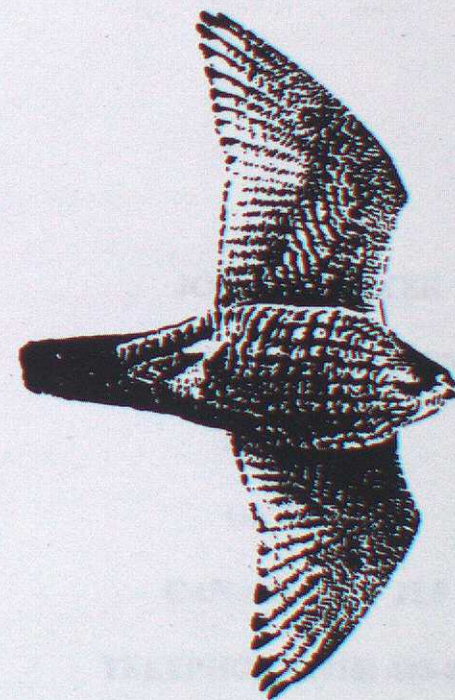


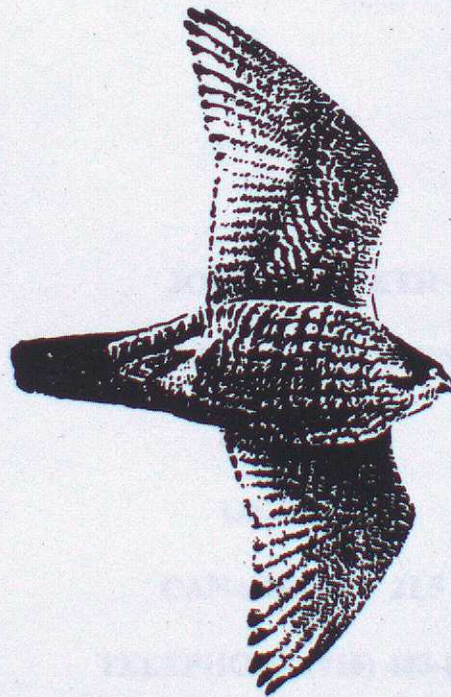


REPORT ON THE
GREATER METROPOLITAN TORONTO
RAPTOR WATCH



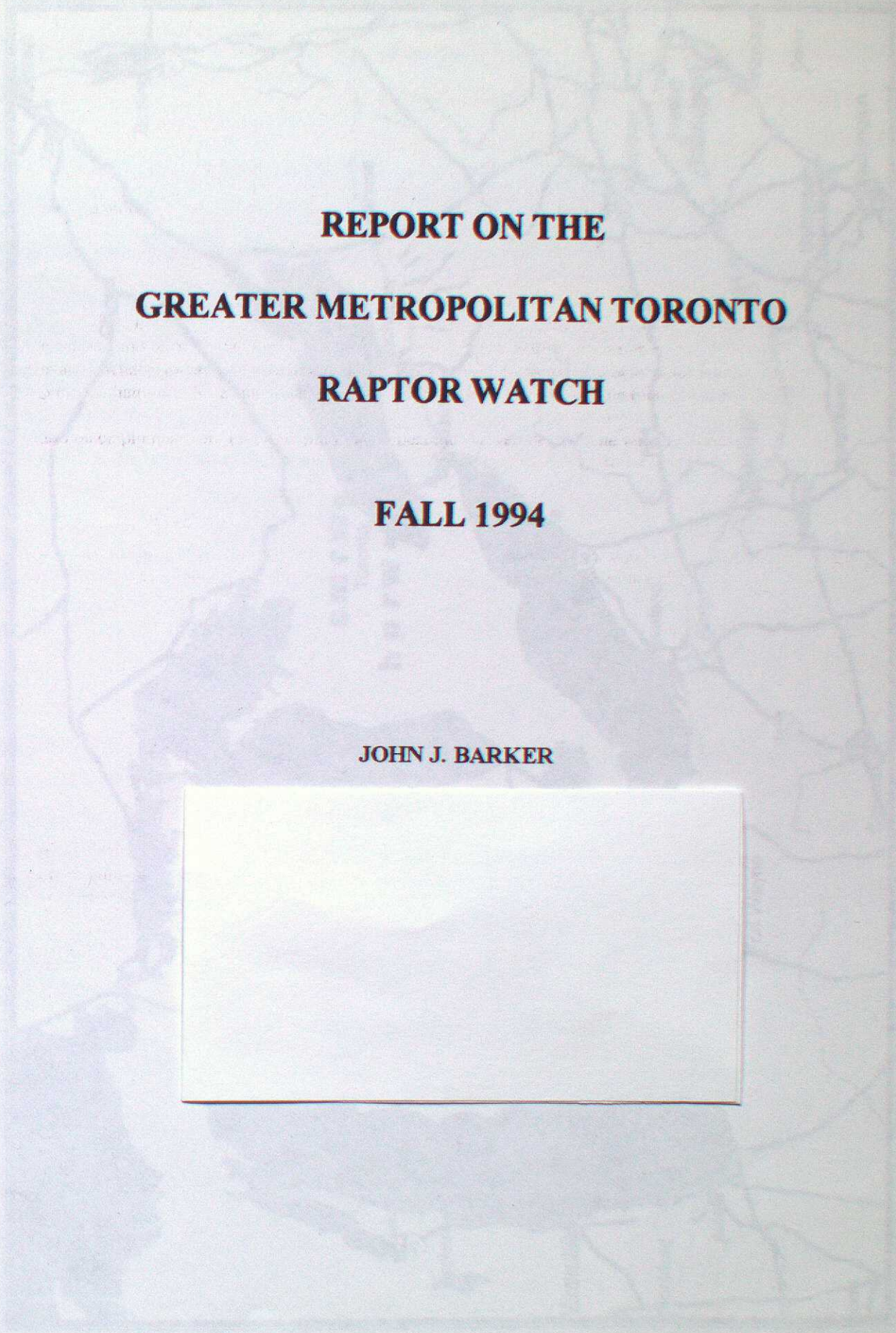
FALL 1994
JOHN J. BARKER

**REPORT ON THE
GREATER METROPOLITAN TORONTO
RAPTOR WATCH**



FALL 1994

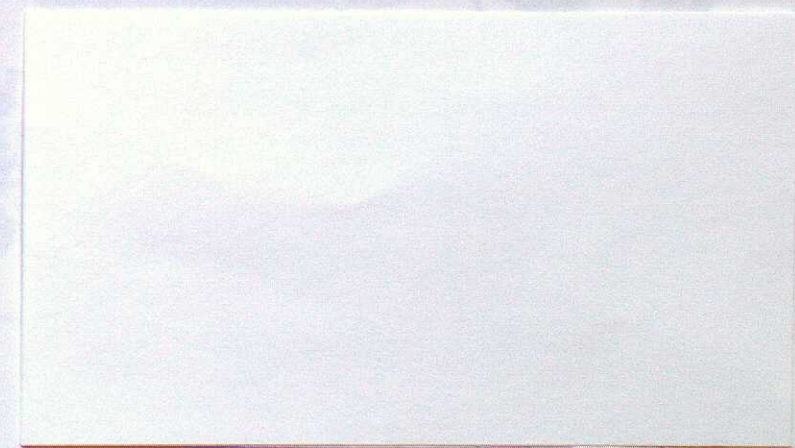
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**REPORT ON THE
GREATER METROPOLITAN TORONTO
RAPTOR WATCH**

FALL 1994

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REPORT OF THE
GREATER METROPOLITAN TORONTO
SANITARY DISTRICT
WATERWORKS
DEPARTMENT
REPORT ON THE
SOURCES OF WATER

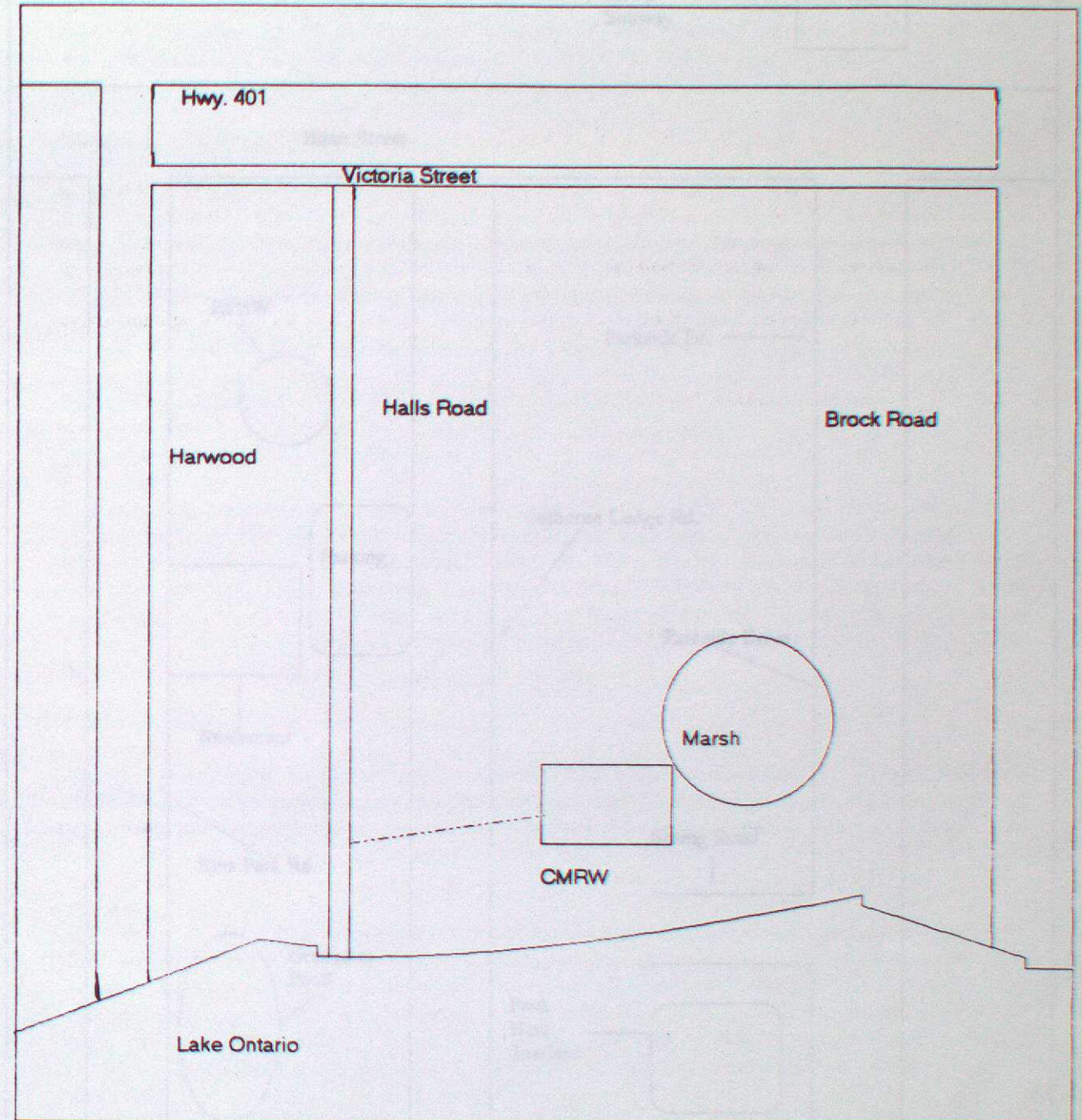
Map



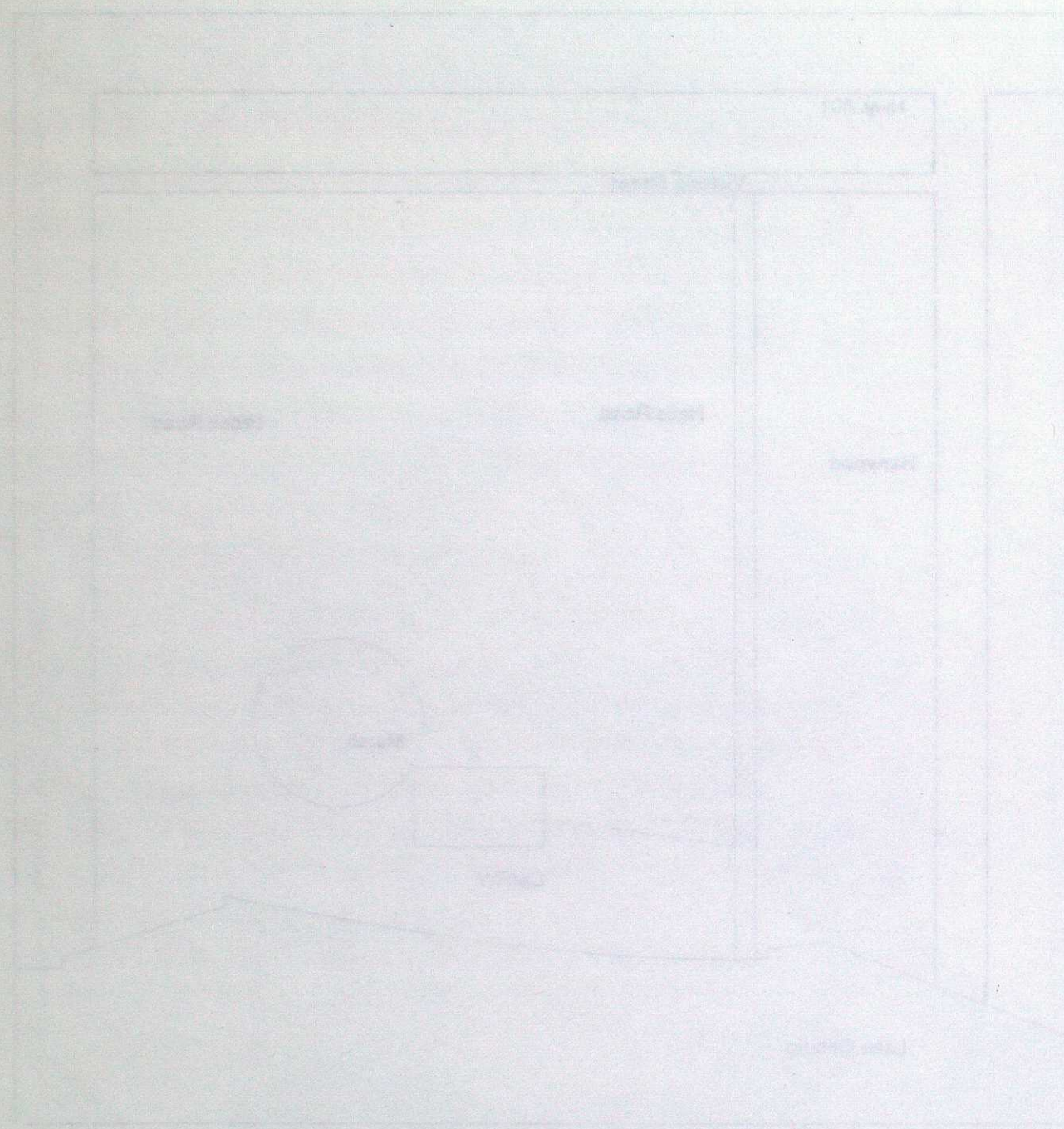


Directions to Cranberry Marsh

NORTH

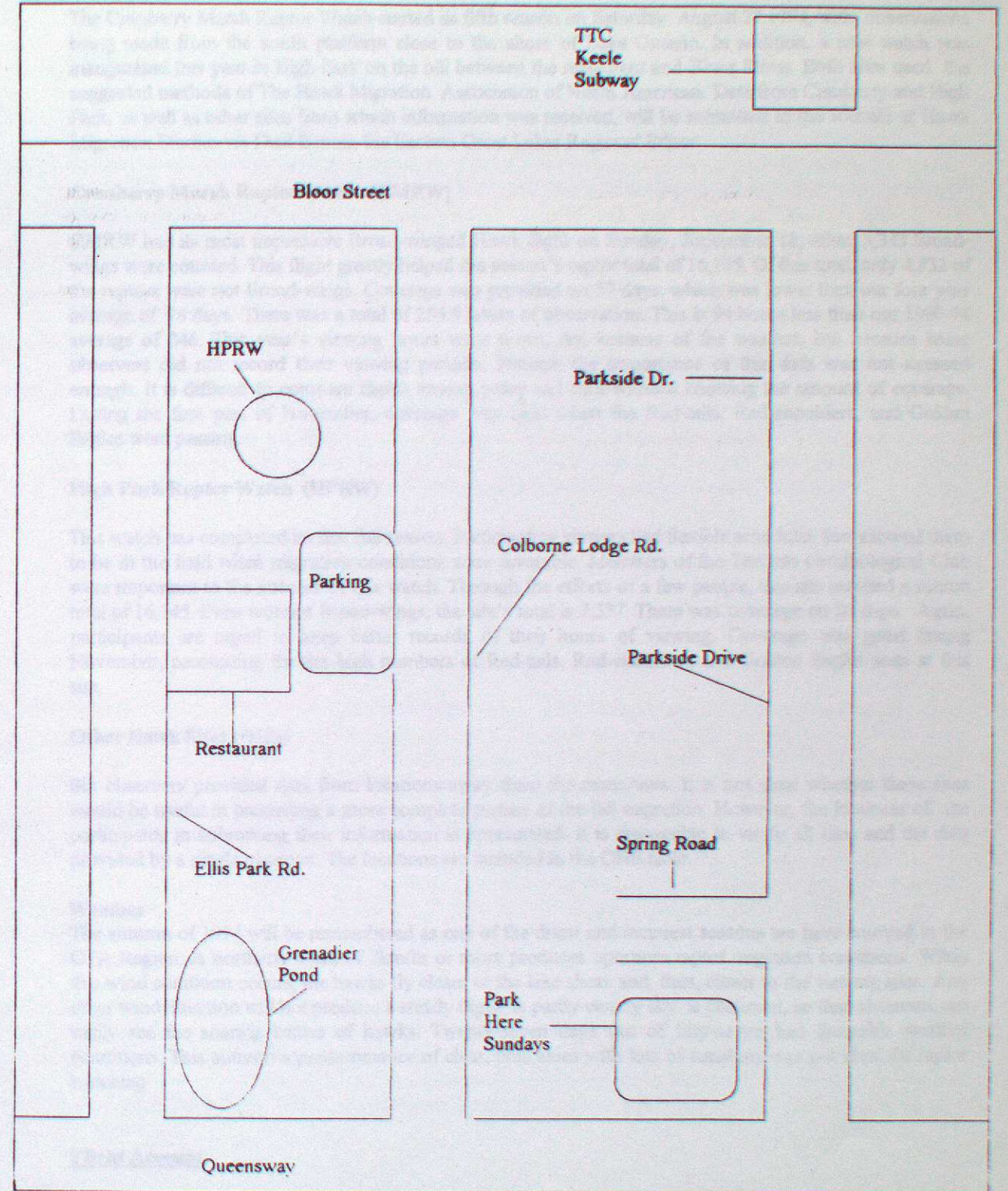


Directions to Cherry Hill



Directions to High Park

North



Introduction

The Cranberry Marsh Raptor Watch started its fifth season on Saturday August 27 1994, with observations being made from the south platform close to the shore of Lake Ontario. In addition, a new watch was inaugurated this year in High Park on the hill between the restaurant and Bloor Street. Both sites used the suggested methods of The Hawk Migration Association of North America. Data from Cranberry and High Park, as well as other sites from which information was received, will be submitted to the Journal of Hawk Migration Studies via Dick Benoit, the Eastern Great Lakes Regional Editor.

Cranberry Marsh Raptor Watch (CMRW)

CMRW had its most impressive Broad-winged Hawk flight on Sunday, September 18, when 5,343 Broad-wings were counted. This flight greatly helped the season's raptor total of 16,135. Of this total, only 4,832 of the raptors were not Broad-wings. Coverage was provided on 57 days, which was lower than our four year average of 74 days. There was a total of 255.5 hours of observation. This is 94 hours less than our 1990-94 average of 346. This year's viewing hours were down, not because of the weather, but because some observers did not record their viewing periods. Perhaps the importance of this data was not stressed enough. It is difficult to compare flights among years and sites without knowing the amount of coverage. During the first part of November, coverage was light when the Red-tails, Red-shoulders, and Golden Eagles were passing.

High Park Raptor Watch (HPRW)

This watch has completed its first full season. Participating viewers had flexible schedules that allowed them to be in the field when migration conditions were favorable. Members of the Toronto Ornithological Club were important to the success of this watch. Through the efforts of a few people, this site reached a season total of 16,745. Even without Broad-wings, the site's total is 7,337. There was coverage on 36 days. Again, participants are urged to keep better records of their hours of viewing. Coverage was good during November, accounting for the high numbers of Red-tails, Red-shoulders and Golden Eagles seen at this site.

Other Hawk Sites (OHS)

Six observers provided data from locations away from the main sites. It is not clear whether these sites would be useful in presenting a more complete picture of the fall migration. However, the kindness of the participants in submitting their information is appreciated. It is impossible to verify all sites and the data provided by a single observer. The locations are included in the OHS table.

Weather

The autumn of 1994 will be remembered as one of the driest and sunniest seasons we have enjoyed in the GTA Region. A northerly wind of 7km/hr or more produces optimum raptor migration conditions. When this wind condition occurs, the hawks fly closer to the lake shore and, thus, closer to the viewing sites. Any other wind direction will not produce a steady flight. A partly cloudy sky is preferred, so that observers can easily see the soaring kettles of hawks. Twenty-seven days out of fifty-seven had favorable weather conditions. This autumn's predominance of clear, blue skies with lots of sunshine was not ideal for raptor watching.

Flight Account

Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier and Broad-winged Hawk had their best flights since we started counting in 1990 at CMRW. High Park had a very good movement of Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered, Red-tailed Hawk and Golden Eagle. Cranberry Marsh had a fair

showing of Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon. At CMRW we had **Poor** coverage during the week. We missed seven species at their peak movements, while HPRW had better fortune in observing these species. Their better coverage accounts for the differences in the total counts.

Viewing Periods for Hawk species

One may say with confidence that hawks are fairly consistent in migration dates from year to year. Comparing 1994 with previous years, the following "viewing windows" are crucial to a good count. Failure to ensure adequate coverage means that many hawks pass through our area unobserved; hence, the count is low. **TV:** October 1--10, **OS:** Sept. 5--11, **BE:** Sept.16--29, **NH:** Sept.9--23, **SS:** Sept.11--Oct.10, **CH:** Sept.16--Oct.10, **NG:** Oct.16--Nov.10, **RS:** Oct.13--Nov.10, **BW:** Sept.11--20, **RT:** Oct.26-- Nov.11, **RL:** Oct.19--Nov.11, **GE:** Oct.26--Nov.10, **AK:** Sept.11 -- 29, **ML:** Sept.11 -- Oct.20, **PG:** Aug.31 -- Sept.30.

Species Accounts

Turkey Vulture

CMRW - A season total of 1,869 was recorded eclipsing the old record of 1,721 from 1991. This total represents 12% of the total raptors counted during the season. The best day for Turkey Vulture was October 2 when 717 were counted in nine and a half hour. The average annual total is 1,482. Birds per hour increased to 7/hr, up from 3.7/hr in 1993. The first sighting was September 5; the last November 7.

HPRW - This site recorded 1,711 for the season, representing 10% of the total raptor count. The peak day was October 3 with 558. The first sighting was September 10; the last November 11.

OHS - R. Shillabeer counted 53 individuals at Kennedy / Danforth in Scarborough, September 29.

Osprey

CMRW - The season total of 52 ranks fourth since 1990. Clearly Osprey numbers were down. Their numbers represent only .003% of the total tally. The peak day was September 3 when 10 birds were counted. In past years the peak day fell between September 9 - September 29. The total is substantially below the annual average of 79. In past years, Ospreys traditionally used Cranberry Marsh as a feeding station en route south, but this behavior did not seem to occur this year. The earliest bird was seen August 28; the latest October 23.

HPRW - The season count was 39 for .002% of the total migration. The first bird was August 28 and the last October 10.

Bald Eagle

CMRW - A season total of 11 was recorded. No doubt this is due to the inadequate coverage at Cranberry Marsh during September when only 8 Bald Eagles were counted. High Park tallied 17 by comparison. In addition to the lack of observers at Cranberry Marsh, wind direction also accounts for part of the difference in totals between the two sites. Lake Ontario has wind conditions which are often quite different from those found inland. Cranberry Marsh is directly beside the lake, while High Park is a few kilometers north at a higher elevation.

The age breakdown from Cranberry Marsh is as follows: first year - 4, second year - 1, third year - 2, adult - 1, unknown - 3. The total Bald Eagle migration constitutes .001% of the total fall raptor count.

HPRW - The season total was 19, with 5 birds recorded September 19. The age breakdown at High Park is as follows: First year - 6, Second year - 3, Third Year - 1, Adult - 4, Unknown - 5. The percentage of the total migration is .001%.

OHS - Bob Yukich observed one Eagle that was either a First or Second year. The Eagle was seen flying over Lincoln Ave in the Town of York. Norm Murr spotted another Bald Eagle October 8 at the Leslie Street Spit.

Northern Harrier

CMRW - This species had a very successful breeding season resulting in great numbers of migrants at locations and at other hawk watches. When have you seen Harriers fly in groups of ten or more? That is exactly what happened at Cranberry Marsh September 18 when the daily total was 68, smashing the previous high total for a single day of 18 recorded September 11, 1991. The total count for the season, 322, also sets a new record, breaking our past record of 177 in 1991. I had hoped to see more males in their grey and black plumage, but only one put in an appearance November 24. The females and the first years birds made up the show this year. Northern Harrier represents 2% of the annual total. This year's excellent showing boosts our annual average to 213, up substantially from the previous figure of 132.

HPRW - The total count was 277, with a peak of 87 September 17. This is High Park's first year of full coverage; therefore, no previous comparative numbers are available. September 17 was marked by cloudy skies with WNW winds at speeds between 9 to 30 Km/hr. There was no moisture before and after this date for ten days. No doubt this is at least a partial explanation for the superlative migration in our area.

Sharp-shinned Hawk

There has been an abundance of discussion regarding the reasons for the decline of this species in the north-eastern United States. I will not attempt to explain the various theories postulated by the established and respected observatories; these hypotheses have been well-covered in birding journals. I wish to state, however, that the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, near Windsor, Ontario experienced only 10,375 Sharp-shins compared with their 21 year average of 13,507 during the 1994 fall migration.*

CMRW - The season's total was 1,296, down from our five year average of 1,845. The peak day occurred September 10 with only 132 birds. This total is the lowest recorded since 1990. On September 11, 1993 304, Sharp-shins were viewed flying west over Cranberry Marsh. Calculating the birds per hour, it remains unchanged from 1990 at 5. This species represents 8% of the seasonal total.

HPRW - This site had better numbers; no doubt their superior coverage being a factor. The total was 1,742, with a high count of 313 September 18. Perhaps we missed this movement at Cranberry Marsh where we concentrated on the dramatic migration of Broad-wings. High Park's count represented 10% of their total.

OHS - Norm Murr reported seeing 76 Sharp-shins at the foot of Leslie Street September 3.

Cooper's Hawk

CMRW - Our total this year was only 31; 1993, by comparison recorded 59. Our best peak day was September 23, 1992 which saw 26 Cooper's Hawks pass through. I would like to make a point regarding the identification of this species. The leading edge of the wing is more reliable than the tail shape. Do not ignore the tail just make a note on both. Use this method when Male Cooper's and Female Sharp-shins are flying by you at the same time. The Cooper's Hawk will show the head protruding past the edge of the wing and the overall wing is larger and straighter than the Sharp-shinned Hawk. We were very conservative in our identification practices and this may explain the large difference in the Cranberry and High Park counts.

