

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club

155

April Meeting

Monday, April 7, 1958 at 8.15 p.m.

at the
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Speaker: Dr. R. G. Blackadar
Geologist on the staff of the Geological Survey of Canada,
and one of their Arctic experts.

Subject: "Our Eastern Arctic".

The tempo of exploration and development in Canada's Eastern Arctic has increased greatly in the past few years, and it is now a region of considerable interest to the mineral and transportation industries. Dr. Blackadar will, by means of coloured slides and a moving picture, describe this land, its people and its wildlife.

SPRING OUTINGS

For information regarding spring outings please consult the enclosed folder.

BOTANY GROUP

The April meeting of the Botany Group will be held in Room 203, Botany Building, University of Toronto, (use north-west door) on Wednesday, April 9, at 7.30 p.m.

Speaker - Mr. Marshall Bartman.

Subject - "Woods, wild flowers and still waters".
Illustrated with colour photography.

JUNIOR FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

The next meeting of the Junior Field Naturalists' Club will be held on Saturday, March 29 (note change of date). It will be in charge of Botany Group.

Speakers: Louise Tomlinson - The Sugar Maple
Joan Worfolk - African Violets
Heather Moore - Weeds

Mrs. J. Goodwin - Our Native Orchids

Film: The Ecology of a Spruce Bog.

President - Dr. Walter Tovell

Secretary - Mrs. J.B. Stewart
21 Millwood Road. HU 9-5052

Assistant Secretary - Mrs. H. Robinson,
49 Craighurst Ave., HU 1-0260

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



NEWSLETTER

Number 155

April 1958

During the recent F.O.N. field trip (February 23) held in co-operation with the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, local naturalists were given a striking demonstration of the unsuspected wealth of wild life still to be found within easy reach of Toronto.

Hardly had we got out of our cars in the valley at the Boyd Property, a new Metropolitan Authority park and conservation project in the Humber Valley between Woodbridge and Kleinburg, when someone shouted, "Look!" We did, and saw two deer dashing from a hemlock wood onto the river; two more followed, then a fifth, and all five deer went streaming in line up the bank and along a hillside in full view. Tails raised, heads arched, they made a wonderful sight, and a perfect introduction to the park. The best part was that this was no prearranged affair; this was a natural sight, naturally occurring, within 25 miles of the center of Toronto, such a sight as most Torontonians would think you had to go a hundred miles at least to see. What a proof this of the value and success of protection!

And we were to have more! When we broke into parties and went into the wood, what should we find but the spot where the deer had been bedding down. John Mitchele made the discovery, and heralds were immediately dispatched to call in members of other parties nearby. Few of the people present had ever seen a deer "yard", as such winter resting and feeding grounds are called. Certainly it was new to me though I have tramped miles of bush in winter where deer yards could have been. The greyish ellipses, melted hollows in the snow, where the deer had lain the previous night, were dotted about beneath the heaviest hemlock cover. Beside each hollow was a pile of dark droppings, and leading to and away from the "bed" were lines of tracks. As we wandered further in

the thick evergreen grove we found more and more evidence: additional beds, more droppings, more tracks, which showed conclusively that the deer had been using this grove for a long time as their regular winter home. Wherever cedar (arbor vitae) existed the lower branches had been browsed. In some places cedars had fallen or branches had been broken off, presumably as a result of ice storms: in such cases the deer had stripped them clean. In a few spots to which deer tracks led the snow had been cleared forcibly from steep banks, as if the animals had been seeking roots or ferns to eat. The Authority men who were with us said that about ten deer were living in the park. At this late date in the winter season food may be getting scarce, though the snowfall this winter has hardly been very serious in the Toronto region.

The deer and the deer yard were assuredly the major find of the trip. Still, the deer were by no means the only animals to be found or which were living in this area. One of the party caught sight of a large hole, some 20-25 feet up a tall tree. When I looked at the hole I was able, through my binoculars, to see that, snugly inside, a large porcupine was cosily asleep. Again the heralds went out, and others came to see. Several people mentioned that this was the first porcupine that they had seen alive in the wild. Among this number were three or four New Canadians, who were extremely pleased at the observation, as, of course, were we all. One of the New Canadians was especially interested in seeing the porcupine's tracks. Right at the base of the tree this was not possible, since the animal had packed a trail so hard that no individual tracks were discernible. A few yards off, however, the broad snowshoe-like tracks could be made out. And, inasmuch as we had just seen a perfect set of raccoon tracks a little farther back in the wood, it was possible to demonstrate the difference between the two tracks to perfection.

The only trouble with tracks and their study in this wood was that they were so numerous, so interlacing, overlapping and mixed together that often it was difficult to find a clear track of one species. The snow under the trees looked rather as if a five o'clock animal rush hour had occurred. The whole wood was in fact riddled with tracks, and if they were sometimes hard to tell apart they were at the same time mute testimony of a teeming animal population. Fox, red squirrel, cottontail, jack rabbit, raccoon, porcupine, deer, weasel, mice, were all represented. A world of mysteries was there to be investigated if any observer could and would take the time.

Indeed, the visit to the Boyd Property was a revelation. The long sweep of valley, flanked with groves of evergreen and hardwoods, everywhere full of signs of wild life, was both beautiful and heartening. To know that the Metropolitan Conservation

Authority is really acquiring lands of this size (the Boyd Property is 230 acres) and character raises the real prospect of our being on the way to the building up of a park and conservation system worthy of the name, and one commensurate with the immense demands that must be put on it in so densely populated an area. There is still a long way to go but there is no doubt that the present administration is moving in the right direction, and with commendable speed and foresight. We congratulate the officers of the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and all those who support them, for the good job that is being done. All naturalists, and every farsighted person in this region, should give their support to this development. It must be done now or the opportunity will go by.

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One of the most successful feeding stations in the Toronto region is that of the Bunkers at their home, Happy Nook, in Dunbarton. Very well known to the members of this club, since the Bunkers have been most generous in inviting the club to hold a field day at their place each fall for several years, the Happy Nook establishment is as interesting for birds in winter as at all other times of the year. And this has become true because of the care and attention that has been given by the Bunker family to the development of a large scale feeding station.

The following account of this development, as written by Miss Ethel Bunker, will give a good picture of how this has been accomplished.

Bird Feeding at Happy Nook, Dunbarton

"We started with one covered feeder, one fat log and two coconut shells. It did not take long to make them of rough wood, without trimmings, and less time to put the covered feeder on a post and the other three hanging from the branches of a tree. The feeders were filled with peanut germs, sunflower seeds, chicken feed and grit.

"For a few days the birds did not notice the feeders until some sparrows came on the covered one; then starlings soon followed, making the food disappear quickly. Chickadees came to see what all the noise was about and found the peanuts in the coconut shells, then started carrying the peanuts away to hide in the bark of nearby trees. Downy woodpeckers discovered and used the fat log, and before long both woodpeckers and chickadees were

using the fat log and coconut shells regularly. When cardinals and blue jays came we made more feeders, and spread them about on different trees. The chickadees like variety, so they used all the feeders; the cardinals and blue jays followed suit.

"It was fun to watch the blue jays try to land on a swinging half-coconut shell. At first they were so clumsy, but with a little practice they soon did it. Starlings and sparrows can do it too.

"We saw pheasants in the orchard one day so a covered feeder was made on the ground like a large box turned on its side with a few evergreen branches put around it to give it the appearance of a natural shelter. It worked; the pheasants came for the chicken feed, and so did some ruffed grouse.

"The old saying, 'The more you have the more you get,' is very true of bird feeders because the more feeders you have the more birds are attracted, as long as you keep them well filled.

"Our regular bird visitors this winter are cardinals, blue jays, Oregon and slate-coloured juncos, hairy and downy woodpeckers, evening and pine grosbeaks, whitethroated sparrow, purple finches, goldfinches, redpolls and white-breasted nuthatches. The redpolls, purple finches, goldfinches and pine grosbeaks feed on the apples that were left on the trees last fall.

"I think this is a very encouraging experience, and it has given us a lot of pleasure, and work, too, pleasant work.

"Squirrels are our worst trouble, black, gray and red. The feeders hanging on trees were originally hung with strong string, but this soon had to be changed as the squirrels sat on the branches, pulled up the coconut shells and had a good feed. The strings were replaced by wires, four to five feet long; then, when the squirrels could not pull the feeders up they slid down the wire, and with a little practice would catch onto the feeder and get something to eat. We watched one squirrel try sixteen times before succeeding! This winter all the hanging feeders have foil pie plates or tin covers on them and rustproof wire to hang them with. When the squirrels found they could not get a grip on the shiny wire they tried jumping from another branch but the tin covers stopped them from catching hold of the feeder so they have given up trying now. One problem not yet solved is how to stop them getting into the high feeders. They climb up a metal post like climbing a tree. The feeders on two chimney tiles are easy for them as they jump half way up against the tile and on the rebound catch the bottom of the feeder and pull themselves up. I hope to solve these problems some day.

"If you should start feeding birds, keep it up, for it is a great pleasure which rewards you well for your labour. You get acquainted with the birds and they get acquainted with you."

Ethel Bunker

The success achieved by the Bunkers at their feeding station was amply demonstrated to a group of us on March 2. When we drove into the driveway at Happy Nook we were immediately greeted by the merry chinking notes of evening grosbeaks. Then we saw a feeding tray with several grosbeaks on it, and with others flying in and out. This was at one corner of the house, and in front of it was a gunny-sacking blind, only 4-6 feet from the feeder. This was Alf's blind, from which he could take pictures of birds on the feeders, point-blank at closest range. We thought he might be in the blind, but he was not at home. Quickly we saw two more feeders to the other side of the house, two behind the house and two in the orchard. Every single one was being eagerly patronized, and in them all were evening grosbeaks. Grosbeaks were everywhere. Their notes filled the air, and they flew up calling wherever one walked. What a wonderful sight, and what a pleasure to live where this sight is possible.

At the beginning of the winter season Alf invested in hundreds of pounds of seeds and peanuts. I gather there was some remonstrance, to which Alf replied, "We're going to have birds this winter!" And do they ever, and have had all winter. The evening grosbeaks have come recently, but others, as Miss Bunker has pointed out, have been around all the time, and visitors have come and gone. Today, not only were the grosbeaks present--one has to mention them first for they were certainly dominating the scene--but there were chickadees, downies, juncos and a hairy as well. And with the juncos were two Oregons, a brightly-coloured male and a female. These two, along with a whitethroat which we also saw, have been amongst the permanent winter residents. In plain fact, Alf's investment in feed has proven wonderfully worthwhile, and a source of continual excitement and adventure. All are now agreed on this. And really it was not much to pay for so rich a return, far less than most people pay in a winter for entertainment of a much less repaying kind.

Members interested in feeding stations would find a visit to the Bunkers' place very much worth their while.

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Another very successful feeding station is that conducted by Mr. Jim Mackintosh at Glendon Hall. He too has at present (late February - early March) a large number of evening grosbeaks, and since a number of people responded very generously to Mr. Jim Baillie's suggestion in his newspaper column that they bring feed to help out with the grosbeaks at Mr. Mackintosh's station the latter wishes to thank all those who were so kind in their response. Many members have had a great deal of fun and delight in visiting the Glendon Hall feeding station.

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Birds Seen on T.F.N.C. Field Trip in Cedarvale, Feb. 8, 1958.

In response to a request from a member of this Club the list of birds seen on the February field trip in Cedarvale is given here. It was as follows: Red-tailed hawk, Pheasant, Rock Dove, Flicker, Hairy and Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Shrike, Starling, House Sparrow, Cardinal, Common Redpoll, Goldfinch, Slate-colored Junco.

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Book Review: Of Men and Marshes. By Paul L. Errington.
(New York: Macmillan, 1957), pp. ix, 150.
In Toronto: Brett-Macmillan Ltd. Price \$4.50.

From a man who has been hunter, trapper, amateur naturalist and professional biologist we get one of the most intensely interesting and widely informative books on the subject of marshlands and man's relation to them that has ever been written. Imbued throughout with a sense of real beauty there is nonetheless not one page of unrealistic sentimentality in the book. The author sees and understands what he sees, and he is able to convey to his readers in simple, clear and convincing language what he sees and feels and understands. Hunter and trapper he has been but always one who could thrill to the stirring colours of a sunset, to the whistling wind setting waves aflowing amongst the marshland reeds, to the sleek grace of a mink swimming across a tea-toned creek. Indeed, he has found so much of beauty and wonder and mystery in the marshes all through the years that now his

main hope is that some of this world of wetland wonder may be saved forever and ever. It is in danger, in grave danger; it must be saved.

There are many reasons to save the wetlands. Some are soundly economic and "practical" in the usual utilitarian sense. Men are only beginning to appreciate the very real connection between permanent agricultural security and the preservation of marshlands. That is why millions are being spent in some areas for restoring marshes whilst in others millions are being still lavished upon clearing them away. There are also scientific reasons for saving wetlands since these areas provide some of the best, often the only situations, where proper studies may be made of the balance of nature, and from such studies in the long run men can and have learned lessons of adjustment between themselves and Nature that they can learn in no other way. Somehow man must learn how to create a workable balance between the necessary artificialities of a world marked by a belief in an accelerating economy and the equally necessary naturalness of a world uncreated by man in which man has to live for as long as there shall be humanity. Yet, to do this with any success, man must know Nature as she really is, not as he thinks or dreams that she is, or as he wants her to be. Nature was there before man, and may well be there after man has gone unless man learns to cooperate with the Nature of which he is only a part for all his pretentious ambitions.

Nowhere are the lessons to be derived from the study of Nature set forth more emphatically, more clearly, more reasonably than in this book. The views here expressed are based on a lifetime of thorough scientific study, and yet there is something more, something without which this man would never have been able to discover so much and, above all, to understand: he has been in love with his subject. He has come to see through his own experience that in the beautiful wildness of marshlands there is a practical value that equals anything that may be stated in dollars and cents, and for more and more people something that, with the ever-increasing pressures of modern life, will outweigh any consideration of ordinary economics: that is, peace of mind. On this subject I will let Professor Errington speak for himself,

"At times, one of man's greater needs is freedom from himself, and this freedom is likely to be increasingly threatened by population and economic pressures, by dogmas of organizations exalting power and bigness, and by old ideas that Nature exists only to be conquered. The trapper or the ex-trapper or the frank recluse is not alone in needing, on occasion, freedom from man to escape being psychologically overwhelmed by Man as a mass phenomenon.

Love of naturalness, of open skies and shady forests, of land and water and solitude and living things, is depicted over and over again in the world's literature and art, from long before the Christian era. It is known under many names or under no articulated names at all--by savages who can put little into words or who have in mind mystical deities of woods, waters, or mountains, and by persons of the most modern viewpoints who love the out-of-doors for what it is, all or part.....

Wilderness and related outdoor values may not offset all the worries and frustrations to which civilized man is subject, but they help. I would say that cherishing them can be among the experiences redeeming human life from futilities and conceits. The receptive person can thus better see himself, his life, and his problems within a framework of universal order, or permanent physical realities, of evolutionary trends, and of the great phenomena of Life."

This book makes sense from beginning to end, and it is sense surrounded with beauty and inspiration.

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Book Review: The Pebbles on the Beach. By Clarence Ellis.
(London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp. 163.
In Toronto: British Book Service, Ltd.

You have not, perhaps, thought of pebble-hunting as an absorbing hobby. Nonetheless here is a man who, among many others, has found it to be so. And in this nicely illustrated little book he is able to convey to his readers a great deal of the satisfaction he derives from this aspect of nature study, so little regarded or suspected of possibility by most naturalists. There is beauty and detective work and leisurely pleasure all wrapped up together in the hunt for pebbles. This book applies to Great Britain, it is true, but the search for pebbles, the making of a collection, can be done in North America as easily as in Britain, and along the shores of the Great Lakes in many places as well as on the ocean beaches. Even it could be pursued as a profitable hobby on the dry beaches, eskers, moraines and other remains of the glaciers that once covered our land, for they carried and created a rich variety of pebbles. If you want to find your way into a fascinating corner of the world of nature you have never entered before, here is your chance of an introduction. Get

"The Pebbles on the Beach" and follow Mr. Ellis' lead.

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Spring Migration Record

Those members who have had the pleasure of participating in the cooperative study of continental bird migration in years past will want to continue to present their findings this spring. Many who have not yet taken part will want to do so beginning this year. For this reason we are again appending a copy of the proper form for the presentation of records. This may be detached and sent in as directed on the form. This is a kind of cooperative research in which a great many observers may readily share.

It is desirable that spring records be in by June 10. "Late reports as well as records for prior years (1953-1957) can still be used; but they may not be processed as promptly as those received by this date.

"Most of the 1957 material has been put on IBM punch cards and is available for research purposes. If you submitted records for one or more species on the 1957 spring or fall list, you will receive (either enclosed or under separate cover) a machine listing of your records. If any error or omission is noted please advise us at once so the correction can be made before the record is used.

"The species on the 1958 spring list are exactly the same as those on last year's list, but there have been some minor changes in names to conform with nomenclature in the new A.O.U. Check-List of North American Birds.

"Spring reports for 1957 came from 42 states, 8 Canadian provinces, the District of Columbia and the Bahamas. In spite of this wide coverage the number of reports from many individual states was disappointing. Only 5 states or provinces (Ontario, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Wisconsin and Nebraska) were represented by more than 30 cooperators. Observers who failed to send in their records because the spring migration was late and their arrival dates scanty are urged to send in what information they have. We wish to repeat that there can never be too many reports, even from one locality, as long as they are not duplicate observations on the same individual birds. Our ideal cooperator does not make long trips to different areas; rather, he watches and listens in

his own neighborhood, for at least a short time, nearly every day; and he concentrates on those birds familiar to him and common in his area. We ask only that you report just the birds which are believed to have actually arrived (or departed) on the date when seen or heard. In the "Peak" columns enter any arrivals of additional individuals, any high counts obtained, or any other records of migratory movement. Records of even single birds found freshly killed at towers or ceilometers are important and should be included, together with a footnote explaining the source of the observation.

"While the processing of migration data for electrical sorting and tabulating has many advantages, it also has certain limitations. If an actual count of birds is not possible, we ask that you give a reasonable estimate of numbers rather than use terms such as 'many', 'common', 'few', etc. We have no way to interpret these words and no provision for putting them on the punch cards. Also, we respectfully request that you use a separate sheet for each location (town or county). Requests for extra sheets will be filled promptly. Also, we shall appreciate your assistance in helping us get forms in the hands of new participants.

"We wish to emphasize once again that we do not expect any one person to report all species on the list. The average person reports on only 5 to 10 species, and many sheets contain data for but a single species. We are not so much interested in the very first bird of a species to reach a certain state or locality as we are in the date on which many different people report an influx or departure of that species. So every observation counts, no matter how meagre it may seem to the reporter. Although many birds arrive at about the same time each year, the exact date is determined in part by weather conditions. Only by having a large number of observations from many localities can the full extent of the effect of meteorological conditions on bird migration be determined. Your continued cooperation is greatly appreciated."

This statement from Mr. Chandler S. Robbins, the biologist in charge of the Migration studies, indicates exactly what is wanted and also shows that Ontario observers have already responded warmly to the appeal for cooperation. Their observations are a valuable contribution which we are sure they will be happy to maintain, and to extend by persuading other observers to join in this valuable piece of research.

R. M. Saunders

Editor.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
PATUXENT RESEARCH REFUGE
LAUREL, MARYLAND

COOPERATIVE MIGRATION STUDY - SPRING OF 1958

Once again we ask your cooperation in gathering information on the spring migration of certain species. Numerical estimates of abundance should be used insofar as possible. Please use a separate sheet for each locality. Records from prior years are now being put on punch cards; a list of yours will be sent you for verification.

STATE: _____ . COUNTY: _____ . LOCALITY: _____ . LAT: _____ LONG: _____

OBSERVER: _____ . ADDRESS: _____

Species	Code No.	First Migrant		Peak		Peak		Peak		Last Noted	
		Date	No.	Date	No.	Date	No.	Date	No.	Date	No.
Whistling Swan	180	58									
Canada Goose	172	58									
Mallard	132	58									
Pintail	143	58									
Marsh Hawk	331	58									
Killdeer	273	58									
Common Snipe	230	58									
Mourning Dove	316	58									
Common Nighthawk	420	58									
Chimney Swift	423	58									
Ruby-t. Hummingbd	428	58									
Yel-shaft Flicker	412	58									
Eastern Kingbird	444	58									
Gt Crest Flycatcher	452	58									
Eastern Phoebe	456	58									
E. Wood Pewee	461	58									
Barn Swallow	613	58									
Purple Martin	611	58									
Common Crow	488	58									
House Wren	721	58									
Catbird	704	58									
Brown Thrasher	705	58									
Wood Thrush	755	58									
E. Bluebird (male)	7664	58									
E. Bluebird (fem.)	7665	58									
Red-eyed Vireo	624	58									
Black& White Warber	636	58									
Yellow Warbler	652	58									
Myrtle Warbler	655	58									
Ovenbird	674	58									
American Redstart	687	58									
Redwinged Blackbird	498	58									
Baltimore Oriole	507	58									
Scarlet Tanager	608	58									
Rose-br. Grosbeak	595	58									
Indigo Bunting	598	58									
Am. Goldfinch	529	58									
Slate-col. Junco	567	58									
Chipping Sparrow	560	58									
White-crowned Sp.	554	58									
White-thrtd. Sp.	558	58									

Please send reports to Chandler S. Robbins, Patuxent Research Refuge, Laurel, Maryland, or to your Audubon Field Notes Regional Editor.

Chandler S. Robbins, James H. Zimmerman, John V. Dennis