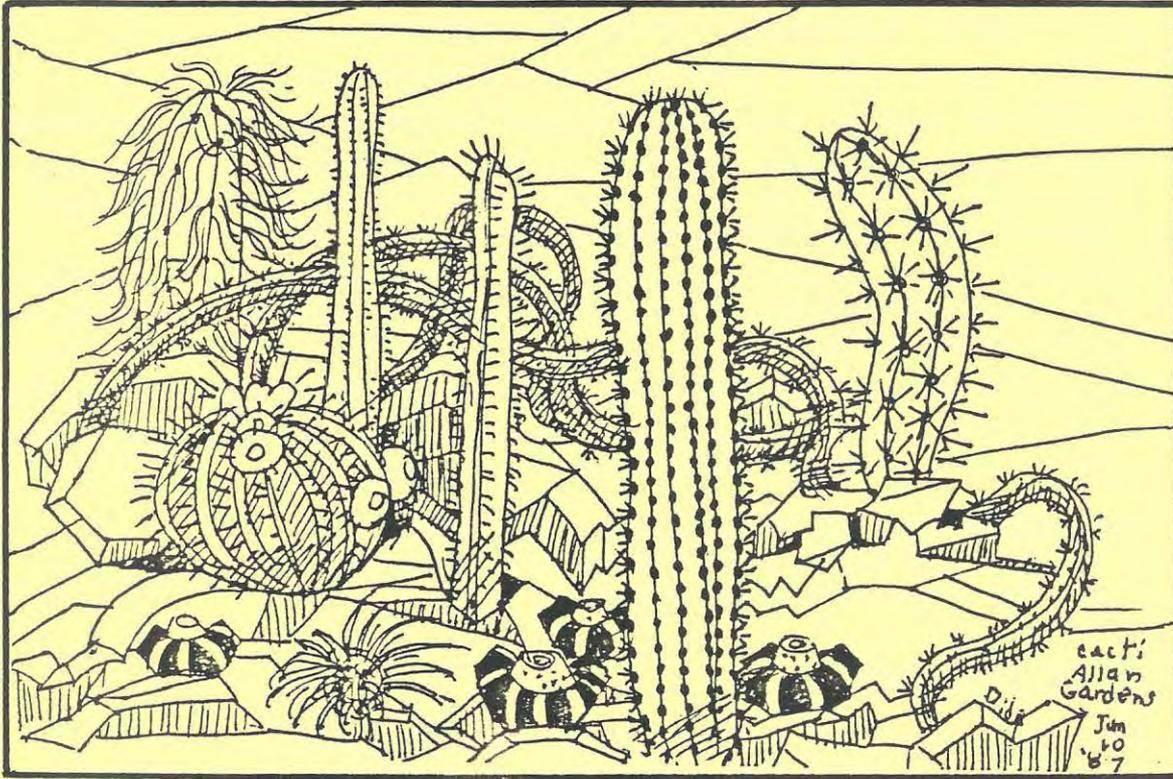


TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 408

December 1989



A sketch from a TFN Nature Arts Outing

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TFN MEETINGS

General Meeting

Monday, December 4 at 8 pm - PLANTS USED FOR FOOD AND MEDICINE BY THE SIX NATIONS INDIANS, an illustrated talk by Jack Lord of the Royal Botanical Gardens at 155 College St., 6th floor auditorium

- + from 7 pm to 8 pm - a display of Mary Cummings' art
- + a display from the Canadian Wildflower Society (a chance to subscribe)
- + hasti-notes of Suzanne House's watercolour wildflower paintings will be available for purchase (\$2.00 each); also, "The Canadian Wildflower Book of Days" by Suzanne House and Donald Sutherland (\$14.95)
- + an opportunity to purchase back issues of the ONTARIO FIELD BIOLOGIST, other TFN publications, hasti-notes, prints of selected newsletter covers, pins, decals and crests
- + easy TTC access (building is one block west of Queen's park subway stn.)
- + free parking in the Board of Education garage on the west side of McCaul Street just south of College Street

NEXT GENERAL MEETING: Monday, February 5, 1990
The Wild Bird Clinic at the University of Guelph,
an illustrated talk by Karin Machin

Group Meetings

Tuesday, January 9 at 7:30 pm - BOTANY GROUP MEETING
Robin Powell, President of TFN, will show slides from the TFN photo collection.
Meet in Room 251 at 155 College St.

Monday, January 15 at 7 pm - ENVIRONMENT GROUP MEETING
An astounding array of wildlife lives with us in the city. Frequently, co-existence poses hazards for us and them -- migrating birds break their necks against the skyscrapers that block their flight path, raccoons invade our attics, nests of cottontails turn up unexpectedly. The list goes on.
Come to January's Environmental Meeting and hear former Metro Zoo keeper Kip Parker discuss the philosophy and practice of wildlife rehabilitation. He will provide tips on what city dwellers should -- and shouldn't--do when they find injured wild animals. Learn how we can live harmoniously with the furred and feathered in the concrete jungle.
Meet in Room 251 at 155 College St.

Please Note: NEXT NEWSLETTER - February 1990 (mailed in mid January)

also: NO January General Meeting & NO January Bird Group Meeting (see page 3).

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Volunteer help, both ongoing and one time, are the life blood of the TFN. Without either, we would cease to exist. It would only be a matter of how quickly. The Bird Group is without a leader. A volunteer is needed to look after the group's activities; e.g., reserve meeting facilities (at Toronto Board of Education Building), arrange for audio-visual equipment, find speakers and notify membership of upcoming activities (via newsletter). Most of this is straightforward. It would be a pity to mothball this group for the lack of one volunteer. If you would like to lead the Bird Group or know a likely candidate, please contact me or any board member.

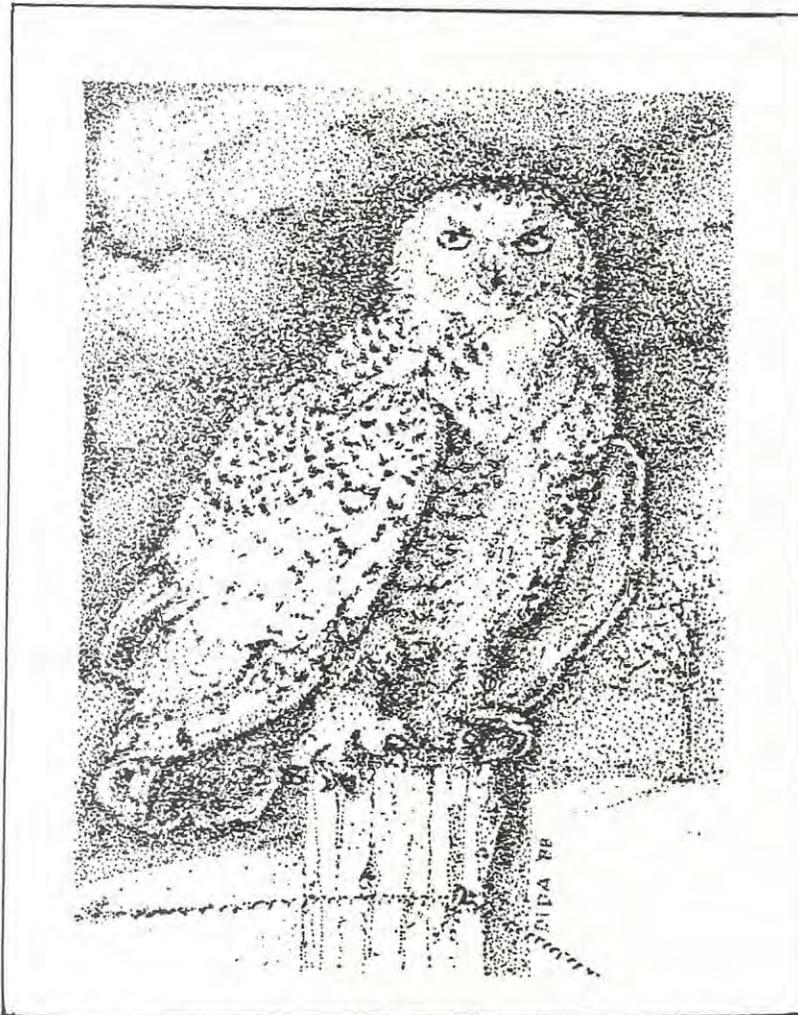
A recent successful example of effective volunteer help, was the TFN's response to MTRCA's proposed East Point Park development. This development involves a marina and tableland park on the last remaining unspoilt area of Bluffs and beach by the mouth of Highland Creek. The TFN was able to quickly put together a professionally packaged critique of this proposal. We will be watching East Point Park carefully.

Robin Powell (928-9493)



THE SNOWY OWL

According to TFN Library material, the snowy owl nests in rolling tundra. It is circumpolar as a nesting species and winters far enough south to obtain sufficient daylight for hunting, not being among the nocturnal owl species. Some individuals migrate as far as Toronto or even further south. Though the number of these birds which seek out Toronto headlands, beaches, and fields depends on the populations of small mammals further north, in fact in the past ten years only one winter (1985-86) has not produced at least a few reports in TFN files.



drawing from a photo by Dr. G. Peck in THE ARCTIC COAST by Douglas Wilkinson

December

TFN OUTINGS

- Saturday NORTH YORK CENTRE - nature arts North York
 Dec. 2 Leader: Betty Paul
 10:30 am Meet at the turnstiles of the North York Centre subway station.
 Bring cameras, sketching materials and stool, or just come
 and enjoy. Lunch optional.
- Wednesday ROSEDALE RAVINE - nature walk Don tributary, Toronto
 Dec. 6 Leader: Helen Juhola
 10 am Meet at the Rosedale subway station. Walk ends at different stop.
- Saturday SYLVAN PARK - birds Lakeshore, Scarborough
 Dec. 9 Leader: Karin Fawthrop
 10 am Meet on the south side of Kingston Road at Bellamy Road.
- Tuesday ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM - nature arts Toronto
 Dec. 12 Leader: Marjory Tilley
 10:30 am Meet at the Museum entrance on the west side of Queen's Park
 Crescent just south of Bloor Street. Bring sketching materials
 and stool or just come and enjoy.
- Wednesday ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCE CENTRE - tour Toronto
 Dec. 13 Leader: staff
 10 am Meet at Danforth Technical School, 840 Greenwood Avenue (north
 of Danforth Avenue).
- Sunday HUMBER BAY EAST - birds Lakeshore, Etobicoke
 Dec. 17 Leader: Ross Harris
 10 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Lake Shore Blvd.
 West opposite Park Lawn Rd.
- Wednesday PARK DRIVE RAVINE... - nature walk Don tributary, Toronto
 Dec. 20 Leader: Sandy Cappell
 10 am Meet at the Castle Frank subway station. Walk ends at a
 different public transit stop.
- Wednesday CEDARVALE RAVINE - nature walk Don tributary, York, Toronto
 Dec. 27 Leader: Ruth Munson
 10:30 am Meet at the Eglinton West subway station of the Spadina subway
 line. Walk ends at a different public transit stop.
- Saturday ALLAN GARDENS - botany Toronto
 Dec. 30 Leader: Dr. Nick Badenhuizen
 11 am Meet at the greenhouse entrance which is south of Carlton and
 east of Jarvis St.

▷

*Freed from measuring the earth with our legs,
 we lose touch with time, space, and texture.*

Helen Juhola

TFN OUTINGS (cont'd)

January

- Monday CASTLE FRANK - nature walk Don tributary, Toronto
 Jan. 1 Leaders: Aarne and Helen Juhola
 1:30 pm Meet at the Castle Frank subway station. Walk will end at a
 different public transit stop.
- Saturday YORK CEMETERY GREENHOUSES - nature arts North York
 Jan. 6 Leader: Paul McGaw
 10:30 am Meet at the turnstiles of the North York Centre subway station.
 Bring cameras, sketching materials and stool, or just come
 and enjoy. Lunch optional.
- || Sunday * HUMBER VALLEY - Lakeshore to Bloor Humber, Etobicoke
 Jan. 7 Leader: Dennis Clarke & others
 2 pm Meet at the western terminal of the Queen streetcar line.
 Walk will end at Bloor Street.
- L \ Wednesday * LAKESHORE - Marie Curtis Park to Kipling Lakeshore, Etobicoke
 Jan. 10 Leader: volunteer required (see page 19)
 1:30 pm Meet at the western terminal of the Lakeshore streetcar line.
 Walk will end at Lake Shore Blvd. West and Kipling Ave.
- Saturday WEST HUMBER - birds West Humber, Etobicoke
 Jan. 13 Leader: Joan O'Donnell
 10 am Meet on the corner of Albion Road and Barker Ave.
- Tuesday NORTH YORK LIBRARY - nature arts North York
 Jan. 16 Leader: Mary Cumming
 10:30 am Meet at the turnstile of the North York Centre subway station.
 Bring cameras, sketching materials and stool, or just come and
 enjoy. Lunch optional.

▷

* See page 19.

For Enjoyment of TFN Outings

- Visitors and children are welcome on all outings.
- Outings go whatever the weather.
- All outings are accessible by public transit (TTC 393-4636, Ride Guides are free)
- Metro maps are available for a nominal sum. Do get one!
- Walks are usually at a leisurely pace and begin and end at the same location unless indicated otherwise.
- Note taking, sketching, photography and collecting of litter are encouraged, the collecting of specimens is discouraged.
- Please do not bring pets on outings. Dogs have been found to interfere with the environment, viewing and safety on the trail.
- Useful numbers: Police 967-2222; pollution complaints within Metro 965-9619.

JANUARY OUTINGS (cont'd)

L2 Wednesday LAKESHORE - Kipling to Royal York Road Lakeshore, Etobicoke
Jan. 17 Leader: volunteer required (see page 19)
1:30 pm Meet on the south side of Lakeshore Blvd. West at Kipling.
Walk ends at a different public transit stop.

112 Sunday HUMBER VALLEY - Bloor to Dundas Humber, York/Etobicoke
Jan. 21 Leader: Nancy Fredenburg
2 pm Meet at the Old Mill subway station.

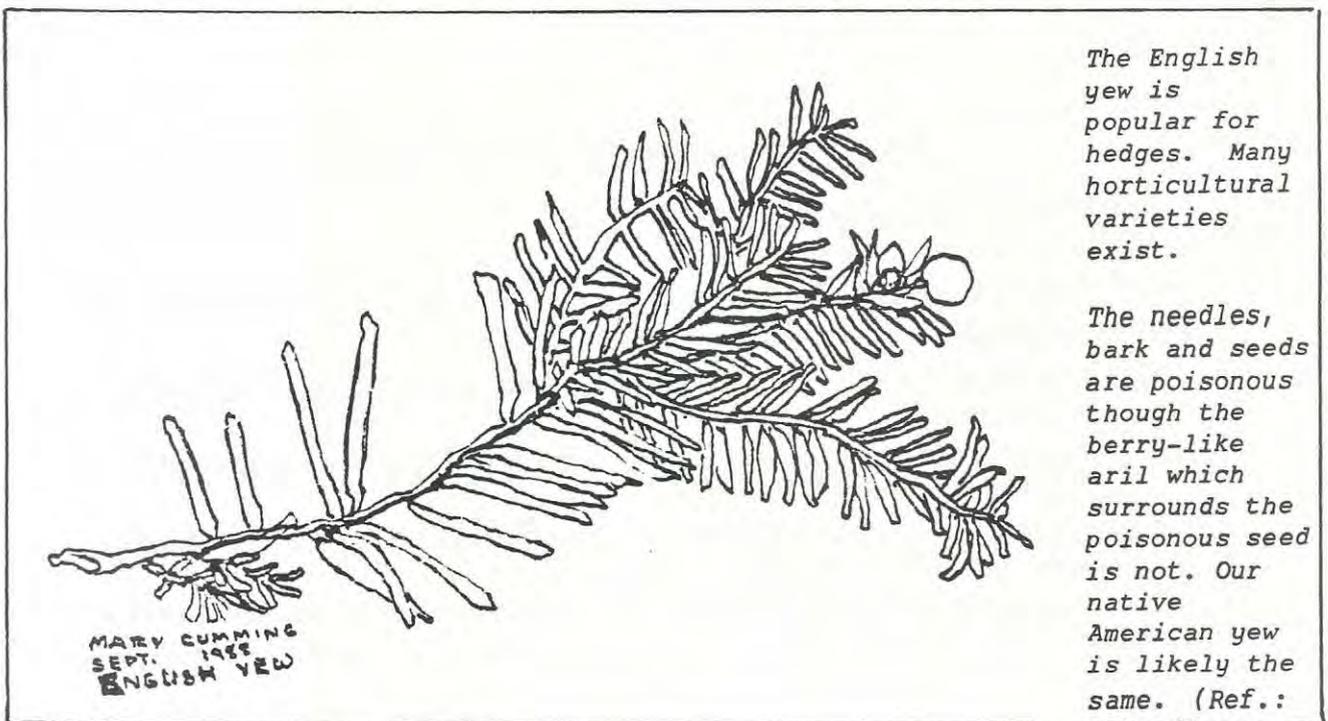
L3 Wednesday LAKESHORE - Royal York Road to Park Lawn Rd. Lakeshore, Etobicoke
Jan. 24 Leader: volunteer required (see page 19)
1:30 pm Meet on the southeast corner of Lakeshore Rd. and Royal York
Road. Walk ends at a different public transit stop.

Saturday HIGH PARK - master plan Toronto
Jan. 27 Leader: Jerry Belan
10 am Meet at the north entrance to the park opposite High Park Ave.
to 12 noon Walk will end at a different public transit stop.

Sunday CENTENNIAL PARK CONSERVATORY - botany Etobicoke
Jan. 28 Leader: Judy Hernandez
1 pm Meet at the entrance on Elmcrest Rd. north of Rathburn Road.

Wednesday WINDFIELD PARK - nature walk Wilket Creek, North York
Jan. 31 Leader: Joan Patterson
10:30 am Meet in the parking lot (park entrance) on the south side of
York Mills Road just east of Bayview Ave.

□



The English yew is popular for hedges. Many horticultural varieties exist.

The needles, bark and seeds are poisonous though the berry-like aril which surrounds the poisonous seed is not. Our native American yew is likely the same. (Ref.: TFN Library Files)

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Sept. 27, 1989

I am pleased to receive your letter of September 11, 1989, concerning the Belt Line lands in the City of Toronto.

I can advise you that negotiations are currently underway between the City of Toronto and the Canadian National Railway Company (CN) for the City to acquire from CN the railway right-of-way known as the Belt Line which extends from the lands just west of Allen Road to the east of Mount Pleasant Road. By acquiring the Belt Line, the City will be in a position to guide its future development as a linear public park and recreation facility and as an important component of the City-wide recreation trail system.

As a result of your interest in the Belt Line, your name has been added to our mailing list. In this regard, you will be kept informed of the City's progress in its negotiating on the Belt line.

Paul Bedord, Director
Community & Neighbourhoods
Planning Division, City of Toronto

Oct. 19, 1989

Sandy Cappell kindly donated some Kentucky Coffee tree seedlings he had grown from seed to us to grow on to transplanting size for use in our natural parklands. He suggested that others might wish to collect and grow seed, and we would certainly welcome this, provided the plant species are suitable for natural parklands. This would include most native trees and shrub species, but not trees that are particularly invasive such as willow, poplar, Manitoba maple. Exotic invaders (Norway maple, buckthorn, European birch, European mountain ash) are also not especially helpful. All nut trees are most welcome.

Growers should stratify seed collected this fall (place in sand in the refrigerator for 60 to 90 days) then pot in the early spring and grow for one season. We will be happy to transplant into our nursery at Windfields Farm next fall. For information, call 224-6293.

Bill Granger, Manager
Arborist Services, North York

HOPE FOR SCHOOLYARDS

In England, a three-year-old national research program -- the Learning Through Landscapes project -- is under way to investigate how schools can restructure paved and windswept schoolyards to give them a countryside look and so provide "a complete environment for learning". The idea is that "the landscape in which the school stands...can provide a rich and stimulating resource and setting...for learning and teaching."

from "Reflections -- Encountering the Countryside --II" by Tony Hiss in THE NEW YORKER,
Aug. 28, 1989

KEEPING IN TOUCH (cont'd)

Autumn 1989

Am reading old newspapers of Eastern Ontario on microfilm, relating to family research on my family, and came across the following in an Almonte Gazette issue of Feb. 23, 1912. Thought it might be of interest to TFN:

Almonte Gazette, Feb. 23, 1912 "Rare Birds Found in Lake Ontario" (from the New York State Preservation Commission)

"The Bulletin deals with the wholesale destruction of the passenger pigeon now extinct in this section of the country. A few years ago they were slaughtered by the thousands and if not consumed at once, were salted and used at a later date. At one time flocks fully a mile long were common in spring but now they are never seen."

"There are several varieties of Arctic birds that straggle as far south as Lake Ontario. All species of hawks follow the line of flight along Lake Ontario...sharp-shinned most common, at times 50 or more being seen. Quite common mid-May and sometimes as early as the first week of April. Rare birds sometimes seen include the rarest -- the tufted titmouse. Two small flocks of these were found along the shores of Lake Ontario, January 1909, in quite severe weather. Among the waterfowl -- Eider duck is a rare straggler -- found on two occasions -- in August 1910 and 1911. The phalarope is another visitor to Lake Ontario. Recently it was observed in Monroe County, the northern variety, August 19, 1910 and Wilson's, Aug. 20, 1911. Four birds were seen in each instance. Other birds along the shores of Lake Ontario during migration (include) the surf scoter, Baird's and white piping sandpiper and piping plover. Among the non-game birds -- Caspian tern, great black backed and laughing gull, parasitic jaeger, murre, and more rarely, cormorant."

Jean McGill

August 30, 1989

Thought I'd follow up on our brief conversation at the end of Ken Cook's Old Shorelines walk on Oct. 15th, regarding reforestation of the land bordering the "subway barns" in the east end of Toronto.

▷ I spoke with Aird Lewis, Director of "Trees for Today and Tomorrow" (44 Eglinton Ave. West, Suite 206, Toronto M4R 1A1, Tel: 485-1901) who has advised me that the following is required if a reforestation program is to be pursued.

- a map showing the location of the tract of land
- type of soil and cover
- who owns the land...if it is public land, who has responsibility for it

If all the above information is provided at one time, it can save time in getting the program under way.

Charles Salmon

P.S. I really enjoy the walks and get a lot out of the outings.

A Christmas message...

DANCING DANDELIONS

As the dandelion has become my favorite flower, for years I have wanted to make a Christmas card about it because in the Spring the outline of the leaves of some dandelion plants resembles an evergreen tree, a favorite motif of mine for my Christmas card designs over the years.

The leaves that have been photocopied on this card were picked early in March this year on the campus of the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in downtown Toronto.

The dandelion has been a great inspiration to me for nearly two decades. I paid little attention to it after the joy of discovering it in childhood until I was looking for a symbol to associate with museum research in all countries of the world.

Here was a plant rich in fortitude, with a delicate fragrance, a design based on all the elements of geometry, particularly the circle and the sphere, and displaying all the colours in the spectrum in its life cycle.

Despised by many people, this little plant is one of God's great works of art. I have had the audacity to place a star for Christmas in the centre of the dance, for they both symbolize the light in the holy, and not always so holy, human spirit that dwells in all of us. Jesus taught us to let our light shine, so that the world may see our good works. Observing the dandelion has helped my light to shine on occasion. May it also offer inspiration to you.



from a 1984 Christmas Card
by Frances M. Johnston

Ed. Note: As well as the three
actual dandelion-leaves,
only a red pen was used to suggest
lights at the tips of the lobes,
and a gummed silver-paper star.

BEGINNINGS

This month we welcome back to these pages, after a long absence, Rosemary Gaymer. For 17 years Rosemary gave her time and talents to the TFN. After serving on, and also leading, the Outings Committee, Publicity and Membership Committee, and Bird Group, Rosemary was our President from 1972 to 1974. Shortly afterwards, her move to Oakville (to be closer to her work at the many campuses of Sheridan College) made it impractical for her to continue TFN activities. Rosemary sends her best wishes to club members. "I think of you often," she writes, "and avidly read the Newsletter." She says she'd be delighted to hear from any old friends and acquaintances if they are going to the Oakville area, or "even just feel like picking up the telephone for a chat." Rosemary's number -- not a long distance call from Toronto -- is (416) 844-8332. Her address is 205 Queen Mary Drive, Apt. 1103, Oakville, Ont. L6K 3K8. Here is Rosemary's story.

H.T.

There was no known occasion when I became interested in birds. I don't think I ever wasn't! The family swore I was born watching birds and examining flowers and beetles...

We had a large garden in the country, near the North Sea in East Anglia, with at least 22 species of birds nesting most years. By age nine, I had a bird-feeding shelf on the inside window-sill of my bedroom-study, level with the canopy of a large old apple tree. Hours were spent watching birds in ultimate close-up, learning to look at every feather.

With a 3,000 acre mixed farming estate to roam over, plus adjacent heathland, miles of estuarine river banks and grass "marshes" behind the sea walls, it was a naturalist's heaven. For two years, from age nine to eleven, because of a combination of illness and outgrowing my strength, I neither attended school, nor had regular tuition at home, being on a generalized reading program but otherwise "running wild". I considered that my "work" was Natural History, with capital letters. We had a large "summer house" in the garden (like a half-open, thatched-roof gazebo) with lots of shelves. It was a busy collecting centre and laboratory, with open-air window-sills bearing glass jars with growing caterpillars and pupae, and rows of twigs and plants for various types of study. Every day, "rounds" were made in the garden and nearby to collect the correct fresh plant food for the caterpillars; and trees, hedges and flowerbeds were swept with butterfly net to collect new specimens.

My nature note books from age nine through twelve were full of behaviour watching, migration and nesting details for birds; bud, leaf and flower emergence dates, plus diagrams and sketches. Mother encouraged the recording and sketching, and broadened my reading to tie natural history into English literature and geography. Father's influence in particular steered me to see all aspects of nature as interrelated. As well as being a great agricultural manager, he was in many ways far ahead of his time in comprehending environmental problems, and the need for conservation. Nowadays, he would have been in the forefront of the battles to preserve the countryside.

Another great influence on me was short but intense: meeting writer and conservationist Grey Owl. I had read several of his books, over and over.

▷

BEGINNINGS (cont'd)

Father took me to hear him during his lecture tour in 1937, and was somewhat dismayed afterwards as I fought my way, politely but with utter determination, to the back of the book-autographing line. My reward for being last was almost five minutes conversation with Grey Owl. I can still feel his incredible presence. While not fully aware of it until after arriving here 20 years later, I know that Grey Owl's influence was a large part of the eventual turning of my mind and life towards Canada.

Then there were no more weekends at home. I was sent to boarding school, the war years ensured, then career pressures in London. The naturalist in me had to be pushed off-stage and forcibly "sat down" in the wings. Bird-watching survived, but only on occasional home visits.

Once into Canada in 1955, there was a second beginning. The initial year was bleak -- I met not one single person interested in birds, or other aspects of nature. Then finally the TFN was mentioned in a newspaper column ... and I ran to a meeting at the Royal Ontario Museum. Six months later, I was to visit friends living on the Gulf Coast of Alabama for Christmas and my first North American vacation. Knowing that they were not interested in birds, I asked the late and great Jim Baillie at the R.O.M. if he knew of any people I could contact in Alabama for some field trips? He did, and two fantastic back-to-back Christmas Counts resulted. After that, Jim Baillie very quietly became my chief mentor (as he was to some other people). Having always felt so keenly in tune with the countryside in England, it was agonizing to be so generally unfamiliar with the natural world here in those first years. Jim recognized this, and understood my frustration -- no-one else did -- and taught me how to study quickly, in order to fill up the worst gaps as fast as possible -- and not only with birds, but general habitat knowledge, trees, wildflowers, butterflies and much else. Because of his very public specialty in birds, many people never realized what an outstanding all-round naturalist he was.

It was not entirely coincidental that I had a job near Bloor and Avenue Road ... so that I could slip into the Museum in lunch hours and study with Jim, who drilled me on identification and pushed me further and faster than I thought I could go.

Many years later in 1986, when I had to retire early from full-time employment, but continuing to work as a private career consultant, it was a while before I realized that the "door to the cage" was finally open: I was free to work outdoors part of the time, if I so chose. The dyed-in-the-wool field naturalist could at last come out of the wings into centre stage. I did so choose!

And so there was a third beginning. Now, I'm busy doing more nature writing and very happily teaching other courses -- such as on wildflowers, trees and shrubs, and general aspects of ecology -- in addition to the on-going Bird Study courses for Sheridan College's Continuing Education, and other short, more advanced courses on birds. And I'm having a marvellous time learning the flowers, trees and general natural history of other regions of North America, each time I prepare myself to lead nature tours*to wonderful places.

There have been several beginnings, but the circle is now delightfully complete.

Rosemary Gaymer

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See page 41.

BIRD REPORT

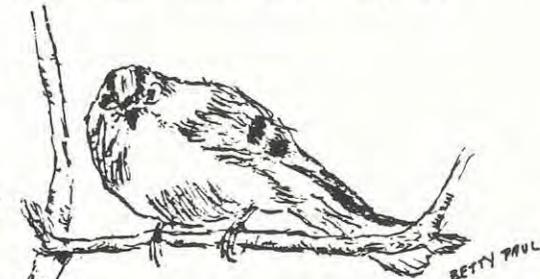
For the calendar year 1989, reports of about 150 species of birds observed in Toronto Region* have been received by TFN from individual members. Please send in your reports by early January so that we can continue to monitor the status of our species. Still unreported by individual members for 1989 are several "fairly common" species, also quite a few "uncommon" species which have, however, been reported at least ten times previously in this decade. Continue to report "rare" species so that we can record any change in status. In these cases, report the distinguishing feature(s) on which you based your identification. If you do not keep a complete list, don't forget to include any notes you may have on our "common" species, such as unusual numbers, appearance, behaviour, nesting evidence, early or late migration dates, wintering, food taken, and roosts.

Type, print, or write carefully. Use any order you wish. Your reports are kept on file as official records, so please use complete species names (as on TFN's TORONTO REGION BIRD LIST, 1985). These may be abbreviated (e.g. "bl.-c. chickadee" to distinguish it from the brown-capped or boreal chickadee - as you never know when there may be another influx of the latter!).

By the way, please send along copies of any lists you may have of bird observations from other sources.

Our thanks to those who have already participated in 1989. Send your reports to Diana Banville, #710 - 7 Crescent Place, Toronto, Ontario, M4C 5L7.

* within 50 km radius of ROM DB



Golden-crowned Kinglet
(sketched from mounted specimen
at Royal Ontario Museum)

GRANTS FOR BIRD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION

Do you have plans for a project on birds that needs some extra funding? The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation may be able to help and invites you to apply for a grant. Two types of grants are offered: 1) project grants for support of research, conservation or educational projects on Canadian birds, and 2) atlas travel grants for participants in high priority fieldwork for the Maritimes or Alberta Breeding Bird Atlases (open to both residents and non-residents).

Projects must be conducted in Canada or on Canadian birds on their wintering grounds or migration routes. Applications may be submitted by individuals or organizations and preference will be given to projects conducted by amateurs, to those which use data collected by volunteers, and to those not eligible for other funding. Grants are usually in the range of \$200 to \$2,000 and average about \$1,000. Application forms and instructions may be obtained from Martin K. McNicholl, Secretary, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario NOE 1M0 (Tel. 519-586-3531). The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund is funded primarily by Long Point Bird Observatory and co-operating naturalists' clubs from proceeds of Canada's annual Baillie Birdathon.

BIRD REPORT (cont'd)

WINTER BIRDWATCHING -- DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Winter is a challenging time of year to be looking for birds. The quantity of birds may be low but the quality can be high. It is the only season in Southern Ontario to see snowy owls, white-winged gulls (glaucous, Iceland), and evening grosbeaks. Believe it or not, migration continues into December. For birds, January is more the true start of winter in Toronto.

For beginning birdwatchers, waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans) are an excellent starting place. There are relatively few species to learn, their field marks are not too complicated, and (thank goodness!), they usually stay still long enough for you to study them. Around Toronto, winter is a good time for viewing ducks. If you can handle the weather, this is a good opportunity to ease your way into birdwatching.

Here are some of the better spots for wintering waterfowl around Toronto. In general, the Toronto harbour and the western waterfront, say west of Ontario Place and on out towards Hamilton, are better than east of the city. The Leslie Street Spit (also known as Tommy Thompson Park) at the foot of Leslie Street is a great place to see hundreds of oldsquaw ducks. The Toronto Islands are worth a visit. There, and along the waterfront at Sunnyside, the ducks are often found close to shore. One of the best areas is Humber Bay park at the mouth of Mimico Creek. I would choose the east side at the foot of Parklawn Road rather than the west side, although there will be ducks at both. And don't forget Grenadier Pond in High Park. The southwest corner of the pond at the Queensway and Ellis Avenue rarely freezes over. You can feed the flock of resident mallards and geese there and get a REALLY close look. The north end of Grenadier Pond is also good. The cattail marsh and open water here often shelter northern shovelers, a species seldom seen elsewhere around Toronto in winter.

Twenty or more species of waterfowl winter in the Toronto area each year. The most common ones are Canada goose, American black duck, mallard, greater scaup, oldsquaw, common goldeneye and bufflehead. So familiarize yourself with these in your field guide before you head out. Also be sure to scan the flocks carefully because there is always the possibility of finding something different!

Ross Harris

ONTARIO RARE BIRD ALERT

The Ontario Rare Bird Alert is a project of the Long Point Bird Observatory and is funded through the proceeds of the Baillie Birdathon.

Call (519) 586-3959 (24 hours a day). If you wish to leave a message, you may do so at the end of the recording. It is hoped that if you find a rarity or have an unusual sighting, you will want to share it with others by reporting your observation. The message will be updated weekly, or more often as necessary, and will emphasize provincial-level rarities anywhere in Ontario, unusual sightings in the Long Point area, and trends during spring and fall migration.

For further information call Ron Ridout (519) 586-2652 or Doug McRae (519) 586-3531.

▷

January 8, 1989 Lake Ontario Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory

	Presqu'ile	Port Hope	Durham			TO	RON	TO				Hamilton	Niagara	TOTALS
				//1	//2	//3	//4	//5	//6	//7	Subtotal			
Red-thr. Loon							1				1			1
Trumpeter Swan				1			3		1		5			5
Mute Swan			2	3		8	15	2	48	8	84	18		104
Snow Goose				1					3		4		2	6
Canada Goose		87	834	4751	652	34	90	576	2687	2134	10924	2203	398	14446
Wood Duck							1				1	2	1	4
Green-Winged Teal				4							4			4
Am. Black Duck		14	67	34	94	6	13	11	52	218	428	300	85	894
Mallard		661	549	894	392	346	598	282	1020	1448	4980	692	934	7816
Northern Pintail		1	2	2						1	3	31		37
Northern Shoveler								2			2	8		10
Gadwall				24		264	4	80	268	15	655	98	1	754
Am. Wigeon					1				21	1	23			23
Canvasback									1		1	1		2
Redhead	6			19	1		70	24			114	7		127
Ring-necked Duck				1							1	1		2
Greater Scaup	265	14	248	181	5	10	116	107	241	62	722	1894	2285	5428
Lesser Scaup							1		8		9	39	4	52
Harlequin Duck							1				1			1
Oldsquaw	365	51	11		158	1070	1311	364	719	20	3642	22	1219	5310
Wh-Winged Scoter				1			2				3	3	21	27
Com. Goldeneye	150	28	98	59	35	14	84	25	114	171	502	220	998	1996
Bufflehead	10	17	44	57	8	25	87	25	66	65	333	133	334	871
Hooded Merganser				1				2			3	2	2	7
Com. Merganser	2	18	33	42	2	28	23	9	32	3	139	502	443	1137
Red-br Merganser		1		14	12	15	44	3		4	92	34	81	208
Duck sp.		33												33
American Coot				1					1		2			2
TOTALS	798	925	1888	6090	1360	1820	2464	1512	5282	4150	22678	6210	6808	39307
SPECIES	6	10	10	19	11	11	18	14	16	13	27	20	15	27

TFN 408 - 14
LAKE ONTARIO MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY

ROUTES AND OBSERVERS:

Presqu'île Provincial Park and area: Presqu'île-Brighton Naturalists
Port Hope area (Wicklów to Wesleyville): E.R.McDonald, B.C.Olson
(Willow Beach Field Naturalists)

Durham area (Wesleyville to Whitby): B.&E.Allen, D.Calvert, L.Dunfield
(Durham Region Field Naturalists)

Toronto Route 1 (Whitby to Rouge R.): R.Nisbet, M.Wilson, D.Marven, B.Henshaw
Route 2 (Rouge R. to Coatsworth Cut): F.&M.Bodsworth, A.Dobson,
R.&M.Tasker, B.Falls
Route 3 (Eastern Headland to Cherry St.): G.Fairfield, F.Carnwright,
R.Cubitt, J.ten Bruggenkate
Route 4 (Toronto Islands) : G.Coady, B. Edmunds
Route 5 (Parliament St. to Humber R.): G.Worth, T.Mason
Route 6 (Humber R. to Watersedge Park): D.Perks, J.Lamcy
Route 7 (Watersedge Park to Bronte): M.DeLorey, B.Jefferson, M.Ansell
(Toronto Ornithological Club).

Hamilton area (Bronte to 50 Point; Hamilton Bay): D.Gardner, J.Dowall, G.Naylor,
T.Cole, R.Dobos, M.Street, B.Smith, D.Malena, V.Evans, J.Olmstead,
J.Cram, P.Walker
(Hamilton Naturalists Club).

Niagara Area (50 Point to Niagara-on-the-Lake): G.Bellerby, J.Black, D.Euler,
M.E.Foley, D.Naismith, C.Sanderson
(Peninsula Field Naturalists).

TIME & WEATHER: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The lake was generally open but some 'downwind' bays were icebound, due to strong SW winds (55Kph with gusts to 90Kph!) Clear, sunny day in a.m., however large swell on lake restricted visibility of offshore waterfowl. Temperature in a.m. was +5C, but dropped quickly in p.m. to -5C as winds shifted to NW. Little or no snow on the ground.

REMARKS: This is the 43rd year for the Toronto count and the third year that the entire lakeshore from Presqu'île to Niagara-on-the-Lake has been covered.

In the Toronto area, 22678 individuals were seen, second only to the 1980 total of 29600. The number of species seen, 27, is a record; the previous high was 25. Record high numbers were seen for Trumpeter Swan, Mute Swan and Canada Geese. Near record numbers were seen for Gadwall, Oldsquaw, and Red-breasted Merganser. Low numbers were seen for Black Duck (only 1969 was lower), Canvasback, Greater Scaup, and Common Merganser. The Red-throated Loon was the second-ever (last time was 1985), and the Ring-necked Duck was the first since 1978.

The eastern areas all reported low counts due to the difficult weather. The western areas also experienced difficult weather, but did find large numbers of the diving species, Scaup, Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Mergansers.

Altogether 39307 individuals were found from 27 species.

Thanks to all the clubs and individuals who participated.

W.J. Edmunds

A BLACK DAY FOR THE BLACKS

... Mallards were once largely confined to west of the Mississippi but have been steadily moving into eastern North America for the last thirty to forty years. This might not matter at all except for one thing. As the mallards roll eastwards they replace the original black ducks. In area after area mallards have appeared, their numbers have increased and then, simultaneously, observers have reported increasing numbers of hybrid individuals (crosses between mallards and blacks) and decreasing numbers of pure black ducks. Before long the blacks dwindle to almost none, as do the hybrids, and what was once an area inhabited exclusively by black ducks is completely taken over by mallards. This has already happened in southwestern Ontario, for example, and while black ducks still seem as common in Algonquin Park as they ever have, their future here is by no means certain...Although male black ducks look quite different from male mallards, the two species are actually very closely related to each other. The black duck may, in fact, be just a well-marked race of the mallard and not a separate species at all. It probably arose fairly recently, in the last Ice Age, when a small group of mallards was cut off from the main population out west and was forced to adapt to the forests of eastern North America. Camouflage was important in their wooded environment so the males evolved less flamboyant plumage than the ancestral pure mallards of the open prairie. They also evolved a resistance to avian malaria which is transmitted to ducks by blackflies and was a serious cause of death to ducks in the east. (The resistance of blacks and the susceptibility of mallards to avian malaria was long thought to be one of the main reasons why blacks could live in the forested east -- with all its disease carrying blackflies -- whereas mallards apparently could not.)

If the new black duck population had remained physically separated from the mallards out on the prairies for a few more thousands of years the two might have become even more different from each other and been incapable of interbreeding even if they did meet again some day. We'll never know because we humans unintentionally arranged an end to their separation. By clearing the forests of the east we created prairie-like habitat attractive to mallards and so they started to expand towards the Atlantic. This by itself wouldn't have meant trouble for black ducks except that now the two species or races started to encounter each other in the same eastern wintering areas, chiefly along the Atlantic coast. Winter is the time when ducks start their courtship and pair up (which saves them from having to go through the process and lose valuable time before laying eggs when they arrive back on their breeding grounds). But because blacks and mallards had not yet evolved different courting behaviours during their several thousand years of separation they still found each other quite attractive when we brought them back together again on the east coast. It turned out, in fact, that female blacks found male mallards to be even more interesting than males of their own species. Under these circumstances and with possibly a greater reproductive rate in mallards, blacks soon found themselves being genetically swamped. Also, the hybrid black-mallards resulting from the crossbreeding of their parents were perfectly fertile and when they bred themselves with pure mallards they may have introduced the gene for resistance to avian malaria into the mallard population.

DUCKS (cont'd)

If this is the case, it means that mallards will have surmounted the last barrier that could have prevented them from moving into the still forested parts of the east. We cannot predict the future with absolute certainty, of course, but it's hard to see what could stop the mallards now from completely replacing the black duck everywhere. ...

extracted from "The duck that may not be much longer" in THE RAVEN (Algonquin Park News), Vol. 30, No. 2, June 29, 1989

□



BEWARE OF CHRISTMAS CATALOGS which advertise merchandise to "help wildlife". One such catalog advertises a wreath of twining vines as "a gift from Nature". Did Nature have anything to say about it? It hardly helps wildlife if this material was actually taken from the wild. It is well to know the organization one is dealing with before purchasing such merchandise, wildlife stamps, etc. Their ideas of what "helps wildlife" may not be yours. Money spent on manipulation and control of Nature may be more than you bargained for.

DB

MAMMAL REPORT

To date in 1989, seventeen species of mammals have been reported in Toronto Region.* Don't forget to send in your report for the calendar year 1989 by early January. It may include sightings or evidence of



Eastern Grey Squirrel
by Jean McGill, from photo

any kind. Please specify actual species (e.g. "eastern gray squirrel" rather than "squirrel"). Copies of TORONTO REGION VERTEBRATE LIST are available at TFN General Meetings or may be ordered through the mail. Reports go into official record files, so please type, print or write carefully. Report the "uncommon" and "rare" mammals, but "common" mammals are also important - report unusual numbers, food, behaviour, breeding evidence, appearance.

Our thanks to members who've already participated in 1989. Send reports to D. Banville, #710 - 7 Crescent Place, Toronto M4C 5L7. ◁

RECOMMENDED FOR IDENTIFICATION:

- A FIELD GUIDE TO THE MAMMALS - Burt & Grossenheider
- A FIELD GUIDE TO ANIMAL TRACKS - Claus J. Murie
- A GUIDE TO ANIMAL TRACKING AND BEHAVIOUR - D. & L. Stokes

*within 50 km radius of Royal Ontario Museum.

D.B.



HANDS ON THE RED WOLF

I wear a radio collar.

*My own blood
rendered radioactive
in miles of veins
is my leash.*

*The dart that pierces
by remote control
should I stray
is a fence to me.*

When will the red wolf be free?

Diana Banville

OUTINGS REPORT

Once a month since April members have been given the opportunity to learn about the natural and unnatural history of Black Creek in Metro Toronto under the leadership of one TFN member and one member of the Black Creek Project, a group of people dedicated to the rehabilitation and protection of the Humber River's largest tributary.

Starting in January 1990 we are going to explore the rest of the Humber watershed in Metro Toronto starting at Lake Ontario. We will be meeting every other Sunday afternoon at 2 pm and plan to walk, whatever the weather, and learn about the human and natural heritage in our midst. At least one leader will be present on each hike and we look forward to studying the plants, animals, landforms, human history and effect of urbanization on Metro's largest watershed.

Bring cameras, binoculars, notebooks, litter bags. Also, dress warmly. The walks won't be long or strenuous but it's more fun if you don't get too cold. Most of the walks will end at a different public transit stop than the one they begin at, so we encourage you to get a good map of Metro Toronto (about \$3.00) and a free Ride Guide and leave the car at home. It's a great way to learn some natural history and get to know Toronto.

Of course, as usual, we plan to provide at least one Botany and one Birding outing, and one Nature Arts outing a month on weekends.

Oh yes, and on Wednesdays we are going to explore the Lake Ontario shoreline from west to east, starting at Marie Curtis Park on the western border of Metro Toronto.

Don't forget if you want to lead a hike or help lead one or have a special interest or knowledge to share or have an interesting place in Metro you'd like to show us, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Call Sandy Cappell at 663-7738.

H.J.

P.S. If you don't like the cold weather, try one of our winter "innings", opposite of "outings". We will be visiting several greenhouses during the winter (see the newsletter cover). □



GARDEN BALSAM,
sketched at Muir Park
by Lenore Patterson,
apparently sometimes
escapes from gardens
as it has been seen
growing along Cook &
Emery Creeks in Metro.
It is an *Impatiens* like
our spotted and pale
touch-me-nots, though,
like the Himalayan
balsam, it originated
in Asia. This is the
genus which is
"impatient" to shoot out
its seeds from its
elastic coiling valves.
GRAY'S MANUAL 8th Ed.

PROJECTS

THE GEORGIAN BAY OSPREY SOCIETY (GBOS)

The GBOS was formed in the summer of 1986. A few concerned cottagers on the eastern shore of Georgian Bay were aware that nesting opportunities for returning young ospreys were non-existent. This magnificent bird of prey had not been seen on this part of the eastern Georgian Bay pre-cambrian shield shoreline in living memory; however, in the early 1970s the presence of hydro poles enticed several pairs into the area. Although naturalists were encouraged by this, there was concern about the few suitable sites available for returning young birds, particularly when, one year, a pair were seen attempting to build a nest on a cottage chimney top. Also hydro poles were being replaced with underwater cables.

The objectives of the GBOS are:

- to protect and enhance the habitat of the Georgian Bay osprey;
- to study and survey the life cycle, habits, nesting and habitat;
- to promote awareness, appreciation and communication.

The GBOS now has almost 100 members (including families). Members have documented nests from Severn Sound to north of Parry Sound. Last fall and winter four new nesting platforms as well as three replacements were erected on poles; most of the sites were occupied by returning ospreys.

After early scepticism, cooperation and support are coming from many different groups. Local marina operators are hauling poles across the ice; helpers are making platforms and manhandling them into position. Ontario Hydro has just put up a pole and moved a nest as well as retrieving a dead fledgling for an autopsy at the Wild Bird Clinic in Guelph. The Coast Guard made a special "decoy" pole to entice would-be nesting ospreys away from one of their channel buoys.

For two years the Ministry of Natural Resources has given GBOS a Canadian Wildlife Involvement Program (C.W.I.P.) grant to assist in the work. One member in the Honey Harbour area stated: "I hardly knew my neighbour until I found we had a common interest in our osprey".

Kittie Fells, President, points out that the osprey is a barometer of the health of the environment, as it is a bird of prey living precariously at the top of the food chain.

▷ For further information, contact Kittie Fells, 35 Nanton Ave., Toronto, Ont. M4W 2Y8 or call 406-925-8012.

Kittie Fells

▷

Food City is encouraging customers to practise the art of reuse. As of July 1989 customers reusing their plastic bags at Food City outlets will receive 3¢/bag off their grocery bill anywhere in Ontario. (The rebate is given on Food City plastic bags only.)

from "Of Note" in ONTARIO RECYCLING UPDATE, Vol. IX, No. 4, July/Aug. 1989

PROJECTS (cont'd)

VOLUNTEER NATURAL HISTORY PROJECTS IN ONTARIO

To find out about natural history projects throughout the Province of Ontario, contact The Natural History Research Group, c/o Heritage Resources Centre, ES1, Room 235, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ont. N2L 3G1. The Natural History Research Group now publishes the former "Directory of Cooperative Naturalist Projects in Ontario". The main objectives of the group are: 1) to promote and assist volunteer-based natural-history projects; 2) to foster applied research in conservation biology and landscape ecology; and 3) to serve as an information resource and data centre on species, ecosystems and landscapes. If you would like more information on the group or have material to include in the next directory, please contact them at the above address.

H.J.

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES OF METRO TORONTO

Don't forget to send your notes about your sightings of salamanders, frogs, toads, snakes and turtles you saw during the past year to Bob Johnson, c/o Metro Toronto Zoo, Box 280, West Hill, Ont. M1E 4R5. Include date and location as well as species and behaviour observed. Best reference book to use: FAMILIAR AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES OF ONTARIO by Bob Johnson, Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., Toronto 1989, available at bookstores for \$9.95 or from the publisher at P.O. Box 69, Postal Station H, Toronto, Ont. M4C 5H7 for \$9.95 + \$2.00 for postage and handling.

H.J.

ADOPT A RAVINE

Many of us derive great pleasure from walking in a ravine or other natural area near our homes. The notes we make as we walk can end up in a form to be shared by other TFN members -- a Ravine or Natural Area Study.

Will you consider compiling such notes about an area near you? Perhaps your New Year's Resolution! Sample studies are available from the office. For further information please call the TFN office: 968-6255.

H.T.



The World of Mosses
NOTE CARDS
Original water colour studies by
Robert Muma

LITHOGRAPHED ON ACID-FREE PAPER
A series of 8 botanical folds, envelopes
and plastic box - \$10.00 + \$1.00 mailing
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COMPOSTING COMES TO SUNNYBROOK PARK

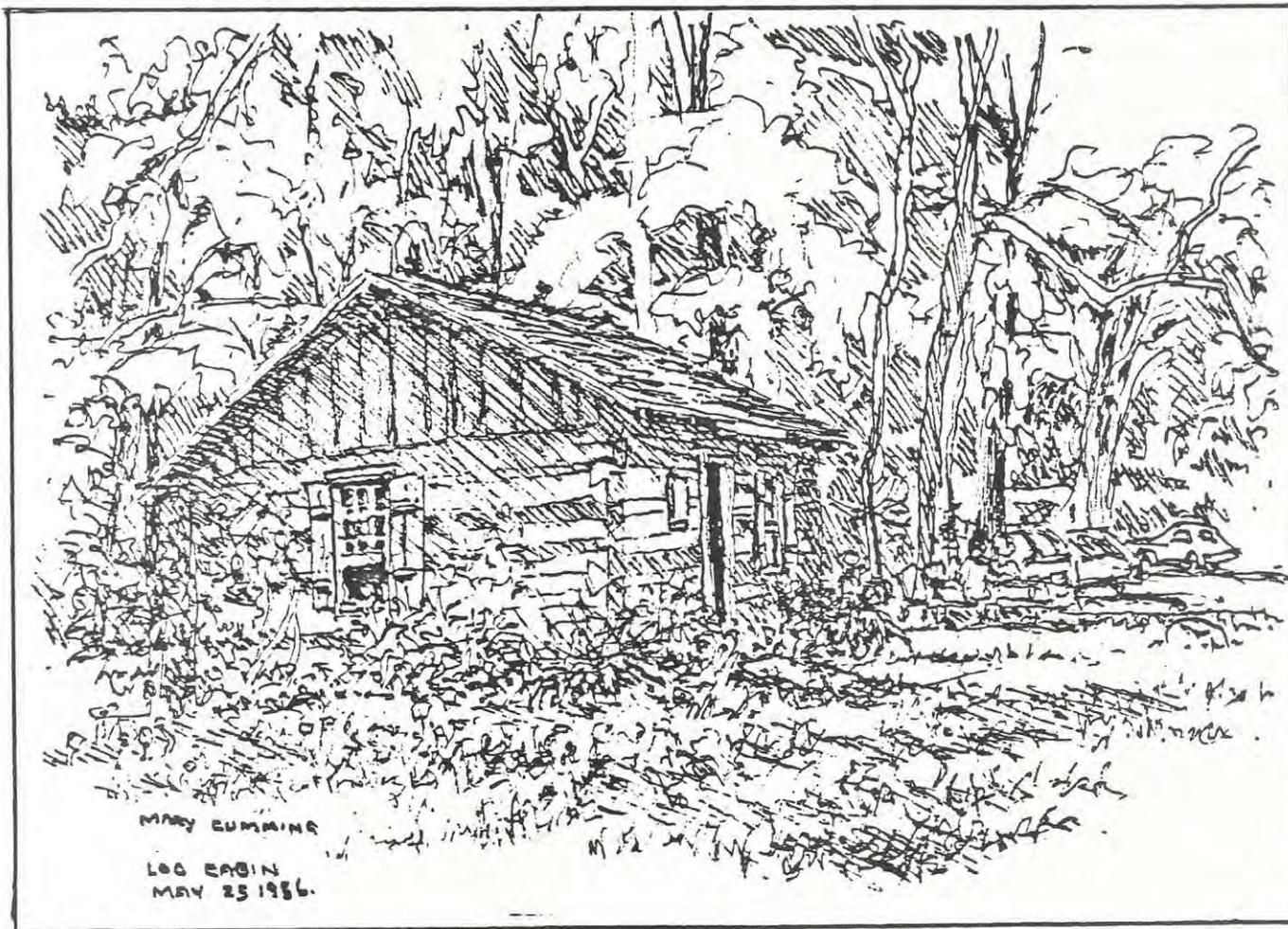
As part of an innovative project aimed at encouraging Toronto residents to compost kitchen and yard wastes in their backyards (or on their balconies), a composting "demonstration site" has been opened in Sunnybrook Park adjacent to the log cabin (TFN Nature Information Centre).

Several different composting bins and composting systems are displayed, offering a composting style for every household. Information signs allow visitors to walk through the site and gather knowledge about the composting process. In the spring someone from the Recycling Council of Ontario will be at the site each Saturday and Sunday from 1 pm to 4 pm to answer questions.

▷ If you belong to a club, church group or other organization, you may want to take a guided tour of the site. A knowledgeable guide is available, at no charge, by phoning 960-1025. We would be delighted to provide tours to any group interested in learning about composting.

The site is one part of the Home Composting Education Project, a program developed and being conducted by the Recycling Council of Ontario, with funding from the Metropolitan Toronto Works Department.

Gudrun Knoessl, Project Co-ordinator



FOR READING

BIRDS OF THE LESLIE STREET SPIT compiled by the Friends of the Spit, 1989.

This pocket-size booklet contains the names of the 284 species that have been seen on the spit. It is available from Friends of the Spit, P.O. Box 467, Station J, Toronto M4J 4Z2. (A donation to cover postage and handling would be greatly appreciated.)

FERNS AND FERN ALLIES OF CANADA by William J. Cody and Donald M. Britton prepared for Agriculture Canada, 1989. Includes Latin names with synonymy; common names, keys to families, genera and species; descriptions; and notes on cytology, habitat, range, and items of special interest are given. Line drawings and distribution maps are provided for each species. This is a paperbound book containing 430 pages and selling for \$38.50. May be ordered from the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Ottawa K1A 0S9.

Review:

OSPREYS -- A NATURAL AND UNNATURAL HISTORY by Alan F. Poole, published by Cambridge University Press, 1989 (246 pages), \$30.00 U.S. (See page 40.)

Dr. Poole has written a clear, entertaining and up-to-date book on the natural history and status of the osprey. In his Foreword, Roger Tory Peterson says: "Poole has taken New England's favourite bird and put it in global perspective...", but as Dr. Poole points out the osprey is everyone's bird, since most northern ospreys winter in Latin America, Africa, and South East Asia, "no continent except for Antarctica is foreign to this bird".

Dr. Poole is a staff biologist at the Manomet Bird Observatory, Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and so the book, though good reading for the layman, is also replete with scientific information and includes research data from all over the world -- there are some 300 references to research papers, and an excellent index. Perhaps most interesting to the naturalist and conservationist is Dr. Poole's warm but unsentimental analysis of the effect of man particularly through herbicides and pesticides (and just wanton destruction) on this magnificent bird of prey. However, encouragingly, he describes the osprey's response to man's positive intervention through protection and the erection of nesting platforms.

A thoroughly enjoyable and practical book for both the scientist and the interested lay reader.

George Fells

Comment: See pages 20 and 40 for more about the osprey.

▷

To hold and let go is all we can do with whatever we are.
from CONVERSATIONS WITH A TOAD by Robert Bringhurst, Editions
Luci Lambert, Vancouver/Shawinigan, 1987

FOR READING (cont'd)

CITY MAGAZINE, Box 29, University Centre, U. of Manitoba, R3T 2N2, edited by Kent Gerecke. Quarterly, \$4/copy.

Recommended is Volume 11, No. 1, Summer/Fall 1989, for its excellent, absorbing articles, poetry, and reviews on environmental philosophies as they relate to cities and society: The Green City Movement is explained, the relationship between feminism and ecology, between socialism and the environment, "deep ecology" vs. "social ecology", the controversial G.R.E.E.N. Products, commentary on the "sustainable development" catchword, Toronto's Cityplan '91, to name a few of the subjects. The environmental theme is a recurring one throughout other numbers of this magazine as well. Except for a slight gloss on the cover, it is not a "slick" magazine, thus no glare on the paper as you comfortably read the sizable print, unhampered by advertising. There are photos, a cartoon or two, altogether a refreshing format.

DB

A CODED WORKBOOK OF BIRDS OF THE WORLD, Vols.1 & 2, by Ernest P. Edwards is now available on disks for IBM PC or PS/2 and compatibles; or MacIntosh. For more information contact Ernest P. Edwards Box AQ Sweet Briar, VA 24595, USA.

RECENTLY RECEIVED:

THE CHANGING ATMOSPHERE: A CALL TO ACTION, City of Toronto Special Advisory Committee on the Environment, Report Number One, Oct. 30, 1989

REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, CANADIAN PARKS SERVICE, 1989

□

GIFTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

When you choose gifts this holiday season, think about their effect on the environment. Buy quality products that will last for a long time and not add to our growing waste problems. Teach your children about waste management by telling them about the resources that go into making their toys and why they shouldn't be wasted. Consider giving your family a battery charger and rechargeable batteries this holiday season. Batteries contain heavy metals that are toxic to the environment. Using rechargeable batteries ensures that fewer batteries end up in the landfill. Plug in radios and other items instead of using batteries whenever you can.

Instead of buying wrapping paper, consider wrapping gifts in newspaper with a coloured bow or coloured magazine pages. Reuse wrapping paper whenever you can.

from THE EAST YORKER, December, 1988.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD -- BUT IT MIGHT BE MICA

There are over 3,000 different species of minerals, but only a hundred are important as rock-forming minerals, and a mere 20 of that hundred -- largely compounds containing silica -- make up about 90% of the earth's rocks.

Of the silicates, quartz and feldspar are most abundant, and 70% of all rock picked off the ground will be either or both. However, the mica family is outstanding for its various uses and its beauty.

Mica is a foliaceous mineral composed of countless paper-fine "leaves" or plates. It has perfect basal cleavage and can be split into thin sheets. Book mica, for example, can extend for great lengths. On one field trip I watched two collectors carrying off a 3 ft. long "book" of biotite mica -- carefully; it splinters easily -- and muscovite crystals measuring 7 ft. to 9 ft. across have been mined in Mattawan Township in Ontario.

There are three principal and important micas: muscovite (white), phlogopite (amber), and biotite (black). The first two have high industrial value.

Muscovite is a potash mica. It has silvery tones, ranging also into pale yellow, light brown, a translucent apple-green and a luscious wine-red. It takes its name from Old Russia (Muscovy) where it was used as a substitute for glass. It is an insulator and serves this purpose in electrical apparatus. One of its commonest appearances is as the reflector sheet inside a toaster, though nowadays this sheet is more likely to be made from synthetic mica.

Phlogopite is a magnesium-potassium mica. It is abundant in Ontario and, like muscovite, finds its way into many contrivances as an electrical insulator. It is named from a Greek word meaning "fire-like" in allusion to its colour, though it can also be found in shades of green and white.

Biotite mica contains iron as well as magnesium. It has great importance as a rock-forming mineral. It ranges from a shiny black through brown to dark green and is named in honour of the French physicist J.B. Biot.

In the field it is often difficult to differentiate between the various golds and browns and no less an authority than Professor "Digger" Gorman has said that until it can be confirmed in the laboratory he usually calls all white mica muscovite, all black, biotite, and all golden inbetweens, phlogopite.

In my part of the metropolis I have discovered muscovite at three sites, one a supporting wall, and one consisting of some half-dozen slabs of silvery-green and wine coloured rock parked at the junction of front garden and sidewalk. Whenever I pass this, I stop to gawk. Years ago I called out to the owner as she careered up her garden path: "Do you know what you've got here?" "Came with the house" she replied and slid quickly behind a closing front door -- I mean, some madwoman carrying on about rocks! The third find is along a side road in the Main Street area in which several garden walls have been built from red muscovite. Explanation might be that the contractor (1) was also a rockhound, (2) had a strong aesthetic sense, or (3) had simply come into a pile of this "pretty" stuff and couldn't think of a better use for it.

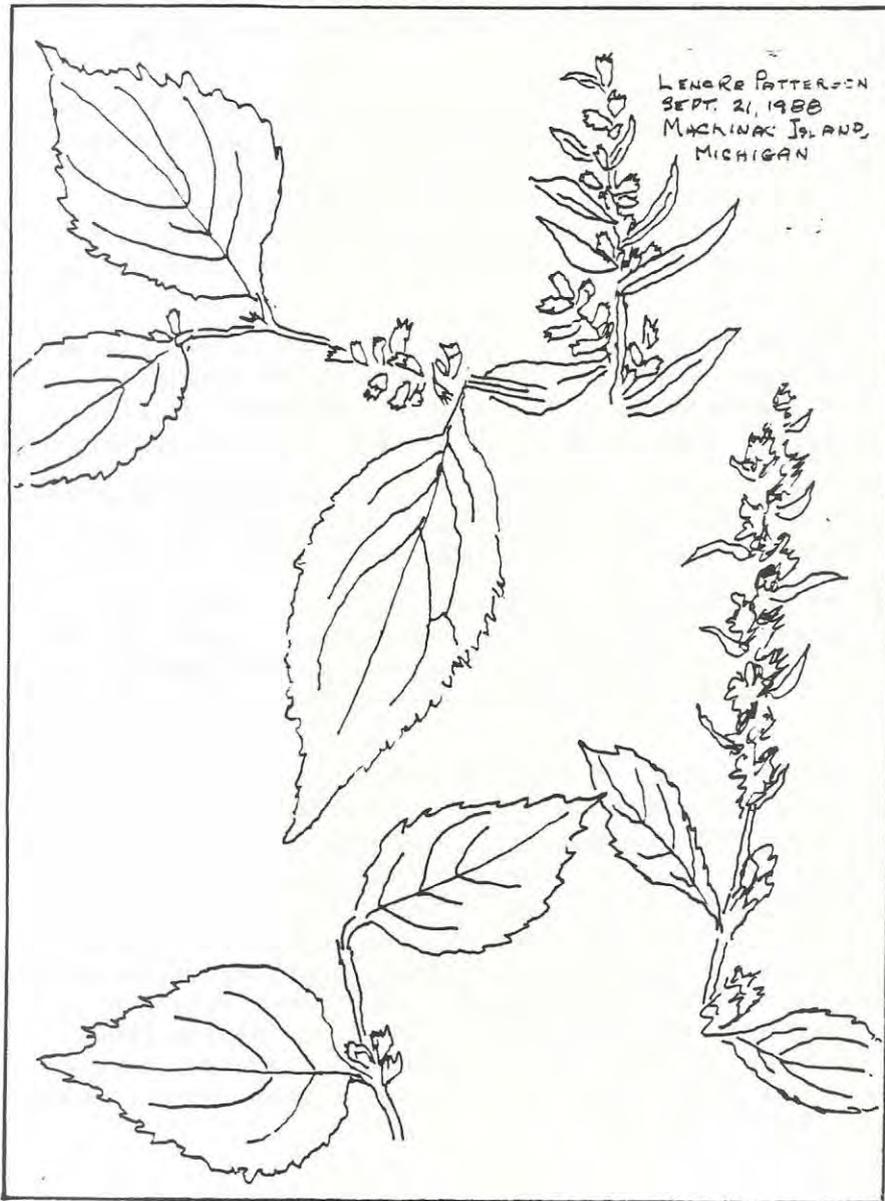
MICA (cont'd)

For interested members, an excellent beginner's pocketbook is Golden Guide's ROCKS AND MINERALS. For those wishing to spend more and acquire some beautiful photographs into the bargain, there is Simon and Schuster's GUIDE TO ROCKS AND MINERALS. The University of Toronto conducts a most enjoyable Elementary Mineralogy course (free for seniors!), and the rockhound bible is J.D. Dana's MANUAL OF MINERALOGY (written by him in 1848), in whichever edition it can be found.

But by then, of course, one has passed from curious to irrevocably hooked.

Eva Davis

□



The flower clusters of the ZIG-ZAG or BROAD-LEAVED GOLDENROD

are in the leaf-axils and at the summit.

A common woodland plant of Metro Toronto.

Ref.: A FIELD GUIDE TO WILDFLOWERS

Peterson & McKenny

REMEMBERING ELEANOR SKELTON -- AN EXTRAORDINARY BOTANIST
--

It was with surprise and sorrow that I learned of the passing of Mrs. Eleanor Skelton on October 1, 1989. My memories of Eleanor will be of an extraordinary woman, an impressive botanist, a devoted wife and a good friend. Born and raised in Toronto, she undoubtedly developed a love of nature and the outdoors during her childhood and youth when she spent her summers at the family cottage on Gull Lake in Haliburton. As a young girl, Eleanor's artistic talents became apparent. She was invited to attend special classes at the Art Gallery in the evenings and on weekends. However, she decided to continue her education at the university level, graduating with a General Arts degree with emphasis on biology from the University of Toronto.

Although tiny in stature, her determination and expectations were far from small. Ahead of her time, a truly liberated lady, believing that anything was possible if you put your mind to it, she and a girlfriend cycled from Toronto to Ottawa in the 1920s. They were told that it was far too rigorous and dangerous an endeavour for young ladies to ever attempt -- but they did it! Considering the state of the gravel roads and the rain they encountered on the way, it was quite a feat! But that was Eleanor: ready to accept any challenge.

Having decided that biology sparked her interest, especially the study of fish biology, Eleanor made inroads into this male-dominated field by gaining employment with the Ontario Fisheries Research Laboratory from 1929 to 1932. Particularly impressive was the fact that she spent two summers at the Research Camp on Lake Nipissing: the first female biologist to work at the camp. Her enthusiasm, commitment and competence were persuasive in allowing this breakthrough to occur. In 1931 she deposited her first plant collections in the herbarium at the University of Toronto (TRT).

It is difficult to talk about Eleanor without mentioning her husband Emerson. They met while they were students at the university and were married in 1931, so this past September marked their 58th wedding anniversary. Their mutual interest in natural history and, in fact, in all facets of science, and their enjoyment of the outdoors continued to be important throughout the years.

The couple spent the first several years of their marriage in Toronto before moving to southwestern Ontario -- Wallaceburg, then Sarnia and settling down to raise their three sons David, Gerry, and Philip. During this time Emerson became an accomplished photographer of wildflowers. Canoeing and camping were frequent family pastimes.

In the mid-sixties when their boys were at university, Emerson accepted chemical engineering projects in Mexico and British Columbia where the couple could indulge their interests from archeology to geology. In British Columbia Eleanor spent time persuing her hobby of painting with the spectacular scenery of the Rockies as her inspiration. They returned to Toronto in the late sixties and settled in Leaside. Emerson retired in 1975 and the couple embarked on a special project.

I first met Eleanor and Emerson in 1976 when they were auditing the Plant Taxonomy course at the Botany Department and were bringing in plant specimens to identify from their summer holiday in Haliburton. With the enthusiastic support of Dale Hoy, they began their retirement project of documenting the

ELEANOR SKELTON (cont'd)

plants of Haliburton County. For eight years, from 1976 to 1983, the Skelton's rented a cottage in Haliburton, sometimes departing from the city as early as April and returning to Toronto at Thanksgiving, and conducted field excursions collecting and carefully pressing plant specimens throughout the growing seasons. During the winter they identified and painstakingly mounted the collections, providing TRT with some of that institution's finest specimens. They would mark particular trees or shrubs, collecting flowering, fruiting and mature leaf material from the same individual, and mount all the stages on a single sheet, sometimes even including a close-up photograph of the flower or the habitat. In all they donated over 2100 herbarium sheets to the TRT representing more than 930 taxa. The neatness and completeness of their specimens is outstanding. They are a real asset to the herbarium and often are consulted by artists and researchers, showing that non-professional or "amateur" botanists can make very worthwhile contributions to science.

Eleanor had a very special place in her heart for aquatic communities, spending innumerable happy hours in the canoe with Emerson, investigating the submerged, floating and emergent vegetation of the many rivers and lakes in Haliburton. She made some outstanding discoveries too, such as locating a colony of the provincially rare bladderwort, *Utricularia geminiscapa*, and an especially large colony of another bladderwort, *U. gibba*. Her interest in the effects of acidic precipitation on the vegetation and aquatic systems of Haliburton led her to confer with Ministry of the Environment staff at Dorset and eventually to contribute lists of plants present at specific lakes in the region to the Acidic Precipitation in the Ontario Study program.

While residing in Toronto, Eleanor was an active member of the Leaside-East York University Women's Club, particularly the World Affairs Group. She and Emerson were also active TFN members, attending the regular monthly meetings as well as the Botany Group meetings, even giving a presentation to that group on the Flora of Haliburton in the old Botany Building. From 1983 to 1986 the Skeltons took on the mammoth task of writing up their findings and incorporating geologic, topographic and soil information. This phase also included checking the herbaria at Ottawa and the Algonquin Park Museum for new records and additional distributional sites. Their intention was to produce a scientifically valuable work which would be straight-forward enough to be used by naturalists. Because of their contributions to the herbarium, the Skeltons became Field Associates in the Department of Botany of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in 1987.

During the final writing stages, Emerson's health began failing, leaving the onus to fall on Eleanor. In her typically thorough and determined fashion, she rose to the occasion and did an excellent job. Once the manuscript was completed it was submitted to the ROM publication department. The review process, both internal and external, resulted in further changes that Eleanor ably dealt with right up until this year with the help from ROM Botany Department staff.

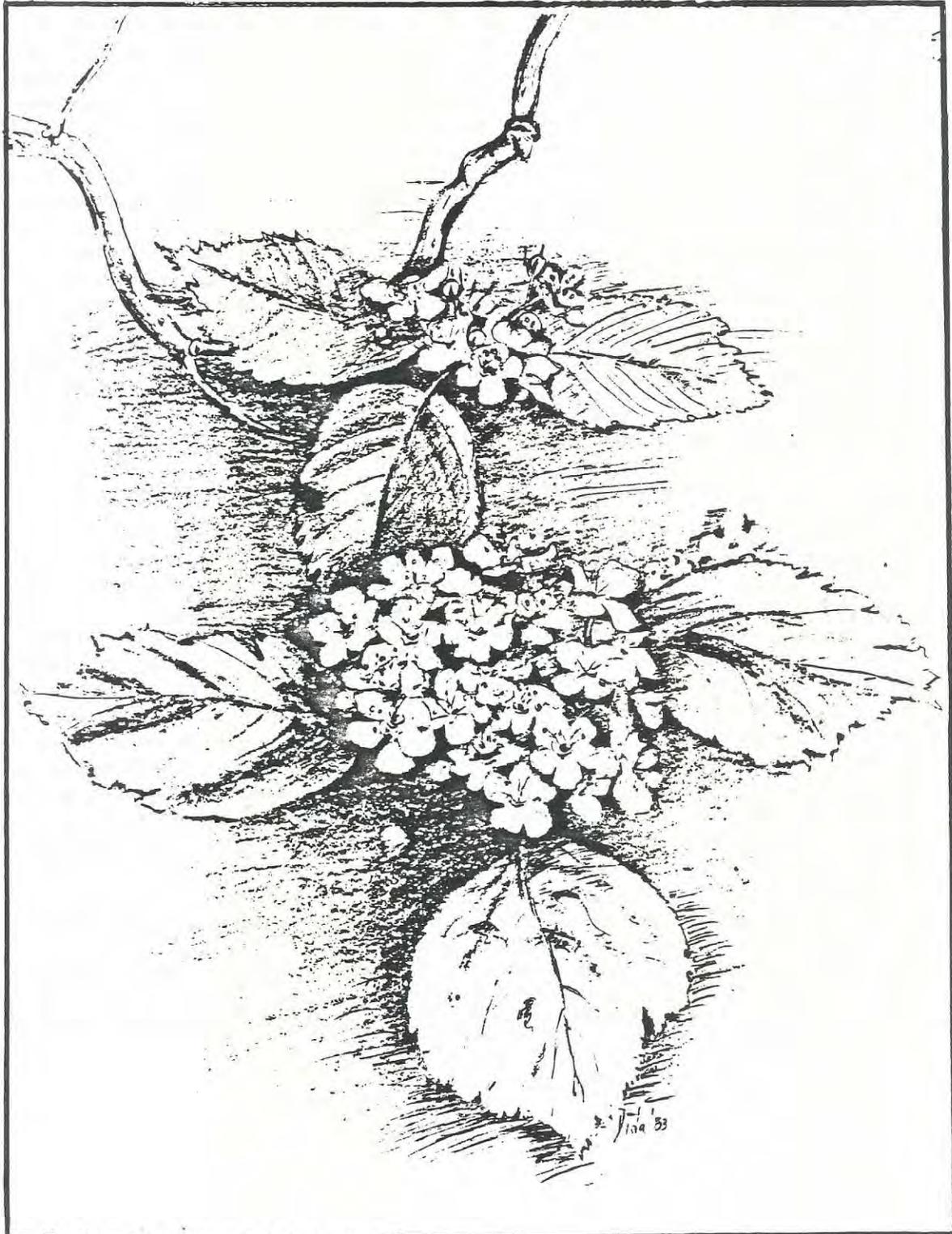
In the fall of 1988 the Skeltons moved to Owen Sound. This spring they began exploring their new surroundings and even sent specimens back with me to the herbarium in August when I visited. At that time Eleanor joined me on a brief trip to collect fruiting specimens of *Crataegus douglasii* south of Wiarton. Although obviously in pain, her interest was undaunted as she

ELEANOR SKELTON (cont'd)

searched the roadsides for this unusual black-fruited hawthorn.

It would have been very satisfying for Eleanor to have been able to browse through the FLORA OF HALIBURTON; however, her work will soon be in print and will be a fitting tribute to this remarkable person who I am very proud to have known.

Sheila McKay-Kuja



Native hawthorn High Park

IN THE NEWS

BUTTERFLY HOLDS QUARRY'S FUTURE - FIRM FACES \$10m LOSS

Industrial sized chainsaws and 45-ton backhoes are being held at bay by a butterfly at Canada's largest commercial quarry. The clearing and blasting of a 20-hectare (50-acre) parcel of Dufferin Quarry's multi-million dollar aggregate operation has been put on hold because a butterfly considered to be an endangered species has been sighted on the property. The West Virginia white butterfly was sighted on the Dufferin property by a Ministry of Natural Resources research team last spring while the team carried out routine investigations of plants and animals on the province's endangered species list. The province's Endangered Species Act carries a maximum \$3,000 fine and/or six months in jail if the company's operations disrupt or destroy the butterfly's habitat. If Dufferin is forced to abandon the 20-hectare parcel of land for the sake of the West Virginia White, it would represent a \$10-million loss for the company. The West Virginia white butterfly is the only insect on Ontario's endangered species list. It currently classifies 18 species of plants and mammals as endangered. The butterfly was classified as an endangered species in Ontario in 1977 after the Toronto Entomologists' Association urged the MNRs wildlife branch to list it. Based on their studies of the butterfly, the association was successful in defeating Ontario Hydro's plans to build a right-of-way through the Halton Agreement Forest which would have disrupted the butterfly's flight patterns.

based on an article in the SPECTATOR (Hamilton), Summer 1989

RISE IN TICK-BORNE LYME DISEASE SURPRISES ONTARIO HEALTH OFFICIALS

Lyme disease, a debilitating illness spread by ticks, appeared to increase this summer in Ontario, the only province where health officials must report cases of the disease which can lead to flu-like symptoms, chronic fatigue, arthritis, heart problems and meningitis. Thousands of people get the disease every year in the United States, but it is less common in Canada. Most cases occur in Ontario, although some have been documented in Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta. So far in 1989, 17 cases of Lyme disease have been confirmed in Ontario. Officials are examining another 59 suspected cases. This is the first year that figures have been gathered: Ontario has required reporting only since last November. The disease is caused by a spirochete, a corkscrew-shaped bacterium that infects certain ticks. Ticks pass the infection to animals or humans while sucking their blood. For those who are worried, simple precautions are recommended:

- wear protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, and tuck pant legs into your socks
- use insect repellent containing an active ingredient known as DEET
- at day's end, check your body for ticks

The tick looks like a poppy seed when it first attaches itself. After several days, it can swell to the size of a raisin. It's a good idea to see your doctor if you are bitten because the disease is easily treated in its early stages.

from the GLOBE AND MAIL, Sept. 12, 1989

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

GARDENERS ARE WARNED OF THREAT BY WILDFLOWER BULB "POACHERS"

Snowdrops, crocuses, scillas and other bulbs that bloom in early spring are undaunted by frost or late snowfalls and gladden winter-weary hearts with their perky flowers. Strange as it may seem, these charming little bulbs are the subject of an international controversy. Environmentalists are urging gardeners to boycott certain bulbs. The Natural Resources Defense Council and the World Wildlife Fund claim that poachers are digging bulbs from natural habitats in Turkey and other places around the eastern end of the Mediterranean for marketing in Holland. From there, the bulbs are sent to North America. This has brought many wild species to the brink of extinction, environmentalists say. Among the most threatened are snowdrops, winter aconites, hardy cyclamen, crocuses, grape hyacinths and narcissus. The North American Flowerbulb Wholesalers Association suggests that gardeners purchase bulbs only from reputable dealers and insist that dealers provide information about the source of all their bulbs. The association says bulbs collected from the wild can generally be identified by several characteristics:

- if the price appears "too good to be true"
- if the nursery uses colourful names rather than the proper Latin names
- if the pictures look highly coloured and unnatural
- if the bulbs are small and somewhat dried out

If you order by mail, make sure you order from a reputable company. The World Wildlife Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council are urging gardeners to avoid the following bulb species:

- giant snowdrops (*Galanthus elwesii*). Ordinary snowdrops (*G. nivalis*) are okay.
- summer snowflake (*Leucojum vernum* and *L. aestivum*)
- narcissus (*N. triandrus* var. *albus*, *N. asturiensis*, *N. cyclamineus*)
- glory-of-the-snow (*Chionodoxa sardensis*, *C. tmoli*, *C. luciliae*)
- winter aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis* and *E. cilicica*)
- Anemone (*A. blanda* blue or mixed may be from the wild)
- scilla (various species still collected in Turkey)
- tulip (*Tulipa praecox*). Others okay.

from an article by Betty Frankel in the TORONTO STAR, Sept. 29, 1989

METRO OKAYS FOOD RECYCLING PROGRAM

You've seen the Blue Box -- now get ready for the Brown Box. Metro council approved a pilot program to have 11,000 homeowners put food waste into a new recycling bin, most likely a brown box. The waste would be picked up and taken to a Metro composting plant and turned into fertilizer for landscapers, parks departments and possibly for the public. The program will be tested in North York, Etobicoke, York and East York four to six months from now. Similar programs are in effect in several European cities. Homeowners will be provided with special bags to store organic waste, such as food scraps, coffee grounds, bread and eggshells. Food and other organic material is said to make up 30 per cent of household waste, so the program could go a long way to reducing the amount of trash going into Metro's rapidly filling garbage dumps.

from an article by Jim Byers in the TORONTO STAR, Oct. 12, 1989

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

MARINA CALLED FIRE HAZARD

Bluffer's Park in Scarborough could be the scene of a major disaster according to the City's fire chief. Traffic congestion, an insufficient supply of water and the presence of extremely flammable liquids are some of the factors contributing to the hazard. Recommendations include the building of a second access road to the harbour, widening of the existing road and construction of a marine fire station on the site to better handle emergencies. Pumping water directly from Lake Ontario is out of the question because firefighters wouldn't be able to get their hoses close enough to the lake. Bluffer's Park Marina is owned by the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, which in turn leases the property to the marina and four private yacht clubs.

adapted from an article by Donovan Vincent in the TORONTO STAR, Oct. 16, 1989

RABIES VACCINE

Wild foxes in Metro Toronto started getting a rabies vaccine yesterday. The provincial Ministry of Natural Resources launched what it billed as "among the most advanced and innovative" experimental rabies-control programs in the world. More than 3,000 baits with liquid rabies vaccine are being placed along the main rivers in Metro -- the Humber, the Don -- as well as along Highland and Etobicoke Creeks.

from "For the Record" in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Oct. 17, 1989

PARK SERVICE CITED IN WILDLIFE DAMAGE

The Canadian park service has been responsible for the destruction of wildlife, Auditor-General Kenneth Dye has found. His annual report cited:

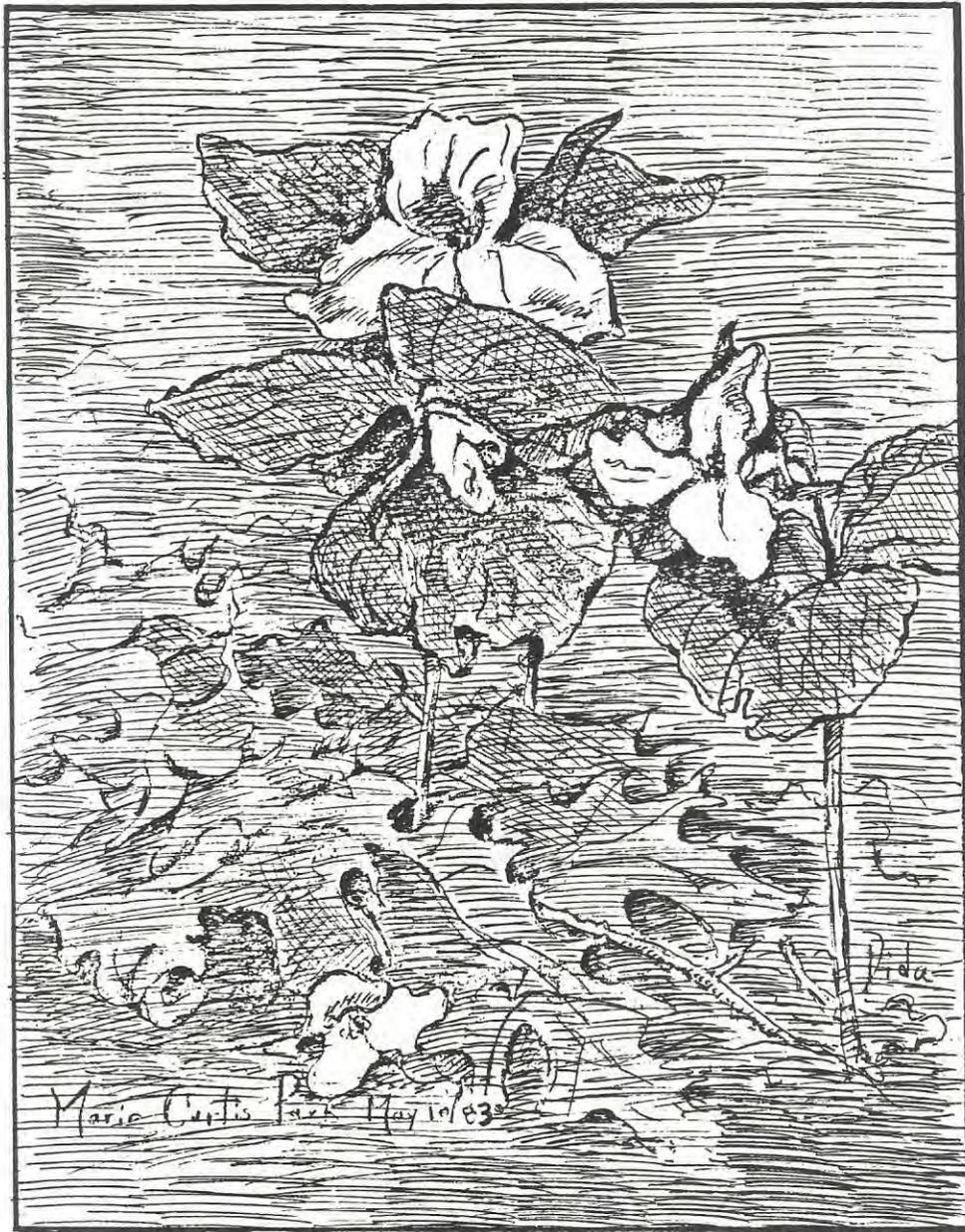
- the destruction of a growth of Franklin's lady's-slipper, a rare orchid, by the construction of a campsite at Pukawska National Park in Northern Ontario
- the disturbing of Dall's sheep at Kluane's Sheep Mountain in the Yukon
- unmonitored duck hunting at Point Pelee National Park in Ontario (which was subsequently prohibited by the minister in June 1989)
- bear hunting without authorization in Wood Buffalo National Park in Northern Alberta
- snowmobiling in areas where it is not permitted in Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland

These actions are contrary to policies of the park service that "are designed to conserve ecosystems," the report says. "The policies ban all forms of damage or removal of resources except certain traditional activities and then only under conditions specified at the time of park establishment." In response, the park service said it requires "the clear commitment of adequate fiscal and manpower resources" -- more money and more people -- to plan, implement and monitor its programs. Instead of recommending more money and more people for the park service, the Auditor-General suggests that existing staff could be used more efficiently. He also recommends that a strategic plan be developed and that fees be charged where it is appropriate to do so.

adapted from an article by Graham Fraser in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Oct. 29, 1989

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IN MEMORIAM



We were sorry to learn of the recent deaths of two outstanding Ontario naturalists, Dora Huestis Speirs and Dr. Peter Peach. Newsletter readers shared Mrs. Speirs' recollections of her early days as a naturalist in our "Beginnings" series (TFN 403:11:Apr.89). We extend sincere sympathy to the families of Mrs. Speirs and Dr. Peach.

H.T.

FLORAL CLOCKS

I have long known that the scarlet pimpernel closes its petals at the approach of rain. Indeed, it seems to get an advance notice of several hours and never opens at all on a rainy day. Our rural ancestors used to call it the "poor-man's weather-glass" or "shepherd's barometer" -- at least, according to Anne Pratt, the Victorian botanist, though I sometimes suspect her of embellishing folklore just a little! I also know that the pimpernel can be relied upon only until 2 pm (GMT). After that it closes for the day, regardless of weather.

Likewise, the goat's-beard unfolds its petals at sunrise and retires to sleep at noon. Anne Pratt says it is for this reason known as the "noonday flower" or "Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon". The common field bindweed, such a nuisance to gardeners, also closes its petals on the approach of rain and towards the end of the afternoon. And the centaury shuts shop at around three o'clock, though it can be induced to open its petals again if brought into a well-lighted room.

Recently, I learned that Linnaeus, generally regarded as the founder of modern botany, knew all this back in the middle of the 18th century. He took the trouble to work out the composition of a floral clock, which would enable the initiated to tell the time to within an hour (or about as efficiently as a sundial). This is his list: 6 am, spotted cat's-ear opens; 7 am, African marigold opens; 8 am, mouse-ear hawkweed opens; 9 am, prickly sow-thistle closes; 10 am, nipplewort closes; 11 am, star of Bethlehem opens; 12 noon, passion-flower opens; 1 pm, childling-pink closes; 2 pm, scarlet pimpernel closes; 3 pm, hawkbit closes; 4 pm, small bindweed closes; 5 pm, white water-lily closes; 6 pm, evening primrose opens.

That adds up to a thirteen-hour day, which seems reasonable, as they are all flowers of midsummer. Those species which are found in the high Arctic stick rigidly to their timetable, unaffected by the midnight sun. Explorers in those parts are said to find it sometimes useful to be able to check with the flowers when their compasses and watches go haywire, as can happen near the magnetic North Pole.

Most of Linnaeus's blossoms, I have been unable to check on, but I have heard the star of Bethlehem called "eleven o'clock lady"; and I have noticed white water-lilies folding their petals in the evening. The opening of the evening primrose is a curious procedure. During the late afternoon the flower-buds due to open start to do so from the bottom upwards, taking about half-an-hour over the process. Finally they are held closed by a clip at the tip of the petals which bursts with a distinct pop. Each flower lasts only for one night, hanging wilted and dying by morning, but for several weeks there is a succession of others preparing to take its place.

adapted from an article by Ralph Whitlock in the MANCHESTER GARDIAN, May 18/86 (from the PENINSULA NATURALIST, No. 143, Summer, 1986)

□

Icy shades of blue,
umber, dark browns, dull yellow,
deep greys; it's winter.

Gentle snowflake brushes nose,
frigid winds, tingling toes.

ARHCEOLOGISTS DIG INTO THE SECRETS OF LANDFILLS

Archeologist Bill Rathje, in the manner of his kind, has spent much time sifting through garbage dumps. His current interest, however, is not ancient dumps, but modern landfills. Rathje and his colleagues are associated with the Garbage Project, a multi-disciplinary research program at the University of Arizona. A report on the project's work has arrived from the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.

Since 1987, Rathje's team has dug into four landfills: one in Tucson, Arizona; one in Chicago; and two in the San Francisco Bay area of California. Using a truck-mounted bucket auger, they bore as deeply as 90 feet into a landfill, taking samples at 10-foot intervals. Then they determine the gross constituents of the garbage by weight and volume.

The results indicated that "what we think is in landfills and what happens to it over time may be based more on myths than on facts". In other words, much of the information used to plan municipal solid waste landfills may be wrong. Rathje's group found, for example, that fast-food packaging averaged about 0.25% of the volume of waste in landfills. It has been estimated to account for as much as 10% of the volume. Disposable diapers, which have been estimated to take as much as 5% of the volume, averaged about 1%. The largest single item, both by weight and volume, in the landfills probed by the Garbage Project was newspapers. They occupied some 14% of the volume of wastes. Telephone books were a big item, too. The volume they take was difficult to estimate, however, because most are thrown out during a short period -- one or two weeks once a year. The Arizona group found that plastic bottles are squashed by the tons of debris and dirt above them, which sharply reduces the space they occupy. Many glass containers, on the other hand, are not squashed. Replacing plastic with glass, therefore, would not extend the lives of landfills unless the glass containers were recycled or discarded. Studies of simulated landfills have indicated that biodegradable wastes break down extremely slowly in the anaerobic conditions of landfills. Rathje and his coworkers verified the point. They dug up hot dogs and pastries, for example, that were still recognizable after having been buried for as long as 15 years. Grass clippings were often green. Newspapers were often readable -- in fact, they were used to confirm dates of burial. The Project reports that biodegradable waste occupies more than 65% of the volume in the landfills they studied; the percentage changed little, even after more than ten years. Paper and cardboard made up more than 50% of the volume of waste; yard waste about 5% and food about 1%.

from Newsprints by K.M. Reese, written for Chemical and Engineering News produced by the American Chemical Society via THE CHICKADEE (Huntsville), Vol. 32, No. 1, Sept. 1989

Our moral obligation as human beings is to maintain options for future generations.

from "Reflections - Ends and Means: Restoration and the future of land Management" by Chris Maser in RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT NOTES, Vol. 6, No. 1, Summer 1988

A NATURALIST'S CODE OF ETHICS

A CLIMATE CHECKLIST: We've got the whole world in our hands

While waiting for the world's governments to adopt a strategy for stabilizing the climate, individuals can do many things to slow global warming. Basically, anything that saves energy will help. Some suggestions:

- Drive fewer miles. The average (20 mile-per-gallon) car exhausts one pound of carbon dioxide (CO₂) for each mile it travels. If you drive 10,000 miles a year, that's five tons of CO₂. Cut back by walking, riding a bike, or taking a bus to work. If you must drive, carpool in a fuel-efficient vehicle.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent ones. An 18-watt screw-in fluorescent bulb produces as much light as a 75-watt incandescent bulb and lasts ten times longer. Unlike fluorescent tubes, compact bulbs don't hum or flicker, and they produce a light comparable to that of an incandescent bulb.
- Be an energywise shopper. Before buying a new home, car, furnace, water heater, or refrigerator, be sure it's energy-efficient. Use natural-gas appliances where you can; you'll cut that portion of your CO₂ output by half.
- Plant trees. Because a fast-growing tree can recycle 48 pounds of CO₂ each year, planting trees is one of the most cost-effective, immediate and gratifying steps you can take to fight climatic change.
- Avoid purchasing products containing chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Leaky air conditioners in cars are the single largest source of CFC emissions; if you have an auto air conditioner, make sure it is leakproof. If it needs to be recharged, have its CFCs recycled. Other CFC sources include cleaning sprays for sewing machines, VCRs, and electronic equipment; aerosol dust-removers used by photographers; rigid insulation; and foam packaging. Substitutes are being developed for most of these applications. Seek out and use them where possible.
- Educate your friends and neighbours.
- Recycle newspapers, aluminum, glass, and other materials.
- Make sure your home is tight and well-insulated.

adapted from an article in SIERRA, Vol. 74, No. 4, July 1989

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HELP PROTECT CONSERVATION AREAS

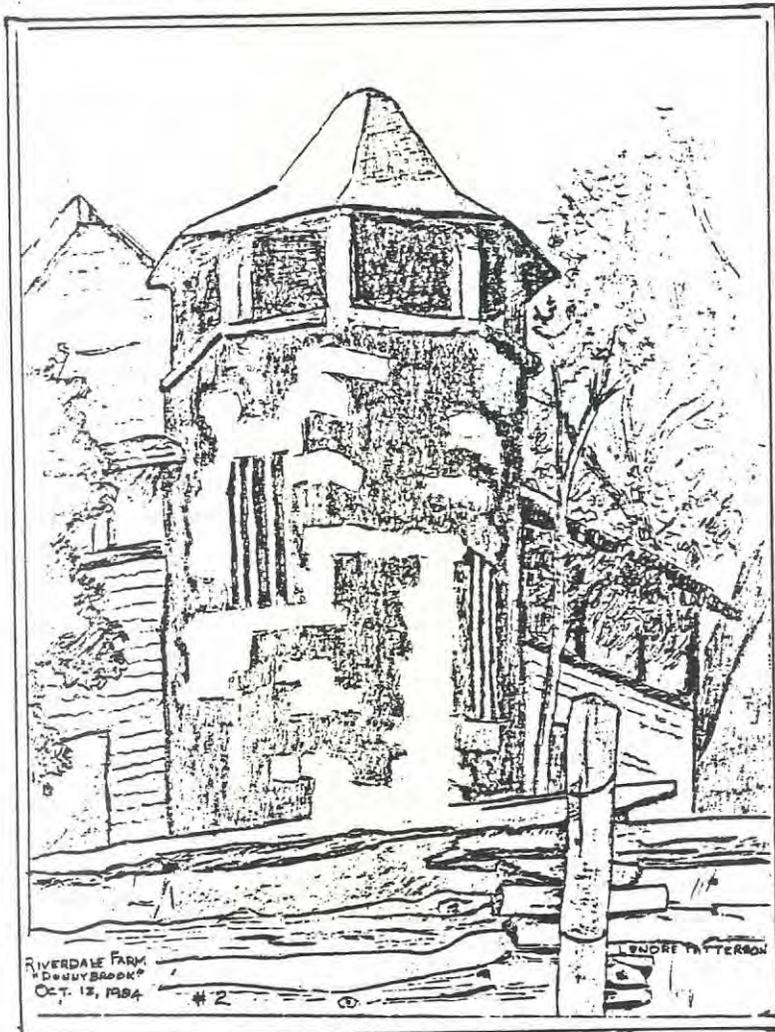
▷ The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA) owns more than 12,000 hectares of land from Ajax to Mississauga, and from Lake Ontario shoreline to Highway 9, including conservation areas, waterfront parks, and education centres. To stop the illegal operation of all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles, poaching and the theft of firewood and Christmas trees, they need your help. Report any incidents to MTRCA at 661-6600 or to the police. Include licence numbers along with date and location.

SKY NOTES

Recommended Reading: SKY NEWS published four times a year by the National Museum of Science and Technology, P.O. Box 9724, Ottawa Terminal, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 5A3. Free, though donations made payable to the Receiver General of Canada are appreciated.

Includes sky maps and notes about watching for events such as meteor showers, positions of planets and hints on how to improve your watching skills.

H.J.



"THE DONNYBROOK" at Riverdale Animal Farm, by Lenore Patterson. Several drawings resulted from our Nature Arts Outing in August, 1984, of this building, not long before it was torn down. The tower has been partially rebuilt on one side, but it has lost its attractive "cap" roof. (See TFN 379:30 for a more distant view in farm setting, by Mary Cumming.)

There are some plans to incorporate what remains of the building in a new educational facility at Riverdale.

...we worry about global warming; we fear the ozone on the ground that injures our trees and our lungs, and the thinning ozone miles over our heads that no longer protects us against ultraviolet radiation. We worry about the nitrogen and sulphur oxides that fall again as acid precipitation and the carbon monoxide that crowds the oxygen out of our red blood cells. We're doing it to ourselves every time we put the key in the ignition and turn it.

from "Phenomena, comment and notes" by John P. Wiley Jr., in SMITHSONIAN, Vol. 20, No. 4, July 1989

SALT

Winter will soon be upon us again, bringing with it snow and ice and, with that, salt on the roads.

Road salt is the biggest single use for salt in North America; many of us hate it; it damages cars where it sticks to the undersides, and farmers with property through which salted roads pass lose thousands of dollars in crop damage from salt spray, but the experts tell us there is no alternative here in northeastern North America with our cycle of freeze and thaw, freeze and thaw.

These days we take salt very much for granted -- sure we may grumble about the salt on the roads in winter or at yet another price increase when we buy another packet of table salt (forgetting that the last one we bought was six months or more ago -- and men do have to mine it underground), but it hasn't always been so.

In primitive societies where salt was not known and flesh was eaten raw or roasted, never boiled, it may, and probably was, because that way the meat retained its natural salt. Salt mines have been found that date back to Iron Age people; it was used to seal covenants and salt and incense trade routes were important in the ancient world.

For many years now iodine has been added to table salt during the brining process as a means of preventing goiter, those huge deforming thyroid glands that were so common still within living memory. Sea salt naturally contains iodine, but it has only recently become available to the vast numbers of people living inland.

We all know that the Romans paid their soldiers in salt, called a "salarium", from which our word "salary" is derived, but others used salt as money too. Marco Polo left records of its use in the financial system of the Mongol emperors; it was a currency in Tibet and surrounding areas, and cakes of salt were used as money in Ethiopia.

Not so long ago salt's use as a household commodity went far beyond seasoning and cooking; it is used in saline drips in hospitals, is part of a medical procedure to remove tattoos without scarring. Salt, or derivatives, are used in the purifiers bought for swimming pools and in the dye of your blue jeans. The list goes on...and we still throw a pinch over our left shoulder for luck.

Audrey Barnsley

from the PENINSULA NATURALIST (St. Catherines), No. 155, Summer 1989

□

*By salting the fields
the Romans destroyed Carthage.
We do it ourselves.*

haiku by Aarne Juhola

THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

December 1988, Toronto

This month was the sunniest on record with over 118 hours recorded at Toronto City for December. This was due to a cold spell early in the month and to an unusual tendency for the sun to continue shining through incursions of mild air from the southwest with low pressure systems. Mean temperatures were slightly above normal but still the coolest since 1985. Precipitation again fell short of normal (making 1988 the driest year in Toronto since 1963 with 647.2 mm in the city and only 604.2 mm at L.B. Pearson). It was also the driest and windiest December since 1985.

Some unusual happenings. Cold air began to move in after a warm dry surge from the southwest on Dec. 6th. On Dec. 11-12th, Toronto was in the deep freeze with temperatures as low as -20°C at Lester B. Pearson Airport. (This failed to break the 1977 record during the same period of -27.2°C -- an unprecedented early cold wave that affected rural areas). Cold weather with occasional snow lasted until Dec. 18th, whereupon Toronto was affected by a series of disturbances that passed to the west, bringing some quite mild intervals, some rain, and yet still a fair amount of sunshine. There was some freezing rain in morning rush hour on Dec. 27th, but otherwise December could be described as benevolent yet with an interesting amount of variety.

January, 1989, Toronto

It was the warmest January since 1950 with a mean temperature of -0.2°C downtown and -2.2°C at L.B. Pearson Airport; these means are 4.2 and 4.5°C above normal, respectively. There were only six days with a maximum below freezing downtown, and ten at the airport. Not only was it a very mild month, but it was also drier and somewhat sunnier than normal, with snowfall totals below average. The snowfall downtown was the lowest since 1983, and most of the month there was no snow on the ground. In fact, the line of snow cover was north of Barrie at the end of the month! Total precipitation continued the dry trend from 1988, with about the same quantity as last year of around 25-35 mm in the Toronto area.

The month opened with a brief cold outbreak. Behind it came a southwesterly flow of warm air -- and the next cold front actually triggered thunderstorms on the night of Jan. 7-8th. Southwesterly winds and mild air prevailed until Jan. 20th, when the second brief cold surge moved into our area (there were only two the whole month). But, again, this brought a return flow of warm, dry air across southern Ontario. The final four days of the month were decidedly balmy, peaking on Jan. 31st with 10.7°C at the airport and 11.5°C downtown. Interestingly, these readings were lower than the record warmth during the same period in 1988, when it rose into the teens. But January 1988 also had much more cold weather.

Scientists continue to look anxiously for signs of global warming from the greenhouse effect produced by carbon dioxide and other gases released by industry and agriculture, while in Ontario, warm and dry conditions continue...

Gavin Miller

COMING EVENTS

- Monday, Nov. 27 at 7:30 pm - Annual General Meeting of the Georgian Bay Osprey Society - Speaker to be Dr. Alan Poole, author of "Ospreys -- A natural and unnatural history" - Meet in the auditorium of the Ont. Hydro Building, 700 University Ave. (at College St.) See pages 20 & 23.
- everyday to Jan. 15 from 10 am to 4 pm - Toronstonians: creatures and characters that reside on Toronto buildings, a photographic exhibit at Toronto's First Post Office, 260 Adelaide St. East (east of Jarvis St.). (Stamps bought at the Post Office provide the museum with some income.)
- spring 1990 - Women and Environments Conference - Call Rosalind Cairncross at (416) 533-4076 for further information.
- Saturday, Nov. 18 to Dec. 24 - 19th century Yuletide at Black Creek Pioneer Village.
- Saturday, Dec. 9 & Sun. Dec. 10; also Dec. 16 & 17 - Early Victorian Christmas at Todmorden Mills.
- Tuesday, Dec. 12 - Don Valley Brick Works - Open House for plans. Call Marie O'Keefe for details about where and at what time (392-4031).
- Saturday, Dec. 23 - Toronto Ornithological Club Christmas Bird Count, Call Beth Jefferson at 251-2998 if you want to participate.
- Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 7 pm - meeting of City of Toronto Task Force on the Lower Don in the West Lounge of the Toronto City Hall.
- Thursday, Jan. 11 & Fri. Jan. 12 - Private Stewardship of Heritage Resources - a professional development workshop. For further information, write to Environmental Studies Bldg., Room 345, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ont. N2L 3G1 or call (519) 885-1211.
- Wednesday, Jan. 10 at 7 pm - See Dec. 13 notice
- Sunday, Jan. 21 at 3 pm - Royal Canadian Institute lecture - Prof. Richard Jarrell - To plan for the future: look into the past -- the nature of Canadian Science, an illustrated lecture at the Medical Sciences Bldg. Call 928-2096 for details.
- Saturday, Jan. 27 at 1 pm - Toronto Entomologists Association meeting at the Planetarium lecture room.
- Sunday, Jan. 28 at 3 pm - Royal Canadian Institute lecture - Prof. Kirk Wipper - Our debt to the world of water craft - see Jan. 21 notice.
- Thursday, Jan. 18 & Jan. 19 & Jan. 20 - Healthy Place - Healthy People - a provincial conference in the Sheraton Caswell Inn, Sudbury, Ont. \$75 per person, or \$300 for 5 people. For details, write to City of Sudbury, Leisure Plan, Bag 5000, Station A, Sudbury, Ont. P3A 5P3 or call (705) 671-2231.

COMING EVENTS (cont'd)

Travel

Thinking about your 1990 holidays? You might consider taking in a nature conference or a nature tour. Consider the Annual General Meetings of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Canadian Nature Federation. Usually a range of pre- and post-conference tours are available as well as an array of field trips scheduled during the conferences themselves.

For information about the Canadian Nature Federation Conference which is to be held this year in London, Ontario from May 18 to 21 with the theme being "Global Change and Sustainable Development", write CNF Conference 1990, P.O. Box 4185, London, Ont. N5W 5H6.

For information about the Federation of Ontario Naturalists meeting, to be held in Thunder Bay from June 1 to June 3, write to the Thunder Bay Naturalists, Box 1073, Thunder Bay, Ont. P7C 4X8.

For nature tours anytime throughout the year, send for the catalogues of any of the following:

Nature Travel Service, 127A Princess St., Kingston, Ont. K7L 1A8

Canadian Nature Tours, 355 Lesmill Rd., Don Mills, Ont. M3B 2W8

Rosemary Gaymer, 1103 - 205 Queen Mary Dr., Oakville, Ont. L6K 3K8 (See pages 10 & 11.)

Also, TFN has a file of travel suggestions which you might be interested in looking at. Call Diana Banville at 690-1963 if you are interested. □

CONSERVATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Three scholarship awards of \$1,000 each are available to encourage and assist University and College students residing or studying in the Metropolitan Toronto Region, and wishing to broaden their knowledge of conservation through study, travel and practical experience.

For further information about the B. Harper Bull Conservation Scholarship Awards Program, write to The Executive Co-Ordinator, The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation, 5 Shoreham Drive., Downsview, Ontario M3N 1S4. □

Editorial Committee

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