

APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 2, 1962, at 8.15 p.m.
at the
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Speaker: DR. CARL ATWOOD, Associate Professor, Department of Zoology, University of Toronto

Subject: EARLY STAGES OF THE SOCIAL HABIT IN INSECTS

Dr. Atwood, whose special study has been forest insects, will discuss the primitive type of social organization found in the sawflies, comparing it with that of other insects and of man. Colour slides.

Spring Outings

Please consult the enclosed folder, in which Miss Rosemary Gaymer and her Outings Committee have listed an attractive series of field trips.

Junior Club

The Botany group of the Junior Field Naturalists' Club will be in charge of the meeting on Saturday, April 7th, at 10.00 a.m. in the Museum theatre. Four junior speakers will present botanical topics, and the special feature will be Along the Bruce Trail, with introduction by Mr. Harvey Currell, and colour slides by Mrs. Mary Ferguson (Woods) and Mrs. Janet Goodwin (Shores). A special invitation is extended to parents and to members of the T.F.N. to attend this meeting.

Director - Mr. R. MacLellan - HU 8-9346

F.O.N. Events

24th Annual F.O.N. Camp, June 30-July 14, Billie Bear Lodge, Huntsville

The enclosed folder will be sent to your interested friends and acquaintances upon request. Call the F.O.N. - HI 7-7421.

30th Annual Meeting & Convention, April 14, Teachers' College, London

- Theme: Man's Place in Nature
- Panel discussion, conducted by Mr. Lister Sinclair
- Photography exhibition
- Films, papers, reports, business meeting
- Dinner at Panorama Banqueting Hall - guest speaker, Mr. Blair Fraser, editor, MacLean's Magazine
- Full information from F.O.N. - HI 7-7421

Attention Photographers

Two exhibitions of nature photography (colour slides) are forthcoming.

F.O.N. Photography Exhibition - closing date March 31st - call F.O.N., HI 7-7421 for further information.

2nd International Exhibition of Nature Photography - closing date Apr. 28 - further information from Mr. Clarence M. Smith, Exhibition Chairman, Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Main Post Office, Box 384, Hamilton, Ont.

President - Mr. Fred Bodsworth

Secretary - Mrs. H. Robson
49 Craighurst Ave.
Toronto 12
HU 1-0260



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March, 1962

A BIRDING TRIP TO ARIZONA AND MEXICO
(cont'd from last month)

In the night the temperature dropped so sharply that we wondered how Bill and Warren, bedded down on the desert floor, could possibly get any restful sleep. Before daylight, all four of us were up moving around in an effort to get warm. The dawn chorus consisted of songs of cactus wrens and house finches interspersed with occasional squeals from ash-throated flycatchers and gila woodpeckers. Later, canyon wrens added their talented voices to the medley of morning music. Walking up the steep slope of the canyon, we came upon a current of warm air which had evidently risen and was being held captive by the forbidding face of the mountain. It was a novel sensation to stand in this air-stream warming ourselves as though it were a hot air ventilator in a house. Along the highest ridge, turkey vultures sat waiting for this rising air to reach them and carry them away.

Two new birds were found - a rock wren and a few white-winged doves. Other species listed here included violet-green swallow, rough-winged swallow, Bendire's thrasher, western meadowlark, white-crowned sparrow, loggerhead shrike, sparrow hawk and mockingbird.

Descending the canyon, we saw a hummingbird several times but were unable to get a good enough look to identify it. At last it lit on a desert shrub but, as it was a dingy female, green above and gray below, we couldn't be sure of its identity. But then the male flew into view and we could see the blue throat and red bill with black tip. He hovered around the female, then flew almost straight up, forty or fifty feet, then dive-bombed with wings whining through the air like a diminutive siren.

Levelling off when even with the female, he skimmed past his partner's perch and repeated this act while we stood awe-struck at our wonderful luck in being treated to such a performance. When we checked our Guide Books, we identified this pair of hummers as broad-billed hummingbirds.

Starting back to Hermosillo, we now were able to see the countryside which, Friday night, we had traversed in the dark. By mid-morning the temperature had risen from chilling cold to uncomfortable heat. We drove through unsettled country where the hand of Man had not altered our natural environment. The only signs of human influence were the road itself and the power line running out to Kino Bay. At one spot, we watched a pair of red-tailed hawks building their nest on the cross-arm of a hydro pole. Our first and only Bullock's oriole was seen, a flaming-orange and black male bird, brighter and slightly larger than our Baltimore beauty. Then a flock of lark buntings drifted across the desert, likely migrating to their northern summer homeland. A coyote appeared on the shoulder of the road, sniffing and tip-toeing through the sparse scrub, obviously looking for its dinner. There was a colony of Mexican ground squirrels here and several of them were poised like furry pickets eyeing the coyote and weighing his evil intentions. Five black vultures sat silently on the cross-arm of a hydro pole just above our station wagon.

Up to now, we had failed to find any caracaras but soon our first one was seen, perched in a tree near the road. It was not fully adult and the dark feathers seemed more brownish than black. The very long legs gave it a stance like no other hawk has. Soon a second caracara joined it and, as we watched them through the 'scope, we could see a cactus wren on the branch beside them, scolding and fussing. It would creep up the limb within a few feet of the caracaras, fuming and jouncing as it directed a tiny tempest of indignation at its unwelcome visitors. The caracaras remained haughty and unimpressed, in fact they didn't even appear to notice their agitated heckler. On the other side of the road we saw two more caracaras, both adults, so this was probably a family group.

Approaching Hermosillo, we identified lazuli bunting, killdeer, Brewer's black-bird, common ravens and lark sparrows. The palo verde trees were coming into leaf and looked a bit like large forsythia bushes.

Hermosillo, a city of over 100,000 inhabitants, is the capital of the State of Sonora. It is a city of contrasts, a combination of impressive, modern architecture and squalid, impoverished slums. It was Sunday morning and there was fiesta flavour in the air. Beautiful, buxom girls promenaded in the city parks dressed in colourful finery. Young men conversed in clusters, their handsome, sun-reddened features partly hidden by black sombreros. An election campaign for the office of State Governor was at its height. From the sky, one of the candidates bombarded the city with election literature. In one of the wide streets, the rival party's supporters were preparing to barbecue a whole ox, evidently directing their appeal to the electors' stomachs instead of their minds.

In the parks, nasturtiums and petunias were in full flower. Beautiful Bougainvillea vines made brilliant displays with their masses of carmine-coloured flowers. Inca doves, house sparrows and boat-tailed grackles were the common birds in parks and gardens. Here we also found our first bronzed cowbirds, quite similar to our brown-headed species, but with a noticeable red eye.

On first entering the city, we stopped at an unusually extensive display of flowers to look for hummingbirds. A narrow lane led us down a row of houses into a desolate, dirty courtyard. A few small, unwashed children were playing in a muddy depression. Ringing the court were low-roofed shacks, each seeming to contain an entire family of human beings. The hot sun's glare was oppressive, and an unhappy pig, tethered to a stake, squealed as it strained toward a patch of shade just out of reach. Boat-tailed grackles shrieked and yelled in discordant chorus from a scrubby hedge. Hungry, half-starved dogs barked at us and aroused sedentary citizens from their siestas. From the door of his hut, a Mexican appeared, obviously puzzled at the sight of four gringos staring at his flowers through high-powered glasses. Warren explained to him that we had come from Canada and were looking for hummingbirds in his yard. His face became a picture of bewilderment and I think he is still wondering how such an unlikely situation could have come about.

The Rio Sonora has been harnessed by means of a large dam on the outskirts of Hermosillo, and a lake-sized reservoir has resulted. Here we found olivaceous cormorants, a small species of cormorant with a liking for inland waters. They are not much larger than crows. Other water-birds included 5 snowy egrets, 2 gadwall, 25 coots, a common egret and 30 ruddy ducks.

A muddy outlet led away from the reservoir and, along its banks, women were washing clothes, pounding them on flat stones, then scrubbing them in the brownish waters. We saw some Indians taking part in some kind of ritual dance complete with big wooden head-masks. Warren thought they were Yaquis but a Mexican told us they belonged to the Saris.

Below the reservoir was a marshy spot where we hoped to find something exotic, like a purple gallinule or a jacana, but nothing of the sort turned up. We did find a Bell's vireo singing, a vermilion flycatcher, Inca doves, our first Cassin's kingbird, a blue-gray gnatcatcher, Audubon's warblers, long-billed marsh wrens, and an unidentified hummingbird.

Before leaving Hermosillo we had lunch in a cafe. All our other meals had consisted of food which we brought with us. Tourists are so susceptible to dysentery that we had avoided public eating-places but we now put our trust in Warren who knew which cafes were safe. We had taco, tortilla and beans, and beer. Taco is a dish made up of shredded vegetables and diced meat, heated on a griddle and wrapped in tortillas. Although it smelled delicious while it was cooking, the whole meal was quite tasteless.

We spent the afternoon driving northward at a leisurely pace as we were a bit regretful at having to leave Mexico so soon. Although we were two hundred miles south of the Arizona border, we were still farther north than many parts of Texas. Therefore we could hardly expect to see many birds which do not occur at least somewhere in U.S.A. The collared plover was the only one we had found so far, and the farther we drove from Hermosillo, the less likelihood there was of adding more. However, there were other species which do enter U.S.A. in a few places, but are much more at home south of the border, and we hoped for some of these, such as Harris's hawk, green kingfisher or a jacana.

On the road we found five turkey vultures and two caracaras eating the carcass of a jackrabbit and, as we approached very slowly, one vulture remained until we were so close that the hood of the car obstructed our view of it. Farther on, we stopped to look at a coyote near the road, with a kill in its front feet and sitting nearby, awaiting their turn, were three vultures and a caracara. Bill spotted a large bird perched in thick scrub. With the aid of the balscope we found it to be a horned owl, a very pale one, likely the subspecific "palescens" which occurs in this part of Mexico.

Warren knew of a place near the village of Imuris where the Rio Magdalena was flowing. All the other river beds we had seen were dry. The thought of open water raised our hopes of seeing a green kingfisher although Bill dampened our enthusiasm by reminding us that he had never yet seen this bird. To reach the Magdalena we drove along a few miles of unimproved roads into a new type of countryside - farmland. In this watered valley there were several prosperous-looking farms. At one point we saw bamboo under cultivation. The river was shallow, only a few inches deep in many places. The many trees along its banks were full of birds. We found our first curve-billed thrasher, green-tailed towhee, Sprague's pipit and black-headed grosbeak. A belted kingfisher was seen and this made the presence of a green kingfisher seem less likely as this bigger bird would probably not stand for fishing competition from a smaller rival. Among the many other birds found here were killdeer, sparrow hawk, cardinal, mourning dove, brown towhee, gila woodpecker, vermilion flycatcher, house sparrow, common snipe, turkey vulture, white-crowned sparrow, ruby-crowned kinglet, boat-tailed grackle, Lucy's warbler, yellowthroat, lesser goldfinch, black phoebe, spotted sandpiper and Lincoln's sparrow. We had started back to the car when we heard a weak rattling noise more like the clatter of a wren than a kingfisher. Somewhere we had read that this was the noise of a green kingfisher, so with this faint hope we went back to the river and Bill finally spotted the bird, far up the stream, sitting on a stake over the water. Then it flew towards us, flying low and turning every bend of the river as though following a highway. We waited for another look and, in a few minutes, it came back, again following the winding watercourse, turning each corner in flight. When on the wing, this bird shows much white spotting in its plumage. The green is a very dark shade, in fact it appeared almost black. The bird is very small, not more than half the size of our belted kingfisher. This was a crowning climax of a most enjoyable trip into this small corner of Mexico. The sun was setting as we left this attractive valley. We had intended to visit a small lake fed by warm springs but by the time we arrived it was too dark, so we continued to Nogales re-entering U.S.A. at 8:00 P.M.

We shall always be grateful to our two well-informed and enthusiastic companions as, without them, I doubt if we would have seen one-half as much as we did. Before saying our Good-Bye's to Bill and Warren, we obtained directions to Sycamore Canyon, an area recommended by them as a possible place to find wild turkeys.

At daylight the next morning (Monday) we left Nogales. As we left, thousands of blackbirds were flying northward across the International Border, obviously in migration flights.

The road to Sycamore Canyon was tortuous and hilly. Again, we found ourselves in country that was virtually uninhabited. Almost every day of our trip, the weather has been perfect and to-day was no exception. Clear blue sky with a warming sun already two hours a climb set the stage for our morning's activities. At the Canyon, a

chorus of western bluebirds, chipping sparrows and brown towhees competed for our listening favour with calls, squeaks and chatters of red-shafted flickers, spotted towhees, ruby-crowned kinglets, bridled titmice, rock wrens, acorn woodpeckers, Arizona jays and a red-naped sapsucker. Local naturalists had been surprised this winter to find long-eared owls in this Canyon, a most uncommon bird in these parts. This morning we heard one hooting several times, its sequence consisting of four dove-like calls, each syllable about the same length, and descending in pitch. Even though this owl is much commoner at Toronto than here, neither of us had ever heard its call before. We spent most of our time here looking for wild turkeys but had no luck. Just before noon we returned to Nogales retracing eighteen miles of winding road along high rims of slopes which, some places dropped almost perpendicularly into deep grassy valleys. Small purple flowers were common and I believe are called filaree. Attending them were many butterflies which looked the same as our black swallowtails. A Mexican goshawk was seen flying high over one of the valleys. A hooded oriole was added, then another new species - the Lewis' woodpecker. We had been told to watch for these dark woodpeckers. Bill Harrison had explained that in flight they look more like small crows and this description fits them exactly. They do not have the bouncing flight of other woodpeckers, and their gray and rose underparts don't show up in flight as plainly as one would think. Other birds seen along our route were Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, red-tailed hawk, common raven, turkey vulture, loggerhead shrike, house sparrow, a roadrunner, cactus wren, boat-tailed grackle and ladder-backed woodpecker.

Our next objective was Mount Graham, the highest mountain in Arizona. It is near the town of Safford and we spent the afternoon driving from Nogales to the foot of the mountain. It is difficult to describe habitat groups in this part of the country as things change so frequently with one's elevation. Most of the area we traversed this afternoon was covered with ocotillo, yucca, prickly pear, tree cholla and barrel cactus. Ocotillos were just coming into flower whereas, yesterday, two hundred miles farther south, they were at their peak. Near Benson, Earl stopped to photograph some desert plants and found seven Gambel's quail. These droll little fellows, running through the cactus like fat little men, their plumes nodding back and forth with every step, added a touch of comedy relief to the sombre desert.

At the foot of Mt. Graham we slept in the station-wagon. The owner of a country store told us the road was still clogged with snow on the upper slopes and that we would not be able to climb all the way up. This was a bit discouraging.

We started our ascent at 7:30 A.M. (Tuesday). Around our station-wagon black-throated sparrows and cactus wrens were singing but we quickly lost this desert environment as we started to climb sharply. The elevation where we had slept was 3,235 feet. The peak of Mt. Graham is 10,713 feet above sea level. The mountain is actually a long ridge of the Pinaleno Mountains, twenty-five miles long and twelve miles wide. In an earlier issue of Audubon Magazine, we had learned much about this mountain from an article written by W. F. Heald. There are several camp grounds and miles of excellent trails. Thirty-six miles of winding road pass through all the climatic and ecological changes that one would experience on a trip from Mexico to Canada. The road contains many winding loops, hair-pin turns and switchbacks, some of which run along sheer rims of mountain side from which vast panoramic views of Arizona and even Mexico can be seen. At 4,500 feet, stunted junipers appear, then live oaks and pinyon pines. There are a few mountain streams and one of them - Noon Creek - gurgles past a shady picnic ground. Farther on, Chihuahua pines and Mexican pines appear towering over lower stands of manzanitas, madrones, mahogany and, along stream banks, sycamores, cottonwoods, maples and alders. Ponderosa pine is here in a

varying form, some trees having anywhere from three to seven needles in a bunch. At 7,400 feet Douglas firs and white firs are common. Past 8,000 feet, the Douglas firs reach giant size with diameters of seven feet. Engelmann spruce also grow to great heights. Above 9,500 feet the trees are mainly Engelmann spruce, alpine fir, limber pines and aspens.

To-day we were anxious to see how far up we could go. No cars had reached the top yet this season. At 3,500 feet we met a road-building gang who had to clear a section for us with a bulldozer to let us through. At Noon Creek we looked diligently along the stream hoping to find a dipper but this bird eluded us. We did find many small dark lizards sunning themselves on rock ledges. Manzanitas were in flower, considerably farther advanced than in the Chiricahuas last week. We found a black swift, a large swift as big as a martin with a dark and light pattern on the underside of the wings. At 6,000 feet we found bridled titmice, painted redstarts and ruby-crowned kinglets. By noon we had driven only 11 miles. Snow appeared now and became more plentiful the higher we climbed. We stopped for lunch at the 7,400 foot mark. Here we found three birds, all new to us. First a hermit warbler sang from above us and was finally identified after a long search in the tree-tops. Mexican juncos were seen. They look much like gray-headed juncos but the large yellow ring around the eye is very prominent. Our third "lifer" here was the little pygmy nuthatch. These tiny birds roam the country in winter in flocks, something other nuthatches do not seem to do. There were thirty of them here calling and acting like finches. In fact we were most surprised when we found them to be nuthatches. Birds in thick conifers are extremely hard to find and many times we would hear and even see birds but would have to give up in our attempts to identify them. We saw red-shafted flickers, a hairy woodpecker and a Steller's jay. We hoped for pinon jays and Clarke's nutcrackers but found none.

From 8,000 feet there was snow in all shaded areas. Our breathing was noticeably affected by the altitude and our faces were burning from sun's rays which, at this elevation, are filtered through a much thinner layer of atmosphere than at sea level. Mexican chickadees were our only other new birds learned to-day. They are much like our own black-cappeds but have the black chest patch extending over a larger portion of the breast.

At the 10,000 foot mark, the road was blocked with snow and we could go no farther. We did walk up a little farther but even this was difficult as the snow was several feet deep in places. Mexican juncos were seen here. We had driven a total of 24 miles and it was now 4:00 P.M. It took another hour and a half to descend. Back in the desert where we had slept the night before, we saw a phainopepla.

This marked the end of our planned stops, our next objective being simply to get back to Toronto and, at the same time, see as much more of the south-west as we could as we drove along. On Wednesday we visited the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge near San Antonio, N.M. Although this was an excellent spot for observing birds, we had the memory of the Bitter Lakes Refuge fresh in our minds and this Refuge suffered a bit by comparison. Also, our appetites for birding had been dulled by the last week-and-a-half of endless successes in finding one new thing after another. So, after two hours here, we decided to spend the rest of the day driving homeward. The afternoon's driving was across high tableland, over 6,000 feet high in places. Juniper was the dominant plant in many places. To our north the lofty Manzano Mountains were well covered with snow on their highest slopes. Near Mountainair we

stopped to explore a dry creek-bed and found two more new birds - the mountain bluebird and Townsend's solitaire. They were with a migrating flock of robins and were feeding on juniper berries. Other birds noted included gray-headed and Oregon juncos, ferruginous rough-legged hawk, horned lark, rock wren, marsh hawk, Cassin's purple finch and common ravens. At Negra, a ghost town, grassland took over. Our only prairie falcon of the trip was seen here. It was perched on a fence-post eating a small mammal. We walked up to it to make it fly to be sure of our identification. The black axillar patches under the wings were quite conspicuous in flight. The rest of the day we were alert for more quail or prairie chickens as the habitat seemed just right. We failed to see any. During the night we drove across the Texas panhandle and were in Oklahoma City at daylight. Here I made my acquaintance with the Carolina chickadee, a bird which has eluded me on several other birding trips. We found many of these later on in Oklahoma and Missouri. At Oklahoma City the countryside changes back from creosote-bush, sage and yucca to rolling scrub oak country. The rest of the trip was a retracing of our route which we had followed two weeks earlier on our way out. We arrived back in Toronto late Saturday night, March 25th, having driven a total of 5,914 miles.

We had listed 235 species of birds and had seen some of the most interesting countryside one could ever wish to see. Now, a year later, as I look out at snow-banks and icy streets, one thought keeps pounding in my mind. I wish I were going again this year.

G. Bennett
Acting Editor.

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DISSA AND DATA

FREAKY FLOWERINGs: In an earlier winter issue of the Newsletter we published a list of wild plants found in flower in the Toronto area on or after Nov. 1st. One additional flower has since been reported. Mrs. Lucie McDougall and Mrs. Mab Anderson report a white violet (*Viola canadensis*) found in late November in the Burnhamthorpe Woods. We'd like to hear from other botanist members who have records of more late-flowering plants.

APRIL BIRD-LISTING: The other day we were asked, "How many species of birds should I find in one day during the month of April?" The answer depends on how well one knows birds, how many hours in the day are spent afield, and whether it is early April or late in the month. Migrants are arriving almost daily so, assuming the observer knows birds well and intends to spend from daylight until dark afield, we would say that at Toronto on April 1st, forty species would be a good list. The later in the month, the more birds there are to find. So, we suggest that you take the date of the month, add it to forty, and set this as your target. This way, on the 15th you would aim for 55 and on the 30th the objective would be 70 species. Our own best list ever in April was on April 29th, 1961 at Presqu'île Point, Ontario where, with Earl Stark and Doug Scovell, we listed 80 species. Only once before had we ever exceeded 70 species. Try it sometime!

OWLS HAVE TO EAT TOO: Mr. Ray Woodfield of 40 Checkendon Drive, Rexdale, sent in a very interesting report on the activities of a screech owl at his feeder. Here is the story in Ray's own words.

"We have two feeders. One is pole-mounted in the backyard; the other is a tray on the sill of our bedroom window. Over the past two or three weeks we had noticed feathers accumulating in the window sill tray. At first we thought these to be simply normal dropping of feathers from the birds using the tray. However, we abandoned this theory when one day we observed that the few feathers had suddenly grown into a small pile. Close examination revealed traces of blood on the feed and it became evident that some birds had not been faring too well. As the tray is so located that it is inaccessible to animals - except squirrels - we concluded that this must be some sort of 'aerial attack'. We did have owls in the vicinity during the summer and naturally these became suspect. This called for some close watching! Accordingly we adopted the habit of sneaking furtive glances around the ends of the drapes during the evenings and early morning hours. Our vigilance has been rewarded and we have now, on three occasions, observed a screech owl sitting on the tray making himself quite at home. This fellow seems to be picking off sparrows from the trees at night and bringing them over to the 'table' where his victims probably dined the previous day. It is ironical that we should have set up the feeder to feed the small birds and that it has indirectly become the feeder for bigger birds to feed on smaller ones. One must, no doubt, take a philosophical point of view of such occurrences and consider them as all being part of the balance of nature."

T.F.N. OUTINGS: The outings arranged by our Outings Committee provide one of the best means we know for our members to see and learn birds. Almost every outing results in some mighty fine observations. Buz Sitwell's group on Jan. 27th turned up a barred owl in Cedarvale Ravine. Those attending the outing at the Boyd Conservation Area led by Jack Gingrich on Jan. 14th saw snow buntings, a northern shrike, a rough-legged hawk, pine grosbeaks and a black-backed three-toed woodpecker. For a purely enjoyable day, we can think of no better activity than a T.F.N. outing.

EARLY FLOWERS: If you have not already started doing so, this year try keeping a list of all wild flowers found and identified. There is no better way of maintaining one's interest in botany. The first flowers will soon be out. Some of those to be expected before the end of April are hepatica, bloodroot, dandelion, Dutchman's breeches, spring beauty, yellow dog's-tooth violet, marsh marigold, skunk cabbage, coltsfoot, pussytoes, wild strawberry, trilliums, violets and Jack-in-the-Pulpit.

G. Bennett
Acting Editor.

A LETTER FROM MRS. RUTH STEWART TO HER FRIENDS

It would seem to be the case frequently, that when an inexperienced person is called upon to reply to an after-dinner speech, most of their memory, and a very considerable amount of the cohesion of their thoughts seem to vanish. For this reason particularly, and also to reach those of my friends who were unable to attend the very delightful dinner party which was given for me at York University, I should like to take this opportunity to express my most sincere thanks to all of you for your kindness and generosity on this occasion. I have never considered my naturalist activities to be work. They have always been an unfailing joy to me, and have brought rewards a hundred-fold greater than anything which I have ever put into them.

I rather doubt whether I should say that I've learned a lot, but I have most certainly had many able teachers who have done their utmost to help me. Among these are four people to whom I would like to express my very special thanks. They are A. F. Coventry, J. R. Dymond, T. F. McIlwraith and Helen Lawrence. From my earliest years as a student at camp, when "Covers" patiently guided my stumbling footsteps in the identification of the flora of the surrounding countryside, it has been my great privilege to count these four people as my friends. We have birded together, in fair weather and foul, with great hilarity and mirth, and it has been a liberal education for me to be with them. To Helen Lawrence, who as well as aiding and abetting me on the more recent trips with the other three, has been my room-mate and friend at the F.O.N. Camp, I would say a special thank-you. Helen has accomplished something which I doubt if anyone else could have done. Despite the fact that I am tone deaf, and cannot carry a tune, even in my mind, she has managed, by dint of long and patient perseverance to enable me to recognize and identify the songs of such confusing birds as a robin and a tanager; a black-throated blue and a black-throated green warbler. Truly a Herculean task!

And so to all of you I send my grateful appreciate of your kindness, and the hope that in our new home on Vancouver Island, we may have the opportunity of welcoming at least some of our eastern friends, and showing them that we are carrying on the traditions which have been so thoroughly instilled in us while we were in Toronto.

Ruth Stewart

WHAT'S AROUND?

by Slim Pickins

April is a pretty tricky month to go looking for birds. Some days you're going to see winter birds like chickadees, nuthatches and creepers and other times you're going to get spring arrivals like flickers, sapsuckers, towhees and ruby-crowned kinglets. And if you go out in the country you're going to get stuck on the muddy roads.

An enjoyable outing is a walk around Rattray's Marsh in Lorne Park. Drive out Lakeshore Rd. (No. 2 Highway) west through Port Credit. Just past the Lorne Park turn-off watch for Bexhill Drive and turn south off No. 2. There is a red brick house on the south-west corner. Roll down your windows and listen for bird songs as you drive south on Bexhill. There is private property all along this road so please don't trespass. Drive right down Bexhill until it comes to a dead end. Then walk down the path to the marsh. Go along the east side to the lake. In the marsh there'll be red-winged blackbirds, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, baldpates, kingfishers, swamp sparrows and lots of other birds.

In the Lake you'll want to watch for red-necked grebes as this is the place where they are seen often. Look off-shore and scan all the waterfowl. These grebes look like big ducks with no tail, long necks and flat heads. If you go fairly late in April you might see a few dozen of them. Walk west along the shore and look up into the marsh and watch for wood ducks. There should be some here and the males are in such beautiful plumage this time of year that you can hardly believe they're real.

In spring when the flowers come out, the hillside on the north side of the marsh is good for finding trilliums that have freak green and white flowers and the yellow beadlelily or Clintonia.

I don't think anybody minds you walking around the marsh. But, please remember there is a lot of private property along Bexhill and it's only fair to stay off. I know if I had a place there I wouldn't want people tramping all over my petunias.

Yours truly,

SLIM PICKINS