

NEWS LETTER

OF THE

THUNDER BAY

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

PORT ARTHUR - FORT WILLIAM



15th March, 1952,
Vol. VI, No. 2

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

Dear Fellow-Naturalists:

Spring is approaching from the south and the first migrants soon will be arriving. The first Robin is often regarded as the harbinger of warmer weather and the first dandelion is a cheering sight. A study of the club records show that certain birds arrive about the same dates each year. There also appears to be some regularity in the sequence in which some species arrive. Plants too, have an orderly habit of flowering. Fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and insects usually follow apparently predestined patterns in their lives. We expect the smelt run in the spring and the speckled trout to spawn in the autumn. The first tree toad is heard - it is about two weeks before the first garter snake is seen? Many questions come to mind when you try to find the sequence of natural history events that occur throughout the year. What is the influence of weather on migration? The Canada Goose is said to move northward with the advance of the isotherm of 35° F. What is the pattern of arrival of birds and other animals and flowers in our area?

YOU can help the club in its efforts to chart the pattern of events in the Fort William - Port Arthur area. Write what you see in a notebook and then send in a list of the events recorded to the Secretary. Phone them in if you wish. During the migration season once a week reports are appreciated in order that our field notes may be kept up-to-date. The summer months observations provide material for the September Newsletter. What are we interested in recording? Everything. None of us can make a full time job of this nor is that the idea. The thought is that if you keep a record of what is of interest to you the club will accumulate a wealth of knowledge about the district. Each accurate observation is a real contribution. You will find your enjoyment of nature growing as your notebook fills. Perhaps it will contain records of the dates the first blooms were seen on wildflowers, the dates migrant birds arrived in the Spring and were last seen in the fall, the singing dates of frogs, the notes you found, and the butterflies seen. Someone may wish to watch one species of bird in a certain area and note the frequency of its habits. There are many ways of enjoying your outings and notes can help the Club.

"Wildlife Down East" is the final presentation of the Audubon Screen Tours for this season. Carl W. Buchheister, Vice-President of the National Audubon Society, will tell the story of wild life in New England on April 18th at the Fort William Vocational School.

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

Thought for the month -

"It is characteristic of science and progress that they continually open new fields to our vision". Pasteur.

WINTER FIELD DAY

The enjoyable meeting last year between members of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union and our Club made us welcome the opportunity to meet our friends from across the border again this year. Once again the weather was perfect for the outing, which was held on 23 February, 1952. The dinner meeting was held in the Pigeon River Hotel. Mr. O.A. Finseth, President of the Duluth Bird Club, and Dr. A. E. Allin, our President, were co-chairmen. Observations made during the day were discussed and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife film "Behind the Flyways" was shown.

Birdlife between the Lakehead and the International border was noticeably scarcer than at this time last year. It was suggested that the poor crop of mountain-ash berries last fall might be one of the reasons that the only birds seen on the Canadian side were two Hairy Woodpeckers, one Blue Jay and six Black-capped Chickadees. Last year numerous flocks of Grosbeaks, Redpolls and Pine Siskins were observed. A red fox was seen near the Ontario Hospital.

The value of feeding stations was demonstrated when Red-breasted Nuthatches, Canada Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, were seen eating at one behind the American Customs office. Several members of the local club went to Grand Marais and saw more than 1,000 Old Squaw ducks, several Golden-eyes and American Mergansers swimming in Lake Superior. There was a considerable amount of open water between ice floes along the North Shore. Other birds seen included two Bald Eagles, two Bronzed Grackles, three Pine Grosbeaks, three Ravens, four Slate-coloured Juncoes, and Brown-capped Chickadees.

Fifty-seven persons from both countries were in the groups that met at the border. Four clubs were represented; the Duluth Bird Club, the Minneapolis Bird Club, the Minnesota Bird Club and the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists' Club. American members present were: John G. Erickson, Lewis L. Barrett, Mr. & Mrs. Boyd Lien, Theodora Melone, Jessie Richardson, Vera E. Sparkes, Amy Chambers and John Futcher of Minneapolis; Mr. & Mrs. Harvey Putman, O. A. Finseth, Flora A. Evans, Evelyn S. Palmer, Catherine Lieske, Stanley Hammer and Bruno Giernot of Duluth. Lakehead members included: Mr. & Mrs. C.E. Garton, Mr & Mrs. Malcolm Armstrong, Mr. & Mrs. Bert Hanton, Mr. & Mrs. P. W. Waff, Mrs. A. S. Gilby, Mrs. P. Addison, Miss R. Penwarden, L. S. Dear, A. Robinson and K. Denis of Port Arthur; Mr. & Mrs. J. R. Lawrence, Joan Lawrence, Earl Buckley, Dr. & Mrs. A.E. Allin, David Allin, Mr. & Mrs. W. J. Thompson, Ann Thompson, Dr. & Mrs. H. Quackenbush, Allan and Annis Quackenbush, Mr. & Mrs. J. Murie, Miss Dorothy Smith, Miss Katherine Devereaux and Captain A.E. Fader of Fort William; Mr. M. Knowles of Rosslyn and Mrs. C. Rydholm of Vickers Heights.

AROUND OUR NIPIGON HIGHWAY HOME

Birds have been more plentiful lately than at Christmas time. About twenty Blue Jays come to the feeding tray every morning. Some pay a return visit during the day, but not all of them. The tray attracts one squirrel too, and it is interesting to see the whole flock of jays rise and fly whenever this lone little animal appears. Black-capped Chickadees are numerous and quite friendly. Two of these little fellows have only one leg but both seem able to hold their own among their pert and saucy brethren.

February 6th there were five Downy Woodpeckers at the feeding tray, though only three have been regular - two males and a female. Two female and one male Hairy Woodpecker have been around all winter and on February 7th (a nice mild afternoon) one of them enlarged the hole in a swallow bird house, managed to get inside, and then feathers, fluff and straws were thrown out. This house had been used by the swallows last summer.

Speaking of bird houses, we have some here for the wrens which are quite busy at nesting time. In the autumn we see chipmunks carrying materials into these houses where we suspect they spend the winter. Back come the wrens in early summer and clear out the houses as did the Hairy the other day. Last summer bees used one of the houses for a time but something disturbed them and they are gone.

Owls are heard quite frequently and earlier in the winter we heard the howls of wolves and saw their tracks near our home

Mrs. C. R. Rogers.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FEDERATION OF ONTARIO NATURALISTS

The Annual Meeting of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists will be held in the Royal Ontario Museum at Toronto on Saturday, April 5th, 1952. The annual business meeting will be held in the morning and a programme of natural history papers will be given in the afternoon. Dr. R. M. Saunders, author of Flashing

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1951 OBSERVATIONS

New Year's day a hundred Herring Gulls were seen at the Lakehead and the following day 12 Robins were observed. The rowan trees, locally better known as Mountain Ash, bore a magnificent crop of berries in 1950, many of which remained on the trees until midsummer, 1951. Numbers of Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, Cedar and Bohemian Waxwings, Robins and Starlings fed on these during the winter. Pine Grosbeaks were not seen in the twin cities in the numbers which appeared the year before the rowan crop failed in 1949. Common Redpolls were fairly abundant throughout the winter becoming scarce about April 8th. Feeding trays attracted many wintering birds. The presence of a slate-coloured Junco on January 9th (K.D.) and two Brown Creeper on Jan. 14 (Mrs. Knowles) were unusual records. The highlight of the winter season was the heavy flight of Great Grey Owls and an echo flight of Snowy Owls. Two Richardson's Owls were found in Port Arthur early in March.

The winter was severe and on January 30. a new low temperature record for the Lakehead was set when the mercury fell to -42.2° F. February ended with a 65-year record snowfall when 13.2 inches fell in the 27th. The total snowfall for the season was about 10 feet and there was still approximately 3 feet of snow in the bush on April 22nd. Lake Superior was frozen far from shore and on March 10th there was ice all the way across though open tongues of water were present here and there. However, pussy willows were flowering by March 6th and the migrant crows were back in flocks on the 26th and 27th of March. On April 9th dewworms were out and a Compton Tortoise butterfly was seen. The first groundhog showed himself the next day and by the 16th the smelt were running in Current River.

Purple finches were our first spring migrants, arriving in numbers on March 2nd, although the average date is April 14th. A singing male American Goldfinch on April 29th was also unusual as the average arrival date is May 18th. On the whole, however, the early migrants were slow in arriving. Red-winged Blackbirds were 13 days later than the average and Myrtle Warblers were 9 days late. By May 3rd the Current River dam was over-flowing and the weather improved until on the 25th when an 85° F. reading made a new May record. The outstanding event of May was the period May 18th to 20th, when twenty-eight species arrived. This coincided with particularly favourable meteorological conditions. Two species, new to Lakehead records, were seen on May 20th; a Western Tanager was observed by Mrs. W.P. Hogarth and C.E. Garton saw a Yellow-throated Vireo. Although there are only two or three previous records of Indigo Buntings, three were noted over this week-end and Black-throated Blue Warblers were also fairly common. Other interesting spring observations included a Whip-poor-will on April 28 (Mrs. Hogarth) and a Nighthawk on May 16th.

Wildflowers are a welcome sight after a long winter and the first dandelion was noted on May 6th; two days later Spring Beauty, Bloodroot, Hepatica, Marsh Marigold, Wild Ginger, Wood Anemone and Wild Strawberry were in bloom. The foliage developed rapidly on the trees and leaves were well out of bud by May 13th, almost two weeks earlier than in 1950. The club held its Regional Gathering on May 26 when 43 species of plants were found in bloom and 65 species of birds were seen despite the rain. Hudsonian Curlew were seen on June 7th (K. Eoll).

During May two albino Mudpuppies were caught in the Kaministiquia River and given to Dr. Allin who now has four albinos from this particular area. Two Snapping Turtles were reported seen at Round Lake by Claude Garton and Bell's Turtles were seen at Castle Lake. A Raccoon was seen near the old sheep ranch in Port Arthur in June by Gordon Lewis and another was reported seen at Amythest on July 11th by Dr. E. N. Wright. A Sea Lamprey taken by Jerry Skea at Birch Beach July 31 attached to a three-pound lake trout was sent to Dr. Allin for his fish collection. Rock Bass appeared to be on the increase throughout the district. A ling containing 3 smelts was taken May 2nd. A Brown Trout caught on October 20th is the first known record for this district.

Upland Plovers returned, as they have on several occasions since 1945. More Bobolinks were noted than usual, although no breeding record was established. The Brewer's Blackbirds nested in the customary area but the colony was reduced to three birds, one male and two females. The nests were found by Dr. Allin on June 13th, 100 feet apart, and contained five and four young respectively. A Cedar Waxwing nest found May 20th at 40 feet in a white birch was unusually early and unusually high. A Barn Swallow's egg was found in the nest of a Phoebe under a local bridge and a Robin's nest situated on the top of a stub, 8 feet from the ground, containing two eggs on May 20th, were interesting records. Forty-seven different species were found breeding in the district. Although Pine Siskins were common all summer no nests were found.

Warblers were migrating south at the Lakehead as early as August 2nd. Shore birds were very scarce in the fall, the first returning Lesser Yellowlegs and Solitary Sandpipers being reported August 19th. Four Golden Plovers were noted Sept. 7th. Pectoral Sandpipers were not reported. Flickers were migrating in O'Connor Township on Sept. 3rd and the next week Mrs. Addison saw a flock of Bluebirds in Port Arthur. A heavy migration of Cape May and Myrtle Warblers, Lapland Longspurs, and Vesper Sparrows occurred on Sept. 15. Large flocks of Robbings were seen between Sept. 29th and Oct. 8th. Ravens became common again early in September. A Great Blue Heron was brought to Dr. Allin late in September which had a haemoglobin of less than 25% and was too weak to fly. One of two similar specimens taken last year suffered from a Leucocytozoon infection.

Ducks were possibly more abundant than for several years. Early in September Blacks, Mallards, and Blue-winged Teal were fairly abundant but the majority appeared to move south about the middle of the month when Ring-necked Ducks were fairly common. The Ring-necks did not remain in their usual numbers at Whitefish Lake during October, but Lesser Scaup, which arrived about the same time, were abundant until the lake froze over on October 30th. More than the usual number of White-winged Scoters were noted this year. Very few pond ducks were seen. Redheads, Buffleheads, American Golden-eyes, Canvasbacks and Greater Scaup were seen but Pintails, Baldpates and Green-winged Teal were not observed. Col. L. S. Dear added another new bird to the local records when he saw a Western Grebe at Whitefish Lake on October 19th.

The first heavy frost was on September 25th and snow fell on October 24th. Believed to have been the earliest time the temperature has been below zero in the Autumn, November 2nd brought a -2° F. record. A Broad-winged Hawk was seen by L. S. Dear on November 4th which was a late record. Northern Shrikes were seen on October 13th, 27th and 28th in O'Connor Township by Dr. Allin. Ruffed Grouse began budding about the end of October. A late date for the Fox Sparrow was October 27th. A Snowy Owl was seen by J. Parkin on November 3rd and four more were seen before the end of the year. Three Glaucous Gulls were seen by C. E. Garton on December 2nd. Although the rowan crop was very poor this year pine Grosbeaks were present in fair numbers in the fall, and on December 9th were noted feeding on the samaras of Black Ash. Another highlight of the year was the report of a Cardinal on December 26th by Mrs. C. Rydholm. This bird, the first for our area, has been seen many times since.

Compiled by Dr. A.E.Allin and K. Dennis.

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FIELD NOTES

Feb. 14.	Robin, P.A., Norman Dennis	March 9	Brown Creeper, Rosslyn, Red-breasted Nuthatch Blue Jays Canada Jays Mrs. Knowles.
" 16.	Snowy Owl, Paipoonge Twp. Allins Redpolls, Neebing Twp. The Allins	" 11	Pileated Woodpecker McIntyre Twp. Mr. & Mrs. Hanton.

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THE NOTE BOOK

Three Evening Grosbeaks were observed on March 2nd, feeding on the seeds of the dried and frozen fruit of two Cotoneaster shrubs. Although there was a heavy crop Dr. Allin reported that only 50% of the fruit remained after the day's feeding.

March 4th - Pussy Willows open in sheltered spot in Fort William (David Allin)

March 5th - Tug Whalen begins icebreaking, the ice being only 24-28 inches thick compared with the average of 36 to 39" customary.

March 4th - Mr. Jackson, Rosslyn Village, phoned to say that a Woodpecker (or Woodpeckers) was destroying the bark on a live willow and an aspen. Investigation proved this correct. One 3" aspen was girdled and probably will die. Bent comments that both the Hairy and Downy occasionally eat the cambium layer of bark but that it was not a serious matter. At the Jackson home, however, under special circumstances, a tree is actually being killed. Mr. Jackson believes one Downy Woodpecker is to blame. Incidentally Mr. Jackson breeds budgerigars and showed Dr. Allin one nestling and a set of marble-like white eggs which a female was incubating.

February 28th. Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence reported a brown butterfly (probably a Compton Tortoise-shell) between the inner and outer windows of their kitchen.

Ken Campbell visited Caranac, 20 miles east of Long Lac, during February and saw a White-throated Sparrow which has been visiting a feeding tray at the home of Mrs. J.S. Navin.

February 21st Ken Eoll saw an Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker at Stevens.

EXCHANGES

WILDLIFE REVIEW No. 65, Nov. 1951: Articles reviewed include-de Vos, Antoon and Peterson, Randolph L. A. review of the status of woodland caribou (*Rangifer caribou*) in Ontario. *Journal of Mammalogy* 32 (3): 329-337 illus. August 1951

From review of literature, sight records, and trend information the authors conclude that the caribou in Ontario are now much reduced in range and number, and that "South of a Lake Abitibi-Lake Nipigon Line it seems almost certain that there are no more than approximately three or four hundred caribou remaining. North of that line it seems likely that there are at least 1,000 animals, and possibly two or three times that number."

THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, 65, #5:184-185, contains an article by A. E. Allin: "Records of the Sea Lamprey and the Silver Lamprey from the Canadian waters of the western end of Lake Superior."

THE FLICKER, 23, #4:81-82, contains a section "The Canadian Lakehead" edited by Dr. Allin. Both this and the preceding journal is available to our members in the reading rooms of the local libraries.

ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF BREEDING BIRDS OF THE REGION OF THUNDER BAY, LAKE SUPERIOR.

Breeding Birds of the Region of Thunder Bay, Lake Superior, Ontario was written by our Honorary President, L. S. Dear and published in the Transactions of the Royal Canadian Institute, No. 49, Vol. XXIII, Pt. 1, October, 1940. Observations made in the field during the following years resulted in records of four additional breeding species to the list, and of nesting records of two species whose nests had not been found at the time the list was published, though they were known to breed in the area. Col. Dear has supplied these supplementary records.

ADDITIONAL RECORDS

PINTAIL (*Anas acuta tzitzihua*). Since the spring of 1944 this species has been observed in considerable numbers, many of them apparently remaining to breed. The first breeding record was established in 1943.

Breeding records: Fort William, June 6th, 1943, duck with brood of young;
May 14th, 1944, nest with four heavily incubated eggs.

UPLAND PLOVER (*Bartramia longicauda*). The first record of this species was in the spring of 1946 when two pairs were observed which showed every evidence of breeding. Subsequently, a young bird about a week old was found in a large pasture field in Fort William, the parent bird being observed at the same time. A pair was again observed in the late summer of 1950.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). One colony, only, is known to exist in this area, but when it became established is not known. Birds were first observed during the summer of 1943 and have bred in the same spot ever since, in spite of gradually encroaching building. This spot is within the city limits of Port Arthur. Breeding Record: Port Arthur, June 26, 1947, nest with four eggs.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Dendroica tigrina*). This species appears to be an uncommon but regular summer resident and undoubtedly breeds. It is noted every summer, but the nest has not been found.

BREEDING RECORDS OF SPECIES ALREADY REPORTED

CANADA SPRUCE GROUSE (*Canachites canadensis*). Devon Twp., June 4th, 1950, nest with eight eggs.

WESTERN PAIM WARBLER (*Dendroica palmarum palmarum*). The breeding of this species was established on June 9th, 1945, when a nest with four eggs was found in McIntyre Township.

Two other records are of interest, a Catbird nest with four eggs found in O'Connor Twp., June 5th, 1949; and a Wilson's Warbler nest with five eggs in O'Connor Twp., found June 22nd, 1949.

Phenology, states the dictionary, is the science dealing with the influence of climate on the recurrence of such annual phenomena of animals and plant life as bird migrations, budding, etc. The purpose of this report is to assemble facts about the plant and animal life of the local area that will eventually give us a clear picture of the normal sequel of events. It is not expected that everyone will be able to make a record for every item listed but it is hoped that everyone will turn in these sheets in the fall. The co-operation of every member of the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists' Club will aid greatly in this effort. Observations of plants made in the same locality in successive years show the effect of climate better than scattered observations so it would help if you jot down the place where you noted each species.

NAME	ADDRESS
1. SKUNK (emerges from hibernation)	date- where-
2. MARSHHAWK (Migrants arrive)	
3. WOODCHUCK (emerges from hibernation)	
4. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (Migrant males arrive)	
5. BRONZED GRACKLE (Arrives	
6. ROBIN (Migrants arrive in numbers)	
7. KILLDEER (Arrives)	
8. CANADA GOOSE (Arrives)	
9. SPRING PEEPER (first singing)	
10. EARTHWORM (on surface of ground)	
11. BROWN BAT (flying)	
12. YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (arrives)	
13. MOURNING CLOAK BUTTERFLY (First seen)	
14. PUSSY WILLOW (in pollen)	
15. PHOEBE (arrives)	
16. RUFFED GROUSE (Drums)	
17. QUAKING ASPEN (Populus tremuloides) (In pollen)	
18. EASTERN BELTED KINGFISHER (arrives)	
19. ALDER (Alnus incana)(in pollen)	
20. HEPATICA (in bloom)	
21. BLOODROOT (in bloom)	
22. DANDELION (in bloom)	
23. MARSH MARIGOLD (in bloom)	
24. WOOD ANEMONE (in bloom)	
25. HERMIT THRUSH (arrives)	
26. STEMLESS BLUE VIOLET (Viola cucullata)(in bloom)	
27. PIN CHERRY (in bloom)	
28. CHOKE CHERRY (in bloom)	
29. HOUSE WREN (arrives)	
30. WILD STRAWBERRY (in bloom)	
31. EASTERN KINGBIRD (Arrives)	
32. FALSE SOLOMON'S SEAL (Smilacina stellata) (in bloom)	
33. LILAC (in bloom)	