

CANADIAN NATURE FEDERATION REPORT



The annual fall regional meeting of CNF was held at U.P.E.I. on Oct. 22, attended by about 25 people from the three Maritime Provinces. The meeting was chaired by Hal Mills, Regional Vice-President of CNF.

The morning session, chaired by Geoff Hogan, was devoted to a symposium on Piping Plovers. Winnie Cairns began with an overview of the natural history of the species. Phil Michael of P.E.I. National Park outlined the park's management efforts to minimize contact between nesting plovers and the park's 1.6 million visitors. Roland Chaisson and Stephen Flemming described research on habitat preference, predator reactions and population distribution of Piping Plovers in Nova Scotia. They indicated the difficulties in implementing adequate protection for the species in areas outside national or provincial parks.

Harry Beach of Kouchibouguac National Park in N.B. described the preference of park birds for nesting on the unstable offshore dune islands. Bruce Johnson of CWS in Sackville reviewed recent population assessments for N.B., P.E.I. and the Magdalen Islands. He pointed out the problems of providing adequate protection for a protected species like the Piping Plover, when its nesting habitat cannot be adequately protected. He indicated the need for the licensing of off-road vehicles and more public pressure to insist on greater police surveillance of beaches.

The discussions following the presentations raised a number of points. In general the population of Piping Plovers in the Atlantic region appears to be more or less holding its own at the moment. There is a need for leadership to provide direction and coordination of the various efforts aimed at enhancing the status of Piping Plovers. Protection efforts should gain the cooperation of local fishermen, beach users, tourism groups, wildlife interests, etc. Numerous suggestions were made for the promotion of the Piping Plover through the media, particularly as a focal point for the wise use of the total beach environment.

In the "Regional Issues" portion of the conference, concern was expressed for the dangers of offshore oil development, especially from the drilling of exploratory wells, for which an EARP process is not required in advance. Reports were presented on the activities of the Island Nature Trust and the National and Provincial Parks Association. The recent Cape Breton herbicide case and its implications for future environmental court cases were discussed.

The third session of the day focussed on the question "What can CNF do for its affiliates?" Comments indicated the importance of Nature Canada in providing top quality coverage of natural history topics and issues. The need was seen for CNF to develop a larger media image, so that it would be more meaningful for a local group to cite backing from CNF.

The final session of the day asked, "What can the affiliates do for CNF?" Here the view was expressed that a region such as ours can attempt to balance with realism some of the naive and overly zealous preservationist attitudes of urban nature lovers from central Canada. It was also suggested that CNF should work more closely with other groups concerned with environmental quality.

In conclusion, those present felt it was worthwhile to continue fall regional meetings, since they provide the only real chance the common member has to express his views. Next year's meeting will be held in Nova Scotia.