

Local

Photographer reveals secret life of urban wildlife

JOURNAL STAFF

Sarnia's Lake Chipican in Canatara Park is home to a number of huge but rarely seen snapping turtles, including one that a biologist has estimated at more than 100 years old.

This spring nature photographer Ronny D'Haene watched as two of the dinosaur-like creatures emerged from the murky depths to mate, a violent affair he had witnessed once before.

"It's unbelievable, really, to see them wrestle each other like that. I know it sounds weird, but it looks like she wrestles him until he submits, and keeps at it until all of her eggs are fertilized."

D'Haene, 63, is a self-taught photographer who has made the wildlife of Sarnia and Lambton County - animals, birds, insects - his specialty.

He is entirely self-taught and picked up a camera seriously for the first time in 2002 following a life-changing accident.

Good wildlife shots are everywhere around us, he says, but patience is

required to get them.

On one recent outing to Canatara Park he focused on one small patch of milkweed blooming with flowers. When he

emerged hours later he had images of 40 different insect species.

One shot of a jumping spider, reproduced here, was taken from four inch-

es away.

"You just have to be tenacious," he says. "It's like what they say about the lottery, if you don't play you can't win."



A MALE PILEATED woodpecker brings lunch back to share with a youngster in the nest. Ronny D'Haene

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Local



TOP LEFT: A GREAT blue heron fishing in Lake Chipican wasn't put off when the fish it speared for dinner proved to be an ornamental goldfish or koi someone released in the Canatara Park pond.
TOP RIGHT: THE COURTSHIP of snapping turtles, like this pair in Lake Chipican, is a rarely witnessed event. Unlike other turtles, snapping turtles cannot withdraw completely inside their shell and so defend themselves by snapping at potential predators.



BOTTOM LEFT: A RED-TAILED hawk brings food back to a nest made of sticks high in a tree. The feathers of red-tailed hawks, like those of eagles, are considered sacred to many Indigenous people of North America.
BOTTOM RIGHT: A TINY black jumping spider stares down a camera lens positioned just inches away. Jumping spiders are active hunters that chase down their prey. Many have eight eyes: two large eyes in front to get a clear image and judge distance, and extra side eyes to detect when something is moving.

PHOTOS BY RONNY D'HAENE

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