

Outdoors

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

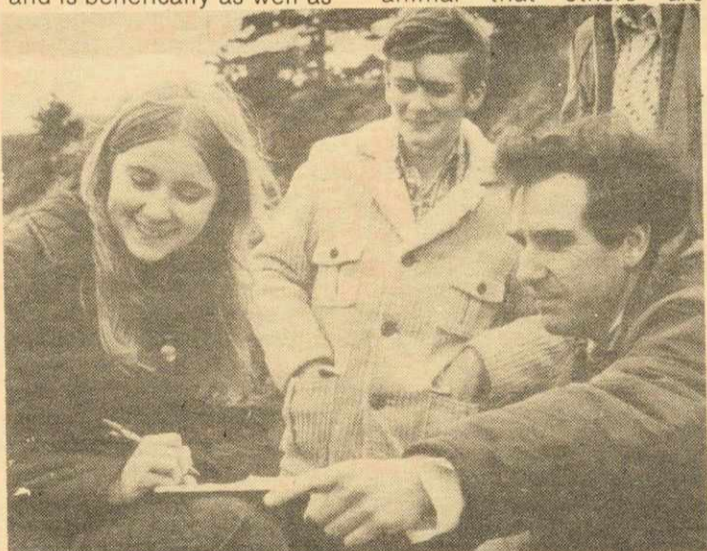
by Alexia Barnes and Kevin Moore

"Thousands of naturalists, historians, archeologists, and other specialists are engaged in the work or revealing ... something of the beauty and wonder, the inspiration and spiritual meaning that lie behind what the visitor can with his senses perceive."

FREEMAN TILDEN

Outdoor education is a general term used by biologist and athletes alike. It is the study of nature as well as the pleasure and skill of orienteering. It is the observation of stars and the physical conditioning of skiing. If it occurs outdoors and is beneficially as well as

educational then we'll include it. For the purpose of this article, the valuable portion of this topic which is usually covered by physical education, will not be included. Although snowshoeing, kayaking, and camping are some of the more important aspects of modern living, this article will concentrate on the philosophy of the process of informing the public on the natural aspect of the outdoors.



There are few people who can experience the beauty and the hold of the Long Range Mountains of Newfoundland, Cape Split of Nova Scotia, and the "Flowerpots" of New Brunswick without complete wonderment. But knowledge of how they were formed and what they consist of doesn't distract from their beauty. Instead the feeling that you hold that little bit of knowledge enables you to almost grasp an understanding of their processes; multiples your feelings tenfold.

The feeling of sitting in a

cave with thousands of bats above you isn't diminished by knowing that there are only three species total. It's similar to the alienation of being new in a class, judo or a club but as you slowly grow to know your fellow members you feel more at home. The general knowledge necessary to start of this enlightenment isn't detailed but many stay clear of it because of the long scientific names associated with sauna and the fine distinctions in rock types. This is a self-defeating attitude because common names are the ones used most. And these are far better than no names. As long as you keep in mind that the animal that you are calling a mask shrew is the same animal that others are

calling the common shrew, the cinereus shrew, Musaraigne cendree and "dat little brown thing that lives in me barn." It's known to millions simply as **Sorex cinereus**. But still any name is better than none, as long as it's the right name. To know that Peggy's Cove is granite, is all that's necessary without going into what granite composition type it is. The transferring of this general knowledge is easier than many realize, especially with children. Show them lambkill and tell them it's poisonous to domestic sheep and it will remain in their minds. Pick up winter moose droppings and crush it in your hands to show it's only sawdust and reflect their winter food and that too will stay. Although it can be done inside, an outdoor environment is really necessary for association.

Unfortunately most of our teachers are taught in terms of limits, not only in education but their own majors as well. Since our elementary and junior high

school science teachers can have majors from any number of sciences then unless it is a personal hobby, how much outdoor will be passed on by a physics or chemistry major. Not praising biology as being any better as a case example is standard BIO. 2000 would prove a few years ago, all lab demonstrators were showing the students the life cycle of rock tripe and the interior of a black pine needle but when these demonstrators; all graduate and doctorate students, were asked to go into the field to obtain actual plants so they could be viewed personally, instead of drawings, all admitted that they couldn't identify them. Of course these species were not their speciality and if we had asked them of some member of Sarcomastigophora or Phaeophycophyta then we would have received an answer. But yet these are the biology courses that prospective teachers are taking preparing them to teach. To know the details of conjugation, and parthenogenesis are important but it is assumed that personal interest will take the entire field of natural science into account.

People, particularly children, have to be reached. A more encompassing field of study is necessary for teachers at all levels. Fortunately, this feeling of "total awareness" is spreading in the schools system. In example, for the grade ten level biology, a new Environmental Studies Series has been developed by the Science Section of the Nova Scotia Museum, manuals containing associated information and experiments on varying habitats from roadside ponds to pastures, from the shore to the bog, has been developed. Another high school, in Hants County, is doing a detailed study of Annapolis Valley.

But those in the Halifax area, especially on peninsula Halifax, may have a feeling that we haven't the proper surroundings for outdoor study. Halifax has many spots of open areas, and we are known as the "City of Trees". Also in the center of Halifax is located the Nova Scotia Museum. In the past at the old Nova Scotia Museum of Science of Spring Garden Road, held a variety of both indoor and outdoor classes that possessed unusual personal quality. Although an effort was made to recapture the informality, it was lost due to the move made to a new location on Summer Street and also the loss "of Science" from its name. With the new facilities, especially space, the classes developed into a formal class-type structure.

"Natural history is personal and informal, the school-like false "nature study" approach too often defeats our purpose, should be strictly avoided." (Pierre Tashereau, Former Curator of Botany, Nova Scotia Museum)

For the Halifax area, the Museum is still the best source of natural science. A small pamphlet entitled **Discover the Nova Scotia**

Museum 1974/1975 is available on loan. Note that its type of interpretation is still retarded to the **World In a Marsh** variety.

Although children are easier to reach especially with their untroddden imagination, it is still important to convince adults. They're the ones who control things at the present time. Try to tell a fisherman something about the sea, a lumberman about the woods. In closing, keep in mind these topics given to me by students of the Spryfield Day Camp on things that they wanted to see and work with personally because they never had a chance in school. Especially note the girl's choices, no stereotypes here. Kathleen Pace, snakes and turtles; Natalie Foley, spider webs; Brian Poole, ants; Marlene Gallagher, mice and snakes; Christopher Wesley, rocks; Andrea Belair, flowers and leaves; Sandra Fougere, ants and shells.

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