

NEWS AND NOTES

DECEMBER MEETING Tuesday, December 2 will be the last meeting of the 1980 year. Phil Michael from Parks Canada will be the guest speaker. His topic "The Natural History Interpretative Program in the Prince Edward Island National Park" should be of interest to everyone.

As in previous years, refreshments will be served at the December meeting. To make the occasion even more enjoyable bring along your favorite mug.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT This year's annual Christmas Bird Counts are to be held on December 20 (P.E.I. National Park) and December 27 (Hillsborough). In case of inclement weather, alternate dates are December 21 and 28. New participants as well as experienced counters are welcome to come along on the day-long events. At the end of each count day, counters are invited to gather for a pot-luck supper. A participation fee of \$2.00 helps to defray expenses of publishing the results of the more than 1300 counts held across the continent. If you would like to become involved in finding out how many and what species of birds we have on the Island in late December, contact Winnie Cairns (838-3225 through the week, and 894-4095 on weekends).

D.E.D. UPDATE As a follow up to Jean-Paul Arsenault's article "Dutch Elm Disease On Prince Edward Island" in the November issue of the newsletter, I contacted Mr. Arsenault concerning the results of tests carried out on P.E.I. last summer. All tests proved to be negative. Thus, all those areas sampled are still free of Dutch Elm Disease.

Clare Martin, Editor

FIELD TRIP REPORT On the evening of November 21, ten members of the Natural History Society were guests of Professor Earl Wonnacott at U.P.E.I.'s new observatory. Located on the top of Memorial Hall, the observatory looks like a giant silver dome. The moon was full that evening and although a light haze covered the sky, many features of the lunar surface could be seen. Professor Wonnacott expertly explained the workings of the observatory housing and the Celestron - 14 telescope it contains, as well as ably answered the many questions of society members. At the conclusion of our visit Professor Wonnacott invited the society members to return to the observatory at a later date.

MURDER IN MILLTOWN CROSS

On November 19, while sitting cosily at home by the fire, I observed a confrontation between two common crows and a common grackle. Working as a team, the crows systematically chased and harrassed the grackle, tearing away feathers and delivering sharp pecks to his head and neck whenever opportunities permitted. Inevitably the grackle was pinned down by the strong toes of his captor who continued with the plucking process under the observant eye of the second crow. Before long crows and victim flew to a nearby maple. The attack continued. During most of this time the grackle remained still but now and then he would thrust his head forward and violently agitate it in a struggle to free himself. But the crow held tight, and soon his victim was largely stripped of his feathers. Now instead of feathers, the crow tore into the flesh of the dying bird.

Unfortunately at this point the telephone rang, and when I returned all three birds had disappeared.

Winnie Cairns