

Report of the Alberta Natural History Society

To the Hon. Duncan Marshall, Minister of Agriculture.

Sir,—I have the honour to submit the ninth annual report of the Alberta Natural History Society for the year 1914.

The annual meeting of the society was held in the council chamber, Red Deer, Wednesday, November 25th, 1914, the president, Mr. R. E. Fiske, Hillsdown, in the chair.

The president reported the result of the competition for the prizes offered by the society at the local fairs as follows: Brown & Schaefer's book on Rocky Mountain Flowers, was offered as a prize for the best collection of wild flowers, competitors to be children in any school of the Red Deer Inspectorate. This was won by Everett Hill of Blackfalds. Folsom's Book on Insects—for the best collection of insects. This was won by Josie Gudmundson of Red Deer. Similar prizes were offered at the Stettler District fair and a prize was awarded to Joe Gray of Stettler, for an excellent collection of insects.

Grants have been made to the various branch societies as follows: to the Red Deer Branch, \$25.00; to the Innisfail Branch, \$10.00; and to the Stettler Branch, \$10.00.

A grant of \$40 was also made to the Red Deer Public Library for the purchase of books on natural history subjects. The secretary's report appended shows a balance on hand of \$166.04 and was adopted on the motion of Mrs. George and seconded by Mrs. Cottingham.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The election of officers for 1915 resulted as follows:

Hon. President: Hon. Duncan Marshall.

Hon. Vice-Presidents: E. Michener, Red Deer.

Geo. Harcourt, Edmonton.

President: R. E. Fiske, Hillsdown.

Vice-Presidents: F. C. Whitehouse, Red Deer, and Presidents of Branches, ex officio.

Hon. Treasurer: Mrs. George, Red Deer.

Hon. Secretary: Mrs. Dunbar, Red Deer.

Committee: Mesdames Cottingham, George, Panely, Tallman and Mr. E. Wilton, Red Deer.

Mrs. Morton, Erskine.

Mr. Sanson, Banff.

Mrs. Geary, Innisfail.

Rev. J. S. Shortt, Innisfail.

LOCAL OBSERVATIONS

The following notes on natural history for 1914 in the Red Deer District were communicated by members. The beavers in Waskasoo Park, Red Deer, which were mentioned in last year's report, are said to be increasing in

numbers, several of their young having been seen They are under the protection of the city authorities. Dr. George reported that the pheasants and Hungarian partridge imported into the south of the province some two or three years ago are becoming more numerous and appear to have become acclimatized. Dr. George hopes they may come further north. Among the birds, magpies are becoming very plentiful. The Canadian jay or "Whisky Jack" is now very scarce. This bird seems to recede from civilization. It was at one time very common in the district. Moose and deer are plentiful this year, especially in the foothills and in the neighbourhood of Rocky Mountain House. The northern hare or snowshoe rabbit abounds in thousands. Disease is, however, making its appearance amongst the rabbits. Mr. Wilton reported the presence of the Prairie Marmot, or Woodchuck, it having been noted in two varieties, the (black and the roan. In the mountains the wood rat, commonly known as the Mountain or Bush-tailed rat, is found in large numbers in the deserted log shanties left by construction camps. The common European rat, which is such a pest in Winnipeg, is not yet reported to have made its appearance in Alberta. The search for fossilized remains of pre-historic animals in the Red Deer Valley has been prosecuted this year by the Geological Department of Ottawa, as well as by Professor Brown of New York. The professor also reports having observed good oil indications at this point. The president stated on the authority of Mr. Frank Farley of Camrose, that at a lake near Camrose the double crested Cormorant, the blue heron and the American white pelican breed in considerable numbers.

REPORT OF THE RED DEER BRANCH

To the President:

I beg to submit the following report of the Red Deer Branch: Interest in the work of the society has been well maintained throughout the year. Much individual search has been carried on by the members of this branch, though no field days have been held. Arrangements were made with the proprietor of one of the moving picture halls in the city to exhibit natural history films. This was done on two occasions and prizes were offered for essays by the school children upon the subjects illustrated on the screen. This proved to be quite a success. Some very good papers were submitted by the children in the competition. In conjunction with one of the exhibitions a very instructive discourse was given by Dr. Sisely, upon the commercial value of nature study. Since the outbreak of the war little work has been attempted, as the leisure time of the members has been largely taken up by patriotic occupations.

MEETINGS

At two of the meetings in the earlier part of the year, papers were read by members of this branch. Mr. Whitehouse gave an interesting paper on Entomology, dealing particularly with the order Lepidoptera.

The meeting was held at the residence of Mr. Whitehouse, thus giving those present the pleasure of seeing his beautiful collection, which was highly appreciated.

The City Hall was secured for hearing a paper given by Mr. Boyce, School Inspector, who chose for his subject the Fossiliferous Deposits in the Valley of the Red Deer River. The subject was presented in an able manner, Mr. Boyce having recently paid a visit to the place where these interesting specimens are being obtained.

Appended is a separate report by Mr. F. C. Whitehouse, which is of special interest to lovers of trees. The present membership of this branch is twenty-one and its funds amount to \$54.55.

Respectfully submitted,
S. Panely, Secretary.

APPENDIX TO REPORT OF RED DEER BRANCH

Red Deer, November 24th, 1914.

As a member of the local branch of the Natural History Society of Alberta and one who devotes attention to the Entomological department, I append memoranda concerning several matters of special interest. *Malacosoma Disstria*, Forest Tent Caterpillar.—In a paper which I prepared for the local society in February last I stated that this destructive pest was in evidence in the Red Deer district in 1913 and that I anticipated an increase in their number for 1914. In this I was not mistaken. I destroyed two large webs in my own garden this summer and south west of Penhold a considerable white poplar bluff was entirely denuded of leaves, I am of the opinion that in this section of Alberta a parasite, the Tachnid fly, is holding the pest in tolerable check at the present time. In orde een authenticated, I do not hesitate to report upon these.

NEW INSECTS RECORDED

Catacala Pura, the Pure Underwing.—"This moth is recorded by Mr. J. B. Smith, as occurring in Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico in October," Professor Chas. J. S. Bethune, Guelph. "Habitat-region of the Rocky Mountains,"—Dr. W. J. Holland, *Moth Book*.

That it has never before been taken in Alberta I have upon the authority of Mr. F. H. Wooley-Dod, of Midnapore, who has devoted over twenty years to the lepidoptera of this province. Whether or not it has been taken in any other province of Canada I have not as yet definitely ascertained.

It was taken at light about September 1st.

Asteroscopus Borealis (Smith)—This moth is even rarer than the preceding species. The type was taken by Mr. Firmstone Heath of Cartwright, Manitoba, 1899. The Cartwright insect referred to is in the United States National Museum, Washington. Until my enquiries concerning the moth have been brought to a conclusion, I regret that I cannot state whether or not subsequent specimens have been taken. One recognized authority states that in his opinion mine is "only the second specimen so far known." He admits, however, that he may be mistaken.

Respectfully submitted,
(Sgd.) F. C. Whitehouse.

REPORT OF THE ERSKINE BRANCH

President: Mrs. S. S. Judd.

Secretary-Treasurer—Mrs. C. B. Morton.

Number of members—six. Number of meetings—ten.

Number of books in library—six.

Amount in hands of Treasurer—\$28.80.

Owing to the small number of members, each decided to do individual work, taking up the study of flowers and geology. A great number of beautiful butterflies were noted in this district this summer. An excellent entry of insects was made at the Stettler Fair, Joe Gray of Stettler, winning the prize. This boy is quite a naturalist, having in his house a number of fine specimens. An endeavour will be made to place this work in the public schools next year.

Respectfully submitted,
(Signed) Mrs. C. B. Morton.-