

Dear Fellow Naturalist:

Our news letters have been rather few this fall. This has been chiefly because of lack of effort on the part of the president although, frankly, there has been little of import to pass along. It is hoped that this will not continue in the New Year, but, no promises are made. You can forestall it by sending in contributions each month. No matter how insignificant your observations may seem to you, they are of interest to other naturalists and act as an incentive to keep up "nature study" when Nature is at her quietest.

We were very sorry that our Fall Field Day, planned for Saturday, September 20, failed to come off. The threatening weather in mid-morning caused us to cancel our plans. However, several persons did have an informal outing the following day to the Pass Lake area. The studies centred mainly around geological subjects, although numerous migrant birds were seen. Better luck on our field day next spring.

The attendance at the two indoor meetings held in October and November was very gratifying to the club executive. Les Emery's "Geology of the Thunder Bay Region" was highly instructive and after the outing on Sept. 21, quite pertinent. It was a pleasure to listen to Antoon de Vos talk about the wild life in the Dutch East Indies. We are very happy to know that Mr. De Vos is planning to stay at the Lakehead for the next two years, and we give him assurance that he will be very welcome at our meetings or outings.

On Sunday, Nov. 16, the Allins, Philpotts, Denises, Quackenbushes, and Cartons, took a trip to the large cave at Cavern Lake, north of Dorion. The strenuous hour and a quarter trip in was well worth the effort. This tremendous cave is a natural wonder of the district, but let us hope it doesn't become too popular or our friends, the bats, its present occupants, will likely seek other winter quarters. Several specimens of the Big and Little Brown Bats were collected, and Dr. Allin is making studies of the development of the young. Specimens of bats from other localities would be welcomed by Dr. Allin.

Our winter's program is now shaping up. On Monday, January 26, Mr. C. A. Elsey, biologist with the Division of Fish and Wildlife in the Geraldton district will address us on "Problems of Lake Management". Mr. Elsey was a classmate of Dr. Allin's and is well up on his fish and related wildlife problems.

The February meeting is still undecided, but not from lack of speakers, rather the opposite. The topic for Feb. 23rd will be announced soon.

In March, Mrs. Eva Beckett, is going to tell us about the flora and fauna of Churchill. Since this is her summer home, her intimate knowledge of Churchill and its environs will ensure a worthwhile address.

Have you read Driftwood Valley by Theodora C. Stanwell-Fletcher. She and her husband go into the wilds of British Columbia, build themselves a log cabin in a little-known valley north of Hazelton, and observe the wild life there, collecting specimens for various museums. Her day by day account of their life there, and the valley's plant and animal life is hardly a momentous contribution to scientific knowledge. Driftwood Valley is, however, an exciting and satisfying book; one you will read from start to finish and wish there were more. It is published by Little, Brown and Company and is available at both public libraries.

Another very readable book is Mammals of North America By Victor H. Cahalane. Authentic, but written so that it can be enjoyed by everyone, young or old, it is a good introduction to the study of mammals, and better still, a book that you will want to read for the pure enjoyment of its sympathetic treatment of our best-known group of animals. It is published by MacMillan and is also in both public libraries.

How many of us keep accurate records of our observations? The human memory is far from infallible, ~~and~~ while a "note on the spot is worth a thousand recollections". Dr. A. E. Allin has contributed a summary of the year's observation highlights made up from his notes. We are deeply indebted to Al for his contribution which is published as an appendix to this letter.

Here are two observations of unusual interest not included in Dr. Allin's summary.

Barred Owl: specimen found by Mr. E. P. Flatt near Baldy Ski Club, McGregor Twp., 7 miles north-east of Port Arthur on Oct. 12.

3 Otters on Dec. 2 at Beatty's Lake by A. De Vos.

The annual bird census held by our club at the instigation of the Ottawa Field Naturalist will be held on Friday, December 26, weather permitting. If the day proves too stormy, it will perhaps be put ahead to Sunday, Dec. 28. It is hoped that as many as possible will take part for the more observers in the field, the more accurate the record. If you plan to attend, kindly contact Dr. Allin in Fort William at S. 294 or S. 3052, or Keith Denis in Port Arthur at N. 3092. Anyone with a car is especially welcome as transportation promises to be limited. If you prefer to make up your own party, be sure to let us know beforehand the area you intend to cover so no duplication of observations is made. Accurate data is required i.e.: time, sky conditions, temperature, wind (direction and speed), number in party, species, number of individuals seen, number of car miles travelled, number of miles covered on foot, time spent on foot and by car, names of observers. If you are unable to get out, you may still see birds in the vicinity of your home. Please report these to Dr. Allin by Monday, Dec. 29, at the latest.

With all the best wishes for a Merry Christmas and an interesting and profitable New Year.

Sincerely yours,

C. E. Garton
A. E. Allin, M.D.
K. W. Denis

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1947 OBSERVATIONS

compiled by Dr. A. E. Allin

January Herring Gull in Fort William on 1st, although there was a foot of snow and the temperature was -27°. Northern Shrike on 12th in Port Arthur (C.E.G.). Heavy crop of Rowan berries and Pine Grosbeaks common. Ravens common at Model Mink Farm.

February Moderate numbers of Snow Buntings and Bohemian Waxwings this winter. Evening Grosbeaks scarce. Relatively few Starlings. They have apparently learned to migrate. A Crow has remained in Fort William all winter; others seen at Model Mink Farm.

March Common Redpolls frequently seen throughout the winter; during the last week of March, at least three Hoard Redpolls reported. Two Pine Siskins on the 28th -- this species very abundant in 1947, (at least 200 were noted on June 15th). Crows were noisy on the 20th. Herring Gulls returned on the 21st. Cooper's Hawk noted on 23.

April Groundhog near Hodder Avenue on 1st (A.E.A.) Robin on 7th; Smelts running in the Current River on 7th, continuing to 24th. Woodcock off Arthur Street, Fort William, on 16th. Saw-whet Owl on 20th (C.E.G.), Canada Geese on 22nd; Great Blue Herons on 24th, 25th, and 27th. In view of the ice, they must have had feeding problems. Green Grasshopper (Rydholms) on 28th and that evening, the first Dew-worms. Crow's nest, Vicker's Park, on 25th held one egg. By 27th, waterfowl were becoming common at Empire Elevator. On the average, birds arrived four days later than usual. (One May migrant arrived on schedule.)

May Wood frogs, Swamp Tree Frogs, and Spring Peepers first heard on 1st, 2nd, and 12th respectively, and Rydholms reported first eggs on 7th. Rainbow trout running streams on 4th. Northern Suckers not noted until 24th. Little Brown Bat on 25th. Birds of interest were American Rough-Legged Hawk near Flint on 23rd (C.E.G. and Philpotts). 2 Ring-billed Gulls at Empire Elevator on 10th. Mourning Dove in Vicker's Park (A.E.A.). Short-eared Owl (L.S.D.) on 11th. 70 Coween Ducks at Rossport on 25th. Orange-crowned Warbler on 27th in Port Arthur (C.E.G.). The Field Day on the 31st at Flint was notable for the many American visitors and the Solitary Sandpiper present. Large numbers of shore birds were noted on the 25th. (K.L.&D.B.)

June Early in the month, numerous reports of Evening Grosbeaks (Rydholms, Ellis and Hoald). A few were reported throughout the summer. On the 20th, Dr. Hall, President of the University of Western Ontario, saw a Raccoon cross the Cypress River. By mid-month large flocks of Starlings noted. The outstanding record was Dear's observation of ten pairs of Brewer's Blackbirds at Intercity on the 10th, and his discovery of a nest and four eggs on the 26th -- first eggs of the species for Ontario. On the 15th, a Lincoln Sparrow's nest at Flint contained four eggs. An American Rough-legged Hawk was also noted (A.E.A. and L.S.D.) On the 22nd, a colony of Band Swallows was of interest -- all eggers were heavily marked by droppings of Mallophaga. On the 29th at Nalalu, late nest of Hermit Thrush with four eggs. During this month, Miss Cooper and Miss Cutherland reported Scarlet Tanagers at Silver Islet. There were several other reports of this species which was also common this summer in Southern Manitoba.

July Polyphemus moth on 2nd. Lunas were reported from June until July 20th when we saw one at Silver Harbour. Giant silkworm moths appeared to be relatively scarce this summer. On the 15th, a nest of a White-throated Sparrow on Corbett's Creek held three eggs. Rydholms report Pin Cherries and Saskatoons abundant. Cho're cherries were scarce, although their blooms had been profuse.

August North of Murillo, young Pileated Woodpecker also nest of Cedar Waxwing with one egg (Allins). More Woodcock reported east of Port Arthur. White flowered variety of Fireweed near Blind Creek.

Chipmunks have been numerous this season. Coasters have been common and several large Rainbow Trout (Steelheads) have been recorded. During this summer, Rydholm's English Sparrows for the first time in Murphy Park.

September White Pelican, Port Arthur, On 17th (K.D.) ~~White-headed is still here (October 15th)~~. Previous Lakehead records were 2 in October, 1922, and one in October, 1892. At Hurkett, Sept. 27th, more Mallards and Redheads than usual. An early record of Lesser Scup was one collected the same day. Geese were reported from Hurkett on the 30th.

October On the 4th a domesticated form of the Old World Ring Dove was collected 3 miles out Arthur St. (A.E.A) Heavy migrations of Robins, Juncos, and Tree Sparrows on the 11th. Lapland Longspurs moved through in large numbers on 13th. This bird, in drab fall plumage, is easily overlooked. Carter Snakes killed on roads on 13th. On 15th, a Big Brown Bat was flying in Blak Twp. On the 25th at Sandstone Lake; 2 Bald Eagles, 2 Snow Buntings and several Ravens. The latter were very noisy. Few of us realize these birds have such an amazing repertoire. Open season this month for Grouse. Few Ruffed Grouse were taken but they were plentiful in the bush. Spruce Grouse were common in some localities. The fall has been amazingly mild. Ducks have drifted through so there was difficulty in estimating their numbers. Greater Scup on Whitefish in mid-October (L.S.D.)

November Heavy snowfall at Whitefish on 6th and by 11th lake frozen over. Mrs. Love, Fort Arthur, reported a Ring Dove had been seen at McVicar's Creek for several months. Bill Gardner reported Blue and Snow Geese on the 10th. On the 16th, twelve members visited the "Bat Cave" at Cavern Lake. On the way saw American Rough-legged Hawk and Raven and the tracks of a Lynx. The cave contained seven Big Brown Bats and several hundred Little Browns. Bill Gardner has reported Salamanders on several occasions this summer. This month he collected another -- Jefferson's Salamander. On the 26th, Herring fishing commenced in Thunder Bay.

December Rowans abundant, but few Pine Grosbeaks noted. Now Snowy Owls reported to date. Manitoba Maple trees laden with seeds, but no Evening Grosbeaks.

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We have heard of 166 species of birds being observed locally by members of the Club this year, about 15 more species than reported for 1946.

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Publications by Members

- Dear, L. S. : Upland Plover in Thunder Bay District, Ontario. The Auk. Vol. 64, No. 4, p. 632, 1947.
- Allin, A. E. : Greater Scup, White-fronted Geese and Hoyt's Horned Larks near Fort William, Ontario. The Flier, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 102-104, 1946.
- Allin, A. E. and Dear, L. S. : Brewer's Blackbirds breeding in Ontario. The Wilson's Bulletin, Vol. 59, No. 3, pp. 175-6, 1947.
- Anon, : Christmas Bird Census, 1946, Fort Arthur - Fort William, Ont. (Silver Harbour to Kakobeka Falls) The Canadian Field Naturalist, Vol. 61, No. 2, p. 65, 1947.

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