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VOLUME 14, NO. 1
WINTER 2004/05

A Walk In The Woods

*Large Mammals
Program*

Random Casts

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OF ANGLERS AND HUNTERS**



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NOVA OUTDOORS

WINTER 2004

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Nova Outdoors

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of Anglers and Hunters



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Winter, 2004/05
**STATEMENT
OF PURPOSE**

The Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters is interested in all aspects of the out-of-doors and is dedicated to the fostering of sound management and wise use of the renewable resources of the Province. We want to ensure that their economic, recreational and aesthetic values may continue for the benefit of this and all future generations.

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Angela Urquhart
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David Boutilier
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*Letters and/or contributions
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Nova Outdoors
P.O. Box 44028, 1658 Bedford Hwy.,
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Ph: (902) 468-6112
E-mail: novaout@accesscable.net

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A Walk In The Woods

Project connects Nova Scotia woodland owners to information highway



Don Cameron

Landowners have received what many of them have wished for, thanks to the Nova Forest Alliance. Reaching woodlot owners all over Nova Scotia has always been a challenging task. Much of Nova Scotia's forest land is owned by more than 33,000 individual woodland owners, many of whom don't belong to any of the province's several different woodland owners' organizations. However, reaching them with information about sustainable forest management and the newest best management practices is critical.

Their woodland is the source of approximately 70 percent of the timber produced annually in our province, so the decisions private woodlands owners make about how to manage their land have a significant impact upon the environment, economy, aesthetics, wildlife, recreational use of the forest, and much more.

One important goal of the Nova Forest Alliance (NFA), Nova Scotia's Model Forest, is to increase awareness and use of sustainable forest management practices. One way to achieve this is to find effective ways to reach, encourage and provide tools and resources to private woodland owners. And so, in 2000, the need for a one-stop, accessible resource of information for woodland owners was clear.

According to the NFA, several communication devices were considered. The creation of a new website was determined to be the best tool because it could be flexible and affordable enough to rise to the challenge of housing so much information and keeping it current for the potential audience of 33,000 users spread across the province. The idea of the Woodlot Info Shop (WISH) website was born.


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Designed to link woodland owners to information, this website project used the expertise of woodland owners, along with technical and operational woodland experts, to assemble the most up-to-date information and resources for landowners in a one-stop, all-inclusive package. It is designed to cater to woodland owner users regardless of their level of land management expertise, from rank beginner to old pro.

It offers tips to landowners managing their property for a variety of purposes, from wildlife habitat to recreation, from growing wood products as a source of retirement income to non-timber forest products, such as maple syrup. It was also carefully planned to contain a large variety of resources: pages of summarized information on woodland management planning topics, a calendar of events, literature and links resources, highlights of current issues, and on-line calculators of various types.

The WISH website has something to offer every landowner interested in managing their forest for today and tomorrow. The site is a project of the Nova Forest Alliance, a partnership of nearly sixty organizations working together to improve how forests are managed in Nova Scotia.

Together, those partners combine their knowledge and resources through projects such as the WISH website in the interest of furthering sustainable forest management practices. For more information on the WISH website, check it out at: www.woodlotinfohop.ca.

Tree Trivia: We are approaching the time of year when families begin to plan for the acquisition of their Christmas tree. It is important and easy to keep your tree as fresh as possible to get the maximum enjoyment out of it. More information coming on this topic in the coming weeks.

*Don Cameron is the Information
Officer for the Nova Scotia section of
the Canadian Institute of Forestry.*

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Executive Director's Voice



by Tony Rodgers

A great deal of concern and apprehension took away from the excitement of opening day of the season for white-tailed deer and bear here in Nova Scotia when it was discovered that conservation officers were reminded that they have the authority to request federal firearms documents.

The documents in question are the infamous Possession Acquisition License (PAL), the Possession Only License (POL) and the individual firearm registration certificates issued to gun owners under the Federal Firearms Act Bill C-68.

I found out about this when I received an ordinary brown envelope in my snail mail from someone who must be in or close to the Department of Natural Resources. This happened on the Thursday before the start of the season. In the envelope were two sheets of paper that made up what was a bulletin to conservation officers numbered seventeen. It is for their operations manual.

The contents of the bulletin were contrary to everything I believed to be true about how the government of Nova Scotia and the enforcement section of the Department of Natural Resources were going to handle hunters in respect to the Federal firearms laws. In fact it was the very opposite.

Members of the Federation have always understood, for the past two years, that conservation officers would only be checking for the hunter orange cards which showed if you were qualified or trained to use a bow or firearm or both, and the hunting license itself. The hunting license would tell the officer all he needed to know about what species you were hunting and if you had already taken any game. Both of these were provincial documents.

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The part of Bulletin #17 that worried me the most and prompted me to put out a press release was Section 2(a) that states in whole: when enforcing an act/regulation under your primary mandate (i.e.: Wildlife Act) you may confirm the person has a valid firearms license/registration. (1) When the person does not have a Firearms License and/or Registration, do not return the firearms to them until the documents are produced.

Those are pretty strong words. Words that could ruin the hunting trip for a great number of hunters if enforced.

Members of the government are on record stating that the present Progressive Conservative government would not support the federal firearms legislation to the point that they said they would not provide provincial crown prosecutors to such cases. Our Federation was also telling hunters the same thing but we also added a word of caution. If you are challenged by a federal officer such as the RCMP, they may request the Possession Acquisition License or the Firearms individual registration certificate.

On that Thursday, we were taking a chance with our good name by not getting the information out to the public as soon as possible and telling them that they better take all of their PAL/POL and the correct registration for the firearm they are using with them.

I had from noon on Thursday to do something. I first called as many people as I could think of to get some sort of reason for the change. Unfortunately, I did not reach everyone I wanted on time. I did speak to enough people and gathered enough information to realize that it was someone other than the government changing the policy for them.

For the record, I have a copy of the government POLICY on the "Enforcement of the Federal Firearms Act/Regulations":

B. (1) It is not the intent of the Department of Natural Resources to carry out "proactive" enforcement of the provisions of the Firearms Act and Regulations.

However, we also understood – and it should be no surprise to anyone who breaks wildlife laws like shooting a deer with the use of a light – that conservation officers will exercise their authority and confirm whether or not the violator has a federal firearms license and if the gun used in the crime belonged to the violator or to another person. If an additional firearm crime is discovered during the investigation of the Wildlife violation, it will be passed along to the RCMP to do their investigation.

Communications broke down between two major partners who share responsibility for the wildlife resources of the province. Although we contribute in different ways, the Federation and government both want the best for strong wildlife conservation in the future.

That future depends heavily on the retention of and the increase in genuine concerned hunters who not only look at the sport of hunting as an opportunity to harvest, but a means of putting something back into the resource.

Our license dollars and the tax dollars we pay on goods that we use in hunting would be missed by the government and the people of Nova Scotia if we were not there.

Our other role as the eye of wildlife biologist who depend on hunters and trappers returning their report cards and the information gained from them support the business of sustainable wildlife for our kids and grandkids.

Stick up for yourself as a hunter and talk about what you can whenever you can. Don't just brag about trophies but spread the word of a healthy outdoor activity that gets you into the woods and fields, enjoying the fall and winter in Nova Scotia and all of the benefits nature has to offer.

Hunting and gun ownership are still not considered dangerous activities by the insurance industry of Canada or the United States like many other adventure sports.

So I hope when reading this, you have already enjoyed a great deer hunt or rabbits, grouse, duck or whatever your game. One thing that is also important to re-

Continued on page 13.

Large Mammals Program

By Tony Nette and Vince Power

Deer

The continued decline seen in the provincial herd size in the spring of 2003 and again in 2004 was not unexpected because of the long-term effect of the very harsh winter of 2000-2001. That winter, 65 percent of fawns were lost to starvation, and overall 47 percent of the herd starved. Recovery of the herd is expected to be slow and take a number of years. The high number of fawns and yearlings lost in the late winter of 2001 are not there now as three and four-year-olds which would normally produce a large number of fawns. Deer numbers on Cape Breton Island have been reduced more significantly by deep snows over the past few years.

A number of hunters have expressed concern over declining deer numbers and suggested that coyotes are the problem. Others suggest that all deer hunting should be closed for a few years.

Coyotes are certainly an effective predator of white-tailed deer. However, coyotes are well-established throughout the range of deer in North America, and have not threatened the long-term well-being of deer populations. Abundance and distribution of deer is primarily dependent on habitat quality and winter severity. Lower survival rates and reduced reproduction among coyotes will adjust their number to prey abundance.

A closure of deer hunting, as has been suggested, is considered unnecessary and would send the wrong message to hunt-

ers and non-hunters alike. Hunter harvest, under modern management approaches/regulations, is not a threat to the long-term well-being of deer populations.

Table 1 presents data on the provincial deer population size, harvest, hunter numbers, hunter success, deer herd condition and reproduction for years 2000 - 2004.

Table 1: Status, Harvest and Condition of Deer In Nova Scotia

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Spring Herd Size Estimate (PGI)	51,504	52,570	46,549	47,475
Total Registered Harvest	9,602	9,319	7,301	
Total Antlered Deer Harvested	6,526	6,263	5,516	
Total Antlerless Deer Harvested	3,076	3,056	1,785	
Total License Sales	48,533	45,763	42,260	
Overall Hunter Success (%)	19.8	20.4	17.3	
Bow Stamps Used	2,670	2,475	2,307	
Harvest by Bow	220	214	242	
Non-Resident License	623	538	450	
Non-Resident Harvest	109	59	63	
Fetuses per 100 Adult Does (≥ 2.5 yrs)	169	151	141	163
Mean Yearling Antler Beam Dia. (mm)	21.0	22.1	21.2	
% Herd Mature Bucks - Post Hunt	25.0	26.5	20.4	15.9
% Herd Nutritionally Stressed ¹	47.6	14.9	18.3	23.7

Determined by assessing bone marrow fat content of dead deer found during 1 February through 15 May. When 25% or less fat remaining, the deer is considered to be nutritionally stressed.

In response to declining deer numbers, fewer antlerless deer hunting stamps have been issued. Only 5,250 stamps will be issued for the Fall 2004 hunt, as compared to 25,000 issued in the Fall of 2000.

Deer hunting licence sales continue



to steadily decline. No doubt low abundance of deer is a factor but this trend is apparent throughout North America. In Nova Scotia small game licence sales are dropping at about the same rate.

Table 2 provides the number of antlerless deer hunting stamps made available in 2003, the number of applicants for those stamps, and the reported kill, by zone.

Table 2: Year 2003 Harvest By Deer Management Zone

D.M. Zone	ADHS Available	Applications Received	Antlerless Deer Kill Reported	A Buck @ Kill Reported	Total Kill
1	500	3,434	146	986	1,132
2	2,000	6,430	695	1,720	2,415
2 A	500	1,303	90	133	223
3	0	0	0	46	46
4	4,000	11,819	756	1,872	2,628
5	500	1,949	84	362	446
6	0	0	0	175	175
7	0	0	0	21	21
Unknown	0	0	14	201	215
Total	7,500	24,935	1,785	5,516	7,301

*Hunters did not indicate DMZ for these kills.

Though the overall provincial deer herd size has declined in recent years, the area around Lunenburg and Bridgewater has seen a continued increase in deer num-

bers. The reason for this high density of deer is felt to be because of the relative mild winter conditions this area normally experiences. As well, because the area is highly developed and much of the area made up of small residential holdings, it has received little hunting pressure.

In an effort to attract more hunters to the area and use hunting to reduce the number of deer and associated problems, the area was sub-divided to create a new deer management sub-zone 2A. Five hundred antlerless hunting stamps were issued for zone 2A in 2003 and a total of 223

permits has been increased to 750, and hunters holding those antlerless permits will be asked to report their hours of hunting effort and how many deer they saw while hunting. In this situation, hunters are being used to address a community problem and also being used to monitor deer abundance over time. It is a good example of the value of hunting to society, that goes well beyond the money spent buying a licence, hunting equipment, travel costs, etc.

Bear

Bear hunting season was extended through to the end of the general open season for deer hunting in 2003. Hunters were not required to hunt at registered bait sites during the extended season, therefore bear hunting licences could be (and had to be because of increased licence sale prediction) sold by vendors throughout the province. As a consequence the bear hunting report form was provided to hunters as a postcard type removable page in the Licence-Summary of Regulations booklet.

Although bear hunters are required by law to submit the completed report form (regardless of success) returns for Fall 2003 have been dismally low. Consequently, there is low confidence in the harvest estimate numbers for hunting and snaring, as well as hunter success rate, as presented in Table 3 below. This is a serious problem in that we have poor sampling on which to derive key indicators on bear age/sex ratio and number of bears taken from specific areas or from the province as a whole, to demonstrate that the

Continued on page 9.

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Random Casts

Unusual Flies and Lures

By Don MacLean

When I sit down at my fly tying desk this winter, most of the dry flies, nymphs and streamers that I tie would look familiar to anglers. There are a large number of tried and true fly patterns, such as the muddler minnow and mickey finn, which have been catching fish for many years and will continue to catch fish for many more. However sometimes I like to create a new pattern or make some changes to an old one.

It always surprises me what fish sometimes eat, and what will attract them to the hook. Perhaps the most unusual fly pattern I have ever seen was one made with the toe of a partridge. The toe, complete with toe nail, was tied on a hook and looked remarkably like a big nymph. I never fished it but I am sure you could have fooled a trout with it.



A Nymph

The use of unusual materials is not limited just to flies. I recently read a story about a big brown trout that was caught near Witless Bay in Newfoundland. The lure which caught the trout was a local favourite made from a four inch nail. They cut off the nail head and flattened both ends before drilling a hole in each end and adding a hook and swivel. The final touch was to add some red lines to the nail with fingernail polish. I expect the lure would look very much like a sand lance or capelin in the saltwater where they fish these brown trout. In any case, who is going to argue with success, or the price? I also know some anglers who make their own lures for fishing striped bass. The lures are short lengths of broom stick painted white. They add a few screw eyes to which they attached treble hooks and a swivel for the line and they are in business. Judging by the teeth marks in the ones they showed me, they must work.

Bait is another area where the unusual

sometimes catches fish. I have heard of fish caught on pieces of marshmallow or hot dog. Cheese and corn niblets are also a perennial favourite. I have also seen trout and salmon strike at, but not eat, objects such as a dime and cigarette butts. Sometimes all you have to do to provide something different is use a new material which will add more life-like action to your fly patterns. The material I turn to most is marabou. These feathers, which come from turkeys, have a lot of movement when wet. Tying a streamer with a marabou wing instead of the more com-

mon bucktail will give it much more life-like action in the water. So whether you tie up some partridge toe nymphs or make some four inch spike lures, don't forget to try the unusual when everything else isn't working.

Tight Lines.

Don MacLean is a Nova Scotia biologist who writes on sport fishing topics. His book, Discover Nova Scotia Sport Fishing, was published in 2003.



Moose on mainland Nova Scotia are formally listed as "Endangered."

You can assist the Moose Management Program by reporting your sightings of moose and moose sign (tracks, droppings, shed antlers) on **MAINLAND** Nova Scotia to the nearest DNR office. Or, report online at:

www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/web/msform.htm

And remember, poaching is a threat to the survival of moose populations on mainland Nova Scotia. Report poaching by calling **1-800-565-2224**.

Help Manage Your Wildlife.



TODAY'S RESOURCES, TOMORROW'S LEGACY

Large Mammals Program...

continued from page 7.

kill is within acceptable/sustainable limits.

Hopefully, this problem can be rectified when a new Nova Scotia Hunter-Firearms card is introduced and an alternate method of hunter reporting is implemented.

Moose

The Cape Breton moose hunt changed considerably in 2003. Applicants for the limited number of licences available were required to choose between two one-week hunts, and for each hunt choose between one of four moose management zones in which they wanted to hunt.

The change in regulations effectively spread hunters through time and space, which better facilitated an increase in licence numbers without causing a hunter crowding problem. The total licence number was increased from 200 (from 1986 - 2002) to 310.

Tables 4a and 4b provide a summary of the two 2003 moose hunts by zone, number of licences available, number of applications received for each of the eight possible options, as well as harvest and hunter effort by moose management zone.

Moose hunters continue to enjoy an overall high success rate ranging from 56.5 percent in zone 3 - second hunt, to a high of 100 percent in zone 1 - first hunt. The good hunter success rates in zones 3 and 4, especially in the first year of hunters being restricted to these lower elevation zones, indicate a substantial number of moose in these areas which have received little hunter effort in the past.

Overall the two hunt and four zone management approach was well accepted by hunters and few complaints or prob-

Continued on page 17.

Table 3: Bear Harvest Summary, 1993-2003

Year	License Res.	License Non-Res.	Hunter Harvest	Hunter Success	Snaring Permits	Snaring Harvest
1993	286	44	111	44.2%	129	60
1994	481	37	248	47.9%	181	110
1995	708	81	286	36.2%	227	91
1996	656	102	247	32.6%	184	67
1997	540	116	191	29.2%	162	65
1998	505	109	243	39.6%	142	65
1999	522	123	208	32.2%	101	33
2000	498	153	264	40.6%	127	54
2001	544	101	226	35.0%	155	54
2002	584	84	284	42.6%	197	96
2003	1322	87	393	27.9%	156	39

Table 4a.: 2003 Cape Breton Moose Harvest

Season 1 (Sept 29-Oct 4)

Moose Zone	Permits Issued	Applications Received	Bull Harvest	Cow Harvest	Total Harvest	Success Rate (%)	Effort/Moose (Person Hours*)
1	55	2,876	48	7	55	100.0	54.8
2	50	3,072	33	9	42	85.4	91.8
3	25	519	12	3	15	58.8	143.5
4	25	300	13	2	15	61.9	151.6
Total	155	6,767	106	21	127	x = 81.9	x = 75.9

Table 4b.: 2003 Cape Breton Moose Harvest

Season 2 (Oct 6-Oct 11)

Moose Zone	Permits Issued	Applications Received	Bull Harvest	Cow Harvest	Total Harvest	Success Rate (%)	Effort/Moose (Person Hours*)
1	55	2,433	44	8	52	95.7	27.1
2	50	2,838	38	8	46	90.0	102.9
3	25	623	19	4	23	94.1	62.5
4	25	250	13	1	14	56.5	202.7
Total	155	6,144	114	21	135	x = 87.1	x = 63.2

* Person Hours per moose = $\frac{\text{Hunting Effort}}{\text{Moose Harvested}}$

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Summary Of Inland Fisheries Field Projects, 2004

By Tara Crandlemere, Nova Scotia
Department of Agriculture and
Fisheries

The fall has arrived and our field season has come to an end. Our Division accomplished another very successful array of research projects throughout Nova Scotia, some of which were continued from last season and others were new research initiatives.

At the beginning of the season, our division examined the sea trout populations in River Denys, Middle River, and Lake O'Law Brook in Cape Breton. This project assessed sea run populations on these systems through a mark and recapture project. Fish were live trapped with fyke nets and data collected on age and length. This project methodology worked very well, and provided valuable information on sea run brook trout populations in these three systems. A total of 2,650 fish were marked (adipose fin clipped), 2,100 were captured and 77 were recaptured. On average, 7 percent of the population were greater than 25 cm and 3 percent were greater than 30 cm. The information gained will also be applicable to mainland rivers.

We continued with our electrofishing project throughout the province. The purpose of the electrofishing project was to test the assumptions made through the water temperature classification system (MacMillan et al. 2002, unpublished) that was developed by our division. The Nova Scotia Water Temperature Monitoring project involved the classification of 322 sites on 34 river systems throughout the province into cool, intermediate, and warm thermal categories based on mean summer temperature. There are 104 cool water sites (<16.5°C), 97 intermediate water sites (16.5-19°C) and 121 warm water sites (>19°C). The Nova Scotia stream classification system was based on the assumption that cool water sites are more important to Atlantic salmon and brook trout populations during warm low flow conditions in the summer. Our division electrofished 77 stream sites that were previously assessed through the temperature monitoring project and collected salmonid population and habitat data. Results of the project indicated that brook trout population density was strongly related to water temperature. Approxi-

mately 48 times more trout were found in the cool water sites compared to the warm water sites. The distribution of Atlantic salmon did not seem to be strongly related to the thermal nature of streams in our study. Salmon numbers may reflect absence or low numbers of adults returning to spawn rather than freshwater conditions.

The study also examines the impact of what a potential increase in water temperature could have on the number of cold water sites for trout in the province. Increased water temperature is a possibility in the future and an increase of 2°C in the average summer temperature could result in a 50 percent loss in trout habitat, which also reflects a 50 percent gain in the number of warm water sites. The study indicated that a higher percentage of competitor species (white and yellow perch, white sucker, brown bullhead) were found in the warm thermal category. If conditions continue to warm, competitors of trout will benefit.

Our division worked again this summer with Queen's University on the Nova Scotia Paleolimnology project. This project studies a lake's history using information archived in lake sediments. This research is designed to investigate water quality in Nova Scotia using paleoecological indicators. Such indicators of water quality are diatoms and chironomids. This research method allows us to see what long term (150 years) changes have occurred in trout habitat. A total of 35 lakes have been sampled from 2003 to 2004, and 14 more will be sampled in the 2005 field season.

We continued to work with the Mulgrave and Area Lakes Enhancement Association on the Bottom Draw Facility at Goose Harbour Lake in Guysborough County. The project involves using a siphon to create a bottom draw to release cool water to the St. Francis Harbour River. The bottom draw taps into the cool water in the hypolimnion (bottom layer) of the lake and carries it over the
Continued on page 12.



Think About It – Is The Earth Flat?

For hundreds of years Europeans thought that Earth was the centre of the Universe. (Albeit that now their descendants think it's Toronto), we have learned that is not the case.

Today many in Canada, including some gun-owners, mistakenly believe that licensing firearms owners is the path to preventing society's violent events.

All will agree that criminals will ignore any licensing provisions; most will agree that those intent on committing suicide will use other means if a gun is not available, and that accidents are never prevented by the mere fact of having a licence. After agreeing with the above points many still wishfully cling to the licensing panacea. Three negative conclusions cannot possibly result in logically viewing firearms licensing as a solution to life's bleaker moments.

Licensing's major accomplishment is the reduction of legal, responsible gun-ownership in Canada. It acts as a barrier to those who may wish to own firearms. The political influence of gun-owners is diminishing as the effects of licensing decrease the number of those who have a stake in the issue.

Losing our rights, traditions, heritage and culture to a misguided attempt to create a perfect world is a crime in itself. Gun-owners and the organizations purporting to represent them should never support suicidal legislative options because of their own wishful thinking or desire for political correctness.

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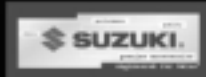


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Summary of Inland...
continued from page 10.

dam; feeding the original stream channel with a cool constant flow of water, approximately three million gals/day. This research project did have a positive impact on the water in St. Francis Harbour River with approximately 15 times more flow after bottom draw was operational. A project like this has begun to address a habitat need for brook trout and Atlantic salmon. This research initiative represents a new enhancement strategy and may have applications in other areas where impoundments are present.

A smallmouth bass project was conducted in Cape Breton that confirmed the presence of this non-indigenous species in low numbers in Lake Ainslie, Inverness County. Smallmouth bass were illegally introduced to Lake Ainslie in 2003 but have thus far have not established a spawning population. Habitat analysis has indicated that spawning structure and substrate constitutes less than four percent of available shoreline but may not be a limiting factor to successful colonization based on observations in established bass populations elsewhere. An important consideration to whether smallmouth bass become established in a particular water body may be this species' thermal requirements. If spawning occurs, young of the year small-

mouth bass (0+ juveniles) need to accumulate enough fat reserves in their first growing season to survive the winter, or the starvation period. This "geo-thermal exclusion" of smallmouth bass from certain geographic areas of the province may explain the inability of some introductions to become established.

Other smallmouth bass projects in Nova Scotia include: (1) monitoring the distribution of this species provincially and within watersheds, (2) sport fishing tournament monitoring, (3) development of a juvenile density index as a predictive tool for assessing year class strength and recruitment to the fishery, (4) assessing the consequences of illegal introductions to native fauna, ex. speckled trout and the endangered Atlantic whitefish, and (5) regulatory assessment as it relates to "Trophy" and "High Harvest" smallmouth bass fisheries.

An acid rain mitigation committee was formed to look at recommendations put forth in the Hindar Report 2000. The committee contains members from Nova Scotia Salmon Association, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Nova Scotia Power, Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Trout Nova Scotia, Department of Fisheries Oceans, and Environment

Canada. Inland Fisheries were invited to join the committee, as a technical member while the NSSA will be the lead organization. West River, Sheet Harbour was chosen as the pilot river and the method of mitigation will be lime dosing over a ten-year period. Bio monitoring of the system began in 2004, including water sampling, temperature profiles, and collection of baseline data on fish and invertebrates populations. Inland Fisheries took the lead role in temperature, fish and invertebrate sampling. Dr. Trefor Reynoldson from Acadia University will lead the data analysis of the invertebrate sampling and partner in funding with Atlantic Salmon Federation for potential graduate studies. We would like to thank all the volunteers who were involved in the research projects conducted by our staff and hope that their valuable support continues in the future. For further information on the research projects, please call our office in Pictou (485-5056).

Tara Crandlemere is a member of the Inland Fisheries Division at the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.



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Owning A Gun And Hunting Are Not Risky Activities Say Insurance Companies

By Garry Breitkreuz, M.P./House of Commons Press Release

"The Liberals could have saved taxpayers a billion dollars by checking with the insurance actuaries."

Recently, Garry Breitkreuz, Official Opposition Critic for Firearms and Property Rights, defied the Justice Minister to produce the statistical evidence that shows that simple possession of a firearm is a risk to public safety. "Insurance companies make their living by assessing risk, and they don't even ask applicants if they own a gun," observed Breitkreuz.

"The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association provided a list of risky activities for which they require applicants to complete a supplemental form. Guess what? Owning a gun, hunting, sport shooting, and gun collecting were not on the list. If actuaries and insurance underwriters don't think owning a gun is a public safety risk, why do the Liberals?" asked Breitkreuz.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada confirmed that the presence of firearms in a home would only be relevant to insurers if they were considered as valuable personal property. Firearms ownership is not a liability issue for obtaining home insurance. The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association said that: "firearms ownership was not a rated activity and was not considered for underwriting purposes."

The Association also provided a list of risky activities that required insurance applicants to complete a supplemental form. They said the following list of rated activities is common to all life insurers in both content and scope: parachuting/sky-diving; ballooning; hang gliding; flying; ultra lights; motorcycle or automobile racing; scuba diving; aviation; mountaineering; drug usage; tobacco usage and alcohol usage.

"In 1994, the Liberals made a colossal mistake that no responsible gun owner would ever do. They started shooting before making sure they were aiming at the right target," said Breitkreuz. "Instead of targeting their gun control laws at the criminals who use firearms, they aimed 95 percent of their legislative measures at the three-million responsible firearms owners who insurance companies say aren't a risk."

Once their misdirected law was passed, anti-gun paranoia took over in the

Justice Department. In her December 2002 report, the Auditor General said: "... the Program's focus had changed from high risk firearms owners to excessive regulation and enforcement of controls over all owners and their firearms. The Department said the excessive regulation had occurred because some of its Program partners believed that the use of firearms is in itself a "questionable activity" that required strong controls."

"The Liberal government should start using facts instead of the personal opinion of a few bureaucrats bolstered by highly questionable statistics and propaganda. The Liberals could have saved taxpayers a billion dollars or more just by checking with the insurance company actuaries before they started down this trail of wasted Loonies. The hemorrhaging of tax dollars on the gun registry must stop before another billion is wasted," concluded Breitkreuz.

Executive Director's Voice...

Continued from page 5.

member as a hunter is to try not to be too harsh on a hunting activity that you don't like. Too often I hear of someone who is a purist rabbit hunter that believes dogs should not be used to chase bunnies and the next guy doesn't like bowhunting because they start earlier than the firearms people and some who don't like bear snaring. Well, if you have energy to bitch about other hunters, get in touch with me someday because I have information on a whole group of anti-hunters that would like to shut us all down.

If she hunts and he fishes they come from good stock. Remember we are all descended from successful hunters/gatherers ... as for the others, well, someone had to clean the cave.

*Tony Rodgers
tonyrodgers@eastlink.ca*


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Osprey

This bird often catches fish by diving with its wings half closed and claws stretched forward, disappearing under the water in a great spray. Carrying its catch headfirst in flight, it uses both feet to hold the fish. It builds a nest that is an immense mass of dried branches, interwoven with materials such as stakes, rope, strips of old cloth, plastic, and even caribou antlers. This bird can live for 15 to 20 years, and one individual was known to survive to age 35.

Adult birds have a dark brown back and a white forehead, cheeks, neck, breast, and belly. A dark stripe extends from the base of the beak and across the eye to the back. The head and upper part of the breast are streaked brown, as is the underside of the wings and tail. In North America, the breast stripes are heavier on the female than on the male. The juveniles and adults look much alike; however, on the juveniles the brown feathers on the upper parts are tipped with white and the breast and head are more heavily striped.



Osprey
Ospreys acquire their adult plumage at about 18 months.

As is the case with most raptors, the female is larger than the male. She weighs on average 1.6 kg, compared with 1.4 kg for the male, and has an average wingspan of 163 cm, compared with 159 cm for the male. The adult Osprey measures anywhere from 53 to 65 cm long.

Anatomically, the Osprey resembles the eagle, but its narrow wings, when outspread, are markedly angled, and the structure of its feet and claws is so peculiar that it has been placed in a separate sub-family, the Pandioninae, of which it is the sole representative.

Unlike other raptors, the Osprey has four equal toes. The outer one is reversible, enabling the bird to seize its prey with two toes pointing forwards and two pointing backwards. A long, sharp, curved claw on

each toe, and short, rigid spikes, known as spicules, on the sole of each foot, give the bird a firm grip on its slippery prey, which nearly always consists of fish that the bird catches alive, hence its nickname of fishing eagle or fish hawk.

Signs and sounds

For its size, the Osprey has a small voice, but if it is displaying or is feeling threatened, its cry will carry a fair distance. Usually, it gives out a whistling 'chook, chook, chook' sound. The cry of the male, when frightened near the nest, is a shrill and frantic 'cheric, cheric', whereas the females give out a rapid 'pew, pew, pew' sound.

The Osprey is one of the most widely distributed birds in the world. It is found on ocean coasts and along the shorelines of large lakes and rivers on all continents and islands, except those in the polar and sub-polar regions where water surfaces are frozen for most of the year, and a few very isolated islands in temperate and tropical zones.

Unique features

When an Osprey spots a fish from the air, it hovers at a height of 10 to 30 metres until the fish is in a suitable position. Then, in a dramatic performance, the bird, huge yet wonderfully light, dives from the sky with its wings half closed and claws stretched forward, and disappears under the surface in a great spray of water, usually reappearing a few seconds later with a fish firmly clutched in its claws. Fortunately, the Osprey's plumage is fine and dense, particularly on its feet, so that the bird does not get very wet. The Osprey carries its catch headfirst in flight, using both feet to hold all but the smallest fishes.

If the fish is large or difficult to control, the bird may have to make several attempts before it succeeds in rising out of the water. It has happened that an Osprey, after catching a fish that was too heavy, has been unable to loosen its grip and been dragged under water by its prey and drowned.

The Osprey searches especially for slow-swimming fish near the surface. In Canada, its favourite freshwater species are sucker, pike, and pickerel of moderate size. Occasionally, it catches fish weighing as much as 2 kg from aquaculture, or fish farm, ponds, to the consternation of the operators of the ponds and sometimes at the risk of its own life. In



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saltwater environments, it feeds mostly on plaice and tomcod, but also takes pollock, shad, and smelts.

On occasion, a Bald Eagle will try to rob an Osprey by harassing it in flight until it drops its prey. Except during the nesting season, the Osprey perches near its fishing area to eat its catch, which it holds down with one foot and tears to pieces with its beak, devouring the head first. During nesting season, it brings the prey to the nest or to a perching place close by.

Most Ospreys that nest in Canada migrate in spring from wintering sites in Latin America and the northern part of South America. However, migratory behaviour depends on age. The one-year-olds remain on the wintering grounds all summer. Of the two-year-old birds, 30 to 50 percent return in spring to the area where they were hatched, although they do not nest. Ospreys three years and older, which have reached sexual maturity, return to their hatching sites every spring to breed.

In Canada, the Osprey most often nests in sturdy spruce or pine trees whose tops have broken off under the weight of snow or ice, providing a natural platform for the nest. In areas where large trees are lacking, perhaps as the result of a forest fire, the bird will sometimes nest on the ground, chiefly on large boulders in streams, atop rocks not accessible to land predators, and sometimes even on artificial structures such as power pylons, factory chimneys, hunters' blinds, or the bare frames of abandoned wigwams. It uses artificial nesting platforms (erected with the encouragement of wildlife managers) in areas where natural nesting sites are lacking.

The Osprey's nest is large and permanent, generally near water and at the top of a large tree. The tree may be alive or dead, but preferably should be strong enough to carry the weight of the nest, which consists of an immense mass of dried branches, interwoven with other materials, such as stakes, rope, strips of old cloth, plastic, and even caribou antlers.

To build its nest, the Osprey gathers branches from the ground or breaks them off

trees by flying at them. Most construction takes place early in the nesting season but the Osprey may add to its home throughout the summer. In late summer, the bird spends a great deal of time repairing the nest for use in the following year. On average, the nests are 30 to 60 centimetres deep and 1 metre in diameter, but some are more than 2.5 metres across. Early in the season, a small hollow accommodates the eggs, but the nest grows flatter as the nesting season advances. Each year, the Osprey adds materials, and as a result, the weight of the nest sometimes causes it to slide down the trunk of the tree.

Generally, the Osprey defends its territory against other large birds such as eagles, owls, gulls and the Great Blue Heron, which will not hesitate to take over its nest. The Osprey frequently takes the precaution of building more than one nest in its territory, especially if one year it does not manage to have young.

Some couples share the same nest year after year. At the start of the breeding season, when they are pairing or reaffirming their bond, they perform a spectacular display. The male repeatedly flies high into the air, hovers for a few seconds, dives, and reascends in a sweeping arc. Sometimes the female participates in a modified version of this display, making a show of pursuing the male. In another type of ritual display near the nest, the male flies laboriously, body arched and feet dangling below, often holding a fish or a branch in his claws.

According to estimates, nesting females lay an average of three buff-coloured eggs with dark brown speckles. The male takes little part in incubation, or warming the eggs until they hatch, and devotes most of his time to fishing. He is the sole provider for the family during the month of incubation and the subsequent month, when the growing chicks demand more than six fish per day. If food is abundant, two out of three chicks are usually able to fly after seven to nine weeks of constant parental care. Predation on eggs and young birds by crows, ravens, owls, gulls, and raccoons does not usually happen unless human activity has disturbed the parents.

According to the most recent estimates,

about half of young Ospreys die in the first year; the mortality rate in subsequent years is between 16 and 19 percent. Available banding data (20,000 individuals have been banded in the last 60 years), indicates that Ospreys can live for 15 to 20 years; however, some individuals have lived much longer. The longevity record for the species is held by a banded bird that died, probably from a bullet, at age 35. Unfortunately, we don't know whether this individual had bred every year up to its death. The greatest recorded number of breeding seasons for a single bird is 23.

Like many other birds of prey that are high on the food chain, Ospreys throughout the world had breeding problems during the 1950s and 1960s. These problems arose mainly from the then widespread use of organo-chlorine pesticides, especially DDT. DDE, a substance produced when DDT decomposes, caused thinning of the shells of the eggs, which consequently tended to break under the weight of the female. Since the use of these products has been limited nearly everywhere, populations in areas where there is still suitable nesting habitat for the species have begun to recover.

Apparently it is the Osprey's long life expectancy that enabled it to survive through those years of heavy pollution, despite low productivity. The bird's amazing adaptability, which allows it to live near humans and to use artificial structures for nesting where there are no natural sites for its nests, reinforced by access to artificial reservoirs and ponds stocked with fish, has contributed to the recovery of the populations of Ospreys that were most strongly affected by pesticides.

Besides being a magnificent representative of North American wildlife, the Osprey acts as a biological indicator of environmental problems. And as long as people continue to act on the signals that this and other indicator species are sending out about the condition of the environment, populations of Ospreys and many other species will remain.

Courtesy of the Canadian Wildlife Service. For more, see Hinterland Who's Who: <http://www.hww.ca/>

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Large Mammals Program...

continued from page 9.

lems were reported.

Table 5 demonstrates the representation of bulls and cows in the 2003 harvest as compared to the previous seven years. In 2003, hunters took slightly more than 5 bulls for every cow. This high ratio indicates most hunters had opportunity to choose a bull over a cow (which most hunters will take) and is further indication of an abundance of animals in the area.

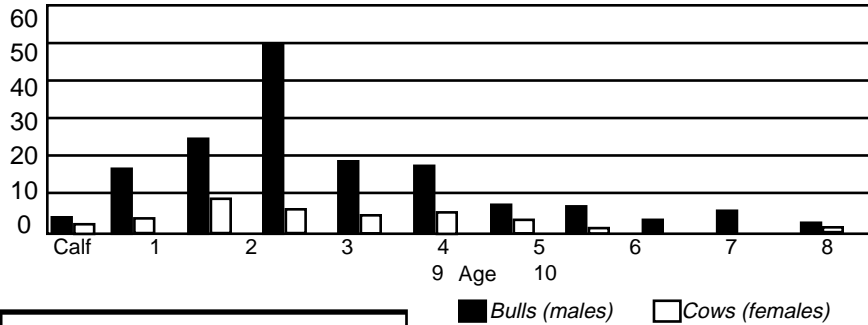
Figure 1 provides the age and sex make up of moose harvested in the fall of 2003.

Tony Nette and Vince Power are members of the Wildlife Division at the Department of Natural Resources in Kentville, Nova Scotia.

Table 5: Moose Harvest Breakdown By Sex 1996-2003

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Males	124	117	121	109	128	147	150	220
Females	51	66	67	74	62	39	39	42
M:F Ratio	2.4	1.8	1.8	1.5	2.1	3.8	3.9	5.2
TOTAL	175	183	188	183	190	186	189	262

Figure 1



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Animal Rights Groups To Announce Plan to Merge, Ban Bowhunting

U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance

The U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance (USSA) has learned that the nation's principal anti-hunting organizations will announce a merger on Monday, November 22. In announcing the merger, the unified anti-hunting group will reveal its intention to target bowhunters for extinction.

The USSA, a national organization founded to protect the rights of sportsmen to hunt, fish and trap, has been following a rumour that the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the Fund for Animals are preparing to combine forces.

The HSUS, located in Washington, D.C., is the nation's largest animal rights organization raising nearly \$60 million in 2002. The Fund for Animals is the most vociferous anti-hunting organization and is headquartered in New York City. It raised \$6.7 million in 2003.

Scripps Howard News Service reporter Lance Gay confirmed the merger announcement to USSA late Friday afternoon. Gay stated that sources within the groups confirmed that the new organization would seek to ban bowhunting as a first priority.

In response, USSA announced an emergency meeting of bowhunting organizations, businesses and publications to prepare to counter the attack. The Alliance created the Bowhunter Defense Coalition to defeat a series of attacks on bowhunters during the late 1980s.

"The merger announcement serves as a wake up call to bowhunting groups to reunite to defeat what promises to be a powerful attack on our heritage from this monstrous anti-hunting group," said Rick Story, U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance senior vice president. "To win, we will need to energize the vast grassroots network of sportsmen across this country."

Over the years, the Fund for Animals and HSUS have been the two most formidable organizations working to ban hunting. While the Fund for Animals has been openly hostile to hunters, HSUS has attempted to mask its intentions by raising funds using puppy calendars for promotions. Earlier this year, HSUS appointed former Fund for Animals official Wayne Pacelle to the position of CEO. Combined with the merger announcement, Pacelle's appointment leaves little doubt about the agenda of the newly-merged organization. According to public filings, the new organization will have combined assets of as much as \$97 million to implement its anti-hunting agenda.

The U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance protects the rights of hunters, anglers and trappers in the courts, legislatures, at the ballot, in Congress and through public education programs. For more information about the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance and its work, call (614) 888-4868 or visit its website, www.ussportsmen.org.



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Nature Conservancy of Canada (CCA) Dedicates Memorial Site to William E. Schwartz at Gaff Point

By Linda M. Stephenson

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) recently announced the dedication of a memorial site to the life and work of William "Bill" Schwartz (1931-1997) at Gaff Point in Lunenburg County. The five hectare (12.5 acre) memorial site, to be known as William E. Schwartz Memorial Point, is marked with a bronze plaque and located at the tip of Gaff Point on the Kingsburg Peninsula.

Bill Schwartz, an accomplished Nova Scotian who owned and operated Schwartz Inc., one of Canada's oldest food and spice companies founded in 1841, had a long history of conservation work and involvement with NCC, and was its national chair from 1993 to 1995. He was instrumental in NCC's work, in partnership with the Kingsburg Coastal Conservancy (KCC), to acquire and protect Gaff Point (50 ha/124 acres) from private development in perpetuity for the benefit of all Nova Scotians. Bill was also a key player in NCC's projects in Nova Scotia to acquire and protect

Munroe's Island and Abraham's Lake. Another significant success of Bill's leadership was his recruitment of Dr. Bill Freedman, now Chair of Dalhousie University's Biology Department, to NCC.

"This memorial project is part of a larger one that has resulted in the acquisition of this entire peninsula", said NCC National Board member and Atlantic Chair, Dr. Bill Freedman. "Gaff Point juts out almost 2 km into the Atlantic Ocean and is the last wild headland remaining in Lunenburg County."


Bill Jones and Art Hustins co-chaired the project to create this memorial to Bill Schwartz and raised substantial funds from friends and colleagues to establish this site and to contribute to the acquisition of properties on Gaff Point.

"Bill worked tirelessly on behalf of NCC raising funds and securing ecologically threatened properties," said NCC Atlantic Regional Board member Bill Jones. "It was in 1997, on his way to an NCC board meeting in Toronto that he tragically passed away."

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is a non-profit, non-advocacy organization that takes a business-like approach to land conservation and the preservation of biological diversity. Its plan of action involves partnership building and entering into creative conservation solutions with any individual, corporation, community group, conservation organization or government body that shares its passion. Since 1962, NCC and its supporters have protected more than 725,000 hectares (1.8 million acres) of ecologically significant land nationwide; more than 6,000 of those hectares (15,000 acres) are in Nova Scotia.

The Kingsburg Coastal Conservancy initiated the effort to protect Gaff Point in the mid-90s and has been an invaluable partner in this \$1.4 million dollar project. The KCC has kindly agreed to steward Gaff Point including the newly designated William E. Schwartz Memorial Point.

Linda M. Stephenson is NCC's Atlantic Regional Director. For more information, visit www.natureconservancy.com.



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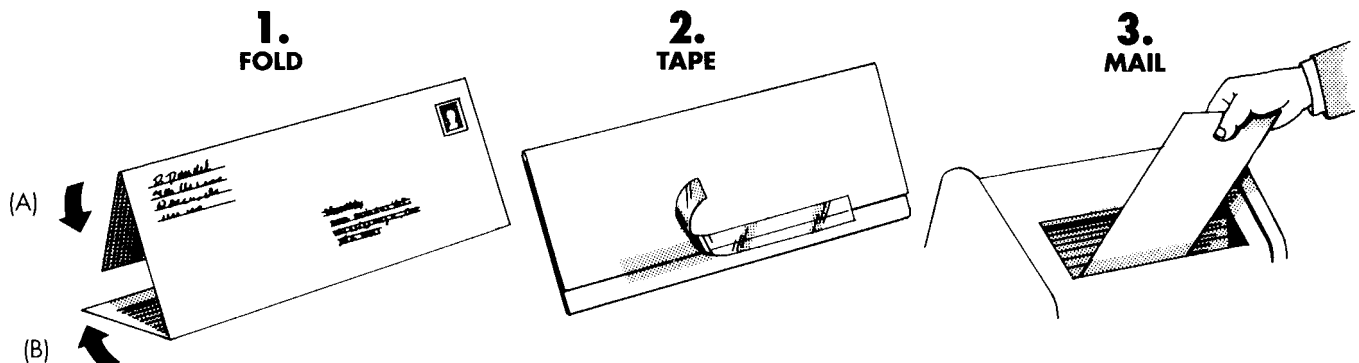


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