

THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

P.O. Box 158, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0

JULY 2011 VOLUME 14 NO. II

number 2 of the 2011 Blue Heron Newsletter. The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society is approaching its 13th full year as a non-profit membership entity championing the responsible stewardship of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. Just as you think stewardship and environmental matters are at rest, items arise that need to be addressed. If the Society was not extent, there would be no collective credible voice to deal with issues that are brought to the Society's attention.

The two current issues that stand out are a proposed expansion of a rock quarry on the New Harris Road south of the Seal Island Bridge and a

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nce again, it is time for Issue very costly proposed 70 slip marina facility at the head of East Bay adjacent to the Ben Eoin Golf course. Minimal public discussion has been aired regarding these two projects. As usual, debates do not arise until people are made aware of the threats to the environment or concerns over personal property surface. More detailed clarification is a must.

> Fortunately, there have been recent community meetings that will lead to hopeful further debate regarding these two potential projects. However, one or two meetings are not sufficient to address the concerns, as much information is lacking with regards to the long term economic and environmental repercussions.

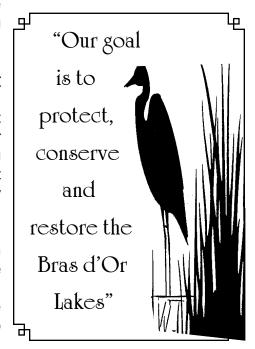
> Weather is still a major concern given increased volatility of weather systems that pass over Cape Breton. Spring 2011 has been an unpredictable one as low pressure systems stalled in the area creating cloud, rainy and windy weather. A presentation by Bill Danielson author of "Cape Breton Weather Watching" at the Society's AGM in April 2011 provided excellent information on changing weather patterns based on the warming of the ocean temperatures that increases Cape Breton's vulnerability of experiencing storm conditions. The dollar value of damage to land and harbors in Cape Breton from storms in the fall of 2010 was in the millions of dollars. Both fisherman and private property owners were storm victims. Excessive rains also

have caused costly siltation and erosion within the Bras d'Or Lakes watershed.

NOTICE

THE ANNUAL GENERAL **MEETING OF THE SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON** SATURDAY, **AUGUST 6, 2011** AT 10:00 A.M. **MASONIC HALL BADDECK**

ALL MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND AS WELL AS INTERESTED CITIZENS WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH THE **FUTURE STEWARDSHIP OF** THE BRAS D'OR LAKES.



NEWS ITEMS:

ANNUAL AGM:

The annual general meeting of the Society was held on April 30, 2011 at St. Michaels Hall in Baddeck. About 25 individuals attended. Both the President's report and that of the Treasurer were presented. William Danielson was the guest speaker. His book "Cape Breton Weather Watching" is an excellent read. Bill resides in South Harbor after retiring from a professor of meteorology at the University of Hartford in Connecticut. His weather knowledge is exemplary and his book a great addition for those interested in the details of local Cape Breton weather phenomena.

NOVA SCOTIA NATURALISTS:

ova Scotia Naturalists held its AGM at the Gaelic College from June 3-5, 2011. Society Board member, Dr. J. V. O'Brien, was instrumental in organizing this very successful gathering. Board member, Tim Lambert, spoke on the Bras d'Or lakes and its water shed. Jim O'Brien has provided a detailed summary if the meeting in this Newsletter.

NEW HARRIS QUARRY:

he Society was informed about the proposed expansion of a rock guarry on the New Harris Road. The existing quarry is to be increased in size. Residents of the New Harris Road were not consulted about this expansion. They are concerned about this quarry expansion with regards to environmental issues and deleterious

actions with regards to blasting,

mining rock from the hillside. A destination. A committee has been meeting was held with the Nova Scotia Department of Environment. (See article by Pate Bates)

BEN EOIN MARINA:

The proposal to construct a 70 berth marina at the head of East Bay adjacent to the Ben Eoin Golf Course property is moving ahead. ECBC has been petitioned for financial assistance by the proponents who also have an interest in the golf course. The shorefront property requires rezoning. An application has been made to the municipality of Cape Breton county for rezoning. Meetings have been held to inform the public about this project. To date little information has been put forward regarding the cost and the long term sustainability of this project. There are concerns about the location of this marina as excavating and dredging of wetlands are involved. (See Pat Bates's Letter to Malcolm Gillis, Planner CBRM)

CELEBRATE THE LAKES:

Asummary of the "Celebrate the Lakes" contest is provided in by Society board member Leah Noble as published in the Victoria Standard. This contest asked for artistic and media submissions by students from schools that were considered to be in the Bras d'Or Lakes watershed. (See Victoria Standard Reprint)

BRAS D'OR LAKES MARKETING STUDY:

Recently, a proposal has been tabled to create a marketing strategy for promoting the Bras d'Or

dust, truck traffic and future accretive Lakes as a recreational boating formed to work with Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation to embark upon a three year marketing campaign that would target both Canadian and American recreational boating markets.

BRAS D'OR LAKES FESTIVAL:

Work still continues under the egis of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation to build a program of festivals for the communities on the shores of the Bras d'Or Lakes. A committee has been selected to work with ECBC to bring this program to fruition. ECBC has been concentrating on festival type promotion to enhance the profile of the Bras d'Or Lakes as a recreational destination. Information may be accessed at www.brasdorlakesfestival.com

2010 SUMMER STUDENT REPORT:

Cociety board member Lynn Baechler has provided a review of the work of the two summer students hired in 2010 to carry our various projects initiated within the Bras d'Or Lakes Watershed. Cumulatively, these project introduce students to various issues as well as build a better knowledge base for better understanding of the complexities of the issues that require on going attention.

2011 SUMMER STUDENTS:

wo students have been engaged through the federal governments 'Summer Student

News Items...cont'd

Employment Program'. Elizabeth MacLellan and Emily MacDonald, both from Sydney NS, have been hired to work in partnership with the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society and The Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve Committee and the Department of Fisheries. A report will follow in the January 2012 Blue Heron. The Society is grateful for this opportunity to uses enthusiastic students to assist in projects concerning knowledge enhancement and stewardship issues.

NATURAL HISTORY SERIES:

Aseries of evening talks on natural history of the area will be held at the Bras d'Or lakes Interpretive Center staring on June 22, 2011. Two more talks with be given on July 27, 2011 and August 22, 2011. The talks are open to the public and start at 7PM, The center is located in Baddeck's historic Old Post Office at 532 Chebucto Street.

MARRIAGE CELEBRATION:

Society board members celebrated the February marriage of Pat Bates, Society chair, and Patricia Fricker, Charge d'Affaires of the Nova Scotia Sydney Legal Aid Office, at a dinner at the Inverary Inn after the April 30, 2011 annual general meeting. Pat has guided the Society since its inception and now has embarked on a new adventure! We wish the both of them the very best.

AGM NOVA SCOTIA NATURALISTS

by J.V. O'Brien, Society Board Member

The Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists now better known as Nature Nova Scotia (NNS) is, like the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society (BSS), a legally listed non-profit corporation and as such has to have by law an Annual General Meeting (AGM).

However unlike the AGMs of many 'non-profits', NNS makes an occasion of their AGM. It is a two day plus week-end with legally required business meeting taking up only a few hours of one day. The rest is spent on biologically relevant indoor presentations and out door field trips etc.

Since it is a federated group its AGMs are held in different locations each year and sometimes in association with other groups and 'non-profits'. Last year's (2010) NNS AGM in Sherbrooke was held in association with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and the St. Mary's River Association.

Prior to that (2010) meeting, members of the NNS board had suggested to me since an NNS AGM not been held in Cape Breton for some years and I was a BSS board member I might consider organizing the 2011 NNS AGM in the Baddeck area in association with the BSS. This I agreed to do provided the BSS board also agreed. It did and also agreed also agreed to sponsor two students for the NNS meeting. Two such post graduate students, Molly Simon BSc from Antigonish and Jennifer MacPhee BSc from Sydney were chosen and attended the meeting.

After looking around for a suitable location at the suggestion of my neighbour Dan Banks I contacted the Gaelic College in St.Anne's Bay.

It turned out to be ideal for such a meeting with accommodation, meals, and all the necessary facilities at a remarkably good price. To top it Gail Montgomery and the rest of College staff did an excellent job; they were a credit to the College and Cape Breton.

The week end opened on Friday evening June 3rd with a reception enhanced by the traditional music played by Otis Tomas and Rocky Shore.

On Saturday morning the day started with a pre-breakfast birder spotting outing lead by Dave Harris. After breakfast the day started with four in-house presentations starting with Don Anderson's on CB Dragon Flies. This was followed by Fenton Isenor on CB's geology, James Bridgland on the Highland's National Park and last but not least Bruce Hatcher the Bras d'Or Lakes.

In the afternoon there were field trips to Uisge Bann Falls lead by botanist Sharon Sneddon, to Meadow Rd. by birder Bev Brett, and separately to another Meadow Rd destination to a sadly rare remnant of Acadian Forest by Bob Bancroft and Mary Ann Wilson and by Dave McCorquodale in the College grounds identifying insects.

After the Banquet in the evening Bob Bancroft addressed the thorny Coyote issue. Though Astronomer Tim Donovan had hauled his telescope from Middle River for the occasion sadly the weather did not co-operate on either night. The foggy night though did not deter the 'owlers' lead by ornithologist and bird photographer Dr. Richard Stern.

On Sunday morning BSS board member Tim Lambert made a fascinating presentation on rising water levels. This was followed by the NNS annual business meeting. In the afternoon a large group went

AGM Nova Scotia Naturalists...cont'd

on a Puffin Tour trip to the Bird Islands and in Whycocomagh on their way back to the mainland a few people broke their journey and joined John Gillis on a local 'walk in the woods'.

As the organizer my job was made easier by the fact that all but two one of the presenters and field trip leaders turned up and the ones who couldn't gave me ample warning. make; not bad. And last but not least the help obtained from the NNS executive, President Bob Bancroft, Secretary Doug Linzey, Treasurer Jean Gibson Collins and Nature Canada representative Joan Czapaly.

At the meeting on behalf of Nature Canada board representative Joan Czapaly presented Bob Bancroft with the Pimlott Prize in recognition of the work he has done over the years for the Natural World in Nova Scotia.

SUMMER STUDENT PROJECTS 2010: A REVIEW

By Lynn Baechler, Society Board Member

Our project was attempting to answer a question: "Is the water quality in the Skye River more dependent on land use or underlying geology".

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society carried out a preliminary water quality monitoring project in the Skye River watershed between June 28 and August 19, 2010.

Project Description:

The Skye River watershed covers approximately 111 km² of the 3566 km² Bras d'Or Lake watershed. The

largest tributary (Indian Brook) flows into the Skye River within 2 km of the river mouth (deltaic environment in the Bras d'Or Lake).

The main branch of the Skye River watershed is a relatively well populated rural area, with agriculture being the prime land use. Four large dairy farms are located in the main branch Skye River watershed. The Indian River branch is relatively unpopulated with forestry being the main land use.

We determined the watershed areas for the 2 branches of the Skye River to be 48.3 km² for the Indian River branch and 62.8 km² For the Skye River branch. The Skye River watershed is underlain by at least 13 mapped bedrock units. Portions of the watershed are covered in thick surficial deposits (glacial sand and gravel deposits).

Activities:

Each of the 8 monitoring sites was visited at least 6 times. Field Conductivity and temperature were collected with a YSI 30 conductivity meter. Turbidity was measured using a turbidity meter. Discharge estimates were calculated using the cross sectional area x velocity method. During the latter half of the monitoring period samples were collected for determination of PO4, SO4, NO3-N, color, turbidity and TSS using a portable HACH kit. Bacteria samples were submitted to Maxxam Analytics in Sydney. The lab assisted us with costs. J. Foulds, aquatic biologist, accompanied the student in the field one day and they described the aquatic habitat at several of the monitoring stations. The student interviewed several

Ine student interviewed several longtime residents of the Skye River watershed, including the late Hugh Austin. The interviews were very informative, and showed the Skye River branch to have been quite different in the past. The river was used for running

logs to Whycocomagh Bay (in the spring), and was a favourite spot for trout fishing. A new publication "Glimpses" was used to become familiar with the historical aspects of the area.

Findings:

- The Skye River branch became turbid (dirty) after heavy rainfall events.
- The Skye River branch has abundant growth of "whitewater crowfoot" in its channel, all the way up to its headwater area. Photographs show this plant growth was not present in the channel 10 years ago (Sta S-1).
- Fecal bacteria counts are relatively low in headwaters of Skye and Indian branches (very low in Indian Branch headwaters).
- Fecal bacteria counts were higher in the Skye branch, especially at Sta S-2.
- Indian Branch has a population of trout (fishers frequent at Sta I-3).
- The relatively 'clean' water flowing from the Indian branch serves to dilute the higher bacteria concentrations from the 'Skye' branch.
- Except at the headwater stations, conductivity values reflect the dilution effects of precipitation events on the water chemistry in the Syke and Indian branches.
- The underlying bedrock in the Indian branch is mainly resistant metamorphic rocks that are not easily eroded, creating deeply incised channels and waterfalls. The geology underlying the Skye branch consists of more easily eroded bedrock with extensive unconsolidated deposits creating fertile agricultural land. Increases in stream velocities due to precipitation events subject the stream banks to erosion, resulting

Summer Student Projects 2010: A Reivew...cont'd

in turbidity in the water column.

- The Skye branch is heavily farmed, with a population of dairy cattle. Topography near the river channel is gentle.
- On the other hand, the Indian branch is more forested with steeper slopes, and less agriculture in the watershed.

Conclusions:

Based on this very preliminary summer project, we found that both the underlying geology and the land use practices contribute to the water quality in the Skye River.

Recommendations:

Further work should be done to document changes in the Skye branch river channel. Perhaps this could be carried out by local watershed group.

SUMMER STUDENT LOCATED AT HIGHLAND VILLAGE, IONA

The student constructed an index of the items published in the Blue Heron.

He assisted the Highland Village staff with a similar project. He made a short video of the Bras d'Or Lake as he saw it. With staff from the Highland Village Museum he collected several archived pictures in the Grand Narrows area, and attempted to re-photograph them in the present and determine shoreline changes. This was impossible however due to the significant tree growth, which obstructed view planes.

2011 SUMMER STUDENT PROFILE: EMILY MACDONALD

My name is Emily MacDonald; am currently undertaking a M.Sc. program from Ulster University of Northern Ireland. As a graduate student studying Coastal Zone Management and a Cape Breton girl who grew up next to the Bras d'Or Lake. I could not ask for a more fitting summer job than with the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association (www.BLBRA.ca). As the BLBRA eagerly anticipates the official designation of 'Man and Biosphere' (MAB) from the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) preparation work is well under way to ensure the whole island will be made aware of this unique opportunity. My role over the next eight weeks will cover a variety of tasks ranging from developing educational outreach material, administrative assignments, and collaborating with groups around the watershed in delivering art shows and plays produced by school aged children living around the lake.

2011 SUMMER STUDENT PROFILE: ELIZABETH MACLELLAN

y name is Elizabeth MacLellan. I was hired as a summer student by Bras d'Or Stewardship Society. Over the past month, this has entailed collaboration with Department of Fisheries and Oceans in working on a project to improve life for oysters in Bras d'Or Lakes. We are conducting fieldwork for further research of MSX disease through cultivation and collection of oysters, as well as monitoring green crab predation at or near three oyster sanctuaries in the Bras d'Or. I am very grateful for the experience the Stewardship Society has provided me and am excited to be involved in research that could potentially have an economic benefit for my home, Cape Breton.

QUARRIES: MUST DEVELOPMENT NEGATE THE ENVIRONMENT?

By Pat Bates, Chairman

he Bras d'Or Lake Stewardship Society (BSS) frequently finds itself playing a determining role in whether development projects proceed or not. The Society's primary purpose, if it need be restated, is "Conservation, Protection and Restoration of The Bras d'Or Lake." Yet, like most citizens, we understand the need for development of the economy, usually manifested in new projects, improvement to our infrastructure, including roads, buildings and bridges necessitating paving, cement plants and quarries for aggregate.

Such is the case for expansion of the long established sand and gravel pit on the New Haven Road, Victoria County, to Quarry status. The new classification means that blasting will now become part of the operation, a likelihood of increased traffic in an area adjacent to a camp for Boy Scouts and there exists potential for higher levels of run-off into the Lake. Officials for BSS met on two occasions with staff for the Dept. of Environment including one meeting attended by residents of the New Harris Road area. Some of the concerns of the residents include risk to residential water supply from blasting, scarification of elevated land from excavation and damage to local roadway and bridge from high levels of heavy truck traffic.

Quarries: Must Development Negate The Environment..cont'd

BSS officials raised the spectre of risk of higher levels of sedimentation and other contaminants flowing into the Lake because of the absence of a sufficient number and capacity of settling ponds. In addition, when elevation of the Kelly's Mountain lands are considered, current capacity of culverting appears inadequate or non-functioning, risking over-road type flooding at even greater rates with increased activity levels.

Officials were considerate in listening to all the concerns expressed and were expected to weigh the issues in determining if the requested permit would be granted. In the event the necessary permitting is to be granted, it is hoped that project proponents will be obliged to amend project plans to accommodate public concerns.

THE HIGHWAY IS A PATH OF LIFE: A CLEAN RUNNING BROOK SUSTAINS LIFE.

By Mabel MacEachern, Board Member and home owner in Irish Vale.

le all enjoy the great pleasure $oldsymbol{\mathsf{V}}$ of driving our vehicles on new beautifully constructed highways or any road way. This major reconstruction job took place between June and December of 2010. Like most everything there are consequences for someone or something when natural habitats are inhibited. In this case when this major road construction was started on Middle Cape Hill and through Irish Vale one brook in particular, MacLean's Brook at the bottom of middle cape was greatly disturbed. Using best management practices

to control run off sediment is an important component in construction site design. This company Dexter Construction "failed the test until they were reminded of their responsibilities."

Sediment is produced when soil partials are eroded from the land. Signs of runoff pollution during road construction include obvious changes in streams downstream from the construction such as; muddy water heading for in this case the Bras d'Or Lakes.

Early in the construction phase I checked the brook and to my horror the water looked like pure mud and running into the lakes. I called the chair of the Bras d'or stewardship, Pat Bates, to report this and to inquire how this sediment could be kept from entering the lakes. Pat immediately went into action and spoke with Sharon Munroe at the Department of Environment, two days later I checked the brook again and now there was a salt water berm installed at the mouth of the brook. The water in the brook was still looking like mud but there was no longer any sign of sediment entering the lake.

Now, Mother Nature often likes to show who is boss and in doing so the material used in that berm was on the shore on more than one occasion but the construction Co. was diligent and they kept replacing it until the water began to run clear in the brook.

In late November I checked the brook the water was clear but the build up of sediment on rocks and other material in the brook was very heavy. In mid June I walked most of the brook between the highway and the shore. There are great improvements but the pools still show heavy signs of siltation.

Overall I feel it's safe to say we the general public are very happy with the newly constructed highway.

I personally am pleased with the effort shown by the Construction Company, once reminded, to protect the lake even though MacLean's brook is still showing lingering signs of siltation.

I live very near MacLean's brook and it has been a source of enjoyment from the quiet peacefulness of this brook, to summer cottage people who use the water for a variety of reasons to my children and now grandchildren being able to catch smelt and speckled trout.

Will there be speckled trout this year I doubt it but I will keep checking.

EVOLUTION OF TRANSPORTATION IN THE BRAS D'OR WATERSHED

By David Gunn, Society Board Member

Transportation in the Bras d'Or watershed has undergone dramatic changes over the last 50 years.

Until the 1950's there was regularly scheduled steam ship service on the Lake. The last vessel to operate was the SS Lakeview. Her predecessor was the SS Marion.

The Lakeview left Sydney Monday, Wednesday and Friday and proceeded to Whycocomagh where it spent the night. She left Whycocomagh Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday for Sydney. Enroute the ship stopped at Government wharves located at Ross Ferry, Boularderie, Big Harbour and Baddeck.

This service carried freight and passengers as well as occasional livestock. The Lakeview was equipped with the classic steam whistle which allowed people on shore to mark her passage.

Evolution of Transportation in the Bras d'Or Watershed...cont'd

The Lake was also well served by rail – The Inter Colonial Railroad was opened in 1886. It served a number of lake side towns, Orangedale, Alba, Estmere, McKinnons Harbour, Iona, Grand Narrows, Christmas Island, Bigbeach, Shenacadie, Beaver Cove and Boisdale. The Inter Colonial (later Canadian National) offered good service.

In 1953 there were three passenger trains each way....six days a week.

The night train carried sleeping cars between Sydney, Halifax and St. John. The day train offered a parlour car and food service. The trains had railway Post Office cars. Mail was sorted enroute. Mail a letter to Montreal at Orangedale on the platform before the evening train and it would be in Montreal the day after next in less than 48 hours.

Major stations such as Orangedale sold thousands of money orders since men did not have checking accounts received and accepted express, less than a carload.

Movements and carloads: Orangedale was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Order a canoe from Chestnut's Fredericton, it came on the train. In 1960 an O'Day sailboat ordered from Toronto came on the train. Fresh oysters were shipped from Orangedale to Montreal. People arrived at these stations by boat. A John MacLean ran a ferry service from Malagawatch to Orangedale early in the last century.

With the coming of good roads and the automobile the steamer and the railway services disappeared - the steamer service disappeared after the war - the railway service was gradually abandoned. The Orangedale station closed in 1980's and is now a museum.

Mr. Malcolm Gillis

Planning Dept.

Cape Breton Regional Municipality

Sent by e-mail to: mggllis@cbrm.ns.ca

Dear Mr. Gillis:

Subject: Proposed Ben Eoin Marina

The Bras d'Or Lake d'Or Stewardship Society has consulted and been consulted on the proposed establishment of the subject project.

While we can't ignore the potential economic benefits of the project, the two areas of specific interest to the Society are: (a) the importance of an additional sewage pump-out station, and (b) by converse, the destruction of a Barachois to enable the project to proceed.

At the time of the Public Open House, May 4th (?), the Society neither publically objected nor supported the initiative as several important pieces of information were absent: one, a clear picture of the scope of the environmental review of which the UINR piece had not been completed, and second, the formal or official position of the N.S. Dept. of Natural Resources in respect to the proposal. The matter of re-zoning is a less important issue for the Bras d'Or Lake Stewardship Society. The position of BSS generally is if there are no long-term damages to the environmental integrity of the Lake and Lakeshore, we do not object to projects. However, in the case of the Ben Eoin Marina, we have to note the concerns expressed by some of the full-time residents of the area.

We understand the reasoning for the selection of the proposed site and it would appear that the adjacent shoreline has similar physical characteristics also requiring inland excavation to create a sheltered harbor site. Absent from the discussion to date is the compensation by the project proponents enabling creation of an alternate Barachois. This is not a new concept but an option believed, considered and implemented in other jurisdictions enabling authorities to approve the projects as originally designed.

It is important to find the right balance in considering all the impacting factors related to project approval. Hence the importance of a broad-based environmental review, including public forms or hearings. Ben Eoin has become the site for a succession of projects all considered as discrete or individual initiatives. There are hints of more projects being contemplated. It may be important to have a "time out" to examine the exceptional attractiveness of the community and set out a broader framework within which all existing and future projects and residents can find consensus.

Respectfully yours,

P. J. (Pat) Bates, Chairman Bras d'Or Lake d'Or Stewardship Society

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Bras d'Or Watch

to report any observed acts, incidents and violations that threaten the integrity of Bras d'Or Lakes please call:

1 800 565 1633

Our Email: stewardship@baddeck.com

2011

<u>BRAS</u>	<u>D'(</u>	<u> </u>	<u>LEWA</u>	<u>RDSHIP SOCIETY</u>
MEMBER FAMILY CONTRIBUTOR SUPPORTER LIFETIME MEMBER Mail check or money order alon		\$15.00 \$25.00 \$50.00 \$100.00 \$500.00	Name Address	☐ Yes, I am in favour of conserving and restoring the Bras d'Or Lake and watershed through responsible stewardship.
and address to: Bras d'Or Stewardship Society P.O. Box 158 Baddeck, Nova Scotia, B0E 1B0		Phone Fax	e-mail	