

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 512

WINTER ISSUE

December 2002



Marie Curtis Park with Lakeshore Blvd. Bridge

Drawing by Mary Anne Miller - February, 1999

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TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, December 1, 2002 - EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE
MONARCH BUTTERFLY, an illustrated talk by
at 2:30 pm Don Davis, life-long naturalist with a special
at Emmanuel College interest in monarch butterflies which he has
75 Queen's Park Crescent East been tagging since 1968.

VISITORS WELCOME! - This talk will include information about the
biology, migration and conservation issues
of the monarch butterfly.
+ social hour beginning at 2 pm with free juice
and coffee
+ memberships and selected publications for sale

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, February 2, 2003

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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Toronto, Ont. M5B 1J3

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NEXT NEWSLETTER: February 2003 (to be mailed Jan. 14, 2003)

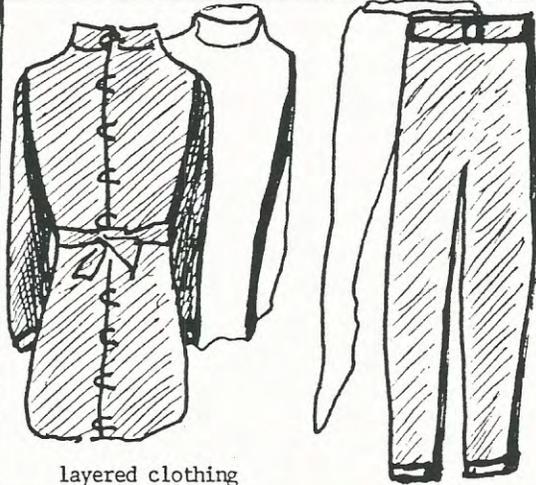
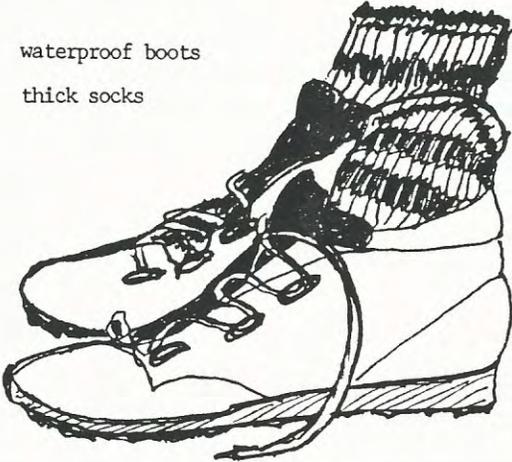
FOR ENJOYMENT OF WINTER OUTINGS

peaked woolly cap with ear muffs

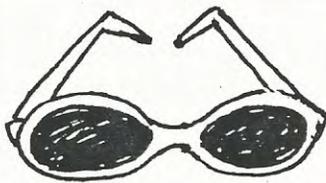


mittens over gloves

waterproof boots
thick socks



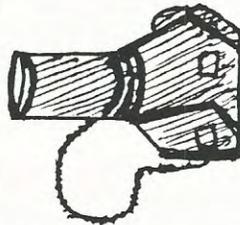
layered clothing



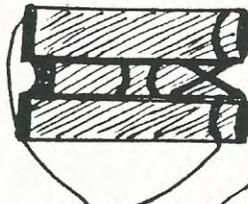
sun glasses, if desired



thermos for hot drink

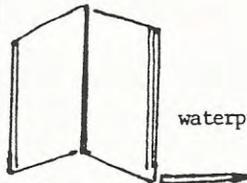


camera

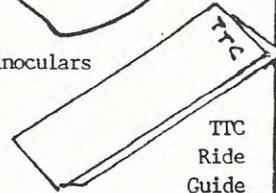


binoculars

snack



waterproof notebook



TTC
Ride
Guide

Eva Davis

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.

- Dec. 1 TFN MEETING - See page 2 for details.
- \$ ferry
tickets Tuesday WARDS ISLAND - nature walk
 Dec. 3 Leader: John Eastwood
 10 am Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St.
 Bring lunch and binoculars.
- \$ entry
fee Saturday GARDINER MUSEUM OF CERAMIC ARTS - nature arts
 Dec. 7 Leader: Diana Banville
 10:30 am Meet at the entrance, on the east side of Queen's Park Ave.
 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.
- Thursday GERMAN MILLS - nature walk
 Dec. 12 Leader: Theresa Moore
 10 am Meet at the northeast corner of Steeles Ave. East and Leslie
 to 12:30 pm St. Bring a snack.
- Sunday LAMBTON WOODS - nature walk
 Dec. 15 Leader: Diana Karrandjas
 10:30 am Meet at the entrance to James Gardens, on Edenbridge Dr.,
 east of Royal York Rd. (north of Dundas St. West:). Bring a snack.
- +
 Sunday THREE CREEKS - urban ecology
 Dec. 15 Leaders: Helen Mills & Peter Hare
 2 pm Meet at the northwest corner of Yonge St. and Lawrence Ave.
 Walk will end at the North Toronto Community Centre. This is a joint outing
 with the North Toronto Green Community.
- Thursday BLACK CREEK - heritage walk
 Dec. 19 Leader: Madeline McDowell
 10 am Meet on the east side of Jane St. at Alliance Ave. (north of
 St. Clair Ave. West).
 Bring lunch and binoculars.
- Saturday LESLIE STREET SPIT - winter waterfowl
 Dec. 28 Leader: Boris Mather
 1:30 pm Meet at the southeast corner of Queen St. East and Leslie St.
 Bring binoculars and dress warmly.

For JANUARY OUTINGS, see page 5. For other outings and events, see page 29.



JANUARY OUTINGS

- Thursday HIGH PARK - nature walk
 Jan. 2 Leader: Boris Mather
 10 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Bloor St. West
 opposite High Park Ave.
 Morning only. Bring binoculars. Dress warmly.
- Monday DEERPARK LIBRARY - nature arts (photography)
 Jan. 6 Leader: Robin Powell
 2 pm Meet on the second floor of the library which is on the north
 4 pm side of St. Clair Ave. East, one block east of Yonge St.
 Bring your own nature slides, as many as 20, or just come and enjoy looking.
 A projector and screen will be provided. If you have any questions, please
 call the TFN office at 416-593-2656. Snap shots are also welcome.
- Wednesday ALLAN GARDENS - heritage walk
 Jan. 8 Leader: Gail Gregory
 1 pm Meet at the entrance to the greenhouses, on the south side of
 3 pm Carlton St., just east of Jarvis St.
- Saturday NATURE IN THE CITY - urban geology
 Jan. 11 Leader: Ed Freeman
 1:30 pm Meet at the northwest corner of Queen St. West and University
 Ave. Walk will end at the Royal York Hotel.
- Tuesday PROSPECT CEMETERY - trees & shrubs in winter
 Jan. 14 Leader: Jack Radecki
 10 am Meet at cemetery entrance on the north side of St. Clair Ave. West
 opposite Lansdowne Ave. Walk ends at 1 pm.
- Sunday LOST MEANDERS OF THE DON - urban ecology
 Jan. 19 Leaders: Peter Hare & Helen Mills
 2 pm Meet at the northeast corner of Queen St. East & River St.
 This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community, Evergreen
 & the Task Force to Bring Back the Don. Walk will end with cider at Riverdale Farm.
- Wednesday GUILDWOOD PARK - winter birding
 Jan. 22 Leader: Karin Fawthrop
 10:30 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Guildwood Parkway
 opposite Galloway Rd. Bring binoculars. Morning only.
- Sunday EASTERN LAKESHORE & HIGHLAND CREEK - nature walk
 Jan. 26 Leader: Orval White
 11 am Meet at the southeast corner of Guildwood Parkway and Morningside
 Ave. Bring binoculars, snack and hot drink.
- Wednesday WARDS ISLAND - ducks
 Jan. 29 Leader: Ann Gray
 10 am Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. Bring lunch.

\$ ferry
 tickets

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Toronto City Council has accepted the new Official Plan; it still needs to be approved by the Province. This plan is a vision for Toronto for the next three decades during which it is expected there will be population growth of 500,000 to 1,000,000. This plan is an integrated set of policy statements that in a sense is a broad urban planning blueprint. I suspect few will disagree that this new Official Plan has to be better than what existed shortly after amalgamation in which there were 6 separate Official Plans from the former municipalities plus the one for Metro government. Policy statements tend to be short on details. I'm concerned about those areas of the plan that deal with environmental protection. With the projected population increases over the next 30 years, there's going to be a tremendous increase in pressure on the remaining natural areas. One theme that troubles me is the proposed increase in public access to the open green space system. From our experience, increased public access and environmental protection of Toronto's remaining natural areas are incompatible. Although the policy statements appear to provide adequate protection generally, we can only really gauge this once zoning bylaws are enacted. I hope to say more about the new Official Plan in future reports.

On Sunday, November 3rd, the general membership of the TFN approved the purchase of two 25-acre blocks of land as an addition to our nature reserve program. I've asked our lawyer to finalize the purchase of the two properties. With luck we will purchase the block of land between the existing Emily Hamilton Nature Reserve and these new lands.

Robin Powell

□

THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS

... more than 70 per cent of the wetlands originally found in Southern Ontario have been severely altered or destroyed over the last 200 years or so, drastically reducing the available habitat for all local wetland fauna.

Wetlands, which include swamps, marshes, and bogs, provide shelter and food for more than one-third of North America's endangered species. They act as traps for aquatic and soil pollutants from surrounding areas, and they help to minimize flooding and erosion. Yet throughout the world, wetland ecosystems are endangered. An awareness of the significance and vulnerability of these habitats is especially important in Canada, which contains about one quarter of the world's remaining wetlands.

from "Tunnel Syndrome" by Radu Cornel Guiasu in ROTUNDA, Vol.35, No.1, Summer/Fall 2002 (Royal Ontario Museum).

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Most of the major TFN activities are quite conspicuous, e.g. year-round outings, the newsletter, monthly meetings and our nature reserves. Not conspicuous are the numerous administrative duties necessary to support these activities. There is another area that should get greater recognition, i.e. the TFN's environmental protection activities that range from basic monitoring to direct action. Monitoring relies on information gathered by members from newspapers, periodicals, mail, TV, the Internet, and contact with politicians and government officials. Direct action involves participation by members or representatives from the club in public meetings, open houses, workshops, membership on committees and workgroups, and preparing letters and reports of support or concern. For your information I've listed below some of the environmental issues of the GTA and Toronto in which the TFN is currently active:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Activity</u>
Etobicoke/Mimico Creeks Humber R. - Black Cr.	Watershed Coalition Lambton G.C.C. Renaturalization
Humber R. - Rainbow Cr. Lakeshore	York University - Proposed Tennis Canada development Widening of Hwy #407 Ashbridges Bay STP - Site Design Tommy Thompson Park (The Spit) Phase II Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corp. - proposals
Lakeshore - Mimico Lakeshore - Toronto Islands Little Rouge R. Little Rouge R. - Markham Lower Don R./ E. Don R. Mimico Cr. Mimico Cr. - Mississauga Oak Ridges Moraine Other	Amos Waite Pk. renaturalization Toronto Island Airport expansion York Durham Sewage System Expansion Proposed cemetery Don Valley Parkway - proposed widening Bonar Cr. renaturalization Bank stabilization Northern extension of Hwy. 427 Beltline Trail (York) - proposed naturalization Mosquito spraying - West Nile virus Sale of Hydro One corridor lands Toronto Official Plan II Wet Weather Flow Management Master Plan Rouge Pk. - maintenance problems
Rouge R. Rouge R. - Morningside tributary Scarborough Bluffs - Guildwood Scarborough Bluffs - Port Union West Don R. - Burke Ravine	Tapscott residential development Shoreline stabilization Shoreline development Proposed residential development

Robin Powell

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PROJECTS

BAD VIBRATIONS GETTING WORSE

In Toronto sound measurement levels on a relatively quiet afternoon:

- Front Street across from the Crown Plaza -- 74 decibels
- in the St. Andrew subway station as a train came in -- 80 decibels with a spike of 100 when the brakes squealed
- around the curve to King Station -- 82 decibels, with the screaming of the wheels peaking at 88 decibels.

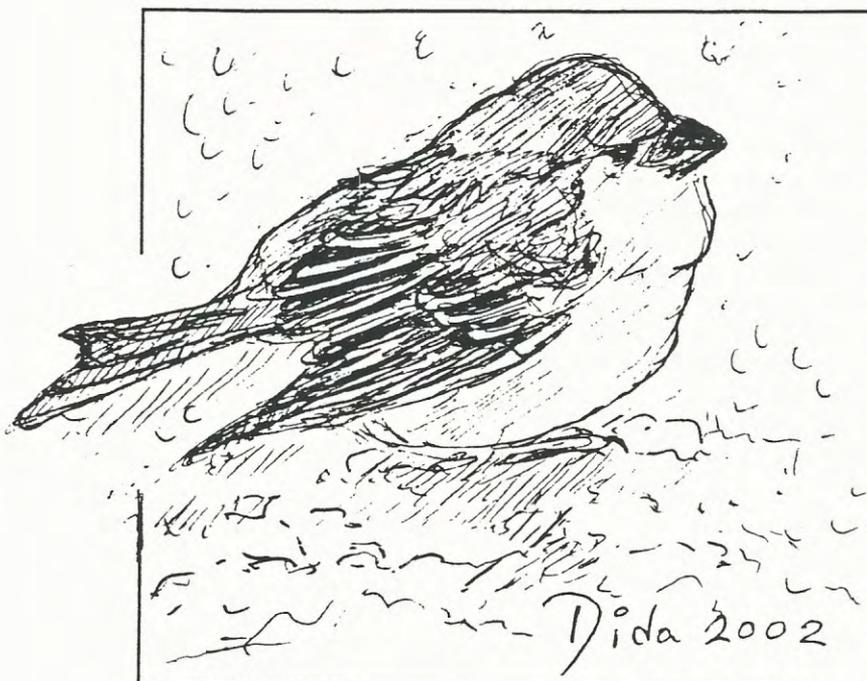
It hurts. According to provincial guidelines, the ideal noise level in Toronto ought to be somewhere around 55 decibels.

We are deaf to any talk about damage to our ears. Trouble is, the problem is invisible. We think we are immune to noise at concerts and hockey games. We think we can take it. We can't. Too much noise for too long does irreversible damage.

At the moment there are two acoustical specialists working for Toronto Works and Emergency Services; their job is to measure sound over time at particular places in the city to keep track of the ambient noise levels. The program is being phased out. They'll lose their jobs next year. That's unacceptable. I SAID UNACCEPTABLE.

from an article by Joe Fiorito in the GLOBE & MAIL, Oct. 28, 2002

Comment: Call or write your local councillor. We need our hearing for birdwatching. □



a rosy bird,
the PINE GROSBEAK, is
an irruptive wintering
Toronto species,
but at least
one or two
turn up in Toronto
every year.

drawing by
Diana Banville
based on a photo
by Pam Blakey
in BirdWatch Canada
Fall 2002, No. 21
(Bird Studies Canada)

FOR READING

High and Mighty: SUVs: The World's Most Dangerous Vehicles and How They Got That Way By Keith Bradsher, Public Affairs, 468 pages, \$42.50

Sport Utility Vehicles, better known as SUVs, are trucks -- they are not cars -- the New York Times reporter who wrote High and Mighty, lets you know all the way through what he thinks about SUVs. Their green image is a "mirage". They are geopolitical disasters because they "increase American dependence on foreign oil." Their safety image is phony because they "roll over too easily, killing and injuring occupants at an alarming rate." His arguments, warnings and conclusions are backed up by thorough research.

High and Mighty is an ambitious book that aims to change the way North Americans -- especially lawmakers, Detroit engineers and safety advocates -- think about SUVs. Detroit loves making SUVs because of their extremely high profit margins, and because drivers' love affair with the beasts refuses to wane. The problem with SUVs is that they were not derived from cars. Most were based on truck bodies, such as the farm-friendly Ford Super Duty pickup. They are heavy and ride high off the ground, meaning they can inflict enormous damage to other vehicles in collisions and roll over far more readily than cars. Truck-based SUVs require bigger engines to move their bulk. These engines, too, tend to be primitive old bangers that deliver low fuel economy and obnoxious amounts of pollutants.

The big question is this: As normal cars became safer and more efficient in the 1980s and 1990s, why were SUVs allowed, even encouraged, to go in the opposite direction? The chapters that cover Detroit's extraordinarily successful effort to exempt SUVs from the safety, fuel-economy and air-pollution standards that govern cars are the book's most compelling bits. Because they were officially trucks -- essentially farm and business implements -- they were, and remain, subject to minimal regulation. Bizarrely, in 1990, environmentalists supported Detroit's effort to block better fuel-efficiency standards for SUVs. They did so in exchange for a ban on oil-drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In retrospect, it was one of the green movement's stupidest compromises. As the body count from SUV-related accidents rises and as North America worries once again about high oil prices, it's a book that deserves attention.

from a review by Eric Reguly in THE GLOBE & MAIL, September 28, 2002



To re-establish nature in the form of restored or relocated habitats and species may be a worthy idea, but it frequently fails as a management exercise. Once damaged or destroyed, nature is not easily replicated.

from "Nature in Perspective" by Tim O'Riordan (a book review of NATURE CONSERVATION by Peter Marren, Harper Collins New Naturalist) in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 20, No. 8, Aug. 2002

FOR READING (cont'd)

MAMMALS OF NORTH AMERICA by Roland W. Kays and Don E. Wilson, Princeton University Press, 2002, 240 pages

More on mammals of our continent -- several such books have come out lately -- and it's about time. This field guide, however, does not deal with one aspect or area but is more comprehensive than any with which we're familiar. The mammals north of Mexico are covered as in the old Peterson series A FIELD GUIDE TO THE MAMMALS but in the case of the new Princeton series MAMMALS OF NORTH AMERICA, the range map and text for each species is on the page facing the illustration. So, if you're travelling about the continent, there will be no frustration about trying to establish the identity of the animal you're looking at "right now"; the creature will not necessarily pose till you're ready but everything you need is right there on the same page. Speaking of the illustrations, they are attractive and, for the most part, well done -- taken from ten different sources -- though, in my opinion, not to compare with the life-like Grossenheider illustrations in the Peterson series book. That guide tended to have each species in the same position as those with which it is compared. This Princeton guide, however, opts for the idea of showing the maximum number of positions possible; the animal you're viewing may be in any one of them. Also each species is pictured (and in colour) -- rather than in some cases, given only a mention and comparison in the text as in the Peterson series guide. The latter, however, saves some weight this way -- a factor for back-packers. It is lighter, in the hard-cover than the new Princeton guide is in paper-back with entirely glossy (acid-free) sheets. There are ten pages of introduction in the new MAMMALS OF NORTH AMERICA including pictured quick ID chart and further reading list, two pages of whale and dolphin dive-sequences, four pages of scats, four pages (on covers) of tracks, a two-page glossary and a five-page index. With this new guide, wherever we go in Canada or the United States we can readily find everything we need to know to identify any one of the 442 mammals in it which we see along our way.

Diana Banville

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST:

WILDFLOWER: North America's Magazine of Wild Flora (4 issues per year)
Box 335, Postal Station F, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2L7 (\$40 per year)

TAKE A HIKE -- RECREATION TRAILS OF YORK REGION, featuring 32 trails each with a map and description plus information on access points, distance and surface. Free. Call York Region Tourism 1-888-448-0000.

ROUGE PARK TRAILS MAP. Free. Call 905-713-6007.

MAP OF LOST RIVERS OF THE DOWNSVIEW LANDS AND SURROUNDING TORONTO AREA, forgotten tributaries of the Don River and Black Creek, available for \$5 each at the TFN office on Friday mornings between 9 am and 12 noon.

THE BUTTERFLIES OF THE TORONTO REGION compiled by Barry Harrison and published by the Toronto Entomologists' Association, 2002 (available at the TFN office for \$3 each)

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MONARCHS IN MEXICO

For years my friend and I had anticipated a visit to the monarch butterfly over-wintering sites in Mexico. We expected trees shimmering with orange wings, but found instead a sodden gray mantle of dead butterflies. Under overcast skies dark smudges of surviving clusters hung in the distant trees of the El Rosario monarch butterfly sanctuary. Not one butterfly flew. We returned to our hotel in the nearby town of Angangueo and grieved.

A major snowfall had occurred January 13th, 2002, preceded by several days of rain and followed by a sudden deep freeze. Dr. Lincoln Brower, a leading monarch biologist from Virginia, estimated 250 million butterflies had perished. Why was this storm in the Sierra Madre Mountains northwest of Mexico city so devastating? Part of the answer lies in our changing global climate. The temperatures at the El Rosario site were the lowest on record.

A greater part of the answer lies in our impact. The approach to El Rosario was through steep mountains scraped almost bare of vegetation, past dwellings of people living in desperate poverty. Farmers illegally cut wood from the reserves for heat and cooking, and when the thin soil for their crops is depleted of nutrients, they slash and burn ever further up the mountain. In the smoke the monarchs go berserk.

Brower's research has shown how an intact forest system is key to the monarchs' winter survival. The forest canopy serves as umbrella, blanket and hot water bottle. Tearing of the umbrella by tree removal allows rain and snow to wet the butterflies, leaving them susceptible to freezing ice crystals. Holes in the blanket allow the butterflies' body heat to radiate out to the cold night sky. And smaller tree trunks retain less heat through the night for the roosting butterflies.

International concern that deforestation of the monarchs' over-wintering sites has endangered the whole migration phenomenon led to the Mexican government declaring the core clustering areas protected, but illegal depletion of the surrounding buffer zones continues. As adjacent forest is removed, the butterflies shiver with increased winds, depleting the fat reserves needed to carry them through to spring.

Monarchs depend on cardiac glycosides in milkweed to protect them from predators. Milkweed does not grow in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico, but in the United States and Canada. Monarchs are tropical butterflies that migrate north in the spring to find milkweed and fly south in the fall to escape our cold winter.

For five months in Mexico they drink only water. The cold at 11,000 feet suppresses reproduction until fresh milkweed emerges. Only a narrow band of forest protects them, as monarchs bred east of the Rockies in 2.6 million square kilometres of North America funnel into a total area less than half the size of the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens.

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MONARCHS IN MEXICO (cont'd)

These butterflies in Mexico are the seed crop which must survive the winter to recolonise the eastern North American breeding range. If conditions are too harsh the whole monarch migratory phenomenon may collapse.

Fortunately, my story continues, and is cautiously optimistic. At the more distant Sierra Chincua sanctuary the forest was intact with a dense growth of oyamel firs and pines. Horses carried us up steep slopes to the clustering area, much larger than at Rosario, with fewer dead upon the ground. In the silence a branch crashed to the forest floor, overburdened with the weight of a million butterflies. Here the canopy provided a microclimatic envelope of protection, and there was hope for the monarchs' survival.

On our fourth day the sun shone at last and we returned to El Rosario. Within the tiny clustering area, half the size of my backyard, the air was a blizzard of flying monarchs. Butterflies basked on the bushes and hung from the trees in long blazing clusters like grapes on the vine. My friend told me to smile for the camera, but I wept with joy and wonder and relief.

In spring the monarchs experience a mating frenzy, and journey north to lay eggs on emerging milkweed in the southern United States. Exhausted, they die, and about six weeks later their eggs have progressed through the caterpillar and chrysalis stages to become adults who continue northwards.

Fall emerging monarchs that fly south are about four generations removed from those who started north the previous spring. How they return to where they have never been remains a mystery.

The future of the monarch migratory phenomenon remains uncertain. Despite government crackdowns illegal logging still undermines initiatives in reforestation and finding alternate industry for local farmers.

Ultimately the fate of the monarchs depends not only on their overwintering sites but also on conditions in the United States and Canada. With a good crop of milkweed and nectar plants the numbers may rebound, but a continuing drought combined with a policy of killing and cutting every plant that looks like a weed could spell disaster.

Here in Ontario, too, we must be stewards of the land and provide for the creatures like monarchs who share it with us.

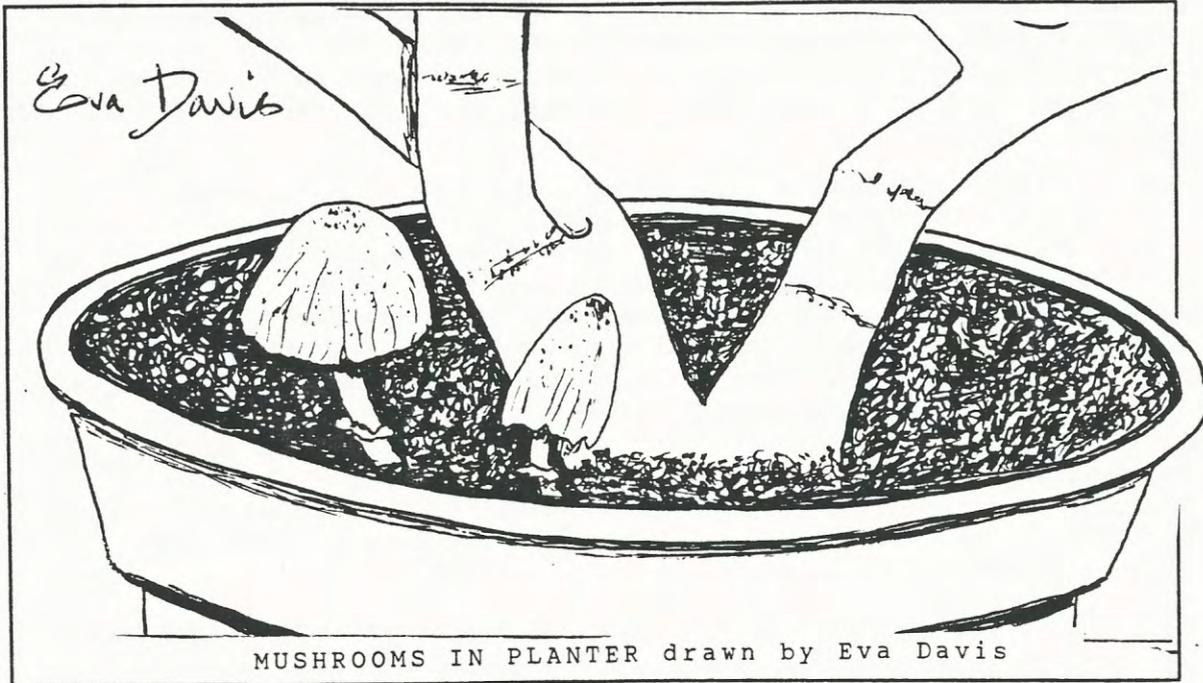
An article by Win Laar in HART'S-TONGUE HERALD, NEWSLETTER OF THE OWEN SOUND FIELD NATURALISTS, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring, 2002

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This December day
and birds singing, just imagine!
Well, starlings are birds.

haiku by Diana Banville

FLOWERPOT MUSHROOMS



This small fungus, shown above, comes as a surprise to many plant owners, one of its favourite locations being indoor pots (it also frequents greenhouses and leaf piles in hot weather). Roger Phillips* lists it under *Cystoderma*. In my apartment it popped up above the roots of my ancient jade plant. The yellow cap is 1-2" across and dotted with tiny scales. Its stalk is yellow and slender and sports a small ring midsection, its gills are free, crowded and yellow. Spore print is white.

Another delightful visitor this summer was the tiny, exquisitely delicate Japanese parasol (according to Barron**), which proliferated in my pot of eyelash begonia. The source was the well-rotted wood I had used for filler at the bottom of the pot. For a mushroom enthusiast, it is serendipity to have these elusive creatures turn up in one's own home instead of having to go out and hunt them.

Eva Davis

* *Mushrooms of North America* by Roger Phillips, Little Brown & Co., 1991

** *Mushrooms of Ontario and Eastern Canada* by George Barron, Lone Pine Publishing, 1999

Hurling invectives,
demanding my sandwich crusts,
those brash fellows, gulls!

Haiku by Arthur F. Wade
Hanlan's Point, 2001

THE DANGERS OF WRAPPING SHRUBS WITH MESH STYLE NETTING

Each fall our attention turns to preparation for the upcoming winter. Often this includes the wrapping of small to mid-sized vulnerable shrubs, many of which produce berries. In many instances, these berries provide another food source for those birds that visit each winter from more northern locales.

Wraps used to cover shrubs vary from burlap to very fine meshed green cloth to white or clear plastic netting material that has a mesh size of around 2 cm. One might think that a small to medium (1 - 2.5 cm) mesh size can protect the shrub while at the same time permit birds to safely access berries that the shrub produces. It is the mesh size that becomes important for those birds which attempt to harvest berries from shrubs during lean winters where natural sources of berries are reduced. Depending on how the shrub is wrapped, birds may attempt to eat berries through the wrapping, or attempt to get under the wrap to get at food that is "just out of reach". In both instances, depending on how the wrap is used, it may in fact become a death trap. As I have learned this past winter, the white or translucent plastic wrap that has a mesh size of approximately 2 cm is deadly to hungry birds.

This past winter saw a significant increase in the number of Bohemian waxwings visiting Prince Edward Island. The good natural berry crops were consumed and it was not long before these sources were stripped bare. As the snow started to melt, the berries in the junipers in our front yard became exposed. Hungry Bohemian waxwings started to congregate and eat the berries through the netting (2 cm mesh size). A few got inside the shrub, entering at the base of the plant so that they could get at berries deep inside. It was not long before two waxwings trying to get out of the junipers became enmeshed in the netting. Fortunately, we noticed their struggling and were able to safely extricate both birds from the netting. At that time, I just made a few large holes in the netting to allow the birds easier access and exit ports to the junipers.

Unfortunately, as the snow melted and lower portions of the junipers became exposed, the waxwings started to eat the newly exposed berries. Four birds managed to get their heads through the mesh and become entrapped. We were able to save only two of these birds. The other two either strangled to death or died of shock during their struggles to escape. Needless to say, the remaining netting immediately came off the junipers to ensure that this would not happen again.

In thinking about this tragedy, and based on my observations as to the number of people who use the white or translucent plastic netting (mesh size 1 - 3 cm) to wrap bushes, I would make the following recommendations:

- . If you wish to protect berry-producing shrubs -- or any shrub for that matter, consider the use of burlap or fine meshed (0.5 cm) green cloth wrapping.



DANGERS OF MESH NETTING (cont'd)

- Consider unique wrapping techniques using wood stakes as a support to allow one side (lee side) of the bush to remain open so that birds can use the bush for winter protection, and as a food source.
- Be careful in your selection of netting to protect gardens or fruit-producing trees in summer.

from an article by David Seeler, in THE ISLAND NATURALIST, Issue #163, Apr.-Aug. 2002

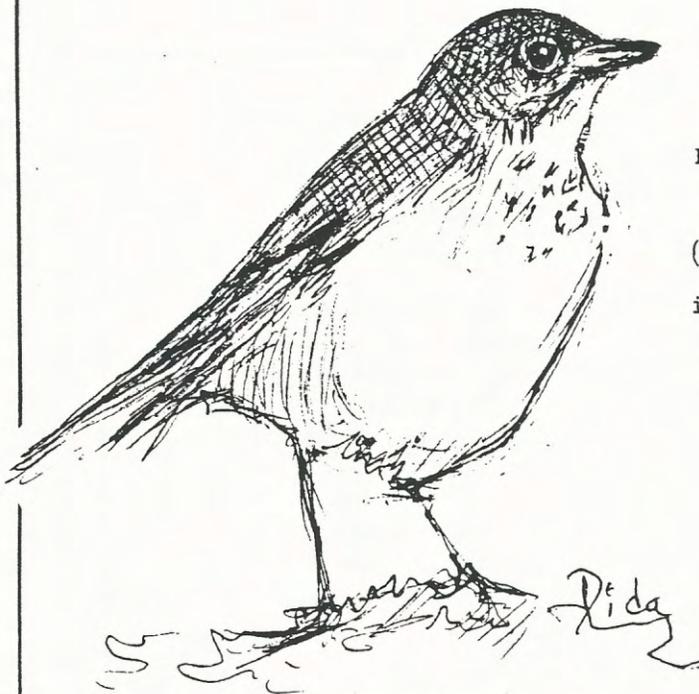


BICKNELL'S THRUSH

has been treated as "split" from the gray-cheeked thrush by the American Ornithologists' Union. Both species are on the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' FIELD CHECKLIST OF ONTARIO BIRDS,

though Bicknell's is of rare occurrence in the Province. (Much of its breeding range lies in Quebec.)

The gray-cheeked, a far-north breeder, is rare as a nester in Ontario, though we are familiar with it as a migrant throughout the province.



Ref. BirdWatch CANADA

No. 18, 2002,

(Bird Studies Canada)

including photo

on which the drawing

by Diana Banville

was based.

WILLIAM (BILL) CARRICK (Nov.14, 1920-Oct.7, 2002) REMEMBERED

Bill Carrick, a local naturalist, wildlife photographer and cinematographer, died October 7 from serious injuries suffered in a fall at his wildlife facility on the Pickering/Scarborough border in the Rouge Park.

A self-proclaimed "nature nut" from the age of 9, Bill was born in Toronto and grew up near a park and library, giving him easy access to nature and stories about wildlife. He developed his keen interest in photography as a member of his high school camera club.

After serving with the RCAF in World War II, he attended the University of Toronto, thereby gaining access to a darkroom at the Royal Ontario Museum. He took photographs for the museum and the university, and was commissioned to take photographs for Bev Scott's book Freshwater Fishes of Eastern Canada, which was for many years the standard of reference in the field. From photography, Bill ventured into film making, sometimes with one of his U of T classmates, Farley Mowat. He worked on an impressive array of films including movies for Walt Disney, several documentaries, and the 1998 film Gray Owl by Sir Richard Attenborough.

During the past 25 years Bill focused on raising wildlife and an awareness of nature at his base in the Rouge. He enjoyed taking time to offer visitors close interaction with his Beavers, and guiding them around to all the wildlife, including the endangered sandhill cranes and trumpeter swans he raised for the Toronto Zoo's breeding programme. Bill was honoured as a recipient of the Rouge Park Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to public appreciation of nature.

from information provided at his memorial service held at the Hillside Outdoor Education School. □



"BARREN STRAWBERRY"

Terra Cotta
Provincial Park
May, 2002

A native Toronto
wildflower - uncommon,
but look for it in
ravines, such as
Spring Road ravine
in High Park.

- rose family,
flower yellow.

Drawing by
Eva Davis

IN THE NEWS

HERBICIDE CAUSES SEX CHANGE IN FROGS, U.S. STUDY FINDS

A popular weed killer appears to be feminizing male frogs in the U.S. Midwest, turning tadpoles into hermaphrodites with eggs in their testes. Previous work had shown that atrazine, one of the most commonly-used herbicides in the world, feminized frogs in laboratory experiments. This new study is the first to conclude that the chemical also causes tadpoles in the wild to morph into bizarre male-female hybrids.

Atrazine has been used for more than 40 years in many countries, including Canada, and kills the weeds that prey on soybeans and corn. It is so widespread it can be found far from agricultural areas, and even in rainwater and snow. Farmers in Canada use atrazine, and it has been reported in drinking water in British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Ontario. This new research shows that the chemical can hurt frogs at levels far below what Health Canada deems acceptable for humans in drinking water.

Its use is now being reviewed by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Environmentalists say that it should be banned and that farmers should switch to safer alternatives. Atrazine is manufactured by the Swiss chemical company Syngenta.

from an article by Anne McIlroy, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, October 31, 2002

DUST SUPPRESSANT BANNED IN ONTARIO

Dombind, a road-dust suppressant that has been called toxic by environmentalists, can no longer be used in Ontario. The substance is a by-product of recycled cardboard produced by Norampac Inc., and has been banned because it creates the potential for long-term buildup of dioxines in the environment.

from an article in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, November 1, 2002



THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

A Christmas [Bird] Count is an annual bird census that takes place throughout the United States [and Canada] during the final weeks of December. It was started in 1900 as an alternative to traditional "side hunts", during which hunters went out after Christmas dinner, chose sides, and competed to see which group could shoot more birds. Today's more merciful event is undertaken by volunteer bird-lovers who count not only the different species of birds but also the actual number of individuals. This can provide useful scientific data about bird populations.

from RED-TAILS IN LOVE: A WILDLIFE DRAMA IN CENTRAL PARK by Marie Winn, Vintage Books, N.Y. 1998/1999

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

TORONTO HARBOUR HOT SPOT FOR TOXIC CHEMICAL BDE

BDE, brominated diphenyl ether is a cousin of now-banned PCBs and is added to a host of consumer items, including textiles, foam furniture cushions, ceiling tiles, vehicle interiors and the circuit boards inside computers, televisions and most electronic gadgets. The chemical slowly evaporates in the home and from landfill sites. It is also released in particles from incinerators. In Toronto and Lake Ontario, BDE levels are doubling every three years.

Previous studies also detected the chemical in lake trout, meat and dairy products, and human breast milk, where it was 100 times higher than a decade previously. Gull eggs from three hot spots showed BDE levels of 1,000 to 1,400 parts per billion. Gull eggs stored from 1981 contained only 10 to 30 parts per billion of the chemical.

Research has established that BDEs can damage the liver, disrupt thyroid hormones and poison neural systems. The new research puts BDE levels on a par with the levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) proven to cause developmental problems in children. A "penta" version of BDE is considered the most dangerous and is the variety banned starting next year in Europe. The penta variety is the most widely used in North America. An estimated 70,000 metric tonnes of brominated flame retardants are consumed annually on the continent.

from an article by Peter Calamai, in THE TORONTO STAR, October 28, 2002

CLIMBING RAISES CONCERNS FOR NATURE

Rock climbers are in a tussle with park wardens over the environmental impact of their sport after rare vegetation was destroyed at one Ontario park. Climbers scraped clean some rocks in one area of the Bruce Peninsula Park, which is both an archeological site with known remains of First Nations encampments as well as a place where several rare ferns and other plants thrive in the dense cedar forest. The big limestone rocks at the delicate site are ideal for bouldering, a variation on rock climbing that requires little equipment. Small indentations and fissures, which climbers clear out with wire brushes, are filled with rare and delicate ferns, small cedars and other vegetation that has taken root and slowly grown for hundreds of years.

from an article in THE TORONTO STAR, October 28, 2002

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...Butterflies in general are taxonomically the flagship of the insect world. If the insects of a given locality are at all well-known, butterflies, in part because of their beauty or psychological allure, are likely to attract the most attention.

from NOBOKOV'S BLUES: THE SCIENTIFIC ODYSSEY OF A LITERARY GENIUS by Kurt Johnson and Steve Coates, McGraw-Hill, 1999

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

PARK HAS A DRAMATIC STORY TO TELL

The Cloud Garden is a small downtown park with a cloud garden conservatory -- west of Yonge St. between Adelaide St.W. and Temperance St. Ironically, the Cloud Garden was conceived in the early '90s as part of the massive Bay-Adelaide Centre project. That project was never finished, and all that remains is the garden, an underground parking garage and a six-storey concrete shaft that stands where a tower was to have been built.

Cloud Garden opened in 1993. The traditional notion of the park as little more than uninterrupted greenery is no longer adequate. To be effective, green space (read: nature) must have lots of room. Think of High Park, etc. The Cloud Garden is an excellent example of a new breed of urban park. Though it offers the usual opportunities to sit amidst greenery, it also engages the visitor in other ways. Most striking is the Cloud Garden conservatory, a medium-sized greenhouse* in which trees and flowers are planted that are typical of cloud forests, which are usually found at high altitudes. Because the space is so limited, the conservatory is more vertical than horizontal. It can be reached by a series of sloped stone pathways that also lead to a lookout and a five-storey waterfall that happily blocks out the dull roar of the surrounding city.

from an article by Christopher Hume, in THE TORONTO STAR, September 27, 2002

MELLON LAKE CONSERVATION RESERVE SAVED - MINING PERMIT DENIED

The Palu-Corbelli Ltd. has been seeking permission from the provincial government to develop a mine within the boundaries of the Mellon Lake Conservation Reserve, 35 kilometres north of Napanee. However, due largely to pressure from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Wildlands League, World Wildlife Fund Canada and a dedicated effort by many members of the Kingston Field Naturalists, the mining permit was denied by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). According to the MNR, the Palu-Corbelli Ltd. could not meet the terms and conditions required for a permit. This type of problem will continue to present itself through the province, unless stronger laws are enacted to protect parks and natural areas.

from an article in THE BLUE BILL, QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF KINGSTON FIELD NATURALISTS, Vol.49, No.3, September 2002

* Toronto has two other greenhouses which are open to the public:

Allan Gardens, south side of Carlton St. between Jarvis and Sherbourne Streets
Centennial Park, 151 Elmcrest Road, north of Rathburn Rd., west of Hwy 427.

These are great places to visit, especially in the winter.

▷

ANTARCTICA

Recent science news:

Late last month, the hole in the ozone over Antarctica divided in two, an unprecedented phenomenon that caught the scientific community by surprise. Regardless of any potential explanations for the double ozone hole, the prediction remains in place that at least another 50 years will be needed for the Earth's ozone layer to completely recover from CFCs.

People on Antarctica's icy field are four times as likely to get sunburned as those at the North Pole.

from an article by Michael Kesterton, in THE GLOBE & MAIL, October 10, 2002

SNAKE CONDOS MAY BE END TO SLAUGHTER

About 100,000 snakes migrate from their summer homes in bogs and quarries to the unique limestone sinkholes and fissures that form several large snake dens at Narcisse and other Interlake towns, which sit between Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg.

Precast-concrete snake bunkers have been designed to mimic the unique labyrinth of lateral spaces within the region's limestone. In these spaces, the reptiles spend the winter, forming large wiggling balls that are often 10,000 snakes thick to save their internal moisture during long, cold months underground. A large observation snake den that researchers could use to monitor the reptiles as they overwinter has also been designed. These snake bunkers would cost between \$10,000 and \$50,000. Eight thousand snakes have died this fall along a three-kilometre stretch of highway bordering the Narcisse snake dens.

Two years ago, Manitoba Conservation bored a dozen tunnels under Highway 17, which cuts through the migratory path, and built a unique mesh fence to try to re-route the snakes without having them meet a messy fate under speeding tires. It helped reduce the yearly snake kill from its peak of 30,000. Snake condos could further reduce the roadkill, as well as offering a solution to private landowners who are unhappy with dens on their properties, to re-locate the snakes instead of having them destroyed. Being able to see the snakes overwintering could also extend the area's snake-based tourist season.

from an article by Krista Foss, in THE GLOBE & MAIL, October 7, 2002



There is something self-preserving about the natural world -- its ultimate adaptation -- so that what is familiar and expected often seems new, over and over again: snow in winter, robins in spring, leaves turning in the fall.

from FOUR WINGS AND A PRAYER: CAUGHT IN THE MYSTERY OF THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY
by Sue Halpern, Alfred A. Knopf, 2001

 IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

ATVs REV THROUGH NATURE PRESERVE

Sand Pond national wildlife area in southern Nova Scotia, a critical resting place for migrating birds that is supposed to be out of bounds for humans, has been turned into a racing ground for all-terrain vehicles. The ATV drivers had been "mud-bogging" in the delicate wetland, getting their vehicles stuck in the bog, then gunning them to get out. The natural cranberry bog was torn up beyond recognition. The ATV rally organizers had built a bridge to the protected area to help people gain access to its farthest reaches.

Sand Pond is not the only area with damage. Canada's 143 national wildlife areas and migrating-bird sanctuaries, set aside as refuges for wildlife and endangered species, are in a shocking state of disrepair, says a study by the Canadian Nature Federation. Unlike popular national parks run by the Parks Canada agency, the wildlife areas and sanctuaries are governed by Environment Canada. But over the years, they have been neglected and forgotten, starved of funds and scientific expertise.

The biggest problem: Federal employees who are supposed to take care of these areas work from such a small budget they are unable to access the areas, much less make sure they are in good shape. The annual budget for the 143 areas is \$1.7 million, or about 15 cents per hectare. In the United States, spending on refuges is about \$12.61 per hectare, the study says.

The 143 areas -- some of less than a hectare and others massive -- are dispersed across the provinces and territories. Threats to the sites include poaching, boating, the invasion of alien plants such as purple loosestrife and leafy spurge, dam construction, the aquaculture industry and contamination by mercury and oil spills. Some refuges are so degraded that Environment Canada will have to decide whether to spend more on them or abandon them. The study recommends that the refuge network receive an annual budget of \$35 million so that scientific work can proceed.

from an article by Alanna Mitchell, in THE GLOBE & MAIL, September 23, 2002

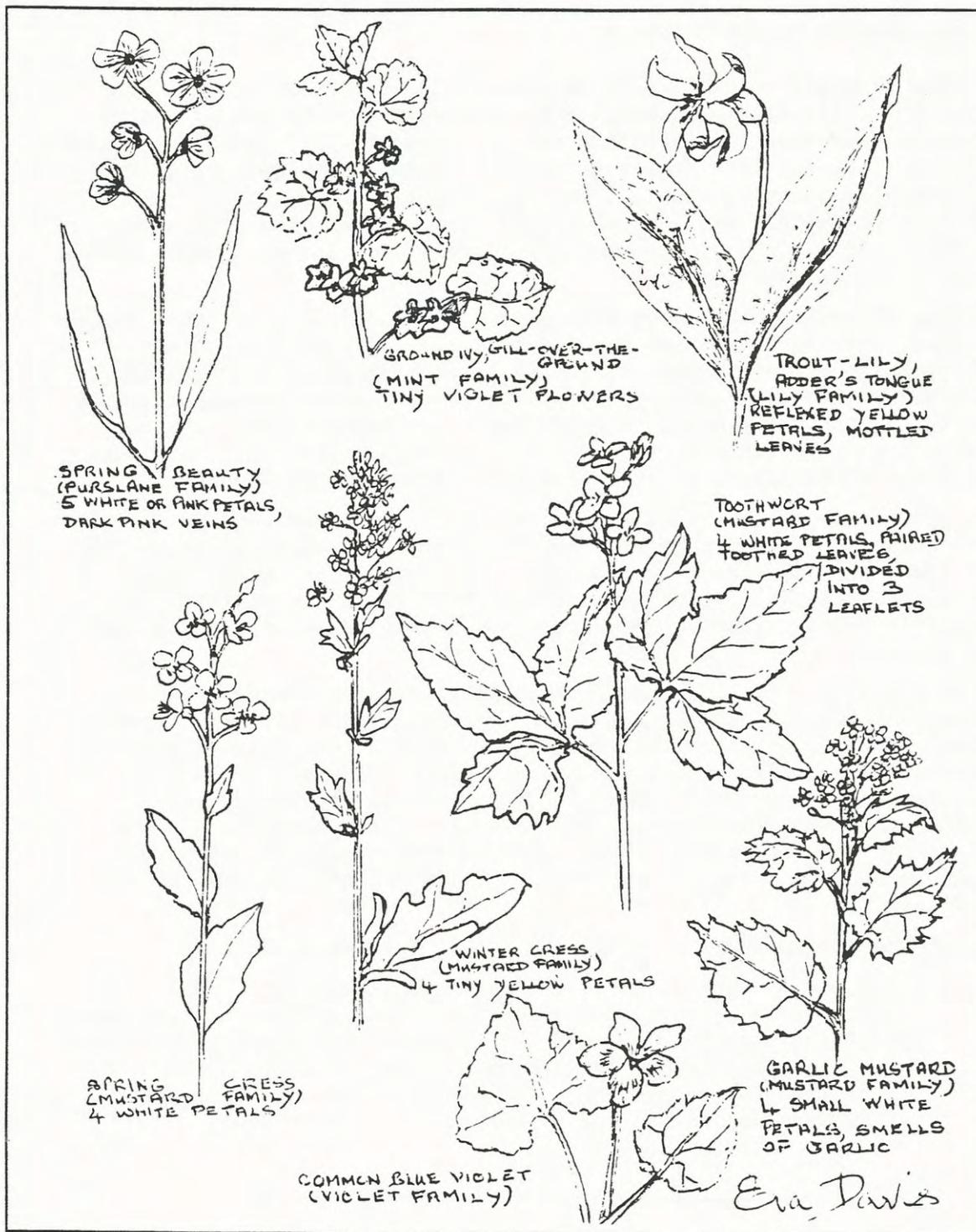
Comment: Even our provincial parks show lack of stewardship. On a visit to Presquile Provincial Park in May 2002, we found all the trees and shrubs had been browsed and the only understory plants to be seen were wild leeks, may apples and ostrich ferns. The fault is apparently the presence of about 300 deer. (A management study recommended 30 deer as suitable for this area.)

H.J.

▷

Winter red-tailed hawk Soaring over the Don Valley My spirit soars too.

Helen Juhola
Jan. 5, 2002



All these were found on one visit to a Brampton woodlot. Eva Davis, May 15, 2002

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

N.J. TOURISM FOR THE BIRDS

The 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Association Recreation indicates that those who came to New Jersey last year to watch animals such as birds in backyard feeders and whales swimming offshore pumped big money into the state economy. The wild-animal enthusiasts spent \$1.24 billion (U.S.) on hotel rooms, food and equipment in 2001 -- significantly more than the \$987 million spent by those who hunted and fished in the state. That makes New Jersey just one of seven states where those watching animals have a bigger economic impact than those trying to catch them. The others are Arizona, Hawaii, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Vermont.

One of the biggest gatherings for thousands of birdwatchers is the New Jersey Audubon Society's annual Cape May Autumn Weekend. Cape May's wildlife-watching success is mainly due to its location: it is a major stopover for migrating birds.

from an article in THE TORONTO STAR, October 22, 2002

CALGARIAN'S BRIGHT IDEA WINS RECOGNITION

Light Up the World Foundation has developed a safe, cheap and reliable light system, which uses just a fraction of the power Western countries suck up, and has helped to install it in about 1,000 homes in Africa, South Asia and Central America.

Tiny light-emitting diodes or LEDs, which are used in alarm clocks and remote controls do the trick. A single white diode, which uses less than a tenth of a watt of power, provides enough light for a child to read by. Now, with advances in technology, an entire village can be lit with less energy than it takes to power the 100-watt light bulb. The system can be powered by solar panels and rechargeable batteries for a one-time cost of about \$60 (U.S.) per household.

from an article by Dawn Walton, in THE GLOBE & MAIL, October 22, 2002

OUR LOCAL TALLGRASS PASTURES MAY RISE AGAIN

Mainstay forage for livestock has been the commonly grown cool-season grasses, whose vigorous spring growth tends to slow down in July and August, requiring pastures to be rotated to maintain useful forage. If the season is particularly hot or dry, farmers may need to purchase extra bales to see the cattle through the summer months.

Quite the opposite are the warm-season grasses, known as tallgrass or native prairie, the product of 5,000 years of evolution, they began their history when the climate was much warmer. Great herds of bison and elk grazed here. These grasses: big bluestem, little bluestem, switchgrass, and Indian grass, mature from mid-July to August, just when the growth of cool-season grasses is waning.

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IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

Tallgrass species tend to be slower to establish than the early grasses, and the seed -- probably because of its scarcity -- is on the expensive side. But they may well be worth the effort as they establish very deep roots, are heat and drought tolerant, and provide nutritious feed at a sometimes very crucial time. Added benefits are the tallgrass prairie's many drought resistant wildflowers, and the wildlife fauna which depend on them. Species such as bee balm, blazing star, prairie smoke, wood lily, butterfly weed and blue-eyed grass, are a delight to the spirit, and rival any garden in beauty during the spring and summer months.

With the threat of climate change, brought about by global warming, becoming increasingly apparent, it may be that these tallgrass prairie plants will provide the seeds for a valuable 'new' addition to our local pastures.

from an article by Barry King, in THE COLBORNE CHRONICLE, August 22, 2002

OLD BIRD CLOCKS UP AIR MILES

Ornithologists in the U.K. have discovered what may be the world's oldest living bird, a Manx shearwater that was probably born in 1952 and has clocked up about five million air miles. What is even more remarkable is that the far-flying, gull-like seabird was preparing to celebrate its golden jubilee by breeding again when it was rediscovered -- for the third time since it was marked in May 1957 -- in a colony on Bardsey Island off North Wales.

Shearwaters are gliders rather than flappers, and this one is believed to have just returned from its South American wintering grounds. According to experts, it is not uncommon to find birds of up to 20 years old although 50 years is astonishing.

The oldest bird ever found was a royal albatross named Grandma that nested in New Zealand and was at least 53 years old when it disappeared. Experts believe there may be even older birds out there, particularly from the parrot family, some of which are believed to have hatched at the end of the 19th century.

from an article in CNN TRAVELLER MAGAZINE



WHAT IS A SPECIES?

The occurrence of hybrids illustrate the difficulties of defining exactly what a species really is. We give games to plants [or animals] at the extreme ends of a range of variability, [but] they only become separate species, in any biologically meaningful sense, when they lose the capacity to interbreed and form intermediates.

from an answer by Bill Gates (biologist) to a letter about primroses in "Questions" in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 20, No. 3, March 2002

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

LILYPAD PAVAROTTIS?

An amazing musical frog from Anhui Province in China has astounded biologists with a repertoire so broad and variable that 12 hours of taped sounds from 21 males showed not a single repeated call. These singing frogs far outperform the Bophis frogs of Madagascar, which have a repertoire of 28 distinct types of calls.

from an article by Michael Kesterton, in THE GLOBE & MAIL, October 16, 2002

HOTTER SUMMER NIGHTS

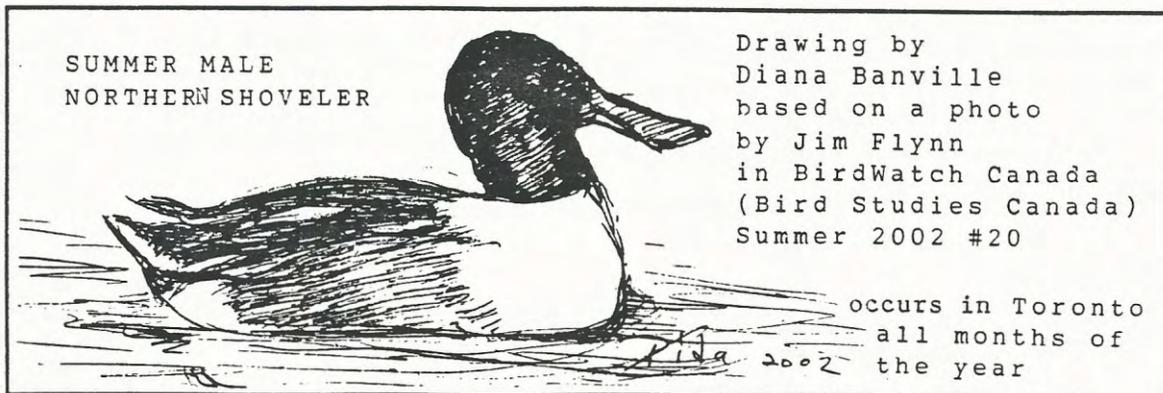
Cities in the United States have an average of 10 more hot nights a year than they did 40 years ago, a 300 per cent increase across the U.S. Although temperatures in rural areas seem to have remained relatively constant during that period, urban and suburban areas, particularly in major East Coast cities, have more hot summer nights than ever.

from an article by Steve Newman, in THE TORONTO STAR, October 5, 2002

ICE SHOWS WARMING

Data obtained from the analysis of ice core samples collected at a remote glacier in northwestern Wyoming show that air temperatures in that area have undergone a dramatic increase since the early 1700s. This is the first time that ice core samples from within the continental U.S. have been studied. Stable isotope ratios of oxygen preserved in ice cores collected from the site were used to reconstruct long-term variations in air temperature. They revealed that the air temperature at the high-elevation site has increased by more than 3.3 degrees Celsius during the past 40 years alone. The recent rates of warming reconstructed from the ice-core data are more than four times higher than the global average during the past 100 years.

from an article by Steve Newman, in THE TORONTO STAR, October 5, 2002



IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

GEESE NOT WELCOME

Toronto parks staff wants \$195,000 to step up its attack on the city's goose population. Goose droppings pose a major problem in city parks, especially along the waterfront and at golf courses, says a report. It proposes a multi-faceted attack strategy to deal with the estimated 7,500 geese that spend at least a portion of the year in city parks. The strategy includes:

- . \$45,000 for three special sweepers designed to remove goose feces.
- . \$65,000 for signs and pamphlets warning people not to feed geese.
- . \$50,000 in landscaping changes to discourage geese at High Park, Bluffers Park, the Toronto Islands, the western Beaches and Marie Curtis Park.
- . \$35,000 to use trained dogs and falcons to force geese to move along, and to expand a program used in High Park since 1997 of oiling eggs to prevent them from hatching.

The city-wide goose-management strategy outlined in the report would cost \$26 per goose.

from an article by Paul Moloney, in THE TORONTO STAR, October 8, 2002

ZOO LOSES RARE BIRDS TO WEST NILE

The West Nile virus has claimed the lives of five endangered North American loggerhead shrikes at the Toronto Zoo and struck a blow to its bird-breeding and conservation program. The five that were felled by the West Nile virus were among 50 captive shrikes in the zoo's breeding program, which began releasing birds in the Ontario wild last year. The virus, which is transmitted by mosquitos feasting on infected birds (particularly crows), has been killing animals in United States' zoos since 1999, when the virus was first identified by a veterinary pathologist at the Bronx Zoo.

To try to protect its birds, the Toronto Zoo moved birds normally kept outside inside and started injecting them with a vaccine developed for horses even though there is no absolute proof that it works on birds. The zoo has also vaccinated some of its mammals, such as zebras, rhinos and elephants. The virus has also stricken a bald eagle, a kestrel, and some wild Canada geese, but they appear to be recovering.

from an article by Estanislao Oziewicz, in THE GLOBE & MAIL, October 12, 2002

Being a developer is the only influential American calling except for journalism -- that requires no license, and it shows.

from WILD NIGHTS: NATURE RETURNS TO THE CITY by Anne Matthews, North Point Press, N.Y. 2001

THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

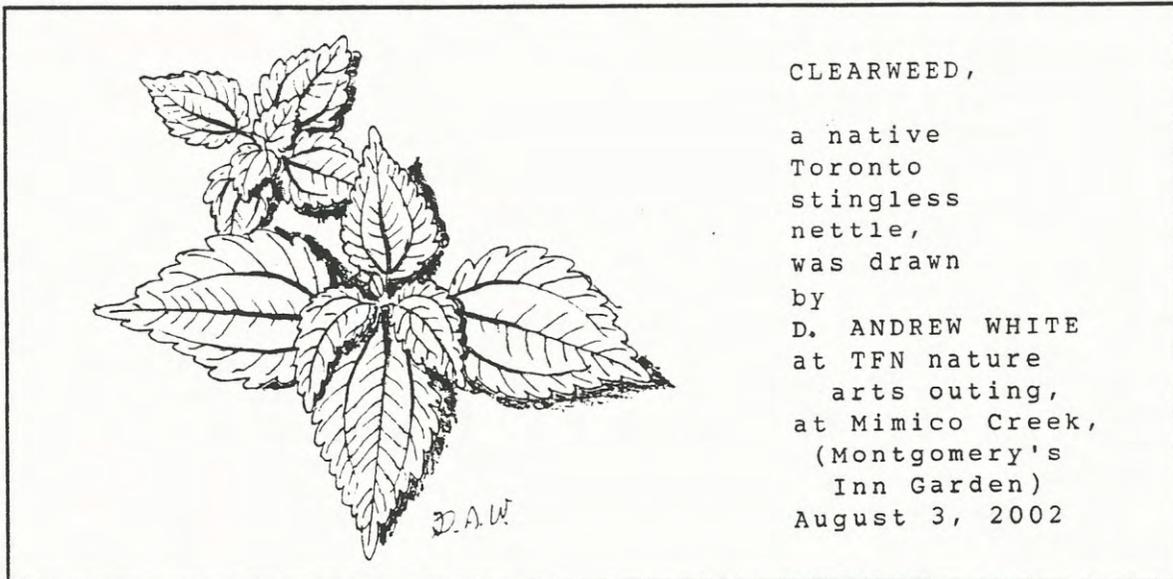
December 2001, Toronto

Record warmth continued, as December beat 1998's record by 0.8°C downtown and 0.9°C at Pearson Airport -- quite a remarkably large margin. The monthly mean was 3.2°C downtown and 1.7°C at Pearson. However, the average maximum downtown of 5.5°C was the same as in 1998.

Above-freezing temperatures prevailed during the first half of December as far north as James Bay. It hit 17.5°C downtown and 18.3°C at Pearson on December 5th, the second highest monthly readings on record after 20°C in 1982. Downtown Toronto experienced its by-far-latest first frost on record on December 8th. Freezing daytime temperatures waited until Christmas when something of an eastern North American trough developed. Ironically, this shift in the pattern brought record-setting snows to Buffalo for Christmas week: record-warm Great Lakes provided for a very energetic lake effect. Toronto did not get any lake effect snow to speak of, although one fall of wet snow on December 15th brought 8-10 cm. This ensured that December did not have absent or record-light snowfall. Barely 1 cm fell in December, 1998. The light snowfall in combination with average amounts of rain made for a dryish December with 40-50 mm total precipitation.

The trend toward very warm December weather in recent years has made the five-year average (1997-2002) at Pearson Airport 1.6°C warmer than the long-term standard normal (1971-2000). This is even including the very cold anomaly of December 2000.

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CLEARWEED,

a native
Toronto
stingless
nettle,
was drawn
by
D. ANDREW WHITE
at TFN nature
arts outing,
at Mimico Creek,
(Montgomery's
Inn Garden)
August 3, 2002

THE WEATHER (cont'd)

January 2002, Toronto

The record warmth and quiet conditions continued almost the entire month of January. Only on the last day was there a shift as the only significant winter storm so far of the season hit Toronto.

Toronto downtown had a mean temperature of 0.9°C for the month, the warmest since 1932 which was 1.9°C, and the second mildest on record. There was very little day-to-day variation, and the lowest temperature all month was merely -7.6°C -- by far the highest monthly minimum on record (1932 recorded a monthly minimum of -10.6°C, so this winter had not yet had a minimum temperature of -10°C up to at least half-way through!). The difference between high and low temperatures was a paltry 4.6°C, the lowest since 1987, although it did peak at 10.8°C on January 28th -- a sunny quiet day to boot. The mean maximum downtown of 3.2°C was exceeded as recently as 1989 (mean maximum of 3.3°C) and much stranger as long ago as 1880 (mean maximum of 3.7°C). So we cannot quite call January unprecedented, although in combination with November and December we could, although even here November 1931 - January 1932 came close.

Pearson Airport, with a record going back to 1938 and with recent urban heat island effects, did have its warmest January on record, with a mean of -0.5°C beating 1990's -0.8°C; temperatures peaked at 11.2°C on January 28th, and the coldest day was January 19th with a minimum of -11.6°C.

Precipitation was slightly below normal with 45.8 mm downtown and 46.2 mm at Pearson. Snowfall was 25.4 cm downtown and 31.4 cm at Pearson -- not especially light considering the monthly conditions. But most of this fell in a storm on January 31st, which included ice pellets and freezing rain in some locales.

Persistent southwesterly winds associated with the uninterrupted mild conditions made this the windiest January since 1997. The average windspeed at Toronto Island was 25.0 km/h, 2.4 km/h above normal; and at Pearson, winds averaged 19.1 km/h, 1.5 km/h above normal.

Gavin Miller

□

There's a huge difference between the impact of a 'once-in-100-years rainfall' now and similar events in the past for one simple reason: nature can no longer provide us with the 'free service' of managing such huge volumes of instant rainfall through old floodplains, water meadows or meanders, because they've largely gone. We have built or planted crops on these land forms or drained them, and now we're paying the price. [This refers to the disastrous floods in Germany in August 2002.]

from "On the value of life" by Jonathan Porritt in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 20, No. 10, Oct. 2002

COMING EVENTS

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

- Sat. Dec. 7 from 8:30 am (all day) - Waterfowl, west Toronto lakeshore or beyond with Jean Iron. Meet in the parking lot at Humber Bay Park East. Bring a lunch. Carpool if necessary.
- Sat. Jan. 11 at 1:30 pm till sunset - Gulls and waterfowl at Sunnyside with Glenn Coady. Meet in the Sunnyside parking lot at the foot of Windermere Ave. Dress warmly.

Toronto Entomologists' Association

- Sat. Jan. 25 at 1 pm - Insects of the Haliburton Forest with Sandy Smith in Room 119 of Northrop Frye Hall, 73 Queen's Park Cres. East. Free. Visitors welcome. Call 905-727-6993 for more information.

Mycological Society of Toronto

- Call 416-444-9053 for information about meetings and forays.

Royal Canadian Institute

- Sunday afternoon lectures on science begin January 12. Call 416-977-2983 for details.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority - Conservation seminar

- Winter waterfowl - Sat. Dec. 7 from 1 pm to 3 pm at Humber Bay Park West (off Lakeshore Dr., west of Park Lawn Rd.) [Call 416-661-6600, ext. 5660.]

Citizens Concerned about the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront

- Sat. Dec. 7 from 9 am to 11 am with Ron Scovell. Meet in the parking lot of Humber Bay Park East. Call 416-252-7047 for more information.

Rouge Valley Conservation Centre

- Sunday, Dec. 8 from 1 pm to 3 pm - Pioneer History - walk begins at the Pearse House, on the east side of Meadowvale Road, north of Sheppard Ave. East. Call 416-282-8265 for more information.

Ian Wheal Heritage walks

- Look in NOW for details.

High Park walking tours

- Call 416-392-1748 or 416-392-6916 for details. \$2 donation.

Natural History Travel [led by George Bryant]

- For information about guided nature tours in Ontario and beyond, call 416-443-0583.

North Toronto Green Community Seminar - Smart Living with Ravi Singh of Eneract - Choosing an energy provider - Mon. Jan. 27 at 7 pm at the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre, 200 Eglinton Ave. West. □

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TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB: ITS HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION, 1965\$ 2.00	TORONTO REGION BIRD CHART, 1983.....\$ 4.00
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