

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club

158

November Meeting

Monday, November 3, 1958, at 8.15 p.m.
at the
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Speaker: Dr. R. M. Saunders

Subject: BEHIND THE BIRDS

Dr. Saunders needs no introduction to members of our Club. His monthly reports on highlights of his birding activities make each Newsletter a treat to look forward to. An authority on birds, a lover of all nature, Dr. Saunders is bound to paint vivid word-pictures of outdoor life in this lecture with the intriguing title.

NOVEMBER OUTING

Saturday, November 8, at 1.30 p.m. Geology in the Humber Valley. Meet at the Old Mill lower parking lot.

Leaders: Dr. Peter Peach and Dr. Walter Tovell.

F.O.N. CHRISTMAS CARDS

A limited supply of Christmas cards will be on sale in the rotunda at the November meeting. Mr. G. A. Scott of the Oshawa Naturalists' Club has produced an attractive design showing evening grosbeaks feeding on the seeds of the Manitoba maple --- a typical winter sight. You can support the work of conservation and nature education carried on by our Club and by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists by purchasing these cards. Price \$1.50 per dozen.

BOTANY GROUP

The Botany Group will meet on Thursday, November 20th, at 8 p.m., sharp, in the library of Eglinton Public School, Eglinton Ave. and Mt. Pleasant Rd. New members welcome.

Mrs. May Persson, Secretary
LE 6-0975

JUNIOR CLUB

The Junior Field Naturalists' Club will meet on Saturday, November 1st, at 10 a.m. in the Museum Theatre. The Bird Group will be in charge. There will be talks by junior members and two movies will be shown. Children between 8 and 16 may register at this meeting -- fee \$1.00 per year.

Don Burton, Director
RU 2-2155

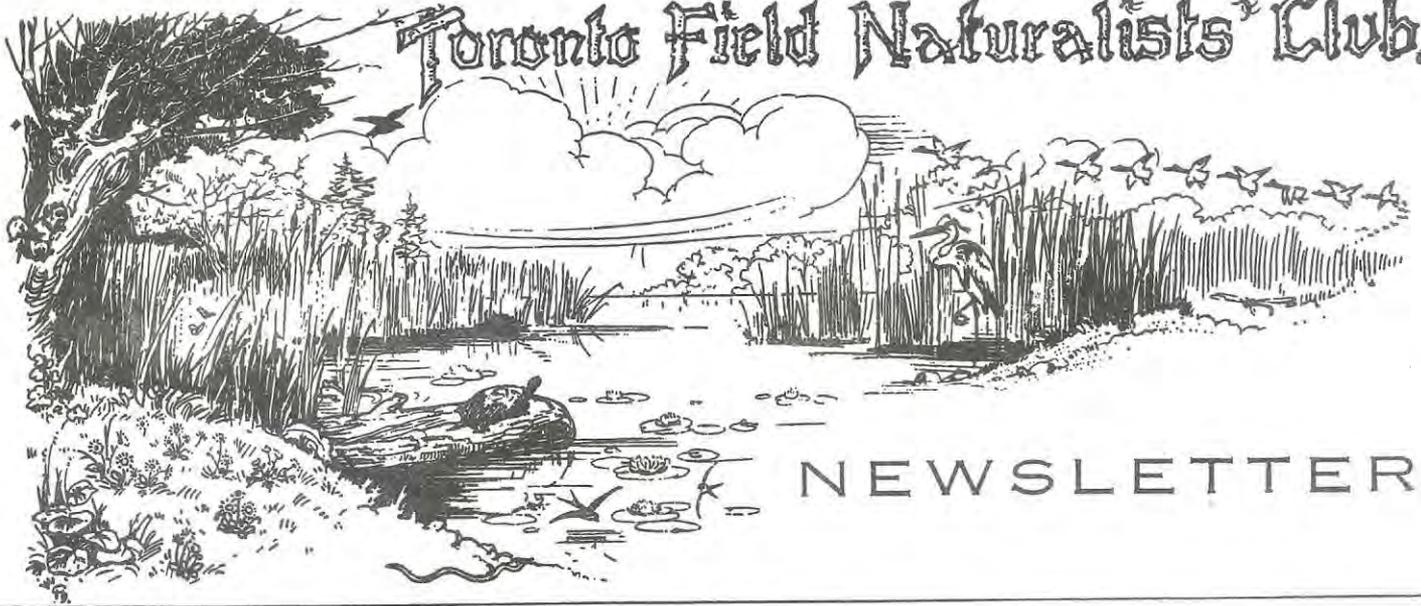
FEEES

Fees for the 1958-9 season are now past due. We will be glad to receive them through the mail or at the November meeting. The fee remains unchanged at \$2.00 per year.

President,
Dr. Walter Tovell

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

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



Number 158

OCTOBER, 1958

A visit to Algonquin Park at any time of year undoubtedly has its rewards for the naturalist. The month of August, however, does not at first thought offer as much attraction as periods both earlier and later in the year since so much of this month is a time of quiescence in bird and animal existence, especially for the birds since moulting is taking place in so many species. Consequently, not until this year did Mrs. Saunders and I discover that late August in the Park can be a most exciting time.

Intimations that this would be the case began within three or four miles after passing the western entrance on the afternoon of August 27th when Ann spotted a "large crow" that might be a raven on top of a dead tree. Stopping to get a better look caused the bird to quit its roadside perch. Still, as it planed across the road it left no question in our minds as to its identity for both its manner of flight and the loud, hoarse calls of Krruk, Krruk named it "raven" rather than "crow". Only a short way further on I called for another halt, having seen an interesting "bump" on a dead cedar tree. The bump, as I had suspected, was a woodpecker clinging tightly, motionless, to the trunk of the tree. And to our delight this woodpecker was a black-backed three-toed. Particularly noticeable as we gazed upward to the bird forty or fifty feet above our heads, was the black and white barring or "laddering" on the flanks.

In another couple of miles we had come to our first deer. Having provided ourselves with a few apples at Dorset we were ready to hand out the preferred largesse; how preferred we were able to tell at first encounter when our proffered apple immediately caused a deer that was being fed potato chips by a tourist to turn from that fare to ours. At the next stop we had to deal with a small buck,

its first year's horns just showing. He proved to be little experienced with handouts and had to have the apple broken up (bitten into pieces by me) before taking any, whereas the old buck panhandler we had first met had gobbled down a whole apple without demour. The young deer allowed Ann to pat it once between the horns but drew back when this was tried again, though remaining to finish the pieces of apple. The third pause for deer was transformed into a bird stop when we became suddenly aware of Canada jays watching and commenting upon the situation. Three of the whiskey jacks jabbering in the trees and darting out over the road were soon joined by a fourth. To us it was clear that these notorious camp followers were on the lookout for a free feed too so we left the deer to others and hastily uncovered our own picnic lunch to find tidbit to give to the jays. A box of chippers offered itself, and we tossed some of the crackers into the adjoining ditch. The idea that the birds were on the watch for something of the sort was immediately verified when two of them sailed across from the trees to telephone wires on our side, then dropped down to snatch a cracker each, withdrawing at once with their prizes to the shelter of the trees. We threw out more; back they came, and their companions too. Soon we had two jays right by the car, and three feet from where we stood. It certainly wouldn't take much, it seems, to have these birds feeding from one's hand. Two were in adult plumage and two in immature so this may well have been a family group. With their appearance we had seen three of the special birds of the Park before we arrived at the Nature Museum.

The Park Museum has become so popular that additional parking space has had to be provided. The popularity of this institution, so deserved, was fully demonstrated by the full ranks of parked cars and by the jam of people inside the Museum where it was almost as hard to move around as it would be on Labour Day at the C.N.E.! If anyone doubts the interest in wild creatures, in outdoors Nature, which is spreading in our cities, a day's watch at this beautifully-kept display will settle all his skepticism. If moreover he adds the knots of cars parked at the entrances to the Park Nature Trails, and the attendance records for the talks given in the Museum hall he will marvel at the eagerness that so many people exhibit to get back to the wild and to know something of the ways of wild creatures. All this is very heartening, and shows how ripe is the field for harvest.

From the Museum we went on to the spruce partridge grove where we changed into tramping clothes and plunged into the spruce wood in search of that elusive grouse. The tall spruces, the lush bracken and a beaver pond made a most attractive setting for our hunt. Pushing on through fern and spruce to a second beaver pond on the far side of the grove we found ourselves treading upon a veritable Christmas carpet of red and green, so luxuriant were the bunchberries everywhere. Along the edge of the pond the brilliant bunchberries gave way to the sparser bearberry whose gooseberry-sized orbs were just starting to flush. Above them white-tufted cotton grass nodded on bare stems whilst great skeleton trees reared inviting lookout-

points for fly-catching birds. Each one of these trees we scanned for an olive-sided flycatcher without having more success than getting our hopes raised two or three times. Well, if we couldn't find a quick-three-beers bird we did step off the beaver dam down beside the finest specimens of bottle gentian we had ever laid eyes on. Nearly hip-high in the tall growth they were coming up through, the plants bore several perfect indigo blooms, incredibly lovely in their green fastness. Had we not come across the dam at that particular place we would never have seen them for they could have been missed at a few feet, so dense was the surrounding growth. If the hunt for the spruce grouse ended, so far as that bird was concerned, with the finding of a single moulted feather, a beautiful brown feather with an orange spot at the end, it nevertheless brought us not only sights of many fascinating flowers and fruit but also the company briefly of another group of Canada jays. A queer, light chuckling sound that I took to be the assembly call of the grouse, and which I imitated in an attempt to bring the partridge into view, turned out to be one of the many calls of the inquisitive jay. The chuckling was soon succeeded by mutterings and jabber, and at last three jays came into view momentarily, slipping through the dense spruces beside us, no doubt giving us the once-over as they passed, and going quickly on.

We had made arrangements to stay at Killarney Lodge for the night, having been allotted the last accommodation available for that date. It proved to be a well-equipped tent situated on the innermost point, just above a tiny sand beach, quite the quietest and most secluded spot to be had, and very much to our taste. There was just time for a quick refreshing dip before the evening meal, which was well up to the usual high standard of this excellent establishment.

With an hour-and-a-half of light still at our disposal after our meal we asked Mr. Moore, the proprietor, about a place to see beaver. He told us to go to Kearney Lake where we would find a boat we could use and where beaver are numerous. Kearney Lake, we soon learned, is one of the places where a new campsite has been created by the Park authorities. Less populated than the sites along the main road, it was still quite full, and when we arrived at the edge of the lake we found the shore to our left full of boys in swimming. They were being supervised by two leaders out on the water who were sitting in the boat we were supposed to use. The shouting and splashing of this crowd hardly seemed to favor views of beaver, yet no sooner had I raised my binoculars and begun to sweep the lake than I caught sight of the head of a swimming beaver. Then there was a second beaver, both over near the western shore and out beyond the crowd about 200-250 yards. With all the noise I expected to hear the usual smack of tail on water, and to see the animals dive from view. Nothing of the sort occurred. The farther beaver did in fact dive but almost immediately reappeared with something in its mouth which it brought back to shore. There it climbed out onto the bank, dragging whatever it had up over an inclined mass of

grey debris, probably old branches, which made a runway leading to the bank where it disappeared. Moments later it was out again, waddling down the incline and taking to the water as if no disturbance was going on at all. Obviously the beaver of Kearney Lake, like other animals in the Park, are becoming so used to humans as to ignore them, even at their noisiest. Without the boat we had had as good a sight of beaver as we could reasonably have expected, indeed, a far better view than ordinarily since a beaver, upon sighting an intruder, usually sounds a general warning with its tail and vanishes for good.

After this observation, as there was still light to see fairly well, we drove on to the Opeongo Road and up it to the lake of that name. Alongside the last large beaver meadow, the Laurel Meadow, where there is in season as fine a display of sheep laurel as it is possible to see anywhere, a flycatcher on top of a cedar spire raised my hopes anew for the sight of an olive-sided. We stopped, only to find a kingbird instead. I was muttering about this when Ann said, "Listen." Drifting down from the ridge to the west came the weird, long-drawn-out howl of a timber wolf. Twice more it was repeated, then silence. Imitation brought no response. An exciting sound this that reminded us both of past summers in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains in Syria, and which called to mind vividly the night in a much more recent summer when Greer Roberts and I nearly fell out of a canoe on a little beaver pond not so far from the Park when wolves howled a hundred yards off our bow. We drove on to Opeongo, turned and came back, stopping again at the same spot. By now the full moon had risen, a vast silvery saucer above the eastern hill. Two swamp sparrows chipped strenuously beside the road. Then, all at once, we heard the sounds I had been hoping for all day; rather, instead of the quick-three-beers I had expected came now the high-pitched pip-pip-pip which the olive-sided uses as an alarm or warning. The bird kept well over on the eastern side of the meadow and could not be seen, but this insistent call is as characteristic of this bog flycatcher as the better-known song by which the "thirsty bird" is more widely acclaimed. The hearing of the olive-sided's voice in the moonlit dusk would in itself have made our trip, along with all that we had already seen and heard. Then, as so often happens, riches were added to riches, for as we stood on the silvered road, up on the western ridge welled out now, not the voice of one lone wolf but such a chorus as we had never known. Howls, bays and barks, yapping and yodelling rose to the sky in a gloriously melodious salute to the moon. To us it sounded like a dozen voices though probably it was no more than six or eight. Twice the chorus swelled, filling the air with the quivering excitement of the wild, warning creatures far and wide that hunters were on the prowl.

This was the climax of a tremendously thrilling day, yet even this was not to be the end for all night long the loons

offered their own untamed arias to the moon, accompanied once by the muted wails of yet another wolf pack on the ridge to the south of the Lake of Two Rivers. This was the north and the wild as it was, and as it should be. Long may it remain so, that we of the civilized, citted south may go to it to be refreshed and renewed by contact with the pristine, the primeval.

In the morning we got away after an early breakfast and were able to spend some time on the way out of the Park before meeting an engagement near Huntsville. We had two apples left, and so were on the lookout for deer, which we quickly found. As we were going up a long slope I spied a splendid buck with a fine set of antlers standing in under the trees well back from the highway. We wondered if he would come out. No fear -- as soon as we stopped he looked expectantly in our direction, then, when I held out my hand, he immediately started forward. Hardly had he reached the road when another car drew up. Children and adults piled out; cameras were readied. This is always likely to happen on the main road. As soon as one car stops for a deer a traffic jam of other interested people begins to form. The buck we had enticed out had difficulty trying to decide which car to go to, ours or the second arrival, but once more sight of the apples decided the matter. And the knowing old fellow had no trouble in handling apples whole with evident relish and dispatch. We left this experienced buck to the picture-takers. Another few miles and a dozen deer, and then out of the bush came a doe, followed by two spotted fawns. Ann, who had seen her first such fawn the day before, was greatly excited by this sight. We stopped. No apples remaining we had to get out yesterday's uneaten lunches. From this store we had perforce to offer the doe, which came eagerly to be fed, seeming very hungry, a ham sandwich! What's more she ate it, first the bread, then the meat, and looked around for more. Meanwhile the two fawns were wandering along the middle of the road uttering plaintive tooting calls, not unlike the notes of a loud-voiced nuthatch. We were distressed by this since the doe appeared to pay her young no attention; even when two cars came roaring down the road she did no more than glance at the complaining offspring. Happily, the drivers slowed, and threaded their way through the group with care. We felt, however, it was high time for us to leave the too-negligent mother, and to get on ere her yet callow youngsters should come to grief. Before we came out of the Park gate we had seen yet another spotted fawn, and 39 deer in all. Not much of the pristine or primeval in such sights and experiences as these but even this sort of contact with nature, with animals of the wild, has a real place and value in getting the uninitiated, children and the yet unknowing adult, interested in Nature's world. Even deer that eat ham sandwiches by the side of parked cars can be the means of arousing curiosity, invitations to new investigation and new knowledge.

One more stop before we left the Park, this time beside a bog swarming with migrant warblers and their varied associates,

produced for us not only a bewildering scurry of these south-bound travellers but also the nasal twang and brief sight of a brown-headed chickadee that had got temporarily mixed up with the crowd, a quick look at one pileated woodpecker dipping across the road, and the sound of another tapping stolidly just behind the first screen of undergrowth. Two ravens croaking in a tree overhead bade us farewell as we reached the vicinity of the gate, marking the end of a remarkably full and rewarding encounter with the natural life of our nearest great wild park.

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We are much indebted to Gerry Bennett, one of the most active birders in the Toronto area and member of this club, for the following enlightening article on the bird-watcher's language.

THE BIRD-WATCHER'S VOCABULARY

or

AVIANESE MADE EASY

by Gerry Bennett

Bird-watchers are a lot like human beings. Like human beings they have a language which is not well understood by other forms of life. The beginner, caught in the bewildering whirl of identifying birds, finds that he must also learn the dialect of his colleagues, a patois not hitherto defined, a medley of meaningful metaphors which I have come to call "Avianese".

I have long admired this colourful lingo, this fascinating phraseology molded, not of fantasies, but of honest truths garnished with the harmless hyperbole and served with the elasticity of exaggeration. It allows no lies. The birder may stretch the truth, but had better not break it, or verily he shall be drummed out of the corps. Avianese allows no bluffs, no boasts, no babble. Gradually, the beginner learns to adopt the language, to master its phrases and, as his life-list lengthens, so does his repertoire of Avianese.

After receiving a flood of requests (two post-cards in the past seven years), I'm outlining a compendium of phrases translated into English to assist the beginner in getting started in this world of the Idion's Delight. So don't wait. Why be a novice when, with a little imagination, the beginner may become a veteran, the veteran an expert and the expert a genius.

Vocabulary

<u>Avianese</u>	<u>English Translation</u>
We scoured the area.	We drove around the marsh twice.
Blue jays seem to be on the increase.	I was out twice this year and saw blue jays both times.
My latest record by 12 days.	I don't get out much in October.
Let's leave fairly early.	I'll call for you at 4.30 a.m.
I brought a light lunch.	Eleven sandwiches, a pie and a quart thermos of tea.
Active in the field.	Goes to Pelee every spring.
Thousands.	Hundreds.
Hundreds.	Dozens.
There's a lovely little spot just ahead.	We're coming to the Sewage Disposal Plant.
Authority.	Owns a Peterson, keeps records and subscribes to Field Notes.
Eminent authority.	Also reads Bent.
Time for lunch.	10.30 a.m.
Be sure to stop at Ormsby and look for a black rail.	There was one reported there in 1934. It was collected.
Tanagers were all over the place.	We saw three in Cedarvale and one near Aurora.
A wave.	Three birds or more.
A heavy flight.	Several waves.
An invasion.	Quite a few.
Birds are a lot scarcer this year.	Don't get around much any more.
Absolutely guaranteed.	Vaguely possible.
Several other observers saw it.	My neighbour and his wife were with us.
I don't see what else it could have been	I didn't see it very well.

We had a most enjoyable
outing.

Let's not try for a
big list.

Well seen.

A dandy look.

An amateur.

A list hound.

We sat in Holland Marsh until
midnight and heard two yellow
rails. It stopped raining at 10.

Let's quit after we get 120.

Only two trees between me
and the bird.

Well seen.

A list hound.

Me, and proud of it!

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Book Reviews

Outdoor Rambles. By Stuart L. Thompson. Illustrated by
Geoffrey Goss.
(Toronto, Longmans, Green & Co. 1958). pp. 147.
Price \$3.50.

As an all-round field naturalist and as one who has
laboured incessantly with ever-widening success to arouse public
interest in nature, no one has had a longer career in this
region nor become better known than the author of this book,
onetime president of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.

Stuart has always been particularly successful in
awakening young people to the lure of the wild and in drawing
the attention of those who have had little experience to the joys
and excitement of discovery in the world of nature. This he
has done in many ways: in summer camps, through leading hikes,
in countless public talks and lectures, in broadcasts and TV
sessions. Now, he has drawn on all these, and on his lifelong
journal, to give us this pleasant collection of Outdoor Rambles.

The Rambles are a distillation of Stuart's experiences,
selected and ordered so as to initiate the reader into the
pleasures of nature observation all through the year and in all
the provinces of that world of nature with which the author has
made himself so well acquainted. We watch the skunk cabbage
poke through the mud in spring, the snipe winnowing over the
marsh; we hear frogs singing, and examine a "dying lake"; we

take note of "wings in the dusk" -- nighthawks, whip-poor-wills, bats, flying squirrels, and we discover the thrill of following tracks, of listening to nature's sounds; we chase the seasons through the year until we have passed snow buntings and redpolls in wintry fields and have emerged once again into the verge of spring with chickadees whistling in the maple sugar bush. These are the sights and sounds that Stuart has pursued with unfailing zest all his life long, and which he has taught untold others to rejoice in. Here in these pages he is still doing the job he has done all these years, and doing it well -- initiating people into the many-sided, unending delights of the realm of Nature. In this endeavour Stuart is ably abetted by the illustrations of his friend, Geoffrey Goss, a newcomer to the field of nature illustration, and one whom we are pleased to see taking up this line. His scratchboard drawings do much to draw out the spirit of Stuart's writing and to set it vividly before the reader's eyes. The pleasing format, the fine printing and clearcut reproductions all add their part to the attraction of this certain-to-be-popular book.-- (R.M.S.)

Listening Point. By Sigurd F. Olson. Illustrated by Francis Lee Jaques. (New York, Knopf. 1958. In Canada, Toronto. McClelland and Stewart, Ltd.). Pp. x, 242. Price \$5.00.

Men and women in their daily round of busy-ness, of rushing from home to office and office to home, of washing dishes and cleaning floors, of signing memoranda, and of churning through rush-hour traffic, are apt to forget that all this endless and often rather meaningless activity is carried on in a world that is full of beauty and wonder and mystery. To know this it is necessary to take time off from all fretting busy-ness in order to look and listen, to see and hear, to think and meditate and dream. We ask, How can it be done? And yet, in each one of us is buried a need for contact with this greater world, a yearning that will not be erased for a glimpse into the mystery of life and for a recovery of that sense of wonder that is natural to man, without which he is a restless, unsatisfied being.

To that need and quest is dedicated this new book by Sigurd Olson, who has already opened the way into the world of mystery for so many with his volume, The Singing Wilderness. Geologist and biologist, lifelong traveller of wilderness trails, it is natural that Olson should find the entrance to this world through the gateway of nature. In the beauty of a falling leaf, the perfection of a rose quartz crystal; in the mystery of the spawning of the eelpout and of the bobcat trail, he finds the long past of man and of the earth, he discovers the setting of human life and history. In the joy that lights

the eyes of three little girls seeking pussywillows at the break of spring he sees the native feeling of wonder and delight that is the endowment of all if only they can retain some hold on this simple child-like faith. And they can, if they will but maintain a "Listening Post" somewhere. Many have such a place. All others can have, if they will. It does not need to be a lone point on a far northern lake as it is for Olson; it may be anywhere, even, as he points out, a scrap of beach a few feet from Chicago's Lakeshore Drive, where one can look out over the wide expanse of a Great Lake. He who seeks in truth will surely find his own Listening Point, his entrance way into the world of beauty and wonder and mystery, the world which has always been and always will be.

Like his previous work, Listening Point is a gem of a book, of interest to a wide reading public, precious to the naturalist and to anyone who relishes the feel of the "wild". Attractive as are its pages they are made all the more alluring by the drawings of Francis Lee Jaques who has the remarkable ability of making it seem as though you could tramp the woods and hear the birds in his magnificent black-and-whites.--(R.M.S.)

The Snakes of Ontario By E. B. Shelley Logier. (Toronto. University of Toronto Press. 1958).
Price \$4.95.

This book, The Snakes of Ontario, by E. B. Shelley Logier, was written for children and teen-agers but many senior herpetologists will profit from its story. Like all good juvenile literature the book is written down to its audience but is a straightforward account of these reptiles in the Province. Young people, in this day and age, are lucky, for their questions are answered in a clear readable prose and by the foremost authority in this field in Canada.

The illustrations include two coloured plates by Mr. Logier. The frontispiece is of the eastern garter snake in its natural habitat, a very excellent water colour that is accurate in every detail. The black-and-white illustrations are, also, the work of the author, but there are two photographs that were taken by Hugh Halliday.

The herpetologist will find the range maps of each species of definite value.

A map of the Province shows where each kind of snake occurs and where it will be found. A small insert map of North America shows the complete range of the species. The maps

are close enough for comparison and this feature will make the book a "must" for every snake man in Ontario. Incidentally, I think this is the first time that the ranges have been completely mapped and I am sure that it is the first time that we have had a comparison map of the total range.

The book opens with a good account of snakes in general, starting with "What is a snake" and going on to "Fear of snakes". The next section is a good account of the harmless snakes, each form having a short statement of its size and structure, colour, habits and habitat and distribution in Ontario. This statement is well illustrated with drawings, photographs and maps. The venomous snakes have their own section with the same carefully detailed accounts as have the harmless snakes. Following this is a section on snake books. Eight appendices give various matters that could not be included with the species accounts. A glossary, a careful delineation of snake bite and its treatment, of collecting and preserving snakes, and a key to the kinds found in this region, are a partial list of this part of the book.

Quoting from Mr. Logier's book: "Our debt to these despised and persecuted creatures is never forced upon our attention, for the simple reason that the pest animals that they destroy never annoy us afterwards, neither do the teeming millions of offspring which they would have produced had they lived. We remain blissfully unaware of the fact that they act as a screen between us and the possible damage of swarms of destructive little enemies. When such screen animals as snakes are killed off because of our stupid dislike of them, and outbreaks of pests occur, eating up our crops and stored products, and girdling our fruit trees, we lose millions of dollars; we also spend large sums of money on artificial controls, not always very successful."

A reviewer must find some fault and I think that the range maps should have been larger, in fact, the Ontario ones should have been full page size and the North American maps, with the full range of the species, seem to me to have needed the opposite page.

A word about the author. Mr. E. B. Shelley Logier came to Canada from Ireland in 1906 and joined the staff of the Royal Ontario Museum in 1915. He was made Associate Curator of Ichthyology and Herpetology at the Museum in 1950, a position he still holds. He is the author of several books on reptiles and has contributed many papers to the scientific journals. -- (G. C. Toner)

R. M. Saunders,

Editor.