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SUMMER IS ICUMEN IN

With Spring barely on Winter's traces it may seem a trifle early to be planning for Summer. But then everything moves so quickly in today's jet-age. The stores are full of June bikinis in March and Christmas carols in October. So why not think about Summer now? Anyhow, here's a few things I may do this summer - or I may not.

Read a book

For months now my den has been filling up with books - highly readable but largely unread. For months I have been promising reviews for the Newsletter. Perhaps some member would like to contribute a review or two for next season's Newsletters? Here's a list of a few that interest me - and might interest you as well.

1. The Naked Ape (Desmond Morris) - the much publicized best-seller about the human animal - (Clark, Irwin - \$5.95)
2. On Aggression (Konrad Lorenz) - A controversial look at the behaviour of man and animals - (University paperbacks - \$1.75)
3. African Genesis (Robert Ardrey) - a personal look at man's supposed evolution from the killer apes of Africa - (Dell, 95¢)
4. The Territorial Imperative (Robert Ardrey) - the lively best-seller on the animal origins of property and nations - (Delta paperback - \$2.95)
5. Two in the Bush (Gerald Durrell) - This time it's Australia. Almost all of Durrell's entertaining stories of animal-collecting expeditions are available as Penguin paperbacks. I'm addicted to them myself.

6. The Year of the Gorilla (George Schaller) - a young biologist's unique study of mountain gorilla life in Central Africa - (Phoenix pb. \$1.95)
7. The Life of Plants (E.J.H. Cornes) - a revolutionary approach by a tropical botanist to the evolution of plants - 'the durian theory' - (Mentor \$1.50)
8. Fantastic Trees (Edwin Menninger) - an enthusiast talks about the marvels of the tree world - mostly tropical. Loads of good photographs. (Viking, \$8.95)
9. Stonehenge Decoded (Gerald Hawkins) - how Stonehenge was used as a computer in ancient times to predict eclipses. Did you see the movie at the R.O.M.? - (Delta paperback, \$2.25)
10. The Deer and the Tiger (George Schaller) - a thorough ecological study of tigers and deer in Kanha National Park, India - (U. of Chicago Press, \$10.00)

Visit Kortwright Waterfowl Park

My last visit was a family outing in March. Despite a wet foggy day we thoroughly enjoyed looking at the exotic ducks and geese and talking with Mrs. Carrick over a hot cup of coffee. This place might someday be the Slimbridge of Canada - if pollution of their stream by a housing development can be prevented. The best time to go is in late May or June when all the ducklings and goslings have hatched and are taking their first imprinting lessons. A delightful place.

Hike the Bruce Trail

At least a bit of it, although it is now open from Niagara to Tobermory. It might be a good idea to read that booklet on hiking first. It's available from: Greb Hiking Bureau, 1 Adam St., Kitchener, Ont. In its 48 pages it tells all about boots and socks and footcare and described all the better-known hiking trails in Canada. All for free.

Collect and eat bags of mushrooms and native plants

How about: fricassee of mushroom and leopard frog, a side dish of milkweed shoots with a dessert of blueberry cheesecake washed down with birch beer and topped off with mountain ash liqueur. Delicious! and all-Canadian as well! But before you walk out and eat your first leaf, stop and read Erika Gaertner's 'Harvest without Planting - on Eating and Nibbling off the Land'. It tells you which meals you can survive. Available from: Donald Runge Ltd., 243 Pembroke St. W., Pembroke, Ont. (Price \$2.50 - about 70 pages)

Lie on my back and watch the clouds go by

And when I get tired of that, turn over on my stomach and watch the ants crawling around. Do people - other than small boys and men with hand lawn-movers - still pass their time this way? I've got both - a small boy and an hand-mower - so it's fairly certain we'll be studying lots of ants and clouds at our house this summer.

Have a happy spring and summer - and lhude sing cuccu!

Elmer Talvila

COMING EVENTS

CBC-TV: Audubon Wildlife Theatre, every Saturday at 6.00 p.m. E.S.T. from April 13 - end of the year. Most of the films were shot in Canada and the U.S.A. but other parts of the world are represented: Caribbean, Scandinavia, Iceland, South America and India. The programme for May:

- May 4 - River of Grass - Robert C. Hermes (Florida Everglades)
- May 11 - Wildlife Island - Dan Gibson (Toronto Island Nature School)
- May 18 - Sea, Ice and Fire - Dr. Olin S. Pettingill (Iceland)
- May 25 - They Live by Water - Jack Carey, Burlington (pond life)

The Christian Science Monitor is starting a series of 15 full-page articles on The National Parks starting with the May 1 issue. The articles will explore the urgent problem of what should be done to protect and preserve the great natural wilderness areas of the U.S.A. for future generations.

THE HEAVENS ABOVE - MAY

- May 1 - Sunrise at 5.09 E.S.T.; sunset at 7.21 p.m. E.S.T.
- May 4 - Eta Aquarids meteor shower lasting about 3 days. A somewhat weak shower averaging 20 meteors per hour. Associated with Halley's comet, as are the Orionid meteors in October.
- May 23 - Mercury is at greatest elongation east of the sun. May be seen with east about 19 degrees above the western horizon at sunset.

THE HEAVENS ABOVE - JUNE TO SEPTEMBER

- June 15 - The tiny asteroid Icarus passes within 4 million miles of the earth before passing between Mercury and the sun.
- June 21 - Summer begins at 3.31 a.m. E.S.T.
- June 29 - Delta Aquarids meteor shower averaging 20 meteors per hour.
- August 11 - Perseid meteor shower, the most conspicuous and dependable of all the annual meteor showers. This year the full moon will be a handicap. Expect to see over 50 meteors per hour over a period of one week. Associated with comet 1862 III.
- Sept. 22 - a total eclipse of the sun visible in Siberia. Visible as a partial eclipse along the coast of Labrador and Baffin Island at sunrise.
- Sept. 22 - Autumn begins at 6.40 p.m. E.S.T.

A PROMISE by Joy Pocklington

Recently our Editor of the Toronto Newsletter has scolded the members for not writing him long accounts of the previous outings. He probably thinks someone has relented and this is an account of the last bird walk. Well, it is not. It is just a promise that if the outing to Toronto Island in May is as great, and phenomenal as May 8, 1965, I'll send in a long article. That was the year when we arrived on the Island on a chilly cold morning, the Island covered in mist, and as the mist lifted about 9.30 a.m. it revealed the most amazing collection of birds all near the ground.

This is an exaggeration, but practically every warbler in the book seemed to be flitting around the flower beds, along with a woodcock, white-throated sparrows and many others. There were seven horned larks and kildeers and eight male Baltimore orioles in one tree. I've been back in May, in 1966 and 1967, and it has been worthwhile but not comparable to May 8, 1965.

The last May Outing was the centennial outing and it was delightful; mainly to me because there were so many Canada geese proudly waddling with their baby goslings. The sun was shining and around the swampy area fat mother ducks were sitting on great nests full of eggs. Fourteen eggs in one nest! With some fiddling, the bird count was made out to be 100, so we saw lots of birds.

I hope to go on the Toronto Island outing in May, 1968, and if it is as great or nearly as great as 1965 I'll send you a long report. I promise!

(Okay - it's a promise. And maybe we'll reach 100 without any fiddling at all - like counting pigeons. Ed.)

PLANT FAMILIES

THE BUTTERCUP OR CROWFOOT FAMILY - RANUNCULACEAE

A large family of 1500 species and 40 genera distributed throughout the world but mostly centred in temperate or cool regions. Nearly all are herbaceous perennials, at least one is a vine (*Clematis*) and one a shrub (yellowroot). They often grow in wet places, hence the latin name - ranuncula - which means a little frog.

This family is so varied that every rule you make about its characteristics has many exceptions. One basic rule, though, is that the flower parts are all separate and free and numerous (there are exceptions.) This applies to sepals, petals and pistils (or carpels as 1-celled pistils are called.) The family is considered to be the most primitive of all herbaceous dicots because of this 'separateness' feature.

The family is often split by taxonomists into tribes, e.g.: anemone, clematis and hellebore - or crowfoot, peony and hepatica. As you can see by these names the Ranunculaceae contain some of our best known garden flowers and wild flowers. There are few plants of economic importance although several are still used as drugs. Most of the species are poisonous - some dangerously so.

There are about 30 species in the Metro area.

Some characteristics of this varied family are:

1. The flower parts are free and spirally arranged. Both the corolla (if present) and calyx form free petals and free sepals. The number of parts usually vary in a given species.
2. The stamens are always numerous, spirally arranged and attached to the receptacle below the pistils (called a hypogynous arrangement - the ovary is said to be superior.)
3. The flower arrangement may be almost anything: solitary (celandine); cyme (buttercup); raceme (monkshood); corymb or panicle (meadow rue). Common petal colours are yellow, blue and white. Nectaries are often present.

4. The leaves are nearly always basal or may be arranged along the stem often in a spiral fashion (a cauline arrangement). They are often palmately veined and deeply divided but rarely compound.

5. Bracts are usually present and may be large and leaflike (hepatica).

Here are some members of the family:

Wild flowers: crowfoot, buttercup (Ranunculus), meadow rue (Thalictrum), rue anemone (Anemonella), hepatica, Canada anemone, virgin's bower (Clematis virginiana), marsh marigold (Caltha palustris), goldthread (Coptis trifolia), wild comumbine (Aquilegia), baneberry (Actaea), monkshood, hellebore, snakeroot (Cimicifuga).

Garden flowers: peony, delphinium, anemone, columbine, clematis, monkshood (Aconitum), globe flower (Trollius), adonis, winter aconite (Eranthis), nigella, Christmas rose (Helleborus niger).

Poison - beware! Most of the species are somewhat poisonous. Particularly poisonous in all its parts is monkshood or wolfsbane (Aconitum). The poison is an alkaloid (Aconitine) related to strychnine, morphine and nicotine. It was formerly used in arrow poisons (India, Alaska) and medicine (rheumatism, toothache, neuralgia). The cure sounds worse than the disease! Another species with a poisonous reputation is cursed crowfoot (Ranunculus sceleratus) also known as mort aux vaches. Useful for blistering skin and inducing sores.

Love-in-a-mist or Devil-in-the-bush: Both names refer to the lovely garden flower Nigella damascena which is called love-in-a-mist from the feathery green bracts surrounding the blue flower, and devil-in-the-bush from the seed capsule which is crowned with little horns. It's easy to grow from seed and lots of fun to shake out the little black seeds from the papery hollow capsule.

Folk medicines: The roots of several species have long been used for medicine, particularly in the Appalachians (Dogpatch). These folk medicines include: orangeroot or 'turmeric' (Hydrastis canadensis), shrub yellowroot (Xanthorhiza) and goldthread (Coptis trifolia).

'Blood drops of Christ': In the Bible we read about 'the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin' (St. Matthew, 6:28) It is now believed that these 'lilies' are really the poppy anemone (Anemone coronaria) which is common on the barren hills of Palestine. An interesting story is told how the seeds of this flower came to Europe in the ballast of ships returning from the Second Crusade. The soil found its way to the Campo Sancta cemetery in Pisa, the blood-red flowers duly appeared and were as duly attributed to the blood of the martyrs shed in the defense of the Holy Land. Even today this anemone is known as the Blood Drops of Christ in parts of Southern Europe.

We were delighted to receive the following letter from MR. R. D. SYMONS recently:

Dear Mr. Talvila: I received a copy of your Newsletter with review of Hours and the Birds from Mr. Mitchell Pallington recently. Thank you for your kind introductory words and for the review...I know Toronto rather slightly, although I have been there many times...do you know Dr. Saunders, who wrote Carolina Guest?...I do hope to get down this summer, as a firm is publishing another book of mine this fall. Mr. Pallington

may have told you how ill I am...I am 70 now. I expect you see from my book what a joy life has been to me in spite of the fact that the way was often rough. Illnesses, the loss of my eldest son in the late war, other domestic tragedies. I have sinned and been forgiven; I have been sinned against and learnt to forgive. Life at its fullest must be growth. The ways of nature, if studied, will never lead a man wrong. Our modern artificial life often does.

It goes hard with me to be given drugs. I prefer nature's way and certainly have no wish to be kept just alive - for nothing. I overcame a crisis 2 years ago which allowed me to finish Hours and the Birds. If I overcome this, perhaps there will be a further purpose. But in any case, any time I cash in now I win the jackpot, for I have had a wonderful full life.

I do wish all the best of luck to your club. The hope for the young people today is to get to know and value their environment. 'The way of an Eagle; the way of a man with a maid.' It will still pay us to go to the ants. Where better could we learn loyalty and responsibility than to observe how a pair of timber wolves stay true to each other on their journey...May your meetings be full of inspiration, may your rambles unfold something much more than mere scientific observations; may you all grow in spirit and in wisdom from your contacts with the seasons, the weathers, the running streams, the crested forests and the ever-moving, ever-singing wild birds, no less than the humbler beasts who creep and burrow.

You will be glad to know I have received more than 150 letters of real appreciation of this book from all over Canada, most of the States, Britain and even from Hawaii, Trinidad, Barbados, Kenya, Union of South Africa and Sweden...All good wishes and many thanks...(signed) R. D. Symons.

COOPERATIVE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY OF NORTH AMERICA

The following is an extract from the January/February Newsletter of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists:

We are anxious to get as much cooperation with regard to the breeding bird survey as possible from all the Federated Clubs and individuals whether they are members of the F.O.N. or not...At a recent meeting of its Board of Directors, the F.O.N. has undertaken to coordinate the Ontario part of the 1968 Breeding Bird Survey of North America. Survey routes have been selected at random in each one-degree block of latitude and longitude. Each $24\frac{1}{2}$ mile route, with 3 minute stops spaced one-half mile apart, is driven by automobile. A route may be completed in about 4 to $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours. All birds heard or seen at the stops are recorded on special forms to be supplied and the data are forwarded to Chandler S. Robbins at the Migratory Bird Population Station, Laurel, Maryland, 20810. The data are transferred to machine punch cards and compiled and analysed by computer. Most of the occupied parts of eastern North America will be covered in 1968. For the first time ever, changes in abundance of breeding birds is being measured. The survey does not pretend to measure the actual number of birds present in an area, but it gives an idea of abundance which can be used to detect and measure changes from year to year. Of course it samples most effectively those species that are most readily seen and most frequently heard. We need good field birders who are willing to cooperate in running the selected survey routes in Ontario. Participants must be thoroughly competent in rapid field identification by sight and song. If you would be willing to participate in this survey during June 1968, or wish further information, please send your name and address to our coordinator: Dr. Martin H. Edwards,

19 Jane Avenue, Kingston, Ont., together with a statement of how far from home you would be willing to go to run a route. (Routes must be begun one-half hour before local sunrise.) Route maps and instructions will be provided to participants selected by the coordinator. It is essential that we get uniform high quality coverage across Ontario for this to be a success. A 'team' of 3 including a driver and timer, a recorder, and an 'observer' would be the ideal for each route. Two can do it with effort and one can do it alone with abnormal effort and strain! (The Breeding Bird Survey, 1966, is available as Special Scientific Report...Wildlife no. 102, February, 1967, 43 pp., by Chandler S. Robbins and Willet T. Van Velzen from the United States Dept. of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C., 20240.)

THE TOWERBIRDS
by Jack Gingrich

Recently, I ran into my old friend Professor R. U. Kidden. He told me all about his latest project; he is studying the Spherical-tailed Towerbird, Avisturris caudaglobosa, about which little is currently known. This is the bird you see perched along the wires of high voltage electric transmission lines. The precision with which they perch exactly the same distance on each side of each insulator has intrigued ornithologists for many years, but the extreme difficulties encountered in studying these birds have so far discouraged most researchers. We should feel deeply indebted to Professor Kidden for his initiative in finally pushing back one of the last frontiers in ornithology in North America. Although his work has barely started, he is pleased to share what little knowledge he has so far gained.

These birds get their name from their unusual shape; the head is spherical (which is in itself not too unusual) and the tail is almost identical to the head! They perch with their slender bodies inclined at exactly 45 degrees, looking almost like small gray dumbbells attached to the wire.

They are apparently completely nocturnal and prefer to remain stationary on the wire during all daylight hours and also during moonlit nights. Prof. Kidden has found that when he attempts to observe these birds at night with searchlights, they refuse to move. He is convinced that they are capable of flight because he sees no other way for them to get onto the wire. He plans to use infra-red photography to record their nighttime behaviour.

Observing these birds at close hand is of course made difficult not only by the danger in climbing the tall towers, but also by the danger associated with the high voltage on the wires. So far, officials of the Hydro Electric Power Commission of Ontario have been reluctant to shut down a line long enough for the professor to do any banding or collecting.

Nothing is known of the mating displays or nesting habits. The sexes are extremely similar, and thus these birds probably have similar difficulties to such birds as the penguins where it is only the behaviour pattern which indicates to a male bird whether he is performing for a female or just another male. But in this species, the professor feels that there is a further problem confronting the male - how can he tell which end of the female is which?

The food of these birds is another unanswered question. Are they insectivorous or seed-eaters? Prof. Kidden is working on a theory that these birds are able to convert the electrical energy from the corona discharge from the high tension wires into

a form of energy which can be absorbed by the birds. Most ornithologists dispute this theory, but if it proves to be true that this bird is literally able to 'charge its batteries' while sitting on the wire, a new branch of science may exist.

H.E.P.C. officials are not the least bit worried if the birds do rob energy from the wires. The amount would be insignificant compared to the power transmitted, and the corona power is wasted anyway. Also, these birds are quite beneficial; they act as vibration dampers, and if these birds were not present, the wires could build up dangerous vibrations under certain wind conditions which might break the wires or insulators. Curiously, if engineers had to design suitable vibration dampers, they (the dampers, not the engineers) would look surprisingly like the towerbirds!

Perhaps the most intriguing mystery of all is how these birds manage to adjust their numbers so that there is always just the right population to provide two birds per wire per tower! As new lines are erected, the population automatically increases by just the right amount. Is a surplus produced each year, with only the healthiest birds surviving the keen competition for a place on the wire? What did these birds do before there were transmission lines?

Prof. Kidden has found that there are two subspecies, A.c. lowvolticus, which prefers towers with 110,000 volts or less, and A.c. hivolticus which prefers higher voltages. Was there perhaps another species in southern Ontario a few years ago which preferred 25 Hertz (cycles per second) instead of the now standard 60 Hertz? With high voltage d.c. transmission coming in a few years, will another subspecies develop?

So you can understand why most ornithologists have found other projects to do rather than study the Towerbirds. Professor R. U. Kidden is therefore to be commended for his courage in tackling this problem. We are sure that when his results are finally published, they will be electrifying.

BITS AND BOBS

Sex in the Garden (Eric Nicol, in the Toronto Star)

My father-in-law, a gardener of the first watering, took a look at my backyard the other evening. I knew that only love for his daughter restrained his revulsion at what he saw, a welter of weeds and vegetables locked in mortal combat. Finally he said, 'You'll have to mate your squash.' I laughed heartily and stopped laughing when I saw he wasn't kidding. 'How's that again?' I said. 'Your squash,' he said, pointing. 'You should help them pollinate. What you do is you take the female blossom and you -' 'Wait, I said, looking around nervously at neighboring windows. 'Maybe we'd better discuss this behind the garage.' Sometimes help is needed.

'Behind the garage', I said in a low voice, 'now what about the female blossom?' He explained that the squash had male and female blooms and that well, sometimes the birds and the bees weren't enough. They needed a little help. My help. 'What do you want me to do?' I asked. 'Play soft music in the squash patch?'

Patiently my father-in-law told me how male blooms differed from female blooms and to tap pollen from the former and fertilize the latter. I'm afraid I giggled once or twice. It's too bad we middleaged juveniles have to pick up these facts of botanical life behind the garage.

Quite apart from the intimate nature of my father-in-law's suggestion, my heart wasn't in the program he'd outlined. For one thing, I never planted those squash in the first place. The seeds must have been hiding in the compost used to encourage the peas we planted. Only one pea came up, quickly strangled by this jungle of giant leaves and yellow flowers: squash. I don't even like squash.

But I must admit that it's one of the few plants in the garden that have managed to fight the weeds to a standstill. Its plate-sized leaves have cut off the weeds' sunshine, while providing dark, dank housing for mosquitoes. Every time I've tried to prune the squash, squadrons of mosquitoes have roared out to its defence. It's had us all buffaloed.

One's duty must be fulfilled.

I'm not one to carry a grudge, however, and if the squash needed help in having fruit, I wouldn't shirk. 'I'm going squash courting,' I told my wife a couple of evenings later. 'You're what?' she said. 'A new twist,' I said. 'I'm mating squash, instead of squashing my - ' The slam of the screen door assured me that I was alone.

My father-in-law had told me how to identify the male blooms. Most of the blooms, on my inspection, proved to be girls, but I finally found a small male hiding shyly under a leaf. My probe was poised over the stamen, I think, and it froze there. The doubt had struck me: was what I was about to do completely ethical? Was I violating the moral code of the vegetable world, laying myself open to a denunciatory editorial in Weeders' Digest? I decided I couldn't take the chance. If the bees and the prevailing breeze couldn't fix the squash up, I wasn't going to put my gardening practice in jeopardy by performing an operation outside the law.

That's how it stands with our squash. The boy bloom is withering fast. The girls are thicker than ever.

The Things I Prize

These are the things I prize,
And hold of dearest worth:
Light of the sapphire skies,
Peace of the silent hills,
Shelter of the forest, comfort of the grass,
Music of birds, murmur of little rills,
Shadows of clouds that swiftly pass,
And, after showers
The smell of flowers
And of the good brown earth -
And best of all, along the way, friendship and mirth.
--Henry Van Dyke

Earth's Common Things

In wonder-workings, or some bush aflame,
Men look for God and fancy Him concealed;
But in earth's common things He stands revealed,
While grass and flowers and stars spell out His Name.
--Minot J. Savage

ERRATUM

We promised you different errors and last month we delivered. We sincerely apologize to Mr. Outram for completely changing the meaning of the last sentence in his article Chekhov and Conservation. It should have read: 'At that time we presume the feeling of most people in Russia, as in North America, was that the forests were INEXHAUSTIBLE.'

INVITATION

The editor has a full season's supply of newsletters from various Nature clubs and would be happy to lend them to any interested members. The Clubs included are: Toronto Bruce Trail; Canadian Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Society; International Council for Bird Preservation; Conservation Council; Hamilton, London, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Oshawa, Richmond Hill, South Peel, Thunder Bay.

THANK YOU

A hearty thanks to all those members who contributed something to the Newsletter this past season. I'm only sorry that I wasn't able to publish all of your contributions. And very special thanks to those long-suffering assistants Miss Hattie Beeton and Mrs. R. M. Smith for putting up with the way I have consistently ignored the Newsletter deadlines. Next season I plan to set the deadlines after the Newsletter is published so we shouldn't have this problem any more.

I would be delighted if any contributors or would-be-contributors could visit with me this summer. Perhaps we could have a garden party and chew a bit of wolfsbane and drink some SIMA and discuss ways in which the Newsletter could be improved (short of firing the Editor!)

Elmer Talvila, Editor
11 Hartfield Court
Islington, Ont. (231-1064)