

# Taking walk in the woods can be revitalizing

With lots of nice weather opportunities this fall, I hope you've been able to get out and have a walk in the woods.

Taking the word from those of us who have rambled about recently, it can be an exhilarating experience.

Such a leisurely exposure outdoors may also give you some insight as to what's been happening there during the past few months.

Some signs are very evident, while other clues must be looked for.

A good example is the rubbed off bark on an exposed sapling. It shows where a buck deer has worked the velvet from its rack while honing its formidable tines for the rutting season.

## EPS Update

## Registration begins on January 7

Kindergarten and pre-registration begins Jan. 7, 1991.

Please advise anyone with a child who will be five years old by Dec. 31 to phone Greenbank Public School at 985-2567 and register their child.

Epsom Public School will once again be participating in Operation Scugog so we can help needy families across the community share in the joy of the Christmas season.

Each student will be given the opportunity to bring items of non-perishable food, gifts or gift certificates.

All donations should be brought to the school no later than Dec. 20 and they will be delivered to the Scout Hall in Port Perry on Dec. 21 at 9 a.m.

Please advise the office at Epsom P.S. if there is any change to your emergency number in case you cannot be reached.

Students will not be allowed to leave the school with anyone other than parents unless we receive a note or phone call from the parent stating otherwise.

Entomologist Calvin Davis conducted workshops on insects from the rain forest in South America Nov. 12.

His collection of various insect specimens, including many live ones, was interesting to students and staff.

Lucien Montiero, an exchange student from Brazil, visited Epsom P.S. and discussed life as a student in Brazil with our students. Her talk and video of her family and life in Brazil was enjoyed by all.

The Grade 5/6 class was visited by William Henshall recently. He is the bylaw officer for the Township of Scugog.

Mr. Henshall explained his responsibilities and outlined what a bylaw is.

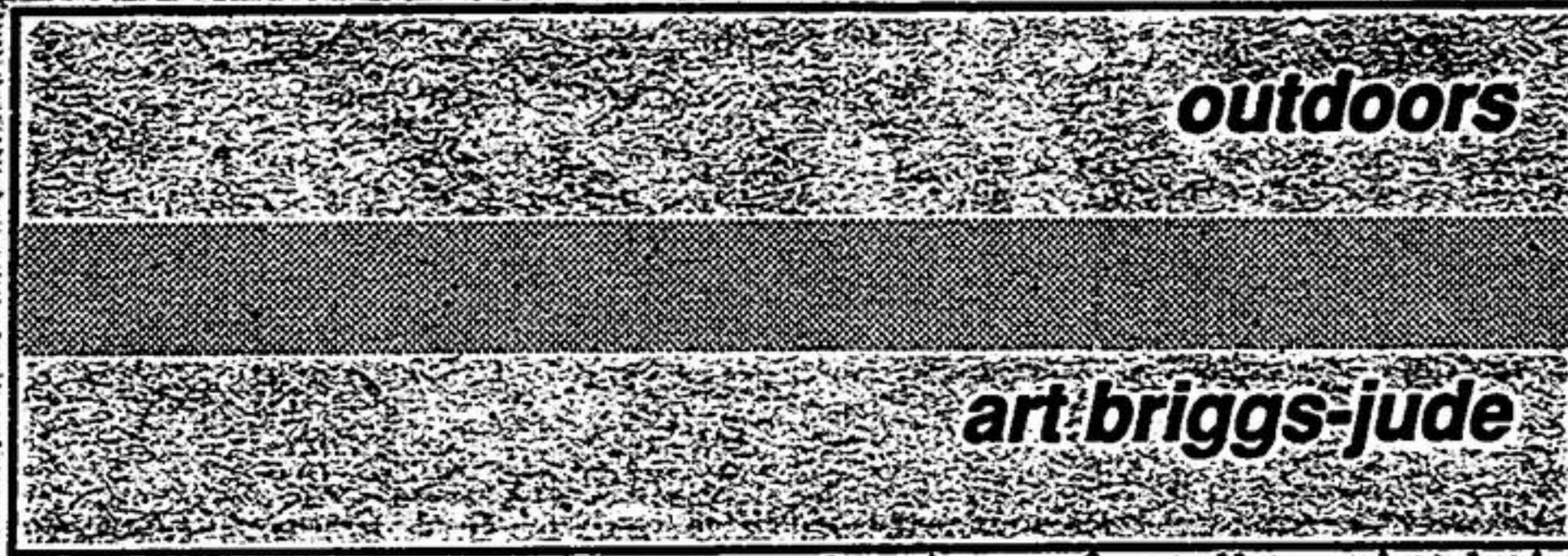
We all have a better understanding of bylaws and the roles they play in the community.

### Sports

It's hockey playoff time at Epsom P.S. No one wants to lose and after the opening round, only one team was eliminated. Great defence and goal tending has forced a lot of 0-0 tie games.

Currently, there are five teams battling to get the two spots in the final round. Good luck to all teams.

The Grade 5 swimming program for Epsom students begins Jan. 7, 1991. The school contribution totalled \$560.95 for Unicef this year.



outdoors

art:briggs-jude

which is, by the way, still on.

Another sign left by a buck deer these days is the patch of pawed ground called a scrape.

Here the buck has left not only its urine scent but a single hoof-print in the centre as if to stamp the place with its personal autograph.

Looking at the tips of the low bushes and shrubbery that you pass will quite often give you an insight into what whitetails eat during the cold weather months.

Remember that deer change gradually from grazers in warm weather to browsers in the winter. This fact will be clearly evident in the nipped off twigs of red osier dogwood, maple, cedar, and sumac.

Little wonder feeding programs in which bales of hay were dropped to starving winter deer were not successful. Today, wise deer management includes the cutting of browse in late February.

But there are tracings and

leavings of smaller animals in the outdoor landscape too. Ruffled patches of leaves beneath an oak grove are a good sign black squirrels have been busy salvaging and burying their horde of acorns before the freeze.

And if you pick up an acorn you think they missed, look it over carefully. It probably has a grub hole in it and was a bushy-tail reject.

Under the evergreens, you'll likely notice little piles of pine cone scales. These are all that's left after a red squirrel chewed out the centre to reach their tiny winged seeds inside.

The hollow end of a protruding limb at eye level might also be a gourmet storehouse for these spring-loaded nutcrackers.

If so, it will contain everything from dried mushrooms and berries to wild nuts and seeds. Actually, a closer look at one of these squirrel storehouses will give you a good idea of

what kind of nut trees are in the area.

Incidentally, this is how we first knew that there were butternut trees on our property.

In a place where the soil is sandy or shallow due to surface rock, you'll notice the dusting places of ruffed grouse and other woodland birds.

Look carefully around these dust bath sites, for you may find a feather or two to help you identify the dusters.

In a nearby stand of hemlock, little sprigs of evergreen boughs litter the ground. A black burly ball high in the upper limbs draws your attention.

It's a fat old porcupine that, alas, has not confined its chewing to the hemlock tips but has also girdled the neighboring beech, maple and birch trees.

It is while looking up in some smaller trees that you notice several nests from the previous summer.

One large, bulky mass was likely the cradle of a crow. The other nest, though, is more interesting.

It's a tiny woven cup of birch bark shreds, fine grass and slender rootlets. A red-eyed vireo's nest?

Quite likely, as you remember seeing them in that area during the summer.

The sinking sun setting in a crimson sky gives a preview of tomorrow's weather. It also silhouettes a large football-shaped structure in the young hardwoods ahead. It's the nest of a bald-faced hornet or yellow-jacket wasp.

It's empty now, but even in the winter it looks foreboding and brings back memories of some past summer excitement.

It's also just another interesting observation that a walk in the woods will bring.

Try it. You'll be surprised at what you will see.

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*Voices ring out throughout the world heralding in the season of good cheer. May joy abound for you.*

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

**Council & Staff**