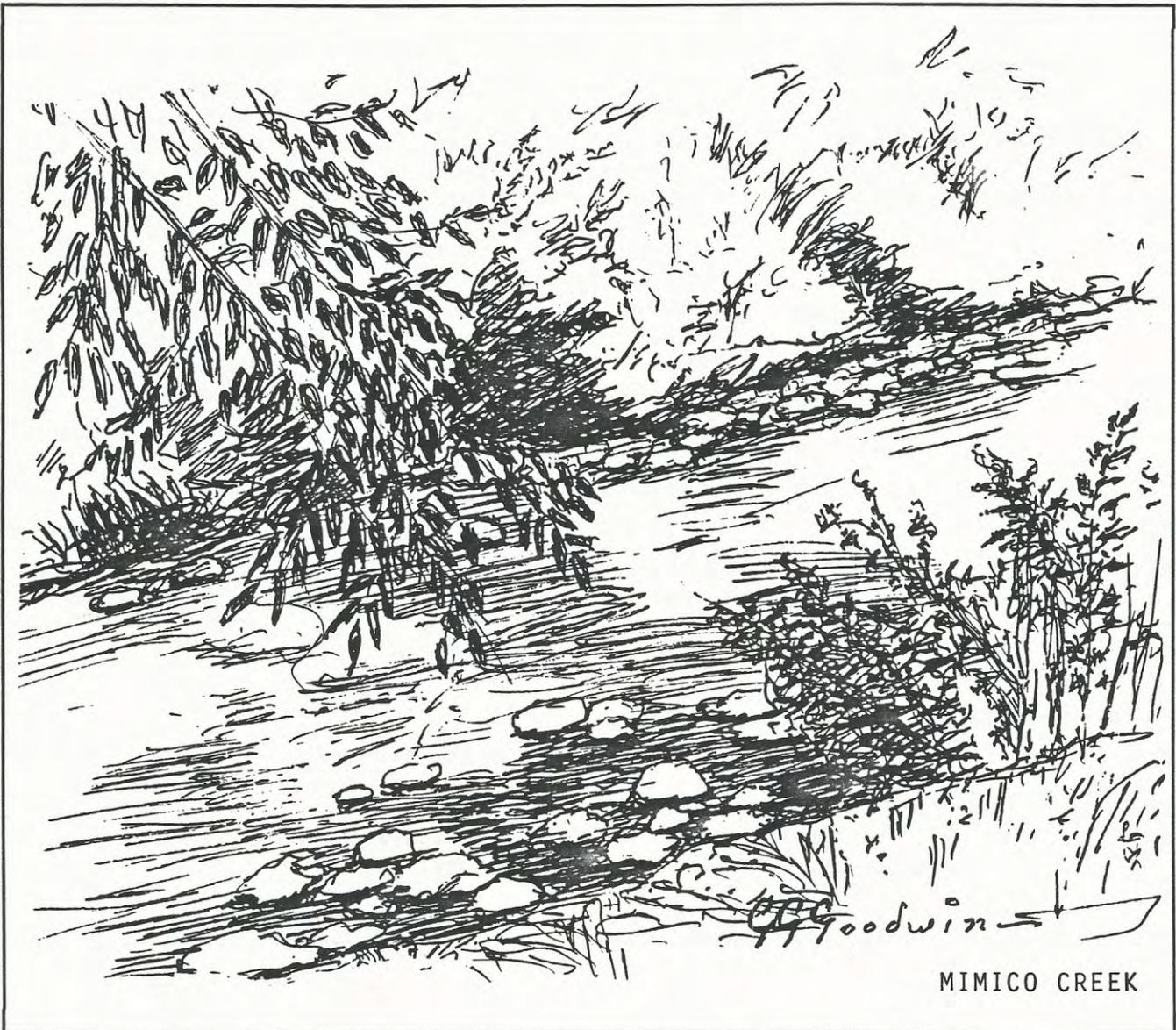


TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 480

December 1998



MIMICO CREEK

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TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, December 6, 1998 -

at 2:30 pm

in the Northrop Frye Hall
Victoria University

73 Queen's Park Cres. East

TFN 75th ANNIVERSARY

&

HOLIDAY SEASON CELEBRATION

- TORONTO THE GREEN: A CONTINUING DISCOVERY
an illustrated talk by Robin Powell, a TFN
Past President and TFN photo librarian.

- Since the publication of TORONTO THE GREEN in
1976 Toronto naturalists have continued to
discover more about Toronto's natural history:
we have explored routes of lost (long buried)
creeks, have inventoried the birds, amphibians
and reptiles, mammals and plants of the region.
Even in those few years major changes have
occurred: Pacific salmon can be seen in our
rivers and creeks, the house finch is everywhere,
red-eared sliders (a turtle) are seen in most
ponds in the city, and so on. All the photos to be
shown have been taken by TFN members who have
donated them to our excellent collection.

+ Social Hour beginning at 2 pm with free juice
and coffee

+ sale of raffle tickets for two paintings [See page 7.]

+ beginning at 3:30 pm, special refreshments as
well as coffee and juice

+ raffle tickets will be drawn (You must be
present to win.)

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, February 7, 1998

PLEASE NOTE: There is no meeting in January.

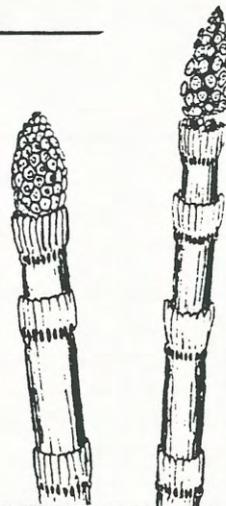
NEXT NEWSLETTER: February (to be mailed in mid January)

PLEASE NOTE: This newsletter includes events for both
December and January.

SCOURING RUSH or ROUGH HORSETAIL

is a common native of Toronto
with a wide distribution
throughout the world.

The specimen drawn by
D. Andrew White was growing
in Morningside Park.



TFN OUTINGS

REMEMBER: Children and visitors are welcome on all outings but please, **NO PETS!**
 To get to outings on time, check TTC routes and schedules by calling 393-4636.
 Check the weather by calling 661-0123 so you will know what to wear on outings which go rain or shine.

- Thursday HIGH PARK - nature walk Toronto
 Dec. 3 Leader: Phoebe Cleverley
 10:30 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Bloor St. West
 opposite High Park Ave. Bring lunch.
 This large park with its many habitats is a refuge for wildlife every season
 of the year. Bring binoculars and notebooks.
- Saturday GARDNER MUSEUM - nature arts Toronto
 Dec. 5 Leader: Mary Cumming
 10:30 am Meet at the museum entrance on the east side of Queen's Park
 just south of Bloor St. West.
 \$ entry Bring sketching materials and stool or just come and enjoy. We will compare
 \$ fee our "works" over lunch somewhere nearby.
- Sunday See page 2 for details.
 Dec. 6
 2 pm
- Wednesday EAST POINT - nature walk Lakeshore, Scarborough
 Dec. 9 Leader: George Bryant
 10:30 am Meet at the corner of Beechgrove Drive and Coronation Drive.
 Morning only.
 This lakeshore park at the mouth of Highland Creek, with its trails and
 connections to the valley and the beach, is a good place to see wintering
 waterfowl as well as wintering woodland birds.
- Saturday SIDE PATHS OF DAVENPORT - heritage walk Toronto
 Dec. 12 Leader: Ian Wheal
 1 pm Meet at the southeast corner of Old Weston Road and St. Clair
 Ave. West.
 Much of this walk will be on city streets as we look for traces of our
 natural and built past.
- Wednesday CENTENNIAL PARK- nature walk Etobicoke Cr., Etobicoke
 Dec. 16 Leader: Ann Millett
 10:30 am Meet at the northeast corner of Rathburn Rd. and Elmcrest Rd.
 Bring lunch.
 As well as a wild river valley, this park contains the Centennial Park
 Conservatory with its Christmas show of poinsettias. [See page 6.]

SEE PAGE 12 FOR WHAT TO WEAR.

DECEMBER OUTINGS (cont'd)

- Saturday HIGH PARK - nature in winter Toronto
 Dec. 19 Leader: Joanne Doucette
 10 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Bloor St. West
 opposite High Park Ave. Bring lunch.
 Bring notebooks and binoculars. We will be looking at how plants and
 animals survive -- with or without a snow cover.
- Sunday WHITE OAKS OF TADDLE - nature walk Toronto
 Dec. 20 Leader: Helen Mills
 2 pm Meet at Humewood Park (one block north of St. Clair Ave. West)
 on Humewood Dr. (west of Bathurst St.)
 We will be walking south along streets, looking at the great white oaks
 of the Iroquois shoreline and the watershed area between Taddle Creek and
 Garrison Creek. This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community.
- Wednesday SUNNYBROOK PARK - bird study West Don, North York
 Dec. 23 Leader: Louise Orr
 10 am Meet at the park entrance on the west side of Leslie St. just
 north of Eglinton Ave. East. Morning only.
 The deep valley with its forested slopes and brushy areas is an ideal place
 for wintering birds. Bring binoculars.
- Sunday GERRARD RAVINE - nature walk Toronto
 Dec. 27 Leader: Ken Cook
 2 pm Meet at the northeast corner of Coxwell Ave. and Gerrard St.
 East opposite Fairford Ave.
 This ravine, also known as Williamson Ravine, provides a sheltered refuge
 for wildlife during the winter.
- Tuesday TORONTO ISLANDS - bird study lakeshore, Toronto
 Dec. 29 Leader: Ann Gray
 10:30 am Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. Bring lunch.
 \$ ferry Dress warmly and bring binoculars and notebooks. Wintering ducks and gulls
 tickets should be seen as well as smaller birds among the bushes on the Islands.

BROAD-LEAVED EVERLASTING PEA

introduced from Europe and now
 a hardy garden-escape in Toronto,
 favours roadsides, river banks
 and railway embankments. A
 ground-cover of its 1-1/2"
 flowers, which range from pale
 pink to startling cerise,
 is a sight to behold.

Eva Davis



TFN OUTINGS

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 To get to outings on time, check TTC routes and schedules by calling 393-4636.
 Check the weather by calling 661-0123 so you will know what to wear on outings which
 go rain or shine.

- Sunday
Jan. 3
1 pm
CEDARVALE RAVINE - nature walk Don tributary, Toronto
Leader: Allan Greenbaum
Meet at the Heath St. exit of the St. Clair West subway station (Spadina line).
This deep ravine has long been a favourite with birdwatchers and birds. Believe it or not the subway runs under the ravine. Come and see what restoration has done for the area.
- Wednesday
Jan. 6
10:30 am
EASTERN BEACHES - nature walk Lakeshore, Toronto
Leader: Valerie Allen
Meet at the southwest corner of Queen St. East and Lee Ave. at Kew Gardens. Morning only.
We will be walking along the boardwalk towards Ashbridge's Bay Park looking for wintering birds and perhaps ice formations along the shore.
- +
Wednesday
Jan. 6
10:30 am
CLOUD FOREST - nature arts Toronto
Leader: Susan Weiss
Meet at the southwest corner of Yonge St. & Richmond St. We will visit the small greenhouse in the park and compare our "works" after lunch at a nearby food court. Bring sketching materials or cameras.
- Sunday
Jan. 10
1 pm
MORNINGSIDE PARK - nature walk Highland Cr., Scarborough
Leader: Boris Mather
Meet at the entrance to the park on the west side of Morningside Ave., north of Lawrence Ave. East.
This will be a long walk south along Highland Creek to its mouth at the east end of East Point Park. Dress in layers. It may be sheltered in the deep valley, but windy along the lakeshore.
- Thursday
Jan. 14
10 am
HUMBER BAY PARK - nature walk Lakeshore, Etobicoke
Leader: George Bryant
Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Lake Shore Blvd. West opposite Park Lawn Rd. Morning only.
Dress warmly and bring binoculars as we will be looking for wintering ducks and gulls, wonderful views of the city and ice formations.
- Sunday
Jan. 17
2 pm
LAKE IROQUOIS SHORELINE - nature walk Toronto
Leader: Peter Hare
Meet at the Metro Archives, 255 Spadina Rd., north of Dupont St. We will be following the ancient shoreline between Castle Frank Creek and Yellow Creek -- where they intersect the bluff. This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community.
- Tuesday
Jan. 19
11 am
SERENA GUNDY PARK - nature walk West Don, North York
Leader: Carol Miller
Meet at the southeast corner of Eglinton Ave. East and Brentcliffe Rd. Bring lunch.
This park is on the west side of the West Don Valley and has good trails and much to see.

JANUARY OUTINGS (cont'd)

- Saturday ROUGE VALLEY - nature walk Rouge, Scarborough
Jan. 23 Leader: Sue Russell
1 pm Meet at the Pearse House on the east side of Meadowvale Rd.
north of Sheppard Ave. East.
We will be looking at some of the efforts made to restore parts of the
park -- at the Beare landfill site as well as some other places.
- Wednesday HUMBER VALLEY - bird study Humber, York/Etobicoke
Jan. 27 Leader: Carol Sellers
10:30 am Meet at the Old Mill subway station. Bring lunch.
Bring binoculars and notebooks and warm clothing. We will be looking for
birds both along the river and in the wooded areas along the valley.
- Saturday SMALL'S CREEK AND POND - heritage walk Toronto
Jan. 30 Leader: Ian Wheal
1 pm Meet at the Coxwell subway station.
This walk will be in a southerly direction and on streets. We will be
looking for remnants of natural heritage and at some of our built heritage.

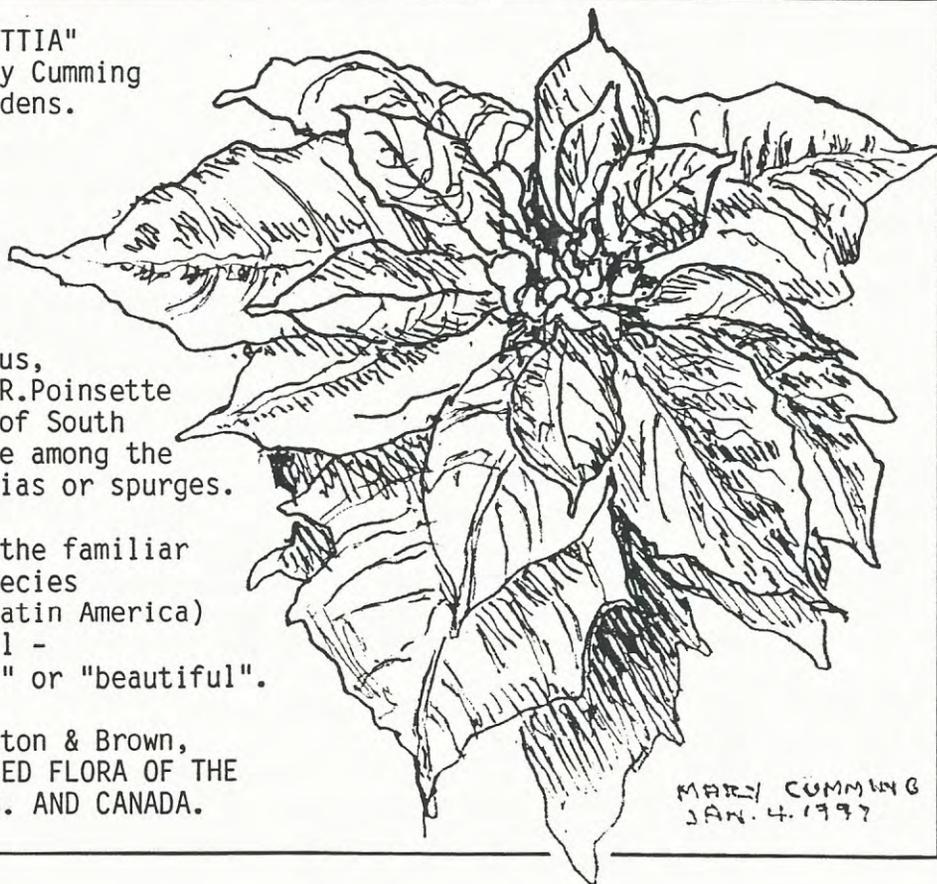
□

"PINK POINSETTIA"
drawn by Mary Cumming
at Allan Gardens.

Plants of
this sub-genus,
named for J.R.Poinsette
(1779-1853) of South
Carolina, are among the
many Euphorbias or spurbes.

The name of the familiar
Christmas species
(native to Latin America)
suits it well -
"pulcherrima" or "beautiful".

Ref.: Britton & Brown,
AN ILLUSTRATED FLORA OF THE
NORTHERN U.S. AND CANADA.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Season's Greetings to all the members and friends of TFN. I hope you have all made plans to attend our special 75th Anniversary meeting on December 6th at Northrop Frye Hall. As well as an illustrated slide show compiled from our photo library by Robin Powell, a past president of the club (see page 2 for details), there will be special refreshments and a raffle for two lovely paintings by Leslie Mirylees, kindly donated by Louise Herzberg. This will take place after Robin's presentation, so please plan to stay.

At this time, I would like to acknowledge a few volunteers and board members who have made valuable contributions to the club in recent months.

Jo Butler has been doing a great job trying to promote our club by sending applications and posters to the libraries and news releases to radio stations and newspapers. Anyone with further suggestions should call the office or write to the club.

Sandy Cappell and Jean Macdonald have prepared many displays and have arranged for volunteers to look after them at special events throughout the Toronto area. Anyone wanting to help with rounding up volunteers for these events should call Sandy at 663-7738 or the office at 968-6255.

Phoebe Cleverly has organized a great program for the 1998-99 seasons including many interesting speakers. Again, anyone with suggestions for topics or speakers should call Phoebe at 369-0546 or the TFN office.

Elaine Farragher has redesigned our application form and produced a poster listing our monthly meetings. I'm sure you will find these both very attractive.

Ann Millett has been conducting a "Junior Outreach" program for school groups. We have needed this ever since the Junior Naturalists Club was disbanded in 1983. Anyone wanting to help with this should call Ann at 905-792-0844.

There are many other individuals working behind the scene in TFN, several of whom I have mentioned in previous reports. All your contributions are equally important. The individuals mentioned above will give the membership an idea as to what goes on behind the scenes and I hope that our other volunteers who were not mentioned this time will forgive me as space limitations will not permit me to list all of you.

I also want to congratulate Helen Juhola who was recently awarded a Canadian Wildflower Society Conservation Award for her dedicated efforts over the years to preserve Toronto's flora, fauna and natural landscapes. I'm sure that all of you (and that includes most of us) who know Helen either in person or through her work with TFN over the years will agree with me that this award was well deserved.

Also this month a big thanks to Toronto Parks for producing a series of excellent self-directed "Discovery Walks" with well thought out signage and outstanding support materials for school use. Thanks also for acknowledging TFN's contribution by adding our name to the interpretive information. TFN member and Parks employee Jerry Belan was very active in this endeavour.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (cont'd)

President's Field Notes #11, December 1998

Many nature clubs hold a Christmas Bird Count in December or early January. I spent my Christmas holiday in Brockville last year and in response to a notice in the local paper, I contacted the Brockville District Field Naturalists and was invited to take part in their annual Christmas Bird Count on January 3, 1998. Although I was the most distant visiting naturalist on the count, I was not the only non-resident as we had participants from the Kingston and Ottawa clubs.

We divided up into groups to cover as much as possible of Brockville City and the surrounding area. One group, led by count co-ordinator Martin Taylor and his teenaged son Frank, who is also an excellent birder, covered the southwestern section including "Butternut Bay", Yonge Mills, Lyn, etc. It was a mild day with temperatures reaching to about +7°C but it was very windy at times, especially near the St. Lawrence River making it seem much colder than it really was. We had had a relatively heavy snowfall a few days earlier but most of it had melted except in the bush. There was a lot of open water so wintering ducks were dispersed and hard to find, but inland birding was good, especially around feeders and in fields. Some of the highlights for me included pine grosbeak, northern shrike, pine siskin, common redpoll (large flocks) and a common raven. All the groups met back in Brockville at a donut shop for a final tally and a cup of hot chocolate before heading home.

If you are travelling and have the opportunity to contact a local nature club, I encourage you to do so. You will find yourself at ease amongst like-minded people and you will learn a lot about the area. Information on many Ontario clubs may be obtained by calling the Federation of Ontario Naturalists at 444-8419. However, not all clubs are FON affiliates so you may want to check local papers, chambers of commerce and tourist bureaux as well.

That's it for this time around. All the best for the new year and, hopefully, I'll have my first report for 1999 in the February newsletter.

Morris Sorensen

□

DEEMED, INDEED!!! [See letters on page 9.]

For further reading on the issues of pesticides and health, read the following:

- HOW MANY PARENTS REALIZE THAT THE HERBICIDES AND PESTICIDES USED IN LAWN AND GARDEN CARE ARE LITERALLY KILLING THEIR CHILDREN? A recent publication by the Environmental Health Committee of the Ontario College of Physicians warns of such dangers to human health. Further information on this issue may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Goderich Medical Centre, 181 Cambria Rd. N., Goderich, Ont. N7A 2R2.
- REDUCING YOUR RISK FROM PESTICIDES, World Wildlife Fund's 24-page booklet, offers practical suggestions for reducing or eliminating pesticide use inside and outside your home, at schools and daycares, in your municipality, and in agriculture. To get your copy, call 489-8800.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Oct. 5, 1998

In your letter of September 14, 1998 to Councillor Rae you express concern over the use of Roundup in the Don Valley Brick Works site.

Roundup was applied on September 14, 1998 to a patch of poison ivy near a pathway over an area of fifty square meters. Poison Ivy can cause an extreme reaction when contacted by park patrons and is extremely difficult to control. Mechanical methods of eradication simply spread the volatile allergen and can harm our staff.

Chemical methods of control are recommended and, as mentioned in the response to your previous inquiry, glyphosate has been deemed to be non-toxic.

Claire Tucker-Reid, General Manager
Parks and Recreation, Toronto

October 6, 1998

Please find enclosed a copy of a letter and a report that I have received from Claire Tucker Reid, the General Manager of our Parks and Recreation Department regarding the use of "Round-Up" in City parks and public open spaces.

As you will note, Ms. Reid is confident that the use of this herbicide along transportation corridors and in some parklands, around the base of trees, is justified. She also has included a report from the University of Guelph that confirms "Roundup" as having no direct environmental impact on mammals, birds or fish, and has been deemed as "non-toxic".

I will await the report from Parks and Recreation regarding the attachment that you sent to me about the toxicity of this product and will forward a copy along to you when I receive it.

Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention. When I have further information on this issue or on the broader issue of the new integrated plant health care policy, I will let you know.

Kyle Rae
City Councillor -- Downtown
Toronto

□

Comment: For further information on this issue, see comment on bottom of page 8; also see page 22. What does your Councillor think about this issue?

H.J.

RICHARD MERRILL SAUNDERS 1904 - 1998

Dr. Richard M. Saunders died on June 25, 1998 in his 94th year after a short illness. Dick, as he was known to his many birding friends, was a pillar of the Toronto Ornithological Club and the Toronto Field Naturalists in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. He was an enthusiastic, indeed an exuberant bird watcher, often the first to shout out the name of a new bird. His local stamping ground was Cedarvale ravine, a short walk from his home on McMaster Avenue. Here for many years he led bird walks every Wednesday morning in May for the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club. His deep resonant voice could be heard calling out the names of the birds he heard and observed for the benefit of his flock of devoted followers. As a teenager I assisted on some of these outings and when left on my own on one occasion I failed to recognize the song of a bird behind a high fence. Members of the group were sure that Dr. Saunders, who was away that week, would have known the song and I expect they were right. (I climbed the fence later in the day and saw my first Connecticut warbler.) Dick was one of the most active and best known birders of his day, usually going afield with one or more friends including among others Jim Baillie, Tom Murray, Greer Roberts, Bob Trowern, Earl Stark and Doug Miller.

From 1931 to 1971 Dick Saunders was Professor in the History Department at the University of Toronto, specializing in modern European history. Born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, he received his early education at Clark University and then taught at the American University in Beirut, where he met his wife Anne. He received his PhD at Cornell, studying with the famous historian, Carl Becker. During his career at the University of Toronto, he was known as a gentle and rather reserved man who delivered dramatic lectures in which he sometimes took on the persona of such figures as Martin Luther. His lectures and seminars were very popular with students.

In natural history circles, Dick was also known as a dramatic speaker, who eloquently proclaimed his love of nature. He was much in demand and I recall that he was the dinner speaker when the American Ornithologists Union met in Toronto. From 1934 to 1966 he wrote diaries of his experiences, all 14 volumes of which he presented to the Toronto Ornithological Club in 1992. In April of that year he was made an Honorary Member of the club, attended the meeting and delivered a stirring address to the members. He wrote beautifully and informatively. For 25 years he edited and wrote the Newsletter of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club. His first book, FLASHING WINGS (McLelland and Stewart 1947) was based on entries from his diaries, arranged in a yearly calendar. It provides a vivid word picture of birding in Toronto at that time. This book contains what was probably the first table of arrival and departure dates of birds in the Toronto region based on his and Jim Baillie's observations. His later volume, CAROLINA QUEST (University of Toronto Press 1971), consists of graceful essays about a trip he took with Tom Murray. In one of the most exciting chapters he describes an expedition culminating in a view of the now extinct ivory-billed woodpecker.

When he became deaf in his 60s, Dick withdrew to some extent from birding and club activities and turned his attention to photography, specializing

 SAUNDERS (cont'd)

in wildflowers. He collaborated with Mary Ferguson on two books, CANADIAN WILDFLOWERS (Van Nostrand 1976), and CANADIAN WILDFLOWERS THROUGH THE SEASONS (Van Nostrand 1982).

Anyone who reads his diaries, books and essays will have a measure of the man and his style. For some of us it was a privilege to have known Dick Saunders and shared his enthusiasm for nature.

from an article by Bruce Falls in the TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER, No. 87, Sept. 1998

 Number 48

 December, 1944

This afternoon, December 13th, the first day after the great blizzard of 1944, I spent two hours exploring the upper part of Cedarvale ravine. Deep snow is almost the worst hazard with which our winter birds have to cope. I was interested to see how they were faring.

Approaching from Tweedsmuir Avenue, I plunged down over the first slope and across the field to the edge of the dip overlooking the stream. Right at the edge I came upon a song sparrow. The heavy alarm notes drew my attention to the bird which was feeding on weed seeds near at hand. Otherwise no birds were visible or within hearing. Somewhat further along, where I could look down on the east end of Cardinal Corner, I found the usual large flock of house sparrows in the willows, as jubilant and perky as ever. Of course, with a bright blue sky, dazzling white snow, and a snap to the air one had to be exhilarated.

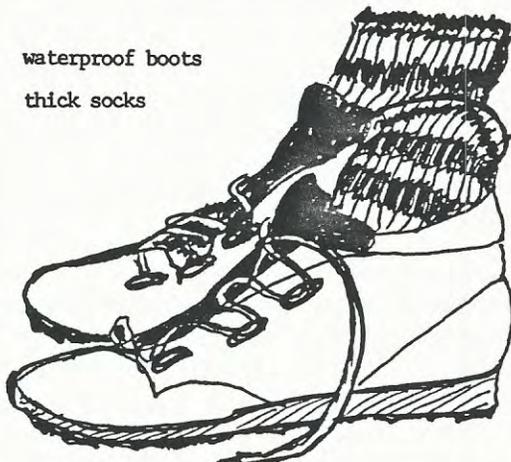
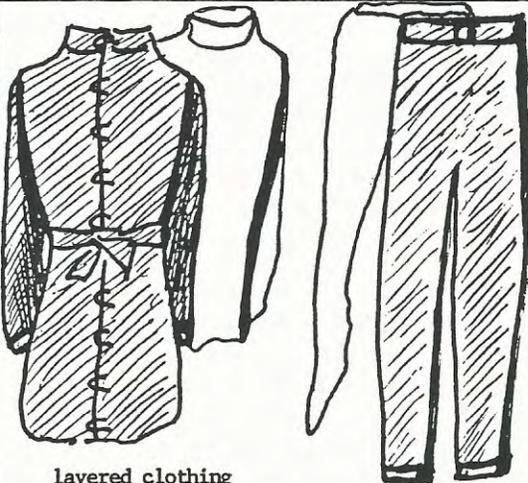
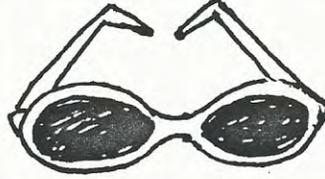
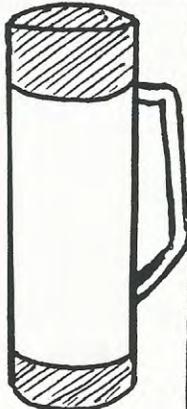
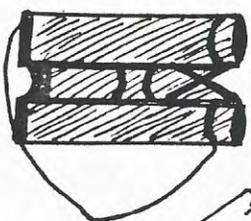
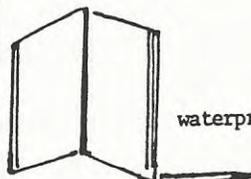
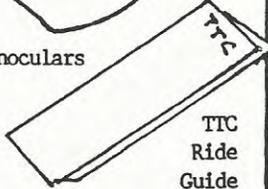
At this point I started down the main slope and was at once in to snow [sic] up to my hips, slipping forward, more or less in command of the situation, until, at last, I unexpectedly and unpleasantly upon a submerged burr [sic] bush! Refusing to be daunted I extricated myself, removed the burrs, and ploughed on. Soon I came to an abrupt halt, for the snow ahead was marked with a remarkable pattern. For eight feet a bird had floundered across the surface marking each advance with a complete pattern of its wings, the impression of every feather being clear and sharp. The initial marks showed a hollow, corresponding to the body. The depth of this indentation indicated that the bird had landed with force. The distinctiveness of the wing markings in its subsequent progress revealed that it had made a great effort to move quickly, each flap having forced the wings well into the snow. The trail led up to a thorn tree and ceased as abruptly as it commenced. What is the story behind this snow picture? Hard to say -- but it looked to me as though some small bird -- perhaps a tree sparrow or junco as the wing spread was between 8 and 9 inches -- had been severely frightened. It dashed down, possibly being pursued by the owl or hawk, hit the snow, clambered across the surface to the nearest shelter, and took refuge in the thorn tree. There were no marks of blood by the track so it probably got away.

an excerpt from one of Dr. Saunder's newsletters

As well as being editor of the Toronto Field Naturalists newsletter from 1938 to 1965, Dr. Saunders was president of the club from 1940 to 1943. He was an Honorary Life member of TFN. □

If in doubt, call the weather number 661-0123 before getting ready.

FOR ENJOYMENT OF WINTER OUTINGS

<p>peaked woolly cap with ear muffs</p> 	 <p>mittens over gloves</p>
<p>waterproof boots thick socks</p> 	 <p>layered clothing</p>
<p>sun glasses, if desired</p>  <p>snack</p>  <p>thermos for hot drink</p> 	<p>camera</p>  <p>binoculars</p>  <p>waterproof notebook</p>  <p>TTC Ride Guide</p>  <p><i>Eva Davis</i></p>

PROJECTS

BAILLIE FUND GRANTS AVAILABLE

Since 1978 the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation has provided over \$300,000 in grants to some 273 research projects that contributed to the study and preservation of Canadian birds and their habitats. In 1998, the Fund disbursed over \$29,000 to 27 projects across Canada. The Fund offers two types of grants: (1) for projects that involve research or education or that contribute to the preservation of Canadian birds; or (2) for a special 5-year program (1994-1998, renewed for 1999-2003) to initiate and support migration monitoring stations (bird observatories) that monitor Canadian landbirds during their migrations. The Fund supports projects that involve volunteers in education, research or data collection. Support of graduate student research projects is not a priority. Individuals or organizations can apply. Grants range from \$200 to \$3,000 and average about \$1,000. Next deadline for applications is January 25, 1999.

For more information and application forms write to: Secretary, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, Bird Studies Canada, Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont. NOE 1M0 (Tel. 519-586-3531).

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

Requested: Essays (no longer than 500 words), reviews (no longer than 300 words), poems, cartoons, sketches and newspaper clippings.

Subjects: plants, animals and natural areas in the Toronto region, especially reports of personal experiences with wildlife.

Please include your name, address and telephone number so submissions can be acknowledged. With newspaper clippings, include source and date of each clipping.

Time dated material such as notices of meetings should be submitted at least six weeks before the month in which the event is to take place.

Send material to: Toronto Field Naturalists
605 - 14 College St.
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1K2

Editor: Helen Juhola

Art, Poetry and Nature Observations: Diana Banville

Assistants: Eva Davis, Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg, Eileen Mayo, Toshi Oikawa

Printer: DM Printing

Mailer: Perkins Mailing Services

FOR READING

NEW NATURALIST'S GUIDEBOOK FOR TORONTO

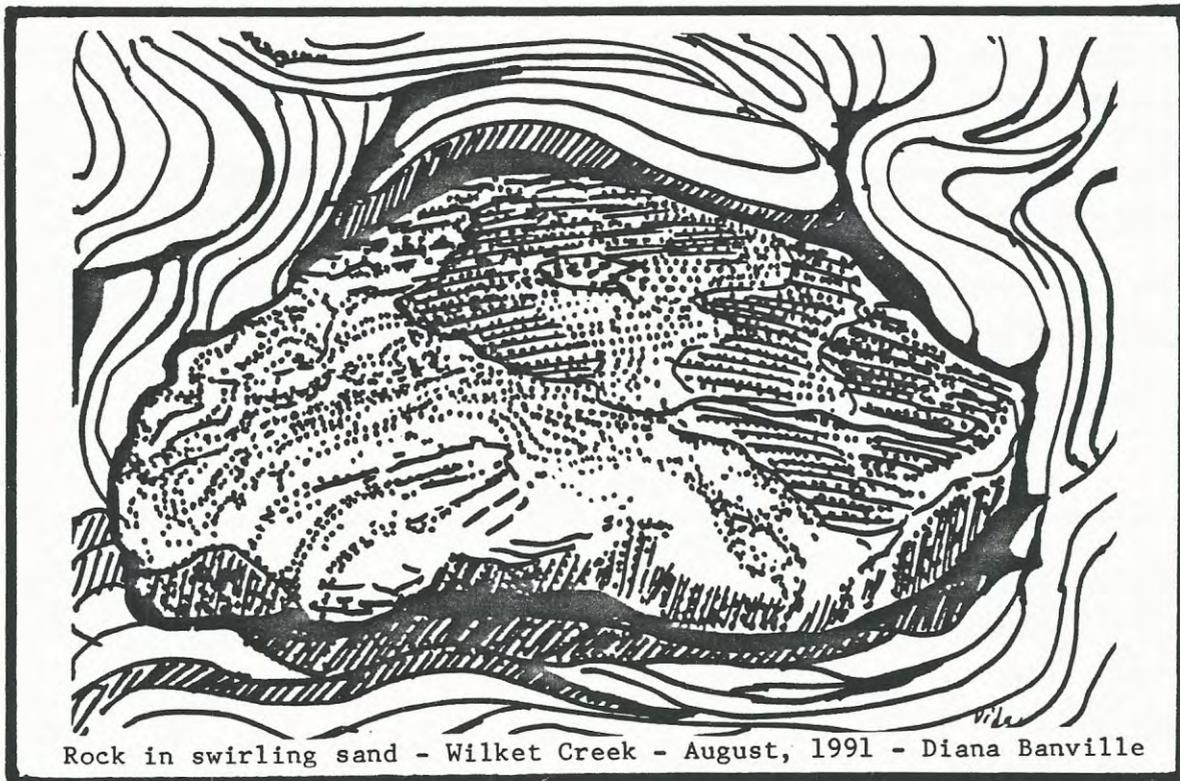
In conjunction with the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America, held at Toronto in late October, a colorful guide to the geology and landforms of the Toronto area has been prepared. This 40-page booklet introduces the geological history of the Toronto region from its plate tectonic assembly, through its Paleozoic sea deposits, and concludes with its glacial history.

The human touch following glaciation is revealed, as our impact upon the landscape is explored in the sections dealing with landfills and waste disposal. Interwoven throughout the booklet are places to visit where one can see the features and processes described. Major sites to visit as outlined within the booklet are: the Don Valley Brick Works Park, Scarborough Bluffs (Sylvan Park, Cathedral Bluffs Park, Bluffers Park), the old Lake Iroquois shoreline, the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Niagara Escarpment, and landfills.

With photographs and illustrations in full color, and a price of only \$8.00, this booklet should be especially popular to Toronto Field Naturalists, students and teachers. It is also of interest to anyone curious about how our landscape originated and the consequences resulting from our impact with the landscape. Look for it at our monthly meetings at Northrop Frye Hall.

Ed Freeman

TORONTO ROCKS: THE GEOLOGICAL LEGACY OF THE TORONTO REGION by Nick Eyles and Laura Clinton, University of Toronto at Scarborough, 1998. Cost is \$8 or \$10 for postal orders. □



ONE LESS FISH

I've written a lot about a little section of Mimico Creek. This area was once the centre of a cohesive farming community known as Richview. An iron bridge took Richview Side Road (now Eglinton Avenue West) across the creek, providing a link between the two focal points of the community: the school at Martin Grove and the church at Brown's Line (Highway 27). It was these two structures (and a post office I never saw) that provided the community's cohesion. Although anything "store bought" required a trip to Weston, the local farmers were proud of their church and post office but, most important, they were proud to be able to provide their children with an education at their school. I was enrolled in the little two-room school the last year of its existence ('56,'57) and even went to the church -- on occasion. Although there is no sign left of the school, the church's graveyard has been preserved and can be seen on any trip to the airport (a little jewel embedded in the crowning achievement of today's traffic planners). Here's a bit more about one of my favourite spots.

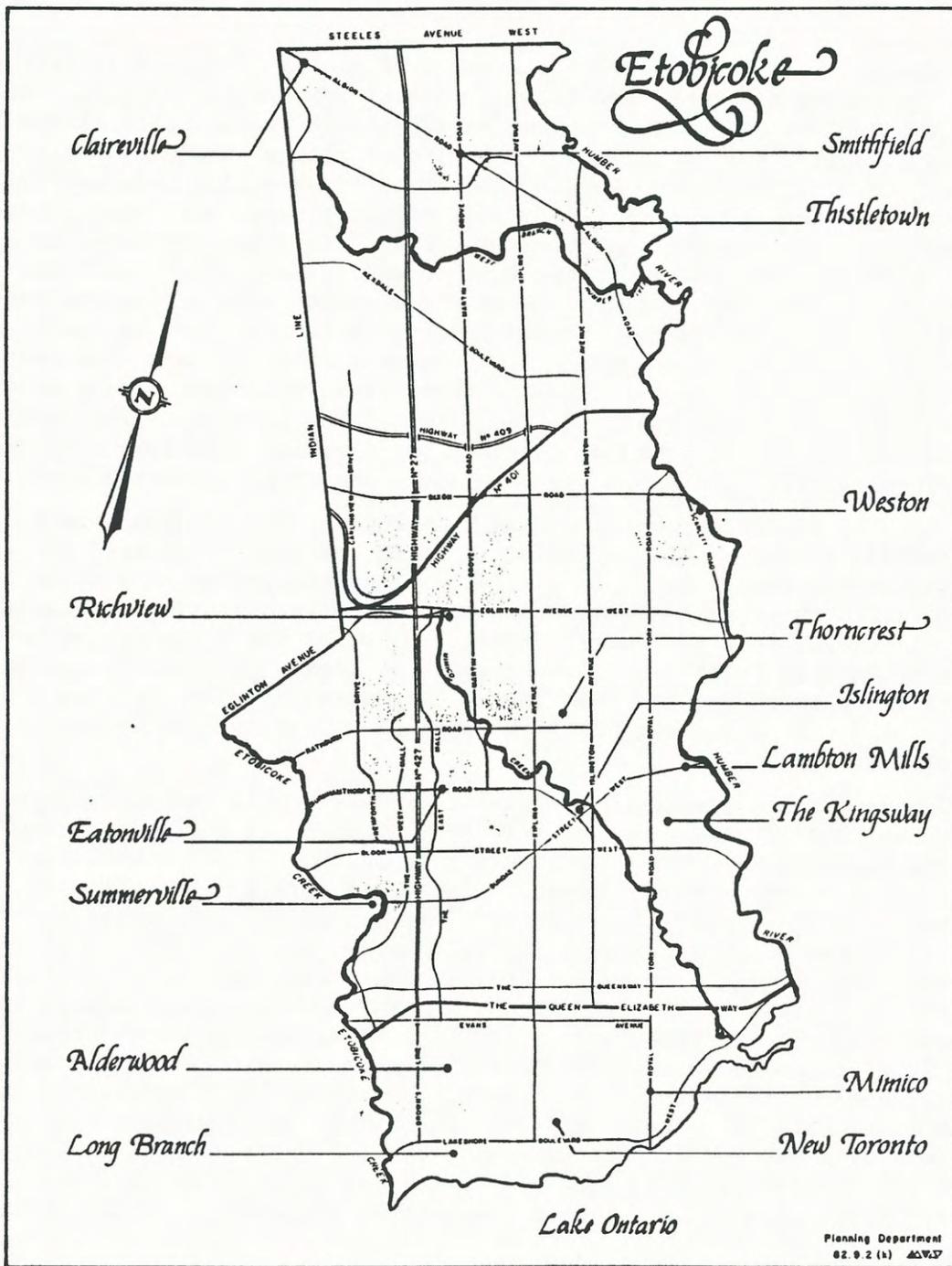
This area of Mimico Creek has always been a pesky little challenge for the traffic planner. It just seems to be in the way. Maps from the turn of the century show Brown's line fording it at several points. When I lived there, there were huge arched concrete culverts taking the traffic over at several points. Today? Well, I actually saw a map of the basket-weave of highway interchanges under which it flows. The traffic pattern defies description (it has been called spaghetti junction) but, as I often say: "They've been building this interchange all of my life -- and it still needs work".

The Mimico Creek valley was once a major flyway of the passenger pigeon migrations. Mimico means (roughly) "resting place of the wild pigeon". After a summer on the Bruce Peninsula the passenger pigeons would fly south -- first stop, Mimico Creek. They would rest in the valley to fatten up on the hickory nuts before their hop across Lake Ontario. You can still find hickory trees in several places. Sadly, when the settlers got here they made short work of the pigeons. They were easy pickings for any predator and only survived in their natural environment through sheer numbers. It was the systematic extermination by man that eventually did them in. For any species which relies on numbers for survival, a small reduction has a cascading effect which accelerates their reduction. This leads inevitably to extinction. One of the more novel methods of extermination was to set a hickory tree full of birds on fire -- you could flame broil a few hundred all at once -- a veritable Swiss Chalet on a camping trip. (Sorry -- a rather insensitive treatment of a disgusting legacy.)

I'd like to tell you a little story about the creek that is still vivid to me after 40 years. It demonstrates the changing values of the importance of the environment that have developed over this 40-(42 if you're counting) year period.

I was a city kid, transported to the outer edge of the emerging suburbs of Toronto. Although a mere five miles from where I grew up, this move made me feel like I'd been transported to western Canada at the turn of the century. After settling into our new home in the summer, school (remember those days?) was fast approaching. "Here's where you'll be

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from VILLAGES OF ETOBICOKE published by the Etobicoke Historical Board, c 1985

Red osier glows
where charcoal trees loom in mist.
Winter solstice scene.

haiku by Arthur Wade
Toronto Islands Dec. 1997

ONE LESS FISH (cont'd)

going", mom said as we drove down dirt roads to Martin Grove and Richview Sideroad. Huh? This place has a pump out front and a bell on top, I thought in disbelief. "Look, it has a pump out front!", said mom, always trying to comfort me. "I noticed", I grumbled. Then, remembering my old school, I half heartedly pleaded, "Why did we have to move from Dufferin and Rogers?" My old school, Hughes Public, had outside water fountains that you could put your thumb over and squirt kids with, and the big boys could make water shoot away up into the air. I had almost reached the point where I could do that, but now, what could I do at Richview Public School with a pump out front.

I got over my youthful depression fast and, in fact, it became my job, just before lunch, to fill up the teacher's tea kettle from that great pump out front. I'm not sure whether that was a reward or punishment -- in any case, it sure was fun. I even got to ring the bell in the steeple by pulling a rope in the cloak room. I think the teacher liked me; he was from western Canada. (That pump -- every drink of water was so cool and refreshing you couldn't stop. I still remember it.)

I was a non-swimmer, but used to go down to the creek and watch my school buddies swim. Note, I had friends from grades 4,5,6,7 and 8; after all, we were all in the same room. We had the same pop math quizzes. (I hated it when one of the grade 4s beat me, like that Eric, my best friend, three years younger than me and the smartest kid in the school.) The creek water was actually a bit murky but I think Richview kids thrived on murk. They loved diving into the deep water from the bridge. They would climb, angle iron by angle iron, until just watching them caused your toes to curl under and gave you a queasy feeling in your stomach. Then came the dive -- Kerploop -- then, who could stay under the longest? These kids were way cooler than the ones at Hughes -- way cooler.

One day we all headed for the creek. It was one of those days when it's too hot and you hear those buzzy things that some kids thought were the telephone wires. (I know, I'm supposed to be a serious naturalist but I still call them buzzy things, and I still have the feeling that the noise is caused by cracked insulators on open telephone wires. I can dream, right?) As we approached the creek something wasn't right. The water wasn't murky any more. It was a brilliant chartreuse -- like the colour of one of mom's dresses. (You know, the colour moms used to wear. It was the 50s.) Even Richview kids wouldn't swim in that, so we went home. Upon reporting the news (and here's my point), there was a sort of indifference to, or complacency about, the whole thing. "Oh well, some factory must have opened upstream. That's progress for ya...people do need jobs." The only one who was the least bit concerned was Mrs. Omdahl (the lady who made the Danish pastries you'd kill for). However, everyone knew she was an eccentric. She wanted to preserve the old woodlot that was in the way of the proposed widening of Eglinton Ave. West, and radical things like that. (Oh, and get this conneciton -- "that Eric" was her little boy.)

They closed Richview and opened a brand new school, one with halls like they have in jails and electric bells and fountains with water that tasted funny, and they called it Richview Public -- right! Dad got a transfer a few years later and we moved away, but for those last years the creek was never quite the same. I remember one other day when it ran an

ONE LESS FISH (cont'd)

eerie, rusty red, like the colour you might see for trendy wall-to-wall carpeting. (It just wasn't getting better.) I read that the Humber River died around the mid 1800s as a result of sawdust being dumped into it. One valley over, and about 100 years later, I witnessed the demise of Mimico Creek -- a demise brought about by some businessman authorizing the dumping of something -- "trying to increase the bottom line" is what they say, isn't it?

That's a bit of the background of my "Mimico Meanders" articles that appeared during the past year in the TFN newsletter. In them, I retraced my steps from a different perspective. I returned earlier this year to see how things were going. I am pleased to report: "Not bad!" The swallows and kingfishers were there although I couldn't find the kingbirds. As I strolled along I felt I should report that ecologically this place isn't a very pretty sight. Botanists would cringe upon seeing it. All the plants are unnatural for the ecosystem and so on. There are no rare or spectacular things at all, but the water isn't chartreuse.

As I was leaving that day, I looked around to take a quick inventory: savanna sparrow, song sparrows (everywhere), catbird, cliff swallow, barn swallow, bank swallow, phoebe (or is that a pee wee -- get the book), a mallard with one duckling -- very nice, another cardinal, a yellow shafted flicker, orioles, a pair of belted kingfishers, and kerploop, one less fish. Nothing out of the ordinary here -- a bunch of normal stuff, and I don't have to dream!

Ken Cook

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BANK BEAVERS

When I was young, in Elgin County Ontario, I would sometimes hear the term "bank beaver". By this the rural folk meant beavers that already have access to a deep pond, hence they have no need to build dams or lodges, so they don't. Most of the rural folk seemed to realise that the 'bank' and dam building beavers were the same species (*Castor canadensis*). Although, I do remember one farmer who insisted that 'bank beavers' are a distinctly different species.

During the summer of 1997 I saw a beaver swimming in the lagoon at Bluffer's Park. I was rather surprised at this, as the Bluffer's Park is so developed. Nevertheless, there was at least one "bank beaver" in the lagoon. This winter I have noticed that the beaver, or beavers, have been busy felling trees and shrubs in the area. The trees felled included willows, poplars and dogwoods.

D. Andrew White

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FAIRY RINGS

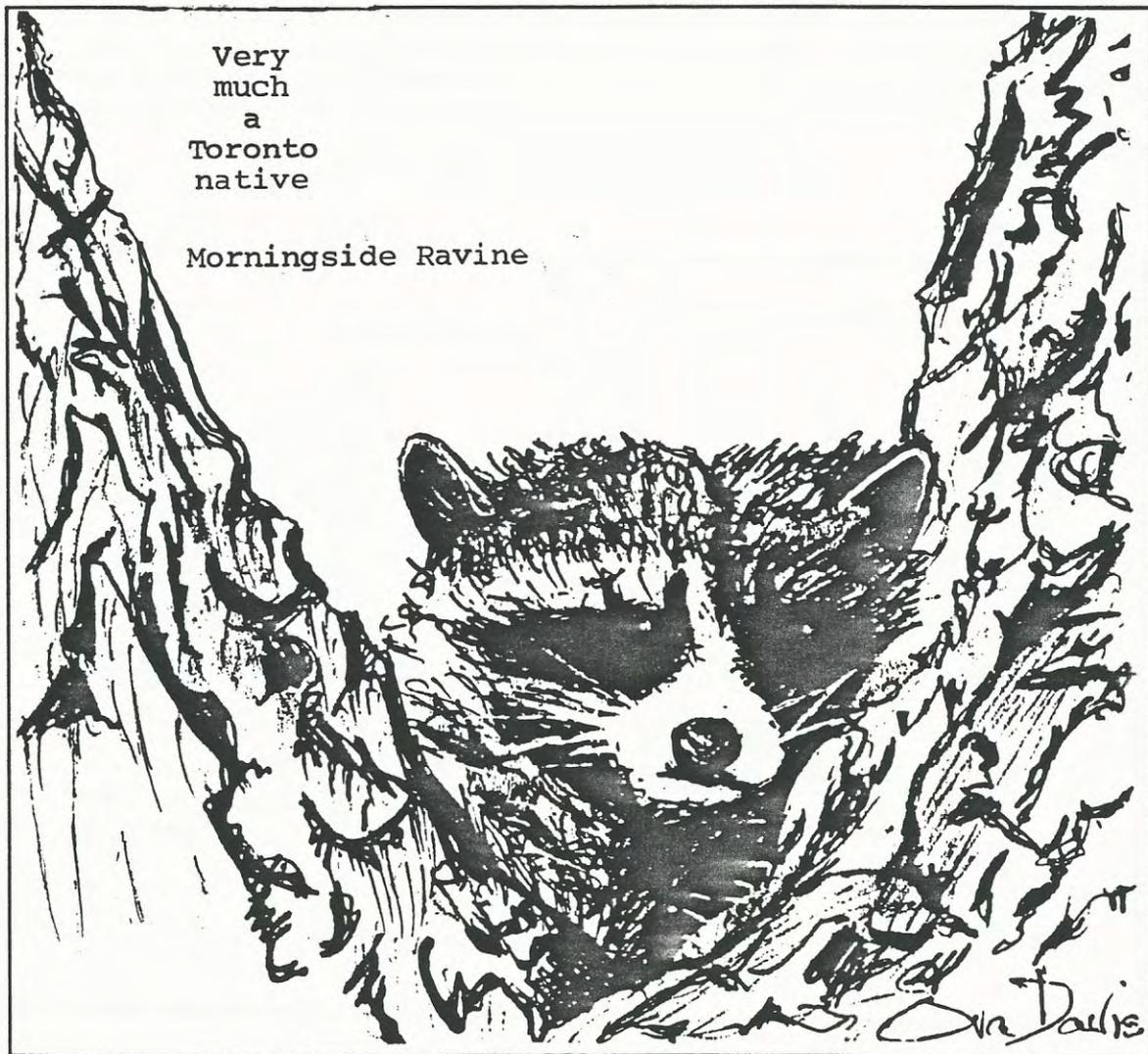
I was enlightened to read recently that there are two kinds of "fairy ring", that familiar circle of mushrooms which we all come across at some time.

There are free rings, a frequent sight in parks and gardens, of encircling small buff-coloured mushrooms. Free rings can grow up to 8 inches a year and reach a diameter of more than 30 feet.

The other kind is the tethered ring which may be formed by mycorrhizal fungi; i.e., those which live in symbiotic partnership with trees. Tree and fungus need each other for survival, and "tethered" means that the mycelium of the fungus can never stray far and must remain joined to the roots of the specific tree.

Eva Davis

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TREES OF MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY

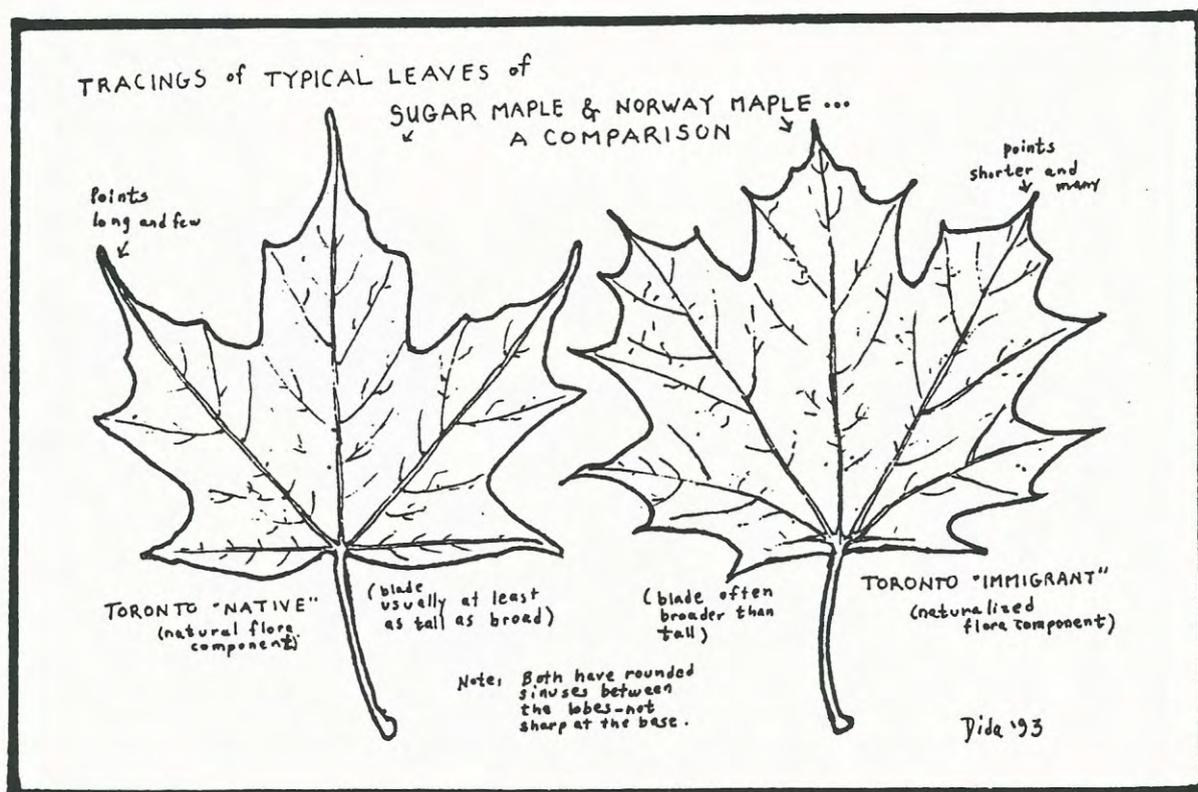
The Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) is the most common tree in Toronto. First choice for home builders, it is inexpensive, hardy, fairly disease-resistant, and can be custom-made. There are varieties from which to choose: a tall tree, a round tree, a red tree, or whatever is desired, all at bargain prices. Most of these are found in Mount Pleasant.

In the P section there is the "Pride of Oregon". It has dissected, overlapping leaves and is one of the more unusual varieties. The "Olmsted" is in section L. Others include the Globosum, Crimson King, Schwedlerii, Drummondii, Lobergii, Almira, Deborah and Crimson Sentry.

The problem with these maples lies in their capacity to reproduce. In Toronto they have taken over on grasslands, in parks and in wild areas where native trees dominated in the past.

Most people cannot tell a Norway from a sugar maple, so they don't realize we have an invasion. The Norway has bigger, flatter seeds and latex inside the petioles. The native 'sugar' gives us maple sugar and turns the brilliant fall colours which are a magnet for tourists. With all the varieties of Norway available, why has no one developed a seedless tree? If it can be done for the honey locust, surely it is not beyond our capability.

Roger Powley



IN THE NEWS

URBAN HAWK FINDS BALCONY RAILING A PERFECT PERCH

A red-tailed hawk is one of the most common birds of our region and mid-to late winter are the best times to see them. They're everywhere, but perhaps the best place to be sure to see them is by driving around the open countryside near Pearson International Airport, including Hwy 401. Look for them perched on fence posts and on tops of trees. Food shortages caused by severe weather changes and the use of poisons to kill rats and pigeons are probably the worst threats these birds face. Although red-tails can take prey up to the size of a pheasant, it is pigeons, rats and mice that attract them to the city. In the countryside, the meadow vole is probably their primary food.

extracted from an article by Barry Kent MacKay in the TORONTO STAR, Feb. 22, 1998

MERCURY FOUND TO HARM LOONS

The loons on the lakes of Eastern Canada are playing the same role as the canary in the coal mine: They're warning of danger. A new study by Environment Canada scientists has found that high blood levels of the toxic metal mercury interfere with the loon's ability to successfully nest and raise young. They feed at the top of the food chain, just as we do and just as a lot of other species do, and if the loons are being so seriously affected, then that's got to raise serious concerns about human health.

extracted from an article in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Sept. 22, 1998

RESCUING BIRDS

Wildlife rehabilitators often must care for animals, especially birds, that would have been better off left alone. Frequently a baby bird hopping around the base of a tree is a "fledgling" still under the watchful eye of its parents. They can be safely replaced in the nest. But when well-intentioned people pick them up and take them home for a few days, there's no way to reunite them with the parents.

from an article in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Oct. 9, 1998

IT'S BLOWIN' IN THE WIND POWER

Giant windmills are not to everyone's taste. While some may think of them as graceful symbols of a technological civilization -- like bridges or skyscrapers -- others find them aesthetically repulsive. Another more tangible flaw is the threat that giant rotor blades pose to birds. According to a U.S. study, more than 500 birds of prey -- including 78 golden eagles -- were killed by wind turbines at the Altamont Pass power station in California during a two-year period. To combat the problem, planners are trying to locate turbines away from avian flyways; designers have also turned to smooth, tubular towers that make it difficult for birds to perch.

extracted from an article by Dan Falk in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Sept. 5, 1998

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ATLANTIC SALMON BREEDING IN B.C. RIVER

Atlantic salmon that have escaped from West Coast fish farms have been discovered breeding, which was previously thought impossible. Healthy young Atlantic salmon were found last month in a Vancouver Island river. The discovery, if confirmed by scientific review, is expected to renew protests against the fish farm industry in British Columbia. It will also generate intense scientific interest, and may cause alarm among regulators of fish farming elsewhere in the world. Atlantic salmon, originally imported from the East Coast, are the main fish raised in the giant floating net-cages found in dozens of fish farms floating along the B.C. coast. They are farmed because they grow faster than natural Pacific salmon. The risks posed to the environment by the farms, such as genetic intermingling with Pacific salmon and the introduction of new diseases, have been a source of concern between the \$190-million fish-farming industry in B.C. and its critics among environmentalists and the much weakened B.C. commercial-fishing industry.

extracted from an article by Ross Howard in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Sept. 23, 1998

Comment: On Oct. 16/98, Diana Banville saw about eight large fish in the East Don River in the Wigmore Park area. On Oct. 17/98 I saw six very large, dead fish in the Don River north of the Pottery Road bridge and south of the weir. John Clayton of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority said they are Chinook salmon on their fall run. He hopes that when the weir on the East Don River south of Lawrence Ave. East is changed, the fish may be able to spawn in the Don. Meanwhile, they swim as far north as Wigmore Park and die. Watch next fall in all our rivers for these impressive looking fish. Do call the Conservation Authority at 661-6600 if you see any. These particular fish had been "planted" when they were very small in Ashbridges Bay, had fed in Lake Ontario for about five years and were heading upstream to breed and die. What I find interesting is that the Atlantic salmon are living in the Pacific and the Pacific salmon (the Chinooks) are living in Lake Ontario. What a mess!

H.J.

...chemical pesticides and herbicides are manufactured to destroy life forms, and are known neurotoxins and hepatotoxins. They can't be seen or smelled in a lot of cases, but that doesn't make them benign. Their damaging effect on the ecosystem, the food and water supply and the related direct and indirect effects on human health make it an even broader issue beyond acute human illness. Anyone interested in the health of our planet and our children needs to be sensitive to the role that pesticide sprays play. [See pages 8 & 9.]

from "Doctors should tackle excessive pesticide use, too" [a letter] by John Gamage, M.D, Markham in the TORONTO STAR, May 22, 1998

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BLIGHT

Persistent organic pollutants or POPs for short include pesticides and industrial chemicals largely banned in North America but still freely applied in many tropical and subtropical nations, including China. The POPs now popping up 3,100 metres above sea level in the Rockies, at places as seemingly pristine as the Columbia Icefields and Lake Louise, are a notorious lot. They include lindane, a common prairie crop insecticide; endosulphan, a popular insect killer applied in eastern Canada; chlordane, a banned termite terminator; and DDT, the outlawed mosquito slayer that still remains a legal weapon for malarial control in China and Mexico. The scientists also found lots of PCBs, the industrial chemicals once used in electrical transformers. These compounds can cause a lot of trouble once they get into fatty tissue, where they biomagnify. Some are endocrine disruptors -- they mimic the body's hormones and play havoc with development and gender. Others can disrupt enzyme function and impair reproduction in animals and humans. The cyclical process in which these chemicals evaporate into the air and then cool and condense, only to fall back to Earth in colder regions, is known as "the grasshopper effect". The grasshopper effect explains why the world's highest levels of toxaphene now float on top of the Arctic Ocean; why 25 per cent of the dioxins in Lake Michigan hail from southern Texas; and why ski hills up and down the Rockies harbour unwanted pollutants from as far afield as Asia. These same chemicals condensing at high altitudes in Costa Rica and the Rockies may play a role in the well-documented disappearance of frogs and salamanders. The amphibians that have typically disappeared first all lived in high altitudes and bred in fresh water. The grasshopper effect may in part explain their world-wide decline. The study recorded a consistent pattern: The higher up the mountain the scientists took their samples, the greater the levels of pollutants. Samples from 22 sites in British Columbia and Alberta showed a 10-to-100 fold increase in POPs between 770 and 3,100 metres in altitude. Given that industry produces more than 100,000 chemicals, some scientists suspect that cold condensation may be trapping more than just POPs in the Rockies. Other chemicals such as 2-4D, a plant killer, may well show up. The snow study traces its origin to a landmark 1993 Environment Canada survey that found high levels of the toxaphene (a pesticide used heavily in cotton fields) in trout and whitefish in alpine lakes in Canada's four Rocky Mountain parks. Higher alpine lakes tended to have more contaminated fish than subalpine lakes. In many cases fish were too contaminated for daily human consumption. Fish in alpine and subalpine lakes are not really suitable for wildlife that eat fish, including osprey, otter and eagles, and that's quite a statement to make about our national parks.

extracted from an article by Andrew Nikiforuk in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Oct. 17, 1998

This cold winter day
a roof shingled with pigeons
trying to keep warm.

haiku by Helen Juhola

ONTARIO CROWN LAND UP FOR GRABS

Ontario's forests are up for grabs, and if the mining and logging industries get their way, almost every bit of Crown land -- provincial parks included -- would be thrown open to development. Imagine running into an open-pit mine on your next paddling trip through Algonquin Park. The very idea sounds absurd, but it could happen. With the release of the Lands for Life report, the resource industries took a step closer to gaining access to the vast tracts of protected and unprotected government-owned lands, which cover 87 per cent of the province. The 88-page report summarizes the conclusions and recommendations of the public consultations that addressed the future use of Crown lands. The report, submitted to John Snobelen, the province's Minister of Natural Resources, is not government policy, though it will have enormous influence in shaping the upcoming policy on Crown land management for generations to come. To no one's surprise, one of the core themes in the [Oct. 30/98] Lands for Life report was "providing greater security for resource industries." The report also raises the concept of "floating reserves" which apparently means allowing certain lands to be protected, but only after the resource companies have been given the option to develop them. But surely most parks and several pure wilderness areas are worth protecting from the chainsaw and mining shovel. The Lands for Life recommendations are just that, recommendations, and nothing will be decided without vigorous public debate. Let's hope.

extracted from an article by Eric Reguly in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Oct. 31, 1998

REPORT OKAYS LOGGING OF MOST WILDERNESS

Expanses of Ontario wilderness that add up to an area larger than Yukon should for the most part be thrown open to loggers, miners and developers. The recommendation, which comes after two full years of fractious public consultations, has been met with disdain by environmentalists, who had fought hard to protect 12 to 30 per cent of the land from developers. The recommendation calls on the province to protect only 7.6 per cent of 46 million hectares of publicly owned land in Northern and Central Ontario. That is 1.6 per cent more than was protected from development before the process began.

extracted from an article in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Oct. 31, 1998

WILDERNESS REPORT CALLED INADEQUATE

Two million hectares of wilderness would be only partially protected and open to limited logging, mining, hydro electric development and roads, according to the Lands for Life report released Oct. 31 by the natural resources ministry. The partially protected regions would allow industrial development under a vaguely described condition of being "compatible with reserve values". In addition, hunting would be allowed in new and some existing parks. Although environmentalists complained the process was weighted in favour of development, forestry industry officials were unhappy with the proposals. The goal of creating security for the forest industry has not been achieved. The ministry is seeking public comment on the proposals until Nov. 30. [See article on page 25.]

extracted from an article by Brian McAndrew in the TORONTO STAR, Oct. 31, 1998

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

RECYCLING IDEAS FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE

- Placed in the garden or back yard, a Christmas tree can provide winter shelter for small birds, but remember to remove all tinsel - birds will try to eat the shiny stuff.
- Consider decorating the tree again, this time with treats for the birds, such as orange slices, peanut butter spread on tree seed cones or suet balls stuffed with sunflower seeds.
- Old Christmas trees stacked together in a forest provide shelter for rabbits and other small animals.

extracted from an article in the LONDON FREE PRESS, Dec. 27, 1997

PUBLIC GARDENS ADD COLOUR TO THOSE DULL WINTER DAYS

Admission is free to Toronto's two indoor public gardens and both are wheelchair accessible and open every day of the year.

- Allan Gardens, just east of Jarvis St. on the north side of Gerrard St., is open Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4 pm and Saturday and Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm. Special events include the spring display of forced bulbs from late January to late April, the Easter show of lilies, hydrangeas and begonias around Easter time, the fall flower show of chrysanthemums and the Victorian Christmas show from early December to early January.
- The Centennial Park Conservatory at 151 Elmcrest Rd. in Etobicoke is open from 10 am to 5 pm every day of the week. Special events include the Spring show of bulbs from early February to May 31, the Easter show of Easter lilies and hydrangeas a week before Easter, the summer show of tropical and annual plants from June 5 to Sept. 7, the fall chrysanthemum show from Sept. 13 to Nov. 23 and the Christmas show of poinsettias from Nov. 29 to mid-January.

extracted from an article in the TORONTO STAR, Feb. 7, 1998

Comment: Toronto now has another greenhouse garden: the Cloud Garden on the south side of Richmond St. West between Yonge St. and Bay St. The building is open Mondays to Fridays from 10 am to 3 pm and there is no admission charge.

LANDS FOR LIFE

▷ The Hon. John C. Snobelen, Minister of Natural Resources, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ont. M7A 1W3 wants your comments on his ministry's report. You may write to him or call his office at 416-314-2301. See three articles on page 24 about this issue. □

Barred owl at evening
asks, "Who cooks for you, for you?" -
and your answer is?

haiku by Harold Taylor

GREAT HOLIDAY GIFTS

TFN membership: See back page of newsletter for rates.

TFN publications: See back page for list and prices.

A Spit Kit (which includes one year membership in Friends of the Spit, bird checklist, spit poster, plant book for spit, etc.) To order send \$17 (individual) or \$20 (household/group: 2 or more at the same address) to: Friends of the Spit, P.O. Box 51518, 2060 Queen St. East, Toronto, Ont. M4E 3V7.

Federation of Ontario Naturalists membership: call 444-8419 for details.

Canadian Nature Federation membership: call (toll free) 1-800-267-4088 for details.

ASHBRIDGE'S BAY edited by George Fairfield: Send \$23 per copy to the Toronto Ornithological Club, 332 Sheldrake Blvd., Toronto, Ont. M4P 2B8.

TORONTO ROCKS: THE GEOLOGICAL LEGACY OF THE TORONTO REGION by Nick Eyles and Laura Clinton: send \$10 to the Toronto Field Naturalists (see address on back cover).

WILDFLOWER (North America's Magazine of Wild Flora): call 924-6807 for details.

Mycological Society of Toronto membership: Call Pat Burchell at 444-9053 for details.

Toronto Entomologists' Association membership: call Alan Hanks at 905-727-6993.

Gem and Mineral Club of Scarborough: call Randy Ernst at 494-4276.

▷ TFN memberships and publications may be purchased at the TFN office on Dec. 9 from 3 pm to 8 pm. See page 29.

H.J.

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A normal annual snowfall in Toronto is 65 inches. A few flurries usually occur in November, and occasionally several inches may fall but it is not until December that the ground becomes snow-covered, and this, as a rule, not until well on in the month; there is not sleighing at Christmas in more than one year in five, and in many winters the ground is bare during Christmas week.

from "The Climate of Toronto" in THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE TORONTO REGION, ONTARIO, CANADA, by J.H. Faull, The Canadian Institute, 1913

THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

December 1997, Toronto

Toronto enjoyed a tranquil month with almost no snow, mild temperatures, and reasonable sunshine given the time of year. An El Nino-influenced flow of mild Pacific air across the mid-continent contributed to the quiet weather. Two winter storm systems threatened us but both times passed to the southeast leaving us dry, although a brief incursion of Arctic air followed the second system on New Year's Eve, bringing temperatures in the minus teens, the only inclement weather of any note. Mid-month brought four consecutive days of full sunshine, with temperatures rising to 8°C. Sunshine hours totalled 83.9, definitely above normal, although not exceptional.

Over the month as a whole, mean temperatures ran about 2.5°C above normal, but well within the range of recent years. Ten of the past twelve Decembers have had above-normal temperatures. Snowfall was only about 12 cm and total precipitation was 34.4 mm downtown and 30.2 mm at Pearson Airport. These were the lowest values in four years. Winds were moderately light.

1997 was a dryish year. Downtown Toronto recorded 721.2 mm of precipitation as opposed to the normal 818.9 mm. The growing season, April to September, was rather draughty with 321.4 mm as opposed to the normal 430.1 mm. This year had the driest growing season since 1971 when precipitation was 288.5 mm.

G.M. ▽



FLOWERING CURRANT is a plant native to British Columbia and into California. Its flower-colour is described as "red-pink" in *NATURE WEST COAST* by the Vancouver Natural History Society. The comment is made, "Sent to England by David Douglas in the early 1800's. Still grows in many British gardens." It was in a Glasgow garden that Mary Cumming made this drawing. It has been found growing wild in Britain, according to Fitter in *THE WILD FLOWERS OF BRITAIN AND NORTHERN EUROPE*. Four native currants and gooseberries grow in Toronto, as well as two from the Old World which are planted and persist without help. We are used to yellow, green, or white flowers, but sometimes the bristly black currant's are purplish and the skunk currant's a bit rosy.

January 1998, Toronto

El Nino certainly hit North America with a vengeance but, as usual, spared Toronto. It was a strange month with record-setting cloudiness, temperatures about four degrees Celsius above normal, and abundant rain in the first ten days of the month.

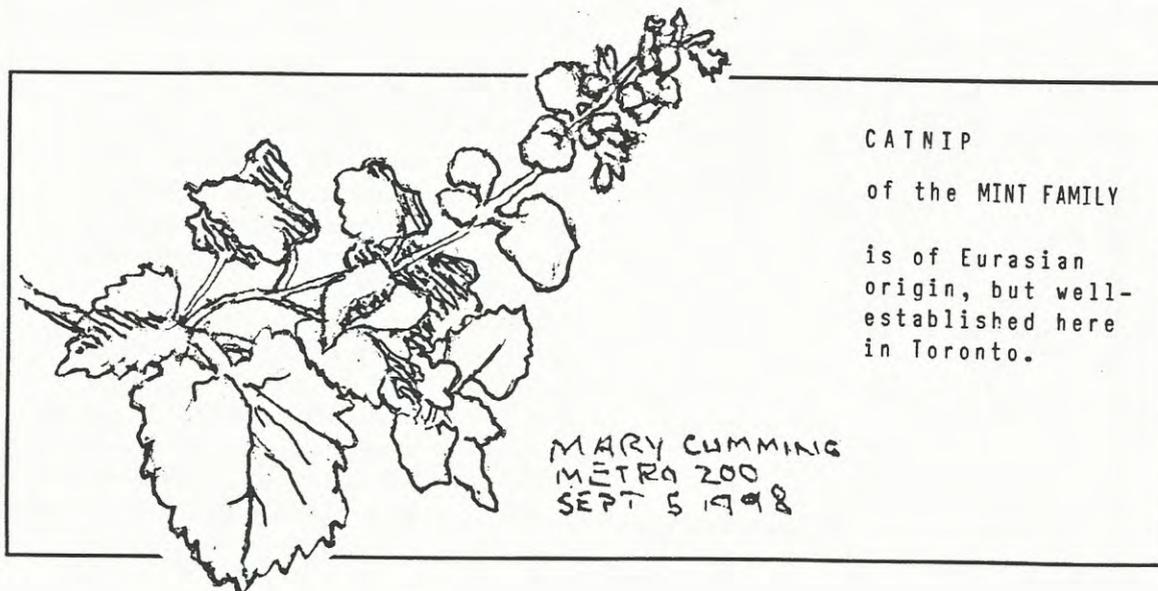
The big news was the huge ice storm, Canada's costliest natural disaster, which struck an area from Kingston, Ontario, to the Maritimes. Montreal and the Eastern Townships of Quebec were the worst-hit areas with up to 70 mm of accumulated freezing rain. The storm lasted from January 5 to January 11. Montreal was shut down for a good week, and some rural areas remained without power for a month. Except for some very brief spells at the beginning and end of this period, we had simply regular rain as temperatures soared over 10°C on a couple of occasions during that week. Temperatures rose to over 20°C in parts of the eastern U.S. Meanwhile it got very cold in western Canada -- an unusual situation for an El Nino winter and a change from Alberta's December forest fires.

After the rain, conditions became somewhat more seasonable, although still running above normal in temperature. Two respectable snowfalls came, snow-cover was established for the duration of the second half of January, and there were actually some freezing temperatures.

It was the warmest January since 1990. Rainfall was highest since 1995 with about 70 mm of precipitation. Snowfall ended up being close to normal, with Pearson on the light side at 24 cm and downtown just a little heavy at 38.8 cm. Although the month was decidedly wet, total precipitation was exceeded as recently as 1995. The lack of sunshine, however, did set an all-time record for January with only 40.6 hours recorded, mostly on a few days in the middle of the month. The previous record, way back in 1893, was 44.8 hours. Pearson Airport's average windspeed of 14.7 km/h was the lightest since 1983.

Gavin Miller

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COMING EVENTS

Toronto Ornithological Club - Jim Baillie Memorial Bird walks - aimed at the intermediate birder, but beginners are also welcome. Free.

- Sat. Dec. 5 at 8:30 am (all day) - Waterfowl along the west Toronto lakeshore or beyond with Jean Iron. Meet in the parking lot at Humber Bay Park East. Bring a lunch. Carpool if necessary.
- 1998 Toronto Christmas Bird Count - Dec. 27. Call Dan Bone at 766-9967 for more information. Cost: \$5.
- Winter Waterfowl Count - Jan. 10, 1999

Royal Canadian Institute - free science lecture at the Macleod auditorium Medical Sciences building, 1 King's College Circle. Call 928-2096.

- Dec. 6 at 3 pm - Science for young people (ages 7-97): Weights, wings and wheels with George Vanderkuur

Kortright Centre for Conservation, Pine Valley Drive, Kleinburg - many outdoor activities planned. Admission fees. Call 905-832-2289 for details about activities and costs. [not accessible by public transit]

The Urban Naturalist - has no public workshops scheduled at the present time. Those of you who have requested brochures, please be patient. They will be mailed out when our re-organization is complete. Meanwhile we continue to offer group outings and school programs as well as maintaining a resource file for nature travel and ecotourism world-wide. For further information please call 755-6030 and ask for Morris.

Birdwatching and Wildflower tours: Point Pelee, Algonquin Park, Rideau Trail, Cape Breton, Bermuda. For free newsletter, call George Bryant at Natural History Tours, 223-6922.

Art on the Wing: British, American and Canadian Illustrated Bird Books from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century

An exhibit prepared by Joan Winearls at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, 120 St. George St. The exhibit runs from January 25th to April 9th, 1999. The Fisher Library is open from Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A catalogue accompanies the exhibit and costs \$ 20.00, -- free to Friends of the Fisher Library.

This exhibition will look at the changing styles in bird art in books of the last three centuries. On display will be Gould's hummingbirds, Lear's toucans, Wolf's falcons and Audubon's warblers from the great period of hand-coloured lithographs and also twentieth century work such as Fuyes' hawks, Peterson's first field guide and Brooks' and Shortt's ducks. Come and learn more about the origins of bird illustration in an exhibit which should be a delight to all bird lovers.

TFN office OPEN - Wednesday, December 9 from 3 pm to 8pm

Books, booklets, posters, pins, crests, decals, checklists and memberships for sale. (Save the postage and visit the office.)

Great gift ideas!!!

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