TRAIL & Landscape

A PUBLICATION CONCERNED WITH
NATURAL HISTORY AND CONSERVATION

Trail & Landscape Vol 19, No 5/233-272/November-December 1985

Trail & Landscape

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Vol 19 No 5

TRAIL & Landscape ©

Published by
The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club
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Welcome, New Members

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August, 1985

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Chairman,
Membership Committee

from the Editor...

Special Thanks to *Trail & Landscape* Contributors

As with its predecessors, production of this 19th volume of *Trail & Landscape* has depended on the hard work of many contributors and volunteers. In addition to the people whose names are listed on the inside front cover of each issue, others have lent their time and talents to improving the accuracy and quality of each issue. This year the following people have been of particular help to us:

George Argus	Bruce Di Labio	Christine Hanrahan
Paul Catling	Albert Dugal	Tom Hanrahan
Brian Coad	Jack Gillett	Henri Ouellet
Francis Cook	David Gray	John Sankey
		Stan van Zyll de Jong

Municipal Elections - November 12th

Once every three years we voters get the chance to choose the most capable candidates to represent us on local and regional municipal councils. These are the people who decide the fate of all lands under their jurisdictions including Natural Environment Areas.

With few exceptions, appallingly few candidates show any evidence of environmental awareness. On the recent City of Ottawa Council, Brian Bourns, Rolf Hasenack, Nancy Smith and Marlene Catterall stood out for their efforts to protect our significant natural areas and maintain a clean, healthy living environment. Brian and Rolf are retiring at the end of this term; Nancy Smith is running for re-election in St. George Ward, and Marlene Catterall is running for Mayor.

When you vote this November, do take your responsibilities as naturalists seriously. Granted, in some municipalities the pickings are slim, but where you have outstanding candidates such as Marlene Catterall and Nancy Smith, don't let bad weather or inertia stop you from getting to the polling station to vote for them!

And after the election, your vocal support is essential to press for decisions that will protect our few remaining natural areas. If you stay silent, the profit-driven developers will win every time. Keep up with the issues and act to protect our natural areas! ¤

The National Museum of Natural Sciences Needs Your Help

The National Museum of Natural Sciences is in trouble. The Scientific Divisions have been seriously understaffed for several years and are now facing a further loss of 25% of their research support and technical personnel. The 17 people being laid off represent over 100 years of accumulated knowledge, expertise and skills which will be lost to the Museum, to the scientific community, and to the Canadian public. This will be a crippling, and in some cases a killing, blow to the research and scientific services that the Museum provides.

Some of the effects of this staff lay-off will be:

- less time for the remaining staff to respond to queries from the public dealing with such diverse topics as how to remove bats from an attic, how to recognize poison ivy, or how to deal with leeches in your lake;

- little new scientific input into exhibits for the more than 500,000 annual visitors; consequently exhibits will be changed less frequently and will not represent the latest and most complete information;

- sharply reduced participation in the work on endangered species for the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC);

- few, if any, new and revised editions of Museum nature guides and books (used by over a million professional and amateur Canadian naturalists); for example, subsequent volumes in the series *Handbook of Canadian Mammals* (see page 264) will appear only after long intervals instead of at the current two year frequency because the technician who makes the measurements and prepares the maps will no longer be there. The futures of other Museum publications are in jeopardy.

- curtailed use of Museum collections by students and scientists in most fields of natural history, due to a shortage of staff;

- curtailed or terminated use of the Museum's unique expert identification services for birders, anglers, mineralogists, biologists, archaeologists, consulting companies and so forth. As specific examples: the entire Gem Collection will have to be closed, halting all exhibits, acquisitions and impartial identifications; the Zooarchaeological Identification Centre, which identifies animal bones from archaeological sites and biological projects all across Canada, will be cancelled com-

pletely; the Ornithology section, which among other things identifies birds involved in collisions with aircraft and recommends measures to avoid such dangerous incidents in the future, will be forced to limit this service and thus its contribution to air safety;

- preservation, maintenance and documentation for the National Mammal, Bird, Fish, Invertebrate and Mineral Collections (part of Canada's heritage for over 130 years) will be paralysed. Calculations indicate that if the trend continues to 1990-1991, these irreplaceable collections, now worth tens of millions of dollars, will have suffered irreversible damage; approximately half will be undocumented and thus unusable and virtually worthless. The stagnation and deterioration in these National Collections will mean that very little new original research will be done on Canadian plants, animals or minerals.

Canada's National Museum of Natural Sciences will relinquish its position as a world-class natural history museum, a source of pride for the entire country, and will become merely a caretaker institution.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can take the few minutes needed to write a brief note to the Prime Minister's Office, expressing your views on the crippling loss of manpower and resources to the Scientific Divisions of the National Museum of Natural Sciences.

Write today to:

The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney,
Prime Minister of Canada,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6.

No postage is required.

PLEASE HELP THE MUSEUM - EVERY LETTER COUNTS ¤

Recent Bird Sightings

Christine Hanrahan

Did anybody else feel as I did in June: overwhelmed by a dreadful certain that summer was never going to arrive? Fortunately, despite such inauspicious beginnings, summer did appear, in fits and starts, and proceeded to chug along uncertainly through August. Hot, muggy days were interspersed with days of surprising chill, and the dryness of July gave way to some heavy rains in August. Ottawa Beach looked promising in July when sandbars began to emerge, boding well for some good shorebird habitat. The rains of August soon covered them up, and although they re-emerged, the best shorebird spots were the local sewage lagoons. Ottawa Beach did, however, play host to some interesting shorebirds.

A rather startling amount of activity is condensed into the three months covered by this report: June, July and August. The northward-bound stragglers are still pushing through in early June; meanwhile the frenzy of breeding activity prevails locally. By July the fall migration of shorebirds has begun, and, come August, most migrant species are on their way south. The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas is in its final year, and atlassers have, throughout the five-year period, contributed greatly to our knowledge of locally breeding birds. This year was no exception, and once again more locations for species previously believed to be rare or uncommon locally have been found.

The most interesting sightings involved shorebirds. Hudsonian Godwits in unprecedented numbers arrived at Ottawa Beach on August 25th. In fact, August 25th was a rather remarkable day, and if you read the shorebird sightings carefully, you will see why. A Marbled Godwit, Whimbrel and Buff-breasted Sandpipers all added to the interest. Three Great Egrets visited Ramsayville Marsh at the same time, making a trek to that place worthwhile. Otherwise there were no "mind-boggling" rarities to add spice to our summer months.

Grebes: A Horned Grebe at Casselman sewage lagoons first observed on July 10th in full breeding plumage remained throughout the summer. This constitutes only the second summer record for this species.

Cormorants: Several birds could be seen along the Ottawa River at any time during the summer months, especially around Lemieux and Morris Islands.

Herons and Bitterns: The Great Egret is still a locally rare species, although since its first sighting in the region in 1972, it has been observed on average about every second year during the May-September period, for a total of nine sightings. A tenth sighting occurred this year when three birds turned up together at Ramsayville Marsh on August 20th. They stayed around for over a week allowing observers excellent views.

Last year this writer optimistically stated that Least Bitterns were being found with "increasing frequency", primarily due to Atlas work. Alas, no breeding reports were turned in this year. Nonetheless, up to 12 birds were reported from the Quebec side in the Thurso area in mid-July.

Waterfowl: The Bell-Northern regulars - Canada Geese, that is - took up residence again on their artificial pond near Moodie Drive in April. In due course, they produced numerous progeny - a contribution to the ever-burgeoning Canada Goose population in Ottawa. Several other broods were found in new, and unexpected, places leading to the conclusion that this species may well become a very common breeder here one day.

About 26 Brant were seen on June 1st and 14 more on June 4th near Fitzroy Harbour Dam.

Gadwall were reported in small numbers throughout the period and evidence of possible breeding was found at Almonte during an evening of Atlas square-bashing. Five Ruddy Ducks were found at the Casselman sewage lagoon in mid-July and were present throughout the summer. Also at the same lagoons was a female Canvasback, which spent the summer there. Normally this species is present only in the spring. This sighting represents the first summer record for the Ottawa District.

One Ring-necked Duck was observed on June 2nd on a reservoir in the Lac Philippe area. Five Lesser Scaup were seen on June 29th, while in July observations of this species increased. The growing numbers of this species during the summer months leads one to believe that more confirmation of breeding will surely be found. During the five-year Atlas period, however, only one confirmed breeding was reported Nepean Bay in 1983.

Raptors: One Peregrine Falcon was observed on June 20th and another on August 26th at Shirleys Bay. A Merlin was also observed at Shirleys Bay in early August.

Shorebirds: July's long, hot days may lead many sun-seekers to imagine an endless summer, winter being only a dim, barely-perceived memory. For birders, however, such oblivion is a luxury not allowed. It is an unfortunate fact of birding life that July sgnals the start of the fall migration, and fall gives rise to visions of ice not far behind. No sooner have the shorebirds flown north than (so it seems) they turn around and head south again, condensing summer terribly! The local sewage lagoons were the hot spots beginning in early July, and by August the shorebird migration was in full force. Black-bellied and Lesser Golden Plovers were observed in regular numbers,

while the two Yellowleg species along with more common shorebirds were seen in good numbers.

A Marbled Godwit made a brief visit to Cobbs Creek near Bourget on June 12th. This sighting constitutes at least the tenth record for this species in recent times. If Godwits of the Hudsonian variety were what you really wanted to see, then Ottawa Beach on August 25th was the place to be. A flock of about 120 Hudsonian Godwits were watched by many observers for several hours in the morning, while a smaller flock of about 80 was found at the same place in the evening. It is assumed that these were two separate flocks, thus putting the number observed on that one day at an incredible 200 birds! That same day a Whimbrel rested for a while at the Central Experimental Farm.

A single Solitary Sandpiper was seen at the end of June; during July this species increased somewhat. More Wilson's Phalaropes were noted in suitable habitat during this breeding season, and a family of fledged young was found on Casselman sewage ponds. Five years of Altas work in this region have turned up confirmed breeding evidence for three separate families. About the usual number of Red-necked Phalaropes occurred in August with six being found on August 25th at various sewage ponds. One Stilt Sandpiper was reported July 8th at Richmond, while on August 25th a flock of 11 was found at the same place! Sightings of one or two birds throughout July and August were not unusual.

Three Red Knots were observed June 3rd, and two more were southward bound, this time at Ottawa Beach on August 25th, sharing the sand bar with the Hudsonian Godwits. An unusually large flock of 20 White-rumped Sandpipers was at Green's Creek on August 25th. Baird's Sandpipers turned up in small numbers through most of the period beginning with one on July 8th at Richmond. The rare Buff-breasted Sandpiper was also seen in unusual numbers this August. One appeared at the Central Experimental Farm on August 25th and four more on August 27th near Osgoode on the Manderley Sod Farm. Single birds of this species have been recorded during the August-September period over the past few years.

Gulls and Terns: A Glaucous Gull observed through June and July along the Ottawa River and at Nepean Dump was the same bird spotted regularly during May at the same locations. Bonaparte's Gulls were found in the expected numbers during the same two months. Caspian Terns are becoming regular visitors to our area of late, especially in the late spring and early summer. This year was no exception when two birds were seen on July 20th at Ottawa Beach. An Arctic Tern was reported at the end of July.

Cuckoos: A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was observed in suitable habitat in the Blakeney-Almonte area in mid-July. Five years of intensive atlassing have yielded sightings on only a few squares within the 50 km circle of the Ottawa District.

Woodpeckers: Several reports of Red-bellied Woodpeckers were noted this summer. Red-headed Woodpeckers continue to be found in good stands of dead elms. Successful breeding was again confirmed in several locations, while observations of single birds and of pairs were reported from various areas in the region.

Flycatchers: A few Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were still migrating through our area in early June. Willow Flycatchers are becoming increasingly common in areas of suitable habitat. Or perhaps they were always out there, and we are only just beginning to catch on! Certainly the Atlas project has persuaded more of us to go into heretofore "unbirded" areas with the net result that more birds of more species are being found. In the case of this species, five more atlas squares have been found to have Willow Flycatchers, bringing to 27 the number of known locations in the 50 km circle.

Swallows: All six species were present in good numbers except for Rough-winged, which is never abundant here at any time. Flocking began to occur in mid-July, and mixed flocks of thousands were noticed by August.

Ravens: Common Ravens continue to be seen occasionally along the Dunrobin Ridge and the Green's Creek area. A single bird was observed twice in the Blakeney area over a ten-day period.

Wrens: A Carolina Wren was heard singing on July 18th just outside the 50 km circle near Carleton Place. In June 1983 a single bird was heard in the Russell/Limoges area. That was the first summer record for the species since at least 1976 (Bell, F. 1983. May-June Sightings. The Shrike 8(3): 16).

Northern Mockingbird: One of this species visually and vocally advertised its presence near the National Research Council of Canada campus at Montreal and Blair Roads throughout most of June. Several other reports of Northern Mockingbird were noted during the summer including an observation from the Sarsfield area. This species seems to be holding its own, although the population isn't increasing at any great rate.

Thrushes: The Eastern Bluebird population is faring well these days. A sure sign of healthy numbers is expansion into areas where this species has not been seen previously and where nest boxes are absent. In these cases natural cavities are used for nesting, and this practice seems to be on the increase as many reports of such usage have come in over the summer. Several pairs were observed in the Greely area, each using natural nest sites; other reports are from outside the District.

Swainson's Thrushes were reported on June 1st in the Gatineau Hills and again on July 23rd in the Smyth Road area. This species is a notoriously late spring migrant and observations to mid-June are not unusual.

Loggerhead Shrike: The dramatic decline of this species continues in our area. While two nests were found outside the 50 km circle, only two sightings were made within, and neither of these confirmed breeding.

Warblers: Good numbers of the regular breeders were noted throughout the period. A Brewster's Warbler (a result of hybridization between Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers) found itself at the Innis Point bird banding station on July 4th. Blackpoll Warblers were still migrating through in early July as were a few Bay-breasteds.

The fall warblers trickled slowly through, often in small mixed flocks. Some of the more northerly breeders turned up singly. Innis Point had a Cape May on July 15th and a Bay-breasted on July 27th. A Northern Parula was seen on August 17th and a Tennessee on August 16th, both in a woodlot in the Smyth Road area. Last year's fall warbler migration was slow, and, as of late August, this year seemed to be shaping up the same way. Perhaps the September-October sightings will have more exciting news.

Blackbirds: Traditional flocking areas (Ramsayville Marsh, Black Bay and Shirleys Bay) have been playing host to enormous concentrations of mixed blackbird flocks. The buildup began in late July and reached its peak by late August when flocks of 8,000 - 10,000 birds could be seen at Ramsayville Marsh. Most of the birds are Red-winged Blackbirds, but up to 1,500 Common Grackles were usually mixed in.

Northern Cardinal: This is another species making slow but steady inroads as a locally common breeder. Reports of successful nestings have come in from many areas of the city. Further sightings this year come also from the areas of Gagnon, Green's Creek, Richmond, Kanata and Constance Bay.

Finches and Sparrows: The first breeding record for House Finch in the Ottawa area occurred last year (1984). This year further successful nestings were noted within the city. Presumably this species will eventually expand its range to areas outside; Smiths Falls already has a number of House Finches, although no nests or young birds have yet been found. Pine Siskins seem to be flourishing of late with atlassers turning up this species all over the place. Clay-colored and Grasshopper Sparrows are increasing annually in our region, and new locations continue to be found. A small colony of Clay-coloreds was observed four km east of Almonte during June, while another location was found near Corkery. Grasshopper Sparrows were reported from the areas of Vars, Crysler and Dwyer Hill.

I would like to acknowledge the help of all atlassers who went out and did their bit this summer. Many of the sightings used in the text are from them. Preliminary *Shrike* data was also very useful. Thanks also to Frank Bell and Frank Munro. ¤

Hook, Line and Sinker in the Stomach of a Loon

Bruce M. Di Labio

On December 19th, 1984, a Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) landed in a field in Kanata. It was alive when found and was taken to the Wild Bird Care Centre operated by Kathy Nihei. The bird had a badly broken wing and died two days later. It was donated to the National Museum of Natural Sciences for preparation as a study specimen.

During the preparation, the gizzard was dissected out and the contents were examined. (The gizzard is the muscular portion of a bird's stomach which grinds the food. It often contains grit, pebbles or stones that the bird swallows to act as abrasives on the food items.) The loon's stomach contained the expected small stones but no food. Unexpected contents were the remains of a 12 mm long fish-hook, a 3.5 cm length of leader, and a 3.4 g sinker. The loon, a fish eater, undoubtedly caught and ate a fish which had escaped from a fisherman.

View of the Loon's stomach showing the hook, line and sinker among the expected small stones. Photograph by the author. ¤

Persistent Nesting Attempts by Ring-billed Gulls

Bruce M. Di Labio

The expansion of the range of the Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) in southern Ontario has been well documented (Ludwig 1974, Blokpoel 1977). In the Ottawa area, the behaviour of these gulls has taken on a predictable pattern. They arrive in the area in March and are observed frequently at municipal dumps, in fields, and along rivers. Nesting begins in early May at several sites along the Ottawa River. These sites are increasing in both size and number (Cooper *et al.* 1982). After nesting is completed, the gulls, both adults and young, stay in the area until the lakes and rivers begin to freeze in late November or early December.

A favoured feeding and resting site is the Ottawa-Carleton Trail Road Landfill Site known to birders as the Nepean Dump. In the early spring of 1983, approximately 1,500 to 2,000 Ring-billed Gulls were regularly observed there. From mid- to late April, numerous copulation attempts were observed. A nest was found on May 13, 1983, and several more were located in the

Adult Ring-billed Gull at the Nepean Dump.

A view of the nesting area on the east side of the Nepean Dump.

Ring-billed Gull nest, Nepean Dump. All photographs were taken on May 28, 1983, by the author.

following days. By May 28th there were an estimated 40 to 50 nests and by June 3rd about 100 nests. At this time, all nests had two or three eggs.

Regular landfill operations caused parts of the dump where birds were nesting to be covered over in sequence. As one part was destroyed, the birds would renest on adjacent ground. The last nests were covered in late June, and no further nestings were attempted. No young were ever observed, and all eggs were probably destroyed before incubation was near completion.

Nest sites in the dump were varied. They included bare earth, tops of rock piles, and centres of automobile tires. The nesting gulls were very tolerant of truck traffic, and they did not flush as the trucks drove by. Several nests were very close to the roads in the dump, some as close as three metres. Nest materials included feathers, leaves, pine needles, small sticks and cedar branches, grasses, string, roots, chips of wood, tissue paper, and a shampoo sampler.

The nesting at the Nepean Dump site seems to have been a single year phenomenon. No nests had ever been found, or even suspected, in the years prior to 1983. No nesting attempts were recorded in 1984 and 1985 despite regular visits by observers.

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Blokpoel, H. 1977. Gulls and terns nesting in northern Lake Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence River. Can. Wildl. Serv., Progress Note 75, 11 pp.

Cooper, C.R. 1982. Ring-billed Gulls nesting on the Ottawa River near Ottawa. Ont. Field Biol. 36(1): 82.

Ludwig, J.P. 1974. Recent changes in the Ring-billed Gull population and biology in the Laurentian Great Lakes. Auk 91: 575-594. ¤

* * * *

ALFRED BOG PAINTING TO RAFFLED

Tickets for Aleta Karstad's oil painting, *Alfred Bog: the Edge of Drainage*, will soon be available for $2. each. The winning ticket will be drawn at the Soirée in the spring. Additional details will be available in the next issue.

* * * *

Species List for Ottawa-Hull Christmas Bird Counts (1919-1984)

Bruce M. Di Labio

The following list is an updated version of the summary of Ottawa-Hull Christmas Bird Counts which appeared two years ago (Trail & Landscape 17(2): 63 (1983)). The addition of seven new species in the last two years along with several new record highs warrant a revision of the list. This new list contains a total of 138 species.

The current list details the following information: First Record - the year a species was first recorded; Years Recorded - the number of counts on which the species has been found; Record High - the highest number of individuals of a species found on any one count; and Record Year - the year in which the Record High was recorded. When the Record High was tied for more than three years, the number of years is given rather than the years themselves. Less specific records (for example, scaup sp., accipiter sp., hawk sp., gull sp.) are not included in this treatment.

The list follows the new American Ornithological Union order.

Species	First Record	Years Recorded	Record High	Record Year
Red-throated Loon	1970	1	1	1970
Common Loon	1962	3	1	62,77,84
Pied-billed Grebe	1968	4	1	4 yrs.
Horned Grebe	1973	1	2	1973
Red-necked Grebe	1949	5	2	68,84
Great Blue Heron	1952	2	2	1965
Canada Goose	1957	11	502	1984
Wood Duck	1971	4	3	1979
Green-winged Teal	1979	1	1	1979
American Black Duck	1941	38	786	1984
Mallard	1931	28	292	1984
Northern Pintail	1975	2	2	1975
Canvasback	1968	2	1	68,73
Ring-necked Duck	1952	11	9	1966
Greater Scaup	1952	6	4	1979
Lesser Scaup	1969	9	4	1984
King Eider	1983	1	1	1983
Harlequin Duck	1971	1	1	1971
Oldsquaw	1956	8	6	69,84
Surf Scoter	1984	1	1	1984
White-winged Scoter	1970	4	1	4 yrs.
Common Goldeneye	1924	61	501	1984
Barrow's Goldeneye	1960	15	2	61,78,79
Bufflehead	1953	10	4	71,72
Hooded Merganser	1937	25	5	1984
Common Merganser	1926	55	79	1952
Red-breasted Merganser	1948	20	13	1949
Bald Eagle	1972	2	1	72,73
Northern Harrier	1984	1	1	1984
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1921	18	4	1984
Cooper's Hawk	1960	14	5	1970
Northern Goshawk	1924	28	8	73,76
Red-shouldered Hawk	1948	2	1	48,55
Red-tailed Hawk	1960	15	9	1973
Rough-legged Hawk	1956	21	28	1973
American Kestrel	1940	41	18	1974
Merlin	1931	9	2	39,59
Peregrine Falcon	1972	2	1	72,75
Gyrfalcon	1972	2	3	1980

Species	First Record	Years Recorded	Record High	Record Year
Gray Partridge	1948	35	675	1980
Ring-necked Pheasant	1932	51	56	1944
Spruce Grouse	1944	1	2	1944
Ruffed Grouse	1919	64	93	1979
American Coot	1969	2	1	69,84
Common Snipe	1970	3	1	70,78,83
Ring-billed Gull	1957	7	53	1984
Herring Gull	1923	33	1,870	1984
Thayer's Gull	1973	3	1	73,79,81
Iceland Gull	1956	15	13	1982
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1979	1	1	1979
Glaucous Gull	1943	25	35	1982
Great Black-backed Gull	1957	11	69	1984
Black-legged Kittiwake	1981	1	1	1981
Thick-billed Murre	1952	1	1	1952
Rock Dove	1932	45	7,369	1980
Mourning Dove	1952	15	106	1984
Eastern Screech-Owl	1923	21	2	4 yrs.
Great Horned Owl	1929	37	47	1971
Snowy Owl	1954	22	10	1967
Northern Hawk-Owl	1922	5	2	1965
Barred Owl	1933	24	6	1977
Great Gray Owl	1983	1	23	1983
Long-eared Owl	1973	5	1	5 yrs.
Short-eared Owl	1957	7	9	1962
Boreal Owl	1973	2	1	73,76
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1971	7	1	7 yrs.
Belted Kingfisher	1964	7	2	4 yrs.
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1979	2	2	1979
Downy Woodpecker	1921	63	211	1980
Hairy Woodpecker	1921	63	224	1975
Three-toed Woodpecker	1941	19	29	1976
Black-backed Woodpecker	1927	25	20	1980
Northern Flicker	1958	6	5	1984
Pileated Woodpecker	1926	35	14	1984
Eastern Phoebe	1969	1	1	1969
Horned Lark	1948	18	167	1960
Gray Jay	1921	19	19	1972
Blue Jay	1921	59	663	1984
American Crow	1921	63	1,716	1984
Common Raven	1971	13	24	1980
Black-capped Chickadee	1919	66	2,660	1982
Boreal Chickadee	1927	20	24	1972
Tufted Titmouse	1979	1	1	1979
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1920	49	388	1976
White-breasted Nuthatch	1921	64	263	1980
Brown Creeper	1920	55	51	1979
Carolina Wren	1971	3	2	1980
Winter Wren	1950	6	2	1974

Species	First Record	Years Recorded	Record High	Record Year
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1927	31	47	1982
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1949	3	4	1982
Swainson's Thrush	1984	1	1	1984
Hermit Thrush	1960	3	1	60,71,84
American Robin	1921	28	71	1984
Varied Thrush	1979	1	1	1979
Northern Mockingbird	1964	10	4	73,79
Brown Thrasher	1968	4	1	4 yrs.
Water Pipit	1954	1	1	1954
Bohemian Waxwing	1930	21	1,060	1980
Cedar Waxwing	1932	24	403	1984
Northern Shrike	1921	52	24	1977
Loggerhead Shrike	1962	1	1	1962
European Starling	1924	61	6,742	1984
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1967	8	7	1979
Black-throated Green Warbler	1984	1	1	1984
Pine Warbler	1982	1	1	1982
Common Yellowthroat	1979	1	1	1979
Northern Cardinal	1945	18	65	1983
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1968	2	1	68,82
Rufous-sided Towhee	1969	5	1	5 yrs.
American Tree Sparrow	1920	51	477	1984
Chipping Sparrow	1969	3	1	69,81,84
Field Sparrow	1965	2	2	1971
Savannah Sparrow	1966	1	1	1966
Fox Sparrow	1984	1	1	1984
Song Sparrow	1924	38	25	1979
Swamp Sparrow	1968	10	6	1977
White-throated Sparrow	1922	20	16	1976
White-crowned Sparrow	1948	6	4	1970
Dark-eyed Junco	1932	30	232	1984
Lapland Longspur	1937	11	30	1961
Snow Bunting	1921	57	1,876	1975
Red-winged Blackbird	1928	26	15	1972
Eastern Meadowlark	1931	5	2	1980
Rusty Blackbird	1964	12	7	1977
Common Grackle	1930	30	12	72,73
Brown-headed Cowbird	1960	14	29	1980
Northern Oriole	1978	1	1	1978
Pine Grosbeak	1919	43	1,080	1977
Purple Finch	1920	30	519	1976
House Finch	1980	2	33	1984
Red Crossbill	1950	17	108	1976
White-winged Crossbill	1927	22	300	1984
Common Redpoll	1919	52	3,264	1981
Hoary Redpoll	1952	10	15	1952
Pine Siskin	1919	51	894	1922
American Goldfinch	1923	51	1,591	1984
Evening Grosbeak	1923	38	2,621	1972
House Sparrow	1927	58	6,655	1968 ¤

* * *

The 1985-1986 Christmas Bird Count Calendar is on page 269.

Birding in Ottawa, Back When . . .

A.J. (Tony) Erskine

When I came back to Ottawa in 1968, I soon found that birding there was not as I remembered it. I had changed, but so had the birding community and the places where they went. Gradually, I came to terms with the altered birding opportunities of the 1970s, but I didn't get the differences sorted out in time to write a retrospective essay for the Club Centennial. The idea persisted, however, and here it is.

Some of my earliest birding was in Ottawa, where I spent the summers of 1951, 1952 and 1953, and the winter of 1952-53. In retrospect, it is clear now that those were the last years of an era. Soon afterwards, everyone had cars, and urban sprawl flowed outward from the old city. In the early 1950s it was still feasible for a birder to walk into the country from the end of the streetcar lines, or even - in some directions - from The Glebe. The built-up area of the city was bounded by the Driveway west of Bronson and by the south bank of the Rideau River east of there. Tunney's Pasture was a pasture, and Britannia Village a village, and Baseline Road was a narrow gravel road in the country. We didn't have or feel the need for Club excursions to Presqu'ile Park in those days. Birding was less dramatic then, but it was fun. Perhaps we all tend to idealize life as it was in our early twenties (Nevil Shute remarked on this in *Requiem for a Wren*); certainly never again had we as much energy and enthusiasm, and the time to use them, without all the responsibilities of adult life. But I hear you muttering "OK, OK, but *where* did you go, *how* did you get there, and (especially) *what* did you see?"

I lived in The Glebe then, and I worked on Booth Street in 1951 and the Experimental Farm in 1952-53. Thus, a lot of my birding was around Dow's Lake, including the wooded edge of Dow's Swamp and the Arboretum, and the overgrown "sanctuary" south of the naval base. The railway bridge over the canal (before the tunnel was built) allowed us to walk where now it is impossible. In those days one could see almost every duck species on the Ottawa list at Dow's Lake, and many other water birds as well. Black Ducks were the common large dabbling ducks then, and Mallards were scarce. In the late summer and fall of 1952 I saw my first Horned Grebe, Green Heron, Hooded Merganser and Ruddy Duck there. We also were pleased to see, on the log boom that separated the canal from the lake, what then were rare gulls in Ottawa, Great Black-backed and Ring-billed Gulls. Yes, those birds were scarce then, and local naturalist Doug Savile published an article around that time on how to distinguish the different plumages of Ringbills from the much more usual Herring

White's Bridge over the Rideau River from the northwest, late winter 1953. Note the lack of snow, and the woods and scrub where Carleton University (foreground) and Vincent Massey Park now stand. (Photo taken from the site of the Tory Building.)

Dow's Lake from near Bronson bridge, summer 1952. Note wooded edge of Dow's Swamp (left), railway bridge over canal (left distance), and log boom between canal and lake (centre).

Gulls. The 1947 Peterson field guide had things to itself then, and no one had prismatic telescopes ...

A little farther afield on foot, we followed the railway track south over White's Bridge to the woods beyond (now Vincent Massey Park), where I saw my first Red-breasted Nuthatch in January 1953. The Farm fields towards Hartwell's Locks were often productive. Kestrels wintered there in the almost snow-free winter of 1952-53. And in 1951, before I had binoculars or knew any bird book except Taverner's *Birds of Canada*, I puzzled over the large, noisy shorebirds that said everything but the "Killdeer" that the book described. Rockcliffe Park was too far for walking, so I bicycled. The ungroomed park woods then had breeding Pine and Mourning Warblers, and Veeries, all new to me and the first of those was a challenge to identify from Taverner. One late winter visit turned up my first Pileated Woodpecker.

A person dependent on bicycle (no 10-speeds then) or streetcar needed all day to get good value from the country to the west or to the north. In shorebird season I went almost weekly to the rivershore west from Britannia, but I seldom got as far as Shirleys Bay unless Tom Morland and the Saviles drove me from Beatty Point. Marchhurst - for Field Sparrows, then scarce and local around Ottawa - was my farthest west by bicycle, and I made one trip a year north to Meech Lake for Canada Warbler, Scarlet Tanager and Broad-winged Hawk. I also ranged east to Mer Bleue (once) for Sedge Wren and Henslow's Sparrows, the latter then regular if scarce, and south to Pine Road beyond Uplands Airport for Grasshopper Sparrows. Some species now regularly encountered were - or were thought to be - scarce then, but others we then saw regularly in or close to the city have retreated before the urban sprawl. Unfortunately we have no standardized data base like the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas on which to base such comparisons. Loggerhead Shrikes and Upland Sandpipers were more common then, although local, but I never saw or heard a Towhee in those summers.

Another obvious difference from the present was the overall scarcity of birders. At one meeting of the bird group of The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, in Fred Bourguignon's home, only five people present were keeping records of what they had seen; the others relied only on memory. Of the five, four were born in England, and the fifth was married to one of the others, which may tell us something. One result was that "first arrival dates" in spring then showed when a species arrived in numbers, rather than the lone stray two weeks in advance of the rest that is detected 100 km or farther away from Ottawa by the peregrinating "twitchers" of today. A year's list of 200 species in the Ottawa area was very good then. Yet we made a few notable records. On an excursion to the back of Shirleys Bay from Innes Road in early November 1952, the Saviles, Tom Morland and I saw a subadult Golden Eagle high overhead, passing south. We

A rural road near Dunrobin, summer 1953.
Photographs taken by the author with a folding Brownie camera.

thought it exceptional, but 20 years later birders started to see Golden Eagles recurring, if hardly frequently, there at the same season. Thanks to the exceptionally open spring following record low snowfall in 1952-53, the arrival of Snipe (regular from March 29) was the earliest on record.

It was all new and wonderful to me then. I got over 70 lifers in the Ottawa area during my stay in 1952-53. But I still enjoy seeing the same familiar species I first met in Ottawa, back when the bird world was new and waiting to be explored. ¤

Tony Erskine lived in Ottawa from 1951 to 1953 and from 1968 to 1977. Since 1977 he has lived in Sackville, New Brunswick.

The Breeding Birds of the Mer Bleue Bog

Stephen Gawn

The existence of the Mer Bleue bog is well known to local naturalists, but the bog's birdlife is not well known to many. This article seeks to redress this situation by discussing those birds that nest, or are suspected to nest or to have nested, in the bog.

The Mer Bleue is a domed sphagnum bog with several sandy "islands", encircled by an alder thicket "moat", and surrounded by sandy uplands. As far as birds are concerned, the bog can be divided into a continuum of four subhabitats based on tree cover. At one end of the continuum is **Open Bog**, consisting of the sphagnum mat and other short vegetation with just the odd (usually dead) tree. Scattered **Tamarack and Black Spruce**, often forming clumps, can be considered another subhabitat. Further along the continuum are low, sprawling **Black Spruce Thickets.** At the end of the continuum are **Thick Black Spruce Stands.** Although there are many birds that nest in the moat, in the drainage ditches, and on the islands, and many others which feed in the bog, this article will consider only those species that are believed to breed in the actual bog habitat. Most of the information presented here originates from fieldwork undertaken in 1984 for the National Capital Commission (Dean 1984)*. Published accounts and earlier records have also been included.

Mallard: This species may be an uncommon breeder in the bog. In 1984 a female, seen twice in June, was thought to have flushed from the Open Bog north of Dolman Ridge.

Northern Harrier: This species was seen infrequently in the bog. While it may be a breeder, it is more likely that sightings were of hunting birds that nest outside the bog.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: May be an uncommon breeder as a single bird was observed deep in the heart of the bog in the summer of 1984.

Spruce Grouse: Historically nested in the bog, but by 1911 the species was in serious decline (Eifrig 1911). None has been recorded recently.

* *The contents of this article do not necessarily reflect the policies of the National Capital Commission.*

Mourning Dove: A relatively common breeder in the bog, although only one nest was found, at the edge of some Scattered Tamarack.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Possible breeder; recorded several times in 1984, but no nests were found.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Nesting status uncertain. In 1984 the species was recorded only in late May and early June. Macoun (1898) refers to a mid-June sighting. These records could be of late migrants rather than breeders.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: An uncommon breeder. In 1984 this species was recorded between the ridges in a Thick Black Spruce stand. A nest with young was found in June 1898 (Macoun 1898). Eifrig (1911) considered the species to be breeding sparingly in the bog; Ouellet (1974) mentions summer observations.

Alder Flycatcher: Common breeder in the bog. In 1984 it was one of the most common species in Black Spruce Thickets; also recorded in Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce.

Eastern Kingbird: Uncommon breeder. In 1984 this species was found scattered throughout the bog's four subhabitats, being most common in Thick Black Spruce Stands.

Gray Jay: A nest in 1974 which fledged one young (Ouellet, O'Donell and Foxall 1976) is the only breeding record of this species in the Ottawa area.

Blue Jay: Uncommon breeder in the bog. In 1984 a family group with young was observed in a Thick Black Spruce Stand.

American Crow: Uncommon Breeder. In 1984 a nest was found in a Black Spruce in the eastern part of the bog.

Black-capped Chickadee: Common breeder in Thick Black Spruce Stands.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Possible breeder. One was recorded in a Thick Black Spruce Stand in the middle of the bog. Ouellet (1974) suspected that this species bred in small numbers.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Uncommon breeder in Thick Black Spruce Stands. In 1984 birds were recorded at several locations between the ridges.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: A very uncommon breeder which shares the Golden-crowned Kinglet's preference for dense Black Spruce. In 1984 it was recorded between the ridges.

Hermit Thrush: Common breeder. It prefers Thick Black Spruce Stands but was also recorded in Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce, and Black Spruce Thickets.

American Robin: An uncommon breeder. Nests in Thick Black Spruce Stands.

Cedar Waxwing: A relatively common nester. Found throughout the bog except for Open Bog.

Nashville Warbler: Abundant breeder. Found in all bog habitats, although much less so in Open Bog.

Magnolia Warbler: Possible breeder. Not recorded in 1984. Eifrig (1911) describes it as a moderately common breeder.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: An uncommon breeder. Found in all bog habitats except Open Bog. In 1984 a nest was found in a Thick Black Spruce Stand.

Blackburnian Warbler: Possible breeder. Not recorded in 1984. Eifrig (1911) refers to this species as a summer bird of the bog.

Palm Warbler: Present status uncertain. This species was not recorded in 1984. In 1983 a single bird was heard near the islands. Macoun (1898) and Eifrig (1911) describe the species as a common summer resident of the bog. Lloyd (1944) describes nests found and young collected.

Common Yellowthroat: A common breeder. Most common in Black Spruce Thickets, but also in Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce, and Thick Black Spruce Stands.

Wilson's Warbler: Possible breeder. Recorded as breeding in 1890 by F.A. Saunders (Anon 1891). Although no breeding evidence since in the Mer Bleue, this species is suspected to nest in the Alfred Bog, some 60 km to the east.

Chipping Sparrow: Possible breeder. In 1984 a single bird was heard in a Thick Black Spruce Stand.

Clay-colored Sparrow: A common breeder in the bog. Found mainly in Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce. This species was not recorded by the early writers.

Savannah Sparrow: A very common nester. Found in the Open Bog where it is virtually the only bird species present. Also found in Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce.

Song Sparrow: A very common breeder. Prefers Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce, but found in the other bog habitats as well.

Lincoln's Sparrow: A not uncommon breeder. Jones and Gawn (1984) estimated 30 to 40 breeding pairs. Although its presence in the bog has been suspected since 1974 (Ouellet 1974), it was

only in 1983 that the species was confirmed as a breeder. Mainly found in Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce and in Black Spruce Thickets.

White-throated Sparrow: An abundant nester in the bog. Most common in Black Spruce Thickets; also recorded in Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce, and Thick Black Spruce Stands.

Dark-eyed Junco: Possible breeder. Not recorded in 1984. Ouellet (1974) mentions summer records for the bog.

Common Grackle: Possible breeder. This species was recorded once in Scattered Tamarack and Black Spruce.

Brown-headed Cowbird: Found uncommonly in the bog.

Purple Finch: Uncommon breeder. Usually found in Black Spruce Thickets and Thick Black Spruce Stands.

White-winged Crossbill: Breeding status uncertain. This erratic species was recorded twice in 1984, but no breeding evidence was found.

American Goldfinch: Probably breeds in the bog. In 1984 this late nesting species was recorded frequently but never with breeding evidence.

The 1984 study revealed 32 confirmed or possibly breeding species. There are an additional seven species not recorded in 1984 for which nesting was suspected or proven in the past. Spruce Grouse have been extirpated in the Ottawa Area for many years; earlier breeding records from the bog represented remnants of a disappearing population. The Gray Jay record remains the only Ottawa breeding record. Palm, Magnolia, Blackburnian and Wilson's Warblers and Dark-eyed Junco may still breed in the Mer Bleue, but in such low numbers that they were not detected by the 1984 study. Many people associate the 1963 Hawk Owl breeding record with the bog; however, the nest was not in the bog proper but adjacent to it in a deciduous woodlot on Borthwick Ridge (Smith 1970). For a discussion of other species recorded in the larger Mer Bleue Conservation Area, see Dean (1984).

For both aesthetic and scientific reasons, the Mer Bleue should be preserved. The bog provides a pocket of special habitat containing species of plants and animals found in few other places in the Ottawa area. Few experiences can rival being serenaded by a chorus of Hermit Thrushes, Lincoln's Sparrows and other northern birds while watching the early morning mist rise from the Mer Bleue.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Stew Hamill, Chief, Conservation Section, Greenbelt Division, National Capital Commission, for his awareness of the bog's qualities and his initiation of the 1984 study. Thanks also to Paul Jones and Joanne Dean for their camaraderie in the field and their assistance in the completion of this article.

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Percy Taverner's Impressions of the Mer Bleue

Jack Cranmer-Byng

Percy A. Taverner, author of *Birds of Canada*, arrived in Ottawa from Detroit, where he had been working as a draftsman in an architect's office, to take up his appointment as ornithologist in the newly established Victoria Memorial Museum at the beginning of May 1911. His first month in Ottawa was spent in administrative matters such as a medical examination, getting his name put on the civil service pay roll, and meeting his new colleagues at the Museum. Foremost among these was the distinguished naturalist, Professor John Macoun. Although Taverner and Macoun had corresponded a few times in the past decade, they had not yet had a chance to go collecting together. However, on June 6, Macoun, Taverner and Charles H. Young, entomologist at the Museum, made a trip to the Mer Bleue (often spelled Mere Bleue in those days). Taverner recorded the day's outing in a notebook entitled *Notes on Plants, Animals, Insects etc.** It is reproduced below.

June 6, 1911

Today Prof Macoun, Mr. Young and I went out to the Mere Bleue for a days collection. We arrived at Carlsbad Springs about a quarter of nine, worked the Mere until half past three in the afternoon and then crossed to some woods to the south until about train time getting home about half after seven in the evening.

The Mere is a large tract some miles in extent of old lake bed filled up with Sphagnum moss in which grows limited patches here and there of Tamarac and some evergreen that I do not know by name. Pitcher plants grow all over the bog and it is covered with kalmia of some species which however was in bloom but here and there in small sprays. The day was quite cool turning cloudy in the afternoon. The ground except at the edges is quite firm and almost dry. All about the edge there seems to be a space of almost open water grown up more or less with alder and such shrubs.

As to ornithological results we did not perform very much. Birds have settled down into their summer quietness and were conspicuous by their quietness. Besides I do not think the Mere is of great interest from an ornithological standpoint except as a nesting place for some rather northern breeders. We found about three pairs of Palm Warblers that evidently had young near. Mr. Young last year found several nests of them containing fledglings.

* *Royal Ontario Museum, Taverner Papers*

John Macoun (left) and Percy Taverner on a field trip together, locality unknown. Photograph from Negative No. J-5535, National Museums of Canada.

One of the most interesting things was a Connecticut Warbler that sang continuously and led us a rare chase in locating it. The song had the peculiar haunting timbre making it very hard to locate the origin of the sound and though within a few feet of it and hearing it sing once or twice a minute it was a long time before I located the singer. At last I saw it and backing off from it took a shot at it. The bird was hit but came down on a long slant and could not be found. In all probability it was nesting nearby but we were unable to locate any female. I have not the slightest doubt as to the identity of the individual though I did not get a good enough view to recognize it by sight relying only upon the song as a means of identification. I think however that the song is so characteristic that there can be but very little doubt as to the identity. The only thing else it could have been is a Mourning Warbler.

We also took a much washed out and badly worn partial albino Song Sparrow. The plumage is much worn and frayed and is not pure white but a general dirty cream in color.

I looked for orchids pretty closely but was unable to find but a few Arethusa bulbosa.

Prof Macoun tells me that his son has investigated the Mere Bleue and finds that the sphagnum and peat deposits are in some places forty feet deep.

Evidently the Mere is a great entomological collecting ground though the day was not bright enough to bring out the insects well and Young had but very little luck. He showed me the black caterpillar that feeds on the pitcher plants. They spin a web across the openings of the pitchers and live in the bottom of the cups in those that contain no water. Whether they drain the water out of the cups themselves does not appear. They evidently feed on the surface of the leaves at night and hide in the bottom of the cups through the day. They seem to live in various leaves and to confine themselves to no one. When they assume the chrysalis state they spin a septum across the tube above themselves and pass the pupa state in the dry cell thus formed. ¤

Jack Cranmer-Byng is working on a biography of Percy Taverner, who was Head of Ornithology at the National Museum of Natural Sciences from 1911 to 1942. This excerpt from Taverner's notebook reflects the attitude of that time toward birding - through the sights of a gun. Some attitudes have changed for the better!

Backyard Mammals

Peter Hall

Birders are listers. All of us who like to watch our feathered friends usually keep at least several different lists - life, provincial, Ottawa District, and, of course, the backyard list. I, myself, take great satisfaction in sitting in my kitchen with a cup of coffee in hand, marking off my latest avian backyard visitor. Great, a Lincoln's Sparrow. That makes 99.

But more recently, sparked by Sheila Thomson's series of articles in *Trail & Landscape* about mammal sightings at her cabin on Mount St. Patrick, I started thinking about another possible list - backyard mammals.

Sheila has a certain advantage with the Madawaska wilderness as her backyard. Since my house in situated in downtown Ottawa two blocks off Bank Street close to Billings Bridge, I couldn't hope to compete with Sheila in terms of numbers. Also, I've only been in the house for six years, and the backyard is tiny. Yet, in its own way, my list is rather impressive. If you include the immediate neighbourhood (I had to stretch my backyard a bit because I wanted to include a part of the Rideau River shoreline), my list tops 13 species of mammals.

Some species were certainly expected. Black squirrels, including their gray-coloured cousins, are everywhere because of the large numbers of mature oaks in the neighbourhood. Being situated a block from the Rideau River, bats were also to be expected as they strayed from their nightly insect search. Now, not being a bat expert, I can't identify them on the wing, but there are at least two species involved. The one is likely the Little Brown Bat as a dead one had been found once in the vicinity, but the other, larger one which flits through our backyard at dusk will probably remain unidentified.

The river is also an obvious locale for several other interesting city-dwelling mammals. Muskrats are a common sight along the shore at the foot of our street. They seem almost totally unconcerned about the humans watching them at close range while they fuss in and out of the aquatic vegetation.

One surprise for many is the number of Beavers that live downtown in Ottawa. Several beaver houses are found near Billings Bridge, and a common sound while walking along the Rideau shore at night is the slap of a Beaver's tail on the water just before it dives. Last February, I saw five Beaver stranded on a small island following a thaw. They must have been flooded

temporarily out of their home. One neighbour got rather irate after she lost part of her cedar hedge that ran down to the river. The hedge showed up as part of the nearest beaver house.

A very unexpected fur-laden visitor has been seen several times in or near the river - that's our Mink. His triangular-shaped head is instantly recognizable as he swims through the water. Another neighbour reported looking up from his work bench to see the Mink looking in his open basement window. Once noticed, the Mink quickly scuttled back to the river.

A large oak tree at the foot of our garden has been the den for a mother Raccoon and her successive families for several years. In the spring it has not been unusual to spy four or five small Raccoon heads peeking out at us as we barbecued in the backyard.

One day, the same oak tree produced a new visitor. On a branch hanging over our back door, a Porcupine short-sightedly stared down at us. It was a brief visit as next day there was no further sign of our prickly friend. Perhaps just as well for the local dogs.

The neighbour who lost her hedge to the Beavers was also somewhat miffed at another mammalian resident in her backyard, which abuts ours. We would regularly see a chubby Groundhog emerge from under a wood pile in her yard and waddle over to the beautiful flower garden that was our neighbour's pride and joy. The flower heads disappeared one by one. Following several months of attempts to live trap the Groundhog (she must have caught and released the Raccoons ten times in the process), the Groundhog disappeared one day. We understand he is living somewhere along the Queensway out of town.

One other backyard mammal has what you would call a lingering presence. Never seen, but sometimes detected with the nose, our neighbourhood Striped Skunk(s) is (are) a mixed blessing. Like the Lincoln's Sparrow on my bird list, it became another backyard lifer for my mammal list and appropriately, number 13.

Not to ignore the smaller members of the mammal clan, two species of rodents have lived on and off in our backyard. Occasional views of a furtive little face and tiny footprints in the snow showed that at least one Deer Mouse or White-footed Mouse was in residence. Tunnels in the grass after the snow melted and the occasional sight of a small brown figure disappearing down the tunnels showed there is a thriving population of Meadow Voles.

The final name on our list is a common one for most naturalists and that's the Eastern Cottontail. These small brown rabbits have from time to time cropped the grass in the wilder corners of the yard and are most often seen just after sunrise.

Well, not a huge list, I know. But for a downtown backyard list, not bad. Who knows, maybe a Red Fox will wander into the neighbourhood, or a River Otter will climb the river bank as a neighbour reported seeing several weeks ago. Better get the list out. ¤

Handbook of Canadian Mammals 2: Bats

Get the facts on Canada's bats!

Stan van Zyll de Jong, Curator of Mammals at the National Museum of Natural Sciences, describes these small misunderstood creatures in the second volume of the series *Handbook of Canadian Mammals*. He deals with the two families and twenty species of bats recorded in Canada.

This book retains the highly successful format used in the first volume of the series, which dealt with marsupials and insectivores. Its well organized structure and clear, concise style make it easy to consult. Each native species is identified by its scientific, English and French names. Descriptions include comprehensive information about weight, measurements, habitats, food, populations, reproduction and behaviour. Bibliographical references are also provided for each species, and the author has included a worldwide perspective on bats.

The book is illustrated with colour plates, black-and-white drawings, and range maps for both Canadian and North American distribution. It also contains an identification key, a glossary and a bibliography.

This new reference work on bats will be of definite interest to biologists, naturalists, students, and anyone else who would like to learn more about these mysterious creatures of the night.

Handbook of Canadian Mammals 2: Bats is available at Nature Canada Bookshop and the bookshop of the Museum of Natural Sciences. Price: $19.95 (10% less at Nature Canada Bookshop).

Raising Cecropias for Fun and Grosbeaks

J.W. (Jack) Holliday

As some of you know, I annually raise a crop of Cecropia larvae to the cocoon stage. I keep the cocoons in the garage over winter and release most of the moths when they emerge the following summer (late May). On occasion I have supplied cocoons to schools and a couple of times to the Macoun Field Club. Two years ago at the Soirée, I sold some to raise money for the Alfred Bog Fund and made $50. I hope those persons who took cocoons home were rewarded with the emergence of a beautiful Cecropia Moth.

Out of curiosity, I have on several occasions placed larvae on trees and shrubs to observe their behaviour in a natural environment. One summer at the cottage at Val des Monts, Quebec, I had caterpillars on Pin Cherry, apple, birch and ash trees. Most of them, about 12, were on a medium-sized White Birch at the edge of the lot. I found they didn't move around very much, being content to stay on the introduced branch and to eat the leaves of that branch. Occasionally, one would move to a nearby branch. I checked them daily.

One morning while enjoying the July sun, I heard a Rose-breasted Grosbeak's "metallic '*Klip*'" (P.A. Taverner's *Birds of Canada*). Looking upward I soon spotted a colourful male bird busily hammering on a branch high overhead. Because of the foliage I couldn't see clearly, so I obtained my binoculars from the cottage. A little adjustment and then vividly I could see it was methodically beating a Cecropia larva to death. With alarm I realized it was one of my own.

With proprietary haste I retrieved those that the bird (or birds?) had not found. Four!! I gathered those four from the apple, cherry and ash, meanwhile watching the Grosbeak from time to time. Having satisfied himself that the larva was dead (totally limp), he flew away with it, I assume to feed nestlings. Within minutes he was back. He searched that birch tree from top to bottom, often leaning forward and looking upward at the underside of leaves. He found none. Not content with that search, he returned at least three more times that day and on the following two days to search the birch and sometimes other nearby trees.

Due to my rapid rescue he found none. I assume he had already discovered and dispatched eight before I noticed. By the methodical way he searched, I suspect that large caterpillars, such as Luna, Cecropia, Polyphemus and Sphinx, are a regular part of this bird's diet.

As a sequel to these observations, several weeks later my brother-in-law, Larry, phoned to tell me of a destructive bird at his cottage. It seems he had a nice patch of Tiger Lilies coming into bloom at his cottage near Wakefield (24 km distant from Val-des-Monts). Then this destructive bird, out of pure malice as far as Larry could understand, came along and started in to smash all the buds with its beak.

I guessed at once. I laughed and said, "A Rose-breasted Grosbeak". "How did you know?" was his cautious reply. I then told him about my experience with the grosbeak and the Cecropia larvae. Apparently the bird had mistaken the 10 cm-long green buds for caterpillars. Not discouraged by one attempt, he persisted in smashing all the buds. Even though Larry shooed him away, he returned time after time to pound the lily buds.

Taverner reported that they also eat potato bugs, and one time I saw a male grosbeak feed two young birds from a potato patch for the better part of an afternoon. When the birds departed, hardly one bug could be found. Probably the large caterpillars of several species are too big for warblers and vireos to contend with. Grosbeaks can use them as food, but only after hammering them into a limp state.

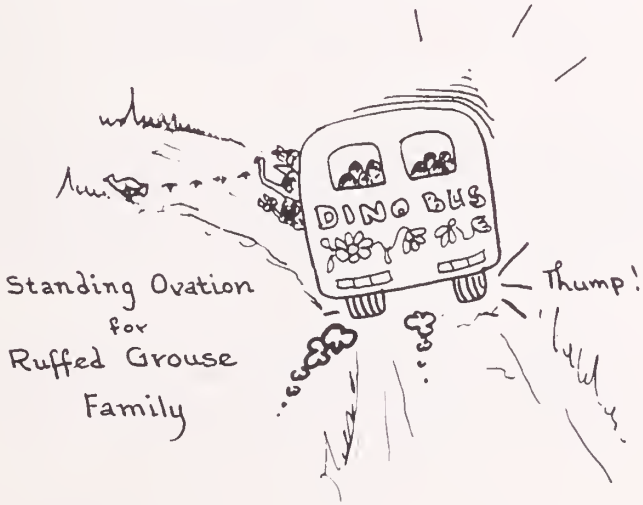
Occasionally since then, I have set larvae to graze on trees, but only after first checking to ensure there were no Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in the area. ¤

Dinobus to Chaffey's Locks

Mary Hoth-Campbell

The August 11th excursion to Chaffey's Locks was my first Dinobus trip and what a pleasant experience it was. When we gathered at the National Museum of Natural Sciences, the sky was overcast and threatening, and rain had been predicted in the morning. But before noon, the sun was shining brightly on a beautiful midsummer day. Ellaine Dickson counted heads as we filed on the brightly painted bus, and the time passed quickly as we drove by fields of nodding Queen Anne's Lace and vibrant stands of Purple Loosestrife. The sky brightened to enhance the scenery with patches of sunshine and shadow.

We arrived at Chaffey's Locks just after 10 a.m., and while waiting for a few more members to join the group, we scattered in various directions. Some of us headed for the Opinicon Hotel for a coffee, while others watched the lock being operated manually as it has been since the 1830s. Back on the bus, we bumped over a country road on our way to Skycroft Outdoor Centre. On the way, a Ruffed Grouse led a brood of young across the road in front of us. Although we probably all had seen this happen before, the sight drew a standing ovation from almost everyone. Love your enthusiasm, fellow birdwatchers!



Parked at Skycroft as guests of Directors Anne and Jim Barton, we set out on one of the Centre's many footpaths with Peter Hall and Colin Gaskell as co-leaders. It proved a worthwhile hike; Black-billed Cuckoos, Golden-winged Warblers, Eastern Bluebirds, Scarlet Tanagers, Great Crested Flycatchers, Cerulean Warblers, Black-and-white Warblers and Pine Siskins were among the many birds sighted. We also had a good look at a very large Green Darner, a dragonfly that Peter caught and held for us to examine. Thanks to several reference books loaned by Mrs. Bonwell of Skycroft, we were able to identify the Moonseed vine.

Peter also pointed out male Gypsy Moths, small brown and tan creatures that are the pests destroying our shade and forest trees. The female, white in colour with black markings on its wings, is much larger than the male and cannot fly. We saw several females on the lower trunks of trees laying the fuzzy buff-coloured egg masses that resemble chamois. The ever-hungry caterpillars are hairy and grow to about 6 cm in length. They are easily recognizable by the double row of dots along their backs - five pairs of blue and six pairs of red. When fully grown, the caterpillars enter the pupal stage, forming dark reddish-brown protective coverings. Adult moths begin to emerge in late July. A single Gypsy Moth caterpillar can devour several leaves a day. They feed on a wide variety of trees and are one of the most serious threats to our forests.

We saw many trees damaged, including a White Pine that had been killed. Jim Barton pointed out a large apple tree that had been completely stripped of leaves in July and was now in second leaf and looked quite healthy. To be attacked by the caterpillars again next summer would be fatal for the tree, Jim felt.

At noon, the beach area at Skycroft provided a quiet and lovely setting for our lunch break. We then went on a short hike to a marshy area and watched two Common Loons diving for fish.

Back in the bus once again, we rode the short distance to the Queen's University Biology Station on Opinicon Lake. There a boardwalk has been built out into the marsh, and this provided a great opportunity to view Cardinal-flowers, Swamp Milkweed, a willow-herb, Yellow Loosestrife and Buttonbush among the many cattail plants.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent swimming in the warm water of Opinicon Lake and being taken on a short boat ride. A most interesting sight on the boat ride was an Osprey diving repeatedly in the lake for fish, much like pelicans do. Like any fisherman, numerous attempts were made before it emerged successfully from the waters with a fish in its claws.

The day was capped by a delicious steak cookout prepared by

the staff at the Station and served in the dining hall. The fresh salads, fruits, cookies and banana bread would tempt any palate.

Birding continued after dinner until the "all aboard" call signaled the end of a most enjoyable day. A friend I had invited and newly exposed to this group of amateur naturalists, said that after watching the people who watched birds she was most impressed with both species. ¤

Christmas Bird Count Calendar

The Ottawa area Christmas Bird Counts will take place on the dates given below. Readers wishing to participate should contact the compiler well in advance of the date shown.

Count	*Date*	*Compiler*
Ottawa-Hull	December 22	Bernie Ladouceur (729-9471)
Pakenham-Arnprior	December 26	Michael Runtz (1-623-6975)
Carleton Place	December 28	Arnie Simpson (1-257-2963)
Dunrobin-Breckenridge	January 5	Bruce Di Labio (729-6267)

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Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions and Lectures Committee
Philip Martin (729-3218), Chairman

Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader.

Saturday
9 Nov.
8:00 a.m.

FALL BIRDS
Leader: Bob Bracken (728-3495)
Meet: Britannia Drive-In Theatre, Carling Avenue
The emphasis will be on migrants such as some hawks and waterfowl that pass through the Ottawa area late in the fall. Binoculars and/or scopes are essential. Dress warmly and bring a snack.

Tuesday
12 Nov.
8:00 p.m.

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
DON'T BRING THEM BACK
Speaker: W.P. Campbell
Meet: Auditorium, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets
Dr. Campbell, Special Projects Director in the Plant Health Division, Agriculture Canada, will discuss the reasons for plant quarantine and the role that can be played by collectors and fanciers in protecting Canada's agriculture, forestry and environment from the establishment of new pests.

Saturday
7 Dec.
8:00 a.m.

LATE FALL AND EARLY WINTER BIRDS
Leader: Bruce Di Labio (729-6267)
Meet: National Museum of Natural Sciences, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets
This half-day trip will visit several areas to see some of the interesting birds that make Ottawa their home as well as late fall migrants. Bring binoculars and/or a scope. Dress warmly and bring a snack. The Dinobus will be provided free of charge by the National Museum of Natural Sciences.

Tuesday 16 Dec. 8:00 p.m.	OFNC MONTHLY MEETING THE GYPSY MOTH - UNWELCOME VAGABOND Speaker: Bob Taylor Meet: Auditorium, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets Dr. Taylor, scientific advisor, Forest Insect and Disease Survey, Canadian Forestry Service, will discuss the history and biology of the Gypsy Moth as well as its spectacular population growth in eastern Canada in the 1980s. Come and learn more about this destructive pest which may soon invade your property.

Saturday 18 Dec. 1:00 p.m.	WORKSHOP ON BUILDING A BIRD FEEDER Leader: Jim Wardwell Meet: Britannia Ornithological Country, Carling Avenue Time: 1:00 p.m. or Meet: first house on the left (located well back from the road) past St. Mary's Anglican Church on Fortune Road [illegible]. Time: 1:30 p.m. Bring a hammer, and, if possible, nails and scraps of wood or the appropriate item for your feeder. Register by telephoning the Club number (722-3050) at least ten days in advance. If you decide subsequently not to go, please cancel your registration so that someone else can have your place.

Tuesday 13 Jan. 8:00 p.m.	ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING Meet: Auditorium, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets This will be the Ottawa Annual Business Meeting of The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club. After the business part of the evening, it is likely that a nature slide will be shown. Watch for the next issue of Trail & Landscape for full details.

Material intended for the Conservation Corner should reach the Editor's desk before October 1st at the latest.

ISSN 0041-0748

TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

published by

THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

Second Class Mail - Registration Number 2743
Postage paid in cash at Ottawa

Change of Address Notices and undeliverable Copies:
Box 3264 Postal Station C, Ottawa, Ont.
K1Y 4J5
Return postage guaranteed

Printed by
LOMOR PRINTERS LTD