

to this project provided over \$1,048 towards the land acquisition programs of the Trust. Society members also participated in Piping Plover monitoring. Bruce Smith led the Great Black-backed Gull egg removal project on the Hillsborough Bridge piers to assist the terns nesting there.

Charitable activities: in addition to those noted above, the Society contributed Audubon Field Notes to the U.P.E.I. Library, and a \$100 gift for land acquisition by the Island Nature Trust. The Society completed the year with assets of \$5,729.90 in its various accounts with almost all of this in the book publishing and projects fund accounts. From this, approximately \$900 in year 2000 commitments are remaining to be paid.

THE COMMON RAZOR CLAM – DELICIOUS YET ELUSIVE:

by Jim Jenkins.

Many of us have wandered over the sandy beaches and shores of P.E.I. hunting for soft-shelled clams or maybe enjoying the ambiance with the shallow warm waters lapping over our feet. In search of those delicious bivalves, the steamers or soft-shells, have you ever encountered some clams, which are spotted at the surface, and when you went to dig them up, they seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth. They are no where to be found. You have most likely encountered the common razor clam known in the world of Latin as *Ensis directus*. The razor clam gets its common name from its shape. It resembles the old style “straight” razor commonly used a half-century ago and even today by some barbers.

The razor clam belongs to the molluscan shellfish known as “bivalves”. It has two outer shells. This clam lives mostly in sandy areas, most commonly in shallow waters. It has been found in deeper waters over 90 feet, but this is not common. Being a bivalve, the razor clams have male and female sexes. This species reproduces from late June to September. The eggs are fertilized in the water column and the fertilized egg develops into a larva. The larvae go through a swimming phase which lasts for approximately four weeks and then they develop into the familiar razor clam shape upon settling to the bottom.

Most people do not know of the razor clams delicious qualities. It seems that the energy required to dig up these elusive critters seems to frustrate most folks. If you can forge ahead and overcome the tediousness of the task, you will be rewarded with a most delicious treat.

The razor clam is usually sighted with its siphon at the surface. This structure allows it to pump water through its gills thus extracting both oxygen and food from the water. It will have its long foot extended deep into the sand with the end of the foot filled with water, which gives it a wedge shape. This posture is designed as a survival mechanism as not only people think razor clams are delicious but other predators hunt for them as well. These include various seabirds, crustaceans (lobster, rock crab, the new green crab), etc. Upon detection by sound, pressure or shadow, the razor clam will quickly flex its foot muscle, which hauls the body and shell deep into the substrate. A second survival adaptation is the curved shape of the clam. This shape allows the clams to sink into the substrate on an angle. Therefore when you dig straight down, often you will find nothing for your efforts. I have noticed that the angle of withdrawal depends on the age of the razor clam. Very young razors, say two or three inches long, will withdraw and end up almost horizontal when you dig them up. As the clam matures you will find them more vertical. A clam of say seven or eight inches will withdraw to a greater depth but will be only at a slight angle when compared to the young clams. Mother Nature gives these adaptive survival mechanisms to its creatures to ensure the survival of the species.

Where can you find these clams? Usually any sandy area inside bays and areas where there is a lower rate of wave action. For example, the sand flats in Covehead Bay have a large population. In Bellevue Cove, there are lots just below the children’s camp. Ask a shellfish fisherman and they will describe numerous areas where they are found. I like razor clams but only dig a few at a time. The legal recreational limit is 300 clams. Clams are defined by Fisheries and Oceans for recreational and commercial harvest as quahaugs (*Mercenaria mercenaria*), soft-shells (*Mya arenaria*), bar clams (*Spisula solidissima*) and razor clams. You are allowed to take up to 300 clams of which only 100 can be bar clams or bay quahaugs.

I dig them with my hands to cause the least amount of damage. For example, most people don’t realize that they can create up to 65% mortality to soft-shelled clams by digging with a shovel. I dig when there is a few inches of water over the clams and use a swirling motion to create a “whirlpool” effect. It is quite successful when