

February birds beat the blahs

By MARION STREBIG
Federation of Ontario
Naturalists

Although the weather can't make up its mind whether to commit itself to winter or spring, birds have already decided.

For them, the silly season has arrived.

Again, the male cardinal is using the forsythia bush to launch attacks against the garage window.

There, he flutters for 30 seconds or so, then returns to the bushes to preen. Possibly, seeing his own reflection in the window, he imagines he's driving off battalions of rival males. Birders also suffer.

I'm not a lister. A lister is a birder who abandons everything including his family and job if he hears of a rare bird anywhere within a day's drive.

But I confess to responding to a call we received at the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. It related to a Rock Wren that appeared to have settled, at least temporarily, on a lakefront in Etobicoke.

The Rock Wren is a western bird that should have been happily wintering in Arizona. We wondered what strange twist of fate had prompted it to land on the shores of Lake Ontario, thousands of miles from home.

When we heard about the wren, it was a bright day in February. The sun was warm and the sky was blue — a perfect time to play hooky. Several of us drove down to the lake.

The location it had selected was, in many respects, an ironic one. It was a man-made spit in the process of being created by truckloads of fill.

Looking for a bird as tiny as a wren among piles of rock was

like searching for the proverbial needle in a haystack except wrens, like small dogs, are given to noisily scolding intruders.

While we never did see or hear this elusive fellow, we did catch the sound of a horned lark tinkling somewhere on that muddy expanse of raw earth.

Also, among the rocks, we started a small flock of snow buntings that rose on rapid wing and whirled away like driven snow.

On a small tree near the entrance to the spit, a handsome male evening grosbeak sat long enough to be admired.

It was a good day for hawks as well.

On our way back, we spotted two Red-Tailed Hawks floating over the Don Valley. One had something dangling from its talons.

Lately, there seem to be Red-Tailed Hawks wherever there is open ground.

Since this hawk's diet consists largely of rodents, it hunts like most owls, from a perch. But it also appears to enjoy the intoxication of rising in spirals, its broad wings motionless. I saw it again later in the day, escorted by three noisy crows. It came to rest in a pine tree within view of my window.

It was there the crows really began to have some fun.

Although the Red-Tailed Hawk is too ponderous in motion to be a threat to any bird, these crows were not about to tolerate its presence on their territory. They proceeded to buzz the hawk and I could tell through my binoculars they

were actually making contact. Finally, the hawk turned its head, like a horse shaking off a fly; rose on broad strong wings and sailed out over the ravine.

His tormentors, already losing interest, only followed a short distance.

I'll be watching for its return, next time possibly with a mate.

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Mini-retreat in Claremont

CLAREMONT — Claremont Baptist Church is hosting a mini-retreat Saturday, March 4 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Workshops at the event will include chocolate-making, folk art, scarf-tying and hands-on crafts.

The guest speaker is Sooz Wells. She will also provide music.

Registration, which includes lunch, is \$10.

For additional information call Janice Schier at 649-2127, or Pat Davis at 649-5104.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

TAKE NOTICE THAT a Public Meeting of the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario will be held at the SHERATON PARKWAY HOTEL, 600 HIGHWAY #7 EAST, RICHMOND HILL, ONTARIO on THURSDAY, MARCH 16th, 1989 at the hour of 10:00 o'clock in the forenoon, at which time the Board will hear applications in accordance with the Liquor Licence Act, and Regulations thereunder.

The following establishments have applied for a licence of the class indicated, and the applications will be entertained at the aforementioned location and time:

Applications For New Licences

- Club 300 Bowl
146 Old Kennedy Road, Markham
Dining Lounge Licence
- Union Station Brew Pub
4396 Steeles Avenue East, Markham
Dining Lounge Licence, Patio Licence,
Brew Pub Licence

AND FURTHER TAKE NOTICE that any person who is resident in the municipality and who wishes to make representation relative to the application, shall make their submission to the Board in writing prior to the date of the hearing, or in person at the time and place of the hearing. (Copies of written submissions will be forwarded to the applicant).

Liquor Licence Board of Ontario
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