



THE BULLETIN

November, 2003 No. 431

2003 - 2004 EXECUTIVE

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Events calendar

Botany Group	Date: Monday December 1, 2003
Bird Group	Date: December 10, 2003 Location: Dana Jonak, 905-881-0603
Executive Meeting	Date: Tuesday December 9, 2003 Location: McConaghy Centre
General Meeting	Date: January 15, 2004 at 8:00pm Location: Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church hall 10066 Yonge Street * note: There will be no General Meeting in December *
Niagara River Gulls	Sunday, November 30, 2003 at 7am Vellore Hall, leader: Kevin Shackleton
Eastern Lake Simcoe	Sunday, December 7, 2003 at 8am Bruce Brydon, 905-836-8589
Christmas Bird Count	Saturday, December 20, 2003 (All Day) Natalie Helferty, 905-881-8403 See Details on Page 2

A Flutter of Monarchs

It is a warm, late September early afternoon. The meadows below the jagged sand cliffs of the Bluffs of Scarborough, east of Toronto, are a brilliant yellow and deep purple.

The yellow is late goldenrod blooms, five feet - nearly one and a half meters - high. The purple is New England fall Asters which is almost as tall as the goldenrod, is laid out in broad patches above thick fronds of small white aster blooms.

Low willows, small aspens, dogwoods and highbush cranberry viburnums surround each meadow area lining the lagoons below the cliffs, softening the onshore breeze.

A puff of that south-eastern breeze and a wonderful flutter of a thousand orange and black butterflies lifts from the purple asters. It swirls for a moment, then descends in hundreds of smooth glides back to the nectar of the purple blooms. They have been quietly feeding, two, three, five to a purple cluster, wings joined, showing only milky orange and dark veins until the brilliant orange lift-offs.

This is the annual monarch butterfly gathering along the north shore of Lake Ontario. Contentedly drawn by the purple flower blooms they arrive into the calmer air under the cliffs and rest awhile, their long tongues unfurling into the yellow florets in each aster center.

...continued on P.3



The Bulletin is published 9 times per year, from September to May inclusive, by the *Richmond Hill Naturalists*, and is mailed free to members. The Bulletin is the official publication of the Richmond Hill Naturalists, a non-profit organization, the objectives of which are to stimulate public interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation of our natural areas.

Address Correspondence to: **Richmond Hill Naturalists, P.O. Box 32217, RPO Harding, Richmond Hill, On, L4C 9S3**

Deadlines: The editor encourages submissions from any member on any topic related to nature or conservation, and in particular, any issue that might be of interest or concern to members of this club. e-mail: lhelferty@sympatico.ca Deadlines are the first day of each month.

Bulletin Advertisers have been selected because of their relevance to member interests.

Members are encouraged to patronize our advertisers and please mention that you saw their ad in our Bulletin.

Change of Address: Any change of email or street address should be sent to Mike Turk who prints the envelopes for the Bulletin mailing. See the Executive List for contact information.

MEMBERSHIP IN RHN

The *Membership Application Form*, is available at each General Meeting from Mike Turk, or in our club brochure, available from any executive member listed (see page 1).

NEW MEMBERS

Roderick and Sharon Stewart
Gabriella Cavallini

Meet our new members at club events and say Hello!

RHN Events:

EVENTS FUTURE

- **Sunday, November 30, 2003:** 7am-230pm. "Niagara River Gulls"

Each year thousands of gulls from across eastern North America collect on the Niagara River. Scattered among these thousands are rarities from the west coast, the high arctic and occasionally from Europe. Much of the day is spent looking for these rarities as well as migrating waterfowl.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Vellore Hall (9545 Weston Rd, 1km S of Major Mackenzie Dr) so that we can car pool or at 9:00 a.m. at the Table Rock Restaurant. Leader Kevin Shackleton. Bring a lunch and wear warm clothing.

- **Sunday, December 7, 2003:** 8am-1pm. "Eastern Lake Simcoe"

Snowy Owls, Tundra Swans, late duck migrants and early winter passerines are featured. Meet Bruce Brydon at 8:00 a.m. at the N.E. corner of Leslie and the Ravenshoe Sideroad. Bring a lunch. Call Bruce at 905-836-8589.

- **Saturday, December 20, 2003.** 8am-4pm. York Region. Audubon Christmas bird count.

Chilli supper will be hosted this year by Valerie Kent. 173 St. Anthony's Court, Richmond Hill. 905-508-5531. Potluck contributions welcome. Leader Natalie Helferty. Call 416-416-460-2460.

Upcoming RHN General Meeting Speakers:

December – no meeting. Christmas Bird Count will be on **Saturday, December 20** (all day).

Please contact Natalie Helferty if you wish to volunteer for this event.

Thurs. January 15, 2004 – Steve Gahbauer, hike leader of the Rouge Valley Foundation, will be showing his amazing trip through Costa Rica! Bella! RH Presbyterian Church. 7:30pm

Thurs. February 19, 2004 – Steve Varga, MNR biologist and amazing field botanist, will show us the beauty of the Oak Ridges Moraine and what all the 'fuss' is about. RH Presbyterian Church. 7:30pm

Thurs. March 18, 2004 – Douglas Skeates, 'retired' MNR forester and CESO member, will give a travelogue of his many environmental activities around the world. Exciting! RH Presbyterian Church 7:30pm

Thurs. April 15, 2004 – Dr. Theo Hofmann, our bird records secretary and volunteer extraordinaire, will show us his wonderful trip to Spitzburgen, Norway and the birds he encountered. RH Presbyterian Church 6:00pm. AGM

Please note: Richmond Hill Naturalists welcomes anyone to volunteer as an outing leader. If you would like to volunteer or you have any ideas, please submit them to Martin Chen (905-709-0246, jmchentoronto@rogers.com).

GTA Events:

Toronto Entomological Association

- **Saturday, November 22, 2003:** 1pm. "STRANGE THINGS DONE 'NEATH THE MIDNIGHT SUN"
Lecture by Doug Currie, Curator of Entomology, Royal Ontario Museum & Department of Zoology, U of T.

...continued from P.1

MEMBER SUBMISSIONS

Here, in these rich fall meadows beside parklands and marina seawalls, the success of this year's monarch season is on spectacular display. They are not quite filling the shoreline trees but the rich profusion on the aster and goldenrod meadows is a pleasing harvest for the monarchs this summer of 2003.

One is so happy to see this tranquil profusion. It is in contrast to watching the intrepid progress of these orange migrants throughout the rest of the City of Toronto. Watching this, one hopes they will rise high enough over the Gardener Expressway. One is anxious for them flapping strongly south alongside the Toronto Island bound ferry, knowing that somehow they are going to carry on to cross, Marilyn Bell like, the 53 kilometres of cold, blustery Lake Ontario. The brilliant orange of most of them are welcome signs of their recent emergence from their jewel-like jade green chrysalises, each with its unexplainable dots of pure shining gold. Weeks of energetic feeding on thick milkweed leaves has brought them strong and healthy through their yellow, black and green banded caterpillar stages of life. The milkweed's pungently sweet fragrance drew their mothers to place their eggs on the tall plants.

Toxin laden milk saved many of them as they grew from half a centimetre to four centimetres in preparation for their amazing metamorphosis and even more amazing migration back to their tropical winter homes.

If one is lucky you will know a special someone who has found out how and where these handsome butterflies carry out the early stages of their lives. Having someone like this, you will know that in spite of their bitter milkweed diet, from egg on to their two to three centimetre robustness, the little monarchs have an almost inescapable array of predators in the ordinary meadow or garden. Ants, wasps of all shapes, colors and sizes, spiders, sparrows, warblers, thrushes - urban starlings, and cowbirds all visit the milkweeds .

My monarch butterfly guardian searches out the egg clusters as soon as she can after the arrival of early summer mothers in Toronto who are drawn to the great milkweeds that have been fertilized to glossy greenness and strong fragrance in a small, crowded East Toronto garden. They are almost in the shade of 10 foot yellow bloomed cupplants.

Her butterflies-to-be are moved into a sunny window. They are supplied with daily leaf fodder for their methodical, driven grazing. The caterpillars grow, defecating small deep-green pellets. Suddenly their feeding will finish; their genes tell them they are ready. It is good if their containers are covered because they begin their trek as caterpillars. Intently and intensely, each seeks the perfect place to make its marvellous change. Colorful warning stripes split away for a pale jade-green housing.

My monarch guardian proudly calls her friends when her broods are hatching into orange and black brilliance. Sometimes we join her to watch them take their first flights. They are full of an instant wisdom, and an amazing skill and competence of flight. Their orange beauty and elegance honestly put our flight machines to shame in efficiency and delicate maneuverability; everything - except speed and noise.

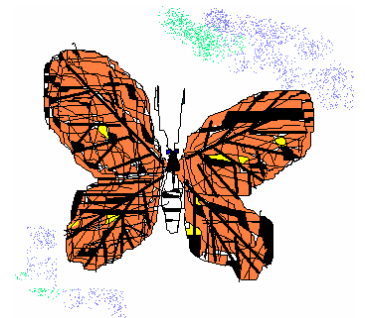
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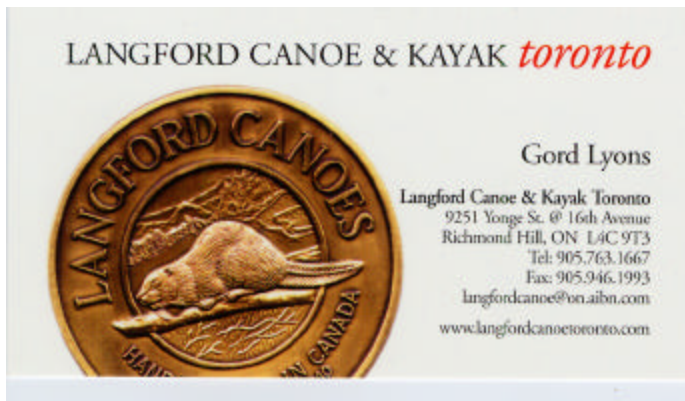
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We watch them fly up over the fence and away south. They will join, in this good year, thousands, nay millions, all across North America. This years profusion defies the threat to so many other species brought on by our own human proliferation. Their ancient wisdom defies the natural power and vaguary of weather.

They will, according to [David Gibo](#) - who studies Monarch butterfly migrations and behaviours at Erin College of the University of Toronto - wait for the winds that will help them make progress in their genetically defined drive north in spring and now south. This will lead them through three to five generations to reach the

American Gulf States. They will know how to use thermals and rising air. They will soar a mile high where they will glide (if possible), or they may have to flap long distances against winds. Yet they know somehow - Gibo admits he does not know how - that they are crossing their true course.

But here, this September afternoon, on sun warmed purple flower heads, in gentle winds protected by high sand cliffs, these wonderful orange travellers rest and sip nectar beside Lake Ontario before their next step southward.

- Michael White, past President

EVENTS PAST

A Special Council Meeting was announced in the Liberal newspaper for September 15, 2003 to report on the "North Leslie Secondary Plan" and associated development applications. The report included a request for amendment to expand the plan north of 19th Avenue to include the "Manson Investments" property.

At the Richmond Hill council meetings in May and September, Marianne Yake presented, as a delegate for the Richmond Hill Naturalists (RHN), our position regarding the "North Leslie Secondary Plan" that was before the Ontario Municipal Board. These plans included lands bounded by Bayview Avenue on the west, 19th Avenue on the north, highway 404 on the east, and Elgin Mills on the south. This property is, for the most part, currently zoned "agricultural" and encompasses some of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Marianne, on behalf of the Richmond Hill Naturalists, had asked that the "North Leslie Plan" be adopted into the Richmond Hill official plan, but was not adopted at the time. She also asked that the 'linkage' between all the tributaries to the Rouge River be strengthened, and that there was a need for the town to adhere to the recently introduced "Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act". This effort was required since the lawyer arguing for Richmond Hill was not addressing this issue, nor did Richmond Hill seem particularly concerned about the lands that included the discharge headwater streams for the Rouge river. RHN wanted the town to address these concerns to the OMB.

Also included in this OMB hearing is a parcel of land that is referred to as the "E. Manson" lands, running north of 19th Avenue south of the CNR tracks approximately three-quarters of the distance west of Leslie Street toward Bayview Avenue. This parcel includes a sod farm and fell under the designation "transitional properties" during the land freeze on the Oak Ridges Moraine. This property is the "Loophole" that the Planning Commissioner for the town had found, but chose to leave 'as-is' even after it was found. In the staff report for September the town of Richmond Hill's lawyers, under direction from council, showed little concern for this property at the OMB hearings, even though the Region of York later stated they had concerns. But York left this for the town to argue.

The "E. Manson" block lies half on the Moraine and half off. Their initial plan, submitted in 1999, shows that they planned to develop only the area off the Moraine. As a result of the town's "non-position", the OMB chair ruled in July 2003 that this land could be developed to the **full extent of the property**. In August the developers of the land submitted their new plans -- which included the entire property.

The town of Richmond Hill has now set the precedent for the whole Moraine: properties that had submitted plans prior to the freeze could now *bypass* the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act!

Richmond Hill council had subsequently asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs to review the OMB decision, which affects sections 15 and 17 of the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, as it is not in keeping with the spirit and direction of the act. However, this was done after the ruling had already been made.

-- Marianne Yake

Bird group report for October, 2003

On October 8th, 2003, the bird group met at the home of Joyce McKinnon to discuss the Great Horned Owl and the Great Grey Owl.

The Great Horned Owl (*Bubo Virginianus*) also called the big hoot owl, cat owl, and chicken owl to name a few. It is quite common in the rural areas, and are heard more than they are seen. They are widespread over the United States and Canada from the tree line south over Canada, Alaska, the United States and Mexico. They tend to be non-migratory.

The Great Grey Owl (*Strix Nebulosa*), also commonly called the "great grey ghost", spectral owl, or spruce owl. They are common only in timbered regions of the far north. They nest in the boreal forests of North America from central Alaska, to northern Yukon, Northern Manitoba and Ontario, and south to the high spruce and pine forest of the Rockies. They are basically non migratory except when food is scarce.

The behaviour of the Great Horned Owl is savage and unpredictable. It seems to have a poor sense of smell and regularly kills and eats skunks. It is mostly solitary. It is essentially a nocturnal hunter but it can be seen

almost any time of day especially on overcast days. The Great Horned Owl is a deadly hunter, combining its keen senses and silence in flight with strength and audacity. It will attack almost anything up to the size of a fox or a small dog. The mating calls begin in early December. The female is hard to woo. The male entices her on the ground by a variety of showy behaviours and sometimes must present her with a small prey before she capitulates. The Great Horned has no natural enemies except man. The greatest cause of death is probably accidental killing on highways by vehicles. They have been known to attack humans who approach a nest with young. There have been numerous cases reported of campers being attacked as they move around their campsite at dusk or dawn. The Great Horned makes a variety of sounds better understood by coming to our meetings.

The Great Grey Owl is a reasonably fearless bird not easily put to flight. It is not aggressive like the Great Horned, but is also solitary. It hunts by day in the north but becomes crepuscular and nocturnal in the south. It moves frequently from perch to perch while hunting, watching and listening for prey, which it attacks with its huge talons. The male woos the female by engaging in some peculiar flight manoeuvres which end on the ground where the actual mating occurs. The pair remains together throughout the nesting season and may remain mated for years. The Great Grey is non aggressive and has often been caught by hand during daylight hours. Great Horned Owls, martens, and wolverines take the young birds. The Indians will kill the birds for food in emergencies and the eggs are still gathered by Indian women for food.

The nesting and egg development of the two birds are similar. They both use an unlined cavity that has material already present. The breeding season for the Great Horned begins at the end of November or January in the south, to early April in the north. Both are single brooders. Both lay 1-5 eggs depending on the availability of food. Both nestlings are altricial and downy. Both young hatch over a period of days and are tended by both parents, the female brooding while the male brings food. The Great Horned young leave the nest at 4-5 weeks but do not fly well until 9-10 weeks. The Great Grey young leave the nest at 3-4 weeks but do not fly until 5 weeks. Both young rely on the parents for food for a long time.

The Great Horned Owl can be found in a wide range of woodland, mainly deciduous to mixed coniferous forests

with open fields nearby. Found from sea level to 4000m. The Great Grey Owl can be found in dense boreal or coniferous forest, favouring areas with openings. Found from sea level to 1000m; in California up to 2400m, and in Utah up to 3200m. The Great Horned Owl eats a variety of small mammals, reptiles, fish and carrion if food is scarce. It prefers mammals, and in Canada the snowshoe hare represents 83-86 % of its diet. It will eat other birds from passerines to great blue herons. It forages mostly at dusk. It hunts from a perch, dropping steeply to the pray, or flaps and glides over open areas where prey is likely to be.

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Both birds seize their prey with their talons and swallow small prey whole. Larger prey is dismembered first. Bones and fur/feathers are regurgitated. The Great Grey eats smaller mammals. They are mostly nocturnal and crepuscular hunters. They also hunt from perches but they can detect prey under the snow and can break through snow cover with "clenched" feet to grab the prey with their talons.

The Great Horned Owl (45-63 cm) is a heavyset bird weighing more than the Great Grey (60-83 cm). The Great Horned has ear tufts and is heavily barred beneath, with a conspicuous white throat bib. The Great Grey is a dusty grey colour, heavily striped lengthwise on the under parts. It has a large rounded head without ear tufts. The strongly lined facial discs are very large, dwarfing the yellow eyes. It has a black chin spot bordering two broad white patches (moustache). The tail is 12 inches long, which is long for an owl.



General Interest



The York Environmental Stewardship, in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and York Region's Natural Heritage and Forestry Services Department have created 'logo' garbage bags for use by community groups who undertake stream and/or land/forest clean-up initiatives throughout the Region. These bags contain the message "Supporting Community Volunteers for a Healthy Environment", and are free to any group requesting them. Call for bags if you are undertaking community clean-ups, and pass this message on to other community groups or direct interested groups to use them if and when you get inquiries. A sample of the messages on the bags are shown here.



Supporting Community Volunteers for a Healthy Environment



Requests for bags should be directed to:

Brian Peterkin, Coordinator
York Environmental Stewardship
905 713-7732
brian.peterkin@mnr.gov.on.ca

or

Sandra Malcic
York Region
905 895-1200 ex 5274
sandra.malcic@region.york.on.ca

The Oak Ridges Moraine Hiking Trail (ORMHT)

The Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA) is looking to partner with members of the Richmond Hill Naturalists to identify an optimal route for the ORMHT through Oak Ridges. Work has started on the "southern" route for the Trail which will cross Yonge Street near Bond Lake. The purpose is to fulfill the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan with respect to a trail across the Moraine in the Core and Linkage areas. The present "northern" route through Aurora will be maintained, as it provides a more direct route from King to Whitchurch. A Planning Committee is now being established which will include members of ORTA from King and Whitchurch-Stouffville. Members of the Richmond Hill Naturalists are encouraged to submit ideas about route options. If you are interested in helping to shape the trail route through Oak Ridges please contact Diana Piché 905-773-4199 diana.piche@sympatico.ca.

NATURE NEWS

Joint Canadian Peregrine Foundation-Richmond Hill Naturalists 2003 hack will not be funded by Trillium

The Canadian Peregrine Foundation (CPF) and the Richmond Hill Naturalists (RHN) have received the unfortunate news that the Ontario Trillium foundation application that was submitted in early May for the July hack release and fall satellite tracking of 2 birds (Richmond and Miryam) on their migration south and north again and the West Nile Virus study by the Ontario Veterinary College was not accepted by the Trillium selection board upon their review of the application this fall.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Ministry of Culture, receives \$100 million of government funding annually (generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative), and is administered by a volunteer Board of Directors. In partnership with others, the Ontario Trillium Foundation makes strategic investments to build healthy, sustainable, and caring communities in Ontario.

CPF received a standard form letter that did not explain the exact reasons why funding was not continued. CPF was aware that there were many applications submitted this spring from other groups however.

Having funded a 'hack and track' in the past may have disqualified CPF from further funding, but the additional West Nile Virus study that was submitted and the reason why this final year of work was requested to be done by CPF and RHN does not seem to have been considered.

Since timing was critical in releasing the birds to the wild when they were ready to fledge, CPF had hoped and prayed they would get the funding, at least in part, to cover the West Nile Virus study and satellite tracking for fall, but the application was turned down altogether.

Dr. Bruce Hunter of the University of Guelph had also submitted applications for funding for his West Nile Study to study vector transmission and inoculation among bird offspring, but he was also unsuccessful, so it seems that bird studies are low on the list of priorities of West Nile Virus studies at the moment, although you might think that transmission of the virus and how it is spread would be important considerations for research funding.

As a community, ending on a low note is really too bad. This is also the last year of hacking that will be allowed in Ontario, since the MNR will no longer be supporting hack releases in Ontario for peregrine falcons.

Thanks all for reading and assisting in the falcon release program over the past few years!

The birds appreciate the effort by their continued existence!

- Natalie Helferty

President, Richmond Hill Naturalists

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

AUGUST

Peel Region

Great Egret - 1 at Pond, Bovaird & Dixie Rd. Aug.7,12 (ARa).

Osprey - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Aug.24 (DMi).

Wild Turkey - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Aug.24 (DMi).

Black-billed Cuckoo - 2 (pair) at Centreville Crk Aug.21 (PG). 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Aug.24 (DMi).

Eastern Screech-Owl - 1 at Graydon Property, Humber Grove Aug.27 [Singing Male] (PG).

Pileated Woodpecker - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Aug.24 (DMi).

Red-breasted Nuthatch - many at Palgrave Conservation Area Aug.24 (DMi).

Pine Warbler - 7 at Mt. Wolfe 31 (KHo).

York Region

Pied-billed Grebe - 1 at St Johns SR Marsh Aug.24 (RJF). 1 at Schomberg Sewage Lagoons Aug.27 (DMi).

Double-crested Cormorant - 2 at St Johns SR Marsh Aug.24 (RJF).

Great Blue Heron - 3 @ Pond, Mjr Mack. E of Bayview Aug.09 (GL,BC). 2 @ Oakbank Pnd ThrnHll Aug.17 (TH).

Green Heron - 1 @ Lumsden Prop Aurora Aug.01-31 (HL). 2 @ Coyote Pond Mrkhm Aug.18 (SLo).

Black-crowned Night-Heron - 2 at Toogood Pond, Unionville Aug.16 (SLo). 7 at St Johns SR Marsh Aug.24 (RJF).

Trumpeter Swan - 2 (pair) at Toogood Pond, Unionville Aug.31 (SLo). No tags and no leg bands.

Wood Duck - 2 (1 ad (f), 1 imm) at Toogood Pond, Unionville Aug.18 (SLo).

Mallard - 42 at Oakbank Pond Thornhill Aug.17 (TH).

Osprey - 1 at Bloomington and 404 Aug.07 [Flying over] (BB). 1 at ramp 404/Bloomington Aug.22 [Adult] (BB).

Northern Goshawk - 1 ad. 1 imm. at YRF North Tract Aug.07 (TH,ChvR). (in neighbourhood of nest)

Common Moorhen - 3 at St Johns SR Marsh Aug.24 (RJF).

Killdeer - 8 at Pond, Major Mack. E of Bayview Aug.09 (GL,BC).

Lesser Yellowlegs - 5 at Coyote Pond, Markham Aug.15 (SLo).

Solitary Sandpiper - 1 at Coyote Pond, Markham Aug.05 (SLo). 1 at Schomberg Sewage Lagoons Aug.27 (DMi).

Spotted Sandpiper - 3 at Pond, Major Mack.E of Bayview Aug.09 (GL,BC). 3 at St Johns SR Marsh Aug.24 (RJF).

Upland Sandpiper - 8 at Coyote Pond, Markham Aug.05 (SLo).

Baird's Sandpiper - 1 at Schomberg Sewage Lagoons Aug.24 (DMi).

Stilt Sandpiper - 3 Juv at Schomberg Sewage Lagoons Aug.27 (DMi).

Mew Gull - 1 at Toogood Pond, Unionville Aug.17 (SLo). A very rare visitor from the west (or from Europe?)
 Caspian Tern - 2 @ Coyote Pond Mrkhm Aug.05,15 (SLo). 4 @ Pond Major MacK.E of Bayview Aug.09 (GL,BC).
 Common Tern - 1 at Coyote Pond, Markham Aug.03 (SLo).
 Common Nighthawk - 4 at Maple Avenue Richmond Hill Aug.18 (GL).
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird - 1 at Carrying Pl. Trail Kettleby Aug.20-21 (CAT).
 Belted Kingfisher - 1 at Oakbank Pond Thornhill Aug.17 (TH). 6 at St Johns SR Marsh Aug.24 (RJF).
 Downy Woodpecker - 4 at 34 Shady Lane Thornhill Aug.04 (SVa).
 Hairy Woodpecker - 2 at 34 Shady Lane Thornhill Aug.04 (SVa).
 Common Raven - 1 at YRF North Tract Aug.02 (RJP) (Davis Dr/Hwy 48). 3 @ Bayview & Holborn Aug.03 (anon.).
 Red-breasted Nuthatch - 1 at 34 Shady Lane Thornhill Aug.04 (SVa).
 Carolina Wren - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Aug.27 (DJ).
 Northern Mockingbird - 1 at Canad.Tire at Dufferin N of 7 Aug.13 [Carrying Food] (TH).
 Nashville Warbler - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Aug.16-17 (DJ).
 Bobolink - several groups at Coyote Pond, Markham Aug.21 (SLo).
 Baltimore Oriole - 3 at 34 Shady Lane Thornhill Aug.04 (SVa).

SEPTEMBER

Peel Region.

Black-crowned Night-Heron - 9 at Pond Sandalwood and Heart Lake Sept.13 (BNo).
 Bald Eagle - 1 Ad at Heart Lake Conservation Area Sept.21 (BNo).
 Sharp-shinned Hawk - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Sept.04 (PG,EM).
 Cooper's Hawk - 1 Imm at Graydon Property, Humber Grove Sept.07 (PG).
 Northern Bobwhite - 2 (pair) at Caledon East Sept.08 [Escape] (anon. fide PG).
 Willet - 1 at Pond,Bovaird & Dixie Rd. Sept.13 (BNo).
 Eastern Screech-Owl - 1 at Graydon Property, Humber Grove Sept.07 (PG).
 Great Horned Owl - 1 at Graydon Property, Humber Grove Sept.07 (PG).
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird - 1 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.22 (BCa).
 Philadelphia Vireo - 1 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.14 (BCa).
 Red-breasted Nuthatch - 1 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.15 (BCa).
 White-breasted Nuthatch - 2 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.15 (BCa).
 Northern Mockingbird - 4 at Railway. at Hwy 50 Sept.12 (PG). Pair feeding two young.
 Nashville Warbler - 1 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.14 (BCa).
 Chestnut-sided Warbler - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Sept.04 (PG,EM).
 Black-throated Green Warbler - 2 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.14 (BCa).
 Blackburnian Warbler - 1 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.27 (BCa).
 Bay-breasted Warbler - 5 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.14 (BCa).
 American Redstart - several at Palgrave Cons Area Sept.04 (PG,EM).1 at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.14 (BCa).
 Wilson's Warbler - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Sept.04 (PG,EM).
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak - 2 Imm at Cameron Property, Albion Sept.09 (BCa).
 Brown-headed Cowbird - 500 at Pearson Int'l Airport Sept.07 (GM).

York Region

Double-crested Cormorant - 6 at St Johns SR Marsh Sept.17 (RJF).
 Great Blue Heron - several at St Johns SR Marsh Sept.17 (RJF).1 at Bathurst and 407 Sept.29 (MCh).
 Great Egret - 1 at St Johns SR Marsh Sept.13-23, 2 on 23 Sept. (RJF).
 Green Heron - 1 at Lumsden Property, Aurora Sept.01-10 (HL).
 Black-crowned Night-Heron - 1 at Lumsden Propty, Aurora Sept.06 (HL).2 Imm at St Johns SR Marsh Sept.17 (RJF).
 Trumpeter Swan - 6 at Lumsden's, Aurora Sept.01-10 (HL).("wild" birds).3 at Coyote Pond, Mrkhm Sept.11 (SLo).
 American Wigeon - 1 F at Coyote Pond, Markham Sept.10 (SLo).

Mallard - 75 at Lumsden Property, Aurora Sept.01-10 (HL).
 Northern Shoveler - 1 F at Coyote Pond, Markham Sept.29 (SLo).
 Hooded Merganser - 2 at Cunningham Drive Ponds Sept.26 (H&MF).
 Osprey - 1 at Holland Landing at Brydons Sept.27 [Flying South] (BB).
 Cooper's Hawk - 1 at Headwaters Park R.Hill Sept.26 (GL,BC).1 at Holland Landing Sept.27 [Flying South] (BB).
 Merlin - 2 at 19th Avenue and Warden Sept.26 (GL,BC,).
 Peregrine Falcon - 1 Imm @M.MacK & Hwy27 Sept.01 (JLo).1@ Lumsden Propty, Aurora Sept.12 [Flying over] (HL).
 Ring-necked Pheasant - 1 F at Marita Payne Park Sept.28 (ICa).
 Sora - 1 at St Johns SR Marsh Sept.17 (RJF).
 Killdeer - 30 at Woodbine and Major MacKenzie Sept.26 (GL,BC).
 Greater Yellowlegs - 3 at Coyote Pond, Markham Sept.29 (SLo).
 Spotted Sandpiper - 1 at Headwaters Park Richmond Hill Sept.26 (GL,BC).
 American Woodcock - 2 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27,J.Love Sept.07 (JLo).
 Eastern Screech-Owl - 1 at M.MacK+Hwy.27 Sept.10 (JLo).1 at 8 Marie Ct. Thornhill Sept.28 [Singing Male] (BE,AE).
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Sept.01-14 (DJ).
 Belted Kingfisher -1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Sept.01-02 (DJ).3 at St Johns SR Marsh Sept.17 (RJF).
 Philadelphia Vireo - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Sept.29 (DJ).
 Blue Jay - 40 at Phyllis Rawlinsn Pk Sept.26 [Flying over] (GL,BC).20 at 123 Woodward Ave., Thrnhl Sept.28 (H&MF).
 Red-breasted Nuthatch - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Sept.30 (DJ).
 Brown Creeper - 2 at Marita Payne Park Sept.28 (ICa).
 Carolina Wren - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Sept.16-30 (DJ).
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Sept.29 (DJ).
 Hermit Thrush - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Sept.29 (DJ).
 Northern Mockingbird - 1 at Cunningham Drive Ponds Sept.26 (H&MF).
 Brown Thrasher - 1 at 376 Bent Cr. Richmond Hill Sept.23 (DS).
 European Starling - 600 at Nantucket Dr. Oak Ridges Sept.20 [Flying off] (SDP).
 Cedar Waxwing - 50@ M.MacK+Hwy.27, Sept.01, 8 Sept.24(JLo).15@ Pomona Mills Pk Thrnhl Sept.28 (H&MF)
 Nashville Warbler - 1 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27,J.Love Sept.14 (JLo).
 Chestnut-sided Warbler - 1 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27,J.Love Sept.14 (JLo).
 Magnolia Warbler - 2 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27,J.Love Sept.14 (JLo).
 Black-throated Blue Warbler - 1 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27,J.Love Sept.14 (JLo).
 American Redstart - 3 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27,J.Love Sept.28 (JLo).
 Wilson's Warbler - 1 at 190 Grandview Ave., Thornhill Sept.28 (DJ).
 White-crowned Sparrow - 1 at Grandview Ave., Thrnhl Sept.26 (DJ).1 at M.MacK & Hwy.27,J.Love Sept.29-30 (JLo).
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak - 3 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27,J.Love Sept.05 (JLo).
 Red-winged Blackbird - 300 at Nantucket Dr. Oak Ridges Sept.10 [Flying off] (SDP).
 Rusty Blackbird - 1 at Bartley Smith Greenway Sept.29 (ICa).
 Common Grackle - 400 at Nantucket Dr. Oak Ridges Sept.13 [Flying off] (SDP).
 Purple Finch - 2 at Marita Payne Park Sept.28 (ICa).

AE Anita Edmunds, ARa Alfred Raab, BB Bruce Brydon, BCa Barry Cameron, BC Bob Cubitt, BE Bill Edmunds, BNo Bob Noble, CAT Carol Ann Trabert, ChvR Christel von Richter, D&AD David and Amy Darker, DJ Dana Jonak, DMi Dave Milsom, DSt Daphne Straumann, DTH Doris Hofmann, EM Elizabeth Morton, FWh Freddy Whillans, GD Gene Denzel, GL Graham Leonard, GM G. Morton, GoC Gord Cameron, H&MF Harold & Muriel Farrant, HL Harry Lumsden, ICa Ian Cannell, JLo Joan Love, JMcL John McLean, JNo Joanne Nonnekes, JWa John Watson, KDu Keith Dunn, KHo Karen Hollingshead, KRS Kevin Shackleton, LNo Lionel Normand, MCh Martin Chen, MWh Michael White, NH Natalie Helferty, PF Pat Fallis, PG Phyllis Graydon, RCu Robert Cubbitt, RJF Ron Fleming, RJP Ron Pittaway, RL Raymond Le istner, RT Roger Taylor, RTi Russell Tilt, SDP Susan DiPucchio, SH Sue Hayes, SLo Stan Long, SVa Sandy Vanderbrug, TH Theo Hofmann, TW Tom Waechter

2003 Christmas Bird Count

The 103rd annual Christmas Bird Count (Year 47 for RHN) was held on Sat. Dec. 14th, 2002.

A cool (-5 C) day met our 33 birders as they headed to their usual haunts, or watched from their backyard, to track down every bird they could. Through some snow, our fearless watchers found a total of 48 species this year, below last year's total of 50. We lost rough-legged hawk, Merlin, wild turkey, glaucous gull, great horned owl, long eared owl, from last year, but gained, purple finch, redheaded woodpecker, and a lone eastern phoebe seen during the count week by Dana Jonak. We also had a High Count this year of trumpeter swans and belted kingfisher, topping last year's High Count of 3 kingfishers. From last year's High Count crow number of 782, there was a considerable drop to 169, likely due to West Nile Virus. Herring gull numbers also took a plunge from last year's 7312 count to 172. Total number of birds also dropped considerably from 18,362 to 7,551.

This year everyone can view totals online at <http://www.birdsontario.org/cbc/cbcmain.html>.

Thanks to all the participants (and special thanks to Gloria Marsh for hosting again).

Area 1: Sandy Vandenbrug, Ron Fleming, Michael White, Elsie Petch

Area 2: Gene Denzel, Tom Waechter, Martin Chen, Denise & Rod Potter

Area 3: Harold & Muriel Farrant, Dana Jonak, Joyce McKinnon, Barbara Whillans

Area 5: Russ Tilt, Graham & Lois Leonard Area, Mike Turk

Area 6: Frank Pinilla, Area 7: Bruce Brydon, Area 8: Theo Hofmann, Tracey Etwell, Joel Kits, Scott Rush

Area 9: Natalie Helferty, Carol Pender-McKnight, and Stan Long as fieldwatchers, Freddy Whillans, Ann Fowle and Harry Lumsden as feederwatchers, and Winnie Yung and Roy Smith as mockingbird seekers.

- Natalie Helferty

Species (status)	Count	Species (status)	Count	Species (status)	Count
Great Blue Heron	6	Gull sp.	142	Brown Creeper	3
Canada Goose	992	Rock Dove	317	Golden-crowned Kinglet	31
Trumpeter Swan (HC)	15	Mourning Dove	239	American Robin	321
American Black Duck	74	Eastern Screech-Owl	2	Northern Mockingbird	7
Mallard	1021	Great Horned Owl	0	European Starling	1923
Northern Harrier	1	Long-eared Owl	0	Cedar Waxwing	80
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Belted Kingfisher (HC)	6	American Tree Sparrow	8
Cooper's Hawk	5	Red headed Woodpecker	1	Song Sparrow	3
Red-tailed Hawk	31	Downy Woodpecker	16	Swamp Sparrow	2
Rough-legged Hawk	0	Hairy Woodpecker	9	White-throated Sparrow	10
hawk sp.	3	Northern Flicker	2	Dark-eyed Junco	169
American Kestrel	9	Pileated Woodpecker	4	Snow Bunting	0
Merlin	0	Eastern Phoebe (US)	cw	Northern Cardinal	46
Wild Turkey	0	Northern Shrike	3	Brown-headed Cowbird	0
Ring-billed Gull	778	Blue Jay	50	House Finch	70
Herring Gull	172	American Crow	169	Purple Finch	3
Iceland Gull	1	Black-capped Chickadee	401	American Goldfinch	206
Glaucous Gull	0	Red-breasted Nuthatch	7	House Sparrow	161
Great Black-backed Gull	23	White-breasted Nuthatch	8		

From the Editor

The municipal elections are over, and voter turnout this year was even more dismal than during previous years. Our local council in Richmond Hill was largely returned intact, with one exception: the incumbent, Nick Papa was ousted by the young and forthright Elio Dilorio in ward 5 - my own ward. There seems to be a disengagement among the voters of this town and region that is somewhat startling if you consider the importance of so many issues that are facing this area. This issues include the rapid loss of farmland and other natural areas to expanding sprawl - a type of development that pays little attention to "community" and sustainable infrastructure and a general degradation of both our natural and social environments.

The local group, ACT Now!, <http://www.richmondhillactnow.com/> had championed a change in local government representation, primarily for the purpose of having a local council that is more inclined to make policy decisions in favour of good planning and environmental preservation, unfortunately that did not come about.

Maybe in 3 more years. Let's hope it's not too late by then.

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