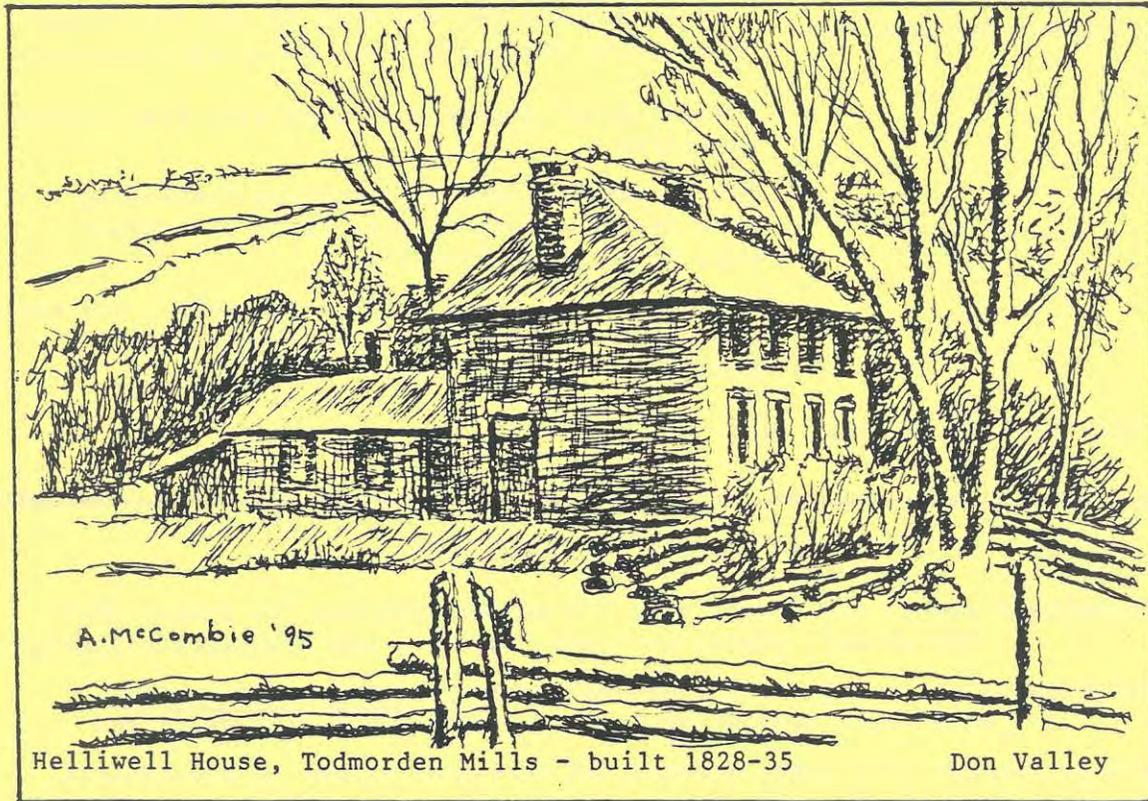


# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 458

March 1996



Drawing by Alen McCombie

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## TFN MEETINGS

- Sunday, March 3, 1996 - WILDLIFE REHABILITATION  
at 2:30 pm  
in the Northrop Frye Hall - Hear about the history of the centre, why animals  
Victoria University become sick, injured or orphaned and what can be  
73 Queen's Park Cres. East done to prevent it, and some of the challenges  
of wildlife restoration and nuisance situations.
- + "Social hour" starting at 2 pm with free coffee and juice
  - + TFN memberships and publications (including back issues of the Ontario Field Biologist) will be for sale from 2 pm.
  - + "Always Alice" cards will be for sale. For custom or individual cards, call TFN member Alice Mandryk at 416-767-6149.

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, April 7, 1996

### 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.

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  
20 College St., Unit 11  
Toronto, Ont. M5G 1K2

Newsletter Committee members: Helen Juhola, Diana Banville, Jenny Bull, Eva Davis, Nancy Fredenburg, Eileen Mayo, Joan O'Donnell, Toshi Oikawa.

High over Queen Street  
red-tailed hawk slowly soaring.  
Pigeons in panic.

haiku by Helen Juhola

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

- |   |  |                                      |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <p>Saturday<br/>March 2<br/>10:30 am<br/>\$ entry<br/>fee</p> | <p>METRO ZOO - nature arts<br/>Leader: Alf Buchanan<br/>Meet at the zoo entrance on the west side of Meadowvale Rd. north of Sheppard Ave. East. Meet just inside the gate. The various pavilions provide excellent chances to sketch and photograph animal life. Bring a stool and your supplies. We will be meeting at the African McDonalds for lunch and viewing of our work of the day and recent photos.</p> | <p>Rouge, Scarborough</p>            |
| <p>Sunday<br/>March 3<br/>2:30 pm</p>                         | <p>TFN MEETING (See page 2.)<br/>73 Queen's Park Cres. East</p>  |                                      |
| <p>Tuesday<br/>March 5<br/>10:30 am</p>                       | <p>WEST DON VALLEY - nature walk<br/>Leader: Maureen Allain<br/>Meet at the Earl Bales Community Centre on the east side of Bathurst St., south of Sheppard Ave. West. Lunch optional. We will be walking north in the valley toward G. Ross Lord Park and looking and listening for the first signs of spring such as returning red-winged blackbirds and song sparrows.</p>                                      | <p>West Don, North York</p>          |
| <p>Sunday<br/>March 10<br/>1:30 pm</p>                        | <p>TORONTO'S FIRST WATERFRONT - nature walk<br/>Leader: Ken Cook<br/>Meet at the southeast corner of Bathurst St. and Front St. Starting at the point where the Simcoes camped in the 1790s we will walk eastward along Front St. (the original lakeshore) looking at the changes that have taken place in the past 200 years.</p>   | <p>Toronto</p>                       |
| <p>Thursday<br/>March 14<br/>10:30 am</p>                     | <p>HUMBER VALLEY - nature walk<br/>Leader: Ann Millett<br/>Meet at the south east corner of Eglinton Ave. West and Scarlett Rd. Bring lunch. Today we will walk north in the valley looking for more signs of spring. Some hill climbing involved in exploring this stretch of the valley.</p>   | <p>Humber, York</p>                  |
| <p>Sunday<br/>March 17<br/>2 pm</p>                           | <p>WALMSLEY BROOK - nature walk<br/>Leader: Helen Mills<br/>Meet at Northern Secondary School, 851 Mt. Pleasant Rd. (1½ blocks north of Eglinton Ave. East). This is another walk in the series to look for traces of lost/buried watercourses. It is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community.</p>   | <p>West Don tributary, East York</p> |



MARCH OUTINGS (cont'd)

Wednesday NORTHERN DISTRICT LIBRARY - nature photography Toronto  
March 20 Leader: Jean Macdonald  
2 pm to Meet at the library on Orchard View Blvd. (one block north  
4 pm of Eglinton Ave. and just west of Yonge St.)  
Members are invited to bring their own nature photos, up to  
20, or just come and enjoy the afternoon.

Wednesday WATERFRONT - nature walk Lakeshore, Toronto  
March 27 Leader: George Bryant  
10:30 am Meet at the foot of Leslie St. Lunch optional.  
We will be walking from the foot of Leslie St. to Cherry Beach. Migrating  
birds arrive at the lakeshore where they often rest after crossing the lake.  
We may even see early signs of greening. Bring binoculars and note books.

Saturday MORNINGSIDE PARK - nature walk Highland Creek, Scarborough  
March 30 Leaders: Morris Sorensen & Starr Whitmore  
11 am Meet at the park entrance on the west side of Morningside  
Ave., north of Lawrence Ave. East. Bring a light snack.  
We will be looking for signs of spring -- perhaps the skunk cabbages will  
be visible and flowering. Bring cameras, sketch pads, notebooks and  
binoculars. □

THE GARDEN TULIP is shown on our TFN checklist as "not established" in our Metro flora. Solitary specimens are encountered in such places as East Don, Sherwood Park, Leslie Street Spit and Scarborough Bluffs, possibly planted by squirrels.

There are many species of tulips - originating in the Old World - but many popular hybrids were developed from *Tulipa gesneriana*. Tulips are in the lily family.

Ref.:

THE COMPLETE HANDBOOK OF GARDEN PLANTS by Michael Wright, Rainbird Publishing 1984.



MARY CUMMINE  
ANIM GARDENS  
APRIL 8 1993

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The latest output from the Highway 404 Extension route planning and environmental assessment process gives TFN members cause to allow themselves a tiny sigh of relief. It no longer appears that our Jim Baillie and Emily Hamilton Nature Reserves are in the route of this proposed expressway. The plans to build the expressway are proceeding apace, however.

It will still be months before the environmental assessment of the highway 404 extension is complete, and even if the highway is approved it may not be built for many years. The planning process goes like this. First, a plethora of possible routes is generated. Then, as studies and consultations proceed, the number of possible routes under consideration is reduced through a process of elimination. Finally, a route favoured by the "proponent" (in this case, the Ministry of Transportation) and a few alternates are assessed in depth in the Environmental Assessment document that will ultimately be filed. This document is then subject to review by other government agencies and by the public. If both the assessment document and the proposed "undertaking" being assessed are deemed acceptable to all concerned, then the project gets a green light. Otherwise, a hearing may be held before the Environmental Assessment Board, and the Board would then decide the fate of the project.

One of the routes initially under consideration would have run diagonally across the provincially significant Uxbridge Brook wetland complex, right between our two nature reserve properties. This route has now been eliminated from the set of options. The nearest route that is still a live option would cross Uxbridge Brook about a kilometre north (that is, downstream) of the reserves. Although our own properties are now unlikely to get clobbered directly, there is still reason to be concerned about the contribution of this highway to the cumulative disruption of ecosystems at a regional level, as well as to the loss of farmland and habitat.

Quite apart from the damage done by the construction of the highway itself, is the role it plays in a land-gobbling, ecologically and economically inefficient pattern of development. The highway is being built to service yet-to-be-built but already-approved commuter suburbs in the far north-east of the Greater Toronto Area. The developments were approved on the understanding that highways would be built to serve them, and the highway is to be built because the mandate of the Ministry of Transport is to service approved developments. It will no doubt stimulate the development of still more far-flung suburbs.

When the TFN made this objection in a letter to Transport Minister Al Palladini, he replied that the developments in question had all

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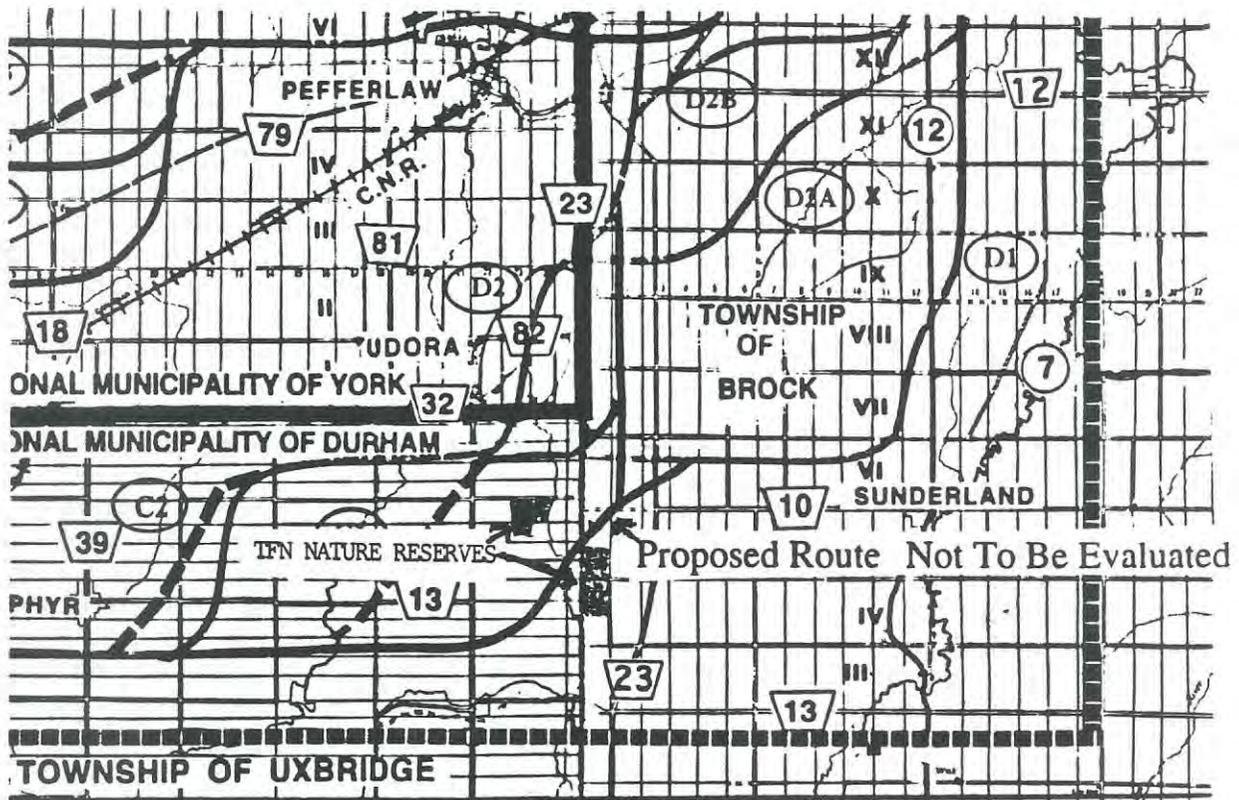
PRESIDENT'S REPORT (cont'd)

been duly approved in an open and democratic manner. The logical implication was that if we didn't want highway 404, we should have intervened over the years in countless development applications around the east end of Lake Simcoe. Of course, such intervention would have been futile. The whole point is that the approvals were granted in the context of a policy which guaranteed that highways would be built to serve the commuting needs of however many future residents the local municipalities could manage to attract.

Although the Golden Report (to its credit) at least paid some lip-service to the goal of restraining sprawl in the Greater Toronto Area, and although the Hon. Mr. Palladini assured the TFN that provincial spending on highways as well as on public transit was to be cut, there is little in either the specifics of the Golden Report's recommendations nor in the tenor of the current provincial government's policies to suggest that more environmentally sound land-use policies will be the order of the day. Quite the contrary. Perhaps we should take what comfort we can in the fact that highway 404 will not be going right through our nature reserves after all.

Allan Greenbaum

□



**Highway 404 Extension Environmental Assessment**

■■■■■ Hwy 404 Study Area    - - - - - Bradford Bypass Study Area

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

January, 1996

I should have been reporting the moth species recorded in my garden in Scarborough, the Rouge Valley and other places in Metro over the past 12 years. After reading that only 23 moth species were reported [in 1995], I decided to add to the TFN records for last year [1995]. I identified 83 moth species, two-thirds of which were attracted to the 150W bulbs, ultra-violet fluorescent tubes and "sugar bait" of stale beer and molasses in my naturalized garden!

Paul McGaw

Ed. note: Following the above was a list of English and scientific names of 64 moth species in Paul's Scarborough garden adjacent to the St. Clair Ravine, one species in Taylor Creek Park, 13 species in the Rouge Valley and 5 species in High Park. By the way, our TFN animal-life checklists cover not only Metro but a radius of 48 km (30 miles) from the Royal Ontario Museum. If reported by location and date, the reports can be filed under the specific location for future studies. □

On May 22, 1982, the TFN took a fondly remembered trip to Carden alvars, those limestone formations which favour specific plants. The whole plain was dancing with the red of painted cups and the yellow of balsam ragwort. I have since encountered these elsewhere, but not the plant rare to central Ontario which was growing on a cattle-grazed alvar. It was the long-plumed purple avens (*Geum triflorum*); I found it impossible to do photographic justice to this peculiar plant, for its massed, waving, purple-brown fruiting heads really took on the amorphous appearance of its other common name, "prairie smoke".

Eva Davis

See also: THE ONTARIO FIELD BIOLOGIST,  
Vol. 29, No. 2, Dec., 1975,  
for an article on alvars.



## FOR READING

TORONTO THE WILD - FIELD NOTES OF AN URBAN NATURALIST by Wayne Grady, published by Macfarlane Walter & Ross, Toronto, 1995, 37A Hazelton Ave., Toronto, Ont. M5R 2E3. \$26.95. (257 pages, plus 4-page bibliography and 12-page index.)

If you are expecting that there are many "field notes" in this book as mentioned in the sub-title, this is not the case. There are relatively few pages devoted to this genre. Much has been based on interviews, some of them in the field, such as in the case of Irene Fedun, where the author captured the spirit of the early morning rescuers of birds and bats in the downtown canyons during migration. Life histories of some of the most familiar Toronto denizens occupy even more space in the book, where the author's fascination with the life around him is evident. He is carried away by his enthusiasm and the reader with him till tripped up by some contradiction, misapprehension, exaggeration, anachronism, inaccuracy or misleading statement - too many to ignore. Are starlings in the family Icteridae as on page 97 or Sturnidae as on page 235? Are there 65 non-native species of plants on the Leslie Street Spit as on page 9 - or 168 as on page 8 (subtracting 115 native plants from the total of 283)?

While bluntly contradicting other sources on the nomenclature of the house sparrow and the migratory vs. sedentary status of the house finch (pages 42, 45 & 95), the author has naively set himself up to be contradicted in turn! Had he consulted the most recent authority, the AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION CHECK-LIST OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS 6th Edition 1983, he might not have stuck his neck out quite so far. Still, I suppose it's his lack of solicitousness for his neck which is part of the charm of his creative style - until he waxes scientific from time to time, often not revealing his sources adequately.

Unfortunately this author has apparently not had before him some of the main sources of up-to-date Toronto information on natural history - including the Ontario atlases with maps including Metro - on birds, butterflies and mammals. At least these did not appear in his bibliography nor did many of the publications of the Toronto Field Naturalists such as checklists, newsletters with index, ravine studies - not even TORONTO THE GREEN! Based on TFN's publications and reports the garter snake, though not poisonous, does bite, if handled incorrectly, as at least one TFN member has found out the hard way. (See author's page 57.) There are still many red squirrels in Metro where there are pines (re p.247). Re p. 148, the statement about 8 out of 10 species of plant in Toronto having been introduced is the opposite of the true picture. In the field, in Metro there are, at last count, 893 native and established introduced species growing successfully in the wild, of which 734 are native and 159 established introduced plants. 8 out of 10 are native - abundance is another story. On pages 213-215, it's not clear why the red fox was ruled out in the case of the Mount Pleasant supposed coyote evidence. Re p.228, the author should consult the Metropolitan & Region Conservation Authority on the subject of coyotes howling in the city.

Though this author does exaggerate, his sincerity comes through in his attitude to species other than our own. He has a refreshing way of turning our anthropocentric world view upside down. Those thoughts are worth reading.

Diana Banville



See also page 27.

FOR READING (cont'd)

**THE YEAR IS A CIRCLE** by Victor Carl Friesen, published by Natural Heritage/  
Natural History Inc., 1995 (123 pages, over 70 colour photographs)

The sub-title is "A Celebration of Henry David Thoreau". Saskatchewan photo-journalist V. C. Friesen is a life member of The Thoreau Society and this compilation of Thoreau quotes with Friesen verse and colour plates is his tribute to the master. Thoreau was an ecologist before the word had validity, and it comes as a shock that this man who has had such influence on our outlook upon nature lived for a mere 44 years.

Each section is headed by a Thoreau observation around which the author weaves his verse. Readers will find individual felicities in these poems. Pearls which delighted me were:

"A white tern soundlessly rows the blue sky...";  
"The crickets' squirling still, an undertone in Gaelic mode";  
"...distant birds like small black stars";  
"Enclosed within an eggshell whiteness."

The photographs are exquisitely apposite.

The Conclusion returns us to Thoreau.

"Each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest,...a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation" (today, a "given" in North American urban living).

"What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?"  
The ultimate unanswerable question.

And finally: "In wilderness is the preservation of the World."

The greatest compliment to this lovely little book (roughly 6" x 7") is the resolution to renew acquaintance with the works of the master.

Eva Davis

RECENTLY PUBLISHED:

Glen Stewart Nature Trail, a pamphlet produced by the Parks and Recreation, City of Toronto. Call 392-1111.

The small format (7½" X 4") will fit in most pockets; two maps -- one the general location, one of the ravine are useful; beautifully illustrated; includes history, ravine rules and information about selected plants and animals in the ravine. Well worth having when visiting this area.

H.J. □

...photographs often provide the first steps toward reverence for and greater understanding of the wonders of the natural world. They are important tools for changing hearts and minds.

from "Editorial" by Rosamund KidmanCox, BBC WILDLIFE, Vol. 13, No. 11, Nov. 1995

Lake Ontario Mid - Winter Waterfowl Inventory

January 7, 1996

Compiled by: Bill Edmunds

Species	TORONTO AREA													Hamilton	Niagara	TOTAL		
	Kingslon	Quinte	Presqu'ile	Port Hope	Durham	Route1	Route2	Route3	Route4	Route5	Route6	Route7	Subtotal					
Common Loon	2				1													3
Horned Grebe	1																	1
Double-crested Cormorant															2	16		18
Tundra Swan	47														11			58
Trumpeter Swan						8	1					2	11					11
Mute Swan	2				9	19	3		1	25	93	11	152	28	2			193
Snow Goose										1			1	1				2
Canada Goose	64	30		230	253	9245	680	164	3	1027	1151	2239	14509	4813	178			20077
Wood Duck										1			1					1
Green-winged Teal								2					2	1	1			4
American Black Duck	212	3		261	154	101	61	5		49	88	54	358	237	5			1230
Mallard	669			896	747	1448	345	407	8	2874	1634	262	6978	1946	290			11526
Northern Pintail	1				10	4							4	19				34
Northern Shoveler										9	1		10	6				16
Gadwall	14					13		183				116	312	27				353
American Wigeon	1											6	6					7
Canvasback	6											2	2					8
Redhead	91			4		25		17	45	92	164	3	346	12				453
Ring-necked Duck	5								1				1	8				14
Tufted Duck										1			1					1
Greater Scaup	4150			1	75	275	3	877	1326	1724	2810	8515	15530	6056				25812
Lesser Scaup	15					8			9	1	3		21	834				870
Harlequin Duck					1	1						1	2	1	1			5
Oldsquaw	39726	7	6	1	8860	4	1072	870	271	432	870	6	3525	98	95			52318
Black Scoter	1								1				1					2
Surf Scoter	1								1				1					2
White-winged Scoter	14500				34	43	1	54	1183	2100			3381	2400				20315
Common Goldeneye	7884	208	355	51	3058	1360	1468	26	414	21	1297	2568	7154	2670	153			21533
Bufflehead	247	58	19	9	129	277	49	24	142	41	179	264	976	635	38			2111
Hooded Merganser	2						1			6	3		10	8	1			21
Common Merganser	256	1	2	6	30	368	15	10	57	57	105	14	626	27	303			1251
Red-breasted Merganser	210	2		1	13	29	16	38	61	6	12	21	183	82	44			535
Ruddy Duck												2	2					2
American Coot	2					1		1			2	2	6	5	2			15
Duck sp.		10	1750			2200							2200					3960
Mallard X Black Duck										4			4	9				13
Total Birds	68109	319	2132	1456	13378	15429	3715	2678	3523	8471	8539	13961	56316	19936	1129			162775
Total Species	25	7	4	9	15	18	13	14	15	18	20	13	30	24	14			34
Bald Eagle	15	2					2						2					19

## LAKE ONTARIO MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY

Routes: Kingston Area (Ivy Lea to Prince Edward Point)  
 Quinte Area (Wellers Bay to Point Petre)  
 Presqu'ile (Provincial Park area)  
 Port Hope Area (Wicklow to Wesleyville)  
 Durham Area (Wesleyville to Whitby)  
 Toronto Area - Route 1 - Whitby to Rouge River  
                   Route 2 - Rouge River to Coatsworth Cut  
                   Route 3 - Eastern Headland to Cherry St.  
                   Route 4 - Toronto Islands  
                   Route 5 - Parliament St. to Humber River  
                   Route 6 - Humber River to Watersedge Park  
                   Route 7 - Watersedge Park to Bronte  
 Hamilton Area (Bronte to 50 Point + Hamilton Bay)  
 Niagara Area (50 Point to Niagara-on-the-Lake)

Conditions: The weather was cold (-20°C to -15°C), with a 15 to 20 km NE wind. The wind piled up ice in all west-facing bays, which resulted in reduced totals for Niagara and Hamilton.

The west end of the lake had clear skies. The east end of the lake was plagued by dense fog, which resulted in low counts for all eastern areas except for Kingston, which fortunately did their count on Jan. 6.

All inner bays and channels were frozen over.

Remarks: This is the 50th "Duck Count" for the Toronto Ornithological Club and the sixth year that we are reporting Census results for the entire Canadian shoreline of Lake Ontario.

Participating in this 50th Duck Count were several long-term TOC members, including Murray Speirs, who participated in the first count in 1948, Fred Bodsworth, who started participating in the second count and has done 40 Duck Counts since then, and Don Perks, who has participated in 30 Duck Counts.

The cold winter weather resulted in low numbers for some species (e.g. loons, grebes), but high numbers were reported for many species. Diving ducks continued their remarkable increase in number, most certainly due to the influx of zebra mussels into Lake Ontario.

For the entire census area (Kingston to Niagara-on-the-Lake), a record 162,775 waterfowl of 34 species were found. The previous high number of waterfowl was 135,541 during last year's MWWI count. The number of waterfowl reported during the past two MWWI counts ('94 and '95) were 35-45% higher than the previous year's counts, and this year's total is another 20% higher. Greater Scaup, Oldsquaw, White-winged Scoter and Common Goldeneye are the main contributors to this record total of individuals.

Kingston had most of the Oldsquaw (39,726 of 52,318) and the White-winged Scoter (14,500 of 20,315). Greater Scaup numbers were concentrated in Toronto through Burlington (21,586 of 25,812). Common Goldeneye numbers are increasing everywhere (21,533). As usual, Canada Goose (20,077) and Mallard (11,526) were also well represented.

In the Toronto area a record 56,316 waterfowl of 30 species (also a record)



WINTER WATERFOWL COUNT (cont'd)

were seen. Average numbers for the past six years are 35,698 birds and 25 species.

Record high numbers were seen for Trumpeter and Mute Swan, Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser (10!), and Ruddy Duck (2!).

Rarities included 1 Snow Goose, 1 Wood Duck, 2 Green-winged Teal, 4 Northern Pintail, 2 Canvasback, 1 Ring-necked Duck, our first-ever Tufted Duck (a female at Sunnyside), 2 Harlequin, 1 Black and 1 Surf Scoter, 10 Hooded Merganser, 2 Ruddy Duck, and 6 American Coot.

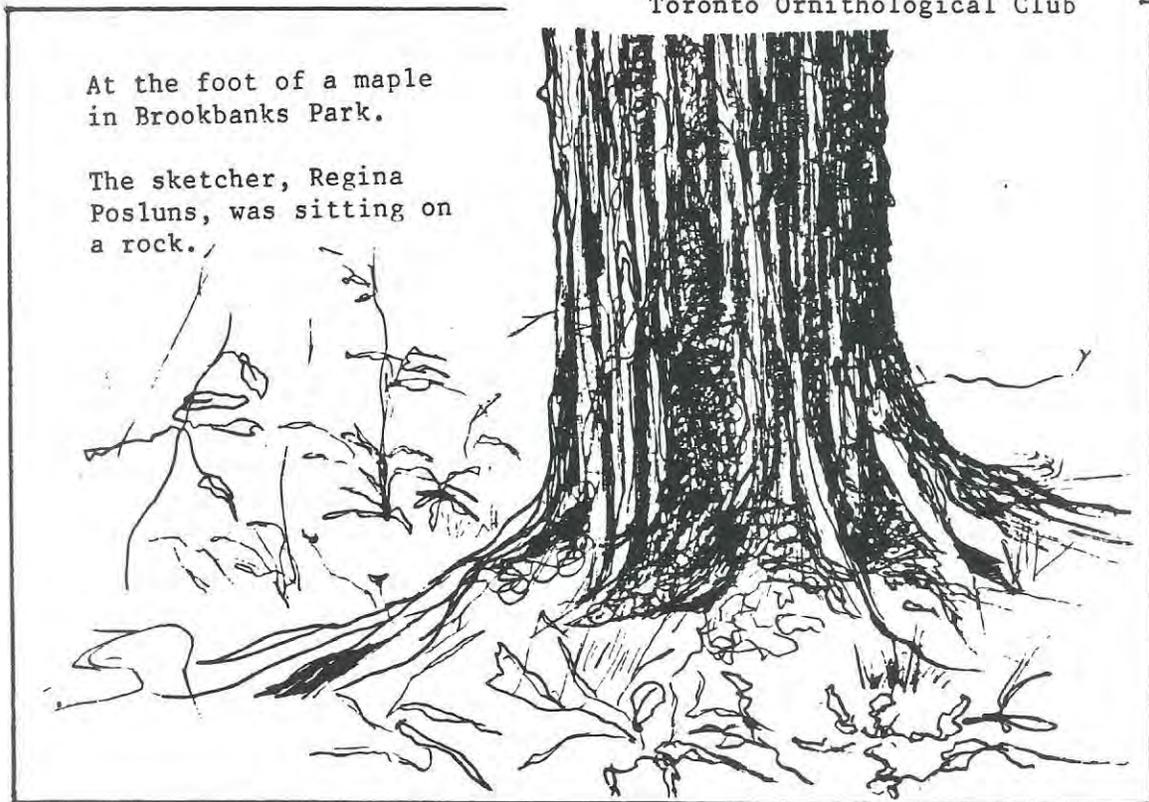
Outside the Toronto area there were some excellent sightings. Niagara had 16 Double-crested Cormorant, 1 Green-winged Teal, 1 Harlequin, 1 Hooded Merganser, and 2 American Coot. Hamilton had 22 species including 2 Double-crested Cormorant, 11 Tundra Swan, 1 Snow Goose, 1 Green-winged Teal, 8 Ring-necked Duck, 1 Harlequin, and 8 Hooded Merganser. The Durham lakeshore had 12 species including 1 Common Loon, 1 Harlequin, and 8,860 (!) Oldsquaw. Presqu'ile area had poor conditions and had to settle for a Gyrfalcon. The Quinte area also had poor conditions but did report 2 Bald Eagle. Kingston had 68,109 (!) waterfowl of 25 species, including 2 Common Loon, 1 Horned Grebe, 47 Tundra Swan, 6 Canvasback, 5 Ring-necked Duck, 1 Black and 1 Surf Scoter, 2 Hooded Merganser, 2 American Coot, and 15 Bald Eagle.

Thanks to all the clubs and individuals who participated. Next year's count will take place on Jan. 12, 1997.

Bill Edmunds, Compiler  
Toronto Ornithological Club

At the foot of a maple  
in Brookbanks Park.

The sketcher, Regina  
Posluns, was sitting on  
a rock.



# PROJECTS

## INTERESTED IN RESTORING URBAN WATERS?

The Coalition to restore Urban Waters (CRUW) will be hosting a 3 day conference/workshop in Chicago, Illinois entitled Friends of Trashed Rivers III. This conference is intended to bring interested people together from various government and non-governmental organizations to celebrate our opportunities, successes, visions and future. The emphasis of the conference will be on presentations from citizens who are active in community groups and non-profit organizations, and hands-on outdoor workshops that demonstrate various river restoration and stewardship methods. The Waterfront Regeneration Trust will be involved in a presentation on regional growth management planning to protect and restore urban waterways and wetlands. We are very interested in hearing from various grass-roots community groups who are doing restoration work in their local watersheds. We hope to form a strong contingency of interested organizations and individuals to attend the conference which runs from May 16 - 18. Some funding is available from CRUW to cover the cost of the convention and accommodation. As well, there may be opportunities to organize car-pools among the interested parties. If you would like us to mail you a brochure or to receive additional information please contact me on Thursdays at the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, 416-314-9475.

Suzanne Stevenson

## HUMBER HERITAGE NEEDS HELP

From its founding, the vision of the Humber Heritage Committee has been the designation of the Humber as a Canadian Heritage River. The Humber watershed has provided fresh water and a nurturing ecosystem in which people have thrived for millenia.

The river's scour and steady flow provided the industrial power for European settlement, locating the development of the diverse industrial heartland of Canada in the Greater Toronto area.

We envision people and the river, with a love of the earth, living together in understanding and respect, as we enter another millenium.

The river, its groundwater, its scour and all that is supported by it, is a thing of amazement and beauty, which shall perpetuate itself, as it always has, in harmony.

The TFN has, through the work of Helen Juhola and Joan O'Donnell, contributed valuably to the work of the Committee. We need a new TFN representative to replace them.

Humber Heritage meets at 9:30 am on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA) headquarters at Steeles and Jane.

For more information, call Madeleine McDowell at 767-7633.

Madeleine McDowell, Chair  
Humber Heritage Committee

## PROJECTS (cont'd)

## HOUSE FINCH DISEASE: FACTS, FIGURES, AND A CALL FOR HELP

Since early 1994, bird watchers throughout much of Eastern North America have been noticing House Finches with red, swollen, crusty eyes. These birds have a respiratory disease caused by *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, a bacterium that usually infects poultry. The disease poses no known risk to humans, but it can be fatal to the finches. Sometimes the birds' eyes swell so much that they can't see, so they have a hard time finding food. They may starve or die from cold weather. The seriousness of the disease is so far undetermined. Many individual birds will certainly die, but the species as a whole is not likely to be affected. If you see infected birds in your yard, do not become alarmed. The disease is not a threat to humans, and it's safe to continue feeding birds. But you can take some steps to keep the disease from spreading: Clean your bird feeders regularly -- at least once at the start and again at the end of the winter feeding season -- with a mild bleach solution (one part bleach to nine parts water). Dry the feeders well before filling them. Prevent overcrowding by adding extra feeders to your yard; the disease spreads when birds are in close contact. And report sick birds to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. By law, only licensed wildlife specialists may handle wild birds. Also consider participating in the Cornell survey. All you have to do is watch your backyard feeders as you usually do and record whether any House Finches visit. If they do, you'll note whether they show any disease symptoms. Then once a month you'll send your data forms in. Participants in FeederWatch can receive survey kits for free. Other participants are asked to send a \$7 fee to help cover the costs of printing and mailing data forms, as well as the newsletter. For more information, or to sign up, write:

House Finch Survey, P.O. Box 11, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

a press release from Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, received in Feb. 1996.

## NATURAL HERITAGE EDUCATION AT ALGONQUIN PROVINCIAL PARK

Students in their last years of high school or the first one or two years of university are needed to work from mid-June to Labour Day to help visitors understand and appreciate the natural and human history of Algonquin Park. Requests for application forms and/or additional information should be directed to: Park Naturalist, Ministry of Natural Resources, Box 219, Whitney, Ont. K0J 2M0; phone: 613-637-2828. Final application date: March 1, 1996.



*There's NEVER daylight.  
So cannot imagine night  
when born without sight.*

haiku by Vera Irving

## PROJECTS (cont'd)

## DOWNSVIEW CHANGES

The Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Toronto lands in Downsview will be held "in perpetuity and in trust primarily as a unique recreational green space for the enjoyment of future generations" area MP Art Eggleton claimed once again in December 1995. The federal government has reaffirmed its 1994 and 1995 budget commitments to reduce and close CFB Toronto. Defence Minister David Collette says there "will be a significant recreational green space that would ensure the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment. This will contribute to a linkage to the existing Don and Humber Valley park systems". (All the above quotes in news releases from Eggleton).

While this all sounds wonderful, only 149 hectares of the 280 hectare site has been designated as park and recreational land, some of which may be open to the public as early as summer 1996. It will be five to 15 years, after extensive public consultation and reviews of development proposals before the lands are fully developed according to Collette in an interview with the Toronto Star. Collette told the Star: "It must be primarily park-urban recreational space --but it could have interspersed enclaves of mixed use". (Toronto Star, Dec. 19, 1995)

Such statements have led many, including North York-Spadina Metro Councillor Howard Moscoe to be cautious about the park plans. Moscoe has concerns that the plans could turn into "another Harbourfront boondoggle" in which the federal government sells off too much land to be developed. (Toronto Star, Dec. 19, 1995)

The federal government claims it is open to suggestions and wants public input, so those concerned about preserving and enhancing the existing green space should contact local Liberal MPs, especially Mr. Collette (447-5544) and Mr. Eggleton (565-4514), or write to them c/o House of Commons, Ottawa, K1A 1A6 (no postage required).

Some TFN members have been discussing strategies and can be reached at 398-5587 (Jim Purnell), or 781-7663 (Helen Mills).

Jim Purnell

## IF YOU FIND A BANDED BIRD...

If you find a banded bird, gather all the information you can about the bird and send it, along with the band (if possible) to the Bird Banding Office, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0H3. Note all the numbers on the band, the date the band was found, the exact location where it was found, and identify the species if you know it. Other information regarding how the bird was found or killed is also very valuable. Remember to include your name and address. If you see a colour-marked bird (marked with dye or with supplementary coloured bands or tags), record as much of the above information as possible and send it to the Bird Banding Office. When you provide this information, you will receive a Certification of Appreciation telling you where and when the bird was banded, who banded it, and other data collected by the bander.

from THE BLUE BILL (Kingston), Vol. 42, No. 4

## HERITAGE CENTRE CELEBRATES 200 YEARS YONGE

▷ The Community History Project (CHP) Heritage Centre has re-opened on the second floor of 719 Yonge Street with a full range of displays celebrating 200 Years Yonge. The hours of operation are as before: from noon until 4 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The owners of the building, Roy's Square (the block of stores at the southeast corner of Yonge and Bloor), have added a special room on a year-long basis for use in the Pioneer Food Focus and Farmers' Market every Tuesday from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. This activity is in Room 205 at the right of the top of the stairs, while the Heritage Centre is located in rooms farther down the hall. The CHP has offices in the same hallway. The Pioneer Food Focus has been going since 9 January with a different heritage organization coming each week to talk about their historic recipe and show their own displays. In the winter months, the food focus will take place in this room, with a quilter at work on a Yonge Street quilted wall hanging, artists and artisans from the First Nations doing their work and showing some interesting displays.

The Farmers' Market at present is a good place to pick up maple syrup, homemade jams and pickles, and even worm castings for natural gardeners. TFN has display material on exhibit for the year and will be mounting special exhibits. In the spring, the Pioneer Food Focus will move out into the street - the laneway called Roy's Square, honouring one of the early surveyors of Yonge Street in the 1830s. The CHP Heritage Centre also opens up on Tuesdays while all of the activity is going on at the other end of the hall, so you can see it all on Tuesdays!

See also page 29.

Jane Beecroft



THE CAPE MAY WARBLER is a regular Toronto migrant in spring and fall.

The drawing was based on a photo by William Reynolds in his book, POINT PEELE, Oxford U. Press, 1981

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## LEAD: A CONTINUED THREAT TO OUR WILD BIRDS

In a recent conversation with Cindy Pyves, Ontario Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Network (OWREN) member and a fellow University of Guelph student, I was reminded of the importance of thinking globally while acting locally. Ms. Pyves spoke of the continued threat posed by lead shot to our wildlife which we, as naturalists, should obviously be concerned about. It was estimated that prior to 1991, when the United States adopted regulations on the use of non-toxic shot, lead poisoning killed some 1.5 to 3 million waterfowl in North America every year. Lead toxicosis can occur in waterfowl and raptors as a result of ingestion of lead shot, sinkers and weights. It is speculated that each year in Canada 1500 tonnes of lead shot are deposited in the environment by hunters, while 370 tonnes of lead sinkers accumulate in bodies of water when they become detached from fishing lines and nets.

**Exposure** - Waterfowl such as ducks, geese and swans risk ingesting lead which has accumulated at the bottom of lakes and marshes when they scoop up food and the grit which aids their digestion. Piscivorous birds such as loons are thought to ingest lead when they feed on fish which have swallowed weights. Raptors, including hawks and eagles, are secondarily poisoned when feeding on prey which has been shot or has ingested lead shot or sinkers. Once ingested, the lead is retained in the gizzard, where it is slowly broken down by gastric juices. The breakdown releases toxic salts which are absorbed through the intestinal wall and, once in the bloodstream, cause lead poisoning.

**Scope of the problem** - According to Dr. Vernon Thomas of the University of Guelph, two or three shot gun pellets contain sufficient lead to kill a goose or swan within weeks, while a single sinker is enough to kill a loon. Data accumulated by Ms. Marilyn Twiss, an M.Sc. student with Dr. Thomas, show that the cause of death for 32 to 34 of 178 adult Common Loons examined over the last 10 years in Ontario was attributed to lead toxicosis. These data include the findings of Kit Chubb of the Avian Care and Research Foundation, who found that 30% of the Common Loons she examined had died of lead toxicosis.

As migrating birds travel great distances and may pick up lead at any point during their journey, lead poisoning in wild birds is not merely of local concern. In fact, to avoid birds ingesting lead in one country and then succumbing to toxicosis in another, it is imperative that the legislation in Canada and the United States, as well as in Mexico, be consistent. This brings us back to the idea of thinking globally while acting locally -- or in this case, nationally.

**Action** - The good news is that progress was made this summer in the fight to eliminate the use of lead products! On July 24, 1995, then Environment Minister Sheila Copps announced a ban on the use of shot for the hunting of migratory birds, under the Migratory Birds Convention Act. It will first be implemented on all National Wildlife Areas by 1996, and then across Canada by 1997. Implementation of the ban will bring Canada in line with the United States, which has had such legislation in place since 1991. ▷

## LEAD (cont'd)

Although this initiative is indeed a step in the right direction, the use of lead shot for other types of hunting and shooting (i.e., upland hunting and target shooting), as well as the use of sinkers and jigs, has yet to be addressed. These uses continue to add to the lead burden of the environment, increasing the risk to wildlife.

**Alternatives** - Alternatives to lead shot, such as bismuth and steel, have been used in the United States, Denmark and Norway and the Netherlands for several years. These alternatives have been known to be as effective as lead shot when used competently, and are not toxic to wildlife. High quality steel shot retails for about the same price as the best lead shot. Non-toxic sinkers produced from steel, bismuth and tin, as well as composites with tungsten and molybdenum are available for use in Canada. Though slightly more expensive than lead, the use of alternatives would entail a mere 1 to 2% increase in the annual expenses of anglers, according to Dr. Thomas. Such an expense pales in comparison to the benefits that would accrue from the creation of a far more sustainable sport.

**What you can do** - This summer, a report submitted to then Environment Minister Sheila Copps by the Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development also recommended the implementation of a ban on the production, sale and use of lead shot and sinkers across Canada, under the Environmental Protection Act, by May 31, 1997. As of yet, though, no action has been taken to implement this broader legislation, and thus it is very important that you inform the Minister (now Sergio Marchi) of your concerns regarding the effects of lead on Canada's wildlife. One personal letter has far more impact, and is given more weight, than several form letters. You may wish to make use of the points raised in this article to guide you in writing your own letter.

Jocelyn Neysmith

adapted from an article in THE WOOD DUCK, newsletter of Hamilton Naturalists' Club, January 1996 □

*Carpet of mottled leaves,  
some with bright yellow flowers,  
miniature lilies with red stamens,  
beside a brook hastening to the Hudson.*

*I want to go back next week  
to see the trout-lilies  
in full bloom.*

*Will I?*

*Sr. Margaret Banville  
April 21, 1989*

## THE DURATION OF DESIRE IN FROGS AND TOADS

After the unpredictable spring we had in 1995, many of you may have noticed that frogs and toads can be very temperamental in their singing patterns. If you are new to "frogging", learning about amphibian breeding phenology may help you to detect all frog and toad species calling at their peak chorus.

Frogs and toads overwinter in holes in the ground, or in mud at the bottom of a water body, respectively, depending on whether they are mainly terrestrial (e.g. wood frogs, gray treefrogs, and American toads) or mainly aquatic (e.g. northern leopard frogs, green frogs and bullfrogs). Because amphibians derive their body heat from their surroundings rather than producing it themselves, they will only be able to move when the surrounding temperature is warm enough. A heavy spring rain will often warm up the ground and water enough for frogs and toads to emerge from overwintering sites.

Terrestrial species literally thaw out in the spring. With the exception of the American toads, all frogs can have up to 40% of their bodies frozen when they are overwintering in the ground! They survive by producing substances which prevent their cells from breaking when their bodies freeze over the winter. Frogs cannot be completely frozen though, so terrestrial frogs need a deep snow cover to insulate the ground and ice cannot form to the bottom of the pond. Once frogs emerge, they migrate to breeding grounds and set up territories. When the temperature is right, the males start calling. Frogs that breed in temporary pools are "explosive" breeders. They have to breed quickly before the water evaporates, so eggs and tadpoles can survive. Explosive breeders do not have the time to set up territories and so instead migrate en masse to one suitable area to sing and breed. Thus, wood frogs and Fowler's toads, which are explosive breeders, can be found calling in groups for two weeks only.

Most of the frogs and toads in the Great Lakes basin are prolonged breeders and call for several weeks. These species tend to be permanent-water breeders that overwinter in mud. They may be found at the edge of ponds until the temperature is warm enough for them to set up territories and start calling and breeding. Peak calling generally coincides with warm temperatures and wet weather.

Lured by the sound of calling males, females may travel long distances to breeding grounds. Once females arrive, they choose which male they want to breed with, based on the depth of the male's voice and the quality of his territory as an egg-laying site. Older males tend to have deeper voices and to be larger and so are able to successfully defend better sites.

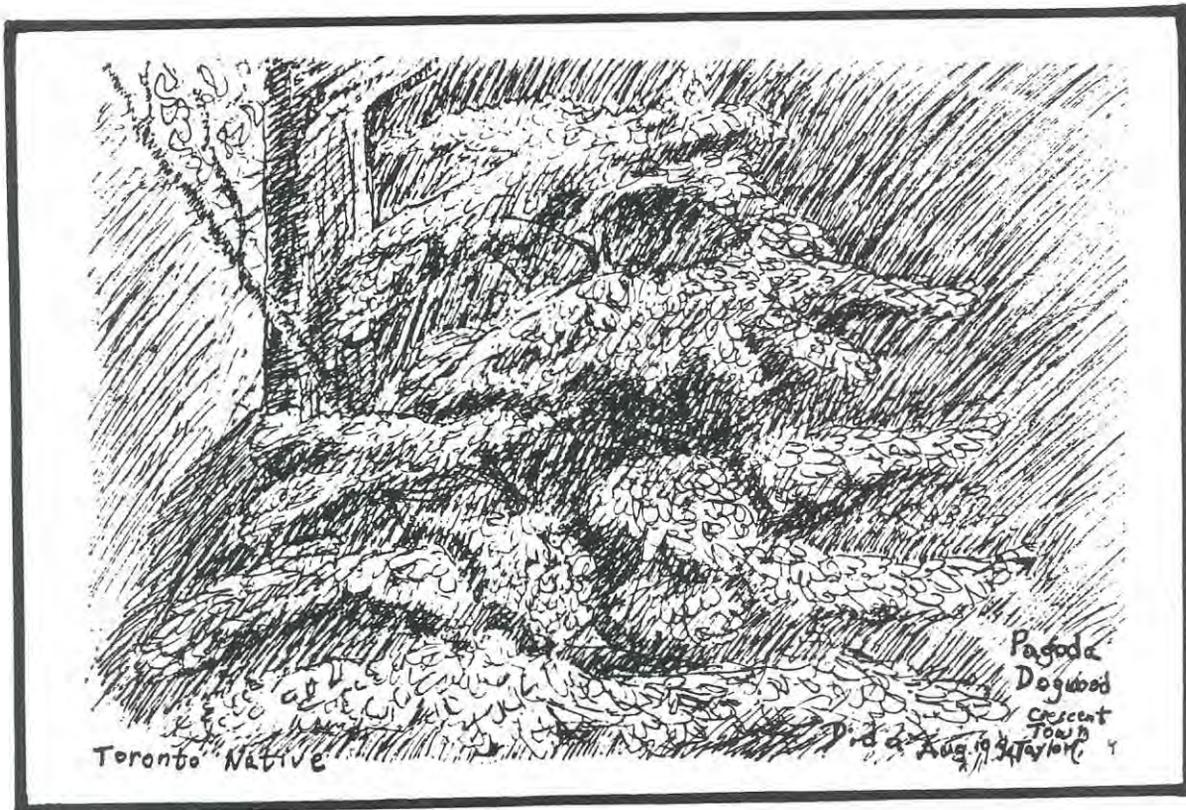
It may take as little as one night for all the females to reach a breeding site, lay their eggs and leave, as in explosive breeders. In prolonged breeders, females arrive a few at a time over the breeding season. Once egg-laying is done, females leave immediately and generally do not lay a second clutch. Male frogs will continue calling to attract many females.



As you can see, timing is crucial in determining the peak calling period for many species, so thinking like a frog might help you decide when to survey. Going out when the temperature is appropriate for each species helps to ensure that you will hear them. To detect the explosive breeders, keep track of daytime temperatures and survey when it's warm, a day or two after a heavy spring shower. The prolonged breeders breed later and longer, so timing is not as crucial. A warm, wet evening should result in good calling for all species.

Natalie Helferty

▷ from MARSH MONITORING PROGRAM NEWSLETTER, No. 2, 1995, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0 Tel: 519-586-3531 Fax: 519-586-3532 □



All the animals and land throughout this planet are held in trust by us. We have no right to destroy or change this heritage so that it becomes unrecognizable. We have a duty to pass the planet along to future generations in as unspoiled a way as possible. This requires intelligence, foresight, understanding, and creative effort.

extracted from PASSPORT TO ANYWHERE: THE STORY OF LARS-ERIC LINDBLAD, Times Books, 1983

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 THE AQUATIC NURSERY OF DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

Even when winter is upon us, it is never too early to consider the spring and summer, especially the insects that accompany these seasons. One favourite summertime order of insect is the Odonata, otherwise known as dragonflies (Anisoptera) and damselflies (Zygoptera). A dragonfly is easily distinguished from a damselfly by the fact that it holds its wings out horizontally while a damselfly usually holds them vertically above its body or only partially spread.

While the terrestrial adults are familiar to most people the aquatic nymphal form is not as commonly recognized. The nymphs of odonates, much like their aerial adult forms, are voracious predators. They can be collected from streams, shallow rivers and ponds such as those located in the Duffin Creek Conservation Area north of Ajax. By simply dragging a net through pond weeds or kicking stream debris from the rocky bottom into a net you should be able to snag some immature odonates.

These nymphs have a modification that assists them to capture prey and helps distinguish them from all other aquatic insect nymphs. This modification is an elongated, hinged and extensible lower lip or labium with hook-like apical lobes at the end which allows for the rapid seizing of prey, even small fish.

It is also relatively easy to determine whether or not the nymph you have managed to obtain is a dragonfly or a damselfly. A damselfly nymph has three long caudal appendages on the end of its abdomen which it uses as gills in order to breathe. A dragonfly nymph lacks these long gills and has only three small triangular appendages. It breathes by sucking water through its anus into a rectal chamber that contains tracheal gills and then expelling it. This also provides it with a very effective jet-propulsion system.

The nymph will undergo several underwater moults (the shedding of its hard exoskeleton in order to grow larger) before leaving the water and moulting for a final time into the winged adult form. With its large compound eyes and ability to beat its wings alternately, giving it the ability to hover, the nymph of dragonflies and damselflies is well suited to carry on its predatory ways.

Mark Hanson

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□

## W E E D S ( ? )

I always have difficulty with the dividing line between "wildflowers" and "weeds". What makes for the difference? If there is a scientific elucidation I have yet to come across it; if it is the time-honoured assessment of a wildflower becoming a weed when it grows where it was not planted, then this remains a personal and arbitrary definition. For myself, I think of most (even the least desirable - e.g., swallowwort!) as plants rather than weeds, and I find it interesting that the Peterson Guide, out of well over 1,200 species described in terms of plants, vines, shrubs, creepers, etc., nevertheless gives the name "weed" to the following: Jimsonweed, milk-purslane, English and common plantains, stinging nettle, the much maligned common dandelion, horseweed (it even merits the adjective "rank"), Asiatic dayflower, and bladder campion. Jimsonweed is poisonous, but so is fool's-parsley and it is called a plant, albeit an ill-smelling one. All, except for horseweed, are aliens, but if being non-native were the criterion a huge number of wildflowers would have to be reclassified. So it appears we fall back on the personal preference.

All this is mere preamble to the plant goings-on on my small balcony this summer. Along with the store-bought geraniums and dusty millers, I hosted a number of gatecrashers (air borne, bird borne, soil impregnated?). There was a tall, rich swathe of pale smartweed, a mass of Asiatic dayflower, a burst of rough cinquefoil, climbing false buckwheat, creeping wood sorrel, a lone dandelion, feverfew, galinsoga, and countless tiny black locust sprigs and ever-optimistic Manitoba maples -- even a repeat of last year's peanut, though arriving too late in the season to produce any nuts. (In 1994 I harvested two whole peanuts from my visitor.) All this I find exciting. What will come up next?

I might for the summer of 1996 do the balcony equivalent of those who have given up on regulated flowerbeds and regimented lawns and let their space go wild, by gardening standards. It appears all I need are numerous soil-filled receptacles requiring the occasional watering during dry spells, and -- as with the Spit -- "things" will move in. The time has come to stop pulling up the "weeds" from around my store plants -- indeed, to stop buying store plants -- and to let Nature get on with it!

Eva Davis

□



BRITISH SOLDIERS OF RED CREST LICHEN - JAMES BAILLIE RESERVE

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## SIGHTINGS OF A GARDENER

What I like most about the Riverdale Meadow Community garden at Broadview and Danforth is its diversity. Flowers, vegetables, herbs, fruit trees and berry bushes all grow together in irregular-shaped plots. Rocks, stones, wood and water are placed amongst these plants to protect and enrich the soil, nourish plants and insects, create pathways and attract wildlife. Cardinals, goldfinches, preying mantises, monarchs, foxes and other wildlife visitors are often seen eating, sleeping or playing in the garden. It certainly is a popular spot - for all species!

**Wild Eyes** - The summer of '95 will be remembered as the summer Toronto melted. Just when we thought that the heat and humidity had reached their peak, the mercury climbed a little higher. It was on one of these sweltering days that my friend, Sasha, and I spotted a small bundle of red fur perched on the mulch pile. To avoid the heat of the midday sun, Sasha and I arrived in the early morning to prepare for an upcoming tour. We were gathering fallen branches for a bean teepee when I felt that feeling of being watched. I turned around, expecting to see a person but was greeted instead by a small red fox. I quietly called to Sasha who was scavenging on the ground for strong fallen branches. The two of us stood still, watching the fox watch us. After a short time, he got up from his resting spot and descended from the mulch pile, all the while looking back at us. Then he scurried away down the hill and disappeared into the valley. The adventurer in me wanted to follow him and discover his den; but the realist in me said "there's no way you're getting over or under that chain-link fence." So I remained in the garden with Sasha and revelled in the memory of those recently-departed wild eyes.

**Dusty Wings** - Monarch, tiger swallowtail and red admiral butterflies frequently greeted me on my visits to the garden. These beautiful creatures made excellent use of our newly planted butterfly garden as well as the milkweed and sunflowers planted in numerous plots. I often found myself mesmerized by their colours, patterns and undulating flight. At a time when butterfly populations are shrinking due to habitat destruction, it is wonderful to see so many individuals finding refuge in our diverse and chemical-free garden.

**Behind the Maple Leaves** - In the refreshing coolness of the summer evenings, we gardeners often got together to work and chat in the community garden. One of the most dependable attendants at our Monday night "work-meetings" was a red cardinal. What he lacked in gardening skills, he made up for in aesthetics and verbal capabilities. While we mulched and watered the garden plots, our red-feathered friend perched himself upon a maple branch and sung in perfect pitch. Above the noise from idling engines and honking horns, his familiar song rang out loud and clear.

The Riverdale Meadow Community Garden is an inspiration! It satisfies both the gardener and the naturalist in me. Come for a visit and see for yourself. One thing's for sure - you won't be alone! For information about tours, call Janet McKay at 416-461-9670, ext. 29.

Colleen Cirillo

□

## TAR SPOT OF MAPLES



Last year seemed to be a year for "Tar Spot", *Rhytisma acerinum*, which affects maples. It is in the class Ascomycetes.

The disease will probably be noticed first in late summer or early fall when large black spots appear on the leaves of maples. The spots will remain on fallen leaves, and over the winter within the structure spores develop and are released in the spring through splits which occur on the surface of the spots.

Some of these spores will reach young maples leaves and those that land on the under-surface can germinate and invade the leaf causing leaf tissue to turn light green or yellowish. During the summer the black structures begin to form. In this early period two kinds of nuclei develop and in pairing they function in the sexual development of the fungus. As the season progresses spores begin to develop within the spots and this continues in the fallen leaves for the release the following spring and the renewal of the cycle.

According to some experts the incidence of Tar Spot varies considerably from year to year "probably in response to climatic conditions". It is said to occur wherever maples grow in moist environments. Was this Toronto recently? One authority states that Tar Spot is scarce in urban and industrial areas because it is sensitive to polluted air. Low concentrations of sulphur dioxide prevent new infections. With a bumper crop of Tar Spot last fall, does that mean our air last year was purer than usual?

Although maple Tar Spot is unpleasant aesthetically it probably has little importance in the development of the trees.

Jean Macdonald

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...as human beings we are simply one of the creatures in the forest, and what happens to the forest happens to us.

from TREASURES OF THE PLACE: THREE CENTURIES OF NATURE WRITING IN CANADA by Wayne Grady, Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver/Toronto, 1992

## BLACK OMEN

I knew the oil company I work for was having financial problems; still, I was shocked when I looked out the window to find a turkey vulture staring balefully back in at me! The bird was standing on the gravel-tar roof of the twenty-three-floor building. Spreading its wings a full six feet wide, it repeatedly hissed and feinted strikes towards its own reflection in the mirrored glass. Its bald red head was startling in contrast to its black plumage. Most unnerving and memorable was its bone white bill. Why had it landed on the roof? Was it trying to attack a rival? If so, was it a male or female? Had the food odours vented from the mall below attracted it? Was it merely tired? After ten minutes, building personnel opened the window to the roof, shattering the perfect mirror. As if a mesmerizing spell had been broken, the vulture soared back up into the blue morning sky. Heading north, away from downtown North York, it vanished. I don't know if the vulture was migrating or a resident. Perhaps this spring we'll see it again. After all, business is not much better.

Laurie Takayesu

□



THE COMMON FIG (*Ficus carica*), the edible species, was photographed on Huron Street by G. Geltner in the fall of 1990 and cut down in the spring of 1991. It was sadly missed on subsequent TFN downtown flora outings. (See TFN 375:6, 1985, and 423:7, 1991.)

## IN THE NEWS

### SHADE TREES CURB GLOBAL WARMING

City trees are beneficial because of the cooling effect of evapotranspiration in their leaves and the complex ways they mitigate pollution. By restoring high tree "canopies" over streets and parking lots, whose paved surfaces contribute to higher temperatures, the United States alone could save as much as \$4 billion in energy use each summer. Despite widespread public concern, cash-strapped municipalities see trees more as a cost than a benefit. They buy the cheapest saplings for streets and parks and spend less than 50 cents a year per capita on tree maintenance. A perennial challenge facing foresters who want to create urban tree "canopies" --streets and parks where the crowns of trees meet to form a green roof high overhead--is that not enough large species thrive under difficult urban growing conditions. Municipalities are now reluctant to plant whole streets or neighbourhoods with a single or just several species. They fear the cost of cutting trees down should some unforeseen disease destroy them, as did Dutch elm disease, which killed millions of city trees in eastern North America. Ironically the elm was one of the most pollution-resistant, fast-growing and long-lived trees in cities.

extracted from an article by Alfred Holden in UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO BULLETIN, 8 January 1996

### METRO O.K.S \$1 MILLION FOR RIVERSIDE PARKLAND

Metro Council has approved \$1 million for riverside parkland, including Milne Hollow in the Don Valley, the public acquisition of which was among the last projects of one of Canada's leading conservationists, Charles Sauriol. This money will also help pay for some nine properties in the mid- and north Humber Valley lands. This acquisition will ease completion of the Humber Trail between the waterfront and Steeles Avenue West.

adapted from an article by Peter Small in THE TORONTO STAR, 21 December 1995

### SCHOOLS AND LOCAL GROUPS URGED TO CLEAN UP BLACK CREEK

Schools and community groups are being invited to adopt sections of the 20-kilometre-long Black Creek in Metro Toronto and York Region to help to preserve the Humber River tributary. They will be asked to haul out garbage, plant shrubs along banks, monitor water quality and urge residents not to pour pollutants down drains. The move was announced in early December when the Black Creek Project, a group of environmental volunteers, cemented a partnership with The Biosphere in Montreal, an Environment Canada agency. The Black Creek Project will send details of its work to The Biosphere, a resource centre on water and ecosystems in the Great Lakes, and in return will be able to find out through the Internet what other groups or scientists are doing to reverse pollution trends in the lakes and St. Lawrence River.

extracted from an article by Brian Dexter in THE TORONTO STAR, 14 December 1995



IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

### 'MOUSE FRIENDLY' -- THAT'S OUR T. O.

Toronto is a "mouse-friendly" town. There are rodents in the Don Jail, St. Lawrence Market, supermarkets, restaurants, even the Eaton Centre and SkyDome and in offices from City Hall to the big banks. However, the news is that this severe winter has drawn unusual numbers of foxes, owls and hawks into Metro to feast on urban mice. Four Red-Tailed Hawks have been hanging out around Yonge and Bloor, there's a Great Horned Owl in Cabbagetown, and a slew of falcons along the central lakeshore.

adapted from an article by George Gamester in THE TORONTO STAR, 16 January 1996

### BACKYARD SPARROWS SLOW ON THE UPTAKE

Re: Wayne Grady's article 'Why House Sparrows Prefer Their Seed On The Ground (Nov. 18): While house sparrows are indeed related to weaver finches (family Ploceidae), they are in fact true sparrows (Passeridae), contrary to what Mr. Grady states. They were known in Europe by the names sparrow, sperling, or other ancestral and related forms of the word sparrow for centuries before Europeans arrived in North America and erroneously labelled members of the family Emerizidae with the same name. Mr. Grady also writes that house sparrows are pests of grain crops and therefore would not have been effective as controllers of insect pests upon their introduction into North America. Although sparrows do eat large quantities of grain, they also primarily feed their young insects, and kill great quantities of insects in the process. This fact was obviously not a mystery to those who released sparrows in North America. Finally, Mr. Grady seems convinced that because the sparrows in his neighbourhood will not feed from his bird-feeding platform, they are constrained to feed on the ground by their evolutionary history of feeding on weed seeds that have ripened and fallen to the ground. He surmises that their habit of knocking seed onto the ground is due to this constraint. However, house sparrows readily feed from bird feeders in other neighbourhoods and cities. In addition, house sparrows in grain-growing areas do not wait for ripe seeds to fall to the ground, as Mr. Grady suggests. They are often observed to eat grain from the standing stalk. They are indeed well known to spill a great deal of seed onto the ground, as he writes. However, this is a secondary result of their search through the seed pile for their favourite kinds of grain, not an elaborate behaviour designed to satisfy a compulsion to feed on the ground. I suggest that the majority of sparrows in Mr. Grady's backyard have simply not learned to exploit bird feeders. [See review on page 8.]

letter to the editor by Anthony Lang, PhD, ornithologist, in THE GLOBE AND MAIL, 2 December 1996

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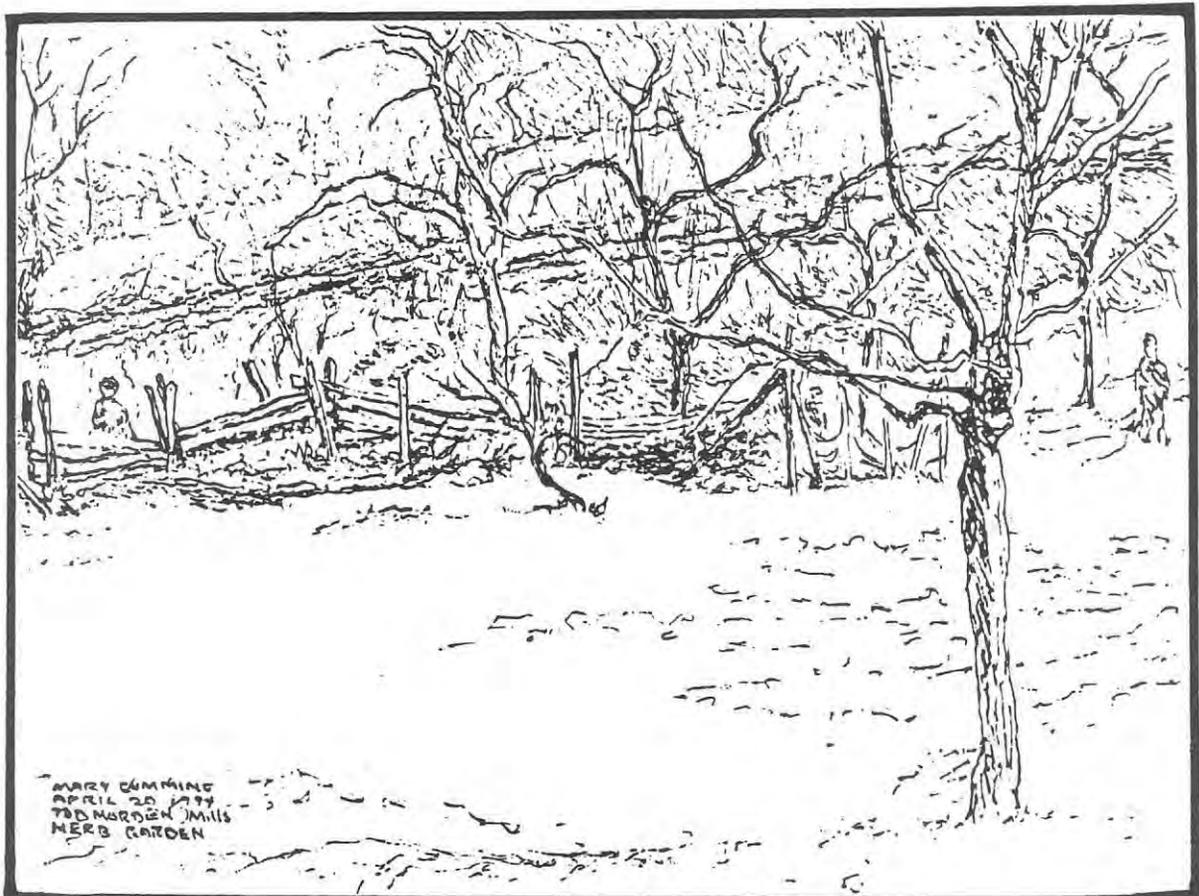
## THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

Toronto, March 1995

Spring seemed to come early this year as March was unseasonably warm, sunny and dry. At about 2.5°C above normal, March was the warmest since 1977 at Pearson Airport, and since 1987 downtown. Sunshine approached 200 hours with 193.8, the most since 1987 when there were 198.5 hours. Precipitation was fairly light, most of it from one system on March 7th. Snowfall was scanty. Downtown's 4.6 cm contrasts dramatically with the normal of 22.7 cm, and was the lowest since 1981, which had 4.1 cm. Light winds round out the picture of a distinctly lamb-like March.

The core of the spectacular weather occurred during a record or near-record warm spell from March 12th to 16th, which occurred at about the same period as another early season "heat wave" in 1990. Away from Lake Ontario, temperatures rose over the 20°C mark on March 14th and 15th at Pearson Airport, with a maximum of 20.9°C on the latter day. Thereafter, it settled down into a more seasonable weather pattern but abundant sunshine prevailed: it was almost totally clear from March 23rd to 28th.

Gavin Miller



## COMING EVENTS

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

- Sat. March 2 from 9 am (all day) - Winter Birds (Durham Region)  
Meet George Bryant at the Pickering GO station to form a car pool if necessary. Bring a lunch and dress warmly.

Toronto Entomologists' Association meeting - Sat. March 23 at 1 pm in the Public Lecture Room at the McLaughlin Planetarium - Dr. Tom Alloway will talk about "How do ants in slave-making colonies recognize each other?". For more information call Al Hanks at 905-727-6993.

Friends of Don East York - nature walk with Morris Sorensen - March 24 at 1:30 pm. Meet at the corner of Broadview and Mortimer. Free 2 hour walk.

Willowdale Gem and Mineral Club - Gem and Mineral Show - Sat. Mar. 16 from 10 am to 6 pm and Sun. March 17 from 11 am to 5 pm at Armour Heights Community Centre, Avenue Rd. & Wilson Ave. Free admission.

Black Creek Project meeting - Wed. March 6 at 6:30 pm at the Centennial Bldg. (Senior's Lounge), York Municipal Centre, 2694 Eglinton Ave. West.

Citizens for a Lakeshore Greenway walk - Sat. March 30 at 10:30 am starting at Marie Curtis Park West parking lot. Bring lunch. Leader: Bill Frankling. Walk ends at Port Credit.

Canadian Wildflower Society East Toronto Chapter meeting - Wed. Mar. 27 at 7:30 pm at the Beach Recreation Centre, 6 Williamson Rd. Topic will be "Photographing Wildflowers" with Nancy Mungall. For more information call Paul McGaw at 261-6272 or Carolyn King at 222-5736.

Kortright Centre maple syrup making - March 2 until April 14 from 10 am to 3 pm. For more information call 905-832-2289.

Botanizing in New Mexico with Jim Hodgins, editor of WILDFLOWER magazine, May 15, 16, 17 or and  
Botanizing in Dominica, West Indies, April 28, 29, 30.  
Small, intimate group, maximum 9; \$375 CDN. each; food, lodging, transport extra. For more details contact Jim Hodgins at 90 Wolfrey Ave., Toronto, Ont. M4K 1K8.

North Toronto Green Community - Seedy Saturday - Sat. March 9 from 10 am to 4 pm at the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre, 200 Eglinton Ave. West. \$5 donation suggested to support a heritage and community garden for the park.

Community History Project Heritage Centre celebrates "200 Years Yonge" at 719 Yonge St. from 11 am to 4 pm on Tuesdays with a Pioneer Food Focus and Farmers' Market. [See also page 16.]

Toronto Historical Board lunch-time lectures on urban development issues - Thursday, 12 noon to 1 pm, March 14 to April 18 at 205 Yonge St. □

# TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS

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\$30 FAMILY (2 adults - same address, children included)  
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\$20 STUDENT, SENIOR SINGLE  
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