

UNUSUAL PLANT REPORTED:

by J. Dan McAskill

When an alternate leafed plant with non-toothed leaves and succulent appearing black berries was delivered to the office by Wendell Profit in August, it was time to dust off the plant identification keys again. This specimen came from the Routes for Nature and Health in West Royalty. As happens quite often when such a plant is brought in for identification, another example was brought in from near the old jail in Charlottetown only a few days later. Perhaps the large blueberry like berries attracted the eye!

Diagnostic features included a simple (single rather than multiple) leaf structure with veins parallel and curving near the margin to follow the leaf edge. Leaves were arranged in a sub-alternate (not quite opposite) pattern. The leaves were 5 to 7.5 cm long (2" to 3"). The unripe berries were red and they became juicy blue-black when ripe. Each berry contained three large, laterally flattened, ungrooved seeds. The berries, approximately 8 mm (1/3") in diameter, were arranged on short stems (pedicels) attached at the leaf junctions. There was a light coating of hairs on the fine branches (thus termed pubescent) and lenticels were common. Ben Hoteling's drawing on the cover brings the plant to life.

For those who have worked with plant keys, the helpfulness of having flowers is understated. As it was in the berry stage and I had no keys operating strictly on berries and the leaf keys I had access to gave conflicting information, it was time to go back to the route of plant descriptions. Britton and Brown's *An Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada* provided sufficient detail to confirm the plant to be a buckthorn. This was one that caused lots of confusion as various keys provided quite different descriptions for key features including the presence of teeth on the leaves, the number of seeds, features of the seeds, and the height. It appears that the plant is *Rhamnus Frangula*, the European Buckthorn. The genus to which this plant belongs is listed as producing plants that cause explosive (intense) diarrhoea and cramps. The specimen has been sent away for confirmation of the identification.

(Editor's note: Thanks to Ben Hoteling, Katherine Clough, and Diane Griffin for assisting with this puzzle)

THE BAIN BIRD COUNT:

Compiled by J. Dan McAskill

The Bain Bird Count on Saturday, May 25th this year was a cold affair before the day ended. Several teams spent time in the field and 126 species were recorded. Jean Watts and Gerald MacDonald spent their time in Eastern Prince Edward Island and recorded 64 species. The Birds and Breakfast groups recorded 30 species. Ray Cooke, Bill Bowerbank, and I spent the night and continued to the following evening exploring the Island from Charlottetown to East Point and back. By 6 pm, the three of us had recorded 109 species. Bill and I continued through until 8:45 pm and achieved a day total of 120 species while covering 315.6 km.

The counters seen the following species: Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, American Bittern, Canada Goose, Mallard, Black Duck, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Common Eider, White-winged Scoter, Black Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Osprey, Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Virginia Rail, Sora, Semipalmated Plover, Piping Plover, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, American Woodcock, Common Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Greater Yellowlegs, White-rumped Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Sanderling, Iceland Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull,

