



THE BULLETIN

August/September 2004 No. 438

2004 - 2005 EXECUTIVE

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Events calendar

Executive Meeting	Tuesday September 14, 2004: McConaghy Centre
General Meeting	Thursday September 16, 2004 Rich Hill Presbyterian Church 10066 Yonge St. The speaker this month is Marcel Gahbauer, Topic: An Adventure in the Arctic.
Botany Group	Monday October 4, 2004 Topic: Mushrooms. Location: Doug and Audrey Wallace's
Bird group	Wednesday October 13, 2004 Topic: Acadian and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers. Location: Muriel and Harold Farrant's 123 Woodward Ave. 905-889-7156.
Field Trips	- Sunday September 19 th , 2004. Presqu'île Provincial Park Contact: Bill Edmunds at 905-731-7551.

See Details on Page 2

EVEN-SONG IN HUNTER'S POINT PARK, 2004

Some Naturalists had been asked to help the Richmond Hill 'Parks and Culture' department upgrade the unique Hunter's Point Ecological Wildlife Park, and this request had brought both myself and David Tomlinson to the park on a morning in early July. Later that same day I had joined Alan Channon to make a botanical assessment of the Park.

The park at that time of the morning was teeming with bird-song. It has been nearly ten years since David and landscape architect Henry Kortikaas had put together Hunter's Point Park. This park was the town of Richmond Hill's Parks department's first experiment in designing nature into an urban neighbourhood. As David and I did our early morning (5am) survey, he commented that all the best breeding bird sites in his native England were closely designed and managed. That was why he had been so excited to do the Hunter's Point experiment.

Cont'd on page 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:

Brigitte Kalthoff, Woodbridge

Meet our new members at club events and say Hello!

EVENTS FUTURE

RHN Events:

- Tuesday September 14, 2004. 7:30pm. Executive Meeting at the McConaghy Centre.

- Thursday September 16, 2004. 7:30pm. General Meeting at the Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church. This month, Marcel Gahbauer will be talking about his experiences birding up in the arctic.

- Sunday September 19th, 2004. 7:00am. Fall trip to Presqu'ile Provincial Park. In this central Lake Ontario waterfront area we will search for migrating passerines, waterfowl and shorebirds. This is always a great trip with a wide variety of species to see. Meet at 7:00am at Vellore Hall (9545 Weston Road, 1km south of Major Mack) to car pool, or at Presqu'ile (outside the park gate) at 9:00am. Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions, especially since it is close to the lake. Bring a lunch. Call Bill Edmunds at 905-731-7551 to answer any Questions.



- Monday October 4, 2004. 12:30pm. The Botany Group will meet at Doug and Audrey Wallace's to discuss Mushrooms. The topic for November will be "Our favourite New Discoveries".



- Wednesday October 13, 2004. 8pm. The first Bird group meeting of the year will be held at Muriel and Harold Farrant's house, 123 Woodward Ave. 905-889-7156. The topic will be Acadian and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers.

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:

- Tuesday September 21, 2004. 6 to 9 pm. Valerie Kent's "Summer's Harvest Art Show and Sale" will open at the Skylight Gallery at the Aurora Town Hall, and features a collection of new paintings done over this summer. There are new watercolours and acrylic paintings which focus on the Oak Ridges Moraine area and capture the startling fragile beauty of the land formations and the lush variety of the trees, including hemlock, birch, pines and beech. There are also paintings of the marshy areas with bullrushes and wild flowers, as well as area lakes and lakeshores. The show is open during business hours. Everyone is invited to the opening reception. There will be many small art works and great gift ideas. Admission is free. Visit: www.valeriekent.com Aurora town hall is at 100 John West Way, Aurora. Call 905-727-3123 ext. 530 or 905-508-5531 for information.



- Saturday September 25, 2004. 10am – noon. Rouge Watershed “Fall Colours and Migration” event at Bruce’s Mill Conservation Area on the south side of Stouffville Rd, East of Warden. Join conservation staff for a guided hike and bird of prey demonstration. Improve your tree and bird identification skills while learning how native flora and fauna prepare for the coming winter. Bring bird and tree field guides and binoculars if you have them.

- Saturday October 2, 2004. 10am - 12 noon. Duffins Watershed Event. Enjoy a guided hike along the Seaton Trail to the Whitevale Dam. Discover which fish and wildlife species live in and around Duffins Creek and talk to conservation staff about the recent dam restoration. Meet at the Seaton Trail Head parking lot on the south side of Whitevale Rd., just east of Altona Rd., Whitevale.

- Saturday and Sunday October 16, 17, 2004. 10am to 5pm. Valerie Kent will be participating in the Richmond Hill Studio Tour and Art Sale. Admission is free. Call 905-787-1441 (ext.222) for more information.

...cont'd from page 1

MEMBER SUBMISSIONS

EVEN-SONG IN HUNTER'S POINT PARK, 2004

His design used an open field that was originally set aside for an unneeded school. He carefully graded it to create low hills around a central meadow area. The ecological succession preparation was an important key to the plan. The richer soils were scoured from the central meadow area, which would prevent the normal process of field plants, shrubs and finally trees from taking over the whole site.

Our job in 2004 -- nearly 10 years later -- was to assess how this process was working. We will submit our reports to the Parks and Culture Design director, Audrey Hollasch in August. The Hunter’s Point area residents and all of the Naturalists involved will also have a chance to review and in turn assess our findings and recommendations sometime in September.

However, what I would like to tell you about is the delight of the evening bird-song I heard a few weeks later.

It had rained until after noon, but the sky was clearing, so I hopped on the bus at the Finch Avenue bus station and headed north to Highway 7. I transferred to the York Region No. 77 which took me right over to the Park.

It was 5.45 when I reached Misty Vale Road at the north end of the Park. My assignment that evening was to count people, dogs, birds and whatever else might be out and about on this fine evening.

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Dogs and their walkers traversed the asphalt walks through the Park and the sidewalks around it. The Park itself was awash in a sea of fuzzy seed heads from *Cirsium Arvense* -- creeping thistles from Europe that have been unkindly named “Canada Thistle”. Occasionally, a big purple-flowered *Cirsium Vulgare*, commonly known as ‘Bull Thistle’ or ‘Field Thistle’, or a formidable blue-grey ‘Nodding Thistle’ made a brave stand among the smaller sized throng. The *Vulgare* species is what we usually think of as ‘Scotch Thistle’; it is handsome enough that a well known English gardener – and Canada Thistle hater – had accepted it as part of his garden design.

The borders of the Park and areas around the Tennis Courts had been planted with a broad assortment of native shrubs and trees, and many of them are progressing in spite of being surrounded by the fuzz-topped thistle horde. But on this late July evening, I was suddenly aware that the thistles are welcomed by one small bird clan, the spectacular lolloping American Gold Finches. They are all over the park among the seeding Thistles. There must be ten or more families of these cheerful, colorful finches feeding on the unwanted wealth of thistle heads. The vegetative progress of the Park will be the subject of considerable importance in the final Report.



Next, as I traversed the park between rows of leather leafed Hawthorn, which have dark green leaves with 4 inch long thorns, I was aware of another clan of birds engaging themselves among a rich harvest of choke cherries.

The Robins among them were so satiated that they hardly moved as I approached their shrub feasts. They were joined by at least four different flocks of Cedar Waxwings. There were also Starlings and English Sparrows around, but they were overwhelmed by the native feeders.



At the centre of the park is the 'designed meadow' area, with its parched soils and no thistles. Instead of thistles, David and Henry's plan for a more varied native plant

community of tall grass prairie species seems to be working. Handsome stands of smoothleaved Coreopsis (as Allan would soon tell me) dotted the area with other thin grasses and forbes. There is also Echinachia, pale blue-flowered Wild Bergamot, and some pleasing little pink flowers among many other flowers and 'weeds' that I was not very familiar with. It is something of a success story.

There is also a 20 foot tall skeleton of an Ash tree. The green Ash shoots around it's base remind me of the toughness of this tree. In the bare branches above, the king of the meadow - and of the park - had set himself up to proclaim his monarchy : a Song Sparrow. He graced the park with his small, proud, centre-spotted chest shining in the reds and yellows of the sunset. The fields of Goldfinch-filled thistle down was filled with his sweet 'tsip.sip.sip' song. He was one of the four or five males that David and I had counted in the Park on the morning birdsong visit earlier in the month.

The Song Sparrow flew warily away as I approached his tree to try for a photo. He proclaimed his ownership from a series of posts around the ash tree as I crouched down among the thistles to try to record the little emperor. Soon other birds arrived in view of my vantage point. First some rollicking gold Finches, then a Robin, and a Mourning Dove stopped by, then two Waxwings. Suddenly the little sparrow was there. He bounced around the branches until all the other birds left. There was no doubt that this was his perch as he lifted his head and sang.

I managed to get a photograph against the gold, red and grey clouds as the sun set red. I hope to get the film back soon. This will be an important part of the report



of the ecological results of the Hunter's Park experiment.

There were the numerous rabbits. Mockingbirds, who are usually spotted in pairs, were nowhere to be seen or heard that evening. There were tennis players. The neighbours and their dogs were friendly, wondering what will happen with their unusual park. There was a neighbourhood ballgame being played in adjoining Chapman Park. There was the roar of Highway 7 and Highway 407 on the bridges over the Don River to the south. There was a yellow warbler nesting in the trees we Naturalists had planted 15 years ago in the Richmond Hill Golf Course.

But where the bobolink and the meadowlark had once ruled, it is very clear that with the right meadow and natural environment a new group of Bird Kings have found a place to thrive in an urban park.

These are the gay Goldfinches, and above all, the feisty, sweet-sounding little Song Sparrow.

- Michael White, Past President

- Artist-instructor Valerie Kent will hold adult watercolour classes at the Mill Pond Gallery (314 Mill Street, R.H.) called "*Learn to Paint in Watercolours*". The courses are eight weeks and are suitable for all levels. The classes will be held Wednesdays, starting September 21 from 7-10pm, or Sundays starting September 25 from 6-9pm and will cost \$195. Call 905-508-5531 or visit www.valeriekent.com or www.rhga.ca for information and to register.

June 1st Richmond Hill Naturalists trip to the Carden Alvar

In spite of dire predictions from the weatherman, Charlene & Gene Denzel, "Freddy" Whillans, Shirley Mihalik and Tom Waechter joined Ian Cannell and "guest birder" Jay ("Parabolic Ears") Peterson for an enjoyable day of birding at Carden. The weather man was quite wrong and we had nary a drop of precipitation all day. We managed to find most of the grassland-loving birds that Carden has to offer, with the notable exception of the Loggerhead Shrike. A total of 80 species was observed during the day.

- Ian Cannell, Concord

EVENTS PAST

- On August 1st Valerie Kent announced that, for personal reasons, she will be curtailing her activities on the executive of the Richmond Hill Naturalists. Valerie will continue to support the activities of the Richmond Hill Naturalists as a regular member. We regret that she has made this choice but do completely support her decision and hope that in future she might be able to join us again in sustaining the our important work for the people and wildlife of town and region.

- On June 20 the annual Dragon Boat race was held on at Lake Wilcox. The Richmond Hill Naturalists once again fielded a team, thanks to the efforts of our Field Trip Coordinator, Martin Chen.

- Greenbelt Update – On May 21st in Aurora the Standing Committee on General Government heard presentations from various municipalities, public and private interest groups regarding Bill 27 – the [Greenbelt Protection Act](#).

Among the presentations made was one by Maryanne Yake on behalf of the Richmond Hill Naturalists. The committee heard many concerns regarding the preservation of nature, leapfrogging of the Greenbelt, farming and expansion of the 400 series highways to name a few key issues. Issues concerning the Bethesda/Leslie Lands on the Oak Ridges Moraine will be looked at by the task force, thanks to Carrie Hoffelner. On the previous night presentations were made at Richmond Hill town council, and there is some hope that the large 'gap' in the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act (ORMPA) will be finally given some attention. Directors of ['Environmental Defence Canada'](#) also made a presentation to the Committee on behalf of the ['Ontario Greenbelt Alliance'](#).

- On Friday, July 23rd an Environmental Committee meeting was held to discuss local issues.

Present at the meeting were Theo Hoffman, Mary anne Yake, Lloyd Helferty, and Michael White.

Items discussed were Local, Regional, and Provincial concerns such as the **de-watering** (see the notes regarding the impact of this de-watering in the new 'Local Issues' section of the Bulletin) and loss of stream protection along 19th Ave and Leslie St as well as in other parts of the Oak Ridges Moraine by sewer construction

(see: http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&call_pageid=971358637177&c=Article&cid=1090447813451), the granting of an EA (Environmental Assessment) for the Pine Valley Road extension, the status of the lands south-east of Bethesda Road along the Bayview Avenue extension, and the "Metrus Recreation Trail" that the 'Metrus Development Corporation' has proposed to build across the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Lands from Bathurst to Bayview (note: A TRCA meeting may be held in August and this issue will likely be discussed further, where we may learn about motivation, size and routing of the trail, which is still disputed.)

Comments were requested for Provincial Planning Initiatives such as the ['Golden Horseshoe Smart Growth'](#) plan, the 'Greenbelt' plan and 'OMB reform'.

Members are asked to contact Natalie Helferty or Maryanne Yake to add comments.

Support was also provided for Jane Underhill in King City who is continuing her fight to control sprawl even though the province has decided, against all other arguments, to force the 'Big Pipe' solution onto King township.

- Michael White

- In June there was another meeting and public consultation of the ['Ontario Smart Growth Network'](#). The outcomes of this event were supposed to bring us "a step in the right direction" in terms of the "future directions of the government with respect to the planning system and transportation" in the province. [*One has to wonder whether these meetings are only an effort to try and sell us on their idea of what "smart growth" should be and if they are truly capable of curbing sprawl and protecting viable ecosystems. If you consider the actions of the Ontario government lately, it seems that they are only playing lip-service to 'smart growth'. See **Local Issues** section – Editor*]

- On Saturday, June 19th at the Oak Ridges Recreation Centre and Arena the [Oak Ridges 2004 Family Fair](#) took place. This event was Presented by the Oak Ridges Lions Club and included kiddie rides, live shows, magic acts, food demos, vendors, crafts, candy, dunk tanks, ponies, a petting zoo, live sports, and an Oak Ridges History section among other events.



NATURE NEWS

- On Thursday June 10th at the [Mill Street Brewery](#) in the Distillery District the Green Tourism Association hosted a public launch of their new [Green Web](#) map. This interactive online map tool will allow visitors and residents to search and map out green tourism options and activities to include in their trips to the city of Toronto - from local heritage and restaurants to access points to the Waterfront Trail. For more information goto: www.greentourism.ca

- This rare creature is under threat...

For hundreds of years naturalists have studied wildlife, paying special attention to creatures on the "at risk" list. But now, according to a historic Yorkshire nature society, wildlife experts have become an endangered species themselves. The [Yorkshire Naturalists' Union](#) (YNU) says there is now a "serious shortage of field naturalists."

To try and reverse the decline, the YNU is urging people of all ages to get involved with their local natural history societies. The campaign has been backed by world-famous naturalist David Bellamy. Mr Bellamy urged people to sign up to a nature group, saying, "There is now a desperate shortage of natural historians. It is mainly because of changes in school syllabuses and the fact that few, if any, universities have departments of biology let alone botany and zoology. In the main they have been replaced by biological sciences specialising in genetic engineering and molecular biology."



Professor David Bellamy

A shortage of naturalists means that rare wildlife species can go overlooked and potential nature sites can be missed or lost. If you know anyone who has an interest in natural history, help them to get involved. It doesn't matter how little they know, others will be happy to pass on their knowledge.

Joining a local Naturalist society is a rewarding experience and you will be able to help provide information vital to the conservation of wildlife. If you only record the common species it is a way to get started and helps build up the picture of what is going on out there. The more you do the better you become.

The decline is not due to a lack of interest in wildlife, but due to fewer people choosing to study nature.

(from an article by Richard Edwards, forwarded by members of [Bishops Mills Natural History Centre](#), Bishops Mills, Ontario)

LOCAL ISSUES

The BIG PIPE is coming to town

On May 26, 2004 the Ontario Ministry of the Environment granted conditional approval for York Region to extend the [York Durham Sewer System](#) (YDSS) to King City, and on August 5, 2003 in a striking about-face, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that the controversial "Big Pipe" sewer connection to King City has been approved for the town.

Mr. McGuinty tried to explain that this decision was the "price of progress" and brushed aside suggestions it will encourage urban sprawl and hurt the environment, however those working close to the project know that the extension of the YDSS to King City will not only lead to more Urban Sprawl (contrary to the intent of the Greenbelt Protection Act), but will also deplete aquifers even further, transfer waters from the Oak Ridges Moraine to other watersheds (contrary to the intent of the [Source Water Protection Act](#)), and will reduce agricultural land cover in Ontario contrary to the intent of Ontario Liberal Government's commitment to protect natural heritage systems and prime agricultural land from sprawl. As a result of the project the Humber River will be degraded, the flows significantly reduced, and the project will negatively impact flora and fauna if urban sprawl ensues.

The expansion of the York-Durham Sewer system is already causing major damage at the Rouge River headwaters (see story below). Other Toronto-area rivers stand to be damaged also.

The 'King Environmental Groups' (including 'Concerned Citizens of King Township', 'King City Preserve the Village' and 'Nobleton Alert') have joined forces with the 'Safe Sewage Committee of Toronto', the 'Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition', the '[Friends of the Rouge Watershed](#)', the '[Green Door Alliance](#)', and the international '[Great Lakes United](#)', a coalition of some 180 Great Lakes basin groups to oppose this expansion of the Big Pipe.

Jane Underhill or King City indicated that citizen environmental groups in King have been calling for an environmental assessment of this proposed pipeline expansion for a decade, as have organizations such as the [Sierra Legal Defence Fund](#).

Karen Gray of the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans commented, "Frankly, I am concerned that a 5-10% reduction in base flows to the Humber River may have a **devastating impact to fish and fish habitat** and there may also be high costs associated with impact studies and monitoring." R.W. Messervey of Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources concurred, stating that, "the proposed undertaking [the YDSS/Big Pipe extension to King City] will result in a harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat." According to engineering reports that were commissioned by King Township in 2001, communal (local) treatment options would be viable within King City. Unfortunately, this does not seem to have been seriously considered.

[Fish habitat loss is only the 'canary in the mine'. What is at stake here is much larger than that : Local control over local water resources. Read the next story to find out what is happening already. – Editor]

De-watering of the Oak Ridges Moraine

In order to allow construction of the York Durham sewer line (16th Avenue segment), massive de-watering of the Oak Ridges Moraine is currently underway (aquifers are being drained and dumped into local streams).

This de-watering project has already removed at least **30 million litres** of fresh water from the Oak Ridges Moraine aquifers which support Rouge Park streams and hundreds of wells in rural Markham.

A professional hydrogeologist has confirmed the impacts of this draw down of the middle aquifer, and shown that the water level of the aquifer had dropped by as much as **60 metres** (200 feet) during 'Phase 1' of the sewer construction project. Additionally, the Upper Aquifer is 'leaking' into the large de-watered zone above the middle aquifer.

The Zone of aquifer impact is more than **150 square kilometres**, stretching from beyond Leslie Avenue in the west to the Pickering Townline in the east, and from below 14th Avenue in the south to above Elgin Mills Drive in the north. (At Kennedy Road and Stouffville Side Road near the headwaters of Bruce Creek, 9 kilometres north of the dewatering site, there is an "unexplained" 18 metre (59 foot) drop in the aquifer level, and at McCowan and Elgin Mills Roads 4.5 kilometres north of the dewatering site there is also an 8 metre (26 foot) drop in the middle aquifer level.)

The draw down of the aquifer (by de-watering) is resulting in the harmful alteration, disruption and damage to sensitive fish habitat and wetlands, and has **dried-up many wells in the area**. Adverse effects will increase over time as streams, wetlands and sensitive vegetation dry up, since the radical draw-down of the middle and upper aquifers reduces hydraulic pressure which reduces base flow to sensitive Rouge river streams, fish habitat, wetlands and plant communities.

The 'Phase 2' dewatering rates for the 16th Avenue sewer line are **higher** than the dewatering rates for 'Phase 1'.

Dewatering for the 16th Avenue sewer line project is proposed for another 24 to 30 months (at least **2 years**), additional de-watering is required for other nearby sewer segments for another several years, and the cumulative draw-down impacts will reduce rebound rates over time, particularly during this period of decreasing recharge (due to higher rates of land development, which causes increased runoff into storm sewers) and increasing withdrawals.

Experienced engineers from the City of Toronto had suggested alternative sewer designs that would avoid or significantly reduce the proposed de-watering, yet York Region's consultants seemed disinterested in design alternatives.

- Jim Robb, Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition (416) 431-4556



- The Ministry of Natural Resources '[Leslie M. Frost Centre](#)' was closed on July 13th after Minister of Natural Resources David Ramsay said that the government could no longer afford the expenditures required to sustain the Frost Centre, as it is "not in line with our core functions". There had been reports in the media of its impending closure. Part-time staff had only received contracts until the end of October.

The Leslie M. Frost centre has for 60 years been a place of instruction for biologists and an excellent place to host conferences such as for the [Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists](#). As with the closing of tree farms, the government is being very short-sighted once again to the detriment of biology and conservation, in their pursuit of cutting slivers off their budget.

It is a sad irony that if more people were to go out to places such as the Frost Centre more often to rejuvenate and relax and connect with nature, there wouldn't be the high need for health care that is draining our government coffers and forcing institutes such as the Frost Centre to be closed. Like the Royal Botanical Gardens, which was just scooped from a potential shut-down, and with the Royal Ontario Museum Biodiversity Centre hanging by a thread, it will take political will to keep the Frost Centre open.

Coming from the Liberals, who supposedly put 'environment, community values and community health and heritage' at the top of their agenda, a closure such as this seems even more devastating. Instead of all the 'highways to nowhere' being built, the government should re-invest in its existing infrastructure, including its long-standing institutions, and promote them to visitors and to the people of Ontario. The government should be encouraging people to visit these places and learn about our province, one of the richest and best in the world.

Growing strong communities means growing up, hence maturing. The decisions made today to close long-standing community facilities that advance knowledge and enjoyment of our natural world will only degrade our society and cloister us into our homes, leaving us mentally, spiritually and physically ill and disassociated with the real world that nurtures us.

The world is too grand and beautiful to close our door on it and leave the mega-industries to despoil it for profit at the expense of our future, which is what this government is actually doing when they throw money at hospital ('sickness care'), auto manufacturing companies and highways, instead of investing in real honest-to-goodness well-being found in our connection to the natural world in which we were created and have evolved.

We can paddle with or against Mother Nature's flow - it's our choice. Keeping our nature centres open to allow for that reconnection and learning is going *with* her flow. In the end, it makes the trip of life more enjoyable and easier.

-- Natalie Helferty, President

The following is an excerpt from a related article that ran in the May 15 edition of the Toronto Star :

York developers suffer a dry spell: Growth outpaces the water supply Pipes from Peel behind schedule

By Elvira Cordileone, Real Estate Reporter

York Region's skyrocketing growth rate means there isn't enough water to supply all the new developments builders are clamouring to get underway. "Right now, water is like gold. If you have the water allocation (from the local municipality) you can go ahead, but there are a number of builders who are stuck," said Patrick O'Hanlon, a past president of the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association. "Large tracts of land of new development are in trouble," O'Hanlon said. "York Region, responsible for major infrastructure planning, can't draw water directly from Lake Ontario so it has had to find another source.

Two years ago, Peel agreed to supply water to York based on the region's anticipated growth until 2031. Since then, the growth rate has soared higher than the earlier estimates, pushing water demands upward as well. The tighter water supply has caused waves for builders and developers aware of what is happening. "York Region had started a large water supply system, but it's behind schedule, and it has to come down to Markham. When they finally do get the water, there's no place to put the sewage. That means it can't be released." Peel's commissioner of public works said *the regions are trying hard to find a way to fast-track projects that weren't supposed to be built until years from now.* "The commitment is there," he said. "The question is, can we actually get some of the work done when Markham wants it? We're working like crazy to resolve the issue."

-- Submitted by Cathy Miller

[*Is this why Mr. McGuinty has gone ahead and approved the Big Pipe to King city over all objections? – Editor*]

Two youths are occupying trees in the path of the controversial [Red Hill Creek Expressway](#) near Hamilton. A court injunction bans members of the public from parts of the area, but the tree-sitters have been in the valley for more than two months, after moving into trees on the Niagara Escarpment where highway blasting was to begin in May. The city is working on parts of the valley to build a highway to join the Lincoln Alexander Expressway and the Queen Elizabeth Way.

[*More information about these two would be appreciated. If any member knows more about them please notify the editor with any comments. – Editor*]

The [Nature Conservancy of Canada](#) (NCC) and The [W. Garfield Weston Foundation](#), together with John and Barbara Poole of Alberta, and Waterton area landowners, announced the successful completion of the single largest private conservation initiative in Canadian history.

The seven-year project, involving more than 25 different landowners, has resulted in the protection of more than 100 square kilometres of key conservation and ranching lands adjacent to [Waterton Lakes National Park](#) in the southwest corner of Alberta, without taking the land out of production.

- July 20, 2004. Ontario, Quebec and all eight states that border the Great Lakes unveiled proposals for new controls on the diversion and use of water on Monday. See the CBC News article for more information: http://www.cbc.ca/stories/2004/07/19/Great_Lakes040719

On May 31, 2004 the Ontario government put in place legislation that would protect the Eastern Wolf by permanently banning the hunting, trapping and chasing of wolves and coyotes in and around Algonquin Provincial Park. Many thanks must go out to all of the individuals and organizations that put pressure on the government to pass this legislation and make protection of the wolves a reality. See the press release at: http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/csb/news/2004/may31nr_04.html

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

May - July 2004

Peel Region

Least Bittern - 1 at Mount Hope Rd & Hunsden Rd. July ?? [[Unknown Date]] (SH).
Northern Harrier - 1 at Humber Valley Herit.Tr.Bolton May 20 (PG,EM).
Black-billed Cuckoo - 2 at Hunsden S.R. June 23 (anon fide PG).
Barred Owl - 1 at Humberstation & Patterson S.R. July ?? [[Unknown Date]] (SH).
Common Nighthawk - small flock at Erindale Park May 26 [Circling above] (TS).
Olive-sided Flycatcher - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area June 18 (PG,EM).
Blue-winged Warbler - 1 at Humber Valley Herit.Tr.Bolton May 20,27 (PG,EM).
Golden-winged Warbler - 1 at Humber Valley Herit.Tr.Bolton May 20,27 (PG,EM).
Chestnut-sided Warbler - 1 at Humber Valley Herit.Tr.Bolton May 20 (PG,EM).
Scarlet Tanager - 2 at Humber Valley Herit.Tr.Bolton May 20 (PG,EM).

York Region

Double-crested Cormorant - 7 at Milne Cons. Area, Markham May 04 (SLo).
Great Blue Heron - 1 @Shady Ln Thrhnl Jun21,30(SVa). 12 @Georgina Isle Jun26(TH,PH,3St).
Green Heron - several, ad & y at YRF - Eldred King Tr.(W-Main) July 18 (RJF,TH).
Black-crowned Night-Heron - 2 Juv at Holland Marsh June 27 (KRS). 1 at Korean Church Pond Dufferin July 25 (TH).
Trumpeter Swan - 2 @Georgina Isle, SW tip Jun26(TH,PH,3St). 2 @Kortright Pnd, with 3 eggs. (J.Lo,m.obs.)
Greater Scaup - 1 at Milne Cons. Area, Markham May 04 (SLo).
Bufflehead - several at Milne Cons. Area, Markham May 04 (SLo).
Common Merganser - 21 @S Shore Lk Simcoe Jun24(GL,RCu). 10 @Willow Beach, Lk Simcoe June 26(TH).
Ruddy Duck - 1 at Holland Landing Sewage Lagoons May 23 (RJF,KRS,JMcL).
Osprey - 1 @Milne Cons. Area, Mrkhm May4(SLo). 1 @Bloomington-404 May12,20,Jun26 (TH,BB).
Sharp-shinned Hawk - 1 at Bathurst & Hwy 7 June 16 (MCh).
Cooper's Hawk - 1 @Sugarbush, Hwy 7 & Bathurst May9(TH). 1 at Hunter's Point Park Langstaff July 02 (MWh,DT).
Red-shouldered Hawk - 7 @20 km route around YRF's May3(TH,NH).
Broad-winged Hawk - 1 at YRF - Eldred King Tr.(W-Main) July 18 [Adult on nest] (RJF,TH).
Red-tailed Hawk - 2 (pair) at Nantucket Dr. Oak Ridges July 01-20 (SDP). 3 at Bathurst & Hwy. 407 July 11 (MCh).
Northern Goshawk - 2 in North Tract YRF, June 03 (CvR,TH).
Semipalmated Plover - 5 at Coyote Pond, Markham May 19 (SLo).
Solitary Sandpiper - 3 at Toogood Pond, Unionville May 03 (SLo).
Upland Sandpiper - 1 at Kleinburg Hydro Research Stn. May 23 (RJF,KRS,JMcL) May 30 (JNo,LNo).
White-rumped Sandpiper - 12 at Pond Major MacK. and 9th Line May 13 (SLo).
Dunlin - 6 at Coyote Pond, Markham May 16 (SLo).
Short-billed Dowitcher - 2 at Coyote Pond, Markham May 29 (SLo).
American Woodcock - 1 at Langstaff Eco-Park May 06 (TH).
Caspian Tern - 1 at Dufflang Pond, Langst./Duffer. July 25 (TH).

Black-billed Cuckoo - 1 at Nashville: Huntington/Kirby June 12 (RJF,KRS,JWa).
 Red-headed Woodpecker - 1 at N end Pine Valley Dr. May 23 (RJF,KRS,JMcl).
 Pileated Woodpecker – 1 @Hwy 7 & Bathurst May9(TH). 2 in Claireville June 03, one in nest hole (RBHS,WPo,TH).
 Great Crested Flycatcher - 1 at Huntington Park July 27 [Fledged young] (TH,GJB).
 Eastern Kingbird - 2 at Marita Payne Park May 26 (MCh).
 Common Raven - 1@YRF,Zephyr May1(BB). 2@YRF,Zephyr May22 (BB,SM,JRM). 2@YRF, North Jun3(CvR,TH).
 Horned Lark - 2 (pair) at Redelmeier Property July 18 [Pair] (GJB,TH).
 House Wren - 2 at Maple Research Station June 11 [Agitated] (JNo,TH).
 Golden-crowned Kinglet - small flock at Toogood Pond, Unionville May 03 (SLo).
 American Robin – 6@Grenfell Markham July ?? (CMK). 3 successful, 3 nests raided, one pair raised by Cowbird.
 Northern Mockingbird - 3 at Kleinburg May 23 (RJF,KRS,JMcl). 2 at Hunter's Point Park Langstaff July 02 (MWh,DT).
 Blue-winged Warbler - 1 at Kortright Conservation Area June 12 (RJF,KRS,JWa).
 Orange-crowned Warbler - 1 M at Mable Davis C.A. Newmarket May 07 (KRS,KDu).
 Nashville Warbler - 1 at Maple Research Station July 25 (TH).
 Yellow Warbler - 2 (pair) at Hunter's Point Park Langstaff July 02 [Nest with young] (MWh,DT).
 Pine Warbler -1 at YRF - Eldred King Tr.(W-Main) July 18 [Fledged young] (RJF,TH).
 Mourning Warbler - 1 at Kortright Conservation Area June 12 (RJF,KRS,JWa).
 Scarlet Tanager - 1 at Mable Davis C.A. Newmarket May 14 (KRS).
 Chipping Sparrow - Pair at 4 Grenfell Markham (Carol McK) July ?? [Nest with young].
 White-crowned Sparrow - 2 at Mount Albert May 02 (AI). 1 at Whillans, Bridgport Richmond Hill May 05-10 (FWh).
 Brown-headed Cowbird - 1 at 4 Grenfell Markham July ?? (CMK). Raised by American Robins
 Pine Siskin - 1 at Whillans, Bridgport Richmond H May 10 (FWh).
3ST Three students , AI Anne Ives, BB Bruce Brydon, CMK Carol McKnight, DT David Tomlinson, EM Elizabeth Morton, FWh Freddy Whillans, GJB Gerry Binsfeld, GL Graham Leonard, JMcl. John McLean, JNo Joanne Nonnekes, JRM Jim Macey, JWa John Watson, KDu Keith Dunn, KRS Kevin Shackleton, LNo Lionel Normand, m.obs. Many Observers, MCh Martin Chen, MWh Michael White, NH Natalie Helferty, PG Phyllis Graydon, PH Paul Harpley, RCu Robert Cubbitt, RHBS Roy Smith, RJF Ron Fleming, SDP Susan DiPucchio, SH Sue Hayes-TRCA, SLo Stan Long, SM Sean Macey, SVa Sandy Vanderbrug, TH Theo Hofmann, TS Tessa Shelvey, WPo Winnie Poon.

Special Note from Theo:

In July Carol McKnight and Stan Long visited Vancouver Island and saw over 20 of the typical West Coast species, among them the rarely seen or difficult to find Wandering Tattler, Redbreasted Sapsucker, Bandtailed Pigeon and Marbled Murrelet.

From the Editor

This month I have included a new section in the Bulletin titled “*Local Issues*” wherein I have included subjects that relate to Naturalist interests concerning the state of local affairs regarding conservation, development, and the environment in our local and extended community. As a naturalist I am myself quite concerned about the state of the natural world and the effects of actions by our local decision makers might have on the state of the natural world, especially regarding the sustainability and ‘liveability’ of the natural communities close to where we live.

Decisions that are made at various levels, from private individuals and corporations, industry, town and regional council, all the way up to the Provincial and National governments, can sometimes have profound impacts on the wildlife that most of us enjoy studying and observing. As citizens we should be informed of any decision that is made that might affect us or the wildlife we study – for better or for worse. In creating this new segment within the Richmond Hill Naturalists Bulletin I hope to bring to our membership, in a clearly identified section, some of the information they need or would like to know so our members can be, at the very least, aware of the forces and decisions that are driving change in our communities.

What we do or don't do with this information is up to each individual.

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