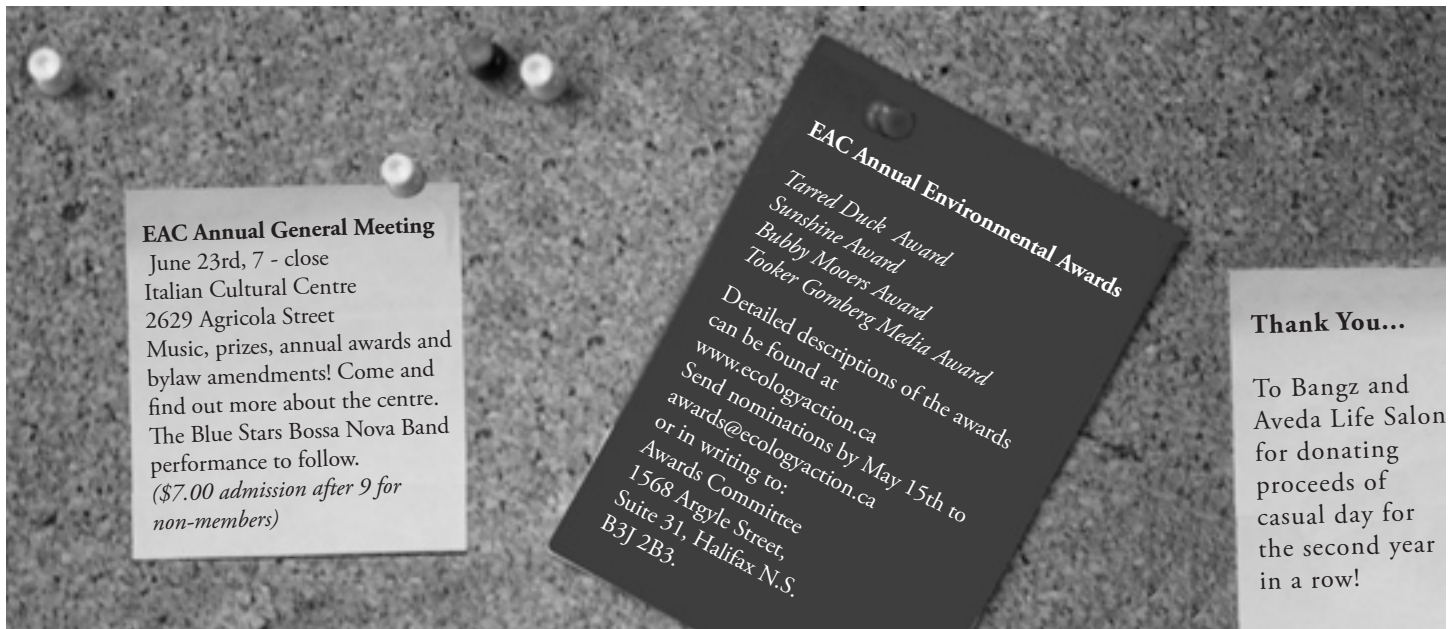


vol. 23:2 spring 2005

B E T W E E N T H E
i s s u e s

BETWEEN THE COVERS:
The American Lawn
How Far Does Your Food Travel?
The Garden Party





BETWEEN THE ISSUES
VOL. 23 NO. 2

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letterstothecentre



nick bevan-john

A matter of safety

While I support the principle of more support for biking in the city, I believe there is a large learning curve needed to have compatible interaction between bikes and pedestrians and bikes and cars. I have had some close calls as a pedestrian with a tandem [of bicycles] passing me on a sidewalk, one on each side with only a millisecond of warning; a child roaring off a sidewalk into a crosswalk straight at me. As a driver I have a right turn on a just turned light as a cyclist roared up on my right side. Bikers, if they are going to share the road must abide by the rules, signalling; not driving the wrong way on one way streets and using lights at night. Yes. Drivers must be vigilant for bikers.

Tom Creighton, Fuller Terrace

EAC Response

If I understand correctly, you are one of many who are frustrated with cyclists, yet, recognise that bicycles are a legitimate form of transportation. The reality is that pedestrians and cyclists are killed by cars and trucks, while the reverse is a rarity. Until respect is given to cyclists and pedestrians, through safe facilities and driver and cyclist education, cyclists will continue to seek safety on the sidewalk and some will continue to behave irresponsibly. It is important to actively promote implementation of cycling infrastructure, so that children and adults feel safe and respected in bike lanes and on the streets. A brief chat with cyclist friends provides a sample of some distressing stories regarding incidents with drivers - being hit by a tennis ball thrown from a car on an icy, winter night; a baloney sandwich tossed from a passing car and hitting the cyclist in the face; being chased by a truck onto a sidewalk. These incidents are but a few of daily experiences cycling in HRM. Cyclists, pedestrians and drivers must advocate for safe transportation infrastructure.

Rebecca O'Brien, TRAX Coordinator, EAC

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EAC and friends help spell out Kyoto on Citadel Hill in Halifax to celebrate its entry into force on February 16th 2005. *Margo Gesser*

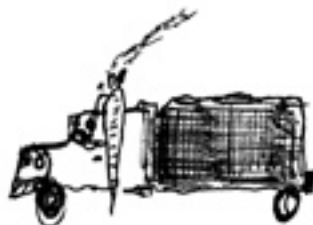
editorial

Spring at the Ecology Action Centre is always filled with life as new projects begin, summer staff are hired and we contemplate spring cleaning (and where to fit everybody). In keeping with the theme of spring, in this issue June Hall examines the history of the lawn, which is of particular relevance given HRMs pesticide bylaw and the work the Centre has been doing to educate people on alternatives to pesticide and herbicide use.

As seeds are sowed and gardens rejuvenated, Jen Scott writes how far our food must travel to stores and onto kitchen tables. Buying locally is something we can all do that makes a difference both for the environment and the local economy. As well, Lynn Brooks reminds us of the importance of green in our lives – be it a house plant or an extensive garden. Each spring, EAC celebrates gardening through our Garden Party and Auction to be held this year on June 5 at St. Mary's Boat Club. It is an event not to be missed. This year, we launch a new fundraiser in our Native Tree Spree, encouraging people to plant native trees to enhance backyard green space and restore the natural forests. Marina Myra advises on purchasing and planting native trees in the *Citizens Choice* column.

The shortened edition of BTI leaves us with many challenges in making room for all EAC projects. Increased advertising and the ever-expanding nature of EAC activities, fills up 16 pages rather quickly! *The Action is Our Middle Name* column tries to cover as many bases as possible, with focus on different committees each time. We welcome content and suggestions from members and readers.

Susanna Fuller



nick bevan-john

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For committee meeting times please see www.ecologyaction.ca or call our main number, (902) 429-2202.

actionisourmiddlename

branching out Thanks to gardener, visionary and volunteer, Ron Scott, who will be providing us with organically grown native trees, and an energetic team of tree lovers, the EAC will be launching its 3rd fundraiser this spring! Nova Scotia's native Acadian Forest has all but disappeared. This is your chance to plant a tree in your backyard which, over the next 50 years will fix 2.3 kg of carbon dioxide for every kilogram it grows. The trees will range in age from one to three years priced (by age) at \$10, \$15 and \$25. The services delivered by trees are invaluable. They improve the quality of our air and water, prevent erosion, provide noise barriers and reduce your household heating and cooling costs. Native species are lower maintenance and make local wildlife happy. Join our Native Tree Spree and help make Nova Scotia greener and leafier. To purchase a tree call (902) 429-2202 or check out our website (www.ecologyaction.ca/trees.shtml) to learn the date and location of our community booths.

successes and updates

In the past few months, various projects and issues in which the EAC has been involved, have come to fruition. In March, the provincial government announced protection of Gully Lake- Eigg Mountain wilderness areas. Also, on the wilderness front, final recommendations of the Voluntary Task Force on Off Road Vehicles include the majority of environmental protection provisions supported by the EAC. The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) announced renewed funding to maintain facilities and human presence on Sable Island. DFO Maritimes Region has developed a Draft Coral Conservation Plan for deep sea coral protection (an issue that the Marine Issues Committee has been working on for several years). Following the success of the UPASS student bus pass system at St. Mary's University (the implementation of which the TRAX project facilitated), Dalhousie and Kings College are moving in the same direction and hope to implement UPASS in 2005/2006.

coastal: a day at the beach Good news for Nova Scotia's coasts as Coastal Issues Committee (CIC) Reconnecting the Coast Initiative moves into high gear. The goal of this campaign is to protect Nova Scotia's coasts from impacts of unregulated development. Proceedings of the Changing Tides workshop held in Cornwallis in November are now available. Outcomes of this workshop include: coastal action priorities for Nova Scotia, which have been presented to all three provincial caucuses. CIC is working in partnership with the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia on a draft statement of provincial interest on coastal areas which will eventually be added to the Municipal Government Act. The Salt Marsh and Tidal Rivers restoration project has received project funding from the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk to mitigate impacts of tidal barriers on Atlantic salmon in the Inner Bay of Fundy. Three new CIC publications on tidal barrier audits around the Bay of Fundy are soon to be released!



new projects at the eac

Spring always brings new projects to the EAC. The latest to join, under the fold of the Food Action Committee (FAC) is the Local Exchange and Trading System (LETS). LETS is a thriving barter network that is socially inclusive, ecologically sustainable and allows members to meet their basic needs. It works like this: You offer a service or goods for exchange. When another member receives those services or goods, you get a credit that you can use to obtain services or goods from any other members. It is like the Bargain Hunter, only better.

For more info email halifaxlets@care2.com or call (902) 422-2772. FAC has also started a Garden Mentorship Program, pairing seniors with youth to create gardens throughout the city. Steer Clean encourages early retirement of older vehicles in order to reduce air pollution and CO2. Stay tuned for a June launch of the project and if you have an old vehicle contact Maggy Burns at steerclean@ecologyaction.ca.

there once was a fish... who had only one wish: When it's my time to be took let me be taken by a hook. A fish knows what's best and so do the vast majority of Atlantic Canadians. The EAC, Newfoundland's Fisheries Recovery Action Committee, and BC's Living Ocean Society commissioned a poll on Atlantic Canadians' position on dragging. 89% said that they would like to see restrictions on dragging, 6% were satisfied with the status quo, and 3% didn't know (as low as it gets for the don't know category). For more information, check out the marine page on the EAC website. Also on the marine page, thanks to Sadie Beaton, is material to help you locate and purchase sustainably caught seafood. Get in touch with the Marine Committee for more breaking news.

Planting Native Trees in the Maritimes

by Marina Myra



Dump and Run

May 7, 9-3 Acadia Arena,
Main St, Wolfville, N.S

EAC Volunteer Orientation

May 18th 5:30pm,
1568 Argyle Street

Canadian Commuter Challenge

June 5-11, 2005
Register at www.commuter-challenge.ca
Contact EAC at commute@ecologyaction.ca

HRM Bike to Work Week

June 5-11, 2005.
A perfect time to start cycling to work!

EAC Annual General Meeting

June 23rd, 7-9pm
Italian Cultural Centre
2629 Agricola St., Halifax, N.S.

For EAC Issue Committee meeting times, additional events and opportunities please see: www.ecologyaction.ca

action into the spring

Whether you want to restore Acadian Forest elements back into your woodlot or naturalize your back yard, planting native trees is by far the best choice. Native trees restore the original flora and as they are adapted to grow in this region, require relatively little maintenance, provide native wildlife habitats and are less susceptible to disease. Trees in rural areas can become a future source of income when grown to marketable size (and selectively logged!) and in high densities, sequester carbon for atmospheric CO2 reduction. Urban tree planting has the added benefit of reducing noise, cleaning the air and beautifying private and public space. Doing a bit of homework and choosing the appropriate trees for your site ensures the trees you plant are likely to grow and prosper with little if any, future maintenance.

If you are interested in restoring a wooded area, the best choices are shade tolerant species such as hemlock, beech, sugar maple, red spruce, white pine and yellow birch. These species germinate and grow in low light conditions on the forest floor. They wait, growing slowly until a gap opens in the forest canopy by a downed tree, whether by natural or human means, giving them a boost of energy to grow and find their place in the sun. Planting native, shade tolerant seedlings in a wooded area, increases the rate of succession towards a more natural forest. If your goal is to convert an open field or yard to a wooded area, faster growing seedlings such as white spruce or balsam fir are better suited. As the transformation from a field or yard to a for-

est takes time, planting fast growing trees is helpful in establishing woodland structure. *Finding and Planting Native Tree Seedlings* Purchasing native tree seedlings is probably the most convenient way to obtain trees. Trees are usually better adapted to their local environment, so it is ideal to plant seedlings originating close to your planting site. You can get free native plants from areas where they are growing naturally, but be sure to check with the landowner if you want to collect from private property. The best place to obtain wild seedlings is from public road-

sides and areas that are destined to be developed, as these seedlings would likely not survive to maturity. You can also grow your own seedlings and both the Falls Brook Centre in New Brunswick and the MacPhail Woods Ecological Forestry Project websites have tips for setting up home nurseries. For

a comprehensive guide to planting native trees, see MacPhail Woods Ecological Forestry Project web site.

The following species are native to the Atlantic Provinces: Balsam Fir, Eastern Hemlock, Eastern Larch, Black Spruce, Red Spruce, White Spruce, Jack Pine, Red Pine, White Pine, Yellow Birch, White Birch, Red Maple, Sugar Maple, Red Oak, Black Cherry, Black Ash, White Ash, American Beech, Butternut, Eastern Red Cedar, Northern White Cedar, Black Walnut, Curly Willow, Gold Willow and Pussy Willow.

Marina Myra is a member of the North Mountain Old Forest Society. To buy trees from the EAC, please see www.ecologyaction.ca or call 429-2202.



aaron harpell

Nova Scotian Nurseries that Sell Native Trees

Scott and Stewart Forestry Nursery

St. Andrews, N.S.
Jackie MacDonald
902-863-3588

Strathlorne Forest Nursery

Inverness, N.S.
Doug Beaton
902-258-2626

T & D Nursery

New Ross, N.S.
Debbie Reeves
902-689-2737

Baldwin's Landscape Nursery

Falmouth, N.S.
Robert Baldwin
902-798-9468

Windhorse Farm

Wentzell Lake, N.S.
Jim Drescher
902-543-6955

Mala Farm and Nursery

Canning, N.S.
Marina Myra and Lance Bishop
902-582-1208

ecobriefs

by June Hall



nick bevan-john

Best safeguard, right?

As expected, George Bush acted swiftly after his re-election to consolidate his "record" on the environment. In his sights, other than Kyoto and Alaskan oil: 80–90% of the "critical habitat" established in 2000 by the Clinton administration for salmon and steelhead trout along the U.S. west coast. Involving as it does thousands of miles of streams and their watersheds, this vast area (deemed essential for the species' survival) had thus become off-limits to loggers, miners and developers, and had greatly reduced the amount of water available for agriculture.

How could Bush do this? Seems that earlier in 2004 he'd pulled a neat trick, removing salmon from the shelter of the Endangered Species Act simply by deciding to count fish bred in hatcheries as wild. No longer endangered, ergo little need for protection. And that's not all. The administration has relaxed forestry regulations in national forests, and also ruled against a plan to demolish eight dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers, a plan that would have allowed the fish to migrate unhindered (at present they're trucked round the dams).

No, let the market decide their fate. The market, after all, is the best safeguard of the environment. A decision on the proposal is expected by June.

L.A. Times, 1 Dec. '04

Showing GM the door

GM (genetically modified) crops in Britain have had a tumultuous ride, but science and the activists appear to have finished them off, at least for now.

The country's Labour government has long been keen on the crops, but in the run-up to the 2001 general election there was a huge public backlash against plans to introduce them. Stalling for time, the environment minister of the day ordered extensive field trials (the largest in the world) of GM varieties of four leading crops, and now results for the last of these crops - herbicide-resistant winter oilseed rape (canola) - are in. Winter oilseed rape is Britain's largest and most lucrative crop.

But unlike trials for spring oilseed rape and sugar beet, where the environment was clearly the loser, these results are close (though the press may tell you otherwise). Yes, the number of broad-leaved flowering weeds, which provide food for bees, butterflies and more, were down, but invertebrate levels in the soil were up. The culprit appears to have been the timing of herbicide applications, rather than the crop itself. (The trials did not include organic methods.)

But it's a moot point. In recent years activists have made it impossible to carry out field research at all. Regulations require that experimenters post the coordinates of their plots on the Web, and hey, presto, the activists descend.

The Observer, 20 Mar.;
New Scientist, 21 Mar. '05

Blot on the landscape?

Another British story. Not everyone is happy with the country's ambitious plans to reduce its CO₂ emissions. At issue: huge wind farms marching across wild, "iconic" landscapes considered national treasures,

landscapes that the Guardian Weekly compares to Turners and Constables.

Of immediate concern are plans for the world's largest wind farm, on Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The farm is to be built on "a windswept, hyena-coloured expanse of bog, waterfall, cliff and scarp [whose] ecological significance has been compared to that of the Serengeti." There are to be 234 turbines, each nearly 140 m high, 170 km of roads, nine electrical substations, and of course pylons and wires to carry the electricity off the island.

To the Guardian, scale is key. The British government should replace these mega-projects with small, local projects and besides, what on earth are they doing madly extending airport runways. Don't they get it?

Backing up the Guardian, in a way, is the German energy agency, "the world's leading producer of wind energy." Wind farms are inefficient tools at best, they say, when it comes to combatting climate change.

Guardian Weekly, 4 Mar. '05

Powering East Africa

The African Rift Valley, a complex (and active) geological feature stretching from the Red Sea to Mozambique, holds great potential as a source of geothermal energy. To date, however, only Kenya has begun to exploit the heat trapped deep underground, and then only to the tune of 121 megawatts. The total potential of the region could be as much as 6.5 gigawatts, enough to provide a seventh of the continent's electricity, according to the Guardian.

But now the UN Environment Pro-

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available internationally

aaronharpell



nick bevan-john

gramme, along with several partners, has embarked on a US\$200 million project to prospect for new sites for power stations, investigate the huge technical problems involved, and identify partners and donors for future development. Known as the African Rift Geothermal Development Facility (ARGeo), the project hopes to tap into this clean energy source to provide electricity to this desperately energy-poor area, home to about 60 million people. For Ethiopia and Djibouti, geothermal is the only indigenous energy source.

Guardian Weekly, 25 Mar. '05; Web sources

Things go better with... pesticides?

It all began in August 2003, when the Centre for Science and Environment, a New Delhi-based environmental group, reported that it had found substantial pesticide residues - many times amounts allowed in Europe - in soft drinks sold in India. Needless to say, sales of pop plummeted. To its credit, the Indian government acted swiftly to produce new draft standards for pesticides (and caffeine) in non-alcoholic carbonated beverages. Now the Supreme Court has ordered Pepsi and Coca-Cola - which were indicted by a parliamentary committee for the way they do business in India - to include information about pesticide levels on their pop labels.

"Delighted consumer and environmental groups" in India are heralding these advances; the hope is that they will provide a model for reforms in food standards generally. And oh, the joy of seeing those giants of industry embarrassed!

Env. Sci. & Tech. online, 19 Jan. '05; www.cseindia.org

Tradeoff for the Aral Sea

Fed by two rivers, the Amu Darya in Uzbekistan and the Syr Darya in Kazakhstan, the Aral Sea was once the fourth-largest lake in the world. But 40 years of Soviet mismanagement changed all that. Once possessed of a thriving fishery, today the inland sea is a shrivelled, polluted shadow of its former self, considered by many the worst environmental disaster anywhere.

As massive amounts of water were diverted from the rivers for irrigation (cotton was the major crop), the sea has shrunk by 75%. Its coastline contracted by tens of kilometres, leaving behind a fine alluvial sand that blows hither and yon, spreading pollutants (and especially pesticides) over a population now deprived of its living; the health impacts are horrendous.

But now a US\$45 million World Bank project aims to save the Small Aral, the northern part of the sea. A large dyke and sluice, due to be completed this summer, will prevent water from draining towards the south, thereby raising water levels by 3 m and covering 1000 km² of former seabed. Hoped-for benefits include increased rainfall, fewer dust storms, a restored fishery and substantially lower salinity. A mixed blessing, however. The larger, southern part of the sea will shrink even further, eventually allowing overland access to an island that was the main Soviet centre for testing biological weapons.

Any bets on its safety?

Science, 18 Feb. '05

Program launch June 2005...
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THE AMERICAN LAWN

a short history

by June Hall

Undeniably the single most important American contribution to landscape design, the lawn carries on its velvety shoulders images of democracy, egalitarianism, consumerism, civic responsibility, and chemical warfare, to name a few. Its record in the United States, described so eloquently by Virginia Scott Jenkins in her 1994 book, *The Lawn: A History of an American Obsession*¹, echoes much of that nation's history over the past 150 years and more. And where the U.S. leads, Canada follows.

Forty million acres, or thirty? Whichever way you slice it, these two recent estimates² of the amount of turf in the United States surely boggle the mind. Add in the US\$10.4 billion spent each year on seed, sod and chemicals, and an untold amount on professional lawn care, and the importance of the American (and Canadian) lawn becomes apparent. Evoking our African origins, we've constructed a savanna from coast to coast.

Beginnings

Two conditions must exist before you can grow a lawn. First, you must want to grow it, and second, the tools to establish and maintain it must be available.

Although lawns had been popular with aristocrats in England since Tudor times, and in France since the 18th century, only a few wealthy Americans — Washington and Jefferson among them — embraced the practice before the late 19th century. Lawns remained an expensive and difficult proposition.

First is the matter of grass. In the early days, lawns were hit or miss affairs. Only introduced grasses (including *Poa pratensis* more commonly known as “Kentucky” bluegrass) were suitable and then only in a few areas, primarily the Northeast, where they had long since displaced delicate native grasses in agricultural fields. But two new developments in the 1880s spurred development of new varieties: the explosive development of golf after the first American course was built in 1888 (in New York), and the establishment of government agricultural field stations.

Funded generously by the U.S. Golf Association (USGA), the federal department of agriculture (USDA) embarked on research into turf. From 1910 to 1924 the Arlington Experiment Farm, the Bureau of Plant Industry's main field laboratory (and now the site of the Pentagon), was the centre, but eventually research spread to dozens of stations across the nation. The effort continues to this day. Scott Jenkins maintains that if there hadn't been a cadre of golfers within the USDA in those early years, “the domestic landscape of the United

States might look very different today.”

Next there's the matter of machinery. Livestock and scythes were the only option until Edwin Budding, an engineer at an English carpet mill, developed the first mower in 1830. American patents followed from the 1860s on and by 1885 America was making 50,000 mowers a year. But still, the machines remained heavy and unwieldy.

And finally, the desire to have a lawn. Beginning in the 1840s, village improvement societies in New England sought to beautify their surroundings, building on the romantic ideal that beautiful surroundings are part of a civilized society. A neatly cropped grassy common became part of this ideal. Then in 1868 Frederick Law Olmstead, the American landscape architect responsible for Central Park in New York and Mt. Royal in Montreal, designed Riverside, a Chicago suburb. Here for the first time were the winding streets, the detached houses set on wide lawns with no intervening fences to break the visual sweep. Olmstead was not alone, however, and suburbs soon radiated in profusion from the major cities, a reaction in part to the horrors of the industrial city, and helped along by streetcars and the railroad.

An idea spreads

The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 exposed millions to Olmstead's design ideas, which spread like wildfire among the middle class. But many other factors soon played a part in the lawn's growing acceptance. Garden clubs and contests, city beautification projects and more, all products of the City Beautiful Movement, “put pressure on communities to achieve new aesthetic standards in domestic and community landscaping.” As early as 1870, in a book on suburban landscape design, Frank J. Scott had articulated what would eventually become part of the American psyche, the notion that it's shameful not to keep up your lawn. Homeowners who don't look after their front lawns, he said, are selfish, unneighbourly, unchristian and undemocratic.³ In time, many cities would enact bylaws, take people to court, and even throw them in jail if they failed to conform.

Between the 1880s and 1920s the U.S. was transformed into a consumer society. Mail-order catalogues, trade journals and popular magazines flourished, a product of the revolution in publishing. Advertising aimed at the masses promoted both an increasing mountain of garden-care equipment, and (as the 20th century progressed) the ethos that a good family man (never a woman) maintains his lawn. And lawns did become somewhat easier to maintain as new grass varieties appeared; as rubber hoses, sprinklers and city water supply

1 The source of the quotes and most of the information in this article. The book was published by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

2 “American lawns impact nutrient cycles,” *Envir. Sci. & Technol.*, 1 March 2005.

3 Quoted in *Second Nature: a Gardener's Education*, by Michael Pollan. New York: Dell Publishing, 1991.

made irrigation possible; and once a shorter workweek and labour-saving devices gave homeowners more time.

The 1920s were marked by the growth of garden clubs, flower shows, and competitions for small-lot design. Dozens of magazine articles and the USDA provided advice. Golf, now a middle-class pursuit, continued its spread across the country, and its players eagerly tended their own lawns. By 1937, despite the Depression, Americans were spending \$200 million a year on private lawns.

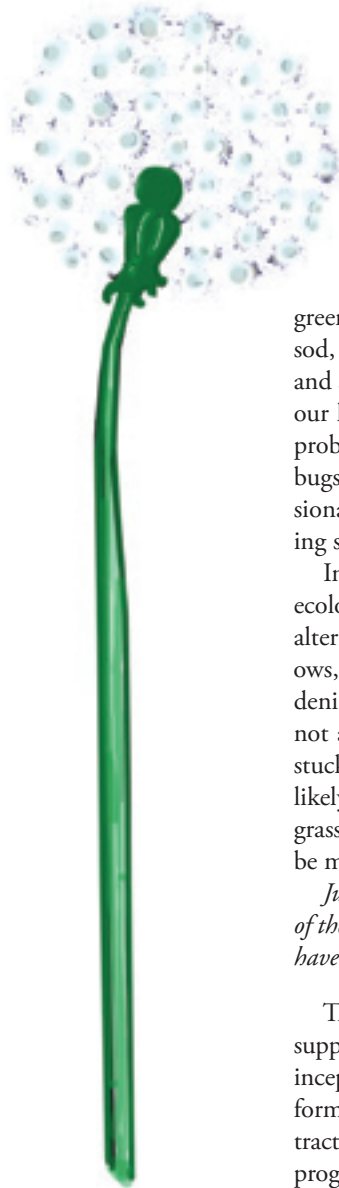
But it was only after the Second World War, by which time most American lawns were in a sad state of disrepair, that the lawn truly came into its own. The pent-up demand for housing, the baby boom, low-cost mortgages for veterans, and the growing affordability of the automobile fueled a huge expansion of suburbia and the beginnings of urban sprawl. Grass was a boon to the developer, a cheap and easy way to cover the ground. Half a million new lawns were added to the nation's total in 1960.

Standards of perfection

Humans, says Scott Jenkins, have “a tendency to recognize problems only when a solution has been identified.” As time went by, manufacturers promoted ever-higher standards of lawn perfection as a way of encouraging you to buy their chemicals, tools, machines and grass. At first only natural methods (top-dressing, manure) were used, but around 1930 researchers began turning their thoughts to fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. The role of pH was discovered soon after (liming became an annual ritual), and artificial chemicals became generally available after the war; the first weed and feed came on the market in 1949. The ethos of better living through science hit its stride.

And here's where warfare enters the picture. Americans have been locked in mortal combat, says Scott Jenkins, for more than 50 years. Chlordane, lead arsenate, DDT — these were our early weapons. Until Rachel Carson opened our eyes, we had little perception of the dangers of the chemicals we were using, and then only barely. Cities joined in the collective blindness, applying the same chemicals and standards of perfection to parks, playgrounds and roadside verges. Golf courses went one further, using water and chemicals in prodigious quantities (think oases of green in the Arizona desert). The Vietnam War added to the arsenal.

But it was still hard to establish a lawn. Enter a beguiling shortcut — a pre-fabricated lawn, either artificial (astroturf,



green concrete), or ready-made in the form of sod, first suggested as an alternative in the 1950s and soon becoming the preferred method. But as our lawns became more and more artificial, new problems appeared — crabgrass, thatch, cinch bugs, and more — all of which needed professional help. Lawn companies proliferated, growing steadily more prosperous through the 1990s.

Inevitably, there has been a reaction. The rise of ecological awareness from the 1960s on prompted alternative landscape ideas — xeriscapes, meadows, the use of native flora — and organic gardening has become increasingly popular. HRM is not alone in restricting the use of pesticides. Yet stuck as we are with large city lots, the lawn is not likely to die out any time soon. For most people, grass remains the easiest option. Let's hope we'll be more sensible about it in future.

June Hall is a long time volunteer and member of the EAC and past editor of Between the Issues. We haven't quite let her off the hook yet!

The Ecology Action Centre has been a vocal supporter of the HRM pesticide bylaw since its inception, and had the opportunity to become formally involved last year. The Centre was contracted to deliver the inspection and education programs, and helped to maintain its strength and effectiveness.

The EAC will be involved again this year and would like to start building a network of pesticide-free gardening and lawncare expertise. For those who are new to pesticide-free approaches, we would like to connect them with examples and people they can learn from. It makes sense to begin with EAC members and others you could suggest, contact us to find out more.

Your level of involvement can range from simply identifying your property to offering your contact information for those who would like to learn more by speaking with you. We could help collect photos and stories from your landscape with the potential to profile features on our website. Eventually we would like to have examples all across HRM so people can easily find someone in their community to connect with. As similar bylaws spread across the country, Halifax residents and EAC can continue to lead by providing a model for sharing expertise.

*Gregor MacAskill
Pesticide Bylaw Project Manager, EAC*

askecohead



eryn foster

Q. How much energy does my computer use?

Hans Albarda, an EAC member, had an interesting experience while responding to a request from friends to discuss their electrical energy consumption. His story follows:

We walked around each room and looked at every electrical appliance, carefully making a list of every light-bulb, radio, tea-kettle, etc. recording energy consumption of each. When we had completed the list, we added the length of time each appliance is turned-on each day, giving us a picture of electricity use in their home.

The big surprise came when we looked at their computer. The label on the back of the computer indicates that it uses 345 Watts (W) for the hard drive only, not including the monitor, printer, fax, etc. On a typical day, this appliance is ON for ten hours. The daily electrical energy used by this computer, therefore, 3 450 Wh (Watt-hours). Since 1000 W = 1kW (kilowatt), the computer uses 3.45 kWh per day. (Your bill from NS Power gives you your daily kWh usage).

What does 3.45 kWh look like? As coal-fired generators are used to manufacture most of the electricity (need percentage) sold by Nova Scotia Power Corporation (NSCP), I decided to put 3.45 kWh in the form of a heap of coal. One pound of average coal, when burned, gives off heat equal to 12,000 BTU (British Thermal Units). Now, to convert this heat energy into electrical energy: 1 kWh of electrical energy is equivalent to 3,413 BTU of heat energy so, 1 lb of coal is burned to produce $(12,000/3,413 =) 3.52$ kWh of electricity.

When coal is burnt to manufacture electricity, it does so at about 70% efficiency. Therefore, when 1 lb of coal is burned only $(0.7 \times 3.5 =) 2.5$ kWh of electricity arrives at my friends' house. For every 1 kWh distributed, the NSCP burns $(1 / 2.5 =) 0.4$ lbs of coal.

My friends' computer uses 3.45 kWh of electricity per day, which is equal to $(3.45 \times 0.4 =) 1.38$ lbs of coal. They use their computer every day, thus they use $(365 \times 1.38 =)$ over 500 lbs of coal per year, just to run the hard drive.

A computer seems small, clean and innocent - but for the 500 lb heap of coal it burns each year. What can we do to change this? The smallest computer is best (i.e. simple laptop). No computer should be left idling.

Public access computers (i.e. CAP sites) are a good sharing of resources. Telephone, Canada Post, and even real face-to-face discussion, can be used instead of e-mail. We are all in this together.

Hans Albarda lives with his family outside Wolfville, Nova Scotia. He has lived off grid since 1971.

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Fundraising for the Environment - Putting the "Garden" in Garden Party

by Lynn Brooks

Every January for seven years, a group of dedicated EAC volunteers begin meeting to plan the annual Garden Party and Auction. The event is held on a Sunday afternoon in late spring and celebrates the places we call home. Every home needs a garden. A plant in the window, an herb pot by the backdoor, or a tomato plant in a barrel on a balcony. To make one's home into a place that feeds the soul, most of us need help and to find that help is the challenge the Garden Party volunteers set for themselves.

Just as a house starts with bricks and mortar, so gardens start with soil. Over the years the Garden Party has auctioned off loads of donated compost -- enough to make any finicky plant leap into growth. Landscape designers have donated hours of consultation and there have been gift certificates for every conceivable service. The businesses and artists who donate their wares, are leaders and role models in sustainable living. At the EAC Garden Party there will be works of art by local artisans and wonderful pieces by the long time major sponsor, the Pottery Guild of Nova Scotia. Not only do these pieces add to indoor ambiance, many can be displayed outside (and even hold a plant!). A unique piece can be a focal point for a garden. The modern approach is to consider yards, gardens and decks as an extension of one's living space.

Then there are the plants. Nurseries such as Springvale, Bayport Plant Farm, and Terre Nova Landscaping donate locally grown plants well suited to our soil and climate conditions. Often

there is a temptation to mimic gardens seen in magazines and end up trying to use plants that are unsuited to our growing conditions. To achieve the same look, use hardy natives or plants which are proven performers in our climate.

One of the joys of gardening is that very quickly, you have something to share. Gardeners love to give pieces of this or that, and fundraisers such as the Garden Party are an ideal way for gardeners to donate. Everyone is encouraged to do so. But care must be taken not pass on problems. Garden thugs such as Aegopodium or 'goatweed' should never be donated (except to the green bin). North America is riddled with invasive species that got a start in someone's garden. When dividing plants, give each section a shake and eye it carefully for any nasty hitchhikers before potting. Do the same before putting any plant in your garden. Lily beetles are in our area after hitching a ride from Ontario. With care, we can all feel good about giving and receiving plants.

The Garden Party is a great way for novice and experienced gardeners to pick up good-sized plant material, take home some beautiful art, support a good cause, and have fun at the same time. Always remember that if one plant looks good three will look even better, and if you don't cover the ground Mother Nature certainly will.

Lynn Brooks is a long time EAC volunteer, former staff member and gardening force to be reckoned with. She spends her spring and summers – in her garden

theeacindex

Number of participants in EAC's TRAX March 21-24 Green Commuter Contest: 208

Total kilometers not traveled by single occupancy vehicle as result of transportation choices made by participants over those 4 days: 23979.80 km

Percent of Atlantic Canadians who agreed "there should be regulations that restrict where trawling [a method of fishing] can occur and the types of equipment used" in a recent Corporate Research Association poll commissioned by the EAC: 70

Percent of Nova Scotia respondents who felt that dragging should be banned completely: 19

Percent of publicly (crown) owned Nova Scotia coastal land: 5

Percent of the world's wetlands found in Canada: 25

Percent of Bay of Fundy salt marshes lost because of human alteration over the last 500 years: ~ 80

Percent of tidal rivers on the Nova Scotia portion of the Bay of Fundy found to be partially or fully restricted by a tidal barrier (dam, causeway, dyke, culvert) during the EAC's tidal barrier audits: ~50

Number of salt marsh restoration projects in Nova Scotia: 1

Amount of salt marsh that will be restored when the EAC project succeeds in getting a restrictive culvert at Cheverie Creek replaced by a larger opening: ~ 35 ha

Percent of Nova Scotian beef available in local stores according to a recent survey conducted by EAC's Food Action Committee (FAC): 0%

Number of active FAC members: 30

Number of FAC members on *Breakfast Television* promoting local food for breakfast: 4

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artandtheenvironment

Local Photographer Captures Nova Scotia's Newest Protected Areas

by Susanna Fuller and Raymond Plourde



Nova Scotia's newest protected areas - Gully Lake and Eigg Mountain - James River in fall 2004. *Irwin Barrett*

Irwin Barrett's photographs of Nova Scotia's newest protected areas have been gracing the pages of the local papers, and now BTI. After five years of hard work on public land protection and leading the NS Publiclands Coalition (representing over 45 groups), EAC's Wilderness Committee has met with success.

On Friday March 4, 2005 the provincial government announced the permanent protection of 8000 acres encompassing the Gully Lake and Eigg Mountain- James River bringing the per-

cent of protected public lands to 8.4%. In 1992, the province set a goal of protecting at least one area in each of our 80 natural landscapes.

While this is a major step forward, we don't expect to stop here. For more details, to learn more about the public lands campaign or to get involved see www.publicland.ca. Stay tuned for our 3rd annual Public Hikes on Public Lands organized each summer by the centre.

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For bulk orders, flour and kernels, call Speerville Mill in New Brunswick (1-866-277-6371).

For small orders and retail, ask for it through the Grainery (446-3301), Great Ocean (425-7400), or your local food buying group.

Seed and general information:

Contact Jen Scott (jen@ns.sympatico.ca or 902-757-1640).



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Does Your Food Travel More Than You Do?

by Jenn Scott

I have three wishes for Nova Scotia eaters (that's all of us). My first is to reintroduce competition in Nova Scotia retail and wholesale food sector. My second is to increase the farmgate price of food produced on Nova Scotia farms. My third is to allow every Nova Scotian the opportunity to enjoy the goodness of food that is grown close to home.

The three wishes are related to a disturbing trend in Nova Scotia farming. For the second year in a row, total net farm income has dipped below zero. This has never happened before in all the years these statistics have been compiled. Never. This means that as a group, farmers are paying out of pocket to produce food. This gives new meaning to the expression 'farm subsidy'.

Not only have farmers been facing declining net income over time, their is crumbling. Many farmers are dipping into farm equity built up over a hundred or more years in order to continue farming. That means, putting a mortgage on a farm that has long since been paid for; selling pieces of the farm as building lots; not having time or resources to invest in soil-building and conservation measures.

Some people think that Mad Cow disease (or Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) is a source of the crisis. No. The problem lies in deeper soil. Farm income is related to the amount of competition between buyers of farm products. There needs to be competition – otherwise buyers call all the shots. They dictate price, quantity, quality, packaging, delivery, and traceback requirements. If the producer doesn't comply with buyer demands, they get cut out, and there aren't many alternative buyers to pick up their product.

Free trade means that producers have to contend with increased competition from farmers all over the world. Ironically, it also means that retailers and other farm product buyers with market power can continue to consolidate in order to reduce competition.

Businesses buying farm products in this region have consolidated to the point where two major players hold the majority of buying power. If they don't want to pay

the local price for a farm product, they can source it from somewhere else. If they don't want to deal with several family farms or smaller processors, they can choose to buy from larger farms and processors in other regions, countries, or continents. This is when food starts to travel more than most would ever imagine.

Food that travels loses nutritional value. We don't know how it is produced and it is hard to find out. We are unsure of the integrity of the producer or processor and it is difficult to hold them responsible for problems. We lose control of our food supply. We have all noticed a decline in locally-produced and processed food in our 'supermarkets'.

Many buyers are no longer community-based. They are business people with no relationship to local producers. They have little awareness of rural communities and the potential they hold. They have no idea of farm contributions to local economies, social fabric, stewardship, and human capital.

Large retailers can absorb a few losses and sell items such as strawberries for less than production cost. This will gradually eliminate any remaining competition. Competition among buyers is good and healthy as it encourages innovation and improvements in quality. It leads to fair prices for farmers. When a farmer has fewer buyers – whether it's due to mergers, or loss of infrastructure, or closure of borders – they simply don't have the power to command a fair price.

Nova Scotian citizens have a role to play

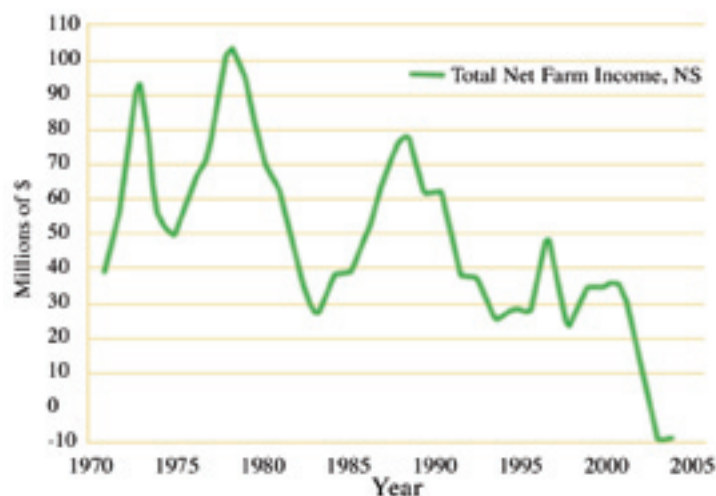
here. Do we want to lose our farms? No. People are demanding Nova Scotian-grown food in their 'supermarkets'. People are buying food from farm stands, farm markets, or directly from farmers they know.

After the closure of the US border to Canadian beef, some producers switched from selling at cattle market to selling directly to neighbours and friends. People buying beef this way generally get a better price than if they bought it at the grocery store. Farmers get a better price. Local processors get more business. New relationships develop as farmers expand their direct market. Customers start to ask why local beef isn't offered in the grocery store. They realize the health benefits of beef raised on grass and clover vs. beef finished in Western feedlots.

A growing direct contact between people who grow food and those that eat it will offer opportunities for farms to remain viable players in rural communities. The side-effects? Increased demand for local processing. Increased opportunities for people to eat fresh food. Increased opportunities for farmers and consumers to get a better price. Reduced greenhouse gas emissions from food transportation. Better looking and fresher food on your table. And finally, increased understanding between the farming and non-farming population.

Jennifer Scott is a founding member of the Food Action Committee at the Ecology Action Centre. She has spent the last 12 years working on farms; working with farmers; and analyzing farm trends.

Figure 1: Total Net Farm Income, Nova Scotia Farms, (millions of \$1997)



Source: Statistics Canada 2004. Net Farm Income. Cat No. 21-010-XIE (May 2004). Figures are corrected for inflation allowing net income comparison over a period of years.

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Riding Against the Odds

While we all know that we could do more to reduce our footprint on the planet, sometimes there are people who make us realize that we are not doing quite enough. Tim Verney is a resident of Northend Halifax, and commutes 8 km to work each day, by bus or by bicycle. Tim cannot drive, as a result of impaired vision, but as he says, that is not what motivates him to cycle. In an interview with Rebecca O'Brien, TRAX coordinator, Tim admits, "I just find that the exercise and fresh air I get when I cycle makes it a great way to separate work from home. This is how I burn off stress- and I feel that by the time I get home, I have separated work life from home life, which is really important to me. I really like the way cycling brings me home feeling refreshed. Also, it is affordable for us to live where we do on the peninsula because we do not have the expense of a car. Time commuting long distances to the suburbs is wasted time. Cycling a short distance to work frees up valuable time". You may have seen Tim cycling by – sometimes a cow-patterned calf flashes as he cycles. Tim is a double leg amputee.

In dealing with visual and physical impairment Tim says, "I know what my limitations are, and what I can do. In terms of my sight, when I bike, I assume nobody sees me, and nobody is going to give me a break. Being a leg amp, it is actually easier to bike than to walk. As far as the designs on

Rebecca O'Brien



my prosthetics, I can't control what people think, but I can control what people see. I like to have a laugh, and so do most people. Seeing amputees can make people uncomfortable, but when you jazz them up, people are quick to smile".

EAC Says hello...and goodbye

EAC seems to always have projects ending and new ones beginning. In this issue, we say goodbye to Tony Bowron who has worked for the last six years on the saltmarsh project. Nicole Hynes worked as saltmarsh project intern for the last six months, and has now finished her term. Thank you Nicole! Hello to Sean Weseloh-McKeane who has joined us as Reconnecting the Coast Initiative coordinator and Japchi Bas who will be running the Garden Mentorship Program. And, as al-

ways, EAC relies on many volunteers to collaborate, advocate and accomplish our many goals. A special thank you to interns Doug Mitchell, Ashley Marlin, Sadie Beaton who have all worked very hard on the Dragging Campaign and sustainable seafood issues.

A Special Thank You

Jen Graham, who has served as co-chair of our board of directors for the last year, worked countless hours on personnel policies, the ad hoc restructuring committee, organizing the AGM, early morning breakfast meetings, late night wine meetings, not to mention her fundraising and policy work on the Coastal Issues Committee, must be thanked. EAC depends heavily on volunteer efforts and Jen has gone far beyond the call of duty.



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Nova Scotians

Protecting Our Wilderness

The preservation and protection of our environment is everyone's responsibility.

At Environment and Labour, we are committed to expanding the number of protected areas in our province. It's part of our green plan, *Toward a Sustainable Environment*.

This year, we decided to designate lands at Gully Lake and at Eigg Mountain-James River as protected wilderness areas.

We did this with help from our partners so Nova Scotians – and their children and grandchildren – will always enjoy a walk through undisturbed wilderness.

For more information on protected areas, visit our website at www.gov.ns.ca/nsla/pareas

