

NEWS LETTER

OF THE

THUNDER BAY FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

PORT ARTHUR - FORT WILLIAM



7th February, 1952
Volume VI, No. 1.

250 N. Algoma St.,
Port Arthur, Ontario.

Dear Fellow Naturalists:

Our club was organized nineteen years ago and since that time a real interest in natural history has been apparent locally. Many of the original members have contributed items of interest for use in our news-letter and it is hoped the new members will not hesitate to send in their observations. Every item is a help. Sometimes we cannot use the information immediately but every note contributes in the end to our knowledge of the district.

The Annual Meeting was held in the Fort William Public Library on January 15th and the following persons were elected to serve during 1952.

Honorary President	L.S. Dear	Past President	C.E.Garton
President	A.E.Allin	Vice-President	H.K.Campbell
Secretary-Editor	K.W.Denis	Treasurer	J.Murie

EXECUTIVE

FORT WILLIAM: H. Quackenbush, J. Thompson, Mrs. A.H.McKague, Mrs. J. H. Lawrence
PORT ARTHUR: A. Robinson, M. J. Armstrong, Mrs. P. Addison, Mrs. C.E.Garton.

Past President Claude Garton, who is a director of our parent body - The Federation of Ontario Naturalists, spoke on the drive now under way to finance the employment of a full-time managing secretary for the Federation. During the past twenty years the work of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists has been done entirely by voluntary effort but now the needs and opportunities have become too great a task for a few individuals to handle properly in their spare time. To render the necessary service to the cause of nature education and conservation someone with the necessary qualifications must be on the job continuously. The Lakehead has been asked to raise at least \$ 80, of the necessary \$ 4,000. that is needed and it is hoped to raise even more. Two ways individual members can help are:

1. Join the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and contribute if possible more than just the \$ 2. membership. Most of the \$ 2.00 membership is used to print and distribute bulletins. Donations are income tax exempt but not the \$2. membership.
2. Secure new members. We have only our members on whom to depend in this campaign. The majority of Canadians enjoy nature and hope to continue to find pleasure out-doors - supporting the Federation of Ontario Naturalists will help to ensure that enjoyment.

Please send your contribution to Mr. C.E.Garton, 354 Leslie Ave., Port Arthur.

The Thunder Bay Field Naturalists' Club enjoyed a good year in 1951 and it is hoped that this year will be even better. The Audubon Screen Tours have been a success, and plans are being made for our Annual Dinner, the Regional Gathering, and other meetings and outings. Our treasurer has asked that we pay our membership dues as soon as convenient - just send them to Mr. J.Parkin, 472 St.Patrick's Square, Port Arthur. There is no change - \$ 1.00 for individual membership, \$ 1.50 for a family.

Yours sincerely,

A. E. Allin	President.
Keith Denis,	Editor.

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS 1951

The Thunder Bay Field Naturalists' Club took their annual Christmas Bird Census on December 26th. For the first time a specified area was designated in which results were to be used for a report to the Audubon Field Notes, while these results, plus observations in the area we have customarily covered, were to be forwarded to the Canadian Field Naturalist. Two ruffed grouse were the only birds reported from outside the Audubon circle and the following report covers the remainder of the birds which were observed within the Audubon territory.

Port Arthur-Fort William, Ont.: (7½ miles radius, Bare Point to Chippewa Park, Carters' Corners and Intola P.O. 8% lake, frozen as were all streams, 12% peat and muck bogs, 12% residential and industrial areas, 25% farmlands, 43% woodlands mainly second growth aspen, birch and jackpine with alder thickets.)

Dec. 26: 9 A.M. to 5.30 P.M. morning dull with scattered snow flurries, clearing in afternoon. About 2 inches snow on the ground. The temperature ranged between 15°F and 12°F. The wind was Northwest from 20 to 30 miles per hour. Relative humidity at 1.30 P.M. was 69%. Mountain ash berries were scarce but weed seeds easily available. Twenty-eight observers in 11 parties. Total party hours 40 (25 on foot, 15 by auto), total party miles - 144 (29 on foot, 115 by auto).

Ruffed Grouse	7	Brown-capped Chickadee14
Herring Gull31	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2
Rock Dove	251	Bohemian Waxwing	1
Snowy Owl	1	Common Starling	112
Hairy Woodpecker	1	English Sparrow	775
Downy Woodpecker	1	CARDINAL	1
Canada Jay	3	Evening Grosbeak	17
Blue Jay	18	Pine Grosbeak	50
Raven	24	Common Redpoll	262
Crow	6	Slate-coloured Junco	1
Black-capped Chickadee	67		

A total of 1645 individuals of 21 species were observed in the Audubon area. Seen in the area during the count period were three robins but none appeared on Boxing Day. Indications of birds not seen on the census day being in the district were noted as usual. C. E. Garton saw Hungarian Partridge tracks in the snow. A shrew with its head beaten in was found in an alder crotch by Ken Campbell and Norman Denis just after Keith Denis noted what might have been a shrike through gusts of snow. The Robinson's reported hearing Great Horned Owls hooting in the night before Boxing Day.

Those participating in the 1951 Christmas Bird Census were Mr. and Mrs. P. Addison and sons Bill, Peter and Edward, Dr. & Mrs. A.E. Allin, D. Bianco, H. K. Campbell, K. Denis and son Norman, Mr. & Mrs. Ken Eoll, C. E. Garton, Mr. & Mrs. Hanton, Dr. & Mrs. W. P. Hogarth, Mrs. M. Knowles, Mrs. Pengelley, A. Robinson, D. Rowan, Mr. & Mrs. C. Rydholm and children Louise and Roy, Mr. & Mrs. J. Thompson.

In 1950 a total of 1671 birds of 24 different species were observed on the Christmas Bird Census. The record for individual birds seen was made in 1948 when 2770 birds of 23 species were counted. The greatest number of species seen on a Christmas census was 29 in 1947. The Cardinal is the 45th species noted on these occasions. The Cardinal, first observed by Mrs. C. Rydholm, is the first species previously unknown in the area that was reported on a Christmas census.

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The earliest local record of bird observations during the Christmas Bird Census optional dates is in the columns of "The Sentinel" published when Port Arthur was Prince Arthur's Landing. The Sentinel for January 10, 1878 carried this item:

"Silver Islet Correspondence
December 24, 1877.

Capt. Trethewey and Mr. Jno. Jilbert remarked that robins abound in the woods back of the Location!"

THE NOTE BOOK

Club members desirous of seeing Ravens and wintering Crows should visit the vicinity of the Port Arthur Country Club and Chercover's Farm. On January 18th, both species were present; the majority of the birds were ravens but at least one crow was both seen and heard.

Starnosed moles are observed infrequently. Mr. Ed. Etienne, Christina St., Fort William, found one dead on January 15th. You will recall it was Mr. Etienne who found the Coween (Old Squaw) on March 24, 1950 by the local railroad tracks. Subsequently this duct was photographed by Ken Campbell and the picture has since been widely displayed. Another mole was found on January 26th by Mrs. J. D. Wark, R.R.#3 Fort William (Scott Highway) and a third was brought to Mr. C.E. Garton on January 18th in Port Arthur. The Times-Journal has reported one found dead at Fort Frances and another at Geraldton. This animal is widely distributed throughout Ontario and is not uncommon locally though seldom seen.

Several years ago a Common Horse-chestnut tree (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) was planted at the corner of Donald and South Brodie Street, Fort William. Due to continued care and attention it survived and grew to a height of about 15 feet. Despite the severe winter of 1949-50 which resulted in the death of one large branch, it blossomed in 1950. When the old house at the corner was removed to make way for the park the tree went too. There are a number of trees in the Lakehead district referred to as chestnuts but they are actually specimens of the Ohio Buckeye (*A. glabra*).

After the heavy flight of Snowy Owls during the winter of 1949-50 and the well recognized echo flight of 1950-51 we expected few of these northern visitors during the present season but to date at least six have been seen: Nov. 3 - P.A.; Nov. 10 - Neebing Twp.; Nov. 12 - F.W.; Dec. - F.W.; Dec. 26 - Neebing Twp.; Jan. 6 - P.A. Jan. 9 - P.A.

Mrs. C. H. Philpot sent a clipping from a Victoria, B.C. newspaper telling about an experiment the H.R. MacMillan Co. is conducting in an effort to save fir seeds air sown from forest mice. The plan is to dye poisoned oats green, which it is believed, though not proved, will cause the birds to leave the deadly grain untouched though the mice will eat it. Decimating the mouse population would give the fir seeds a better chance of reproducing. Norman Denis recently tried this experiment. Using vegetable dyes he coloured wheat green, blue and red, placed it in separate heaps on a feeding tray, and watched for results. English Sparrows and Starlings ate all colours of grain, the preference being first natural, then red, followed by green, and lastly blue. A second trial with green coloured grain found the birds showing little hesitation in eating the brilliant green wheat. Evidently Starlings and English Sparrows will eat grain dyed green-at least in the shades used.

Recall the heavy crop of Rowan berries in 1950? They persisted on the trees throughout the winter providing food for the wintering flocks of Robins. Great numbers of dried berries hung on the trees until mid-summer. But the 1951 crop was very small - practically none on those trees which bore fruit in 1950. In contrast there is a heavy crop of seeds on the Manitoba Maples and Highbush Cranberries bore well. This may result in the Pine Grosbeaks turning to food sources ordinarily not utilized. A flock at Vickers Park on Dec. 9 were observed feeding on the fruit of the Black Ash. We can recall only one other occasion when these samaras were eaten by Grosbeaks and that, too, was in a season when the Rowans were not available. Mrs. Rydholm reports them feeding on the buds of jackpine, another food not normally included in their diet insofar as local observations are concerned. During November she also noted them feeding on Pincherry and Chokecherry fruits.

Winter feeding stations have greatly increased in numbers during recent years. This probably accounts for some of our unusual winter records. As long as food and shelter are available the occasional bird may remain which would normally have migrated with its fellows. The feeding station of Mr. & Mrs. Fraser Dupuis, Vickers Heights, has proved particularly attractive during the present season. In addition to Black-capped Chickadees, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, and Blue Jays (6 on Jan. 13) several unusual visitors have appeared. A Slate-coloured Junco was seen on Dec. 27, and on Jan. 12th two White-throated Sparrows were observed by Dupuis and Allins. The presence of these sparrows constitutes a new winter record for the species at the Lakehead. Outstanding of course was the Cardinal which the Dupuis first noted at their feeding station in mid-December. On December 26 they showed it to Mr. and Mrs. Carl Rydholm who identified it for our Christmas Bird Census. The Cardinal usually appears several times each morning and once in the afternoon. Through the kindness of Mr. & Mrs. Dupuis several of our club members have had the pleasure of seeing this

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First Known Record of the Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta fario*)
in the Thunder Bay District Waters.

This "freak" fish was captured by Captain Tripp, a commercial fisherman, while lifting his gill-nets set off McKellar Point on the north-west shore of Lake Superior on October 20, 1951. The fish, apart from being the first known specimen of brown trout to inhabit these waters, was found marked by a vertebral deformity when captured - thus the descriptive non-de-plume.

The specimen appeared to be in an otherwise healthy condition and exhibited no apparent deficiency as a result of the deformity. The fish measured 20½" in total length and weighed 62 ounces. These measurements were taken with the fish in a frozen state for the second time. The identification was made by personnel from the Department of Lands and Forests, and was confirmed by Dr. W.B. Scott, Curator, Division of Ichthyology and Herpetology, Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology.

C. Armstrong.

REPORT OF SEA LAMPREY RETRIEVED IN 1951

Specimen Number	Date	Observer	Prey Species	Locality	Size	Method
1.	June 2	Angus Bruley	Lake Trout	Simpson I.	13"	Gill Net
2.	June 23	Wm. Legault	Lake Trout	Copper I.	12"	Gill Net
3.	June ?	F. Westerback	Lake Trout	Silver I.	--	Gill Net
4.	Aug. 1	Gerow Bros.	Lake Trout	Slate I.	--	Gill Net
5.	Aug. 10	Wm. Legault	Lake Trout	Crow Point	14"	Pound Net
6.	Aug. 14	Gerow Bros.	Siscowet	Slate I.	18½"	Gill Net
7.	Aug. 20	Jerry Skea 3 lb.	Lake Trout	Birch Beach	12"	Trolling
8.	Sept. 15	Steve Paulmert	Lake Trout	Selim Point	14"	Pound Net
9.	Oct. 2	Wm. Legault	Lake Trout	Moffat Straits	16½"	Pound Net

N.B. Specimen #6 was taken from 80 fathoms.

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Every odour has four elements; 1. fragrance - a flowerly odour, 2. acid - a keen smell like vinegar, 3. burnt-like creosote, 4. caprylic-goaty odour. Two chemists, Earnest C. Crocker and Lloyd C. Henderson, developed a system of classification of odours according to the 8 intensities of the four elements that they could distinguish. Ill is light in every element while one rose they checked was 6523. Crocker, described as "The Man with the Million-Dollar Nose" by R.M. Yoder is an article in the Saturday Evening Post of September 29, 1951 believes most persons could learn to separate the four elements.

FIELD NOTES

Additional birds observed in 1951.

Dec. 2 Glaucous Gull - 3 in Port Arthur by C. E. Garton;
1 in Fort William by Mrs. W. P. Hogarth and the Allins.

Dec. 26 Bohemian Waxwing - 1 in Port Arthur by C. E. Garton,
Eastern Cardinal - 1 at Vickers Heights by Mr. & Mrs. Fraser Dupuis
and the Rydholms.

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COMPARISON OF BIRD OBSERVATIONS DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS

	<u>1949</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1951</u>
Number species seen in year	171	187	184
Number species seen at Regional Gathering	84	83	65
Number species seen on Christmas Census	28	24	21
Number species in breeding records for year	54	41	46
Number species new to district records	0	4	4

In 1950 the Oregon Junco, Yellow Rail, Florida Gallinule and European Widgeon were added to our records, while in 1951 the Western Tanager, Western Grebe, Cardinal and Yellow-throated Vireo were observed locally for the first times. These species brought the total number of species that have been recorded in the district to 247.

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Bird Observations - 1952

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| <p>Jan. 1. Common Redpoll - F.W., A.E.A.
Starling - P.A., K.D.,: F.W., A.E.A.
House Sparrow
Pine Grosbeak
Rock Dove</p> <p>3. Eastern Cardinal - Mrs. Hogarth
& Dorothy Allin
Ruffed Grouse - Neebing Twp.;
George Whitefield.</p> <p>4. Raven - P.A., A. Robinson</p> <p>5. Crow - F.W., Allins
Black-capped Chickadee
Brown-capped Chickadee</p> | <p>Jan. 6. Downy Woodpecker- F.W., Allins
Hairy Woodpecker
Snowy Owl, P.A., C.E. Garton</p> <p>10. Hungarian Partridge-Neebing Twp.
J. Pugh.</p> <p>11. Herring Gull, F.W., A.E.A.
Pileated Woodpecker-Sellars,
Annis Ferrier</p> <p>12. White-throated Sparrow-Vickers
Heights, Allins and
Dupuis.</p> <p>13. Blue Jay (6) Vickers Heights,
A.E.A. and L.S.D.</p> <p>16. Canada Jay - Sellars, Annis
Ferrier.</p> <p>20. Evening Grosbeaks (16)- F.W.
Joan Ferrier.</p> <p>21. Goshawk - P.A., A.E. Allin.</p> |
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The first winter record at the Canadian Lakehead for White-throated Sparrows was established when Mr. & Mrs. Fraser Dupuis and Dr. and Mrs. Allin observed two at the Dupuis feeding station in Vickers Heights.

EXCHANGES

The WOOD DUCK, Hamilton Nature Club, Vol. 5 #4, Dec. 1, 1951; Autumn at Pimisi Bay by Louise de Kiriline Lawrence tells of an influx of black-capped chickadees early in September. Blue Jays visited the feeding station a month earlier than usual, all being adult jays. Canada Jays appeared again in numbers for the first time since 1945. "Could it be that a series of winter with "northern" birds prevailing is due at Pimisi Bay?" Chickadees were reported from Toronto as being more numerous, and believed coming from the north. A heavy migration of loons is mentioned.

The JACK-PINE WARBLER, Michigan Audubon Society, Vol. 29 # 4, Dec. 1951: Summer Records 1951 by George Wickstrom reports that below normal temperatures were common all summer. In some areas bird migration was noted earlier than usual. Breeding records included one of Kirtland's Warbler and the first two Michigan nests of the Gadwall Duck. The first record since 1827 of nest and eggs of a Nashville Warbler was reported.

THE LAKEHEAD "AUDUBON" AREA

The Thunder Bay Field Naturalists' Club decided in 1951 that two Christmas Bird Census reports would be made - one over the area previously covered to the Canadian Field-Naturalist, and one over an area conforming with the requirements of the Audubon Field Notes. The latter, which for convenience will be called the "Audubon" area in this newsletter, had to be within a $7\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius, and as much of the customary area as possible was included. The map used was well marked before the "Audubon" area was selected. Carter's Corners and Intola Post Office provided points for one end of the dividers and at the intersection of lines from those places the centre of the area was determined. Other points on the perimeter worth remembering are: Bare Point, Port Arthur; Whiskey Jack Point near Chippewa Park; the Ontario Hospital corner, a few rods past the corner where the road north from Carter's Corners crosses the Oliver Road; just north of Kivikoski; and where the Black Bay Road cuts the North Branch Road.

Regretfully some places could not be included in the new area. Favourite spots like Kakabeka Falls and Rogers' feeding station had to be left out. Also McKenzie River and Silver Harbour, where we are most likely to see ducks in December, are beyond the 15 mile diameter. The observations made at these localities will be reported in the notes sent to the Canadian Field-Naturalist.

Certainly the "Audubon" area offers a variety of habitats. Approximately 12% is residential and industrial, 12% peat and muck bogs, 25% farmlands, 43% woodlands, mainly second growth aspen, white birch, jackpine and spruce, with many alder thickets. The 8% remaining is water which will usually be covered with ice at the time of the Christmas Bird Census. Mount McKay on the south-east rises 1,000 feet above the lake. The Kaministiquia River, the largest river in the area, meanders through a valley that runs east-west just north of the mountain range. The altitude rises from Lake Superior (approximately 603 feet above sea level) steadily in the remainder of the area and in the north-west near Intola reaches 1200 feet above sea level. The Current River, the second-largest stream in the area, flows for about two miles through the NE section of the area to empty into Thunder Bay. McVicar Creek, a small stream, drains a small area nearby. The McIntyre and the Neebing rivers, and their many branches, drain the major portion of the "Audubon" area. Lakes are scarce in the area, the largest being the artificial 'Boulevard Lake' formed by a dam across Current River, and this is only $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long. The other five lakes are little more than ponds about one-quarter mile long - Crescent Lake on Mt. McKay, Shuniah Lake, and the 'Cousineau' lakes up the Neebing River.

The approximate areas of the surface deposits are - 14 square miles of water; 6 sq. miles of alluvium of present streams (mainly in the delta of the Kaministiquia); 5 sq. miles of rock outcrops; 40 sq. miles of delta, terrace and lakebed deposits of glacial Lake Algonquin; 22 sq. miles of muck and peat bogs; 89 sq. miles of glacial till (chiefly ground moraine, soil: stony clay and stony loam) and glacial outwash (soil: gravelly, fine, sandy loam); and 1 sq. mile of dune sand near Rosslyn village. The lake beaches are an interesting feature. A prominent series starts at Whiskey Jack Point and rises 232 feet above the lake. Port Arthur is built largely upon a series of terraces formed by successive stages of glacial Lake Algonquin with beaches at 772, 751, 720, 698, and 692 feet above sea level. A beach at 663.4' was formed in an early stage of the Mississippian Great Lakes as likely were others at 645 and 628' above sea level. The highest beach occurs $\frac{3}{5}$ mile down a road $5\frac{1}{10}$ miles past the Y on the River Road - elevation 850' above sea level.

Few points in the "Audubon" area are over a mile from a road. Main highways include No. 61, No. 17 and No. 17A, the Oliver Road, and John St. Road. Some roads are kept in good repair while others present hazards to low-slung automobiles. Port Arthur and Fort William are the main population centers while smaller ones include Wickers Heights, Jumbo Gardens, Rosslyn Village, Baird and Intola. The Mission Village on the Indian Reserve should also be mentioned.

The food plants used by wintering birds are well distributed. When the favourite feeding grounds of the different species of birds are ascertained our Christmas Bird Census reports will reflect this knowledge. The "Audubon" area might be regarded as a challenge to the members of the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists' Club.

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