

## Enviro-kids: Have a new attitude

Twenty years ago, most kids, says author Sylvia Funston, wouldn't have known an ecosystem from a stereo system. Nowadays, children and adults alike are more conscious of the environment and our important human link with it.

The 48 recycled pages of Funston's *The Nature Book* (Greey de Pencier, \$7.95 pb), another of OWL's Green World series, will keep children busy and entertained with puzzles, quizzes, games, simple projects, and fascinating facts that will, at the same time, enlighten them further in environmental matters. Adults can learn a thing or two as well. Did you know that in Switzerland, all drivers turn off their engines while waiting at red lights to reduce air pollution? And Iceland's national TV station does not broadcast on Thursdays. This move saves energy and also encourages people to read.

Just when we have contracted a weed control company to care for our lawn this summer, I have to read Constance Perenyi's *Growing Wild* (Firefly Books, \$8.95 pb, 6-9 year olds). "Once upon a time... there was a perfect... not just one perfect lawn, but many. Together these squares of bright green grass marched across the neighborhood. All the lawns were proud to be perfect. But they were also very, very lonely." Perenyi is suggesting we bring wildlife back into our yards by making our properties more inviting places to feed on, rest in and build homes on. This may be a scary concept for many adults who work hard all summer long, watering and mowing their perfect lawns and dumping chemicals on them. It would take committed adults with the encouragement of their children to go against the suburban grain and provide some refuge for wildlife.

Mary's father is one of those people who has lost his sensitivity to living things and decides in Margaret Haffner and Marion Taylor's *Mary's Tree* (Firefly Books, \$4.95 pb) to chop down an apple tree because it's in the way. Mary pleads with him not to carry out his plans and he agrees with her, so long as she can come up with 10 reasons for saving it.

Rather than giving us a day in the life of a tree, Jan Thornhill ambitiously gives us 212 years in the life of a maple tree in *A Tree in a Forest* (Greey de Pencier, \$14.95 hc, ages 5 and up). When the maple key first falls from the branch of a large tree, native children are running through the forest, and the forest abounds in wildlife. The seedling endures drought and fire, and as it grows, it becomes a haven for many creatures. Twenty-five years later, a log cabin appears nearby. A farmer and his family tap the 100-year-old tree in the spring. As the tree reaches the end of its life, there is a diminishing sap supply and some of the highest branches are bare because of acid rain. Then one fall, the old trunk crashes to the forest floor, only metres from a modern subdivision. Its spirit, says Thornhill, will return to the earth.

One of Bobbie Kalman and Janine Schaub's books in the Crabtree Publishing Company's new Primary Ecology series is *How Trees Help Me* (\$9.95 hc). Children can enter into a friendship with trees by observing them, feeling them, smelling them and even listening to them.

In the author's second information/activity book, *Squirmy Wormy Composters*, they show that vermi-composting can make an excellent classroom project. It also helps reduce the amount of leftover food thrown into school garbage cans. One student gets so attached to the pet worms that he plants a Red Wiggler on his tongue — for display purposes only, of course.

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## Sick birds at Mountsberg get \$125,000

Part of the health care bill for birds of prey will be covered by a \$125,000 Environmental Partners Fund grant announced by the Minister of State, the Honourable Pauline Browes.

The money will contribute to the construction of the Mountsberg Centre for Birds of Prey, a project that will rehabilitate hundreds of hawks and owls that are injured annually in the Golden Horseshoe area.

The Environmental Partners Fund is a five-year, \$50 million program designed to form partnerships between community groups and the federal government for projects that will solve environmental problems.

Birds of prey will receive extended care at the Centre before being released back into the wild.

The Centre will also serve as a relocation release site

for birds of prey that are captured at Pearson International Airport.

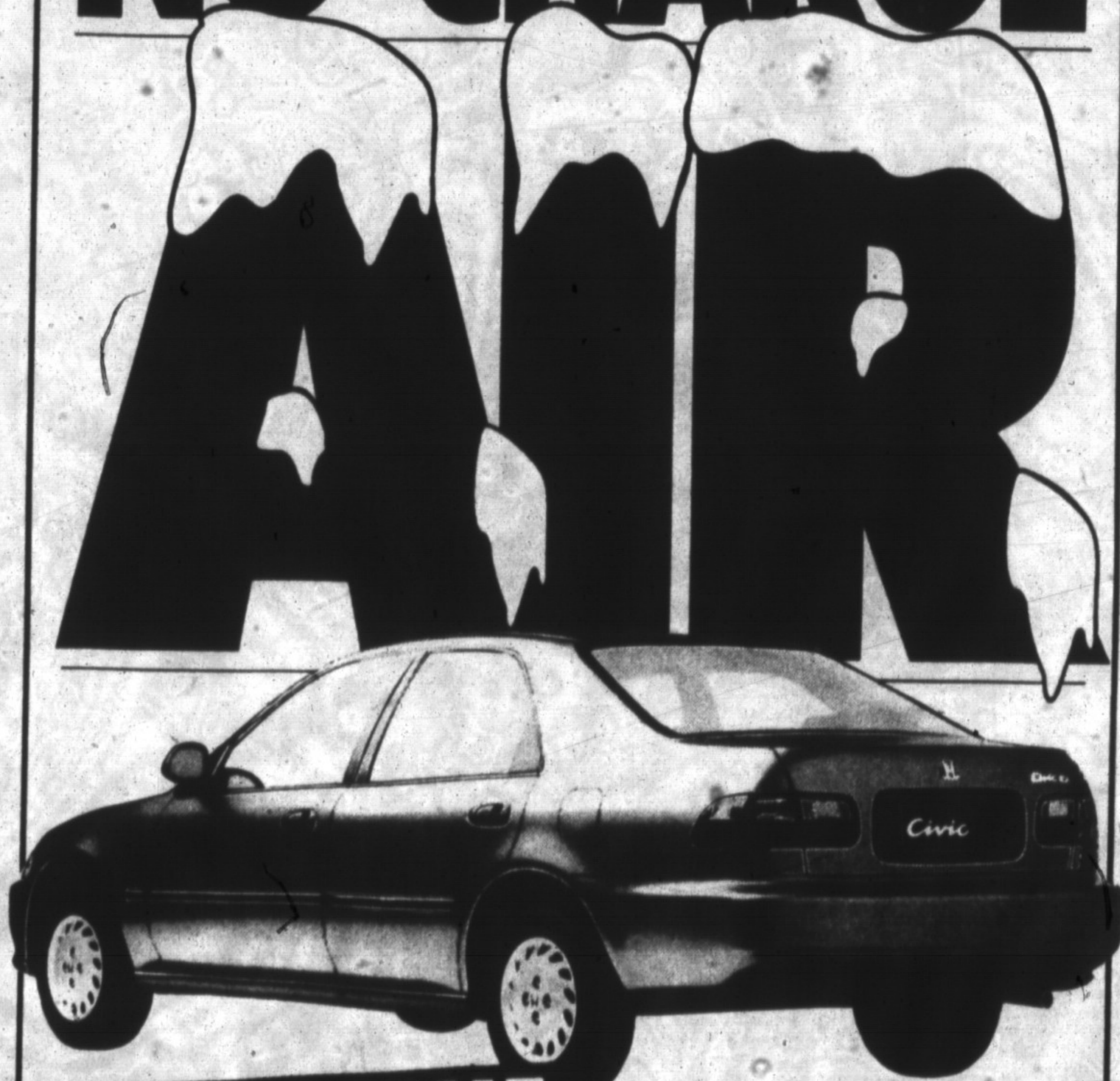
The project includes an educational component expected to involve 75,000 visitors annually.

The \$125,000 federal grant will be matched by the Friends of a Feather Committee that was formed to initiate the project. Other partners include the Halton Region Conservation Authority and Foundation, along with the Friends of the Environment Foundation chapters (Canada Trust) from Burlington, Oakville and Milton.

Construction of the new centre will be kicked off Sunday, May 24 with a sod turning ceremony at 2:30 p.m. at Mountsberg Wildlife Centre. It's expected to open next year.

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