

# Outlook on Lifestyle

## Three more types of north Halton woodpeckers

Last week's column dealt with our three most common woodpeckers - the downy, the hairy and the common flicker. Three other species of woodpecker also breed in north-Halton.

The yellow-bellied sapsucker is one of these. As its name suggests, the primary food of this woodpecker is sap. These birds drill small holes into trees and then lap up the sap that is exuded. Small insects that they encounter as they drill, are also included in their diet.

From my experience, sapsuckers are generally birds of extensive woodlands. They are more common in central and northern Ontario in forests that contain large numbers of their favorite tree - the white birch - than they are in southern Ontario. I've found sapsuckers nesting in Halton Regional Forest, north-west of Milton.

An interesting association exists between the ruby-throated hummingbird and the sapsucker. On a number of occasions I've observed hummingbirds in the vicinity of sapsucker drilling operations and suspected that they too were consuming the sap. After consulting reference books I found that this was

indeed the case - that hummingbirds supplemented their nectar diets by feeding at sapsucker holes. They have even been recorded driving the much larger sapsucker away after holes had been drilled.

### Backyard Naturalist

By DON SCALLEN  
Herald Special



Another Halton woodpecker is the red-headed, easily one of the most beautiful of our native birds. Its head is a brilliant red and the rest of its plumage is sharply defined black and white.

The red-headed woodpecker is a bird of open woods and the field-woodlot habitat that defines much of southern Ontario. They seem to have an affinity for large trees, particularly oaks, that furnish acorns, and important red-headed food source.

Once these birds were more common than they are today. Their weakness for fruit drew the ire of or-

chard growers who shot and poisoned them. Red-headed nests carved into cross-treat telephone poles became death traps for the baby birds and the aggressive introduced starlings moved in and took over nesting sites.

Thankfully the red-headed woodpecker has shown some recent resurgence. I've observed them this year in the farm-woodlot habitat south of Georgetown and most recently at Georgetown Golf Club. While golfing at the club two weeks ago, I paid more attention to a family of these woodpeckers than I did my rapidly burgeoning score.

The sixth Halton woodpecker is the pileated, the most impressive member of the group, by virtue of its size. At 16 to 19 1/2 inches in length the pileated's size rivals that of a crow.

These proportions and a large flame-like crest make identification of this bird an easy matter.

Pileateds are essentially birds of extensive forest but at times venture close to human habitation. I've observed pileateds along Silver Creek very near Georgetown.

Despite their size and despite the fact that pileateds are fairly common in this area, their retiring

habits can make them hard to find. Signs of their presence are much easier to come by than the birds themselves. Large oblong holes dug out of the trees by their chisel-like beaks are very much in evidence in the woods of north-Halton.

Pileateds excavate these holes in search of carpenter ants and grubs. They also forage for insects on rotted stumps, quite close to the ground.

Pileateds are very closely related to the ivory-billed woodpecker, formerly of southern United States. The ivory-billed, even larger and more striking than the pileated now

appears to be extinct - a victim of guns and habitat loss.

The strong preference of pileated woodpeckers for deep woods makes them vulnerable to habitat loss as well.

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### DEAR MEG



Meg Whitcomb

### Soldier defends his right to walk

DEAR MEG - I am a U.S. soldier stationed in West Germany. When I was home on leave, I spent most of my time in my sister's trailer, which is in a park that has security guards 24 hours a day. The night before I left, my mother and I were out for a walk around midnight when the manager of the park stopped us and asked what we were doing. My mother replied, "Walking," and he started yelling

about a curfew. I reminded him the curfew was for 16-and-under kids and that this is America, which is a free country.

He said, "This isn't America, this is my trailer park," and he threatened to have my sister evicted.

I think constitutional rights are being violated. I have stood on border-guard duty less than 50 feet from the communists to defend these rights. If this guy can stop me from taking a walk, then my being over here is a waste of time.

If I had the money I'd sue the guy, but I don't - FREEDOM FIGHTER, WIESBADEN, GERMANY

DEAR FIGHTER - One of the rights you are defending is the right to own property. The man's trailer park is his private property so he has the right to make rules - about cats, dogs or midnight strollers - for the security and convenience of his tenants, including your sister. I understand your aggravation, but if you give the question a little more thought, I'm sure you'll agree

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