



# ALBERTA NATURALIST

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OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 1973



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ALBERTA NATURALIST

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Box 1472, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2N5

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NEWSLETTER

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Edited by Virginia Lang

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Season's Greetings: may your feeder be blessed with many chickadees, and may your nose not freeze on the Christmas Bird Count.  
One down, many to go.

12:15 A.M., Monday morning

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FROM THE EDITOR

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On behalf of all FAN members, I thank Dave Spalding for the considerable time and effort spent editing the Alberta Naturalist. Under his guidance our publication has made great strides.

It was with pleasure and enthusiasm that I accepted the editorship of the Alberta Naturalist. Alberta needs a strong provincial publication. It is my intention that the AN will fill this need. I hope we can, within two or three years, produce a publication comparable to the Saskatchewan Natural History Society's Blue Jay. However, a large membership is required to cover printing costs of such a publication. Therefore, while continuing to upgrade the AN, we must strive to increase our membership considerably.

Beginning with Volume 4 Number 1 (January-March) the AN will be printed in booklet form. The size of each page will likely be 8½ x 7", so I ask that charts, drawings, et cetera not exceed this size. Deadlines for submission of material are: February 15, May 15, August 15 and November 15. Material for Volume 4 Number 1 should be sent to me at #D-122 28th Avenue NW, Calgary. After March 30 my mailing address will be R.R. #1, Busby.

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OUR COVER ARTIST

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Our cover features Agaricus silvicola, drawn by Mrs. Helene M. E. Schalkwyk of Edmonton.

Mrs. Schalkwyk has a Master's degree in horticulture, but her main interest is fungi and the role they play in nature's energy cycle. She has been painting fungi for the last four years; to date she has found and painted over two hundred species. Three of her paintings have been submitted to the Canadian Nature Art Show.

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FAN NEWS

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FAN MEMBERSHIP

1974 FAN membership fees are now due. Please mail your \$2.00 (or \$10.00 for a Supporting Membership) to Mrs. Helen Schuler, 2630 - 22nd Avenue, Lethbridge.

There are well over six hundred people in Alberta who belong to FAN corporate member clubs. Yet there are only about two hundred members of FAN. Most will agree the key to a strong provincial voice is a large membership. A relatively simple method to increase our membership, as pointed out in a previous issue, is for each current member to get (at least) one friend to join FAN. As FAN is a charitable organization, all payments over \$2.00 are tax deductible; your wealthier friends might be persuaded to purchase a Supporting Membership.

FAN BRIEF: The Restoration of Water Levels in the Peace-Athabasca Delta

Following are excerpts from FAN's brief presented to the Environment Conservation Authority of Alberta in October, 1973:

". . . We are in favour of the proposal for at least effecting partial control of waters outflowing from Lake Athabasca and the Delta to ensure the preservation of deltaic marshland productivity, such that there would be a return towards the

'natural' state which existed prior to construction of the Bennett Dam on the Peace River. We stress the need to restore the 'natural' water regime on the Delta without delay, so that further deterioration of the deltaic marshland productivity will be alleviated. . .

. . . We support the suggestion for a structure at the Little Rapids site, and the removal of the temporary Quatre Fourches Impoundment. Proposals for sites at Revillon Coupé and in the Chenal des Quatre Fourches, wholly within Wood Buffalo National Park are undesirable in a natural park setting. . . we would hope that the required rock and other necessary local material will be obtained largely from outside the Wood Buffalo National Park boundaries. . .

. . . The construction of a weir or other modifying structure at the Little Rapids site on the Rivière des Rochers appears to be the minimum necessary to ensure that the Delta area maintains its natural physical and biological characteristics, and that the natural values of Wood Buffalo National Park are not adversely affected. . .

In conclusion we wish to digress slightly from the main topic under discussion, and request that the members of the Hearings in their report should include a section indicating the desirability of including a major portion of the sand-dunes on the south shore of Lake Athabasca in an Ecological Reserve or natural park category giving similar degrees of protection. These dunes like the Delta area have unique natural features and should be preserved for all to enjoy and study. We understand that an area of the sand dunes in Saskatchewan, coming to within a few miles of Alberta, has been proposed as an Ecological Reserve. We suggest, therefore, that the three Governments represented on these Hearings should look at the desirability of having one or more large portions of these sand dunes protected and preserved for all time."

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#### CLUB NEWS

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It is regrettable (but understandable, considering the change in editors) the only clubs represented this issue are Calgary and the Edmonton Natural History Club.

#### Calgary Field Naturalists' Society

The Natural Areas Committee's 302-page publication "Five 'Natural Areas' in the City of Calgary" is now in its fourth printing, approximately 350 copies having been sold. Work has begun on the new report which will include revisions of the original five areas and presentation of five new 'natural areas' within Calgary.

The Bird Study Group has initiated their winter projects which include "Woodpeckers of Alberta", "Bird-Feeders in Southern Alberta", Snowy Owl census work, field studies of magpies and chickadees, and "Bird-Finding in the Calgary Region".

#### Edmonton Natural History Club

The winter schedule of general meetings has been announced as follows: December, Dr. Graham will discuss the weed problem at Lake Wabamun; January, a visit to the Planetarium; and February, Pesticides and Birds.

A separate Junior Naturalists section of the Edmonton Natural History Club has been set up, with its own meetings, field trips and other activities. As their first project, the Junior Naturalists will begin maintenance of a section of the Bluebird Trail this year. Their winter meetings are the third Wednesday of every month (through June), 7:00 PM, at Garneau School, 109th St. & 87th Ave., Edmonton.

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THE ALBERTA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

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The Federation of Alberta Naturalists are pleased to announce the establishment of the Alberta Ornithological Records Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. W. Ray Salt. The Committee is composed of seven members, five from Alberta and one each from British Columbia and Saskatchewan. The Alberta members will constitute the main working group of the Committee, with the out-of-province members being called upon to provide an opinion on submitted records when required.

The Federation believes that the Committee will fill a need and will provide a degree of authenticity to records of sighting and breeding of birds in Alberta. Up until now the recording of unusual sightings or breeding records has been somewhat unsatisfactory since observations are reported and sometimes published without any established standards or criteria for their acceptability. We wish to encourage Albertan naturalists and visitors to our Province to submit details of observations of species of birds seen in various areas of Alberta and especially rare and unusual species of birds.

There are two main functions of the Alberta Ornithological Records Committee (AORC):

1. The AORC will serve as a repository for records of birds from any and all parts of Alberta. The Committee welcomes reports on Alberta birds in any form but a standardized form has been devised which will enable an observer, with a minimum of inconvenience to himself, to report on all of his observations in one region for periods of up to one year. This report form, called by the Committee an Area List, will be printed and will be available for distribution early in 1974. It is hoped that all observers who work in any area for an appreciable period of time will utilize this form to report their records. All records should be sent to: The Secretary, Alberta Ornithological Records Committee, Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta, 12845 - 102nd Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, T5N 0M6.

NOTE: It should be emphasized that this form, the Area List, is not intended to replace, nor should it be used as a substitute for, the individual record cards currently being used by several naturalists' clubs in Alberta.

2. The AORC, when requested to do so, will examine the documentation of records of rare and unusual species of birds in Alberta. When serving thus, as an adjudicating body, the Committee will place each record in one of the following categories: I. Substantiated Record, II. Documented Observation, III. Documented Nesting Record, or IV. Unsubstantiated Observation, and will advise the observer of its decision.

A list of species and the zones of the Province in which a record would be considered unusual will shortly be published by the AORC.

MINISTIK HILLS FIELD STUDY CENTRE

by Dr. L. Fenna

This venture into outdoor education (reported in Volume 3 Number 2) is preparing for its second year of operation, although still having to proceed very cautiously with the building programme, owing to the limited success that has been met with in searching for financial support.

However, we were greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm of many of our visitors during the opening season, and this confirmed our feeling that people do like to get outside and enjoy finding out something about the plants and animals around them.

This coming year we shall be expecting more of the school classes that came for day visits during the 1973 school sessions, but we want to emphasize the residential courses, when visitors can stay for two, three or five days - or longer if they wish. We are leaving every weekend open during July and August for general natural history topics, so that people who cannot attend when specific fields are being explored can drop in for two or three days, and their interested can be accommodated. Specific topics include birds, wildflowers, nonflowering plants, insects, landscape and nature painting and hobby farming.

If you are interested in hearing more about this Centre, write for information to Dr. L. Fenna, 12312 - 39th Ave., Edmonton, T6J 0N2.

NATURALISTS' BOOKSHELF (5)

Butterflies of Saskatchewan, by Ronald Hooper. Reviewed by C.D. Bird

Ronald R. Hooper has just produced an outstanding 216-page book on the skippers and butterflies of Saskatchewan.

The first 19 pages present details on the history of butterfly collecting in the province, what butterflies are, their life history and habits, life zones in the province, where and how to collect, and how to mount, label and identify specimens. These comments are quite useful for the beginner and provide many helpful hints for more advanced workers.

The next 176 pages are devoted to the 135 species that have been found in the province. The arrangement is according to families, each starting with a simple description and an easy-to-use diagram key to the individual species. All of the species are illustrated with black and white, or occasionally, color photographs. The latter are of excellent quality but some of the former, for example the blues, could have come out better. A particularly nice feature is the way in which the text for each species is on the page facing the illustration. This text includes the key characters used in identification, stressing ways by which related species may be distinguished. There is also a description of range, time of flight, ecology and food plants. The book ends with a list of hypothetical and expected species, a bibliography of helpful references, and a checklist of the Saskatchewan species.

Naturalists in Alberta with an interest in entomology will find this work very helpful due to its completeness, regional interest, and because practically all of our species, other than some restricted to the mountains, are included. In the writer's opinion it is the best single book on the butterflies of this region.

The book was published by the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources and may be obtained for \$3.00 from the Blue Jay Bookshop at the Museum of Natural History Regina, P.O. Box 1121, Regina.

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ALBERTA NATURALISTS (10)

by David A.E. Spalding

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John Macoun (17.4.1831 - 18.7.1920)

John Macoun, the 'Dean of Canadian Naturalists', was a remarkable man. He was born in Ireland, and died at the age of 89 in active retirement on Vancouver Island. In between he packed an amazing career of travel the length and breadth of Canada, the study of many aspects of natural history, and two careers. Together with his son, James (who followed his father's career and died in the same year), he made a major contribution to Canadian natural history.

He was born in Maralin, 20 miles from Belfast in Ireland, and as a teen-aged boy came to Canada with his family and settled in Seymour township, Northumberland County, Ontario. With his two brothers Brederick and James, John cleared the land and began to farm. To help bring in money, John soon took to teaching as well, and by 1859 was taking a course at the Normal School in Toronto. From about 1850 he was studying botany, and in a few years was a recognized authority. He was obviously a successful teacher as well, and became head of schools in Belleville. In 1862 he married Miss Ellen Terrill, of Wooler, Ontario, by whom he had five children.

In 1872, a naturalist of some repute, he had the opportunity to join Sandford Fleming in his survey for the route of the Canadian Pacific. With him he crossed the plains and mountains to the Pacific. In 1874 he became Professor of Botany and Geology at Alberta College, Belleville, but the life of travel was clearly too strong. By 1875 he was with the Geological and Natural History Survey, crossing the continent again with Selwyn. His report was published in 1877.

Further visits to the prairies between 1879 and 1881 led him to publish in the following year his book 'Manitoba and the Great North West', which, with his enthusiastic lectures and reports to parliament, played an important role in the opening up of the west to settlers.

By 1882 he had left Alberta College for Ottawa, as Botanist to the Dominion Government and in 1887 became Assistant Director and Naturalist, a post which he held until his death. Until 1911 he travelled extensively, building up major collections.

He 'retired' to the coast in 1912; a partial paralysis scarcely delayed his departure, or (after he had learned to write with his left hand), slowed his writings. Heart trouble in 1920 led to his death.

With his eldest son James, John Macoun collected a herbarium of 100,000 specimens for the National Museum, as well as several thousand birds, about two thousand mammals, and many fish and invertebrates. After he had collected most of Canada's flowering plants, he turned his attention to mosses, and was actively studying the mosses and fungi of British Columbia until just before he died.

He was a member of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club from 1879, and its President in 1886-87. He was also a Charter Member of the Royal Society of Canada, an associate of the American Ornithologists' Union, a Fellow of the Linnean Society, and a Charter Member of the

American Society of Mammalogists. He received an M.A. from Syracuse University.

Publications (some with his son) included the Catalogue of Canadian Plants (1883-1902) and of Birds (1900-1909) and a textbook of Elementary Botany.

At his death he left manuscripts on the Flora of Ottawa, Nova Scotia and Vancouver Island, and an almost completed autobiography which was later published.

John Macoun has been commemorated by the town of Macoun, Saskatchewan, and has also had fourteen flowering plants, fourteen mosses, two lichens, five hepatics, a starfish, two molluscs, a butterfly and a fish named after him.

He is remembered as of retentive memory and keen repartee, and had great enthusiasm, honesty and sympathy. He was a Presbyterian.

### Portrait

Canadian Field-Naturalist. 34:111

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Gibson, A. F.T. Shutt and W.T. Macoun. 1922. Autobiography of the late Prof. John Macoun. Canadian Field-Naturalist 36:39-40.

M(acoun), W.T. 1920. Obituary. John Macoun, 1831-1920. Canadian Field-Naturalist 34:110-114.

### Publications (Alberta relevance only)

1877. Geological and Topographical Notes on the Lower Peace and Athabasca Rivers. Geological Survey of Canada, Report of Progress for 1875-76. 87-95.

1877. Report on the Botanical features of the country traversed from Vancouver Island to Carleton, on the Saskatchewan. Geological Survey of Canada, Report of Progress for 1875-76. 110-132.

1882. Manitoba and the great North-west. World Publishing Co., Ontario.

1883-1902. Catalogue of Canadian plants. Dawson Bros., Montreal.

1909. Catalogue of Canadian Birds. Canada Dept. of Mines, Geological Survey Branch. viii + 761 + xviii.

1922. Autobiography of John Macoun, M.A., Canadian explorer and naturalist, Assistant Director and naturalist to the Geological Survey of Canada, 1831-1920. Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club. 305 + vi.

### RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ALBERTA (6)

Bird, C.D. A New Catalogue of the Bryophytes Reported from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Dept. of Biology, Univ. of Calgary, Calgary.

Edwards, Barry. 1973. A Nesting Study of a Small Population of Prairie Falcons in Southern Alberta. Canadian Field-Naturalist. 87(3): 322.



- Griffiths, D.E. 1973. Yellow-billed Loon on Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta: A New Record. Canadian Field-Naturalist. 87(2): 182.
- Kondla, N. and B. Danielson. 1973. Nesting of the Common Raven in Southwestern Alberta. Calgary Field Naturalist. 5(2): 62-63.
- Kondla, N.G. and H.W. Pinel. 1973. Breeding Records of 19 Species of Birds in Southern Alberta. Blue Jay. 31(3): 153-157.
- Leskó, G.L. New Data on the Distribution of the Moss Splachnum rubrum in Alberta. Canadian Field-Naturalist. 87(3): 304.
- Lister, Robert. Unusual Winter Movements of Common Ravens and Clark's Nutcrackers. Canadian Field-Naturalist. 87(3): 325.
- Lister, Robert. Northern Records of the Mockingbird in Alberta. Canadian Field-Naturalist. 87(3): 324.
- Owens, R.A. and M.T. Myres. 1973. Effects of Agriculture Upon Populations of Native Passerine Birds of an Alberta Fescue Grassland. Canadian Journal of Zoology. 51(7): 697-713.
- Palindat, R., V. Lang and D.V. Weseloh. First Authenticated Record of the Western Sandpiper for Alberta. Canadian Field-Naturalist. 87(3): 315.
- Scholefield, P. 1973. Grylloblatta - A Link with the Past. Calgary Field Naturalist. 5(3): 99-103.
- Vick, R.H. 1973. To Find Alberta's Prickly Rose. Blue Jay. 31(3): 182-3.
- Vick, R. 1973. Forty Birds Attracted to Gardens of Central Alberta by Fruiting Trees and Shrubs. The Edmonton Naturalist. February, 1973: 5.

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CLUB CORNER (5): Study Nights

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For those clubs who are looking for winter activities to supplement general meetings and field trips, this may give you some ideas. The Calgary club conducts a series of Study/Identification Nights during the winter months. Their study nights are designed to stimulate interest and instruct members where or how to learn more about a particular aspect of natural history.

Generally, a society member (not necessarily a 'professional'), who is particularly knowledgeable or skilled in a given area is asked to give a sixty to ninety-minute presentation. Frequently, slides, collections or displays are utilized. Some of the programs presented by CFNS members during the last two years have been: identifying insects, animal tracks, nature photography, lichens, Australian gemstones, spring flowers, arctic flora, bird migration and mushrooms.

A program of study nights can be designed to suit your club's needs. If you are blessed with a large junior membership, they could be aimed at, and perhaps even presented by, young members. If your

club's activities are 'bird-heavy', your study nights could feature botany, herpetology, et cetera, to balance your program.

Study nights are an excellent way to utilize your pool of amateur talent, to provide a diverse program, and to encourage involvement by more members in your club's programs.

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Many of our member clubs have activities and programs, such as CFNS study/identification nights, which might be useful to other clubs in planning their activities. We would welcome reports for CLUB CORNER.

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#### NOTES AND NEWS

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##### Plant Phenology Study

There has been a gratifying response on the part of many individuals to the FAN project involving the gathering of phenological data in the form of the dates of blooming of Alberta flowering plants. This response was particularly good during the spring, but tapered off and only a few individuals have been providing substantial summer and fall data.

We have had essentially no observations from the Peace River Country and from the northern and east-central parts of the province. We need more observers, especially from these areas.

All observations have been published to date in the Calgary Field Naturalist and a summary article will appear sometime this winter in the Alberta Naturalist.

Due to (1) the time involved in recording observations because of the large number of species involved, (2) problems involved with the determination of difficult groups, and (3) shortage of publication space, it has been decided to somewhat simplify and abbreviate the project. This will be done by drawing up a master list of about 100 key species of which observations will be particularly invited and on which data will be published. These species will be chosen so that (1) weeds are avoided, (2) they are representative of all seasons, and (3) are all relatively easy to identify. Observations on other species would, of course, still be welcomed.

The success of this project depends upon yearly observations and it is hoped that the response will be even better next year.

##### Red-winged Snowy Owls??

If you see one, don't have your eyes tested or take the oath! Ross Lein has begun a program of banding and colour-marking of Snowy Owls in the Calgary area. The owls are individually marked with two or three colours (red, yellow, green) in two or more of five locations on the body (wing tips, bend of wing, tip of tail, back of neck, and upper breast). Sightings of these birds will indicate the extent of local movements by winter birds and demonstrate whether the birds are truly winter residents or merely moving through the area.

If you see a colour-marked owl, record the date and the

precise location of the sighting, and the details of the markings (colour and position). Contact Dr. Lein, Department of Biology, University of Calgary, Calgary, T2N 1N4. Please make a special effort to check all Snowy Owls you see for colour markings.

#### Saskatchewan Bald Eagle Banding Program

Last summer a colour-marking program, to study migratory and local movements of Bald Eagles, was initiated in northern Saskatchewan. Patagial wing markers, in red, green and yellow were put on nestlings. Should you observe any of these wing-marked immature eagles (they do not get their white head and tail until their fourth or fifth year), please note what colour is on each wing, location of the sighting (as exact as possible), and the date. Send, with your name and address, to Doug Whitfield, Botany Department, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

#### Information on Bird Feeders Requested

Scott O'Keeffe, a CFNS Bird Study Group member, is compiling a booklet about maintaining successful bird feeders in southern Alberta. If you have or know anyone who has a successful bird feeder in the Red Deer area and points south, please advise Scott, 3607 Utah Drive SW, Calgary.

#### Recent Alberta Wilderness Association Publications

The following booklets are now available from the Alberta Wilderness Association, Box 6398, Stn. D, Calgary, T2P 2E1:

- "Elbow-Sheep Headwaters", 570 square miles, 42 pages, 16 maps, illustrated. \$2.00.
- "9 Wildland Recreation Areas" on Alberta's east slopes. Approx. 100 pages, 50 maps, trail guide. Illustrated. \$3.00.
- "Willmore Wilderness Park", 1800 square miles north of Jasper, approx. 45 pages, 6 maps, trail guide. Illustrated. \$2.00.

#### New Magazine: Ecology Canada

The FAN library has received a copy of the maiden issue of this new magazine. The articles, although very simplistic, are rather interesting, the photography artful - a very slick production. \$1.00 per issue, published monthly by The Earth City Foundation, a non-profit, Federally-chartered environmental research, education and design institute. May be of interest to some members.

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#### OVERHEAD (35)

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The courageous efforts of some biology teachers to use live specimens were discouraged by inefficient ventilation systems.

Alberta Department of Education  
1965 Annual Report