



THE BULLETIN

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE RICHMOND HILL NATURALISTS

October 2011 — No. 499

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Hallowe'en Colours

A handsome male American Redstart displays his beautiful autumn colours at the Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station on September 24, 2011.

While some humans in these parts are running and working out in preparation for the onslaught of fall marathons, this tiny warbler, weighing in at about

8 grams, is chirpily fattening up on bugs, and even berries and seeds, in preparation for the long trip to Central America, a journey of perhaps 5,000 km or more (Editorial License Warning: of course he'll be displaying the same colours -- only brighter -- in the spring, but we thought he made a great fall picture). (Photo - Denise Potter)



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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.

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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.

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Membership



Your membership fee helps pay for the club's monthly hall rental, website registration, speakers, printing and postage for the Bulletin (all Website and Bulletin contributions and editing are on a strictly volunteer basis), and special events. You can join or renew online by clicking on the "Membership" link on the website at rhnaturalists.ca; pick up an application from any member of the executive, or in person at the monthly General Meeting. A single membership is \$30; get a membership for the whole family for only \$35.

Hallowe'en Hike at Lake St. George – Sun. Oct. 30, 3:00 – 4:30 pm

This is our annual visit to this historic site, now a TRCA Field Centre not normally open to the public. In the spirit of the season, costumes appropriate to hiking in the outdoors are encouraged and treats will be on hand. The hike will go for an hour and a half or so and the terrain is not too challenging, and there will be a scavenger hunt for the youngsters to keep them entertained.



The Field Centre is located on the north side of Bethesda just east of Bayview.

For more information, contact Jim &/or Sharon Bradley 905-773-7415, jsbradley@rogers.com . The hike is supported by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Oak Ridges Trail Association

Coming Events

Richmond Hill Naturalists General Meetings

Unless otherwise noted General Meetings are held at Presbyterian Church, Wallace Hall, 10066 Yonge St., North of Major Mackenzie Dr., West side. For info contact Marianne Yake at 905-883-3047, or visit www.RHNaturalists.ca.



Thursday, October 20, 7:30 PM - General Meeting: "Why the World *Won't* Come To An End In 2012" with Dr. Ian Shelton



Thursday, November 24, 7:30PM - Joint meeting with West Humber Naturalists - Birds and Other Adventures in Machu Picchu with Gene Denzel. See page 5 for more details.



Saturday, December 17 - Christmas Bird Count. Contact Gene Denzel for more information at lezned@yorku.ca



Bird Group Meetings

November 9, 2011 Host: Charlene Denzel Birds: Lesser Scaup and Ringbill Duck

December 14, 2011 Host: Mike Turk Birds: Dicksissel and Bobolink

January 11, 2012. Host: Athena Antiochus. Birds: Three-Toed Woodpecker and Black-Backed Woodpecker

For more information about the Bird Group contact Mike Turk at turkm@accessv.com



Astronomy

Observing every Friday night in Richmond Hill, weather permitting. Contact astronomy@rhnaturalists.ca for more information.

Please note: Richmond Hill Naturalists welcomes anyone to volunteer as an outing leader. Contact trips@rhnaturalists.ca if you would like to organize or promote an outing.



Sunday, October 23rd. 9AM - ALL DAY - Leslie Street Spit with West Humber Naturalists. Join Kevin Shackleton for a 6-kilometre hike along this man-made peninsula in southeast Toronto. The Leslie Street Spit is a migrant trap where southbound birds gather to feed before setting out across Lake Ontario. Wear sturdy hiking shoes for the long walk, some food and water for sustenance, binoculars for birding, and a spotting scope if you want to scan the rafts of waterfowl that gather on the lake and in the ponds. If you are interested in participating, please confirm with Kevin no later than October 20 by phoning 905-853-6959 or e-mailing: kevin.shackleton@rogers.com. Approximate start time will be 9:00 a.m. with the rendezvous at the foot of Leslie St. south of Lakeshore. This is a full-day trip.

Sunday, October 30, 3PM to 4:30PM: Annual Hallowe'en Hike at Lake St. George: the Field Centre is located on the north side of Bethesda just east of Bayview. Contact Jim &/or Sharon Bradley 905-773-7415, jsbradley@rogers.com

Sunday, October 30th, 10AM to 3PM Eco-Doors Open Caledon Tour the town and see for yourself what your eco-friendly neighbours are doing to help keep Caledon green! Where: Caledon; visit <http://www.trca.on.ca/ecodoorsopen/> for full details and map

Aren't Kingfishers and Blue Jays related?

Gene Denzel summarizes October's Bird Group meeting

The group convened at Barbara Jackson's home to discuss birds seen over the summer, but in particular to look at the Blue Jay and the Belted Kingfisher. Present were Barbara, Mike Turk, Athena Antiochus, Joe Agg, Muriel Farrant, Theo Hofmann, Martin Chen, and Gene and Charlene Denzel. After the usual scrumptious tidbits provided by Barbara to go with the tea/coffee, we got down to work.

Although superficially similar (large blue-ish birds), these two species are really quite different in details of plumage, body, habits, and even habitat. A corvid, the Blue Jay is familiar to everyone East of the Rockies as a brash, colourful, noisy fellow. Although many do migrate Southwards in Winter, most hang around living off food they have cached during the warmer months (although they are happy to visit feeders as well, especially if peanuts are available). They are omnivorous, eating everything from seeds and insects to eggs and baby birds, even carrion. Although severely effected by West Nile a few years

ago, they have bounced back now to previous numbers, and are quite ready to adapt to human settlements.

Belonging to a completely different family of birds, the Belted Kingfisher is even more widespread, but more restricted in habitat in that it needs to be near a source of fish, its primary



food. Although it is a quite distinctive bird (large shaggy head, very large dagger-like bill, bright white collar) it can be hard to spot if it is just perched in a tree, but when it launches into flight it usually accompanies itself with a distinctive rattling call. This species is somewhat unusual in that the female has fancier plumage (a single blue chest-belt for the male, with a second rust-coloured one for the female).

They are very effective fishers in

still, clear water, but have difficulty in waters choked with plants or debris. They can dive beneath the surface for a fish, and are able to see beneath the water because of the nictating membrane (a transparent extra eyelid) common to waterfowl. They nest in tunnels in the sandy or clay banks of ponds or rivers, and these tunnels can be quite long (tunnel lengths of five feet and even seven feet have been reported for the Belted Kingfisher). When the young are ready to leave these nests, the parents actually teach the young to fish, rather than it being completely instinctual. Because of its dependence on particular habitat, which can

be frequently ruined by development, farming, etc., the Kingfisher's numbers are locally variable, but overall quite healthy. In Winter they will move Southwards if their water freezes over, although we often find one or more around on the Christmas Bird Count.

*Bittersweet October. The mellow, messy, leaf-kicking, perfect pause between the opposing miseries of summer and winter.
~Carol Bishop Hips*

LEAF Tree Tenders Training

by Deb Chute

Have a special place in your heart for trees? Ever thought you would like to be able to identify them more easily? Want to know more about tree growth, what is the Urban Forest and how those trees are protected? Then consider taking a LEAF (Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests, www.yourleaf.org) Tree Tenders Training Programme. I just finished doing that and could not say too many good things about the quality of the presentations and the enthusiasm and

commitment of the presenters. Neither did I ever realize how much one could learn when planting one tree. (i.e. its relationship to type of soil and nutrition, stress prevention, root protection, etc.) I'm still struggling with that tree ID problem but can now at least understand how to use a Key to help me out. Thanks, LEAF.

Picture: Jessica Piskowski, Education and Stewardship Coordinator, LEAF demonstrates tree planting skills to Tree Tender Training Class at Toronto Botanical Gardens, October 1, 2011. Photo by Deb Chute



The Sacred Valley: Birding Adventures in Peru

Gene Denzel will recount a recent trip to Machu Picchu and surroundings for the Richmond Hill Naturalists and West Humber Naturalists Joint Meeting, Thursday, November 24th



*Above: Machu Picchu
Below: Chestnut-crested Coronet
Photos by Gene Denzel, April 2011*

Last April Charlene and I were fortunate to be able to visit Peru. Five days of the trip were with a group tour to Machu Picchu and the sacred valley, through Adventure Canada. Surrounding this were some solo sightseeing in Lima, and several one-day and one week-long birding trip, with car, driver, and guide. The talk will mostly concentrate on the Machu Picchu portion, but we will spend a little time on the birds seen on the various outings (ranging from sea-level to 4500 metres, covering a variety of habitats).

Along the way we will also share some of the unplanned adventures we ran into.



Ontario Streams Annual General Meeting

Members of the public are welcome to attend the Ontario Streams Annual General Meeting on Saturday, November 19th, 10AM to approximately 12:30PM. Lake St George Field Centre, Davis Hall, 950 Bethesda Road, Richmond Hill (The entrance to the Field Centre is on the north side of Bethesda Road, to the east of Bayview Road. Follow the driveway to the Field Centre's parking area. Davis Hall is the main building adjacent to the parking lot with a front porch. Signs will be posted.) Ontario Streams will be holding their Annual General Meeting at the Lake St George Field Centre in Richmond Hill. This meeting is open to the public and will include presentations on Ontario Streams' 2010 field projects, Stewardship and Volunteer Award presentations; and a presentation by Mark Heaton of the Ministry of Natural Resources on Atlantic Salmon recovery in the Credit River watershed. Light refreshments will be provided. For more information and to RSVP your attendance, please contact: Doug Forder, Field Supervisor Tel: 905-713-7399 (office); 416-993-1658 (cell) E-mail: doug.forder@ontariostreams.on.ca

Patterson Creek Planting, Richmond Hill
Come out and help Ontario Streams staff and other members of your community plant native shrubs along

Patterson Creek. You will be helping to create habitat for local wildlife, including the endangered redbreasted dace!

When: Saturday October 22nd, 2011

Time: 9:00am—12:00pm

Where: South Rumble Pond Park

(South Rumble Pond Park is located off of Mill Street, just east of Bathurst Street. Mill Street is one set of lights north of Major Mackenzie Drive. Parking is available along Mill Street and in the surrounding subdivision. Follow the paved path off of the south side of Mill Street into the park. Signs will be posted. Alternatively, footpaths also enter the park off of Harmony Hill Crescent and Carrington Drive.) Shovels and gloves will be provided, as well as light refreshments following the event. Volunteers should wear sturdy footwear and dress according to the weather. This event will take place rain or shine. For more information and to RSVP your attendance, please contact: Jessica Benvenuti, Project Coordinator Tel: 905-713-7399 (office); 416-554-6262 (cell); E-mail: jessica.benvenuti@ontariostreams.on.ca

Humber River Brown Trout Spawning Surveys, Caledon

Come out and help locate brown trout spawning redds along the Humber River. No experience necessary! Volunteers will be lead by experienced biologists and fishermen. Each group will walk a section of the Humber River, spotting brown trout redds and recording their locations using handheld GPS units.

When: Saturday October 29th and Sunday November 6th;

Time: 10am sharp to 12:30pm

Where: Take Hwy #50 north from Bolton and turn west onto Castlederg Road. Meet at the Castlederg bridge, located west of Duffy's Lane and east of Humber Station Road. (A road closure may affect the Oct. 29th meeting spot. Please register for this event so we can communicate any changes to you if necessary) Volunteers are asked to please be on time as we are meeting at the bridge and then leaving in groups to other locations to begin the surveys. For safety reasons, if late, please do not walk along the river trying to find us—we may not be in the direction you are looking! and cell phone reception in this area is not reliable. Please dress appropriately for the weather. A limited number of chest waders and polarized sunglasses will be provided, however if volunteers have their own it is suggested that they bring them. The event may be cancelled if heavy rain occurs the evening before/morning of the event, which would cause the river to become too murky to spot the redds. If you are unsure of the conditions, please call Christine at 416-993-1646 on the morning of the event to confirm. If you are interested in this event, please contact: Christine Pritchard, Project Coordinator/Biologist Tel: 905-713-7399 (office); 416-993-1646 (cell); E-mail: christine.pritchard@ontariostreams.on.ca In your email/phone message, please provide the following registration information:

- * Your name
- * Date(s) you are interested in attending
- * Do you need to borrow a pair of chest or hip waders? If so, what is your boot size?

I cannot endure to waste anything as precious as autumn sunshine by staying in the house. So I spend almost all the daylight hours in the open air.
Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804 - 1864)

SENTINELS ON THE WING: How are our Butterflies?

by Don Davis

The Toronto Entomologists Association is pleased to announce the inaugural event of our new Quimby F. Hess Annual Lecture series. Many of you will remember Quimby Hess as a former TEA President, dedicated entomologist and co-author of our Ontario Butterfly Atlas. His contribution to the TEA and to Ontario insects has been immense. We hope you all can join us in honouring Quimby and enjoying this excellent talk.

Butterfly lovers will want to attend the First Annual Quimby F. Hess Lecture. Saturday, November 19, 1:15 p.m. Room 110, Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories (St. George Campus, University of Toronto, 25 Harbord Street, Toronto).

Peter Hall, Research Associate at the Canadian National Collection of Insects, Ottawa, and co-author of The Butterflies of Canada, will present an assessment of the health of Canada's butterfly populations, focusing mainly on Ontario butterfly species. Peter is author of a recent report published by NatureServe Canada called Sentinels on the Wing: the Status and Conservation of Butterflies in Canada. Based on this report, his talk explores which species are declining, which species are increasing and the many factors affecting the status and trends of butterfly populations. To end the presentation, Peter will outline what can be done to better encourage and protect our butterflies. This is the inaugural event of the annual Quimby F. Hess lecture series. The public is invited, and so the event is being held in a large, 150-seat lecture hall. After the talk, there will be a reception for the lecturer, TEA members and guests.

PLEASE NOTE: The following website shows a photograph of the Ramsay Wright Laboratories, with the much shorter building wing where lecture room 110 is located directly in the front of the top photo. Second photo shows the Harbord Street



"Banding" Monarchs with numbered dots at the Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station. Photo by Denise Potter

entrance. Scroll down further for a street map of the location:

http://osm.utoronto.ca/osm/accessibility/building_data/rw.pdf.

Finding automobile parking on the busy University of Toronto campus and adjacent streets is challenging. An alternative is to take the TTC Bloor-Danforth or University-Spadina subway train to St. George station and walk south on St. George Street for about 10 minutes to the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories. Entrances to the building are located off of St. George Street and off of Harbord Street. For further information, please contact Don Davis: donald_davis@yahoo.com

Can you identify this moth?

This dramatic fellow -- about 8 cm in length -- haunted the back yard of Theo and Doris Hofmann for several days last summer, hanging out on the cement wall amongst the Virginia Creeper.

We have some ideas about what it might be but would be interested in knowing what the members of the Club think.



Canadian Snow Bunting Network Needs Your Help

and other news from Bird Studies Canada

The Canadian Snow Bunting Network (CSBN) is a collaborative network of researchers and volunteers monitoring the migratory and wintering behaviour of Snow Buntings in Canada. Banding wintering Snow Buntings is the CSBN's only reliable way of monitoring the health of birds, as it is very difficult to access most breeding populations. If you are a landowner and feed Snow Buntings on your property, or if you are a bird bander and would like to help us improve our understanding of this species, the CSBN would like to involve you in trapping and banding efforts this winter. If you are interested in helping, please contact Dr. Oliver Love at olove@uwindsor.ca, 519-253-3000 ext. 2711.

Project FeederWatch
Workshop for Families
On Saturday, November 5 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, please join Science Educators Jody Allair and Liza Barney for a Project FeederWatch workshop designed to prepare young birders and their families to feed and monitor winter backyard birds. The workshop will cover a wide range of topics, including advice on bird feeders and bird food, identifying feeder birds, making your backyard more bird-friendly, and participating in Project FeederWatch as a Citizen Scientist.

The workshop will be held at Bird Studies Canada's (BSC) headquarters, 115 Front Road, Port Rowan, ON and will have an outdoor component (weather permitting). The fee is \$10 per family. Pre-registration is required so please contact Liza Barney at (519) 586-3531 ext.128, lbarney@birdscanada.org, or

visit BSC's Bird Science and Environmental Education Program website to register.



Bat Migration Studied
Researchers from the University of Western Ontario and Bird Studies Canada (BSC) recently published an article in the *Journal of Animal Ecology* on migratory stopovers in a long-distance migratory bat. Little is known about bat migrations. Silver-haired bats were captured during autumn migration along the north shore of Lake Erie at the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) and affixed with radio transmitters in order to continuously track their movements throughout a broad stopover region (~ 800 km²). About half of the bats departed to the south across the lake, while others followed the

shoreline. Bats generally only stayed for one day (longer in bad weather)- surprising as many migrating birds stop at this site for days or weeks. Body condition of each individual was also assessed (fat and lean stores), and computer simulations suggested most bats had enough fuel to reach their winter destination in the southern United States without the need for extended refueling stopovers. Perhaps the bat's ability to save energy by lowering body temperature when inactive may be key to the differences between the migration of bats and birds allowing bats to complete their migration at a fraction of the time and energy required for similar sized birds.

For more information or a copy of the article contact Stu Mackenzie at smackenzie@birdscanada.org.

Tragic Impact on Wildlife from New Zealand Oil Disaster

Hundreds of dead birds have already been found along the Bay of Plenty coastline as a result of the Rena oil spill disaster but these represent just a fraction of the affected wildlife, *Forest & Bird* (BirdLife in New Zealand) have said. "The number of birds being found washed up on the beaches will be a very small proportion of the birds being affected", *Forest & Bird's* Seabird Conservation Advocate Karen Baird said. "A lot of oil-covered birds will simply sink at sea and some of the more lightly oiled birds will be flying back to their colonies."

For more details go to <http://www.birdlife.org/community/2011/10/tragic-impact-on-wildlife-from-new-zealand-oil-disaster/>

Will they make it to German Mills Creek Next Year?

by Phil Goodwin, eDon editor

Boy, oh, boy. What a salmon run this season. They just haven't stopped. Saturday at our planting we saw about 20 and then Tuesday and Wednesday, I went down to the river after work and saw a couple of dozen again. Plus, there have been many sightings at Thornhill Golf Club, plus in the south end of the EDP and even going up Newtonbrook Creek – which is a first, as far as I know.

Fishing for Pacific salmon, Chinook and Coho is permitted in the Don til December. But that is only if you have a license and fish with rod and reel. No fishing with nets, spears or drag hooks. If you see someone fishing, don't be shy and call 1-877-TIPS-MNR or 1-877-847-7667. Really, no one should be fishing. There are not enough to fish and it depletes potential next generations. You would not want to eat them anyhow, they are on their "last fins", so to speak.



A salmon thrashes its way up the Don River into Thornhill. Photo by Phil Goodwin of the East Don Parkland Partners, October 2011

"Fall is not the end of the gardening year; it is the start of next year's growing season. The mulch you lay down will protect your perennial plants during the winter and feed the soil as it decays, while the cleaned up flower bed will give you a huge head start on either planting seeds or setting out small plants." - Thalassa Cruso

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Youth is like spring, an over praised season more remarkable for biting winds than genial breezes. Autumn is the mellower season, and what we lose in flowers we more than gain in fruits. ~Samuel Butler

The opening of the Baker's Woods Trail

by Marianne Yake

RH Naturalists were pleased to participate in the opening of the Baker's Woods Trail on October 2.

Located at the northwest corner of Bathurst and Hwy #7 off of Thornhill Woods Drive, the 43 hectare woodlot was originally part of the Baker family farm settled in 1802.

The opening of the sugar bush came in 1816. The Bakers sold maple syrup and also provided harness to local farmers. At its peak 5,000 spigots produced enough sap to provide many thousands of litres of maple syrup for locals to enjoy. This provincially significant woodlot is still home to many birds, native trees and plants, including some trees that today are 240 years old, in an intact interior forest.

In the late 1990s the family sold the land to developers, leading to a public outcry to preserve these woods. Led by members Tom Waechter, Lynn

MacMillan, Margaret Cranmer-Byng, Natalie Helferty and Ontario Nature's John Riley, the Richmond Hill Naturalists championed these woods for protection.

Ten years ago we were able to encourage the Province to put forward 1.3 million dollars, and with York Region, Vaughan and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority putting in together the other half (1.3 million) the site was purchased for preservation.

On October 2nd, these partners as well as Maple Lions providing a pancake breakfast, and groups such as Ontario Forestry Association, York Region Environmental Alliance, LEAF and others, celebrated the opening of the trail, part of the Don River Watershed.

Thanks to all our volunteers, Natalie, Gloria, Chungsen, Deb, Bertie and especially Joe Agg for helping out with this successful event.



Above left: Tom Waechter in the decorative ribbon-cutting gate built by Joe Agg; Above Right: Joe Agg with his owl pal, Below left: Marianne Yake and Deb Chute; Below Right: the Ribbon Cutting: when we all pitch in, we can make a difference!