

# Toronto Field Naturalists' Club

## January Meeting

Monday, January 7, 1957 at 8.15 p.m.  
at the  
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Through the courtesy of Ralph Knights, a member of our Club, the following motion pictures will be shown:

THESE SEASONS	Coloured	20 minutes
GRAY GULL HUNTER	Black and White	15 "
(This film was taken by a Swedish photographer in his hunt for a rare Baltic gull).		
VEGETABLE INSECTS	Coloured	20 "
(This is not a recent movie, but it is most interesting, as it deals chiefly with the life of insects as seen through the microscope).		
WARDENS OF WATERTON	Coloured	12 "
A CAMPER LOOKS AT NATURE - A short talk illustrated with a coloured movie will be given by Mr. Kirk Wipper, Athletic Director at Hart House. Mr. Wipper is actively interested in leadership training in the non-profit camps of Ontario. Many will know him through his C.B.C. programme "A Walk with Kirk"		

### OUTING

Saturday, January 12, 2.00 p.m. Winter trees of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. Meet at the Yonge Street gate. Leader Mr. L.T. Owens.

### BOTANY GROUP

The January meeting of the Botany Group will be held on Thursday, January 17, 1957 at Eglinton Public School, corner of Eglinton Ave. and Mt. Pleasant Rd. at 8.00 p.m. The speaker will be Dr. Aramson, his subject Forestry, and the Chairman will be Mr. Jim Mackintosh.

### JUNIOR FIELD NATURALISTS

The January meeting will be held in the Museum Theatre on Saturday, January 5, 1957, at 10.00 a.m. The Insect Group will be in charge of the meeting, and two films "Vegetable Insects" and "Butterfly Botanists" will be shown.

### FEEES

If you do not receive any more Newsletters after this one, it may be because you have not paid your current fees. \$2.00 would seem very little for the advantages this Club offers! If you change your address, will you kindly notify us promptly? Also, if you think you have paid your fees, and don't get a Newsletter, please contact the secretary - we do make mistakes, but it is much easier to correct them before they have gone too long. Thank you for your cooperation!

John Mitchele - President

Mrs. J.B. Stewart,  
21 Millwood Rd. Secretary.

# Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



## NEWSLETTER

Number 144

December 1956

### The Land of Great Silence\*

In spite of all the years I have lived here, I still find beauty and enchantment, romance and adventure, and a very soul-satisfying existence in the land of Great Silence. Sometimes I think that it is the silence of these far-off places that I like best of all.

From the standpoint of a field naturalist this (1955) was a good year in the north. We do not see the great numbers of nesting birds that we used to in the immediate vicinity of this community. For naturally, as the town grows, these birds move farther afield. But not so far that we cannot see every type native to this region during one season's birdwatching. And, in addition, there is never a year without some surprising record of a stray bird in this part of the Arctic. This year my exciting observation of an Eastern Mockingbird on May 31st raised me to the seventh plane of happiness for the rest of the birdwatching season. I had a long and careful observation of this bird, all forenoon in fact, and in that time was able to check (with the help of Peterson's Guide) every feature of identification both when the bird was at rest and in flight. Besides I know the mockingbird well in Florida where it is more

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\*Ed. Note: Under this title we are privileged to include two letters from Mrs. Eva Beckett, a keen observer and ardent naturalist, who is a resident of Churchill, Manitoba. The Newsletter owes this privilege to Mrs. Beckett, and to the Margaret Nice Ornithological Club, of which Mrs. Beckett is a corresponding member, and to which these letters were written. Our thanks to Mrs. Beckett, and to Mrs. Margaret Marsh and Mrs. Irma Metcalfe for making these letters available. The first letter was written in November 1955, the second on September 11, 1956.

common than robins are in this country. So, we never knew what to expect when we set out on a birdwatching trip in the Arctic. It may be possible to tell you more sometime of strays we have seen in our part of the north. But, for a minute or two, I would like to mention some of the delightful features of bird-watching here during the spring migration.

After a winter of bitter cold and howling winds, it is with a tremendous upsurge of spirit that northerners greet the first snow buntings. A few of these birds may arrive by the end of March, but it is more often the second week of April before we see them. It is still winter at that time, and the snow so deep that there would be little food here for these birds were it not for the abundance of seeds on the ground around the grain elevator. Every snow bunting bound for the eastern Arctic seems to know that the snow melts early on the sunny side of the elevator and that millions of tiny seeds await them there; so, for weeks we have a tremendous concentration of snow buntings here. They are jittery when they first arrive, and will stay on the ground for only a few seconds, then are into the air again in a swirling cloud. But back they come in a minute or two to feast again. The quantity of seeds that they consume must be great in proportion to their size, for they feed from dawn to dusk. I never weary of watching them during the 6 to 7 weeks that they linger here, and always have a big supply of seed from the elevator on hand so that I can set up my own feeding station. These are weed seeds screened from the prairie wheat, and are free for the asking; so, my birds fare well too. Among these seeds there is a round brown kind, about the size of a radish seed, that none of the birds will eat. I have not yet found out the plant that it comes from, but must remember to send some of these rejected brown seeds to the Department of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan (almost all grain for this terminal elevator comes from Saskatchewan) next spring, just out of curiosity. You would wonder why some birds leave the flock and come to feed by my door. It must be that with birds, as with people, some are individualists, for all through the weeks that they linger here, 50-75 snow buntings are right on hand every morning at my feeding station. They add such joy to our breakfast time, as they are only about 10 feet from the windows by the breakfast table that we wouldn't miss putting out food for them for anything. Rather comically about 15 of these pampered darlings of ours stayed behind, lured by the "flesh pots of Egypt", after all the other tens of thousands of snow buntings had gone on to their nesting grounds in the farther Arctic this spring. We wondered if they would nest here, and watched them closely, for we have never known snow buntings to make their nests in this region. I continued to put out their seeds each day for a fortnight or more after all the big flocks had gone on, and still they stayed, feeding with the white-crowned sparrows, larks and longspurs, that by this time were busy with their nests. Well, there finally came

a very hot day. My poor snow buntings were quite dejected. They spent the day flitting between the feeding station and a big piece of stranded ice on the beach. Their beaks hung open as if they were really finding the heat a great trial. The next day was hot too, so hot that the foolish little snow buntings had to spend most of the time on the stranded ice. That night they disappeared - took off, no doubt, for the cooler latitudes to which they really belonged. The moral is, that perhaps I should not have been so good to them! Or, perhaps they weren't interested in setting up housekeeping.

The great surge of bird migration to this region in spring-time usually occurs between May 15th and the end of that month, though I recall one late spring when practically nothing but snow buntings arrived before May 29th. Then, in two days everything came, and the northern skies simply rang with bird songs.

I always think of the white-crowned sparrow's lovely song as the "theme song" of this tundra region. Clear and joyous it rings throughout our long, long days of early summer, and indeed, on into late September sometimes. Tree sparrows are numerous here too, as well as savannahs, Harris' and fox sparrows. This year, for the first time, two fox sparrows came regularly to our feeding tray. They were really beautiful, and gentle-mannered in spite of their large size. The Harris' sparrow is big and beautiful too, but he is a regular bully. There is always a feud when a Harris' sparrow lights down among a score or two of other birds at our feeding station in early spring. A large space of ground will be simply covered with seeds, plenty of space and seeds for all, yet the minute this handsome bully arrives, he starts pushing the others around. This may seem incredible, but we have seen, through the windows by our breakfast table on many an occasion, a Harris' sparrow rush at some other bird (usually smaller than himself, or herself, I can't tell the difference between male and female of this species) and seize it by a feather with its beak and hang on, in spite of vigorous struggling on the part of the victim, until the feather came out, or else was badly bent. Nevertheless, in spite of his bullying ways, I'm always thrilled to the core the morning each spring that I waken to hear his husky "the-ee, the-ee, the-ee", announcing his safe return.

Tree swallows come early, usually on or about May 17th. That may not seem early in your more southern latitudes, but it is quite early with us. These birds nest here in much greater numbers than they did 10 or 12 years ago, chiefly, I believe, because people are putting up houses for them. We have four swallow houses, one on each of the only four poles nearby, and the swallows that first claim them each spring always have a strenuous time retaining possession of them, so many others want them too. When the young leave the nests, they sit in numbers along our clothesline balancing uneasily until they

grow strong of wing. It is always fun to watch them at such close range. Two years ago I was sitting watching them one sunny morning when suddenly, out of the blue, along came a barn swallow and momentarily joined them. Observations of barn swallows are rare for this region, so I was glad that Theodora Fletcher, who wrote The Tundra World was with me to share that observation. If you have read that book, you know the tremendous delight she took in birdwatching in this region. She is a very wholesome and lovely person, a wonderful companion on any field trip. She has spent many summers here. I really enjoyed her other book Driftwood Valley more than the tundra one, especially the chapter "Singing Wolves".

Visitors to this region frequently express surprise on seeing robins here, but a good many pairs nest in and around this community. They probably are becoming more numerous here too. When I first came here, I thought these robins extremely furtive in their habits, very timid about people, and their song much less rollicking than that of the Ontario robin. I attributed that to the fact that they were pretty well to the limit of their northern range in the eastern Arctic, and to the Indian and Eskimo children, who are often very cruel with birds, stoning them and breaking up their nests, so making robins very shy about nesting near human dwellings. However, many of the Winnipeg birdwatchers claim that these are "northern" robins and a bit different from those of more southerly latitudes, that they are darker in color, etc. I can never be quite certain of that because I have never seen the two types together in the migrating season.

But, when the day came that a pair of robins nested on a ledge over our shed door we were nearly delirious with delight ... our birds were beginning to trust us! This happened about six years ago and came about rather amusingly. The shed is separate from the house and sits off to one side about 25 feet distant. I can see the door of it from my place at the breakfast table. The ledge above the door was very narrow, but for two or three mornings that spring I noticed bits of straw hanging from the ledge. It suddenly dawned on me that some bird was trying to build a nest there but the ledge was too narrow. So I nailed a wider piece of wood to it. That was on a Friday morning. Nothing happened all day; no bird came near. But what a surprise on Saturday morning! When I raised the window blinds, there on the widened ledge was a complete nest. A pair of robins had worked most of the night ... in the latter part of May there is little darkness here ... and built their new home over our shed door. They were still around but disappeared completely as soon as they knew that we had seen them. I worried all day when they didn't come back to their beautifully built nest. But that was needless. They were giving the masonry of their nest a chance to thoroughly dry out. That night they came and lined it with soft bits of grass and on Sunday morning the

mother bird was on the nest. When she left the first blue egg was in the nest. She came back that afternoon to begin incubating that first egg. On Monday morning when she was away for a few minutes, I peeped into the nest to see a second egg there. On Tuesday a third was there. That was the full clutch, and incubation was well under way. A few days later, on the 24th of May, when folks in Ontario were picnicking at the beaches, we had a tremendous blizzard here. Wind blew violently from the east, right against our dear robin on her nest, and great quantities of snow fell. She was completely covered over several times. The first time that happened, I went out and brushed all the snow away. She was frantic at first and flew off the nest, but later she did not let herself be so upset about my unburying her. The story ends happily, for, two weeks to the day that incubation of the first egg began, it hatched out. The next little bird came a day later, and the third the day after that.

This year the male bird arrived on May 16th. We presumed he was our robin because he came right to the tall pole near the shed and for days lustily proclaimed his territory. Five days went by without his dear mate's arrival. On the sixth day he had a new wife and the pair was busily preparing a new nest on the ledge, right beside the one from the previous year. The new wife was extraordinarily jittery; we didn't get a good look at her for a day or two, but when we did we found she was a most unusual-looking robin, for across her breast was a dark band like that of a varied thrush. Did you ever hear of such a thing? We never had, so we watched her closely. Like many other creatures that are oddities, she was easily disturbed. Alas! On the 24th of May holiday, about the time the new nest was finished, my husband decided to tidy up the shed. He did not take long or make much noise, but Mrs. Robin was so upset about it that she wouldn't come back to her nice new home, no, not for anything. We were terribly upset about her attitude, but couldn't do a thing about it. So off that pair of robins went and made another nest in the cleft in a high rock, half a mile or so away, in a lonely spot on the coastal ridge. I saw them there on several occasions. There was no mistaking her with that strange band across her breast. A few days after they left our shed, imagine our joy on seeing that another pair of robins was occupying the beautiful new forsaken nest. They proved a quiet domesticated pair that raised two broods of three young robins each.

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When I wrote you last the snow buntings were here on their way to nesting grounds in the far north. Now we are expecting daily to see them on their return, for already summer is far spent in this region. There are snow flurries today, and wild winds, and a raging sea. That gives me a real

reason for being indoors, with time to read and think and write. I am glad of that because the summer has been a tremendously busy one.

In spite of the boisterous day, or maybe because of it, I have just had a very good observation of a long-tailed jaeger, the first I have seen this season. This bird is not common along our coast, though we do usually see one or more each season. It belongs to the farther north. Our jaeger is the parasitic jaeger, the magnificent "sea hawk" that harries the gulls and terns and steals their fish from them rather than make the effort to do its own fishing. It nests on the open tundra, usually leaving this region as soon as its young are able to fly.

The long-tailed jaeger that I have been watching as I write is flying back and forth along the edge of the sea, possibly in the hope that food will be dashed up on the shore by the thundering waves. It is a very handsome sea-bird too. But I can plainly see that I must take my eyes from the grandeur of the coast this morning if I am to make any headway with these bird notes. Our "birdwatching eyrie", as we call our little northern cottage, is on a sloping hillside not more than 200 yards from the edge of the sea (Hudson Bay) so we can really enjoy the sea in all its moods, and also have many fine bird observations without going out of doors at all.

For the past week enormous flocks of wild geese have been passing overhead on their way south, some flocks flying low enough that we could see their markings clearly even without the field glasses. Their wild clangouring is such an exhilarating sound, I always rush out to see them. Yesterday, as I picked cranberries on the hillside, a small flock, 10 lesser snows and two blue geese, flew by so low overhead that I could hear the swishing of their wingbeats. They did not appear to see me, so I lay back against the mosses and looked up at their lovely gleaming bodies and great outspread wings. They are so beautiful. A little later in the afternoon, a line of swans, nineteen of them, came right overhead too, great silent birds flying with necks outstretched as though eager to get to their destination. All this, and a pail of cranberries too. It was a very rich afternoon.

There is an abundance of wild fruit here this season. The baked apple berries were simply superb. Their season is short, usually about a week to ten days in mid-August. The tundra is golden with their fruit at that time, in moist mossy places around the lakes. Later come the gooseberries, red currants and black currants (the currants grow in the river valleys and are of good flavour, especially good for jelly,) then the bilberries, or "blueberries" of the north, and cranberries. These cranberries are by no means as large

as Cape Cod products, but they are abundant, are easily gleaned, and are very rich in vitamin C. So we use them copiously. We can pick them ourselves, or have the Indian women do it for us. I am sufficiently plebeian to find a great deal of pleasure in cranberry-picking, especially on a sunny day when the autumn air is like wine and the mosses are soft and springy underfoot, and wild geese are going overhead. No mosquitoes or blackflies at this time of year, no snakes this far north, no poison ivy, no burs or thorny bushes - just sheer enjoyment. Wouldn't you like to come berry-picking with me?

These fruits I have mentioned, along with the Arctic raspberry which is delectable but not at all plentiful here, are the ones that we humans enjoy. Birds enjoy them too, as well as many other fruits that we leave strictly to the birds. There are great quantities of crowberries, bearberries, soapberries and others that are less palatable, yet which are important in that they provide food for the countless numbers of birds that rear their young in this northland. At this time of year the hills are crimson with the autumn foliage of the bearberry plant, not only here but deep into the Arctic. The tundra has no maple trees, yet is rich in autumn crimson and gold - crimson leaves of the bearberry plants and extraordinary gold of the dwarf willows.

Last evening when some local folk had dropped in for an hour's chat, I had occasion to bring a folder of willow specimens from my herbarium. As I leafed over page after page of willows, one man gasped, "I thought a willow was a willow. I didn't know there were all those". For, incredible as it may seem, there are 22 species of dwarf willows in our immediate neighbourhood, some of them tiny creeping plants, others quite sizeable shrubs. Other localities have other species too.

Even the tiny willows have a great part to play in the life of birds nesting in this region. Countless nests are built in the little leafy willows or under them. The down from their fat catkins of last year still clinging to the shrubs this spring, went into the structure of hundreds of nests. From the buds on branches sticking up through the drifts in winter, ptarmigan, or northern grouse, eke out a scant subsistence. In springtime one will often note a perfectly healthy-looking willow with no leaves on the tips of many branches. Why? The tips of the branches were reaching higher than the snow-drifts around them, and ptarmigan devoured every wintering bud.

Speaking of willows makes me realize that one of my summer projects is still unfinished. For I am collecting willow galls. The time of collecting is the first two weeks of September. I have yet much to do, and the weather today is discouraging. At the moment a real blizzard is blotting out the landscape. This project is not one of my own special

choosing, but one more or less thrust upon me. Yet it is proving tremendously interesting and is opening a whole new avenue of reading and learning. Like my guest of last evening who thought a willow was a willow, I thought a gall was a gall. Now, I'm discovering many sorts and sizes of galls even on these tiny dwarf willows of the tundra.

This all began one day in early summer, when a sawfly authority, a man who has studied sawflies in many countries of Europe and who came this year to study them in Canada, found his way to the eastern Arctic, and eventually to our door. He is also one of the staff of the British Museum, so by the time he left the north, I found that I had been persuaded to take on the contract of collecting specimens of sawfly galls on the many willows of this region for the British Museum in London. It is anticipated that the collection will yield species new to science. So, if some day you hear of Sawfly Beckettii, you will know how it came about!

The study of these galls has brought about a more intensive study of the willows, as the galls are classified partly by the species of willow on which they were found. That, in turn, brought me close to nesting birds. It was a surprise to find a pretty new nest with three tiny blue eggs on August 18th, the nest of a common redpoll, probably a second setting, though these birds do seem a bit erratic in their nesting habits. I visited the nest again on August 25th, but the eggs had still not hatched. When I went again on August 29th, a cold windy day, three naked babes cuddled in the downlined nest. It was September 6th before I saw them again. How they had changed! They were big and bright and already well-clothed. They peered over the side of the nest as though they would like to take off. On September 10th when I passed that way again, they had gone from the nest. It seemed late in the season for these young birds, but red polls may be hardier than most others that nest here. Hoary redpolls nest here too, but in fewer numbers than the common redpoll. In their spring plumage, they are exquisite little birds.

During the last week of August, and the first week of September, enormous flocks of sparrows of various kinds, of horned larks, pipits and longspurs concentrated here. Most of them have gone on south now though a few of each species are still here. There are still a few shorebirds too, and quite large flocks of rusty blackbirds. Hawks have been scarce here ever since the early spring, when numbers of them followed the snow bunting migration, as mice and lemmings, usually so numerous on the tundra, were very scarce this season. These little rodents are usually the mainstay of food supply for hawks and other birds of prey, as well as for foxes.

And, by the way, the little brown seed from the prairie

weed seeds that I use for bird food - the only seed that snow buntings spurned at our feeding station - turned out to be a mustard seed, and probably too hot for them. I planted some of these seeds in the corner of our tiny garden, and they grew to be one of the common prairie mustards (Brassica Kaber). During the spring and summer my birds ate 90 pounds of weed seeds (seeds screened from the wheat in the grain elevator here), as well as the daily crumbs and scraps from our table. There were few dull moments at our feeding tray.

However, we saw little that was new to us this season. No stragglers from other territories were noted here. But, in company with John Crosby of the National Museum, Ottawa, we were lucky enough to get the story of a pair of Rock Wrens that spent the summer in our locality, (an account of this will appear in a forthcoming issue of the Canadian Field Naturalist). This was the first record of Rock Wrens here, and they appeared to be nesting. Also, I was able to prove to the Winnipeg naturalists that we really do have rubythroated hummingbirds here. One female rubythroat was found dead in the powerhouse which it had entered by way of a broken window during a cold June storm. I sent the tiny dead bird to the Natural History Museum in Winnipeg. I have been seeing an occasional rubythroat, or more, each summer for many years.

John Crosby spent several weeks in Churchill during the early summer. You probably saw the photo-story of him and his work in the National Museum in a June issue of the Star Weekly. He is an artist, and was doing sketches of birds and bird habitats while here. We greatly enjoyed getting acquainted with him, and with Mr. Ralph McLeary of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club, who was in Churchill at the same time. Both were tremendously keen birders. Bristol Foster of the University of Toronto was back too for another summer in this region, continuing his study of Phenacomys, yellow-nosed mice. As well as being a keen biologist, Bristol is doing superb camera work.

Another visitor from the National Museum was Dr. Howard Crum, head of the bryophyte department in the botany section. With a team of specialists in bryophytes (mosses, lichens and liverworts), he worked in this region for nearly two months. Others of his team were Dr. Wm. Steere of Stanford University, California, Dr. Anderson of Duke University, North Carolina, and Wilfred Schofield, M.A. of Wolfville, N.S. Also working on botany in this region and north of here, was Dr. Ritchie of the staff of the University of Manitoba. He concentrated more on the vascular plants than on bryophytes. Acquaintance with, and an occasional field trip with these outstanding botanists, greatly enriched my summer. I felt that I had learned a great deal from them. My own special botanical problem this summer was the collecting and study of plants newly introduced here. Most of these, of course, are weeds from

the prairies that have come in grain shipments to this port. An amazing number have already come to stay. In addition, I made a full collection (for an American museum) of the vascular plants native to this region, approximately 300 species. The preparation of these for museum specimens takes endless time and care, but it is work that I greatly enjoy.

Birdwatchers, botanists, and camera fans in unprecedented numbers came "down north to the end of steel" this summer. A great many of them looked us up, and we were happy to have a share in entertaining them during their stay in Churchill. We're fond of people too as well as birds and flowers. So the summer was very full of interest here, so full that there was no possibility of my getting off on another Arctic voyage.

At present our harbour is filled with freighters from various European countries, some of them beautiful new ships. It gives the place quite an international flavour. More grain than ever is going overseas by way of this route. Some of these freighters have splendid accommodation for about twelve passengers, which is usually booked up, though it costs much the same to travel this way as by regular ocean liners.

Now I must be off ... to make a cranberry pie! I trust you will find some interest in these jottings from the northland.

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#### BOOK REVIEW

The Great Migrations. By Georges Blond. Trans. by Frances Frenage. (The Macmillan Co. New York. In Canada Brett Macmillan Ltd. Toronto, 1956) pp. VII, 192, Price \$4.00

Fascinated by the problem of the migrational movements of wild creatures Georges Blond, a well-known French publicist, has combed the literature on the subject and has culled from it the stories of six of the most interesting of these migrations: those of the wild geese of Asia, of the Atlantic herring, salmon and eels, of the North American bison, of the locusts of Arabia and Africa, and of the lemmings of Norway.

Without being anthropomorphic the author has nonetheless managed to dramatize his account by telling his tales in large part through the life story of a typical individual or pair. It is an effective method - one indeed with which we are becoming increasingly well acquainted - , and in no way objectionable;

for the popularizing of scientific knowledge it is a well-chosen medium. The stories of the locusts and the eels will probably be the most novel to most readers, but all the accounts are attractively written. It is a tribute to the translator that they emerge so well in their transition from French to English. This is good popular science, good reading for yourself or for a friend.

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Most readers of the Newsletter will by this time have heard of the extraordinary invasion of three-toed woodpeckers which is taking place in the Toronto region and throughout Southern Ontario this winter. At the time of writing (December 3) more than forty reports of Arctic three-toeds have come from the Toronto area, and at least 3 American three-toeds have been seen here, the first of this species since 1901. The Arctic three-toeds began to appear early in October; the first American three-toeds turned up at Highland Creek (Maple Creek Farm) on November 11, and was found by George Fairfield. Thanks to the competent working of the "grapevine" (on this occasion Mrs. Donald Gunn) I was able on that same afternoon, along with my daughter and Ray Pannell, to see a sight which I had never believed possible hitherto; to have both an Arctic and an American three-toed in the binoculars at one time. On the same day Wishart Campbell found a second American three-toed near Ajax. The third of the species was found at Glendon Hall on November 17 by Ed. Waltho and Dryden Bryant. Since that date it has been in more or less regular attendance there, and has been seen by many observers, including Roger Tory Peterson. In Toronto for an Audubon Screen Tour, Peterson was able to get an hour or so to go in search of this rare woodpecker. His fortune was very much in, for, when the Toronto birders took him to the favored tree, there was the bird, the first he had ever seen in Eastern America. What is more, he turned his head and there was an Arctic three-toed on another tree. It would appear that Toronto does well by its Audubon Screen Tour lecturers! All three of the American three-toeds have been found working on diseased elm trees. It would, therefore, be wise to keep a close eye on all the dead or dying elms in your neighborhood. If birds of either species are discovered please report them to the office of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists at 187 Highbourne Road, Toronto.

Northern shrikes are again with us in good number for the fourth successive winter. They may be looked for in open country and are usually to be found sitting on the tops of bushes, trees, poles, etc. which provide satisfactory lookouts. A few snowy owls have been reported though this is not supposed to be a winter for their migration. However, as Mrs. Beckett's letter shows that there has been a shortage of lemmings and mice in the north, there may be more owls here this winter than was anticipated.

A heavy movement of rough-legged hawks suggests that this may be the case, as these hawks and snowy owls come from the same region. Both hawks and owls are most likely to be found in the open country and in places similar to those favored by shrikes.

Winter finches do not seem to be moving south, at least this far. A few snow buntings, pine siskins and evening grosbeaks have been reported. No reports of crossbills or pine grosbeaks have come in yet. They may come later if there is heavy snow, but from all accounts there is a heavy cone and seed crop in the north, and this will tend to hold them there.

R. M. Saunders,

Editor.