

THE NEWSLETTER

OF THE TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Number 27

January 1942

We are very grateful to Mrs K. Stilwell of 26 Donwoods Drive, York Mills, for being so kind as to meet our request for a description of her most successful feeding-station by sending in the following very interesting account.

"Here on Donwoods Drive, only a short distance from a busy section of Yonge Street, we see an astonishing variety of birds. These vary somewhat according to the season, for instance last Fall we were amazed to see a juvenile great blue heron standing like a statue on the garden rockery. He remained in our garden or in the immediate vicinity for about a week before moving on elsewhere.

We have proved that it is not difficult to entice birds to the garden or verandah. In our eight years' residence in the district we have had a pair of cardinals with us each year--one winter and again this season, two pairs. They come at very frequent intervals to the trees or railing of the verandah, for peanuts. It is very gratifying to realize that they expect food from us--in fact we feel honoured that we have been selected as their hosts! This winter we have been specially singled out by the very rare Carolina wren. It appeared about six weeks ago--a round, reddish-brown little bird, with a long slightly curved beak, clearly defined eye-stripes and a sharply stuck-up tail. We were advised--on learning the species--to put out chopped suet and ground peanuts and since doing this it comes to the verandah very frequently, staying only a minute or less--seldom longer--but appearing again at very short intervals. On Census Sunday we watched out for it fairly often between household duties and saw it six times and it had probably visited us many more times than we were aware of.

The little downy woodpeckers are frequent visitors to the bags of suet hanging from the trees and we see the big hairy fairly often. We also have a dark-coloured downy--his white marks yellowish-grey so that at first sight he looks like a small starling. Even his red hat is a subdued shade. Whether he is another kind of downy or merely a "throwback" we do not know. He comes very frequently to the suet. The little brown creeper jerks his way up the tree trunks without much success in his search I am afraid, although he may find tiny particles of suet deposited in crannies in the bark by the downy woodpeckers.

The white-breasted nuthatches and chickadees are very frequent visitors--we often have four of the latter on the verandah at once. The little nuthatch walks down the brickwork near the window for a nut he has seen on the sill. If no nut is there he will walk down the wall near the door, look through the glass, spying me in the hall, and of course his plea cannot be ignored. I once watched him pecking away between the bricks above the window and after a while he pulled out a nut evidently put there on some previous occasion for some such emergency.

We are told there are several robins in the immediate neighbourhood but so far have seen only one. We put out sultanas --as they relish them in the summer--and hope to draw them towards the verandah.

Blue jays are numerous; we throw out nuts because a cardinal is in a tree watching for food and in a moment five, six or seven blue jays are on the railing or steps.

We have starlings, of course, not too many as yet to become a nuisance, but more than our fair share of sparrows. This, I think, is because we try, very successfully, to attract pheasants and sometimes have as many as nine in the garden at once. The bird-table in the back garden is near the house and on it we put cracked corn, bread, cake crumbs, sultanas, desiccated coconut, etc. Naturally, it attracts birds other than pheasants but we are content to know that the pheasants can always count on obtaining food when they visit us and we have to put up with the less desirable birds."

We were pleased to receive from Mr Walter Hahn of Richmond Hill the record of a surprising observation of Canada geese made on November 21, 1941, at a small pond in his area. Mr Hahn's letter reads as follows:

"While sitting on the bank of James Rumble's pond, which is located on the corner of Mill Road and Bathurst Street, Richmond Hill, I was rather startled by a great flutter of wings. It was far too loud for any birds of ordinary size and I literally froze as the animals do, so as not to frighten whatever it was. Before I had time to guess any longer, three beautiful Canada geese settled on the water not 25 yards away.

To see these three lovely birds was like an apparition and it gave me a thrill in the bird line which I have not experienced since I heard a mocking-bird singing for over ten minutes near Hamilton two years ago.

They slowly swam (glided would express it better) to the north end of the pond where it peters out into a slough. Here they made themselves at home, conversing in low undertones and doing a bit of occasional feeding and preening. Fortunately I was camouflaged out of the landscape by some dense cedars and the birds were entirely unaware of my presence. I was nothing short of spellbound watching these magnificent birds float around in their home element utterly oblivious to the fact that two eager eyes were watching their every movement, and there I sat until darkness blotted them out.

I returned next afternoon eager to continue my observations, but alas, they were gone and no doubt had continued to wing their way to the sunny south."

From Mrs L.M.Sisman of Aurora we have had this delightful narrative of birding in that quarter:

"On December 7, a bright clear day, I walked in a northerly direction from my home and the first two birds I saw were pine grosbeaks eating maple buds; then some distance farther on I came upon eleven more, females and immature males, all on the ground. We had had a light snowfall the previous day. However, these birds

had found a bare spot under a mountain ash tree and were eating the berries that had fallen. One other day I had them in my own garden and there they were having dinner of the red berries on the barberry bushrubs and of maple keys, thirteen birds in all. In the same district I first saw the grosbeaks, there was one robin eating mountain ash berries, and a flock of tree sparrows with one white-throated sparrow in their midst.

On Sunday, December 14, a stormy day, we found our first long-eared owl in an evergreen bush on the outskirts of our town.

The pine grosbeaks have been around our High School and have created a great deal of interest amongst the pupils and I was so pleased to learn my daughter was able to identify them.

The one male cardinal is still about town, the last glimpse I had of him was at the local garbage dump. What a spot for so handsome a fellow!

Today [December 21] I saw two Canada jays on the fifth concession of Whitchurch. This is the first I have seen of these birds in our vicinity."

You will remember that at Christmas time each year bird-watchers everywhere take a census of the birds in their region. Believing that you would be interested in the results of the census in the Toronto-Hamilton area we have obtained from Mr J.L. Baillie the report of the Toronto observers, and from Mr George North, secretary of the Hamilton Bird Protection Society, the report of the Hamilton census.

The census taken in the Toronto area on December 28, 1941, was the seventeenth annual Christmas bird-count in this region, all of which have been conducted by the Brodie Club. This year's census was particularly successful as five new species were added to the total list of observations, bringing the total number seen at Christmas time in this area to 105 species. This particular census was taken by 54 observers divided into 22 groups who covered 8 standard routes. The weather conditions approximated those of the Hamilton census taken a week earlier. They saw in all 60 species this year, a very high record, and of these 60 species the observers saw 16,648 individuals. The list of the species seen and the number of each follows.

Loon 1, horned grebe 1, pintail 8, shoveller 1, ring-neck duck 2, greater scaup 1526, American goldeneye 379, bufflehead 35, old-squaw 975, American merganser 57, red-breasted merganser 6, sharp-shinned hawk 1, red-tailed hawk 1, rough-legged hawk 2, sparrowhawk 7, ruffed grouse 11, ring-neck pheasant 194, glaucous gull 4, black-backed gull 15, herring gull 2661, ring-bill gull 1, screech-owl 2, horned owl 5, snowy owl 4, barred owl 2, long-eared owl 3, kingfisher 3, flicker 2, hairy woodpecker 18, downy woodpecker 82, Canada jay 2, blue jay 118, crow 13, black-capped chickadee 490, white-breasted nuthatch 82, red-breasted nuthatch 2, creeper 19, Carolina wren 1, robin 2, golden-crowned kinglet 29, cedar waxwing 1, starling 6043, English sparrow 2023, red-wing 5, cardinal 34, evening grosbeak 3, purple finch 4, pine grosbeak 13, hoary redpoll 2, redpoll 733, goldfinch 26, white-winged crossbill 2, savannah sparrow 1, junco 388, tree sparrow 291, white-throated sparrow 1, swamp sparrow 3, song sparrow 25, lapland longspur 9, snow bunting 274.

The routes covered were: (1) East Don (O'Connor Drive, Woodbine Avenue to Dawes Road, Willowdale to Oriole); (2) West Don (Rosedale Ravine, Riverdale, Old Beltline, Sunnybrook, Sherwood and Lawrence Parks, York Mills); (3) Cedarvale, Hogg's Hollow, Mt Dennis, Weston, Thistletown; (4) High Park, Sunnyside, Humber (to Old Mill, Baby Point, Lambton); (5) Lakeshore (Humber to Port Credit, Parkdale to Parliament Street); also Erindale and Streetsville to Meadowvale; (6) Ashbridge's Bay, the Island, and Zoo Park; (7) Lakeshore (Woodbine Avenue to Whitby); (8) Woodbridge, Maple, King.

The observers were the following:

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| J.L.Baillie | W.Giles | L.Prince |
| F.Banfield | Dr Harrington | H.H.Proctor |
| H.Barnett | C.E.Hope | C.Proctor |
| D.Beacham | R.F.James | R.Ritchie |
| G.Bell | G.Lambert | R.Rutter |
| Miss E.M.Boissonneau | R.Lanning | J.Satterly |
| A.Carmichael | R.Lindsay | O.Scovill |
| Mrs T.Clayton | J.J.MacArthur | W.E.Shore |
| M.Clayton | R.MacArthur | T.Shortt |
| A.Coventry | D.Macdonald | A.Smith |
| J.Crosby | C.MacFayden | E.Smith |
| O.E.Devitt | D.McEachern | L.L.Snyder |
| R.Dingman | T.F.McIlwraith | H.Southam |
| F.Dingman | R.Measham | F.Starr |
| Y.Edwards | Mrs M.H.Mitchell | Mrs K.Stilwell |
| I.Ellis | T.R.Murray | F.Urquhart |
| B.Falls | K.Nielsen | |

The Hamilton report is as follows:

Loon 2, horned grebe 3, mallard 18, black duck 370, gadwall 10, baldpate 1, pintail 2, ring-necked duck 1, canvas-back 4, greater scaup 350, American goldeneye 410, bufflehead 9, old squaw 1, white-winged scoter 12, hooded merganser 16, American merganser 239, red-breasted merganser 88, sharp-shinned hawk 1, Cooper's hawk 1, red-tailed hawk 7, red-shouldered hawk 1, rough-legged hawk 1, marsh hawk 1, sparrow hawk 3, ruffed grouse 49, European Partridge 9, pheasant 133, killdeer 1, glaucous gull 2, black-backed gull 98, herring gull 1898, ring-billed gull 16, great horned owl 4, snowy owl 1, barred owl 2, long-eared owl 2, kingfisher 1, hairy woodpecker 10, downy woodpecker 60, blue jay 61, crow 6, chickadee 254, white-breasted nuthatch 39, red-breasted nuthatch 1, brown creeper 2, mockingbird 1, robin 4, golden-crowned kinglet 5, starling 836, English sparrow 1940, cardinal 22, common redpoll 9, goldfinch 27, white-winged crossbill 1, junco 391, tree sparrow 291, swamp sparrow 1, song sparrow 12, snow bunting 1. TOTAL 59 species, 7741 individuals. Angus Jackson found the mockingbird at Stoney Creek, feeding on honeysuckle berries.

We wish to remind the members of the annual conference of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists which will be held on February 28. It will be well to keep that day clear of other engagements.