



TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Number 287

December, 1974

Visitors welcome!

DECEMBER MEETING

Visitors welcome!

Monday, December 2, 1974, at 8: 15 p.m.

at

252 Bloor Street West.

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

SPEAKERS: Mr. and Mrs. Larry McKeever.

SUBJECT: OWLS. Kay and Larry McKeever operate what can best be described as an owl salvage operation on their 1½ acre property near Vineland in the Niagara Peninsula. The operation started a number of years ago and has grown gradually to its present proportions where 19 large outdoor flight cages and a number of indoor winter and invalid cages house a number of owls varying between 50 and 70 of some 15 species. Illustrated with colour slides.

DATE of next meeting: Monday, January 6, 1975.

REMEMBER THE DATES OF THE AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS: Eaton Auditorium - 8:15 p.m.

- Thursday, December 5 - "Wild Scandinavia" - John Bulger
- " January 9, 1975 - "Wild Animals" (Africa) - San Schipper & Henk Kegel
- " February 13, 1975 - "Outback Australia" - Eben McMillan

If you did not attend the October show, we suggest you circle these dates on your calender as a 'must'. You will be thrilled at the beauty and perfection of these colour films. The number to call: 364-6487 Price per ticket \$2.25.

CLUB FEES ARE NOW DUE. The renewal response has been wonderful. If you haven't renewed, won't you mail in the attached form with your remittance today ?

TO: MRS. E. HANSON, Membership Secretary
Toronto Field Naturalists' Club
83 Joicey Blvd., Toronto Ont. M5M 2T4

DATE _____

I (we) wish to renew TFNC membership and enclose cheque or money order

() Single \$7.00 () Family (adults) \$10.00 () Life \$100.00

() Corresponding (living more than 30 miles from the Royal Ontario Museum) \$3.00

() Full-time student (aged 16 or over) \$ 2.00

Senior Citizens, 65 and over: () single \$4.00 () Family \$6.00 () Corresponding \$2.00

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ Postal Code _____

JUNIOR CLUB NOTE: Back to regular time for meetings. (10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon)
Saturday Meeting will be held in the Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park.
December 7 The Minerology Group will be in charge. An interesting film will also
10:00 a.m. be shown. Director - Lyn Scanlan, 488-8321 (after 5:30 p.m.)

ENVIRONMENTAL Meet at St. James Bond United Church on Avenue Road, just north of
COMMITTEE Eglinton Avenue. Reminder: monthly meetings are scheduled for the
Wednesday season on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. Club members are invited
December 11 to join in the discussions.
8:00 p.m. Chairman, Henry Fletcher (421-1549)

BIRD GROUP No meeting in December. Watch your January Newsletter for details on
a most interesting evening on Warblers with George Fairfield.
Chairman - Red Mason, (621-3905)

BOTANY GROUP No meeting in December. See you in January. This meeting will start
a series on Plant Identification with Leila Gad. Check the next
Newsletter for details. Chairman - Wes Hancock (757-5518)

Meetings held
rain or shine!

OUTINGS FOR DECEMBER, 1974

Visitors
Welcome.

Sunday EARL BALES PARK - Birds Leader: Mr. Walter Hutton
December 1 This was formerly the Don Valley Golf Course. Meet at the entrance
10:00 a.m. on the east side of Bathurst Street just south of Sheppard. (Bathurst
bus, Sheppard Avenue bus). Morning only.

Saturday GLENDON CAMPUS, YORK UNIVERSITY - Birds Leader: Mr. Ed. Franks
December 7 Go west on Lawrence Avenue. East from Park Lane Circle (east of Bayview
9:30 a.m. Ave.) Turn left at the bottom of the hill into the parking lot. Meet
here. (Pedestrians walk down through the campus from Bayview and
Lawrence). Morning only.

Sunday BOYD CONSERVATION AREA - First Winter Walk (5 miles) Metropolitan
December 8 Toronto and Region Conservation Authority event. For information
10:30 a.m. phone: 630-9780.

Dec. 13 - 15 NIAGARA RIVER BIRD LIFE - For information contact Ontario Nature Tours,
6372 Montrose Road, Niagara Falls, Ont. Phone (416) 356-1089, or
1164 Broadview Ave., Toronto, Ont. Phone: 422-4830.

Chairman - Harry Kerr (481-7948)

REMINDER!

Renewal membership form on reverse side. Keep in touch with T.F.N.
'coming events' during 1975 by sending in your renewal today.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

During the past month I have received many requests for information on the Canadian Wildlife Federation. Most of the people seeking this information had received a mailing from the C.W.F. or had read an article about it that appeared in the Star on October 9. I promised to seek further details and now have the following to offer:

Some of the confusion undoubtedly results from the fact that we are confronted by three organizations with similar names. These are the Canadian Wildlife Service, The Canadian Nature Federation, and the Canadian Wildlife Federation. The first is the branch of the Canadian government that is responsible for the management of wildlife in Canada. The second is "a national non-profit organization representing provincial naturalists' federations, local societies and individuals across Canada. It developed out of the Canadian Audubon Society in 1971." (Quote taken from title page of "Nature Canada", the journal of the C.N.F.). Our Club maintains a membership in the C.N.F. as do many individuals in our Club. The third group, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, has been, until recently, almost entirely sportsman oriented. In order to broaden its base the C.W.F. decided to broaden its membership appeal. Hence an extensive mailing was sent out across Canada soliciting memberships from all who are interested in the conservation of wildlife. The journal of the C.W.F. is "International Wildlife". This attractive publication is published in the United States and has been one of the journals of the National Wildlife Federation (U.S.A.) for many years.

To clarify the C.W.F. stand on hunting, we have reproduced here a letter that I wrote to the executive director of the C.W.F. and his reply.

"Mr. Kenneth Brynaert
Executive Director
Canadian Wildlife Federation
1673 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K2A 1G4

Dear Mr. Brynaert:

As Coordinator of Outdoor Education and Environmental Studies for the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, and as President of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club, I have recently received numerous inquiries from teachers, student teachers, and naturalists regarding the Canadian Wildlife Federation. These inquiries were prompted, in large part, by your recent publicity mailing and by an article that appeared in the Toronto Star on October 9, 1974. The Star article said, in part, that your organization ". . . is an organization of sportsmen, hunters, and fishermen", yet your publicity mailing makes no mention of this. The membership appeal presented in your mailing appears most attractive to naturalists but the bulk of naturalists are not in any way favourably inclined towards joining a hunter-based organization. This, I believe sums up the type of correspondence I am receiving. People are asking me if they would be supporting sport hunting if they joined the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

I am currently writing an article to clarify this matter for release in the Newsletter of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club and other publications, and would appreciate a statement from you that would answer the question I am being asked. I would much prefer to use information received directly from you than to use second-hand sources like the Toronto Star.

"Most of the people with whom I have talked understand that selective killing -- the culling of old, diseased, and maimed animals from herds by trained marksmen -- is essential for the long-term survival of the species. Natural predators have vanished so man must assume their role in ensuring that the best animals survive to perpetuate the herd. However, most of these people are, like myself, totally opposed to sport hunting, on the grounds that killing wildlife for pleasure is a demented human pursuit that simply does not warrant a place in the spectrum of human activities. It cannot be justified biologically since sport hunters do not seek out the old, diseased, and maimed animals. Nor can it be justified, except for residents of remote areas, as a means of obtaining food. Further, most naturalists are not impressed by statements indicating that it is cheaper to let sport hunters control wildlife than to let government-paid marksmen do it. Besides, most sport hunters admit that they hunt mainly for the pleasure of the kill. I find it impossible to explain to anyone why some people can obtain pleasure from killing.

Against this background, then, I would appreciate an answer at your earliest convenience regarding the Canadian Wildlife Federation's position on sport hunting (not hunting in general). Then I will pass this information on to interested persons in the hope that both you and I will be saved the inconvenience of numerous individual inquiries.

Thanking you in advance, I remain

Yours very truly,

(sgd) W. A. Andrews

Associate Professor

Science Education Department"

WAA:cf

and

"Mr. W. A. Andrews,
Associate Professor, Science Education Department
University of Toronto, 371 Bloor St. West
Toronto, Ontario. M5S 2R7

Dear Mr. Andrews:

Many thanks for your letter of October 22, 1974.

The question relating to our promotional material can be answered quite simply. As you are well aware up until now our 160,000 membership base was almost exclusively sportsman oriented. It was therefore decided that as a conservation organization we had an obligation to broaden our membership appeal.

For the beleaguered conservation movement, the thin line between discord and disagreement is more important today than ever before. There has always been room within the movement for differences of opinion over such questions as hunting. Hopefully there always will be. But when disagreement breaks down into polarization and quarreling, the entire movement suffers accordingly.

The Canadian Wildlife Federation does not want to close off discussion related to the hunting question. We believe however that this matter is essentially personal in nature. Each person must decide for himself whether it is right to hunt or not to hunt. By the same token, each person must respect the others right to make this decision. I do not feel it is either right or proper that either of the two sides should force their views on the other.

"Since its inception, the CWF has supported hunting as an integral part of wildlife management. We also support those thousands of people who are more interested in maintaining optimum of wildlife for the purpose of watching or photographing them. Everyone who enjoys wildlife should have the opportunity of enjoying it.

It is felt however, that enjoyment alone is not enough. At a time of sky-rocketing population and land development across the country, conservationists must work and join together - despite their differences - to preserve what is left of our threatened wildlife heritage. To whatever extent the debate over hunting alienates one interest from the other, it is counter productive, diverting energy and funds from the larger issues, such as habitat improvement, land acquisition, wildlife research and improved public education.

We must unite with a common effort if we are to succeed at all.

Yours very truly,

(sgd) K. A. Brynaert,
Executive Director. "

KAB/gf

Postscript

Mr. Brynaert makes a strong case for the joining of hands by naturalists and hunters. Regretably he ignored my request to comment specifically on sports hunting. All of us surely understand the importance of hunting as a part of wildlife management. Weak, diseased and starving animals are dealt with more humanely by a hunter's bullet than by nature, now that many natural predators have vanished. However, sports hunters seldom seek out the weak, diseased and starving animals. Only hired professionals will do that. So I will support hunting by trained experts as a tool of wildlife management but I cannot condone sport hunting, or killing of wildlife for personal pleasure.

I know that feelings always run high on the hunting issue. I suspect that a few of you may be hunters. If you are, I would appreciate an answer to this question: "Why is it fun to kill an animal?" I have asked that question many times but all I get are other reasons why people hunt--to help keep wildlife population in check; to have a day in the woods with the boys; to get healthy exercise. But the truth of the matter is that sports hunters hunt mainly for the pleasure of the kill. Hence the name "sports hunting". So, until someone can explain to me why it is fun to kill, I will continue to do battle with sports hunting, in spite of Mr. Brynaert's assertion that "neither of the two sides should force their views on the other." In my opinion, it is immoral to say or do nothing when something is taking place that you strongly feel is wrong.

*

May I wish you, one and all, a very, very,

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

and a

NEW YEAR

filled with hope and peace

..... Bill Andrews

Does your Christmas gift list still have a few empty spaces? If so, you might consider one or more of the following pocket books that are among my favourites. Each one costs less than the trimmings for the turkey -- and will last longer. If your friendly bookseller does not have them on the shelf they can be ordered. Allow several weeks for delivery. Happy shopping to you and, to a friend, happy reading!

"The Eye of the Wind" by Peter Scott (Hodder and Stoughton)

"I am without question the luckiest, and I believe the happiest, man I know." So Peter Scott begins a captivating autobiography. Son of Scott of the Antarctic the author is a renowned artist, world champion sailor, small boat commander in World War II, glider pilot, and a naturalist with world-wide concerns. A few days before he died struggling to reach the South Pole his father wrote to his mother: "Make the boy interested in Natural History. It is better than games."

As a boy Peter Scott lapped up the romance of Ernest Thompson Seton's animal books. Growing up, he was an avid hunter of ducks and geese. One day, in his early twenties, he and a companion had shot twenty-three geese. Among them were two wounded ones, "and as soon as we had picked them up we hoped they might not die. The birds we had been trying to kill we were now trying to keep alive." This was a turning point. He became more interested in trying to catch birds alive. Of his early attempts to net geese he wrote, "these two days have been two of the most enjoyable I ever spent in the pursuit of geese; and the total has been one goose .. but alive."

He worked hard to improve his techniques; one he introduced to Manitoba's Delta Marsh. Later came his world-famous Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge in England. Now Sir Peter Scott, the author travels with the message of conservation for all who will listen.

"Adventures in Nature" by Edwin Way Teale (Dodd, Mead and Company, Apollo Editions)

Whether he is alone atop the Empire State Building at midnight observing the fall migration, creeping through a cattail marsh, or walking among redwoods that were seedlings in the time of Christ, Edwin Way Teale has the ability to make you feel you are there, too. Probably the most widely-read naturalist on the continent his four books on the seasons earned him a Pulitzer Prize. "Adventure in Nature" contains thirty-one of his writings from some of his earlier books that are no longer in print. A delightful volume.

"The Year of the Whale" by Victor B. Scheffer (Scribner's)

This fictional account, based on fact, begins with the birth of the Little Calf, a baby sperm whale that may have weighed in at one ton. Through twelve months we follow the young whale as he learns to tell his own kind from the deadly killer whale, slowly becomes familiar with the sounds of the sea, makes the acquaintance of ships, and takes part in his first migration. Between the events in the Little Calf's first year the author interposes fascinating facts about whales and about man's attempts to learn more about their environment.

Dr. Scheffer, a biologist with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, has produced a story that is graceful and full of respect for one of Nature's greatest creatures. His tale won the Burroughs Medal for the year's best book in the field of natural history.

"The Pine Barrens" by John McPhee (Ballantine Books)

A natural anachronism of New Jersey are the Pine Barrens. Set in a state that has nearly a thousand people per square mile the central area of the Barrens has only one-seventieth that number. Beneath its sandy soil is a natural reservoir of pure water that is equivalent to a lake 75 miles deep with a surface of 1,000 square miles; one of the greatest recharging natural areas of the world.

Twenty-three different orchids, swamp azaleas, swamp hyacinths, and many more plants attract insects and botanists alike. Of birds, 84 species breed there. Fifty-pound snapping turtles are not uncommon. The past of the Barrens is redolent of tar and forges that turned out bog iron cannonballs for the Continental Army in the American Revolution. And the future? That's not so certain. The Pine Barrens lie astride a line joining Boston and Richmond, a megalopolis of 40 million people. John McPhee, a talented and versatile writer, hopes for the best - both for the residents of the Barrens and its natural treasures.

"Beyond Your Doorstep" by Hal Borland (an Audubon/Ballantine Book)

Here are 274 pages packed with information about the natural world beyond the city. The reader will find details of the plants and animals to be found beside the road, in pastures and meadows, in the woodlands, bogs and swamps as season follows season. There are chapters on birds, mammals, and an introduction to the sun, moon, stars and weather. At the end, under "An Armful of Books," the author has listed some of the books he has found especially interesting or useful.

I like Borland's term "nature watcher." It conjures up an active pursuit in the outdoors that all of us can enjoy without having to feel we must be experts. Hal Borland has written many award-winning books. This is one you may wish to find under your own tree on Christmas morning.

!*****!

A WINTER REUNION WEEKEND FOR TRIPPERS

February 28 - March 2, 1975

A reunion weekend will be held at the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre, near Dorset, for canoe trippers, backpackers, hikers, and those interested. Its purpose is to provide a meeting place where friends can share a winter experience together, relive activities of the past summer, and plan for the summer ahead.

The program will include snowshoe and ski hikes over wilderness trails, rich in wildlife. Here you'll meet the friendly grey jay and chickadee, hear the wild cry of the raven and bluejay, and read the tracks in snow of the wolf, moose, deer, fox and other forest creatures. You'll be part of a wolf howl and view film and slides of trips of the past year - wilderness canoe trips, a hike in the Rockies, an African safari, and many other surprises. Accommodations are comfortable here and you'll find time to relax in the lounge by the open fire for a chat with old friends.

Cost of this weekend is \$35.00 and car pools will be encouraged.

For information and/or registration please call or write :

Ed O'Connor
2 Nursewood Road - Apt. 11
Toronto, Ontario M4E 3R8

phone: (416) 699-9211

GRACKLES

This year we had two odd occurrences in the back yard both involving grackles.

In May '71 a member's article mentioned observing grackles dunking bread in the bird bath. Having raised a young grackle last year, I can state they will dunk anything.

I rescued the bird from two small boys who, having themselves rescued him from a cat, were trying to help him fly (with an injured wing) by the simple expedient of tossing him around. He was a pathetic bedraggled mess and I named him Patrick, my father's name, because as I said to my father, "He's so ugly he needs a good name." All our young birds have proper names and Pat was raised in company with a robin named Edward.

Pat would take anything we gave him, including bread soaked in milk and nice soft cooked corn and put them in his drinking water. We would give him a dish of water for bathing and he would put twigs and beakfuls of soil in it before finding it suitable for his ablutions. Having seen this, I was not surprised this spring to see a grackle come to the bird bath with, as I thought, a piece of bread in his beak which he placed in the water. I did notice, however, that he did not retrieve it. He came back later and did the same thing only this time, having put the bread in the water, he stepped in, bathed and then flew off. This time I thought I would investigate, there to my amazement were six or seven very large pure white droppings, I realized then that he was "house" cleaning. I emptied the bath and refilled it.

By coincidence that same night the "Audubon Wildlife Theatre" showed the courtship and nesting of the lyre bird. It showed the nestling depositing its droppings in the female's beak. She then either buried them in a damp place or put them in a nearby pool, thus eliminating any evidence of the young bird. I wondered if this was what my grackle was doing. This went on day-after-day as long as the young were in the nest. Sometimes the male would come and sometimes the female. I knew it was the same pair, the female had no tail and so was easy to recognize. If I was out in the garden when one of them arrived there would be a "clack" of annoyance as the bird passed over and someone else I guess had a turn at being chamber maid.

From the bird's point of view I suppose there was no real problem. The robins, sparrows, etc., drank and bathed in the water regardless but from a humans point of view this was unhygienic and I tried to keep the water clean. I now have the most fertilized fir tree in Scarborough! Those grackles I swear must have had at least ten young or so it seemed to me. I was tempted to install a Johnny-on-the-Spot. Eventually, however, the young left the nest and things returned to normal but the question remains why? Why this year after all the years the bird bath has been there? Why only one pair out of the dozens which must have nested in the area?

(Ed: I regret not having the name of the author of the above article. If you recognize it as your own, please call and let me know.)

The T.F.N. wishes to acknowledge gratefully the gift of 20 colour slides of Cedarvale Ravine, taken in January, 1974, from Patricia Oman.

NORTH YORK "RAVINERS" CO-OPERATE WITH BOROUGH IN ENVIRONMENTAL WEEK

In March we accepted the invitation of the Environmental Committee of the Borough to join in planning for "Environmental week October 20 - 26, 1974". It was decided that the "Raviners" would be responsible for: (1) program for a public meeting; (2) T.F.N. display; (3) two nature hikes. These events would be included in the Borough publicity.

DISPLAY AT FAIRVIEW MALL .. Jack Cranmer Byng and Stewart Hilts were responsible for this interesting and informative display, which consisted of the display prepared for the 50th Anniversary ... large map of Metro showing water courses, newspaper clippings, pictures of Brookbanks Ravine by Dr. Bruce Cruickshank; photos of Don Valley Ravine from Bayview Bridge, showing where the proposed Lawrence Avenue East extension would have gone, by Mark Sawyer; pictures of Junior Club members on hikes, etc. This proved very interesting to the public.

PUBLIC MEETING AT SENECA COLLEGE, October 22nd .. Chairman was Alderman Betty Sutherland. Chairman of the Borough Environmental Committee Ravine presentation, Stewart Hilts. Slides of Brookbanks Ravine were shown by Dr. Bruce Cruickshank, and slides of birds in the ravine were shown by Ken Carmichael.

The panel consisted of: Jack Cranmer-Byng, Stewart Hilts, Dr. Bruce Cruickshank; Bruce Parker, Jackie Dineen, Ken Carmichael and Gordon Hutchison (Deputy Commissioner of Parks and Recreation of North York.) It was a very successful evening, although due to lack of publicity, the attendance was small.

NATURE HIKES, Saturday, October 26 .. Brookbanks Ravine (east of the Parkway, leaders: Dr. Bruce Cruickshank and Bruce Parker, who are doing a study of this ravine. G. Ross Lord Reservoir (Dufferin and Finch) .. leaders: Jackie Dineen and Jack Cranmer-Byng. The hikes were publicized by flyers distributed in the schools and an article in the "Mirror" .. about 30 persons participated in each hike (sorry to report very few T.F.N. Members were present). It is felt that further hikes should be planned in different ravines of North York to encourage the local people to participate and in this way become more aware of the natural habitat.

While the "Environmental Week" was a success, we realize there is much work to be done to ensure that the ravines are fully protected by the Borough. More people are now aware of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club and its concern for the environment, and the fact that the Club will offer assistance and co-operation in protecting and preserving our natural areas.

..... Rae Abernethy.

SPECIAL NOTICE

The Ministry of Natural Resources were marking Oldsquaw in the Arctic last summer. The birds are marked at the top of the bill with a yellow plastic nasal saddle.

Anybody sighting birds that are marked in this way are asked to notify Dr. Robert Allison, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife Branch, Whitney Block, Queen's Park, Toronto.

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If you are experiencing trouble with the delivery of your Newsletter, will you please contact the Secretary at 422-4830. New mailing stencils are now being made and the correct postal code will be shown.

Hattie Beeton, Secretary, 1164 Broadview Ave., Toronto, M4K 2S5

ICELAND TRIP -- JULY 25 - AUGUST 9, 1974

This trip was prepared by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists under the leadership of Dr. Peter Peach (Geologist) and organized by the Icelandic Tourist Bureau in Reykjavik, who provided the guide and the busdriver. These men stayed with us throughout the trip.

Accommodation in Reykjavik was in private houses, but on tour was in Hotel EDDAS - these being government boarding schools. The farms are so far apart that going to school is a problem, so all rural children board from 7 to 14 years of age. In July and August these schools provide accommodation for tourists, and are quite well run, tho' I think the menfolk on our trip found the beds too narrow! Rooms and bathrooms were adequate, and most schools had a warm swimming bath. Icelandic breakfasts were served, i.e., help yourself to the spread of breads and cheeses, fish, cold meats, tomatoes and cucumbers, coffee and milk ... but each school seemed to serve something different -- one place served hot porridge! Lunches and dinners were also had at these places; both meals consist of cream soup, fish or lamb, potatoes and tomatoes and cucumbers, coffee/tea. At the evening meal there was a dessert of stewed fruit and skyr (yogurt). The meals are very generous - always second helpings offered.

The bus was specially built for the Iceland roads by Mercedes-Benz and was a wonder on the steep roads with hairpin-bends. The roads are not paved, except in the towns, and are made of lava gravel - dusty when dry, and full of potholes. The graders were at work frequently. The roads are very narrow, and we often travelled on mere tracks, which are usable only in summer. We crossed three suspension bridges, but usually the bridges were just wide enough for the bus to creep over carefully, and this happened a lot as there are numerous rivers.

The whole island is volcanic, starting only 60 million years ago, but has been erupting somewhere ever since. In the 1100 years of settlement there has been an eruption on the average every five years. It was interesting to see the different kinds of lava flows, how much they were eroded or still completely barren of vegetation. The whole island is mountainous in the centre with varying heights and cones, and several very large glaciers and some smaller. The coast is a series of fjords, except the south coast which is mainly a washout plain caused by volcanoes erupting under the icecap and resulting in violent floods. Everywhere there are rivers, and the hundreds of waterfalls of all sizes, shapes and volumes were fascinating.

The farms are large - tho' one cannot see boundaries as the sheep roam well up the hillsides. Often the farmhouses are against the mountain and are built of concrete painted a creamy white, and the roof of corrugated iron painted red - in one district they were yellow with a pale blue roof, but the former is traditional, and must look nice and cheerful in the drab winter landscape. The fields were green and full of good hay, some being cut and baled with modern machinery. Less good pasture had Icelandic cattle, which come in all colours, and produce very good milk. Both the sheep and cattle have to be kept indoors from November to April, so the hay is important. They also grow some turnips, and use silos, tho' we didn't see many silos standing up, as they often dig a pit. Practically anywhere in Iceland you can dig a well deep enough to supply your farm with a constant supply of HOT water, so houses are well-heated and comfortable. In some thermal areas there are large commercial greenhouses where they grow vegetables - hence the tomatoes and cucumbers served with every meal! We were puzzled about the potatoes, as nowhere did we see a potato patch larger than would supply the one farm, and some did not seem to have any at all. There are lots of ponies around as they are used to round up the sheep, but they are mostly idle in summer, tho' pony trekking is popular.

Only once did we see a pig - pork and bacon were never on the menus, and very infrequently did we see poultry - the only eggs we had were hard-cooked slices.

The price of food was shockingly high ... luckily our tour was all-inclusive except for the free days in Reykjavik at beginning and end of the tour. As 96 l.kronur equal \$1.00 it was easy for us to make rapid comparisons and when our first dinner bill was nearly 15 dollars apiece we were quickly alerted to this high cost of living. We discovered that the cafeteria at the airport in Reykjavik was more to our liking - coffee there was only 45 cents, whereas other places tea and coffee were 70 - 85 cents! A hamburger was \$1.50 at the airport - in town \$2.50.

Reykjavik is a modern city - since they learnt to build in concrete most of the old has been replaced, and houses are in various styles and quite like British houses of the '20s and '30s, with gardens and low walls. Before this, corrugated iron was their building material and some of these good substantial houses remain in a fine residential area overlooking the town lake. All roofs are corrugated iron painted various colours, except in the new suburbs where ultra-modern houses have flat roofs. The only stone-built building was the Parliament building in Reykjavik, which dates from the end of the last century (and still bears the crest of the Royal Arms of Denmark -- Republic since 1944). Even the cathedral is corrugated iron. They are building a new church in concrete which dominates the skyline otherwise the chief landmark is the huge concrete hot-water storage tanks up on a hill; these supply the whole city with hot water and central heating. There is no smoke in the city, the only pollution being from cars and buses. There has never been a railroad. Communication around the coast was by boat or overland by pony, until cars came in and they 'improved' the roads. The people just now seem to be well-off -- cars galore and TV everywhere. What we liked best was the lack of billboards and advertising -- this lack reached down to road signs, and once our bus driver got us lost because there was no sign at the fork of a road; we landed up at a lovely farmhouse and no road beyond.

NOW for the tour. There were 21 of us, including Dr. Peach. Also the driver Elias and the guide Gerard. They collected us from our gistihusid and we drove north, along the coast. The road follows the shore under the mountain and all around the fjords. It was a beautiful sunny day and of course we had to stop at every waterfall, and to photograph the bus inching its way over the bridge. (I think there were only two of us without cameras; Erna and I spent photography time looking for plants and birds).

At the head of Hvalfjordur (Whale fjord) we stopped at the whaling station as a small ship was bringing in a small whale. The bay was full of Fulmars and young floating on the water -- they nest on the cliffs above---oystercatchers at the edge of the water. We did not wait for the butchering of the whale - it was a small sperm - but we were to see this operation at a later date...smelly! We went on around the fjord and up over a pass, and down onto a wide plain ringed with mountains; a few still had patches of snow. In this valley among the hayfields we found our Hotel Edda. After lunch we went in the bus for a beautiful drive over heath land and beside rivers to look for birds and plants. It was quite rewarding both ways, this being the only time we had a good look at Ptarmigans, and our first look at Red-shanks and Whimbrel, and snow buntings in summer plumage. I should mention that Icelandic birds and plants are European, rather than American; the sea birds are found on both sides of the north Atlantic; some plants are boreal and do occur in our northern latitudes. So there was a great deal which was 'new' to most of us, tho' the birds were familiar to me from Shetland and Hudson's Bay. (Except the Iceland Falcon and I. Gull).

The Black-tailed Godwit was also a new species, and the Golden Plover a different species from the one we have in n. Canada. We stopped by a waterfall where there

was a fish ladder carved out of the lava-rock; the salmon here is very good. Sometimes we saw a few people fishing, but usually we went for miles without seeing a soul. After dinner (salmon) Erna and I climbed the hill behind the school. On this steep slope we found a plantation of trees - the two native trees, Birch, *Betula tortuosa*, and Mountain-ash, *Sorbus aucuparia*, and mixed with them were a few conifers - a spruce, possibly *Picea sitchensis*, and an unidentified pine, none of which were doing well. All trees everywhere were stunted and twisted, and very much windblown. It is recorded that when the Vikings first went to Iceland 874 AD there were birch forests below the snow-line, but of course they soon used up all the wood for firewood, etc., and their sheep ate any seedlings which might have replaced the forest. On this hill we found billberry and a blueberry, and Alpine Lady's mantle, crowberry and the remains of the Mountain Avens (*Dryas octopetala*) - not the same one as we have in Manitoba. Dwarf Birch was creeping on the ground, along with *Salix herbacea*, and ling heather was in full bloom.

It was still broad daylight when we went to bed at 11:30 p.m., in fact only once on the whole trip I saw darkness, when a crying baby woke me at 2 a.m.

The next morning we started off northwards, climbing up over mountainous roads and lava-fields, then down on to a plain, then all the way around a fjord (one wished for a ferry!). Here Elias looked for a White-tailed Eagle which is known in these parts, but we did not see him. Greylag geese were down in the water. Then we drove out on a peninsula to a small fishing port Stykkisholmur where we hired a boat to take us to an island of puffins. There were hundreds of these comical birds flying around - they fly like buzz-bombs - and stand on the rocks looking curiously down at us; also on the rocks were nesting kittiwakes, their young still downy, and fulmars. We went further on to an island where we could land and walked about on the grassy turf, finding Moonwort and Gentians (*G. campestris*) and One-flowered Erigeron, which was exciting, but little did we know how common these were to become. We also had good looks at Black Guillemots, and Great BLBK Gulls in the juvenile stage; also some Eider ducks and cormorants. On our return journey we stopped at another island to collect two men who had spent the week-end there net-catching puffins. This has been done for centuries and is legal with a limited bag. The net is on a long handle - like an enormous strong butterfly net. The man stands in a hollow at the edge of the cliff and reaches for the birds as they come to land. I guess killing them isn't as easy as it sounds - 'just stretch the neck'. These men had 120 puffins in a bag; they let me handle some as people wanted to photograph them. We never had puffin stew!

We went back to the same hotel for the night - usually two nights at one hotel - the next day pushed off southwards, visiting a place where a 13th century historian and saga-writer lived. Snorri Sturlsson. We saw the hot pool which he had excavated for his bath, and he built a tunnel from it to his house - the original house not being there as it was built of turf, as were all buildings until late 19th c. Then on southwards over the Kaldidalur (Cold Valley) which is the most desolate-looking high plateau of lava rocks, but on either side high mountains, and the beautiful dome of the Langjökull shining white in the sunshine. We stopped to put stones on the cairns and the temperature was 44°F, but it didn't seem that cold. Occasionally between the stones we saw small plants of Arctic Thyme, Thrift, Sea Campion and Woolly Willow (*Salix lanata*) struggling to survive, otherwise the whole area was barren.

Coming down on to the plain of Thingvellir we had a good view of the valley and the lake in the distance. This is the place where parliament met every year in June from early times until they built the House in Reykjavik. Representatives came from all over the island to discuss issues and read the laws. It was held open-air, but I suppose they had some kinds of tents. When we got to the scene it was still

decked out with flags and remains of yesterday's celebrations of 1100 years of Settlement. We walked around among the lava cliffs which surround the whole area, and saw the waterfall into the river which then flows in a rift in the lava before tumbling out on to the plain. There were very small ferns growing in the crevices (*D. fragilis* and *Woodsia alpina*), but the lava didn't support much vegetation, and where it did there were signs up not to walk there as it was dangerous. The cracks were deep and vegetation a thin layer.

The next place where we stayed was a High School and had good accommodation and a nice hot swimming bath; and a beautiful view of Hekla, the highest mountain, covered in ice despite the eruption in 1970. The next day we went over to see the lava-flow from that eruption. The end of the flow stopped abruptly and stood about 20 feet high. The eruption was not from the top of Hekla but from 4 fissures along the sides, and just poured out over the valley as though it was being pushed by a bulldozer. It looked and felt like dark red cinders. It is cold now. Our leader had been there to see this flow while it was still flaming red hot, and advancing at the rate of 5 - 10 meters an hour. He said it made a terrific noise as it pushed along groaning and crackling with loud reports. It had been easy for sightseers to get there as there is a bridge over the Thyorsa river which serves the power station nearby.

We visited the thermal area in which the Great Geysir (pronounced jezeer) used to spout, but no longer does, but the junior geysir beside it goes up every few minutes and is a delight to watch. There is also a beautiful deep clear-blue hot pool nearby - the water is so clear that one cannot see the surface. Near this area is the waterfall Gullfoss (Golden falls) which is quite spectacular; many small falls at various levels unite to fall into a deep narrow canyon. As we drove along the south coast we crossed several glacial rivers which are swift and milky white - also coming down from the cliffs were waterfalls of various sizes and shapes, some pretty with wind blowing a fine veil of water, others are thundering straight falls. From the south coast we went to the outlet glacier from Eyjafallajökull. Driving along the road it soon became a mere track and at the river ceased completely, so we drive right through the shallow but wide pebbly river and out the other side. This happened several times, until we had to walk over the black sandy riverbanks to get to the glacier. It also was black, from all the volcanic ash - occasional greenish spots showed. It was cold and rather grim (water temp. 34°F) so we didn't tarry long after climbing around a bit, and went back to the seacoast, driving over miles of black sandy shore to a rocky promontory where there is a famous rock with a hole underneath it. Dyrholaey. Here we watched the seabirds nesting on it. Common Guillemots, puffins, Kittiwakes, and flying around a Great Skua, and some dark phase Arctic Skuas. The black plain is the nesting area of the Great Skua; they feed on the fulmars which cross the plain to their nesting area in the mountains around. It was a beautiful evening; the puffins stood around posing for photos, and we found interesting stunted plants in the turf. The Westman Islands looked spectacularly high standing up out of the calm sea.

The next day we went to Reykjavik and flew up to Akureyri in the north. It was a disappointing flight as it was too cloudy for seeing much below us. Also this was the end of our perfect weather .. from now on it was likely to shower at any time. At Akureyri we spent the morning in the Botanical Gardens where we found an area set aside for native plants, labelled. This was a great help to us in identifying plants we had been in doubt about, and seeing some we hoped to see in the wild. This park was all divided up into squares, with rows of trees for wind-breaks .. this was also observed at Rejk. park, and at schools, so it must be very necessary to protect plants from the constant winds. Here as in other places it was chiefly the native birch and mountain-ash which were used, and a few willows. None of these were of any great height, though a bit better than in Reykjavik. The town is situated on the west hillside of a fjord, which opens up

northwards. From here we went to the famous lake Myvatn which is a favourite with tourists. Nearby we stopped to see Godafoss, which I thought was the most beautiful of the fosses we saw; there was a more exciting one where a huge volume of water came through a hole in a rock and tumbled into a canyon, and further downstream numerous small falls oozed out of the rock halfway up the high bank. But at Godafoss the water fell from four levels into a wide rift and one can enjoy the whole scene at once.

We followed the Laxa river - a few salmon fishermen were there - and here were many Harlequin ducks, and Barrow's Goldeneyes (*Bucephala islandica*) with their young at various stages, some only downy chicks. Of course the drakes of most species had gone out to sea to moult. On the lake were lots of eider ducks; Whooper Swans and families, over 70 in one group; Arctic Terns and Black-headed Gulls in colonies; a family of Horned Slavonian Grebes; and some Scaup (Greater). There may have been more duck species, but at this season it is very difficult to distinguish between all these brown females! Lots of Red-necked (northern) Phalaropes were milling around in a bay on the lake. We were here for three days; one day we saw two merlins, and then we saw a pair of Iceland Falcons in the distance flying around beautifully. Frequently in grassy places in among the rocks there were meadow pipits, White wagtails, Wheatears, and one day I saw a black-and-white Snow Bunting feeding its begging young. While up here we also went to Dettifoss - the highest waterfall in Europe. It wasn't impressive, grey water, grey rocks, just a straight fall into a grey canyon - but it was high - 135 feet. Driving there and back we went over a very desolate "hraun" - old lava field where the stones were covered in a grey moss, and very forbidding. Myvatn (Midge Lake) is shallow (3 meters) and lies between lava flows. At the north end there are many grotesque shapes of lava blocks both in the lake and on the land around. One area called Dimmuborgir is set aside as a national park and has very curious rocks in it. In another area the lava flowed down from a nearby volcano and stopped a few yards away from the little church - 1724 AD. It takes about two hundred years for much vegetation to grow on the lava, and here the cracks and fissures had plants and small shrubs of bearberry and other heath plants - and the Woolly Willow - and in sheltered places there were struggling birches. There is a thermal area here and several bathing pools are found down in the fissures. Further afield we went to Namaskard where there are hot mud-puddles - dark grey and rather nasty looking, smelly bubbles bursting. Sulphur mountains all around...interesting, but one does not want to stay long. Oh, yes, the midges at the Lake were numerous and bothersome, but didn't bite.

The road from Akureyri to Reykjavik is 280 miles so we made an early start. We made a side trip to an old farmhouse which has been kept as a demonstration of the type of dwelling which served the people for a thousand years. I do not know how long a sod house would have lasted without renewal but they looked solid enough - only dingy. The walls and roof were of sod, and the front and back where there were windows and doors were made of driftwood. There was also a small church built the same way; each grave in the yard had a fence around it and a small tree planted in the centre.

The drive down was beautiful and the scenery varied, sometimes getting glimpses of an ice-capped mountain, then down to the shore of a fjord and around its two lengths, and so to Reykjavik.

The following day we went on the southwest peninsula chiefly for birding which was quite good; purple sandpipers on the shore, and Gannets and Manx Shearwaters wheeling around out at sea. At Grindavik we looked at the fishing fleet and while in the harbour saw three Iceland Gulls, a bit of a surprise as they are regarded as winter visitors.

Back in Rk. we had a better look at the town (population 90 thousand, Iceland pop. 213,00). We were amazed at the number of bookshops, and how much was printed in Icelandic and translated into English and German. All shops are small, and the outlets for their handicrafts were so very nice. Very expensive. The hand-knitted sweaters were of the heavy type with patterned yoke - also many other knitted articles, blankets and other handweaving; sheepskins; ceramics made out of the lava clay which were attractive but heavy; the silversmith work was interesting, but hardly wearable. There seemed to be very few grocery shops and we kept wondering where the housewives shop.

The trip to the Westman Islands was cut short by fog, in fact we were lucky to get there at all as the fog didn't clear till noon. It was a half-hour flight, and when we landed on Heimaey were taken by bus over to the town, and the site of the eruption of 18 months ago, which inundated two-thirds of the town with lava and volcanic ash. This has been shovelled away from the houses which are salvagable, and many new places ready and many of the original inhabitants (5,500) have returned to work, and the harbour is working at full capacity again. At least one-third of the town was a total loss, but luckily no lives were lost, as evacuation was quick, and there were enough ships on hand to take people to the mainland. The cone rose about 500 feet, from a fissure at the side of the island, and we drove up on these mounds of ash. If you dig your fingers down in the ash it soon becomes too hot to bear. It is still very hot and smoldering in the centre, and may take a century to cool. We didn't get a chance to go out in a boat to see the lava flow on the shore, as they were anxious to get the plane away before fog rolled in again. A quick look was better than none at all.

The flight back from Iceland to New York was perfect. We had an excellent view over the southwest peninsula and the rocky islet of Eldey - a Gannet colony.

.....Emily Hamilton
(488-0677)

COMING EVENTS:

ROYAL CANADIAN INSTITUTE

Information: 922-2804

Saturday evening lectures, Convocation Hall, University of Toronto, 8:15 p.m.
Dec. 7 - Men, Women and Machines - illustrated with slides. Dr. E. Llewellyn-Thomas, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto. The potential of machines in aiding human welfare with examples from medicine.

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Information: 928-3690

Sunday afternoon films 2:30 p.m.

Sunday evening films 7:30 p.m.

SORRY ... we ran out of space ... your January 1975 Newsletter will include Extracts from Addresses given at the World Wildlife Fund, Second International Congress, London, 17-18 November, 1970. Very interesting and provocative reading.

ALL THE BEST TO YOU ALL FOR THE COMING HOLIDAY SEASON.

Phone: 231-1064

Elmer Talvila, Editor
12 Cranleigh Court
Islington, Ontario.

RAVINE WALKS AND ENVIRONMENT WEEK, OCTOBER 20 - 26, 1974

In order to participate in North York's Environment Week I offered to take as many school classes as possible on a ravine hike. The walks had two purposes, the first of which was to show school children the value of their neighbourhood ravines. The other purpose was to show the Borough that the T.F.N.C. and its Environment group have an active interest in the ravines of North York. My offer was passed on to the schools of North York by the Borough.

Of the 18 schools which contacted me I was able to take 7 classes on hikes. The remaining classes were advised to contact me again to arrange a date for a hike. A total of 225 children and adults were taken on hikes which concentrated on the past, present and future condition of the ravines which were visited. Some of the more specific topics which were discussed included birds, trees, seeds, erosion and glaciation.

Two relationships between people and ravines were encountered. The first was that children are interested in using ravines for more than play areas. Many children appreciate the natural state of a ravine and its value in providing habitats for birds and animals. Some children understand the need of good management to preserve the natural environment of a ravine. The second observation was that teachers are generally unaware of the ravines which are near their schools and how to use them. Teachers tend to feel that they are not qualified to teach natural science in a natural setting. These hikes provided a good opportunity to inform school principals, teachers and parents about the T.F.N.C. and the ravine project.

On Saturday, October 26, public walks were held by myself at Brookbanks Ravine and by Jack Cranmer-Byng at the Ross Lord Reservoir. About 30 people attended each of these walks. People on these walks expressed a desire to learn more about their ravines and the activities of the T.F.N.C.

A Club outing at Brookbanks ravine on Sunday, October 27 was attended by about 30 members. The highlights of this outing included very good observations of Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins and a Raccoon sleeping in the crotch of a tree.

I consider the ravine walks successful because they gave about 315 people an opportunity to take a look at one or more of their ravines. If we are going to attempt to preserve our ravines we should show that they are being used not only by birds and animals but also by people such as ourselves.

..... Bruce Parker

RAVINE INVENTORIES -- WINTER BIRDS

One of the main objectives of the Environment Groups Ravine Survey is to compile inventories of all forms of life in each of the ravines in Toronto. This is a tremendous undertaking since there are over 100 ravines and the forms of life are numerous (birds, plants, mammals, frogs, insects). Each of these forms of life plays a role in the ecology and the food webs of a ravine.

Most of us find that birds are a major attraction of ravines. In order to increase the inventories of Ravine Bird Lists, the accompanying form is suggested. The list includes most of the regular winter birds found in a ravine but space is left to add others which may be present. Space is also available to record more than one visit to a ravine or to record visits to more than one ravine. The report of your visit may be the first record the Ravine Group has for your ravine. Any information which you would like to contribute on birds, plants or any aspect of a ravine would also be appreciated (including notes on birds seen in past years).

RAVINE INVENTORY -- WINTER BIRDS

RAVINE:

DATE _____

NAME _____

or location _____

Mallard

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Red-tailed Hawk

Brown Creeper

Rough-legged Hawk

Winter Wren

Am. Kestrel

Robin

Ring-necked Pheasant

Northern Shrike

Herring Gull

Starling

Ring-billed Gull

House Sparrow

Mourning Dove

Cardinal

Great Horned Owl

Evening Grosbeak

Hairy Woodpecker

Purple Finch

Downy Woodpecker

Pine Siskin

Blue Jay

Am. Goldfinch

Crow

Slate-coloured Junco

Black-capped Chickadee

Tree Sparrow

White-breasted Nuthatch

White-throated Sparrow

Song Sparrow

OBSERVER: _____

return to: Bruce Parker, 100 Graydon Hall Dr., Apt 506, Don Mills, Ont. M3A 3A7