

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 491

April 2000



ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK - native Toronto songbird
based on a photo by the late Dr. Donald Gunn

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TFN MEETINGS

- Sunday, April 2, 2000
at 2:30 pm
in the Northrop Frye Hall
Victoria University
73 Queen's Park Cres. East
- Guests are
welcome!
- GEOLOGY OF THE OAK RIDGES MORaine
an illustrated talk by John Westgate,
Professor of Geology, University of Toronto
at Scarborough.
 - The talk will be about the origin, age and character of
the moraine which is the source of Toronto's rivers.
For more information about this important
landform, see TFN 489, page 17 & TFN 490, pages 10 & 11.
 - + 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, May 7, 2000

NEXT NEWSLETTER: May (to be mailed in mid April)

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.

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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.

- Saturday DOWNTOWN - nature arts Toronto
 April 1 Leader: Mary Taylor
 10:30 am Meet at the exit turnstiles of the St. Andrew subway station (Spadina line). Bring camera and or sketching materials including a stool or just come an enjoy.
 We will be looking at some of the small parks in the heart of the downtown area. At lunch we compare our works so bring a sandwich or be prepared to visit a food court.
- Sunday TFN MEETING (See page 2 for details.)
 April 2 BRING A FRIEND.
 2:30 pm
- Thursday CEDARVALE RAVINE - nature walk Don tributary, York/Tor.
 April 6 Leader: Peter Hare
 2 pm Meet at the Eglinton West subway station (Spadina line).
 We will be walking south following the route of the mostly buried Castle Frank Creek, looking for signs of spring.
- Sunday LESLIE STREET SPIT - nature walk lakeshore, Toronto
 April 9 Leader: Joanne Doucette
 10 am Meet at the foot of Leslie St. (a 10-minute walk south of Queen St. East). Bring lunch.
 This is a continuation of a waterfront trail series of walks. Gulls will be nesting already on the spit, a wilderness created by dumping subsoils and "clean" fill into Lake Ontario for the past 40 years.
- Wednesday BESTVIEW PARK - nature walk East Don, North York
 April 12 Leader: Carol Sellers
 10 am Meet at the southeast corner of Steeles Ave. East and Laureleaf Rd. Bring lunch and binoculars.
 Perhaps we will find early spring flowers in this mature maple/beech woodlot. South of the woodlot the valley is mostly old field habitat beside the river. This should be a good time and place to observe birds.
- Saturday CP VIADUCTS - heritage walk East York, North York
 April 15 Leader: Ian Wheal
 2 pm Meet at the southeast corner of Bayview Ave. and Moore Ave.
 This is a continuation of a walk taken last fall to observe how the railways managed to cross Toronto's deep valleys of the Don River and its tributaries.

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APRIL OUTINGS (cont'd)

- Sunday
April 16
1 pm
LAVENDER CREEK - heritage walk
Leader: Dick Watts
Black Creek tributary, York
Meet at the Fairbank Community Centre, 2213 Dufferin St.
(south of Eglinton Ave. West).
"From Glaciers to Now" will be the topic as we walk over glacial till, down a broad valley into ancient Lake Iroquois, through former brickfields and recent landfills, along the Davenport gravel bar and into the plains of the ancient Humber River. Tour ends on Humber Blvd. at Black Creek.
- +
- Sunday
April 16
2 pm
LOWER YELLOW CREEK - urban ecology
Leader: Helen Mills & Ed Freeman
Don tributary, Toronto
Meet at the Davisville subway station.
This walk will be partly along streets, through a cemetery and into a ravine, ending at the Don Valley Brick Works, with a hill to climb at the end.
- Wednesday
April 19
10:30 am
\$ ferry tickets
TORONTO ISLANDS - nature walk
Leader: John Eastwood
Toronto
Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. Bring lunch.
The Islands with their many habitats and ferry ride to get there are always a favourite place to visit. Bring binoculars as there may be birds to see.
- Saturday
April 22
10:30 am
MORNINGSIDE PARK - nature walk
Leaders: Carol and Murray Seymour
Highland Cr., Scarborough
Meet at the park entrance on the west side of Morningside Ave., north of Lawrence Ave. East. Bring lunch.
Some climbing as we explore the edges of the valley and a mixed forest looking for early spring flowers and birds.
- Wednesday
April 26
10:30 am
RAINBOW CREEK - nature walk
Leader: Robin Powell
Humber, Vaughan
Meet at the northwest corner of Steeles Ave. West and Islington Ave. Bring lunch.
We will be walking north through hilly country as we explore this small tributary of the Humber. Though much of this area is considered significant and worthy of protection both highways and sewers have been constructed recently.
- Saturday
April 29
10:30 am
LAMBTON WOODS & JAMES GARDENS - nature walk
Leader: Leslie Burns
Humber, Etobicoke
Meet at the park entrance on Edenbridge Dr. which is east of Royal York Rd. and north of Dundas St. West. Bring lunch.
Lambton Woods is an excellent place to see native wildflowers and birds; James Gardens is an outstanding garden park. Enjoy the contrast.
- Sunday
April 30
2 pm
Trethewey Model Farm - heritage walk
Leader: Ian Wheal & Ed Freeman
York
Meet at the northeast corner of Weston Rd. and Ray Ave. (north of Eglinton Ave. West).
Learn about a former farm and airfield. Walk is mostly on streets.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Beauty - in the eye of the beholder? - perhaps. The perception of beauty is subjective but can be shared. In this report I would like to share with you some perceptions of beauty in nature which I have recently enjoyed.

Visiting my son and family in Walters Falls at the beginning of March, I saw the waterfall, released from winter's grip, splashing between icy rocks and bushes to the brook below, rippling over its gravelly bed through the valley. We walked in woods silent and white with freshly fallen snow, the laden boughs of cedars bending over the path sending down showers of crystals as we passed. My granddaughter (just turned seven) delighted in climbing trees in an open area where we could see the intense blue sky and brilliant March sunshine. The wind had stilled and the only sounds were a lone chickadee singing and crows cawing in the distance. On the way home she ran ahead - small footprints in the snow - here she leaped a small stream, there she climbed a hill on the other side. This is Bruce Trail country; from a hilltop we could see far across whitened fields, rolling hills and woodlots to the distant horizon. That night I was once again astonished by the brilliance of myriads of stars in the mid-night sky. On this visit I saw no unusual birds, but there were several overwintering male red-winged blackbirds amongst the starlings and mourning doves. As I returned south two days later, the warm sun had melted much of the snow, creating a swirling pattern of brown and white in the farmers' fields. Along the way I saw a red-tailed hawk, a Cooper's hawk, and a harrier - fierce beauty.

Did you see the crossbills at Cranberry Marsh? Both species: the red and the rosy-pink white-winged with their striking black and white wing pattern were feeding on alder "cones", busily searching out the seeds with their especially-adapted curved, cross-tipped bills. North of Highway 7 in Durham region we saw flocks of redpolls and cedar (with some Bohemian) waxwings. As it was snowing we couldn't detect much colour, but we could see their graceful outlines and the way they moved. Flight patterns are another thing of beauty, distinctive, purposeful: a pair or a flock of snow geese, oldsquaw ducks or whimbrels rising, wheeling, landing, or rising again, an eagle soaring, an osprey diving, the slow wingbeat of a heron returning at dusk. Gulls, terns, hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, damsel flies - beauty in motion.

At our March meeting we were treated to some adventures with Sid Daniels and friends on their expeditions in search of amphibians and reptiles. His slides and commentary illustrated the amazing variety of creatures in these orders and the remarkable adaptation of a snake's mouth, a salamander's skin, a turtle's shell, to its habitat and its food. We learned many things, including this: one should open a herpetologist's briefcase with extreme caution. Our speaker's yielded our special guests: a corn snake from South Carolina and her tiny three-month-old offspring and Charlie the box turtle. Beautiful? - yes, the colours and patterns of these animals in gold, russet-orange, brown, black; the underside of the snake arranged in blocks of black and white like piano keys. The audience showed great enthusiasm for our guests, surrounding Sid Daniels at the end of his talk and wanting to touch the turtle and snakes, which were quite active when handled.

I'd also like to express appreciation for beauty created by human hands. The excellent slides and photographs we've been privileged to see, beautiful illustrations in books (and in this newsletter) and special exhibitions that are

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (cont'd)

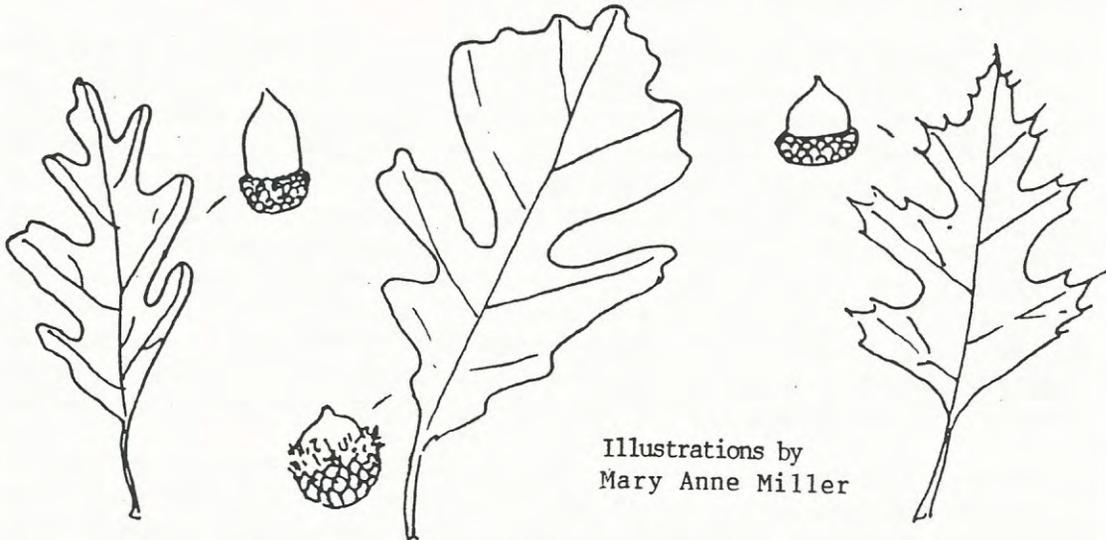
available in Toronto. The Royal Ontario Museum's "Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids" displays the skilled work of sculptors, painters, potters, jewelers from some 5000 years ago, their creations still full of life. If you go, note the depiction of many plants, mammals, birds, and fish in bas-relief and in hieroglyphics, some of which are painted or filled with faience. In December I visited the Maya Universe at the Gardiner Museum, which showcased the "remarkable artistic achievements of the Classic Maya Period (AD 250 - 850)" in carved stone, ceramics, shell, and jade. The Art Gallery of Ontario presents a succession of wonderful exhibitions. In January I enjoyed "Krieghoff: Images of Canada", Cornelius Krieghoff's lively depiction of the Quebec landscape and habitant and native culture of the 19th century. All the people, children and adults, as well as the animals, are shown participating in the action of the picture.

It's SPRING, the time of reawakening. Let us also spring into action and pursue a dynamic relationship with our environment.

Phoebe Cleverley

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THREE TORONTO NATIVE OAKS - Leaves and acorns - LEFT the familiar WHITE OAK. CENTRE the less common BUR OAK, the leaf, typically, with its broad top half and the acorn earning its English name (as well as its alternative name of "mossycup oak"). RIGHT the most familiar RED OAK, with its sharp leaf-lobes. (At High Park we can learn to recognize the similar BLACK OAK with its broader, darker leaves and top-shaped acorns - our only other native.)



Illustrations by
Mary Anne Miller

FOR READING

The following are a few of the books I have read and enjoyed during the last year or two. They are quite varied but share a love and respect for the natural world. All are available through the Toronto library system.

Kingbird Highway by Kenn Kaufman, published by Houghton Mufflin, Boston, 1997.

In 1973, at the age of 19, Kenn Kaufman embarked on a "Big Year", a race for the record of most bird species seen in North America in one year. This highly entertaining book relates his adventures travelling on a shoe-string budget and his enjoyment of the wonders he saw. Kaufmann's appreciation of the birds and desire to learn more about them, however, always seem to override the game of adding ticks to his list and nowadays he no longer even keeps a list.

The Minds of Birds by Alexander F. Skutch, published by Texas A & M University Press, College Station, 1996.

Dr. Skutch deals with a wide variety of topics including memory, migration, social life and tool using. He does so in a highly readable style, referring to many scientific studies as well as fascinating and often amusing anecdotes. The book tantalizes the reader with glimpses into the amazing intelligence of birds while showing that scientists have as yet barely scratched the surface in a field which offers vast scope for future research.

Highgrove: Portrait of an Estate by HRH the Prince of Wales and Charles Clover, published by Chapman, London, 1993 and by Simon & Schuster, New York under title Highgrove: An Experiment in Organic Gardening and Farming.

Besides being full of beautiful pictures, this book makes fascinating reading. It recounts the transformation of Prince Charles's Highgrove estate into an organic farm along with the reintroduction of native species including wildflowers and barn owls. New hedgerows, woodlots, ponds, birdhouses and the move away from chemical dependence have all encouraged a resurgence of wildlife. Although the book deals with England, it contains much food for thought relevant to our own area and the world at large. Long before reading this book, I had seen an excellent television documentary film about Highgrove which I hope to see re-run one day.

The Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinctions by David Quammen, published by Scribner, New York, 1996.

David Quammen does a marvellous job of combining travel writing with scientific information. He begins with the fascinating story of Alfred Wallace who has been unfairly overshadowed by his contemporary, Charles Darwin. Quammen then takes us along on his own trips to such far-flung places as Madagascar, Malaya, Galapagos, Tasmania, Mauritius, Guam and the Amazon basin. Along the way he interviews researchers and views their field-work, explaining in layman's terms the effects of species isolation, shrinking habitat and introduced species.

FOR READING (cont'd)

The many serious issues dealt with are liberally interspersed with humour and adventure.

Diary of a Wilderness Dweller by Chris Czajkowski, published by Orca, Victoria, 1996.

This book follows "Cabin at Singing River" about Chris Czajkowski's first wilderness home. Regular readers of Wildflower magazine will remember her many enjoyable articles about botanizing in British Columbia. "Diary of a Wilderness Dweller" tells of her experience during 1988 to 1990 when she single-handedly built two log cabins at a new location in the Coast Range of British Columbia and began her business, Nick Tessli Alpine Experience. Both her appreciation of the natural world and her story of what one determined woman can accomplish make interesting reading.

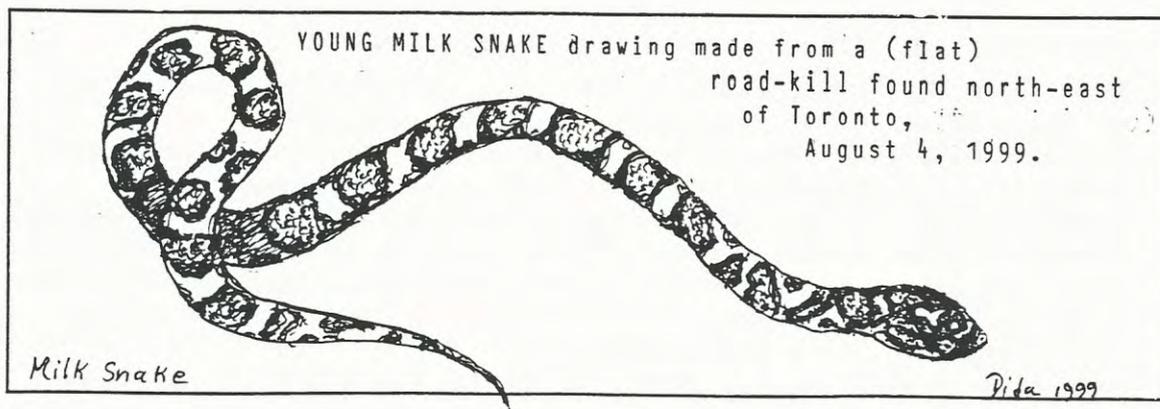
The Beak of the Finch by Jonathan Weiner, published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1994.

Jonathan Weiner describes the ongoing study by Rosemary and Peter Grant, begun in 1973, on the evolution of the Galapagos finches. These scientists have actually been able to observe evolution in action. At times one can become a bit bogged down in scientific detail, but the reader who forges on will be rewarded with fascinating insights as well as glimpses into the rigours of life for both researchers and their subjects in an extremely inhospitable environment. Of particular interest is the light shed on the ultimate futility of pesticides and excessive antibiotic use.

Chasing Monarchs by Robert Michael Pyle, published by Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1999.

The author takes an autumn journey from Washington, his home state, and southern British Columbia following monarch butterflies on their southward migration. Along the way he observes, besides monarchs and other butterfly species, spectacular topography, unique plants and animals, and diverse people together with their impact on the environment. Pyle effectively combines natural history with entertaining travel writing.

Marilynn Murphy



FOR READING (cont'd)

DAVE'S BLOOMIN' FLOWER GUIDE- Blooming dates of Central Ontario Wildflowers - by David J. Hawke, illustrated by Juliana Hawke, Buteo Productions, 3490 Line & North, RR #4 Coldwater, ON L0K 1E0, 1999. 66 pages, soft cover \$12.00 + \$2 shipping, cheques payable to David J. Hawke.

An imaginative approach to the subject of phenology (a contraction of "phenomenology" applied to plant life). Of the 66 pages, 44 are devoted to charts, graphs and indices. Full-page botanical pen drawings of nine favourites are scattered through this attractive booklet.

The map shows the zone most likely to apply, which does not include southwestern Ontario or the shores of Lake Ontario.

There are 10 pages of spacy text in artistic print, arranged in centred lines, explaining (sometimes in convoluted sentences) what Dave has in mind. It's good to know at the outset that Dave's bloomin' vocabulary may be different from that of your dictionary. We learn on page 19 that "tri-monthly" does not mean "every three months" or "lasting three months" but "one-third of a month".

The booklet could have used some editing - to avoid confusion in the choice and handling of the symbols, for example. A couple of dozen "typos" have crept in (or could it be Dave's bloomin' spelling is to blame? e.g. "centaury", not "centuary" and "shepherd's purse", not "Shepard's purse"). All errors in the "Bloomin' Charts" are repeated in the "Index of Common Names"; others appear in the "Index of Scientific Names". Most of the 486 species of Dave's 17 years of study, however, have been correctly named (according to pre-1990 nomenclature, i. e. without benefit of Morton & Venn, A CHECKLIST OF THE FLORA OF ONTARIO, apparently. The BLOOMIN' FLOWER GUIDE has no bibliography).

Dave's point seems to be that field botany can be fun and still make a real contribution to the data of one's region. Dave's contribution is unique. Notice, for instance, the two bar charts showing the difference between "beginning bloom" and "concurrent bloom". I learned that, in both cases, late June is the peak, but that the vertical bars of "concurrent bloom" form a symmetrical mountain while the ups-and-downs of those of "beginning bloom" form a craggy one. That was new to me.

Diana Banville

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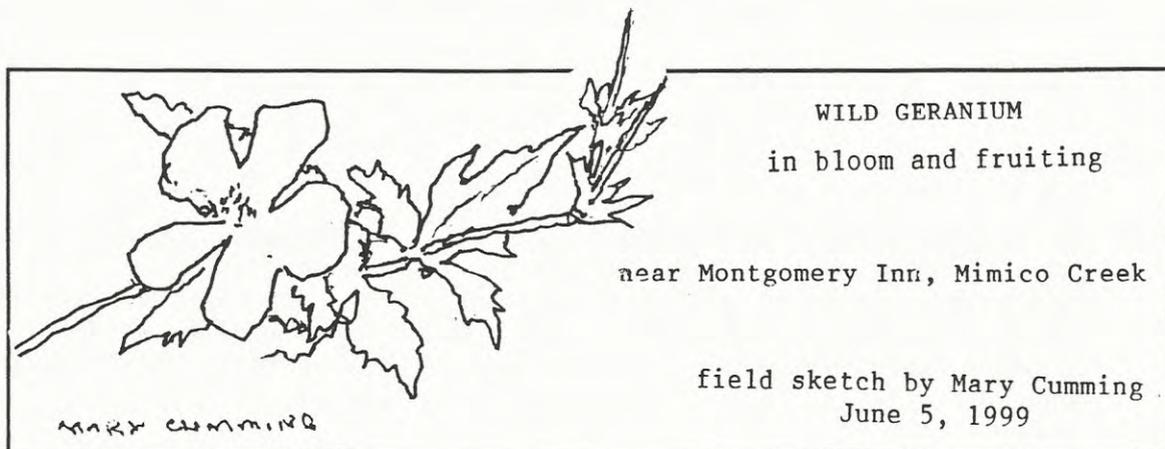
The Niagara River: An Important Bird Area, by Richard Knapton and D.V. Chip Weseloh, published by Environment Canada, 1999
This guide to viewing gulls and waterfowl in the Niagara area is a free publication. For availability contact Environment Canada, Ontario Region, Canadian Wildlife Service, 4905 Dufferin St., Downsview, Ont. M3H 5T4. Their web site is: www.cciw.ca/green-lane/wildlife

NATURALLY ONTARIO: "Exploring the Wealth of Ontario's Wild Places", by Betty Zywatkauskas, Random House of Canada, 1999, 278 pages, \$22.95.

The latest book from this award-winning travel writer ("Great Getaways: The Best Day Trips in Southern Ontario" and "Weekend Getaway Guide", Toronto Life), NATURALLY ONTARIO is indispensable for both beginners and more seasoned explorers as to "When", "Where", "How", and, as far as possible, "How Much". Most of us are well aware of Bird Migrations, The Colours, the Mushroom Season, etc., but our experience is frequently achieved by happenstance and not always at the best time with the best results. As much as it is possible with a variable like nature, this book directs us to the right time, the right places, the most direct routes at an estimated cost, as well as deadlines for booking ahead. For example: a trip to Wabikimi, one of Ontario's newest provincial parks, entails calling the park superintendent and deciding which of Via Rail's passenger trains you favour to make a special stop along the line, arrangements advisedly to be made at least 48 hours in advance through your local Via Rail Reservations Office. Each of the chapters on birds, beaches, flowers, major mammals, etc. ends with a summation titled "First-hand Experience" which sums up the "Where", "When" and "How". There is a heartwarming chapter on "Urban Wilderness" which extols the glories of the Rouge, the Don Valley, Toronto's waterfront, etc., illustrating, as always, how blessed Torontonians are. Each chapter has a margin insert recording some little-known nugget (to me at any rate). Carp may live to be 150. The average chipmunk collects more than 900+ acorns per day. Read up on the rest for yourselves! Jacket and chapter illustrations are beautifully effective, and this book, while not exactly pocket-size (9" x 6") is easily "manageable" and includes a listing of Ontario's long-distance hiking trails, bibliography plus recommended reading and an index. Don't set off without it!

Eva Davis

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PROJECTS



Naturalists Needed to Help Monitor Wetland Birds and Amphibians



Would it surprise you to know that for hundreds of people in the Great Lakes region, the arrival of spring means heading for the local marsh? Three hundred people have already done this as volunteers for the Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP), and the data they have collected provides important information on marsh birds and amphibians in the Great Lakes basin. This year, the MMP is looking for more volunteers to help with surveys throughout Ontario and the Great Lakes states.

▷ The MMP offers everyone — from amateur naturalists to professional biologists — a unique and rewarding opportunity to help learn about and conserve Great Lakes amphibians and marsh birds, and their threatened habitats. If you are interested in participating in the MMP, contact Kathy Jones at 888-448-2473 or aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org or visit the web site at www.bsc-eoc.org. The MMP provides training materials that will guide you and help you polish your identification skills. However, you should be able to identify, by sight and song, most of the common marsh bird species. There is no fee to participate.

The MMP is managed by Bird Studies Canada in partnership with Environment Canada and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

from Bird Studies Canada, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont. NOE 1M0

MANITOULIN'S CUP AND SAUCER CONSERVED!

▷ The Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC) has purchased the 347-acre Cup and Saucer Trail property, Manitoulin Island's first large nature reserve on the Niagara Escarpment. The EBC still has to raise \$90,000 to pay off the mortgage. The EBC is at 503 Davenport Road, Toronto, M4V 1B8. Donations to pay off the Cup and Saucer mortgage are tax-receiptable.

from an article by Bob Barnett in ON THE EDGE, newsletter of CONE, Winter 2000

PEREGRINE FALCON SIGHTINGS WANTED

▷ If anyone spots a peregrine falcon they should contact the Canadian Peregrine Foundation at 416-481-1233.

from the GLOBE & MAIL, March 6, 2000

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JOURNEY NORTH

Journey North is an Internet-based science program that allows students to participate in a global study of wildlife migration and seasonal change. Now, over 4500 schools representing more than 250,000 students are expected to participate in the Spring 2000 Journey North Program.

The journeys of a dozen migratory species are tracked. Students share their own field observations with classrooms across the Hemisphere. In addition, students are linked with scientists who provide their expertise directly to the classroom. Several migrations are tracked by satellite telemetry, providing live coverage of the individual animals as they migrate. As the spring season sweeps across the Hemisphere, students note changes in daylight, temperature and all living things as the food chain comes back to life.

TFN members are invited to participate by spreading the word of this program to local teachers and schools. The web site address is: <http://www.learner.org/jnorth>. You can also support the program by reporting your "first sightings" of species being studied. You may report these sightings directly to the program via the web site (for quality control reasons, you must register at the web site) or report your sightings to this writer. Species being followed this spring include: bald eagle, earthworm, frog (first heard), hummingbird (feeder up, first sighted), ice out, leaf-out (any species), loon, maple syrup (first sap run), monarch butterfly, oriole, red-winged blackbird, robin (first seen, first heard), swallow, tulips (emerged, bloomed).

Sightings must include name of observer, date, place, details of observation and e-mail address (if applicable).

Journey North is a free on-line educational service, supported by the Annenberg/CPB Math and Science Project. It is supported as a model for math/science educational reform.

Don Davis

donald.davis@utoronto.ca (416) 638-7738

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY TIP

From an environmental point of view photographing common subjects close to home makes sense, because little or no travel is involved, and a common species is probably less susceptible to disturbance. You can also have repeated, reliable contact with such a subject, enabling you to photograph it when conditions are just right. Above all, you will find it easier to devote the time it takes to record the subject in depth. The longer you spend with a subject, the more ideas you will have for recording it, the extent of which will be limited only by your imagination.

from "Photo tips" by Laurie Campbell in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 17, No. 10, Oct. 1999

KEEPING IN TOUCH

February 25, 2000

I thought that your readers might be interested to learn that a tagged female monarch butterfly, #946 KF, that I released on September 18, 1999 at Tommy Thompson Park, was recovered on January 14, 2000 by Guadalupe De Jesus Hernandez at the El Rosario overwintering site in the state of Michoacan, Mexico -- about 2874 kilometres from where it was originally released.

In fact, this has been a remarkable year for monarch butterfly recoveries in Mexico. Of 1,700 monarch butterflies I tagged last September, a total of 7 have been recovered to date at El Rosario (3 more were originally tagged at Presqu'ile Provincial Park and 3 more tagged at Darlington Provincial Park). More recoveries are anticipated.

This remarkable turnabout in the reporting of tagged monarchs in Mexico can be attributed to the fact that local guides have been paid a reward of \$5.00 US or 50 pesos for every tag they turn in -- or about half a day's pay for every tag turned in!

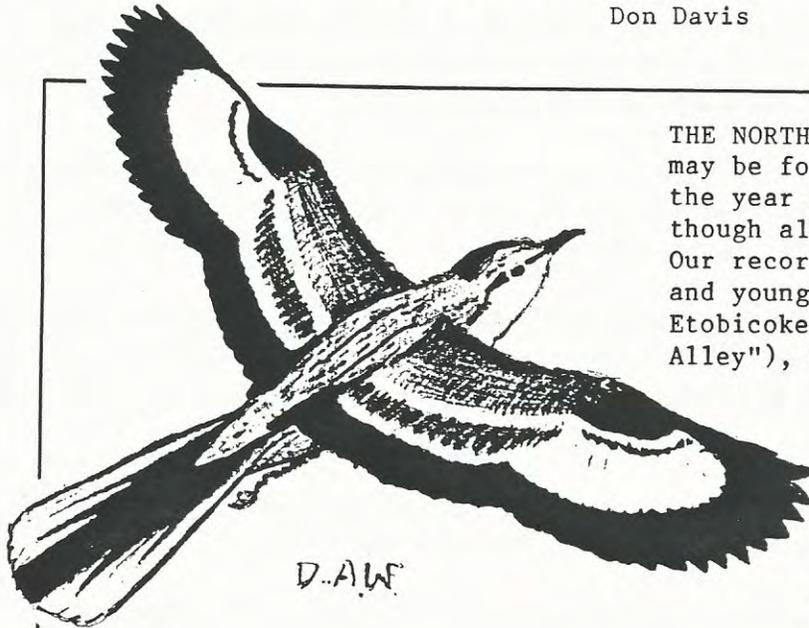
Dr. Orley Taylor of The Monarch Watch (University of Kansas) reports that almost 500 tags have been recovered to date, and he anticipates that as many as 700 to 800 may eventually be reported.

▷ A spread sheet describing all monarchs recovered to Feb.15/00 can be found at: <http://www.monarchwatch.org/tagmig/99recovl.htm>.

An interesting aside: A number of old monarch tags, including some from Dr. Fred Urquhart's tagging program, are being turned in!

Don Davis

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THE NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD may be found every month of the year in Toronto - though always a scarce bird. Our records show active nests and young since 1995, at Etobicoke Creek ("Mockingbird Alley"), Highland Creek

(Sheppard & Markham Rd.) and Sam Smith Park.

(See Cadman et al. ATLAS OF THE BREEDING BIRDS OF ONTARIO on its range expansion.)

Drawing by D. Andrew White who observed it along Ellesmere powerlines in the summers of 1996 and 1998.

TFN WALK - DROP-OUT REPORT

On Saturday, January 29, we joined a nature walk on the Leslie Street Spit. It started with a bang when someone spotted a Great Horned Owl perched in a nearby tree. After everyone had looked their fill, the group started off up the road. We followed for a bit and then veered off to the lake side to get a closer look at the Oldsquaws and Mergansers. Coming back to the road, we found the group had continued on. We hurried to catch up until we saw a pair of tracks heading right towards the marina side. We followed them for a bit to see if we could determine whether they were fox or coyote. Eventually we did pin them down: in fact one set was fox and the other coyote.

By this time the group was a long way ahead, and we noticed at our feet a well used animal track paralleling the bank. We've found in the past that following a track like this often led to interesting discoveries, so off we went.

With formation of ice on the marina side, the water level has lowered and we were able to see parts of the bank and beach not usually visible.

The first thing to catch our eyes was a recent beaver gnawing with a urine splotch below it. Was it beaver or coyote marking? There's a picture in my camera. Perhaps those animals we saw earlier in the year were beaver rather than the muskrats we assumed them to be. No other gnawings were immediately evident: a question for further investigation in the spring.

Further along, on an exposed section of beach we found some feathers. A couple were bright yellow and black, but a couple of others still attached to the same piece of skin were barred brown and white. Kestrel? Certainly not a Goldfinch. Who hunts Kestrels?

Rounding a bend we saw in the trees up ahead our friend the Great Horned Owl. We assumed it to be the same one, but was impossible to tell. After we looked at the bird for a few minutes, and the bird looked at us, it took off, flying farther out the spit.

Another exposed section of beach displayed strands of water weed with thousands of clam-like shells attached. We assumed from the size and appearance that they were zebra mussels. Do they die off in the fall? Did some local condition kill them? Were they simply washed up on the beach while attached to the weeds?

Walking around the bay, we rounded a point of land and behold, there was the Great Horned one up in another tree. It didn't even wait this time, but flew off immediately.

Somewhere along here we found a comfortable lunch log and sat sipping our hot soup while admiring the range of colours over the city caused by the yellow haze of pollution.

More walking and then suddenly, a large shadow passed over us with an almost inaudible whoosh. The Great One had been sitting in a tree right beside us, we had but to look up.

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DROP-OUT REPORT (cont'd)

Rounding yet another of the many points and bends, we came to an area totally unfamiliar to us. We later realized it lay across the little bay from the bridge on the main walk which runs up the spine of the spit.

The first tracks we noticed here appeared to be those of a woodland jumping mouse: not rare exactly, but not that common either. Next, we were amazed to see the extent of beaver stumps here. We know about the hutch over near the bridge, but this showed extensive feeding over a number of years.

Field mouse tracks amongst the coyotes. There are few if any squirrels on the spit.

Then cottontail, and it was moving! There was a good eight feet between track groupings; maybe the speed had something to do with the number of coyote and fox tracks in the area. At one time we thought that the rabbits had been eliminated by the foxes, and the foxes by the coyotes. All three seem to be alive, well and in motion.

By this time we were at the Aquatic Club and decided to head up the access road back to the main paved path and hence back to the beginning.

Thanks to the Parks Dept. for Johnny-on-the-Spot at the entrance gates.

The point to all this? The TFN walk was well led and included a number of experienced and knowledgeable people. We undoubtedly missed seeing a number of species of birds and probably other interesting things as well. Nevertheless, we enjoyed our day tremendously.

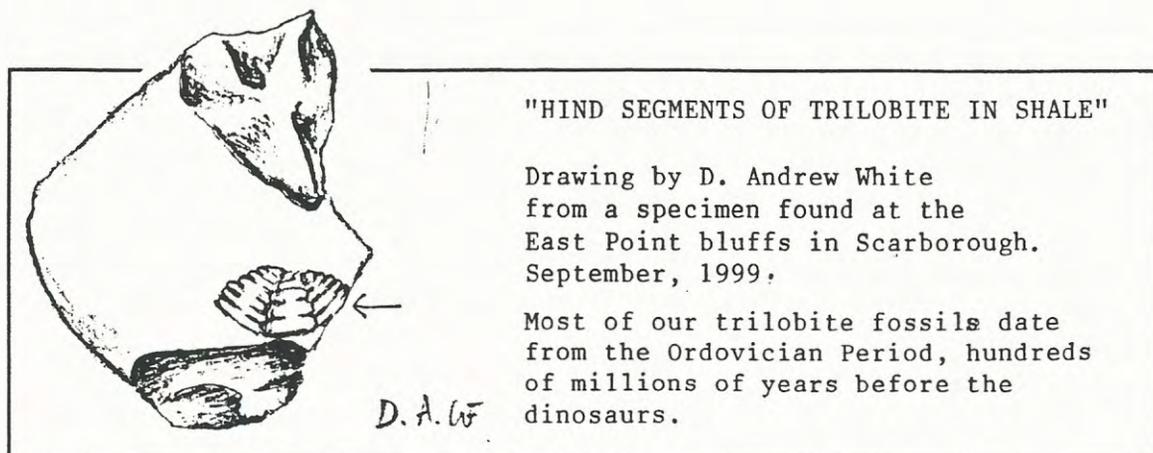
A TFN walk can be a success even when one doesn't stay with it. Thanks once again to all concerned.

Carol and Murray Seymour

* Strange!

They are supposed to hibernate.

□



THE AUDIENCE *

The people in this audience gave up hurrying a long time ago. Many of them never learned to hurry. You miss much when you hurry. These people enjoy the world around them far too much to race through it. Theirs is a quiet pleasure long discarded by the average city dweller. They have not forgotten how to stand and stare, to **take** in - to see the weed, triumphantly flourishing amid concrete at the base of the light standard. They **know** what it is. They know if it is native or imported. If they don't know, they are busily remembering its structure so that they can look it up in a book. And if they have to miss the bus through their study so be it. They usually have the time.

They are used to walking. It's the natural way of seeing things at just the right speed. They can easily stop whenever they want and they don't have to think about parking. Several of them are in excellent physical condition resulting from decades of walking. Others battle with the infirmities visited upon us by age. They still walk, perhaps not as far as they used to or want to, but they have not given up walking. **And** they use public transport without decrying its inconvenience. Why they have been known to get off a bus, if they spy something through the window that catches their naturalist's eye, just to get a better look at it.

You may say they have the time to do this since they are retired. But that is not the complete reason. Some of them did this when they were going about their working lives. And maybe they were late for something or other. But that did not matter because they had seen something wonderful, something amazing, something that nobody else on the bus had noticed.

As you can see, most are comfortably dressed because they value ease and comfort. Everyone who walks values ease and comfort. If your glance is just cursory you may conclude that quite a few do not care much about fashion. You would be very wrong. There is more colour sense scattered in the clothes of this audience than can be found in many arts classes. These people know colour through years of careful observation of nature - of seeing how greens tone into browns, how blues vary, how one scarlet lily pad jostles against the green before other people even think of Fall. They know how contrast works - know how burnt umber and orange look striking when thrown against certain backgrounds. Know this because they have seen it in trees stripping themselves for winter.

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THE AUDIENCE (cont'd)

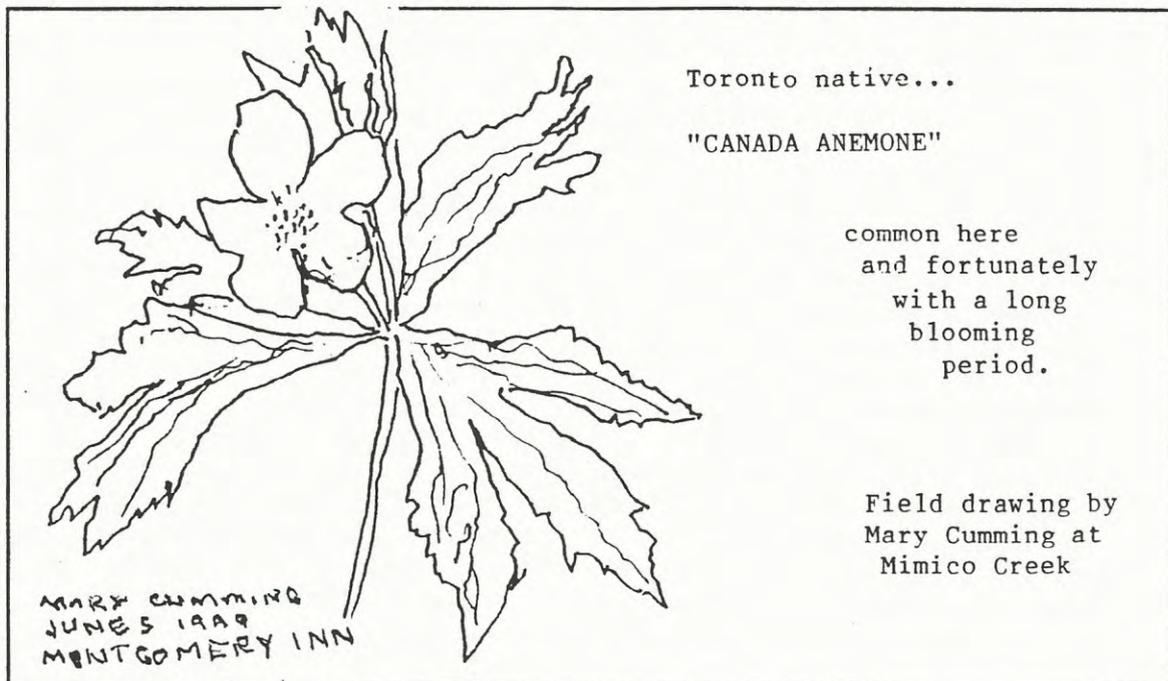
It is difficult to say whether these people are a rearguard from the 19th century, or whether they are in the vanguard of the 21st century. Actually they are both. They know that once certain things in the environment have vanished, they have gone forever. There is no recalling vanished things from gene banks, no Jurassic Park-style resurrection. They believe, as many scientists suspect, that humanity might be sowing the seeds of an environmental whirlwind that will strip the planet bare.

What they feel, they fight for. This is not an audience that takes no for an answer. They not only see things in their surroundings, they read newspapers. They complain to local councils; they complain to provincial bodies; and they complain to Prime Ministers. Indeed they are accomplished and elegant naggers. They have the tenacity of bull dogs and are forever vigilant. Authorities who regard them as amateurs are making a big mistake. To use another canine comparison, they, like Jack Russell terriers, will tackle anything regardless of size.

They have gentle, not hungry, eyes. They regard living things with great respect. I am reminded of one of Hollywood's diminutive characters with whom naturalists have much in common. Do you remember ET? Do you recall his gentle wonder when he looked upon plants? ET was fantasy, but his attitude was not. You can see it in many naturalists.

Louise Herzberg

☐



TORONTO BUTTERCUPS

A recent article on buttercups of Ottawa District made me curious about the relative distribution of Toronto's flora in this genus (*Ranunculus*). We list ten species. Ottawa District, geographically more extensive, lists fifteen.

Kidney-leaved buttercup is common in both areas.

Tall buttercup, the common established species from Europe, likewise.

Beaked white water crowfoot is in both areas, rather rare here, but less so farther afield. Forms of it are found all over North America and Eurasia.

Bulbous water crowfoot from Europe has not been reported here and apparently not in Ottawa District for some time, though it's not been listed as rare in several Central Ontario locations where it does occur.

Seaside crowfoot has not been listed in Toronto nor elsewhere in Central Ontario. It's quite rare in Ottawa District, though it has an extensive world distribution.

Early or tufted buttercup, pale yellow, is rare in Toronto, only found in High Park and Upper Gerrard Ravine so far. Marginal in Ottawa District (Arnprior).

Lesser celandine appears to be a garden escape in both areas (not to be confused with the established greater celandine in the poppy family - both Eurasian).

Yellow water crowfoot has not been reported here, considered rare in Central Ontario, but has been found in Ottawa District. It has floating and stranded forms.

Creeping spearwort is common along the Ottawa and the Rideau, not listed in Toronto nor anywhere nearer than Simcoe County, the only location listed in all of Central Ontario. There are forms in Eurasia.

Swamp buttercup is "rather rare" in Ottawa District where it's called hairy or rough buttercup or northern crowfoot. We've found it in four watersheds here. Considered familiar enough in the past, I've few recent personal records but we did spot it by Toronto Zoo core woods July 3, 1999.

Macoun's buttercup is a northern species, quite rare in Ottawa District and not listed for Toronto or anywhere else in Central Ontario.

Bristly crowfoot occurs in many habitats in Ottawa District, rare here, found in two watersheds. It also occurs in the Old World.

Hooked buttercup is common in Gatineau Park but less so in other Ottawa District locations. We have six locations for it in Toronto.

Creeping buttercup from Europe is established in Toronto and described as "rather sparse" as a weed in Ottawa District.

Cursed or celery-leaved crowfoot, pale yellow, also of the Old World, is found in ten areas of Ottawa District, and at nine locations in Toronto.

Each species is well-described in the article and easy to compare, with the help of a key and xeroxed herbarium specimens. With the one white exception, all species mentioned are normally yellow-flowered - appropriately for buttercups.

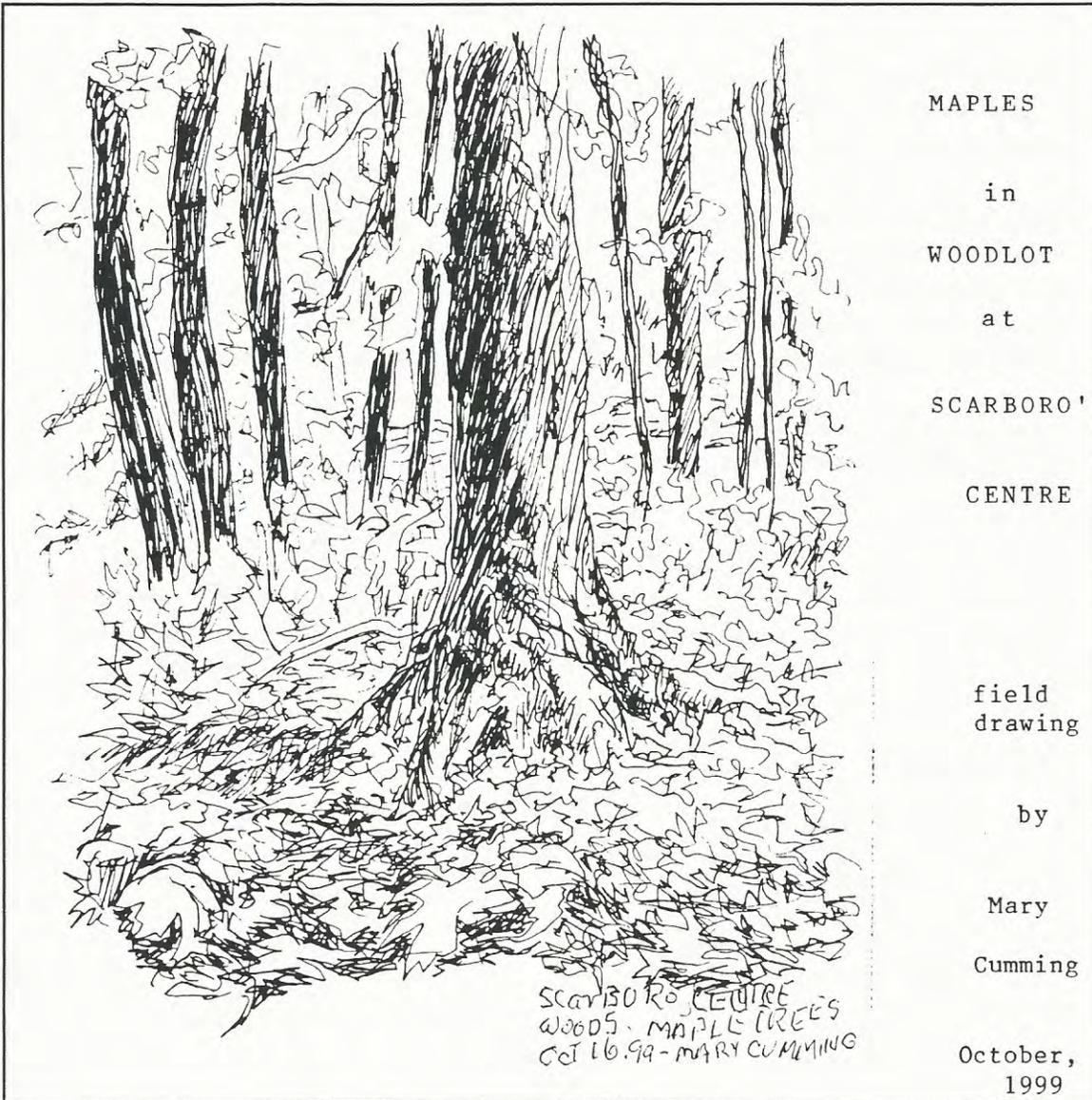
Diana Banville.



TORONTO BUTTERCUPS - continued

Ref. "Buttercups of the Ottawa District" by John Gillett in TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club, Vol. 3 No.2, April-June 1999 (pages 74-93)

DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF THE VASCULAR PLANTS OF CENTRAL REGION, ONTARIO, MNR, by J. L. Riley 1989.



MAPLES
in
WOODLOT
at
SCARBORO'
CENTRE

field
drawing

by

Mary
Cumming

October,
1999

SCARBORO' CENTRE
WOODS - MAPLE TREES
Oct 16, 99 - MARY CUMMING

THE TREES OF MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY

There are several Pagoda trees (*Sophora japonica*) in Mount Pleasant. A member of the pea family (Leguminosae), this tree is also called the Japanese Sophora, or Scholar's tree.

There are two large trees just off Yonge Street, one in section "T", the other in "H". This winter these trees are heavy with fruit. This is probably because of the long hot summer we experienced in Toronto. In England these trees rarely produce fruit and do not flower until they are at least thirty years old.

The Pagoda tree is native to Korea and China. The North American *Sophora* is the Texas Sophora (*S. affinia*) which grows mainly in Texas and some neighbouring states. It won't grow in Canada.

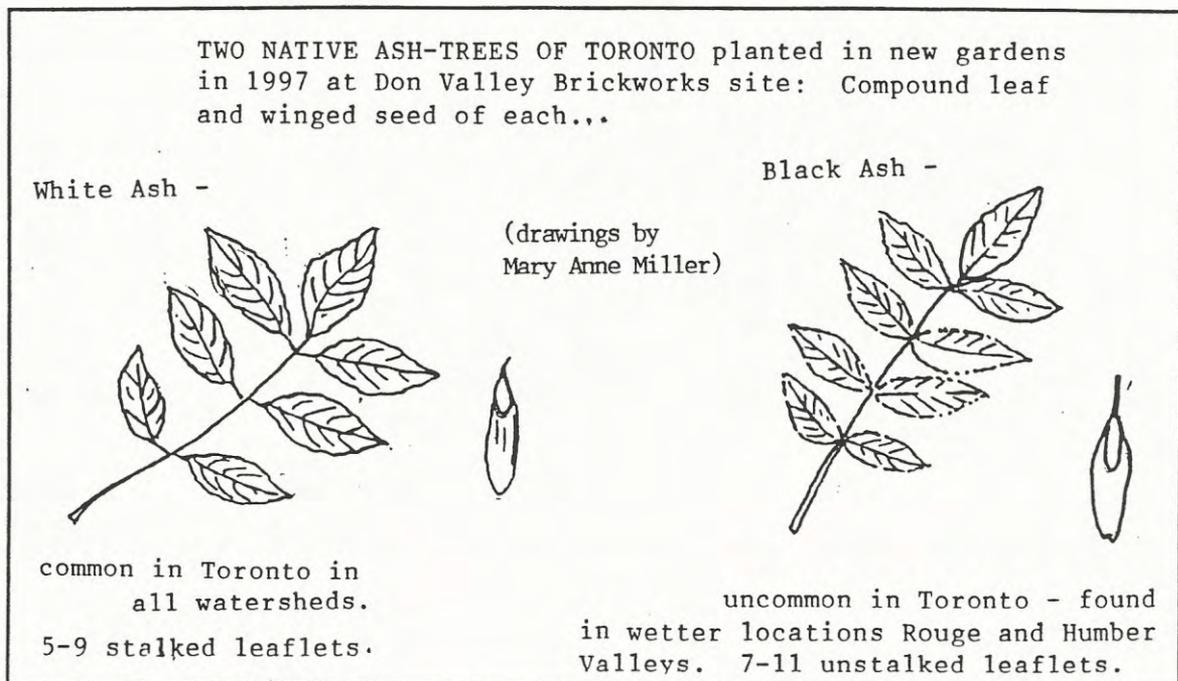
The Pagoda tree looks much like a Black Locust except it doesn't have thorns and the bark is not as rugged. The white pea flowers open in late summer. The fruit stays on the tree all winter and gives the tree a unique look. The fruit hangs in panicles and is a pod which is divided up in sections. If you open the pod it is filled with a sticky substance which surrounds the seed. It has a green pea odour which is very strong.

I had never heard of this tree before I began wandering around Mount Pleasant and reading labels on trees. There is always something to learn when it comes to trees.

* 1999

Roger Powley

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IN THE NEWS

AN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA AT THE DINNER TABLE

With more and more people eating more and more fish, some fish populations are crashing. Now environmental groups are offering consumers advice about which commercial fisheries are in good shape, and which are struggling.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



Severe to modest

FISH	STATUS	CONCERNS
 SHARK	Because sharks are slow-growing fish that produce relatively few offspring, intensive fishing has been devastating. Most species on the East Coast are depleted.	Shark-fishing methods also endanger turtles and marine mammals.
 SWORDFISH, MARLIN	Atlantic species are depleted. Conditions in the Pacific are unknown.	Efforts to limit fishing are ineffective in the Atlantic, virtually nonexistent in the Pacific.
 SHRIMP	About half the shrimp sold today is farmed, but shrimp farms can pollute and destroy habitat. Shrimp are plentiful in some regions, depleted elsewhere.	The number of unwanted fish caught while harvesting shrimp is so high that, on average, every kilogram of shrimp sold means seven kilograms of non-shrimp.
 ORANGE ROUGHY	Native waters of Australia and New Zealand are depleted; since fish take many years to grow they will not rebound quickly.	Nets used to catch these fish do significant damage to the ocean bottom.
 GROUPEE	Fishing in spawning areas has seriously depleted many populations.	Management in the southeastern United States is improving, but the catch is unregulated elsewhere.
 ATLANTIC COD, HADDOCK, POLLOCK	Decades of overfishing caused populations to crash, severely disrupting the fishing economies of Maritime Canada and New England.	Nets dragged along the bottom damage the ocean floor, decreasing chances of recovery. But stocks are slowly rising in areas closed to fishing.
 SCALLOPS	Sea scallops are seriously overfished. Bay scallops are vulnerable to algae blooms and pollution.	Dredging for scallops disrupts habitat and takes in many other species. (Some scallops are farmed indoors.)
 SALMON	Healthy in Alaska; wild salmon elsewhere are in serious difficulty.	About half of salmon on the market is farmed, but farming pollutes, displaces wild fish and encourages the shooting of wild seals, which prey on farmed fish.
 TUNA	Most bluefin tuna are sold to Japan for sushi; bluefins are severely overfished, other species are declining.	Prospects in the Atlantic are poor; management in the Pacific is inadequate.
 SNAPPERS	Red snapper is depleted. Status of yellowtail snapper is unknown.	Management is generally poor. Shrimpers kill billions of juveniles each year.
 LOBSTER	Because they grow slowly, lobsters are vulnerable to overfishing, which is widespread.	Because most lobsters are caught in species-specific traps, lobster fishing does little damage to the environment.

Sources: *The Audubon Guide to Seafood*, *The Monterey Bay Aquarium*

DEAN TWEED / *The Globe and Mail* / *New York Times*

from "Taking the seafood off the menu" by William Broad in the *GLOBE & MAIL*, Jan. 6, 2000



GREAT LAKES THREAT?

Accidentally introduced to Florida in 1960, the hydrilla is poised to invade Canadian waterways. Hardy and adaptable, it propagates quickly in lakes, rivers and ponds, choking out native plants and disrupting drainage, boating and swimming.

Female flower floats at the end of a long stalk.

The hydrilla can reproduce in several ways. It can produce both male and female flowers. Shoots can sprout from tubers growing from the roots. Even free-floating plant fragments can take root and reproduce.

Plants can grow in water up to 20m deep, forming dense canopies at the surface that starve other plants of sunlight.

■ Water systems where the hydrilla has become established.

Roots form tubers from which a new plant can sprout.

Sources: United States Geological Survey, University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants

DEAN TWEED / The Globe and Mail

SUPER WEED OF WATER THREATENS GREAT LAKES

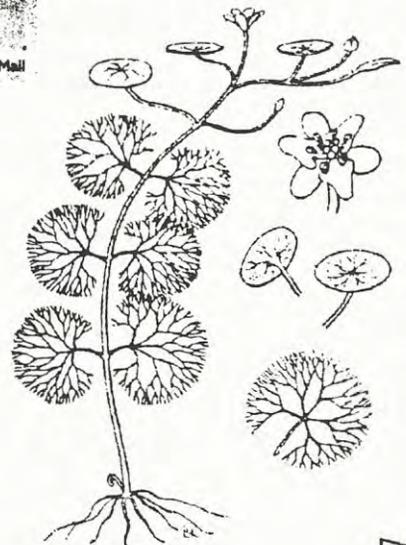
The latest foreign species poised to threaten the Great Lakes is the hydrilla, a water weed believed to have originated in India and Korea. It was introduced to Florida in 1960 through the dumping of aquarium water. Since then, it has spread throughout the U.S. South and as far north as Connecticut.

from the GLOBE & MAIL,
Feb. 16, 2000

FANWORT INVADES ONTARIO WATERS

Fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) is a common aquarium plant that poses a threat to Ontario waters. Native to south temperate climates, it has spread through accidental release from aquariums. It is similar to milfoil and white water-crowfoot and can spread through vegetative reproduction of stem fragments or rhizomes.

from THE ORCHID, Vol. 45, No. 7, Oct. 1999



IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

WORLD'S MOST ACTIVE CHRISTMAS COUNT

It can now be confirmed that for the second year in a row, North Bay had the largest number of observers in the world during the recent Christmas bird count. With all figures in, and double-checked, some 1011 people took part in its count on Dec. 19. None of the 1800 other counts, including that of past perennial leader Edmonton, with 650, or third-place Victoria, with 500, will come close. The reason? Feeder Watchers. Believe it or not, some 968 of them. The forty-three field observers who covered the balance of the area within the prescribed 15-mile diameter circle saw very few interesting birds, actually, except for 10 open-water species, waiting a few more days until freeze-up, before heading further south. Oh yes, and Snow Buntings, and Northern Shrikes. And, one other interesting thing -- after a high of over 500 in 1988, the once common House Sparrow has completely disappeared in North Bay. Sort of sad, actually.

from an article by Dick Tafel in THE WOOD DUCK, February 2000

WIND TURBINE UPDATE

The Toronto Works Committee met in December and accepted a noise report study for the proposed wind turbine project on Toronto's waterfront. Two prime locations, the grounds of the water filtration plant beside Colonel Samuel Smith Park and the base of the Leslie Street Spit, are being considered. An environmental assessment is first required. The Metro Toronto Regional Conservation Authority is on record stating that neither of these sites, or any other site on the lakefront, is appropriate. John Carley will inform TOC members of details arising from the next MTRCA meeting. FLAP has published reports from Europe that indicate that the mortality rate from wind turbines is much higher than the 1.4 birds per year that has been touted by local bird consultants. John Carley emphasized parks and green space corridors are for public, not commercial use. The Leslie Street Spit is soon to be designated as an important birding area. Details to be published, as they become available.

extracted from "Announcements" in TOC Newsletter, Vol.102, February 2000

Wooded or natural areas near the Great Lakes shore have higher concentrations of birds than inland sites. Migrating birds tend to concentrate near the shores of the Great Lakes because the lakes are large bodies of open water that represent significant barriers to migration. Sites within about a half mile of the shoreline are most important, especially when migrating birds run into inclement weather over Lake Ontario and are forced to seek the nearest available shelter. Birds are known to land in the most convenient location under such circumstances, before making their way to the most suitable foraging areas or cover.

extracted from "Environment Canada's Assessment of the Red Hill Valley" in the WOOD DUCK (Hamilton Naturalists' Club), Vol. 53, No. 3, Nov. 1999

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

A DAY WITHOUT CARS

Nearly 150 Italian cities banned cars in their centres on Feb. 6 in an intensified effort to battle air pollution. Car exhaust has often caused air pollution levels to exceed safety standards across the country. The ban is part of once-a-month trial program to improve air quality. Rome, Milan and Florence banned all vehicles except public transportation or those powered by electricity. City officials in Rome sweetened the ban by offering free admission to museums and charging the cost of an ice cream cone for a two-hour rental of an electrically powered moped. All public trams, buses and subways were also free.

extracted from article in the LONDON FREE PRESS, February 12, 2000

GASOLINE SPILL LEAKS INTO BLACK CREEK

About 10,000 litres of gasoline flowed from a tanker trunk, which was leaving a gas station around 11.30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 28, near Dufferin Street and Lawrence Avenue. The gasoline erupted from the side of the tanker, spilled into local storm sewers and ended up in Black Creek just south of Lawrence Avenue West, killing about 20 fish. The Ministry of the Environment said about 4,000 litres were captured before reaching the river. Once gasoline enters the water system, it is extremely difficult to contain it. The whole food chain is affected when rivers get polluted. Pollutants go through fish, birds, into the atmosphere and into our drinking water. Because Black Creek is connected to the Humber River, it's likely pollutants will travel into Lake Ontario. According to the Ontario government, between 4,000 and 5,000 spills occur each year in the province -- the majority of them gasoline spills under 10 litres. However, smaller gasoline spills from splashing, or leaks at gas stations, have serious implications. A small amount of gasoline pollutes the groundwater. One litre of gasoline pollutes one million litres of water, and gasoline contains cancer-causing toxins.

extracted from an article by Natalie Southworth in the GLOBE & MAIL, March 1, 2000

TORONTO THE GREEN WINS INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Toronto is the world's greenest city. An international competition awarded what is known as the "Green Oscar" for the city's success in making an environmentally friendly place to live. Toronto made the grade against cities in 28 countries in a category of places with populations of more than one million. The judges were particularly impressed by the city's vision of restoring its 49 kilometres of waterfront and its recognition of heritage buildings. Another thing Toronto had that others didn't is a tree-advocacy project, a regular program of planting trees on city streets and replacing dying trees. The plaque will go on display in City Hall. The award should interest more people in environmental initiatives such as tree and flower planting and river cleanups, and it's also going to bring in more tourists.

extracted from an article by Wallace Immen in the GLOBE & MAIL, Feb. 22, 2000



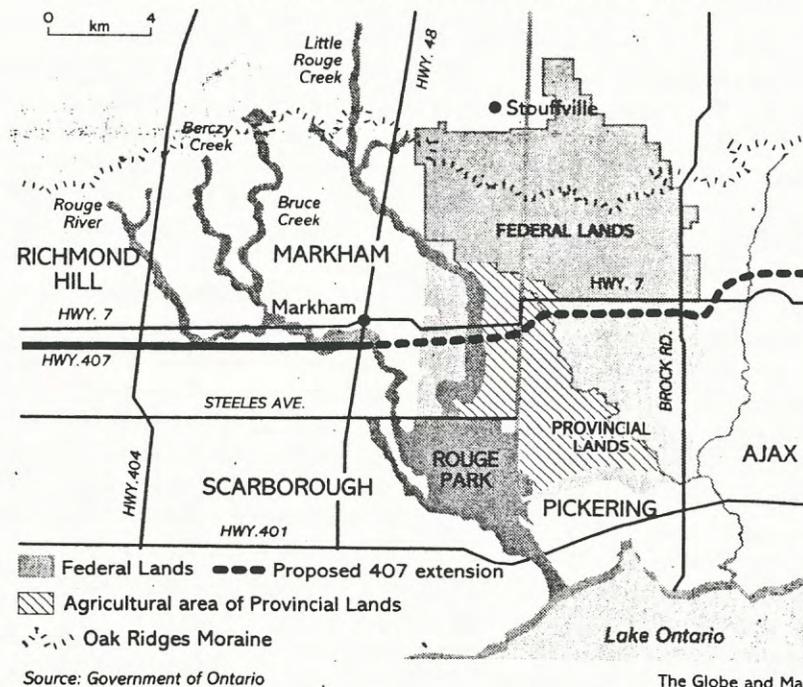
IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

COALITION PROTESTS HWY. 407 EXTENSION

A loose coalition of environmental, transportation, native and land-use organizations joined together to beg the federal government to conduct a full-scale public hearing on the environmental impact of the proposed highway 407 extension. Environmental groups say the Harris government has abdicated its responsibility to conduct a full environmental review of the proposed highway extension. The privately-held 407 consortium plans to extend the four-lane highway by 16 kilometres eastward from Markham to Brock Road in Pickering by the end of next year. While the province conducted its own environmental assessment of 407, it was done before the route was finalized and failed to study the impact of the road extension on air quality.

extracted from an article by Jennifer Lewington and Hamida Ghafour
in the GLOBE & MAIL, March 7, 2000

HIGHWAY 407 EXTENSION PROPOSAL



The robin's alarm
brings peace unintentional
to industry's din.

haiku by Diana Banville
Crescent Town, July 9, 1998

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

RAVINE TO GET MUCH-NEEDED HELP

Don't venture off the beaten path. That's the message users of Summerhill's Balfour Park and ravine are getting from the city and environmentalists trying to preserve the area. The city plans to build one new staircase and repair another into the park and step up its public campaign with the hope park users won't tear up the treed slopes of the ravine. The city is trying to re-establish the various ecosystems and indigenous species in the forest. Cyclists have torn up sections of the area which now have to be repaired. The ravine is getting improvements to areas that have eroded, and a new parkette is being added to the park. The cost of the project is being shared by the city and a developer. The construction of the steel stairs and lights is to begin before May and be ready in time for June. Existing stairs at the end of Shaftesbury Ave. will be repaired.

extracted from an article by Cathy Sheldrick in the TOWN CRIER, February 2000
(Leaside-Rosedale)

BIRDMAN DEDICATED LIFE TO FEATHERED FRIENDS

James L. Baillie often dubbed "The Birdman of Ontario" lived at 19 Eldora Avenue in North York until his death in 1970. James Baillie was born in Toronto on July 4, 1904. His father was a carpenter and the family lived on Howland Avenue. Young James went to King Edward School and Harbord Collegiate. While attending Sunday School, one of his teachers took the class on a nature tour of Moore Park and James' interest in bird-watching was born. His first job was as an office boy with a wholesale grocery firm, earning \$15 per week. One of his first paychecks was spent buying birdwatching equipment at a pawnshop. He bought a pair of opera glasses for \$3 and spent 75 cents on a guidebook. At the age of 27, Baillie began writing a weekly column for the Toronto Telegram about nature, natural history and, of course, birdwatching. He also began collecting rare books and bird specimens which are now housed in the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. It was not long before James was able to turn his full attention to his hobby -- ornithology. In 1922 he joined the Royal Ontario Museum as a junior assistant in zoology. Baillie was in his element. As well as working at the museum and writing his column, he organized lectures and walking tours. He set up the Audubon Screen Tours which were shown at the Eaton Auditorium, under the auspices of the Toronto Field Naturalists Club and the Royal Canadian Institute. In 1955, he began a series of lectures at the University of Toronto's Extension Department. He was also enjoying a few special assignments. One, for the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, had him investigating the illegal shooting and possession of ducks. In 1956, he presented a brief to Ontario's Fish and Game Committee on the need for the protection of hawks and owls. Baillie was also producing scripts for radios and films produced by the National Film Board. From 1947 until 1956, he was regional director of the Audubon Field Notes, covering Ontario, western New York, and northern Pennsylvania.

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IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

James spent most summers birdwatching and collecting in all parts of Ontario. His finest hour came when he acquired a specimen of the Great Auk, the flightless seabird of the North Atlantic which had been extinct since 1844. Baillie had acquired the bird from Vassar College who had owned it since 1867. He also found two extinct Canadian species for the museum -- a Labrador duck and some of the over 140 specimens of passenger pigeons. For the last ten years of his life, Baillie's health was failing. That, and the fact that the University of Toronto was somewhat reluctant to promote technicians to full curatorial rank seemed to hold him back. But Baillie had shown his worth and, in 1960, was appointed assistant curator of the ornithology collection at the museum, which had now grown to over 100,000 items. In 1967, Baillie was awarded the Centennial Medal for his work inside and outside of the museum. On May 29, 1970, James Baillie died of a heart attack -- on what was to be his last working day at the museum.

from an article by Jeanne Hopkins in the NORTH YORK POST, February, 2000

THE MUCH MALIGNED STARLING

... Almost never alone, even in breeding season when foraging for food for nestlings, the starlings work in small groups. After the young have been raised, the family groups form large flocks, often numbering thousands. The starlings are the avian "gleaners." As they move individually among the flock, they search the ground. Not a leaf remains unturned, not a cranny remains unprobed. First left, then right, often in a circle each bird goes. Nothing is missed, woodlice, beetles, millipedes, centipedes, ants (dead or alive). All is consumed. Too rapid for my eyes, they waddle, like mechanical toys, picking up and gulping down all sorts of unidentifiable bits.

... Starlings are "with us." Not for them the solitudes of the forests. No, it is on our lawns and parkways (where the grass is short), and the parking lots and roadways where they earn their living. Dropped crumbs, lost potato chips, squashed insects, all are eagerly consumed. They dodge our cars and happily forage along our median strips.

...The more one observes starlings, the more appreciative one becomes. They are much like us, living in the cities, scrambling to raise a family, enjoying the summers, surviving the winter. Some even travel south to avoid the cold, but discover that competition is more fierce there because of the millions of local birds to which are added all those from farther north. They are semi-dependent upon us, so don't cuss them at your feeder; learn to appreciate these active birds as they struggle to survive.

from an article by Jack Holliday, in TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, Vol.34, #1, Jan.-Mar. 2000

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THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

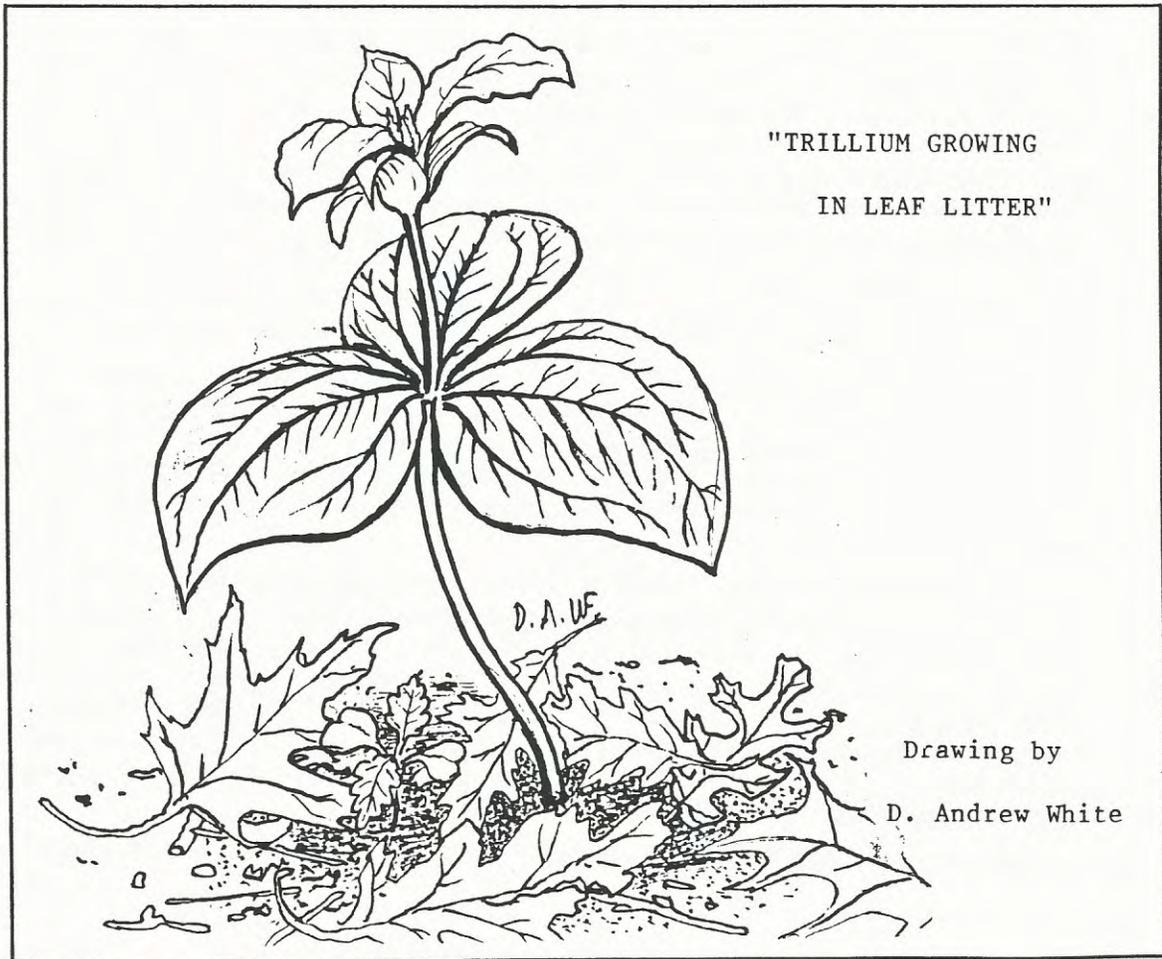
April 1999, Toronto

This was another warm, dry, sunny, quiet month. Mean temperatures ran about 1.5° to 2° C above normal with few extremes, and precipitation was generally restricted to three episodes in the middle part of the month. A huge blocking high pressure area kept weather systems pushed to the west and south, and the final seven days had virtually total sunshine, which continued into the first part of May. The 218.7 hours of sun (both Pearson and downtown) was well above normal but still below last year's total.

Total precipitation was near 50 mm, somewhat below normal and reaffirming the long-term drought trend that had been eased by January's heavy snowfalls.

Gavin Miller

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COMING EVENTS

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

- Sat. April 29 at 8 am (all day) with Hugh Currie to see early migrants at the Leslie St. Spit. Meet at the foot of Leslie St. and bring lunch.

Eighth Annual Tyler Creek Clean Up - Sat. April 29 at 10 am. Meet at the north side of Eglinton Ave. East between Sloane Ave. and Victoria Park Ave. just east of Oasis Condominium Residences. Bring gloves. Call K. Fall at 416-751-4617 if you have questions. "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little".

Toronto Entomologists' Association meeting - Sat. April 22 at 1 pm in room 603 at the Royal Ontario Museum. James Kamstra will be talking about the butterflies of Durham Region. Call Alan Hanks at 905-727-6993 for more information.

Society of Ontario Nut Growers annual auction of nut trees, books, nut seeds, crafts, cookery and other nut related items - Sat. April 22 from 1:15 pm to 4 pm at the Civic Garden Centre (Leslie & Lawrence).

Save the Rouge Valley System - nature walks on one Saturday afternoon each month. Call 282-9983 to find where the walk begins.

High Park walking tours - at 1:15 pm starting from the south side of the Grenadier Teahouse & Cafe (across the street at the benches).

- April 16 - Reviving Spring Creek
- April 30 - Celebrate Earth Day in High Park: Phone 392-1748.

Explore historic Toronto walking tours begin April 29 and run to Oct. 8. For a copy of the schedule, call 392-6827, ext. 265. These walks are free.

TFN
display

Earth Day in High Park - April 30. TFN will have a display at Colborne Lodge. If you can help, call Andre Vietinghoff at 232-9241.

Sweet Heritage - an event of the Community History Project - March 25 from 11 am to 6 pm in Roy's Square, one block south of Bloor St., east off Yonge St. Syrup & cookies will be for sale. Call 515-7546 for details.

TFN
display

Wildlife Week at Kortright - April 15 & 16. If you can help drive our display unit to and from Kortright, please call Andre Vietinghoff at 232-9241.

In window-sill trays
tiny leaves begin to wave.
The gardener beams.

haiku by Arthur Wade
April, 1998

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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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