

# NEWS AND NOTES

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DECEMBER MEETING REPORT. There was an above average attendance at the meeting - among them eight brand-new members who have joined our ranks in November and December. We welcomed the flurry of activity as members renewed their membership for 1982. Members voted to renew a subscription to 'American Birds' which we donate to the Robertson Library, University of Prince Edward Island.

Guest speaker was Pat Gray, an Island resident for the past three years, and formerly from the West Coast. Mrs. Gray, a member of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, spoke eloquently on the subject of "The Harp Seal".

The Harp Seal summers in the waters between Canada's arctic islands and Greenland. Other herds inhabit the waters north of Europe. In the fall, the Canadian herd begins migrating south, arriving off Newfoundland, Labrador and the Magdalen Islands in the late winter near the time when the pups will be born on the ice floes surrounding these shores. On rare occasions a seal herd may reach the Gulf shore of Prince Edward Island. The adult Harp Seal feeds mainly on capelin.

Pat Gray became personally involved when a seal herd arrived off the north shore of the Island in March 1981. Quickly an impromptu seal hunt got underway. Licenses were issued to persons who, having no previous experience in sealing, were given a brief preparatory course in killing seal pups. Curious citizens flocked to the beaches to have a look. Soon Prince Edward Island came in for very unsavoury worldwide publicity. To aggravate the situation, the weather turned bad and caused the ice to break up, dumping helpless seal pups into the water before they were able to fend for themselves. Many perished because of natural causes. Some made it to shore, but that only prolonged their misery. On the beach, seal pups crammed their stomachs with small pebbles, and succumbed.

Separated from its mother, and requiring a special formula and a specific method of administering it, there is little help for an infant Harp Seal, even from would-be helpful human beings. At this point, Pat Gray telephoned for help, and got it - from scientists knowledgeable about seal problems, and from IFWA. Eventually, with the help of scientific know-how, and the devoted care of some Island people, a number of seal pups were supplied with nourishment until they were old enough to be returned to the sea.

What Mrs. Gray wishes to promote is the establishment of a Marine Mammal Sanctuary off the shore of our national park, where such animals would no more be subject to human molestation, and yet at the same time could be viewed from a discreet distance by an interested public.

(by Margaret E. Mallett, Charlottetown)

JANUARY MEETING. The Annual Meeting of the P.E.I. Natural History Society will be held at 8:00 p.m. on Jan. 5th, 1982 in the Provincial Health Building. Guest speaker will be Kathy Martin who will show slides on her past summer's work and adventures while conducting research on Willow Ptarmigan in a tundra area near Churchill in northern Manitoba.

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 1982 are coming in splendidly. If this continues, January should see our membership practically all signed up for another year. This would be the best ever, for which we thank you all. (M.E.M.)

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HAPPY NEW YEAR

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