

# Acton's Boathouse Beach the dirtiest in Halton last year

**B**oathouse Beach at Acton's Fairy Lake was the dirtiest of the seven beaches in the region last summer.

And the main culprit? Geese, duck and seagull poop, according to a Halton health department report released last week.

The beach was closed for 63 days (the highest closure rate among the beaches in Halton) between mid-June and September. That meant it was only safe for swimming about three out of every 10 days.

In 2001, the beach was closed for 42 days.

The waste created high levels of E.

coli. bacteria making it unsafe for swimming.

The presence of the bacteria, found in the intestinal tract of warm-blooded animals, forces Halton's health department to close a beach until E. coli has cleared.

"Every time we took a sample there, a lot of waterfowl were there," said Dave Stronach, a senior advisor with Halton's health protection services.

He authored an information report released to the region's health and social services committee meeting last week that documented weekly results last year for E. coli among the region's seven major beaches.

Old Beach, also located at Fairy Lake,

was closed for 28 days.

Stronach made it clear that there is no single primary cause for beach pollution, which makes it difficult to source out the specific problem and cure it.

"With any of these things, if we're talking about birds or Lake Ontario, they may be a part of the puzzle but I don't think it's all of it," he said. "I think it's more complicated than saying it's just one thing."

As for the waterfowl messes at Boathouse, Stronach said what might be worth considering is looking at establishing a net over the beach, like at Kelso Beach in Milton, to see if it might be a deterrent.

Halton Hills Regional Councillor John Day agreed. He said the Acton beach has had a Canada geese problem for some time.

He said he finds them waddling onto his backyard, with many of the geese coming from the nearby Credit River.

He said he intends to raise the issue of netting at Boathouse Beach with his fellow councillors, as well as suggesting the town look at other municipalities to see what they've done to fix their bird problems.

"Our summers are short enough and people want to take advantage (of the beaches) when they can," Day said.

—By Jason Misner, special



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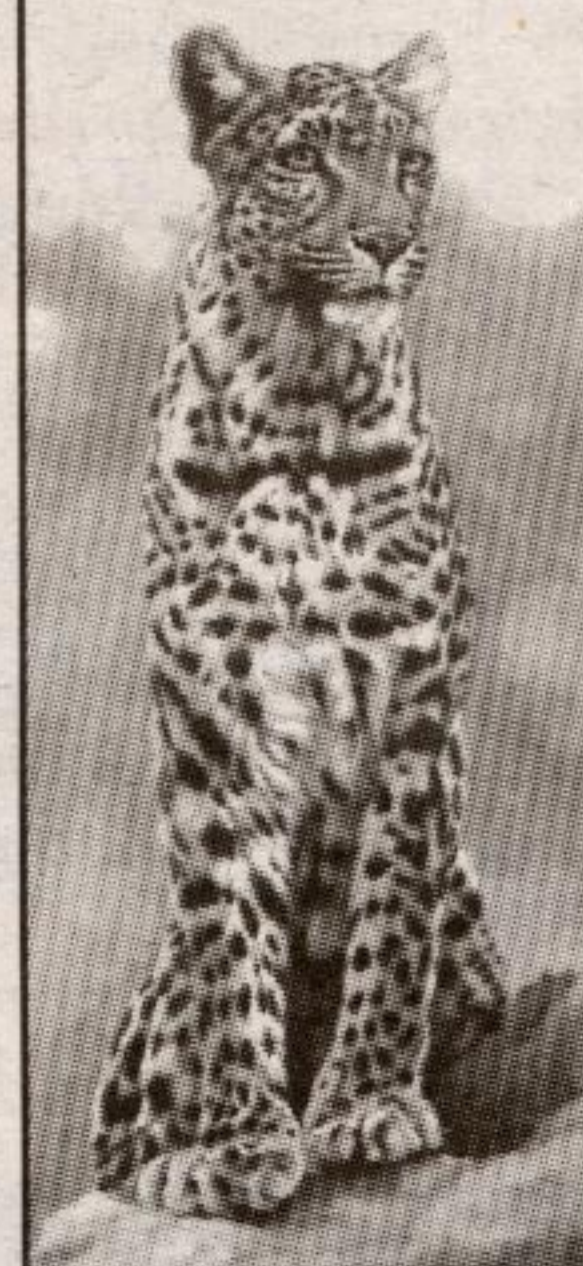
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