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

BETWEEN THE COVERS:

Greening Buildings

A Letter From the Beach



 an ecology action centre publication

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Features

Greening Buildings

/ 20



Letter From the Beach

/ 12



CONTRIBUTORS: Sadie Beaton, Mark Butler, Cheyenne Dickinson, Frank Fawson, Jen Ford, Susanna Fuller, Laena Garrison, Jen Graham, Catherine Joudrey, June Hall, Marla MacLeod, Anne Magera, Kate McKenna, Jen Scott, EAC Staff

CONTENT EDITOR: Anne Pryde

COPY EDITORS: Maggy Burns, Susanna Fuller, Tim Roberts

COVER: Aaron Harpell

ILLUSTRATIONS: Aaron Harpell, Syd Smith, Janet Wilson

PHOTOGRAPHY: Sadie Beaton, Cheyenne Dickinson, Frank Fawson, Amy Joudrey, Marla MacLeod, Heather McKibbin, Erin O'Connell. RCEN, Jen Scott

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tableofcontents

- 4 **Action is Our Middle Name** *compiled by EAC Staff*
- 6 **Ecobriefs** *by June Hall*
- 8 **Delicious Inspiration from New England**
by Marla MacLeod and Jennifer Scott
- 11 **Avoiding A Slimy Seafood Future** *by Sadie Beaton*
- 12 **Letter from the Beach** *by Jennifer Graham*
- 15 **Planning for Kids' Sake** *by Cheyenne Dickinson*
- 16 **Undersea Community Action** *by the Marine Team*
- 18 **Home Make-over** *by Frank Fawson*
- 20 **Greening Buildings** *by Claire Simmons and Trsha Dempsey*
- 22 **Citizen's Choice** *by Catherine R. Joudrey*
- 24 **Thinking Outside the Car** *by Laena Garrison*
- 26 **Ask Eco Head**
- 27 **Art and the Environment** *by Kate McKenna*
- 31 **Green People** *by Mark Butler and Susanna Fuller*

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letter from the centre



*EAC gives the province a lifeline to help with its floundering climate change policies.
Photo credit: Heather McKibbin*

This is a very practical issue. There is lots of advice, both for the individual and for our governing bodies. You can read about how to protect our beautiful coasts, how we can revitalize our food system, how your children can walk to school in safety, how to raise a tricky environmental matter with a recalcitrant boyfriend and more.

Environmental organizations have always been in the business of producing how-to manuals: how to get your lawn off drugs, how to heat your home without emptying your purse or the planet, how to fish sustainably, etc. What's changing is that more and more people are reading these manuals and acting on the advice.

Many are driven to make changes in their lives because of the distress they feel over the increasingly obvious wear and tear on this planet (and you can read about some of the frightening trends in the Eco-Briefs section). Yet what is really convincing people to change how they live is the growing realization that the earth's resources are finite. We're running out of the stuff, be it farmland or fuel.

Environmental organizations don't have all the answers or sometimes even the right answers. This is unsurprising given our relatively puny resources and the immensity of the challenge. However, we think the questions are the right ones and as more and more businesses, governments and citizens respond, the answers will emerge as we hope they do in the following pages.

Environmentalists have often been portrayed as flaky, idealistic, naïve and impractical. Perhaps at times we are, but at its core, the environmental movement is the opposite. It is practical, realistic and even conservative, if "conservative" means "to conserve".

Likewise our vision is sometimes labeled radical, but we are not the radicals. The radicals are those that want to line our coasts with development, fish as if the sea-floor was flattop, trade as if geography doesn't matter, use our natural resources as quickly as possible, forget the wisdom of our ancestors and generally behave as if we were divorced from nature.

Read the rest of this magazine and what might have seemed impractical or radical to you five years ago, last year or even last month before you paid 1.40/L at the pump might now seem very useful advice.

-Mark Butler

EAC PROJECT STAFF AND COMMITTEE CONTACTS

CORE STAFF

Policy Director: Mark Butler 429-5287
action@ecologyaction.ca
Internal Director: Maggy Burns 429-5289
centre@ecologyaction.ca
Financial Director: Carla Vandenberg 442-0254
eac@ecologyaction.ca
Outreach Coordinator: Charlene Boyce-Young
422-0198 outreach@ecologyaction.ca
Office Coordinator: Jocelyn Knoester 429-2202
info@ecologyaction.ca
Membership Coordinator: Miranda McQuade
422-0198 membership@ecologyaction.ca
Web Manager: Emma Boardman 429-2202
web@ecologyaction.ca
Between the Issues: betweentheissues@ecologyaction.ca

COMMITTEES / PROJECT STAFF

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

TRAX: Leana Garrison 429-0924 trax@ecologyaction.ca
Jen Powley 429-2202 jentrax@ecologyaction.ca
Steer Clean: Scott Gillard 442-0202
steerclean@ecologyaction.ca
Bike Again: Scott MacPhee or Susanna Fuller
bikeagain@ecologyaction.ca
Active & Safe Routes to School: Janet Barlow
442-5055 asrts@ecologyaction.ca /
Cheyenne Dickenson 442-5055
walk@ecologyaction.ca

URBAN ISSUES

Healthy Lawns Coordinator: Chris Benjamin
442-5051 getyourlawnoffdrugs@ecologyaction.ca
Green Renovations: Zak Miller 442-5051
gogreen@ecologyaction.ca
Kim Thompson 442-5051 fernlane@ecologyaction.ca

COASTAL ISSUES

Coastal Coordinator: Jen Graham 442-0199
coastal@ecologyaction.ca

ENERGY ISSUES

Energy and Climate Change Coordinator:
Cheryl Ratchford 422-0199 energy@ecologyaction.ca
Solar Gain: Wayne Groszko 442-0300
solargain@ecologyaction.ca /
Janice Ashworth 442-0300
janice.ashworth@ecologyaction.ca

FOOD ACTION

Heliotrust: Jen Scott 429-2202 jen@ns.sympatico.ca
Food Miles: Marla MacLeod 442-1077
foodaction@ecologyaction.ca
Urban Gardens Project: Garity Chapman
urbangardens@ecologyaction.ca

MARINE ISSUES

Marine Conservation Coordinator: Susanna Fuller
442-0199 marine@ecologyaction.ca
Sustainable Fisheries Scientist: Jen Ford 446-4840
jenford@ecologyaction.ca

Communications Coordinator: Sadie Beaton
442-0999 sadiebeaton@ecologyaction.ca
Sustainable Seafood Coordinator: Anna Magera
442-0999 seachoiceatlantic@gmail.com

WILDERNESS ISSUES

Standing Tall: Jamie Simpson 429-1335
forests@ecologyaction.ca
Wilderness & Public Lands: Raymond Plourde
442-5008 wilderness@ecologyaction.ca /
Kermit deGooyer 442-5008 kermit@ecologyaction.ca

thinking outside the car (Transportation Issues Committee) TRAX teamed up with Transport 2000 Atlantic to host the first annual provincial Green Mobility Forum in Wolfville on May 21-22. Approximately 80 participants attended to explore alternatives to the reliance on private vehicles for transportation. Speakers came from across the province as well as from across the country to share success stories from their jurisdictions, such as Quebec's provincial bicycling network. Participants "walked the talk" by exploring local sustainable transportation modes: a ride on a Kings Transit bus and Trans County Transportation Society's new accessible mini-bus, a pedestrian walk-about in Wolfville, a bicycle safety session and bicycle tour, and the potential for reinventing rail in Nova Scotia. Participants voiced a need for a political champion, provincial co-ordination and a stable, predictable source of funding for sustainable transportation. TRAX will publish and publicly release its Green Mobility Strategy at the end of June. Check out www.ecologyaction.ca/trax for more information.

bike week 2008 (Transportation Issues Committee) It was Bike Week's 10th anniversary in HRM this year! TIC organized Bike Week's opening night, the Bicycle Jamboree, a night of live music, dancing, games and the Bicycle Idol Contest (winner Archie Gillis won a new bike!). The jamboree kicked off with the arrival of 300 critical mass participants, Halifax's largest critical mass ever! Later in the week, TRAX organized a Share the Road Checkpoint with HRM Regional Police to provide education for drivers and cyclists on sharing the road. Maybe in another 10 years, Nova Scotia will have real cycling infrastructure and a critical mass ride of 3000!

growing change (Food Action Committee) Crop, Cars & Climate Crisis: FAC teamed up with other food and social justice organizations from across the country to organize a six-city tour of speakers on the topic of social and environmental impacts of industrial agrofuels production. The Halifax leg of the event was a great success! Our panel consisted of speakers from Argentina, Colombia, the UK, Montreal and PEI, who discussed the many local and international implications of these technologies. Approximately 175 people attended the forum. Many important questions were raised and discussed. Interested in finding out more? See www.cban.ca/agrofuels for info and resources. Our third "Musicians for Farmers" event was a huge success. Over 170 people enjoyed delicious local food and wonderful live music! Stay tuned for future "Musicians for Farmers" events in the fall. All proceeds raised go to support HelioTrust. www.heliotrust.ca and www.heliotrust.squarespace.com. FAC has received funding for the fourth year of our Urban Garden Project. Our Urban Garden Coordinator works with children at two garden sites, plus other partnering sites in Halifax to teach them about organic gardening. We are looking forward to another tasty growing season! The Food Miles quest continues. We are very encouraged by the enthusiasm and support we have received from farmers in Nova Scotia. See the article in this issue for an account of our latest adventures. For more information or to get involved in FAC, contact Marla MacLeod at foodaction@ecologyaction.ca or by phone at 442-1077.



lifejackets & other news On the first anniversary of the province's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, EAC sought to rescue Nova Scotia's 'floundering' climate change agenda. A disappointing budget topped off a year of inaction on climate change. The province neglected to expand funding for fuel oil energy efficiency. This funding must be ramped up to meet GHG goals and help Nova Scotians with rising heating costs. After witnessing this unfortunate spectacle, EAC offered a 'bail out' to the Premier by providing a life jacket, a bailer and examples of legislation, regulations and budgets that have been implemented in other jurisdictions over the past year. The next day, lifejackets covered the entire front fence of Province House. See budget and climate change action analysis and pictures of lifejackets on the EAC website. One area where significant progress has been shown is the Utility and Review Board's acceptance of a multi-stakeholder "settlement" that will see \$13 million invested in electric energy efficiency in 2008 and 2009 and transition to an independent administrator. Dr. David Wheeler from Dalhousie University also concluded a stakeholder process that recommends a "performance based independent efficiency agency" to run energy efficiency programs. To create this made-in-Nova Scotia, best-practice agency, the government needs to implement legislation and develop a new non-profit in short order. Brendan Haley is leaving the Energy Coordinator position to do a PhD in Public Policy at Carleton University. Cheryl Ratchford has been hired as the new Energy Coordinator. The committee wishes Brendan the best and is excited to work with Cheryl to clean up Nova Scotia's energy system.

Connecting the Coast (Coastal Issues Committee) The 2008/2009 Nova Scotia provincial budget contained funding for the development of a coastal zone management framework. CIC congratulates the government on this announcement and urges provincial leaders to ride the wave and make healthy, functioning coastal ecosystems a key goal of the provincial water strategy currently being developed. It is often difficult to understand who does what in the coastal zone. It is confusing for government and the public alike. A lack of jurisdictional clarity leads to inaction, so super-volunteer Alexi Baccardax has updated Navigating the Maze: A Citizen's Guide to Coastal Action in Nova Scotia to help in figuring out the coastal maze. See www.ecologyaction.ca and click on the "Latest News" section of the CIC page.

win on the high seas

(Marine Issues Committee) On May 7th, our own Susanna Fuller led a very successful push to get the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to adopt an agreement on the management of bottom fishing activities on the high seas. With this agreement, the United Nations General Assembly is calling on NAFO members to fully implement measures to protect sensitive ocean bottom ecosystems, including deep-sea corals and sponges, from the effects of bottom fishing by December 2008. If NAFO members, including Canada, the European Union, Norway, Iceland, Russia and the United States, cannot implement these measures, the UN has called on them to stop all high seas bottom fishing. Stay tuned for high drama on the highseas! The busy Marine Issues Committee had two more big announcements on their plate this April and May. First, the EAC launched Canada's Business Guide to Sustainable Seafood along with the other SeaChoice partners at the end of April. Retailers and food service operations that are interested in sourcing more environmentally-friendly seafood can use the Business Guide to get started. Canada's Business Guide to Sustainable Seafood is available at the SeaChoice website at www.seachoice.org. Then on May 8th, the EAC joined 13 other conservation organizations from across Canada and the U.S. to announce a "Common Vision for Environmentally Sustainable Seafood." The Common Vision is a coordinated effort of a broad swath of NGOs to coordinate cooperation between businesses that buy and sell seafood with the conservation community. The Common Vision is already gaining industry support, including locally from the Fisherman's Market in Bedford. For more information on the Common Vision, visit www.solutionsforseafood.org. The Marine Issues Committee also organized a splashingly successful Oceans Week, which runs June 6-12 with speakers, workshops, a film screening and culinary delights - all in celebration our oceans. You can still check out our crafted Stitchin' Fish display of the Northwest Atlantic seafloor in the window of The Loop Craft Café. The seafloor display was crocheted, knitted, painted, glued, quilted and sewn by volunteers to rejoice in the beauty, diversity and fragility of our ocean floor habitats. You can also visit the Stitchin' Fish blog at <http://eacstitchinfish.blogspot.com/>.



EVENTS

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protecting unique forests

(Wilderness Committee) Imagine walking across rolling hills, listening to birds chirping, with the sun shining on your face, and dew-covered leaves rustling. This could be a peaceful scene from home, but I'm 5,064 kilometers away in a tiny community called Nuevo Mundo, Ecuador. So much life surrounds me as I pause to look around: the primary cloud forest on my left, birds zooming by overhead and stray dogs sauntering past. I think to myself: "Thank you Canadian International Development Agency." What an amazing experience I've been able to have. During this International Youth Internship, I've been fortunate to witness forest management both in Nova Scotia with the Ecology Action Centre and at the equator. Fundación Rainforest Rescue (FURARE) is an organization based in Ecuador's capital city of Quito whose main work is to promote Analog Forestry. This technique aims to restore biological diversity on degraded lands while also providing spices, fruit, and nuts for local consumption and sale. It typically uses plants and trees of similar size, function and structure to mimic the makeup of the natural forest. Through periodic meetings to compare notes, the locals pick and choose the most successful species and have a personal say in how and why things are planted. It's amazing how empowering and beneficial such active forest management is to the local community. Nova Scotians are also blessed with a unique and beautiful forest, and I find myself admiring the differences between the two while comparing and contrasting how things are done in Ecuador and in Nova Scotia. I received a crash course about the Acadian Forest during an Acadian Forest Science Conference last year, which I helped to organize. And since returning in March, I have jumped right back into things, preparing for the Voluntary Planning public consultations for the Department of Natural Resources' new Natural Resources Strategy. Speaking up and having a say in how your forest is managed is important in all situations, across all borders. Visit www.novascotiaforests.ca to learn about what you can do and to join the Forest Alert! list.

By June Hall

A dental record

Over the last 10 years, Norway has enrolled almost 100,000 infants and their parents in the Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study, a massive attempt to track down the causes of disease. The study is based on questionnaires and biological samples (such as blood and urine) from the children and their parents and will run for decades. Approximately 100 subprojects with specific research questions have been proposed, covering a wide range of environmental and genetic topics.



Now a new twist has been added. Parents have been asked to send in their children's milk (baby) teeth, creating what could become the world's largest tooth bank. Teeth start developing about two or three months after conception, adding material over several years. Laid down at the same time are trace amounts of a wide range of toxins absorbed by the child in utero and through early childhood; an environmental history, as it were. Analyze the teeth, goes the thinking, and you may find links to diseases developed later in life — even decades later.

Science, 25 Apr. '08

Tragedy in the making?

No doubt about it: globalization has huge implications for biodiversity. A prime example is the spread of invasive species, a phenomenon as old as civilization but which has really picked up in recent decades.

By largely keeping to itself, however, China has not until now been a major player — either as a contributor of inva-

sive species, or as a receiver. Not surprisingly, the situation has changed over the last 25 years. We're feeling the effects here in North America — the Asian longhorn beetle entered the U.S. on a shipment of wood from China in the early 1990s — but so also is China, which is battling a variety of unwelcome visitors (the North American fall webworm, for example, is destroying many of Beijing's trees and shrubs, while goldenrod has spread to 20 provinces in just 10 years).

Trade is not the only culprit. Drastic changes in land use, enormous construction projects, and the increased movement of people and goods around the country (to name a few) are fueling what scientists fear could turn into an onslaught, a possible tragedy in the making for China's tens of thousands of native species.

Bioscience, Apr. '08

Going, going...

Shorebirds are in trouble all over the world, but especially so in the Asia-Pacific region, as dramatically revealed by Silke Nebel and colleagues. Since 1983 they've been conducting aerial surveys of shorebirds at 2,000 wetlands across eastern Australia. The results are alarming. In just 23 years (till 2006), bird counts have dropped by 81 percent for resident species and 73 percent for migratory visitors. Australia plays host to 15 resident and 36 migratory species, some of which make annual round-trip flights of 24,000 km or more from as far away as Siberia and Alaska.

It's not hard to identify reasons for the decline. Development at critical stopover points along the flyway (in China and Korea, for example) is "taking a heavy toll," while in Australia water diversions for agriculture (cotton and rice in semi-arid areas!) are affecting wetlands in many areas and coastal development proceeds apace.

The results may, however, have been skewed by the severe, multi-year drought afflicting much of the survey area. There is no way of knowing if recovery is possible (or even if the drought will end, though rainfall has increased this year). In addition, aerial surveys are less than 100 percent accurate.

Biological Conservation, Apr. '08

"Food miles"

Do food miles matter? Probably not much, according to a recent study by Carnegie Mellon University researchers Christopher Weber and Scott Matthews.



The distance your food travels "from farm to plate" seems an easy way to measure its contribution to climate change, but in fact, transportation accounts for a mere 11 percent of the greenhouse gases "that an average U.S. household generates annually as a result of food consumption." More important by far, say the authors, is how the food is produced, not how far it's transported.

The study examined the whole North American food supply, from the manufacture of fertilizers and tractors to the vast amounts of methane and nitrous oxide emitted during farm production. Indeed, the latter two gases "blow away CO₂." Not surprisingly, red meat and dairy are major villains. Eliminate all animal products for just one day a week, and you'll make more of an impact than you would by switching to a totally local diet. In addition, you need to ask questions such as: "Is my local tomato grown in a heated greenhouse, versus field-grown in California?" When applying the results of this study to the Nova Scotia situation, however, it is important to remember that in N.S., beef, dairy and lamb production are generally an ecological use of farm land because these ruminant livestock are fed grass and clover, which cover the soil well, preventing erosion. Grass and clover, along with manure from the livestock, add to soil organic

carbon (a GHG sink). Also, food traveling to NS travels much farther than U.S. average distances. Asking for local, grass-fed beef, instead of eating imported beef will help reduce your GHG impact.]

The bottom line: eating locally grown food makes sense for many reasons, but curbing global warming is not necessarily one of them. But still... California, Florida and Central America are so far away.

Env. Sci. & Tech. online, 16 Apr. '08

E-waste in Africa

Despite the Basel Convention, which outlaws the export of hazardous waste, and a slew of national and regional laws in the EU and elsewhere, discarded electronic equipment is still being exported to developing countries in enormous quantities. For instance, only about one in four of the half million computers arriving in Lagos, Nigeria, each month actually works; the rest end up in toxic mountains of e-waste, where children as young as six help search for valuable metals.

Indeed, West Africa must be added to China and other Asian countries as a major destination for e-waste. Exporters (often scrap merchants) skirt the rules by claiming the used computers are headed for schools and hospitals. There is little chance they'll be caught



Janet Wilson

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– agencies back home lack the resources to check each shipment.

Computer Aid International is one legitimate supplier. It makes sure each computer works, and in Kenya is setting up a simple recycling facility to ensure the computers it donates don't add to the problem when they die.

Guardian Weekly, 16 May '08

Fire sale

Hard to imagine, but the government of Cambodia has effectively put the country up for sale. Foreign speculators have responded with enthusiasm, snapping up 45 percent of the land over the past 18 months. Islands, beaches, reefs, forest: it's all on the market. How come? Think cash-strapped, corruption-ridden country, then pair it with the U.S. sub-prime crisis, which has seen money managers scrambling for alternative places to park their cash. Amazingly, Hun Sen and his government are allowing investors to set up 100 percent foreign-owned companies that can acquire land and real estate on renewable 99-year leases, something no other country allows. Virtually the whole coastline is now under foreign ownership, the aim being to make the country a hot new tourist destination (think mega-resorts). In terms of cash, \$2 billion of new finance entered the country in 2007, "a 1,500% percent increase over the previous four years."

But don't people live there? Well, many of them are relatively recent arrivals, having settled along the coast in the aftermath of the 1960s Khmer Rouge reign of terror. Any rights they may have are being ignored; the land is sold as if no one lives on it, and villages erased. A new nightmare for the land and its people.

Guardian Weekly, 2 May '08

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Delicious Inspiration from New England

By Marla MacLeod and Jennifer Scott



Jen takes in the educational display at Natick Community Organic Farm.

Local food – more Nova Scotians are talking about it, buying it, enjoying it. Chefs are showcasing local ingredients on their menus, farmers' markets are packed, and scarcely a day goes by without a discussion about local food in the news. While we revel in the seasonal taste sensations, we also worry about increasing fuel costs, decreasing numbers of farms, an aging farm population, and global food scares. There is a groundswell of interest in building a sustainable food system in Nova Scotia and we are now grappling with the question of how best to do this.

So, with promises of tasty food and delicious inspiration, the Food Miles team set off for New England on a research road trip to check out exciting initiatives taking place in Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York State. These states are similar to the Maritimes in many ways – climate, crops, and the prevalence of small and medium-sized farms.

Maine, which falls into the same bio-region as Nova Scotia, has a population of 1.25 million, comparable to the almost one million living here. Nova Scotia has 3,795 farms, while Maine has 7,100 farms. While

we have more year-round farmers' markets than Maine, the state has 10 times as many organic farms and an extremely successful annual Common Ground Fair that attracts thousands of people. Nova Scotians spend an estimated 7% of their food budget on locally-grown food, while about 4% of the Maine food budget goes to local farmers. Nova Scotia has three hundred acres of working farms protected by Conservation Easements, Maine has over 10,000 acres. Both Maine and Nova Scotia have a long way to go towards creating a healthy and efficient local food system.



Marla in Vermont with a brown Swiss Dairy cow.

Here are some of our favourite inspirations from the trip:

1) Matchmakers – Individuals (non-profit or for-profit) who link farmers with institutions, such as schools or universities. Kelly Erwin in Massachusetts describes herself as a 'dating service' for farmers and food service managers. She understands the needs and challenges faced by each party. She has a directory of farmers, knows what each grows and in approximately what quantity, and helps them find schools and universities on their existing delivery routes. She develops resources for food service managers, such as local food cookbooks and seasonal availability charts. Five years into this initiative, she hopes that this job will become a permanent part of the Department of Agriculture.

2) Support for CSAs – A Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) system is one in which a farm sells "shares" at the beginning of the season. Their customers receive a weekly basket of fresh farm products. In Nova Scotia we have two or three CSAs – Maine has over 100! In fact, the



Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) has a staff person devoted to CSAs, providing resources and support for farmers interested in this marketing approach.

3) Support for new farmers – Who is going to grow all the food we are now so interested in eating? An apprentice/journeyman program for new farmers put on by MOFGA is attracting interest and teaching valuable skills to up and coming farmers. Also, the Intervale in Vermont allows new farmers to gain experience and use common land and equipment without a huge investment. Once they've proven



their ideas work, they move on to create their own farms.

4) Community Farms – We visited five community farms in New England, one of which was Land’s Sake in Weston, Massachusetts. In the 1970s, community leaders had the foresight to protect over 2,000 acres of green space in the town – park, woodland, and farmland. Last year, Land’s Sake produced about \$280,000 worth of produce and maple syrup, right in the middle of a suburb! They also sold firewood and timber, maintained green trails, ran educational programs for children and grew food for the Boston food bank.

For more information about these initiatives, check out the following websites:

MOFGA -- <http://www.mofga.org/>

Intervale -- <http://www.intervale.org/>

Land’s Sake -- <http://www.landssake.org/index.htm>

Marla and Jen coordinate the Food Miles Project, a collaboration between the EAC and the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.



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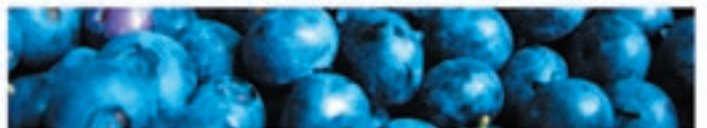
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Avoiding a Slimy Seafood Future

By Sadie Beaton

“Catch of the Day: Hagfish”.

Is your mouth watering yet?

Hagfish are considered the planet’s most ancient vertebrate. Fascinating and mysterious, they also enjoy notoriety as one of the world’s most disgusting critters - having even been featured on TV’s “Fear Factor”. Hagfish resemble a foot-long cross between a slug and an eel, with one nostril and a pair of blind, skin-covered eyes. Also known as slime eels, they secrete gallons of thick, fibrous mucus when disturbed. These bottom feeders also lack a jaw, instead using large tooth-like plates on their tongues to penetrate any available orifice to consume their prey from the inside out.

Still hungry?

Hagfish are the targets of a new, experimental fishery in Atlantic Canada, currently under consideration by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). In the wake of the devastating groundfish collapse of the 1990s, DFO has been looking down the marine food chain, allowing exploratory fisheries for species once thought of as inedible, even nuisances. Local fishermen have long cursed hagfish, or “hags”, as they have a habit of munching on commercial catches, and coating the nets with their stinky sludge in the process.

So who eats them? It turns out that the demand comes primarily from Korea, where, no joke, hagfish are considered a powerful aphrodisiac. These mud-dwelling hags are sold as high as \$20 a pound in South Korea, where over 9 million pounds a year are consumed. Curiously, hagfish are also prized by Korean leatherworkers, who appreciate their smooth, scale-less skins and fashion them into slick boots, handbags and belts. Interest has also emerged in marketing the hagfish’s viscous white goo as a baking ingredient, similar to egg whites.

Hagfish lack the ‘charisma,’ to say the least, of cuter marine species like seals and whales, making them unlikely poster children for ocean conservation. But while



Syd Smith

they may not be pretty, hagfish are considered an integral part of marine ecosystems. They appear to fill an ecological role similar to the buzzard, cleaning up the rotting carcasses that drift down to the seafloor, leaving only the bones behind. Hagfish have also been found to be an important menu item for several marine mammals treasured by a concerned public, including seals and sea lions.

Scientists know very little about the life cycle of Atlantic hagfish. Their life expectancy, age at maturity, and spawning ground locations are still entirely unknown. Hagfish are also believed to reproduce very slowly. Exploratory fisheries for previously unexploited species like the toad crab and sea urchin have already been awarded with commercial licenses on the East Coast, prompting concerns that a fishery for hagfish will also

be awarded licenses before enough information can be gathered to set precautionary management limits.

Across the globe, fisheries have first targeted the biggest, tastiest fish, such as tuna, swordfish and cod. As these stocks have depleted, we have begun to pursue others, often lower on the food chain. As marine scientist Dr. Daniel Pauly has warned, this pattern of fishing down the food chain could be perilous. As he has predicted, “The big fish, the bill fish, the groupers, the big things will be gone. It is happening now. If things go unchecked, we’ll have a sea full of little horrible things that nobody wants to eat. We might end up with a marine junkyard dominated by plankton.”

With dishes like grilled hagfish, krill salad, and even jellyfish ice cream appearing on menus, this fish lover’s nightmare is in danger of becoming reality. The good news is that we can all take action by seeking out local, sustainably sourced seafood every time we eat at a restaurant or visit the fishmonger. These purchases also support local fishermen and seafood processors, a lifeline in our coastal communities.

SeaChoice is seafood markets program that can help Canadians make sustainable choices. It is a coalition of five environmental organizations across the country, including the Ecology Action Centre. SeaChoice has developed “Canada’s Seafood Guide,” a handy wallet-sized card that rates popular seafood on a colour scale to help you make sustainable choices. The website, at www.seachoice.org, contains much more detailed information about each species listed.

Some local “Best Choices” right now include: bottom hook-and-line groundfish (such as haddock, pollock and hake); low-density farmed mussels and oysters (at the Halifax Farmer’s Market); and Chedabucto Bay trap-caught shrimp. All of these sustainable seafood choices are delicious, nutritious and, to boot, are unlikely to ooze buckets of suffocating slime.

Sadie works on sustainable seafood issues at the Ecology Action Centre and is willing to believe that hagfish have pretty nice personalities.

Letter from the Beach

By Jennifer Graham

Dear Mom and Dad,

Thank you so much for the generous graduation gift. I'm using the cash to support an extended tour of Nova Scotia's fabulous beaches. Don't worry, this applied beach study is excellent preparation for a future career in coastal zone management. And I am learning a lot.

The sheer diversity of beach ecosystems in Nova Scotia is astounding. Along the Bay of Fundy, I walked for miles on exposed mudflats wondering if I'd ever actually reach the water. In contrast, the chill ocean spray as I stood on the rocky shores at Blue Rocks near Lunenburg made me long to put some distance between myself and the cold grey sea. Next, I risked exposure while venturing into the waves at Crystal Crescent beach near Halifax. Finally, I wondered if I had accidentally traveled to the Caribbean, as I savored powdery white sand and azure waters off Carters Beach in Queens County.

The provincial Department of Natural Resources (DNR) produces a guide to Provincial Parks called "Parks are for People". That doesn't seem quite right to me – after all, many beaches and coastal areas are home to all sorts of plants and wild-

life, some of which are rare or endangered. Sandpipers and semi-palmated plovers spend summers feasting on insects and worms at the water's edge. Piping plovers are pretty cool too – there are only about 40 breeding pairs of these feisty little birds left in Nova Scotia. They nest right on the beach, so it is important to keep people, dogs, and motorized vehicles away from their nests during the breeding season. Beaches are not just for birds. When I camped at Five Islands Provincial Park near Parrsboro, I watched a deer and two fawns walk gingerly across the wet sand to feed in a nearby meadow. Foxes, coyotes and raccoons are not shy about nighttime visits to the beach, especially to steal eggs from a nesting shorebird. The rich shellfish harvest in the lagoon behind Martinique beach demonstrates that the most edible coastal creatures are found underwater or buried in the mud.

For a province with so many amazing beaches and rich coastal habitats, Nova Scotia spends a paltry sum on beach management. DNR manages approximately 50 Provincial Parks which contain beaches and is also responsible for the 92 beaches protected under the provincial Beaches Act, as well as the shoreline below the high



water mark. Most "protected" beaches were designated to prevent sand or gravel extraction. DNR's Parks Division has an annual budget of only a few hundred thousand dollars.

The lack of resources for beach management is not the only surprise. At the provincial level, Nova Scotia still does not have a comprehensive coastal policy, although the provincial government has recently committed to putting a coastal framework in place by 2008. I hope they follow through before too many more of Nova Scotia's coastal ecosystems are destroyed by development next to (or even right on) sand dunes or salt marshes. Given that Nova Scotia sells itself as 'Canada's Ocean Playground', it seems incredible that the provincial government has not invested in protecting its most valuable asset – its 7,000 kilometre long coast.

Maybe because of their unique location between land and sea, Nova Scotia's beaches have fallen in the gap between marine and terrestrial management. This spring, public consultations about the future of Nova Scotia's forests, parks, mining, and biodiversity will give citizens an opportunity to speak out about the lack of protection for Nova Scotia's beaches (pub-


Piping Plover

Charadrius melodus melodus


STATUS Endangered 
Endangered 

Approximately 40 breeding pairs are located on coastal beaches along the north and south shores of Nova Scotia. Winter from North Carolina to Cuba.

Population Range




Habitat
Found along coastal beaches in open or sparsely vegetated areas of sand or pebble, or on mud flats. Nest and raise young from May to August on dry, open ground between the dense dune vegetation and the high tide mark. Nests are small depressions, lined with small pebbles or shells, and are well camouflaged.

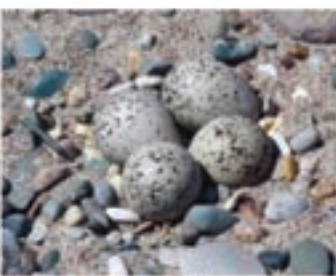


Species Description
The Piping Plover is a small shorebird (17-18 cm), with sandy-gray upperparts and white underparts. It has a black band around the neck and forehead, an orange bill with a black tip and orange legs. Chicks have sandy-gray upperparts, white underparts, no black on the neck and forehead and a solid black bill. Its call is a whistled "peep lo".

Dunes Dry sand – Sensitive nesting area Wet sand – Safe walking area Ocean



Nest scrape with eggs



Piping Plovers are migratory shorebirds that are observed on coastal beaches from mid-April through September during breeding and migration.

lic submissions are being accepted until July 31, 2008).

It would be fantastic if the government's commitment to reforming the Park system were genuine. Beaches are complex systems with many interconnected features, like sand dunes, tidal lagoons, mudflats, sandbars and salt marshes. Managing beaches is about more than providing enough trash cans – although even those are visibly lacking at most public beaches. Good beach management uses an integrated approach that considers the entire beach ecosystem. Ecosystem-based management considers a full range of natural beach functions and processes. Nova Scotia's beaches are very dynamic; they erode, and rebuild themselves frequently in response to natural forces such as wind, waves, and storms. An ecosystem approach means letting beach systems migrate, allowing dunes and sand bars to breach and rebuild in responses to natural forces, and restricting beach-front structures that may destabilize beach systems, accelerate erosion, or interfere with beach sediment supply.

Nova Scotia could show leadership in beach management by setting up a network of "protected" beaches. The protected beaches networks should represent

a full range of beach types and all regions of the province. Protected beaches should be managed to maintain a full range of ecosystem functions and biodiversity.

Yesterday, I was trying to nap on Cape Sable Island, which is pretty much one huge beach and dune system, when I was awoken by a bevy of Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) circling up and down the beach. Nova Scotia would be a nicer place to visit (and live) if existing rules and regulations protecting coastal areas were fully enforced, including provisions against OHV use on beaches and sand dunes, and rules requiring all dogs to be on a leash.

On a positive note, the provincial government is starting to understand the ecological significance of coastal areas. They are being proactive in working with other government agencies and groups like the Nova Scotia Nature Trust or Mahone Islands Conservation Association to buy and protect ecologically significant coastal lands. The provincial government has just bought Carters Beach and many people hope the adjacent lands will become a Nature Reserve as recommended by the United Nations Commission on Biodiversity in the 1970s.

Take Action

Treat beaches with respect!
Stay off the dunes.
Walk on the wet sand and the water's edge and
Keep your dogs on leash
Write to the provincial government and ask them to move forward on coastal zone management.

Nova Scotians value their beaches and coasts, and are extremely concerned about losing traditional access to the water as the result of new developments. At one point, my beach odyssey took me to Cow Bay, outside of Halifax. I'd heard the area was popular with surfers. I'll never know how good the breaks are since I couldn't figure out how to get to the water without crossing private property.

The province needs to find out how and where residents and visitors are accessing the coast in order to implement appropriate coastal access strategies. Beach access and public use must be balanced with wildlife and habitat protection. Increased access can mean more traffic, more noise and litter, and degradation of a fragile ecosystem. Many other places develop access policies by collecting beach attendance records,

Interesting Points

- Individuals can live up to 14 years.
- To court a female, males perform a "goose step" display.
- Disturbance by humans or predators can cause pairs to abandon their breeding site.
- Close approaches to parents may result in a broken wing display.
- Male will act as "Mr Mom" for his chicks if female leaves family early.



Male performing goose step display

Threats to Survival

- Crows, gulls, and other predators eat eggs, and young and are attracted to the beach by garbage.
- Humans (on foot and in vehicles) and dogs disturb plover families and sometimes destroy nests.
- Habitat loss from natural beach succession and shoreline development.

How You Can Help

During nesting season (mid-April to August) avoid disturbing plovers: walk on the wet sand, keep your dog on a leash, and do not drive OHVs along the beach.



Similar Species

Semipalmated Plover:

Similar size (18 cm) and shape; chocolate-brown upperparts; dark marking under eye; often seen in large flocks on water's edge.



Killdeer:

Larger size (27 cm); chocolate-brown upperparts; orange rump; double stripe on breast; loud repeated call when agitated. Often nest in open fields and parking lots.



Sanderling:

Similar size (18-20 cm); longer, black bill; mottled, brownish or grey upperparts; black legs; often seen in large flocks on water's edge.



Do not litter. Pick up garbage, tell your friends how to help, and get involved - become a Piping Plover Guardian.

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship

Contact: Environment Canada (902) 426-4196 or www.ec.gc.ca
Info: www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca
Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or sightings@speciesatrisk.ca
Stewardship: Piping Plover Guardian Program - Bird Studies Canada (902) 426-4055, or psplovers@gmail.com,
 Kejimikojik Area Stewardship Program, www.speciesatrisk.ca/stewardship

mapping traditional and current access points, and identifying ecologically sensitive areas where access should be restricted.

While they are counting people, beach managers should be collecting other important information. Water quality at salt water beaches is not currently tested. Uniform monitoring that measures total coliform, fecal coliform, and enterococcus (bacteriological indicators) should be done regularly, and the results posted at the beach.

I also wonder if the provincial government really understands climate change? The beach at Chezzecook on the Eastern Shore is already retreating at a rate of 5 metres per year. Barrier beaches and dunes are the first line of defense protecting inland areas and infrastructure against climate change impacts like rising sea levels and more frequent storm surges. In the next few decades, the natural structure, function, distribution and abundance of coastal and terrestrial species will change as a result of climate change. To reduce its vulnerability, the entire beach system including sediment sources, adjacent headlands, tidal ponds and wetlands should be protected so that the beach system can rebuild itself in response to natural and human-induced pressures.

It is difficult for Nova Scotia to be proactive in beach management. Presently, Nova Scotia's beach managers are not able to measure the health of its beaches. They are lacking basic information on everything from water quality to beach access. The government needs to develop indicators of beach health and use them to establish overall beach management goals and plans for individual beaches. Most other coastal states and provinces are doing more to value, manage, fund, and protect their coasts. If Nova Scotia seeks to be a leader in coastal zone management, it needs to set some clear priorities and move forward on their implementation.

Well, Mom and Dad, I'd love to write more, but I'm heading off to Gabarus Beach in Cape Breton – it is one of the most pristine beach systems left in the province. Maybe it should be the site of the next protected beach? I'll write more soon.

*Your loving daughter,
Jen*

Jennifer Graham is the Coastal Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre. She can be found exploring Nova Scotia's beaches and trying to learn to surf.

Quick Facts about Endangered Piping Plovers

*Compiled by Sue Abbott, Bird Studies Canada
(nsplovers@gmail.com)*

Estimated number of breeding Piping Plover pairs in Nova Scotia: 40

Decline in the number of Piping Plovers pairs on the South Shore of Nova Scotia since 1991: -46%

Increase in the number of Piping Plover pairs on Cape Breton and the Northumberland and Shore of Nova Scotia since 1991: 140%

Favourite spot on a beach to nest: Sand with scattered cobble, driftwood and kelp and sparse vegetation above the high tide mark

Best plover-friendly tips for the beach: Walk on wet sand, keep pets leashed, and respect signs marking sensitive nesting areas

Number of eggs in a clutch: 4

Number of days that chicks are flightless: 28

Typical pre-copulatory activity of male: Fast, goose-stepping (or "tattoo-like") march

Typical post-copulatory activity of female: Preening

Favourite foods: Marine worms, crustaceans, insects

Approximate mass of a Piping Plover:
43-63 g (~6-8 toonies)

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Planning for Kids' Sake: Safe and Active School Travel

By *Cheyenne Dickinson*



The Grosvenor-Wentworth Park Elementary School Travel Planning Committee discusses traffic issues affecting students' walk to school.. Photo credit: Cheyenne Dickinson

Many of us have fond memories of our travels to and from school: walking on a crisp fall day and hearing the leaves crunch under your feet; feeling the sun on your face as you cycle home on a warm summer afternoon; talking and playing along the way with parents or friends from the neighbourhood.

Unfortunately, as more and more children are bussed or driven to school, many students aren't getting the chance to form these types of memories. Only 25 percent of elementary school children in Nova Scotia walked or cycled to school in 2001. By 2005, this number had fallen to a mere 15 percent. Add to that the fact that two-thirds of children in the province are not active enough for health benefits and it's clear that something needs to be done to turn these trends around.

A new national project being piloted in part by the Ecology Action Centre's

Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) program is a step towards reaching that goal. The School Travel Planning pilot will better enable ASRTS to reduce the number of vehicles around the school at drop-off and pick-up times; improve local air quality; create safer streets and pathways for young pedestrians and cyclists; and increase the number of physically active students. Nova Scotia is one of four provinces participating in the pilot – alongside British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario – between now and March 31, 2009.

Five HRM schools have been chosen to participate in the pilot, including three pilot schools (Shatford Memorial Elementary in Hubbards, John MacNeil Elementary in Dartmouth, and Grosvenor-Wentworth Park Elementary in Halifax) and two control schools (Basinview Community School in Bedford, and Westmount Elementary in Halifax).

With the assistance of key community stakeholders, each pilot school will participate in a five-step process to write a School Travel Plan that will help to address any barriers to children using active transportation to and from school.

In April, the schools participated in two survey processes: a “hands-up”, in-class survey asking students how they traveled to and from school each day for a week, and a take-home family survey that delved deeper into the families' travel habits. The take-home survey was an opportunity for parents and their children to outline the routes they take to and from school while identifying barriers that might hinder them from using active forms of transportation more regularly. Some commonalities existed in the barriers identified at all five schools, including issues with traffic speed, problems with traffic congestion, a lack of safe places to cross busy streets, and parents' hesitation to allow their children to travel to school on their own.

The next step in the process will involve brainstorming solutions to these barriers. These could include engaging students in walking and wheeling safety training, starting a walking buddies or “Walking School Bus” program, launching the Pace Car program in the school community, or lobbying for improved crosswalks in the area.

Once action plans have been solidified for the three pilot schools, a School Travel Plan will be written detailing the issues identified, the solutions developed to address those issues, and recommendations for implementation. School Travel Plans will be executed in the fall of 2008, and follow-up surveys will be administered in the spring of 2009 to monitor any change in travel habits as a result of the process.

The national School Travel Planning pilot project is an important step towards maximizing the benefits of safe and active school travel in Canada. The project has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada and national coordination by Green Communities Canada. For more information, please contact Cheyenne Dickinson, Community Advisor with Active & Safe Routes to School, at walk@ecologyaction.ca or 902.442.5055.

Cheyenne Dickinson is the Community Advisor for the Ecology Action Centre's Active & Safe Routes to School program.

Undersea Community Action - We've got Branches in All Kinds of Directions

*By the Marine Team (Anna Magera, Sadie Beaton,
Jennifer Ford, Susanna Fuller)*



Stitchin' Fish - Crafting Sea Floor Biodiversity in Atlantic Canada

High Seas Trawling Moratorium Revisited

Fact: Canada's continental shelf is home to over 30 species of coldwater corals.

Since hosting the first International Cold Water Coral Symposium in 2000, where we were simply trying to put corals on the map, significant progress has been made towards their protection. Do you remember the calls for a high seas moratorium on bottom trawling? That was, in part, about protecting corals. While a moratorium was not adopted, the United Nations General Assembly did instruct the world's fishing nations to protect the high seas from the impacts of bottom trawling.

Fast forward to May 2008, and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) (responsible for managing fisheries past the 200 mile limit), committed to mapping and protecting corals, sponges, canyons, seamounts and other vulnerable species under its jurisdiction. Canada and other countries will have to report progress to the United Nations in 2009. The EAC has been involved in every step of this process, and hopes to celebrate meaningful conservation measures in the very near future. Keep your fingers crossed for the high seas.

Consuming the Oceans

Fact: We love seafood. The average Canadian eats 9-10kg of seafood per year and this number is rising.

Between 1991 and 2003, Statistics Canada found that Canadian seafood consumption increased by 10%, and it is still rising. By 2010, the demand for seafood across North America is expected to rise by 40%. The rest of the world loves our seafood too. Seafood exports represented a \$3.9 billion industry for Canada in 2007 – the largest exported food commodity at 670 million tonnes of wild and farmed seafood. Nova Scotia is Canada's top seafood exporter, at 137,027 tonnes. Are we destined to eat our oceans to death?

Taras Grescoes, author of the recently published book *Bottomfeeder*, toured the world, searching for sustainable seafood options. He now recommends eating bottomfeeders, of species that are low on the food chain, such as herring, like Solomon Gundy, Brunswick sardines, smoked mackerel, oysters or mussels. More herring are caught in Canadian fisheries than any other species, with 160,000 tonnes of herring caught in the Atlantic Provinces in 2005. Only 15,000 tonnes were caught by herring weirs, used in the Bay of Fundy for hundreds of years and inspired by similar methods used by First Nations people.

Fact: Mathematicians struggled to understand "hyperbolic space", the underpinning of general relativity theory and proposed shape of our cosmos. They had no way to model it physically until 1997, when a researcher at Cornell University displayed hyperbolic space using crochet patterns for some of our favourite underwater animals - corals.

In the ocean, the anatomies of corals, sponges, kelps and nudibranchs had been expressing hyperbolic geometry for millions of years. Inspired by the Institute For Figuring's crocheted coral garden, many of the creatures have been created using principles of hyperbolic geometry. Crafty contributors from across the continent have helped the EAC to spawn a Northwest Atlantic sea floor. This mostly yarn-based ecosystem is amazingly diverse, complete with sponges, corals, sea cucumbers, starfish, sea mice and more.

Come down to The Loop Craft Cafe on 1547 Barrington Street and have a look at the EAC sea floor display, and check the blog to find out more: <http://eacstitchinfish.blogspot.com>



Carbon Footprint

Fact: The oceans act as a giant carbon sink, absorbing about 1/3rd of the world's human produced carbon.

Everyone is talking about climate change these days, but what about the impact of carbon on the world's oceans? The ocean's ability to absorb carbon is not able to keep up with all of the extra CO₂ we are producing, and as a result the oceans are becoming increasingly acidic. "Ocean acidification" is potentially a big problem for many marine organisms – from crustaceans like shrimp and crabs, to mollusks like mussels and oysters, to tiny zooplankton that make up the base of the food web – as increased acidic conditions make shell production more difficult. Current climate change models predict that by 2050-2100, ocean water will essentially be "corrosive to marine organisms." The most practical and economical way to reduce impacts of carbon on the oceans is to reduce our carbon emissions.

One way you can help is by purchasing seafood with a low carbon footprint. So far, sustainable seafood rating systems have not included carbon in their sustainability calculations because the calculations can be complicated. However, scientists like Dr. Peter Tyedmers at Dalhousie University have analyzed the energy inputs and associated greenhouse gas emissions of fisheries and throughout the entire seafood product chain. These "life cycle" energy inputs and resulting emissions depend on many factors, including how abundant the fish are, how they are caught or farmed, the processing method, and distance and method of transport from ocean to plate. For example, a preliminary analysis of the trap shrimp fishery near Canso shows that the energy input to catch these shrimp is only a quarter of that required to catch their trawl caught cousins. Good for the sea floor, good for Canso, and good for the climate.



Marine Planning

Fact: On June 6th 2008 the federal government announced renewed funding for Sable Island and a commitment to protecting the island as a National Wildlife Area under Environment Canada.

Cities, towns, even rural areas have zoning plans. People have gotten together and made decisions on where they want to have certain activities and where others are prohibited. In many parts of the world's oceans, the same type of much needed planning is occurring. Off Nova Scotia, the Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management Plan (ESSIM) has been in the works for almost a decade. With a plan finalized, the ENGO Caucus, consisting of World Wildlife Fund, Ecology Action Centre, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club of Canada have been working on a spatial conservation action plan, to assess the level of protection from human activities, and where more protection might be needed. While it is much more difficult to think about planning for an environment because we can't see underwater, it is critically important. The public will be invited to learn more about ESSIM and contribute to marine planning at the ESSIM forum to be held in the fall of 2008.

What is happening to the lions and tigers of the sea?

Fact: According to a Dalhousie University study, 90% of the large predators in the sea have been fished out, including tuna, swordfish, and sharks. More than 50% of the catch in the Scotia Fundy pelagic longline fishery is discarded.

Nova Scotia used to be home to a vibrant inshore swordfish harpoon fishery that is now much reduced. Bluefin tuna are the world's largest and fastest bony fish (fish that are not sharks), and the largest tuna ever recorded was a 1,496 lb bluefin caught off Nova Scotia. Bluefin tunas up to 2 m long are still caught with rods in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off Hubbards, but these fish are known to be seriously overfished and there are efforts to close the major tuna fisheries across the Atlantic. And then there are the sharks. Great whites, blue sharks, short fin mako, and porbeagle sharks have all declined by 90% in Nova Scotian waters. Think twice before you choose to eat tuna, and ask for harpooned swordfish.

The good thing about a trap, is you can choose to go in it, or not.

Fact: Shrimp traps can be made at home from modified lobster traps.

The Guysborough County Inshore Fisherman's Association, based in Canso, have been experimenting with shrimp traps since 1994. The shrimp traps can be set within sight of the shore and hauled in within the day, which means less fuel and less time at sea away from their families for the fishermen in this community. What's more, the traps allow small shrimp to crawl back out of the traps, yielding a larger, better quality shrimp for the market than you would normally get in a trawl. And even better, the shrimp traps catch shrimp without damaging the sea floor, catching juvenile fish, or destroying mangrove forests. Chedabucto Bay trap-caught shrimp can be bought at Fisherman's Market, Homegrown Organics or Pete's Frootique.

EAC has also been working with a group of fishermen in Port Mouton Bay who wish to try using traps similar to crab pots to catch cod and haddock. In addition to minimal habitat impact, there may be other benefits to fishing with traps, such as using less bait than longlines, protecting caught groundfish from seals, and allowing the fish to be landed alive, thus improving quality.

Home Makeover: A Nova Scotian's Experience with Retrofitting For Energy Efficiency

By Frank Fawson



Solar power provides ~ 50% of the heat and electricity for Frank Fawson's century old farmhouse in Lunenburg County. Photo credit: Frank Fawson

Housing is one of the biggest determinants of our ecological footprint. The alluring dream of constructing a new, energy efficient home in order to lower energy use is one I am sure many Nova Scotians have had. But most of us live in homes already built, so the focus switches to making them more energy efficient. In choosing to renovate an existing home rather than build a new one, the consumption of building materials can be greatly reduced.

Reduce, reuse and recycle have a priority in their order. My wife Wynne and I were able to reduce our ecological footprint by reusing an existing building and recycling building materials wherever possible.

We were only the third family to own this century-old farmhouse. It came to us affordably run-down but largely intact in its original form. Peeling off the layers of 1960s-style shag carpet, wall paneling and ceiling tile slowly revealed the pearl within.

The house is a two-storey 'four-square' in Lunenburg County. Almost all the windows, doors, pine clapboard siding and metal roofing, if not original, are in the style of the era. Inside, the doors, trim and flooring are also largely original. In fact, even the wall and roof cavities were original in that there was absolutely no insulation installed.

Conserving the heat in our 1,750-square foot home was the first step. A forced hot air heating system consumed eight cords of wood and 500 gallons of furnace oil through one heating season. We had cellulose (recycled newspaper) insulation blown in the walls (R-14) and in the second floor ceiling (R-24). Weather stripping and storm windows were added where necessary.

Increasing efficiencies came second. An additional chimney flue was installed along with two good quality second-hand woodstoves. A small wood cook stove is great for cooking and heating water. A cast iron stove was also installed in the living room. This reduced our fuel consumption to five cords of wood and less than 200 gallons of furnace oil per year.

The third step involved changing the source of our energy to renewables. A used domestic hot water solar heating system cut the energy used by our electric tank in half. The payback period was reduced to about four years by installing valves to bypass the electric when the solar was hot rather than using the solar as a pre-heater for the electric as it was designed. Before taking a shower our teenage daughter would think about how much sun there was that day, go to the basement and check the temperature of

Fawson Family Energy Use – February 2008

Use	Electric	Wood	Solar
Domestic Hotwater	on demand heater	kettles	3/4" copper coil heat exchanger
Est. % of annual use	40%	10%	50%
Space Heating	baseboard back-up	2 older stoves	4x (4'x 8') plus 6x (3x8) panels
Est. % of annual use	5%	50%	45%
Energy Consumption	Avg. kilowatt hrs/day	cords/year	Solar % of use
Electricity, Space Heating Domestic Hot Water	11 kw/hrs/day	2.5 - 3 cords	47%
Total	13.7 million BTU	28.25 million BTU	37.25 million BTU

the solar and, if it wasn't hot enough, turn two valves, flick the breaker on for the electric hot water tank and wait an hour. If a shower-happy teenager could make these lifestyle adjustments then we figure pretty well anyone could.

A few years later we installed two more used 4'x 8' thermal solar panels to meet some of our space heating needs. In-floor heating was installed in one half of the main floor area. By this time we had stopped using furnace oil and our wood consumption dropped to about four cords of wood per year.

After a few more years we completed the in-floor heat on the main floor. Six used 3'x 8' solar panels were installed for this heating. This winter we expect to burn 2 1/2 - 3 cords of wood. Of the total energy now used in our home, including electricity, about 47 percent comes from solar. The only heat on the second floor,

Take Action

Start Insulating!
Contact Conserve Nova Scotia to
learn about
energy efficiency programs

Sign up for a
green renovation workshop
at the Ecology Action Centre

other than what rises, is electric in the bathroom and in one room used as an office. However, our electric use for heating remains low with total electric bills running about 10-12 kwh per day in the winter months and lower in the summer. Using a clothesline instead of an electric dryer and a drying rack above the woodstove helps keep electric bills down as well.

There was a necessary priority in the order of changes made. First, conservation through insulation lowered our energy consumption (blown-in cellulose cost approximately \$3,000). Second, installing woodstoves increased the efficiency of our heating system (two stoves and chimney flue cost \$2,000). And third, thermal solar changed the source of energy we consume (solar heating system cost \$3,500). The total cost came to \$8,500. These changes to an existing house were more affordable for us because we did much of the installation ourselves over a number of years.

Reducing the size of your ecological footprint is primarily about lowering your consumption. In new construction, minimizing the amount of materials used is the greatest challenge, while in renovations the challenge is lowering your ongoing energy use. Both require careful consideration in determining your overall impact on the planet.



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Greening Buildings: Inspirational ways to reduce your ecological footprint

By Claire Simmons & Trisha Dempsey

Regardless of the size of your building or your financial constraints, you can make your building more sustainable. Here are twelve examples of buildings we found in HRM whose green initiatives inspired us

P'lovers
5657 Spring Garden Road, Halifax NS
www.plovers.net

Type: Environmental Department Store

- Display cases from re-used materials
- Cork flooring (a renewable resource)
- Recycled wallpaper
- No bag campaign – money saved is donated to environmental organizations
- Low-flow faucets – hot water turned off
- Energy-efficient lights bulbs
- Minimal packaging is requested from suppliers



Garrison Brewing Co.
1149 Marginal Road, Halifax NS
www.garrisonbrewing.com



Type: Production and direct sales

- Low embodied energy – reuse/ renovation of original structure
- Natural clay plasters and paints on walls
- Reused old exterior windows inside to increase natural lighting
- Installed skylight to reduce reliance on artificial lighting
- Brewery staff bike available for errands to encourage sustainable transportation
- Minimal packaging is requested from suppliers
- Key supporter of 'green' Seaport Beer Festival

Charles Street Reno
5687 Charles Street, Halifax NS
rodmalay@ns.sympatico.ca

Type: Commercial and residential.

- Deconstruction NOT demolition – recycling, and reuse of construction waste
- Extensive green roof
- Passive solar design: concrete floors for thermal energy storage
- Geothermal heat source
- Encouraging community involvement by employing local workers
- Forest Stewardship Council certified wood
- Grass Crete instead of paved parking space
- Low-flow plumbing
- Energy-efficient light bulbs



Ecology Action Centre
2705 Fern Lane, Halifax NS
www.ecologyaction.ca

Type: Non-Profit Organization

- Solar panels provide hot water for domestic use and in-floor heating
- Passive solar design: concrete floors for thermal energy storage
- Upgraded local insulation materials
- Sealed windows to reduce heat loss



- Interior windows between rooms encourage natural day lighting throughout the building
- Dual flush toilet and low-flow plumbing
- Natural clay plasters and paints on walls
- Reused and recycled building materials
- Forest Stewardship Council certified wood
- Low “off-gasing” furniture

The Wooden Monkey
1685 Argyle Street, Halifax NS
www.thewoodenmonkey.ca

Type: Restaurant

- Low embodied energy – reuse/renovation of original structure
- Reuse/recycled building materials
- Wood flooring from fallen Hurricane Juan trees
- Energy saving fridge and dishwasher
- Energy-efficient light bulbs
- Plans to install a low-flow 4 litre toilet
- Local and organically grown ingredients
- Biodegradable take-out packaging



NSCC Waterfront Campus
80 Mawiomi Place, Dartmouth NS
www.nsc.ca

Type: Community College

- Aiming for LEED Silver Certification
- On the Harbourside, windows span all 5 levels providing natural light and passive solar energy
- Automated blinds cover windows at night to trap heat inside
- Steam energy supplied by Nova Scotia Hospital eliminates the need for fossil fuels on campus
- Low-flow plumbing
- Motion sensed lighting
- Low-emission finishes and furnishings
- 98% recycled material in drywall
- More than 90% of construction waste diverted from landfill

Clean Nova Scotia
126 Portland Street, Dartmouth NS
www.clean.ns.ca

Type: Non-Profit Organization

- Solar panel heats domestic hot water
- Wilson's biofuel is used for heat
- Plans to install green roof
- Improved insulation with caulking and weather stripping
- Enviro-fans and a programmable thermostat
- Low-flow water faucets
- Energy-efficient light bulbs
- Biodegradable cleaning products



BIO Energy Centre
1 Challenger Drive, Dartmouth NS
www.bio.gc.ca

Type: Federal Government building

- Seawater cooling from Bedford Basin
- 8" deep extensive green roof
- Photovoltaic solar panels provide lighting needs
- Natural ventilation system using windows with weather sensors
- Sunshades block or allow sun depending on the season

Kenneth C. Rowe
6100 University Avenue, Halifax NS
www.management.dal.ca

Type: University building

- Five-storey atrium for natural light
- Water source heat pump system
- Thermal insulation envelope with operable windows
- Sunshades block or allow sun depending on the season
- Low-flow plumbing
- Incorporated recycled materials
- Low-VOC finishes
- Motion-sensored lighting

Quinpool Towers
2050 Quingate Place, Halifax NS

Type: Apartment block

- 5" deep green roof
- 28802 feet of solar panels heat domestic hot water
- Potential for geothermal
- Sustainable transportation: conveniently located on top of Superstore and in close proximity to many goods and services
- Bike storage cage compensates for limited parking spaces

Halifax Seaport Market
Pier 20 Terminal Road, Halifax NS
www.halifaxfarmersmarket.com

Type: Farmers' Market (to open in 2008)

- Open weekdays, the new market will support local farmers from across the province
- Intensive green roof will provide insulation and a place to grow produce
- Rainwater will be collected and filtered by a grey-water system
- 9 wind turbines will generate electricity
- Solar panels will collect energy for radiant in-floor heating
- Sensored-geothermal system will store solar heat until needed
- Windows will provide natural lighting and passive solar energy
- Interior plants will improve air quality
- Natural clay plasters and paints on walls

For complete project profiles visit:
www.ecologyactioncentre.ca/buildinggreen

Mountain Equipment Co-op
1550 Granville Street, Halifax NS
www.mec.ca

Type: Retail store

- Renovated instead of rebuilt to reduce embodied energy
- Used low-VOC paints
- Used pigmented concrete sealed with wax as an alternative to off-gasing floor finishes
- Motion-sensored lighting

- Temperature set to 21o to limit air conditioning
- Garbage audits determine sources of waste and business practices are adjusted accordingly
- Returned clothing and gear is donated
- Recycles batteries, cell phones and ink cartridges
- No bag campaign – money saved is donated to environmental organizations

Buying Green Homes

By Catherine R. Joudrey



Photo credit: Amy Joudrey

Buying a home has turned over a new leaf, a green one. Homebuyers are shifting towards more ecologically friendly property purchases says Jan MacAuley, a real estate agent in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

“People are looking for smaller, definitely simpler homes in favour of a location,” said MacAuley, owner of Healthful Homes Realty. “The location is becoming far more important because they don’t want to buy a car.”

Instead of a vehicle, many homebuyers are discussing transit opportunities. By living in the city centre, these options are possible. The main reasons new homebuyers green their new homes include lowering heating costs, health considerations, and a concern for the environment.

Lower Energy Costs

Great news! The ecoENERGY retrofit program can help Canadians upgrade



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www.greenpowerlabs.com

their newly purchased homes. This country-wide program is designed to improve your home's energy efficiency and reduce other resource demands, such as water and fuel consumption. Save money, reduce heat, and limit your ecological footprint!

Best of all, the provincial and federal governments will help foot the bill after the work is done. Whether you make simple changes, like replacing water-guzzling toilets with dual flush, or delve into more intensive endeavours, such as installing air exchange systems, every positive change makes a difference!

Every home, whether new to you or not, can take advantage of this great incentive. Please visit www.conservens.ca/energyguide for more energy saving information and to find an energy advisor in your area.

Replace old appliances, like your washer, dryer and refrigerator, for EnergyStar models and save money, too!

A Healthy Building

A healthier building means a healthier you. Options are available for potential homeowners looking for healthy, green homes. Real estate companies, such as

Healthful Homes Realty, focus on the environmentally conscious sale of homes. Any home can be sold as a green home!

Healthful Homes Realty provides potential homeowners with information such as radon testing, and a detailed home review outlining materials and potential concerns within the home.

After you purchase a home and begin renovations, consider the toxic levels of the materials both inside and out of your home. Choose sustainable, locally produced and low-emission materials for renovations to help protect your family and the environment.

Protecting the Environment

Canada has over 13 million homes and 380,000 buildings! These buildings have a large impact on the country's energy consumption. In fact, they use 30 percent of the Canada's energy and create 30 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions, according to federal Natural Resources Minister Gary Lunn. Incentives such as the ecoENERGY retrofit program help lower these buildings' energy use.

New homes continue to be built each year, but they only account for 1 or 2 percent of the housing market. Building a new home accounts for 50 tonnes of CO₂ while renovating an existing one creates 15 tonnes, according to a study reported by The Guardian.

Choosing Your New Home

Selling property is big business. Over 88,000 real estate brokers look after most of Canada's new home purchases. Each year, between 400,000 and 500,000 property transactions take place. Real estate agents are definitely busy! As the trend for greener real estate moves from the United States into Canada, more eco-friendly real estate options are becoming available to potential homebuyers. Searching for a new home? Look for a green real estate agent near you!

Thanks to Jan MacAuley for sharing her knowledge on green real estate. Purchasing a home in the HRM has definitely become greener with Healthful Homes! www.healthfulhomes.ca.

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E-mail: bikeagain@hotmail.com

Ecology Action Centre

Green Mobility Strategy: Thinking Outside the Car

By Laena Garrison



What if for the equivalent cost of one-quarter tank of gas per person per year, we could quadruple the province's contribution to sustainable transportation, and reap the benefits in our communities?

Currently, the provincial government's investment in sustainable transportation options for Nova Scotians is inadequate. TRAX developed the Green Mobility Strategy to increase provincial commitment to sustainable transportation. There are eight key recommendations in the Green Mobility Strategy:

1. Create an annual, predictable source of sustainable transportation funding

In 2008 funding from Nova Scotia's government for transit and dial-a-ride service, was \$3.78 per capita. Between 2003 and 2006, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the two provinces with population size closest to Nova Scotia's, funded \$10.95 per capita. During the same period, the average investment of all provinces was \$19.87 per capita (Table 1). Using the provincial average transit investment as a guide to determine the total sustainable transportation investment needed in Nova Scotia, TRAX recommends between \$10 and \$19 million per year in Nova Scotia.

2. Identify a provincial department to be the steward of sustainable transportation

Currently, there is a lack of coordination among provincial departments in the provision of sustainable transportation infrastructure and services. One department,

such as Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal or Conserve Nova Scotia, needs to take the lead to develop and implement a comprehensive sustainable transportation strategy. In Quebec, the transportation department takes the lead, and provides infrastructure and services for all road users, including cyclists, pedestrians, taxis and public transit users, as well as supporting the maintenance of rail infrastructure.

3. Establish indicators for annually measuring progress toward sustainable transportation

Currently, there is a lack of consistent, reliable data available on indicators, such as the commute mode split (percentage of commuters who walk, bicycle, or use public transit, transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions), the total amount of land paved for transportation, the portion of children driven to school and the percentage of the population who live within 500 metres of a transit station. The commute mode split percentages in Nova Scotia are: drive alone to work (73%), carpool (11%), public transit (6%), and walk or cycle (9%). TRAX recommends that the province identify environmental, social and economic indicators, set goals for the indicators and evaluate progress. For example, Quebec has established a goal to increase mass transit ridership 8% by 2012, which is estimated to result in a reduction of 28 million litres of fuel and 80,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to removing 14,000 vehicles from the road.

4. Create a sustainable transportation network

Much of the province is not served by public transit or active transportation routes of any type. A provincial sustainable transportation network should include a cycling network, an active transportation trail network, an intercity public transportation network - including passenger rail, ferry systems, express transit service - and shuttle services connecting rural residents on secondary roads to ferry, coach and rail terminals.

Transport Quebec, for example, has invested almost \$100 million over the past 30 years into its provincial cycling network, La Route Verte, which is now recognized by the National Geographic Society as the top cycling destination in the world.

5. Integrate land-use planning into provincial policy to achieve transportation energy efficiency

Urban density is a measure of how compact a community is. Generally, the more compact a community is, the more citizens can live within walking distance of work, school, shopping and public transit services the more working farmland and habitat can be protected from urban sprawl, and the more efficient the use of road, sewer and water infrastructure. Between 1971 and 1996, urban density in Nova Scotia decreased by 36%, one of the sharpest declines in the country.

Ontario's Places to Grow Act (2006) is one model of integrating land-use planning into provincial policy. The goal of the act is to prevent urban sprawl and create communities, where services such as housing, schools, shops and employment are located in one neighbourhood. The act calls for \$17.5 billion of investment in rapid transit systems for the Greater Toronto Area over 12 years; municipalities to accommodate at least 40% of new housing units in existing built-up areas; financial incentives to reward the development of former industrial lands and infrastructure; and conservation of 1.8 million acres of heritage and farmland.

TABLE 1: Provincial Transit Investment

Year	Area	Per Capita	NS Total
2007	Nova Scotia	\$1.38	\$1,288,000
2008	Nova Scotia	\$3.78	\$3,530,000
2003-06	Saskatchewan and Manitoba	\$10.95	\$10,220,000
2003-06	All Provinces, excluding Nova Scotia	\$19.87	\$18,550,000

6. Increase public awareness about sustainable transportation

TRAX recommends that Nova Scotia develop a centralized transportation website - with information on all provincial transportation services, routes, schedules and fares; a ridematching program; and a share the road campaign to encourage increasing acceptance and use of active transportation.

7. Implement financial incentives to encourage sustainable transportation

Incentives, such as transit tax credits or hybrid vehicle rebates are sometimes needed to change people's transportation habits. Ontario exempted the purchase of bikes, bike helmets and safety equipment from the 8% provincial sales tax. In the U.S., four cities offer location efficient mortgages, which offer low down payments (3%), competitive interest rates, and flexible criteria for financial qualification to encourage people to buy homes in communities where they can walk to work, school, stores, recreation, and public transit services.

8. Implement policy and education programs to improve vehicle efficiency

90km/hour burns ~30% less fuel than 120km/hour. TRAX recommends that the province work with the department of Health Promotion and Protection's Injury Prevention Committee and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to lower and enforce speed limits. We also recommend that the province adopt California-like vehicle emissions standards – fleet average fuel economy of 6.72 litres per 100 kilometres by 2016.

Support the Green Mobility Strategy!

Contact your Member of the Legislative Assembly to explain your sustainable transportation needs and voice your support for provincial tax or fee increases where the revenue is invested in sustainable transportation infrastructure and operating costs: www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/members/directory/constituencies.html

Measure your transportation carbon footprint (and aim to reduce it!): www.sustain.ubc.ca/eco-survey/

Use VIA Rail www.viarail.ca/ or Acadian Lines www.smtbus.com/ to travel in NS

Read the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation pamphlet on criteria to consider when choosing where to buy a house: www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/buho/sune/index.cfm

Calculate the walkability of your neighbourhood: www.walkscore.com/

Take a CAN-BIKE course. Contact Bicycle Nova Scotia to find out about CAN-BIKE courses being offered in your area: www.bicycle.ns.ca

Apply for the Federal Transit Tax Credit www.cra-arc.gc.ca/whatsnew/items/transit-e.html#expanded

Follow eco-driving tips, such as driving 90 kilometres per hour on the highway. Visit Conserve Nova Scotia's Drive Wiser website to learn more: www.drivewiser.ca/

Why a Green Mobility Strategy?

Reduce personal transportation costs

Gas prices have risen to \$1.38/litre. "The average Nova Scotian [spent] about \$3,036 a year ... on costs such as vehicle ownership, operation ... and parking" (Genuine Progress Index Atlantic, 2006).

Increase access to employment, health care, education and social opportunities.

Approximately 30% of Nova Scotians do not drive, including youth, seniors, individual with low incomes and individuals with physical and mental challenges.

Conserve farmland and habitat

Paving land for transportation results in habitat fragmentation and population decline of large vertebrates, like Nova Scotia's mainland moose.

Increase physical activity

Built environments, e.g. pedestrian streets, that directly encourage safe walking, cycling, skateboarding, rollerblading, scootering, wheelchairs, etc..., are necessary to improve the health of our communities.

Reduce energy consumption

Transportation accounts for 27% of the greenhouse gas emissions we create in Nova Scotia.



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By EcoHead



henny mac

Dear EcoHead,

Recently, I was having lunch at my favourite restaurant, when I saw my environmental activist roommate's boyfriend. Heading over to his table to say hello, I was shocked to see this educated, seemingly socially-aware boy drinking from a bottle of commercial spring water! I've heard that even the United Church in some parts of Canada has prohibited the use of bottled water at church functions. Should I confront him? Should I tell my roommate?

-Concerned

Dear Concerned,

Don't panic, the relationship may not be doomed – he's still got time to be redeemed. Even the best of us let our green halos slip from time to time. Though it may seem shocking that anyone could go through life unaware of the social and environmental impacts of bottled water, perhaps he is simply naive. You could help this poor man (and your roommate) by educating him in green water etiquette.

Start by giving him some basic facts on why he should be carrying around his water in a re-fillable bottle instead: in Canada bottled water is less regulated and therefore possibly less safe to drink than municipal tap water; the energy and transportation costs of bottling drinking water take a huge environmental toll (not to mention the waste generated from unrecycled bottles); and there are some obvious social ramifications of buying and selling something that should be available to all. I'm sure you are well aware of the impacts of bottled water. If not, facts are easy to find on websites such as www.insidethebottle.org/.

If this makes him thirsty for more water conservation tips, suggest some simple things he can do around the home. Suggest installing low-flow showerheads, water efficient appliances, and low or dual-flush toilets. Water conservation is also very romantic: showers use less water on average than a bath, and on top of that, showering with a friend can help you save even more water!

The garden is another area where it's relatively easy and painless to cut down on water consumption. It is easy to set out barrels to catch rain for watering gardens. Convert lawns to beautiful, natural spaces (a 1,000-square foot lawn can consume more than 143,000 litres of water in one summer!). Some very useful tips on conserving water in your yard can be found at www.ecologyaction.ca/gowild.

If he's the right guy for your roommate, then he should be making changes in no time. And you can move on to asking your favourite restaurant why they serve bottled water in the first place.

-Ecohead

artandtheenvironment

By *Kate McKenna*

If you find yourself walking to work on a mid-winter morning, tempted to shatter the thin skin of glassy ice that has formed over a shallow puddle, Stan Godlovitch wants you to think twice about your pending destruction.

Stan Godlovitch is a philosopher who has a peculiar area of interest: the aesthetics of nature. Saying that an academic is interested in the aesthetics of nature is akin to being introduced to a doctor and then being told her specialty is bloodletting.

Thinking about nature in the same way that we think about art is outdated and archaic in most academic circles. You could open any philosophical work on aesthetics from the eighteenth century (I know how many of those you have lying around) and it would most likely focus on the experience of nature. Aesthetics, which refers to the appreciation of beauty and the interpretation of visual culture, began as an investigation of nature. During the nineteenth century, the focus shifted to art; some twentieth-century writers even defined aesthetics as “the philosophy of art.”

But discussions about beauty and nature have been popping up in journals, magazines, and conferences, and western Canada is one of the centres of new ideas. A chorus of new voices have been discussing what natural beauty is and what it means. There is a renaissance underway and Stan Godlovitch is just one of many new voices.

Godlovitch's ideas are among the most unusual and radical in this new chorus. In his article “Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics” he argues that a human being's ability to appreciate beauty is limited by the fact that s/he is a human being. He argues that our concept of nature is totally anthropocentric, or human-centred. As humans, our ability to perceive and understand nature is bounded by our human-ness: our size, our lifespan, our senses, and our culture. This is not a problem with art, because art is made by humans, but it is a problem with nature. In other words, nature doesn't speak human, and we aren't bilingual.

To illustrate his point, Godlovitch describes the thick sheets of ice that accumulate on the Bow River, near his home in Calgary. In the Spring, when the sun begins to melt the icy masses during the day and they refreeze during the cold nights, the cycle causes stress fractures. From the outside they look sturdy, but as Godlovitch's son discovers, apply a well-placed kick and “these blocks will rupture into a shower of splinters that spread round their base like a diamond scree.” While these monuments to winter may be as beautiful as the Rockies or the sand dunes of Price Edward Island, they differ in scale; they will not last the season and they are rather small. Relative to our human scale, they are transient, while the Rockies and the dunes are formidable.

Take Action

Godlovitch is one of many fascinating philosophers, if you want to know more about Godlovitch and his crew of natural aesthetes check out *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments* edited by Allen Carlson and Carl Berleant.

Godlovitch asks “should it make any difference to us that some things of aesthetic value might be transient?” Godlovitch's question is especially pressing if we use our aesthetic appreciation of nature as grounds for an environmental ethics. If we nobly chain ourselves to the towering redwoods, should we also protect things of transient natural beauty, even if we cannot appreciate them entirely because we are so thoroughly human? He argues that “to transcend the more parochial exhibitions of anthropocentrism [we] must embrace not only all creatures great and small but all also all processes long and short.”

I understand if trying to argue a child out of breaking the surface of an icy puddle seems totally unreasonable. Godlovitch himself admits to asking for the impossible. In fact, it is the impossibility of such an approach that Godlovitch admires. He believes that the search for a non-anthro-

pocentric aesthetic could provide the best foundation for environmental ethics. The oceans and the skies are almost incomprehensibly vast, and so we have not been able to imagine that our waste, run-off, and emissions could ever do any real damage. If we are more aware of how severely limited we are, in our ability to appreciate and admire nature, then our experience to and relationship with nature will be characterized by “mysteries without solutions.” And knowing that we don't know much might make us more careful, more wary.

It seems outlandish to suggest that the Rockies and the icicles hanging off your eaves trough should be treated with the same reverence. I know. I thought it was crazy the first time I read it. But the more I think about human ignorance and arrogance, and the destruction it has wrought, the more I agree with Godlovitch. And I haven't been able to go ice-breaking since.

Kate McKenna is a recent graduate of King's College and the Membership and Outreach Coordinator at Visual Arts Nova Scotia. She believes anyone can be a philosopher if they wanna.



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EAC Staff and Board of Directors would like to thank the dedicated Garden Party Committee for a successful 10th Annual EAC Garden Party and Auction held on June 8th, 2008. Over \$17,0000.00 was raised in one afternoon to support the core operations of the Centre. Over the last decade, the Garden Party has raised over \$150,000.00 for the Centre.

In April 2008 we also concluded our Fern Lane Capital Campaign, to raise \$140,000.00 towards the renovation of our new home. The Fern Lane building has become a showcase for much of our work, and greatly expanded our programming on green building and energy efficiency.

EAC greatly appreciates our Garden Party donors and those of you who gave so generously to our Fern Lane Campaign. We could not do our work without your support.



Photo credits: Erin O'Connell

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hellos & goodbyes

2008 has been a year of unprecedented comings and goings of EAC staff. We miss our old colleagues and welcome the new ones.

Friends who have moved on:

- Tim Crabtree
- Joanne Cook
- Brendan Haley
- Dave Lovekin
- Heather McKibbin
- Zoë Miles
- Minga O'Brien
- Amanda O'Rourke
- Tiffanie Rainville
- Stephanie Sodero

New Arrivals:

- Rosemary Aqua (ASRTS intern)
- Sonja Bhatia (Standing Tall intern)
- Ellen Bird (Coastal intern)
- Garity Chapman (Urban Garden Coordinator - returning for her 2nd year)
- Misha Couvrette (Photo intern)
- Ryan Kelly (Solar Gain intern)
- Jocelyn Knoester (Office Coordinator)
- Miranda McQuade (Membership Coordinator)
- Jen Powley (Transportation Coordinator)
- Cheryl Ratchford (Energy Coordinator)
- Kristine Richer (Jazz Fest intern shared with Jazz East)
- Jamie Simpson (Standing Tall Coordinator)
- Arnaud Varin (Solar Gain intern)



**GO NORTH!
STUDIO AND GALLERY TOUR
OF NORTH END HALIFAX 2008**

Saturday September 6, 12-5

Go North! is a celebration of creativity and culture in Halifax's North End community. Neighbourhood residents and the general public are invited to visit studios, galleries, alternative art-production spaces, local businesses and non-profit organizations supporting art.

Tour maps will be available the day of the event at Eyelevel Gallery located at 2063 Gottingen St.

For more information on how you can participate, please contact northend@gonorthhalifax.com or call 425 6412 or check out gonorthhalifax.com



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Thank You Martha

By Mark Butler and Susanna Fuller



Martha Kostuch, addressing a crowd with eloquence and conviction Photo credit RCEN

Canada's conservation community recently lost one of its keystone individuals, with the death of Martha Kostuch in April 2008. While many of us have been rushing to fill the gap left by Martha (with the instructions she left, of course), her presence is greatly missed across the country. While Martha lived and worked in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, her work was not limited to her immediate community.

Martha moved to Alberta to work as a veterinarian in the 1970's, but quickly found herself defending the natural world around her from poorly planned development. Sometimes she worked as a vet and for the environment at the same time; delivering a calf while participating in a conference call. Living in Alberta, you can imagine the focus of much of her environmental work: the impacts of gung-ho oil and gas activity.

She became particularly well versed in the health effects of sour gas both on humans and on the farm animals she treated as a vet. When the oil industry discovered sour gas off the Eastern coast of Nova Scotia we called Martha. One company, El Paso, a large American pipeline company, was proposing to transport natural gas to the United States through an underwater pipeline. El Paso announced

that they wanted to build a gas plant in Shelburne County to remove the sulphur from the sour gas and send it on its way again to the US.

Residents of East Green Harbour in Shelburne County were worried about the plant. Martha agreed to travel to Nova Scotia to do a public presentation and workshop in Lockeport on living next to sour gas facilities. Martha was both knowledgeable, knew her facts and delivered the information in her level headed way. At the same time, she didn't mince her words about the impact of chronic or acute exposure to sour gas and the risks of living next to these facilities. She showed pictures and recounted incidents of shoddy and dangerous practices in the industry.

The El Paso proposal never went anywhere, primarily because of lack of discoveries, but we also like to think that Martha played a role in the outcome. (As of 2008, Encana will be extracting and processing sour gas at its recently approved Deep Panuke site off the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia.)

Martha and EAC crossed paths again in 2006 as part of our work on protecting fish habitat. One of Martha's greatest skills was the ability to bring people together, despite their differences, and work

towards better environmental practices. She did this with the Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and was a founding member and co-chair of the National Fish Habitat Coordinating Committee, of which EAC is also a member.

Her work with oil and gas companies and the development of the Clean Air Strategic Alliance in Alberta is a lasting example of Martha's ability to work together with broad stakeholders, but to never compromise her integrity. Martha could chair a conference call with 30 participants, and ensure that everyone got to speak, and that the call ended on time. A true miracle. She could also crochet everything from fish to bicycles, and in her last few months crocheted enough creatures for all the children present at her memorial.

Martha is one of the people who built the environmental movement in this country and she did so largely as a volunteer. As more of us find paying jobs in this field it is important to remember the pioneering work of people like Martha and that volunteers across this province and country continue to do much of the heavy lifting. Thank you, Martha.



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Photo taken by: Willy Robinson, GM, iNova Credit Union while on a credit union mentoring program in Northern Uganda.

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2. Mentoring Credit Unions in Malawi in 2007 and this year in Northern Uganda
3. Launching an EnerGuide Loan in September at prime rate to assist with making homes more energy efficient, details in next *Between the Issues*.
4. Encouraging Nova Scotia travel by offering a one night stay at a Nova Scotia Signature Resort with all loans for \$10,000 or more at very competitive rates; full details are on the iNova Credit Union web-site www.inovacreditunion.coop

To contact us call 902-453-1145 or visit us at 6175 Almon St. in the Canada Post building. **It's worth finding iNova Credit Union**

Recent EAC Successes:

- NS announced their intention to release a Coastal Framework plan.
- Launched the Green Renovation Workshop series.
- Released the Green Mobility strategy for NS.
- Launched the Making Tracks active transportation safety education program.

The Ecology Action Centre Needs Your Help



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