

The

This is Young Naturalist Year: 1966-67
Do you have a Young Naturalists Club in your school?

Young Naturalist

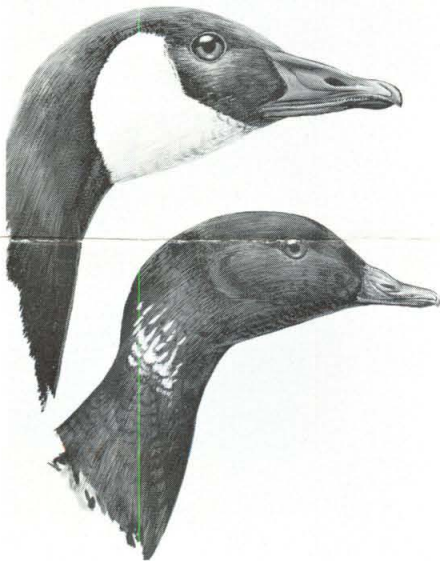


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APRIL, 1967

Brant-“Cousin” of the Canada Goose



The head of the Canada Goose (upper sketch), and the Brant are about one-quarter life-size.

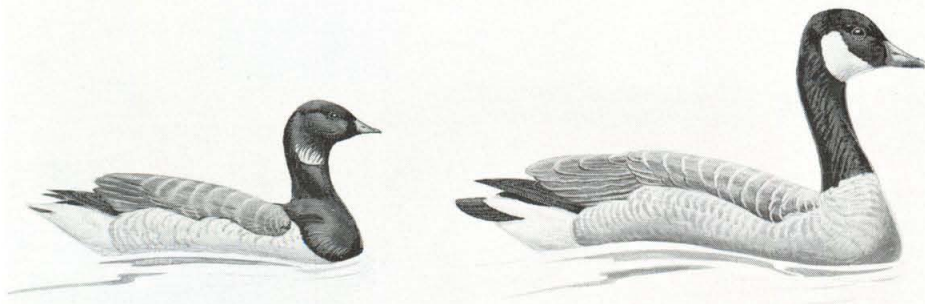
No doubt you have at some time seen Canada Geese. Do you also know their little “cousin” — the Brant?

I can still remember the thrill I experienced when I first saw Brant. It was on June 11, 1938. Spring migration should have been over but a “hunch” said to me: “Go to Sunnyside and look.” So I went to Sunnyside Park (in Toronto) and carefully looked over the gulls along the breakwater. Presently an unfamiliar shape began to “steam” across the gap between two breakwaters: it was a bird as big as a black duck or a little larger, riding high and jauntily. It looked something like a small, dumpy Canada Goose but the white seemed to have slipped off the cheeks halfway down its black neck and become dirty on the way down. Its beak was stubbier and more rounded on top than that of a

Canada Goose and its tail was more tipped up, showing the long white undertail coverts. Undoubtedly a Brant—my first. Soon this bird was followed across the gap by another, and another, until nine had passed by in single file. One was seen eating some long green plant obtained from the lake side of the breakwater, perhaps the favorite food, eelgrass.

Since that memorable day I have come to look for brant in late May and early June. Sometimes I have seen them at Sunnyside, sometimes in loose flocks flying overhead. Last spring, on May 14, a flock of about 75 were riding the waves off Whitby harbour adding life to a sparkling blue lake.

Canada Geese are seen more frequently nowadays too as the Toronto Island flock keeps growing. You may see the familiar V overhead any month of the year as these local birds explore the city and suburbs. I saw one flying up the Don Valley one morning, twisting its long neck this way and that to better view the traffic winding its way beneath on the Parkway. That is not the time and place to study and admire their striking flight pattern . . . the big brown bird with its six foot wingspread, the white patch at the base of the tail, the long black neck with white face and intelligent dark eye. Look for these marks if you have an opportunity to walk along the beach at Sunnyside or Toronto Island . . . or



Sketches by Barry Kent MacKay

The Brant (right) looks like a small Canada Goose. Note how the cheek patches of the Canada Goose seem to become dirty neck marks in the Brant.

See BRANT — Page 3

The Coming of Spring

Part 2 — concluding article

Equinoctial

The long-standing popular belief is that severe storms occur at the vernal equinox. It is true that in March we are invaded by air masses which are often at extremes of temperature and humidity and this creates storminess. But it is false to pinpoint the day of the spring equinoxes as the basis for storms. Modern investigations have shown there is no special tendency to rough weather at equinoctial times, vernal or autumnal.

Lion-like March comes in hoarse, with tempestuous breath. March is traditionally a boisterous month throughout the temperate zones of the northern hemisphere. The reason is that the polar regions are then about their coldest after six months of night while the equatorial regions are at their hottest because the sun is overhead. The strength of the atmospheric circulation depends primarily on the difference in temperature between the equator and the poles; hence it is most vigorous when the contrasts of heat and cold are greatest — in March.

Spring tides — unusually high tides — do occur in spring but they also occur twice each month in all the seasons of the year.

Febrile

Spring is the time of spring fever. Spring fever is a common set of symptoms occurring with many people in the temperate zones around mid-April, particularly with the appearance of a sudden warm spell following a long cold period.

It is generally marked by a feeling

of lassitude associated with changes going on in the body to meet the changes going on out-of-doors.

The long-held idea of thinning blood in the spring has some basis in fact: when the temperature rises, the body has to get rid of heat. Blood vessels dilate so that blood can be carried nearer the skin where heat is lost more quickly to the air. Plasma, a watery substance in the blood, increases in amount; hence the thinning. The general enervated feeling that takes place is simply the body's reaction to the energy being used to effect the changes in the blood. For a few days, until acclimatization takes place, the familiar spring fever symptoms may occur.

Phenological

For the astronomer, spring may date from the vernal equinox, but for the grower of green thumbs, spring dates from the day of first flowering. This is called "phenological" spring and is taken to begin when the average temperature of the air goes above and does not fall below 45°F. But phenological (i.e. growth) dates vary widely with place and species and are therefore quite detailed.

You may make your own phenological report on the arrival of spring by noting the average first dates of the flowering of common plants and shrubs and trees, and if you will, the dates of the arrival of spring immigrant birds and the first appearance of various lepidoptera.

March wind and April showers bring forth May flowers. Changeable, they say, as an April day: the uncer-

tain glory of an April day. April and May between them make bread for all the year. April for me, May for my master. Let it rain in April and May for me, and all the rest of the year for thee.

The merry month of May: welcome be thou, fair fresh May. Heat in May gives strength for the whole year. For a warm May the parsons pray. A May wet was never kind yet. Rainy May marries peasants but May rain is death to young pigs. Water in May is bread all the year. Cold May enriches no one. A leaky May and a dry June keep the poor man's head abune.*

Envoi

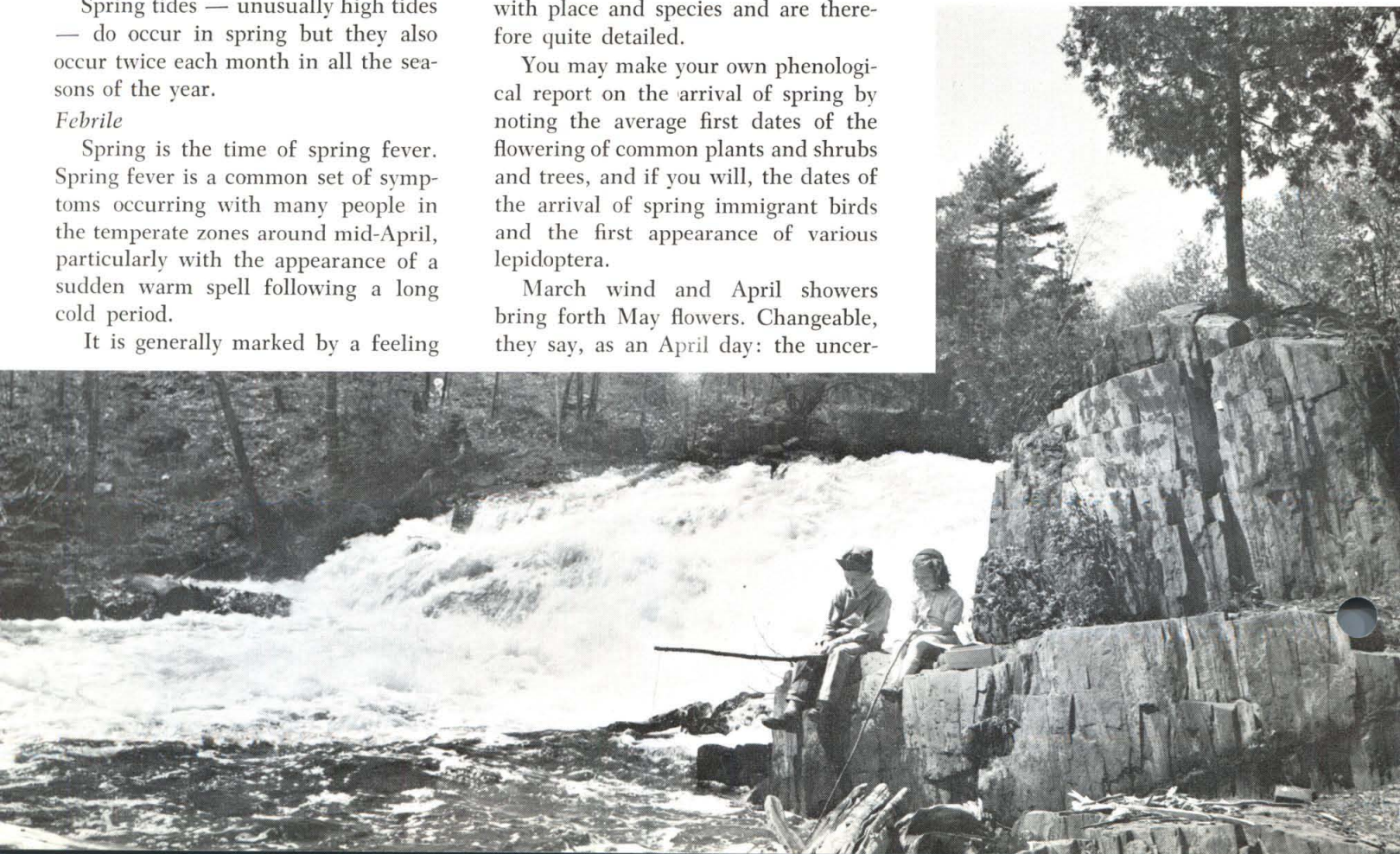
Spring: slippy drippy nippy; summer: showery flower bowery; autumn: hopyy cropy poppy; winter: wheezy sneezy breezy.

What a wondrous thing is spring: first it blew and snow and then it thew and then by jing it friz.

—PERCY SALTZMAN

*abune: ancient Scottish for "above".

Ed.: See experiment, page 4



Club News



Kingston Junior Naturalists

This month our news comes from Kingston. Dr. Fred Cooke writes:

"We had a very interesting meeting of the Kingston Junior Naturalists last week. Ricky Beharriell, who is the youngest member of our senior club, gave a talk to the juniors about his hobby—reptiles and amphibians. He told us how to identify the different groups and added interest to his talk by bringing along a number of live specimens. He displayed a garter snake, a DeKay's Snake, and a five-foot Black Rat Snake which had just shed its skin. Most of our members were quite happy to handle the exhibits. He also brought a newt, two types of salamander, two kinds of turtle, two frogs, and an iguana. Finally, he told us how to set up a terrarium so that we could keep and study these

animals at home (mothers willing!).

"The previous month Dr. Martin Edwards instructed us to nature photography and showed some beautiful slides. The following Saturday he took us out with our cameras and gave a practical demonstration of how to photograph birds at feeders. The juniors got some good pictures as well."

Many boys and girls have organized a natural science club in their school or classroom. If you have such a club, you are invited to share your experiences with others by reporting your activities in this column. We would be pleased to have pictures of your outings and projects. Be sure to describe your activities fully, giving the names of the leaders and assistants. Write to Mrs. Barbara Wilkins, Editor of Club News, 213 Rosedale Heights Drive, Toronto 7, Ontario.

BRANT — from Page 1

study them as they proudly swim with long necks upstretched in the waters just offshore.

The accompanying sketches by Barry Kent MacKay will point out useful hints for differentiating these two geese which add so much to the charm and interest of Ontario lakes and skies.

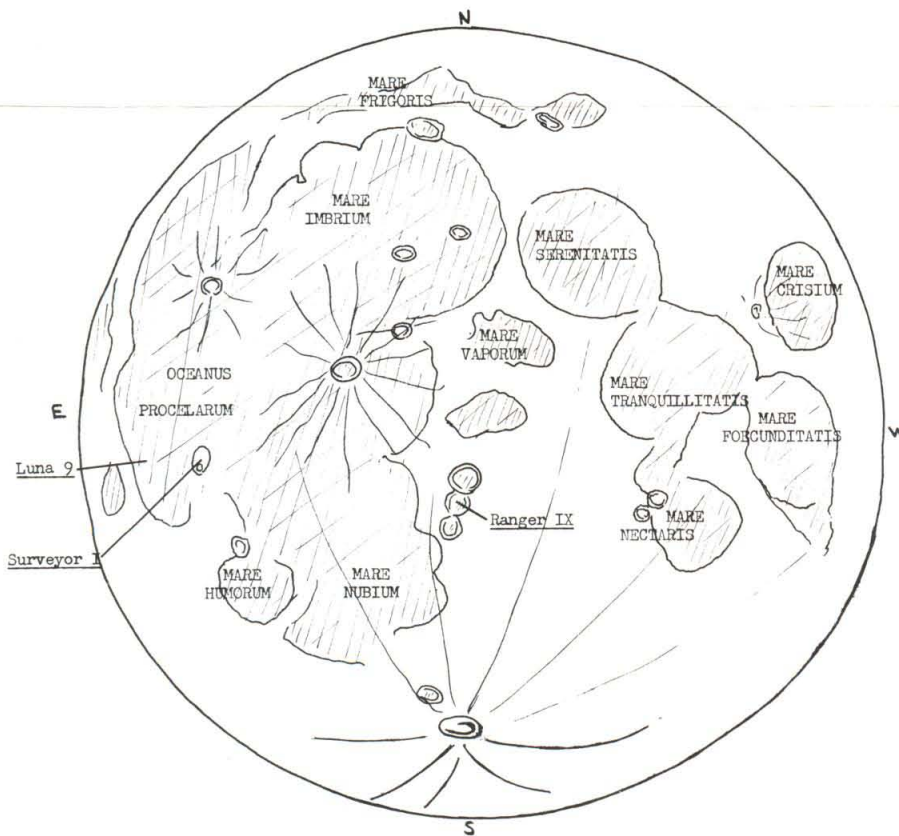
J. MURRAY SPEIRS

ancient astronomers to be covered by water and therefore given the Latin name "mare" for "sea") are the dark brown areas covering perhaps one-third of the near-side of the Moon. While the bright highland areas are extremely rough, dotted with craters and mountains, the maria are relatively flat and smooth and are similar in appearance to deserts, though they are not covered with sand. It is the smooth, flat nature of the maria which makes them of current interest: they are ideal landing areas for future astronauts. The maria are best seen at the time of full Moon, the craters at first or last quarter.

The five maria on the west side of the Moon are all rather small and, with the exception of Mare Crisium, tend to blend together to form one system. Mare Crisium, being separated from the others, is easy to distinguish by eye. The area covered by craters on the west side of the Moon is much larger than the area covered by the maria. On the east side, the area of the maria is greater than that of the craters and mountains. Near the north lunar pole is Mare Imbrium, thought to be the youngest (most recently formed) of the maria and to have been formed by the impact and explosion of an asteroid.

Oceanus Procelarum (Ocean of Storms) is the largest of the maria. It is of special interest because the American Surveyor I, Russian Luna 9, and several other Russian space craft are sitting near its eastern border. Because of the large flat area available in Oceanus Procelarum we can expect other rockets to be directed toward a landing there. It is hoped that astronauts will be able to explore this region within the next three years.

DOUGLAS P. HUBE



The Moon Seen with the Naked Eye

The visible side of the Moon may be divided into two areas, the dark,

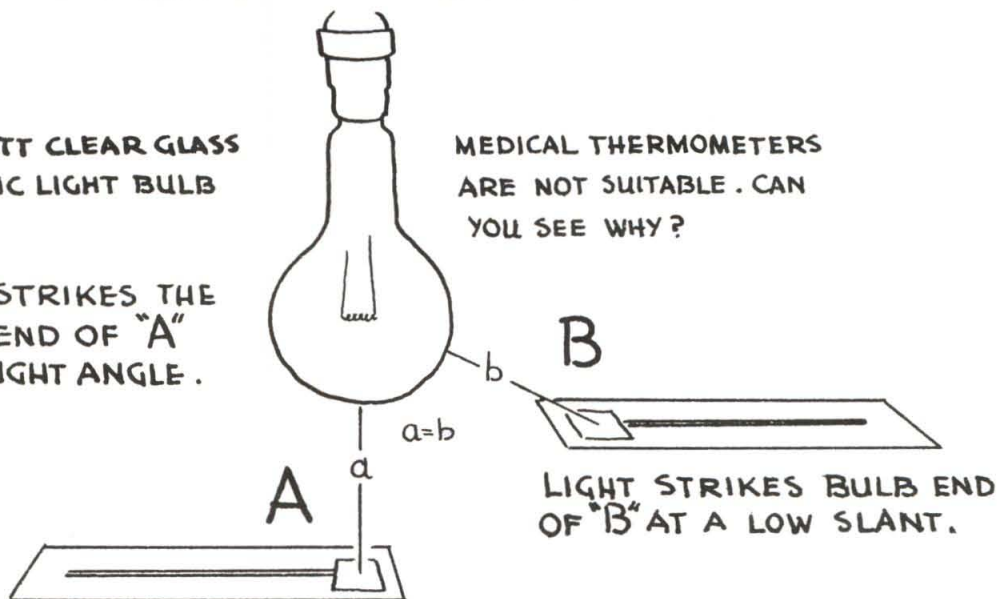
smooth maria, and the brighter highland regions. The maria (thought by

THIS EXPERIMENT SHOWS WHY CUBA IS WARMER THAN CANADA

200 WATT CLEAR GLASS ELECTRIC LIGHT BULB

MEDICAL THERMOMETERS ARE NOT SUITABLE. CAN YOU SEE WHY?

LIGHT STRIKES THE BULB END OF "A" AT A RIGHT ANGLE.



COVER THERMOMETER BULBS WITH SMALL SQUARES OF BLACK PAPER HELD IN PLACE WITH CELLO TAPE

PLACE BOTH THERMOMETERS AS SHOWN. READ AND RECORD TEMPERATURE. THEN TURN LAMP ON. READ AND RECORD TEMPERATURES AT THE END OF EACH MINUTE FOR 10 MINUTES. WHICH THERMOMETER HEATS UP FASTER? WHY?

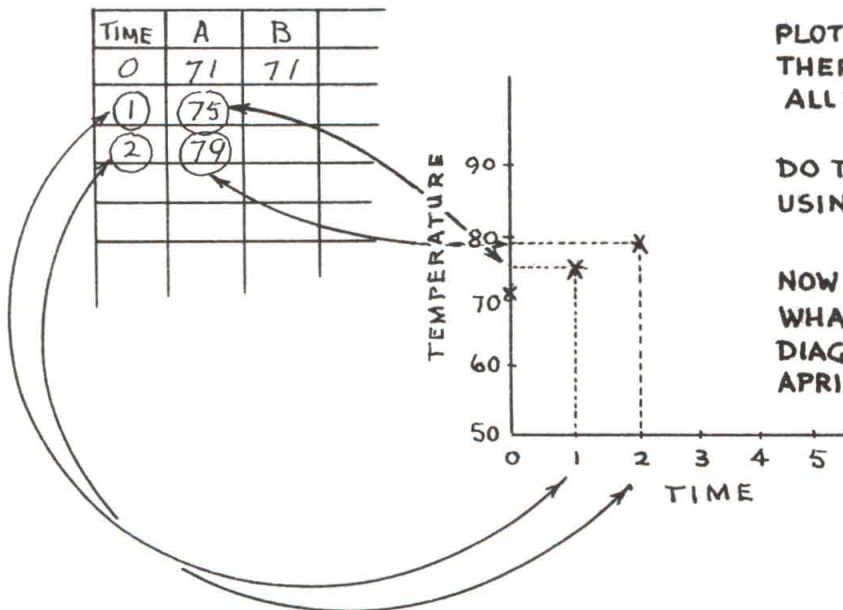
DIAGRAM AT LEFT SHOWS HOW TO PLOT TEMPERATURES ON GRAPH

PLOT ALL THE TEMPERATURES FOR THERMOMETER "A" FIRST, THEN JOIN ALL THE X'S TOGETHER.

DO THE SAME FOR THERMOMETER "B" USING A DIFFERENT COLOUR PENCIL.

NOW STUDY THE GRAPH AND DECIDE WHAT IT TELLS YOU. (STUDY ALSO THE DIAGRAMS OF THE EARTH IN THE APRIL YOUNG NATURALIST.)

O.G.R.



Oscar G. Rogers

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