

The Uxbridge Cosmos

Vol. 18 No. 3

TheCosmos.ca

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Taxes on the rise again • Everyone say 'cheese'! • What's that at the birdfeeder?



'CRUSHED' IT! - Local snow artist Preston Wilson took advantage of the snow left by Monday's blizzard and, with a bit of help from his dad, created a giant snow sculpture of the sea turtle 'Crush' from the Disney movie *Finding Nemo*. The *Cosmos* wants more photos of you! See page 3 for details.

Photo submitted by Chris Wilson

Controversial apartment building recommended for approval

by Roger Varley

In a 14-page report, township planning consultant Elizabeth Howson recommended to council on Monday that it approve the Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications sought by Evandale Developments Ltd. to build an apartment block at the corner of Herrema Boulevard and Brock Street East.

In her report, Howson noted that Evandale has made several changes to its original application. They include moving vehicular access to the site to Herrema Boulevard from to Low Boulevard; reducing the number of proposed units to 59 from 86; and reducing the height of the proposed building to four storeys from six.

Howson said her analysis of the application

shows it meets provincial policies and fits in the region and township official plans.

"This is exactly the kind of location for this type of development," she told council, noting that an unofficial proposal made about a decade ago to build a supermarket in that location included plans for three apartment buildings.

Nevertheless, she told councillors they still have some say in the final look of the apartment building and said a detailed look at the development will come during the site plan process. She said council would have some input on the look of the building and said the township should look at hiring its own architect to help them in the process.

Asked by Councillor Bruce Garrod what would happen if council rejected the sought-

after amendments, Howson said the developer could take its case to the Ontario Land Tribunal. She advised, however, that if that happened, the township would have to hire another planning consultant because her report recommends approval. She added that an OLT appeal would cost the township around \$40,000 in legal fees.

Howson pointed out that, even with approvals, the apartment building would not be a sure thing. She said sewage allocation for the site would come at the end of the process and if there isn't sufficient allocation, construction would not proceed.

"If there's not allocation, then the whole thing is stopped," she said.

...continued on page 3

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Council & Committee Meetings

Meeting Schedule for January, 2022

Monday, January 24

COMMITTEE, 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, January 25

~~DEPARTMENT BUDGET
PRESENTATIONS - CANCELLED~~

Wednesday, January 26

AGE FRIENDLY COMMITTEE

1:30 - 3:00pm.

Monday, January 31, 9:00 a.m.

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Employment Opportunities

Complete details are available at
uxbridge.ca/employment_opportunities

Fire Department - Volunteer (Part -Time) Firefighters

Closes Monday, January 31 at 4:30pm

Candidates must be 18 years of age or older. An information session will be held virtually at 7pm on January 19, 2022. Link is available at uxbridge.ca

Please note: Schedules for the recruitment process may be adjusted based on Covid-19 protocols.

Community Services Department – Camp Program Coordinator (F-T summer student)

Closes Monday, February 7, 2022

Community Services Department – Camp Supervisors (F-T and P-T summer students)

Closes Monday, February 7, 2022

The Township of Uxbridge is an equal opportunity employer in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC). The Township of Uxbridge will provide accommodations throughout the recruitment and selection and/or assessment process to applicants with disabilities and/or needs related to the OHRC. Personal information provided is collected under the authority of The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.



Uxbridge at a Glance

The Corporation of The Township of Uxbridge
51 Toronto Street South, P.O. Box 190
Uxbridge L9P 1T1
905-852-9181 info@uxbridge.ca

Board Opportunities - The Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society

Do you have a passion for history, arts, volunteering, and making learning accessible? The Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society operates as a 'Friends of the Museum' fundraising arm to the Uxbridge Historical Centre and is looking for new Board members! The USHS provides valuable support to the UHC and advocates for Uxbridge's Heritage through annual fundraisers, events, and more, including popular events like Heritage Day. Positions up for election in 2022 include: President, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and general board members. For more information and how to apply, please visit ushs.ca or uxbridgehistoricalcentre.com/opportunities

Winter Ice Conditions

Elgin Pond

The Township of Uxbridge will be testing the ice conditions at Elgin Pond throughout the winter. A flag notification system is in place:

No Flags – Testing has not begun

Red Flags – Ice is not safe – please stay off

Yellow Flags – Skate with caution

Flags are located at the North End of Elgin Pond, beside Mill Street.

Please keep away from water inlets and outlets on the pond, as ice thickness is compromised.

Storm water Management Facilities

Please keep off of all storm water management facilities. Water levels fluctuate at these facilities and as such are not safe for skating or other activities.

Bids & Tenders

All current bid opportunities are posted to
Uxbridge.ca/bids_and_tenders

U22-01 Fields of Uxbridge, Senior Soccer Field Irrigation – Closes February 3, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

All bids must be received by the Township by the deadline stated, either electronically via the Township's website or in-person (by appointment only) at the Township Office located at 51 Toronto St. South. Public tender openings are not happening currently however bid results will be posted at uxbridge.ca/bids_and_tenders in a timely manner.

Arena & Uxpool Closed Starting

Wednesday, January 5, 2022
Due to Provincial Restrictions



Election Compliance Audit Committee

Townships of Brock, Uxbridge and Scugog

The Townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge are requesting applications from interested members of the public to serve on the Compliance Audit Committee for the 2022 Municipal Election. This committee, consisting of three (3) members, will serve all three (3) municipalities for the term of November 15, 2022, to November 14, 2026.

Ideally, membership on the Compliance Audit Committee shall be comprised of one (1) member of the public from each municipality to serve all three (3) municipalities.

Purpose

The purpose of the Committee is to review applications which may be referred by the Clerk or submitted by qualified electors who believe, on reasonable grounds, that a municipal election candidate or registered Third Party Advertiser has contravened the provisions of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, related to campaign finances. The powers of the Committee will be to:

- Review applications received and decide whether the application should be granted or rejected;
- If the application is granted, to appoint an auditor to conduct a compliance audit; and,
- Upon receipt of the report indicating a contravention, the Committee may commence legal proceedings against the candidate or Registered Third Party Advertiser; or,
- Upon receipt of the report indicating no contravention, the Committee may make a finding as to whether there were reasonable grounds for the application and determine whether to recover the costs of conducting the compliance audit

Qualifications

Committee members must have the ability to understand and apply the election campaign finance provisions of the Municipal Act and must be considered impartial with respect to their ability to fulfill their responsibilities. Preference shall be given to those Committee members with experience in accounting, law, and law enforcement.

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, prohibits members of Council, a local board, staff of the respective municipalities, candidates, and Registered Third Party Advertisers from serving on this Committee.

Remuneration

Members of the Committee shall be provided a retainer and remunerated for their attendance at meetings together with mileage.

Application Process

Interested persons are invited to forward a written expression of interest and resume outlining their experience and qualifications to serve on this Committee to the Clerk of one of the (3) municipalities.

Further Information

Further information, including the terms of reference may be obtained from the office of the Clerk in each municipality.

Application Deadline

Applications will be received in the office of each Clerk until **4:30 p.m. on January 28, 2022.**

Mr. Fernando Lamanna
Municipal Clerk & Deputy CAO
Township of Brock
1 Cameron Street East,
P.O. Box 10
Cannington, Ontario
L0E 1E0
flamanna@brock.ca

Ms. Becky Jamieson
Municipal Clerk
Township of Scugog
181 Perry Street
P.O. Box 780
Port Perry, Ontario
L9L 1A7
bjamieson@scugog.ca

Ms. Debbie Leroux
Municipal Clerk
Township of Uxbridge
51 Toronto Street South
P.O. Box 190
Uxbridge, Ontario
L9P 1T1
dleroux@uxbridge.ca

Township of Uxbridge COVID-19 Updates

Facility Closure Information

Town Hall - Open for essential services
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Uxbridge/Scugog Animal Shelter open by appointment, call 905-985-9547

Questions? Contact Us!

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Township of Uxbridge documents are available in alternate formats upon request.
Please fill out the Request for Alternate Formats Form at uxbridge.ca/accessibility

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Municipal taxes raised 3.89 per cent

by Roger Varley

With the possibility of some minor tweaking, municipal property taxes in Uxbridge will increase by 3.89 per cent when the 2022 budget is approved in a couple of weeks.

At Tuesday's final budget discussion, finance committee chair Councillor Bruce Garrod took pains to explain that 2.1 per cent of the 3.89-per cent increase goes towards the township's asset preservation. Without that, the increase would be just 1.88 per cent. As Mayor Dave Barton pointed out, the asset preservation pays for road projects in the township such as repaving. He said funding asset preservation was one of the toughest decisions this council has made in its tenure.

Garrod said the regional tax increase is expected to come in at 2.5 per cent. When the

municipal tax is blended in with the regional levy and the education tax, the overall increase in property taxes will be less than 3.89 per cent.

Treasurer Donna Condon will submit her final budget report to committees of council on Feb. 7 and the budget will receive final approval from council on Feb. 14. When Condon's report is received, the actual dollar increase in property taxes will then be made public.

Garrod pointed out that the 3.89-per cent increase is the lowest increase during this council's term in office and is also lower than the rate of inflation.

In 2019, the municipal tax rate increased by 4.86 per cent. In 2020, the increase was 4.58 per cent and last year it was 4.27 per cent.

Building gets first approval, from page 1

Council voted unanimously to accept Howson's report and her recommendations, but added an amendment to the report produced by Garrod, which said a holding symbol will be added to the zone which could only be removed if a number of conditions are met.

The Cosmos wants to publish your photo!

Thanks to the pandemic and the cold weather, we're all doing a lot more inside these days. Take a photo of your every day moments inside, and send it to us, along with a brief description and the names of those in the photo.

Whether you're home schooling, doing laundry, working at the dining room table, or everything at the same time - the more spontaneous, the better. We'll choose some of our favourites, and your every day moment could turn into front page news for the week!

Submit photos by 5 p.m., Mondays. Photos must be high-resolution, colour pdfs. Email to Lvann@thecosmos.ca

We look forward to seeing what's going on inside Uxbridge!





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Our two cents

NIMBY-ism is alive and well in Uxbridge

We journalists do our best to try and stay unbiased, look at all sides of a story or situation, and really understand as many points of view as possible when covering something. But this is an opinion column, not a news article, and we are going to come down heavy on one side of an ongoing problem here in Uxbridge.

A letter was received for information during the portion of Monday's council meeting devoted to the public works and active transportation committee. The piece of correspondence was from a resident of Goodwood who moved to an "estate home" in the hamlet five years ago "to get away from the city noise and traffic." The letter remarked on how there is suddenly a sign on Hwy. 47 directing traffic to use Goodwood Rd. (Reg. Rd. 21) as a bypass around the town, and went on to complain about the truck traffic and noise now occurring on Goodwood Rd.

NEWS FLASH (maybe this is an article) - there have been *numerous* signs around Goodwood for *many years* instructing truck traffic to go around Uxbridge proper, not through. There have been numerous studies done, looking at how to get the trucks to go around Uxbridge proper, not through. Most people don't *want* the trucks going through downtown Uxbridge for a multitude of reasons - noise, pollution, congestion, unsightliness. It's impossible to have a conversation with a friend on the street when a transport truck is rumbling through. So they are asked to bypass downtown and use Reg. Rd. 21.

The ask to council to "remove the sign and limit the truck traffic on Goodwood Rd." had us holding our sides, we were laughing so hard. Just where, oh Letter Writer, are these trucks to go? Uxbridge doesn't want them *downtown*, you don't want them in your estate home backyard... Perhaps a large overpass, from the intersection at Hwy. 47 and the York-Durham line all the way over to Hwy. 47 and Lake Ridge Rd.? Will that satisfy you?

To council - you held your smiles and your tongues incredibly well while dealing with this particular agenda item. Diplomacy at its very best. We applauded you during the meeting, but you likely couldn't hear us because a truck was going by.

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Letters to the Editor

Time for a town square

Ted Barris, Wynn Walters, and other town square supporters are correct. A town square will bring many positive changes to our town, including increasing shopping in our downtown, interesting and unique shops, and dining in our restaurants. Ted mentioned many uses for the area. They don't have to be costly or complicated. Relaxing and listening to our excellent musicians will attract many people, like me.

Carol Johnson
Uxbridge

Ted Barris was right last week (Jan. 13) in his column, that a central downtown square would be a great addition to Uxbridge. I believe to keep our town vibrant we continually need to look for opportunities to build our sense of community. A town square that was designed as a "people place" would do just that. We have an opportunity to build a good sized town square, right on the main street with shops and restaurant on either side. The square needs to be large enough that it could be used by community groups and also conveniently accessible by people strolling by. It is a costly project, but money

well spent, as it will be a legacy for many years to people living in Uxbridge. If I could, I'd re-work the line from Joni Mitchell's song *Big Yellow Taxi*, where she sings, "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot" to "We tore down the parking lot and put up paradise."

Dwight Clements
Uxbridge

I greatly enjoyed Ted Barris's recent article in the *Cosmos* (Jan. 13 edition). The need for a town square is critical. When we moved to Uxbridge, 30- odd years ago, Uxbridge was a vibrant town easily the equal of Port Perry. Now, the downtown core is dying. Whether it's a lack of caring, poor political leadership or an absence of a vision, I don't know, but a golden opportunity was missed with the installation of the new culvert, in effect a glorified drain under Brock St.

John Mellor
Uxbridge

The January 13 issue of the *Uxbridge Times-Journal* contained an article by reporter Moya Dillon concerning the revitalization of downtown Uxbridge and a consultant's report relating to this. I was pleased to read of the findings and

recommendations of the consultant and of Ms. Dillon's reporting on the matter – at least until I got to near the end of her article. In my view, the consulting firm is on the right track with its findings, proposals and recommendations, i.e., to create a public square in the area close to where Coffee Time is presently located. Many Uxbridge residents have called for exactly the same thing. My pleasure turned to dismay when I read Mayor Barton's comment about council having been relatively silent, allowing the public to develop a vision, but now is the time to, if possible, "include more residential units and more jobs in the downtown core, that's the goal." It appears to me that Mayor Barton would prefer to ignore the consultant's report or to cherry pick from it, giving short shrift to measures that would really give the downtown a focus for the public. Is this another example of the tried and true dodge of setting up a process of public consultation, hiring a consultant and at the end of the day doing what you wanted to do all along? Let's hope that council does not squander a unique opportunity.

Earle Lockerby
Sandford

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Am I Wrong?

column by Roger Varley

Experiencing déjà vu (déjà vu...déjà vu)

Ontario premier Doug Ford says he will have some positive news on the COVID-19 front later this week. The scuttlebutt is that he will ease some of the restrictions that were put in place at the start of the year.

However, I'm not going to get my hopes up too much: we've been here before, several times.

I've lost count of the number of times the province has shut us down, let us out and then shut us down again since this pandemic started. And the result is almost always the same: the COVID-19 numbers go down, restrictions are lifted, the numbers go up again and the restrictions are back in force. And with schools being reopened for in-class learning this week, how long will it be before the numbers soar once more?

After almost two years of this nonsense, one would think that the powers-that-be would have learned - (no in-class teaching required) - that doing the same thing over and over and always expecting different results is, as Albert Einstein said, the definition of insanity. And yet they go their merry way, imposing restrictions and lifting restrictions ad nauseum, with no discernible results. Keep poking a donkey with a sharp stick and he will move. But if you use that sharp stick too many times, the donkey eventually develops a callous and decides not to move anymore.

Eventually, the general populace is going to develop such callouses. Eventually, people are going to be so tired of going around in circles that there likely will be a backlash that all the protocols and restrictions are not going to hold back. Anti-vaxxer rallies have been going on since the pandemic started, but if the government and their health experts don't start to show a modicum of creative and critical thinking in getting this disease under control, those anti-vaxxers are going to be joined by people who are fully vaccinated but just

fed up with all the malarkey.

We've worn our masks, we've received our vaccines, we've sanitized our hands, we've kept our physical distances, we've avoided crowded venues. In fact, the vast majority of us have done all that the so-called experts have told us to do. To what purpose? Jobs have been lost, businesses have closed and lives have been disrupted severely, but is there anyone who can say we're in a better position than we were two years ago.

I'd say we are worse off than when we started. Our health care workers certainly are under far more stress than they were at the beginning. The same could be said of our teachers. Now we are seeing stories about grocery stores possibly closing because of shortages of staff and products. And my hair is a mess.

I certainly do not want to contract COVID-19 and I would not wish it on my worst enemy. That said, however, I am slowly but surely reaching the point where, as Rhett Butler said, frankly, I don't give a damn. Living like groundhogs, poking our noses out every now and again to see if it's safe to go outside, is not living at all. It has reached the point where many people - (and it includes a lot of seniors such as myself) - are extremely cautious and nervous when entering a store such as Zehrs or Canadian Tire. In fact, I find that, except for my daily cup of coffee, I go into stores as little as possible these days. I apologize to our local merchants for that, but that's the result of lockdown after lockdown.

It seems to me that Doug Ford better have not just positive news but wonderful news or else, like most of you, it will just go in one ear and out the other. On the other hand, maybe he should just tell us what we all suspect: that COVID-19 is here to stay and we have to learn to live with it.

Tell me, am I wrong?



The Barris Beat

column by Ted Barris

Mad dogs and snowstorms

As a general rule - remembering obedience training sessions I've attended with most of my canine companions over the years - when I walk a dog, I try to keep the dog on a leash and at my left side. I use the universal command, "Heel," to keep the dog loping along at the same pace I'm walking. My current canine pal, Jazz, is still learning that command. But for the first time since I got him about seven months ago, during Monday's snowstorm, I didn't care if he heeled or not. In fact, along our walk through the early morning darkness and whiteout of the storm, I encouraged him like Sgt. Preston of the Mounted.

"On Jazz!" I called out to him. "Way you go!"

In the storm, I cast the obedience to the wind because the sidewalks had blown in. There were no footprints for us to follow. I had no footing in the blowing snow. So, I chose to depend on Jazz's instincts to guide us onto solid surfaces and quite frankly to help me keep my balance.

Over many winters and many snowstorms, I've learned some basic coping skills. For example, when I drive in winter, I always carry an emergency kit with matches and a candle in my glove compartment; a lit candle inside a marooned car throws a remarkable amount of heat in the confined space. It's a good idea to store a chocolate bar or two in there too. So, in the aftermath of our latest blizzard, I thought I'd offer a lesson or two from storms past.

I remember, for example, during my university days (when I didn't own a car), on Friday nights I routinely hitchhiked to a farmhouse east of Toronto for the weekend. This one Friday night, an eastbound ride on Hwy. 401 dropped me at the ramp to the northbound Hwy. 115/35. All I needed was another hitch of 15 kilometres or so to north of Pontypool, Ont., and I'd be at the farm safe and sound. Except this night the weather along Lake Ontario was completely inhospitable - snow accumulating, wind whipping and temperature plummeting. Nobody was on the road, except the occasional transport. Miraculously, one stopped in the tunnel under 401 and picked me up. "I can't thank you enough," I told the driver.

"You can thank me by never pulling this

stunt again," he said. And he proceeded to tear a strip off me for hitching in such horrible weather. He claimed he was the only semi on the road for miles and if he hadn't happened along, they'd probably have found me frozen to death in a snowdrift the next morning. Lesson learned. (In fact, I'd recommend nobody hitchhike in winter or ever.)

In the 1970s, I worked at a Saskatoon radio station, but commuted back and forth from the countryside to work. One February night driving home to my in-laws' farmhouse west of Saskatoon, I turned off the highway and encountered snowdrifts too deep for my 1967 Valiant to penetrate. It was 3 a.m. and I was stuck in a snowbank, I thought, miles from anybody. (There were no cell phones then.) "Never abandon your car in a snowstorm!" all of my experienced Prairie friends had told me. And yet that's exactly what I did to try to get help. I walked almost two kilometres in shoes and a flimsy coat, managed to reach a farmhouse, and called my brother-in-law Bill to retrieve me. He roared down the grid road in his Dodge truck and pulled me out. "Don't ever do that again!" he scolded me. That's when I started practising good winter driving habits - packing a parka, proper boots, emergency supplies (including the matches and candle).

One last thought about dogs and winter. Many years ago, when I wrote music features for Toronto pop music magazines, I interviewed singer/songwriter Corey Wells in California. Some may remember him from the rock band Three Dog Night. Some will remember hits such as *Joy to the World*, *Never Been to Spain* and *Mama Told Me Not to Come*. Anyway, I asked Wells about the origin of the band's name. When Aboriginal people in Australia bedded down on cold nights, Wells told me, some slept on the ground keeping a dingo (dog) close by for body heat. On colder nights, they slept next to two dogs. But for sure, a freezing cold night was a "three dog night."

Apocryphal perhaps, but I'm sure canine survival instincts are pretty reliable. In any case, I've decided to let my pal Jazz pull me at will through any and all snowstorms. In an emergency, dog obedience rules be damned.

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Focus on Finance with Tammy Scuralli, Edward Jones

What are your financial resolutions for 2022?

As you know, 2021 was full of challenges. We were still feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic when supply chains shut down and inflation heated up. But now it's



John William Megens
January 31, 1935 ~ December 19, 2021

- Don't take my boots off,
I've got too much left to do.
- Don't take my boots off,
The day isn't through.
- Don't take my boots off,
I need to push that pedal.
- Don't take my boots off,
There are cattle to pick up in the meadow.
- Don't take my boots off,
The country life's for me.
- Don't take my boots off,
God's given me so much to laugh and see.
- Don't take my boots off,
My family & friends expect me home.
- Don't take my boots off,
I'll never leave them all alone.
- Don't take my boots off,
Please take a chapter from my book.
- Don't take my boots off,
Life is precious – take a look!
- Don't take my boots off,
When I get to the big white gate.
- Don't take my boots off,
I'll be trucking with all of heaven's great!

In memory of John Megens, a loving husband, father, Opa, brother, cousin, uncle, cattleman, horseman and friend to many. He lived every day to its fullest, had a passion for agriculture and a heart of gold. Memorial & charity for donations to follow later in 2022.

time to look ahead to a brighter 2022. And on a personal level, you may want to set some New Year's resolutions. You might resolve to improve your health and diet, and possibly learn some new skills, but why not make some financial resolutions too? Here are a few ideas to consider.

Prepare for the unexpected. If you haven't already created an emergency fund, now may be a good time to start. Ideally, you'd like to have three to six months' worth of living expenses in this fund, with the money kept in a low-risk, liquid account (if you're retired, you may want to consider up to a year's worth of living expenses). Once you've got this fund established, you may be able to avoid dipping into long-term investments to pay for short-term needs, such as costly home or auto repairs or large medical bills.

Boost your retirement savings. The pandemic caused many of us to reevaluate our ability to eventually enjoy the retirement lifestyles we've envisioned. In fact, according to a study from Age Wave and Edward Jones, 60 per cent of pre-retirees and 53 per cent of Canadian retirees indicated they were interested in receiving retirement related guid-

ance from a financial professional to determine the best way to optimize their retirement savings. This year, if you can afford it, increase your contributions to your Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) and your Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP), or other employer-sponsored retirement plan.

Reduce your debt load. The less debt you carry, the more money you'll have available to support your lifestyle today and save and invest for tomorrow. Resolve to cut down on your existing debts and avoid taking on new ones whenever possible. Motivate yourself by measuring your progress. Record your total debts and then compare this figure to your debt load at the start of 2023. If the numbers have dropped, you'll know you were making the right moves.

Don't overreact to the headlines. A lot can happen during a year. Consider inflation – it shot up in 2021, but it may well subside in 2022. If you changed your investment strategy to accommodate the rise in inflation, will you then have to modify it again when prices fall? What about changes in interest rates? And don't forget extreme weather events, such as wildfires and floods. Any, or all, of these occurrences can affect the financial markets in the short term, but it doesn't make sense for you to keep changing the way you invest in response to the news of the day. Instead, stick with a strategy that's appropriate for your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon. You may need to adjust this strategy over time, in response to changes in your own life, but don't let your decisions be dictated by external events.

These aren't the only financial resolutions you can make, but following them may help you develop positive habits that can help you face the future with confidence.

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For more information, please contact Tammy E. Scuralli, Financial Advisor at Edward Jones, at 905-852-1244.



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The Nature Nut

column by Nancy Melcher

The usual suspects

Congratulations! You've put up your birdfeeder, secured the squirrel guard, and filled it with bird food. Now you see birds coming to grab a seed or two. Blue jays and cardinals are easy to identify, but what are all the little ones flittering about? Here's a handy guide to what you may see visiting your feeder.

First the robin-sized birds. Blue Jays have blue, white, and black feathers, and a perky crest. Cardinal males are bright red with a black face and heavy red beak, with a long tail and crest. Females are brownish overall with reddish wings and tail. Mourning doves are chubbier birds, with soft grey-brown backs and pinkish heads and chests. They will often feed on the ground, and their wings make a whistling sound when they take off.

There's a wide variety of sparrow-sized birds. The most common feeder bird is the goldfinch. Their winter plumage is a drab, unstreaked olive brown. They have darker wings with white wing bars, a notched tail, and conical beak. They're often accompanied by pine siskins and common redpolls. Siskins are the same size as goldfinches but are brown birds with lots of streaks and yellow wing markings. Their wheezy twitters may be the first thing you notice.

Common redpolls are plump light brownish-grey birds with a red cap on the top of their black face. Males have pinkish chests, and both sexes have long notched tails.



Male common redpoll.

Photo by Nancy Melcher

Two more plump visitors are chickadees and juncos. Curious but tiny chickadees are often the first visitors to a new feeder. They have big heads, black caps and bibs, white cheeks and chest, and buffy sides. Their backs, tails and wings are grey. Juncos are slate grey on top

with light coloured beaks and white underparts and outer tail feathers. They prefer to feed on the ground, picking up the seeds that other birds have dropped.

Pairs of nuthatches also visit backyard feeders. Sleeker than the rest of the visitors, they are agile, and often climb down a tree head-first.



White-breasted nuthatch.

Photo by Nancy Melcher

White-breasted nuthatches are grey on top with white chests, and a black collar and cap. Red-breasted nuthatches are smaller and have a brick red chest, as the name suggests. They're like their cousins but sport a black eye stripe in addition to the cap and collar.

This list wouldn't be complete without woodpeckers. White with spotted black wings, cap, eye stripe and moustache, these acrobatic birds eat suet and black sunflower seeds. The smaller downy woodpecker is the most common woodpecker and is a bit larger than a white-breasted nuthatch or goldfinch. It has a small slender beak. Its larger cousin, the hairy woodpecker, is closer in size to the cardinal and has a larger beak. Males of both species have a red spot on the back of their head.

There are many more birds that may visit your feeders, including hawks, starlings, pigeons, and other woodpeckers, sparrows, and finches. You'll also be challenged to keep squirrels from cleaning out your feeders! A good bird book with clear, colourful pictures will help you identify these less-common birds. Enjoy these entertaining backyard visitors and don't hesitate to reach out with your questions.

Nancy Melcher is The Nature Nut. Send details of your sightings or questions about the natural world to: general@melcher.cx

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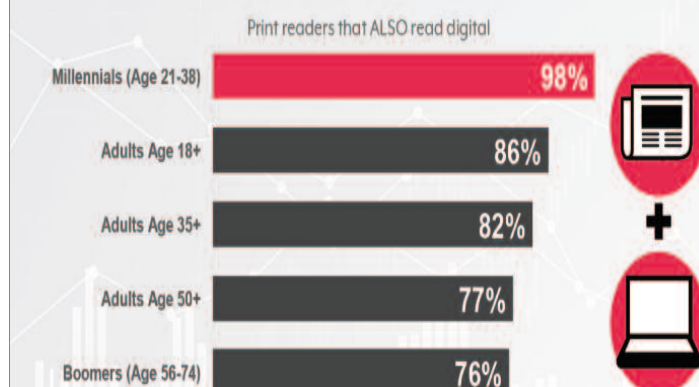
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