

# Light lures birds to

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

At 4 or 5 a.m., when you are asleep, they are walking between the office towers in downtown Toronto, looking for birds.

Underneath the rows of shining windows, or beside the bright floodlights, they find them. Birds lying dead, injured or stunned. Birds confused.

Sometimes they don't find even one. Sometimes they find 10 or 50 or more, lured by lights into the glass.

It is always during the songbird migrations of fall and spring that the tall buildings claim the most.

"There might be 300 birds in one morning," said Michael Mesure, the Thornhill resident who co-founded the Fatal Light Awareness Program, or FLAP. "They go in waves."

The volunteers have to find the birds before predators — crows, gulls, racoons, rats and cats — arrive.

Dead birds are collected and identified. The injured ones are nursed until they can be released.

Since 1997, FLAP has found 126 different bird species in downtown Toronto.

"Some days you can have more dead than alive and you could just cry," said Maureen Flynn, a volunteer.

Birds also are striking reflective office buildings in the daytime and

sailing into livingroom windows and, increasingly, the guidewires for telecommunications towers.

Toronto, according to a video produced by a local company three years ago, is "one of the major cities on one of the biggest bird migration corridors on the planet."

Fatal Light, sold to a Japanese television network but never shown in Canada, recounts how, in 1993, Mesure formed FLAP, said to be the world's first and only group dedicated to stopping bird collisions.

FLAP convinced owners of Consillium Place, an office tower in Scarborough, to experiment with window film after the group collected 800 birds there last year. The building's use of mirrored glass is common and lowers cooling and heating costs, "but I call it an architectural cop-out," Mesure said. Birds, meanwhile, view the reflections "as a place they can go into."

Mesure uses window film, the same material used on public bus advertisements, on his own windows and he said it works.

FLAP wants office towers to turn off unnecessary lights. Mesure argued telecommunications towers could be lower to the ground by using satellites to relay their signals.

Flynn, a junior kindergarten teacher at St. David Catholic School in Maple, said the school board headquarters in Aurora reduced its night lighting at FLAP's request.

Volunteers put injured birds they



PHOTO/ALLAN CAIRNS

Fatal Light Awareness Program president Michael Mesure tends to a wood thrush, which collided with a highrise in downtown Toronto.

find in paper bags and either treat them at home or hand them over to the Toronto Wildlife Centre or Toronto Humane Society.

Experienced FLAP members give birds homeopathic medicine for injuries, usually head trauma.

Flynn releases the birds who had

been heading north at the Kortright Centre for Conservation in Kleinburg.

"I want to get them past the big buildings of Vaughan."

For more information about FLAP visit their website at [www.flap.org](http://www.flap.org)

# Foundation frantic to track endangered peregrine falcons

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

Richmond Hill's resident endangered species is an accomplished killer and Mark Nash has the evidence in front of him.

"I have a starling's wing, I have a pigeon's wing, I have a blackbird wing, I have a blue jay head," Nash said, reviewing a package of bird remains on his desk.

The gnawed-on items were collected from the roof of Richmond Hill's municipal office tower, the first home a juvenile peregrine falcon called Rouge, killer of the hapless birds, may remember.

Rouge, along with three other peregrines, was raised there in a hack box until his 45th day of life.

Once released, Rouge stuck around the centre of town — not a bad place for a peregrine, according to Nash — although he has also gone hunting on the Leslie Street Spit.

"He's still chasing people off the Richmond Hill roof and terrorizing the neighbourhood," Nash said.

But more amazing to Nash, co-founder of the Canadian Peregrine Foundation, is where

Rouge's hackmates have gone since the four birds were released June 28.

One, Sir Richmond, died in July after an operation to repair a broken wing.

But the others were tracked, by satellite, through a backpack antenna harnessed to each bird.

Rouge's antenna pack was taken off in December, when his surviving hackmates, according to the foundation's Project Track-em, had already reached the tropics.

Nate, whose transmitter is "still talking" made it to northern Colombia. Echo reached the Panama Canal before his transmitter quit.

And incredibly, there have been two sightings by birdwatchers this month — one on the QEW in Burlington, the other in Stoney Creek — of a peregrine with an antenna on its back.

Nash is now frantic to confirm the identity of the bird, or birds, before the antenna harness does what it was designed to do within another couple of months — falls off. Possibilities include Echo, Lincoln (another juvenile with a dead transmitter, released by the foundation in

Guelph) and an adult peregrine harnessed but unaccounted for after its release in Alberta.

"I need a (leg) band number," Nash said.

He already expects the tracking experiment, which the self-employed Toronto man said has had its critics, will be valuable to study the peregrine, the world's fastest bird.

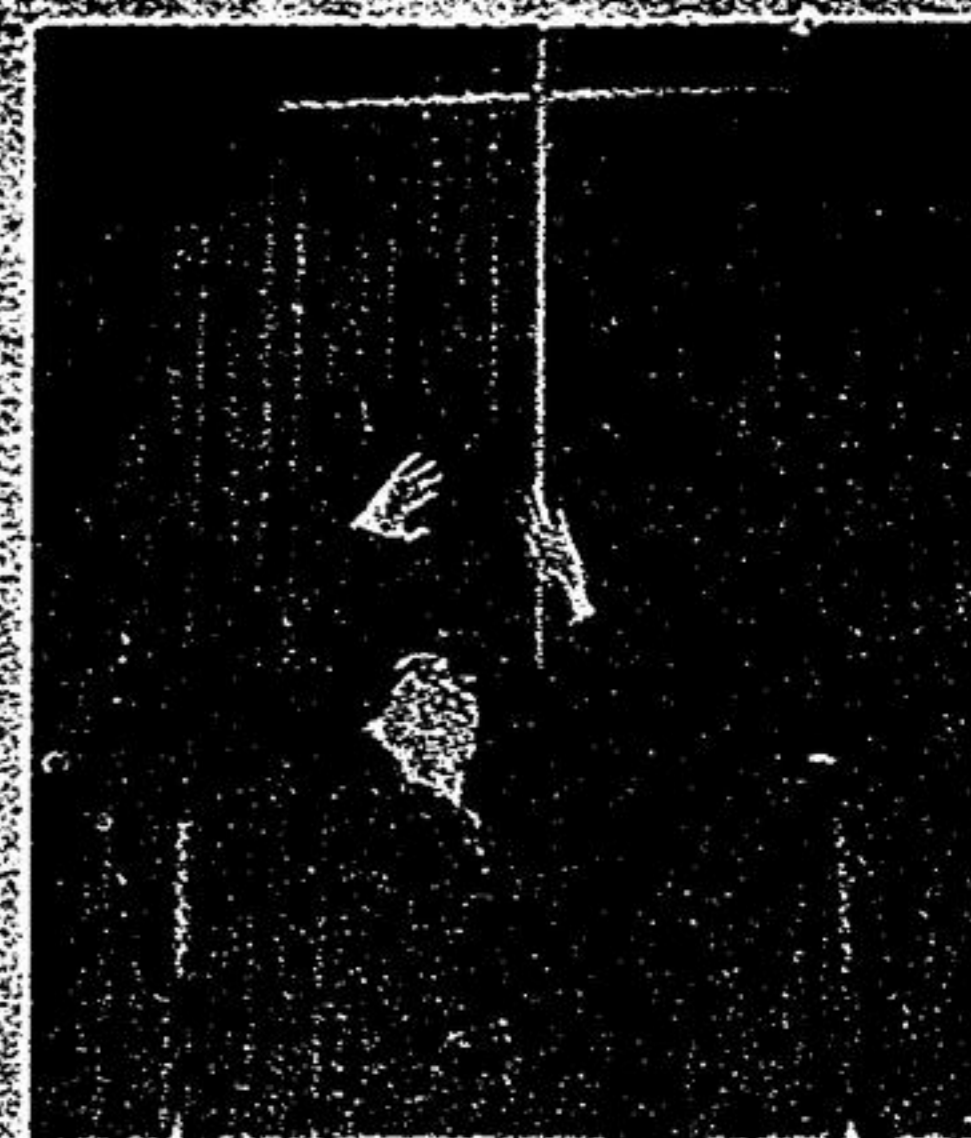
"Nobody on this globe has ever put a transmitter on the back of a first-year juvenile bird."

Although 550 peregrines bred in captivity have been released in Ontario, last year only 23 breeding pairs were known in the province. The peregrine in the wild has a high mortality rate and its recovery from the brink of extinction is slow.

Human intervention (in the form of the pesticide DDT) nearly wiped out the bird, Nash hopes care by human volunteers and hack box releases can help more of the species survive.

If you see a peregrine, the foundation asks you to report the time, location and the bird's band number if possible, by calling (416) 481-1233. The Richmond Hill peregrine website is [www.peregrine-foundation.ca/tops/rhtop.html](http://www.peregrine-foundation.ca/tops/rhtop.html)

## REGIONAL News Digest



### WHAT'S HAPPENING

**Sing Spirit, Sing**  
Sunday, March 26 at 3 p.m.  
Thornhill United Church  
25 Elgin St., Thornhill

The Music Makers of Cobourg join the Cantabile Chorale of York Region for a concert, which also features liturgical dancer Vivian Rabe (photo). For information and tickets, call 731-8318 or 764-9692.

### Doctor faces fraud charges

A Thornhill man is one of 12 doctors charged with fraud and conspiracy after the Ontario Health Insurance Plan was bilked of more than \$2 million.

Dr. Eric Cheung, 32, was charged March 1 after a two-year Ontario Provincial Police probe of Mississauga's Advanced Walk-in Clinic on The Queensway.

Investigators allege, between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 1997, the doctors billed for services that were not rendered; billed for services that were not medically necessary and billed for unnecessary medical referrals.



The clinic is owned and operated by Dr. Carlo Meola, 43, of Mississauga and he is among those charged. The doctors face one count each of fraud over \$5,000 and conspiracy to commit fraud over \$5,000.

### Bogus bomb disabled

York's Emergency Response Unit officers were forced to disable what appeared to be a bomb found behind an industrial plaza in Vaughan yesterday.

York Regional Police ERU discovered cylinder-shaped objects with wire sticking out of them wrapped inside a tan-coloured bag.

A high-powered air/water cannon was used, partially destroying it. The remainder has been sent to the Centre for Forensic Sciences in Toronto for analysis.

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