Sods, Soil, and Spades: The Acadians at Grand Pre and their Dykeland Legacy

Sherman Bleakney is widely known in Canada as a zoologist of remarkably diverse interests and publications. As curator of amphibians, reptiles and fish at the National Museum of Canada from 1952 to 1958 his expeditions from the Maritimes to Alberta doubled the national herpetology collection to 14,000 specimens. He published a ground-breaking analysis of the distribution of amphibians and reptiles in Eastern Canada (Bleakney 1958) based on his 1956 Ph.D. thesis from McGill University supervised by legendary Max Dunbar, the first Ph.D. in herpetology at a Canadian university (Cook 2007). In 1958 he returned to Nova Scotia where he had been raised, and to Acadia University where he had obtained his B.S.c and M.Sc., to teach zoology and where he has remained until and past retirement. Although initially his herpetological contributions continued there, particularly on both freshwater and marine turtles, he became increasingly immersed in publishing on fishes and invertebrates of the marine ecosystem of the Minas Basin, culminating in a book on nudibranchs (Bleakney 1996).

Since 1994 he has further broadened his environmental perspective and turned his critical trained eye and literary skills and enthusiasm to the dykes originally built by the French settlers (Acadians) along the Minas Basin at the head of the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia. The result is a fascinatingly detailed and thoroughly documented history and construction analysis, with sections on the geology, post-glacial events, and fauna of an area which boasts the world’s highest tides and the land reclaimed and protected from them. For this he has been able to draw on written and oral accounts and has paid particular tribute not only to the builders but also to those who left an accurate record of techniques of dyking brought from the low countries of Europe and adapted to the local conditions.

**Literature Cited**


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**ZOOLOGY**


