



THE BULLETIN

May/June 2007 No. 464

2005-2006 EXECUTIVE

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| President | Marianne Yake . . . 905-883-3047 president@rhnaturalists.ca |
| Past President & Speakers | Natalie Helferty speakers@rhnaturalists.ca |
| 2nd Vice President | -- Position Available -- |
| Secretary | -- Position Available -- |
| Treasurer | Gene Denzel treasurer@rhnaturalists.ca |
| 50 th Anniversary | Michael White |
| Field Trips | Tom Waechter trips@rhnaturalists.ca |
| Environment | -- Position Available -- |
| Publicity | Sharon Bradley publicity@rhnaturalists.ca |
| Bulletin Editor | Lloyd Helferty 905-707-8754 editor@rhnaturalists.ca |
| Membership | Mike Turk membership@rhnaturalists.ca |
| Events | -- Position Available -- |
| Ontario Nature Rep | Diana Piché |
| Website coordinator | Rod Potter webmaster@rhnaturalists.ca |

Events calendar

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Mill Pond Splash | Sunday June 3, 2007 Location: Mill Pond When: Noon – 4pm. |
| Executive Meeting | Tuesday June 12, 2007. 7:30pm Where: Robert Holland Centre |
| Annual Corn Roast | Saturday September 8, 2007. 6:00pm Where: Russ Tilt's house 25 Bridgewater Street South, Richmond Hill |
| General Meeting | Thursday September 20, 2007. 7:30pm Speaker: To Be Announced Location: Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, Wallace Hall. 10066 Yonge St. North of Major Mackenzie Dr., West side |

Check for more Events and Outings on Page 2

Baillie Birdathon results

May 18th, 2007

Armed with generous pledges from members who were at the annual meeting, Gene and Charlene Denzel, joined by Denise and Rod Potter for part of the time, birded in Pt Pelee National Park and Hillman Marsh from 13:30 on Monday May 7 until 13:30 on the 8th, with a total of 13 hours of birding during that period. The result was a total of 102 species, including only 14 warblers.

The weather was good during this time at Pelee, meaning rain overnight and fog in the morning. The highlights were a Hooded Warbler, a Marbled Godwit, 3 wrens (Carolina, Winter, and House), and 5 thrushes (counting Robins).

During the next 4 days Gene and Charlene birded some more in the Pelee area, and then moved on to Rondeau Provincial Park. Rondeau was quite productive, with as usual much less crowding. For the 5 days, the total got up to 139 species for Gene and Charlene, including 25 warblers, with good views of a Golden-Wing, a Blue-Wing, a Kentucky, a singing Hooded, a Cerulean, and a swarm of Northern Parulas. All in all, a delightful May outing.

Continued 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: editor@rhnaturalists.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

Mailing Database: Mike Turk

Distribution: Athena Antiochos

Visit our Website at www.rhnaturalists.ca

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. You may also sign up or renew at <http://www.rhnaturalists.ca/membership/>

NEW MEMBERS:

George Z Zhang ; Anne Todd
Nancy Zalman

Meet new members at club events and say Hello!

EVENTS FUTURE



- **Sunday June 3, 2007.** Noon – 4pm. **Mill Pond Splash** at the Mill Pond. Join the *Richmond Hill Naturalists* at our booth, help plant a tree, clean up the park or take a walk in the woods. An acknowledgement presentation of the Ontario Trillium foundation grant will take place at 1pm in Mill Pond Park.



- **Tuesday June 12, 2007.** 7:30pm. **Executive Meeting** will be held at [Phyllis Rawlinson Park](#).



- **Saturday September 8, 2007.** 6:00pm. The Richmond Hill Naturalists annual **Corn Roast** will be held at Russ Tilt's house in Richmond Hill. 25 Bridgewater Street South. Bring your own cutlery, plate, mug/glass and lawn chair. Contributions to the dessert table would be appreciated. The corn roast is the time to renew your Richmond Hill Naturalists membership (\$20 for individual | \$25 for family). Those unable to attend the corn roast may pay for their membership at the September general meeting.



- **Thursday September 20, 2007.** 7:30pm. Our first **General Meeting** of the 2007-2008 year will again be held at the Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, Wallace Hall. 10066 Yonge St., North of Major Mackenzie Dr., West side.

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



- **Friday to Sunday June 8-10, 2007.** Ontario Nature's **76th Annual General Meeting and Conference** hosted by the Peterborough Field Naturalists. This year's theme is *The Kawarthas: Landscapes of Transition*. Trent University in Peterborough. Info and registration forms available at www.peterboroughnature.org. Call 416-444-8419 ext. 240 or 1-800-440-2366 for more info. If you plan on going please contact Diana Piché at 905-773-4199 to see about organizing a group/carpool for the Richmond Hill Naturalists.



- **Saturday and Sunday June 9 & 10, 2007.** **Windfall Ecology Festival.** Fairy Lake Park, Newmarket. Features exhibits on energy efficiency, solar and wind power, organic and local foods, World Music Stage, workshops, Kid's Eco-Zones, skateboard park and more. <http://www.windfallcentre.ca>



- **Thursday June 14, 2007.** 6–8pm. **Humber Flats EcoPark** Moraine Walk. Join Evergreen and Richmond Hill Natural Heritage staff & Diana Piche on an informative walk to learn about the Oak Ridges Moraine. Appropriate footwear & repellent are advisable. For information contact Paul at 416-596-1495, x226 or pabell@evergreen.ca



- **Friday to Sunday June 15-17, 2007.** 2007 Oak Ridges Lions **Family Fair & Home Show.** Oak Ridges Rec Centre and Arena. Midway, carnival rides, games, clowns, jugglers, games, live music acts, sports skills, BBQs, fire trucks, reptiles and much more. Home show featuring over 100 exhibitors including "green hub" for information on local natural environment and nature. Saturday only. Fri: 6p-10p, Sat: 10a-10p, Sun: 11a-6p. Free gate admission.



- **Friday to Sunday June 15 to 17, 2007.** The first **Carden Nature Festival**. Guided hikes, canoeing, introduction to fly-fishing, photography, historic tours, a ghost tour, a visit to a Mennonite farmers' market, a Friday evening ceilidh with local fiddlers -- over 30 activities in all. Entry is limited and is on a first-come first-served basis. To get your choice REGISTER NOW!! For more information and registration details, visit www.CardenGuide.com/Festival. You must pre-register. Individual and family Festival passes are available.



- **Saturday and Sunday June 16 & 17, 2007.** **The Moraine For Life Adventure Relay.** A non-stop 160km Team Challenge! Run, Hike, Bike Paddle... No experience necessary. Up to 15 people per team. For more information contact the [Oak Ridges Trail Association](http://www.OakRidgesTrailAssociation.com) at 1-877-319-0285 or go to: www.moraineadventure.com.



- **Thursday, June 21, 2007.** 10am – 2pm. Brenda Hogg will be hosting a **Seniors' Lunch and Information Session** on at the McConaghy Centre. See the full article on page 3, [Local News](#).

MEMBER SUBMISSIONS

...Continued from Page 1

Baillie Birdathon results

For those who want to pledge, it can still be done either by contacting Gene directly or online through the secure Bird Studies Canada website using the following link: <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/bat/donate.jsp> and entering Participant's ID# 56301 in the appropriate place.

If you have your own ID with Bird Studies Canada, you should enter it where requested to simplify processing.

- Gene and Charlene Denzel

Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture topples the myth that food production has to occur in wide-open spaces on large tracts of land.

In fact, urban agriculture flies in the face of what usually has been done (and shown to be possible) in urban communities. Urban agriculture is part of a growing trend toward locally produced food, knowing where food comes from and who grew it.

Urban agriculture is about feeding people; it embraces the rights of farmers to produce food and the right of community to choose what they want to eat. It is also about giving people access to food unpolluted by genetic engineering and free from pesticides. Healthy and nutritious food has a lot to do with how that food was produced.

Local food production creates a connection that highlights the value of both the urban and rural environments and goes beyond mere gardening because the intent is to look

at the comprehensive approach to the issue of developing local economies — hiring locally, selling locally.

Using a “food-system” paradigm, one can see clearly how urban agriculture can not only improve access to high-quality food in communities, but can pull a community together in ways few other activities can.

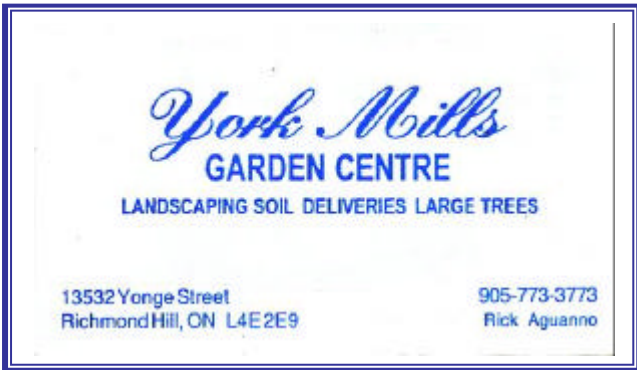
- Marianne Yake, from the article, “*Creating local food options in an urban setting*” by LaDonna Redmond

One important note: We are missing, with some few notable exceptions, community and allotment gardens in York Region. It is certainly not included in the [York Region Sustainability Strategy](#).

Premature births linked to levels of pesticides and nitrates in surface water

Supporting links between healthy landscapes and healthy people the growing premature birth rate in the United States appears to be strongly associated with increased use of pesticides and nitrates, according to work conducted by Paul Winchester, M.D., professor of clinical pediatrics at the Indiana University School of Medicine.

Professor Winchester reported his findings on May 7 at the Pediatric Academic Societies' annual meeting, a combined gathering of the American Pediatric Society, the Society for Pediatric Research, the Ambulatory Pediatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.



Dr. Winchester and colleagues found that preterm birth rates peaked when pesticides and nitrates measurements in surface water were highest (April-July) and were lowest when nitrates and pesticides were lowest (Aug.-Sept.).

The highest rate of prematurity occurred in May-June and the lowest for Aug-Sept regardless of maternal age, race, education, marital status, alcohol or cigarette use, or whether the mother was an urban, suburban or rural resident. Pesticide and nitrate levels in surface water were also highest in May-June and lowest in August – September, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

"A growing body of evidence suggests that the consequence of prenatal exposure to pesticides and nitrates as well as to other environmental contaminants is detrimental to many outcomes of pregnancy. As a neonatologist, I am seeing a growing number of birth defects, and preterm births, and I think we need to face up to environmental causes," said Dr Winchester, who

is also director of Newborn Intensive Care Services at St. Francis Hospital in Indianapolis.

Preterm births in the United States vary month to month in a recurrent and seasonal manner. Pesticides and nitrates similarly vary seasonally in surface water throughout the U.S. Nitrates and pesticides can disrupt endocrine hormones and nitric oxide pathways in the developing foetus.

Project FeederWatch

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is inviting city residents to "**Celebrate Urban Birds!**"

The Feederwatch program asks people to watch birds for only ten minutes in urban green spaces, whether they are balconies with potted plants, community gardens, tree-lined streets or large urban parks, record the sightings of the 15 target bird species and send the information to the Urban Bird Studies group at the Lab through the mail or via the Internet.

Learn more at <http://www.urbanbirds.org/celebration>

Celebration Kits are available. They include a colorful urban birds poster, silhouette poster with "cool facts", educational materials about birds and urban greening, data forms, and sunflower seed packets for planting in pots and gardens.

Please send any Celebrate Urban Birds! inquiries to Urban Bird Studies at urbanbirds@cornell.edu.

Hand Feeding Hummingbirds

This is something I have never seen before, or ever even heard of. This lady lives in a Hummingbird fly zone. As they migrated, about 20 of them were in her yard. Just for a lark, she took the little red dish and filled it with sugar water and this is the result.

- Joyce Horner



LOCAL NEWS

- On April 19, 2007 **Lynn Foster**, local councillor in Ward 4, Richmond Hill announced her candidacy for the Progressive Conservative nomination for the Richmond Hill riding in the next Provincial election, which will take place on October 10th, 2007.

This means that a new vacancy will open up on town council. Let us hope that a progressive and responsible candidate will step forward to fill this position. We need more people on council who understand that nature matters in Richmond Hill.

NEW INITIATIVE BECOMES PART OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

Special presentations help share information with the community about what matters most to them

RICHMOND HILL - The first in a series of special community presentations is being introduced at the Council Meeting on Monday, May 28, 2007. The presentations will be made by Town staff to Council and the community on a variety of topics including the environment, the Official Plan and Strategic Plan and are aimed at not only sharing information, but also engaging the public in initiatives that the Town plans to undertake in the near future and that can impact their quality of life.

"We decided that sharing information as well as engaging citizens are important aspects of municipal government," said Mayor Dave Barrow. "All residents are encouraged to attend these presentations as well as our regular Council meetings."

These new public interest sessions, held once a month, will be allotted approximately 30 minutes of a regular Council meeting, featuring a presentation by staff on the scheduled/pre-determined topic. The first presentation, which will be held on Monday, May 28, will focus on the Town's continued commitment to the environment.

Staff from the Town will address what the Town is doing when it comes to climate change, clean air and renewable energy, "green" buildings and "green" fleet, waste management initiatives such as GoingGREEN, the Town's Healthy Yards program, stormwater management, Lake Wilcox strategies, sustainable transportation and more. The next presentation, planned for the June 26 Council meeting, will focus on the Town's Strategic Plan and Official Plan.

There are no presentations scheduled for July or August due to the Council meeting summer recess, however, a full slate is expected for the fall. A schedule of Council meetings can be found on the Town's Website and on the Bulletin Board pages in The Liberal newspaper. Council meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers on the first floor of the main Municipal Offices at 225 East Beaver Creek Road. Each presentation is slated to begin immediately following regular business.

DEREK W. WELSH
I.S.A. CERTIFIED
ARBORIST #ON - 0129

- TREE & SHRUB PRUNING
- INSECT & DISEASE CONTROL
- TREE & STUMP REMOVAL
- DEEP ROOT FERTILIZING
- PLANTING & TRANSPLANTING

AUTHENTIC TREE CARE INC.

1-888-366-CARE (416) 990-CARE

PO. BOX 118, BALDWIN, ONTARIO L0E 1A0

Road Widening

York Region is planning to widen 16th Avenue to **6 lanes** from **Yonge Street** in Richmond Hill all the way East to the Markham bypass (Don Cousens Way) in Markham. York is also looking at making "improvements" between Don Cousens Way all the way over to the York Durham townline.

York Region also has plans to widen Bayview Avenue south of Major Mackenzie Dr down to Steeles Avenue. The Region has also excluded the Bayview project from having to undergo an Environmental Assessment (EA) despite the fact that it now appears that this area will also be widened to accommodate High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes.

Numerous groups in **Thornhill** and **Richmond Hill** are opposed to the widening of **Bayview Avenue** and have requested a future meeting with the Regional Councillors and the Mayor to discuss their concerns. Council will also be asking the Region to explain in detail the EA process for Bayview and hopefully learn why the particular area was excluded from the EA process.

Serious erosion problems exist along the banks of the East Don River south of John Street and there is a potential danger to homes from this ongoing erosion, especially if Bayview Avenue were to be widened any further.

The Region had previously undertaken an "Erosion Restoration Implementation Report". The report indicated that out of the 30 "high priority erosion sites", 10 are in Thornhill and 8 out of the 10 are located on the East Don River south of John Street. (The area not included in the current EA.)

Summit Golf Course has Requested to Remove 6-7 acres of Trees from the Jefferson Forest!

On Wednesday June 13, 2007 [Summit Golf & Country Club](#) applied to the Region's Transportation and Works Committee to remove several acres of trees from the Jefferson Forest. A copy of the report can be obtained from the Regional Clerk Dennis Kelly at denis.kelly@york.ca.



Motorized vehicles in our green spaces!

The return of good weather has brought ATV's and dirt bikes back to our natural spaces. Motorized vehicles and nature don't mix. They are prohibited from parks and natural areas in Richmond Hill.

These places are protected for some very good reasons. Motorized vehicles disturb the peaceful enjoyment for other park users and harass wildlife. Their speed along trails poses a safety hazard for pedestrians and cyclists. Off-trail riding also damages natural features and wildlife nesting areas.

The [Oak Ridges Friends of the Environment](#) formed a partnership with the Richmond Hill By-Laws office and the York Region Police to assist in reducing this illegal activity in our community. You can assist by **reporting** information about observed use of motorized vehicles in these areas.

The following information will be helpful:

Date, time and location:

Identifiable marks (i.e. bike/ATV licence, trailer licence, car/truck licence):

Any other comments that may be helpful to by-laws and police patrols:

Send this information to orfe@oakridgesfriendsoftheenvironment.ca

The data will be compiled and sent to the Town to assist patrols and to send warnings to identified individuals.

Death in Our Rivers

On May 8, 2007 Deborah Martin-Downs, Director of the Ecology Division at the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority indicated that a spill occurred in the **Little Rouge River** in the Stouffville area resulting in a fish kill. The Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Natural Resources responded to the incident and are undertaking an investigation.

According to the Highway 7 Corridor and Vaughan North-South Link Public Transit Improvements Environmental Assessment, the Rouge River watershed is known to support reidside dace, American brook lamprey, and central stoneroller, all of them rare, threatened or endangered species.

The Friends of Osprey need your Eyes to Observe Osprey Nests in your Area!

If you are able to give a little time to fill out our survey form of nests near you this would be a big help!

Barbara Puxley, Founder, [Friends of the Osprey](#), they will mail you a copy of the map with the nest numbers near you on it. Please let the Friends of the Osprey know of the new nests you may discover, and whether you think any nests that you know of pose a hazard to power or telephone lines.



The Friends of the Osprey need your eyes as they do not have enough members yet to keep all known nests under adequate observation. The Friends of the Osprey survey nests from Mitchell Lake; Sturgeon Lake; Pigeon Lake; Buckhorn Lake; Stoney Lake; Lovesick Lake; Chemung Lake over to Lakefield; down the river to Peterborough, Rice Lake; south of Baileborough, west from there to Indian River; Omemee; Emily Creek; Lake Scugog and Scogog River to Lindsay.

- Barbara Puxley, Founder, Friends of the Osprey

Bobcaygeon, ON 705-738-6271 puxley40@yahoo.ca

Incineration for York Region?

The Regions of York/Durham have short-listed 5 potential sites for a new incineration plant, one of which is off Davis Drive between Warden and Woodbine Avenue (adjacent to the existing recycling plant) right next to the Moraine and Black River.

Area residents in Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, Holland Landing, Aurora, Stouffville, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Thornhill, Markham, King and Sharon could be affected by any toxins that are emitted from this plant.



A decision will be made within the next few months as to the selected site for this incineration plant. Communities First, a local group of concerned residents would like people to go to their website and sign the petition they have set up there. Go to <http://communitiesfirst.ca/>

- Sharon Yorke, Communities First

NATURE NEWS

The Pollination Canada Program

Did you know that 70% of our food crops need insects for pollination? Did you know that most wild plants, and small animals that eat seeds, could not survive without them?

Not only bees and butterflies; there are over 1,000 species of pollinating insects in Canada! Unfortunately, these beneficial insects are under pressure from loss of habitat, loss of food sources, disease, and pesticides. As insect populations are threatened, so are the fruit and vegetable produce, and the wild ecosystems that depend on these pollinators.

Pollinators need your help. A new "citizen science" program allows the Canadian public to participate in a nationwide survey of pollinators. This is an ideal way to be educated and engaged and to make a difference. The Pollination Canada program educates people about the important role of pollinating insects, and the need to conserve their habitats. We also provide information and tools for educators, who can conduct programs to groups of various ages and interests.

The heart of the program is actual monitoring of insect populations and diversity. By observing pollinators in gardens, local parks, along country roads, basically anywhere flowers are growing, and then sending in these observations, Pollination Canada participants help scientists to better understand the crucial relationships between pollinators, ecosystems, plant diversity, and human activity. This information is needed now, so that steps can be taken to preserve pollinator populations. All of our training material, including the Observer's Kit, is easily downloadable from www.pollinationcanada.ca

Modernizing the Fisheries Act - Lake Ontario Waterkeeper

Monday, May 28, 2007

A new Fisheries Act, known as Bill C-45, is in the midst of second reading in the House of Commons. If the Bill passes, it will weaken Canadians' access to the legal system, diminish corporate accountability, and undermine environmental justice across the country.

Bill C-45 is a complete overhaul of the old Fisheries Act. Gone is the rule that says a community will participate in an environmental assessment if fish habitat is to be destroyed. Gone is the rule that ensures at least one-third of every river is always unobstructed. Gone is the rule that says ships can't sweep coal ashes into our waterways. Gone are the key definitions that prohibited the deposit of deleterious substances into Canadian waters.

The proposed Fisheries Act takes environmental protection away from citizens and independent courts and concentrates power in the Minister's office. It abandons rule of law in favour of Ministerial discretion, politicking, and lobbying.

The Act that once pledged to protect fish now protects corporate interests through grants, loans, and insurance programs. It also offers up a new, softer response to serious environmental crimes by allowing "alternative measures agreements" to replace guilty pleas and criminal records - an approach that is radically different from this government's other crime policies.

By contrast, today's Fisheries Act says that no one can put toxic substances into waters where there are fish and no one can destroy fish habitat without government authorization. Offenders can be tried in a criminal court and face fines of up to one million dollars a day or jail time if they are convicted. The rules that clarify what "deposit", "deleterious substance", or "harmful alteration" have been established through years of independent deliberation. The standards are clear, they apply equally to every polluter, and they equally protect every waterway in the country.

To help you review the proposed changes to the Fisheries Act, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper prepared a twelve-page background on the changes to habitat protection and pollution prevention provisions in the new Act.

See: <http://www.waterkeeper.ca/documents/2007-05.C45changes.pdf> for more info.

The New "Endangered Species Act, 2007" Gets Government Support!

On May 17, 2007, the Ontario Government passed new **Species at Risk Legislation** that is among the strongest in North America. The legislation is one component of the government's comprehensive three-part approach to species at risk protection that also includes programs and policies to implement the new legislation, and greater support for public stewardship initiatives. The new act takes a stewardship-first approach to protection of species and their habitats and makes Ontario the North American leader in species at risk protection and recovery.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is working with its conservation partners to develop the stewardship program. Initiatives eligible for stewardship funding may include outreach and education projects, habitat enhancement and recovery, youth employment and research activities, and support for landowner efforts to protect species and habitat. \$18 million in funding will be made available over the next four years to support public stewardship activities that protect essential habitat and green space.

Of note: Conservative Leader John Tory skipped the vote. His own caucus did not support the legislation to protect endangered species and four Conservative MPPs voted against the legislation. Conservative candidate Randy Hillier (Lanark, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington) has been leading the call against the legislation.

Species at Risk In Canada

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) met last week to assess the conservation status of Canadian species. This year there are 552 'species at risk' in Canada, an increase from the 534 species assessed to be 'at risk' in November 2006.

There is good news for a few down-listed species including sea otters, peregrine falcons and the Newfoundland population of the American marten. Unfortunately, there are also many bad news stories, especially in Canada's oceans, with 18 new species added to the list - seven being marine species in steep decline mainly due to bycatch in commercial fisheries. For more details visit the COSEWIC website at www.cosewic.gc.ca.

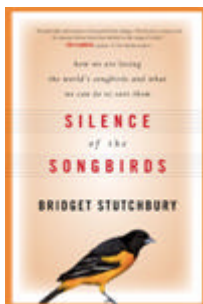
Bob Hunter Environmental Award

On Thursday May 24, 2007 the city of Toronto announced they will continue to honour the lasting legacy of Greenpeace co-founder, Bob Hunter by establishing the **Bob Hunter Environmental Award**.

The city says the award will recognize outstanding achievements and initiatives within Toronto and will be presented annually at the **Green Toronto awards**.

Bob Hunter ended his career as an ecology specialist at CityNews and always brought with him a rare and genuine passion and commitment to protecting the planet. He was pioneer in the field. Hunter died at age 63 on May 3, 2005.

Silence of the Songbirds



Silence of the Songbirds is a new book by Bridget Stutchbury, a renowned ornithologist at York University. In the book she shows that dozens of migratory songbird species are suffering serious population declines and are disappearing at a frightening rate. She describes how tropical deforestation, pesticides, unsustainable logging, and more are threatening songbirds. Stutchbury argues that when birds begin disappearing, we may be next.

Find out more at www.silenceofthesongbirds.ca

Organic Food on the Rise



Over half of Canadian households bought organically grown food last year, citing use of *pesticides and fertilizers* as their top concern, according to a Certified Organics Report released Monday. The report, compiled by market research group the Nielsen Company, found that 51.5 per cent of Canadian households bought an organic product within the past year.

The Canadian Organic Growers Association says there were 3,618 certified organic growers in Canada in 2005, with another 241 farmers in the process of converting their conventional farms to organic. More than 530,000 hectares of land are dedicated to growing organic food, the largest crop being wheat. There are only about 50 Certified Organic farms registered in Ontario.

Last September, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency proposed a new set of rules for farmers wanting to carry a new "Canada Organic" label. The federal watchdog said farmers would have to submit an application for certification with information on the methods of production and the substances used in production.

EVENTS PAST

A Tribute to Glen Davis, Philanthropist

On Friday May 18, 2007 Glen Davis was killed after being shot in the torso. Police said he was likely targeted by the assailant who shot him. He was found near his car in the underground garage of a building housing [World Wildlife Fund Canada](#) offices in Toronto's north end.

Glen Davis had been a champion for conservation for thirty years, supporting WWF-Canada and many other organizations. Glen had donated millions of dollars to wildlife conservation and environmental causes.

"It appears that he was deliberately selected in this case: there were a number of people in that underground parking lot," homicide Det. Wayne Fowler said at a news conference.

Glen had a deep and personal connection with the wild places of Canada, and his support has helped conserve many of Canada's most important wilderness areas, such as [Ivvavik National Park](#) in the Yukon, [Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve](#) in British Columbia, [Tuktut Nogait National Park](#) in the Northwest Territories, among others.

He was an accomplished hiker and paddler, who had travelled some of the wildest and most remote areas of Canada, many of which he helped protect. Glen was an informed philanthropist.

He networked, he listened, he read, and most importantly, he spent time in the field.

In all things, Glen had a clear vision for conservation.

- excerpted from 'A Tribute to Glen Davis' (WWF) and CBC News (Sunday, May 20, 2007 | 1:54 PM)

A Tribute to Bill Davis, "Grand-daddy of the Greenbelt"

On May 22, 2007 former premier Bill Davis was honoured with the 2007 *Friend of the Greenbelt Award* for helping plant its seeds over 35 years ago. A generation of Ontario leaders who actively promote the spirit of conservation joined a new generation of leaders at Toronto Botanical Gardens to honour Davis.

The prize, awarded by the [Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation](#), was in recognition of his government's "bold action" in 1973 to protect the [Niagara Escarpment](#) shortly after Davis became premier. Davis was also responsible for cancelling the proposed Spadina Expressway, and his actions set the precedent for Ontario growth planning and helped create a province with an intact rich natural landscape supporting a green environment, farming, and rural life alongside its most heavily populated centres.

(Davis had also developed a "greenbelt bill" back in the 1970's that was never passed.)

Davis received his award from Juno winner Sarah Harmer, who won the first Friend of the Greenbelt Award.

Five historic plaques were unveiled to recognize Davis' accomplishment, which will be installed along the Niagara escarpment at Niagara Falls, Hamilton, Caledon, Owen Sound and in the Bruce Peninsula.

- based on a press release by [Environmental Defence Canada](#)

- On Thursday, May 31 from 2pm to 7pm The town of Richmond Hill, along with their Natural Heritage staff, held their **Healthy Yards Event** at the Richmond Green. The event included Free expert advice on backyard naturalization and organic lawn care, free Native Plant and Organic Lawn Care kits and a chance to win gardening prizes.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

Bird Observations Have Changed!

In keeping with the times, the **Richmond Hill Naturalists** in cooperation with the [West Humber Naturalists](#), have jointly established an electronic database to keep track of all the *Bird Observations* from club members. Theo Hoffman will no longer be accepting submissions from members.

Due to this change, the **Bird Observations** for this month will not be published in this edition of *The Bulletin*.

Members with *Bird Observations* who wish to submit sightings may still do so in two ways:

1. Send submissions by e-mail to: Sightings@rhnaturalists.ca or birds@rhnaturalists.ca
2. Send written submissions by surface mail to: **Gene Denzel, 9 Idleswift Dr., Thornhill, ON L4J 1K8**

[Rod Potter](#), our new website coordinator, along with [Bob Noble](#) of the [West Humber Naturalists](#) are now in the process of updating our website so that members can submit their bird sightings using an **online Observation form** on our website at <http://www.rhnaturalists.ca> as well.

This online tool will eventually let members with internet access fill in all of the various details of their observations directly online.

Full details about how to use the internet tool will be provided to members at a later date.

This month's Bird observations will be published in the future and will be viewable online.

If you would like a *paper copy* of this month's bird observations, contact Marianne Yake at 905-883-3047.

Theo Hoffman's Mountain Plover sighting!

After 4 fruitless attempts at sighting the rare Mountain Plover at its nesting site in Western Canada, Theo's 5th attempt to see this bird finally paid off! This summer, Theo went to the extreme South-East corner of Alberta on the border with Montana, close to a place called "Wild Horse", where he finally managed to see a nesting Plover. He went with a group of birders from Western Canada called "Eagle Eye".

This sighting rounds out Theo's lifetime list of every breeding bird in Canada. The Canadian Wildlife service has estimated that there were only about 10 Mountain Plovers breeding in all of Canada this year.

From the Editor

On May 23, 2007 Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of New York City, announced that the city's entire taxi fleet will be converted to hybrid vehicles by 2012. The city has been testing 375 hybrid cabs for 18 months, and will soon begin converting its 13,000-vehicle fleet. The city plans to convert 1,000 taxis by October 2008 and an additional 20% of the fleet would be converted each year thereafter until the entire fleet is converted.

"It will be the largest, cleanest fleet of taxis anywhere on the planet," Bloomberg said, adding that the switch would be the equivalent of taking 30,000 individually owned, gasoline-powered vehicles off the streets. "These [cabs] just sit there in traffic sometimes, belching fumes," he said.

Louise Vetter, president of the American Lung Association of the City of New York, agreed: "New Yorkers are exposed to some of the dirtiest air in the nation. Putting more clean cabs on New York City streets is an important step in our fight to improve air quality."

The move was hailed by the New York Federation of Taxi Drivers too. Crown Victoria taxicabs, which get only about 10-15 miles to the gallon (16-23 L/100km), currently make up about 90% of the city's 13,000 licensed yellow cabs. A cabdriver can pay as much as \$100 a day to keep the tank in a Crown Victoria full.

It is all part of Bloomberg's plan to cut the city's carbon emissions 30 percent by 2030 under 'PlaNYC'.

How soon will it be before Toronto follows suit? It may take longer than we think. Regular Toronto taxicabs are not even allowed to take passengers to the airport and we don't even have a commuter train or subway linking our airport to the downtown. How backward is that? The best we can come up with is a [four-day "anti-idling" blitz](#).

Lloyd Helferty, Bulletin Editor editor@rhnaturalists.ca

905-707-8754 Mailing Address: 603-48 Suncrest Blvd. Thornhill, ON L3T 7Y1