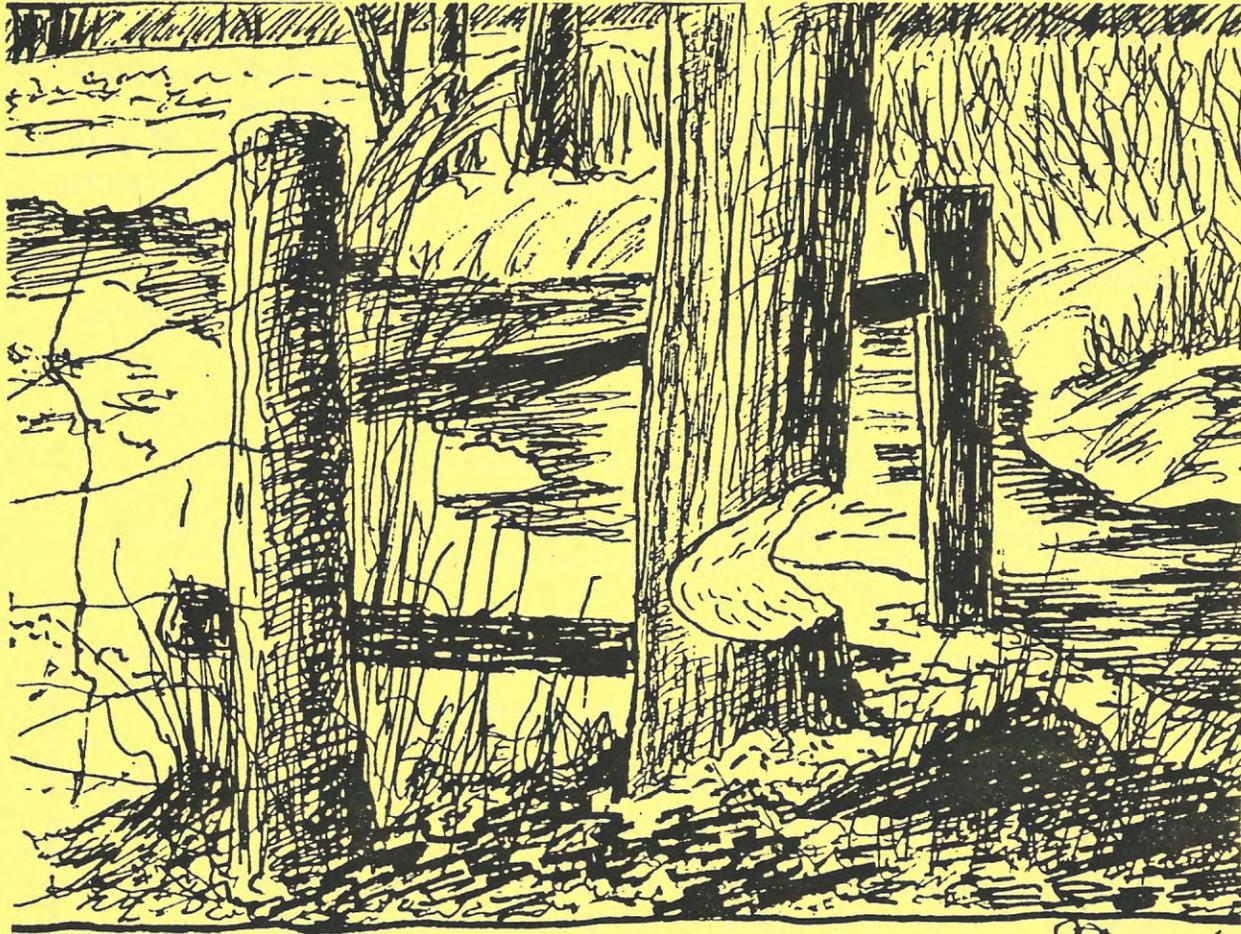


# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 498

March 2001



"BEAVER WORKINGS ON THE HUMBER RIVER, TORONTO"

Field drawing by Joanne Doucette, 2000.

## Inside

Amphibians & reptiles 8,14  
Birds 4,6,7,8,9,11,13-15,17,21  
Coming events 18,24-25  
Fishes 14  
Geology 18,21  
Invertebrates 10,11,15,18,19  
Issues 15,17,18,19,20,22  
Mammals 1,9,11,14,20,22  
Projects 7-9,22,24

TFN - meetings 2  
newsletter submissions 2  
office hours 2  
outings 3-4  
President's report 5  
publications 26  
volunteers needed 24  
Trees 11,12,20,23  
Weather 21,23

## TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, March 4, 2001 - GEESE, SWANS AND BEAVERS  
at 2:30 pm  
in the Northrop Frye Hall  
Victoria University  
73 Queen's Park Cres. East

an illustrated talk by William Carrick, originator of the concept of inducing migration in reintroduced populations of geese, swans and cranes.  
- The speaker will tell us the highlights of raising and keeping geese, swans and beavers for film productions.

VISITORS WELCOME!

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

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, April 1, 2001 (Daylight saving begins.)

NEXT NEWSLETTER: APRIL (to be mailed in mid-March)

 TFN office - open Friday mornings from 9 am to 12 noon. Publications available as well as pins, decals, badges and hasti-notes (new!).

### IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

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

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

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

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

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

Editor: Helen Juhola

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Printer: DM Printing

Mailer: Perkins Mailing Services

# 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. \* These numbers should be preceded by 416.

- Sunday  
 March 4  
 2:30 pm  
 TFN MEETING (See page 2 for details.)
- Monday  
 March 5  
 2 pm to  
 4 pm  
 NORTHERN DISTRICT LIBRARY - nature arts (photography) Toronto  
 Leader: Robin Powell  
 Meet at the library on Orchard View Blvd. just west of Yonge St., one block north of Eglinton Ave, on the second floor. Bring your own nature slides, as many as 20, or just come and enjoy looking. A projector and screen will be provided. If you have any questions, please call the TFN office at 416-593-2656. Snap shots are also welcome.
- Saturday  
 March 10  
 10 am  
 \$ ferry tickets  
 TORONTO ISLANDS - nature walk waterfront, Toronto  
 Leader: Joanne Doucette  
 Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. Bring lunch, binoculars, a telescope (if you have one) and dress warmly. We may see 25 species of birds and thousands of ducks. Walk will probably end about 4 pm.
- Thursday  
 March 15  
 10:30 am  
 TFN OFFICE - nature arts Toronto  
 Leader: Diana Banville  
 Meet at the TFN office (2 Carlton St., #1519) [northeast corner of Yonge & College].  
 We will be viewing binders of illustrations from more than 20 years of newsletters, arranged by subject, and discussing ideas. Lunch may be purchased at College Park food court. Bring recent work to show and/or copies to submit for the newsletter. [There is always art on display at College Park.]
- Sunday  
 March 18  
 2 pm  
 TREES IN WINTER - urban ecology Toronto  
 Leader: Peter Hare  
 Meet on the north side of St. Clair Ave. West just east of Bathurst St. (St. Clair West subway entrance).  
 On this walk we will be looking at trees in winter, landforms and notable houses past and present. This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community.

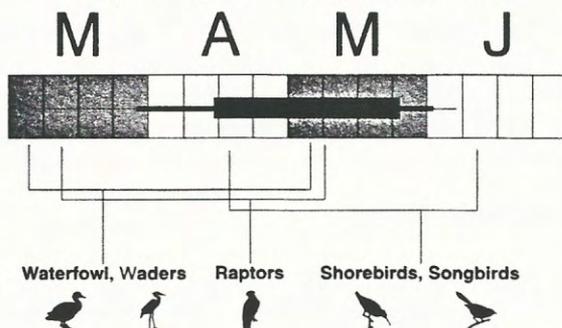
Wednesday  
 March 21  
 SPRING BEGINS

FOR OTHER WALKS AND EVENTS SEE PAGES 24 AND 25.

## MARCH OUTINGS (cont'd)

- Thursday WARDS ISLAND - nature walk Lakeshore, Toronto  
 March 22 Leader: Ann Gray  
 10 am Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. Bring lunch,  
 \$ ferry binoculars, and water.  
 tickets Now that spring has arrived, birds are arriving daily from wintering areas  
 south of Toronto. Be prepared to look for signs of spring.
- Saturday DORSET CREEK - nature walk Highland Cr. tributary, Scarborough  
 March 24 Leaders: Carol & Murray Seymour  
 10:30 am Meet at the southeast corner of Lawrence Ave. East and  
 Markham Rd. Bring lunch.  
 We will be following this branch of West Highland Creek looking for signs of  
 spring. Moderate hills and some slippery places.
- Sunday TOMLIN'S CREEK - urban ecology Toronto  
 March 25 Leader: Ed Freeman & others  
 2 pm Meet at the southeast corner of Queen St. East and Coxwell Ave.  
 This walk will take us to the site of the former Small's Pond and a visit to  
 one of Toronto's newer parks on the site of the former Woodbine (Greenwood)  
 Race Track.
- Wednesday WILKET CREEK RAVINE - nature walk West Don tributary, North York  
 March 28 Leader: Roger Powley  
 10 am Meet at the southwest corner of Lawrence Ave. East and Leslie  
 St. Bring lunch.  
 We will visit Edwards Gardens and follow the ravine south looking for birds  
 and other signs of spring.
- Saturday MIMICO CREEK VALLEY - nature walk Mimico Cr., Etobicoke  
 March 31 Leader: Diana Karrantjas  
 10 am Meet at the southwest corner of Lakeshore Blvd. West and  
 Park Lawn Rd. Bring lunch.  
 This walk will be rugged in part and on streets in part. We will be walking  
 north to Montgomery Inn (plenty of places to leave early), following the  
 creek.

GENERAL SPRING MIGRATION PATTERN FOR BIRD GROUPS  
 THROUGH SOUTHERN ONTARIO



from a  
 Kortright  
 pamphlet

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The site of our city was chosen because of its natural harbour, its river valleys, abundant forest and rich meadows. When the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, arrived in Toronto on May 2nd, 1793, he decided to establish the capital of the new province on this shore. In August of that summer, he changed the name to York to honour the Duke of York for his victory over the French. (In 1834, when Toronto was incorporated as a city, its original name was restored.) Surveyor Alexander Aikin drew the first official plan of York Harbour, showing the sand spit then known as the peninsula, with a proposed block house and battery at Gibraltar (now Hanlan's) Point, the barracks for the Queen's Rangers near the mouth of Garrison Creek, the tiny town site to the west of the Don River, and a long straight line, the future Lot Street (now Queen), with lots lined up in a military-style grid, stretching northward.

Many of you may have read the diary of Elizabeth Simcoe, the Lieutenant-Governor's wife, who came to Toronto in July, 1793, aboard the "Mississaga", from the then capital, Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Simcoes had spent a year there and before that a winter in Quebec, having travelled from England with their two youngest children in 1791. It's a delight to read Mrs. Simcoe's observations; she came prepared to have an adventurous and enjoyable relationship with the 'new' country, its flora and fauna, and its human inhabitants, both settlers and Indians (her word). One of her regular exercises, winter and summer, was to ride her spirited horse on "the peninsula opposite Toronto, so I called the spit of land, for it is united to the mainland by a very narrow neck of ground".

Storms in the mid 19th century broke through the narrow spit, forming the Toronto Islands, which have continued to evolve, due partly to natural forces and partly to changes engineered by humans, such as dredged lagoons and built-up land for the city airport. While we cannot claim that the water in the bay is as "beautifully clear and transparent" as it was when Elizabeth Simcoe ventured forth, even today walks on the island's beaches, woodlands and meadows offer fresh air and plenty of opportunities to observe nature. The frozen bay in winter is an adventure of a different order. The steel-clad ferry, "Ongiara", its bow built like a sled, seems to glide over the ice; winter ducks and gulls seek open water wherever it can be found, while ice chunks crash or tinkle along the shores. On a walk at the end of December we saw people skating on the lagoon and three horses, freed from Far Enough Farm, were grazing through the snow near the new Island Public School.

Good sources for further information about Toronto's unique waterfront include the TFN booklet TORONTO ISLANDS, by Steve Varga; ASHBRIDGE'S BAY, edited by George Fairfield, published by the Toronto Ornithological Club, 1998; A PLACE TO WALK, by Aleta Karstad, Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., Toronto, 1995; BAYWATCHING, newsletter of the Toronto Bay Initiative. The Island Archives are kept by Albert Fulton of Algonquin Island. Toronto Reference Library and the Urban Affairs Library in Metro Hall can also be helpful.

Our resolutions for the new millennium should include keeping informed about plans for Toronto's lakeshore lands and supporting those who would protect and enhance their natural value. Like the hardy pioneers of two centuries ago and today's intrepid island dwellers, let's be active in enjoying our environment and creative in planning the future of our city.

Phoebe Cleverley

□

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

Feb. 2, 2001

I really enjoy reading about wildlife sightings in the area, so I would like to tell you about one of my own.

It was Monday, December 4th, 2000. Still no snow on the ground. Heidi (our cat) and I were standing by the back patio doors watching the birds. The seed feeders were full and I had just replenished the supply of peanuts for the blue jays. The yard was full of activity. I was watching the juncos feeding off the ground when another bird caught my eye. It was acting differently which is why I noticed but it looked like "just a sparrow". I kept watching and wondering why it wasn't using the feeders along with the rest of the birds. I decided to run for the binoculars. It was a male white-throated sparrow kicking up a storm searching for food. I called for my husband Glen to come quickly. He confirmed by sighting with equal enthusiasm. We were thrilled to see it, just as we are when we see the first one return in spring. A few days later it snowed and I couldn't help wondering if he had finally headed south. I didn't see him again. It's funny how exciting seeing even a common bird can be when you're not expecting it. It was like last year, when I was watching the goldfinch feeder. I got out the binoculars for a closer look at the birds only to discover that they were pine siskins. We had never seen them in the backyard before. I keep looking this year but there is very little activity at the goldfinch feeder except when the other feeders are empty and the house sparrows try desperately to get at the niger seed.

Wendy Small, North Leaside (Toronto)

P.S. Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds" Map 367 has a tiny purple section in our area indicating that the white-throated sparrow can be a year-round resident.

Another book we have, although a little out-of-date (1988), - "A Bird-Finding Guide to the Toronto Region" by Clive E. Goodwin has the white-throated sparrow as rare from mid-November to about the end of March. His definition of rare is as follows: "Rare - occurs annually (sometimes in small numbers) but can often be missed in the season even with regular field trips".

□

In like a lamb but  
all too quickly, by nightfall,  
a roaring lion!

Haiku by Diana Banville,  
March 1, 2000.

# PROJECTS

## ATTENTION PARENTS AND KEEN TEEN BIRDERS!

The 2001 Young Ornithologists' Workshop will be held at Long Point Bird Observatory from 27th July to 3rd August. This intensely-packed week of activities focuses on field ornithology and includes banding, censusing, field identification, birding trips, bird skinning, guest lectures, warbler model making and much more!

Come and make new friends from across the country with similar interests in the world of birds. Six lucky applicants (ages 13-17) will be selected for the Doug Tarry Bird Study Awards and recipients will have all expenses (except travel costs) paid.

▷ Applications are due for 30th April, 2001. For additional information and an application form, contact: Jon McCracken at Bird Studies Canada (e-mail: [jmccracken@bsc-eoc.org](mailto:jmccracken@bsc-eoc.org)) P.O.Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont. NOE 1M0

## ONTARIO BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

The second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas is underway! It is scheduled to run from 2001-2005. It follows on the highly successful first atlas that was carried out from 1981-1985.

The first atlas has been used province-wide to aid in conservation and protection efforts for Ontario.

The second atlas will be even more useful because it will:

- . Provide a picture of how bird distributions have changed over the past 20 years
- . Highlight any species that are showing alarming declines, and
- . Reveal patterns of abundance

▷ To get involved, you can register on the Breeding Bird Atlas web page ([www.birdsontario.org](http://www.birdsontario.org)) or through your Regional Co-ordinator (a listing is available on the web page).

If you don't have access to the web, contact:

Nicole Kopysh,  
Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas,  
c/o University of Guelph,  
50 Stone Rd.E., Blackwood Hall Room 211  
Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1

Tel: 519-826-2092, Fax: 519-826-2113



## MARSH MONITORING REPORT

For the first five years of the Marsh Monitoring Program (from 1995 through 1999) red-winged blackbird was clearly the most commonly recorded marsh nesting species. Swamp sparrow was also observed frequently and four other songbirds (common yellowthroat, yellow warbler, song sparrow and marsh wren) were nearly as common. Tree and barn swallows were the most commonly occurring aerial foragers.

Several species exhibited significant declines across the Great Lakes: pied-billed grebe, blue-winged teal, American coot and black tern. Black tern numbers declined by an average of 20% annually during the five-year period. The number of pied-billed grebes also declined, although not as steeply as for black tern -- an average of almost 12% per year. Data also revealed declines in tree swallow and red-winged blackbird numbers.

Statistically significant increases were observed for Canada goose, mallard, chimney swift, northern rough-winged swallow, common yellowthroat and common grackle.

The declines in some wetland specialists and increases in some wetland-edge and generalist species suggest some changes in wetland habitat conditions. For example, black tern, pied-billed grebe and several other species depend on a mix of vegetation and open water habitats. These habitat conditions usually result from periodic, wide fluctuations in water levels; long-term stabilization of wetland water levels disrupts this natural cycle.

During the five-year period, spring peeper was the most frequently detected species of amphibians. Green frog was the second most frequently detected species, followed by grey treefrog, American toad, northern leopard frog, bullfrog, chorus frog, and wood frog.

Declining trends were found for American toad, grey treefrog and chorus frog. Increasing trends were found for bullfrog, northern leopard frog, spring peeper, green frog and wood frog. However, only the declining trend for chorus frog was statistically significant.

▷ If you would like to join a network of others who are concerned about wetlands and their inhabitants, and would like to contribute your time and talents to the conservation of these rich and valuable components of our natural heritage, please contact: Kathy Jones at 888-448-2473 (aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org) or visit the web site at [www.bsc-eoc.org](http://www.bsc-eoc.org)

extracted from an article by Mary Vallianatos in LONG POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY AND ONTARIO PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER, Vol.32, Number 3, Fall 2000 ▷

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

Haiku by Helen Juhola

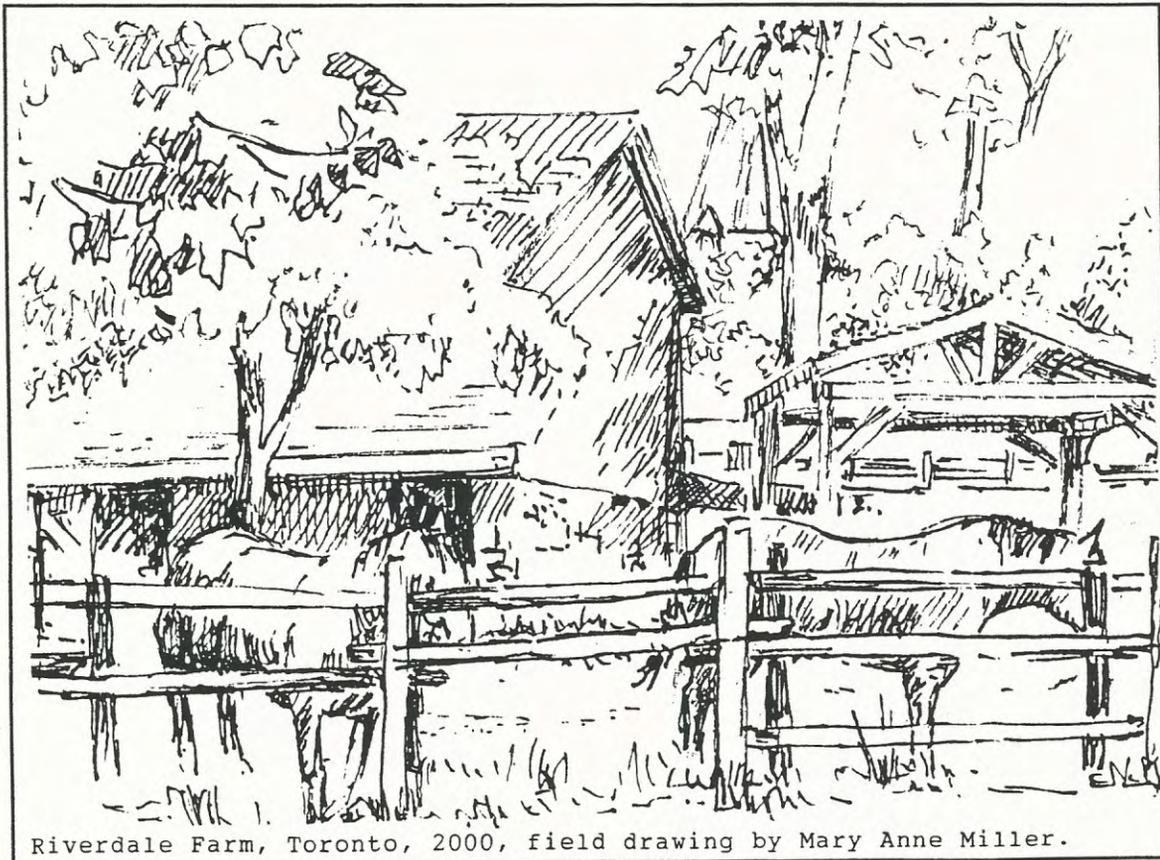
## PROJECTS (cont'd)

## FATAL LIGHT AWARENESS PROGRAM (FLAP)

In the Toronto financial district about half of the annual 2000 birds retrieved by FLAP are rehabilitated and freed. 41% of these birds are warblers, although woodcocks, brown creepers, owls, sparrows, thrushes and thrashers are found in great numbers as well. FLAP needs more volunteers who are willing to monitor (at present) 40 structures in the downtown area. Lack of volunteers prevents FLAP from visiting every building every day. If you are able to be on the scene at approximately one hour before daybreak during peak migration times (mid-March through the first week in June and mid-August through mid-November), FLAP would greatly appreciate you volunteering your time. You may contact FLAP at: 65 Front Street W., Suite 0116-207, Toronto, Ont. M5J 1E6  
Tel: 416-366-3527. Or contact them at their www site <FLAP.org>  
Two-thirds of all strikes happen in the fall migration. In North America, it is now estimated that there are over one billion strikes per year.

from the TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB NEWSLETTER, No.104, April 2000

□



Riverdale Farm, Toronto, 2000, field drawing by Mary Anne Miller.

## THE EUROPEAN SKIPPER

Skippers are small dull-coloured butterflies with fat bodies like moths. About 30 species occur in Europe. Eight of these can be found in Britain. These skippers have English names as well as scientific names. The other skippers of Europe have no English names because they occur in countries where English is not the primary language. The British skippers are the Essex skipper (*Thymelicus lineola*), the Lulworth skipper (*Thymelicus acteon*), the small skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*), the grizzled skipper (*Pyrgus malvae*), the large skipper (*Ochlodes venatus*), the chequered skipper (*Carterocephalis palaemon*), the silver spotted skipper (*Hesperia comma*), and the dingy skipper (*Erynnis tages*).

One of these skippers (*Thymelicus lineola*) has become established in Ontario. The preferred larval foodplant is timothy (*Phleum pratense*) although several other grasses are eaten. The skipper was first discovered in London, Ontario in 1910. It has now spread to the East Coast as far south as Maryland. Most texts in Canada refer to this skipper as the European skipper. This is not a very accurate term because although it is the only European skipper that has been introduced here, it is not the only European skipper. There are 29 others. The English name is the Essex skipper and this is what we should call it. This common name has been around for hundreds of years, and we should not ignore it.

Roger Powley

□



I stepped to the door  
to look outside  
and felt the fresh air  
and I wanted more.

Soon a wind came by  
pushing white clouds fast  
across the blue sky.  
How can it all last?

Then I felt the change  
to a new season  
bidding me follow  
without a reason.

Now I had hope  
and I can sing  
leaving all behind  
to welcome the Spring.

Mary Cumming

## THE MYSTERY OF THE STRIPPED ELM BARK

Our rear (north) windows look out on a big old American elm, one of the few that survived the Dutch elm disease of the 1950s. I had been puzzled for some time as to what was causing a large patch on the main trunk about 10 metres above the ground. The grey outer bark was stripped off showing the light brown underbark. At first I thought "Oh no, not another outbreak of the disease". We used to see lots of stripping like this during the time of the Dutch elm disease, the work of black-backed and hairy woodpeckers searching for the larvae of the elm bark beetle. However this patch never spread to the rest of the tree. It was facing me on the south side of the trunk and was about one metre tall by 50 centimetres wide. What was most puzzling to me was that it always looked fresh. I thought of red squirrels which I have seen stripping the bark of cedars for their nests. However the red squirrel work is much more radical and scars the tree more deeply than the patch on our tree.

This morning I found the answer. It was a cold morning with no wind. The temperature was  $-8^{\circ}\text{C}$ , but the sun was shining brightly on the trunk of the elm. A grey squirrel clambered up the trunk and flattened itself out on the patch with all four feet spread to their limits and the claws hooked into the bark. It remained in this posture for five minutes and then reversed to a head down posture, where it remained for another five minutes. It was close enough that I could see it pretty well with my eight-power binoculars. However I wished to see if it was chewing on the bark so I set up the 36 power telescope and zeroed in on its head. Its nose was pushed into the bark but the jaws were not moving.

No doubt about it -- this was just a favourite sunning place for the squirrels on cold winter mornings when the temperature on the surface of the trunk was several degrees higher than that in the surrounding area. The worn patch was the result of squirrels hooking their claws into the bark innumerable times.

I must watch for similar patches on the south side of other trees in our area to see if this is a common phenomenon. Isn't it amazing what trivial things amuse us old naturalists?

George Fairfield

□

*Early spring morning  
stand under a tree playing  
patty-cake with wind*

Haiku by Karen Parker

THE TREES OF MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY

When I was young elm trees were abundant. Now, because of Dutch elm disease they are becoming rare. One tree which grows in Mount Pleasant is a wonderful substitute. It is called the keaki (*Zelkova serrata*). I love the names of these trees; they have a musical quality. The keaki's I have seen don't have long boles but seem to branch much like the European horn beam. In its native Japan the keaki is much valued for its timber. The wood has beautiful grain and is prized for cabinet making. In the fall the leaves turn yellow, pink and orange. Some Zelkovas grow in the Caucasus and one species grows in Crete. We do not have any native species in this part of the world. To find one in the cemetery look in the south end of "D" section. It is labelled Zelkova, its generic name, but I much prefer the common name keaki.

Roger Powley





KEAKI OR JAPANESE ZELKOVA

sketches based on  
photos in the book:

A PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDE  
TO MORE THAN 500 TREES  
OF NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE  
(In fact, many are Asian.)

by Roger Phillips,        1978  
Random House, New York.

Note that the leaf tends to be lop-sided at the base - like its cousins, the elms.



## STORMWATER DETENTION PONDS: ARE THEY A RISK TO WILDLIFE?

Urban stormwater -- whether from rain or melting snow -- flushes debris and contaminants from roads, parking lots, sidewalks, rooftops, lawns, and other surfaces. Stormwater can contain suspended solids, nutrients, bacteria, oil and grease, trace metals, and organic contaminants such as pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

Stormwater detention ponds are designed and constructed to reduce flooding and erosion by controlling the peak flow, frequency of peak flow and velocity of stormwater. These ponds are also designed to trap and settle much of the solid material carried by the stormwater as sediment.

Settling improves water quality and helps reduce contaminant loads into rivers or lakes. Structural devices, such as oil and grit separators, may be incorporated upstream of the pond system to capture oil and larger particles. Aquatic vegetation can serve as a biological filter to retain fine sediment and the contaminants bound to this sediment.

While some contaminants biodegrade within the stormwater pond, others are more persistent and accumulate. Therefore it is important to determine what the usage rate of these ponds is by wildlife and whether their health is being compromised.

In 1997 and 1998, stormwater detention ponds at six sites in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and nine sites in Guelph were studied by Environment Canada.

Some of the ponds contained small wetlands that had naturally developed, but none had received any specific habitat enhancements. The ponds ranged in age from 3 to 22 years, in depth from 1.0 to 1.5 metres, and approximately 0.5 to 2.0 hectares in surface area. All ponds, except three, were located in residential areas.

For each pond, a wildlife survey (birds, amphibians, fish, reptiles and mammals), sampling and analysis of water and sediment, and toxicity tests using fish and benthic (bottom dwelling) organisms were conducted. Contaminant levels in the eggs of nesting red-winged blackbirds were measured from two ponds in the GTA. At four ponds in Guelph, in-situ bioassays of frog egg and tadpole development were also performed.

### BIRDS

Bird surveys were conducted once or twice each week from May to November 1997. The number of bird species seen feeding or nesting at a pond ranged from below 10 to 38. In total, 71 species of birds were seen nesting or feeding at the stormwater ponds during the six months of surveys.

For some stormwater ponds, the number of bird species seen was comparable to other non-stormwater ponds in the GTA. For example, breeding bird surveys conducted in 1998 at Chester Springs pond, a 0.25 hectare wetland in Toronto, found 28 species of birds using the site. Clearly, stormwater ponds can attract similar numbers of bird species as other wetlands.

STORMWATER PONDS (cont'd)

AMPHIBIANS

Once or twice each week from April to July, 1997, amphibians were surveyed at night during three to five minute surveys per pond. Among all sites, seven of the nine species of amphibians that could be expected in these southern Ontario locations were found.

The species found were the wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*), American toad (*Bufo americanus*), northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*), green frog (*Rana clamitans*), gray tree frog (*Hyla versicolor*), and western chorus frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*).

The number of species found per pond was one to seven in Guelph and zero to four in the GTA. Although the amphibians were surveyed with higher frequency than is required for the Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP), the number of amphibians found per stormwater pond is still rated as low to moderate when compared to other MMP sites in the Great Lakes basin.

Seven stormwater ponds had two or fewer amphibian species while eight ponds had three to seven species.

FISH, REPTILES AND MAMMALS

Fish were sampled with minnow traps in July, 1997. Observations of reptiles and mammals were noted during the course of the bird and amphibian surveys.

Among all ponds in the study, four species of reptiles including eastern garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) and three species of turtles were found. One species of turtle was an introduced species, the red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta*), which is commonly kept as a pet and often released into local ponds.

Eight species of fish, mainly minnows, as well as white sucker (*Catostomus commersoni*), pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*) and a non-native goldfish were seen or trapped among all ponds.

Eight species of native mammals were observed including meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), eastern cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), groundhog (*Marmota monax*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*).

Overall, for all species surveyed, stormwater ponds vary in their attraction of wildlife species, and can generally be rated as low to moderate in terms of species diversity.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- As expected, all stormwater ponds contained contaminants, generally at low levels. Levels of some persistent contaminants in sediment and water from the 15 stormwater detention ponds exceeded Ontario and Canadian guidelines for water and sediment quality in the freshwater environment.

▷

## STORMWATER PONDS (cont'd)

- . Bioaccumulation of persistent contaminants (i.e. DDE and PCBs) into red-winged blackbird eggs was found at the two sites where they nested.
- . Sediment from 1 of 15 sites, situated in a commercial/light industrial area, was toxic to benthic invertebrates in a short-term bioassay. No sites contained sediments that were toxic to fish in short-term bioassays. Conditions were toxic to frog development at 1 of the 4 residential sites.
- . Stormwater ponds do not provide good quality habitat for fish and wildlife due to the potential for contamination.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- . Pollution prevention (i.e. controlling contaminants at their source) is an effective way of reducing contaminant loads to stormwater ponds. In addition, monitoring conditions within the stormwater pond itself may identify the need to investigate and eliminate pollutant sources.
- . Stormwater pond management is recommended to ensure acceptable environmental quality. Management should include water and sediment monitoring and, when guidelines are exceeded, a wildlife survey is recommended. Quantifying wildlife use will assist in determining the need for further risk assessments or remedial action.
- . Habitat enhancement for wildlife is more ecologically viable in natural wetlands than in stormwater ponds.
- . Natural wetlands should not be used to treat stormwater because they provide many ecological and economic values which can easily be degraded or lost.

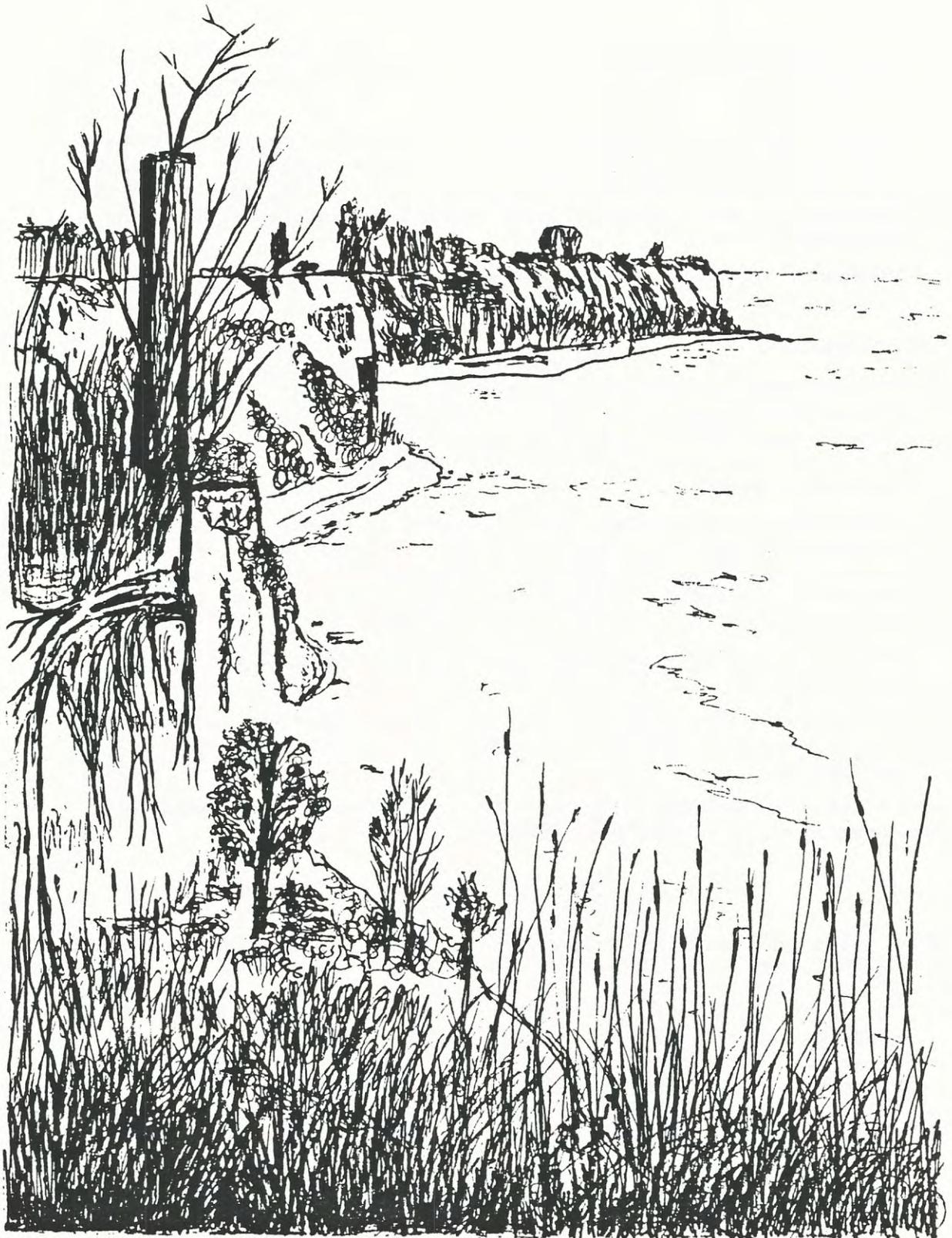
from an article by C.A.Bishop, J. Struger, L.Dunn, D.R.Forder, and S.Kok, Biologists, Environment Canada, in THE WOOD DUCK, January 2001

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## THE CONSEQUENCE OF EXCESS

Since 1950, world population has more than doubled, from 2.5 billion to 6 billion. Canada's population has followed suit, moving from 14 million in 1950 to 30 million today. The past 50 years have seen more people born on the planet than during the previous four million years of human life. ... Canadians consume more energy per capita than any other country. Canada is also the second-largest per capita emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. ... Canadians have one of the highest overall per capita consumption rates in the world. It is speculated that our 30 million Canadians consume at the rate of all 728 million Africans.

from "How many Canadians can the planet afford?" by Vivian Pharis in WILDFLOWER, 16(3), Summer 2000



*Drawn on site,  
looking east.*

*Greyabbey Park, Scarborough*

*Anne E. Levin  
October, 2000.*

## IN THE NEWS

### NO MOCKING FROM THE GALLERY, PLEASE

A pair of kookaburras sat on a tree branch observing play on the first green of the World Match play Golf Championships in Melbourne, Australia, early in January. The American players complained that the strange laughing cry made by the birds put them off their stroke.

from the TORONTO STAR, Jan. 20, 2001

### AIRBORNE HEIST

Italy's police are on the trail of a crow who snatched 500,000 lire (\$238) from a man who was withdrawing money from an automated teller machine in Sicily. As the bank notes emerged from the machine the bird swooped onto the man and snatched the bills away before he was aware of the assault. Police have theorized that the bird was trained to commit the crime and reported that a man with a pet crow had recently been seen in the area.

from "Earthweek: Diary of the planet" by Steve Newman in the TORONTO STAR, Jan. 27, 2001

### JOKER' HILL PROPOSAL WOULD KEEP SITE FOR RESEARCH

Joker's Hill, an estate just north of Toronto, was donated to the University of Toronto by benefactor Murray Koffler in 1995. The estate covers approximately 860 acres of land and is located on the northern edge of the Oak Ridges Moraine. University researchers and scientists are asking that the university keep Joker's Hill fully intact and provide base funding to maintain the estate, estimated at about \$300,000 a year. Joker's Hill supports a rich and very diverse ecosystem and offers a vast array of teaching and research opportunities. A decision on the future of Joker's Hill will be made within the next two months.

from an article by Janet Wong in the UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO BULLETIN, Jan. 29, 2001

### BLUEBIRD BOXES DO WORK!

Friends of Short Hills Park installed 80 bluebird boxes throughout the conservation area. During the year 2000 they reported that more than 150 baby birds of several species were hatched in the nest boxes. These included 37 eastern bluebirds, 66 tree swallows, 18 house wrens and 15 black-capped chickadees. All the houses were mounted on pipes. They plan to mount another 20 boxes in 2001.

from THE PENINSULA NATURALIST, Vol. 196, Jan. 2001

<p>Baptized branches rise exalting a wet sky.</p>
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Haiku by Giovanni Malito

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

BUTTERFLIES ARE FREE AT CONSERVATORY IN CAMBRIDGE

Inside, 30 to 40 species of butterflies fly freely in a humid conservatory that simulates their tropical home. As many as 2,000 butterflies can be seen fluttering among tropical plants chosen for their insect-appeal. Water gurgles through every corner of the 930-square-metre conservatory. Man-made streams trickle around the perimeter, leading to a waterfall tall enough to walk under. Moving water can be treacherous for the delicate insects, so a pebble beach has been provided where visitors can watch them sipping from sheltered pools.

The conservatory is just one wing of a new 2,325-square-metre facility dedicated to educating and inspiring visitors to appreciate butterflies and their part in the natural world. Not to be missed are two galleries where Wings of Paradise curator John Powers has displayed highlights from his formidable collection. A former teacher and police officer, Powers has studied and collected butterflies for decades and participated in several university research projects. Although there are many collections that are larger, few can match the quality of this one, which features many rare, large and remarkably beautiful species.

The building is set on 47 hectares of grounds complete with four-fifths of a hectare of wildflower meadow for attracting native butterflies in the summer months. There are also roughly five kilometres of walking trails.

Wings of Paradise is located at 2500 Kossuth Rd., Cambridge. From Highway 401 exit north on Hwy.24, then turn west (left) at Kossuth Rd.

Open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with the last admission at 4 p.m. Admission: adults \$7.50, seniors \$7, youth \$6.50, children \$4. Information: telephone (519) 653-1234 Internet: [www.wingsofparadise.com](http://www.wingsofparadise.com) Tip: wear colourful clothing and a sweet fragrance if you want the butterflies to land on you. Dress in layers as the temperature in the conservatory is about 30°C and very humid.

extracted from an article by Betty Zyvatkaukas in THE GLOBE & MAIL, January 20, 2001

FRIENDS OF MISERY BAY FOSSIL WALK [MANITOULIN ISLAND]

Look, learn and leave is the theme that ran through 'Frozen in Time,' the fossil walk with paleontologists from the Royal Ontario Museum. It is important to leave a fossil in place and intact. Fossils tell a story when found in combination with certain others. When a fossil is removed from its site, its placement among the other clues which combine to give us an accurate sequence of events is lost. The story is destroyed and the fossil is no longer 'frozen in time.' Look at the fossil, identify and study it. Then leave it in place.

extracted from an article by Mary Ellen Nies in THE MANITOULIN RECORDER, Sept.6, 2000

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## IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

## CANADIAN EARTHWORMS AREN'T NATIVES

According to recent research by an earthworm ecologist, you could dig up approximately the upper half of the North American continent and almost never find an earthworm of true North American descent. Basically, anything you can buy in a bait store in most of the country is European. Biologists have a term for the many species that wander into non-native territory and prosper: weeds. The area in question, which includes all of Canada, New England, some mid-Atlantic states, and much of the upper Midwest, is entirely populated by weed earthworms. The rest of the continent contains a mixture of weeds and native earthworm species.

The dividing line begins on the east coast in New Jersey, at about 40 degrees latitude, then snakes its way westward, dipping a few degrees south in the Midwest, then rising to just below 50 degrees latitude as it makes its way to the Pacific in Washington, where the last glaciation stopped, the farthest advance of the ice in the last glacial period, which was 15,000 to 20,000 years ago. To the north of it, you generally don't find native earthworm species. To the south, you can find them.

During that last period of glaciation, when areas that are now temperate were covered with vast sheets of ice, earthworms were among many of the creatures that were wiped out. For some distance below that line, permafrost set in and pushed the earthworms even farther south. In the 150 to 200 centuries that followed, they simply have not made their way back again. Yet there are earthworms north of the line: European and Asian immigrants, brought inadvertently by humans. The horticultural trade moved trees, probably in the colonial period, by bringing tubs of trees. Plants were moved in their soil: apples, rosebushes, any woody plant. Lilacs were probably brought over in pots. And along with the soil came earthworms.

extracted from an article by Sam Hooper Samuels, New York Times, in THE TORONTO STAR, Sept.10, 2000

## KICKING THE CAR HABIT

The Ontario Medical Association has estimated that air pollution related illness kills more than 1,800 people and makes many times that number sick in the province each year, at a cost to society of over \$2.4 billion. Accidents and fitness lost when people drive rather than walk or cycle create further health care expenses. Government subsidizes the construction of roads and parking areas, and maintains them at enormous expense, while public transit costs are passed on to users. In fact, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in the developed world where senior levels of government don't support public transit. The air, land and water pollution caused by automobile production, use and disposal is also huge -- together they likely exceed the impacts of any other single industry. Most of these costs we have yet to pay -- lead in soil from historic car emissions near roadways, chronic smog and congestion reducing our attractiveness as a site for investment and tourism and water polluted by salt runoff in the spring will prove exorbitant to remedy.

extracted from an article by Beth Savan in THE BULLETIN (University of Toronto) Nov. 2000

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IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

ANOTHER ROADKILL AFTERNOON

To be sure, the reason for crossing the road has always been to get to the other side. But on Toronto streets this year, 2,264 animals -- raccoons, squirrels, cats, dogs, foxes, coyotes and pigeons -- fell miserably short of that simple goal. The death toll continues to mount as the city's wildlife populations grow fat on balmy winters, accessible trash and suburban sprawl.

An amalgamated Toronto Animal Services (aka the pound) handles all roadkill. It's a service for which Toronto pays just under \$800,000 annually, \$250,000 short of actual costs.

Toronto's largest park harbours the city's highest concentration of [High Park] foxes, coyotes, skunks and raccoons, yet on the streets that box it in, no more than three warning signs are posted asking motorists to remain alert and to check their speed. Any complaint filed with the transportation department about a particularly dangerous roadway will be investigated and, if necessary, the appropriate signage will be installed.

There are several ways that we inadvertently encourage animals onto the road. We put out garbage the night before pickup -- in plastic bags instead of secured bins. We throw food out from our cars, and that attracts them out into the road. If they're then killed on the road, they in turn attract other animals to scavenge the remains.

Dead On The Road:

- . Number of roadkills in Toronto in 1999 and 2000: 4,200
- . Number of near roadkills: 280
- . Percentage of these victims that were wild: 55
- . Percentage domestic: 45
- . Percentage put down: 65
- . Percentage DOA: 15
- . Percentage released/returned to owner: 20
- . Roads with the most roadkills: Parkside Drive, Parkdale; Victoria Park Avenue, the Beaches; Jones and Shudell, east end; Kingston Road, Scarborough; Mount Pleasant Rd, Rosedale; Avenue Road, North Toronto.

extracted from an article by Vernon Clement Jones in NOW, December 7-13, 2000

WHERE TREES THRIVE

Where trees are ill-kept, dying, or diminishing, we often find a community that feels run down. Although trees are seldom recognized as either part of the cause or a symptom of the community's woes, the truth is clear -- trees symbolize permanence and stability. Where trees thrive, a community feels good about itself.

from "Trees of Significance Programme", a pamphlet published by the City of Etobicoke @ 1998

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## IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

## LAKE ERIE EARTHQUAKE TICKLES TORONTO

A light earthquake under the southern edge of Lake Erie near the Ohio-Pennsylvania boundary rattled pictures 170 kilometres away in Toronto on Jan. 29.

The quake hit at 10:03 p.m. Eastern time and registered at 4.2 in magnitude. There were no immediate reports of damage even near the epicentre, about 15 kilometres north-northwest of Ashtabula, Ohio, but the shock "was felt from Cleveland to Erie, and even Toronto".

from THE GLOBE & MAIL, January 26, 2001

## BIG WAVES LINKED TO WARMING

There has been a gradual increase in wave heights in the northeast Atlantic in the past few decades. Average wave heights in the Norwegian Sea were increasing by about 10 centimetres a year in the period between 1955 and 1994. But in the latter part of that period -- 1975-94 -- the maximum per-year increase in wave height was closer to 20 centimetres. Also, records show that in the 1954-1977 period an average of seven days per month was detected with strong wave pounding. This number increases significantly in the second half of the record, reaching approximately 14 days of strong microseisms (wave vibrations) per month.

The increase in wave height seems to match increased air temperatures near Earth's surface, and a recorded increase in storminess. This combination suggests there's a common mechanism that is driving the change, and that could be global warming. If you increase the greenhouse effect, you have to increase the dissipation of kinetic energy, and friction between the atmosphere and the ocean is a major candidate for using up extra energy. The greenhouse effect involves gases such as carbon dioxide absorbing extra heat, gradually increasing the global temperature. The seismic vibrations are probably a global signal rather than being limited to the north Atlantic.

extracted from an article by Robert Cooke in THE TORONTO STAR, November 16, 2000

## FERRY SERVICE RESUMES

Toronto Island ferry service resumed after the completion of ice damage repairs. Three of the ferry Ongiara's propellers were broken off and a fourth was damaged by thick ice in Toronto Harbour on January 11th.

from THE TORONTO STAR, January 13, 2001

## CROWS TAKE A HIKE

An annual bird count conducted New Year's Day found only 147 crows in a 24-kilometre radius around Chatham, down significantly from last year's Christmas Count of 160,000 crows. Bird Control International started its work -- to rid Chatham of pesky crows -- in mid-November. The firm guaranteed a 90 per cent crow reduction for a \$50,000 fee. Meanwhile, the nearby town of Essex counted more than 120,000 crows in mid-December. That's an indication Chatham's crow problem hasn't been fixed, just relocated.

from THE TORONTO STAR, January 3, 2001

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IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

WILD IN THE CITY

The Toronto Wildlife Centre, supported by donations, is housed in the former police building at the Downsview military base. Founder and executive director Nathalie Karvonen, the Toronto biologist who opened the centre in 1993, hopes to move to bigger and better digs next year.

The centre takes in more than 200 species of sick, injured or orphaned wild animals. There are "literally only a few" facilities of this size and scope in Canada. Up to 2,500 patients a year are returned to their natural habitats, whether that be the Rouge Valley or mere blocks away from Yonge and Bloor. "With any wild animal, we need to respect the wildness of the animal." Wildlife can be beautiful, dangerous or inconvenient, often all at the same time. How we view and treat wildlife has much to do with how we view the world and how we view ourselves.

The efforts made by the Toronto Wildlife Centre to preserve wildness provide an interesting window on what wildness is -- to animals and to us. There are 16 full-time, part-time and seasonal staff (all inoculated against rabies) and about 75 volunteers with various responsibilities, from cleaning cages or repairing microscopes to providing legal assistance. In addition to wildlife rehabilitation, the centre offers a Wildlife Hotline that handles about 16,000 calls a year on everything from how to get rid of a skunk and whether a fledgling on the ground is an orphan, to life-and-death wildlife crises.

It is difficult to do what's best for an animal -- any animal. Humans are so used to doing what's best for humans. There doesn't seem to be enough tolerance and not just about wildlife, but natural things in general. Everything is not just the way we want it. Wild creatures don't exist to entertain us, thrill us or even educate us. They exist for themselves, separate, wild. Truly understanding what this means is not an easy task. It is, perhaps, a lifelong task.

▷ If you wish to make a donation, need advice or assistance regarding a wild animal, call the Toronto Wildlife Centre hotline: 416-631-0662.

extracted from an article by Margie Rutledge, in THE TORONTO STAR, January 28, 2001

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[The problem of conservation] is being tackled too much in the surely now disproved fashion first tried out on the Indians -- that is, in terms of special reservations and salvation showpieces -- and not enough in the way of a general reintegration of common nature in ordinary life.

from WORMHOLES: ESSAYS AND OCCASIONAL WRITINGS by John Fowles, Henry Holt & Co., N.Y., 1998.

## THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

March 2000, Toronto

This was the third-warmest March on record, after 1945 and 1946. There were only two brief cold spells mid-month. Monthly mean temperatures ran about 5°C above normal, which is warm even by the standards of 1998 and 1999.

The freakish weather actually peaked early in the month as the persistent ridge that re-appeared in February strengthened, bringing temperatures above 20°C to the Toronto area on March 8th and 9th, the earliest ever recorded. Pearson reached 21.8°C on March 8th, and downtown 21.3°C on March 9th. Southwestern Ontario recorded some readings in the 25°C to 26°C range, breaking not only all records but re-affirming the need to shift our expectations of what our climate is like for the 21st century. The warmth was short-lived, however, as a strong cold front on March 9th brought a dramatic shift -- temperatures stayed below freezing all day on March 10th, and snow fell on March 11th.

The rest of the month continued mostly mild, and almost entirely dry, touching the 20°C mark again on March 25th. Spring certainly got an early start, being just a few days behind 1998 by month's end, with forsythia and daffodils starting to bloom.

What else to add? It was the driest March since 1981 (21.8 mm and 18.8 mm total precipitation downtown and at Pearson). It seemed cloudy, but that was only in contrast to the previous year. This year's 172.3 hours of sunshine were about 15 more than normal. Winds blew slightly stronger than normal at Pearson and slightly lighter than normal at Toronto Island. The entire Great Lakes basin was mostly free of snow and ice and water levels continue to decline.

Gavin Miller

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### MARCH IS STILL THE TIME FOR MAPLE SYRUP...

This is the Month for making Maple Sugar, a hot Sun & frosty nights cause the Sap to flow most. Slits are cut in the bark of the Trees & wooden troughs set under the Tree into which the Sap -- a clear sweet water -- runs. It is collected from a number of Trees & boiled in large Kettles till it becomes of a hard consistence. Moderate boiling will make powder sugar but when boiled long it forms very hard Cakes which are better. ... In a month's time when the best Sap is exhausted an inferior kind runs of which Vinegar is made. Cutting the Trees does not kill them for the same Trees bear it for many years following.

from MRS. SIMCOE'S DIARY, edited by Mary Quale Innis, Macmillan of Canada, Toronto, 1965

## COMING EVENTS

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

- Sat. March 3, from 9 am (all day) with Ron Scovell. Meet in the parking lot at Humber Bay East to form a car pool. Bring a lunch and dress warmly to see "waterfowl" from Toronto to Burlington.

Toronto Entomologists' Association - Sat. March 24 - student symposium  
Call Alan Hanks at 905-727-6993 for details.

Royal Canadian Institute Sunday afternoon lectures on science at 3 pm at the J.J.R. Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Building, 1 King's College Circle. Free.

- March 4 - Block-wide termite control is a reality
- March 11 - Ask Pippa - live!

For more details, call 416-977-2983.

Through David's Eyes: an exhibit of photos of built and natural heritage - Feb. 20 to Sept. 30 at the CHP Heritage Centre, 719 Yonge St., 2nd floor, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 12 noon to 4 pm. Call 416-515-7546 for more information.

High Park Walking Tours - starting at 1:15 pm just south of the Grenadier Cafe & Teahouse in the park. \$2 donation suggested.

- Sun. March 11 - Exploring High Park
- Sun. March 25 - High Park's Creeks & Ravines

For more details call 416-392-1748 or 416-392-6916.

Astronomy lecture & sky-viewing at Astronomy Dept., University of Toronto, 60 St. George St., Room MP134 - first and third Thursdays of every month at 8 pm from October to April. For more information call 416-978-2528 or 416-978-2016.

Ian Wheal Heritage Walks -

- Sat. March 24 at 2 pm - Grog Lane (St. Patrick's Market & vicinity)  
Meet at the northeast corner of John St. and Queen St. West.
- Sat. March 31 at 2 pm - Lost Ponds of Dentonia  
Meet at the Main subway station.

Canada Blooms - Flower and Garden Show - March 14 to March 18 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. TFN will be sharing a booth at the exhibit. We need volunteers to hand out applications and be enthusiastic about our program. Please call Andre Vietinghoff at 416-232-9241 or the TFN office at 416-593-2656 if you are interested in helping. Free admission for volunteers. Shifts are 10-1, 1-4, 4-7, 7-9 except Sunday when last shift ends at 6 pm.

Listen to Art Drysdale's Gardening Program - Saturday mornings (8 am to 9 am) Radio AM 740. Starting March 17 (8 am to 10 am). He interviews TFN's monthly speakers.

## COMING EVENTS (cont'd)

Engraved, Printed and Coloured: The Making of Audubon's Birds of America  
- Jan. 27 to March 25 in the Canada Trust Gallery, Toronto Reference  
Library, 789 Yonge St. Call 416-393-7131 for more details.

Citizens Concerned about the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront - Sat. Mar. 24 -  
guided bird walk from 9 am to 11 am with Andrew Keaveney. Meet in the  
parking lot of Humber Bay Park East. For more information call  
Barbara Keaveney at 416-252-7047.

Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch - at Beamer Memorial Conservation Area  
above Grimsby (just a little west of Mountain Road). A south wind  
produces the best days to see thousands of migrating raptors Mar. 1 - May 15.

Willowdale Gem & Mineral Show,  
Armour Heights Community Center, 2140 Avenue Rd. Toronto  
Saturday, March 17, 10 am - 6 pm, and Sunday March 18, 11 am - 5 pm.

Mycological Society of Toronto Meeting -  
Civic Garden Centre, 7:45 pm in the Auditorium  
Monday, March 19 "Can Technology Save Fungal Biodiversity?"  
Dr. Robert Fogel, Professor of Biology, University of Michigan. □



MARY BURNING  
SHADRON HOTEL LOBBY  
WATERFALL with ducks  
MAY 6 2000

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Publications Mail

Registration No.

09840

**TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST**

Published by the Toronto Field Naturalists, a charitable, non-profit organization, the aims of which are to stimulate public interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation of our natural heritage. Issued monthly September to December and February to May.

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