

THE NEWFOUNDLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

P. O. BOX 1013

ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

The Osprey

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October Meeting

Frank Tompe
Topic to be announced

Arts and Culture Centre Lecture Room
8.15 pm Wednesday 20th October



The Council 1971-72

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Les Tuck has been coopted to fill the vacant place on the council.

Programme of Indoor Meetings 1971-72

(At 8.15 pm in the Lecture Room of the Arts and Culture Centre)

October 20, 1971 Dr. Frank S.Tompa
"African Wildlife" and/or "Hungarian
Natural History"
November 17, 1971 S.Frank Manuel
"A Caribou Doe, a Lynx, a Bacterium and
a Here - Four Unlikely Associates"

Members will not be phoned about meetings unless there
are last minute changes.

Feeding Wild Birds in Winter

There is so much written material available on this subject, that it would be more or less pointless for me to write anything other than some of my own experiences here in Newfoundland. After having started three different feeding projects in three different gardens, the gardens varying from an area of open gravel to one secluded amongst trees, I can assure you that the amount of success will depend on the amount of shelter and vegetation that you can supply. If your garden and surrounding area is almost devoid of vegetation, then plan for the future and plant lots of trees and shrubs. Try to encourage your neighbours to do the same. Properly landscaped gardens not only benefit many forms of wildlife, but also raise property values. In the meantime, remember that artificial WINDBREAKS and retreat cover will help you get started whilst all the stuff you've just planted is growing!

There is a difference of opinion on whether or not to feed the birds all the year around. So far, I don't feed wild birds during the summer months because I like them to carry on fulfilling their role in the ecology of things. I do, however, commence feeding around late August because I enjoy seeing the flocks of birds this will sometimes bring in. The birds that winter here are active in the fall and amongst other things are looking for winter quarters; if they find your ready supply of food, they may decide to stay in your area.

There are many kinds of food used for wild birds feeding; I have enclosed a chart of some types and also a few of the birds known to take them. Personally, I wouldn't bother with any foods other than suet, sunflower seed, cubed or crumbled bread and toast, and small seed mixtures. During the winter, I use these four continuously because I believe that a mixed diet is healthier for the birds and of course brings around a greater variety of species.

Suet I put out in homemade baskets and use plastic netting or fish net for this purpose. I don't use wire netting because in cold weather it can severely damage the birds. I prefer the suet to be somewhere solid (not swinging) because this way seems to be preferred by the Woodpecker family.

Always remember that some birds prefer to take food off the ground than from a bird table. Scatter some of your small seed mixture on the ground, preferably in some loose material such as shredded peat or loose earth and make sure it is scattered so that the birds have to work for it. Only put down an amount that can be cleaned up between bird feeds. If cubed bread or toast is used, I suggest you put it on a bird table and not on the ground.

There are all sorts of designs for bird tables but unless your're a fairly handy carpenter, I suggest you keep to the type that I use. My design is simply two rectangular pieces of plywood lying paralalled with each other, but

held approximately 7 1/2" apart by a piece of 2" x 1" wood at each corner. The roof overlaps the table by two or more inches all around. Put a raised edge (say 1" x 1") around the table to stop the food falling off too easily but make sure to leave a slight gap at the corners to allow for drainage. Incidentally, Blue Jays like to stand on this edging and "hammer" away at sunflower seed held between their feet. The table is mounted on a post about six foot off the ground, I like to be just able to see onto the table from the ground, but if you're shorter than six feet, I wouldn't suggest you put your table any lower.

Place your table (s) in a sheltered place; preferably near trees or shrubs, but watch out for house cats and boys with air rifles. Once you start feeding the birds, make sure you keep it up; it's hardly right to encourage the birds to settle for the winter in your area and then cut off their food supply. Once winter weather has set in, you should keep a quantity of mixed food available to the birds at all times during the day but this is often quite difficult if there are large numbers of birds and limited funds available. If large numbers of Evening grosbeaks appear, put out only the amount you can afford, then let them go and feed off somebody else! Keep your beef suet out throughout the winter for it will go hard and last a long time; it is also inexpensive. Put out your other food at regular times (try 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. and 2 to 3 p.m.) for birds will learn your schedule and will soon be sitting around waiting for you to appear with their meal.

I haven't as yet put out water for birds in winter, but it is quite possible that I'll try out some experiments on this during the coming season. Birds will utilize snow but what if there isn't snow, but lots of frost—and ice? Some people put out a shallow dish of warm water at each feeding time; it soon freezes but may give a very thirsty bird a chance to drink. Some people in Britain put an aquarium heater in the drinking bowl but then it's not so cold in Britain. This trick may work on the Avalon.

Birds 'working' at a feeding station will attract other birds to the area. Many of these birds will not take your food but just seem to like the company of each other. This is particularly so during spring and Fall when birds are on the move. A feeding station will also 'bring in' birds of prey! I have seen Merlin Falcons take starlings over my garden twice and once a Siskin. The other day an immature sharp-skinned hawk tried very hard to catch one of the Blue Jays at my feeder, but taking a Blue Jay isn't as easy as one may imagine.

It is very interesting and often useful to keep a note of the numbers and types of birds using your feeder; keep the dates too. Members of the Bird Group of this society are keen to hear any news of birds. If I can be of any help to you with your bird feeding problems, don't hesitate to phone me at 726-3270.

Bernard S. Jackson
September 29, 1971

Species of Bird	Sunflower Seed	Small Seed Mixtures	Beef Suet	Cubed or Crumbled Bread or Toast	Broken Dog Biscuits	Mixed Table Scraps	Chopped Fruit & Vegetables	Peanuts (shelled)	Peanut Butter	Cracked Corn	Cooked Meat
Junco	*	*	*	*	*		*		*	*	
Chickadee	*	*	*	*	*		*	*			*
Brown Creeper			*	*				*			
Purple Finch	*	*	*								
Starling		*	*	*	*	*	*				*
House Sparrow	*	*		*	*	*	*			*	
Hairy Woodpecker	*		*		*				*		*
Downy Woodpecker	*		*		*				*		*
Flicker			*						*		
Robin			*	*			*		*		
Blue Jay	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	
Nuthatch	*	*	*				*	*			
Evening Grosbeak	*	*								*	
City Pigeon		*		*	*	*				*	
Fox Sparrow	*	*		*							
Whitethroated Sparrow	*	*	*	*							

Squid Jiggings

"You must come", said Ruth, enthusiastically. "It's a laugh. It really is; and they are so repulsive. Ugh."

So, at 6.30 pm, clad in thick socks, boots, sweaters, long pants, old caps and woollen 'jiggings caps' we set out. Fred, a blue-eyed sixteen year old, was waiting by the wharf. We studied the rotting wooden steps apprehensively but noted that Fred's boat, although old and wooden, was somewhat larger than Dave's little aluminium one. We would go with Fred.

"Bit 'loppy' thi s'evenin'," remarked Fred as his boat sneaked into wave after wave. The hesitant sound of the engine suddenly cut out. We had left the shelter of the bay and had not yet gained the calmer waters of the squid-jiggings ground. The 'lops' hit us sideways on. We sat still half terrified and half hysterical while Fred, balancing in the rocking boat, tried to re-start the engine...

Ah. We were off again - the prow of the boat high in the air and spray drenching us. It felt safer to sit on the bottom

of the boat.

Rounding the point the waves gradually became smaller and as we progressed up the h'Arm (a narrow fjord-like inlet) the water became absolutely calm. Steep spruce covered hills led down to the water and on a small grassy meadow horses were pastured.

"Want a jig?" called out Fred. "No, thanks, I'll watch a while". Secretely I was scared. Fred put a couple of jiggers over the side and immediately began hoisting them in. The string moved very quickly over his fingers and then a squid appeared bright orangey-pink with a bold black eye, waving its tentacles and squirting 'ink' and salt water all over the place.

I tried. At first I didn't want to catch one. Then I felt a subtle weight on my line. I hoisted one in. 'If you can't shake 'er off, pull 'er off, but watch yours fingers.' How could one do it? There was the squid caught fast on the circle of tiny hooks. It looked dangerous.

As darkness fell the squid became phosphorescent- hundreds of darting streaks of silver in the water. Soon the bottom of the boat was covered with a writhing squelching mass. My arms and back were aching. I was beginning to feel cold. Instructions as to how to "pull off their head, pull off their tails and turn them inside out" drifted past me. I was watching the moon rise over the spruce trees.

Yes, it was "a laugh". It was also beautiful, frightening, mysterious and exhilarating. I'm glad I went.

Eileen Frost

Editor's note: Mrs. Frost has recently spent a year living in Seal Cove, White Bay. She adds that apart from their use as bait, squid can be stuffed with breadcrumbs and herbs, sewn up and baked, or, probably more common in Seal Cove, cleaned, opened up flat and hung out to dry on the washing line like dozens of pairs of brown socks.

October Meeting

Frank Tomps, who will be our speaker this month, is a field biologist who has travelled widely in Europe, Africa and Canada. At the time of going to press he is travelling again and we are not sure of the exact title of his talk, but whichever of the alternatives he chooses will be well illustrated with colour slides.