

Nova Scotia's wildlife at home at Shubenacadie

Some of the most enchanting hosts and hostesses you fill find anywhere in this province are the furred and feathered ones at the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park.

This sanctuary, operated by the provincial government, covers a 1,600-acre area and is open to the public free of

charge. (It must be the last tourist attraction around that does not have an admission charge or ask for donations.) An adjacent camping spot helps to make the site popular in the summer, as well.

You reach the park by taking 102 or 2 to Shubenacadie. Watch the signs for the turn-off

to the right. (Signs along the 102 state "Wildlife park"; one sign in particular reads: "Musquodoboit Valley Wildlife Park, which is misleading. While it indicates a general direction for two different places, it could suggest to a stranger that there was another wildlife park in the

Musquodoboit Valley. Perhaps it could be clarified.)

Having taken the turnoff at Shubenacadie, a short winding road leads you to the parking area with the campsite on the left and the wildlife park on the right. It is not uncommon for the park to have 5,000 — 7,000 visitors a day on summer weekends.

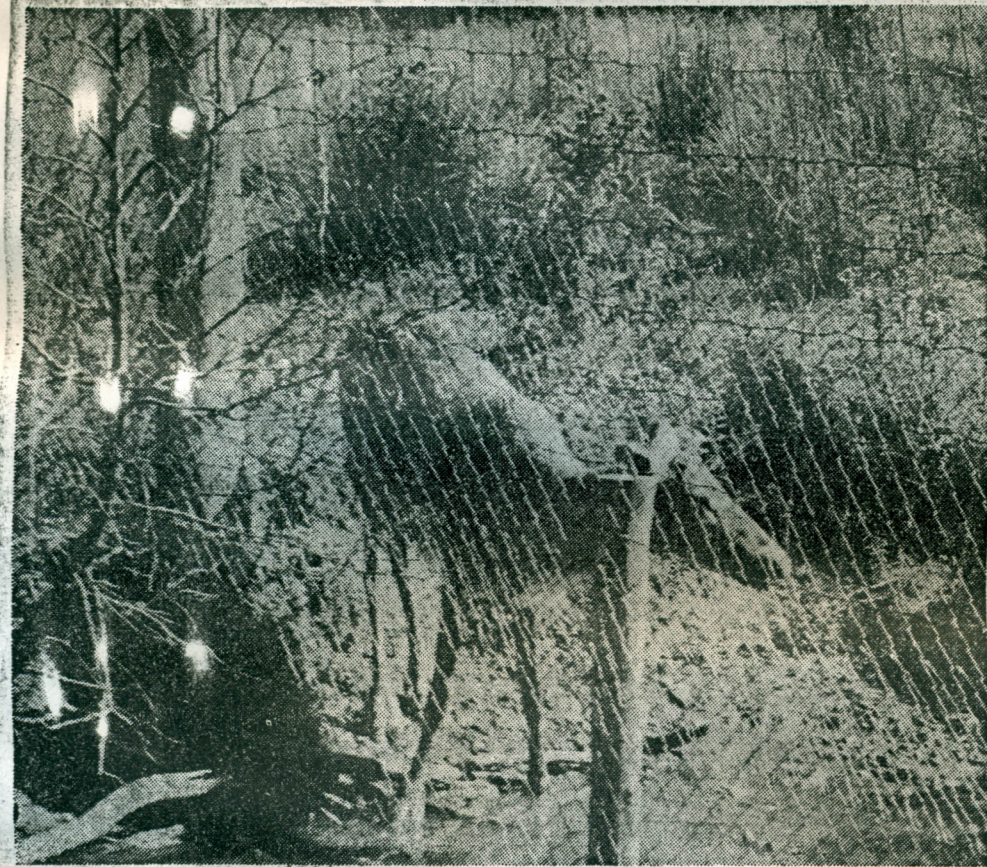
On my visit, James Evans and Mindy Gordon of the park staff, showed me around. Birds and animals are housed in small pens, in ponds and fenced off areas, and, in the case of the moose and caribou, in fenced sections of 10 or more acres in size.

The park entrance is along one side of the deer pen and the deer, including some fawns, come to the fence to inspect visitors.

A prime attraction is the otter pen. It's inhabited by one otter at present, a female named Murphy (She came from Murphy's Cove), who has all the stage presence of a vaudeville troupier.

Also on the lookout for the limelight are the young raccoons in another large pen. They were raised by hand at the park, among many young animals and birds, which are reared by the attendants.

Young wild creatures, a young bear cub at the park is



an example, are sometimes found along the roads and taken to the park where they are cared for and, if the park does not have room, sent to other parks or zoos.

"We've also raised about 200 wood ducks this year," said Mindy, "some of them to be let go in other parts of the province."

The park also contains wolverines, a skunk, mink, a marten, porcupines, bears, seals, Aoudad sheep and Sable Island ponies.

The dry weather this past summer presented a problem with water levels in the ponds and bird areas, and it was necessary to pump additional

water from nearby lakes.

Staff are proud of the park's record for raising rare birds in captivity, including the trumpeter swans, in that instance for the first time in captivity.

The peacocks (losing the beauty of their tails at this time of year) have the run of the place. "They go all over, on top of the cages, everywhere," said Mindy. "People get anxious and tell us 'The birds are out' but they are allowed to roam free. Within the park."

There is a small herd of caribou, but they have a large area in which to roam and may not always be on display.

There are two moose, both cows, and they come down to a small shed for food and can be seen then.

Feeding is a major task, with a varied menu. Concocting the otter's food is a special task, and involves preparing a mixture of ground meat, eggs, bran, liver, oatmeal, charcoal and other items.

A pair of cougars occupies one pen and there are two pairs of bobcats or lynx.

Signs everywhere urge people not to feed animals and not to leave litter, which may be harmful, lying about. Signs also advise that anyone molesting the birds or animals will be asked to leave. "We've had little trouble" said Evans, "since people know we mean business. The RCMP are on call and we won't put up with any trouble."

The park will remain open until Thanksgiving, possibly until the end of October or early November if the flow of visitors remains steady.

Seeking better life for animals in Shubenacadie Wildlife Park

By BARBARA HINDS
Staff Reporter

Animals in Shubenacadie Wildlife Park will have a better life if the government acts on a brief presented to the department of lands and forests by Mrs. Elizabeth Murray of Halifax.

She wants the park to have bigger cages, natural grounds in which animals can exercise, better protection for animals from the public to prevent teasing and injury sometimes deliberately inflicted and prevention of poaching and illegal hunting in the game sanctuary.

According to the minister, Benoit Comeau, the department will do the best it can with the funds at its disposal to adopt some of Mrs. Murray's suggestions.

Aware of the increased cost of park operation entailed in the suggested improvements, Mrs. Murray proposed a 50 cent charge be made for admission. School outings would be exempt.

Mrs. Murray said if the public were informed why a charge was made, through posting notice to tell them it was for provision of such things as better animal cages, they would be willing to pay.

Animals such as cougar, raccoons, lynx, fox, bear, wolverine and badger were now housed in cages with no natural environment, she said.

With the exception of the bears, the largest cages are only 10 feet by 20 feet, she said.

Larger areas should be made available to the animals. Cages could be

placed with accessibility to an outdoor run on natural ground for summer. Dens could be built to connect with summer and winter quarters.

Present protection of the animals from humans was most inadequate, she said.

Signs saying: "Do not feed," or "Do not touch" were largely ignored and animals were vulnerable to all sorts of feeding and garbage.

Stricter penalties should be imposed for those who were caught either teasing, feeding or injuring the animals.

She said she strongly recommended a larger, more reliable and better informed park staff, to be on the move at all times while on duty in the park. They would be more effective and better recognized if they were given a distinctive uniform or badge.

Existing staff members were unable to properly patrol both the animal park and wildlife refuge, resulting in illegal hunting and poaching, she said. At least two full-time rangers should patrol the game refuge during the hunting season, she said, and a boat and snowmobile should be available to the rangers to make their work easier.

Mrs. Murray has reared a wide variety of wild animals in Africa and Australia. She has toured public schools in the area, teaching children basic respect for Nova Scotia's wildlife, and she is president of the Women's Auxiliary of the Halifax Wildlife Association.

Sod turned for environment centre

SHUBENACADIE — Lands and Forest Minister Vincent MacLean turned the sod Wednesday at the site of the new Forest Environment Centre to be built here to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Nova Scotia department of lands and forests.

The new centre will be located at the entrance to the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, an attraction operated by the department which draws more than 250,000 visitors a year.

Construction of the \$250,000 facility is expected to begin next spring with completion scheduled for late summer or early autumn.

"One couldn't have picked a better spot to locate an interpretation centre to demonstrate to a large visiting audience the many ways our forest resources are used today," Mr. MacLean said.

He said the department's concept of forest use has changed from a single fibre-oriented viewpoint to one of multiple forest resource use. It is no longer acceptable to deny public use of forest lands for reasonable recreational purposes and, as a consequence, the department is now directing its planning efforts in a more comprehensive manner to include forest fibre utilization, recreational pursuits and wildlife management, he said.

A concept of a Forest Environment Centre has been prepared in which resource will be interpreted by means of illustration and displays. This interpretation will bring to the public the significance and necessity of viewing our forest resources as an entity and the need for integrated land use.

The centre also will provide an additional learning experience

to the great numbers of children who visit the wildlife park.

Dr. G. W. I. Creighton, Halifax, who served as deputy-minister of the department from 1949 to 1969, paid tribute to Eldon Pace, supervisor of the wildlife

park. He said the park had its origins in the late 1940s when the fish and game association approached the department to raise pheasants. Mr. Pace was chosen to head the project.

Since that time, the park has

developed into one of the finest attractions of its kind and Mr. Pace had become renowned for his success in raising rare and endangered species of waterfowl.

Also participating in the ceremony were John Hawkins, agriculture minister and chairman of treasury board; Colchester MLA's Melinda MacLean and Floyd Tucker; lands and forest deputy-minister R. H. Burgess; Don Eldridge, Truro, executive director of the Nova Scotia Forests Products Association; and Hugh Fair, Wolfville, chairman of the Forest Practices Improvement Board and the centre's planning and construction committee.

The design of the Forest Environment Centre consists of five hexagonal pods clustered around a central courtyard. All visitors to the wildlife park will pass through the courtyard and can stop to look at the demonstrations in the display areas on their way into or out of the park.

The structure will be made entirely of Nova Scotia wood such as white pine, hemlock and spruce, with rough hewn planks and beams for steps and seating areas.

The centre will also house administration and park offices.

Claims Canada geese air-borne nuisances

MILFORD — Canada geese, which are big attractions at the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, are air-borne nuisances and councillor Max Mosher wants to get rid of them from the Shubenacadie watershed area of Snides Lake.

Coun. Mosher told the East Hants municipal council meeting here that he is prepared to circulate a petition among residents to see what can be done about the "essence of goose" being left by geese swimming on the lake.

He said about 200 geese are on the lake at times and so far they have managed to keep it free of ice.

Merle Prime, department of lands and forests, has suggested it might be possible to

change hunting regulations so the geese could be shot around the watershed area. Another suggestion was scare devices, such as those used by blueberry growers to keep birds from their crops. Warden James MacKenzie of Enfield said the department should buy the scare devices because the birds are kept at the department sanctuary. Wild geese go to the sanctuary to feed, then both wild and tame come to the lake.

Although no one offered to be council's official goose-counter, they agreed the numbers are likely to increase if no action is taken. They will petition both the departments of health and lands and forests to take action.

Centre named in honour of retired deputy

By CLARENCE ROBERTS
Truro bureau

SHUBENACADIE—The man who has been credited with many innovative changes in the forest industry was honoured Friday by having the forest environment centre at the wildlife park here named after him.

Officially opened by Lands and Forests Minister George Henley, the Creighton Forest Environment Centre was named after Dr. G. W. I. Creighton, a former deputy minister of the department.

Mr. Henley said the forest environment centre was named in honour of Dr. Creighton in recognition of "a life devoted to the preservation and proper management of the province's forests."

The centre, at the entrance to the wildlife park, takes the form of five hexagonal modules with a diameter of 36 feet each, joined together by an open display area.

Three of the five pavilions house colourful displays tracing the history of forestry in the province, the development of the department; native trees, their nurturing and harvesting; land use and wildlife in its natural habitat.

Six guides are employed at the centre which will be open all summer. Constructed entirely of native lumber, the structure cost \$250,000 including the displays. The sod was turned Dec. 22, 1976, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the formation of the department.



DR. G. W. I. CREIGHTON

In paying tribute to Dr. Creighton, Bob Burgess, a former deputy minister of lands and forests, said Dr. Creighton was responsible for starting a survey of crown lands; setting up a policy governing crown lands; used aerial photos to aid cruising; ensuring crown land was properly managed; starting reforestation programs; establishing good public relations between lumber and pulp companies and landowners; exchanging crown lands for private holdings to facilitate management; insisting forest fires

be brought under control and building up the equipment and personnel for the job; and demonstrating concern for youth by advocating the establishment of the wildlife park.

Dr. Creighton listed several people he worked with who helped build up the department and establish programs.

He paid particular tribute to Eldon Pace, the present superintendent of the Shubenacadie wildlife park, who started out in the business as a forest ranger and started raising pheasants and other birds.

Eventually 400 acres were found in the Shubenacadie and the park was established and it continued to grow, Dr. Creighton said.

The park attracts more than 250,000 visitors-a-year and the Creighton Forest Environment Centre will further the popularity and usefulness of the park, Mr. Henley said.

The firm of J. Leslie J. F. Isenor Construction Ltd., Shubenacadie, erected the buildings, which were designed by the architectural firm of Leslie R. Fairn and Associates of Halifax. Design Associates of Charlottetown prepared the displays.



SANDY AND SABLE

Two Sable Island horses, Sandy and Sable, were added to the animal population at the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park this year. Shown making friends with them is Heather Willis of Gay's River, who was

employed at the park this summer. She is the first woman in the 20 years the park has been operating to be employed there.

Shubenacadie Park Takes On New Look This Year

By HATTIE DENSMORE

SHUBENACADIE — The Shubenacadie Wild Life Park has taken on a new look this year with an expanded park and picnic area which gives the family visitors lots of room to play as well as enjoy a rest and lunch.

The park now contains about 1,600 acres.

Hundreds of people came Sunday as the warm sun made it a beautiful spot to be. Last year the park had 210,000 visitors and if the present trend continues it could well be topped long before the season ends this year.

The newest addition to the

park is three bear cubs. Superintendent Eldon Pace says that mama bear is a very cross animal and these days is well caged with her youngsters. Papa bear struts around in a paddock next to her cage, as if he was really all that proud of the first babies the two bears have produced in captivity.

The Mouflon sheep weren't as lucky as the bears and they didn't produce young this year. They are natives of Croisica and instead of greeting visitors from their home at the entrance to the park this year they're being moved to a 20-foot man-made mountain in the park grounds.

Breeding animals in captivity isn't a job for amateurs and Mr. Pace is internationally famous for his work. In addition to the many trophies he's won in other years, in 1968 he won the International Wild Waterfowl award for the outstanding game breeder in the world. He also won the Master Breeders Bronze Medal for outstanding game propagating. Mr. Pace is very happy with the park extension as he feels it will give the children a place to romp and play before they enter the park to see the animals. It's always helpful when some of their steam is run off before they get to the animals. He recommends when bus loads of children come that there be

one adult to each 10 children for supervision. He feels that if the children are in small groups they see more and the supervisors can read them the animals story posted on cages. It also eliminates the danger of over zealous children either teasing or making too much noise which has upset animals to the extent that they will kill their young.

"Lottie" is a real favorite with everyone as she takes a public bath completely oblivious of the many eyes upon her. She's a 35 pounds of fighting fury and swims with another female otter in their large cage. Lottie has only one friend; Mr. Pace, and as far as she is concerned the rest can move on. Mr. Pace

takes her out for a walk on her harness and she will give him a slobbery kiss for his kindness.

Animals and birds have come to the park both by purchase and trading from all over the world. There are \$20,000 worth of cranes there and many many more. At feeding time wild birds come to the sanctuary and feed too. There's no hunting allowed at any time. Included in the list of animals there are the perky ground squirrels, horned owl, wildcats, badgers, lynx, cougars, wolverines, caribou, fisher, porcupine, moose and the beautiful deer. They live a happy and protected life under the watchful eyes of their caretaker.



Popular peacock is one of the exhibits not native to Nova Scotia.



The park, which was visited by 180,000 persons last year,
includes five wildcats.

Success story of the Shubenacadie Park

SHUBENACADIE (Special) — From a meager portable display booth and a single pen of pheasants to one of Nova Scotia's largest and most popular attractions—that is the story of the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park.

The brainchild and pet project of Eldon Pace, park superintendent since its inception, it has become internationally known for its wildlife conservation, and now attracts over 200,000 visitors a year from all corners of the globe.

During the spring of 1950 the department of lands and forests built one small pen for rearing pheasants for release throughout the province. As more pheasants were reared and the number of pens increased, Nova Scotians became increasingly aware of the success of the project and began to bring in abandoned and injured animals, such as raccoons and fox cubs.

Around the same time a law was passed in the province, prohibiting people to keep such wild animals as deer, bobcats, otter, bear and moose, in cages.

"We traveled around the province and gathered up some of the animals found in captivity," says Mr. Pace. "We had to find somewhere to put them."

Coupled with public support and enthusiasm for the travelling display, which showed movies and housed a few of the more common animals, the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park was unofficially born in 1954.



Visitors amble leisurely through the Shubenacadie admission charge. The park closes for the season this Wildlife Park, one of the few places left with no weekend.