

# Toronto Field Naturalists' Club

164

May Meeting  
Monday, May 4, 1959, at 8.15 p.m.  
at the  
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

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MR. MURRAY JOHNSON, of the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, will give an address on the work of the Authority, referring particularly to the Conservation Areas, some of which we will be visiting on our spring outings. Illustrated with slides.

This will be our annual business meeting, with presentation of reports, election of officers, etc.

F.O.N. Camp - What better holiday for a nature-lover than two weeks of informal, comfortable living, with the opportunity to observe and study nature under expert guidance? When? - June 27 to July 11. Where? - Billie Bear Lodge, near Huntsville. Accommodation is limited, and reservations are being made almost daily, so if you are interested please contact Mrs. J.B. Stewart, 21 Millwood Rd., HU 9-5052, or the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 187 Highbourne Rd., HU 9-4694, for further information.

## Nature

Week-End Camp- From Friday evening, May 15, through to Monday afternoon, May 18, at Ryerson Beach Camp on Lake Erie, near Normandale. A camping week-end for adults with instruction in almost every branch of natural history. Sponsored by the Hamilton Naturalists' Club and the Community Programmes Branch of the Ontario Department of Education. Further information may be obtained by writing to the Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Main Post Office, Box 384, Hamilton, Ont.

Junior Club - The Toronto Junior Field Naturalists will meet on Saturday, May 2, at 10 a.m. There will be elections, and Flight Magazine will be distributed to all members. Two movies will be shown - "Australia's Coral Reef" and "World in a Marsh". Visitors welcome.

Changing Your Address? - If you move during the summer, please don't forget to notify us.

President -

Dr. Walter Tovell

Secretary - Mrs. H. Robson,  
49 Craighurst Ave.  
Toronto 12  
HU 1-0260



Number 164

April, 1959

What a contrast in seasons, and what a difference in a birdwatcher's experience from year to year! He may go to the same places and at the same time of year but let him beware of predicting that he will see the same birds or have the same impressions year after year. This lesson, so well known to the experienced observer, was nonetheless so emphatically driven home this year that I feel that it is worth handing on to the readers of the Newsletter. This I will do by simply setting down one after the other two journal accounts of my annual spring trip to Long Point for swans that of 1959 and that of 1951. In conjunction they tell the story.

(1959)

Though Greer Roberts, John Nettleton and I set off for Long Point this morning (March 27) at 8.00 from my house with snow still falling, after a storm that had laid six or seven inches of soggy blanket on the ground, we felt that the chances were good that clearing weather would greet us before we got to Port Rowan. And so it did, for we never got there at all! No indeed; the further south we went the worse became the storm. So severe was wind and blowing snow beyond Stoney Creek that time and again we had to stop or slow to be sure we were still on the road. Solid white sheets of snow sweeping off pasture fields made it impossible to see a yard ahead. Fortunately traffic was not great along this stretch, for it was terrifying to see a car suddenly shoot out of the white fog right beside us, a few feet from our hood. Yet on Number 3 highway, when we reached it, the situation was even worse, for there cars were numerous, coming in strings. Since no one dared try to pass, and threatening at every moment to break into our lane as drifts caused drivers to veer or half-lose control. Nor did John have any better assurance than oncoming drivers that he would be able to prevent us from ending smack up against one of the other cars or in the ditch. We saw over three dozen vehicles that had slid off the road, and nine serious accidents on this trip. In one place three large transport trucks had all turned over, and in another a bus had struck a car sheering off the side, had

snapped a telephone pole bringing down the wires across the highway, and had ended head down against a fence.

The nearer we came to Lake Erie the worse it was. Several times we thought to turn back, then pushed on a little further. We reached Simcoe, eating our lunch in the car beside a parking meter in the main street because we dared not edge off the road elsewhere. And even here we had trouble getting started again because of the depth of snow. We drove on towards Saint Williams, believing now we might get through as the snowfall had stopped, and the clouds were lifting. But the wind was still whooping it up, and shortly after making the turn towards Vittoria we were halted by the sight of cars stuck in a drift ahead; even as we paused we could feel our own car slide into deeper snow and the wheels begin to spin. Seeing us stop one of the men who had been trying to push a car in front came hurrying towards us. When he arrived he said there were four cars stuck in the drift, and that we would all have to help each other if we wanted to get through. He was bringing someone home from hospital, so we three joined the others to see what could be done. Once out of the car the wind sanded us with whirling snow, blinding and freezing at the same time. With six men helping we managed to push and lift the car -- an Austin -- through the drift. Then we worked on a heavier car, and got it on a bit. By now a car from the west decided to get around us, and, as we all expected, merely succeeded in getting thoroughly sunk in the ditch. He couldn't get out without a tow truck. Other cars arrived from Simcoe way, only to have their drivers decide that there was no getting through. They backed out the way they came, and when I saw that John and Greer, having got free, were doing the same, I walked back to join them. We had started with four cars stuck. Nine cars were in the drift now, and nothing could be done until a plough should come.

We drove back to Simcoe, discussing what to do, and finally deciding to try the road from Delhi south to Saint Williams. This we did only to end up a mile from Delhi faced with another drift in which a truck and a car were stuck. And on the way back along Number 3 from Delhi we saw the nasty accident involving the bus and a car, this just at the juncture of the third road down to Saint Williams. That sight decided us finally to go back home if we could get there for we certainly couldn't get to Port Rowan.

Turning at Simcoe we came up Number 24 to Brantford and then to Hamilton. Happily the snow had been less, the traffic heavier, and the ploughs more successful along this route. We got back to Hamilton Bay around 3.00, with the sun beginning to peep through the clouds, so we turned at Aldershot light to go down to the bay. At Lasalle Park we did not venture down the hill since a quick survey from the road showed that it was not worth the risk, for no swans were to be seen and almost no ducks. Swans we did find, at last, near the east end of the park, 28 in all, near shore, and nicely visible in the now bright sun. John was pleased to see them; so were Greer and I, for though we had seen a larger number last Saturday near this same place, it was a comfort not to be totally defeated on this "spring" swan jaunt. After a chat with Bob Elstone, who came along while we were there, we drove on home, arriving back at my house, to my family's amazement, at 5.00.

This was our annual "Long Point spring swan trip," the first time we have ever been prevented from reaching our objective because of roads made unpassable by a blizzard and drifting snow! And this at the end of March along the Lake Erie shore!!!

All in all it was a frightening experience. The three of us were only too glad to be home without serious mishap after all the accidents we saw, and all the potential ones that almost materialized. If any one believes that Old Man Winter doesn't have some mean wallops to hand out, even when you think him on his way, they should have been along on this trip. There were many times when I thought he was going to deliver us a knockout blow.

But what of the birds? We saw few, of course, and most of those heading for cover. Yet, when we were stuck in the big drift near Vittoria, with the snow sifting by, the wind whistling, our faces freezing -- even then there came to our ears the merry trilling song of the horned lark, indeed of several of these heralds of spring, for not less than a dozen were chasing each other up and down the adjoining field, singers bursting with the spirit of spring just as if all this wintry scene were somewhere else, in another world. No, spring, the time of new birth, would not be stopped; the spirit of regeneration would not be downed. Winter might have its fling but it was surely a last fling. The season of death was passing, the new life coming to the fore. And this, we could not forget, was Good Friday.

(1951)

A long line of flashing white forms vanishing westward in a soft, grey-green sky, such is my chief memory of yesterday (March 31). One line followed another; V's and skeins and threads of great white birds. All day long, over bay and marsh, the procession went on. Sometimes there were a dozen groups in the sky at once; at others only a wild, gentle music falling with the rain told us of the approach of an unseen flock. Heralded by music, passing with easy grace, disappearing into the half-seen west, bound to goals scarcely known, the swans are at once our most impressive and our most mysterious birds.

Many passed overhead leaving us admiring below. Others, however, could not resist the compelling invitations raised to their ears by their brethren on the pools. With each line the swans feeding among the reeds set up a musical clamor. Beginning with low muttering it rose to an excited crescendo as the oncoming line neared the pools; a thrilling response reached our ears from above as the flying birds returned the salute. It was a symphonic poem, played on woodwinds and muted brasses to human ears; to the swans, it was the music of life, lived freely and without fear.

Many of the flocks called their greetings to the ones below and passed on. Others could not withstand the beckoning calls. When this happened a line would halt, the flock would become a mass of circling birds, usually with one bird a little aside. This one, I take it, was the leader, and when the leader had surveyed the lay of the land, and was satisfied, some sort of signal was given. Followed by the flock, now separated into small groups -- two, three, four -- the leader would circle lower and lower until with black feet and legs extended he would drop feet foremost into the pool. Wings would flap slowly and heavily, acting as a break in the landing. As a rule the whole procedure was so exactly timed and performed that hardly a splash resulted. With the flock down, quiet ensued until the next flock appeared, or until some of the feeders decided to leave.

It was always possible to tell that a departure was impending. A group

among the birds on the pool would begin a low tooting, unlike the clamor of greeting. Steadily it would mount in intensity and tempo until the whole group would suddenly raise their great white wings, rise up onto the surface of the water, patter heavily for several yards, flapping all the while, until the broad white wings were able to lift the great white bodies into the air. Then, once more, they were the graceful creatures of the sky, whose lives are a compound of freedom, music, and grace.

What I have been describing took place at pools along the causeway that crosses Long Point Marsh. So confiding were the swans that scores fed and called, circled and descended, flew up and returned, lived their ways before our eyes within a hundred yards. At times many of the birds were as close as a hundred feet. Truly, some of the flocks that responded in the sky to the calls from below did not like the look of the many humans -- all birdwatchers -- and their automobiles drawn up on the causeway beside the pools. Often the snowy-winged beauties would plane around and around over our heads, calling loudly, clearly desirous of joining their kin but unable to make up their minds about the safety of doing so in face of the human horde. Some gave it up and reformed their lines to go on to the west. Some circled lower and lower, stretched out their legs preparatory to settling, only to rise up once more when but a few feet from the water. As a rule these braver ones would eventually come down though they might make several tries before deciding. All this beautiful indecision gave us onlookers the most splendid opportunity to see not only the loveliness of the swans' manoeuvres but also to get a glimpse of the working of their minds. Thank God there were no gunners present. I think I would have shot anyone who raised a firearm against such beauty. I only hope that safe nearness to a group of people in this place will not make these wonderful birds less wary of other men.

Where were the flocks that streamed across the sky coming from? This was a question frequently posed among the observers. They may have come from the great concentration at Turkey Point Marsh across the bay, or from marshes and bays further out on the point which extends a long way in that direction. No doubt some of them did. Many, it seemed to me, approached the causeway from such an angle that it appeared more likely that they had come in across the lake. In that event they could have travelled from the Finger Lakes region of New York State, from Presqu'ile Point or Pymatuning Reservoir in Pennsylvania, or even directly from the Susquehanna flats on Chesapeake Bay where they congregate in migration. Such long flights would not be more than ordinary for these voyageurs and it would account for some flocks being ready to come down to rest and feed at Long Point Bay. This place is, in fact, one of the chief pausing places on the migration route of the swans from the Atlantic coast to the Arctic tundra.

In the pools along the causeway there were hundreds of swans early in the morning. Unquestionably some of these birds came from the Turkey Point concentration for there would have to be a good deal of dispersal over the bay area for the feeding of such a crowd. Also, we could see much coming and going of flocks over the marshes, as well as the obvious passing of flocks bound for more distant points to the west. The migrant flocks usually were higher up than the ones that were going from one part of the marsh to another. How long any group of swans stays at a resting place like Long Point Bay is unknown. This, no doubt, depends on weather conditions, date of arrival, and food supplies. Some may stay for only a few days, some stay for two or three weeks probably, others for longer. At any rate, the concentration, though fluctuating in number, tends to

build up to a peak, then to disperse. The height of the flocking at Long Point Bay is reached around the first of April which is the reason for our annual visit to the area. In other years we have been delighted to see a score or a few hundred swans, any number that appeared. That was until we found by accident last year that we were overlooking the main point of congregation, namely Turkey Point Marsh at the northeast end of Long Point Bay. This year we made straight for that spot upon our arrival on Saturday afternoon (March 31st).

Twice our efforts to get to the right spot were balked by muddy roads. Finally, about five o'clock, we hit exactly the right place near the end of the Forestville road. There a farm stands on a low ridge. With the farmer's permission we walked through his yard and behind his barn. At that point we were 30 to 40 feet above the marsh and had an unbroken vista across its whole extent. The entire area is a sea of cattails dotted with open pools except near the lakeshore side where a large stretch of water reaches in from the bay. Here were the bulk of the swans. What a sight! They were massed so thickly that it seemed as though snow lay over most of the water area. We counted a hundred, then estimated the rest. The total seemed unbelievable so I counted a thousand and estimated again. The result was the same. Incredible as it may seem, we all agreed that no less than 10,000 whistling swans lay before us!

We were approximately a mile to a mile-and-a-half from the chief aggregation. Even so their calling sounded like a loud chorus. With a favoring wind this did not seem so strange. Yet, the next morning at dawn when we came out of the hotel at St. Williams we could still hear the chorus -- and then we were a good three miles distant.

For an hour on Saturday afternoon we surveyed the multitude. There was much coming and going, flocks arriving from the lake side, others shifting from the main flock to the pools in the cattails where feeding was going on. On a grey afternoon, with a hint of snow in the sharp westerly breeze, we could easily imagine that this was not Turkey Point on Lake Erie but some distant lookout on the tundra on an afternoon in June just after the arrival of the swans at their breeding grounds. The only thing wrong with that dream, I suppose, would be that the birds would be dispersed there, divided into pairs and occupying territories. No, this concentration is a phenomenon of the spring migration, and we were standing in one of the few places in the world where something as wonderful as this might be seen.

On Sunday (April 1) we learned that the local game warden had made an estimate comparable to our own. Also he told us that this was the largest concentration ever known to occur in the area. That will mean, of course, since there has been some sort of official supervision. Such a great sight is a tribute to the effectiveness of protective legislation properly enforced for a generation ago the whistling swans were so low in number that ornithologists were worried for their future. With protection they have fared so well that they have increased perhaps fivefold in a generation. The total number of the swans wintering on the Atlantic coast is now given as 16,000. They were down to a few thousand (3 or 4) at their lowest. These swans are the Atlantic coast birds so we were looking at well over half of their number.

As I gazed on the snowy horde I thought to myself, this is a place that ought surely to be made a sanctuary, if for no other reason than to give still further assurance to the future of this magnificent bird.

The impressive massing of the swans totally overshadowed all other birds though they were present in huge numbers. Indeed, as usual, thousands of waterfowl dotted Long Point Bay. In the pools where the swans were feeding, baldpates, blacks, lesser scaup and others associated on amical terms with their noble distant cousins, feeding altogether on the most intimate basis. The swans never showed any annoyance at the presence of the ducks but occasionally a swan would make a pass at one of its own kind. Arching its long neck, and flapping its wings, it would thrust forward its head (probably hissing, though this could not be heard), and menace its companion. The other swan might reply in kind so that a squabble, short-lived and without ferocity, took place. Once or twice three or four swans became involved in such a quarrel, when much flapping and splashing, and a certain amount of chasing resulted. In this they acted like their lesser associates, the ducks. Whether or not it was a dispute over feeding, or a mating fight we could not say. Such disturbances were rare.

Had the swans not so wholly absorbed our attention the enormous flock of starlings, that swarmed over the cattails like a vast army of gnats or mosquitoes just before sundown on Saturday, rising and falling in a misty black cloud before coming to rest as a chattering host among the cattails, might have been our most impressive sight on the trip. Again the 15,000 red-winged black-birds that also found refuge in the cattail wilderness that night; the thousand coots, black balls bouncing placidly on the bay; the several thousand canvas-backs; the half-thousand of redheads -- and all the others -- any of these could well have commanded our admiration on any other occasion. This time they were simply others among many. In all we saw 63 kinds of birds during the trip -- five of the birds seen were bald eagles -- but why count up the list, for this was swan week. Swans over all! To think that we stopped at Dundas Marsh on the way down as an insurance against failure at Long Point. There were 186 swans on the marsh behind McMaster University, a larger number than I had ever seen at Hamilton before. Facetiously I said, "This is an hors-d'oeuvre!" How little I knew at that moment that in a brief two hours we would be standing looking over Turkey Point Marsh, gazing in wonder on 10,000 swans.\* So we close this account, where we began, with swans. If this be April Fool's Day, let us have it many times.

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\* Ed. Note: An even greater concentration, 14,000 in number, was reported by the Department of Lands and Forests personnel, as being present at Long Point Bay at the end of March, (1959) just after the big storm that prevented us from reaching our goal.

We are very happy to bring to the readers of the Newsletter the following delightful account prepared by Miss Ethel Bunker. The Bunkers' experiences at their home, Happy Nook, at Cherrywood, with this inimitable little screech owl, raised from a ball of fluff, make a charming and informative naturalist's tale, and one that will be all the more fascinating to members of this club since so many of them saw Elvis in person.

Elvis, The Happy Nook Owl

By Miss Ethel Bunker

It was a nice Saturday in June when Alf, my brother, came home with a new station wagon. Of course I wanted a ride in it before he left for work at 4 p.m. Just after dinner the phone rang and I answered. It was Susan, a little neighbour of ours living about two miles along the road. She said, "Could you please come right away and get a little bird I have for you?" "Thank you," I said, "I'll be along as quick as I can." Now was my chance of a ride in the new station wagon, so I called Alf and asked him if he would like to take me. It was not long before we were on our way.

We met Susan and Joe, her father, along the road. Susan had a small salt box, and in it underneath some Kleenex was a little ball of white fluff little larger than a golf ball. To my surprise it was alive. Susan had found it in the grass beside the road and taken it home. It was easy to see that this was an owl a day or two old, but where was the nest it had come from? Susan and her father had hunted but could not find a nest anywhere so she had phoned me. When I asked her what she would like me to do with the owl she said, "Feed it and keep it for a pet." I thanked her, and said I would do my best, so away we went home with the owl.

Alf went to work and there was I with a little owl wanting food and I had not any idea what to give it. Having a good number of books about birds in the house I started trying to find out what owls feed on. Most of the books gave good descriptions of owls and their food, but not of baby owls or how they are fed. I could not tell what kind of an owl it was but I knew it could not eat live mice, minnows, frogs, insects and earthworms since it was so small it could not stand up.

Moreover, this bird needed food now, not when I could catch it. Since this was Saturday afternoon Alf would not be home again before Monday noon. I did not know what to do when suddenly I remembered that years ago when Alf had a baby chick that did not feed well he would bring it to me and I would keep it in a little box and feed it with hard-boiled egg until it was well enough to feed with the other chicks again. I thought possibly what was good for baby chicks might be good for baby owls, so I tried and it was. Baby owl would take it from between my thumb and finger while I held it in the other hand.

Now it would eat how was I going to give it a drink? With a chick I'd take hold of the head and put the beak into water then lift up the head

and after a few times it would drink without any help. Baby owl was different; it could not stand yet, and its beak was bent down, so I had to find another way. I dipped my finger in water and put it to its beak but the owl would not take it. I tried an eye-dropper but it kept its beak closed and shook the water off. I thought, well this is just a baby not able to drink yet.

Hard-boiled egg was good food but I thought it would like a little variety so I tried pablum, wheat-germ, and bread crumbs. I tried them both dry and moistened with milk, and even put a little sugar on them, but it would not take any of these.

After a few days my sister in the city phoned the Department of Ornithology at the Royal Ontario Museum to try and get advice for me. At last she got in touch with the Biology Club and three boys came out to see the owl. Their advice was a great help to me and gave me hope of raising it. I learned it was a screech owl and must have live food, especially mice, minnows, frogs, insects, caterpillars, young rabbits and squirrels! If I could not always get food for it I could substitute with minced meat or liver, but it must have mice to provide the hair to form pellets, since it must cast up pellets to eliminate undigested food waste. All owls do.

Off I went to the hardware shop and bought half a dozen mouse traps. Being very fortunate in living next door to a mink ranch I baited my traps, took them over and set them where Jock, who owned the ranch, said I most likely would catch mice. Next morning over I went wondering what I would do with half a dozen mice to feed a baby owl. When I looked at the traps not one had been touched, so I still had no food for the owl. I had to have food so I picked up the traps, set them in another shed, and had the same results. Jock took pity on the owl and gave me some mink food, which was minced whale meat and chicken heads. I was pleased to get it. A little mixed with some hard-boiled egg made a good meal for the owl. Satisfied then, it lay on its belly and slept. When Alf came home he went over to the fish pond and Joe, Susan's father, gave him a pailful of minnows for the owl. Susan was very pleased to know we could feed it. Now with the mink food and live fish, and perhaps a mouse or two sometimes, the owl would not starve.

At last Alf solved the hair problem. He brought me some home from the barber shop, which I cut up and mixed with the food. A day or two later I picked up the owl to feed it and it stretched itself up and opened its mouth wide as if yawning a couple of times, and sure enough up came a pellet all covered with human hair. All my worries were over. I had found a substitute for mice.

In a few weeks I had located a few places where I could catch mice and so was able to have the real thing. Then the neighbouring children started catching them for me as did some grownups. One woman sent me 15 mice from Oshawa.

At first the owl lived in a berry box with Kleenex for a bed but I soon found it would not settle but was restless. I thought it was cold so I covered it with Kleenex and then it would lie there and sleep until it was hungry again. All this food it was eating had to be cut up and rolled in

hair unless I was lucky enough to have a mouse, or a piece of rabbit or squirrel.

In about a week you could see the tips of the wings showing feathers. Our owl was getting big for its bed and lifting its head up by itself. After ten days it tried to stand on its feet but would soon fall over again. Fluff showed gray across the breast now and on the head. In two weeks the berry box was too small so we gave it a large cardboard box with straw. The owl soon began to scramble about in this but when it lay down it whimpered if you did not cover it up. If anyone stepped near the box it would peek out from under its blanket. Each day you could see a difference with more feathers showing. It was more active, getting on to the sides of the box, walking about and picking at the straw.

I would take the owl in the box and put it in the shade of a tree while I was working. It seemed to like being out of doors. One day I put it on a shrub near where I was sitting and it soon started walking along the branch. When it was three weeks old I was standing near the back door with it on my hand, admiring the markings on the wings as it was stretching them, when it made a sudden flap and glided to the ground about ten feet away. A few days later it flew off the ground into a tree to a height of about eight feet.

Now the owl could fly I wondered how long it would be before it could catch its own food. I was getting a good supply of mice but they were all dead, and it would not touch them without them being cut up. It would take minnows, grasshoppers, moths, caterpillars alive, always taking them head first and squeezing the head with its beak for a few seconds before swallowing them whole. One morning I tied a thread to the front legs of a dead mouse and dragged it through the grass past our owl. It watched the performance but made no attempt to catch the mouse. I held the mouse up close and then the owl took it, but only hopped about with it and did not try to eat it.

It would play with your fingers now or a piece of wood and small children would lie on the grass and let it play with their fingers, and it never hurt them. However, it would not let anyone pick it up; if they tried it flew up into a tree.

Ear tufts were showing by now, and when the owl put them up and looked at you with its yellow eyes there was no doubt this was a real screech owl.

When I worked in the garden it would come to me and was pleased to have any grubs, worms or beetles I offered. One day I put it on a branch in the shade and when I looked again the owl was in the sun with both wings and tail spread out, eyes closed, having a real sunbath. This was a surprise to me as I had always thought of owls as night birds, preferring the dark.

At five weeks old our little owl earned a name. The reason was that it would stand and rock its head from side to side, then its body, then bow low and stretch up again as tall as it could. When we laughed at it, it would do this all over again. So we said, "This is really rock and roll. We'll call him Elvis, after Elvis Presley."

About this time we used to get some good laughs at Elvis, when he saw

something he did not like, for instance. A hawk, a crow, a plane, or a person with bright red clothing, would cause him to stretch as tall and thin as he could, and to squint his eyes and watch whatever it was pass by. This was really very funny. Another antic that pleased the children, as long as he was not too close, was when he showed how brave he was. He would crouch low, let his wing feathers down on the ground and stare fiercely at you, then take a slow step or two toward you and make a sharp loud "Woof," very much like a dog. These antics made him the center of attraction with visitors and he seemed to like it. If he felt very friendly he would let them stroke his feathers or tickle him around the neck and he would blink his eyes contentedly at them.

Jock gave me a large mink pen which we set up under an apple tree so Elvis could spend his time out there instead of being shut up in the house. The children could come then and bring grasshoppers and worms for him as they liked.

At six weeks old he would follow me through the orchard to the garden and then hop around where he liked while I worked. He would always fly to me for protection if anything frightened or startled him. One day when he was frightened I picked him up and was holding him on my hand after a plane had gone by when he flew into the top of a large elm tree. When I finished hoeing I went around the tree and called Elvis but could not see him. As I passed a small shrub I heard a little whimper and there he was nearly touching my shoulder so I picked him up and carried him home.

Alf and my nephew Alfred were going to Haliburton for a few days and wanted me to go too, but who would look after Elvis? Alf said, "We will take him too," and we did! We got a small pen from Jock and a box and took a couple of dead mice and a piece of squirrel and away we went. At meal time we would let Elvis out on the ground or in the shrubs and give him some food. At West Guilford the two Alfreds decided to go fishing so while they fished I gave Elvis a treat on the lawn of a school nearby. As I let Elvis out of his pen, a boy passing by on a bicycle stopped and came over to see what I had. He looked at the owl and asked questions; Elvis looked at him then started rocking and rolling. The boy laughed and the more the boy laughed, the more Elvis rocked and rolled. The boy wanted me to give him the owl and when I said, No, the owl could not feed itself yet, the boy said he would feed him. When I still said, No, he offered me a dollar. When I said his mother would not want an owl around he hopped on his bicycle and went to ask her. Soon he was back with four more boys but when I would not let them have Elvis they caught grasshoppers and fed him until the two Alfreds had finished fishing. After being away three days Elvis was pleased to get back to a large pen and fresh food and minnows.

His feathers were growing fast now. Dark bands were showing on his breast and his ear tufts were prominent when he erected them. At last he would take a whole mouse and tear it to pieces himself, always taking the head first. His minnows I would drop on the floor and while they wiggled he would pounce on them and if he missed them it was fun to see him back away from them, then try again. When he caught one he always held it with his foot until it stopped flipping and then ate it head first. About this time he would spend a lot of time watching the minnows swimming in the washtub so I thought he would like to fish for himself. He did. I would put about two inches of water in a

shallow dish and a few fish and at first he would stand on the edge and try to catch them. He soon learned to go right into the water and get them and then he would have a good bath until there was no water left in the dish and it would take a lot of shaking of feathers before he could fly off the floor.

One morning a neighbour phoned to say Elvis was in her cellar and I tried to tell her this couldn't be as Elvis was in his pen under the apple tree but she would insist so I asked her to close the door and I would ask Alf to go over. Alf came home with an adult screech owl; he banded it and kept it in the dark to quieten down then put it in the pen with Elvis. Elvis looked at this owl for a short time then put his wings down and crouched low and gave one big loud "Woof." The adult owl looked frightened and backed into a corner, then Elvis gave a big spring right at the owl. The owl did not move so Elvis backed up and tried again with the same result. As I was afraid of Elvis getting hurt Alf let the owl go and it flew into a pine tree nearby. About two hours later when we let Elvis out he flew into the pine tree and hunted for the owl.

We liked watching Elvis catch his own insects for no matter how small they were he would catch them with his feet and then hold them up to his mouth without squashing them. At last I had a trap to catch live mice and the first morning there were two in it. In trying to put them in a tin so Elvis could catch them one fell on the floor. Elvis missed it and it got under a pile of wood but Elvis waited and got it later himself so now I knew he could catch mice as well as insects.

At the end of August we had some very nice weather with moonlight nights; Elvis would not want to come in at night and I didn't blame him. One evening I called him and he would come but as soon as I tried to pick him up he would fly away again. At first I thought it fun, then I saw another screech owl on the roof of the house so I watched them and they were having a grand time chasing each other so I left Elvis to enjoy himself. Next morning when we got up he was sitting on his perch waiting for breakfast.

In September we had a Field Naturalists' Club hike here and many people were interested to see Elvis. In June we had had the same group here the day after I got Elvis so they were pleased to see him again. He got tired, however, of too many persons trying to pick him up so he disappeared. After the people had gone I called but he did not come. In the morning he was sitting up near the roof in the barn and stayed there all day.

During September and October we were busy picking and packing apples in the orchard. Elvis was the overseer and would be up in a tree with Alf or sitting on the baskets with me. If the chickadees saw him they would hop around and scold him and all he would do was blink his eyes at them until they were tired and flew away. One day I saw him fly into the bush at the back but did not trouble about him. After an hour or more I was attracted by a great noise of little birds in the bush so I went to see what the trouble was. There was Elvis on an old tree stump about four feet high, and there were some small birds scolding him. I counted ten chickadees, four black-and-white warblers, six goldfinches, one phoebe, one chestnut-sided warbler, and several wrens! I don't think he liked their noise at all, as he followed me back to the apple picking and stayed with me.

When the weather got colder with more rain Elvis would sit on a shelf in the back porch and watch the birds out of the window. Some days he amused himself with caps and hats on the shelf, or pulling an old straw hat to pieces. There were two tubes of No. 612 insect repellent on the shelf and Elvis would keep busy pulling and pushing them to the edge of the shelf and knocking them off, and we would put them up again whenever we passed. In the cellar he had a small box with some straw in it which kept him busy as he was continually pulling out the straw and putting it in again. While he was thus busy he would say, "cluck-cluck-cluck" and would keep it up about fifteen minutes without stopping, just like an old hen. Then we would say, this must be Elvistine not Elvis.

Early one morning we were awakened by a very lonesome call of "who-who-who-who", all on one sad note. We listened and the call came from the cellar; it was Elvis singing. This new note made five different noises we had heard. First, whimpering for attention; second, snapping his beak as if he were cross; third, a bark very much like a dog's, one sharp "Woof;" fourth, clucking like a hen; fifth, "who-who-who-who," all on the same note.

In January we had a very cold spell with no snow on the ground, strong northwest winds and below zero temperatures which lasted over a week. In the mornings Alf would go out to see that there was food for the birds in the feeders, and although it was still dark Elvis usually went with him but soon came in again. One morning he went out and did not come in all day, so when evening came I asked a group of boys if any of them had seen an owl. One boy said there had been a little gray one at their house and he was going to pick it up off the front lawn but a dog came and chased it away and it had a silver ring on its leg. That was at Rosebank Rd. about two miles from here. I went over next day to see if I could find him but no, he had been seen but was not there when I was. After five or six days one morning Alf went out to feed the birds and in flew Elvis and straight downstairs and on to a post and waited for fish. He did not go out again for over three weeks. For the rest of the winter Elvis went out usually on nice bright days but soon would come on the perch at the kitchen window and when we opened the door came in.

When spring came Elvis got restless and would stay out all day. If it was wet he would spend the day in the garage so Alf opened a stovepipe hole in the wall and he made his home over there, but nearly every day he would come in for a visit. I put his dish with water and minnows in it over in the garage and refilled it usually twice a day. If we wanted him we would call and usually he answered with a whimper and if he wanted to come in he would fly down to some place where I could reach him and I would pick him up and bring him in with me.

Now I got a chance of seeing Elvis catch his own food. One morning he was sitting at his door (the old stovepipe hole) looking about when I saw him glide down to the grass and catch something. I wanted to see what it was so I went over and he did not fly away. When I looked I saw a mouse and he let me take it off him and examine it while he just sat watching me. It was a field mouse and when I gave it back to him he took it up into his doorway and ate it.

One morning we were all going out and just as I came out of the kitchen Elvis flew into the living room. I called him and tried to catch him but he felt like playing so I left him sitting on the window drapes. When we came

back I called Elvis several times and got no answer so I looked for him. I found him sitting in the middle of Alf's bed rocking and rolling at a wooden saw-whet owl Alf has on his dressing table. I called him and he took no notice of me so I picked him up and then he was mad and snapped his beak at me.

My sister would sometimes go to the back door and whistle or make bird calls and several birds would answer her. Elvis did not pay any attention to her at first. Then one day she was calling to the birds when she gave a loud trill and Elvis flew off the post he was sitting on and on to her head and sat there. After that whenever he heard her trill he would come and sit on her head. I tried this but he would not sit on mine or anyone else's head.

With spring the birds started building nests and looking over bird boxes. Elvis did not mind but the other birds objected to him being around. The robins built in a cedar tree near the garage and every time Elvis sat in the maple tree they would come and scold and fly at him; then the bluejays would join in and sometimes the catbirds until he would be so tired of it he would go into the garage and stay there. One day a pair of bluebirds were looking over the bird boxes but when they saw Elvis on a ladder just inside the garage they went on to the garage door and scolded so hard I wished I understood their language, but when Elvis just sat there and blinked his eyes at them off they flew and we did not see them again. By the end of June the young robins were ready to fly and the old ones would not let Elvis have any peace. If he came out they dive-bombed him until he got sick of it and went into the garage and would not come out.

One evening in July when we came home he was sitting on a post waiting for us so I got some rabbit meat for him and he sat on his shelf eating it while I closed the garage door. Next morning he had gone away and did not come back. People would say, "Oh he'll come back again." We hope so, but we are still waiting.

R. M. Saunders,

Editor.