

Mountain Lake and the Quill Lakes. With hunting pressure constantly increasing and if lead shot continues to be used, the mortality of Saskatchewan ducks due to lead poisoning can only increase. Monitoring this mortality factor is inexpensive and should be initiated on a large scale. Further studies may aid in preventing this cause of waterfowl mortality from becoming more serious.

¹BELLROSE, F. C., Jr. 1964. *Spent shot and lead poisoning*. Waterfowl Tomorrow. United States Gov't. Printing Office, Washington, 479-485.

²FLANEGAN, GENE. 1970. *Lead poisoning problem solved?* Ducks Unlimited Quarterly 33(1), Chicago, 16 p.

³KIMBALL, W. H., and Z. A. MUNIR. 1971. *The corrosion of lead shot in a simulated waterfowl gizzard*, Jour. Wildl. Mgmt. 35: 360-365

⁴TENNYSON, JON. 1971. *The quest for a solution*. Ducks Unlimited Quarterly 34(2), Chicago, p.

⁵TRAINER, D. O., and R. A. HUNT. 1965. *Lead poisoning of waterfowl in Wisconsin*, Jour. Wildl. Mgmt. 29: 95-103.



THE COMMON DANDELION

by MARIE BARTON*

“Oh, dandelion, yellow as gold,
What do you do all day?”

So read my prescribed grade-three reader in my early years. My pre-school granddaughter with the imagination of a poet shouts, “Oh, look at those dandelions sitting on the clothesline!” I look and see a row of eye-catching goldfinches, eaters of dandelion seeds. They eat the flowers, too. A color food?

Children still make chains from the hollow, milky stalks of these flowers that bloom from May to September. They tell fortunes by blowing the cluster of white-plumed, beaked seeds from their platform until all have

taken to the air. When the disks of the composite gleam with its packed golden ray florets, the wild bee gathers the pollen for bee bread and the nectar for honey.

“If only they bloomed at Christmas,” sighs my retired, Swedish neighbor in the suburbs. He loves these ‘u starts’ in his lawn less than do the children, the goldfinches and the bees. But he has lived enough years to remember back to the homestead days. Then he helped his grandfather carry water from the well to a carefully fenced, cultivated patch of the precious vegetables that he calls in his mother tongue by the name of *dent-de-lion*, meaning lion’s tooth —

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ference to the shiny leaves so sharply incised and lobed, leaves that form a rosette around the very short stem.) The mesh enclosure of the pioneer garden of dandelion herbs was sunk into the ground in order to keep out gophers.

"The pioneers raised dandelions?"

"Yes," he answers. "The flowers made good wine. I make some even yet. The leaves we cooked as we cook kale. I liked them in milk sauce or with thick cream, sometimes butter."

"And the roots?" I ask, for the 1973 Funk and Wagnall's *New Encyclopedia* says that they "contain a substance used as a laxative."

"Oh," he replies, "They made a coffee substitute. In those days we had little money for the real bean from the store."

I have a friend, a back-to-nature buff, wife of a doctor, who digs the 2- to 12-inch long, fleshy, tap roots. She trims and cuts the washed pieces, then dries and bakes them in a slow oven on a shallow pan. In lieu of a grinder, she crushes her processed product with a rolling pin. "No caffeine," she says as she pours me a cupful of the brewed beverage. "It's good, I take it black."

In the spring this woman gathers tender young toothed leaves for salads and potherbs. Her *Northern Cookbook* from the Queen's Printer contains recipes. Some cookbooks recommend adding sliced root to the greens. The herb is rich in vitamin C. Though a conservationist, my friend harbors no scruples of conscience about gathering this wild source of food. "Like the starling, it is not on the list of endangered species." She laughs. "Since ancient times the plant has been gathered or cultivated for consumption."

And like the starling and the English sparrow, the Common Dandelion, known by its Latin name as *Taraxacum*

officinale, is an import from Europe. Dan McGowan of Banff is credited by Annora Brown in her book, *Old Man's Garden*, with the knowledge that it was the Hudson Bay Traders at Fort Churchill that used it "to balance a diet consisting too largely of meat."

Olive Perry in *Edible Wild Plants* gives the information that dandelion greens are obtainable in New York supermarkets for the gourmet taste. New Jersey market gardeners raise them in 2- to 4-acre lots. "Several horticultural varieties have been developed that form large leafy plants."

Britannica includes dandelion greens as food for silkworms when silkworm farmers find that mulberry leaves are not to be had. A Russian species of dandelion is cultivated for its latex for the manufacture of rubber. Euell Gibbons in *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* has a chapter on the worth of the dandelion and how to use it.

Apparently as a survival measure this plant could be as useful to man as the reindeer to the Laplander — greens, organic vitamins, honey, wine, medicine, 'coffee', bird food, silkworm forage, and source of rubber, not to mention its esthetic beauty and as a plaything for children. Whether one regards the lion's tooth that grows in temperate, Arctic and tropical regions, on roadsides, fields or tundra as friend or foe — it's all in your point of view.

Editor's Note: While the Common Dandelion is by far the best known of the dandelions, there are several other species, most of which occur in and near the mountains and were not introduced from abroad.

