

Outlook on Lifestyle

Great blue heron one of area's largest birds

On a recent visit to Black Creek on Georgetown's western boundary I disturbed a Great Blue Heron intent on capturing fish in a quiet pool of the stream. With protesting guttural croaks it lifted its heavy body into the air and flew off to seek a quieter fishing hole.

Standing an impressive 130 cm tall and with a wingspan exceeding 180 cm the Great Blue Heron is one of our largest resident birds. They are a common sight in Halton Hills rivers and streams, having adapted successfully thus far, to the human altered environment. The individual that I flushed was likely a recently arrived migrant from wintering grounds in the United States. This hardy heron, however, does not always migrate from our area in winter. I have observed Herons in January doggedly pursuing fish in ice-free pockets of the Credit River.

Great Blue Herons are often misidentified as "cranes", a family of similar large wading birds. Canada has two nesting species of cranes - the Sandhill and the celebrated Whooping Crane. Neither of these birds is resident in southern

Backyard Naturalist

By DON SCALLEN
Herald Special



Ontario. The Sandhill nests primarily in the Hudson Bay lowlands of northern Ontario and in Manitoba, while the breeding range of the exceedingly rare Whooping Crane is confined to Wood Buffalo Park in northern Alberta. While there is some possibility that the occasional Sandhill Crane may rest in our area during migration, I am not aware of any sightings. Nevertheless, Great Blue Herons and Sandhill Cranes, though similar in form and color can easily be distinguished by the way they fly. Cranes fly with their necks outstretched, while herons tuck their necks back like a reversed "S".

Great Blue Herons usually nest in colonies on islands or the shores of lakes and rivers. A colony may eventually contain hundreds of nests but an or so is a more typical number

Usually built high up in deciduous trees, these nests are large, loosely woven platforms of twigs, that would never pass a building code inspection. In severe storms they are easily destroyed.

Ideal heron nesting habitat is not available to the Great Blues of Halton Hills, but the rich aquatic life of the Credit River watershed has enticed these birds to settle here nonetheless. I know of one colony in Halton Hills where perhaps three score nests have been built in the tall beeches and maples of a farm woodland. Located a considerable distance from the Credit River and close to much human activity, this colony is clearly not optimum heron habitat but for now it is thriving. Because of their colonial nesting habits, herons are particularly vulnerable. The landowners in the area of this colony are to be commended for not disturbing the herons, for if the great birds lost this site it is questionable whether they would establish another colony in north Halton.

The population of Great Blue Herons in Halton is healthy for now. If we maintain the quality of the water in the Credit River watershed and don't interfere with the Great Blue's nesting sites, this happy situation will prevail.

TOP TEN MOVIE RENTALS

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 st Top Gun | 6 th Howard The Duck |
| 2 nd Cobra | 7 th Police Academy III |
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| 5 th Raw Deal | 10 th Delta Force |



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2 guest speakers

The North Peel chapter of the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (ACALD) will be hosting two guest speakers at Chinguacousy Secondary School in Bramalea on April 1. Pat Chalmers of Humber College will speak on the topic "Building blocks for success: identifying your child's strengths and weaknesses and helping your child to cope". Ann Knapp, special education teacher with the Etobicoke Board of Education will address the topic "You, your child and your child's teacher: helping your child to cope with the system". The presentations start at 7:30 p.m., and there is a non-member admission fee of \$2. For more information, call 459-8840.

Paying twice

Burlington Mayor Roly Bird made it clear Burlington doesn't want to be paying for the process twice.

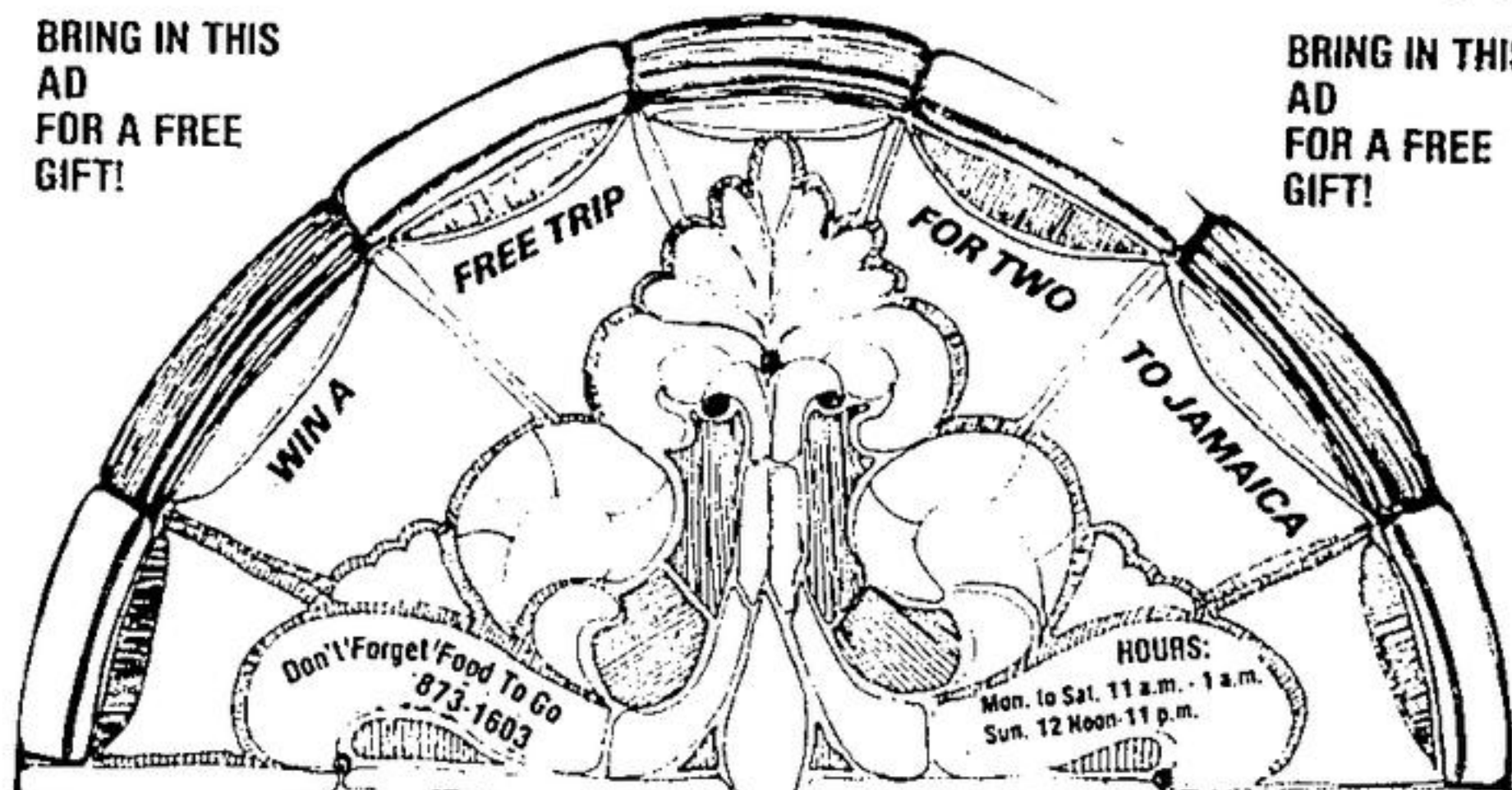
Already the city is paying for the environmental assessment hearing as a defendant, objecting to the Region's selection process which wants to put a new Regional dump in Burlington.

Last week, the Mayor suggested the other three municipalities consider putting up the hearing costs on behalf of the Region, so that Burlington doesn't end up paying twice.

He backed off from making any formal motion to that effect, making it clear he was presenting it to Regional councillors as a suggestion for the other three municipalities to act on.

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