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Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

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Volume 40, Number 6

September-October 2006

## Club Activities

**Indoor:** Meetings begin at 7:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month from October to June at St. Andrew's United Church, 89 Mountainview Road South in Georgetown (Mountainview & Sinclair) unless stated otherwise.

**Sept 12: Watershed Health and Urban Development.** Presenter - Christine Zimmer, P. Eng., Senior Water Resources Engineer, Credit Valley Conservation. Topics covered; the direct linkages existing between public health and ecosystem health, present watershed conditions showing some degradation in the environment, and current planning and development practices which are not sustainable. Location: Youth Room, Chris Gibson Recreation Centre, 125 MacLaughlin Road North, Brampton (905) 874-2820 (North of Queen on East side of McLaughlin). Map page ?

**Oct. 10: Greenland and Nunavut Travels.** Jean Iron, Ontario Field Ornithologists, will give a talk on her Arctic travels. Location: St. Andrew United Church, 89 Mountainview Road South, Georgetown (Mountainview & Sinclair)

**Nov. 14: Re-introduction of Elk into Ontario.** Meagan Hazell will speak about her research on the release of large ruminants into Ontario.

**Dec. 12:** Potluck at Limehouse Hall or St. Andrews

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**Outdoor:** Trips begin at the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) parking lot at Guelph and Mountainview Road, Georgetown, unless stated otherwise. If you would like to meet the group at the trip site, please speak to the trip leader for the location and directions to the starting point.

**Sept 16: Electrofishing in Silver Creek at Norval.** Bob Morris will be the leader. Meet at the baseball diamond parking lot in Norval at 9:00.

**Sept 24: Afternoon Walk at Calcium Pits.** View an unnamed lake south of the pits and walk the boardwalk in the wetland. Leave the NEC parking lot at 1:00 pm. Bring snack, drinks, appropriate clothing and footwear. Trail is fine most of the way but ground could be a bit damp very close to the lake.

**Oct 14: Hawk Watch in High Park, Toronto.** Meet Gerry Doekes at 9:00 or around 10:00 at the Grenadier Restaurant parking lot, in High Park.

**Oct 22: Day Walk on Bruce Trail near Silver Creek.** The exact section to be determined. Meet at 10:00 am. Bring lunch, drinks, appropriate clothing and footwear.

**Oct 29: Rattray Marsh.** Meet at 9:00 or to make other arrangements call Andrew Kellman at (905) 873-7338.

**Nov. 5: Hamilton Fall Bird Round-up.**

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## Young Naturalists

**May 27:** Willow Park Fall Outing. Meet Nancy and Andy Kovacs at the Willow Park parking lot at 1:00. For more information call Andy or Nancy at (905) 702-1132.

## President's Message

I wish to extend a welcome back to another exciting year at the Halton North Peel Naturalist Club! This greeting especially pertains to our new members, or to those who may be reading this newsletter as a guest! On an official note, I would like to remind everyone that their 2006/2007 memberships are due. Young Naturalists' will also be running again this year under the direction of the Kovacs. If you would like to help out, or know of any budding young naturalists, please speak to Andy or Nancy. We're also looking for people interested in running for executive positions in the upcoming club elections in October. In particular, we are desperately looking to fill the vacating positions of Treasurer, Membership and Publicity Coordinator. If you are interested in any executive position, please speak to a member of the current executive!

I hope that everyone had a fun-filled and productive summer, and were able to spend some time outdoors exploring nature. Andrew and I certainly had a busy summer, and packed in a number of weekend trips and longer adventures. I'm sure that everyone will enjoy sharing stories of their summer travels at the upcoming meetings. Maybe a few people will even be willing to relate their adventures in the form of a newsletter article or two!

Finally, we are really keen to boost membership this year, and hope to achieve this in part through promotion at community events such as fall fairs, etc. We have updated the club's display boards and showed them off at Riverfest in June. I wish to extend a sincere thanks to those that helped out at this festival. Any help at upcoming events would be greatly appreciated, as would your suggestions about boosting membership. We look forward to hearing from you this fall!

Sincerely,  
*Kelly Bowen*

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club, Box 115, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4T1

### Executive

President: Kelly Bowen (905) 873-7338  
Past-President Andy Kovacs (905) 702-1132  
Vice-President: Andrew Kellman (905) 873-7338  
Secretary: Janice Sukhiani (905) 693-8227  
Treasurer: David Williams (905) 877-1539

### Appointments

Membership: Teresa Rigg (905) 873-0614  
Newsletter: Gerda Potzel (905) 702-1681  
Ontario Nature Representative: Teresa Rigg  
Public Relations: Gerry Doekes (905) 873-0179  
Young Naturalists: Nancy Kovacs (905) 702-1132

Membership .for one year: \$20 Single; \$30 Family  
The Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club is an affiliated member of Ontario Nature

Email submissions/questions/concerns to: [gpotzel@sympatico.ca](mailto:gpotzel@sympatico.ca)  
<http://haltonnorthpeelnaturalists.org>

## Letter to the Editor

June 21, 2006

I love receiving your club's newsletter and read with interest about the various outings and community issues that involve the members; I am proud to be a "lifer" in the Halton/North Peel Nats!

Enclosed is a small contribution for the young naturalists program. Working with youth in nature has been a life-long interest for me. Funds are needed to purchase assorted equipment and activity items for the children's programs.

Please convey my warmest greetings to your members and tell them that I'm always with them in spirit at the meetings and hikes.

Sandy Symmes

## Bird Report from Upper Canada College (UCC)

June 6, on property adjacent to the College, a Clay – colored Sparrow was found singing daily from June 6 to July 21.

In the last 2 weeks of June, both Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoo's were both seen and heard calling.

On July 6, I found a Sharp-Shinned Hawk hunting in the vicinity of a nest, one fledged young was perched on a branch near by and calling, the nest was located in the crown of a white spruce tree in a dense plantation forest.

A Pine Warbler was singing for most of the summer on territory.

August 24, there was a light rain the night before, causing a small fall out of migrating warblers and other species of birds.

Chestnut-sided Warbler (many immature.)

Black-throated Blue Warbler

Cape May Warbler

Blackburnian Warbler

Black-throated Green Warbler

Magnolia Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)

American Redstart

Wilson's Warbler



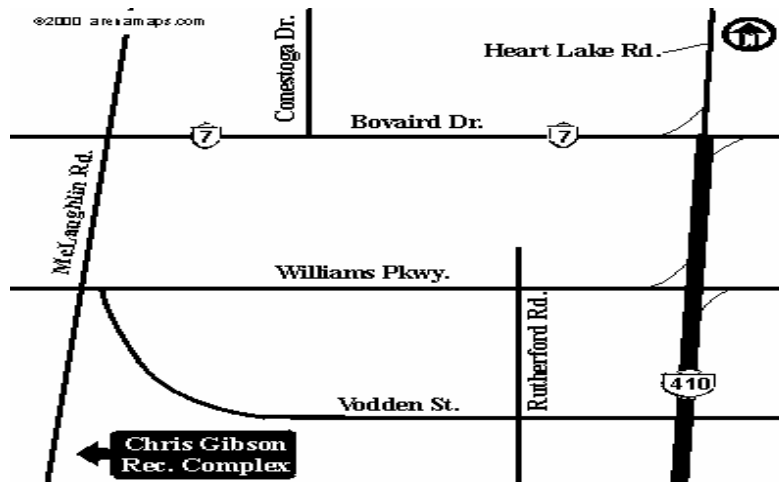
Other Species, Least Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, Spotted Sandpiper

Gerry Doekes

## Other Events of Interest

**Friday, October 27 to Sunday, October 29, "W" is for Water; Ontario Environment Network (OEN) Fall Conference 2006.** Pearce Williams United Church Christian Centre, South of Iona (Hwy. 3), west of Fingal, 8009 Iona Road, R. R. #1, Fingal, ON N0L 1K0. The focus of the conference will be on water. The centre piece of the weekend will be the *Ontario Clean Water Act*, but we will also discuss the *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement*, hydro power, sewage sludge, road salt contamination, bottled water, etc. If you have any suggestions for speakers or anything related to the fall conference contact Phillip Penna,, 705-840-2888, [oen@oen.ca](mailto:oen@oen.ca), or visit [www.oen.ca](http://www.oen.ca).

**Friday, September 22.** Car Free Day in Canada. International Car Free Day is an annual event celebrated by 100 million people on every continent and supported by the European Union, the United Nations, the Government of Canada and the leaders of 1500 cities around the world. Car Free Day street events and forums highlight the many problems caused by our dependence on the private automobile. It emphasizes the rights of pedestrians and cyclists, the need for more and better public transit. For more information visit [www.carfreeday.ca](http://www.carfreeday.ca).



## Ghost Ponds of North Halton

If you closely examine the topographic maps that cover the Region, Halton is a land of ponds. If you tally all the large and small water bodies that fall within the boundaries, you will come up with a total of about 1109 that were large enough to be mapped. That number doesn't include the myriads of seasonal pools. Since those maps were created, some ponds have disappeared and new ones have been created. This report looks at the creation and removal of a number of larger ponds in the northern parts of Halton.

When you have such a large number of ponds within the relatively small area that defines Halton, obviously the ponds are small. Many were created as farm ponds but some developed in natural depressions in the rolling topography and some were even by-products of quarrying. Within Halton, the largest natural water bodies include Crawford Lake, Lake Medad, Fisher's Pond, and an un-named pond south of the Calcium Pits. The largest man-made water impoundments that currently exist include Kelso Lake, Hilton Falls Reservoir, Scotch Block Reservoir, Burns Conservation Area, Fairy Lake, Milton Town Pond, Campbellville Pond and Islay Lake. Goosepimple Lake at the Blue Springs Scout Camp and Wolfe Lake at the Terra Cotta Conservation Area are smaller reservoirs that were the result of water management actions on existing watercourses. Numerous dams had been created historically on the rivers in Halton, particularly the lower reaches of Sixteen Mile Creek and Bronte Creek, but elsewhere as well. The ponds that developed behind these dams are no longer there and the history and locations of all the various mills in southern Halton is beyond the present discussion.

The comings and goings of the ponds, sometimes after several decades of existence, has also meant ecological changes in the immediate vicinity of the ponds. First, there was likely an initial loss in the area of the terrestrial ecosystem. This would really be quite trivial with respect to the disturbance created by other land clearing in their immediate area. The creation of new water bodies increased the potential for expansion of certain types of aquatic organisms. These would be particularly adapted to warmer water, for example, certain species of fish would be favoured. Because the ponds were likely shallow, the water would be warmed within the confines of the pond and this temperature change could affect the cold water fisheries downstream. Dams constitute a very significant physical barrier to the migration of fish and other species. It is well-known that the demise of the Atlantic salmon in Ontario came about by the establishment of dams on their spawning streams. The physical presence of dams caused silt to

be deposited behind the dams where the slower moving water dropped its burden of suspended soil. When the dams were removed, some of the altered ecosystem was able to re-establish. The silt deposits, when exposed and dried, supported a meadow of herbaceous plants. In time, this will eventually become forest if succession is allowed to proceed. When the ponds were filled in, as some ponds were, there is no possibility of returning the site to its former condition. Change in the natural ecosystem is inevitable; however, with the hand of man making various changes, the changes that occur are not likely to be favourable.

### Terra Cotta

Terra Cotta Playground was once the site of a bustling recreational area. One of the main attractions was a concrete-lined swimming pool located just west of Winston Churchill Boulevard within the present Terra Cotta Conservation Area. Credit Valley Conservation closed the swimming pool with the intent of transforming the pond into a wetland with all the features of a natural marsh. The concrete liner was removed and the wetland constructed in 1994-95. The area has effectively been restored to a naturally functioning marsh ecosystem.

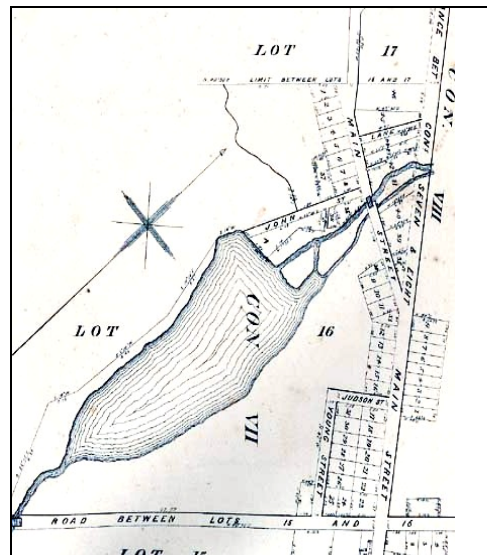


Figure 1 – Location of millpond at Stewarttown

### Glen Williams

The Credit River was used as the power source for the Georgetown Power and Light Dynamo as well as several woolen and other mills in the village of Glen Williams [1]. At least one dam existed on the river prior to 1900. This dam was destroyed by spring floods in 1950. The river has been mostly restored to its original course and there is little evidence of any water impoundments in the village.



### Stewarttown Pond

Stewarttown Pond is located west of Trafalgar Road and immediately west of the village on Black Creek (Fig. 1) [6]. The pond is situated adjacent to the aptly named Mill Pond Drive. John and Duncan Stewart arrived at that location in 1842 and built a saw mill and a gristmill. Their dam effectively harnessed the power of the creek to drive those mills. Later, the dam on Black Creek was used for powering one of Walter Lawson flourmills. The location of the former pond is barely detectable at the present time owing to the fact that much of the former water area has been replaced by silt deposits. Herbaceous vegetation has covered the area that now appears as flat field through which the Black Creek flows.

### Georgetown Ponds

Industry in Georgetown started in 1823 with the arrival of George Kennedy who was attracted by the availability of waterpower. Fourteen years later, the Barber brothers bought the mills and foundry and commenced several commercial enterprises including the generation of electrical power. Damming of the Credit River at the Barber Mill resulted in water being impounded for a considerable distance upstream from River Drive. The Georgetown town map in the Historical Atlas of Halton shows a millpond that extended nearly half way towards Glen Williams. The breaching of the Barber dam allowed the water to return to its normal course.



Figure 2 – Location of four ponds in Georgetown

An article written by John McDonald in the “1976” *Halton Sketches* lists four major ponds that once were present within Georgetown [2]. The locations of these ponds are shown in Figure 2 based on the map of Georgetown in the Historical Atlas of Halton [6]. The best known was Wilbur Park Lake (Fig. 2). That pond on Silver Creek was delineated by Guelph, Mill and Park Streets. It was used to power the Barber woolen mill. There was another large un-named pond that extended under the Grand Trunk Railway line

just upstream from the John Street culvert. The water there once powered the Dayfoot Tannery. The other two ponds, Long’s Pond and Lawson’s Trout Pond, were situated west of Main Street in Georgetown. They supplied the water to run a flourmill on Mill Street. It is amazing that these ponds were filled by two springs yet sustained trout and powered a mill.

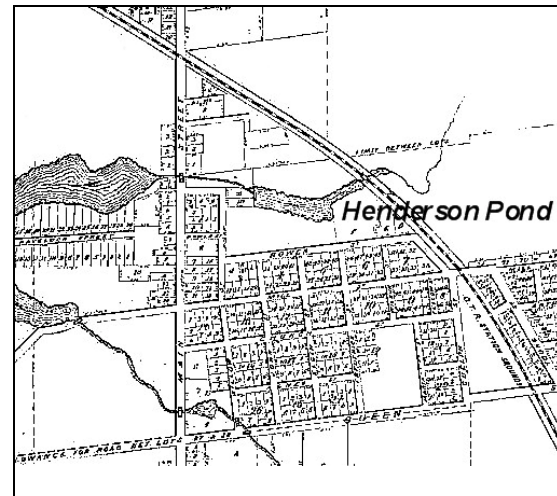


Figure 3 – Location of Henderson Pond at Acton

The only remaining evidence of these ponds is a depression south of Memorial Park at Charles Street and Princess Anne Drive. Lawson’s pond was filled to allow the Toronto Suburban Railway to pass through the site. Wilber Lake, Long’s Pond and the Un-named pond were given over to a thick growth of woody species typical of riparian sites. Their locations presently do not hint at their aquatic history or show any appearance to ever have been filled with water. The former Lawson Pond has been filled in and the buildings constructed there look like any other part of the urban main street of Georgetown.

Separate from the Barber Mills was another dam on the Credit opposite the intersection of Armstrong Drive and Sinclair Avenue. It was the location of the dynamo of a generator that was used to supply electrical power to the mill upstream. That feat was the first such use of electrical power of industry in Canada. A small pond was created in the river by this installation but a few rock walls and some remnants of an earthen dam are all that is left of the facility.

### Henderson’s Pond

In Acton, Henderson’s Pond existed on School Creek just upstream from the Acton Library [3, 6]. It extended behind the row of company houses on Bower Street and covered the location of the present Halton Hills Hydro building (Fig. 3). The historic air photo of the pond on a Canadian Postcard shows that part of the pond extended under the CN railroad towards Wallace Street. The particular use of the pond is uncertain but might have been used by the former Storey Glove factory. Since the dam was removed, much of the area reverted to a grass and

treed area with a stream running through it behind the Acton Public School. The area east of the railroad remains a wet wooded site.

### **Norval**

Norval Mills were established at Norval by Robert Noble in 1868. The Credit River was dammed to power the mills. While there was still a millpond upstream from the Norval Dam, ice was cut to supply ice for refrigeration purposes during the rest of the year. The mills relied entirely on the river. During Hurricane Hazel, the mill was extensively damaged and the last of it was removed to straighten a section of Highway 7. The dam is still evident beside Winston Churchill Boulevard but it holds back relatively little water. Like many other dams on the Credit River including the next one downstream at Huttonville, the pond behind the dam had silted in and now the remaining flat silt deposit is supporting the growth of herbaceous vegetation. About the only water at the site is that which flows in the river itself. Woody debris trapped at the dam currently causes some water to back up behind the dam.

### **Limehouse**

The outline of Limehouse Mill Pond can still be detected today. It was used mainly to power the Gowdy-Moore sawmill and other lime industry buildings that shared the same general location on Black Creek [4] (Fig. 4). It was necessary to build a trestle over the pond to allow placement of the tracks for the "Radial" railroad running from Toronto to Guelph [5]. Much of the pond has been filled in with silt deposits. Beavers periodically attempt to block the creek at the dam location and increase the water volume on the site by their actions. Countering this are some sinkholes that allow water to escape through the bottom of the pond. Terrestrial vegetation now covers what used to be standing water. The specific age of the millpond is not known. Lumber was shipped from Limehouse as early as 1876 but lime production was in operation much earlier dating to the 1850's. The kilns closed in 1915.

### **Waterfalls Playground**

Waterfalls Playground was developed as a 'modern recreational park' on Lot 24 Concession 7 of Esquesing Township near Silver Creek in 1954. This included a swimming pond built up from the millpond that originally powered a gristmill established shortly after 1822. The sawmill ceased operating in 1935. The pond was expanded by extraction of crushed stone from 1956 to 1966.

### **Derry Road Mill**

A gristmill once operated at the northeast corner of the intersection of Trafalgar Road and Derry Road formerly called Auburn. That mill was replaced by a newer feed and seed supply building in 1940. A few other buildings still remain at the site but the watercourse that was the source of the power is now barely evident as a ditch in a farm field. Some sort of

pond must have existed to retain water for powering the original mill but there is currently no evidence of any such former impoundment.

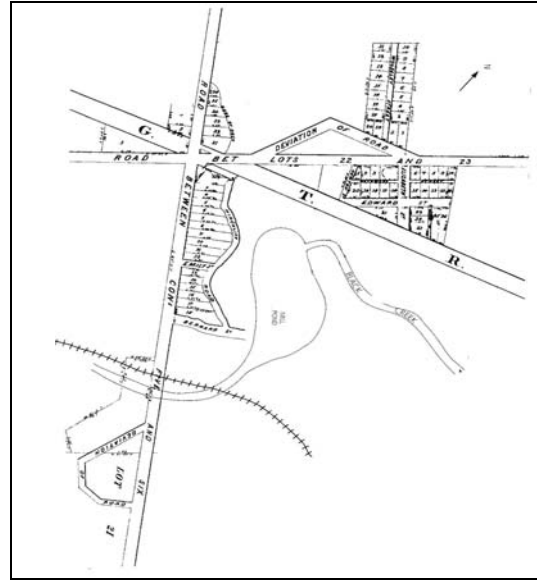


Figure 4 – Location of millpond at Limehouse

### **Lumber Mills**

A lumber mill once existed at Lot 19 Concession 6 Nassagaweya. The mill was initiated by Rufus Adams of Acton and continued to operate for about another 70 years by Thomas Bell. A pond on the tributary of the Sixteen Mile Creek is shown at this location on the Historical Atlas of Halton but there is no significant pond there at the present time.

### **Dufferin Quarry Expansion Area**

A pond that barely fits within the present series under discussion once existed on the property on the east side of the Nassagaweya-Esquesing Town Line south of Sideroad 15. That area is part of the proposed expansion for the Dufferin Aggregate Quarry. A small concrete-lined pond had been created on the intermittent stream crossing the property. It is not clear if that creation was done for the owner's enjoyment or part of a plan to develop some kind of amusement attraction. The pond remains as a concrete basin with cracks and with weeds growing in those cracks. In its current state, the pond is rather insignificant as a water body or as a natural feature.

### **References**

- 1 - McDonald, J. 1976. H.P. Lawson responsible for Georgetown's first hydro power. #4. *In Halton Sketches* Dills Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd., Acton, Georgetown, Milton. Pp. 8-9.
- 2 - McDonald, J. 1976. The "old" ponds of Georgetown #18. *In Halton Sketches* Dills Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd., Acton, Georgetown, Milton. Pp. 46-48.
- 3 - McDonald, J. 1976. W.H. Storey's enterprise starts with glove complaint. #30. *In Halton Sketches* Dills Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd., Acton, Georgetown, Milton. Pp. 80-82.
- 4 - McDonald, J. 1976. Gowdy family of Limehouse prominent in area's history. #35. *In Halton Sketches* Dills Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd., Acton, Georgetown, Milton. Pp. 91-93.

## Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

### Membership for September 2006 to September 2007

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewal or \_\_\_\_\_ New Member(s)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Single (\$20.00) \_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$30.00)

Do you have any suggestions for programs or field trips?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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#### WAIVER OF LIABILITY

(**must** be signed by anyone planning to attend field trips or other outdoor activities)

In making this application, I affirm that I am in good health, capable of performing the exercise required to participate, and that I accept as my personal risk the hazards of such participation and will not hold the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club or its representatives responsible.

In consideration of the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club accepting my application, I hereby and forever release and discharge the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club and its officers, directors, servants and agents from any liability whatsoever arising as a result of my participation in these trips and declare that this is binding upon me, my heirs, executors, administrators and assigned.

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please fill out this form and bring it in to next indoor meeting. or mail with payment to:

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club,  
P.O. Box 115,  
Georgetown, Ontario,  
L7G 4T1

If you can add this note to the 3rd page. Or something you see fit.

Thanks,  
Andrew

I just got home from a late summer evening walk at Limehouse CA. As most of you already know the bridge was taken out last fall. People were still trying to cross the creek there. That is no longer possible as part of the old beaver dam has now been removed making the creek flowing more freely and very unsafe to attempt to cross.

Please use the baseball diamond parking area to enjoy the sights and sounds that can be enjoyed here through out the year.