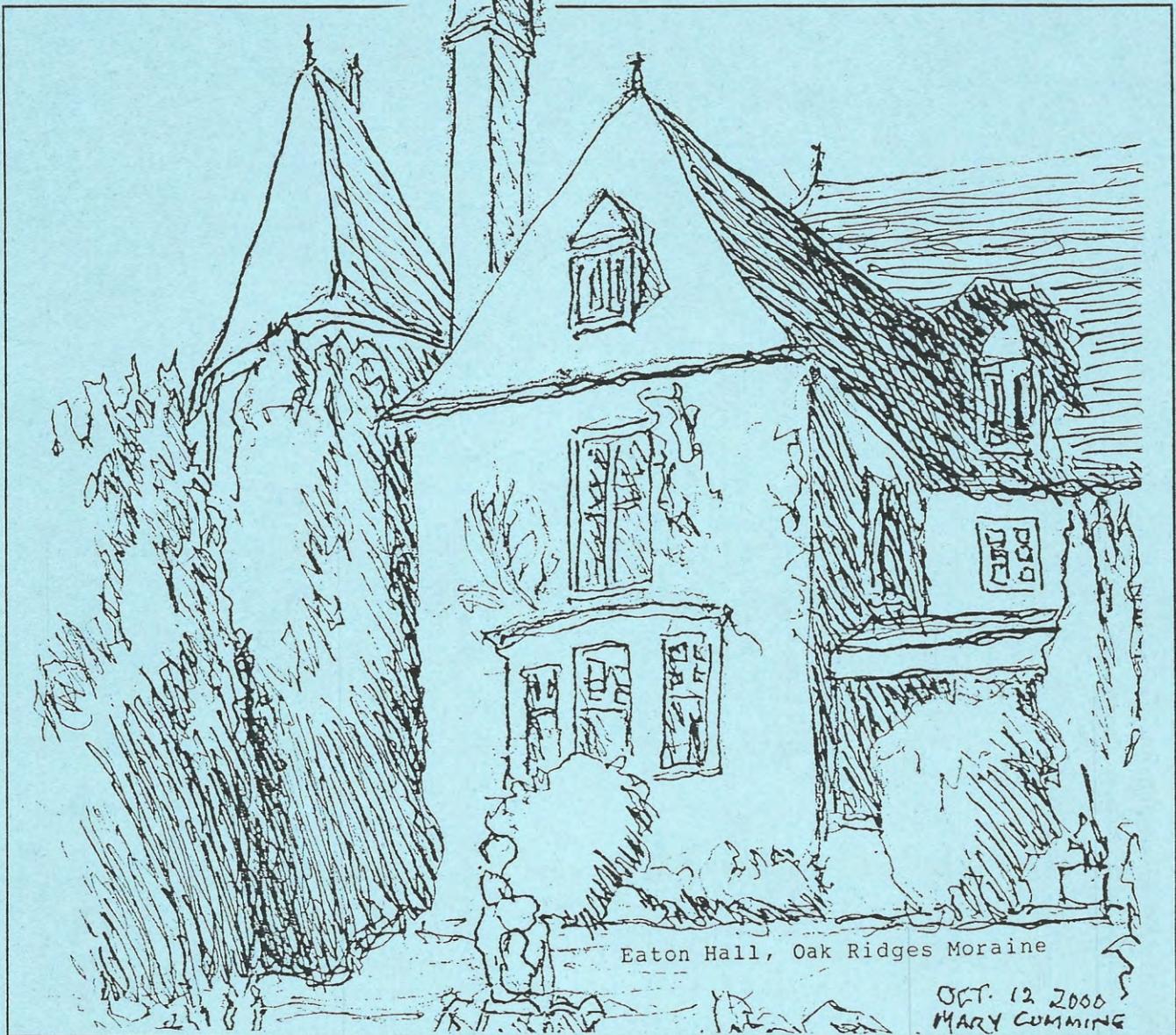


TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 519

November 2003



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TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, November 2, 2003 - POLAR BEAR PROVINCIAL PARK

at 2:30 pm

at Emmanuel College

75 Queen's Park Cres. East

VISITORS WELCOME!

an illustrated talk by Jean Iron, president of the Ontario Field Ornithologists and editor of its newsletter.

We will be shown pictures and learn about geese, other birds, wildflowers and mammals the speaker saw and experienced while banding geese with the Ministry of Natural Resources on the Ontario coast of Hudson Bay.

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

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, Dec. 7, 2003

NEXT NEWSLETTER: December/January (to be mailed in mid November)

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

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

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

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

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

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

Editor: Helen Juhola

Poetry, Art and Nature Observations: Diana Banville

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

Printer: DM Printing

Mailer: Perkins Mailing Services

TFN OUTINGS

REMEMBER: Children and visitors are welcome on all outings but please, **NO PETS!**
 To get to outings on time, check TTC routes and schedules by calling 416-393-4636.
 Check the weather by calling 416-661-0123 so you will know what to wear on outings
 which go rain or shine.

- Saturday GALLERY HOPPING - nature arts
 Nov. 1 Leader: Mary Cumming
 11 am Meet at the Cumberland exit of the Bay/Bloor subway station.
 Bring anything you wish to show the group when we go to lunch. We will be
 visiting a number of art galleries in the Yorkville area. Lunch will be in
 a mall.
- November 2 TFN MEETING. [See page 2 for details.]
- Thursday HIGH PARK - nature walk
 Nov. 6 Leader: Pat Jones
 1:30 pm Meet at the park entrance on Bloor St. West opposite High Park
 Ave. Bring binoculars.
- Saturday HIGH PARK - trees
 Nov. 8 Leader: Bohdan Kowalyk
 10 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Bloor St. West
 opposite High Park Ave. Bring binoculars and note books. Morning only.
- Wednesday COL. DANFORTH PARK - nature walk
 Nov. 12 Leader: Karin Fawthrop
 10 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Kingston Rd.
 at Col. Danforth Trail.
 Morning only. Bring binoculars and a snack.
- Sunday RUSSELL CREEK - urban ecology
 Nov. 16 Leaders: Peter Hare & Ian Wheal
 2 pm Meet at the southeast corner of Front St. West and Simcoe St.
 This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community.
- Tuesday WARDS ISLAND - birds(especially ducks)
 Nov. 18 Leader: Ann Gray
 10 am Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. in time to catch
 the 10 am ferry. Bring lunch, binoculars, and dress warmly.
- Saturday WARDEN WOODS - nature walk
 Nov. 22 Leader: Gail Gregory
 10 am Meet at the Warden subway exit (southeast corner of Warden Ave.
 and St. Clair Ave. East). Bring binoculars. Morning only.

\$ ferry
 tickets



NOVEMBER OUTINGS (cont'd)

Wednesday PINE HILLS CEMETERY - trees
Nov. 26 Leader: Jack Radecki
10 am Meet at the cemetery entrance on Kennedy Rd. (north of St.
Clair Ave. East)[walk south from Kennedy subway station].
Bring binoculars. Morning only.

□



Drawing by Diana Banville, 2003
based on earlier field-sketch

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The September 27th bus outing to the nature reserves was a success. The 25 members who attended the outing must at first have doubted if they would get to walk about the Jim Baillie and Emily Hamilton Nature Reserves due to the heavy rainfall in the morning. However, the rain stopped by the time we went into groups for the afternoon walks. With a turnout like this, we will try to schedule spring and fall outings to the nature reserves each year.

For TFN members to enjoy the Jim Baillie nature reserve, there is maintenance work that must be done several times each year. Typical maintenance work includes clearing trails, replacing trail markers, and removing weeds and tree seedlings. Removing a particular weed (pale swallowwort a.k.a. dog-strangling vine) has become urgent. This weed must be eradicated or it will become established in the nature reserve as it has in parts of the Rouge Park. There are only several small patches and these can be completely removed if we act quickly. If you would like to join a work party at the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve before winter sets in, please call the TFN office and leave your name and telephone number. [Call 416-593-2656.]

It's been a tough year for Toronto with SARS, the power blackout and the resurgence of West Nile virus. It recently got worse with the arrival of the Asian long-horned beetle in the Greater Toronto Area. Infestations have been discovered in the Woodbridge area (Vaughan) east of the Humber River valley and also west of the junction of the West Humber and Humber Rivers. Maple trees are the preferred sites for the female beetles to lay their eggs. They also attack poplars, birches and willow trees. With no known natural predators here, clear-cutting infected trees and nearby healthy trees is the only known way to control this serious pest. The felled trees are chipped and/or burned as a further precaution. If this serious pest is not destroyed in these sites now, there could be enormous ecological, economic and aesthetic effects for the Greater Toronto Area and beyond. [See also pages 18,19.]

Robin Powell

□

A PEST TO US IS RARE WHERE IT COMES FROM

Frogbit is a plant of chalk and limestone districts and has never been very common in Britain. Now it seems to be in serious decline, mainly as a result of pond drainage and water pollution.

The story is quite different on the other side of the Atlantic, where introduced frogbit is running riot in Canada's wetlands and is classified as an invasive and alien weed.

from "New Moon in April" by Phil Gates in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 21, No. 4, April 2003

AN EIGHTY-FOUR SQUARE METRE PARADISE

Our city back yard is very small. With so little ground we have had to make the most of the space available. We have carefully chosen the trees we have planted over the years -- cedars for dense cover and fruit-bearing tree species that ripen consecutively to provide berries from July through to the winter. Today (July 6) the serviceberries are ripe, the mulberries are green -- turning red, soon to be black like big blackberries, the mountain ash berries are tiny and green and we will not see red berries until late August. The Boston ivy which covers the house will have a grand crop of fruit in October.

We have provided nest boxes and feeders to host as many summer birds as possible. There is a crested flycatcher box on a tall pole at the back (north) end of the yard, a house wren box on the west fence, a hummingbird feeder on the east fence and a distelfink feeder on the side of the house by the kitchen window. In the past we have provided water but because of West Nile disease we have covered our little pond.

The flower beds are a combination of standard garden flowers such as roses, tulips, daffodils, peonies, twelfth-of-July lilies and iris and such intruders as Jerusalem artichoke, wild carrot and creeping bellflower. The result is chaotic but provides a mass of blooms from April until October and lots of seeds for the goldfinches when the "weeds" have gone to seed.

One advantage of a small yard is that the wild creatures you see are never far away. The longest sighting distance from the house to the end of the yard is fifty feet (17 metres). Binoculars are only necessary for the smallest of details such as small butterflies, obscure field marks on birds or identifying the type of food nesters are carrying to their young. Another advantage is that the birds and mammals get used to seeing us up close and become very tame. The chipmunk nearly runs over our feet when heading for his home under the deck. The squirrels will take peanuts from your hand or, if you are not watching, sneak into the house looking for the "mother lode" -- the pail from which the peanuts came. The crested flycatchers look down with apparent amusement as our grandson races around shouting under their nest box.

This morning I am sitting on the back deck with my notebook and a cup of coffee. A chipmunk is in the serviceberry just now helping himself to the berries that ripened overnight. I hope he leaves a few berries for the robins and orioles but judging by the frequency of his trips from the bush to his storage area, I doubt it. The cardinals are going in and out of the dense barberry in the yard next door. I think this is their second nesting attempt having lost the first to a predator. The crested flycatchers are making regular trips to the box with food for the chicks. The trips have been going since July 3, presumably the day the eggs hatched. In their food gathering trips the parents are careful to not leave the nest unguarded. While one bird is away the other is standing guard on the roof of the box. On the last trip the returning bird touched beaks with its mate, apparently a signal for the changing of the guard, then entered the box to deliver the food and the mate flew off to look for

A PARADISE (cont'd)

more. This morning a pair of grackles watched the nest from a nearby tree for a few minutes and then gave up and flew off.

Our new house wren box which our friend Donald Burton knocked together from scrap lumber in his basement is unoccupied so far. I know the wrens are summer residents in a ravine not far from here but I guess they just have not yet discovered our superior accommodation.

The hummingbirds visited our feeder during May while they were passing through on migration. We have not seen them since and must conclude that we live too far downtown to attract nesting hummingbirds.

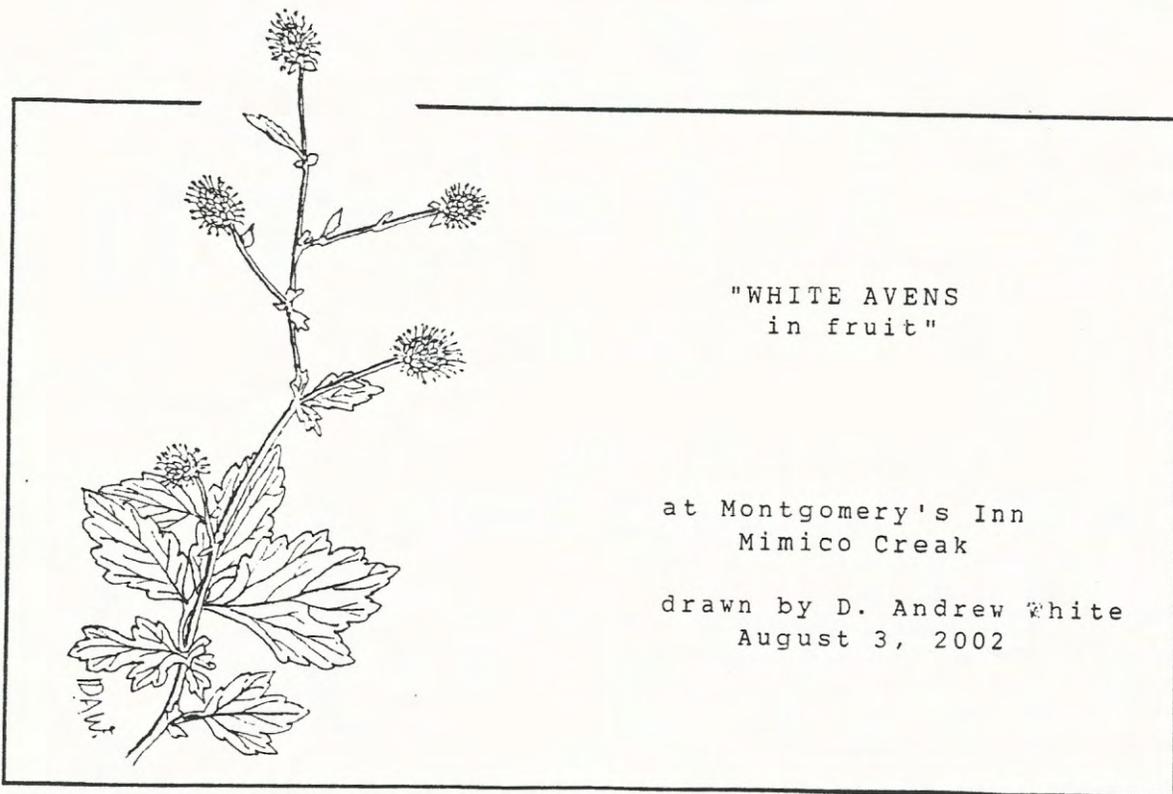
With the heavy summer vegetation we hear birds that we do not often see -- flickers, red-breasted nuthatches, red-eyed vireos, indigo buntings, goldfinches and house sparrows.

Missing from our usual roster of birds this summer are crows, blue jays, and chickadees, no doubt the victims of West Nile disease.

Our back yard is not one that would appeal to the fastidious gardener. The only time it appears tidy is after a January snowstorm. On the other hand it provides us with endless amusement and the opportunity to study wildlife from the comfort of our garden chairs.

George Fairfield

□



THE FOX FAMILY

Most people think of crows as pesky noisy birds. They have a bad reputation for robbing nests and scavenging. In truth crows are the police of the bird world. They warn smaller birds of dangerous predators with a loud and persistent "caw". Birdwatchers soon learn the value of listening to crow calls. These often lead you to owls, hawks or other predators. You will soon learn to identify a "caw" as the one used to harass predators. I heard such a noise while walking in Mount Pleasant Cemetery behind my home. Of course, I had to see what the commotion was all about, so I started walking towards the crow.

As I approached the "cawing" I spotted a red fox running between the tombstones. Foxes are not common in the city so I always enjoy seeing them. They are such beautiful creatures with their bushy tails and coloration. Sometimes they will lead you to a den, or one of their sunning spots, where you can see them. I followed the animal from a distance, watching it with binoculars. It went to a hillside where there were more shrubs for better concealment. I noticed that at the bottom of the hill was a pile of sand where it had been digging. I was hoping it would make a den and raise a family, but that never came to pass.

The fox had a great sunning spot on top of a crypt built into the side of the hill. You could not see him from below and to spot him from the top you had to go off the beaten path. I was anxious to share my joy of finding this animal so went home to get my spouse. We returned and looked over the top of the hill where the fox was still enjoying the warm sun. We then walked around to the bottom of the hill where there was a road about 40 yards from the hill. I thought I would remember the exact location by lining up the sand pile with a tombstone and remember the name of the deceased. This way, I could describe to others exactly where the den was. We walked down the road and lined up a gravestone with the location of the animal. The name was quite easy to remember. The grave site belonged to the Fox family.

Roger Powley

□

URBAN JUNGLE

Trees grow better in cities than in the countryside. In a study of cottonwood saplings in New York City and the surrounding countryside it was found that the trees in the city were always twice as big. The effect is caused by traffic fumes creating the toxic gas ozone. In the cities, the ozone levels are kept in check as the gas is destroyed by other pollutants such as nitrogen oxides. But ozone also drifts into the countryside where nitrogen oxides are low. There, because the ozone lingers longer in the atmosphere, trees experience prolonged exposure to the gas.

from "In Brief" in THE NEW SCIENTIST, July 12, 3003

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Between, that is, a gas station with drive-in and a car-repair centre with drive-in (and you can't get them "harder" than that!): an incredible blaze of tall or (so-misnamed) common buttercups. Crowding each other out in something like three-by-three yards of "unsalvaged" ground. I have not seen such a triumphal gathering in years and why they chose to display their glory in such inhospitable surroundings, rather than in a meadow, is beyond me. Perhaps they thought this cluster of today's amenities needed brightening up. They certainly did. One of the mysteries of city life which make prowling the streets so interesting. There are survivors in such unlikely places.

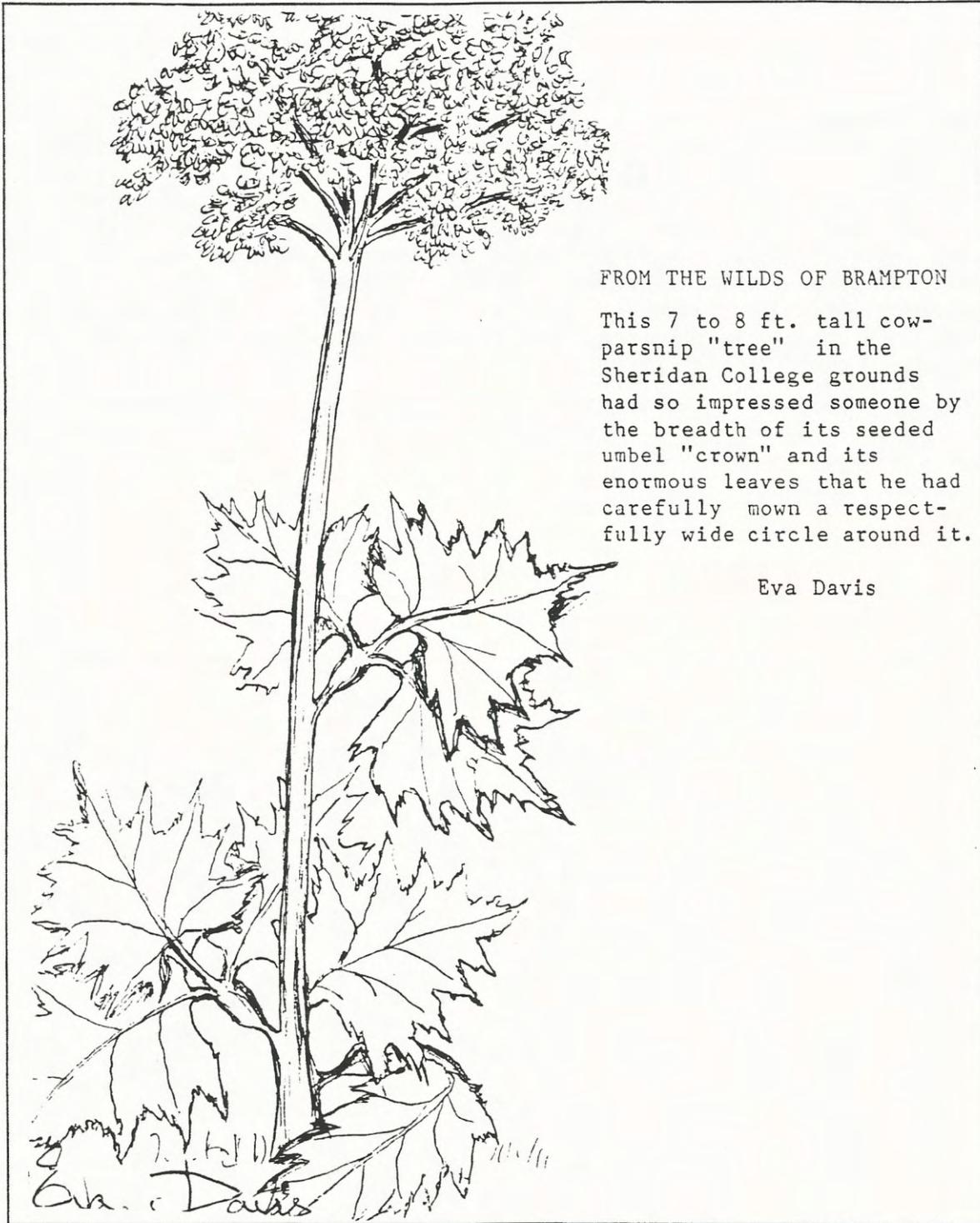
Of course, these particular survivors are doomed. They are, after all, just "there" and not earning anything. Next time I walk past, they will probably be under asphalt.

(Do we really need the 21st century?)

Eva Davis



drawing by Eva Davis



FROM THE WILDS OF BRAMPTON

This 7 to 8 ft. tall cowparsnip "tree" in the Sheridan College grounds had so impressed someone by the breadth of its seeded umbel "crown" and its enormous leaves that he had carefully mown a respectfully wide circle around it.

Eva Davis

Given that today's children are starved of a lack of direct contact with nature, will there be another generation of field naturalists?
from "Now the Magazine is 40" by R.K. Cox in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 21, NO. 4, April 2003

ON THE ROOSTING OF DOVES

We live in a bird roost. Or at least we are surrounded by trees that each evening become the overnight resting place of several hundred mourning doves. Our townhouse is part of a 30-year-old complex with numerous Austrian pines, including about a dozen that form a solid pine wall in the front of our unit and five more located in the green space behind us.

I've been aware of the roosting activity for a number of years, but I suspect most of the other residents have no idea what is going on. While the flight of doves can generate some noise, there is no mournful calling associated with the roost. Indeed, we rarely see or hear mourning doves on the property at other times of the day. The area seems to be reserved for sleepovers.

As dusk approaches, doves begin to congregate on the roofs of most of the buildings in the 140-unit complex. They arrive singly or in small groups from all directions. This gathering usually commences about 10 minutes before the birds begin to move into the trees. I've counted over 350 doves on the roofs at one time, but the shift to the trees can begin well before the last doves arrive. Some don't participate at all in the roof assemblies which makes it difficult to estimate the total number of doves in the roost and led me to try an alternate counting method.

The five pines behind our unit are visible from the bedrooms. For four evenings in December, I took up a position at the window and counted the birds entering a clump of three pines. Most of the townhouses beyond these trees can also be observed from this vantage point. I also counted birds that stopped on the roof, and any others that I saw passing overhead to a destination other than the three-tree clump. It should be noted that I could only see entries from three sides of the clump, so it's likely that some birds entered from the side that wasn't visible to me.

In the four nights of observation, between 72 and 93 birds definitely roosted in the clump. Another 125 to 165 were seen flying overhead for a total of 200 to 250 observed in just one section of the townhouse complex. The numbers that spent some time on the roof ranged from 30 to 40. Most of these, but not all, eventually entered the three-tree clump. Others came from the north side of the complex, perhaps even from the roof of the building containing our unit. Some appeared to arrive from a distance and went directly into the trees.

However, directly isn't exactly the right word for the doves' flight pattern. The mourning dove has been clocked at speeds approaching 90 kilometres an hour, and I suspect some of the ones I was trying to count were moving at close to that velocity. Sometimes they came in waves, careening off in all directions, swinging around two or three trees like orbiting astronauts and then disappearing into a fourth. Since these flights occurred in fading light, you can imagine why I wasn't able to count birds going to the two single pines at the same time as trying to keep track of the ones entering the clump. 

ON THE ROOSTING OF DOVES (cont'd)

Indeed, the doves on the roofs were almost indistinguishable from the shingles before most of them migrated to the trees. The entire process seemed designed for evasion.

While thirty or more birds might rest on the roof, there were never more than four or five that moved to the trees at the same time. As many as 16 moved over the space of one minute, and usually about half the total arrived during a 3-4 minute peak period. The whole roosting process took between 16 and 27 minutes in the four nights of observation.

The timing of the arrival in the trees appeared to be closely related to light levels. I watched on three successive evenings. The first and last were overcast, the second mainly clear. On the overcast evenings the first birds arrived at one minute after sunset, but on the mainly clear day, the light faded more slowly and the first bird didn't roost until 12 minutes after sunset.

One of the trees in the front of our unit branches over the sidewalk and is quite close to a streetlight. When we arrive or leave in the evening, this light allows us to view 30 to 40 doves sitting three or four to a branch close to the trunk in the upper limbs. You can walk under the tree without disturbing them, and stop for a brief glance, but even late in the evening a pause of more than a few seconds will usually be noticed and the entire group will flush.

Not surprisingly, the roost generates considerable guano, and when there's been a fresh snowfall, the accumulated amount from a single night can be estimated. Using the tree near the light, as well as the three-tree clump -- both of which had known minimum numbers of birds -- it was possible to estimate the number in the entire roost at over 500 birds.

I mentioned the evasive manner of the birds arriving at the roost. A little internet and library research suggested why. Mourning doves are the number one "game" bird in North America. Each year somewhere between 40 and 60 million are shot for the entertainment and culinary delight of residents of 38 American states, including all those in the south.

A tour of the websites of the "Conservation" departments of various states will provide you with recipes for mourning doves, and the recommendation that chefs should anticipate that each diner will require 6-10 birds for a meal. The 4-5 ounce doves each deliver about one ounce of meat. Some northern states including Michigan and Iowa have recently narrowly rejected intense campaigns to open their territories to hunters. A major effort is also underway at the national level in the U.S. to amend the Migratory Bird Act to allow the hunting season to open in August instead of September, even though mourning doves nest into October.

The Virginia "Conservation" Department offers tips on how to attract doves by planting sunflowers and corn and then mowing them just before hunting season opens. They point out that "baiting" is illegal, but this apparently is a way around that rule. In Missouri, the state "Conservation" department manages 48 areas specifically for dove shooting, including some designated for youth. The "conservation" part of this effort bans lead shot from three of the ranges. ▷

ON THE ROOSTING OF DOVES (cont'd)

Some websites estimate that the lifespan of mourning doves is about seven years, but quite different information is reported from states where hunting is permitted. Here the "harvest" is regularly justified with assurances that most doves live less than a year.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife webpage estimates a total population of 475 million birds, suggesting that about 10% are shot each year. They note: The mourning dove remains an extremely important game bird, especially since more doves are harvested than all other migratory game birds combined.

A 1991 survey indicated that the mourning dove provided about 9.5 million days of hunting recreation for 1.9 million people. One attraction is that you don't have to get your feet wet or sit in a blind. As one hunter observed: Older people, the middle-aged, kids, they all can participate. It's not a hard hunt, just fellowship.

You will recall that the mourning dove's close relative, the passenger pigeon, fell victim to similar human depredation, and that much of the kill took place at overnight roosts where birds could be easily clubbed out of the trees. Prior to extinction, it may have been the most common bird in North America, with populations estimated at five billion.

The Audubon Society notes that the emergence of the mourning dove as a game bird is relatively recent and is often motivated by the challenge of bringing down a fast-moving bird rather than the meager food value. They note that kestrels and other similar birds are so often mistaken for the doves that hunters refer to them as disposable animals, "rats with wings," "kamikaze pilots," "torpedoes" and "little gray rockets."

Perhaps this American pastime is one of the reasons mourning doves have been shifting northward for many years, along with climate change. McIlwraith reported in 1886 that the species did not overwinter in Ontario and breeding was even irregular in Hamilton. The breeding range had extended to Simcoe County by the 1930s and individuals were observed as far north as James Bay. By this time some were overwintering, but they weren't found in large numbers in Christmas counts before the 1960s.

The northern shift has the obvious advantage of avoiding hunters, but brings its own hazards for mourning doves such as frost damage to their feet. A University of Guelph study in the mid-1970s found a majority of doves examined in the January-March period showed frost damage, ranging from loss of a single claw to complete loss of several digits.

In the same period, another observer reported frozen feet on 14 of 17 doves captured near Orillia. He noted that nails were absent and toes yellow and enlarged.

The Austrian pines utilized in our neighbourhood likely provide some shelter from the winds of winter. Local spruce trees, on the other hand, are ignored. Some authors have argued that the benefits of roosting activity extend beyond protection from predators and the elements.

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ON THE ROOSTING OF DOVES (cont'd)

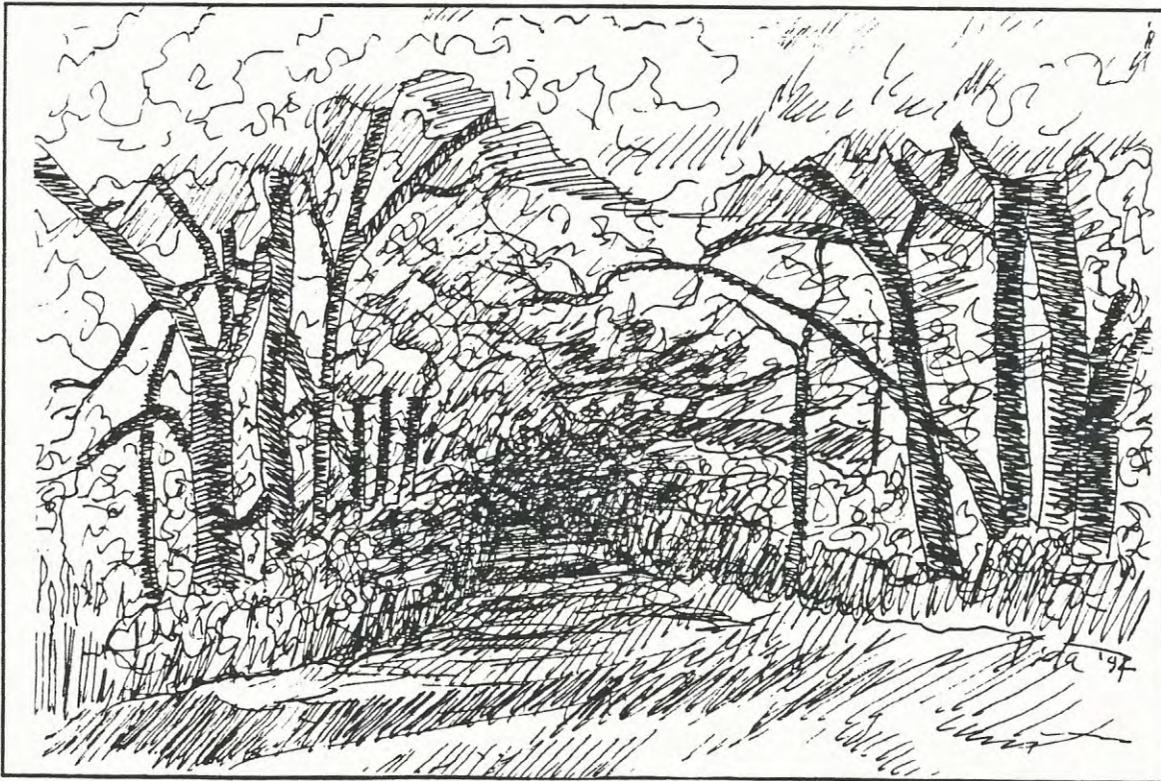
An interesting 1996 study published in "Animal Behaviour" generated evidence that raven roosts function as information centres about food sources. The authors found that captive birds released at roosts followed others to carcasses of large animals, while those released in other areas failed to find these high quality food sources. Conversely, when captive birds were released at carcasses and later joined roosts, they were followed back to these feeding stations by other roost participants.

Aside from temperature and human problems, the main predators of mourning doves are reported to be "cats, hawks, cats, owls and CATS". There are lots of wandering felines in our neighbourhood, but I haven't yet seen evidence that they have been successful in detecting or depredating the roosting doves. Sharp-shinned hawks seem to have more success, and the roost may explain why we see this species fairly frequently, and why we are occasionally visited by great horned owls.

Whatever the reasons for the roost in our neighbourhood, it offers a fascinating glimpse of the less visible portion of the lives of birds, and a chance to learn a little more about their behaviour.

from an article by Don McLean, in THE WOOD DUCK, vol.56, no.7, March 2003

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THE PATH TO GOULDING HOUSE.
OLD MASSEY ESTATE, TAYLOR CREEK PARK
(field sketch by Diana Banville)

IN THE NEWS

CHINA'S TASTE FOR EXOTIC FLESH RIPENS THE RISK OF ANOTHER SARS

There is mounting evidence the virus for SARS was first transmitted to humans from the wild animals that are popular cuisine in the booming cities of southern China. Like many other diseases, from Ebola to monkeypox, the source of SARS was probably an animal species. Most of the earliest known cases last November and December were snake sellers and chefs who were routinely exposed to wild animals in the markets and kitchens of Guangdong. [See also page 16.]

Scientists who have tested dozens of wild animals have found a SARS-like coronavirus, almost 100-per-cent identical to the human SARS virus, in exotic animals such as civet cats, bats, snakes, mountain pigs, ferret badgers and raccoon dogs. All are widely consumed as food in Guangdong, where they are known as ye wei ("wild taste"). Up to 50 per cent of people who work with wild animals in Guangdong have tested positive for antibodies to the SARS coronavirus, Chinese researchers say.

Transmission from animals to humans, if it happened, would have been made easier by the poor sanitation and overcrowding in Guangdong's famous wildlife markets, where vendors live and sleep among cages of exotic animals. In response to the SARS research, Guangdong authorities seized 30,000 wild animals from shops and restaurants and announced a shutdown of the wildlife trade. Yet the wildlife trade is still alive. It has shifted only slightly underground, where aggressive entrepreneurs continue to flog their wares. It is not easy for the government to change the eating culture of southern China, especially with the booming economy and rising incomes. People want to flaunt their wealth, and they think it's prestigious to eat wild animals.

People in northern cities such as Beijing are not amused by the peculiar cuisine of the south. Many blame Guangdong's eating habits for causing the spread of SARS, which devastated the economy of Beijing this spring.

extracted from an article by Geoffrey York, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, June 28, 2003

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Surely native plant societies are primarily in the business of saving wild places, not adding to or promoting planted landscapes.

As civilization busily turns natural landscape into planted landscape, we should be a voice for slowing down that conversion and not part of the clamour for more of it.

Shouldn't our societies be best known as front-line advocates of natural process in the revegetation of land and as minimizers of intervention, letting nature be nature whenever possible?

from "Native Plant Societies and Grassroots Conservation" by Stanwyn Shetler in
WILDFLOWER 19(2), Spring 2003

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

OUR WINTER ROBINS DON'T HANG AROUND FOR SPRING

We tend to associate the American robin with the lawns, parks and gardens where most of us see them. But the immense majority of Canadian robins nest in boreal forests, including tundra regions at the very edge of the tree line. This is a hardy songbird that breeds from northern Alaska and the Yukon east to the Ungava peninsula, and south as far as the scorched and rugged desert country of Baja California and southern Mexico.

In fall our robins tend to gather in rather loose flocks ranging in size from a few birds to many dozens, even hundreds. And they move south, concentrating their numbers in the southern U.S. (with some birds moving to the Bahamas or to Central America). But southern Ontario is within the northern part of the wintering range.

The number of robins wintering in Ontario is only a fraction of summer population. Moreover they tend to cluster in sheltered ravines or woodlots where they may go unnoticed by most folks, most of the time. They feed on berries, including juniper, and other fruit, including apples left hanging on the trees. Winter flocks sometimes occur in abandoned orchards, pecking at age-softened fruit. In a pinch they can make do with the fuzzy berries of sumac. As long as they have food, cold does not seem to be a serious problem, but prolonged deep snow can cause some hardship. Worst of all is thick ice from freezing rain. Attempts to put out raisins, apple-halves, dog food or other treats for the robins at such times are usually thwarted by hungry starlings, jays and squirrels -- all more accustomed to hand-outs than are the more independent robins.

extracted from an article by Barry Kent MacKay, in the TORONTO STAR, Feb. 23, 2003

CHINA LIFTS BAN ON WILD-ANIMAL SALES

China's wild-animal dealers are swiftly gearing up to sell their exotic products to restaurants and food markets again, despite concerns that the lucrative trade could be the source of another SARS outbreak. The World Health Organization has expressed concern about the revival of the wild-animal trade, calling it premature because a proper risk assessment has not yet been conducted. By lifting the ban, China has made it easier for private entrepreneurs to portray their wildlife products as a safe business without any link to severe acute respiratory syndrome, even though scientists still suspect a connection. Chinese analysts said the ban on the wildlife trade was as futile as prohibiting the drug trade.

The government has been under heavy pressure to lift the ban, which had a serious impact on the local economy. One market alone, Xinyuan, estimates that it provided jobs for 30,000 vendors and suppliers. Under the new government policy, the 54 exotic species can be legally sold and consumed if they are raised domestically under controlled conditions.

extracted from an article by Geoffrey York, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, August 19, 2003

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

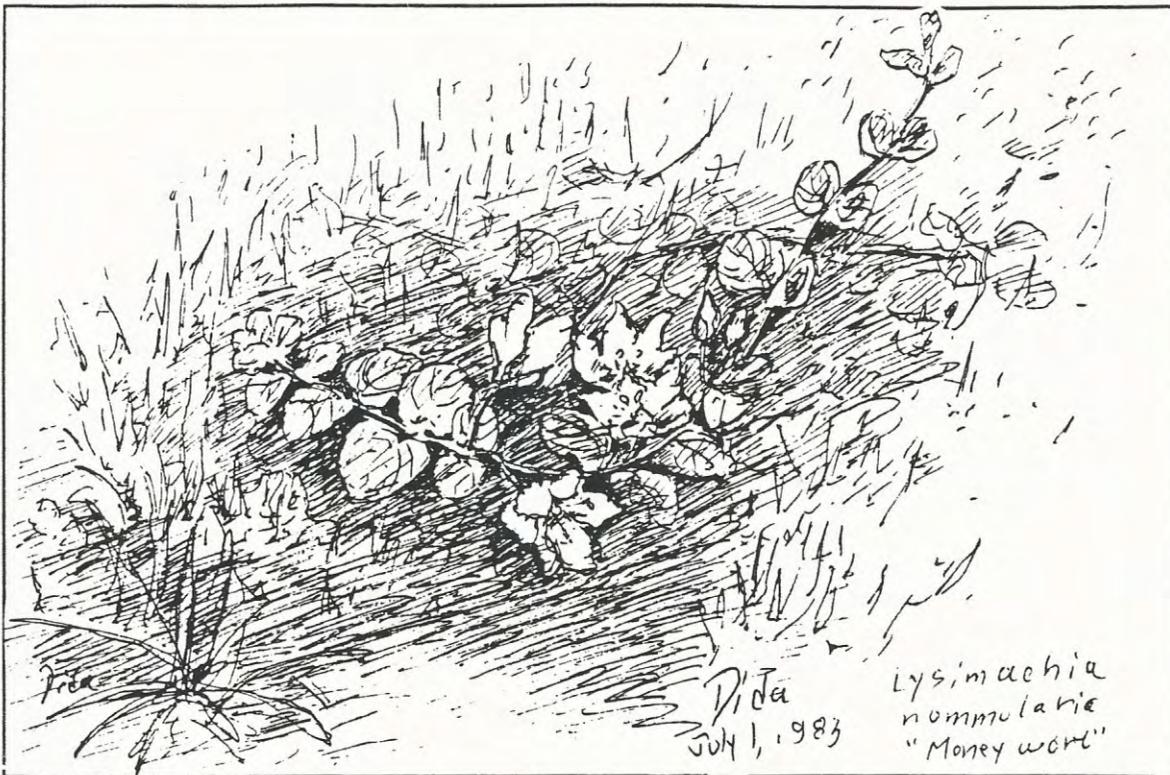
WHO HAS SEEN THE WIND POWER?

TransAlta Corp., the big Alberta electrical utility, said recently it will invest up to \$2-billion over the next decade on wind turbines. The decision, coming from a utility known mostly for its fossil-fuel-fired generators (it's the country's second-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases), could be the clearest sign yet that wind energy is about to change the Canadian landscape.

Enough electricity is now being extracted from the world's winds to meet the residential needs of 23 million people, or the combined populations of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Meanwhile, electricity from coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel, has fallen by nine per cent since 1995.

In the last decade, production costs have dropped from about 30 cents per kilowatt hour to 6 cents or even less. Some turbines now approach two megawatts of capacity -- enough for 700 homes, and nearly three times the models of the mid-1990s. Their enormous blades sweep through a diameter as large as the wing span of a 747, and their towers can be 20 storeys tall (winds are stronger and less subject to turbulence at higher elevations). Computer controls have also improved the reliability of the machines, and design improvements have made the blades more efficient at squeezing every last watt out of the air.

extracted from an article by Martin Mittelstaedt, in the GLOBE AND MAIL, Jan. 4, 2003



"Moneywort" a Toronto wildflower in the primrose family
field sketch by Diana Banville

WANTED



*Actual size of beetle is:
2 - 3.5 cm or 1 1/2 inches*

*Beetle shown is larger
than actual size.*

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ASIAN LONG-HORNED BEETLE?

The Asian Long-horned Beetle has been found in the cities of Toronto and Vaughan, centred on the Woodbridge area.

If you live in or near this area, we ask you to examine any trees on your property, especially maple and horsechestnut, for signs of this destructive beetle. Infested trees will show signs of beetle damage, especially round exit holes in the bark, oval wounds (egg-laying sites) and sawdust from the larvae boring in affected trees. Attacked trees may also leak sap.

We are also asking that people living in or near this area to **not move trees, nursery stock, firewood and tree prunings**. This may cause the beetle to spread outside of the

infested area. For more information on movement and disposal please contact the CFIA.

This beetle does not pose a threat to public health, however it attacks and kills living broadleaf hardwood trees.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, along with the City of Vaughan, City of Toronto and other partners need your cooperation in preventing the spread of the beetle.

If you find this beetle, please report it to **1-800-442-2342**. For more information, pictures and updates on finds of the Asian Long-horned Beetle, please see our website at www.inspection.gc.ca

 Canadian Food Inspection Agency Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments



See pages 5 and 19 for more about this issue.

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

LONGHORNED BEETLES MENACE LOCAL TREES

At a site in Vaughan near Steeles Ave.W. and Highway 400, Asian longhorned beetles have already destroyed about a dozen trees around an industrial mall. Officials do know the bugs have infiltrated trees in an area roughly bordered by highways 407 and 400, and south in Toronto as far as Finch Ave. W. and Milvan Dr. The beetle likely stowed away in wooden packaging and crates commonly used to transport heavy equipment and were unknowingly delivered to local companies.

Strict federal import policies introduced about four years ago now require wood from overseas to be treated in an effort to contain the insects.

Telltale signs of infestation include oval holes about the diameter of a pen, on trunks, branches and exposed roots. Reddish brown sap drips from the holes and there's often sawdust around the base of the tree.

The beetles first surfaced in North America in 1996, and have killed thousands of trees in New York and Chicago. The key to eliminating the pests rests with the public. Report damaged trees immediately by calling the CFIA hotline at: 1-800-442-2342.

extracted from an article by Leslie Ferenc, in the TORONTO STAR, Sept. 13, 2003

LOONS THAT CHANGE THEIR TUNES PUZZLE SCIENTISTS

Researchers announced that the territorial yodel of a male loon on a lake at first seems as individualistic as a fingerprint. Yet if the loon is forced to switch lakes, he also unexpectedly changes his yodel. Although loons can live for three decades, they are threatened by fishing gear, water pollution and habitat loss.

The loon has three distinct calls -- a "come hither" wail between mates or for calling chicks; a tremolo signalling distress; and a yodel, the call that begins with a quick succession of repeated musical notes. A loon might switch its yodel with its territory for several reasons: to sound different from new neighbours, to hide from previous neighbours or to please its new mate.

extracted from an article by Peter Calamai, in the TORONTO STAR, July 29, 2003

... A species is considered native to North America if it was present somewhere on the Continent in pre-Columbian times.

I see it as truly native to a given site only if it reached that site by natural forces of dispersal and colonization without deliberate human intervention. Further I would say that a native, whether from near or far, becomes an alien introduction the moment it is sowed or transplanted by human agency. Its point of origin is only part of its story. Thus, in a real sense, the act of planting makes aliens of natives.

from "Native Plant Societies and Grassroots Conservation" by Stanwyn Shetler in WILDFLOWER 19(2), Spring 2003

IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

THE EAGLES HAVE LANDED

Bald eagles are long-lived birds, often hitting the ripe old age of 28 years in the wild. But their longevity in the southern part of the Great Lakes region doesn't come anywhere close to that. Biologists have discovered that the raptors are dying in their prime, attaining less than half the reproductive life span considered normal for their species. Elsewhere in Canada, bald eagles are living as long as they should. They are plentiful from British Columbia's Pacific coast to the shores of the Atlantic provinces.

The fate of the eagles along Lakes Ontario, Erie and Huron is an important matter for wildlife biologists. The birds are a so-called sentinel species, a top predator, just like polar bears, killer whales and wolves. The health of any animal at the top of a food chain, particularly a long-lived one, is an excellent indicator of the state of the entire ecosystem in which they live.

Why eagles should be afflicted by dramatically shortened life spans is a mystery. They may be at risk from two recent biological threats -- West Nile virus and avian botulism, which is being found in many aquatic birds around Lake Erie. But scientists are most worried that the eagles are being poisoned by an unexpected environmental threat -- mercury and lead, which can inflict extensive nervous system damage in exposed animals. Surprisingly high levels of both heavy metals are being detected in eagle carcasses, which are collected for research purposes when they are found. They also sometimes have cancers and even arthritis.

The bald eagles of Southern Ontario and the adjacent areas of the United States were nearly wiped out in the 1970s. They were highly susceptible to DDT, the now-banned agricultural chemical, and other organochlorinated biphenyls. The chemicals didn't kill adult eagles, but impaired their ability to reproduce. DDT causes eggshells to be thin and eggs to break before the young can hatch, while PCBs are suspected of causing embryos within the eggs to die or to develop defects, such as crossed bills.

Eagles may be ingesting lead by preying on birds injured or killed by hunters using lead shot, which was banned in the 1990s for waterfowl hunting. If this has been causing problems for eagles, it should gradually diminish as the lead works its way out of the environment. Another possibility is that eagles are eating fish that have swallowed lead sinkers used by sports fishers.

Mercury is the bigger mystery. It has been eliminated from most products in which it was once used, and discharges from human sources are down about 80 per cent. The only large remaining unregulated source in North America is the power-generation business, where the metal is emitted as a byproduct of burning coal to produce electricity. Mercury also tends to build up in fish that live in the reservoirs behind power dams.

extracted from an article by Martin Mittelstaedt, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, June 21, 2003



IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

SERENDIPITY IN SHERWOOD PARK

Sherwood Park is a 16.2 hectare ravine park near Mount Pleasant Road and Eglinton Avenue East within the Don watershed. Burke Brook flows through the park and into the West Don River. Red oaks seem to be the oldest trees in the park, but although they produce abundant acorns, young oaks have been hard to find.

In 2001, volunteers planted a variety of trees and shrubs on a sandy hillside under a giant red oak. A few months later a major storm split the oak. The half that fell crushed many of the new plants. City forestry staff determined that the remaining part of the oak was likely to fall soon and thus removed both fallen and standing parts of the oak during 2002. Early in 2003, volunteers planted more trees and shrubs to replace those lost. Two months later a volunteer leader went to the site to flag locations for herbaceous perennials and grasses. Wonder of wonders, the whole hillside was covered in red oak seedlings most of which had come from the doomed tree. After consultation with forestry staff, volunteers have been very busy, cutting many of the small plants immediately surrounding these seedlings to reduce competition for space, moisture, sun, and nutrients. A thick 'doughnut' of woodchip mulch is placed around each seedling. This work was completed on August 10 with a total of 639 red oak seedlings discovered and protected. Discussions are taking place as to what will be done with these natural miracles in spring 2004.

from an article by Janice Palmer, in BRING BACK THE DON SEASONAL UPDATE, Fall 2003



IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

MORE NEWS FOR CHICKENS

A study of "free range" chickens in Britain found that only 15 per cent of the birds ever poke their beaks outside the barn at any given time. Barnyards shaded by trees are most likely to tempt the fowl out. Researchers suggest that the shy chickens may be pining for the forest. The birds may share a preference for trees with their wild ancestor, the red jungle fowl, which shelters in Asian bamboo forests. For modern chickens, trees may offer shade, protection from crows and a windbreak.

from an article by Michael Kesterton, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, August 13, 2003

BIRD WATCH

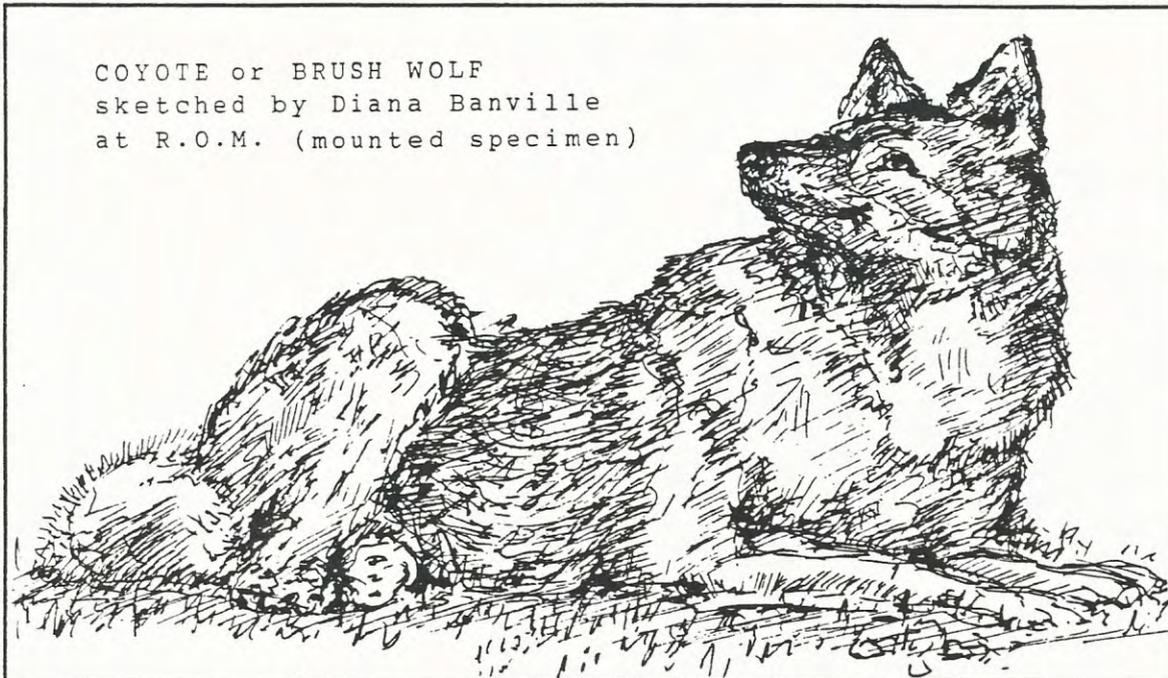
While banding an albatross on Midway Island last year, U.S. Geological Survey scientist Chandler Robbins was surprised to find that he had banded the seabird before -- in 1956. At that time it had just laid an egg, so it had to have been at least five years old. The 51-year-old albatross, which was found with a healthy chick, sets a longevity record for North American wild birds.

In a Michigan backyard, nearly 18 per cent of all the American tree sparrows banded visiting feeders were recaptured and several have returned for five years. This is pretty remarkable, considering not only that the majority of small songbirds don't live through their first year of life, but that the sparrows have a choice of many local feeders and weedy fields. That they return specifically to a fairly average suburban yard shows the precision of their site fidelity.

from an article by Michael Kesterton, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, July 14, 2003



COYOTE or BRUSH WOLF
sketched by Diana Banville
at R.O.M. (mounted specimen)



IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

A LONG, COOL DRINK FOR CITY

Enwave District Energy Ltd. has been placing air-filled pipes in Lake Ontario since the start of July. They were manufactured in sections about 10 metres long in a Huntsville factory and shipped to a Belleville factory along the Lake. There, they were fused into sections about 200 metres long and transported by barge to Toronto's port, where they were bolted into the 1.5 kilometre-long sections that are in the lake now. Ultimately, the water that's being drawn through these pipes is going to be used for the city's new drinking water system.

In exchange for building and installing the pipes to transport water to the city's island filtration plant, Enwave is allowed to use the very cold water from the bottom of the lake in its commercial venture: a deep-lake, water-cooling system to air-condition downtown buildings. The water, piped from a point 5 kilometres offshore and 83 metres deep, is a chilly 4°C. Enwave puts the value of the cooling system at about \$135 million. Once completed, the system will be able to cool 20 million square feet of office space, or the equivalent of 50 to 100 buildings.

Enwave also says the system will slash power costs and eliminate the need for more than 35 million kilowatt-hours of coal-fired electricity. So far, there are five buildings that have signed on to use the system, the Air Canada Centre, the Metro Convention Centre, the Steam Whistle Brewery, the Data Centre and an office tower at 1 University Avenue.

Extracted from an article by Kerry Gillespie, in the TORONTO STAR, August 7, 2003



NATURE CAN PAY ITS WAY!

[More than a decade ago] the US Environmental Protection Agency ordered New York [City] to build a filtration plant for the water the city gets from the Catskill and Delaware Rivers. The estimated cost was around \$6 billion to \$8 billion with an annual maintenance bill of around \$500 million. This created such a fuss that officials started looking at the alternative -- letting nature clean New York's water by protecting the catchments through which it flows on the way to the city. Left undisturbed, soil, plants and trees can absorb and filter the contaminants that would otherwise have to be chemically treated.

And that's what they're doing -- the city is buying up land all around the key reservoirs and dishing out around \$140 million a year to local businesses, government bodies and individual citizens to promote environmentally-responsible development, farming, land use and forest protection. Not cheap, by any standards, but a snip by comparison with the mega-engineering alternative.

from an article by Jonathon Porritt in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 21, No. 3, March 2003

Most Intelligent Species!

"We are the Greatest!" was their refrain.
"Just look at the size of our marvellous brain!
We have split the atom and conquered disease,
Cloned a human and oil-rigged the seas."

"Yes, we are so smart that we know it all,
We can humanize pigs and grow a cow tall.
We can calculate distance in far away space.
Conquer the stars from an orbiting base".

"Some of that's true, and some of it's not,"
Thought the all-knowing watcher - "but look what they got."
"They poisoned their water and poisoned their air,
They stripped their protection from UV's bright glare."

"They once had it all, but they didn't take care.
They plundered and pillaged, and that wasn't fair,
Wasn't fair to the 'others' who tried to exist.
Considered as 'dumb', they were struck from the list."

But nature is nature and will have her way.
She's not just cute puppies and lambs in the hay.
She is typhoon, tornado and virus and germ,
She is syphilis, earthquake, iceberg and worm.

They had wiped out the 'others' and razed all the trees
They thought they could rule the planet with ease.
But that takes a smart one, far smarter than they,
And what challenges nature will soon fade away.

Diana Karrantjas

So should we trust the experts?

Yes, but we should also be clear about who is paying them before
accepting their word.

from a review by Hugh Warwick of "Trust us, we're Experts" by Sheldon Rampton and
John Strauber Tarcher in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 21, No. 4, April 2003

THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

November 2002, Toronto

The month was unremarkable aside from the heavy mid-month snowfall. This, however, combined with temperatures averaging close to the long-term average but well below those of many recent Novembers, gave the month a rather wintry mood. It was in fact the coolest November since 1997 with a mean of 3.2°C at Pearson Airport and 4.3°C downtown. Temperatures saw-sawed between mild readings in the teens and near or below-freezing conditions. There were two days when the maximum temperature remained below freezing.

The major snow storm on Nov. 16th-17th was the month's big story. It delivered a total of 22.6 cm at Pearson Airport and 22.4 cm downtown. This was a mid-winter style synoptic storm, and it was the heaviest snowfall downtown since March 4th-5th, 2001. At Pearson, the last snowfall so heavy was on February 8, 2001. The snow cover only lasted 3-4 days as milder weather quickly replaced the arctic air mass. There were several other light events, including one on Nov. 6th that covered the ground with about 5 cm north of Highway 7. The result was a total of 30.8 cm for the month at Pearson Airport, making it the snowiest November there since 1950 and the third-highest on record. (The long-term average is 7.6 cm and the record in 1940 was 61.0 cm.) Downtown's snowfall total was a still-formidable 26.6 cm, but this was exceeded as recently as 1997. It exceeded the total of any month of the previous winter.

Rainfall for the month was somewhat below-normal, so the total precipitation was balanced out with 81.2 mm downtown (slightly above normal) and 67.2 mm at Pearson (slightly below).

It was a cloudy, gloomy month as is typical for November. Sunshine (at Pearson) totalled 71.3 hours, the lowest for any month since January, 2001 and the lowest for November since 1995 (measured downtown). There was a discrepancy between winds inland and by Lake Ontario. Pearson Airport's average wind speed of 18.6 km/h was 3 km/h above normal and the highest since 1989. Toronto Island's 19.7 km/h was actually 2 km/h below normal.

Gavin Miller

□

Local natural history and field-study societies have traditionally nurtured field identification skills, passing knowledge down through the generations. ... It's vital that the sheer pleasure of personal discovery of nature is kept alive.

from "Coming in from the fields" by Phil Gates in BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 21, No. 4, Apr. 2003

Comment: So do bring a child on the next nature walk you attend!

COMING EVENTS

Toronto Ornithological Club - no outings this month

Toronto Entomologists's Association

- Nov. 22 at 1 pm in Room 113, Northrop Frye Hall, 73 Queen's Park Cres. East - Doug Currie of the Royal Ontario Museum will be giving a talk about the diversity of arctic blackflies. For more information, call Alan Hanks at 905-727-6993.

Mycological Society of Toronto

- For information about meetings and forays to find mushrooms, call Vello Soots at 416-444-9053.

Citizens Concerned About the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront

- Sat. Nov. 15 from 9 am to 11 am at Humber Bay Park with Don Burton to see birds. Meet in the south parking lot (rain or shine). Call 416-252-7047 for more details.

High Park afternoon walking tours (\$2 donation)

- Sun. Nov. 21 walks begin at 1:15 pm just south of the
- Sun. Nov. 16 Grenadier Restaurant
- Sun. Nov. 30

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

Rouge Valley Conservation Centre

- Thurs. Nov. 27 at 7:30 pm at the Pearse House - First Nations Prehistory For more information call 416-282-8265.
- Sun. Nov. 9 - First Nations History, a walk beginning at Pearse House at 1 pm.

Save the Rouge Valley System

- Sun. Nov. 30 at 1:30 pm, a nature walk beginning at Amos Ponds at Old Finch Ave. and Pickering Town Line on east side north of Old Finch Ave. Call 416-282-9983 for more information.

Todmorden Wildflower Preserve

- Thurs. Nov. 20 from 7 pm to 10 pm. - Annual General Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation night at Todmorden Mills with Gregor Beck as the guest speaker. Call 416-423-1504 for more information.

Friends of Don East

- Sat. Nov. 1 from 10 am to 12 noon - a walk in Taylor Creek with Paula Davies and Stephen Smith, starting at the Stan Wadlow Community Centre. Call 416-429-9484 for more details.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

- Winter Waterfowl at Tommy Thompson Park (Leslie St. Spit) Nov. 22 from 1 pm to 3 pm. Call 416-661-6600 for more information. [ext. 5660]

COMING EVENTS (cont'd)

Toronto Reference Library

- Photographing Toronto from the 1850s to present - beginning Nov. 8
- 789 Yonge St. Call 416-395-5577 for more details.

Royal Canadian Institute - Sunday afternoon lecture on science - free
at 1 King's College Circle (JJR Macleod Auditorium) at 3 pm.

- Nov. 2 - Microbial Geoengineering: Acid Mine Drainage
- Nov. 9 - Globalization, Infectious Diseases and the Public Health
- Nov. 16 - Is Mathematics Made in Heaven, or is it Just a Language Game?
- Nov. 23 - Supernovae and Neutron Stars: a Short Tour of Extreme Astrophysics
- Nov. 30 - It's Fun but is it Science? (especially for ages 7-13.)
Call 416-977-2983 for more information.

Ian Wheal Heritage Walks (Call 416-570-6415.)

- Sat. Nov. 1 at 1 pm - Lost Sagebrush Prairie. Meet at the Runnymede subway station (Runnymede Rd. entrance).
- Sat. Nov. 15 at 1:30 pm - Wards Island Fishing Village. Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. in time for the 1:30 pm ferry. □

TFN BOOK SALE

We have books on subjects of interest to
Naturalists, including some field guides:

HARDCOVER	\$1.00 each
PAPERBACK	\$0.50 each
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OTHER PUBLICATIONS

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB: ITS HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION, 1965	\$ 2.00	TORONTO REGION BIRD CHART, 1983	\$ 4.00
CHECKLIST OF PLANTS IN FOUR TORONTO PARKS; WILKET CREEK, HIGH PARK, HUMBER VALLEY, LAMBTON WOODS, 1972	\$ 2.00	A GRAPHIC GUIDE TO ONTARIO MOSSES, 1985	\$ 4.00
TORONTO THE GREEN, 1976 Metropolitan Toronto's important natural areas are described and recommendations given for their conservation and management; includes maps, bibliography and index	\$ 8.00	GUIDE TO TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' NATURE RESERVES, 2001	\$ 4.00
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Survey #4 - Wigmore Ravine, 1975		HUMBER FORKS AT THISTLETOWN, 2000	\$ 4.00
Survey #5 - Park Drive Ravine, 1976			NO G.S.T.
Survey #6 - Burke Ravine, 1976		All publications may be ordered from Toronto Field Naturalists, 2 Carlton St., #1519, Toronto, Ontario M5B 1J3. (Add \$2.00 per item for postage and handling).	
Survey #7 - Taylor Creek-Woodbine Bridge Ravines, 1977			
Survey #8 - West Don Valley, 1978			
INDEX OF TFN NEWSLETTERS (1938 to present).....	\$10.00		

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not to give out its membership list.*

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