

PEEL BIRD ER. SMITH, PAT.

MR. 8-89
H.N.

Red Bird Br- Smith, Pat

A resident of Port Credit for more than 20 years before moving to Oakville, she assumed that once she moved, the bird business would slow down.

She was wrong. "Suddenly it mushroomed," Smith said. "Small children, teachers and adults continued to bring me sick birds. People from Port Credit were still bringing the injured animals up to me, and word of mouth spread the news."

For the past 30 years, she has been getting up at 6 a.m. to tend to injured birds, and her day doesn't end until 11 p.m.

"I haven't had a day off in 18 years," she said. "It's been a lot of blood, sweat and tears — but I love it. It has kept me very, very busy."

Last year, she treated 728 birds, and only 125 eventually died. She has treated ducks, owls, geese, robins, hawks and hundreds of other species for broken wings, legs, cuts and pesticide poisoning.

Her anger surfaced when she speaks of the poisoned birds, that usually never recover.

"People don't realize how dangerous the lawn pesticides are — not only to birds, but to humans as well," she said. "It makes me so angry when I see these poor birds. People are so damn spray crazy, and if we keep on poisoning them, there will be no birds left for our children to enjoy." Smith feels it's necessary to make people aware of the harmful chemicals, urging people to read the small print on the pesticide bottles. Especially with spring just around the corner.

"All the birds will be flying back from down south, and I beg people to let the birds do what they were created to do. Don't use a harmful spray, let the birds eat the insects — that's their job!" she said emphatically.

She has huge cages in her back yard to house the large birds, and she keeps the smaller birds in cages set up in her recreation room. It is illegal to keep migratory birds in cages, so she had to apply for a permit from the federal and provincial governments allowing her to keep them for as long as it's necessary.

Last summer, Smith received an Award of Merit from Prime Minister Brian Mulroney for her outstanding community achievements. She also made a film documenting her 10-month relationship with a red-tailed hawk, which is on file at the Oakville Library.

"The film is called *Goodbye, Red*, and when the library first showed it, people were crying in the audience. It is a very beautiful story," she said.

Smith has taken care of 10 great blue herons, and a Canada goose which had flown all the way from South Carolina.



Photo by Tony Mihok
Former Port Credit resident Patricia Smith, 82, has treated just about every kind of sick bird over the past 35 years, from ducks to owls, geese, robins and hawks — even Sparrow hawks, like this little critter. She tended to 728 of our feathered friends last year, suffering from everything broken wings to pesticide poisoning.

Mar. 8-89 MN

Patricia Smith is for the birds of Mississauga

By NIAMH WALSH
Special to *The Mississauga News*
Patricia Smith knows she's for the birds.

Her legacy began in Port Credit in 1953 when she made a hobby of caring for injured birds. Soon, after moving to Oakville in 1966, Smith's hobby turned into a full-time job.

Now 82, she's nursed thousands of birds back to health over the last 35 years, and has been affectionately nicknamed the "Bird Lady" by Oakville and Mississauga residents.

"Birds recognize me as a friend, and they tell me in their own way when they are ready to leave," she said. "The payoff is in releasing them back to their normal life, but it is sad to see them go."

Another hobby that keeps Smith busy is her rose garden. She cultivates about 200 rose bushes in her back yard, and is a lifetime member of the National Canadian Rose Society. One year she was awarded first prize for the best white and red rose in Canada.