

Outlook on Lifestyle

Nature's world isn't all serenity and peace

The natural world is not always serene and peaceful. Birds, animals and insects are all engaged in a perpetual and sometimes savage struggle to survive. In a balanced natural system almost all creatures are potential victims of some other creature. Only the few species on the top of the food chain can afford not to maintain eternal vigilance.

As I walked along the banks of a marsh I became aware of a loud splashing sound coming from the water. The source of the sound was obscured by dogwoods and alder. At first I suspected beaver - beaver cut trees on the shore indicated their presence. But as I approached, noisily moving through the shrubs the sound did not cease. I knew then that beaver were not the source of the noise, for their keen hearing would have alerted them to my presence and caused them to retreat.

The noise turned out to be the half-submerged thrashing of a wood duck. At first I was puzzled. The duck was obviously restrained by something under water - a trap maybe or perhaps its legs had somehow been tangled in submerged vegetation.

I soon had the answer - the head of a large snapping turtle momentarily broke the surface, the legs of the duck held firmly in its jaws.

I had read about the snapper's propensity for occasionally including ducks in their diet but had never observed the gruesome reality.

The duck and the snapper were beyond reach in deep water. I wondered what I would have done if I had been able to reach them. Certainly, my first impulse would be to free the duck from the snapping tur-

tle's grasp, but I question now whether that would be the right thing to do, for I would be interfering in a natural predator-prey relationship.

As it was, the duck struggled for about 30 minutes, before it mercifully died.

Predator-prey dramas occur everywhere, even in the tame environs of suburban backyards. Most of these are easier to accept than the

one I witnessed in the marsh.

I marvelled recently at the predatory habits of the ambush bugs that lurk in my hydrangea blossoms. These little brutes (less than 1/2 inch) are a yellow-brown colour and grotesquely shaped.

They lie in wait for unwary pollinators and then lunge at them with barbed front legs. Bees and hornets, several times larger than

the ambush bug, are routinely dispatched. Yellow jackets, the late summer scourge of backyard barbecues, are no match either, for the diminutive ambush bug.

Ambush bugs and snapping turtles, hawks and wolves all play necessary roles in the environment. And they do not kill indiscriminately, but only what they need to survive - a lesson that the two-legged creature on the highest wrung of the food chain has yet to take to heart.

Backyard Naturalist



BY DON SCALLEN
Herald Special

The brutality that is part of nature has a purpose of course. In a balanced state, predators actually serve to maintain the health and vitality of prey populations. Wolves preying on deer for example, keep deer numbers down to levels that the environment can support. Eliminate the wolves and the deer population expands. Winter arrives and the larger numbers of deer eventually consume the available vegetation and starvation results.

Acceptance of the logic of predation can, be put to the test however, when an actual predator-prey struggle is witnessed. I was privy to such a struggle last week in Halton Regional Forest

VIA Rail reduces fares for students

VIA Rail Canada Inc. is introducing a national student fare which entitles all full-time students to a 33 per cent discount on basic one-way coach fares anywhere on the VIA system.

To qualify for the reduced fare, students must present a valid student I.D. card when purchasing their tickets. The new fare will apply to trips taken on or after August 15, 1987.

"The new fare offers students a sizeable discount and the flexibility to travel at times that suit them, with very few restrictions," Murray Jackson, VIA's vice-president of Marketing and Sales, said in announcing the new offering.

"VIA feels that the train is the ideal way of travelling for students," Mr. Jackson added. "The train offers downtown to downtown service and a chance to meet friends, read or catch up on school work. And the fact that it is now more affordable should be especially appealing to students."

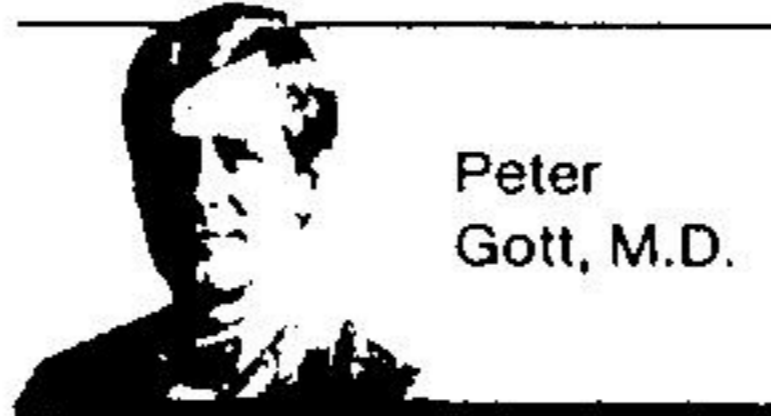
Tickets at the lower student fare can be purchased for travel anywhere on the VIA system on any day of the week with certain exceptions.

The discounts does not apply to trains departing Fridays and Sundays between the hours of noon and 6 p.m. in the Quebec-Windsor corridor

and on some Atlantic services. In addition, discounts are not allowed during the Christmas holiday period (between December 18 to January 4).

The new student fare follows a number of recent enhancements to VIA service which include, among other, new uniforms for on-board and station employees, modernized station facilities in many locations, and VIA's on-time commitment program whereby travellers receive substantial travel credits toward future trips if their train is late.

DR. GOTT



Peter Gott, M.D.

Exercise aids 'restless legs'

DEAR DR. GOTT I had restless legs for years. Then a doctor suggested I do exercises to stretch out the muscles in the backs of my legs, and this really helped me.

DEAR READER The peculiar sensation known as "restless legs" is caused by poor circulation that probably results from a form of muscle cramp. Since stretching is the way to overcome muscle cramps, I'm not surprised that leg exercises helped you. One of the easiest ways to stop a cramp in the calf is to stand about a giant step away from a wall, lean forward until your hands touch the wall and then stretch your calf muscles by bouncing on the balls of your feet.

DEAR DR. GOTT The dermatologist says that my husband has "housewife's eczema." Topical creams don't help. I've also noticed changes in his body - particularly his breasts, which are getting larger. Could a hormonal imbalance be causing his skin problem? He's 58.

DEAR READER -- Breast enlargement in males is never normal. Your husband's breast-size increase could be related to a hormone imbalance, certain medicines or simple overweight. He should be checked by a physician to see if he has a serious medical condition.

The breast problem probably is not related to the skin problem. "Housewife's eczema" (or "housewife's hands") is a form of contact dermatitis, a skin rash that is caused by an allergy to soap or detergent. Years ago, you-know-who did the dishes. Although the housewife may have thoroughly rinsed her hands, tiny traces of soap were left in some skin creases,

particularly under the wedding ring. With time, the skin reacted to the soap. Women would develop an angry-looking, itchy inflammation in the wedding-ring area, and this would spread to other parts of the hand.

I don't see much "housewife's hand" anymore. It was easy to cure: Women simply removed their wedding bands for a few days, avoided soap and used cortisone cream.

Unless your husband is a avid dishwasher or has had skin reactions to other substances, he probably doesn't have "housewife's hand." When he goes for the breast checkup, make sure that he asks the doctor about the rash, too.

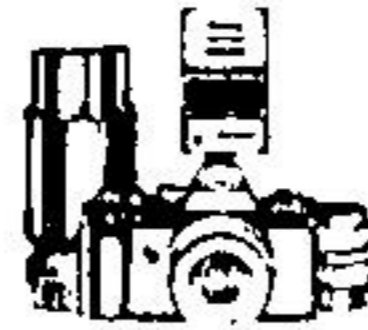


Photo Tips

by Peter Moss

This week rather than provide you, the readers, with a few helpful hints to aid you on your way to finer photographs I would like to ask of you, the readers, for some feedback on the subject of a Georgetown or Halton Hills Camera Club.

For some years now people have been lamenting the lack of some sort of organization and/or group, where-in or where-by local photographers could share their interests and ideas together. I know that after some six years of watching the annual 'Photo Art' show grow to a truly first class exhibition, that there are sufficient numbers out there to create a strong nucleus for a dynamic camera club in our community.

After some six years of 'Photo Art' planning and promoting I know that Mr. John Sommer owner of Gallery House Sol would not only be ecstatic about the idea but would probably be willing, with some friendly persuasion, lend the benefit of his many years of expertise.

At present, a small number of us are in contact with several large camera clubs seeking out their assistance in creating a club for Halton Hills.

Therefore if you would be interested in having a local camera club I will need the input of you - the future members of a local organization dedicated to helping your hobby or interest in photography. If you have some thoughts or some ideas that you think will be of use, by all means drop me a line (the address at the bottom of this column) or drop a line to The Herald in care of 'Photo Tips'. Please enclose your name and address along with your ideas so that we may contact you afterwards.

As something concrete begins to take shape I will devote the specifics of our progress in an upcoming 'Photo Tips' along with a separate public service announcement.

Looking forward to hearing from you.



Peter G. Moss Photography

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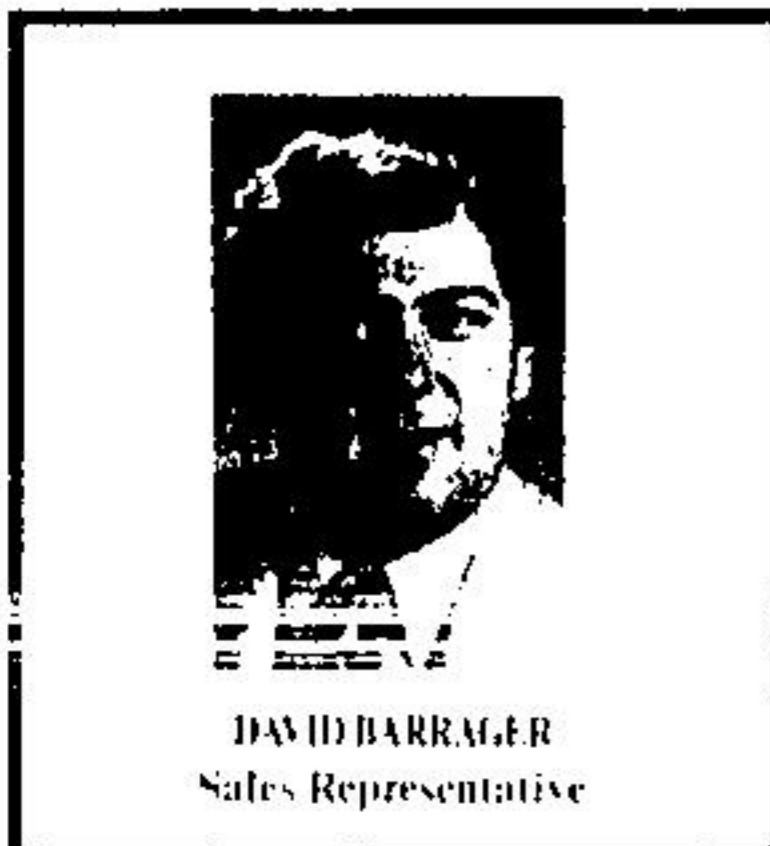
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