

Mr. Wm. Smeaton, B.A., Ottawa.

Mr. A. D. Watson, Ottawa.

Miss A. J. Wilson, Ottawa.

Mr. A. Effingham Fleck, Vancouver, B.C.

The President suggested the formation of branches or small affiliated clubs in places near Ottawa such as Carp and Stittsville. These branches would carry on local field work and could be visited each year by the Club at some time when a joint field day could be held. The Council approved of the plan and appointed Mr. J. W. Gibson to make preliminary arrangements for the organization of such a branch at Carp.

T. E. C.

NOTES.

DIOSCOREA VILLOSA.—On page 184, Vol. XXII. of THE OTTAWA NATURALIST, Mr. W. A. Dent describes a delightful retreat for the nature lover where Lake Huron has gradually narrowed into the St. Clair River.

Referring to the rarity of the slender twiner found there popularly known as the Wild Yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) he invites reports of its distribution. It is not rare in wooded flats along the Thames River westward from London. There is a fine patch of it in a thicket by the bank of the River within the city limits.

J. DEARNESS, London, Ont.

SNAKE BEHAVIOR.—The observation which follows seems worthy of presentation, if not as an unusual occurrence, yet as one which may be new to many. My own opinion is that it might be less unusual than it probably is, if the reception almost invariably accorded to members of the snake fraternity did not render it next to impossible.

One morning last April, while strolling among the ruins of an old building, I came upon a large garter snake, which was making strenuous efforts to get out of my way. As soon as I noticed it I stopped short, only a couple of feet away, and was rather surprised to see it do the same. Evidently it was aiming to avoid detection until I should pass on. With the object of seeing what would follow, I waited motionless, and for a whole minute or more nothing took place. Finally it began to venture on escape, and in the most cautious way drew itself forward a trifle, so slight as almost to escape notice. After another wait a slightly bolder hitch forward was made. This procedure was repeated many times with increasing confidence and more substantial progress each time, until it had got about four feet away from me, when it glided quietly off among the weeds.

I was sufficiently interested by what I had seen to wonder if the snake would repeat its successful ruse; and so I overtook it once more at a little distance, stopping when within a foot or two of it. It stopped as before, drawing back its head, and throwing its body into considerable curves. What followed was substantially the same as I have already described, but was if anything even more cautious, and longer in accomplishment. The markings of the snake were admirably suited for harmonizing with its surroundings and in doubling from side to side, the body's motion did not greatly break the homogeneity with the waving grass. The creature's self-possession and apparent confidence in its tactics, impressed one particularly, whenever the peculiarity of its mode of travel compelled it to direct its head almost squarely toward the quarter from which it sought to escape. Needless to say, its well-earned liberty was gladly granted; and, I suppose, if it succeeds in running the gauntlet of human persecution until a like occasion again presents itself, it will all the more instinctively rely on what has once proved safe wood-craft, and if the next intruder also witnesses the little drama of which he is the cause, will furnish him with another instance of the marvels of animal sagacity.

HERBERT GROH, Ottawa.

BIRD NOTES.—In the Montreal Witness of February 13th, 1909, a note reporting the appearance of a solitary robin in the vicinity of Montreal, called forth another from Ottawa. Quoting from the Ottawa Journal this correspondent says, that small flocks of robins have been frequently seen at Ottawa during the winter.† This is so unusual that we should be pleased to learn something more about these wintering robins; particularly as to their feeding habits and whether they were immature birds or not.

Pine Grosbeaks and Redpolls have been unusually common here this winter, the Grosbeaks feeding on seeds of Mountain Ash and apple trees. Prairie Horned Larks were first noticed on the 28th of February, when I saw four birds; a week later saw six, apparently mated.

On February 21st, my attention was attracted by the grating notes of a Northern Shrike. It was unusually tame, permitting a near approach to its perch in an apple tree, though becoming very nervous and excited, whilst emitting a series of cries, one of them a good imitation of an alarmed Catbird and yet another reminding me of the Blue Jay's cry. At intervals it also indulged in its customary warble, suggesting that of the Purple Finch. The body of a Redpoll impaled on a twig of the

†See also Ottawa Naturalist, March 1909, p. 265.—Ed.



Groh, Herbert. 1909. "Snake Behavior." *The Ottawa naturalist* 23(3), 58–59.

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