

CANADA

TODAY / D'AUJOURD'HUI

VOLUME TWELVE NUMBER THREE MARCH NINETEEN EIGHTY-ONE



In the Spring a Canadian's Fancy Lightly Turns to Thoughts of Mud

The crow (not the robin) announces the end of the Canadian winter in a raucous voice, and to small boys listening through a window that has been opened a crack for the first time in months, it is a promise of endless sunny days.

The sun comes, the ice goes, the mud appears from sea to sea, and everyone puts on his rubber boots. No one loves the mud but it is a harbinger as sure as the crow.

After the mud comes the click of heels on city pavements (a sound to delight the

wearers of the heels), and after the crow come finer feathers and sweeter songs. The columbine blooms, cottage shutters come down and the voice of the hoary marmot is heard in the West.

In Canada (with the dazzling exception of coastal British Columbia) all winters are hard winters, and hearts leap up when they melt away. In this issue of CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI we consider the sights, sounds and rites of the Canadian spring.



Common Crow by J. Fenwick Lansdowne of British Columbia, perhaps the greatest painter of birds since Audubon.
Cover photo: Crocuses on the Parliament lawn.

Mr. MacDonald and Brewery Creek

Some years ago the late Rt. Hon. Malcolm MacDonald, who was then the British High Commissioner to Canada, spent an instructive year at Brewery Creek, a stream that flows into the Ottawa River across from Ottawa on the outskirts of Hull, Quebec. He noted the weather, tested the ice and watched the arrival of birds in the spring and their departure in the fall.

Spring begins officially in Ottawa, as elsewhere, on March 21, and by that date in that particular year it was bursting out at Brewery Creek. This was unusual.

"The snow gradually melted. It remained longest in the woods or beneath groups of trees where it was partially protected from the sun, a glistening carpet of sugary spring snow. Before it wholly disappeared the next phase in the cycle of bird life had commenced. In the spring birds lose no time in progressing towards the achievement of the supreme aim which governs all their activities — procreation, the renewal and preservation of their various species. No sooner have they completed migration (which might be supposed to exhaust them) than they take the next step, the securing of 'territory' on their breeding grounds . . ."

The male birds sang their mating songs, and the most conspicuous were the brown, striped and streaked song sparrows.

"They perched near the tops of shrubs or small trees, faced the sun, tilted their heads, opened wide their beaks and poured forth songs so vehemently that their throats swelled almost to the bursting point."

By the 24th of March the first snows were gone and Mr. MacDonald actually sunbathed on two successive afternoons. Then, alas, the sun withdrew and the temperature dropped. April came in with a gale and ice formed on the edge of the river, but then things warmed up. By the sixth day of the month the buds on the trees had, in Mr. MacDonald's exultant words, "turned into infant leaves and a few small dandelions and a patch of strawberries appeared on the banks."

The warmth was followed, inevitably, by a cold spell which was followed in turn by warm rain. The dandelions lost their flowers and grew fuzzy grey heads, and the richer yellow of buttercups arrived. And then, in rapid succession, came anemones, white dogwood, lavender, speedwell and pink spring beauty. By the middle of May the trees were covered with leaves and the birds sang hidden among them. Spring had definitely arrived.

Mr MacDonald's Bird Count

The birds that came to Brewery Creek were pretty much the ones that came, sooner or later, to all of southern Canada. Sixteen species arrived in March, eighteen in April and fifty-three in May.



All were migrants, though some individuals among the hardier species had probably hung around Ottawa all winter. On March 5th he saw a few starlings and on March 7th a crow. On the 8th pine siskins, on the 9th, a horned lark and on the 10th, an English skylark. These were followed by a herring gull, American goldfinches, song sparrows, bronzed grackles, American robins, a couple of ducks (merganser and golden-eye), a cowbird, a red-winged blackbird, a northern flicker, a meadowlark and a belted kingfisher.

In April Mr. MacDonald counted, among others, various duck species, slate coloured juncos, lesser scaups, savannah sparrows, downy woodpeckers, purple finches, barn swallows, spotted sandpipers and killdeer.



By May there were birds all over — chickadees, kinglets, sparrow hawks, all manner of warblers, sea birds such as Bonaparte's gull and double-crested cormorants, blue-winged teals (the last of the ducks to arrive), swifts and swallows, plovers, turnstones, grosbeaks, bitterns, vireos, least flycatchers, cedar waxwings, eastern wood peewees, the black-billed cuckoos and ruby-throated hummingbirds.

In Ottawa

Ottawa is covered with snow in the winter and with tulips in the spring.

By the last two weeks in May Ottawa has had 500,000 crocuses, 600,000 daffodils and three million tulips on public display. Many of them are on the lawns of Parliament and they have, perhaps, been coddled a bit by the heating plant pipes that run beneath the grass. The tulips were a gift from the Netherlands in appreciation of Canada's help during World War II when Canadian Forces liberated Holland and members of the Dutch Royal Family stayed in Ottawa in exile.

Gatineau Park, on Ottawa's edge, has lakes (the beaches open the second week in June) and more acres of flowers. Their names, listed in official guide books to the Park in both English and French, include white baneberry (*actée à gros pédicelles*), wild leek (*ail sauvage, ail des bois*),



White Baneberry.

anemone, windflower (*anémone du Canada*), pussytoes (*antennaire négligée*), columbine (*ancolie, gants de Notre-Dame*), wild sarsaparilla (*salsepareille*), jack-in-the-pulpit (*petit prêcheur*), spring beauty (*claytonie de Caroline*), and stemless lady's slipper (*sabot de la Vierge*).



Dow's Lake, Ottawa.

Sugar Time



Sugarbush, Limbour, Quebec.

Once the drastic change in Canada's seasons brought a drastic change in Canada's diet.

In Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, the first sign of winter's end was spring lamb. Novelist Hugh MacLennan remembers his father telling him that the celebration of Christmas was nothing compared to the festivity of the day the first fresh lamb was brought to the table.

"In those days [MacLennan wrote] when the Island was almost cut off, this must have been the day of the year, for during the last months of winter and the early weeks of spring, people had lived from barrels of apples, potatoes, salt herring and cod, and even fresh cod was a treat. Things are not like that now of course, but the lambs which have pastured on those rain-washed hills are still the tenderest I have ever tasted."

Now Canadians eat lamb whenever they feel the urge, but there are still changes in the supermarket and the dinner table when fresh fruit hangs heavy in the orchards of southern Ontario and the Okanagan valley in British Columbia, berries come to the bushes of the Maritimes and the sugar maples are tapped in Quebec.

Sugar maples abound in eastern and Atlantic Canada, but along the banks of the St. Lawrence the making of syrup, sugar and maple taffy provides the occasion for a family festival. In his woods the Quebec farmer may have as many as 4,000 maple trees. Only those that are at least six inches in diameter are sap producers, but even so, an awful lot of sap is flowing in March.

It runs when the moon is in the proper phase and the daytime temperature is at least 45°F. It runs sweetest when the warm days come late, and it runs best when the day is foggy and the

nighttime temperature is below freezing.

Twenty-five years ago the farmers made their rounds in the spring with a horse-pulled sled, but now the big producers use tractor-hauled wagons and the smaller ones snowmobiles. The traditional system of collecting—by tapping the individual trees with spigots and letting the sap flow into a covered bucket—still prevails among the farmers, but the big commercial operations now link the trees with plastic tubing and the sap is pumped automatically into the storage tanks. The tubing is said to increase production by as much as forty per cent.

The old method is more fun. The farmer and his helpers first tap the trees and set out the buckets—a full day's hard work for three on an average farm.

Then the sap, which runs most readily in the day but sometimes at night, is collected daily. Collection begins when the sun is well up and the snow and frost have been melting for several hours. The sound of the sap dripping is loud in the woods. The gatherers have a big tank on their snowmobiles, or a bigger one, up to 500 gallons, if they are working with tractors and wagons. They also have gathering pails, one for each worker, about twice as capacious as the pails on the trees.

The caravan makes its way into the sugar bush. The worker lifts the lid from the pail attached to the tree and then tips it, pouring the sap into the gathering pail. It takes practice, for it is easy to splash the sap from the full pail. The rhythm of the work depends on the rate of flow; sometimes it takes several sap pails to fill the gathering pail, sometimes only a couple. The gathering pail must be lifted shoulder high when it

is poured into the tank, another opportunity for spillage. It is hard work—a full gathering pail weighs some fifty pounds—and the snow makes everything more difficult.

If a gathering pail holds five gallons, it takes at least two hundred fast-flowing trees to fill the tank and sometimes many more. A team filling the tank five times during the daylight hours has done a good day's work.

From the gathering tank the sap goes to the storage tanks and from there, filtered, it goes to the boilers. The boiling begins while the sap is still being gathered, for if the storage tanks are allowed to remain filled overnight, there will be no place to put the next day's collection and the pails on the trees will overflow. At the peak of the flow, however, the operation is often manned around the clock.

The boiler pans, which come in multiples of three, sit on top of a wood-burning fire box. Sap pans are bigger than syrup pans. The sap flows through U-shaped tubes from pan to pan, as it thickens from sap to syrup. The flow is automatic, controlled by floats (as the level in one pan drops it draws in more from the pan above).

The sap boils for hours with temperatures carefully controlled; at 219°F one gets syrup or—if the syrup is whipped—soft sugar; at 230°F one gets taffy and at 238°F maple sugar.

It takes thirty to thirty-five gallons of sap to produce one gallon of syrup. An efficient farmer

with 2,000 to 3,000 producing trees may get a gallon of syrup an hour during the boiling process.

There are three basic rules that govern production: the sap must be gathered every day; it must not be allowed to remain more than twenty-four hours in the storage tank; and the pans and all the apparatus must be cleaned every three or four days.

The Party

The gathering of the sap is a rite of spring and often the occasion for a big family party. Everyone works, then everyone feasts.

The party is sometimes on Saturdays, more often on Sundays. The family invites friends and close relatives, and the whole group may number about twenty.

The special menu includes a base of pea soup and many syrup specialties. Eggs are broken into the boiling syrup, emerging half boiled, half poached and very sweet. There are crepes with maple syrup and maple sugar spread on crusty bread and covered with thick country cream. The children make cones of birch bark, fastened with a thorn, and fill them with soft sugar. On the Monday after the party the children take soft sugar cones to school for friends and teachers and the mother sends off packets of syrup, sugar and taffy to friends and relatives who couldn't come to the party.



Making Maple Syrup by Cornelius Krieghoff (1853), 12" x 18", private collection.

Expected Times of Arrival

If the arrival of warm weather is the most positive sign, spring comes to different Canadian places at remarkably different times.

Bruce Hutchison once wrote an essay entitled "Canadian Spring" in which he advanced the theory that it first arrived on the tip of Vancouver Island in late February or early March, "wearing violets and daffodils and primroses in his hat" and then moved slowly eastward, across the mountains to the prairies and finally to Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces.

"By the time [spring] has reached the Great Lakes," he wrote, "the first green stalks of grain will be thrusting through the winter crust far behind him and in Winnipeg the early crops of tin cans and ash heaps will be leaping up suddenly through the snow."

It is an amusing picture, but the facts of the case are less orderly and more complicated. The mean January temperature on British Columbia's southern coast is 40°F, and one could say that spring spends the entire winter there. It is true that warm weather comes sooner to the southern prairies than to the east coast, but Mr. Hutchison blinked his eye at everything north of the 49th parallel. If a mean of 40° is a fair measure of minimum spring balminess, the season doesn't get to the southern Arctic until July and it never gets to the northern Arctic.

If one measures the advance of spring by the melting of the ice and snow, there are also opportunities for confusion. Some sections have a lot more to melt than others. The Northwest Territories, which is basically frozen desert, is likely to receive no more than forty inches of snow in a year — the equivalent of less than five inches of rain. On Vancouver Island there will probably be about twenty inches, while the upper coast of British Columbia gets eighty or so. There is a lot more snow in the east than on the prairies; in most of Ontario and Quebec the annual mean is eighty inches and in places it is one hundred.

There are, of course, other ways to measure spring's arrival than with thermometers and overflowing creeks, and the best may be the behaviour of the flowers, birds, beasts and people.

Across the country Canadians mark the real end of winter by opening up their summer lake cottages, traditionally on May 24th, Victoria Day, but there have been many hopeful signs before that.

In the Rocky Mountains spring comes with a rush of water. Much of the mountain snow stays frozen year round, but a lot melts, turning narrow creeks into boiling rivers of floating timber and rolling boulders. Once, in the 1960s, fifteen inches of rain fell on southeast British Columbia and southwest Alberta in a single spring downpour, and that, added to the melting snows, washed out roads and flooded townships.

In Edmonton the snow melts in March or April, and the schoolchildren put on the rubber boots they will wear until May, discard their winter clothing and go out in the school yard to shoot marbles and jump rope.

The most obvious sign of spring's arrival in Edmonton and the rest of the North is the swift lengthening of the day. The winter sun sets at 4 p.m., but by May it shines until 10 o'clock at night. Summer heat comes soon, and in Alberta the springs, like the autumns, are short.

Spring comes to Nova Scotia's northern coasts in the form of icebergs. When the drift ice comes down in April, the air in Cape Breton smells, in Hugh MacLennan's phrase, like an icebox that needs defrosting. The floes, spongy and greenish, crowd right into the harbours.

Spring comes everywhere in the shape of flowers. They usually arrive across the province (with the exception of British Columbia) in April. Many of the same ones — poppy, columbine, daylily, spring adonis — thrive from coast to coast.

By June even the Yukon has begun to thaw and Frances Lake is brilliant blue, the Dog Tooth Mountains are dark with spruce, pine and fir, the black bears, brown bears and grizzlies are prowling about and the valleys and river basins are green with moss.



Pink Lady's Slipper.

Malak of Ottawa is celebrated for his photographs of nature. On these pages we present a sampling of his views of spring across Canada. Other photographs by Malak appear on the front and back covers and pages four and five.



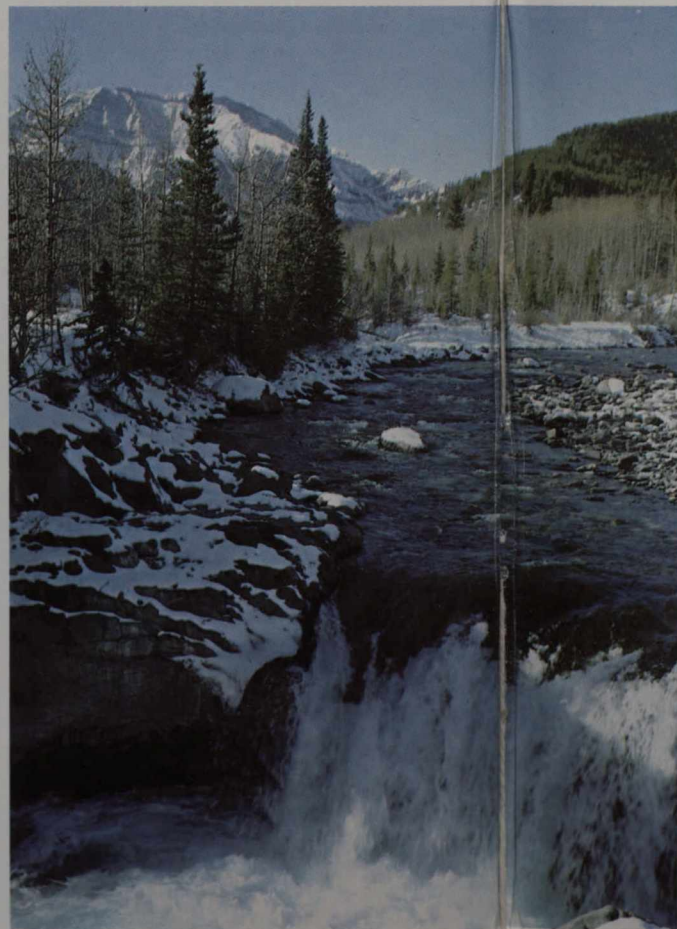
Victoria, British Columbia.



Evangeline Church, Grand Pré, Nova Scotia.



Hyacinths, Toronto City Hall.



Spring runoff, Alberta.



Trilliums.



Canada geese.

Awake, Awake

Polar bears spend relatively little time sleeping. The males hibernate from late November to late January in snowbank dens. The females stay put until March. When they come out to eat, their menu is the same as when they went in, mostly meat and fish.

Spring comes in April to the Rocky Mountain grizzlies. They emerge from hibernation and graze on new grass, licorice root, glacial lilies, spring beauty, angelica and skunk cabbage. The newborn cubs get their first exciting look at the great outdoors.

The black bears who have spent the winter in caves or mossy hollows under low spruce

branches wake up in April, too, when the melting snow floods them out. They range across Canada, from Newfoundland to the Queen Charlotte Islands. Food is usually scarce when they start ambling about so they eat spruce needles, carpenter ants, grubs and beetles.

The chipmunks, ground squirrels, marmots and woodchucks (or groundhogs) also hibernate. The male woodchuck may emerge as early as January if the weather is mild, the female in the first mild days of April. The hoary marmot, who lives in British Columbia and the Yukon, is the most determined sleeper of all, clocking off eight months a year, from late August to late April.



The return of the Canada geese is one of the first signs of spring.



Arctic Poppy.

Festivals

Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories has a mild climate, for the Northwest Territories.

In June the temperature ranges between a minimum mean of 24°F (-4.4°C) and a maximum mean of 85°F (29.4°C).

The arrival of the warm weather and the long, long days is celebrated on June 23 by the Annual Midnight Golf Tournament which begins in sunlight (at midnight) and ends the same way. The greens are not grass but sand, and the ravens sometimes steal the balls.

At the other end of the NWT, in Frobisher Bay, the residents celebrate the arrival of spring with Toonik Tyme in April. In Frobisher the



*A spring day in
Iron Hill, Quebec.*

season's change is mostly a state of mind, not temperatures. The week-long carnival features seal skinning, igloo building, ice sculpturing and power toboggan races.

In the town of St. George in Quebec (and elsewhere in the province) the end of winter is marked by a lottery and a festival. An old car is chained in place in the middle of the Chaudière River, and the day it finally plunges through the ice marks the beginning of *la débâcle*. Tickets are

sold and the person holding the one with the correct, or closest to correct, day, hour and minute of the plunge wins the pot. *La débâcle* was once a time of both festivity and real danger — the river, rising and clogged with timber and other flotsam, invaded basements and swept great chunks of ice down the highways. The danger has been somewhat lessened since Canadian Forces engineers began dynamiting the ice jams that formed at the bends of the river, but the festival goes on.



Melting ice, Rosway River, Nova Scotia.



Lake Aishihik in the Yukon.

Canoeing

Pierre Berton once defined a Canadian as a person who could make love in a canoe, and it is perfectly true that in the spring many a Canadian's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of shooting the rapids.

In April Canada's southerly streams are swollen and rushing over and around boulders. The sport begins then and lasts across Canada, in a somewhat modified form, through the summer.

The neophyte must learn that white water canoeing is a matter of skill, not strength — no one is strong enough to win an Indian wrestling match with the water. The successful rapid-shooter must master different techniques for handling different kinds of turbulence and must be able to read the tell-tale signs in the water ahead, avoid the impassable and refrain from the impossible.

The Greening of the Ice Sheets

As the nine-foot-thick ice of the Beaufort Sea thins, the spring sun shines through and brings to life the microscopic plants that have been frozen below.

The algae blooms and covers the bottom of the ice sheet. The microscopic animals feed on the algae and fish feed on them. The ecosystem of the North is repeating its age-old cycles.



Dragging a field in Bath, Ontario.

Transportation

The Northwest Territories has two basic forms of ground transportation — in the winter most everything moves on ice, in the spring everything switches to water.

The great ice road from Edzo to Echo Bay on Great Bear Lake which was rebuilt each January is no more. It was replaced by Hercules aircraft and went out of business in the spring of 1979.

The shorter ice roads that remain are still built as straight as possible, using lakes whenever feasible and avoiding steep grades. The lakes are connected by "portages" of compressed snow, and during the winter months tractors tow freight along them. When the road starts puddling in

March, attention switches to the rivers.

The Mackenzie and Liard Rivers are bridged by ice in the winter, but the ice starts falling apart in mid-April. For some weeks it is impossible to get across, and the traffic from bank to bank or beyond moves by helicopter.

Around the beginning of May, after the ice has cleared, ferries take over. The Liard ferry can carry eight automobiles across in six minutes, and the Mackenzie one can carry ten automobiles across in eight.

The Mackenzie Valley

The snow and ice in the southern Mackenzie basin melt in April. The Mackenzie River system is the longest in Canada—its watershed drains over 700,000 square miles.

Tons of icy water pour down the mountains, and the ice cracks into splinters, hillocks and masses the size of islands.

The Mackenzie flows to the northwest, and as the ice and silt-laden waters plunge toward the Beaufort Sea, they leach out iron, calcium, sulphur, and phosphorous—all elements essential to growing things—and deposit them on the flood plains.

By late May and early June the lower Mackenzie has thawed; birds are arriving in great flocks from Mexico, South America and even Antarctica;

the top few inches of permafrost have melted; and forget-me-nots, lupine and poppies pop into bloom. Caribou herds return from the south to their calving grounds on the Beaufort Sea, and swarms of mosquitoes and black flies appear to torment them.

The St. Lawrence Seaway

The St. Lawrence Seaway closes down for the winter around December 15 and opens up again around April 1.

The winter months are spent in major maintenance and rebuilding—this winter the workmen widened the Welland Canal section between Lakes Ontario and Erie. In March they start cleaning up from the construction work, and then the ice breakers, the *Pierre Radisson* and the *Franklin*, start clearing the way in the locks west of Montreal.

If the winter is exceptionally mild, the Seaway may open to traffic as early as the end of March—if it is exceptionally severe, the opening may be delayed as late as April 7th, though that hasn't happened in years.

Pleasure craft are permitted in the Seaway, though boats less than twenty feet long or weighing less than one ton are not allowed in the Welland Canal.



Spring comes late to the Eskimo village of Koartak in northern Quebec.

"A Sad Ballad"

(George Bain, former Ottawa Editor of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*)

In places quite as north, I'm sure, as here
The air grows warm and happy children sing,
The grass, long-hidden, starts to re-appear,
The dogwood blooms, the songbird's on the wing;
How lovely; what a soul-restoring thing
To see all nature bud, and bloom, and grow,
The sun is back, farewell to winter's ting
—And here we woke once more to falling snow.

In places less recalcitrant and queer,
Less out-of-joint and downright ding-a-ling,
The sights alone this gladsome time of year
Would justify a monumental fling,
Mimosa, gold enough for any king,
And cherry-trees with lace all burdened low,
Anemones in shades to beggar Ming
—And here we woke once more to falling snow.

And what is more, what virile sounds to hear—
The 'click' that greets the golfer's proper swing,
Or else that sound the baseball fan holds dear,
That wood-on-leather, homer, sort of ring,
That tight, high sound of tennis, almost 'ping',
The 'thock' of bowling balls that meet just so,
The sound that days of sunshine always bring
—And here we woke once more to falling snow.

Envoi

Oh, Prince who's good, oh, Prince to whom we
cling,
Proclaim the truth, intone it soft and low,
"The world, the whole damn world, is bathed in
spring"
—And here we woke once more to @#\$\$% /#
Snow.

"April"

(From *A Suit of Nettles* by James Reaney)

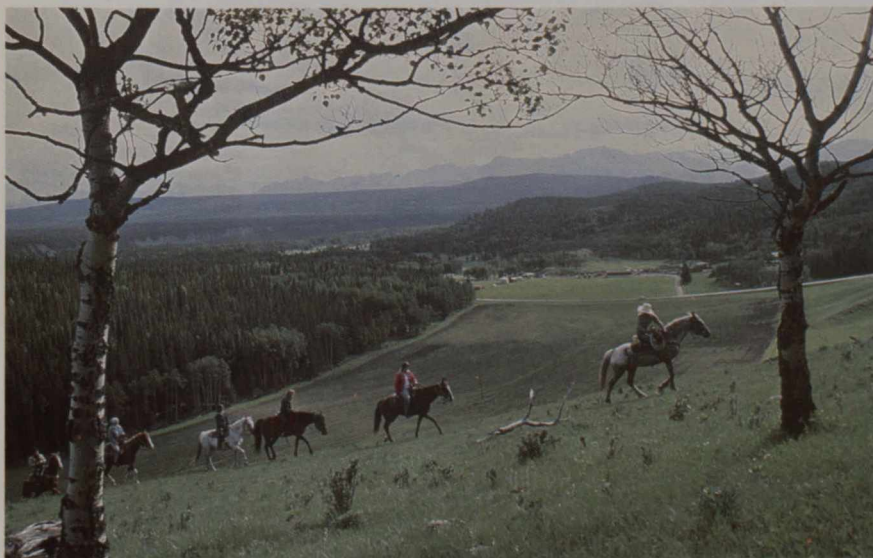
Your limbs are the rives of Eden.
From the dead we see you return and arise,
Fair girl, lost daughter:
The swallows stream through the skies,
Down dipping water,
Skimming ground, and from chimney's foul dusk
Their cousins the swifts tumble up as the
tusk of roar day
in bright May
Scatters them gliding from darkness to
sun-crisp.

Courtesy of Press Porcépic Ltd.
217—620 View Street, Victoria, B.C.
V8W 1J6

When the Ice Worms Nest Again

There is a worm of the Oligochaeta family that lives on ice fields, but the one encountered most frequently in the Yukon is a fraud. He is served to summer visitors in cocktails and is usually a bit of spaghetti with an eye painted on it. Robert W. Service's novel *The Trail of '98* has one character telling another that he'll meet her when the ice worms nest again. There is also a folk song of obscure origin which has a chorus that promises: "In the land of the pale blue snow/where it's ninety-nine below/And the polar bears are roaming o'er the plain/In the shadow of the Pole/I will clasp her to my soul;/we'll be married when the ice worms nest again."

The nestings take place in the spring, of course, in time for the tourists.



Ghost River, Alberta.



Calgary in the spring, by Judy Mah.

Spring in Alberta

A sampling of nosegays composed by children at Colonel Sanders Elementary School in Calgary, Alberta, especially for CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI, and sent to us by Principal Erna Penner.

*Kites in the sky
are going by
The wind takes them up
up up
And then the
wind drops: The kite
comes down
down down*

Jill Ferguson

*Springs start their long
journey down the mountain top,
The flowers start to pop
Fawns, calves and colts are born,
The groundhog sees his shadow.
The snow is gone,
And the ice on the Bow river
starts to break.*

Kari-Lynn Hughes

*When the flowers blossom,
They just glossom.*

Jana Oddie

*The farmers have rested,
And at this time are tested.*

*To plant all their grains,
Hoping spring brings heavy rains.*

*But not for long, we find,
That another season is right behind.*

*Our wild roses are out so fast,
They aren't hard to find in the grass.*

*When the wind starts blowing them away.
We know that Spring has gone astray.*

Laurel Wieshlow



Parliament Hill, Ottawa.

This newsletter is published monthly and is available free upon request. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Canadian Government. Unless specifically noted, articles are not copyrighted and may be reproduced. If you have questions or comments or wish to be added to our mailing list, please be in touch—address and telephone number below. If you wish to change your address, be sure to include the number on the top line of your mailing label. Written by Tom Kelly, designed by Baslaw, McCarney and Mann Limited, Ottawa, Canada, printed by K.G. Campbell Corporation Ltd., Ottawa, Canada.

CANADA

Today/d'aujourd'hui

*Canadian Embassy
Ambassade du Canada
1771 N Street, NW
Room 300
Washington, DC 20036
202: 785-1400*

*Address Correction
Requested*



BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OGDENSBURG, N.Y.
PERMIT NO. 266

ISSN: 0045-4257
PRINTED IN CANADA