

they baked an angelfood cake, it would come out of the oven a distinct pink. The children sometimes slept under overturned dories. But they had the time of their lives. The lighthouse had to be constantly manned. There were dances and picnics. Later Government canning inspections became more stringent, Milligan's Wharf developed, and the channel running between two sections of the sandhills at Conway Inlet deepened allowing the boats easy access to the main island. And the lobster factories on the sandhills became obsolete. Until a few years ago, an old weatherbeaten lighthouse still marked a factory site, but even it is gone now, moved to the mainland to become part of a large house. No trace of the factories remains. Farmers stopped coming across to gather the hay, and man's presence out there became more and more occasional, the unstable sands and strong winds rapidly obliterating any traces of his temporary incursions.

Later, the military invaded and set up big targets on the sandhills for aerial gunning practice. Spent cartridges still occasionally protrude through the sand. But lobster factories, hay mowing and even occasional military manoeuvres represent inroads by man in an age of gentler technology and the sandhills have been able to revert to a natural state. Now it is a deserted expanse, a nesting place for black ducks, mergansers, terns, and herring gulls. In spring, plovers, sandpipers and other shore birds arrive, loons call from protected bays, and occasional brant stop off. In the fall, geese rest here on their way south, thousands of cormorants move overhead and large groups of eiders feed offshore. There are a few hunters' blinds, and the carcass of an abandoned dune buggy on the beach, the scars of its tracks still marring the grassy dunes with parallel lines. On summer Sundays, clam-diggers and picnickers go across and fox hunters and snowmobilers in the cold months.

But in spite of their actual proximity, the sandhills have retained a flavor of remoteness where man is an occasional, temporary visitor. And, in a world increasingly paved and polluted, crowded and cosmeticized, such places are becoming rare and, consequently, infinitely more valuable to retain in a natural state.

The situation regarding the sandhills is potentially fragile. One road across would permit access to dune buggies, dirt-bikes, winabegos, hook-ups, shore lots and all the trappings of shoddy commercial development evident on more and more of the shoreline of Prince Edward Island, and unlike man's earlier activities on the sandhills, our technology today poses an irreversible threat to so fragile an area. We must ensure that the sandhills do remain inviolate, that man remains an infrequent visitor, that the sanctity and primaeval loneliness of these beaches and dunes retain their mystery and silence. As Paul Brooks wrote in his biography of Rachel Carson<sup>1</sup>:

"Somewhere we should know what was nature's way; we should know what the earth would have been had not man interfered. And so, besides public parks and recreation, we should set aside some wilderness areas of seashore where the relations of sea and wind and shore - of living things and their physical world - remain as they have been over the long vistas of time in which man did not exist. For there remains, in this space age universe, the possibility that man's way is not always best".

<sup>1</sup> Paul Brooks "The House of Life".

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