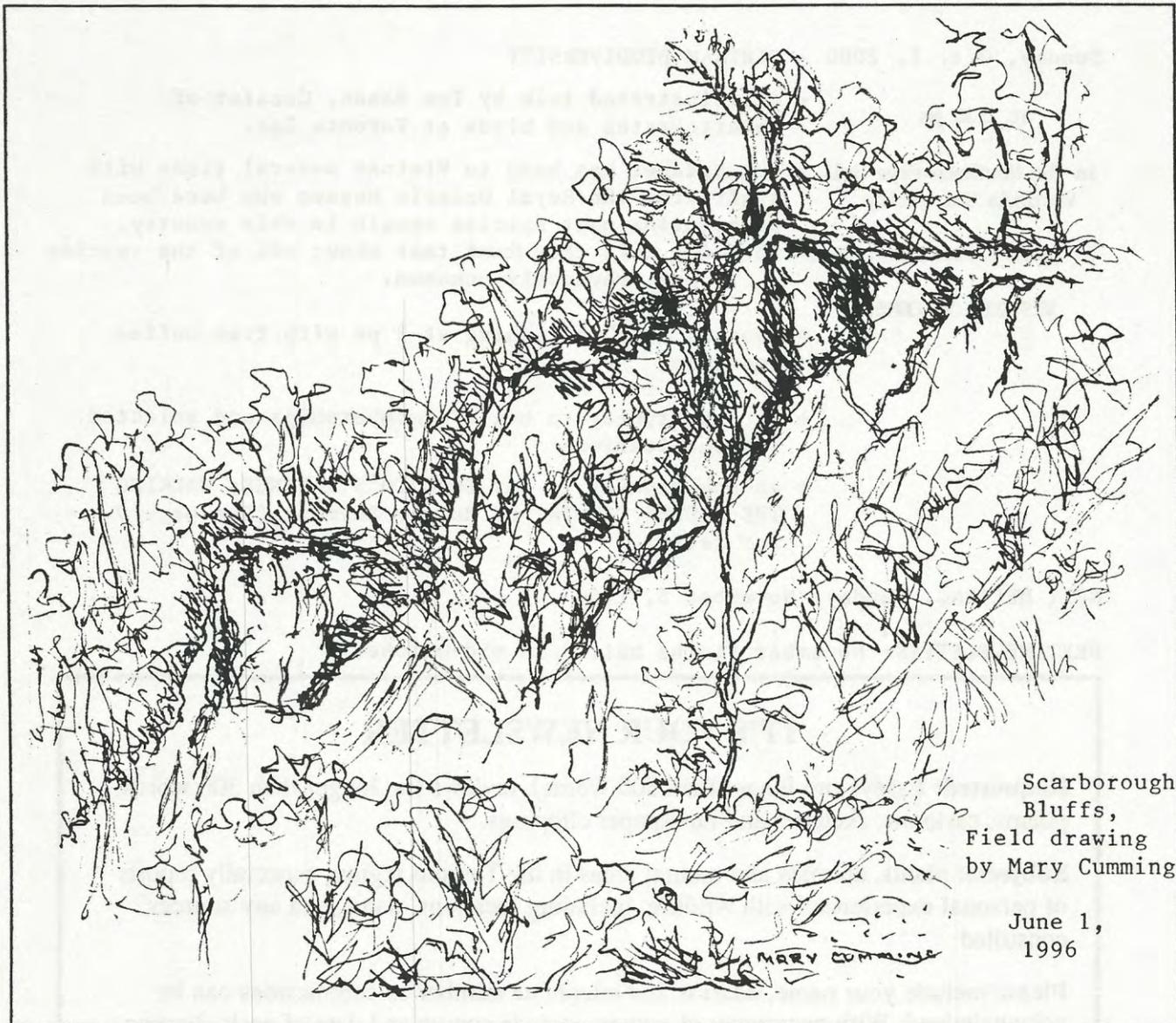


TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 494

October 2000



Scarborough
Bluffs,
Field drawing
by Mary Cumming

June 1,
1996

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TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, Oct. 1, 2000 - VIETNAM BIODIVERSITY

at 2:30 pm

- an illustrated talk by Tom Mason, Curator of invertebrates and birds at Toronto Zoo.
- The speaker has been to Vietnam several times with staff from the Royal Ontario Museum who have been discovering what species remain in this country. In doing this they found that about 40% of the species are previously unknown.

in the Northrop Frye Hall -
Victoria University

73 Queen's Park Cres. East

VISITORS WELCOME!

- + "social hour" beginning at 2 pm with free coffee and juice
- + an opportunity to buy TFN memberships and selected TFN publications
- + an opportunity to buy TORONTO'S RAVINES: WALKING THE HIDDEN COUNTRY by Murray Seymour (See page 7 for review.)

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, November 5, 2000

NEXT NEWSLETTER: November (to be mailed in mid-October)

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

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

Subjects: plants, animals and natural areas in the Toronto region, especially reports of personal experiences with wildlife, including locations, dates, and any sources consulted.

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

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

Send material to: Toronto Field Naturalists
2 Carlton St., #1519
Toronto, Ont. M5B 1J3

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Toshi Oikawa, Marilynn Murphy, Robin Powell

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It's that time of the year -- when we wonder how the summer could have passed so quickly and how Labour Day and back-to-school could be here already. With your indulgence I'd like to share with you a few highlights in the old school tradition of 'what I did last summer.'

Water -- so essential to life -- can also be destructive, as it proved to be last May 12th when a sudden violent storm sent torrents of rain, turning Toronto's paved streets into rivers. I tried to wait out the downpour at the Hummingbird Centre, but at last splashed the two blocks along The Esplanade, arriving home so drenched my sandals took two and a half days to dry. Sewers overflowed, wreaking havoc along various streams in the Greater Toronto Area, flooding Riverdale Park, the Don Valley Brickworks, and Todmorden Mills, and filling the basement garage and workshops of my building with up to ten inches of water for almost three days. I am told there were more storms in June, when I was enjoying sunshine on the West Coast. (Okay, there was some rain, 'liquid sunshine', but no storms.) When I walked in Wilket Creek Park towards the end of July I found a scene of devastation caused by a previous deluge. Perhaps it was the accumulated effects of several torrents raging down the lovely valley of this tributary of the Don, tearing at the banks, uprooting trees, covering the bottom lands with silt, sand and debris, buckling or breaking up parts of the asphalt path. The bridges held and plants, though disturbed, were apparently recovering. Broken and fallen trees, including a tall white pine still across the path on our July 27th evening ramble, were a major loss. The West Don River seemed less affected in this area, probably because the flood waters were held back by the dam at G. Ross Lord Park. We need to continue with studies, citizen education, and creative measures to alleviate the effects of sudden downpours on our watersheds.

On the day after the May 12th storm I was privileged to join a migratory bird walk at the Toronto Zoo, when we made our way through the damp green valley alongside the raging brown Rouge. Part of our trail was along the defunct monorail (also flooded in places) which eventually took us past the Dall's sheep. Bunched together across the paddock, they stared at our human awkwardness as we edged along the raised railway, then scattered in alarm as we approached. At the far side of the next enclosure we spotted a female moose with her calf; both immediately disappeared into the woods. When we reached the large pasture where wapiti (elk) and wood bison, also with young, were grazing, the keeper told us that the wobbly-legged baby moose had been born the previous night. Birding on this hike was not spectacular, but the sighting of a newborn moose was a memorable experience. Young animals do have a special appeal for me (maternal instinct?). On an August visit to the zoo with my son and two youngest grandchildren, we saw a young giraffe, greater kudu, cheetahs, baboons and more, in the African Savanna, but the lion family was barely visible, fast asleep in the heat of the day. We especially enjoyed the lowland gorillas, where dignified grandfather Charles presides over a community of several

PRESIDENT's REPORT (cont'd)

generations and colour variations, all awaiting the completion of their spacious new habitat, the Gorilla Rainforest. Adela (age 7) and copper-haired Brendan (4) were also entranced with the orangutans in the Indo-Malaya Pavilion. These strong, intelligent animals also exhibit complex social interplay, keeping active in their large enclosure with ropes, swings, platforms, a hammock, and various 'tools' (a scoop, containers, blankets) to stimulate their interest. The grandchildren were especially delighted with the antics of a baby orangutan who, like his elders, seemed not at all shy in the presence of curious humans.

Do you know the renaturalized wetland along the West Don in Ernest Thompson Seton Park, down behind the Ontario Science Centre? I spent a couple of hours there on a sunny day early in July, just observing the flowers and birds, including tree swallows and cedar waxwings hawking for insects, and four fledgling kingbirds lined up on a bare branch waiting for lunch provided by their busy parents. Occasionally, one would try a tentative flight to a nearby branch. Monarchs indeed of such wetlands, kingbirds are very attentive parents.

In Vancouver in June I was charmed by two soft gray cygnets, carefully guarded by mother swan near the verdant edges of Lost Lagoon. Under an overhanging branch not far away a female wood duck swam with three active ducklings. On Beaver Lake, several female mallards foraged amongst the abundant water lilies while carefully shepherding their offspring. From the seawall far below the Stanley Park end of Lions Gate Bridge, I could see pelagic cormorants and glaucous-winged gulls flying in to their nests on ledges of a steep, rocky cliff. No young were visible as yet, so I wasn't sure what stage the nesting activities had reached. Pelagic cormorants (smaller than double-crested, with white patches on their flanks) were also observed on a small rocky island in Malaspina Strait south of Powell River. Nearby were a number of shy harlequin ducks, probably not yet of mating age. As we reached these rocks in our canoe, my daughter and I stopped paddling, watched by 20 harbour seals who kept their distance, except when one or other of the young seals was brave or curious enough to pop up nearby and regard us briefly with liquid brown eyes before swimming back to mother.

Returning from a morning cruise out of Parry Sound on the M.V. Chippewa, I saw a common loon with two chicks. It was a brief glimpse as we steamed past a small island, but the other parent was in view for a longer time, closer to our boat and no doubt vigilant, though seemingly unperturbed. We also saw osprey in flight and one on a nesting platform, but the young had left the nest.

A week later, while staying further north on a rocky Georgian Bay island (one of 30,000), I woke up early to view a brilliant pink sunrise reflected on still waters. I shared the perfection of the morning with a lone loon floating off the next point, not feeding, diving, preening, or calling, just being. Peace.

Phoebe Cleverley

□

FOR READING

TORONTO'S RAVINES: WALKING THE HIDDEN COUNTRY* by Murray Seymour,
Boston Mills Press, 2000, \$19.95

In his book "Toronto's Ravines: Walking the Hidden Country", Murray Seymour explores some of those natural treasures which help make Toronto a livable city.

Each chapter focuses on one of six watersheds: Etobicoke Creek, Mimico Creek, Humber River, Don River, Highland Creek, and Rouge River. Mr. Seymour opens each chapter with background information including both human and natural history, origins of names and engaging anecdotes. He then outlines walks (34 in total) complete with maps, directions to starting points both by car and by public transit, details of the trails and examples of what one can expect to see along the way. For some routes he warns of steep or slippery sections so that less agile walkers can choose appropriate trails.

Occasionally he mentions the location of seasonal washrooms. A welcome addition would have been the location of that rare and endangered species, the year-round washroom.

An "interlude" concludes each chapter. These range from natural history vignettes to an account of Hurricane Hazel and its continuing impact, nearly half a century later. My favourite interlude describes an evening at a beaver pond. Mr. Seymour invites the reader to sit quietly and observe the wildlife which uses the pond. He then goes on to explain the life cycle of the pond itself — how the beaver creates it and why it eventually meets a natural end.

The world revealed by Mr. Seymour abounds in birds, plants, fungi, mammals, insects and human history, and can be enjoyed in all seasons for no more than the cost of T.T.C. fare. I read this book with a cast on my leg, and with growing impatience to get back out and explore some of the unfamiliar areas. For many readers "Toronto's Ravines" will open up a new world of surprisingly wild enclaves, havens from the surrounding megacity's crowds and noise. For seasoned ravine explorers it offers some fresh insights and new destinations.

Just remember, as Murray Seymour declares in his introduction, "The person who finishes any one of these walks in the shortest amount of time has missed the whole point, and a lot of other good stuff too! Enjoy."

Marilynn Murphy

* for sale at TFN Oct. meeting

□

*Heavens! A fruit fly!
Perhaps it finds worthwhile
the untreated apples.*

haiku by Diana Banville

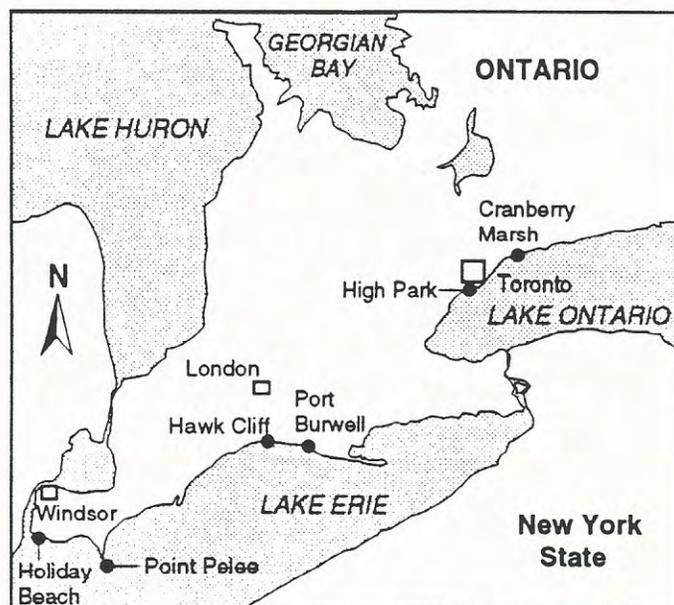
FALL HAWKWATCHING

Interest in hawkwatching has grown rapidly in recent years and has spread worldwide. Hawks are magnificent to watch, especially in flight, as they stream by Ontario's top watches. There are 23 species of diurnal raptors on the Ontario checklist. This guide treats the fall migration period of vultures, ospreys, hawks, kites, falcons and eagles in southern Ontario.

Table 1. Fall Migration Period and Peak Numbers of 16 Diurnal Raptors in Southern Ontario

Species	Migration Periods and (Late Dates)	Peak Numbers
Turkey Vulture	Mid-September to mid-November (rare winter)	Early to mid-October
Osprey	Mid-August to late October (early December)	Early to mid-September
Bald Eagle	September to December (rare winter)	September
Northern Harrier	Late August to late November (winters)	September
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Late August to late November (winters)	September
Cooper's Hawk	Mid-September to early November (rare winter)	Early to mid-October
Northern Goshawk	Early October to late November (winters)	Late October to early November
Red-shouldered Hawk	Early October to mid-November (rare winter)	Mid to late October
Broad-winged Hawk	Late August to early October (early November)	Mid-September
Swainson's Hawk	Early September to late October	Mid-September to mid October
Red-tailed Hawk	Mid-September to early December (winters)	Mid-October to early November
Rough-legged Hawk	Early October to early December (winters)	Late October to early November
Golden Eagle	Late September to December (rare winter)	Late October to early November
American Kestrel	Late August to mid-November (winters)	September
Merlin	Late August to early November (rare winter)	September
Peregrine Falcon	Early September to late October (rare winter)	Late September to early October (<i>tundrius</i>)

OFO NEWS October 1999



Major hawkwatching locations in southern Ontario

Michael King



FALL HAWKWATCHING (cont'd)

When to See Hawks

The following chronology applies to watches along Lakes Ontario and Erie. See Table 1. Fall migration begins slowly in mid-August with most species peaking in September and October; the migration ends gradually after mid-November into December. In late August, ospreys, northern harriers, sharp-shinned hawks, broad-winged hawks, merlins and American kestrels begin migration with bigger movements of these species in September. Most broad-winged hawks surge south in spectacular numbers within the space of a week on a few lucky days in mid-September. A few bald eagles are regular throughout the whole migration period. After mid-September increasing numbers of turkey vultures, Cooper's hawks and red-tailed hawks join the flow. Tundra peregrine falcons peak in late September and early October. Cooper's hawks peak in early to mid-October. Red-shouldered hawks peak from the middle to late October. Red-tailed hawks peak in late October and early November. Rough-legged hawks, northern goshawks and golden eagles are regular in small numbers from mid-October to early November. There is the occasional good flight after mid-November, but numbers are usually much lower. Some raptors continue to migrate into December. Note: Keep in mind that most of the above raptors also winter in southern Ontario.

Weather: The best viewing conditions for fall flights occur during cold fronts with northwesterly and north winds. Cold fronts trigger migration and the associated northwesterly winds cause hawks to pile up and fly lower along the north shorelines of the Great Lakes. Indicators of an upcoming flight are: (1) the recent passage of a low pressure system (hawks are held up by bad weather), (2) a rapidly rising barometer indicating an approaching high pressure system, (3) decreasing temperature and humidity, (4) northwest and north winds. Note: Hawks migrate during most weather conditions except heavy rain, but are often missed because they fly higher on a broad front in warm weather away from shorelines. The strategy used by most migrating hawks is to glide from thermal to thermal. Wind direction also affects where the migration path will be on a given day. Hawks fly along shorelines in calm conditions and light winds from most directions, but strong onshore winds keep the birds well inland. Some hawkwatchers monitor the marine weather forecasts on Channel A of Environment Canada, which gives continuous updates of wind speed and direction. Inexpensive weather radios are available at Radio Shack.

Where to see Hawks

Southern Ontario has some of the finest fall hawkwatching sites in North America. A glance at Map 1 shows the funneling effect of southwestern Ontario between Lakes Huron, Ontario and Erie. Most migrating hawks exit the province across the Detroit River south of Windsor. The best sites are located along the shorelines of the Great Lakes because most hawks are reluctant to fly over the Great Lakes. When hawks migrating south on a broad front encounter the north shores, they parallel the shorelines until they can turn south again. ▷

FALL HAWKWATCHING (cont'd)

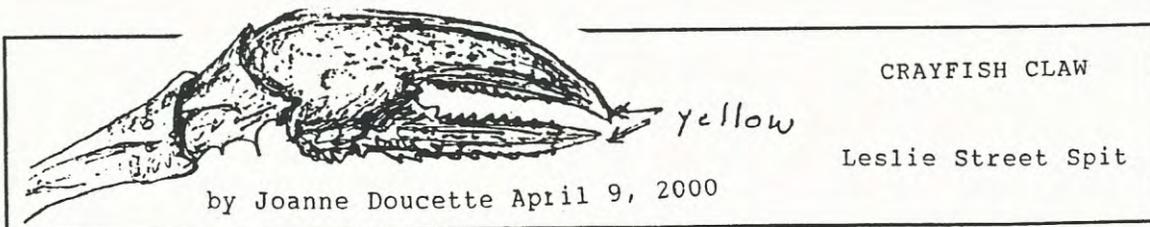
Most hawks move west along Lakes Ontario and Erie. North and northwest winds help concentrate the flight lines in a narrow corridor close to the lakes. Flights are smaller going east from Cranberry Marsh along Lake Ontario, except at Prince Edward Point at the east end of the lake, where flights are associated with strong northwesterly winds. Hawks going around the west end of Lake Ontario move southwest and appear to reach Lake Erie just east of Port Burwell. Further east, such as at Long Point, not many hawks are seen. Hawk numbers increase going west along Lake Erie from Port Burwell to Holiday Beach. See Map 1 for relative positions of the major fall hawkwatching sites in southern Ontario. Directions to these site locations may be found using

Clive Goodwin's (1995) Bird-Finding Guide to Ontario and the official Ontario highway map in your car.

High Park: This fabulous site in Toronto's famed High Park is in the city's west end between the Gardiner Expressway and Bloor Street. Go to parking lot of Grenadier Restaurant from Bloor Street via West Road or take the east entrance off Parkside. Note: On Sundays and holidays from 1 May to 1 October, vehicle entrance to High Park is from Bloor St. only. Hawks are viewed from the small knoll known as Hawk Hill just to the north of the restaurant. High Park offers excellent birding throughout the year. See Bob Yukich's (1995) site guide to Toronto's High Park in OFO News 13(3):2-3.

How to See Hawks

Identifying hawks correctly takes considerable practice. Experienced birders use a combination of jizz (general impression and shape) and field marks. Most distant jizz identifications of common hawks by experienced observers are highly reliable. However, the ID of rare and out of season species should not be based solely on jizz. Make sure that you see field marks that are 100% diagnostic. First, group raptors into accipiters, buteos, falcons, harrier, osprey, kites, eagles and vultures. Second, keep in mind that hawks often change their shapes depending upon the type of flight: soaring, gliding, flapping and sailing, power flight in pursuit of prey and so on. Almost all raptors can appear like another species depending on flight style and size illusions. Accipiters and falcons in a full soar can look like buteos; accipiters in power flight look like falcons and so forth. Concentrate on proportions, body size, wing and tail length, wing width versus tail length, amount of flapping, fast or slow flapping, tight or wide soaring circles and so on. Hawks are easier to spot against clouds than clear skies. However, the same hawk will appear more washed out against clouds versus a bright blue sky. Tip: To learn what hawks look like at a distance, practise following close birds of known identity to the limits of sight. ▽



CRAYFISH CLAW

Leslie Street Spit

by Joanne Doucette April 9, 2000

FALL HAWKWATCHING (cont'd)

Healthy Eyes and Skin: Watching hawks exposes your eyes and skin to damaging sunlight. Cover up and wear a wide hat and sunscreen. To protect your eyes wear sunglasses or prescription glasses with ultraviolet protection.

Juveniles First: In most hawk species, the juveniles migrate earlier in the fall than the adults, with some exceptions being the osprey, peregrine falcon and probably the golden eagle. Juvenile hawks in fall are migrating for the first time. Juveniles may fly lower than adults because they are not as skilled at using thermals.

Lawn Chair: An essential comfort item along with a lunch and thermos of coffee.

Male or Female: In most diurnal raptors, but not all, the sexes are similar in coloration. In all species, however, the females are larger than the males, but only in a few species such as the accipiters can extremes be reliably sexed by size in the field.

Noonday Lulls: There is often a noticeable lull in numbers at midday at many watches. Most hawks are probably just too high to see in the bright sky and heat of midday.

Ozone Bird: A high bird barely visible even with binoculars! Also known as a bird in the stratosphere. The altitude of migrating hawks generally increases from morning to afternoon. Many hawks migrate above the visible range.

Plumages: Hawks come in two main plumages: juvenile and adult. In most species, the juvenile plumage is retained about a year before the prolonged molt to adult plumage during the summer of its second calendar year. Adults also molt during the summer. Some species interrupt (stop) their molt before migration and finish it on the winter grounds. Aging hawks is easy in fall. Most birds are clearly either juvenile or adult.

Population Changes: It is important to keep in mind that most raptors have good and bad breeding years depending on weather and prey cycles. The ratio of juveniles to adults of each species seen at hawk watches often gives a measure of breeding success. Weather is the single biggest factor affecting total hawk numbers seen from year to year. Like snowy owls, rough-legged hawk numbers fluctuate because of lemming cycles in the Arctic. Northern goshawks breeding in the boreal forest irrupt southward in numbers about every 10 years when there are declines in ruffed grouse and snowshoe hares. Some species, such as the osprey, bald eagle and peregrine falcon, are increasing since the banning of DDT. Mainly because of different weather patterns affecting flight lines and how high hawks fly, expect to see wide yearly fluctuations in hawk numbers. The importance of long-term counts, including the ratios of juveniles to adults, is that population trends become evident, particularly when correlated with other watches. ▽

FALL HAWKWATCHING (cont'd)

Reference Points: At each hawkwatch, there are reference points that spotters use to tell others where to look for hawks. These include silos, towers, trees and cloud formations. Also every hawkwatch has its own particular flight lines with certain species consistently appearing in the same part of the sky. Observers often use the clock method to point out the location of a hawk, for example, referring to the sky as 12 o'clock for midway between the two horizons, thus 10 o'clock, 2 o'clock and so on.

Scanning Tip: Experts usually spot the hawks first. Why? They scan with their binoculars the usual flight lines and the bases of cumulus clouds where kettles often form.

extracted from an article by Ron Pittaway in OFO NEWS, Vol.17, No.3, Oct. 1999

□



SHAGBARK
HICKORY

Frontenac
Provincial
Park

drawn by
Joanne
Doucette

An
uncommon
Toronto
native,
it grows
in
Mimico
Creek,
Etobicoke
Creek,
Humber
and Don
Watersheds

Weeds are plants that have evolved to take advantage of peoples' disturbance of the soil.

from "Beyond Wilderness and Lawn" by Michael Pollan in HARVARD DESIGN MAGAZINE, Winter/
Spring 1998

PASSING IT ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION

I am sure that most naturalists hope that they can pass on their interest in nature to their children. The hobby has brought us great pleasure and we want the same for our kids. What an enormous advantage the naturalist's children have. While the other kids are stuck in front of the television watching some inane children's show they are taken places and shown things that their friends don't know exist. We read about a child's sense of wonder, and where could this sense manifest itself better than in watching a nest of young birds or coming across a wild orchid they have never before seen.

Jean and I were concerned that our kids would be exposed to all the delights of nature and from their earliest days took them everywhere we went.

One of the dreams of my childhood was to see a colony of prairie dogs. I had read Ernest Thompson Seton's wonderful story about these fascinating creatures in "Wild Animals at Home". It was not until I was a grown man and driving with my family through the Badlands of North Dakota that my opportunity finally arrived. We had learned of a big colony just over a mile off the highway. Following the directions we headed out with our binoculars and telescope. It was a very warm day and soon the question was asked "How much farther is it?" This was repeated several times before we reached the edge of the colony.

It was a big colony, perhaps 100 burrows. The parents and young animals were nibbling the grass near the entrance to their burrows. When we approached too closely the "dogs" (really a kind of ground squirrel) would take up their lookout stations on the raised hillock at the entrance of the den. A little closer and the parents would straighten up, give a couple of "yek"s and the whole family would dive down into the hole just as Seton described.

On the way back there was much complaining about the heat and the long walk. We had no air conditioning in the car so we opened the windows wide. We stopped at the first small café we came to for cold drinks. I asked the proprietor what the temperature was "One hundred and five degrees, but it is a dry heat you know".

Our girls got to see many more wonderful places -- climbing the steep trails at parks in the Rockies, holding on tight to a wave-tossed boat off Vancouver Island and portaging our canoe through the boreal forests of Northern Ontario.

We even allowed them to assist on our studies of nesting birds. I had a 100 foot length of hemp rope that I used to find the nests of grassland birds. I would take one end, and one of the girls the other, and we would walk a straight route across the field dragging the rope between us. When the rope passed over a nest the incubating bird would fly up and we would follow the rope to the nest. It was hard work but the excitement of finding a nest made it worthwhile.

▷

PASSING IT ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION (cont'd)

I got the first indication that the girls lacked some of our enthusiasm for birding when Janet was only three years old. We had taken her to see the movie "War and Peace". Henry Fonda and his fellow prisoners were being herded along in the snow by the French soldiers retreating from Moscow. They were dressed in rags, freezing and starving. Suddenly in the darkness of the theatre, Janet's clear little voice was heard "They are bird-watching".

Before long, as we gathered our equipment together, we would hear "If you are going bird-watching we are staying home with Grandma".

Our attempt to pass along our love of nature has met with limited success. The girls know many common birds and wildflowers but somehow they lack our enthusiasm for the treks through the mosquito-infested wetlands we love so much.

However, my grandson is growing fast and I can hardly wait until he is old enough to be taken on a tramp around my favourite sewage lagoon and shown how to tell apart the fall-plumaged golden and black-belled plovers.

Reference: Seton, E.T., 1927 "Wild Animals at Home" Pp.19-22, Doubleday, Page & Co., New York.

George Fairfield

□

"CONKERS" - Roger Powley's article on horsechestnuts (TFN:489:14) started me thinking about this game in my (much more distant) past. Girls, of course, didn't play conkers, but I remember my brother talking about chestnuts being "eighty years old" or even over "a hundred years old" and I wondered about this until it was explained to me that a chestnut (on a string threaded through a hole drilled in it) when it broke its opponent's chestnut, took on the age of the broken one, adding it to its own. Did it start its sporting life as a one-year-old? I don't recall - maybe counting by tens would be easier.



My brother had some withered horsechestnuts in his stable in the late 1920's. They didn't seem to have names - only ages. The expression "that old chestnut", when referring to a joke or old song, probably does not have in mind the "true" chestnut but the horsechestnut - an old "conker".

DB

SOME SURPRISES AT ASHBRIDGE'S BAY PARK

Today (March 24, 2000) I took a leisurely stroll around Ashbridge's Bay Park. A raccoon snoozed about 10 metres up in the crotch of a poplar, its head cradled firmly in the fork and its furry, grizzled body hanging more precariously out on a limb. Out in the lake, a small flock of twenty or so oldsquaw foraged and, near them, a gorgeous female red-breasted merganser dived. Around me song sparrows chorused from almost every bush. Some shrubs had three or four of these striped brown sparrows. A wave of them must have arrived in the last few days. Male red-winged blackbirds shrieked, "Conkalee", but I saw no females. They must be on their way still. In Coatsworth Cut and Ashbridge's Bay, about thirty buffleheads squabbled as they fought over a duck's version of true love. There was a lot of comical head-bobbing going on, like those toy dogs you used to see in the back of cars. A solitary American coot pulled up some aquatic leaves under the docks and carefully ate them. I saw a ring-billed gull catch a fish (they eat more than just garbage) and bring it back to a shoreline rock to eat. Gadwall, black ducks, mallards and, of course, Canada geese were very evident, but further out there was a flock of ten redheads, a few greater scaup and a dozen or so lesser scaup plus a pied-billed grebe, bobbing about and sometimes sinking under the wavelets.

I walked further along the shoreline between the washrooms and the marina and saw a gray squirrel at the very top of a poplar, his tail streaming in the east wind. He was busy pulling off poplar buds with his paws and stuffing them into his cheek pouches.

Further along, I had my biggest surprise of the day. A pussy willow about 8 metres tall was covered with a flock of house sparrows like plump round decorations on a twiggy Christmas tree. I wondered just what they were doing, because they weren't simply roosting -- they were tugging hard at the pussy willows. Through my binoculars I could see that they were not pulling off and eating the male willow flowers we call pussies. Nor were they pulling out any pussy fur. Instead they were shaking the pussies and gobbling down the falling pollen. Pollen is very nutritious, high in protein, so I have got to hand it to the "spugs", as the English affectionately call house sparrows. Like Homo sapiens they are an adaptable species, adept at finding food, and willing to travel the world in search of new homes. I wonder why we so dislike our successful immigrant birds (house sparrows, starlings, rock doves). Could it be that they are so much like us? Aggressive, invasive, adaptive, urban?

Joanne Doucette

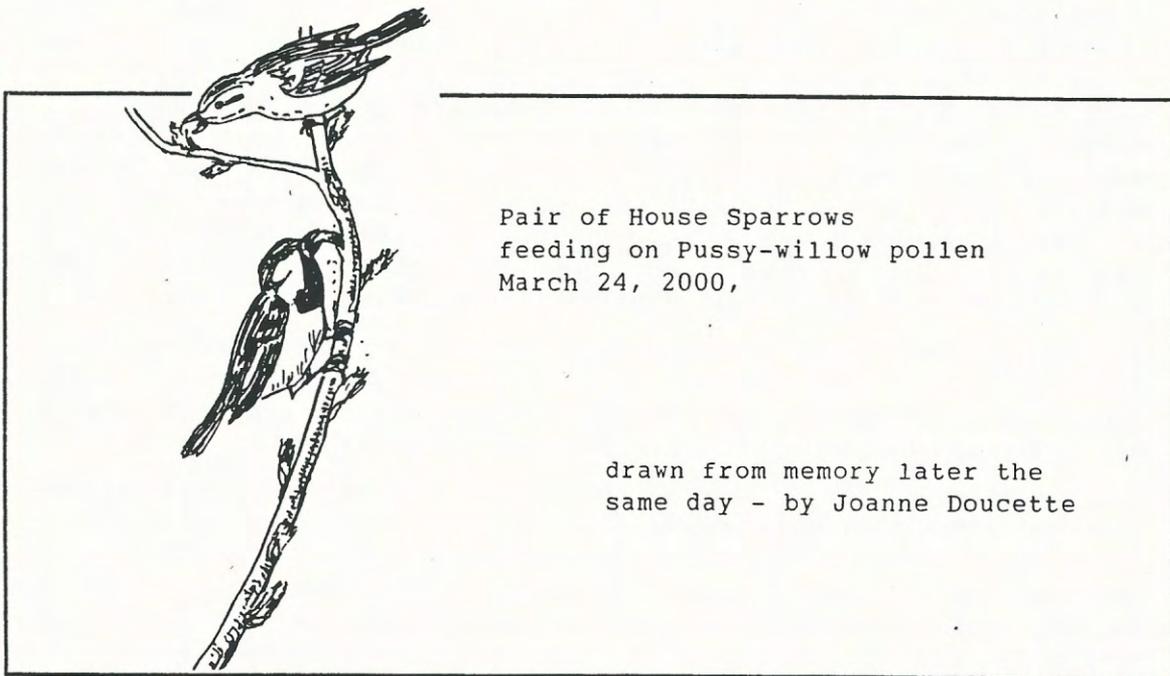
To save the moment
either take a photograph
or write a haiku.

Haiku by Helen Juhola

Further comment:

Flowers may be mostly about luring insects, but birds stick their beaks in too, particularly to pussy willow catkins. Many small birds are busy holding territories, finding partners and mating at a time when energy supplies in the form of insects and seeds are unpredictable. For a small bird, three hours of feeding on pollen or nectar has been estimated to provide the equivalent of a whole day foraging for insects and seeds. The plants, in return, get another agent to distribute their pollen -- handy after a cold snap, when insect numbers are down.

from "New moon" by Nick Baker in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol.18, No.4, April 2000



Pair of House Sparrows
feeding on Pussy-willow pollen
March 24, 2000,

drawn from memory later the
same day - by Joanne Doucette

The ruby-throated hummingbird is thought by many people to be among the frailest and most delicate of birds. Not so, because when it comes to migration, this is no wimp! In a 26-hour marathon, hummingbirds cross the Gulf of Mexico -- a distance of over 1000 km -- nonstop.

from "Migrate or die trying" by Jon McCracken in the LONG POINT BIRD OBSERVER,
Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer 1998

THE HISTORY OF AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Aerial photography is the science of obtaining images of ground features from above the ground. Aerial photography was born in 1858, when a Parisian photographer named Gaspard Felix Tournachon took a photograph with a camera attached to a balloon. Aerial photography grew from there, utilizing kites, and eventually airplanes in 1909. Camera technology and photo interpretation evolved rapidly after the inception of the airplane. The military used aerial photography intensively during World War I for military reconnaissance. During World War II heavy attention was given to photo interpretation, testing different films, filters and cameras.

More recently aerial photography has been adapted to many applications other than the military. Engineers and planners use aerial photographs for infrastructure and environmental uses. Real estate firms and assessment firms use them for property identification, land-use/demographics, and management for zoning and taxation. Aerial photographs are intensively used in facilities management and resource inventories. Environmental impacts can be detected using time lapse photography. Environmental monitoring and management also depend on aerial photography. In addition, aerial photographs have been used as novelty items and gifts.

An aerial photograph can be a very valuable tool. It provides a different perspective of familiar territory. It can provide a quick holistic view of your property or site of interest. It can be used to plan a trip or field exercise. It can even be given as a gift.

from an article by Mark Rowsell in FORESTRY FORUM, Vol.II Issue 23, April 1999



Amaryllis

I am lost in this amaryllis
Lost in the subtleties of its redness
In its glorious iridescences.
Like a strangely-patient butterfly
It opens its wings for my inspection
I travel down its silky throat
Where redness looks like
Fresh blood spilled.
I see its stamens split open
And pollen dust falling upon petals.
Did I see this just now
Or was it yesterday?
But what does that matter
To this trumpet blast of redness.

Louise Herzberg

THE ADVANTAGES OF AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY FOR LANDOWNERS

Many professionals use aerial photographs in their work. Cartographers and planners take detailed measurements from aerial photos in order to prepare maps. Skilled photo interpreters use aerial photos to evaluate land use and environmental conditions. Why do they use photographs? Both maps and aerial photos present a "bird's eye" or "topographic" view of the earth, but aerial photos are NOT maps. Maps are a generalized representation of ground features, while aerial photos show a realistic "snapshot" of the earth's surface.

Aerial photography has many significant advantages over ground-based observation, including: (i) improved vantage point, (ii) the capability to stop action, (iii) provides a permanent record, (iv) broader spectral sensitivity than the human eye, and (v) better spatial resolution than many ground-based sensing methods. These advantages coupled with the relative low cost and easy accessibility (e.g. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources) make aerial photos an excellent choice for landowners to expand their appreciation of their property.

The OMNR has conducted province-wide aerial photography (most recently in 1991) at a scale of 1:10,000. Each photo shows approximately 1000 acres (404 ha).

Aerial photography applications for landowners include: property assessment, forest management plans, change detection indicators, hunting or trails maps, property sales tool, promotional items, novelty items, and historical artifact. Landowners can order aerial photographs through Eastern Ontario Mapping & Information Services by simply specifying lot, concession, and geographic township. Photos can be merged to form photo mosaics, specific areas of a photo can be blown up, and print-outs can range in size from 8½x11" to 34"x44".

In conclusion, aerial photography is a relatively inexpensive and accessible tool that landowners can use for a broad spectrum of applications.

from an article by Mark Rowsell in FORESTRY FORUM, Vol.II Issue 24, May 1999

□

...Can one be secondarily "initially challenged"? If so, that's my state when it comes time for making entries in the TFN Index under "Projects". A good guessing-game would have such questions as "Which two local nature-oriented organizations share the acronym, "TEA"?" Never mind, anyone going to the wrong meeting would still be doing something enlightening. In fact, a small "t" tea wouldn't be a bad idea to discuss the whole (rather amusing) problem!

DB, in response to PC in her PR in TFN: 492

THE TREES OF MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY

Many of the trees in Mount Pleasant Cemetery have beautiful fall colour. The contrast between evergreens makes the scene even more spectacular. Of course the King and Queen are the sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) and the Red maple (*Acer rubrum*). Much has been printed about maples in our newsletter but I would like to add a helpful hint for beginners. If you eat lots of sugar it will rot your teeth. This is an easy way to tell a sugar maple from a red maple. The "red" has teeth, the "sugar" hasn't.

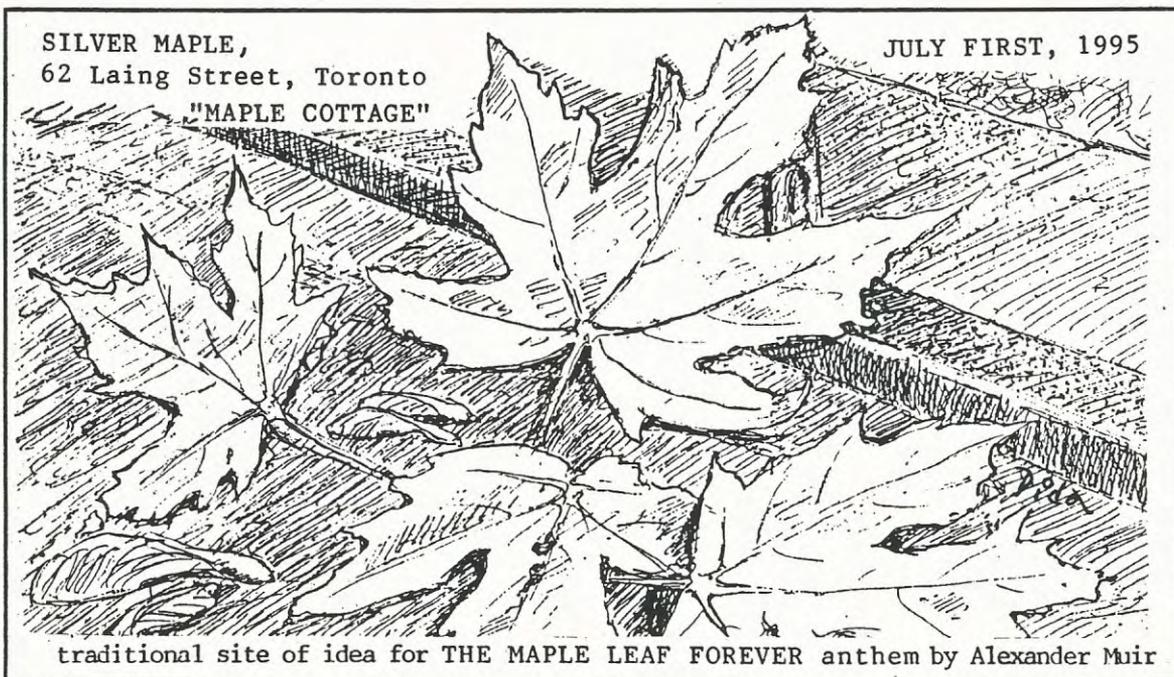
In section "X" of the cemetery, you will find the grave of Alexander Muir. He is the composer of the song "The Maple Leaf Forever". Now no one knows which maple leaf inspired him, but our best guess was the sugar maple or the red maple. (I sure hope it wasn't the Norway maple.)* On each side of his memorial these trees have been planted.

The red maple is planted throughout Mount Pleasant Cemetery; there are lots in section "C". An interesting form is called *Acer rubrum Morgan*. It is one of our attempts to make everything in nature mathematically perfect. It has the exact shape of a lollipop. One can be found in section "D".

The sugar maple also has different "forms" such as the "upright sugar maple". I'm sure there must be some in the cemetery but none is listed.

Roger Powley

* Ed.Note In fact, it is supposed to be a silver maple that inspired him, specifically the one on Laing Street, near the Leslie St. Spit. □



COMMON BOTANICAL NAMES

Wherever did they originate? What visions they conjure up!
Hawksbeard, goat'sbeard, goat's-rue (did one ever?)

Then, as you muse on, a story emerges:

At four-o'clock one October afternoon, black-eyed Susan, bouncing Bet and sweet Cicely went for a picnic in the woods with their friends Gill-over-the ground, herb Robert chewing on black gum, and wild sweet William.

They walked through the woods with their trusty hounds-tongue 'n' chicory. Except for a lone partridgeberry, they saw no birds or animals; however, in the wetland were trout lily, toadflax, turtlehead and pickerelweed.

In the picnic basket were butter-and-eggs, buckwheat, Labrador tea, milkweed, cheeses, and pineappleweed, with boneset for the dogs. After eating, they set off for home; it got dark very early and swamp candles, blazing stars and moonseed lit their way.

Fortunately in their quiet neighbourhood they did not meet wild madders with their cleavers, and all reached home safely. The girls, eyebright and forget-me-not, returned to their virgin's bower and the boys climbed into their bedstraw to dream of sowing wild oats.

Ruth Munson

□



Poison Ivy and Broad Beech Fern - Rouge Valley, Summer, 1999
(drawing by Joanne Doucette from her photo)

PROJECTS

PLANTING A TREE PROVIDES HUGE REWARDS

- . Trees absorb carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. Humans breathe oxygen. The benefits are obvious.
- . On a hot day in the summer, the shade under a tree can be as much as 30°C cooler than a paved lot.
- . A tree or row of trees planted as a windbreak for your home can save you money on your winter heating bills.
- . Likewise, a tree shading your home in the summer can save air-conditioning costs.
- . Trees absorb sound and can create a sound barrier between your home and a busy street or highway, for example, or other source of noise pollution.
- . Trees absorb atmospheric pollution and provide clean, healthy air to breathe.
- . As ultraviolet radiation from the sun becomes more of a problem, the shade of a tree on your deck, patio or yard becomes a necessity.
- . Trees provide privacy and add character to your home.
- . Erosion on slopes can be controlled by the planting of trees. Trees also absorb and hold water in the soil, preventing runoff and thereby helping to maintain groundwater levels.
- . Birds and other wildlife are attracted to treed areas.
- . Trees add to the property value of your home.
- . Last but not least, the beauty of a tree gracing a lawn or adding a focal point to your yard is indisputable. We all experience the cool, calming effect of a suburban street that is lined with trees.

extracted from an article by Charlie Dobbin in the LONDON FREE PRESS, May 7, 2000

DAM BUSTERS

One year after the Edwards Dam was blown up, the Kennebec River is recovering. Migratory fish, including sturgeon and Atlantic salmon, have been travelling past the old hydro-power site for the first time in 150 years and water quality has improved. Wildlife groups in the U.S. hope the Kennebec success will set a precedent for river restoration elsewhere.

from "News of the Earth" by Kenny Taylor in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 18, No. 9, Sept. 2000

CAR-FREE DAYS

The first European-wide car-free day is being celebrated on Sept. 25, 2000. The previous year 22 million people enjoyed urban life transformed by temporary car-free areas in large parts of town and city centres. Some people enjoyed it so much they wanted a car-free day every week.

from "What's on" by Simon Bell in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 18, No. 9, Sept. 2000

Comment: Such a day must do wonders in reducing air and noise pollution! Anyone who has visited the Don Valley when either the Don Valley Parkway or the Bayview Extension is closed down knows what a difference a car-free road makes.

▷

LESLIE STREET SPIT RECORDS



Tommy Thompson Park - Flora and Fauna Observation Card

Please fill in one of these cards for any observations you make at Tommy Thompson Park. This information will be added to our database and will be used to improve our knowledge of this unique area.

Date of obs.:

Type (mammal, plant, insect, bird etc.):

Species:

Number:

Sex (if known):

Age (if known):

Circle: - seen - heard - scats - pellets - specimen - other (specify):

Exact location (UTM Coord. or use grid on back):

Comments (nest, young, eggs, digging nest, laying, killed by predator etc.):

Observer:

Telephone Contact:



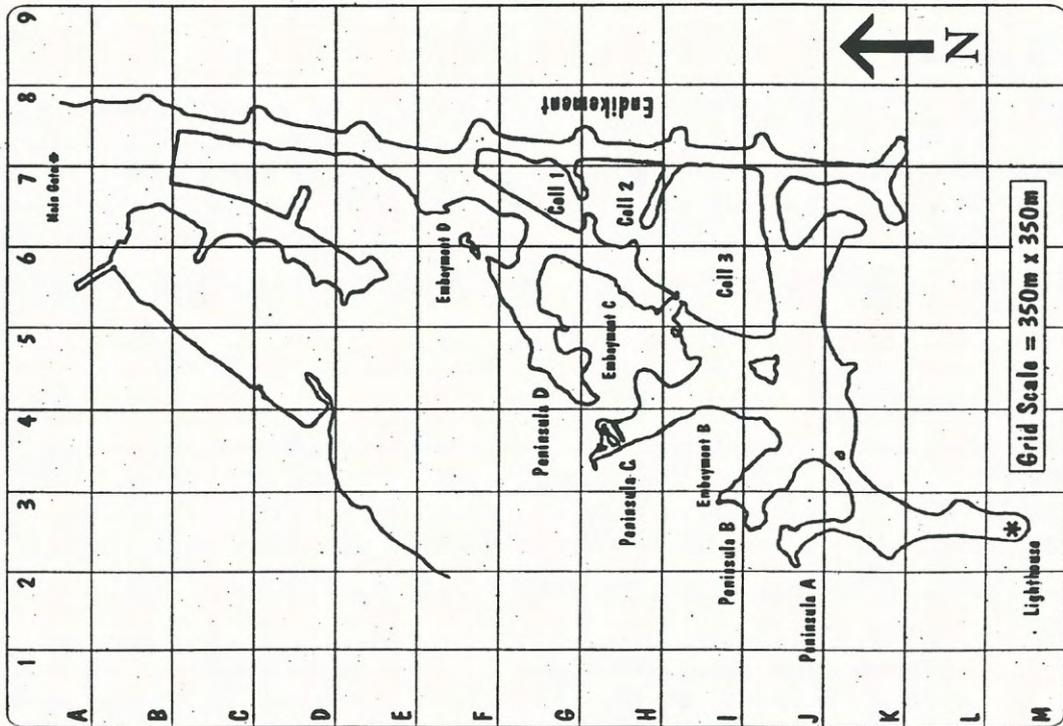
metro region
conservation

Return to: Scott Jarvis, MTRCA, 5 Sheresham Drive, Downsview, Ontario M3N 1S4

Environment
Canada
GREAT LAKES 2000
CLEANUP FUND



Tommy Thompson Park



IRONY

I have been visiting the mouth of Mud Creek, just outside the Don Valley Brickworks Park. Since the Parks Department has taken the stream out of a pipe and created a pond the area is now attracting wildlife. Much of the area has been bulldozed, and what was essentially a weed patch has become bare. I saw this as an opportunity to revitalize the vegetation. I started by pulling up the remaining Japanese knotweed and pulling up the dog strangling vine and stinging nettles as they appeared. Some grasses, willows, and dames rocket came up and I let them grow. My thought was to let the wildflowers reproduce, while pulling the weeds and eventually a beautiful garden would be created.

One day while working there I looked across the Don and saw another person picking all the dames rocket.* It occurred to me he was doing the exact opposite of me. Irony?

Roger Powley

* another invasive alien

□



January 15, 2000, circa 1:30 PM:

What was probably a coyote (faint chance, a dog) was seen crossing the pathway in Morningside Park. Later it was seen on the bank of Samson Crescent. Weather: After snow. Small dog size, very straight tail, quite dark grey. No collar and no sign of owner. Verdict: (based on my New Mexico sightings) a coyote.

D. Andrew White

IN THE NEWS

ECOLOGISTS IN B.C. DECLARE OPEN SEASON ON ALIEN BULLFROGS

Bullfrogs have invaded Vancouver Island in a population explosion that ecologists believe is threatening indigenous frog species. In Ontario, scientists say the bullfrog population is shrinking because of habitat destruction, pesticides and overharvesting for frog's legs sold to restaurants -- but its B.C. cousins are thriving. They are also found in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The huge frogs, native to Eastern North America, are multiplying in B.C. at an alarming rate. They can grow to half a kilogram by eating birds, fish, small mammals, snakes, other frog species and even their own offspring. At up to 20 centimetres in length, they are the largest frogs in North America and can double their weight in a month. They are superb predators.

from an article by Kim Lumman in the GLOBE & MAIL, July 15, 2000

DRIVING FOR DOUGH

Most of the province's 38 conservation authorities are desperately seeking new sources of revenue, after the province slashed funding by 70 per cent and told conservation officials to "use" their waterways and forests to make up the shortfall. Until recently David Crombie, the former Toronto mayor whom many credit with saving the city's downtown 30 years ago and who has a green reputation because of his work on the Waterfront Regeneration Trust was the chair of EnviroGolf, a fledgling company that sells golf courses to conservation authorities by promising not to raze the landscape, and to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers that might poison streams and creeks. Crombie also helped to convince the Ganaraska Conservation Authority to go for an 18-hole EnviroGolf course. That means felling red pines in the Ganaraska Forest, which was planted 50 years ago to stop the annual flooding of Port Hope by the Ganaraska River.

from an article by Rosemary Speirs in the TORONTO STAR, May 13, 2000

STUDY URGES ACTION ON TOXIC ROAD SALT

A five-year assessment by a panel of scientists, environmentalists and health experts found that heavy use of road salt contaminates groundwater and harms plants and animals. Health officials say human hazards have not been linked to road salt, but meltwater runoff and leaching from storage piles have been known to make well water too salty to drink. About five million tonnes of road salts are spread on Canadian roads each year. At between \$50 and \$65 a tonne, municipal officials say it's the cheapest and most effective way to make icy roads safer.

from an article in the GLOBE & MAIL, Aug. 12, 2000

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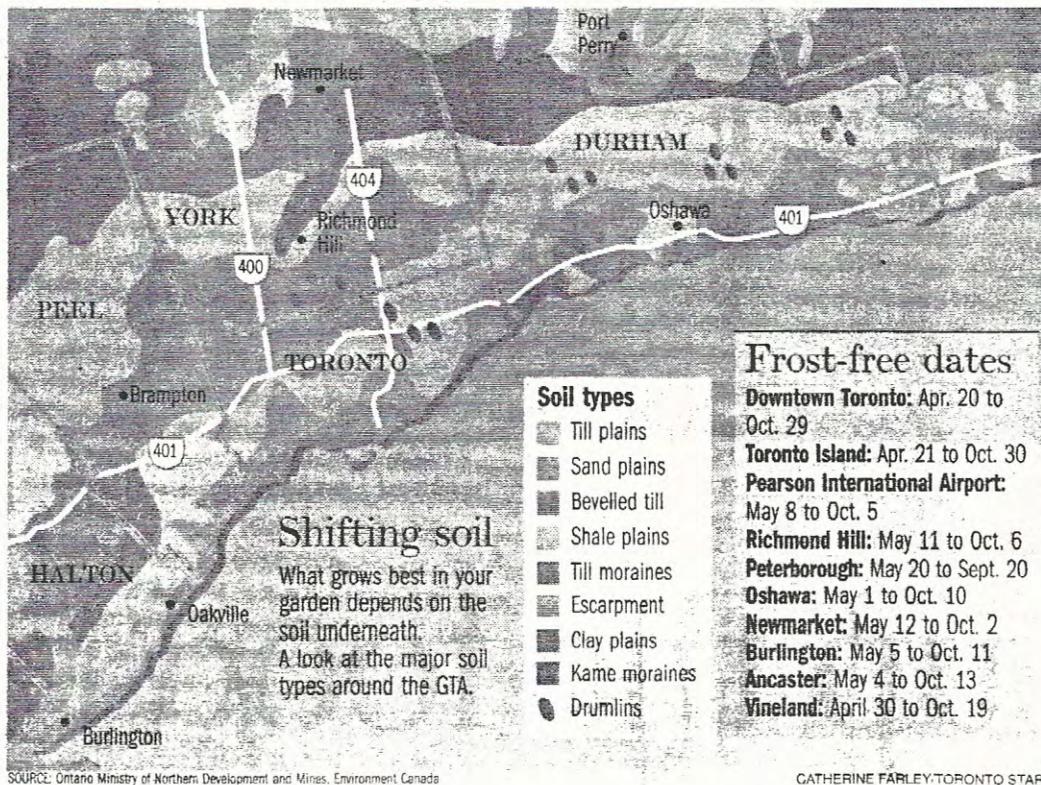
IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

COYOTES ON THE PROWL, BUT LIKELY NOT IN PACKS

Greater Toronto has become coyote country. Their numbers are growing because of an abundance of food due to recent mild winters, hunting and trapping bans in urban areas, and because they're wily and adaptable. Generally, coyotes roam alone or in family groups, not in packs, especially in the summer, when they're rearing young. In the winter, they'll sometimes form packs to hunt larger prey such as deer. While coyotes don't pose a danger to people, they'll eat cats and small dogs. Last spring, two large coyotes chased a small dog in Toronto's High Park but were scared off by the owner. In recent years, coyotes have been seen in the parks in Mississauga's Meadowvale area, where they were welcome because they help to control the goose population. Attacks on livestock by coyotes are common in rural areas of Greater Toronto. However, coyotes only kill for food.

extracted from an article by Mike Funston in the TORONTO STAR, Aug. 5, 1999

THE CHANGING OF THE GARDEN



Forget May 24, the traditional Victoria Day start to the gardening season. The "official" frost-free date for downtown Toronto is April 20, according to Environment Canada. And serious Toronto gardeners know the "actual" date is much earlier.

from an article by Dana Flavelle in the TORONTO STAR, April 15, 2000



RESULTS FROM THE LAB.

SGS Pharmaceuticals tested 12 kinds of water for purity. Eleven were bottled water. One was tap water. The results were surprising. Although all of them were safe to

drink, five brands of bottled water were less pure than tap water. Six brands of bottled water tested perfectly, showing no presence of bacteria.



	Acqua della Madonna	Crystal Springs	Dasani	Evian	Luso	Naleczowianka	Naya	President's Choice Iceberg	President's Choice	San Benedetto	Volvic	Toronto tap water
Heterotrophic Plate Count	10.92	318	0	14.56	249	0	1.32	0	0	0	0	0.23
Coliform Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E. coli Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Standards for Canadian drinking water are set out in a Health Canada document called Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality. The guidelines are produced in co-operation with provincial health and environment ministries, and are recognized as the standard yardstick against which water quality can be measured.

Among the parameters it sets out are three key indicators of bacterial contamination:

- Heterotrophic Plate Count determines the presence of bacterial colonies. The maximum allowable is 500 colonies in a one millilitre sample.
- Coliform Count indicates the presence of coliform bacteria. In a 100 millilitre sample, zero coliform are allowed.
- E. coli Count determines whether E. coli bacteria are present. In a 100 millilitre sample, zero E. coli are allowed.

The Globe and Mail

IS BOTTLED WATER REALLY BETTER?

Laboratory tests commissioned by the GLOBE & MAIL show that some bottled water provides exactly what the industry promises -- absolute purity. But of 11 brands tested, five exhibited higher levels of bacteria than a sample of Toronto tap water. The bacteria aren't dangerous, and all the water tested fell well within federal drinking-water guidelines.

from an article by Peter Cheney & Krista Foss in the GLOBE & MAIL, June 17, 2000

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

CALCIUM DEFICIENT BIRDS

After examining collections of birds' eggs in museums, Cornell University found that modern American birds have thinner egg shells than their predecessors, possibly caused by a lack of calcium from natural sources in their diet. When nearly 700 birdwatchers placed oven-dried crushed hen's eggshells in wild bird feeders around the U.S., researchers concluded that the birds benefited from their calcium supplement.

from "Green Fingers" by Sally Cunningham in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 18, No. 9, Sept. 2000

NEW REGULATIONS FOR BAIT FISHERY

The Ministry of Natural Resources has set new regulations for the province's bait fishery. To ensure proper management and sustainability of bait fish in Ontario, bait harvesters are now required to keep more accurate records of the amount of bait harvested, and a commercial bait licence is now needed to sell leeches and northern leopard frogs. All other species of frogs are restricted from commercial harvest. Commercial bait operators are also no longer permitted to preserve or sell salted bait. The new regulation prevents the unsustainable practice of commercial bait operators selling salted bait by the bushel to anglers who dump large quantities down ice fishing holes to attract other fish (this practice is known as chumming). Sales of baitfish in the province are estimated to be worth between \$40 and \$60 million annually.

from an article in the COBOURG DAILY STAR, April 22, 2000

TOO MUCH NITROGEN?

As more nitrogen is applied, fewer species of plants survive. The ones that do are usually less-desirable, non-native ones such as quack grass, which needs high doses of nitrogen to thrive. When the amount of nitrogen doubles, species diversity declines by 25 per cent. As the levels continue to increase, species loss eventually reaches 40 to 70 per cent.

from "Social Studies" by Michael Kesterton in the GLOBE & MAIL, March 20, 2000

PRONOUNCED DIFFERENCES

Controversy has arisen in Toronto about how to pronounce the word "coyote", prompted by sightings of the animal in the city's High Park. Torontonians call it a "ky-OAT-ee". Westerners, who have lived with the animal longer traditionally have more commonly said "KY-oat" or even "KY-oot" (a Northern Alberta variation). The animal's name is ultimately derived from Nahuatl, the language spoken by the Aztecs, for whom the crafty canine was a "coyotl". Now the coyote does go by other names, such as "prairie wolf" or "brush wolf", but zoologists point out that it is not a wolf.

from an article by Katherine Barber in the GLOBE & MAIL, Feb. 7, 2000

□

THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

October 1999, Toronto

This month was close to normal in all respects, the first month of which that could be said in the past two years. The mean temperature was just 0.1°C above the 1961-1990 average downtown and 0.4°C above at the airport. Large areas of eastern North America were below this long-term average. Rainfall was within 1-2 mm of the average at both major Toronto observing stations, but over half of it fell on Oct. 13th, with only 4-5 mm after that date. For the third year in a row we had a sunny October with more than 180 hours of bright sunshine. Pearson Airport averaged the windiest since 1990 but Toronto Island had near normal wind speeds.

Early in October, a couple of strong cold fronts swept across southern Ontario, bringing a now unfamiliar chill and frost on October 7th everywhere except downtown locations. Daytime temperatures below 10°C and brisk winds made it quite sharp. Thereafter, a warming trend set in and the rest of the month was mild with some fluctuations. As many as five days had maximum temperatures above 20°C, including on the Thanksgiving weekend and occurring as late as October 30th. Hallowe'en was spectacular.

Gavin Miller



THE WILD CARROT
or
Queen Anne's Lace

has also earned
the name,
"Bird's Nest Plant"
- the stage it
has reached in
this drawing
by Mary Cumming.

Guild Inn, Scarboro' Bluffs
September 4, 1999



COMING EVENTS

Toronto Ornithological Club - Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Walks - for the intermediate birder, but beginners are welcome - free

- Sat. Oct. 7 from 8 am (all day) with Hugh Currie. Meet at the Toronto Islands ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. to catch the 8:15 am ferry to Hanlan's Point. Bring a lunch.

Royal Canadian Institute - free science lectures, Sundays at 3 pm in the Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Bldg., 1 King's College Circle. Call 977-2983 for more information.

- Oct. 22 - Wild salmon, escaped farmed salmon and a conservation imperative - F.J. Whoriskey Jr.
- Oct. 29 - The Global Village is a myth - P. Hoffert

High Park Walking Tours -

- Oct. 1 - Harvest Festival at Colborne Lodge (see below)
 - Oct. 15 - The Birds of Fall (Meet at 9 am; bring binoculars.)
 - Oct. 29 - Nature photography (Bring your camera.) at 1:15 pm
- Meet near the south side of the Grenadier Cafe and Teahouse. Walks last about 2 hours. \$2 donation suggested. Walks begin at 1:15 pm.

Bird Studies Canada - annual members meeting and birdfest at the Royal Botanical Gardens - Sun. Oct. 1 from 11 am to 5:30 pm. Cost: \$7. Call 1-888-448-BIRD to reserve tickets. Send money to Bird Studies Canada, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont. NOE 1M0.

High Park Harvest Festival - Oct. 1 from 12 noon to 4:30 pm. Special event admission \$2 to tour Colborne Lodge. Traditional music, a Victoria picnic, children's activities. Volunteers needed to help with a TFN display for a couple of hours. Call Andre Vietinghoff at 232-9241 if you are able to assist.

TFN
display

Ian Wheal Heritage Walks

- o Sat. Oct. 7 at 2 pm - lost ponds of Silverthorn. Meet at the southwest corner of Caledonia Rd. and Eglinton Ave. West.
- o Sat. Oct. 14 at 1:30 pm - fishing girls of Toronto (c1912). Meet at the southeast corner of Queen St. East and Sumach St.
- o Sat. Oct. 28 at 1:30 pm - Liberty St. Meet at the southeast corner of King St. West and Dufferin St.
- o Sun. Oct. 29 at 1:30 pm - railway lands east. Meet at the clock outside Union Station on Front St. West just west of Bay St. □

Clangor in the night.
Parting the curtains to peek,
the bandit: Raccoon

Haiku by Therese Paradis

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\$25 SINGLE, SENIOR FAMILY

\$20 STUDENT, SENIOR SINGLE

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