

Editor's Mail

Protected?

Dear Mr Thomas:
I was intrigued by The Tribune's Page 1 photo, (Feb. 15 issue), of the Great Horned Owl. I wasn't aware that an owl would attack penned-up fowl of this type. I thought their diet consisted mainly of rats and mice.

The question that follows is: Has a farmer the right to shoot birds of this species if he's protecting his own livestock or are they protected regardless of the damage they do? I've yet to find anyone who has the answer.

If a dog entered a property and destroyed a fowl or animal, a farmer could kill it. Does the same rule hold true for birds of prey? Sincerely,

Gordon Bennett,
R.R. 1, Cedar Valley

Editor's Note: Jim Ryan of Canine Control, R.R. 4, Stouffville, says a legitimate farmer is entitled to protect his own property against any bird or animal that causes death or injury. In this case, however, the ruling would not apply.

Disservice

Dear Editor:
The information accompanying the photo of the Great Horned Owl did a disservice to this beautiful bird.

What makes you so sure it entered the pheasant pen to kill or, if in fact it DID kill?

Now, all the wild bird hunters will be questioning the owls' right to protection. They'll point to this one alleged incident and use it as an example.

I'm not saying an owl wouldn't kill a fowl of this kind, but I would suggest it's very unlikely.

Sincerely,
Bruce Atkinson,
Gormley, R.R. 1.

Editor's Note: I feel, as you do, that owls should be protected. However, in this instance, it DID kill. I saw the victim, or what was left of it.



"Sorry sir, but Nicole's Science Fair project just erupted again"

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ROAMING AROUND



Did I miss my calling?

BY JIM THOMAS

Did I miss my calling? Was I really meant to be what I am and do what I do? Many undoubtedly ask themselves this same question, usually after it's too late to change lanes.

I'd be dishonest if I said I dislike journalism. The truth is, I not only like it, I love it. However, there are times, (usually around 3 a.m. on a Tuesday morning), when I wonder if, thirty-three years ago, I selected the right profession. This, however, is an open-ended query I'll never be able to answer. For I'll never have the opportunity of finding out.

I suppose, the best way of responding to the vacuum in my mind, is to ask myself a question: "If I had my life to live over again, would I choose the same vocation?" My immediate response would be an unequivocal 'YES' which, I suppose, is all the convincing I should require.

Still, for all that, there remains a gnawing sensation way down deep, that I should have been a teacher. It's a profession I hold in high regard, particularly at the elementary level where the shaping of minds, souls and spirits is at an important and impressionable stage.

In this regard, I can think of no greater satisfaction than to look back over an entire generation and say: "In them, is a little bit of me." What a reward.

Because of this innermost feeling, I become extremely irritated when I hear people, in very general terms, condemn the profession. They talk about the hours--9 to 3:30; the holidays--Christmas, Easter, March 'Break' and Summer; the salaries; the benefits and all the other red herrings worn thin with age. It's safe to say not one of these serious critics would last a week in a classroom let alone ten months.

By the same token, I also become even more aggravated when I observe a teacher shirking his or her responsibilities. The system has a few of these, teachers who look on their work only as "a job". They do no more than is absolutely necessary and, in some instances, not as much. These are the parasites, few though they may be, who give the profession a bad name.

But I'd never be one of those; no sir, not me! Maybe yes, maybe no. Who's to say?

All I know is I enjoy talking to kids, and I was afforded that opportunity a week ago Thursday.

The occasion was Career Day at Summitview School. With pad and pencil in hand, I attended the event. However, as fate, (good fortune), would have it, one of the speakers, (a lawyer no less), was delayed on a case in court, leaving a vacan-

cy on the guest list. The principal, Lorne Boadway, immediately announced my presence to the organizer, Merrill McPhail and suggested something to the effect that "if you're really stuck, Jim can fill in." Staff teacher Norma Card went a step further. She grabbed me by the arm and with her feminine powers of persuasion, ushered me inside the classroom door.

While pretending to be awe-struck by the suddenness of my switch in roles, I was actually elated. For a half-hour, at least, I was fulfilling a life-long dream.

Even without the benefits of props, (a newspaper, camera, etc.), I told my listening audience all about the wonderful world of journalism.

And listen they did, their young minds weighing on every word. Later, they posed questions, intelligent questions, that could have opened up whole new areas of discussion. But there wasn't time, the thirty minutes had gone by like thirty seconds; certainly for me and hopefully for them. I was sorry when it was over. The half-hour had made my day.

However, the days since have been less intriguing. For the question has arisen again with ever increasing intensity. Did I miss my calling? I'll never really know. But thanks, kids, for keeping the spark alive.

Editorials

Parental interference at Science Fairs

In recent weeks, we inspected the majority of Science Fair projects in Whitchurch-Stouffville schools; not all, but most.

In some instances, the work involved was amazing, even surpassing expectations of local judges.

We praise these programs. However, we feel ground rules should be more explicit.

Can a parent assist and, if so, to what extent?

Several students to which we talked, honestly admitted they'd received help. But how much help--part of it; half of it; all of it? They didn't say and we didn't ask.

However, it's safe to say the kid who "goes it alone" and produces a project according to his (her) ability, doesn't stand a chance against displays completed by adults.

This eventually leads to frustration and ultimate withdrawal.

Attempt to embarrass

By requesting other municipalities in York Region to consider the establishment of a young offenders detention centre in their areas, the Town of Richmond Hill, it would appear, is attempting to embarrass its neighbors by tossing them a politically hot potato.

In addition, its attempting to wash the blood of guilt from its own hands.

For it was Richmond Hill, (as well as Aurora), that opposed a detention centre at Blue Hills Academy, west of Yonge, a decision that engendered some criticism.

ism. So now the Council is saying: "How would you like it?"

Here in Whitchurch-Stouffville, instead of discussing the issue in private and coming up with no decision, members should have responded: "Yes, if the location is right."

York Region requires such a centre, so why not here? A nothing response would indicate Council's too timid to accept such a responsibility. This is the type of reaction Richmond Hill was looking for and no doubt expected.

Protect at any price

If an opinion poll was taken concerning types of stories that interest readers most, (Tribune readers anyway), news items related to birds and animals would undoubtedly rank far above all the rest. We conclude this from comments received every time nature stories appear in this newspaper. It matters not what kind--a dog, a cat or a canary; folks are suddenly caught up in the joy or sorrow that may be connected with it.

We know this when we published the Page 1 photo of the Great Horned Owl and the understandable question that would follow: "The owl killed, should it too be killed?"

In this case, no, only because a pheasant-owner isn't considered to be a legitimate farmer. However, had this

predator selected a different site, (a legitimate farming operation), to feast on a fattened fowl, then the owner could have killed it without question.

The law, in our opinion, is hazy with respect to what's protected and what isn't and what's protectable and what isn't. And how is the bird to know?

We say that a Great Horned Owl or any other similar species, should be protected regardless of the size of the property where the victim is found or the nature of the operation where the killing takes place.

Birds of prey aren't particularly choosy when it comes to meals; particularly during the winter when meals are often difficult to find. This being the case, the law of the wild should prevail.

WINDOW ON WILDLIFE

Old fashioned winter

BY ART BRIGGS-JUDE



This real, cold, old fashioned winter with its temperature extremes, reminds me of the winter of 1981. Why temperatures of minus 40 degrees Celsius were recorded in many places, and at our old farm near Westport I think they dropped even a shade or two lower. My wife and I had arrived from our Gormley residence to spend a winter week in the country. And because this was an annual cold-weather vacation we thought with our previous experience, we were prepared.

Oh, I might as well tell you we didn't have the hydro in yet, so our only source of heat was an ancient Patricia Pat cook stove. Now under normal winter conditions this old chrome and black beauty was more than adequate, but as I pointed out this was not an average season. We had half expected the pump in the kitchen to be frozen (it was) and so had brought in a couple pails of water to tide us over till we got the pump thawed out. What we didn't expect was to have these same pails of water freeze solid right in the same room as the stove, and within an arm's length of our bed.

Let me tell you how frigid it really got during that record cold snap and how it affected us. Apart from the slight inconvenience of melting ice in the pails to wash and cook, we had a few other problems. A cold air mass was continually chilling the floor up to the stove level. And despite laying old rugs down and patching the wall holes up, the warm air just kept going up, and away through the old rafters.

To take advantage of this warm upper air mass, we lashed four foot lengths of 2x4's to the legs of the bed. Buoyed by the results, we decided to eat in this upper warm region too. It was a simple matter to nail a piece of heavy plywood to the top of a step ladder and thus form a high table. Now extension legs were attached to a couple of chairs using some lengths of old pipe. A few cross pieces on the bed legs and an old foot stool enabled us to reach these dizzy heights. And under such conditions it's amazing how quickly you adapt. In fact I think I only got up once in the night and stepped off into four feet of air space before crashing down in a crumpled heap on the floor. Seems to me about that time I even forgot what the heck I got up for in the first place.

Being an ardent hockey fan we tried to get the N.H.L. games on our little battery T.V. set. Well sir, somehow that intense cold was affecting the transmission and we were getting zilch. As I was fiddling with the set, my wife suggested the fire might be more important. "There's some of that good hard ironwood down there in the cellar," she said, "Maybe we should try it". Soon I was stoking up the stove, and as I did a great idea crossed my mind. Why not utilize that tall plume of iron laden smoke curling up in the frosty air as a T.V. antenna? In another moment I had fastened a wire from the T.V. set to the stove pipe. When I switched the dial back on, the results were amazing. Why I had 26 channels without a cable and even picked up a Russian League hockey game

between Sparta and Moscow Selects. The real test of the cold nights though were the evening jaunts to the outside john. The extreme cold was cracking through the trees sending off as many reports as the opening shots of the duck season on Lake Scugog. But that was only part of it. Stepping outside I was greeted with a number of intermittent missiles as the old square nails flew out of the plank siding aided and abetted by the penetrating frost. Rushing back inside I returned to complete my back-house journey wearing an old construction hard hat and carrying a large garbage can lid for a shield.

Thus equipped I was able to reach my destination, fending off the unexpected square-headed shrapnel enroute. But trouble was everywhere on that trip. Can you imagine my concern, when I discovered as I was about to leave, that my posterior was frozen to the seat. Undaunted, I carefully reached around and tapped out the hinge-pins with my pocket knife. Racing indoors with the seat still fast frozen, I must have resembled a large mud turtle with a small shell. Rather than risk injury, I let it come off in its own good time.

Of course, all this would have remained a secret except for the fact I went skinny dipping in the back forty pond that spring. And wouldn't you know, some smart alec neighbor's kid had to spot me. "Hey mister", he yelled, "as I submerged to my waist, "That horseshoe you got tattooed on your hind end sure is a dandy"