

Summer students will check birds for West Nile Virus

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

Diligence is the buzz word as York Region's health department prepares for another season of monitoring mosquitoes and birds for signs of the West Nile Virus.

While no humans have contracted the virus, it is present in York Region. The health department will

spend more than \$28,000 this summer on monitoring and education efforts aimed at preventing the spread of the disease.

Two students will be hired to conduct monitoring and the region will continue to send dead birds for testing, Darlene Keates, a program manager with the health protection division, told members of the

health committee last week. Perhaps the most important component of the region's efforts will be public education, Ms Keates said.

Committee chairperson Joyce Frustaglio said in addition to circulating information on hazards associated with the virus, the region ought to help allay fears.

Although 21 infected birds were

collected in York communities — Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Markham and Georgina — no instances of infection among humans occurred last year, the first year the virus showed up in the region. More than 1,000 people contacted the health department to report dead birds.

The health department's West

Nile Virus strategy for 2002 will include:

- A public awareness campaign;
- Training for public health staff in mosquito identification and monitoring; and
- Hiring two students to monitor the region's bird population and collect and send dead birds for testing.



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Volunteers for Save the Rouge Valley System survey creek life in part of an ongoing habitat restoration project on the Willowgrove property.

Creek without a name could become Willowgrove

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

A part of the Rouge River may soon take the name of one of Whitchurch-Stouffville's oldest families.

Willowgrove, a prospective name being put forward by town councillor

Mark Carroll, is also the name of a McCowan Road day camp.

There doesn't seem to be a recorded name for the creek, which starts as a swale running south along McCowan from Bloomington Road and crosses Stouffville Road just east of McCowan.

The watercourse heads through Spring Lakes Golf Club and the day camp before joining the Little Rouge River in Markham. The Little Rouge, in turn, meets the main Rouge in Scarborough.

Willowgrove Farm Day Camp, located off McCowan on the Markham/Whitchurch-Stouffville border, is named for the Grove family, Mennonites who farmed the land from the early 1800s to 1968 and whose descendants still live in the area.

In recent years, river otters have been seen in the creek, which is edged in places by willows. The day camp, reflecting the Mennonite faith, has featured many environmental programs, including tree-planting and bird-house installation.

"They've done so much stewardship," Mr. Carroll said.

The Rouge Alliance, a municipal partnership governing Rouge Park, approved the name Willowgrove Creek at a recent meeting. Approval from councils in Whitchurch-Stouffville and Markham is still required.

Mr. Carroll said he has submitted the creek name to provincial government's Ontario Geographic Names Board. Landowners will be asked to support or object to the proposal, he said. "I'm not sure what happens after that."



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