



TFC Midwinter Waterfowl Survey P 8-9
Birding in Hawaii - P-13
First Spring Flowers - P 14-15
Birding in St Lucia P-18

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Number 306

March 1977

Visitors welcome!

MARCH MEETING

Monday March 7, 1977, at 8:15 p.m.
at
252 Bloor Street West

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

Speaker: Dr. Peter Peach

Topic: It's up to our kids

Dr. Peach is a professor of Geology at Brock University in St. Catherines, and this year is vice-president of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. He will address us in his own informative and entertaining style, stressing the importance of outdoor education in our schools. Never has it been more important that our future citizens have an appreciative and conserving attitude toward our natural heritage.

Apr. Meeting: Monday, April 4, 1977

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM

Thursday, March 17 Bird Islands of the North Atlantic with Stephen Kress
8:15 p.m. at The Eaton Auditorium, 440 Yonge St.
Single tickets \$2.50; Student tickets \$1.25

LONG POINT (BUS OUTING) Saturday, March 26

An opportunity to see the Whistling Swans and other waterfowl. Reserve your place on the bus by phoning Eva Hunt at 221-6303 March 12-18. Confirm by sending the fare (\$7.00 payable to the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club) to Eva Hunt, 271 Hounslow Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2N 2B7. Cheques for this outing must be received by March 22. Bring lunch. There will be one pick-up at Bloor and Yonge (at subway entrance near Bay Store) at 8:00 a.m. Bus will arrive back in Toronto around 5:30 p.m. Leaders: Ruth & Eric Lewis

Note: To determine the number of buses to be chartered for TFNC outings, advance registration is required and cash can not be accepted on buses. Drivers go west from Port Rowan to Hwy. 59 and south on the causeway to the bridge. Meet at 10:00 a.m.

Junior Club
 Saturday
 March 5
 10:00 a.m.

Meet in the Theatre of the Royal Ontario Museum from 10 to 12.
 Membership is open to boys and girls from 8 to 16 years of age.
 This meeting will be presented by the Ecology Group.

Director: Lynn Scanlan 488-8321

Ravine Group
 Wednesday
 March 9
 8:00 p.m.

How to Conduct a Ravine Survey: discussion and slides
 Meet at Huron Street Public School, 541 Huron Street (north of
 Bloor, west of St. George St.)

Chairman: Jack Cranmer-Byng 488-3262

Botany Group
 Tuesday
 March 15
 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Bill Freedman of the Botany Dept. U. of T. will show slide
 studies of the Mackenzie Delta areas of the Northwest Territories.
 Meet in the cafeteria in the basement of Hodgson Public School
 on Davisville Avenue just east of Mount Pleasant Road. Enter
 the school at the east end. (Parking is available in the
 schoolyard. Enter from Millwood Road one block north of
 Davisville Avenue.)

Chairman: West Hancock 757-5518

Bird Group
 Wednesday
 March 23
 8:00 p.m.

Dr. Eric Single has recently moved here from New York where he
 was editor of the Journal of the Hawk Migration Association of
 North America. Eric will talk to us about migrating raptors,
 show us slides of hawks and falcons, and tell us how to identify
 the different species. Let us all learn how to identify these
 birds and become experts in the field. Meet in St. James Bond
 United Church on Avenue Road just north of Eglinton Avenue.

Chairman: Red Mason 621-3905

OUTINGS FOR MARCH

Outings are held rain or shine. Visitors are welcome.

Sun. Mar. 6
 12:00 noon

Owl Hunt, Leaders: Red Mason & Jerry White
 Starting from the intersection of Airport Rd. and Derry Rd.
 lights in Malton, go west on Derry Rd. to first entrance into
 airport property. Turn left into Skyport area (big hangar
 with sign) and meet in parking lot. Bring something to munch
 on as we may have to stall till dusk to see the Screech Owls.
 Arrange to double up so we do not have too many cars in the
 caravan. We will be looking for any or all of the nine species
 seen here. How many will we see?

March 12-18

Time to reserve your place on the bus to Long Point. Call
 Eva Hunt 221-6303.

Sun. Mar. 13
 2:00 p.m.

Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Leader: Bruce Parker, Trees in Winter
 Meet at the entrance on the east side of Yonge St. 0.3 mi. north
 of St. Clair Ave. (subway).

Sat. Mar. 19
 9:00 a.m.

Lambton Woods, Leader: Peter Wukash, Birds
 Meet in the parking lot of James Gardens. (Take Royal York bus
 from Subway to Edenbridge Dr. and walk east 0.14 mi.)
 Lunch optional.

Sat. Mar. 26

Long Point Bus Outing (see page 1)

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

My message this month mainly concerns environmental issues of interest to all naturalists.

Late last year we learned that the Ontario Falconers are pressing the provincial government for a relaxation or repeal of present controls that prevent the ownership or possession of Ontario's birds of prey. I suspect the authorities are evaluating the public's reactions; and if there is little expression of public opposition, one might well expect such relaxation to begin. The future of this issue depends largely upon how strongly naturalists are willing to make their personal point of view known to the province. Accordingly, I urge you to instruct the government that a relaxation of these controls should not be permitted. The best way of doing this would be to write a letter to either

The Honourable William Davis, Premier of Ontario, Queens Park, Toronto
or The Honourable Frank Miller, Ont. Minister of Natural Resources, Queens Park

Your letters will be most effective if they contain specific questions to be answered so that the use of a form-letter answer is impossible. For further information on this subject read The Globe and Mail (Dec. 22/76): "Naturalists' Brief Opposes Relaxing Falconry Rules" by Eric Single, or call Red Mason at 671-4144.

The second issue concerns the Elora Gorge. See "On Standing" by John Swaigen in the Ontario Naturalist (Sept./Oct. 1976) or "An Old Law is Lost" by Marc C. Denhez in the Globe and Mail (Jan. 27/77) for a discussion of the issues involved. Letters about this issue should be sent to either the Premier of Ontario or to the Minister of the Environment. It might also be useful to write your own provincial member of parliament.

The third issue concerns the central Toronto waterfront. For two years now our club has been sending representatives to the Central Waterfront Planning Committee, and members have been submitting plant and animal lists to our representatives. Then in December 1976, Mayor Crombie, at a public meeting, introduced the members of the Central Waterfront Planning Committee and an environmental consultant who revealed how the information gathered about the waterfront area can be used to plan intelligently and sensitively for this important environment. No actual plans for the waterfront have been approved. Before any plan can be approved, the data gathered must be applied to discover the best possible use of any particular area. Meanwhile, from the information gathered, the fact has emerged that the Leslie Street Spit is an outstanding natural area excelled only by Long Point and Point Pelee. However, it has now come to the attention of our representatives on the CWCP that the Toronto Harbour Commission has been destroying valuable natural habitat on the spit by covering the sandy areas and natural vegetation with truck fill in preparation for an unapproved plan for marinas in the area. See the Globe and Mail (Feb. 4/77): "Do we want wall to wall boats?" by Colin Vaughan. Members are urged to read the article and write letters to any or all of the following: praising the intent of the environmental approach to planning and condemning the action of the Toronto Harbour Commission in thwarting this method of planning.

Mayor Crombie, City Hall, Toronto

Globe and Mail, Editor, 444 Front Street West, Toronto

Toronto Harbour Commission, Toronto Star Building, 1 Yonge Street, Toronto
Central Waterfront Planning Site Office, 235 Queen's Quay West, Toronto

Ron Thorpe

HELP WANTED

► a Chartered Accountant to volunteer to do the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club audit — the time involved would approximate 30 to 40 hours annually. Please call Ron Thorpe at 484-1807.

IN THE EDITOR'S MAIL

from Diana Banville in Mombasa, Kenya, a letter "...I promised so many people reports on the life here ... I'm having the very opposite weather to what you're having in Toronto -- quite too hot. I try to stay out of the sun or even indoors much of the day...hope to see everybody much later in the year", and a page of drawings of garden birds of Kenya with an accompanying article that makes "as many comparisons with Ontario wildlife and plants etc. as I can" (to be published in the April newsletter)

from Lois James (284-6409) of Save the Rouge Valley System, an announcement that "Ryerson Urban Studies Department will undertake an extensive study of the Rouge River Watershed".

from Jack Cramner-Byng, a copy of Bulletin containing an article by Professor Douglas H. Pimlott of the Faculty of Forestry and Landscape Architecture, Innis College and the Department of Zoology. The article is an address made to the University of Toronto Alumni Association, and is "Canadians and the Arctic: the saga of Mighty Mouse and two elephants".

from EMS Information Team, Fisheries and Environment Canada, Ottawa, Ont. K1A OH3, six free information sheets about water: Nature's Most Versatile Substance, Where and in What Form?, Its Use in Canada, Too Little or Too Much?, Development and Conservation, Cleaning up Pollution.

IN THE NEWS

from the Toronto Sun (Jan.4/77): "Metro's Ravines Face Destruction" by David Thompson Both Henry Fletcher, a director of the TFNC, and R.J. Bower, Metro Planning Commissioner, talk about the need for a short-term valley land study.

from the Globe and Mail (Jan.26/77): "Toronto the Green Strollers' Delight" by Mary Kibblewhite; an excellent review of our most recent publication

from the Globe and Mail (Jan. 27/77): "Whooper Flock Climbs to 99, Museum Says — There are 99 whooping cranes in the world, the highest number since a conservation program began in 1961, the Saskatchewan Museum of Nature says...In 1939 there were only 14 known whooping cranes."

from the Globe and Mail (Jan.27/77): "Salty-tongued One Could Say" by Dick Beddoes; an article about the excessive use of salt on the roads this winter.
Ed. note: Anyone wanting to discuss this matter further should call the Metro Roads and Traffic Dept. at 751-3639 and/or their own borough Roads Dept.
City (367-7737), East York (461-9451), Etobicoke (626-4171),
North York (225-4611), Scarborough (438-7372), York (789-4528)

from the Globe and Mail (Jan.1977) by Zena Cherry: "Speaking of books, the Toronto Human Society is establishing an animal library available to the public. If you have any animal literature you would care to donate, the address is 11 Wellesley St. West Toronto M4Y 1E9

COMING SOON

- March: publication of our "Spring Outings Booklet"
- April: publication of "A Guide to the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve"
- May 14: official dedication of the shelter at our nature reserve
- May 15: a program of Jim Baillie Memorial Nature Walks

TORONTO ISLAND AIRPORT STUDY

A study is underway to evaluate future uses for the Toronto Island Airport (TIA) site. More than a year ago the Toronto Harbour Commission indicated that the airport has been operating at a substantial deficit and that the present operation is due to be terminated.

Three primary alternatives were proposed for the TIA site:

- 1) to somehow continue operation as a private airport
- 2) to begin operating as a commercial stolport
- 3) to be converted to a different use; for example, housing or recreation

The TFNC has stated strong opposition to the creation of any type of commercial airport; and further, if present operation could not be continued, the site should be utilized for passive recreation activities, recognizing the site's strategic location and unique potential as habitat for a wide variety of bird and plant species.

The final cycle of public participation will begin in April with a series of workshops held by the public participation consultant, and a public conference will be held in May. A schedule of dates and locations for the workshops and conference will be published in the next newsletter.

It is expected that all the various technical reports produced during the study will be completed and available by March 18. Members who want to receive summaries of these reports or obtain further information can do so by writing:

► Earl Berger Limited, 47 Colbourne St., Suite 206, Toronto, Ont. M5E 1E3

It would be very timely if members concerned about this issue would write to Earl Berger Ltd. stating your concerns and in particular recording your opposition to the conversion of this unique site to any form of commercial airport, since jetports and parkland just don't mix.

Dave Morin, TFNC representative
Central Waterfront Planning Committee

ROYAL CANADIAN INSTITUTE LECTURE PROGRAMME

Saturday evening lectures are held at 8:15 p.m. in Convocation Hall, University of Toronto. Lectures are free to the public as is the parking on the campus of the University. For further information, apply to the Secretary, 191 College Street, Toronto, Ont. M5T 1P7, or telephone 922-2804.

- | | |
|----------|---|
| March 5 | <u>The Joints that allow us to stand and look ahead</u>
an illustrated lecture by Edward H. Simmons, Associate Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto. Chief of Orthopaedic Surgery, The Toronto East General and Orthopaedic Hospital |
| March 12 | <u>Canadian Space Programme</u>
an illustrated lecture by David A. Golden, President and Chief Executive Officer, Telesat Canada, Ottawa |
| March 19 | <u>Canadian Air Flight</u>
an illustrated lecture by Alan C. Frosst, Director of Research Services, President of the Centre for Applied Research and Engineering Design, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont. |

THE JIM BAILLIE NATURE RESERVE — THE STORY OF THE PURCHASE

If I were asked to name the most dramatic week in my life, I would probably pick the week starting March 29, 1970. My two-year term as president of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club was nearly over; the last meeting of the Board of Directors was to be held at my home that Wednesday. The big issue in the preceding decade had been: should the club buy property, and if so, what kind of property? Now after nearly ten years of discourse, we still had no property.

While most of our members probably wanted to have a nature reserve, we all had doubts about our ability to raise enough money. Finally, after a great amount of argument at executive meetings, we decided that the club should buy a limited use nature reserve, not a recreational area.

At the beginning of the dramatic week of March 29 I had given up all hope of finding a suitable property. Our attempts at finding a suitable area near Toronto had been unsuccessful; we had looked at very few places, and all seemed beyond our resources.

Progress had been made in preparing for a possible purchase however. Our financial position was good. The club had applied for and received recognition as a charitable organization authorized to issue official receipts to make donations deductible for income tax purposes. This is vital for raising money. Also, the club was fortunate in having legal talent in its membership, which made it easy for us to proceed with incorporation. The club was now a corporation without share capital, and thus legally entitled to own land.

When I arrived home after work on Tuesday March 31, a message was waiting for me: I was to phone Fred Bodsworth, a former president of the club. When I phoned him, he told me that he had received a call from Ian Adams, a fellow author who had been trying for some time to sell 60 acres from his 100-acre property north of Uxbridge. Although Ian had met Fred on only one occasion, he remembered that Fred belonged to a nature club, and was anxious to sell to someone who would keep the property in its natural state.

I obtained the number from Fred, phoned Uxbridge, and arranged with Ian Adams to visit the property the following Saturday. At the meeting of the Board of Directors the following evening, I obtained the authority to take out an option on the property if I thought it advisable.

On Saturday April 4 Fred and Margaret Bodsworth drove me to Uxbridge while my wife Mary stayed home to attend to our older son who had chicken pox. I still remember the final lap of our journey down that narrow, snow-covered road where two people waited for us at the bridge. One of them was Ian Adams; the other was his visitor, Farley Mowat. I felt rather out of place with three authors!

Although there was almost a foot of snow on the ground, we struggled over the rough trails to view as much of the property as possible before lunch. It was difficult to judge the suitability of the land as it was so covered with snow.

We had lunch with the Adams and the Mowats in the Adams' impressive house — it is constructed from two separate log houses moved piece by piece from other locations.

During lunch, Farley Mowat entertained us with hilarious tales. He suggested that the best way to keep people out of the property was to post tiny signs near the bottoms of tree trunks saying "Beware of poisonous snakes". He asked what

use we might make of the property, and when I suggested that we might, among other projects, conduct a breeding bird census, he said that we were just a bunch of peeping toms.

After lunch we worked out an option agreement. Fortunately I had attended a seminar on nature reserves sponsored by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists at which options were discussed, and I had a standard option form with me. An option to buy property is simply an agreement between the seller and the prospective buyer. For an agreed-upon sum of money, often quite small, the seller agrees to give the buyer a certain number of days in which to reach a decision and raise the necessary money. During this time, the seller cannot sell to anyone else, even if offered more money. At any time within the period of the option, the buyer can purchase the property at the agreed price. If the buyer fails to do so within the time limit, the seller can then sell to anyone else, and the buyer loses the money paid for the option.

We agreed on a period of 60 days, and a price of \$18,000, the same amount per acre as Ian Adams had originally paid for the property. However, there was a stipulation — we could not erect any buildings on the property as long as Ian Adams owned the adjacent 40 acres across the brook. Also he was to have the first chance to buy the property back if we decided to sell. He agreed to give us this option upon payment of ten dollars.

It was not until I got home that I realized that I had forgotten to pay the ten dollars! I phoned back to say that I would mail a cheque, but actually it probably didn't matter because he was anxious to sell to us and would likely have honoured the option agreement even if it had been entirely verbal.

The following weekend the annual meeting of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists was held in Hamilton so no attempt was made to visit the property. The next Saturday, April 18, my wife and I took a few members of the Board of Directors to see the property. This time we left our younger son at home with the chicken pox in the care of his grandmother. On Saturday April 25 I conducted more board members around the property. The reaction of the board was generally favourable, but it was decided that the final decision should be deferred until the new president and several new board members took office. There was little doubt as to the outcome, and when the new board met, the historic decision was made which resulted in the purchase of what is now known as the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve.

Some time later I was pleasantly surprised to receive a cheque for ten dollars from the club treasurer reimbursing me for the option payment.

Jack Gingrich

HELP WANTED

- someone with access to a router to make a sign (similar to the ones for provincial parks) for the entrance to the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve
- someone able to construct two picnic tables for the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve .

Volunteers please call either John ten Bruggenkate at 425-6096 or John Lowe-Wylde at 284-5628

OF FOG AND FUZZY FORMS

Your editor say it is not enough to just publish the summary of the wildfowl inventory. What was it like? Why do we do it? She's right, of course, even if this year's weather invited some impolite responses to those questions. (Why do we do it? Heaven only knows!)

It all started over 30 years ago when the Canadian Wildlife Service wanted accurate inventories to enable them to set bag limits for waterfowl hunting. At that time it was a cooperative Federal-Provincial arrangement, but after a while both the CWS and the Province lost interest. By that time we had twenty years of consecutive inventories, and we felt that it would be a pity to discontinue them. Recently there has been a reawakening of official interest, and the Province is once more using our results, although for other purposes than setting bag limits!

The usual count-day is the second Sunday of the year, and Gord Bellerby says I have an unnerving knack of picking one of the worst days of the winter. We certainly have had some atrocious weather, from freezing rain, snow, and bitter cold to torrential downpours. However, two years ago it was more like spring, and on my own route we had two Carolina Wrens singing, and Tufted Titmice at the Gunn's feeder as we romped through the count in record time with the ducks sitting placidly on an unruffled lake.

This year was even faster. We finished by lunch time. The conditions, however, were very different. We arrived at Bronte harbour to find it completely frozen for the first time in my recollection on the count. The lake mist was so heavy that a pair of Mute Swans loomed up like something out of a set for Swan Lake, and much time was devoted to speculating on the possible identity of shadowy forms.

One of the standing jokes of our route — we have all been covering it for years — is that Doug Corbridge has a special brand of coffee which invariably will produce something exotic after a mugful or two. But it didn't work this year, and my complacent comment about the mist "always rising by 10:30 or so" failed to come true. The mist was still heavy by the end of the census.

So that is what this year's count was like: bitterly cold, not very productive, and very short.

Clive Goodwin

MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY

Routes and Observers

1. Whitby to Rouge River: J.M. Speirs, C. Beldan, M. Herman
2. Rouge River to Coatsworth Cut: F. Bodsworth, B. Parker, A. Dobson, M. Bodsworth
3. Leslie St. to Cherry Beach: G. Fairfield, W. Freedman, G. Lambert, S. Mackay
4. Toronto Islands, Eastern Gap: J. Kelley, R. Gerras
5. Parliament St. to South Humber mouth: G. Bellerby, E. & K. Carmichael
6. Humber to Watersedge Park: D. Perks, J. Lamey, E. Single
7. Clarkson to Bronte: C.E. & J.E. Goodwin, C. Corbridge

For copies of the "Rare Bird Report Form", contact Mr. Clive Goodwin,
11 Westbank Crescent, Weston, Ont. M9P 1S4.

TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY

ROUTE NUMBER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTALS
Mute Swan			5			2	8	15
Canada Goose	170	153	280	165	426	199	111	1504
Snow Goose						1		1
Mallard	868	203	118	480	1089	970	681	4409
Black Duck	23	199	19	4	104	146	251	746
Gadwall			10	4		8	11	33
Pintail						1	1	2
Green-winged Teal	2							2
American Wigeon	1					4		5
Wood Duck	1							1
Redhead			18	16			50	84
Canvasback			20		6			26
Greater Scaup		6	393	47	674	1685	1047	3852
Common Goldeneye	64	68	27	7	123	84	159	532
Bufflehead		5	30	38	126	54	45	298
Oldsquaw		215	261	127	158	1200	67	2028
Harlequin Duck					1	1		2
Black Scoter					1			1
Common Merganser	55	3	3		1	4		66
Red-breaster Merganser	1							1
American Coot							1	1
TOTALS	1185	852	1184	888	2709	4355	2436	13609

Time and weather: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

-16°C, lakemist throughout, sunny, 5 mph north wind, sheltered water frozen
January 9, 1977

Compiled by: Clive E. Goodwin

MAKE A NOTE OF IT

Two requests in the TFNC newsletter of February left me in stunned amazement. On page 5, with reference to a previous request for reports of bird movement, Clive Goodwin wrote: "... more records of every kind are needed. So please send yours in". And on page 8, Doug Gardiner, in his request for bird observations on the Eastern Headland, wrote: "... please take a moment to write down any bird you see and the date".

I am stupefied that anyone can study any branch of natural history and not make notes of observations. In respect to birds, the branch that interests most people: has birding degenerated into nothing more than a mad circus, a sort of whirling dervish sport where the only secretarial effort is to tick a name on a card?

I can't speak for all the crowd from my early birding days. Only Jim Baillie showed me his journals. I know that another half dozen must have kept records as they provided me with vital information obviously copied from their notes. Remarks by others indicated that they too had committed observations to paper.

The results of the observations of the field men of the thirties and forties were kept neatly documented in ROMZ; they ranged from a chronological file of checking cards through a data file of nesting locations and other information. I worked on both, particularly transferring nest localities to maps, but also completing a compilation of migration records. During some research at the Royal Ontario Museum a few years ago, my request for these files was met with blank stares. Yet those files which originated from the field notes and collections of the men who blazed the trail for me and you are now, apparently, considered dispensable and inconsequential. Perhaps their having been relegated to the incinerator has influenced the present crop of birders who feel the effort of notekeeping is of no lasting value. But it is of value!

Many records tantalized us; for example, I once questioned the absence of the White-fronted Goose from the list of Toronto's birds. Several references were to one record, all of them nebulous to be true, but worthy of investigation. Finally John Townson, a highly respected amateur ornithologist and contemporary of J.H. Fleming, W.E. Saunders, Hubert H. Brown, and Dr. W. Brodie, was consulted. "The record", came his reply over the phone in Jim Baillie's office, "is good. But I can give you no data on it". Townson's word was enough. The goose was on the next list although it is not on now because someone did not take a moment to jot down the particulars when he either saw it or shot it.

Dave Brewer is currently writing a history of the birds of Wellington County to be presented at the April convention of the FON in Guelph. "We hope", said Dave, "to show changes in population". Such changes cannot be demonstrated unless the historian has access to the records of the past. If you don't keep such records you are letting future birders as well as your contemporaries down.

One important attitude to keep in mind if you are an historian is: if you receive data from a fellow observer, be sure to acknowledge it. (It is to be hoped this lesson percolates the Goodwin and Gardiner minds.) The information may be worthless but it was prepared perhaps at some expense of time and was, further, submitted at your request. I'm still awaiting such acknowledgements from more than one compiler, and have been waiting now for many years. Obviously the next time one of those persons, all strangers to me, makes such a request, you can rest assured he'll get a typical "Archie Bunker" rejection.

There is another thing to consider. You can't fill in blanks and gaps from memory. Had I started even the skimpiest kind of note-keeping when an interest in birds was first manifest, I'd now have records dating back to 1920, possibly even earlier. Detailed notes do take time, painfully evident when my practice became too time-consuming in the fifties and early sixties. When I see that fifteen-year hiatus in my records now, I could break down the wall in sheer frustration. Fragmentary notes of observations important to me and perhaps even to you are all I have. That, and memories too uncertain to commit to paper. Certainly memories without data.

Take it from an old-timer. Without records you, in the words of the public school student, will be sorry!

William C. Mansell

THE STRANGER WHO DROPPED IN FROM THE COLD

On the final day of 1976 I was awakened by the sound of rustling paper emanating from my living room. Knowing that no presents had been left unwrapped, I thought that perhaps my pet hound was snouting through some back issues of the Naturalists' Newsletters searching for reports of grouse sightings.

Like the mythical homeowner who rose from his bed "to see what was the matter", I decided to investigate. Upon entering my hall I was greeted by two large, yellow, saucer-like eyes belonging to a small grey creature. As I crept closer I realized the cowering beast was a small, rather frightened owl!

I cupped it in my hands and stroked it gently. Eventually it curled its talons around my index finger, cautiously closed one eye, and laid back its petit feathery ears.

Its height and wingspan were approximately eight and twenty inches respectively. It was distinctly grey, but showed mottled patches of brown characteristic of a Screech Owl.

Despite falling down the chimney into a paper-strewn grate, it seemed to suffer no physical effects other than a little initial shock. After giving it some attention in the form of picture taking, I decided the best form of therapy would be to return it to its natural environment. My home is in Cedar Valley, near Newmarket. Although I have heard many owls in the early hours of the morning, I have never been fortunate enough to spot one. This little "screecher" must have alighted upon the edge of my chimney underneath a metal down-draft eliminator at about 8:00 a.m., fallen asleep, lost his balance, and tumbled down the chimney.

Perhaps this incident verifies the wisdom of the owl: although it did fall down a chimney, at least it had the good sense to choose the home of a naturalist club-member!

Michael Gillespie

.....

Ed. note. In the Globe and Mail of Wed. Jan. 19/77, W.C. Mansell's column was entitled "Starling Blows Down Chimney". This incident occurred in Mississauga; his explanation was that the bird fell as the result of a violent wind storm.

NORTHERN SHRIKE OBSERVATION NEAR TERRA COTTA

Our home is in a wooded area near Terra Cotta. On Jan. 1, 1977 we had a visit from a Northern Shrike, Lanius excubitor. About 9:00 a.m. I went out to scatter millet for the tree sparrows and goldfinches and startled a Northern Shrike which had been perching on a weathervane feeder near our dining room window. He flew to nearby willows, but in a short time returned to his perch on the feeder.

A Blue Jay was sitting in an apple tree nearby quite undisturbed. The shrike moved to a stake about four feet high nearby, and the Blue Jay went to the feeder and ate sunflower seed. The small birds (tree sparrows, chickadees, and goldfinches) were not in evidence while the shrike was around. The shrike stayed around the house, sometimes moving to the top of an ash tree, until 11:00 a.m.

At about 8:15 a.m. on Jan. 2, Everett observed the shrike using the feeder as a hunting look-out. The bird was peering over the edge with his body and tail hidden by the feeder. Suddenly the shrike pounced upon a meadow vole which had come out of a hole in the snow to feed upon millet. The shrike held the vole with his feet and repeatedly struck it with his beak until the vole was dead and motionless, then the shrike flew off with the vole to some thorn trees down the lane.

Monday, Jan. 3, the shrike was on the feeder again at about 9:00 a.m. I decided to use my field glasses and have a good look at the bird to see if the lower mandible really was lighter than the upper mandible. To my surprise the shrike opened its beak very wide and out popped a pellet about 1 inch long by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter. I collected the pellet after the shrike had gone. The pellet looks as if it is composed of small bones and fur (like a small owl pellet).

We have not seen the shrike since. He may be back later.

Barbara and Everett Jaquith

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

three of last year's foster-hatched Whooping Cranes returned north, one to Idaho, one to Montana, and one to Utah?

"birders" are providing an increasing amount of information to ornithologists?

more birds are being reported in different areas and at different times of the year (information that was lacking before)? Keep it up!

Eskimo Curlews were reported on the western side of Hudson Bay?

a Great-tailed Grackel showed up in Illinois? Is Canada next?

the South Polar Skua may be the most seen skua on the East Coast?

200,000 Cattle Egrets nested in Florida in 1976 only 23 years after the first nest was found there?

a Spotted Redshank was sighted at St. Davids near Niagara Falls?

Red Mason

BIRDING IN HAWAII

One of the highlights of the Ontario Nature Tour visit to Hawaii at Christmas was the sight of hundreds of Red-footed Boobies nesting at Ulupau Head on the Mokapu Peninsula, Island of Oahu. The tour director, Gus Yaki, had obtained permission to enter the area occupied by the Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station. Here we watched birds on Nuupia Pond. Continuing on, we drove to the restricted-area barrier where we could see the nesting boobies being harrassed for their food by the Great Frigatebird, or 'IWA. Seeing the birds at a distance was just a teaser, so Gus consulted further with personnel at the barrier. As a result an escort was assigned to take us closer. We drove to within arm's length of the boobies on their nests. They were not disturbed, but posed peacefully and appeared to take no notice of the photographers. A wonderful experience!

A really exciting happening occurred on the second last day of the tour — a Horned Grebe was sighted on the Island of Kauai. After Gus reported the find to Dr. Robert Pyle of the Hawaii Audubon Society, we learned that no previous record of a sighting existed for the Hawaiian Islands. To an avid birder like Gus, this truly climaxed the trip. This same day, we also saw a Laysan Albatross. One had been seen during the Christmas Bird Count and was considered an unusual record. However, Gus found four of them, sitting as if nesting on the ground.(This is their nesting season). We did not approach to avoid disturbance. Local naturalists will watch the birds to determine the results.

Words fail to express the beauties of the Hawaiian Islands. (We visited four). To see is to believe!

Dorothy Marshall

COMMUNICATION IN ANIMALS

The Royal Ontario Museum is presenting a series of weekly lectures illustrating and describing how the lower animals "talk to each other". The lectures are at 8:00 p.m. on Thursdays in the ROM Theatre and are free.

- | | |
|----------|--|
| March 3 | <u>Moose and Caribou Behaviour and Communication</u>
Dr. Anton Bubenik, Research Branch, Department of Lands and Forests, Maple, Ont. |
| March 10 | <u>Insect Sound Communication</u>
Dr. Glenn Morris, Associate Professor of Zoology, Erindale College, University of Toronto |
| March 17 | <u>Whales</u>
Dr. W.E. Schevill, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, Mass. |
| March 24 | <u>Echolocation in Bats</u>
Dr. Brock Fenton, Department of Biology, Carleton University, Ottawa |

HELP WANTED

► someone to attend one or two meetings a month (held between 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. at the waterfront) as the TFNC representative on the Bayfront Area Task Group of the Central Waterfront Planning Committee. Please call Doug Gardiner at 493-2807.

THE FIRST SPRING FLOWERS

In the midst of late January snows and frigid temperatures spring flowers may seem still far away. Yet, in fact, the adventure of finding the first flower of spring can take place, and ordinarily does, barely a month later during the last week of February. A late cold season may delay its appearance by a week or two but not more.

This flower is the skunk cabbage (Symplocarpus foetidus), always the first in normal succession in the Toronto region. When the yellow pollen of its staminate flowers shakes off in your hands you know it to be in bloom, and then you may watch insects coming to get their share. The place where it comes first is in the Lambton Woods near the Nature Trail. The reason for its early development there is that springs along the western slope keep many places wholly or almost unfrozen throughout the winter, thus giving the plants their opportunity for an early start. This plant is one that also has the interesting capacity of creating its own heat which helps in melting the snow for a short distance around the emergent spathe. Consequently you commonly see the first flower of spring standing in an open circle wholly surrounded by snow, the courageous herald of new life and a new season.

There are several spots where skunk cabbage is known in the Metropolitan region, one of the most prolific areas being Morningside Park south of Ellesmere Avenue. This area, however, because local habitat conditions are so different, is colder, hence slower in coming into spring dress. The skunk cabbage here tends to be two or three weeks later than at Lambton Woods.

All early spring flowers vary as to their time of blooming according to the warmth or severity of the season, but their order of appearance changes but little from year to year. The second and third flowers to bloom in this region are almost certain to be a shrub and a tree. The shrub will be the spotted alder (Alnus rugosa) whose staminate catkins will be found shedding their pollen usually about the third week in March though they may be delayed for as much as two weeks or more. The best place to see them in first flower is along the west bank of Grenadier Pond where reflected heat from ice or water probably hastens their development. The tree is the silver maple (Acer saccharinum) which is common both as a planted tree in the city and wild along open wooded slopes. It is likely to come out first where its branches are warmed by reflected heat from south-facing building walls.

Another tree that comes early is the trembling aspen (Populus tremuloides) whose catkins dangle golden in the sun over open rocky banks such as you find at Terra Cotta near the Credit River or along the Bruce Trail. Two shrubs that bloom about the same time are the two hazelnuts, the beaked hazelnut (Corylus cornuta) and the common hazelnut (Corylus americana). The first of these may be found readily on the west bank of Grenadier Pond, and the second in the Lambton Woods. Along with their male catkins each produces a tiny but exquisitely beautiful rich pink female (pistillate) bloom. To see this at its best use your magnifying glass (10 X is the usual size used by field botanists).

An equally early spring flower is coltsfoot (Tussilago farfara) which looks superficially like a dandelion but if you examine the stem and note that no leaves are present at its blooming you will begin to see the differences. The leaves in this case come well after the blooming and it is they that give the plant its common name as they are thought to resemble a colt's foot. It grows on open, damp, often clayey banks and may occur in great masses. It is common

at some spots along the Scarborough Bluffs, in the Woodbridge area and, despite the destruction of so much of the Nordheimer Ravine, there is still a good stand about 200 yards northwest of the Spadina Viaduct. This stand came into bloom in late March last year.

Indeed, all the plants I have mentioned commonly bloom in March though a late cold season may hold them off until mid-April.

In the open deciduous woods of our area the first flowers will customarily be the hepaticas, the pointed-leaved hepatica (Hepatica acutiloba) and the round-leaved hepatica (Hepatica americana), whose fuzzy buds push up amongst the old leaves of the previous year. This happens as soon as the snow is gone and the delicate flowers, varying from white through pink to deep blue in colour, come shortly thereafter. On south-facing slopes in the woods it takes about a week for them to develop if the weather is favourable. At the same time spring beauty (Claytonia caroliniana) and blue cohosh (Caulophyllum thalictroides) will be joining the hepaticas in turning the leafless woods into a spring garden.

You will have noticed that I have not mentioned the pussy willow (Salix discolor) which many people think of as the first spring flower. However, the soft, silky "pussies" which may often be seen from late fall to early spring are not really blossoms but a protective covering. Only when the noticeably yellow stamens begin to peak through the protective "fur" can the pussy willow be said to be in bloom; in other words, the staminate flowers, the first to appear, give the pussy willow in flower a distinctly yellow look. This happens hereabouts from late March to mid-April so that the pussy willow may be anywhere from No. 10 to No. 25 in the spring flower succession, but certainly never No. 1. On my own list it was No. 10 in 1974, No. 22 in 1975, and No. 18 in 1976. Not only weather conditions but local habitat circumstances will make for such a range of dates.

One further word to those whose looking may be more confined to city streets. Quite frequently if you will watch south-facing banks along the streets or railway embankments near overpasses, plots warmed by sun reflected from south-facing buildings, extra sheltered spots of all kinds you may find during March — in fact, in any month of the year, including December, January, and February — the occasional chickweed (Stellaria media), shepherd's purse (Capsella bursa-pastoris), dandelion (Taraxacum officinale), common ragwort (Senecio vulgaris), and perhaps other so-called "weeds". These are some of the plants that have followed men around the world throughout his historic travels and they have learned to take advantage of all the favourable conditions he provides, including extra warmth from sun-reflecting buildings. For such plants these are natural habitats.

With these indications I hope you will find it a rewarding adventure seeking for your first spring flowers in 1977.

Richard M. Saunders

ANYONE FOR A WALK?

In 1976 the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club had 72 outings (14 evening walks and 7 bus outings). As well as these walks, we had four Jim Baillie Memorial Walks. Altogether we found about 223 species of birds, over 468 varieties of plants, and many mammals on these outings. Hope to see you all on our "spring" outings starting in April.

Herb Elliott

PLANT NATIVE TREES

Naturalists have recognized the loss of our natural habitats and wildlife to urbanization. I want to point specifically to the loss of our native trees, and to suggest that these can and should be replaced.

The tragedy of our elms is familiar to most. The planting of elms is probably a lost cause even though a rather expensive cure for Dutch elm disease is now available. People have searched for a substitute tree for the elms — one with the same vase-shaped outline; I feel this is perhaps the wrong approach, that instead we should recognize shapes and forms of other trees characteristic of Ontario and put some of these back on our landscapes.

At the present time, as our trees are being removed either to make way for development or because they have died as a result of such things as root disturbance with subsequent insect or disease attack, they are being replaced by alien or foreign trees. The landscape-nursery industry is on a trend to European garden plants; the Europeans have been far more advanced in horticulture than we, and we have borrowed their plant materials instead of developing our own. The flashy, colourful garden trees have been more popular than our own trees; however, in the long run they have not done as well. Many of the small flowering ornamentals such as the crabapples, cherries, mountain ashes, and other members of the rose family have been bred and selected for ornamental qualities, but not for resistance to insects and disease. They have a host of pests and require much maintenance to keep them healthy. We should learn from orchard growers who must maintain their trees intensively — most of us are familiar with deteriorating trees in abandoned orchards. The flowering crabs, cherries, etc. have most of the same pests and problems as the fruit trees.

The "cheap" trees that nurseries sell become expensive in the long run. Such trees as the poplars (Lombardy, Bolleana, Carolina), weeping willow, Chinese elm, tree of heaven, and black locust all grow quickly and tend to die quickly or else grow too large and fall apart easily. We can perhaps include here a few of our own such as our poplars, willows, and Manitoba maple.

The more successful European trees, notably Norway maple, little-leaf linden, and Austrian pine are, in my opinion, much overused and are never natural components of the Ontario landscape.

When considering tree species to plant in a given area it is generally wise to select kinds that are growing naturally in that area. Very often the local species will be most suitable for the local soils. Native trees have adapted genetically to their regional climate. Adaptations include the regulation of timing of dormancy in the fall and spring by the seasonal changes in daylength — which changes with latitude. If we took seeds from our local red maple south to Florida where it is also native, they would grow very poorly. Similarly, trees from the south would not last one winter up here. Many trees and shrubs used here have been imported from areas with milder climates and do have problems with spring and fall. Scots pine is an example of a tree which is not quite suited to our climate. Even though it would never have frost problems here, it does not grow into the tall straight timber tree that it is in Europe, and often, depending upon how mismatched its climate of origin is with ours, it grows into a crooked and stunted tree. Trees that are matched to their local climates (as well as to their preferred soils) will have the best chance of reaching their potential growth, form, and longevity.

Planting those kinds of trees found within your area is the best way to make your home blend in with the natural landscape and give the appearance of being in harmony with nature. We often see a patch of woods cleared for the construction of a building followed by landscaping with trees such as Austrian pine, crimson Norway maples, weeping willows, and so on. Because the building and landscaping contrast with the surrounding woods, to me the landscaping fails to heal the scar of the development.

Naturalists in Toronto should recognize and appreciate the forest associations, or natural landscape themes, within our city. We have oak forest (for example, black and white oaks and sassafras in High Park) close to the lake and in the west end. Inland this changes to a mixed northern hardwood forest of sugar maple, beech, white ash, basswood, and others. White pine, hemlock, and the birches are typical of the cooler ravine slopes and the east end. Lowland forests include cottonwood/willow associations of the beaches and Toronto Island (somewhat similar to Long Point or even Point Pelee); willow, balsam poplar, and Manitoba maple in the river floodplains; and white cedar, birch, and tamarack stands in the east end.

Since trees in our cities have so little opportunity to reproduce (we seem to prefer manicured lawns and gardens), we should artificially reproduce, or transplant, or buy the native trees to keep the natural character they provided.

If gardeners object and want their properties individual, there are several uncommon native trees that we can grow here in Toronto. Who has in their gardens these Carolinian trees: hackberry, cucumber tree, tulip tree, pawpaw, sassafras, Kentucky coffee-tree, redbud, hoptree, black gum, flowering dogwood, or blue ash? And unless you live on the edge of a woods or have a tree that survived development, you are unlikely to have hemlock, yellow birch, ironwood, blue beech, any hickory, beech, black or white oak, native black cherry, basswood, or red maple. Many of these trees are not grown by commercial nurseries. Some are slow growing and difficult to transplant, and others are rare or not easy to find. Naturalists could find a challenge in trying to grow these. Others are commercially grown, but are not selling well. By asking for native trees we can encourage nurseries to grow more. Other industries in our society are selling Canadiana, isn't the landscape-nursery industry behind the times?

In conclusion, we should be growing native trees for two basic reasons. First, they often perform better, live longer, and so on because they have evolved with our natural environment. It is a wise investment to plant a shade tree that will be around for our grandchildren rather than an ornamental that we will likely outlive. Secondly, we should be proud of our natural heritage in trees, and keep them with us in our man-made environments.

Robin Cunningham

For information about trips to the arctic with Alex M. Hall (our speaker at the January meeting), write to

Alex M. Hall, 9 John Beck Crescent, Brampton, Ont.

For information about canoe trips, contact Ed O'Connor (699-9211) of the Environmental Experiences Club, 2 Nurseywood Road, Apt. 11, Toronto M4E 3R8

NATURAL HISTORY PLEASURES OF ST. LUCIA

Christmas in the Caribbean! sun, sand, and birds galore!

St. Lucia is a small island in the Lesser Antilles. It has a population of 100,000 clustered around the cities of Castries in the north and Vieux Fort in the south. We chose a hotel in a remote location hoping to have an opportunity to study the plants, animals, and birds of the island. We were not disappointed.

The combination of wide beach and mountain forests gave us ample scope for exploration. A visit to the nearest town required walking for three-quarters of an hour up and down, and round and round, but we enjoyed it because the road wound through an unusual botanical garden containing hundreds of indigenous trees, all labelled. We saw coconut palms, hibiscus flowers, mango, and pawpaw. But the major reason we went was to observe the birds, and our hopes were more than fulfilled.

We saw Mangrove Cuckoos — one sat quietly only six feet from my elbow. (His broadly striped tail measured at least twelve inches.) We saw the Purple-throated Carib Hummingbird; and the Antillean Crested Hummingbird was observed darting in and out of the blossoms of the lipstick bush. The Zenaida and Common Ground Doves fluttered along the road in front of us; and a solitary White-breasted Thrasher posed in a coffee bush and twitched his wings as visitors passed.

Both early morning and late evening proved to be profitable times for bird-watching. Even during a pre-breakfast swim we saw a Ground Dove lurking about the beach chair, trying to get a peek at the birdbook. The Magnificent Frigatebird with its scissor-tail soared high above the waves. Breakfast almost had to be wrestled from the little Bananaquits and Greater Antillean Bullfinches who darted back and forth overhead waiting for crumbs to be dropped.

And not only birds flew! Flying fish entertained us every day with acrobatic leaps over the coral reefs. This reef was a popular place for snorkelling, and here I caution all bird-watchers to beware — that Canada Goose you may be watching, bobbing among the waves, just may be a snorkel pipe!

I heartily urge all bird-watchers to consider a visit to St. Lucia to experience the warmth, beauty, and the birds of this truly glorious island.

Diane Ettles

For information about a tour to Trinidad and Tobago (March 11-22) or a trip to Western Europe -- Belgium, Holland, and England (June 23-July 14), contact
Don Baldwin, 47 Duggan Avenue, Toronto M4V 1Y1 (488-7769)

For information about trips for naturalists and would-be naturalists, weekends on the Madawaska to learn about whitewater skills, a how-to-do-it-on-your-own trip in Algonquin in August, an all-women's trips in Killarney, contact
Algonquin Waterways Wilderness Trips, (469-1727)
John McRuer, 271 Danforth Avenue, Toronto M4K 1N2

For trips led by expert naturalists, contact Gus Yaki (416) 356-1089 of
Ontario Nature Tours, 6372 Montrose Road, Niagara Falls, Ont. L2H 1L6

THE ONTARIO FIELD BIOLOGIST

This scientific journal which is published twice a year by the TFNC presents reports of field studies, mainly in botany and ornithology.

Volume 30, issue # 2 has just been published. It presents:

If you do not already subscribe to THE ONTARIO FIELD BIOLOGIST, we suggest that you do so now.

There are two good reasons for this hurry-up signal. First, although sharp increases in postage and printing costs have forced us to raise the subscription price to \$3.00 a year, we feel that TFNC members should have an opportunity to get in "under the wire" at the old rate. So, if you subscribe before April 1, the price will still be \$2.50 a year. Secondly, in an effort to keep costs down we have increased our press run on the last several issues to obtain a lower cost per copy. This has resulted in a rather substantial inventory of back issues which we are now offering at \$1.00 per copy. This price will prevail until April 1, then it will become \$1.25. Would you care to use the order form below?



Where and when will you see bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis) in Toronto this year?

SUBMISSIONS TO NEWSLETTER

Material for the newsletter should be submitted to the editor by the first day of the month, and articles should be no longer than 1500 words.