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Hail to Camping! Long May It Rain!

Camping is an activity of interest to most naturalists. So it seems appropriate to use this Newsletter to pay tribute to the art of camping, and to honour those of us who, last summer, took to the wilderness with tent and paddle.

Camping comes in all shapes and sizes, and so do the campers. A man whose cooking skills around the house consist of making dark toast, becomes a culinary virtuoso as soon as a tent is pitched. Steak a la kerosene, pickerel fillets with charcoal tips -- no exotic dish is beyond the range of Mr. Back-to-Nature.

If you haven't thrilled to the sound of a transistor radio in Quetico Park; if you haven't breakfasted on the shore of Lake Nipigon on sandwiches filled with peanut butter and black flies; if you don't know the sound of rain on a sleeping-bag -- you have not lived the full life.

In a few hundred years, the Royal Ontario Museum, in its 20th-century gallery, will have a habitat group entitled, "Campers on Lake Superior, circa 1966." The group will be a family of five -- father, mother, two boys and a daughter. There will be a bell tent with one side torn open by the wind. Mosquito-proof netting encloses a verandah and a table piled with lamps, stoves, wet bedding, two cases of beer and a spray-bomb of repellent. There is no room on the table for eating. The campfire is wet but not quite out. A foul smoke rises from it. A breeze blows in a strange spiral fashion so that, as the campers circle to get fresh air, the smoke always follows them.

Mother's short shorts expose red areas dotted with insect bites. Father walks with a limp, favouring his left ankle which he hit with the axe when the wood he was chopping suddenly moved out of the way. The younger son is in the

background dropping a small fish down the back of his sister's blouse. The sister is practising an a-go-go step with increases in tempo as the fish lands. The older boy is not in the group. He is already hitchhiking back to the city.

Tied to the table is a small dog with a timing mechanism which starts the animal barking when the first camper in the Park retires for the night, and stops at sunrise or if a prowler should happen to approach the campsite.

A clothes-line anchored to the tent's main pole is tied to the car's side-view mirror arm. When the weight of the clothes sags the line too much, the car is moved up a few feet to tighten it. A statistical review of the clothes on the line shows that, although only two of the campers are women, just one article out of twenty-eight belongs to the men and that is the boy's swimming trunks. If one looks closely, a squirrel may be seen on the tent, gnawing through one end of the clothes-line.

Well, perhaps the above group could be you and your family. Or your neighbours. At any rate, it certainly couldn't be me because my camping companions have become discouraged long ago. Nobody will go camping with me so I go alone.

My memory of outdoor living goes back to public school days when a friend and I used to go to the woods with some food our mothers packed for us, and there we would build a fire, burn buns, upset tomato juice and smoke cigarettes made out of sweet fern and pine needles. We would avow that this was the life and often it would take an hour before the novelty wore off and we went home.

Later, overnight ventures made it possible to try out some Boy Scout lore such as, "digging an Indian well." This procedure goes as follows. Find a creek or pond. With a shovel, which the smallest boy in the group always has to carry, dig a pit a few feet back from the bank. Wait for it to fill up with clear, cold water. Keep waiting. After it fills up with brown water, bail it out, splashing it over the other Boy Scouts. After it fills up again with a muddy liquid, have everyone drink what is left in their water bottles. It is improvisation like this that makes a man out of a boy, and pneumonia out of a common cold.

Let me tell you of my camping trip last summer. As I said above, I went alone. I took food, drink, clothing, air mattress, sleeping-bag and station-wagon. You think to-day's campers are soft? You think there is no "roughing it", no "pleasant discomfort"? Well, you weren't there.

My first night was spent in Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park near Mattawa. I had bought a steak to charcoal-broil in some idyllic setting on the shores of a rippling river, relaxing at peace with the world, meditating on the perfection of Nature, the benevolence of Man, and the splendour of Space. Due to black flies, this event was postponed. Instead, I ate buns and corn syrup in the car. Have you ever eaten syrup in a car? It is an adventurous liquid. It likes to trickle over the end of a bun and drip into a shoe or coat-pocket. Two drops on one's comb will make any morning in camp a challenge.

So be it. At camp, buns with anything else make an above-average meal so no complaints there. Next, a long walk at dusk listening to night sounds. Perhaps I might hear an owl -- or even a whip-poor-will! Half of

my walk was most enjoyable -- the dry half. When I was a mile from camp, some type of freak storm came up suddenly and the pelting rain coming, not down but horizontally into my face, revived me, prodding me into running the last half-mile. I arrived back at the wagon, over-stimulated and ready for a quiet night's rest. After undressing in the cramped quarters of the front seat, I climbed into the back of the wagon and into my sleeping-bag. Floating on my air mattress, a pleasant feeling of fatigue in my limbs, and corn syrup in my hair, I slept. What peace!

An air mattress has an interesting quality in that when it develops a leak, the deflation is so gradual that the sleeper is unaware of the fault. So, as I slept, I eased down so slowly on to the spare-tire tools and axe handle that I didn't awake. I dreamed that I had swallowed a set of children's building blocks. A doctor was boring holes in me to get the blocks out one at a time and I implored him to leave me alone and let me buy the boy another set.

At length I awoke and inflated the mattress. It would take at least until morning before it was flat again. I could still get a few hours' sleep. But, wait! A whip-poor-will! New for my year's list! What luck, and just outside the car. But the bird wasn't satisfied with a few notes. It called and called ---- and called again ---- and again. I rolled down the window, threw pots and pans toward the sound, spilled the syrup again, threw out my clock by mistake, and still that bird kept it up. By actual count, that darned goat-sucker whipped poor Will 876 times before packing it up at ten minutes to five. At five o'clock, the dawn chorus of birds and insects took over as I got up and had breakfast, cooking my favourite outdoors breakfast recipe.

It would be unfair to TFN members not to share my recipe for the perfect camper's breakfast:

Scrambled Eggs a la Bennett

1 frying pan with loose handle	Milk
A few eggs	1 can pork and beans
1 stone with slanting top	Bread
Honey	Pepper and wet salt

Spread one slice of bread with honey and place at far end of campsite. This will entice most of the black flies away from your table. Only the hardiest will remain with you.

Place can of pork and beans on table. Place salt and pepper shakers on chair.

In centre of fire, place stone with slanting top. Do not choose flat stone or you will be robbed of the fun of trying to keep the pan from sliding into fire.

Break eggs, getting as much as possible of each into frying-pan. You have to expect a few failures at first. Some of the egg-whites will land on the outside of the pan. Leave them there. They will add a delightful aroma when burnt. Also, throw eggshells into fire. The acrid smoke will discourage insects and bears.

Now place pan on stone and make circles in the egg mess with a fork. This will mix the black carbon of the pan with the eggs making a lovely golden brown colour. Pour in some milk taking care not to slop it over and put out the fire. Sit down on the salt and pepper shakers.

Soon, lumps will appear in the eggs. Don't panic. These are normal for some reason. Place coffee pot on one corner of stone. This will overbalance

the pan and most of the eggs will fall into fire. The rest will be burnt by now anyway.

Open can of pork and beans. Serves four.

So, there's nothing like it. Camping is relaxing. Sand is fun. Insects are interesting. Rain is life. This has to be the camper's creed. There is no room for negative thinking in a camper's plans. This will evolve anyway. No need to plan it.

If we seem unduly harsh on the benefits of outdoor life, we apologize. In spite of equipment failure and car trouble, the wet and the cold, it's the best game in town.

I can hardly wait to go again next year.

G. Bennett,  
Acting Editor.

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We're indebted to our Outings Committee Chairman, Mr. Jack Gingrich, not only for his tireless efforts in organizing our outings, but also for the following summary of the TFN's most recent outdoor activities.

#### News of The TFNC Outings This Fall

by Jack Gingrich

Autumn beckons the naturalist to the outdoors as compellingly as the more dramatic spring. The colours of the landscape are at their best. Those interested in botany can find just as much and perhaps more to interest them in the fall as in the spring. Those who watch birds find the interest and variety of the fall migration satisfying because it is spread over a longer period of time; this allows a more leisurely pace, with more time to enjoy the other aspects of nature which must take second place in the hectic spring. Finally, the fall weather is often better, and the days are shorter so the enthusiast can remain outdoors from dawn to dusk without becoming quite so exhausted by the end of the day.

The fall outings of the TFNC this year have reflected this change of pace. There were more "morning only" outings, and fewer requiring a lunch. It is interesting to note that the attendance did not fluctuate so much as in the spring, and that the average attendance was higher (39) than in the spring (33).

There has been more stress on botany this fall, with almost equal numbers of bird and botany outings. The latter have been confined to only two places: Wilket Creek and James Gardens. Both of these areas, one in the east and one in the west, are on land which fortunately has been left in a reasonably undisturbed state adjacent to more highly developed parks and formal gardens. They provide a surprising variety of native and introduced plants so near to the heart of the city.

For example, the report on the September 25th outing at Wilket Creek listed, in addition to the usual goldenrods and asters, witch-hazel in bloom, berries on such shrubs as maple-leaved viburnum, high-bush cranberry, snowberry, red-osier dogwood, common buckthorn, common elder and American yew, various other fruits and seeds, rattlesnake weed (Hieracium venosum) in bloom, and

whorls of the beautiful orange fruit of the horse gentian (Triosteum perfoliatum).

The first outing of the fall, for botany on September 11th, was well attended. The Don valley at Wilket Creek was full of autumn flowers. The following day, pessimistically inaccurate weather predictions, apparently, kept the attendance at the Toronto Island outing down to 28. Actually, the weather was excellent except for a wind strong enough to make observation of small birds difficult. The best bird was a whip-poor-will sleeping in a bush about 15 feet from the ground. Sharp-shinned hawks were migrating, and about 30 were seen. There were also a few broad-winged hawks.

Alf. Bunker's "Happy Nook" has always been popular. The outing there on September 18th was no exception. A large group of TFW'ers obtained a list of 75 species of birds, including gadwall, wood duck, hooded merganser, solitary sandpiper, rough-legged hawk, red-headed woodpecker, water pipit, Connecticut warbler, and rose-breasted grosbeak. There were also many fungi.

The Humber valley, High Park, and Sunnyside areas were searched for birds on September 26th. The warblers were numerous and active; identification was thus difficult, but 10 species were recorded, including blackpoll. Migrating blue jays were seen in large numbers at Grenadier Pond. Eight species of pond ducks were seen, including pintail, wood duck, and shoveller. A complete absence of chickadees was noted; this is interesting since a major invasion of chickadees occurred in October. A scarlet tanager was seen.

Over the past years it has been customary to have an outing at Toronto Island around the middle of October to see the small, amazingly tame saw-whet owls whose migration route includes Toronto Island. This year, this outing was too early (October 2nd) and no saw-whets were there. The chairman of the outings committee admits that this was an oversight, and apologizes to the members for this careless error, which was realized too late to change the announcement in the Newsletter. Some members did visit the Island around the middle of the month and saw some of these owls, although there were not too many this year.

During the October 2nd outing at the Island, there was an excellent opportunity to observe at close range two ospreys and a white-winged scoter. Also seen were ruddy duck, sanderling, winter wren, scarlet tanager, and white-crowned sparrow. The following day, the fruit of the skunk cabbage was found during the botany outing at James Gardens.

A migration of crows, with a ted-tailed hawk, was observed at Cedarvale Ravine on October 16th, but they were at such an altitude that they could scarcely be seen except with binoculars. This is a good example of how birds such as crows and hawks can get through this area without being seen. Many flowers were still in bloom, notably New England and red-stemmed asters, Canada goldenrod, forget-me-not (Myosotis scorpioides), and snakeroot. There was considerable interest in the rich crop of high-bush cranberry, and also in the buckthorn berries which are relatively rare here.

Wet weather reduced the attendance to 10 at Wilket Creek on October 23rd. There were fungi such as shaggy manes and inky caps, but no flowers. The group concentrated on trees, and saw a black-backed three-toed woodpecker.

Another section of the Bruce Trail was used for a hiking trip on October 31st. The trail is intimately associated with the Niagara escarpment over most of its length. At Dundas, Spencer Creek has eroded a gorge into the escarpment;

about half a mile back, two branches of the creek meet, and each branch has eroded its own gorge for a further half mile. Thus, the gorge is Y-shaped, with a high waterfall at the end of each branch of the Y. The west branch of Spencer Creek flows over Webster's Falls, and the east branch over Tew's Falls. The trail, generally following the escarpment, detours around this gorge following the bottom on the west side, and running along the top between the two falls and along the east side.

This part of the trail is probably the most scenic in the Toronto-Hamilton area. The 47 people attending this outing enjoyed it in spite of the rain and high wind. There were few birds, but the geology is quite interesting. The results of erosion of softer underlying rock, and the subsequent breaking off of the harder rock at the surface, were well displayed at Webster's Falls. Much of the gorge has steep bare limestone walls on the upper part, and vegetated talus slopes on the lower part. Rainy weather prior to the outing made the trail slippery, but it also provided plenty of water to make the falls more spectacular.

A cold west wind forced the November 13th outing away from the waterfront and into the ravines. The north end of Grenadier Pond contained two shovellers, four gadwall, and 20 green-winged teal along with mallards, blacks and American widgeons. The outing then moved on to the valley of the Etobicoke River where a flock of about 100 white-winged crossbills was found.

There were no flowers in Wilket Creek for the November 20th outing, but there were many fruits and fungi on display.

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Mr. Peter Iden, editor of the Ontario Field Biologist, sends us this resume of the forthcoming 1965 issue:

"The Ontario Field Biologist is one periodical which should be read by all people with an interest in natural history. The 1965 edition of this amateur-scientific journal, which is published annually by the Toronto Field Biologists' Club, is the largest and most interesting issue published for some time.

"A survey of snowy owls wintering on Wolfe Island, near Kingston, is presented by Helen Quilliam. The present status of the white pelican in Ontario is summarized by Dan Mansell. Also on birds is a contribution from Rev. R. C. Long, representing an annotated list of the birds of Pickering Beach. The results of breeding bird censuses and bird counts by members of the TFBC are published regularly in the Ontario Field Biologist.

"Barbara Froom writes about her fascinating observations of a captive smooth green snake. This little snake not only established a longevity record for North America but also laid eggs after more than four years, without having been in contact with a mate. There are two articles by Robert Lindsay, one on the habits of the five-lined skink, the other observing the egg-laying habits of the musk turtle.

"Moths are the subject of a contribution by Rev. J.C.E. Riotte. Four of the five moths mentioned in his article were recorded in Canada for the very first time. Dr. W. W. Judd tells us about black widow spiders collected in southern Ontario. Another contributor, Brock Fenton, went underground and returned with some highly interesting observations on the cave fauna of south-eastern Ontario.

"The many engrossing articles in this journal are further complemented by several excellent maps and illustrations by such talented and well-known artists as Sylvia Hahn, Terry Shortt, and Paul Geraghty. Abstracts from publications of other active naturalist groups and a ten-year index complete this well-balanced issue.

"There can be no doubt that this is a publication which will not be put away until all of its highly informative contents have been read. Copies of the Ontario Field Biologist will be available at the January meeting of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club at 50¢ per issue, or they may be ordered from the Business Secretary of the Toronto Field Biologists' Club, Mr. Donald E. Burton, 4 Donna Court, Willowdale (Phone 225-2403). A very small quantity of sets (Numbers 10 to 18) are still available at \$2.00 per set."

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### Dissa and Data

#### Birds in Poetry

Mr. Outram's article on Dante in last month's Newsletter has prompted a TFN member (whose name we can't decipher) to quote some references to birds found in Lord Byron's writings, such as

I saw the expectant raven fly,  
Who scarce could wait till both should die,  
Ere his repast began,

and

Ah, nut-brown partridges! ah, brilliant pheasants!  
And, ah, ye poachers! 'Tis no sport for peasants.

Byron must have been in a flippant mood when he wrote

And Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,  
But like a hawk encumbered with his hood--  
Explaining metaphysics to the nation--  
I wish he would explain his Explanation.

#### Grindelia squarrosa

In our November 1965 Newsletter we mentioned having found the flower, Grindelia squarrosa in the Humber valley, and asked if other observers might know of this plant's status in our area.

A note from Mrs. Stuart Thompson advises that Mr. Thompson had found and collected a specimen on October 3, 1927, at Kinghorn, in King township. The specimen was eventually given to the Department of Botany of the University of Toronto. Mr. Thompson had also found this plant near Edgely (east of Woodbridge).

Mrs. Thompson adds that it is a western plant, naturalized in the east in occasional spots of dry soil.

We'd appreciate hearing from other botanists regarding this interesting flower which, from its sticky foliage, has earned the English names of gumplant and tarweed.

## A Composite List of Winter Birds

We remind our readers that, this season, we intend to compile a composite list of all species of birds found in the Toronto area between December 1, 1965 and February 28, 1966. These three months are considered the winter season as far as Toronto birdfinding is concerned.

The Toronto region, birdwise, is considered to be the area within a 30-mile radius of the Museum. Roughly, this is bounded by Bronte on the west, Aurora on the north, and Whitby on the east.

Anyone wishing to report interesting winter records may drop a line to either the TFN office, 49 Craighurst Ave., Toronto 12, or G. Bennett, R. R. #2, Woodbridge. Or, if you advise Peter Iden at 677-3243, we'll pick up the item from Peter's Birdfinding Bulletin.

In case any members doubt that there are many birds to be found in winter, we'll wager that this season's composite winter list will run between 130 and 150 species.

## Early Records of Birds

Last month's request for early literary records of Canadian birds has resulted in our attention being drawn to one of Jim Baillie's "In Birdland" columns of 20 years ago. In a column which appeared in The Telegram in June, 1945, Mr. Baillie explains that the first important naturalist in Ontario was Andrew Graham, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts at the mouth of the Severn River and York Factory. Thus, the first serious work on Ontario birds was done, not in the Great Lakes region, but on Ontario's salt-water coastline of Hudson Bay. In 1768, Mr. Graham sent a collection of birds, fish and mammals to The Royal Society in England. Unfortunately, the column referred to doesn't identify any of the birds collected.

Mr. Graham's successors, Humphrey Marten and Dr. Thomas Hutchins, also made scientific collections. Mr. Baillie advises that a volume by Dr. Hutchins entitled "Observations on Hudson's Bay" dated 1782, contains 135 pages on birds and is still in the Company's library in London.

Charles Fothergill, who lived from 1816 - 1840 in the Port Hope area, after immigrating from England, is often thought of as Ontario's first eminent naturalist but, of course, Graham, Marten and Hutchins preceded him by several years.

Incidentally, Jim Baillie, who is undoubtedly the outstanding ornithologist in Ontario's history, and a TFN member, is also an authority on the life and works of Charles Fothergill.

## Help Wanted

The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority would like to hear from naturalists interested in conducting nature hikes or field trips in Conservation Areas. A number of educational assistants are required for this part-time interpretive work in 1966. Hikes or field trips are provided for school classes during the week and for the public on week-ends. Further information may be obtained by contacting the Information and Education Division of the Authority at Box 720, Woodbridge, Ontario, or phoning 889-5425.

## Your Newsletter

We've been greatly encouraged by the extent of our members' participation in contributing articles to the Newsletter, and in responding to requests for comments and information.

We consider one of the functions of this publication is to act as a clearing-house for ideas and news. Let's hear from you. This is your Newsletter, not mine.

### Orioles at New Liskeard

The publication "Peep" issued by the Kirkland Lake Nature Club, in its October edition, advises that a pair of Baltimore orioles were observed feeding young this summer at New Liskeard.

This is certainly an interesting item as this bird must be at the extreme northern edge of its breeding range at New Liskeard. Perhaps Bob Trowern, erstwhile Laird of New Liskeard, could enlighten us further on this bird's status in the Northern Ontario clay belt.

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### What's Around?

by Slim Pickins

Last month I suggested when you go birding you might have some refreshment in your car. A woman 'phoned, disgusted, saying I shouldn't give people such ideas. Well, Lady, I don't know what you have in mind but I was talking about hot chocolate.

The sparrows at our feeder are so fat their flesh is coming out through their feathers. Mary says we should soak their food in Metrecal. I told her she should talk. Ha! Ha!

If you want a good bird hike in winter go to Wilket Creek Park. Drive along Eglinton Avenue to Leslie Street, then drive north on Leslie about as far as a country boy can throw an apple. Turn west off Leslie down into the park. You'll see the sign. Park the car and walk. If you don't have a car, you can get directions by phoning the old reliable TTC.

You can walk two different directions (but only one at a time). You can follow a path north, that is towards Lawrence Ave. This runs in the valley and will take you to the edge of Edwards Gardens. Watch for a pileated woodpecker.

If you want a longer walk and more birds, walk west over the river and keep going west. Watch in the dead elm trees for three-toed woodpeckers. Also, listen and look for such winter birds as tree sparrows, siskins, redpolls, evening grosbeaks and maybe an owl if you're lucky.

When you get to the end of the Park, the river sort of swings north. You can squeeze around a fence if you want and keep going right up behind Sunnybrook Hospital and even on to the York University if you feel that healthy. Don't forget you have to walk back.

On a Sunday morning, bright and cold, just after a fresh snow, this is a mighty fine walk, as long as you don't mind church bells. Just don't try to walk across the river on the ice. You might step on a fish.

Happy New Year,