

Mr. Thos. McMillan, Seaforth, Ont.

Mr. J. A. Munro, Toronto.

Hon. Mrs. O. H. Lambart, Ottawa.

Mr. G. Michaud, Ottawa.

On request of the Natural History Museum of Hamburg it was decided to exchange publications with the Museum.

The Publishing Committee were requested to report at the next meeting of Council on the state of that portion of the Library now stored in the basement of the Normal School and to make some recommendation as to what should be done with it.

February 9th—Present: the President, Mr. A. E. Attwood, Messrs. A. Halkett, A. Gibson, C. H. Young, E. E. Lemieux, A. McNeill, L. H. Newman and T. E. Clarke.

Miss W. K. Bentley, Ottawa, was elected a member of the Club.

The Publishing Committee presented a report showing progress on the work of dealing with the Library question.

T. E. C.

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## BIRDS OBSERVED AT OTTAWA, ONTARIO, WINTER 1908-1909.

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BY G. EIFRIG.

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The present winter has been a very successful one for Ottawa, from an ornithological point of view at least. While it has not been an unqualified success from the standpoint of the winter itself, inasmuch as the essentials of winter hereabouts, cold and snow, are remarkable for their low quantity, and therefore coal-dealers presumably will pronounce it a dismal failure, yet the birds and especially the true Canadian winter birds have taken to our fine capital city in greater number and variety than in many years since and probably for many years to come.

To begin with the rarest, on December 13th a flock of about thirty Bohemian Waxwings or Chatterers (*Ampelis garrulus*) took up their residence in the Metcalfe-O'Connor Streets' district where they feasted on the berries of the many mountain-ash trees to be found in that part of the city. They usually divided into small flocks and spread out over this area, and then they joined forces again for the night. From about January 12th, however, they concentrated themselves at the corner of Slater and O'Connor Streets, where a small rowan tree offered berries to them that seemed to be more to their taste than any others. Here and on neighboring larger trees they



could be seen every day, sometimes only a part of the flock and then again all, until the 24th of January, when the queer rain and subsequent freezing coated everything thickly with ice. They were, however, seen as late as February 22nd. This and the species next mentioned are about the two most irregular and erratic birds we have. Their coming and going follows no recognizable rule or law; they are in no wise migrants, but only aimless wanderers. They may come here next winter again, in greater numbers than in this, or they may not again turn up for many years. Their breeding range and habits are but imperfectly known. In winter they may turn up anywhere, but in summer they have only been seen in the stunted spruce stands around Hudson Bay; in the Mackenzie Basin at Great Bear Lake; at the sources of the Athabasca River and high up in the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia, and at Banff and Canmore. They make their nests of moss, etc., well up in pines and firs. It is a beautiful bird, much like the Cedarbird, only larger and handsomer.

On February 7th a flock of the rare and pretty Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) put in an appearance in the Somerset-Cartier Streets' neighborhood. While they are not at all averse to rowan berries, they prefer the seeds of the Manitoba or ash-leaved maple (*Acer Negundo*). There were thirteen of them, and the males in their handsome yellow, white, black and dark olive-brown plumage certainly presented a fine sight. They would often alight on the roofs of houses or sheds and eat snow and perhaps clean themselves in it. The females and young are much less conspicuous, being a uniform gray over the head and body, the wings being black and white, and a tinge of olive on the neck and breast. A flock of seven was seen on the Experimental Farm. In their proclivities for apparently aimless, erratic wandering, this species is just like the Waxwings, and they also share the same breeding range. Bird-lovers here consider themselves fortunate in having seen these two rare species in one winter, which perhaps will not happen again in a life-time. Many observers in other places look for these birds diligently all their lives and never see them.

Besides these, our more common, but none the less equally welcome winter visitors, the Pine Grosbeaks (*Pinicola enucleator*), are here again in numbers. They too are most numerous in the same general district, where the first two stayed. When one sees below a rowan tree debris of berries lying about, he may be sure that some of these birds have been there eating, or are still there. When eating, which they nearly always do, they are very silent, and it sometimes takes a good hard look to discover them



in the trees, even when these are without leaves. These birds were seen as late as February 25th.

The White-winged Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*) was here in great numbers late in fall and some at least must have remained for the winter, because on February 8th, a part of one was found at the Experimental Farm by Mr. Groh. The other part had just been eaten by a Northern Shrike. This cross-bill is in its wanderings and appearances almost just as unreliable and erratic as the first two species named.

Of similar habits, only not to the same degree, are the Redpoll (*Acanthis linaria*) and the Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*). Both of these little birds have been here this winter in more than usual numbers. Even three of the rare Hoary Redpolls (*A. hornemannii exilipes*) were seen January 24th in a yard on Wurtemberg Street.

An extremely rare freak in nature was seen by the writer on January 19th on Rideau Street. In a flock of English Sparrows nearly at his feet, was a red English Sparrow. Nor was the red over only a small area, or of an indistinct, brownish hue, but very bright and general. It was a crimson shade below, like the red of the male Pine Grosbeak, and a brick-red like the American Crossbill on the back. Otherwise, in size, build, shape and behavior, he was like the English Sparrows in whose company he was; also, the wings and tail were like those of this far too common denizen of our streets. For several reasons it is not likely that this bird was a hybrid between the common sparrow and, say the Purple Finch or one of the Crossbills. It must, therefore, have been a case of erythrism, like there are cases of melanism and albinism. In fact there are usually some albino or partly albino English Sparrows to be seen in winter in our streets, as during this winter, when some with large patches or a collar of white have been seen near By market.

A first record for Ottawa is the occurrence, November 2nd, of several King Eiders (*Somateria spectabilis*). Four of these were shot and mounted. On December 2nd another flock of 75, mostly young ones, came up the river and stayed for a while near some of the boathouses on the river. Ten of these were shot by the ever present gunners. The remainder went up the river and were observed as far as Pembroke, Ont.

Finally, those mysterious wanderers from far northern shores, the Brunnich Murre (*Uria lomvia*), appeared again, December 1st, when six were seen. On the 19th of the same month they came in large numbers, about 500 being seen winging their way up the river. Many of course fall victims to the numerous gunners, with which our river seems to be lined, in and out of



season. The case of this bird is a very perplexing one. Their coming is no migration in the common sense of the word. In fact, they are lost the moment they leave salt water. All that come here and are not shot perish of starvation, as they do not seem to be able to find suitable food in any river or lake. Why they should year after year persist in coming up here to perish is hard to say.

And, to cap the climax, the Robin (*Merula migratoria*) has been with us nearly all winter. A little flock of four was seen in various places up till Christmas, and then took up its headquarters in the trees around the City Hall, where they could be seen during even the coldest days we have had. Certainly a novel sight for Ottawa.

Also, a Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) was seen in the middle of this winter, namely January 10th, at the Rifle Range. Why these birds, which are not supposed to winter here, stayed here this winter, or came here, is hard to tell. Did they know the winter would be a mild one?

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#### MEETING OF THE BOTANICAL BRANCH.

Held at the residence of Mr. E. R. Cameron, 21st December, 1908. Present: Prof. J. Macoun, Dr. Ami, Rev. G. Eifrig, Dr. Blackader, and Messrs. Cory, E. R. Cameron, J. M. Macoun, W. T. Macoun, Attwood, Whyte, MacMillan, D. Cameron, Jacombe, Witten, Bond and Groh.

The first part of the evening was devoted to some subject of general botanical interest. Prof. Macoun exhibited a copy of the newly-issued edition of Gray's Manual, and gave some explanation of the need which existed for such a work, as well as some interesting information about the methods and painstaking labor by which it had been brought to its present revised form. In order to cover a more natural floral area than heretofore, it was necessary to make exhaustive explorations of the Eastern portion of Canada so as to include its flora. Likewise, in order to bring the work into line with recent ideas of classification and the latest findings of botanical science, the sequence of the families has been entirely changed, and changes in nomenclature have been adopted. Prof. Macoun referred to Britton and Brown's botany as an effort to forestall this work, but considered that this was such a superior and admirable book that it should be everywhere welcomed.

Prof. Macoun also spoke about the Ottawa Flora which he is engaged in preparing. He invited all members who have



Eifrig, Charles William Gustav. 1909. "Birds Observed at Ottawa, Ontario, Winter 1908-1909." *The Ottawa naturalist* 22(12), 262-265.

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