

# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 514

March 2003



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## TFN MEETINGS

- Sunday, March 2, 2003 - THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PROTECTING GREAT PLACES  
an illustrated lecture by John Riley, Director  
of Science and Stewardship at the Nature  
Conservancy of Canada.  
at 2:30 pm  
in Emmanuel College  
75 Queen's Park Cres. East
- In this talk we will learn about how the Nature  
Conservancy sets about conserving Canadian eco-  
regions and biodiversity and their standards for  
the purchase and stewardship of these lands.
- VISITORS WELCOME!
- + a "social hour" beginning at 2 pm with free juice  
and coffee
- + memberships and selected publications for sale

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, April 6, 2003

TFN OFFICE: open Friday mornings from 9 am to 12 noon

### IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

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

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

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

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

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

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**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.

- Saturday  
 March 1  
 2 pm to  
 4 pm
- DEER PARK LIBRARY - nature arts (photography)  
 Leader: Robin Powell  
 Meet on the second floor of the library which is on the north 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.
- March 2
- TFN MEETING - See page 2 for details.
- Wednesday  
 March 5  
 10 am
- VALE OF AVOCA - nature walk  
 Leader: Boris Mather  
 Meet at the St. Clair subway station (Pleasant Blvd. exit). Morning only.
- Saturday  
 March 8  
 9 am
- HUMBER BAY PARK - early migrants  
 Leader: Verna Higgins  
 Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Lake Shore Blvd. West opposite Park Lawn Rd. Brunch lunch & binoculars.
- Wednesday  
 March 12  
 10 am
- HIGH PARK - lost waterways in High Park & vicinity  
 Leader: Ron Allan  
 Meet at the entrance to High Park on the south side of Bloor St. West opposite High Park Ave. Bring binoculars. Morning only.
- Sunday  
 March 16  
 1 pm to  
 4 pm
- EXPLORING LAKE IROQUOIS SHORE BLUFF & DAVENPORT TRAIL- urban ecology  
 Leaders: Dick Watts, Ian Wheal, David Raymond & others  
 Meet at the JJ Piccininni Community Centre (St. Clair Ave. West, just west of Lansdowne Ave.). This walk which ends at the Dupont subway station is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community.
- Wednesday  
 March 19  
 10 am
- OLD GO LINE - nature walk  
 Leader: Roger Powley  
 Meet at the northeast corner of York Mills Rd. and Leslie St. Bring lunch. This walk will end near the corner of Lawrence & Leslie.

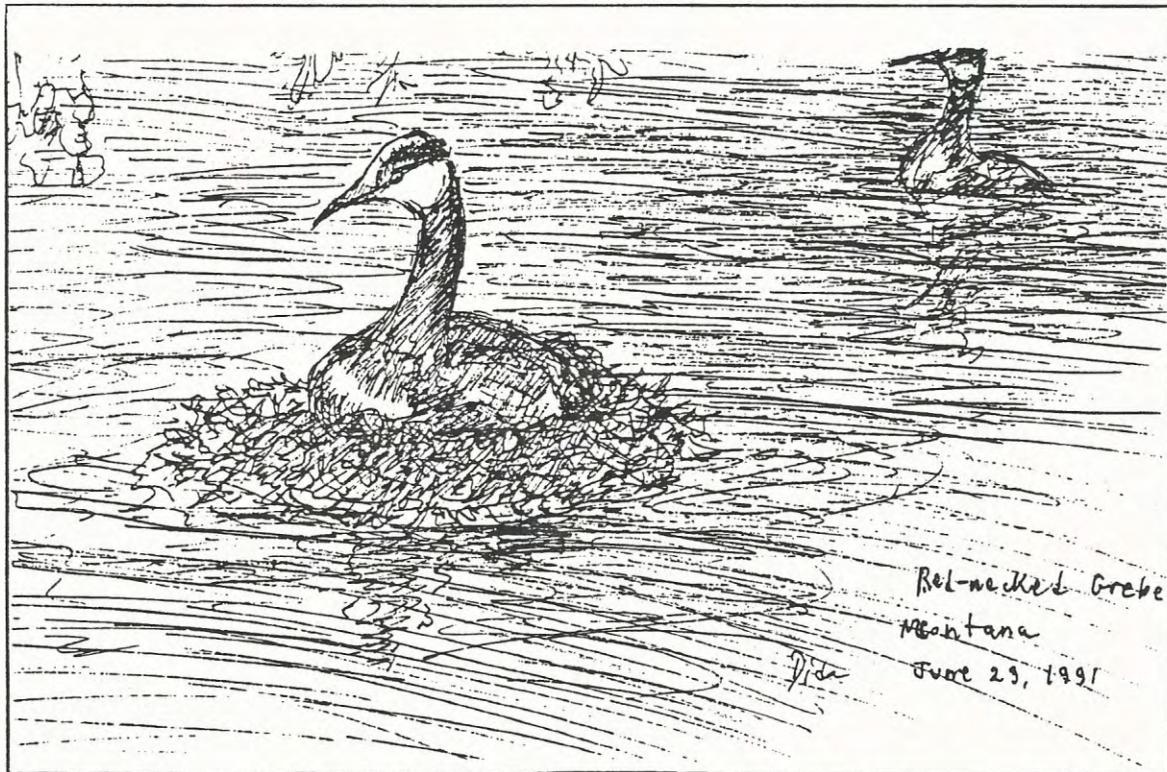


FOR MORE OUTINGS AND MEETINGS, SEE PAGES 4 & 25.

MARCH OUTINGS (cont'd)

- Saturday ROUGE VALLEY - early migrants  
March 22 Leader: Karin Fawthrop  
10 am Meet at the Pearse House (first bus stop north of Sheppard Ave. East) on Meadowvale Rd.  
Morning only. Bring binoculars.
- Sunday BLUFFERS MEADOW - nature walk  
March 23 Leader: Ken Cook  
10:30 am Meet at the southeast corner of Kingston Rd. and Chine Dr.  
Morning only.
- Tuesday CEDARVALE RAVINE - spring migrants  
March 25 Leader: George Bryant  
10 am Meet at the Heath St. exit of the St. Clair West subway station.  
Bring binoculars. Morning only.
- Saturday G.R. LORD PARK - nature walk  
March 29 Leader: Heather Mackey  
10 am Meet at the northeast corner of Finch St. West and Dufferin St.  
Morning only.

□



THE RED-NECKED GREBE is seen all months of the year in Toronto Region. It has been breeding annually since 1997 in Bronte Creek and Bronte Harbour - often on a floating tire. It ranges widely. Field sketch by Diana Banville in Montana, 1991.

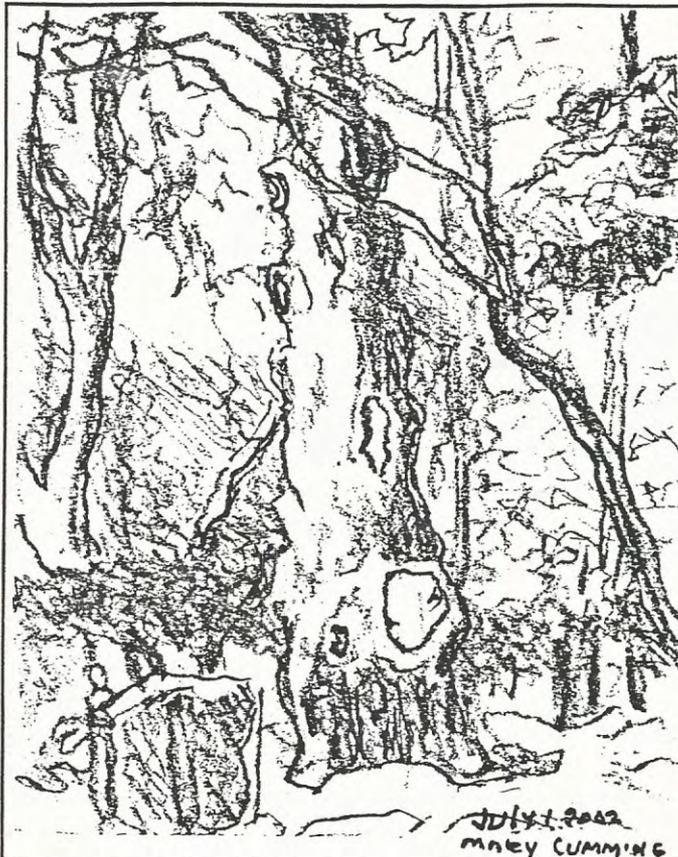
## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It should come as no surprise that MAKING WAVES, the city's land planning document for the waterfront, has been delayed again. This plan called for continuous public green space along the water's edge. In what appears to be a self-serving move, prominent architects (not urban planners), arguing that there was too much green space in the plan, persuaded city council members on the Planning and Transportation Committee that there should be more housing (high-rise condos) and mixed use structures at the water's edge. City planners, working with these architects, are to revise the plan and resubmit it to the Planning and Transportation Committee in late March. This will delay Toronto City Council's review of the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation's (TWRC) business plan.

Although much of the green space proposed in the original MAKING WAVES would be landscaped and not natural, at least it's publicly accessible and green. Toronto doesn't need more condos at the water's edge as presently exist west of Yonge St. Fortunately Robert Fung, chair of TWRC, and Paul Bedford are fully committed to a central waterfront that is green and accessible by the public. The eagerly awaited compromise should generate even more waves.

Robin Powell

□



GUILD INN  
WOODLOT

pencil  
field drawing  
by Mary Cumming

July 1, 2002

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

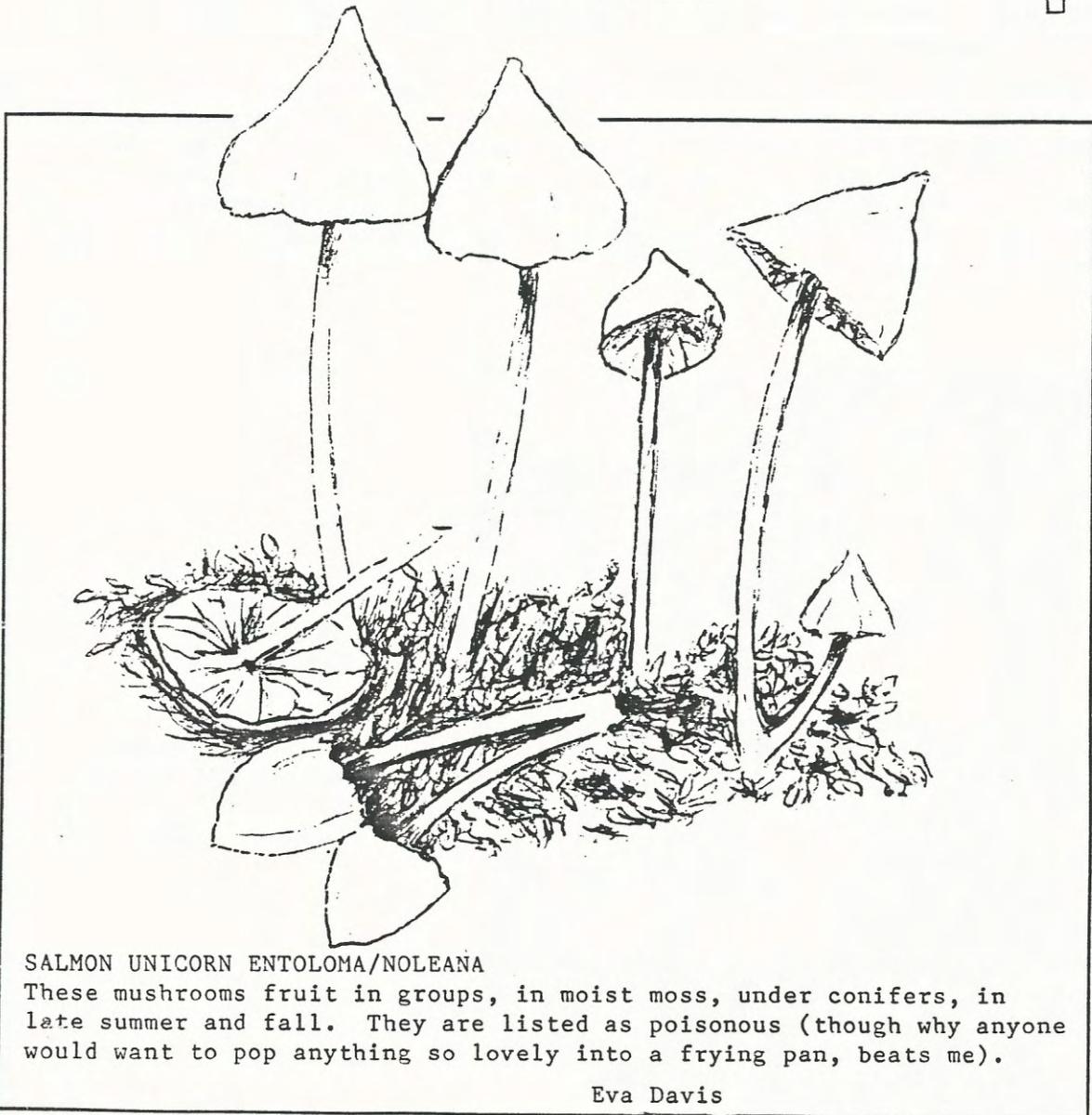
January, 2003

On October 20, a neighbour knocked on our door wondering what the strange animal in his yard was. He described what Ron recognized as an opossum, and Ron was jealous. He puts seed on the ground to attract wildlife, so why couldn't it visit our yard?

Then on December 19 at dusk, the dog would not stop barking. The opossum had showed up at last! Now Ron was elated and he chalked up another animal for his yard list.

Joan O'Donnell

□



SALMON UNICORN ENTOLOMA/NOLEANA

These mushrooms fruit in groups, in moist moss, under conifers, in late summer and fall. They are listed as poisonous (though why anyone would want to pop anything so lovely into a frying pan, beats me).

Eva Davis

# PROJECTS

## ONTARIO ABANDONS PARK PROMISE IN KAWARTHA

New legislation introduced by the Minister of Natural Resources could turn the Kawartha Highlands into a four-wheel drive playground rather than the provincial park recommended by the local stakeholders committee. The provincial government is proposing to designate the high-profile Kawartha Highlands Signature Site as a "Recreation Reserve," a newly created designation that would emphasize creating roads and trails for motorized recreation and commercial activities such as guided commercial hunting. The new legislation says nothing about managing the area to protect ecosystems, species or habitats and clearly puts "use" ahead of "protection."

The Kawartha Highlands were designated as one of only nine Signature Sites across Ontario in recognition of its significant natural values, including remote lakes, sensitive wetlands, rare rock plain plant communities and old forests. Designating the area for intensive recreation use, including increased access for snowmobiles, ATVs, four-wheel drive vehicles, jet skis and motorboats, is the wrong approach. Worse yet, the government is also suggesting that this new development-focused designation could also be applied to many of the 215 Ontario's Living Legacy sites still awaiting official regulation.

We must send a strong message to Premier Ernie Eves that this approach is unacceptable. Please send a message to Premier Ernie Eves opposing the designation of the Kawartha Highlands as a Recreation Reserve and supporting its designation as a fully operational provincial park with the resources and tools to protect the area's natural character. Tell the Premier you are disappointed that his government is introducing weak new legislation instead of passing a stronger Provincial Parks Act. Remind the Premier that the Local Stakeholders Committee, with representatives from all parts of the community, strongly recommended full operating park status as the only effective way to protect the Kawartha Highlands and tell him that this new legislation is a betrayal of the government's promise to protect Ontario's natural legacy.

Key points to emphasize to the premier:

- . His government should withdraw its proposed Recreation Reserve legislation.
- . There is clear public support for full provincial park status for the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site.
- . The government should be strengthening rather than weakening protection for our parks by passing a new Parks Act.

▷ Write to Premier Ernie Eves, Legislature Building, Queen's Park, Toronto, ON M7A 1W3 Fax (416) 325-3745 or 6195  
webprem@gov.on.ca

from an article in THE CHICKADEE (Huntsville) January, 2003, Vol. 45, No. 3

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

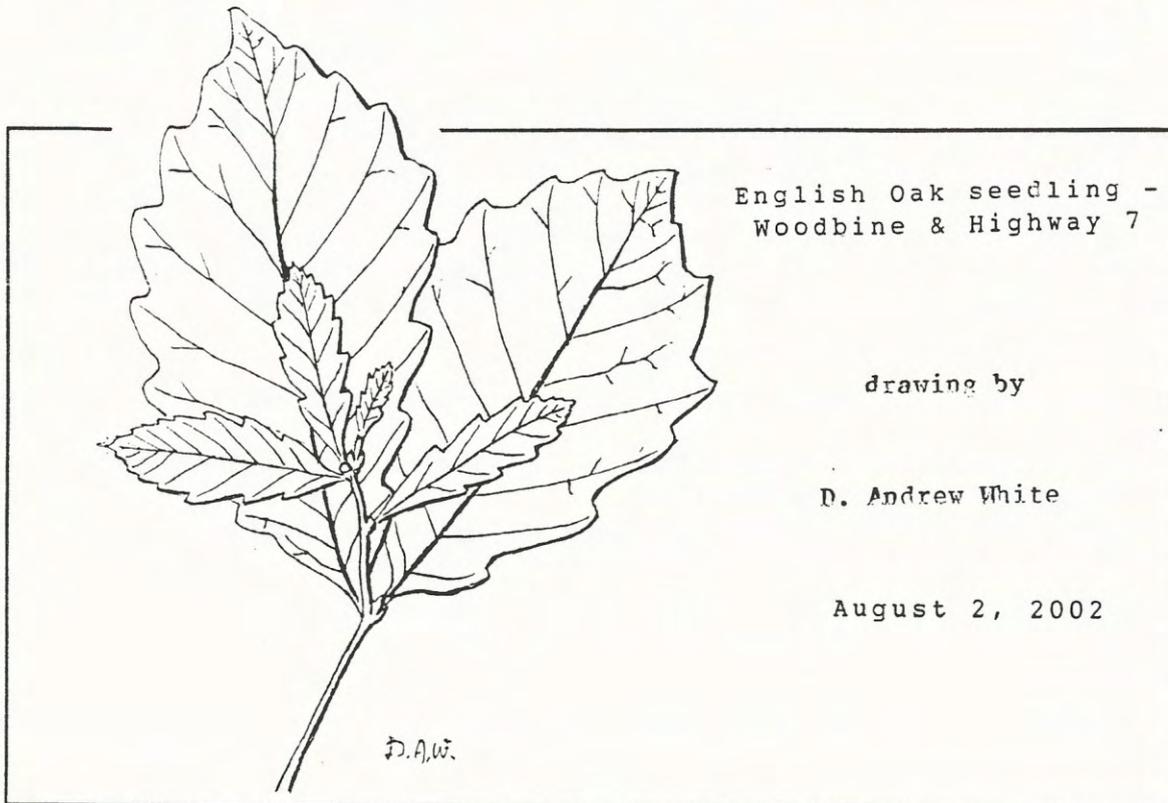
The Ontario Ministry of Education removed Environmental Science from the secondary school curriculum in 2000. Returning environmental education to our schools in 2003 and keeping outdoor education centres open across the province is crucial to ensure that future generations will have the tools and knowledge to make sound environmental decisions.

The recently released Education Task Force Report on the Education Funding Formula excluded environmental education from the Funding Formula. The need for environmental education in the curriculum and outdoor education experiences have never been greater, as Ontario's population becomes increasingly urbanized. Only by giving students opportunities for making connections to the natural world can we correct the environmental problems now facing Ontario.

▷ If you believe that this is true, contact Premier Eves and ask him to restore environmental education in the classroom. Each Ontario student should receive at least one outdoor education opportunity -- preferably with an overnight visit -- in each of the years that they are in elementary and secondary school. [Address of Premier on page 7.]

from an article in THE BULLETIN, Richmond Hill Naturalists, January 2003

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## FOR READING

ROGUE PRIMATE by John Livingston, Key Porter Books Limited, 1994

This is, in Farley Mowat's words, "one hell of a book, written by one of the most perceptive primates of our species." For me, it is, indeed, one of the most dense and seminal books I have read. It tackles head-on all the shibboleths of human superiority: that we are dominant, that we were foreordained, by Nature, to be the controllers of Nature, that our mission is the humanization of the planet -- "The destiny of Earth as a human monoculture is manifest".

The author nails the unacknowledged function of zoos -- "serious institutions of research, conservation, and education, but all in the business of entertainment," feeding the fundamentalist myth of absolute human power in the dichotomy of 'us' and 'them'. He flays the medical 'justification' of vivisection -- if it is good for humanity, it is 'justified'; the fur trade; the chimera of the 'humane' trap with the resulting suffering of countless animals in order to find which mechanism 'hurts' least; the "celebrated, red-neck institution of rodeo ... which deals with the major theme of human superiority over Nature." He dismisses the accusation of anthropomorphism; scientists make anthropomorphic judgements all the time since humans are incapable of objectivity. He labels -- splendidly -- Sustainable Development as "a full-blown oxymoron." He quotes Gregory Bateson who has pointed out that "instinct", like gravity, is an "explanatory principle" which explains everything and nothing. And he attacks the very apex of our claim to supremacy; self-awareness (which we persist in believing no other animal has), by reminding us of the chimpanzee Washoe who learned sign-language to the point at which she could identify her mirror-image as herself -- the first of other "scientifically" unarguably self-aware animals.

Mr. Livingston sees the primary human threat to all other life forms as threefold: human fecundity -- no wild animal proliferates under conditions of appalling privation and that we do suggests "the human reproductive cycle is anomalous and unnatural"; exploitive economic growth; and our by now built-in conceit of Manifest Destiny.

We are, in the author's phrase, "the animal with something askew". This askewness is the consequence of our deliberate separation from Nature. In the final paragraph, he defines the "sacking and pillage of Nature" as the consequence of our unawareness and uninvolved in nearly all we routinely do and think. And he says that he -- and you -- and I -- are all accessories.

Not a comfortable book, but a profound one, going to the core of our blinkered belief in our dominant place in the universe, combined with our seemingly inherent inability/?refusal to look at the consequences of our destructive takeover of the very cradle of our being. Required reading if we are to wake up to the illusions under which our species lives.

Eva Davis

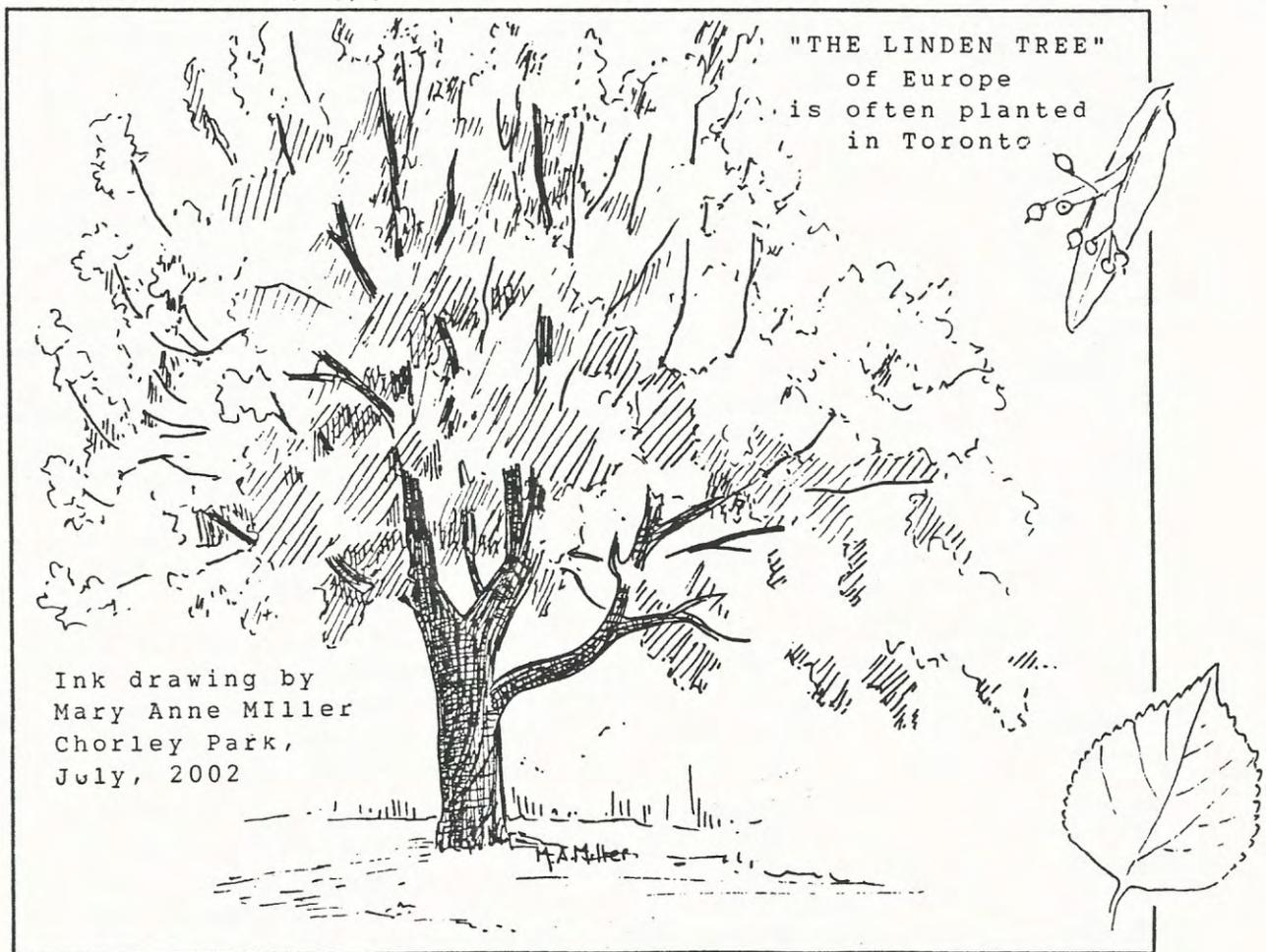
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Recently Published

NATURE ON THE TORONTO ISLANDS: AN EXPLORERS GUIDE by Joanna Kidd, published by Toronto Parks and Recreation. \$4.00 (available at Toronto City Hall)

TORONTO PARKS AND TRAILS, map produced by City of Toronto. free from Toronto Parks Department

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW IN SOCIAL CONTEXT: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE, edited by Allan Greenbaum, Alex Wellington, Ron Pushchak, published by Captus Press Inc. 2002; about \$63 includes tax



No matter how permanent our endeavours, nature will reclaim them when we leave, the balance between life and death will be struck once again.

from LISTENING TO WHALES: WHAT THE ORCAS HAVE TO TEACH US by Alexandra Morton, Ballantine Books, N.Y., 2002

## GOOD NEWS FROM THE OWL FOUNDATION

The good news from Kay McKeever's Owl Foundation in Vineland is that no more owls have died since September. Considering that in the previous three months of 2002, 84 of the 240 resident owls died of West Nile Virus, that is cause for relief.

When the owls started dying last June, Dr. Bruce Hunter, a wildlife pathologist at the University of Guelph, suspected avian herpes, but the usual remedies proved ineffective, and symptoms didn't quite fit. Specimens sent to Winnipeg sat untended for three weeks, as the single specialist was on holiday. By the time he returned and diagnosed West Nile Virus, all the northern owls were dead.

A vaccine for the virus had been developed in the 1920s in Eastern Europe to protect Arabian horses, but none was available in Canada. Kay located some in Fort Bragg, Iowa, that was reserved for veterans returning from Afghanistan. She purchased \$1,600 worth of the vaccine and administered it to the remaining owls, three doses each, given via a tube down the throat, very stressful for the birds.

Many observations have been made over the course of this unfortunate episode, and questions raised. Although all the northern owls, the Great Gray, Snowy, Boreal and Northern Hawk Owls were lost, only one each of the Spotted and Tawny Owls died, and the Eastern Screech, Barn, Flammulated, Northern Pygmy, Northern Saw-whet and Burrowing Owls are all fine.

Observations may lead eventually to solutions. The University of Guelph will take samples from both the dead and the living owls to determine if the southern owls have antibodies indicating they have developed an immunity to the virus, and will attempt to develop a vaccine specifically for birds, as opposed to the current vaccine intended for horses.

How did the owls become infected with West Nile Virus? The obvious answer is that mosquitoes carried the virus, but Kay believes the greater role was played by a bird parasite called the Hippoboscid fly, known as the louse fly or flat fly. These insects feed on blood in the quill of emerging feathers of large birds, and this summer the northern owls were infested with 300-400 flies per bird, the worst ever. Kay blames a milder winter that allowed most of the fly pupae to live.

She describes the louse fly as being almost impossible to kill. They must be individually picked from the bird, an imaginably unpleasant task, and squished. (She said if you hit them with a hammer on concrete, the legs get up and walk away.) Until this year, the major impact of the louse flies on the owls had been to lower haemoglobin levels in their blood.

Carolling robins  
impart a whole new aspect  
to the ides of March.

Diana Banville  
2002

OWL FOUNDATION NEWS (cont'd)

Kay was one of the first to suspect that the louse fly is a carrier of West Nile Virus. She and Dr. Hunter, who has worked with The Owl Foundation for about eight years, continue to investigate the role played by the Hippoboscid. Dr. Hunter believes it might be possible for the flies to carry West Nile on contaminated mouth parts, but Kay wonders if the adults are also vectors, and if the young flies already have the virus when they hatch out.

To answer this question, in December Kay sent 1,000 virgin louse flies, those who were frozen immediately after emerging from their pupa without ever having had a blood meal, to Dr. Hunter, who was to grind them up, put them into solution, and test the solution for West Nile. If the solution tested positive, that would prove that Hippoboscid is indeed a true vector of the disease.

It was the loss of all seventeen adult Great Gray owls, one of whom was still breeding after being with The Owl Foundation for 25 years, and ten juveniles, that was most grievous. Just eight years ago the McKeever's found the recipe for cage design that allowed the Great Grays to pair bond. It takes about seven years to get a fertile egg, and then the pair is bonded for life. A 4,000 sq. ft. release training cage had been built to train last year's ten baby Great Gray owls so they would be released in their natural habitat in the boreal forest next spring. Now they are all dead.

They say that every cloud has a silver lining. Because of last summer's drought, grasses didn't set seed, leaving nothing for meadow voles to eat. Because of the collapse of the prey population the predatory owls were starving to death. However, the death of 84 owls had created a temporary surplus in the standing order of mice picked up each week at McMaster University. If the order were reduced, it would be difficult to increase it at a later date. Now 42 hungry Screech Owls and 32 Great Horned Owls over-wintering at The Owl Foundation are fattening up on double rations of the 2,600 mice served each week.

A new isolation unit is being built with 20 units, where all future incoming owls will be housed for the six weeks needed for three doses of vaccine before they join the others. The screening on this new unit will be so fine that not even the tiniest insect can squeeze through.

Since early October there is again a Great Gray Owl in Kay's life. If it turns out that this is a male, he will be named Phoenix, and if it is a female, she will be named Genesis. If male, unfortunately Phoenix will be unable to breed because he has a badly damaged wing, but at least he speaks a familiar language. The first male and female Snowy Owls to arrive sometime in the future will be named Adam and Eve.

from an article by Win Laar, in the NATURE NIAGARA NEWS, #258, January 2003

□

Showy mourning cloak  
emerges in early spring.  
Does not mind cold feet.

Therese Paradis

## EASIER ACCESS TO HUMBER BIKE PATH

Toronto has now completed the construction of a bike path in the lower Humber Valley. The new path goes under the highways and C.N. tracks and connects the lakeshore bike path with the old path which ran only as far south as the Queensway. The new path runs on the west side of the river going north from the lake by the Palace Pier Condominiums.

The paths we have in our river valleys are improving every year. I am hoping that planners will continue with the good work and try to make the bike routes with fewer hills and try to stay in the river valleys as much as possible.

The Humber has had vast improvements in the past ten years with many bridges being installed. The paths up Highland Creek are also wonderful.

I know many naturalists who like to see these areas remain wild with fewer dogs and joggers, but in my opinion the more people that are using and enjoying our green spaces the better chance we have of saving them from development. For some people these paths may be a transportation corridor to commute to work and back. Any help getting cars off the road is a good thing. To all the people involved in this, keep up the good work.

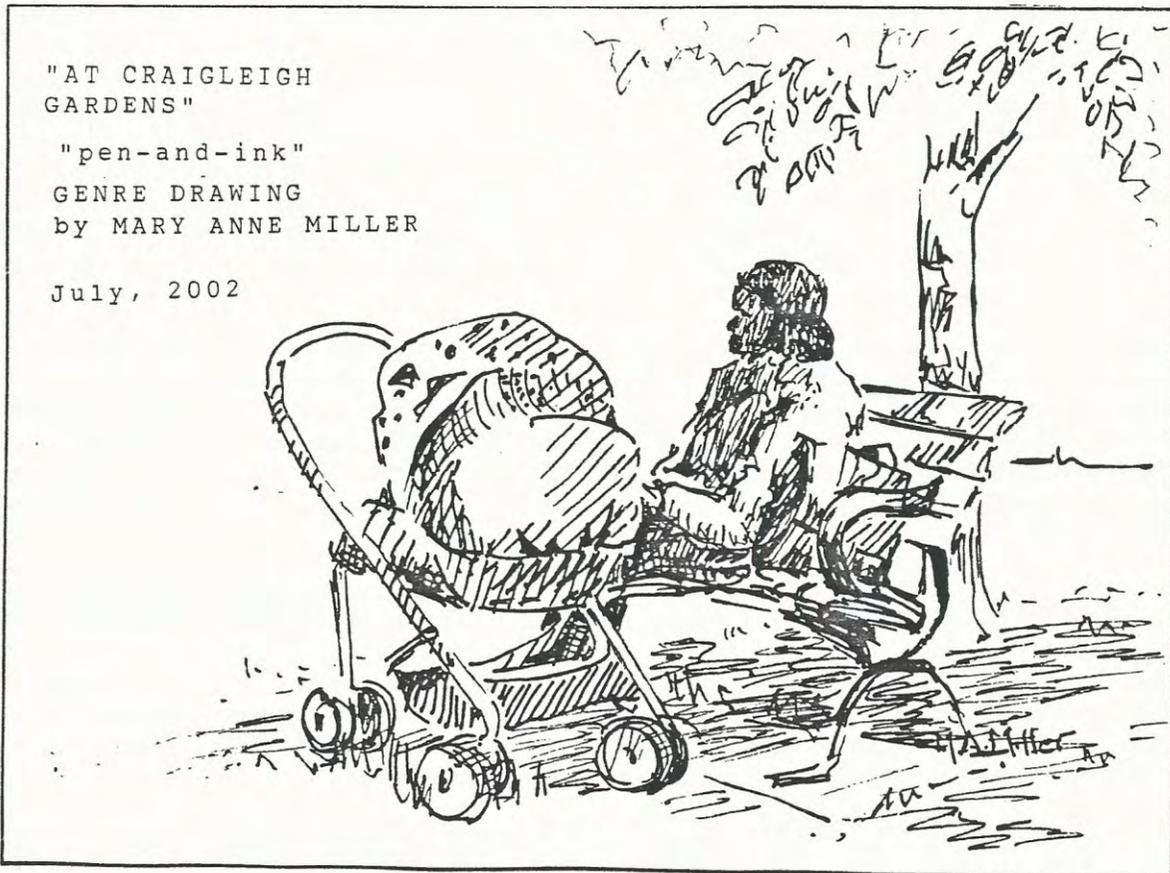
Roger Powley

□

"AT CRAIGLEIGH  
GARDENS"

"pen-and-ink"  
GENRE DRAWING  
by MARY ANNE MILLER

July, 2002



## STINK, NOISE AND POLLUTION

The above come to mind especially if you live on a rural road that just happens to link an Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs' (OFSC) trail. Manufacturers claim to have improved the efficiency of the snowmobile two-stroke engines but they still dump a staggering one third of the fuel "consumed", unburned, "out the tailpipe" on to the snow and ice. (This fact is confirmed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.) There are approximately 175,000 active members of OFSC. In his article "The well-groomed trail" (The Country Connection - Winter 2002) Michael Enright, a freelance writer living in Muskoka writes: "The average distance driven by each of the approximately 175,000 active snowmobilers last year was 1,763 km, for a total of 305.5 million km. There are some 49,000 km of trails across Ontario (OFSC - 2000 Ontario Snowmobiling by Numbers). A well-tuned machine will travel approximately 250 km on one tank of gas. Most machines are equipped with a 40-litre tank, which translates to a collective 49.3 million litres of fuel. Of this, one third or 16.4 million litres is dumped unburned over lakes and trails in Ontario". The mathematics show that 322 litres of fuel was dumped on every kilometre of these trails! This is not the burned fuel coming out in the form of smoke, stink and noise. In other words -- fuel is simply carried from service station and dumped onto snow and ice to begin its dirty work!

"As spring warms the air", Michael Enright again, "millions of litres of gas and oil are simultaneously released into Ontario's forests and lakes". Scientists are more and more troubled by this annual "toxic shock", known as phototoxicity. Minute organisms absorb chemicals in the fuels which enables them to be killed by daylight. "We know these chemicals are as toxic as narcotics in the water", says Peter Landrum, toxicologist with Great Lakes Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Small fish eaten by predators (herons, loons, lake trout, etc.) move the toxins up the food chain. Who is protecting the environment in Central Ontario -- the province's favourite playground? Certainly not the tourist industry nor the snowmobile affiliated businesses. Meanwhile there are no rules for the playground!

One thousand snowmobiles visit Yellowstone Park every day -- the carbon dioxide production tops 3 million pounds annually (Yellowstone Net Newspaper, April 1999). Financial interests have for three years opposed plans to phase out snowmobiles in the park. Kevin Collins of National Parks Conservation Association says "the pollution in the park is dramatic and disgusting", to the point of causing park gatekeepers to complain of dizziness and headaches.

The battle to ban or not to ban, rages ferociously. Manufacturers and other financial interests lobby and pressurize authorities to stall, obstruct and delay legislation, which quite obviously is necessary to protect the environment and ourselves. Michael Enright's closing words: "We stand, like unwitting warriors in a war run by anonymous generals, ever -vigilant of the right to destroy ourselves". (Based on "The well groomed trail" in The Country Connection, Winter 2002)

from "Gleanings" by Hugh Reynolds in THE CHICKADEE, Vol. 45, No. 3, Jan./Feb. 2003

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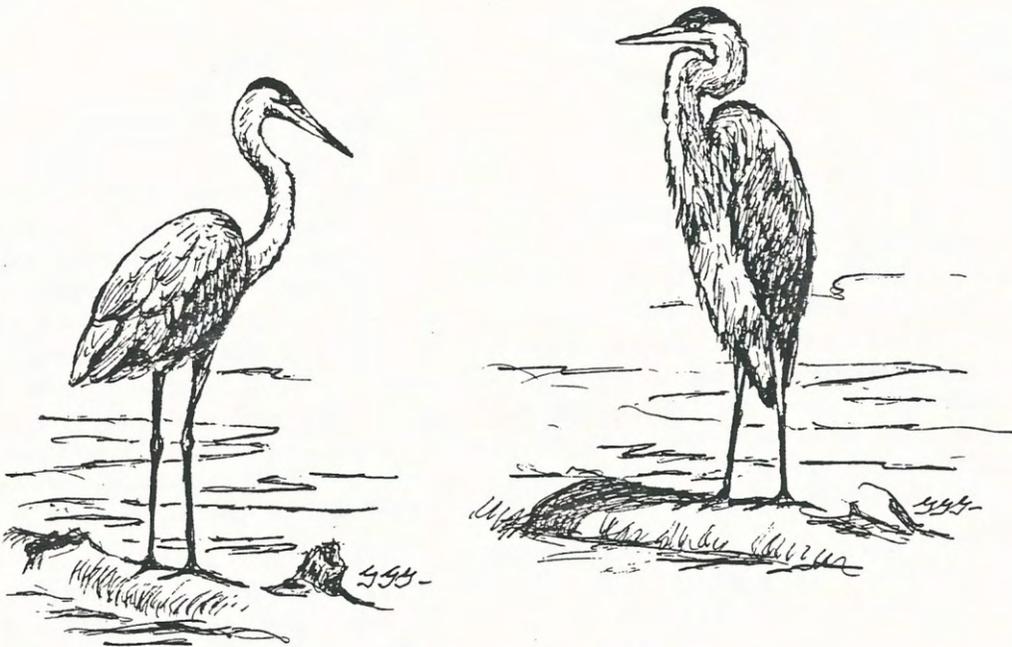
## THE GREAT BLUE HERON

The great blue heron has been confirmed as nesting at the Leslie Street Spit recently. An adult with a large young in a nest was observed on Aug. 11, 2002.

Up to now, the only nestings reported in our region have been in colonies, especially the heronries on the Markham/Pickering line, and in the Bolton area. A comparatively new heronry has been started in Vaughan. Still another new location in Halton may be out of our region.

Diana Banville

References: Toronto Region Records



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We tend to forget that nature conservation began as a scientific exploration in the 1950s, and that the whole edifice of wildlife protection remains on a scientific footing.

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

## GETTING STARTED ON BRYOPHYTES (MOSSES)

There is no question that bryophytes form a substantial part of many Canadian ecosystems, and, in some cases such as bogs, they are the main component. Their small size and the difficulties of identification deter most botanists from attempting to become familiar with them. This is compounded by the fact that almost none of them has a common name. Many dedicated naturalists have a tendency to swoon when they see "Latin". Part of the problem is the difficulty of pronunciation. Take my advice -- say it syllable by syllable, separate prefixes and suffixes, and don't try to put the emphasis on the second syllable according to North American protocol -- you may choke yourself! It really does not matter if someone says it differently from you! Polytrichum is a good example. Poly is a prefix meaning many, trichum means needles -- separate them.

Identifying bryophytes (and lichens, too) requires the same sort of mindset as doing crossword puzzles. You have to look for clues and fit them together. The thallose liverworts, such as *Marchantia polymorpha* L. and *Concocephalum conicum* (L.) Lindb., are not difficult to recognize. Lichens may be thallose, but their colour is never pure chlorophyll green and their texture is quite different. A little experience soon enables one to separate the leafy liverworts from the mosses. Liverworts have large cells and they are bilaterally symmetric, so something small, flat and relatively translucent will be a liverwort. One exception (there is always at least one) is the dark patches of *Frullania* on tree trunks in moist areas which are flat but definitely not translucent. Beyond that, a microscope is really necessary, but it does not have to be an expensive one (or new). You can get by with x40 and x100, although x250 or even higher can be useful. For lower magnification a good x10 lens, a good light and a white surface would probably serve, although a dissecting (incident light) microscope is better.

Get in the habit of systematically noting colour, leaf shape, leaf margin, presence of a midrib (liverworts never have them), whether or not the midrib has lamellae on it, the size and shape of the cells, the presence of underleaves (liverworts only), fuzzy structures on stems (paraphyllia or pseudoparaphyllia) in mosses, the type of branching, etc. Habitat and substrate are also very important.

I regret to have to say this, but your best hope for identifying liverworts in Ontario is to buy "An Enthusiasts Guide to the Liverworts and Hornworts of Ontario" by Linda Ley and Joan Crowe. Available from: The Claude Garton Herbarium, Lakehead University, 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, ON P7E 5E1. The price is \$15.00 including postage. ▷

... There is no such thing as nature ... There is just the earth and us, the namers, standing upon it, naming those places without us, nature.

from "Wickerby: an urban pastoral" by Charles Siebert, Crown Publ., Inc.  
New York, 1998

## MOSSES (cont'd)

While we would be the first to admit that the printing leaves something to be desired, and there are some problems with numbering families since the printer didn't give us a chance to proofread it, nevertheless, it was created originally for beginners and it does cover all known Ontario liverworts. Also, a very useful supplement is the "Liverworts of Britain and Ireland" by A.J.E. Smith, Cambridge University Press, 1990. Rudolf Schuster's definitive work on the Hepaticae and Anthocerotae of North America may be found in a few universities, or on the bookshelves of a few lucky people like me who managed to get hold of all six volumes! For mosses: Howard Crum, 1983, "The Mosses of the Great Lakes Forest" from the University of Michigan Herbarium, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109. It was still available recently at about \$18.00 US. His keys are difficult to use, but his descriptions are very thorough. Better keys and illustrations are to be found in Robert Ireland's "Moss Flora of the Maritimes", National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa. This was out of print but there has been talk of a reprint. You could e-mail Dr. Ireland at <EIRELAND@erols.com> to enquire about this. If you cannot locate a copy, try to, at least, acquire a photocopy of the keys. The two volume set "Mosses of Eastern North America" by Howard Crum and Lewis Anderson, Columbia University Press, 1981, will be found in most university libraries, and is a very useful reference.

from an article by Joan M. Crowe in THE FIELD BOTANISTS OF ONTARIO NEWSLETTER  
Vol.14(1), Spring 2001

Comment: Anyone interested should obtain a copy of A GRAPHIC GUIDE TO  
MOSSES by Robert Muma, published by the TFN in 1985, and  
available for \$4 from the TFN office Friday mornings.

□

As I stopped  
to sketch the  
trout-lilies,  
the toads  
stopped trilling.  
I forgot about  
the toads till  
they started  
trilling again.  
They had  
forgotten  
about me.

DB



### THE MYSTERY "INFECTION"

It was a nice day in September. After enduring a July and August that no human should have to endure, I thought I'd venture a trip to the Islands -- Toronto Islands that is, just for the day, on my new bicycle. As it turned out, it was quite an adventure, but of an unexpected type.

I usually do the walk from Hanlan's Point to Centre Island, snooping through the dunes and woods; however, with the bike, I wouldn't go off path too much, but I could go a lot further into places I hadn't seen for a long time.

One little side trip I took was to Gibraltar Point for a bit of lunch. It's really a mess now, shored up in a haphazard way to stop the erosion. I wandered around a bit but soon was on my way. But something happened there that slipped my mind for a while. Something that caused me quite a concern ... quite a concern indeed!

By the time I had reached Algonquin Island and Ward's, I felt an itching on the back of my leg, about ankle height. "Damn mosquitoes, they get me every time," I thought.

The next day at work, I became very irritated by my itchy ankle. I pulled down my sock to have a look. Oh! Wow! The back of my leg and my ankle were covered with small red blotches. I could also feel two small bumps where the itching was emanating from -- bumps unlike any mosquito bite I ever had. "What the heck is this?", I said to myself.

The next day, things got worse. The blotches were getting bigger; the bumps were getting redder. I have a friend who has a mini apothecary cupboard. I could get some anti-itch cream there and get to my doctor the next morning. When I arrived at my friend's, I said "Have a look at this." As I pulled up my pant leg, there was a concerned gasp. "Have a look at this," my friend directed at another person in the house. "What's it look like to you?" "That really looks like a spider bite to me," was the reply. "I've been bitten by a spider and it looked an awful lot like your leg."

What next? I smeared on some cortisone cream and after a consoling cup of tea was off. I watch PBS. I've seen shows on stings and venomous spiders and ticks. At this point I was confused. Spider maybe, but maybe a tick (another one of our favourite arachnids). Two of the participants in meetings I go to in the U.S. had just recovered from Lyme disease treatment. (TWO! ... one from Albany, the other from Annapolis) but the Lyme disease "blotch" is quite distinctive and easily recognizable. This wasn't one of those (I hoped).

Next day, the doctor took one look at my leg and lurched for his prescription pad. "We have to take down that infection; it's quite bad you know." I pointed out the bumps but he wasn't really interested. "They'll go away," he said. I have little faith in doctors. I have less faith now. He prescribed an antibiotic, ApoCephalex, directed at the target and a cortisone cream for the itching -- a lot stronger than my friend's off-the-shelf remedy. ▷

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MYSTERY INFECTION (cont'd)

What happened next was that all the dots amalgamated into one big red blotch; the blotch got bigger; and the bumps turned a deep purple and more itchy. Everyone who saw my affliction was taken aback. "Go see a dermatologist for gosh darn sake." "I may have to, but I'll give the medication a bit more time." I had to cancel a trip to the States my company was sending me on.

As time went on, no progress. I decided to do research on the Internet. Search for ... hmmm ... "red blotches itchy skin", maybe. About this time I realized that the redness and purple were coincident with the application of the cortisone cream. I stopped applying it immediately. "Got to see what's under the bumps," I thought. They were a constant and the centre of all this. The place where everyone was saying "spider bite".

With a crude magnifier, a sterile blunt instrument and some frustration, a friend managed to get two little things out of my leg. There was a curious silence. They didn't look exotic, like spider fangs or tick mouth parts. "They look like ... seeds maybe, or polished crystals," I said. They were the size of a half-grown flea and completely featureless. "Got to figure out what these are. The itching is really subsiding."

The next day I remembered that the ROM has a service for identifying things. What resulted was an e-mail dialogue with Julia Matthews (librarian), Doug Currie (entomologist), and Jenny Bull (Botany Technician, Vascular Plant Herbarium -- and TFN member). While Doug Currie doubted an insect, even a spider could have caused the problem, Jenny Bull suggested the following:

"He could have brushed against some *Cenchrus longispinus* (long-spined sandbur) and the tip of the spines may have broken off in his skin. I haven't seen it at Gibraltar Point but I do know it grows nearby in the "Wildlife Area" behind the filtration plant -- it's small (ankle-height) and pretty vicious because the spines are so hard. Grasses of Ontario p.496: 'Burs hardened, subglobular involucre of sharp barbed spines (sterile branches) fused together ..... irritatingly sharply barbed spines ..... ... now common in sandy areas around popular beaches..."

The plant theory was interesting. Now it was time to have a look at this sandbur thing, so off to the Net again. Several pictures were there along with interesting descriptions.

I decided that Jenny was right. What was taken out of my leg was half the barb, split off, with the split along the length of the spine (the size of a small flea).

I never found out what the strange infection was, but I sure found out that you never rub a cortisone/steroid cream on infected skin. The antibiotics did stabilize the infection, but if they had not been effective, I could have suffered a far more serious skin lesion and massive and dangerous spreading of the infection.

Ken Cook

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## IN THE NEWS

### CHESTNUT RESCUE IS UNDERWAY

The Canadian Chestnut Council and the Norfolk Chestnut Working Group are working in what was once prime chestnut country in the sand plains of Haldimand-Norfolk area running west from Port Dover. American chestnuts once made up a quarter of the forest that stretched from Michigan to Maine and south to Georgia. They were tall and straight, easily achieving diameters of more than a metre in Ontario. The fungus arrived in New York City from Asia in 1904. By the early 1920s it had reached southern Ontario. By 1950, the tree was all but wiped out. The fungus causes cankers on the trunk that prevent the soil's moisture and nutrients from rising up the trunk to nourish the tree. After the cankers girdle the tree, it dies. Stumps will produce sprouts, but they, too, get infected and die, until the roots simply give up.

Several methods are being tried to combat the fungus. The most promising is to crossbreed the American with the Chinese chestnut, which is highly resistant to the fungus. By continuing to crossbreed through seven generations researchers expect to produce an almost pure American chestnut that retains the fungus-resistant gene from the Chinese chestnut. Since a chestnut has to grow five to seven years before it can be crossed, the process will take 35 to 49 years.

from an article by Cameron Smith in the TORONTO STAR, Jan. 25, 2003

### DON'T GIVE UP ON BUTTERNUTS!

A walk through most deciduous woodlands will tell the tale: the butternut is threatened by the all-pervasive butternut canker. The tree is almost extinct in its Eastern American range. But stands of healthy butternut still exist amidst vast areas of largely infected trees. These healthy trees may hold the key to the species' survival.

Geneticist Henry Kock at Guelph U related that a major contributing factor in the near extinction of the American chestnut was the attitude of loggers and woodlot owners that "they're going to die, so cut them down anyway without leaving them to waste." With this seemingly logical attitude, the American chestnut vanished from the eastern forests. Similarly, many possibly resistant white elms have been cut down.

from an article in HART'S-TONGUE HERALD, Owen Sound Field Naturalists Newsletter, Winter 2002-03

### THIS MONTH'S COVER

BLACK WALNUT - fruiting branchlet with inset of bark

- pen & ink site drawing by Mary Anne Miller in  
Mount Pleasant Cemetery



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IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

#### RING OF DOOM FOR COCKNEY SPARROW

An intriguing new theory has emerged to explain the recent massive decline in the British sparrow population. Cats, garden chemicals, and loft insulation have all been blamed in the past. Now there are millions of new culprits: mobile phones. The disappearance of the species from large cities correlates with the introduction of phone masts. Studies have warned about the effects of these radiations on reproduction. As ever, more research is needed, but the dismally undeniable fact is that sparrow numbers are in freefall. London alone has lost 75% of its sparrow population since 1994, and overall numbers have nearly halved in the last 30 years.

from an article in the GUARDIAN WEEKLY, January 16-22, 2003

#### WHAT'S UP WITH TURKEYS

In Morin County, California, a flock of wild turkeys is wearing out its welcome. The turkey flock has grown at a frightening pace, scampering over sensitive watershed creating a nuisance by defecating on automobiles and competing for food and space with native birds who were there long before the turkeys. The local water authority is considering trapping them or sending out armed rangers.

from an article by Michael Kesterton, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, November 29, 2002

#### ONE SOLUTION TO KEEP BIRDS FROM HITTING WINDOWS

If you're all too familiar with the sickening thud of a bird hitting your window, you might be interested in this innovation from FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program). You may recall FLAP as the group trying to educate the public and businesses about the hazards of birds striking windows. For years it's been urging businesses to turn off lights in office towers at night -- migratory birds are attracted to them with fatal results.

FLAP is now encouraging homeowners to try a product called Scotchcal, from the 3M company. Scotchcal is a film that adheres to the outside of windows and is best known for its use commercially to put advertising murals on the sides of TTC vehicles.

FLAP has discovered that when Scotchcal is applied to the exterior of a home's window, the thousands of small perforations allow ample light to pass through the window, while substantially reducing the window's exterior reflectivity and transparency -- the two characteristics which cause birds to collide with windows. It gives the added bonus of privacy: residents inside can still see out, but people can't see in.

At approximately \$3 per square foot, this product is not cheap. But often, covering just one problem window is enough to halt the bird strikes. For more information on obtaining this product, visit:

▷ [www.flap.org/film.htm](http://www.flap.org/film.htm) or call 416-366-3527.

▷ from an article by Rick Orchard, in THE TORONTO STAR, September 5, 2002

ECCENTRIC MAYOR WAS HONEST AND RICH

Thomas Foster, mayor of Toronto in the mid 1920s, is responsible for a whole range of philanthropic activities, including: planting trees to beautify our city; bankrolling an annual picnic for Toronto school-children; comforting patients in several hospitals; financing cancer research and feeding noisy ducks along the waterfront.

Also, hiring top-flight architects and importing the finest Italian marble for the ornate floors, stately columns, three crypts and a pulpit, he erected in 1935 a 20-metre high, \$250,000 Byzantine tomb overlooking the rolling Ontario countryside 70 kilometres northeast of Toronto. [just south of our first Nature Reserve] Valued at more than \$3 million today, it's still quite a sight.

For information on visits and tours, check out [www.uxbridge.com/people/tfoster.html](http://www.uxbridge.com/people/tfoster.html) or call Bev Northeast at 905-640-3966.

from an article by George Gamester, in THE TORONTO STAR, January 19, 2003

FEATHERED RAPTORS DOING BETTER THAN THE CITY'S TALLER VARIETY

Bird-watchers doing an annual Christmas census found that after years of decline linked to the use of now-banned pesticides, such as DDT, hawks falcons and bald and golden eagles are successfully reproducing around Ontario and happily using cities as their hunting grounds. The predator birds that would have migrated south in the past are staying through the winter. More sources of prey are available because bird populations are growing as more people feed them.

Cooper's hawks and sharp-shinned hawks have taken to patrolling neighbourhoods that have back-yard bird feeders, where doves and other small birds they feed on will congregate. In this leafless season, peregrine and merlin falcons and American kestrels can easily be seen against snowy backgrounds as they swoop at small birds in parks and yards. Some red-tailed hawks, which generally seek their prey around farm fields and highways, have also become adept at catching pigeons downtown.

from an article by Wallace Inmen, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, January 11, 2003

DECISION ON PESTICIDE USE TO BE MADE IN THE SPRING

Health Canada will decide this spring whether to ban a popular and controversial pesticide ingredient used on lawns, turfs and golf courses that's been linked to cancer and other diseases by health activist groups and environmentalists. Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency has almost finished a review of the use of 2,4-D, the most widely used herbicide in the world and one that's still commonly used in Canada and the U.S.

Health Canada is currently in the process of phasing out two other lawn and turf pesticide components, diazinon and chlorpyrifos, because the chemicals failed to meet the agency's new safety requirements for children's exposure. Chlorpyrifos has been almost completely removed, while diazinon should be out by 2004.

from a Canadian Press article in THE TORONTO STAR, December 30, 2003

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

#### ABSENCE OF GARDEN CHIRPERS TROUBLING THIS WINTER

Every year I receive letters or calls from folks wanting to know why there are no birds to be seen in their yard or neighbourhood. This season is a bit different. I have never received so many queries about missing birds, and I think much of it is fuelled by fears that West Nile virus is taking a toll.

Originally the experts believed only Corvids (crows, ravens, jays, magpies) died from West Nile. Other birds contracted the disease, but survived. We now know that not only do many bird species contract West Nile, but many individuals of various non-Corvid species die from the disease.

Last October it was widely reported that there was a decline in black-capped chickadees around Chicago. Crows are said to have all but vanished from the Washington, D.C. area. On the other hand, on Jan. 4, the 29th annual Christmas bird count for Algonquin Park, scored the highest ever number of black-capped chickadees (2,108) and even tabulated the highest tally yet for a Corvid -- 561 blue jays.

Salmonellosis, trichomoniasis, aspergillosis and avian pox are more familiar diseases known to affect and kill familiar garden birds. House finches have been particularly bothered by eye infections. It is prudent to regularly disinfect feeders with one part liquid bleach to nine parts lukewarm water, and keep food dry, clean and fresh. The West Nile virus seems to hit bird populations in a patchwork fashion. We still know too little about the virus's effect on birds to pinpoint it as the major factor explaining the local reports of missing garden birds.

from an article by Barry Kent MacKay, in THE TORONTO STAR, January 12, 2003

#### DEER HITS MAN'S CAR ON CUMMER AVENUE

A man driving west along Cumber Avenue toward Bayview Avenue couldn't believe his eyes when he saw a large deer at around 2:30 a.m. The deer plowed into the front right side of his car, fell to the ground, then got up and took off.

The driver wasn't hurt but the impact cracked in the windshield, smashed the front fender and jammed the door shut.

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources said although it may seem unbelievable, it's not uncommon to find deer roaming city streets, especially near areas along Bayview Avenue, where there's green space and water.

Deer populations are thriving. A few have been spotted occasionally along major highways such as the 401 and 404. If you've got some forest cover or water and cover, you're going to find deer. They're part of the southern Ontario landscape.

from an article by Stavroula Meditskos, in the NORTH YORK MIRROR, January 12, 2003

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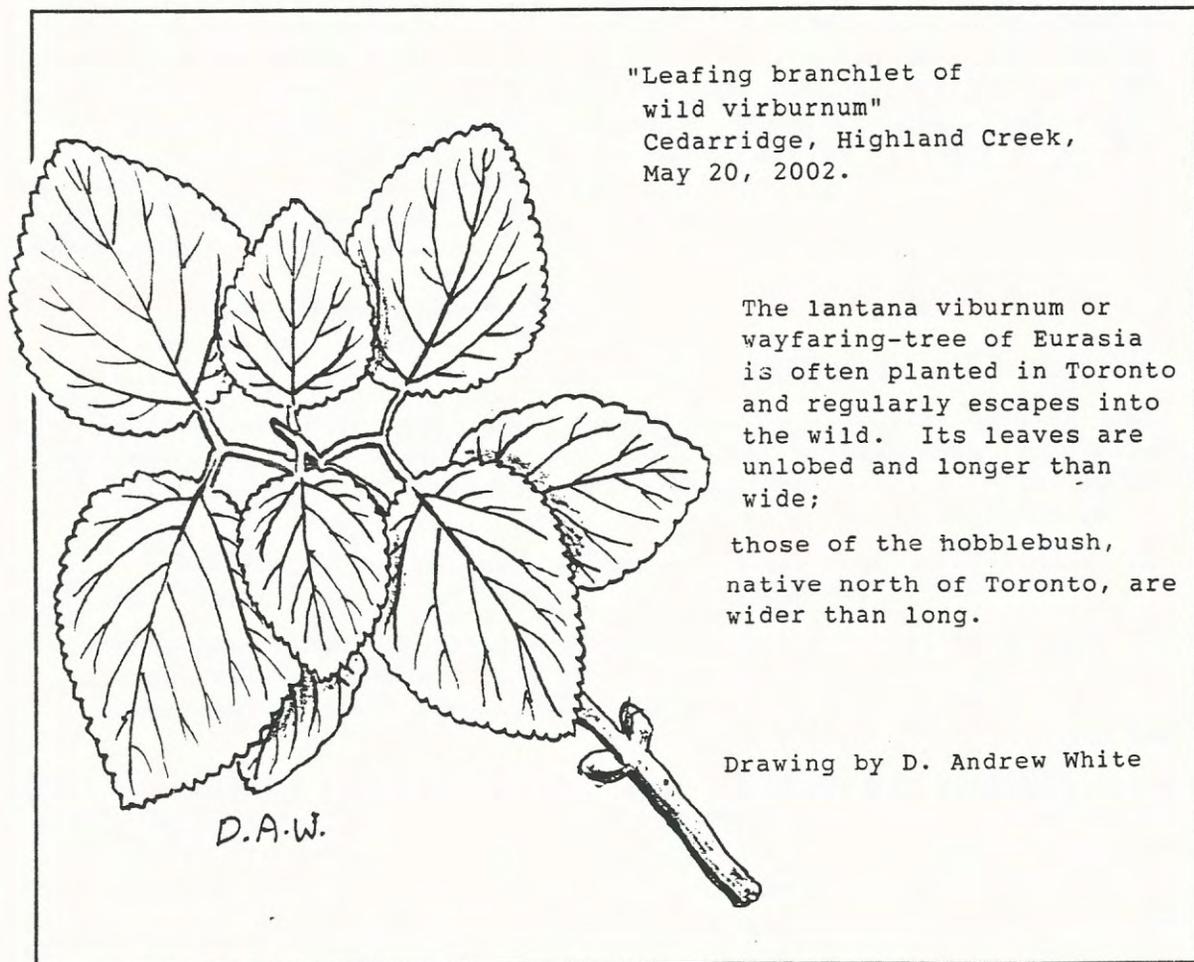
## THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

March 2002, Toronto

The mildest winter in Toronto's history this may have been, but it did not end particularly early. March brought unsettled weather and occasional snow into the final week of the month. There were no freakish heatwaves as in 1998 or 2000. Changeable temperatures ranged from the upper teens early in the month to the  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$  range as late as March 25th. The waters of the Great Lakes, having remained open all during this mild winter, were able to generate lake effect snow in snow belt areas on March 21st to 23rd. Finally, the Easter weekend, which closed the month, was mostly pleasant.

The result of all this was a month averaging well within the range of recent normals, as the record warm pattern showed distinct signs of breaking down.

Gavin Miller



## COMING EVENTS

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

- Sat. March 1 from 9 am (all day) with Ron Scovell to see waterfowl from Toronto to Burlington. Meet in the parking lot at Humber Bay East to car pool. Bring a lunch and dress warmly.

Ian Wheal Heritage walks

- Sunday, March 30 at 1:30 pm. to Toronto Islands. Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. Ferry tickets needed.
- Saturday, March 8 at 1:30 pm to visit west headwaters of Humber River tributaries. Meet at the southeast corner of Eglinton Ave. West and the East Mall.

High Park afternoon walking tours

- Sunday March 9 - Myths and legends of High Park
  - Sunday March 23 - Lost waterways in High Park and vicinity
- Walks begin at 1:15 pm just south of the Grenadier Restaurant in the park. \$2 donation expected. Call 416-392-1748 or 416-392-6916 for more details.

Rouge Valley Conservation Centre

- Sunday, March 9 - Nature photography
- Meet at Pearse House on the east side of Meadowvale Rd., the first stop north of Sheppard Ave. East. Call 416-282-8265 for more details.

Toronto Entomologists' Association

- Annual student symposium - Sat. March 22 at 1 pm at the Ramsay Wright Zoological Building, Room 432 (southwest corner of St. George St. and Harbord St.). For more information call 905-727-6993.

The Market Gallery - A record preserved: Toronto's 20th century architecture (documents the changing landscape of Toronto from 1907 to 1989) beginning March 1 through to June 22. Free. For more information call 416-392-7604.

North Toronto Green Community

- Caring for the Earth in your own backyard, a talk by Lorraine Johnson - March 31 at 7 pm at the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre, 200 Eglinton Ave. West. Free. Call 416-781-7663 for details.

Gem & Mineral Show - March 15 and 16 at Armour Heights Community Centre, 2140 Avenue Rd. (at Wilson). Call 416-630-4914 for more details.  
Sat. 10 am to 6 pm; Sun. 11 am to 5 pm.

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... the only area of Toronto that has been set aside strictly for pedestrians is the underground city.

from "Urban Issues" by Christopher Hume in the TORONTO STAR, Oct. 29, 2002

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