

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 499

April 2001



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TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, April 1, 2001 - URBAN FORESTRY -- THE BIG PICTURE
at 2:30 pm an illustrated lecture by Professor Andrew Kenney,
Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto
in the Northrop Frye Hall - We will hear about investigations into the impacts
Victoria University of urban development on woodland ecosystems and
73 Queen's Park Cres. East the relationship between urban design and the
extent of urban forest canopies. The speaker is
VISITORS WELCOME! particularly interested in strategic planning in
urban forestry and the involvement of stakeholder
groups in the management of this important
natural resource.
DAYLIGHT + social hour with free juice and coffee beginning
SAVING at 2 pm.
BEGINS!

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, May 6, 2001

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

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.

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APRIL OUTINGS (cont'd)

- Sunday WHERE THREE WATERSHEDS MEET - urban ecology York
 April 22 Leaders: Dick Watts & Terry MacAuliffe
 1:30 pm Meet at the northeast corner of Vaughan Rd. and Arlington Ave.
 On this walk which will be on streets and through parks we will be learning
 to read the landscape. (This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community.)
- Tuesday MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY - birds & trees Don watershed
 April 24 Leader: George Bryant
 9:30 am Meet at the Davisville subway station. Bring lunch.
 This is a great time of year to learn some of our early flowering trees
 and stop, look and listen for birds. Bring binoculars and notebooks.
- Thursday MOORE PARK RAVINE - nature walk Don watershed
 April 26 Leader: George Bryant
 9:30 am Meet at the entrance to Mt. Pleasant Cemetery on the east side
 of Mt. Pleasant Rd. south of Merton St. Bring lunch.
 This time of year warrents two nature walks in one week. This will be a
 longer walk than the previous one with a climb out of the Don Valley at the end.
- Saturday MOORE PARK RAVINE - nature arts Don watershed
 April 28 Leader: Alan Power
 10:30 am Meet at the entrance to the ravine, on the south side of
 Moore Ave., east of Mt. Pleasant Rd. Bring lunch.
 Bring what you need for photography, sketching or painting, and anything you
 wish to show the group when we compare our morning's work after lunch.
- Sunday DOWNSVIEW LANDS - urban ecology North York
 April 29 Leaders: Ed Freeman & Ian Wheal
 2 pm Meet at the southwest corner of Dufferin St. and Wilson Ave.
 This walk will be mostly on level ground. We will be learning more about
 the landscape. Good views from these high lands. (This is a joint outing
 with the Black Creek Project.)

PROTECTING RAVINES

Ravines, valley lands, wood lots and natural waterfront areas make up about three-quarters of Toronto's 7,000 hectares of parks. There are 29 ravines in the former city of Toronto alone.

Human actions can have a major impact on the viability of the ravines. A change in the ravine's natural topography, the removal of natural vegetation, the introduction of new plants, or the run-off water from swimming pools or eavestroughs can cause erosion. These changes will, in turn, have an impact on the health of trees and the wildlife.

In ravines protected by Ravine Control Bylaws, it is prohibited to cut down healthy trees, change the natural elevation, dispose of swimming-pool water, dump debris, including garden waste and leaves, and construct new structures or retaining walls.

extracted from an article by Gay Abbate in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, Feb. 26, 2001

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I write, snow is 'flurrying' steadily and a major storm threatens the Atlantic coast. Canadians are enjoying winter sports; I doubt if anyone in the GTA can yet discern any signs of spring. I hope by the beginning of April we'll be observing on our walks harbingers of that season Charles G.D. Roberts calls "The Sweet O' the Year".

My granddaughter enjoys playing patience (double solitaire). After a game with her, I was thinking about the patience required in tackling issues regarding the environment. Sometimes it feels as though we are besieged on all sides and have to fight the same battles again and again. If it seems that the forces which value only the "bottom line" and financial gain have all the power, we shouldn't lose heart. There are many organizations, some local, some broader in scope, some noisy and demonstrative, others working away quietly. For example, did you know about the Toronto Pedestrian Committee that meets once a month at City Hall? I think most TFN members would approve their objectives, which include working for improved pedestrian safety and access, providing Council and staff with input regarding allocation, design and use of public space, and promoting walking as "the most environmentally friendly form of transportation". If you would like more information, you may contact Betty Bushe, Committee Secretary, at 416-396-7088, or at bushe@city.toronto.on.ca.

Many of us are active in groups that support the protection of specific areas such as High Park, Toronto Islands, Leslie Street Spit, and the major watersheds of the Humber, Don, and Rouge Rivers. As well, many belong to larger organizations such as the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Canadian Nature Federation, and the World Wildlife Fund. One individual or group cannot do it all, but we can be strong if we communicate with one another, share our knowledge and experience, and stand together to protect endangered spaces and species. These could include wild lupines in oak savannah in High Park, forests and wetlands, kettle lakes and kettle bogs on the Oak Ridges Moraine, and even Arctic wildlife refuges for caribou and polar bears.

At our March meeting we distributed a broadsheet jointly published by STORM and EARTHROOTS and urged support for the position on the Oak Ridges Moraine presented by STORM Coalition. These will again be available at our April meeting.

By then we should know more about plans being outlined for the Toronto waterfront. A great deal of thought, energy, expertise, and planning has been poured into this initiative, especially over the past five or six years. There are numerous facets to it, many of which were explored at a meeting I attended at Enoch Turner Schoolhouse at the invitation of Pam McConnell, my Councillor. While the Toronto 2008 Olympic Bid (TO-BID) made a detailed presentation with maps, sketches, and photographs, they were only one of many organizations represented, including Toronto and

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (cont'd)

Region Conservation Authority, Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Task Force to Bring Back the Don, Citizens for the Old Town, and many neighbourhood associations. Although the West Don Lands were the focus of this meeting, surrounding areas, the port lands, and the mouth of the Don were also discussed. There was consensus that planning should be on a long-term basis, with Olympic designs required to fit in to a comprehensive plan to be developed incrementally, in a "double cycle". The two major problems are flood prevention and soil remediation. Senior levels of government would need to undertake these expenses, plus infrastructure, for a total of 50 to 70 million dollars for the West Don Lands. The intention would be to realize a return of two to three times the development costs after the Olympics, or at such time as the properties were sold. Two ideas I liked were a naturalized open area with a "green space connection" from Esplanade to the riverbank park, and a "pedestrian and bicycle bridge connection across the Don River".

A group called Friends of the Lower Donlands (FOLD) has a vision to free the river from the concrete bonds of the Keating Channel and create a broad wildlife corridor from the Don Valley through the port lands to the Leslie Street Spit. Also "FOLD calls on city planners and officials to make sure that the larger community takes part in all decisions affecting the future of the port lands and the lower Don River".

If you have ideas and/or energy to contribute to the TFN Board or to any of our fellow organizations working to create livable neighbourhoods while protecting our natural heritage, don't hesitate to become involved. Together we can make a difference.

Phoebe Cleverley

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... We are very short of land where the various wildlife components, the diverse native species of plants and animals are free to react together and establish and maintain themselves over long periods of time in a dynamic relationship. Where these areas do exist they are often among the most beautiful and interesting parts of our natural heritage, largely as a result of this freedom to develop with the minimum of human interference, in complex responses to the forces of natural selection. If we start to manipulate these areas to any great extent then we shall impose upon them man centred ideas of what they should be -- which are likely to reflect the fashion of the day rather than any fundamental understanding of the ecological complexities of the natural situation. The areas will be characteristic of a particular management fashion rather than reflecting the working out of the ecological possibilities closely attuned to environmental conditions. Natural regeneration on the other hand will tend to reflect this relation, which, although it may proceed according to some generally understood ecological principles will, in detail, be unforeseeable, in response to complex interactions that cannot be forecast. ...

from THE CAIRNGORMS: THE NATURE OF THE LAND by Colin Baxter & Rawdon Coodier,
Scottish Natural Heritage, 1990

KEEPING IN TOUCH

February 20, 2001

Belated note re R. C. Harris outing in January: I meant to report 24 snow buntings on the south parapet of the building as the last three of us left it. They were twittering in the sunshine, then flew down to feed on a south-facing grassy bank which was free of snow. We watched for 2-3 minutes until they were disturbed by a pedestrian and all flew off towards the lake.

I don't know if other TFN people saw them. We were a large group from three associations that day.

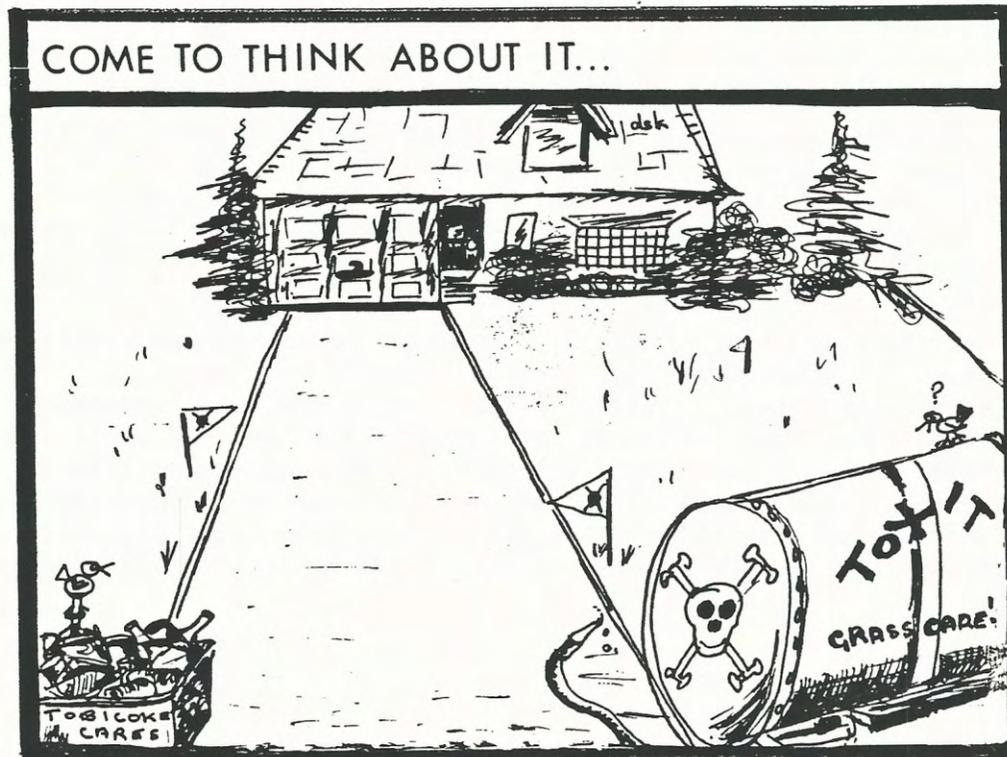
Margaret Catto

February 20, 2001

A suggestion for trip leaders: In Saskatoon, where I've been on a number of field trips while visiting family, trips always start with everyone introducing themselves in turn around a circle, starting with the leader. For newcomers or non-regular members, it provides a chance to hang a name on a couple of people besides the leader. Next trip, you get to know a couple more.

I tried this today at Humber Bay Park, and learned a lot of names of familiar people myself, which gave me confidence as the leader. With 20-odd people it's easy. On spring/summer trips it might take too long. Saskatoon trips peak at around 25. Just a suggestion.

Margaret Catto



cartoon by Diana Karrantjas

KEEPING IN TOUCH (cont'd)

February 27, 2001

I find it hard to believe that I have now lived in Winnipeg for well over a year. I am enjoying being back in Manitoba although I do miss my many friends in TFN.

Like Toronto, Winnipeg is a city of rivers. Of course the two main ones are the Red and Assiniboine but there are many smaller ones such as Sturgeon Creek and Omand's Creek. Most of these have lovely walking trails along parts of them.

Also, like Toronto, Winnipeg has many parks and green spaces, large and small. Assiniboine Park is the large central park containing both natural and manicured areas and a major zoo. Adjacent to it is the much wilder Assiniboine Forest which is great for native flora and contains significant areas of aspen parkland, wetlands and tall grass prairie. A very special place is the Living Prairie Museum encompassing one of the few remaining large expanses of tall grass prairie in North America. Interestingly enough, one of the others, Ojibway Prairie in Windsor, Ont. is also completely within a city, Living Prairie Museum is a virtual "sea of flowers" in midsummer but I also enjoy an early spring visit to greet the first Prairie crocuses, the provincial flowers of Manitoba. Prairie crocuses often push their way up in sheltered areas when there is still snow on the ground elsewhere. Superficially, they resemble the familiar garden crocus but they are actually a member of the anemone or buttercup family as their scientific name *Anemone patens* indicates.

Although you won't see Prairie crocuses there, you can get some idea of what prairie and parkland habitat look like by visiting Toronto's High Park with its wild lupines and big bluestem ("turkey tail") grass. The latter is the indicator species which gives tall grass prairie its name.

Winters in Winnipeg are much longer and colder than in Toronto but can be quite enjoyable if you enjoy winter sports. I enjoy snowshoeing and even taught some classes in it at Living Prairie Museum this winter. Sometimes I just walk up the road from my house to Kildonan Park, another large city park, carrying my snowshoes with me. Twice I have encountered a large white-tailed jackrabbit who is also out snowshoeing!

Winnipeg has the usual birds found in most urban areas such as starlings, house sparrows and rock doves just about everywhere year round, white-breasted nuthatches, hairy and downy woodpeckers, black-capped chickadees and crows year round in selected habitats, and the usual seasonal birds and migrants. Some specialties that you wouldn't likely find in Toronto include black-billed magpies and yellow-headed blackbirds. You don't have to go very far outside the city to find white pelicans, sandhill cranes and western grebes. Harris' sparrows are very common in migration.

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KEEPING IN TOUCH (cont'd)

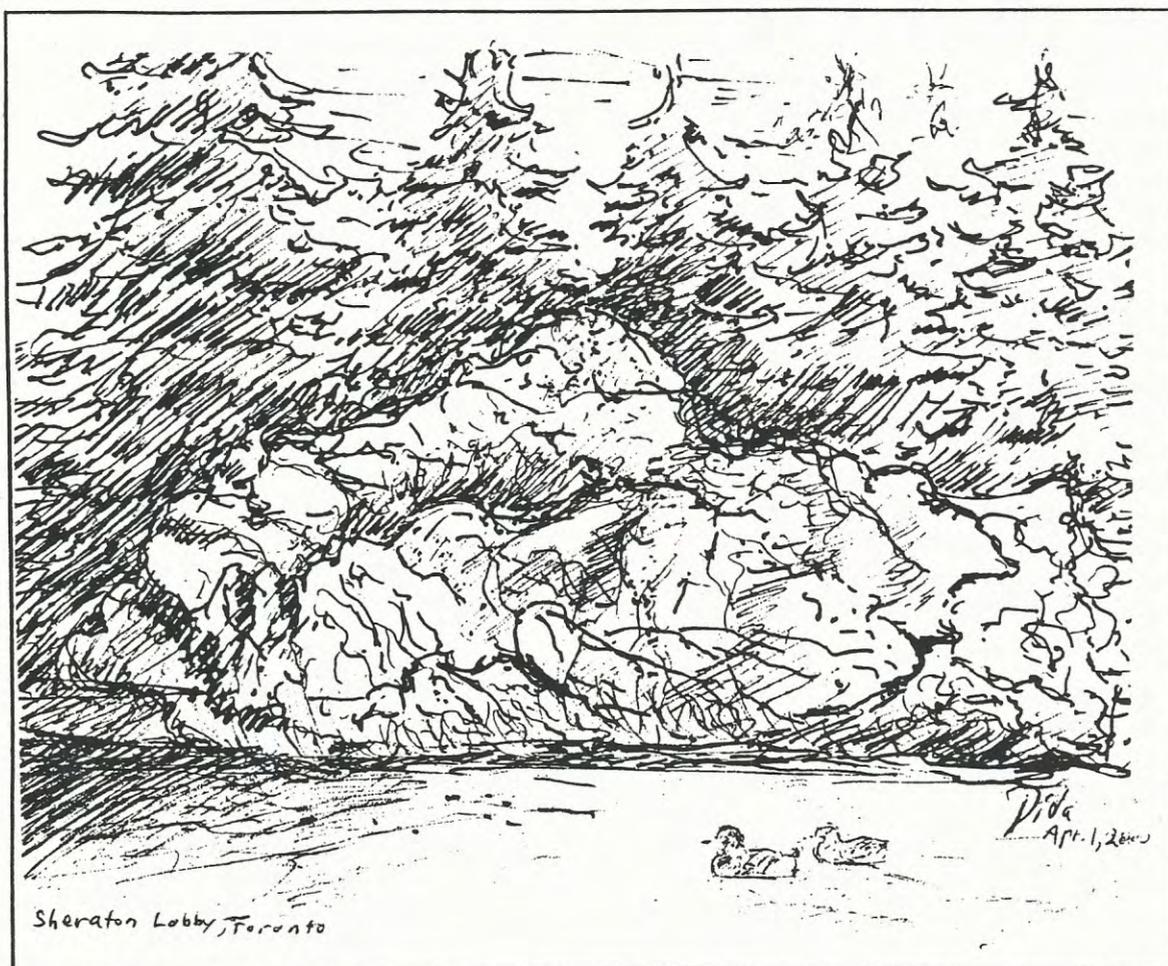
A common animal in some parks is the Richardson's ground squirrel, locally called a "gopher". Red squirrels are more common than grey squirrels. White-tailed deer and coyotes may be found in some of the larger parks.

On a personal note, I'm continuing to work at building "The Urban Naturalist" conducting outdoor education programmes in and around the city. I have a website now at www.wilds.mb.ca/urbanat. My own site is probably of limited usefulness to Torontonians unless you are planning on visiting Manitoba or Northwestern Ontario, but by clicking on my "links" page you get a host of connections not only to worldwide ecotourism opportunities but to such showcases as Dr. William Pruitts Taiga Research Station (University of Manitoba) with many articles and research papers pertaining to the Boreal Forest, Dr. Clarence Tillenius, famous wildlife artist and museum diorama creator, and the late Bill Mason, canoeist, film maker and conservationist - "Path of the Paddle" etc.

I continue to enjoy reading the TFN bulletin and keeping in touch with happenings in Toronto.

Morris Sorensen

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THE 76th TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS --
December 30, 2000

Although many participants in the 2000 Toronto Christmas Bird Count will probably remember the day more for the weather than the birds, the event was on the whole quite successful despite the inclement weather. Snow fell for most of the day, quite heavily at times, resulting in very limited visibility, and making it virtually impossible to look at any overhead birds through binoculars because the lenses were constantly being coated with fresh flakes. It was also a cold day, with a high of -8°C at best, and everyone was very happy to get inside and warm up at the end of the day.

Our total for the day ended up at 79 species and 49,195 individuals -- both down from the high counts in recent years, but still among the top six in our history in each category, and very respectable given the conditions under which the count took place.

There were no all-time firsts this year, but there were some impressive highlights all the same. Perhaps the biggest surprise was the American woodcock found by Dan Bone's group in Downsview Dells Park. The bird was spotted in a patch of open water along the mostly frozen Black Creek, and was the first woodcock on the Toronto count since 1952. A bit further west in the park, the same group also came across a northern goshawk, which was last recorded on the 1996 count. Ron Scovell provided another raptor highlight with a red-shouldered hawk, which came to visit his backyard, and nearby Alfred Adamo's group spotted a ring-necked pheasant along the North Humber, the first one seen on count day since 1994. Another surprise was the American pipit recorded by Patrick Stepien-Scanlon and the High Park group at Sunnyside Beach. This species has been seen on only five previous Toronto counts, most recently in 1997.

Record high counts were set or tied this year for seven species. The oldest record to fall was for greater scaup -- this year's count of 5,482 greatly exceeded the previous high of 3,969 from 1972. Other new highs included 157 mute swans (126 in 1996), 5 peregrine falcons (ties high of 5 in 1999), 8 American coots (3 in 1997, 1998, and 1999), 11 Iceland gulls (8 in 1999), 20 glaucous gulls (9 in 1992), and 397 northern cardinals (392 in 1998). Other high counts of note included 4 northern harriers (the best count since 4 in 1961), 72 red-tailed hawks (76 in 1989), 12 long-eared owls (17 in 1961), and 9 short-eared owls (12 in 1951).

As always, there were also some species present in much smaller numbers than usual. The 1,698 Canada geese were the lowest count since 1989, when only 1,002 were seen. Common mergansers at 72 (fewest since 62 in 1987) and red-breasted mergansers at 41 (fewest since 34 in 1988) were well below long-term trends, though interestingly the 45 hooded mergansers were near a record high. The lone pair of great horned owls found by Glenn Coady in the Humber Marshes were the only ones for this year's count, marking the first time since 1971 that fewer than three were found. A trio of songbirds were also scarcer than usual this year: 73 blue jays (fewest since 66 in 1985), 735 black-capped chickadees (611 in 1988), and 37 white-breasted nuthatches (28 in 1984).

THE 76th TOC CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS -- Dec.30, 2000 (ctd.)

Over the course of Count Week (December 27 through January 2), a further seven species were added to this year's list. Common loon, red-necked grebe, and horned grebe were all seen at Humber Bay, a northern pintail was reported from Ashbridge's Bay, a bald eagle off Cherry Beach, a field sparrow was on Toronto Island, and a common grackle was at a north Toronto feeder. Unfortunately, the ivory gull, which had been present at Humber Bay around Christmas, was last seen just before Count Week began -- it would have been a first for the Toronto count. Other more frequently occurring species which were notable by their absence this year were green-winged teal (seen on 8 counts over the past decade), Carolina wren (7), swamp sparrow (8), white-crowned sparrow (6), red-winged blackbird (5), purple finch (6), common redpoll (6), and pine siskin (5).

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all 85 participants who contributed to this year's count, and in particular to the route leaders who helped make my job as compiler easier by preparing their summaries quickly and accurately. Special thanks to all the observers who promptly submitted documentation for rare birds, to Dan Bone and Alfred Adamo for all of their help throughout the fall with organizing the count, and to Ron and Mary Tasker for once again hosting the post-count festivities.

from an article by Marcel Gahbauer, in the TOC Newsletter #112, February 2001



JANUARY 7, 2001 LAKE ONTARIO MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY

CONDITIONS: The western end of Lake Ontario enjoyed good viewing conditions with -5°C to -10°C temperatures, light easterly winds, no precipitation and overcast skies. Visibility was generally excellent all day. The eastern portion of the lake had less hospitable conditions, with intervals of heavy precipitation. All bays, channels and inner harbours were frozen over, and deep snow cover made access difficult in many areas.

REMARKS: This is the 55th 'Duck Count' for the Toronto Ornithological Club and 11th year that the entire Canadian shoreline of Lake Ontario has been covered. This year we counted an impressive 250,446 water fowl from 37 species. This is the third highest count ever; only the counts from 2000 (457,813) and 1999 (282,489) were higher. There were significant decreases in the numbers seen for the following species: Canada goose, mallard, scaup, long-tailed duck [formerly old squaw] white-winged scoter, and common merganser. Viewing conditions contributed to the lower number of 'diving' waterfowl counted, while the colder winter, deep snow cover and management practices may explain the decrease in the Canada goose and mallard numbers.

Two species whose numbers are increasing steadily are bald eagle and trumpeter swan. (We count bald eagles during the Waterfowl Count.) Trumpeter swan numbers have risen from 16 to 24 to 40 to 93 in the last four counts, while bald eagle numbers have risen from 26 to 32 to 37 to 58 during the same timeframe.

In the Toronto area (Whitby Harbour to Bronte Harbour), a record 78,017 waterfowl from 25 species were seen. This beats last year's record total of 64,763 and the previous record of 56,577, set in 1998.

Record high numbers were seen for trumpeter and mute swan, redhead, ring-necked duck, greater scaup, bufflehead, hooded merganser, and American coot. Near record numbers were seen for gadwall and long-tailed duck.

Low numbers were noted for Canada goose, mallard, and black duck; in fact, the totals for all these species were well below the average values for the past decade. As well, snow goose, wood duck, green-winged teal, northern pintail, northern shoveler, and ruddy duck were all missed on this day.

Rarities included 1 red-throated loon, 1 common loon, 18 canvasback, 14 ring-necked duck, 1 harlequin duck, 1 black scoter, 1 surf scoter, 69 hooded merganser and 23 American coot. In addition, an interesting hybrid male duck, believed to be a tufted X ring-necked, was also reported.

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JAN. 7, 2001 LAKE ONTARIO MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY (cont'd)

Outside of the Toronto area, there were some excellent sightings.

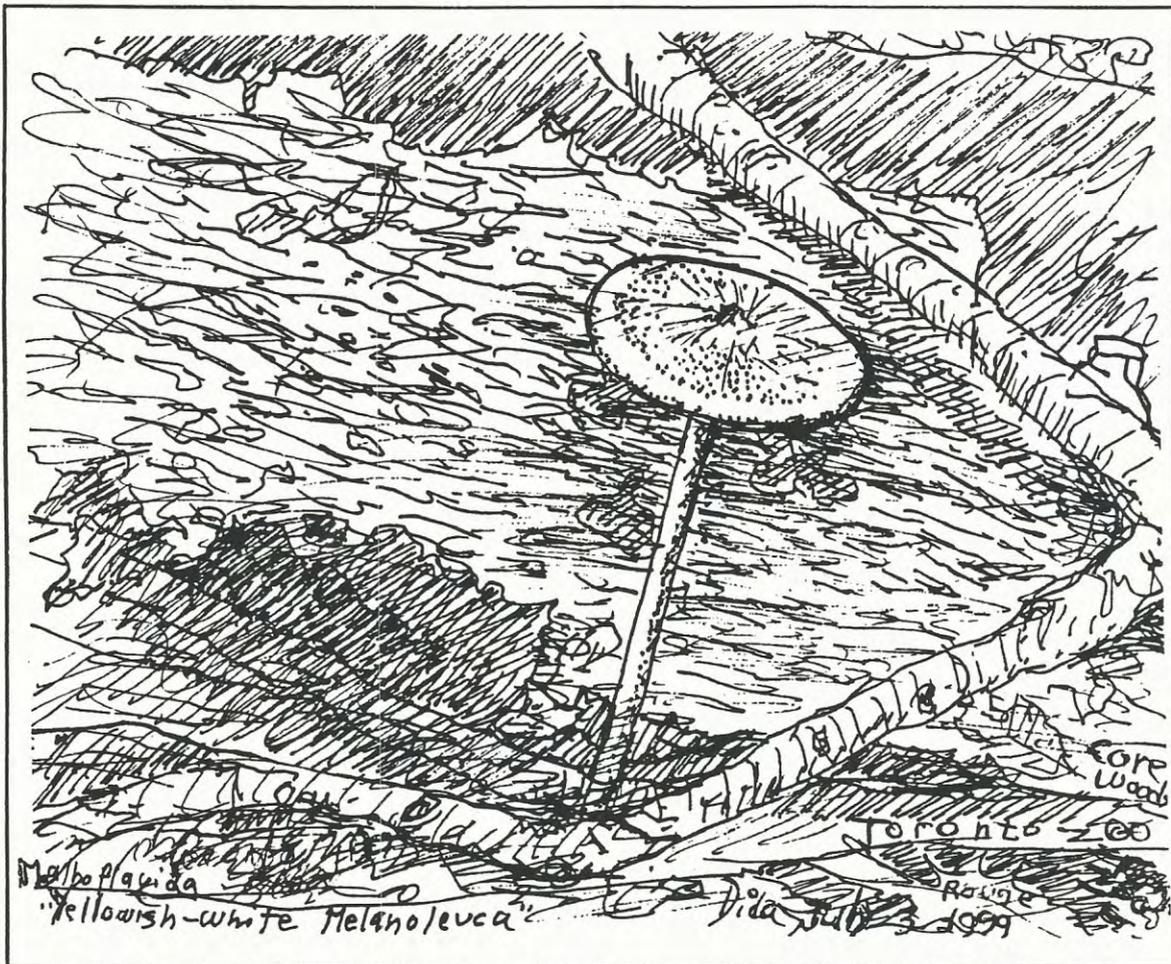
- . Niagara had 5 double-crested cormorant, and 2 American coot.
- . Hamilton had 28 species including 6 double-crested cormorant, 2 wood duck, 6 green-winged teal, 1 northern shoveler, 1 common eider, 2 black scoter, 99(!) surf scoter, 72(!) ruddy duck and 11 American coot.
- . Durham had an American coot.
- . Port Hope had 4 horned grebe, 1 hooded merganser and 2 American coot.
- . Presqu'ile had 30 mute swan.
- . Quinte had 1 northern pintail, 1 hooded merganser, 1 ruddy duck and 3 American coot.
- . Kingston had 30 species including 1 red-throated loon, 1 common loon, 1 pied-billed grebe, 4 horned grebe, 1 red-necked grebe, 3 double-crested cormorant, 111 tundra swan, 2 harlequin duck, 2 black scoter, 1 Barrow's goldeneye, and 2 American coot.

Thanks to all the clubs and individuals who participated.

Next year's count will take place on January 13, 2002.

from a report compiled by Bill Edmunds in the TOC Newsletter #112, Feb. 2001

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TO TAME A SHREW

"Shrewish: like a shrew in disposition; evil-tempered" says my dictionary, but captive shrews kept by me over the past few years have revealed a new aspect of these interesting creatures.

Our subject is the short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*), the largest North American member of the shrew family, a fairly common mammal at times. Mouse-sized and somewhat mouse-like in appearance, though with minute eyes and no apparent external ears, this is an insectivore, not a rodent.

The short-tailed shrew is known to be venomous, that is, its bite is poisonous. Venom secreted by its salivary glands -- similar to cobra venom -- allows this shrew to immobilize its prey, whether snails, insects, earthworms, mice, or even young rabbits.

As I've described elsewhere, one shrew apparently brought about the death of an unlucky screech owl that pounced upon it beneath a bird-feeder one frigid winter night. Bitten on one toe by the desperate shrew, the owl then froze to death, still crouching upon its equally unlucky prey. Naturalists who have been bitten by shrews report suffering considerable pain for up to three weeks.

Because shrews are more active and more resistant to cold than lab mice, they make good lures for capturing great gray owls. [Dr. Nero is well-known for his owl research in Manitoba.] A shrew darting about in a small wire-mesh cage placed atop a snowbank provides an irresistible lure for an owl.

One hard-working shrew allowed us to thus net and band 21 great grays in one winter. I kept that shrew for nearly two years, feeding it sunflower seeds and other grains, as well as bits of frozen mice. In the second summer, I began feeding it earthworms, which it relished. Thereafter, whenever I fed it, I let it sniff my fingertips, trying to get it to associate the odour of my fingers with its favourite food. I did this carefully, to be sure, but day by day I became bolder, even daringly letting it touch a fingertip with its quivering nose.

Eventually, I felt confident enough to let it advance onto my fingers, and then, gradually, onto my hand. Finally, convinced that I could trust it, I took it up in my hands. What a thrill! To hold a live shrew, to feel its quivering body, its rapidly scratching feet, even to hold it to my ear and listen to its astonishingly rapid heartbeat -- this was exciting!

After that shrew died, apparently from natural causes, I decided to try to tame a second one. A new shrew, captured in our yard on October 18, 1999, nipped my fingers a few times, even drawing blood, but apparently not injecting any venom. I held it in my hands for the first time less than a month after bringing it indoors. It can now be picked up and held momentarily by anyone, as several friends have learned. Even my dear wife, Ruth, with considerable trepidation, has held this shrew briefly. Of course, our shrew has learned that

TO TAME A SHREW (cont'd)

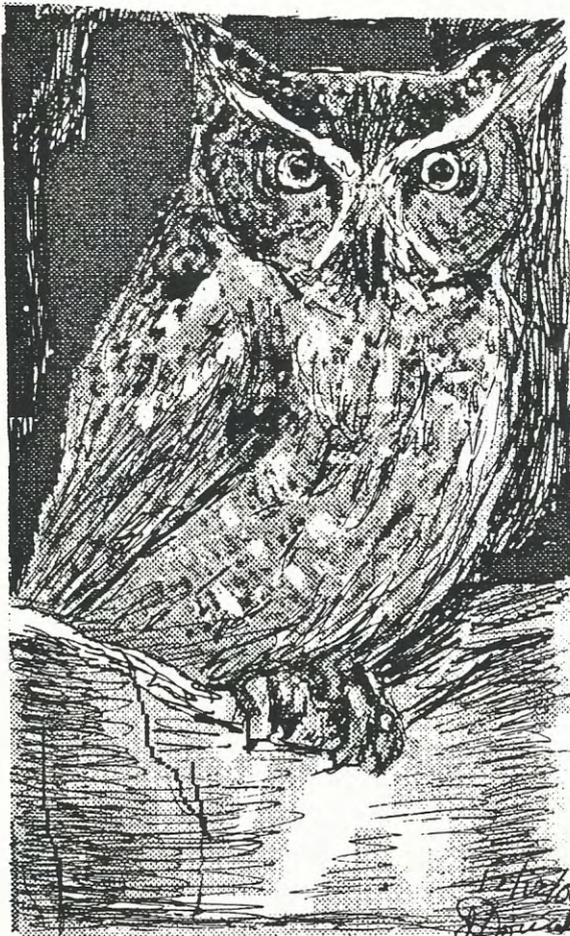
being handled leads to subsequent provision of a lively earthworm -- clearly a welcome treat.

As I see it, the shrew is not so much tame as simply tolerant. This shrew even lived for several months with two different lab mice, and seemed to enjoy their company. When I handle the tame shrew, I'm aware that it is constantly trying to free itself, but it makes no effort to bite. What impresses me most about all this is the short-tailed shrew's adaptable nature.

Let me add that to the best of my knowledge, despite Shakespeare's craft, no one else has ever tamed a shrew. However, I would be delighted to hear from anyone who may know otherwise.

an article by Robert Nero, in the BULLETIN, Manitoba Naturalists Society, December 2000/January 2001

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THE EASTERN SCREECH OWL

breeds in Toronto; its calls are heard in all months of the year according to our TFN Toronto Region Records, with sightings of both grey and red colour-phases roosting and nesting not uncommon.

Mixed media drawing is by Joanne Doucette. December 12, 2000.

Screech Owl, Highland Creek

THE TREES OF MOUNT PLEASANT

Caucasian wing-nut (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*) sounds like a slur against white people. It is actually an unusual member of the walnut family, Juglandaceae. My sister-in-law saw it in the cemetery while visiting my father's grave site. She took me to see the tree so I would identify it for her. When I saw the long catkins, I thought it was some type of laburnum. Fortunately the tree was labelled. It has no bud scales and large compound leaves. It also tends to grow more than one trunk. The leaflets tend to overlap each other. This feature is not common so is a good way of identifying the tree. The common name may sound humorous but it tells the whole story of the tree. It originates in the Caucasus Mountains, and the fruit has a wing. The scientific name tells me it has leaves like an ash. Ptero means wing, and carya is from the Greek karua which was the name of the walnut tree. (Carya is now used as the generic name of the hickories.) You will find the wing-nut in the southern part of Section 41.

Roger Powley

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THE BAY BREASTED WARBLER has been reported in Toronto Region in recent years from May 10 to May 29 during spring migration and the first week of September in the fall. It breeds much further north in the Province. The species is known as a spruce budworm specialist.

Ref.: ATLAS OF THE BREEDING BIRDS OF ONTARIO, Cadman et al.

IN THE NEWS

BEAVERS ARE LOVING THE BIG-CITY LIFE

Although few Torontonians know it, the city's 2.3 million two-legged mammals share their urban area with a thriving community of a few hundred beavers. Hunting nearly wiped out beavers in many parts of Canada during the fur-trade years. But they have made a comeback, naturalists say, and now are seen in the Don, Humber and Rouge River valleys, as well as on the Toronto Islands and in the inner harbour, just below the row of condominiums that have sprung up along Queens Quay West.

People are usually thrilled by the sightings, in part because of the animal's historic importance. On the Toronto Islands the beavers have caused a stir among the night guards who watch the various yacht clubs during the winter. Not only have the animals been chewing up trees at the Island Yacht Club, they've made their way to the best-known club on the islands, the Royal Canadian Yacht Club.

The city doesn't make efforts to control the spread of beavers or to contain their numbers, which have not yet reached levels that would endanger tree cover on the waterfront or in river valleys. Beavers eat mainly deciduous trees, and the poplars and willows they chew on the islands will typically sprout again. However, city forestry staff will place fences around the trunks of valuable trees to protect them.

adapted from an article by Martin Mittelstaedt in THE GLOBE & MAIL, March 5, 2001

SUBURBIA ON THE LAKE

There are now 15 prefabricated houseboats at Bluffer's Park Marina in Scarborough, in east-end Toronto. But two dozen more will be moored there this spring, with negotiations for another 20 come the summer. The same developer is hoping to introduce two dozen of the prefabricated look-alikes to the Toronto Island Marina at Centre Island.

Without the messy intervention of the city's planning department or the requirement for neighbourhood consultation, a deal was struck between two of the city's most coveted marinas and a fledgling housing manufacturer.

extracted from an article by Lisa Rochon in THE GLOBE & MAIL, February 22, 2001

To think environmentally is to find reasons to garden. Growing one's food is the best way to assure its purity. Composting, which should be numbered among the acts of gardening, is an excellent way to lighten a household's burden on the local landfill. And gardens can reduce our dependence on distant sources not only of food, but also of energy, technology, and even entertainment.

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

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

THE PEREGRINE PERSPECTIVE AT PEARSON

They're what you might call unlikely birds of a feather. A small population of wild peregrine falcons is making life easier -- and far safer -- for pilots operating their big metal birds out of Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport.

The falcons are part of a unique project introduced by the Greater Toronto Airports Authority last summer to reduce bird populations in and around Pearson, necessary in order to keep aircraft bird strikes down to a minimum.

Bird strikes can cause havoc with aircraft engines and can be dangerous, particularly to smaller aircraft on takeoff or landing. Trained birds of prey are commonly used by wildlife control officers to scare off other large flocks of birds. They hunt other birds, which acts as a deterrent to inhabitation and helps suppress the bird population around the airport.

No other airport in Canada has made use of wild falcons to do the job. By having the wild falcons on hand, unwanted bird populations get an around-the-clock message that Pearson isn't a good place for them to stay.

Three baby falcons were banded by the Ministry of Natural Resources last July and then placed in a custom-built home, provided by the Canadian Peregrine Foundation, on top of the GTAA administrative building, which is located on the southern side of the airport. The birds have had minimal human contact since they took up their jobs patrolling Pearson's airspace, hunting according to natural instinct on a 24-hour basis. The falcons migrate to warmer climes in the winter, and the hope is they will return to Pearson in the spring.

The three falcons introduced last July have since attracted other wild falcons who have decided to make Pearson their home. If a falcon comes across other falcons, it assumes it's come across a good area for hunting.

extracted from an article in THE GLOBE & MAIL, Dec. 4, 2000

GARTER SNAKE GROTTOS

Each spring in central Manitoba, tens of thousands of red-sided garter snakes emerge from their rocky dens in the bleak countryside between Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba. Until the early 1980s, some local collectors scooped up thousands of the snakes and sold them to pet dealers in the United States, England and Germany. Scientists and wildlife officials became concerned, and in 1988 commercial collecting was banned, but many snakes were still killed in traffic as they crossed a major highway near the Narcisse dens. Last year Manitoba government officials installed a series of pipes under the road. But how to get the snakes to use them? Experiments showed that if garter snake pheromones were applied to the floor of the culverts, the snakes would follow the chemical trails. The technique is working: last fall thousands of garter snakes crossed safely under the highways.

from "Serpentine Cross-Dressers" by R. Shine & R. Mason in NATURAL HISTORY, Vol. 110, No. 1, Feb. 2001

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

SALMON FARMERS GET HOOKED BY PROFITS

Until a few years ago, we ate only wild salmon and it was an expensive delicacy. The fishery operated only when salmon returned to spawn, so fresh supplies were available just a few months a year. Most of the time, consumers made do with frozen, canned and smoked -- or none. And stocks were dwindling. In the late 1960s, Norwegians hatched a bright idea. Why not raise salmon in confined spaces, where they would be handy to get at and could be produced year-round?

The industry started flourishing in Canada in the mid-1980s. Our farms are mainly in New Brunswick's Bay of Fundy and off the B.C. coast. British Columbia recently ended a moratorium on new salmon farms. Only four sites have been approved, but Anne McMullin, of the province's Salmon Farmers Association, predicts the industry will grow from 121 to 640 farms over the next decade, creating 20,000 jobs. New Brunswick, with 86 sites, is also accepting applications for more, after a hiatus while new policies were developed. Sixteen are in so far.

Out beyond the fish-farm cages, most stocks of wild salmon are in decline. Farming isn't the main reason wild species face extinction. They have been overfished and their habitat is disappearing. Meanwhile, well-intentioned restocking programs -- about 5 billion hatchery-raised salmon go into the North Pacific each year -- produce what some researchers call "dumb" fish that breed with the wild ones and weaken the gene pool. Evidence from Europe suggests farming has a significant, negative impact on wild populations. Diseases kept at a low level in the wild are amplified in the crowded pens and made more powerful by antibiotics, then attack the wild stocks.

Thousands of farm salmon escape each year. Some breed with wild fish, weakening the gene pool. Others take over spawning grounds. Farming reduces the pressure to preserve salmon rivers -- making it seem to matter less that the wild fish might vanish. If we'd protected the habitat, we'd have more fish today. In the North Atlantic, the Atlantic salmon, in its pure form, is just about extinct. Only 200 - 300 wild salmon return to rivers in Maine -- the species' last American toehold. The Mirimachi River once boasted a huge salmon run. After years of pesticide spraying and pollution from pulp mills, they're in such small numbers, it's appalling.

The Pacific Ocean is home to five salmon species -- sockeye, chinook, coho, chum and pink. There are about 30,000 stocks, each genetically programmed to spawn in a particular spot in a particular river or stream. Few are left in the southern part of salmon territory, which extends down to California. All that remain in Japan are hatchery-raised. Salmon are still numerous off Alaska, much of B.C. -- where stocks rebounded during the past two years -- and Russia's Far East coast and commercial fisheries still operate. But the Russian stock is threatened by oil and gas development and North American spawning grounds continue to be wiped out.

extracted from an article by Peter Gorrie, in THE TORONTO STAR, Jan. 20, 2001

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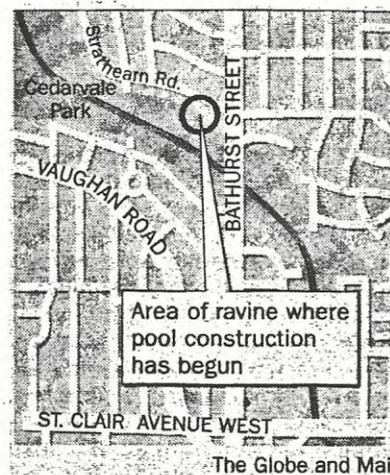
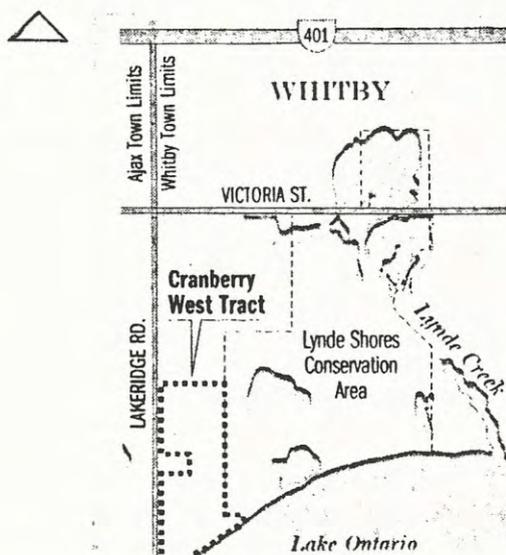
IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

PRIME LAND GOES TO THE BIRDS

40 hectares of land in the Lynde marsh area of Whitby has been acquired through the province's Natural Areas Protection Program. The plot, called the Cranberry West Tract, runs north from Lake Ontario and just east of Lakeridge Rd., on the Ajax-Whitby border.

The land, which is currently used as farmland, is being purchased from a numbered company. It will continue to be leased as farmland through the summer and will then be turned into a meadow. The purchase of the land came through contributions from the province, the town and fundraising by the Lynde Marsh Alliance.

extracted from an article by Martin Patriquin in THE TORONTO STAR, Feb. 21, 2001



DIGGING BEGINS FOR POOL IN RAVINE

The dispute over a pool, in an area that boasts some of the city's most expensive homes, reveals there is little protection for some Toronto ravines, which are often referred to as the heart of the city and what makes it special. The number of ravines in the megacity and how many are protected is not easily available from city hall, although most of the 29 ravines in the former city of Toronto are protected by ravine control bylaws. The lack of protection means that there is a real risk to ravines outside the former city of Toronto.

The city's chief planner notes in his Toronto at the Crossroads report on Toronto's future that more than 50 areas have been designated as being environmentally sensitive and have bylaws to protect them from development. However, almost that many have no formal designation or protection. Cedarvale Ravine is an example of the inconsistencies in ravine protection across the city. The part of the ravine east of Bathurst Street is in the former city of Toronto and is protected by a ravine-control bylaw. The other half, on the west side of the street, is in the former city of York and has no protection.

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority has not yet designated Cedarvale a regulated ravine. Without protection in place, the city cannot legally prevent the construction of the pool. In 1997, York council re-zoned the back portions of the Strathearn lots backing onto the ravine to 'G' -- for green open space -- from residential. The green-open-space designation prohibits the construction of buildings or structures.

extracted from an article by Gay Abbate in THE GLOBE & MAIL, Feb. 26, 2001

NEWS FLASH!!!

The Friends of the Spit agreed to lift their appeal against the City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment Minor Variance Ruling which would add the permitted use of "wind turbine" to the lands at Ashbridge's Bay Sewage Treatment Plant. In return, as part of the agreement to lift this appeal, the proponent has agreed to actively pursue a wind turbine site at the CNE, and if successful in obtaining a CNE site, will not pursue the TEDCO site at the base of the spit. Friends of the spit remain opposed to the location of any wind turbines at the base of the Spit, and will oppose the proposal for the TEDCO site, should the CNE site application fail. Currently the proponent is optimistic that the CNE site will gain approval.

from the TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB NEWSLETTER, No. 112, Feb. 2001

THANK YOU, AND KEEP THE NEWS COMING!!!

What we ask for is newspaper clippings about plants, animals and natural areas in the Toronto region, with the source and a date for each. Thanks to the following members who sent us material during the past year.

Diana Banville	Harding Bishop	Alexander Cappell	Mary Cumming
Nancy Cumming	Karin Fawthrop	Nancy Fredenburg	Mary Hunter
Louise Herzberg	Alen McCombie	Mary Anne Miller	Jean McGill
Melanie Milanich	Grace Somers	Gloria Somerville	
Linda Stemmler	Gerry Shepherd	Arthur Wade	Mel Whiteside
Marg Tilley	Mary Thomson	Molly Campbell	

H.J. ☐

No landscaping yet
but a small bee is checking
the chickweed blossoms.

haiku by Diana Banville
Crescent Town
Easter Monday, 1998

THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

April 2000, Toronto

April was cooler and wetter than what we have become accustomed to. The average temperature dropped to the vicinity of the 30-year average, and there were some conspicuous episodes of rain and snow in the middle part of the month.

Mean temperatures downtown were 0.1°C below normal (the second month with a below-normal mean since November 1997 -- the only other month was August 1999). Pearson's mean of 6.7°C was 0.4°C above the 1971 to 2000 average. Snowfall of 7-8 cm was slightly above normal across the city and the highest since 1996. Rainfall was about 10 mm above normal and the most since 1996. Total precipitation of 84.2 mm downtown and 84.7 mm at Pearson Airport was the highest since that year also and about 15 mm above normal.

The month began with a gradual cooling from March's warmth, but we were not expecting the last visit of winter (which had been virtually absent since mid-February). The mid-continental ridge over North America broke down, allowing Arctic air to seep south. Rain changed to snow on April 8 and temperatures were close to freezing for a few days. A second snowfall came on April 11. The first system deposited over 30 cm of snow in an area from eastern Ontario to New England. Some snow even fell in New York City. Toronto's snowfalls were relatively light but definitely noticeable. A brief warm-up into the twenties followed, but the week leading up to Easter was overcast and cool. Heavy rain and high winds came on Holy Thursday, with gusts of 80 km/h and some tree damage. After this last system, high pressure took over again and the final week of the month brought continuous sunshine, light winds, and temperatures near or slightly above normal. Sunshine would have been exceptionally deficient if it weren't for this last week which resembled the conditions of 1998 and 1999. As it was, the total of 220.3 hours downtown was about 8 hours below normal and the lowest since 1997.

To sum up, April was unsettled for the most part. It brought welcome rains after a very dry winter and a time of very low lake levels.

Gavin Miller

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This Month's Cover

FAWN IN ROUGE

Recollection of a 1988 sight. I had got up from basking beside the Rouge River and there, three or four yards away, was this exquisite small creature sighting me. We stayed absolutely motionless for unconscionably long minutes, when, deciding apparently that I was neither edible nor threatening, the fawn started to munch on surrounding foliage. A gust of wind finally alerted it to something dangerous and it disappeared in a second. What was astonishing about this manifestation was that it was mid-afternoon, the valley was full of shouting children, and there was a well-frequented path for dog walkers only a few yards away.

Eva Davis

COMING EVENTS

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

- Sat. April 28 from 8 am (all day) - Early Migrants at the Leslie St. Spit with Hugh Currie. Meet at the foot of Leslie St. Bring a lunch.

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

- Sun. April 8 - The Birds of Spring [MEET AT 9 AM. Bring binoculars.]
- Sun. April 22 - Earth Day in High Park [See below.]
- Sun. April 29 - Restoration Efforts in the Park

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

Toronto Entomologists' Association meeting - Sat. April 28 at 1 pm in the Northrop Frye Hall, Room 119, 73 Queen's Park Cres. East.

The topic will be "Love at 4 am", the life of the Cecropia moth, an illustrated talk by William Randall. For more information, call Alan Hanks at 905-727-6993.

Environmental Education Conference - May 5 to 6 at Paradise Lake, Waterloo.

Entitled "Reconnecting with Nature", information can be obtained by contacting Bill Andrews at 416-429-2786 or bill.andrews@sympatico.ca or www.0see.org

Toronto Wildflower Society meeting - Wed. April 25 at 7:30 pm at the Beaches Recreation Centre, 6 Williamson Rd. The topic of this meeting will be "How to Photograph Wildflowers" by Nancy Mungall. Call Carolyn King at 416-222-5736 for more information.

Mycological Society of Toronto - meetings and forays. For more information call 416-HI-FUNGI.

Earth Day in High Park - Sun. April 22 from noon to 4 pm

TFN is having a display at Colborne Lodge. Volunteers are needed. Call Andre Vietinghoff at 416-232-9241 if you can help from 12 to 2 or from 2 to 4 pm. [This event is "weather permitting".]

Market Gallery - March 10 to June 24 - Urban Sites: Five Toronto Photographers; 95 Front St. East, 2nd floor; Wed. to Fri. 10 am to 4 pm; Sat. 9 am to 4 pm; Sun. 12 noon to 4 pm. Free. Call 416-392-7604 for details.

The Broken Fence Society third Environmental Art Exhibit - April 16 to April 30 at the Acadia Gallery, 226 Queen St. East. For more information contact the Society at 68 Broadview Ave., Suite 413, Toronto M4M 2E6. [TFN member Alan Power will be showing two bird sculptures.]

Ian Wheal Heritage Walk - Sat. April 21 at 2 pm. Meet at the southwest corner of Oakwood and St. Clair Ave. West to visit Whip-poor-will Estate.

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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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TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB: ITS HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION, 1965	\$ 2.00	TORONTO REGION BIRD CHART, 1983.....	\$ 4.00
CHECKLIST OF PLANTS IN FOUR TORONTO PARKS; WILKET CREEK, HIGH PARK, HUMBER VALLEY, LAMBTON WOODS, 1972	\$ 2.00	A GRAPHIC GUIDE TO ONTARIO MOSSES, 1985	\$ 4.00
TORONTO THE GREEN, 1976 Metropolitan Toronto's important natural areas are described and recommendations given for their conservation and management; includes maps, bibliography and index	\$ 8.00	GUIDE TO TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' NATURE RESERVE, LEASKDALE, ONT., 1986	\$ 4.00
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2 Carlton St., #1519, Toronto, Ontario M5B 1J3. (Add \$2.00 per item
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\$25 SINGLE, SENIOR FAMILY

\$20 STUDENT, SENIOR SINGLE

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