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ALBERTA NATURALIST

Box 308, Spruce Grove, Alberta

NEWSLETTER
January - March 1972 (issued March 1972)

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Edited by David A.E. Spalding

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To receive the Alberta Naturalist regularly, send a subscribing membership fee of 2 dollars to the Treasurer, 2630-22nd. Avenue South, Lethbridge, Alberta. Your subscription is now due unless this space is marked with an x Alberta Naturalist 2(2) for April, May and June should appear shortly. Please submit contributions to the editor as soon as possible, and in any case by April 15th.

STOP PRESS We are delighted to welcome new appointed directors Charles Bird and Joy Finlay. A piece by Joy appears in this issue (p.10), and one is in hand for the next issue from Charles, on 'Blooming times of Alberta Flowering Plants'.

EDITORIAL : The ALBERTA NATURALIST

The Federation of Alberta Naturalists Newsletter is dead!
Long live the Alberta Naturalist

It is perhaps appropriate that a periodical concerned with natural history should evolve, rather than being a product of spontaneous generation. At any rate, the Federation's newsletter, ably conducted by our former president, has now evolved into the ALBERTA NATURALIST. This not only involves a new name, but also a deepening of the original concept to provide even more interest and enjoyment (we hope) to the Alberta naturalists who will read it.

Content will follow the basic concept of the original newsletter, but will concentrate more strongly on local and provincial news, and particularly on features. National news, except when it has strong Alberta relevance, should soon be adequately covered by the Canadian Nature Federation's Nature Canada, of which the first issue can be expected shortly. It should be supported by all Canadian Naturalists. Our features will be planned to give increasing information about the activities of Alberta's naturalists, whether amateur or professional, concerned mainly with research, conservation, education or just plain enjoyment.

Contributions are welcome from anyone concerned with Alberta's natural history, whether or not they are members of the Federation and its member organisations. Some contributions will be solicited, but a steady flow from members would be appreciated, particularly this spring so that the summer issues will not suffer from a shortage of good material. They may be contributions to some of the regular series established in this and later issues, or may be suitable for inclusion as letters, or as special features in their own right. If possible, a typescript would be useful, especially in a finished form that can be reproduced directly. However, any (legible) copy is welcome. For the time being, however, scientific reports should continue to be sent to established periodicals such as Blue Jay. The editorial board will be considering future directions, and your suggestions are welcome.

This is your publication, and your contributions, views, and suggestions alone can make it what it should be.

ASSISTANCE NEEDED

Good contributors play an essential role, but other types of assistance can be rendered. The last issue was prepared and mailed entirely by the President and Secretary to get the ball rolling, but they have many other jobs waiting. Volunteers in the Edmonton area who would be willing to help with occasional typing, collating and mailing would be much appreciated. If enough help is forthcoming a rota could be arranged that would minimise every-one's participation. Please call the editor at 899-2758 (evenings) or 452-2150 (daytime).

10989 - 126 Street,
Edmonton 40, Alberta.
14th January, 1972.

LETTERS

The President,
Federation of Alberta Naturalists,
2130 Crocus Road N.W.,
Calgary 48, Alberta.

Dear Sir:

I wonder how many people felt the same way as I did about the recent movie on Canadian television - The Trap. This film was produced by the Rank Organization (a British company) and was rated as being special. However, the rating dropped in my estimation when the part about the wolves attacking a wounded trapper was seen. This was apparently added to the story in an attempt to dramatize an old wolf myth for extra excitement. Sadly, the story misled many people into believing that wolves present a threat to humans and should be avoided or exterminated. Being something of a conservationist, extermination of any species is one thing I am against! So I feel the movie should be publicly questioned.

If the prediction is true that 80% of our total wildlife will be extinct within 20 years at the present rate of slaughter, conservationists are within their rights to object to negative publicity about any wild animal. Unfortunately, the producer was not concerned enough about being authentic in his portrayal of trap-line living in Canadian wilderness or he might have checked further for reliable information. For example, any reputable conservation society, any qualified biologist or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police could have pointed out that wolves in North America are not dangerous and that no documented case has been established where humans have been attacked like they were in the movie. I feel it is our duty to develop an awareness of how foreign movie-makers deal with our natural environment and how they influence our public. Perhaps more people should question this kind of outside interpretation. Trying to save our native wildlife is a big enough job as it is!

Yours faithfully,

Robert C. Guest

Robert C. Guest,
A Friend of the Wolf.

FAN NEWS

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE

There is nothing like starting on a depressing note. But unless you have paid for 1972 (in which case the box on the front page will be marked), please send your two dollars to the Treasurer, 2630-22nd. Avenue south, Lethbridge. If you are feeling rich, you could of course become a supporting member at \$10, with no extra benefits except to be listed at the top of the membership list and a feeling of satisfaction that you are helping to keep a good thing moving upwards.

MEETINGS FOR 1972

FAN meetings, and their host clubs, are as follows.
BANFF June 17-18, (Bow Valley Naturalists)
CALGARY October (Calgary Field Naturalists) exact date to be announced.
Note also the CNF conference in Edmonton, August 17-20.
Please note these meetings now, and try and attend. All members of member groups, and potential members are welcome. It is hoped that member clubs will keep these dates free of meetings in their own calendars. Fuller details in the next issue.

ADDITIONS TO LIBRARY

(The FAN library is this year being looked after by the Calgary Field Naturalists, to whom requests to borrow items should be addressed.)

Nature Reserves Manual M.Kirk (comp). Federation of Ontario Naturalists

Canadian Wildlife Service 71 CWS

Conservation Directory 1972

Village Lake Louise master plans

The need for a new policy in education The Conservation Society

A procedure for evaluating environmental impact. U.S.Geological Survey

Environmental Pollution in the Drywood Creek Region of Southern Alberta

Dept. of Geography, U of A

Pesticides and the Environment Entomological Society of Canada

What is Labour's stake in Environmental Pollution?

Alberta Federation of Labour

Building a gas pipeline through the arctic

Environment Protection Board

Petroleum and the Environment

Union Oil Company

Proceedings of Public Hearings on Cooking and Hastings Lakes.

Environment Conservation Authority

Alberta Groups concerned with Natural History and the Environment

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

The sixth regular meeting of the Directors was held February 12th, 1972, at the University of Calgary with 12 Directors and an invited observer present

The Directors regretfully accepted letters of resignation from A.W. Rupp and W. Stillwell both of whom had served as Appointed Directors. Several names were suggested for the three vacant Appointed Director positions and we hope to fill these shortly.

Reports were given by our representatives on the structure and role of the Committees appointed by the Environment Conservation Authority; the current activities of the Canadian Nature Federation; and a Conference on "Outdoor Education" to explore the desirability and feasibility of establishing a closer working relationship among the many Alberta groups involved in this area (a further workshop is planned for April 15th in Edmonton). Mr. J.C. Finlay, local chairman for the Canadian Nature Federation Conference to be held in Edmonton, August 17-20, reported on the planning for this meeting. The theme is to be "The Role of the Individual in Environmental Decisions", and the meeting will include panel discussions, workshops, nature walks, a natural history excursion to Elk Island National Park, a nature-artist exhibition, visit to bird banding station, luncheons, social events, and a one and a half day Junior program. Local groups in Lethbridge, Calgary and Banff are also looking into the possibility of arranging pre-conference field meetings for visiting naturalists.

The production of a "Naturalist Guide to Alberta" was discussed, and the form the Newsletter - the "Alberta Naturalist" should take and means for increasing its distribution was also discussed.

Each Corporate Member Club undertook to investigate the possibility of promoting new natural history clubs in adjacent areas. If any FAN members would like to assist in the promotion of clubs in their own or adjacent areas your President or Secretary would be pleased to hear about it. How about clubs being established in the Medicine Hat, Peace River Country, Drumheller, Crowsnest, or other areas of the Province?

The Federation had prepared a brief on "The Environmental Impact of Surface Mining in Alberta" for submission to the Environment Conservation Authority, and agreed to consider the presentation of briefs to future public hearings held by the ECA. A brief has been prepared for presentation to the Federal Government at their Calgary public hearings, March 9 and 10, on the Lake Louise Village Development. A resolution was passed to support the Consumer's Association of Canada in their request to the Minister of Finance "to prohibit the import into Canada for commercial purposes of skins from endangered species of animals as listed in the Red Book of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature". Support was also given for the Alberta Wilderness Association brief for the establishment of a Prairie Park in the Milk River area. Other information was sought on the ecological status of the Suffield Military Reserve and on our resolutions and letters to the Federal Government on Wood Buffalo Park and the South Nahanni area.

LOCAL NEWS

EDMONTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

by Robert Turner

Christmas Bird Count, December 19 1971, 33 members participated. Temperature 25-30 degrees, wind a.m. o, p.m. gusts 10-15 m.p.h., a few snow flurries. For full details see American Birds.

Mallard	113	Blue Jay	90
Common Goldeneye	80	Magpie	329
Goshawk	1	Black-capped Chickadee	194
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Boreal Chickadee	5
Cooper's Hawk	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	2
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Brown Creeper	2
Pigeon Hawk	3	Golden-crowned Kinglet	6
Spruce Grouse	1	Bohemian Waxwing	4062
Ruffed Grouse	1	Cedar Waxwing	11
Sharp-tailed Grouse	15	Northern Shrike	3
Ring-necked Pheasant	12	Starling	24
Gray Partridge	129	House Sparrow	707
Great Horned Owl	1	Evening Grosbeak	306
Snowy Owl	4	Pine Grosbeak	176
Short-eared Owl	1	Common Redpoll	202
Yellow-shafted Flicker	1	Pine Siskin	5
Pileated Woodpecker	1	White-winged Crossbill	20
Hairy Woodpecker	8	Snow Bunting	78
Downy Woodpecker	9		
		Total	37 species

EDMONTON BIRD CLUB (other news)

Last meeting was on February 18th., an account by Dr. David Boag of 'Birds of the Scottish Moors and Glens.

First field meeting will be in May.

A brief on Village Lake Louise has been planned.

LETHBRIDGE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Meeting on 11th. February saw two films ; 'Alberta's changing environment' (an Edgar Jones film), and 'What on Earth' (National Film Board)

A march meeting was planned by Dr. G.A. Hobbs, on 'Insects of Southern Alberta'

On 30th. January a field trip was held in the Lethbridge Natural Area in the Oldman River Valley.(what a hardy bunch(ed)). It was a short Sunday afternoon walk which happened to fall on one of the few mild, calm days at that time.

The natural area was discovered being invaded by snowmobilers, who are permitted in the adjacent Indian Battle Park. Noise from snowmobiles and highway traffic interfered seriously with observations. A letter has been written to Lethbridge City council about the situation. One Bald Eagle, a few chickadees, two mallard, two pintail, few dozen goldeneye and a herd of deer were observed. The trip illustrates the value of getting out and seeing things at first hand. The snowmobilers were in the area due to inadequate fencing and signs.

Future Field Meetings at Six-Mile Coulee (just south of Lethbridge) on 23rd April Lethbridge Community College parking lot south of Kate Andrews Building. Leader Mary Dwyer, object a representative coulee area in early spring.

Kehoe Lake on 7 May. Meet Centre Village (Simpsons-Sears) mall parking lot, 1.30 p.m. Leader Alice Harper, 84105; object migrating water and shore birds.

Current activities include petition and individual briefs in opposition to Village Lake Louise, and attempts to preserve a block of land as representative of original prairie in Milk River-Lost River area (support of brief by Alberta Wilderness Association).

FAN PROJECTS

A NATURALIST'S GUIDE TO ALBERTA (2)

by David A.E.Spalding

About a year ago, I corresponded with Dr. Judd, of the University of Western Ontario, who was closely involved with production of the Naturalist's Guide to Ontario. Some of the details about the way the FON guide was developed will be of interest to our members.

The idea was originally sparked in Ontario by the U.S. "Guide to Bird Finding", by O.S. Pettingill. Two members of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club (London) developed the initial idea, and it was approved by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists in 1956. By 1958 a committee of eight was in operation. As committee members lived in various areas of Ontario, business was carried out through thirty circulars sent out by the chairman. By December 1958, the basic content of the guide was decided, and submissions were being collected during the next three years. Guide lines, a sample guide and topographic maps were supplied to each of the member clubs.

All member clubs and several individuals took part, sending in guides for their areas of Ontario. Federal and Provincial Parks Branches also made contributions on their parks. Each item was passed round the committee for editorial suggestions, and the edited texts retyped. The complete text was passed to the Directors in 1962, and final editing, maps, indexes and a few additions were completed at this time. Final publication was by the University of Toronto Press at the end of 1964. Although the publishers were somewhat sceptical at first, over 40,000 copies were sold over a period, so that the book was a considerable financial success.

It can be done! Ontario, of course, has far more clubs and individual members than FAN has, and our approach will of necessity be different. But at least a start is being made. At the recent Directors meeting, a definite approach was discussed, and will be further reported on later.

Since the last report a list of ten possible areas has been received from the Edmonton Bird Club. Ideally, a member from the Executive of each club will take responsibility for advising on the overall project, and co-ordinating local guides in his area.

Edmonton area suggestions Beaverhill Lake, Elk Island Park, Lac la Biche, Calling Lake, Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park, Big Lake, Limestone Lake, Miquelon Lake Provincial Park, Devon, Edmonton (Whitemud Creek)

ADOPT A SPECIES (1)

by David A.E.Spalding

One problem facing naturalists concerned about conservation matters is that of finding a problem small enough to be tackled in the time available, and suited to their special talents. There are so many problems to look at, and so much being done to tackle them, that it is difficult to know where to start. Many active naturalists find themselves involved in committees, correspondence, and other activities that are valuable for promoting conservation, but are not directly related to natural history, and thus do not have the interest and enjoyment that should belong to what started, after all, as a relaxing hobby to many.

As a FAN project, a possible solution suggested to members is that of 'adopting' a species that is threatened in Alberta. Many such species are known, and in many cases little is known of their status and distribution, and of the factors affecting population and survival. Some are already under study by professionals or amateurs, some are quite inadequately known. Some are dependent for survival on a soundly based public relations campaign. In some instances it may be possible to initiate direct action that may, for instance, safeguard a critical nesting area.

If enough members take up the challenge, this column will appear regularly and suggest species for study, ways of tackling the problems, and reports on the progress on 'adopted' species. Anyone who already has a deep interest of this kind in a particular species will already be working in this direction, and it is hoped that some of them will start the ball rolling by sending in reports on their activities.

As a starting point for others, a few threatened species not known to have been adopted are Bald Eagle, Whooping Crane, Sage Grouse, Caspian Tern, Piping Plover, and Barred Owl. Comments on these will hopefully appear in the future, together with other suggested species. Someone who enjoys organising and writing may even be willing to take over the organisation of this project.

A PROVINCIAL BIRD (2)

by me again

This topic aroused keen interest at the February Director's meeting, and a specific initiative towards getting official recognition for a bird is now being taken, and will be reported on in due course. Meanwhile, suggestions have come in for an official tree and mammal as well, together with support for the original idea. As a first step, clubs are being asked to produce a short list of ten, bearing in mind the criteria suggested in the last newsletter. To aid in this selection, a short list of fifty species is presented below, which should include all the likely candidates. Accidentals, rarities, and similar species with no specific significance have been pruned out to ease the task of selection of the short list, but if your favourite has been missed out, then do not hesitate to put in for consideration. Clubs could discuss this at a meeting, or through their own newsletter, and submit their short list of ten for a future issue of the Alberta Naturalist. The most popular ten can be combined into a single short list that could be the basis of wider public selection.

Common Loon
Red-necked Grebe
Western Grebe
White Pelican
Great Blue Heron
Whistling Swan
Trumpeter Swan
Pintail
Bufflehead
Ruddy Duck
Red-tailed Hawk
Golden Eagle
Marsh Hawk
Prairie Falcon
Sparrowhawk
Ruffed Grouse
Killdeer
American Avocet
Wilson's Phalarope
Franklin's Gull
Black Tern
Great Horned Owl
Short-eared Owl
Nighthawk
Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Belted Kingfisher
Pileated Woodpecker
Tree Swallow
Barn Swallow
Purple Martin
Gray Jay
Black-billed Magpie
Black-capped Chickadee
Robin
Mountain Bluebird
Bohemian Waxwing
Cedar Waxwing
Yellow Warbler
Yellowthroat
Western Meadowlark
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Red-winged Blackbird
Baltimore Oriole
Western Tanager
Red-breasted Grosbeak
Evening Grosbeak
American Goldfinch
White-throated Sparrow
Chestnut-collared Longspur
Snow Bunting

Potatoes might be regarded as a symbol of the most prosaic and everyday aspects of our experience. Yet the humble potato has a romantic history.

First cultivated, apparently, in the highlands of Peru, at elevations between 11,000' and 14,000', the potato was essential for human survival in that harsh climate. It became the central object of a strange cult, apparently aimed at securing the success of this vital crop. From about 200 to 800 A.D., strange pots were made in the form of potatoes, often as showing a more or less human shape. The most bizarre feature is that the human faces show mutilation by removal of noses and lips. This has been interpreted as indicating rites associated with the crop, explained by the suggestion that the Indians regarded as a 'mouth' what we call the 'eye' of the potato.

Transported by the Spaniards, the potato was growing in Seville by at least 1570, and gradually it spread to Italy and Belgium. By 1597 when it was described in Gerard's famous herbal (perhaps brought back by one of Drake's ships, though not apparently by Walter Raleigh as legend has it) it was already being grown in Ireland, though it did not become a major food source elsewhere in Europe until the industrial revolution; there was indeed for a while a 'Society to Prevent Unwholesome Diet' in England aimed at suppressing it. In troubled Ireland, potatoes were easy to grow, easy to harvest and easy to hide. Over eight million people were largely dependent on it when in 1845 the potato blight fungus destroyed the crop. It is estimated that one million died, and another million emigrated within a few years.

Botanically the potato is a Solanum, and belongs to a family which includes other important food plants, such as the tomato, sources of drugs such as tobacco, and also very poisonous plants such as the thorn-apple and deadly nightshade.

Another species of potato grows wild in the Rockies as far north as Colorado, and Alberta species of Solanum include the Wild Tomato (S. triflorum), which grows on disturbed areas such as gopher mounds in prairie and parkland areas, and the introduced Bittersweet and Black Nightshade. Three other members of the family (Thorn-apple, Black Henbane, and Matrimony Vine) occur here as introductions from Europe and Asia.

Further reading

Salaman, R.N. (1945) The potato - master or servant? New Biology 1:9-28
Salaman, R.N. (1949) The history and social influence of the potato
Cambridge University Press
Woodham-Smith, C (1965) The Great Hunger Four-Square. 429 pp.

PMAA NH Div. Misc. Cont. No. 22

D.A.E. Spalding 9.2.72

NATURALIST'S BOOKSHELF (1) The Alberta Conservationist

Welcome to a new and much needed publication. The Alberta Conservationist appeared for the first time late last year, and is expected to appear quarterly. It is attractively printed (on recycled paper), contains good black and white photographs and a colored cover. The magazine was initially funded by an Opportunities for Youth program, and has apparently now attracted enough subscriptions to keep its head above water. It is obtainable from the Sub P.O. 603, the University of Calgary, Calgary 44, Alberta. A single issue is \$1.00, a one year subscription is \$ 3.50, 2 year \$6.50, and 3 year \$9.00.

Our Vice-President, Ian Halladay, is one of the consulting editors, along with one of our new appointed directors, Dr. Charles Bird, so it can be expected that the Alberta Conservationist and the Alberta Naturalist will have a co-operative rather than a competitive future.

Contents of the first issue include 'The High Calling of Stewardship' by Grant McEwan, 'Mule Deer of Alberta' by Leo Bouckhout, 'The Bluebird Trail' by Brett Finlay, and 'A co-ordinated land use policy for outdoor recreation' by Richard Pharis and Grant McNabb.

There are articles on a number of organisations, including the Environment Conservation Authority, Alpine Club of Canada, Alberta Wilderness Association, Calgary Canoe Club, Edmonton Anti-Pollution Group, and FAN. There are a number of other articles, and a poem.

This effort is well worth the attention of FAN members, and we can hope that the Alberta Conservationist will continue to attract a wide support from the public at large.

DAES

CONSERVATION COMMENT (1) VILLAGE LAKE LOUISE

All those involved in the hearings last year on the Mountain National Parks will be familiar with the green plastic envelope and its contents. Those who attended the hearings know how bitterly many of the proposed developments were opposed by an astonishing range of groups and individuals. Only the master planners (heads in the sand for several years?), were clearly surprised to discover that complex road systems, expensive ski playgrounds and the like were no longer regarded by every-one as the ideal use for national parks. Those hearings were notable also because they were called before the overall discussions of park policy, and because the critical developments of Lake Louise and other townsites were excluded from the terms of the discussion.

The hearings were held last April, and the five volumes of proceedings are out, though the National Parks Branch seems to have not only not sent them out to the concerned organisations but to have kept their existence very quiet indeed. An interim statement of decisions reached is included in the package now available on the Lake Louise development, issued less than one month before the hearings. In these the Department agrees that 'facilities for services, food and shelter should be located outside park boundaries wherever practicable', and eliminates three of the proposed visitor services.

One could therefore have expected the plans for 'Village Lake Louise' (a good P.R. man must have thought up that name) would have reflected this new found concern. Not a bit of it. The glossy, 103 page development plan describes a development indeed- expected to contain 7,000 beds (almost), on the valley floor and hillsides.

The latter development, incredibly, is expected to contain thirteen storey tower blocks. The step by step planning is described in detail, and the whole concept is very elegantly designed. The basic assumption is made that a large urban settlement is to be built, lip service only is paid to approval by the National Parks Branch (perhaps not surprising since the branch made the initial approach), and the booklet looks as if it is really designed to sell the project to participating developers once approval is given rather than to present the information needed to judge whether it should go ahead at all.

This important question is however covered by the ten page 'Departmental Statement'. The thoroughness of this discussion may be judged by the conclusion on page two that it is clearly essential, and the rest of the statement is devoted to details of how it should be built. Nowhere are the fundamental questions of development in National Parks discussed. There is nothing to indicate that the Department is aware of any of the intense discussion and publication in the last few years on parks problems and policies, and of the problems that have been hit in more crowded countries all over the world. The possibility of providing similar facilities outside the national parks is not touched on, the problems of creating further demand for our already abused parks apparently not dreamed of.

Widespread concern has been expressed about the limited nature of the hearings, and this concern was justified by the Calgary attendance, which swamped the available accomodation. Apparently many who had travelled to Calgary to present their briefs orally were unable to do so. The briefs were generally against the development, perhaps one third being in support with various reservations. In and out of the hearings, there has been widely expressed concern about government promotion of the project before it gets approval, lobbying for one point of view through the department, press leaks implying that the issue had been prejudged, and the relation of the hearing board.

Most significant organisations in the conservation field have presented their opinions, including FAN, and many individuals concerned have also expressed their point of view. Briefs (which need only be a short letter identified as such) can be submitted up to April 4th. If you have not yet sent one in, send it now to Public Hearings office, National and Historic Parks Branch, 400 Laurier Avenue west, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H4.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN ALBERTA (1) Conducted Walks

by Joy Finlay

"The Old Man floated around on a raft looking for land. Water water everywhere. He asked the muskrat to dive down and find some mud so he could create the land. The muskrat came back with none. So he asked the otter, and then the deep-diving loon. They returned with none. He sent the beaver next. The beaver's blood and muscle chemistry is such that he can stay under for a seemingly long time. At last he returned, exhausted, with a ball of mud in his paws!"

"With this mud the Old Man shaped the mountains, the backbone of the country! He made the prairies and the rivers. He put trees, grasses and flowers on the land. He placed birds, mammals, and insects there....and he created man. Then he taught man how to live with the plants and animals....."

This reference to an indian legend set the theme on October 31 for "Witches Brooms and Elf Shelves", the final walk of a 1971 series conducted by Edmonton Parks and Recreation weekly in the river valley parks system. Being the night after Hallowe'en, fascinating facts and lore were introduced as participants and naturalist explored the what's, where's and why's of some more or less familiar things along the trail in the Whitemud Natural Area. A five year old, proud of knowing his own address was impressed to learn that plants and animals may have addresses too, that the fungus that causes witches broom has its address on a Saskatoon bush. Looking at elf shelves, i.e. bracket fungi, led to consideration of the economy of nature and the problems of waste and recycling in our own community. Gathered around a large stump by the creek some speculations were made about the beaver that felled the large poplar a few years previously. The young folk tried to discover for themselves just how the animal would go about felling the tree with chisel sharp teeth. (continued on page 12)

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ALBERTA: 1

(Selected references to the PMAA bibliography).

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| Alberta Fish and Game Association (1971) | Yearbook. 42nd Annual Convention. February 25, 26, 27, 1971. | 111 p. |
| Anderson, R.S. (1971) | Crustacean plankton of 146 Alpine and Subalpine Lakes and Ponds in Western Canada. | Journal of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada
28 : 311-321 |
| Anon (1971) | The Immorality of the Motorcar. A Report on Transportation and the City of Edmonton. | University of Alberta.
81 p. |
| Anon (1971) | Surface water quality criteria Province of Alberta. | "Defending all Outdoors"
5 (1) : 3 |
| Anon (1971) | Wilderness. | Alberta, a land for living
1 (4) : 42-47 |
| Anon (1971) | Environment Conservation Authority. | Alberta, a land for living
1 (4) : 40-41 |
| Anon (1971) | Not only logging in National Parks.
(Wood Buffalo National Park) | Canadian Audubon
32 (4) : 139-140 |
| Anon (1971) | Environmental Sciences Centre.
(Kananaskis) | Environment News
1 (2) : 4-5 |
| Anon (1971) | Herbicides tested in Lake Wabamun. | Environment News
1 (4) : 5-7 |
| Anon (1971) | Lands & Forests launches weed harvester. | Environment News
1 (4) : 3 |
| Anon (1971) | Rock Salt threatens wildlife.
(use on roads) | "Defending all Outdoors"
5 (3) : 3 |

D. A. E. Spalding. 19.1.1972
Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta
Natural History Division
Miscellaneous Contribution 16.

Environmental Education continued

Some awareness of adaptation, change, diversity and interaction is basic to understanding and appreciating the web of life which the beaver is a part of; and of which we are a part.

The purpose of the walks has been to share with participants, in an enjoyable and relevant manner, in exploring plants and animals, meanings and relationships in the natural world around us, and to discover and consider change and its consequences, whether natural or man-made.

Walks are scheduled for ninety minutes, and may cover about a mile in total distance. Conducted walks for the public have been offered from March through June and September through October for the past four years every Sunday at 10 a.m. at Whitemud Park. Although Wednesday evening walks have been conducted during July and August at Rainbow Valley, where the public campground is located, very few tourists attended. Groups have been representative of all ages and many interests. Individuals, families, Sunday School classes, Brownie Packs, Recreation classes from the University, and others attended in numbers that have varied from six to one hundred sixty. Usual attendance has been between fifteen and fifty, depending, it seems, on whether or not each week's topic has been publicised. School walks were offered in April, May, and June, by appointment only. They were oversubscribed, with only about 6400 elementary students being accommodated in one season. Sunday morning walks will begin again at Whitemud on March 5, 1972, with "Winter Wonders" as a theme.

P.S. For more nature legends see "Old Man's Garden" by Annora Brown. And her paintings are on display at our Provincial Museum in Edmonton.

(Editorial apologies that this has not appeared before the start of the spring walks. Members should try one if within reach of Edmonton. Contributions on any aspect of Environmental Education in Alberta would be welcome)

CLUB CORNER (1) History of the Alberta Natural History Society by M.T. Myres.

(Editor's note - this contribution was prepared by our former president before his departure on sabbatical leave, from information available at the time. Subsequent information that has come to light shed further light on the early history of the group, and carries the history back to 1899. This information will appear in a later issue of the Alberta Naturalist, when there has been opportunity to study it. Histories of the other groups will also appear from time to time).

The Alberta Natural History Society is far and away the oldest member club of the Federation of Alberta Naturalists. Its origins go back to 1904, the year before Alberta became a province. In 1904 Alberta was still a district of the Northwest Territories. On March 16, 1904, nine persons attended a meeting at the home of Dr. Henry George in Innisfail, apparently to form a branch of a natural history society which had its headquarters somewhere in the District of Saskatchewan or District of Assiniboia. Mr. W. Greary was elected President of the Branch, and Dr. George its Secretary-Treasurer. Dr. George was a physician, who attended Chief Crowfoot in 1890 during the last days before his death (Grant McEwan, 1971. "Portraits from the Plains" p. 89-91.). He had created a private natural history museum in Innisfail.

On August 6, 1906, the Innisfail group decided to become a branch of the Alberta Natural History Society, which seems to have been already formed. Dr. George moved to Red Deer at about the same time, so that after this the Alberta Natural History Society was centred on Red Deer. This seems to have been a time for expansion and branches of the Society were established at Camrose (under Frank Farley), Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Stettler, Hillstown, Ponoka, Erskine, Hardisty and Wetaskiwin, in addition to the branches already in existence at Innisfail and Red Deer. Mr. Greary and Dr. George served as presidents of the Alberta Natural History Society in one year or another up to 1913. After a while it became apparent that no useful purpose was served by having both a Red Deer

Branch and the Provincial Headquarters of the Society in Red Deer and in 1915 the Red Deer branch "quietly annexed the parent Society by turning its assets over to the Alberta Natural History Society and , ceasing to function as a branch!"

The Society was at this time recognised by the provincial government, and from the Department of Agriculture and annual grant of \$100.00 was made to the Society and the Society dispersed some of this income to the branches. The Society published reports on its activities in the annual bulletins of the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Agriculture seems to have relied to some extent upon the Society for scientific information about "farm pests" before the Department employed its own entomologists.

Part of the annual grant from the Department of Agriculture was used to finance the publication of three insect lists during the years 1918 to 1920 during the presidency of F.C.Whitehouse. The pioneer natural history publications were the following:

Dragonflies (Odonata) of Alberta by F.C.Whitehouse (1918)

Annotated Checklist of the Macrolepidoptera of Alberta by K.Bowman (1919)

An annotated List of the Coleoptera of Northern Alberta by F.S.Carr (1920)

The authors were a banker, a chartered accountant, and a school inspector respectively.

As the years went by, the branches of the Society in other centres than Red Deer became inactive. Little is known of their history. In the ten years up to 1926, however, the members in Red Deer remained extremely active making numerous excursions and collecting plants and animals. At least sixty-nine talks were heard by the Society between 1907 and 1924 on all aspects of natural history. Red Deer is situated in the parklands of Alberta, the transition zone between the northern forests and the open prairies. Thus it has held particular interest for naturalists whether they were bird watchers such as Mrs. Cassel, (who incidentally opposed Dr. George's collecting of birds), botanists such as Miss Mina Cole and Mrs. Henry George, who was also talented as a painter of wild flowers, collectors of insects, or numerous people who encouraged insectivorous birds, such as bluebirds and tree swallows. Thousands of nest boxes were put up, and in the early years an intense rivalry existed between Camrose and Red Deer for the title of Purple Martin capital of Alberta. The Society also developed extremely close relations with staff members of the University of Alberta, particularly Dr. William Rowan.

In 1922 Mr. and Mrs. J.J.Gaetz premitted the Society the use of their 208 acre property and in the same year the Dominion Government created a bird sanctuary at Gaetz Lakes. Dr. Kerry Wood, well known as an author naturalist, who had joined the Society as a boy in 1918, became the migratory bird officer in charge of policing Gaetz Lake Sanctuary after its creation, a duty he performed for 42 years and gave up only in 1964. The Society published a book on the Gaetz Lake Sanctuary which received wide distribution and encouraged the establishment of many similar sanctuaries elsewhere in Canada. Since 1922 the Gaetz Lake Sanctuary has been used for introducing school children to natural history, and instruction was provided either there or in the schools themselves by Mrs. Wm. Cassel, Mrs. Henry George, Miss Mina Cole, Mr. Kerry Wood and others. Most recently students under the direction of Mr. Bob Mills are studying the fauna and flora of the sanctuary. The Society also attempted during this early period to have the canyon of the Red Deer set aside as a provincial park but were not successful.

From 1926 to 1937 the Alberta Natural History Society was largely inactive, Although Mr. C.H.Snell provided a focal point for such interest in the Society as was maintained. It was revitalised in November 1937, and its activities led to better protection for beaver, and for deer in the farmland areas of central Alberta. Mr. E.A. (Kerry) Wood was Secretary from this time until 1943. Mr. E.R.Wells was Secretary from 1944 to 1951. From the time of the reorganization in 1937 up to 1948 no President held office for more than two seasons but since 1949 it has been customary for the President to remain in office for a number of years. Mr. D.A. Prescott was President from 1949 to 1955, F.W.Harris from 1957 to 1959, Mrs. M.Creechman from 1960 to 1964 and Mrs. E.M.Scoular has been President since 1965. In 1951 she organised an Audubon Junior Club at Horn Hill, seven miles southeast of Red Deer, but unfortunately this club ran out of recruits in the early 1960's.

In 1964 the archives of the Alberta Natural History Society were turned over to the Archives of the City of Red Deer in the new Public Library Building. Also in 1967, Mrs. Scouler compiled a short history of the Alberta Natural History Society which is on deposit in the Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta in Edmonton (NO.A67-293) ; it includes a list of Presidents and Secretaries of the Alberta Natural History Society since 1907 and a list of the lectures given to the Society during its sixty-year history up to that time. Many well-known naturalists were lecturers to the Society or participants in its affairs.

The sixty-five year history of the Alberta Natural History Society is probably typical of local natural history societies in exhibiting periods of very great activity alternating with periods of much reduced activity. In this particular case the Society found plenty to do and a great many enthusiasts to do it during the first twenty years of the history of Alberta. The for ten years the Society was partially or wholly inactive and for this period there is no information. After its reorganization in late 1937 the Society was again active during the period of World War II and the post-war period. During the second period of its history the Alberta Natural History Society was most active in the Red Deer district. Perhaps because of this, quite separate natural history societies were established in Edmonton and Calgary during the post-war period. In recent years the Alberta Natural History Society has had a small membership, and few new members have been recruited. The difficulty of recruiting new members is of course an ongoing concern of natural history societies.

(author's note - compiled from several sources, hopefully without introducing too many errors, as it has not been possible to confirm all points).

OVERHEARD (6)

Fragments from Gilbert White's 'Natural History of Selborne', published in 1789, and the first local natural history ever published.

"..yet there is such a propensity in mankind towards deceiving and being deceived, that one cannot safely relate anything from common report, especially in print, without expressing some degree of doubt and suspicion."

" A full history of noxious insects hurtful in the field, garden and house, suggesting all the known and likely means of destroying them, would be allowed by the public to be a most useful work. What knowledge there is of this sort lies scattered and wants to be collected; great improvements would soon follow, of course. A knowledge of the properties, economy, propagation, and in short of the life and conversation of these animals, is a necessary step to lead us to some method of preventing their depredations."

"You are, I know, no great friend to migration; and the well attested accounts from various parts of the kingdom seem to justify you in your suspicions, that at least many of the swallow kind do not leave us in the winter, but lay themselves up like insects and bats in a torpid state, and slumber away the more uncomfortable months till the return of the sun and fine weather awakens them."

"Faunists, as you observe, are too apt to acquiesce in bare descriptions, and a few synonyms: the reason is plain; because all that may be done at home in a man's study, but the investigation of the life and conversation of animals, is a concern of much more trouble and difficulty, and is not to be attained but by the active and inquisitive, and by those that reside much in the country."