



SANDY BELL, BIRDS OF HAMILTON AND SURROUNDING AREAS

A Northern Saw-whet Owl strikes a wise pose in Beverly Swamp.



BRANDON HOLDEN, BIRDS OF HAMILTON

A red-tailed hawk soars above Beamer Conservation Area in Grimsby.

Winging it

New book explores beauty of our birds



KATHY RENWALD

Our garden is as small as a piece of toast on the landscape but in it are many things to attract birds.

Serviceberry, porcelain vine, pagoda dogwood and sumacs all lure birds to the garden.

On snappy spring days, gardening must stop so I can listen to the sweet call of the song sparrow. In fall, the arrival of juncos seems to say, "put down your tools for the winter."

Our garden is like an appetizer for little birds — a Ritz cracker for chickadees — because beyond our garden is the great spread of Hamilton Harbour. It's alive with birds.

I have seen the arrival of trumpeter swans on Christmas Day, the swift, shrewd flight of osprey diving for fish along the shore, and the stoop-shouldered silhouette of the black-crowned night herons as they search for food in the darkening sky.

The herons lose altitude over our garden as they make the final approach to their home in nearby willows.

Over the garden most days, antics to be seen include the drunken, roller-coaster flight of goldfinches or a red-tailed hawk being pestered by a black-bird.

Now is the time to think about birds with the obvious melancholy of winter coming on. Blue jays, Carolina wrens, mockingbirds and nuthatches — 34 species to be exact — are permanent residents here.

You would know this if you've seen the new Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas by Robert Curry, published by the Hamilton Naturalists' Club.

It took Curry 20 years to get the 672



KATHY RENWALD, SPECIAL TO THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Painting called Crow Studies by Tor Lukasik-Foss is at Mixed Media, James Street.



BARRY CHERRIERE, BIRDS OF HAMILTON

An Ovenbird was photographed in Hendrie Valley.

pages written and published. "I kept telling people I was going to write it, so finally I had to."

For the past two years, Curry has worked six days a week, eight hours a day to meet his self-imposed deadline.

The Burlington resident had lots of help compiling the book from fellow birders, photographers and illustrators. Robert Bateman, a longtime and now long-distance member of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club, supplied the cover art of two beautiful wood ducks.

I like the month-by-month migration and climate summary in the book. October, for instance, is when

winter ducks arrive, and hawks and golden eagles pass through on the northwest winds.

Robert Curry launches Birds of Hamilton at the Burlington Art Centre on Lakeshore Road at 7 p.m. tonight.

Birds of Hamilton, \$60, can be ordered from the Hamilton Naturalists' Club at hamiltonnature.org. It is also available at Bryan Prince Bookseller in Hamilton and A Different Drummer Books in Burlington.

The Hamilton area is a hot spot for bird-watchers. One bird in particular has gotten under the skin of artist Tor Lukasik-Foss. His wonderful Crow Studies, watercolour and felt-tip marker pieces, are on display at Mixed Media, 174 James St. N.

"They aren't meant to be scientific," says Lukasik-Foss of Hamilton, who has been drawing crows for 10 years. "I just draw from memory."

In their hulking blackness, his crows seem to peer right into the soul.

Lukasik-Foss will mount a show Oct. 27 about crows at the Thames Gallery in Chatham.

Kathy Renwald is producer and host of Gardener's Journal. gardenersjournal@sympatico.ca

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