TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Number 310 November 1977

Visitors welcome!

NOVEMBER MEETING

Monday, November 7, 1977, at 8:15 p.m.

at 252 Bloor Street West

(between Bedford Rd. and St. George St.)

Topic: WHY DO BIRDS SING?

Speaker: Dr. Bruce Falls

Dr. Bruce Falls is Professor of Zoology at the University of Toronto. He will introduce his film "Why do birds fly?" (This film has been shown on U.S. tv and on Channel 19.) Following the showing, Dr. Falls will discuss the film and would like to end his address with a general query period. This is a perfect opportunity to have your questions about bird songs answered.

DECEMBER MEETING - Monday, December 5, 1977 at 8:15 p.m.

Program Committee Chairman:
Mrs. Norah Stuart (485-5824)

THE AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS

Tuesday Nov. 15 8:15 p.m.	HIDDEN WORLDS OF THE BIG CYPRESS SWAMP. Richard and Judy Kern OISE Auditorium, 252 Bloor Street West Tickets are obtainable at Eaton's Attractions Ticket Offices, 1 Hayter St., Toronto, M5G 1J7 or telephone 597-1688.

TO: Toronto Field Naturalist' Club
83 Joicey Blvd., Toronto, Ont. M5M 2T4 Date _____

I/We would like to ( ) join, or ( ) renew membership.

Name: _____ Telephone _____

Address: _____ Postal Code _____

Category: ( ) Single $7.00, ( ) Family (adults) $10.00

( ) Full-time student (16 or over) $2.00, ( ) Corresponding (those living more than 30 miles from the Royal Ontario Museum) $3.00

Senior Citizens, 65 or over:
( ) Single $4.00, ( ) Family $6.00, ( ) Corresponding $2.00

MEETINGS

RAVINE GROUP Tuesday November 1 8:00 p.m.	Problems of deterioration in Metro Toronto ravines with John Stevenson and David Milne of the Dept. of Urban and Regional Planning, U of T. They will show slides of erosion damage, garbage accumulation, and fill damage in 40 of Toronto's ravines and will discuss with us engineering, legal, and public awareness issues. Meet at Huron Street Public School, 541 Huron St., (north of Bloor, west of St. George St.)
JUNIOR CLUB Saturday Nov. 5 10:00 a.m.	This meeting will be presented by the reptile group. Meet in the theatre of the Royal Ontario Museum.
BOTANY GROUP Thursday Nov. 17 8:00 p.m.	Mr. Ruskin Willcox will show us his slides on the wild flowers in Wilket Creek Park during all seasons of the year. He also has pictures of the sudden changes in the creek brought about by heavy flooding. Meet at Hodgson Public School, Davisville Ave., just east of Mount Pleasant Rd. Enter school at east end. Parking available in the schoolyard. Enter from Millwood Rd., one block north. Meet in the cafeteria in the basement.
BIRD GROUP Wednesday Nov. 23 8:00 p.m.	Barry Ranford, one of North America's leading photographers, will show us some of his outstanding slides of nature. This is the meeting to pick up your books for Christmas. If you want to pre-order, they will be there for you to make sure it is what you want. Just call me with your order. Don't forget the club discount. Red Mason 621-3905 Meet in St. James Bond United Church on Avenue Rd., just north of Eglinton Ave.

SPECIAL LECTURE

Tuesday Nov. 1 12:15 p.m.	Ontario's Flora and Fauna: Everyone's Heritage, No One's Business Paul Aird, Professor of Forestry This free U of T Sesquicentennial lecture is being given in the Sanctuary of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, 75 Simcoe St. (St. Andrew stop on University subway line).

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

With the onset of chilling winds and shorter days I feel somehwat melancholy when I realize that the autumn colours have passed for another year. However, there is much to do during the winter period and soon, before we know it, the skunk cabbage and trailing arbutus will be our companions. In the meantime your newsletter is an excellent remedy for the long winter's night. If you are looking for a stimulant, why not attend some of the monthly group meetings so ably organized by Wes Hancock, Red Mason, and Jack-Cranmer-Byng? or attend the Audubon Wildlife Film series arranged by David Langford? or help with the Junior Club? or join some of the many outings where you will learn more about the natural history of the Toronto area? For a moment of solitude I would like to prescribe a fall or winter trip to the Nature Reserve. Just consult your Nature Reserve Guide for the appropriate information or contact John Lowe-Wylde, the new chairman, if you need assistance.

At the last Board of Director's meeting several items of general interest were discussed. The Board is in the process of re-evaluating our mailing procedures. We are also attempting to find a mechanism which will allow the Board to handle more easily and effectively some of the great wealth of information that comes to the club. For example, in the past our club has responded to important issues like Point Pelee, Elora Gorge, and Metroplan. Our involvement has been on a voluntary basis and it will continue to be so. If you are aware of an important issue like the development on Taylor Creek, let the club directors know so that we can at least be aware of environmental issues and if possible initiate some action on the club's behalf. In future we hope to be able to place issues such as these in order of priority and address ourselves to the issues by sending a letter of intent on the club's behalf. If there are any club members who would like to work in this manner and who have the expertise, I would appreciate hearing from you.

As an example, the club, through the efforts of many members, has prepared a policy statement on the Aquatic Park (Leslie Street Spit) which will contain our position on the present and future uses of this area. We will print our position for your information in the next newsletter. We hope to do more of this to make you aware of what is happening in the Metropolitan area.

Also the Board feels that the club should have an established policy for dealing with the many environmental consulting firms who constantly request assistance and information. This too will be published in the next newsletter.

The importance of keeping aware and informed was aptly demonstrated to me recently when I learned of two proposed developments: the first a major highway, the extension of Hwy 89 in the Udora area, which is near our nature reserve; the second, a proposed diversion of Morningside Creek north of the Metro Zoo.

In the future our club must continue to respond as best we can to these issues; however, we must never lose sight of our prime reasons for existence: the pursuit and enjoyment of Nature, the aquisition and dissemination of knowledge on Natural History, and the protection and preservation of natural environments.

Ron Thorpe (484-1807)
President

NOTES FROM THE NATURE RESERVE

The Reserve Management Committee is made up of the following people:
Chairman - John Lowe-Wylde
Deputy Chairman - John ten Bruggenkate
Members - W. Andrews, J. Gingrich, E. O'Connor

Plant list additions should be sent to John ten Bruggenkate (425-6096).
Bird list additions should be sent to Clive Goodwin (249-9503).

NOTE: Recent water sampling test results indicate water in the nature reserve is not safe for drinking.

The hunting season started off with a bang on September 24 so if you are using the trails along the river, please be careful. A hunter in a canoe was seen on the Uxbridge Brook by some of our members who were on the red diamond trail.

I want to thank John ten Bruggenkate for his dedicated service as Chairman of the Reserve. John put in a lot of hard work during the past many years and the reserve is in very good shape for his successors.

Also, thank you to:
Charlie Stahl who built #2 toilet
Howie Gildner, responsible for picnic tables in shelter
Fred Barrett for the main entrance sign
Chris Devine for the sign at the red hexagon trail entrance
Willi Goger for plaque installation
and to the volunteers who have responded so generously to my requests for help to maintain our reserve.

John Lowe-Wylde (284-5628)

NOTES FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

I would like to thank every member of the club who assisted us with the booth at the CNE this year. I would also like to thank those members who were contacted but were unable to help. It is, of course, quite understandable that a person cannot always help when asked and I do appreciate the courtesy of our members and the moral support given to us by telephone.

I would particularly like to thank Miss Laura Greer for the tremendous amount of time she spent making telephone calls attempting to find people to man the booth. I am sure that many of our members were as delighted as I was to make Laura's acquaintance. Thanks Laura — the booth would not have happened without your efforts!!

And now, my apologies. If you were not telephoned it was for one of the following reasons: we called and you were out; or I lost or misplaced your telephone number. I moved during June and as is usually the case, some of my records got mixed up. Even now some pieces of paper and index cards are turning up in the strangest places. To make matters worse I understand that Bell Canada did not report my new telephone number to callers at my old number!

I am sorry if I misplaced or misfiled you during my move. Please give me a call during the evenings or weekends if you would like to help out in some manner but were not called this summer. We need you!

Muriel Miville (463-8066)

UPDATE ON TAYLOR/CREEK WOODBINE BRIDGE RAVINES

Following submission of the club's Ravine Survey #7 to the Clerk, Borough of East York, in June 1977, the Development Committee and the Council of East York, at their meetings in September, voted to adopt the following recommendations:

1) That the Borough Solicitor and Planning Commissioner be requested to obtain information on the Provincial legislation and control by-laws for ravine protection in the City of Toronto and report on the applicability of these controls in East York;

2) Implementation of recommendations 1 to 4, inclusive, of the report of the Toronto Field Naturalis' Club as soon as legally possible; and

3) That Council go on record to freeze all future construction of new dwellings in the area north of O'Connor Drive west of Trimontium Developments Limited Phase II to Don Mills Road and east of Trimontium Developments Limited Phase I to the Woodbine Bridge.

As of early October, four of the 23 houses proposed for the Trimontium I site are under construction, and the Ontario Municipal Board hearing for the Trimontium II proposal will probably take place early in the new year.

Helen Juhola (924-5806)
Linda Cardini (924-5008)

METHOD OF REPORTING POLLUTION IN A WATERCOURSE

Chemical Pollution

1. Act quickly — same day if possible.
2. Telephone Metro Toronto Works Dept. Water Pollution Central control Branch at 367-8280.
3. You may be put through to the foreman of the work crew on duty at the time.
4. Give location and brief description of colour and probable nature of pollution, and where it can be found in relation to the stream.
5. You can phone any day (including weekends) up to 10 p.m.

Sewage

Phone the Works Department of the Borough in which the sanitary sewer causing the pollution is situated.

Jack Cranmer-Byng (488-3262)

THE JUNIOR CLUB NEEDS YOU!

On Oct. 1, the Junior Club had its first meeting and we discovered that we are desperately short of leaders. If you think you would enjoy working with a small group of children one Saturday morning each month, please contact John Martin, 98 Nealon Ave., Toronto, (425-3417).

P.S. Don't worry if you aren't an expert naturalist. It's your guidance and love of nature that is important.

OUTINGS REPORT

Toronto Island (Sept. 3, 1977) Seventy-three species of birds were seen on this walk. Highlights were an osprey, olive-sided flycatchers, and red-tailed hawks.

Lambton Woods (Sept. 10, 1977) Twenty-one people attended this walk under sunny skies. Goldenrods were in bloom and the asters were coming into flower. Jewelweed was very tall and prevalent.

Leslie Street Spit (Sept. 11, 1977) A large group of 87 people arrived for this outing. Ten species of shorebirds were seen as well as a Brant. The weather was fine and sunny.

Eastern Lakeshore (Sept. 17, 1977) Thirty-six people took part in this outing. A peregrine falcon chasing a pectoral sandpiper over the marsh was the highlight of this trip. Also two ospreys fishing helped account for the 74 species seen.

Taylor Creek (Sept. 18, 1977) Fourteen people attended this outing in spite of gray skies and light rain. About a dozen species of birds were observed and many colourful fall flowers.

Jim Baillie Nature Reserve (Sept. 24, 1977) Twenty-seven people were on this outing. The threat of rain did not mar the trip. Six new birds were seen, as well as one new plant species. Several flocks of Canada Geese flew over as we had our lunch in the new shelter. The fall colours were early and some of the maples were quite beautiful. A very rewarding trip.

Herb Elliott (763-4869)

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Lake Ontario Boat Trip (Oct. 2, 1977) The swells were high, the boat rolled and pitched. The hardier all survived this, but others did not fare so well. Some did not care if the phalarope was piggy-backing a ride on a sabine gull being chased by a jaeger. Gerry and Bruce White did a tremendous job of getting the boat trip organized. One hundred and fifty of the paid fares showed up (the others lost their deposits) to ride the waves and see 47 species of birds — 7 parasitic jaegers (3 far out, 4 in closer), 1 northern phalarope, a tern identified as an arctic, a small gull sitting on the water (by description, a Sabines), a red-throated loon, and a red-necked grebe. These were the highlights. Getting off the boat I heard "Never again", but by many "See you next year", by a couple "Let's set up two trips next year". However, we will run at least one trip, so keep your dates open around the same time, and watch your newsletter for announcements.

Red Mason (621-3905)

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Scarborough Nature Walks (spring and summer 1977) Following a meeting of Scarborough naturalists in March, Bill Dibble arranged a series of two-hour nature hikes. He was assisted in leading these by John Lowe-Wylde and Ed O'Connor. On April 22, four hardy souls visited the Toronto Hunt Club in pouring rain. On April 24, 106 people walked in the Rouge Valley. Many of these were members of the Highland Creek Rate-Payers Association. Other outings were to Morningside Park (May 1), Caper Valley (May 6), Amos Pond (June 1), Brian Greggains' Farm at Cobourg (June 11), Highland Creek (June 15), Rouge River north of the Metro Zoo (June 22), Amos Pond (June 29). About twenty people attended each of the evening walks.

Bill Dibble (261-7955)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds: Eastern Region
775 pp. published by Alfred A. Knopf. $8.95

The evolutionary process allows for the filling of a niche if a vacancy exists. There appears to be no such niche in the world of field guides to birds of North America. Both the Peterson guides and the Golden Press "Birds of North America" provide nearly all the information that the amateur birder needs to know while in the field. The Audubon Society book has tried to create a niche and fill it, but has failed.

The major claim of this new guide is that it replaces the hand drawn and painted illustrations with full colour photographs. The claim is that the reader sees the birds as he or she would through binoculars or with the naked eye. Fair enough so far; but when did you last see a Chimney Swift at rest on a branch? a Black-and-white Warbler at its nest? or a Night Hawk perching on a wire? Nevertheless the photographs are of a high calibre; but, alas, because of the difficult nature of bird photography, they often do not show essential diagnostic features. I felt that in some cases the colour was a trifle over vivid. A Wilsons Warbler, to my mind, is a little more sombre than the photograph would lead you to believe.

The colour pictures, which take up the first half of the book are arranged in groupings of birds of similar shapes, sizes, and colours; elimination of look-alikes in the field is the objective here. There is a rather useful quick selection method of finding the pages in which your particular mystery birds is shown, thumb-tip size in sets on the illustration pages show silhouettes of the general type of bird represented on those pages; for example, duck-like, swallow-like, tree-clinging birds, and so on. In the perching bird pages some of the reference silhouettes are tinted to suggest the predominant colour of the species shown.

Text in support of the pictures is adequately cross referenced. In some cases small line drawings accompany the written material to help the reader with identifying flight attitudes or markings. The use of these drawings only emphasizes the weakness of the photographs. Each bird is described in terms of appearance (markings, stature, etc.), voice (somewhat inadequately), habitat, range, nest and eggs, and in some cases, notes of special interest.

This is a pocket size book, taller and narrower than other field guides so probably won't become lodged in your jacket pocket when needed most; it appears to be fairly rugged but has the oddest dust cover I've ever seen.

In summary, this book doesn't really achieve anything that hasn't been done far better before. I bought it and was relieved to find an error in the sequence of pages that enabled me to return and get my money back. Peterson's guide, lead on!

Watching Birds; an introduction to Ornithology.
Roger F. Pasquier. 300 pp. published by Houghton Mifflin Company. $11.95

In a nutshell; here is an excellent book for all amateur bird watchers.

The title suggests another book of little depth, charming, full of fireside anecdotes, but likely to gather dust. Not so! This is an invaluable publication giving the spellbound reader a wealth of information and insights into what birds do, when, why, and how.

"Watching Birds" examines first the ornithologist as a species, how to watch birds, what to take, when to go, and where. We are told why birds are studied, what we learn from them and how they fit into the grand scheme of things. There is a brief but fascinating account of the origins and evolution of the modern bird. (This includes an almost de rigeur discussion of Darwin's finches). The introductory chapters close with an examination of taxonomy, explaining the difference between Strigiformes and Strigidae, then finally a listing of the now official new names given to familiars like the Myrtle Warbler and the Baltimore Oriole.

An examination of the bird and its ways then follows to occupy almost the rest of the book. Feathers and Flight. Food, Feeding, and Digestion. Anatomy. Voice. The breeding cycle — territory, courtship, nest and eggs, hatching and development of young. Migration. Winter Habits. Distribution. All of these are chapter titles, and each is thoroughly absorbing.

Why are the wing tips of so many white birds black? How can five different species of warbler all exploit the same tree for food at the same time, and yet peacefully co-exist? Where do mankind and badgers fit into the world of the African Greater Honeyguide? How quiet should you be when watching passerines? Answers to all of these questions are, of course, in the book.

If anything disappointed me it was that some topics were not sufficiently deeply examined to satisfy my curiosity, but the vast range of topics covered would require a very weighty publication to deal with them in much depth. Each chapter instead is backed up with a large bibliography from which the interested student could easily pursue his interests.

This book was originally intended as a high school text, and this is occasionally betrayed by the rather rigid style used; there is no room for frivolity or even personal comment. However, it is extremely lucid, and the ample pen and ink drawings by Margaret LaFarge are excellent. One criticism of the layout is that often the illustrations are many pages from the text to which they refer.

I cannot be anything but highly enthusiastic about this excellent book. It will certainly be well-used in years to come and already has me itching to pursue further reading.

Peter Thoem (699-7711)

CLUB PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

The Ravine Group, on behalf of the TFNC, asked Nancy Bellerby, a former member of the Junior Club, to take a series of about 50 colour slides to illustrate the habitat through which the proposed low-level route of the extension of Lawrence Ave. East at Bayview would take if it were to be built.

The slides are accompanied by a finding list which shows where each slide was taken and the direction in which it was taken. Three sketch maps are included. The sides are available for presentations to the public, and for showing within the club. They can be borrowed from the club Photo Archivist, Mark Sawyer by calling him at 782-3116.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS IN TORONTO

Last winter a research project concerning the nature of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker damage to trees was undertaken as a fourth year thesis for the Faculty of Forestry in Toronto. Field measurements of 101 trees on the University of Toronto campus and in Mount Pleasant Cemetery were complemented by a literature search. As well, many people provided helpful information in response to a request printed in the TFN newsletter. Thanks are extended to all those who responded, especially Mr. Don Baldwin. Some of the more interesting results and conclusions follow.

Of the four subspecies of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers found in North America the eastern subspecies, Sphyrapicus varius varius, has the largest summer and winter range, and hence, the potential to make use of the largest number of tree species for food and nest sites.

The sapsucker uses a sequence of plant foods throughout the year. Conifers are the major food source during spring migration when birch sap is not yet flowing. At that time, sapsuckers consume mostly "bast" (living tissues found immediately under the bark) and some sap, and can cause considerable damage to trees by concentrated feeding. In one area thirty trees of comparable dimensions were measured. Of these, twenty-four were Scots pines, all with sapsucker holes, while none of the six white birches nearby were tapped. This indicates that the damage inflicted to trees in Toronto, especially to Scots and Austrian pines, occurs mainly when sapsuckers are migrating.

Later in the spring sapsuckers feed on the outermost branches of aspens and on red oaks and white elms. Birches are heavily relied on as a source of food during the summer. Apples and red oaks are used more extensively in the fall. A total of 174 native and 31 introduced tree species have served as food sources for sapsuckers. Insects, largely ants, form the bulk of the diet in summer. On the average, 25 to 50 per cent of the diet is bast and sap throughout the year.

Sapsuckers drill holes in small, isolated "exploratory" bands or drill concentrations of rectangular holes in vertical rows. If sap is released existing holes are enlarged and more holes are drilled. Concentrations of rectangular holes are the most damaging because entire sections of bark may be removed as the holes are enlarged creating large entrance courts for bacteria, fungi, and insects. An average of 8 to 10 trees are used extensively in a nesting territory each year.

On Toronto conifers, bast columns were present in the vicinity of whorls of branches. Complete girdling of trees by sapsucker drillings prevents the downward flow of nutrients from the leaves causing an accumulation above the girdle. This leads to pronounced swelling and deformation of the trunk.

From the measurements taken, it appeared that neither the total number of holes on a tree, nor the total amount of bark removed were strongly correlated with either the diameter or height of trees.

Some authors claim that wounded trees, or trees of reduced vigor are favoured by sapsuckers. A statistical test in this study showed no such preference. However, trees planted along roads, sidewalks, and clearings were more subject to attack than those within a forested area. In these border situations, a wound exuding sap might well attract a foraging bird, although such wounds are not required for a tree to be attractive to sapsuckers.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers prefer to nest in trembling aspens infected by the heart-rotting false tinder fungus, Fomes igniarius. Infected trees are ideal nest sites since the rotten heartwood is soft and easily excavated while the uninfected sapwood provides a tough protective shell.

A review of cards in the Ontario Nest Records Scheme at the Royal Ontario Museum showed that of 205 nests, 52 per cent were in poplars, 14 per cent were in maples, and 11 per cent were in birches. Only one-third of the nests were in living trees. Nest trees can be used for up to seven years in succession, although fresh nest holes are created each year.

Although sapsucker activity can cause deformation of the trunk, devaluation of wood, reduced vigor, and eventual death of trees, the impact of sapsuckers on forests as a whole is probably minor.

While the frequency of sapsucker intoxication by fermented sap is unknown, perhaps it is a vital link in the explanation of some of the seemingly incongruous patterns of feeding activity.

Kandyd Szuba (921-9284)

GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR BIRD PROJECTS

The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation invites applications for grants to support projects on Ontario birds in 1978. The Fund's aim is to encourage field studies by amateur naturalists and it will support projects which increase or disseminate knowledge of birds in their natural environment or contribute to their preservation. Priority will be given to projects which involve volunteer naturalists in research or fieldwork and to applicants who do not have access to other sources of support. Individual grants will not normally exceed $750. Applications are due by December 31, 1977, and should be submitted on application forms obtainable from the Secretary, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, c/o Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario NOE 1MO.

The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund is financed in part from the proceeds of the Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Count (Baillie Birdathon). The Trustees welcome additional donations to the Fund. Donations are tax deductible and should be sent to the address given above. Trustees of the Fund are: Fred Bodsworth (Chairman), Clive E. Goodwin, John O.L. Roberts, David M. Scott, Terry M. Shortt, J. Murray Spiers, and James Woodford.

Copies of the ONTARIO BIRD FEEDER SURVEY'S FIRST ANNUAL REPORT may be obtained for 50¢ each from OBFS, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario NOE 1MO.

A JIM BAILLIE NATURE RESERVE ENDOWMENT FUND has been set up to take care of expenses at the reserve whenever a dire need arises and no other funds are available. This fund will be administered by an appointed TFNC committee. Money for the fund was started by profits from book sales of the library of Mr. George Gerald. If you have any nature books — trees, flowers, birds, animals, etc. — and you would like to donate them to us, we will sell them and put the money in the fund. Please contact me for further details.

Red Mason (621-3905)

BIRD BANDING AT PRINCE EDWARD POINT OBSERVATORY (MAY AND SEPTEMBER 1977)

As this was my first experience in banding, I was fortunate to be under the tutelage of Helen Quilliam, a patient teacher as well as an author and well-known "birder". At first my fascination with handling these elusive creatures conflicted with my fear that banding little birds contributed more to man's love of power and knowledge than to the well-being of the birds; however, this conflict was resolved with Helen's help.

My delight in birds increased as did my respect for the peck that the Rose-breasted Grosbeak gave me. This friendly chickadee was equally aggressive in the hand, but not equipped to hurt.

A very few birds do get injured, and a very few die. The ones who die are sent to the Canadian Wildlife Service in Ottawa for autopsy, and usually are found to be diseased or to have parasites. The casualties are inconsequential in comparison to the numbers killed at the Hydro Towers at Bath when the lights are left on during migration.

The knowledge gained by banding passerines does not come from recovery of the bands, but from the live birds as they are banded. Knowledge of migration is increased by

1) recording when males and females migrate, and their numbers
2) recording numbers of adult and "hatch year" birds, and when they migrate
3) recording peaks and troughs of migration
(September 5 to 10 was a trough with only 30 to 40 birds banded and there were 180 on the 11th. A truly peak day last October saw over 400 banded. Is the trough due to weather, or is there a natural break between waves of different species? Would the birds ever fly high and straight through? Answers will come.)

Differences in plumage of White-throated Sparrows indicate different races of the species and these are recorded and counted.

Much is being learned about the migration, moulting, and the morphology of Saw-whet Owls as they are netted in October.

Encephilitis studies on selected species determine their exposure to sleeping sickness and the probability, if any, that they are vectors in the transmission of the disease.

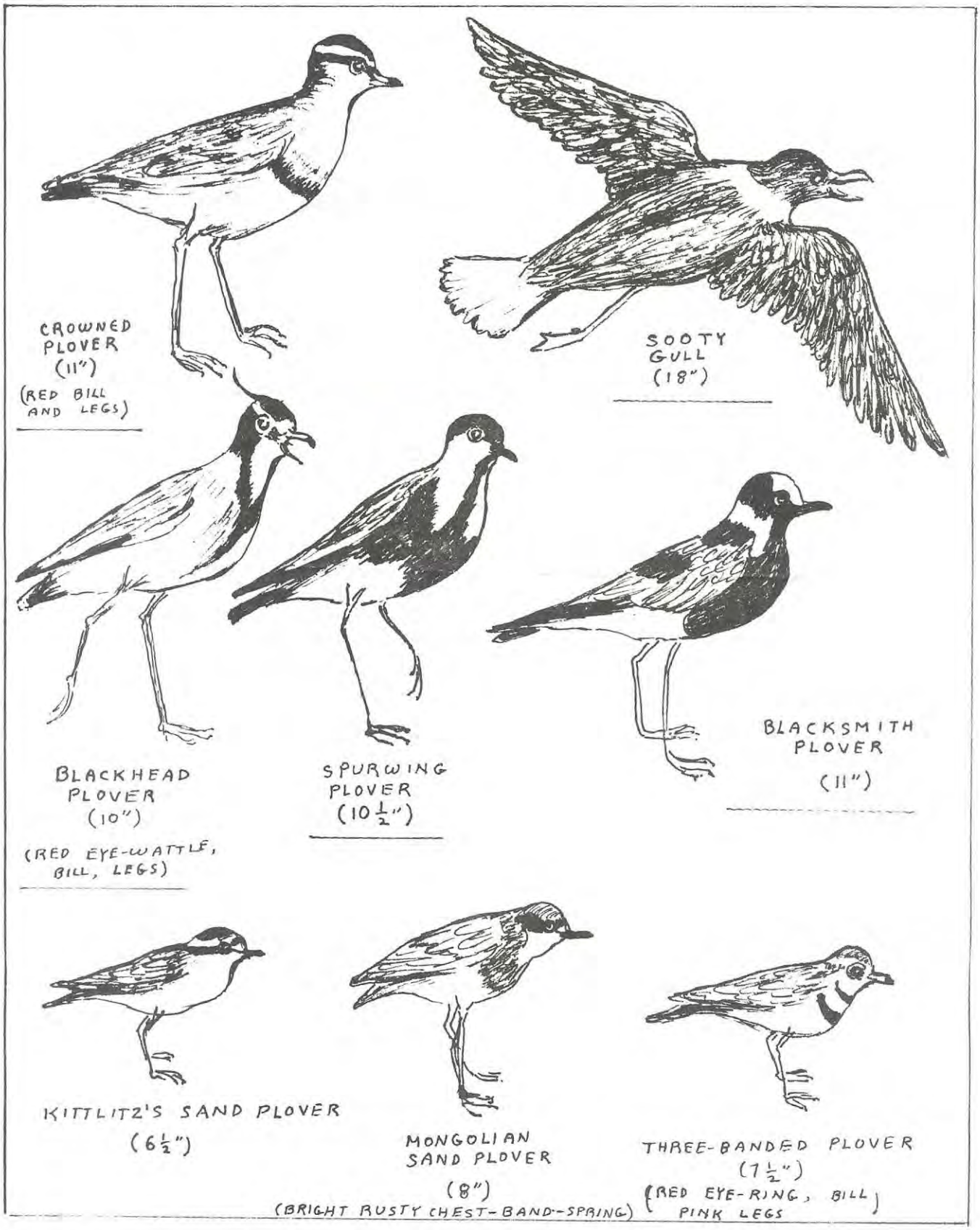
The Kingston Field Naturalists through their Prince Edward Point Observatory are adding significantly to our knowledge of birds. This is the second year they have banded in numbers, and now they have succeeded in interesting the Canadian Wildlife Service who now maintain the point as a feeding stop and migratory route for birds, saving it, just in time, from the developers. As I took a warbler from the nets I knew I was really helping, even if the bird was irritated and inconvenienced temporarily.

Ruby Rogers (789-9612)

Wanted. One WASP NEST in good condition. (No wasps please.)

Laura Greer (691-4888)

A FEW CHARACTERISTICS OF [illegible].....



WATER BIRDS OF THE KENYA COAST

At the seashore it's strange not to see gulls and terns in abundance. "Sparse" is the word on the shores of the Indian Ocean at Bamburi, Kenya. If one sees seven Sooty Gulls (Larus hemprichii) together, it's a "flock". The Sooty is the only coastal gull, though a few of the inland Grey-Headed (L. cirrocephalus) are to be seen at Kilifi Creek (really an inlet), and the Lesser Black-backed (L. fuscus) turns up farther north at Malindi. Of the terns, most are wintering European species. Only one or two species breed in Kenya, but one non-European species, the White-cheeked (Sterna repressa), is resident, though I did not encounter it. During my stay, I believe I caught a fleeting glimpse of a Gull-billed (Gelochelidon nilotica) and a Caspian (Hydroprogn caspia), the latter being the same species as the larger tern we see on Lake Ontario. At the other end of the scale is the Little (or least) Tern (Sterna albifons), which appeared at low tide one day in March just before I left, a flock of about a hundred splashing daintily in the shallows. For an hour or two the Laridae were well-represented. (By the way, this is the same bird that frequents the American seaboard.)

To make up for the lack of gulls and terns, flocks of up to five hundred wintering shorebirds may be seen — ranging in size from the Little Stint (Calidris minuta) of Europe to the Whimbrel (Numenius phaeopus) which breeds in North America as well as in Europe, though I myself had to go all the way to Africa to see it. I love its call at night. The even larger Curlew (N. arquata -- not americanus) occurs, but not while I'm around apparently. The Curlew Sandpiper (Calidris testacea) is sometimes referred to as C. ferruginea or even Erolia ferruginea. It turns up casually in North America. It's very common on the Kenya coast in winter. Most of the coastal species are European ones I had not had a chance to see before.

The Common Sandpiper (Tringa hypoleucos) is usually solitary. In this respect and many others it is very like our Spotted (Actitis macularia) — especially in winter. It's a "teeter-tail" of identical shape and habits. The Spotted is described as a "Tringa" in the European field guide. There are other Tringas, too, in Kenya. Of the seven species listed, I saw five. The Green Sandpiper (T. ochropus) does not care for the sea; I have seen it by little pools in a quarry adjacent to the beach where I was staying. It's bigger than the "Common", has a white rump and less "bob". The Greenshank (T. nebularia) — midway in size between the two Yellowlegs (Totanus), with upturned bill and greenish legs — is common on the coast. The Marsh Sandpiper (T. stagnatilis) is like a small Greenshank, and the Wood Sandpiper (T. glareola rather like the Green Sandpiper. These might be compared to T. solitaria which is the only sandpiper placed in this genus in our current North American guide books.

The ubiquitous Sanderling (Crocethia alba) is to be seen in winter dress in considerable numbers. Then there's our old circumpolar friend, the Ruddy Turnstone (Arenaria interpres). It eluded me for years. I smiled when at last I saw it in fine marbled plumage on Toronto Island, chuckled when I encountered it at Miami Beach the following year and laughed aloud when it greeted me on the Kenya Coast in 1970. However, I didn't have hysterics when I later saw it in Bermuda — by then convinced that it has no confines. The African field guide places it with the Scolopacidae, the sandpipers, and the European and American guides with the Charadriidae, the plovers — the latter better suits its rotund shape.

Speaking of the Charadriidae, the Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) is common; it's like our C. semipalmatus but its toes are not webbed. The Ringed is from Europe, while the only other common plover at Bamburi Beach is the Mongolian Sand Plover (C. mongolus) which is obviously from points east. It's comparable in size to C. hiaticula but its legs appear too long for its short body which is usually hunched, increasing the effect. In breeding plumage it's handsome in tawny and black, chestnut and white, but I saw it in its brownish intermediate plumage. Kittlitz's Sand Plover (C. pecuarius), with its distinctive head markings, is supposed to like the Coast but I saw it only at Tsavo East. At the quarry I found the Three-banded Plover ("two-dark-and-a-white" — like the Killdeer). This plover, C. tricollaris, is of Semipalmated size. I was struck by the fire-red bill and eye-ring — very flashy.

There are three generic names for the Black-bellied Plover — Charadrius, Squatarola, and Pluvialis. Let's call it Pluvialis squatarola — same genus as the Golden. In the French and German squatarola is popularly called the "Silver Plover" to match up nicely with the "Golden". In English (in the Old World) it's called the "Grey Plover" which is not a great improvement over the "Black-bellied". Speaking in terms of plovers, the Kenya Coast, though devoid of "Gold" is rich in "Silver". They were just starting to come into mating plumage in March as I was leaving. What a large plover at close range! It compares in size (11-12") with the lapwing-sized plovers of the savannah of which no representatives of the three genera are to be found in the New World, i.e. — the striking Crowned Plover (Stephanibyx coronatus) often on TV these days, and the beautiful black-and-whites — the Blacksmith Plover (Hoplopterus armatus) of Amboseli, the Spurwing Plover (H. spinosus), and the Blackhead Plover (Sarciophorus tectus) of Tsavo.

My sole entry for the Recurvirostridae is the Black-winged Stilt (Himantopus himantopus) which I spotted in a Tsavo East waterhole. There are four more families of Charadriiformes in Kenya — the famous Jacanidae, the Rostratulidae ("Painted Snipes"), the Burhinidae ("Stone Curlews"), and the Glareolidae (Coursers and Pratincoles). I saw no representatives of these this trip, so I guess I'll just have to go back.

Diana Banville (536-1396)

ROYAL CANADIAN INSTITUTE - Saturday Evening Lectures

Nov. 5	Certainly we can. Gordon S. MacIvor discovery of control of environment within an enclosed space
Nov. 12	Digging in the Past. Dr. D. Pendergast ROM British Hondouras excavations at Lamanai and Altan Ha
Nov. 19	The Space Solution. Dr. Brian O'Leary, former austronaut
Nov. 26	___. Mr. R.T. Tamblyn, Pres. of Engineering Interface Ltd.
Dec. 3	Mystery and Detective Stories Concerning Parasitic Animals. Dr. A. Murray Fallis
Dec. 10	Urban Botany - Plants in Big Cities. Dr. James Cruise

Lectures are held at 8:15 p.m. in Convocation Hall, University of Toronto, and are free to the public. Parking on the campus.
For further information apply to the Secretary, 191 College St., Toronto M5T 1P9 or telephone 979-2004.

PUBLIC TREES

Some trees belong to all of us. They live on public land. It has been established that the public has a right to protect public trees. Remembering that a tree consists of a canopy, branches, a trunk, and roots, a good case can be made for public ownership of a great many of our favourite "heritage" trees. These include trees in parks, school grounds, on hospital and government properties, along roads and abandoned railroads, and maybe even on the banks of navigable waterways and along the borders of private properties.

The next time you take "Fido" for a walk, see how many of these public trees you can spot. The public property line is usually about five feet from the edge of the sidewalk and is marked plainly by the turnoff valves for the water supply to houses and by hydrants. In downtown areas this is often the point where the sidewalk meets the building so that in such areas, all trees are public trees. In any case most land that has public services on it (such as hydro poles and transformers, street lights, hydrants, sidewalks) is public land. Often a marker indicates the edge of the property line.

Are the public trees in your area being looked after well? Are they thriving? The forestry department of your municipality is the place to send your congratulations.

This year a survey of all public trees within Metropolitan Toronto is taking place. It will be possible to identify trouble spots even before going to look at the trees so that precious dollars and manpower can be spent on keeping our trees healthy rather than on cruising the streets. The survey was reported on page B1 of the Toronto Star (June 2, 1977). A complete set of aerial photographs were taken in August (the time of greatest stress for trees) while 14 university forestry students checked the identification of the trees on the ground.

The first part of a larger study of tree needs in Canada is nearing completion. Three model tree by-laws have been drafted — one suitable for small towns, one for medium-sized towns, and one ideal for large municipalities. Each municipality will be able to choose those parts that suit its situation while recognizing what has been left out of its tree program and why. So there may be some worthwhile changes in favour of public trees within the next few years.

Anyone who has noticed what has been happening to public trees in the downtown area in the past five years may still wonder if it will be in time as large trees are planted in small containers and replaced every year or so.

One good thought to top things off is that the best buckeye in town (at the southwest corner of Clarence Square — on Spadina just south of Wellington) is sporting a full canopy again after two years of playing dead. However, the big copper beach on Dundas West at Islington, long the wonder of the neighbourhood because it has been almost encased in asphalt for several years without obvious distress, is now getting thin in the crown and probably won't last much longer. Too bad! It should have been dead five years ago, but it could have lasted a century. The funeral home it shades will need more air conditioning, and the plastic trees will multiply.

Mary Smith (231-5302)

HIKING THE HUMBER

Last September I submitted an article to the TFNC newsletter entitled "Rediscovering the Don". It was accepted immediately and almost before I could untie my hiking boots, I found myself working on the November newsletter. (Elmer Talvila, the previous editor, had suddenly found himself working in B.C.) Luckily for the newsletter, it was a cold and snowy winter — not ideal for outings — and my number-one hiking companion was out of town for almost two months. However, once the May newsletter was complete, we were on our way again.

Our plan for the Humber as with the Don was to follow the river and its major tributaries as closely as possible from Lake Ontario north to where they crossed the Metropolitan Toronto boundary.

We each carried a small backpack containing rainwear, lunch, binoculars, camera, notebook, and maps (one was a Metro Toronto street map, the other a TTC Ride Guide). We wore hiking boots and layers of clothes as the weather was changeable. It varied between 10 and 20 degrees celsius (50-70° F).

Our explorations began on April 18 at 10:00 a.m. when my father and I found ourselves at the west end of the Queen streetcar line — as close to the mouth of the Humber as we could reach by public transportation. Roadways, railroads, hydro lines, and an apartment tower blocked our view and access to the mouth of the river. We also had to detour around the Humber Sewage Treatment Plant and walk on sidestreets until we reached Kings Mill Park. From here we were able to follow the river in parkland, under the Bloor Street bridge and subway, past the Old Mill (one of about 50 mills located in the valley during the past century), to Dundas Street.

The second day we walked from Dundas Street to Lawrence Avenue passing through Lambton Woods, the most unspoiled natural area within the valley anywhere in Metro. Just south of Lawrence Avenue we had to scramble out of the valley rather suddenly where the river runs close to sheer bluffs. From the top of the bluffs we looked down on the wide, flat valley on the opposite side of the river and realized that we were looking at what had been Raymore Drive, the street where 80 people drowned during Hurricane Hazel in 1954. We couldn't help but wonder at the shortness of memory that had allowed the two apartment towers to be built recently on the floodplain south of Eglinton Avenue opposite Lambton Woods.

Day three we walked from Lawrence Avenue to Sheppard Avenue. Again we crossed the river several times — first at 401, and then at Albion Road. Near Lawrence Avenue, where the west branch of the river meets the main river, we found a small lake not shown on our maps. Later research revealed that the lake had formed when gravel was removed for the construction of Highway 401.

The fourth day we entered the valley at Sheppard Avenue and after a muddy experience getting around the back end of someone's property which was sliding into the river, we walked in parkland (Rowntree Mills Park) to Steeles Avenue. At Steeles, the wild nature of the valley was disrupted by the construction of a bridge being built to join Islington Avenue and Kipling Road. We had completed the main Humber!

Day five found us near the "forks" of the Humber. In following the west branch of the Humber River to within sight of Clairville Dam we found ourselves almost 20 miles from home, but still within Metro, and always close to public transportation. We left the valley that day at Humber College.

We were north of the Woodbine racetrack and Malton airport. For me this was the most interesting day. We found twinleaf (Jeffersonia diphylla) flowering — a rare wildflower in the Toronto area — and the river itself was very beautiful as it ran over sheets of flat rock.

Black Creek was next! The sixth day we entered Smythe Park and discovered Black Creek running through a cement ditch. Now we were seeing a real urban river! Since 1954 the Conservation Authority has encased much of Black Creek in cement. We found garbage still being dumped alongside the creek in Keelsdale Park, and mounds of fill beside the river north of Eglinton Avenue. Although plans to extend Highway 400 south to Eglinton Avenue have meant many abuses to this pleasant creek, a number of beautiful natural areas still exist.

The seventh and last day found us at Highway 401 walking in the cement ditch. Twice that day we had to leave sight of the river altogether to go around private golf clubs (Oakdale and Northwood). Finally we reached Pioneer Village. Where the river enters Metro it flows through Pioneer Village and past the campus of York University and the offices of MTRCA (the Conservation Authority) — symbols and warnings.

In the seven days of walking we observed 36 species of birds: Canada geese - common, particularly between the mouth of the river and Eglinton Avenue; mallards - as when we walked the Don, we saw a pair at almost every turn of the river; mergansers - in the marshes at the mouth of the river; Red-tailed hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks - at Rowntree Mills Park and near the Clairville Dam; Killdeer - throughout; one sandpiper; gulls — in the marshes and at the dam south of Dundas Street; Rock and Mourning Doves - throughout; Kingfishers - north of Sheppard; flickers - several; sapsuckers - one; swallows - a few; blue jays - throughout; crows - everyday; chickadees, nuthatches, and creepers - a few sightings; thrashers - one; robins - throughout; kinglets - a few; starlings - throughout; vireos - one; yellow-rumped warblers, black-throated green warblers - near Humber College; house sparrows - whenever we left the valley; meadowlarks - a few; Red-winged Blackbirds - constantly; grackles - everywhere; cowbirds - everywhere; cardinals - a few every day; goldfinches - once; towhees - one just south of Lawrence Avenue; song sparrows - often; juncos - several times; pheasants - every day throughout.

Mammals observed were squirrels - gray and black; rabbits - two sightings north of Sheppard; raccoon tracks in the northern sections; beaver-cut poplars just south of 401; cats, dogs, and horses (twice - at the forks and at Humber College).

We saw no snakes, no frogs, no toads, and the only fish were dead suckers south of Dundas Street.

The only insects were a few midges emerging on one of the warmer days. We weren't complaining about this of course.

Because our walks were taken so early in the spring (between April 18 and May 14), we did not see many wildflowers blooming; however, we did see early flowering sedge, toothwort, coltsfoot, trilliums, skunk cabbage, marsh marigolds, purple violets, trout lilies, early meadow rue, may apple, twin leaf, bloodroot, spring beauty, pussytoes, wild leeks, and june bushes blooming. We also saw some of the largest willows and oaks we have ever seen; and miles of Manitoba maple growing on the floodplain.

For anyone interested in natural history, history, and walking, there is much to be observed in our river valleys. Although the noise from low-flying jets and litter from careless people are often reminders that you are walking within the limits of a very large city, many remarkably wild areas still exist and much remains that is worth saving!

Helen Juhola (924-5806)

OUTINGS

Everyone welcome. Held rain or shine.

Saturday Nov. 5 10:00 a.m.	WARDEN WOODS - Ravine Group Outing Meet at Warden subway station entrance (Warden and St. Clair).
Sunday Nov. 6 2:00 p.m.	MORNINGSIDE PARK - Scarborough Nature Walk Meet in park one mile north of Kingston Rd. in first parking lot on left.
Sunday Nov. 13 9:00 a.m.	LESLIE STREET SPIT - Birds Leaders: Dave Broughton, Warren Russell Meet at gate entrance across from garden plots, at south end of Leslie St. (Queen streetcar to Leslie St. and walk south). Bring good footwear and lunch to carry.
2:00 p.m.	ROUGE VALLEY - Scarborough Nature Walk Meet in the parking lot of the Scarborough Nature School at Finch and Meadowvale on northeast corner.
Sunday Nov. 20 2:00 p.m.	AMOS POND - Scarborough Nature Walk Meet in the parking lot of the Scarborough Nature School on the northeast corner of Finch and Meadowvale.
2:00 p.m.	NESBITT RAVINE - Ravine Group Outing Meet at Todmorden Mills (Bloor subway to Broadview Avenue and bus north to Pottery Road - Mortimer Ave. bus stop).
Saturday Nov. 26 2:00 p.m.	ETOBICOKE CREEK - Ravine Group Outing Meet on Eglinton Avenue on east side of creek. Anyone needing a ride from Islington subway station, please call Mary Smith (231-5302).
Sunday Nov. 27 2:00 p.m.	THOMPSON PARK - Scarborough Nature Walk Meet in main parking lot at corner of Lawrence and Brimley.
Sunday Dec. 4 2:00 p.m.	McCOWAN RAVINE - Scarborough Nature Walk Meet in parking lot of Loblaws store at corner of Brimley and Eglinton.

For information about other outings, call MTRCA (661-6600) in Toronto or CLOCA (579-0411) in Whitby.

Changing your address? Call Lorlei Owen at 225-2205.

Submissions to Newsletter should be made by the first day of the month and articles should be no longer than 1500 words.

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