

Electrical outage hits parts of city

GUELPH

Pockets of Guelph were draped in darkness early last night after trouble at the substation transformer on Edinburgh Road.

Sergeant Joe Hall said police received a call around 7 p.m. reporting an explosion in the area of Water Street and Edinburgh Road.

"We assume it was a problem with the transformer because power went out, but when we arrived on scene there was nothing to see," Hall said, meaning no fire or evidence of an explosion.

Diane Wilson was driving into Guelph from Rockwood along Highway 7 and said she saw a flash and then pockets of darkness just before 7 p.m. Susan Atkinson said she was travelling south on Gordon Street near The Boathouse around the same time when she thought she saw a flash of lighting.

Hall said power went out at the police station on Fountain Street and in several neighbourhoods near downtown. The police station has a backup generator, so power wasn't out for long there. And it was restored throughout the city after about 30 minutes.

"Our emergency backup worked fine," Hall said. "No accidents were reported and there were no incidents either."

Captain Angus McKay said the Guelph Fire Department received many calls for alarm activations, but none amounted to anything.

"There was a call from some people stuck in an elevator," at an apartment building on Silvercreek Parkway, McKay said, "but they weren't stuck for very long."

No one at Guelph Hydro was available for comment last night.

• Mercury staff

LOCAL BRIEFS

FERGUS

Snowmobile stolen from Fergus-area home

A snowmobile was stolen from the back of a Fergus-area home Monday.

The red-and-yellow 2001 Polaris 600 Edge, with a red windshield, is worth about \$7,000. It was taken from a home on Sideroad 10, near Jones Baseline.

Anyone with information can call the OPP in Fergus at 519-843-4240.

ELORA

Police chase fleeing driver but give up because of speed

A driver fled from OPP officers near Elora Monday night when they tried to pull him over.

About 10:30 p.m. Monday, officers patrolling Wellington Road 7 near Elora tried to stop a 1990 Chevrolet IROC.

The driver accelerated and headed south and the police followed.

The officers halted their pursuit because the motorist was travelling at an unsafe speed, police said.

GUELPH

Norwalk-like virus on the out: health officials

The prevalence of a Norwalk-like virus in the community is diminishing, say public health officials.

"The virus peaked about two weeks ago and now it is starting to wane," said Cam Clark, program manager with Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health.

During the peak period, there were outbreaks declared at about a dozen long-term care facilities and day-care centres. The outbreak at the Guelph General lasted two weeks and was declared over Jan. 26.

Clark said there are still outbreaks at two long-term care facilities and one day-care centre.

GUELPH

Giant for-sale sign advertises small unit

The for-lease sign at the busy south-end Hartsland Market Square plaza is large, but that's not because the main anchor — the Zehrs supermarket — is leaving.

"The only thing we're planning is replacing a very small tenant in one of the (retail) units," leasing representative Yoed Goldstein said yesterday, acknowledging the for-lease sign is perhaps too big — though it may not be up for long.

"We have no doubt we'll be leasing it in no time," said Goldstein, who works for the plaza's owner, the Toronto-based RioCan real estate investment trust.

Goldstein said the new tenant will replace a specialized footwear store, Billings Orthotics, which is moving out of the 1,000-square-foot space at the end of next month.

RioCan acquired the 109,000-sq.-ft. plaza, at the corner of Edinburgh and Kortright roads, in 2004.

• Mercury staff



CANADIAN PRESS

University of Guelph researchers were involved in identifying 15 bird species and six bat species from among specimens previously thought to be a single species, like this *Trachops cirrhosus*, a bat from Guyana.

Researchers identify new bats and birds

Using technique pioneered at U of G, researchers attempt to catalogue all the varieties of life on planet Earth

By THANA DHARMARAJAH
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

They've been around for centuries, but 15 new bird species and six new bat species have come to light through DNA "bar-coding."

University of Guelph researchers, along with a team of international scientists from New York's Rockefeller University, have identified "genetic splits" between these species that are hardly noticeable to the human eye.

Their research has just been published in two separate studies in the journal "Molecular Ecology Notes."

Paul Hebert, professor and director of the Biodiversity Institute of Ontario at the University of Guelph, said taxonomists in the past didn't distinguish these species as being different, but now it's been noted their genetic makeup is different.

For example, the solitary sandpiper, which breeds across Alaska and Canada, was always treated as one species, Hebert said.

Now scientists have found there are two species, which can be noted visually by the difference in breast colour during breeding season, he said.

Scientists also confirmed the Eastern meadowlark and the Lillian's meadowlark are different.

Kevin Kerr, a PhD student working with Hebert, said "splitting" is not a new phenomenon in the bird world.

When scientists do find a split,



PAUL HEBERT
U OF G PROFESSOR

“When we're finished codifying bar codes and creating this reference library for life, any person on the planet will be able to identify any organism.”

frequently one of the species may be in the Rocky Mountains and the other in the east, he said.

The Rockies, Kerr said, act as a barrier and prevent birds from travelling across the mountains.

"If these birds can't intermingle over time, they would eventually separate."

The researchers examined 643 North American bird species and 87 bat species from Guyana.

In total, six new bat species have

been unearthed.

The bar-coding of species will have many implications for bat conservation, said PhD student Beth Clare.

Windmills have been causing a lot of bat deaths, she said, and now people can identify which species are being killed and possibly how to prevent those deaths.

Hebert was the first to suggest a short DNA sequence can be used to identify species.

He called it DNA bar-coding, comparing it to the way items are marked at retail stores.

The process of DNA bar-coding takes about three hours and two or three large pieces of equipment.

In the future, Hebert envisions people having hand-held bar-code readers that will, for example, help them tell whether the expensive fish dinner they've ordered is truly a grouper, rather than a catfish.

"When we're finished codifying bar codes and creating this reference library for life, any person on the planet will be able to identify any organism," he told Canadian Press.

"Bar-coding is revealing legions of unrecognized species, and it's going to change the species count for the planet."

Port inspectors will also be able to tell whether the insects they find on flowers and fruits pose a danger.

"There's all sorts of loss of commercial products because we can't answer that question," Hebert said.

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• With files from Canadian Press

Boy killed by puck would have wanted others to keep skating, park sign says

GUELPH

Just a few feet from flowers and other memorial items, a sign erected this week urges the community to continue using the outdoor rink where Nicholas Lambden recently sustained a fatal injury.

"The Lambden family hopes everyone continues to enjoy this park as Nicholas would have wanted," the blue and white sign reads. "Play safe. Have fun."

Andrew Lambden, the boy's father, said the sign was put up by a close friend after consultation with his family.

"We thought it was very kind they offered to do that because we want people to use (the rink) and have fun with it," Lambden said. "That's what Nick would have wanted."

The 10-year-old was hit in the head by a stray puck during a game of pick-up hockey Feb. 11. He was airlifted to Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children and died the next day. Nicholas was not wearing a helmet at the time.

Lambden said his son loved spending time at the park and especially on the rink during the winter, and his family hopes the tragedy will not deter others from doing the same.

"We want to make sure the community continues to enjoy that wonderful park and that they think of Nick when they're there and that they play safe."

Lambden said his family is "coming along" as they deal with their terrible loss.

"It's the saddest thing in the world," he said quietly.

• Mercury staff



DAVE CARTER, GUELPH MERCURY

A sign marks the spot where Nicholas Lambden was fatally hit by a puck.

Man will stand trial after fatal collision

GUELPH

A Campbellville man has been ordered to stand trial more than a year after a spectacular collision that killed two young Fergus men.

Thomas Wilson, 21, appeared in a Guelph court last week for a preliminary hearing. He was ordered by Justice Norman Douglas to appear in the Superior Court of Justice April 2 to set a date for his trial.

Wilson is charged with two counts of criminal negligence causing death and a single count of criminal negligence causing bodily harm.

Curtis Kraemer, 22, and Adrian Turcotte, 19, both died Jan. 6 when their 1995 Volkswagen was torn in half after striking an oncoming van in front of Springfield Golf and Country Club in Guelph's south end.

Police reported the two men had been trying to pass Wilson's Honda Civic as both headed north on Gordon Street. After hitting a van, the back half of the Volkswagen struck the Honda, causing it to leave the road.

Guelph Police said at the time the drivers of the Honda and the Volkswagen knew each other. They had left an Aberfoyle business about 10 p.m. and were driving at high speeds at the time of the collision.

The driver of the van, a 45-year-old man from Welland, received serious injuries to his left hand in the collision.

• Mercury staff

Guelph could be getting a few more classrooms

By THANA DHARMARAJAH
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Two local Catholic elementary schools may soon be getting more classroom space.

The planning and operations committee of the Wellington Catholic District School Board approved a motion at Monday night's board meeting that would add seven classrooms to Holy Trinity Catholic School in Guelph and three classrooms to St. Mary's Catholic School in Elora.

It is hoped the additions will accommodate 160 additional students.

The motion will go to the school board on March 5.

Dan Duszczyszyn, the board's superintendent of corporate affairs, said the extra classrooms at Holy Trinity are intended to address growth in the east end of town and new regulations from the Ministry of Education.

Classes are to be limited to 20 students for those in kindergarten to Grade 3, beginning next fall.

The expansion would be funded through a grant from the ministry that specifically addresses classroom sizes.

Duszczyszyn wouldn't reveal the amount of the grant since the board has yet to put out a request for tenders.

The expansion would replace portables at both schools, Duszczyszyn said.

There are currently five portables at Holy Trinity and three at St. Mary's.

Holy Trinity principal John DalBello said until the addition was approved, portables were the only way they could accommodate students.

He said it's better to have the students "feel more a part of the school."

With more people settling in the east end, Holy Trinity is expecting at least 40 more students in the fall.

DalBello said the new classes will likely fill up within two years.

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In the business of conservation

GUELPH

Two free upcoming Guelph-Wellington Business Enterprise Centre workshops focus on energy conservation measures for firms.

Next Tuesday's will highlight how companies can create their own energy conservation plans.

The following Tuesday, the focus is on renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

The workshops are held from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the business centre, 42 Wyndham St., in St. George's Square.

To register or for more information, call 519-515-0088.

• Mercury staff