

A special program at

Binkley United Church

Study, Analysis and Discussion of C.S. Lewis'

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

(Mythological, Theological and Biblical Perspectives)

Wednesday, October 11/06
7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Leadership and Facilitation:
Andrew Vogt, age 14,
A Young Lewis and Tolkien Scholar

Rev. Douglas W. Hallman
B.Mus., B. Th., M. Div., M.A., Th. M.
(Modest cost for a wealth of written material)



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DISCOVER IIII Books

Watch the birdie

Naturalists Club unveils superlative, authoritative book on area birds

Birds Of Hamilton And Surrounding Areas
By Robert Curry
(Hamilton Naturalists' Club, \$60)

REVIEWED BY GORD McNULTY

The breathtaking extent to which birds enrich our lives in heavily urbanized Hamilton and vicinity is celebrated in a classic new book that promises to become a collector's item.

Dazzling photography, superlative art and passionate writing combine to make Birds Of Hamilton And Surrounding Areas an authoritative and inspiring publication that will long be treasured.

Senior author Bob Curry, a retired high-school teacher who has tirelessly pursued birds for more than 50 years, is justifiably proud of the collaborative effort that turned this 650-page masterpiece from dream to reality.

The book launch will be held on Thursday, Oct. 12, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Burlington Art Centre.

More than 385 bird species that have occurred in the Hamilton Study Area (HSA), a 40-kilometre circle radiating from Dundurn Castle, are described and documented, together with many bird conservation projects undertaken by dedicated Hamilton birders past and present.

The meticulous, history-laden individual species accounts reflect Curry's expertise and love of birding. He was mentored by George North, a legendary Hamilton birder who bridged the time from the days of collecting birds with a gun to collecting by checklist.

Some of the most fascinating stories chronicle the early days of birding in the city 150 years ago. In 1866, Thomas McIlwraith published a Hamilton bird list that inspired bird listing on a provincial basis, and helped ornithologists understand changes in the environment and birdlife.

Birders described flocks of passenger pigeons as so thick that they would darken the sky and even break the limbs of trees with their weight.

Sometimes they flew so low that hunters could knock them down with sticks.

In 1854, in an effort to lessen the slaughter, a rumour circulated that eating too many passenger pigeons caused a cholera epidemic in the city.

The reprieve was short-lived, as the passenger pigeon was last reported in the HSA in 1890.

"Its fate epitomizes the all too frequent human disregard for life and beauty," Curry writes. "This was a bird larger than the mourning dove, with a much more beautiful blend of blue and pink."

It is sobering to revisit other disturbing examples of destruction during the Victorian era. Birds were exploited to decorate women's hats and regulations were weak and



FROM BIRDS OF HAMILTON

Red tailed hawks are in the Hamilton area year round, and can be seen in fall in the Fifty Point area. They like to perch atop hydro poles and look for voles moving through the long grass.

poorly enforced. No fewer than 17 specimens of snowy owls were observed on sale at Hamilton Market in the winter of 1858-1859.

While encouraging progress has been made in protecting birds, Curry underlines how many problems — from loss of habitat caused by inexorable urban sprawl to intensive agricultural practices — continue to exact an ominous toll.

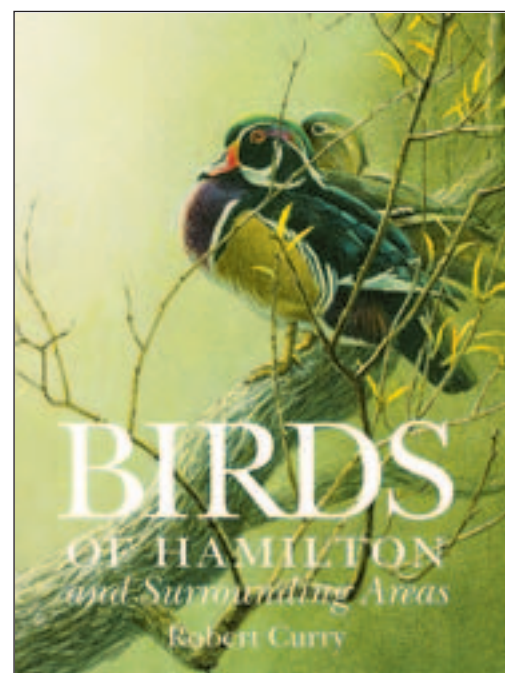
The shoreline of western Lake Ontario and Hamilton Harbour is increasingly popular with birders in search of rewarding encounters with impressive waterbirds. Some species, exemplified by the black-crowned night heron, show a remarkable ability to nest and live cheek-by-jowl with the heavy industry and vehicle traffic all around the harbour.

In January 2001, dozens of birders enjoyed watching an extremely rare ivory gull, a denizen of the high Arctic, for several days on the bay. Jubilation turned to despair, however, when the gull, flying to the lake, collided with power lines on the Hamilton Beach Strip and plummeted to the ground.

As some species have declined, others have spread northward into the HSA with milder temperatures and reduced snowfall. Migrating birds such as the northern flicker, eastern bluebird and American robin now overwinter here with increasing frequency.

All proceeds from the sale of this Hamilton Naturalists' Club publication, involving five years of intensive work and close to 100 contributors, will support the conservation projects of the club.

Beyond doubt, the book will forge a closer connection between the feathered gems of



Hamilton and the ever-growing numbers of people who take delight in observing them year-round.

Anyone with an appreciation of nature will savour this literary gateway into an exciting avian world that is waiting to be discovered and cherished for generations to come.

Gord McNulty is a regular contributor to The Hamilton Spectator's books pages. He is a member of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club.

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