

**Motorcycle myth?****Spooky legend haunts Ghost Road**CHRIS SHANAHAN  
Correspondent

A group of teenagers watch from a parked car as a ball of yellowish-white light floats eerily across the night sky.

The basketball-sized sphere is several hundred metres away but appears to be heading in their direction. Seconds later, it flickers and mysteriously fades into the darkness.

A girl screams and clutches her boyfriend. "It was him," she says breathlessly. Her friends all agree they've just had a close encounter with Scugog Island's headless ghost rider.

The island's claim to supernatural fame is known as Ghost Road, an isolated dirt sideroad where some say a young motorcyclist was decapitated in an accident decades ago.

As the legend goes, the rider so enjoyed the sensation of speed that his spirit continues to frequent the road.

Some area residents believe the story while others say it's hogwash.

One thing's for sure, Ghost Road is a bona fide tourist attraction that gains popularity every Halloween. Visitors from as far away as the United States flock

there to do a little ghostwatching by the picturesque shores of Lake Scugog.

The legend began to spread in the late 1970s, but some say it has been around much longer.

Most everyone in the Port Perry area knows about the haunted mile-long stretch that connects the 9th and 10th concessions. It has been famous for generations as a lover's lane.

Allene Kane, the acknowledged queen of Ghost Road, has lived nearby for 30 years. And she's convinced she knows what's causing all the excitement.

"It's a ghost," Mrs. Kane says matter-of-factly. "There's definitely something out there, a spirit of some kind."

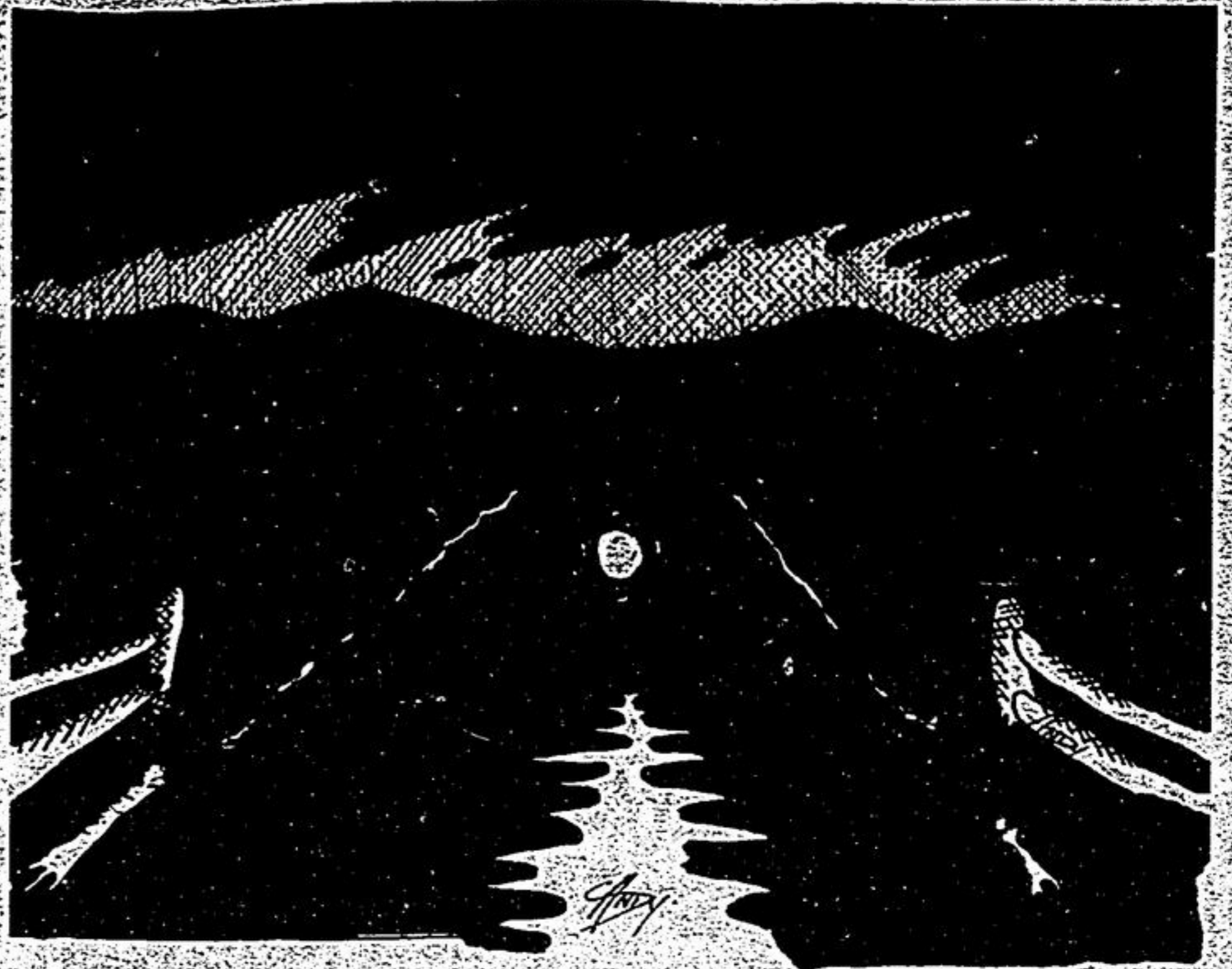
She has consulted two amateur psychics, who both concluded the light is the spirit of a man in his early 20s with light brown, curly hair. He drives an old motorcycle.

The light looks to Mrs. Kane like the headlamp of an old-fashioned motor bike. "It is a faint light then it becomes brighter, like they used to on the old motorcycles with the magneto-type motor."

The rider, which one psychic sensed was a Dan or Dave Sweeney, supposedly lost control of his machine at high speed. He flew off the road into a field and was beheaded by a rusty wire fence.

However, police and hospital officials have no record of such an accident ever taking place in that area.

Several ghostbusting expeditions, including one with a large Stouffville-Uxbridge contingent, have unsuccessfully tried to track the light to its source.



About three years, some Niagara College film students made a short documentary called *Ghost Light on Scugog Island*. One of the crew members took a still photo of the light that, when enlarged, reveals what some feel is the outline of a human figure bathed in a bright aura.

Mrs. Kane disagrees with skeptics who claim the light is actually car headlights shining from the adjacent West Quarter Line Road.

"If you go in the daytime and scan up and down the Ghost Road with binoculars, you can't see the West Quarter Line because there are hills in the way," she says. "I've seen the ghost light in the middle of a snowstorm, in the fog and in the rain."

Less frequently spotted is a red light, which Mrs. Kane believes

to be the motorcycle's tail-light. "One time I was standing on the road and the red light went right by me," she says. "It came within six feet of me."

Scugog Township's mayor, Howard Hall, has joined other residents for Halloween costume parties down on Ghost Road.

"We'd go out for dinner and drinks, then bus down to the road," Mayor Hall says. "We even had a loudspeaker set up to play scary sound effects."

Despite his many sightings, the mayor remains baffled by the light.

"There is something to it but I don't know what it is," he says. "Sometimes you see the light and sometimes you don't. It's something you have to see to believe."

The legend of Ghost Road lives on.

**Wildlife preparing for winter months**ART BRIGGS-JUDE  
Correspondent

The great blue heron sits hunched and forlorn at the edge of the marsh, the gusts of raw wind periodically ruffling feathers on its head.

Occasionally, it would lean forward and dabble in the water like an old man on a park bench poking in a pool with his sun-bleached cane.

Only when a hawk flapped and glided across the valley would the heron cock its head to check on the other's flight. The turkey vulture drifts down from further north, soaring along the ridges and sweeping down over the lowlands.

Its circling flight seems effortless, its search for a carrion meal endless. On two-toned wings of black and grey, the turkey vulture tips and glides above the blazed landscape, an unhurried migrant travelling only by the outward weather conditions or by some inner seasonal clock.

The Canada goose courses across the heavens, a single animated body in a large pulsating flock. Down it comes from the nesting grounds on the Hudson Bay lowlands to the tidal flats of the James Bay estuaries.

Here it gathers friends and strength for the next leg of its journey. By the time it sets its wings on its Great Lakes destination, it will have felt the fury of the storm and kept aloft of most of the native and white hunters.

And for every one that falls, 100 more will carry on. For its presence stimulates a long-standing tradition in people that includes equal amounts of provision and appreciation.

The woodchuck, fat with early autumn gorging, moves from the field to its woodland burrow. Now in the manner of a tired child, it gradually resists the periodic beckoning of the bright sunlight and drowsily goes to sleep.

It will not see the last leaves fall or witness the first flurries of snow. By that time, this chunky rodent will be so deep in slumber even its heartbeat will be barely discernable.

The painted turtle may have sunned itself on its favorite log for the last time this past Sunday. The gradually dropping water temperatures dictate that it must soon dig into the pond's muddy bottom to survive.

There it will remain along with the frogs as the pond freezes over, while the blizzards rage and the mercury drops. Only when the ice melts and sun shines through will the turtle once again be seen sitting on his familiar floating log.

The busy little striped chipmunk is active now only on the brighter days, taking in the last of its winter stores. Though not a true hibernator, this artful dodger blocks up its entrance hole with earth and vegetation, and sleeps in fits and starts throughout the cold winter months.

Occasionally, it leaves its burrow during a warm spell in winter while at other times it merely moves about in its underground chambers, sampling the nuts and berries it carried in during the autumn months.

The soft-voiced bluebirds arrive in family groups from further afield uttering their plaintive calls and pecking and poking into any nearby nest boxes.

Many times they visit a birdbath or other shallow water to bathe and refresh themselves as they move along. Bluebirds like to move south on sunny days, so look for them then, especially in the morning.

These blue robins, as the settlers called them, also like a feed of wild berries at this season, so keep your eye on your mountain ash tree, wild grapevine or Virginia creeper.

I believe that if the bluebirds find a good food supply and suitable nesting cavities in the fall, they quite often will return there the following spring.

The planting of persistent berries and fruits coupled with our moderate winters the past few years has even influenced some bluebirds to stay north.

While spring is the season of expectancy, autumn is a time of preparation and harvest. Many humans, like some of the birds, pack up and head south to dodge the coming winter, while most of us take it a day at a time.

To me, winter opens up a whole new chapter in outdoor activity. We should, like the varying hare, change our coats or, like the ruffed grouse, put on our feathered boots and get ready to enjoy what this season called winter really has to offer.

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