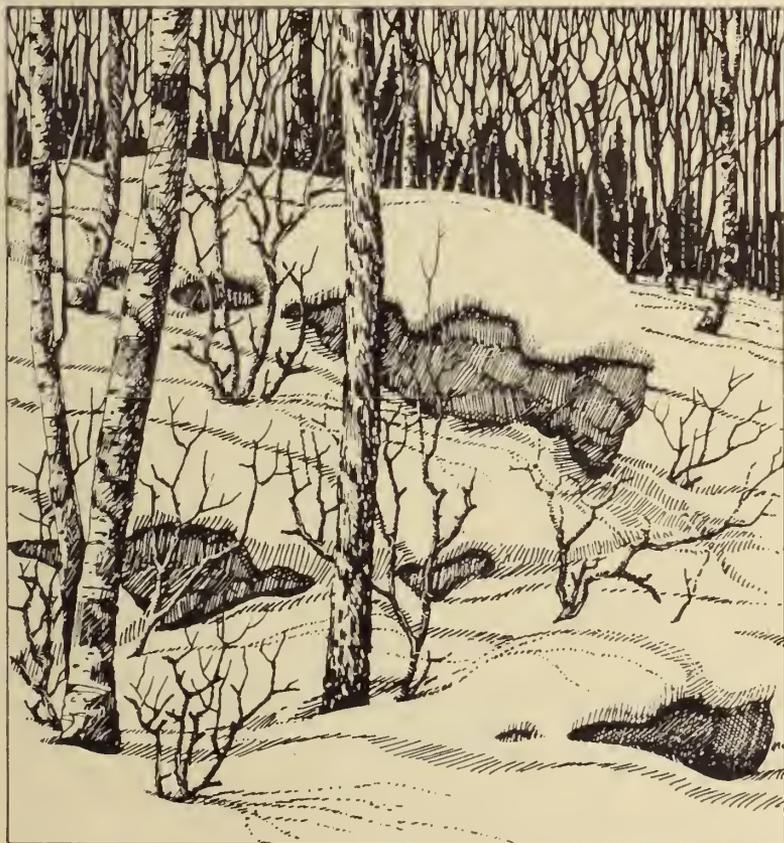


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BOTANICAL GARDEN



*A Publication Concerned With  
Natural History and Conservation*

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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## The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

### *President*

W.K. (Bill) Gummer

**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.

**Club Publications:** THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada, and TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a quarterly providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on Club activities.

**Field Trips, Lectures** and other natural history activities are arranged for local members; see "Coming Events" in this issue.

**Membership Fees:** Individual (yearly) \$20

Family (yearly) \$22

Sustaining (yearly) \$50

Life (one payment) \$500

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THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

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Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4J5

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*After 10 a.m.*

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# Welcome, New Members

## Ottawa Area

Rebecca Aird  
Robert Anderson & family  
Heather Bale  
Jacqueline Bieler  
Mac & Kathleen Brown  
Carrie Buchanan & family  
Peter Croal

Robert Eyahpaise & family  
Jack McLean & family  
Kai Millyard & family  
Nigel Spencer & family  
Colombe Stewart  
Roy Wood  
Florence Woolner

October 1987

Eileen Evans,  
Chairman,  
Membership Committee.

---

# Sparrow Song

Sweet, sweet Canada Canada Canada.  
Land of spruce tree, land of spring,  
Land that makes the wild heart sing --  
Free, free hinterland hinterland hinterland.  
Land of osprey, land of otter,  
Land of autumn's misty water--  
Bleak, bleak winterland, winterland, winterland.  
Land of north wind, land of snow,  
Land of thirty-five below,  
Pray excuse us while we go  
To sweet, sweet Florida Florida Florida.

*David Fraser*

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# Wildlife '87 Garden: Keep It Going!

In the September - October *Trail & Landscape*, a proposal was outlined for The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club to establish a wildlife garden as a model for urban gardeners. The garden, to be set up and maintained by OFNC members, would illustrate in a practical way how Ottawa residents can plant and arrange their own backyards to bring wildlife into the city.

The Conservation Committee has taken the lead and is now dealing with several public bodies that own three potential sites in the central part of the city. These three sites, from which one will eventually be chosen, have in common a size of about five acres, a variety of habitats, proximity to water and good enhancement possibilities.

Once the final decision is made and an agreement is signed, all that is needed is the good will and dedication of Club members to keep it going. So far, a number of members have signed up. Don't wait for spring. We are now in the planning period and need your help. More volunteers are still needed for the following:

1. garden planners (needed are knowledgeable people in such areas as gardening techniques, entomology and ornithology);
2. liaison people with the public land owners and other possibly interested organizations, such as horticultural societies;
3. organizers for equipment and material, including gardening tools, top soil, cuttings, gravel, signage, etc.;
4. fund raisers to cover any necessary costs;
5. teams to clear ground, plant, make signs, maintain garden and all the other pleasing physical activities to keep the project running over a long period of time;
6. promotion and public relations.

All you have to do is phone the Club number (722-3050 after 10 a.m.). Leave your name, telephone number and choice of activity. Spring is not far away, and it will soon be time to get out the hoes, so don't delay. You can make the difference.

---

# Anne Hanes' Cover Illustrations

For 1967, the OFNC Council decided to start a local natural history journal as a centennial project. *Trail & Landscape* was the result. Beginning in the spring of 1967, this new publication soon proved its worth by giving members stimulating articles and letters, and up-to-date Club news every two months.

In Anne Hanes, the Council chose just the person to be founding editor. She not only edited but, with the help of her editorial committee, improvised approaches, solicited material and organized the many jobs needed to get a new publication going. She also did most of the artwork herself. One of her first contributions was a cover design with a different illustration for each of the six bimonthly periods.

Putting out an issue every two months meant spending a lot of time indoors with no extended break to get out and enjoy nature. Anne particularly regretted being deprived of the opportunity to enjoy the precious days of spring, and so, after the second spring went by, she combined the May - June and July - August issues. The May - June illustration was used for the combined issue. This arrangement has been carried through to the end of Volume 21 last year.

Now that *Trail & Landscape* has become a quarterly, Marc Guertin, co-winner of the Club's 1986 Service Award, has created a new cover design with illustrations to reflect the four seasons of the year. The winter version appears on the cover of this issue.

So that all of our readers can appreciate the charm of Anne's cover illustrations and their appropriateness to the two-month periods they represent, we present all six of them on the following pages. This will be the first time most of you will have seen the July - August illustration; about five times as many people receive *Trail & Landscape* as in the early days.

*If you are interested in learning more about the first years of Trail & Landscape, be sure to read Sheila Thomson's account, To an Editor on a Long Trail ....., in the March - April 1977 issue. It was written at the end of Trail & Landscape's first 10 years. JMR*



JANUARY - FEBRUARY



MARCH - APRIL



MAY - JUNE



JULY - AUGUST



SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER



NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

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# Botanical Delights of the Old Blackburn Railway

John Sankey

Last spring, the CPR line from Ottawa through Blackburn and Bourget to Rigaud was removed, leaving only a stone trail where once Ottawa's famous botanists travelled to the Mer Bleue and beyond.

The rail bed north of the Mer Bleue is still worth the attention of botanists. On the third of August last year, when I walked along it, over 50 flowering species vied for my attention. Hundreds of Flat-topped White Asters (*Aster umbellatus*) formed a sheet of white between the Anderson and Kemp Roads. A close look at the roadbed revealed tiny blue flowers of Dwarf Snapdragon (*Chaenorhinum minus*), barely 2 mm across.

But, most interesting of all, I found a small colony of Sticky Groundsel (*Senecio viscosus*) blooming in the roadbed. This plant is rare in the Ottawa area. According to Fernald (*Gray's Manual of Botany*), a major environmental niche for it on this continent is railway ballast. Its fine roots wind over stone surfaces, apparently to scavenge moisture that condenses between the stones most nights. Its leaves are somewhat succulent to store water. A specimen that I collected had no visible soil at all on its roots. Yet, after planting in my garden, it continued to develop buds, bloom, and set seed as if nothing had ever disturbed it.

The compound that makes its leaves sticky (and scented; people who don't like plants call it Stinking Groundsel!) helps to defend the plant against herbivores. *Senecio* leaves and seeds contain chemicals which can kill most insects and grazing animals. However, caterpillars of the genus *Tyria* seek out *Senecio* leaves as food. They store the chemicals in their bodies, presumably to make them in turn unpalatable to their predators. However, the hairs of Sticky Groundsel exude an additional compound, which specifically deters *Tyria* caterpillars from eating its leaves! The strategy seems to be successful here, for there was no visible insect damage to any of the plants I found.

Late each afternoon, the 5 mm-long rays of each flower curl up into a roll 1 mm in diameter, to open only after sunrise the next morning. But the 6 mm-long dry bracts remaining after seeds have blown away do the opposite, reflexing flat against the stem during the day and spreading out full overnight.

SENECIO VISCOSUS

MER BLEUE

1 cm

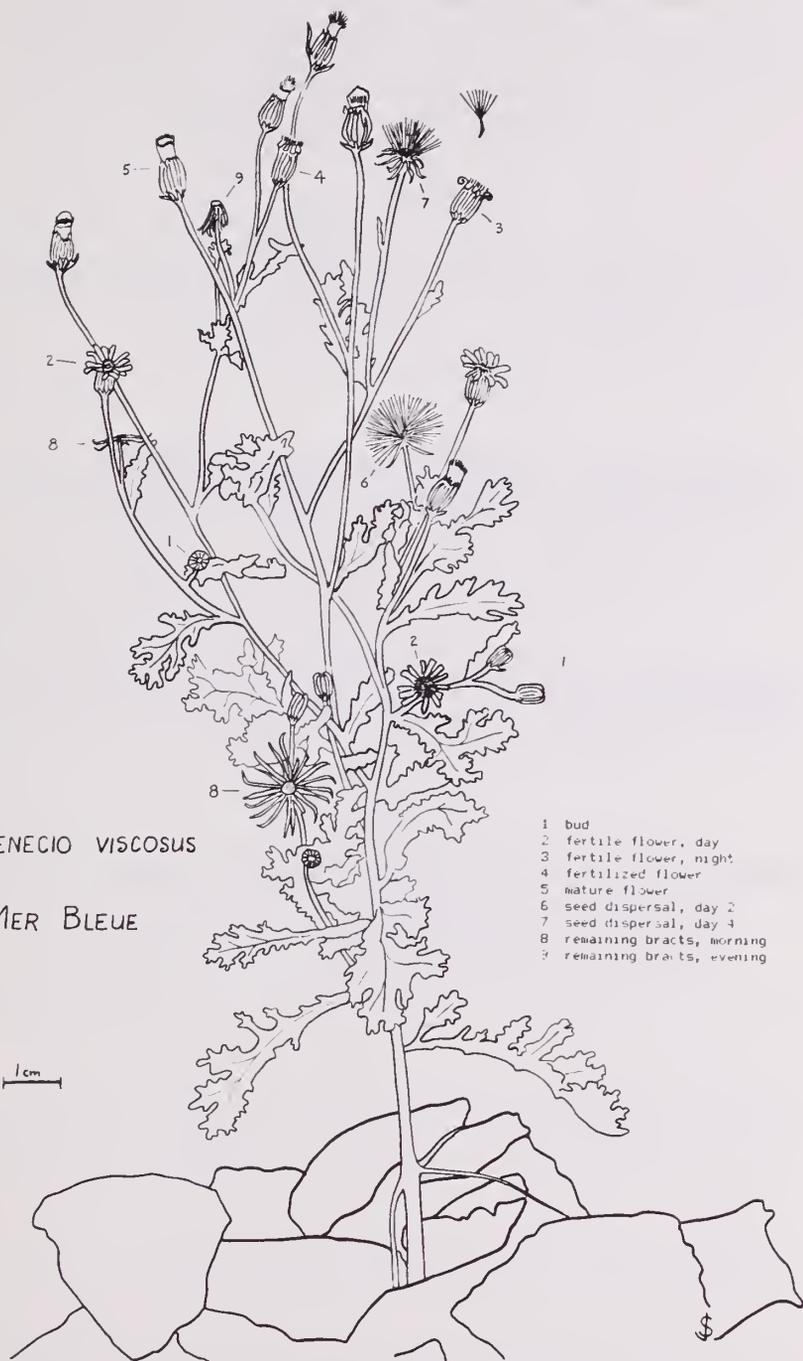


Illustration by John Sankey

Sticky Groundsel must require something very specific (and obscure) in its growing conditions to produce its array of defensive chemicals. It is prolific in seed production and distribution. My specimen produced 43 blooms, with an average of 52 seeds per seed head. Each seed has a gossamer-fine cone of 6 mm hairs that lifts it aloft in the slightest breeze. And yet, I found only one small colony. There is nothing I can discern about the roadbed where it grew that differs from other parts of the 10 km of groundsel-free roadbed that I have walked. The same puzzlement was expressed by Trevor Cole, who reported the first known occurrence of this plant in the Ottawa District (Trail & Landscape 4(1): 16-17 (1970)).

*Senecio viscosus* is one fascinating little plant!

*Acknowledgements:* I thank Kathleen Pryer and Albert Dugal of the National Museum of Natural Sciences for assistance with identifications, and Allan and Joyce Reddoch for assistance in finding references. ▣

*Editor's Note:* There is an extensive literature on *Senecio*; the author would be happy to share the references he has found with interested readers. Contact the Editor for further information.

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## *Trail & Landscape Deadlines*

Date of Issue	Deadline
April - June 1988	January 1
July - September	March 1
October - December	July 1
January - March 1989	October 1

Material intended for these issues must be in the Editor's hands before the deadlines for consideration. Special arrangements must be made for long articles.

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# Winter Wildflowers in Ottawa: Solving a Mystery

Ross Anderson

Following the winter weed walk in 1987, a mystery remained unsolved. The question turned around a specimen identified (by me) as St. John's-wort. Doubt was sown by an apparently innocent remark. "How do you know it isn't a cinquefoil?" That remark was, I suspect, a trap. The person who asked knew perfectly well.

But, how do you know? Among the 20- or 30-odd specimens laid out on the dining room table, among the cinnamon buns and tea cups, there was nothing that keyed out as cinquefoil!

The question remained unanswered. By the 24th of June, when St. John's-wort traditionally appears, I had a plan: wait and watch. When the wildflowers of summer turned to winter garb, I would know which one was which.

St. John's-wort appeared on schedule. By the end of June, the fields around Clyde Woods were filled with raggedy golden flowers which continued to bloom well into the autumn. By then, flowers and seed pods were displayed on the same stalk. It was easy to see they belonged together.

Not so for cinquefoil. First, finding the flower was difficult. When I did find enough to sketch, growing along the path from the woods to Clyde Avenue, I discovered why. The delicate, butter-coloured flower of cinquefoil, unlike St. John's-wort, comes and goes almost overnight. Then, where I left the flowers, hoping they would turn to seed, the mower came along to broaden the greensward and they were gone!

Both flowers were captured on July 20th, the date shown on the sketches. The St. John's-wort flower and last year's stalk were sketched together. It was several weeks before I could again identify cinquefoil, near where it was first seen: a few stalks the mower missed.

The dry cinquefoil has an unbranched, hairy stem and seed pods that are mostly hidden by the sepals. By contrast, the St. John's-wort has a many-branched, hairless stem and seed pods which are easily seen.



Rough fruited Cinquefoil  
 Clyde Woods July 20 '87

Rough fruited Cinquefoil, *Potentilla recta*.

Cinquefoil, in this species, has a delicate, butter-coloured flower. The bracts and stems are hairy. When the "five leaves" come off, as they do in winter, they do so all at once.

If the snow is heavy and beats down the cinquefoil, the mystery will remain as deep and unresolved as before by February 1988. With a little foresight, however, I know where to dig. There is a carefully neglected cinquefoil growing under the cedars in my front garden!



St. John's-wort Clyde Woods  
July, 20 '87.



St. John's-wort, *Hypericum perforatum*.

*St. John's-wort* is tough and persistent, easy to find above the winter snow, in summer the flowers are deep gold, in winter the stalks and seed pods are brown.

The best guide to winter wildflowers is still *Weeds in Winter*, written and illustrated by Lauren Brown, published by Houghton Mifflin, 1977. Try also *Weeds of Canada* by Clarence Frankton and Gerald A. Mulligan, published by Agriculture Canada, with illustrations by W.H. Wright and Ilgvars Steins, 1970.

□

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# The Nose Knows

J.W. (Jack) Holliday

The Gray Squirrels in Ottawa have it easy. During Centennial Year (1967), the City gave a crab apple tree to anyone who wanted one to plant in the garden. Thousands did want, and the one-metre "wands" were planted all over the city. To look at the thin sticks with barely a root at the bottom, we doubted that they would grow, but most of them did, and now mature trees are everywhere, with their annual crop of small apples to tide the squirrels through the difficult months.

Then there are the feeders, ostensibly for birds, but as we all know, the squirrels own them. We humans keep them filled with sunflower seeds, cracked corn, oats, wheat, and rape seed, and the squirrels dutifully gobble up all they can hold.

Each fall, we plant tulip bulbs (imported from Holland they are) as a special treat for the squirrels to dig up, partially eat, then transplant in the neighbour's hedge or vegetable garden.

Some areas of Ottawa have oak trees, mostly White or Burr Oaks, which usually have an annual crop of acorns for the squirrels to harvest. There is a surprising number of Black Walnut and Butternut trees which provide for the squirrels.

I did say Gray Squirrels, but in the northern part of their range including Ottawa, they tend to be mostly black. The farther south, the more of them are gray. Some of the local gray ones have pinkish tails. Some have apricot-coloured ears and a reddish streak down the centre of the back. I once saw a piebald one with black and gray patches all over, about 50% of each colour, near the Champlain Bridge.

Did you ever wonder how squirrels can recall where they buried all those acorns, peanuts, walnuts, tulip bulbs, etc.? Especially when 10 minutes after they bury a nut, another squirrel digs it up and reburies it across the street?

They don't need to remember, their nose tells them.

One January, I watched a squirrel come down a lofty elm, scamper across the hard-packed snow, they begin to dig into the snow. After every few centimetres of digging, he stopped to come up and look around to ensure that nothing was sneaking up on him, then back down the hole and more digging until only the tip of his tail showed. Finally, he returned to the surface, ran up the tree to a suitable branch, and began to chew into the acorn he had retrieved. It was inconceivable that he had remem-

bered that acorn being in that exact spot. After thinking about his method of detection, I came to the conclusion that he must have smelled it. Many animals have a keen sense of smell, but I was surprised that the squirrel could detect an acorn under half a metre of snow.

Table scraps thrown out for the birds sometimes get covered by a snowfall, but the squirrels have no problem finding them and digging them up.

I have tried, with some success and some failures, to grow Black Walnuts into trees. One problem is that they don't grow if they haven't spent a winter under the snow to break their dormancy. It is difficult to winter them outside safe from squirrels.

Some I buried under a pile of stones were fine and sprouted well the next spring. I protected them all the first summer and heeled the little trees into the garden for the winter. The following spring, they had just started into leaf when a squirrel, or squirrels, dug them up, cut off the seedlings and made off with the root with what was left of the nut attached. So much for that attempt.

Another year, I successfully wintered a batch of walnuts, potted them up in 6" pots and had them on a bench in the greenhouse. One warm day, I left the door ajar to relieve some of the heat. An hour later, all seven walnuts had been dug up and were gone. I never saw the thief, but you and I know who it was, don't we. Chancing by, he had smelled the walnuts. It took only a minute or two to find the exact locations, dig them up and, no doubt, plant them somewhere else.

A couple of falls ago, I noticed a dozen or so walnuts in the gutter on Spencer Street, having fallen from several nearby trees. I rescued them and dropped them into the saddle bags of my bicycle. Upon returning home, I put my bicycle into the far corner of the garage, intending to put the walnuts into a safe place later. You guessed it. Later was too late, and "Mr. Keen-nose" had discovered my cache and hastily removed all but one. That one he had chewed open right there in the garage and left the debris as evidence.

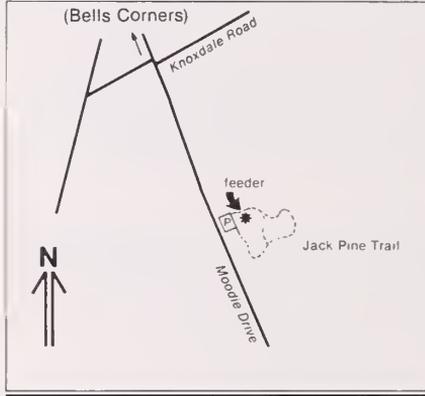
If you have a squirrel in your neighbourhood, carry out an experiment by burying a few peanuts in the snow, then watching to see if your squirrel will find them.

I'm sure he will, his "nose knows" where you buried them.

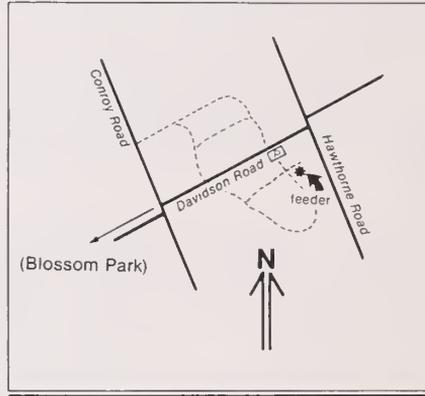
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# Club Bird Feeders

Moodie Drive Feeder



Davidson Road Feeder

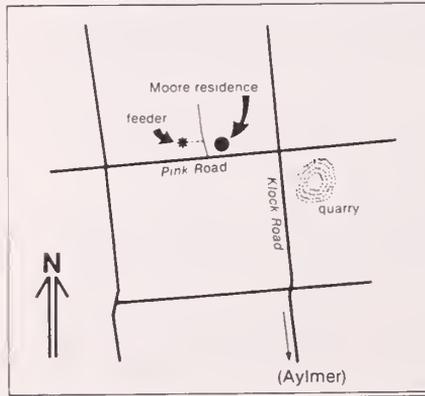


The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club operates the four feeders mapped here during the winter months, the Pink Road feeder in partnership with Le Club des ornithologues de l'Outaouais.

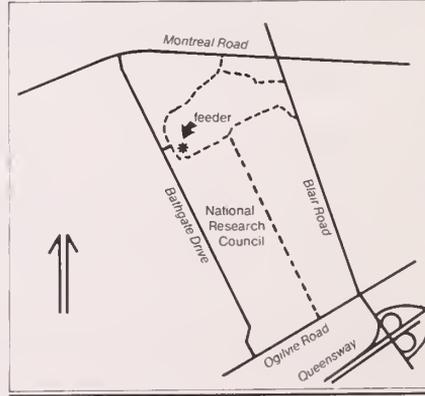
Volunteers maintain the feeders and stock them with sunflower seed at regular intervals. The seed is bought with the proceeds of the annual Seedathon.

In addition to these feeders, Club members look after National Capital Commission feeders at the Stony Swamp and Mer Bleue Conservation Areas.

Pink Road Feeder



Montreal Road Feeder





# OENCS



PLACE: Unitarian Church Hall  
30 Cleary Street  
#18 Bus stops at Cleary St. and Richmond Rd.

RESERVATIONS: To order tickets, fill in the order form and send it along with remittance before April 15 to:

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club  
c/o Ellaine Dickson  
2037 Honeywell Avenue  
Ottawa, Ontario K2A 0P7

# Soirée

## Wine & Cheese Party

Friday, April 29, 1988 7:30 p.m.

- ♦ selection of wines
- ♦ cheese and crackers
- ♦ tea and coffee
- ♦ non-alcoholic punch
- ♦ fruit

Help make this another special evening by contributing your photographic prints and art. Those members wishing to do so, please contact Colin Gaskell (728-7217) for confirmation or clarification before April 17th.

Prints and artwork must be mounted for easy handling. All items for display should be brought to the Unitarian Church between 4 and 7 p.m. on April 29th and taken home at the end of the evening.

This year, the best overall colour or black and white photographic print will be selected by ballots cast by all Club members in attendance. The lucky winner will take home a beautiful art print by Barry Flahey.

Prizes will also be awarded for the best Macoun Club displays. Children attending either primary or secondary school who are OFNC members but not Macoun Club members are invited to compete as well.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ tickets to the OFNC Annual Soirée at \$7.00 (\$3.50 for students under 18) per person. Enclosed please find my cheque or money order for \$ .....



---

# Flycatcher Fever

Tony Beck

I like birds. I seem to like them more each day. I've always been interested in wildlife, but it's only recently that I've gone "Gung Ho" over natural history.

Upon purchasing a camera, I quickly discovered that birds were challenging subjects. Trying to meet the challenge, I found myself out in the field chasing wild fauna and, in the process, bumping into a lot of the local birders. Friendships grew fast and my field activity became more intense.

The first major event in my birding history happened on an all-day birding trip to the Cornwall area. On September 2, 1985, winds were from the south with clear blue skies. With birding buddies Colin Gaskell and Mark Gawn as passengers and me behind the wheel, we were driving east down Highway 2. Around 1 p.m. about half a kilometre east of Ault Road, a simultaneous cry rang through the car. "What's that?!"

All heads turned to a small gray bird on a telephone wire. Loggerhead Shrike was what came to mind. I came to a fairly abrupt stop, much to the dismay of following traffic. A quick 180° turn and were facing the bird.

Binoculars were raised, there was a moment's silence, then suddenly "Oh my God! A Western Kingbird!" came a shout at the top of Mark's lungs. Without hesitation, I opened the sunroof, poked out the camera and took a couple of photos for the record.

I then proceeded to drive closer, but the bird flew farther down the wires. We then got out of the car and set up our scopes next to a farmer's field. All this time, Mark, the walking, talking field guide, was informing us of all the field marks to look out for; in particular, the white outer tail feathers.

What we were observing was a large flycatcher about the size of an Eastern Kingbird. It had a thin, dark bill about three-quarters of the length of the head with a slight hook at the tip. The head and back were mostly pale gray. Here we noticed darkness from the lores through to the auriculars. The tail was very dark and squared off at the end. The belly was lemon yellow, and the breast was a light gray tapering into a whitish chin. The barless wings were dark gray contrasted by the lighter breast and back.

It wasn't until the bird began to fly-catch from a leafless treetop that we were able to notice the white outer tail feath-

ers. With the sun on our backs, we could see the tail feathers flash out at us as the bird manoeuvred around its flying prey.

Throughout our 20-minute view, the bird never made a sound.

This whole experience was rather interesting, especially watching Mark's binoculars rattle against his forehead as his body succumbed to joyous convulsions registering 7 on the Richter Scale. I never thought I'd see anyone get so excited over a bird.

We telephoned out the Rare Bird Alert to Ottawa birders, but, unfortunately, the bird had disappeared before anyone arrived. Judging by everyone's response, it seemed that I had shared in an important record for Eastern Ontario, where there had been only a handful of sightings previous to this. Mark's Rare Bird Report accompanied by one of my photos was later accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee.

So, who could top Western Kingbird in 1985? Not me! I guess I just travel on looking for photos to take or maybe a "lifer" bird or two.

On the afternoon of October 20, 1985, the second last day of my one-week vacation in the woods, I was still looking for some nice scenery in an exhausted fall. I followed the Ottawa River very closely on the Quebec side. I remember as I turned onto a sunny Calumet Island saying to myself, "Why am I going here? There's nothing on this island!".

Moments later, while stopping to photograph a cliff against the river (a photograph I never took), I noticed some activity atop a distant TV antenna. Lifting my binoculars towards the action, I observed a House Sparrow scolding a strange-looking bird.

"Is it a bluebird?", I wondered. "No, it's too gray. Maybe a shrike. Better take a closer look."

With the Ottawa River to my right and farmers' fields to my left, I drove northward a hundred metres or so down the dirt road.

I stopped for another look. "Looks like a Western Kingbird? Naaaa....!"

I drove right into the driveway directly under the bird's perch. Here it was, a large flycatcher-type bird with a black, slightly-hooked bill three-quarters the length of the pale gray head. The back was also pale gray, and there was darkness through the eye to the earpatch. The black, squarish tail was slightly notched. Above a bright, light yellow belly, a light gray breast eased ever so slightly into an off-white chin, and

there were dark gray, barless wings.

Déjà vu!

Camera at hand as always, I began to shoot an entire series of photos as if a reporter covering a major news event. I crept closer with each press of the shutter and managed to position myself about nine metres from the bird to document its flycatching behaviour.

White outer tail feathers and all, I verified my second Western Kingbird for Eastern Canada.

On Calumet Island that day, we were blessed with a high pressure system from the south. With it came lots of sunshine and warm temperatures. This weather kept the dragonflies on the go, and the kingbird would take advantage of this by hawking for them from atop a TV antenna. It would fly out, grab a snack and return.

The bird never uttered a sound even when harrassed by the lone male House Sparrow two-thirds the size of the kingbird.



*The Western Kingbird on Calumet Island gave a spectacular display of its flycatching habits. It was totally unwary of human activity. All photographs by the author.*

Good things come in threes, so there must be another Western Kingbird out there just waiting for me to stumble across it. Could past events be pure luck, or do these birds appear a lot more regularly than records would indicate?

According to records obtained through *American Birds* magazine, there are at least single sightings of Western Kingbird each year in the Maritime Provinces and Ontario. At the time of writing, there have been 16 verified sightings for Quebec, of which the Calumet Island bird was number 16.

This indicates that the Western Kingbird is very rare but a regular stray expected throughout the east.

The long search goes on.

Undaunted by months of failure, I could feel something in the air.

September 28, 1986, on an all-day birding adventure to Presqu'ile Park off the north shore of Lake Ontario, the birds were literally dripping from the trees. Passerines were like blossoms of fruit dangling from boughs. The lake itself was filled with large rafts of diving fowl.

A low pressure system from the south brought a hot and humid breeze along with thick overcast cloud cover. The resulting darkness managed to steal away my ability to photograph at will. But with birds so abundant, I remained in ecstasy.

About 2 p.m., birding chums Tom Plath and Mark Gawn decided to walk along the road called Calf Pasture. I stayed behind near the bay where I was trying to outsmart a Pied-billed Grebe into coming towards my camera's view. After a few acceptable attempts, I looked around to find myself alone.

From the parking lot, I started to walk along a path near some cottages when I spotted a bird directly above me. As it hopped from one treetop to another, I raised my binoculars.

The first thing I noticed was a bright, rich, rufous rump and tail, and then thin, dark streaks down a dirty white breast. The streaks extended part-way down a chalkish, yellow belly. The yellow extended to the undertail coverts. The overall shape was of a flycatcher augmented by a large, long bill hooked at the tip of the upper mandible. The base of the bill was surrounded by bristly hairs. The face was like a bandit's mask formed from a thick, dark moustache and a thicker dark eyeline over a dark eye. The eyeline was surrounded by a grayish white eyebrow and malar stripe. The nape, back and wings were chocolate brown. The back feathers were edged with buff. The wing feathers were edged with ivory white giving a streaked appearance. The legs were dark. As the bird turned to look down at

me, it raised some dark crown feathers.

I knew this bird was out of place. My mental field guide was coming up blank. I struggled from illustration to illustration through the pages of my mind. I tried forcing the identification into something immature and local, but still no good.

Then, like being slapped across the face, I recalled the image of a bird I studied with hopes of recognizing in Arizona. SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER!

"Oh, my God! This can't be happening! Where are my buddies?!"

In desperation, I whistled at the top of my lungs! No response!

With my flash on the camera, plugged into a well-juiced power pack with a 420 mm telephoto lens, I began to bracket a series of exposures.

Even with the loud whistles and abrupt flashes, the bird merely twisted and hopped from one branch to the next.

As each moment passed, I got more desperate. I couldn't get any closer than 12 metres, but I felt satisfied with my observations and photographic attempts so I began to run for the nearest witness. As fast as an Olympic sprinter, I ran down the path screaming like a siren until I finally met Mark.

Out of breath, I began to describe the bird. Mark immediately placed the description into the "striated" family of flycatchers. As we ran back to the site, he warned me of two other birds that could be confused with the Sulphur-bellied. The Variegated Flycatcher and the Streaked Flycatcher are two tropical breeders that would be incredible North American records. The Sulphur-bellied would be a first record for Canada seeing that it breeds in southeastern Arizona.

We met with Tom as we looked for the bird, but after a futile half-hour search we decided to regain our energy by stopping for a meal.

It was about 3 p.m., and Mark initiated the Rare Bird Alert with a call to Ottawa.

Over dinner, we came up with a game plan on how to cover the area as thoroughly and efficiently as possible.

After satisfying our palates, we headed back to Calf Pasture. We dropped Mark off at the western tip of the path heading towards the parking lot. Tom and I drove around to the eastern side and started our search from the cottage properties.

As we slowly crept westward, we investigated every movement. Birds were around, but no sign of our southern visitor.

Then a harsh cry bellowed from the distance! Tom looked at me and said, "Mark's found the bird!"

We ran to the voice to find Mark gaping upward as the bird flitted across the treetops between the bay and the parking lot.

After a good, hard look, Mark and Tom began taking notes while I manoeuvred to get a detailed documentary photograph.

Most leaves were still fighting off the fall colours. At times this made it difficult to study the bird, but on occasion it would perch on a bare branch and reveal itself in all its glory.

During this second observation, we were able to note details such as rusty edges on the covert feathers closest to the leading edge of the wing, as well as thin, dusky, central shaft streaks on the rufous rump and tail feathers.

We could make a direct size comparison when a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker spiralled around a branch in order to avoid contact with the slightly larger flycatcher.

The flycatcher had no trouble finding dinner as it gleaned the foliage for insects.

Occasionally, it would burst into a strong, short flight from one perch to the next.

Throughout the entire observation time, the flycatcher remained silent.

Mark finished scribbling his extensive notes, and I managed to expose a whole roll of film, so it was time to stop pestering our little south-of-the-border buddy and go home.

That night, the nationwide rare bird alert was reinforced with a striated-type flycatcher leaning to Sulphur-bellied but not ruling out Variegated or Streaked.

As it turned out, over 100 enthusiastic bird listers showed up the next day. The little southern critter really raised quite a commotion with the Canadian birding community.

My film was processed, and the textbooks were pulled. All evidence was compiled. We even visited the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Ottawa to compare our evidence to actual specimens in the museum's collection.



*This Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher was a true sight to behold. Many birdwatchers from across Ontario and Quebec flocked to Presqu'ile Provincial Park to get a glimpse of this first record for Canada.*



*From underneath you can see the convergence of the submalar stripes (moustache) creating a dark chin. This small field mark is one of the strongest indications that this bird is a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and not its neotropical twin cousin, the Streaked Flycatcher.*

All information was digested thoroughly, and it appears that we had a first record for Canada of Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher.

Based on Mark Gawn's Rare Bird Report, accompanied by a series of my photographs, the record has been accepted by American flycatcher authorities, the Ontario Bird Records Committee, and the National Audubon Society. Mark's note, *Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher: new to Canada* will appear shortly in *Ontario Birds*.

One can only speculate as to why such a bird would show up on the shores of Lake Ontario. Most people, myself included, believe that the bird's mental compass had reversed polarity. It may think it's flying south towards Peru, but actually it might end up on the shores of Labrador. I hate to guess what will happen after that. In my own mind, that flycatcher will live forever, immortalized by its navigational error.

Well, life goes on, photography is fun, and birding feels good.

Oh! By the way, I'm still determined to find my third Western Flycatcher. I can't help it. I'm suffering from a bad case of flycatcher fever!

#### *Acknowledgements*

Thanks to all for having faith and trust and for lending me their books.

Thanks to Daniel St. Hilaire for Western Kingbird status in Quebec.

Special thanks to Doug McRae for the use of his park and for tickling the press.

Another special thank you to Michel Gosselin for use of the National Museum of Natural Sciences specimens and invaluable literature.

Finally, extra special thanks to Mark Gawn, who passed on so much of his many years of experience to me, and for playing paramount roles in all of the flycatcher discoveries I've had the pleasure of being a part of. ▣

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#### THE BIRD STATUS LINE

For up-to-date information on what's happening in the Ottawa bird world, call the Bird Status Line number: 596-4888.

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# The Madawaska Hills <sup>\*</sup>

## On a Clear Day, You Can See Forever . . .

Mary Hoth-Campbell

It was a perfect winter day! Minus 7° C, crisp and crystal clear - bright sun and fresh snow. What more could we want for our Wilderness Ski Trip in the Madawaska Hills that February day in 1986 as guests of Sheila and Harry Thomson?

We set out early from Ottawa and thoroughly enjoyed the snowy winter landscape of the Ottawa Valley as we passed through towns, villages, fields and forests enroute to the meeting place on Black Donald Road. We were the last of the group to arrive, but Harry had kindly chosen to wait for the late arrivals and we were grateful.

After parking our car, there was a clatter of skis and happy chatter as we "strapped up" on that glistening winter morning and followed Harry through the short, narrow trail to the Thomson's cabin.

The scenery took our breath away. A fresh snowfall had left a couple of centimetres of white sparkling crystals on each twig and branch, giving the appearance of a thick hoar frost. The balsams were outlines and bowed gracefully with the same white frosting. The sky was incredibly blue and the sun brilliant and warm. The boughs and branches hung resplendent, undisturbed by the still air. It was truly a Winter Wonderland.

Sheila welcomed all 21 of us at the cabin door, and offered hot tea and coffee while we chatted with old friends and new. We admired the view of Black Donald Lake and a busy bird feeder as we sat by the large cabin window.

When the "Bathroom Brigade" had ended, we set out about 11:30 a.m. on skis in a long line through woods of birch, balsam, White Pine and maple.

Each turn on the trail brought a new and exquisite scene to view, and oh that I could do it justice on paper. But I must simply say that this bright, still, winter day showed Canada's landscape at its best.

*\* This account of the 1986 Madawaska Wilderness Ski Trip just missed the deadline last year, so here it is to get you in the mood for the 1988 trip on February 20th (see Coming Events).*

The trail was criss-crossed with many markings, and, in order, Sheila had identified the tracks of Red Fox, Snowshoe Hare, a weasel species, Fisher, Marten, Mink, River Otter, a shrew species and Ruffed Grouse. We all tried very hard to identify the distinctive characteristics of each track, but most of us will need a refresher course this year.

Just before lunch break, the sky filled briefly with wisps of cirrus cloud, and Sheila repeated an old rhyme I had not heard before:

"Gaze upon the mackerel sky,  
Not long wet, and not long dry."

Then, just past a beaver dam, we slow-pokes caught up with the advance troups, and found Harry had already built a tripod, using his ski poles and long branches, and had a fire heating water for tea. One of the pots was a spoutless kettle that had been in service and well-blackened for over 10 years.

We stood or sat on frozen "Skinny Pond", warmed by tea and winter sunshine, enjoying one another's company and marvelling at the exquisite weather and our good fortune to be enjoying it in a wilderness setting.

When we had finished our lunch, we set out again through wooded trails to the top of a very high cliff which the Thomsons call Big Lookout. We gazed down across snow-covered lakes with such unique names as "Pumpkin", "Lobster Claw" (both Thomson names), Jack Tarr and Mason, toward the distant blue-gray Madawaska Hills.

While enjoying the scenery from this pinnacle of land, several people asked how we could proceed from this awesome height to continue across Pumpkin Lake. Harry assured us there was a perfectly safe and pleasant trail, but since the loop would be lengthy, Sheila offered to lead the less energetic members back to the cabin.

Harry led us down a winding trail with many switch-backs, the last being Eagle Pass, a steeply descending trail that shot us into a stand of maples and left most of us bottom up! Those of us who descended first had the fun of watching the acrobatic manoeuvres performed by the rest - the accompanying sketch does not do us justice!

(Eagle Pass is not as treacherous as the sketch indicates; we just made it look that way!)



After mastering Eagle Pass, the trail led us across lakes and through woods until we came upon familiar surroundings and found ourselves, tired and hungry, back at the cabin. Sheila, bless her, had lots of hot tea, coffee, cakes and muffins - most welcome!

It was dark by the time we set out again to ski down the trail to the parking lot. By the light of the moon, we followed Harry along the shadowy moonlit trail and laughed hilariously at the more than occasional spill.

I'm sure everyone felt as grateful as I when we said our goodbyes and set out for home after our glorious experience in the Madawaska Wonderland. Thank you, Sheila and Harry! ▢

# Coming Events

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arranged by the Excursions and Lectures Committee  
Ross Anderson (224-7768), 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. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.*

**Registered Bus Trips:** Make your reservation for Club bus excursions by sending a cheque or money order (payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Ellaine Dickson, 2037 Honeywell Avenue, Ottawa K2A 0P7, **at least ten days in advance.** Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing.

**All Outings:** Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and the activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.

Tuesday	ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING
12 Jan.	Meet: Auditorium, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets
8:00 p.m.	The formal business meeting will be followed by an opportunity to ask and learn more about the inner workings of the Club in a relaxed atmosphere. Four discussion groups have been created from various committees of the Council. Awards, Education and Publicity, Macoun; Birds, Excursions and Lectures; Conservation; Finance, Membership, Publications. The committee representatives look forward to your questions and comments over coffee and dessert.

Saturday TOUR OF CARLETON UNIVERSITY GREENHOUSES (ELBA)  
16 Jan. Leaders: Hank Datema and Bill Illman  
10:00 a.m. Meet: at the greenhouses; parking is available in  
to Lot #3 across from the greenhouses in the  
12 p.m. southeast section of the campus opposite  
the Administration Building.  
A wealth of fascinating plants from diverse habitats around the world are the featured attraction.

Saturday WINTER BIRDING IN THE LOW-POLTIMORE AREA  
23 Jan. Leader: Bruce Di Labio (729-6267)  
7:00 a.m. Meet: front entrance, Brooke Claxton Building  
(Health and Welfare Canada), de la Colombine  
Boulevard at Tunney's Pasture  
An all-day outing to observe interesting birds of our  
northern forests. Boreal Chickadees, Common Ravens  
and various species of finches (including the cross-  
bills) are anticipated highlights.

Saturday OTTAWA BANDING GROUP DEMONSTRATION  
30 Jan. Leader: Janette Dean  
and The OBG invites a limited number (5) of Club members  
6 Feb. to assist them and learn about banding techniques.  
7:00 a.m. Register by telephoning the Club number (722-3050)  
several days in advance of each morning outing.

Tuesday	OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
9 Feb.	COMMON SPIDERS OF THE OTTAWA DISTRICT
8:00 p.m.	Speaker: Charles Dondale Dr. Dondale is employed at the Biosystematics Re- search Centre of Agriculture Canada. His illustrated talk will focus on some of the interesting local members of the class Arachnida, emphasizing the bene- ficial role the often maligned spiders play in the environment.

Sunday WINTER WILDFLOWERS  
14 Feb. Leaders: Ross Anderson and Ellaine Dickson  
9:00 a.m. Meet: Sears, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,  
Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue  
This half-day outdoor workshop is designed to in-  
crease your knowledge of winter plant identifica-  
tion. *Weeds in Winter* by Lauren Brown will be a  
source of reference.

Saturday MADAWASKA WILDERNESS SKI TRIP FOR INTERMEDIATE-  
20 Feb. ABILITY CROSS-COUNTRY SKIERS  
Leaders: Sheila and Harry Thomson (234-0845)  
An all-day trip of deep-snow skiing in the lovely  
Madawaska Hills. Register and learn further details  
by telephoning the Club number (722-3050) by Feb. 17.

Tuesday      PLANT IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP  
23 Feb.      Instructors: Erich Haber and Philip Martin  
7:00 -      Meet: Room 15, National Museum of Natural Sciences,  
10:00 p.m.      Metcalfe and McLeod Streets  
This introductory session will concentrate on the use of botanical keys as an aid to plant identification, stressing simple characteristics of leaves, stems and flowers. It is limited to the first 20 people to register with the Club number. Bring a hand lens, magnifying glass and any handbooks you like.

Thursday     OTTAWA BANDING GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
25 Feb.      Meet: Room 15, National Museum of Natural Sciences,  
7:30 p.m.      Metcalfe and McLeod Streets.  
The Ottawa Banding Group extends an invitation to OFNC members to attend their Annual General Meeting. Tony Gaston of the Canadian Wildlife Service will present a slide talk on arctic birds at the conclusion of business.

Saturday     TREES AND BUSHES IN WINTER  
27 Feb.      Leader: Jim Wickware  
9:00 a.m.     Meet: Sears, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,  
Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue.  
An opportunity to explore a local area and learn the secrets of winter tree identification. The trip is limited to the first 25 people to register with the Club number (722-3050).

Sunday       WINTER BUS TRIP TO THE KINGSTON AREA  
28 Feb.      Leader: Roy John  
7:00 a.m.     Meet: Sears, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,  
to              Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue.  
6:00 p.m.     Cost: \$15.00 (See Registered Bus Trips details.)  
The outing will include a visit to either Wolfe Island or Amherst Island to observe owls, hawks and other interesting winter birds. A brief stop may be made at Ivy Lea to search for Bald Eagles.

Tuesday	OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
8 March	FORILLON NATIONAL PARK: THE HARMONY BETWEEN MAN, THE
8:00 p.m.	LAND AND THE SEA
	Speaker: Maxime St-Amour, Chief Park Naturalist. Forillon, truly one of the world's great national parks, offers a unique blend of magnificent geological landforms, waters teeming with marine life and several distinct vegetation communities that foster an amazing diversity of plants and animals. The human history of the Park is equally rich. A memorable day at Forillon, in Maxime's company, was a highlight of the Club's 1986 tour of the Gaspé Peninsula.

Saturday LATE WINTER BIRDS AND EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS  
 12 March Leader: Roy John  
 7:30 a.m. Meet: Westgate Shopping Centre, southeast corner of the parking lot, Carling Avenue and Merivale Road.  
 This half-day outing may include Snowy Owls, wintering hawks, several finch species and some early migrants.

Date and AMPHIBIANS IN SPRING  
 time to Leader: Stephen Darbyshire  
 be decided Meet: to be decided  
 The success of this outing is very dependent on the weather. Those registering with the Club number (722-3050) before March 20th will be notified when final details have been determined. A strong flashlight, rubber boots and a dip net are recommended.

Saturday EARLY MORNING OWLING  
 26 March Leader: Bruce Di Labio (722-3050)  
 2:00 a.m. Meet: Sears, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,  
 to Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue.  
 8:00 a.m. The characteristic sounds of Great Horned, Barred, Saw-whet and, possibly, Long-eared Owls may be heard by the group. Telephone Bruce if you are interested in participating. If for some reason the trip is postponed, he will be able to notify you.

Sunday      BUS EXCURSION: BIRDING AT PRESQU'ILE  
10 April    Leaders: Bob Bracken and Colin Gaskell  
6:30 a.m.   Meet: Sears, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,  
              to                    Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue.  
6:30 p.m.   Cost: \$20.00 (See Registered Bus Trips details.)  
              The popular spring tradition will focus on the large  
              flocks of waterfowl gathered at the provincial park  
              prior to continuing their northward migration.

Tuesday	OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
12 April	UNDERSTANDING THE NATURAL WORLD: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES
8:00 p.m.	Speaker: Dr. Alan Emery, Director of the NMNS The National Museum of Natural Sciences reaches out to all Canadians to create a better understanding of the natural world. Born of the Geological Survey of Canada 140 years ago, the Museum looks at its history and the needs of the nation in defining its future role. Dr. Emery will explain the challenge of in- volving everyone in this task, not just those who visit museums.

Saturday    EARLY MORNING OWLING  
16 April    Leader: Ray Holland (225-9655)  
2:00 a.m.   Meet: Sears, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,  
              to                    Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue.  
8:00 a.m.   Participants may expect to hear the diagnostic calls  
              of several owl species as well as the distinctive  
              sounds of American Woodcock, Common Snipe and Ruffed  
              Grouse. Telephone Ray if you intend to participate.  
              If for some reason the trip is postponed, he will be  
              able to notify you.

Sunday      BUS EXCURSION: HAWK MIGRATION AT DERBY HILL, N.Y.  
24 April    Leaders: Bob Bracken and Bernie Ladouceur  
6:30 a.m.   Meet: Sears, Carlingwood Shopping Centre,  
              to                    Carling Avenue at Woodroffe Avenue.  
6:30 p.m.   Cost: \$20.00 (See Registered Bus Trips details.)  
              When weather conditions and timing are favourable,  
              the spectacle of thousands of hawks migrating through  
              Derby Hill is well worth the bus ride. Canadians  
              should bring proof of citizenship and non-Canadians  
              should carry passports. Optical equipment in "new"  
              condition should be registered with Canada Customs in  
              advance of the trip. The trip will be cancelled on  
              the day before if the weather forecast for the east-  
              ern end of Lake Ontario on Sunday is particularly  
              unfavourable. You will be notified of any change of  
              plan.



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