

# Outlook on Lifestyle

## Cold causes birds to feed more often

When the mild weather of a fortnight ago yielded abruptly to a harsh winter resurgence, birds in their multitudes returned to their backyard feeders. Over the past two weeks, more seed has been consumed by the finch flocks than at any other two week period during the winter. In part, this is due to the cold - the birds need more food to maintain their body temperature. The amount being eaten now however, significantly exceeds that which has been consumed during similar cold spells this winter, despite the fact that bird numbers have remained relatively constant over the past two months.

This increased uptake of food may be a pre-migration response. Redpolls will soon leave on a journey that may take them as much as 3 or 4 thousand kilometres north, to the tundra of Greenland and Canada's arctic. Pine Siskins will head towards the pine and spruce forests of boreal Canada - a shorter jaunt than that of the Redpoll, but a strenuous one nonetheless. It may be that these birds instinctively bolster their fat reserves before embarking on their taxing northward migrations.

The frenzy around my feeders, especially the niger feeder, has reached a fever pitch. Finches compete aggressively for perches, at times even landing on a companion's back to take over a perch. These finch battles take place almost exclusively within species, for a definite and seemingly immutable pecking order exists within species. Of the three small finches that frequent winter feeders, (Redpolls, Siskins and Goldfinches), Goldfinches are low man on the totem pole. They yield quickly and passively to the perch demands of their two northern cousins. Because of this, Goldfinches have been almost entirely displaced from the feeder that

dispenses the desirable niger seed, relegated instead to the black oil sunflower feeder.

Redpolls occupy the top of this mini pecking order. Siskins almost always give up their perch, without complaint, to the slightly larger tundra dwellers. I had to qualify the last statement with an "almost", because I did observe one instance when a Siskin refused to give its perch to a Redpoll. The Redpoll in this case, however, did not press the issue.

Definite pecking orders between bird species have probably evolved over the milleniums. Birds have likely found it more profitable from an energy conservation standpoint to solve their disputes without resorting to aggression.

If passivity between similar species is the norm, it can be just the reverse within species. Attempted perch snatching by a bird of the same species frequently results in vociferous standoffs. If neither party backs down, the squabbling birds may actually make physical contact, occasionally to the point of grappling in mid-air.

Because of the fierce competition for feeder perches I now have some misgivings about feeding the birds. Not that the displays of aggression disturb me - but because the environment that precipitates the aggression is not a natural one.

Feeders provide a concentrated food resource that is not really paralleled in nature. Food sources in nature are usually far less concentrated, meaning that the birds are more dispersed and less likely to resort to aggressive behaviour. Redpolls taking advantage of weed seeds in a field for example, tend to spread out because the food resource is "spread out".

The behaviour of birds at feeders, reminds me of a National Geographic special on chimpanzees that aired last year. In this documentary, researchers provided chimps with a concentrated food source of bananas. In this natural state, chimps eat primarily fruit that is dispersed throughout this habitat. Feeding behaviour is generally peaceful. This peaceful norm was altered dramatically by the introduction of the banana feeding station. The typically sedate feeding habits degenerated into an orgy of aggression, with the more dominant members of the chimp troop hoarding the lions share of the food.

## \$5,500 damage

A left turn onto a private drive off of Trafalgar Road caused an accident in which a total of \$5,500 damage was caused March 8. A Georgetown woman was northbound on Trafalgar Road when she turned left onto a private drive. The driver of a car southbound on Trafalgar Road at 75 to 80 kilometres per hour collided with the car that turned in front of him, police said. The Georgetown woman was charged with failing to yield the right-of-way.

## Garden Gossip

By MADGE WHITFIELD  
HeraldSpecial  
Can you believe this winter and early spring 1987? It may be hard to believe but not hard to take, ENJOY.

I do get questions in a sort of round-a-bout way and a recent one concerns mildew or powdery mildew on roses, begonias, phlox etc. For garden roses you can apply a lime-sulphur (dormant) spray before spring growth starts to prevent the mildew starting.

Another good way is to use Benomyl, which is a systemic fungicide, to control powdery mildew and black spot throughout the growing season. As a systemic control it provides a curative action at the time of treatment and a residual protective action, being absorbed through the plant tissues into the sap stream which carries it to all parts of the plant.

It doesn't wash off but continues to work within the plant protecting it against future invasions of fungus diseases. Benomyl can also be used on infected house plants but should be used at half strength. Benomyl can be obtained from

Dominion Seed House or most places that carry garden supplies.

Have you noticed how your house plants have perked up? Now is definitely the time to divide, re-pot or start slips. If you've had geraniums indoors all winter they are probably either becoming huge or leggy. Slips or cuttings taken at this time will give you new geraniums for outdoor planting. Cut actively growing non-flowering stems three to four inches long just below a node, remove the lowest leaves, dip the stem in rooting hormone and plant in a mixture of sand, peat moss and vermiculite or perlite.

This method can be used to start cuttings from begonias, coleus, ivy, hoyo and impatiens. It is a good idea to put a clear plastic bag over your new plantings to encourage and speed up the rooting. If plastic bags are used the plants will have to be hardened off after they have become established. Good gardening.

Send any question and/or comments to Garden Gossip, c/o The Herald, Georgetown, Ont.  
-Courtesy of the Georgetown and District Horticultural Society

## Concert to 'just help somebody'

For the past several months a group of local Brampton songwriters, musicians, and singers have been combining their talents to produce an all original record album to raise money for the Peel Memorial Hospital Foundation.

The album named after its title song Just To Help Somebody will be released at a concert given by all the participating musicians and singers at the Lester B. Pearson Theatre on March 28, 1987, at 8 p.m.

Net proceeds from the concert and from the sales of the record album (\$10) will go to the Peel Memorial Hospital for new equipment. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for seniors and students, and are available from the theatre box office, 150 Central Park Drive, Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., or by phone at 793-4000.

Recording artists include the Peel Regional Police County Line Band, Helen Kameka, Sharon Leigh, Lloyd Wiseman, Bill Cruise, Mike Baldasio, Chuck Dempsey, Dave Conley and Shaun McGuire.


For further information contact Michael Baldwin at Peel Memorial Hospital Foundation, 451-1710, ext. 5747.

## Baby pygmy hippo born at zoo

Metro Toronto Zoo's continuing commitment to conservation efforts has paid off with the birth of a pygmy hippopotamus on February 15th, 1987. This represents a significant contribution to the world population of this rare and endangered species.

"Psi", the father, was born at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., on October 23, 1972, and came to the Metro Toronto Zoo on July 18, 1973. "Hilda" was born at the Basel Zoo in Switzerland on March 13, 1972, and arrived at her present home on September 6, 1973. This is her fourth calf.

NEWS FLASH!!! Spring zoobabies have started to arrive in earnest! Abigail the orang-utan gave birth to a baby on March 6th. You can visit Abigail and her newborn in the Indo-Malaya Pavilion.



**HALTON ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD**

## FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM REGISTRATION PROGRAM

The Halton Roman Catholic School Board offers a Middle French Immersion Program to its English language students entering Grade 5.

Registration is to take place at the designated school parents wish their child to attend.

Date: Saturday, March 28, 1987  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
Location: Holy Cross School  
222 Maple Avenue  
Georgetown

For further information, please contact:

Michel S. Lecavalier  
Program Consultant  
632-6300

W.C. Hawken, Q.C.  
ChairmanC.G. Byrnes  
Director of Education

# UPDATE YOUR BATHROOM

## RENOVATION SPECIAL

### "WALTEC LOW PROFILE"

Toilet with seat, oval basin,  
Econo bath with tub enclosure. All for one low price.

BONE

# 415<sup>00</sup>

WHITE

# 389<sup>00</sup>

★ Faucets Extra



**HOWELL**  
PLUMBING SHOWROOM

ACRYLIC BATH & SHOWER UNITS    WHIRLPOOLS & PEDESTALS    SPAS    VANITIES & MEDICINE CABINETS

**11 ARMSTRONG AVE.  
GEORGETOWN**

**877-2293****453-8911**