

Outlook on Lifestyle



Watch for predators

If you manage to set up a successful feeding program in your backyard, you will eventually and inevitably receive visits from various avian predators. Any concentration of small birds in winter acts as a magnet for bird eating hawks such as the Sharp-Shinned. The hawk's natural aversion to the urban landscape is overcome by the tempting cacophony of scores of little birds chirping. Sharp-Shinned hawks have been regular visitors to my garden since I set up the feeding program. When all suddenly becomes still and quiet in the backyard, their presence nearby is indicated. Only once though, have I observed a successful kill. The victim was a House Sparrow, unable to reach the safety of a hedge before being felled by the talons of an adult Sharp-Shinned. The hawk carried its prize to a large rock behind a maple tree and over a surprisingly long period of time - 90 minutes - consumed it. I am aware that some people would be repulsed by such a scene, but it was, except perhaps for the setting, entirely natural. Hawks and other predators are important components of a balanced natural order. If you feed the birds, be willing to see some of them fall prey to predators.

circuit, I have never had the good fortune to observe any of these species in my backyard (or anywhere else for that matter). I have however, observed an unsuccessful hunting foray in the garden by that small, dapper falcon - the

hence its entry into my backyard. Last winter as well, my garden was graced by the arrival of a pair of Northern Shrikes - the first Shrikes I had ever observed. A robin-sized predatory songbird, with a hooked beak, the Northern Shrike breeds in the stunted forest and barren land of sub-arctic Canada. As its food (small birds, insects and mice) become scarce in fall, this Shrike generally migrates to lower latitudes, some settling for a time in this area.

Backyard Naturalist

By DON SCALLEN
Herald Special



American Kestrel. The Kestrel is common in the Halton Hills area, often visible perched on roadside trees or telephone wires. Unlike other falcons, the Kestrel's primary food is not birds, but mice, and during the summer, large insects such as grasshoppers. Small birds do however, sometimes supplement its diet.

They possess the somewhat grisly habit of impaling their prey on thorns or barbed wire, where they can leisurely devour it. I have discovered the remnants of a mouse and a chickadee impaled in this fashion. Bird feeders then, will attract more than just seed eaters. Predators, though not planned for or expected, can add another interesting dimension to the backyard feeding program.

Steamer shares his Yorkshire pudding

YORKSHIRE PUDDING. Wheldon "Steamer" Emmerson is not called Steamer because of his proficiency in the kitchen - but he does like to cook. The former mayor of Georgetown was named Steamer when he was a boy. The name first given to him by the late Gordon Alcott, came from a radio drama character called Steamboat. There is the odd, old-timer in town who will still call him Steamboat, he said. The following Yorkshire pudding recipe is an old one. His mother-in-law shared the recipe with Steamer. It's perfect for the cook who can't get his pudding to rise, he said. Mr. Emmerson was mayor of Georgetown for one term in 1969. He was the Georgetown Citizen of the Year in 1984 and has been chairman of many local committees, such as the Georgetown branch of the Canadian Cancer Society. (Herald photo)

YORKSHIRE PUDDING
1 cup of flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup of milk
2 eggs
Beat or mix 1 1/2 to 2 minutes until mixture is smooth. I use a 6 or 8 muffin tin. Take peanut oil, corn oil or the drippings from a roast and grease the inside of each cavity. Then pour a little oil or dripping into each cavity until they are 1/4 to 1/2 of an inch full. Place the muffin tin in an oven preheated to 400 degrees until the oil and pan are hot.
At this time I quickly pour in my mixture until it is about 1/4 of an inch from the top of the cavity. Remember to pour only one time. Don't try to add to the amount in each cavity.
Place the muffin tin back in the oven for 30 minutes or until each pudding has risen and is nicely browned on top.

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