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TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox and Mink Farming

The good turnout of members at the annual meeting of the Prince Edward Island Fur Breeders' Association at Birch Court, Experimental Farm, Charlottetown, last Tuesday, was most encouraging. All those present are actively contemplating raising silver and mutation foxes and quite a few have added mink as well. Not one of them has any idea of discontinuing and all are hopefully looking forward to the return to popularity of silver fox in a year or two. The Association is in a healthy state financially and can continue its operations for several years even though expenditures exceed receipts. The deficit was \$400. for 1949. This was due to generous prize lists and a really worthwhile show with the best judges available to handle the animals.

The dates for 1950 were set as November 21st-24th inclusive. The 21st will be for receiving and classifying day. On the 22nd and 23rd the foxes will be judged and on the 24th the mink. This is a similar arrangement to the previous year and it worked out very well indeed. George A. Callbeck will be asked to judge the foxes and George Mayers of New York the mink. A new feature this year will be a Field Night, with an expert foxman and expert mink man brought in to speak on fox and mink problems and also to give demonstrations of what the fur trade requires in the various types of foxes and mink. It is hoped to have young ladies to model and demonstrate various types of furs and there will be other features that will make the evening quite attractive. The banquet will be carried on the same as in previous years.

The Hudson's Bay Company has set a total of six general auctions together with two special mink and silver fox sales for next season's selling starting November through August 1951. The next special catalogue of silver and mutation foxes will be offered in conjunction with the H. B. C. general sale already announced for June 26th. The first fall sale is set for November 30th, a special mink auction to be followed on December 18th by special mink and silver fox sale. We trust the sale of silver fox on June 26th and succeeding days will be a success. According to a statement made by George Callbeck at the Fur Breeders' meeting there has been considerable inquiry from London the past two weeks and if this accelerates in the next month there is a chance that the above auction will go over. What we are all hoping for is that all the silver fox in the auction company's storages or fur pool's storages will be sold by the 31st of December, 1950. If so this year's takeoff which is not expected to exceed 35,000 should be small enough to create higher prices in 1951.

A. Hollander and Son, New York, is training student mink operators to learn the method of cutting and sewing skins to make up mink garments. They have advertised for auction houses and others to send them a supply of the poor quality skins so they can use them for instruction purposes. There are at present 100 students being trained in two classes of the Central High School of needle trades in New York. A minimum of 600 skins is needed for one term with two classes meeting twice a week.

At the meeting of the fur breeders last Tuesday Lowell Hancock brought up the question of whether it would be advisable to have a number of fox and mink garments made up, particularly fox which is the slowest seller at present, have these displayed at strategic places such as hotels and possibly stores, so that they would be brought to the attention of visitors from abroad. He said—and his statement was backed up by others—that a large number of people come here who are interested in the past history of silver fox farming and who would like to take back with them some article made up of silver fox. He said it was regrettable that fur stores are not

paying the attention to silver fox they did a couple of years ago when one firm purchased over 300 skins, made them up and sold them quite readily.

June will be a busy auction month with fur sales in the United States, Canada and London and just about every type of fur offered. The Hudson's Bay Company, Montreal, general sale of furs started Wednesday and will conclude on Friday. On Monday, June 13th, H. B. C. will hold a sale in London and on the same date the New York Auction Company will offer 45,000 mink from the Great Lakes Mink Association. This is a very superior collection and it will be the last offering that Association will make this season. On June 7-8 the New York Auction Company will offer mutation mink pelts both dressed and raw for the Mutation Mink Breeders' Association, which is expected to be attended by a large group of buyers.

For the first time in over a quarter of a century of its history the Canadian National Silver Fox Breeders' Association will hold its annual meeting in Nova Scotia. The Fort Cumberland Hotel, Amherst, will be the headquarters for the foxmen. On Wednesday the Directors will meet and prepare their reports for the annual meeting which will be held on Thursday. It is expected that quite a large number will attend from this Province and directors will come all the way from western Canada. The President is Arthur Doyle of Winnipeg, who has been in for some time and its possible that he may not be in good enough health to be taken over by Vice President Gordon MacMillan of Cornwall.

The passing of B. I. Rayner at Summerside last week, brought to the minds of older people here the great part he played in the founding of the silver fox industry. Mr. Rayner was 82 years old. As a young man he was, like Charles Dalton and others, a hunter and occasionally trapped or shot a silver fox—then, of course, a rarity. Learning of the breeding experiments of Charles Dalton and Robert Dalton he made his start with cross foxes and soon acquired the technique of breeding and raising them. Later on he got into silver, his father Silas Rayner, being an established breeder of note. B. I., however, struck out pretty much for himself and developed a brighter type of silver than Dalton, Oulton or Silas Rayner. B. I. Rayner foxes had characteristics all their own and they were good breeders.

In 1914 he organized the B. I. Rayner Silver Fox Company with a very classy collection of adult pairs, all of his own stock. The company continued as a successful proposition for many years and is only one instance of the great number of fox farms which had their origin with Rayner breeding stock. One thing we can truly say about Mr. Rayner is that his word was always good and he was reliable. He was one of the giants of a wonderful era and we can remember the interest we and others on the streets of Charlottetown in the lush days of 1910-1914. To his sorrowful family and relatives we extend our best wishes and hope other fox ranchers, our deep regret at the passing of a great pioneer breeder.

Improvement In Lumber Trade

FREDERICTON, June 2—(CP)—Marked improvement in the lumber export trade was indicated here yesterday with two firms loading some 550,000 feet for the United Kingdom.

The lumber was being placed on scows for towing to Saint John next week, where it will be loaded aboard freighters. A Nashwaak firm is loading more than 250,000 feet—mostly two- and three-inch planking—and a Lincoln outfit provides 275,000 feet.

There also is bustling activity at Lincoln, where a river holding boom is taking care of 80,000 cords of pulpwood, en route to the sulphite mills at Fairville.

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- NEWSY NOTES -

By Agricola

THE ROSE-BREADED GROSBREAK

The Rose-breaded Grosbeak, (*Zamelodia ludoviciana*), is the shy beauty of the family, hiding its brilliant plumage, and delightful song in the deep shadows of the primitive forest. It has been seen most frequently in the old timber growths of Lot 30, where its rich rolling song adds a finer charm to the wild music of the foaming streams.

This bird is said to possess all the qualities of a first-class café-bird, readily submitting to confinement, and having vigor to endure it. "Barn's Birds of P. E. I., 1891."

This Grosbeak is now a rare summer resident on the Island, and the only observation is one reported by Mr. J. Frank Sterns, Souris, on May 6, 1931. It is now, "tolerably common" in New Brunswick, and visits Nova Scotia at times.

According to ornithologist Charles W. Nash of Ontario, they are most interesting cage-birds. He always had two; one of them lived 18 years! They were very fond of potato beetles and would take them from his hand. They also ate the hairy Tassock Moth Caterpillar, which most other birds refuse. "As a songster, it is unexcelled and untiring. The plumage of the male, with its striking contrasts of black, white and rose, attracts and pleases, while as a husband and father, he is admirable, for, unlike most male birds of bright plumage, he takes his turn in incubating the eggs, and is so good-natured about it that he often sings while sitting, and after the young are hatched, he is indefatigable in his efforts to satisfy the hungry brood." (Nash).

With this eulogy, we turn to his description:

Rose-breaded Grosbeak—AOU 595. Summer resident, uncommon. (1950)—Male: head, throat and back, black; upper tail covers, white barred with black; wings, black, but primaries white at the base; wing coverts tipped with white, but their under surface rose-red. Tail black, the outer feathers tipped with white on the inner web. Breast bright crimson, rest of the underparts, white. Female: upper parts grayish brown, the feathers margined with buffy-gray. Head with a buff rufous line, and a white line over the eye. Wings and tail, dusky brown; wing coverts, tipped with white, their under-surface yellow, the rest of the underparts cream-color, streaked brown length of adults—about eight inches.

CONCERNING THE WITHEROD

Mrs. J. V. Winesler, of Wallaceburg, Ontario, writes for information about a shrub called the Witherod (or Wither) through the member in hives a rod in the swamp, there was a shrub called "old folk" called withered. I have looked in the dictionary and Nature books for information, and as I cannot find it listed, I wonder if "with-rod" was a name coined by our forebears. If there is such a shrub, have I the spelling right?

In reply, I am glad to help my correspondent by reprinting the following from the Newsy Notes of long ago:—"We are sorer of the Witherod, (*Viburnum Cassinoides*), which is fairly common near swamps and in open positions. Both the common and the scientific names refer to the pliability of the long branches which permits them to be used for binding objects, just as rope is used. The leaves differ from those of *V. opulus* in that they are ovate to oblong and obtuse. The berry—really a "drupe" with a flat, even stone—is at first pink and finally blue-black with a bloom. It is sweet and edible and is known in some parts of its range as the "Wild Raisin".

NAPOLEON AND UNCLE ELBY by Clifford McBride



shrub, try "*Viburnum*" in the index of Gray's Manual of Botany, which may be consulted in your libraries. Many thanks for your kind references to this column.

SOME OTHER PLANTS

The Cheddar Pink, mentioned in the Poet's Corner recently, is growing in my rock-garden where it has flourished several years. It has a little pink flower resembling a small carnation in form, but with a delightful fragrance. (Cheddar Gorge or Vale, is one of the show-places of Somerset County, England, and is further noted as the place where a certain kind of cheese was first made). Slips from my pink have several times travelled to Central Canada.

The Birds-foot Trefoil, (*Lotus corniculatus*), which has been the subject of a test recently in the U. S. A., will grow here too. The plant in the rock garden has come through the winter well, and shows many shoots.

Down on the banks of the "creek"—really the brook—there are signs of awaking life. The tall yellow Iris, wild in England, is peeping up: it is a very good strain. Not far away the Wild Clematis is putting out leaves. Mr. Stephen Campbell, of Campbell's Mills, New Glasgow, kindly gave me this plant years ago. It is I think, scarce on P. E. I. A Riverbank Grape is climbing a maple tree at its own pace: in a year or two should be bearing fruit. In some years, when the cattle are excluded, the creek is gay with the purple flower spikes of the Loosetrife, (*Lythrum*), an Island plant, but rare. Sometimes, too, one finds little clumps of the "Ragged Robin", a *Lychnis*, whose rosy petals are divided into linear segments. There were many of the larger fungi-load-stools—

on the creek-banks at one time, but of late, the climate has been unsuited to their growth. The cowslips in the garden are just showing the flower stalks. The "old folk" used to make a very fragrant wine from the blossoms—70 or 80 years ago! One of the seedlings from this stock threw out red flowers last year, and I see it has survived the winter. Such a flower is a "mutant", from Latin *mutare*, meaning, "I change". Some theorists believe that cosmic or other rays cause such natural changes.

P. S. Don't forget to plant some Night-scented Stock, (*Matthiola bicornis*), this year—especially if you are in the Hotel B. Sines! The scent is delightful, and carries a long way. The flower closes in daylight and for that reason, the seed is planted in some out-of-the-way corner, where the "sulky" flowers won't be noticed.

THE SKY FOR JUNE

There is a conjunction of the Moon and Jupiter on June 6, 1950, but at 11.47 a. m. it will be invisible. Next day, June 7, the Moon is in its Last Quarter. June 12, the Moon is in Apogee, distant from the Earth 232,500 miles. June 15, New Moon. The Sun enters the Zodiacal Sign Cancer on June 21, at 18 hrs, 37 mins, and Summer begins. On the same date but an hour earlier, there is a conjunction of the Moon and Saturn. (Invisible). June 23, the Moon is in its First Quarter, and on June 27, it is in Perigee, distant only 224,900 miles. June 29, it is Full Moon.

The Moon as it travels around the Earth, makes a conjunction with each Planet in turn, but in summer when the light floods the sky, these events are not conspicuous, and are scarcely worth recording. "June 21, Summer begins". This is called the "Summer Solstice", the latter word implying that the sun stands still! What really happens is that the Sun rises at the same time for several mornings and sets in the same fashion for several evenings, following which the days begin to shorten.

Late frosts are dreaded in the first weeks of June and the sowing of tender vegetables should be deferred till they are past. An extra-late frost damaged acres of potatoes on June 21, 1918. Tomatoes and beans hung blackened and dead. Readings from several plants showed 24 degrees. F. What a contrast on June 21, 1951: 11 a. m., 74 degrees, F. at North Wiltshire.

Junior Farmers and Junior Club News

The "Golden Arrow" calf club of Gowne Brae held its first judging class on Friday evening, May 26th at the home of Mr. Charles MacDonald.

Twenty-two members and several visitors were present.

The Junior Farmer groups from Bear River and Cherry Valley will meet on Thursday evening June 8th at St. Peter's Hall in the Eastern semi-final of the P. E. I. Junior Farmers debating competition.

The subject for debate is "Resolved that education in P. E. I. schools should be adjusted to better equip those who plan to farm."

The winner of this debate will compete in the finals against the Bedouet-Fretown Junior Farmers group, the Prince County winners.

The St. George's Ayrshire Calf Club held its first judging class of 1950 on Thursday evening May 25th at the home of club member Ellen Fitzpatrick, with nine members present.

Mr. S. C. Wright, Dept. of Agriculture, was present and conducted the judging class.

Fourteen members were present on Wednesday evening May 31st when the "Eastern Stars" Junior Farmers group met for their regular meeting in the East Point school.

During the summer this group plans to have a baseball team, take part in the tours and Junior Farmers Field Day, get and plant pine trees around the houses to make them look more attractive and to hold dances in the school. The group also decided at last night's meeting to send a donation to the Manitoba Relief Fund.

A Provincial public speaking contest is being planned this year under the supervision of the Dept. of Agriculture and the Provincial Women's Institute Branch.

Participation in this contest is open to young people between 16 and 25 years of age inclusive who are members of Junior Farmers groups or members or ex-members of Boys and Girls Clubs with the following exceptions:—

- (a) Persons who have taken or who are now enrolled in a degree course at any university shall not be eligible for participation.
- (b) Persons who, at any time, have participated in the National Contests conducted by the Canadian Council on Boys' and Girls' Club work may not compete in this contest.

(c) Those placing first and second in Provincial Public Speaking Contests from any preceding year are barred from further competition.

Other rules and a list of topics are now being prepared and will be sent soon to each of the organizations whose members are eligible to compete in the contest.

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