering the Arctic Ocean and one was taken 700 miles up the Yukon River.

IN THE MIRAMICHI

I have not heard of any White Whales having ever been seen in Miramichi Bay or in the Miramichi River; however, some other species of whales have occasionally entered these waters.

Laurence and Mary Jane Kingston of East Point told me about seeing a whale that was grounded at Forrest Corner, half way between Chatham and Loggieville about 12 years ago. Later I talked to Francis Murdock and Jim Kelly, both of Loggieville and both of them had also seen this same whale.

Francis said that someone had shot and wounded this whale and that was why it was grounded. He said that a whale is like a seal in that it will try to get to land as soon as it is wounded in order to save itself from drowning.

Jim said that this whale died and was towed into the channel, but that it later washed up on the beach at the mouth of the Napan River where he found it and measured it. He said that it was 17 feet long and was what Nova Scotia fishermen call a Blackfish, but that it belonged to the whale family. Later I looked in some of my books and found that the Common Blackfish also goes by the names of Pilot Whale and Pothead Whale and that they grow to a length of 22 feet.

90 FOOT WHALE

Jim Kelly said that his father,

David Kelly, once saw a 90 foot whale washed up on Neguac Beach. Jim also said that when he worked as a fisherman he had seen porpoises go up the river past Loggieville on various occasions but that in recent years he has never seen or heard of any porpoises in the river. He said that he has seen both black ones and silvery colored ones and that they have been known to go up the river as far as Newcastle.

NAPAN BAY PORPOISES

Byron Sweezey, a fisherman of Napan Bay says that in earlier years he sometimes saw porpoises

in Napan Bay but has not seen any in recent years. He said that they would follow behind one another in such a way that several porpoises could be mistakes for one whale.

On the first of July weekend one year ago, my sons, Lyle and Ian, were with a group of Mt. Allison students on Fox Island when they came upon a dead whale washed up on the beach. They estimated the length of this whale to be about 70 feet and they thought that it was a Sei Whale but were not sure of the species. This whale was on the seaward side of Fox Island. It appears that whales very seldom enter Miramichi Bay beyond the line of islands across its mouth.

Phone 622-2108

miramichi wild life

by harry walker

Sea Worms and Earth Worms

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA

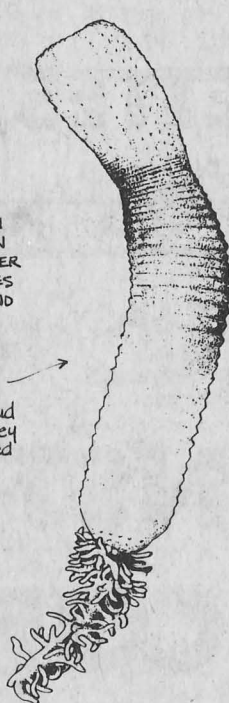
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SEA WORMS

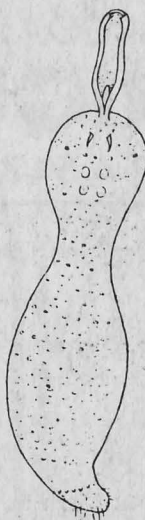
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SHOWN HERE ARE EXAMPLES OF 3 DIFFERENT KINDS OF SEDENTARY MARINE WORMS WHICH MAY BE FOUND AROUND CANADIAN COASTS. THEY RESEMBLE EACH OTHER SUPERFICIALLY, HAVING STOUT BODIES WITH AN EXTENSIBLE ANTERIOR END

PRIAPULID WORM: Up to 80 mm. in length. Burrows into sand and mud leaving only mouth at surface. They prey on slow-moving, soft-bodied animals. Found only in cold waters.



SPOON WORM: Up to 300 mm. in length. Burrows into sand and mud, in which it may build a U-shaped tube. Scoop-like proboscis collects micro-organisms in its sticky secretions. World-wide distribution.



PEANUT WORM: Up to 180 mm. in length. Burrows into sand and mud or lives in rocky crevices or empty snail shells. Tentacles at end of body pick up minute plants and detritus (dead organic matter) settling from sea. World-wide distribution.



C. D. J. J.

Sea Worms belong to a group of worm-like creatures known as Annelids. A more familiar Annelid to most of us is the Earthworm or Fishworm; so Sea Worms are constructed much like Earthworms although some of them have spines on either side of the body, making them look much like centipedes.

I have never seen a Sea Worm in my life and therefore I am not a very well qualified person to write about them; however, I have been

able to gather together a certain amount of second hand information about them. I gather that anyone who has done much clam-digging has probably also dug up some Sea Worms in the process. **Alexander (Sandy) MacDonald** of Chatham, who formerly came from Point Aux Carr, said that he has often dug up Sea Worms. He said that they are grey or brown in color, a little darker than the sand that they live in, have spines along their sides,

and move very quickly. He said that the largest ones are about eight inches long, and since both ends of the worms look almost alike, like an Earthworm, it is difficult to say which end is the head and which end is the tail.

Ronnie and Ruth Kierstead of Douglastown also described some worms that they had dug up while digging clams on Baie Du Vin Island. Their description of these worms corresponded to Sandy's description, except for the color which they described as being the same as that of an Earthworm. These worms were living in mud, rather than in sand and could have been a slightly different species for, according to the books that I consulted on the subject, there are a great many species of Sea Worms. Some of these live in sand, some live in mud, some live under rocks, and others swim in the open water.

In a book called "Animals Without Backbones" by Ralph Buchsbaum, the method of reproduction of some of these Sea Worms is described. One species, known as the Fire Worm has a very unusual and spectacular method of reproduction. The female appears at the surface of the water at about one hour after sunset. At intervals she emits a greenish colored light. The male detects this light and swims rapidly toward it with his own light flashing. When he almost reaches the female, they both explode and die, but special cells from within their bodies mingle in the sea water and produce new Fire Worms. These Fire Worms live in the sea off of Bermuda, and at spawning time, the lights from these worms can be seen by people on beaches.

There are about 7000 known species of Annelids in the world. John Warren Reynolds of the Faculty of Forestry at U.N.B. reported finding 13 species of Earthworms in New Brunswick during a recent survey, the results of which were published in the N.B. Naturalist. Earthworms are valuable to gardeners and farmers as they improve the fertility of the soil and also the drainage and aeration of the soil.

Earthworms appear after a rain because they get flooded out of their holes.

In Australia, there is a species of Earthworm that grows to be 10 feet in length.

Phone 622-2108

miramichi wild life

by harry walker

Seven woodpeckers known on Miramichi

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, or Le Pic Macule in French, is a species of woodpecker that is common in our area. There are seven different species of woodpecker that live here on the Miramichi; the Hairy Woodpecker, the Downy, the Pileated, the Northern Three-toed, the Black-backed Three-Toed, the Common Flicker, and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

The first five species listed above stay with us all year round while the last two spend the summers with us.

Sapsuckers differ from other woodpeckers in several respects. They do not ordinarily drill as deeply into trees as do other woodpeckers but simply drill small holes through the bark. These holes are about the size of a hole made by a four or five inch nail but are rectangular in shape. These holes are drilled in a series of lines around the trunk or the limb of a tree and are usually spaced about one quarter of an inch from one another.

On almost any walk through the woods you will see these holes.

The Sapsucker visits these holes periodically to lap up the sap and also to eat the insects that are attracted to the sap in these holes. The Sapsucker's tongue is relatively short for a woodpecker and has a brush on the end of it for lapping up sap.

Other woodpeckers have long thin tongues that can be extended far beyond the end of the bill and thus pushed down insect holes in wood. On the end of this tongue is a spear with barbs like a porcupine quill enabling the woodpecker to spear and withdraw worms and insects from their holes.

The trees that I have most commonly seen tapped by sapsuckers are, birch, alder, hemlock, and wild apple.

Sapsuckers often do a lot of drumming on trees or even on metal plates for no other purpose than to make a noise. They pick out the most hollow sounding limb or piece of metal they can find for this purpose. I have even seen them drumming on hydro towers that were constructed entirely of metal. This drumming is most pronounced in

the spring.

The Sapsucker is not much of a songster, but if he can't be a songster, he can at least be a drummer. You can generally distinguish the drumming of a sapsucker from the drumming of other woodpeckers because he signs off with two or three irregularly spaced beats whereas the other woodpeckers end their drumming very abruptly.

Greg Harris of Trout Brook has been finding Hairworms in a spring near Heath Steele Mines. I was shown one of these worms which he had brought into the assay lab in a bottle. It was brown in color, probably about five or six inches long, uniform in diameter throughout its entire length except for a very slight enlargement at one end, and only slightly larger in diameter than a hair. It was wriggling like a snake and had more or less tied itself into knots.

I have since been informed that Greg later brought a white one into the lab and has seen many other Hairworms in the spring.

Hairworms are relatively simple creatures anatomically. I say relatively simple since no creature is simple if examined in enough detail. However, Hairworms have a very complicated life cycle which apparently is not fully understood by Biologists. Most of its life is spent as a parasite curled up inside the body of some large insect such as a grasshopper, cricket, or beetle, but the Hairworm must emerge from this insect and return to water in order to lay its eggs and thus reproduce.

It is thought that some of these Hairworms spend part of their life in one insect and then somehow transfer to another insect before returning to the water to complete their life cycle.

When I was a small boy living on the farm I occasionally found these Hairworms, or Horsehair Snakes and was told that they formed from horsehairs that had fallen into the water. Apparently this has been a widely held superstition which has arisen from the fact that these worms look very much like horsehairs and are often found in watering troughs for livestock.

OUTING TUES. SEPT. 13th
AT 6:30 p.m.

Miramichi Naturalists Club—
first fall meeting, preceded by an
hour's outing led by Harry Walker.

Meet at Walker's home, 276 Heath
Court, Newcastle, at 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 13. Return to
Walker's house for meeting to
follow. Members and friends and
anyone interested will be welcome.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA



National Museums
Canada

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER

SPHYRAPICUS VARIUS. 14



This colourful bird with a red cap occurs in most of the forested areas of Canada and together with the Flicker is one of the few species of migratory woodpeckers that occur in this country. The males also have a very distinct red patch on the throat, while the same area in the females is white. They feed to a great extent on sap and cambium, (the inner bark) which they obtain by drilling holes in the trunks of trees. These peculiar holes indicate their presence in a certain region. (see inset)

Insects are also part of this bird's diet and are captured, as is the sap, by means of a long, bushy tongue.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA

National Museums
Canada

RACCOON

PROCYON LOTOR

(15)

This highly intelligent animal occurs throughout most of the more southerly areas of Canada with the exception of Newfoundland. Average weight of an adult male is about 19 lb. with the largest reported weighing over 62 lb.

They live primarily in forested areas near watercourses, where they can find some of their favourite food items such as crayfish, frogs, small fish and turtles. They also eat wild berries, corn, meadow voles and mice. Mainly nocturnal, they have few natural predators although a few are taken by foxes, bobcats and coyotes. Generally mild-mannered and easily tamed, they will fight bravely against great odds if cornered.



Here on the Miramichi we are near the northern limit of the raccoon's range. They have been recorded in the Gaspé Peninsula, but they do not normally go beyond the northern boundary of New Brunswick.

Raccoons are playful, intelligent, and easily tamed, but they also can be brave fighters when circumstances necessitate it.

My wife, family and I once lived in the small village of Gould, Que., near Sherbrooke. There the raccoons were plentiful and they sometimes came into our back shed and upset the garbage cans. There, I have also gotten up early in the morning and found them going over our lawn catching night crawlers. A neighbor lady used to feed the raccoons and they would come up to her back door and take cakes and other goodies out of her hand.

On one back packing trip over near Nictau, my two sons, Lyle and Ian, had raccoons get into their packs during the night and carry off some of their bread.

Raccoons will eat a great variety of food, but they are especially fond of corn. They also like to hunt along streams where they catch fish, frogs, and crayfish, etc. They also eat grubs and large insects such as grasshoppers and crickets. They sometimes catch mice, rabbits, and birds. Much more could be said

about the raccoon but I want to tell you another story.

AT POINT AUX CARR

For the last three years I have been running shorebird surveys for the Canadian Wildlife Service. This year I am running these surveys out at Point Aux Carr. Every two weeks I walk the same stretch of shore and list the numbers of the various species of shore birds that I see. This stretch of shore is approximately two miles long and runs from the end of a small road which is owned by Howard Russell and ends at Mrs Bernard Mac Donald's place at the end of the Point Aux Carr Road.

These trips to Point Aux Carr have been very interesting and I have met more than birds out there. I have met many of the good-hearted and friendly people who live there.

One of these trips in particular I would like to tell you about, but first I must explain something about my telescope. I received this telescope as a Christmas present from my family, a few years ago and my son, Stewart carved a piece of wood in the shape of a gun stock on which to mount this telescope. He stained and polished this stock and as a result the finished product can easily be mistaken for a gun of some kind. In fact the police stopped me once on account of it

and I was also reported to the police on another occasion.

Now to get back to my story, Howard Russell had given me permission to use his road and on this particular trip I had parked my car at the entrance of his road which is directly opposite a house owned by Mrs Maude Russell whom I did not know at that time.

When I got out of my car with my telescope I saw two ladies looking at me from the door yard of this house. Thinking that perhaps these ladies were wondering if I was the Son of Sam, I put my telescope on the top of my car, and then went over to them in order to explain what I was doing. While I was giving this explanation, several other people emerged from the house, and when I had finished my explanation I was invited in for a cup of tea.

After I had accompanied them into the house and had sat down to my cup of tea, a lunch was set in front of me and someone explained that if I were going on such a long walk then I would need some food to sustain me. I was introduced to everyone in the house. Besides Mrs Maude Russell, there were three generations of her descendants visiting with her at the time. There were her son John and his wife Jessie; her daughter and son-in-law, Norma and Roy Watling; their son and his wife, Ralph and Brenda Watling, and their children Kenny and Kathy.

When I said that I never expected such a wonderful reception, Mrs Russell, in a teasing way, suggested that I had it all figured out beforehand and knew that if I spoke to the two ladies in her yard, that they would invite me in.

Before leaving, Mrs Russell invited me to come back and see her again. I gladly accepted her invitation and left with a warmed heart and a full stomach.

Before I got my survey underway that day I also met two boys riding bicycles on the road in front of Mrs Russell's place. They were Timmy and Todd Vienneau of St. John who were visiting their grandmother Mrs Bernard MacDonald. I told these boys about the bird survey that I was running.

When I reached their grandmother's place after completing my survey, I met these same two boys who eagerly asked me about the birds that I had seen. They were quite interested in the list of birds that I had recorded and accompanied me on my long walk down the road back to my car.

On our walk we talked about the plants along the roadside and I was pleased to find them so interested in nature. Before reaching my car we met their father Vincent Vienneau who told me about digging clams at Point Aux Carr and how some of the seagulls were also digging them up and breaking the shells in order to get the meat inside.

SEPTEMBER 17 and 18

The New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists is having a field trip to Miscou Island on **September 17 and 18** in order to see migrating shore birds and waterfowl. Members from the St. John area will be coming to Newcastle on Friday, Sept. 16, then we will all leave for Miscou on Saturday morning. Some members intend to camp on Miscou Saturday night. If interested in taking part, get in touch with me.

miramichi wild life

Phone 622-2108

by harry walker

68 species songbirds survey route 25 miles

SONG BIRD SURVEY

On June 14, my wife Winnie and I ran a song bird survey for the N.B. Museum. This is an annual affair and is always carried out near the middle of June when the birds are doing a lot of singing.

We always cover the same 25 mile route which starts at Richard Connors farm on Boom Road at exactly 4:58 a.m. it then runs through Sunny Corner, Red Bank, Warwick, Quarryville, White Rapids, and Gray Rapids and ends up in the bush somewhere south of Coughlin.

We stop at each half-mile interval along this route. At each stop I look and listen for three minutes and Winnie records all the birds that I see or hear.

At each tenth stop the weather conditions are also recorded as the weather will affect the number of birds detected.

The birds listed below are the birds recorded on this year's count. The number after the name is the number of birds of that particular species recorded during the count.

Robin 64, Starling 57, White-throated Sparrow 47, Crow 36, Ovenbird, 33, Grackle (Blackbird) 29, Yellow throat 26,

Magnolia Warbler 26, Evening Grosbeak 24, Brown-headed Cowbird 23, Song Sparrow 23, Barn Swallow 22;

Tennessee Warbler 21, American Redstart 20, Chipping Sparrow 20, Veery 19, Purple Finch 16, Alder Flycatcher 14, Swainsons Thrush 14, Bobolink 14, Cliff Swallow 13, Red-winged Blackbird 13;

Red-eyed Vireo 12, Bank Swallow 11, Pine Siskin 10, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 9, Nashville Warbler 9, Raven 8, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher 7;

Yellow Warbler 7, Rose-breasted Grosbeak 7, Savannah Sparrow 6, Northern Water Thrush 6, Hermit Thrush 6, Killdeer 5;

Common Snipe 5, Winter Wren 5, Goldfinch 5, House Sparrow 5, Canada Warbler 5, Black-throated Green Warbler 4, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 4;

Nighthawk 3, American Bittern 3, Black and White Warbler 3, Lincoln's Sparrow 3;

Dark-eyed Junco 3, Least Flycatcher 3, Blue Jay 3, Black-capped Chickadee 3, Spotted Sandpiper 2, Common Flicker 2;

Tree Swallow 2, Gray Jay 2, Catbird 2, Parula Warbler 2, Myrtle Warbler 2, Mourning Warbler 2;

White-winged Crossbill 2, Chimney Swift 1, Ruby-throated Hummingbird 1, Kingbird 1, Wood Pewee 1, Olive-sided Flycatcher 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch 1, Blackburnian Warbler 1, Wilson's Warbler 1, Baltimore Oriole 1.

The above list includes 68 species and 761 birds.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA

National Museums
Canada

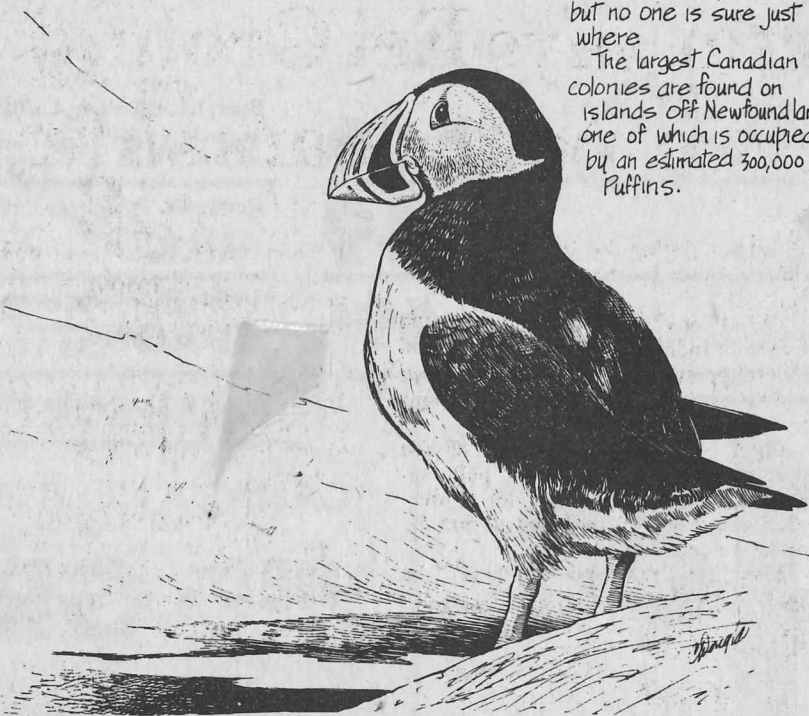
COMMON 16 PUFFIN

FRATERCULA ARCTICA

Sometimes known as the "sea parrot" because of its distinctive bill, which, in the nesting season takes on vivid colours of red, blue-gray and ivory, receding when the nesting season ends.

Winters are spent at sea but no one is sure just where.

The largest Canadian colonies are found on islands off Newfoundland, one of which is occupied by an estimated 300,000 Puffins.



The nest is actually a burrow which the bird digs into soft, turfey slopes for a distance of about 3 ft. and in which one egg is laid. The Puffin is an expert swimmer and often emerges from an underwater foray with 6, 8 or more small fish dangling from his serrated bill. They suffer considerable losses from Herring and other gulls, whose numbers are increasing due to human effluence.

The most obvious distinguishing characteristic of the Puffin is its tremendously large and brilliantly colored, red and yellow, bill. However, this bill is largely made up of colored plates which drop off as soon as the nesting season is over and, as a result, the Puffin's bill is not nearly so large nor so brightly colored during the winter season. This bill is almost as deep as it is long but it is narrow in cross-section.

The Puffin has a large head and a short neck and he stands upright like a penguin whenever he perches upright like a penguin whenever he perches on a rock. He is black above, white below, and has a grey face. All in all he is a rather comical looking fellow and some seafaring people call him the Sea Parrot.

Puffins nest in large colonies on rocky coasts or rocky islands on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Most of these colonies are to the north of us, many of them being along the coast of Labrador and the northern coast of Newfoundland.

From W. Austin Squires book "The Birds of New Brunswick" I find that there is only one Puffin colony in New Brunswick and that is on Machias Seal Island near the entrance to the Bay of Fundy. According to this book, this colony grew from an estimated 100 pairs in 1908 to between 700 and 800 pairs by 1951. Puffins are seldom seen during the winter as they spend the winter far out at sea but a few have been seen around Machias Seal Island as late as early January.

The female puffin usually lays only one egg per year and this egg is laid in a burrow in the ground or in a crevice in a rock cliff.

Puffins live entirely on fish and these are caught by underwater pursuit.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

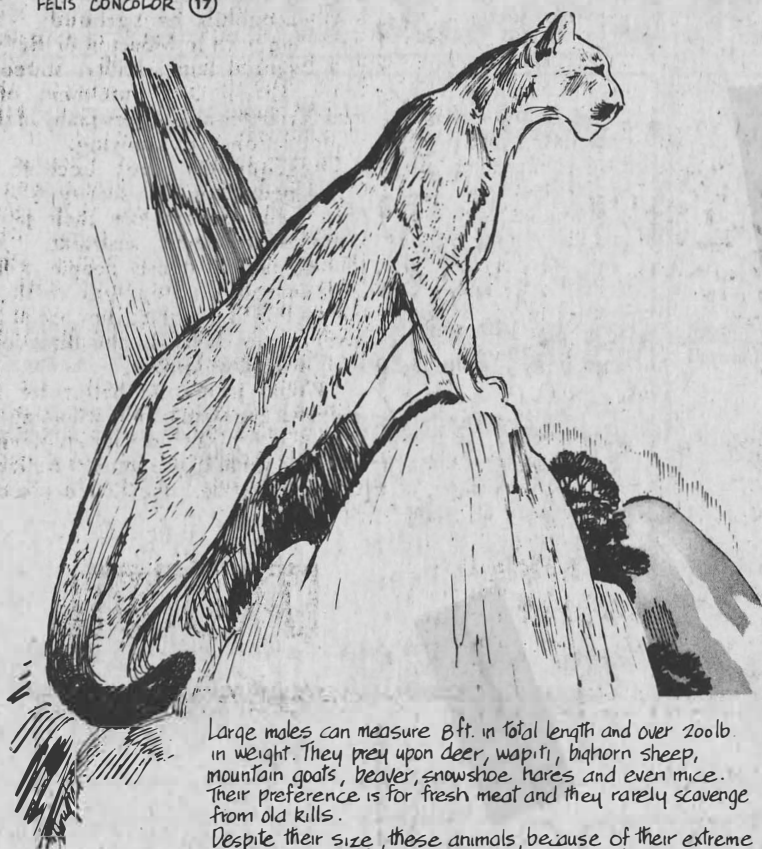
PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA

National Museums
Canada

COUGAR

FELIS CONCOLOR (17)

Next to the bears this is the largest, most powerful Canadian predator. Once numerous from the Atlantic to the Pacific the advance of civilization has reduced much of its range until today it is found chiefly in British Columbia and the Rocky Mountains of Alberta.



Large moles can measure 8ft. in total length and over 200lb. in weight. They prey upon deer, wapiti, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, beaver, snowshoe hares and even mice. Their preference is for fresh meat and they rarely scavenge from old kills.

Despite their size, these animals, because of their extreme wariness, are infrequently seen by man in their natural habitat.

The cougar has been known by many different names, such as; Panther, Mountain Lion, Catamount and Puma. According to **A.W.F. Banfield** in his book "Mammals of Canada", the Cougar has no definite breeding season and kittens may be born in any month of the year.

He also says that the Cougar originally had one of the most extensive ranges of any mammal in America. It ranged from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from southern Argentina to northern British Columbia.

Just how extensive the Cougar's range is today is not definitely defined. The reason for this is, over much of its range it is very rare and scattered. Also because it is so extremely wary and secretive, it is very seldom seen by man.

COUGAR'S STATUS

I asked district biologist, **Robert Currie** of Chatham, what the status of the Cougar was in our area. He said that it is a protected species and so it is illegal to kill one at any time of the year.

However, he said that he was not sure whether or not any existed in our area as he had never received any definite reports of them himself.

He also recommended the book "The Ghost of North America" by **Bruce S. Wright**. I have since obtained a copy of this book as well as two other books by **Bruce Wright** from our local libraries and find them to be both fascinating and informative.

PANTHER SIGHTINGS

Mr Wright did a great amount of work gathering and checking reports of Panthers all over eastern North America.

He obtained more and better evidence of Panthers in New Brunswick and Quebec than from anywhere else in the east. He also obtained enough information from other parts to indicate that there is probably a very thin and scattered population of Panthers in some areas of the eastern United States.

From the New Brunswick Museum I also received the following information; the paragraphs being quoted directly from "Nature Lessons from your Museum".

"This large cat of the same species as the cougar or mountain

The most recent sightings of Cougars that **Bruce Wright** has recorded for the Miramichi area are as follows:

In 1947, two men met a cougar face to face when they rounded a bend in a trail at the head of Robichaud Brook below Loggieville. One of the men was only 26 feet from the Cougar which remained on the trail for only a moment and then disappeared through the woods in twenty foot bounds.

In 1948 Cougar tracks were reported by the game warden in this same area. Again in 1957 in much the same area, a man and his wife watched a Cougar run across a field from their kitchen window.

In 1931, four fishermen sitting on the verandah of a camp at the Square Forks on the Sevogle River saw and later described an animal that swam across to the south bank.

When it reached the shore it stopped and gave the men plenty of time to observe it. One of the men got a rifle and fired at it but missed. The animal in one leap landed on top of the 10 or 12 foot rock behind it and disappeared into the woods.

I, myself, have received a few reports of sightings of animals that could be cougars. I intend to investigate these reports a little more thoroughly and then report the results of my finding in a later article. In the meantime, if you or anyone you know have seen or think you have seen a cougar, give me a call.



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"This large cat of the same species as the cougar or mountain lion of Western America has apparently been in New Brunswick since before the first days of settlement but it has only been officially added to our list of mammals since 1945.

No specimen is yet to be found in any collection. The fact that woodsmen call it the Indian Devil confused the record. The population is small but widespread. It apparently preys mostly on deer as reports of attacks on domestic stock are very few.

"This is a large slender cat with a small head and a long tail. It is in fact the only member of the cat family found wild in New Brunswick which has a long tail.

"The fur is soft and uniform in color, yellowish or reddish brown merging into a dull white on the under parts. The tail is tipped with dark brown or black.

Black individuals are known especially the Florida panther and some have been reported in New Brunswick as very dark. The panther reaches a length of six to eight and a half feet, including the tail, and a weight of 100 to 175 pounds. Those occurring in New Brunswick are considered to be much smaller than these maximums."

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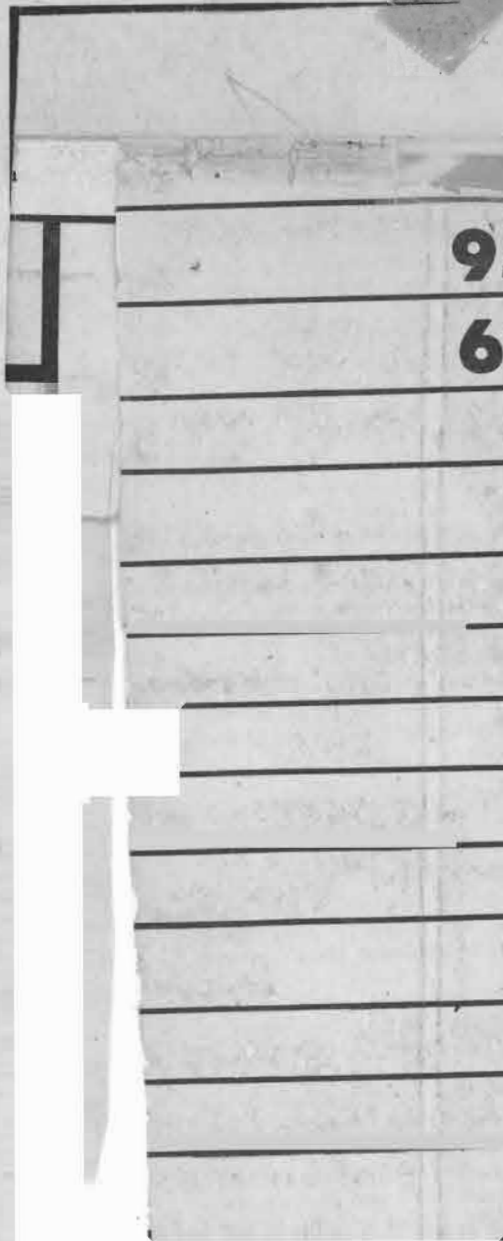
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Oct. 5/77

Naturalist club plans meeting for Oct. 12

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA



National Museums
Canada

POLAR BEAR

URSUS MARITIMUS (18)

One of the earth's largest and most powerful carnivores, the Polar Bear is found along Canada's Arctic coasts from Labrador to Alaska.

In appearance it differs from other bears, having a longer neck and a long, narrow head. Its legs are also much longer.

When disturbed it heads for open water at a rolling gallop at a top speed of about 25 mph.

The Polar Bear may surpass the Alaskan grizzly in size, with the maximum recorded weighing 1600 lb. Adult males often weigh between 400-1100 lb. They are the most carnivorous of the bears, their favourite prey being seals and young walrus. In addition to their mainly meat diet, they graze on grasses, mushrooms and berries.

They have, aside from man, no natural enemies, although they may occasionally fall victim to killer whales. They inhabit all the world's Arctic seas and coastlines.



The polar bear is two to three times as large as the black bear found in New Brunswick and may reach a weight of 1100 pounds. This, however, is not as large as the Alaskan brown bear or Kodiak bear which sometimes reaches a weight of 1500 pounds.

CANADA'S POLAR BEARS

The polar bear lives on the northern coast of all countries bordering on the Arctic Ocean, but Canada has more polar bears than any other country.

At one time it was believed that polar bears kept on the move continually circling around the edge of the Arctic Ocean so that the whole world's population of polar bears were continually mixing.

However, research into their movements by tagging them and then recapturing them again, has shown that most polar bear populations are really quite local.

LOCAL MIGRATION

There are, however, certain local migrations; for instance, in spring, the bears of Canada's Atlantic coast are carried south on ice floes by the Labrador current.

By August these ice floes have all melted and when this happens the bears swim for shore and then travel back north by foot.

Some of these bears are carried through the Strait of Belle Isle into the Gulf of St. Lawrence; some reach as far west as Anticosti Island. Bears often have to swim in order to get to shore again.

On their return trip north, they usually keep close to the shore but they have occasionally been seen as far as 75 miles inland at this time.

DIFFERENT LIFESTYLES

The polar bears of Hudson's Bay have a somewhat different lifestyles as described by Ian Stirling and Charles Jonkel in an article in Nature Canada.

During the summer these bears live in dens alone.

been banned in Russia since 1957.

Seals are the main item in the polar bear's diet although many other things are eaten as well. Usually only the skin and the blubber are eaten and the rest of the carcass is left behind.

However, Arctic foxes, gulls, and ravens clean up what is left. Polar bears also eat young walrus, fish, shoreline carrion, young waterfowl and also some grass and seaweed.

Any polar bear may den up for a few days but only pregnant females hibernate to any extent. They usually hibernate from about the middle of November to the end of March, and it is during this time that the cubs are born.

Nature females normally have a pair of cubs every second year and these cubs stay with their mother until shortly before she dens up to have another litter.

Peter Freuchen, who wrote several very interesting books about the Arctic, described the male polar bear as the loneliest creature in the world.

He is with the female for about two weeks while they mate but otherwise he wanders all alone throughout the remainder of his adult life.

There will be a Naturalist Club Meeting next Wednesday night, Oct. 12 at the James M. Hill Memorial High School in Chatham beginning at 8 p.m.

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During the summer these bears live in dens along the shore. To make these dens the bears dig down to the permafrost.

There the bears can keep cool during the hot weather. There also they are away from the flies to a very large extent.

In the fall, when the ice on Hudson's Bay gets thick enough, the bears return to the ice to hunt for seals.

POPULATION VARIES

In recent years the Polar Bears of Canada's Atlantic coast have decreased almost to extinction whereas the Polar Bears of the west coast of Hudson Bay have increased to almost plague proportions.

Why the one population is decreasing while the other is increasing apparently is not understood.

Polar bears are common in the Beaufort Sea and Amundsen Gulf area, but apparently they are quite scarce in the area between Amundsen Gulf and Hudson Bay. The population of polar bears along the Arctic coast of the U.S.S.R. is thought to be low.

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Seals are the main item in the polar bear's diet although many other things are eaten as well. Usually only the skin and the blubber are eaten and the rest of the carcass is left behind.

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Oct. 12/77

Bird banding helps follow species travels

On Sept. 17, the Miramichi Naturalist Club had a field trip to Miscou Island. Those taking part included Will Astle of Flushing, N.Y. David Smith of Saint John, Sheila Cameron of Newcastle, Don LeHeup of Newcastle, my wife Winnie and son Ian and myself.

Among the more interesting things seen were,—a Harbour Seal, many Gannets, a couple of Pigeon Hawks, a Marsh Hawk, several Red-throated Loons, and a large group of Bonapartes Gulls. Other birds seen were Ruddy Turnstones, Black-bellied Plovers, Semipalmated Plovers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, Common Eiders, Surf Scoters, Cormorants, Rusty Blackbirds and many others.

The most interesting plant collected was a very sturdy and very prickly thistle which was eventually labelled as a Bull Thistle although it had some characteristics that did not seem to fit anything in our books.

CHECK LEG BANDS

Will Astle has been banding birds since 1938 and he requests that you check for leg bands on all dead birds that you find. If you find a bird with a band, save the band, then write a letter to—Bird Banding, Washington, D.C.

This central bird banding agency then gets in touch with the person who banded the bird. In your letter give the number on the band, the place where you found the bird, and the date; also, if you can identify the bird, give the species.

You keep the band, and later you will be notified as to who banded the bird, where it was banded and when.

YOUNG BIRDS TAGGED

Many gulls and cormorants nest on Manawagonish Island in Saint John harbour. Every year, shortly before the young birds leave the nests, Will Astle, with the help of some of the staff from the N.B. Museum, bans all these young birds.

These birds have later been recovered in many places including Texas, Louisiana, St. Pierre and Miquelon, and various places in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. He has had then recovered in Richibucto and Shippegan.

Some of these birds have been found lying dead on the ground, others have been caught in

fishermen's weirs, some have been caught on fishing lines baited with minnows, and some have been sucked into the engines of jet aircraft.

25 YEARS AGO

About 25 years ago, Mr Astle banded young gulls on Miscou Island and found that most of these birds went to Labrador after leaving their nests.

Mr Astle also bands small birds around his home in Flusing, New York. A very unusual coincidence occurred, when a Starling that he had banded at Flushing was recovered five years later in Astle, N.B.

Mr Astle said that his grandfather's brother left England for Canada around 1820 and was never heard from again and so he speculated that perhaps some of the Astles in New Brunswick might be this man's descendants.

INTERESTING HISTORY

Mr Astle has had an interesting history. He was born at the town of Eaton in England, 25 miles from Liverpool; he left school at 12 years of age in order to work for a shilling a week in a grocery store; at 14, he had an opportunity to come and live with his aunt in Flushing, N.Y.

He came and then started to school again when he was 16. He went right through college and became a schoolteacher.

Since retirement he has been working for Queen's County Botanical Gardens in Flushing where he prepares children's nature programs.

BOY SCOUT CONNECTION

He has been connected with the Boy Scout movement during most of his life. He said that the only person in Eaton who had a car was the Vicar. Mr Astle and some of the other neighborhood boys would push this car up the hills as it did not have enough power to make them on its own.

CLUB MEETING

There will be a meeting of the Miramichi Naturalist Club tonight, Oct. 12, at the James M. Hill Memorial High School in Chatham at 8:00 p.m.

At this meeting Sheila Cameron will be showing slides which she took this summer while she was taking part in the Living River's Program.

Killer whales intimidate most other sea life

Killer Whales are found throughout almost all of the oceans of the world but they are more common in the temperate zones than they are in the tropics. They are also more common near shore and along the continental shelf than they are in the deeper parts of the oceans.

MIGRATORY

They make regular migrations along our east coast, heading north during the spring and coming south again in the fall. These whales spend the winter in the warm waters of the Gulf Stream.

Killer whales average about 20 or 21 feet in length but they may reach a length of 31 feet. They are normally black above and white below but albinos are fairly common along Canada's west coast.

FINS DENOTE SEX

Males and females can be distinguished from one another by the size and shape of their fins. The male has much larger fins than the female; also, the male's dorsal or back fin is high and narrow, while the female's is low, broad, and hooked at the top.

The male's dorsal fin is sometimes six feet high while the females is only about two feet high.

WORSE THAN SHARKS

Killer whales differ greatly from other whales in disposition. Most whales are mild inoffensive creatures whereas killer whales are the terror of the seas and are more feared than sharks.

They hunt in packs like wolves, a pack consisting of anywhere from a few individuals up to 40 or more. These packs will attack and eat almost any creature in the sea. The only creatures not afraid of them are adult walrus and the gigantic sperm whales.

Killer whales live mainly on seals and porpoises but they also eat young walrus, fish, squids, and sometimes waterfowl. They kill many other kinds of whales, some of them many times larger than themselves.

PACK ATTACKS

These they surround and attack from all sides. One killer whale is even reported to have temporarily grounded itself while trying to catch a dog that was barking from a rock ledge that was jutting into the

sea.

Killer whales have large conical recurved interlocking teeth but these are used mainly to hold or kill their victims as even seals and porpoises are often swallowed whole. Sometimes old killer whales have their front teeth completely worn away.

CAN BE TRAINED

Despite their ferocious nature, killer whales have not been known to attack man and apparently they are easily tamed and trained to perform acrobatics.

In the wild state killer whales often jump high into the air especially during courtship proceedings. Generally only one calf is born after a pregnancy of 16 months.

NORTH CAROLINA VISIT

Ritchie MacRae of Newcastle recently returned from a trip to North Carolina. He brought back a couple of twigs from a tree that he found growing in the mountains there.

Ritchie said the people he was with said they had never seen such a tree before. The peculiar thing about this tree was the seed pods on it.

These pods were round, about two or two and a half inches in diameter, and all covered with sharp spines like a Sea Porcupine or Sea Urchin. The leaves were somewhat like oak leaves.

SWEET CHESTNUT

From the book "Native Trees of Canada" I was able to identify the tree as a sweet chestnut or the native American chestnut. This is an entirely different tree than the horse chestnut which has been introduced to this country and planted as a shade tree in many parts of Canada.

The sweet chestnut was a large and valuable tree until it was almost wiped out by a fungus disease much like our elms are being wiped out by the Dutch elm disease.

NOT IN N.B.

The sweet chestnut did not grow in New Brunswick but it grew as far north as southern Maine and southernmost parts of Ontario.

Its lumber was very resistant to decay and was used for interior finish, cabinet work, railway ties and so on.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA

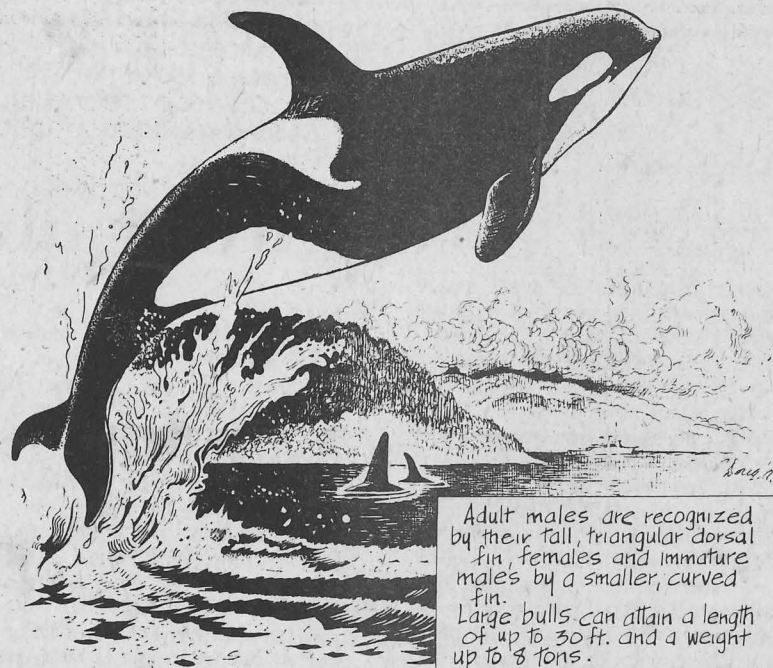


National Museums
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ORCA, OR KILLER WHALE

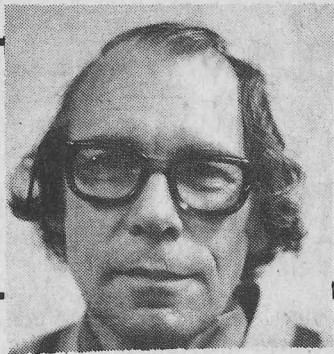
(ORCINUS ORCA) 20

Like other whales, the Orca is a warm-blooded, air-breathing mammal. Called "killers" because they prey on fish, dolphins, seals, and even larger whales, there are no records of them ever attacking man. The story of an Orca found with 13 porpoises and 14 seals in its stomach has been officially discredited. Orcas travel and hunt in social groups (pods) of 3 to 40 whales throughout most of the world's oceans.



Adult males are recognized by their tall, triangular dorsal fin, females and immature males by a smaller, curved fin. Large bulls can attain a length of up to 30 ft. and a weight up to 8 tons.

Oct. 26/77



Miramichi Wildlife

Harry Walker

Living rivers program outlined to naturalists

Oct. 26/77

At the last Naturalist Club meeting Sheila Cameron of Newcastle showed slides and talked about her experience while taking part in the Living Rivers Program during this past summer.

The headquarters for this program was at Micmac Lodge on the Tabusintac River. This lodge is operated by Clive Wishart and is about five or six miles up river from the town of Tabusintac.

A two-mile boat trip is required in order to reach the lodge as there is no road into it.

OSPREYS AND EAGLES

Along this stretch of river, ospreys are a common sight and also there is a pair of bald eagles living near-by. Sheila and another participant in the program, Reta Boyd of Lower Sackville, N.S., found the bald eagle's nest.

It was in a large white pine tree and situated about two-thirds of the way up from the bottom. Sheila said that for her this was a very big event and she took several pictures of the nest from different angles.

LARGE NEST

It was a very big nest made of sticks and looked much like an osprey's nest except that an osprey's nest is always placed right on the top of a tree.

As well as having short field trips around the vicinity of their camps, two long field trips by car were also included in the program.

During the first of these two trips, the group visited Kouchibouguac Park, where they looked over the beaches, a bog, and a beaver dam.

From there they proceeded to the Tantramar Marsh where they visited a biological research project.

TRIP AROUND PROVINCE

Other places visited on this trip included the nuclear power station at Point Lepreau, the Hunsman Marine Laboratory at St. Andrews, the North American Salmon Research Center at St. Andrews, the hydro-electric power station at Mactaquac, a fish hatchery at Mactaquac, another fish hatchery at Minto, and a strip-mining coal operation at Minto.

ALSO QUEBEC

The second of these trips was to the Gaspé in Quebec where they visited Mt. Jacques Cartier and Mt. Albert; the open-pit mining operation and copper smelter of the Gaspé Copper Corporation at Murdochville; and Bonaventure Island on the Gaspé coast.

MOSQUITO TRAPS

At the Tantramar Marsh, biology students had set up five mosquito traps in a row. Each of these traps was of a different color; white, yellow, red, blue, and black; otherwise, they were identical.

These traps were checked periodically and the number of each species of mosquito that was caught in each trap was recorded. It was found that the number of mosquitoes caught in these traps depended to a very large extent on the color of the trap.

BLACK MOST ATTRACTIVE

The white trap attracted the least number of mosquitoes and the

black trap attracted the most. The number of mosquitoes caught in each trap increased in the same order as I have listed them above.

Also here at the Tantramar Marsh, these biology students were catching small birds in a mist net. From each bird caught, a small sample of blood was taken and also a rectal smear was taken. Each bird was also banded and then it was released.

BLOOD SAMPLES

Each blood sample was checked for malarial bacteria which might be transmitted to the birds by mosquitoes.

Sheila explained that only the female mosquito bites and that she only bites once as she must have a blood meal before she can lay her eggs.

This blood meal may come from any species of bird or mammal.

At the North American Salmon Research Center, biologists were conducting genetic research studies on salmon and were crossing various strains of salmon taken from different rivers in N.B.

SALMON CENTER

Some of the salmon raised at this center had been released into the small stream that runs beside the center and a few of these released salmon had returned to this same small stream and been recaptured after spending some time at sea.

On the trip to Gaspé, half of the party climbed Mt. Jacques Cartier while the other half climbed Mt. Albert. They were hoping to find caribou on these mountains but none were sighted.

It was, however, a very interesting hike and Sheila had a number of good slides which she had taken while on top of Mt. Jacques Cartier.

FLAT MOUNTAIN TOP

The top of the mountain was fairly flat and looked like a different world as there were no trees and the vegetation was rather sparse.

Sheila said the caribou live in the valleys during the summer, but come to the top of the mountains for the winter. The reason for this is that the grazing is better in the valleys during the summer.

In the winter, when these valleys are full of snow, the tops of the mountains are swept bare by the strong winds that blow there.

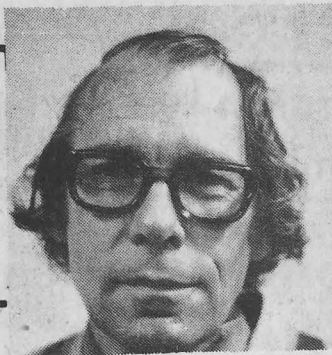
Thus the vegetation is exposed so the caribou can easily get at it.

STRONG WINDS

When they visited Bonaventure Island, the winds were too strong for their boat to land safely, but they were able to circle around the island and observe at close range the many gannets and other sea birds which nest there on the many rock ledges to be found on this island's high rocky shores.

HIGH

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Miramichi Wildlife Harry Walker

Predacious Diving Beetle

Last June I wrote about the Giant Water Bugs that Mel Scott of Strathadam reported flying around the lights at Heath Steele's No. 5 shaft headframe.

A short time after this Mrs Stafford Sutherland of Newcastle telephoned me about two large bugs that were flying around her home. These turned out to be two more of these Giant Water Bugs.

On Oct. 18, Mrs Address Pelletier, who recently moved from Whitneyville to Ferry Road, brought me a large insect which she had found in her yard. It was a Predacious Diving Beetle. Although a Predacious Diving Beetle has no resemblance to a Giant Water Bug, nevertheless in character and habits these insects are quite similar; and much of what was said about the Giant Water Bug could also be said about the Predacious Diving Beetle.

The beetle that Mrs Pelletier brought to me was oval in outline and about 1½ inches in length; his back was uniformly rounded and smooth, while his underside was fairly flat.

Viewed from the top he was all black except for a narrow light brown rim on the outer edge of his wings: viewed from the bottom he was a deep amber brown color and very shiny.

Being neat, streamlined, and shiny, he reminded me of a new car or snowmobile. Actually he was a rather handsome insect; something that most certainly could not be said about a Giant Water Bug.

LIVE IN PONDS

Like Giant Water Bugs, Predacious Diving Beetles spend most of their lives in ponds, lakes, or streams, but at night they will sometimes take off and fly to other bodies of water and during these flights they are sometimes attracted to lights. Also, like Giant Water Bugs, they will eat almost any other aquatic creature that they are able to overpower including small fish.

By the way, a beetle is not a bug nor is a bug a beetle, at least not according to Entomologists nor according to Webster's Dictionary. Webster says that a beetle is any insect belonging to the order Coleoptera and that a bug is any insect belonging to the order Hemiptera. (I don't know what that means, I simply copied it out of the

dictionary.)

A beetle has two pairs of wings, the outer pair being hard, and the inner pair being membranous. The purpose of the outer pair is simply to act as a sheath to protect the delicate inner pair when they are not being used in flight. The hard outer wings, when folded, almost always meet in a straight line down the middle of the back.

ON THE BACK

A bug, on the other hand, may have no wings at all, or if he has wings, then the outer or fore wings are usually hardened only throughout the upper half, the lower half being membranous like the inner wings.

In any case, if the bug has wings, then the wings will not meet in a straight line down the middle of the back as in the case of a beetle but instead they will cross one another forming an x on the bug's back.

With the aid of a magnifying glass I examined the beetle that Mrs Pelletier had brought to me. I found that there were claws on the ends of its front two pairs of legs whereas its hind legs were flattened at the ends giving them the appearance of seal flippers.

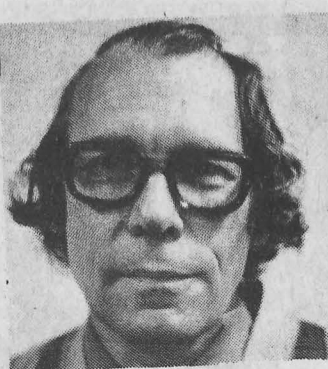
When put into a sink full of water, this beetle was obviously right at home and swam around using its hind legs like a pair of oars. From this later observation I was able to determine that it was a Predacious Diving Beetle rather than a Water Scavenger Beetle; Predacious Diving Beetles, when swimming, use their opposite legs in unison, whereas Water Scavenger Beetles use their opposite legs alternately.

Predacious Diving Beetles and Water Scavenger Beetles look very much alike and if I had not had a living specimen it would have been more difficult to determine which of the above two groups of beetles this one belonged to.

NUMEROUS SPECIES

According to the information that I have there are about 2,100 species of Predacious Diving Beetles in the world and about 1,800 species of Water Scavenger Beetles.

I have not attempted to determine which species of Predacious Diving Beetle this one is. If I did accomplish this, the species would probably have a Latin name but no English name. At this stage I am content just to call it a Predacious Diving Beetle.



Miramichi Wildlife Harry Walker

Sharks, raccoons, and skunks

There are many different species of sharks and most of these tend to live in warm tropical waters; however, the Greenland Shark lives in the Arctic.

Peter Freuchen, in his book "The Arctic Year," says that the Greenland Shark is undoubtedly the laziest fish known in the Arctic and is easy to catch. He says that they may reach a maximum length of 15 feet but that they can be caught on a surprisingly thin line. Unlike most sharks, they live close to the bottom, usually at depths greater than 600 feet. These sharks are caught on a simple hook and line with some chain just above the hook. Apparently the shark on the hook is very often eaten by his companions and frequently a second shark is caught on the same hook.

Greenlanders catch about 50,000 of these sharks annually so they must be quite plentiful. They are caught primarily for the oil in their livers; this being used to make a fine lubricating oil. The shark meat is fed to dogs. The meat of the Greenland Shark however contains an oil which can make dogs or other animals sick or intoxicated.

Freuchen says that if dogs are used to a shark diet and are well fed, then shark meat has no effect on them; however, if the dogs are very thin and are worn out from a long trip, then if they are fed shark meat, this can be fatal to them. He says also that Ravens and Fulmars, that have eaten freshly killed sharks, are sometimes scarcely able to fly or may fly very erratically.

Freuchen says that this shark meat can be prepared for human consumption by boiling it in three changes of water but he does not say what it tastes like. He does say however, to dispose of the first change of water so that the dogs won't drink it, for if they do, it will kill them.

Apparently it is only in recent years that Greenlanders have been fishing for these sharks. They formerly left these sharks alone because of a superstition that these sharks could think almost like a human being and were capable of avenging each other's death.

RACCOONS NOT SHY

On the evening of Oct. 7 I received a phone call from Herbie Kelly of Newcastle. He said that he had two very tame raccoons in his yard. I went over to his place, but by the time that I had arrived, the raccoons could not be found.

Herbie had put five or six bags of garbage in the back of his truck which was parked beside his house. The raccoons had located the garbage, climbed up into the truck and torn the garbage bags apart. Herbie said that he was able to stand on the side of the truck and take a flash picture of them. Apparently this did not disturb them as they simply carried on with their job of going through the

garbage.

Darren Kelly, Herbie's son, said that he and his brother Geoffrey stood on the side of the truck and watched the raccoons through the bars of the truck's rack and that Geoffrey even reached out and touched one of them without disturbing it.

SKUNK AND DOG

Vernon Wayne of Troutbrook told me that he has had a skunk coming to his place and eating with his dog. He said that he has seen the dog and the skunk eating out of the same dish together on several occasions recently.

Since this seemed like unusual dog behavior, I asked Vern what kind of a dog he had. He said she was a small spayed female of no particular breed; just a dog.

Occasionally I hear of skunks being seen with jars over their heads. It seems that they get into garbage and stick their heads into jars in order to lick out the contents and are then unable to get their heads back out again. Recently one was in this predicament on the mine road.

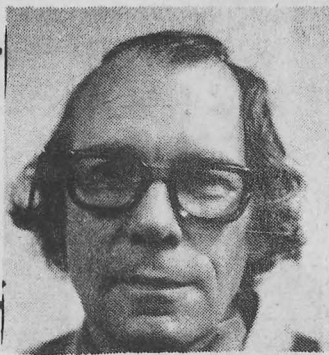
This past summer Ward McDonald of Newcastle saw a skunk in this same predicament at Baie Du Vin. He took a stone and hit the jar with the first shot and broke it off of the skunk's head. The skunk appeared to be unhurt and did not cause any stink.

Once, my aunt in Ontario, Mrs Ted Licence of Stayner, saw a skunk with a jar on its head. She went over to it, pulled the jar off if its head and got into no difficulties of any kind.

I don't know whether skunks will always react in the same way if you rescue them from such a situation or not.

NEXT MEETING

Miramichi Naturalists Club
Wednesday, Nov. 16 at 8 p.m.
Miramichi Valley High School. Dr. LeHeup will present a program with slides of local birds and plants. Anyone interested in nature will be welcome.



Miramichi Wildlife Harry Walker

Barracudas attack humans

The Blue Shark is indigo-blue or gray-blue on the back and is white or very pale gray below. It can attain a length of about 20 feet but it is usually only about 10 feet long. The Blue Shark is considered to be dangerous to man, but not so dangerous as the White Shark, nor the small Gray or Australian Shark. It is these latter two species which are responsible for most of the attacks on humans.

BARRACUDA ATTACKS

It might also be pointed out that many of the so-called shark attacks on humans, are really attacks by Barracudas, a ferocious fish with formidable teeth that lives in tropical regions of the oceans. Barracudas are long thin fish that look much like pike and the largest of which reach a length of eight feet.

The dangers from shark attacks are much exaggerated, and, as Peter Freuchen points out in his "Book of the Seven Seas," a thousand times as many people are killed while driving to and from swimming beaches than are killed by sharks while these same people are swimming in the ocean.

CAN BE DESTRUCTIVE

The Blue Shark is however very destructive when it gets into a shoal of food fishes and it will sometimes pursue them right into a fisherman's net.

According to a booklet put out by the Hunstman Marine Laboratory called "Common Canadian Atlantic Fishes" and written by W.B. Scott and S.N. Messiek, the Blue Shark is found all around the world, inhabiting all the warmer parts of the oceans, and along the Atlantic coast it can be found anywhere from the Grand Banks of Newfoundland to Uruguay in South America, but it only occurs occasionally in Canadian waters as a summer visitor. Also according to this same booklet, the Blue Shark is of no economic importance.

HAIRY WOODPECKER

On Oct. 16, I received a call from Douglas Holmes of Newcastle. He said that a bird had flown against a window and had hurt itself and that he did not know what to do with it. I went to Doug's place and found that the bird was a male Hairy Woodpecker.

The Hairy Woodpecker is a black

and white woodpecker with a broad white stripe down the middle of the back. The male has a small area of bright red on the back of his head which the female lacks.

Another woodpecker, the Downy, is colored almost identically like the Hairy, but it is a smaller bird and has a much shorter bill. The Hairy Woodpecker is almost as big as a Robin and has a bill that is almost as long as its head; whereas, the Downy is not much bigger than a sparrow and has a very short bill for a woodpecker; not much longer than a sparrow's.

RECUPERATED

By the time that I had arrived, the bird seemed to have recuperated. He would not eat anything that was offered to him, but he started flying around the room and landed on a counter top where he decided to sample Dora's birthday cake which was sitting there covered by saran wrap.

We then let him out through the door but he did not at first seem to realize that he was free and just stayed on the door frame. Doug took a piece of cooked hamburger out to him. He took a couple of pecks at it and then flew away.


BEAR SCARE

Before I left Doug told me about an experience which he had had when he was a boy of about 12 or 13 years of age. He said that he and his grandmother, the late Minnie Stewart of Matthew's Settlement, were out picking wild raspberries at the time. Her grandmother, whom Doug described as a very small woman, was walking along a windfall through the berry patch and when she came to the end of the windfall, she stepped off it onto what she thought was a stump but which turned out to be a bear sleeping underneath the berry bushes. Doug said that the bear let out a loud squeal, just like a pig, and then ran as fast as it could into the bush.

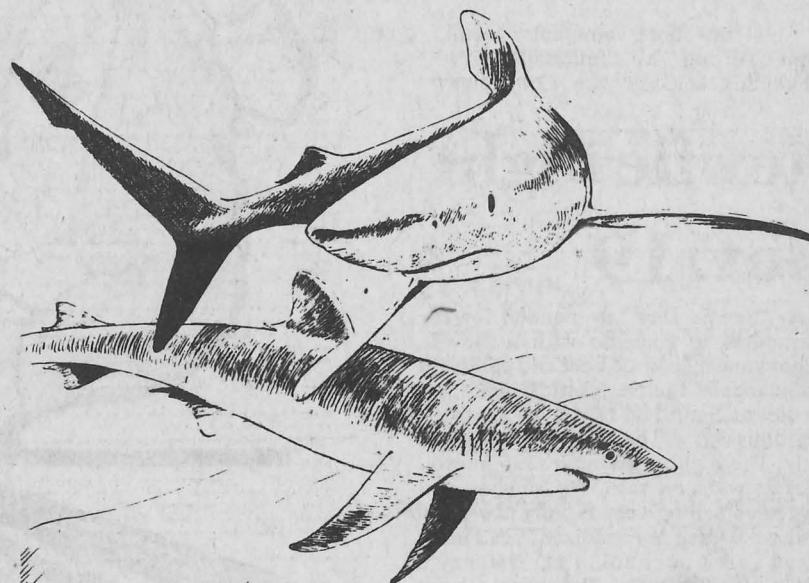
Doug said that he was only a few feet away from his grandmother when this happened and that to say that he was frightened would be very much an understatement. He said that there were no more berries picked that day as he and his grandmother headed for home without delays. He said that he did not know who was most frightened, he, his grandmother or the bear.

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PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA

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BLUE SHARK ⁽²¹⁾



The Blue Shark is one of the most abundant and far-ranging of all sharks and is a prolific breeder. Females sometimes litter as many as 70 pups. This is a slimy built fish with a 7 ft. specimen weighing only about 70 lb. Regarded by anglers as a sport fish, the current world angling record is 11' 6" and 410 lb.

Sometimes known as the blue whaler because of its frequent presence at the whale kill, the blue shark does not have the reputation of being as dangerous to man as other sharks, of being unpredictable and, more than likely, he is one human victim.

Nature trail at South Esk

LARGEST SPECIES

The Whale Shark is the largest living fish, reaching a length of 60 or 70 feet. With the exception of some of the largest species of whales, there is no other creature in the world that is as large as the Whale Shark.

The Whale Shark is easily distinguished from other monsters of the deep by the very obvious round white or yellowish spots on its back and sides. These spots stand out plainly against the dark gray or brown color of the rest of the shark's back and sides.

Despite the Whale Shark's large size, it is harmless to man and, according to "The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Animal History" it lives on small invertebrates and fishes. It has a large mouth but very small teeth. It has a strainer-like apparatus at the gills and swims, with its mouth open, through schools of little fish or other small creatures. In this way it strains its food out of the water in the same way that the baleen whales strain plankton and small crustaceans from the sea water. The only difference is that the baleen whales have a finer strainer than the Whale Sharks.

HIT BY SHIPS

The Whale Shark lives in all tropical seas and is occasionally found in temperate seas. It is sometimes found in schools and is often near the surface and is so lazy or fearless that it is sometimes hit by ships.

SNOW BUNTINGS

During the last few days I have received two phone calls reporting sightings of Snow Buntings. Alma Smith of Newcastle saw a flock of these birds on the Croft Elementary School grounds and Leo Thibodeau of Newcastle saw a flock on the Ritchie Wharf. Both were impressed by the beauty of these little white birds.

Snow Buntings have some black on the wings and tail and also some sandy colored markings, but the predominating colour is snow white, which makes these birds very conspicuous now when there is no snow on the ground. (Perhaps there will be snow on the ground by the time that this comes out in print.) Alma said that the birds took off, circled around, and then lit on the ground again, and she commented on the fact, that while in flight, the birds all banked in perfect unison each time that they changed direction. Leo said that there were about 75 birds in the flock at the Ritchie Wharf.

Lemuel McDonald of Newcastle told me, that while he was putting styrofoam insulation under the floor of his cottage this fall, that a weasel kept playing hide and seek with him or perhaps it would be better called Peek-a-Boo. At any rate, Lem said, that each time that he threw something at it, it would disappear for a little while only to reappear again peeking over a board or some other bit of cover only a few feet away.

NATURE TRAIL

At the last meeting of the Miramichi Naturalist Club on Nov. 16, Vernon Goodfellow of South Esk Road spoke to the club about the nature trail that is to be built in this district. Vernon is chairman of a committee that was appointed to establish this trail. Other members of the trail committee are: William Sewart of South Esk Road, Benedict Donovan of Chatham, Dianne White of Newcastle, and

Harry Walker of Newcastle.

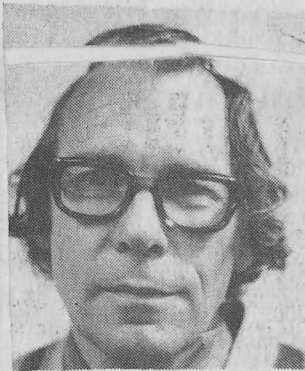
An LIP grant has been approved to finance the building of this trail which it is expected will be used primarily by the schools of the district. Similar trails have been set up in many other parts of our province and apparently they are being used to good advantage by schools. It is expected that classes will be brought to the trail by bus and taught to recognize the various trees, plants, birds, etc. along the trail.

This trail will be set up on the South Esk Road, on the same federal Crown land on which the fish hatchery is now located. Initially the trail will be about two miles long.

Work on the project is to start immediately. Besides cutting the trail, the project will also involve the creation of a parking lot; erection of several foot bridges, walkways over wet areas, and a small shelter; the making of signs to identify and explain something about the various plants, etc. along the trail. The trail will traverse a variety of habitat including a salt marsh at the mouth of Stewart Brook, a lowland flood plain along the brook, high ground and a bog; it will also pass through forests at various stages of growth.

Also at this meeting of the Miramichi Naturalist Club, Don LeHeup of Newcastle showed some nature slides. Don had taken some of these slides here in New Brunswick and others during a vacation trip to Florida. Don had some excellent slides of wild flowers and birds.

E 8—B North Shore Leader, November 23, 1977



Miramichi
Wildlife
Harry Walker

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

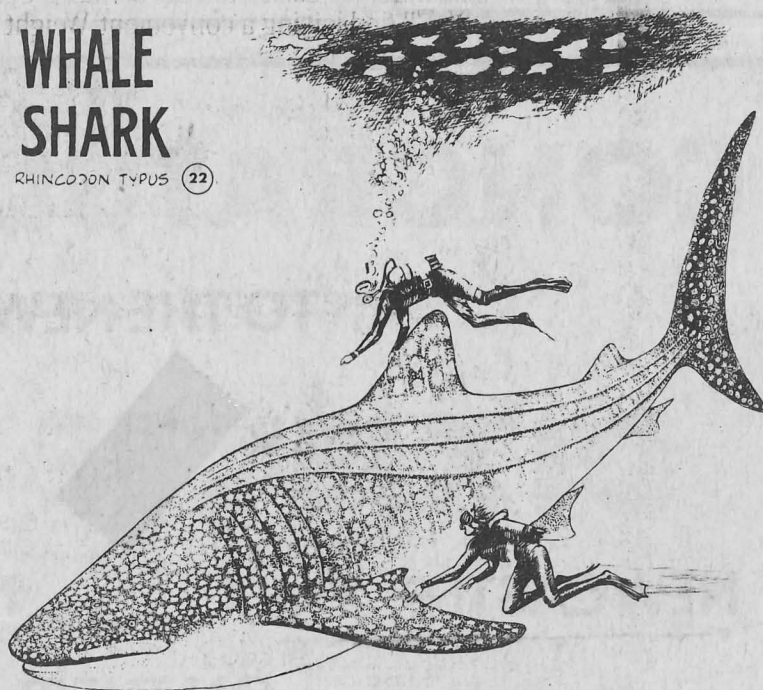
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National Museums
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WHALE SHARK

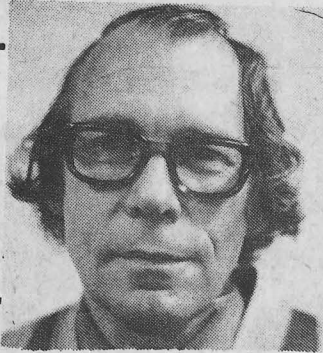
RHINCODON TYPUS (22)



The Whale Shark is the largest known fish. It is known to reach 50 ft. in length and is thought to reach 60 ft. or more. Its weight can exceed 10 tons. This creature ranges all tropical waters, and infrequently strays into temperate ones. It is mainly solitary in nature, and despite its impressive appearance, is harmless to man. Scuba divers and underwater swimmers have clambered unmolested over its body.

The Whale Shark feeds chiefly on plankton, but also consumes sardines and anchovies. It is an egg layer, but to date only 1 egg case of this great fish has been found. It contained a perfect 14½" replica of its enormous parent.

Nov 30



Miramichi Wildlife Harry Walker

Although the Bald Eagle has become rather rare in New Brunswick during recent years, the Golden Eagle is still rarer; nonetheless, the Golden Eagle is occasionally seen in this province, but I know of no sightings here in the Miramichi area. It probably nested in New Brunswick at one time, but this is not definitely established. W. Austin Squires, in his book "The Birds of New Brunswick" says that it was still breeding in two counties of Maine during recent years.

FEMALES LARGER

A Golden Eagle averages slightly larger than a Bald Eagle and a large female will have a wing spread of over seven feet. As in all hawks and owls, the females are larger than the males.

Golden Eagles are dark brown in color with the brown shading into a golden color on the back of the head and neck. They are easily distinguished from mature Bald Eagles because of the latter's white head and tail, but they are difficult to distinguish from immature Bald Eagles.

The Golden Eagle however, has a white patch at the base of the tail, when seen from above, and this is distinctive. The Golden Eagle's legs are feathered right to the toes unlike the Bald Eagle's, but this is not likely to be of much help in identifying it in the field.

LIVED FOR 46 YEARS

How long most Golden Eagles live is not known, but one that was kept in a zoo lived for 46 years. They mate for life but soon find a new mate if one of the pair dies. Unlike most birds, they molt only once every two years. They are reported to be faster and better fliers than Bald Eagles; they flap less and soar more.

Although Golden Eagles are strong fliers once they are airborne, they nonetheless have some difficulty on the take off, unless they are in a position to launch themselves over the edge of a cliff or off of the top of a tall tree. Experiments have shown that they are unable to take off from the ground carrying a load of more than 8 or 10 lbs.

19. TRAINED BY FALCONERS

Golden Eagles are reported to be still trained and used by falconers in the mountainous regions along the Soviet-Chinese border. Here they are used to catch white foxes and carry them back to their trainers. In view of the above mentioned experiments, they must be a rather small species of

fox.

Golden Eagles seem to prefer to live in mountainous country where they can build their nest high up on a cliff. They have a remarkably keen sense of vision, and here they can survey a large area of the surrounding landscape. The nest, which is made of sticks and then lined with finer material, is used year after year, and it gradually gets bigger as the eagles add new material to it each nesting season. Here they usually lay two eggs to a clutch.

In the Book of Knowledge it is stated that Golden Eagles sometimes build two nests about one-quarter mile apart and then use each nest on alternate years. I suppose that no one knows for sure why they do this but it sounds like a good housekeeping practice as it at least gives the bedding a chance to be aired out. Occasionally Golden Eagles build their nest in a tree in which case it may eventually get so big that it breaks the tree down.

DIET DIFFERS

The Golden Eagle's diet differs considerably from that of the Bald Eagle which lives mainly on fish. The Golden Eagle lives primarily on marmots, rabbits, and gophers; but he also catches grouse and other birds, and at times resorts to eating carrion. The Golden Eagle will sometimes carry off the young lamb of a Big Horn Sheep if the mother does not guard it carefully enough. Sometimes this also happens to the young kids of the Mountain Goats.

The Bald Eagle is primarily a scavenger rather than a predator whereas the opposite seems to be the case with the Golden Eagle.

SAW EAGLE

In the last issue of the N.B. Naturalist, it is reported that David Christie and Mary Majka saw an adult Golden Eagle at Mary's Point in Albert County on March 20th of this year. This is the only Golden Eagle sighting to be reported in the N.B. Naturalist in the past year. About one year ago, on Nov. 14, 1976, one was seen at Riverside but this was probably the same bird as Riverside is only a few miles from Mary's Point.

In the last issue of Nature Canada, it is reported, that in the Laurentide Provincial Park in Quebec, three and possibly five Golden Eagles have been killed from eating poisoned bait which has been set out by Park officials in an effort to control wolves in the park. According to this report only one wolf is known to have been poisoned so far.

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GOLDEN EAGLE

AQUILA CHRYSAETOS (23)

The range of this bird extends throughout most of the northern hemisphere.

A splendid flier, the Golden Eagle reaches speeds of 150-200 mph. when diving. Most of its prey is taken on the ground, mammals such as foxes, rabbits, hares etc., but large birds such as geese and cranes are occasionally struck in mid-air. The eagle does not, contrary to legend, prey to any extent on domestic animals.



Nests are built on crags or trees and are sometimes occupied for generations. The young hatch at intervals of several days and in many cases where 2 young hatch, the elder may kill the younger.

Miramichi Wildlife Harry Walker

Dec 7/77

Peregrine Falcon—the noble one

Much has been written about falcons and falconry. Throughout Europe and Asia falconry has been the sport of kings, barons, knights, and the very rich. Kings and sultans kept falconers to train and care for their falcons and other birds of prey which were used for hunting. A good falcon could be sold at a price many times higher than that of a good horse.

Today falconry does not occupy the place of importance that it did in earlier ages, but it is still practiced to some extent in many parts of the world.

The most sought after of all the falcons were the Peregrine Falcon and the Gyrfalcon. Peregrine means traveler and gyr means circle and probably refers to the fact that it nests in a circle all around the edge of the Arctic Ocean.

TWO PHASES

In the eleventh century Greenland was generally known as "the land of the white falcon" rather than as Greenland. The Gyrfalcon comes in two phases, white and gray, and both colour phases can occur in the same brood.

The Peregrine Falcon, which was sometimes referred to as the Noble Falcon in Europe, is sometimes called the Duck Hawk here on this side of the Atlantic.

FASTEST BIRDS

Falcons are considered to be among the fastest birds on the wing and the Peregrine is the fastest of the falcons. Estimates of its speed seem to vary greatly, but Roger Tory Peterson in his book "Birds Over America" tells of an aviator who was in a dive with a small pursuit plane when he looked out of the window and saw a Peregrine pass him by as though the plane was standing still.

The Peregrine was diving at a flock of ducks that was flying below and he struck one of them. The aviator said that the plane was travelling at 175 miles per hour at the time and that the Peregrine seemed to be travelling at twice that speed.

ATTACK METHOD

The above incident illustrates the Peregrine's usual method of attack. It is very similar to the tactics used by fighter pilots and dive bombers during the war. Incidentally, it seems that many of the most ardent falconers of today were former air force pilots.

SMALL BUT FIERCE

The Peregrine Falcon is only about the size of a crow, but it is very strong and fierce. It has long pointed wings which are partly folded in against the body during a diving attack.

For nesting it prefers a ledge high up on a rock cliff which overlooks some body of water. In such locations, it lives mainly on ducks and shore birds. Other Peregrines have taken to nesting on suitable projections on the side of tall skyscrapers in large cities.

Here they live mainly on Pigeons and Starlings. Sea gulls are also sometimes caught by Peregrines.

MALE SMALLER

In a recent article in Nature Canada, Dick Dekker, who has made an extensive study of the Peregrine, says that they have other methods of attack besides their spectacular diving method. This is especially true of the males who are smaller and less powerful than the females, but who are more agile. (The male is only about $\frac{2}{3}$ the size of the female). In some of these attacks they simply chase their victims until they are exhausted. Dekker also says, that despite the Peregrine's speed, its attacks by no means always succeed, but that its intended victim often out-manoeuvres it. In fact, out of 414 attacks that Dekker witnessed the outcome of, only 7.3% of them were successful. In Sweden, Gustaf Rudebeck made a similar study and came up with almost the same figure 7.5%.

Intended victims out-manoeuvre Peregrines in various ways; by abruptly changing direction a split-second before they are hit, by taking cover on the ground, or by diving underwater. (Peregrines almost always catch their victims in mid-air).

ON EVERY CONTINENT

Peregrines are found on every continent in the world and on many of the larger islands, but they are never found in large numbers anywhere and they have been especially scarce in recent years.


Joan Mahabir of North Esk Boom Road had one crash into a large window in the breeze-way of her home. It was shaken-up badly enough that it lay on the ground outside for some time; long enough for Joan to get her bird book and pick out all the characteristics necessary to identify it as a Peregrine Falcon.

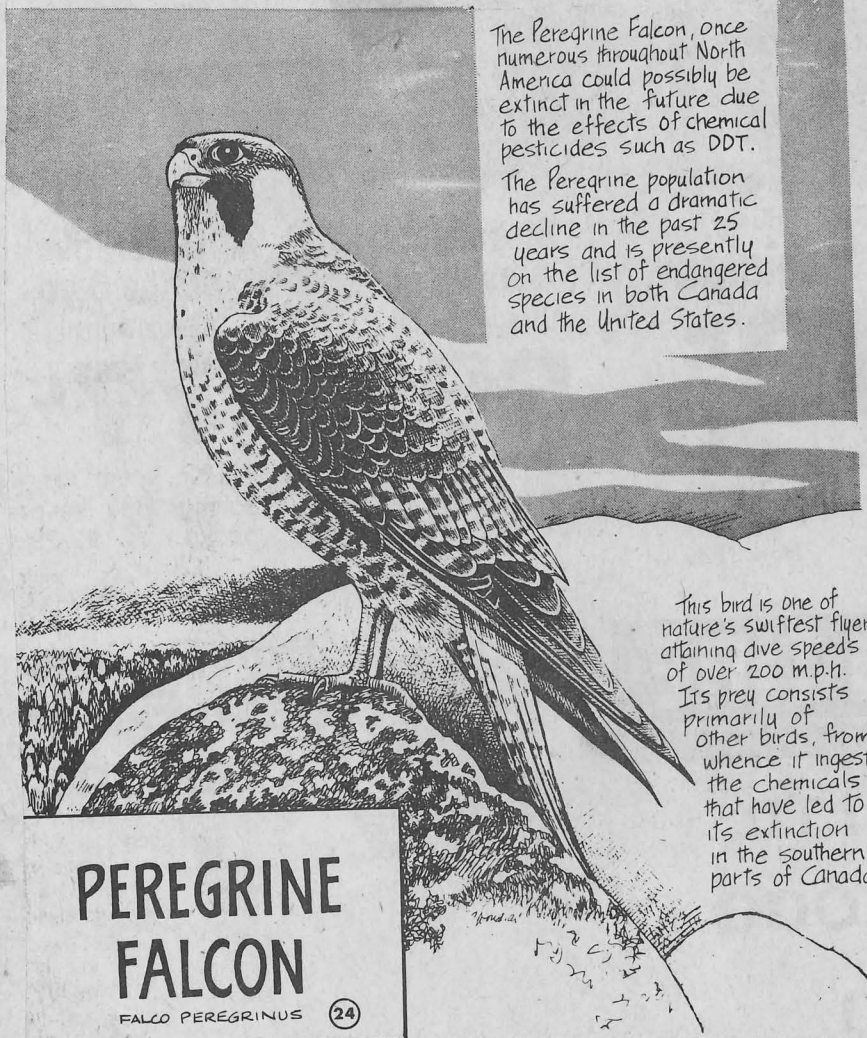
Joan's son, Krishna Mahabir, who started to Croft Elementary School in September, has been a naturalist ever since he has been able to walk. Joan says that he is interested in anything that crawls, walks or flies. I was also very pleased to hear that he is also interested in my articles which Joan says that she reads to her children. I did not realize that I had an audience in this age group.

I have seen some of the snakes, salamanders and beetles that Krishna has found and brought home. His mother has made a rule that he can keep any creature he brings home, for one day and then he must let it go again.

Krishna keeps these creatures in a large transparent plastic bowl with some earth in the bottom of it. Here, he and his sister Chandra and his little brother Ramon can watch them. Joan said that they were interested in the article about the Predacious Diving Beetle as they were sure that that was what one of the large beetles was that Krishna had brought in. This beetle had been attracted to an outside light.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED BY: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES, OTTAWA  National Museums
Canada



The Peregrine Falcon, once numerous throughout North America could possibly be extinct in the future due to the effects of chemical pesticides such as DDT.

The Peregrine population has suffered a dramatic decline in the past 25 years and is presently on the list of endangered species in both Canada and the United States.

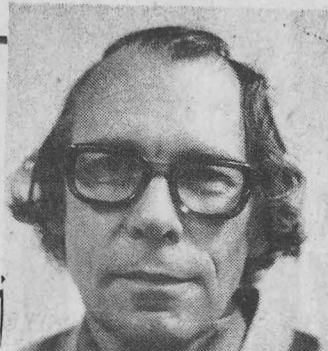
This bird is one of nature's swiftest fliers, attaining dive speeds of over 200 m.p.h. Its prey consists primarily of other birds, from whence it ingests the chemicals that have led to its extinction in the southern parts of Canada.

PEREGRINE FALCON

FALCO PERGRINUS

24

Dec 14/77



Miramichi Wildlife

Harry Walker

This past summer, Joseph Young of Black River has been clearing some land with the intention of draining it and putting it under cultivation. While doing this work, Joe discovered that there was an unusual type of rock on this land. I visited Joe and he took me to see it. We both put on long rubber boots and Joe took a shovel.

DARK POROUS MATERIAL

The place to which Joe led me was an area that had been covered with tamaracks; and scattered over the ground were little mounds of earth. Joe shovelled into several of these mounds and turned the ground over. In each case, the ground was composed of a dark brown, crumbly, porous material and scattered through it were some harder pieces that looked very much like clinkers from a coal furnace. Joe said that there was some similar material showing, up in a gravel pit about 2 or 3 miles away.

I took some of the clinker-like pieces and showed them to two of the Heath Steele geologists, Joe Deveau and Don LeHeup. They both suggested that I get iron and manganese assays run on them. They assayed 43.20% iron and 2.18% manganese.

I have been running shore bird surveys along the shore at Point Aux Carr and I have often seen pieces of petrified wood along a certain section of the beach there, and on this same section of beach I found a rock containing material that looked very similar to that composing the rocks on Joseph Young's property.

This new rock, however, consisted of rounded modules of the dark brown mineral held together by a matrix of light coloured clayey or sandy material.

I broke the rock apart and picked out some of the dark brown pieces and had them assayed. The assay results were 21.25% iron and 16.35% manganese.

Joseph Young's property would probably be about 4 or 5 miles from where I found the rock on the shore at Point Aux Carr.

NOT A PURE MINERAL

The two samples of rock mentioned above, are composed of a mixture of what is called Bog Iron Ore and Bog Manganese. Bog Iron Ore or Limonite is not a pure mineral but rather a fine grained

mixture of various iron oxides. Similarly Bog Manganese is also an impure mixture consisting primarily of manganese oxides.

According to geologists, Bog Iron and Bog Manganese are both formed in much the same way. The iron and manganese are carried into the bog in soluble form by water issuing at the surface as springs; then the iron and manganese are precipitated as a result of various physical or chemical changes such as evaporation or mixing with organic compounds formed from decaying plants. The resulting deposit may consist primarily of either Bog Iron or of Bog Manganese, or it may be a mixture of both.

NO ECONOMIC VALUE

These bog deposits are quite common and are seldom of any economic value. They are too small and too low grade and are generally difficult to upgrade by simple milling methods.

There are 24 known Bog Manganese deposits in New Brunswick but I have no figure on how many Bog Iron deposits there are. The only attempt to exploit any of these N.B. deposits was made in 1947, when Bog Manganese was shipped from bogs at Renous and Grainfield to a plant in St. Stephen. The attempt was short-lived and only lasted for about a year as it proved to be uneconomic.

There is a Bog Manganese deposit at Hillsborough, N.B. that is six feet thick and covers an area of 17 acres.

Besides the 24 Bog Manganese deposits in the province, there is also an equal number of hard rock deposits, the largest ones being at Woodstock and St. Leonard's.

To my knowledge the only Bog Iron deposit to be worked successfully in Canada was a deposit on the St. Maurice River, a few miles north of Trois Rivières, Quebec.

This was the first heavy industry ever established in Canada. The deposit was first discovered away back in 1670. A plant was built and operated intermittently for a period of 150 years, from 1733 to 1883.

During this time it was operated by several different companies or agencies; some of which made a fortune and some of which went broke. Some of the products produced at this plant were stoves, iron plate, cannons, and bullets.



Miramichi Wildlife Dec. 21/77

Harry Walker

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

On Boxing Day, Dec. 26, the Miramichi Naturalist Club will be holding their annual Christmas Bird Count. If you would like to take part in this count, give me a call at 622-2108. If you can't tell a crow from a chickadee, that's okay, we will put you in a party with someone who can identify birds. Also if you have a bird feeder and would like to have the birds coming to it counted, give me a call.

The Wolverine (French Carcojon) is a remarkable and unusual animal in many ways, but not popular with people who are familiar with it. He is strong, ferocious, bold, and cunning.

The Wolverine is one of the largest members of the Weasel Family and a large male may weigh up to 35 pounds. He is heavy set and has short thick legs, long sharp claws, small ears, and a short snout. He is dark brown in colour, except for a broad yellowish band running across either side of his body. These two yellowish bands run from the front shoulders and meet one another at the base of the tail.

The Wolverine walks with his head and tail held low to the ground and with his back forming a high arch. He is covered with long coarse hair under which is a dense underfur; and if his short bushy tail were taken from him, he would look like a small bear.

VALUED FUR

Wolverine fur is very much valued by Indians and Eskimos for trimming the hoods and sleeves of parkas. Other furs, when used for this purpose, will mat and freeze to the face and wrists, whereas Wolverine fur will not.

For its size, the Wolverine is one of the most powerful animals in the world and it is claimed that it will defend its food against the attack of a Timber Wolf or even a Grizzly Bear.

The Wolverine is also credited with amazing intelligence or cunning and will sometimes follow a trapper's trail around a trap line. As he does this, he eats any animals which he finds caught in the traps, and he also sets off other traps in order to remove the bait from them. He can usually spring traps without getting caught himself or if he does get caught, he can usually pull the trap off without sustaining any serious injury.

Sometimes the Wolverine will hide the trapper's traps, and sometimes he will get into the trapper's cabin; once in the cabin, he will tear everything apart and leave the place in shambles.

If a Wolverine establishes

himself on a trapper's trap line, then the trapper must either catch the Wolverine or move to another location.

ENORMOUS APPETITE

The Wolverine is also credited with an enormous appetite although this has been greatly exaggerated. Indians, Eskimos, and Lapps, all seem to be of the opinion that a Wolverine's appetite is never satisfied. For this reason the European wolverine is generally known as the Glutton and the American Wolverine is sometimes called the American Glutton.

Also, these three native peoples, seem to think that the Wolverine is more or less an incarnation of the devil. It seems to be impossible for these people to cache a deer carcass or any other food supply in such a way that the Wolverine won't get it. His keen sense of smell soon detects where it is hidden and then nothing will deter him until he gets it. If food is cached under heavy boulders or under a pile of big logs, the Wolverine will somehow get between the rocks or logs and force them apart. If food is tied out at the end of a small branch or twig, the Wolverine will go out after it and if the branch breaks and he falls to the ground he doesn't mind that anyway as he is too tough to be hurt by such a fall.

CAN KILL LARGE ANIMALS

The Wolverine is primarily a scavenger living on the remains of wolf or bear kills and other dead animals; however, when necessary he can kill large animals such as caribou. He may stalk the caribou for days waiting for an opportunity to jump on its back. The Wolverine also kills mountain goats, porcupines, beavers, and many smaller animals. He also eats fish and a variety of roots and berries.

The Wolverine is a solitary animal. The male associates with the female for only a short period during the mating season and then spends the rest of the year wandering all alone. He ranges over a large territory and will drive any other male from this territory. The only groups of Wolverines that are seen together are the female and her young.

The Wolverine is found in the northern parts of North America, Europe, and Asia. In Canada it is found both on the northern barrens and in the northern forests but it has been much reduced in numbers to what it was formerly. Also its range has been much reduced, it having disappeared from the southern parts of its range. It disappeared from New Brunswick around 1850.