



the Esquesing

Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 42, Number 3

January – February 2008

Club Activities

- Indoor:** Meetings begin at 7:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month, October to June at St. Andrew's United Church, 89 Mountainview Road South (at Sinclair) in Georgetown unless stated otherwise.
- Feb. 12: Escarpment Cedars.** Peter Kelly, Cliff Ecology Group, University of Guelph will be presenting on the ecology of the eastern white cedars that grow on the cliff faces of the Niagara Escarpment.
- Mar. 11: Frogs of Ontario.** Don Scallen will be showing his revised audio-visual presentation on frogs in Ontario.
- Apr. 8: Proven Techniques to Capture Insect Images.** Kerry Jarvis will share his expertise on taking insect photos. Kerry is a TEA member, educator, naturalist, author, and photographer. His images have won numerous awards.
- May 13: Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*).** Greg Bales, Stewardship Coordinator, Halton-Peel Woodlands and Wildlife Stewardship will speak on the status and threats to the butternut.
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- Outdoor:** Trips begin at the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) parking lot at Mountainview Road and Guelph Street, Georgetown unless stated otherwise. If you would like to meet the group at the trip site, please speak to the trip leader for the location and directions to the starting point.
- Jan. 20: Rattray Marsh Outing.** Leader – Bill McIlveen. Meet at 10:00 am.
- Feb. 3: LaSalle Park and Burlington Area.** Meet at 9 am at NEC and 10 am at the Travelodge, downtown Burlington. Contact Kelly or Andrew at 905-873-7338 or andrew.kellman@sympatico.ca.
- Feb. 17: Nature Hike.** Gerry Doekes will lead a nature hike at the Upper Canada College, Norval Outdoor School. Meet at 9:00 am at the UCC, 10444 Winston Churchill Blvd.
- Mar. 15: Annual trip to Long Point.** Long Point is a resting and feeding stop for Tundra Swans on the way to their breeding grounds in the far north. Many other species of waterfowl and some returning songbirds are usually seen too. Meet Ray Blower at 8:00 am. Bring lunch or money for lunch, binoculars, and scopes. Call Ray to join the outing at another location (519) 853-0171.
- Apr. 19: Beamer Conservation Area Hawk Watch, Grimsby.** Meet 9:00 am. On this trip we stop at the Scotch Block reservoir, Islay Lake, and La Salle Park on the way to the Beamer Hawk Watch at the top of the escarpment in Grimsby. The number and variety of hawks has been quite variable over the years; but, we always see some. In addition, a good variety of songbirds and waterfowl are seen. Some things to bring: binoculars, scope, water, lunch, hat and sunscreen. Call Ray Blower, (519) 853-0171 with any questions.
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President's Message

I hope that everyone had a great Christmas holiday, and all the best for 2008. In between the festivities and looking after Sierra, we are currently trying to update both the club's email distribution list and the website. We will not be using the Yahoo groups e-mail until further notice. We will continue to send out group e-mails from the membership list but on the slim chance it is abused by sending inappropriate emails (e.g., spam, rude jokes, etc.) we want it reported immediately to us. What we would like to hear about are interesting nature sightings or anecdotes, descriptions of nature outings (club or personal), upcoming events or news stories that would be of interest to club members, etc. If you send out photos, please resize them so that they won't bog down the slower email connections. This is a forum available to club members, and we would like to see it used. If anyone still is not receiving club emails and would like to, please send us your email address to the club's email 'hnpnc@hotmail.com' and we will add you to the new list.

On a related note, we have been in discussion with web designer Jason Panda regarding a new club website. Our old site has now lapsed, so it's even more important that we address this issue. We will need to provide him with content, and so far these are some of the materials that we think should be included:

- A brief description of our club, our mandate, activities that we participate in, and a brief history of our club (including important projects we have taken part in)
- A list of upcoming topics for our monthly meetings, and the date, time and location (including a map) of the church
- A list of upcoming outings
- A photo page (can be updated periodically as people submit new photos). These should ideally be "action shots" of people taking part in club activities, but good flora and fauna shots, landscapes, etc. would be appreciated
- A pdf copy of the current newsletter, and an archive of past newsletters
- Information on Young Naturalists
- Information on other club projects, or links to these projects, such as the natural areas inventories.
- Contact information
- Links to Ontario Nature and other clubs, conservation authorities, etc.

If anyone has additional suggestions or would like to provide material, please pass them along to the executive.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who took part in this year's Christmas Bird Count on December 26. The weather was great this year, and although the number of participants was lower this year, I think all that did take part had a good time. Special thanks to Bill McIlveen for organizing the event. We look forward to reading about the results!

Kelly Bowen

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club, Box 115, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4T1

Executive

President: Kelly Bowen (905) 873-7338
Past-President Andy Kovacs (905) 702-1132
Vice-President: Andrew Kellman (905) 873-7338
Secretary: Janice Sukhiani (905) 693-8227
Treasurer: Marg Wilkes (905) 878-6255

Appointments

Membership: Christine Williams (905) 877-1539
Newsletter: Gerda Potzel (905) 702-1681
Ontario Nature Representative: Teresa Rigg 873-0614
Public Relations: Vacant
Young Naturalists: Nancy Kovacs (905) 702-1132

Membership for one year: \$20 Single; \$30 Family
The Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club is an affiliated member of Ontario Nature
<http://haltonnorthpeelnaturalists.org>
Charitable number: 869778761RR0001

Year-end Crozier Check-Up

Snow cover was eight inches deep. A lone chickadee was present as George and I plodded across the Crozier, east to west on December 30th. Many rabbits have criss crossed, leaving heaps of raisins and their tracks.

George noticed that most of the end tips of the wild raspberry canes have been nipped off, and all at a precise angle. Deer?



Footprints came from the entry stile, down the west side, and circled a twenty-foot pine, pausing here and there, stamping down the snow. Owl Prowler? Bird Counter?

The page wire fence on the west side has been pulled up from the ground about two feet, and squished down from the top, making it quite useless.

Marg Wilkes

Local Sightings

On Nov. 25th I was out for a walk, and noticed a barred owl keeping an eye on me, appearing quite tame, it was only about four metres above the trail, but did not appear to be agitated by my presence. I returned later, but it had moved on.

The red-bellied woodpecker, I had mentioned in the November-December newsletter, came frequently to the feeder for the month of December. It has a habit of storing its food. I watched it for a while, taking one seed at a time, flying away to a red oak, and storing the seed in the bark of a partially dead branch. It continued this a number of times.



Several American goldfinch and common redpolls continue to feed on the nyger feeders. A flock of 25 cardinals was seen on December 26. With the very cold weather, it seems that a larger number of downy woodpeckers are staying close to the suet feeders as well.

No long-eared owls have been observed yet, in the usual roosting areas of the past winters.

Accipiter hawks, both sharp-shinned and Coopers, are having a field day, given the large number of birds at the four feeders.

Gerry Doekes

Late-Flowering Plants in Halton Hills, 2007

For the sixth year, we have conducted a survey of the plant species that were still in flower late into the fall. The results of earlier surveys were included in an earlier issue of the *the Esquesing* [1]. On November 18, 2007, W.D. McIlveen, Irene McIlveen, and Gerda Potzel visited the same sites as were visited in previous years. The list of species observed in bloom is summarized below. In total, 24 species were still in flower at the time of the survey. A number of these had not been reported before and a number of species that were frequently seen during the survey were finished flowering for the year.

Lucy Maude Montgomery Garden and Willow Park Ecology Centre in Norval - Pink Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*), Annual Fleabane (*Erigeron annuus*), Wormseed Mustard (*Erysimum chieranthoides*), Musk Mallow (*Malva moschata*), Cheeses (*Malva neglecta*), Lemon Balm (*Mentha x piperita*), Garden Pea (*Pisum sativum*), Common Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), Garden Pansy (*Viola tricolor* var. *hortensis*)

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Results of the 2007 Halton Hills Christmas Count

The 2007 Christmas Bird Count for Halton Hills occurred on December 27. Observers were greeted with unusual weather conditions consisting of rather dense ice fog. That fog left the trees covered with a heavy, but beautiful, layer of hoar frost, especially in areas near the Niagara Escarpment. Unfortunately, it also obscured viewing of birds. The ground was covered in snow and most water was frozen except for running streams including the Credit River. The results for the day are summarized in the attached table. For comparison, the average and high numbers recorded for the previous 16 years are included in the table.

The total number of species recorded for the day was 53, above the long-term count average of 49. The total number of birds (8206) was the fourth lowest count in 17 years of observation. The lower numbers are likely a reflection of the impaired viewing conditions, a reduced number of observers, and the fact that an earlier than usual start to winter may have led to the disappearance of some birds. This was offset by the appearance of some of the winter finches that moved south this winter. There were three new species for the count. These were Peregrine Falcon, Bohemian Waxwing, and Field Sparrow. The total number of different species seen in the Halton Hills Christmas Count now stands at 96.

New high totals were found for Wild Turkey (55 birds) and Red-bellied Woodpecker (6 birds). The species with numbers noticeably lower than the long-term average included Mallard, Common Merganser, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, European Starling, Snow Bunting, House Finch and House Sparrow. The reduced number of observers involved with this count is likely reflected in some of these lower counts. Offsetting this was higher than average numbers of Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal and Dark-eyed Junco.

In total, 18 people participated in the count, either as observers or as feeder watchers. Thanks to the following participants. Ray Blower, Kelly Bowen, Bill Doekes, Andrew Kellman, Judy Kimber, Pat Kimber, Lou Marsh, Larry Martyn, Irene McIlveen, W.D. McIlveen, Fiona Reid, Dawn Refrew, Don Scallen, Dan Shuurman, Rick Stroud, Janice Sukhiani, Jake Veerman, Dave Williams. Appreciation is extended to Larry May for arranging access to the Maple Lodge Farms property and to Halton Regional Police for use of their boardroom for the wrap-up session.

W.D. McIlveen



Continued from page 3...

Mountainview, Guelph Street and Maple Avenue Area –

Garden Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*), Yellow Rocket (*Barbarea vulgaris*), Garden Mum (*Chrysanthemum* hybrid sp.), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Gaillardia (*Gaillardia x grandiflora*), Fall Dandelion (= Fall Hawkbit) (*Leontodon autumnalis*), Yellow Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), Mallow sp. (*Malva* sp.), Scentless Chamomile (*Matricaria perforata*), Garden Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), Canada Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), Sowthistle (*Sonchus arvensis*), Common Dandelion, Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), Viola (*Viola* sp.)

W.D. McIlveen

Reference

1. McIlveen, W.D. and I. McIlveen. 2007 Late-Fall Flowering Plants in North Halton. *the Esquesing*, Vol. 41 No 2 pp 6-7.

Results of the 2007 Christmas Bird Count at Halton Hills

Species	2007	Avg.	High	Species	2007	Avg.	High
Mute Swan	4	6	15	Blue Jay	132	166	333
Canada Goose	1914	1841	3534	American Crow	231	352	692
Snow Goose	1		1	Common Raven	1	2	3
Wood Duck	1	1	1	Black-capped Chickadee	546	704	1211
American Black Duck	3	21	67	Red-breasted Nuthatch	15	9	22
Mallard	224	552	1636	White-breasted Nuthatch	44	46	82
Common Goldeneye	1	2	3	Golden-crowned Kinglet	3	8	30
Common Merganser	1	18	66	American Robin	1	34	206
Sharp-shinned Hawk	6	4	7	Northern Mockingbird	5	2	3
Cooper's Hawk	5	2	4	Cedar Waxwing	55	74	240
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	1	2	Bohemian Waxwing	127		
Red-tailed Hawk	54	65	117	Northern Shrike	4	4	19
American Kestrel	7	11	16	European Starling	1506	2239	3490
Peregrine Falcon	1			Northern Cardinal	94	57	95
Ruffed Grouse	1	5	8	American Tree Sparrow	297	314	837
Wild Turkey	55	22	49	Field Sparrow	1		
Ring-billed Gull	31	212	2010	Song Sparrow	1	5	22
Herring Gull	8	49	222	White-throated Sparrow	1	3	10
Rock Pigeon	424	648	1455	Dark-eyed Junco	319	262	565
Mourning Dove	859	710	1385	Snow Bunting	6	291	1118
Eastern Screech Owl	1	2	4	House Finch	138	255	456
Great Horned Owl	1	2	5	Common Redpoll	209	330	1670
Belted Kingfisher	4	3	7	Pine Siskin	2	16	50
Red-bellied Woodpecker	6	1	2	American Goldfinch	174	181	470
Downy Woodpecker	69	52	91	House Sparrow	586	693	1316
Hairy Woodpecker	21	17	32				
Northern Flicker	2	1	2	Total Birds	8206	9742	15507
Pileated Woodpecker	2	4	12	Number of Species	53	49	57



2008 Year of the Frog

Canadian Association of Zoos & Aquariums (CAZA) members join together to raise awareness of the worldwide amphibian crisis. After thriving for over 360 million years, 1/3 to 1/2 of the world's 6,000 known amphibian species could go extinct in our lifetime - resulting in the single largest mass extinction since the disappearance of dinosaurs. "2008: The Year of the Frog" aims to raise awareness among national governments, world media, school educators and people generally about the vulnerability of amphibians and the extinction crisis they face. Throughout the year, Toronto Zoo will be showcasing "toad-ally" fun activities to support this important conservation initiative. For information on Year of the Frog and how you can become involved visit: www.yearofthefrog.org.

The End of Artificial Reefs Constructed from Tires?

It had always struck me as a bad idea that we could use discarded automobile tires to form artificial reefs in offshore waters. The idea was that the tires, when bundled together and placed in certain arrangements in the water would offer a structure on which marine life could become established or find refuge. It was assumed that the tires would function in a manner not unlike sunken ships. Although the idea may have been well-intentioned, in reality, using tires in this way was not much different than simply dumping them into the ocean but in an organized way.

The creation of artificial reefs in this way began around 1972 so we now have an extended period upon which to judge the success of the method. Some reefs have been at least partially successful but others have not.

My concerns about the technique have been vindicated recently when it was been found that the reefs in at least one location in Florida were not functioning as intended. The result of this has been described as an ecological disaster. Apparently little sea life formed on the rubber. Some of the bound tire broke loose and scattered across the ocean floor. Thousands of tires wedged up against a natural reef, thereby blocking coral growth.

Now the two million or so tires that were placed off Fort Lauderdale have to be removed. This is not an insignificant task because it requires divers to retrieve the tires and the recovered tires have to be discarded once again. The full-scale salvage operation is expected to run through 2010 at a cost to the State of Florida of about \$3.4 million. A large part of the cost is being borne by the US Navy as the divers will do some of the work as part of their training.

One of the problems with tires relates to their composition (Table 1). The largest percentage of components is styrene butadiene and carbon black. The former can be present in various mixtures but these are known to be toxic to various organisms. Another component of note is the zinc oxide. Zinc is fairly toxic to fish whereas it is relatively innocuous to most terrestrial forms of life. The toxicity of zinc is influenced by pH (more toxic at higher pH in contrast to the pattern seen with most metals), alkalinity or water hardness, chemical form,

salinity, and water temperature (more toxic at warmer temperatures).

How much of these toxins are likely leaching out of the tires is unknown. They could certainly be harming the fish in the marine environment though the ocean is a large body of water in which the toxins could be diluted, particularly if there are currents to mix the water. If sections of tires are placed in containers with fish, the fish will die quite rapidly but the exact contaminants involved are not known for certain. It is known the old tires pose a greater risk of toxicity than new ones and it was old discarded tires that went to form the reefs.

Disposal of tires does continue to pose a problem owing to their physical characteristics. In landfills, they do not decompose but gradually rise to the surface. There is reluctance to burn tires because of the potential of toxic emissions. If properly incinerated at high temperatures, the toxic components are destroyed. The potential



<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/02/19/tech/main2492219.shtml>

problem of toxic emissions is probably exaggerated by opponents of tire burning. The largest potential for using tires is to grind them and add them to asphalt for building roads where they seem to work quite well.

Whether the tire components are incorporated into the road surface or in the tires themselves, they both get worn away (tread wear). This wear occurs due to the creation of tiny particles that soon become airborne. The particles are mostly of the size that can become lodged deep in one's lungs. The small particle size means a relatively large surface area from which all the listed tire components can readily leach and come

Material	Percent
Styrene butadiene	46.78%
Carbon black	45.49%
Aromatic oil	1.74%
Zinc oxide	1.40%
Stearic acid	.94%
Antioxidant 6C	1.40%
Wax	0.23%
Sulfur	1.17%
Accelerator CZ	0.75%

into direct contact with the lung tissues. If one considers conservatively that a 20-pound tire loses about 10% of its weight over a lifetime of 100,000 km, four tires per vehicle, the hundreds of millions of kilometers driven by Ontario motorists each year, and then it is possible to grasp the magnitude of amount of tire material emitted into the air each year.

So whether we dispose of tires by disposal at sea, burning, burial or use in road construction, the problem of tires and tire disposal lives on.

W. D. McIlveen



<http://www.sprol.com/?p=362> Photo credit: Matthew

Halton Regional Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee Report

Early this year the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club received a request from the Regional Municipality of Halton to designate a member to be their representative on the Halton Regional Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee (HRFSAC).

I offered to stand as our club's representative. Our first meeting was held November 1, 2007. Our committee consists of four citizen representatives and Councilors Barry Lee and Allan Elgar. There is also a representative from the Halton Sportsmen's Association, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, and Conservation Halton. Ron Reinhold, with, Halton Planning and Public Works was the Chair for the meeting.

Our mandate is:

1. To advise and assist Halton Region in regard to the Regional Forest Management Plan. This plan was initiated in 2000 and after extensive consultation with forest users, the public and technical experts it was endorsed in 2005. One of the recommendations of the management plan was the formation of the HRFSAC.

The Forest Management Plan contains management recommendations for the next 20 years. This will be implemented by a five-year operating plan that prioritizes short term goals – 2005 to 2009.

There is also a 10 year capital plan that identifies infrastructure works, i.e. new gates, parking lot resurfacing, fencing, and the location of beaver baffles. It also encompasses “recreation related works” such as boardwalks, trail mapping, disguising unauthorized trails. These activities are all prioritized and are included in budget in the appropriate future years.

2. To discover by discussion, how to best achieve the goals of the management plan.
3. To assist staff in prioritizing infrastructure requirements in the 10-year plan.
4. To bring forth issues that may have an impact on natural heritage systems or forest health.
5. To develop stewardship programs to promote safe, responsible use by user groups.
6. To help develop guidelines for requests to conduct research or hold special events in the forests.
7. Report annually to the public and planning committee on the progression of the plan.

Ron Reinholt discussed the history of the regional forests. The provincial agreement

forests program began in 1922 to reforest wastelands on abandoned agricultural land.

Our forests comprise 14 tracts, covering 665 acres. They were managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources until 1980, with the emphasis on harvesting and wood production. When Halton Region assumed responsibility it was determined that an ecosystem approach would prevail. This began in 2000.

The Halton forest is unique because most of it is located on escarpment lands with a “perched water table” that supports seasonal vernal pools. Management of tracts within the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) must conform to the NEP.

Other matters that have been suggested for our committee to consider: dumping of yard waste and construction waste, how to convey information in regard to harvesting permits, mapping, establishing, and decommissioning trails, identification of trees, assessment of health, and regeneration, working with user groups to self-police or address problems of creation of new trails.

At the end of the meeting we chose a chair and vice-chair for our January 2008 meeting. In April we are visiting the forests. More to report at that time.

Marg Wilkes

27th Guelph Organic Conference January 24-27th 2008, University of Guelph “Building Sustainable Organic Business”

Keynote Address “Organics, Demographics, & Lifestyle Driven Markets” - Dr. David Foot, Professor of Economics, University of Toronto, and author of *Boom, Bust & Echo: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the 21st Century*.

Trade Show & Organic Food Expo - Visit over 150 booths on Saturday 7:00am - 5:30pm Sunday 9:00am - 4:30pm. Free admission.

Workshops – for information & schedules for Thursday, Friday Saturday Sunday check the website at www.guelphorganicconf.ca.

Contact - email _organix@georgian.net; telephone - (705) 444 – 0923, fax - (705) 444 - 0380



Look for the official Canada Organic logo on certified organic products. The logo was unveiled in July 2007.

Only products containing 95% organic ingredients may display the certifying seal.

Natural Wonders of Ecuador

In March 2007, my wife Denise and I finally went to Ecuador, a trip we had been planning all winter.

We arrived in Quito, capitol city of Ecuador on March 4, and were warmly greeted by a Dr. George Cruz, owner of and guide at the 2 lodges that we were going to be staying at. Not a twenty minute drive to the outskirts of Quito, we arrived at the Hosteria San Jorge Botanical and Ecolodge.

This lodge is built as a traditional 18th Century Spanish Hosteria, and is situated on 200 acres in the Pichincha Foothills.

This property is the only reserve within minutes of Quito, and is the start of what is offered as the San Jorge Magic Birding Circuit.

George Cruz owns five different nature and bird watching reserves, located at different altitudes of the country. This gives a wonderful opportunity to see birds that occur only at certain elevations, with some overlap of a few species. San Jorge Reserve includes High Barren Plains and Highland Rain Forest. We had to acclimatize to the altitude (approx. 9000 ft.) for the first couple of hours on our first full day there. We then hiked into the highland plain area of the property. Here we were treated to the constant calling of the Tawny Antpitta. This species of bird is a master at staying hidden but we managed to get a great looks at it.

Another species of bird we observed in this area is the Curve-billed Tinamou, another secretive bird that will not flush until you almost step on it.

We then hiked on, into the Highland Rainforest area, where we saw the beautiful Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager.

Other spectacular species seen on the property. included Black-tailed and Green-tailed Trainbearer, Purple-backed Thornbill (all hummingbird species).

Next day we completed an easy hike to the Yanacocha Hummingbird Reserve, we were treated to the appearance of the Sword-billed Hummingbird (approximately a four inch bill), Golden-breasted Puffleg, Buff-winged

Starfrontlet, as well as other bird species such as the Glossy Flower-Piercer and Barred Fruiteater.

The next two days were spent birding along the world famous birding area named Nono-Mindo road in the Tandayapa Valley where we admired beautiful scenery and observed many more species of birds, including the beautiful Grass-green Tanager, Plate-billed Mountain Toucan and Andean Cock-of-the-Rock.

We then visited San Jorge de Tandayapa Reserve, located in the cloud forest of the Tandayapa Valley. After more hiking we ended up on a hilltop with a shelter that is surrounded by hummingbird feeders. During the next three hours we observed a total of nineteen different species of hummingbirds, including a gorgeous Booted Racket-tail, which is another species of puffleg hummingbird, referring to the tufts of feathers on their thighs.



We then were transferred to San Jorge de Milpe Reserve. This reserve is a beautiful newly constructed 2-level lodge built in 2006, along with observation decks, overlooking a river gorge. Our guide, George Cruz suggested we get ready for a nice relaxing day of hiking, birding and some swimming.

This property was about 280 acres of sub-tropical rainforest with a great trail system and at least five waterfalls, where we had a lot of fun swimming at each of them. They were nice and refreshing. Birding at this location was spectacular as well. In the evening, around the open air dining shelter, there were many beautiful moths of different sizes had wing spans of up to five inches. Along the trail around the lodge, at night, by flashlight we happened upon a

blind snake species, about three feet in length. It was purple in colour and its defense mechanism was based on its ability to emit slime from its body.

We were able to imitate the call of a Common Potoo. After a couple of attempts, the bird finally did answer. It makes a very eerie sound and is of the family species of Frogmouths. This species of bird camouflages itself by perching in a frozen position, making it look like the end of a broken branch.



From this lodge, as a home base, we drove down to the sub-tropical lower humid area of Pedro Vicente Maldonado where we spent the day birding along the road network.

This lodge was well worth the five day visit as a home base within an area that is abundant with bird species.

We transferred back to San Jorge Hosteria Botanical Eco-lodge. The next day George took us and his family north of Quito to spend a delightful day visiting the famous Otavalo Native Market, with all their crafts and native blankets. It was an enlightening day for us to take in the culture of the area, and a pleasant change from birding, allowing our necks a rest.

The next day we left on a trip that would see our guide take us up the western slope of the Andes Mountains, for an adventurous day of bird-watching.

In the Paramo area, on the Papallacta Pass (approximate 14000 foot. altitude) we were lucky to observe a mixed flock of birds, including Giant Conebill, Stout-billed Cinclodes. We also had luck in seeing an endemic Ecuadorian Hillstar (hummingbird sp). All this, with high winds and temperature of only plus 2C.

Heading down the eastern slope, we checked a lot of mountain streams, and finally saw a pair of Torrent Ducks.

Over the next couple of days our guide took us to San Jorge Cosanga/Yanayacu Bird and Wildlife Reserve, the last of the reserves to visit owned by George. This ultimately ended the Magic Birding Circuit.

One more day was spent driving and birding along the road to Coca, a fantastic Amazon Basin area, where we saw the spectacular Paradise Tanager.

George did a wonderful job as a guide, and took the time to share his knowledge, showing us medicinal plants and a lot of the beautiful wildflowers, everywhere we visited. All the meals served were fantastic.

Of all the birds we saw, one of the highlights had to be the Lyre-tailed Nightjar with the male showing off tail streamers of 24 inches in length.

After 22 days it was hard to have had to leave such a beautiful country behind.

Gerry Doekes

Royal Botanical Gardens – Owl Prowling

Saturday, January 26; 7 to 9 p.m. at the Nature Centre, 680 Plains Road West, Burlington Ontario
Members: \$8 (family membership rate \$20 for two adults and dependent children); Non-members: \$10 (family rate \$25). Volumes of myth, magic and folklore are testimony to the intrigue of owls in cultures all around the world. Explore some of these legends and learn about the ecology of Royal Botanical Gardens' owls, then head out onto the trails with Barbara McKean and John Hannah to try "conversing" with some local residents. Registration deadline: January 17. Telephone: 905-527-1158; Toll free: 1-800-694-4769, Greater Toronto Area toll free: 905-825-5040, or email info@rbg.ca.