

THE NEWSLETTER

OF THE TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB
Number 6 February 1939

One of the most interesting developments in the bird world in southern Ontario in recent years has been the noticeable increase of the pileated woodpecker. This magnificent bird is better known to some as the log cock, or the cock-of-the-north. By any name it is the king of our woodpeckers, and one of our finest birds. Close to the crow in size, it has a wing-spread of about two-and-a-half feet. A rich black over most of the body, its slim neck and head are striped with glossy white, and surmounted by a splendid crimson crest. When its wings are spread in flight, large patches of white are revealed, so that the bird may be spotted at a great distance by the brilliant flashes of white. Though normally a rather quiet bird, it is often very noisy, especially at mating time. Unlike other woodpeckers they cut square or rectangular holes, working at an incredible speed with the force of a sledge hammer, in search of the woodborers and carpenter ants that constitute the major part of their diet. In such a large square hole they raise their two young, whose clamors fill the woods when the parents fail to bring back food as soon as they like.

With the cutting off of the original forests in this region and the later increase of gunners this bird decreased rapidly, but it is now coming back. Under protection it has become accustomed to live closer to habitation, even appearing in orchards and near to houses. It seems to be able to get on with smaller trees than formerly. We all look forward to the time--not far distant, we hope--when this fine bird will be a common permanent resident among us.

Messrs R.D.Ussher and O.E.Devitt are making a study of this species and will appreciate any information, observations or otherwise, which our members can give them about the pileated woodpecker in southern Ontario. Has the present increase come from a few birds left in untouched swamps or woods in our area? Or have they moved in from the north woods? Have you found a nest? If so, in what sort and size of tree? We will be glad to forward your observations.

The second winter hike held on January 29 was a great success. Though a drizzling rain prevailed, twenty-five enthusiasts turned out and were duly rewarded. Under the competent guidance of J.L.Baillie, Jr. and R.D.Ussher they visited the Old Mill valley, Harcroft, and upper Grenadier Pond, Sunnyside and the Western Gap. Cardinals were right on hand

to greet the club; a wintering robin and a swamp sparrow were fine sights; but the most unusual finds were a green-winged teal at Sunnyside, and a white-winged scoter at the Gap, both birds being very rare at Toronto in winter. The whole list of species seen on the trip is as follows: Mallard, black duck, green-winged teal, greater scaup duck, American goldeneye, bufflehead, old squaw, white-winged scoter, American merganser, red-breasted merganser, red-tailed hawk, ring-necked pheasant, great black-backed gull, herring gull, downy woodpecker, crow, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, robin, golden-crowned kinglet, starling, English sparrow, cardinal, slate-coloured junco, tree sparrow, swamp sparrow, song sparrow.

Dr A.A.Allen, whose lecture last Friday (February 17) was without doubt the finest talk on birds we have ever heard, has written a book entitled "The Book of Bird Life" which members will find delightful and helpful. In it he recommends the following fruit-bearing trees, shrubs, and vines, which are attractive to birds, and which may be planted with profit by those who wish to lure birds to their gardens: *Five-leaved ivy or Virginia creeper (August-February), *Japanese barberry (the fruit eaten in spring when other foods are scarce), *American hawthorns (October-April. Choose those varieties which hold their fruit), *common juniper (January-December), *red cedar (January-December), *common privet (July-April), wild grape (August-June), mulberry (May-August. One of the best bird foods), wild red or bird cherry (June-November), *flowering crabapple (September-June), sumachs (January-December), *black elderberries (July-October), mountain ash (August-April). Those marked * provide nesting sites as well as food.

New Members

Mr Edwin C. MacDonald	Miss Ruth Wilson
Miss Margaret Pennell	Miss Isabel Pritchard
Mr William Girling	Dr Frank J. Elkerton
Miss Mary Ramsay	Mr W.A.Jennings
Mr John Dixon	Mrs Queenie Davidson
Mrs W.E.Lyall	Prof. K.B.Jackson
Miss Margaret Pennington	Mr Robert Lyall
Mrs J.E.Middleton	Miss Laura D. Wakeley
Mr Allan Lauder	Miss Pauline H.Sutherland
Mrs Tracy Waring	Miss Lillian Adams
Miss Nora Snelgreve	Mr E.B.Elliott
Mrs Anna Watson	