

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

Visitors
welcome!

FEBRUARY MEETING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6th, 1967, at 8.15 P.M.
at the
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Plan to attend
the next
Audubon Film
March 14

Speaker: JAMES WOODFORD, Executive Director, Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

Subject: LONG POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY (Illustrated with colour slides).

Mr. Woodford will discuss the progress of the bird-banding and migration studies which have constituted the principal activities of the Observatory since its beginnings in 1959. References will be made to numerous natural history observations along the beach and adjacent areas.

Rotunda display by courtesy of the TFNC's Bird Study Group. Also, the 1966 issue of the Ontario Field Biologist will be on sale, price 50 cente per copy.

FEBRUARY OUTINGS

Sunday LAKESHORE WEST TO OAKVILLE - Waterfowl Leader: Mr. G. Fairfield
Feb. 11th Meet at the first parking area west of the Palais Royale. This is on the south
9.30 a.m. side of Lakeshore Blvd., within walking distance of the footbridge from Sunny-
side Station (King & Roncesvalles). Rides will be arranged there for those
without cars. Drivers: If travelling south on Parkside Drive, go west on the
Lakeshore Blvd. to first U-turn, then east, to get to this parking area. Bring
your lunch.

Saturday YORK UNIVERSITY (GLENDON) - Birds Leader: Mr. Jack Gingrich
Feb. 25th Meet at the lower parking lot. Enter the grounds via the north entrance at
9.30 a.m. 2275 Bayview Avenue (at Lawrence); turn left, go down the hill, and turn left
again across the bridge. Motorists travelling either way on Bayview, use exit
ramps at Lawrence. Morning only.

Chairman, Outings Committee: Mr. J. A. Gingrich (New phone number - 489-9953)

BOTANY Meet at 8.00 p.m. sharp, at Hodgson School, Davisville Avenue, just east of
GROUP Mt. Pleasant. Speaker: Prof. K. A. Armson, Faculty of Forestry,
THURSDAY University of Toronto. Everyone welcome.
FEB. 16th Chairman - Miss Edith Cosens (481-5013)

BIRD Meet on Monday, February 20th, at 8.00 p.m., at St. James-Bond United Church,
STUDY on the west side of Avenue Road, two blocks north of Eglinton.
GROUP Everyone welcome. Secretary - Mr. Gerald McKeating (293-8643)

JUNIOR Meet on Saturday, February 4th, at 10.00 a.m. in the Museum Theatre.
CLUB The Insect Group will present a programme of films and talks.
Director - Mr. Robt. MacLellan (288-9346)

F O N Algonquin Park and vicinity, with headquarters at Nor'Loch Lodge, Dwight, on
WINTER Lake of Bays. Field trips will include winter birds, animal tracks, winter
WEEKEND twigs, and wolf howling Saturday night. Cost per person - \$25.00.
Feb 17-19 RESERVE NOW with FON - 444-8419

President - Dr. Peter A. Peach

Secretary - Mrs. H. C. Robson,
49 Craighurst Avenue
Toronto 12. 481-0260

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



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January 1967

Bats in the Belfry

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you're at!
Up above the world you fly,
Like a teatray in the sky. (L. Carroll)

Yes, there are bat-watchers (as well as batman-watchers) in the TFNC and Mr. Huggett's little observation in the last Newsletter has brought them forth, bat-like, from their subterranean haunts. The result? Lively conversations with several of them, and in this issue an interesting article about Ontario's bats.

My own encounters with bats have been rather limited, somewhat sordid and even soggy. They bring forth memories of confused alarms of struggle and flight and visions of a watery grave.

The first was The Night the BAT Flew In. Even from this safe distance of 30 years I can remember the crises of that night: the sneak attack, the hidden breach in the window, the rallying together of the broomsticks and mops, the fall of the curtains, and the victory on the hearth. It was a mean and ignorant clash.

The second encounter took place one evening many years later in a canoe in the middle of a lake. Fortunately I was a good swimmer and only my pride suffered.

One thing about bats surprises me--that they are edible. Not only edible, but delicious! At least this is what Mrs. Rawson, author of a famous Australian cook-book, says:

"Once rid of the wings and skin you will hardly know the flesh from pork. I cut them up, along with an onion, seasoned them with all sorts of herbs, stewed them for a couple of hours, then turned them into a pie dish and covered them with a good paste. Indeed the flesh when they are in season very much resembles suckling pig."

Maybe the Walrus was thinking of bats when he asked "whether pigs have wings"!

And think of what you can do with the leftovers! Mix the wool of bat and tongue of dog for witches brew (Macbeth); crushed and mixed with coconut oil the wings are used as a hair wash in India; a bat's brain or blood mixed with honey is a remedy for poor eyesight in Syria; and the left eye of a bat will make you invisible in Austria.

It sure sounds batty to me!

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Les Chauves-souris d'Ontario

by John Gregory Woods

Literally translated the word "chauve-souris" means "bald mouse", and that is what the French call a bat. Bats are, however, neither hairless nor rodents but rather an insectivorous group of mammals which comprise one of the most fascinating facets of Ontario's fauna. They are members of the order Chiroptera (meaning winged-hand) and are unique among the mammals, for only they can attain true sustained flight. In all the world there are seventeen living families of bats and a multitude of specific forms, but here in Ontario there occurs only one family, Vespertilionidae, represented by eight species.

Of our Vespertilionidae, or plain-faced bats, there are five species biologists call hibernators. When the weather turns cold in the fall and flying insects diminish in numbers, the hibernators seek a cool, moist, adit mine or cave in which to pass the winter. These hibernation sites must have temperatures above freezing because a bat will die if ice crystals form in his tissue. It must also be sufficiently moist to prohibit excessive dehydration. Here the bat lies in a restless sleep until the arrival of spring, when the winter quarters are vacated. The bats take up new residence behind shutters, in hollow trees, under roof boards and in an infinite variety of similar locations. It is at this time that their young are born. We may easily recognize one of our hibernating bats from the fact that the dorsal surface of their interfemoral membrane is naked. (A membrane connecting the back legs. Ed.) These five hibernating Vespertilionidae are, in order of their apparent abundance: Little Brown Bat (Myotis lucifugus), Big Brown Bat (Eptesicus fuscus), Eastern Pipistrelle (Pipistrellus subflavus), Keen's Bat (Myotis keenii), and Least Bat (Myotis subulatus).

The second group of plain-faced bats in Ontario are migratory and are represented by three species. Of these bats we know very, very little. They are solitary, hang in trees, do not form colonies, and are seldom encountered. We know only that they moved out of Ontario some time in the fall and that concentrations of Red Bats at Point Pelee in early September seem to occur. Although they are banded with aluminum tags to help trace their movements, none of these marked individuals have ever been recaptured and their exact wintering ground remains a mystery. Migratory bats are easily recognized by the furred dorsal surface of their interfemoral membrane. As a group they are the most attractive of our bats, as their names suggest: Red Bat (Lasiurus borealis), Hoary Bat (Lasiurus cinereus), and Silver-haired Bat (Lasionycteris noctivagans).

We may thus see our bat fauna as an interesting group of relatively unknown mammals. At the present time there are studies being conducted on our bat population by the University of Toronto. Thousands of hibernating and a handful of migratory bats have been banded in Ontario with hopes of increasing our knowledge of their

intricate lives. As naturalists in Ontario you have an opportunity to help in this work by returning any bat bands you may find and by notifying the Royal Ontario Museum, Department of Mammalogy, of any mine, cave, or summer colonies you may know of. Bats are beneficial, important members of Ontario's wildlife, well worth a naturalist's respect and interest.

The Identification of Ontario Bats

Bats represent interesting and occasionally difficult subjects for specific identification. Often confusion arises in the genus *Myotis* and it is necessary to measure body parts in order to be certain of the species. Usually all that is required for naming a bat is a discerning eye and a millimeter rule. It may be of help to know that Little Brown Bats frequently gather in large clusters to hibernate whereas most other species tend to hang alone or in small groups. The following simplified key is presented as a quick guide to the identification of living or freshly-killed specimens in the hand. Two words used in the key which are not in common usage are, (1) interfemoral membrane, the membrane that extends from one leg to the other, usually enclosing the tail, and (2) tragus, the prominent leaf-like projection found in the ear of the bat.

- 1. Top surface of interfemoral membrane furred 2
- 1. Top surface of interfemoral membrane naked 3
- 2. Throat yellow, body grayish brown frosted with white,
total length 130-150 mm Hoary Bat
- 2. Body reddish, frosted with white, total length
93-117 mm Red Bat
- 2. Hair black (rarely brown) with white tips, total
length 90-115 mm Silver-haired Bat
- 3. Tragus sharply pointed, body small, brown 4
- 3. Tragus relatively short and blunt 5
- 4. Total length 80-97 mm, ear from notch 13-16 mm,
foot 8-11 mm Little Brown Bat
- 4. Total length 78-95 mm, ear from notch 15-19.5 mm,
ear extends well past tip of nose when pushed
forward, tragus sickle-shaped Keen's Bat
- 4. Total length 73-82 mm, ear from notch 12.2-15.0 mm,
hind foot very small, 6.5-7.0 mm Least Bat
- 5. Large brown bat, total length 98-132 mm, ear rounded
.....Big Brown Bat
- 5. Small yellowish to dark brown bat, hairs on back
distinctly tricoloured, total length 77-89 mm,
ear from notch 13.5-14.5 mm Eastern Pipistrelle

Literature Cited

Cope, James B. and Russell E. Mumford.

1964. Distribution and Status of the Chiroptera of Indiana.

The American Midland Naturalist, Vol. 72, No. 2. pp. 473-389.

Peterson, Randolph L.

1966. The Mammals of Eastern Canada. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
pp. 59-83.

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The Audubon Wildlife Films

The Audubon Wildlife Films this season have been magnificent! The last two films and lecturers are still vividly in my mind.

Mr. Berlet showed us, "Northwest to Alaska" on November 29th. His was an exciting film filled with dramatic "happenings" from the Alaskan wilderness: a gyrfalcon capturing a ptarmigan; a wolf making off with a caribou calf; encounters with a grizzly and a monstrously large Alaskan moose. On the lighter side we viewed the fun and games of red fox cubs and the marvellous antics of snipe "debating" over their territories--wasn't that a sequence to remember!

His close-ups of arctic flowers, ptarmigan, gyrfalcon, porcupines were larger than life and twice as real. Over all this beauty brooded the mountains, particularly the impressive Mt. McKinley.

Mr. Berlet told me later in an interview that his next Audubon film is "Untamed Olympus". I hope Toronto will be lucky enough to see it!

Mr. Berlet is particularly concerned about the water shortage problem and is planning a film on watersheds in the California and Pacific coastal areas. Many of his films are presently showing in the schools. These include "Deer Families of North America," "Butterflies and Moths," and "Pronghorn Antelope." To see more of his film artistry turn to "Animal Secrets" on TV, Channel 2, any Saturday at 1:00 p.m.

Our latest lecturer, Mr. Robert Davison, presented "The Vanishing Sea" on January 10th. This is a film we will never forget. Mr. Davison is a poet with a camera and his poem was about the Great Salt Lake in Utah. We marvelled at the skillful camera work as much as at the beautiful subjects--the Bear River marshes with their broods of waterfowl, the effortlessly gliding California gulls, the surprisingly graceful pelicans (when flying, that is!), and the lovely western grebes with their astonishing and wildly funny courtship displays.

Mr. Davison's story of the white pelicans was full of exciting discoveries beautifully photographed by an expert. Let's hope we have the good fortune sometime to see his other films on pelicans: "The Great White Pelican," "My Pet Pelican," and "Pelican Island." (The last named is the winner of 3 Film Festival awards.)

Mr. Davison has also made several educational films, some not related to natural science, and has produced many of the "Wild Kingdom" TV shows. His next Audubon film will be about the Grand Canyon.

Welcome back, Mr. Davison--and you too, Prince, you very-much-alive bobcat who

shared the stage with your master.

Now--you see what some of you have missed?

But don't despair--there are still two more films this season. And there's always next year!

Tell your friends about these marvellous showings and bring them with you next time.

One of the best things you can do for the Club--and yourself--is to support the Audubon Wildlife Films.

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News of the Fall Outings of the TFNC

by Jack Gingrich

The fall outings programme started on September 10th with a botany outing at the Glendon campus of York University. This area was a favourite one with botanists before construction of the buildings on the upper part, but the valley behind still remains much as it was before, except for a small area which has seen the blade of the bulldozer. Surprisingly, this is where the most interesting plants occurred, such as the Jimson Weed, Datura Stramonium, of which both races were found! One has green stems and white flowers; the other has purple stems and pale violet flowers.

The following day, an outing to Toronto Island showed that the fall migration of birds was well under way. Swainson's thrushes were quite common, and were the only thrushes seen except for one grey-cheeked thrush. There were five kinds of vireos, twelve kinds of warblers, many rose-breasted grosbeaks, and one scarlet tanager. But best of all, there was one blue-gray gnatcatcher; although this sighting was good, and accompanied by the thin, squeaky, wheezy song, it happened in the afternoon after half of the group had left. Let this be a lesson: when you go to the Island, stay the whole day or you might miss something!

On September 17th the Lambton Woods area was excellent for autumn flowers, and for learning to identify earlier-flowering plants and shrubs in their seeding and fruiting stages. In addition, the partial albino great horned owl, which had been there for the past year, was found and observed.

American golden plovers are not common in Toronto, and when seen, are often alone and not flying. Thus it is seldom possible to really verify what the field guide says--that black-bellied plovers in the fall show black "armpits" in flight, and golden plovers do not. Otherwise, these two species are hard to tell apart in the fall. On September 18th, at Claireville Dam, there was a flock of about 50 golden plover along with the more numerous black-bellied plovers. This is an unusually large flock of golden plover for Toronto. Moreover, a mixed flock flew low over the parking area before the outing started, and gave the best view possible of the "armpits". Therefore let this also be a lesson: always arrive early for outings, or you may miss the best view of the day!

This outing at Claireville was intended to be mainly for shorebirds, and eleven species of shorebirds were seen. But there were also water pipits, a late great crested flycatcher, and an osprey which soared over several times. This magnificent bird of prey is also rarely seen in the Toronto area now.

The September 24th outing to the Hendrie Trail in Hamilton turned out to be excellent for hawks--seven species of hawks were identified. Returning from this outing, some of the group visited Clareville Dam again, and this time the Hudsonian Godwit (which remained for several weeks) was there.

The bird outing the next day wandered south along the Humber River from Lambton Park, and then into High Park. Blue Jays were migrating steadily all morning, and although conditions seemed favourable for a good hawk migration, few were seen. The best birds were a parula warbler and a Connecticut warbler.

High Park was visited again on October 1st, and this time the best birds were orange-crowned warbler and rusty blackbird. The next day it was botany at Wilket Creek Park. The asters and goldenrod were in bloom, and there were many kinds of berries and fruits.

The October 15th outing to Toronto Island was timed to ensure that saw-whet owls would be seen. The chairman of the outings committee felt that it was especially important to do so this year in view of his failure last year to have an Island outing at the right time in October (see the January 1966 issue of the Newsletter). However, in spite of extensive searching, no saw-whet owl was found. It is unusual to find no saw-whets on the Island in the middle of October. A peregrine falcon flew past, out over the harbour, early in the outing, but disappeared before many could see it. Other birds seen were red-headed woodpeckers, ruddy ducks and white-winged scoters. The number of great black-backed gulls seemed unusually high.

Despite the lateness of the season, close to 40 botanical species were still flowering at James Gardens on October 22nd, and this included witch-hazel which was very much in evidence because the leaves were off. Other plants were identified by their seeds or berries, and some exceptionally fine winter rosettes were seen, particularly those of bull thistle, teasel and yarrow.

Palgrave Conservation Area is only a few miles north of Albion Hills Conservation Area, but is quite different. It has not been highly developed for recreational use, as Albion has been, and is thus much more suitable for outings. Nesting boxes for bluebirds have been erected, and this year were occupied by a few bluebirds and by tree swallow. The TFNC's first outing to Palgrave was held on October 23rd. It was a very pleasant fall outing, particularly for those who had not seen the area before. The number of birds seen was not great, and did not include bluebirds, but there were white-crowned sparrows, field sparrows, myrtle warblers and a purple finch. At lunch, a red-shouldered hawk flew over, low enough to show its markings unusually well.

The October 29th Bruce Trail outing took place on an attractive section of the trail not previously used for a TFNC outing. The walk started at Ancaster, and ended at highway 99 (Governor's Road), with a total distance of about 4-1/2 miles. There are two moderately high and very scenic waterfalls along this part of the trail, where streams plunge over the limestone escarpment. A few showers threatened to dampen the hikers, but none were long, and it was mostly clear.

The November 12th waterfowl outing was arranged to start at Claireville Dam in the hope that it would be as good for ducks as last year. This time it was poor, and the outing continued on to the lake shore west from Port Credit. There was, however, one female hooded merganser at Claireville. The list of waterfowl included three gadwalls, 250 American widgeon, one redhead, and five ruddy ducks, in addition to the usual scaup and bufflehead.

The final botany outing of the year was at Wilket Creek Park on November 19th, and a week later a bird outing was held in the same place. There were at least four field sparrows on this outing, but otherwise not many birds.

Questions From Our Readers

The editor and his consulting staff are introducing this new service to our readers. We will do our best to answer your questions on nature or at least refer you to the proper authorities. Here are some puzzlers we received last fall.

- Q. A large green bug with many legs is always walking around my living room. What should I do? (Troubled)
- A. Get a large book on insects and identify it, naturally. If this does not help you, drop the book on the bug; this will change it into a squashed bug. The process is called metamorphosis.
- Q. For several weeks I have been putting my head into a creek to observe a fish that lives there. The fish just stares at me and grunts occasionally. Why?
(Fish-watcher)
- A. Well, why not? You are making the poor fish nervous! Why don't you behave yourself and become a bird-watcher like the rest of us? Take your head out of the creek before the fish becomes neurotic. Be thankful you are not observing a parrot-fish. It might do more than grunt.
- Q. Yesterday at my cottage near Emerald Lake I ate a red mushroom with a black ring around it, and green gills. Today I don't feel well, especially around the gills. What should I do? (Disgusted)
- A. Congratulations! You have just extended the northerly range of the Amanitus noxius! Lie down and don't eat any more of the mushroom as we will need either you or the mushroom as a specimen to authenticate the record.

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Notices

Royal Ontario Museum

Free Sunday films are shown in the Museum Theatre at 2:00 p.m. The following titles may be of interest to our Club members:

- February 5th - The Hunters (Kalahari Desert bushmen)
February 19th - Tufted Heron (of the Camargues delta, Rhone River, France)
March 5th - The Living Pattern (British wildlife)
The Whooping Crane

Animals and Man (CBC-TV)

In the fall of 1965, CBC-TV telecast an exciting and informative biology series, "Animals and Man", which studied the anatomy, physiology, and behaviour of animals in relation to man.

Starting January 8th and continuing for 13 weeks this entire series is being repeated on "The Nature of Things" (Sundays, 5:00 p.m.)

The programs for the coming month are as follows:

- January 29th - Animal Adaption
February 5th - Animals and Food

February 12th - Animals as Engineers
February 19th - Animal Hands and Tools
February 26th - Animal Vision and Smell

Royal Canadian Institute

Free Saturday night lectures are held at 8:15 p.m. in Convocation Hall, University of Toronto. The lectures through 1967 are concerned with aspects of science in each of the provinces and territories. The lecture programme for February is as follows:

February 4th - The Making of the Manitoban Countryside
February 11th - Canadian Engineering--A Century of Achievement
February 18th - The World of the Honey Bee
February 25th - Newfoundland and Labrador--The Province's Natural Resources

For further information and enquiry about membership call the Secretary, 191 College St., WA 2-2804.

South Peel Naturalists' Club

SPNC Annual Lecture - April 24th. Tickets are still available for Roger Tory Peterson's illustrated lecture on the Galapagos Islands. Seats are all reserved at the Port Credit Secondary School and are \$2.00 each. Order from SPNC, P.O. Box 91, Port Credit.

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Christmas Count, January 2nd, 1967

A total of 65 species was recorded, including a red-necked grebe, ruby-crowned kinglets (2), rose-breasted grosbeak, yellowthroat, and tufted titmouse (3).

World's Oldest Tree Felled

A bristlecone pine tree recently felled in the Humboldt National Forest in Nevada, in the course of a study of the distribution pattern of age limit in this species, proved to be about 4,900 years old, the oldest tree of any species known to date. The National Parks Association, in recording this fact, asks pertinently whether the age of the tree could not have been ascertained by the coring technique developed some years ago at the University of Arizona, instead of by the destructive method of felling,

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In view of this Club's present concern with the possibility of acquiring our own wildlife sanctuary it seems appropriate to reprint the following article. It is from the FON Weekly Nature Column, written by Mr. James Woodford, and is called

Woods, Waters and Wildlife

Ontario is a vast area, stretching a thousand miles from Point Pelee to the shores of Hudson Bay. It contains over 400,000 square miles of land, lakes and rivers. It is difficult to believe that Ontario is faced with a new conservation crisis--the problem of providing open space for outdoor recreation and wilderness preservation.

Southern Ontario lacks parks and other outdoor recreational facilities to an extent unparalleled by any other major population centre in North America.

Two-thirds of our population lives in the area around the west end of Lake Ontario --often called the "Golden Horseshoe". In 1960 it was estimated that 42,000 acres of rural parkland was necessary in this area--only 3000 acres were present. Some progress has been made--there are about 12,000 acres today--still far short of what is considered minimum requirements. To compound the problem it is estimated that by the year 2000 at least 96,000 acres will be needed.

Public access to Lake Ontario is virtually non-existent. A study in the Niagara Regional Development Association's area found that there were only 8.15 miles of shoreline for public use--about one inch per person. The population, the report noted, was due to increase by another 1,000,000 in twenty years.

There is only one small provincial park--Darlington (295 acres)--between Oshawa and St. Catharines. The responsibility for acquiring and developing new parks and outdoor recreation areas in the "Golden Horseshoe" region seems to fall mainly on local conservation authorities. Within the limitations of their budgets most authorities are doing an excellent job of developing facilities for all types of outdoor recreation.

It seems clear that the conventional approach to providing parks in southern Ontario is not adequate for present needs and certainly will not be adequate for the future, according to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

The demand is large and it is growing. More and more people have the means and the inclination to use the outdoors for recreation.

The kind of recreation most people want is relatively simple--a path to walk along, a place to swim, a stream to fish in, or an attractive spot for a family picnic.

A detailed study of the relationship of the various agencies presently developing and operating parks in southern Ontario is desperately needed. Along with this there should be a detailed statement of provincial parks policy, including a classification system for parks and recreation areas.

One thing is certain--we must move quickly if we are to assure all citizens of Ontario, present and future, permanent access to their great outdoor heritage.

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Elmer Talvila,

Editor.

