

NATURE
NEWS



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Number 1

FOREWORD

It is gratifying to be able to start a new volume with reports from so many observers we had not heard from before.

This is also a good time to evaluate the service that "Nature News" has rendered in the past two years. This may be summarized briefly as follows: (1) Quite a number of recipients have contributed records of competent observations of wildlife in their sections of the province which has aided our wildlife research programme -- just what I had hoped for -- and also increased interest in this bulletin. (2) The "News" now goes to some 200 teachers who have applied for it and who, we hope, find it useful in their Nature Study classes. More requests from teachers arrive every month. (3) A few readers have become members of the museum. While this financial aid has been welcome and more might justify improvements in the bulletin we are not soliciting it as we feel that current reports on the birds, animals, flowers, etc., in your district are of more value to this museum department than one dollar for a non-resident membership. Where the "News" proves of use in the schools it is just a new phase of the museum's free school service.

How do you like our new cover design -- the Eastern Panther, New Brunswick's recently rediscovered carnivore.

W. A. Squires, Curator.



Miss MacCoubrey at St. Andrews saw her first Evening Grosbeak October 7th and Pine Grosbeaks November 11th. George Boyer reported Evening Grosbeaks (20) at Sackville October 24th and the most Pine Grosbeaks in six years. Mrs. Ayling also reported both Pine and Evening Grosbeaks at Moncton October 30th and I saw 8 Pine Grosbeaks outside my office window early in November, the first here in several years. Mrs. Alice Lee saw Pine Grosbeaks at Biggar Ridge, Carleton County, December 6th. We expect a great influx of Pine as well as Evening Grosbeaks this winter and I would appreciate counts with dates from all parts of the province.

Ronald Spear of Lepreau recently caught a bright blue lobster and brought it to the museum alive. This is undoubtedly a very rare colour phase as none of the fishermen at Lepreau had ever seen a blue one and a local dealer recalled having seen only one or two in his lifetime. I attempted to preserve this specimen in formalin but the colour faded and it reddened badly.

Mr. G. G. Murdoch saw a Robin in his garden on Douglas Avenue Saint John on January 21st and H. C. White reported a Blackbird (sp ?) at Petitcodiac in the middle of January. Although we associate these birds with the summertime they, as well as Vesper Sparrows, Juncoes, Song Sparrows, and a few others, remain with us as isolated individuals or in small flocks near the Bay of Fundy and much more rarely inland. More surprising to me was a report of a male Kingfisher at a spring hole on the upper Kennebecasis on January 11th. Mr. White also reported more than 100 Black Ducks wintering on the upper Kennebecasis and Pollett Rivers. Two White-throated Sparrows were reported at Biggar Ridge, Carleton County. December 6th. This is another species that attempts to winter occasionally but is certainly unusual so far inland.

I continue to see Bluejays quite regularly at Fredericton as I have for a number of winters. White reports them more common than usual at Petitcodiac this winter: Mrs. C. E. Sharp has them eating sunflowers and visiting a feeding tray in her garden at Moncton; Mrs. Harold Hamm of Renforth was also feeding them early in December; George Boyer reported Bluejays plentiful at Sackville from early October with a few still around in December.

Miss MacCoubrey reported the first Horned Larks at St. Andrews November 11th; Boyer saw good numbers of them at Sackville during November and school children saw a flock at Biggar Ridge about December 1st. These flocks would undoubtedly include both the Prairie and Northern Horned Larks. One examined at Sackville November 26th proved to be the latter subspecies.

I have been gathering reports of Killdeer in N.B. for several years, first to prove that it occurred here, then breeding records, and now Boyer reports it in flocks, 15 on the Southwest Miramichi August 8th and 12 near Woodstock August 15th. I saw such a flock near Montreal in October and if they continue to be seen here in such numbers we shall have to take the Killdeer off of the rare list.

Gannets should occur along our shores quite frequently during migration to and from Gaspé but I have few records in my files. However Boyer reports about 50 near Portage Island (Miramichi Bay) July 27th and Miss MacCoubrey saw nearly 100 in both adult and immature plumage between Grand Manan and Campobello on October 27th. Kittiwakes and Bonaparte Gulls were seen near Campobello the same day.

More southerly birds continue to appear in the province. Miss MacCoubrey saw a Red-eyed Towhee scratching in the leaves along the street in St. Andrews October 21st, the fourth or fifth report I have for N.B., all males. Then on October 24th across the Tantramar Marshes from Sackville Boyer saw an Arkansas Kingbird and followed it for some time. This again is the fifth record I have for the province (the third reported by Boyer) and 150 miles farther northeast than Pennfield, site of the nearest previous report.

Boyer reported Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs at Sackville from October 8th and MacCoubrey saw a considerable flock of Snow Buntings at St. Andrews October 28th.

Those interested in mammal distribution will be interested to learn that the Gray Squirrel is apparently increasing in the Petitcodiac region, five being reported there recently, one of which shorted a power line and set a pole on fire. I do not yet have any reports for the 60 miles between Rothesay and Petitcodiac.

I was most interested in a report from H. C. White that the Long-eared Sunfish, Lepomis auritus, occurs in the lower Saint John and has been collected in the Kennebecasis and Canaan Rivers. I shall have to reexamine the Sunfish I collected in the Nashwank River some years ago and classified as the common species L. gibbosus. The classification of fish is not a specialty of mine but I have been attempting to assemble a checklist of our freshwater species so this record is very welcome.

A belated note from Mrs. A. R. Ayling of Moncton deserves special mention. She reports that on April 12th last, shortly after midnight there was a great movement of migrating birds over Moncton -- the sky was filled with twittering birds. I have mentioned it before but it may not be generally known to our readers that great hosts of migrating birds travel along favoured routes (one in N.B. is the shore of the Bay of Fundy) on their way to and from the Arctic, Labrador, etc. Also most of the **small** birds migrate at night! The northerly migration will be under way again before our next number is distributed and it would be of interest to know if Moncton is on the main line or if the birds were detouring a storm front on April 12th.

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Number 2.

FOREWORD

We have to keep our mailing list up to date. It is embarrassing to have copies returned with postage due, so if your copy is not correctly addressed please tell us so.

Undoubtedly some, among the 200-300 who have asked to have their names on our mailing list, have not found this bulletin what they expected it to be, others may have changed their names or addresses.

If you are not a museum member and have not corresponded with us since receiving several copies of the News we have enclosed a form which must be filled out and returned if you wish your name to remain on the mailing list.

W. A. Squires, Curator.

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Spring has officially arrived in the lower St. John valley. Writing this on March 21st I have just had a report that the Canada Geese arrived yesterday at Brown's Flats. Local tradition holds that they always arrive on St. Patrick's Day but with Leap Year and the deep snow they must have become confused. It would be interesting to know what they feed on this early with little open water and the fields mostly covered with snow. Every spring, for part of March and most of April, small flocks of Geese appear in the fields here and there along the lower fifty miles of the St. John valley from the Kennebecasis to the Jemseg.

More Bluejays have been reported from Moncton where L. A. Machum saw one and Mrs. C. E. Sharp five, many times in January and February, and S. D. Whitman reported them common at Gunningsville across the river. Mr. Machum writing on February 15th also reported 12 Evening Grosbeaks feeding on rose hips. Margery Squires saw a flock of 38 Evening Grosbeaks at Fredericton in February.

We have had reports of two birds in the province this winter which have strayed far from their proper haunts. Both constitute first records for the province which, while of no world-shaking importance, is viewed with great interest by naturalists.

Allan Moses, the well-known naturalist of Grand Manan, got a large female Rail on January 21st, which had been caught by a dog. He identified it as a Clapper Rail and the locality near salt water and the grayish colour suggest this species but unless very recent there are no reports for the Clapper Rail north of Bangor, Maine, and none in that state since 1900. It might possibly be the quite similar but browner and larger King Rail which has been found in Maine several times in recent years. Either species it would be the first record for New Brunswick supported by a specimen.

In January Mrs. A. B. Connell noticed a strange gray bird feeding on barberries in her garden at Woodstock. I suggested that it might be a Mockingbird as this bird, considered southern by many people, actually winters quite often in Maine and was found once in Saint John in November.

However, the Woodstock bird has a white eye ring, a rufous patch in the wing and a slightly forked tail all of which adds up to a Townsend's Solitaire, a western bird never reported before, as far as I know, east of Manitoba in Canada. One appeared near New York fifty years ago. Mr. George Boyer of the Canadian Wildlife Service recently saw this bird and pronounced it definitely a Solitaire not a Mockingbird. Although we are convinced that this is a Solitaire such a rarity would have to be collected and the skin preserved to convince anyone in the future that it had been here. Since it has been watched and fed for two months no one wants it killed to form a record.

Henrik Deichmann reported a Song Sparrow at Moss Glen, Kings County, on February 11th and 16 White-winged Crossbills there on the 17th. He also reported Chickadees of both species but all correspondents seem to agree that the Chickadees are unusually scarce this winter.

S. D. Whitman reported that he found the tail and leg of a freshly-killed Gray Squirrel on a wood road near Moncton several years ago. Is this squirrel extending its range or is "Nature News" just bringing out the records? He also identified a Gannet found dead near Moncton in the spring a few years ago. While we could wish for more accurate dates these reports are all important.

This is the time of the year when travellers on the CPR between Welsford and McAdam see numerous deer along the right of way. The past winter with its deep snow could have been hard on the deer which must have yarded where they would be easy prey for predators, dogs, and poachers; but in this region, at least, they appear to be as numerous as ever. I saw six in one group on March 21st.

The first birds to start the northward trek are probably the Horned Larks which appear in Feb. I have as yet no evidence to suggest that these actually winter in the south of the province as they do in Nova Scotia. Many districts hardly ever see them in migration but they are often numerous on the east coast. The Crows when they move up the river valleys in mid-March appear everywhere. A few were reported all winter north to Woodstock but on March 21st I saw hundreds in flight at Welsford and similar flocks were no doubt seen elsewhere. By the time this reaches you Robins, Grackles (Blackbirds), Song Sparrows, and Juncos should have put in their annual appearance.

I have written quite a bit about the Bald Eagle in recent numbers. On January 11th, looking out of my office window, I saw one in full adult plumage soaring and wheeling in the sun which made the pure white head and tail gleam and glisten. All through January and February the residents of the Lancaster Hospital region of west Saint John were treated to regular displays by what was probably the same eagle. I hope this one can keep out of the way of anyone who wants a trophy until New Brunswick decides to protect this species.

I have now found that the Bald Eagle is protected in all 48 states of the United States, and in Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia. The way seems to be cleared for a change of policy in Alaska where the territorial game commission has been paying a bounty under the mistaken impression that it is a serious predator. 100,000 were killed for bounty there but perhaps it will be protected before it is exterminated. In Nova Scotia the Fish and Game Protective Association gave the Bald Eagle its official support in a resolution passed in 1949.

Mr. H. C. White sent us the skin of a Sharp-skinned Hawk which was collected near Petitcodiac February 9, 1952.

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F O R E W O R D

This number should be devoted chiefly to the spring wild flowers but first there are a few important late reports for winter birds and new spring records.

We have reports from several correspondents in Victoria county for this number- birds, animals and flowers. Little has been published about this part of the province and every note is important.

This museum department sponsors as a sideline a Junior Stamp club. If any readers of this bulletin have any postage stamps, new or old, that they have no use for, the members of this group would make good use of them.

W. A. Squires, Curator.



G. H. Brown reported Evening Grosbeaks at Plaster Rock last winter in considerable numbers. Mr. George Baird also reports them at Perth every winter in flocks of 20 to 100. A great deal of interest has been taken in the occurrence of Evening Grosbeaks in the Tobique valley since they were first reported there in summer in 1946 and young were seen at Riley Brook in 1948. About 50, one banded at Lewiston, Maine, were captured in a building there in June 1951 and later released.

Evening Grosbeaks were first seen in New Brunswick about 1915, extending their winter wanderings from the mid-west, but with the coming of spring they went west again. It was not until about fifteen years ago that it was realized that a few might be remaining in summer in northern New Brunswick to breed. It seems possible that quite a few are now breeding here but some, probably a different lot, are found in the same region in winter.

Mr. Brown also saw a flock of at least 500 Snow Buntings at Plaster Rock on April 7th and reported flocks of 50 to 60 common. G. F. Boyer saw a male of this species in Sunbury County in summer plumage, April 18th. These breed from northernmost Greenland south to the mainland of North America.

It is interesting to note that Robins and Grackles reached Plaster Rock April 3rd. Apparently there is little difference in arrival date between the north and south of the province.

I saw the first Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker at Fredericton, May 18th, that I have seen in several years. This woodpecker with the dark-blue back and yellow crown is, judging by old records, common in the north of the province.

Boyer and Bruce Wright saw two Glossy Ibis at Maugerville, May 7th. This is the first provincial record although the species has no doubt been in the province before as there is a record for Nova Scotia and two were at Luber, Maine for some time in 1935. They wander to the northeast in spring but are only known to breed in Florida and possibly Louisiana. They are also found in Europe and Asia.

Miss Mary H. Pickett of Andover reported a hillside covered with blooming Bloodroot April 20th. I have only rarely found Bloodroot and considered it very scarce although I note that it is reported north to Cape Breton in Nova Scotia. We still have a lot to learn about our flora as well as fauna.

When a Marsh-Marigold was brought into the Museum from Coldbrook, April 28th, it was the first time I had seen this flower although I had had reports of it. It is probably much commoner to the north.

Bluets apparently bloom over a long period. I have seen them in York County in late May and in Charlotte county in July. This year they were brought to the Museum from near Saint John on April 28th.

Coltsfoot started to bloom at Saint John in late March as usual and continued through April and into May. Dog's Tooth Violets appeared in sunny places by mid-April but were a month later on shady slopes. I saw the first Mayflowers (Trailing Arbutus) at Fredericton Junction April 25th and found it blooming in profusion at Little River, Sunbury County, April 27th.

By May 19th Twisted Stalk, Red & Painted Trillium, Goldthread, Bellwort, and Cassandra, were out; Shadbush (Bilberry) was beginning to open in the central and southern part of the province; Jack-in-the-Pulpit was beginning to unfold and Clintonia was budded.

Did you ever really look at the flowers on trees? Probably not unless you are a forester. You will find that very few of them have showy petals like the plants that we usually call flowers. Most trees have the male (staminate) and female (pistillate) flowers separate, often like the poplars on different trees. One poplar tree may be covered with catkins, the male flowers and another with quite different-looking female flowers.

George E. Baird has given us several new records for Gray Squirrels extending their range to Andover and well up the Tobique River into the central highlands of New Brunswick. He saw them first at Andover about 1939 and has seen them once or twice a year since. He saw one at the Tobique Narrows in August 1951. There is another colony at Lerwick, Victoria County and Jack Ogilvy of Kilburn informed Baird that there has been a small colony in the Gulguac area of the Tobique for many years.

One Panther report for Victoria county, when investigated by an experience trapper, proved to be a large male Fisher. Many people, even woodsmen do not know how large a Fisher can be and that it spends much of its time in trees.

F O R E W O R D

This number has been delayed by the holiday season and includes reports and observations for early August as well as June and July.

This is the season to get acquainted with the flowers of mid-summer. Every nature enthusiast knows many of the spring flowers but at this season we are surrounded by a great host of plants many of which look familiar but cannot be named.

W. A. Squires, Curator.

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We think of the Goldenrod as a fall flower but how early it actually appears coming into bloom in July. The large Canada Goldenrod is the most noticeable species but we have about twenty different kinds.

The so-called Fall Dandelion starts blooming in June but continues until frost.

Very conspicuous along the roadside is the Joe-Pye Weed and Boneset. The purplish flowers of the former are now especially noticeable in swampy places.

The woody-stemmed Meadowsweet and Steeplebush, our wild Spiraeas, came into bloom in July. These are widespread and common along the roadsides and partially cleared fields are often covered with the pink "steeple" of the latter.

This is the season when numerous flowers appear with yellow blossoms quite a lot like the dandelion. Many of these will be Hawkweeds. You may be familiar with the King Devil and Devil's Paint Brush which often cover acres of neglected fields with their closely matted leaves but do you know the taller (10 to 50 inches) Canada Hawkweed that occasionally smothers large sections of the roadside to the exclusion of all other vegetation. The Hawkweeds form a very aggressive genus of the Composite Family. We have about twelve species several of which are so seldom recognized separately that they have no distinctive English names.

The various species of Sow Thistle are also in bloom now and have several yellow dandelion-like blossoms on each stem.

I have been observing the huge white-flowered plants in the roadside ditches which I have usually classed all together as "Water Parsnip". These belong to the Parsley Family and have large many-flowered umbelliferous flower heads. First blooming (June-July) is the Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*) which often reaches nine feet in height. The leaves have three maple-shaped leaflets. The flowerhead is very large, white and conspicuous. I have not been able to learn whether this is poisonous or not. Blooming a little later (July-August) is Water Hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*) also called Spotted Cowbane and Musquash-root. This plant has a tuber-like root which looks like sweet potatoes, smells like parsnips and is deadly poisonous. I have seen it throughout central and southern New Brunswick, very common.

Miss Janet Curry of Andover thinks the Evening Grosbeaks have taken up permanent residence there as they continue to appear month after month. She also reports that the Baltimore Orioles have bred there the last two summers. This colourful bird is rare here but I usually have a few reports from the St. John valley. Kermod Parr saw it at Fredericton this year and several pairs usually breed there.

Two Mourning Doves were seen at Cape Spencer, St. John County, during July (breeding?) and I saw one at Petersville August 13th.

Stanley Gorham reported a pair of Indigo Buntings at Browns Flat July--. This also sounds like a breeding pair and we have no definite breeding records for this species. If anyone finds a nest we want full information.

Crossbills, especially the White-winged, seem to be more numerous than usual this year. I saw three flocks of twenty or more each in the Burpee Game Refuge in Sunbury County August 3rd. One flock contained Red Crossbills and the others White-winged. I have also seen and had reports of White-winged Crossbills in several other places in the south of the province.

For sheer mass of numbers the shorebirds can beat anything else. On the tidal mud flats of the Petitcodiac River near Albert on August 7th I saw more birds at one time than I would ever have thought possible. Apparently nearly all were Semipalmated or Least Sandpipers, acres covered solidly with birds that rose with a tremendous roar of wings.-- countless thousands near at hand and similar flocks along the shore for several miles.

I watched a pair of Bluebirds with three young at Fredericton for a couple of weeks in July and also saw one near Chipman. This beautiful thrush appears much commoner than when I was first studying birds thirty years ago.

Our Phoebes which have raised young within a hundred feet of our kitchen door in Fredericton since the early 1930's again produced two broods this year.

James Bond of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, visited Shippegan Island in June. Among the many interesting bird records he now has for this and Miscou Island is the Killdeer. He also reports it well established on the mainland at Pokemouche. Just a very few years ago we became very excited at a report of a Killdeer in the province but now we know it occurs regularly in Victoria, Madawaska and Gloucester counties as well as occasionally in the south of the province.

I have mentioned before that Purple Martin occur in the Grand Lake region. They are in fact very common there. In July and early August I saw hundreds of them on the west side from Scotchtown to Princess Park, and on the east side from Young's Cove to Jemseg.

FOREWORD

I have more reports of birds than I can use in this number but as these are mostly seasonal records they will be out of date before our November-December issue, and many more will be needed by then.

Although all these bird records are most useful to me in my special research work I always wish that I could include more about other nature subjects in the "News" for those who prefer wild flowers, rocks, minerals, mammals, etc.

W. A. Squires, Curator.

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On September 28th, in the woods near Stanley, York County, I found a patch of raspberries many of which were in bloom and some were just showing small hard, green fruit. I was at a loss to explain this belated flowering and fruiting. None of my reference books mentions flowers after July while one refers to ripe fruit in September. Has anyone else found raspberry blossoms this late?

In the July number I mentioned that Crossbills seemed unusually numerous this year. I had a recent letter from Mrs. Irma Metcalfe of Thistletown, Ontario, who was on the Nova Scotia shore of the Bay of Fundy from July 7th to 20th. She reports White-winged Crossbills there in almost unbelievable numbers. She writes "I don't think there was any time in the day that we didn't hear or see Crossbills. A walk in the woods was noisy with them dozens singing at onceLarger flocks of maybe 500 were quite common and even after they passed the woods behind were still alive with others" During the two previous summers Mr. and Mrs. Metcalfe had camped at the same places and two years ago saw three White-winged Crossbills at Horseshoe Cove. Mrs. Guy Humphrey reported a flock of White-winged Crossbills at Hampton about August 20th.

I have had several more reports of Evening Grosbeaks in the north of the province in the past summer and it now appears that there must be a large and extensive breeding population there. Mr. R. Dudley Ross saw about 50 Evening Grosbeaks at Gulguac and Nictau and also on the Kedgwick River about 80 miles north of Plaster Rock. He also learned that they had been seen in these localities all summer. Mr. Melvin Moore of Fredericton saw two on the Upsalquitch River August 10th-13th. They were also seen in the area sprayed for spruce budworms at the headwaters of the Upsalquitch in June. These few reports establish the Evening Grosbeak probably breeding over an area 80 by 40 miles in 1952 and the first summer report, about 1940, was from Tabusintac 50 miles farther east.

About the middle of August I visited the old Albertite mine near Albert mines. I was accompanied by a paleontologist from the American Museum who wanted to see some of the fossil fish which had been reported there years ago. First we looked up "Acadian Geology" by Sir William Dawson and read his description of the place where he found the fossils in 1852. When we got there we studied the lay of the land and decided where Dawson found them, dug out pieces of shale, broke them open, and there were the fossils scales, groups of scales, bones and half a fish. A photograph taken in the 1860's or 1870's showed a busy community here -- houses,

nine buildings, a church, -- today it is a cow pasture with not even a board left of all the buildings. The albertite deposit played out.

In previous numbers of Nature News we have mentioned the Bald Eagle which appears to be in danger of extinction. Conservationists everywhere have been pleased to learn that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has nullified the bounty on this bird in Alaska by decreeing it illegal to possess or transport it. So now it is protected in all the United States and Alaska and in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario.

Miss H. W. MacCoubrey of St. Andrews was into the Museum recently to discuss a bird seen at St. Andrews September 21st. It was studied at very close range and was undoubtedly a male Dickcissel, the first reported on the mainland of New Brunswick. It is interesting to note in the latest number of the Canadian Field Naturalist that the first Dickcissel has been recorded in Newfoundland (November 3, 1951). The unusual Newfoundland records coming in recently give a hint of where some of the rare birds we see may go in summer.

The large Rail which was found at Grand Manan, January 17, 1952, and now in the Moses Museum, has been finally identified as a Clapper Rail as Allan Moses had named it. On September 21st another female Clapper Rail was killed at the Pt. Lepreau light -- the second in N. B.

Red Admiral butterflies have been very common this season. The caterpillars did considerable damage in a number of flower gardens that I know of. I saw several of these as well as Common Sulphurs and Cabbage butterflies on October 1st.

Ross reported three Mourning Warblers near Plaster Rock July 30th, and Miss MacCoubrey saw the species at St. Andrews September 7th. These reports interest me as I have not seen a Mourning Warbler for many years. Apparently it is commoner in the north than in the south of the province.

Miss MacCoubrey has supplied the following latest records this year for Warblers at St. Andrews. Some of them will of course be with us for several weeks yet.

September 1st. Pine Warbler and Ovenbird; September 7th Chestnut-sided and Mourning Warblers; September 17th Cape May Warbler; September 19th Blackpoll Warbler; September 21st Redstart and Bay-breasted Warbler; September 22nd Nashville Warbler; September 28th Black and White, Parula, Yellow, Magnolia and Black-throated Green Warblers; and September 30th Myrtle, Yellow-throat and Yellow Palm Warblers. I saw several Myrtle Warblers at Fredericton October 5th.

Miss MacCoubrey also reported a flock of 50 Cowbirds near Saint Andrews on September 15th and 20 Pipits on September 20th.

Asters and Goldenrod are the characteristic fall flowers here. While it may be difficult to name each species it is interesting to see how many different ones you can find. On a short walk recently I easily found five different kinds of Goldenrod.