



# TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Number 292

May, 1975.

## MAY MEETING

Monday, May 5, 1975, at 8:15 p.m.

at

252 Bloor Street West

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - Election of Officers. Presentation of reports.

Important business. See President's Message inside this Newsletter.

Following the business portion of this meeting, we are pleased to announce:

**SPEAKER:** William A. Rapley, D.V.M., Metropolitan Toronto Zoo

**SUBJECT:** "The Birds of California".

Dr. Rapley's illustrated talk will cover some of California's birds and their nests. He will show sightings in the Salton Sea area of the Blue-footed Booby, Brown Booby, the Magnificent Frigatebird; also first nest of the Black Skimmer ever discovered in California. Slides of mammals and flowers will also be included.

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## FIFTH ANNUAL JIM BAILLIE BIRD WALK - Sunday, May 25, 1975

Take a walk with us to see the spring bird life in your city! Members of the Toronto Ornithological Club are ready to help you find and identify the birds at the four best locations that can be reached with or without a car. The date is Sunday, May 25; all walks begin at 8:30 a.m., except the Island which is 9:00 a.m.

Here are the locations and meeting places. Walks last about three hours. The pace is slow (about a mile an hour).

1. TORONTO ISLAND - Meet at the Ferry Docks at the foot of Bay Street to take the first available ferry at 9:00 a.m. The Island, site of the Toronto Nature School, is the resting place of migrating birds crossing the lake from the South. Many exciting bird finds have been made there.
2. HIGH PARK - Meet at the parking lot on Lakeshore Blvd., opposite the Seaway Hotel at 8:30 a.m. We will take a limited number of cars from there to the top end of Grenadier Pond. High Park, Toronto's largest and most easily accessible park, is a rewarding place to look for birds.
3. THE BELT LINE RAVINE - Meet at the northeast corner of Moore Park, at Moore Avenue and Welland Avenue at 8:30 a.m. This eastern part of the former Belt Line Railway has grown back to a treed and shrubby haven for migrating birds. Sixteen species of birds have been found to breed there in a recent survey. Other natural and scenic features are the magnificent heights of Chorley Park, and the revealing excavation of the Toronto Brick Works Quarry. Toronto's geological past is laid bare in this vast digging.
4. WILKET CREEK PARK - Meet at the parking lot at 8:30 a.m., off Leslie Street opposite the Inn on the Park. This park chain includes Serena Gundy, Edwards Gardens and Ernest Thompson Seton Parks. They include a tributary of the Don River and offer varied cover for many birds.

This unique day of bird walks is the fifth annual outing dedicated to the late James L. Baillie, dean of Toronto Field birders and inspiration to at least two generations of enthusiasts. Jim showed the way for the city dweller to find joy in the vibrant bird-life at our doorstep. Come along and meet us, park that polluting gas monster, stretch your legs and enjoy the city's green areas. You'll feel like a new person!

JUNIOR CLUB  
Saturday  
May 3  
10:00 a.m.

The Toronto Junior Field Naturalists' Club will hold its May meeting in the Royal Ontario Museum. This will be a general meeting. Awards will be made for the photo contest. "Flight" copies will be given out. Elections will be held for President and Vice-president, also Treasurer. Come prepared for field trips.  
REMINDER: Don't forget the bus trip to the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve on Saturday, May 31, 1975.

Director, Lyn Scanlan - 488-8321 (after 5:30 p.m.)

ENVIRONMENTAL  
COMMITTEE  
Tuesday  
May 13  
8:00 p.m.

Meet at St. James Bond United Church on Avenue Road, north of Eglinton Avenue. This will be the last meeting before the summer. All members of the Club are cordially invited to attend and to raise questions regarding current environmental issues and to hear reports on work in progress. Chairman, Henry Fletcher (421-1549) WATCH FOR the CBC-TV 15-minute film about ravines, on location in a ravine in May, with Stewart Hilts and Jack Cranmer-Byng. The program is "A Way out" .. either Sunday, June 8 or 15 at 12:45 p.m.

BIRD GROUP

There will be no meeting this month. We will all join in the Jim Baillie walks on Sunday, May 25th. (as listed on the first page of this Newsletter). MAKE A NOTE OF THE DATE and come along!  
Chairman, Red Mason (621-3905)

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OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS:

Toronto naturalist Eric Nasmith is having an exhibit of his prints and water-colours, including bird-inspired subjects, from June 1st to July 4th, at the ONTARIO ARCHITECTS ASSOCIATION building, 50 Park Road, Toronto. The hours are: 9 to 12 noon, and 2 to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays only. There will be two gala evening viewings on June 4th and June 18th from 5:00 p.m. till closing.

PROJECT BAY - a canoeing adventure to James Bay. Trip features include transportation from Toronto to the Timagami region and return transportation from Moosonee via the Polar Bear Express. DATES: June 30th to August 22nd, 1975. Information and brochure outlining this exciting adventure may be had from: Project Bay, 11 Frontenac Ave., Toronto, Ont. M5N 1Z4, or phone: Wayne Krangle at 783-3097 or Jack Newton at 633-2053. Reservations must be made no later than May 8th.

ROCKS AND MINERALS: Information 1975. This interesting booklet is a most convenient source reference for anyone interested in the minerals, rocks and geology of Ontario. It lists and describes all the publications, such as books, brochures and maps currently available on these subjects from Government agencies and mining companies and organizations. As well there are up-to-date lists of Ontario mineral and lapidary dealers, clubs and periodicals. THREE COPIES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE LITERATURE DESK AT OUR MAY MEETING. It may also be ordered free of charge from the : Geoscience Information Office, Ministry of Natural Resources, Whitney Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ont. M7A 1X3.

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Special note of thanks to John Bradshaw for his wonderful help in publicizing the Club's meetings and outings, especially during the period when difficulty was experienced in getting the Newsletter to our members.

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Well that's it for this season. No more Newsletters until next October. Thanks to all those who have contributed material this past season; I still have some articles left over to start off with.

Have a happy summer and come back next fall with some more stories.

Phone: 231-1064

Elmer Talvila, Editor,  
12 Cranleigh Court, Islington, Ont.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The May monthly meeting of the Club includes the Annual General Meeting. From experience in many organizations, I know that people tend to avoid Annual General Meetings. Let's be honest; they are not very exciting. However, they are necessary. I wish to assure you that, barring unforeseen developments, the business portion of the May meeting should be short, leaving the bulk of the evening for a program of our usual type and calibre. Please make a special effort to attend this meeting. This is your Club and you should be at the Annual General Meeting to participate in the election of the incoming officers and to vote on other matters affecting the operation of your Club.

This is the last Newsletter of the season. Thus I would be remiss if I did not take the opportunity to thank, on your behalf, our Club officers, editors, secretaries, treasurer, secretarial assistants, committee and group chairmen, and the many other people who assist the foregoing in keeping this large Club operating smoothly and efficiently. After a year as President, I am still overwhelmed by the fact that so many people work on our behalf, largely without recognition, just because they want to help the Club. Often during the year I have worried over what I thought was a Club problem, only to discover, when I phoned someone for advice, that no problem existed. The matter had already been taken care of by someone like our efficient secretary, Hattie Beeton, or our knowledgeable treasurer, Helen Yemen. We are all so used to the many services of our Club that we tend, at times to take things for granted. But Newsletters don't grow on trees; our editor, Elmer Talvila puts many hours into their production each month. Nature trails and fences don't grow at nature reserves; our reserve manager, John ten Bruggenkate and his committee spend several weekends per year constructing such things. The planning of our outings involves countless hours of work each year by Harry Kerr and his committee. Many evenings are used by Mac Smith and his committee to plan and promote our Audubon Wildlife Films. Trevor Hamilton, who resigns this season after several years as program committee chairman, has donated several hours per month of his time to ensure that we have monthly programs of high calibre.

I detect a new vitality surging through our Club. More people are getting involved in more and more activities. Our Bird Group, under Red Mason, is more active than I have seen it since I joined the Club. Our Botany Group, under Wes Hancock, has experienced a remarkable increase in attendance. The Environmental Committee, under Henry Fletcher, has been involved in a host of worthwhile activities. Of particular note is the success of the Ravines Sub-group of the Environmental Committee. The work of this sub-group, lead by Stewart Hilts and Jack Crammer-Byng, has received recognition from various industrial organizations and the Parks Department. Club members and Club activities have been featured on television, on the radio, and in the press, thanks to the active involvement of our Public Relations Committee, chaired by Harold Taylor. The "Ontario Field Biologist" is now appearing as two issues per year, thanks to the editorial work of Barbara Wilkins. Lyn Scanlan and her assistants have put new life into our Junior Club.

I have surveyed only some of our activities. To cover all of them would take more space than I have available. However, I listed these just to let all of you know how active the Club is. If you feel "left out", plan to get involved next fall. All of the groups and committees are continually looking for new members. Join one in the fall and help contribute to the growth and vitality of our Club.

..... Bill Andrews

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE BUSY

Club members may be interested to learn what the Public Relations Committee has been up to this past season. Its efforts are in two directions: one, to publicize Club events and activities; the other, to arrange for greater contact between the concerns of the Club and the public.

In the first category we had the assistance of the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, radio stations CFRB, CBL, and CJRT-FM plus CFTO-TV and York Community Cable-TV in publicizing

- .. our monthly OISE meetings
- .. the Junior Club monthly meetings at the ROM
- .. special meetings of our Botany and Environmental Groups

The Star carried a report on the Club's survey of Brookbanks Ravine. A special "Thank you" is extended to John Bradshaw who has been a consistent booster of the Club on his CFRB Saturday morning program.

In the category of arranging greater contact with the public the Committee's work included the following:

- .. CBC-TV "A Way out" (CBLT Sundays, 12:45 p.m.) screened the October outing of our Junior Club at Duffin's Creek
- .. our President, Bill Andrews, was interviewed on "Metro Morning" (CBL Radio) about the Club's opposition to hunting in Point Pelee National Park
- .. CFRB has been carrying a series of nature 30 second "spots"
- .. Junior Club leaders visited York Woods and Cedarbrae suburban public libraries in April to bring special programs to youngsters who do not get to the ROM meetings
- .. "A Way Out" expects to show, in the latter part of May, several Club members explaining the importance to Toronto of preserving its ravines. Watch for it - CBLT Sundays, 12:45 p.m.

I wish to thank Committee members Pat Jones, Margaret Thomas, and Hattie Beeton for faithfully keeping the media supplied with details of our meetings and other activities; also Mark Sawyer for photographic coverages.

Harold Taylor  
Chairman  
Public Relations Committee

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NOTICE IS GIVEN that the Secretary has received a further nomination for the position of Director to retire in 1978.

The following is the slate of nominees for the year 1975-76:

Henry Fletcher  
N.H.M. (Mac) Smith  
Sheila McKay  
Reta McWhinnie

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MICHIGAN FOR KIRTLAND'S WARBLERS

by Jo Ann Murray

Birders, if you don't yet have a Kirtland's warbler on your Life List, you can get it easily on a weekend.

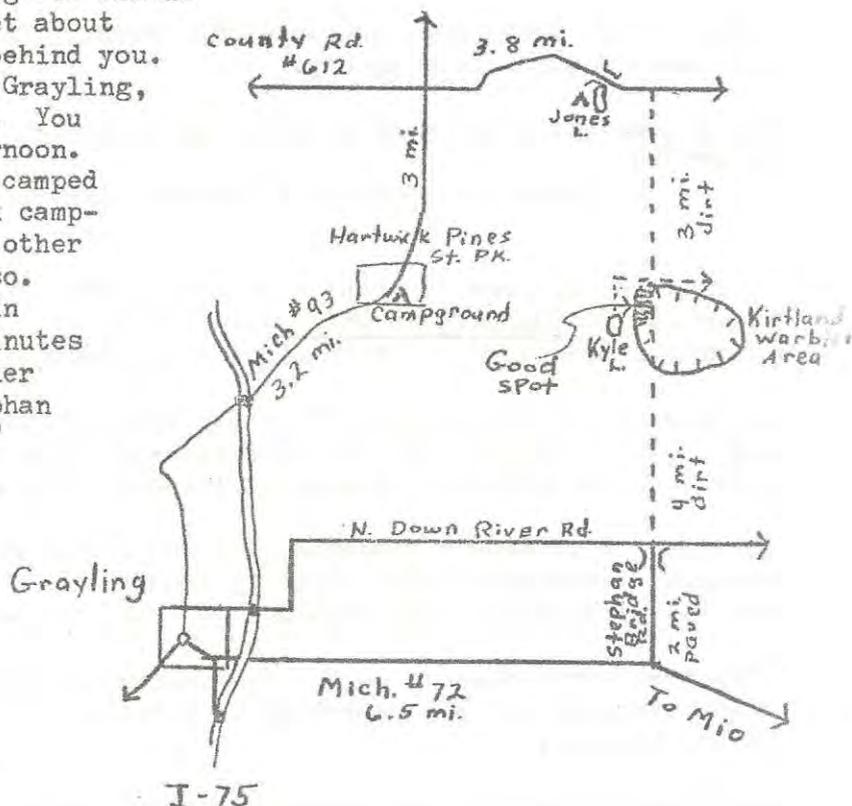
They nest from mid-May to mid-July only in Crawford and Oscoda Counties in the upper central part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. They winter in the Bahamas. You might be lucky enough to see one in the Toronto area during migration, but it may take 20 years to do it! It's easier to go to them.

Leave Toronto on a Friday evening for Sarnia and Port Huron, Michigan, and get about three hours or more of driving behind you. Next morning, head north toward Grayling, Mich., on Interstate Highway 75. You should arrive there by mid-afternoon. When I made the trip in June, I camped in the Hartwick Pines State Park campground (see map), but there are other good campgrounds in the area also. Motel facilities are available in Grayling. It took only a few minutes to drive to the Kirtland's warbler area via County Road 612 to Stephan Bridge Road and the "Good Spot."

When I arrived and played the Warbler's tape recorded song, three birds could be heard from the road, answering loudly. One of the birds was easily tracked down as it was singing from a branch of a large dead tree which loomed above the 5-18' jack pines favoured by the species. It was readily observed through binoculars, but would not allow close approach and dropped down into the pines, only to re-appear in the dead tree after

I moved away. This observation was made at about 4:30 p.m., on June 29th.

Three birds were heard there again next morning without the aid of a tape. The rest of Sunday was spent returning to Toronto.



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Your Editor has just received a copy of Mono Cliffs Provincial Park Master Plan from Leo Smith, who submitted information on bluebirds to the consultants involved in the planning. It appears that a real effort has been made to preserve the significant natural features and scenic qualities of the area. Our Club held a hike there last June 8th; it's a beautiful rugged area well worth a visit. The Park report can be obtained from the Ontario Information Bookshop, 880 Bay Street, Toronto. (\$2.00).

## CANOEING ANYONE?

A program of CANOEING ACTIVITIES is being offered over the spring and summer by Algonquin Waterways Wilderness Trips. A couple of the Algonquin Waterways staff are T.F.N. members and in former years several T.F.N. members have travelled on their trips.

This year's schedule includes single day canoeing classes just outside Toronto, weekend canoe trips for beginners in Algonquin and Killarney Parks, and many longer trips. The most exciting is a two-week whitewater adventure on the Missinaibi River north of Lake Superior - a historic fur trade route. The Algonquin Waterways staff has been working with the Sierra Club to get the river designated as a Wild River Park. The group will gather for three days of pre-trip training in running rapids.

Food, staff, equipment, and pre-trip training is provided for all the trips. All you need is your sleeping bag.

For a complete program of classes and trips in 1975 call Mavis Kerr at 469-1727, or write:

Algonquin Waterways Wilderness Trips, 271 Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N2.

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To help you prepare for your trip, you might like to read a new book just off the press called Canoeing in Ontario. It will give you tips on choosing equipment and describes over 150 places to canoe from Algonquin Park south.

Authors Ian Scott and Mavis Kerr say that Ontario boasts the best places for canoeing in North America and the choices range from places for afternoon outings and easy weekend jaunts to extended wilderness trips.

The idea of writing a handbook came about because Scott and Kerr, leaders with the Algonquin Waterways canoe tripping group, found that so many newcomers to the sport are "ill-informed, under-prepared and have the wrong equipment."

This book gives answers to the most-asked questions about equipment, skills, and canoe camping. It also provides such extras as trip planning checklists that can be photocopied.

Canoeing in Ontario, has 82 pages, over 60 maps and illustrations and is available in most Ontario bookstores and sports stores, or it can be ordered from the publishers, Greey de Pencier Books, 59 Front Street, East, Toronto, Ontario, phone: (416) 364-3333.

It can also be ordered from Algonquin Waterways Wilderness Trips, by sending \$2.50 plus 25¢ handling charge, 271 Danforth Avenue, Toronto, M4K 1N2.

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## BLUEBIRD BOXES

Complete directions for cutting, building and mounting your own bluebird box may be obtained from Leo Smith, 133 Madison Ave., Toronto, M5R 2S3. Phone: 925-1854, or from the Editor: 231-1064.

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Tour a Metro Park area with Parks Department Commissioner Thompson. Next tour is Highland Creek Park on Morningside Avenue on Sunday, May 4th at 10:00 a.m. More information : 367-8176.

## CHASING BIRDS IN WINTER (concluded)

by Gerry Bennett

My pursuit of wintering birds in Southern Ontario which started back on December 1st had produced 128 species by February 16th.

On the 22nd I made my third trip to Bill Honsberger's near St. Catharines to find a tufted titmouse which comes to the feeder. This time I was successful.

On the 28th, the last day of my winter period, I was in the London area. Near Komoka, where a pair of bald eagles have resided for years, I added this species. Near Melbourne I found a Bobwhite. In the afternoon I returned home via Long Point and there I found five Killdeer and they were my 132nd and final species of the long season.

Now, just in case anyone has got the impression that finding birds is easy, let me tell you a little story. In fact, let me tell you several little stories.

As far as the rarities and straggling species are concerned, there are far more failures than successes. Several years ago I kept statistics as to how many reported rarities were actually found when I went to see them. Success occurred only 19% of the time -- roughly once in five tries.

This winter my failures included merlin, mockingbird, barn owl, northern three-toed woodpecker, turkey, ruby-crowned kinglet and fox sparrow, to name only a few. These are species for which I made special trips to places where they'd been recently.

The mockingbird won first prize for the "bird that didn't show up" award. I made eleven different tries on Plymbridge Road in Willowdale at a place where several observers kept seeing one -- never found it. Then in late February I learned of one at a feeder just three blocks from my office but I could never turn it up. Dave Fidler and I visited a section of Aurora where the Beamans have had a mocker in their yard for over a year. It must have died the night before. Jack Cranmer-Byng found one in the Bridle Path area but it wouldn't show for me. I also struck out twice in Niagara-on-the-Lake and once in Welland where a mockingbird "sits right on the wire behind the house." In total, twenty-nine separate visits to different places on supposedly hot trails produced zero mockers.

Two afternoons in Oro Township, north of Barrie, where others had found northern three-toed woodpeckers didn't prove successful. Two trips to Ivy Lea, east of Kingston, for turkeys were both in vain. After driving to Bradley's Marsh (a 400-mile round trip) I was unable to get permission to look for the barn owls which live there year around. A ruby-crowned kinglet in Oakville wintering with chickadees ("just whistle and it will come right out") mustn't have heard my whistle. Harry Kerr found a fox sparrow near Pickering in with some other wintering sparrows, but the day I looked for it they were all in South Carolina.

There were also birds which, although not the prime reason for a trip, could logically be expected in the area. For example, on a week-end in Algonquin Park, I missed spruce grouse (I always do miss that one) and barred owl both of which were known to be right there. Ron Pittaway, one of the Park naturalists, had a barred owl answer a wolf howl a few nights before so he came with us on the evening of February 1st and howled and howled. We felt like it because nothing answered at all -- not even a wolf. The next day we went to Arrowhead Provincial Park north of Huntsville, where there are barred owls, and hooted our heads off but the owls evidently just didn't give a hoot.

Other failures included a golden eagle which was at Point Pelee in late November but cleared out when it heard we were coming; two dunlin at Niagara Falls that were never there when we were; and a merlin in King Township which used its magic to disappear at our approach.

And some of the birds I did find held out as long as they could. I made eight fruitless trips to Oakville for killdeer only to finally add them at Long Point on the last day. It took two trips to London to get bald eagle and bobwhite; several searches in different places for a hermit thrush -- and so on.

So what does it all mean? Nothing. It's just fun, that's all. Statistics and outdoor enjoyment. Whether the birds show up or not, the world revolves at the same speed.

Speaking of statistics -- in addition to my 132 species mentioned in this and preceding instalments, we know of at least another 24 which were identified in Southern Ontario this winter. These were: surf scoter, goshawk, golden eagle, merlin, spruce grouse, turkey, common gallinule, dunlin, black-headed gull, barn owl, barred owl, great gray owl, yellow-bellied sapsucker, northern three-toed woodpecker, eastern phoebe, rough-winged swallow, mockingbird, eastern bluebird, ruby-crowned kinglet, pine warbler, western meadowlark, rose-breasted grosbeak, vesper sparrow and fox sparrow. This aggregate total of 156 species indicates that one individual observer could conceivably reach the 150 mark assuming lots of time, money, energy, patience and, probably most important of all, luck.

Now that it's all over, I can hardly wait to do it again next winter.

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ED O'CONNOR WRITES, IN PART:

Dear Elmer:

By now you may have heard the Dorset 'Winter Reunion for Trippers' was a great success. Some 71 people took part in the weekend and, unfortunately, over 20 had to be turned away because of the accommodation. Those present were members of T.F.N., F.O.N., C.N.F., Bruce Trail, Sierra Club, Toronto Hiking Club, families and friends - so it was a real mixed group. Ages ran from 3 months and up. Many of the people had never snowshoed before - and they really were enthusiastic. Three feet of fresh snow, sparkling under bright sunlight, helps.

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The weekend went by too fast for us all and a few hung on Sunday for a last snowshoe hike or a few more rides on the innertube. Now the weekend is over I'm still getting calls and letters from people to say how much they enjoyed things, and it's good to hear. One chap asked if there will be a repeat next year, and if it was too soon to book his family on it. A year is a long time but, hopefully, we'll run 2 of these next year so that we won't have to turn any away.

One thing mentioned on the weekend was that Norm Cramp, of Georgetown, and I are forming a partnership in a small tripping organization, known as Environmental Experiences Club. Our idea is to introduce people to nature, through outings, with the hope they will become naturalists. An Ojibway weekend, in September, drew a good deal of interest from the group. This will be a weekend of camping at the Indian reservation, Parry Island (Parry Sound area). We'll have Ojibway guides to tell and show us the old traditions and ways of the tribe, and to give us a taste of Indian bread and corn soup. There'll be a chicken barbecue, and activities will include nature walks through rugged wilderness.

On the third week in July we'll have a week-long canoe trip in North Tea Lake, Algonquin Park and, in September, a week-long canoe trip on the Wolf/Pickerel Rivers (French River area). We also plan a fall weekend at Dorset - or the Bruce Peninsula. Anyone interested in these activities, or in being placed on a mailing list, can call me (699-9211).

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### BIRDING IN TOBAGO

by Bas and Rita Wigglesworth

When we came across the new Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago in the F.O.N. bookshop, we thought we would take advantage of an early winter school break to see what birds we could add to our list. Many of the inexpensive tours include Tobago in their itinerary. By purchasing this guide by Richard French, the following information may help you to acquire fifty life birds in a very short stay on Tobago alone.

When we first arrived at our hotel on Tobago, near Grafton, we were told about a sanctuary located at Black Rock, only a short walk from the hotel, where they fed the birds each day at 4:00 p.m. Not having a great deal of time at our disposal we decided to walk there the next morning, keeping track of every bird we saw along the way.

We left our room by the sliding glass doors facing the Caribbean. The first bird to catch our eyes was the Bananaquit, his incessant chatter telling us that he was in the flower of the banana tree growing just outside. Ruddy Doves and Sooty Grassquits were on the lawn along with a pair of doves which did not quite match the Eared Dove as pictured. Looking up Man-o-war Birds were overseeing a great commotion on the water. Brown Pelicans, fishing, were being harassed by a flock of Laughing Gulls, Sooty and Large-billed Terns and at least two Brown Boobies. Half a dozen Snowy Plovers picked at the wave ends as they returned to the sea.

As we turned to the road our first sighting was a number of Shiny Cowbirds. The dominant male of the group puffs himself up to about twice his size when calling and puts so much energy into his song that his whole body shakes with the effort. We were not very far along before seeing Black-faced Grassquits, a Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, and a number of Brown-crested Flycatchers, which, along with Gray Kingbirds, seemed to have first choice of position on the overhead wires.

A bend in the road, made necessary by an s-shaped brook headed for the nearby sea, yielded the following birds in the trees bordering upon it: Barred Antshrike, Red-rumped and Red-crowned Woodpeckers, Blue-gray Tanager, Band-tailed Pigeon, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Tropical Mockingbird, another Dove which we could not identify, Cattle Egret, Greater Yellow-legs, Striated Heron, and a white heron which we could not identify, with pinkish bill and light green legs, probably an immature.

Reluctantly we moved back to the road and on to the bird sanctuary without a name. Around the last bend an unholy uproar could be heard off to the left. In the trees and low bushes Crested Oropendolas, (Yellowtails, they call them), and Common Anis were having a set-to. When you first hear one of these Oropendolas tuning up or whatever he is doing you cannot believe your senses, the squeaks, gurgles, mechanical sounds, etc., are out of this world. The Anis appear to be our purple Grackles until you notice their heavy bills which shine white in the sun.

We finally arrived at the road leading through the brush to the sanctuary which was the home of Mr. Smith and his sister, Mrs. Alefounder. More gracious and helpful people cannot be found. Among their guests at this time was Dr. England a noted naturalist, fresh from a lecture on the Buccoo Reef at the Town Hall in Port of Spain. This reef is just a few miles from the sanctuary. Mr. Smith not only extended his hospitality but assisted us immeasurably in pointing out trails to take, and which birds to expect. This information included positions of nests and the reproduction of calls of certain birds, in order that we might locate them more readily. A word of warning: Insect repellent is a must in the bush.

On the higher trails were the larger birds, Common Potoo, White-tailed Nightjar, and Jacamar. The lower trails promised Little Hermit, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, and Blue-backed Manakin.

We did add the following to our list while on these trails: Jacamar, White-fringed Antwren, Rufous-breasted Wren, Blue Black Grassquit, Rufous Vented Chachalaca, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, White-lined Tanager, Blue-tailed Emerald, Copper-rumped and Ruby -Topaz Hummingbirds, Tufted Coquettes, Blue-crowned Mot Mot, Gray-throated Leafscaper, Yellow-breasted and Dusky-capped Flycatchers, White-flanked Antwren. The two birds underlined were not supposed to be here but there was no doubt in our minds as to the sightings. We saw a number of each.

A ploy used to attract the birds was the repetition of the call of the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl. This was used to great advantage by our guide on Trinidad.

Blue-backed Manakins could be heard throughout the lower trails. Mr. Smith would have been happy to have us witness the mating display of this Manakin but unfortunately time was against us as it normally takes place first thing in the morning. This mating display involves two male birds which utter their "chup" calls in unison while jumping up and down alternately on a common display branch. Should a female approach, the males appear to jump over one another, the lower moving under and the jumper flying backwards.

Upon returning to the house we found about a dozen Blue-crowned Mot Mots being fed by hand. Other birds accepting the hand outs were: Red-crowned Woodpeckers, Bananaquits, Bare-eyed Thrushes, and Chachalacas. We were also treated to the appearance of two Iguanas from among a family of six which occupied one of the giant trees on the west side of the house.

We are now consolidating notes made on the Trinidad portion of our trip, which together with Tobago, allowed us to add one hundred life birds to our list.

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FROM .. THE MYCELIUM, Newsletter of the Mycological Society of Toronto.

Seminar on Monday, May 12th, 8:00 p.m., Room 7, Botany Building of the University of Toronto.

SUBJECT: Identification of spring and early summer mushrooms, illustrated with slides.

SPEAKER: Scott Redhead, graduate student at U. of T.

Friends are always welcome at meetings. Anyone wishing to join the Society may do so at the meeting or by mailing a yearly subscription of \$2.00 to the Treasurer, Connie Morgan, 36 Walmsley Blvd., Toronto, Ont. M4V 1X6.

Further information: Vivian Newman, 233-2025.

The following is reproduced from ASKI, Vol.2, No.1 - January, 1973, a publication of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Parliament Buildings, Toronto. The author, Barbara Froom, works for the Information Branch. She is well known to all local 'herp' lovers as editor for the last 15 years of the Newsletter of the Canadian Amphibians and Reptiles Society. Her excellent book: "Snakes of Canada", McClelland and Stewart (7.50) is available at most newstands and certainly from the R.O.M., Classic Books and Eatons.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

by Barbara Froom

Have you ever wondered what goes on while a book is being published and promoted? Well, I was in for quite a few surprises when the renowned (and individualistic) publisher, Jack McClelland, accepted my manuscript of THE SNAKES OF CANADA.

I got as far as checking the galley proofs before I learned that this wasn't the only book the publishers expected of me -- I had to write a complete autobiography! And because Farley Mowat can recall being conceived in a canoe on a river in eastern Ontario, all McClelland and Stewart writers are obliged to remember as far back as the day they were born. There was also a lengthy questionnaire to be filled out -- truthfully, even by fiction writers.

The snake book finally materialized, but I couldn't figure out why the media acted so cold and snappish. They had all been so enthusiastic about the various brochures I had written for the government.

When I spoke to a normally pleasant columnist, she replied sharply: "Some people just shouldn't be at large, and your publisher's one of them." I immediately called McClelland's promotion department to report that the media were saying some very nasty things.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Jennie, the publicity assistant. "We're facing all kinds of charges. In fact, there's a Humane Society inspector in our warehouse right now, and yesterday the postal authorities were out here, going through everything that we're sending out. And there's this television producer who swore he saw a snake crawl across the studio floor when he opened ..."

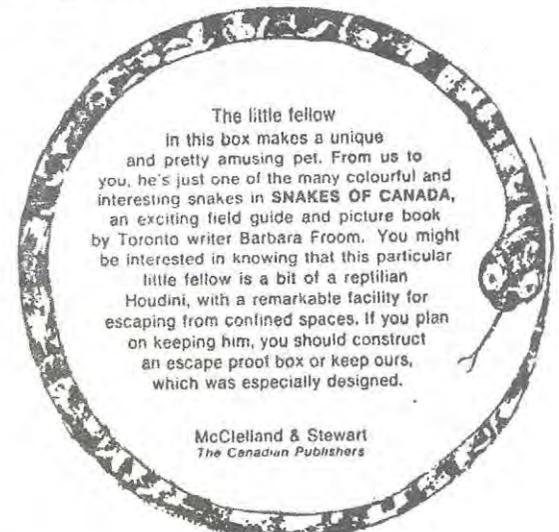
"But, surely, my book wouldn't ..." I interrupted in bewilderment. "None of the books have been sent out yet," sighed Jennie. "It's all because of our snake box." "Good heavens, Jennie," I gasped, "What are you talking about?"

"Well, it was just a little promotional gimmick that we sent to the media all across Canada. There really wasn't a snake in the box -- just straw -- but I wouldn't even repeat what some of them called us."

"But I thought publishers just sent out flyers," I said in amazement.

"Not us. We're -- uh, a little different. We have managed to get you on a national TV show next week -- by some miracle, they didn't get their box -- but the host has a terrible phobia about snakes. So - uh, good luck."

I arrived at the Toronto hotel where the lunch hour show is done live, and I ran into the distinguished host of the show who came in at the same time.



The 6" x 6" cover of the fake snake box.

He eyed my big straw bag and declared loudly: "There's no way I'm going to do this interview -- I absolutely refuse." He carried on to such an extent that his producer, all his assistants, the hotel manager and two yogis (who were also guests on the show) were soon clustered around us in the hotel lobby.

One of the script-writers waved my life history (which I thought was kept oh, so confidentially by my publisher) and suggested an interview on some other topic from my past. The yogis tried to calm the host, telling him to take deep breaths. "It's all in your head," one said.

"It is not -- it's in her bag," he roared.

"But it's not what you think," pleaded a researcher. "Oh, sure, sure, it's just a cute, slimy little thing that sticks its tongue out." And turning to his producer, he asked him to call the announcer who fills in for him during vacations. Unfortunately, the announcer was busy, taping commercials.

Just then, a world famous actor (who was also to be on the show) arrived, but after a few seconds one of the assistants tried desperately to lead him away. "Oh, no, I want to stay and see the last act," he said. "This is superb acting -- a magnificent cast!"

One of the yogis suggested we all sit down on the floor and meditate quietly for a moment, and a solution would come to us.

An immediate solution came to me. My versatile publisher, Jack McClelland, has his own interview show, so he could take over.

"But there's only ten minutes left," moaned the producer. "Get him a police escort -- this is an emergency," said the frantic host. It turned out that Jack was on the west coast, but his secretary asked to speak to me.

"Be considerate," she implored. "You know why a fine, gentlemanly type like the host doesn't want to do this interview -- he just doesn't want to have to mention your snakes' names. So don't use Fuddle and Duddle -- just use your little water snake, Bambino, and everything will be alright."

"But Marge," I wailed. "I haven't got Fuddle or Duddle or Bambino. I knew he was scared to death of snakes, so I didn't bring them."

"What in Heaven's name have you got in that bag, then?" asked the host, his eyes widening in astonishment as he wiped his brow.

"Only my wig and little gold sandals -- so I can try to look glamorous for your show."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DATES TO REMEMBER

- May 22 - 25 - Point Pelee, American Birding Association. Contact: Red Mason, 265 Markland Drive, # 205, Etobicoke Ont. M9C 1R5 (621-3905) for full details.
- May 26-- 30 - Symposium on Wildlife in Urban Canada, University of Guelph. Details from Office of Continuing Education, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ont.
- June 6,7,8 - Trent University, Peterborough Ont. Annual Meeting, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 1262 Don Mills Rd., Don Mills, Ont. M3B 2W8 (444-8419)
- June 13,14,15,16 - University of Victoria, Victoria,B.C. Annual Meeting of the Canadian Nature Federation, 46 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Ont. K1P 5K6.



ON CANADA'S FIRST CITY NATURE TRAIL

Mr. L. T. Owens, (right) on the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club Nature Trail in Sunnybrook Park, 1930. He conducted groups large or small along the trail during the summer after the trail was first opened June 7, 1930. (Photo contributed by Colin Farmer, T.F.N.C. President 1931-1933).

BLUEBIRD PROJECT REPORT FOR MAY, 1975

I have 470 bluebird nesting boxes in position as of this date, April 3, 1975.

During the fall and winter the boxes in need of repair were cut down and brought home and washed out with hot water. After a few weeks, when the wood had dried out these houses were strengthened and given screws in place of rusted nails and re-worked generally and then re-painted. Perhaps eight to ten weeks later they were taken out to their original fields.

Mono Township is my best township in every way and I think I could show you 100 breeding pairs in one day by the first week in May.

Only one act of vandalism occurred in this area (to the best of my knowledge) and this happened in Mike Wiles field where somebody put four bullet holes through box TEN.

Where children interfere with my trail, we try to bring them to our side by giving them boxes with their names on. The bargain is struck that they are to leave my boxes alone and report to the ROM on the results of their own units. I am trying to be tactful at this stage. Should damage or cruelty continue we may have to go to the police or to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Several times, this year I have been to the ROM to check the nest record cards. Bluebirds have been reported at Jordan Station on the Niagara Peninsula and as far north as Kenora.

Dr. George K. Peck and I have had long talks about bluebirds and whether they nested here before the Indians came with their pastoral economy. He holds the view that they nested in the blackened stumps after the fires of natural cause had cleared open areas in the forest. Dr. Peck wants cards from every box in my system. If we can get some reliable people we might send in one thousand reports of nestings for the summer of 1975. The ROM wants all species using my boxes reported so that the Year Book, published in May of 1976, can be more complete than ever.

I still want some reliable deputies with their own cars or, perhaps, young naturalists where parents can drive the children or teenagers. The best area is the north slope of the Hockley Valley, reached from Airport Road and Sideroads 20, 25 and 30, going west to Highway Ten.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lawrence Zeleny of Maryland has sent me plans for making nesting boxes out of plastic milk jugs. The indications are that this new departure is 100% effective against English Sparrows. All the usual native species will accept the box but the killer, the imported Weaver Finch of Europe, will not.

I am making such a device now, but it is not enclosed with plywood, at this stage. Where sparrows take over, as is the case at the Jim Baillie Reserve (the farms to the north) I shall try to replace the cedar boxes with Beckers 3-quart milk jug houses.

Dare I ask all members of the T.F.N. to try this experiment? The boxes must have drainage and ventilation and they must have thick wood over the roof to break the force of rain and the resulting noise.

Could this be a major breakthrough in reversing the bad luck of the bluebird, since the sparrows got here in 1912?

\* \* \* \* \*

I have one Wood Duck box in position in the Glen Haffey extension. Fresh wood shavings were placed inside in late March. Jack Runnalls of Mono Township has another box of mine, built at Maple two years ago. Two more Wood Duck boxes are in the basement and they should be erected on a quiet pond by mid-April.

Large nesting boxes for kestrels and owls and great-crested flycatchers were also made and are being set out. The ROM said to put them on adjacent fence posts because of the territorial instinct of the male starling. He will defend the locality against others of his own kind but not against red-headed woodpeckers, etc.

\* \* \* \* \*

Many experimental boxes were made, in an effort to block out the sparrow from my bluebird houses. In one series the hole gets smaller and smaller. In another, the wood gets thicker and thicker, making the entrance hole a veritable tunnel. The cavities slope up on some and on others they slope down at 45 degrees. We hope to report on these in the October Newsletter.

Remember my request for assistance. We might turn the Smith Bluebird Trail into an official T.F.N. bluebird project.

Leo Smith (925-1854)

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The following is reproduced from THE BULLETIN of The Conservation Council of Ontario (January, 1975).

#### STUDIES IN URBAN NATURE

by A. I. Dagg, University of Waterloo  
C. A. Campbell, OIKOS Associates

Odd as it may seem, most biologists live in cities, but know little about the ecology of where they live. If they undertake a research project they usually plan to do the work in the tundra or in the tropics or, if money is scarce, in the nearest field station or government park. They like to travel and they like to work where few people will disturb them or their quarry. This predilection has resulted in the absurd situation where about 60 scientific papers have been published on the distant caribou in Canada while the familiar gray squirrel has been described in only one or two (7).

Recently a few biologists have been turning their attention to wildlife in the cities. Alan Beck (2) watched stray dogs in Baltimore. By noting such things as that the dogs did each day, where they went and with what other dogs they consorted, he was able to compile enough material for a book, a work dealing not only with the behaviour of the dogs, but with their effect on other wildlife species in Baltimore.

Another book, NATURE IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE (9), has been compiled from scattered urban ecological studies by Don Gill and Penelope Bonnett of the University of Alberta. In all this useful compendium discusses the observations and research contained in almost 450 scientific articles.

Finally the first symposium on wildlife species in cities, to which the authors both contributed papers, was held by the University of Massachusetts in November, 1973. Over 200 people came to hear 30 papers presented on such topics as birds and architecture, use of cemeteries by wildlife, disease and parasites in urban wildlife, wildlife and aircraft, robins in West Newton, park mallards, coyotes and people, squirrels in Maryland, and birds in Washington (15).

Urban ecology is an important field not only in itself but because it educates people about animals and plants living outside their windows. If they have interest in and sympathy for these species, they are more likely to have appreciation for all wildlife in Canada and for its conservation.

It is difficult to make predictions about urban studies, because a city provides an ecosystem which is unique. Compared to the surrounding area, a city has less vegetation, less radiation and wind, more heat, cloud and rain; and much more pollution by gases and particulate matter. The habitat may also vary considerably in one block, and is controlled by various owners who may or may not favour trespassing by naturalists.

The city also has abundant people, people who ask what you are doing as you search with a magnifying glass for lichens on a brick wall or time the speed of a chipmunk carrying chestnuts from your porch to his storage place in the back yard, and children who destroy birds' nests and eggs. One man watched while one of our students set out six live-traps in a Kitchener Park where we had received permission to trap; then, when the student had gone, he stole all the traps.

The joy of research in urban ecology is that anyone with a knowledge of scientific methods can do it. If you can identify an evening grosbeak and keep accurate notes on when it was first and last seen at your feeder, and on when and how often it visited you, you have data on this species that can be part of an extensive project. Or you can undertake an entire project by yourself. Dagg collected a large supply of horse chestnuts at Niagara Falls last autumn, 25 of which she set out on her porch. Every hour she counted the nuts which had been carried off by squirrels and replaced those which were gone. Over a period of a few weeks she was able to graph the hourly activity of the neighbourhood squirrels in collecting chestnuts and correlate their activity with the daily temperature, with sunshine and with rainfall.

Ecological urban research in the city falls into five main categories.

1. DISTRIBUTION: Avid bird watchers already keep notes on the birds that visit their yards. We found this helpful when we interviewed 12 such people to find out what species of birds might, with proper management, be persuaded to live in cities. Our research indicated that over 90 species had been seen on the lots in Kitchener-Waterloo over the past 30 years, many of which came to feeders but others which could be encouraged if the city set aside natural woodlots and municipal lakes.

Ranford and Mason (18) carried out a related study when, during three fall migrating periods, they collected each morning all the birds which had flown into and fallen down dead or stunned beside the Toronto-Dominion Building in Toronto. Their collection of 470 individuals of 64 species gave a good (but depressing) estimate of the number and kinds of birds which migrate south through Toronto.

Information about urban mammals is harder to obtain because these animals are more secretive than birds. For our book dealing with mammals living in the

Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge complex and in Guelph (5), we obtained information via (a) sight records of individuals or their tracks, (b) reports of the smell of skunks, (c) live trap catches, (d) road kills, (e) newspaper accounts of such things as a coyote kill on the Conestoga Parkway in Waterloo or a deer in winter leaping through a house's picture window and (f) records of cat kills. George Toner (21) published an account of the species of small mammals which his cats brought to his home near Bancroft, Ontario, following a night of hunting. Such a study could be readily duplicated in the city.

Reptiles and amphibians are fascinating but often over-looked members of the urban environment. They are, however, perhaps the least able to survive habitat changes and human persecution. The city, with its roads, often cleaned-up woodlands, drainage schemes and water pollution takes a great toll of herptiles. Nevertheless, some North American and European cities still have surprising numbers of them present although only about 35 urban studies of "herps" have been published (4). It would be useful to have more, especially comparing species existing in city cores, residential areas, parks and vacant lots. Thorough searches and live-trapping with pitfalls and funnels could be employed.

Local plant lists have to be periodically updated because of urban sprawl. Many plant communities are destroyed and some species even exterminated within an area. In the Waterloo Region, Campbell and others are mapping changes in the flora of specified areas which have occurred since 1945, a number the result of urbanization. Bog plants such as some orchids have suffered most, followed by ferns and heaths. Correlated with these losses have been gains by established weeds, new aliens and cultivated plants gone wild, especially on vacant lots and recently disturbed soils.

## 2. BIOMASS

As yet we do not have enough data to evaluate the biomass of urban mammals (which are secretive) or of urban vegetation (which depends greatly on man's sufferance), but work can be done readily on birds. At present we are emulating a Finnish study in which all the birds seen along a set route of streets one day each month over a period of a year are tabulated in Helsinki the biomass of birds, calculated from the number of individuals and the approximate weight of each, was far higher in the city than outside it, but the variety of birds was less in the city (16). The values varied for each season. Our results, and those of Erskine (8), show that Canadian urban birds are similarly dispersed.

Nothing has been done in Canada on biomass of urban herptiles, which comprise a small portion of the total. However in spring and fall, aggregation of frogs, toads and snakes may be locally significant. Artificial sources of water, increased cover in the form of trash and more food (e.g. insects at street lights) often increase their numbers.

A useful botanical project would be that involving a marked plot in a natural urban park. This quadrat study might include counting the number and kinds of plants in a small square in successive years. If the number and diversity gradually decreased because of too many people using the park, this evidence would be useful in a demand that more parks were needed.

3. HABITAT AND HABITAT CHANGES: In cities as elsewhere, the environment determines what species can survive there. Where there are many trees, one expects and finds many birds. Such information can be gathered directly, as Judd has done in the Byron Bog in London, Ontario. There, between 1957 and 1965 in 22

papers he chronicled the mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, other invertebrates, and plants in the bog as the city of London, Ontario, has surrounded it (12).

Speirs and his colleagues (20) have carried out a similar study in birds in Ontario County, showing how the bird composition changes as one moves from an agricultural area into an urban one.

The animals living in a habitat can also be studied, less accurately, by questionnaires. Several years ago Dagg (6) and two students interviewed 1421 house dwellers in Waterloo about animals they had seen on their lots. From their answers we were able to correlate various species and their presence on a lot with trees and the lot's nearness to wooded parks, brushy areas and agricultural lands. A similar study may be repeated in a few years, since changes in fauna with change in habitat can only be a long term project.

"Herps" require somewhat specialized habitats. Small natural areas with pools and abundant ground cover allow salamanders to survive in cities. If their nesting areas are not eliminated and their young collected by children, turtles may exist too. Frogs and toads require breeding pools and snakes denning sites. The massasauga rattler survives yet on the marshy outskirts of Windsor while in Waterloo Park, which is surrounded by the City of Waterloo, there are painted turtles, garter snakes, common toads, green frogs and leopard frogs (Campbell, pers. comm.) Small changes in soil, water supply, ground cover, relative humidity and temperature may affect herptiles significantly in urban areas. Their preferred temperatures and water balances should be studied more in such settings.

Some unusual native plants can survive in small remnants of natural habitat within cities. In Kitchener, numbers of showy orchis and showy lady-slipper have remained in undisturbed corners of wooded and swampy parkland in Cambridge, Ontario, a colony of yellow lady-slipper was found in an old forested park at the same spot where a botanist had located it 67 years before.

4. BEHAVIOUR: One of the most satisfying kinds of research involves studying a single species in depth. Dagg, for example, spent much of one winter watching squirrels from her kitchen window. Since they daily crossed from one side of her back yard to the other, she was able to map the trees and branches along and between which they bounded. An analysis of these branches showed that although the squirrels were capable of travelling by several routes, they habitually chose only one, along which they rushed often at great speeds. They thus had instituted a well-known three-dimensional aerial highway similar to the runways frequented by terrestrial mammals. Dagg's observations yielded information not only on the squirrel's pathways but on encounters between two or more individuals, on times of daily activity, and on parts of the yard and food sources especially favoured by the squirrels. If a squirrel is found dead, an analysis of the food in its stomach can confirm its choice of food.

Bird research could centre around Erskine's hypothesis (pers. comm.) that pigeons only roost on buildings three stories or higher because these emulate suitable cliff facings. Or a study could be undertaken to prove that birds nesting in urban shrubbery really do build their nests higher than they would in rural undisturbed bushes (3).

Other questions raised about herptiles could be answered. Do some bold snakes and turtles become more wary in urbanized areas? Does the attraction in cities of foods such as insects, mice and rats for reptiles offset the danger from people and from being run over on warm roads?

5. POLLUTION: Studies of pollution in cities are less straightforward than those already discussed but more vital if we consider non-human species living in the cities as indicator species. If certain plants or animals are poisoned by pollution, there is a strong possibility that human beings are being adversely affected too, even if they do not know it,

If the possibility of pollution is serious, dead or dying specimens should be sent to a laboratory to be analyzed. The danger from DDT was given prominence when robins were found dead on lawns in Wisconsin, Illinois (10). Analysis of the birds showed that they had died from eating earthworms whose tissues were loaded with DDT because the worms had eaten leaves sprayed with this chemical in an effort to stop the Dutch Elm disease. Bats should be analyzed too because, as insectivorous species, they may reveal excess use of pesticide. Other species may foretell problems for both wildlife and human beings, already high levels of lead have been found in voles living near expressways (11). Urban dogs are known to have a higher frequency of pulmonary disease than are rural dogs and in urban dogs too carcinoma of the tonsils is prevalent (17,19).

Because of their relative immobility and several life stages in different habitats, amphibians are especially vulnerable to insecticide pollution, as has been shown by scientists since the war. As early as 1944 preliminary experiments by Logier (14) indicated that DDT sprayed by plane in Algonquin Park would kill over 50% of the herpetile population directly. More animals would die later from lack of food or from eating poisoned insects. Algicides and herbicides are a menace also.

Spraying for mosquitoes in the 800 acre Dundas Marsh near Hamilton, Ontario, killed nearly 5,000 muskrats in 1945. Wragg (22) found that their deaths, however, were caused not by the DDT itself but by the fuel oil and kerosene in which the pesticide was dissolved. The oil wet their fur so that it no longer protected them from the cold.

There are a number of observable signs of air pollution affecting plants: stippling and lesions on leaves, bleaching of leaves, premature shedding of leaves, browning of ends of conifer needles; and glazing and bronzing of bands across grass blades (1). However, there are other causes such as fungi and aging for some of these, and levels of contaminants in the air must be high for pollution to cause them. An expert should examine damaged plants to determine the probable cause. It is important that such plants are examined, because what is killing them may kill human beings eventually.

Some plants, such as whitepine and lichens, are much more sensitive to air pollution than others. Lichens, the most sensitive plants to man-made atmospheric pollutants, are the first plants to disappear in cities (13). The central areas of big cities are usually without lichens. Progressively farther from the city core toward the surrounding countryside more lichens of more species are able to grow.

In this article we have mentioned superficially some of the research that has been or could be done in cities. If it inspires any amateur or professional to carry out further research so we could know more about urban ecology, we would be delighted.

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