

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

Visitors welcome!

DECEMBER MEETING

Visitors welcome!

Monday, December 6th, 1965, at 8.15 p.m.
at the
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Speaker: JOHN A. LIVINGSTON, Executive Producer of Science Programs, CBC

Subject: GALAPAGOS (Illustrated with slides)

Under the leadership of Mr. Livingston and CBC filming expedition went to the Galapagos Islands in the spring of 1965. Ever since Charles Darwin visited them in 1835 these islands, located 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador, have fascinated students of the evolutionary process. Others in the field party included James Murray, producer of "The Nature of Things"; William H. Gunn, recordist of wildlife sounds; T. M. Shortt, Royal Ontario Museum; and Roger Tory Peterson. Some of the animals included in Mr. Livingston's presentation will include tortoises, iguanas, lava lizards, Darwin finches, mockingbirds, hawks, penguins, and flightless cormorants.

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December Outings

Sunday LAMBTON WOODS & JAMES GARDENS - Botany Leader: Mr. Jim Simon
Dec. 5th Meet at the parking lot of James Gardens, on Edenbridge Drive.
2:00 p.m. Edenbridge Dr. crosses Royal York Rd. about half way between Dundas St. and Richview Side Rd. James Gardens are between this intersection and the east end of Edenbridge Dr. at Scarlett Rd.

Saturday REAR OF BOYD CONSERVATION AREA - Birds Leader: Mr. Jack Gingrich
Dec. 11th From the intersection of Highways 400 and 7, travel west about 1-1/2 miles to
9:30 a.m. Pine Valley Drive (watch for sign pointing to Mart Kenney's Ranch). Go north on Pine Valley Drive about 2 miles, as far as possible on this road without turning east or west. Park on the side of the road. Morning only.

Committee Chairman: Mr. Jack Gingrich (531-9701)

BIRD STUDY GROUP The Bird Study Group got off to an excellent start at its first two meetings. The December meeting will be held at St. James-Bond United Church, on the west side of Avenue Rd., two blocks north of Eglinton. This group is for all TFNC members who want to learn more about birds.
Monday Dec. 13th 8:00 p.m. Secretary: Mr. Gerry McKeating (293-8643)

BOTANY GROUP There will be no meeting of the Botany Group in December. The following motion was passed unanimously at the October meeting of the Botany Group: Moved that the Botany Group request the TFNC executive to consider the Botany Group henceforth as a study group of the TFNC. In this case, the TFNC would appoint a chairman for the Botany Group commencing next year, rather than having the Botany Group elect its own chairman as at present.
Secretary: Miss Edith Cosens (481-5013)

LAST CALL FOR FEES! Membership renewals were due in September. If you wish to remain on the mailing list, we urge renewal by mail at once, or at the December meeting. Single membership \$4.00; family \$6.00; corresponding \$2.00.

ABOUT YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING -

- At the December meeting see our selection of FON Christmas cards, calendars, and hasti-notes. Daily reminders which were out of stock are now available.
 - How about a pair of tickets for one of the Audubon Wildlife Films? These may be ordered by mail now from Eaton Auditorium, to be sent to you and presented as a gift. Price \$1.50 each. The remaining programmes are
 - Tuesday, January 11 - Worth Randle - "Waterway Wildlife"
 - Tuesday, February 1 - James A. Fowler - "Trailing Nature Northward"
 - Tuesday, March 22 - D. J. Nelson - "Inherit the Wild"
- A descriptive brochure to present with the tickets may be obtained from the TFNC Secretary (481-0260) or picked up at the December meeting.
- For your young friends, a subscription to the Young Naturalist, published ten times a year by the FON. Phone 444-8419 for a sample copy, or pick one up at the December meeting. To subscribe, send \$1.00 to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 1262 Don Mills Rd., Don Mills.
 - Birders would appreciate a supply of FON Bird Checking Lists. You can get them at the December meeting. Price 5 cents each.
 - The second edition of A Naturalists' Guide to Ontario is now available from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. Edited by W. W. Judd and Murray Speirs, and beautifully illustrated by Sylvia Hahn, it tells where to go, how to get there, and what you may find. Cloth-covered \$4.95 (to FON members \$4.45); paper-covered \$1.95 (to FON members \$1.75).
 - Plan to visit the FON Nature Bookshop at Shoreacres House, 1262 Don Mills Rd. It will be open for Christmas Shoppers on Saturdays, Dec. 4th and 18th, from 9 to 2, and each weekday from 8 to 4:30. There you can examine at your leisure an extensive selection of nature books, recordings, etc. FON members receive the advantage of a 10% discount on all purchases.
 - Or drop in to see Reg. James at Conservation Enterprises, 51 McKee Ave., Willowdale. Reg can show you feeders, nesting boxes, bird calls, bird baths, binoculars - all kinds of equipment for the enthusiast.

JUNIOR The Mineral Group will be in charge of the regular monthly meeting at the
CLUB Museum Theatre on Saturday, Dec. 4th at 10:00 a.m.

Director: Mr. Robt. MacLelland (288-9346)

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Anyone interested in attending a University Extension evening course in Natural Science commencing in January should telephone the Division of University Extension, 928-2343, before the end of November.

TFNC CLUB HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION. If you have not yet obtained a copy of this booklet, you can get one for 50 cents at the December meeting and be "in the know" about the background and present organization of our Club.

Have you paid your fees yet?

President - R. F. Norman

Secretary - Mrs. H. C. Robson
49 Craighurst Ave.,
Toronto 12 (481-0260)



Number 215

Authorized as 2nd Class Mail by
The Post Office Department, Ottawa,
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November 1965

The York Downs Story

A story in the Globe and Mail of Nov. 12, 1965 referred to the imminent sale of York Downs Golf Course to private developers. Indications are that this sale will be approved by the Golf Club's members before the spring of 1966.

The disappearance of this scenic Golf Course will be regretted by many local residents, particularly those naturalists whose wanderings have frequently included a trip to the York Downs area.

The Golf Course itself covers an area east of Bathurst St. to the west branch of the Don River, south from Sheppard Ave. about halfway to Wilson Ave. Adjacent to the Golf Course is the river valley carved out by the Don winding from Finch Ave. south and east across Sheppard angling towards Avenue Rd., under #401 Highway, ultimately blending in with the portion of the Don Valley commonly known as Hogg's Hollow.

The general York Downs area is one small piece of the Don Valley. The west branch of the Don rises out of the ground near the hamlet of Teston, just north-west of Maple, and wanders through the townships of Vaughan and North York. It is now a slow-moving, shallow, polluted stream whose banks, once wooded and green, are gradually being converted to masonry abutments decorated with detergent foam and broken bottles. Before white men settled in this area, the river was wide, deep and rushing. Early records make frequent references to salmon fishing. The river course was strewn with fallen trees and navigation by canoe was hampered by occasional rapids and fast water. In 1788, the Don was shown on a map as the Nechinquakakonk. It was named the Don after the Don River in Yorkshire.

Wildlife observations in this valley around 1800 would include such items as passenger pigeon, moose, fisher, lynx, pine marten, black bear and wolverine, all of which have long ago vanished from the region. Still occurring, but only

occasionally, are beaver, white-tailed deer, otter, brush wolf and porcupine. Species now in the area, not seen before the white man, are starling, rock dove, house sparrow, European hare and pheasant.

There is a record of a large flight of passenger pigeons in 1877 which took six hours to pass over a point near Todmorden. As far as we know, 11 pigeons in 1896 is the last record of this extinct bird in the Don watershed.

Around 1790 the York Downs area was truly a primeval wilderness. Most licensed white fur-traders plied the Humber and Credit valleys. Outlaw traders, finding the rum trade too lucrative to quit the area, took to hobnobbing with Indians along the Don. Senecas and Mississaugas seem to be the tribes most likely to have camped in York Downs. We do know that there was a Mississauga camping spot between Maple and Concord.

Lord and Lady Simcoe lived at Castle Frank around 1793-1820. Mrs. Simcoe's diary gives us a wealth of information about the area from the Lake Ontario shore past Todmorden. Although there is no evidence that she proceeded as far as York Downs, it is safe to assume that her general descriptions would apply. These descriptions include references to wild ducks, red-winged blackbirds, eagles, rattlesnakes, haws, baneberries, handsome Indian men, wild pigeons, raccoons, foxes, wolves, deer, pike, pickerel, geese, and "whipperwills".

By 1801, all lots on both sides of Yonge St. within the Don watershed had been granted. In that year settlement slowed down somewhat when it was announced that henceforth settlers would have to pay for their land. Taxes were levied on log houses if they had two or more fireplaces.

From 1816 to 1842 many changes occurred. The war with U.S.A. being over, immigration increased. Sawmills and grist mills sprang up quickly. The younger generation were anxious for progress; the older people shook their heads and wondered what the young folks were coming to.

One of the best-remembered settlers was James Hogg, a strong-willed and strong-muscled man whose name will likely never die in Toronto history. He died in 1839. In the same year, Rev. Dr. Scadding wrote of the scenic vista to be seen as one stands on the rise north of the Jolly Miller looking west over the York Downs valley. He refers to "undisturbed forest with little patches of pleasant grassland."

Through the 1850's there were trees large enough for squared timber of white pine, oak, ash, birch, maple, elm and hemlock. The decline of big timber started in the '70's as building increased. In York County production of maple syrup in 1880 was 100 times as much as in 1940.

A map of York Downs as of 1860 reveals some surnames perpetuated in the area's geography. The south-west corner of Sheppard and Yonge was farmed by John Sheppard. J. & W. Hogg lived in the valley. John Armour owned the land along Wilson from Yonge Blvd. to Bathurst St. and John Lawrence farmed on the north-west corner of Lawrence and Bathurst.

Along the north side of Wilson from Bathurst to Dufferin, the Steward family settled. One of these farms was subdivided between 1947 and 1950 and I lived from 1949 to 1955 in this subdivision on King High Ave. In this period I spent many hours observing and cataloguing the history of the area's natural wildlife. I believe one of the old Steward houses still stands on the north side of Wilson Ave. near Collinson Blvd. As late as 1950 we used to pick wild strawberries in the fields now occupied by streets such as Yeoman Rd., York Downs Drive, Palm Drive, Laurelcrest, Silverton, Invermay and Fayewood. As late as

1953 there were Henslow's sparrows in the fields and a small pond, visible from our back door, was visited by ducks, green herons, kingfishers and fall shore-birds. The site of this pond is now Robbie Ave.

In 1900, our area was a farming community with orchards, woods and rolling fields. On what is now the south-east corner of York Downs Golf Course, the river then widened into a pond and these waters were harnessed to drive one of the many mills along the Don. By 1925 the pond had disappeared but the raised mill race could easily be detected up to ten years ago when the area was bulldozed to create the present Municipal Golf Course running west from Yonge St.

Between 1900 and 1925, bird students were few compared to the present. The area was occasionally visited by Paul Harrington, Jim Baillie and Stuart Thompson. It was regarded as a likely spot to find upland plover, grasshopper sparrow and Henslow's sparrow. In the early '20's starlings first became established and, about the same time, European hares, or jackrabbits, came into the York Downs region. There were many sloughs and these harboured breeding birds such as blue-winged teal, bittern, black duck and pied-billed grebe.

From 1925 to 1945, urban expansion was slow. There was a gradual growth along Dufferin, Lawrence, Yonge Blvd. and Wilson. DeHavilland airport came into being, necessitating the diversion of Dufferin St. One forgets that this airport is really the western extremity of York Downs. The York Downs sloughs and the Hogg's Hollow Ravine lay comparatively untouched until the end of the war. In the years '25 to '45, more observers began to visit York Downs. In 1929, on May 24, C. N. Brebner found the long-eared owl nesting along the Don. In Hogg's Hollow on June 1, 1930 Elizabeth Price found a golden-winged warbler's nest. In 1931, Cliff Hope collected in the area and obtained specimens of pine grosbeak, golden-winged warbler and Carolina wren. The first record I can find of cardinals was an observation at Armour Heights by Cliff Hope on Jan. 24, 1932. This species is now common throughout the whole Don Valley.

On July 4, 1935 Ott Devitt found young grasshopper sparrows, confirming speculation that this sparrow did breed in the area. Frequent records of barred owls and snowy owls by Vic Crich, Cliff Hope and Jack Satterly indicate the area was most favourable to these interesting winter birds. On May 24, 1937, Murray Speirs discovered Henslow's sparrows on York Downs Golf Course and soon after, breeding records were established. The first Toronto area record for Leconte's sparrow was by Speirs on May 27, 1937 on York Downs and two days later Andy Laurie discovered Nelson's (sharp-tailed) sparrow in the same spot. An excerpt from The Chat, published by the Toronto Ornithological Field Group in June, 1937, reads as follows: "During the last week of May, Armour Heights became a veritable Mecca for ornithologists who wished to see such rare sparrows as Henslow's, LeConte's and Nelson's all in the same field." Armour Heights is a term synonymous with the south-east part of York Downs.

In the summer of 1937, a field survey was conducted to determine the density of nests in the region. An area of approximately 1/15th of a square mile was marked off. The census of nests in this small sector included 3 pheasant nests, 2 robins, 7 bobolinks, 5 meadowlarks, 13 redwings, 6 savannah sparrows, 1 Henslow's sparrow, 2 song sparrows, 1 pied-billed grebe, 2 American bitterns, 3 sora rails, 1 upland plover, 1 starling, 1 flicker, plus a dummy nest of a long-billed marsh wren and a LeConte's sparrow carrying food.

If I were asked to choose the "National Bird" of York Downs I would select, not the above-mentioned sparrows, but the short-eared owl. Over the years, no species has attracted as many observers to York Downs as this interesting and gregarious owl. On the Golf Course just east of Bathurst St. near York Downs Drive is a stand of Douglas fir, an introduced tree whose bearded cones lend an

exotic touch to the fairway. Short-eared owls regularly use these trees as protective roosts each winter. It is not unusual to flush twenty owls out of this row of conifers. Also roosting here is the occasional long-eared owl and dozens of house sparrows. In addition to their interest as winter visitors, the short-eared owl used to summer on York Downs and two naturalists, Don Smith and Al Gordon, set out in 1943 to find out if the bird nested in the area. The short-eared owl nests on the ground. Unknown to Smith and Gordon, two young birders, Dalton Muir and Dick Robinson had already found a nest on May 19, 1943. For three successive years these two observers (Smith and Gordon) combed the fields systematically, practically a yard at a time, and documented some extremely interesting stories of the nests, young, habits and tricks of this bird. Other persons who observed, photographed, recorded and studied this predator in the York Downs fields were Vic Crich, Bob Bateman, John Holland, Chuck Wheeler, Terry Shortt and Don Wilcox. It is extremely unlikely that this bird nests in the area now unless it is in the DeHavilland airport grasses.

More bird records compiled up to 1945 were a Canada jay seen along Yonge Blvd. by Mrs. Sisman of Aurora in November, 1941, and a pileated woodpecker by John Crosby and York Edwards on Apr. 12, 1942. This big showy woodpecker is now well re-established in the Don Valley but in the early '40's it was a rare bird in Toronto.

In the late '40's the Bathurst-Wilson and Sheppard-Wilson Heights areas built up quickly. In the early '50's it became more and more difficult to find such birds as upland plover, Henslow's sparrow, bittern and black duck.

The York Downs Golf Course and adjacent ravine, however, remained an excellent birding site. From Dec. 1, 1949 to Nov. 28, 1954 I recorded 141 species in this area. These included bittern, goshawk, pigeon hawk, Virginia rail, woodcock, saw-whet owl, pileated woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, boreal chickadee, short-billed marsh wren, Carolina wren, yellow-throated vireo, golden-winged warbler, hooded warbler, Connecticut warbler and Oregon junco. On June 7, 1953 Jim Baillie and I found a cerulean warbler nesting, the first Toronto breeding record for this bird.

Attempting to compile a consolidated bird list from all local observers' records, resulted in 185 species for the area bounded by Yonge, Wilson, Wilson Heights Blvd., and Sheppard.

Since moving away from the area in 1955 I have revisited it only a few times. Hugh Halliday and Bill Wasserfall, both of whom live just north of Sheppard Ave., have probably done more observing in this sector of the Don Valley than any other birders.

On the night of October 15, 1954 something happened to alter the topography of the Don Valley. Hurricane Hazel struck. On October 16 I walked in the valley along the river grist south of the Golf Course. My notes of that day read -- "At 1:30, Olive and I walked over to the ravine to view the effects of the storm. We had to walk. Already there was a road gang at work filling in broken shoulders and mending the washed-out spots. The creek was flowing heavily and the river itself was still swollen. The changes in the ravine defy description and it was as though we were viewing hundreds of years erosion crowded into twenty-four hours. Dozens of fully-grown trees were down, some across the river and some parallel to it. For some distance back from the banks of the river bed the ground had been covered with a sandy ooze which, in some places, was three or four feet deep. The silt was very soft. Vegetation on the floor of the ravine along the river was sealed over permanently. Along the river, in both directions, as far as we could see, the water had pushed down everything in its way and well up on the banks, everything was flattened."

Although the above emphasizes the change which Nature can make on an area when in a violent mood, the effect of man-made efforts make even a hurricane seem minute. The earth-mover and the bulldozer do the job faster and more ruthlessly. From their efforts, there is usually no return.

Therefore, the subdividing of York Downs Golf Course will assuredly see the end of an era--the final step of evolution from primeval state to barbecue-lined patios. Let's hope the gardens will be green, the feeding-stations will be well-stocked and that some day green-belt planning will save us from further losses of natural areas such as the beautiful York Downs Golf Course.

G. Bennett,

Acting Editor.

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We're grateful to contributors Miss Ruth Marshall, Mr. Joe Millman and Mr. A. A. Outram for the following Newsletter items.

Miss Marshall sends us this information from the Ontario Forestry Association: "For the past five years the Ontario Forestry Association has been active in setting up a unique youth programme which is called the Resource Rangers. This is another of the O.F.A.'s projects to educate the adults and youth of our province in the necessity of conserving our forests and their related resources of soil, water and wildlife. Boys between the ages of 10 and 16 are given the opportunity to learn of the land and to know the workings and limitless values of the forest. Professional foresters, conservationists, soils men and wildlife experts are their instructors, and a classroom of timber land and trail is their environment for learning.

"Four levels of achievement and five badges in each level make up the complete course which should take from 4 to 6 years to complete. Some of the individual courses are tree identification, wildlife studies, camp craft, orienteering, forest management, and hunter safety.

"The first Resource Rangers' District was set up in 1962 under the sponsorship of the Oakville YM-YWCA. Since that time 14 other Districts have come into being across Ontario, and it is hoped that further communities will take advantage of this conservation training.

"The training course is accomplished through evening meetings and Saturday outings, plus a summer camp programme.

"The distinctive Resource Rangers' uniform is made up of a forest green shirt and field cap, a colourful crest, and gold string tie. It is a uniform which we hope will be worn by increasing numbers of boys during the future years, and which will develop into a visual symbol of conservation.

"All that is required for the establishment of a Resource Rangers' District is an adult council of from 3 to 7 interested parents or members of a sponsoring body, an adult leader, and a minimum of 12 boys.

"At the present time there are 15 groups of Resource Rangers. They are widespread about the province from Sioux Lookout in the northwest, to Oshawa, from St. Catharines to Creighton-Lively (Sudbury area). The local sponsors vary from YMCA's to Rotary Clubs, and from Optimist Clubs to Conservation Clubs.

"There is a definite need for a youth programme such as the Resource

Rangers, for it is not merely a case of learning about our resources; mainly, it is developing a way of life--a respect, a tolerance, an understanding, and a solid framework upon which can be built tomorrow's Canada with our country's most precious natural resource--our youth.

"For further information, contact: A. Graham Nelson, Ontario Forestry Association - 927-3986."

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Some Thoughts on Field Work and Projects

by Joe Millman

The name of our Club indicates that we should be interested in field activities and, in fact, the report of outings in the October Newsletter by Jack Gingrich shows that the members are indeed very much interested in field trips. Furthermore a great many of the replies to the recent club questionnaire suggested that more "projects" were desired.

When considered together, and if these two factors may be judged as representative of the thinking of TFNC people in general, it is astonishing that there has not been more recorded evidence of the fruits of field projects undertaken by our members. Is it perhaps because many of us are too inclined to wait for a "project" of earth-shaking importance to be undertaken by the club as a whole? A very great deal may be done by individuals. To the naturalist with wide experience there is no greater satisfaction than to be able to undertake some original research or investigation, to come up with new answers and previously unpublished data, and then to pass this on to others for their information and pleasure. For the naturalist with limited experience there is no better way to learn than to undertake an individual project and to dig for facts in field and literature until some of the interesting answers are known. Of course difficulties will be met with and mistakes will be made, but there are other club members who will be able to suggest ways and means of overcoming the difficult hurdles and correcting the mistakes. I submit therefore that none of us, experienced or otherwise, should hesitate to step off the beaten track both literally and figuratively and undertake "projects" on our own without waiting to be led.

So, what are these projects which might be undertaken? To answer this, all one needs is a little imagination and a great deal of curiosity. The list of possibilities is endless. Just a very few examples of questions to which I am sure I have never seen published answers:

- On a good migration day how many Bluejays per hour will pass from east to west a given point on the flyway back of Simcoe Point? How many hours or days will this flight continue? What happens to this flight when it reaches the environs of Toronto? How much does it vary due to weather or from year to year?
- How many individual pieces of material go into the construction of a Song Sparrow nest and what are they? How many building trips must the bird make in what length of time? What is the weight and displacement of the mud used in a Barn Swallow's nest? What is the average and what is the deviation from average? Does this depend on location?
- How many individual plants may be counted on a square yard or perhaps 100 square feet of any given habitat? What are these and what is the relation to soil and other habitat conditions?
- In an area prolific in Yellow Lady's Slipper Orchids how many of the flowers have the lateral petals twisted "right-hand thread" and how many "left-

hand thread"? How does this vary between right and left petals? Can the variation be explained by the laws of chance or is there a definite pattern due to cause or causes to be determined?

What about checking the rings on tree stumps where the trees are cut with such alarming frequency as rural roads are widened? What are the age patterns of the various species related to size and location? Can a good growth calendar be computed for the past 200 years in the Toronto area?

Whatever the field of nature study the list may be extended ad infinitum. But of what use is all such information? Would such projects not result in the compilation of great quantities of useless data? Perhaps, but who can tell? Let us not forget that some pretty important weighty results came from answers to such seemingly trivial questions as: Why did a certain mold have a particular effect on a germ culture? What made tiny ducklings follow their mother in the manner in which they did? What enabled a frog to jump in the manner in which it did?

Useless or not as the prime study may seem, there is a very desirable spin-off from this type of individual research or project endeavour. It increases knowledge, increased knowledge stimulates interest, and sympathetic interest is the essential basis for true conservation effort on the part of ourselves and others. And let us not say that we do not need knowledge, interest and conservation in this day and age!

I have a sneaking suspicion that a great deal of individual research in nature study has been undertaken by the members of the club, but that the results of same have neither been written up nor reached the light of day. And this brings us to a final thought - could not the TFNC set up a library or repository for all such project research material produced by its members? This could be presided over by a "Registrar of Projects" with whom any members could check to learn what had already been done and what was being worked on at that time. It is very probable that quite a bit of such material could be published in the Newsletter and whether published there or not, at least kept on file for reference. Most learned societies publish "transactions" to record the works of their members. Perhaps it is time that the TFNC had "transactions" of its own even though we may not qualify as a learned society.

And so to sum up: Firstly let us not wait to be led into magnificent projects of great magnitude but be willing to get our feet wet as individuals on projects of our own imagining. Secondly let us give some thought as to ways and means whereby the results of such research may be preserved and passed on for the enjoyment and enlightenment of others. If the above merits the interest of TFNC members perhaps it would be well to let your executive know your thoughts. They would be greatly assisted if you would call the Secretary, Mrs. Mary Robson, (481-0260) and let her know if you have been, or are at present engaged in a nature study project, and if you would be interested in undertaking such a project in the future. Perhaps you would let her know also if you are interested in the formation of a "library" of such material.

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Dante Alighieri, 1265 - 1321

by A. A. Outram

During 1964, the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare, there was a spate of books, papers and lectures on the Bard of Avon. Christopher Marlowe, too, was born in 1564. He died at the age of twenty-nine.

Had he lived as long as Shakespeare we might have paid honour to him, also.

During 1965 there has been a revival, or renewal of interest in Dante, as it is the seven hundredth anniversary of his birth. Few great poets have failed to record at least an occasional observation on nature. One can hardly imagine a true poet not being cognizant of the wonder of the various forms of life about him. Here are three such instances from Dante's "Divine Comedy"--mammalian, avian, and entomological--as rendered from the original Italian by a famous translator.

Remember, Reader, if you've ever been
Caught in the mountains when a mist came on
Through which you peered as moles peer through the skin, . . .

Some moles actually have a thin membrane over the eye. The belief was common that they could not see. Shakespeare, who frequently drew on nature for his material, on two occasions at least referred to "the blind mole". Dante believed that they had eyes and at least some vision.

And like a baby stork, that longs to fly
And flap its wings, and then, afraid to quit
The nest, flops down again, just so was I--"

Thus, as their black bands scurry to and fro
Ant muzzles ant, belike to verify
The roof, or swap the news--I do not know.

Dante showed keen observation for any period, but particularly for anyone born in 1265.

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Dissa and Data

Stork's-bill

Mrs. Esther Carin, a TFN member, reports finding a flower near Chaplin Cres. & Eglinton which she hadn't seen in the Toronto area before. It is stork's bill, botanically known as Erodium cicutarium, a member of the Geranium family.

We have never seen this flower in the Toronto area although some of the more avid botanists know of its existence. Dr. R. M. Saunders has found it in Eastern Ontario in the Rideau district.

The flower is a native of the Mediterranean area, having become introduced as a weed over most of U.S.A., preferring open fields. It flowers from early spring to late summer. The fruit has a beak, hence the name stork's-bill and also the Latin generic Erodium derived from the Greek word erodios meaning a heron.

We would like to hear from botanist members who may have further information on this flower.

Early Canadian Literature

As a co-operative project we'd like to hear from TFNC members who know of references to birds in early Canadian writings. Some one once told us that Jacques Cartier's diaries made a reference to seeing ruffed grouse along the shore of the St. Lawrence River. If so, this may well be the earliest record of Canadian birds.

It would be fun to compile a list from all such sources prior to 1900. If you know of any such references please let us know stating author, title, and year of publication.

Newsletter Articles

The October Newsletter contained articles sent in by Lyman Chapman and R. W. McCauley and in this issue there are items from Ruth Marshall, Joe Millman and A. A. Outram. This adds up to the type of diversified Newsletter we enjoy editing. We're sure there are many members who have something to say and we ask you to send any contributions to these pages either to the Secretary, TFNC, 49 Craighurst Ave., Toronto 12, or to G. Bennett, R. R. #2, Woodbridge, Ont.

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What's Around?

by Slim Pickins

Well, we've got our feeder going. How about you? Our birds are all from rich families. They won't eat scraps or cheap stuff but insist on peanuts, coconut, pearled barley and anchovy olives.

There are a lot more birds around these days than people think. You can see forty or more species in a day this time of year but most people say they've all gone south. Well, this is south to things like tree sparrows and scaup ducks and three-toed woodpeckers.

Claude Hopper and I went to the new Claireville Dam the other day and it's a good spot. To get there, drive to No. 27 and Albion Rd. which is an extension of No. 50 Highway. There's one of those new, modern cemeteries on the north-west corner. Turn west and go a mile or so to Claireville. At Claireville turn south on what used to be called Indian Line. It's the only road so you can't go wrong. On your right, or west, you'll see a dam and a reservoir which some day will be a big lake because the more water there is in it the bigger it gets. If this hasn't frozen all over, there'll be lots of ducks--blacks, mallards, maybe widgeon or pintails or scaup or quite a lot of other fowl.

If you have an hour or so, walk around. You'll probably find wintering meadowlarks, sparrows, red-tailed hawks in the trees, maybe even a snowy owl in the fields or on a fence post.

If you have a little refreshment in the car you'll enjoy it more after your walk.

This dam is one of the best things that has happened to Toronto birders in years. Make sure you get back to it in the spring for ducks, grebes, coot and maybe even geese. In fact a trip here should be interesting at any time. Claude says it's his favourite birding spot by a dam site.

Hasn't the weather been awful?

Yours truly,

Slim Pickins.