

Trailblazer

Missing Long-eared Owls

By ALEX EBERSPAECHER

Something out there is out of whack again! For years the 'owl tree' near my home had at least 20 Long-eared owls as residents by this time of year. This year only one was sighted.

What went wrong is only a guess on my part and no one else has given me an acceptable explanation. Anybody involved with wildlife knows that all creatures are governed by yearly cycles. This is especially true for birds of prey such as hawks and owls.

During years when foods such as mice are plentiful, we have many hawks and owls but when the food has depleted, the birds become scarce as well. This is nature's way of balancing wildlife.

This particular tree is

usually very productive, especially for the photographer. What is the reason for the great drop in its resident population? Could it be interference from us? Perhaps they cleaned out all the mice in the area and have moved on to a new spot? Maybe I will find out in time.

OWL HANGOUT

Conservation areas in our region, near the big city, are man-made hangouts for all kinds of owls each winter. Whereas snowy owls frequent the areas around the airport and some of the river valleys, Long-eared, Great Horned and Saw-whet owls are quite common in parks, as are Boreal owls, my favorite subject for photography.

The Long-eared owl, with its protective coloration, is very hard to spot. He can compress his feathers to look more like

a tree stump than a bird. In spite of the name, he has no ears but tufts of feathers that look much like horns, its most outstanding fieldmark.

As do all owls, they fly completely noiselessly but look much like giant moth with their fluttering flight.

Long-eared owls are usually found in flocks of about 10 to 25 birds.

The chief food, in the winter range in our area and in Northern Ontario during the summer, consists mainly of mice. As are all owls, they are a good bird to have around.

HORNED OWL

The Great horned Owl is much larger and more difficult to approach. Single birds are the rule with pairs as an exception. However, I know of one such pair in our region right now. As with the previous bird, this fellow has only feather tufts that look like horns. He feeds mostly on rabbits but will also relish other birds and has been known to down the odd stray cat.

The smallest of the owls is the Saw-whet. Making

his home in our region all year round, this bird is easily seen in conservation areas near towns. He is easily approached and makes a good subject for the camera. Some of them are so tame that a full-grown adult can actually be touched.

By imitating their notes, they can easily be decoyed and brought into range of the camera or

binoculars. Although these birds migrate short distances in flocks, one usually finds a solitary bird during the winter.

The Boreal Owl is just a shade larger than the Saw-whet and is also very tame. Last year I snapped a couple rolls of film of one bird, just a few feet above me in a bush. Working for well over an hour, I arranged the camera and flash from all

sides. Only occasionally would he open one eye to see what was happening.

I even arranged some branches below the bird to be out of the way of my camera. The only complaint I had was with the bird itself. He got so used to me and became so indifferent that he refused to even open one eye. But then, why should he care? I was just another intruder.

Hill Atoms win three

It was an enjoyable week for the Richmond Hill Atom A's as they came up with three wins against only one loss.

The Hillers split with Stouffville winning 5-3 at home and then losing 3-1 in Stouffville.

The win saw Pat Dickinson leading the home team with two goals with singles going to David Repath, Paul Ruytenbeek and Dino Delfabro. Assists to John Kennedy with two and Russell Armstrong, Ruytenbeek and Robbie Jakma with one each.

The loss saw Russell Armstrong scoring the only Richmond Hill goal from Greg Moore.

The Steelers hosted Orillia Saturday night but weren't very gracious as they won 3-1. Paul Ruytenbeek, Brian McKenna and Jason Haile scored the hometown goals with assists to John Kennedy and Pat Dickinson.

The Hill team then walloped Pickering 7-0 with Russell Armstrong coming up with the hat-trick and one assist. Dickinson had two goals and two assists.

Greg Moore and Delfabro had one goal each. Other assists went to Cesidio Negri, Paul Ruytenbeek and Derek DiBattista with two each and Repath and Dino Buffon getting one.

Vending loses 2

It just wasn't Thornhill Active Vending Atom I's days against Barrie last week losing 4-1 and 7-2.

The 7-2 loss saw Active Vending completing a busy week and playing minus three regulars. They were no match for the large, aggressive Barrie team.

Simon Fleming-Wood scored for Thornhill from Scott Tew and Tim Bagg. Scott Tew also scored for

Thornhill from Glen Oliver and Philip Farb, Mike Steinberg and Alan Dworatzek played well on defence for Thornhill.

The 4-1 loss at Thornhill saw Barrie taking a 4-0 lead before Frank Lafona scored for Thornhill from Fleming-Wood. Troy Braithwaite, Glen Oliver and Sean Bradley played well at forward for Thornhill. Tim Bagg and Dworatzek played well on defence.

Jack Blyth leads

Jack Blyth Real Estate maintains a narrow two-point lead atop the Richmond Hill Town Men's Hockey League standings with Gormley right behind with 37 points.

Top league scorer is Errol Hook of Ponderosa with 43 points on 25 goals and 18 assists.

	W	L	T	GF	GA	PTS
L&M	17	3	5	79	41	39
Jack Blyth	16	4	5	87	41	37
Gormley	12	9	4	63	53	28
Galaxy	12	11	2	75	74	26
Ponderosa	10	10	5	72	75	25
Barrow's	11	11	3	81	86	25
Summit	10	11	4	58	60	24
White						
Water	7	13	5	76	85	19
3 Coins	7	15	3	59	80	17
Richvale	3	18	4	45	100	10

GOALTENDERS						
	GP	GA	AVE	SO		
Ben Bourget						
Jack Blyth	25	41	1.64	5		
Dave Carnell, L&M	25	41	1.64	4		
Len Bishop						
Gormley	25	53	2.12	1		
Dan Ransom						
Summit	25	60	2.40	2		

LEADING SCORERS						
	G	A	PTS	PIM		
Errol Hook	25	18	43	18		
Dave Berseth, L&M	23	16	39	15		
Steve Wilson, L&M	19	17	36	31		
Rod Chapman						
Gormley	20	12	32	39		
Tony Roffey						
White Water	20	12	32	18		
Rob Hurlburt						
Barrow's	18	12	30	18		
Danny Phillips						
Barrow's	13	17	30	36		
John Gropp						
Jack Blyth	14	15	29	24		
Rick Collins						
White Water	17	11	28	21		
Bob Mills						
Barrow's	13	12	25	67		

Carpenters tie 2-2

The Richmond Hill Carpenter Peewee B's came up with a big effort last Sunday and the result was a 2-2 tie against Thornhill. They haven't beaten Thornhill all season.

Richmond Hill opened the scoring in the first period on a goal by Sean O'Brien from Jim Anderson. Thornhill tied it and went ahead in the second 2-1.

The third period saw Anderson scoring the

tying goals from Jim Hodson.

Goalie Sean McQuiggan played a very steady game for the Carpenters and Ralph Seybold came up with an excellent effort on defence in that game and in Saturday's 8-3 loss to Barrie.

Goalscorers for Richmond Hill in that one were David Abernathy unassisted; Carl Kiely from Darin Grodzinski; and Sean O'Brien from Jim Anderson and Jim Hodson.

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