



TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Number 301

October, 1976.

Visitors welcome!

OCTOBER MEETING

Visitors welcome!

Monday, October 4, 1976, 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¢).

SPEAKER: Dr. Richard F. Fisher

TOPIC: "Interactions Among Plants"

Dr. Fisher is an Associate Professor with the Faculty of Forestry and Landscape Architecture at the University of Toronto. He is an excellent speaker whom you will find both entertaining and instructive; he will relate how plants interact with one another in space, time and by the use of chemical. His talk will be illustrated with slides using diverse examples from the Northern Boreal Forests to the Southern Deserts.

First AUDUBON WILDLIFE film for this season - Thursday, October 28th, Eaton Auditorium at 8:15 p.m. Season tickets are now on sale. For additional information, folders, or order forms, call A.T.O. 597-1688.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Monday, November 1, 1976.

CLUB FEES ARE NOW DUE. These may be paid at the October meeting, or you may fill out and mail the coupon below with your remittance.

-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
Saturday
October 2
10:00 a.m.

The Junior Club meets on the first Saturday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, from October to May. Membership is open to boys and girls from 8 to 16 years of age. Royal Ontario Museum. Registration day, followed by an interesting film.

Director - Lynn Scanlan, 488-8321 (after 5:30)

BOTANY GROUP
Tuesday
October 19
8:00 p.m.

Mrs. Betty Greenacre will show us the "SHAPES AND COLOURS OF FUNGI". These pictures were taken in Ontario, most of them found locally, and help to identify the various mushrooms and fungi that appear at this time of year.

Location: Hodgson Public School, Davisville Avenue, just east of Mt. Pleasant Road. Enter the school at the east end, or if you park in the school yard, the centre rear door is open. Entrance to the yard is from Millwood Road, one block north of Davisville Avenue. We meet in the cafeteria in the basement.

Chairman - Wes Hancock - 757-5518

BIRD GROUP
Wednesday
October 27
8:00 p.m.

Meet at St. James Bond United Church on Avenue Road, just north of Eglinton Avenue.

Dr. Verna Higgins one of our own bird club members has just returned from Australia, where she spent the past year doing research at the University of Sydney Plant Breeding Institute. Verna, a keen birder, will show us some of her coloured slides on birdlife in Eastern Australia. The title of her talk will be 'Birding all around Down Under'. This will be a very interesting presentation -- one you won't want to miss.

Chairman - Red Mason - 621-3905

CHANGE IN EDITOR

Elmer Talvila has gone to Vancouver for the next several months and Helen Juhola will be looking after the Newsletter in his absence. Please direct all mail to :

Mrs. Helen Juhola, 51 Alexander Street, # 112, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 1B3 (924-5806)

URGENTLY NEEDED - Chairman of the Program Committee

Unfortunately our Program Chairman has had to resign due to business pressures. We urgently need a replacement who will co-ordinate the activities of the Committee that arranges the interesting and enjoyable monthly programs at OISIE.

This is a fine opportunity for you to serve your Club in a leadership role. If you regularly attend the monthly meeting you have satisfied most of the requirements of the job. This crucial position must be filled so that the T.F.N.C. can continue to bring its members dynamic and enjoyable programs. Please help if you can.

(membership renewal form on reverse sheet)

Outings held
rain or shine!

OUTINGS FOR OCTOBER, 1976

Visitors
Welcome!

- Saturday
Oct. 2
10:00 a.m. MOAT FIELD FARMS - Botany Leader: Bruce Parker
Meet at corner of of Don Mills Road and Duncan Mills Road (one stop
light north of York Mills). Morning only.
- Sunday
Oct. 3
10:00 a.m. WILKET CREEK - Leader: John ten Bruggenkate
Meet at the Rotary Log Cabin (1/2 mile on the main road to Sunnybrook
Park) just before gates. Parking area available. A good opportunity
to see the cabin and displays. Lunch optional.
- Saturday
Oct. 9
9:00 a.m. HENDRIE TRAIL, HAMILTON - Leader: Miss Emily Hamilton
Bus schedule: Please note - one passenger pick-up
9:00 a.m. n.e. corner of Yonge and Bloor
Reserve your place on the bus by phoning Mrs. Norah Stuart, 485-5824,
after 6:30 p.m., Sept. 18-26. Confirm by sending payment (\$4.00) payable
to Toronto Field Naturalists (Hendrie Trail) to Mrs. M. Blackshaw, 20
Prince Arthur Ave., Apt 3G, Toronto (927-2275). Cheques must be received
by October 6. Drivers - follow the Q.E.W. and Hwy. 403 west. Take
Hwy.2 (Plains Road) towards Burlington. Just past the intersection of
Hwy. 6 south and Hwy. 2 east, on the left side of the road, is the
parking lot of the Hendrie Trail (across from the Rendezvous Restaurant).
Meet here. Bring lunch to carry.
- Sunday
Oct. 10
9:00 a.m. TORONTO ISLAND - Birds Leader: Mr. George Fairfield
Meet at the Island Ferry Terminal at the foot of Bay Street to take the
first available ferry. Bring your membership card and a lunch to carry.
- Saturday
Oct. 16
10:00 a.m. EAST DON RAVINE - Nature Walk Leader: Mr. Henry Fletcher
Meet at the northwest corner of Leslie Street and Sheppard Avenue East.
The walk will follow the ravine north, past Finch Avenue. Lunch optional.
- Sunday
Oct. 17
10:00 a.m. TAYLOR CREEK - Nature Walk
Leaders: Helen Juhola
 Linda Cardini
Meet at Woodbine and O'Connor Avenues (Woodbine bus). Morning only.
See page 13 for further details.
- Saturday
Oct. 23
9:00 a.m. TORONTO LAKESHORE - Birds Leader: Mr. John Kelley
Meet in the Lakeshore parking lot, east of the Humber River and west of
Windermere Avenue. (opposite the Seaway Hotel). Bring lunch.
- Sunday
Oct. 24
10:00 a.m. MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETARY - trees Leader: Miss Emily Hamilton
Meet at the entrance on the east side of Yonge Street (0.3 mile north
of St. Clair Avenue subway station). Morning only.
- Sunday
Oct. 31
9:00 a.m. MOORE PARK RAVINE - Birds Leader: Mr. Eric Nasmith
From Moore Avenue and Mt. Pleasant Road, go east about 1/4 mile on Moore
Avenue to the ravine entrance just east of Welland Avenue. meet here.
STANDARD TIME (South Leaside bus from St. Clair). Morning only.

ON SALE AT THE MONTHLY MEETINGS

Chairman - Herb Elliott - 763-4869

- ... The new Club Pin (very attractive in colour) ... price \$1.50 per pin.
- ... "Toronto the Green" ... \$2.50 per copy.
- ... 'Migration Chart' and 'Check list of Plants in Four Toronto Parks' ... 50¢ each
- ... Ontario Field Biologist (June, 1976 issue) ... \$1.25 per copy
- ... Christmas Cards, Hasti-Notes, Daily Reminders and Calenders will also be available

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

WHO'S WHO - 1976-77

President - Mr. Ron Thorpe, 217 Greer Road, Toronto - 484-1807
Vice-President - Mr. Wes Hancock, 10 Shaneen Blvd., Scarborough - 757-5518
Past " - Prof. Wm. A. Andrews, 213 Divadale Drive, Toronto - 425-4607
Secretary - Miss Carole Parsons, 65 Havenbrook Blvd., T.H.1, Willowdale - 494-8487
Treasurer - Miss Helen Yemen, 200 Brooke Avenue, Toronto - 783-2155
Auditor - Mr. Elward G. Burnside
Director Junior Club - Lynn Scanlan, 120 Broadway Ave., #204, Toronto-488-8321 (after 5:30)
Editors - Newsletter: Mrs. Helen Juhola, 51 Alexander St. # 112, Toronto - 924-5806
- Ontario Field Biologist: Mrs. Barbara Wilkins, 213 Rosedale Heights Drive,
Toronto - 483-6742
Membership Secretary - Mrs. Ida Hanson, 83 Joicey Blvd., Toronto - 488-7304
Ontario Field Biologist Secretary - Mrs. Mary Robson, 49 Craighurst Ave., Toronto - 481-0260
Junior Club Secretary - Mrs. E. Scanlan, 120 Broadway Ave. # 204, Toronto-488-8321 (after 5:30)
Audubon Wildlife Films - Mrs. Phyllis Thomas, 171 Church St E., #305, Brampton - 459-4646
Newsletter Production - Miss H. Beeton, 1164 Broadview Ave., Toronto - 422-4830

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD -

Mr. Henry Fletcher	Joan O'Donnell
Mrs. Helen Juhola	Mr. Barry Ranford
Mr. John Lowe-Wylde	Mr. N. H. M. (Mac) Smith
Miss Sheila McKay	Mrs. Norah Stuart
Miss Reta McWhinnie	

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN -

Audubon Wildlife Films - Mr. David Langford - 683-7654
Bird Group - Mr. R.E. (Red) Mason - 621-3905
Botany Group - Mr. Wes Hancock - 757-5518
Environmental Group - Mr. Henry Fletcher - 421-1549
Jim Baillie Reserve - Management - Mr. John ten Bruggenkate - 425-6096
Junior Club - Lynn Scanlan - 488-8321 (after 5:30)
Ontario Field Biologist Editorial Committee - Mr. Clive Goodwin - 249-9503
Outings Committee - Mr. Herb Elliott - 763-4869
Program Committee - to be appointed

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The evening before I wrote this article I sat quietly on some exposed granite at the edge of a small marsh where the white pines were silhouetted against a rosy sky, gilded with silver. The sound of wood ducks and the chilling night air heralded the onset of autumn. With the familiar sights and sounds of fall comes other enjoyable pursuits.

Once again our Club members gather to exchange notes on the summer's happenings - the enjoyable holiday or the successful quest for a plant, bird or unique environment. As we start our 54th year of activities, I wish to extend to you greetings from the Board of Directors and myself. I intend to follow my predecessor by using this column to keep you aware of the work of the committees, groups and individuals that keep our Club active and energetic. Many thanks to the Past-president, Bill Andrews, and his retiring Directors who worked so diligently and successfully on your behalf. Also to all of you who embrace the numerous tasks required to keep the TFNC operational my fondest thanks. My job is much easier because of active and responsible help of you, the Club members. As I start into my first year as President I hope that I will be able to meet you all and personally express my greetings.

I must confess that I am relatively new to the Club compared to the impressive record of my predecessors. Perhaps I have not had the privilege of meeting you. Please introduce yourself to me at the general meetings so that we can get acquainted. And if I can be of assistance, don't hesitate to contact me or any of our Directors. Our phone numbers and addresses are regularly published in the Newsletter.

Many things have happened since the last general meeting. Did you see our booth at the C.N.E.? Thanks to the efforts of many of our members we informed visitors to the EX about our Club. The TFNC in co-operation with Metro Parks presented a nature interpretive program at the Sunnybrook Park log cabin during June, July and August. The program included nature hikes for the general public on Sundays and Wednesday evenings. Activities of this type require a lot of help from our members but these programs help us grow. The aims of the Club are successfully promoted through this type of public program. We are helping others develop appreciation of the wonders and beauties of nature which we all hold so dear.

Have you seen and obtained a copy of the newest TFNC publication "Toronto the Green"? Our first press run of 3,000 copies was completed in mid-June and distributed to several governmental agencies as a position paper of the TFNC on the natural areas in and around Metro. I encourage you to read this publication, it is very informative. The media were very complimentary. Several articles appeared in the newspapers and on radio and TV. You will find this publication especially helpful in identifying the ravines and river valleys, natural history, geology, nature and TFNC attitudes toward the Metro environment.

By the time this Newsletter reaches you, most of our activities are well underway. A fine roster of outings are available for September and October and don't forget the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve picnic on Saturday, September 25th. The Audubon Wildlife Films begin Thursday, October 28th at Eaton Auditorium. Have you purchased your season tickets yet? Also the various groups meet regularly each month. If you are interested in meeting other TFN members and expanding your knowledge, join the Botany, Bird and Environmental groups which meet regularly each month. No special skills or knowledge is required to join. By attending these meetings I have personally aquired interesting ideas on many topics. Hope to see you there!

The TFN Club pin is now available. It is good looking and costs only \$1.50 per pin. Further details on page 3.

ATTENTION: Naturalists in the Credit Valley Conservation Authority Area

The Education Officer of the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, Mr. George Roberts, has requested assistance from naturalists in the Orangeville, Terra Cotta or Toronto area interested in voluntarily leading educational field trips (mostly elementary students) along educational trails at Orangeville and Terra Cotta. Since most groups will be booked on week days it is possible only retired or self-employed persons would be eligible. An orientation hike and teaching-guiding assistance will be provided for volunteers. Anything you can do to help will be greatly appreciated.

George is a keen naturalist, Vice-president of the Bruce Trail Association, and a trip leader for the TFNC.

If you can help, please contact:

Mr. George Roberts, Education Officer,
Credit Valley Conservation Authority, Meadowvale, Ont. L0J 1K0 (451-1615)

NEWS FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

The Environmental Working Group has received bird lists, compiled over the past three or four years for the following places:

- 1) Rowntree Mill Park, and adjacent area. Compiled by Peter Wukasch, Jerry and Bruce White.

A total of 176 birds have been recorded in the past few years in this area, including Upland Plover, Golden-winged Warbler, Western Meadowlark and Dickcissel.

- 2) West Pond - Rennie Park Ravine. Compiled by Herb Elliott over the past three years.

A total of 70 species, of which the nests of 23 species were found. The Mourning Dove and Spotted Sandpiper have both nested here very recently.

- 3) Northend of Grenadier Pond. Compiled by Vera Irving.

This list gives a total of 98 birds seen between May, 1975 and September, 1976 on the west side of the northern end of Grenadier Pond and from the garden of her house in Palisades Road, which is on the hillside above the Pond.

Lists of birds, of plants, and of trees for a particular area within Metro are valuable as evidence of the natural state of a park, ravine or section of a river valley at any particular time. The Environmental Group welcomes further lists from competent observers. Such information may be put to good use at short notice when a particular area is threatened with buildings, a new road, bridge, sewer or other potential damage.

..... Jack Cranmer-Byng.

NEW BOOK STORE OPENED IN TORONTO DEVOTED TO NATURE AND THE OUTDOOR LIFE

Birdwatchers, botanists, hikers and canoeists will all discover a wealth of information laid out in a comfortable setting. If you are wanting a book for yourself, or for a gift, we suggest you contact:

OPEN AIR BOOKS AND MAPS, 10 Adelaide Street East, Toronto (363-0719)

Present hours are: Weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

"WOODY" - THE GROUNDHOG - HER LONG WINTER NAP

(Ed. note: The first story on Woody appeared in the March, 1976 Newsletter. The following is a letter received from Mrs. Bea Wyer telling of the accident to her pet).

"In October the question that started going through my mind was: 'is Woody our pet groundhog going to go into hibernation or not?' She had been sleeping a lot more than usual the past few weeks. Also her eating had increased tremendously. Woody was still as playful as ever but seemed to tire more often and would climb up on my knee to fall asleep, which I didn't object to a bit.

I was very fond of her doing that as it made me feel as if she really trusted me not to harm her. I did not give Woody her daily bath after the cool weather came as I feared she might catch a chill, but I brushed her and applied baby oil to her fur. I've found out that a groundhog has very scaly hide, almost like a dandruff; by applying baby oil this condition is kept under control. Also it gets rid of any musky odor that is sometimes noticed.

In December when the heavy snow came to our place, I wondered what Woody would think of it, so I opened the patio door so she could go out on the sundeck which he was used to doing. Out she went, but didn't think very much about getting her feet cold in the snow. It wasn't long before she came running back into the house. I dried her feet off and left her to admire our Christmas tree. Between Woody and our two cats 'Spooky' and 'Chicko' I was kept busy replacing the ornaments that they knocked off in their playing. Each day I would make a small snowball and bring it in to the house for Woody to see; she would eat the snowballs as if they were a treat. Then on December 15th, I heard paper rustling near the Christmas tree; to my surprise here was Woody tearing the wrapping from the Christmas gifts and stuffing them into her mouth till it was so full she could hardly move. Away she'd go hardly able to see where she was walking for the paper and ribbon hanging out of her mouth. We followed her to see where she was heading. First the bedrooms - in the closets - under the china cabinet, then down the stairs to the basement. After putting the contents of her full jaws down in every spot she could find and then picking it all back up again each time she'd look for another spot. She left it and came back upstairs to see what else she could make a nest out of.

I assisted her by supplying odd bits of wool and rope. Everything I gave to Woody was bunched up with her front feet and pushed into her mouth. I could hardly believe how much she would cram in. Then after a couple of hours she didn't come upstairs again. We looked all over but couldn't see where she was. I was kind of worried after a month went by for fear she had died.

The end of January my husband started to paint the basement floors. Under the stairs was quite a space where he kept some motors; after moving a couple he noticed what looked almost like a beaver's dam made of everything you could imagine, including some of our summer clothing which was stored in plastic bags in the basement. Carefully we made a small hole to nearly the bottom to find Woody curled up in a ball sound asleep. I was so pleased to find her safe. The covering was left the way she had piled it and we put boards around the nest so the cats wouldn't get in to disturb her. All the floor was painted around Woody's nest and she did not stir at all. Then the next question that entered my mind was: 'will Woody remember us when she comes out of hibernation or be a vicious wild animal?'

On February 20th a rustling sound started to come from under the basement stairs. Within a few minutes out came sleepy-eyed Woody. Jack my husband came up to tell me. I ran down with some raisins and an apple in my hand. At first I was a bit nervous about handing it to her in case she'd forgotten me. Soon I had no fear at all, when Woody came over and started licking my slippers. Reaching down I picked her up and

hugged her. After she ate the raisins and apple that I held in my hand, I brought her upstairs for some warm milk and cat food. 'Boy was she ever hungry!' Her breakfast of milk, cat kibble, peanut butter and lots of water; when she finished eating she stretched her legs quite a bit then decided to play. Her back would hunch up and she'd chase the cats who loved to play with her. Woody would roll over on her back and try to grab the cats' tails as they walked by her. Up she'd jump and run over to me, climb up my slacks to rest in my arms. She just loved to be patted and have her ears rubbed.

I was very happy to know now that she hadn't forgotten me. Woody seemed very happy as she waddled all through the house looking at familiar things. After about an hour she gathered up some papers she found by the fireplace and cramming them into her mouth, climbed under the china cabinet. It is the most fascinating thing to watch Woody's actions. She sits up on her hind end so straight and with her front paws tears the paper up and pushes it into her mouth, then gathers some more paper or anything she can get, sits up and goes through the same motions till her mouth is absolutely packed. I sit and watch the whole procedure - it is so interesting. Each time she'd put the bedding under the cabinet she'd come out and over to see me again for some more affection and stroking.

Strangely after all this work she'd head back downstairs to the big nest she'd made, crawl in and sleep till the next morning, leaving all the nesting material she'd worked so hard to arrange still under the cabinet in the dining room. Three days have past since Woody first came out from her winter sleep and each morning she comes up at almost the same time 11: a.m. - eats, plays, puts some more paper, etc., under the cabinet then after approximately one hour in all, goes back to her nest for the rest of the day. How long she will do this I don't know. Warm greetings are waiting Woody every morning when she comes up for her visit and breakfast. Wonder if she knows how much I've missed her since she first settled into hibernation.

When her sleep time is over it will be bath time for her as her fur is very dull and scaly; also her tail is not nearly as bushy as it was, in fact she looks very straggly now. Hibernation must take a lot out of little creatures. Some more 'Tender Loving Care' will soon have Woody back in perfect shape again. My only regret is that I don't have a good camera to take inside pictures. If I did, some of the shots of Woody would be priceless."

This is the final chapter on Woody .. Mrs. Wyer wrote the following letter:

" Woody came out a few mornings and played happily then she missed a couple of days so I thought she'd gone back to sleep till the warmer weather came. She loved to climb up on a small chair I provided for her and lay on a cupboard in front of the basement window where the sun beamed in. While she was in hibernation we moved the chair away and changed the basement around to paint. Woody went to her usual sunny place and not finding the chair, tried to climb up the heavy wiring which connected to the electric heater. Her teeth must have gone through to the wires while trying to pull her heavy weight up to the window. When I found her she still was at the wires and I could see where her teeth had gone through. Her belly had several burns on it.

It is without a doubt the saddest day of my life. I will miss her more than anyone can possibly realize. Some may think I'm very foolish to be that way over a wild animal but to me she was like one of my children."

THE MIGRATION OF THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY

The August, 1976 issue of the 'National Geographic' contains a stunning article by Dr. Fred A. Urquhart, a Canadian Zoologist at the University of Toronto, who has been studying the migration and ecology of the Monarch butterfly since 1937. It is entitled: "Found at Last: the Monarch's Winter Home", and is accompanied by splendid colour photos and a map of North America showing the Monarchs' breeding range and the 20-acre enclave in Mexico where they winter. Members of the Club should be on the lookout for Monarch tagged with a pink label and if they find one collect it to Dr. Uquhart at the University of Toronto.

... Jack Cranmer-Byng.

HAD YOUR HOLIDAYS ??? LOOKING FORWARD TO THEM DURING THE WINTER MONTHS ???

You might find the following of interest :

Ontario Nature Tours offer:

Oct. 8 - 15 - Algonquin Autumn Visit	Dec. 25 - Jan 2 - Southern Florida
Oct.16 - 24 - Great Smokies Autumn Visit	Dec. 26 - Jan 9 - Hawaii Visit
Nov. 6 - 21 - Florida and the Everglades	Jan. 22-23/77 - Birding for Beginners
Nov.24 - Dec 1 - Cuba and the Isle of Pines	Mar. 19 - 27 - Coastal Texas Tour
Dec. 3 - 5 - Niagara River Bird Life	Apr. 2 - 16 - Arizona Tour
Dec.23 - Jan.2 - Trinidad and Tobago	May 23 - June - Galapagos

Sept - Oct, 1977 - Australia - New Zealand

(Gus Yaki, 6372 Montrose Road, Niagara Falls, Ontario or:
71 Thorncliffe Park Dr., # 511, Toronto Ont. M4H 1L3 (416) 421-4537

or something closer to home:

Environmental Experiences Club offer:

Oct.9 - 11 - Algonquin Backpacking (Highland Trail)
Jan. 28-30, 1977 - Dorset Winter Weekend No. 1
Feb. 26-28 " - Dorset Winter Weekend No. 2

and something to plan for:

Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick - June 26 - July 3, 1977
contact: 2 Nursewood Road, Apt. 11, Toronto Ont. (416) 699-9211

PRESIDENT'S UP-DATE "TORONTO THE GREEN"

During the summer I have received many responses to our latest publication -

"Toronto The Green"

Because of its obvious political implications municipalities and provincial ministries were made aware of our report. Myself and others have encouraged these agencies to comment on our publication. The response has been very favourable and quite extensive. You might be interested in the various groups which have responded. They are the: Borough of Etobicoke, Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Culture and Recreation, and the Ministry of the Environment.

To give you an indication of the importance of the Club's efforts in preserving Nature in Toronto, I offer the complete text of a letter sent to me in response to "Toronto the Green". The following letter is from P. G. Cockburn, Regional Director, Central Region, Ministry of the Environment

.....



Ontario

Ministry of the
Environment

Central Region

Suite 700
150 Ferrand Drive
Don Mills, Ontario
M3C 3C3
(416) 424-3000

July 9, 1976

Ronald C. Thorpe, President
Toronto Field Naturalists Club
217 Greer Road
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Mr. Thorpe:

I have reviewed your organization's publication 'Toronto the Green', which you recently provided to me. I wish to commend you and the Field Naturalists Club for the fine effort evident in this document.

The stated purpose of this effort is to increase public knowledge and appreciation of Toronto's natural areas. Wide circulation of this informative publication could greatly assist this purpose.

The recommendations appearing in chapter 6 are of particular interest to us. We share your concern that natural areas are increasingly threatened by the pressures of development in Metropolitan Toronto. Further, we appreciate that uniform and co-ordinated policy of various governments and agencies with common jurisdiction over these natural areas has often been lacking. To this end the first recommendation of your report is that policy aimed at conservation of natural areas be incorporated in Metro Toronto's Official Plan, as well as those of the municipalities in and around Metro. In our experience such general policies and statements of intent are very much in evidence in recent Official Plans. What has often been lacking is a comprehensive evaluation of such areas to clearly indicate their significance, and thus assist in implementing such policy. A clear and comprehensive evaluation of the environmental significance of natural areas greatly assists agencies such as our own by providing a factual basis to support such policy and recommend against development in or adjacent to natural areas. For these reasons we fully support the Toronto Field Naturalists in their intent to identify and evaluate specific areas of significance in and around Metropolitan Toronto.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this publication.

Yours truly,

P.G. Cockburn
Regional Director

REDISCOVERING THE DON

... by Helen Juhola

Few citizens of Toronto realize the valuable heritage of river valleys and ravines that Toronto possesses. I grew up close to the Don Valley and walked in it with my family every Sunday for almost twenty years. Until I read "TORONTO THE GREEN", I had not really had much understanding of the geology and history of the complex river valleys and ravine systems within Metropolitan Toronto. In discussing the publication with my father, we decided that the obvious project for us was to follow the Don River from its mouth to its source (or at least to the boundary of Metropolitan Toronto) and to explore all the ravines containing its tributaries within the Toronto area.

We examined our maps of the City and decided to follow the river by walking leisurely for no more than two or three hours at a time. This meant making eight approximately equal outings. Each outing was started where the previous one had ended. By the fifth day, however, the trip by subway and bus at the beginning and end of each day's walk was taking almost as much of our time as the walking so we began taking lunch with us. Also although we tried to prepare for each day's journey by consulting our maps, they did not tell us which side of the river it was better to follow, which bridges we could walk under and which we had to cross over, and where fences, high river banks, and tributaries would almost stop us.

Our adventure began on Monday, April 5, 1976 at 1:00 p.m. at the Cherry Street bridge where the Keating Channel and Lake Ontario meet. The bay was full of overwintering ducks, the sun shone, and the river itself was shallow and clear -- my first surprise. I had always thought the Don River was terribly deep, and had never seen it anything but muddy or coloured from industrial wastes. The first block to our progress along the west bank was a very low bridge over the Don River at its junction with Keating Channel. For anyone interested in bridges, the first lap of our journey included thirteen -- road bridges, railway bridges, an oil pipeline bridge, an abandoned bridge (to and from nowhere), a foot bridge, and the Prince Edward Viaduct which carries a subway line as well as vehicular traffic. This section of the valley (between the mouth of the river and Todmorden Mills at the foot of Pottery Road (off Broadview Avenue) also contains several historic sites, the most unchanged being Todmorden Mills, the site of one of the earliest settlements in the Toronto region.

The second lap of our journey (this time along the east bank of the river) took us from Todmorden Mills to the "forks" of the Don River where we had to make a rather daring scramble under a bridge to avoid fording the river or climbing a fence. The valley is so deep and wide in this section that we were able to observe geese swimming on the river while trains passed and the Don Valley Parkway suffered from one of its frequent tie-ups.

The third day we followed the east branch of the Don River from the "forks" to an area known for more than 100 years as Milne Hollow and now the busy intersection of the Don Valley Parkway and Lawrence Avenue. This whole stretch of the river had to be followed by walking on the railway tracks. The river which winds excessively in this section is bordered by willows, dogwoods, and poison ivy. Only Flemingdon Golf Course with its startling smooth green grass and the bridge across Eglinton Avenue interrupted the wild nature of this part of the Don Valley.

The fourth day we followed the river from Lawrence Avenue to Sheppard Avenue. Following the river meant traversing the Donalds Golf Club grounds and later crossing under Highway 401. North of the golf club the valley begins to flatten out so that where the river flows under the highway there is almost no valley to walk in and the bridge over the river seems even wider than it really is.

The fifth day we followed the river from Sheppard Avenue to Steeles Avenue. As we walked north the river meandered more and the valley became open meadowland. Also the river branches at Cummer Avenue so that we had to decide whether to follow the east branch or the west branch of the east branch of the Don River. We chose to follow the west branch. That was the day we got into the mud. The river looked harmless, but the banks were slippery. Yes, there really is quicksand in the Don Valley!

Day 6 found us back at the "forks" of the Don ready to follow the west branch to Lawrence Avenue -- Metropolitan Toronto parkland (mown grass and asphalt paths) almost all the way. We climbed out of the valley that day through the Glendon campus grounds where we saw our first warbler of the spring.

On the seventh day we followed the river from Glendon campus to Sheppard Avenue -- through the Rosedale Golf and Country Club, along some city streets, across Yonge Street at York Mills Road. (The river here flows through a cement-lined ditch and it takes some imagination to remember this is the area known formerly as Hoggs Hollow. Next we had to walk through the Don Valley Golf Club where a sign said "Trespassers may be prosecuted". We thought about that while we walked. North of the golf course we followed the river through the Earle Bales Park, until recently another golf course (York Downs).

The eighth and final day we followed the river from Sheppard Avenue to Steeles Avenue. For the second time we found the river flowing through a cement-lined ditch past houses located in the valley. Suddenly we were into a very wild and beautiful section of the river valley. Trees grew right to the water's edge and the river sparkled and splashed. We had walked through a private estate. At the north end of this section signs said "private property - no trespassing", but we were through by then. From Bathurst Street we continued north and west. Although the river is dammed at Bathurst Street one wonders why because the river north of here is very shallow -- which was lucky for us as we had to cross it on stepping stones three times that afternoon. Finally we reached the almost empty G. Ross Lord Dam and Reservoir at Finch Avenue. From here the river flows through undeveloped parkland to Steeles Avenue.

During our leisurely explorations we saw evidence of previous occupation of the valley by farms and mills. Now the valley contains railroads, highways, sewers, pipelines, some industry, and a few homes. We observed Ryerson students surveying, students from East York making maple syrup, North York students enjoying outdoor education. We saw joggers, dog walkers, golfers, and bird watchers.

Among the animals that we observed were groundhogs, squirrels, muskrats, 1 chipmunk, 1 dead skunk, many raccoon tracks, 1 garter snake, tadpoles, snails, butterflies, midges, and 33 kinds of birds.

As we walked north and the spring season progressed, we saw more and more native wildflowers -- carpets of violets, trout lilies, trilliums, wild ginger, wild leek, and ferns and many introduced species of plants such as crack willows, Norway spruce, Chinese elm, apple trees, ground ivy, coltsfoot, black swallowwort, teasel and parsnips.

We noted with sadness the deeply eroded routes where motorbikes had travelled, unnecessary destruction of trees by vandals, rubble from construction sites, numerous landslides where buildings had been built too close to the edge of the valley and all the vegetation lost, litter left by thoughtless people, abandoned tires, and piles of blackened snow dumped by the City.

However, we also noted with great pleasure how much cleaner the river itself was than we had remembered, how many and how beautiful the park areas within the valley were, the many areas of forested slopes, and the pair of mallards at every turn of the river. (We couldn't decide if it was always the same pair leading us on or if there were scores of mallards living along the river).

It is most impressive to think that in eight outings through relatively wild areas we had traversed one of the largest cities in Canada. Our appreciation of Toronto has increased immensely. We are looking forward to completing our explorations of the tributaries of the Don River -- and then there is Etobicoke Creek, Mimico Creek, the Humber River, Highland Creek, and the Rouge River.

SUNDAY WOODBINE BRIDGE RAVINE - Environmental Action Walk
OCT.17 Leaders: Helen Juhola and Linda Cardini
10:00 a.m. Meet at the corner of Woodbine Avenue and O'Connor Drive. Take the
 Woodbine bus north from Bloor Street Suhway to Woodbine Bridge.
 Morning only.

A survey of ravine lands that are scheduled to be redeveloped. It's not too late to protest. Come and learn about the area, and what you can do to keep Toronto green.

WOODBINE BRIDGE RAVINE

What began as a typical Club ravine study is turning into a protest to save this area from two subdivision proposals. The lands currently have 5 houses on large lots backing onto Taylor Creek Park. The proposals would put 46 houses on the area, would involve excavating slopes and destruction of most of the trees. The first subdivision has received draft approval by all officials, but the Club is filing an objection to it with the Minister of Housing. The Club's protest is a natural outgrowth of the recommendations in its recent publication "Toronto the Green".

A tour of the area will be held on Sunday October 17 to see the site.

BOOKS OF INTEREST

Nature in the Urban Landscape: A Study of City Ecosystems by Don Gill and Penelope Bonnett, published by York Press of Baltimore in 1973.

This thought-provoking and informative book contains chapters on the characteristics of urban flora and fauna and the management of urban wildlife habitat. Examples given are for London and Los Angeles but with many Canadian examples included as well. A glossary, bibliography, index, and list of common and scientific names of species referred to makes this book useful.

Man in Nature: Historical Perspectives on Man in His Environment, edited by Louis D. Levine, published by the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in 1975.

This collection of seven essays was originally prepared for a lecture series given by members of the Royal Ontario Museum staff. The authors examine attitudes toward the environment of the Prehistoric Near Eastern, Ancient Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, North American Indian, and Mesoamerican Mayan civilization and how each civilization met or failed to meet the challenge of increasing population and decreasing natural resources. The book is illustrated with maps, photos, and drawings, and each author has included suggestions for further reading.

EASTERN HEADLAND OR AQUATIC PARK

There has been considerable media information issued pertaining to an area at the foot of Leslie Street, which is referred to as Aquatic Park or the Eastern Headland. As this project is the largest of its kind in Ontario, and possibly in Canada, and as it has a major interest to naturalists, we felt our members would be interested in knowing what is happening in this area.

Aquatic Park, or Eastern Headland as it is sometimes called, is a man-made peninsula of land at foot of Leslie Street which protrudes into the lake for a distance of over 2½ miles. It covers a total area of about 550 acres between its connection with the mainland at the foot of Leslie Street and the existing shoreline referred to as Cherry Beach. Of the total 550 acres, there is about 250 acres of land - the difference being sheltered bays.

The Toronto Harbour Commissioners began building this peninsula seventeen years ago as part of their plans for the expansion of a new port area for the City of Toronto. Four years ago, the Harbour Commissioners presented a plan for its use as a park.

The Central Waterfront Planning Committee, an Inter Agency Co-ordinating Committee, was established to make recommendations on plans and policies for the Central Waterfront. The Aquatic Park falls within the geographic area of this Committee and a Port and Outer Harbour Area Task Group was set up to make planning recommendations to the Central Waterfront Planning Committee. The Planning Committee and Task Group have permanent members representing Industry, Board of Trade, City Council, Conservation Council of Ontario, etc. The Toronto Field Naturalist Club has a member on both C.W.P.C. (David Morin) and P.O.H.A.T. (Doug Gardiner).

There have been over 150 proposed uses for Aquatic Park, including sailing, water skiing, playgrounds, camping, amusement parks, rifle ranges, tennis, etc. Your Club has submitted several presentations on behalf of its members and a concerted effort made to retain as much of the park as possible in a natural state. It is our belief that Aquatic Park should look like no other Metropolitan Park.

It is possible that intensive use areas will have the usual appearance of trees and grass lawns, however, it is our proposal that much of the Park be covered with dune grasses, willows, dogwood and alder. Cattails and rushes would grow in wet pools which have formed behind sand or pebble beaches and the weather and changing seasons would help make the Aquatic Park into an urban park unlike any other on the Metropolitan Waterfront.

A significant proposal we have made on your behalf is the establishment of a Wildlife Area at the extreme south tip of the Park. This area would cover an area of about 50 acres and would serve as a wildlife and nature interpretation area involving the creation of distinctive natural ecotypes. Current inventories by our Club members indicate that a unique flora and fauna is developing on the Aquatic Park site. Our recent field observations show that the shoreline and the lagoon areas in their present state are probably the finest bird areas along the entire waterfront.

Although the park is still in its planning stage, it is not too soon for us to collect information concerning the flora and fauna which is currently present and monitor these areas as time progresses. If each of us would take a few minutes of time to record what we see when we visit this area, it will provide invaluable information to your representatives on the C.W.P.C. and P.O.H.A.T. committees. Your Club will set up, as soon as possible, the necessary communication method to gather the information our members have collected.

If you have not seen this area, drop by on a Sunday afternoon or look out at it from a tall office window - it's one-third the size of all the Toronto Islands. This is a major project and we'd like to provide our members with a unique opportunity to enjoy their chosen avocation or hobby - will you help us? contact: D. A. GARDINER,

YES IT IS! - NO IT ISN'T!

... by Adrian Trembling

Sunday, September 12th, four T.F.N. birdwatchers and myself find a small tern lying on the sand towards the end of the Leslie Land Spit. Its lack of long, forked tail feathers catches our attention. After 15 minutes of deliberation we come to the conclusion that it could be a Least Tern, the first specimen ever found in Ontario.

Early Monday afternoon I set off for the Royal Ontario Museum, after our stiff discovery is barred from a further stay in the family freezer, even though it is wrapped in a good half-dozen sandwich bags. (yes, sandwich bags. I did say it was small).

On arrival, I ask the museum receptionist whether I can speak to anyone in the bird department. She says she'll phone, and asks what to say. I tell her I have a bird skin.

"A skin" she repeats. "Skinned?"

"No, a skin. But not a skinned skin".

This eludes her.

"Look, I think you'd better talk to them yourself".

I comply, and soon I'm on my way up to the third floor.

Two people are waiting in room 209. A copy of 'Birds of North America' lies open nearby. Least Tern heads the page. Taking the bird, one of the eager waiters exclaims, "It could well be!". He leads the way down a hall containing specimens and I follow. The appropriate cupboard is opened and the drawers slide out.

Small, yes. Yellowish legs, yes. Unforked tail, yes. Least Tern, No.

With a comparison of the beaks, he tries to soften the blow of my disappointment. I mumble back, trying to soften the blow of his. As I leave, the second person notes, "You had him very excited!" "He had me very excited," I reply.

Downstairs again. The guard leans over. You got it to them all right did you? What was it?"

I address my collar, "Yes, I did. A Common Tern".

"Oh yes? Was it then. That's nice".

No it wasn't.

NOTE - for my fellow discoverers: The tail of a Common Tern does not grow until quite late in its development. It might not be a bad idea for T.F.N. members to add a note of this to their Field Guides, as neither 'Peterson's' nor 'Birds of North America' indicate this.

'DID YOU KNOW' items from the Bird Group

Ducks travel in a dive approximately 1 to 2 feet per second. For an Old Squaw which dives the deepest of ducks to go 200 feet, which they sometimes do and back to the surface, it would take 6 minutes. Sure a long time to hold your breath.

What Eskimos like better than candy? They bite off the knob on King Eiders beak.

Decoy -- comes from a Dutch word 'endekoy' meaning duck cage.