

# *The Lady's-Slipper*



*Spring 1994*  
*Volume 11, #1*



### *DID YOU KNOW?*

- the hummingbird is the only kind of bird that can fly backwards
  - relative to its size, a sparrow has a larger brain than a man
  - in one hour, an oak tree can lose 4,500 litres of water vapour through its leaves
  - there are 14,000 different types of moss
  - humans use only about four percent of the plants growing on Earth
  - in seven seconds a wren can sing 130 different notes
  - an American redwood tree can grow 110 metres (362 feet) high
  - a Peregrine Falcon can spot a pigeon at a distance of 8 kilometres (5 miles)
  - snails can sleep for three years without waking up
  - an acre of grassland can hold three million earthworms and two million spiders
  - mosquitoes prefer biting fair-haired people
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### **Discounts for Macnamara Members**

By showing your membership card, you are entitled to:

- 10% discount on birdseed at M&R Feeds & Farm Supply, 70 Decosta St., Arnprior
- 15% discount on any book at R&R Books, Arnprior Mall
- 20% discount on 5 or more books of the same title at The Arnprior Book Shop, 152 John St. N., Arnprior

# PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

by Michael W.P. Runtz

Well here we are, ten years later! Who could have predicted back in 1984 that the inaugural meeting of the Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club would draw 75 people and that a decade later the club would still be thriving?

Certainly the small group who gave birth to the Club had hopes that there would be enough interest in this community to sustain a naturalist club of some form. Back on January 3rd 1984, Verna McGiffin, Eric Ridgen, Sloan Watters, Kevin MacDonald, Adolf Vogg and myself met to discuss the possibility of forming such a group. I thought it might be of interest to include a few excerpts from the minutes of that initial meeting to illuminate some of the history of this celebrated club.

"The meeting was called to order at 1950 hours (Jan. 3, 1984) at the apartment of Mike Runtz.

The first meeting was a discussion as to whether a naturalist club would work in Arnprior. The feeling was a unanimous YES! This enterprising group got down to business and decided to form a steering committee for the formation of such a club.

The name chosen was the Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club, because Charles Macnamara was the first naturalist of renown from this area. By using his name, and not Arnprior solely, an impression of the club being for people all through this area and not Arnprior solely, would arise. Also, *Field Naturalists'* implies activity in the field, which is definitely one of the aims of this club."

Thus, the initial spark of an idea was fanned into a blaze of activity. During several more planning meetings into which input from such distinguished individuals as Dr. W.J. (Bill) Crins was graciously given, the first public meeting of the Club was planned. After an intensive advertising

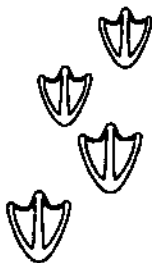
blitz, the first meeting was held in the Arnprior High School teachers' lounge on Tuesday March 6, 1984. Interesting exhibits of local flora, fauna and minerals were displayed. I gave a slide presentation on local flora and fauna. The response from those in attendance was overwhelming! As the bold headline in the *Chronicle* correctly stated, "Naturalist club is off to a great start."

Since that nervous step forward in 1984, the Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club has stridden into 1984 with a strong and dedicated membership. Our monthly meetings continue to outdraw those of other naturalist groups including the long-established and revered Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club. Our varied field trips continue to satisfy a diverse array of interests. The Club has indeed been a resounding success and will undoubtedly continue to be so for many years to come.

Why this great success? Is it because the Club has a record of acquiring outstanding speakers such as Dr. Brock Fenton (the Bat Man)? Is it because our field trips are led by experts in their fields such as Dr. Don Lafontaine (Lepidopterist extraordinaire)? Is it because we live in an area superbly blessed with a diverse landscape and therefore rich flora and fauna?

Undoubtedly each of these features contributes in some fashion to the Club's overall success. However, without question the most important factor lies within the membership itself. The wealth of talented, devoted and personable individuals who so willingly share their hard-earned knowledge and time with anyone interested is, to me, the real reason for this club's vitality. We are genuinely blessed to have gifted and generous members like Adolf Vogg, Eric Ridgen, Sloan Watters, Jack Gill, Sheila and Harry Thomson, Donna Metcalfe, Phil Poole, Howard Wickett — I should continue on but I am afraid that the list of names would fill this page and the next, for each and every one of our members contributes in his or her own special way to the success of the club.

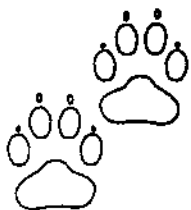
It is unfortunate that Charles Macnamara, the great individual after whom the Club is



named, could not have been here to share in our ventures. Charles lived in Arnprior from 1880 to 1944 and worked for the McLaughlin Bros. Lumber Company. His only day off each week was spent exploring areas all through this region. He had a particular interest in the tract of land bordering the Ottawa River between the Madawaska and Mississippi Rivers and spent much of his time studying its natural history. Due to his efforts, this stretch became the Nopiming Game Sanctuary in 1920. The areas he discovered and explored were meticulously documented in his photographs and diaries and paved the way for myself and other naturalists to follow.

Charles Macnamara may not be here in person but his spirit lives in each and every one of us. Every time we marvel at the perfection in a Showy Orchis bloom, Charles is there. Every time we feel the tiny claws of a friendly Chickadee tickle our hands, Charles smiles along with us. Every time we frame a blazing sunrise over a misty lake, Charles trips the shutter. The naturalist soul that Charles Macnamara possessed is also shared by each and every one of us. Curiosity, marvel and delight in natural phenomenon is the common bond that all field naturalists past and present share. It is this unbreakable bond that

keeps the Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club strong. May we all continue to enjoy and appreciate our natural heritage for many years ahead, and may the Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club live on for all decades to come!




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*Michael W.P. Runtz  
President  
Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club  
2 May 1994*




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*This is a self-portrait of Charles Macnamara which he entitled "The Bird-Census Taker's Christmas Dinner 1925".*

## Outings with Adolf Vogg

*by Donna M.A. Metcalfe*

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**H**e stands on a rock by the water's edge. Ever prepared for a field outing, Adolf has on his wellingtons, a treasured tilley hat, binoculars and carries a well-equipped green rusk sack. With a gleam of excitement in his eyes, he glances through a well-thumbed field guide. "Watch your step and look carefully around," he says. "What we are looking for is in this location."

So begins one of many exciting evenings. A peek at the White Lake Fen, a place of busy self-absorption; to the White Lake Mountains, with its ancient shorelines; to Marshall's Bay and the alvars, with their rare flora; to a gravel pit, with fossils from the last Ice Age — we have certainly enjoyed many an enchanted evening. And we hope they continue.

# A "SUNNY" DAY

by Donna M.A. Metcalfe

We have enjoyed many wild and wonderful outings with the club. Some are more special to each of us for different reasons. This particular one is memorable for me.

A dear friend and club member Phil Poole has Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. It was a desire of his to revisit Conroy Marsh. We had gone on a canoe trip there the year before and were in awe of this huge watery garden, with its magical beauty in mist and sunlight.

Phil was not able to walk alone at this point. He had to be lifted in and out of the boat. But the desire was there, and kindred spirits were more than willing to share again some of those magical moments.

We decided to go a week ahead of the field trip and scout for the best areas to go canoeing.

Phil and Sheilagh, Dean Bowes and I set off from Quiet Place Camp, which is on Little Mississippi River. The marsh's shallowness encourages rampant growth and shorelines are some distance from the water's edge. The only accessible areas are the rivers at the ends of the marsh. We boated down to Mayhew, a town at the other end of the marsh. (Some of us were to later refer to it as Mahem.)

The two-hour leisure tour down was spectacular. The Opeongo Mountains, shimmering pale violet in the morning sky, surrounded the slumbering watery haven. The sweet and welcoming breezes were laden with the fragrance of thousands of white water lilies.

The bright sunny sky was dotted with a few puffy white clouds, which became increasingly dark. I pulled out my little black umbrella, opened it up, put it over my head and jokingly said, "Okay, you guys, just remember whose umbrella this belongs to when it begins to rain" and "Doesn't this just remind you of the famous movie *African Queen*?"

The umbrella was, in fact, little bigger than the brim of my Tilley hat (I do have some foolish moments). Comments were made about the superstitions of opening up umbrellas on sunny days and of the absurdity of it raining on such a gorgeous day. Anyway, we went on our way.

Phil expertly manoeuvred the boat over the waves of passing boaters. They seemed to be in quite a hurry ...

Within a short time, the situation changed drastically. Raindrops began to splatter, in seconds becoming a torrential downpour. Distant shorelines not only disappeared but so did the water lily pads in front of the boat. The lightning ripped and tore around the mountain tops, and the thunder boomed, echoing and re-echoing around the valley and creating a terrible din.

We were soaked to the skin within moments. The pelting rain stung, and I waited for a hail storm to begin. Can you imagine being in an aluminum boat with ice pellets bouncing off it and thunder and lightning performing at its best? Thank goodness, we were not to have had the pleasure.

It was decided that Phil should have the umbrella because he was the one steering the boat. Dean held it over his head, switching arms as the need arose. I had a foil survival sheet with my equipment, and Sheilagh wrapped it around Phil's legs. He felt much warmer within moments.

As quickly as it came up, the storm abated and the sun shone intermittently. By this time we were at Burnt Bridge, and several eager boaters were setting off up the marsh. We passed under the bridge and around the bend of the Little Mississippi River when it started to rain again.

For a while we enjoyed the solitude of this quiet, warm, gentle shower — even though we were squirming a bit in our wet clothes.

But our luck was not to be. The storm returned with a vengeance. The lightning displays were unnerving and the thunder unbelievable.

Parts of the river's edges are marshy and inaccessible; this was one of those areas. Again it reminded me of the movie *African Queen*. Not one of us mentioned trying to make it to shore. Our luck had definitely run out.



By this time Dean was bailing the boat out while still holding up the umbrella. He could be heard muttering under his breath, "God, can't you do any better than this?" His glasses were not only fogged up but covered in water droplets, and he was peering over the rims.

Water dripped off our hats, noses, shirt sleeves, pant cuffs and seats. We were one bedraggled-looking bunch. We looked at each other and laughed uproariously. Life just doesn't get much more adventuresome than this.

Eventually the dock came into sight.

In our eagerness to get away from the raging elements, we hopped out onto the dock. Two things happened at once. The dock was so wet and slippery, we couldn't stand up. Phil couldn't readjust his weight fast enough and very nearly went overboard. After rectifying the situation, we got Phil out onto his foam mattress. He reminded us that he had intended having a snooze on it on the dock in the sun after our trip. We grinned.

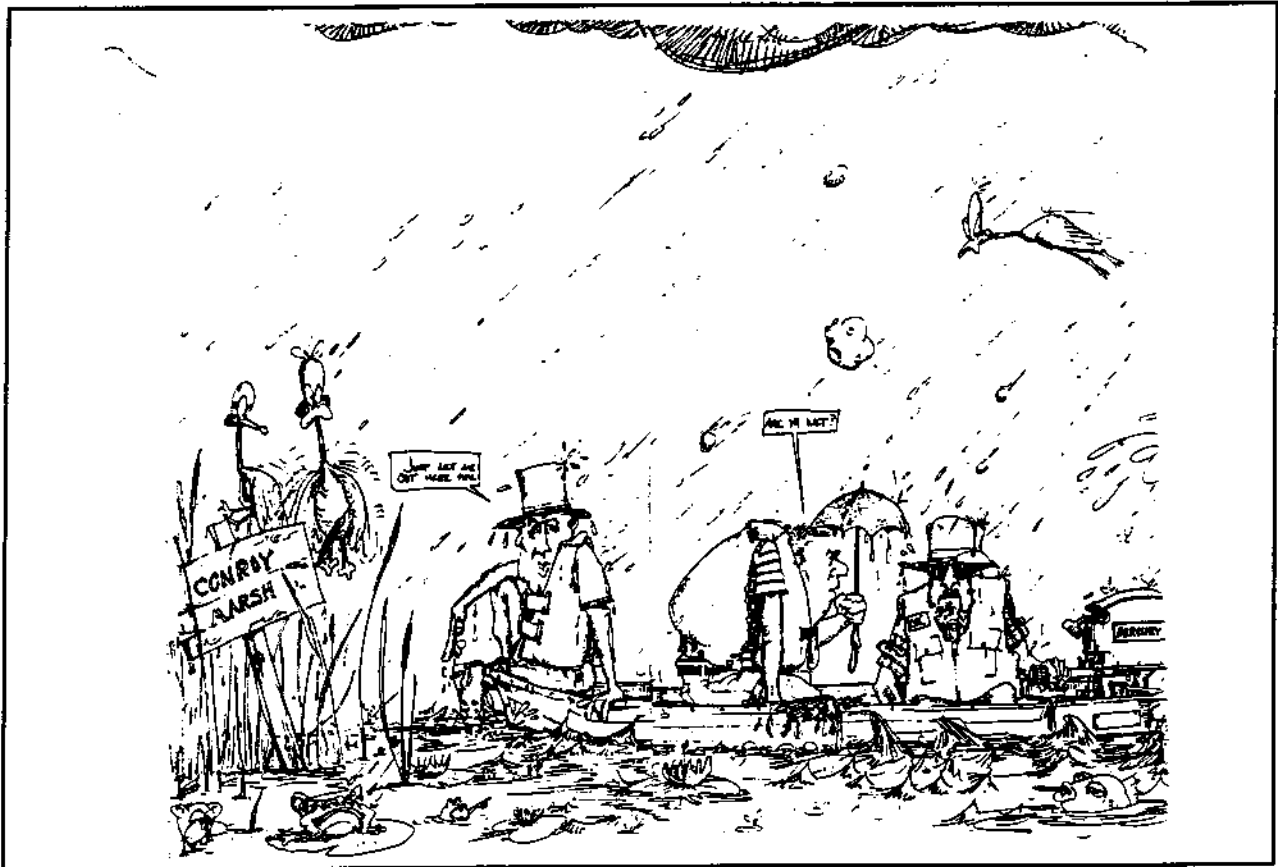
But the rolling thunder was promising nothing.

Sheilagh and I got on each side of Phil and had him skimming over the mud puddles to the truck in a couple of flashes. We got him into the truck, and Sheilagh wrapped him up in the foil survival blanket and turned the heater on. I was

sure I saw Phil still grinning from ear to ear as they drove off down the road.

It was a long wet drive home. On arrival, I called to see how Phil was coping. I could hear him laughing in the background. Sheilagh says he's looking forward to a canoe trip in Algonquin Park — we laugh. With our luck, he trusts us?

When times get tough for him, Conroy Marsh still brings a smile and a chuckle. He still maintains that it had been a "sunny" day.



# WHAT'S YOUR AGE, MOTHER EARTH?

by Jack Gill

Sooner or later, the amateur naturalist is apt to put this question as he or she is confronted with rocks of reportedly known age, such as our local Precambrian folded and altered marbles and gneisses dated at 1.3 billion years and our younger Paleozoic limestones and shales, dated about 450 million years. If only one could see the two in actual contact, we might see why the Paleozoics are known to the younger — and we can see them.

On Highway 17, close to the Madawaska turn-off into Arnprior, it is fairly clear that the limestone sediment of a Paleozoic sea-bottom lies (unconformably) upon the eroded Precambrian surface, and has broken pieces of the older rock incorporated within it. Satisfied?

But this only shows relative age. What of the huge numbers of years so glibly bandied about by geologists?

Well, those are absolute ages, which cannot be determined in the field, but require specialists with very sophisticated laboratory equipment. The Geological Survey of Canada makes determination of age on rocks throughout the country using spectrographs.

Besides unconformities, searchers use many other indications of relative age between formations, such as intrusion of molten igneous rock into older rocks and heat effects on the older rocks, both of which are commonly seen in our area.

The last "court of appeal" on the age question is the spectrograph. This instrument first appeared in 1915, when the face, hands and springs of the first radioactive clock were brought together by F.W. Aston. It was the outcome of contributions by such distinguished scientists as Marie and Pierre Curie and the Canadian Ernest Rutherford who in 1905 discovered that uranium minerals emitted particles of helium and that the age of the uranium could be measured by the amount of helium that had accumulated. The change in the uranium is now usually called "decay" and the products "daughters." The proportion between decay product and original element or mineral takes place at a uniform rate, hence we have a "clock."

Over the years, many refinements in equipment and technology have been made, and many useful mother-daughter pairs have been discovered. These radioactive pairs include: potassium-argon (K-Ar); rubidium-strontium (Rb-Sr); uranium-lead (U-Pb); and carbon 12-carbon 14 (C-12-C-14).

A popular example of a radioactive decay clock is the C-14 clock. When a piece of wood dies, its C-14 content diminishes steadily in proportion to its C-12. The half-life of C-14 is about 5,900 years, thus furnishing a useful clock for many "young" rocks, but not far back enough. For our local Paleozoics of about 450 million years (450 Ma) and our Precambrian rocks of about 1.3 billion years (1.3 Ga). These figures always have a possible error, which is shown by a plus or minus number. For example, a certain rock from Labrador gave a U-Pb age of 2675 +/- 6 Ma (2,675,000 +/- 6 million years).

What then of our original question: "What's your age, mother Earth?"

"Well then, my son/daughter, the age of my oldest-known rocks is about 4 billion years. I am older than they are, but you will have to ask the stars about my age."

Doing just that, we look to the stars: the ones we can see and touch. Stony meteorites and the moon's rocks are available. Stony meteorites are believed to be fragments of layer bodies formed in our solar system at about the same time as the planets and satellites. By the Rb-Sr method, they yield fairly consistent dates of 4.6 +/- 0.1 billion years, the date when rocks of the Earth first became solid but not peaceable and unchanging. Fracturing, faulting, folding and deep burial into hot zones have all been at work in our local Precambrian metamorphic rocks, processes that have reset the radioactive clock to a much younger age than the original rocks and left us a very challenging task to decipher. Some victories have been won, but it remains a "task for the ages."

# JUNIOR MACNAMARA FIELD NATURALISTS



By Donna M.A. Metcalfe

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The younger folks in the Club enjoyed various activities over the year.

More bluebird boxes were added to the trail. So far the inhabitants range from tree swallows to house wrens.

K&P Trails was a tremendously exciting outing, with as many as 12 lifers being added to some lists.

The highlight of our day was a bittern. We had been eating our lunch in the middle of a marshy area, counting warblers for about half an hour, when a bittern flew up from within 15 feet of us. It had been perfectly still the whole time, blending in remarkably well with its surroundings.

A wild clematis and some rare ferns were also seen. A good day!

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## HIDDEN WORLDS



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*Wildflowers don't appear to insects as they do to us. Ultraviolet patterns invisible to our eyes lie within many blooms. Here, these patterns are revealed in brown-eyed susan (left) and marsh marigold (right). The inner part of the petals contain pigments known as flavonols which absorb ultraviolet (here appearing as black). The outer part of the petals contain carotenoid pigments which reflect ultraviolet light (here appearing white). Both pigments reflect yellow wavelengths. Because colours are caused by reflected light, we see the entire petal as yellow as we only see the yellow and not the ultraviolet wavelengths. Insects would see the inner part of the petal as "yellow" (they are believed to see our yellow more as a "red") but would see the outer part as a combination of reflected yellow plus ultraviolet light. This is believed to be perceived by them as a "purple". By the way, insects probably see our green as a neutral gray! Wouldn't it be fascinating to be able to view our wildflowers through the eyes of an insect?*





## TO SEE OUR COUNTRY

by Howard Wickett

In 1992 my wife and I went on our sixth and last drive west to British Columbia and numerous stops in between. In 1993, with a one hundredth birthday celebration, a wedding and a golden wedding spaced over seven weeks, August to October, we took our last, last drive to B.C. and numerous stops in between. What a privilege to be Canadian and to be able to make the opportunity to visit our country from sea to sea. Our next step should be Iqualuit and other points north.

Planning the trip was simple. We contacted provincial travel departments and received a treasury of maps, accommodation and other booklets. Very useful for the logistics side of the trip, and they make for enjoyable planning. Stopping overnight at town X? Check the accommodations booklet and choose the motel that suits your fancy and your budget. Plan to have your cereal and coffee before you hit the road. Take something along with you for your coffee and exercise break, plus your cooler for lunch in a roadside park that your map will identify. When you reach town X, cruise by the motels you have marked before you make a choice. Look or ask for a "nice little restaurant" to have supper, then explore the area before you retire to cribbage, scrabble or (ugh-h) TV.

Ontario provides a wealth of beautiful scenery, especially around Superior to Thunder Bay and on to Kenora. Try stopping at most of the points of interest. You will absorb a lot of history, and the Terry Fox Memorial at the Lakehead will bring a lump to your throat.

And then you reach the marvelous prairies where the road and the sky go on forever. In Manitoba the fields of sunflowers stretch right to the horizon. When you reach Saskatchewan, look for adjacent fields of flax and canola, a sight to behold. In southern Alberta you will see prickly-pear cactus and pronghorn antelope in the drier grazing lands, while further north there is grain, grain, grain, oil, oil, oil and everywhere the wild rose of Alberta.

When you reach Calgary, the mountain foothills show up in the haze, and very soon you are in the Rockies and beautiful British Columbia. Stop for a break in a roadside park, and the Stellar's Jay will seek crumbs at your table, while Clark's Nutcracker watches from the limb of a

lodgepole pine. No matter how you scheduled your trip to get this far, you still have the added pleasure of coming home by a different route. No crowded highways; try parallel roads to the TransCanada or the Yellowhead.

Early in the season there is a treasury of wildflowers to identify at most of your halts. The spring and fall migration on the central flyways will turn up many bird species that you may never have seen before. On our 1987 trip, we took two-and-a-half weeks to reach Edmonton after visiting several "birding hot-spots" described in *Bird Finding Guide to Canada* (edited by J. C. Findlay). Whiteshell Park, Birds Hill, Oak Hammock Marsh, Riding Mountain in Manitoba are great places to visit, and bird. Cypress Hills and Last Mountain Lake in Saskatchewan will give you hours of fascination. In Alberta, Waterton Lakes and the two other national parks, Banff and Jasper, are the jewels of the West. Beaverhill Park east of Edmonton and Dinosaur Park on the TransCanada east of Calgary are two locations that you should not miss. As you travel through the Prairies, you will have to resist stopping at every slough to observe shorebirds and waterfowl. Don't slam your car door, or they will all be "spooked."

Driving through the mountains in B.C. provides marvelous views. As you spiral up the excellent roads of Mount Revelstoke, you may see all four species of chickadees resident in Canada. The Rogers Pass and railroad interchanges have a special interest, then you are downhill to Vancouver and the wonderful scenery along the coast right to Pacific Rim on the west side of Vancouver Island.

Of course, you have planned your return trip as well, so I will leave you east-bound, with just another tip or two. A bag of "loonies" saved over several months financed almost half of our driving and accommodation, which just topped \$1000. We drove 11,000 kilometres during the seven weeks we were away from home. We were fortunate to have family and friends to visit, so the entertainment was over and above the trip costs. Layovers for a day at special-interest locations give time for rest and relaxation.

If you have never driven across this country of ours, it is time to go. Once you have done so, I'm sure you will agree it is time to go again.

# The Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Bird Count

by Michael W.P. Runtz

Most of you are quite familiar with this bird count for many of you take part in it each year. For those that do not of this important annual event (held each year on Boxing Day), allow me to provide you with a brief background.

First, what is a bird count? Well, all across North America each year for the week or so leading up to Christmas and the week or so following it, bird counts are held all across North America (and also in recent years further afield). These winter counts, each held on a single day, are an attempt to gather data on wintering birds. Each count consists of a circle with a 7.5 mile radius. All of the count records are held by the American Audubon Society and the information generated allows for general trends in North American birds to be followed.

Although the Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Count officially was first taken on December 26, 1970, the two counts from which it derived its name both had long and illustrious lives. The first count to be taken was by Charles Macnamara and Liguori Gormely in 1913.

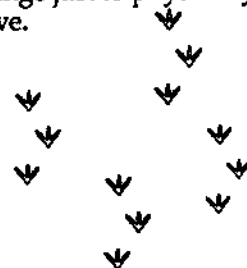
Known as the Arnprior Christmas Bird Count, the count was taken by Charles snowshoeing (or walking depending upon the year) east from Arnprior through what is was to later become the Nopiming Game Preserve, and Liguori travelling west to Braeside. The Arnprior Count continued to be held until 1939. The Pakenham Christmas Bird Count was first taken in 1925 by Edna, Bill, Allan and Verna (now McGiffin) Ross. This count continued to be taken until 1969. The next year the count circle and name was changed to accommodate an aggressive Arnprior contingent consisting of the late Bud Levy, Sloan Waters and myself.

I'll never forget my first count. It was in 1966. I learned about the count in the local paper article called "Strictly for the Birds", written by the mysterious "Hawkeye". Only later did I learn the true identity of the author -- Bud Levy. What a magical day. I can still vividly recall spotting a Pileated Woodpecker (much rarer then than now) and a Red-breasted Nuthatch climbing rocks near White Lake.

Over the years we have become much more adept at finding the birds in the count area. Familiarity with the area, more experienced observers, better optical equipment and improved identification skills all contribute to a more successful tally.

Nowadays we average about 46 species a count, considerably up from the 20 or so species tallied in the early years.

Despite a number of improvements to the count methodology, one factor remains impossible to improve. That is the weather, which this past year was terribly uncooperative. For those with poor memories (or who were wise enough not to venture outside that day), the day began with winds up to 50 km per hour and the temperature dropping to minus 30 degrees. The windchill brought it down to near minus fifty! The day became more than just a challenge to find the birds; rather it became a genuine challenge just to physically survive.



In case you might want to attend this year's Boxing Day count, I better inform you that we also frequently have beautiful conditions for the count. Naturally, over the years you are bound to hit a bad day or two. Somehow I think (and pray) that we may never again have a

day as challenging as the bird count of 1993!

Despite the abominable conditions, a surprising total of birds was tallied. Following is the summary from this past year's battle of the elements:



PAKENHAM-ARNPRIOR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT  
26 December 1993

| SPECIES   | NUMBER | SPECIES                                    | NUMBER |
|---|--------|--|--------|
| Common Goldeneye  | 1      | Red-breasted Nuthatch                      | 9      |
| Common Merganser  | 2      | White-breasted Nuthatch                    | 67     |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk  | 1      | Brown Creeper                              | 4      |
| Northern Goshawk  | 1      | Bohemian Waxwing                           | 69     |
| Red-tailed Hawk   | 5      | Northern Shrike                            | 1      |
| Rough-legged Hawk   | 2      | European Starling                          | 125    |
| American Kestrel  | 1      | Northern Cardinal                          | *17    |
| Gray Partridge  | 5      | American Tree Sparrow                      | 123    |
| Ruffed Grouse   | 13     | Song Sparrow                               | 1      |
| Rock Dove   | 323    | Dark-eyed Junco                            | 28     |
| Mourning Dove   | *138   | Snow Bunting                               | 753    |
| Great Horned Owl  | 1      | Red-winged Blackbird                       | 1      |
| Snowy Owl   | 2      | Brown-headed Cowbird                       | 2      |
| Short-eared Owl   | 1      | Pine Grosbeak                              | 169    |
| Downy Woodpecker  | 81     | Purple Finch                               | 7      |
| Hairy Woodpecker  | 67     | House Finch                                | *78    |
| Black-backed Woodpecker   | 2      | White-winged Crossbill                     | 1      |
| Pileated Woodpecker   | 1      | Common Redpoll                             | 530    |
| Horned Lark   | 121    | Hoary Redpoll                              | 1      |
| Blue Jay  | 459    | Pine Siskin                                | 1      |
| American Crow   | 141    | American Goldfinch                         | 161    |
| Common Raven  | 19     | Evening Grosbeak                           | 1096   |
| Black-capped Chickadee  | 888    | House Sparrow                              | 777    |
| <b>TOTAL SPECIES: 46</b>  |        | <b>TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 6,296</b>            |        |
| Seen in count week but not on count day: <b>Great Blue Heron, Herring Gull, Belted Kingfisher</b> |        |  |        |
| <b>LEGEND</b>   |        |  |        |
| <u>Underlined and BOLD</u> = New Species for Count  |        | <u>Underlined number</u> = Ties High Count |        |
| Asterisk * = New High Count   |        | <b>BOLD</b> = Rare Species                 |        |