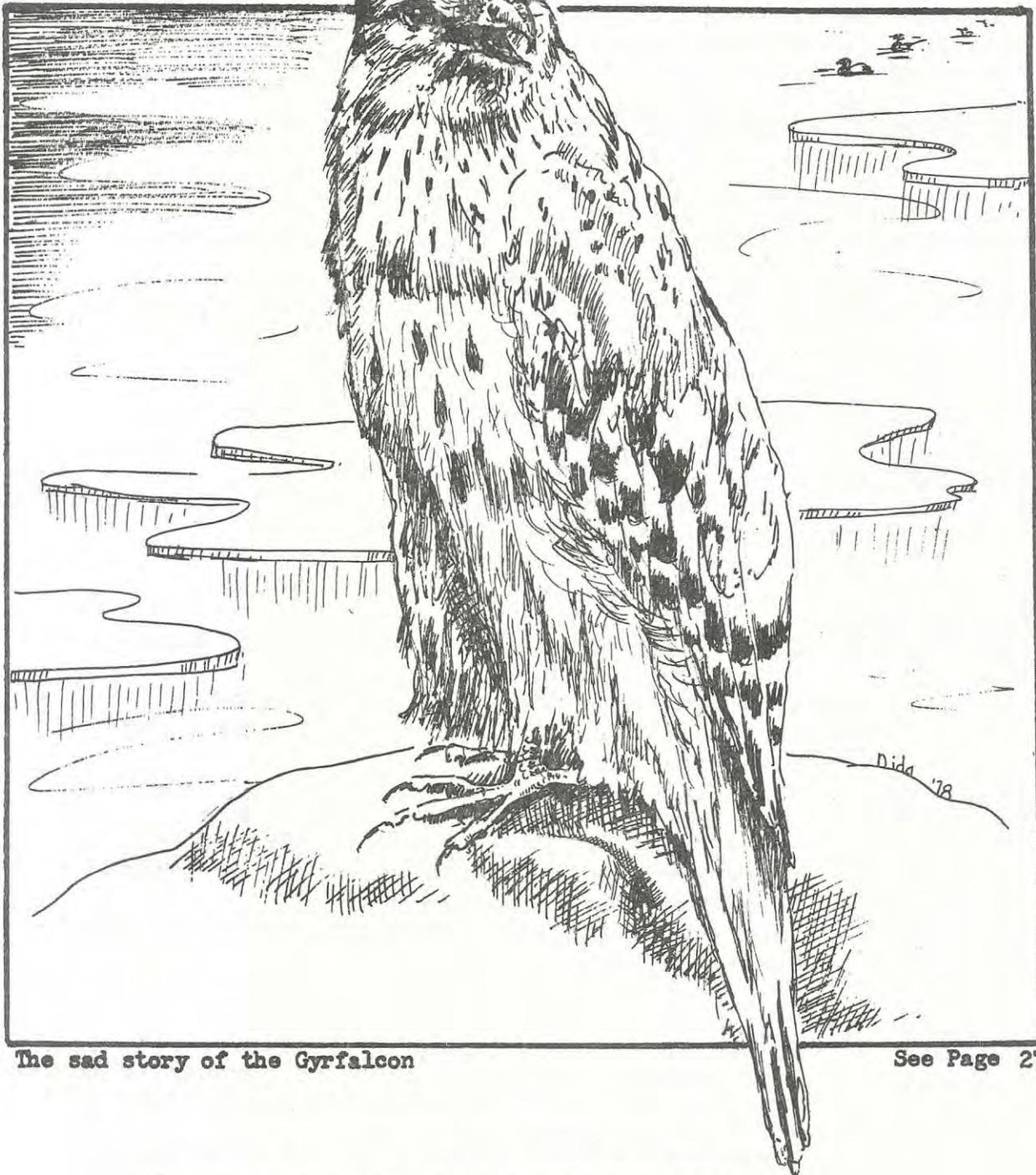


# TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS NEWSLETTER

Number 320

December, 1978  
January, 1979



The sad story of the Gyrffalcon

See Page 27.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND PUBLICATION SALES

83 Joicey Blvd., Toronto, Ont. M5M 2T4 or call 488-7304

# TFN MEETINGS

VISITORS  
WELCOME

## GENERAL MEETINGS

252 Bloor Street West (O.I.S.E. Bldg.)  
(Between Bedford Road and St. George Street)

Monday, December 4, 1978, at 8.15 p.m.

**ANIMALS AND MAN** - Mr. Bill Carrick, Free-lance photographer  
Historical outline of relationships of animals to man from the time when animals were first domesticated to the present. Illustrated by a film made by Mr. Carrick, who will also discuss the filming of wild life.

Monday, January 8, 1979, at 8.15 p.m.

**PROPAGATION OF SHRUBS AND TREES FROM CUTTINGS AND SEEDS** -

Mr. Ray Halward, Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton  
Discussion of plants for birds and wildlife food; collecting plants in the wild; transplanting wild plants or rooting from cuttings, and other "cultural" directions.

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February meeting -- Monday, February 5, 1979, at 8.15 p.m.

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## GROUP MEETINGS

(No Group Meetings in December, except Junior Club)

### Bird Group

Wed. Jan. 24 Birds of the Atlantic Coast  
8.00 p.m. - Mr. Roy John, well-known birder in Port Hope area  
Location: St. James Bond United Church  
Avenue Road, Just north of Eglinton  
: : : : : : : : : : :

### Botany Group

Tues. Jan. 9 Identifying Trees in Winter by their Twigs  
8.00 p.m. - Mr. Paul McConnell  
Location: Hodgson Public School cafeteria (basement)  
Davisville Ave., just east of Mt. Pleasant Road  
: : : : : : : : : : :

### Junior Club (for children between 8 and 16 years of age)

Sat. Dec. 2 Bird Group in charge of meeting, under  
10.00 a.m. leadership of David Kelly and Brian Gray  
Sat. Jan. 6 Mineralogy Group in charge of meeting, under  
10.00 a.m. leadership of Irwin Kennedy  
Location: Planetarium Auditorium (immediately south of Royal  
Ontario Museum)  
: : : : : : : : : : :

### Ravine Group

Wed. Jan. 17 An Outline of the Scenic Roads Study in the Town  
8.00 p.m. of Vaughan, northwest of Metro Toronto, conducted  
by Ministry of Environment in conjunction with  
TFN during summer of 1978.  
Presentation with slides - Mr. Paul McConnell  
Location: Huron Street Public School, 541 Huron St. (North of Bloor)  
: : : : : : : : : : :

### Waterfront Group

No January meeting. Watch for announcement of February meeting.



- Sunday  
Dec. 3  
1.00 to  
4.00 p.m.
- LESLIE STREET SPIT - Birds**  
Leader: Bill Freedman  
Meet at the foot of Leslie Street. Warm, protective clothing is essential. The spit can be windy and cold.  
Note: The special bus from Queen does not run in winter.
- Wednesday  
Dec. 6  
10.00 a.m.  
(Sharp)
- RIVERDALE FARM - Animals**  
Leader: Laura Greer with assistance of Farm staff  
Meet at Farm entrance. (Carlton car to Gerrard and Sumach and walk north to Winchester. Go east on Winchester to Farm entrance.) No entrance fee.  
Cars - On-street parking in the vicinity
- Sunday  
Dec. 10  
1.00 p.m.
- CLAIRVILLE - Birds**  
Leader: To be announced.  
Meet at the corner of Albion and Islington (near Donut Shop). Waterproof footwear would be advisable. (Take Islington bus 37 from Islington subway station to Albion Road. From Finch station, Finch West bus 36B to Islington and Albion. Bus also serves Albion west of Islington.) People arriving by TTC will be taken to Clairville by car.
- Sunday  
Dec. 17  
2.00 p.m.
- BOARDWALK - Eastern Beaches**  
Leader: Bill Dibble  
Meet in the parking lot of the Balmy Beach Canoe Club. (Queen car east to Beech Avenue. Walk one short block south.)
- Sunday  
Dec. 24
- CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**  
If you wish to participate in the Bird Count call Harry Kerr at 481-7948.
- Wednesday  
Dec. 27  
11.00 to  
2.00 p.m.
- METRO ZOO**  
Leader: Wes Hancock with assistance of Zoo staff.  
Meet at Zoo entrance. (Subway to Warden station, then Scarborough 86C bus to Zoo.)  
Cars - Zoo exit is marked on 401. Follow Zoo signs on roads in area. Bring lunch. There will be the regular admission fee: Adults \$3.50, 12-18 yrs. \$1.50, 5-11 yrs. \$0.50. (Under 12 must be accompanied by adult.)
- Sunday  
Jan. 7
- WINTER WATERFOWL COUNT**  
If you wish to participate in the Waterfowl Count call Clive Goodwin at 249-9503 (until 9.30 p.m.)

UPCOMING OUTINGS - Continued

Wednesday **ALLAN GARDENS**

Jan. 10 Leader: Molly Campbell

10.00 a.m. Meet in greenhouse. (Carlton car to the Allan Gardens stop - between Jarvis and Sherbourne).

Sunday **CENTRAL WATERFRONT (HARBOUR FRONT)**

Jan. 14 Leaders: Reid and Margaret Wilson

1.00 p.m. Meet at the foot of York Street on the west side of the Terminal Warehouse Building beside Skipper Restaurant. (Bay bus to Queen's Quay and walk west.) People coming by bus will be assigned to cars for moving along the waterfront.

Sunday **HERITAGE TREES**

Jan. 21 Leader: Mary Smith

1.00 p.m. BUS OUTING. The outing will look at unique or representative specimens of trees which for various reasons should be preserved as a public resource.

Meet at the Legislative Building, Queen's Park. Parking will be permitted on property adjoining the building.

To reserve your place on the bus call Eva Hunt, 221-6303 on January 4 or 5 between 9.00 a.m. and 9.00 p.m. Confirm by sending fare (\$4.00 payable to Toronto Field Naturalists, Heritage Trees) to Miss Helen Yemen, 200 Brooke Avenue, Toronto, M5M 2K6. Cheques must be received by January 12.

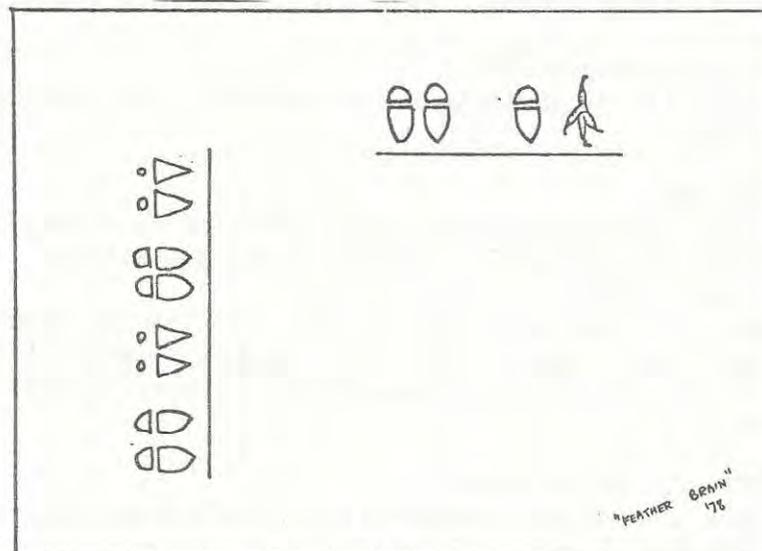
Sunday **WILKET CREEK PARK - Walk and Coffee**

Jan. 28 Leaders: Muriel Miville and Bruce Parker

1.00 p.m. This will be a one-hour walk, ending back at the Centre for coffee and doughnuts - a social hour to meet the executive and other members. (Centre closes at 4.00 p.m.)

Meet at the Civic Garden Centre, Lawrence Avenue and Leslie Street. (Lawrence East or Leslie bus from Eglinton subway station).

Cars - (From west of Bayview) - Lawrence breaks at Bayview. Rejoin by going north on Bayview and then via Post Road. Or come to Leslie via Eglinton or Wilson/York Mills. Parking at the Centre.



"....and now Panel, let's see if you can  
guess our Challenger's secret....."

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I wish all our members and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I hope 1979 will be a very successful year for all the Toronto Field Naturalists' members. Your Outings Committee is planning interesting outings, including some social events, to help you meet your fellow-members.

Our Junior Club is in need of leaders for some of its groups. I would like to see more active participation by our Seniors in the programs for the Junior Club. If we provide proper guidance and instruction to our young people, we can reduce the conservation problems of the future.

Wes Hancock.

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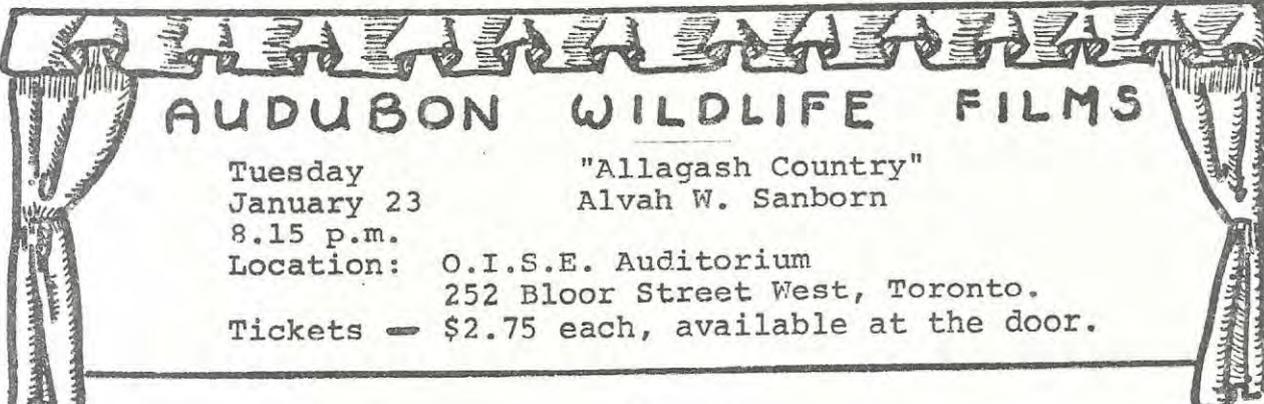
Both our October and November issues of the NEWSLETTER were delayed by the Post Office, as many members know. This issue is being mailed early in November to cover December and January. A mailing during the Christmas rush does not make a lot of sense; our Dec.-Jan. issue will cover all activities for this period. You will have noticed a complete NEWSLETTER was issued in September instead of the brief notice formerly sent out. So there are still eight issues throughout the year: Sept.; Oct.; Nov.; Dec.-Jan.; Feb.; March; April; May. This way we cover the same amount of news for less cost.

Editorial Committee

## DISPLAY MATERIAL WANTED

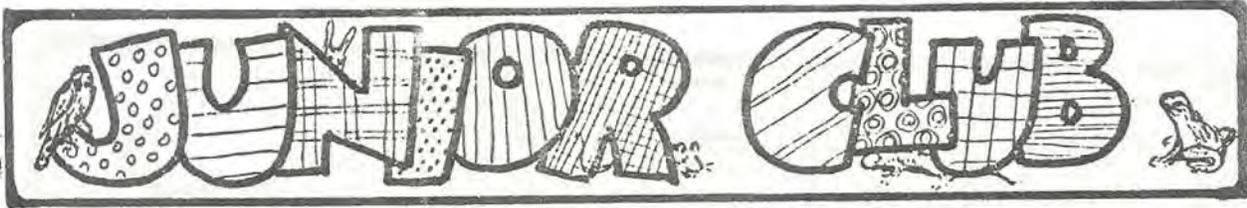
Have you a seed collection? A gall collection? Winter botany? Bird feathers? Rock specimens? Shells? Nature art? What is your nature hobby or project? Do let us know! Perhaps it will be useful for an article in the NEWSLETTER or could be used as a basis for educational displays.  
(Call Laura Greer, 691-4888 or any member of the Editorial Committee.)

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### AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS

Tuesday "Allagash Country"  
January 23 Alvah W. Sanborn  
8.15 p.m.  
Location: O.I.S.E. Auditorium  
252 Bloor Street West, Toronto.  
Tickets — \$2.75 each, available at the door.



THE GUINEA PIG

The guinea pig is a gentle pet.  
 He never presents himself as a threat.  
 He is shy and sweet and does not bite.  
 But even so you should not give him a fright.

In spite of his name, he is not a pig.  
 He is a rodent, who likes gnawing on figs.  
 He is a small animal with a plump little body.  
 You can have fun with him if you don't act snotty.

In the wild, guinea pigs live together in burrows.  
 And some are even covered with loose, fluffy curls.  
 They have short little legs, with no tail at all.  
 But when they are hungry, you can hear their pig-like call.

They eat leaves, plants, and rabbit food.  
 Which always puts them in the nicest mood.  
 So if you are thinking of buying a pet.  
 Remember the guinea pig, for he is your best bet.

Dawn Zoll, Mammal Group, JFN

.....  
 The Junior Field Naturalists are working on a co-operative project with the Toronto Field Naturalists preparing a "grow at home" packet of acorns and chestnuts. Our latest field trips have been nutty (full of nuts) that we are busily collecting for the Sportsmen's Show.

We are still desperately in need of leaders. Interested? Please call Tyna Silver at 636-4812.

The names of twenty different trees which grow in Ontario can be found among these letters. The name of the tree sometimes is read forward, at other times down, or diagonally. One letter can be used for more than one tree. See if you can find them.

from THE WOOD DUCK, Vol.32,#2

A M K A B Q R E A P P L E A T  
 T U L I P A S D F B A S B O S  
 B L M Z C E D A R E B U Q C R  
 C B N Y S P R U C E C M R D Q  
 W E W A L N U T G C D A S C F  
 H R O X C O T M O H E C T H O  
 I R C H O K E C H E R R Y E N  
 T Y P I D M U W I L L O W R M  
 E J Q C E A S H J M F P U R L  
 P I R K O A K B E R A N V Y K  
 I H S O F M V A I M G S W E J  
 N G T R G L A Z K Q L M P F I  
 E F U Y H K W P M P H O X E H  
 C H E S T N U T L O I L C Z N  
 D E V W I J X Y N E J K Y K G

# WALKING REPORT

May 4. Glendon Campus - Diana Banville and Molly Campbell - 13 people. Alternative proposals for extending Lawrence Avenue were discussed, noting the white pines which would be removed if the plans were carried out. Trout lilies, hepatica, trilliums, marsh marigold, bloodroot and wild ginger were blooming, as were sugar maples and bittersweet. A meadowlark in Glendon ravine was the first sighting in five years in that location.

May 10. Warden Woods - was the scene for 13 enthusiastic explorers who found the usual spring birds and some chimney swifts. Wild flowers on the slopes included two saxifrages side by side, five kinds of ferns, red and white trillium and trout lilies at their best.

June 1. High Park - Isabel Smith - 10 people - cool, sunny. Wild geraniums were blooming in profusion along the nature trail, as were starry false Solomon's seal and the larger false Solomon's seal. Columbine in bloom were quite numerous, and black and choke cherry were in full bloom. Numerous other wild and interesting flowers and shrubs were seen.

June 3. Luther Marsh - Paul Cannon; Leo Smith - 11 people in 5 canoes. Seen were 61 species of birds including ospreys, tree swallows and purple martins. Mallard and blue-winged teal nests were seen with eggs, and ospreys were incubating at two sites. A female Wilson's phalarope was in view for a long time but photographers were frustrated. A dunlin and a pectoral sandpiper were feeding together.

June 4. Palgrave - Gerry Bennett - 65 people - weather perfect. Seen were 50 species of birds including pileated woodpecker, alder flycatcher, roughwinged swallows, cedar waxwings, red-eyed vireo, Nashville warbler, ovenbird, grasshopper sparrow, ruffed grouse and goshawk.

June 7. G. Ross Lord Dam - Jerina Jelinowicz - 15 people. The impact of man on the environment of the dam area was examined. The effects of industry, housing and the dam itself were discussed. Thirty-four species of plants were identified.

June 8. Park Drive Ravine - Jeff Kaiser - 10 people. Not many birds were seen but the ravine walk was enjoyed the more because of its proximity to downtown.

June 10. Taylor Creek - Patrick Temple - 24 people. A walk along the abandoned railroad embankment paralleling Taylor Creek below a mature oak woodland threatened by development. The embankment was thick with native and weedy flowering plants including Canada anemone, bastard toad-flax, orange hawkweed, oxeye daisy, blackberries, daisy fleabane, celandine, buttercups, cypress spurge and black swallow-wort. The trail led through the ravine to Taylor Creek Park which has to some extent been "sanitized" into lawns and picnic areas. But the park still has some nice woods on the steeper slopes, and red-eyed vireos, wood pewees, crested flycatchers and northern orioles were some of the birds seen or heard in the area.

OUTINGS REPORTS - Continued

June 11. Vandorf Bog - John ten Bruggenkate - 15 people. 72 plant species were identified, including 23 in flower: clintonia, long leaved stitchwort, hooked buttercup, goldthread, pitcher plant, downy dewberry. Birds seen included pileated woodpecker, great crested flycatcher, blue jay, house wren, northern oriole, brown-headed cowbird and rose breasted grosbeak.

June 13. Leslie Street Spit - Bill Freedman - 30 people. Walk to see breeding birds. They walked to the edge of a gull colony and counted 20 Caspian terns, lots of common terns and ring-billed gulls. Also seen: 50 Savannah sparrows and 100 killdeer, 25 semipalmated sandpipers and a few others like purple martins and barn swallows.

June 17. Sandbanks Provincial Park - Peter Peach - over 50 people. The walk included the section previously known as Outlet Park. The dune ecology was interesting, with the ease of blowout apparent. The big dune which had been partly removed by a cement company was showing the rate of recovery now that sand removal has stopped. Outlet Park has a very beautiful beach and an excellent new nature trail. Some of the plants identified were: pickerelweed, blue-eyed grass, large yellow orchid, sandbar willow, sandwort, grass-of-Parnassus and silverweed.

June 24. Jim Baillie Nature Reserve - John Lowe-Wylde - 9 people. There were many mosquitoes and deer flies in the bush areas. We walked along three trails, then had lunch at the shelter, where the field was carpeted with daisies, hawkweed, buttercups and wild strawberries. There were good sightings of blue heron, red-tailed hawk, cedar waxwings, green heron, bobolinks and killdeer.

Sept. 9. Toronto Island - Emily Hamilton, Peter Wukasch, Bill Freedman, Helen Juhola - 70 people. The group was split for botany, general interest, birds. Fringed gentian was not yet visible but ladies'-tresses, slender gerardia and Kalm's lobelia were in bloom.

Sept. 10. Thomson Memorial Park - Bill Dibble - 25 people. Seen on the morning walk were some great trees well named by the Parks Department: elm, walnut, cedar and maple over 100 years old. Parts of the Highland Creek banks had had work done on them, and the park is in better condition this year.

Sept. 13. Guild Inn Woodlot - Charlie Crosgrey - 20 people. The woodlot was in the process of being fenced in. A broad winged hawk, rock dove, ring billed gull, a warbler and some crows were seen. Erosion of the bluffs was discussed. Some field and wetland plants were identified. There was a good assortment of native trees and a few introduced species.

Sept. 16. Jim Baillie Reserve - John Lowe-Wyld - 30 people - an invigorating fall day. A carpet of blue gentians, both closed and fringed varieties, near the White Trapezoid Trail were accented by brilliant yellow goldenrod. Many unusual plants were seen, some in fruit. Bird and insect watchers had a field day.

Sept. 16. Cedarvale Ravine - Jack Cranmer-Byng - 36 people. Hugh Curry reported seeing 2 long billed marsh wrens in the marshy spot near the Bathurst bridge in the summer. Paul McConnell identified some of the biological mistakes in the new plantings, and there was a discussion of who - if anyone - would replace the dead specimens. Jack Cranmer-Byng invited 4 members of the Forest Hill Ratepayers Association and they were interested in the Cadillac proposals for building on the St. Michael's property. Purple effluent was noted in the stream just north of Glen Cedar bridge.

# RAVINE GROUP report

## STUDY OF CEDARVALE RAVINE NEEDED

1. The restoration and replanting of Cedarvale Ravine after the completion of the subway beneath it is now almost done. This would be the best moment to begin to make a study of the ecology of the ravine and its use by citizens.
2. There is a sense of urgency about the need to complete such a study because the advocates of extending the Allen Expressway south to Bloor through Cedarvale Ravine — headed by Alderman Esther Shiner of North York — will come up again with renewed pressure at the time of the next provincial election.
3. The TFN failed to have a study of the ecology of the ravine ready when it was most needed when the Spadina Expressway was threatening to be built through the ravine. Then a citizens' group wrote and printed their own study called "Foxes and Watercross". This report played an important part in rousing public opinion against the expressway and leading to its abandonment by the provincial government.
4. The TFN should now play its proper role by preparing an up-to-date study of the ravine and its value to the whole community.
5. We visualize that 2 or 3 members might coordinate the study hopefully working with some university students on an Experience 79 program — sponsored by the Ontario Government.

If interested, please call Jack Cranmer-Byng at 488-3262.

## DECLINE OF WHITE PINES IN TORONTO RAVINES

Jack Cranmer-Byng has reported on a study on white pines undertaken by a U. of T. student under the direction of Dr. John Andresen. Three sample plots in Toronto ravines (Vyner Road, Riverview Drive and Mobile Drive) were compared with three plots on a limestone hillside in Harvey Township near Burleigh Falls. Although sulphur dioxide is considered a major factor causing decline of white pine in Toronto, sulphur levels in Harvey Township are comparable and the white pines there are flourishing in comparison with those in the Toronto areas studied. Air pollution injury could not be established by foliage tests. The evidence gathered in the study indicated the possibility of the decline being caused by the cumulative effect of many different pollutants.

Coupled with pollution causes is, of course, a natural cause — the result of "succession" — the hardwoods of the "climax" forest being less "sun-loving" eventually take over from the pines. Those in the Harvey Township situation are in an earlier stage of "succession" — in an open, sunny location.

A long-term project for the Ravine Group of the TFN might be to study possible favourable habitats for white pine in Toronto and to undertake plantings — being careful not to disturb the development of our forests of beech and sugar maple and other desirable flora.

## AMALGAMATION OF METRO PARKS AND PROPERTY DEPARTMENTS

In June of this year, the Personnel Officer of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the Chief Administrative Officer (John Kruger) both sent reports to the Metropolitan Executive Committee proposing the amalgamation of the Parks and Property Departments. The matter was subsequently referred to the Parks and Recreation Committee at a special meeting held on July 18, 1978, at which it heard communications from various associations and groups opposing this proposal. The Toronto Field Naturalists in a written brief set out their reasons for wishing to see the Metro Parks and Recreation Department remain under its own commissioner. In spite of well argued public opposition, the Parks and Recreation Committee recommended that the Commissioner of Property (Robert Bundy) be named "Commissioner of Parks and Property", with a Deputy Commissioner of Parks and a Deputy Commissioner of Property reporting to the Commissioner.

It was also recommended that the two departments be maintained as separate departments, that the present Parks and Recreation Committee be redesignated "the Parks, Recreation and Property Committee", and that the Commissioner of Parks and Property report directly to this Committee on all parks and property matters.

These recommendations were approved by Metro Council at their meeting on Sept. 8, 1978, with the proviso that the Metropolitan Executive Committee be requested to undertake a review of the operations of the Departments of Parks and Property in one year's time.

The new Deputy Commissioner of Parks is Mr. Christopher Roberts, formerly head of the Planning Section in Metro Parks.

The Toronto Field Naturalists, together with other citizen groups which view this manoeuvre with some suspicion, will be watching the effects of this reorganization on the policy and operation of the Metro Parks and Recreation Department very closely during the coming years.

Jack Cranmer-Byng

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### TECHNIQUES FOR THE PRESERVATION OF RAVINES

The shocking demise of Brookbanks Ravine into an ugly and dangerous-looking ditch this fall prompts us to review our strategy. In 1974 TFN published a ravine survey of Brookbanks Ravine. Now we must ask, what good is the inventory when the natural area has been transformed? We should spend our time on more profitable effort. Read Mac Kirk's "Technique for the Preservation of Natural Areas" for a wider view of the problem and its possible solution. It is available from the Outdoor Art and Science School, 375 Edinburgh Rd. South, Guelph, Ont. N1G 2K7 for \$2.50 each.

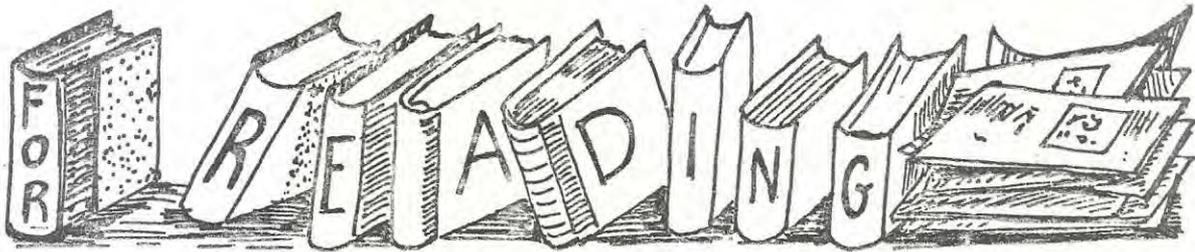
Mary Smith

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### RAVINES EXTOLLED IN WEEKEND MAGAZINE

Jack Batten, in a short piece in the Star's Weekend Magazine of July 8/78, described three Toronto ravines: Nordheimer, Mount Pleasant (Vale of Avoca and David Balfour), and Sherwood Park. He ended his article by saying that Toronto is blessed with ravines and that citizens should support their local ravine. Good advice! Let's all write to the editor of "Cityspan" and ask for another article by Jack Batten along the same lines.

Jack Cranmer-Byng



Environment on Trial, A Handbook of Ontario Environmental Law  
by David Estrin and John Swaigen, Canadian Environmental Law  
Research Foundation, MacMillan, Toronto, 1978, 587 pp., \$6.95

No person seriously interested in environmental law should be without this book. It is a valuable compendium of information on the legal aspects of pollution, planning, and environmental assessment. Environment on Trial is remarkable among Canadian legal texts in that it attempts to explain in a simple straightforward way to the average citizen how he may protect his environment from all forms of pollution. It is thus both a legal treatise on the environment and a valuable "how-to" book which may be consulted successfully by the reasonably intelligent citizen. The appendices include such valuable information as how to lay a private charge, how to start a small claims court action, how to do water analysis, and even a section explaining where to find the law.

Environmental problems are regulated by many different Provincial statutes, and many of these statutes will be unfamiliar even to the average lawyer. Statutes such as the Beach Protection Act, the Beds of Navigable Waters Act or the Woodlands Improvement Act are not often met in every day practice. Some problems, such as harbours, involve Federal law; others, not covered by legislation, must be solved by the common law. Environment on Trial does a good job of integrating these various sources of law and focusing them on individual environmental problems. This will be of great assistance to the average lawyer who can profitably use this book as a start for his legal research.

I would like to be able to say that the chapter on the Environmental Assessment Act, which is new with this edition, will be a great help, but the Ontario Government has been so pusillanimous in implementing the terms of this legislation and has exempted so many projects that to date the Environmental Assessment Act is nothing but a hollow shell. Environment on Trial adequately documents the inadequacies in the application of this Act.

This book, however, omits one subject close to the heart of many naturalists. It does not discuss the Endangered Species Act, nor in general, the protection of animals and plants. I believe this is a serious omission, for plants and animals are important indicators of the quality of our environment. They are important also in themselves, and until we attach an intrinsic value to flora and fauna over and above their purely

utilitarian value to man, we will never develop an effective environmental policy.

In sum, however, Environmental on Trial is a valuable, if not indispensable book, which ought to be consulted by anyone with a legal environmental problem.

Brian W. Gray

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A Field Guide to the Nests, Eggs and Nestlings of North American Birds by Colin Harrison, Wm. Collins Sons & Co., 1978, 416 pp. + 64 plates.

It is ironic that we now have two books on the market dealing with nests and eggs, both by persons named Harrison. This volume is by the author of a British work on the same subject, and it has a subtle British flavour to it. One suspects it originated across the Atlantic, which leads to some questions about its accuracy.

The British background intrudes with caveats about egg collecting, more of a problem in the United Kingdom than here, and some idiosyncracies of terminology and sequence. For example, tanagers follow finches. It may be argued that these anticipate future changes in systematics, but they are not here yet and field guides are no places for systematic innovations.

Wherever its origin, however, on the whole it seems a competent enough work. The quality of a book of this kind rests mainly on the thoroughness of the author's survey of the literature, something that can be done as well in the UK as here. The general information provided checks out quite well, and there are features which the other guide (in the Peterson Field Guide series) does not offer. For one thing, western birds are covered, and many eastern birds missing from the Peterson work. The latter makes no pretense of covering nestlings; this book does, and young of key species are illustrated. Excellent colour photos of eggs are another plus.

At the more detailed level the questions I mentioned at the opening reappear. The details presented correspond closely to those in Bent, but when I began to dig into more recent studies contradictions appeared. Alison's 1975 study of the Oldsquaw found an incubation period of 24-29 days with an average of 26; the present book states the period as 23-25 days. Downy young of White-winged Scoters do not have the down ending in a straight line on the bill, and the Red-breasted Merganser downy young has a reddish lower mandible and a whitish spot behind the bill (plate 5). In 1963 Smith found the Grasshopper Sparrow incubation period was 12-13 days, but Harrison has it as 11-12. The most serious error I located was in transposing the habitats

of Willow and Alder Flycatchers, something an author with North American experience should have caught. I could go on, but the reader will see the point. While this to some extent is nit-picking, the value of this kind of book lies in its mass of detail, and if the detail is full of errors, then what is reliable and what is not?

On the whole, however, the errors are not of the kind that will bother the general user very much, and the book does bring together much useful information. Nest field guides cannot offer the kind of definitive identifications that good guides to the birds themselves do. But they are helpful and if you want a useful supplement to the Peterson work then this book is worth buying. The Peterson (by Hal Harrison) with its photographs of nests, remains the most valuable and accurate book for those species it covers.

Clive E. Goodwin  
- - - - -

A Guide to Bird Watching by Joseph J. Hickey, 1975, Dover Publications Inc., reprint of 1943, Oxford University Press edition. Available from General Publishing Co., Ltd., 30 Lesmill Road, Don Mills (tel. 445-3333) \$3.50 per copy. (Telephone orders are accepted.) It also may be available in bookstores.

It is written simply and is very readable, with lots of anecdotes. Hickey starts with the basics of bird watching (equipment, identification, where and when to go, how to take notes and keep records) and goes on to describe the hows and whys of various areas of real ornithological research. He explains how different studies can be adapted to any birder's resources and abilities and strongly encourages everyone to go beyond listing species seen. There are chapters on migration, bird counting, distribution, banding and life history studies.

An "Annotated List of Bird Books" is provided, with books described under several categories (including Field Guides, Regional Works, Life History Studies, and Conservation). The 1975 (Dover) edition also has a list of references updating this original list. It is a very interesting and informative book - for any birder.

Shirley Thompson  
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A CHRISTMAS-GIFT IDEA - FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES.....

OWL - magazine published by The Young Naturalist Foundation



Publisher's Claim: "It stimulates children to read, helps them with school projects, encourages interest in the environment - and besides - grownups can't wait to read it themselves." Nature stories and comics, pull-out animal posters, amazing science experiments, 'how-to' projects and many fun ideas for outdoors.

10 issues for \$6; 20 for \$11. OWL Magazine, 59 Front Street East, Toronto M5E 1B3. Gift cards sent.

Civic Garden Centre

Wednesday      The New Humber Arboretum  
 January 17      —Art Coles  
 8.00 p.m.

Location: Civic Garden Centre, 777 Lawrence Ave. E., at Leslie

The following courses will be offered at the Civic Garden Centre in the new year. Full details may be obtained by calling the Civic Garden Centre, 445-1552.

Commencing, January 8 - 8.00 p.m. - 8-week course - Organic Gardening

Commencing January 15 - 10.00 a.m. - 3-week course - Botanical Art

Commencing January 18 - 8.00 p.m. - 6-week course - Perennials

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Royal Ontario Museum Exhibitions

To December 3 - "X-Ray Vision: Radiographs of Lower Devonian Fossils"

Location: Lower Rotunda, Royal Ontario Museum

To November 30 - "Take Two Trilobites and Call Me in the Morning"

Location: ROM Showcase, Museum Subway Station

To January 21 - "The Canadian West: The Land and the People"

Location: Canadiana Building, 14 Queen's Park Cres. W., Toronto

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Royal Canadian Institute Lectures

Lectures at Convocation Hall, University of Toronto. Admission free.

Saturday      Reproduction in the Evolution of Life

December 2      - Dr. Peter H. VonBitter

8.15 p.m.      Associate Curator in charge, Invertebrate Paleontology, Royal Ontario Museum, and Associate Professor of Geology, University of Toronto

Saturday      The Climate - Is It Changing

December 9      - Mr. George S. Atkins

8.15 p.m.      Senior Agricultural Commentator, C.B.C., and Climate Food Project Consultant, Massey Ferguson Co.

Saturday      Benefit of Diet in Children and Need for Physical Activity in Children

January 13      - Professor R. C. Goode

8.15 p.m.      Department of Physiology, University of Toronto

Saturday      The Wonders of Modern Communications Technology

January 20      - Professor F. M. Clydesdale

8.15 p.m.      University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass.

Saturday      To be announced

January 27      - Professor T. C. Hutchinson

8.15 p.m.      Chairman, Department of Botany, University of Toronto

PROJECTS OF INTEREST TO NATURALISTS

The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority is undertaking a pilot project to classify ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS within its area of jurisdiction. This area encompasses the Etobicoke Creek watershed, east of Carruther's Creek and as far north as Highway 9, south to Lake Ontario.

Anyone with information pertaining to unique or unusual flora, fauna, habitat and/or areas providing an important ecological function (i.e., migratory bird stopovers, flyways, etc.) is invited to contact:

Janice Doane, Biological Assistant  
Metropolitan Toronto and Region  
Conservation Authority  
5 Shoreham Drive  
Downsview, Ontario, M3N 1S4

or phone: 661-6600 ext. 213

Please give detailed description of the location and the significance of the find, as well as the observer's name, address, and telephone number.

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"PLANT DICTIONARY London (CP)

Professors at four universities have received a £57,000 grant to prepare a dictionary of plants and their habitats to help planners and conservationists."

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We note the following from The Financial Post October 14, 1978:

"LOOKING FOR LETTERS

"I am, with the permission of Lady Roberts, collecting the letters of her late husband, Sir Charles G. D. Roberts (1860-1943) for publication.

"Roberts was a well-known poet and writer of animal stories, and an avid outdoorsman. He lived, at various times in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Toronto and Vancouver, traveled extensively in Canada between 1880 and 1943 on lecture tours and personal visits, and had contacts with persons from all walks of life.

"This is my final attempt to collect additional Roberts letters before completing the preparation of the existing collection for publication. I should greatly appreciate hearing from any persons holding letters from Sir Charles. I can be contacted at the -  
Roberts Letters Project  
c/o Department of English  
University of New Brunswick  
Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5A3

Fred Cogswell  
Head, Roberts Letters  
Project, Fredericton, N.B.

WATCH FOR WASPS.....

There's a new wasp in our midst - and it doesn't qualify as a "White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant". It's called Vespula Germanica. Unlike those familiar species which cosily nestle into the chinks in your brickwork or snuggle up against your eaves in their paper nests, these will build inside your walls. According to an article in the Globe & Mail, Oct. 31, the queens may be hibernating in our attics this winter. It was first seen in North America in the 1950s. It came to us via the C.N.E. because apparently it just loves hot dogs and ice cream!

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ORGANIC GARDENS

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There are a number of organic gardens and farms which are beginning to surface around the Metro area. These gardens grow vegetables and/or fruit without benefit of poisons or fertilizers, and if you have been on the receiving end of some of the notably tasteless products masquerading as fresh food recently, you might like to reassure yourself that your tastebuds are still operating by visiting some of these gardens. If you know of others, we would be glad to lengthen the list:

'Therfields' Farm  
Friday 4 - 8 p.m.  
Saturday 10 - 5 p.m.  
Sunday 12 - 5 p.m.

Airport Road, north of #9 Highway, at #5 Sideroad,  
or write, R. R. #5, Orangeville, Ontario, L9W 2Z2

A note of interest in the COUNTRY GUIDE MAGAZINE is their emphasis on yield - i.e., quantity, vs. quality. Who cares how many tons of tasteless pap they produce? No wonder it has to be purchased pre-wrapped in the store - no one would buy it if they tasted it first!

Mary Smith

## GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR BIRD PROJECTS

The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation invites application for grants to support projects on Ontario birds in 1979.

The Fund's aim is to encourage field studies by amateur naturalists and to support projects which increase or disseminate knowledge of birds in their natural environment or contribute to their preservation. Priority will be given to projects which involve volunteer naturalists in research or fieldwork and to applicants who do not have access to other sources of support. Individual grants will not normally exceed \$750. Applications are due by December 31, 1978, and should be submitted on application forms obtainable from the Secretary, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, c/o Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, NOE 1M0.

The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund distributed about \$3,000 to six grantees in 1978. The Fund is financed in part from the proceeds of the Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Count (Baillie Birdathon) and the Trustees welcome additional donations, which are tax deductible, and should be sent to the address given above. Trustees of the Fund are Fred Bodsworth (Chairman), Clive Goodwin, David M. Scott, Terry M. Shortt, J. Murray Speirs, Ronald R. Tasker, and James Woodford.

### PROJECT INFORMATION REQUESTED

The 1979 edition of the Directory to Co-operative Naturalists' Projects in Ontario is now being compiled. The Directory is designed to publicise volunteer naturalists' projects and attract wider participation in them. Selected project descriptions are published in the Nature Projects section in the Ontario Naturalist, as well as being included in the Directory.

Examples of projects in the 1978 Directory include Christmas Bird Counts, inventories of natural areas, and county plant and bird checklists. Most projects were bird studies, but there was an increase in projects on other subjects and it is hoped that this trend will continue.

If you are undertaking a project which you think may benefit from inclusion in the Directory, please write to David J.T. Hussell, Editor, Directory to Co-operative Naturalists' Projects, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario NOE 1M0, and ask for a project description form.



Familiar Plants  
1. Burdock  
2. Milkweed  
3. Chicory  
4. Indian Hemp

**THE GALAPAGOS - CONSERVATION AND HOW TO BEHAVE**

Unique. Nature's laboratory and Darwin's inspiration. To the islands aboard "Buccaneer", with a shipboard regimen which includes water conservation. There are few wells on these volcanic islands. The naturalists aboard are not Ecuadorians but the Captain is, and this is a tight run ship. There is a completely conscious approach to the ecosystem we shall visit and they spell it out. The government sets a limit on the numbers brought. You are one. There is to be no more immigration. You may smoke aboard ship, not ashore. There is a real danger of fire, and besides, filter tips have been known to choke pelagic birds.

Then comes the reality, swamping the senses. Galapagos Penguins and Flightless Cormorants. Seals which greet the swimmer with a kiss! Lizards just lying and beaches without plastic. The discreetly painted 10 cm black and white pegs which mark the trails. Big enough if you're looking and completely effective if you cooperate. The do's and don't's: Always keep to the paths...Collect nothing but pictures...Leave nothing but footprints...Move slowly among the animals...Do not touch or feed; this is not a Zoo.

The firm authority of a young sun-tanned guide in khaki shorts. A warden without badges. "You are off the path", you hear directed at a photographer going too near. I asked, "What would you do with an uncooperative tourist?". The reply, "Restrict him to the ship".

Our visit to the Darwin Research Centre. The programmes afoot to right the destructive wrongs caused by our exploitation and introduction of foreign species. The research dollars, wisely spent, trying to better understand the intricacies. The plea, before we visit the one village we shall see, "Please don't buy black coral beads or turtle shells".

Soon over. But something very special has been experienced. A good example has been shown and is remembered.

But isn't every place unique?

- Don Baldwin

(Don Baldwin led a tour to the Galapagos in March, 1978 and was our October speaker)

"A Field Guide to the Birds of Galapagos" by Michael Harris and Barry Kent MacKay. Available from the Nature Canada Bookshop, Ottawa. Red Mason can also supply.

Fred Bodsworth will lead a tour to the Galapagos in January, 1979. Call him at 699-2127

**VENEZUELA TOUR**

Visiting the Tuy River Valley, Rancho Grande, Andes, Llanos, Henri Pittier National Park, etc. from sea level to the high Poramo (above 9,500 feet).

March 16-31, 1979

Leader: Don Baldwin

Phone: 536-5542

Cost: \$1,285 U.S. from Miami

Recently published: "A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela" by De Schauensee & Phelps will increase your enjoyment of this fantastic tour. Available from Nature Canada Bookshop, Ottawa. Red Mason also has copies on order.

See next NEWSLETTER for announcement of Don Baldwin's Grand Manan tour in July

"YOU'RE A.....WHAT?"

Have you ever been in the company of a new acquaintance and dropped the proverbial bomb? You are casually having a very pleasant nondescript conversation that turns to weather and gardens.....and then you go and SAY IT.....the conversation stops, a look of amazement appears on his or her face (you feel like a child who has said a naughty word). The long, long silence is sometimes broken by a snigger. And then you hear pronounced THOSE words: "YOU'RE A.....WHAT? - A BIRD-WATCHER???"

I don't quite look like the late Dame Margaret Rutherford, but from what I can gather, I probably should when I announce that I watch birds. The hearer is either aghast or dumbfounded.....or gives me a queer kind of look. I have just posed a problem which he or she is not quite sure how to handle.

Bird-watching, for some reason, carries a hidden suspicion. I don't know whether it's the fact that people think one is looking at "things one shouldn't" through binoculars and passing it off as "bird-watching", or whether birds are considered so commonplace they wonder why anyone bothers to watch them.....unless he or she is a little "weird".

There is a variety of comebacks from these people after you have announced your hobby (after all, it isn't normal like watching TV or sewing or reading) and invariably they will wish to converse further (more curiosity?).

- "Live in an apartment - there are no birds." (An excuse to avoid divulging ignorance of subject).
- + "There's a funny bird in our garden; it's not a robin" (the only one he knows). "It's large, black, shines blue around the neck, has yellow eyes....." (Wants information but is not prepared to purchase a book.) Keep him in suspense before announcing it could be a grackle. DON'T tell him it is a common bird; arouse his interest with more questions and information.
- "Oh, you watch birds; you'd love our ..... Parrot; he's so much nicer than a cat or dog." (Someone with whom she can discuss her "different" pet and feel comfortable doing so.)

I have yet to meet someone who will just come out honestly and say, "I really know nothing about birds, but I wish I did."

So, my advice to fellow bird-watchers.....when in those chitty-chatty conversations with people who don't know yet what your hobby is, savour the moment, mentally decide into which category your listeners fall (the I-DON'T-KNOWS, the WANTS-INFO, the WANTS-TO-DISCUSS); then, at the opportune moment, go ahead - drop your bomb!! However, be prepared, should the other person happen also to be a bird-watcher, make sure you have lots of time to talk.....you may be late for an appointment.

.....Feather Brain

## WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BIRDS?

TFN members who want to know more about birds and bird movements should consider subscribing to American Birds (a publication of the National Audubon Society). The "American" in the title refers to birds of the Americas, and Canada gets very good coverage - better, really, than the rather small number of Canadian subscribers warrants.

My own involvement is in preparing the quarterly season account of bird news for Ontario, a summary that is made possible by the contributions of about 500 other volunteers across the Province who send in their records for each period. Ontario is one of 23 regions covering all of North America and Hawaii, and each quarter an overview of the continental picture forms the subject of an article on "The Changing Seasons."

Some of you may remember the old Audubon Field Notes, the predecessor of the present publication, when the sections I have just outlined were all you got for your money. Not much, really, as at that time even the regional reports were quite short. One issue also included all the Christmas Censuses for the continent, but unless you are manic about seeing your name in print in the Toronto count, then you might find that issue too heavy on data to be very fascinating reading.

The A-B subscription still brings the CBC issue, but that is now just the start of the things it offers. The Ontario regional summary has expanded to almost 4000 words, and particularly interesting or unusual points in all the summaries are highlighted or boldfaced. More significant is the appearance of colour in the pages, and the appearance of a whole range of items of interest to bird enthusiasts, from an annual photo salon to periodic "Site Guides" to places of interest. Articles range from informative to semi-technical, but even the latter can be fascinating. The latest issue chronicles the 80-hour, 3500 km trans-oceanic flight of the Blackpoll Warbler, for example. Much valuable information on identification appears, the most recent being in a two-part article on sea-birds in the Bay of Fundy, with useful notes on such puzzlers as jaegers and terns. The same issue had a short piece on the pitfalls of Hoary Redpoll identification.

There's a "Market Place" and from time to time articles on building a library, choosing binoculars, and so on appear. The technical articles are also interpreted: "On understanding quantitative surveys of vegetation: what those numbers mean and how to use them to envision an area" was the title of such a paper in January. For the conservationists among us, the annual Blue List survey of birds thought to be declining is at present underway.

So I think it's good value for money if you're keen on birds. And it complements, rather than competes with, such publications as The Ontario Naturalist and Nature Canada. Those of us who work at putting the seasonal summary together have an interest in encouraging a wider Ontario circulation, because the space we are allotted is directly related to this: the more readers we have, the better job we can do in telling the story of the seasons. But really American Birds is an excellent way of keeping informed on what's going on in the bird world. It costs \$12.00 a year (6 issues) from American Birds, 950 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

Just a word in closing about how you can help contribute to the network. It is very easy for a Torontonion, because there's no intermediate sub-regional editor as there is in other cities, although I do pick up information from other sources: Gerry Bennett's monthly compilation for areas NW of here, and the Toronto Ornithological Club's records from Arnold Dawe, for example. But normally you simply send the information to me at 11 Westbank Cresc., Weston, M9P 1S4. If your records are published your name is given as the contributor, but of course the vast mass of details cannot be published. This makes them no less useful as they all help form a picture. The sheer volume of material I receive makes it very time-consuming and expensive to acknowledge every note individually, but I do try to contact contributors periodically and thank new people particularly.

Clive E. Goodwin

## TRAIL USERS' CODE

Following up on the announcement of our Naturalist's Code of Ethics project announced in the November Newsletter, you might be interested in the "Trail User's Code" which is attached to every membership card of the Bruce Trail Association —

- Hike only along marked routes.
- Do not climb fences—use the stiles.
- Carry out all garbage (if you can carry it in, you can carry it out).
- Light cooking fires at official campsites only—drench fires after use. (Better still carry a lightweight hiker's stove.)
- Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy.
- Never strip bark from trees.
- Keep dogs on leash on or near farmland.
- Walk around the edges of fields not across them.
- Protect and do not disturb wildlife.
- Take nothing but pictures—leave nothing but footprints!

## TORONTO TREE WEEKEND IN A NUTSHELL

Some people go through life calling a tree a tree and never know the common name, let alone the botanical name of any. They usually call evergreens Christmas trees; all trees on tropical islands are palms; and all the rest are trees. Most people know a little more - usually a pine from a spruce, a maple from an oak, as well as a willow, a poplar, and a birch. Probably all of us would like to know more but don't always find studying a tree book an easy way to learn trees. Although trees in nurseries and on nature trails are often labelled, which is a help, I never seemed to learn much that way. In January I was fortunate enough to learn how to identify a great many kinds of trees in one fun-packed weekend with Ontario Nature Tours. Of course, I already knew a good number of trees from gardening and previous nature walks, and had a yen to learn more, so was receptive, which helps.

I already knew the evergreens which are cone-bearing, and could distinguish these from the deciduous trees which drop their leaves in the fall and so were bare at that time. The exception, of course, is the larch which has cones and sheds its leaves. We saw two species - the European larch and the tamarack (our native larch). The European larch has cones twice the size of the Canadian larch which has half-inch cones. The larches stood tall and cylindrical.

We met in High Park where we waded through deep snow down an avenue of Austrian pines with long twin needles. The needles don't snap when bent and make good toothpicks. We looked at the trunks and calculated the age of the trees by counting the number of places where branches grew out from the main trunk. The white pine we easily identified by its feathery bundles of five needles (remembered because there are five letters in "white"). We snapped the twin needles of red pines with their reddish trunks. These needles are twice as long as the needles on jack pines. The pine with the obvious orange bark and dramatic wild formation was the Scots pine - wild and dramatic like the people from Scotland. These trees, we were told, grow taller and are more majestic in Scotland. We also saw a Mugho pine on an incline. These usually grow in a circular, bushy form in gardens.

We saw only one fir; it was not native. Our leader said it was a fir, and was as "fir" as he wanted to go. He didn't want to go out on a limb. We identified Norway spruce with its sinister drooping branches and very long cones. Blue spruce we saw in gardens. I have yet to learn black and white spruce, but I did learn that black spruce likes to have its feet in water.

We felt the needles of the eastern hemlock. They are very soft and each has two white lines on its underside. It is a dainty tree - one of my favorites. The eastern white cedar, I was surprised to learn, is not a true cedar; its genus name is Thuja. We felt its scale-like leaves and observed the shreddy, reddish bark which had been stripped from one old tree by squirrels for their nests.

Then we had the "Is that Yew" routine. Yew leaves are very, very dark and the seeds are extremely poisonous. Birds have the sense to eat the fleshy fruit but leave the seeds. We felt the sharp leaves on the juniper and discussed the gin flavour of the berries.

Now for the deciduous trees. Emphasis was put on observing the twigs and buds. We were taught the MADCAP rule for identification. MADCAP in the dictionary is a person of wild or eccentric behaviour, a flighty or hare-brained person, one who indulges in frolics. Was it coincidence or not, but there we were in the dead of winter, spending all day outside with the temperature minus 17 degrees (between jogging sessions and jumping up and down on the spot to get the feeling back in our feet). So we learned the MADCAP rule:

- When the buds on the twigs are opposite as opposed to alternate, the trees are - Maples, Ashes, or Dogwood (with the exception of the alternate-leaved dogwood).
- CAP stands for Caprifoliaceae, the family name of a group of smelly bushes. The CAP also stands for capricorn or goat. Bushes belonging to the CAP family include honeysuckle, elderberry, and nannyberry.

In the maples we soon learned to recognize the Norway maple with its smooth gray bark and samara spread at an angle of 180 degrees. The Manitoba maple has hairy twigs and samara close together. The red maple has reddish buds and twigs. The ashes have stout twigs with terminal buds much larger than the lateral. We did not learn to tell a dogwood by its 'bark', but by its bushyness and clusters of female buds. Of course, we were all fooled by the alternate-leaved dogwood.

Under CAP we found the honeysuckle and broke the twigs. The European had hollow twigs; the Canadian was solid. We also learned to identify the elderberry and the nannyberry.

Now it was time to look at trees and bushes with twigs and buds alternating on the branches. We were getting hungry, so we chewed on a few basswood buds. To quench our thirst we ate the fruit of the sumach. We also learned to identify the clumps of female sumach tree (with fruit still clinging) from the clumps of male sumach trees (no fruit). Hunger gone and thirst quenched, we were ready for entertainment, so we scattered the seeds of the paper birch on the snow and created scenes of bobwhites flying over footprints. For

laughs we looked at all the monkey-faces on the butternut tree bud scars. For further excitement we watched the twigs fall off the crack willows as the cold wind blew through the trees. Those with constipation were tempted to try the blue berries from the European buckthorn tree.

Apple trees we identified by the hoary twigs and thorns and by the few old apples still clinging to them. Thorns also grew on hawthorns and locust trees. Our illustrious leader picked a twig from a tree and said, "To prove this is a black locust, here is a locust", and sure enough, a locust (grasshopper) was impaled on one of the twin thorns. It must have been left there by a shrike.

We identified black cherry trees by their delicate buds, the lenticels on the younger bark, and as a final test, we chewed on the twigs which tasted of bitter almonds.

Some of last year's fruit hung on the London plane trees and looked like ancient maces. The bark was attractive, distinctive, and mottled.

The copper beech has very attractive twigs with copper-red rolled-up buds, not easily forgotten once seen.

The sassafras tree we learned to identify by its shape and green twigs.

We saw two ginkgo trees with lumpy stubs along the branches. We were told that this is a very ancient species of tree long extinct in this part of the world. It was rediscovered within the last two hundred years in Tibet. Evidently the female tree in fruit has a very offensive odour so it is not used in parks.

The oaks have five buds at the ends of the twigs. The white oaks have leaves with rounded lobes; those of the red and black oaks are pointed.

Our last tree was the balsam poplar with its pointed, sticky buds. By this time the temperature had dropped a few more degrees and we decided to call it a day before somebody came to collect all the MADCAPS and take them in for psychiatric examination!

Jay Pecklington

#### NEWSWORTHY BIRD.....THE TURKEY

An October 5th item in the Globe & Mail relates the story of a wild turkey picked up on Eglinton Avenue, Mississauga. It's now in the sanctuary of Mrs. Bernice Inman at Dundas St. and Mississauga Rd. They formerly were resident in Ontario but turkeys have been hunted out over a wide portion of their range. Attempts to reintroduce them in Ontario have not been successful. If you see one, check the tip of the tail - if it's rusty rather than white, it's probably a wild bird. Not suitable for Christmas dinner - they're much slimmer than their domestic counterparts.

## THE PHANTOM PHALAROPE

I enjoy walking (or even sailing) in the company of pleasant people who love nature, and that is why I recently joined the Toronto Field Naturalists. I'm fairly hopeless however when it comes to identifying plants, birds, trees and other assorted objects that decorate the countryside. In fact, in my student days, I misguidedly applied for a job as a gardener and the irascible retired Major who owned the place (and who had just as misguidedly hired me) used to loom over me saying "Now don't pull that up, that's a flower", or "Take that one out, it's a weed".

It was with no great expectations, or even ambitions, therefore, that I joined the recent Lake Ontario cruise on board CAYUGA II, in search of the legendary phalarope and something called the jaeger, which I always thought was a kind of shoe. At any rate, I was familiar with the phalarope from having read "Too Late the Phalarope" by the South African writer, Alan Paton. (Most of my bird lore is of literary origin and I can usually drum up some sort of bookish association with at least one of the birds we spot on the outings.) The phalarope, however, was not only late that Sunday out on the lake, but it never got there at all, or at least eluded the gaze of the stalwarts with the formidable-looking telescopes.

What we did see, in plenty, were gulls. A huge flock of them followed the boat, grabbing up bits of bread thrown out from the stern. I admired the way they manoeuvred and avoided colliding with each other in the scramble. This time I had some binoculars and followed one huge gull in particular which seemed to have only one leg. I was going to point this out to my friend as a rarity, when the bird infuriatingly lowered its second leg which it had apparently been resting for a while. Obviously there were all kinds of subtle distinctions to be made among these gulls, but half an hour of watching them was enough--in fact, when I close my eyes I can still see a whirling mass of gulls, one with one leg. It's like those white lines you see when trying to get to sleep after a long night's drive.

Luckily I had brought along a paperback in case of bad weather, and I noticed that quite a few others had done the same. There were even card games and chess games and I saw several people asleep, though I doubt they were TFN members. The voyage itself was most enjoyable and there were even a few dramatic moments when, on occasion, about fifty people, binoculars at the ready, would charge first to port, then to starboard when a non-gull had been reported lurking in the wings, so to speak.

Although I had gone mainly for the trip, I was impressed at how my birdwatching friends remained stoical, making the most of the gulls and trying to identify certain birdlike specks on the horizon. I had some friendly chats, learned a bit, got some fresh air and didn't even read much of my book. I must look up the phalarope some day to check if it ever gets north of Johannesburg.

## THE SAD STORY OF THE GYRFALCON

The NEWSLETTER has received a journal-style report from Margaret and Reid Wilson and Gordon Bollerby concerning the Gyrfalcon which visited Toronto Harbour last winter. The report starts out with the sighting by Dave Fidler on January 22 at Pier 4 and finishes up with the March 30 account of the falcon's untimely end. It had been feeding on wintering ducks, such as Oldsquaw and Seaup, in the ice-bound harbour, thus augmenting its diet of pigeons. A high window-ledge in the Terminal Warehouse Building was its favourite roosting-place and it was below this point that it was found dead - apparently poisoned, according to the report of the lab at Environment Canada, but the cost of determining the source was deemed too high.

People came from Detroit, Boston and many parts of Canada and the U. S. just to see this rather rare raptor. Unlike the smaller Peregrine Falcon (whose numbers are decreasing due to the effects of pesticides) the Gyrfalcon is not on the 'Endangered Species List' in Ontario. Both are arctic-breeding falcons, but unlike the Peregrine, the Gyrfalcon rarely turns up south of Latitude 50°, even in winter. It is thought that the gyr never has been abundant. (By the way, for the uninitiated, I've been told to pronounce that 'jeer'.)

The colour-range of the Gyrfalcon is from blackish through many shades of grey to white. The individual in question is reported to have been a grey-phase bird but appeared to be getting lighter as time went on. This makes sense since it was an immature and younger birds are more heavily mottled than mature birds according to the manuals. A 'beautiful face-pattern' is mentioned which fits the grey-phase bird since moustachial markings are vestigial or lacking in the white phase. The white underside of our bird, we are told, showed a 'darker tear-drop pattern'. This individual is otherwise described as 'beautifully marked' and the observers are not sparing in their use of such words as 'gorgeous' and 'magnificent'. They found its speed, too, remarkable and referred to its size as 'massive'. It was identified as a female which in the gyr, as in a number of other raptor species, is considerably larger than the male; she goes to 2 feet in height with a 4-foot wingspread.

How did this impressive creature come to grief? It is known that certain poisons are sanctioned for control of pigeons (the last meal of the gyr). It is still a mystery, too, why many ducks have been found dead along our waterfront. Surely this matter should not be dropped. Among our many members, if there is anyone who knows correct procedures to arrive at clear-cut answers in such cases, please contact the Editorial Committee. Then perhaps the TPN can hope to devise some kind of remedial action to help prevent further depletion of our wild fowl and rare raptors.

The rarity of the Gyrfalcon might have given rise to a certain legend which goes something like this: 'One day a man sighted a white falcon - the spirit of impending death he was told - ah, but not yet! He was informed that on the next such occasion he would know his time had come.' One winter a friend of mine, having just read this legend, was meditating in the grounds of a monastery in the Hudson Valley; looking up she suddenly saw a great white falcon flying by her at close range. (She insists it was not a Snowy Owl.) Well, my friend probably has a long life ahead of her for the chances of that ever happening again are pretty remote. In fact, these days, it seems it is the Gyrfalcon that must die if it ever catches sight of Man!

D. B.

# HELP WANTED

Did you know that the TFN has a scrapbook in which we try to keep a record of items in the news covering our activities? It was started in our Jubilee Year, 1973, by Harold Taylor, then Chairman of the Public Relations Committee. Claire Brigden, present Chairperson, is looking for a volunteer with access to the newspapers who would like to take over the job of clipping the news items and maintaining the scrap book. If you think you would enjoy this little task, call Muriel Miville, 463-8066.

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Another important task for some generous volunteers is the compiling of an Index for the TFN NEWSLETTER. We are often asked for specific information and an Index is badly needed. If you are interested in undertaking this, call anyone on the Editorial Committee.

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We are trying to get our 'archives' in shape on the TFN NEWSLETTER. We like to have any issue available to any member who wishes to borrow it. Students, for example, sometimes need them for projects and others who may be doing research. (By the way we have newsletters of other naturalists' organizations on file and occasionally other reports are available.) We have on hand all the copies of the NEWSLETTER for the years 1938 to 1952 and 1972 to 1978. What is missing are issues for the years 1953 to 1971 inclusive. If your membership is of that vintage, perhaps you would go through your files and see if you have any of those copies to complete our set. If so, call any member of the Editorial Committee.

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PLEASE - is there anyone out there who is good at lettering? That sign "help wanted" at the top of this page should tell you how much your services are needed. Contact a member of the Editorial Committee. Signs are frequently needed for displays.

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

Newsletter Editorial Committee

Ms. Diana Banville -536-1396  
#501, 1011 Lansdowne Ave., Toronto M6H 4G1  
Miss Mildred Easto - 488-0962  
#416, 28 Broadway Ave., Toronto M4P 1T5  
Mrs. Helen Juhola - 924-5806  
#112, 51 Alexander St., Toronto M4Y 1B3  
Miss Jean Macdonald - 425-6596  
88 Parklea Dr., Toronto M4G 2J8  
Miss Florence Preston - 483-9530  
#203, 368 Eglinton Ave. East, Toronto M4P 1L9

Articles and/or drawings for the Newsletter will be welcome and must reach a member of the Editorial Committee by the first day of the month. Articles may be anywhere from one or two sentences to 1500 words in length.