



TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Number 295

December, 1975

Visitors Welcome!

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DECEMBER MEETING

Monday, December 1, 1975, at 8:15 p.m.
at

252 Bloor Street West

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

SPEAKERS: Dr. and Mrs. Walter M. Tovell

SUBJECT: "Iceland"

Their slides will illustrate Icelandic glaciers, geysers, waterfalls and volcanic phenomena, plus fascinating studies of birdlife.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Monday, January 5, 1976.

NEXT AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM: Thursday, January 22, 1976: Jeffery Boswell showing his inspiring slides on "Wildlife Safari to Ethiopia". An evening you won't want to miss. Good seats still available. Eaton Auditorium, 8:15 p.m. Students may purchase tickets the night of the showing for only \$1.25.

Club fees are now due. The attached coupon may be filled out and mailed with your remittance (hopefully the mail strike will end sometime), or you may pay your dues at the next meeting.

-detach-

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 - Meeting will be held in the Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's
Saturday, Dec. 6 Park. The Minerology Group will be in charge. A feature film
10:00 a.m. will be shown. Director - Lyn Scanlan, 488-8321 (after 5:30 p.m.)

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE - Meet at St. James Bond United Church on Avenue Road, just north
Monday, Dec. 8 of Eglinton Avenue. Club members are invited to come and dis-
8:00 p.m. cuss Metro's parks and waterfront. Chairman - Henry Fletcher (421-1549)

BIRD GROUP - No regular meeting this month. See OUTINGS below for complete
Sunday, Dec. 28 details. This is a special outing.
9:30 a.m. Leaders: Jerry and Bruce White Chairman - Red Mason (621-3905)

BOTANY GROUP - No meeting scheduled for the month of December.
Chairman - Wes Hancock (757-5518)

OUTINGS FOR DECEMBER, 1975

Saturday, December 6 - WILKET CREEK - SERENA GUNDY - SUNNYBROOK AREA - Birds
10:00 a.m. Leader: Doug Gardiner
Meet at the first parking lot entrance on Leslie Street, just north of Eglinton Avenue East. Lunch optional. (Eglinton East, Lawrence East or Leslie bus).

Sunday, December 7 - KORTRIGHT CENTRE FOR CONSERVATION WALK - Boyd
10:30 a.m. For information phone: 661-6600
Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Sunday, December 28 - T.F.N. BIRD GROUP OUTING
9:30 a.m. Leaders: Jerry and Bruce White
Meet in the Lakeshore parking lot, east of the Humber River and west of Windermere Avenue (opposite the Seaway Hotel). This outing will include a search for owls. Bring lunch. Visitors welcome.

Saturday, January 10, 1976 - LAMBTON WOODS - Birds
8:30 a.m. Leader: Dave Broughton
Meet in the parking lot of James Gardens. (Royal York bus from subway to Edenbridge Drive and walk east 0.4 mile). Outing will continue along the Lakeshore and in High Park in the afternoon. -Bring lunch.
Chairman - Harry Kerr (481-7948)

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

In this last President's message of 1975, I wish to inform you of some of the major activities of your Board of Directors during the fall months.

1. The Board voted a donation of \$200.00 to the Canadian Environmental Law Association for its Elora Gorge Defense Fund. This money will be used by CELA to pay legal expenses as this organization fights to preserve the rights of citizens to challenge governmental bodies when they handle public property in a manner deemed inappropriate by the citizens.
2. The Board has devoted much time to the consideration of a report produced by our Environmental Committee titled "Toronto the Green". This report surveys the natural areas of the Metropolitan Toronto Region and makes recommendations with respect to the future of such areas.
3. A decision was made not to replant those portions of the Nature Reserve where last year's plantings were unsuccessful. The Board members felt that open space should be left at the Reserve.
4. The Board decided to use the general funds of the Club to pay off the mortgage on the Nature Reserve. It is our hope that those of you who have not yet made a final donation to the Nature Reserve Fund will do so this month. The money borrowed from the general funds of the Club must be repaid in order that the Club can meet operating expenses for the remainder of the year.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year ... and don't forget to feed the birds!

..... Bill Andrews

COMING EVENTS

ROYAL CANADIAN INSTITUTE

Information: 922-2804

Saturday evening lectures, Convocation Hall, University of Toronto - 8:15 p.m.

December 6 - "Charles Darwin, Who he was and What he did" - slides. Dr. W.E. Swinton, Prof. Emeritus, Dept. of Zoology, University of Toronto, and Sr. Fellow, Massey College.

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM - Sunday Family Films - Sundays at 2:30 p.m.

Information: 928-3690

December 14 - "Beyond Australia" - the travels of trader-postmen.

Should you be experiencing difficulty finding the bird seed you need this winter, perhaps one of the Club members could help you .. he not only can supply the seed but the feeders also. Contact:

Bernie Wardle at 225-8381.

IN QUEST OF DIVERSITY

..... by Clive Goodwin

Environmental concern in Canada has tended to focus in two broad directions: one, on campaigns against pollution, waste and the like, which emphasize man's profligate use of our planet and the mess he is making of it in the process. The second has been towards the preservation of wilderness and the effort to preserve significant areas of natural lands, usually by making them parks.

No one talks about the need to preserve diversity. Yet it is diversity that so many of these attempts are really seeking to preserve, and without diversity much otherwise excellent land-use planning will fail to give satisfaction. The problem with the expanded urban suburbs is really that they are all so alike, but mile upon mile of boreal forest can be pretty monotonous too unless it is being experienced as a contrast to something else. Preservation of diversity assures protection of wilderness, but it does it in a more sophisticated way, because attention is given to the preservation of the wild and natural communities on which wilderness depends. Diversity is a key to the richness of human experience, and maintenance of diversity one of our main challenges in a technological world.

Our single-use orientation does not allow much scope for variety, and even when we pay lip service to multiple use we rarely manage with this in view. Our pre-occupation continues to be with some primary use with frequently grudging acceptance of one or two other uses which can be assimilated without too much conflict.

It is in our cities that the demand pressures are greatest, and where the conflicts between one kind of use and another can be most intense. The positive side of these varying demands is that they can achieve diversity on the urban scene, and one effect of this is that cities can be surprisingly rich areas for wildlife, popular sentiments notwithstanding.

On the face of it, natural land is out of place in the city, and we can recall an argument a few years back that it was unreasonable to attempt to maintain a marsh in an urban area: one should go to Algonquin Park for that kind of thing, it was suggested. The cost of ravine lots is one testimony to the fact that there is a very keen appreciation of natural areas in the city, and to some extent every urban garden is its own silent witness to the desire of its owner for something alive and green. The enormous educational value of urban natural areas is increasingly being recognized, sometimes to the detriment of the areas themselves with the heavy pressures of interpretive programmes.

Natural communities are nowhere very well understood, but we have a sense of their importance and are concerned lest our aggressive manipulation of the natural world for a thousand and one human uses is unwittingly thrusting us on the road to catastrophe. Yet, here are natural communities that somehow manage to co-exist with man and his works, and surely from them there must be lessons that can be learned about how man can come to terms with his environment. The fact that the urban natural land is scarce even when it is highly valued, indicates not only the pressures to which it is subjected, but our poor understanding of how it functions and of what it needs to survive.

Urban natural land offers some intriguing paradoxes. One such pocket in Toronto is a brushy tangle of vines and shrubs sandwiched on a hillside between old housing and industrial yards. No one maintains it, and in a conventional sense it is not used, yet it has more in common with wilderness than a great deal of Ontario's rural countryside, and far more than the city's manicured formal parks. Disused fields

on the urban periphery offer havens to open country wildlife, and on the Great Lakes concentrations of waterfowl are often associated with point sources of pollution which may artificially enrich the local waters. Land concentrations of animal life at dumps are a corresponding phenomenon.

These are familiar examples, but they do not sit particularly well with the conventional ideas about human impact on the rest of life on our planet, and they suggest opportunities for compromise in unconventional directions. We forget that plant and animal communities are no respecters of place: if the conditions are right they will develop or survive regardless of whether humanity has identified the location as a piece of waste land, a park or wilderness area. In the city natural diversity is often greatest on "waste" or disused land, and the implications of this for urban open space management are considerable. City dwellers tend to feel that natural land must be preserved in parks of various kinds, but some park administrations are wedded to bulldozers and clean-up programmes which achieve an exactly opposite result.

Much of the richness of southern Ontario and the variety within our cities today is a reflection of inefficiency as much as anything else. It is difficult to keep farms productive in the urbanized shadow. It is less expensive to leave a farm woodlot in place than it is to clear it. No one has time to scurry around the city clearing out the brushy corners and forgotten ravines. The penalty we pay for this lack of sensitivity is that natural environments in the city are lost or have their quality systematically eroded, to be appreciated only when finally gone; because even the most commonplace natural communities are poorly understood, and we have developed no tools for retaining this diversity in the city, short of outright acquisition, which in turn leads to further pressures for "use".

A reordering of priorities seems necessary. Provincial wildlife agencies might start paying some attention to the dynamics of natural communities generally, including those that are most commonplace. Inventories of natural areas in our major urbanizing regions are urgently required, as are techniques to encourage landowners to preserve natural environments that exist on their properties. Parks administrations might begin to rethink the traditional grass-and-trees management approaches which have dominated urban parks for many years, and urban planning might well require that developers offer plans which will preserve significant natural areas in their developments, as well as allowing them to make the most of their market value. Significant tracts of publicly owned land have open space value, but are presently closed to public access, and one way of identifying public properties in our urban areas is to look for the eight-foot chain link fences that surround them. Even where no such fences exist, public access to areas frequently is vigorously denied.

Perhaps we all need to return to a sense of the value of little things.

From Ed O'Connor

September 27, 1975.

Hi, Elmer:

I was out to the picnic today at Jim Baillie and there was a good turnout (about 50). Looked like rain all day but we had only a few drops when we were leaving to come home. We had a good deal of colour in the trees.

By the way, we now have a properly built 'outhouse', with thanks due to John Lowe-Wylde, our Deputy Chairman. It is located just off the parking lot, behind some trees. The trees we planted last spring aren't in too good shape, for the most part, although the red oak trees seem to be holding their own. The trails were not too bad, but there are some windfall trees blocking one part of the Blue Rectangle Trail

that we'll have to clear. We managed to stir up a couple of grouse, and a young raccoon was very interested in us from his perch in the trees. The dead porcupine is still hanging high up in the trees, where he's been since last winter. A surprising number of birds there, for the time of year, but mostly jays, chickadees, and sparrows. We did see a belted kingfisher by the river; lots of ducks flying, and a goose. As I was leaving a great blue heron flew low over my car. Altogether a pleasant day, with some nice people. Nobody was too eager to come away.

Regards

Ed O'Connor.

DOWN EAST NATURALLY

To get away from the heat of Toronto we decided to try the East Coast for our summer vacation. So starting out at 5:00 a.m. on a bright, sunny July morning, we drove towards Quebec.

Our first observations were of many Upland Plovers perched on fence posts along the busy 401, north of Kingston. On the second day, driving around the Gaspé, we noticed there were numerous flocks of Common Eiders and Double-crested Cormorants fairly close to shore. Stopping the second night at St. Anne-des-Monts, we were surprised to see snow on the mountains at 700 feet as we were sweltering in a temperature of 90°.

Our next encounter with large numbers of birds, was at the renowned "Bonaventure Island". Having camped at Perce, we packed a picnic lunch to spend the day on the island. The boat that carried us passed under the Perce Rock, covered with numerous Cormorants and Gulls. As we circled the island we observed many Razor-bills, Black Guillemots and Common Murres, which nest on the lower ledges.

While walking the one-and-a-half miles to the Gannetry, a Bald Eagle soared overhead, which we were told is quite rare in this area. There are now about 60,000 pairs of Gannets nesting at the top of the cliffs, along with Black-legged Kittiwakes. This is still one of the easily accessible islands for close observations of these birds. We were also informed that there were fifteen Puffins on the island, but we were not lucky in spotting these.

Leaving Perce we decided to spend our last eleven days in Fundy National Park, where we saw 71 species of birds, two of which were lifers; the Parula Warbler and Boreal Chickadee, both of which seem to have escaped us at home.

We were determined to find the Parula Warbler as we had been informed that there were many nesting in the park. So for nine days we searched the different trails hoping to spot this elusive bird. By the tenth day we had given up hope. Early this morning we were feeding the Gray Jays which came down to our table regularly and we noticed that as these tyrants took their tour of the campground, the trees seemed to come alive with birds. So we decided to follow the Jays and observe the birds scolding them. Reaching the other side of the camp, we suddenly heard it: "bzzt, bzzt". 'Could it be?' Yes it was a female Parula and later on a beautiful male appeared. We not only found our elusive warbler we also found its nest, made of lichen and secured atop a yellow birch. During our stay we must have passed that tree about fifty times.

Other regular visitors to our camp were: Sapsucker, Evening Grosbeaks, Downy Woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Wood and Hermit

Thrushes, Solitary and Red-eyed Vireos, Bay-breasted and Black-throated Green Warblers, Purple Finches, Pine Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins and the Tennessee Warblers, which have greatly increased in number due to the infestation of the Spruce Budworm. And, of course, the Boreal Chickadee which we also noticed first by its call, which is huskier than the Black-capped. The remaining species were found along the many nature trails and beaches. There are numerous trails which one can take alone or with a group led by one of the many naturalists, all of whom we found were very informative.

This is also an excellent place for botanical observations, having a peat bog with Pitcher Plants and a good variety of orchids, the prettiest being the Arethusa. There are also a great many woodland flowers, Bunchberry and Wood Sorrel being the most numerous.

Of course birds and flowers were not the only things we saw. There was a raccoon who visited us and was not at all shy; there were also porcupines and deer. And as we were leaving to come home, out of the morning mist a young moose appeared; it was as if he was saying goodbye. We have to congratulate the people who run this park, on its cleanliness, its naturalist program and also for leaving it mostly in its natural state.

Overall we spotted 106 species, which, considering the time of year, we thought was good. So if you are going Down East, try Fundy Naturally.

..... John and Joan Thomson.

Metro's nature 'nuts'

In the October 21st issue of the Toronto Star, there was an article headed: "Metro's nature 'nuts' fight to save wildlife", by Bob Pennington a Star Staff Reporter, covering an interview with Bill Andrews. The accompanying picture showed Bruce Parker identifying a ginkgo tree for members of the Club who were out for a field trip in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. This is the kind of publicity we need for our Club and our 'cause'. I don't even mind being called a 'nut'!

Here's what was said in the article about some of our conservation efforts and our Environmental programs:

"Trail-bikes are now rated the major hazard, following a successful campaign against snowmobiles:

"These bikes rip vegetation off the hills and cause erosion. They are so noisy that there is no way wildlife can exist in the same area.

"Our members have written hundreds of protesting letters, but nobody seems to be doing anything effective about them. If we wait too long, the battle will be lost!"

Despite such rebuffs, the naturalists are continuing with their aim to complete a biological survey of all the ravines in the city:

"We want to be in a position to say exactly 'Look what you are going to destroy before you go ahead with this construction.'

"Sometimes we are successful. The TTC is working with us on a restoration project in connection with the Spadina subway. We were also able to show that the effect on animal and plant life by the building of a Lawrence Avenue East bridge had also been grossly underestimated."

A survey of Chatsworth Ravine Park (sometimes known as Lawrence Park Ravine or Glenview Ravine) was the first undertaken by the Club.

This exposed the ecological deterioration taking place and led to remedial work by the City of Toronto Parks Department, including the planting of more trees.

Measuring 200 yards in length and only about 150 yards at its widest point, the park still offered many surprises.

The check list of trees, shrubs, ferns, herbaceous plants and woody vines made between June and September totalled no less than 250 varieties.

A five-year study of the birds observed in Chatsworth revealed 76 different species, five of which were known to have nested in the ravine.

Surrounded by three schools, this park receives intensive use. Yet daisy fleabane grows here, as does nipplewort, enchanter's nightshade and water-horehound.

Winging in to nest, observers have noted, were such intriguingly named creatures as the rufous-sided towhee, the slate-colored junco, the white-breasted nuthatch and the red-eyed vireo.

There's magic for you in just one tiny piece of Metro, a magic these naturalists not only appreciate but are doing their best to preserve for future generations.

DRY LANDING ON SOUTH PLAZA

..... by Joy Pocklington

This is an account of one of the many island landings a group of naturalists, and others, made on one of the Galapagos Islands.

On the twentieth of May we climbed down into the tender, and prepared to land on South Plaza Island. As we approached many sea-lions swam out to greet us. They surrounded the tender and accompanied us in towards the natural lava jetty where we were to land. One in her enthusiasm plumped right on the edge of the jetty. She had to be manually removed before we could set foot on land.

This rocky island has a roundness and smoothness of the rocks, which has resulted from the hot lava cooling beneath the water, and later being thrust upwards to form the island. The rocks immediately near the landing were occupied by many land iguanas. These interesting reptiles, with their raggedy, yellowish and orange skin, are descendants of the marine iguanas. They are larger, measuring three to four feet, and have a more developed jaw. They live in dug burrows (one room apartments) and feed on the vegetation -- mainly cactus. They seem aggressive by nature but not to humans. No study has been done of these reptiles and their life span is unknown. They fight and bite each other until they draw blood, and then stop; the fight is usually over territory. We saw several bloody mouths. We would have fed the land iguanas with cactus flowers, but didn't, so as to disturb their way of life as little as possible.

All over the island the opuntia cactus grows; it is quite spectacular. Many cactus finches flitted around them. We were told that the opuntias grow very tall only on the islands where the turtles and iguanas abound. On the islands without these

reptiles the cacti are short and scrubby. This is an example of the animals influencing the evolution of a plant. The centre of the island is covered with a red succulent plant, Sesuvium. The Sesuvium, the cactus trees, and the marbled smooth rock together create a weird, unusual and quite attractive landscape.

On the west side of South Plaza high rugged cliffs are found, and it is here the swallow-tailed gull nests; also shearwaters, storm petrels and tropic birds. There were many swallow-tailed gulls in evidence, some with their speckled young. They are indeed for me the most beautiful bird in the world, with their snowy-white swallowtail, blue gray plumage, pink feet and beak, and a pecking spot at the top of the beak. They are said to stay with their young all day in the nesting season, to protect them from the marauding frigate birds. They leave the nest only at night to feed. At night though the Galapagos Owl goes out preying on eggs and young. There are less owls than frigate birds, and the swallowtail gulls manage to multiply. The storm petrels nest in burrows -- there were probably hundreds under the cliffs, none visible. We saw the red-billed tropic bird but only from the distance.

On top of the cliff were many old bones of sea-lions and I believe it is nicknamed 'The Sea-lions Graveyard'. The guide said that the bull sea-lions become quite worn out and die young because of the strenuous life they lead! They charge up and down all day across some rocky inlet protecting their harems from intruding males, sorting out females who have altercations; also heading off pups who wander too far. The males evidently die at about sixteen years, and the females at eighteen.

We passed some highly polished rock runways, very fishy smelling. This was where the sea-lions romp up and down between the bay and the cliff top -- 'Sea-lions Roadway'. We had the same sea-lion send off on our return, when they followed the tender out and tried to race it for some distance.

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS - 1975-76 - Eaton Auditorium - 8:15 p.m.

- Thursday - January 22, 1976 - "Wildlife Safari to Ethiopia"
- " February 19 - "Bermuda - Land and Sea"
- " March 18 - "The Vanishing Eden"

Jot these dates down on your calendar ... tell your friends and neighbours. The more seats sold, the more revenue for the Club. Students may purchase tickets the night of the showing for only \$1.25 each.

Ready to think of holidays or to get away for a weekend? Check the following:
Ontario Nature Tours - 71 Thorncliffe Park Dr. # 511, Toronto, M4H 1L3 (421-4537)
- 6372 Montrose Road, Niagara Falls, Ont. - Gus Yaki

- Dec 5 - 7 - Niagara River Bird Life
 - Dec. 21 - Jan 3/76 - Hawaii Calls
 - Dec. 25 - Jan 3 - The Everglades and South Florida ... and many more
- Write or phone for further information and copy of Release No. 6.

AND

Environmental Experiences Club - offer:

- Jan. 30 - Feb 1, 1976 - Dorset Winter Weekend No. 1
- Feb. 27 - 29 - Dorset Winter Weekend No. 2
- March 12 - 14 - Winter Camping (Algonquin Park) and more ... contact:
Ed O'Connor, 2 Nursewood Road, #11, Toronto M4E 3R8 (699-9211 after 6:00 p.m.)

Apologies and best wishes

I wonder how many Club members will be reading this issue of the Newsletter?

If you've managed to get your copy you'll find it rather slim pickings as the mail strike has cut off all the usual contributions. If the strike continues the next issue might be even slimmer. To stay in business at all is going to be pretty difficult. We're going to try though! Hattie will be delivering some copies by hand; others will be available at the monthly meetings. So maybe we can keep going for a while without the mails.

Meanwhile I can certainly use some contributions for the next issue. If you have any material at all please give me a call and I'll gladly pick it up or make some arrangements with you to get it to City Hall where I have an office. If we all try we can keep the Newsletter going. So let's try!

The Toronto Ornithological Club would welcome your assistance in advising of any rare bird you may see. A 'Rare Bird Report Form' is attached.

I guess Christmas is going to come despite our troubles. I sure hope so! And I hope too that instead of adding to your troubles it brings a feeling of joy and peace and goodwill towards your fellow man and your fellow creatures. So here's best wishes to all of you for a Joyful Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

1. SPECIES: _____ 2. NUMBER SEEN: _____
3. LOCALITY: _____

4. DATE SEEN: _____ 5. DATE OF REPORT: _____
6. TIME: _____ 7. DISTANCE: _____ 8. HOW MEASURED: _____
9. LIGHT CONDITIONS (eg. sunny, overcast): _____
10. POSITION OF OBSERVER AND BIRD IN TERMS OF 9. _____
11. OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED: _____ 12. WATCHED HOW LONG? _____

13. WHAT HABITAT: _____
14. WHAT WAS IT DOING (flying, feeding, etc.): _____

15. DID YOU CONSULT A GUIDE? WHICH ? _____

16. HAVE YOU CONSULTED ONE SINCE ? WHICH ? _____

17. HAVE THEY INFLUENCED YOUR IDENTIFICATION ? HOW ? _____

18. HAVE YOU SEEN THE SPECIES BEFORE ? (when and where) _____

19. HAVE YOU SEEN SIMILAR SPECIES ? _____

20. DID ANYONE ELSE SEE AND IDENTIFY IT INDEPENDENTLY ? WHO ? _____

21. DESCRIPTION OF BIRD:

22. ADJACENT SPECIES USED IN COMPARISON:

23. SIMILAR SPECIES ELIMINATED (2 REASONS):

24. NAME AND ADDRESS:

SEND TO:

Mr. John A. Kelley
2309 Lakeshore Blvd. West, Apt. 305,
Toronto, Ontario. M8V 1A7.