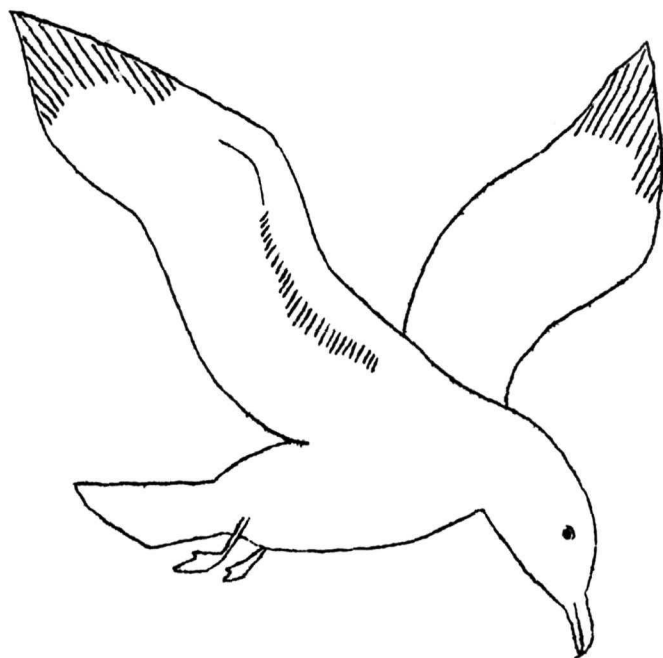


# NATURE NOTES FROM ACADIA

VOL. 1

AUGUST, 1932

NO. 2



## ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

### BAR HARBOR, MAINE

Department of the Interior

National Park Service

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
ACADIA NATIONAL PARK  
BAR HARBOR, MAINE

NATURE NOTES FROM ACADIA

Volume 1

August, 1932

Number 2

George B. Dorr, Superintendent  
B. L. Hadley, Chief Ranger  
Arthur Stupka, Ranger-Naturalist, Editor

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## AUGUST IN ACADIA



A band of swallows strung out along the lines of electric wires which follow the country road, asters and goldenrods and Pearly Everlasting in the fields, the drone of the dog-day cicada overhead, and a dash of crimson upon the Woodbine and the maples. It is August in Acadia, a lull-period between green summer and colorful autumn.

Silence reigns in the ranks of the feathered choristers. Nesting cares are, for the most part, at an end while the restlessness of migration time has not yet begun in earnest. This is the month of molting, and few are the birds who continue to sing. The talkative Red-eyed Vireo, the ever-cheerful Chickadee, the Flicker and a few others are sometimes heard, but these at best constitute a mere handful.

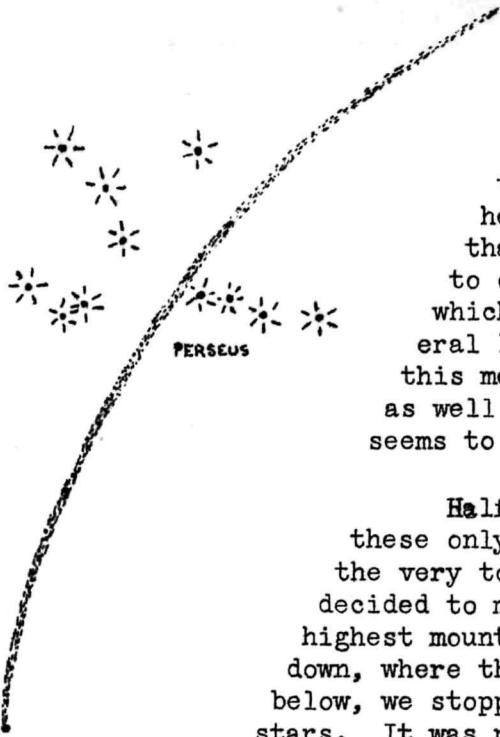
Daisies now appear frayed and bedraggled and the abundant roadside Fireweed has lost its blooms. These and other flowers of early summer are fading before the pageant of thistles, asters, goldenrods, and other late summer blossoms. The caps of many bright-colored mushrooms are being reared above the leaf-mold in the flowerless woods, dotting the forest floor with a hundred different hues. At night the insect chorus is best in open meadows where innumerable six-legged musicians scrape and fiddle as though to out-do their brothers.

In the woods the squirrels are beginning to cut the green fruits from the Beech, the Arbor Vitae, the White Birch, and from other trees. In places the ground is strewn with fresh cuttings.

August is the month of wild berries - red, orange, blue, black, white, and numerous other colors. Of these, red and its various shades, predominate, and some of our most attractive wild fruits are so colored. Bunchberry, Hobblebush, Red Elder, Sumac, Cherry, Shadbush, Mountain Holly, Twisted Stalk, Partridgeberry, Baneberry, American Yew, Raspberry, Mountain Cranberry, Trillium, and others have fruits which are some shade of crimson.

The year seems to slumber in August, so quiet are the wild things. But before the month has passed the face of the fields can hardly deny the coming of autumn's fiery legions. Our summer passes with the passing of the Maize Moon.

## THE TEARS OF ST. LAWRENCE



Shortly after midnight, on August 12, we left Bar Harbor and made for the Cadillac Mountain road. The moon had set and the sky overhead was bright with stars. All indications were that this was to be an ideal night during which to observe the annual spectacular shower of meteors which streak across the northeastern sky in the general location of the constellation Perseus. Although this meteoric shower is observable some nights before as well as some nights after the date we had chosen, it seems to be at its best on the night of August 11-12.

Half way to the summit we encountered fog banks and these only became more dense as we continued upward. On the very top the fog was quite heavy and we therefore decided to make our observations from a lower point on this highest mountain on the island. About two-thirds of the way down, where the road widens, with beautiful Eagle Lake just below, we stopped and made ready for our count of shooting stars. It was now 1:45 standard time, and the sky was exceptionally clear.

We sat back to back, each intent on counting as many meteors in one-half of the sky as could be observed. From this point on our story may as well be in periodic form:

1:45 until 2:00 - Together we saw 28 of the Perseid meteors in this first 15-minute period. A cool steady wind kept rustling the nearby low-growing birches creating the only night sound. Cassiopeia overhead in the Milky Way and the Big Dipper on the horizon.

2:00 until 2:15 - A total of 26 streakers across the starry sky.

2:15 until 2:30 - At least 38 visible shooting stars, several of which were exceptionally spectacular streamers. At 2:20 we were entertained by the wild lonely laughter of a loon on the lake below us and at 2:25 the northern horizon was illuminated by short rays coming from a low dim bow of the Northern Lights.

2:30 until 2:45 - Our greatest number of meteors was counted in this period - 54 in all. Many of these were bright and sometimes three or four followed one another in very rapid succession. The Northern Lights growing dim.

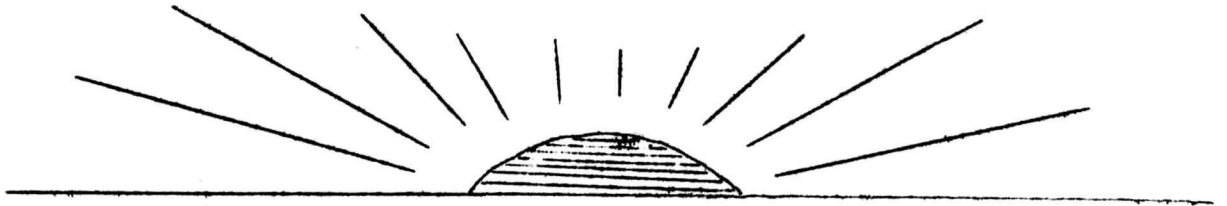
2:45-3:00 - In this, our last period, 30 shooting stars were to be seen. Venus, the brilliant morning star, made its appearance above the mountain top in this period.

(continued on next page)

Altogether in the one hour and 15-minute period during which we watched, a total of 176 meteors were counted. Although there was a concentration in the general direction of Perseus, some streakers were seen in almost all parts of the sky. After 3 o'clock the stars grew noticeably more dim and we gave up our count.

The August meteors, sometimes known as "The Tears of St. Lawrence" represent one of the finest of celestial displays. Astronomers tell us that they are exceedingly numerous and very small, the size of a pebble or less. They are thought to be fragments of comets which ignite when they dash into our atmosphere at a speed of from seven to 49 miles per second. Many strike the earth, but due to their reduction by combustion, virtually all are in the form of small grains of dust.

- Ranger-Naturalist



#### WILD LIFE ALONG THE HIGHWAYS

We who patrol the roads through Acadia National Park have an excellent opportunity to observe wild life on the island. It may be early morning when we open the Cadillac Mountain Road for those who wish to see the sun rise from that summit that a glimpse of a mother deer and her fawn may be had when we round a bend in the highway. Perhaps this couple has been surprised at its feeding. Away will go the mother, stopping after a few bounds, perhaps, to look back after the fawn who, apparently fascinated by the headlights, may hesitate before deciding to follow as best it can. But the mother deer will wait, and sometimes the two will watch us from the forested road-banks until we are out of sight.

From Cadillac's summit, during blueberry season, we sometimes can see hundreds of gulls feeding on the ripe fruit on the nearby mountain tops. Occasionally the noble bald eagle is seen wheeling high overhead, or perhaps we are fortunate enough to witness his thrilling act of robbing the Osprey of its fish. A glimpse of even the much smaller forms of wild life, especially squirrels and small birds, make our patrol of the highways all the more pleasant.

- Vernon A. McQuinn  
Temporary Ranger

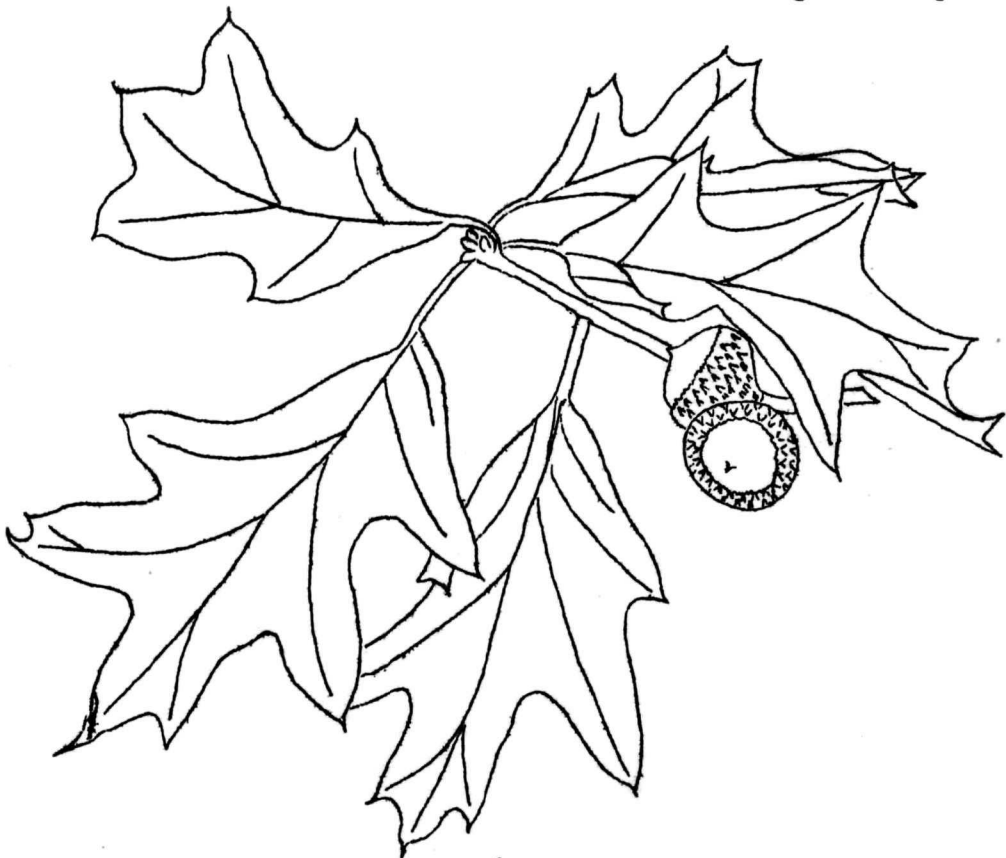
## BEAR OAK

Since the Bear or Scrub Oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*) on Mount Desert Island is confined to the summit of Acadia Mountain, it naturally attracts considerable attention. Moore and Taylor, in their extensive report on the vegetation of this island remark that "Perhaps no other plant is so apparently out of key with its environment." The plants, except on the north slope, come down to the 225 foot contour and grow clear to the summit (680 feet). This is the same species of oak that covers thousands of acres on the hot sandy plains of Long Island and New Jersey.

How this scrubby tree got started and why it does not grow on other mountains on the island remain a mystery. According to the studies made by the botanists already referred to, several other mountain summits furnish an environment almost identical to that found on Acadia, yet not a single plant of it has been found elsewhere on the island.

The trees grow 5 to 8 feet high on the average and form close matty clumps. The limbs are stout and intertwining and the leaves are distinctly bi-colored - a dark green above and a downy gray on the under surface. The illustration below shows the natural size of the leaves and acorns.

- Margaret Stupka



## A GREEN SNAKE FAMILY



HEAD OF  
GREEN SNAKE  
X2

In late July, during the course of one of our Children's afternoons, we came upon an old stump in an open grassy field near Bar Harbor. The bark around it was loose and, being in quest of any living thing which might be of interest to the group, I started to remove it. Hardly had the first strippings been scaled off when suddenly a full-grown Green Snake and a cluster of four of its white eggs were exposed to view. All were collected by the now much interested party and we proceeded on our way.

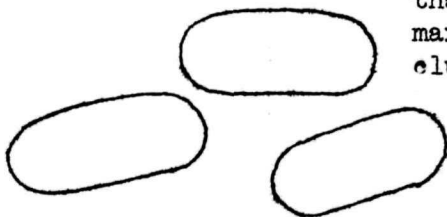
Two or three more stumps in the near vicinity were examined but these yielded no treasures. But our real find was not far away. Within a hundred yards of where the first strike was made we came upon a large punky old stump of some tree which had been cut close to the ground. What bark there was around it was easily removed, and to our great surprise and delight a cluster of 30 eggs of the same species of snake was discovered. Some of these were as though glued together in clusters of six or eight eggs, and all were neatly tucked away in the soft red rotted wood of the old stump, just inside the bark.

We were now "snake-minded," and to the enjoyment of everyone a total of eight Green Snakes was collected in the hour spent in the nearby grassy fields.

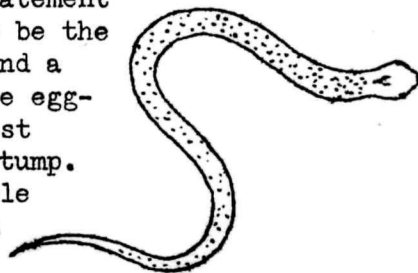
Upon returning to the Park Office I packed a number of the eggs into a container which I had filled with soft well-rotted wood and in the days that followed the substance which surrounded the eggs was kept moistened. We were hopeful.

Twenty days later, on August 17, four baby Green Snakes, each measuring around four and one-half inches, had hatched. On the following day two more had burst through the soft white leathery shells. On August 19, three additional snakelings had their little heads more or less out of the eggs in which their grayish bodies were coiled. These, however, did not emerge until on the following day. On the 22nd, baby Green Snake number 10 had the tip of its nose out of the egg. All were of approximately the same size, about four and one-half inches from tip to tip.

Since Ditmars, in his "Reptile Book," makes the statement that about a dozen eggs seem to be the maximum number deposited, to find a cluster of 30 would point to the egg-laying activities of at least three females in this one stump. The absence of other suitable places for egg-deposition in this area probably accounts for this concentration.



EGGS OF GREEN SNAKE X1



NEWLY-HATCHED YOUNG X1

- Ranger-Naturalist

## LIFE IN THE RUINS

As I passed a turn in the road near the northern part of Somes Sound my attention was drawn to what must have been over a score of spider webs which festooned the dead remnants of a flooded and scattered stand of shrubs and low trees. The heavy morning fog outlined these webs so distinctly that they glistened like so many silver wires - quite a contrast to the gaunt, black, skinny fingers of the dead vegetation which supported them. It were as though nature had brought new beauty and new life to this swamp land, new raiments to replace the old.

In nature's scheme of things death is quite as important as life. The changing seasons blow life into new flowers, but they also blow life out of the old. Yet there seems to be a decided tendency on the part of our mother earth to cover up whatever is dead and dying, to shun that which is barren and empty. A wild animal dies in the fields, but how rarely we find its body. Scavengers reduce it to nothingness in a relatively short time. The face of the fields breathes life, not death.

One of our New England nature writers once made the statement that the "deadest" trees in the woods are the "livest" and fullest of fruit - for the naturalist. A tree may die, but invariably a new form of life moves in. Lichens and mosses grow upon its bark and insects and other forms of life find habitation in its trunk. Woodpeckers may hammer their nesting sites there, and in time, when these birds fail to return, blue-birds, flying squirrels, or wood mice may take up residence there. Not until it has been absorbed by the earth from whence it came can we call a dead tree dead.

The barren rocks in time become coated with lichens, mosses, ferns, and flowering plants. Wherever there is a vacancy the surrounding environment tends to engulf it. Death is important, but it becomes concealed by a cyclic omnipotent life. Nature's graves are soon obscured by flowers.

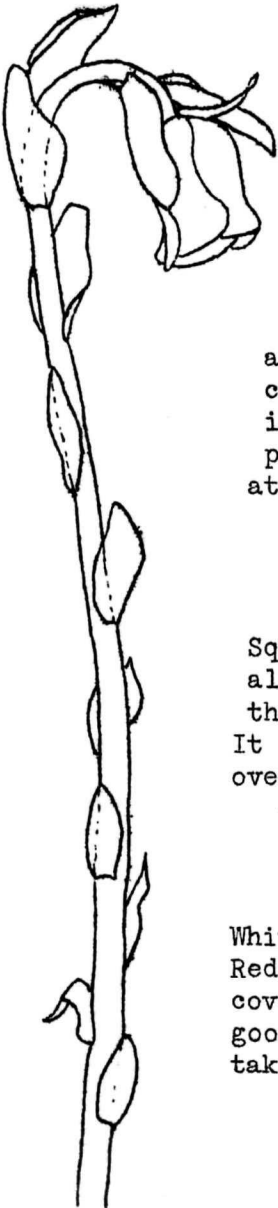
- Ranger-Naturalist





## Miscellaneous Notes

Both the Indian Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) and its cousin the Pine Sap (*Hypopitys americana*) are at the height of their flowering season in early and middle August in Acadia National Park. At the two wildflower exhibits maintained in the park no plants attract as much attention as these two interesting saprophytes. The former, sometimes called Ghost-flower, is a clean white in color when it first appears above the leaf-mold whereas the latter is lemon-yellow in color throughout. Both plants turn dark upon drying. The accompanying life-size illustrations show their respective habits of growth.



INDIAN PIPE

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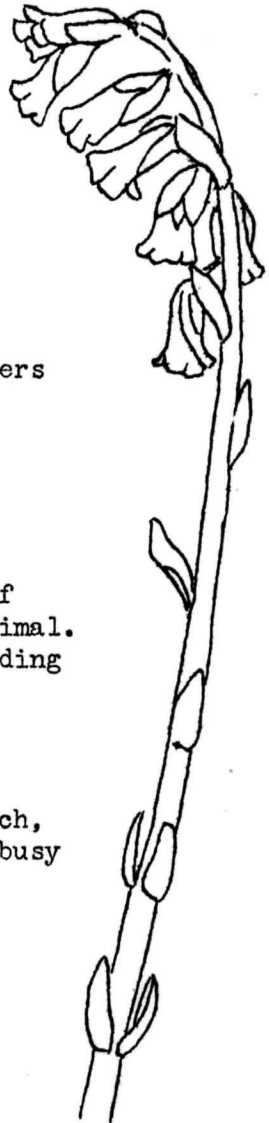
Early in August, in the woods near the southern tip of Echo Lake, a party guided by the Ranger-Naturalist and made up of members of the Appalachian Mountain Club Camp, came upon an excellent and unusually large specimen of the Fly Agaric or Fly Amanita (*Amanita muscaria*). This plant measured exactly 12 inches from top of cap to base of volva and the freckled and somewhat depressed cap, bright orange at its center fading to yellow along the edge, was seven inches broad. This strikingly-colored species is poisonous and has been found in greater or less numbers at all elevations in the park area.

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During the month, a specimen of Mearns Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus macrotis*) was found dead along the highway south of Bar Harbor. This is one of the few summer records for this uncommon nocturnal animal. It probably had been struck by a passing car while gliding over the road.

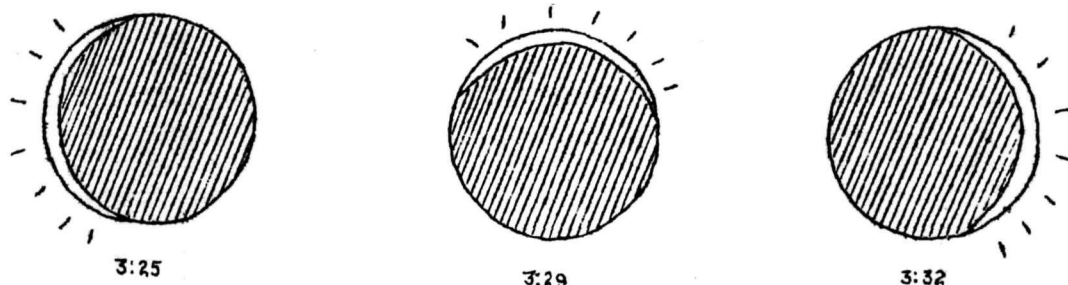
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Fruits from the Arbor Vitae, Red Oak, Spruce, Beech, White Birch, and Moosewood Maple are being cut by the busy Red Squirrels. In places the forest floor is fairly covered by recent cuttings. The trees are yielding good crops this year and the squirrels are evidently taking advantage of the bountiful wild harvest.



PINE SAP

### THE SUN'S ECLIPSE AT ACADIA



On the afternoon of August 31, at least 3000 people armed with fogged film negatives and colored glasses assembled upon the summit of Cadillac Mountain to witness the sun's eclipse. In this region this most spectacular of celestial phenomena was 98 per cent total. The afternoon was fairly clear with very little wind.

Shortly after 2:15 (standard time) the first exclamation, "It's starting on the right," was heard and by 2:30 the nick in the sun was prominent. At least 50 per cent of the sun was obscured by the moon's shadow at 3:00 o'clock. At 3:20 one of the members of the Ranger-Naturalist's party who had brought a thermometer as part of his equipment remarked that the temperature had dropped exactly 14 degrees since 2:35. At this same time (3:20) readings on a photographic exposure meter indicated that photographically the sunlight was approximately one-fifth as strong.

An air of tenseness was felt throughout the group at 3:25 when the sun was almost obliterated by the moon. The eclipse was now at a maximum (98 per cent total) for this region. The air had become cool and the distant islands were enveloped in a noticeably dim grayish light. Overhead the sky was blue. The sun now appeared as a very narrow crescent. Little clouds of gnats suddenly became noticeable on the mountain top.

But the climax was soon at an end. Slowly the sun's bright crescent began to increase in size and the crowds on the summit began to disperse. The grand celestial performance was now on the wane.

- Ranger-Naturalist

NATURE NOTES FROM ACADIA  
Acadia National Park - Bar Harbor, Maine

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(Compiled by Margaret Stupka)  
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