

Avid observer notes birds

Jeff Harvey, R.R. 1, Acton, is an avid bird watcher and a member of the Georgetown Naturalists club. He has been observing his feathered friends for several years now, and he is going to share his knowledge with readers of this newspaper. He will be writing articles on birds to be found in this locality.

This week he writes on seasonal changes in the birdlife of Halton county, and on bird-watching as a hobby.

by Jeff Harvey
The number of people who

study birds, whether in their own backyard, or in far away places, is on the increase. How many friends do you have who maintain a winter feeding station for birds? In a way, people who do this are in fact taking an interest in the environment. Other people who construct bird houses are helping various types of birds to sustain their numbers year by year.

Just about everyone can recognize a robin, a crow, or a sparrow. But not every person realizes how many different species of birds are found

in this area. Even those people who do not look for birds or cannot identify those he sees has any idea how many types there really are.

In Halton County, for example, on a warm spring day in mid-May, a person who searches hard enough could see as many as 50, or if very lucky, 100 types of birds in the one day. Over the whole year, there are about 250 species which at some time or other pass through Halton. Of these, between 70 and 100 are known to nest.

Many very rare birds,

which migrate from as far away as Central South America, can be found nearby! Most of these can be found in the Niagara Escarpment forest, just south of Speyside. Here is a list of some exotic species which migrate thousands of miles every spring and fall.

Most of these you won't know, but could with only a little practice. Scarlet Tanager, Northern Oriole, Wood Thrush, Yellow-Throated Vireo, many types of warblers, Grosbeak, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, together with the well known Common Crow, Black-Capped Chickadee, Robin, Starling, and many, many others.

Those names may sound like they came from who knows where, but it took me only two years to learn about these and the many others found in this beautiful area. And once this hobby starts, it tends to be addictive. As your "life list" grows, you really get involved with it, and travel all over.

However, don't get the idea that you have to travel thousands of miles to see these birds. A good start would be to put up a winter bird-feeder.

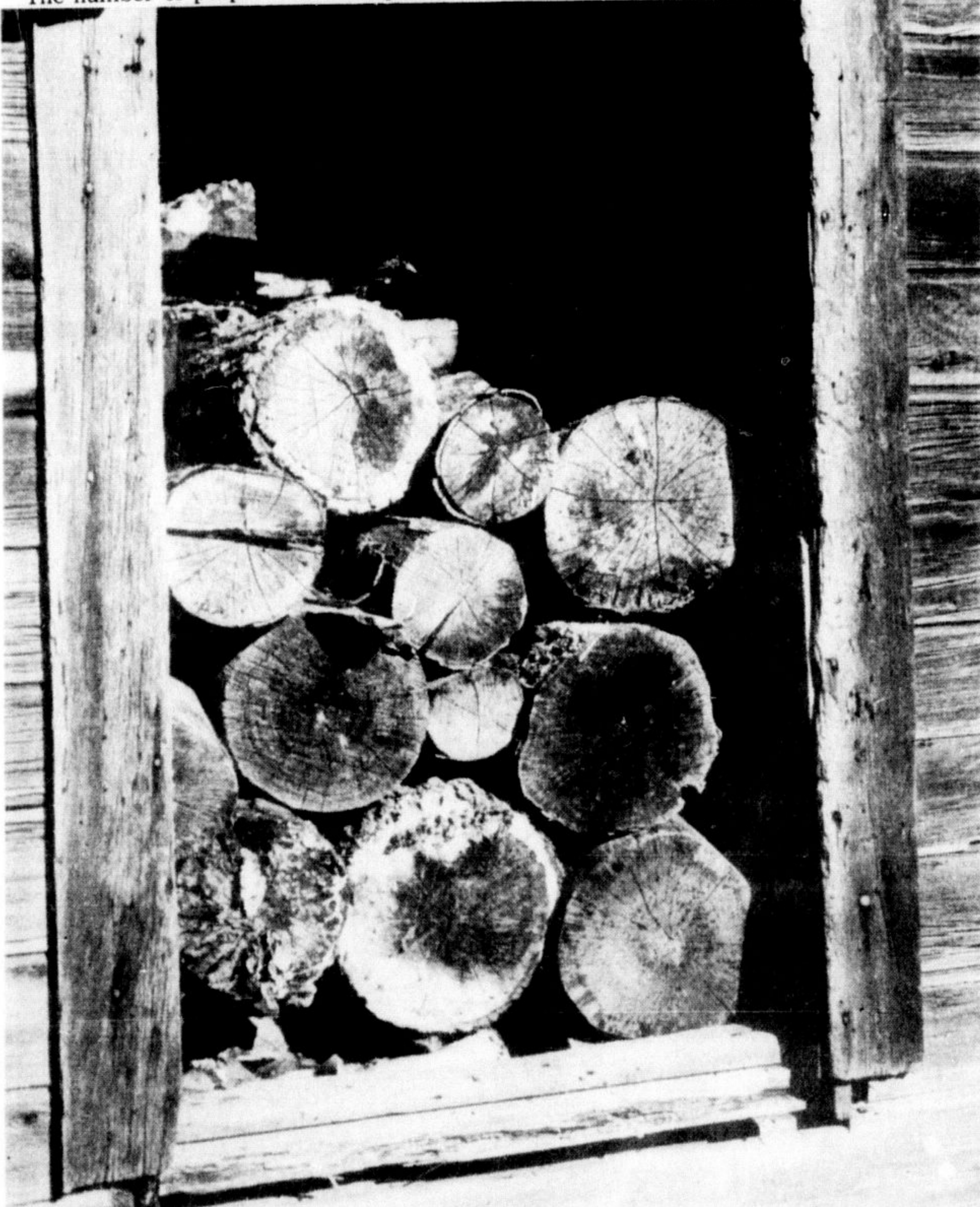
Don't be surprised when the birds arrive. Some of these, such as chickadees, will even feed out of your hand.

Bird study is also relatively inexpensive. All you really need is your two eyes and an interest in all the birds. As you gain more interest you will find binoculars an essential. These should be chosen with care, but a good pair of 7x50 or 7x35 binoculars should cost between \$20 and \$80 dollars.

In addition to the binoculars, a good bird guide book would be very useful. Two books which come to mind are Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds" and Robbins, Bruun's, and Zim's "Birds of North America". These books, which are sold in either hard or soft cover, can be purchased at most reputable book stores, and by reading these guides, and looking for patterns within a family, it is possible to recognize most local species by sight.

Another invaluable aid in identifying local birds is by ear. All birds, in one way or other, have a voice, and though at first they may all sound alike, after awhile you will learn the local dialects of most species, and this will help you to separate the "common" ones from the more "rare" types of birds.

I have studied the local birds for eight years, and I am familiar with 98 per cent of the songs of local species.



THE WOOD PILE, a familiar scene in many a local pioneer home, is coming into vogue again as more and more people add a fireplace to their modern homes. Many have cut and stored their wood by now, and smoke wisely from many chimneys on cool evenings.

Tax Talk

Q. I did not receive a T4 slip from my previous employer. Do I have to report the income?

A. Yes, all income must be reported. Employers are required to forward T4 slips to the last known address of the recipient on or before February 28 each year. If you have not received a T4 slip by the second week in March, you should contact your employer.

After all reasonable attempts have been made to obtain the information slip, your income and deductions, Canada Pension Plan contributions, Unemployment Insurance Premiums and T.C. Deductions should be estimated on your return. Forward pay stubs if possible. Attach a letter stating that you were unable to obtain a T4 slip and outline the estimated information. Also, give your employer's full name and address.

Q. I am married with a wife and two children, one seven and the

other seventeen. My wife and children did not earn any income last year. What exemptions am I entitled to claim?

Everyone is entitled to the basic personal exemption of \$2,270. You may also claim a married exemption of \$1,990, a \$780 exemption for your seventeen-year-old and a \$430 exemption for your seven-year old.

When making your claim be sure to give all the information requested on page 2 of your income tax return. For more details, check your 1977 Tax Guide.

Can I claim my common-law wife and our children?

Since a common-law wife is not considered a spouse for income tax purposes, you cannot claim the married exemption for her. You can, however, claim the children as dependents provided that you and not your common-law wife supported them.

Tax Talk

Q. My wife owns the house we live in. Can I apply for a Registered Home Ownership Savings Plan?

A. Starting January 1, 1978, you may no longer apply for a RHOSP or make any more contributions to an existing plan if at the time you apply, you are living with your spouse who owned a home during that year and the immediately preceding year and anyone lived in that property during those years.



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