

Outlook on Halton Hills



Enjoying the tranquil waters of Fairy Lake is this lone Canada Goose. With the hot weather in July, not only the birds have taken to the water. The beaches have been crowded with swimmers and sunbathers out to beat the heat. (Herald photo)

Turkey vultures

Waves of heat shimmer over the expanse of desert. Saguaro cactus poised like sentinels rise out of the burning sand. A weary cowboy trudges through the wasteland in a desperate quest for water. Looking up he sees vultures, gathering in macabre anticipation of his death.

A scene such as this could have been taken from any number of old-time westerns. It would bear little relationship to the reality in Halton Hills - except for the vultures.

Vultures, featured so prominently in many westerns, are also a prominent feature along the Niagara Escarpment in this area. They are well established and appear to be increasing in number. From spring to fall, a walk along the Bruce Trail anywhere in Halton or Peel will almost inevitably yield a sighting of one or more of these large carrion eaters. Excellent "can't miss" vulture viewing areas are Rattlesnake Point and the Fallbrook road area just north of Glen Williams.

The turkey vulture is the species that inhabits Southern Ontario. They are so named because their naked red head is similar to that of a turkey. They are large birds. Their six foot wingspan outstrips that of all our other breeding birds except the great blue heron.

Turkey vultures are predominantly black, their red heads are visible only at close range. The underside of their wings is two toned - dark black towards the front, grayish towards the back.

Vultures are most commonly observed, riding the thermals on warm sunny days.

In flight they are graceful. They soar in great arcs seldom flapping their wings.

This ability to glide almost effortlessly, along with their large size and black colouration distinguished them from the red-tailed hawk, the only breeding bird in this area that might conceivably be confused with a turkey vulture. During spring and fall migrations an occasional eagle may pass through this area. At these times, vultures can be distinguished by the way they hold their wings in flight - a slightly concave "V" instead of a flat plane.

Backyard Naturalist

By DON SCALLEN
Herald Special



Vultures feed almost exclusively on carrion. This habit may seem repugnant but is actually a valuable service to the environment. Rotting, potentially disease ridden meat is disposed of. Flies are denied the opportunity to lay their eggs in the rotting flesh.

Vultures feed on carrion because, unlike the closely related hawks and eagles, they lack strong feet and talons. They are unable to strike and grasp prey with any force, thus out of necessity they have become scavengers. They approach a potential meal warily, as if wanting to be very sure that their prey is indeed dead. Eventually, if they don't observe any movement over several minutes, they may move near and

begin to eat.

Vultures use at least two and possibly three of their senses to find carrion. The ones that soar over the wide open vistas of the desert can rely primarily on their keen eyesight to find a potential dinner.

Our vultures depend on their eyesight as well but perhaps more important is their sense of smell. Unlike the desert, the verdant hills of Halton are cloaked in vegetation.

Vultures "sniff out" the dead animals concealed by this vegetation.

There is some evidence that hearing can come into play as well in the vulture's search for food. In experiments they homed in on jars containing buzzing flies.

Vulture's rather gruesome lifestyle has caused some interesting physiological adaptations. The head is featherless for example, so rotting flesh will not cling to it. Candace Savage in *The Wonder of Canadian Birds* also reports that the Vulture has "an extraordinary resistance to disease - even the potent botulism toxin has little effect on them."



Our last column to you

Over the past ten weeks we have provided general information about summer job search techniques. Unfortunately, the summer of '87 is winding down for staff at the Canada Employment Centre for Students and our office will be closing, August 12, 1987. As a result, this will be our last column for the summer.

The purpose of *Student Job Scene* has been to educate student about finding summer employment. We would like to continue this by offering some tips about looking for work next summer.

Most importantly, you should start looking early during the school year. Do not wait until school is over. Good summer jobs are usually filled by Spring Break.

Make sure that you are prepared to start looking. Have your resume and work history fact sheet updated. Get permission from the people that you want to use as references. Have a Social Insurance Number available. You do not need to put the number on application forms but you will need it once you have been offered a position. Get an application from the Canada Employment Centre in Georgetown. It takes approximately six weeks to receive the social insurance card.

Ask friends and family members about job opportunities, including application procedures. Find out where you should apply and who you should contact. Do your research and know about the position you are applying for.

Be resourceful. Keep your eyes and ears open. Read the whole newspaper, not just the classifieds. If there is an article announcing that a new company is opening in town, find out if they will be hiring. You must be creative and assertive when enquiring about possible job openings.

If you want to work at a summer

camp or a resort you should contact them directly. Ask them to mail you an information package and an application form. Return it as soon as possible. The federal and provincial governments usually hire their summer staff early in the year. For example, for our jobs we had to apply in early February. The Ontario Ministry of Skills Development Summer Experience '87 program application deadline this year was April 17. This information shows that you must act early. Go to the Canada Employment Centre and pick up the information booklet advertising provincial summer jobs.

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