

Looking at the importance of keeping wildlife trees, healthy soils and variety in forests, the booklet gives options for treating different types of woodlands.

The booklet is free and available from the Environmental Coalition office at 126 Richmond St., Room 1, Charlottetown P.E.I. C1A 1H9; the Root Cellar; and the Voluntary Resource Centre. They will also be available at the October meeting of the Natural History Society. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please enclose \$2.00 to cover handling and postage and mail to ECOPEI at the address above.

## ON FISHERMAN'S BANK

by Dan McAskill

For the past several years one of the Society's members, Dr. David Cairns, has been observing the spawning habits of the Atlantic Herring (Clupea harengus harengus) on Fisherman's Bank, approximately 12 kilometers off Cape Bear. Several members of the Society have had an opportunity to accompany the boat both to count pelagic birds and to see the type of work being carried out.

David uses a variety of boats as observation platforms depending on the type of work being implemented and the availability of the boats. On our trip on August 31st, we used a 28 foot fiberglass boat. As soon as we cleared Georgetown Harbour, I started making the 1/2 hour seabird and mammal surveys developed by David several years ago. As the trip takes 1 1/2 hours, there was time to complete 2 counts during the cruise to the bank, a shoal area only 10 to 25 meters deep. The bird counts showed a transition from terns, Herring Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls, cormorants, and Bonaparte's Gulls to Herring Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls, and Gannets on Fisherman's Bank. The number of birds this far from shore, at times hundreds were in view, speaks of the large number of fish present on the bank during the spawning period.

Once on the bank, the boats Captain and crew, Jim Murchison and Jamie MacDonald, utilized the LORAN to find specific sites on the bank. As each was located by the LORAN coordinates, an underwater video camera tripod unit with an egg depth measuring ruler and an alcohol thermometer to measure temperature was quickly lowered to the bottom. The camera was hooked to a monitor (TV screen) on the boat so David and Jim could determine if eggs had been deposited. By following a predetermined grid, the extent of a spawning bed could be mapped and its size estimated. The ruler could be seen on the screen and the egg depth could be measured so that estimates of egg deposition could be made. Where thick beds of eggs were present they resembled fields of snow. Hard to picture when the temperature on the sea bottom was approximated 17 degrees Centigrade.

The video hookup also provided an excellent picture of bottom life on the banks. In many of the views, winter flounder and cunner were abundant. Several mackerel hand lined off the boat were gorged with herring eggs. In addition to the fish life, David and Jim reported the sighting of both minke and fin whales this year.

## ANIMAL AND PLANT SIGHTINGS

Common Loon - 1 on West River July 25 (EC)

Loon - 1 at Argyle Shore, July 3 (BC)

Red-necked Grebe - 1 at Black Pond, September 2 (RC)

Leach's Storm Petrel - at least 3 off mouth of St. Peter's Bay Aug. 3 (BP)

Double-crested Cormorant - occupying Hillsborough Bridge Piers 1, 2, & 6 on August 30; 1 on Fisherman's Bank on August 31 (JDM)