



KIM HEAPS PLAYS Buttercup in the McKenzie-Smith production of the Gilbert and Sullivan classic H.M.S. Pinafore. There are two separate casts for the operetta, one of which will perform on Wednesday and one Thursday of next week.

Two owl species in Halton

by Jeff Harvey
During the latter stages of February and continuing through April the Great Horned and Screech Owls are searching for mates. At these times it is quite easy to hear their calls during the nighttime hours. The voice of the Screech Owl is considered by the superstitious to forecast death or the omen of coming misfortune. Of course, these beliefs are merely old wives tales and bear no truth.

The Screech Owl's call consists of a low and long tremulous whistle with a quavering quality about it. Some individuals do not quaver or alter the pitch and the quality is more clearly defined. They can be lured quite close by playing the calls loudly and repeatedly on tape recorders.

The Screech Owl occurs in open woodland groves, shade trees and field edges and may nest in bird boxes, but usually in hollow trees. They are

among our smallest owls, only eight inches long. The plumage varies from owl to owl, as some are gray while others tend to be more reddish brown. The variations in colour have no relation to age, sex, or season. These small owls raise one brood of four or five young annually, with an incubational average of 26 days.

They are invaluable birds in that they feed on great quantities of rodents which do great harm to field crops. Small birds, reptiles, insects and frogs may also be eaten at different times. Though more common in the United States, they are widespread and are commonly seen in Halton, where proper habitat exists.

The Great Horned Owl is one of the most savage members of its family. This powerful bird of prey feeds on a wide assortment of birds and small mammals, notably skunks, squirrels, rabbits, mice, grouse, ducks, crows, and rarely poultry. At these

times, when raiding the henhouse, it can be considered destructive.

Crows despise this bird, and have been known to gather in huge numbers around a dozing owl and caw at the top of their voices. After several attempts the wary intelligent owl is usually able to escape its tormentors.

The Great Horned Owl hunts on dark days, at dusk or at night. It is quite large, and the female, which is somewhat larger than the male, may attain a length of 23 inches. The voice is made up of between five and seven low 'hoo' calls, generally six in this rhythm: hoo hoo hoo hoo (pause) hoo hoo. Rarely individual birds emit a loud piercing shriek.

This owl is the most common in North America. In Halton County it can be found in either deciduous or mixed forests, where game is readily available. The nest is usually an old nest of a hawk, crow or squirrel high in trees, but hollow limbs and cliff

ledges are frequently used. Two or three young are raised, with an incubational period of about 30 days.

Both species of owls described here are valuable in helping to maintain a balance in nature between the "opportunists" (predators) and the herbivores. Thus it is essential to prevent the extermination of these owls from the countryside.

Advertising on arena boards

Halton Hills is considering allowing advertising on the ice making machines and around the boards of the rinks, as a way of making money.

Councillor Walter Biehn said it is done in all sports events in Europe and could see no reason why it can't be done here.

Recreation Director Glen Gray said he is looking into the matter.

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