



suggests the HCA has set a dangerous precedent and Columbia should look for another location for the project.

Richard Leitner, of *Hamilton Community News*, covered the HCA Board meeting. His report noted a succession of consultants for the college and co-proponent Plaza Imports Ltd. said the development will further establish the area as an education hub and be engineered to create a more stable slope and improve the properties ecologically.

Lawyer Brian Duxbury said the slope “is already an artificial construct” because other developments have piled fill there over the years. He was quoted as saying, “This site is an anomaly and it sets no precedent.”

Planning consultant Sergio Manchia said the project is a predominately residential use — not institutional — and will be a gateway to west Hamilton for 900 international students. Only four of the HCA directors in attendance asked questions. They then went behind closed doors for about half an hour, emerging to approve the permit without debate. They attached nine conditions, including among other things the owner submitting a detailed geotechnical report on the slope’s proposed reconstruction and entering into a “save harmless” agreement indemnifying the HCA against any liability for the development. Mike Stone, the authority’s manager of watershed planning services, was quoted in the *Community News* as saying that he understood the location is really attractive to the college, but he maintained the development is too big for the available land.

Hamilton Ward 1 Councillor Aidan Johnson, a HCA director who missed the meeting because of a scheduling conflict, told *Community News* he was “surprised and disappointed” to learn of the authority’s green light. Supporting the staff position, he added that if he had thought there was going to be any problem, he would have rearranged his schedule to attend the meeting. Councillor Johnson, who chairs the City of Hamilton’s planning committee, noted the issue entails a rezoning application that will ultimately be decided by City Council. A public meeting is expected to be scheduled later this spring and the HNC plans to comment.

John Terpstra, who is writing a book about Chedoke Creek and the valley to be published this fall, is another critic of the HCA decision along with other opponents such as Joanna Chapman.

John, quoted in a recent *Hamilton Spectator* column by Jeff Mahoney, said it is wrong to reduce the creek and valley to real estate when the City has a limited amount of natural land features. John was also interviewed on the Hamilton Cable 14 TV program, *City Matters*, on March 22. He received an encouraging response from host Doug Faraway, who recalled fond memories of growing up in the Chedoke watershed as a youngster and expressed appreciation of the stream.

“The idea of putting landfill in a valley to create developable land is wrong on a number of counts,” John said. “...Whether the valley is pristine any longer or not, this is not something we should be doing anymore.”

John’s book, called “Daylighting Chedoke,” will explore how more cities in North America, Europe and Asia are taking creeks that were formerly rerouted in underground pipes and opening up the streams. The “daylighting” strategy improves storm runoff, creates natural vegetation and enhances the quality of urban life by giving citizens more opportunities to enjoy the benefits of living near creeks.

John will be leading a Jane’s Walk early in May, starting at Chedoke Creek beside the valley. He can be reached at [j.terpstra@sympatico.ca](mailto:j.terpstra@sympatico.ca)

## Anhinga – New for the HSA

by Ross Wood

On 28 May, 2017, I was in my front yard (Nassagaweya First Line, 200 metres south of Campbellville Rd) doing what every birder does at that time of year; trying to squeeze in as much birding as possible before spring migration comes to an end for another year. It was 11:30 a.m. and I was entering everything I could see and hear into my eBird checklist. Considering the time of day, the birds were still quite vocal with singing Northern Waterthrush and Red-eyed Vireo claiming their territories and being among the first species added to the eBird list, followed by many other expected species.



Ross Wood at OBRC meeting in Toronto, April 2015 - photo Mark Peck.

I was waiting for my wife Karen and our dog to join me for a walk as I was eager to get into the woods to see what other late migrants may be trickling through. I was growing increasingly impatient with this delay. Thankfully this meant I was standing in the only location around with an unobstructed view of the sky. Suddenly I spotted a large black bird soaring high in the sky. My initial thought was, “boy that sure looks like an Anhinga”. Knowing that was very unlikely I put my binoculars on the bird and was astonished to find that my initial gut feeling about this bird was correct. The Anhinga soared as it slowly worked its way across the sky in a southwesterly direction, looking like a flying

cross as they are often described, with roughly equal lengths of its tail and outstretched neck from the body. It appeared to be an adult male as it was all dark except for a pale dagger-shaped bill, and when the light hit the bird at a certain angle as it banked around, I could make out a clear buffy-brown tip to the tail.



Anhinga at Delaware, Ontario on 18 July 2000 - photo Kayo Roy. This long staying Anhinga (two months!) was seen by well over a thousand birders.

Knowing the exceptional rarity of this observation, I had to document the sighting as best I could. My camera was sitting in my car on the front seat which was parked right beside me. Unfortunately the car was locked with the keys in the house! I made a quick decision to run into the house to get the keys in the

hope of getting a photograph. My dog, sensing my excitement or possibly just being impatient to go for a walk too, jumped all over me as I burst in the door. Although it likely took only seconds to find my keys, it felt like minutes, and by the time I was back outside and had grabbed the camera, the Anhinga was gone. What disappointment; I had lost my chance at getting a photo. I knew the next best thing I could do was alert other birders of the sighting and the direction of travel. I quickly fired off a post to Hamilton Birds and then I called and texted other birders that lived closest in the direction the bird was headed. Unfortunately the Anhinga would not be seen again.

*This sighting becomes the first accepted record of this species for the Hamilton Study Area. The documentation submitted to the Ontario Bird Records Committee, was officially accepted by the OBRC on 8 April 2018. Due to its exceptional rarity, it was picked to be the Bird of the Year for 2017 in the Hamilton Study Area, despite being seen by only one observer. It is one of few accepted records for Ontario. There are two old records one from Sault Ste. Marie in 1881 and the other near the town of Wellington in 1904. Neither of these records have been accepted as valid Ontario records although both may be good records. We will never know. The first accepted Ontario record was in 2001 when an adult was seen by over 1,600 people from 16 July to 16 September in a pond near Delaware. Since that time there have been four other accepted Ontario records and Ross's record makes the sixth - Ed.*

## Half of the Earth for Nature

*from Focusing on Wildlife - 1 March 2018*

In 2010 at a major international conference in Japan, governments agreed to establish a network of reserves and protected seas that would, by 2020, cover 17% of Earth's land surface and 10% of our oceans. "With more than two years to go, we now have about 15% of land protected and about 7% of oceans," said Mike Hoffman, of the Zoological Society of London. But many conservationists argue that even if these goals could be achieved they will still not halt extinctions. The current focus on protecting what humans are willing to spare for conservation is unscientific, they say. Instead, conservation targets should be determined by what is necessary to protect nature. This point is stressed by Harvey Locke, whose organisation, Nature Needs Half, takes a far bolder approach and campaigns for the preservation of fully 50% of our planet for wildlife by 2050.

"That may seem a lot – if you think the world is just a place for humans to exploit," Locke told the Observer. "But if you recognise the world as one that we share with wildlife, letting it have half of the Earth does not seem that much." The idea is supported by E. O. Wilson, the distinguished Harvard biologist, in his most recent book, *Half Earth*. "We thrash about, appallingly led, with no particular goal other than economic growth and unfettered consumption," he writes. "As a result, we're extinguishing Earth's biodiversity as though the species of the natural world are no

better than weeds and kitchen vermin." The solution, he says, is to fill half the planet with conservation zones – though just how this division is to be decided is not made clear in his book. In any case, Hoffman points out, simply setting aside huge chunks of land or marine areas will not, on its own, save the day. "We could earmark the whole of northern Canada as a wildlife reserve but, given the paucity of animals who live in these frozen regions, that would not have a significant effect on a great many species who live elsewhere," he said.

Simply setting aside half the planet as wilderness and using the other half for giant cities and farms poses other difficulties. Instead, conservationists argue, a far more carefully integrated pattern of wildlife areas needs to be established, one that will allow animals to move relatively easily between reserves, and so maintain genetic diversity between populations.

### Welcome Corner...

Our Membership Director Jill Baldwin, and the entire HNC Board would like to welcome the new members who joined in March.

Welcome Catherine Beattie, Jonathon Von Kodar, and the family of Terry, Monica, Jennifer & Taylor Tait.