

New book highlights the *Birds of Hamilton*

Hamilton may be best known as steel town, but it has another claim to fame few people know about.

Situated at the western end of Lake Ontario, its marshes, woods, streams and valleys abound with birds of all shapes and sizes.

From red-breasted robins to white pelicans, grabbing a pair of binoculars can often yield surprising results.

With the publication of his book *Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas*, lifelong bird-watcher Robert (Bob) Curry wants to get the word out that Hamilton and the surrounding counties are wonderful places to find birds.

He should know. After 53 years of amateur study, Mr. Curry is widely regarded as a leading authority on bird study.

His love affair with winged creatures began when he was only eight years-old.

Living in Scotland, he saw a pair of golden eagles while out fly fishing with his father. The experience sparked a lifelong passion for birds.

He has been president of the Hamilton Naturalist's Club, chair of the Long Point Bird Observatory, chair of the Ontario Bird Records Committee, and most recently, named distinguished ornithologist by Ontario Field Ornithologists.

At 670 pages, *Birds of Hamilton* is nothing short of Mr. Curry's opus – the culmination of life dedicated to studying birds and their conservation.

Graced with a pair of wood ducks painted by Robert Bateman, Mr. Curry's vision is that the hardcover book be the definitive reference that catalogues everything known about the history of Hamilton's 386 documented bird species.

The last time a comprehensive regional reference hit shelves was almost a century ago when *Birds of Ontario* was published.

Mr. Curry hopes *Birds of Hamilton* has the same legacy – one

that will have both dyed-in-the-wool and casual birdwatchers reaching for the book in 50 years.

"I want it to stand as a definitive study. It's meant to be everything known about birds and the lives of those who study them in the Hamilton area," Mr. Curry said.

Starting serious work on the book six years ago, Mr. Curry drew on the collective knowledge amassed in nearly 100,000 bird sighting records.

Noted Canadian author Fred Bodsworth, who has written extensively on natural history, wrote the forward and Robert Bateman donated an original work of art that was auctioned for \$19,000 to help fund production.

Profits made from the book's sale will be donated to the Hamilton Naturalist Club.

While writing *Birds of Hamilton*, Mr. Curry also took on the role of editor editing several chapters contributed by fellow naturalists about bird conservation projects.

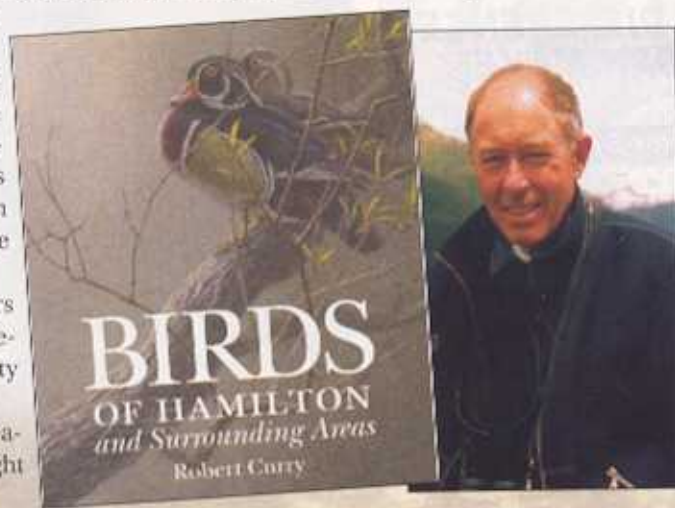
Stories about rehabilitating birds like the Bald Eagle, which were once shot and poisoned as pests in the early part of the century and then nursed back from the brink of local extinction.

Even after six years of work and the help of an army of volunteers, Mr. Curry smiles in acknowledgement that the *Birds of Hamilton* will always be an ongoing work.

Just as Mr. Curry gave the book to the printers, birdwatchers found a rare ocean going bird – a Manx Shearwater, blown in on the heels of hurricane and never before recorded in Hamilton bringing Hamilton's total species count from 385 to 386.

"I was so excited I didn't sleep all night. I sat up and wrote another chapter which I was able to squeeze into the book," he said.

Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas is available at local bookstores.



Robert Curry has studied birds for five decades. This life-long fascination has culminated in the recent publication of *Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas*. Six years in the making, the book profiles bird hot spots, species accounts and conservation projects.

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