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BUTTERFLY COLLECTING IN LABRADOR AND NEWFOUNDLAND

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In a previous article (Ferris, 1974), observations on arctic collecting were reported, but little was mentioned about the eastern arctic. During July, 1975, the author collected extensively in Newfoundland and Labrador. Although somewhat expensive, travel to these areas now is quite easy, and some of my experiences are presented here.

Both Gander on the main island of Newfoundland and St. John's in the Avalon Peninsula are served by Air Canada jets from various points in Canada and the U.S. Boston is a convenient departure point. Newfoundland is well connected by paved roads. The principal one is Hwy. 1, the Transcanada Highway, which links St. John's in the southeast and Channel-Port-aux-Basques 565 miles away on the southwest coast, passing through Gander, Grand Falls, Deer Lake, and Corner Brook on the way. Numerous secondary roads, many paved, permit access to coastal and bay areas including St. Anthony on the northern tip of Newfoundland. Rental cars are available from three major and several smaller auto rental agencies.

One can travel from Newfoundland to Labrador by air or ship. The Canadian National Railway system operates summer passenger boat service from St. John's, Lewisporte, and other ports in Newfoundland to ports in Labrador as far north as Nain (ca. 57° N). This service typically begins from early to mid-July depending upon breakup of the arctic ice. Eastern Provincial Airways jets connect St. John's, Gander, and Deer Lake, Nfld. with Goose Bay and several other communities in southern Labdr. Labrador Airways, Ltd. serves Hopedale, Davis Inlet, and Nain by twice-a-week float planes. Charter flights are

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available to other areas. These flights, however, are strongly dependent upon weather conditions, and one should plan on alternative travel by ship if possible. During forest fire season, flights are curtailed, and the company generally caters to the charter trade over the regularly scheduled passengers. Nain is the northern most community regularly served by air or ship.

For those wishing to drive from the States to Newfoundland (not Labrador), one can drive to Nova Scotia via Maine and New Brunswick. Car ferry service (Canadian National Railways) is available from Sidney, N.S. to Channel-Port-aux-Basques, Nfld. Unless one has unlimited time, driving is not recommended.

Housing can be a problem. Motels and tourist homes abound in Newfoundland, but Labrador is another matter. There is a basic, but expensive, hotel at Goose Bay, but the smaller communities presently offer no tourist services. One must make boarding arrangements with individual families. Usually contacts can be made through the proprietor of the general store in the community of interest. Such arrangements, however, should be made well in advance. There is a "motel" and club proposed for Nain which should be in operation by 1976. Of course, camping is possible, and one may camp almost anywhere in the countryside.

Sanitation and water supply are also a problem in some of the smaller communities. Individuals prone to intestinal disorders are well advised to boil or treat drinking water. Because provisions come into northern Labrador only in the summer by freighter, the diet is rather limited. Anyone requiring special foods best check in advance on their availability.

As with most subarctic and arctic areas, the weather is extremely variable in Newfoundland and Labrador, so that the collector should allow himself several weeks for a trip. The main season is from mid-June to early August. The season normally begins a bit later in Labrador with the last two weeks in July as perhaps the optimum collecting period generally in northern Labrador.

A number of species can be taken in Newfoundland, but at any given locality in Labrador, only a rather limited number are to be found. In northern Labrador, there appears to be substantial variation from year-to-year in what flies, and it should be noted that *Boloria polaris* and *Oeneis jutta* fly during even-numbered years. For example, extensive collecting at Nain in

1975 yielded only ten species. About 15-16 species are variously recorded from Nain. The author had no previous records for three of the species taken. Weather conditions were excellent for the most part.

While travel to Newfoundland and Labrador is relatively easy, one should recognize that it is expensive and that the number of species taken may be quite limited. Another phenomenon noted was that butterflies occurred in very local colonies, and were not generally distributed as is the case in much of the western arctic. Butterflies were abundant in a given locale, while seemingly identical habitats a mile distant were barren.

Much of the terrain in Labrador is covered by dry caribou moss and scrub. The larval foodplants associated with butterflies are absent. For this reason, one should choose travel destinations rather carefully to avoid arriving at a "dry" area. Generally speaking, butterflies were not nearly so abundant as in the western arctic.

As opposed to the western arctic, butterflies do fly on overcast days in both Labrador and Newfoundland. On clear days, they were observed on the wing from 9 am ADT until 5 pm ADT, and flew for a shorter period on overcast days.

Collecting in Newfoundland and Labrador can be quite rewarding, but plans for travel and housing should be made well in advance. It is essential that sufficient time be allowed for the trip to accommodate the weather and changes in air travel schedules.

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