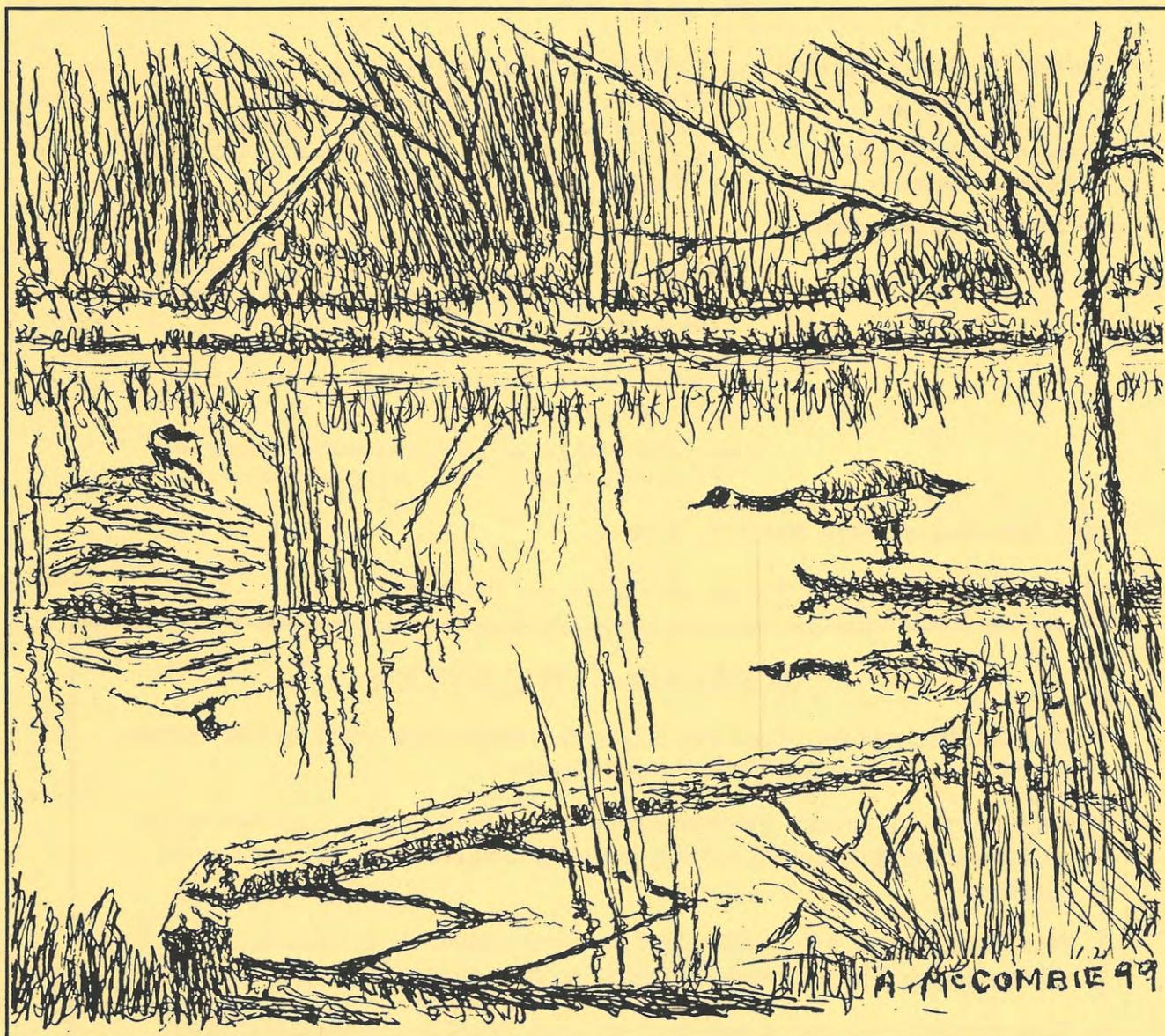


TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 489

February 2000



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TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, February 6, 2000 - A SOUTHERN ONTARIO NATURALIST IN THE
at 2:30 pm CARIBBEAN, an illustrated talk by
in the Northrop Frye Hall Alan Watson, Director of the Arboretum and
Victoria University Assistant Professor of Environmental Biology
at the University of Guelph

73 Queen's Park Cres. East

- We will be told how to use our skills as naturalists in exploring new environments as we spend the afternoon enjoying scenes from a warmer climate.
- + a social hour beginning at 2 pm with free juice and coffee
- + an opportunity to purchase memberships and TFN publications, pins, crests and decals.

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, March 5, 2000

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

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
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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.

- Tuesday GLENDON CAMPUS - bird study West Don, North York
 Feb. 1 Leader: Margaret Catto
 10 am Meet at the gates to Glendon (the east side of Bayview Ave. at Lawrence Ave. East). Morning only.
 TFN has published a booklet about this area. Come and learn why it was published and look for changes to the ravine.
- Saturday NORTHERN DISTRICT LIBRARY - nature arts Toronto
 Feb. 5 Leader: Robin Powell
 2 pm Meet at the library (on Orchard View Blvd. just west of Yonge St.) on the second floor.
 Bring your own nature slides, as many as 20, or just come and enjoy looking. A project and screen will be provided. If you have questions, please call Robin at 928-9493 or the TFN office at 593-2656. Snap shots are also welcome.
- Wednesday CENTENNIAL PARK - nature walk Etobicoke Cr., Etobicoke
 Feb. 9 Leader: Ann Millett
 10:30 am Meet at the greenhouse entrance on Elmcrest Rd. just north of Rathburn Rd. (west of Hwy. 427). Bring lunch.
 We will be looking at nature in winter, both indoors and out, so dress in layers. Bring binoculars and notebooks.
- Sunday TORONTO ISLANDS - nature walk Lakeshore, Toronto
 Feb. 13 Leader: Joanne Doucette
 1 pm Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St.
 \$ ferry We will be looking for signs of wildlife including foxes and tree sparrows
 tickets and may get a chance to learn some common animal tracks. Dress warmly.
- Tuesday TORONTO'S UNDERGROUND - urban geology Toronto
 Feb. 15 Leader: Ed Freeman
 2 pm Meet at the south west corner of Yonge St. and Dundas St.
 We will be walking south through Toronto's vast network of underground streets, looking at the building materials used and learning about where in the world they have come from.
- Sunday MUD CREEK, WALMSLEY BROOK, etc. - urban ecology Toronto, East York
 Feb. 20 Leaders: Helen Mills and local residents
 2 pm Meet at the northeast corner of Eglinton Ave. East & Redpath Ave.
 On this walk we will be following buried watersheds and sewersheds and looking at street trees, an ecogarden in a schoolyard, etc. This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community. ▽

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings and best wishes to all our members for the year 2000!

As I write this in the early hours of the new year, the media are striving to outdo one another in recollections about the past millennium and predictions about the one we are beginning (now or a year from now matters little in the long run). You may be weary of all the 'Y2K' chit-chat by the time you read this, but will probably remember what you were doing at midnight as 1999 passed into 2000. I was watching the spectacular fireworks along the Toronto waterfront, enjoying a splendid view from the roof of my apartment building on the Esplanade. With my Scottish Presbyterian roots, I'm not sure I appr-r-roved of such extravagance, but since I didn't have to make the decision, might as well enjoy the show. Like many human achievements, it was a fleeting moment (well, 17 minutes, I'm told). The moon and stars, as many as we can see from this brightly-lit city, give a more permanent beauty to the night skies.

The other memorable element in the fin-de-siècle cornucopia was the mind-boggling trip around the globe with cameras bringing sunset, sunrise and midnight celebrations from 52 countries into our living rooms via television. From lavish displays in big cities like Sydney, Beijing, Moscow, London, and New York, St. John's and Vancouver, to traditional ceremonies in Kamchatka and Nunavut, from Fiji to the Peruvian jungle to Samoa as the new year arrived in different time zones of the global village. We shared song and dance, joy and hope and wise words from such leaders as Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan. These electronic marvels certainly make our world very different from that of the 1st century or the 11th century, or even the beginning of the 20th century. Is it better? I believe in many ways life is better for most of us and that the common man and woman now have more choice as to the kind of life they and their families and communities will lead.

Since joining the Toronto Field Naturalists I have become much better acquainted with the waterfront in Toronto. Many of you will also have participated in walks along various parts of the waterfront trail and on the Toronto Islands and Leslie Street Spit. From publications such as TORONTO ROCKS we can gain a perspective as long as we wish. "The Earth was formed some 4.5 billion years ago and plate tectonics has probably been active for at least 3 billion years. A 400 million year long 'Wilson Cycle' of supercontinent formation and breakup has been identified as a recurring feature of planetary tectonics. This cycle has been the major control on water depths in the oceans, climate and biological evolution." Maps and diagrams picture for us the extent of the last ice age, some 12,000 years ago, and the shoreline of Lake Iroquois. This large lake, formed from glacial meltwaters, reached a level about 200 feet above the present level of Lake Ontario. "When the ice in the St. Lawrence valley eventually melted, Lake Iroquois was drained,

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (cont'd)

exposing a more or less level clay plain..." For more information on how Toronto was made, the formation of the ravines, Scarborough Bluffs, Don Valley Brick Works site, Toronto Island and more, see the TFN publication TORONTO THE GREEN. 200 years ago, the town of York was just beginning. Forest and shore, lakes and streams were largely undisturbed. 100 years ago, the lower Don had been straightened, and soon Ashbridge's Bay marsh, the natural mouth of the river, was filled and Keating Channel built to redirect and enclose its flow. At the start of the 20th century there were some 30 brickyards in Toronto producing more than 100 million bricks a season. Local clays yielded both the distinctive red and the paler yellow brick used in so many of our city's historic buildings, including houses in Rosedale, the sylvan suburb on the western edge of the Don Valley.

If you have an interest in our natural history beyond these brief remarks, check out the publication table at our monthly meetings; also consult the back page of this newsletter and two books we have featured in the past: Aleta Karstad's A PLACE TO WALK, A Naturalist's Journal of the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail, Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 1995, and ASHBRIDGE'S BAY, edited by George Fairfield, 1998. The Royal Canadian Institute's 1999 book SPECIAL PLACES: The Changing Ecosystems of the Toronto Region will be a resource for many years to come. As well, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust and the Toronto Bay Initiative have many programs "that contribute to improving the health and integrity of Toronto Bay and its sewershed with particular focus on water quality; habitat; public access to the water; linkages with upstream programs, and ecological understanding." (TBI Mission Statement)

'Think globally, act locally'. The TFN has been doing this since 1923 and its aims are still relevant: to stimulate public interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation of our natural heritage. My millennium message? It's more fun if you're involved! We need our members to care, to be informed and alert. Think about volunteering to lead walks or to serve on our board. Give us a call or send a note to the TFN office. I'll see you on a winter walk and at our first meeting for 2000 on Sunday, February 6th.

Phoebe Cleverley

□

<p>Serene must have been the end of nine ninety-nine. Y1K OK!</p>

Haiku by Diana Banville
December 31, 1999

SOME NOTES FOR THE SKETCH : "AM I A DADDY YET ?" *

I never fully appreciated how well the term goose neck applied to that familiar type of desk lamp until I came upon this pair of Canada Geese this spring at the ox-bow pond in the East Don Valley, between Finch and Sheppard Avenues. The one standing on the partially submerged log was performing the most fascinating sinuous contortions with its neck, as though sending some sort of signal to its mate nesting on the muskrat house. The latter was probably sitting on a clutch of eggs and doing its best to keep a low profile, as they say nowadays. On thinking of a title for my sketch, I took the partner on the log to be the gander. But "it ain't necessarily so". It may well have been Mum signaling Dad that she'd had her lunch and it was his turn to go. I don't know how long they had been nesting and unfortunately they had gone by the time I had a chance to return. However, Howard Jackman tells me there were actually two pairs of geese with broods, and that one of the broods was around long enough to have grown almost as big as the parents. They probably had to find a better food supply, as there isn't much mown lawn - their favourite forage - in the vicinity of the pond. Perhaps the muskrats resented strangers setting up housekeeping and rearing a family in their attic, and were glad to see them go. It's bad enough to have bats in one's attic, let alone geese ! By the way, Helen Juhola reports having seen a muskrat swimming under the ice in this pond one winter. Their house is built mostly of stems and leaves of cattails, of which there is an abundant supply around the pond.

Besides the geese and muskrats, this pond attracts quite a variety of other wildlife. Beavers were very active there last year, as evidenced by the felled tree in the foreground and raised bank in the background of my sketch. There was at least one around again for a while this spring. On warm days there are always painted turtles sunning themselves on logs. This year someone went to the trouble of setting up a wood duck box and I have heard of some sightings. Other birds seen there from time to time are the Great Blue, Little Green and Black-Crowned Night Herons, the Kingfisher and, of course, the ubiquitous Mallard Duck. Of all the birds the Mallards seem to make most continuous use of this pond. I saw a drake, duck and duckling all standing together on a log this summer. Isn't it unusual for the drake to remain with the family ? Someone has also released some goldfish into the pond and they were doing very well when I saw them competing with the Mallards for handouts of bread. In fact they were nipping at the Mallards' feet as though to shoo them off ! Or maybe they just couldn't tell a duck's foot from a piece of bread until they sampled it. It will be interesting to see how the goldfish overwinter and whether we will eventually have another Wychwood Pond situation. Although it is not very big, our ox-bow pond is a very busy place !

Alen McCombie
Bayview Village, December 1999

□

* title of cover illustration. See also page 11.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

November 9, 1999

... I read most of the October issue to a lady who is nearly blind. She enjoyed it so very much. The current issue arrived on Nov. 3rd - the day of the big snow storm -- most timely to read Gavin Miller's report for 1998!

Vera Clarke
Orillia

November 19, 1999

...About the bird feeders. I put a 3-foot piece of "dryer vent" piping suspended at the base of the bird feeder, covering the pole for the three feet. It had a circumference of about 5-6" - and the squirrels find it hard to climb up the pole with the tin pipe around it. So far this has worked. Now I have two feeders - one with no pipe and cheap feed where the squirrels are welcome and one with pipe on it with the more expensive feed for the birds. Fixed-income people have to economize where they can!

Diana Humphrys

November 27, 1999

The December issue of the Newsletter contained a snippet on "Safer Winter Walking" about studded safety soles strapped onto boots to deal with walking on icy surfaces. Although I am not sure, I think the snippet described a pair of safety soles I bought some years ago.

They didn't help me in city pavement walking, although they were great for walking on non-tar/cement surfaced trails and walking on uneven ground, either muddy or icy. However, on smooth icy surfaces, like pavement under freezing rain, I did not find these soles good. Indeed, the smooth studs in the soles turned the safety soles into hard-to-control ice-skates! I stopped wearing them for city pavement walking where I really needed them and felt most at risk.

Louise Herzberg

November 30, 1999

Do Ladybugs migrate or hibernate?

Sybil Carmichael, I may have the answer.

Years ago, when I had an enclosed balcony facing south-east, I acquired a carpet to cover the bare cement floor. In late fall, I decided to store it away for the winter. As I started to roll it up, I noticed a large orange patch on its underside. To my amazement, this orange patch was a swarm of ladybugs, huddling cosily. There must have been 400 to 500 of them, obviously intent on spending the winter in this sheltered environment.

▷

KEEPING IN TOUCH (cont'd)

(I must add that there were just as many house flies crowded together on another corner of the rug.)

There you have it. I believe that ladybugs do hibernate!

Therese Paradis

December 2, 1999

We think you may be interested to hear another chapter in our ladybug story.

Two years ago the balconies in our apartment building were re-concreted and new railings installed. Now, as a follow-up, we are to have them inspected. This morning, in preparation for this inspection, I rolled up our outdoor carpeting, and guess what I found!!! -- clusters of ladybugs -- about 50 to a cluster. Most were underneath the carpeting, but some were on the cement.

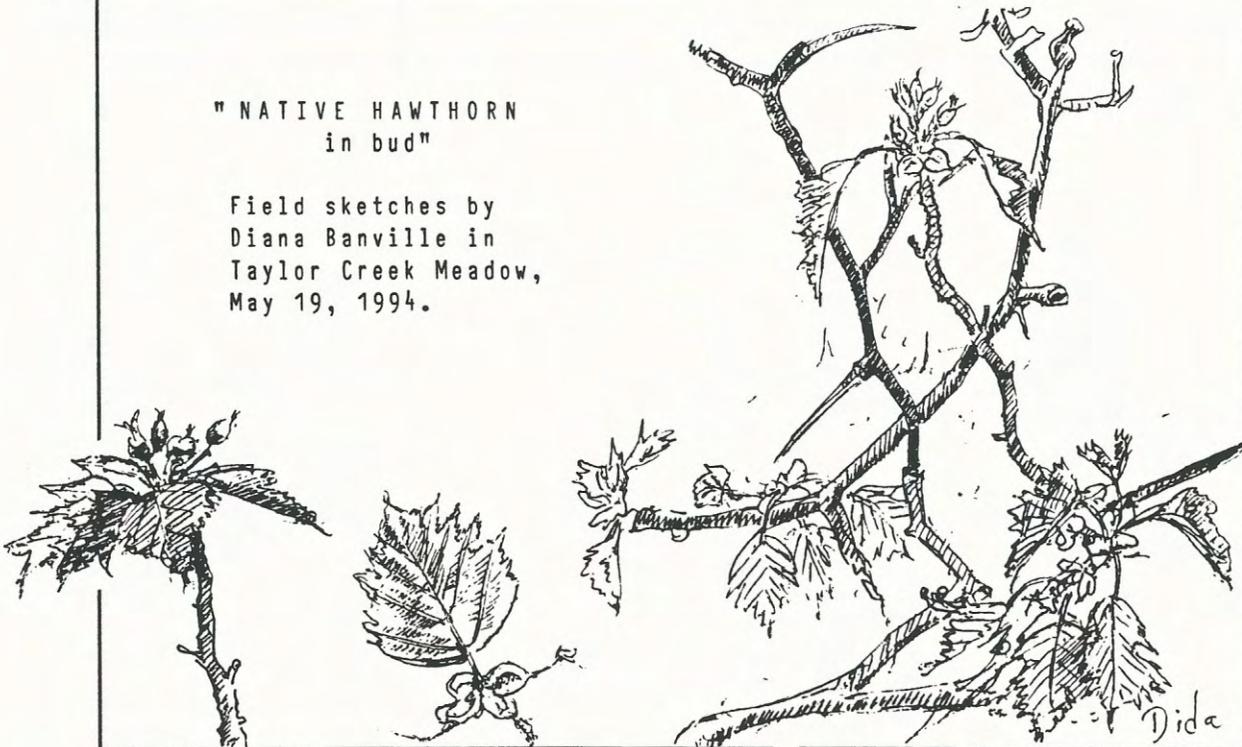
Now my question is answered -- ladybugs do hibernate. I guess they crawled under the carpeting to be cosy for the winter, and most of them still will be, as they are rolled up out of the cold. I hope they can find their way out! We'll have to unroll them before they need to. Whoever heard of rolling up ladybugs for the winter?!!!

Sybil Carmichael
Willowdale



" NATIVE HAWTHORN
in bud"

Field sketches by
Diana Banville in
Taylor Creek Meadow,
May 19, 1994.



Dec. 9, 1999

I read with interest Eva Davis' observations of the fall flowering of violets. This last year, 1999 was a bonus year indeed for reliving the early spring and walking along woodland paths enjoying blooming violets. In my observations, I have seen them in most years, but they seem to be more frequent in years of dry summers. Perhaps we should not be too surprised by this, especially last year, when late blooming dandelions and other spring flowering plants were common.

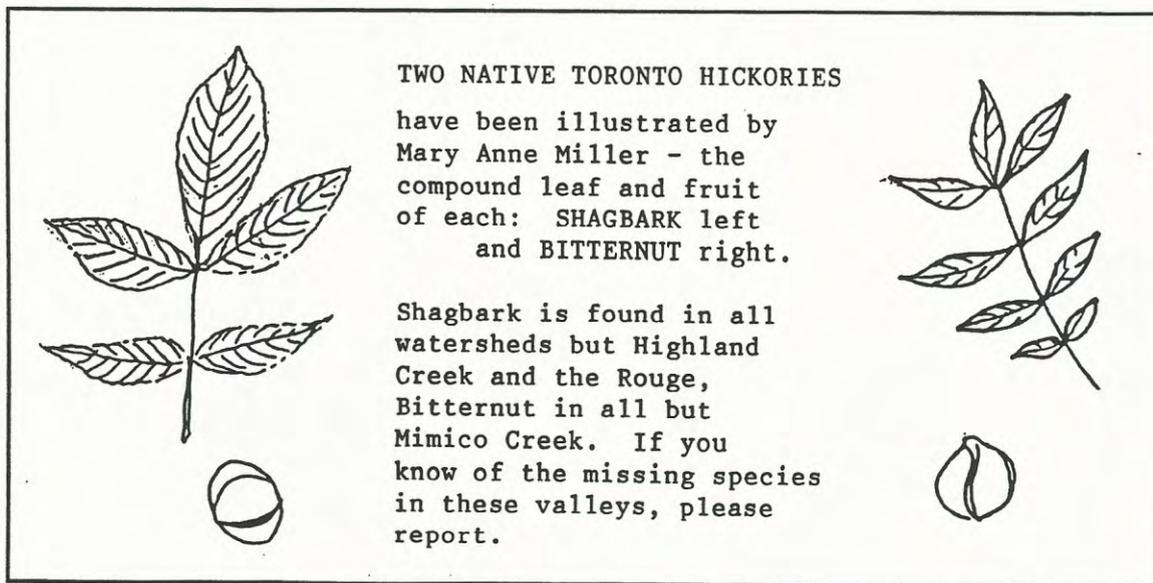
Violets along with many spring flowers produce their flowers in response to daylength, and this is one of the reasons why the appearance of flowers in spring is so regular. As a result, although they produce most flowers in springtime, they often will flower again in the fall when daylength shortens.

Violets are a fascinating group of plants that actually produce two very different kinds of flowers, there is the very familiar violet known to us all, pollinated by flies and bees, but in late summer the same violets produce greenish flowers which do not open and in which the petals and stamens are reduced. These "cleistogamous" flowers, as they are called, are borne low down on the plant either on upright stems or close to the ground. These flowers produce viable seed without pollination.

In the fall, both flower types can be found on the same plant, but an interesting question has remained in my mind as to whether, especially during dry years, the early stages leading to the formation of these "cleistogamous" flowers can produce the spring-type flowers instead. I think there is more to Eva Davis' question than meets the eye! In nature once again, a simple question yet becomes more complex. Perhaps next fall, members would like to keep records of any flowering spring plants.

John Sparling

□



CITY ESCAPE

I've spent many hours in this meander*[of the East Don River, south of Finch Avenue East]. Here I've seen beaver, mink and groundhog, muskrat swimming under the ice, squirrels, a fox nearby, and the tracks of racoons. Here too I identified my first scarlet tanager, and watched nesting flickers carry food to their young.

I've watched the river bed change its shape, watched beaches come and go, and seen an island grow in the middle of the stream.

Mostly I've been alone, and resented it when dogs and their owners came tramping by. I've always felt safe, here in the wild in the city, only making sure to leave before nightfall so that I can see the many holes in the ground waiting to catch hold of my feet and break my ankle.

Today is a beautiful fall day, warm with a slight breeze. The trees have mostly shed their leaves, and the undergrowth is drying up. Overhead a pair of belted kingfishers are engaged in some sort of chase or mating dance, and a sharp-shinned hawk rises from the field, circling until it finds a thermal and soars off to the west.

It's very quiet. Some chickadees, a pair of cardinals, and the occasional robin adding their calls to the muted sounds of traffic and a barking dog. An airplane overhead doesn't last long enough to disturb.

There's a red squirrel running across a log. If I sit here along enough I might see other things. Or I might not. You never can tell. The muskrats disappeared some years ago, and the swallows don't seem to nest here any more either, though they'd be long gone on their migration route anyway.

If I wasn't so timid I'd wait until dark to see if there are any owls around. I saw a pair here once, long ago. I think it was the year I found the "R.I.P." scrawled in a childish hand on ruled paper, fixed to a stick in the ground — the year there were hundreds of dead crayfish or shrimp on the beach after the spring run-off. The grass and shrubs lay flat for yards beyond the river bank. It must have been a big flood, but I hadn't seen it.

No flood today — the river so placid it hardly seems to be moving, though I can hear the ripples over the rocky section upstream. There, the trees which were happy with their feet in the water now stand dead 30 feet from the river, and the tree on the opposite bank which had sheltered the muskrats fell in several springs ago.

The narrow beach is covered in tracks, and I recognize those of deer. Deer here? Where would they be hiding? Maybe on the "wild" side, where I once stood too long on an anthill before realizing it, a place I could get to in winter by crossing on the ice. I try to track the deer, but lose it in the grass. It will keep its secrets for another day. My meander on the Don.

Merle Young

* See cover and article on page 7.

□

SLIDE PRESENTATIONS

A few years ago the Federation of Ontario Naturalists recruited a number of naturalists to give slide presentations at seniors' homes. This service provided entertainment to the residents at the homes and a chance for us to wave the flag for the conservation movement.

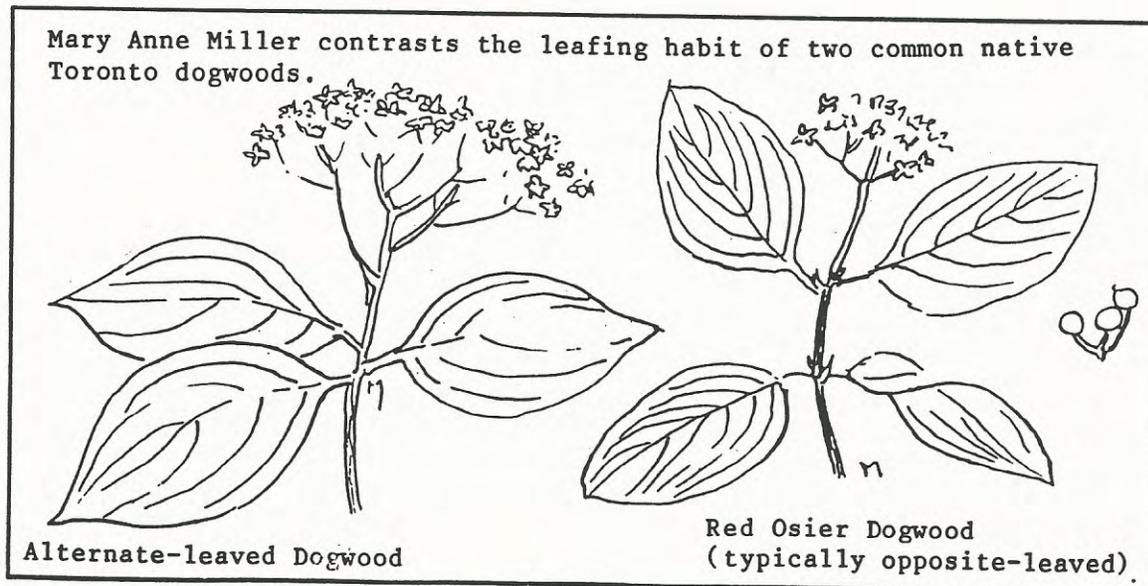
As one of the volunteers I was not upset that the occasional senior would fall asleep during my slide show. After all, I occasionally nodded off myself in a warm meeting room after a large dinner. I did not take such lapses as lack of interest in the presentation but rather as one of the problems of old age.

However I was not prepared for the experience I had in a seniors' home in North Toronto. The room was adequate, I had a good turn out, and the home had supplied a young employee to act as the projectionist.

I was giving what I thought was a fascinating account of my travels in the Hudson Bay Lowlands. A short way into my talk I called out "next slide please." Nothing happened. I tried again more loudly "NEXT SLIDE PLEASE" Again, nothing. I walked over and switched on the light. The projectionist was sound asleep. I shook him gently and he sheepishly carried on with his task to the end of my presentation. Oh well, maybe he had been out late the night before. I put it down as one of the problems of youth.

George Fairfield

□



THERE ARE FAIRIES – ER – FOXES AT THE BOTTOM OF MY GARDEN

In the September issue you solicited information on fox-sightings. Of course, I assumed you meant recent sightings, and I can certainly do that. However, I feel I must include an account of the very first occasion on which a fox was seen in our garden.

It was about twenty-seven years ago, VERY early one weekend morning when my four-year-old son came into our bedroom saying “Quick! Mum, Dad – there’s a fox in the garden!” I remember rather crossly telling him to go back to bed – that it was only a dog. A few days later, on a morning when my husband had had to get up extra early for work, he came back into our bedroom to say that there was indeed a fox in the garden.

Needless to say, I was up like shot to have a look! As my husband said “How could we have doubted the child?” The fox was picture-perfect – just exactly like an illustration in a children’s book called ‘Petunia’, about a barnyard goose of that name. Need I say more?

The intervening years have brought many more sightings, especially in recent times. Since I retired a couple of years ago, I’ve had the time to gaze out of the window for longer periods and I usually enjoy a couple of sightings a week. My garden backs into one of the many ravines which run into the Don Valley and the back half is totally uncultivated, now making it a perfect spot for foxes – it’s criss-crossed with the pathways they have beaten! I believe the fox family winters under my garden-shed - there’s a very musky odour in there in early spring. Winter visits are especially wonderful as those beautiful red coats contrast with the snow. Last year I watched as the dog-fox dug up and ate food which had been cached in the snow over the raspberry patch! I’ve seen the vixen lying curled up sleeping in the warmth of spring sunshine in her favourite spot, although I have only once seen kits who were probably three months old at the time. A few years ago, my son left his dog in the back garden leashed to a tree - something he didn’t normally do. After a little while he looked out to see how Burleigh was doing - she had been joined by a fox and the two of them were lying within feet of each other enjoying the sun!

How I shall miss these thrilling moments if I ever have to move from here!

Tessa Edward

D

A naturalist is lucky in two respects. First, he enjoys every bit of the world about him and has a much more enriched life than someone who is not interested in nature. Second, he can indulge his hobby in any place at any time, for a naturalist will be fascinated to watch nature struggling to exist in the midst of a great city as well as observe its riotous splendour in a tropical forest. He can be equally interested and moved by the great herds on the African plains or by the earwigs in his back garden.

from THE BEST OF GERALD DURRELL, chosen by Lee Durrell, Harper Collins Publishers, 1998

THE TREES OF MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY

When identifying trees, the leaf arrangement is pertinent. The most unusual type of leaf is the palmate variety. Opposite leaves are also less common than alternate. There is only one genera in the cemetery which is opposite and palmate. It is commonly called Horse Chestnut or Buckeye (AESCULUS). In Mount Pleasant there are three kinds of Horse Chestnut. They are the common, ruby, and baumannii. The ruby (AESCULUS X CARNEA) has red flowers, and the baumannii has double white flowers. The Horse Chestnuts have sticky buds so can be easily separated from Buckeyes. The scientific name for the common Horse Chestnut is HIPPOCASTANUM. It literally means "horse chestnut". Hippo, of course, is Greek for horse, as in "Hippopotamus", "RIVER HORSE". CASTANEA is the generic name for chestnut. Common Horse Chestnuts are planted all over the cemetery but the BAUMANNII is only listed in section 25 and 32. I have not verified that these trees exist. We will have to wait until they flower next year.

When I was young, horse chestnuts were collected because of the beautiful colour and shiny clean surface. Opening that ugly, prickly shell to discover that magnificent fruit was exciting every time you did it. We always ended up with pockets full and then didn't know what to do with them. Some children put them on a string and played "conkers", trying to break your opponent's nut. We used to say the winner had "babies" although I can't recall how exactly the system worked. Kids used to try all kinds of methods to make their chestnuts harder. Soaking and freezing never worked that well. As children, we were entertained for the whole season by creating our own toys, playing games with what was available. The toy industry now creates everything out of thick plastic, which is quickly broken and ends up in a landfill, but that's another issue for discussion.

I own a medical dictionary. It is Blakistons third edition. I have found that most chemicals that are derived from plants have similar names. I have found some interesting alkaloids this way. For this reason, I looked up AESCULUS and found the following:

ESCULIN, AESCULIN 6.7 - DIHYDROCOUMARIN 6 - GLUCOSIDE C¹⁵ H¹⁶ O⁹, a constituent of the leaves and bark of the horse chestnut AESCULUS HIPPOCASTANUM. Being fluorescent it absorbs ultraviolet rays and has been used as a sunburn protective.

Does this mean those expensive sunblock lotions can be made at home out of horse chestnut leaves?

Roger Powley

□

Lady moon half seen.
wearing, in wintery mode,
cloud-grey kimono.

haiku by Arthur Wade
February 20, 1997

A DIRECT HIT

It was on a sunny February day at 11 a.m. as I walked home from the subway, drab snowbanks lining the sidewalks, remnants of Toronto's huge January snowstorm.

Suddenly thud--I was struck above my left temple by a hard object. Was someone flinging snowballs? mudballs? In shock I turned and saw a group of workers talking and shovelling a driveway a few hundred feet away. Were they acting like school boys, I wondered.

So sudden was the hit that it took a few seconds for me to register that an object had swooped upwards above my head and then outwards across the street to some bushy shrubs.

I had been hit by a sparrow in fast flight. Its eyesight and orientation had gone askew, weakened perhaps by the rigours of winter. The impact was strong enough to make me realize the force with which birds can hit windows. In this case I was the one in danger of being knocked out. Lucky sparrow.

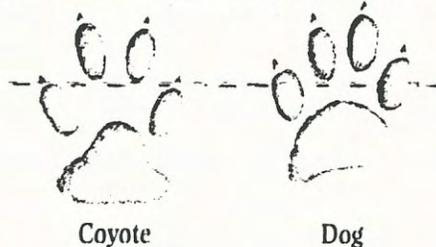
How many people have been hit on the head by one?

Kittie Fells

□

Coyote or dog?

You can detect the presence of these elusive creatures by looking for their tracks in the snow or mud. Don't be fooled by look-alike dog tracks. Lay a straight stick across the backs of the two front pads. If the stick intersects the two side pads, the tracks belong to a dog. If it just catches the front of the side pads, they belong to a coyote.



Coyote

Dog

Illustration: Marie DeVitt

ANIMALS' *voice*

15

from "COYOTE PHOBIA: IN DEFENCE OF COYOTES"
by Ellis Greenstein and Jackie Jenkins, Winter 1999

PROJECTS

NATURALISTS FEAR GOLF-COURSE COMPLEX IN BRONTE PARK

Bronte Creek Provincial Park straddles the boundary between Burlington and Oakville, and is the only provincial park located in an urban area. Rapid residential development outside the park makes it a valuable natural sanctuary. Much of it could be flattened if a plan by the Royal Canadian Golf Association to create a huge golf course complex on the land goes through. It would be the first time any Ontario provincial park has been developed in this way. The golf association wants the park as a new home for its operations -- what it is calling Golf Canada Village, a \$25-million project to include an 18-hole championship stadium course, an 18-hole public course, a nine-hole junior course, a golf academy, a clubhouse, and office space for its national headquarters. Oakville is eager to have the development because it wants to bask in the international prestige of having the major golf course within its boundaries. Town officials have commissioned studies that indicate the golfing centre could be a springboard for further development around the park, by attracting residential complexes, resorts and low-rise office buildings to be near the golf courses. Records indicate Oakville town staff zeroed in on the park because it offered a large parcel of high-quality land that could be obtained inexpensively.

extracted from an article by Martin Mittelstaedt in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, Nov. 29, 1999

COMMENT: Express your disapproval of this project by writing to Stephen Ross, Executive Director, Royal Canadian Golf Association, 1333 Dorval Dr., Oakville, Ont. L6J 4Z3 Phone (905) 849-9700; fax (905) 845-7040; sdross@rcga.org with copies to Hon. John Snobelen, Minister of Natural Resources, Room 6301, Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley Street W., Toronto, Ont. M7A 1W3 Fax (416) 314-2216 e-mail not available, and your own MPP.

With the exception of High Park, the prairie and related communities at Bronte Creek Provincial park are the most significant in the natural region in terms of size, number of prairie/savanna species, number of provincially rare and rare to uncommon species, and representativeness. The Greater Toronto Area has 142 golf courses. The Greater Toronto Area has one provincial park (Bronte Creek).

extracted from an article by Bruce Mackenzie in WILDLAND NEWS, Winter 1999-2000

What's your project for the new year? Choose an environmental issue and write a letter or make a phone call. If you don't get a response within a month, follow through with another letter or phone call. Also don't forget to send a copy of any letter to your appropriate representative -- letters to the Mayor should include a copy to your Councillor; letters to the Premier should mean a copy to your MPP; a letter to the Prime Minister should mean a copy to your MP.

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PROJECTS (cont'd)

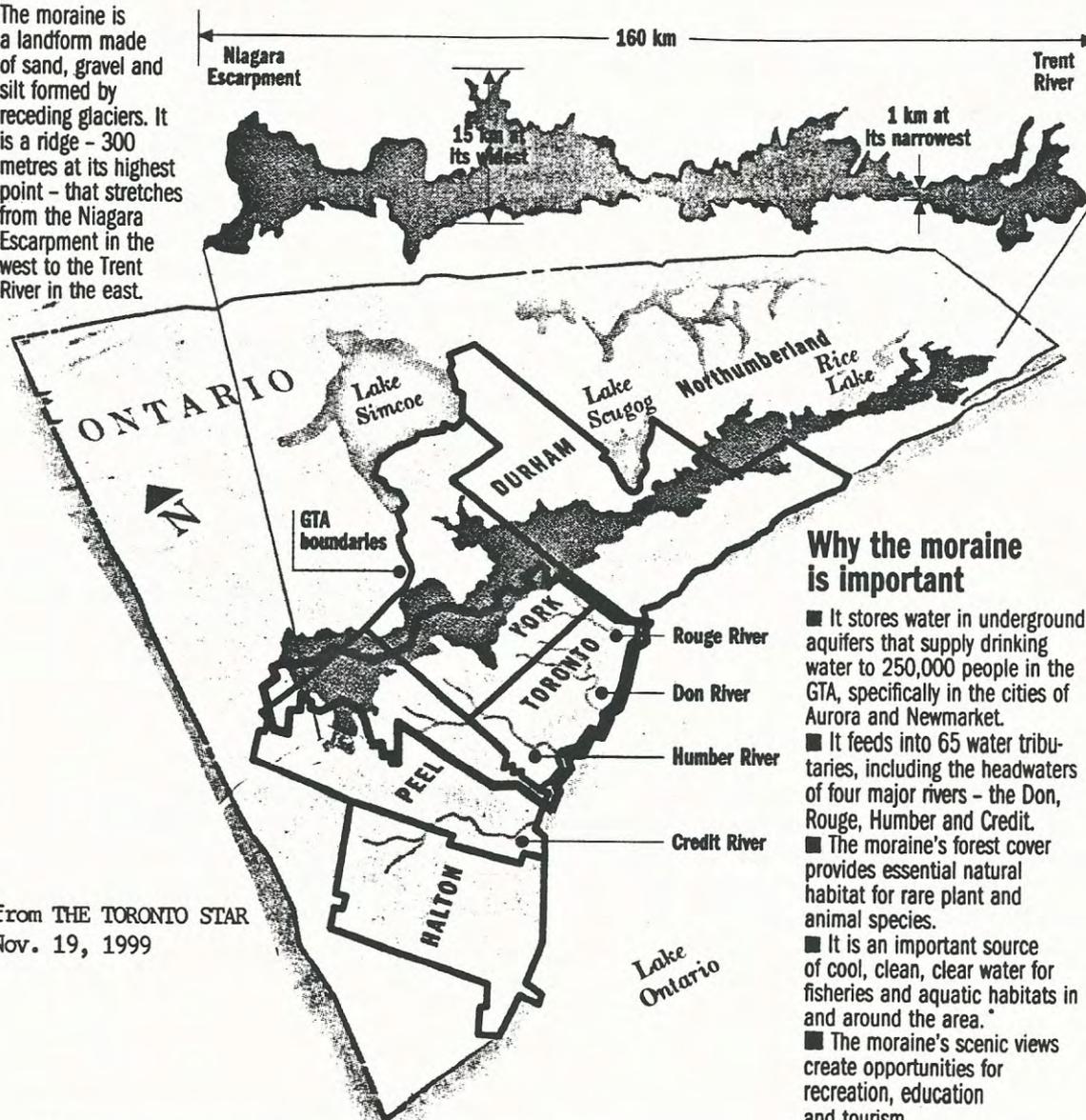
HELP SAVE THE OAK RIDGES MORAINE

[See news article on page 21.]

A coalition of environmental groups is calling for the creation of a huge park in the Richmond Hill part of the moraine. The Kettle Lakes Coalition, which is made up of Earthroots, Richmond Hill Naturalists, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM), the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, West Humber Naturalists and Save the Rouge, have proposed a 2,700-acre park. Despite news that the Ontario government will allow development, your letter may be the one that makes the difference! Please write to Premier Mike Harris at Room 281, Legislative Building, Toronto, Ont. M7A 1A1 and to Tony Clement, Minister of the Environment, at 135 St. Clair Ave. West, 12th floor, Toronto, Ont. M4V 1P5.

For more information on the Kettle Lakes Coalition, contact them at P.O. Box 2194, Stn. B, Richmond Hill, Ont. L4E 1A4 or call 905-780-3938 or FAX 905-780-1170.

The moraine is a landform made of sand, gravel and silt formed by receding glaciers. It is a ridge - 300 metres at its highest point - that stretches from the Niagara Escarpment in the west to the Trent River in the east.



from THE TORONTO STAR
Nov. 19, 1999

PROJECTS (cont'd)

THE CANADIAN FERN SOCIETY

The Canadian Fern Society was organized in 1998 and already has one hundred members, mostly in southern Ontario. The Society has organized indoor meetings and field trips, and publishes a newsletter -- FILIX -- for members. Recently, the Society established two public fern display gardens.

The hardy fern collection has been placed at James Gardens, one of three "Formal Garden" parks in the Toronto parks system. This is a popular spot and should provide plenty of public exposure to ferns. The second location is the Centennial Park Conservatory, also in Toronto, where the Society has established the non-hardy fern collection in an ideal location complete with waterfall and small stream. Altogether around 300 ferns from more than eighty different varieties are now on display, and the Society hopes to add to this number in the future.

In addition to the public display gardens, some space has been obtained in a production greenhouse to grow ferns from spores.

Mr. Alastair Wardlaw of Glasgow, a member of the British Pteridological Society, visited Canada in September 1999. A one-time resident of Toronto, Professor Wardlaw gave a talk and slide presentation to the Canadian Fern Society's meeting at Humber Nurseries. His subject was "Canadian Ferns in a Scottish Garden".

The acting president of the Society is Mr. Tom Thomson, assisted by Mr. Brian Cook and others, and together they have given the Society a remarkable flying start in just two years. Membership of \$15 per year may be sent to Mr. Tom Thomson, The Canadian Fern Society, c/o Humber Nurseries Ltd., R.R. #8, Brampton, Ontario L6T 3Y7.

from THE WOOD DUCK, December 1999

TFN IS NOW ON THE INTERNET!!!

Our address is www.sources.com/tfn. Any changes or suggestions should be made to Elaine Farragher, our web master, at 537-5877.

TFN BOARD NOMINATIONS INVITED

The TFN is looking for people with initiative who are willing to devote time to working as members of the Board of Directors. Please send your suggestions to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, c/o TFN, 1519 - 2 College St., Toronto, Ont. M5B 1J3. (The report of the committee will be published in the May newsletter.)

PROJECTS (cont'd)

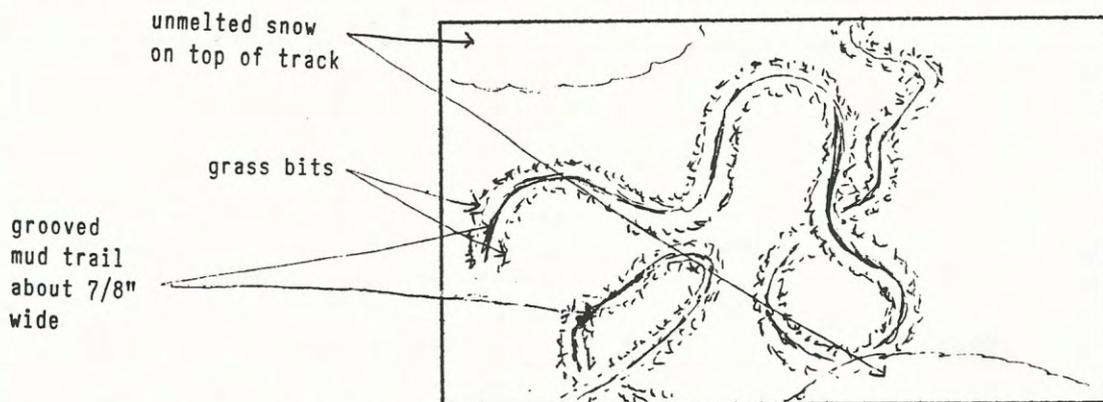
EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL AVAILABLE

In addition to the publications listed on the back of the newsletter, we have for sale at our office: newsletter indexes for all years up to 1997, issues of The Ontario Field Biologist, A Key to Common Grasses of Metropolitan Toronto and York Region, A Bird Finding Guide to the Toronto Region, A Guide to the Ferns of Grey and Bruce Counties, The Orchids of Bruce and Grey, and reasonably-priced used nature-related books. There is also a box of "freebies" including back issues of various nature magazines. The office is open Fridays from 9 a.m. til noon. Drop in and find some interesting reading material and good additions to your nature library.

Marilynn Murphy

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GRASSY RUNWAYS..."Sunny but cold with a bitter wind from northwest. Temperature about -6° C. Very difficult walking conditions as the melting snow had now frozen into icy patches... We were intrigued with some strange tracks in the grass. These consisted of squiggles that wandered around in a meandering fashion, the centre quite grooved and about $7/8$ " wide, while the grass was piled up on either side. I will try to sketch them.



Does any one at TFN know what sort of track this is?

...Diana Karrandjas"

(excerpt from outing report of TFN and FRIENDS OF MIMICO CREEK Nature Walk, West Deane Park, February 20, 1999)

Ed. note: The grass clippings are characteristic of the Meadow Vole, according to A GUIDE TO ANIMAL TRACKING AND BEHAVIOR by Donald and Lillian Stokes. Had it been a runway made by a Short-tailed Shrew, the grasses would have been simply pressed aside. Both of these species are common in Toronto but seldom seen because of their habits.

IN THE NEWS

THE TOWER OF BABBLE RISES OVER TORONTO

With the completion of the steel scaffolding at 306 Yonge St., just north of Dundas, the city -- and arguably the world -- has its first media tower. The media tower is the message, writ large and visible 24 hours a day. The Torch on the Square, our second media tower is being constructed on Dundas St. at Victoria St., at the east end of Dundas Square. An artist's drawing shows a giant (50-metre) inverted cone rising brilliantly into the darkened skyline.

extracted from an article by Christopher Hume in THE TORONTO STAR, Oct. 30, 1999

COMMENT: What about migrating birds, dark skies ??

TOWER TERROR

Collisions with tall towers erected for cellular telephones, television and radio are killing birds by the thousands. The problem, says the American Ornithological Union, is particularly acute in bad weather at night, when birds are attracted by tower lights. One of the worst incidents occurred last winter in Kansas when about 10,000 migrating birds died at the site of a TV tower. So far, the only answer seems to be one devised by a Canadian power company: It found that flashing strobe lights reduce bird kills around tall smokestacks.

an article by Colin Haskin in the GLOBE & MAIL, Dec. 9, 1999

BALLOONS ARE DEADLY!

Balloons present a serious environmental problem. Helium balloons released into the air on special occasions, or used at parties and not disposed of properly, are a threat to marine animals and other wildlife. Many whales, dolphins, turtles and other marine animals die from ingesting balloons. The balloons, once swallowed, block the intestinal tract, not allowing anything to pass through the animal's system.

String or ribbon attached to balloons is also a threat. The ribbon can be ingested, causing intestinal problems, or it can become tangled around birds' necks, legs or feet. This can prevent them from looking for food, causing them to die of starvation.

Balloons can take years to decompose, and animals who ingest them will die before the balloons decompose. Instead of using balloons at a party, why not suspend stuffed animals or other toys from the ceiling with colourful ribbons, so guests can take them home?

from an article in "Animals' Voice", Winter 1999

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IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

DEVELOPMENT FREEZE RULED OUT FOR OAK RIDGES

There will be no freeze, temporary or otherwise, on urban development of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Despite political embarrassments and pressure from local politicians, environmentalists and civic activists, the Mike Harris government has decided to let proposed new housing proceed on the belt of environmentally sensitive land north of Toronto. There are currently 20 proposals that would put 50,000 more people on the moraine before local governments or the Ontario Municipal Board. Developers believe even existing restrictions are unreasonable and have appealed regional-government refusals of their plans to the Ontario Municipal Board. [For more information on this issue, see page 17.]

extracted from an article in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, Nov. 1999

NATE AND FALCON PALS FLYING INTO HISTORY

A \$4,425 radio transmitter, the size and shape of a mini cigarette lighter, was fastened like a knapsack to a peregrine falcon's back in August, when he was released from captivity in Richmond Hill, Ont. The transmitter sends a signal every four days to a satellite that produces a reading of his exact location. The data show he successfully crossed the Gulf of Mexico on Oct. 14, rested for a couple of days in Cancun, carried on toward Belize and by Nov. 1 was hovering over Colombia. It is the first time an Ontario-raised peregrine falcon has been tracked via satellite telemetry. Four male falcons -- Eco, Rouge, Lincoln and Nate -- were outfitted with the 20-gram transmitters. All are being carefully watched by the Canadian Peregrine Foundation, a Toronto-based non-profit organization that raised \$8,000 to fund the initiative called Project Track-em. During the 1950's residues of DDT and other pesticides caused the birds' egg shells to break easily, killing the chicks inside. In 1979 there was only one breeding pair of peregrine falcons recorded in Ontario. The use of DDT was eventually banned in the early 1970's and in 1977 a recovery program funded by the Ontario and federal governments helped increase the number of birds in the province. Last year, the number of breeding pairs in the province had grown to 23. However, of the 500 individual birds that were tagged with aluminum bands and released into the wild as part of the recovery program, the CPF knows the whereabouts of only six. Using radio transmitters is a way to keep track of the falcons and learn more about the birds' flight patterns and survival rates.

extracted from an article in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, Nov. 1, 1999

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On a wintry street
house sparrow's boring chirp sounds sweet:
"Nice day, nice nice day!"

Haiku by Phoebe Gieverley

S. ONTARIO FEELS THE EARTH MOVE

Residents of Oshawa, Pickering, Ajax, Scarborough and Toronto east of the Don Valley reported a tremor that rumbled along the western part of Lake Ontario at 5:40 p.m. on Nov. 26, 1999. The quake lasted less than half a minute, but it was as loud as an airplane flying directly overhead. The Southern Ontario Seismic Network, operated by the University of Western Ontario, measured the quake at magnitude 3.9 and placed its centre 21 kilometres southeast of Pickering, home of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station. The network is financed by Ontario Power Generation and has a seismograph in Pickering.

extracted from an article by Kim Honey in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, Nov. 27, 1999

FOREVER GREEN: A PLEDGE FOR TOMORROW

Lorne Almack and his wife Rhoda have signed an easement agreement with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists that ensures their 34-hectare rural property just north of Pickering near Claremont will remain a nature preserve for at least the next 999 years. Though the property can be sold, it cannot be developed or divided, which reduces its market value substantially. The Almack's are the first Ontario residents to sign such an agreement with the federation. Easements of this type are already popular in the United States, where millions of square kilometres are being saved from development without anyone having to purchase the land. The new Almack conservation easement, just south of the village of Claremont, is in a designated environmentally sensitive area and encompasses a branch of Duffin's Creek, wetlands and a mixed forest augmented by 85,000 trees planted by Almack's family. Under the terms of the easement, 10 hectares of land will be retained for farming, four hectares for existing buildings and orchards, and the rest will remain forest and wetlands. The easement also encourages recreation that would not disturb or change the property, such as walking or bicycling, and limits timber harvesting to selective cuttings that maintain the forest canopy. New housing, land severances, all-terrain vehicles and golf courses are not permitted. The easement is registered on land title and the restrictions will show up whenever someone tries to buy or develop the Almack property in future. Under the easement, the federation has the right to inspect the property periodically to make sure it is being kept in its natural state.

extracted from an article by Stan Josey, in THE TORONTO STAR, Nov.13, 1999

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Attracting wild birds
an all-you-can-eat buffet
rewards onlookers.

Haiku by Therese Paradis
November, 1999

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

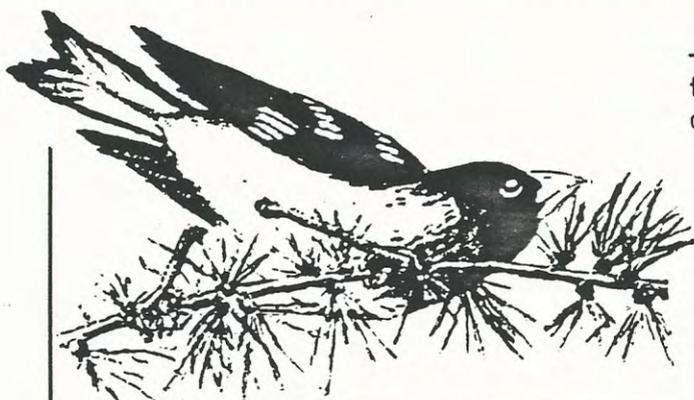
LOOSESTRIFE UNFAIRLY DEMONIZED

Contrary to well-funded protestations by interest groups, purple loosestrife is not the menace it's made out to be. Judging from what I saw in Ontario, purple loosestrife was in full bloom all across Canada during August. It was about this time four years ago that I travelled right across the country, from Osooyos, B.C. to Pasadena, Nfld., and I well remember seeing the "beautiful purple weed" in full bloom in every province except Newfoundland. I have been defending this plant (excellent for bees and honey-making, colourful, does well in a variety of conditions, insect and disease resistant, with a long blooming period), for about a decade. In that time I've been subjected to tongue lashings from government officials, do-gooder (so-called) environmentalists, conservationists and preservationists. Poor lowly gardeners don't know whom to believe. Some biologists and naturalists continue to call for a government ban on the same and propagation of the plant which they say, as a non-native, has no natural predators and is quickly taking over our already threatened wetlands. In response to continuing negative publicity, I did a little investigation into the subject and found that the possibility of purple loosestrife taking over other common wetland border plants such as cattails and natives such as willows is highly unlikely. Wetlands remain in existence for only a period of time - regardless of predators such as loosestrife. Over the next 100 years, virtually all the wetlands we now know will cease to exist, and many new such lands will be formed. Those condemning the plant might well check with competent researchers such as Dr. Spencer Barrett of the University of Toronto's botany department. He and his colleagues dare anyone to show a natural, undisturbed pristine environment where purple loosestrife has invaded. University of Guelph zoology department professor Ted Knuds recently released a paper discussing the pros and cons and concludes the threats attributed to purple loosestrife are largely exaggerated.

an article by Art Drysdale in FOREVER YOUNG, September 1999

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ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK male, on WHITE PINE - by D. Andrew White



- a Toronto nester,
the species does not often
choose a conifer as a nest site,
but uses pine needles
as nest material,
according to Peck & James in
BREEDING BIRDS OF ONTARIO.

MAGPIES COULD SOON BE COMMON SIGHTS HERE

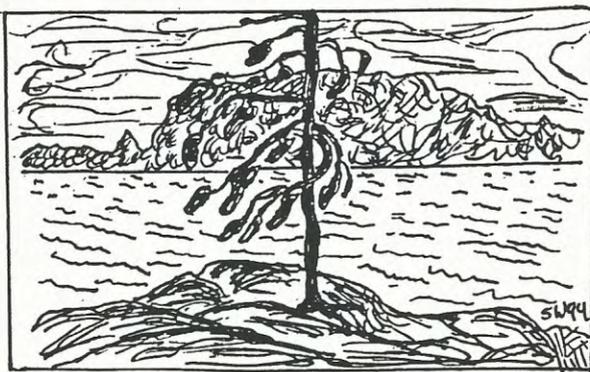
The real world is complex. Nothing is static. Gadwalls are historically a prairie species, but they now commonly breed far to the east of the prairies. The first nest was recorded in Ontario in 1955. Black-billed magpies were first found nesting in Rainy River in 1980, although they had probably gone unnoticed earlier. Deforestation increases suitable habitat for this species. Magpies irregularly occur in southern Ontario and there seems to be no reason why they won't eventually establish themselves in our region. They are now nesting on the Bruce Peninsula. The first Brewer's blackbird nest known for Ontario was found in Thunder Bay in 1945. The yellow-headed blackbird, a species associated with prairie sloughs, was first found nesting in Ontario in 1961, near Rainy River. The arrival of the northern cardinal as a breeding species in Ontario is well documented. It entered the province in the 19th century but was not known to nest around Toronto until 1922. Now it is one of our most common breeding species. Great egrets, so often associated with subtropical swamps, were first found nesting in Ontario in 1953, on an island in Lake Erie. Egrets now regularly nest as far north as Georgian Bay.

extracted from an article by Barry Kent MacKay in the TORONTO STAR, May 2, 1999

THE BIRD THAT JUST SEEMS OUT OF PLACE

White pelicans are traditionally associated mainly with the southern United States, but two-thirds of the continent's flock of 150,000 breed in Canada. The first nesting pelicans were spotted on Lake of the Woods in 1938 and now the colony is one of the country's largest. Over the years, the pelicans have moved their breeding grounds farther and farther north. They're now found from British Columbia to Northwestern Ontario, spending the winter in the U.S. south and Mexico. After first appearing in 1938, they were seen on Lake of the Woods only occasionally until the mid and late 1950s when they began to arrive in substantial numbers. The explanation offered by the Ministry of Natural Resources is that extremely high water levels forced them from their traditional prairie nesting grounds. The colony expanded from 50 adults in 1960 to 15,000 in 1991. About 20 years ago, some birds migrated another 500 kilometres to the east and settled on Lake Nipigon.

extracted from an article in the GLOBE & MAIL, July 24, 1999



THE WEST WIND - Tom Thomson

The pine tree is bent
 Roots clinging to ancient rock
 West wind froths the bay

haiku by Susan Weiss

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

A RADICAL PLAN TO PRESERVE THE BELOVED ELM

Cuttings from about 50 massive elms will be grafted on to the roots of elm seedlings. It's the start of a 30-year project to breed an elm tree that is naturally resistant to the deadly fungus carried from tree to tree by the bark beetle, which has destroyed millions of elms in eastern North America over the past six decades. In 1991, a team of University of Toronto scientists identified and isolated antifungal compounds called phytoalexins that are produced when a tree is attacked by pathogens. That opened the door to the study of disease resistance in American elms, since the phytoalexins can be used to measure the strength of a tree's natural immune system. The Guelph Arboretum has embarked on a long-term plan to save the tree from extinction, a project wholly dependent on outside donations. It has raised \$33,000 of its \$100,000 goal. Some of the trees will be injected with a virulent strain of the Dutch elm disease and measured for the amount of phytoalexins it produces and how fast it produces them. Scientists will select the most resistant trees and plant those in an orchard that will become the Arboretum's elm-tree gene bank. They will eventually cross-pollinate each other, creating a new generation of disease-resistant elms. By about 2016, the project directors hope to have the first crop of seeds to distribute to Ontario nurseries, which will grow them into trees and sell them to the public. That first generation of disease-resistant elm trees should produce a second generation of seeds by about 2035 and, eventually, the widespread natural dispersal of resistant elm seeds.

extracted from an article by Kim Honey in the GLOBE & MAIL, April 9, 1999

BREEDING MITE-PROOF HONEYBEES

Two kinds of mites have been killing honeybees: tracheal mites, for which the Ontario Beekeeping Association has bred resistant bees; and verroa mites, for which they are halfway to a breeding solution. So successful have they been that Ontario is now exporting queen bees. California used to be the capital of exports, but beekeepers there relied too heavily on pesticides for killing mites. And now mites have been developing resistance to the main pesticide, Apistan. Meanwhile Ontario, which in 1990 produced 2,500 queen bees for commercial beekeepers, now produces 14,000 to 15,000. There are probably few if any wild honeybees left. They will have been killed by mites. But by breeding resistant bees the Ontario beekeepers will ensure that swarms of resistant bees will migrate from commercial operations to the wild. Tracheal mites puncture the breathing (trachea) tubes of the bees to get blood, either killing them directly or so weakening them that they die of other causes. Verroa mites attack bees in the pupal stage. Either the pupa is killed, or the bee that develops is deformed. Tracheal mites arrived in Canada in 1987, verroa mites two years later.

extracted from an article by Cameron Smith in the TORONTO STAR, March 13, 1999

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IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

BALD AND MULTI-COLOURED, TORONTO'S SQUIRRELS COME IN ALL MANNER OF FORM

Most Toronto dwellers are accustomed to seeing black and grey – and, somewhat more rarely, red – squirrels rushing about our streets, parks, and balconies. But how about a calico or tabby squirrel? No, it's not a fluke. A multi-coloured squirrel is not such an odd sight in the city these days. A black and grey squirrel, for example, may indeed make black or grey babies. Or they can, in a defiant rodent fashion statement, produce a litter of six or seven technicolor fluffballs, with any combination of black, grey, silver, brown, or white in their coats. One need only take a stroll through Queen's Park to see a range of white markings and brown shades on squirrels with primarily black and grey coats. The Eastern Grey [the most common squirrel species in Toronto] can now be black, silver grey, white, brown, or a combination thereof. They can also be black or grey with beautiful white tails. The red squirrels, however, tend only to be red. They tend to be more territorial than their black and grey counterparts. Squirrels with bald spots are also a common sight, and it's not because they're getting old. Squirrels, it seems, pull out their own fur to line their nests.

extracted from an article by Rondi Adamson in the NATIONAL POST, March 4, 1999

AN EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL in its RUFIOUS COLOUR-PHASE
at Allan Gardens on Saint Patrick's Day, 1999,
looked like an enormous Red Squirrel.

It was seen
around the statue
of Robert Burns,
erected
July 21, 1902,
in memory of
the beloved
Scottish poet,
as Susan Weiss
noted in her
illustrated journal
of TFN outings.



IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

WHY CITY BIRDS LEARN WRONG SONGS

Dutch studies published in 1994 and 1995 found there were significantly fewer birds in areas where mean sound levels over 24 hour periods were 55 to 58 decibels (dB). It is also found that populations of individual species in such areas could drop by as much as 83 per cent; up to 70 per cent of the different species of birds had lower populations; and the total population of all species could be as much as 25 per cent lower than normal. Noise interfered with the ability of young males to learn the precise songs to attract females. In residential areas of the old City of Toronto where noise has been measured, levels are 6 to 12 per cent higher than in the Dutch studies. During the past 25 years, the old City of Toronto brought out three major reports on sound levels. They covered 1974-1981, 1982-1986 and 1987-1993. By 1993, levels had increased by about four dB. We know that children in schools that are near highways learn at a slower rate. Several sites were surveyed in the Toronto reports. The site with the lowest levels is a residential area immediately west of High Park. In the first report it averaged 58dB; in the third, 62dB. In the commercial-residential area north and south of Eglinton Ave. from Avenue Rd. to Bayview Ave., sound levels rose from 60 dB in the first report to 64 dB in the third. In the industrial area west of Leslie St. and north of Cherry Beach, they rose from 67 to 73 dB. In the downtown core they went from 67 to 69 dB. In only one site did sound levels drop. That was in the Junction area north of Keele and Dundas Sts. They fell to 62 from 66 dB. Noise levels in the city are directly related to traffic levels. When you're up against high intensity sound, trees and shrubs won't help (unless you create a small forest). The only hope for birds is to maintain sanctuaries, such as the Rouge Valley, the Oak Ridges Moraine, High Park and Toronto Islands. But by all means plant trees. They won't lessen the sound, but they'll provide a better habitat for birds. The only real solution is to reduce noise levels. And if you want to campaign toward that goal, you can call Noise Watch, a non-profit volunteer group at 416-410-2236.

extracted from an article by Cameron Smith in the TORONTO STAR, May 8, 1999

PETER WHALEN WAS BIRDING EXPERT AND DEAR FRIEND

Peter Whalen, 65, died at home of cancer on the sunny afternoon of Saturday, August 14. Peter Whalen was the birding columnist for The Globe and Mail for more than 25 years. His column was of special value to many during the days when his audience was local and the column was published on Wednesdays. "Peter would write about what had been seen the previous weekend, and where." When The Globe and Mail went National, Peter would get on the phone Monday evenings and place calls to each part of Canada, gleaning information on what was seen where from his vast network of contacts. Peter often reported on various naturalists organizations but he would not join them, citing concern about even giving an appearance of compromising his objectivity.

extracted from an article by Barry Kent MacKay in the TORONTO STAR, Aug. 22, 1999

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THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

February 1999, Toronto

It was déjà vu from last year, almost, as the exceptionally mild conditions of late January continued most of February. It was the fifth warmest February on record downtown (after 1998, 1984, 1954, and 1976). Pearson's mean was the third warmest on record, after 1998 and 1984.

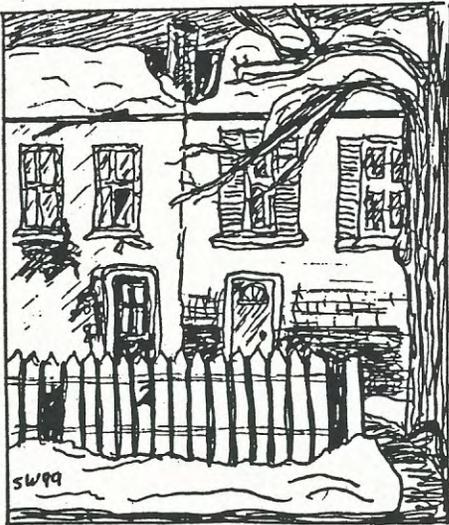
February was dry again, returning to the tranquil conditions that had been interrupted by the blitz of snow last month. Rainfall was near normal but snowfall was 5 cm or less everywhere. Pearson's 3.4 cm was the second lowest on record, after 1998. Total precipitation of 32.8 mm downtown and 27.4 mm at Pearson was the lowest since 1995. Most of this fell as rain the last couple of days. Sunshine was rather high at 143.1 hours, about 30 above normal, and the highest since 1994.

Mild, quiet weather continued up to mid-month, and it was shaping up to beat even last year's record warmth. We peaked at 12.2° downtown on February 11th, the warmest February day since 1984. But there was one moderately cold spell from February 18th-23rd with temperatures dropping into the minus teens one or two nights.

Snow cover from January faded away amazingly quickly and became discontinuous in open areas by mid-month. (It remained in sheltered areas, however, until the end of March or the beginning of April.)

Gavin Miller

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OLD HOUSES - Lawren Harris

Nightfall. A snowfall
blanketing the trees and yards
The equalizer

haiku by Susan Weiss

COMING EVENTS

Heritage Showcase 2000 - Friday, Feb. 18 from 10 am to 9 pm; Sat. Feb. 19 from 9:30 to 6 pm; Sun. Feb. 20 from noon to 5 pm at the Scarborough Town Centre. TFN members are needed to volunteer at the TFN display table. Call 593-2656 or Andre Vietinghoff at 232-9241 to volunteer, or just come and enjoy the displays of all the heritage groups in Toronto.

TFN

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

- Winter Birds in Durham Region - Sat. Feb. 12 from 9 am (all day) with Marcel Gahbauer. Meet at the Pickering GO station to form a car pool if necessary. Bring a lunch and dress warmly.

High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee Walking Tours 2000 starting at 1:15 pm (unless otherwise noted) from the south side of the Grenadier Teahouse & Cafe (across the street at the benches). Walks may go on uncleared trails. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Call 416-392-1748 or 416-392-6916.

- o Feb. 13 - a walk in High Park
- o Feb. 27 - Identifying trees in winter
- late notice o Jan. 30 - How plants and animals adapt in winter

Toronto Entomologists Association meeting - Feb. 26 at 1 pm at the Royal Ontario Museum. Call 261-6272 to check meeting-room number. At this meeting, members bring slides or specimens of interesting insects found in 1999.

Seedy Saturday - Feb. 26 from 10 am to 4 pm at Black Creek Pioneer Village, sponsored by Seeds of Diversity and Black Creek Pioneer Village.

ROYAL CANADIAN INSTITUTE - free science lectures, Sundays at 3 pm in the Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Building, 1 King's College Circle

- Jan. 23 - Science and Health in the New Millennium
- Jan. 30 - Artificial Animals (and Humans): from Physics to Intelligence
- Feb. 6 - Enhancing Drug Discovery Using Combinatorial Synthesis
- Feb. 13 - The Kuiper Belt and the Origin of the Solar System
- Feb. 20 - Aging and Vision: the amazing, changing brain
- Feb. 27 - The Development and Testing of a Full-Scale Piloted Ornithopter (Flapping-Wing Aircraft)

For more information call 928-2096.

Holiday Ideas

- Natural History Travel with George Bryant. Call Travel Helpers at 416-443-0583 or 1-877-245-2424.
- Canadian Nature Federation Annual General Meeting and Conference in Corner Brook, Nfld. from July 12 to July 15. Call toll free at 1-800-563-6353.
- Federation of Ontario Naturalists Annual General Meeting and Conference in Midland, Ontario from May 26 to May 28. Call Liz Schandlen at 705-526-8320 for more information.

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OTHER PUBLICATIONS

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB: ITS HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION, 1965\$ 2.00	TORONTO REGION BIRD CHART, 1983.....\$ 4.00
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