

TRAIL & Landscape

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NATURAL HISTORY AND CONSERVATION



T R A I L & L A N D S C A P E

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- Founded 1879 -

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Objectives of the Club: To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

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THE CLUB'S CENTENNIAL - A TIME TO LOOK AHEAD

In 1979 The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club will celebrate the hundredth anniversary of its founding. We will take pride in remembering the many accomplishments of its members during the first hundred years - original studies of the natural history of the Ottawa area, the contributions of John Macoun to biology and to Canada, and the wild flower paintings of Mrs. White (wife of the first president) - to name a few examples.

And yet, while we have a right to glory in our history and our traditions, we must not allow ourselves to wallow in nostalgia. Nor can we let ourselves be encumbered by established customs when we make decisions about the Club's future direction. We can't afford to.

Gone forever are the limitless expanses of forest and the pure rivers. They were two-generation-old memories at the time of the Club's founding. But how much worse is the situation today. The only natural areas we have left are those which survived by accident rather than by good planning.

The environment of the Ottawa - Hull region has changed over the past hundred years and the Club's emphasis has changed also, but not enough. Whether we like it or not, the protection of the few dozen natural features left is our responsibility. We alone realize the value of these irreplaceable areas, and we would feel most severely their loss. And so, we can't remain "just a bunch of birdwatchers"; we must involve ourselves in the planning and political processes, particularly at the municipal level.

In 1968, when the Club's Constitution was brought up to date, the Objectives were expanded to read: "To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage, ... to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things." A good start! Several years later a committee was set up to deal with conservation concerns. For the past few years this important task has been carried by only a few individuals. However, such significant and difficult work requires the full participation of all members. Therefore, we call on the 1976 Council to provide leadership in channeling a high proportion of the Club's local energies to this work.

Now, all of this activity is a big job and one which does not have to be tackled alone. We have allies. The National and Provincial Parks Association has the special task of protecting Gatineau Park from mismanagement and other abuses. The National Capital Environmental Council (see page 8) has recently been formed to co-ordinate the efforts of all environmentally oriented groups in the region and to provide a strong lobby for sane and human planning.

But, of course, perhaps you would rather choose to be "bird watchers" and to continue the myopic pre-occupations of admiring and/or studying natural history. In that case, we face a high probability that one day we will drive out to find Gatineau Park crisscrossed with autoroutes or the Mer Bleue converted to a sewage lagoon.

These are the realities of Ottawa - Hull in the 1970's. We naturalists must be active in defending natural areas against encroachment and destruction. Otherwise our legacy to Club members a hundred years from now will be an asphalt landscape with only English Sparrows and Starlings to study.

J.M.R.



nepean waterfront park
nepean parks and recreation department

Changes at Ottawa Beach

Jim Wickware

For two or three years past the river at Ottawa Beach and Crystal Bay has been changing its location and shape. Where waters once hurried through reeds, grass and tree-covered mounds have grown, walkways lead to a bank some several hundred feet further into the river from its former location. A newly created waterfall and stream feed man-made ponds leading into Graham Creek, which, if you look carefully, still enters the bay as before.

This man-made landscape has changed familiar birding locations and affected habits and patterns of some of the birds we have become accustomed to look for there.

With the major construction impact having one full season to be observed, readers may be interested in how it has affected the migratory birds who regularly stop over in this location.

Bruce Dilabio, a frequent and regular observer of birds in the area, has indicated changes that have taken place. The waders such as the sandpipers, yellowlegs and plovers are no longer to be seen in the numbers previously recorded due to the obvious loss of feeding habitat.

The puddle ducks who dabble in shallows have moved out with the shoreline. Blacks, Mallards, Pintails and Teals can still be observed in numbers previously noted. The point at the end of Graham Creek remains intact as a landmark for flying geese and along Ottawa Beach the big birds are still observed as previously seen. Further out into the river where the waters begin to deepen the divers including Scaup, Bufflehead and Goldeneye still are seen as before. In the spring northern migrants begin to appear here as early as mid-April and continue on through May. About mid-August the first waders begin to appear from the north and in ever increasing numbers the migration grows until November with the last hardy holdouts pulling out about Christmas. The migration habitats of the majority of the birds using the Crystal Bay and Ottawa Beach areas does not appear to have been disturbed by the creation of the park.

While man-made changes have had an almost instant impact, there will be further and more subtle natural changes occurring. A slow silting of the new bank by river currents may occur, followed by the establishment of new plant growth as previously found along the original beach. With this, a revival of the waders would follow, as well as possible increased numbers of dabblers.

Perhaps Club members who use this area would be interested in observing, recording and reporting the happenings, along what may become one of the better observation areas that is easily accessible, whether by walking, cycling, or arriving by car; and as Bruce points out, he has seen more than a fair share of rarities while birding along this shore.

AUTUMN BIRDS 1975

The autumn of 1975 will long be remembered as the possible bonanza season for those keen birders anxious to increase their Ottawa lists. Unfortunately, the Audubon's Shearwater was found dead, the Western Grebe at Shirley's Bay was seen by only one observer, and the Black-headed Gull remained at the Ottawa dump for five days along with 5000 other gulls. The latter was so difficult to find that some birders made four consecutive trips. Why the total bird species recorded from the district should suddenly increase by three in one month is a matter of conjecture. But no doubt the weather disturbances that brought an unseasonable amount of rain in early autumn had something to do with it.

An adult Red-throated Loon was observed from the Shirley's Bay dyke on September 24th. This bird had retained a substantial portion of its spring plumage - the red on the throat could be seen. A very well documented report of a Western Grebe on the Ottawa River in early September was received from Jo Ann Murray. Perhaps the bird discovery of the year was the Audubon's Shearwater at Almonte. Not only was this the first record for Ottawa but also the first for Canada. Normally, this species ranges in the sub-tropical belt of the Atlantic Ocean and rarely appears as far north as Cape Cod. Yet this is the third pelagic tubenose to be recorded within the Ottawa district. Previously, Harcourt's and Wilson's Storm-Petrels have been found dead. Also a Fulmar was recovered from the Ottawa River near Arnprior outside the 30 mile Ottawa District radius. A very late Cattle Egret was observed briefly on the log boom at Kitchissippi lookout. It was found by B. Dilabio et al on October 11th and was later seen flying north into Quebec.

Duck migration seemed slow. Many northwestern species had not peaked in numbers until late October. For the fourth consecutive fall a male Barrow's Goldeneye was seen on the Ottawa River just east of Kitchissippi lookout.

Individual Peregrine Falcons were found at Dunrobin on September 7th and at Ottawa Beach on October 3rd. This seems to be consistent with the low numbers in previous seasons.

The low level of the Ottawa River afforded good mudflats and consequently extensive feeding areas for shore birds. The difficult-to-identify Long-billed Dowitcher appeared at Shirley's Bay on three occasions during September. In addition to having noticeably long bills, the definitive "keep" call note was recorded on tape and compared positively with bona fide recordings from the Mackenzie River Delta. The number of species and individuals of phalaropes was amazing. It was possible to see all three species at Shirley's Bay on a single day. Red Phalaropes numbered from one to three during the period from September 7th to October 12th. As many as 15 Northern Phalaropes could be found at one time from September 17th to September 28th. And two Wilson's remained in the lagoon for a week in mid-September.

Gull-watching in the Capital this season can only be described as absolutely incredible. Fifteen species occur in eastern North America on a regular basis and ten of them were seen in Ottawa. S. O'Donnell and C. Griffiths discovered Ottawa's first Black-headed Gull. It was an adult bird in winter plumage that remained at the Ottawa dump for five days. Excellent photographs were obtained to confirm the identification. Another European straggler, the Little Gull, first recorded in Ottawa last June, was seen again. An adult bird flew with Bonaparte's at Shirley's Bay on September 2nd and a sub-adult bird was observed at the Britannia filtration plant. An immature Sabine's flew across the Shirley's Bay dyke on September 7th. This was the third record for the species from the district. An early immature Iceland Gull arrived on October 19th at the Ottawa dump. And no fewer than five immature Thayer's Gulls were carefully identified throughout September and October. A Pomarine Jaeger flew around Lac Deschênes for one day on September 21st.

Three Eastern Kingbirds were found September 27th at Luskville, one Crested Flycatcher in Wychwood on September 26th and one Olive-sided Flycatcher on September 21st, all late dates. Swallows remained throughout September until the first week of October; one Bank Swallow on October 4th, one Barn Swallow on October 5th, one Cliff Swallow on October 5th and two Purple Martins on October 7th. Again, all these observations represent very late dates.

There were unusually high concentrations of Swainson's Thrushes throughout September. There were also numerous reports of Gray-cheeked Thrushes. The fall bird count yielded an amazing 25 Boreal Chickadees. Even though fall counts in previous years were held three weeks earlier, Boreal Chickadees have never been recorded on these surveys. In fact, three such birds are in a spruce tree outside the window of the author as this report is being prepared. Gray Jays first appeared on the fall bird count when three birds were recorded. As many as six individuals have been seen in Wychwood at one time and another has remained near the Rivermeade Golf Course into November.

Yellow-throated Vireos were found on September 7th and 27th. Solitary, Philadelphia and Warbling Vireos were all seen in October. Similarly many fall warblers lingered late into October. One party recorded no fewer than 18 warbler species on October 2nd.

Red Crossbills appeared again this fall. Many sightings have been made wherever suitable habitat exists. Siskins and Redpolls are still scarce as of October 31st. An unconfirmed but precise description of a Harris' Sparrow was given by Bob Watt of a moulting adult bird. He observed it for half an hour near his home in the Gatineau.

Birders have found this fall to be very exciting and successful. Let us hope this success can continue into the winter season.

Monty Brigham

Environmentalists Unite in NCR

This fall a new non-governmental organization was formed, called the National Capital Environmental Council. At the present time it is acting as an information flow between citizen groups and non-profit organizations in the National Capital Region to facilitate informed citizen participation in the planning process.

One important role of the Council is to bring together groups in Ottawa-Carleton and l'Outaouais, thus strengthening their effectiveness when important decisions are made concerning the National Capital Region. This is particularly important in view of the fact that the federal government is working to encourage the growth of a bilingual and bicultural capital. Also, from a practical standpoint, with respect to the physical planning of the Region such as the provision of roads, bridges, and recreational areas, communication between the two regions' residents is not only desirable, but can also be mutually beneficial in terms of working towards retaining the quality of life we presently enjoy in the nation's capital.

The Council has met three times to date, twice in Ontario and once in Quebec. Meetings are informal and subjects for discussion are varied and interesting. Emphasis is laid upon the multi-disciplinary nature of the "environment" and thus many concerns are covered, for example, in the fields of housing, transportation, recreation, pollution, land-use management. Representatives of different groups participating at meetings to date number fifteen. Unfortunately, due to the mail strike we have not been able to send out information on items discussed at the meetings. One important topic, however, has been citizen participation in the Joint Parliamentary Committee hearings on the National Capital Region. It would appear that many groups feel intimidated by the magnitude of the Committee's task, and therefore may not offer their views and opinions on the future of the NCR. The Council is currently working with the Committee to overcome this problem and encourage as many groups as possible to seek a voice in the proceedings.

To date many people have expressed support for the Environmental Council and see it as important in filling a gap in terms of coordinating individual groups' efforts to protect the environment in the National Capital Region. The future direction of the organization may be toward becoming a strong lobbying voice for the initiation and improvement of environmental legislation at all government levels.

Should any person be interested in knowing more about the Council, please call me at 829-6798.

Marey Gregory



Queen of a Paper Palace

Isabelle Nicol . illustrated by Alan Emsley

Anna was now three days old. She hung head down in her six-sided grey paper cell, seeming to defy the laws of gravity. When her mother, the queen of this particular nest, had borne the milky-white egg from which she hatched, it had been glued to the upper end of the downward-opening cell. She was now held in place by a thick mucus secretion, but as she grew older, she would fill the cell and the pressure from the bulk of her body would hold her in place. Anna's cell was larger than the worker cells because she was to become a queen some day, and in so doing she would be larger than her sister workers, and her daughters who would work for her. She would also be larger than the male with whom she would some day mate in order to carry out her life's plan.

Right now Anna was a white, grublike creature and she was hungry. One of her elder sisters, a worker in the colony, approached her and began to feed her the minced-up portions of a moth caterpillar. By being fed Anna was stimulated to produce drops of a sweetish fluid from her mouth. The worker lapped up this product greedily before she went on her way. Because Anna was in a stage of quick body growth, she was fed mainly protein-rich insects which were well minced in the mandibles of her elder sister workers. And too, because she was to become a queen she was indeed well fed and not exploited to produce the sweet salivary substance which the workers were fond of stimulating the worker caste larvae to produce, often with no food forthcoming in exchange.

And so the days of her larval growth went, twelve in all; days in which she was well fed and grew to fill her cell. Surprisingly enough, considering the amount she ate, Anna did not foul her bed. The waste products collected in her abdomen and showed through the light skin as a darkened area. When she prepared to enter the pupal stage, she would void these wastes all at one time and they would become a dried pellet in the bottom of her cell.

On the twelfth day Anna began to produce a silken material from glands in her head. She formed a cap over the opening of her cell and completely swathed herself in a silken shroud. She was now in the pupal stage of her life and extreme changes were taking place within her cell. Larval tissue was broken down and remodeled into adult features. At first she became a creamy-white replica of

her mother. Then color began to appear in her wings, legs, antennae, and on her body itself. Fourteen days later she cut her way out of the cocoon and emerged an exact duplicate of her mother: a winged, big-eyed, colorful wasp, a bald-faced hornet.

It was now late summer and Anna would be leaving this, her first home, without seeing its ultimate dissolution. Her mother, the old queen, was worn out and no longer able to produce eggs. Soon after Anna left, her mother died. The only occupants of the nest now were aged workers and the last of the larvae. In an instinctive effort to continue the life of the colony, these workers began to lay eggs in the cells, often botching the job by laying two eggs in one cell. But these being imperfect females and unmated, their eggs hatched only into drones, the male hornets. Now that the queen was dead, discipline broke down in the nest. Some of the workers dragged larvae from their cells and dropped them. Some turned to cannibalism and ate both eggs and larvae. Many left to range the fields, but all would succumb in the first cold snap. The only ones who would survive the coming winter would be the queens who would start new colonies.

When Anna left the nest she rose high in the air and was pursued by a male of the species. Mating took place in the air and soon after, the drone died, his purpose in life having been served. Within her abdomen, Anna had a sac called the spermatheca in which the supply of sperm she had received from the male was stored. Here the sperm would remain viable until needed to fertilize her eggs come spring.

But now it was getting late and Anna needed a place to sleep the winter away. She chose a spot deep down amongst a lot of deadfalls, crawling under some loose bark. Though twilight was descending upon her and she would soon be covered with a blanket of snow, Anna was not entirely safe. For if the coming winter proved to be a mild one, it could be her undoing. And then there was the shrew.

* * *

It was cold, so very cold. The shrew ran along her tunnel, hunger gnawing within her. It was now mid-winter and though it was indeed cold in the outer world, down here under the insulating layers of snow, she continued to run along her runway in comfort. But she was hungry. She was finding it increasingly difficult to uncover insects to satisfy her appetite. She had crawled under the bark of the fallen pine and eaten all the grubs she could find, as well as any insects and clusters of eggs in the bark crevices. The old pine had fallen across one of her runways that fall, during a fierce gale, and she had investigated it well. She had also nosed around clumps of sod, under stones and fallen timber on her home grounds for overwintering beetles, grubs, cocoons, insect eggs. She had devoured all she found. Now her pantry was dwindling. She came out of her runway on top of the snow and glanced apprehensively at the pile of deadwood. In order to get to it, she had to run across a small expanse of ground which had been blown clear of snow and was as hard as stone. She didn't like the idea of exposing herself in the open but hunger overcame her discretion.

She ran quickly, looking neither to left nor right. When she reached the deadfalls she quickly ran into a little crevice under the logs. She sat and listened intently before she began her quest for fuel to keep the inner fires burning. She poked about and was fortunate to find a hibernating Mourning Cloak butterfly. She made short work of it but it did little to ease her hunger. She nosed more deeply into the deadfalls, pushing her small body under the loose bark. Yes, there was something here: a hornet. If she could just push a little harder to loosen the bark she would have it. The shrew didn't see the lithe, shadowy white form that came gliding up behind her.

Not too long after the shrew made her wild dash across the frozen ground for the deadfalls, a weasel came by and caught the warm, fresh scent of a meal. With his small sinuous form, it was no problem to squeeze in after the shrew and unravel the tangle of her wanderings. He came upon her quickly and she had no time to experience fear. She died quickly.



And so winter passed, a cold one, much to the well-being of many an insect including Anna. For if a mild winter had prevailed, she might have wakened and started to wander, using up her limited reserves. And she might not have found shelter later in the day when it turned cold again.

Spring arrived: warm, balmy days in which the snow began to melt, cold winds no longer held a tenacious grip over the land, sap once again moved through the trees and their buds swelled. Patches of green showed here and there over the ground and the birds began to return again to raise their families in this land of returning plenty.

Anna wakened from her long winter's sleep on a warm, sunny day. She flew from her hiding place and began her search for a nest site. She chose the underside of a branch overlooking a small stream and began to cast about, looking for weathered wood with which to start her paper palace. It wasn't long before she found some old weathered timber near her nest site.

Placing herself in a position parallel to the grain of the wood, Anna proceeded to scrape fragments from it with her sharp-toothed mandibles. She walked backwards tearing off strips of the fibre. These wood pieces were held in the back of her mandibles until a sufficient quantity had been collected. Then Anna chewed and rechewed these fragments, mixed with generous amounts of her saliva, until they were soft and pulpy. Her mandibles moved sideways as she chewed, much like a pair of scissors. She formed the pulpy mass into a small pellet about an eighth of an inch in diameter.

She flew to her nest site and started to build her nest. A small disc was formed on the underside of the branch, then a slender stem extending downward from it. The entire weight of her home and its inhabitants would be supported by this slender column. At the lower end of the stem she constructed the outline of the first cell. When the first cell was completed she started a second one on the side of the first, then a third cell in the angle of the first two. All her cells would be hexagonal in shape and as she completed each one, she laid an egg in it.

Her manner of using fresh, moist paper pulp was to straddle the edge of the paper sheet already under construction and apply the ball of pulp to it. Walking backward, she worked the pulp into a slender string which she attached by biting it to the old paper. Moving back and forth she would gradually form the moist fibres into a thin addition at the edge of the sheet. As she worked she always moved backward so as not to walk on the newly spread pulp. She would take time out to inspect the quality of her work, for she would test it with her antennae, wanting the material to result in a nest of uniform thickness. While Anna was away collecting more building material, the newly added layer would harden, and by the time she returned it would be ready to receive another addition.

Next she built the first of many paper envelopes to enclose the brood cells. These paper envelopes were attached to the stem supporting the nest, ballooned out about the cells, and drawn together, leaving a small opening at the bottom.



When her larvae began to hatch, Anna became a huntress. Although she herself subsisted on nectar, honeydew, plant sap or other sweet juices as from ripe fruit, as all adult wasps do, her young needed meat in the form of insects. These sweet juices were an energy food and so were suitable for her and other wasps, but the growing larvae needed protein for their development.

Anna hunted by sight and killed her game by biting it, not stinging it. She would capture her prey, dismember it, then chew it into hamburger-like food pellets which she fed to the growing larvae. Some of the liquid from these chewed-up insects also formed a part of her diet.

She now divided her time between feeding her brood and creating additional coverings for her nest. Then one day her larvae began to pupate. And not long after, the first of her worker daughters cut her way out of the cell, and proceeded to do what each and every worker after her would do as she came from her cradle. She crawled along the comb until she came to the first cell with a large enough grub in it. She nudged this grub on the head with her jaws and the grub exuded a sweet drop of liquid which the wasp drank up greedily. And she proceeded from cell to cell in which there were grubs large enough to perform this service. This was her first meal.

Now these, the first brood, took over enlarging the nest, which was now the size of a golf ball, and feeding the young. They also took up the responsibility of feeding the queen their mother, and themselves. They would leave the nest, find a source of sweet substance, fill their crops with the liquid and return to the nest. There they would regurgitate a portion of the liquid, feeding it mouth to mouth to other workers and to the queen. They also hunted down such insects as houseflies, blowflies, moth caterpillars, and spiders for the larvae.

After a week or two of gathering wood fibres, the wasps exhausted the saliva which they needed to mix with the fibres. They then confined themselves to hunting, and caring for the young, leaving the wood gathering to the newer members of the household.

As the inhabitants of the nest increased, it was necessary for Anna's daughters to increase the size of their home. They built entire new floors, hanging each from the one above by a paper stem. However, the paper envelopes which originally enclosed the nest were too restricting, so while new envelopes were constantly being applied on the outside of the nest, the inner envelopes were removed to make room for the cells. These two operations always went on simultaneously so that the eggs and larvae were never subjected to heat, cold or insect enemies. When the nest was finished it was approximately one and a half feet long and had ten floors or tiers.

The series of paper envelopes, each with an air space between, formed excellent insulation against the heat of the days and cold of the nights and there was much less temperature variation within the nest than outside. If the temperature within the nest did become too warm, the workers could create currents of air along the passageways by fanning their wings.

It is interesting to note that some of Anna's offspring were not above taking shortcuts in forming their paper. There happened to be cardboard signs near their home. They would gouge out mouthfuls of this bleached white substance, and many cells would be finished off in white rather than gray.

Anna had long since settled down to laying eggs, and this was all that was required of her for the rest of her life. When laying her eggs she would lay them in concentric zones radiating outward, the older larvae thus being toward the inside.

Now it was late summer and the cycle of her life was just about complete. Large cells were constructed, about one-third larger than the worker cells, and Anna proceeded to lay fertilized eggs in them. From these would come the young queens. In other cells she laid unfertilized eggs from which would come the drones.

Anna's life was nearing its end. She had brought into being 15,000 offspring. Of these, 100 would be queens. She had fulfilled her existence by perpetuating her species in these young queens and males. And now she would literally die of old age. But her life wasn't to end this way.

It was a warm, sunny afternoon. Insects were humming in their dull monotone, the sky was clear. Three young boys worked their way down to the stream and skipped stones across the water. Jostling each other playfully, they made their way down along the bank. The oldest of the boys noticed the nest hanging above the water and in youthful exuberance dared one of the other two to knock it off the branch. Afraid of backing down in front of his friends the young boy looked around for the longest stick or branch he could find. He found one which wasn't quite as long as he would have liked, but it would have to do.

The boys were quite aware of the dangers involved when fooling around with a hornets' nest, but they couldn't resist the desire to see what would happen when it fell. They apprehensively watched their friend, standing well back of him and ready to take flight should a mass of angry hornets come their way. The boy with the stick held it out at arm's length (no doubt wishing his arms were longer) and struck the nest as hard as he could. The nest swung free and fell into the stream.

As soon as the boy hit the nest his friends ran up the bank and he followed as fast as he could. They turned in time to see the nest slowly sinking.

Many of the hornets had escaped and flew about, apparently disoriented. Their home was no longer where it should have been. But as the water gushed in through the entrance of the nest and slowly seeped in at the sides, many more drowned within their home. And Anna, old and tired, felt the cold water creeping in around her. She didn't have the strength to try to escape. And so she died, along with her larval offspring, which would have been her contribution to her species.

The boys continued their jaunt down the bank of the stream, good-naturedly calling out to each other and skipping stones off the water.



TO THE SAGUENAY

At 6:30 a.m. on Saturday, October 11, 1975, a busload of Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club members began a whale-watching and bird-watching excursion which would take us to Rivière-du-Loup and Cap Tourmente, Quebec, and by boat along the St. Lawrence and Saguenay Rivers. The excursion was arranged and led by Roger Foxall in cooperation with the Montreal Zoological Society, which ran a similar itinerary 24 hours ahead of ours. Their leader, Mr. J.T. Iles, accompanied us on our excursion. Of course, there was no guarantee that we would find whales. However, the Montreal Society had organized many such trips in the past, and every trip had located some whales.

Saturday's lunch stop was at Montmagny, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, beyond Quebec City. Here was a small waterfowl sanctuary where perhaps 5,000 Greater Snow Geese were resting and feeding. Ducks included Mallard, Black, Pintail, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal. There were also hunters on the shore on both sides of the sanctuary, forbidden to enter the sanctuary, but allowed to shoot any geese they could hit passing overhead or lured outside the boundary with decoys. The scene resembled a carnival shooting-gallery, although very few geese were actually shot. Even a small sanctuary under such conditions is better than none, as the tired birds had to run the gamut of hunters all along the shoreline to reach this place of comparative safety.

Continuing on, we reached Rivière-du-Loup in late afternoon. Our hotel was the Auberge de la Pointe, the location of which afforded an excellent view of the river below. Some of our group excitedly sighted our first whales almost at once -- a small pod of Belugas well out on the river. The backs of these small whales resembled oval ice flows as they rose to the water's surface to breathe. Here we also saw an immature Gannet, and two adult Black-legged Kittiwakes.

Next morning, we set off downriver aboard a 45-foot boat. The wind was bone-chilling. Forewarned, we had piled on layers and layers of clothing. Our destination was the mouth of the Saguenay River. The cold waters of the wide, deep St. Lawrence River become partially saline there when mixed with the cold North Atlantic tidal inflow. The Saguenay is also cold and deep. The mixing of the three waters, all cold and rich in plankton, results in a very rich "planktonic soup", and is an excellent feeding area for baleen whales.

FOR WHALES

About noon, some distance from the boat, we saw a black back rise out of the water, showing a dorsal fin with a curved tip. Shouts of "Whale!" brought everyone scrambling to the forward rail for a good look at our first Minke or Piked Whale. It surfaced and spouted several times, once quite close to our boat. It was difficult to tell how many Minkes there were; at least two. After a while, the whales seemed to tire of people-watching, and disappeared.

Our boat turned back upriver, and headed into the beautiful rocky-walled Saguenay where Beluga whales live year-round. Although the scenery on land was colorful and impressive, we saw no whales.

On our return to Rivière-du-Loup, we saw several more Minke whales. A few observers on the forward upper deck saw a harp seal regarding us curiously.

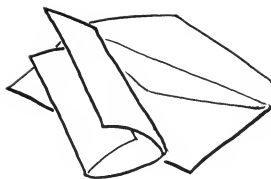
Birding was good, too. Kittiwakes were common, as were Black Guillemots in winter plumage. There were other alcids: a few Razorbills and Murres, and an immature Common Puffin looked us over carefully before diving. A light-phase Northern Fulmar flew stiffly past, as we wondered how it happened to be so far out of range. Several Parasitic Jaegers chased gulls. A large raft of Common Eiders took to the air as we went by.

A light snow was falling as we docked at Rivière-du-Loup at 5 p.m. and boarded our bus for the return to Quebec City.

The next morning, Thanksgiving Day, found us at Cap Tourmente near Ste. Anne de Beaupré. This is a major staging area for the Greater Snow Goose, and there were probably 125,000 of the birds present. A Ross's Goose turned up here last spring, but we found none. There were many sparrows present, including Sharp-tailed. The "Cape of Torment" (so named by Jacques Cartier four centuries ago because of the incessant wind) was warm and sunny for us. The striking autumn color and the masses of noisy Snow Geese kept the photographers busy.

It was a perfect ending for a memorable trip.

Jo Ann Murray



Editor, T & L

On rereading George Neville's plea for land acquisition I couldn't help thinking of a nature preserve on the outskirts of Minneapolis which I visited during the fifties.

After World War I Minneapolis, instead of building a monument, constructed a victory highway several miles in length which circled out from the city and back again. Out at about the centre of the loop was a patch of woods which had been turned into an herbarium, named for a lady teacher at one of the high schools. She had taken her botany students there on nature hikes until the idea finally caught on. When I was there they had several trails with named plants along each. There was a desert trail over sand dunes on which cacti and other desert plants could be seen. There was a swamp trail with orchids and other swamp plants. A hardwood trail with plants common to our northern hardwoods and a spruce-pine trail. All of the plants, trees and shrubs found in Minnesota were supposed to be there -- and it seemed to me from adjoining states as well.

Since you would never find so many species in any one locality, most of them had been moved from other locations. But this had been done so cleverly that every plant was in its natural habitat and associated only with other plants normally found with it. This must have been a tremendous task for there was the gathering of the plants, their careful replanting, the correct naming and the maintenance of the herbarium. But it was really appreciated for their visitor's book had names from most European countries and even China and Japan, while graduate students from all over the United States came for ecological studies.

I don't remember how it was maintained, whether the city had taken it over or whether the Lakes States Forest Experiment Station did the work. I should have made special notes about it but I was at the Experiment Station to study black spruce and this was a short side trip before going to their northern muskogs.

I also appreciate that Trail & Landscape is primarily an Ottawa magazine but the Minneapolis idea could be applied to places in our greenbelt quite as satisfactorily as it had been there.

Sorry about the paucity of information but should the idea catch on it would be possible to write to The Information Officer, Lakes States Forest Experiment Station, St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A.

Best of luck with your excellent magazine.

J.J. Robinson

WASP AND CATERPILLAR

Janet Meldrum



While blueberry picking on a rocky hillside last July I suddenly found myself the observer of an interesting little episode in insect life.

As I sat filling my pail with the delicious berries, a small movement caught my eye. A very thin, black wasp with a small area of red on its abdomen was approaching along the ground. It walked smoothly and effortlessly in spite of the fact that it was straddling, and carrying with it, a bright green caterpillar slightly longer than itself and much fatter. The caterpillar was immobile, apparently dead.

Suddenly the wasp stopped, put down its brightly coloured victim, and began to dig. In a few seconds a neat, round hole appeared and the wasp disappeared underground. The burrow seemed to have already been dug and only to need a little clearing out. The efficient wasp went in and out several more times, each time coming to the surface with a little more of the dry, sandy soil.

Shortly the hole was finished. The wasp grasped the caterpillar at one end and backed into its burrow again. Slowly the unfortunate caterpillar was dragged underground.

That was the last I saw of the insects. I resumed my blueberry picking after a few minutes of waiting, in vain, for the return of the wasp.

I should have been more patient. While looking up burrowing wasps in an (admittedly old) insect book I found the following bit of intriguing information:

"Much has been written about the caterpillar hunts of the Sphecinae. One of the most interesting points is that certain Sphecs, after having stocked the nest, laid an egg, and filled up the entrance to the tunnel, pick up a pebble and, using it as a tool, pat down the loose earth."*

Perhaps the wasp was a Sphecs that would have treated me to a display of tool-using, if only I had waited.

* Lutz, Frank E., Field Book of Insects (revised 1948)

from: FISHES OF CANADA'S NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

By D.E. McAllister and B.W. Coad

LAKE CHARR (TROUT) *Salvelinus namayoush* (Walbaum)

Distinguishing Features The tail fin has a deep fork and the body and dorsal and tail fins have light spots rather than dark, wavy markings.

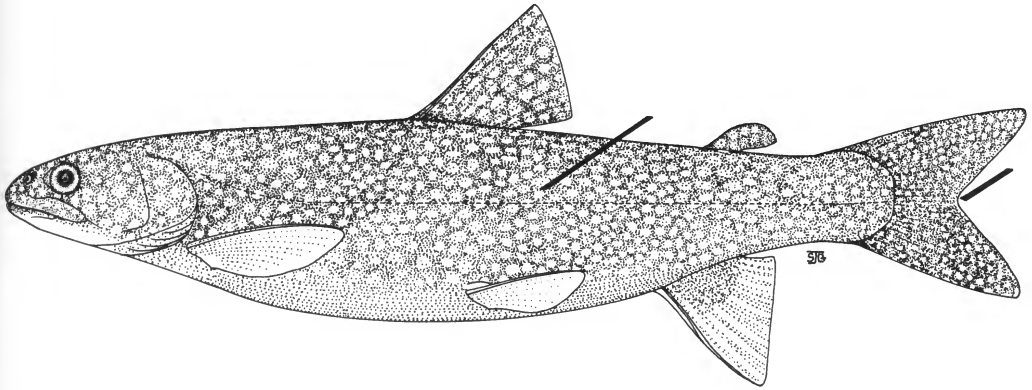
Description Body robust with some lateral compression. Mouth large, slightly oblique, upper jaw extends past eye. Teeth present on both jaws and tongue. There are 8 - 10 major dorsal and 8 - 10 major anal fin rays. Pelvic fins behind level of leading edge of dorsal fin. There is a pelvic axillary scale and adipose fin. Very small scales number 116 - 138 in lateral line. Medium gill rakers number 16 - 26. Intestine bears 81 - 208 pyloric caeca. Color olive or brown-grey on back fading to whitish belly. Back and upper sides have grey wavy markings. Sides spotted with irregular grey markings. Lower fins dusky with pale leading edge but no black stripe. Young fish have 5 - 12 dark parr marks and transparent fins, darkening with age. During breeding season, breeding tubercles develop near base of anal fin. Tips of jaws and roof of mouth become whitish in males. Specimens to 49.5 inches and 102 lb have been reported.

Based on literature reports; no specimens available.

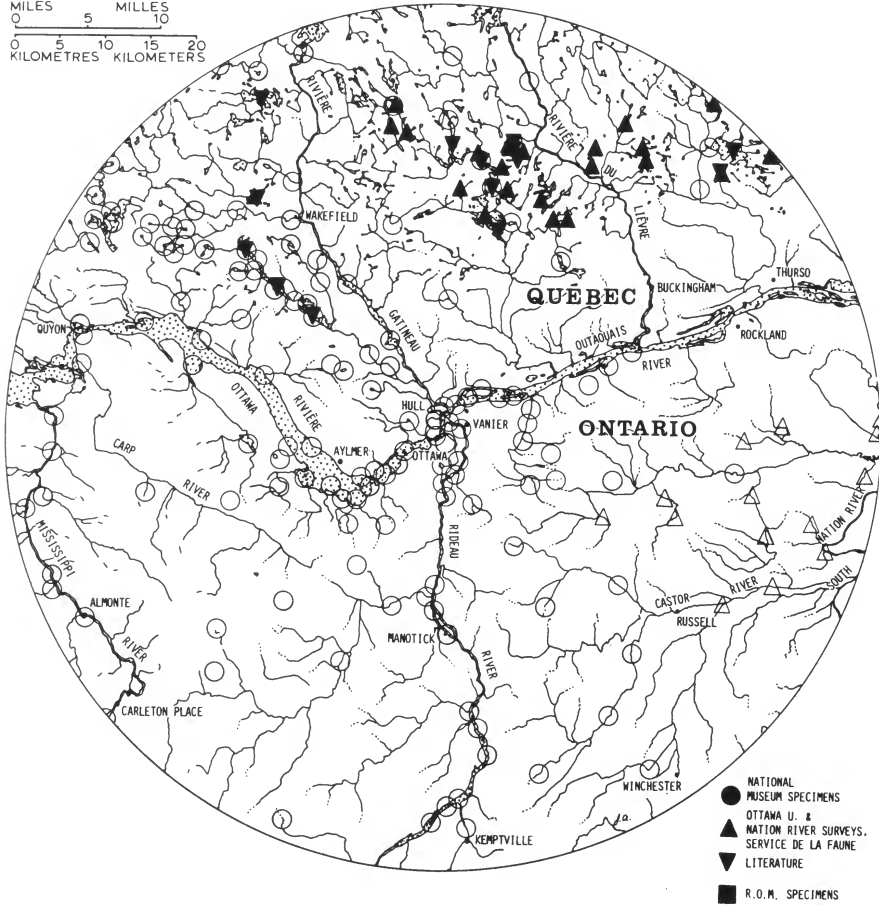
Origin In eastern North America lake charr may have survived glaciation in both a Mississippian and Atlantic coastal refugium and specimens in our area may be derived from either or both.

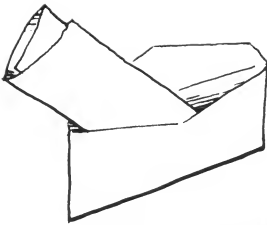
Biology Lake charr are commonly found in cool, deep lakes but may also occur in rivers. They may be seen in rocky shallows during the fall spawning season but retreat to deep, cool parts of lakes in summer. Spawning may occur in groups or be restricted to a single pair of fish. Eggs fall between the rocks of the spawning ground which may be cleaned by rubbing and brushing beforehand, although no nest is built. Up to 18,000 eggs may be deposited, measuring 6 mm in diameter. Hatching occurs early the following spring. Lake charr may live 25 years, attaining sexual maturity at 6 or 7 years of age. Food items include crustaceans, aquatic and terrestrial insects, fishes, and occasionally small mammals. (B.W.C.)

Source: The National Museum of Natural Sciences or the National Museums of Canada. Reproduced by permission of Information Canada and N M N S



MILES 0 5 10 15 20
 KILOMÈTRES 0 5 10 15 20





What Difference Does It Really Make?

On Tuesday, November 11, 1975, an employee of the National Museum of Canada shot what was believed to be an Arctic Loon on the Ottawa River at Britannia. The loon was collected to confirm the field identification which was questionable due to plumage similarities between several species of loons. Accordingly, bird-watching in the Nation's Capital has taken on added dimension -- that of observing believed-to-be-rare bird species shot in some of Ottawa's prime birding areas. ... The Ottawa River and Shirley's Bay are no longer protected stop-overs for our spring and fall migratory species.

One bird is dead. Arctic, Red-throated, Yellow-billed, Common -- what difference does it really make? The National Museum may now proclaim that they know for certain that the reported field identification of an Arctic Loon by some of Ottawa's most reliable birders was in error. It was merely a Red-throated Loon. Oh, well, they could have had less luck. It could possibly have been a lowly Common Loon. Then the excitement, turmoil and confusion would have had, in retrospect, even less glamour.

Man's insatiable quest for factual knowledge has once again been temporarily satisfied. The bird in question is now dead and will soon become a study skin for the National Museum of Canada. It is reportedly a textbook example of an immature Red-throated Loon. So what?

Some birdwatchers check off or collect bird sightings as children collect hockey cards. They are more concerned in having a complete set than in appreciating the significance of the individuals seen. Well, to those birders who derive such personal pleasure in adding another bird to their backyard, province, or life set -- scratch the Arctic Loon. Most naturally we all hope that when the next bird is shot and placed under scientific scrutiny, it will augment someone's personal list and make the set more complete.

When will this irreverence end? It is an insane, senseless act to kill migratory birds that stray from what are believed to be their common flyway routes. It is equally ludicrous to collect a bird specimen because it is classified as rare by the ornithological staff of the National Museum or the local birding fraternity of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club. I believe that the OFNC and all concerned individuals should deplore such acts and publicly take a stand to protect all bird species within the greater Ottawa Area.

It is difficult for me to comprehend the limits of the fanatical fervour to which ornithological field identification has succumbed. There even exists a local list of highly sought-after rare birds. Unfortunately, a pattern is emerging whereby, for one reason or another, the rare bird becomes a study specimen.

Man is fallible. He does err, not only in his field identification of birds, but also in his judgement in understanding the meaning of reverence. Then again, the Red-throated Loon has much to learn of the ways of man. To quote Dr. W.E. Godfrey of the National Museum of Canada in his text, *The Birds of Canada*, "The Red-throated Loon is inclined to be more sociable than most other loons."

Bob Watt
RR #3, Wakefield, P.Q.
J0X 3G0

This letter was brought before Council and discussed for a good half-hour. It was felt that no action could be taken on this single incident as it entails wider issues on which club members may have diverging opinions. Open discussion at a general meeting is being considered, to give members an opportunity to make their views known.

We recall several other cases where the finder of a rare bird, wishing to share the excitement, reported it and the bird was promptly shot. The finder suffered anguish and other birders were dismayed. Could the Club negotiate with the Museum an agreement to respect our traditional birding areas, such as Shirley's Bay, as sanctuaries -- out of bounds to collectors? (A.H.)

Hatch the right BIRDS from these

SCRAMBLED EGGS

Rearrange the letters in the totally misleading egg-words to form correct current names of Ottawa birds. (Try it without reference to a check list.) Answers on request.

example: We're parrots! TREE SPARROW

Sora
trod wheel

Rub not
her Eagle

real
Owl stew

Heron or
Tern oil

O, do wipe
caked Petrel

brew tiny
duck longer

O see
Wren atop
weed!

I send
rubber
Teal

Sew it,
my Finch

damn her
red Goose

O!
Rails
tore ivy

big
keg-nose
Raven

O F N C EVENTS IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

arranged by the Excursions and Lectures Committee
J. Donald Lafontaine, Chairman (829-7273)

Monday
19 January

Annual Business Meeting

AND MEMBERS' PHOTOGRAPHIC EVENING

Meet: Auditorium, National Research Council,
100 Sussex Drive

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Members are invited to bring their favourite slides on local natural history. These will be shown as time permits after the business meeting.

Refreshments will be served.

Tuesday
10 February

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
AN INTRODUCTION TO BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

Speaker: Don Lafontaine

Meet: Auditorium, Ottawa Public Library,
Laurier and Metcalfe Streets

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Sunday
15 February

FIELD TRIP: WINTER BIRDS

Leader: Steve O'Donnell (737-5270)

Meet: Loblaws, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,
Carling Avenue at Woodroffe

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Half day trip - Bring a snack.

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