

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

MAY MEETING

Monday, May 6th, 1963, at 8.15 p.m.
at the
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Annual Meeting and Election of Officers

"Camp Billie Bear - Sights and Sounds" - a half-hour "short" in colour, with sound track - humorous "tid-bits" of life and events at the well-known F.O.N. Camp - produced by three of the campers. Come and be introduced to Camp Billie Bear, or re-acquaint yourself with the pleasures and benefits of a two-weeks' sojourn there.

- In the rotunda - A selection of brochures outlining places of interest to visit in Canada - an aid to your vacation planning.
- "Flight", the annual magazine written and illustrated by our Junior Club members, will be on sale - 50 cents per copy.
 - R.O.M. Bird Check Lists - 5 cents each.

JUNIOR CLUB T.F.N. members are invited to attend the final meeting for this season of the Junior Field Naturalists' Club, on Saturday, May 4th, at 10.00 a.m. in the Museum theatre. There will be election of officers, presentation of prizes, and distribution of "Flight" magazine to Junior Club members. A thrilling underwater film, THE SILENT WORLD, will be shown. A contribution of 25 cents will be asked from visitors to help defray the cost of obtaining the film.

F.O.N. SPRING WEEKEND At Billie Bear Lodge, Huntsville, May 31st to June 2nd. Full details may be obtained from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 170 The Donway West, Don Mills, telephone HI 7-7421.

AN EVENT OF INTEREST On Wednesday, May 1st, at 8.15 p.m., at the Humane Society Auditorium, Wellesley St., W., a lecture on "Reptiles" by R. V. Lindsay, presented by the Canadian Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Society. No admission charge.

DETAILS OF TWEED WEEKEND (as promised in the Spring Outings folder)

An interesting outing is being planned for the weekend of Friday, May 10th, to Sunday, May 12th, in the area of Tweed, on Stoco Lake (24 miles north of Belleville, and 14 miles east and south of Madoc).

From Toronto take Hwy. 401 east to Belleville, then Hwy. 37 north to Tweed; or take Hwy. 7 straight east to Actinolite (look for "Log Cabin Restaurant" at junction of No. 7 and No. 37 Highways), turn right to No. 37 and go 5 miles south to Tweed. Approximate distance by either route is 150 miles.

Friday night, May 10th. For early arrivals, coffee will be available in the coffee shop of West Wind Motel in Actinolite, until 11 p.m. The motel is on Highway 7, north side of road, 1 mile west of the Junction of No. 7 and No. 37 Highways.

Saturday, May 11th. Meet at 9.30 a.m. in the Tweed Memorial Park, on Stoco Lake. Geology, birds, and botany around Tweed, Stoco and Sulphide. Return to Tweed at 6.00 p.m. Leaders: Dr. Walter M. Tovell and Dr. Peter A. Peach. Tweed is the site of the University of Toronto's Geology Camp, held in the early part of May each year for two weeks' intensive field work for the geology students. Drs. Peach and Tovell have been on the Camp staff since the Camp was organized six years ago.

Sunday, May 12th. Field trip to Presqu'ile Provincial Park, where there should be a good movement of shore birds in particular. Meet in the parking lot at the Park entrance at 10.00 sharp. Leader: Mr. Jack Gingrich.

For those who wish to stay in the immediate vicinity of Tweed, arrangements have been made for reservations to be received at:

West Wind Motel, Actinolite:

Single units (1 double bed)	\$6.00 one person
Double units (1 double bed)	\$8.00 for two persons (i.e. \$4.00 each)
Double units (2 double beds)	\$10.00 per room - for 2, 3, 4 persons
Extra cots in rooms	\$1.00 per cot

(4 units with 1 double bed each, 6 units with 2 double beds each)

Park Place Motel, Memorial Park, Tweed:

Single units (1 double bed)	\$6.00 one person - \$7.00 two persons
Double units (2 beds)	\$8.00 two persons
Double units (2 double beds)	\$10.00 per room - for 2, 3, 4 persons
Extra cots in rooms	\$2.00 per cot

(4 units with 1 double bed each, 6 units with 2 double beds each)

Tweedsmuir Hotel, Main Street, Tweed:

Single accommodation ranges from \$4.00 per person to \$6.00.
 Double accommodation averages about \$8.00 for two persons per room.
 4 people in one room - \$8.00 per room
 Extra cots available.

Breakfast and take-out lunches for Saturday and Sunday are available at the motels and at the hotel. Please be sure and order your lunches when making your reservations, as these cannot be made up on short notice. Dinners can be obtained at the Log Cabin Restaurant in Actinolite, and at the Tweedsmuir Hotel.

Please note: It is recommended that reservations be made as soon as possible, to avoid last minute disappointment. The T.F.N.C. executive and leaders regret that they are not in a position to undertake the responsibility of arranging for the accommodation or transportation of participating members.

Map References for the Tweed field trip:

National Topographic Series, scale 1:50,000
 Kaladar sheet No. 31 C/11, East and West halves
 Tweed sheet No. 31 C/6, East and West halves
 Obtainable at: Parliament Buildings,
 Department of Lands and Forests,
 Map Distribution Centre.

President - Dr. David Hoeniger

Secretary - Mrs. H. Robson,
 49 Craighurst Ave.,
 Toronto 12, Ont.

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



NEWSLETTER

Authorized as second class mail
by the Post Office Department, Ottawa,
and for payment of postage in cash.

NUMBER 196

APRIL 1963

For this issue of the Newsletter we have some very interesting contributions from our members.

A recent letter from Mrs. Henry Marsh, written at the Bishop's house in Whitehorse, Yukon, on March 28, gives a glimpse into the very different experiences that some of our farther members are having. She writes,

"It is amazing and wonderful to watch just outside the window while I type and see forty snow buntings eating Henry's cracked wheat cereal with gluttonous cupidity. Henry is even more delighted than I am and has bought six packages of porridge meal, which he is sure they prefer. The flock now has found the top of the shabby black garage that hides any view from our kitchen window. For the first time it is a delight for now the whole roof is covered with buntings, lifting and falling in wonderful patterns of white and silver grey. Another fifty have landed as I write. Evidently the word has gone forth.

Hurrah! Among them is a dark little associate. It's a Lapland longspur, a lifelister for me! I nearly sent a telegram when I saw it.

Though it is 6.30 p.m., and almost navy blue night, the buntings are still feeding. They are very plump, well larded for the next long flight.

I wondered where they would go for the night. From our kitchen window we look onto the back of the Old Log Cathedral, built in 1900. As I later looked over there, there they were, scores of them, scuttling into the crevices between the old logs, tucking themselves under the eaves, cuddling down into the shelter of the belltower. 'Yea the sparrow hath found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts.'"

A few days before Mrs. Marsh had gone as business manager and chaperone to Fairbanks, Alaska, with Indian skiers going to compete in the annual carnival there. Of this experience she writes,

"As we drove from Whitehorse to Fairbanks on the first day of spring for the Gold Nugget ski races we observed all day long snow buntings filtering northward in twos and threes. A week later as a bitter wind gusted through Whitehorse it literally blew in not only drifting snow but scores of brown and white buntings. These were the birds we coaxed to stay near the house by scattering cracked wheat cereal and old bread.

"At Fairbanks I met the distinguished local ornithologist, Mrs. Bruina Kessel. Pine grosbeaks were singing on the campus of the University of Alaska, and there was an occasional flight of redpolls. Mrs. Kessel tells me that the great movement of spring birds comes in one whoosh from the middle of April to the middle of May. But the migration is on now; next week will bring rough-legged hawks and golden eagles, then will come canvasbacks. And so on and on.

Because this was carnival week I was able to go to a native potlatch. Have you ever had Indian ice cream? As far as I can gather it is animal fat, probably moose or caribou, poured into a five gallon can. Then berries are stirred into it while it is soft. After it is frozen then it is ice cream! I had cranberry and brown, quite palatable in very small amounts while still very frozen but not so good as it melts. We had roast beaver, rabbit, moose, caribou and other new delicacies. After the feast the Indians and Eskimos of Alaska, who had come down for the world's greatest dog races, vied with one another, dancing and singing.

The Eskimos had wonderful fur parkas. They came from Point Barrow and Kotzebue, Nome and Sitka. The old man was a marvellous mimic, an Eskimo Marcelle Marceau. We got to the dog races too; twenty-eight dog teams, some with eleven dogs each. I was there on the first day and delighted in watching the natives cheer their own dogs. I hear it gets more and more exciting with added features each day, such as blanket tossing and snowshoe obstacle races. A wonderful experience.

The party of Indians that I was chaperoning was from Old Crow which is in our diocese, the farthest north settlement. The Old Crow skiers leave Whitehorse tomorrow. They will be back in their Arctic village by the first of April. Today Ben Charlie and Isaac Thomas, two of the champion skiers, watched a flock of snow buntings from my window, and commented, 'These snow birds will be in Old Crow when we get back -- lots of them'.

The Indian boys, as well as being skiers of Olympic potential, are skilled naturalists. They have worked as field men for Dr. Lawrence Irving of the University of Alaska. Dr. Irving was much impressed that Big Joe Kay, chief of Old Crow for twenty years, knew the Indian names for 99 of 107 species of birds, observed there. It is revealing to find the Loucheux Indians recognizing and naming birds for the pure love of knowledge. Only a few ducks and ptarmigan are important to them as food for they live mainly on caribou, moose and fish. At the feast given in honour of the Bishop last summer Peter Moses danced "The Crow", perfectly mimicking that bird. It was most encouraging to me to find two of our Indian skiers so knowledgeably interested in the first migration of birds this spring. They really know the birds. The University of Alaska research team thought the rough-legged hawks which they observed in May at Old Crow were just arriving but changed their opinion when Ben Charlie told them that the hawks had been there since April and were nesting in May. The first Arctic loon's nest was found by Irwin Linklater, another of the

skiers, at the edge of a lake in Old Crow flats. Yes, these boys are really good observers. No wonder that Henry is almost belligerently proud of our Arctic-bound friends, both skiers and buntings."

x x x

x x x

x x x

Recently, February 23 - March 3, four of our well-known members, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Pannell, Miss Helen Smith and Miss Etta Weinert, had an interesting visit to Bermuda. We are very pleased that they have put some of their observations and impressions on record for the benefit of the other members of the club. Here is their account.

Beautiful Bermuda

It was morning. We raised the venetian blind and looked out. Spread before us was the water of the harbour, dancing and shimmering in the morning sun. On the other side against a backdrop of sullen clouds lay Hamilton, glowing like a necklet of pearls in the early light, a picture not to be forgotten. If this was Bermuda we were going to like it.

For two or three days we took short exploratory walks peering into sunken gardens or craning our necks to view the various palms and other strange trees that graced the landscape. The most startling revelation came when we learned that there was no fresh water on the islands. True, there were a few brackish ponds but no fresh water such as we know it in Canada -- nothing but the rain, the precious rain. Catchbasins could be seen on the hillsides and every roof is so constructed as to prevent a quick run-off, the rain being conducted into troughs leading into cisterns down below. Some buildings such as churches collect more water than is needed. It is a reserve supply. Fortunately, the rainfall is well spread over the seasons. Supplementary water is, however, obtainable. We noted that there were no brick houses in Bermuda. All were made of local limestone which is quarried and cut into blocks. Bermuda homes, washed with a whitening, often tinted in pastel shades, present a picture of loveliness and cleanliness.

Having satisfied ourselves, for the time being, with our immediate area, we planned a trip to the sea. Our Guest House was situated at the east end of the Great Sound on Hamilton harbour. To reach the open sea we had to face in the opposite direction and cross the width of the island. The hilly land hid our view of the ocean until we were almost upon it. Soon it came into full view. One great expanse of unbelievable blue; not one blue but several. Aquamarine, ultramarine and turquoise, and over the sunken reefs was the strange moire effect of green and pink. No wonder an artist, when he was asked, "Do you find the colours in Bermuda differ from elsewhere?" replied, "No, only the sea and that is extraordinary". Our attention was now drawn to the exposed reefs. The waves were lashing themselves into a white froth of fury on the coral, seemingly resenting this interruption to their shoreward surge. Mary and I were content to feast our eyes on this scene, but Helen and Etta, not less sensitive to this beauteous spot, were soon heading for the inviting sandy beach, as having brought their bathing suits they were now eager for a dip in the briny. Later we learned that this coral sea, long since, had been the graveyard of many an adventurous bark that had sought shelter on this inviting stretch of shore. Some of these wrecks have lately been spotted by scuba divers. Fabulous treasures have been recovered and may be seen at the Museum at Flatt's Bay.

From this same Museum we obtained a booklet on the fauna and flora of Bermuda. In it, is the checklist of birds, listing 22 nesting birds, 14 of which are resident. This would indicate, at once, that this is not a birdwatcher's paradise, yet close to

200 species have been recorded over the years. Catbird, cardinal and bluebird, fairly common to Bermuda, were our firsts. The kiskadee or Derby flycatcher, though introduced, is resident and common. It is not unlike our crested flycatcher in general appearance, has a striking black-and-white face, rufous upper parts and a sulfur-yellow breast. It is also extremely vocal and easy to identify. The ground dove is also resident and to be found everywhere. It is a quaint little bird that one could enclose in the hand; it may be seen foraging for its food like a little mouse. Another resident bird is the chick-of-the-village; this local name suggests its song. Ornithologists will recognize it as a sub-species of the white-eyed vireo (Vireo griseus Bermudianus). This bird has declined rapidly in the last few years due to a very tragic situation. Not long ago great red cedars were common throughout the island, but today few remain. They, too, may pass away all due to a deadly blight known as the 'scale'. It is heartbreaking to see so many stands of dead trees. Much of it has been cut away and is being replaced by the Australian pine (Casuarina). It was in these cedars that the white-eyed vireo thrived. Whether the new trees will meet the requirements of this lovely little songster remains to be proven. House sparrows thrive here in plague proportions, unhappily.

Due to the efforts of the Audubon Society of Bermuda, an area known as Spittal Pond, a brackish pond, has been set aside as a wildfowl refuge. This we were intent on seeing, and one afternoon we took our usual method of transportation, a taxi, to this not too far distant spot. It is in a valley very close to the sea on the sheltered side of the island where between this pond and the ocean lies a high rock, known as Spanish Rock. The pond is probably 300 yards long and 100 yards wide, rather too close to civilization to be an ideal refuge. However, a pond is a pond and birds have not much choice. We started down the hill with stealthy tread. There was no cover here and we feared to betray our presence. Suddenly, three white birds, showing signs of uneasiness, moved into the open. We stopped, put our glasses on them and identified one as a cattle egret, the other two being foreign to us. Off they flew, but we saw them later and discovered they were immature little blue herons. We were now able to conceal ourselves somewhat by bushes. Making our way cautiously along the bank, we stopped as we spotted more herons across a little bay. Behind them some darker birds were busying themselves in the rank grasses. When one of these raised its head, the others quickly followed suit. Nine glossy ibis! Another heron with a dark body and a white belly attracted our attention. Out came Peterson. This was a Louisiana heron, a lifer for us all. On the far side of the pond we spotted a great blue heron. Farther along, our glasses picked up a blue heron with the sun glinting on its plumage. What a sight! Almost as blue as a bluebird! It was a mature little blue, again a lifer for all of us. Also an American egret came under our scrutiny. The pond was widening out now, and we saw many ducks along the edge of the water: mallards, blue- and green-winged teal, baldpates in goodly numbers, also coot and pied-billed grebe. Killdeer rose up near us, making it quite clear that they resented our intrusion. Next, a lone and large shorebird was noted picking its way sedately through the rushes. When it finally came out into the open, we discovered it to be a greater yellowlegs. We had certainly hit the jackpot here. All this with singing cardinals and the calling crows reminded us of spring in Canada. Now two bluebirds flew across the water and lit on a rail fence. We thrilled to hear a soft gentle song from one of them. The spell of our suppressed excitement was now broken. Chortling merrily about our 'finds' we returned to find our driver had arrived at the appointed time. The climax came as we neared home. Three Wilson's snipe were spotted at a wet patch in a sunken garden.

On another occasion when travelling in a taxi, I noted a supposed gull passing ahead of the car. It dropped into a nearby field. As we came to a stop we noted a reclining cow enjoying the balmy air and sunshine. Perambulating close by was the

white bird. It approached the cow, stuck out its neck, took aim, then struck swiftly. It was a cattle egret snatching a fly from the flank of the cow. This was the first time any of us had seen a cattle egret in action. We continued our journey in high spirits.

According to our checklist the mockingbird, an introduced species, had failed to establish itself and was, therefore, left off the list. So, imagine my chagrin, when the girls came back from a walk, which I had passed up, to have them call out that they had just identified a mockingbird. It was of the accommodating variety, having flown up onto a telephone wire for the girls' inspection.

We had compiled a composite list of 38 birds, including wintering palm and myrtle warblers, also ruddy turnstones during our short stay. Of course, our time was not all taken up with birdwatching, as the following section by Miss Helen Smith will indicate. All in all, we had a glorious holiday in this never-to-be-forgotten beautiful Bermuda.

Now let us look at some of the trees and plants of Bermuda. To do this we'll have taxi-driver Gilbert as our guide. The taxi-drivers are considered ambassadors of these fair islands, but Gilbert is an example par excellence with all the innate dignity of his race, with his cultured soft-voiced use of the English language, with his love of Bermuda, and his knowledge of its flora and fauna.

Bermuda is a semi-tropical land with luxuriant growth; flowers and flowering shrubs bloom all year round, and fruit eight months of the year. Gilbert was quick to point out orange trees, grapefruit, lemon and loquat, all heavy with fruits. We exclaimed in delight at seeing the small banana plantations, and examined the beautiful unusual flower at the end of each developing stalk of fruit. Then came the weird pawpaw tree with its umbrella of leaves at the top, and clustering underneath, the fruit, green turning to ripe yellow. Half a dozen varieties of palm dot the islands, with the royal palm being the most stately; a row of them make a road an avenue. An excellent example of this was at the Botanical Gardens, where the Islanders are encouraged to procure plants, bushes and trees to make Bermuda even more beautiful.

Along the road, Gilbert showed us the star, or Norfolk Island pine, looking just as if its branches had been hand-trimmed, and the feathery Casuarina or Australian pine. But it was almost with tears in his voice that he explained the stark skeletons on the hillside -- Bermuda cedar, victim of the 'scale' blight over ten years ago. Once the most abundant tree on the islands, its thick branches provided not only nesting sites for birds, but most important, a windbreak against the ever-present high winds. The wood is still being used for burning and for wood-carving.

Bermuda has so many flowering trees, shrubs and plants. The oleander was coming into bloom, and everywhere, whole hedges of hibiscus presented a riot of colour, there being thirty varieties, we were told. Flanking the roadside were nasturtiums bigger than we'd ever seen them. Their morning glories run rampant. Here was a high hedge of "match-me-if-you-can" with its gaily-coloured leaves; there along the front of a low stone wall a mass of dainty "Japanese Firecracker". And to see poinsettias growing six to ten feet high! Of course, Gilbert took us past fields of the Bermuda Easter Lily already in bloom; and we were thrilled to see lawns with the heady-perfumed Freesia, growing as we grow crocuses here.

"Oh, stop the car, please, Gilbert, I hear goldfinches." Out of the car we pile, binoculars up, to find European goldfinches in our glasses! And you can imagine that every bluebird we saw had four pairs of eyes glued on it -- how we loved them.

Gilbert touched on geology too: the volcanic rocks, and the limestone rock, so milky-white in the freshly-cut quarries, so weathered and gray in the old, low stone walls. It didn't take much persuading to have us visit the astounding "Crystal Cave" with its stalactites and stalagmites, where we used a pontoon-supported walk that rose and fell with the tide though the ocean was I don't know how many miles away.

The winter season allowed us to touch on only a few of the highlights of interest to naturalists. The travel folders expound on the beauty of Bermuda, how photogenic it is, all the activities it has to offer. We bring back pleasant memories of the "Garden of the Atlantic", plus a little bit of England this side of the ocean.

x x x

x x x

x x x

Miss E. P. Miller, writing from Sunderland, Ontario, tells us of observations of bluejays at her feeding station this winter. She writes,

"I enjoy reading the Club's Newsletter very much. It helps keep in touch when I cannot attend the meetings or the Audubon films.

"I felt you might like to hear of a bird visitation we had and pass it on to any interested members.

"On February sixteenth around 9.30 a.m. sixteen bluejays were observed perching in the top branches of a tall maple tree, some eighteen or so feet from the front of our house. We could hear a strange musical chatter which drew us to the east upstairs windows. The birds were in four groups and within these groups were perched in twos.

"Each right-hand bird, as we watched, did the musical talking to its partner. When finished it shook the branch with both feet as if giving emphasis to its speech. I had never heard these musical phrases before and tried to imitate them but could not. Each pair acted the same way over and over again. We watched enthralled for a half hour. Then the right-hand jays began flying away one at a time in different directions. The remaining birds rested there for a time then, with one accord, swung off as a flock in a northwest direction.

"We have not seen these latter ones since, so wonder if they were being told that there was not enough food for them in these parts and were ordered to go elsewhere.

"Eight bluejays, we do know, are in our vicinity, five of them daily frequenting our feeder. One, in particular, is very bossy, not even allowing others to feed with it. The other four have found a way, however, to overcome this selfishness. They swallow many sunflower seeds at one time when this bird is not about, then fly off, regurgitating them in a secret spot where they can safely devour them one at a time. We have seen them swallow as many as twenty-two seeds at top speed, then make off, before the "Boss" returns, to the eavestrough, a crotch in the hedge or some place in the snow.

"Bird food must be plentiful this season in woods and swamps, for we have had no chickadees, grosbeaks, juncos or cardinals. One hairy woodpecker comes now and then but no downy as yet.

"March second a purple finch did visit our small feeder with the five tree sparrows and he has stayed quite busily feeding today.

There does not appear to be enough food for rabbits. They have eaten off the tops of all our berry canes and tried to get at our protected shrubs as well.

"I hope the club had a very interesting winter, nature-wise, in spite of considerable severe winter weather."

Editor's comment: We have never seen the sort of bluejay performance described by Miss Miller but it resembles certain courtship displays as recorded in ornithological literature. The indication that the jays were divided into "twos" would seem to bear out this interpretation even at that early date. Some birds go through pre-courtship displays long before mating and nesting.

The bossiness of the individual jay is doubtless an example of the peck order in operation. This is characteristic of winter flock feeding at places like feeding stations.

Miss Miller's report of the scarcity of chickadees and other birds at her station has been the common experience of many if not most feeding station owners in this area this winter. Wild fruit and seed were indeed plentiful in Southern and even Northern Ontario this season, a fact which undoubtedly kept large numbers of birds in the woods and fields. Only late in the season for two or three weeks did evening grosbeaks, redpolls, purple finches and pine siskins appear, the grosbeaks only in small numbers. They have all mostly gone again now.

x x x

x x x

x x x

Highlights of T.F.N.C. hikes (September-March)

Beginning on Saturday, September 22, and continuing on subsequent Saturdays throughout October an enthusiastic group of 10-14 botanically-minded members, under the leadership of Dr. Fletcher Sharp, explored the botanical resources of Wilket Creek, and also visited spots as far as Gormley, Vandorf Farm, the northern Boy Scout camp. Wilket Creek was voted the best botanizing area of the lot.

On September 29 Len Butcher led a small group along the east bank of the Humber from the Old Mill to Dundas Street. Forty-four kinds of birds were seen in the two hour hike. Len reports that the east bank is now going wild again and is in a much better condition for the observation of both birds and flowers than it was after the face-lifting the valley received. Especially good at migration time.

On October 14 some 68 people turned out to scour Centre Island with Robert Taylor. Undoubtedly the outstanding sights of the trip were the owls: 1 short-ear, 1 boreal and 39 saw-whet owls! Since the destruction of Ashbridge's Bay and Cherry Street beach the Island appears to be the main centre for saw-whet migration. They also saw fringed gentian in bloom.

Thirty observers at the Terra Cotta conservation area on October 28 were treated to a stimulating geological tour with Dr. Peter Peach and bird sights with Jack Gingrich. Many in the party were surprised at the size and variety of this attractive conservation area. It is well worth many trips.

A survey of the Toronto waterfront from Woodbine Avenue to Sunnyside on November 4 yielded the remarkable sight of five bluebirds, 20-30 snow buntings and a Lapland longspur at Cherry Beach, and a good view of a shoveller, a great blue heron, baldpate and coot at Grenadier Pond. The leaders were Mrs. Eve Cobb, Mary Spiers and Jack Gingrich. 35 people turned out for this tour.

Helen Lawrence's group of 25 at the Boyd Conservation area on November 17 may have had cloudy and cold weather but they observed some mighty interesting things all the same: a raccoon sleeping on top of a squirrel's nest in a tree; a good view of a

northern shrike catching a mouse; a red-tailed hawk display. They also had chances to compare the call notes of white- and red-breasted nuthatches, and of goldfinches and pine siskins.

On December 1 ten people went with John Miles to visit Coote's Paradise in Hamilton, to Dundas and to King's Forest. Thirty-two kinds of birds were seen, the most interesting being two long-eared owls and two tufted titmice, the latter being watched at a feeder in Dundas while the group was having lunch. This party also saw a raccoon up a tree, and recorded witch-hazel in bloom and Christmas fern.

On a fine and sunny February 10 in Wilket Park Miss Mary Spiers and 25 observers found 19 species of birds, an excellent list for such an area at that date. Everyone got a good look at two pileated woodpeckers.

On February 23 Don Young took 11 people around the Greenwood Conservation Area and then on to the lake at Pickering and Whitby. Some 25 species of birds were discovered, 13 of these being in the Greenwood area, but much pleasure was had in observing trees, winter plant skeletons, tracks of animals, and, best of all, three deer, seen near the parking area.

March 9 saw Mrs. Eve Cobb leading a group of 25 up the Humber valley from the Old Mill to Dundas Street. Again a pileated woodpecker was the highlight of the 17 species of birds seen. Mrs. Cobb noted the keenness of a number of the young people present on the trip.

On March 24 some 48 people enjoyed the first warm spring day of the year at Glen Haffy Conservation Area with Gerry Bennett. Gerry turned up robin, grackle, cowbird and killdeer as spring "firsts", and showed the party deer tracks and Christmas fern as well. 17 species of birds were seen, really a good count for this inland area at that date.

x x x

x x x

x x x

Report on Spring. As an addendum to the previous Newsletter the editor would like to point out that in spite of the long, hard winter spring came with a sudden rush this year. Birds like robins, redwings, killdeer, vultures, and several ducks, indeed, most of the early migrants began to arrive from one to ten days earlier than average. The first flower, skunk cabbage, was seen in bloom on March 23, and on March 31 hepatica was out, a very early date. On April 5 hepatica, spring beauty, dogtooth violet, blue cohosh, bloodroot were all in bloom. Silver maples were in blossom during the last week in March, and were quickly followed by cottonwood poplar, common elm, ground hemlock, black willow and spotted alder, all by April 7. This then is an early spring in the Toronto region.

Now comes the most exciting month of the year, May, when all nature rushes into new vivid life. There is so much to see in any May that no one, even the keenest, can ever see it all. But think what you can see if only you will try. May is a challenge to every field naturalist, and everyone has his own way of meeting it. What is yours?

Editor,

R. M. Saunders.