



SCOUTING-EDUCATION IN NATURAL HISTORY

by Pat Doyle, Charlottetown

The Scouting Movement in Canada is presently celebrating its 75th anniversary. Prince Edward Island has also had a long history in Scouting with over 70 years involvement. Records date back to 1909-1910 when patrols were first established at Alberton, Charlottetown and Summerside.

1983 is also the 125th anniversary of the birthday of Lord Baden-Powell, Scouting's founder. 'BP' had an enviable military career and while still in the army wrote a book entitled "Aids to Scouting", designed to assist in the training of army scouts. Thinking that young boys could also benefit from the scouting experience, he wrote another book called "Scouting for Boys". From interest developed from this book and discussions with Sir Dillion Smith (founder of the Boy's Brigade) a camp was organized in July and August of 1907 on Brownsea Island in England. This is generally accepted as the birth of the Boy Scout Movement.

Today scouting on the Island involves boys aged 5-17 years, grouped to form Beaver Colonies (5-7 years), Wolf Cub Packs (8-10 years), Scout Patrols, Venturers and Rovers. Scouts are encouraged to be active in their communities as well as the natural environment. The majority of activities and events are outdoors, and camping, campcraft, hiking, field trips and orienteering form the core of the program.

Scouting by its very nature has a close affiliation with natural history. This is manifested in a number of ways, particularly since the movement places a strong emphasis on harmonious relationships among scouts, their fellow man and the natural environment. It goes further than the teaching of basic survival skills by attempting to engender a respect for nature through observation, identification and study of our natural plants and animals.

The Provincial Boy Scout Council has established two permanent camping areas at Mt. Buchanan and Riverdale. It is here that the boys have the opportunity during any season to live in close proximity with nature. The diversity of plant and animal communities at these sites exposes boys to the beauty, complexity and fragility of life forms. It is hoped that from these experiences that a truly environmentally conscious adult may develop.

"Trees for Canada" this spring marks its 10th birthday as a major fund raising activity. Since its inception, Scouts have planted 22 million seedlings across the country. Last year alone 90,000 boys and leaders planted 2½ million seedlings and collected \$596,000. This annual project is typical of Scouting ideals as the funds are used to help run local programs as well as support overseas development projects. Scouts Canada works closely with CIDA in these international areas. "Trees for Canada" provides a real program plus to all levels of scouting by emphasizing the outdoors, conservation and environmental objectives; and exercising the principles of service, wise use of resources, doing one's best and being prepared.

The Scout movement on the Island has benefitted tremendously from the support given it by the many volunteers in all levels and aspects of the program. The natural history elements have been greatly enhanced by a number of individuals but particularly by the late J. Frank Gaudet who had served as a leader and member of the Provincial Council for many years. Through his work as Provincial Forrester he passed on much of his experience and love for the Island environment to hundreds of boys and leaders.