



Editor's View of the Spring Thaw

Spring is a volatile transitional season. Sometimes it's heavenly, sometimes it disappoints. A poor spring, in my opinion, seems to last only a few days. When the sun heats up to replace cold winter instantly with hot summer, spring is the casualty. I swear I have seen tulips go from tight bud to full flower to spent petals, all in one unseasonably hot day.

A good spring, to my mind, is a long, slow warming up, with cool, sunny days that let the wildflowers and the cultivated forsythia, daffodils, tulips and apple blossoms unfold easily and last a long time. I like a gradual awakening of the land, with plenty of bird song filling the air and the rich smell of good earth below.

An early sign of spring is when the maple syrup starts to flow. When I sit in the sun at my father's pond on the bench he made, I can sometimes hear drips from the big maple tree above me, hitting the ground. The sap literally spills out the ends of the branches. I have seen chickadees take a swift sip of the sweet stuff. We celebrate maple syrup and its festivals in this issue.

We also capture the fleeting, rare beauty of native orchids thanks to the knowledge and photographic collection of naturalist Gary Hutton, who has written a charming article on them for us.

With the spring thaw, water levels are high and rivers, creeks, and seasonal streams produce beautiful sights and sounds. Photographer Wayne Moody has captured a refreshing view of the Credit River which we feature in our centre spread.

Views and vistas of landscapes near Owen Sound get special treatment by Patricia Langer, whose artistic work with large-format cameras creates moody, black-and-white abstractions.

Robert Barnett shares valuable information that he has gathered about programs designed to help landowners save money and conserve properties that are important to them. This could be a useful reference for financial or estate planning.

Spring is a time when our energies increase and we begin moving outside more, to enjoy what's unique about life close to the Niagara Escarpment. Why not get out and explore the wonderful places that are close to home?

Gloria

Gloria Hildebrandt, Editor

Corrections

In the December 2008 issue, the article on Devereaux House contained an error. The previous tenants were not evicted for vandalism. Although

vandalism did occur at the house, it happened after the tenants moved out. We regret any concern this error may have caused.

We will let this expert explain another important correction:

I was very interested to see the picture of a bat in *Escarpment Views* December 2008. It is good to know that there are bats living in caves in the area. The bat shown is not a Little Brown Bat, however, but the much less common Eastern Pipistrelle. This tiny bat has paler wing bones and more rounded ears than Little Brown Bats, with fur that is darker at the tip than at the base (the fur pattern is reversed in Little Browns). Eastern Pipistrelles were not found in the Hamilton region despite intensive mammal surveying resulting in the publication of the *Atlas of Mammals of Hamilton* (2005). Until recently, they were very poorly known in the Halton region, with only a handful of records from 1960 or earlier. In 2007 I led a team studying small mammals in the Credit Valley Watershed as part of the Credit Valley Conservation Natural Areas Inventory, and we found Eastern Pipistrelles to occur at three different sites. We identified bats using bat detectors, and these bats have a particularly distinctive call pattern, making them unmistakable. Pipistrelles were one of the least common of seven bat species

that we recorded, but they appear to be widespread in the region. We did not survey the Kelso region and it is an important new data point for the species in Halton.

Fiona Reid

Fiona lives on the Escarpment, and is a departmental associate in mammalogy with the Royal Ontario Museum, and the author and illustrator of Peterson Field Guide to Mammals of North America.



Eastern Pipistrelle PHOTO BY PIOTR SCIEZKA