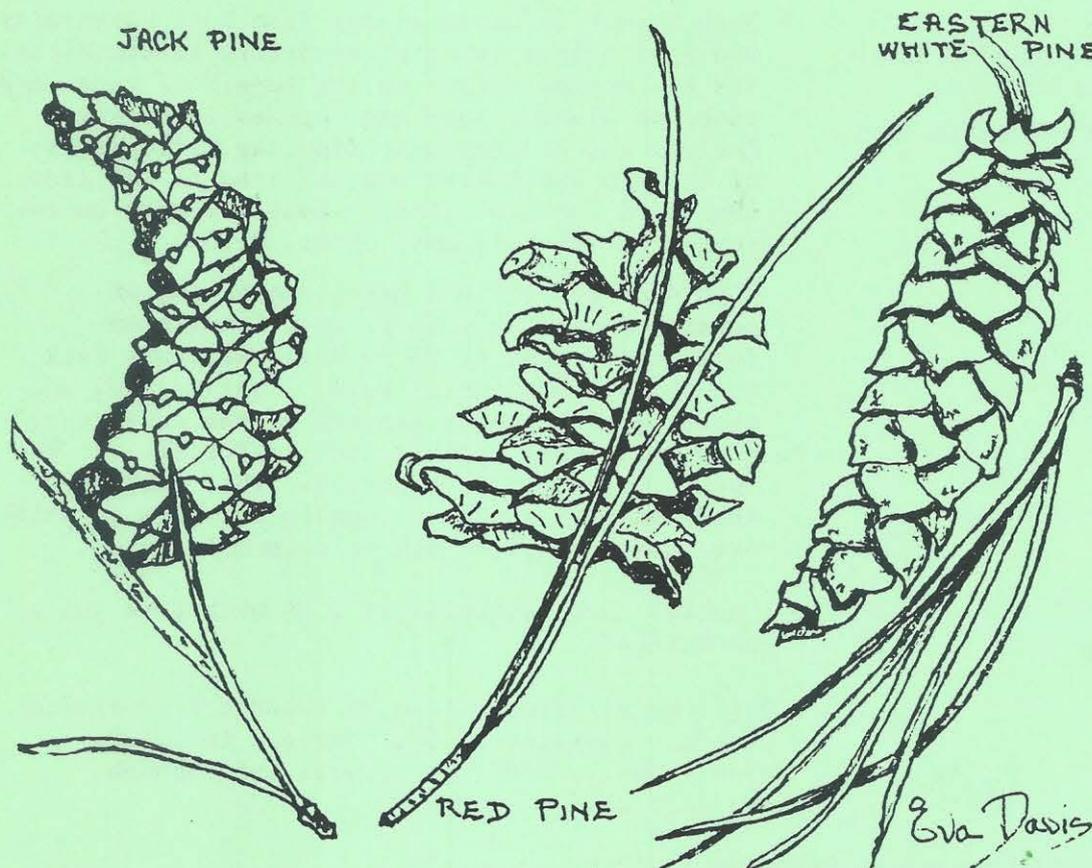


# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 472

December 1997



"THREE ONTARIO PINES - cones and needle-bundles"  
drawn from specimens by Eva Davis.

Toronto status: White and Red native; Jack pine planted.

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## TFN MEETINGS

Sunday, December 7, 1997 - DEER DEPREDATIONS IN CAROLINIAN FORESTS  
an illustrated lecture by Dawn R. Bazely  
at 2:30 pm

in the Northrop Frye Hall  
Victoria University  
73 Queen's Park Cres. East

- Dawn Bazely is an ecologist from York University who specializes in plant-herbivore interactions. She has worked mainly on the impact of geese and sheep on plants. She has degrees in Botany, Zoology and Biogeography from the Universities of Toronto and Oxford and has been on CBC radio (Quirks & Quarks) talking about her work on the remote Scottish Island of St. Kilda.
- High deer populations have been having an adverse impact on such premier Carolinian forests as those at Point Pelee National Park and Rondeau Provincial Park. Deer grazing and browsing affect many aspects of the ecosystem, from individual species such as Trillium to the "gap" dynamics of the forest. This talk examines some of these impacts and ways in which over-grazed habitat can be restored.

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

+ Quilt Raffle Ticket Sale to benefit Bird Studies Canada. Tickets: \$5.00. Odds: 1 in 1,500. Draw: June 1, 1998. [For more information, see page 14.]

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, February 1, 1998

NEXT NEWSLETTER: February 1998 (to be mailed in mid-January)

Average annual temperatures in Toronto are 2 degrees Celsius higher than they were 100 years ago. This is mainly owing to urban heat radiation. And the inner city averages 191 frost-free days a year compared with 145 days in the northern limits. The heat-island effect extends right up to the northernmost suburbs. Hot spots are at major intersections and a huge peak at ever-busy Highway 401. Surprisingly, urban valleys such as Hogg's Hollow no longer send temperatures plummeting, perhaps because they are now full of highrise condominiums. The real cold spots are now located in rural areas north and south of Aurora, leaving dormitory towns such as Richmond Hill, Thornhill and Newmarket to develop heat islands of their own. The new temperature profiles should warn developers about traffic pollution seeping into Hogg's Hollow and other frost valleys from Highway 401.

extracted from "Taking Yonge's temperature" by Gordon Black in the TORONTO STAR, Oct. 4, 1997

If in doubt, call the weather number 661-0123 before getting ready.

FOR ENJOYMENT OF WINTER OUTINGS



# 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 will know what to wear on outings which go rain or shine.

- Wednesday HIGH PARK - nature walk Toronto  
 Dec. 3 Leader: George Bryant  
 10 am Meet at park entrance on the south side of Bloor St. West  
 opposite High Park Ave. Bring lunch.  
 Bring notebooks, binoculars and your favourite field guide. This park with  
 its oak woodlands and large pond is always interesting.
- Saturday YORK CITY HALL - nature arts Black Creek, York  
 Dec. 6 Leader: Mary Cumming  
 10:30 am Meet in the lobby of the York City Hall at 2700 Eglinton Ave.  
 West, west of Keele St.  
 We will view the exhibition of the York Artists Guild, and have our lunch in  
 the cafeteria. Bring some of your own work to show at lunchtime.
- Sunday TFN MEETING [See page 2 for details.]  
 Dec. 7  
 2:30 pm
- Tuesday ERNEST THOMPSON SETON PARK - nature walk West Don, East York  
 Dec. 9 Leader: Jo Croft  
 10:30 am Meet on the south side of Eglinton Ave. East opposite Leslie St.  
 This will be a fast walk as we explore the park named after one of Canada's  
 best known naturalists. This is a chance to enjoy getting out and looking  
 about. We may see anything from wintering Red-tailed hawks to late-blooming  
 flowers. Morning only.  
 +
- Tuesday GARDINER MUSEUM - nature arts Toronto  
 Dec. 9 Leader: Alice Mandryk  
 10:30 am Meet at the entrance on the east side of Queen's Park just  
 south of Bloor St. West (opposite the Royal Ontario Museum).  
 We will be viewing the Christmas trees and pottery exhibits and then have  
 lunch at the ROM. Bring any work you have to show at lunchtime.  
 \$ entry  
 fee
- Sunday MARIE CURTIS PARK - nature walk Etobicoke Cr., Etobicoke  
 Dec. 14 Leader: Ken Cook  
 1:30 pm Meet on the bridge over the creek, on Lake Shore Blvd. West,  
 west of Brown's Line.  
 Many ducks, geese, swans and gulls enjoy this area in the winter before the  
 river freezes. A trail beside the river gives access to the shale-lined  
 valley -- a really scenic place at any time of year.





# TFN OUTINGS

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

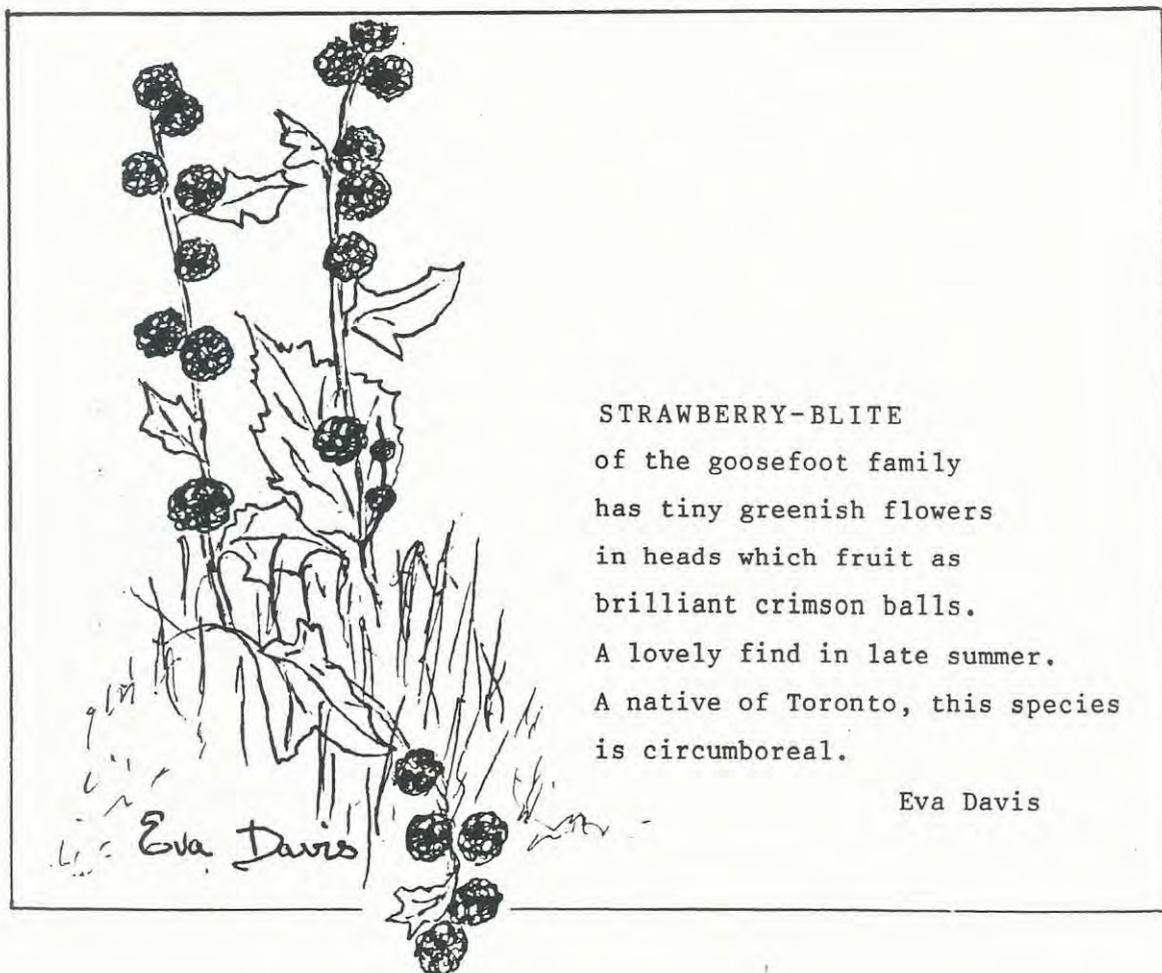
- Saturday NORTH YORK LIBRARY - nature arts North York  
 Jan. 3 Leader: Diana Banville  
 10:30 am Meet at the exit turnstiles of the North York Centre subway station.  
 We will be looking at prints in books or sketching from the windows of the library. Weather permitting, we may visit the York Cemetery greenhouses. Lunch will be in the mall, after which we can look at each other's work.
- Thursday CHERRY BEACH - nature walk Lakeshore, Toronto  
 Jan. 8 Leader: George Bryant  
 10:30 am Meet at the southwest corner of King St. East and Sumach St. Morning only.  
 We will be looking at winter weeds and birds at the mouth of the Don River and on Lake Ontario. Dress warmly.
- Saturday WESTON GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB - human & natural history Humber, Etobicoke  
 Jan. 10 Leaders: Marj Mossman & Mary Lou Ashbourne  
 1:30 pm Meet at the golf course entrance on St. Phillips Rd., west of Weston Road.  
 The winter is a good time to visit golf courses to look for birds and mammals which find food and shelter in these semi-private areas.
- Wednesday HUMBER BAY PARK - birds Lakeshore, Etobicoke  
 Jan. 14 Leader: Barbara Kalthoff  
 11 am Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Lake Shore Blvd. West opposite Park Lawn Rd. Bring lunch.  
 This park has been created by dumping construction rubble at the mouth of Mimico Creek and later landscaping the area. It has become a wonderful place to see winter waterfowl -- ducks, geese, swans and gulls. Bring binoculars.
- Sunday MASHQUOTEH - nature walk Toronto  
 Jan. 18 Leader: Helen Mills  
 2 pm Meet at the northeast corner of St. Clair Ave. West and Avenue Rd. This is a joint outing with the North Toronto Green Community. We will be looking for signs of a lost creek about which little is known.
- Wednesday WILKET CREEK - birds Don tributary, North York  
 Jan. 21 Leader: Louise Orr  
 10 am Meet at the southwest corner of Lawrence Ave. East and Leslie St. Lunch optional.  
 Bring binoculars and notebook and be prepared to stop, look and listen. This sheltered ravine provides excellent habitat for overwintering birds.



## JANUARY OUTINGS (cont'd)

- Saturday RAVINA CREEK - heritage walk Toronto  
 Jan. 24 Leader: Ian Wheal  
 1 pm Meet at the Donlands subway station.  
 This walk will be through city streets, looking for signs of a mostly-buried creek and noting how much of interest to naturalists remains.
- Sunday SCARBOROUGH HEIGHTS - nature walk Lakeshore, Scarborough  
 Jan. 25 Leader: Boris Mather  
 1 pm Meet at the entrance to Rosetta McClain Gdns., on the south side of Kingston Rd. (east of Birchmount Rd.).  
 We will check the waterfront for waterfowl and the nearby ravine for wintering birds and good views of the bluffs.
- Tuesday TORONTO ISLANDS - birds Lakeshore, Toronto  
 Jan. 27 Leader: Ann Gray  
 10:30 am Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. Bring lunch.  
 \$ ferry Dress warmly, bring binoculars and be prepared to stop, look, and listen.  
 tickets As well as waterfowl in the bay, we may find other birds spending the winter in the island's natural areas.

□



## STRAWBERRY-BLITE

of the goosefoot family  
 has tiny greenish flowers  
 in heads which fruit as  
 brilliant crimson balls.

A lovely find in late summer.  
 A native of Toronto, this species  
 is circumboreal.

Eva Davis

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I write this in late October, Christmas still seems far away, but by the time you receive your newsletter the holiday season will be fast approaching. Seasons greetings to all our members!

As we share this holiday season with our family and friends, let us also remember to thank "Mother Nature" for all the joy she has given us during this past year. From a special treat at the feeder for our feathered friends to a major donation to your favourite environmental cause, there are many ways of doing this. Please give it some thought.

President's Field Notes #3, December 1997

Winter is a good time to look for signs of animals that we may not actually see. If we have snow it's an excellent time to search for animal tracks. Sometimes they tell a life and death story concerning a capture or a narrow escape. You may even wish to make plaster casts. Check also for den sites and droppings (scat). Expect some strange looks if you decide to discuss the latter with your non-naturalist friends, but it can be fascinating. Let's see now, fox or coyote?

Look also for abandoned bird nests and hornet's nests (much safer at this time of year!) as well as woodpecker holes, insect egg cases and pupae. Bracket fungi are in evidence on trees and the fields are filled with the skeletons of winter weeds.

I'm not really an avid lister, but I generally start a new set of nature notes every January including bird, mammal and plant observations. It is interesting to check back to see the variations from year to year.

Many books are available on animal tracks, winter weeds, etc. A good starting point and all-purpose reference is A GUIDE TO NATURE IN WINTER by Donald Stokes.

Again, my best wishes to all of you for the holidays and the upcoming year.

Morris Sorensen

□

### COMMON COLTSFOOT

is a native of Europe but is well established in all Toronto's watersheds.

Familiar as the first showy spring wildflower we notice, its huge leaves develop only later, resembling a colt's hoof (Britton & Brown's ILLUSTRATED FLORA OF NORTHERN UNITED STATES AND CANADA lists several other names along those lines).

Drawing by D. Andrew White



## FOR READING

**Canadian Garden Words** by Bill Casselman. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company Ltd. (1997). 356 pages, \$19.95.

How and why plants get their names is an area unexplored by most botanists and gardeners. Enter lexicographer and raconteur Bill Casselman to set matters straight. Equipped with wit, humour and a serious obsession with words, he delves into the fascinating name origins of native and exotic annuals, perennials, bulbs, herbs and trees. Both vernacular and scientific names are considered. Along this etymological odyssey, Casselman's enquiring mind also showers us with myth, history, speculation and pure trivia.

For example, under 'Flax', we learn that *linoleum* is a combination *linum* (flax) and *oleum* (oil), as it was originally made partially from solidified linseed oil. And lovers of Manitoba maple (you know who you are) might get a little defensive when they learn of recent studies indicating its pollen has the highest level of allergenicity of all tree pollen on earth!

Despite the book's title, many of the "garden" plants will be familiar to local naturalists. A quick perusal reveals a number of non-native garden escapes, as well as natives which have been transplanted from the wild into the garden. In addition, a chapter each is devoted to native wildflowers and indigenous trees. One will also find many familiar wildflowers embedded in discussions of related garden plants.

If you have never had a desire to learn how plants got their names, this book may convince you otherwise.

Richard Aaron

**Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names For Gardeners** by William T. Stearn. London, Eng: Cassell Publishers Limited (1996). 363 pages, \$26.95.

Once again we have a book seemingly restricted to gardeners. But again that scope encompasses naturalists as well. Obviously the marketing types are aware that there are a heck of a lot more gardeners out there than botanists. This book is a complete revision of the author's previous edition, published in 1972, which itself supplanted a much smaller work by another writer which came out in 1963. The result is a dictionary with the names of over 6,000 genera and species, which can be used to form a huge number of viable combinations.

This dictionary is the perfect complement to the first title reviewed. It adds the ability to translate many more scientific names, plus contains interesting nutshell histories of words named after people. There are also two insightful essays, one an introduction to botanical names, the other an introduction to vernacular names. The more serious of the two works reviewed, it nonetheless has a fascination and appeal all its own.

Richard Aaron



READING (cont'd)

OUR STOLEN FUTURE - ARE WE THREATENING OUR FERTILITY, INTELLIGENCE, AND SURVIVAL? - A SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE STORY by Dr. Theo Colborn, Dianne Dumanoski and Dr. John Peterson Myers, published by Dutton, 1996, 306 pages

This is a mini review and maxi recommendation for this book which is of special interest to parents, grandparents and would-be parents. The theme is simply and clearly that hormone disrupting chemicals deliberately used and accidentally taken into our bodies *wreak all manner of havoc.*

In 1938 British scientist and physician, Edward Charles Dodds, and his colleagues announced the synthesis of a chemical that acted in the body like natural estrogen. It was called diethylstilbestrol or DES, and became a massive human experiment, prescribed to prevent miscarriages, to treat menopausal symptoms, etc. Later DES became linked to a rare vaginal cancer and abnormally formed uteri in daughters of women who used it during pregnancy. DES sons have been studied much less than DES daughters and conflicting results have emerged from studies exploring links between DES exposure and testicular cancer. About our similarity with mice, alligators, and other vertebrates, the writers say: the estrogen circulating in the painted turtle is exactly the same as the estrogen rushing through the human bloodstream.

The book reports on the work of cell biologists, Drs. Ana Soto and Carlos Sonnenschein in 1985-88 in Boston, who found puzzling results in their experiments with human breast cancer cells. They presumed some sort of estrogen contamination in the lab, and spent four frustrating months before they finally tracked down the "phantom estrogen". It was from the Corning tubes they used - the plastic appeared to be biologically active. Corning declined to disclose the chemical content of the plastic resin because it was a "trade secret." The scientists were concerned about the effect of the plastics used to package food, even baby bottles, and worried that kids might take in estrogenic substances with their milk. They ask how many more hormone-disrupting chemicals remain to be discovered. Again and again the book points to our scientific ignorance of the effects of synthetic chemicals - one chapter is titled "Flying Blind." They state that "U.S. production of carbon-based synthetic chemicals which represent the lion's share of synthetic chemicals, topped 435 billion pounds in 1992, or 1,600 pounds per capita" and "In 1991, the United States exported at least 4.1 million pounds of pesticides that had been banned, canceled, or voluntarily suspended for use in the United States, including 96 tons of DDT. These exports included 40 million pounds of compounds known to be endocrine disruptors." The authors mention "hand-me-down" poisons inherited by grandchildren - developmental effects across three generations! They state that some synthetic chemicals believed to cause cancer are poly-aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, a class of chemicals found in petroleum products or created by the incomplete burning of any carbon-containing material ranging from gasoline to hamburgers on the outdoor grill.

## READING (cont'd)

This book is broad-based, and mentions thinning of the ozone layer in the stratosphere, discovered in the 1970s. In 1995 two chemists, Rowland and Molina, were awarded the Nobel Prize for research on CFCs and threats to the ozone layer. In 1948 Paul Müller was awarded the Nobel Prize for developing DDT!

The writers mention signs of change that will diminish hazards by reducing waste and the contaminants reaching the environment, such as a fabric now produced in Switzerland - a mixture of wool and the plant fibre ramie. They mention the importance of recycling material, whether in the compost pile or the factory. The authors suggest that we consumers ask the grocery chain if their food is screened for contaminants, and press manufacturers and political leaders for amendments to trade secrets laws, and for full disclosure when pesticides are used in multifamily dwellings, lawns, schools, and places where food is stored, sold or prepared.

The book includes some suggestions for consumers. Living more simply is one. It suggests consuming less fatty food such as butter, cheese, lamb and beef; eat more vegetables, grains and fruits. Don't rely on water filters, which are designed to remove bacteria, micro-organisms, and unpleasant odors - they may not remove hormonally active synthetic chemicals. Don't assume that bottled water is properly regulated or uncontaminated, especially if bottled in plastic. Give babies unpainted, unvarnished toys made of wood or natural fibres - not plastic.

This book says clearly to me that it is not merely a few of us who suffer environmental illness - perhaps most of us do now, or will in the future. It is full of goodies and baddies and fortunately written for lay people who are without scientific knowledge. It's about public health and about personal health. It's easy to read and is well referenced. READ ALL ABOUT IT yourself in *OUR STOLEN FUTURE*.

Helen Hansen

▷

Children today are surrounded by visual and auditory stimulation. A quiet walk in the woods listening for birds is a harder sell than it used to be. But at least two things about kids have not changed. First, they are still profoundly curious about how the world works and what it contains. Second, they thrive and grow by exploring their curiosities with caring grown-ups. Saving the natural world requires nurturing positive habits and values in today's youngsters, so it is crucial that we grown-ups keep reminding ourselves of the enormous, timeless value of exposing our passions to the children around us.

extracted from "The View from Sapsucker Woods" by J.W. Fitzpatrick in *BIRDSCOPE*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Winter 1997

ALL THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA, by Jack L. Griggs, published by Harper Collins, 1997, 172 pages, \$28.50.

This book states it is a super, faster, easier guide to identifying birds and that it contains everything you need to know about North American birds. Well, they are correct in their statement. This is the first and only guide that organizes birds by field-recognizable characteristics with land birds and perching birds further characterized by shape, colour and bill characteristics. The book is not organized in the "standard" species listing, making it a bit difficult for us "old-timers" that are used to glancing quickly to the section of birds we want to check. On the other hand the birds are grouped relatively in a species listing according to the groups (i.e., water birds at the beginning, owls and hawks in the middle and the remaining passerines at the end, as in all the other guides). The drawings are exceptional, and even though birds are portrayed in a "habitat" type of landscape they are easy to follow and the landscapes don't detract from the species for the most part. This is definitely an excellent book for a beginning bird watcher or a birder without an extensive natural history library. The centre of the book walks the amateur through the identification process, and the beginning of each new bird section talks about how to identify the species with numerous natural history information.

Any bird field guide can be quickly and easily judged by how it treats the warblers, gulls, shorebirds and birds of prey. I compared this book with all six currently available top North American bird field guides, and it came out shining in all aspects of how it treated the difficult birds. While Peterson fails in its portrayal of the gulls this book follows the National Geographic's guide in showing the known age plumages of the gull species (not just the heads as Peterson does). The warblers are correctly portrayed with their winter plumage easy to follow, but I still prefer Peterson's handling of the "confusing fall warblers". Birds of prey are portrayed with flight drawings of adults and immatures right on the same page, which the National Geographic only partially covers on the same page with female and immature flight drawings all grouped together separate from the species listing.

While it is an excellent book with current natural history information, it is not the all out stand-alone guide that most of us would prefer. I still prefer Peterson for the fall warblers and for the "peeps", and National Geographic for its uncluttered portrayal of all the species. *All the Birds* is a good book, but I would still recommend both Peterson and National Geographic as the best guides for the field. If you only have Peterson or National Geographic and want to get a second guide, buy whichever of the two you are missing before *All the Birds*. If you want an additional guide to compare your identification skills, this is an excellent one for that. My preference order for all-round species portrayal, ease of use and quality is National Geographic, Peterson, *All the Birds*, Stokes' *Field Guide to the Birds*, Golden Guide and Audubon Guide.

a review by Sharon David in THE BLUE BILL (Kingston Field Naturalists), Vol. 44, No. 3, Sept. 1997

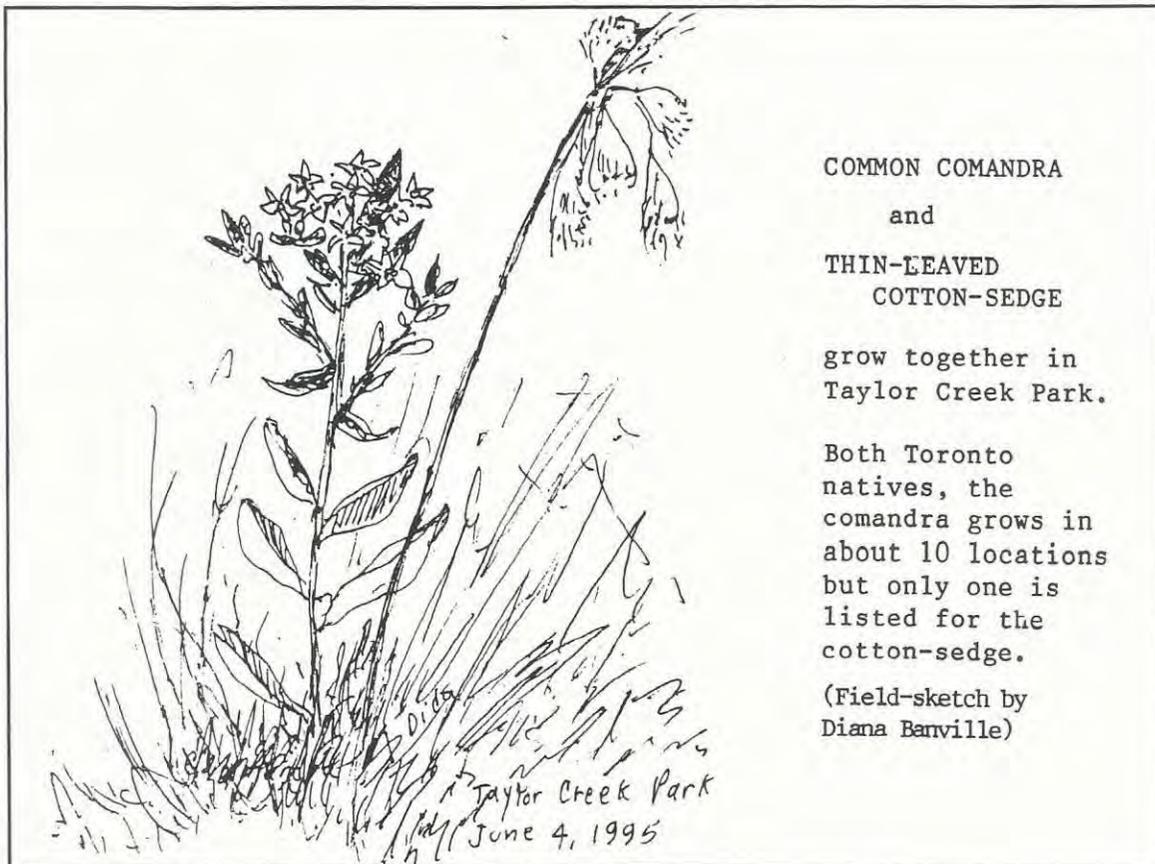
## READING (cont'd)

WETLAND PLANTS OF ONTARIO by Al Harris, Gerry Racey, Steve Newmaster and Linda Kershaw (eds.), published by Lone Pine Publishing, 1997, 256 pages, \$24.95.

The title says it all, this book features the most common wetland plants that we would find in Ontario. The introduction describes the forest regions of Ontario and the different wetland types present. The "how to use this guide" is simple and natural to the naturalist. The book is divided into sections describing trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses, sedges, aquatics, ferns and allies, and bryophytes. Each section contains descriptive text, various line drawings and photographs useful for field identification. I found the "notes" in each species listing quite interesting in providing alternate names, historic uses, similar species and other tidbits of information. This book will decrease the weight of a knapsack containing individual field guides by 10 kg. This will allow the naturalist to stay on the surface of a bog mat and prevent him or her from becoming the next "bog person" to be found in about 25,000 years from now. This is money well spent.

from a review by Gary Ure in THE BLUE BILL (Kingston Field Naturalists), Vol. 44, No. 3, Sept. 1997

□



COMMON COMANDRA  
and  
THIN-LEAVED  
COTTON-SEDE

grow together in  
Taylor Creek Park.

Both Toronto  
natives, the  
comandra grows in  
about 10 locations  
but only one is  
listed for the  
cotton-sedge.

(Field-sketch by  
Diana Barville)

# PROJECTS

## QUILT RAFFLE

The quilt was designed, constructed and hand-quilted for Bird Studies Canada (BSC) by the Norfolk County Quilter's Guild. It is queen size and a warm cream colour. A central motif consists of nature topics, loons, cattails, water lilies, natural scenery and more. A border reveals cleverly hidden birds. On the back a Great Horned Owl conceals a flap which opens to reveal details of the making of the quilt. In grandmother's day this was referred to as "the cookie pocket".

Proceeds of sales of the raffle tickets will go towards the restoration of the marshland on BSC's new headquarters property.

Bird Studies Canada's aim is to conduct and promote ornithological studies, emphasize those which increase understanding of bird distribution, abundance and population changes, generate information in support of Canadian birds and their habitats and inform the public. Their publication, BirdWatch Canada is published by the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO).

## THE JAMES L. BAILLIE MEMORIAL FUND

Do you have plans for an individual or club project on birds that needs some extra funding? The *James L. Baillie Memorial Fund* may be able to help. The Fund offers two types of grants: (1) for projects that involve research or education or that contribute to the preservation of Canadian birds; or (2) for a special 5-year program to initiate and support migration monitoring stations (bird observatories) that monitor Canadian land birds during their migrations. The Fund supports projects that involve volunteers in education, research and data collection. Support of graduate student research projects is not a priority. Individuals or organizations can apply. Grants range from \$200 to \$3,000 and average about \$1,000. Next deadline for applications is 26 January 1998. For more information and application forms write to: Secretary, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, Bird Studies Canada, Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0 (Tel: 519-586-3531, email bsc@nornet.on.ca).

CHRISTMAS TREES - Recycle your tree by placing it outside close to your bird feeders. It will remain green until spring and will be used as added cover and shelter by the birds during the remaining winter months.

extracted from THE BLUE BILL (Kingston Field Naturalists newsletter), Vol. 43, No. 4, Dec. 1996

## PROJECTS (cont'd)

## ROUGE VALLEY FOUNDATION EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Rouge Valley Foundation is a registered charitable non-profit organization founded in 1984. The mandate of the Foundation is to preserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Rouge Valley. This is achieved through a variety of restoration and rehabilitation projects and through educational programming. The Foundation is operated by a volunteer Board of Directors who provide the leadership and support for all the many activities. With wide community support, the Foundation restored the historic Pearse House and converted it into the Rouge Valley Conservation Centre from which a wide variety of educational programs is offered to students of all ages. The program days include guided hikes, bird-box building, slide shows, etc. and are custom designed to the needs of different age levels. Programs are offered all year round. Volunteers, especially retired people, are needed. Training is provided or you can bring your own programs. To arrange a program day for your school or community group or to enquire about volunteer possibilities, contact Chris Evans, Program Coordinator, at 298-5624.

## FEET ON THE STREET

A group of concerned Metro Toronto citizens have organized to promote walking and safe, healthy and comfortable street environments. To find out more about this or to join them, call 929-5483.

WINTER BIRDS OF TORONTO      Where birdlife is concerned, "winter" here in Toronto is usually considered to be December, January and February. My count is based on Christmas through January, in an attempt to avoid counting maverick migrants. In round numbers, there are 140 regular winter bird species to be found in Metro or, in a few cases, just beyond its limits in the rest of Toronto Region (within a 48 km radius of the Royal Ontario Museum). Half of these, around 70, are in the "common" to "uncommon" categories of abundance; the other 70 are more scarce but still regularly occurring. Adding those which could not be described as "regular" in any way, but turn up as a surprise from time to time, can bring the total to over 150. Topping this figure by the addition of isolated "historical" records is really stretching it!

Diana Banville

Ref.:

A BIRDFINDING GUIDE TO THE TORONTO REGION - C. Goodwin, 1988  
 TORONTO REGION BIRD CHART, TFN - B. Parker, 1983  
 TORONTO REGION RECORDS, TFN - to 1996

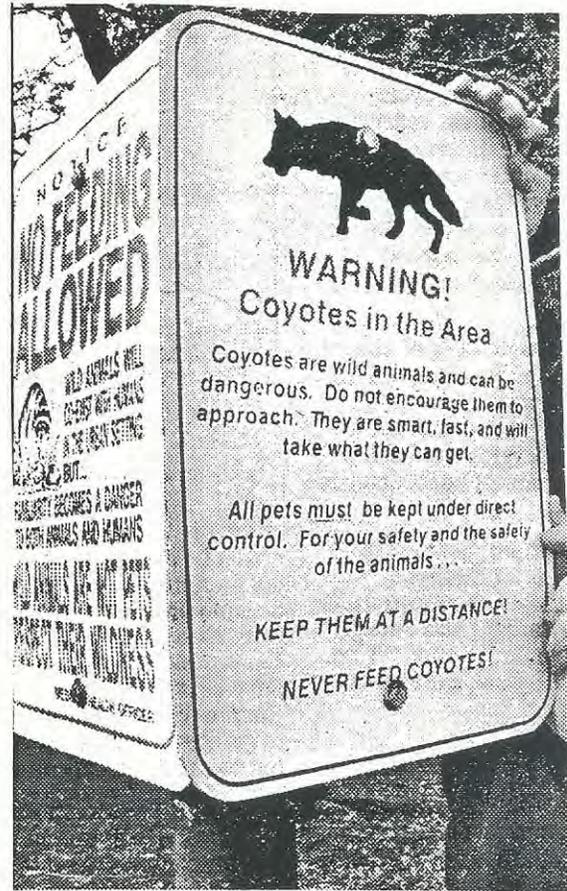


COYOTE PROJECT

from photo in LONDON FREE PRESS,  
April 5, 1997

The sign is warning visitors to  
Vancouver's Stanley Park -- to  
keep at a distance and definitely  
don't feed these animals.

Anyone seeing coyotes  
along the Metro Toronto  
shoreline should call  
the Metro Conservation  
Authority at 661-6600,  
extension 233.



NATURE TRAVEL

Maybe it's time to think of holidays or ways to increase your knowledge of natural history. Have you considered taking a trip, for a day several days, or even longer? Contact any or all the following to find what's available.

- ▷ ● Urban Naturalist - Information on worldwide nature tours, cultural tours, birding etc., plus local walks and workshops. Please call Morris Sorensen at 755-6030 for details or check with him most Fridays at West Hill Travel, 2012 Sheppard Ave. East.
- ▷ ● Natural History Tours with George Bryant - includes Ontario tours and longer excursions. Call 223-6922 or write to George Bryant at 58 Fairmeadow Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2P 1W7.

NATURAL HISTORY BOOKS

▷ Looking for a rare, out-of-print, hard to find, used, antiquarian or new book? Want to find a new home for such a book? Contact Ron Scovell at 744-3888 or write to Hillstar Books, 3 Sims Cres., Etobicoke M9V 2S9.

CARDS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

▷ For custom or individual greeting cards, call Alice Mandryk at 767-6149.

## MIMICO MEANDERS

## Kingfishers

On one TFN walk we came upon a Kingfisher, complete with fish. It was sitting on a branch growing out of a bank 4 or 5 metres high. This was the Bank-Swallow bank. Now, I've come upon Kingfishers before and something was different here. The Kingfisher is a very skittish bird. The slightest thing out of the ordinary in a place it knows causes it to fly off frantically with noisy cries. This bird sat calmly chattering while 10 people watched it. Hmm, could its nest be near by? I kept this in mind as something to check on.

The next time I visited the location I noted a male, then a female Kingfisher on the same branch with fish in bill, but neither would give away the location of the nest, no matter how much stealth I applied. But, the next time I visited the bank I was rewarded for my diligence. Carefully, I sighted the bird (again fish in bill) from the opposite bank. When it saw me this time it flew off to a nearby tree. Not falling for this ruse I decided to look over the Bank Swallow nests which now had pairs of tiny Bank Swallow chicks peeping out. As I scanned the multitude of nests I noticed one pair a bit larger than the others and, a bit more blue! I sharpened up my focus a bit and there they were -- two miniature Kingfishers complete with mussy little crests and large pointed bills "exquisitely evolved for the piscatorial pursuits of this piscivorous predator" (grin -- they eat fish and have the equipment to catch them). It's great to come upon little things like this. You develop a real love for birds watching their life cycles.

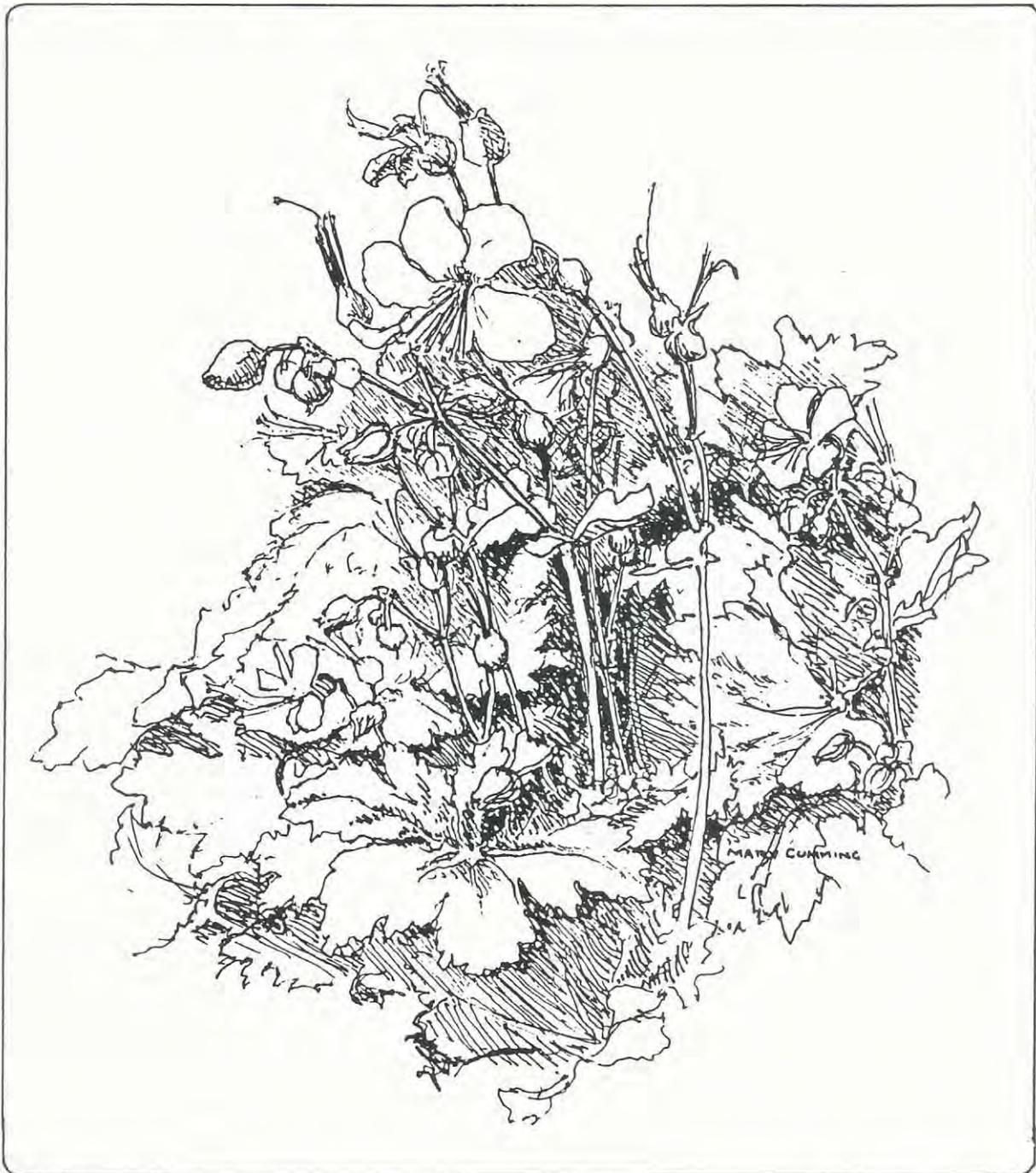
A bit about the nest. The Kingfishers had "usurped" one of the Bank Swallow nests and enlarged it to accommodate their needs. (Remember the House Sparrows [TFN 470, pages 15-16]). They had chosen one with a large root extending out of the bank just below the hole -- a convenient stepping point for entering the nest. They were right in the middle of the Bank Swallow action but with their own unique nest. Also, although the parents flew great distances up and down the creek in search for food, there was a never-failing food source within about a hundred metres. Just upsteam the creek is contained in a V-shaped concrete channel. The channel at this point spills into a pool in the real creek bed. Believe it or not, this ugly channel provides a great little minnow-spawning ground. The pool fills up with a nice size school of minnows, some a few centimetres long. With abundant hiding spots around, this was an excellent homestead (I thought) for such a great bird.

Unfortunately, I never saw the two young Kingfishers again. I returned a few days later after a violent storm and noticed the mother flying around bewildered and in a panic near the nest site. I thought the storm might have had something to do with it, but upon locating the nest, I saw something was very wrong. The neat little entrance had been disturbed, almost ripped apart. It looked as if some sort of predator had something to do with it. I returned a few times after that, but not a tousled little Kingfisher was to be found. One time I returned to the northern bridge and, swish, two Kingfishers shot through. They didn't have the "look and feel" of adult birds and I fooled myself into thinking they were the young

ones. They probably weren't. Observing birds can be difficult sometimes when so often you have to return home with that rotten feeling you get when you know you'll never see a friend again.

Ken Cook

□



Zdravets

June 13, 1983

## PROJECT FEEDERWATCH 1996-97 CANADIAN OVERVIEW

A total of 1326 Canadian participants, representing every province and territory, registered for the 1996-97 Project FeederWatch season. Canadian results largely mirrored continental trends. On the whole, FeederWatchers reported fewer birds in the eastern part of the country than they did in the previous winter. Populations of irruptive species were less dramatic than in years past across the country, though areas in the west experienced good numbers of a variety of species.

Once again, the Black-capped Chickadee was crowned 'king of the feeder' as Canada's most widespread feeder species. Black-capped Chickadees visited more feeders than any other species in all provinces except British Columbia and Quebec, where they were runners-up to Dark-eyed Junco and American Goldfinch, respectively.

Among the common feeder species, the most noticeable decline occurred in House Finch winter populations. Although the percentage of participants reporting House Finches in 1996-97 was the same as in the previous winter, a drop in mean flock size caused an overall 22% decrease in the number of birds reported. After several years of population growth, House Finch numbers levelled off in winter 1991-92 and then declined markedly in winter 1996-97. Although House Finches are still found at proportionally more feeders than they were when Project FeederWatch started, their actual numbers are at or below 1987-88 levels. These declines have occurred only in the East; western House Finch populations are stable or increasing. Project FeederWatch is currently investigating this decline in relation to the House Finch disease survey (eye conjunctivitis).

Common Redpoll numbers increased only in the Northern Rockies region, particularly in British Columbia and Alberta. Since the inception of Project FeederWatch, Common Redpoll abundance has followed a biennial cycle, reflecting periodic invasions to the East. This year, most Common Redpolls remained in the far north. Last year, FeederWatchers reported a slight increase in the numbers of another unpredictable, wandering soul - the Evening Grosbeak. However, in 1996-97 Evening Grosbeaks wandered almost out of sight; fewer were recorded this season than in any other since 1988-89. All provinces reported fewer Evening Grosbeaks, save for a small increase in British Columbia.

## OWLS AT YOUR FEEDER

A number of people seem concerned that various species of owls hanging around feeders might be preying upon feeder birds. While this does occasionally happen, it is the exception rather than the rule. More often than not, the owls are attracted not so much by feeder birds, but by what the birds attract to your feeder....

Birds are not the tidiest of eaters. In the process of eating, they fling seeds every which way, scattering a lot on the ground where, after dark, they are eaten by mice. Of course, these rodents are an owl's preferred food. To an owl at least, mice are especially welcome during what is normally a difficult time of year. So, the owl you see roosting in a tree near your feeder is often sleeping off a good feed of mouse steak - not hunting down feeder birds.

extracted from an article by Vince Deschamps in BIRDWATCH CANADA, a publication of Bird Studies Canada, Fall 1997

□

### FIELD PUSSYTOES

- a common native Toronto  
wildflower -

Drawing by

Mary Anne Miller



The simple rule of thumb is this: if you can't reuse it or recycle it, think twice before you bring it home.

from "Eliminate Garbage" by Steve Curson in RICKY McMOUNTAIN BUYER'S GUIDE, Vol.3, No.1, Jan./Feb. 1990

## MANY BIRD POPULATIONS NOW STABLE

Migratory bird populations in North America are actually in better shape than experts have thought for the past two decades, according to a front page article in the Globe and Mail, June 10, 1997. A new analysis of 30 years of breeding bird survey data has found that on the whole, bird populations are in good shape.

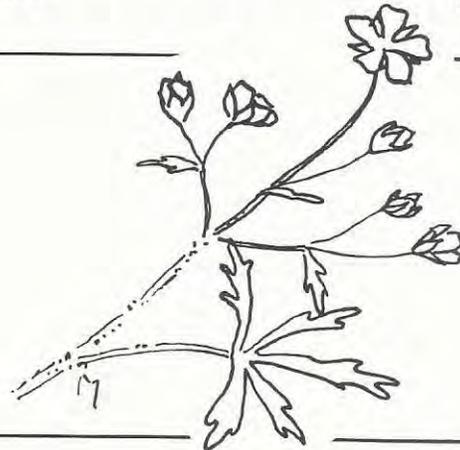
Stable, or even growing in numbers, are the ovenbird, red-eyed vireo, scarlet tanager, great crested flycatcher, hooded warbler and ruby-throated hummingbird. Brushland birds, such as northern oriole, house wren and indigo bunting, are also increasing. Expanding forests in the northeast, along with large forests in the mid-United States, are so well stocked with birds that they act as "reservoirs," exporting young birds to smaller forests, farms, and suburban woodlots and parks. The important thing, say conservationists, is to protect the large forests, to offset the losses of birds in smaller forests. Another area of concern is stopover habitats along migration routes.

So why have we been hearing that songbirds are in trouble? The researchers think that it's because locally there have been some dramatic declines, and these discoveries have hit the press and created the impression that songbirds as a whole are in trouble. Grassland species, for example, are in serious decline. Have you noticed fewer bobolinks than there used to be? This species has declined by 90 percent in the midwestern United States. The reason? Pastures and hayfields are being converted to croplands, and faster-growing grass seeds have led to earlier harvesting, which destroys the eggs and young of grassland birds in their nests. Some forest species, including wood thrush and cerulean warbler, are also declining, but most are holding steady.

extracted from an article by Lorraine Brown in HART'S-TONGUE HERALD, the Newsletter of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists, vol. 10, no. 2, Fall 1997

SILVERY CINQUEFOIL  
of the rose family.  
Origin: Eurasia -  
now an established part  
of Toronto's flora.

(Drawing by  
Mary Anne Miller).



### WHITHER THE LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE?

The loggerhead shrike is an endangered species in Ontario. MNR and other agencies have been putting their now-meagre resources into looking at the distribution of this species, and trying to determine what conservation efforts should be made on its behalf. But the idea of conserving this species has been questioned. Tom Cade and Christopher Woods make the following points:

All evidence seems to indicate that this shrike is a native of the American south and southwest, habitats which include deserts, scrub lands, savannas, and some agricultural settings. Its expansion into the northeast (Ontario) and the northern Great Plains is associated with the deforestation and agricultural development of those areas in the late 1800s. Its primary breeding habitat in this new range includes seral stages of vegetation, that is, plant communities that occur between the time that fields are abandoned, and climax maple-beech forests are re-established. The maturing of the interrupted plant communities in the northeast has resulted in declining habitat for loggerhead shrikes.

Finally, Cade and Woods note that while Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Survey data show an overall dramatic decline in shrike sightings, in core areas of their native habitat, populations are either stable or increasing. They conclude that attempts to conserve shrike populations in their expanded range would likely not perform well. Should it become necessary, conservation programs for shrike populations should focus on preserving suitable habitat in core areas of their breeding range. In short, efforts to resist the extirpation of loggerhead shrikes from Ontario would not be wisely spent conservation dollars.

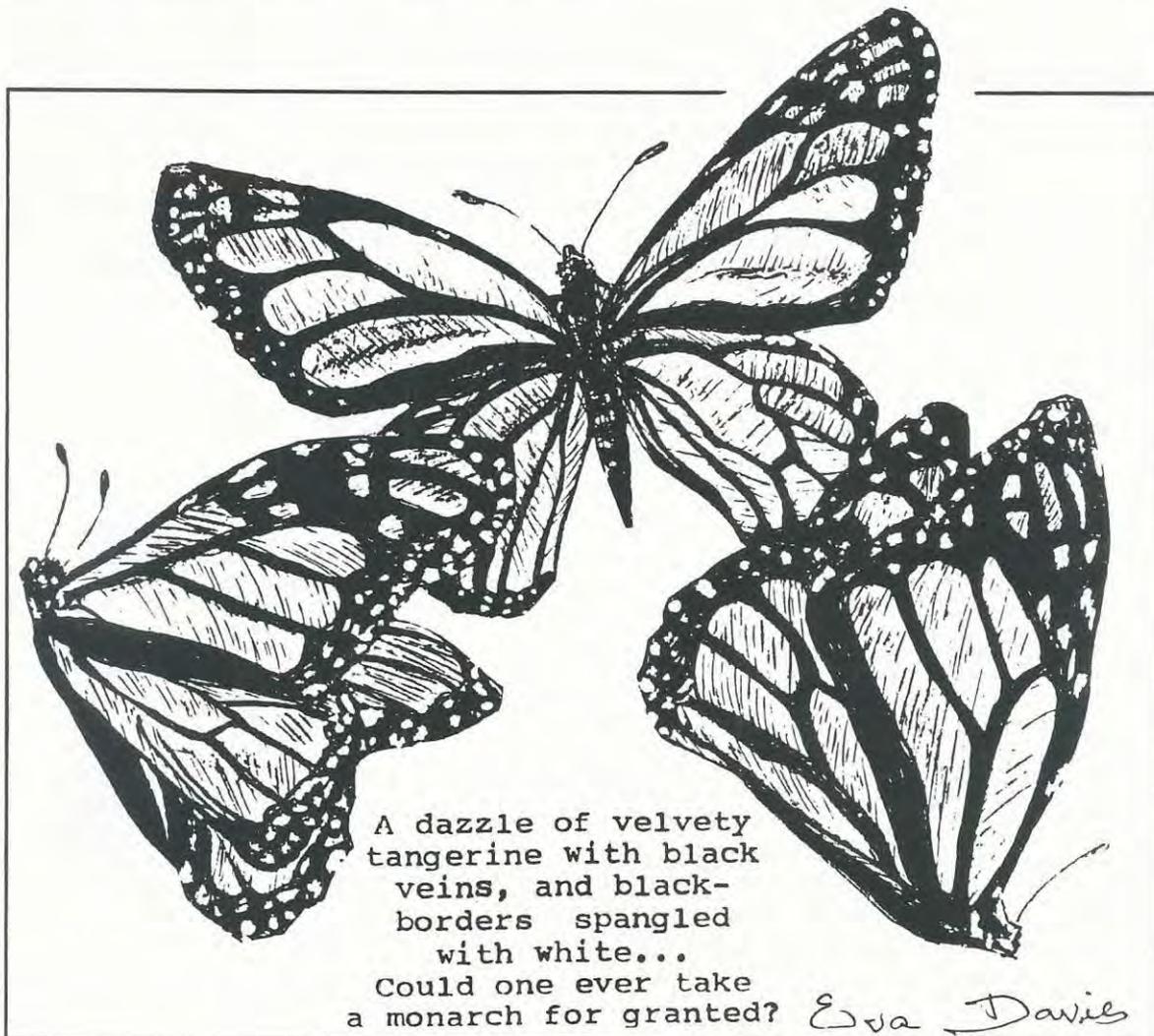
The case of the loggerhead is instructive. First, it shows the importance of a solid base of evidence in planning conservation efforts for a species. Based on records dating back over 100 years, Cade and Woods are able to construct an argument showing the wisest deployment of conservation dollars for shrikes. (Would that we had such records for all species!) The case also shows the pitfalls of basing conservation efforts on a static view of nature. The argument goes like this: shrikes are here, they are in trouble, therefore we ought to protect them. While it would be nice to maintain a breeding shrike population in Ontario, our choices are not as simple as "preserve everything" or even "maximize diversity."

## LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (cont'd)

## Comment:

If you find this topic interesting, take a look at a very thought-provoking article, Terms of Endangerment by Don Gayton in the May/June '97 issue of Canadian Geographic. Gayton criticizes the endangered species movement for doing expensive recovery work on cute, cuddly species like the panda, or romantic species like the wolf, while the Plains spadefoot toad and Furbish's lousewort, though equally endangered, are ignored. According to Dayton, "Perhaps the most destructive tendency of the movement is an excessive concern for the species and little concern for the habitat upon which that species depends."

comment from Lorraine Brown, editor, in HART'S-TONGUE HERALD, the Newsletter of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists, Vol. 10, No. 2, Fall 1997



## COLOUR ME GREEN

Have other members ever toyed with the science fiction fantasy of our planet changed suddenly to a burgeoning mantle of red? Or yellow? Or blue? We are enchanted by the reds and golds of fall, and we are assured that, from space, ours is a sea-blue world. But how would we adapt to forests of endless variations of reds or blues when the colour green is built into our genes? These, admittedly pointless, musings struck me during a June meander through Warden Woods, that smallest but most important jewel in Metro's crown. The endless variations, the almost electrical vibrancy, of the greenery! For me, green is the most difficult colour to capture on paper. In order even to approximate its depth I have to experiment with "balances" of blue, of purple, of bronze, yellow, dark gray. It isn't simply that green is not one of the primary colours. (Yellow is, for example, yet I find yellow the second most difficult colour to invest with depth.) However, all this is background to the fact that green -- the returning green of spring -- remains an overwhelming experience.

Meanwhile, Warden Woods had burst forth with its yearly "production number" of grasses, ferns, horsetails, cattails, swallowwort, jewelweed, ground ivy, and poison ivy. Garlic mustard was fading, Dame's rocket, celandine and winter cress were at their peak, coltsfoot and dandelion had become trillions of powder puffs about to disappear in the wind. Cabbage whites and sulphurs danced everywhere. The trees were, as always, magnificent.

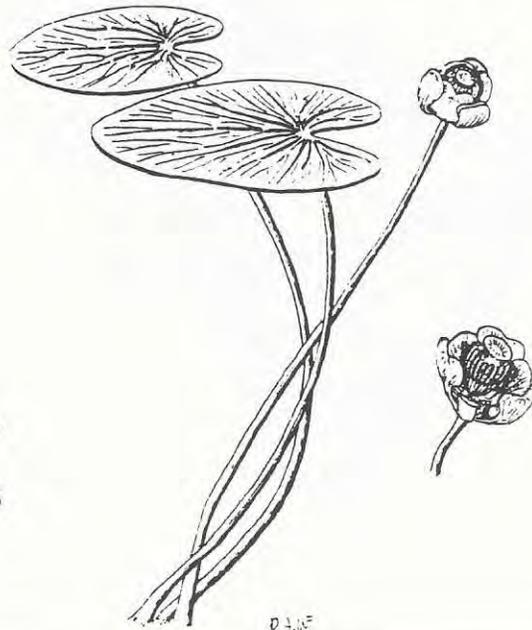
Ending with the subject of colour, Warden Woods is equally soul-stirring in the autumn when a true science-fiction display paints our green world a kaleidoscope of invading golds and crimsons and tangerines and purples. Warden Woods should not be missed in either season.

Eva Davis

□

The (Northern)  
"SPATTERDOCK" or  
"YELLOW POND-LILY"  
was drawn by  
D. Andrew White from  
Rouge observations.  
Blooming and seed-  
formation neared its  
peak toward the end  
of August.

Our Metro native is the  
one called "BULLHEAD-LILY"  
in the popular  
FIELD GUIDE TO WILDFLOWERS  
BY Peterson and McKenny.



## DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CAT IS?

Cats are born with the natural instinct to hunt, whether hungry or not, and when allowed to roam outside, prey upon small mammals and birds. *Feeder Watch News*, a newsletter published by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, reports that cats are the second most frequent predator found at bird-feeders in the US and Canada (sharp-shinned hawks are #1 on the list).

In Britain, a year-long study looked at the prey which home-owners retrieved from their felines for one day of each week. From the 78 cats studied, researchers identified 1100 prey samples - 36 percent of which were birds. Considering that cats normally bring home about half their prey, the over five million cats in Canada could account for close to 140 million prey items per year, or 50.4 million birds!

Sadly, putting a bell on your cat doesn't work. Cats approach their prey very slowly and silently, and the birds don't respond quickly enough. With cat populations getting out of control (Rachel Lamb, a Humane Society program co-ordinator in Washington, DC, reports that 35,000 kittens are born in the US every day), spaying or neutering is recommended to reduce the problem.

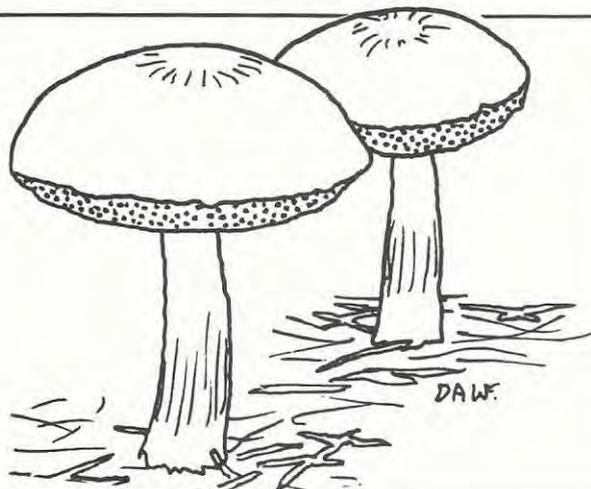
Keeping your cat indoors is another option that allows your pet to live a cleaner, healthier life. The average life expectancy of an indoor cat is 15 years, compared with three to five years for an outdoor cat, which is more prone to disease and has a high probability of being struck by a vehicle. Cat kennels are also an alternative for those who insist their cats live outdoors. The structure should be fully enclosed (top, bottom and sides) with wire or plastic mesh, and include a sunning platform, shelter from the elements, an open area to feed, room for a litter box, and something that the cat can climb, scratch and play on.

Remember the statistics and take some measure of responsibility before you let your cat outside. The birds will thank you for it!

an article by Paul Van Gorp in NATURE CANADA, published by the Canadian Nature Federation, Autumn 1997

"BOLETES" - a drawing by  
D. Andrew White

(According to TFN records  
11 species of boletes  
have been identified in  
Metropolitan Toronto.)



## IN THE NEWS

### THOUGHTS ON FISH AND FISHING

Fish and frogs and dogs and humans are all vertebrates whose nervous systems are quite akin, regardless of brain size, especially when it comes to feeling pain. A fish's mouth parts turn out to be exceptionally nerve-rich. A fish caught and released is severely traumatized, often fatally.

extracted from an article by Mike Handley in the TORONTO STAR, Oct. 3, 1997

### HYPERCOLOURS

Birds have four types of colour-detecting cells in their eyes, compared with three for humans. Although birds' eyes react to red, green and blue, they have an extra receptor for ultraviolet -- a part of the spectrum people usually can't see. The world may appear to them in "ultracolours" and they may be able to detect differences -- for instance, between male and female birds that look the same to us.

from the GLOBE AND MAIL, Oct. 1997

### EARLY EGGS

British birds are now laying their eggs more than a week earlier than normal, possibly owing to the continued global warming. After studying the records of 1,000 volunteer bird watchers that go back to 1975, researchers at Britain's National Centre for Ornithology found significant trends towards earlier laying dates for 20 species. Some species "set up house" 17 days earlier, while others started just four days earlier. The average change was 8.8 days.

from "Earthweek" by Steven Newman in the TORONTO STAR, Aug. 9, 1997

### COYOTES ATTACK DOG ON EARLY A.M. RUN

A Downsview man watched helplessly as a pack of wild animals attacked his dog while it ran (off leash) just off Dufferin St. north of Wilson Ave. at about 2 am on a Friday evening. The man sat in his truck monitoring the dog's movements when a pack of animals, thought to be coyotes, came over a small ridge and attacked the dog in the fully-lit parking lot. The man was breaking the law with his dog off a leash and he was on private land. Ministry of Natural Resources does not have a rule to protect domesticated animals from wildlife.

extracted from an article by John Wilkinson in the NORTH YORK MIRROR, Aug. 27, 1997

### FOXES, COYOTES AND DEER ROAM OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

People can successfully share a city with wildlife and, in doing so, we not only benefit the animals around us, but enrich our own lives as well. If you have questions pertaining to wildlife or other related issues, call the Metro Conservation Authority at 416-661-6600. For injured or sick animals, wildlife problems around the home, or help in trapping animals in your attic, call the Humane Society at 416-392-2273.

extracted from an article by Ed rubinstein in the BAYVIEW VILLAGER, Oct. 1997

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## IN THE NEWS (cont'd)

## PESTICIDE USERS SHOULD POST WARNING SIGNS

The next time you see a sign posted in a city park that looks like a warning about pesticide spraying, look again -- it might be one of a new set of signs boasting about safe-pesticide-free lawns. North York council approved the signs -- which feature a cartoon of a diaper-clad baby crawling across the lawn -- to highlight the 90 per cent of North York parks that are currently pesticide-free.

from an article by David Nickle in the NORTH YORK MIRROR, Aug. 23-24, 1997

## RESTORED BRICK WORKS OPENS

Metro now has a park where an industrial wasteland used to be. The Don Valley Brick Works site opened on Oct. 19, blending a look into the city's industrial past with a sprawling scenic parkland. The 17-hectare park, located on the banks of the Don River off Bayview Ave. north of Bloor St., sits on what used to be Toronto's massive brick works factory. Until 1989, bricks that formed such landmarks as Osgoode Hall, Casa Loma and old city hall were made here. A group called Friends of the Valley realized the geological significance of the location and lobbied to save the derelict brick-making site and turn it into a conservation area. In 1989 the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority bought the land. The old quarry has been turned into a natural garden with a large wetland complex. The park's huge north face offers a glimpse of the remnants of glacial activity and millions of years of climatic changes. Several of the old brick works buildings have been restored and stabilized and visitors can read about their history. The park is free to the public.

extracted from an article by Donovan Vincent in the TORONTO STAR, Oct. 19, 1997

## POACHERS CUT DOWN 20 TREES IN KING TOWNSHIP WOODLOT

Tree poachers in York Region have left a trail of destruction in a four-hectare woodlot. Officials say the case is the first of its kind and police are investigating the chainsaw felling of 20 mature hardwood maples, each about 25 metres high and worth about \$11,000. The cut which is about 500 metres from the nearest road probably occurred in the first week of September. The incident is a wake-up call to property owners to keep a close eye on their woodlots. Only about 18 per cent of York Region remains forested. The region has a bylaw to restrict and regulate the destruction of trees since 1991.

from an article by Brian Dexter in the TORONTO STAR, Sept. 18, 1997

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<p>Like many brave flags, crabtree still holds autumn's fruit, defying winter.</p>
--

Haiku by Arthur Wade  
January, 1997

## THE WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

December 1996, Toronto

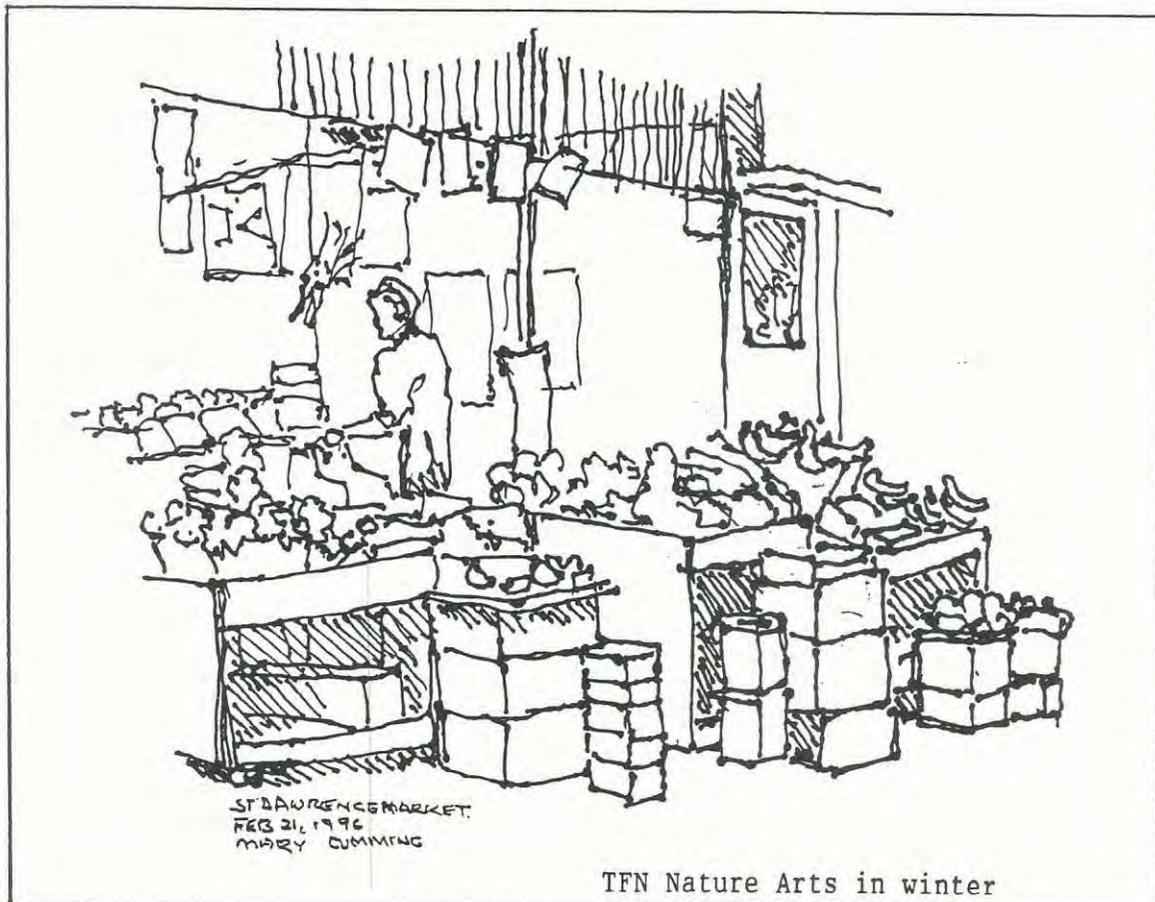
November's trend was reversed as the first eighteen days of December all recorded a mean temperature above normal. Thereafter, conditions became more changeable, although not even Pearson Airport recorded a temperature below  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Rainfall was above normal; snowfall was near normal (mostly due to a couple of falls after Christmas); and total precipitation was about 30 mm above normal, the most since 1990.

January 1997, Toronto

The month was active and changeable with near normal temperatures and heavy snowfall. The temperature attained the  $10^{\circ}\text{C}$  -  $11^{\circ}\text{C}$  range on Jan. 5th, but plunged to  $-22.3^{\circ}\text{C}$  downtown and  $-24.6^{\circ}\text{C}$  at the airport on Jan. 18th, only to reach  $7^{\circ}\text{C}$  a few days later. 57.4 cm of snow fell downtown, 20 cm more than the average, while Pearson airport recorded 48.8 cm of snow, more than 16 cm above normal. Significant snowfalls occurred on Jan. 9th and Jan. 24th, with frequent lighter falls. There were 18-19 days with measurable snowfall this month! With the frontal zone so near to southern Ontario and with so many airmass changes, nothing lasted too long -- even the snow cover disappeared or nearly disappeared on two occasions while at other times it was up to 14 cm.

Gavin Miller

□



TFN Nature Arts in winter

## COMING EVENTS

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

- Sat. Dec. 6 from 8:30 am (all day) - Waterfowl - West Toronto Lakeshore or beyond with Jean Iron. Meet in the parking lot at Humber Bay Park East. Bring a lunch. Carpool if necessary.
- Christmas Bird Count - Dec. 28. Call Frank Pinille at 905-737-2721 if you want to participate. Cost: \$5.
- Winter Waterfowl Count - Jan. 11. Call Bill Edmunds at 905-731-7551 if you want to participate.

NEXT TOC walk will be in February.

Toronto Entomological Association meeting - Jan. 24 at 1 pm in Metro Hall. Call Alan Hanks at 905-727-6993 for details.

East Toronto Chapter of the Wildflower Society meeting - Jan. 28 at 7:30 pm at the Beaches Recreation Centre, 6 Williamson Rd. Call Carolyn King at 222-5736 for details.

Royal Canadian Institute - free Sunday lecture at 3 pm in the Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Bldg., University of Toronto

- Dec. 7 - The science event for young people
- For more information call 928-2096.

Black Creek Project - monthly meetings and work days. Call 661-6600, extension 364 for details.

□

### 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.

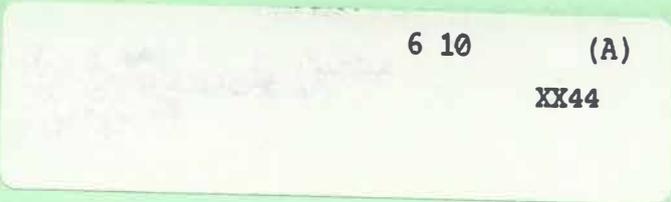
**Send material to:** Toronto Field Naturalists  
605 - 14 College St.  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1K2

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\$25 SINGLE, SENIOR, FAMILY  
\$20 STUDENT, SENIOR, SINGLE  
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