

Spring Beauty

BY BRUCE MacLAREN

The Spring Beauty (Claytonia caroliniana), a fragile-looking, small plant with attractive pink flowers, is not well known in P.E.I. In Dr. Erskine's first publication on the plants of P.E.I. he reports it only from the New Glasgow area. I have never been able to find it in this area, probably the wrong place or the wrong time. I have, however, found

Spring Beauty quite prevalent in (wouldn't you know it) the Indian Bridge area of the Morell River. I feel sure it is present in other areas, probably overlooked because, unless it is in sun in bloom, it would take a talented botanist to recognize it.

The term "fragile looking" must be a mistake because this small attractive plant finds its way from a small tuber, about the size of a small hazel nut, from at least six inches down, through the roots of birches, elms, etc. The tuber is edible but I have not tried it because it took me well over half an hour to obtain three plants to press for the herbarium at the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa. The tubers are very lightly attached to the root and each time I would get down to the tuber it would break off.

The late Euell Gibbons in "Stalking the Wild Asparagus" refers to a closely related species Claytonia virginia. Apparently the tubers on this species are a good bit larger, and Gibbons is high on the flavour of them when boiled for about 10-15 minutes. If I were stranded at Indian Bridge in late May or early June I'm afraid I would not be able to survive on the tubers from P.E.I.'s Spring Beauty!



Habitat protection best policy

BY TONY DUKE

(This is the second half of a story excerpted from the Fall 1986 issue of Conservation, published by the Department of Lands and Forests in Nova Scotia.)

Also listed as endangered is the eastern cougar, a smaller reddish cousin of the more common western cougar. None have ever been shot or trapped within the province. But every year, a few unconfirmed sightings are reported in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (21 in 1985), so the Department continues to list it as protected during the hunting and trapping season.

Fortunately for the endangered eastern peregrine falcon, which was exterminated from eastern North America by pesticide poisoning and to a lesser degree by habitat loss and shooting, there is a captive breeding program being carried out by the Canadian Wildlife Service. Sixty-one birds hatched in incubators in Alberta have been released around the Bay of Fundy since 1982 and Nova Scotians get an occasional glimpse of them near the Bay. We hope this small nucleus of birds will return to breed and develop into a self-sustaining population.

The right whale gets its name from the first whale hunters who felt it