WHITE SPRUCE by Dan McAskill
(Picea glauca) + cultivars

Habitat: On Prince Edward Island, this species is primarily found forming dense, almost pure stands on old fields. It is also found in coastal areas, back dunes, and as a component of mixed wood stands. Where this species has grown in an abandoned field, its life span is considerably shorter than its potential life span of 150+ years. In these old fields, it normally starts declining before 50 years of age and in certain stands the onset of this sudden mortality can commence at 35 years. This species is heavily tapered in most areas on the Island and is relatively short with a height of up to 20 m (66 ft). Diameters of up to 45 cm (18 in) are common but exceptional trees can be up to 90 cm (3 ft.).

Wildlife Benefits: provides food and cover; provides seeds/cones for seed eating birds and squirrels; provides foraging habitat for foliage gleaners (chickadees, Evening Grosbeaks) and bark gleaners (chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, creepers); during spruce budworm outbreaks many caterpillar foraging birds will frequent white spruce trees.

Seasonal Considerations: provides cover year-round; produces seed in mid-autumn to late autumn; cones stay intact and disperse seed as they dry; nature of cone opening makes this a good species for crossbills; produces heavy seed crops in the wild every 3 to 7 years.

Comments: although its form is altered, this species can often survive coastal wind and salt spray where many other species die; on the mainland, mature to over-mature areas near rivers may serve as deer overwintering areas; susceptible to spruce budworm defoliation and spruce gall mite damage; can be pruned to form a hedge; serves as an excellent edge/border tree; good seed year every 2 to 6 years after about 30 years of age; susceptible to root and trunk rots when planted on former agricultural land.

NEWS FROM ABOUT compiled by Dan McAskill

On September 30th, a case of Pathogenic Newcastle Disease was diagnosed from specimens taken from a cormorant from Ontario. Three varieties of this viral disease exist ranging from very mild to highly pathogenic. The bird in question was carrying the velogenic strain which causes the highest level of mortality. During the summers of 1990, 1992, and 1995, outbreaks of this disease caused the death of large numbers of cormorants in colonies in western Canadian provinces and in Ontario. The disease is spread to other susceptible birds by the consumption of contaminated materials which can survive for days. This disease can cause devastation of commercial poultry flocks so recommendations to growers are rigid bioscreening of flocks to prevent exposure to wild birds and people or services which may be involved with wild birds. Wild birds, particularly waterfowl and pigeons, demonstrating abnormal behaviour or neurologic signs should be reported to the nearest Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Office (adapted from an Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Oct. 3 memorandum)

Thanks to meetings hosted by the Canadian Nature Federation (CNF) with naturalists in 1994 and follow-up discussions, the CNF and the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists have joined forces tp expand education. During 1997, a special introductory offer will allow naturalists to join both organizations and receive both of their publications for only $25. The two memberships would normally cost $48. (adapted from CNF release)

A keen interest in fungi (mushrooms) led to the discovery of a new Canadian species of fungus in the shifting, infertile dunes of Pinery Provincial Park in Ontario. It is *Hebeloma affine* Smith, Evenson & Mitchel (1983). This specimen was only the second record in the world with the first being found on September 21, 1953 on the edge of dunes in Wilderness Park area in Emmet County Michegan. (adapted from Toronto Field Naturalist 461:16-17)

On October 12th, in a ceremony at the Palais de Congres, the Quebec Labrador Foundation's **Caring for the Earth Award 1996** was presented to Island Naturalist Editor, Dan McAskill. This international award was created in 1995 to recognize persons in eastern Canada and New England who demonstrate outstanding leadership and dedication in the field of conservation and sustainable development. Mr. Laurent Cloutier, a Conservation Officer with the Ministere de l'environnement et de la faune in Quebec's Eastern Townships, was honoured with the "Special Recognition Award" for 1996 for his long term conservation education efforts. (adapted from October 1996 QLF Release)