

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

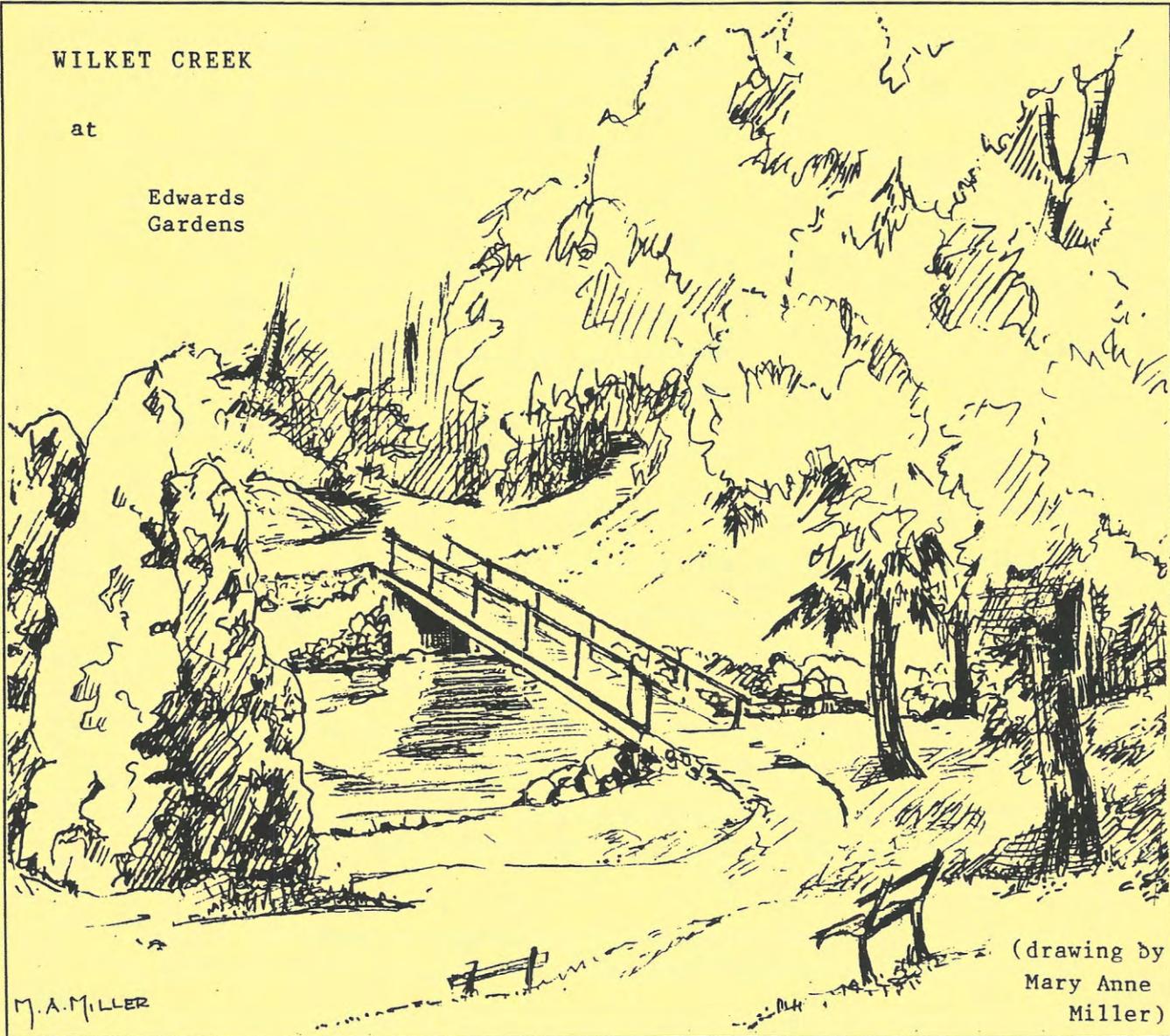
Number 502

October 2001

WILKET CREEK

at

Edwards
Gardens



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TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, October 7, 2001 - CONSERVATION OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES
an illustrated talk by Bob Johnson, Curator
of Amphibians and Reptiles at the Toronto Zoo
at 2:30 pm

in the Northrop Frye Hall
Victoria University

VISITORS WELCOME!

- Amphibians and reptile conservation projects will highlight community involvement and the implications of keeping common species common. Included in the discussion will be examples of projects that range from building snake hibernacula (overwintering sites) to tracking snapping turtles in the Rouge Valley.

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

+ an opportunity to buy TFN memberships and selected publications

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, November 4, 2001

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

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

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

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

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

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

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

Editor: Helen Juhola

Poetry, Art and Nature Observations: Diana Banville

Assistants: Patricia Brind, Eva Davis, Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg,
Toshi Oikawa, Marilyn Murphy, Robin Powell

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 416-393-4636.
 Check the weather by calling 416-661-0123 so you will know what to wear on outings
 which go rain or shine.

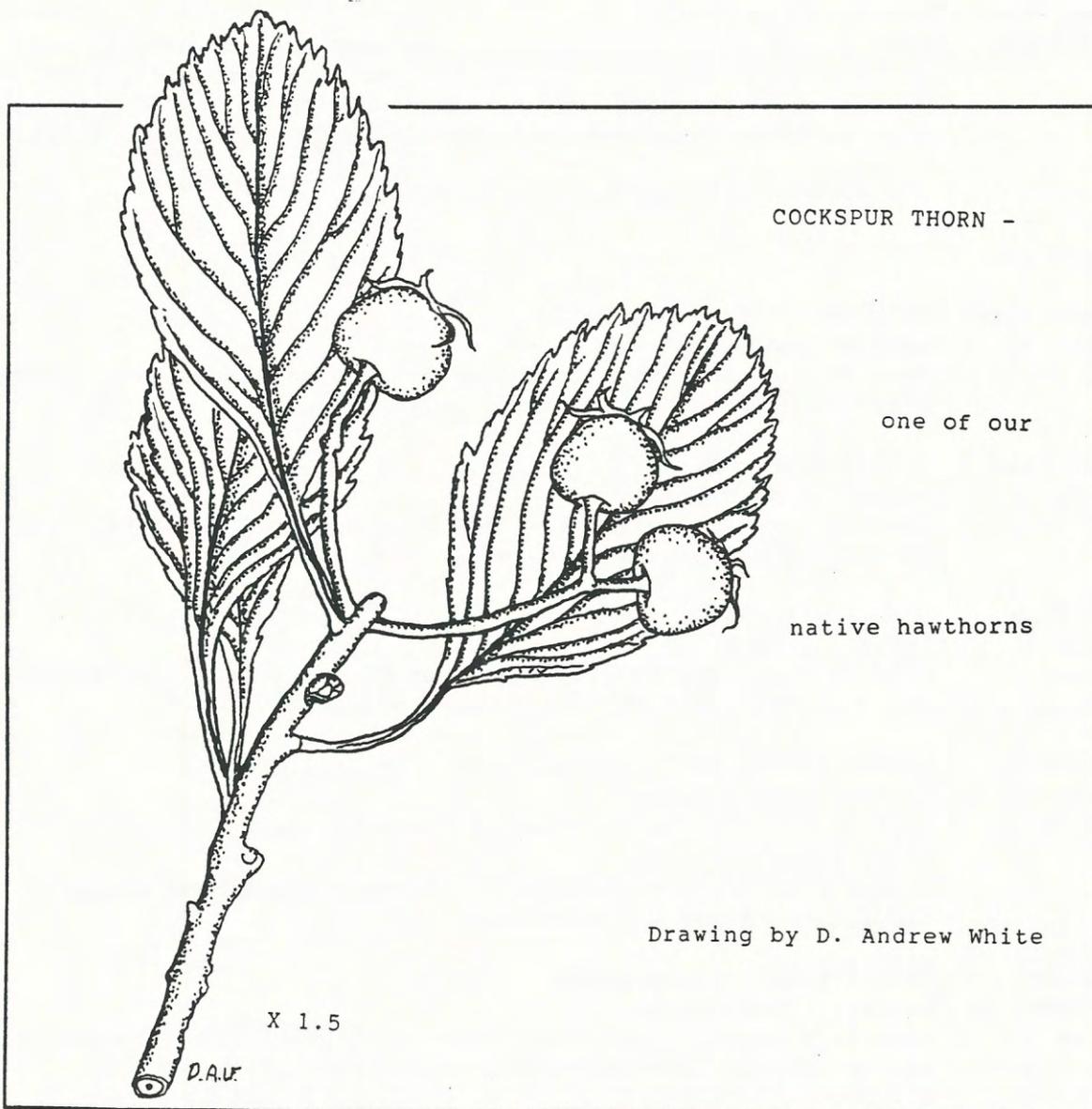
- Wednesday HUMBER ARBORETUM- nature walk
 Oct. 3 Leader: Carol Sellers
 10:30 am Meet on the south side of Humber College Blvd. west of Hwy. 27
 at entrance to arboretum. Bring lunch and binoculars.
- Saturday GLENDON CAMPUS - nature arts
 Oct. 6 Leader: Mary Taylor
 10:30 am Meet at the gates of Glendon on the east side of Bayview Ave.
 at Lawrence Ave. East. 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. Bring lunch.
- Sunday TFN MEETING (See page 2 for details.)
 Oct. 7
 2:30 pm
- Wednesday GUILDWOOD PARK - nature walk
 Oct. 10 Leader: Karin Fawthrop
 10 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Guildwood Parkway
 opposite Galloway Rd. Morning only.
- Saturday HIGH PARK - trees
 Oct. 13 Leader: Bohdan Kowalyk
 10 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Bloor St. West
 opposite High Park Ave. Morning only.
- Thursday TORONTO ISLANDS - birds
 Oct. 18 Leader: Doug Paton
 9 am Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. in time to take
 \$ ferry tickets the 9 am ferry. Bring lunch and binoculars.
- Saturday LESLIE STREET SPIT - nature walk
 Oct. 20 Leader: Boris Mather
 10:30 am Meet at the southwest corner of Queen St. East and Leslie St.
 Bring lunch.
 We will be looking at where the Gardiner Expressway was and then looking at
 fall flowers and migrating butterflies.
- Sunday TADDLE CREEK - urban ecology
 October 21 Leader: Eduard Sousa
 1 pm This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community
 and the Taddle Creek Watershed Initiative. Please call
 416-599-4171 to register. Meet on church steps at corner of
 Wychwood Ave. and St. Clair Ave. West (west of Bathurst St.).

OCTOBER OUTINGS (cont'd)

Thursday EAST POINT PARK - nature walk
Oct. 25 Leader: Boris Mather
10:30 am Meet at the east end of Guildwood Parkway at the foot of
Morningside Ave. Bring lunch.
This will be a lengthy walk with much to see and hear along this relatively
undeveloped stretch of shoreline.

Saturday ROUGE VALLEY - nature walk
Oct. 27 Leader: Robin Powell
10:30 am Meet at the northeast corner of Sheppard Ave. East and Meadowvale
Rd. Bring lunch.

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THE MEADOW NORTH OF THICKSON'S WOODS IS "THE MISSING LINK"

While Thicksen's Woods itself is a vital migration link, the conversion of surrounding wild spaces to industrial uses has the potential to seriously erode its value to wildlife and to human visitors alike. Waterfowl using Corbett Creek Marsh and the beaver ponds upstream may nest several hundred metres from the water. Songbirds moving north from the woods in May need cover and additional food sources to facilitate their passage. Species that nest in transition habitat such as overgrown fields are being displaced as these areas are converted to industrial subdivisions.

The overgrown meadow immediately north of the woods is summer home to willow flycatchers, yellow warblers, eastern kingbirds and cedar waxwings. In winter, tree sparrows and northern shrikes forage here for food. In fall, palm warblers and Lincoln's sparrows can be found. In spring, meadowlarks and magnolia warblers pause to feed. And this is exactly the sort of habitat that endangered loggerhead shrikes need to refuel during migration.

This meadow really is "the missing link". It not only connects Thicksen's Woods to Corbett Creek Valley, it also buffers the Waterfront Trail and its many users from the deafening noise and nauseating exhaust fumes arising from the constant stream of truck traffic along Thicksen Road and Wentworth Street. Just imagine how much poorer everyone's outdoor experience would be if the meadow became home to a large fleet of trucks rather than the flocks of birds we enjoy seeing and hearing there now. One need only stand on the north edge of the woods on a May morning and watch the warblers and tanagers streaming northward to realize just how critical it is to protect this key piece of habitat.

The Thicksen's Woods Heritage Foundation board has been negotiating for months to purchase the meadow -- 8½ acres that, left natural, will buffer the woods, marsh and creek valley as other natural spaces in the neighbourhood are replaced by sterile asphalt parking lots. A deal has been struck for \$62,500 per acre, which means raising more than half a million dollars even without interest payments. Yes, it will be a major challenge to achieve this goal, but this is also a golden opportunity, an opportunity which, if not grasped, will be lost forever.

Terms of the agreement call for a six-month closing to give time to raise the \$100,000 down payment. So our first hurdle is to come up with \$100,000 cash by February 6, 2002. If 500 people donated \$1,000 each, for example, we'd have the downpayment and be well on our way toward paying off the remaining mortgage of \$431,250. \$1,000 is a lot of money -- but spread out over five years it's only \$200 per year, a small price to pay to protect the irreplaceable jewel that is Thicksen's Woods.

Picture yourself in Thicksen's Woods on a sunny May morning, trying to hear the song of a white-throated sparrow or winter wren above the constant roar of trucks coming and going next door. Remember the sweet perfume of pine needles on a warm August afternoon, and imagine how quickly that fragrance would be destroyed by the stench of diesel fumes. And then ask yourself, "What is protecting Thicksen's Woods worth to me?".

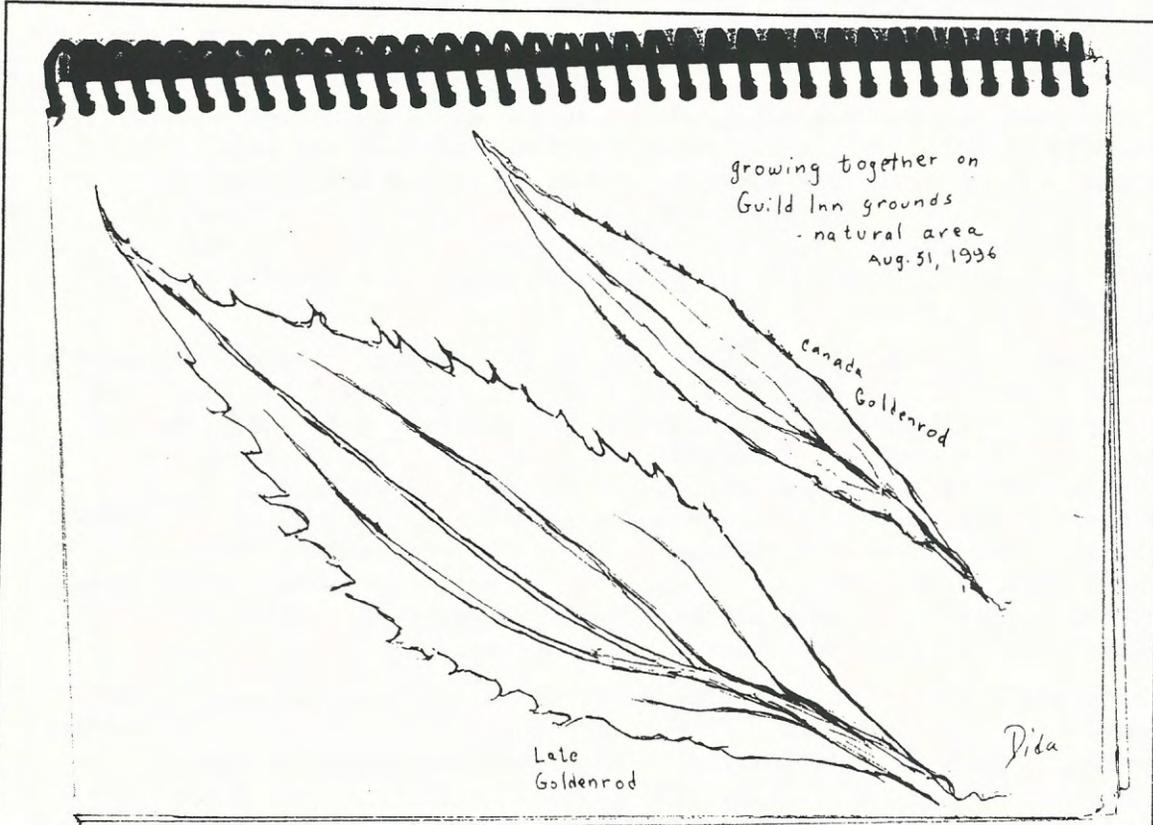
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Tax deductible donations can be made to:

Thickson's Woods Heritage Foundation,
Box 541, Whitby, ON L1N 5V3

For more information: (905) 725-2116 or at nature@thicksonswoods.com
or visit our web site (coming soon): www.thicksonswoods.com

Dennis Barry



The late goldenrod has noticeably larger leaves than those of the Canada goldenrod and also broader in relationship to their length. Both are described as "strongly triple-nerved" in the manuals. Also common here is the tall goldenrod - shown as a separate species in our popular field guides but is sometimes considered a variety of Canada goldenrod. (Our other Toronto goldenrods have leaves more or less "feather-veined".)

DB

Ref.: FERNALD - GRAY'S MANUAL OF BOTANY.

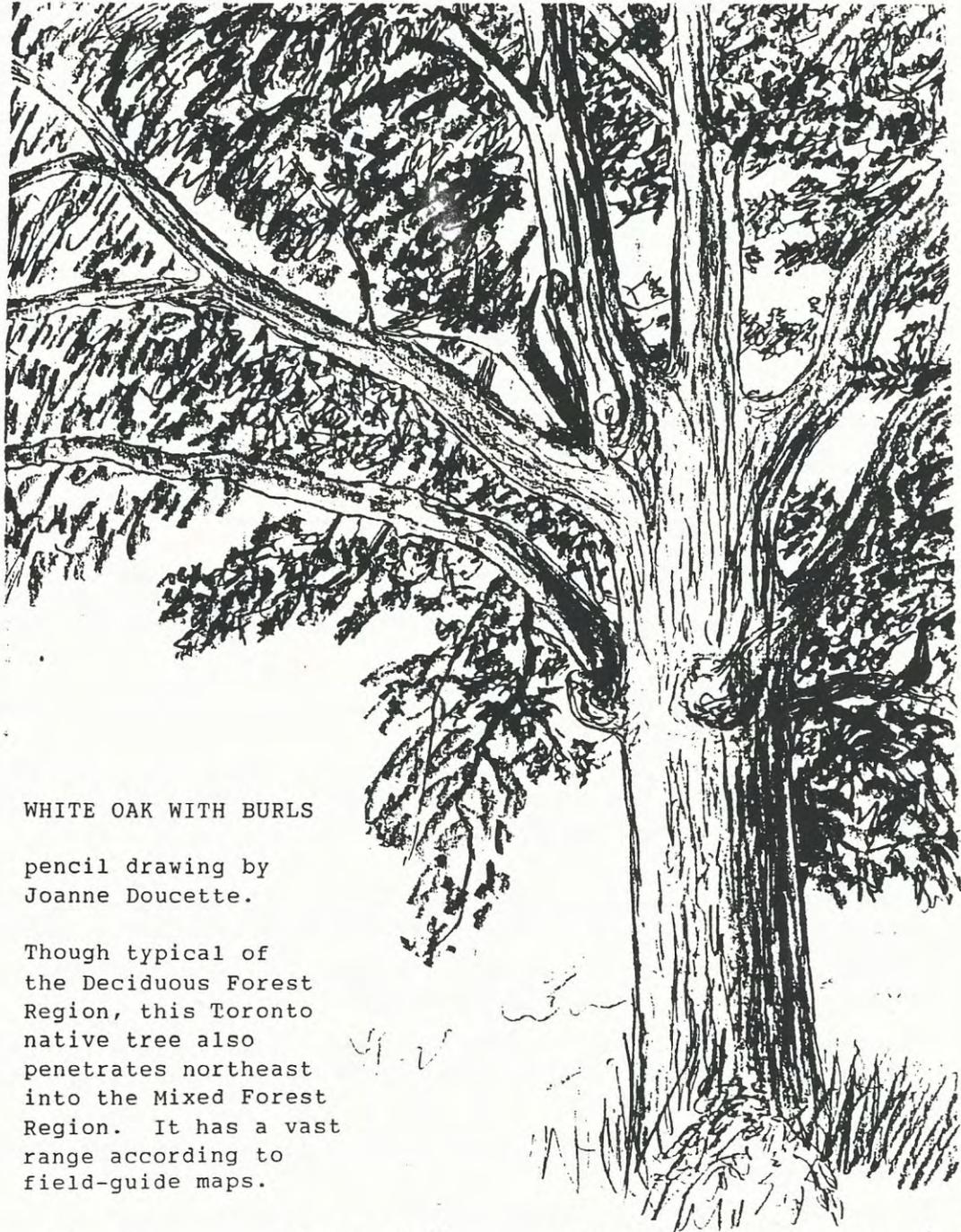


THE EFFECTS OF AIR POLLUTION ON WOODLANDS

- . The chemical soup of air pollution that flows across the land is intercepted by forests, where the gases are taken in by plants but the particulates are screened out.
- . Those plants (such as lichens and mosses) that can't control which components of air they take in disappear first, but others are also negatively affected.
- . The chemical soup contains nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, suspended particulates, and ozone, which is actively created within the chemical soup and is toxic to plants.
- . In the last 20 years, but especially in the last 5 years, Ontario has become the world leader in sulphur dioxide, ozone and photo-chemical contaminants.
- . The highest ozone levels in Ontario occur in the Peterborough area and west of Long Point (but elsewhere levels are also bad) because the principal summer winds come from the southwest. Winds passing over cities containing many cars (i.e. Detroit and Toronto) cause ozone levels to peak downwind about three hours after rush hour.
- . With increased levels of ozone on the ground and reduced levels in the stratosphere, there is increased exposure to UVb (a powerful mutating factor) at ground level.
- . Ozone holes in the stratosphere are worst from mid-March to mid-May, and with spring now arriving on average six days earlier, forest canopy and spring wildflowers are developing when UVb levels are highest.
- . Pollutants in the air are affecting living organisms at all levels, but some are more sensitive than others.
- . Trilliums in inner city woodlands produce no seeds, probably because insect pollinators are negatively affected by air pollution; seed set in disturbed woodlands is half that of large undisturbed woodlands.
- . Soil bacteria in the inner city and along roadsides are being poisoned by air pollution, which results in slowed decomposition of leaf litter.
- . In areas where leaf litter is most contaminated, it doesn't break down at all and forests have stopped growing.
- . In woodlots around Toronto, there has been a 15% decrease in annual decomposition, which has caused a 15% decrease in the growth of forests.
- . Sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide in air pollution can cause winter damage to trees.
- . To reverse the effects of air pollution, we need to focus on transit, reducing cars and reducing emissions, including those from Ontario Power Generation. ▷

The material on the preceding page is from "FON Woods Talk Report" by Winnifred Wake reporting on two presentations by Tom Hutchinson of Trent University; THE CARDINAL, No. 184, Aug. 2001

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WHITE OAK WITH BURLS

pencil drawing by
Joanne Doucette.

Though typical of
the Deciduous Forest
Region, this Toronto
native tree also
penetrates northeast
into the Mixed Forest
Region. It has a vast
range according to
field-guide maps.

J. Doucette

WHITE OAK

SELKIRK PROV. PARK AUG. 7/99

FROM THE WILDS OF BRAMPTON...

I live within a 25-minute walk of Meadowvale Cemetery. This large, orderly artefact is surrounded by fields, once, I suppose, crop-producing, now, I assume, cemetery property. On my meanderings in these areas I have been impressed by the multitude of deer prints.

Last spring (April 23, an incredibly warm day dropping, unexpectedly, like balm from heaven), I skirted a large part of this cemetery extension which appears to be in the process of translation to "civilized" usage -- huge old trees laid low, landfill by the endless truckload. All this stops at the unarguable boundary of a railway embankment.

When I was about ten yards from this line a splendid young deer leapt from nowhere and ballooned from one shrub cover to another until its white, heaven-directed tail disappeared.

Now to appreciate this visitation, taking place in broad daylight, I must stress that although the train line appears to be in disuse (rails rusty and no transportation that I, at any rate, have seen), this deer was nevertheless in a highly populated area. Cemetery vehicular comings and goings not far away; close by a great, grinding machine doing its ground-clearing 'thing'; homes, at this point, on the other side of that rail line (one of which contained a dog, fortunately leashed, who objected vociferously to my presence); a couple of major highways thundering over bridges not too far down the line; and overhead the minute-by-minute boom of planes from Pearson Airport, heading northwest. Admittedly, on the other side of those homes is a remnant of forest bordering the Credit River, but even this bit of wilderness is riddled with bike trails.

So, in the face of all odds, a marvellous sighting!

I then negotiated the link-fence separating rail and cemetery property and followed the line until I reached the river which, like rivers the world over, has an incredibly convoluted course. Its banks were rich with the bursting of young nettles and there were surprisingly large patches of delicate squirrel-corn. Along the rail line was the lovely golden spread of coltsfoot, the opening umbrellas of May apple, white clusters of bloodroot, and occasional tiny sprigs of spring-beauty.

Returning to cemetery property (again over the link fence to the, by now, hysterical indignation of that omnipresent dog) and through the cemetery proper, enjoying the prolonged honks of a pair of Canada geese who appeared to have decided that this was home, at least for the present. Back to base, and the discovery, on my small balcony, of a sleepy ladybird (I still call them by the old British name -- a corruption, I believe of the medieval title of the Little Birds of Our Lady). This specimen was alien, the southern lady beetle -- nevertheless, an indication of advancing summer (however much we, this year, may have feared for its eventual arrival).

The Wilds of Brampton, indeed! In spite of civic planning to keep This Sort of Thing in its place.

Eva Davis

□

MAGICAL BIRD

"Are you a butterfly or are you a bird?" I asked, as a little bird darted into my garden and flitted around the spray from my hose. It was such a dear little animated, jewel of a bird, I was enchanted. It obviously was delighted with the spray and played in the garden for about five minutes, while I continued talking and not shifting the spray from the hose. It volplaned down a large Mandevilla leaf, then darted to the orange tree where it shook drops off the leaves and showered itself, fluffing and fanning its feathers. It displayed its tail feathers in a fan striped with bands of yellow, with a little yellow epaulet. Fall warblers are difficult to identify, but this was surely an immature male American Redstart or a female. Peterson describes it as the most butterfly-like of the warblers. What a lovely experience in a small garden at Bloor and Yonge. [Aug. 25, 2000]

...

Surely magical moments don't happen twice? But last evening at about the same time, 5 p.m., I took out the hose and started its jet along the wall of clematis. There was sudden motion again by the Mandevilla vine, and the same little jewel of a bird flitted between the boards of the fence next to Bill's garden. This time it stayed and played, fanning its brilliant tail with the stripes of yellow, fluffing, shaking, in constant motion, whirling and darting almost like a little hummingbird. It didn't seem to want to stop its play until it became thoroughly soaked. I had adjusted the hose until there was just a fine misty spray for it, but it seemed to have no sense of threat as I adjusted the hose or, this time, even moved my position. Truly a second magical experience. Between blinks of an eye it shot back through the space between the boards of the fence and was gone. But the second event took certainly ten minutes. [Aug. 26, 2000]

Jean P. Milner

□

- Bee, visiting my cola can,
for whom do you gather this alien nectar?
Surely not the hive!
- Bee, so bravely entering
this deep perhaps perilous nectary,
did the hive request Diet?

Arthur Wade, Summer, 2000.

GOD BLESS THE BIRDS

God bless the sparrows that nest in the roof.
That wild creatures share our city they're proof.
In this desert of concrete to life they have clung,
And against all the odds they're raising their young.
And God bless the birds.

God bless the geese that dwell by the shore.
Each winter we feed them, each spring there are more.
In the parks they increase to numbers burdensome,
Thus proving the truth: If you build it, they will come.
And God bless the birds.

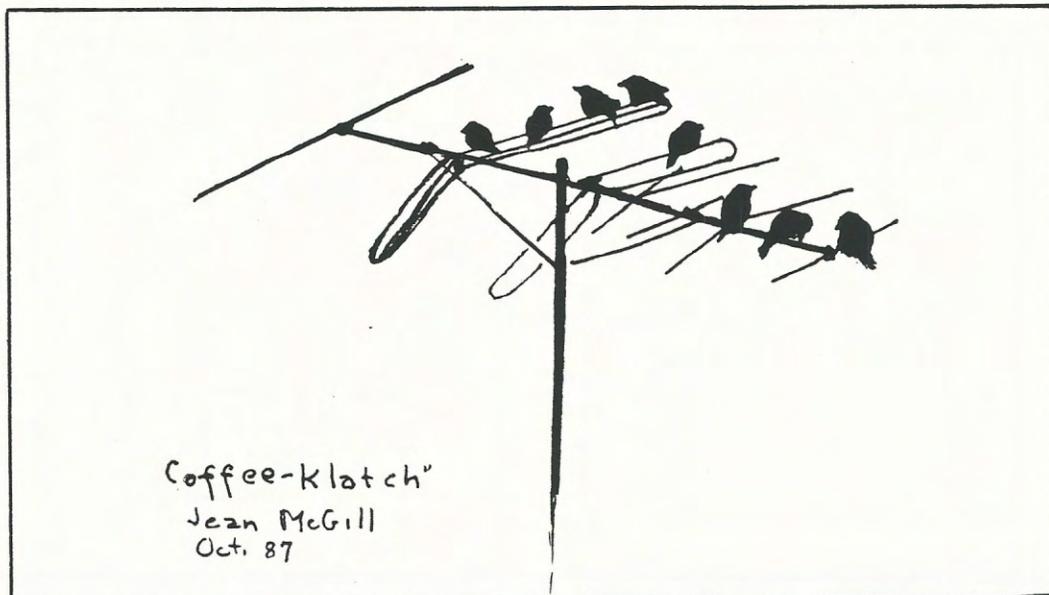
God bless the gulls that forage through trash.
Though some people wish they could settle their hash.
Like demons they squawk, they poop from the air,
For which they've been banished from Nathan Phillips Square.
And God bless the birds.

God bless the pigeons that nobody loves,
Though they don't seem so bad if we call them rock doves.
They flourish like weeds, attracting much blame,
But how can we criticize when we do the same?
And God bless the birds.

NOTE:

The preceding was inspired by sparrows living and nesting in the pipes attached to the ceiling of the National Trade Centre. It was written to the tune of Malvina Reynolds' "God Bless the Grass".

Elizabeth Block



THE TREES OF MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY

They say the baldcypress is a hardy tree; it even ranges into southern Illinois. We always think of this tree as a Florida swamp tree, not something that would survive in Canada. When I saw this tree in the arboretum guide, I thought it would not last over a cold winter. It was listed in "N" section, so I searched the area with no luck. This confirmed my first thought that it could not live in Toronto. I was wrong. I was searching for a buttonbush in "Q" section and lo and behold a bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). It wasn't very big, the leader was broken, and it had some dead branches, but it was alive.

The wood of the baldcypress is resistant to water damage and is used for guttering and barrels. If the tree is growing in water the roots produce "knees". They contain "pneumatophores" which help in aeration of the roots. The tree looks a little like the dawn redwood but the leaves are not opposite. It is a deciduous tree and is one of the last trees to leaf out. The section "Q" where it is planted was once a pond so the "below ground" water may help it survive.

Roger Powley

□

A TOURIST

Listen to the wind!
The tent flaps
and the trees sing.

Look into the eyes of
the gannet -
see innocence.

And what is
a home
for a seal?

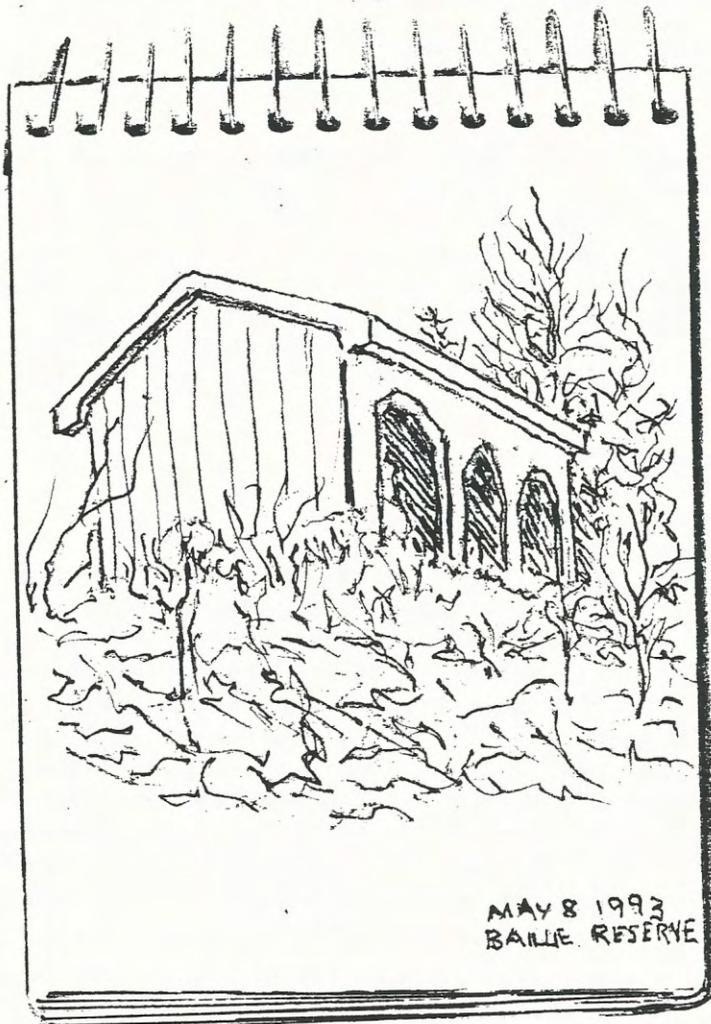
Larisa Zviedris

KEEPING IN TOUCH

August 13, 2001

I would like to offer a well-earned "Thank You" for the information and expertise given in the compact "Guide to the TFN Nature Reserves". As someone who had the good fortune to visit the reserves on TFN outings when I lived in Toronto, I am astonished at the richness of what flourishes in these natural areas. Anybody visiting them, and even anybody who has never made the trip (every member should!) can benefit from the information in this knowledgeable and handy guide: trees, mosses, butterflies, fungi, ferns, wildflowers, birds, insects -- you name it, it is there. A steal at \$4.00 for every nature-lover and a "must" for TFN supporters.

Eva Davis



THE SHELTER AT

THE TFN'S

JAMES L. BAILLIE
NATURE RESERVE

sketched by

Mary Cumming

IN THE NEWS

LET'S TALK HOPPING

Typically, large birds such as chickens, turkeys and ostriches walk when moving sedately and then run to move faster. Smaller birds, such as finches, sparrows and crows, tend to hop. The general rule is that the more time a bird spends in trees, the more likely it is to hop.

extracted from an article by Michael Kesterton in Social Studies, GLOBE & MAIL, May 19, 2001

AUSTRALIAN BIRDCALLS HAVE A RING TO THEM

The electronic tweeting of mobile phones is so widespread that some birds are mimicking the sound as part of their mating and territorial songs. Australia has six so-called mimic birds that commonly imitate sounds in nature. The birds hear the ringing of more and more mobile phones in rural areas, Queensland Museum's bird expert said.

extracted from an article in THE GLOBE & MAIL, June 13, 2001

SERVE AND PROTECT

When a family of ducklings fell down a Vancouver sewer grate, their mother did what any parent would do -- she got help from a passing police officer. The duck grabbed him by the pant leg while he was on foot patrol near downtown. The mother duck grabbed again when he tried to leave, and then walked to a nearby sewer grate where she sat and waited for him to investigate. He saw eight little babies in the water below. After removing the heavy metal grate with the help of a tow truck, the officer scooped up the ducklings and watched as they and their mother departed for a nearby pond.

extracted from an article in THE TORONTO STAR, July 21, 2001

THIS SUMMER ONE OF WORST ON RECORD FOR DIRTY AIR

According to provincial records, this summer has experienced the worst air quality since the present system of air-pollution monitoring was instituted in 1993. Since May 1, the province has issued advisories for 14 days. On those days, the air was unfit to breathe because it was laced with pollutants harmful to the lungs, such as ozone and small particles, among other contaminants. The entire summer of 1988 has worse records from that year are not comparable to statistics used now. The province says pollution from sources such as vehicles and coal-firing power plants in the U.S. Mid-west accounts for more than half the contaminants in Ontario's air. The rest is from Ontario industries and farms. Consequently, some of the worst air pollution in Ontario is found in out-of-the-way rural areas near the U.S. border.

extracted from an article by Martin Mittelstaedt in THE GLOBE & MAIL, July 21, 2001

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

OAKVILLE COPES WITH STINK OF ROTTING ALGAE

Mats of decaying algae lining the lakefront are blamed for what one Bronte resident calls an "appalling stink." It's a perennial problem "but definitely worse this year than the last few. It's enough of a nuisance to generate lots of complaint calls to the town hall in Oakville, but officials note algae consists of a variety of natural, plant-like aquatic organisms that are only an aesthetic problem, not a health concern. The species most common along the Toronto-Burlington lake shore is Cladophora. It poses no risk to pets or wildlife. Gentle southwest winds are causing the algae to accumulate, with no storm waves to disperse it.

The problem seems centred in Oakville. Nutrients that fuel algae growth come from lawn and garden fertilizers and pet waste washed into the water. Later in August and September, decaying algae often cause bad tastes and odours in drinking water drawn from the lake.

from an article by Eric McGuinness in THE TORONTO STAR, August 9, 2001

HEAT WAVES NOT NEW

Re: Drought, From Coast To Coast (Aug. 14): The current continent-wide drought inevitably raised the global warming question. There can no longer be uncertainty that, whatever may be the contributory causes, it is a real phenomenon; but we have short memories, and it is easy to overlook the great climatic variations that occur over the long term.

Bad as the current three-year drought on the Prairies is, old people can readily recall the infamous '30s, when dust-bowl conditions prevailed there for almost a decade. And within the past few years, large parts of the Prairies have been so wet as to prevent seeding. The hot, dry summer of 1961 was notorious, as you report; but only seven years previously the Prairie summer had been so wet that the wheat crop fell prey to a new species of rust.

In Ontario, the recent heat wave and a comparable one in 1988 were notable, but anyone in his mid-70s or older can recall the great heat of 1936, from July 8 to 13, during which temperatures of 38°C or 39°C were reached on five days in Southern Ontario, a record not equalled in the intervening 64 years. The natural fluctuations of our climate are great, and we must resist drawing conclusions from short-term phenomena.

from S. A. Brown, Peterborough, Ont. in LETTERS TO THE EDITOR,
in THE GLOBE & MAIL, August 16, 2001

The handsome kestrel
hovering over the fields
sends mice scurrying.

Haiku by Therese Paradis

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

TOE-LESS IN ONTARIO: MOURNING DOVES CAN'T STAND THE COLD

Mourning doves commonly suffer from frost damage to their feet. A study showed that up to 33% of over-wintering doves suffer from this problem in Ontario! Most mourning doves that breed in Canada migrate south in the winter to avoid cold temperatures; however, the proportion of over-wintering doves appears to be increasing, either due to greater supplies of waste grain in fields, or perhaps as a result of increased birdfeeding.

extracted from an article by Rick Buncombe, FeederWatcher (with input from Becky Whittam) in BIRDWATCH CANADA, #15, Winter, 2001

CANADA GEESE

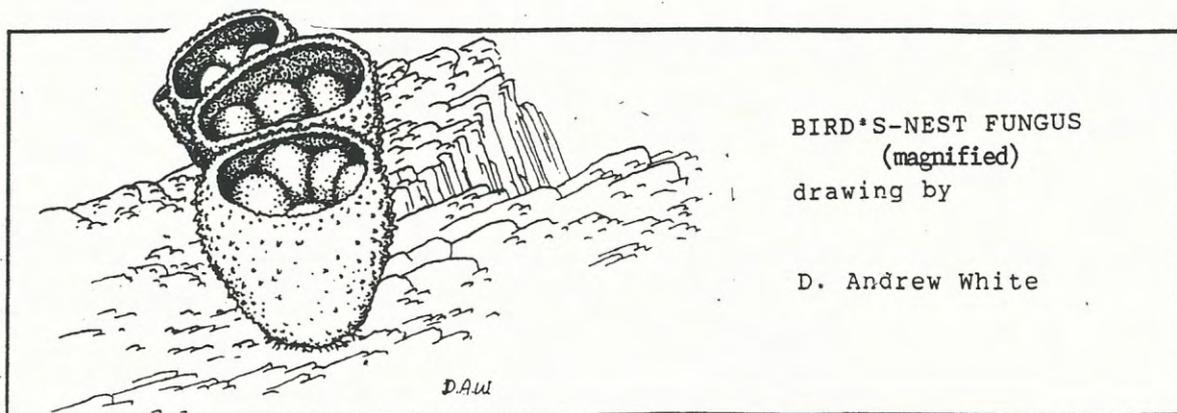
Whitby council doesn't like migrating geese "dropping" by, so it adopts a bylaw fining residents \$75 for feeding the birds.

from an article in the TORONTO STAR, April 21, 2001

WORLD DEPOPULATION?

- "Eighty-three countries and territories are now thought to experience below-replacement fertility. Those places encompass nearly 2.7 billion people -- roughly 44 per cent of the world's total population."
- "Nearly 40 countries and territories will have lower life expectancies in 2010 than they enjoyed in 1990. More than 750 million people ... live in such spots. Many of these countries are today's sub-Saharan victims of the HIV-AIDS epidemic. But the international health setback is not just about Africa and AIDS. In Russia ... life-spans are shorter today than 40 years ago. In a dozen other post-Communist countries, life expectancy is lower today than in the 1970s."

from an article by Michael Kesterton in THE GLOBE & MAIL, May 1, 2001



BIRD'S-NEST FUNGUS
(magnified)
drawing by

D. Andrew White

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

YARDS WITH ALE TRIP UP UK'S HEDGEHOGS

Britain's wild hedgehogs are getting tipsy on dishes of beer that gardeners leave out overnight to trap slugs. The creatures have been found to get so drunk that they fall asleep, forgetting to roll up into a protective ball. Some have been seen after a night of drinking alcohol, on their side, not too tightly curled and snoring in a vegetable patch. When they wake up they are wobbling from side to side and zig-zag as they walk. Hedgehogs are a protected species in Britain, vulnerable to attack by predators, especially birds.

extracted from an article in the GLOBE & MAIL, May 19, 2001

TOWN'S PESTICIDE BYLAW UPHELD

The Supreme Court of Canada is permitting municipalities to regulate or outlaw the use of pesticides. The 7-0 ruling approved a bylaw the Quebec town of Hudson passed in 1991, which had angered a coalition of landscaping and lawn-care companies that regularly used pesticides in their business. The Supreme Court enthusiastically endorsed the idea that local politicians have a special role to play in safeguarding the health of their constituents.

While many municipalities have experimented with pesticide control since the Hudson bylaw was passed, it acquired the status of a test case defining the clash of environmental values. A spokesperson for the World Wildlife Fund Canada said the federal government can expect renewed pressure to ban some of the 7,000 pesticides registered for use in the country.

from an article by Kirk Makin, in the GLOBE & MAIL, June 29, 2001

WIND FARM OPERATORS BUGGED BY POWER SHORTAGE

Insect guts make a mess of car windshields, but when splattered on the blades of high-tech windmills they can cut power output by up to half, a new report says. Because insects rarely fly in strong wind, clean turbines operating in these conditions do not become contaminated and power levels remain constant. But when the wind is calm, the temperature rises above 10°C and there's high humidity -- the conditions insects prefer for flying -- the leading edges of the blades can become covered with dead bugs. Extraneous material shifts the air flow to the leading edge of the blades, slowing them. Operators of wind farms in California, for example, found that their turbines were sometimes generating half the power they should have been producing. The solution appears to be simple: simply clean the blades.

from an article by Dawn Walton, in the GLOBE & MAIL, July 5, 2001

Oh! The call of the jay!
(Listen to me, you'd think I'd been away.)

Diana Banville,
February 9, 1998

WILY COYOTES ACQUIRE A TASTE FOR FREE LUNCH

Under a proposed bylaw, the fine might be \$100 for someone ticketed for putting out food for animals considered "dangerous," which include coyotes and foxes. The idea of the bylaw is not to spy on people but to make the point that well-meaning humans have to stop feeding animals because it is creating a public hazard. Normally shy and cautious, coyotes that live in Toronto's valleys and ravines have been having ever closer encounters with people because they expect to be fed. Several people around High Park leave food for coyotes every day, including one person who leaves full meals of chicken and rice.

The coyote population around Toronto began to expand about five years ago. No one has reported being attacked, but reports have been received about cats and small dogs being eaten. What some people think of as kindness will eventually mean a death sentence for the coyotes they feed. You can't relocate coyotes or foxes because they find their way right back to their home territory. If people can't live with them, the only safe and effective thing to do is to kill the animals. There is nothing in the proposed bylaw saying animals can't be fed on private property. According to provincial rules, it is a property owner's right to kill or trap a wild animal that becomes a nuisance.

from an article by Wallace Immen, in the GLOBE & MAIL, April 16, 2001

SUPERIOR, BUT FOR HOW MUCH LONGER?

Water levels on the three upper Great Lakes are plunging for the fourth straight year. The new declines come after a particularly troubling episode of plunging levels in the Huron-Michigan system from 1998 to 2000, when the water dropped about a metre, at the fastest pace ever noted in 140 years of record keeping. It is not unusual to have decade-long periods of relatively high water levels that are followed by declines. For instance, wet years led to extremely high lakes in the mid-1980s, while droughts in the 1930s, mid-1960s and the past few years meant low readings.

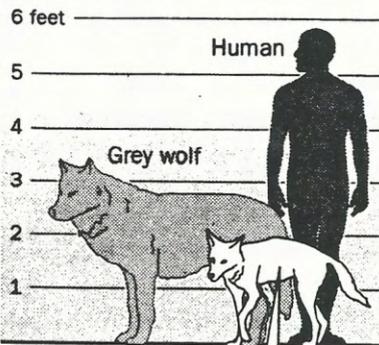
Water levels also change with the seasons, reaching a nadir in late winter, and then peaking in early summer as snow melt replenishes the lakes, when the full heat of summer has not yet begun to cause large losses from evaporation. Ice acts like a giant covering, minimizing the amount of water that evaporates. It was the fourth year that the ice cover was less than long-term averages. The lakes, except for Erie, didn't ice over at all and ice protects the lakes from evaporation.

Low levels have a major impact on human activity around the lakes. Last year's declines caused problems for marinas, left the docks of many cottagers high and dry, and prompted large-scale dredging. Dredging worries environmentalists because it stirs up contaminants, now buried in mud, that were laid down during the high polluting period in the 1960s, before bans on toxins such as polychlorinated biphenyls. Even lake freighters feel the impact of low water and last year were forced to carry lighter loads to prevent them from running aground, bearing 5 to 8 per cent less cargo such as iron ore, coal and other commodities.

from an article by Martin Mittelstaedt, in the GLOBE & MAIL, April 7, 2001



Coyote watch



A large coyote measures two feet at the shoulder. Coyotes are widespread in North America and have adapted well to living around people.

The Globe and Mail



Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab.

RICHARD PALMER/The Globe and Mail



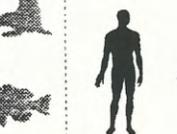
IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

CANADA TO BE AMONG FIRST TO SIGN CHEMICAL BAN

The dirty dozen: twelve hazardous chemicals that cause fatal diseases and birth defects among humans, birds and fish.

<p>Aldrin Pesticide applied to soil to kill termites, grasshoppers and other pests. Can also kill humans.</p>	<p>Chlordane Broad-spectrum insecticide. May affect human immune system and cause cancers.</p>	<p>DDT Most infamous of the POPs, DDT was widely used during the Second World War to protect soldiers and civilians from malaria, typhus and other diseases spread by insects.</p>	<p>Dieldrin Used mainly to control termites and textile pests. Second most common pesticide found in pasteurized milk in the U.S.</p>	<p>Dioxins Emitted mostly from burning of hospital waste, municipal waste and hazardous waste. Linked to immune and enzyme disorders in humans.</p>	<p>Endrin Insecticide sprayed on cotton and grains. Also used to control mice and other rodents.</p>
					

Source: Graphic News, United Nations Environment Programme

<p>Furans Found in emissions from waste incinerators and automobiles. Linked to immune and enzyme disorders in humans.</p>	<p>Heptachlor Used to kill soil insects and termites. Classified as a possible human carcinogen.</p>	<p>Hexachlorobenzene (HCB) Kills fungi that affect food crops. Can cause potentially fatal metabolic disorders in humans.</p>	<p>Mirex Insecticide and fire retardant in plastics, rubber and electrical goods. Classified as possible human carcinogen.</p>	<p>Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) Used in industry as heat exchange fluids in electric transformers and as additives in paint and plastics. Linked to developmental and behavioural problems in human infants.</p>	<p>Toxaphene Insecticide used on cotton, cereal grains, fruits, nuts and vegetables. Possible cause for cancer among humans.</p>
					

TRISH McALASTER, RICHARD PALMER / The Globe and Mail

from the GLOBE & MAIL, May 23, 2001



*I could smell plastic
as I looked at the flowers.
I was in a car.*

haiku by Helen Juhola

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

LESLIE SPIT PLAN MAY EGG ON CORMORANT HATERS

In 1959, construction firms began dumping earth into Lake Ontario. Thus began what is now Tommy Thompson Park, better known as the Leslie St. Spit. A landfill site on weekdays, on weekends and holidays it becomes a park -- an urban wilderness. The spit hosts the largest night-heron colony in the Great Lakes, which is at the northern end of their North American range, and thus has attained international status as an Important Bird Area.

This is not wilderness. It is a manufactured environment, mostly managed by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. Part of the authority's mandate is to maintain biodiversity. That leads to a controversial plan to limit cormorant nesting to where it now is, on two of three major peninsulas. (The authority already limits the nesting of ring-billed and herring gulls, while encouraging common and Caspian terns.) The fear is that cormorants' excrement will destroy small trees required by the night-herons for nesting. Cormorants will nest on the ground as trees die out, but not night-herons.

from an article by Barry Kent MacKay in the TORONTO STAR, March 25, 2001

MONDO CHIPMUNK

- . Neither sex is particularly gregarious, except in the year's two mating seasons (early spring and early summer). The female is even more territorial than the male and may bite and chase a suitor away from her den. If she does have a litter of pups, she will shoo them away from her home in six to eight weeks.
- . Chipmunks may sometimes chirp for 15 to 20 minutes to ward off interlopers from their feeding grounds. They can pack their cheeks with food until they are almost as large as their heads. They fight at the drop of a hat, constantly scolding, chipping and flicking their tails.
- . These rodents will eat bark, seeds, nuts and shoots. They like to munch on tulips, crocuses and lilies, but avoid daffodils and hyacinths. Chipmunks are fond of the peanut butter used as bait in rat traps and are good at snatching it away.
- . They are not herbivores. They'll eat insects, snails, eggs, salamanders and small mice. A chipmunk will not attack a healthy adult songbird, but can sometimes get the drop on a nestling or injured bird.

from Social Studies by Michael Kesterton, in THE GLOBE & MAIL, April 3, 2001

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IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

VANCOUVER BLOWS AWAY USE OF LEAF THROWERS

Vancouver has become the first city in Canada, and only the second major city in North America, to ban gas-powered leaf blowers. A total leaf-blower ban will take place in 2004. Until then, the machines will be restricted; they can only be used from October until January and must be at least 50 metres from any residential building. Los Angeles is the only other major city on the continent to ban gas-powered blowers. It isn't just the noise that upsets some residents. People have complained of the gasoline smell the machines emit, and others blame them for air pollution.

from an article in METRO TODAY, July 18, 2001

RACCOONS UNMASKED FOR BRITS

Love 'em or hate 'em, raccoons have put Toronto on the map as the raccoon capital of North America. The crafty critters that draw scorn from some residents for invading their homes and are admired by backyard wildlife watchers who revel in seeing families of them scampering through their neighbourhoods will soon be featured in a BBC documentary. A cameraman for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Natural History Unit is staying in The Beach filming a sequence about how raccoons have adapted to living in an urban environment for a 10-part documentary series co-produced with Discovery Channel called "The Life of Mammals". Toronto, because of its reputation as the raccoon capital of North America, is the ideal stage for the BBC to capture on film the behaviour of these complex creatures.

from an article by Kim Downey in THE MIRROR, Beach-Riverdale Edition, July 27, 2001

FROM THE PAST

"In stagnant conditions of weather", said the British medical journal LANCET in 1913, "as on a fine sunny day or during a windless drizzle of rain, quite a haze of petrol fumes accumulates [in London's air], which is very unpleasant to the pedestrian... We anticipated some years ago that the contamination of the streets would pass from a purely physiological kind to one of a chemical nature as we discontinued horse traffic in favour of motor traffic. Improvements have, however, been made during the past few years in the engines of the motor-car, and we may hope that soon they will be rendered practically fumeless, which will imply a more economical use of fuel in addition to the suppression of an obvious nuisance."

from an article by Michael Kesterton in THE GLOBE & MAIL, August 1, 2001

NEW POLLUTION HOTLINE

Lets you report acts of pollution anonymously, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free 1-866-663-8477.

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

ODD APHID INVASION ROOTED IN SOY FIELDS

Gentle breezes helped Toronto blow off a bizarre invasion of foreign soybean aphids that have been feasting for weeks on one of Ontario's most important cash crops. Commuters in Toronto found themselves covered with tiny green bugs on Aug. 2 as they headed home, breathing through handkerchiefs and struggling to brush off insects that were literally dropping from the sky. The curator of entomology at the Royal Ontario Museum said it's an Asian species, and it just got into Canada this year for the first time. It's in every soybean field in Southern Ontario. The aphids which sprout wings and ride the wind in search of additional food, began taking to the skies, leaving in their wake damaged soybean crops and, likely, heavy economic losses for farmers. It's a brand new insect pest. No one's ever seen this many aphids on soybeans before. The aphids likely migrated west on soybean plants and other legumes, an increasingly common phenomenon in an era of growing international trade and travel.

from an article by James McCarten in the GLOBE & MAIL, Aug. 4, 2001

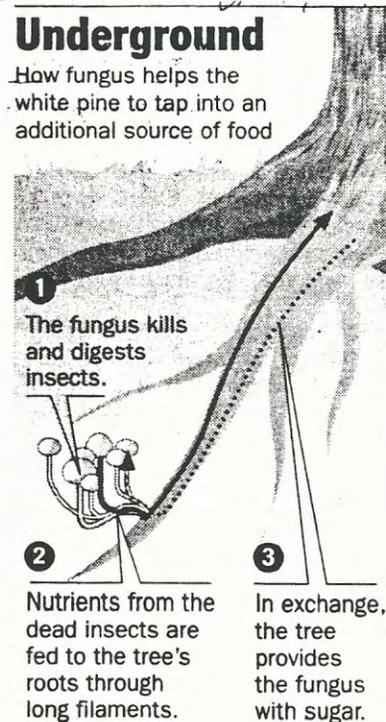
ECOLOGISTS FIND KILLER TREES IN ONTARIO

Researchers have found that the stately white pines in Ontario's Algonquin Park team up with mushrooms to eat insects alive. Scientists have known for years that trees absorb nutrients from dead and decaying plants and animals in soil, always with the help of fungal species that break down the material. However, insects are actually being killed for their nutrients, with the fungus and the tree acting as predators.

from an article by Anne McIlroy in the GLOBE & MAIL,
April 5, 2001

Underground

How fungus helps the white pine to tap into an additional source of food



RICHARD PALMER/The Globe and Mail

The term "semi-natural" is used in recognition of the fact that almost all has been modified to some degree by man's activities.

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

WHAT'S UP!

The number of man-made objects in the heavens is nearly 8,000, and growing almost daily. About 2,500 of these objects are genuine satellites -- spacecraft specifically designed to orbit Earth. As for the other 5,000 or so out there, they're the celestial equivalent of roadside trash: hatch covers, rocket bodies, bits and pieces of payloads that have disintegrated or (at the rate of about six a year) unexpectedly exploded, even a glove that a Gemini astronaut lost back in the 1960s. ... Only a small proportion of orbiting objects are visible through even the most powerful backyard telescopes.

from "Lost in Space" by Richard Panek in NATURAL HISTORY, Vol. 110, No. 2, March 2001



THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

October 2000, Toronto

A splendid fall. Aside from a chilly and somewhat unsettled Thanksgiving weekend, October featured slow-moving high pressure systems with abundant sunshine, mild temperatures and, occasionally, low cloud and fog later in the month. Eight days topped 20°C downtown, and the monthly mean of 12.0°C was 1.4°C above the 1971-2000 average. Pearson Airport's mean of 11.2°C was 2.3°C above normal and the warmest since 1971, which had a mean of 12.5°C. For the fourth year in a row, sunshine for October was well above normal with 182.9 hours recorded. Normal is 149.5 hours.

The month was very dry as well with only 20.0 mm of rain downtown and 17.6 mm at Pearson. This was the driest downtown since 1966, and 1963 at Pearson. Rain fell as very light showers evenly distributed through the month with weak frontal systems. Over the Thanksgiving weekend a deep cold trough, which had developed in the latter part of September, re-established itself for a few days and some neighbourhoods reported wet snowflakes mixed with the showers.

Generous spring and early summer rains had supported good vegetation growth in 2000, and the conditions that followed during the fall produced a spectacular display of colour in Toronto's ravines. More rain and snow will be needed in coming months, however, to offset the dry conditions that began in 1997.

Gavin Miller

□

POISON IVY LEAVES
with their typical
3-leaflet form...

The fruit of this native Toronto plant is a food-source for some birds. Also, ruminants relish it, according to an Ontario Agriculture leaflet, but humans expose themselves to the toxic oils throughout the plant at their peril.



Drawing by D. Andrew White, 2001

COMING EVENTS

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

- Late migration - Toronto Islands - Sat. Oct. 6 from 8 am (all day) with Hugh Currie. Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. to catch the 8:15 am ferry to Hanlan's Point. Bring lunch.
- NEXT OUTING IN DECEMBER.

High Park walking tours

- Sun. Sept. 30 at 9 am - birds of fall (Bring binoculars.)
- Sun. Oct. 7 12 noon to 4:30 pm - Harvest Festival at Colborne Lodge (not a walk)
- Sun. Oct. 21 - Nature arts. (Bring your camera.)

These are moderately paced walks, usually beginning at 1:15 pm just south of the Grenadier Cafe in High Park. Tours last about 2 hours and end at Colborne Lodge. \$2 donation. Call 416-392-1748 or 416-392-6916 for more information.

Heritage Toronto guided walking tour

- Sat. Oct. 13 at 1:30 pm beginning at the Old Mill subway station. Madeleine McDowell will lead a walk, reminding people of what happened in this area during Hurricane Hazel which occurred on Oct. 15, 1954.

All Aboard Toronto - railways and the growth of a city - Aug. 4 to Oct. 7 at the Canada Trust Gallery, 789 Yonge St. (maps, photos, paintings and an exhibit guide). Free.

Design Exchange - Eye, Hand and Thought - designs inspired by nature - to Nov. 30 at 234 Bay St., Mon. to Fri.: 10 am to 6 pm; Sat. & Sun.: 12 noon to 5 pm; adults \$5, seniors/students: \$3.50.

Rouge Valley Conservation Centre (Pearse House) - guided theme walks

- Oct. 14 - Fall colours beginning at 1 pm and lasting for 2 hours. Meet at the Pearse House on the east side of Meadowvale Rd. north of Sheppard Ave. East. Call 416-282-8265 for more details.

Rouge Valley Foundation - Hike for the Rouge 2001 - Sat. Oct. 20 starting at the Pearse House (see above) - a fund-raising event. Call 416-431-6591 to register.

Walk for the moraine - a fund-raising event - Sat. Oct. 13 at Seneca College, King Campus on Dufferin St., 3 km north of King Rd. Call 416-410-6271 or 1-877-288-6399 to register.

Toronto Bay Initiative - guided tour of R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant - Fri. Oct. 19 from 4:45 pm to 6 pm. Call 416-943-8080, ext. 227 to register.

Natural History Travel - trips cover all aspects of natural history and may be local (a few days) or longer trips out of the country. Call 416-443-0583 for more details.



COMING EVENTS (cont'd)

Ian Wheal Heritage walks

- Sat. Oct. 13 at 1:30 pm - Early industry and housing on Maria St. Meet at the southwest corner of Dundas St. West and Keele St.
- Sat. Oct. 20 at 11 am - The Peninsula - Toronto Islands. Meet at the foot of Leslie St. This will be a long walk. Ferry fare necessary.
- Sat. Oct. 27 at 1 pm - Toronto Railway Sesquicentennial (1851-2001). Meet at the southwest corner of Jarvis St. and King St. East.
- Sun. Oct. 28 at 4 pm - Ghost Walk - ghosts of the good, bad and indifferent, Ontario Central Prison. Meet at the southeast corner of King St. West and Dufferin St.. Bring water and flashlight if possible. Come and see wildlife at sundown.

Downsview Park walk - Oct. 3 at 6:30 pm. Meet at the Children's and Community Discovery Centre. Please call 416-952-2223 if you plan to attend.

High Park Harvest Festival - Sun. Oct. 7 from 12 noon to 4:30 pm at Colborne Lodge. TFN volunteers are needed to help with our display. Shifts are from 12 noon to 2 pm and from 2 pm to 4:30 pm. Please call Andre Vietinghoff at 416-232-9241 if you can help.

TFN

TFN speakers are interviewed by Art Drysdale on the Saturday before our meetings. Listen from 8:05 to 10 am to AM 740 (CHWO Primetime Radio).

Mycological Society of Toronto -

Call 416-HI-FUNGI for information about meetings and forays.

Toronto Entomologists' Association -

For information about meetings and outings call Alan Hanks at 905-727-6993.

Friends of Highland Creek

- Sat. Oct. 27th at 9:30 am - a tree planting at 1960/1970 Ellesmere Ave. (north side of creek, south side of Ellesmere Ave. west of Markham Rd.) Everyone invited. Shovels etc. provided. Call Cathy Humphrey at 416-439-1036 for further details.

Royal Canadian Institute - free science lectures on Sunday afternoons at 3 pm, starting Oct. 21. Call 416-977-2983 for more information.

Daylight Saving Time ends - Sun. Oct. 28th. Turn your clocks back one hour. □

Crows' raucous cawing
at dusk on an autumn day
proclaims summer's end.

Haiku by Jane Grell

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS

2 Carlton St., #1519
 Toronto, Ontario M5B 1J3
 416-593-2656
 Web site: www.sources.com/tfn

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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
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*Please note: It has always been the policy of the Toronto Field Naturalists
not to give out its membership list.*

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\$30 FAMILY (2 adults - same address, children included)
 \$25 SINGLE, SENIOR FAMILY
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