

to the tail pattern as the reverse of that of a Northern (Baltimore) Oriole. The bird was about the size of an Evening Grosbeak. The beak was long and pointed. The next day there was a heavy snowstorm and the bird was not seen on subsequent visits to the area.

Scott's Oriole is a summer resident of the southwestern United States and Mexico. It winters south of the American border. Recent casual records include an immature Scott's Oriole banded at Duluth, Minnesota, on 23 May 1974 (Sundquist, K. 1975. Scott's Oriole banded in Duluth. Loon 47(1): 22-24).

The developed film slides were shown to John P. Ryder, Lakehead University, who confirmed the

identification. Readily identifiable duplicate slides were forwarded to W. Earl Godfrey, National Museum of Natural Sciences, and to Clive E. Goodwin, chairman of the Ontario Ornithological Records Committee. This is the first known record of Scott's Oriole in Canada.

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## Toponymy as a Tool in Biogeography: An Example from Newfoundland

Toponymy can be a helpful tool in biogeographical research, especially in tracing the history of local biotic communities. Place names that indicate past environmental conditions or catastrophic events may be particularly important when written reports of such events are non-existent, and when field evidences are obliterated (Seibutis 1974). An illustration of such circumstances may be found in the Notre Dame Bay area of northeastern Newfoundland.

Northeastern coastal Newfoundland has a marine-modified subarctic type of climate (Koeppen's Dfc)<sup>1</sup> capable of supporting a well-developed northern coniferous forest. The various climate/vegetation relationship formulae (e.g., see Mather and Yoshioka 1968), or the forest productivity indices (e.g., the Paterson's "Climate, Vegetation, Productivity Index" (Lemieux 1961)), indicate that the vegetative cover of the area should be a forest. The present vegetation, however, exhibits a "patchy," contrasting character from one place to another, and from one island to another: the boreal forest of Rowe's type B29 (Rowe 1972), barrens, and intermediate vegetation types are dispersed in an emulsion-like pattern. It cannot be correlated either with the very slight climatological differences, or with the variations in soils. Detailed research, however, has indicated that the main environmental factor responsible for this condition is fire (Mednis 1971). Although direct evidence of past

vegetation fires appears only sporadically, and written reports are very few, numerous place names, including those of some of the presently forested places, indicate that fires have occurred in the area, in some instances even centuries ago.

Of the total of 448 geographic names that appear on the Botwood sheet (2E) of the Canadian National Topographic System maps (1:250 000), there are at least 43 place names (or 9.6%) referring to fires (see Figure 1). As a part of a place name, the term "burnt" is the second most frequently used term (after "wild") in this area. "Burnt Head," for example, is used for seven different places, three of them located on Long Island, only 1.5 to 2.4 km apart.

In some instances the place name infers the degree of the burn, as for example, "Coal All Island" and "Cinder Island," located approximately 1 km apart (see Figure 1, inset); they contrast with the adjacent "Green Island." Some names may even lead to the identification of the type of vegetation burned, as, for example, "Alderburn," whereas others, indicating the seral stages of post-disturbance recovery of the northern coniferous forest, may be interpreted as inferring to former vegetation fires. Names like "Birchy Bay" and "Aspen Cove" belong to this group.

In the case of the Notre Dame Bay area, the linguistic origin of the place names may reflect the sequence of frequenting and settling of the area, and, consequently, the approximate age of the fire. The first Europeans to leave place names in this area were the Portuguese, who have frequented it since the beginning of the 16th century. They were followed by the French and the English.

The more prominently located coastal features

<sup>1</sup>The Dfc type is characterized by the average monthly temperature for the coldest month between -3°C and -38°C; with 1 to 4 months averaging above 10°C; and with precipitation evenly distributed throughout the year in sufficient amounts to supply moisture for a forest vegetation (Blüthgen 1964).

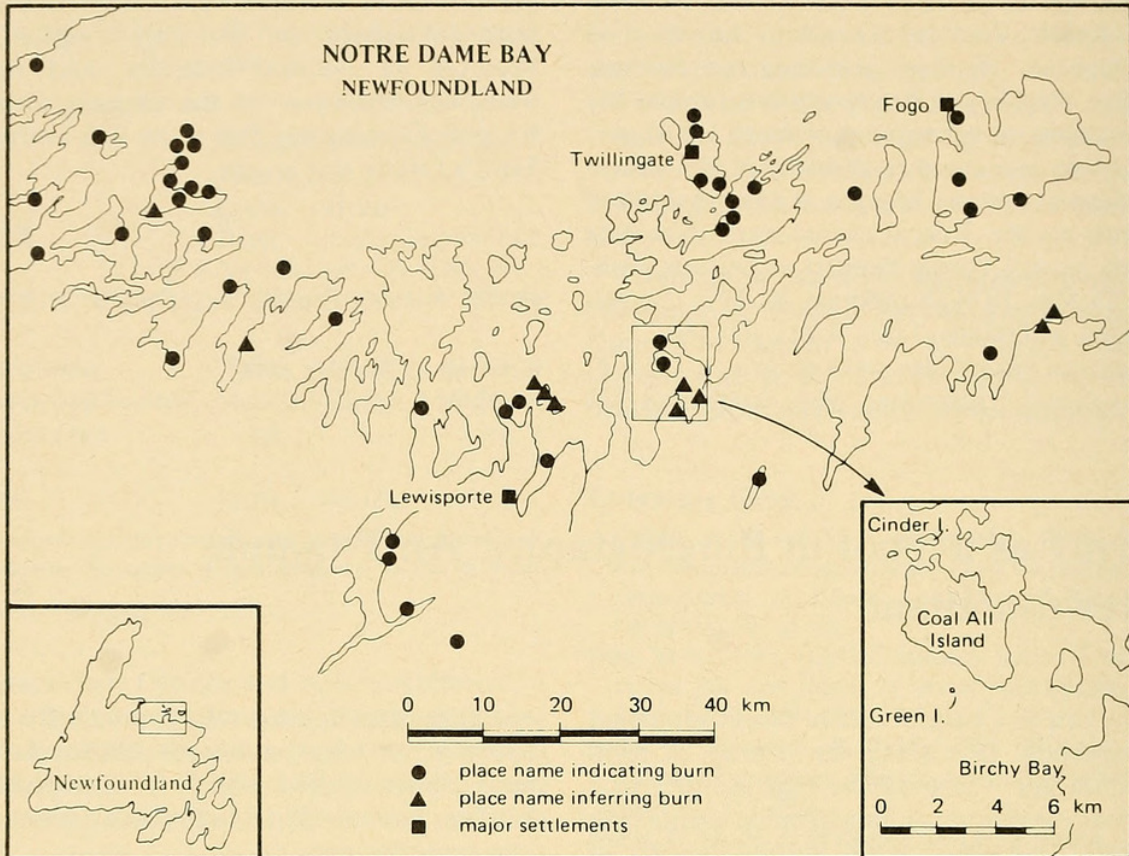


FIGURE 1. Location of place names referring to fires.

facing the open Atlantic were discovered and named earlier than those located deeper in the bay. Hence the name of the largest island at the entrance to the bay, Fogo Island, is one of the oldest place names in Newfoundland. It first appears as y:do fogo (Fogo Island) on a map drawn by Pedro and Jorge Reinel in or before 1519, and it means "Fire Island" in Portuguese. "Cap Brulé"<sup>2</sup> (Burnt Cape) near the western entrance to the bay is of French origin, and, consequently, not as old as the names of Portuguese origin. It should be noted, however, that even most of the English place names are relatively old, probably originating about the time the first English fishermen frequented and settled the area at the end of the 17th century. Several "Burnt Islands" and "Burnt Heads" appear on the earliest sea charts of the area, surveyed by Michael Lane in about 1785, and by Frederick Bullock in 1826<sup>3</sup>.

Place names, at best, are only indicators reminding the researcher to consider the possibility that vegetation fires may have occurred in a given area. Only a more detailed field investigation can properly appraise the actual role of the fire in development of local vegetation types and their distribution.

<sup>2</sup>Cape Brulé is the approved name of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

<sup>3</sup>Both charts are in the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

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