

Rare bird turns development on its head

by Dick E. Bird

Dateline: April 1, 2003

Birdwatchers from all over Canada and the United States are expected to flock to the Stouffville reservoir this spring.

They will hope to catch a glimpse of the very rare Australian upside-down bird (*avis inversus australis*). Half-way around the globe from its native habitat, the bird has been seen several times at the reservoir. It has been seen only three times

in the past 10 years in North America.

The bird was formally identified by William Bliss, president of the Bird Watchers' Society of Canada, last week. The 76-year-old hobbyist said that seeing it "was without doubt the biggest thrill of my life."

Four features will help to identify the bird which is slightly smaller than a robin. Its body is a bright yellow colour and its beak

Residents in a flutter over arrival of rare upside-down bird

is slightly curved to help dislodge insects from under bark. On its head are two tufts that look like horns.

Most of the time the bird will be seen with its head downward on a tree trunk or hanging by its feet from a branch -- hence its common name. This photo-

graph was taken just a few days ago by a staff member of the birders' favourite magazine, *The Armchair Naturalist*.

People are asked not to approach or disturb the bird if they see it. However, spreading a few raisins around would not be harmful as this is the closest

thing to its native food -- dingo dung.

"This is a very significant event," stated Tom Clinch of the Association of Canadian Ornithologists (www.a.con.org) and Stouffville should expect to see a lot of visitors. Anything that attracts tourists to our town is beneficial according to one councillor, who hopes "it will help to revitalize our downtown core."

Not everyone is happy,

though, as it was thought that preserving the bird's nesting site would interfere with the mayor's hopes for a 348-home development on the reservoir site. As one disgruntled naysayer observed, "Which is more important, the town's growth or some goofy bird?"

Editor's note: Dick E. Bird is the nom de plumage of a prominent local citizen.



The Australian Upside-down Bird is expected to be found hanging about at the Stouffville Reservoir on April 1. One councillor is hoping that the bird's arrival will help to revitalize the downtown core by attracting tourists, but some people fear it will ruffle feathers in the pro-development camp.

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