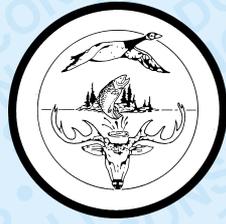


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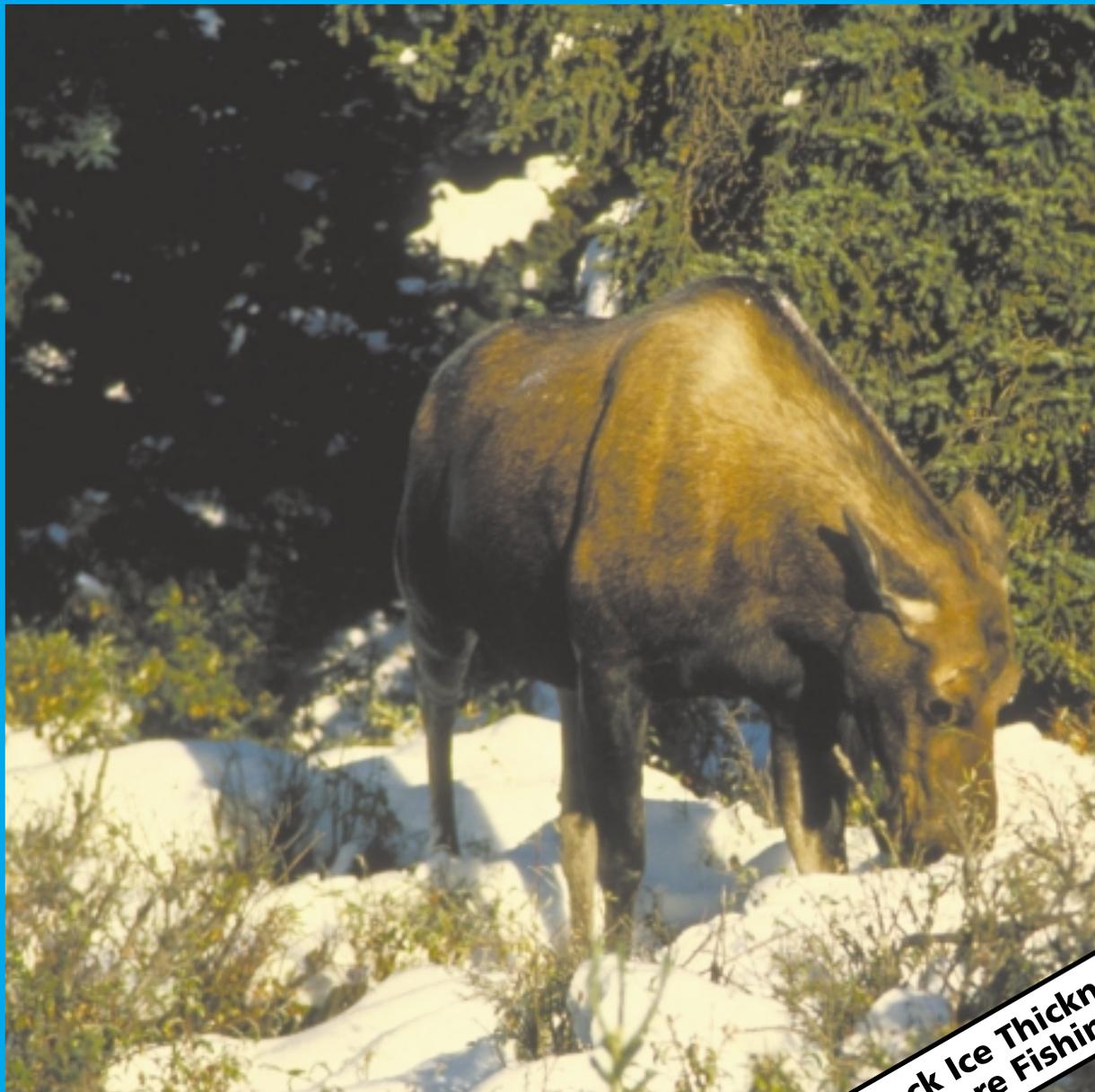
VOLUME 13, NO. 1
WINTER 2003/04

Chronic
Wasting Disease
Can It Happen Here!

Tips on Upgrading
Your Firearms License

A Walk In The Woods

**OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
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NOVA OUTDOORS

WINTER 2003

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of Anglers and Hunters



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Winter, 2003/04
**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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President's Message

"Where did the summer go?" These words and thoughts seem to be common conversation when outdoor enthusiasts meet, and reminisce of their recent outdoor adventures. This year, 2003, appears to be highlighted by spring floods, a short damp summer and Hurricane Juan in the Fall. All of which impacted most of us in one way or another. Additionally affected were wildlife and habitat in almost every sector.



Gary Penney

wildlife and aquatic life had to survive severe changes to their environments. The true affects of this year's weather extremes may not be obvious until next year and there after. For example, it appears we are seeing this fall, a down turn in mature deer, possibly a result of the low birth count of 2000 and 2001's late and cold wet springs. However, mother nature's succession has accomplished amazing survival over the decades, and we have learned a lot about intervention for the right reasons. We need to be diligent observers, have accurate facts, and react appropriately and responsibly to improve wildlife and its habitat.

As we are entering the winter season, I usually receive several calls for information from folks wanting to know about feeding wildlife. Other than providing feed for your backyard feathered birds, I recommend you not feed any wildlife on your own initiative, including ducks, squirrels, etc. The most unfortunate thing about feeding wildlife, is that they become dependent on your food supply and do not forage for themselves. Should your food supply discontinue, or be interrupted, starvation could result.

Another downside of improper feeding of wildlife, is that the feed you are providing may not have the proper nutrients for the species to build fat reserves for the harsh winter months ahead. There can also be risk of disease being introduced or spread when numbers of a species are feeding together. A last consequence of feeding wildlife is the possibility of it becoming a "nuisance" or "problem", either to yourself or someone else. My recommendation, should you observe or have reason to believe a wildlife species is in trouble, especially unusual behaviour (i.e. unafraid) contact a wildlife specialist or the Dept. of Natural Resources. Let wildlife be "wild" in its natural habitat - unless extraordinary circumstances exist. Wildlife has the instincts and skills required to survive on its own. It's usually our sympathetic nearsighted intervention that results in their worsening predicament later on.

In closing, I want to recognize a youth hunting program being developed by the Big Game Society of Nova Scotia and assisted with funding from NSFAH. This is a Youth Hunter Education Scholarship to assist youth that don't have the opportunity of a mentor or parent interest and financial means to get started. This program has a highly dedicated volunteer effort by the Big Game Society of NS and hopefully will be the catalyst of more youth development in hunting and fishing.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters, thank you for your support throughout the year and I wish you a prosperous and safe year in 2004.*

*Yours in Wildlife,
Gary Penney*

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Executive Director's Voice



By Tony Rodgers

A rifle shot rings out in the dark of the night. It wrestles sleep from residents of a nearby rural home who are disturbed once again by jackers. The house lights are turned on and half a sleep a phone call is made to conservation officers to report the shot and its location.

This unfortunately is a scenario played out much too often in Nova Scotia. Poaching is a parallel activity to the provincial deer hunting season that has been going on since deer were introduced to the province — the poaching season.

When these criminals commit their acts they leave behind evidence of this crime. Tire tracks, shell casings, gut piles or unclaimed dead deer which contain the bullets that killed them. These are usually not very bright people who poach and in some cases are known by locals and the Conservation Officers themselves.

Like the solving of any crime the wildlife police officers use many techniques and methods employed by other police agencies. Surveillance, clue gathering, reliable information from informants, animal protein matching and up until this summer the forensic laboratory services of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

In August the RCMP officer in charge of the six RCMP forensic laboratories across the country Assistant Commissioner Joe Buckle, wrote to wildlife agencies across Canada "Unfortunately, due to the heavy pressure on our firearms services, Forensic Laboratory Services (FLS) can only continue to provide analysis in those instances where there is associated criminal activity. As an example, firearms analysis of exhibits associated with Wildlife Act and Regulation contraventions can no longer be accepted."

No mention of the budget cuts was made in the Assistant Commissioner's letter, but according to Gary Breitkreuz, Official Opposition Critic for Firearms and Property Rights, a "briefing note" dated September 18, that he obtained under the freedom of information, contradicts the excuse given by the RCMP just 20 days earlier. "Earlier in the current fiscal year the

government announced budget cuts of one Billion dollars resulting in an impact to the RCMP of \$15 million. The contribution of the FLS to this cause was \$446,000. In addition, for the past two consecutive years the FLS has been unsuccessful in obtaining and "A" base increase."

I wrote the Solicitor General of Canada, Wayne Easter complaining about this serious loss to wildlife of this crime solving tool. In part his letter reply said "... and I am advised that, while the RCMP recognizes the importance of wildlife cases, increased demands and current workloads are such that the services of the forensic laboratories have been reviewed to ensure that priorities are aligned to the core mandate." So what is it? Workloads as the minister says or budget cuts according to the briefing note?

Whatever the reason, wildlife loses.

Mr. Breitkreuz went on to say in his remarks about the freedom of information request that for the sake of \$446,000 that is 0.3% of this year's gun registry budget of \$128 Million), the Liberals decided to let hundreds of Wildlife Act offenders off scot-free. "

Other documents provided by the RCMP show there have been 222 "wildlife cases" handled by the firearms forensic unit since 2001.

It was also discovered that it is just not the provincial wildlife agencies that would feel the effects of these cuts. Breitkreuz also discovered that the RCMP admitted that these cuts also affect prosecutions by Fisheries and Oceans, Parks Canada and the enforcement officers of the Environment Canada who are responsible for the Federal Migratory Birds Act, that has international application with our friends in the US.

The RCMP failed to prove that their service was under "heavy pressure". It appears now that the Budget cuts will affect the Liberal promise to protect wildlife and the environment, said Breitkreuz.

As an alternative service to the top rate forensic service that they were getting from the RCMP it was suggested that wildlife agencies across Canada send their exhibits to the National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratories in all places Ashland,

Oregon. Apparently this service is provided free to wildlife investigative agencies. If you get out the map that is on the West Coast of the US.

I wonder out loud if the RCMP have ever tried to ship a firearm out of Canada, especially one that is not yours, along with accompanying ammunition. These firearm laws that we are dealing with are so aneal that I doubt the firearm could be sent without a great deal of trouble. Think now about trying to get that firearm back into the country, especially one that is identified as being involved with a crime.

Never assume that the firearm is the guilty firearm. What happens if it is the wrong firearm and the owner can't get it back. What kind of a mess will that create.

In news stories in Halifax papers, John Mombourquette, Chief of Enforcement with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reports that his department was blind sided by the decision. He went on to say that the RCMP Forensic Laboratory Services provided a great service and that they have been dependent on this service for years and a great many wildlife cases.

Mr. Mombourquette also said that if they had been notified he believes DNR would have been willing to pay for the use of the labs.

After hearing this news about the loss of FLS to conservation officers' ability to link poachers to their crimes I tried to imagine what kind of a job the RCMP would have done if they had been successful in replacing the Conservation Officers in the summer of 2000. The provincial government toyed with this idea but had a change of mind after some reason was suggested.

Conservation officers are a special breed, you must really want to do that job. I wonder what kind of a job would have been done especially since we now know that the RCMP don't view wildlife crime as serious enough to receive forensic consideration.

When will the Canadian public wake up and pay attention to what the firearms legislation has done and will continue to do

Continued on page 7.

Chronic Wasting Disease: Can It Happen Here In The Maritimes?

By Mark Hamilton

PULLQUOTE: At a bait site, nose-to-nose contact, sneezing, licking, or the presence of saliva, urine or fecal matter on bait food means an ideal propagation site for fluid-borne diseases.

Hunters all over North America are becoming increasingly concerned about the connection between baiting (spreading food to attract animals, primarily deer) and the spread of disease in wildlife.

Baiting varies in scale. In Michigan alone, carrot-growers sold all their yearly culls to hunters, about 800 tractor-trailer loads at a value of \$6 million US. Growers there fought a bait-limit imposed after scientists at the USDA Agricultural Research Service showed that bovine tuberculosis could survive for days on feed. Michigan veterinarians indicated that baiting was a clear factor in disease spread where deer densities ran high, resulting in serious threat to that state's multi-billion dollar dairy industry.

Baiting has always been a topic of dissent in the hunting community. Many hunters and non-hunters tend to regard baiting as a symptom of a results-oriented society, where taking deer is more important than maintaining the practice of fair chase. Within the hunting community, on the average there has been an erosion of the skills needed to understand animal movements, habits, and instincts. Yet defenders of the practice point to several perceived benefits: baiting holds the interest of newcomers to the practice of hunting; it brings and holds deer within range of a bowshot; and it increases hunting safety by rifle-shooting deer from stands at close ranges.

The questions of ethics and skill are taking a backseat in the new landscape of debate on baiting, however. The presence of new and poorly-understood diseases has caused us to take a hard look at

every aspect of our working relationship with wildlife. Although biologists have expressed concern over baiting and feeding of wildlife as far back as the 1930s, the presence of Chronic Wasting Disease has brought a new seriousness to rethinking these practices.

At a bait site, nose-to-nose contact, sneezing, licking, or the presence of saliva, urine or fecal matter on bait food means an ideal propagation site for fluid-borne diseases.

Manitoba is among several states and provinces to impose a baiting ban. This is a precautionary measure, as no-one knows for sure how CWD is spread. CWD is a progressive, untreatable, untestable, fatal disease of the same family as Scrapie, which occurs in sheep and goats, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), which occurs in cattle, and Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease (CJD), which occurs in humans. Caused by a renegade, self-replicating protein called a "prion," this family of disease (Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies) has been known to jump the species barrier: in Britain, over 100 people have died from developing the variant CJD from eating BSE-infected beef. Chronic Wasting Disease itself is thought to have originated in Colorado where elk and deer were penned together with Scrapie-infected sheep.

As yet, there have been no known cases of CWD being transmitted either to humans or livestock, although three young Americans have developed classic CJD, which is rare in young people, and all three had a history of eating venison. We know for certain that animals can pass it to each other, that females can pass it to their offspring, and that elk and deer kept in paddocks formerly housing infected animals have contracted the disease, leading scientists to conclude that the environment of facilities can become in-

fectured also. CWD has been diagnosed in wild deer in Colorado, Wyoming, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Saskatchewan, and in game farms in these and other states, plus one case recently found in farmed elk in Alberta. It is worrying to note that a mule deer was recently found with CWD in New Mexico, far from any former range of the disease. Wisconsin officials have commenced the destruction of 25,000 deer in an effort to control the spread of CWD, and in Colorado more than 10,000 animals have been killed using helicopters and sharpshooters.

Since 1996 and the CWD outbreak in game-farm elk in Saskatchewan, the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) has destroyed nearly 8000 animals. That outbreak was traced to a single-point source—a Colorado-born animal brought from a South-Dakota game farm to a Saskatchewan elk breeder. All animals associated with that presence were destroyed.

A common tie is obvious in the transmission of disease in wildlife: game farming. Unlike domesticated varieties of animals that have, over time, become extremely resistant to disease, the penning of wildlife increases exposure and stress and may lead, ultimately, to sickness.

Containing these diseases has proven almost impossible. When game farms in Canada experienced a TB outbreak in the 1990s, brought here in elk imported from the US, the TB spread to cattle, pigs and humans. It also cost Canada our TB-free status, valued by Agriculture Canada at \$1-billion. With a 20 per cent failure rate

Continued on page 8.

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Executive Director's Voice...

Continued from page 5.

to the wildlife of Canada. Hunters pay for wildlife conservation in this country. Our license fees to hunt, donations to provincial and federal environment wildlife habitat programs and the tax collected on the items we use in our hunting activity will be lost because this gun law is hurting legitimate firearms owners, the hunters who pay.

This really is the last straw, our Fed-

eration has said from the beginning that Canada's new gun laws would have a negative impact on the wildlife of this country and this action is a domino result of our gun laws.

Smile and say hi to a conservation officer. But don't be fooled. Just because they lost the forensic labs doesn't mean they don't

have other tools. I don't expect a poacher is reading this but just in case, look over your shoulder.

Join a wildlife organization or two. They are fighting for you. *

*Tony Rodgers
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Chronic Wasting Disease...

Continued from page 6.

in the current mid-cervical screening test, another outbreak is entirely possible.

The US Government's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has declared a state of emergency because of the risk CWD poses to livestock. In Canada, the CFIA has stated that CWD has been defeated, or so they hope, and elk farmers are "optimistic" that the industry will return to its former state.

The market for these farmers was mostly in Korea, where elk antler velvet was revered as an aphrodisiac and traditional remedy. This market has been largely destroyed by the presence of Viagra and the discovery of CWD brought into Korea through infected Canadian elk.

In Canada, elk antler velvet continues to be sold, without warning to the consumer, despite the fact that infection has been proven in the sites of origin of the velvet. The industry has stated that the heat used for drying the velvet sterilizes it. This is extremely unlikely, given that prions have been shown to resist destruction even when they are reduced to ash at 600°C. In one reported medical case, doctors performing an operation on a woman with CJD were alarmed to find the infection had spread to two other patients undergoing operations using the same surgical implements, despite normal sterilization of the tools involved.

The real market for elk ranches, according to the Canadian Wildlife Federation, turns out to be government compensation. Before the Korean ban on Canadian elk antler velvet imports, prices were as high as \$120 per pound. Now the price is closer to \$20 and the buyers are primarily domestic.

Two years ago, bred female elk sold for as much as \$20,000; this fall the same quality of animal sold for about \$1,250. It is noteworthy that the CFIA pays up to \$4000 per animal destroyed because of the disease, and that industry spokespeople dismiss current problems as "growing pains."

In July the CWF called for a total ban and decommission of cervid (deer and elk) farms in Canada. The CWF has been calling for an environmental impact assessment of game farming for 15 years,

citing transmission of disease, hybridization, and loss of natural habitat as some of their main concerns. There are still 810 elk farms in Alberta and Saskatchewan, with about 60,000 animals. These farms tend to be little more than fenced areas, and the wild populations of the species are often right there beside the enclosed animals. Animals do get out of the pens; wild animals do get in; and disease is spread. In areas where infected, decommissioned farms are left untended, wild animals potentially have no barrier to disease.

Game farm owners point to current regulations on moving and testing animals as proof that disease is being carefully controlled. In Nova Scotia, CFIA officials follow the agency's guidelines in safeguarding cattle here from brucellosis and tuberculosis potentially carried by farmed cervids. Nova Scotia currently allows the importation of game-farmed deer. Cervids entering the province need to spend time in quarantine while tests for these diseases are carried out. Transport of cervids is allowed only with permits, and farms need an approved quarantine center before animals are allowed into the province. Other regions have their own regulations besides federally-imposed ones. In Saskatchewan you can't take cervids out, and in Alberta you can't move any in. In Saskatchewan, the head of every deer or elk killed needs to be turned over to the province. Regulations on bringing animals between the US and Canada change monthly (borders are mostly closed at the moment).

It is not currently known, however what the incubation period of TSE diseases is. It can take months or years for clinical signs to appear after the initial exposure and infection takes place. There is no way to test live animals for CWD, and no sure way to know if animals entering Nova Scotia have been exposed. Like Lyme Disease or West Nile Virus, which have now both occurred in Nova Scotia, we can only wait and see if it turns up. While states like Illinois don't allow hunters to enter with animal carcasses

(only processed meat can be returned from the hunt), in Nova Scotia we allow animals to be brought in as long as they were obtained legally elsewhere.

The question of baiting in the Maritimes remains very much a question of how imminent is the presence of disease, possibly devastating disease, and what our wildlife is worth to us. It is reasonable to be concerned and to take steps to mitigate the threat our wildlife and wildlife-related industries face. For the hunter, it could mean being aware that the potential for damage exists, and making a move toward reducing the size of bait piles. The potential for disease spread and the opportunity for poaching and abuse are both curtailed by small bait piles that require more constant attention. The increased need to place these piles selectively should sharpen the skills of newcomers to the outdoors. This is a compromise several states have accepted. Also, before using urine or scent lures, hunters should be aware that one infected sample could spread anywhere in the common pot.

While baiting restrictions seem a necessary and reasonable form of damage control, focusing on the practice of baiting might detract from the real culprit in disease propagation in wildlife. It might also leave wildlife solely in the hands of agencies that demonstrate an incomplete understanding of the spectre of CWD.*

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NOVASCOTIA
The Honourable Chris d'Entremont
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

Tips On Upgrading Your Firearms License

I decided some years ago that I had all the shotguns I needed and I never bothered to obtain a Firearms Acquisition Certificate or FAC. Meanwhile all the noise and nonsense about gun registration reared up, and I



Ed Coleman

obtained my possession certificate, and the Firearms Act became law.

Flash forward to last winter when the new S.I.R. outdoor supplies catalogue arrived from Winnipeg. There in all its glory was the just introduced Beretta A391 Xtrema semi-automatic shotgun with three-and-a-half inch chamber, 28 inch barrel and wetlands camouflage finish.

I didn't exactly drool over that gun but I found myself digging out the catalogue and reading its specs again and again. A month later Field & Stream magazine arrived and there was a feature on the Xtrema. The glowing review of the shotgun convinced me it was ideal for the kind of waterfowling I do and I decided I had to have one.

Obviously since I have the possession only license I had to be upgraded. To obtain the upgrade, the so-called possession/acquisition license required by the Firearms Act, I needed to pass the Canadian Firearms Safety Course. This seems like a lot of unnecessary rigmarole and red tape but now it's the law; no retailer will sell me a shotgun unless I have the license to prove that I meet the criteria set down by the Firearms Act.

I've mentioned my sudden desire to buy a new shotgun because I learned about a shortcut for obtaining the acquisition certificate. What I learned may be helpful for anyone who doesn't have the acquisition card and who may decide they need a new shotgun or rifle. If you've been hunting for decades, there's no need to apply for the Firearms Safety Course and spend several evenings in a classroom being lectured on firearms stuff you don't need to know and will never have any use for.

If you qualify, you can take a short version of the safety course by telephone. And as I said, your qualification is your hunting experience. In fact, if you've owned a firearm since 1979 you qualify to take the telephone version of the course.

Here's how you do it. Call the Canadian Firearms Centre office and ask for info on taking the firearms course via telephone. You'll be connected with an office that will send you the application to take the telephone test once they're convinced you qualify.

There could be a two-month wait for your test once you return the application. In the meanwhile, obtain a copy of the Canadian Firearms Safety Course book and study it thoroughly. The test will consist of about 30 questions, most of them of a general nature. If you're familiar with firearms and ammunition, however, you won't have any trouble passing. Concentrate on the safety aspect of firearms use when studying the book.

One of the questions you will be asked is to name the vital four acts of firearms safety - ACTS. A friend and I got this question when taking the telephone test. This is explained in the course book's introduction and is repeated a couple of times. Make sure you're familiar with it.*

Ed Coleman is a well known outdoors writer who lives in the Annapolis Valley.

Random Casts

Fishing With The Wulff Man

By Don MacLean

When Lee Wulff crashed his plane and died at the age of 86 in 1991, the angling world lost one of its giants. Many considered him to be the most influential angler of the 20th century, and it could be argued that few have contributed as much to our knowledge of fishing for trout and salmon. His legacy lives on however in the flies he developed, his books and videos, and the fishing equipment he invented. As an author and teacher Lee Wulff was a leading voice in the conservation of trout and salmon. As early as 1939 he recognized the effect that over fishing was having on salmon and he coined the phrase "A good game fish is too valuable to be caught only once."

Lee Wulff was no stranger to Nova Scotia. He often came here to fish and his first experiences as a salmon fisherman were gained on the Margaree, Ecum Secum and St. Mary's Rivers. In a letter he wrote to the Margaree Salmon Museum, that is now on display there, he wrote, "The Margaree was my first love

among salmon rivers". In later years Wulff, along with his wife Joan produced a series of videos on fishing in Nova Scotia for the provincial Department of Tourism. They included fall salmon fishing on the Stewiacke River, as well as a video of fishing for bluefin tuna off the Canso Causeway. Bill Bryson, who at that time worked for the Tourism Department told me that Wulff, then in his 80s, had a tuna that they estimated at 1000 lbs. almost to the gaff three times before the leader parted.

Besides creating his books and videos Lee Wulff was also an inventor. He is credited with creating the modern fly fishing vest, as well as triangle taper fly line. He was also a well known fly tyer and designer. Without using a vice he was able to tie the smallest fly while holding the hook in his fingers. Although best known as a salmon angler Wulff also did a great deal of trout fishing. Some would consider the series of flies which bear his name as his greatest contribution to angling. Originally designed as trout flies they are effective on almost any fish that swims. The Wulff series of flies, the Royal, White, Black and AuSable, as well as the many variations that now exist, are found in most anglers' flybox. Although he is no longer with us,

Lee Wulff's legacy of fishing knowledge, his flies and his conservation ethic will live on.*



White Wulff

Hook: Mustad 94840 size 8-16

Tail: White calftail or bucktail

Body: White wool

Wings: White calftail or

bucktail tied in upright, and divided

Hackle: Light Badger

Tight Lines

©2003 Don MacLean

Donald A. MacLean is the Assistant Director Inland Fisheries Division for Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Pictou, NS.

Invitation To 2nd Eastern Cougar Conference

Conference Planned for 2004! The Eastern Cougar Foundation is proud to announce "The Eastern Cougar Conference, 2004", to be held April 28, through May 1, 2004, in Morgantown, West Virginia. This special conference, only the second such meeting ever devoted entirely to the fascinating subject of the cougars in the East, Southeast, Midwest and Great Plains of North America, is being organized jointly by the ECF and the American Ecological Research Institute (AERIE), which is directed by Dr. Jay Tischendorf of the ECF Board.

This gathering is open to anyone with an interest in wildlife, conservation, nature, cougars, or related topics. Students are encouraged to attend. AERIE and the ECF are currently soliciting proposals for pertinent papers. If you would like to have a presentation, poster, or display considered for inclusion in the final schedule of events, please e-mail a brief (500 words or less) abstract as soon as possible to Dr. Jay Tischendorf at

Jay_Tischendorf@Merck.com. Those without computer access may contact Jay Tischendorf by mail at: Dr. Jay Tischendorf (DVM), Director, American Ecological Research Institute (AERIE), P. O. Box 1826, Great Falls, MT 59403 USA.

This is an incredibly rare and unique opportunity for anyone and everyone with an interest in mountain lions east of the Rocky Mountains to gather together, network, and share in literally the latest and most cutting-edge information and tech-

nology on this important subject. This opportunity doesn't come around everyday. The last time was 10 years ago. Those who attend will be monumentally glad they did, and those that don't will regret it for a long time to come.

For more information or to register for this exciting event, visit the Eastern Cougar Foundation's website, www.easterncougar.org

Please pass this message on to others who may have an interest.*

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For detailed information about hunter reporting see page 33 of the 2003 Nova Scotia Hunting & Furharvesting Summary of Regulations booklet you received as part of your licence, or on the web visit www.gov.ns.ca/natr/hunt/regulations/
A no-kill report is just as important as reporting a successful hunt.
Remember, effective management of hunted species requires the participation of hunters.
Are You Doing Your Part?

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Gun Laws Do Not Reduce Criminal Violence According To New Study

Restrictive firearm legislation has failed to reduce gun violence in Australia, Canada, or Great Britain. The policy of confiscating guns has been an expensive failure, according to a new paper "The Failed Experiment: Gun Control and Public Safety in Canada, Australia, England and Wales", released in November 2003, by The Fraser Institute.

"What makes gun control so compelling for many is the belief that violent crime is driven by the availability of guns, and more importantly, that criminal violence in general may be reduced by limiting access to firearms," says Gary Mauser, author of the paper and professor of business at Simon Fraser University.

This new study examines crime trends in Commonwealth countries that have recently introduced firearm regulations. Mauser notes that the widely ignored key to evaluating firearm regulations is to examine trends in total violent crime, not just firearm crime.

The United States provides a valuable point of comparison for assessing crime rates as that country has witnessed a dramatic drop in criminal violence over the past decade - for example, the homicide rate in the U.S. has fallen 42 percent since 1991. This is particularly significant when compared with the rest of the world - in 18 of the 25 countries surveyed by the British Home Office, violent crime increased during the 1990s.

The justice system in the U.S. differs in many ways from those in the Commonwealth, but perhaps the most striking difference is that qualified citizens in the United States can carry concealed handguns for self-defence. During the past few decades, more than 25

states in the U.S. have passed laws allowing responsible citizens to carry concealed handguns. In 2003, there are 35 states where citizens can get such a permit.

Disarming the public has not reduced criminal violence in any country examined in this study. In all these cases, disarming the public has been ineffective, expensive, and often counterproductive. In all cases, the effort meant setting up expensive bureaucracies that produce no noticeable improvement to public safety or have made the situation worse. Mauser points to these trends in the countries he examined:

England And Wales

Both Conservative and Labour governments have introduced restrictive firearms laws over the past 20 years; all handguns were banned in 1997. Yet in the 1990s alone, the homicide rate jumped 50 percent, going from 10 per million in 1990 to 15 per million in 2000. While not yet as high as the U.S., in 2002 gun crime in England and Wales increased by 35 percent. This is the fourth consecutive year that gun crime has increased.

Police statistics show that violent crime in general has increased since the late 1980s and since 1996 has been more serious than in the United States.

Australia

The Australian government made sweeping changes to the firearms legislation in 1997.

However, the total homicide rate, after having remained basically flat from 1995 to 2001, has now begun climbing again. While violent crime is decreasing in the United States, it is increasing in Australia. Over the past six years, the overall rate of violent

crime in Australia has been on the rise - for example, armed robberies have jumped 166 percent nationwide.

The confiscation and destruction of legally owned firearms has cost Australian taxpayers at least \$500 million. The cost of the police services bureaucracy, including the costly infrastructure of the gun registration system, has increased by \$200 million since 1997.

"And for what?" asks Mauser. "There has been no visible impact on violent crime. It is impossible to justify such a massive amount of the taxpayers money for no decrease in crime.

For that kind of tax money, the police could have had more patrol cars, shorter shifts, or better equipment."

Canada

The contrast between the criminal violence rates in the United States and in Canada is dramatic.

Over the past decade, the rate of violent crime in Canada has increased while in the United States the violent crime rate has plummeted. The homicide rate is dropping faster in the U.S. than in Canada.

The Canadian experiment with firearm registration is becoming a farce says Mauser. The effort to register all firearms, which was originally claimed to cost only \$2 million, has now been estimated by the Auditor General to top \$1 billion. The final costs are unknown but, if the costs of enforcement are included, the total could easily reach \$3 billion.

"It is an illusion that gun bans protect the public. No law, no matter how restrictive, can protect us from people who decide to commit violent crimes. Maybe we should crack down on criminals rather than hunters and target shooters?" says Mauser.

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Lend A Hand

Don't Just Complain About The State Of Our Outdoors - Do Something About It

By Andy Houser

Reprinted with permission from *The Outdoor Canada* magazine.

I have often thought that our national bird should be the seagull. If we Canadians aren't squawking about something, after all, we're dumping on it. And like seagulls, in too many cases we're content to simply enjoy the spoils of others' efforts. Too often, this seems to be particularly the case with hunters and anglers and those who make it their business to cater to them.

Do you hunt? Do you fish? Do you guide or provide other services? If so, what are you doing to protect your hunting and fishing heritage? Are you actively working on conservation projects or other activities to help ensure the future of hunting and fishing? Are you a member of a provincial or national conservation organization or a local group actively working on conservation or heritage projects?

You may say you contribute by paying taxes, but all Canadians - whether or not they hunt or fish - also pay taxes. And with the overwhelming pressures on governments, particularly with respect to health care, education and social welfare, how can you expect your tax dollars to be directed to your special interests?

"What about licence fees?" you may ask. When most hunting licences cost less than a box of shells and most fishing licences cost less than a specialty lure, what makes you think that the revenues from licence sales could come even remotely close to providing the dollars needed for effective fish and wildlife management and heritage protection?

We have often been fortunate in having politicians and public servants who truly care. But without the strong advocacy of anglers and hunters, individually and as members of angling and hunting organizations, and without strong partnerships with fishing and hunting groups, very little would (or could) be accomplished. For example, neither wild turkeys nor elk would have

been reintroduced in Ontario without the work of hunting organizations. And programs to stop the introduction and spread of exotic species would never have been implemented. Fish-stocking programs would have ceased years ago.

The contributions of anglers and hunters to conservation projects and heritage protection in terms of time, dollars and effort is truly phenomenal. But most of those contributions come from a small group of individuals and organizations. The vast majority of anglers, hunters and supporting industries are content to live on the spoils and, when things don't go well, to squawk and dump.

Why aren't more anglers, hunters, tourist operators and service providers more active? Apathy? Cheapness? Laziness? I don't know. The excuses, including lack of time or the supposedly high cost of participation, aren't adequate. Ever played golf? Gone to the theatre? Do you have kids in organized sports? Take the time - and take the family. Become active.

Even if you can't get out personally, join a provincial or national organization or a local club that is working for the protection of our hunting and fishing heritage - and gain the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to make a difference. If you aren't a member of such a group, or you aren't actively taking steps in some other way to protect our outdoors heritage, you're not part of the solution.

You're part of the problem.

They Want You - Many local fishing and hunting clubs are affiliated with provincial or territorial organizations. As well, most national associations have local chapters. To find a club or chapter nearest you, contact the relevant group below.

Provincial/Territorial Organizations

Northwest Territories Wildlife Federation:
(867) 873-3853

Yukon Fish and Game Association:
(867) 667-4263
www.yukonfga.com

British Columbia Wildlife Federation:
(604) 533-2293
www.bcwf.bc.ca

Alberta Fish and Game Association:
(780) 437-2342
www.afga.org

Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation:
(306) 692-8812
www.swf.sk.ca

Manitoba Wildlife Federation:
(204) 633-5967
www.mwf.mb.ca

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters: (705) 748-6324
www.ofah.org

Fédération québécoise de la faune:
1-888-523-2863
www.fqf.qc.ca

New Brunswick Wildlife Federation:
1-888-272-6411
www.wildlife.nb.ca

Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters: (902) 477-8898

Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation: (709) 364-8415

P.E.I. Wildlife Federation:
(902) 566-0676
Canadian Wildlife Federation:
1-800-563-9453
www.cwf-fcf.org*

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A Walk In The Woods

People And Their Forests

“There is no beauty so great as beauty shared”.

Anonymous

Our forest land is part of the future. What we do now to our land affects



trees, birds, animals, plants, and all living things in the forest for a long time.

It affects whoever may own the land in the future - our children, grandchildren, or someone we have never met. It affects our neighbours and the local community. By taking care of our land now, we can ensure a healthy forest for future generations of all living things. The future of the forest is in our hands now.

Establishing long-term plans for your forested property is a positive first step toward good forest stewardship. An appropriate management plan considers your needs and desires and helps you achieve them while working within environmentally responsible guidelines and regulations.

Conversations with forest landowners have revealed some interesting stories about their likes and dislikes in the forest. Seeing big, healthy trees, animals, and wildlife habitat are among the “likes”; seeing and walking past dead trees or fresh cut stumps and branches are among the “dislikes”.

Visual Quality

Much of the enjoyment we receive from being in the forest comes from what we see and how it makes us feel. Think about why you like the forest. Think specifically about what you enjoy and appreciate.

It is important to remember that visually pleasing aesthetics doesn't necessarily equate to ecological health and high biodiversity. In fact, a commonly considered nice view scape of colourful, rolling agricultural fields, usually contain less biodiversity than clearcuts,

which most people don't enjoy seeing.

Are you interested in hiking, trail biking, backpacking, camping, picnicking, or identifying wildflowers because of the visual and scenic qualities of the forest? Do you like to see big trees, sunny areas, cool, shady areas, a pond, or a meadow?

If you own forest land, you can incorporate these interests into your forest management plans. Following are a few of the visual attributes of forests you may want to consider.

The Canopy

Some areas of your forest could have trees that are about the same height. The tallest trees have branches that interweave to form a dense or closed narrow band of foliage at the top of the trees. These areas have an open, park-like appearance. Other areas could have trees that vary greatly in height. Here, the crowns of the tall trees are farther apart and the upper part of the canopy may be open with crowns of smaller trees below them. The crowns of the smaller trees may be as low as ground level. With this dispersion of foliage from low to high, your view through the forest may be limited.

Big Trees

Most of us like to see big trees in the forest because it gives us the feeling that the forest is old and well established. The big trunks look like pillars holding up the ceiling of a very interesting room. Generally, the big trees are more noticeable when the surrounding trees are considerably smaller. Old growth forests are of particular interest to most because of their beauty, their inherent biodiversity, their genetic value, and sadly - their rarity.

Fields, Meadows, Or Other Openings

These openings provide a warm sunny place where you can see the sky and open land. If you have a field, meadow, pasture, abandoned orchard, or other terrestrial opening, you can

preserve the opening as it is now, or you can let nature take its course. If left alone for many decades, the opening will gradually, via succession, convert to a forest community. Also, you may choose to create a new opening or change the shape of an existing opening to better serve your interests.

Visual Disturbance And Slash

Visual disturbance might be described as tree stumps, cut branches and small scraggly trees, and exposed soil that may result from logging. The visual effects of disturbance and slash can be minimized by working closely with loggers and treating the slash. Slash can be chipped, cut into small pieces, burned, removed, or left where it falls. Slash can be treated so it is below your knees, or put into small piles so you can move around easily (rather than climbing over branches and trunks). Some silviculture treatments create a lot of slash, others create much less. Just remember, most of the signs of disturbance and the slash become much less noticeable a few short years after the treatment.

Of course, there is always the option of leaving a windfirm greenbelt along highways during forest harvesting operations. Once the regeneration has grown sufficiently, (which usually takes five to ten years), the greenbelt may be removed to show off a new healthy, young forest.

Special Plants Characteristics

You can make changes to appearance of a forested area or the edge of a forest, a meadow, or a pond. Colour, flowers, or plants of different shapes and sizes add visual interest. Adding new plants or emphasizing interesting plants that are already established is easy to do. Some people favour maintaining native tree species, whereas others prefer to experiment with other more exotic species from countries around the world. As an example, some species, such as Norway Spruce and Japanese Larch, have proven to be very fast growers. However, they also have become prone to maladies such as insect infestation, frost sensitive and a popular snack for local critters.*

Fish Registry: Good Idea But Flawed

By Ed Coleman

I'm sure anglers will applaud the move by the government to start a sport fish registry for the province. The idea has been kicked around for years and it's great to see it finally become a reality. If I remember correctly, I believe the proposal for a registry originally came from one of the wildlife associations. Correct me if I'm wrong but I think the registry idea, while not originating there, was strongly supported (and promoted) by the wildlife association in Kings County.

In announcing the registry recently, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries released a list of the largest fish caught in the province. These records were said to be "unofficial." Not to be negative, I must add that these records in some instances are out of date and inaccurate.

Let's take as an example the monster of a brook trout (7.5 pounds) that was caught in 1871. In 1967 I did extensive research for a historical review of angling in Nova Scotia for a Canadian outdoor magazine. Digging through several books on angling in south-western Nova Scotia some 150 years ago, I found several instances where 10 pound brook trout were caught.

At least two of these giant brookies were weighed and measured with several witnesses on hand, including recognized guides. Since written records are the only proof that the 7.5 pound trout was caught in 1871, why wouldn't the recorded 10-pounders be considered as legitimate and entered in the records?

I may be stretching it to suggest that the government look at records and include those 10-pound trout in the fish registry. However, on brown trout, I believe the unofficial record for this fish should be updated.

The government says the unofficial record for the largest brown trout caught in the province is a 7.5 pounder taken in 1979. I say this is wrong, and here's why:

In 1963 Kentville angler Hugh Aker caught a brown trout in the Cornwallis River weighing 10 pounds, two ounces. The trout was weighed and measured by fisheries officers and the results published in the local newspaper along with a photograph. Aker's trout stood as the Cornwallis River record for years but has been broken several times.

As unofficial record keeper for the Cornwallis, I have since seen several brown trout caught that topped Aker's fish. I personally weighed and measured what is probably the record for the Cornwallis, a brown weighing 14

pounds, 13 ounces; this trout was caught in the lower section of the river in 1970 by Gilbert (Gilly) Forsythe of Kentville.

Meadowview angler Harold Mahar has also caught several good browns in the Cornwallis, all beating the 7.5 pound fish mentioned in the fish registry. Mahar has landed two 10-pound browns, a 12-pounder and one fish just under Forsythe's monster trout. Ralph Malin of Meadowview has caught two 10-pounders, a 12-pound fish and one brown he and witnesses say weighed 15.5 pounds. Other local anglers, Hughie Graves, Ludie Gallant and Paul Moors, have caught browns much larger than 7.5 pounds. One monster caught by Graves, checked two days after it had been caught, was estimated by fisheries officers to weigh 15 pounds.

The "record" 1.5 pound white perch mentioned in the registry is also questionable and should be checked. On several occasions over the years local anglers have reported taking white perch in the two-pound plus range. The 5.25 smallmouth bass caught in 1997 probably has been beaten as well. In 1998 Black River guide Perry Munro caught and released a smallmouth estimated at 5.5 pounds.*

Ed Coleman is a well known outdoors writer who lives in Annapolis Valley.

Atlantic Raptor Rehabilitation Centre

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Wintertime And Fish Hatcheries

By Darryl D. Murant

At the Dept. of Agriculture & Fisheries fish hatcheries, we're often asked by visitors what we do in the winter. While the hatcheries, at McGowan Lake, Queens Co., and Fraser's Mills, Antigonish Co., are obviously busy places most of the year, people wonder what happens when the water freezes and the sites are covered in snow.

November and December are two of our busier months. The fall and winter stocking program is on-going, while the 'spawning season' is in full swing. By mid-December over 200 lakes and rivers will have been stocked with over 800,000 fish. The bulk of these are Nova Scotia's most popular sport fish, Speckled trout. These are stocked primarily in inland lakes with good water quality and habitat. For the most part, genetic strains used in this program have a wild fish component that should impart good survival characteristics. Sea-run Speckled trout are stocked in several rivers. Broodstock (parent fish) for these are from strains developed from wild fish taken from rivers with well established runs. Once released, these young trout utilize the lower river and estuarine environments to grow quickly and are often creel-sized by the next summer. Brown trout, established in Nova Scotia for nearly a century now, are used to enhance existing populations, usually in rivers. Another species, Landlocked salmon, is also released at this time of year into a select few lakes in the province. In response to angler demand, and in an effort to promote year round sportfishing activity, the

Department's hatcheries provide catchable-sized Rainbow trout to over a dozen sites across Nova Scotia, where winter fishing is popular.

At the hatcheries, hundreds of thousands of trout are kept through the winter months to be either released across the province in the spring or kept as broodstock, used to produce the next generation. Being cold-blooded creatures, these fish feed little in the winter when the frigid water (usually around 1 degree Celsius) results in reduced appetite and growth. Care and maintenance are required, however, to keep them healthy until the spring.

Much of the winter activity at the hatcheries revolves around the millions of eggs collected the previous fall from thousands of female fish. In the wild, trout and salmon deposit their eggs in redds in the stream bottom and leave hoping for the best. This is not the case in hatcheries. Survival rates of eggs deposited by fish in the wild is very low, whereas in the hatcheries 80- 90 percent can be expected to hatch. Achieving these high rates, however, takes a lot of time and effort by hatchery technicians. Eggs must be constantly cleaned and monitored for fungal infections that, if left unchecked, could destroy much of the crop. Despite the very cold water temperature, these eggs develop. By February, the embryos will have grown to the point where they are clearly visible within the egg when it is held up to a light. Their partially developed eyes appear to be staring back at you when you observe them. Once they have developed to this point the eggs can be physically handled without



An ice angler admires his Rainbow trout catch at Gairloch Lake, Pictou Co.. Don't let winter keep you shut in. Rainbow trout fishing is an excellent way to enjoy Nova Scotia's outdoors this winter.

harming them. So, in the hatchery they are resorted, counted and set out in hatching trays or prepared for shipment elsewhere.

People are often surprised to find out that trout eggs can be transported about, either in jars of ice water or in specialized containers where they are kept cold and moist. As a matter of fact the hatcheries import our rainbow trout eggs from Ontario and have on occasion exported Brown trout eggs to government hatcheries in the United States. Each year over one million eggs are provided to various fish and game organizations and volunteer groups across Nova Scotia. In some cases these eggs are buried directly in stream beds to hatch in a week or two. They may also be held in incubation units to hatch and grow to the point where they can forage on their own prior to being released. These projects require a lot of time and effort on the part of these volunteers, but most enjoy it and over the years they have seen the fruits of their labour swimming in local waters.

Trout and salmon eggs are provided for another excellent volunteer program, Fish Friends. This program is administered by the Atlantic Salmon Federation in conjunction with numerous volunteer groups. Aquariums which mimic a gravel-bottomed stream, resource material and of course trout and salmon eggs are provided to elementary school classes. The

Continued on page 20.



Fish hatchery technicians enjoy an early winter morning while examining trout broodstock prior to spawning them.

A Walk In The Woods

Wood lot Owners Turn Their Attention To Salvaging Timber And Silviculture

Hurricane Juan had a significant impact on many wood lots that were located along its swath on September 18. The pattern of damage created by the powerful winds caused a hodge-podge effect. In some small areas, most or all of the trees, usually softwood and sometimes hardwood, were uprooted or snapped off. In much of the area though, the damage is not as definable - it may be a small clump of trees here or individual trees there. Regardless, those wood lot owners who have found a significant amount of damage to their forest stands are either actively engaged in salvaging the timber that they are able to, or else wondering what they should do.

Although there has been damage caused to some of the felled timber, it can still be useful if salvaged over the next 10 months or so. However, as you can imagine, the twisted and uprooted mess will greatly slow the harvesting process. As well, it will be much more dangerous to the logger due to the potential for trees to snap back upward once they are released from the weight of trees that may be pinning them down. As is the case in towns and cities, there are overhead hazards lurking in trees where cracked or broken branches could come hurtling down from the over story at any time.



A coastal view of tree damage at Point Pleasant Park.

If you own forest land and would like to know whether your timber can be salvaged, your local DNR office can



A view of the harbour where trees once stood in Point Pleasant Park.

provide useful information. For example, you can receive contact names and phone numbers for various forestry contractors and companies that are involved in forest harvesting. A brochure will provide helpful hints for a landowner who is preparing to sell standing timber.

Also on hand is information for those landowners who are thinking ahead as to what would be the most appropriate silviculture treatment for their land as well as what silviculture funding programs might be available. There is the option to have silvicultural

Continuing to Support our Natural Resources in the Wake of Hurricane Juan

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treatments funded and carried out through the many forestry companies that are required to do so. As well, there is the option to contact the Association for Sustainable Forestry.

The Association for Sustainable Forestry was formed in November 2000 in order to provide a silviculture funding service to small private wood lot owners in all parts of Nova Scotia. The Association's Board of Directors includes representatives of wood lot owner organizations, the forest industry sector, and the Provincial Government.



A lone tree stands in Point Pleasant Park.



A huge tree uprooted in the Public Gardens.

According to forester Rebecca Aggas, Coordinator for the Association, since its inception, the Association has delivered a comprehensive package of forest improvement treatments. Up to 10 types of silviculture methods are available for funding, including the unprecedented funding of selection management, which allows for the uneven-aged management of forest stands. Other unique treatments include crop tree pruning and crop tree release, which promote added-value wood production while the trees are still growing on the stump.

The future of Nova Scotia's forests is in the hands of the small wood lot owner who holds over half of the provinces woodland. The Association

provides wood lot owners with the potential to significantly, and positively, influence the state of our forests for generations to come.

The Association for Sustainable Forestry is considering applications for the following treatments: Fill Planting, Plantation Establishment, Manual Weeding/Chemical Release (Natural Stands and Plantations), Pre-commercial Thinning (Natural Stands and Plantations), Commercial Thinning, Crop Tree Pruning, Crop Tree Release, Selection Management.

For application forms or more information contact: Association for Sustainable Forestry*

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Truro, NS B2N 5E5
Phone (902) 895-1179,
Fax (902) 893-1197
rjaggas@asforestry.com

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

Photos courtesy of Chris Fogerty

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Gun Registry To Reach A Billion Dollars - A Year Ahead Of Schedule

“But Newly Released Numbers Still Don’t Include ‘Major Additional Costs’ Identified By The Auditor General.”

This November, Garry Breitkreuz, Official Opposition Critic for Firearms and Property Rights, added up the newly released numbers in the government’s documents and to no one’s surprise, the gun registry will cost taxpayers \$941.9 million by the end of March 2004. “Finally the government is admitting they spent more money than the Auditor General documented. Now we’re being told the billion dollars will be reached a year ahead of schedule. How can we believe anything they say if they can’t even forecast their costs one year ahead?” exclaimed Breitkreuz.

Last December, the Auditor General reported: “The Department of Justice estimated that by 2004-2005 it would spend at least \$1 billion on the Program.” The Justice Minister’s October 31, 2003, Performance Report to

Parliament on the firearms program documented an additional \$47.2 million dollars in “indirect costs” that had never previously been properly reported to Parliament, plus \$766.6 in “direct costs” for a “Total Program Cost” of \$813.8 million at the fiscal year end of March 31, 2003. The Minister’s Main Estimates documents for 2003-2004 show the gun registry will cost \$128.1 million - \$113.1 million in “Planned Expenditures” and additional contingency of \$15 million for Alternative Service Delivery (privatization of the program). “This is \$33 million more than the Minister forecasted for 2003-2004 in his report to Parliament on April 24, 2002,” revealed Breitkreuz.

“The \$941.9 million tally still doesn’t include ‘major additional costs’ identified by the Auditor General,” stated Breitkreuz. “The Library of Parliament released three studies in 2003 that show that complying with this useless gun law has already cost gun owners between \$367 and \$764 million, and that enforcement costs will rack up at least another billion dollars. Nor do

government cost estimates include economic costs documented in a 115-page report that has been declared a Cabinet secret, or the cost of administration in other departments who use firearms on a regular basis like the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service. We will be filing more access requests to get this information,” promised Breitkreuz.

After nearly a year of asking, the government still hasn’t answered our questions: How much will the gun registry cost to fully implement and how much will it cost to maintain? Did no one ever report this fiscal fiasco to former Finance Minister Paul Martin? Didn’t he have an obligation to find out?” asked Breitkreuz.

*Government’s Newest Incomplete Forecasts Show Gun Registry Will Cost More Than \$1.4 Billion Before It Is Fully Implemented (I.E. Reaches “Steady State”).**

Submitted by Tony Rodgers

Wintertime and Fish Hatcheries...

Continued from page 17.

children watch the eggs develop through the winter and release the fry into a local stream in the spring. Dozens of school classes are participating in this excellent program.

The Provincial Dept. of Agriculture & Fisheries hatcheries are busy year round so Nova Scotia anglers can be busy year round as well.

The following is a list of lakes that are stocked with Rainbow trout and

open for fishing during the winter. Please check the Summary of Regulations booklet for specific seasons and bag limits.

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 Antigonish County
 Gillis Lake, Antigonish County
 Gairloch Lake, Pictou County

Albro Lake, Halifax County
 Meadow Pond, Hants County
 Silvery Lake, Kings County
 Sucker Lake, Lunenburg County
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*Darryl D. Murant is the Hatchery Manager at Fraser’s Mills Fish Hatchery, Antigonish, NS.**

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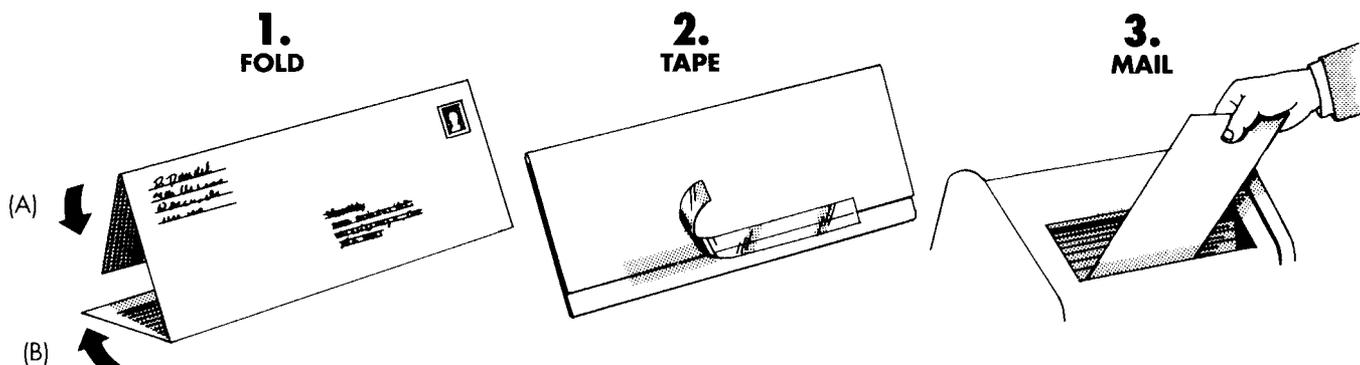


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