

"Haldimand Sachem"

New book features local birds

By NEIL DRING
The Sachem & Gazette

Birds seen in Haldimand County play a significant role in a new book published by the Hamilton Naturalists' Club.

"Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas" by Robert Curry is now available. Curry, a retired Burlington schoolteacher, who was the lead author has been dreaming about such a book for the past 25 years so you can tell it's no fly-by-night publication.

His compilation follows on the wings of Thomas McIlwraith's "Birds of Hamilton, Canada West" which was published in 1866.

Curry's 676-page reference book details the status of over 385 species of birds that have occurred in the Hamilton Study which includes Haldimand County.

As well as detailed accounts of each species, the book features 32 pages of colour, an original art cover by Robert Bateman, chapters by leading local field naturalists covering a wide range of birding projects, and the history of birding activity in the area, detailed colour maps of the

regional hot spots and vegetation types and seasonal bar graphs for each species.

The cover, called Wood Duck Pair, was painted by Robert Bateman. The original painting fetched \$19,000 at auction which was donated to the club.

Among the many rare birds in the book are a few f r o m

Haldimand. For example, one of only three Gray Flycatchers ever seen in Ontario was found one Christmas Day bird count in Fisherville. Hundreds of birdwatchers came from all over during the next week to catch a rare glimpse of the bird normally seen in the Rocky Mountains. The weather turned extremely cold in early January and the bird wasn't seen again - presumably succumbing to the bitter cold.

In 1993, John Dickie Jr. from Haldimand's Irish Line took a picture of a rare Forktailed Flycatcher which is normally found in Mexico and Argentina. That

sighting was one of only six ever reported in Ontario.

Some rare bird sightings, such as the two previously mentioned are uncommon in this area mainly because the birds are lost. Other birds, native to this area, are rare sadly because they are now endangered species. For example, the Cerulean Warbler used to be

a common bird in the Six Nations area, but no longer breeds within the Hamilton study area.

Barn owls may still live in the Cayuga area, but the

last reported sighting of one was in 2001. "Bird-watchers can't find them," says Curry, since they are nocturnal animals and bird counts are held during the day.

If local residents see a barn owl, they are encouraged to contact the Hamilton Naturalist Club to report it says Curry.

"Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas" was created through the efforts and involvement of many Club volunteers. Proceeds from the sale of this publication will support Hamilton Naturalists' Club conservation and education projects.

To order, check the Naturalists' Club web site www.hamiltonnature.org or call 905-525-2142.

