Our Wildlife

News from the Wildlife Division

Department of Environment & Conservation
Natural Heritage Branch

Wolf research in Labrador

Text and photos by Isabelle Schmelzer

You know you're a biologist

when you get excited about a new pair of rubber boots: neoprene, lightweight and insulated, in case you're similarly inclined, but I digress. On this occasion, I was also looking forward to where these boots would take me in the coming weeks.

Along with colleague Shannon Crowley and local trapper Broderick Barney, we were about to initiate a two week live-trapping program for wolves as part of a larger study on the relationship between wolves, moose and caribou in central Labrador. Preparations had been ongoing for several months. With the help of trappers and conservation officers from the Island, we'd amassed a respectable pile of "problem" beaver carcasses, a favorite food of wolves. We'd plied biologists from Ontario and Alberta using similar methods with questions regarding their trap preferences and modifications, and ordered the supplies we'd need from a salt-of the-earth Texan with an international reputation for providing live capture equipment for researchers.

We'd even pored over catalogues of lures (yes, these exist!) with curious names such as "predator delight" and "k9triple take" (but which ubiquitously emitted a foul smell to our less discerning noses).

Now the time had come to put some of our knowledge into practice.

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As we made our way to Goose Bay,

I imagined that foxes, ravens, jays and wolves, getting a whiff of the perfume of semi-frozen carcasses and lures the truck was no doubt emitting on an unseasonably warm fall day, would treat the scent with the same enthusiasm as children greeting an ice cream truck on a summer's evening.

Our objective was to live trap up to four wolves from different packs resident within the area year-round, and to fit them with a radio collar containing a GPS sensor which collected a "fix" (or a location) every two hours and sent it to a satellite to be retrieved from the laptop of an eager biologist. A relocation interval of this frequency allows biologists to closely track the movements of the collared wolf and their packs, and to identify clusters of locations that may be associated with kills.

Research has shown that wolves, normally consummate travelers, spend one to two days within the same area after killing large prey such as moose. By identifying these clusters and visiting them in the field, biologists can learn about how frequently wolves kill large prey, and about the types of prey wolves prefer — perhaps they are choosing older or younger animals rather than those in their prime, for example.

Wolves account for 60% of the mortality in adult caribou of the *Threatened* non-migratory forest-dwelling populations. However, as moose are much larger, they are preferred by wolves, and may encourage wolf territories being established in a given area. Other studies have shown that when moose numbers exceed one per 10 km^2, survival of adults and recruitment of young caribou into the population can be compromised.

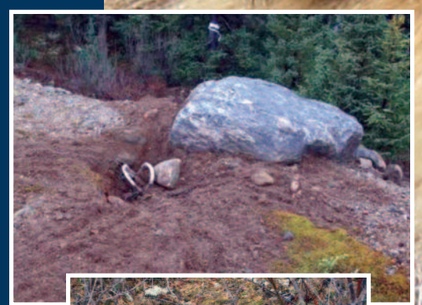
In recent years, moose have been expanding their ranges in Labrador, and since timber removal results in succession of forest vegetation that is attractive to moose, it is possible that densities may increase further in the Goose Bay area. In addition, large groups of migratory caribou from the George River herd have also spent winters within the areas used year-round by sedentary caribou and wolves over the past 10 years, and this may also increase wolf densities in the area, to the detriment of resident caribou. By studying the daily movements, territory size, and hunting patterns of wolves in conjunction with our caribou monitoring program, we hope to gain information about the dynamics of the wolf-caribou-moose relationship in central Labrador.

Day 9 of living the modern trapper's life:

I'm up at 4:30, am subsisting on crackers and coffee, have no idea what day of the week it is, and spend 15 hours each day driving bone-jarring roads (flat tire count: three) and checking and resetting our 25 traps. I have gained enormous respect for trappers who lugged their traps and travelled this same route on foot for many months each fall, and for the art of trapping itself. Wolves are highly intelligent and possess a sense of smell so acute that even something we might consider minor, like touching a trap with bare hands rather than gloved ones, would easily be detected by them and alert them to the trap's presence. On a revisit to a trap set at a rock recently marked by a large wolf, we discovered that the wolf had indeed returned—and had expertly dug out the trap (which had been fully concealed) without setting it off, as if to say "you're going to have to do better than that."

Nonetheless, we are successful in making two captures, and the experience of handling these impressive animals is one I'll not soon forget. In order to make the experience safer for wolves, we have chosen not to use anesthetic unless absolutely necessary, as this may place the wolf at risk during recovery. Obviously live handling an animal capable of hunting large prey needs to be done carefully, and we do so methodically as a team, using a series of poles, nooses, hobbles, and a muzzle. Working quickly and quietly to reduce stress on the wolf, we measure and weigh the animal, assessing age, gender and physical condition. After fitting the animal with an ear tag and radio collar, it is released back into the wild. As I watch it streak back into the forest, I look forward to getting to know this animal by tracking its movements and learning more about wolf behaviour.

Left: Wildlife Division senior biologist for Labrador, Shannon Crowley, prepares live traps for wolves. Wolves are highly sensitive to smell and trapping them is a tricky process. Below, left: traps are baited with beaver carcasses and concealed. Below, right: up close and personal with a trapped wolf.



Rare plants, irate bears, angry black flies

Labrador Botanical Survey

Text and photos by Aare Voitk

The small aircraft thrummed as its twin engines drew us through the air. Signs of human influence on the land faded quickly as we drew away from Goose Bay. Roads and tracks, once so bold and stark, dwindled to nothingness, swallowed up by a patchwork of green conifers, bluish wetlands, and bare rock. The alien landscape unfolding beneath us was breathtaking in its desolate beauty. Thanks to science, this was my first-ever trip to Labrador.

Since 2007 a botanical survey has been undertaken in Labrador every summer by the Department of Environment and Conservation's Wildlife Division. These surveys serve to expand the knowledge of the abundance, habitat needs and distribution patterns of the Labrador flora, and create a baseline of information that allows the Wildlife Division to assign ranks for plants based on their rarity in Labrador. The data informs decision making during the planning stages of large infrastructural development projects such as the Lower Churchill hydro development or the Trans-Labrador Highway, so one can see that it is not, as has been suggested, simply a good excuse to go gallivanting about countryside, mooning at the scenery.

This past summer was no exception and a study was carried out in cooperation with the Torngat Secretariat. Joan Anderson, community development officer/tourism coordinator of Makkovik, expressed interest in more information about her community, and it was decided the 2010 survey would take place in and near Makkovik, Labrador.

The survey team comprised of Claudia Hanel, botanist for the Wildlife Division; Aare Voitk (your humble scrivener), assistant botanist with the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre (AC CDC); and John McCarthy, a lichenologist working for the AC CDC as well.

The week of July 29 - Aug. 4, 2010 was spent surveying as many sites in and around Makkovik as possible. Five main areas were identified: Makkovik River, Dunn Island, Kidlialuit Island, Benedict Hills, and in and around Makkovik itself. Each site was carefully chosen to maximize the habitat variability between the sites based on geology, hydrology, and vegetative type.

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As many varied habitats as possible were sampled within the sites to document the widest range of flora present in the area.

Most mornings started with a boat ride to our survey site. As we quickly found out, the suitability of a landing spot was dependant on more than just the geology and morphology of the site: other dangers lurked as well.

One fine morning while seeking a mooring point near the Benedict Hills, our guide, Cyril Lane, cut the throttle and started scanning the coastline. We scientists aboard started debating various landing spots, only to watch Cyril reach for his gun. We quickly shut up: his boat, his decision. He looked at us, faintly amused, and just pointed at the beach to the spot where we had wanted to put in. Three scientists raised their binoculars to eye level, and saw an irate mother black bear with her cubs. Locals 1, Scientists 0.

From the five main sites, chosen for their uniqueness and habitat diversity, 77 stations were sampled. This was accomplished by physically walking the sites, with more emphasis placed on zones of habitat change and convergence. Walking a site invariably meant hiking up something; that is, unless we weren't wading through something, usually a bog. When time and black flies allowed, complete habitat descriptions were conducted, which included bedrock type, soil consistency and moisture, exposure and altitude.

Common plants were simply listed; plants that were either rare or lacking in sufficient knowledge to permit ranking were photographed, and/or harvested for herbarium samples. Collected plants were sorted and pressed at the end of the day, and thus preserved until they could be identified and properly mounted on herbarium sheets for future reference.

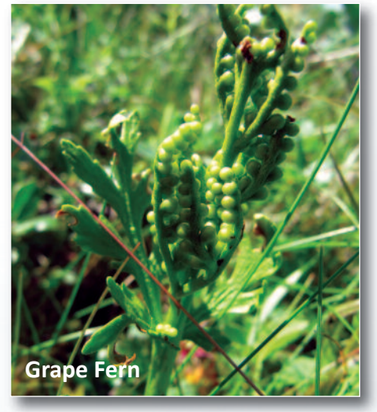
Some plants of note were the Snowy Gentian (*Gentiana nivalis*), a member of the Mare's Tail family (Hippuris sp.) and a lonely Lance-leaved Grape Fern (Botrychium sp.). The collections included common types of edible plants, such as Plumboys (*Rubus arcticus*) and Bakeapples (*Rubus chamaemorus*), as well as carnivorous plants feeding on insects, such as the Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) or Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*).

Many flowers were aesthetically pleasing, like the sultry River Beauty (*Chamerion latifolium)*, or the Bird's Eye Primrose (*Primula laurentiana*), or had a peculiar shape, such as the Elephant Head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*).

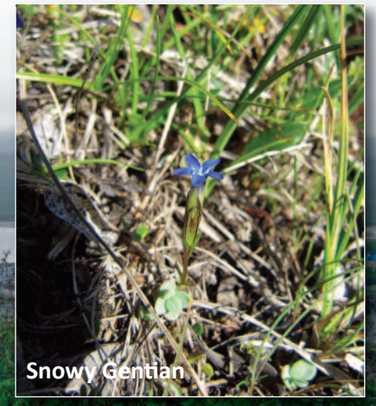
After a week of surveying, a total of 343 plant specimens were collected and pressed, and an additional 550 plant observations were recorded, mostly of species known to be relatively common in Labrador.

So ended my first foray into Labrador. Beautiful, windy, chilly in August, with more black flies than you can shake a stick at, more black flies than grains of sand in a desert, in fact, more black flies than you can fit in your mouth (or would want to). But above all else, beautiful.

This study was made possible by the generous assistance of the Torngat Secretariat and their staff, as well as the proactive interest of the Makkovik community development officer, Joan Anderson. The invaluable information gathered will be added to the Provincial Plant Database, and will also be shared with the people of the community in the form of guide-books or brochures for tourists and residents.



Grape Fern



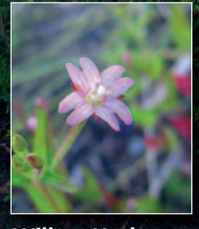
Snowy Gentian

Bakeapple

River Beauty

Mare's Tail

Round-leaved Sundew



Willow Herb

Elephant Head

Common Butterwort

Plumboy

Bird's Eye Primrose

Tradition meets science in winter creel surveys

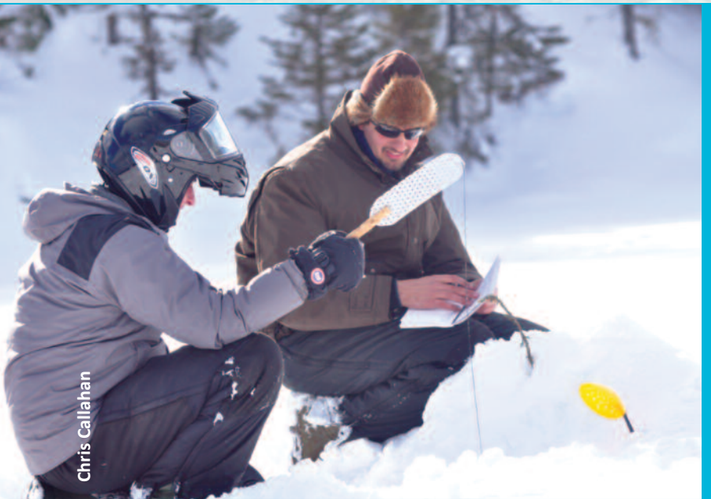
Living in Newfoundland and Labrador provides the outdoor enthusiast with one of winter's most enjoyable outdoor sporting events: ice fishing. Like "rabbit catching," ice fishing is a rite of passage for many Newfoundland and Labrador youth. Nothing is quite comparable for both young and old as boring the first hole of the season, dropping a line, and waiting for that first tug. The displeasure of a numb nose, toes, and fingers is quickly abated with the eruption of a plump brook trout through an ice-glazed fishing hole.

Don Keefe

By Don Keefe and Karen Rashleigh

Don Keefe

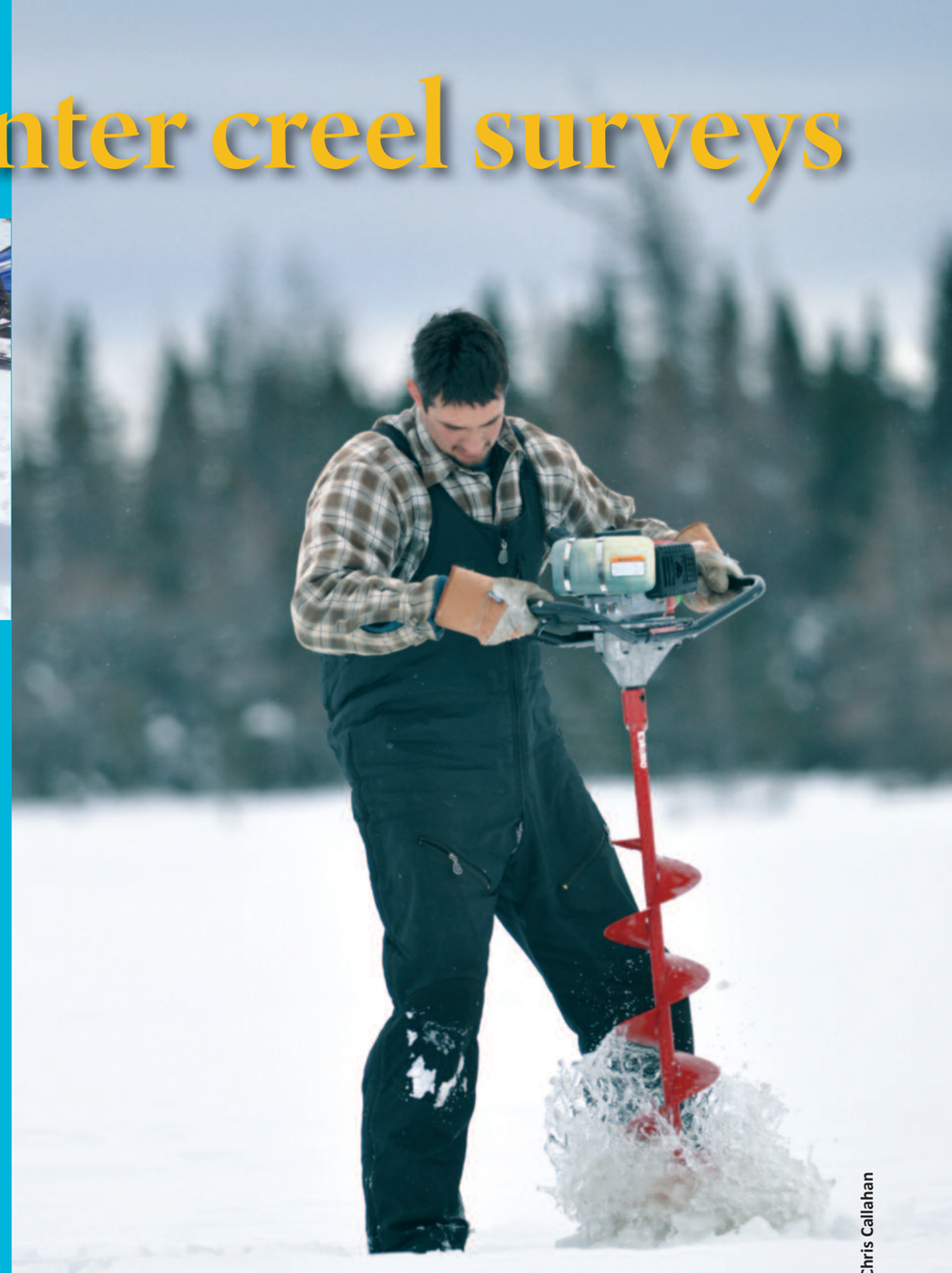
While management of the inland fish resource is under the authority of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Wildlife Division contributes to the management process through licencing and annual research and monitoring initiatives. Resident anglers can do their part to assist in the management of this culturally and economically significant activity through their active participation in ice-fishing surveys designed by managers and scientists of the Wildlife Division. These surveys are known throughout scientific literature as "creel surveys." The term "creel" historically refers to a woven basket in which anglers placed their catch. During patrols, game wardens would ask anglers if they could inspect their creel baskets.



Chris Callahan

Winter creel surveys conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador follow a roving survey design. This is an on-site intercept method whereby agents travel a predetermined route, typically comprised of multiple lakes within a watershed, and survey anglers that are actively fishing. Interview questions are designed to obtain information regarding the number of anglers in a party, number of rods used, the length of time fished, and the number of fish kept and released by species. This information is used to model fishery effects such as effort, catch rate, and harvest for various recreational fish species. Additionally, these surveys provide relevant biological information from the angled catch, such as fish lengths and weights. Upon completion of the survey, each angler receives a cooperating angler lure (or spinner) to thank them for their time and support.

Angling surveys complement other initiatives underway regarding recreational fishery management throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and provide resource users with an opportunity for direct input into the management and conservation of inland fish species. Continued Page 6



Chris Callahan

Ice-fishing is a great way to introduce kids to outdoor pursuits. Top photos: Liam Keefe waits patiently, then displays a great catch with Terryn Reardon and Jacob Keefe. Left: Wildlife Division technician Mark Young and ecologist Don Keefe prepare to interview anglers during the annual creel survey. Above: Don gets ready for a day's fishing.

FISHING FACTS

• An estimated 132,000 residents of Newfoundland and Labrador participate in the recreational fishery each year and spend nearly 14 days per year participating in fishing-related activities. Direct expenditures attributable to recreational fishing in Newfoundland and Labrador amount to $51.3 million annually. (Source: 2005 Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada)

• There are over 25 freshwater fish species in Newfoundland and Labrador. Brook trout have an average lifespan of approximately 8 years, while lake trout may live to more than 40 years old. Rainbow trout and brown trout were introduced to insular Newfoundland in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

• The Wildlife Division has been instrumental in the development of the following special trout management areas:
- Indian Bay Watershed
- Middle Brook Watershed
- Eagle Plateau Management Zone
- Churchill River Drainage Basin Watershed (Labrador West)

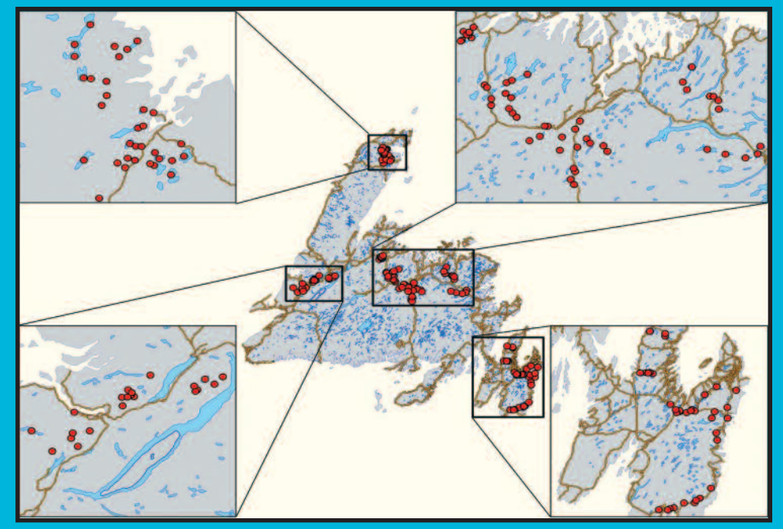
• Most recently, recommendations intended to improve the brook trout fishery on the Jonathans Brook Watershed in central Newfoundland were made after considerable research by the province in conjunction with public consultations.


Chris Callahan


Don Keefe


Chris Callahan

Winter creel surveys will take place in various regions of Newfoundland and Labrador throughout the 2011 ice-fishing season. These surveys will be conducted by Wildlife Division staff, as well as Conservation Officers from the Department of Natural Resources. Information on season and bag limits for winter angling is available in DFO's online Anglers Guide at http://www.nfl.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/e0005656 .



Above: Creel route locations throughout insular Newfoundland. If you have any questions or comments regarding inland fisheries research and management in Newfoundland and Labrador, please contact the Wildlife Division at (709) 637-2112/2022 or visit: http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/index.html

Top left photo: Wildlife technician Mark Young surveys anglers on Johnsons Pond in western Newfoundland. Centre and bottom: Measuring the angled catch. Below: Don Faulkner and son Brandon fishing on Lower Jonathan's Pond in central Newfoundland.


Chris Murley

Preserving NL's turr hunting tradition

Newfoundland and Labrador is the only area in North America where murres, known locally as turrs, can be legally harvested by non-Aboriginal people. This is due to the great importance of murres to the province, which was recognized following Confederation with Canada. In fact, murres are the only migratory birds that can be legally hunted from a power boat.

By Charmaine Barney and Jessica Humber

Turr hunting has been a long-cherished tradition in Newfoundland and Labrador. Top: Wildlife Division stewardship biologist Charmaine Barney as a child with her cousins, helping prepare a catch in Labrador. *Submitted photo*. Right: hunters still look forward to the challenge of turr hunting. *Photos: Chris Baldwin*

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have traditionally hunted murres as a source of winter food and for recreation. The murre harvest falls under federal jurisdiction. Regulations govern daily bag and possession limits as well as hunting seasons throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Murre hunters are required to be residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, and must possess a Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit validated with a Wildlife Habitat Canada Conservation Stamp and a NL Outdoor Identification Card while hunting.

The razorbill is a seabird that is protected under the Migratory Birds Convention Act (MBCA) and is not allowed to be harvested. While murres are also protected under the MBCA, the Act does allow residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to harvest murres. This regulated harvest of murres does not extend to other seabirds that may have also been traditionally harvested in the past, such as razorbills, puffins and dovekies.

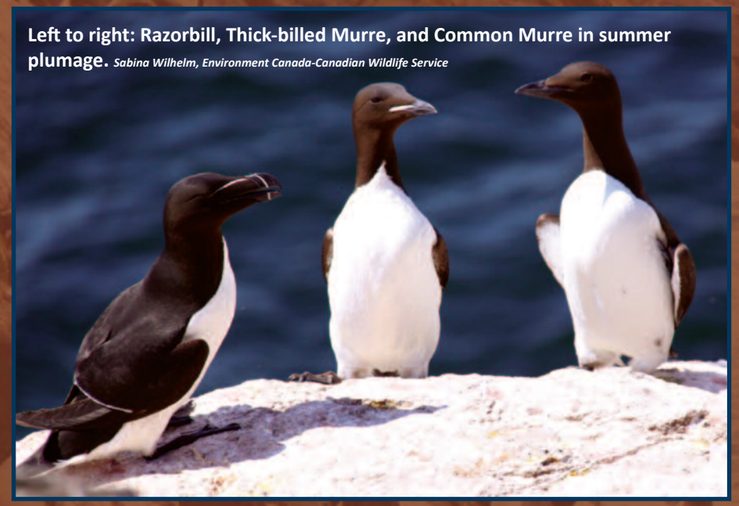
Sustainable harvest management is an important aspect of the conservation of all seabird species. Razorbills, locally known as tinkers, are protected from harvest. Due to their similar appearance to murres, distinguishing razorbills from thick-billed and common murres can be challenging, especially during harsh hunting conditions. This often results in significant razorbill by-catch. The hunting of murres outside of the designated season and non-compliance with prescribed bag limits and possession limits are also ongoing conservation concerns.

In 2005, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Environment Canada, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Legacy Nature Trust agreed to use the revenues from the sale of Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamps to murre hunters to establish the Newfoundland and Labrador Murre Conservation Fund. This fund, today administered by Bird Studies Canada on behalf of Wildlife Habitat Canada and Environment Canada, supports conservation activities that will enhance murre management and protection to help ensure a sustainable murre population. Programs and projects that introduce youth and the general public of Newfoundland and Labrador to the conservation, management, and traditional use of murres have been identified as eligible activities under the fund.

Since 2001 the Wildlife Division, as a partner in the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture, has implemented a province-wide Coastal Habitat Stewardship Program. This program is an education and enhancement conservation initiative that partners with municipal governments and resource users to conserve coastal habitats, with the goal of sustaining associated seabird and sea duck populations. Continued Page 8

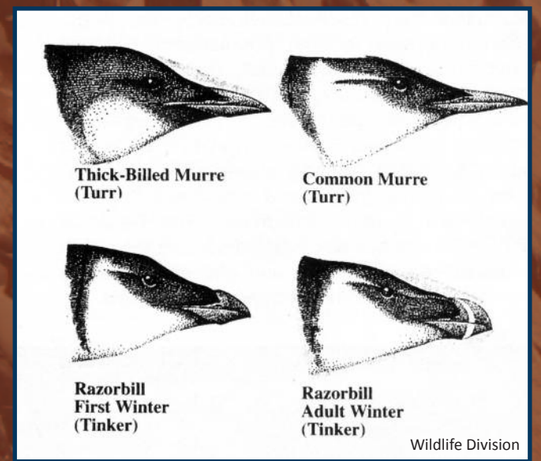
Turrs, murres, tinkers or razorbills?

Due to their similar appearance to murres, distinguishing razorbills from thick-billed and common murres can be challenging, especially during harsh hunting and low light conditions. This can result in a significant razorbill by-catch and can pose a conservation concern. It is important that hunters take the time to learn how to tell the difference between murres and razorbills and always make the effort to identify their target before shooting.



Left to right: Razorbill, Thick-billed Murre, and Common Murre in summer plumage. *Sabina Wilhelm, Environment Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service*

General differences:
Thick-billed murres are usually stockier than common murres, with a shorter, thicker neck, larger head, and deeper bill. Thick-billed murres have a horizontal white line on their bill which is absent in common murres, and a distinctively thicker, stubbier bill than common murres. While razorbills are also quite stocky and thick-necked, an important distinguishing difference is that their deep bill is laterally compressed or flattened and contains a vertical white line. It is important to note that the smaller bill of the first-winter razorbills lacks this white line, thereby making it more similar to the bill of the thick-billed murre. Unlike murres, razorbills have a long pointed tail, which extends past their feet when in flight. When the razorbill is sitting on the water, its tail is often raised noticeably upward.



Wildlife Division

Seasonal differences:
In summer, thick-billed murres and razorbills differ from common murres in having sootier upperparts (more brownish in common murres), and the pattern of white on the breast extends up onto the throat, tapering to a point. On common murres, the white on the breast extends only to the base of the neck. Also, in many common murres, the eye-ring and narrow groove behind the eye is white, a pattern that is not seen in thick-billed murres or razorbills.

In winter, thick-billed murres are best distinguished from common murres by the plumage on their head. Thick-billed murres are entirely black on the top and sides of their head, while common murres have a prominent white patch behind their eye, bordered below by a black eye-line. The plumage on the razorbill's head resembles that of the common murre, with the white extending above and behind the eye.

Environment Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service

Photo: Chris Baldwin

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Municipalities currently participating in Coastal Habitat Stewardship projects include Cartwright, Red Bay, Mary's Harbour, St. Lewis, St. Anthony and Burgeo. Significant numbers of hunters reside in and around these municipalities, whose offshore habitats also have high concentrations of both thick-billed and common murres. Residents of these towns have formally agreed to support seabird conservation and to contribute to their sustainability.

This year, to complement the activities being implemented through the Coastal Habitat Stewardship Program, the Wildlife Division will also implement a project approved under the Newfoundland and Labrador Murre Conservation Fund to support murre habitat conservation, preservation of the province's rich murre hunting tradition, and the fostering of a stewardship ethic among hunters. Many of the province's hunters are already active stewards of our natural heritage and are mentors to the younger generation. This project will help to reinforce their activities and support them in efforts to influence the activities of others.

Three education/outreach events will be held in coastal communities having strong historic relationships to murre hunting traditions. These events will feature hands-on training in seabird identification as well as sessions focusing on waterfowl and seabird conservation, the cultural significance of the murre hunt in Newfoundland and Labrador, and sustainable hunting. The messages addressed at these events will be reinforced by distributing educational brochures and by installing interpretive signage on public wharves. This signage will highlight murre identification, best management practices for hunters, and the cultural significance of the murre hunt. Residents of these communities will be encouraged to recognize their collective responsibilities and their stewardship role in the conservation of seabird and sea duck populations and their habitats for future generations.

Connecting Post Secondary Students with Wildlife Management Principles
is a program sponsored by the College of the North Atlantic
and the Department of Environment and Conservation, Wildlife Division
Text and photos by Christian Wright

Tales of a first-time hunter

I didn't see a single one, but that's not the point.

A love of nature and a sense of adventure somehow landed me in Corner Brook. I grew up in Ontario, and had never been to the island before, but that didn't stop me from jumping at the opportunity to take the Fish and Wildlife Technician program at the College of the North Atlantic. It seemed like the right thing to do, at the time, and I've since come to realize that indeed it was. During my two years at the college I was learning something new every day, whether we were in a classroom, a lab, or in the field. I'm sure it will come as no surprise that learning in the field was always a bit more fun; when I found out that our class was going coyote hunting, I couldn't help but let a smile slip across my face.

Before last year, I'd never been hunting before. Bass fishing is a different story, and I'm sure that growing up I probably caught every last frog and snake within ten kilometres of my family's cottage. Hunting, however, had never presented itself as an opportunity, unless you count tin cans.

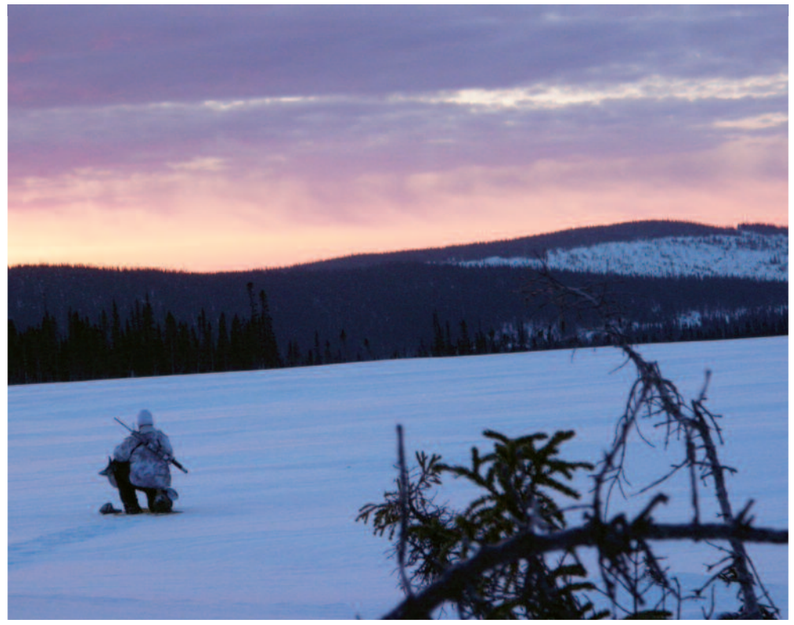
Our class had spent more than one night in the woods before, so our trip preparation was starting to seem a little more routine. It was winter, and we were going to be sleeping in canvas tents, each with a sheet metal stove (think five-star resort). We were lucky enough to have some of the Wildlife Division's stewardship and education elite guiding us on the trip. As easy at it was to forget, this trip was still going to be educational. After loading up our gear, and counting skidoos, we hit the road in high spirits. The destination: Main River.

After we'd arrived and made camp, we circled up to hear the plan. The day was already starting to slip away, so if we wanted to have any luck at all the next day, it was decided that we'd start scouting for tracks. We broke into groups and jumped on our machines, each taking a different route to find tomorrow morning's hunting sites. Keep in mind that this was all new to me, so nodding my head and saying yes was the game. My group travelled trail after trail, eyes darting to the sides to spy those tracks we'd learned to know as a coyote's.

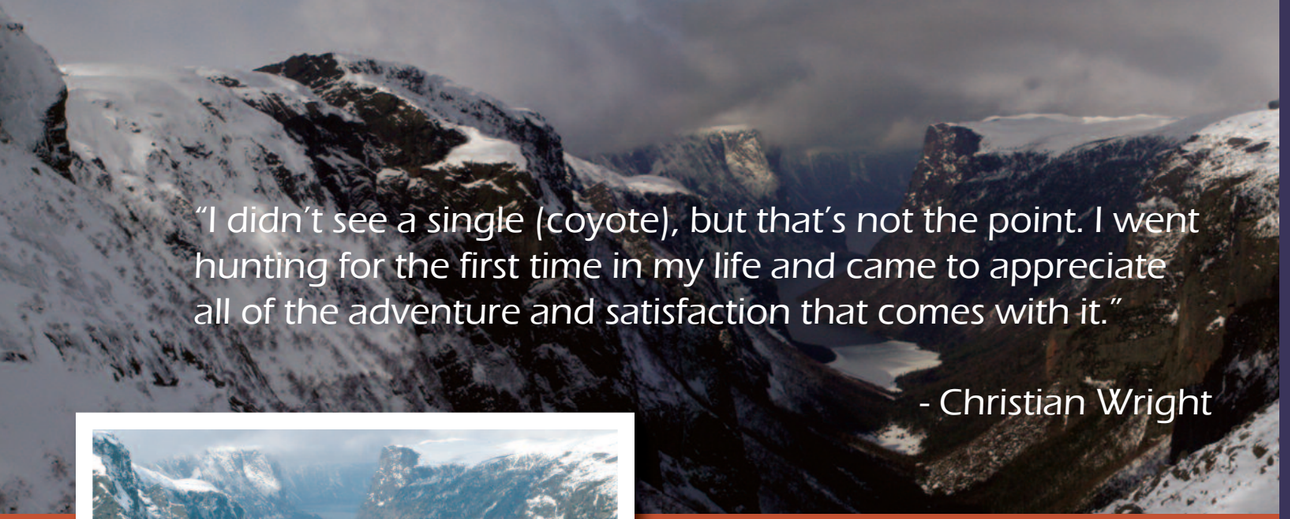
As luck would have it, it wasn't too long before we came to a promising site. At the edge of a frozen lake, there was enough cover for a group of us to have a chance to lure an animal in without too much suspicion. Our minds made up, we headed back to camp to fire up our stoves, have a bite to eat, and get some rest before the early day ahead.
I always sleep well in a tent, and that night was no exception. In the morning I had enough time to brew a pot of coffee in the dark before we were all ready to head out. After warming the skidoos up we broke into our parties and hit the road again, eager to get set up before the sun rose. As students, we were really only observers rather than hunters, but try telling that to my heart as it thumped away in my chest while I hunkered down behind a spruce at the edge of that lake. A coyote decoy had been set up, as well as an electronic caller, and I was camouflaged by a white sheet pulled up to my chin. The scene was set as the sun cracked over the horizon, flooding the sky with pink and orange. And so the waiting began.

The electronic caller let loose a few haunting howls. We sat in silence, scanning our surroundings for any movement at all as the minutes ticked by. Perhaps a few more calls were in order? Sit, scan, sniffle, wait. The sun crept higher, and I couldn't help picturing us as jailbirds making a break, backs against the wall, pinned by spotlights from the guard towers. We were as good as caught; if there had been a coyote in the area, it wasn't fooled by our ruse. Stand up, stretch, sniffle, and back on the skidoos to make our way to the camp.

I began worrying that maybe I had somehow spoiled our chances at the edge of the lake. Had I been making too much noise? Was my coffee breath so pungent as to be a deterrent? I'll admit that I was somewhat relieved when we got back to camp and found out that none of the parties had been successful. Even if I had done something wrong, at least I wasn't the only one. We each had a little story to tell about our own experience that morning as we cooked up the hot breakfast we were all so grateful for.



Later that afternoon I was ready for round two. As I strapped my bag to the skidoo, I felt determined that we would at least see a coyote. After all, that morning had been my first time hunting - of course I had bungled the whole thing up, how could I not have? Well, I wasn't going to let that happen a second time. When dusk came we were set up again, my eyes scavenging the scene in front of me, willing a coyote to come into view. Surely if I looked hard enough I'd be rewarded. Our mentors of course made no promises of success; with the coyote's keen senses it would have been a fluke for our motley group to avoid being detected by prey. Continued Page 10



"I didn't see a single (coyote), but that's not the point. I went hunting for the first time in my life and came to appreciate all of the adventure and satisfaction that comes with it."

- Christian Wright

Back at camp we regrouped with the other parties and, once again, no success was reported. I suppose that camaraderie is formed just as quickly in times of failure as in times of triumph, and there was an air of it that evening as we unloaded our gear.

We were all treated to moose stew that night, and as we sat together the conversations began. As students we had the opportunity to pick the brains of the Wildlife Division representatives who talked to us about management policies, the role of hunters and trappers, the latest government actions involving woodland caribou and the impacts of predators like the coyote. What was apparent in our discussion is that wildlife management isn't a matter of simply applying a one-fix solution to a complex arrangement of issues. We talked about the need to create a broader public awareness of the issues and interactions with wildlife and habitat, and the challenges of sustaining wildlife populations in perpetuity. We ended our discussions on coyote hunting tips, and most importantly to us, how to get a job after graduation. We hunted again the next morning to no avail. This trip was soon coming to a close and the thought of a hot shower at home was tiptoeing into my head.

I didn't see a single one, but that's not the point. I went hunting for the first time in my life and came to appreciate all of the adventure and satisfaction that comes with it. It was the last time my class got to camp together, and I went home with a camera full of great pictures. I had gotten the chance to ski-doo to the cliffs around Western Brook Pond, one of the most beautiful spots I've ever been. I had gotten to sit in total silence and watch the sun rise and set in amazing technicolor over a pristine landscape. I walked away from the experience having learnt more than I ever had about predator hunting, and ready to jump at the opportunity to do it again. Above all else, I learned that after the lack of success we had on the trip, there's no doubt I'll get an animal next time. It's pretty much guaranteed.

Right?

Trappers share knowledge, new tricks at coyote workshops

Participants at the coyote trapping workshops. Left: Frank Hathaway demonstrates a dirt hole set at the Deer Lake session. Right: An interested group in Grand Falls-Windsor watch as Frank sets a snowmobile set during the outdoor practical session. ***Photos and text: Nathan Spence***

In late January the Department of Environment and Conservation's Wildlife Division and the Newfoundland and Labrador Trappers Association (NLTA) delivered three coyote trapping workshops across the Island.

The workshops were designed to introduce new and experienced trappers to common methods of coyote trapping, hone experienced trappers' skills, answer questions about coyote general biology, and talk about the work being done in the province to deal with coyote issues.

During the evening session, Wildlife Division training specialist Nathan Spence and NLTA president Kenneth White delivered information on coyote ecology, general trapping and licencing, and the trapper education course offered in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Guest speaker Frank Hathaway, an experienced educator, professional trapper, and retired New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources game warden, focused on a variety of trap preparation essentials, necessary equipment, and basic approaches to coyote trapping. He later moved into demonstrations of key methods of leg-hold use and a variety of snare types and methods.

The following morning, workshop participants were invited to attend a field session to observe and be involved in practical demonstrations involving set site selection, setting leg-hold traps, snares, and cable snares.

Having experienced and novice trappers involved in the workshops provided an excellent opportunity to share ideas and discuss tips and tricks of the trade. Some commented on the incredible opportunity to glean knowledge from other trappers who have had the opportunity to hone their skills and choose the most effective methods through their years of experience – something very few people in this province have been able to do.

Workshops were held in Deer Lake, Grand Falls-Windsor and Mount Pearl, and were well attended with more than 100 people attending the three sessions combined. Additional workshops are being planned for later this year. For more information, contact Nathan Spence, at (709)637-2006 or email nathanspence@gov.nl.ca

Moose Monitoring Program

Hunters provide valuable data for moose research, management

Chad Andrews and Gary Andrews participated in the 2010-11 Moose Monitoring Program by collecting samples from their harvested moose and submitting them to the Wildlife Division using a kit provided (below). Their participation enhances moose research and management in Newfoundland and Labrador.

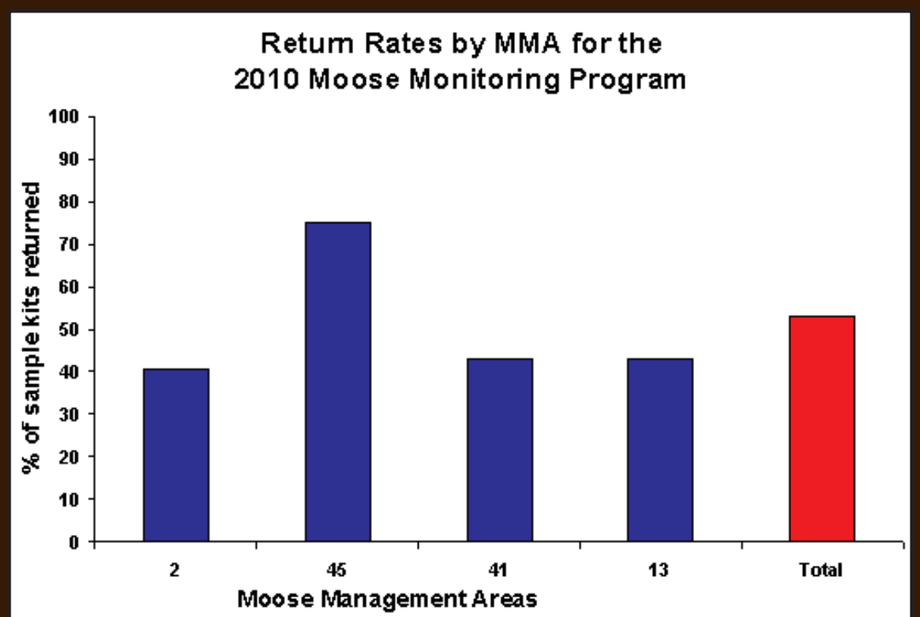
By Emilie Kissler

This past hunting season, some hunters were asked to participate in a moose monitoring program implemented by the Wildlife Division. The program is part of a larger scale research project aimed at evaluating the body condition of Newfoundland and Labrador's moose population. We requested hunter assistance in collecting biological samples and other data from harvested moose in four moose management areas: MMA 2 (Portland Creek); MMA 45 (Ten Mile Brook); MMA 13 (Gaff Topsails); MMA 41 (Sheffield Lake).

Hunters play a valuable role in wildlife conservation and their participation in the moose monitoring program is another example of how hunter cooperation assists in wildlife research. This study will help us make decisions on long-term management for Newfoundland's moose population. Participation in the moose monitoring program was voluntary. Hunters were asked to participate by local conservation officers during routine patrols in the fall of 2010. Hunters who volunteered to participate were provided sampling kits and asked to collect samples of blood, liver, kidney, feces, hair, the jawbone, and the lower portion of the front leg from the knee down to the hoof from harvested animals. Hunters were also asked to take pictures of the animals they harvested.

One hundred thirty sampling kits were provided to hunters across the moose management areas during the 2010/2011 hunting season. In total, 68 kits were completed and returned, giving an overall return rate of 53%. All of the samples collected contribute important information that will assist in the management of moose as a resource in Newfoundland and Labrador. Samples submitted are being analyzed and will contribute important data to a number of scientific research programs in addition to the moose monitoring program. All hunter harvested samples will be used for comparison to samples collected from moose seen in poor condition on the Northern Peninsula to further assist research into the issue. The jawbones will support long-term moose population monitoring through the ongoing jaw collection program in the province. The kidney will be used to reevaluate the cadmium levels in moose, and the hair will be used in DNA analysis that will allow researchers to analyze the variance in the genetic distribution of moose in Newfoundland.

The Wildlife Division thanks hunters who participated in the Moose Monitoring Program during the 2010/2011 hunting season and looks forward to continued cooperation from hunters for the upcoming season. Hunters who are successful in receiving a moose licence in any of these four moose management areas for the 2011/12 season and are interested in participating, please contact the Wildlife Division.



Moose photos: Emilie Kissler

Hindsight

by Gerry Yetman


Shooting at Peter's River Grounds.

I trust that you have enjoyed the previous reprints of articles from the past. For this edition I have chosen an article from the July 1906 edition of the Newfoundland Quarterly, "Shooting at Peter's River Grounds" by W.A.B Sclater.

Mr. Sclater was a lifetime member of the St. John's Rifle Club and a member of the Game and Inland Fisheries Board for many years. It is a colorful account of a few days shooting on the southern Avalon Peninsula. The references to his guide's choice of firearm are amusing and our Hunter Education staff are probably cringing at the thought of someone foolhardy enough to actually fire that old blunderbuss. They were a different breed back then, larger-than-life characters that could endure great hardship, had amazing physical strength and were often endowed with a subtle wit.

We are all richer thanks to the scribes who took the time to put pen to paper describing their experiences so that others who were not there could also enjoy them. The article is included at the end of this newsletter for your reading pleasure, or you can access it at Memorial University's Centre for Newfoundland Studies at

http://collections.mun.ca/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/quarterly&CISOPTR=22992&CISOSHOW=22898 (go to page 5.)

I am indebted to the present-day scribes who have taken the time to provide accounts of their experiences for this newsletter. Hopefully another generation reading of these experiences a hundred years from now will enjoy their snapshots into another time as we are enjoying those of a hundred years ago.

This is the last issue of "Our Wildlife" of which I will have the pleasure of being editor. Retirement is fast approaching (April 29) but I will be looking forward to the future issues so that I can be kept up to date on the varied and exciting activities of the staff of the Wildlife Division. Keep up the good work.

Gerry Yetman, Editor

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Thank you to everyone who contributed to the content of **Our Wildlife.** This newsletter would not be possible without the extensive field work, data analysis, mapping and other tasks performed by our very dedicated staff.

The mandate of the Wildlife Division is to protect and conserve Newfoundland and Labrador's biodiversity and manage its wildlife and inland fish resources for the benefit of present and future generations. To deliver on this mandate requires an incredible amount of work, both in the field and at the office. It is our hope that these newsletters will provide a snapshot into the work of the professionals who are striving to fulfill this mandate, and to highlight the complex nature of wildlife research and management.

- Gerry Yetman, Senior Manager, Stewardship and Education

Big game biologist Casidhe Dyke took this shot of woodland caribou during the 2011 census. It was featured in the March - Week 1 **Your Shot Daily Dozen** on National Geographic.com

Department of Environment & Conservation

Wildlife Division

Newfoundland Labrador

Shooting at Peter's River Grounds.

By W. A. B. Sclater.

SOMEWHERE in the early seventies a note from an old sporting friend, reminding me of a promise to take him to my favourite shooting ground viz., Peter's River, and saying that he had word from there, that there were plenty of birds and that they were in fine condition decided me, and after having got tents, guns, &c., packed and sent on with the dogs, we started on our long journey (over a none too good road) of eighty miles to St. Mary's. From there we took a boat down Holyrood Pond, and arrived at Peter's River on the second night, and put up at Mr. Lundrigan's hospitable home, known to every sportsman who visits the place. We sat up late that night with our host, talking over the St. John's news, and, what was of more interest to us, the chances of a good bag on the morrow. We made an early start next morning for Peter's Pond grounds, taking two guides with us. It was late in the afternoon when we arrived at the camping ground, as we did some little shooting by the way.

We pitched our camp in a well sheltered nook, by a babbling brook, close under the fir trees. Mike (one of the guides) soon

THE AUTHOR AND HIS GUIDE.

had some of the grouse (shot on the way in) cooking on sticks round the camp fire. The kettle boiled and tea made, we set to, with appetites sharpened by the long tramp from the coast. Supper over we were just starting our pipes, when Mike's sharp ear caught the Honk, Honk, of the Canada goose. Presently we all heard it, even the Doctor who had turned in; for a voice from the sleeping bag wanted to know why some of us young fellows could not go off and try to get a few of them. Mike said that the birds were in the lake, so he and I started to try and get a shot. However, he was not at all satisfied with the gun I carried (the Doctor's 12 bore Greener), and went back to camp for his; and scorcher it was, six feet long, one inch bore, the lock fastened to the stock with wire and screws, was fitted with flint and steel, or as Mike called it, *a fire place*. (Why it did not go to pieces at the first shot was the wonder). The

look. He had, as is usual with the fisherman, taken off the trigger guard, as he said it hurt his finger when firing heavy loads. "Hold on a moment, sor, and I'll just put a light load in her before going down to the pond." He proceeds to do so; first he pours a few ounces of powder from the horn into his hand, then into the muzzle, on top of that a wad of ship's oakum, then a handfull of B. B. shot, and then more oakum, all well driven as tight as possible. The flint broken with the back of his knife, touch-hole cleared, fresh powder in the pan, and off we start for the lake. "I say, Mike, you have too much in that gun she will go to smash and give the Doctor a job." "No fear, sor I have only six fingers in her," and placed four fingers of one hand and two of the other on the protruding rod, to prove what he said but such fingers! It would take ten fingers of an ordinary man to fill the same space! We got down to the lake without accident, but no geese were in sight. Mike was, however, not at all put out "We are all right, sor, they are over there on the mash and will be back in the pond soon." We had not long to wait, for in a few minutes the honk, honk, coming this time from the marsh told us that they were on the way. A startling honk, honk, close to my ear caused me to turn sharp round, only to see by the twisting of Mike's face that the last calls came from him. The geese heard and answered several times, and as the caller did not go to them they made up their mind to come to us.

"Here they come, sor! look out and take it easy, don't shoot till they get over the island, I will take them going off." Sure enough! here they come, calling all the time. Opposite the island they changed their minds and go over it, giving me a long shot which only scattered them, but just as they got in line again Mike's six-footer booms out. A cloud of smoke is the first result, Mike on his back (tripped over a boulder) the second: but on getting down to the lee of the island, we find six dark objects bobbing up and down on the waves, which a favouring wind helped us to gather. "Oh! sir," says Mike "you had the laugh on my old fusee to day, but if we had to depend on that fancy little gun of the Doctor's we would have to go back to camp without a sign of a feather." I said nothing then as I thought it would have been a loss of time to try and convince Mike of the beauties of the Greener Gun after what had happened. We got back to camp tired but happy at our luck.

Voice from the sleeping bag: "Well, what luck? We heard you fire three shots, and Mike, I noticed that you got off the cannon of yours. Do you require my services to set your shoulder?" "Oh! no, your honor, I only had a small load in her; but she got six." "What, six geese?" "Yes, your honor and it was the old fusee that got them; they were too far for that little gun of yours, I heard the shot strike on their feathers but they were too far." (I think this last was added to let me down easy.)

We were up and had breakfast by dawn; the day was just right, very little wind, with a little dew on the ground. Mike and I were mates for the day, the Doctor taking the other man. After arranging to meet for luncheon at a place a few miles down the river, we started. The Doctor and his dogs were soon lost sight of, but we knew by his shooting that he was having good sport. We had only started from camp when the dog drew up on a fine covey of grouse, the old dog "Sam" laying

close to the ground, and the young one backing beautifully. Mike started the covey which got up nicely, giving me two easy shots, which I got—old Sam still staunch—the young one ready for a chase; but Mike's big hand was on his collar, and a "No, you —— blackguard, you won't get the chance to run them up this time." A few "cuffs" from Mike's free hand and his lesson was learned. We followed up the rest of that covey, and got most of them, found others, and when we met the Doctor at noon we both had good bags. Mike's plan for cooking grouse came in very well here. We could not carry the bake-pot with us, but the ever ready Mike was at hand with a plan that I had seen used before. A hole was dug in the ground, and a fire built in it. After the ground had been heated, the grouse packed in wet clay was placed in the heated hole, and covered with the hot earth taken from the hole. A fire was then placed on top, and kept going for half an hour. When the birds were taken out the skin, feathers, &c., came off, some melted butter poured over them, made "a dish fit for the king."

WILSON'S SNIPE.

After luncheon, a smoke and forty winks, we started on our way back to camp, this time together. Shortly after starting we had the best picture of the day, our five dogs got the scent of a covey at the same time, and all brought up together, old "Sam" standing, and all the others backing, looking like painted dogs on a painted hillside. We shot most of the birds, and old "Sam" retrieved every one of them, after the last one was shot or gone away. We got back to camp before dark with good bags and at peace with all the world. We had one of the geese cooked by Mike for supper, and found it so tough that we were sorry we had not cooked the grouse instead. Though tired we sat up late over the big camp fire, shooting our game again, over our hot punch, which "by the bye" was always brewed by the Doctor, who was an adept at the job. We remained at that camp for a week and had fine sport all the time.

Mike, rather reluctanly, admitted that the little guns were not bad for some kind of shooting, but for geese, No. We saw tracks of caribou and bear, but never once got near enough for a shot. We had rather good sport with Wilson's snipe on the river flats. This was to have been the first of many shoots we were to have had with Mike as guide, but before we got there again poor Mike had gone over the cliff quite near where we were then camped, and has never been seen since. He was a good hearted fellow, a good guide, and we who knew him best, hope that he is now in the happiest of happy Hunting Grounds.

The one thing you never could depend upon was his idea of distances. Ask him "How far is it from camp Mike?" "Ah! no distance at all,—may be a mile or two." Well,—you would perhaps get the same answer an hour or two after, though you had been walking in the same direction all that time. He was a strong man, and thought nothing of packing 150 pounds with a strap across his forehead. If you asked if the load was not heavy? "No weight at all, your honor (this to the Doctor), but it is wonderful dry work." That always meant a glass of water well qualified with whisky, fifteen minutes rest and a smoke. On one occasion we were coming back by the cliffs. The way was only a sheep path, with a sheer fall of 100 feet if you missed your footing. Mike, who was in front, turned around saying, "Give me that fool dog he will be over the cliff," and catching him by the legs swung him up on top of his load, bringing him down in safety.

Newfoundland Summer.

By Robert Gear MacDonald.

I.

FAR over the bay has the slow sinking sun
Shed its crimson and gold,
But the daylight has yet many minutes to run,
Ere its redness grow cold.
And the twilight will come—that calm hour of the day,
When, our hearts at their best,
Our spirits may roam, and our fancies may stray,
In a rapture of rest.

II.

And over our heads the gulls wing to the sea
From the marsh-hidden place
Where their nests are; and scream they aloud in their glee
As they join in the race.
And the stream prattles on, which the angler will leave,
With his basket of trout,
To the glory and cool of this magical eve
Ere the lights have gone out.

III.

Oh, days of the freshness and strength of the North
And of light in the night
From stars over head that shoot suddenly forth
Into rapt lover's sight:
Oh, hours by the bay o'er whose body of blue
Comes a change every hour,
A change in the pulse-beat, a change in the hue,
Made by Nature's vast power!

IV.

Ione, thy summer is fleeing apace
Take advantage of this;
While this glorious air brings the blush to thy face,
Despise not thy bliss.
Surrender thy proud heart, assaulted so long,
To another or me;
Surrender, and give me a theme for a song,
Full of sadness or glee!

June, 1906.