

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club

177

FEBRUARY MEETING

Monday, February 6, 1961, at 8.15 p.m.
at the
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Speaker: DR. GORDON EDMUND, paleontologist with the Life Sciences Division,
Royal Ontario Museum.

Subject: HUNTING FOR PREHISTORIC ANIMALS IN SOUTH AMERICA (illustrated).
An informal report on recent work conducted by the R.O.M. in the tarpits
of Peru. Dr. Edmund will provide a rontunda display relative to his topic.

February Outing

Sunday Feb. 12 9.30 a.m. A waterfront expedition for ducks. Meet at Woodbine Beach car park south of Old Woodbine race track. Those using public transportation take the street car to Queen & Coxwell and walk south. A thermos of coffee is recommended. Drivers please note: We will be travelling some distance, so we would appreciate as many cars as possible. Your cooperation will be needed in accommodating those who have come by street car.
Leaders: Mr. George Fairfield and Mr. Donald Burton.

Botany Group

Meet on Thursday, February 16th, at 8.00 p.m. in the library, Eglinton Public School, Eglinton & Mt. Pleasant. Speaker: Dr. Judith Hoeniger, Department of Microbiology, School of Hygiene, University of Toronto.
Subject: "Plants of Rocks and Shores." Everyone welcome.
Secretary - Miss F. Preston, HU 3-9530

Junior Club

The Junior Field Naturalists will meet on Saturday, February 4th, at 10 a.m. in the Museum theatre. The Insect Group will be in charge. No more new members will be enrolled this season.
Director - Mr. Robt. MacLellan, HU 8-9346

Audubon Screen Tours

Two outstanding film-lectures remain in this series: "Teton Trails," by Charles T. Hotchkiss, Monday, Jan. 30th & Wednesday, Feb. 1st., and "Pika Country," by Emerson Scott, Wednesday & Thursday, Mar. 22nd & 23rd. Let us each try to see that someone attends who is not already a Screen Tour subscriber, and so give these fine films the audience they deserve. Tickets \$1.25 available from Eaton Auditorium 10 days before each lecture. Descriptive folder mailed upon request to Mrs. J. B. Stewart, HU 9-5052.

F.O.N. Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists will be held at Port Hope on Saturday, Feb. 25th. This will be an interest-filled day with naturalists from every part of Ontario. Open to all. Programme and registration form available from the F.O.N. by phoning HI 7-7421.

President - Mr. Fred Bodsworth

Secretary - Mrs. H. Robson,
49 Craighurst Ave.,
HU 1-0260



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NEWSLETTER

Number 177

January 1961

Last year I undertook to make a survey of plants in bloom in the Toronto region during the month of November, and as readers of the Newsletter will know it was possible to publish a list of thirty-six species discovered during that month (Newsletter No. 168).

This search proved so stimulating and the results so surprising that I undertook a similar study this past fall. Whether or not the season was sufficiently different to make the difference or whether I looked harder than before I cannot say, but this November not thirty-six but forty-six blooming plants were found up to the end of the month. The combined list for the two Novembers comes to fifty-seven species. (Mr. Gerald Bennett tells me that he has a list of fifty-eight species for the month of November over a period of several years.)

Then came the big surprise. On the night of November 30th the temperature went down to 19 and an inch of icy snow fell. There had been several frosts before and some of the wild flowers had survived but this looked like the end. My fears that all would be gone were strengthened on the morning of December 1st when I found some Galinsoga plants I had been watching on my way to the University all black, victims of the cold. When I crossed to the Victoria campus, however, though I failed to find any sign of a Shepherd's Purse I had hoped for I was immensely delighted to see the tiny golden gleams of Inconspicuous Treacle-Mustard decorating a neglected corner as strongly as ever, in bold defiance of surrounding ice and snow. Later in the day, when the snow had mostly melted, I returned for another look, and there, apparently unharmed, was the whole colony of Erysimum inconspicuum, its yellow blooms and green leaves as perky as if frost and snow had never been.

In the afternoon I walked home by way of the railway embankment along Marlborough Street, where I got an even greater surprise, for no less than four species of plants were still in good flower: Peppergrass, Canada Goldenrod, Yellow Goatsbeard and Dandelion. Weeds, you will say; at least many people would. Nothing of the sort. These are flowers of the wild, survivors in nooks and corners of the

city under conditions that seem at first glance anything but favorable, and in weather that appears prohibitive. Five kinds of wild flowers blooming in December in Toronto!

Three days later, when Mrs. Saunders and I drove out to Whitby Harbor, we were able to add four more species in bloom, and two of these--Wormseed Mustard (Erysimum cheiranthoides) and Fall Dandelion (Apargia autumnale)--were new for the year. Indeed the Apargia I had never before seen in the Toronto region. Imagine adding new plants in December. As I kept watch from day to day the list grew. Shepherd's Purse reappeared. Chickweed and Mouse-ear Chickweed put out blooms along the edges of roads or in lawns. A Sow Thistle thrust up from beneath an alley fence. Now there were twelve wild plants in bloom in December. How long could they go on?

On December 9th the temperature fell to 11°. The Treacle Mustard and Shepherd's Purse survived. And Yellow Goatsbeard still had yellow blooms on the 11th. Two above on the 12th; the Mustard is there the next day. Then 3 below zero that night, but the Shepherd's Purse still in white bloom! The next day the Mustard appeared finished from above but when I stooped to peer in among the wind-blown brown leaves which covered most of the plants I found some of the plants still green and with yellow blooms. Hastily I reassembled the leafy protectors around them, and hoped they would go on for a while yet. What is more, the railway embankment showed Yellow Goatsbeard, Dandelion and Peppergrass blossoms braving the cold even now. I couldn't believe it but the evidence was before my eyes. I was so incredulous I even felt the plants and blooms to see if they were really pliable and in good condition. They most assuredly were. Five species able to withstand below zero temperature and repeated all-day frosts. This is really an astonishing affair. On December 20th, with snow starting at noon, I walked over to the tracks feeling that this really must be the last day and I found two blooms of Goatsbeard still there and the Dandelion intact. Then on Christmas Day, after church, we drove to the campus so that I could dig in the snow and uncover the Erysimum plants to see if any could possibly be in bloom. Incredible as it may be, they were! And so also was the Shepherd's Purse. Wild flowers in Toronto on Christmas Day!! Inspired by this success I ferreted in the snow at the Peppergrass stand near the railway embankment three days later and was able to uncover a plant in perfectly good bloom and leaf. I even picked this specimen so that I could show it to others. Four members of the Club saw it and were as amazed as I was myself.

Twelve species of wild flowers in bloom in Toronto region in December and some of them right through the month, snow and frost notwithstanding, even, in fact, blooming underneath the snow.

You can well understand that we weren't going to leave it at that. If Treacle-Mustard could stand so much for so long why shouldn't it be still standing the test on New Year's Day? To answer that query Marshall Bartman, Ann and I drove straight from church to the Victoria campus on that January day. With hopeful doubt I got out and began to finger through the snow down to the cover of dead leaves, to the plants--no bloom, no bloom, no--yes, yes, there is one, another--plants with green leaves and yellow flowers. I picked one and rushed to the car for the others to see the wonder of a wild flower blooming in Toronto on January 1st, picked from beneath the snow!!!

They are gone now, but what a discovery it has been to find that wild flowers can bloom in this region from mid-March to the beginning of the New Year. What a surprise to begin the year with a flower. Long live Erysimum inconspicuum. Inconspicuous it may be, but a great survivor in the battle of life, and a breath of green in the winter's frost, a gleam of gold in January's snow.

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List of flowers seen in bloom November 1959, November-December 1960

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| 1. | Dock-leaved Smartweed (59) | (<u>Polygonum lapathifolium</u>); |
| 2. | Lady's thumb (60) | (<u>Polygonum Persicaria</u>) |
| 3. | Lamb's Quarters (59,60) | (<u>Chenopodium album</u>) |
| 4. | Common Chickweed (60) | (<u>Stellaria media</u>) |
| 5. | Common Mouse-ear Chickweed (60) | (<u>Cerastium vulgatum</u>) |
| 6. | Bladder Campion (59,60) | (<u>Silene cucubalus</u>) |
| 7. | White Campion (59,60) | (<u>Lychnis alba</u>) |
| 8. | Bouncing Bet (60) | (<u>Saponaria officinalis</u>) |
| 9. | Northern or Marsh Buttercup (59,60) | (<u>Ranunculus septentrionalis</u>) |
| 10. | Wild Peppergrass (60) | (<u>Lepidium virginicum</u>) |
| 11. | Tumble Mustard (60) | (<u>Sisymbrium altissimum</u>) |
| 12. | Dog Mustard (60) | (<u>Erucastum gallicum</u>) |
| 13. | Indian Mustard (59) | (<u>Brassica juncea</u>) |
| 14. | Charlock (59,60) | (<u>Brassica Kaber</u>) |
| 15. | Winter Cress (59) | (<u>Barbarea vulgaris</u>) |
| 16. | Marsh Cress (59) | (<u>Rorippa islandica</u> , var.
<u>Fernaldiana</u>) |
| 17. | Water Cress (60) | (<u>Nasturtium officinale</u>) |
| 18. | Shepherd's Purse (59,60) | (<u>Capsella Bursa-pastoris</u>) |
| 19. | Wormseed Mustard (60) | (<u>Erysimum cheiranthoides</u>) |
| 20. | Inconspicuous Treacle Mustard (59,60) | (<u>Erysimum inconspicuum</u>) |
| 21. | Witch Hazel (60) | (<u>Hamamelis virginiana</u>) |
| 22. | Rough-fruited Cinquefoil (60) | (<u>Potentilla recta</u>) |
| 23. | Black Medick (59) | (<u>Medicago lupulina</u>) |
| 24. | White Melilot (59,60) | (<u>Melilotus alba</u>) |
| 25. | Yellow Melilot (60) | (<u>Melilotus officinalis</u>) |
| 26. | Red Clover (59,60) | (<u>Trifolium pratense</u>) |
| 27. | White Clover (60) | (<u>Trifolium repens</u>) |
| 28. | Evening Primrose (59) | (<u>Oenothera biennis</u>) |
| 29. | Queen Anne's Lace (59,60) | (<u>Daucus carota</u>) |
| 30. | Viper's Bugloss (59,60) | (<u>Echium vulgare</u>) |
| 31. | Catnip (60) | (<u>Nepeta cataria</u>) |
| 32. | Common Mullein (59,60) | (<u>Verbascum Thapsus</u>) |
| 33. | Butter and Eggs (59,60) | (<u>Linaria vulgaris</u>) |
| 34. | Blue-stemmed Goldenrod (59) | (<u>Solidago caesia</u>) |
| 35. | Canada Goldenrod (59,60) | (<u>Solidago canadensis</u>) |
| 36. | Zig-zag Goldenrod (59,60) | (<u>Solidago flexicaulis</u>) |
| 37. | Common Blue Wood Aster (60) | (<u>Aster cordifolius</u>) |
| 38. | Large-leaved Aster (59) | (<u>Aster macrophyllus</u>) |
| 39. | New England Aster (59,60) | (<u>Aster Nova-Angliae</u>) |
| 40. | Tall Aster (60) | (<u>Aster Praealtus</u>) |
| 41. | Purple-stemmed Aster (59) | (<u>Aster puniceus</u>) |

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| 42. | Daisy Fleabane (59,60) | (<u>Erigeron annuus</u>) |
| 43. | Horseweed (60) | (<u>Erigeron canadensis</u>) |
| 44. | Ragweed (59,60) | (<u>Ambrosia artemisiifolia</u>) |
| 45. | Black-eyed Susan (60) | (<u>Rudbeckia serotina</u>) |
| 46. | Sticktight (60) | (<u>Bidens cernua</u>) |
| 47. | Beggarticks (59,60) | (<u>Bidens sp.?</u>) |
| 48. | Hairy Galinsoga (60) | (<u>Galinsoga ciliata</u>) |
| 49. | Yarrow (59,60) | (<u>Archillea Millefolium</u>) |
| 50. | Costmary (59,60) | (<u>Chrysanthemum Balsamita</u> var.
tanacetoides) |
| 51. | Oxeye Daisy (59,60) | (<u>Chrysanthemum Leucanthemum</u>) |
| 52. | Tansy (59,60) | (<u>Tanacetum vulgare</u>) |
| 53. | Common Groundsel (60) | (<u>Senecio vulgaris</u>) |
| 54. | Common Burdock (60) | (<u>Arctium minus</u>) |
| 55. | Common Thistle (59,60) | (<u>Cirsium vulgare</u>) |
| 56. | Fall Dandelion (60) | (<u>Apargia autumnale</u>) |
| 57. | Yellow Goatsbeard (59,60) | (<u>Tragopogon pratensis</u>) |
| 58. | Dandelion (59,60) | (<u>Taraxacum officinale</u>) |
| 59. | Field Sow Thistle (59,60) | (<u>Sonchus arvensis</u>) |

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Book Review

GOODBY TO A RIVER. By John Graves (Knopf, New York, 1960. In Canada, McClelland & Stewart Ltd., Toronto). P. 306, Price \$5.00.

Goodbye to a River is a book written by a man who loves nature, who loves the Texas countryside in which he was raised, who strongly admires the raw toughness of life that men have had to wage against the rock, the soil, the wind and the storm--yes, even against themselves--in order to tame this land. Indeed, he would prefer that the taming be never complete, only that the heartening struggle and the wild, natural milieu in which it went on be always there. That this cannot be he knows as well as--indeed far better than--most, and this sense of change, of the hastening current of the passing past, pervades his account like a brooding musical melancholy.

Much as he would dislike the appellation, there is a romantic malaise evident all through these pages. The old is going, the surroundings of childhood are being altered beyond recall--it is a painful, sorrowful process. But there is worse, for this man has suffered the shock of war, has seen violence, bloodshed, brutality at its utmost, its twentieth-century ripping crest. There is a tone of bitterness that the world should be like this, and with this bitterness is united a resentment of the sentimental prettiness of the immediate past. One suspects that, as so often appears in the generation to which the author belongs, there is a powerful, almost a bewildered indignation at the arrival in middle life into a world so utterly different from that which one was raised to expect, a world whose promises of the future are fearful, galling and acrid. Perhaps this is why he so often, so deliberately alternates passages of tender beauty, of sensitive appreciation of nature, and persons, with other redolent of the nasty brutishness, the cruelty and loutishness of past people. Life is like that, he would say, no simple, clear, assured, orderly matter but a vivid mixing of ugliness and loveliness, of lust and love, of greed and generosity, always a complex and variable thing, never staying the same for very long.

In this it is more like a musical score, a very modern musical score in which melody and cacophony, shrill and sweet, gentle pianissimo and blasting crescendo jumble along together. Indeed, this book impresses me with its likeness to much of modern music.

To those who love to be alone in the wild, with birds and animals and plants, with themselves, who are interested in people and in the past, who mourn a bit or a lot for the world that is passing away, this will be a fascinating book. It's not all pleasant reading, but neither is the world we live in wholly lovely, nor for that matter the past from which we came. The world and people have never been as simply lovely, orderly and secure as many would like to believe. In reading a book like this, drift with the writer down stream - he is alone with his dog in a canoe - listening to his impressions, his tales, his philosophising. There's a lot of common sense there, some feelings that many of us share, occasionally an overdose of dramatics and chunky folklore--but all in all a really readable book with a distinctly modern tone.

R. M. Saunders,
Editor.