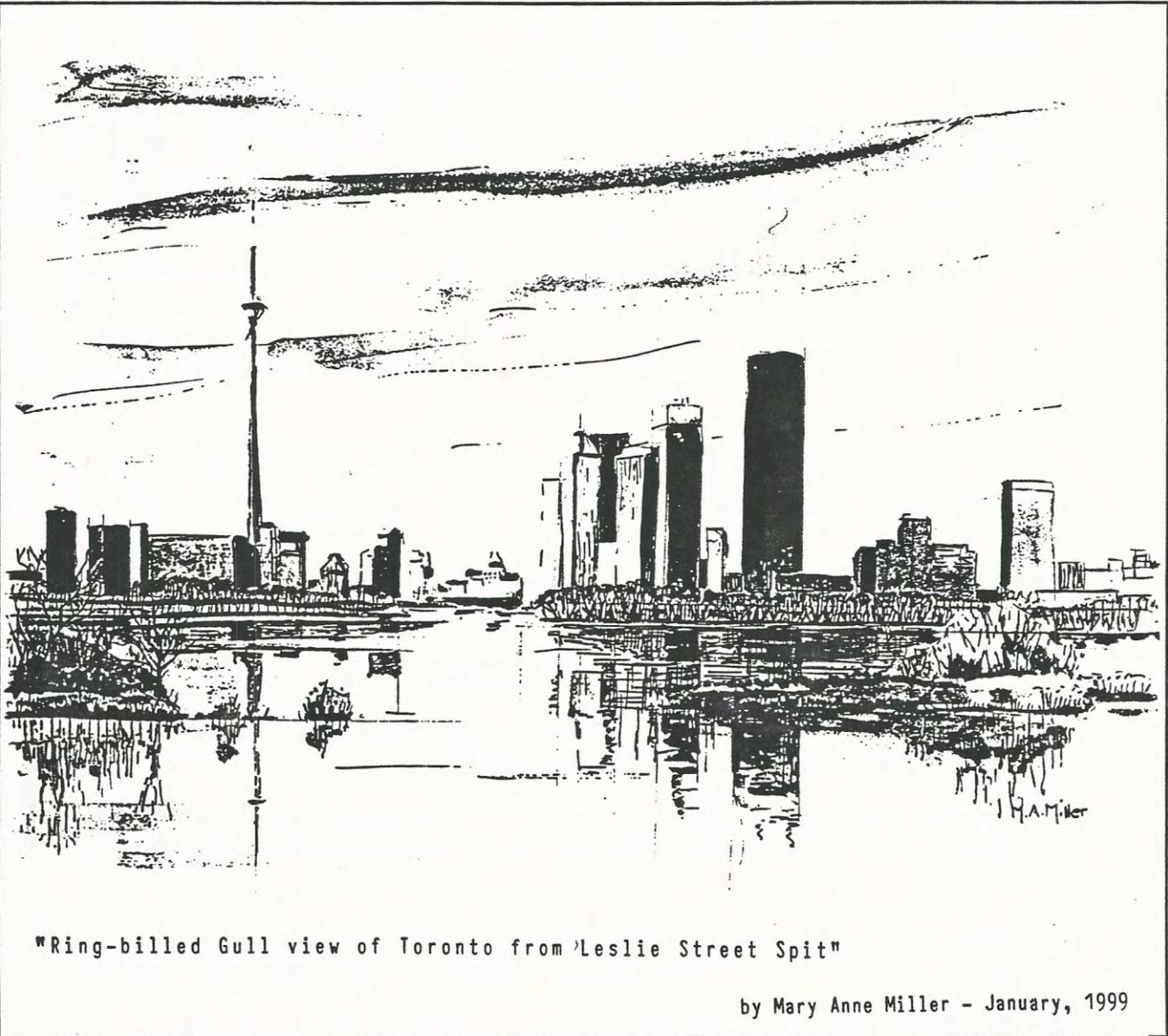


# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 488

December 1999



"Ring-billed Gull view of Toronto from Leslie Street Spit"

by Mary Anne Miller - January, 1999

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## TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, December 5, 1999 - THEN AND NOW

at 2:30 pm

in the Northrop Frye Hall  
Victoria University

73 Queen's Park Cres. East

an illustrated talk by Robin Powell, a Past President of the TFN and TFN photo librarian.

- Changes, both natural and unnatural, will be the theme of this slide show about the Don Valley. Most of the slides have been taken by club members.

+ a social hour beginning at 2 pm with free juice and coffee

+ a sale of books from Natural Heritage/Natural History, Inc., publishers of many books of interest to club members.

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, February 6, 2000 [no meeting in January]

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

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS NEWSLETTER COVERS BOTH DECEMBER AND JANUARY!

### 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, including locations, dates, and any sources consulted.

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  
2 Carlton St., #1519  
Toronto, Ont. M5B 1J3

Editor: Helen Juhola

Poetry, Art and Nature Observations: Diana Banville

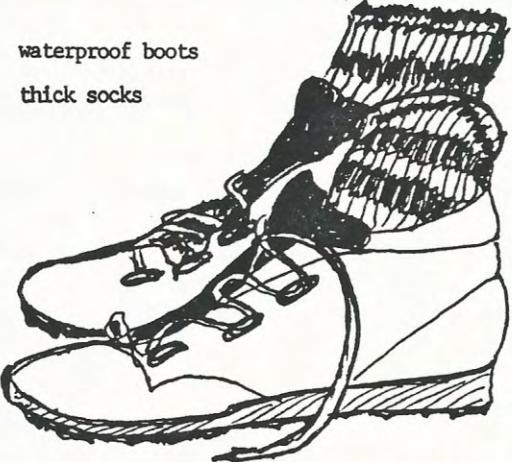
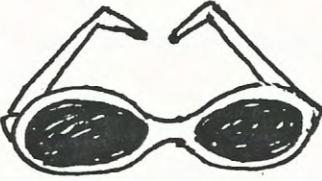
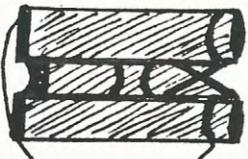
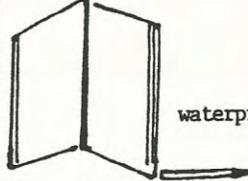
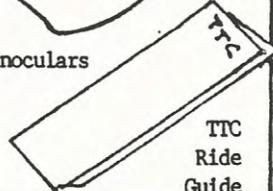
Assistants: Patricia Brind, Eva Davis, Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg,  
Toshi Oikawa, Marilyn Murphy, Robin Powell

Printer: DM Printing

Mailer: Perkins Mailing Services

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>



## DECEMBER OUTINGS (cont'd)

Tuesday  
Dec. 21  
10 am  
NEWTONBROOK CREEK - nature walk east Don tributary, North York  
Leader: Alexander Cappell  
Meet at the northwest corner of Bayview Ave. and Finch Ave. East.  
We will follow this creek in a northwesterly direction. The walk will end at  
at coffee shop on Yonge St. Note this is the first day of winter -- the  
winter solstice (shortest day of the year).

Wednesday  
Dec. 29  
10:30 am  
\$ ferry  
to docks  
TORONTO ISLAND - nature walk lakeshore, Toronto  
Leader: Ann Gray  
Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. Bring lunch.  
We will take the ferry to Ward's Island and walk from there so dress warmly  
and bring binoculars.

▷



# 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.

- Saturday SAM SMITH PARK - birds lakeshore, Etobicoke  
 Jan. 1 Leader: Andre Vietinghoff  
 10:30 am Meet on the south side of Lake Shore Blvd. West at the foot of Kipling Ave. Bring lunch and a hot drink, and dress warmly. Several habitats exist in this park -- wetlands, woods and shoreline. Bring your binoculars to help you find waterfowl and perhaps some land birds.
- Wednesday PINE HILLS CEMETERY - nature walk Taylor Creek, Scarborough  
 Jan. 5 Leader: Karin Fawthrop  
 10:30 am Meet at the northwest corner of Kennedy Road and St. Clair Ave. East. Morning only. This cemetery with its fine collection of trees and shrubs and creek running through it is a great place to wander in the winter.
- Saturday ALLAN GARDENS - nature arts Toronto  
 Jan. 8 Leader: Mary Taylor  
 10:30 am Meet at the entrance to the greenhouses on the south side of Carlton St. just east of Jarvis St. Bring what you need for photography, sketching or painting and anything you wish to show the group when we compare our morning's work after lunch.
- Sunday WATERFRONT TRAIL - nature walk lakeshore, Toronto  
 Jan. 9 Leader: Joanne Doucette  
 1 pm Meet at the southeast corner of King St. West and Strachan Ave. Wear comfortable winter boots and warm clothes. We will stop in a coffee shop for a hot drink. Toronto's natural history and shoreline of today will be compared with those of January 1000 as we look at some of the common animals and plants we know now. Children are especially welcome!
- Wednesday EARL BALES PARK - nature walk West Don, North York  
 Jan. 12 Leader: Phoebe Cleverley  
 10:30 am Meet at the community centre at the north end of the park which is on the east side of Bathurst St. just south of Sheppard Ave. West. Bring lunch. This large park contains many habitats for wildlife, and shelter and washrooms for participants (in the community centre).
- Saturday SCARECROW'S LANE - heritage walk Toronto  
 Jan. 15 Leader: Ian Wheal  
 1:30 pm Meet at the Broadview subway station. We will be walking southeast along streets and through parks.

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 JANUARY OUTINGS (cont'd)

- Sunday  
 Jan. 16  
 2 pm  
 WALMSLEY BROOK - urban nature west Don tributary, Toronto  
 Leader: Helen Mills & others  
 Meet at the northwest corner of Yonge St. and Albertus Ave.  
 We will be looking at "trees in winter" on this joint outing with the  
 North Toronto Green Community.
- Tuesday  
 Jan. 18  
 11 am  
 MT. PLEASANT CEMETERY - nature walk Toronto  
 Leader: Roger Powley  
 Meet at the Davisville subway station. Bring a snack.  
 Cemeteries are great places to walk in winter -- lots of trees and shrubs  
 and bird feeders to look at.
- Saturday  
 Jan. 22  
 10:30 am  
 HIGHLAND CREEK - nature walk Scarborough  
 Leaders: Murray & Carol Seymour  
 Meet at the southeast corner of Lawrence Ave. East and  
 McCowan Rd. Bring lunch.  
 We will be following a tributary of Highland Creek. There are many!  
 Ravines provide food and shelter for wildlife in winter so this is a good  
 place to walk.
- Sunday  
 Jan. 23  
 2 pm  
 RIVERDALE - nature walk Don, Toronto  
 Leader: Ken Cook  
 Meet at the southwest corner of Winchester St. and Sumach St.  
 We will visit the Chester Springs area in the Don Valley, as well as the  
 "restored" ponds at Riverdale Farm.
- Wednesday  
 Jan. 26  
 11 am  
 HIGH PARK - nature walk Toronto  
 Leader: Ron Allan  
 Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Bloor St. West  
 opposite High Park Ave. Bring lunch.  
 Even in winter High Park is a great place to visit to look for wildlife.  
 Bring binoculars and note books.
- Saturday  
 Jan. 29  
 10 am  
 LESLIE STREET SPIT - nature walk lakeshore, Toronto  
 Leader: Doug Paton  
 Meet at the foot of Leslie Street. Bring lunch and dress warmly.  
 Though the spit can be cold and windy in winter, it is a great place to look  
 for wintering waterfowl and even owls.
- Sunday  
 Jan. 30  
 10 am  
 DON RESTORATION SITES - urban ecology Toronto  
 Leader: Colleen Prentice  
 Meet at the Broadview subway station. You may want to bring  
 lunch and a hot drink.  
 We will walk north and look at some of the restoration projects that have  
 been taking place in the valley north of Bloor St.

□

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Even as a child I loved "the woods". I grew up in York Mills, or Hogg's Hollow, where the West Don River crosses under Yonge Street and winds southeastward past Rosedale Golf Club and Sunnybrook Farm (now Park) to join the East Don at the Forks and flow on into Lake Ontario. (A popular name: there's a Don River in Russia and two flow into the North Sea, one at Humberside in Yorkshire and one at Aberdeen, Scotland, birthplace of my grandfather.) Like our city's other major waterways, the Don springs from the aquifers of the glacial moraine known as Oak Ridges.

Donwoods Drive was a steep hill at the end of our street, which, if you followed it through the valley, ended as a path leading through a wooded area near the river, a place of mystery and adventure, sometimes a place of sanctuary and peace. I had to cross the West Don on my way to school. Just beyond the bridge, in the '30's and early '40's, the road led between a stable (where one could occasionally see a blacksmith at work) and an orchard. We used to swim in the river on hot days in the summer and sometimes skate on the ice on the coldest winter days. I also remember driving over that bridge through a raging torrent on the night of Hurricane Hazel in 1954, returning to my husband and children at home on Brookfield Road, which fortunately was above the floodwaters.

But enough reminiscing. As we all know, the Don became polluted while Toronto grew to be Canada's largest city. Storm waters whooshed into it, tearing at the banks with overflow from vast housing developments, carrying industrial and road pollutants and, at times, household waste water because of "combined sewer overflow". The pristine stream teeming with fish in a lush valley full of wildlife, which had drawn aboriginals to the height of land above present-day Riverdale Park East as long ago as 3000 B.C., and the Simcoes to build their summer house, Castle Frank, on the western ridge in the 1790's, had become too filthy for swimming. It no longer freezes over because of pollution, especially road salt.

Nearly twelve years ago, when I returned from living in Vancouver, I joined the Toronto Field Naturalists and began to understand the monumental efforts that had been made over the years by many dedicated individuals and groups, to protect and restore the ravines, forests, meadows, and wildlife that remained within the Toronto area. Some projects have failed, some have brought only partial success, but we continue to guard our precious 'rus in urbe', country in the city.

Celebrating its tenth anniversary in September of this year, the Task Force to Bring Back the Don hosted Bring Back the Don Day. Having attended meetings in 1989 and many events over the decade organized by this 23-member citizens' group sponsored by the



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT (cont'd)

City of Toronto, I offered my services as a volunteer for the big day. All were invited to "see the Don by water, by rail and by land". Families were especially welcomed for the boat tour of Toronto's inner harbour, offering a look at the hoped-for plan to restore a natural course for the river as it enters the bay, and also for the chartered GO train trip up the valley from Union Station to Oriole. Clad in my distinctive marigold "event staff" T-shirt, I was delighted to assist with the train trip, led by John Wilson of Bring Back the Don. The eight-car train travelled slowly so that all could follow the running historical commentary provided by Mike Filey, an excellent communicator and journalist. John Wilson shared the honours with comments on various reclamation sites such as Chester Springs Marsh and Charles Sauriol Conservation Reserve and I was able to join them with a few naturalist's observations, mostly of trees and plants, as not much fauna was visible from the moving train. A family was navigating an inflatable boat near Riverdale Farm and a few Canada geese and mallards floated nearby. I didn't even see the resident Red-tailed Hawk soaring over the Don Valley Brick Works. We were fortunate to have a warm, sunny day for this hour-and-a-half tour. The evening event, which I was unable to attend, was described as a "Gala Fundraiser", with cocktail hour tours of the renaturalized quarry wetlands. Later there was music, dancing, great food and a silent auction to complete a very successful celebration.

If you have never hiked the Don Valley, I would urge you to join any of our walks that explore wildflower meadows, deep woods, river and stream banks, cattail marshes, and ponds where you may glimpse a fox, a Phoebe (bird, that is), butterflies and damselflies, a host of emerging toadlets, or an entire chorus of frogs peering from a cloak of bright green duckweed. Your trip leader will perhaps also point out some of the problems exacerbated by the urban environment: fragmentation of natural areas and proliferation of such invasive species as Garlic Mustard, Japanese Knotweed, Dog-strangling Vine, Purple Loosestrife, and Phragmites.

Your president's debut on Global TV was hardly auspicious, but at least I was able to point out to the interviewer and cinematographer the abundance of Pale Swallowwort (Dog-strangling Vine) that is crowding out the native and more desirable species in parts of the valley, and suggest that they consult the TRCA (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority) as to what the city plans to do about it.

At a reception in the City Hall rotunda on October 26th, the Toronto Field Naturalists, along with many other organizations and individuals, were recognized for our "outstanding efforts... in promoting a healthy and green environment within the City".

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (cont'd)

On your behalf, Helen Juhola, Morris Sorensen and I received the "Thank You Green Toronto" Award from the City of Toronto.

There are now many groups who share our mission to restore and preserve our river valleys, including the Don. We need to work together and keep our elected officials and staff alert to the needs and benefits of Toronto the Green.

Phoebe Cleverley

□

Mimico Creek  
by Geraldine Goodwin  
TFN Nature Arts Group  
May, 1985



## KEEPING IN TOUCH

September 27, 1999

I happened upon a rare sighting, as well as witnessing some interesting territorial display in my local park (Roding Park-Keele/Wilson area). A small sized hawk (kestrel?) was perched in one of the tallest trees in the south east corner of the park. It wasn't long before a pair of crows noticed the hawk and proceeded to try to chase it away. The hawk wasn't so obliging though. The crows pursued the hawk, and the hawk took up the offensive and chased the crows. The crows eventually left but within a few moments returned with another of its kind. This was apparently more than the hawk was willing to take on as it decided to move on without further incidence.

Gerry Cuccio

October, 1999

Re your article in the recently arrived edition of TFN about the red-bellied woodpecker, I can report two sightings in Toronto, derived from my field-notes.

The first -- and it was the first red-bellied woodpecker I ever saw -- was a female seen on the east side of Toronto Island on May 26, 1995. Remarkably, it clung to a tree for several minutes with its back to me, enabling me to check its identification marks against a book. I was on my own at the time. (Unfortunately I'd just parted from Norm Murr about ten minutes earlier, having met him on the ferry!)

The second was almost a year later, on May 6, 1996, in Lambton Woods. My wife was with me and we had quite good views from a path ascending (I suppose) northwest, passing close to some gardens with feeders. I rather think that was also a female, though I haven't indicated this in my records.

I hope these observations are of some use.

W. J. Keith

Ed. Note Anna Burwash of southern Etobicoke telephoned to report that she saw "several" red-bellied woodpeckers in her back yard on the first weekend in August, 1999. ▽

Cold north-west wind,  
icycles growing obliquely.  
Jewelled daggers.

Haiku by Therese Paradis

October 5, 1999

On the weekend of 17 September I attended that anticipated Big Bash of the mushroomer's year, the Mycological Society of Toronto's Cain Foray. This took place in the Dorset area. Gorgeous weather, gorgeous countryside, good company, and the age-old lure of the treasure hunt.

Not the best year for fungi. Too dry, too hot, too soon. What was interesting was that, as has been observed before in a scant period, the number of "ordinary" species was down, but the number of rare fruitings was up. Mushrooms apart, I discovered something I have never seen in all the years I have attended the Foray, in fact in all the years I have lived in Ontario. On one long forest path -- nowhere else during the weekend -- an incredible efflorescence of violets: white, purple, yellow. This on 19 September. When I asked Helen and Diana for an explanation, they could only deduce a second blooming. Have other members come across this phenomenon?

Eva Davis

▽

A VIEW OF THE BRIDGE  
OVER A SPRING WATER CREEK  
POND, HIGH PARK -

Field sketch by  
Mary Cumming

on a TFN Nature Arts  
Outing, October 2, 1999.



## KEEPING IN TOUCH (cont'd)

October 25, 1999

On behalf of the High Park Festival working committee, I thank you for your participation in the festival on October 3 at Colborne Lodge. We were again blessed with beautiful weather for this annual fall celebration. We estimate that about 5,000 people attended the event and feedback has been very positive.

The success of the event is dependent upon the participation of community groups and organizations with an interest in the park and fall activities. Your input makes the event a richer and more meaningful experience for the public.

I would be happy to hear any input or suggestions from you to make the event better. Again, thank you for your participation.

Cheryl Hart  
Site Supervisor  
Colborne Lodge

October 27 , 1999

Thank goodness for my computer!

When I was sitting at it one afternoon around the middle of October, I looked up at the window and saw something that I had never seen before -- swarms of ladybugs. Usually you see only one or two at a time, but that day they were all over the place -- in the air, and crawling on the window and the wall.

I called my husband to look at them, and he went to the living-room window -- a window facing west. The same thing was happening there. They seemed to be enjoying the sunshine.

We kept seeing them for several days, but the numbers got smaller each day.

Now I have a question. Do ladybugs migrate or hibernate?

If I never know the answer to that question I'll always remember that interesting sight, which wouldn't have happened without my computer!

Sybil Carmichael

□

Unloved stalks stand tall  
in their tawny invasive groves--  
wintering knotweed.

haiku by Arthur Wade  
Toronto Islands, December, 1997

OUTINGS REPORT

Do you ever wonder how TFN outings get organized?

Well, it takes a lot of members helping out.

In the first place, we need people to lead. Occasionally members volunteer, but mostly they must be asked. That's the most difficult part. We especially need members who don't mind telephoning and asking for help.

For the past several years, Ann Millett has arranged all the west end, mid-week outings (every other week) and Eva Davis has arranged all the east end, mid-week outings. She has just retired from the position so we have an immediate need for someone to arrange two outings a month, east of Yonge St. (We will provide a list of names, locations and hints.)

Nature Arts outings have been arranged by Mary Cumming for many years.

Helen Mills arranges Lost River outings.

Morris Sorensen has arranged Scarborough outings.

Ken Cook has arranged Etobicoke outings.

Sandy Cappell has helped see that we have at least one outing every weekend.

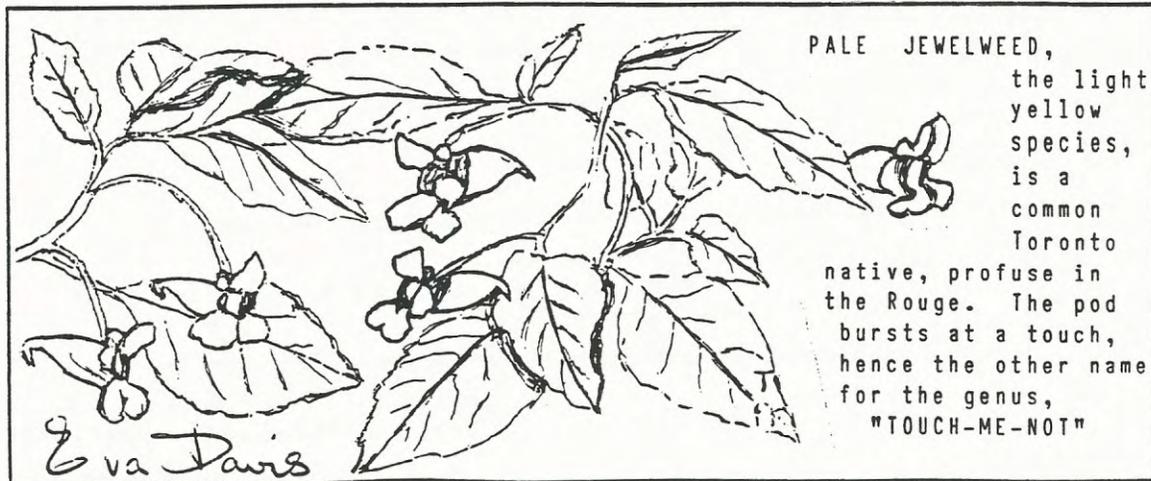
Most recently, Joanne Doucette has volunteered to lead a series of walks along the waterfront; the Seymours, a series to explore Highland Creek; and Ian Wheal has been leading a heritage walk every month.

Nancy Fredenburg sends out report forms to leaders and Diana Banville checks all reports which are then filed in the TFN office.

We would like to hear from anyone who will help call leaders about outings or would consider leading an outing. Please leave your name and number at the TFN office (593-2656) or call Helen Juhola at 924-5806.

Helen Juhola

□



THE 74th TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB  
CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS - DECEMBER 27, 1998

This year's installment of the Toronto Christmas Bird Census (CBC) started off very well with a clear, bright, cool morning. Temperatures began around  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  and increased throughout the day to a high of approximately  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$  by mid-afternoon with winds variable and light. Still water was mostly frozen with running water open, and snow cover was between 2 and 5 cm.

The count day species total of 89 was the second highest ever and the 70,916 individual birds surpassed last year's high mark by 4,336, this was mainly due to the 25,741 European Starlings (21,300 of which were diligently counted by Ray Geras on the Toronto City Shore route, at the roost under the Gardiner Expressway).

A few of the highlights for the day included all-time firsts of the following species: the Black-legged Kittiwake found by Glenn Coady off Humber Bay Park, and the Swainson's Thrush found by Marcel Gahbauer, David Shilman and Bruce Massey in the Don Valley under Bayview Avenue along Lawrence Avenue East.

Firsts for many years, included the following: the 5 Killdeer found between the Ashbridge's Bay & Leslie Street Spit groups were the first ones in 7 years and totalled a new high count, the Fox Sparrow found by Paul McGaw and Carolyn King in G. Ross Lord Park was the first one on count day since 1976, and the *Sialia* sp. (probably Eastern Bluebird) seen by Alfred Adamo along a residential street in Weston was the first of this genus since 1984.

Other highlights included record high counts for many species including Black-crowned Night-Heron (12, previous high=6), Tundra Swan (3, ties old high count), Mallard (4,958, ph=4,512), Gadwall (620, ph=468), Redhead (1,108, ph=453), Ring-necked Duck (9, ph=3), Lesser Scaup (18, ph=13), Bufflehead (736, ph=508), Hooded Merganser (51, ph=26), Sharp-shinned Hawk (9, ph=6), Cooper's Hawk (9, ph=7), Merlin (2, four years in a row there have been 2 seen), American Coot (3, ties old high count), Thayer's Gull (2, ph=1), Eastern Screech Owl (14, ph=13), Northern Saw-whet Owl (3, ph=3), American Crow (1,467, ph=897), American Robin (1,467 - no this isn't a typo, same number as Crow, ph=757), Northern Mockingbird (13, ph=7, obviously some trend here), European Starling (25,741, ph=23,910), Northern Cardinal (392, ph=363). Also of note was the staked-out Common Yellowthroat originally found by Leon Schlichter in the Allan Gardens greenhouses (!), the Blackbird roost found by Don Peuramaki where the Common Grackles, Rusty Blackbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds, Brewer's Blackbird, and Brown-headed Cowbirds were counted and the two Yellow-rumped Warblers seen on the High Park route, again.

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (cont'd)

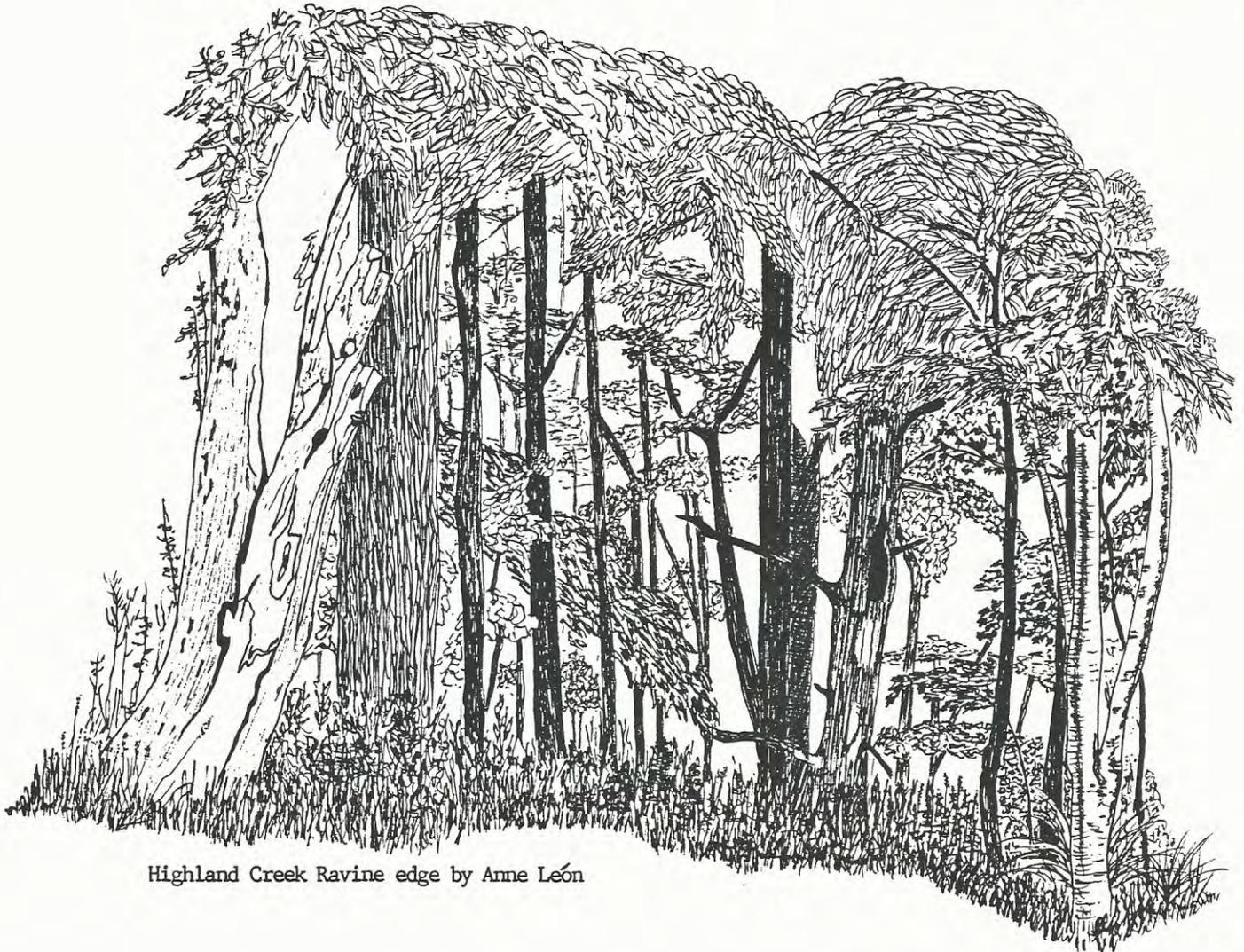
Some notable low-non counts included: one Northern Shoveler which was the lowest count in recent years, 22 White-winged Scoters was the lowest count in 6 years, no Northern Goshawks in the past two years after many years of counting at least one, no Ring-necked Pheasant for four years running, no Snowy Owl again ('98 & '94 are the only 'no-shows' in the past 14 years), and the 3 Common Redpolls were the only "Northern Finches" seen this year.

These totals did not include the three 'count week' species - a Bald Eagle, an Eastern Towhee and a Brewer's Blackbird.

Two main factors were responsible for the high numbers and variety of species seen on this year's count. The first was a very mild first half of December which encouraged stragglers, especially waterfowl, the second was the abundant food available, particularly berries.

from an article by Frank Pinilla & Alfred Adamo in the Toronto Ornithological Club Newsletter, #94, April 1999.

□



Highland Creek Ravine edge by Anne León

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF BIRDERS TO THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

With the number of professional ornithologists and ornithological journals in North America, birders could be forgiven for believing there is little left for them to add to the scientific literature. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

On average, birders spend far more hours in the field than do professional ornithologists, and have correspondingly greater chances of witnessing interesting and uncommon events. Professionals, if they see these things at all, often will not bother writing them up because the resulting notes do not weigh heavily in career advancement.

The kinds of data we are talking about here include observations on unusual food choices, striking or puzzling behaviour, interactions between species, detailed behaviour of out-of-range birds in strange habitats and many other topics. While details of a bird's breeding biology are often known in great detail, it is amazing how little has been published on the behaviour of most species during migration and in winter.

It can be difficult, of course, to find out whether or not a behaviour that seemed interesting to you is already well documented. The new 'Birds of North America' series is a wonderful all-purpose reference for checking out such questions, with its exhaustive summaries of natural history for each species. Even previously published information is often worth repeating, however, to elaborate details or give an idea of how common or widespread an event may be that was previously thought to be unusual.

Writing an article need not be a laborious process. Take a look at your local or regional bird journal to get some examples of their style, and give it a try. Most of these journals are eager to have your contributions, and they are included in literature searches by professionals looking for observations that only you may have made.

from an article by Erica Dunn in the Toronto Ornithological Club Newsletter, #83, March 1998. □

Unlike peregrine  
gyrfalcon flies its prey down.  
Won't stoop to conquer.

haiku by Diana Banville  
(recalling an article by Ian B. Flann  
in TRAIL & LANDSCAPE Vol.32 #3 1998)

## PROJECTS

### BAILLIE FUND GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR BIRD PROJECTS IN 2000

The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation has awarded \$339,000 to some 347 bird research and conservation projects across Canada since 1978. There are two types of grants: (1) projects that involve research or education or that contribute to preservation of Canadian birds; and (2) a special 5-year program (1999-2003) supports migration monitoring stations that monitor Canadian landbirds during their migration. Grants range between \$200 and \$3,000 and they average about \$1,000. Grants are awarded annually, but multi-year support will be considered. Written requests for application forms (please specify regular grant or migration monitoring grant) and additional information should be directed to: Secretary, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, Bird Studies Canada, Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario NOE 1M0  
Phone: 519-586-3531 ext. 217; Fax: 519-586-3532;  
Email: jwilson@bsc-eoc.org). Completed forms must be returned by 28 January 2000. The James L. Baillie Student Award for Field Research is administered by the Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SCO). The deadline for this award is 14 January 2000. For information on this and other SCO awards, students should write to: Dr. David M. Bird, Chair, SCO Student Awards Committee, Avian Science and Conservation Centre, McGill University, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, H9X 3V9 (Phone: 1-514-398-7760, Fax: 1-514-398-7990, Email: bird@nrs.mcgill.ca).

extracted from "BirdWatch Canada" Fall 1999

### HELP WANTED!

Leaders and ideas for mid-week hikes in the western half of Toronto (west of Yonge Street).

If you can help please call Ann at (905) 792-0844.

THANKS.

### EXPLORING DISCOVERY WALKS RESOURCE MANUAL

Toronto Parks and Recreation resource manual "Exploring Discovery Walks With Children: activities and adventures for learning about and enjoying the environment around us" is written for parents, teachers, and recreationists. It outlines each of Toronto's first six Discovery Walk trails with photographs, diagrams, and detailed maps. The manual provides background information on environment and heritage themes and an activity section with over 40 activities that groups can participate in while "Exploring Toronto". The manual's Appendix includes a teachers' curriculum guide for linking Exploring Toronto Themes and Activities to Ontario's school curriculum, a set of six activity sheets, cue-cards for use on a walk, a list of resources and helpful organizations, and more!

If you would like to order the manual (\$25.00), please contact Leigh Meraw at (416) 392-6643.

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## TORONTO'S CANADA GEESE - A BIRDER'S PERSPECTIVE

When I was asked to discuss the recreational value of urban Canada Geese, I had some difficulty in determining what there was to discuss. Birders are aware of Canada Geese, but few of us pay much attention to them. I compiled a list of some ideas and thoughts about Canada Geese and then solicited input from about 25 birding acquaintances. I received input back from 15 birders; the following information is a synopsis of what this sample of birders thought about urban Canada Geese.

Experienced birders generally don't pay much attention to urban Canada Geese, unless they are counting them during the MWWI or a Christmas Count. During 'bird counts' they are reliable and contribute significantly to the overall total. Most experienced birders pretty much ignore Canada Geese at all other times. They belong in the 'too common' category, with European Starling, Rock Dove, and House Sparrow. They are known as 'Canada Loose' to some birders. Even gulls have a higher recreational 'value' to birders since there's always a chance that a flock of gulls might include a rarer species!

However, away from the city, large migrating flocks, flying in their high V formations and calling to each other, is a majestic sight. Some birders said that, along with the call of the Common Loon, this sight and sound symbolizes Canada to them. After all, they are named after Canada and do appear on our \$100 bill.

Birders who live north of the GTA regard the return of the Canada Geese as an early sign of Spring. Others use the appearance of the first Canada Goose young to gauge whether Spring is early or late.

There are a few birders who do scan the large flocks, looking for Canada Goose subspecies (such as Richardsons's), looking for other goose species (such as Greater White-fronted Goose) or looking for 'banded' Canada Geese. Searching through large flocks, keeping track of rarities and band numbers, and reporting the band numbers is an important part of some birders' enjoyment of birding.

Urban Canada Geese are actually more important to novice birders and non-birders. Seeing (and feeding) these large, striking, tame waterfowl in the city is the only contact that many people have with nature and they derive much enjoyment from this activity. This contact with urban Canada Geese may be the trigger that causes some people to take up birding as a hobby.

All respondents to my mini-survey had opinions and ideas concerning whether urban Canada Geese should be managed. 25% said that we humans should leave the geese alone and 'let nature take its course'. The other 75% thought that there should be direct management, such as oiling eggs, or indirect management, such as changing shoreline habitat. All respondents said that any management plan that was adopted must be humane.

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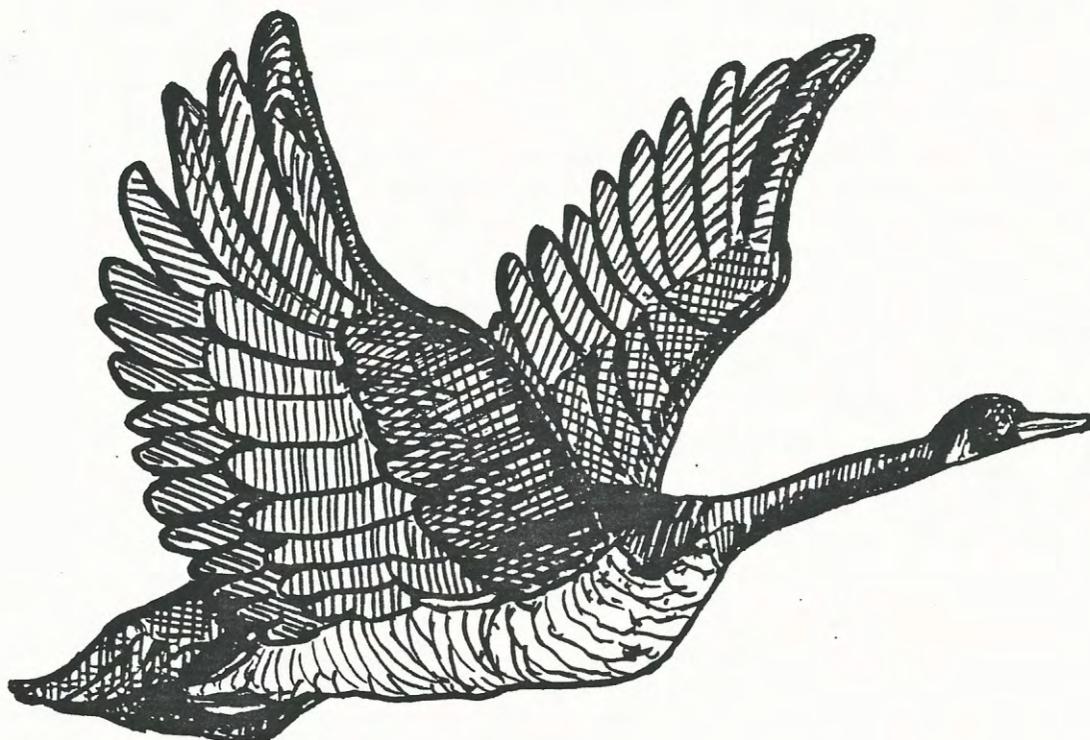
TORONTO'S CANADA GEESE - A BIRDER'S PERSPECTIVE (cont'd)

100% of respondents said that people, not Canada Geese, are the cause of the problem. A few Canada Geese were accidentally or deliberately introduced on Toronto Islands 40 years ago. That small flock grew and was joined by other migrants, so that they now number above 10,000. We have created a huge environment that is perfect for these opportunistic, intelligent birds. They have no predators, there's no hunting season, the vegetation is cleared near lakes and ponds, and we feed them in the winter. No wonder they like it here!

An interesting observation is that urban Canada Geese have a significant impact on other species, both directly and indirectly. In a direct fashion, they compete very successfully with other species for nesting and feeding territory. Indirectly, we are spending significant resources (people and money), trying to control urban Canada Geese, money that would be better spent providing assistance to species whose populations are decreasing.

an article by Bill Edmunds in the WEST HUMBER NATURALISTS Newsletter, October, 1999

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Canada Goose sketched by Diana Banville at Shipp Centre,  
March 3, 1990

## HURRAH! WE'RE INTELLIGENT!

Some years ago, a Harvard professor named Howard Gardner, famous for his work with the education of children, proposed that the current definitions of intelligence were not very helpful except, possibly, as a predictor of success in the North American school systems. He proposed a different approach, and defined seven kinds of intelligence, which favoured not only those who could do good essays and algebra, but included artists, dancers, athletes, psychiatrists, politicians and a host of other kinds of people we respect, who did not necessarily excel in school. More recently he proposed an eighth type of intelligence which may be of interest to TFN members. The following is from an article written about this form of intelligence by a classroom teacher, trainer, and consultant, and the author of books and articles on the subject.

Bruce Campbell in "The Naturalist Intelligence" says

"Dr. Howard Gardner added the Naturalist Intelligence to his list in 1996. It is the first addition to the original seven.

This intelligence has to do with observing, understanding and organizing patterns in the natural environment. A naturalist is someone who shows expertise in the recognition and classification of plants and animals. This could be anyone from a molecular biologist to a traditional medicine man using herbal remedies.

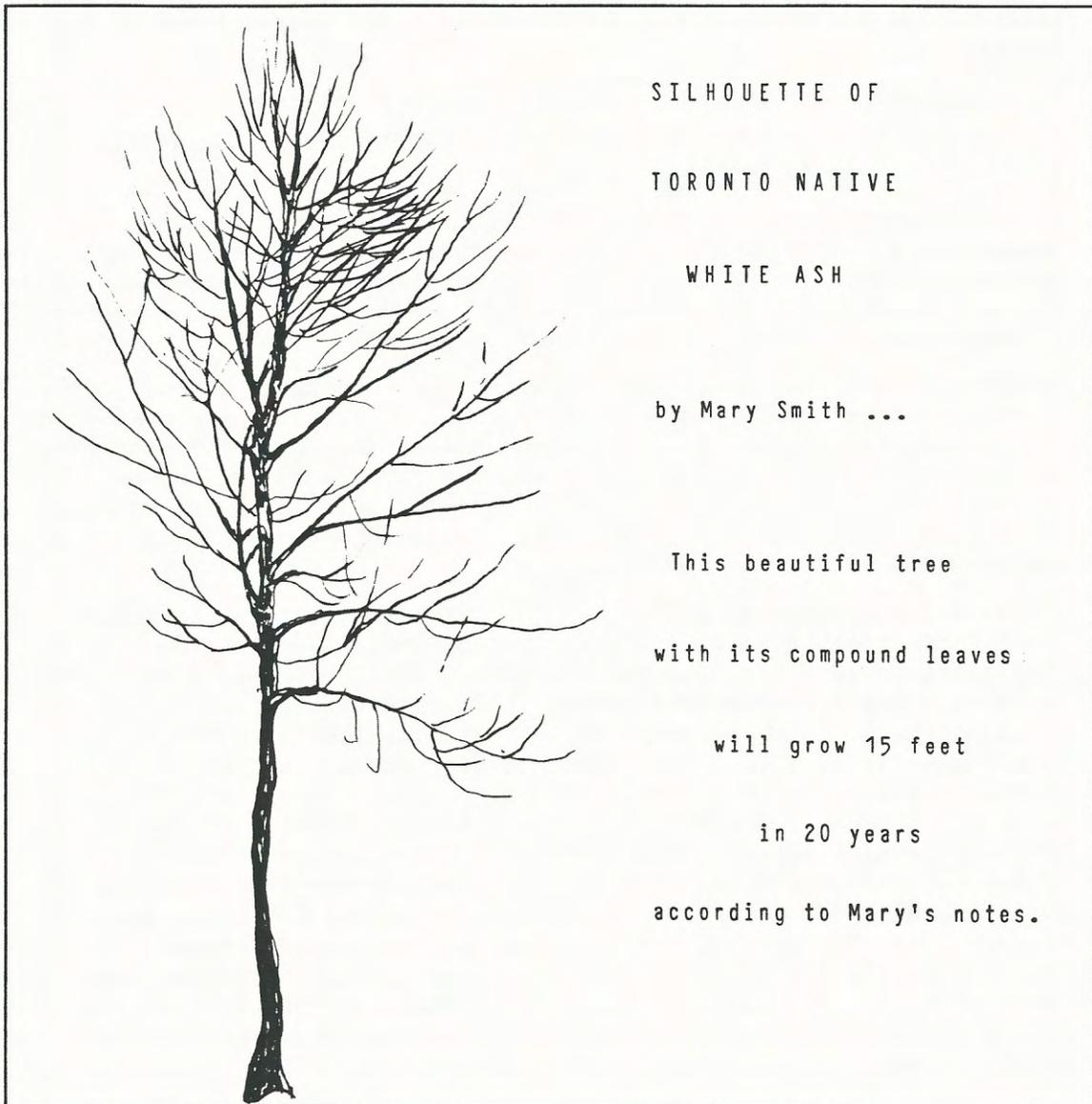
Examples of naturalists might include George Washington Carver, Rachel Carson, Charles Darwin, or a child who skillfully sorts and classifies rocks, insects, shells, or dinosaurs. These same skills of observing, collecting, and categorizing might also be applied in the "human" environment as witnessed in a child sorting sports cards, or an adult who shrewdly distinguishes between the sounds of different engines or analyzes the variations in fingerprints.

A Menu of Instructional Strategies for the Naturalist Intelligence:  
Collecting data, Labeling and mounting specimens from nature,  
Organizing collections, Observing nature, Doing experiments in nature,  
Noticing changes in the environment, Sorting articles from nature,  
Categorizing objects, Classifying information, Keeping notebooks,  
Learning names of natural phenomena, Learning characteristics of the natural world, Using magnifiers or microscopes to study nature,  
Using binoculars or telescopes to study nature, Drawing or photographing natural objects, Nature hikes or field trips in nature,  
Gardening, Caring for pets, Wildlife protection projects, Setting up winter feeding stations for wild animals or birds, Comparing natural observations with others, Visiting zoos and botanical gardens,  
Visiting museums of natural history, Drying flowers, Studying books about nature, Learning about the work of famous naturalists such as: John Muir, Rachel Carson, Charles Darwin, George Washington Carver, Luther Burbank, Annie Dillard, John James Audubon, Aldo Leopold. ▽

Some Naturalist Subjects: Animals, Astronomy, Balance of Nature, Birds, Botany, Butterflies, Conservation, Constellations, Deserts, Earth, Fish, Flowers, Forests, Game, Gardening, Geology, Insects, Lakes, Mountains, Oceans, Plants, Rivers, Rocks, Seasons, Seeds, Shells, Stars, Tides, Trees, Volcanoes, Weather, Zoology."

Murray Seymour

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## OVERPOPULATION

This term has been bandied about lately and it is frustrating. It sounds very scientific but in fact is never used in the proper context. It has negative connotations. You hear it used in regard to Canada Geese, and Ring-billed Gulls especially. Our Canada Goose was once in grave danger of becoming extinct, that is the subspecies that was introduced into the Toronto region in the 1950's. It is the Giant Canada Goose or *Branta canadensis maxima*. It has been slandered for causing phosphate overload in our water, eating our grass, and defecating in our parks. You notice how the word "our" comes into play, as if we own the planet earth -- although geese were here long before people.

First of all, the phosphate issue. Before people started using detergents there was no "phosphate" problem, even with the millions of passenger pigeons and waterfowl in the Toronto area. It is a "no brainer". People are the problem, not geese. The solution to the grass problem is easily solved. Don't grow grass in waterfront parks. After all, most grasses in eastern North America are introduced "weeds".

As for the "droppings" problem, I don't even see a problem. If I go to a park where I may encounter mud or droppings, I wear the proper footwear. Now if someone goes to Sunnyside wearing pink silk slippers and gets them dirty, how is the goose to be blamed? Besides, goose droppings are mostly grass and are not sticky and don't smell. How serious a problem can it be? I would say the dog feces problem is worse, but people love their dogs.

The term overpopulation is only applied when a creature is disliked. A good example is the seal. It is eating all the fish. It is not over-fishing which has caused the decline of fish stocks, it is those rotten seals. What a joke!

Recently the population of Double-crested Cormorants has increased in our region. David Suzuki explained why. For years fishermen have been reducing the numbers of large fish in the Great Lakes. These large fish ate small fish so there was more food for the survivors. Taking away the large predators upset the balance and more small fish survived. This was a windfall for the cormorants who quickly exploited this resource. The cormorant is not a large bird. It can only swallow small fish. It is filling in the niche left by the reduction of large predatory fish. Fishermen will claim the cormorants are the cause of declining fish stocks. Another joke.

"Overpopulation" is always applied to animals which can not be exploited by people. Even though early pioneers said cod were so abundant you could almost walk on the water, have you ever heard of an overpopulation of cod?

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OVERPOPULATION (cont'd)

I don't think there are many people who hate all wild creatures, but it seems this minority get the politicians and press on their side. These plans they have for oiling eggs and moving Canada Geese are ludicrous. If you don't like geese, go to a park where there aren't any, or stay in your own backyard.

The native people never had a problem with large numbers of birds, mammals or fish. They considered it a blessing, and it was a blessing. These creatures provided food and clothing. In modern times humans have tried to claim every inch of real estate as their own. Those darn animals are getting in the way. Even in parks people don't like to see birds. I always thought parks were a sanctuary for wildlife but in Toronto that is not the case. We make a park and then try to rid it of all the wildlife in it.

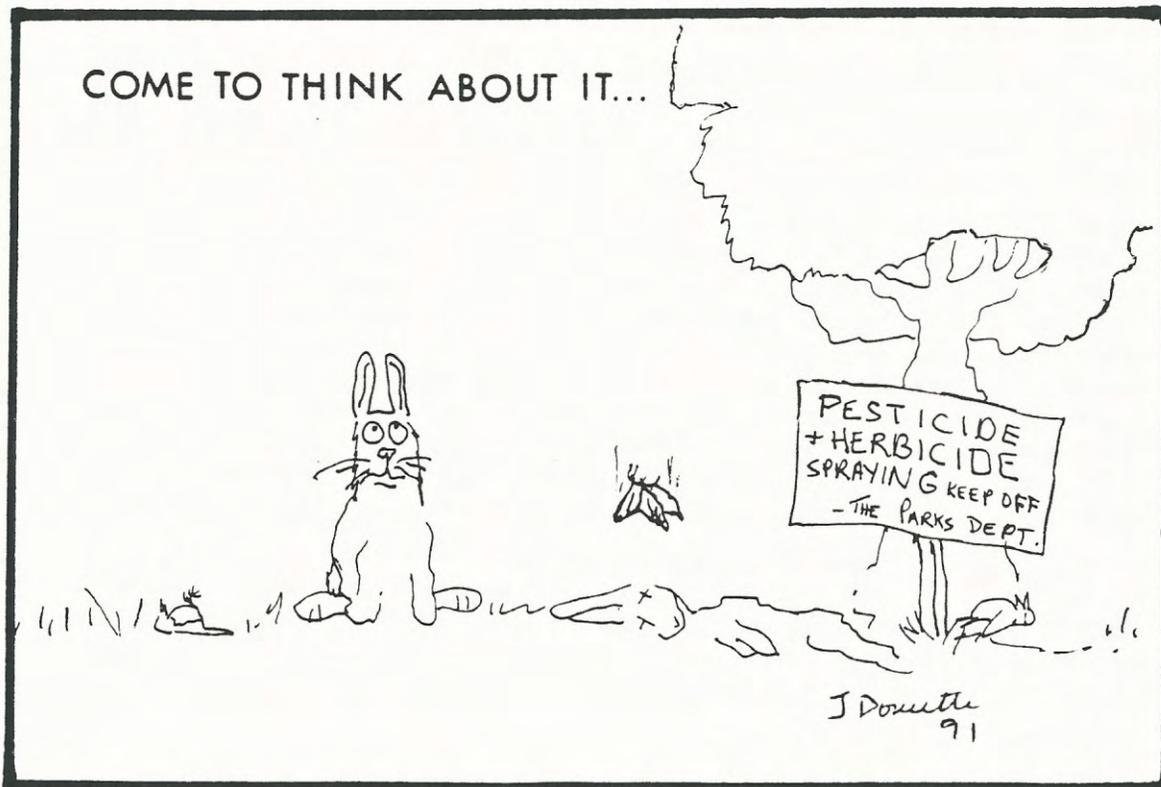
This minority which hates all animals seems to get lots of press. We must kill all the coyotes. They ate my dog. Kill all foxes. They ate my cat. Kill all raccoons. They spill my garbage. Kill all squirrels. They eat my birdseed. Kill all crows. They are noisy, etc. etc.

I think it is absolutely fabulous that we have wildlife in our city, and I'm sure the majority of people feel the same way.

As far as "overpopulation", there is a problem, but it is the six billion humans on this planet!

Roger Powley

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Cartoon by Joanne Doucette

## IN THE NEWS

### PREDATORS STALK RAVINE SYSTEM

About 10 years ago the 'eastern coyote' started using Toronto's vast ravine network and railway corridors to move throughout the city. For the most part, they remain undetected, although sightings have also been documented at Sunnybrook Park and throughout the Don Valley Ravine system, including the Rosedale Valley. "They're pretty much everywhere around the GTA now, the Humber, the Rouge - across Toronto's waterfront." With no natural predators, cars are about the only enemy coyotes have in the city. The first recorded sightings of coyotes in Canada date back to the early 1900s. Research suggests the animals left their American midwest origins to follow the abundant food source provided by humans in the way of garbage or domesticated animals during the widespread colonization of Canada during events like the gold rush. The animals have adapted to the harsh Canadian climate by becoming a larger, bushier strain than their plains cousins. Most eastern coyotes average about 35 pounds, although some have been known to reach the 75 pound mark. Under normal circumstances, the animals are afraid of humans and don't pose much of a threat to adults. Parents, however, should exercise caution and not leave small children unattended in back yards or wooded areas. Owners of small pets should also take precautions when walking their animals in wooded areas. Unlike dogs, coyotes stand and run with their tails pointed down and sound a lot like their cousin, the grey wolf, when they howl. Appreciate them but from a distance; keep them wild.

extracted from an article by Jeffrey Lund in the FOREST HILL TOWN CRIER, March 1999

### HOW TO HELP WILDLIFE CROSS ROADS

As the province expands its highways and extends concrete protection barriers, the message to the public is clear: speak up for wildlife. If you don't, the ministry may not.

extracted from an article by Cameron Smith in the TORONTO STAR, Sept. 25, 1999

### GLOBE LINKS WITH NATIONAL NATURE GROUP

The Globe and Mail is teaming up with the Nature Conservancy of Canada in a bid to raise awareness and support for the conservation of Canada's surviving natural landscapes. The Nature Conservancy takes a businesslike approach to preservation by building partnerships with other organizations that also have a passion for conservation -- not by picketing, lobbying government, or through confrontation.

extracted from an article in the GLOBE & MAIL, Sept. 18, 1999



#### PLANETARIUM'S PROJECTOR SOLD TO YORK UNIVERSITY

It's now almost four years since Toronto's McLaughlin Planetarium was closed by its parent institution, the Royal Ontario Museum, because of cutbacks at the museum. Last month, in a further development, the museum sold the planetarium's huge dumb-bell-shaped star projector to York University for a token \$1, plus the costs of the removal. Built in the mid-1960's by Zeiss Jena in the former East Germany, the projector's hulking, robotic presence at the centre of the planetarium dome was the dominant memory for many of the 5 million visitors to the McLaughlin during its 27 years of public and educational programs. The new planetarium at York has yet to be funded and remains in the planning stage. The lack of a major planetarium in Toronto is a "glaring omission" for a city of this size. There is no metropolitan region of comparable population in the Americas or Europe that does not have a significant planetarium. Major planetariums in Canada are located in Montreal, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. The nearest large one in the U.S. is the Strasenburgh Planetarium in Rochester, N.Y. Toronto's McLaughlin planetarium opened in 1968.

extracted from an article by Terence Dickinson in the TORONTO STAR, Aug. 1, 1999

#### TOWERS, TOWERS EVERYWHERE

In southern Ontario, a current Department of Natural Resources map shows 725 aeronautical obstructions over 150 feet tall. The problem is that the towers' blinking lights (required for aircraft safety) draw in night migrants who circle the towers striking the supporting guy wires. The American Ornithologists' Union estimates that two to four million birds are killed in these collisions in eastern North America every year. When communications towers first went up in the late 1940s ornithologists and bird lovers were stunned to learn that the towers posed a fatal threat to migrating songbirds. Deaths at lighthouses had been noted for centuries, but no one anticipated that tall TV towers would be even more deadly. Numerous studies over the decades have proven this to be true, but only recently has the communications industry started to take action. Not a moment too soon.

extracted from an article in TOUCHING DOWN, The Newsletter of the Fatal Light Awareness Program, Fall 1999

#### SAFER WINTER WALKING?

The risk of falling in icy conditions can be greatly reduced by wearing studded safety soles which can be easily strapped to boots when needed. Well-made safety soles are available at Shoppers Home Health Care Stores in four sizes (S,M,L. and XL) and cost about \$30. Call 1-800-363-1020 for the store locations. Call the store to make sure your size is in stock. (Try for a Seniors Discount.)

from SENIORS' SPORTS CLUB Newsletter, Fall 1999

## THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

December 1998, Toronto

Record warmth continued, yielding gradually and progressively to winter weather -- of a sort (it remained dry and basically snow-free). It was the warmest and sunniest December on record in Toronto. The monthly mean temperature (0.8°C at Pearson and 2.4°C downtown) beat the 1982 record by just 0.1°C. The warm period early this December, although it did not reach the 20°C mark as it did sixteen years before, was much more persistent with temperatures reaching well into the teens on four of the first six days. It continued very mild -- and remarkably sunny -- right past mid-month. The period from Dec. 9th to Dec. 15th, seven days, was one of almost continuous sunshine, positively astounding for Toronto in early winter, indeed unprecedented. This made Toronto's 139.6 hours of sun by far the most recorded for a December. The former record of 118.2 hours was set in 1988.

Meanwhile, the cold vortex over Asia slowly moved east, with the Yukon dropping into the -20°C by Dec. 12th or Dec. 13th. The cold spread southwards into B.C. and the Prairies, skimming Ontario. Vancouver had a distinct cold snap and massive snowfall just before Christmas. Frost hit California, damaging some citrus. As the arctic air passed over the Great Lakes, areas to the lee of the lakes got snowsquall activity, but everywhere else in the south, including Toronto, got just a light covering. Our first measurable snowfall of the season, about 2 cm, fell overnight Dec. 16th-17th, the latest first snowfall on record (the former record being December 15th, in 1939 and 1948). By Dec. 22nd, we had our first "winter" day -- if one defines such by temperatures staying below freezing all day. A bad ice storm affected a swath of the southern U.S. from Texas to Virginia on Christmas Eve, but Toronto stayed fair. (The ice storm was a minor thing compared to the one that hit eastern Canada in January 1998.) After a brief post-Christmas warm-up, frigid conditions sank into Ontario again to welcome the New Year.

In terms of precipitation... Toronto was as might be expected, dry again, especially because of the shortfall of snow. Downtown had 6 cm instead of the usual 34 cm, the least since 1993. Pearson's 8.1 cm was the lowest since 1950 and the third-lowest on record. Rainfall was slightly above at Pearson Airport, giving a significant shortfall downtown and a slight one at the airport.

It was a fitting end to an alarmingly warm year, with every month warmer than normal and three record-breaking months. The mean annual temperature was 2.5°C above normal downtown (11.7°C as compared to 8.9°C) and 3.0°C at Pearson Airport (10.2°C as compared to 7.2°C). It was almost as much above the previous record year, 1991, as 1991 was above the average! Serious dryness has set in as well, with minimal snowpacks and sinking lake levels across the province.

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## WEATHER (cont'd)

## January 1999, Toronto

After a year of record-setting warmth and several months of increasing dryness, Toronto was battered by two weeks of some of the most severe winter weather on record. On New Year's Day, arctic air brought a maximum temperature of  $-12.9^{\circ}\text{C}$  -- not unusual in itself but a return to real winter conditions for the first time in two years. The next day, the first in a series of blizzards hit Toronto. Downtown received 38.0 cm, the heaviest one-day snowfall since December 1944 (probably). This was followed by other snowfalls of greater than 5 cm on Jan. 8th, Jan. 11th, Jan. 12th, and Jan. 14th. The Jan. 12th and Jan. 14th storms totalled over 20 cm, and the blizzard of Jan. 14th began with temperatures below  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  and wind chills of  $-41^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The  $-22.6^{\circ}\text{C}$  minimum downtown that day was the coldest of any since 1994.

The monthly snowfall total was 118.4 cm, the highest for any January on record and the second snowiest month on record (that distinction going to March 1870 with 158.5 cm). Snowpiles blocked residential streets for weeks, ice dams damaged rooftops, and mayor Mel Lastman called the army in to clear the streets. The snow was unceremoniously dumped in various ravines and waterfront natural areas, with some snow remaining in the dumps in the Don Valley until early September! All in all, however, it was hardly a natural disaster to compare with the ice storm of 1998 in eastern Ontario and Quebec, or the Manitoba floods in 1997.

The storm track that produced the snow was very localized to the stretch from Windsor to Montreal. Away from the lower Great Lakes, precipitation was light and dry conditions continued to be of some concern for lake levels and ground water. Pearson Airport, a modest distance inland from downtown and the lakefront, got a total of 79.6 cm, still the snowiest month of its record, but noticeably lighter than downtown.

After Jan. 14th, the weather returned dramatically to the mild, dry, quiet pattern that has persisted for the past year or so, with temperatures well above normal. Much of the snow melted, although a continuous cover persisted the rest of the month despite temperatures rising over  $10^{\circ}\text{C}$  on Jan. 23rd. The switch-around, however, was enough to bring the mean temperature both downtown and at the airport to a whisker above normal, allowing the string of warmer-than-normal months to extend to 14. The mean temperature for the first 15 days was comparable to January 1994, while the last half of the month actually averaged above freezing downtown.

Gavin Miller

## COMING EVENTS

### Toronto Ornithological Club

- Sat. Dec. 4 at 8:30 am (all day) - Waterfowl - West Toronto Lakeshore or beyond. Meet in the parking lot at Humber Bay Park East. Bring a lunch. Carpool if necessary. Leader: Jean Iron.
- Monday, Dec. 27 - Christmas Bird Count
- Winter Waterfowl Inventory - Sunday, Jan. 9

Save the Rouge Valley System - Sunday afternoon nature walks  
Call 282-9983 to check starting point.

The Market Gallery - The Young Century: Daily life in Toronto 1901-1914  
- Nov. 6 to March 5. Call 392-7604 for more information.

Toronto Entomological Association meeting - Sat. Jan. 22 at the ROM, Rm 603  
- Migration Strategies of Butterflies and Dragonflies, an illustrated talk by David Gibo from Erindale campus, University of Toronto. Call Alan Hanks at 905-727-6993 for more details.

### High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee Walking Tours 2000

- Jan. 16 - High Park in Winter
  - Jan. 30 - How plants and animals adapt in winter
- All walks starts at 1:15 pm from the south side of the Grenadier Teahouse & Cafe (across the street at the benches). Walks may go on uncleared trails so wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Call 392-1748 to check details.

Royal Canadian Institute - free lecture - Sun. Dec. 5 at 3 pm at the Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Building, 1 King's College Circle  
● The Matching Game - for young people ages 7 to 97!  
Call 928-2096 for more information.

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THE LAST LOADS - Maurice Cullen

Shows the ice harvest,  
Horses, men, sleighs, the last loads.  
Memories melting.

haiku by Susan Weiss

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