

MARSH MARIGOLD

(Caltha palustris)



by R. Bruce MacLaren, Charlottetown

How this lovely spring wildflower came by the name Marigold I'll never know, because it isn't even related. Sometimes, particularly many years ago, this plant was called Cowslip. This name too is far from correct. Actually, a more correct name would be Marsh Buttercup because it does belong to the same plant family as the buttercup and, except that the leaves are different and the flowers larger, it looks like a buttercup.

What is unusual about this plant? For one thing it is common throughout P.E.I. It is found also in Cape Breton Island and New Brunswick, but does not occur on the mainland of Nova Scotia. Another unusual feature is that, if eaten raw, the leaves are likely to be somewhat poisonous. If, however, the leaves are boiled in about two changes of water, they make an excellent green vegetable. I've tried them myself and they're really good. The unopened buds can be pickled to make a condiment similar to capers. I don't like capers so I've never tried using the buds.

There are many possible medicinal uses for Marsh Marigold. For example, the juice is supposed to be a cure for warts. A drop or two of juice from a leaf or stem is squeezed onto the wart every day until the wart disappears. Since the wart would likely disappear in time anyway it's hard to say whether or not the Marigold juice helped!

FROM THE EDITOR

Once again we have reached the season when the winter meeting series has ended and society members go their separate ways for the summer. At this time it is appropriate to look back on our accomplishments of the year. The past twelve months have been a busy and productive time in the life of the society.

Field outings have been held to places like Tyne Valley, Cape Tryon, Valleyfield and Sharam Point. Monthly meetings featured speakers on such varied topics as the Morell River, Governor's Island, the bears of P.E.I., P.E.I.'s beauty spots, Newfoundland's Baccalieu Island, Arctic wildlife, and wasps and hornets. Three Christmas bird counts, a Birdathon and seabird watches from the ferries were organized. A nature slide contest was sponsored and prizes awarded for nature entries at the U.P.E.I. Science Fair. The society was involved in sponsoring a workshop on nature photography and an exhibition of Island nature photographs. In October we hosted the annual regional meeting of the Canadian Nature Federation.

However, perhaps our most important endeavours have come in the field of educational outreach to the eastern and western parts of the province. Society members were involved in presenting a series of nature lectures at the Eptek Center in Summerside last fall and at the Montague Community School this winter.

The president, the executive, and our many active members are to be congratulated and thanked for their initiative in making this past year so successful. As well, I say a very warm thank-you to all who have been such cooperative contributors to the newsletter over the past five years. Since this is my last issue as editor, I also wish my successors the very best in the future. (Contributions for the fall issue may be sent to the society's box number, given inside the front cover.) Happy Summer to you all!