



TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Number 283

April 1974

Visitors welcome!

APRIL MEETING

Visitors welcome!

Tuesday, April 2, 1974, at 8:15 p.m.
at the

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
252 Bloor Street West

The OISIE Building is midway between the two exits (St. George and Bedford, of the St. George Subway Station. Entrance on the west side of the building via a covered walk from Bloor Street. To park, enter from Prince Arthur Avenue, under the building ... (parking fee 50¢)

SPEAKER: Mrs. Helen A. Sutton, Biological Photographer, Lecture and Research Assistant, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

SUBJECT: 'The Smallest and the Most -- a World of Insects' illustrated with magnificent colour slides.

JUNIOR CLUB The Toronto Junior Field Naturalists' Club will hold its April meeting
Saturday in the Theatre at the Royal Ontario Museum. The Fossil, Herptile and
April 6 Fish Groups will give presentations about fossil communities near Lake
10:00 a.m. Simcoe and about the habitat and care of fish, reptiles and amphibians
 in captivity. Visitors welcome.

Director - Mike Singleton (444-8419)

BIRD GROUP Meet in St. James-Bond United Church on Avenue Rd. just north of Eglinton.
Wednesday Visit Churchill along with Miss Margaret Skeel, who is doing a study in
April 24 breeding biology of the Whimbrel. Miss Skeel will discuss the habits of
8:00 p.m. the Whimbrel at its nesting grounds. Illustrated with slides.

Chairman - Red Mason (621-3905)

ECOLOGY AND Meet in Room 376, of the College of Education, 371 Bloor St. West at
CONSERVATION Spadina.
GROUP SPEAKER: Mr. Ken Strasser, Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation
Wednesday Authority (Information and Education Branch)
April 24 SUBJECT: Ecology of Metropolitan Toronto's conservation areas. Mr.
8:00 p.m. Strasser will illustrate his talk with colour slides on the resident
 plants, animals, birds, etc.

REMINDER: Date of next meeting, Monday, May 6, 1974.

Advance notice of Bird Group for May: there will be no evening meeting. We will
participate in the Nature Walks on May 25. See your Spring Outings book.
... Red Mason (621-3905)

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Each year the Club elects three members to the Board of Directors, and elects -- or re-elects for a second term -- its President and Vice-President. This year Messrs. Stuart Corbett, Mike Singleton and Douglas Wilkins retire from the Board in rotation, and Rosemary Gaymer and Prof. William Andrews have completed their second year as President and Vice-President respectively.

The Nominating Committee, consisting of the Club's three Past-Presidents, recommends the following slate of nominees for the Board:

President: Prof. William Andrews

Vice-President: Ronald Thorpe

Directors to retire in 1977: Wes Hancock

Barry Ranford

Norah Stuart

If elected these persons will join Rosemary Gaymer as Immediate Past-President and the following Directors who are due to complete their terms of office as shown:

Directors due to retire in 1976: Leila Gad

Stewart Hilts

Harry Kerr

Directors due to retire in 1975: Henry Fletcher

Dr. Margaret Knight

Harold Taylor

Club By-law No. 1 provides for other nominations, which must be in writing to the Secretary by any three members of the Club, accompanied by the written consent of the nominee. Such nominations will be published in the May Newsletter and will be added to the list of candidates submitted above, and will be presented to the Annual Meeting.

Clive E. Goodwin

Chairman, Nominating Committee.

MEMORIES

by

WM. C. MANSELL

"I remember, I remember, the spot each bird was met; the little swale where alders grew, and paths were ever wet. The darting swallows, playful swifts, they all accompanied me. I stand in concrete canyons now - in vain I seek one tree." (thank you, Thomas Hood).

I remember such a swale I would skirt on my way to the Humber from my home on Sunnylea Avenue. In May a few returning warblers would greet me there, and there (1947) I met my first chat.

A similar swale was below the advancing granite of Park Lawn Cemetery, not far from the rim of the 8th Humber Marsh, and from which a resentful long-eared owl drifted away. Near there I found barred and great horned; and all three may still be there, for the gloom of the evergreens is greater than ever. But the swale, with its little rivulet, has joined those under the marching rows of granite.

Farther up the river, on the north side of the Baby Point promontory, was Baby's Bush. Renamed, it is now a park, administered by one of our conservation authorities, whose love of grass transcends that of Romeo and Juliet. Nor can these authorities tolerate dead trees or shrubbery. The warblers which swarmed that spot in May must have had descendants, surely. Do none of them care for the bramble which, with the thinning of the woods, has replaced the shrubbery? No more do I. The woodland pool near its edge, once graced by a Louisiana Water-thrush (1947), would now make a good setting for a new version of Beau Geste.

The shrubbery there was much like that between Howard House and Catfish Pond in High Park, where one could sit and see a dozen kinds of warblers in one bush; and where, if a 'wave' struck, conscientious tabulators operated in a frenzy. A beautiful wooded path ran through the ravine by Parkside and Bloor, and there, following an urgent phone call from Jim Baillie, I found a hooded warbler (1937). In the same year my own efforts produced a cerulean along the east road, the side of which was a bush-grown stream.

It was in 1937, too, I first met Henslow's Sparrow, short-billed marsh wren and upland plover, in extensive grassy fields between Dufferin and Bathurst. As near as I can determine, their old haunts form the roadbed of 401.

Unwin Avenue came into prominence a few years ago, shorebirds finding its slimy ooze attractive. But a spot equally as good was Sunnyside, now covered with the scats of Canada Geese. What is now their grazing ground was a mixture of short and long grass, bare sand and small pools, and a mecca for all shorebirds, including a golden plover (1946).

I recall (1939) following a weary flock of truly wild Canada's up Highway 27 until they landed in a cultivated field beside the highway about a mile north of Dundas. Speak of king rails and I remember (1938) one flirting its tail at the edge of the vast 3rd Humber Marsh, and where, in the fall of 1944, a crowd (TFNC?) on the east and I on the west were thrilled by a European Wigeon. That same marsh, and the one at the top of Grenadier Point, invariably produced a least bittern (and once a Cory's - 1950), while flocks of night herons took over a large willow grove north of Lambton (1937).

The two miles between my home in Baby Point and Sunnyside was traversed on foot dozens of times, but sometime on Easter week-end would terminate in my meeting cars containing Baillie, Devitt, Downing, Emery, Hope, Lindsay, Richardson, Ussher and others, to pick up George North in Hamilton, all to marvel at the red-necked

grebes nesting on the boat floats off Brant Inn. A bald eagle or two always kept us under close surveillance. Misidentification brought forth taunts and jibes -- and a myriad of excuses.

Do you remember when you dropped into the Humber Valley at Bloor Street by the 7th Marsh where (1936) a Carolina wren amused me and Frank Cook by pulling leaves from a squirrel's drey, following their progress to the ground? I really don't, but my notes tell me it happened, just as they tell me I saw (1933) soras just above Old Mill bridge and the red garters of a terrified gallinule under it.

In pre-note-keeping days (1922) spring was officially announced by meadowlarks from a field now crossed by Humbercrest Blvd., and which I reached through a cut in the Beltline right-of-way. About the same period a false spring note came from a horned lark in one of the many vacant Swansea fields below Bloor Street.

I remember (1920) a phoebe and an iron bridge in, I guess, what is now Etobicoke; purple martins about a large house near Dovercourt and College (1919); my first crested flycatcher (1918) on the high board fence of our Galley Avenue home, memories of which always return when the 'peent' of a nighthawk knifes through the soft black of a June evening.

Yes, Thomas Hood, I remember, fortunately, because memories are about all I have left.

KALADAR CACTUS

In the February 1974 issue, No. 281, of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club Newsletter, there appeared an interesting article entitled "Mysterious Garden Area Near Kaladar". In the summer of circa 1935 I was in Kaladar Township in the employ of Ontario Department of Highways as an Ontario Land Surveyor. An engineering location survey had been made, from Erinsville, north to Kaladar Village, straightening some of the many curves and bends in the very poor road in use at that time. No construction had been done. I was working on a title survey of the route.

I was amazed to find cactus growing where the new road was to go. They were plentiful, but in a very small area, and all or most would be destroyed when construction started. At that time no one lived in this vicinity and there was no sign that anyone had ever settled there. There were not even fences for miles up or down the road. So I ruled out the possibility that the cacti might be escapes. There was absolutely no chance, at that time, of having a highway rerouted to save flora and fauna, so with the help of my survey party, I transplanted almost all the cacti to what I hoped would be a safe location. I was never able to return to see if the plants survived, but it seems probable that they did, or so I assume from the said article. Had I transplanted to the other side of the highway, they might now now be endangered by the relocation of Highway 41.

It is encouraging to read of the change of attitude of the government over the past four decades.

The said article gives the impression that the Five-lined Skink (formerly Blue-tailed Skink), Eumeces fasciatus, is unusual in this area. This is not the case, nor are they "rather out of place this far north and east". They are found some miles farther north and east, and, of course, a long way to the west, as well as in other sections of southern Ontario. They are probably the only species of lizard to be found in Ontario. Those of the local inhabitants of Lennox and Addition County and Frontenac County who knew them, called them "swifts". May I also point out that Point Pelee is not "the southern-most point in Canada". That distinction is reserved for the south end of Pelee Island, which is farther south than the northerly boundary of the State of California.

..... A. A. Outram

Ministry of Natural Resources,
Atikokan, Ont. Jan. 29, 1974.

Gentlemen:

Just wanted to correct some information in your February Newsletter.

The species of prickly pear cactus (Opuntia fragilis) found near Kaladar, is also found on islands in Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods (just off Lake of the Woods Provincial Park).

Sincerely,

(sgd) Shan Walshe
(Park Naturalist - Quetico).

Mr. Stuart Corbett
52 Haileybury Drive
Scarborough, Ontario.

Dear Stu:

Enclosed is a cheque for \$85.00 from my wife, Mary, as a donation to the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve. You may wonder at the odd amount; the \$85.00 was raised in a rather unusual manner.

In July, 1970, our family spent a month's vacation in a cottage on Georgian Bay. Mary was somewhat disgusted at first to see returnable bottles left lying around the beach, and started to pick them up on her early morning walks. She let the kids get the deposit on them, for spending money. The local general store would give refunds on most brands of soft drinks.

After a while she realized that a considerable amount of money could be obtained in this way, particularly after she discovered that the Brewer's retail stores would cheerfully give 25 cents for each dozen beer bottles, regardless how dirty.

This soon became a considerable operation, and next year, when we returned to the same cottage for another month's holiday, I got somewhat into the act also. Since then, we have done the same thing each July, and I have got even more involved. Also, during the rest of the year Mary picks up bottles whenever we see them on walks or bicycle rides, but seldom by car. We reluctantly pass many bottles on the roadsides because of the danger in stopping and going back for them, by car.

The \$85.00 is the results of this year's effort in returning bottles, including pop and beer bottles, and also non-returnable bottles returned for re-cycling at 1/2 cent each. Of this amount, \$65.00 was from the month of July at the cottage, the rest from the remaining 11 months.

These bottles were collected almost entirely on foot or on bicycle. They were returned by car to the Brewer's Retail stores only when the car was going in to town for some other reason, such as a trip for groceries. At first, I was embarrassed when in the Brewer's Retail stores, since I had never been in one before, and because I was returning so many bottles without buying any of their product, which I do not care for. However, after a few times I got over this. They cheerfully supply what they call "flats" which are cardboard boxes with dividers, holding 24 bottles. We often picked up half a dozen of these flats, and had more than enough bottles to fill them when we returned in a few days.

I have acquired the ability to ride along the back roads on a bicycle, bird watching and bottle watching at the same time. I have carriers both front and back on my folding bicycle. If some day you should be driving in the Midland-Penetang area in July, and see someone riding on a blue folding bicycle, with bottles heaped in both carriers, and with various bags hanging from the handle bars (and even sticking out of pockets, sometimes) don't be alarmed! It is probably just me out raising money for our nature reserve!

Yours sincerely,
(sgd) Jack Gingrich

CONSERVATION CONVERSATION FOR MARCH 1974

Request for assistance.

I have 440 bluebird boxes under my charge and some have not been cleaned out. Many have not been checked since last June and I have no idea of their condition or changes in the landscape or whether vandals have shot them up.

I would like members of the TFN to telephone me and offer to check, report, maintain and clean out boxes in the following areas:

- 1) MILL RUN FARM - This is 7 miles west of Uxbridge and south of Siloam Village. The farm manager is Andrew Heggi and he lives in the new Pan Abode house, one field south of the road. You must notify him or his wife before proceeding.

Owner of the land is Gordon Wotherspoon. We have about 18 boxes in this general area and they are well spaced.

Unless you are agile, you will need a short ladder. Young boys could just climb the post.

Mostly the fronts swing open and are held by two #8 wood screws. These are the square socket type of screw and you will need a Robertson Red screwdriver.

You are also advised to take a scraper, similar to a paint remover, to make a thorough job of removing frozen nests.

- 2) 3 boxes south and west of the 6th line Nassagaweya on the Bruce Trail.
- 3) 4 boxes in the Robertson Tract of Halton County Forest.
- 4) 3 boxes north of the Jim Baillie Reserve in Scott Township.
- 5) 3 boxes on the farm of Gordon Norton in Pretty River Valley in Collingwood Township. Also 2 boxes on Bob Healey's farm in Osprey Township in the same valley but on the south slope.
- 6) 6 boxes in Adjala Township at the corner of the second line and Twenty sideroad.

Try to count the successful breeding pairs of bluebirds and report to me, continually.

..... Leo Smith (925-1854).

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SPRING PREVIEW

We normally visit Point Pelee for at least a part of the annual spring migration, but last year was very disappointing because of the adverse weather conditions. In preparation for each of these visits we keep a regular check on the birds visiting our yard in Scarborough, to keep abreast of the advancing season. Sightings of Yellow, and Black and White Warblers must be recorded in order that we might see the later arrivals at Point Pelee.

When we totalled the number of birds seen in or from our yard up to the end of May we found the total to be fifty-five. This seemed to be a greater variety than usual for this period of time. Our yard is only forty by a hundred feet and in an ordinary built-up neighborhood near Lawrence and Victoria Park Avenues. Possibly the variety of trees and bushes in and around it is an advantage. We have a Sugar Maple, a MacIntosh apple and a Northern Catalpa in the centre of the yard; along the back are a couple of small cedars and a birch. The northern line consists of

two Jack Pines, two bushy honeysuckles, and half a dozen spruce trees. The southern side has a hedge of spirea and lilac. There is an open cut behind the property about a hundred feet wide and then another line of houses backed by a row of giant poplars. This cut is wet enough to support bulrushes. Most of the trees in the neighbors' yards are about twenty years old. The trees which are given the most attention by the visiting birds are the Jack Pines, the Spruces, and the apple tree. They sleep overnight in the Evergreens.

Spring comes in with an awful uproar here when the starlings descend upon a permanent nest of house sparrows next door and try to relieve them of as much nesting material as possible. We sometimes have to appoint a referee as it can go on for days.

The first bird returning to nest is the purple grackle who establishes himself in the giant poplars to the rear. The male robin then appears to sing out his territory and when his mate arrives they set up housekeeping in one of the spruce trees. The song sparrow nests just outside the back fence on the ground or in low bushes. The redwing then moves in somewhere in the bulrushes at the bottom of the open cut and his "kon-ka-ree" is a truly welcome song. The shrill cries of the killdeer are mingled with these other calls as he forages along the cut-away from his nesting site near a playing field to the northeast. A brown thrasher must have a nest in the vicinity because as usual he was a frequent visitor. This year his furtive visits were matched by a catbird who was delivering his garbled address from the Catalpa tree on many occasions. The only other nest that we know of is that of the baltimore oriole which we missed last year entirely but who returned about the first week of May to brighten up the neighborhood.

Along with the earlier arrivals were seen the following: Ring-necked Pheasant, forced in by a late snow storm; Herring Gull, pigeons, Mourning Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Flicker, Crow, Bronzed Grackle, Juncos, Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatch, a pair of Mallards, and a flight of about six Great Blue Herons.

All of the other birds were seen between May first and June first, when the show ended as suddenly as it had begun. Some mornings we would look out and see the evergreens covered with warblers. On one occasion there must have been a dozen Bay-Breasted and Cape May Warblers. Another morning it would be Chestnut-sided and Magnolia Warblers. Had we been able to watch all day the total probably would be much greater.

With the early spring the leaves made identification much more difficult and we must admit that we still have not been able to put a tag on two.

The following is a list of the other birds seen at this time but not necessarily in that order: The warblers - Yellow, Black and White, Canada, Myrtle, Pine, Tennessee, Black-throated Green, Blackpoll, Cerulean, Yellowthroat and for some obscure reason we saw only female Redstarts this year. Philadelphia and Warbling Vireos, Chipping, White-throated and White-Crowned Sparrows. Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-bellied and Least Flycatcher. Hermit Thrush and Veery. Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Cowbird. The last two seen were Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Cedar Waxwing.

We have seen many aggressive nesting birds, such as the Redwings and Kingbirds, but last year our resident Robin resorted to the same tactics. The year before his nest was destroyed by grackles or jays; this year any bird of any size that appears to be headed for his nest in the spruce tree is set upon before he can get even close and taken out with body blocks.

We have of course seen many other birds in and from our yard but thought this variety in such a short space of time was worth passing on to other members. Clearer identification charts will enable us to do a better job next season, weather and time permitting.

..... Rita and Bas Wigglesworth

BOOK REVIEW:

"ARCTIC ALTERNATIVES"

The current "Energy crisis" puts northern development in a whole new perspective. The Americans have decided to ignore the environmental consequences and push ahead with the Alaskan oil pipeline. Our own Athabaskan tar sands and the Mackenzie Valley are receiving renewed attention and there is little doubt that exploration for gas and oil in the arctic islands will be greatly accelerated. In spite of the fact that northern development has become a vitally important topic the average Canadian just doesn't have the time or the expertise necessary to weigh all the factors which must be considered if he is to be well-informed on the subject. A book published in the past year goes a long way toward solving this problem. It's called "Arctic Alternatives", is edited by Douglas Pimlott, Kitson Vincent and Christine McKnight (\$4.50, paperback) and published by the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee. This book is certainly not what one would consider light reading, in fact it might be described as a textbook on northern development. The preface states "the most important function of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee is to bring to the attention of Canadians alternatives and options which exist in Canada north of '60. We stress this role because it is a vital one if Canadians are to have an opportunity to consider Arctic Alternatives."

The book is a record of the national workshop held by C.A.R.C. on People, Resources and the Environment North of '60 at Carlton University, May 24-26, 1972. It includes the background dossiers which were prepared in advance of the workshop by a number of well-known experts on various facets of the arctic. The third section entitled "Resources and the Environment" will probably be of most interest to the naturalist and conservationist. It deals with the physical environment of the north, the terrestrial, aquatic and marine wildlife, the vegetation and permafrost as well as a number of other subjects. Contributors here include such well-known names as C.H. Douglas Clarke, F. Kenneth Hare and Max Dunbar to mention only three.

An important aspect of the book is the contribution to the workshop made by representatives of the various native peoples of the arctic. The opinions and feelings of the Indians and Eskimos have largely been ignored by our federal government in its present rush to exploit the natural resources of the north. In this area C.A.R.C. has made an important contribution to public awareness of some of the problems developing in the north by providing an opportunity for the native peoples to make public their views on the subject of northern development.

In the same section of the book Peter Cumming, Associate Dean of the Osgoode Hall Law School, raises the question of aboriginal rights in his paper, "Our Land -- Our People: Native Rights North of '60". He points out the lack of a meaningful government policy on native rights and states, "The problems of common concern to native peoples and non-natives north of '60 cannot be rationally dealt with unless and until there is a fair and equitable solution to claims based on aboriginal rights."

The subject of legal problems in the Canadian north is dealt with in the fourth and final part of the book. A group from the Faculty of Law at the University of British Columbia critically examined existing land use regulations, the Northern Inland Waters Act and the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. The group also made recommendations in the area of mining regulations and it pointed out that the Canada Oil and Gas Land Regulations are being revised in private consultations between the industry and government. It also made the point that a public review of these regulations is not planned -- such secrecy raises the obvious question of whether the public interest is being adequately protected.

A section which I found particularly interesting was the first one entitled "People and the North: Motivations, Objectives and Approach of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee". This is written by Douglas Pimlott, Chairman of C.A.R.C., and he includes an interesting account of how C.A.R.C. and the national workshop came into being. While sawing and splitting wood in his backyard one Saturday afternoon, Dr. Pimlott began thinking about the events taking place in our arctic and the end result of these thoughts was the formation of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee.

In spite of the "energy crisis" the arctic is too important a piece of Canada to have its future decided by the multinational giants of industry and a compliant government. If we are to have sound development the average citizen must put himself in a position where he can have some influence on the future of our north. If you read only one book this year I suggest "Arctic Alternatives" should be that one. It can be ordered directly from C.A.R.C. at 53 Queen Street, Room 21, Ottawa, Ont. K1P 5C5, if your bookstore doesn't have it.

..... Alex W. Caron.

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WHAT'S THIS? --- A 'PHONE BOOK LIFE LIST ?

by
Gerry Bennett

If you're shut in because of bad weather, or a stubborn head cold, and can't go birding, don't worry, just pick up the nearest 'phone book and start listing.

Using the 1973 Toronto directory, you can find some real rarities. How about Juliette Junco of Roxborough St.? -- or M. E. Goose who lives on Keele St.? Have you met T. Grebe of Dixon Rd.? or V. Grouse on Fernwood Gardens? or D.J. Coot of Steeles Ave.? How about S. Owl on Martin Grove Road or Roy Hawk of Salisbury Ave. or Roman Flicker on Fayewood Ave.? and Helen Rail on Galley Ave. -- does she, by any chance, have a sister named Virginia?

Not quite as rare, but species you don't see every day, are 2 Creepers, 2 Snipes, (but no Jack!), 2 Peregrines, 3 Willets, 4 Falcons, 4 Kites, 4 Mallards, 5 Curlew, 6 Larks, 6 Redheads, 7 Thrushes, 8 Quail, 8 Swallows and 9 Crows.

Continuing the list in order of abundance, we find 10 Cardinals, 11 Teal, 12 Robins, 12 Eagles, 13 Thrashers, 15 Ruffs (and 56 Reeves), 15 Starlings, 16 Bob Whites, 19 Jaegers, 21 Ravens, 21 Brant, 22 Ducks, 23 Storks, 24 Wrens, 40 Doves, 41 Jays, 44 Buntings, 46 Sparrows, 58 Woodcocks, 59 Finches, 70 Swifts, 72 Herons, 72 Part-ridges and 91 Swans.

There is another species, however, that is more abundant than all the above added together. Take one minute and see if you can guess it. The answer is at the bottom of this article. Don't peek!

Ready for some more? You could take a shopping trip. First to to the Egret Acceptance Corp. on Bloor St. West for some money. Some stops would include Osprey Nurseries in Thornhill; the Sandpiper Studio on Temperance St.; Pelican Food Services on Simcoe St.; Skylark Custom Upholstering on O'Connor Drive and Ibis Grocery on King West. For lunch, try the Flamingo Restaurant on Danforth or, for something more exotic, the Loon Fong Yuen on Spadina. Finish the day by cheering up some of the less fortunate at the Chat Social Center on Hagerman St. or the Redwing Convalescent Home on Broadview, having first bought some flowers from Oriole Florists on Yonge St. A pleasant drive home could be via Phoebe St., Veery Rd., Plover Rd., Woodthrush Ct., Goldfinch Ct. and Killdeer Cresc. We could also include Peacock Avenue but is it wild, or an escape?

Undoubtedly, there are more species lurking in the dark interiors of the directory, just waiting to be discovered and enjoyed. Like J. J. Aves of Hollywood Ave., ~~who~~, you must admit, is in a Class by himself. Oh, yes, the answer to the question! There are over 1400 Martins. No wonder they use colonial homes

SASKATCHEWAN'S VAL MARIE AND HIGHWAY 4

by

Harvey Medland

The faded sign read, "Val Marie, Prairie Dog capital of Canada". We had made it after an hour's drive south from Swift Current, Saskatchewan. In a few minutes we'd be in the heart of the Frenchman River Valley surrounded by Burrowing Owls and the constant barking of those large gophers, or so we thought.

But on a Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. Val Marie seemed inert. After fifteen minutes of rumbling up and down roads, we discovered the typical "Sweet little old lady" pushing her rocker over a veranda; and concluded, "This is where the action is."

"Excuse me. Could you tell us where the prairie dog town is?"

She looked confused. "What?"

"The place where the big gophers are."

She responded with a not-too-well controlled and lengthy laugh. "You want to see gophers?" More laughter. "You've come all the way from Ontario just to see gophers?"

This was the best thing she'd heard for months.

A quick thanks and exit took us to the Highlight Cafe. I preferred to avoid the three burly, green-overalled men with grease-laden wrinkles and asked the proprietor for directions. He directed me to the forementioned chaps at the table. Between an argument about Norm's Texas gate and the need for signs to the prairie dog town, I gathered that we had to find Norm Cornfeld's farm three miles south of town.

With a few wiggley lines on a cigarette package lid we headed south. A wrong turn lead us to two stately white-tailed deer. After receiving more directions, we made the right turn to be rewarded promptly by a coyote scrambling from the ditch. Four miles later, another reward - Norm Cornfeld's Texas gate.

But because nobody was home, we again made the wrong turn and drove across a lark and longspur laden field. To the north a pronghorn antelope appeared momentarily on a ridge. A few minutes later a coyote ran across the dry, grasshopper-infested field. An hour later we were back at the farm awaiting someone for more directions.

Eventually a young couple appeared and said, "Go directly east." (I thought I had). "Take the other fork and go ahead four miles."

After a short interlude of trying to avoid gopher holes and boulders, we made a sharp turn and coasted down a steep hill to be greeted by an immature Golden Eagle, whose identification was made easy by those large white patches on his outer wings.

Just ahead was the wide semi-arid valley containing a number of prairie dog towns. Beside the road was a cairn, plaque and guest book which happily had not been subjected to the usual graffiti. Mounds of grey dirt and high pitched barks were in all directions. The "volks" served as an excellent blind, but when we drove within 20 feet of the prairie dogs, their upright stance gave way to a horizontal pose and they soon shot into the burrow with a few flicks of a black-tipped tail.

Our image of numerous Burrowing Owls sitting on fence posts vanished. None were in sight. We searched. A tiny head which seemed larger than a gopher's moved just beyond a mound. It pushed up slightly to reveal one big yellow eye, then another. For a few minutes no one moved. We could see his white eyebrows, but a photo was hopeless. We slowly drove around to the lower side of the burrow, but still, only his head was visible. After a few minutes, he became less concerned with us and began to look about. Then he hopped to the peak of the burrow revealing his long

legs and light brown body, an ideal shot. He twisted his head upward and about with mouth often agape, but otherwise his body was still. Finally, with dark wings he flew a few feet above the ground to the next mound. As if in acknowledgement of the rightful owner, he made several quick bows from the leg joint and then flew to the next mound, then the next before disappearing. We didn't see another that day.

Our inspection of his burrow, an abandoned prairie dog home, revealed that a number of droppings might distinguish it from the routine prairie dog mound.

The only shade available in the valley was provided by fence posts. Earlier, we had noticed birds in these shadows, but they had been upstaged by the owl. Now we focussed our binoculars on them to notice a red shoulder and white outer tail feathers--McGowan's Longspur, not Chestnut-collared as I had thought.

We then decided to investigate the cracked, dropping-covered valley on foot. Lichen and various sages were everywhere and prickly pear cactus was not uncommon. The prairie dogs, however, zipped underground before we could come within 100 feet of them.

After attempting to segregate the valley into various "towns", and then "clans", we returned to Val Marie's Highlight Cafe. The owner seemed pleased with our success and told us that a proposed joint U.S. - Canada park in the area and along the International Border could help to save Canada's only prairie dog colony. He added enthusiastically, "lynx, beaver, fox and mink have also been seen in the area." He did not know that the Saskatchewan Natural History Society leased the land containing the colony from Norm Cornfeld, and seemed impressed when I told him so.

After a brief lunch we turned north onto Highway No. 4, satisfied at the apparent end of a successful day. But a Swainson's Hawk broke the spell by sitting on a fence post offering photographers several "frame-fillers."

A few miles later a brown, obese groundhog waddled across the road before us. "It's not a groundhog. What is it?"

In reply he turned his head and identified himself - a badger. Across the ditch, under the fence and up the field he rumbled as we followed along in the car. Then, to our amazement he turned towards the road and started back under the fence; but a few feet later, he came upon his large burrow and, after a farewell glance, disappeared.

"Let's just park here for a while and see what happens." We didn't have long to wait.

A grey, semi-flattened football tottered toward home along the ditch. A quick photo and he began to enter the burrow. But it was no homey entry. He snarled, growled, rolled over, pawed at the earth and went upright, shot dirt in all directions creating cloud after cloud of sunlit dust and making photography impossible.

Soon the cause of it all appeared; Junior No. 2, an apparent twin, wouldn't let Junior No. 1 enter. For the next several noisy, exhilarating minutes the two shot back and forth and nose to nose like two fencers in a jousting match. Eventually they sasheyed their way under the fence and into the field. Oblivious to obvious domestic differences, Junior No. 3 then appeared and sniffed his way across the road and into the field, ending the episode as it had begun.

But Highway No. 4 had one more treat waiting a few miles north. It was brief, but memorable; nine Pronghorns including two males with good racks. They strode warily as we drove up, but settled when we stopped. When we moved again, however, they moved away into a wheat field and raised dust in their wake. The day's excitement was over.

TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB
 Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory - January 6, 1974
 Compiled by: C.E. Goodwin

Route Number	1	2	3	4	5	6*	7	Totals
Common Loon	1							1
Mute Swan						11		11
Canada Goose	2		76	98	522	84	112	894
Mallard	319	169	63	878	1462	888	703	4482
Black Duck	111	212	4	36	88	352	301	1104
Gadwall					6		10	16
Pintail					4	1	1	6
American Wigeon					1	6	1	8
Wood Duck							1	1
Redhead	222						3	225
Ring-necked Duck					1			1
Canvasback					9			9
Greater Scaup	210	1	400	349	2991	1665	589	6205
Common Goldeneye	65	93	3	27	73	61	122	444
Barrow's Goldeneye							1	1
Bufflehead	29	15	8	95	93	42	21	303
Oldsquaw		17	198	450	547	297	26	1535
Harlequin Duck					1		1	2
White-winged Scoter							1	1
Hooded Merganser		1						1
Common Merganser	12	1	33	57	1	37	3	144
American Coot					1			1
TOTALS	971	509	785	1990	5800	3444	1896	15395

Kingston figures (Kingston Field Naturalists, compiler R.D. Weir, Jan. 2). Horned Grebe 3; Canada Goose 25; Mallard 29; Black 66; Gadwall 2; Redhead 1; Greater Scaup 2120; scaup (sp.) 8; Common Goldeneye 645; Bufflehead 111; Oldsquaw 364; White-winged Scoter 8; Black Scoter 1; Hooded Merganser 1; Common Merganser 110; Red-breasted Merganser 1; diving ducks (sp.) 117; Coot 2; Total 3614.

* Route 6 not covered until January 13 due to an error in scheduling. Assessment of the waterfront indicates there is probably more variation hour to hour than week to week at this period.

Routes and Observers

1. J.M. Speirs, L. Beldan.
2. F. Bodsworth, M. Bodsworth, D. Rickwood, R. Rickwood, N. Hannah.
3. G. Fairfield.
4. P. Middleton, B. Parker, H. Houkins.
5. G. Bellerby, K. Carmichael, G. Carmichael, E. Carmichael, D. Troy, R. Geras, V. Zvereff.
6. D.E. Perks, J. Lamey, R.E. Mason.
7. C.E. Goodwin, A. Dawe, D. Corbridge.

Time and Weather

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Light overcast to sunny. Light SW winds 20°F.

Lake fairly calm. Lagoons and much of bay and inside breakwaters frozen.

* * * * *

TIMELY REMINDER

The Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Annual Meeting will be held at Queen's University, in Kingston, on June 7 - 9, 1974.

A number of talks and seminars covering ecology and other topics of special interest to naturalists have been planned. Special programs for children are being provided. Five field trips have also been scheduled.

Applications for registration and full information will be available April 1st, from the F.O.N. office, 1262 Don Mills Road, Don Mills, Ontario, phone: 444-8419.

Dates again: June 7 - 9, 1974. Place: Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.



Joan O'Donnell, Margaret Knight, Verna Higgins and Erna Lewis examine one of the many labels they placed on trees in High Park, last fall. The project was in co-operation with the City of Toronto Parks Department. (Photo by Harold Taylor).

A goldeneye and merganser nesting box program to determine waterfowl nesting habits is underway in Timmins District. Three hundred and ninety-six boxes are being set out along the Redstone and Whitefish Rivers by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Nesting boxes are being erected along the Redstone this winter while those on the Whitefish will be put up during the summer. It is believed the nesting areas are chosen by the waterfowl during the previous summer and fall.

Aquatic plants in the southern section of Chemung Lake, Lindsay District, will be harvested in a joint project of the Ontario Ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources. Beginning about the end of July, 1974, mechanical removal of the aquatic vegetation will be assessed as a potential method for improving water use. Interested persons, cottagers and residents of the area can contact Natural Resources' personnel at the Lindsay District office for further information.
(from Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Newsletter)

Elmer Talvila, Editor, 12 Cranleigh Court,
Islington, Ontario. Phone: 231-1064.

\$ 2,700. SHORT OF TARGET.

DONATIONS TO THE JIM BAILLIE RESERVE HAVE TAKEN AN UNEXPLAINED AND DISCONCERTING DROP SINCE CHRISTMAS. IN THE PAST MONTH WE HAVE AVERAGED ONLY 3 DONATIONS OR \$45. PER WEEK. THIS IS FAR OFF THE PACE LAST FALL WHEN CONTRIBUTIONS WERE ARRIVING AT THE RATE OF 20 PER WEEK.

YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED!

WE CANNOT PAY FOR THE RECENTLY-ACQUIRED 30 ACRES WITHOUT THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF MORE MEMBERS. IF YOU'VE BEEN PUTTING OFF SENDING IN A DONATION, PLEASE DELAY NO LONGER.

SEND ALONG YOUR CHEQUE AND BE COUNTED!

OUR INITIAL TARGET IS \$10,000. WE EARNESTLY HOPE TO BANK THIS AMOUNT IN CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE END OF JUNE.

HOPING TO HEAR FROM YOU SOON!

----- detach -----

TO: Stuart Corbett
52 Haileybury Drive
Scarborough, Ontario.
M1K 4X5

1974, APRIL.

I enclose a cheque/money order made out to the TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS in the amount of \$ _____ as a donation toward the JIM BAILLIE NATURE RESERVE.

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