



THE BULLETIN

October 2006 No. 457

2005-2006 EXECUTIVE

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Events calendar

Botany Group	Monday November 6, 2006
Bird Group	Wednesday November 8, 2006 Topic: Brown Creeper and White Nuthatch Where: Charlene Denzel's 9 Idleswift Dr. Thornhill 905-889-7156
Executive Meeting	Tuesday November 14, 2006. 7:30pm Location: Robert Holland Centre
General Meeting	Friday November 26, 2006. 7:30pm Combined meeting with West Humber Speaker: Graeme Gibson Location: Kortright Conservation Centre
Field Trips	Saturday, October 21, 2006. 7:00 pm 'Saving the Stars' presented by Dr. Tom Bolton Location: David Dunlap Observatory

Check for more Events and Outings on Page 2

Not enough good soil.

That's the short story of why people who live in homes built in the last 50 years have a hard time growing anything except crabgrass and dandelions - there's no soil to support other forms of life.

The kicker is that all the good soil the farmers nurtured so it would support their families - until produce from California and Mexico made that way of life impossible and forced them to sell to greedy developers who don't care how far away our food is grown - was scraped off and sold by said greedy developers to frustrated gardeners who were forced to buy what they thought they already bought when they mortgaged their lives to their new dream home: to wit, land.

When a subdivision gets built the topsoil is removed and placed in huge piles during construction. During this period the soil becomes anaerobic and all of the living microbes and organisms in the soil die. Rock and clay which hasn't seen the light of day for thousands of years is exposed to the surface. Landscapers call it "hardpan," and from an engineering point of view it's an ideal material to mould into the site's drainage plan. Run heavy equipment over material like that and it quickly gets compacted into something with much the same consistency as concrete.

Once the houses are in place, some marginal topsoil gets put back, but usually only to a depth of about 20cm. The rest of the stockpiled topsoil is usually sold off to nurseries after it is "rehabilitated" by adding manure, peat moss or sand. In the subdivisions there is no rehabilitation, and you end up with less-than-ideal topsoil spread thinly over a layer of clay hardpan that often includes pieces of brick and other debris. It's often referred to as "builder's loam".

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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 2nd Thursday 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.

Editor: Lloyd Helferty

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Distribution: Athena Antiochos

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.

NEW MEMBERS:

Winnie Kwan

Meet new members at club events and say Hello!

EVENTS FUTURE

- **Saturday October 21, 2006. 7pm. "SAVING the STARS"** at the **David Dunlop Observatory** – an Ontario Trillium Foundation funded event. Dr. Tom Bolton, working at the David Dunlop Observatory in Richmond Hill, discovered the first black hole. His scientific and community work has been able to improve the town for star-gazers. Dr. Bolton will speak about our need to continue to reduce light impacts and tell a history of the David Dunlop Observatory. The David Dunlop Observatory entrance gate is on the south side of Hillsview Drive, 1 block South of Weldrick Ave., west side of Bayview Ave.). R.S.V.P. Marianne Yake 905-883-3047. Seating is limited.

- **Saturday October 21, 2006. 9:30am. The 8th Annual Public Walk from Kleinburg to Boyd Park** hosted by the Friends of Boyd Park will start at Bindertwine Park in Kleinburg and finish at Boyd Park, Woodbridge at 1pm. The walk will follow the *William Granger Greenway* along the *East Humber River* starting in Kleinburg, head down to Rutherford Road and then into the north end of *Boyd Park*.

The highlight will be an announcement about the creation of the **Pierre and Janet Berton Trail**. A short ceremony will be held at approximately 2 p.m. in Boyd Park — Janet Berton and members of her family will be in attendance. We hope that the citizens of Vaughan and surrounding areas will join us as we unveil the plans for this very special trail! Refreshments will be available at Boyd Park. Transportation back to Kleinburg will be available. For more information, please call Iain Craig at 905-893-1323 or email craigers@rogers.com. No dogs permitted.

- **Saturday October 21, 2006. 10am to noon. Trans Richmond Trail Planting** hosted by Evergreen. The Trans Richmond Trail runs east to west between Bathurst and Yonge St. Take Gamble Road west from Yonge and turn south onto Rothbury Road. Planting of native trees will take place along the trail where it meets Rothbury Rd.

- **Sunday October 22, 2006. Jefferson Forest Hike, Oak Ridges** 1:30pm. Explore 400 acres of conservation lands to see the Jefferson Forest, the 'hemlock cathedral', mighty oaks, hills of birch, kettle bogs, headwaters of the Rouge and Humber Rivers, and the famous 'dry kettle lake. Leisurely pace 6 km loop but some steep hills. Meet at Sunset Beach parking lot, Bethesda and Bayview. Call Leader: Peter Atfield 905-773-3935.

- **Thursday November 9, 2006. Charles Sauriol Environmental Dinner to support the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust.** The dinner is at the Le Parc Conference Centre located at 8432 Leslie St. in Thornhill. Margaret Atwood will be the keynote speaker this year. Tickets are \$150 with a tax receipt for \$95. Please call 416-661-6600 x 5276 or email wroberston@trca.on.ca.

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- **Saturday November 4, 2006. 8:30am. Lake Ontario West Shoreline fall birds outing.** See ducks and shore birds at key locations along the lakeshore, west from Burlington to Stony Creek and spots in between. Meet at Newkirk GO station in Richmond Hill at or call to rendezvous at our first lakeshore stop. Return mid afternoon. For more details call Tom @ 905-737-4305.

- **Tuesday November 14, 2006. 7pm–10pm. Ontario Nature’s 75th anniversary Gala** evening at the ROM. Plan to attend this event to celebrate accomplishments and share in a vision for the future. Entertainment, distinguished speakers, silent auction, raffle, hors d’oeuvres and cocktails. Tickets are \$85. A \$55 tax receipt will be issued. Order tickets: Chemayne D’souza 416-444-8419 / 1-800-440-2366 x 271 or gala@ontarionature.org. **If you plan to attend and would like to go with other members of the Richmond Hill Naturalists contact Diana Piché:905-773-4199.**

- **Saturday November 18, 2006. 10am to noon. Oak Ridges Corridor Park trail walk.** Hike the new trail from Bayview to Bathurst and make wildlife (and human) observations along the way. For those who are still keen after lunch we will check out some birding spots in the area. Call Tom for trip details @ 905-737-4305.

- **Thursday November 23, 2006. 7:30pm. Joint Meeting with the West Humber Naturalists.** The guest speaker will be Graeme Gibson, author of "The Bedside Book of Birds". The author will present his latest book described as an unprecedented and enchanting treasure trove of paintings, drawings, poems, essays, and scientific observations beautifully capturing the interest and emotions birds evoke. Location: Kortright Conservation Centre.

Please note: Richmond Hill Naturalists welcomes anyone to volunteer as an outing leader.

- **Friday November 3, 2006. 7pm. Richmond Hill Group of Artists Oak Ridges Moraine Art Show and Sale** Open November 4/5 & 11/12, 11am-5pm. Visit www.rhga.ca or call 905-770-7449. 2 Weekends.

- **Sunday November 5, 2006. 11am. Planet in Focus Film Festival** at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). Ontario Nature is co-presenting a documentary called "*The Chances of the World Changing*" from November 1 to 5. The film is a haunting story documenting two years in the life of Richard Ogust. His life takes a turn to the worse, when he finds himself struggling to save hundreds of endangered turtles that he has amassed over the years in his New York apartment. The "**Planet in Focus**" film festival is Canada’s most acclaimed International Environmental Film and Video festival, showcasing documentaries, animation, dramatic features, shorts, and experimental works. For information visit www.planetinfoocus.org.

- **Monday, November 13, 2006. Municipal Election Day.** The Richmond Hill Naturalists urge you to take an active interest in the candidates’ positions on all local issues and ask questions about those that are important to you, your family and your community. Many important decisions that affect our daily lives are made at the local level. Issues such as garbage/recycling, water supply, sewage, roads, snow plowing, local parks and building permits for new construction and land preservation are decided at Richmond Hill and York Region Councils. Info about candidates: http://www.richmondhill.ca/documents/elections/2006_list_of_candidates_by_office.pdf Four members of our club are running for Council: Lynn Foster, Elio Di Iorio, Sandra Di Iorio and Natalie Helferty.

MEMBER SUBMISSIONS

...Continued from Page 1...

The subsurface clays are not soil and don't support healthy trees, shrubs and grass. This forces owners of newer homes to use chemical fertilizers and pesticides in order to get a semblance of green and prevents them from planting sustainable gardens (deciduous trees on west and south, coniferous trees on the east and north, mixed plantings for birds and the like). Planting trees in this less than ideal 'soil' at is like sticking them in a clay pot: The trees eventually start to decline. Sometimes the holes can fill up with water, drowning the tree.

Homeowners in newer subdivisions need to understand that they are going to be buying a house where it is going to be incredibly difficult to grow things for a long time -- it could take more than a century and generations of homeowners before the soil will be healthy enough to support a wide variety of plants and trees. Many homeowners probably think they're going to get soil, and that "soil is soil is soil". But it's not. None of us should be happy about that.

- Wayne Roberts, Toronto Food Policy Council

- Ontario Nature's position on the **Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan** is now available at www.ontarionature.org/pdf/GGHGP_Ontario_Nature_position.pdf. Concerns include plans to extend highway 404 north through the Greenbelt to Lake Simcoe. - Diana Piche

*I wish I was a Glow Worm,
A Glow Worm's never glum.
How can you be unhappy,
When a light shines out your bum?
- Anonymous*

- The **Dufferin Quarry** expansion at Milton was one of the "hotspots" identified by the Green Belt Alliance. It is part of the supposedly protected Niagara Escarpment and part of the Green Belt. A Joint board hearing ruled that Dufferin Quarry can expand across the remaining portion of the wildlife corridor, but legislation allows an appeal to cabinet. Cabinet could decide any day. The Ministry of Natural Resources has recommended approval but cabinet is wavering. Please call, fax or e-mail Premier McGuinty at 416-325-1941, FAX 416-325-3745 or go to www.premier.gov.on.ca/feedback/feedback.asp to write him a message. Please also call David Ramsay at 416-314-2301 dramsay.mpp@liberal.ola.org and Jim Bradley 416-326-9326 jbradley.mpp@liberal.ola.org and tell them that the Board's decision runs contrary to the public interest and public policy because it allows short-term economic gain to trump concern for long-term environmental harm, sets a bad precedent for future protection of the integrity of the Escarpment, promotes the use of virgin (new) aggregates rather than recycled, and authorizes major engineering works that must operate forever and ever to try to protect the area's water resources from dewatering impacts. - Barbara Halsall, P.O.W.E.R. 905-873-0344 (on behalf of Marianne Yake, President)

- The pre-sale of the **Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario (2001-2005)** is now underway. To order your copy (or copies!) go to the atlas web page at <http://www.birdsontario.org/atlas/atlasmain.html>. You can also get more information about the book on the web page. You can also order by calling the atlas office toll-free at 1-866-900-7100, or you by printing out an order form from the web page and mailing it.



The atlas will be over 700 pages long, 9x12 inches and full colour, with photographs, maps and charts for the 300 species breeding in the province. It will be printed and distributed in the fall of 2007. By ordering your copy now, you get the book at a special presale price. During the presale, atlasers can purchase the book for \$67, which includes taxes, distribution and handling. Non-atlassers can purchase the book for \$79 during the presale. The retail price of the book is expected to be about \$96. Ordering the book now also helps us pay for the printing and helps us decide how many copies we should be printing – and would be much appreciated!

The web page also has some samples of what the species account sections of book are expected to look like. I hope you like what you see. After all it's your hard work that made the whole project so successful!

To get the atlaser price, you'll need your atlaser number when you order the book. If you can't remember it, go to the atlas web page, then look under Atlas Data and Maps, then click on Data Entry. If you enter your e-mail address in the space provided there, your atlaser number will be e-mailed to you. You can also get your atlaser number by calling toll free at 1-866-900-7100, or e-mailing atlas@uoguelph.ca. THE PRESALE ENDS ON FEBRUARY 28, 2007, so don't delay.

- Rebecca Harrold, Assistant Coordinator, Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (University of Guelph)

LOCAL NEWS

- Starting October 16, 2006 Ann Marie Farrugia, Natural Heritage Specialist began her job as the Town of Richmond Hill's new **Natural Heritage Coordinator**, replacing Tracey Steele, former Manager of Parks Planning and Development in the Parks, Recreation & Culture Department. Anne Marie can be reached at (905) 771-8870 ext. 3428, email: afarrugia@richmondhill.ca.

- The **University of Toronto** is breaking fresh ground, becoming the first in Canada to commit to serving *locally produced, environmentally and socially responsible* fare in its cafeterias and dining halls.

Under a partnership with Local Flavour Plus (LFP), a not-for-profit organization that certifies the practices of Ontario farmers and food processors, the university will buy some of its milk, fruit, vegetables and other products from those who do such things as use minimal or no pesticides and antibiotics, treat livestock and workers well, cut energy consumption and greenhouse gases and enhance wildlife habitat. U of T's 89 Chestnut St. residence hopes to have 10 per cent of its food this year supplied by LFP-certified producers.

New menu items will be supplemented with "theme nights," featuring dishes made with a particular Ontario product. Farmers will be on hand to explain to students how they produce them. By supporting socially and environmentally responsible producers, city dwellers also do their part for sustainability. Sure, it costs a little more, but the savings to the planet and boost to the local farm economies, enhanced flavour and nutrition and cutting the distance food travels from farm to fork makes it money well spent. It is very much about preserving prime farm land and ensuring that it's not paved over and turned into developments. It is a key food security issue for people.

Lori Stahlbrand, a former broadcaster who teaches a fourth-year course in food security at U of T, got a three-year, \$1 million grant from the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation in July to start the program. "Despite Canada's cold climate, local food can be eaten year-round.", Stahlbrand says. That can be done with greenhouses and proper storage facilities as well as some processing.

- Krista Olins of Thornhill was walking in **Settler's Park** on the morning of Saturday, September 30, 2006 with her husband and father and saw **salmon swimming upstream** in *German Mills Creek*.

The fish was spotted just north of the bridge by the pumping station and was approximately two [2] feet long. This is a very good indication that this waterway is critical to preserve. Water feed into this river must be protected upstream by having the Town and the TRCA perform another study to find out exactly what wildlife it supports.

NATURE NEWS

- On Fri October 13, 2006 the Board and Staff of **Ontario Nature** announced that we they be moving to new office space on October 25, 2006. After nearly 30 years at Locke House they have outgrown the available space. Their new office space is located in downtown Toronto. Locke House is a designated Historic Property owned by the City of Toronto. The telephone and fax numbers will remain the same. An Open House will occur in the New Year. Their new mailing address, effective October 25, 2006, will be:

**Ontario Nature, 366 Adelaide Street West, Suite 201
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1R9**

Nature News For the Birds

Although the leaves are just now reaching their peak of beauty, the chill in the morning air does remind us that winter is coming. Now is the time to prepare to help our fine feathered friends survive the cold months ahead. It really does not take a great deal of effort to provide the birds with food, water and shelter in our yards, and watching them enjoy your kindness can provide hours of entertainment during those often dark dreary days.

In winter, when food is scarce, birds need more energy than usual to keep warm. Thus providing a bird feeding station or two can be of great help to their survival. Before you think about installing or stocking a feeder, however,

it is important to make the commitment for the whole season. Some species can become dependent on your food source and suffer if it dries up. There are many types of feeders and each may attract different varieties of birds. Some, like juncos and sparrows, are ground feeders thus like a straight platform as a diner. Others, like finch and chickadees, will use tubes or box type structures. There is also a variety of food that can be provided. In addition to seed, suet is a great source of energy that is particularly important to chickadees and woodpeckers in the freezing weather.

Of course birds are not the only wildlife that need food in winter and feeders can attract other critters as well. Squirrels are notorious for raiding the pantry.



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Although there are numerous commercial and home-made devices that are promoted to confound these critters, generally they find their way to the trough. They can be entertaining, however, and the birds really do get to eat too. Last, but not least, bird feeders, like all food dishes, get dirty and need to be cleaned periodically to prevent spread of disease among our dinner guests.

In addition to food, birds need a source of water when faced with a frozen landscape. You have probably seen birds visiting a puddle, no matter how small, on a sunny winter day to get a drink. Bird specialty stores sell heated birdbaths and bubblers that can be installed in a winter resistant regular birdbath. These features add to the attraction of your yard to the birds and your entertainment as well as providing for this vital need.

Like us, birds also require winter shelter. Fall is a great time of year to plant a coniferous tree or two in your yard where the birds can get out of the wind and snow as well as find protection from predators such as the neighbourhood roaming cats*. You can also make a bush pile with branches, and vines.

There are many commercial products on the market but it can be easy and fun to make your own feeders and some bird food items. Plans are readily available in the library or on the web. If you are planning to buy a feeder but are not sure what type, and particularly if you wish to get one that will last more than one season, it is best to go to a bird specialty store where you can also get advice. The two closest to Oak Ridges are: The Back Yard Birder on Main Street in Newmarket and Wildbirds Unlimited on Yonge Street in Thornhill.

For more information on feeding and sheltering birds including types of feed and feeders as well as prime locations (make sure you can see them from a window that you look out of frequently), maintenance, and so forth visit: <http://www.wildaboutgardening.org/en/attracting/section3/birdfeeding%20handout.pdf> and http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/AboutBirdsandFeeding/abtbirds_index.html

If you enjoy watching the birds at your feeder, you can also help the scientist by participating in Project Feeder Watch. This can also be a fun family project that will help you learn to identify the species that are benefiting from your generosity. Basically you count the birds that visit your feeder for as little as one hour on two consecutive days each week from November to April. You submit the data on the web. It does have a fee - \$35 for which you get a tax receipt and a package of resources to help you learn more about birds.

For more information go to: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/Overview/whatispfw.htm>

- From The Oak Ridges Friends of the Environment E-Newsletter, October 9, 2006
(Editors Note from Sharon Bradley: *Cats are natural songbird predators so keep them indoors, especially during migration time!*)

- On Tuesday October 3, 2006 **Ontario's Environmental Commissioner**, Gord Miller, warned that Ontario is in fundamental neglect of the environment and that this neglect will have grave and long-lasting consequences.

Miller, who monitors compliance by provincial ministries with the Environmental Bill of Rights, released his 2005/2006 annual report, "**Neglecting our Obligations**". Miller pointed to this year's report for examples of government inaction in almost every area of environmental management - water and air pollution, waste diversion, landfills, aggregate extraction, and climate change.

The Environmental Commissioner urged the government needs to develop a strategy to reduce the major environmental impacts of the transportation sector -- impacts that include degraded waterways, fragmented ecosystems, the massive demand for gravel and sand, and the contribution of almost one-third of the province's greenhouse gases. He warned that the province is not prepared for consequences of rapidly changing weather patterns due to climate change.

Several powerful windstorms this summer that left tens of thousands of residents without power are proof climate change is already impacting Ontario and the Liberal government is not prepared for the consequences. "Our infrastructure is designed for a climate that is no longer our climate," Miller said.

An increasing demand for aggregate also means the province is left with thousands of hectares of unrehabilitated pits and quarries, often in areas of significant natural heritage such as the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Rates for diverting waste away from landfills are still far behind the 60% diversion goal set for 2008 by the Ministry of the Environment, especially for apartment buildings and the commercial, institutional and industrial sectors. It's also clear that the ministry lacks the monitoring data needed to assess whether existing landfills pose a risk to the environment or to human health. Moreover, only six years after the Walkerton tragedy, changes to the Nutrient Management regulation may make key aspects of the regulation unenforceable.

In his report, the Commissioner called on the government to make the Ministry of Education subject to the Environmental Bill of Rights, including the ministry's decisions about curriculum. "Ontario was once a leader in the field of environmental education, and now we have fallen far behind other provinces and the U.S.," said Commissioner Miller. "*Education is the key to shaping the values that will lead to a world where humans and other species can survive and flourish.*" - (Article based on several Press Releases)

Boreal Forest Project

Canada's boreal forest is a globally important ecosystem that contains vast intact forests with clear, clean waters that are rich in wildlife. This broad band of forest lies across northern Canada and covers more than 50 million hectares in northern Ontario – close to half the province. The boreal forest provides numerous ecological, economic and cultural benefits, including helping to protect against global warming by trapping and storing carbon, supporting large, naturally functioning ecosystems that provide habitat for 23 species at risk, and playing a key role in moderating temperatures and increasing atmospheric moisture throughout the year. Without the boreal forest, Ontario would be hotter and drier, affecting everything from food production to water supplies.

The boreal forest north of the Great Lakes is already developed, with extensive road networks, cities and towns, and industrial infrastructure, including lumber mills, mines and hydro dams. Due to lack of proper planning and management, these activities are having devastating impacts on wildlife, especially caribou and wolverine, which have all but disappeared from this part of the province. Millions of songbird nests also have been cut down.

North of an invisible line at around 51 degrees latitude, the roads end, the logging stops and the rivers flow free. This is the northern boreal forest and it has been either officially or practically off-limits to most industrial development – until now. The line of development is quickly shifting north, and will bring with it an advancing line of extinction for species at risk like wolverine and caribou, and will destroy nests for breeding birds. There are already 4,400 mineral claims staked in the north and plans for roads, hydro transmission lines, logging, and open pit mines.

Ontario Nature is working with other conservation partners and First Nation communities to urge the provincial government to protect the northern boreal forest. We want to ensure that conservation-based planning is in place before industry comes into the northern boreal forest. There are several exciting announcements about Ontario Nature's boreal forest project with more to come over the next few months.

Ontario Nature staff will be working with members of the Nature Network over the next year to deliver The Boreal Forest: Ontario's Songbird Nursery presentation at member group monthly meetings and at special community events. Jennifer Baker, formerly the Nature Network Manager, has taken on the role of Boreal Campaign Coordinator and will be coordinating "The Boreal Forest: Ontario's Songbird Nursery" presentations, as well as working with other conservation organizations to protect the northern boreal forest and the First Nations Coordinator will be working out of the Thunder Bay office and will be focusing on building relationships with First Nations communities.

For more information about the Boreal Forest Project please contact Jennifer Baker at 1-800-440-2366, ext. 224 or jenniferb@ontarionature.org.

EVENTS PAST

- On **Wednesday October 18**, 2006 the *Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT)* held a *Land Dedication Ceremony* to commemorate the spectacular donation by James Barber and Anne Sheffield McLeod of a 39.5 acres of upper headwaters and forest land in Aurora.

The lands are part of the upper headwaters of the East Holland River watershed, situated immediately north and east of the Aurora Wetland Complex, a Provincially Significant Wetland. Most of the property is heavily wooded table lands with mixed hardwood cover and wildlife habitat, including Sugar Maple, American Beech, White Elm and Basswood with a number of large White Pines in the south-east portion.

The holding includes two headwater branches of a tributary of the East Holland River draining north from the Oak Ridges Moraine and flowing into a wetland area, part of which is owned and managed by Ducks Unlimited. The McLeod lands contain the single largest block of mature forested land in the north-eastern portion of the Town of Aurora.

- On **August 13, 2006**, Miss Roberta Langtry passed away at the age of 89 and left the largest ever bequest to nature in Canada of over \$4 million to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Miss Langtry was especially fond of the Oak Ridges Moraine and so NCC this week dedicated a plaque in her honour in the Happy Valley Forest along 7th Concession, which is now closed to motor vehicles. NCC will continue to use the funds to protect the moraine.

- On **Saturday and Sunday October 14 & 15, 2006** the 4th Annual *Richmond Hill Studio Tour and Art Sale* was held at 178 St. Anthony's Court in Richmond Hill where local artist Valerie Kent showcased a variety of artwork including oil, acrylic, watercolours and mixed media showing Ontario landscapes that included areas around York Region such as Kettleby, Uxbridge, the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Mill Pond in Richmond Hill.

- Last **Saturday October 14, 2006** Gene Denzel led eleven of us on a fall birding stint to *Reesor's Pond* in Markham and *Cranberry Marsh*. Recent members Lynn and Karen were welcomed and we thoroughly enjoyed ('but really on a day like this these people must be crazy') an interesting morning of birding despite the cool October winds over the pond. Fortunately the weather cleared by the time we reached Lynd Shores. The mornings highlights included Black Duck, Redhead, Greater Yellow legs, Fox Sparrow, Eastern Wood Peewee, Magnolia and Yellow-rumped warblers, Eastern Towhee, Sharp Shinned and Harrier hawks. A hearty lunch at 'Apple Jacks' evened out the cold morning chills. Again thanks to Gene, Graham, Sharon and all who came out.

- On **Thursday, October 12, 2006** the *Don Watershed Regeneration Council* and Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) held a networking forum for groups working within the Don watershed. This forum brought together representatives and members from interest groups with a focus on watershed management activities in the Don watershed. Topics discussed included restoration plantings, site clean-ups, public education workshops, and monitoring and provided participants with a valuable opportunity to discuss stewardship of the Don watershed. Other issues of concern included regeneration activities, invasive species, fundraising and financial planning, capacity building, volunteerism, communication, education, and advocacy.

- On **Monday October 2, 2006** by the *Pembina Institute* released a major report on the province of Ontario's progress on curbing urban sprawl and promoting more sustainable urban development patterns.

"Building Sustainable Urban Communities in Ontario: A Provincial Progress Report" examines the Government of Ontario's initiatives in the areas of land-use planning, infrastructure funding, fiscal and taxation measures, and regional and municipal governance over the past three years.

The report concludes that major progress has been made in aligning the province's land-use planning legislation and policies with smart growth and urban sustainability principles, but report identifies a number of major barriers to the implementation of the province's new policies and plans.

Barriers include the unwillingness of some municipalities to conform to the new provincial policies and plans, and the impact of decisions by the province to exempt many existing development proposals from the new planning rules. York region, for example, is proposing to convert more than 640 acres (260 hectares) of greenbelt protected countryside into the "Keswick Business Park" under these "Grandfathering" rules.

The Ontario Municipal Board is also a major barrier to enforcing municipal compliance with the new provincial plans and policies as well as a failure to adopt complementary financial and taxation reforms, such as the reform of the development charges system, to support more sustainable urban development patterns.

- Also on **Monday, October 2, 2006** and again on **Wednesday, October 4, 2006** York Region held public open houses for their **"Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan"**. The master plan entered its second phase recently, focusing on the development of an improved sidewalk network on regional roads and a formal regional cycling network. Field investigation of potential routes will likely begin in late October and November.

- Thanks to Jim and Sharon Bradley for setting up the **"Fall Colours Hike"** at Lake St. George Field Centre on **Sunday October 1, 2006**. This family hike at the TRCA Field Centre and historic site is not normally open to the public. Members of the Naturalists, along with members of the Richmond Hill Group of Artists, enjoyed the fall colours (such as they were) as we strolled through the trails on this extensive property. Highlights included a walk around the lake, an agricultural and a wetland regeneration site during the approximately 1-1/2 hour hike.

- On **Saturday September 30**, 2006 **Joe Agg** led us on a walk on the **Observatory** lands. Joe's first-hand knowledge of the local people, wildlife and legends were most interesting - tales of poaching and grow ops - across a seemingly isolated and vast area between Bayview Avenue and the CN railway. Wildlife sightings included some resident white tailed deer as well as the local Coopers hawk which permitted the group a detailed look. Thanks again Joe. Your refreshments and hospitality were most appreciated.

- On **Thursday September 21**, 2006 the **Rouge Community Park** in East Scarborough was officially renamed to the "**Bob Hunter Greenspace**". The ceremonies were presided over by mayor David Miller, members of Toronto city council and members of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation department.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

September 2006

Toronto

Trumpeter Swan - 2 at G. Ross Lord Park Sep.26 (TH). One with yellow tag, number not readable.

Out-of-Area.

Great Blue Heron - 15 at Lake of 2 Rivers, Algonquin PP Sep.17 (MCh).

Great Egret - 42 at Luther Marsh Sep.14 (GL,RCu).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper - 3 at Beeton Sod Farms Sep.24 (DJM).

Black-backed Woodpecker - 1 at Lake of 2 Rivers Algonquin PP Sep.17 (MCh).

Peel Region

Bald Eagle - 1 Ad at Clairville Cons. Area Sep.29 (ARa).

Broad-winged Hawk - 935 at Clairville Cons. Area between 14.50 & 15.10 h Sep.21 (ARa).

Merlin - 1 at Dixie & Old Church Rds. Sep.26 (GoC).

Wild Turkey - 40 at Mt. Wolfe & Old Church Rds. Sep.21 (GoC).

Black-billed Cuckoo - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Sep.04 (PG,EM).

Pileated Woodpecker - 1 at Boston Mills Ponds Sep.25 (GoC).

Blue-headed Vireo - 1 at Clairville Cons. Area Sep.21 (ARa).

Red-eyed Vireo - "numbers galore" at Palgrave Conservation Area Sep.04 (PG,EM).

Brown Creeper - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Sep.04 (PG,EM).

Gray-cheeked Thrush - 1 at Clairville Cons. Area Sep.21 (ARa).

American Pipit - 25 at Bolton Sep.21 (PG).

Orange-crowned Warbler - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Sep.14 (PG).

Black-throated Blue Warbler - 2 at Clairville Cons. Area Sep.21 (ARa).

Black-throated Green Warbler - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Sep.04 (PG,EM).

Blackburnian Warbler - 1 at Clairville Cons. Area Sep.21 (A Ra).

Palm Warbler - 7 at Bolton Sep.21 (PG).

Scarlet Tanager - 1 at Palgrave Conservation Area Sep.04 (PG,EM).

White-throated Sparrow - flock at Bolton Sep.21 (PG).

Bobolink - 4 at Albion Trail Sep.07 (GoC).

Rusty Blackbird - 30 at Albion Trail Sep.30 (GoC).

York Region

Pied-billed Grebe - 3 at St Johns SR Marsh Sep.03 (RJF).

Double-crested Cormorant - 12 at St Johns SR Marsh Sep.03 (RJF).

Great Blue Heron - almost daily@Lumsden Prprty, Aurora Sep1-30(HL). 4@St Johns SR Marsh Sep3(RJF).
3@Nantucket Dr. Oak Ridges Mid Sept. (SDP).

Great Egret - 1 at Reesor Ponds, Markham Sep.03,19 (SLo). 1 at Lumsden Property, Aurora Sep.10 (HL).

Green Heron - occasionally at Lumsden Property, Aurora Sep.01-30 (HL).

Black-crowned Night-Heron - almost daily at Lumsden Property, Aurora Sep.01-30 (HL).

Snow Goose - 1 at Reesor Ponds Markham Sep.29 (SLo).

Wood Duck - 50@Hnd Lndng Swg Lgns Sep9(RJF). 2 Juv@Oakbank Pnd Thrnhl Sep18(MCh).
70 at Holland Landing Sewage Lagoons Sep.20(RJF).

Northern Shoveler - 15 at Holland Landing Sewage Lagoons Sep.09 (RJF).
 Redhead - 4 at Reesor Ponds, Markham Sep.03 (SLo).
 Hooded Merganser - 1 at Reesor Ponds, Markham Sep.03 (SLo).
 Osprey - 1 at Holland Landing at Brydons Sep.04 (BB).
 Sharp-shinned Hawk - 1 at Nantucket Dr. Oak Ridges Sep.?? [Mid Sep.] (SDP).
 Cooper's Hawk - 1 @Reesor Pnds Mrkhm Sep12(SLo) Fed on Mourning Dove. 1@ Idleswift Thrnhl Sep.27-28(G&CD).
 American Kestrel - 2 at Markham Bypass Sep.30 (SLo).
 Merlin - 1 at Reesor Ponds Markham Sep.02 (SLo). 1 at Schomberg Sewage Lagoons Sep.03 (RJF).
 Yellow Rail - 1 at Holland Landing Sewage Lagoons Sep.01 (ISt fide RJF).
 American Avocet - 1-2 at Holland Landing Sewage Lagoons Sep.01-04 (RJF, also AnR,GoC).
 Lesser Yellowlegs - 150 Juv at Reesor Ponds, Markham Sep.03 (SLo).
 White-rumped Sandpiper - 11 @Reesor Pnds Mrkhm Sep3(SLo). 1@Holland Landing Sewage Lagoons Sep.4(GoC).
 Stilt Sandpiper - 20 at Holland Landing Sewage Lagoons Sep.04, 18 Sep.09 (RJF).
 Long-billed Dowitcher - 1 at Holland Landing Sewage Lagoons Sep.20 (RLa).
 Caspian Tern - 2 at St Johns SR Marsh Sep.03 (RJF).
 Common Nighthawk - flocks at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27 Sep.01 [Circling above] (JLo).
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird - 2 to 4 at 4 Grenfell Markham (Carol McK) Sep.01-30 (CMK).
 Acadian Flycatcher - 1@Happy Valy Forests Mid September(HBa fide TH). ID not confirmed, photo available.
 Philadelphia Vireo - 1 at 4 Grenfell Markham Sep.26 (CMK).
 Red-eyed Vireo - 3 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27 Sep.14 (JLo).
 Common Raven - 4 at St.Johns S.R. & McCowan Sep.05 [Flying South-West] (RJF).
 American Pipit - 120 at Reesor Ponds Markham Sep.27 (SLo).
 Palm Warbler - 10 at Reesor Ponds Markham Sep.17 (SLo).
 Chipping Sparrow - 2 at M.MacK/Hwy.27 Sep.14(JLo). 2@4 Grenfell Markham Sep.28 (CMK).
 White-throated Sparrow - 3 at 4 Grenfell Markham Sep.26-29 (CMK).
 Dark-eyed Junco - 2 at M.MacK/Hwy.27 Sep.14(JLo). 1@Idleswift Thornhill Sep.27 (G&CD).
 Northern Cardinal - 2 (1 fem. w. young) at 4 Grenfell Markham (Carol McK) Sep.29 (CMK).
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak - 4 at M.MacKenzie & Hwy.27 Sep.14 (JLo).
 Bobolink - 1 at Reesor Ponds Markham Sep.17 (SLo).
 AnR Anna Russell, ARa Alfred Raab, BB Bruce Brydon, CMK Carol McKnight, DJM Dave Milsom, EM Elizabeth Morton,
 G&CD Gene & Charlene Denzel, GL Graham Leonard, GoC Gord Cameron, HBa H Barnett, HL Harry Lumsden, ISt Ian Stanley,
 JLo Joan Love, MCh Martin Chen, PG Phyllis Graydon, RCu Robert Cubbitt, RJF Ron Fleming, RLa Richard Lauzon, SDP Susan DiPucchio,
 SLo Stan Long, TH Theo Hofmann.

From the Editor

A film called "***Escarpment Blues***" will be playing at 7pm at the *Royal Ontario Museum* on Thursday November 2, during the *Planet in Focus Film Festival*. The film chronicles Sarah Harmer's fight to stop the destruction of the Niagara Escarpment and preserve Ontario's Greenbelt.

Harmer's 2005 "*I Love the Escarpment Tour*" was captured on film as she and her band played in community halls and theatres, hiking and kayaking along the Escarpment's Bruce Trail. Part concert film and part documentary, *Escarpment Blues* is a loving tribute to one of Ontario's most beautiful rural areas and the people who live there.

Sarah's support for the Jefferson salamander on the Niagara Escarpment where her parents still live is also noted. Natalie Helferty has worked as the Jefferson Salamander expert witness on the Dufferin Milton Quarry Expansion for CONE (Coalition for the Niagara Escarpment) and POWER (Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources) so Sarah's work has helped CONE & POWER enormously during their appeal to Cabinet.

MNR is arguing that local sourcing of limestone trumps long-term protection of the escarpment, despite the flaws in the technology to 'perpetually pump' water to maintain the wetlands' water tables to ensure the survival of the salamander.

Come see Sarah Harmer perform a few songs live, along with Michelle Rumball noted folk singer and songwriter from Scarborough and formerly of Grievous Angels, for the **Green Divas for Council** fundraising event on **Nov. 6th, 2006** at the **Gladstone Hotel** on Queen Street West. See Natalie Helferty's website at www.nataliehelferty.ca

-- Lloyd Helferty, 603-48 Suncrest Blvd. Thornhill, ON L3T 7Y1. (With input from Natalie Helferty)