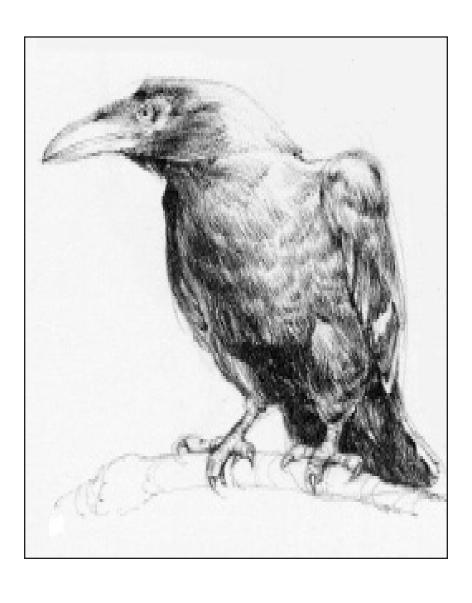
### Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists

# **NEWS**

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

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

reserves, wilderness areas, heritage rivers, and other such protected areas.

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

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

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

#### **FNSN**

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Sport and Recreation Commission

### From the editor

Want to enjoy a little summertime activity in these waning days of winter? In this issue, we take in some field trips enjoyed by participants of the 1997 FNSN conference in Halifax. Some folks from the more rural parts of Nova Scotia were pleasantly surprised by the abundance of nature well within the boundaries of Metro. McNabs Island for example, though far from being a secret, is not exactly overrun by human activity nowadays, and the island, surrounded on three sides by city, can be a delightful and fruitful destination for naturalists. Get a taste on pages 6–8.

On the back page, you will see a reference to a project to be undertaken by your Federation – a province-wide herpetology atlas. Tom Herman, in his address to the 1997 AGM (see page 13), referred to the importance of sponsoring field-based activities. The herp project will be a marvellous opportunity for all Nova Scotia naturalists to get out and put those observational skills to use. It will also be a great vehicle for involving schools – frogs, snakes, turtles, and salamanders are right up the kids' alley. Watch for details.

One of the big advantages of a small province like Nova Scotia is the relative ease of getting to all its parts. We have a wonderful diversity of habitat, most of it accessible within a few hours from almost anywhere in the province. We also enjoy a relatively large community of academic, research, and field-based people in the natural sciences. This coming summer, we all have the opportunity to learn more about our own region and to contribute to the knowledge base via two major meetings. I refer, of course, to our own annual meeting in Antigonish the first weekend in June and the always-popular Canadian Nature Federation conference in Sackville, New Brunswick, the

### AGM field trip: Fleming Park flowers and beaver pond

by Regine Maass

As we met in the parking lot below the Memorial Tower, we heard a loon call in praise of a glorious morning.

Regine gave a brief description of the history of this heavily used urban park. The 95 acres of land were donated by Sir Sanford Fleming to the city of Halifax for recreational use. He proposed the construction of the tower to commemorate 150 years of representative government in Nova Scotia.

We walked down to the shore with its marine environment. The park has sandy beaches for swimming, playing areas, and picnic tables. In the distance, we could see McNabs Island.

Our walk led us into the woods around Frog Pond. This second-growth woodland is a typical Atlantic coastal forest with a lot of rain, high humidity, relatively mild winters, and short, cool summers. We saw lots of bloomers: Rhodora canadense, pink lady's slipper (Cypripedium acaule), Clintonia borealis, wild lily-of-the-valley (Maianthemum canadense), starflower (Trientalis borealis), blueberry (Vaccinium), bunchberry (Cornus canadensis), and cuckoo-flower (Cardamine pratensis). We also identified white pine (Pinus strobus), young beeches



(Fagus grandifolia), red spruce (Picea rubens), birches (Betula), witch hazel (Hamamelis virginiana), hobblebush (Viburnum alnifolium), jewel weed (Impatiens pallida), sarsaparilla (Aralia hispeda), rattlesnake plantain (Goodyera). Alien plants included coltsfoot (Tussilago farfara), dandelion (Taraxacum officinale), and Japanese knotweed (Polygonum cuspidatum).

Large boulders are witnesses of the ice that shaped this landscape during the ice ages.

We walked to the beaver dam and watched two beavers swimming and diving. A loon paid an early morning visit to the lake. Black ducks were nesting on large rocks in the lake.

In the winter, many people use the lake for skating and skiing. It offers

Regine Maass is a longtime resident of the Fleming Park area on the southwest shore of Northwest Arm, where she enjoys nature to the fullest.

### AGM field trip: Butterflying at Pockwok by Peter Payzant

Despite a pessimistic weather forecast, Sunday afternoon was warm and mostly sunny, ideal for butterfly watching. And, despite a gloomy forecast on the part of one of the trip leaders, there were good numbers of butterflies to be seen along the woods road that runs through the Pockwock watershed.

Spring azures (Celastrina argiolus) were abundant, but after observing one of them closely for a few minutes, co-leader Linda announced that we were actually looking at a silvery blue (Glaucopsyche lygdamus), our first for the year. After this, we encountered lots of silveries, and the few spring azures we saw were generally showing signs of wear. A few elfins (Incisalia) darted quickly away, so fast that we couldn't relocate them or sort out the exact species. We were luckier with some dusky wings - a close look confirmed that they were all dreamy dusky wings (Erynnisicelus) - what an evocative name! We also saw a few pinkedged sulphurs (Colias interior), three Canadian tiger swallowtails (Papilio canadensis), a few cabbage butterflies (Pieris rapae) and one anglewing (Polygonia) - a comma or guestion mark - which vanished into the

Peter and Linda Payzant were instrumental in producing the Nova Scotia Butterfly Checklist.

woods so quickly that we couldn't identify it.

In spite of the generally poor butterflying to be had this spring in Nova Scotia, this road turned out to be not so bad after all. There were also lots of dragonflies (kindly elucidated by Tom Herman), and even a few herps: a northern leopard frog (Rana pipiens) and several green frogs (Rana clamitans melanota). It was a fine af-

### AGM field trip: Birding Hammonds Plains

by Randy Lauff

Fulton Lavender led about a dozen hearty birders to the Hammonds Plains area. The overcast skies dampened down the singing of some birds, such as the Blackburnian warbler that barely showed itself. The walk proved to be very instructive, as participants had the chance to simultaneously compare the songs of closely related birds such as red-eyed and solitary vireos as well as three thrushes: hermit, Swainson's and veery. Our most common hearings were magnolia and black-headed green warblers. On the other end of the spectrum, we encountered only a few Canada warblers and one northern waterthrush. To cap off the walk, our provincial bird, the osprey, flew overhead. Thanks, Fulton.

Randy Lauff represents the Eastern Mainland Naturalists on the FNSN board.

# AGM McNabs Island field trip: Birding on McNabs Island

by Bob McDonald

Why is it that a trip to an island, even one in Halifax Harbour, seems so special? Perhaps it was because I hadn't visited McNabs for several years. From the start, three of our party – les amis – decided to set out on their own, leaving eight of us walking Garrison Road heading south.

Species heard outnumbered those seen, but this provided an opportunity to learn a few more warbler songs: American redstart, vellow-rumped, black-throated green, and Tennessee were evident along the road. The area around the marsh and McNabs Pond produced swallows of three species for sure (tree, barn, and bank) and more warblers: singing common yellowthroats and yellows everywhere. Common grackles and red-winged blackbirds harassed one another. Four ducklings accompanied their black duck mother, while a belted kingfisher attracted our attention with its staccato call.

Along the trail to Back Cove, an ovenbird gave its distinctive song but stayed well hidden. A raven croaked, a red-breasted nuthatch "yanked," and a ruby-throated hummingbird whizzed by. We stopped for a rest on the beach at Back Cove. Two osprey nests were active, one in a natural site, the other on a nesting platform near the wharf. We also saw double-crested cormorants and a great blue heron. A hermit

thrush sang from across the cove.

The return trip, retracing our path, provided good views of magnolia, yellow-rumped, and black-throated green warblers, and both male and female American redstarts. No rarities (no scarlet tanager), but a beautiful day – no bugs and good company.

As it turns out, the best bird of the day was not seen by the birding group. A sora called and responded to a tape of its call, according to a participant in the dragonfly expedition. In all, we saw and heard about 40 species – not bad for a four-hour

# AGM McNabs Island field trip: Dragonflies

by Randy Lauff

A misty morning at McNabs Island was the setting for a trip of high-hoped hikers all set for Paul Brunelle's offering of odonates. We marched to the marsh, saw seven (or so) skimmers (Libellula quadrimaculatus) and netted two teneral (recently emerged) damselflies (Ishnura verticalis, Enallagma). Paul predicted the paucity of prize species to be due to the cool spring. He proceeded to look for prepubescent (larval) specimens, by dragging his net through the marshy waters. Two dragonfly nymphs were identified, one a skimmer (Libellula), the other a darner (Aeshna). We saw a few bugs and beetles, including fireflies (really a beetle), sap beetles, and mosquitoes (potential dragonfly food).

Paul and his son, Michael, illustrated proper catching, handling, and release techniques. The release technique requires you to place the dragonfly on your son's hat, place the hat on your head, and continue with your business. The dragonfly leaves at its leisure. Overall, quite an enjoyable, informative venture.

### AGM McNabs Island field trip: Water creatures on McNabs

by Ursula Grigg

Eleven people went on this walk, including two children, trip leader Ursula Grigg, and her assistant Beth McClelland.

We started with a short discussion on water as a mineral, as a rock, and, in its more familiar forms, as vapour, liquid, and solid (ice). Water pervades the earth's atmosphere and body, helping to regulate the earth's temperature, and life without water has always been impossible (as far as we know). Some organisms have left the water but return to it for certain life-stages; this applies especially to insects, including dragonflies and mayflies – among the first insects on earth – which pass their larval stages in water.

We observed seaweeds, which

have always been marine, and eelgrass (Zostera marina), a flowering plant living in the sea.

We walked to McNabs Pond, a large shallow expanse of water flowing slowly to the sea, and tested for salinity by tasting the water; no trace of salt was detected. We found a place where the water could be approached safely, and began to skim the mud and algae bottom and to fish around the water plants for animals, being careful not to disturb too much. Two species of fish were found: a stickleback, probably threespined (Gasterosteus aculeatus), still in breeding colours, and killifish, which could have been either banded killifish (the fresh water Fundulus diaphanus) or mummichogs (brackish water to marine F. heteroclitus). Several sticklebacks, including young ones, were caught and then released; the killifish were too fast for capture.



A female American toad (Bufo americanus) was carried with us for some distance but was released on the way back.

Dragonfly larvae were quite common; we saw three kinds: both libellulid and the short broad type of

Ursula Grigg is a biologist who is enchanted by the tiny creatures in our ponds and intertidal zones. She is the capable editor of the Halifax Field Naturalists newsletter.

dragonfly naiad, and some damselfly larvae. Paul Brunelle looked at them and identified them to family and recommended that the libellulid should be reared until it emerged – a simple matter of a gallon jug of clean water, a stick for an emergence perch, an air stone, and a supply of fresh food. However, we released all the larvae. We saw a diving beetle, streamlined for swimming and with a silvery coat of trapped air on its ventral surface for use under water. There were also water mites.

The pond was a peaceful place, with a duck leading eight or nine ducklings purposefully to cover on the far side; no other waterfowl were visible. Warblers and sparrows were busy in the bushes, and dragonflies and damselflies were taking first flights everywhere. The pool below the outflow sported a raft of water lobelia, not yet in bloom.

The edges of the pond were full of cattails (Typha latifolia), which typify fresh water. At the southwest end, in McNabs Marsh, these gradually gave way to narrow-leaved cattails (T. angustifolia), which are more tolerant of brackish conditions. However, the water here tasted just as fresh as before, probably the legacy of a very wet spring. Wigeon grass (Ruppia maritima), a brackish-water pond-weed from a family of flowering plants living in fresh water, grew in parts of this system.

Back near Garrison Pier, an equally fresh ditch yielded two caddis-fly larvae in cases made of small bits of

leaf and stick; the hoped-for toad tadpoles were not seen. The small cattail marsh north of the pier was found to be draining through a breach in the boulder bank, and was full of mud and seaweed detritus.

We caught an elver (young of American eel, Anguilla rostrata), about 12 cm long and fully coloured. The feeder stream for this small marsh was running briskly but produced only green algae.

The tide was high, so little hunting on the shore was possible; a half-eaten moon snail (Lunatia heros) and the empty shell of a razor clam (Ensis directus) had been thrown up. As we turned over stones near the pier, a number of small amphipod shrimps – scud (Gammarus) and beach hoppers – appeared.

Our foray was not very successful in terms of captures; we didn't find a single one of the three groups of small ancient crustaceans: water fleas, copepods, and seed shrimps. There were very few aquatic insects other than dragonflies – no whirligig beetles, water bugs, or striders, for example. One participant did proclaim a new-found respect for "pond slime" (fresh-water algae). The leader learned to recognize spring azure butterflies.

There was a sequel to this trip, when dip nets were used in the Little Sackville River that evening. This water was running fast over clean gravel.

### AGM field trip: Hemlock Ravine walk

by Lois Jenkins

The Saturday early morning nature walk at Hemlock Ravine Park, led by naturalist Clarence Stevens, was a bit of a nostalgia visit for me; I lived close by the park for a short while in the mid-1980s. Since that time, housing developments have sprung up on two sides of the park, but I was happy to discover that it is still possible to experience there the sense of being in a natural setting "far from the madding crowd."

We searched for salamander eggs in Julie's Pond, gazed high overhead at the "oldest hemlock trees in the Commonwealth," admired a hobblebush in showy bloom, and noted that slash was being left where it lies alongside the trails rather than being cleaned up. We heard the usual bird songs, but made no sightings of special merit. We learned that the old route between Bedford Basin and St Margaret's Bay ran along the ravine, and that Prince Edward (Queen

Victoria's father) and his companion, Julie St Laurent, created an estate on the property in the late 1700s. Some people who walk the trails of Hemlock Ravine Park, we were told, are fortunate enough to encounter a

Lois Jenkins is a member of the Annapolis Field Naturalists Society

### AGM field trip: Photography walk in Point Pleasant Park

by Mary Primrose

Two out-of-town registrants and I started out for our early morning walk in brisk six-degree spring weather. None of us had a camera. but that didn't matter on this wildflower photography walk. Instead of taking time to set up cameras, we talked about different compositions of areas we passed and how at another time they might be photographed to make interesting pictures. We looked at whole scenes in the forest and decided how much to include. We also planned close-up pictures of flowers and greenery, with appropriate backgrounds.

What stood out in the park that morning were brilliantly green mosses and bright orange needles fallen from trees, all enhanced by the cool, early-morning dampness. I'd brought along Spring Wildflowers by Albert Roland and Randall Olson (Halifax: Nimbus, 1993) to help us identify some plants, and

we lis- tened to some birds with a hope of identifying their songs. It was

Sadly, Mary Primrose died in February 1998. She was a keen naturalist and photographer who will be sorely missed by her many friends in the Halifax naturalist and photographic communities.

### Thanks to 1997 FNSN AGM team

Here are the folks responsible for putting on that fine and flawless show in Halifax. Patricia Chalmers chaired the whole thing. Ursula Grigg and Colin Stewart assisted Pat with the program. Stephanie Robertson was on graphic design and program layout.

Shirley McIntyre looked after local arrangements (rooms, meals, etc.). Linda Payzant was the registrar. Peter Payzant assisted Linda and helped out wherever needed. Bob and Wendy McDonald did displays. Greg Crosby was treasurer and legal advisor.

### Sustainable Communities Award – Call for

It's nomination time for the 1998 Sustainable Communities Award, given to a Nova Scotia community that created jobs while best respecting the environment, maintaining control over its own resources, and building a co-operative community culture.

The Environment and Development Committee of the Ecology Action Centre started the Sustainable Communities Award in 1995, Past winners include Bear River, a town that, while cleaning up the environment, turned an innovative sewage treatment plant into an economic bonanza attracting international attention, tourists, and prosperity. Another winner was the Clean Annapolis River Project (CARP), a community-based organization mobilizing citizens, businesses, and researchers to protect and enhance the environment of the Annapolis River.

This award is open to all Nova Scotian communities and community-oriented organizations. Business enterprises are not eligible. Anyone may nominate a candidate. We welcome self-nominations. A two- to four-page letter of nomination should contain the following information: name of community; community contact person and contact information; description of how community incorporated ecological thinking into development; description of tangible results, particularly in the creation of lasting jobs; description of innovative or alternative approaches to development problems; description of how economic strategies are community based; and description of steps taken to create a cooperative community culture.

Closing time for nominations is noon, 31 March 1998. For information on eligibility and a free nomination form, write or call EAC staff person Lynn Brooks (phone: 429-2202, email: eac\_hlx@istar.ca) or award coordinator Tony Charles (phone: 423-3820, email: T.Charles@StMarys.ca).

Submit nominations to:
Award coordinator, Environment
and Development Committee
Ecology Action Centre
1568 Argyle Street, Suite 31
Halifax, NS B3J 2B3

### Maritime Important Bird Areas (IBA) Workshop

On 19-20 September 1997, the Canadian Nature Federation, Bird Studies Canada, the Federation of New Brunswick Naturalists, the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists, and the Natural History Society of PEI co-hosted the Maritime Important Bird Areas (IBA) workshop held in Sackville, New Brunswick. The objectives of the workshop were to raise awareness of the IBA program and its goals; to identify and delineate potential IBAs in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island; to prioritize sites for conservation action; to discuss threats to proposed sites; and to discuss the development of partnerships for IBA identification and conservation. More than 26 people, representing all three Maritime provinces, participated in the two-day event. This enthusiastic group was successful in identifying a working list of more than 110 potential IBAs for the region.

The Important Bird Areas program

is a major conservation initiative of BirdLife International. BirdLife operates as a worldwide partnership with one lead organization in each country (two in Canada). The Canadian Nature Federation and Bird Studies Canada are the BirdLife partners in Canada. The overall goal of the IBA program is to identify and protect a network of sites necessary to ensure the long-term viability of naturally occurring bird populations. Sites are identified under four main categories, using a set of standardized and internationally agreed upon criteria.

To obtain a site nomination form and guidelines, or to find out how you can participate in the IBA program, please contact Christie Chute, IBA Outreach Coordinator:

Canadian Nature Federation 1 Nicholas Street, Suite 606 Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7 phone: (613) 562-8208 Ext 245 fax: (613) 562-3371

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## Vice-President's Report

by Tom Herman

I begin with a reminder of who we are: eleven member societies – local and special interest natural history groups. We speak for several thousand naturalists, a group traditionally apolitical and without a voice. We come from a diversity of backgrounds, but share a common interest in our natural heritage. Since our inception in 1990, we have maintained close ties with World Wildlife Fund Canada and, in particular, the Endangered Spaces Campaign.

We live in a province with a rich diversity of landscapes and seascapes, due in part to our unique geological history. With 73 percent of the province in private hands, our ability to preserve representative habitats on public lands is constrained. This places the onus on the private sector to participate in protecting our natural heritage. The Federation is one of several organizations that can play a pivotal role in encouraging and accomplishing that participation. As well, the Federation can foster an appreciation for our fragile marine habitats, which are desperately underprotected at present.

The challenges we face are large, but need not be daunting; rather, they should be energizing. Climate change, habitat fragmentation due to forestry, mineral extraction and urbanization,

ecotourism, and globalization of the economy affect directly and indirectly what is near and dear to us. As former FNSN President Michael Downing recently reminded us, nature does not need us, but rather we need nature. Nature will endure and survive without our help.

This weekend's meeting has reminded us that the opposite is not true, and we have seen a number of ways in which that has been both recognized and accommodated in largely urban settings. Our many members who were not here this weekend missed an important message: we can no longer afford to separate humans and nature. And naturalists are as guilty as any group in perpetuating that separation.

What role should FNSN play in meeting these challenges? I see education in the broadest sense as a unifying goal for our federation: education of the public in general, our politicians in particular, and, most immediately, our own neighbours and our own members. The immediate challenge internally for FNSN is to find a balance – in part a balance between response to acute external threats and activities and initiation of regional and provincial scale projects that draw on the

As president pro tem for the 1996–97 year, Tom Herman addressed the FNSN AGM in June 1997. Tom was elected president for the 1997–98 year.

expertise of our members, attract their involvement, and contribute to the greater good.

I will briefly review the past year's activities:

- The board of directors met on 9 November 1996 and 16 March 1997. As well, we held an emergency board meeting on 9 February in response to the removal of Jim Campbells Barren from the list of candidate protected sites in the provincial Systems Plan for Parks and Protected Areas.
- In August, Jim Wolford generously (at his own expense) attended the CNF Provincial-Territorial Affiliate meeting in Winnipeg on our behalf.
- We responded critically to the Forest Strategy for Nova Scotia discussion paper.
- George Alliston and Sherman Williams responded on behalf of FNSN to the Nova Scotia Strategic Fossil Resource management plan.
- In December, we presented a brief on the federal Endangered Species Bill (C-65) before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in Ottawa (see FNSN News, vol. 7 no. 1).
- We were well represented at the February public consultations on the draft Nova Scotia Act Respecting Endangered Species (Bill 51), where we submitted a brief on the proposed act.
- We initiated and co-ordinated a letter-writing campaign among

member clubs to protest the removal of the Barrens from the Systems Plan.

- Along with several other environmental NGOs, we met with HRH Prince Philip in Halifax on 21 March, as part of a WWF-sponsored event highlighting the Endangered Spaces Program.
- We have attempted to streamline our communication network among board members by relying more heavily on email. We are presently attempting to set up a list server, in order to make information more readily available to all FNSN members.
- We have discussed at length the importance of sponsoring fieldbased FNSN projects with tangible end products such as atlases or other
- educational materials. We raised numerous possibilities (including a herpetofaunal atlas, an atlas of significant natural areas, a butterfly atlas) and hope that the membership will offer additional suggestions.
- We plan to organize a weekend symposium and workshop next year dealing with the long-term protection and management of parks and protected areas. This "Forum on Protecting Spaces in Nova Scotia" will be modeled after the very successful Envirofor conferences held over the past decade.

I would like to thank in particular the following individuals: Alice White, for her wise counsel; Jill Comolli, for her

many contributions from the "shadows"; George Alliston, for his tireless organizing efforts and willingness to act and serve; Jim Wolford, for ably representing our interests in a variety of settings; Ruth Newell, for her secretarial skills; Larry Bogan, for his computer wizardry and efforts to drag us into the information age; Colin Stewart, for wearing many hats in many places; Jeff Pike, for his continuing commitment as membership secretary; and last but not least, Doug Linzey for accepting and rising to the

challenge of newsletter editor.

Looking to the future, I see the importance of increasing our linkages to other organizations with similar interests. This will hopefully involve expanding our own membership as well as reaching outside the Federation for temporary cooperative ventures. As well, I invite and anxiously await input from our members to develop Federation projects.

This past year, it was circumstance, not lack of commitment, that prevented us from filling all posts on

### Grand Manan beckons bird banders

**Greetings Naturalists:** 

If Grand Manan Bird Observatory, Inc. receives funding again this year, banding will take place at Long Pond, Grand Manan Island.

Volunteer field assistants are needed April 1 to June 15 (spring migration) and July 19 to November 15 (fall migration) to help operate a migration-monitoring station. Duties include monitoring mist nets; removing, identifying, banding, and recording species caught in mist nets; and explaining the operation to the public.

Requirements include being able to identify most birds of the Northeast by sight and sound, working and living in close quarters as part of a team, getting up early, and tolerating biting insects, cool temperatures, and foggy conditions. The usual working day is seven hours, starting one-half hour before sunrise. Previous banding

experience, computer literacy, and personal transportation are definite advantages. If 1998 funding is similar to last year's, volunteers remaining at least one month will get a stipend of about \$240 per month and will live in a modern two-bedroom housekeeping cottage.

To apply, send a cover letter and resume to the address below. Please list the name, address, and telephone number of at least one or two people willing to attest to your qualifications for this position. Indicate the weeks or months that you will be available. Application deadlines are March 16 for spring banding and June 15 for fall banding. Send applications to either:

Charles Graves, president
Grand Manan Bird Observatory,
Inc.
1216 Sand Cove Road
Saint John, NB E2M 5V8
or Eileen Pike, treasurer

