

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



NEWSLETTER

Orchid cover p. 8

Woodsia scopulina
p. 5

Number 239

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NEWS AND VIEWS

.....Browsing through the index of a recent issue of The Auk (Oct. 1968) I chanced to look up the entry, 'Behaviour.' What a lot of strange things birds do that I never suspected them of doing before! Among such normal entries as singing, courtship and copulation I found such bizarre sounding items as: bill-sweeping, bridling, bugling, burping, chin-lifting, grunting, head-scratching, hoarding, inciting and tidbitting. It all sounds very human - except for that tidbitting bit.

.....PLEASE! Won't somebody write something soon for the big special issue of the Newsletter which is to be handed out at the F.O.N. Annual Meeting next April. So far nobody has volunteered either ideas or contributions - and we need them both if we hope to make this issue a success. So please write soon!

.....My recent plea for bird observations fell on nearly deaf ears. However Peter Wukasch and Dave Simpson reported seeing 4 boreal chickadees near the Thistletown Hospital as well as some pine grosbeaks. Any more observations, anyone?

.....The Ontario Government's new plan for Algonquin Park has made the ink boil in the local press. Look at some of the headlines. 'No buzz saws in the park; (Foresters') group wants to control planning; Logging in park 'horrifies' tourists; Head of Foresters' group claims conservationists may be harmful; Plan seeks a compromise for lumber, recreation.' It seems difficult to visualize a compromise between a wilderness forest and a forest managed 'by the only people qualified to do this...the professional forester' (according to Prof. K. A. Armson, Univ. of Toronto.) Especially since the compromise looks more like abdication - only 5% of the Park would be left as wilderness. Most of the rest (87%) would be zoned for 'multiple use.' This, I suppose, means that after the foresters have cut out the trees, the conservationists can have what's left for

their wilderness. Of course there won't be any cutting within 500 yards of a lake or road - though even this concession to conservationists is causing some 'considerable concern' to the Ontario Forest Industries Association. There will be a public hearing in Toronto on November 28. This member of an 'uneducated, over-emotional conservation group' intends to come out swinging at the bell.

.....Premier John Robarts dropped a lot of pearls at a recent dinner address. He put pollution at the top of the list of problems future provincial governments must solve. Mr. Robarts said the challenge of the future will be to control the environment to improve the quality of life. 'I mean the inalienable right of every citizen of this province to enjoy fresh air, sunshine, clean water, green grass and undefiled forest.' I hope he studies that Algonquin Park plan carefully.

.....It must have turned many professional prospectors green as jade to read about the housewife who discovered Canada's biggest single jade deposit in northern B.C. this summer 'simply by following the instructions in a geology textbook.' So far Mrs. Robertson and company have hauled out 38 tons of it worth \$250,000. She must be laughing all the way to the bank.

- Elmer Talvila

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CHECK LIST OF PLANTS IN FOUR TORONTO PARKS

Do you know that a few observant members of the TFNC have seen and identified 375 different flowering plants within the Toronto area? This has been done in four Toronto parks, i.e., Wilket Creek, High Park, Humber Valley and Lambton Woods. The gifted people are Mrs. Eva Parsons, assisted by Miss Emily Hamilton, Mr. Jim Simon and Miss Erna Lewis. So it is not necessary to go to far-off uninhabited parts to look at nature since 162 of the plants have been seen in all four parks.

'Check List of Plants in Four Toronto Parks' has been printed by the TFNC and is available for 35 cents. You will find much to stimulate you in this ten page booklet, since all the plants are arranged in 64 families and listed under the Latin, as well as the commoner English names. Then, too, you can find when the plant is expected to be in flower: i.e., in spring, summer or fall. Perhaps you are not interested in identifying the 7 different violets, 8 goldenrods, 9 asters and 10 buttercups which are listed in the booklet. But you might become excited about finding some of them. Of course, you will need one or more of the many fine Botany books available to identify them, since the List does not do this.

Did anyone ever suggest that Botany is an easy subject to know? Of course a child can make a start and have a lot of fun and all of us can go on learning indefinitely. Our experts have shown us the secret of learning while they find enjoyment in a wonderful hobby. It is to visit the Parks of Toronto (all available by public transportation), to go time and time again, at all seasons, to see and investigate, then consult Botanical references, and keep records to compare one year with another, while leaving the plant growing there, for the enjoyment of the next visitor.

While plant lovers may seem to be losing the Battle of the Bulldozer, it is encouraging to know that lots of wild flowers are growing nearby. The List of Plants is dated 1968, since no promises are being made about what can be found next year. Perhaps you can find some mistakes in it! If so, do let us know and you become automatically a member of the Revision Committee.

You may obtain a copy at any TFNC meeting, at a Botany Group meeting, or by sending 35 cents to: Mrs. Mary Robson, Secretary, Toronto Field Naturalists' Club, 49 Craighurst Ave., Toronto 12.

-- Edith Cosens, Botany Group
Chairman

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PLANT OF THE WEEK

(From The Raven, Algonquin Provincial Park, Dept. of Lands and Forests,
Vol. 9, No. 8, August 7, 1968)

On a certain morning not long ago a group of five men, equipped with cameras, binoculars and such other odds and ends as naturalists burden themselves with, might have been seen entering a motor boat on Cache Lake, crossing to the farther shore and vanishing into the bush. Could you have followed them a mile down a scarcely visible trail and finally to no trail at all, you would have found them scrambling along the side of a low, overgrown cliff and gathering at last around a bluff of almost bare rock, the only point to escape shade from the surrounding trees. Here they would spend close to an hour, setting up cameras on narrow ledges, making long entries in note-books, collecting samples of soil from crevices in the rock, and examining all plants in the vicinity. They they would pack their gear, return to the boat, recross the lake, and disperse. As far as the average eye could see, there was nothing remarkable about the tiny outcropping of typical Algonquin rock, with its few wispy green plants clinging precariously to the scanty soil that had become wedged in its crevices.

What we have just tried to picture for you was no ordinary morning outing but what may well become an annual pilgrimage to check on the welfare of what must surely be one of the rarest plants, not just in Algonquin Park, but in all Eastern North America. This is Woodsia scopulina, a little fern known from the Gaspé peninsula in Quebec, from Silver Islet in Lake Superior, in North Dakota, and perhaps a half-dozen other places east of the Rocky Mountains, including this obscure point of rock, only a few yards across, tucked away in a rough corner of Algonquin Park.

It was exactly 50 years ago, in 1918, the last year of the First World War, that Frank Morris of Peterborough, a dedicated botanist famous for his work on orchids, first found this little colony of Woodsia. What Morris was doing there is anybody's guess, although it should be no mystery; naturalists do such things as a matter of course. The fact that he was there in 1918, seventeen years before the highway was built, should be of interest to the present generation of car users.

As far as we know it was 16 years before anyone went there again, in 1934, and the new visitor was Dr. Edgar T. Wherry of Pennsylvania, whose 'Wild Flower Guide' is a popular pocket flower book. Wherry was taken there by Morris, who reported that the fern colony had declined since 1918.

Although it was seen by at least two other authorities in the intervening years, probably because of the serious botanist's natural caution about disclosing the location of rare plants it was unknown at the Park Museum until 1965, and will not appear on our check-list until a new edition is printed. We have no way of knowing how the colony of 1968 compares with that of 1918, but the general appearance at present does not encourage too much confidence that it will last forever. It does seem reasonable to guess that among the tens of thousands of similar sites in Algonquin Park there must be others supporting this rare fern; so we will continue the search...

-- R. J. Rutter, Editor,

COMING EVENTS

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARIES: Forest Hill Branch, 700 Eglinton Ave. W.: Astronomy display until December 3.

CBC-TV: 'This Land of Ours' - every Saturday afternoon starting Dec. 7. Colourful stories about people involved with our natural resources.

ROYAL CANADIAN INSTITUTE: Saturday evening lectures. Convocation Hall, University of Toronto, at 8.15 p.m. Further information: 922-2804.

Nov. 23 - 'Instant Snow Storms'

Nov. 30 - 'The Measurement of Time'

Dec. 7 - 'Hunting Fossils for the Royal Ontario Museum'

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM: Free Sunday films at 2 p.m.

Dec. 1 - 'The Restless Sea' (also 'Gemini Twelve')

Dec. 15 - Family Day. Four films for big and little children.

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X Bulletin of the International Council for Bird Preservation

Many of our members do not know that the TFNC is an associate member of the I.C.B.P. Recently I received their Xth Bulletin (1967) and found most of it full of discouraging news about oil pollution, effects of pesticides, threatened species and decrease in populations. With the recent teach-in on the population explosion just behind us, I thought the following excerpt would be of some interest. It is taken from: 'Threatened Species of Birds: General Report' by Col. Jack Vincent (p. 82 et. seq.)

During recent months work has continued with the compilation and maintenance of the ICBP list of those birds about the world which are not only rare but also considered to be in some danger of extinction.

Needless to remark, it is not easy to be precise about which of the so-called rare birds should be included in such a list. There is an immense assemblage of species and subspecies known only from a few specimens, a single specimen, or a type locality, but in most of such cases the recorded knowledge is so scanty that it is impossible to guess at the status or population numbers of the birds. Generally speaking, therefore, the list is restricted to those species or subspecies of which our knowledge is such as to make it possible at least to claim with a reasonable degree of justification that they are to some extent threatened.

The purpose of the list is to gather together enough factual information to enable the Council to decide upon measures which may lead to the saving of a species. In many cases the steps taken are in the form of direct approaches to those in authority; designed to bring about either the setting up of a suitable reserve or the introduction of some protective legislation.

The business of amassing the required data is not a simple process, for the main reason that success depends upon the generous co-operation of those who, often living in remote and distant places, not only have the desired information but are also able and willing to embark on the somewhat irksome correspondence necessary to transmit it.

It may also be mentioned that the work is, to say the least of it, disheartening; for one reason because of the inevitable obstacles to rapid progress, and for another

because the outlook so steadily becomes gloomier. The ever-growing problem is the swelling number of species which ought to be added to the list, and there is an almost complete absence of birds whose position is so improved that there is likelihood of being able to delete them from it.

There are, of course, many reasons for this latter, sorry state of affairs, and indubitably the most outstanding is the explosive nature of human populations at this time. Few people, certainly not enough of them, concern themselves with the seriousness of the present trend, and fewer still appreciate the imminent danger. The relevant figures have recently been widely published and publicized for all to see, and it can only be hoped that many people may realize that unless a solution to this problem is soon found the catastrophes that must inevitably befall many countries within another decade will necessarily shake the foundations of those others who at present live in a state of complacency. Three of the many frightening figures are: first, that the world population is at present growing at the rate of 63,100,100 a year (or two babies every second); secondly, that in 35 years' time we shall need 60 million teachers as opposed to 10 million today, or 7 million doctors (to provide one per thousand) instead of 1 1/2 million today; and thirdly, that before the end of this century three times more milk, meat and eggs must be found. The last mentioned is a task almost certainly beyond the capabilities of world food production.

The outcome of this astronomical increase of human beings is everywhere an alarming amount of habitat destruction. As populations grow, so do the demands for more land for grazing, for agriculture, for shifting cultivation, for building, for roads or for real estate speculation. Far too few countries have so planned their territories as to have set aside national parks or equivalent reserves wherein some wild life resources may survive; whilst of those who have set up such sanctuaries, there are many whose intentions have not extended beyond the name and the paper.

Almost everywhere the first thing to disappear with human development is the natural vegetation, particularly the indigenous forest growth, because here some gain can be had, both from the timber and the temporary fertility of the soil. One result is that there are few countries whose forest-dwelling birds are not gravely threatened; another is that water resources are seriously impaired, although the relevant authorities are unable or unwilling to see the obvious.

Manifestly there are many other reasons why the lists of threatened wildlife species continue to grow, such as toxic pesticides, pollution, human predation, and other factors...

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WELCOME!

Here is the list of 46 new TFNC members, who joined during Oct. 1-31 inclusive:

Mrs. Dean Atkinson, 1665 Bloor St., Apt. 1010, Cooksville; Mr. & Mrs. Peter Beales, 1582 Bathurst St., Apt. 310, Tor. 10; Mr. Wesley R. Beresford-Porter, 490 Bedford Park Ave., Tor. 20; Mr. & Mrs. John Blackshaw, 25 Bedford Rd., Apt. 203, Tor. 5; Mr. Gregory P. Bryce, 236 Glenrose Ave., Tor. 7; Mr. R. Bruce Brydon, 91 Agincourt Rd., Agincourt; Mr. & Mrs. M. G. Farquhar, 114 Chaplin Cres., Tor. 7; Misses Bessie & Margaret Gemmell, 2928 Yonge St., Apt. 312, Tor. 12; Mrs. Peter Giles, 11 Lamport Ave., Tor. 5; Mrs. J. W. Graham, 26 Melrose Ave., Tor. 20; Mr. Andy Harjula, 217 Erskine Ave., Tor. 12; Mr. Ross Harris, 31 Paperbirch Dr., Don Mills; Mrs. Marie Hulbert, 23 Woodlawn Ave. E., Tor. 7; Miss Marion K. Jamieson, 5 Du Maurier Blvd., Apt. 327, Tor. 12; Dr. Gordon J. Johnson, 8 Hillholm Rd., Tor. 7; Miss Alice E. Kane, 8 Hawthorn Ave., Apt. 305, Tor. 5;

Mrs. L. Kaye, 24 Hotspur Rd., Apt. 101, Tor. 19; Mrs. Lena Labelle, 21 Woodlawn Ave. E., Tor. 7; Miss Jacqueline Lawson, 80 Castlefield Ave., Apt. 4, Tor. 12; Miss Jean Macdonald, 88 Parklea Dr., Tor. 17; Mrs. R. L. MacFeeters, 52 Jarvis St., Tor. 1; Miss F. Catharine Maddaford, 2000 Bloor St. W., Apt. 303, Tor. 9; Miss Mary Markam, 45 Elvina Gdns., Tor. 12; Miss Marilyn McPherson, 2 Webster Dr., Aurora; Miss Eileen P. Nicol, 75 Wexford Blvd., Scarborough; Mrs. P. M. Norrey, 201 Van Horne Ave., Apt. 1410, W'dale; Miss S. D. Parker, 3 Fairlin Dr., Islington; Mrs. Adeline G. Perry, 750A Yonge St., Tor. 5; Mrs. L. W. Pike, 57 Admiral Rd., Ajax; Mr. Terence Saunders, 19 Hewitt Ave., Tor. 3; Mrs. O. K. Schenk, 230 St. Leonard's Ave., Tor. 12; Mr. & Mrs. Emerson Skelton, 35 St. Cuthbert's Rd., Tor. 17; Miss Mary Skinner, 7 Heath St. E., Apt. 4, Tor. 7; Miss Jean Grant Smith, 56 Burnaby Blvd., Tor. 12; Mr. & Mrs. Jonas Spence-Sales, 121 Nymark Ave., Apt. 102, W'dale; Miss Margaret Thomas, 43 Castle Frank Cr., Tor. 5; Mr. & Mrs. Paul Thomas, 32 Holywell Dr., Weston; Mrs. E. F. Waller, 8 Godstone Rd., Apt. 1411, W'dale; Miss Edith M. Wambold, 15 Playter Blvd., Tor. 6.

We are happy to welcome back to our Club Mrs. Henry Marsh, a very active member for many years, prior to her departure for Whitehorse where she worked side by side with her husband in his capacity as Bishop of the Yukon. Bishop and Mrs. Marsh now reside at RR#3, Cobourg, Ont.

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Conservation News - from The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
(Conservation in Action, September, 1968)

.....The Authority's large 1600 acre Claireville Conservation Area is beginning to take shape. Late last month, a contract was let for the construction of the area's first major facility - a beach pavilion containing washrooms and clothes-changing space. This will be the first of a series of pavilions to be constructed in the Claireville Area, which is scheduled to open for public use sometime next year... The Authority acquired 23 properties totalling more than 448 acres during the May-Aug. period. Since its inception, the Authority has acquired nearly 19,000 acres... Public attendance at the Authority's 12 conservation areas increased by nearly 150,000 during the Jan.-Aug. period this year over the 1967 total for the same period, with 1,090,654 visitors this year compared to 945,451 last year...

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PLANT FAMILIES

The Orchid Family - ORCHIDACEAE

Surely the orchids are the queens of the plant world. Incredibly beautiful, sometime wonderfully fragrant, orchids have about them an aura of romance which has driven plant hunters to seek them out in the steaming jungles of Asia and South America, the lofty Himalayas or the deep gorges of Burma. But perhaps the aura is only the smell of money, for fantastic sums have been paid for a single rare blossom.

With some 700 genera and 15,000 species - some say 25,000 - the orchid family is the largest of all monocots and perhaps the largest of all plant families. Orchids are found in all parts of the world but rarely in great numbers. Usually herbaceous perennials of small size, they may form purple thickets 20 feet high, as does the grass-like Sobralia, or soar 40 feet high in the Australian rain forest as does the vine-like Galeola foliata.

Orchids may be classified according to their habitat: the terrestrial kinds, found in Ontario, grow in peat bogs, meadows, rich or sandy woods (lady's-slipper); the tropical orchids are epiphytes which anchor themselves in trees by their aerial roots through which they also take in moisture and nourishment (Cattleya); The saprophytes live on decaying plant matter and have no green chlorophyll (coralroot). There are even 2 species of Australian orchids (Rhizanthella and Cryptanthemis) which are subterreanean. They spend their entire lives underground, bear self-fertilizing flowers and poke their pods above ground to disperse their seeds. A sort of reverse peanut act.

You may be surprised to learn that there are some 30 species of orchids found in the Metro Toronto region and some 150 in North America. Orchids may be identified by the following characteristics:

1. The sepals are in threes and may be coloured like petals. One, on the upper side of the flower, is often larger and more decorated than the others.
2. The petals are in threes and one is usually much different from the others, being brighter coloured and often a strikingly handsome shape. This is the lip or labellum and it is usually the most beautiful part of the flower. It hangs below the other two petals although in the bud it is placed above. The bud twists on opening.
3. A most remarkable structure is the column or gynandrium which is formed by the fusion of the stamen, the stigma and the style. The anthers are also borne on the column.
4. Pollen grains are often found in sack-like masses (pollinia) on the anthers.

Some local species are (or were): showy lady's-slipper (Cypripedium reginae), small yellow lady's-slipper (C. parviflorum), green orchis (Habenaria hyperborea), rose pogonia (Pogonia ophioglossoides), Calopogon (C. pulchellus), Arethusa (A. bulbosa), Helleborine (Epipactis helleborine), nodding ladies' tresses (Spiranthes cernua), large coral root (Corallorrhiza maculata), twayblade (Liparis loeselii), Calypso (C. bulbosa).

Orchids and insects. Orchids are pollinated by insects and hummingbirds, often through amazingly intricate pollinating mechanisms. Male insects are strongly attracted to some orchids by the shape and colour of the flower which looks remarkably like an alluring female. Some of these insects are literally taken for a ride when they fall for the ruse. Imagine the surprise of an ardent male to find that he's landed, not in the bedroom, but in the fun-house. In some flowers, he may fall through a trap-door or slide down a slippery column into a slop-pail. He then has to crawl through a narrow opening and get bashed in the rear with two bags of pollen - which stick to him. For a queen, like the orchid, it's a remarkably slap-dash love affair!

Darwin and orchids. Darwin was much interested in the adaptations of orchids to insects and insects to orchids. He found in a study of their variations further proof for his theory of evolution. In 1862 he wrote a book about his findings, The Fertilization of Orchids. One quotation (p. 28): "In no other plant, or indeed in hardly any animal, can adaptations of one part to another, and of the whole to other organized beings widely remote in the scale of nature, be named more perfect than those presented by this Orchis."

Vanilla. True vanilla comes from the fermented and dried pods of the orchid Vanilla which is a vine widely cultivated in the tropics. In its native home, the vanilla orchid is fertilized by special night-flying moths in the early hours of the morning. If grown elsewhere no fruits will form since the moth is missing. Hence the flowers

must be pollinated by hand in the early hours of the morning.

Greenhouse orchids. Many beautiful tropical orchids (Cattleya, Vanda, Dendrobium) are grown from seed in greenhouses. It is not an easy process. There are lots of seeds - some pods may contain 3,000,000 of them - but it takes lots of time, 7 or even 15 years, before the first flowers appear. Another difficulty is that the seed may not grow at all unless it becomes infected by certain species of fungus (Mycorrhiza) which provide enzymes and other growth factors. Recently it has been shown that some seeds will grow, without the fungus, in an extract of Vitamin B.

Orchid survey. During 1968, the Niagara Falls Nature Club made a survey of the Peninsula for the location and numbers of individuals of all native orchids still to be found (reported in Bulletin #23, October, 1968.) Ten species are found, the commonest being: hooded ladies' tresses (Spiranthes romanzoffiana) - 307 plants; spotted coralroot (Corallorhiza maculata) - 40; slender ladies' tresses (S. gracilis) - 35; nodding ladies' tresses (S. cernula) - 35; showy lady's-slipper (Cypripedium reginae) - 34. 17 species recorded as occurring in the area were not found at all. I wonder what the story is like around Toronto?

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'Habitat Management,' excerpt from Report of Committee on Conservation, 1968,
in The Auk, (vol 85, no. 4, Oct. 1968) (p. 673)

Most of the land-management practices on this continent are carried on by other than conservation agencies and organizations. Timber harvesting, agriculture in all its aspects, and urban, industrial and transportation development activities represent the vast majority of land uses. Many of these land uses are said to be carried on in accordance with the 'multiple-use' concept, but evidence from such areas as forested northern Minnesota shows forest wildlife populations declining steadily under these programs. Most wildlife species are associated with disturbed habitats. They flourish in areas altered by fire, landslides, floods or windstorms which often provide considerable variations in habitat. Contrarily, vast areas of a climax vegetation type or single-crop agriculture provide a low abundance of wildlife. Agriculture must provide cover in addition to food and water, or there will be little wildlife. The time is coming when some of the better land classes must be zoned specifically for wildlife. Urban planners serving our human population will have little attractive wildlife without planning for appropriate 'open space' habitat...

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THE HEAVENS ABOVE - DECEMBER

- Dec. 1 - Sunrise at 7.33 a.m. E.S.T.; sunset at 4.41 p.m. E.S.T.
- Dec. 4 - Full Moon
- Dec. 13 - Geminid meteor shower. A strong shower of 50 meteors per hour. Lasts about 3 days.
- Dec. 15 - Occultation of Spica by the moon. Not much to spica.
- Dec. 21 - 2.00 p.m. Solstice. Winter begins
- Dec. 22 - Ursid meteor shower. A weak shower of 14 meteors per hour. A new moon should make for good visibility.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

From: Nan Foster: 'I think you should give us the name of the knowledgeable and witty contributor of the section, 'Plant Families.' I've enjoyed and profited by reading this feature of the Newsletter. There are probably others who are curious and desirous of congratulating the author.'

Ed: Thank you, Nan, for patting me on the back this way. All unsigned articles in the Newsletter are written by the Editor.

Here's another pat on the back - much lower down.

From: #816, who never read 1984 and missed the point: '...and frankly, the general tone of these items...is such that I have not sufficient respect for the man to attempt to engage him in a rational debate...incomplete and naive philosophy...expressed in childish and idiotic terms...'

Ed: No offense, #816. Just keep the fan mail coming.

From: Michael McMullin: ...'My suggestion is that the TFNC consider a method whereby members might be able to consult a knowledgeable member, or board of experts, on the identification of specimens they might find and cannot identify through the ordinary textbooks and field guides...I myself have two botanical problems on hand...Perhaps..a description of problems of this kind, in more exact detail than above, might be interesting for members generally and they might be published with an authoritative reply, if you can find an authority willing to handle this.'

Ed: What do the members think about this? Any willing authorities?

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'Rare and Endangered Species,' from The Auk (op.cit., p. 676)

Ivory-billed woodpecker: Recent efforts to substantiate last year's Ivory-bill sightings in the Big Thicket of eastern Texas by John Dennis and cooperators have thus far been unsuccessful. James T. Tanner and Paul Sykes traveled by boat and afoot through much of the area of reported activity in January without seeing the birds or tree borings that could be ascribed to Ivory-billed rather than to Pileated Woodpeckers. The birds seen in 1967 must have been transient individuals whose present whereabouts are unknown. John Dennis is continuing his investigations in the Neches River Valley. Ipswich sparrow: The Canadian Wildlife Service supported an investigation of the Ipswich sparrow on Sable Island. It was learned that the breeding population numbered more than 1000 and that some birds winter on the island. Previously it was believed there were about 300 individuals, none of which wintered on Sable Island. Continuing investigations should provide useful data.

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