



# THE BULLETIN

October 2007 No. 466

## 2005-2006 EXECUTIVE

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## Events calendar

<b>Botany Group Meeting</b>	<b>Monday November 5, 2007. 12:30pm</b>
<b>Executive Meeting</b>	<b>Tuesday November 13, 2007. 7:30pm</b> Where: Robert Holland Centre
<b>Bird Goup Meeting</b>	<b>Wednesday November 14, 2007. 7:30pm</b> Topic: Vesper Sparrow and Field Sparrow Host: Theo Hofmann, 199 Arnold Av. Thornhill
<b>General Meeting</b>	<b>Thursday November 15, 2007. 7:30pm</b> Joint meeting with West Humber Naturalists Speaker: Anne Parker Topic: An Inconvenient Truth–Climate Change Location: Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, Wallace Hall. 10066 Yonge St.

-- **Reminder: There is NO meeting in December --**

**Check for more Events and Outings on Page 2**

## Gladys McLatchy

Fall is always welcomed to the Richmond Hill Naturalists members and friends. It is a time to embark on work and play and set out the future for our membership. Our annual corn roast has been hosted for 44 years at Russell Tilt's home, and we greatly acknowledge the work he has done for our club and the community. We were able to enjoy and catch up with each other after our summer.

Over the summer we received a large bequest from the estate of Gladys McLatchy. I had met Gladys during the debate over the Oak Ridges Moraine in 1999. She was an advocate for the protection of nature and our community. Whether you knew Gladys McLatchy or not, she has created a great legacy for our Club. We would like your input and ideas on the use of her bequest. Please send ideas to me or the executive listed on the front of the Bulletin.

Our Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant provided us with an improved pamphlet and upgraded the club equipment, to further our outreach to others in our community. I would like to thank previous and current executive members for all their continued help and support. We will further our work on the David Dunlap Observatory Lands protection. Gladys legacy will indeed allow us a great opportunity and we hope that this will be a stellar year.

Thank you,

- Marianne Yake, President, R.H. Naturalists



*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](mailto: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](http://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:

*Meet new members at club events and say Hello!*

### EVENTS FUTURE



- **Sunday October 28, 2007. 2:30pm. Halloween Hike at Lake St. George Field Centre.** Join the Richmond Hill Naturalists and [Oak Ridges Friends of the Environment](#) for a family Halloween hike. 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 prizes will be awarded. The hike will go for an hour and a half or so and the terrain is not too challenging. The Field Centre is located on the north side of Bethesda just east of Bayview. Please confirm attendance. Call Jim &/or Sharon Bradley 905-773-7415, [sbradley@aci.on.ca](mailto:sbradley@aci.on.ca).



- **Tuesday November 13, 2007. 7:30pm. Executive Meeting** will be held at [Phyllis Rawlinson Park](#).



- **Wednesday November 14, 2007. 7:30pm. Bird Goup meeting.** The topic this month is Vesper Sparrow and Field Sparrow. The meeting is hosted by Theo Hofmann, 199 Arnold Av. Thornhill. 905-889-1554



- **Thursday November 15, 2007. 7:30pm. General Meeting** at the Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, Wallace Hall. 10066 Yonge St., first block North of Major Mackenzie Dr., West side. Joint meeting with W.H. Naturalists. This month's special guest is **Anne Parker**, who is one of a handful of persons trained by Al Gore to present the **Inconvenient Truth slide show**. Anne will focus her presentation on the implications for Canada. For further info contact Marianne Yake at 905-883-3047, or visit our web site at [www.RHNaturalists.ca](http://www.RHNaturalists.ca). Non-members welcome.



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



- **Sunday October 21, 2007. 10am-12pm.** The Natural Heritage Section of the Town of Richmond Hill's Parks, Recreation & Culture Department, invites you to help **plant trees and shrubs** at the **Heritage Woodlot**, Yonge & High Tech Rd. Equipment will be provided. Please bring drinking water, a hat, sunscreen and a snack. If you would like to participate, please contact [naturalheritage@richmondhill.ca](mailto:naturalheritage@richmondhill.ca) or call 905-771-8870 ext. 3885.



- **Tuesday October 23, 2007. 4pm-10pm.** Formal presentations begin at 7pm. A Public meeting to discuss the recommendations of the **joint waste management group's** study to find a way to deal with our garbage. This meeting is taking place because the proposed \$250-million energy-from-waste facility which will serve York and Durham regions will not be built in York Region. Consultants have instead recommended it be built in Clarington and York has formally committed to sending less to the facility. Go to [www.durhamyorkwaste.ca](http://www.durhamyorkwaste.ca) for more info. Roman Palace Banquet Hall, 1096 Ringwell Drive, Newmarket, (905) 898-2480.



- **Saturday October 27, 2007. 10am to 2pm. Fall into the Moraine Event** in King Township. Hike the Oak Ridges Trail and then explore Pine Farms, a local orchard and winery where you can pick your own pumpkin for purchase. Meet at Pine Farms Orchard and Winery on 16th Side Road just east of Jane Street. Cont'd...

Admission is free but registration is required. For more information visit the Monitoring the Moraine web site at: <http://www.monitoringthemoraine.ca/Fall/index.htm#pfo>



- **Sunday October 28**, 2007. 9am to 12noon. **Ontario Streams Tree Planting**. Help [Ontario Streams](#) and other volunteers plant trees along this Rouge River tributary. You will be helping create wildlife habitat and positively affect the water quality down stream. Shovels and a limited number of pairs of work gloves will be provided. Proper footwear and clothing appropriate to the weather – including a hat – are recommended. The site is located at Tower Road and Yonge Street . Street parking parking or park on Jefferson Forest Drive to the east. For further info contact Christine Pritchard 905-713-7399, [Christine.pritchard@ontariostreams.on.ca](mailto:Christine.pritchard@ontariostreams.on.ca).



- **Wednesday-Friday November 14-16**, 2007. 14th annual **A.D. Latonell Conservation Symposium**. Justin Trudeau will address delegates at this Conservation Symposium being held from in Alliston, Ontario. The theme of this year's Symposium is "*Your Watersheds, Our Great Lakes*". It will draw attention to the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence basin, which contains about a quarter of earth's fresh water reserves and is home to approximately 15 million Canadians and 30 million Americans. For more information visit the conference website at [www.latonell.ca](http://www.latonell.ca).



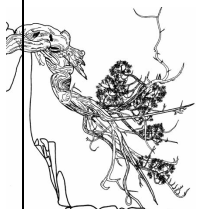
- **Saturday December 15th**, 2007. This years **Christmas Bird Count** will take place in Richmond Hill and surrounding areas. For details contact Marianne Yake at [president@rhnaturalists.ca](mailto:president@rhnaturalists.ca).

## MEMBER SUBMISSIONS

### These Cliff-Hangers Are Survivors

Some of the slowest growing trees on earth live in Ontario's Niagara Escarpment, according to photographer and author Peter E. Kelly, and they live up to 1320 years.

Mr. Kelly spoke on September 20 before the Richmond Hill Naturalists' opening meeting of the 2007-2008 year. He studied the cliff-face eastern white cedar with the Cliff Ecology Research Group at the University of Guelph.



Cliff-face trees grow stunted, twisted and thick only at the base. Dead branches may still droop from older trees. These trees take unusual shapes as they encounter the elements, even growing upside down or horizontal. They cling for their lives though battered by wind, ice, falling rock and human rock climbers. The Eastern white cedar always outlives cliff-dwelling hemlock and spruce, says Mr. Kelly.

Peter Kelly presented evidence of the age and characteristics of these ancient trees. He displayed slides of paintings, photographs and drawings, and brought bored and dated tree cores, a tiny 89-year-old tree, and cross-sections of larger tree trunks. To age trees, Mr. Kelly abstracts a 3 to 4 centimetre-long sample from the core of the tree using a hollow boring device. Thankfully, only light force is required to drill the holes, as he often hangs from ropes to take samples.

The granddaddy of cliff trees east of British Columbia, says Mr. Kelly, peers across Georgian Bay, and its shape reflects that of the rock face. Boasting 1320 years of age, this Eastern white cedar sprouted from seed in the year 688. Mr. Kelly and co-author Douglas W. Larson describe this tree and others in their book *The Last Stand: A Journey Through the Ancient Cliff-Face Forest of the Niagara Escarpment*, published this year. The book documents results from the Niagara Escarpment Ancient Tree Atlas Project, conducted from 1998 to 2004. The project located and described the oldest trees in the Niagara Escarpment. In total, 124 cedars 500 years of age and 10 over 1000 dwell on the cliffs of this geographic area.

### 2007 Greeting Cards / Hasty Notes Fundraiser

This year's card is a lovely Robert McCaw photo of a Pine Grosbeak. They are available in two forms:

1. Blank inside for year round use, or
2. Greeting Cards with this message:

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- Cards must be pre-ordered as there is a no return policy --

Another point of interest on the escarpment, the oldest cedar on Mount Nemo at 874 years of age, bears evidence of branches being cut off by human rock climbers, according to Mr. Kelly. He states that he has spoken to several climbing groups to make them aware of the value of these relics of the past. And on the Bruce Peninsula, Mr. Kelly says, tour boat operators point out the lichen and a rock "princess" but miss another natural treasure, the 829-year-old cedar nicknamed "The Alien." This tree, growing underneath an overhang, displays only one green branch and 10 meters of tightly packed dead stems.

UNESCO's website defines the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve in Ontario as stretching "725 km from Lake Ontario (near Niagara Falls) to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula (between Georgian Bay and Lake Huron)."

- Nancy Zalman

### Caring for Heritage Woods - Part 1

Long ago, the Yonge Street Highway Toll-Gate #3 was at these corners. Beside it was the farm at the boundary of Thornhill and Richmond Hill, north of Toronto. It was on the northeast corner of Yonge Street and Highway 7 – the old Langstaff Road".

Arriving in 1808, John Langstaff developed these crossroads and gave his name to a small village there. It had woodworking shops, a pail factory, a general store, a post office, the Cooks Hotel and a blacksmith shop. Then the Langstaffs became a family of prominent doctors in Richmond Hill. The Langstaff Corners land was sold to Toronto in the late 1800s. By 1913 it had become the City of Toronto's Industrial Farm – the Langstaff "Jail Farm". The Jail Farm was built on 1,000 acres of the last good farmland in Richmond Hill. It was a low security institution compared to the then dreadful Don Jail.

A hundred or so years later, The City of Toronto sold the Langstaff Jail Farm to the Town of Richmond Hill. Some of the Farm area had been lost to the widening of Highway 7 on the south boundary of the farm. The Highway and the east-west Hydro corridor, with its string of tall pylons, took up quite a lot of the south fields of the Jail Farm. And soon the rest was turned into a huge new suburb with thousands of houses and businesses. Now, only a single small stand of trees is left in one corner.



... To be continued

- Michael White, Past President

### The Birds are Leaving

Fall migration is well underway. More than 90% of Canada's birds are migrants. Their fall parade is drawn out over a period from late September well into December. Among the departing birds in October are the Great Blue Herons, Wood Ducks, Blue Jays, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Northern Flickers, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, thrushes, White-throated Sparrows, Brown-headed Cowbirds and, of course, dozens of warbler species, but also hawks and kestrels. Later this month, and in November, Red-winged Blackbirds, larks, Fox Sparrows, mergansers and grebes, and two owl species - the beautiful Long-eared and the cute little Saw-whets - will be leaving, too. The migration season for the American Bitterns flying south in the winter ends around the beginning of December.



Some of the age-old bird migration patterns are changing. The reason is global warming, which affects the times, places and quantities when food is available for hungry migrants. For instance, the Great Lakes are an important staging ground for migratory species, but if waterfowl feed there all winter, there may not be enough food for the migrants that arrive in desperate need for rest and nourishment. There is no doubt about it, things are changing for our feathered friends. Climate change means ranges are expanding, sea levels are rising, storms are becoming more frequent and more intense. Warmer temperatures are causing birds to change their migratory, breeding and nesting habits. Waterfowl are the most vulnerable. But you don't have to live on a coastline or near a major nesting area to observe these effects. Just look in your backyard.

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However, it's not only climate change that affects migrating birds; it's also human activities. According to Bird Studies Canada, Red Knots are in decline because of man-made habitat loss. The Double-crested Cormorant, which had been almost wiped out about 30 years ago by toxins in the Great Lakes, then has made an incredible comeback, is now being massively culled by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Since 2004, the OMNR has killed more than 10,000 cormorants on High Bluff Island in Presqu'ile Provincial Park, ostensibly to protect trees and other bird species. The fact that thousands of dead cormorants have been dumped at a composting heap on the same island the ministry is claiming to protect, makes it evident that its objective is not about saving the ecology of the area.

There is a better, more natural way to keep exploding wildlife populations in check. Ontario's cormorant population will not increase forever. It will eventually outstrip its food supply, outgrow its habitat, or will be reduced by disease and predation. Populations are already decreasing in some parts of Ontario.



And then, of course, there are the thousands of birds that die each year when they collide with lit windows in the skyscrapers of our cities. Logging in Ontario's boreal forest destroys 45,000 nests of migrating birds annually. According to COSEWIC, the Committee on the State of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, 65 bird species are at risk in Canada and 40 boreal land bird species are in decline.

- Steve Gahbauer

## LOCAL NEWS

### Drilling Tests are Underway to pipe Raw Sewage through Bob Hunter Memorial Park and Rouge Park!

Before he died in 2005, Bob Hunter, a great Canadian environmental hero, did City-TV stories on the terrible environmental folly of the Big Sewer Pipe, or 'Big Pipe', being planned for York Region. In 2006 the Province created a [Memorial Park](#) to honour eco-hero Bob Hunter, but now York Region wants to build the 'Big Pipe' through the heart of Bob Hunter Memorial Park!

York Region plans to extend the 'Big Pipe' through Bob Hunter Memorial Park and the Oak Ridges Moraine by using false Information that significantly under-estimates the impacts of the development, even though York

Region's 'Big Pipe' projects have repeatedly harmed public water sources and broken environmental laws, including harming over 150 rural wells and many trout streams as well as repeatedly breaking the Ontario Water Resources Act.

The province of Ontario has not only continued to let York Region disrupt these water sources without prosecution, but will likely allow York Region to pipe raw sewage through "Bob Hunter Memorial Park".

Ontario Environmental Commissioner Gordon Miller once stated that, "*with regard to this whole project there are problems, real issues here – the EA process was not properly followed ... and that's why we're in this mess*".



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Gary Hunter, the province's groundwater expert at the OMB Hearings which led to the creation of the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, has just released a draft Environmental Audit which concludes that the Region's "16th Ave Phase II Trunk Sewer Dewatering" monitoring and environmental assessments are based on false environmental information that significantly underestimate aquifer drawdown magnitude, extent and duration.

The Big Pipe is designed to service York Region's explosive growth (sprawl) and this will yield multi-billion dollar profits for wealthy land speculators and developers. A visit to the [Elections Ontario website](#) shows that major provincial parties help finance their election campaigns and parties with big donations from developers, land speculators and consultants, including Mattamy homes, Metrus Development, SNC Lavalin, Clublink [Golf], Minto and Lebovic Enterprises, among many others. - Jim Robb (647-891-9550)

## Ontario Court Ruling on ORM

James Rusk -- Prominent developer Silvio deGasperis and two companies allied with him acted in bad faith when, on environmental grounds, they tried to stop a land deal that was a key part of the establishment of the Oak Ridges Moraine, a scathing Ontario Divisional Court judgment has found.

"In our view, the bringing of this application was vexatious and an egregious example of abuse of the process of this court in that the applicants clearly intended to mislead this court as to their motives in bringing the application," the court ruled this week. The panel of three Ontario Superior Court judges awarded the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the Ontario Realty Corp. \$702,000 in costs after it ruled that there was no legal merit in the case brought by two landowners, Hollinger Farms No. 1 Inc. and Altona Farms Inc, two companies that are part of a group led by Mr. deGasperis. Since the province stopped development on the Oak Ridges Moraine in 2003, it has been trying to get permission to build in Pickering on what are known as the Cherrywood Lands.

Cherrywood lies next to a site referred to as the Seaton Lands, owned by the Ontario Realty Corp., which the province agreed to swap with a developer who will build on them instead of a more environmentally sensitive site in Richmond Hill. Hollinger and Altona had argued in court that the land swap should have been subjected to a detailed environmental assessment including a public hearing, rather than a simpler documentary process.

But in a ruling rejecting the developer's application, the Divisional Court found last month that "it is clear from the evidence before this court that deGasperis and the applicants have no interest in an upgraded individual environmental assessment of the Seaton Lands. "Their only interest is in frustrating, disrupting and delaying the achievement of public policy goals of the province to protect the Oak Ridge Moraine and to establish controlled development of the Seaton Lands."

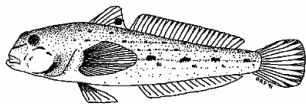
The judgment was hailed by Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence Canada, the group instrumental in establishing development controls on the Oak Ridges Moraine, which have now been extended by the greenbelt around Toronto.

"This [the application for environmental review] was one of the most aggressive and blatant attempts to undermine the greenbelt. So this is good news for those who care about good public policy and the greenbelt," Dr. Smith said, of the 730,000 hectares of environmentally sensitive lands. "What this means is that we can now get the show on the road in terms of proper planning in this area of the province."

- Originally published in the Globe and Mail and submitted by Marianne Yake

## NATURE NEWS

A **dam removal and stream restoration project** is currently underway at Ontario Nature's **Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve** in King Township. When the project is complete, a man-made pond will have been replaced by a wetland meadow with a free-flowing stream running through it. Monitoring is being carried out to track the progress of revegetation and stream channel restoration. To learn more about this project, contact Mark Carabetta, Conservation Science Manager at Ontario Nature, at [markc@ontarionature.org](mailto:markc@ontarionature.org) or 416-444-8419 ext. 264.



### Invasive Fish Found in Rice Lake

Even though its use as bait was banned in Ontario waters in 2005, round goby was recently found for the first time in Rice Lake. Round goby are voracious eaters of young fish, reproduce quickly and can lead to a sharp drop in the number of native species in a lake. Round gobies are relatively small (less than 25 cm) mottled brown in color, have frog-like eyes and a distinctive fin on the belly that resembles a suction cup.

To identify round goby and other invasive species visit [www.invadingspecies.com](http://www.invadingspecies.com). If you are an angler, never release any baitfish or dump the contents of bait buckets into a lake, a river or onto ice. Empty bait buckets on land and dispose of unused bait in the trash, (or freeze / salt for future use).

Round goby became established in the Great Lakes after being discharged from the ballast water of ocean-going vessels. First discovered in the St. Clair River in the late 1980s, this invasive species is now found in all five Great Lakes as well as two inland locations - on both sides of the dam in Hastings on the Trent Severn Waterway near Peterborough and in the Pefferlaw River south of Highway 48 near Sutton. Help slow the spread of the round goby by disposing of baitfish properly and reporting any round goby to the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711.

### Captive Breeding Reduces Reproductive Fitness

This month, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) reported that even though a number of *captive breeding programs* are now in place around the world to help prevent extinction by restoring endangered wild populations and species, the impact of such programs remains largely untested.

A recent [study](#) of the reproductive success of captive-bred fish - when bred in *natural* environments - has shown that captive-reared individuals with captive-reared parents have half the reproductive success of captive-reared fish with wild parents. The rate of fitness decline can be nearly 40% per captive-reared generation, which suggests that breeding programs may not work particularly well when used to try and restore declining wild populations.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Canada's largest optical telescope is headed for the auction block

The 70-year-old **David Dunlap Observatory** in Richmond Hill — once Canada's leading eye on the sky where scientists first discovered black holes — has outlived its stargazing status and will likely be sold to the highest bidder, say officials at the University of Toronto, which owns the 200-acre property.

Donated to the university in 1935 by the widow of mining mogul David Dunlap, an astronomy buff, the telescope was built on farmland that seemed far from the bustle of Toronto. But as urban sprawl wrapped around its forested setting in the 1980s, astronomers began to leave the Dunlap observatory for other countries. They have gone to an extinct volcano high in Mauna Kea in Hawaii, where Canada owns 40 per cent of an observatory, and to the high desert of Atacama in Chile, where Canada owns 15 per cent of a telescope. The university's governing council will take a vote on **October 30** on whether to sell the observatory.



**WATCH FOR UPCOMING UPDATE ON THE DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY ON OUR WEBSITE [RHNATURALISTS.CA](http://RHNATURALISTS.CA)**

The **Carolinian Canada Coalition**, is a non-profit coalition of over 40 government and non-government conservation groups and many individuals working to conserve the ecological diversity of Canada's most threatened natural region. Members include Conservation Authorities, Ontario Nature, Ontario Stewardship, federal and provincial departments and ministries, the Canadian Botanical Association, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and other groups. The activities of the Coalition are directed by a Board of Directors drawn from a wide range of groups and organizations. Coordination for Coalition activities is provided by an Executive Director, Michelle Kanter. From 1984-1994, Carolinian Canada funded land acquisition and stewardship projects directed at conserving 38 critical unprotected areas across the region. These programs resulted in private landowners agreeing to conserve over 15,000 acres and acquisition of 2,000 acres by conservation groups. Public education and scientific studies were also undertaken.

Today, Carolinian Canada promotes innovative and comprehensive approaches to conserving our natural heritage. The "Big Picture" project is a state-of-the-art combination of conservation science and computerized mapping technology used to develop a system of natural areas across the entire Carolinian Zone. Our awards program honours exemplary efforts by conservationists across the region. Conferences, workshops and publications help inform and educate the public and conservation professionals.

Carolinian Canada's funding comes entirely from grants, memberships and donations. Many major public and private sector organizations and foundations have supported Carolinian Canada's projects over the years.

Your support and involvement would be greatly appreciated. To make a donation and join the organization contact Grosvenor Lodge, 1017 Western Rd., London, ON, N6G 1G5. (519) 433-7077. [www.carolinian.org](http://www.carolinian.org)

### Moraine For Life

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation is pleased to announce the launch of a new website dedicated to the protection and conservation of the Moraine!

[www.moraineforlife.org](http://www.moraineforlife.org) is an excellent resource tool for all Oak Ridges Moraine *landowners, stakeholders* and the *general public*. Find out if you live on the Moraine and if so, how living on the Moraine affects you. You can also find information about agencies and resources available to help you restore and enhance your property.

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List Moraine-related events or programs in the website's "News/Events" section as well as showcase the work of your organization. Learn why the Moraine is so significant by browsing the "Explore" section which includes information about special places on the Moraine and the faces that call it home.

The site includes an Interactive Map and a 'Moraine formation animation' where you can go back in time and find out how the Moraine was formed. This website was created for everyone with an interest in the Oak Ridges Moraine with hope it can be an evolving education resource well into the future.

## EVENTS PAST

### Ontario Nature Regional Meeting

On **Saturday October 13** the Richmond Hill Naturalists (RHN) hosted the Ontario Nature Regional meeting at Bayview Hill Community Centre. Our speaker was Dr. Ian Shelton, who talked about Dark Skies. This was an opportunity to raise awareness of the need to reduce light pollution in Ontario skies and bring the issues of protection of the David Dunlap Observatory to the forefront in Richmond Hill and among other clubs across Ontario. Last year the RHN had voted to move ahead on preserving the David Dunlap Observatory site. After the meeting Joe Agg led a tour of the David Dunlap Observatory (DDO) site. The Richmond Hill Naturalists will also be creating a new David Dunlap Observatory section on our website.

You can both see and add your own images of the DDO site at <http://flickr.com/groups/save-david-dunlap/pool/>.

- Marianne Yake, President

### Police Patrols Curb Motorized Vehicles in Natural Areas

York Region Police and the Town of Richmond Hill have taken action on the problem of motorized vehicles in the area's natural spaces by purchasing ATV's for use in patrolling local green spaces. Police can now access private land and lay trespassing charges on those abusing the properties with motorized vehicles and are continuing to send warning letters to owners of any vehicle that can be identified as involved in this activity.

Residents can now send the date, time, location, vehicle description, licence number and any other details to [orfe@oakridgesfriendsoftheenvironment.ca](mailto:orfe@oakridgesfriendsoftheenvironment.ca) and we shall pass it on to the police.



- On **Saturday September 15** the Town of Richmond Hill officially opened Grovewood Park with a day of fun including entertainment, face painting, recreational activities and a free barbeque. The park features a soccer pitch, water play area, tennis and basketball courts as well as junior and senior play areas. It is located on Grovewood Street south of King Rd. and east of Bathurst.

- On **Saturday September 8** the Richmond Hill Naturalists celebrated our Annual Corn Roast at Russell Tilt's home located at in Richmond Hill. Thank you Russell, for allowing us to use your amazing yard for this even once again this year. This year's Corn Roast was another great success!

### Lake Simcoe Protection Act announced for Lake Simcoe

On **July 6, 2007** premier Dalton McGuinty announced on that his government will implement a Lake Simcoe Protection Act. By adopting the recommendations from the Lake Simcoe Environmental Management Strategy (LSEMS), the Province thus ensures the healthy recovery of the lake over time.

- Submitted by Natalie Helferty, Ontario Nature

### One of North America's Rarest Dragonflies Discovered in Canada

On June 20, 2007, Chris Evans of Midhurst, Ontario was looking for dragonflies along the roadside adjacent to the Minesing Wetlands, in Simcoe County, west of the City of Barrie, when he caught a dragonfly he initially assumed was the Clamp-tipped Emerald (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*), a species known to occur in Ontario and one that is very similar to the Hine's Emerald. Photos were taken and were sent to Colin Jones of the Natural Heritage Information Centre [NHIC], part of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. It was then realized that the individual was actually a **Hine's Emerald**.

One week later, biologists at the NHIC visited the Minesing Wetlands and located several more Hine's Emeralds.

Since then, the team from NHIC have been working together to gather as much information as possible on the habitat of this rare dragonfly in the Minesing Wetlands. This information will be compiled into a scientific note and will be submitted for consideration to one of several possible entomological journals.





The Hine's Emerald is a relatively large dragonfly with brilliant green eyes, and prominent yellow spots on the sides of the thorax. They occur only in spring-fed wetlands overlaying dolomite bedrock. Such sites occur on the Bruce Peninsula and Manitoulin Island and have been the focus of several unsuccessful attempts in the past to find Hine's Emerald in Ontario. The Hine's Emerald is the only dragonfly protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act, and one of North America's rarest. Prior to this year, the Hine's Emerald was only known from small sites in the United States, specifically Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri and Illinois. It was also once found in Ohio and Indiana but seems to have disappeared from those states.

The Minesing Wetlands is a vast wetland of international significance spanning an area of over 6,000 hectares. Minesing contains a complex of different wetland types including fens, marshes, swamps and bogs, each supporting a number of sensitive flora and fauna, some of which are rare or endangered.

The Hine's Emerald is yet another rare species of the Minesing Wetlands and an indication of the extreme value of these wetlands to the conservation of Ontario's biodiversity! The discovery of this species in this location may also be an indication that habitats are changing as Global Climate Change begins to show its effects on our local environment.

## BIRD OBSERVATIONS

In September **eBird Canada** began beta-testing their "eBird Data Import Tool".

eBird users can now bulk-load existing sightings that are kept on home computers in various file types to bring them into a data archive at eBird where they can be used by scientists.

The Import Tool uses two file formats that conform to the types of data people typically store in Excel files or other similarly structured datasets. (Users of AviSys and other commercial birding software should note that the eBird team is working closely with these application developers and in the coming weeks will make a special announcement regarding the upload of these data formats.)

eBird Canada is looking for people outside Bird Studies Canada and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to help test their process. They want to get feedback from the birding public and address any issues before they make this tool widely available. If you'd like to upload your bird sighting files into eBird, please contact eBird Canada coordinator Dick Cannings at [dickcannings@shaw.ca](mailto:dickcannings@shaw.ca) for more information. You can check out eBird Canada at [www.ebird.ca](http://www.ebird.ca).

### Reminder - Bird Observations Have Changed...

Our electronic database to keep track of all the *Bird Observations* from club members is up and running. Theo Hoffman is no longer accepting submissions from members.

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](mailto:Sightings@rhnaturalists.ca) or [birds@rhnaturalists.ca](mailto: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 will be providing members with instructions for submitting their bird sightings using our **online Observation form** on our website at <http://www.rhnaturalists.ca>.

This month's Bird observations are viewable online or, if you would like a *paper copy*, contact Marianne Yake at 905-883-3047.

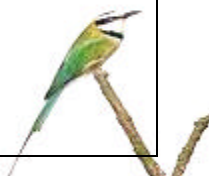
### Maltese Island Migration Woes



The bird migration over Malta, particularly in autumn, an awe-inspiring natural spectacle, which is an inspiration for many tourists and bird lovers. Located midway between Africa and Europe, directly south of Sicily, the Maltese islands are an important stepping-stone on the so-called "central corridor" for bird migration.

Hundreds and thousands of song birds, Turtle Doves, Quails, Bee-eaters, Nightjars and birds of prey wintering in Africa, make a stopover here to roost or to use the thermals over the archipelago to assist them on their onward flight across the Mediterranean. There are also numerous sightings of Osprey, Short-toed Eagle, Booted Eagle, Hobby, Kestrel and Nightjar at this location. The migrating song birds regularly include Whinchat, Wheatear, Spotted Flycatcher, Redstart, Yellow Wagtail, Swifts, Swallows and numerous finch species. But the reality is not as idyllic as it sounds.

Malta has the highest density of **hunters** in the European Union.





Apart from the occasional rabbit, the hunters shoot almost exclusively migrant birds. Officially some 30 species (including 8 finch and 4 thrush species, Skylark, Quail, Turtle Dove, Lapwing and Golden Plover) can be legally hunted or trapped in nets. Apart from this legal hunting activity, reports of the illegal shooting of strictly protected and endangered species - year after year - have caused indignation among bird and animal lovers throughout Europe. Although Malta committed itself to the implementation of European legislation for better protection of bird species on its accession to the European Union in 2003, the shooting of endangered and protected species continues apace in both spring and autumn.



Maltese hunters have long been a problem. Italians and Cypriots are also a problem. In a famous incident a few years ago, Maltese "sportsmen" were filmed killing swans on the water. More recently, a Maltese hunter attacked a bird-watchers group there, among reports from bird-watchers that Italian restaurants are setting 'mist nets' on the roof of their restaurants and playing bird calls at night to lure migrating birds, which they serve for their guests.



## From the Editor

### An End to Environmental Protection?

CWS

On Tuesday September 18<sup>th</sup> CBC News [reported](#) that serious budget cuts by the federal Department of the Environment. These cuts threaten established programs and wildlife services.

The Canadian Wildlife Service - an executing arm of Environment Canada - had its service budget frozen for the rest of the year. Scientific field and survey work has been halted. The Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Network lost 80% of its budget. The Migrating Bird Program had its budget cut by 50%. The budget for National Wildlife Areas, which protects nationally significant habitats for wildlife and birds, has been slashed from \$1.9 million to zero. The federal government's support for Canada's 144 *National Wildlife Areas* has been cancelled.

The CBC said that Environment Minister John Baird wasn't available for comment. His department sent an e-mail to the CBC saying that spending (by the federal government) is being prioritized for "climate change initiatives", yet it's only been about one year since the Residential Energy Efficiency Program [REEP], an excellent energy-saving 'climate change initiative', was axed by the Conservatives.

~~The Residential  
Energy Efficiency  
Project~~

And to top it off, only 9 days later – on Thursday September 27<sup>th</sup> – the Federal Government had the impudence to [announce](#) a record budget surplus of \$13.8 Billion, which is far more than the \$9.2 billion forecast in the Conservatives' March budget. The Feds say that this surplus will be used to "pay down the federal government's accumulated debt" -- which has already dropped to \$467 billion — its lowest level in 14 years.

This is the most blatant attack on environmental protection we have yet to see from any Government since Mike Harris, when he cut funding to the Ministry of the Environment by 42% overnight, decimating the monitoring, testing, inspection, enforcement, and research branches of the Ministry. Back in the Harris days a number of industries formerly regulated by the government were also told they could regulate and monitor their own environmental performance. In other words, compliance was based on the "honour system", meaning that under the legislation, it was no longer an offence for a company to submit false information.

Apparently, maintaining viable ecosystems and connectedness with the world and monitoring the activities of corporations who might abuse our environment are no longer important issues and only "climate change" matters when it comes to environmental protection. The immense and mind-boggling level of short-sightedness, perhaps even vindictiveness, on the part of this Federal Government is jarringly obvious.

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