

THE NEWSLETTER

OF THE TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB
Number 10 November 1939

What a wonderful November this has been for the watchers of birds! Usually one of the low spots during the year, this month has seen an extraordinary influx of birds from the northern wilds for which this is almost the far south. The little pine siskin, relative of the goldfinch, was among the first to come, a particularly large flock being seen at Ashbridge's Bay by D. Miller and others. Evening grosbeaks and common redpolls have both been noted at York Mills by R. Dingman. Pine grosbeaks have been seen and heard in a great many places, notably at Sunnybrook Park. Lapland longspurs were also seen near the gates of that park by T. R. Murray and R. M. Saunders. Northern shrikes are common this year, as well as purple finches and red-breasted nuthatches. Of very great interest is the wave of barred owls and saw-whet owls that has reached us this month. J. L. Baillie has been overwhelmed at the Royal Ontario Museum with reports of these owls. The barred owl is one of the finest rat-catchers in the world. We have had the good fortune to see one almost every morning in the last fortnight on our way to the office. We also have had the novel experience of seeing nine saw-whet owls in two weeks after having seen only the same number in nine years. Snow buntings have been reported from Barrie and Leith but have not reached Toronto yet.

Outstanding in our sights of northern birds this month have been the view of a flock (6) of white-winged crossbills, and the sight of an arctic three-toed woodpecker. The crossbills were seen in Sunnybrook Park by T. R. Murray and your editor in a grove of hemlocks. Detected first by their notes, we found them at the top of one hemlock, busily opening the cones with their fantastic crossed bills. Their rose-red bodies glowed in the sun and contrasted sharply with the green of the tree and the black of their wings, the white wingbars flashed like flakes of snow. It was a Christmas scene, and a fascinating one, that we had the privilege to watch but could not paint as it deserved. We stayed as long as the birds remained--some ten minutes, when some whimsy sent them whirling across the ravine and out of sight.

Last Sunday the same two observers and Paul Hahn came upon an Arctic three-toed woodpecker in Harvie's glen at the west end of High Park. The bird was found by its tapping. The rhythm of the beats is different from that of the woodpeckers we usually hear, perhaps because this dark, sturdy bird from northern forests finds its food as a rule by flaking off the

bark of dead trees rather than by boring. This individual was a female with a solid black back and head, and black bars along the flanks. The male has a flashy yellow cap, of a yellow like that sported by the golden-crowned kinglet. This is the year to look for all these birds, and for the red crossbills, Hudsonian chickadees, Bohemian waxwings, hoary redpolls, and American three-toed woodpeckers that haven't been seen yet.

Paul Hahn had a delightful experience during the fall migration when he found a small flock of hummingbirds just beyond the northern limits of the city. Whilst watching them he saw two birds face each other, then rise up with beating wings in this formation to forty or fifty feet, when the performance ceased, only to be repeated again and again by the same and other pairs of birds. This "dance" is unusual but has been seen by other observers. No explanation of it at this season is known. Mr Hahn was very fortunate to come upon it.

We were pained to see the federal government's decision to end the sanctuary at Wainwright Park and to slaughter the bison herd of which Canada has felt so proud. We recommend to your attention on this score Mr B. K. Sandwell's editorial in the last number of Saturday Night (Nov. 18) with which we heartily concur.

The members will be glad to hear that the Moss Club has recommenced its activities. It is meeting every other Thursday evening in Professor Jackson's room at the Botany Building of the University of Toronto at 8 o'clock. Anyone who is interested in adding to the herbarium of the Botany department, and in the identification of mosses is invited to come. The next meeting will be on December 7. Those attending are requested to enter the Botany Building by the west door. Professor Jackson's room is on the third floor at the east end of the building.

Mrs Jaquith has brought to our attention that, as a result of requests from patients at the Weston Sanatorium, satisfactory arrangements are being made to identify and label the trees on the grounds of that institution. This will provide a welcome centre for the study in that locality.

We are pleased to announce the appearance of a new magazine, Canadian Nature, published by the Whittemore Publishing Co., Ltd., in Toronto. This journal will be of value to naturalists and teachers, to parents and children, and will foster the observation and study of nature. Its profuse illustrations, especially its fine line drawings and plates, add greatly to its worth. Teachers will be pleased to know that in Ontario the Department of Education has approved the placing of this magazine in the schools, where it will be an aid to pupil and teacher alike, since its articles will follow

closely the new programme of studies in natural science. Canadian Nature is published every two months, and the general subscription price is \$2 per year or \$5 for three years, but the publishers have allowed substantial reductions for subscriptions from this club--25 per cent on one-year subscriptions and 20 per cent on three-year subscriptions. The resultant saving will be divided equally between the club treasury and the price to the subscribing member, so that members may subscribe for one year for \$1.75 and for three years for \$4.50, thus helping themselves and the club simultaneously. Subscriptions will be received at the next meeting or may be sent direct to Mrs Jaquith. Copies of the first number (Sept.-Oct.) are still available, and subscriptions may start with the first issue. Members of the club will be happy to know that this magazine is being published as a memorial to Mrs Whittemore who did so much to further the work of the club, especially with the younger members.

New members

Mrs F.E.Appleton
 Mrs E.G.Berry
 Miss Miriam Cameron
 Emanuel Hahn
 Peter Hare
 Miss Edith Heron
 William S. Hunt
 W.H.Kemp
 Mrs H.Link
 Miss Ivy E.Link
 Miss Marjorie Moore
 George B. Munro
 James Murray
 Miss Helen Plummer

Mrs H.Speers
 Keith Stokes
 Wade Watson
 Miss Olive I.Ziegler
 Miss Eva Tetlow
 Miss Mary Kirkwood
 Miss Mary Kirkness
 (Kitchener)
 Robert M.James
 Miss B.Dowdall
 Herbert A.Knowles
 Mrs M.E.Darrall
 Mrs G.H.Corsan
 Miss P.Knapman

Our next issue will include a complete list of the paid-up members of the club.