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ALBERTA NATURALIST

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NEWSLETTER

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Edited by David A.E. Spalding

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To receive the Alberta Naturalist regularly, send a membership fee of \$2 (subscribing) or \$10 (supporting) to:

Mrs. Helen Schuler, 2630 22nd. Avenue, Lethbridge, Alberta.

I enclose my 1973 subscription to the Federation of Alberta Naturalists

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This is a renewal () new membership ()

Name

Address

EDITORIAL : NEW YEARS ARE FOR NEW IDEAS

This will appear somewhat past the traditional time for new year resolutions, thanks to your editor's relaxing Christmas vacation amongst the wall-to-wall people of the old world. Anticipating that the blizzards and cold spells that used to characterize winter in sunny Alberta may still come, however, it is perhaps not too late to throw out some suggestions for new approaches for 1973.

What will 1973 bring to us naturalists? Apart from new threats to the environment nobody had ever thought of last year, only one thing is certain - your enjoyment will depend on your contribution. Make this year the opportunity to try something different in the natural history world. If your horizon is bounded by feathers, try and find out how the fossil collector or the flower photographer get their kicks. If you are only turned on by the mountains, give the prairies a chance this year. If you can't bear to leave your favorite area or group, plan an in depth study of one species or locality. If you are a great observer, but can't remember what you saw last week, buy a field note book and use it every time you go out. If you've never been sure of those brown sparrows, follow up every brown sparrow with binoculars and tape recorder until it gives in and announces its identity loud and clear.

Try something new in travel. If you are a great car driver, try searching all the places you can reach on foot from home. If you don't stir outside until the snow has disappeared, borrow some snowshoes and find out what the other half of the year is like. If you like the south, plan a weekend at Lesser Slave Lake.

Try something new in co-operation. If you always go in a crowd, see what fun can be obtained from solitary walks. If you can't stand anyone else along, try a co-operative project run by your local club and find out why. If there isn't one going, give the President a heart attack by offering to run one.

Make this the year you share your pleasure in the outdoors with other people. Write a note for your club's newsletter or the Alberta Naturalist, offer to give a talk to your kid's school class or guide troop. It's not as hard as you think.

Get some hard fact behind your natural history. Spend an extra hour, or an evening - whatever you can spare - doing some solid reading. Your library or bookshop should have good material, if it hasn't then find out what you need and make 'em get it. Read a nature magazine that you didn't take in 1972 (if you are not already getting it make it NATURE CANADA). If you live in a city, try a course on natural history. If nothing is available (town or country), go to the appropriate authority and beat on the desk until something is arranged for next year.

Life, as somebody once said, is what you make it. Why not make 1973 the year you get twice as much fun out of natural history. If you really want a challenge, and think you know your way around, pick an area - not too large - and try and identify every living thing in it. You'll still be working on that in '74.

Good hunting.

FAN NEWS

Membership

With the start of the new year, your membership subscription to FAN is again due. Prompt payment to the treasurer will greatly simplify our accounting, and help her get on with more productive things, like looking for millionaires, raising a family, and even a little natural history on the side. So mail your membership (\$2 for subscribing, \$10 or more for supporting) to the treasurer at 2630-22nd. Ave., Lethbridge, as soon as possible. If you suddenly wake up one morning and find your eagerly awaited Alberta Naturalist has not been delivered, it will be because you forgot to pay for it.

Our Cover

The other reason for paying your sub is that it helps us pay for an ever improving publication for you. There are lots of activities, lots of ideas, and an ever increasing supply of good material. For a start you will doubtless have noted our new cover, the first of many we hope to feature the work of Alberta's fine nature artists.

Our artist is Ludo Bogaert, vice-president of the Edmonton Bird Club, a member of the Edmonton Art Club, and an artist who is becoming well known in Alberta. His work has been shown in the Edmonton Art Gallery and the Lefebvre Gallery in Edmonton, and he has also exhibited in the two National Nature Art exhibitions organised by the Canadian Nature Federation, held in Ottawa in 1971 and Edmonton in 1972.

Ludo is employed at the Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta as a foreground preparation, and has prepared material for the four habitat groups now on exhibition. He also does illustrations for exhibits and publications, and has recently completed a complete set of paintings of the Alberta Vireos and Warblers, for a new publication by Professor W. R. Salt, now being published by the PMAA.

It is hoped to feature a new drawing on the cover of each issue of the AN, and submissions by other artists, whether or not members of FAN, would be welcome.

New Officers and Directors

We are glad to welcome Penny Gladstone as the new secretary of FAN, and are grateful to the Edmonton Natural History Club for giving her up. Loran Goulden, now President of the ENHC also joins FAN as a director, replacing Cam Finlay, who has played a very active role in the formation and development of FAN, and deserves (but will not have), a rest.

Other new directors are listed in our new membership brochure - Mrs. Broadbent and Gary Fabris for ANHS, Red Deer; Gordon Kerr and Mrs. Osborne for Calgary; and Mike McIvor from Bow Valley.

Publicity

If you enjoy the Alberta Naturalist, show your copy to someone else, and talk them into joining. If you don't, then for heaven's sake write and tell us, keeping your comments brief so that you can enclose an example of the sort of thing you feel should be included.

Yes, that is a serious suggestion. FAN's membership is about a tenth of that of longer established federations of comparable provinces, so we badly need publicity. A FAN brochure is enclosed with this copy of AN; please use it to get another member.

Change of Date for Spring Field Meeting

This meeting, at Buffalo Lake, near Stettler, will now be held on the weekend of May 26 - 27th. Full details in next AN.

CLUB NEWS

Alberta Natural History Society, Red Deer

A new address is announced, of 41 Springfield Avenue, Red Deer, Alberta T4N 0C8. Telephone (Maxine O'Riordan, the new secretary) is 347-4827.

Lethbridge Naturalists' Society

A new, shortened name has been decided on by the Lethbridge group, who were getting confused with the local history groups. Guess who they will get confused with now.....

Officers are now	President	Frank Harper	8-4105
	Vice-President	Bill Sharp	7-1755
	Recording Secretary	Mrs. L. Walker	7-8046
	Corresponding Secretary	Mrs. Helen Schuler	7-1830
	Treasurer	Mrs. Diane Williams	8-0036
	1st. year Director:	Mrs. Elsie Morris	8-3950
	2nd. year Directors:	Mary Dwyer	8-0884
		Steve Shigematsu	8-6859

The February meeting was on the subject of the Oldman headwaters area, in preparation for the forthcoming ECA hearings. There was also a flower identification session by Bill Sharp. Warning was also given of Tony Erskine's annual visit in the meeting notice, together with a description of the breeding bird survey as "a form of late spring madness". For another view see the report by Jack Park in the next AN.....

Calgary Field Naturalists' Society

A notable achievement is publication of the Natural Areas Committee report on the five areas within the city that they have been studying. The report is 302 pages long, costs \$7 post free (cost price), and is available from Dr. C.D. Bird at the Department of Biology, University of Calgary. Latest Word was that the first run of copies was almost sold out, and a new edition was being prepared.

Members will remember Dr. Bird's excellent report on this project at the Calgary meeting last September; it has already sparked other groups into activity in this field. Areas included Nose Hill, and the Fish Creek area just named as Calgary's first provincial park area.

It is hoped that a fuller report on this project will appear in a later issue of the AN.

Edmonton Natural History Club

The ENHC newsletter is steadily growing, and promises to rival the Calgary one soon. The February issue is up to 10 pages, and includes a report on a most successful lecture on muskoxen, (which attracted about 100 people), articles on the green ash, birds attracted by trees, chickadees, a proposed 'ravine watch' project, and a page and a half of bird observations.

The new executive is:	President:	Loran Goulden
	Vice-President:	Martin McNicholl
	Treasurer:	Fred Coffey
	Field Trips:	Jack Park
	Newsletter:	Moira English
	Directors:	Don Brooks, Gerry Carr, Don Spalding, Jim Wolford

Secretary and Social Convenor are still vacant.

Secretaries, do you wonder why your club is not represented in CLUB NEWS, or why the important items are sometimes missed. Could it be, that like most of the other clubs, you leave your unfortunate editor to guess what is going on. Why not send him his own, editorial copy of your newsletter, or better still, write your own reports!

PROVINCIAL NEWS

Alberta Wilderness Association Publishes Elbow-Sheep Wilderness Study

"The Elbow-Sheep headwaters - a recreational wilderness" has been published by the Alberta Wilderness Association. It is 41 pages, plus 14 maps and a foldout sheet, and is very well illustrated and attractively presented. Anyone interested in the Calgary area, the foothills, or the future of wilderness in Alberta should obtain a copy. Price is \$2, and the address is Box 6398, Station D, Calgary T2P2E1.

Kananaskis Action Committee

A new development on the Alberta conservation scene is the formation of ad hoc groups to fight particular battles, often with the support of a variety of existing organisations with longer term programs. Following the Suffield Coalition, there is now a Kananaskis Action Committee, which is concerned with the current Provincial program to widen the Kananaskis road, to the detriment of the surrounding scenery.

There are a number of uncertain issues in this particular problem, including the uncertainty about the purpose for development of the road, the extent and timing of further work, the value of the environmental impact statement that has been issued, and the role of the public in such an issue.

At the moment (according to a feature in the Toronto Globe and Mail), plans call for a widening of the road allowance from the present 66 feet to 150 to 200 feet, and construction of the road to a 70 m.p.h. standard, despite doubts expressed by the consulting firm who prepared the impact statement. Protests have been made by the Alberta Wilderness Association, Canadian Society of Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists, the Alberta Fish and Game Association, and other organisations, as well as FAN, but there are no plans for public hearings.

Membership in the Kananaskis Action Committee is \$1, and more information is available from Dr. J.D. Lousier, Co-chairman, at Seebe, Alberta.

Alberta Animal Record Card

At the request of the Edmonton Natural History Club, the Provincial Museum and Archives have prepared an Animal Record Card for use by naturalists in the province. Such a card has been used by the Calgary FNC for some time for collecting local records, and it seemed desirable to have a standard card available that could be used by any group wishing to set up a recording scheme.

Cards are available free on request from the Curator of Zoology, Hugh Smith, at PMAA. They can be returned to PMAA for permanent reference or sent to local recorders when completed.

The ENHC is also working on a plant card, and PMAA is preparing a record card for detailed documentation of bird sight records of unusual species.

NATIONAL NEWS

New Provincial Federation

New Brunswick has announced the formation of a provincial naturalists federation. It will take over the New Brunswick Naturalist (at present published by the museum), and expand it as its regular publication. First president is David Christie, Natural Science Curator of the Museum. There are three member clubs, in Fredericton, Moncton, and St. John. Individual membership is \$2, and the permanent address is 277 Douglas Avenue, St. John, New Brunswick.

Canadian Nature Federation carries on

This report was given to the FAN directors on February 25th., after attendance at the CNF executive meeting a week earlier, in Ottawa.

Nature Canada 1(4) seen in proof, expected out soon.

2(1) nearing completion, should be not far behind.

A private donation has permitted appointment of an editor for a limited period, to that work on NC is now catching up.

Special Publication No. 2 'The destruction of Manitoba's last great river' was published in January.

Membership is now over 7,000, a four fold increase in the last year or so. Still going up steadily.

Bookshop is doing well. Christmas Cards will be done again this year, and a calendar for 1974 will be printed if funds permit.

Finances a considerable increase in membership is still urgently needed, to enable Nature Canada to be maintained at its present quality. Various sources of grants and donations are being approached.

Canadian Nature Art 73 Plans are well ahead for the third show, to be held in conjunction with the annual meeting. This exhibition will travel across the country, so members who cannot make the conference will be able to see the pictures at least. Any artists who have not been invited to participate should write to CNF.

Next conference will be in Wofville, Nova Scotia, August 23 - 26.

LETTERS

Points from 1972 letters.....

....I have been trying to have a park made of part of the Clearwater forest reserve, from the east side west to the Big Horn Dam along the south side of the No. 11 highway..... I have been in these mountains for 45 years; I have travelled with horses in most parts and this ...is the best place for a park....

....I have noticed in the last three years the people have kept the camp grounds cleaner than they used to; they seem to enjoy the land more. I talked to a lot of people this summer about this park, they said it would be good to see some wild life and some wild horses (there are some wild horses on this land). The people ask about the deer and moose, I am sorry to tell them they have nearly all been killed. I travelled about 400 miles this summer with pack horses and I only saw 7 deer, 3 moose and 9 elk..... there used to be game trails that were tramped bare; now they are grown full of grass. There are not many mountain sheep left, the cattle eat the grass in the flats and the elk go up high to get feed; this is starving the sheep. The cattle go in the creeks to get away from the flies; this makes the water muddy and fish cannot live in muddy water... .. they have planted the cut lines to grass and clover, this will make it bad for the deer and elk because they will come here to feed and the hunters will shoot them.....

Slim Davis, Red Deer.

....Have had an interesting bird watching time this year, having seen several species I'd never seen before including Connecticut, Nashville and Audubon warblers and a golden plover. Also an Osprey on Travis dam, and tree swallows out on an abandoned farmstead in the middle of the prairie. Saw a pair of Cinnamon Teal, too - rather unusual for around here. The Nashville warbler I guess is unusual - but I had a good long look - and he was the only thing in the book...which could have been him. He did not have a coloured patch on his head - but was exactly the same otherwise.

Helen Schuler, Lethbridge

FAN PROJECTS

A PROVINCIAL BIRD (6)

The final two lists are to hand, although one has only eight nominees. The Bow Valley Naturalists proposals are:

- Black-capped Chickadee
- Great Horned Owl
- Bohemian Waxwing
- Red winged Blackbird
- Cedar Waxwing
- Canada Jay
- Magpie
- Raven
- Snow Bunting
- Mountain Bluebird

- Edmonton Bird Club:
- Western Grebe
- Prairie Falcon
- American Avocet
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Gray Jay
- Black-billed Magpie
- Mountain Bluebird
- White-throated Sparrow

The six clubs then have proposed no less than 31 candidates for a 'top ten' list. No species was supported by all the groups, and the votes for the rest were as follows:

- 5 Red-winged Blackbird, Mountain Bluebird
- 4 Black-capped Chickadee
- 3 Prairie Falcon, Black-billed Magpie, Western Meadowlark, Great Horned Owl.
- 2 American Avocet, Snow Bunting, Killdeer, Bohemian and Cedar Waxwings, Pileated Woodpecker, Sparrow Hawk and Gray Jay.

Although all present member clubs have now submitted their suggestions, we have two new groups (Rocky Mountain House and Buffalo Lake Naturalists) who are likely to join FAN. Out of courtesy, we have asked them also to make suggestions.

Latest news is that the Alberta Federation of Rock Clubs are considering a provincial fossil. One proposal is for Stegoceras, the little bone headed dinosaur. Imagine what comment that might cause in the legislature.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (1)

David A.E. Spalding

ALBERTA COUNTS IN 1972

The following summary of the Alberta 1972 counts is taken from the Edmonton Naturalist (January 1973 p. 6), Calgary Field Naturalist 4(7) : 131, and a letter from Loyd Lohr. Saskatchewan had 38 Counts in 1971!

	CALGARY	EDMONTON	STETTNER
Mallard	1623	67	31
Common Goldeneye	205	60	-
Harlequin Duck	1	-	-
Common Merganser	7	-	-
Goshawk	2	5	-
Wough-legged Hawk	1	-	-
Bald Eagle	3	-	1
Pigeon Hawk	4	2	-
Ruffed Grouse	1	-	-
Ring-necked Pheasant	48	18	-
Gray Partridge	115	65	-
Great Horned Owl	5	3	-
Snowy Owl	13	16	-
Hawk Owl	-	1	-
Short-eared Owl	21	1	-
Yellow-shafted Flicker	-	1	-
Pileated Woodpecker	-	3	1
Hairy Woodpecker	2	7	1
Downy Woodpecker	13	14	-

	CALGARY	EDMONTON	STETTLEB
Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker	-	2	-
Northern Three-toed Woodpecker	-	1	-
Blue Jay	-	90	2
Black-billed Magpie	360	437	13
Boreal Chickadee	1	1	-
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	2	-
Red-breasted Nuthatch	-	1	-
Brown Creeper	2	1	-
Dipper	2	-	-
Varied Thrush	1	-	-
Golden-crowned Kinglet	4	4	-
Bohemian Waxwing	4547	1553	-
Northern Shrike	-	1	-
Starling	338	62	-
House Sparrow	1853	491	75
Evening Grosbeak	99	131	3
Pine Grosbeak	216	143	1
Hoary Redpoll	7	6	-
Common Redpoll	252	229	-
Red Crossbill	30	34	-
Slate-colored Junco	4	-	-
Song Sparrow	-	1	-
Snow Bunting	249	115	-
<hr/>			
Species Total	35	36	10
Individual Total	10197	3836	139

Additional spice has been added to the Christmas Count by a plaque presented by Bob Turner & Ian Halladay, to be competed for by clubs that have established a handicap over five years. It will go to the Edmonton Bird Club in this first year.

OVERHEARD (14)

In this work you have first to prove why the shells at a height of 1000 braccie had not been carried there by the deluge, because they are found at the same level, and one can point to many mountains that are higher than that level; and to enquire whether the deluge was caused by rain or by the rising of the sea; and then you have to show that neither by rains, which floods the river, nor by the swelling of the sea could the shells, being heavy objects, have been carried by the sea to the mountains, nor transported by the rivers against the course of their waters.

Manuscript of Leonardo da Vinci(1452-1519)
quoted in Edwards' Early History of Paleontology

OVERHEARD (15)

As the worm passes through the soil the soil passes through the worm

English Zoology student, quoted in Journal of Biological Education, 6(4):225

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS (2)

David A. E. Spalding

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN EDMONTON, 1960-1969

January 1972.

The Christmas Bird Count is a favourite winter pastime of bird watchers all over North America, which also produces valuable distribution and population data for the species seen.

The Edmonton Count is one of the longest established Alberta counts, dating back at least to 1938. It is presently organized by the Edmonton Bird Club, and full reports are published in the Edmonton Naturalist, The Alberta Naturalist, and American Birds (successor of Audubon Field Notes). This summary of the birds observed from 1960-1969 is drawn from the file of Alberta Christmas Bird Counts that is being built up at PMAA.

A recent Calgary Field Naturalist (vol. 4 (6) : 110-114) includes a twenty year summary of the Calgary Count. This summary is done on the basis of a single decade to provide a standard basis for long term comparisons.

SUMMARY OF COUNTS

YEAR	DATE	CENTRE (15 mile diameter)	TEMP.	OBSERVERS (PARTIES)	REFERENCE
1960	26 Dec.	Edmonton Municipal Airport	25 - 30	21 (9)	AFN 15 : 100
1961	26 Dec.	S. end High Level Bridge	-12 to -7	15 (8)	AFN 16 : 87
1962	23 Dec.	University of Alberta	- 9 to -8	28 (13)	AFN 17 : 85
1963	22 Dec.	University of Alberta	2 to 30	30 (15)	AFN 18 : 90
1964	27 Dec.	University of Alberta	- 5 to 0	19 (11)	AFN 19 : 98
1965	26 Dec.	University of Alberta	-22 to -17	19 (6)	AFN 20 : 112
1966	26 Dec.	University of Alberta	15 to 20	20 (9)	AFN 21 : 98
1967	26 Dec.	SW corner University farm	12 to 17	16 (8)	AFN 22 : 111
1968	22 Dec.	University of Alberta farm	-11 to 1	19 (11)	AFN 23 : 133
1969	21 Dec.	University of Alberta farm	14 to 24	26	Blue Jay 28 : 32

Note: In the detailed breakdown below, all figures except one have been checked from the final published form (Audubon Field Notes), and totals in each year are those originally published. The right hand column indicates:

No.Years - Number of years in which species recorded on day of count
10 YR. Mean - Mean number of the species seen per year in the ten year period, to the nearest unit (all means below 1 are shown as 1).

	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	No. Males	10 YR
Canada Goose	x	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Walden	59	9	x	120	65	60	60	250	42	174	9	84
Pintail	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Common Goldeneye	x	-	x	14	4	-	16	30	18	70	6	15
Common Merganser	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Osprey	-	-	1	-	x	-	1	-	-	1	3	1
Rough-legged Hawk	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Golden Eagle	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	x	1	3	1
Peregrine	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Pigeon Hawk	3	-	1	3	4	3	x	3	1	7	8	3
Screech Owl	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Ruffed Grouse	1	7	5	1	2	1	2	-	1	6	9	3
Sharp-billed Grouse	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	10	3	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	44	93	51	96	32	14	6	20	15	13	10	38
Gray Partridge	142	175	141	112	44	-	4	82	96	173	9	97
Great Horned Owl	1	2	2	4	1	3	2	1	1	1	10	2
Snowy Owl	1	1	5	3	1	6	x	1	1	2	9	2
Hawk Owl	-	-	x	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	1
Barn Owl	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	1
Short-eared Owl	10	2	21	3	-	x	-	-	4	18	6	6
Yellow-shafted Flicker	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	1
Pileated Woodpecker	3	1	2	3	-	-	4	-	2	1	7	2
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Hairy Woodpecker	2	1	6	11	8	1	2	2	7	3	10	4
Downy Woodpecker	8	7	9	24	10	1	5	6	6	6	10	8
Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker	1	-	-	2	1	2	2	1	1	-	7	1
Northern Three-toed Woodpecker	-	-	1	-	x	1	2	-	-	-	3	1
Gray Jay	4	-	-	-	3	x	-	-	-	-	2	1
Blue Jay	24	13	23	68	27	7	21	30	30	41	10	28
Black-billed Magpie	131	97	193	292	130	110	127	198	119	196	10	159

	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	No. YEARS	10 Yr. MEAN
Black-capped Chickadee	156	83	106	323	135	47	76	110	82	139	10	126
Boreal Chickadee	13	-	-	5	1	-	4	2	-	5	6	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	4	1	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	-	2	4	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	4	1
Brown Creeper	6	-	-	-	2	2	1	3	-	-	5	1
Robin	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	x	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	1	-	3	1
Bohemian Waxwing	558	353	507	3009	5500	302	3500	3942	5000	2480	10	2515
Cedar Waxwing	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Northern Shrike	-	1	4	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	8	1
Starling	13	6	32	13	32	5	20	2	16	6	10	15
House Sparrow	316	124	613	876	227	325	131	398	305	1941	10	526
Rusty Blackbird	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Evening Grosbeak	28	40	18	72	39	9	11	67	19	98	10	40
Pine Grosbeak	82	135	66	175	48	62	25	39	10	51	10	69
Hairy Redpoll	-	5	-	4	12	2	-	-	2	-	3	3
Common Redpoll	55	163	64	105	53	115	65	-	179	32	9	83
Pine Siskin	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Red Crossbill	-	-	8	12	-	-	-	-	-	51	3	7
White-winged Crossbill	72	26	51	-	71	-	-	9	-	81	6	31
Slate-colored Junco	-	1	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	2	1
Harris' Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1
Snow Bunting	-	631	45	40	102	50	-	60	100	150	8	118
Total Species	27	27	29	31	29	25	29	28	28	30	-	28
Total Individuals	1742	1980	1984	5401	6557	1132	4331	5266	6061	5969	-	4042

Abbreviations: AFN - Audubon Field Notes.
 x - Years in which bird recorded in area during count period, not seen on day.

A recent note (Lang 1973) in the Calgary Field-Naturalist describes an observation of a Rock Dove Floating down the Bow River in January. The bird was already in the water when observed, seemed to be in no distress, and took off without difficulty and returned to a group already loafing on the ice nearby.

This note reminded me of an early unpublished observation of my own on the same species, made in the early 1950's. Although I cannot immediately locate my original field note, I have a clear memory of the bird descending on the water of Forge Dam, Sheffield, staying on the water for a few seconds with wings outspread on the surface, and then taking off again without effort.

With this observation in mind, I have noted several similar instances reported in the literature, though without systematic search. Hoyes Lloyd (1921) noted about 1909 three pigeons settle on Lake Ontario, apparently to drink. In discussion he refers to an early British reference to the habit in both the Rock Dove and the Wood Pigeon, and also cites a similar observation in the Passenger Pigeon. In all these, the birds are considered to have alighted to drink, and kept the wings clear of the water, thus differing from the two observations reported above.

Lloyd also suggests that the habit may be an ancient one (because present in at least three species), and relates this to contemporary views of a close relationship between the pigeons (Columbiformes) and plovers, gulls and auks (Charadriiformes). This point is taken up by Townsend (1922), who quotes two other observations of domestic pigeons settling on water to drink, (England, Massachusetts), and one of his own of a pigeon feeding in the manner of a black tern. Townsend followed his taxonomic ideas by experiment, and "placed a half-grown Domestic Pigeon in a wash-tub of tepid water. With head and neck erect, the bird swam rapidly with alternate strokes.... The wings were arched up and waved slightly.... Its position was that of a duck, but low in the water." He also quotes a case of "a pigeon with a perfectly webbed foot evolved at Cambridge by only three years' selected crossings".

Another letter (Morris 1922) describes a pigeon which in Connecticut deliberately alighted in the water when perching space nearby was already fully occupied by drinking pigeons.

Two notes in Condor also describe related observations. Cottam (1949) described 16 pigeons bathing from lily pads by an artificial pond in Washington D.C. When two or three birds settled on the same pad, it would sink, leaving the birds swimming. At least one bird deliberately landed in the water twice when adjacent lily pads were occupied, and the birds preened in the water and leapt from it without apparent effort.

Brackbill (1950) observed another pigeon alighting twice on artificial water in Maryland. His second observation is the only one that resembles my own, as "it settled tail-first on the water, coming to rest with wings spread on the surface, about two-thirds opened. For a second or longer it floated in this position, and during this time dipped its bill, and apparently part of its head, into the water...."

It seems, therefore that the Rock Dove, or domestic pigeon, occasionally settles on fresh water to drink, bathe, and perhaps feed, and that it can swim with reasonable competence if necessary. Further observations of this behavior would obviously be of interest, and the infrequent records show how little is known about this neglected species. As a "feathered rat" of North American cities, it is often ignored by bird watchers, and yet is a fascinating species, generally little studied except as easily obtained anatomical material or subject for migration observations. In its native haunts it is a bird of sea and inland cliffs in Europe, but has adapted over many centuries to the artificial cliffs of cities, and as Tony Erskine of CWS recently pointed out in Edmonton, was thus "pre-adapted" to North American city life when introduced here. PMAA Natural History Reference List No. 159 gives some further starting points on this species.

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- PMAA Misc. Cont. No. 31 David A. E. Spalding

OVERHEARD (16)

In our opinion, no current topic is freighted with such import as the question of cutting off the enormous drain of fertilizing matter now permitted to wash away into the sea, and the purification of the waters that surround large cities from the pollutions now permitted to contaminate them and the atmosphere that sweeps over them.

Scientific American May 1870, republished 1970

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ALBERTA (3)

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CONSERVATION COMMENT (3)

A Soliloquy on Ecology

Two men walk to the top of a hill and, at its top a scene bursts upon their view, that, at least temporarily and for divergent reasons, deprives them both of the power, or at least, the desire of speech. To one of them it is because of its sheer grandeur and magnificence: He sees before him a mighty panorama "fresh from The Hand of GOD": Rising in the far distance, a mighty range of mountains, silent, aloof, "wrapped in Eternity" and man-chastening orological majesty; the snow-draped olympic heights gleaming in untrodden purity in the sunlight; soaring in breath-taking sweep, to such immense heights as to seem forever above all earthly sin. Here he sees impeccable, immaculate beauty, unmarred and unsullied by the blighting touch of the most destroying monster of all: man-in-the-mass; hag-ridden by insatiable avarice, cupidity and all ancillary vices and desires. These mighty monarchs seem to him to be as inaccessible as the stars; below the timberline their flanks seem to be wrapped in mystic green moss (actually great coniferous forests, dwarfed by distance); the delicate blue haze intensifying the air of other wordly mystery. This forest descends to the intervening plain, and at its undulating line of juncture, several streams emerge along the flanks; some serene and some turbulent, (depending on the terrain,) converge to form a river, that flows sinuously past the hill on which the two men are standing; its ripples sparkling in the sunlight. From this scene of pure wonder comes a cooling breeze, laden with the health-giving scent of pine, spruce, cedar and balsam. He knows that in this forest, Nature, in her ecological wisdom, acts for perpetuity, in continuous cycles of birth, fruition, death, decay and rebirth, from time immemorial and for time that is to be.

Here is primeval logic that man meddles with at his own risk. For all of these reasons he knows that here is life and beauty. As a scene it is ineffable and he feels a great humility. (This would be myself and some of my own reactions). He would fervently hope that it would remain, in toto and forever unattainable and unassailable. This great desire would be so, even knowing that nature "in the raw" is concurrently beautiful and terrible; that her incalculable forces are relentless, implacable and grim; that the internecine war of destruction between bird and beast, insects, arachnida, fungi and bacteria is everlasting; but, that in the scheme of nature, is inevitable, inexorable and necessary: that here, when understood, is logic in the ultimate: ECOLOGY. Here, if a single species of fauna or flora is decimated, the delicate "balance of nature" is upset. This awareness does not mar his total joy, appreciation and exhilaration in and of the glorious vista before him; in fact it enhances it. This man would be myself. But what of my companion of the divergent outlook? He is looking at what I am looking at, but he does not see what I see. He sees the raw materials, natural resources and potential power sources of industry, which (if properly controlled and utilized) are not innately deleterious.

Though, to him, these wonderful forests, spread before him (which, in their remote depths have sylvan glades of cathedral solemnity) are nothing but so many million board-feet of lumber. Here he sees only timber-berths of immense (financial) value. That the glorious notes of singing birds in the pure air and the chattering of busy squirrels and chipmunks and other denizens of the forest would be forever stilled (if his "dream" came true) are matters of no moment to him.

The sounds in which he is interested and which he seems to hear, are the whines of band-saws and the inharmonious clank of the ponderous machinery of lumbering. He sees, too, a mighty dam at the "point of turbulence" (and, inci-

dentally, the point of greatest beauty) of the river, and a man-made lake, where GOD-in-Nature did not intend one to be. In the hope of sufficient mineral deposits in this sub-domain, he further envisages factories and smelters, belching poisons from smokestacks into the (now pure and vibrant) air, and pouring liquid poisons into the (now crystal-clear and pure) waters of the river, below the great dam. Incidentally, he would prefer not to produce these poisons; but to eliminate them, even partially, would reduce dividends to share - and stockholders (Preferred and Common!). This, of course, would be crime unspeakable!

He sees as a concomitant of this industry: towns and villages; perhaps even cities; with all pertinent adjuncts; even to the inevitable slums. To do him justice (and he needs all of it that one can spare!) he would rather not have these slums; but, again, they cost nothing to evolve, but would be expensive to eradicate. So? Do the lives and happiness of mill workers and their children matter; that is, against the much more sacred protection of share - and stockholders rights? (Preferred and Common, of course!). - - - - Well, need either of us soliloquize any further? At some future time one or other of these two "dreams" may come to pass: The area might be declared a National Park. (Should it be? I say YES). Herein not a tree could be felled; not an animal or bird shot, trapped, killed or taken in any way, other than by natural agencies. Not a flower or any other plant picked or its means of propagation destroyed. Only fishermen might fish, as lakes, rivers and streams would be stocked and re-stocked. Or the other "dream" may come to pass: Here is timber, water-power and natural wealth. Also the destroying monster: man-in-the-mass: The "sportsman" (spare the mark!) with his credo: "If it moves and has life, kill it"! (The pioneer hunter is not in this category: he is no wasteful trophy-hunter; but, as the other denizens of the forest, he takes life sparingly and economically, that he himself may eat and live. Neither would he, unlike the "professional" hunter (!!)) shoot only the choicest, most noble and magnificent and leave only the "culls" to propagate the species. But he would be content with the antlers that a deer had shed as a trophy for his cabin wall). - - - -

But now, the two men, each having seen what he would and wished to see; in verbal but not in spiritual communion; physically together, but ideologically worlds apart, turn silently and descend the hill. No, I am not an INDIAN, but I believe I Think as One!!!!

By Leslie M. Parr,
Saturday, 16th. March, 1963

(And from: Neither would he ---- to: propagate the species.
On Saturday, 2nd. April, 1966)

OVERHEARD (17)

If there is one thing that twentieth century Canada has mastered, it is the ability to create instant bureaucracies

D.T.Gallacher, Museum Round-up, 46:21

OVERHEARD (18)

There are really no animal problems in the parks - only garbage problems

E.B.Cunningham

(Information selected from the card index at the Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta - additional information would be welcomed).

JAMES RHOADS GILLIN (4.3.1886-25.3.1952)

Gillin is perhaps typical of many minor figures in Alberta's natural history, of whom little is known in the area he worked. Born in Pennsylvania, son of an enthusiastic collector of birds and eggs, he became a nurseryman, with a keen interest in oology, and a particular flair for finding nests. He became a member of the Delaware Ornithological Club in 1921, and in 1944 spoke to that group of his experiences in collecting eggs in Pennsylvania and in Alberta. After his death from a road accident, his collection was divided between a number of naturalists and museums. Investigation is being made to locate his material, and find out how much of it is documented. No published account of his work has been located, though some of the more obscure local journals may well contain accounts of his collecting.

Does anyone know of further information on his Alberta activities and local contacts?

Obituary

Schorger, A.W. (1954) in Auk 71 : 347

D. A. E. Spalding. 13.4.1971

PMAA, Natural History Division

Miscellaneous Contribution No. 15.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN ALBERTA (2)

A Field Study Centre for Alberta

Beginning in the summer of 1973 we are planning to provide an opportunity for people interested in natural history to spend time pursuing it outside. On 300 acres of land in the Beaverhills area we have a variety of natural habitats from slough to aspen forest, and we are inviting people to come and use it. Watch birds on it, collect dragonflies, study the social life of ants, find out about grasses, wood decay fungi, mosses and algae; it is also a hope that people who tend to be surrounded by the furniture of civilisation will discover what it is that conservationists are anxious to save and why.

The field centre itself consists of a communal building which serves as library, laboratory, meeting room and diningroom. Simple residential accommodation will be provided for, initially, about a dozen people at a time. In the future we hope to expand this to accommodate 40 or 50 students.

The year will open in May, and will start with two months of nature programmes for High School students, groups being invited to come daily and study biology in the field, doing their own investigations under the advice and direction of the Field Centre staff. Residential courses will start in July and continue for two months, lasting about a week each and covering various subjects, such as birds, insects, general ecology, mosses and fungi, and as many other topics as can be arranged.

In view of the emphasis we place on the students making their own field observations, and being able to interpret the results to the group, we suggest that they should be at least fourteen years old. However, in some cases we realize that parents would like to attend, and bring with them younger children. If parents are willing to give the younger members a hand with their field work, this would seem to be a satisfactory arrangement.

At all events we hope that people of different ages and experience will come and work here. Seasoned naturalists may wish to pursue their own research and will be very welcome; complete novices may wish to come and find out what this hackneyed word 'ecology' means. They are equally welcome.

For details of location and summer programme, please write to the directors:

Drs Don and Lois Fenna
12312 39th Avenue
Edmonton

OVERHEARD (19)

If you know all the answers about nature, you haven't asked all the questions

Bus advertisement in Edmonton

OVERHEARD (20)

In view of the population crisis, motherhood is no longer a motherhood issue



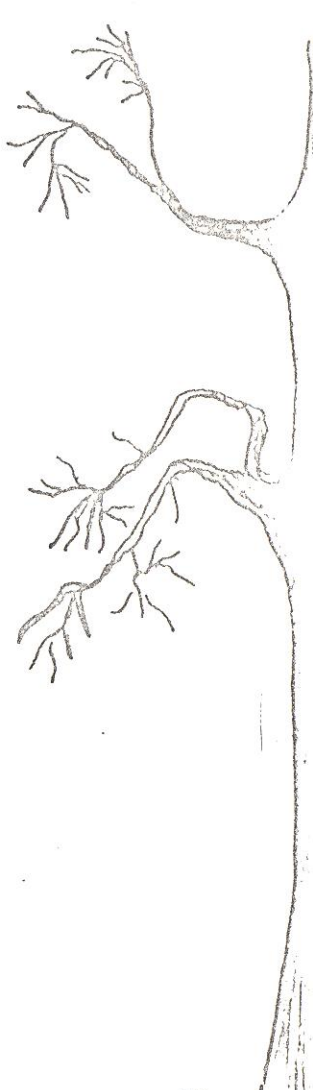
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I READING STORIES SNOW

INTRODUCTION: Discuss effect of snow on animal movement, your movement. Discuss how to identify signs of animal activity in winter. Arouse curiosity by discovering our own animal story in the snow.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY IN A NATURAL AREA:

- Look for tracks and signs to discover what animals are active during the winter. Make listening stops often.
Of some 90 mammal species in Alberta, about 1/3 remain active in winter.
Of the 312 bird species 1/10 are winter residents.
- How does snow affect their movement?
Moose walk through deep snow on stilt-like legs. The varying hare walks on top of the snow, supported by snowshoe-like hind feet. Mice are active under the soft snow, sometimes tunneling to the surface.
- What food is available? Signs of gnawing? Seeds scattered?
- Where do animals seek shelter?
Take temperatures under the snow, above the snow, in exposed areas, and in shelter of trees. Ruffed grouse burrow into soft snow in very cold weather.
- Any territory marks?
Many mammals mark their territory the way a dog does in passing a fire hydrant. Look for yellow stains at the base of trees or in holes in the snow.

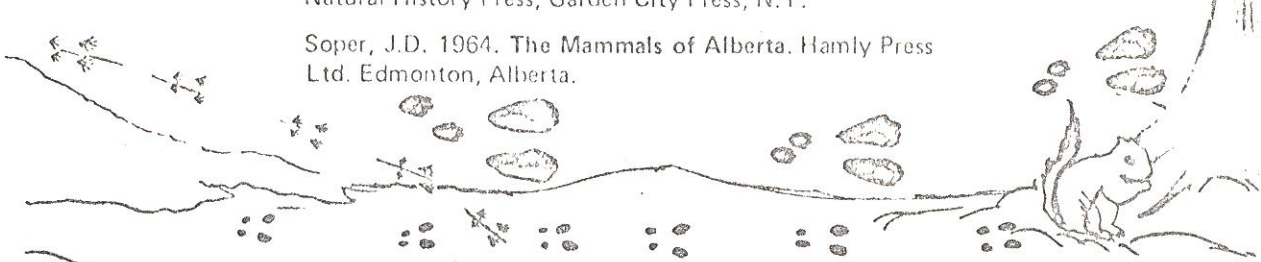


FOLLOW-UP: Consider and discuss similarities between the needs of wild animals and of people in winter.

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This is a page from "Winter-in-the-Out-of-Doors", a HERE and NOW booklet by Joy Finlay, available from: The Recreation Branch Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Alberta, 14th. floor, CN Tower, Edmonton, Alberta.

Single copies: \$1.25, in quantity: \$1.00