



PATRON

Hon. Dr. J.W. Grant MacEwan

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CORPORATE MEMBERS

Alberta Natural History Society
Bow Valley Naturalists
Calgary Field Naturalists' Society
Edmonton Bird Club
Edmonton Natural History Club
Lethbridge Natural History Society

Box 308, Spruce Grove, Alberta

NEWSLETTER

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The ALBERTA NATURALIST volume 2(1), our retitled newsletter, is nearly ready to go, and will appear after the Director's meeting in early February.

TO receive the newsletter regularly, send a subscribing membership fee of 2 dollars to the Treasurer, 2630-22nd. Avenue South, Lethbridge.

EDITORIAL :

FAN's SECOND YEAR

David A.E.Spalding

Where do we go from here? Our retiring President, Tim Myres (who is editing this last issue of the newsletter), has kindly given me this opportunity to present some of my thoughts on the immediate future of FAN. This must be preceded by an expression of thanks to Tim, who did so much to get the Federation under way, and has given us a lead in so many directions. Tim will leave us in January for a sabbatical year, and we wish him well on his trip.

THE OPPORTUNITY. Exciting things are happening in all directions. Natural History and the Environment at large are receiving increasing public interest and concern, which are being reflected at all levels of Government. The situation has finally got so bad that naturalists are no longer crying in the wilderness, but have a job to make their views heard. So many people are jumping on the environment bandwagon that there is a danger that the naturalist will get pushed off. However, we still have an important role to play.

There is certainly much interest and concern, but there is not much knowledge or experience. There is now an opportunity for environmental education and conservation to become the important part of our way of life it should have been for the last fifty years. The naturalist, more than anyone, knows how to get enjoyment from the countryside without spoiling it. He knows what vulnerable areas and species are an important part of our heritage. He can foresee the impact of our developing civilisation on this heritage. There are innumerable opportunities for the naturalist to serve society at large, and growing indications that his participation will be welcome.

SERVICE BEGINS AT HOME. The first opportunity for FAN is to strengthen the Natural History Club movement. By aiding exchange of experience between existing clubs, and actively encouraging the development of new groups, there will be an increase in our resource base, ultimately the individual naturalist. Relations can also be improved with neighbouring provinces, and with the new national body, the Canadian Nature Federation.

COMMUNICATION IS VITAL. This newsletter will become the Alberta Naturalist with its next issue. It will build on the present foundation, with increased provincial news and features. It will be quarterly, and include news items solicited from outside bodies as well as from the members. The possibility of making it available to all members of clubs is under discussion. If it doesn't reflect your views, its up to you.

NATURALISTS ENJOY NATURAL HISTORY. Many worthwhile projects which naturalists get involved in necessarily give a back seat to natural history. Committees, public hearings, letters of protest and the like are essential, but not always very enjoyable. FAN projects and activities can help to put the natural history back. The Alberta Naturalist will carry regular natural history features, and try to develop co-operative projects which can be enjoyable as well as useful. Would you like to adopt a species? Should there

be a provincial bird? Hunt the Prairie park? Watch this space for further details.

ENJOYMENT IS INFECTIOUS. How can we involve others in Natural History? The pollution, population and parks people are in many ways doing a wonderful job. Some of them are us, but many of them are recruits from the public at large. They are fighting for a cause, but they are also thirsty for information. Naturalists can help them to understand what we are all fighting for. How about joint meetings with some of these bodies? One project under way is the Naturalists Guide to Alberta, which will help every-one to follow up their natural history interest in a practical way. The first part may be ready for the Canadian Nature Federation Conference.

CONCENTRATED CONSERVATION. It is all too easy nowadays to spread one's efforts over the whole field of conservation and social issues. But the best contribution can be made where one has knowledge and experience, and nature conservation needs naturalists. FAN, with its member groups, can try and identify the issues of most concern to naturalists, and press for action and participation. We are represented on the Public Advisory Board of the Environment Conservation Authority, and can promote our views in other directions too. Watch for features in the AN on prairie parks, the future of Wood Buffalo, species conservation and other pressing issues. We need to plan ahead, and to see issues before they become urgent.

IS EDUCATION THE ANSWER ? Formal and informal education about the environment is growing. Schools, parks, museums, zoos; a whole range of activities are under way. Is more needed? Can FAN help? Our natural world belongs to all its inhabitants, and those with most power need most knowledge. FAN should at least be in touch with current developments, and can perhaps play a more direct role.

MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL PROGRESS. To make its full impact, the Federation needs full time assistance, to run its organisation smoothly, increase its impact, and free its voluntary officers from routine tasks for more adventurous developments. We're working on it.

FOOTNOTE Tim was not quite able to complete the newsletter - not surprising as he had a round the world trip to plan as well. However, this has given an opportunity to advance some features of the Alberta Naturalist into this issue.

David A.E. Spalding

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Dave,

Within the past year I have been involved with the establishment of proposed wilderness areas and have faced opposition from hunters on the question of wildlife preservation. For your interest and publication, if you wish, I have enclosed a few points as part of my argument against hunting in wilderness areas. I feel that conservationists need points to back up their arguments in view of increased pressure against our wildlife. The enclosed are some of the best points I could think of.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Yours sincerely,

(Robert C. Guest)

Founder, Canadian Wolf Defenders.

(Editor's Note : Bob is a well-known Alberta wildlife artist and conservationist, who has played a leading part in both the Wolf Defenders and the new Peace River group, Wild Kakwa. His views on this question, given below, are well worth thinking about, and readers may well wish to send their comments on this and other conservation issues to the Letters page.)

LETS KEEP WILDERNESS AREAS "WILD"

From time to time we hear suggestions that a wilderness area should be used for hunting. In fact it is encouraged in some cases, perhaps in an attempt to raise support for what is left of our unspoiled country. While the idea of hunting in a wilderness area sounds okay in theory, it would create some problems. The following points should be considered:

1. One of the basic needs of a wilderness area is to provide sanctuary for the remnants of our wildlife population. Wildlife is the essence of any natural setting and unless certain species are protected they face extinction within a few years. Hunting in the same areas would help destroy the ecological balance which has existed for a long time.
2. Hunting automatically creates discrimination against any species of wildlife which appears to compete with man - especially natural predators. Animals such as grizzly bears, coyotes, cougar, lynx, and timber wolves help to maintain a state of healthy equilibrium between the game herds and prey species. Remember - these animals have rights too. Let's save some of their country for them!
3. In the natural state we hardly ever hear of overpopulation or overgrazing. If a natural area is not enclosed by a fence, surplus wildlife usually leaves the more populated regions and spreads out into the surrounding country. Where natural predators are preserved, hunting is not required to "harvest" the extra animals.
4. People, too, like a retreat away from the calculated dangers of each hunting season. The person who prefers to hunt with a camera should have just as much right to be there as the one who carries a rifle. Many outdoor people like to mountain climb, hike, canoe or study natural phenomena without taking risks or being in conflict with hunters.

5. Sometimes hunting initiates human greed and competition. A wilderness area which allows hunting will likely end up as a glorified game pasture - something like those of western Europe. Obviously, the hunters who have the means economically or the right "connections" would have more favourable access to the area.

6. Hunting in a wilderness area involves a question of privileges. For example, if someone has the right to remove wildlife from a reserved area, then someone else should have the same right to dig up trees, transplant wild flowers, collect rocks and rob birds' nests for egg collections. Imagine what would happen to the wilderness concept!

7. Since hunters have vast areas of the province to call their own, especially during each hunting season, I fail to see why they should be allowed within the boundaries of a wilderness reserve. Unfortunately, many careless hunters make a bad name for the responsible ones. Besides, we will all have to make sacrifices if certain areas are to be preserved.

8. On the question of economics, evidently the amount of money brought into the country by hunters is equally matched by that of visitors who wish to camp, take photographs, and generally enjoy the outdoor atmosphere. There are indications that more people prefer to study wildlife than destroy it, especially in eastern Canada. Quite often the cost of good photographic equipment more than equals that of hunting gear.

"How base are the motives which commonly carry men into the wilderness. They have no more love for wild nature than wood sawyers have for forests. For one that comes to sketch, or to sing, a thousand come with axe or rifle."
Thoreau

Robert C. Guest.

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WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

One reply has been received relating to our resolution on Wood Buffalo National Park, published in FAN Newsletter 1 (3) : 39. The letter is from the Hon. Jack Davis, Minister of the Environment, and contains reassuring news. It might have been nice to have heard from the Minister directly responsible for the park, but as all the correspondence has not yet reached the new officers there may be confirmation already in hand. The letter is on page 52, and members will be kept informed of further developments.



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FINANCIAL REPORT FOR PERIOD AUGUST 5, 1970 TO OCTOBER 1, 1971

INCOME -

Corporate membership dues	\$111.50	
Supporting membership dues (7)	72.00	
Subscribing membership dues (108)	216.15	
Donations	182.71	
Christmas card sales	32.75	
	=====	
Total Income		\$615.11

DISBURSEMENTS -

Printing newsletters	\$107.53	
Postage	76.73	
Miscellaneous expenses (receipt books, etc.)	8.95	
Stationary and letterhead	59.35	
Seal	11.00	
	=====	
Total Disbursements		\$263.56
		=====
BALANCE		\$351.55

It should be noted that about \$150.00 in printing was donated.

Helen C. Schuler
(Mrs.) Helen Schuler
Treasurer
Federation of Alberta Naturalists

Francis A. Schultz
Director



Minister
Environment Canada

Ministre
Environnement Canada

Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0H3

Dr. M.T. Myres,
President,
Federation of Alberta
Naturalists,
2103 Crocus Road, N.W.,
Calgary 48, Alberta.

Dear Dr. Myres:

SEP 30 1971

I have reviewed the resolution passed by the Federation of Alberta Naturalists concerning Wood Buffalo National Park, dated June 12, 1971 which you sent to me.

As you are aware, the responsibility for preparing a master plan for Wood Buffalo National Park and for arranging appropriate public discussions and hearings on it belongs to the National and Historic Parks Branch through its Minister, the Honourable Jean Chrétien. It seems very probable that the procedure employed for other national parks across Canada will be followed in the case of Wood Buffalo National Park. Members of the Department of the Environment will undoubtedly provide assistance to the National and Historic Parks Branch in developing its master plan.

I do not know the precise timing relative to the production of the plan nor of the public discussions which will follow. However, I have been assured that they will take place before any commitments regarding possible changes in the status of Wood Buffalo National Park are negotiated.

Thank you for bringing to my attention your Federation's resolution.

Yours sincerely,



Jack Davis.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DIRECTOR'S MEETING, LETHBRIDGE by John M. Powell

The fifth regular meeting of the Directors was held October 2nd., 1971, at the University of Lethbridge with 13 Directors present. This summary of the minutes has been prepared by our new secretary.

The President's and Treasurer's reports were presented. The President drew attention to the good progress made since the establishment of the Federation, but cautioned that additional members and funds will soon be needed if the Federation is to fulfill its potential. The Treasurer showed that the Federation had a balance of \$ 351.55, but made note that some \$ 150.00 of the printing costs had been donated, thus the balance did not accurately represent our expenditures.

Reports were given on the successful First Congress of the Canadian Nature Federation by the Provincial Representative, Miss Aileen Harmon, and the Federation's representative, D.A.E.Spalding. Other reports were given on the proposed 'Naturalist's Guide to Alberta', the resolution on Wood Buffalo Park, the committee on 'water levels at Cooking and Hastings Lakes', and the use of Suffield by the British Military.

The outgoing President, Dr.M.T.Myres, and Secretary, Mr. I.A.R.Halladay, were both thanked for their commendable efforts in organising and running the Federation during its initial period of operation. Mr. D.A.E.Spalding was elected as the new President, and Dr. John M.Powell was subsequently appointed as an appointed Director and secretary. Mr. I.A.Halladay became the new vice-President, and Mrs. H.C.Schuler continues as Treasurer. Mr. A.W.Rupp and Mr. W.Stilwell were appointed to the positions of appointed Directors for 1971-2. Mr. Spalding became the new editor of the newsletter, which, beginning with the second volume, will become the Alberta Naturalist. One other appointment of note was that of Miss Aileen Harmon as chairman of the Wilderness, Parks, and Natural Areas committee.

Dates were tentatively fixed for the next three Director's meetings: in mid February in Calgary, in mid-June in Banff (which would also be the spring meeting of the Federation to be held under the auspices of the Bow Valley Naturalists), and the first weekend of October in Calgary when a fall meeting would be held under the auspices of the Calgary Field Naturalists Society. Plan now to take part in the spring and fall meetings.

STOP PRESS

Director's meeting will be in Calgary on February 12th. in McEwan Hall, University of Calgary.

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY (Put them in now)

Canadian Nature Federation Conference, Edmonton, 18-20th August.

Internationa Union for the Conservation of Nature Meeting, 11-16th September
Banff.

World Conference on National Parks, 21-26 September, Yellowstone.

The International Geological Congress is also meeting in Montreal this year, with field trips all over Canada.

If you can't go to them all, go to the first one !.

FAN PROJECTS: A PROVINCIAL BIRD (1) by David A.E.Spalding

Should there be an 'official' provincial bird? There has been some discussion of the possibility at recent Federation meetings. Alberta has a provincial flower, the wild rose, which appears on FAN's crest. This was established by a very simple act of the Provincial Legislature that specifies the particular kind of rose (Rosa acicularis). There has recently been discussion among lapidary enthusiasts about a provincial stone, for which there is some precedent in B.C.

There are official birds elsewhere in Canada, such as Saskatchewan's Sharp-tailed Grouse. They are moreover the rule to the south where most states have made a choice. An excellent chapter in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service book 'Birds in our Lives', describes these various birds and how they came to be selected. Some, like Louisiana's pelican, date from the early history of the state, and are heraldic symbols of great antiquity. Most were selected during the last few decades, at the instigation of Audubon Societies, women's clubs or schools. The California Gull has been Utah's state bird since 1848, after saving the early settlements from starvation by decimating a plague of grasshoppers. Several familiar and widespread species - cardinal, western meadowlark, mockingbird and robin, have each been selected by several states.

Such a symbol can be a powerful ally of conservation education, and is likely to arouse considerable interest among the general public. Among criteria that have been suggested as a basis for choice are :-

- Striking colour or pattern
- Widely familiar to residents
- Should occur in area for most of year
- Special significance for area.

The subject will be discussed again at the February Director's meeting, and a definite decision may be made on whether, and how, to proceed on getting an official bird established. Why not think about it, and be ready with your suggestions.

REFERENCES

- Briggs, S.A. (1966) Symbols of States in 'Birds in our Lives': 114-120
- Flock, E.B. (1957) Our provincial emblems Blue Jay 13(2):1

FAN PROJECTS : A NATURALIST'S GUIDE TO ALBERTA (1) by David A.E.Spalding

At the Red Deer Director's meeting in June 1971, the possibility of FAN producing a guide to the birds of natural history of Alberta was discussed. Some of the member clubs have started looking into this, and it was further discussed at the Lethbridge meeting in the fall.

Ontario already has an excellent 'Naturalist's Guide to Ontario', published by the University of Toronto Press in 1964. This is a 210 page book, available in hard and soft bindings, which was prepared by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. Its contents include introductory chapters on the geology, vegetation and fauna of the province, and the bulk of the book is made up of over forty regional guides to specific areas of the province. An appendix deals with sources of identification, and there is an index of species and localities.

There is no doubt that a guide of this type would be of great utility to naturalists and visitors to Alberta. There are few guides to regions available separately (perhaps the best are the excellent guides to the geology of the National Parks). 'Alberta - a Natural History' is a first class introduction to the natural history of the province as a whole, but does not present an easy way to follow up that interest in terms of specific places and areas.

There seems no doubt that the project would be worthwhile, though it clearly needs careful discussion and planning. The possibility of producing something in time for the Canadian Nature Federation conference in Alberta next fall, and of co-operation with the Provincial Museum, National and Provincial Parks, and other interested organisations in the province to produce a really worthwhile guide is now being considered. In view of the relatively small manpower available in our clubs, and the extent to which a guide could be expected to grow during the next few years, the best approach would seem to be a loose leaf system.

Members of various clubs have already produced drafts of notes on specific areas as a starting point, and the following list gives the notes already in hand.

Calgary Inglewood, Frank Lake, NE Calgary, Glenbow Lake, Reader's Rock Garden.

Lethbridge Lake Newell, Taber Provincial Park, Lethbridge Area, Horseshoe Lake, Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, Stirling Lake, Keho Lake.

Red Deer Rimbey, Pine Lake.

Banff (existing park leaflets), Lake Agnes Nature Trail, Canyon Trail, Lake Louise, and immediated Banff area.

Nothing has as yet been received from the two Edmonton Clubs.

FAN PROJECTS : NEW CLUBS (1)

by me again.

One of FAN's objects in bringing together the existing groups of naturalists in Alberta was to encourage and assist the formation of new clubs, and so strengthen the movement as a whole in the province.

An analysis of the current membership list suggests some starting points. As might be expected, places with existing clubs have the strongest support for FAN in supporting and subscribing members. Thus, four of the five cities of the province now have naturalists groups, together with one town.

Edmonton (two clubs)	40 members
Calgary	31 members
Red Deer	9 members
Lethbridge	6 members
Banff	2 members

This leaves Medicine Hat (1 member) as our only city without a club. The rest of our individual members are scattered (very appropriately) across the map, in towns, villages, and rural areas. Only Rockyford (3), and Jasper (2) have at the moment more than one individual member. FAN however regards all these areas as growth points - all members in these areas please recruit more members, and work towards starting your own club. FAN will help if called upon.

BOW VALLEY NATURALISTS - SUMMER OUTINGS

We had some fine trips this summer. highlight was probably the over-nighter to Little Yoho Valley, August 7 and 8. we were 13, including an 8 year old, on this jaunt. We followed the main trail in the Little Yoho as far as Laughing Falls, then trudged up the hill to the Little Yoho, following the river to the Alpine Club's Stanley Mitchell Hut near the head of the valley. Through some of our climbing members we had made special arrangements for overnight shelter here. It is in a magnificent setting at the edge of a meadow backed by great spruce and alpine fir. From the door we could see Mount President and the Vice-President rising to 10,000 feet just across the river, while the head of the valley is crowded with moraines and minor peaks. Climax of the trip was the 10 mile high line hike back over the shoulder of Vice-President, through meadows still showing some fine bloom. We were above timberline most of the time for sweeping views of the Yoho Glacier, Mount Ballour and other peaks of the Wapta Icefield on the continental divide. We had some trouble and lots of fun wading two roaring streams from the Emerald Glacier above us. The trail descends through luxuriant forest with impressive views of Takakkaw falls and its source.

Largest attendance of our summer trips was on the Sunshine Meadows walk on July 24th, with 50 people. Some wandered in the meadows while others traversed Twin Cairn to see rock plants and ptarmigan.

Other hikes of particular interest were to Stanley Glacier near Marble Canyon (35 people) where the regeneration of the recent fire burned area was extremely interesting, including a bed of Glacier lilies in the midst of the forest. On the Glacier Lake walk west of Saskatchewan River Crossing we found seven kinds of orchids as well as some interesting fungii and other flora. The large lake is quite wild, and the upper valley beyond the lake would be worthy of an overnight trip.

Our June trip to the amphitheatre on Cascade Mountain was a good "conditioner" involving 2,000 feet and 8 miles. Alpine flora were most advanced on a south facing avalanche slope above the hanging valley. Another spring trip offered more than usual interest, up Johnston Canyon to the Ink Pots and back over Hillsdale Pass: the waterfalls of the canyon were in great form, and perfect light for photography, while the Ink Pots

which few had seen before, provided a unique and sunny lunch spot. Hillsdale Pass still had a great deal of snow on the north side, with grizzly tracks making a useful path uphill. Spruce Grouse, toads, Rocky Mountain Sheep, and early spring flowers provided the excitement, and two elk carcasses provided the atmosphere on our path home.

WINTER MEETINGS (all at 8.00 p.m. in the Firehall Meeting Room).

January 25th. A Talk on Ecology by Margot Lowe, Asst. Park Naturalist.

February 23rd. The Kluane Game Reserve in the Yukon, a potential National Park, by Dr. Valerius Geist.

March 22nd. Films to be announced. by Bruce Gordon

April 26th. Program to be announced, by Jim Thorsell of Great Divide Trail

CALGARY FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Art Rupp is a new Director.

Field Trips included Highwood Pass, August 7-8, attended by 14 people, who camped at Storm Creek, close to the summit of the pass. The Sunday hike went to 8500' to see plants such as golden sedge, white mountain avens, Lake Louise Arnica, and white and purple heather. Animals included a Pika amongst the rocks, Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels, and a herd of 51 elk. There were also tracks of sheep, and a large hole in coal thought to be a grizzly bear trying to dig out a ground squirrel. Birds included Clark's Nutcrackers, Pine Siskins, white-winged crossbills, three immature horned larks, a sanderling near a snowbank possibly feeding on red algae in the snow, and 5 young and 3 adult white-tailed ptarmigan. Other birds in the pass were 3 McGillivray's warblers, Townsend's solitaire, immature Blue Grouse, Golden Eagle, Oregon and slate-colored juncos, Bohemian Waxwing and Gray-crowned Rosy Finches.

Ian Halladay and Garry McKay are elected Directors of FAN.

ALBERTA NATURAL HISTORY CLUB (RED DEER)

FAN Directors are Mrs. Scoular and Mrs. Harris.

Meetings have included slides by Fred Scutz, and talk on Mt. McKinley Park in Alaska by Mr. Neufeld.

Observations reported include large flock of Pine Siskins, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in gardens, and Pelicans at Calling Lake and Lac la Biche.

Concern has been expressed about silting of the lake in Gaetz Lake Sanctuary in Red Deer.

EDMONTON BIRD CLUB

New officers for 1971-2 are Al Karvonen (President), Audrey Taylor (Vice-President), Reg Heath (Treasurer), Bob Turner (Field Secretary), and Mrs. O. Young (Secretary). Directors include Drs. Fenna and Ball, and Messrs. Hennie, Bogaert and Greenlee.

EDMONTON NATURAL HISTORY CLUB

Reported meetings included a talk on the Barrhead-Thunder Lake area by Jack Minnaird, one on fungi of the Edmonton area by Lou Bayrock, with an exhibit of fungus paintings by Lene Schalkwyk.

A Field trip to the Hinton-Luscar area guided by Harold M. Ettar of the Canadian Forestry Service saw forestry practice, siltation in mountain streams, open pit coal mining and land regeneration trials by the Forestry Service.

NATIONAL NEWS - THE CANADIAN NATURE FEDERATION

Canada now has a truly national body representing the interests of naturalists. As a Director appointed by FAN, I attended the first annual meeting in Ottawa on 17th-19th. of September, and the preceding Director's meeting. Other Alberta members present were provincial representative Aileen Harmon of Banff, Fred Scott, a national Director from Calgary, and Al Karvonen, new president of the Edmonton Bird Club.

Members will be familiar with the recent evolution of the Canadian Audubon Society into the Canadian Nature Federation. The new constitution allows country-wide representation, and the new board of Directors has representatives from coast to coast. 403 registered for the conference, and local arrangements were excellent. The program included premiere of two films by the Canadian Wildlife Service, and a presentation of 'Grizzly Country' by Alberta's Andy Russell; an exhibition of the work of naturalists across the country (for which short notice allowed only the presentation of a small exhibit of PMAA publications to represent Alberta); some items of business (including the presentation of cheques by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and Ottawa Field Naturalists for nearly £ 3000); and a series of talks and magnificent slide presentations on Canada's natural history, north, south, east and west; a banquet, and field trips. Keynote talks were given by Douglas Pimlott and John Livingston, both providing much food for thought and discussion.

The most noteworthy associated event was the first exhibition of work by Canadian Nature Artists, held in the National Library and Archives. This was organised specially for the meeting, and despite the short notice attracted a considerable entry. Of the fifty paintings hung, no less than twenty were by Alberta artists. These have nearly all been shown again in a follow-up exhibit at PMAA.

The Federation executive has one or two items to keep it busy now the conference is over. The office has moved to Ottawa, an Executive Director should soon be appointed, and the new magazine 'Nature Canada' is expected to appear in February. Various appeals for funds are being made, and the urgent request is of course for more members. Send your subscriptions of 6 dollars to 46 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Canada. K1P 5K6.

If you need any further incentive to join, the next meeting will be in Edmonton, in August 1972. FAN, and member and associated groups are busy organising the conference under the chairmanship of Cam Finlay, a FAN Director and President of the Edmonton Natural History Club. Ideas, assistance and participation in the meeting are all welcome.

OVERHEARD (1)

"Everybody knows that mosquitoes breed in long grass, and that's why we've got so many of them"

(Local council candidate)

It is difficult to imagine any more obscure and unimportant creatures than the pseudoscorpions. Even their existence is unknown to most naturalists, and the number of people in the world who study them must be extremely small. Yet their interest is out of all proportion to their size and obscurity, and once one has come across them, they are never entirely forgotten.

I first came 'face to face' with pseudoscorpions some years ago when attending a course on spiders at Preston Montford Field Centre, in England. Half way through the course, we were visited by one of the few pseudoscorpion specialists. In our spider hunt, under stones, tree bark, in grass and leaves, none had been found. Soon, a pile of dry grass behind the laboratory revealed several hundred, and I had the opportunity to watch a live one through the microscope.

The most notable feature of a pseudoscorpion is its large claws, which are held up in front of the body, and slowly waved around. A small flat body, with eight legs makes up the rest of the animal, which is only a few millimetres long. They form a group of the Arachnids, related to spiders, harvestmen, scorpions ticks. There are over 1500 species in the world, which live in many habitats, in the soil, decaying vegetation, under stones and bark, and even in books. Tiny as they are, they are carnivorous, and feed on tiny insects, mites and spiders even smaller than themselves.

So far, they are not dissimilar in habits to many small invertebrates. But in natural history, the bizarre is never too far from the surface. Some pseudoscorpions travel by hitching a ride on larger insects, actually seizing the legs of flies or beetles in their enormous jaws. In human terms, imagine taking a trip holding on to the wing of a jet plane by one hand. Such a phenomenon is of course difficult to study, and usually comes to light only when someone studying flies finds one with a passenger. Examples have been found in Europe, Africa, America, Australia and Malaya.

At first the tiny hitch-hikers were thought to be attacking their enormous steeds, but the habit now regarded as a means of increasing their geographical spread, although there is a suggestion that they may afterwards be killed and eaten.

Hitch-hikers are usually females, while males are commoner in the normal habitats. The habit is particularly associated with occupants of temporary habitats such as decaying vegetation, also occupied by flies. The breeding seasons are similar, and newly adult female pseudoscorpions become restless, and will cling to any insect within reach. They may in this way be carried up to a mile. There is even a record of four passengers on one leg of a house fly.

I have not yet located any specific information on pseudoscorpions in Alberta, though they undoubtedly occur. If any readers can supply further information, it will be welcomed.

D. A. E. Spalding.

PMAA Miscellaneous Contribution No. 21

7.10.71

Reference - Natural History Division reference list no. 116

OVERHEARD (2)

"This bird must never be allowed to become extinct again"

(New Zealand Politician)

and (3)

"We have met the enemy - and he is us"

(Banner at pollution protest)