

# *The Lady's-slipper*



*Spring 1986*

*Vol. 3, No. 1*

THE LADY'S-SLIPPER

*The lady's-slipper is the official newsletter of the MacNamara Field Naturalists' Club, P. O. Box 94, Arnprior, Ontario, Canada, K7S 3H2.*

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NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION

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Illustrations: Donnie Gordon & Leslie Cross

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MEMBERSHIP SURVEY 1986

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_

Fields of Interest:

*(Please indicate by checking the boxes)*

Birds

Botany (wild flowers, orchids, ferns, trees, shrubs, etc.)

Mushrooms

Insects (butterflies, etc.)

Geology (minerals, fossils, etc.)

Mammals

Reptiles and amphibians

Nature photography

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

If you are knowledgeable in one or more of these areas, would you be prepared to contribute to the club by being a guest speaker or by leading a field trip? Yes      No

Would you like to see the club arrange other types of activities or embark on other projects? If so, please comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Please send your comments to the M.F.N.C. or hand them in to a member of the executive at an upcoming monthly meeting.)*



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#### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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*by Michael W.P. Runtz*

Already much of the blazing carpet of spring wildflowers that rapidly emerged from the leaf litter under the flood of warm spring sunlight has withered and vanished. Leaves of trees are now unfolding, casting deep shadows onto the once-illuminated floor. With the leaves a burst of insect activity has arisen, enticing multitudes of small birds back from southern wintering grounds.

Spring, indeed, is an exhilarating time of year. Once silent woods are filled with the hollow thuds of drumming Ruffed Grouse, the bubbling trills of Winter Wrens, and the melancholy whistles of White-throated Sparrows. At night, wetlands resound with the shrill peeps of Spring Peepers, the croaks of Chorus and Leopard Frogs, and the trills of Toads. Spring is, indeed, synonymous with life!

One sign of spring to which many of us look forward is the return of Peregrine Falcons to the St. John Chrysostom Church. In 1983 Arnprior made history with the first provincial nesting of Peregrines since 1963. Tragedy clouded this event, for the female was fatally shot and the young mysteriously vanished. For the last two summers the male has returned alone to roost on the bell tower. Last year two

immature females, provided by the Canadian Wildlife Service, were successfully 'hacked' by members of the club. Will they return this year? So far they haven't, but on April 26 Donnie Gordon spotted a Peregrine chasing a Kestrel near the airport. Abandoning the elusive prey, the Peregrine settled for an easier meal in a Meadowlark, which it snatched off the ground. It dined on this feast atop a telephone post right at the junction of the White Lake road and busy Highway #17. I wonder how many people drove by that day, oblivious to the rare spectacle beside them?

Judging by the bird's large size, it was probably a female, but no leg band could be discerned. Was it one of last year's hacked birds with its bands hidden by feathers, or was it a wild bird just passing through, or even more imaginatively was it one of the young from 1983? Unfortunately, we'll never know the answer, but it is exciting to have one of these noble birds visit Arnprior - even if briefly.

The involvement of the Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club in important issues, such as the re-introduction of Peregrine Falcons, is an accomplishment of which all members should be proud. We hope that this programme will continue with the club's support, and we can dream of future nestings from these released birds. Hopefully this summer we will be able to appreciate the elegance and beauty of these magnificent birds in the Arnprior area.

*Good Naturalizing!*

*Michael W.P. Runtz*

## ELDERBERRIES IN THE OTTAWA VALLEY

by Adolf Wogg

Two species of elderberries grow in Ontario: *Sambucus pubens* Michx., the red-berried elder, and *Sambucus canadensis* L., the common elder. Both can be found in the Ottawa Valley.

For years I observed the red-berried elder and on occasion tasted its berries, only to discover that they are not what one would consider palatable. Remembering the delicious black elderberries I enjoyed as a child in my native Europe, I often thought of asking relatives to send me seeds so I could cultivate a crop here. Sharing these thoughts with a friend one day, he claimed that "black" as well as "red" elderberries grow in the Ottawa Valley. That, of course, prompted a diligent search of literature on elderberries. I learned that the common elder (*Sambucus canadensis* L.), also known as the American elder, does indeed grow in our area. Despite its "common" name, this shrub is locally uncommon. It is a relative of the species I knew and enjoyed so much in Europe, the black elder, or *Sambucus nigra* L.

The following spring and summer the search was on. The common elder, with its luscious purple-black berries, makes delicious pies, jam, jelly, preserves, wine, and fritters from the blossoms. If you desire more information about elderberry recipes consult Euell Gibbons' *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*. To collect the fruit successfully, however, you will have to be faster than the robins or the 49 other bird species that make elderberries a part of their diet.

The common elder flowers in July with white, flat-topped, terminal cymes and the fruit ripens in September. The shrub's height averages about 2m and the woody stems have a large white pith. Commonly the compound leaves consist of seven leaflets. It grows in wet areas along streambeds or swamps. Over the years I have found eight stations within 50km of Arnprior, Ontario, ranging from Kanata to Waba to Glasgow Station.

The red-berried elder also flowers white in elongate, pyramidal clusters. However, the flowering time is in May and June. Bunches of bright red berries decorate the shrub in July when the common elder has just begun to bloom. This shrub's average height is 3m and the stems contain a brown pith. It grows in dry, semi-open habitat and is quite common in our area.

The following is a list of differences between the two species:

	<u>Red-berried Elder</u>	<u>Common Elder</u>
Height:	average 3m	average 2m
Leaves:	mostly 5 leaflets	mostly 7 leaflets
Pith:	brown	white
Habitat:	dry; semi-open	wet; open
Fruit:	bright red	purplish black
Flowers:	white, pyramidal, terminal cluster	white, flat-topped, terminal cyme
Flowering time:	May-June	July
Fruiting time:	July	September

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Bibliography

Euler, David: *Shrubs for Wildlife* (M.N.R. pamphlet)  
Gibbons, Euell: *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*  
Soper, James and Heimburger, Margaret: *Shrubs of Ontario*



## THE MACNAMARA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB:

*Not just for the 'older' folks*

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*by Cathy Koot*

The naturalists' club does a lot for its young members. As one of these, I have found that over the past two years I have learned a great deal about the natural world around me. Everybody in the club has so much to offer and share, and all are willing to point out things to the younger members.

I love to learn in the field and with those who have the experience to teach me. Our naturalists' club provides this expertise. There are so many fields to learn about and so many people to tell about them. When the club started I was pretty well interested only in one field: mammals. Now the range has broadened, and I've gotten into bird watching, rock collecting, tracking animals, and many of the fields explored. I value the experience I've had.

I look forward to the field trips as an opportunity to learn; to get to places where I'd otherwise not go and see and, overall, to have fun. I'm glad to know others who share my interests in nature. I value and benefit from their knowledge. I think our club is a great opportunity for the youth, and I am glad I can participate in the preservation of our natural world.

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*(Editor's Note: We would be glad to hear from the other younger members of the club. What are you interested in? What have you learned by being a member?)*



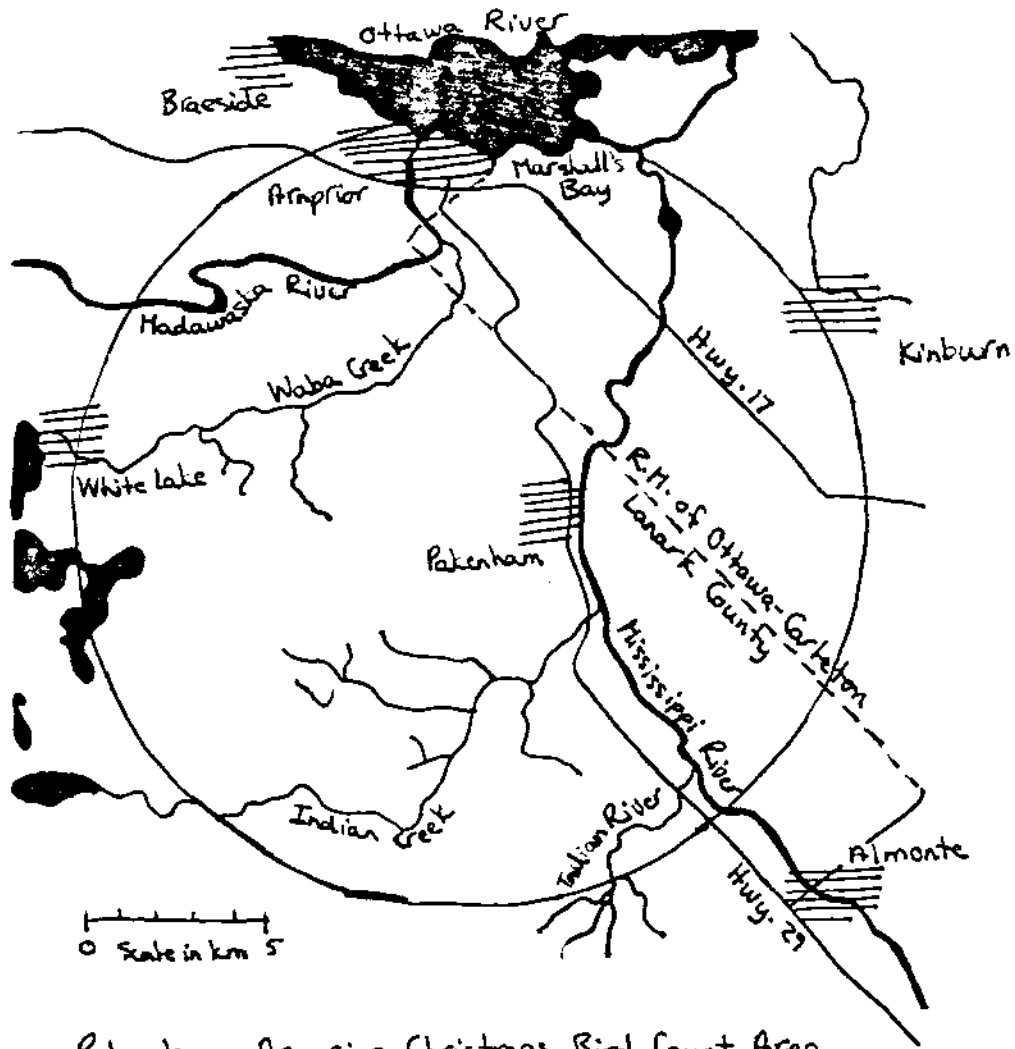
MACNAMARA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB  
 STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS  
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1985

<u>RECEIPTS</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1984</u>
Memberships	683.50	567.00
Name tags	0.00	34.73
Interest	14.26	5.05
Birdathon	466.50	0.00
Donations	25.00	0.00
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	1,189.26	606.78
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
Bulletin		
Photocopy	94.25	
Postage	195.90	204.75
Newsletter		
Photocopy	186.00	
Postage	41.76	171.02
Post Office Box	0.00	11.31
Coffee and donuts	0.00	16.92
Receipt book	0.00	3.48
Other photocopy	2.08	22.88
Memorial	0.00	25.00
Insurance	240.00	0.00
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	759.99	455.36
	<hr/>	<hr/>
EXCESS OF RECEIPTS OVER DISBURSEMENTS	429.27	151.42
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Made up of		
Opening balance	(151.42)	0.00
Closing bank balance	594.69	477.00
Owing for name tags	0.00	(8.08)
Advance memberships received	(14.00)	(317.50)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	429.27	151.42
	<hr/>	<hr/>

THE PAKENHAM-ARNPRIOR CHRISTMAS

BIRD COUNT

by Michael W.P. Runtz



Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Bird Count Area

Christmas Bird Counts, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, have a long history in North America. These bird counts, held in the two-week period embracing Christmas, are an attempt to census winter bird populations throughout the continent. Each individual count covers the area of a 7.5-mile radius circle, and all birds that can be located either visually or audibly in a one-day tally are recorded. Participants, usually in parties of two or three, cover a specific portion of the count area, and they often start before dawn in order to catch any owls that might be calling.

Although the Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Bird Census is a fairly recent title among the almost countless censuses performed each year, the original counts from which it derives its name both go back over many years. In fact, the Arnprior and Pakenham counts were two of the first to spring up in Canada! It is particularly amazing that two counts could take place in such small communities separated by a mere 12km, each manned often by only two or three people loyal only to the count in their own community.

The Arnprior Christmas Bird Count was the first to appear, originating in 1913. Charles Macnamara and Liguori Gormley faithfully traversed the same route along the south shore of the Ottawa River year after year. Gormley would travel west from Arnprior as far as Braeside, then would head south in a loop back to town. Macnamara would wander east through the area which later came to be called the Nopiming Game Preserve, as far as Marshall's Bay. They would usually travel on snowshoes, although the rare mild winter permitted less cumbersome footwear to be worn. One such season occurred in 1923-'24: Macnamara found dandelions in blossom on Christmas Day!

In 1925 Charles Macnamara published in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* a summary of the first 12 counts. His reference to the 1924 census provides us with the first hint of group competitiveness in this count: "Liguori, being a better ornithologist than I, nearly always contributes the best finds. So when we met in the evening to compile our lists, I announced my American Three-toed Woodpecker with a flourish of pride. Alas! he countered with the unique record of two Waxwings, which he said might be Bohemian!"

These early records provide us with a valuable insight into the bird populations of years gone by. In 1925 Macnamara wrote in reference to the newly-arrived Starling: "As yet the birds (starlings) are relatively few and have attracted no public attention. But these are probably only the first trickles of the flood, and in a few years may be as familiar in this part of the country, and as little welcome, as the English Sparrow." An accurate prediction indeed!

Macnamara and Gormley, the only participants of the Arnprior Christmas Bird Count, recorded an admirable 42 species between 1913 and 1939. Counts were apparently not

taken in the years 1928, 1930, 1931, and 1933.

The Pakenham Christmas Bird Census was first taken on December 23, 1925, and, like the Arnprior Count, had only two participants. The late Edna G. Ross and her brother, the late Allan F. Ross started off this historic count, which for many years to come was to be a family affair. Their sister, Verna Ross (McGiffin) first joined the count in 1926 and is still participating to date! One more of the clan, Wilmer Ross, increased the roster (or should it be Ross-ter?) to four in 1931 and is still participating also.

But it was Edna who was the real backbone of the count. She was the count compiler for an outstanding 46 years. During this time she missed only two censuses: 1965 due to her being abroad and 1957 due to illness. It must have been most gratifying for Edna Ross to have seen this count, which she started, grown from just two observers in 1925 to a total of 14 observers in 1972 (the last year she participated) and to have seen the list of species reported climb from 7 to 26 species. Edna not only sustained the count through its early years, but she also created an awareness and appreciation of birds in her community. She did much to encourage new recruits to join the count and to create an interest in youngsters (like myself years ago) to return each year.

The Pakenham group received some assistance from an Arnprior contingent in 1965. I remember this count particularly well as it was my first bird count and I was about 12 years old. It was so incredibly exciting, arising at an early hour (although not really so by today's standards) to meet in front of the local newspaper offices. The late Mr. G.S. (Bud) Levy (alias "Hawkeye" to the readers of his column in *The Arnprior Guide*) headed this group. His wife, Peg, Mrs John Gillies, D. Caldwell, and I completed the crew. Off we headed to the mysterious wilds of the White Lake Mountains where I unforgettably discovered the most exciting bird of my life up to that time - a Pileated Woodpecker! Another find a short while later was to remain always locked in my memory - a beautiful Red-breasted Nuthatch climbing about on a snow-covered rock. From that moment on, I knew I would never miss another Christmas Count as long as I could lift a pair of binoculars!

As the area of the Pakenham Count extended to the edge of Arnprior, the Arnprior group covered the section from Arnprior south to White Lake and east towards Pakenham. Each year the Arnprior group became more involved with the count, until finally the group decided to request that the Count circle be shifted to the west to include more of the area adjacent to the Madawaska River, allowing more home coverage. In 1970 the centre of the 7.5-mile circle was shifted to 45 20' N, 76 20' W. At this time the count name was also changed to the current "Pakenham-Arnprior" title.

The Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Bird Census not only underwent several area and name changes over the years, but also experienced changes in other aspects. One of the major changes, and one that probably had the greatest impact on the count, was the improvement of transportation. Macnamara and Gormley operated strictly on foot, while the Rosses introduced a novel form in 1926: "observers drove together

PAKENHAM-ARNPRIOR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

DECEMBER 26, 1985

<u>WOOD DUCK</u>	1	(3rd COUNT)
<u>MALLARD</u>	1	
COMMON MERGANSER	1	
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	2	
NORTHERN GOSHAWK	2	
RED-TAILED HAWK	7	
AMERICAN KESTREL	2	
GRAY PARTRIDGE	51	
RUFFED GROUSE	45	
ROCK DOVE	874	(RECORD)
MOURNING DOVE	12	
GREAT HORNED OWL	13	(RECORD)
SNOWY OWL	5	(RECORD)
DOWNY WOODPECKER	90	(RECORD)
HAIRY WOODPECKER	82	(RECORD)
THREE-TOED WOODPECKER	2	
BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER	6	(RECORD)
PILEATED WOODPECKER	11	
HORNED LARK	169	(RECORD)
BLUE JAY	409	
AMERICAN CROW	117	(RECORD)
COMMON RAVEN	9	
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	709	
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	21	
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	76	
BROWN CREEPER	12	
<u>CAROLINA WREN</u>	1	(2nd COUNT, TIES RECORD)
<u>GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET</u>	23	
AMERICAN ROBIN	1	
NORTHERN SHRIKE	13	(RECORD)
BOHEMIAN WAXWING	867	(RECORD)
CEDAR WAXWING	1	
EUROPEAN STARLING	360	
NORTHERN CARDINAL	1	
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	107	
DARK-EYED JUNCO	20	
LAPLAND LONGSPUR	1	
SNOW BUNTING	1,374	
PINE GROSBEAK	189	
COMMON REDPOLL	820	
PINE SISKIN	1	
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	107	
EVENING GROSBEAK	669	
HOUSE SPARROW	2,011	(RECORD)

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44 SPECIES - 9,295 INDIVIDUALS

COUNT PERIOD: COMMON GOLDENEYE, GOLDEN EAGLE (NEW SPECIES)

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS: 36

6 miles with horse and cutter." I am sure that this form of horsepower was considerably more dependable in cold weather than the type we often struggle with today. Skis were first recorded in 1935, and the automobile appeared on the scene in 1937. This latter form of transportation was rather limited in use initially due to lack of road maintenance. "It was the advent of school buses in the area that dramatically changed the winter conditions for bird watchers. After their introduction, roads had to be kept open so that children might be driven daily to schools far removed from their homes. Now the Count observers were able to reach choice birding areas quickly by car, or could travel for miles through the country in comfort, searching the open fields and roadways." (McGiffin 1978). And, of course, improved optical equipment and knowledge of birds all contributed to the success of the count as the years passed.

The Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Bird Census has continued to grow and improve yearly. Our most successful count was held in 1981 when 34 participants tallied 50 species (8,933 individual birds). Since its conception, a total of 83 species have been seen on the count, and another 9 during the count period (three days either side of the count).

The count is an annual highlight for many of the participants. If you would like to take part in this year's count, held on Boxing Day, please feel welcome. (On the following page there is a summary of last year's (1985) count.)

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*The majority of the contents of this article - excluding the results of the 1985 Census - was previously published in Trail & Landscape, Vol. 15, No. 5 (Nov-Dec 1981). It is reproduced here with the permission of the publisher.*

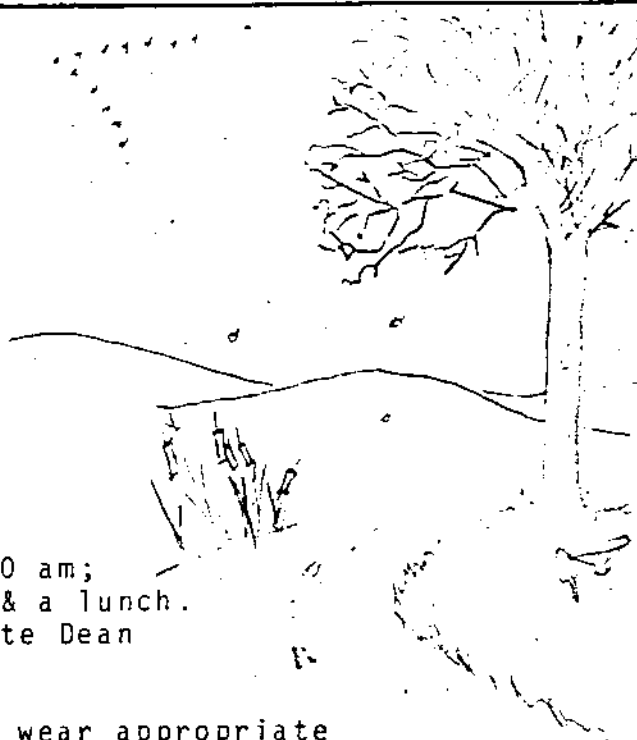
*- Editor*

## CALENDAR

OF

EVENTS

*By Donnie Gordon*

- 
- MAY 11 - BIRD BANDING: 8:30 am; bring binoculars & a lunch. Leader is Jeannette Dean (728-0695).
- MAY 25 - GEOLOGY: 8:30 am; wear appropriate clothing; bring insect spray & binoculars. Leader is Jack Gill (623-4098).
- JUNE 7 - ORCHIDS: 9:00 am; bring rubber boots, insect spray, camera, and lunch. Leader is Adolf Vogg (623-2575).
- JUNE 14 - SNAKES & TURTLES: 10:00 am; bring binoculars and lunch. Leader is Mike Rankin (996-1755).
- JUNE 28 - CANOE TRIP: 7:30 am; trip is for 3 days. Leader is Kevin MacDonald (623-7006).
- JULY 12 - ORCHIDS: 9:00 am; bring rubber boots, insect spray, and lunch. Leader is Adolf Vogg (623-2575).
- JULY 20 - BUTTERFLIES: 7:30 am; bring a net if possible. Leader is Peter Hall (995-8963).
- AUG. 23 - SHOREBIRDS: 7:30 am; bring binoculars. Leader is Eric Ridgen (623-5185).
- SEPT. 6 - MUSHROOMS: 9:00 am. Leader is Dr. Morgan-Jones.
- SEPT. 14 - FALL CANOE TRIP: 9:00 am; bring lunch and a life jacket.
- SEPT. 20 - ANNUAL PICNIC: 1:00 pm.
- OCT. 9 - ASTRONOMY: 6:30 pm; bring binoculars. Leader is Mary Grey (991-3077). (Note: A lecture and film will be given prior to the viewing; if the evening is overcast, the lecture and film will still go ahead.)
- OCT. 11 - WATERFOWL: 8:00 am. Leader is Michael Runtz (623-6975).

NOVEMBER - Not yet determined.

DEC.14 - PRE-BIRD COUNT: 8:00 am; bring binoculars and dress warmly. Leader is Michael Runtz (623-6975).

DEC.26 - BIRD COUNT: Compiler is Michael Runtz (623-6975).

(Note: For a complete description of the Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Bird Census, turn to the article on the subject, located in this issue of *The Lady's-slipper*.)

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The above events may be subject to change. Be sure to watch the regular bulletins or confirm with a member of the club's executive committee.

- Editor



2ND ANNUAL BIRD-A-THON



FOR THE FIRST TIME LAST YEAR THE MACNAMARA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB OF ARNPRIOR HELD A BIRD-A-THON. THIS EVENT, TO BE AN ANNUAL FUNCTION, IS A MEANS FOR THE CLUB TO RAISE FUNDS, WHICH ARE USED TO HELP DEFRAY EXPENSES AND TO PUBLICIZE THE CLUB'S ACTIVITIES.

THE FIRST ANNUAL BIRD-A-THON WAS EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL. THIS YEAR, THE EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE ON ONE DAY DURING THE WEEKEND OF MAY 17. CLUB PRESIDENT MICHAEL RUNTZ WILL BE THE FELLOW OUT TRYING TO CHALK UP AS MANY BIRDS FOR THE DAY.

SPONSORS ARE, NATURALLY, A NECESSARY INGREDIENT. PLEASE FILL OUT THE SPONSOR SHEET PROVIDED HERE AND HAND IT IN TO A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT (AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR MIKE).

BIRD-A-THON

NAME OF SPONSOR	ADDRESS	AMOUNT PER BIRD SPECIES

(NOTE: MICHAEL EXPECTS TO SEE 120 SPECIES.)



I WONDER  
WHY NO ONE  
EVER COMES  
CANOEING HERE?