



the Esquesing

Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 48, Number 5

May - June 2014

Talks and Walks

Indoor: Meetings begin at 7:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month, October to June at St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, 537 Main Street, Glen Williams, unless stated otherwise.

May 13th meeting:

Josh Feltham Professor Environmental & Natural Resource Sciences at Fleming College in Peterborough will enlighten us on one of his favourite study subjects, the five-lined skink, Ontario's sole species of lizard.

June 10th outing:

We'll wrap up the 2013-14 season with a walk at Scotsdale Farm led by Sandy Gillians. Sandy looks forward to introducing members to one of her favourite places. Scotsdale offers a variety of habitats including meadows and mature deciduous woodland. Meet at **7pm (note earlier starting time)** at Scotsdale. Scotsdale is located between Silver Creek and Ballinafad on the east side of Trafalgar Road.

<http://maps.google.com/?ll=43.686231,-79.989095&spn=0.013825,0.025513&t=m&z=16>

We'll meet in the parking lot at the end of the laneway. Walk duration will be about an hour and a half.

September 9th Meeting: TBA

Outdoor Events

Sun. May 18, 2014: Spring Birding at Thickson Wood, Lynde Shores Conservation Area and Cranberry Marsh: If I had only one day in the spring to go birding, this is where I would go. These locations provide a wide variety of habitats including mature forest, meadows, swamps, marshes, old fields and Lake Ontario and its shoreline. The result is a diverse collection of bird species, especially during spring migration. Scheduling on the Sunday of the Victoria Day holiday weekend has resulted, so far, in trouble-free driving to and from these Whitby birding hot spots. Bring a lunch, water, hat, sunscreen, binoculars, etc. Call Ray Blower (519-853-0171) for starting location and times.

President's Message

Hello all,

Spring is finally here! What a welcome sight it is too. What a joy to see the subtle shades of green unfurling leaves taking over from endless grays of winter. It will be interesting to watch the forest slowly recover from the ice storm. Some trees won't make it, but the extra light will bring on fast growth from others.

Migrant birds are now here and it is a wonderful time to get out and see them. City parks are especially rich in birds looking to refuel as they pass through an expanse of concrete. I saw this for myself yesterday in Centennial Park, when I had an hour to kill on Toronto and tallied 10 species of warbler in full spring regalia! Ray's trip to Whitby next weekend will hit some birding hotspots and see many more species of songbird and water birds.

I hope you can all get out and enjoy the good weather – we deserve it!

*Best wishes,
Fiona*

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club, Box 115, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4T1
Charity Registration number 869778761RR0001

Executive

President: Fiona Reid (905) 693-9719
Past President Andrew Kellman (905) 681-3701
Vice President: Don Scallen (905) 877-2876
Secretary: Anne Fraser (905)-877-1844
Treasurer: Janice Sukhiani (647) 408-9515
Roving: Bill McIlveen
Emily Dobson, Nikki Pineau

Appointments

Membership: Valerie Dobson (905) 828-1729
Newsletter: Jeff Normandeau
Ontario Nature Representative: open
Public Relations: open
Webmaster: Sandy Gillians
Crozier Property Steward Marg Wilkes
Hardy Property Steward Ray Blower

Membership for one year: \$30 Single; \$40 Family
The Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club is an affiliated member of Ontario Nature.

www.hnpnc.com



Announcements:

- Our club has installed new **bluebird boxes at St Alban's Church**, crafted by club member **Kim Dobson**. Take a look next time you are at a meeting.



- **Twitter:** We hit 300 followers this May! For those of you not on twitter or not following us you can sign up at www.twitter.com and follow us. Our Twitter handle is @hnpnc
- Last but not least HNPNC is very happy to announce our very own **Bill McIlveen** has been honoured with a Volunteerism Award by Credit Valley Conservation for his 20 years of service. Please congratulate Bill and thank him for his years of hard work protecting our natural spaces. The CVC press release can be found on the next page.

Credit Valley Conservation Volunteers Honoured at Ontario Awards

Thursday, May 8, 2014 by Credit Valley Conservation Category: CVC Awards, Press Release

More than six million Ontarians contribute to their communities through volunteerism each year. In recognition of this, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration held a Volunteer Service Awards ceremony on April 29. The event celebrated the dedicated service of volunteers in the western GTA.

Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) nominated three volunteers for their outstanding contributions to the local environment. Mississauga's Pat Kelly and Jean Williams along with Acton's Bill McIlveen received awards for 10, 40 and 20 years of service respectively. Award recipients were presented with a commemorative pin and personalized certificate acknowledging their years of service.



“Volunteers serve such an important purpose at CVC and their support allows us to perform much-needed work in the community,” said Annabel Krupp, Volunteer Program Coordinator at CVC. “The ceremony showed that volunteer efforts do not go unnoticed.”

The ceremony, held at the Mississauga Convention Centre, was attended by hundreds, including MPP Dipika Dimerla and CVC CAO Deborah Martin-Downs.

The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards recognizes youth with over two years of continuous volunteer service and adults with over five years of continuous service. Nominees must be active participants in the organization and must not receive payment for their services.

Conservation Authorities are a provincial/municipal partnership. CVC was established by an Act of the Province of Ontario in 1954 with a mandate to protect all natural resources, other than minerals, in the area drained by the Credit River. We have been working for 60 years with our partner municipalities and stakeholders to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Credit River watershed for present and future generations. CVC is a member of Conservation Ontario.

Wood Frogs

Don Scallen

Behold the wood frog, an evolutionary masterwork. A soft bodied amphibian that survives the fury of Canadian winters as far north as Old Crow in the Yukon. In that cruelest of seasons, wood frogs lie quiescent in beds of leaves, biding time until snowmelt softens their stiff bodies. They protect their delicate cellular machinery by shunting water out of their cells to freeze benignly in the spaces surrounding those cells. And as if that metabolic alchemy isn't remarkable enough, wood frog cells become infused with glucose – enough, milligram for milligram, to kill a human many times over. For the wood frog though, this sweet syrup becomes a life-saving antifreeze.

Wood frogs are aptly named for they are utterly dependent on woodlands for survival. Essential, too, are ponds for breeding. Usually wood frogs choose ponds that hold water only temporarily - a roll of the dice that can lead to the death or salvation of their progeny. The absence of tadpole-chomping fish in a temporary pond explains the gamble. But, if the pond dries early, mass tadpole-cide will result. The prospect of drying ponds and limited life spans, force a particular urgency on wood frog sex. Of 52 weeks in the year they have but two or three available for reproduction in earliest spring. Moreover, wood frogs may have only one or two of these brief sexual opportunities before they end up in the gullet of a frog-hungry predator.

No wonder then, that a wood frog pond in April is a frenzy of activity. Males beckon females with quacking voices. They battle rivals – scrambling atop them and pushing them under water. Multiple males pursue lone females, in desperate attempts to couple. The mated females lay hundreds of black eggs that soon yield wriggling tadpoles.



The frenzied mating of the marvelously adapted wood frog has persisted for tens of thousands of years. Given woods and water, it should continue for thousands more.

Find more wood frog photos and a rather grainy video of wood frog mating activity at <http://www.inthehills.ca/2014/04/blogs/wood-frogs/>

The Adaptation and Decline of Chimney Swifts

Emily Dobson

The chimney swift is a pretty remarkable species of bird when you consider its rapid adaptation over the last century. Historically, these birds inhabited old growth forests, using cavity trees or snags (standing dead trees) with large hollows for roosting and nesting. However, the European settlement and logging practises occurring into the 1900s saw the destruction of forests across North America, and with it, the loss of vital habitat for many animals including chimney swifts.

As forests were rapidly disappearing, they were being replaced by farmland, barns, churches and houses heated using woodstoves. Conveniently, the swifts would migrate back from the Amazon basin in South America to eastern North America in late April through mid-May (Figure 1). By this time, the chimneys in these structures were no longer being used, providing artificial habitat for the aptly named birds to settle at night-time and to nest in.



Figure 1. Chimney Swift range map, with wintering habitat in South America, and summer habitat in eastern North America.

Source: “Chimney Swift range” by America_Federal_Provincial_y_Departamental is licensed under CC BY 3.0

The reason the chimney has served as a good alternate habitat for swifts is because of both its size and texture. The size of the chimney must be large enough for many birds, as they roost in groups that may be as large as thousands of individuals (Figure 2). This group strategy is beneficial as it provides protection (i.e. from predators) and allows the birds to maintain their body temperature during cool nights. Chimneys with brick interiors create rough vertical surfaces that allows these birds to rest against with a “fork” on their tail. Additionally, nesting birds will use chimneys for breeding, using their glue-like saliva to create half-cup nests within the chimney, with one pair of birds per structure (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Chimney swifts circling a chimney before funneling in and roosting for the night.

Source: “Chimney Swift From The Crossley ID Guide Eastern Birds” by America_Federal_Provincial_y_Departamental is licensed under CC BY 3.0

Figure 3. Chimney swift nest.

Source: “ChimneySwift23” by United States National Park Service, Isle Royale National Park

Despite their rapid adaptation to man-made structures, the Canadian population of chimney swifts has drastically declined by 95% since 1968 (COSEWIC 2007). There are several explanations that may, together, contribute to these significant declines.

For starters, over the last 50 years, North Americans have further developed their heating systems, and instead of using woodstoves with chimneys, gas fireplaces or central heat are instead the norm. New



buildings are no longer being built with chimneys, and buildings that have unused chimneys are being capped, lined or removed, to dissuade other creatures, like raccoons from wreaking havoc and making noise. Combined with deforestation, habitat is becoming more limited.

Mortality along their migration route may also be a factor. Significant declines are caused when hurricanes occur during migration, forcing them to re-route, or reducing food sources essential to their survival. If climate change increases the frequency of storm events, declines may continue, further reducing population sizes.

Changes in food supply may be impacting survivorship of chimney swifts. These birds are aerial insectivores, meaning they catch their prey while flying. They are in flight almost continuously throughout the day, causing them to expend a large amount of energy. Therefore, if food availability is low it can greatly impact their survival.

So what are we doing to help? Well for starters, the chimney swift is listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. Species with a threatened status receive habitat protection, and for the chimney swift, this means any repairs, modifications, maintenance, replacement or demolitions to chimneys that are suitable for habitat require certain conditions, including the following:

- The work must be registered with the Ministry of Natural Resources prior to commencement.
- Disturbance to the species must be minimized.
- Often, new habitat must be created and maintained for chimney swifts.
- Records of ongoing monitoring of the created habitat must be kept and reported.

Bird Studies Canada is conducting a long-term monitoring program, called SwiftWatch, with the goal of continuing to monitor known roosts, to find new roosts, and to raise awareness about this species at risk. The 2014 National Roost Monitoring Program is a continent-wide effort to study this species, and will be taking place May 21, 25, 29 and June 2. If you are interested in volunteering with the Halton SwiftWatch Program, or would like to know more, please contact Emily Dobson (emilydobson@hotmail.com).

References

Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). 2007. Chimney Swift.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology. 2014. Chimney Swift. Retrieved from <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/chimney_swift/lifehistory>

LandOwner Resource Centre. 1999. The Old-Growth Forests of Southern Ontario. Retrieved from <<http://www.slpoa.ca/oldgwth.pdf>>

Ontario Government. 2013. Alter a Chimney (habitat for Chimney Swift). Retrieved from <<http://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/alter-chimney-habitat-chimney-swift>>

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club Membership Form

_____ Renewal or _____ New Member(s) Date _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership renewal fee

from September through to August _____ Single (\$30.00) _____ Family (\$40.00)

New members' fees from sign-up date:

December through to August _____ Single (\$22.50) _____ Family (\$30.00)

March through to August _____ Single (\$15.00) _____ Family (\$20.00)

June through to August _____ Single (\$ 7.50) _____ Family (\$10.00)

Do you have any suggestions for programs or field trips?

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: _____

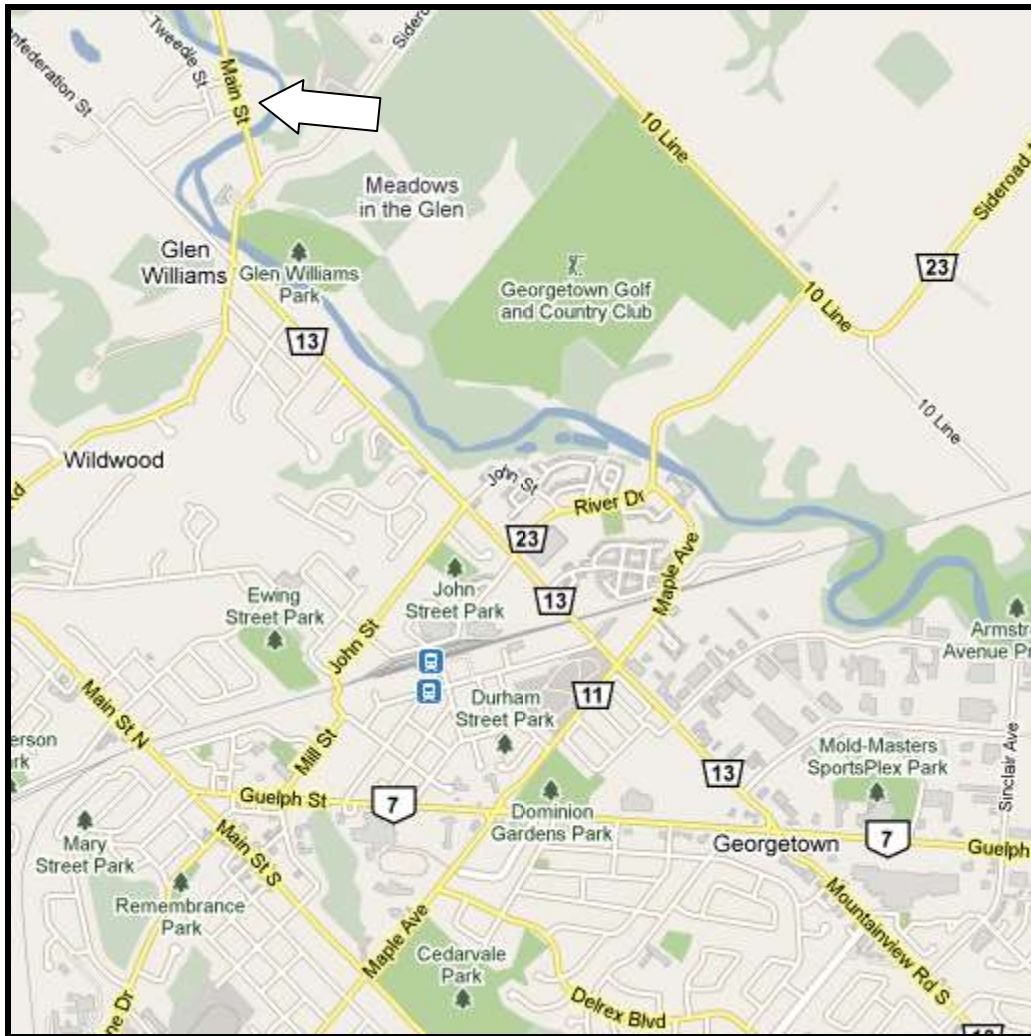
_____ Date: _____

Meetings are at St Alban's Church in Glen Williams (see over) starting at 7:30 p.m.

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

**Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club
Meeting Location
St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, 537 Main Street, Glen Williams**



Naturalist Club Evening Walks - Summer 2014

Halton/North Peel Naturalist and South Peel Naturalist Clubs

All walks are on Mondays and start at the meet location at 7:00pm sharp.
Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear and be prepared for biting insects.

Date	Location	Meeting Place	Leader
26-May-2014	Conely Tract	Hwy 401 at Hwy 25	Bill McIlveen
2-Jun-2014	Indian Ridge Trail	Bridlewood Trail at Glenridge Drive	Bill McIlveen
9-Jun-2014	Jacquith property	Mississauga Rd at King St	Dawn Renfrew
16-Jun-2014	Arbourview Woods	Reeves Gate north	Bill McIlveen
23-Jun-2014	Silver Creek at 8th Line	8th Line & Sideroad 27	Leanne Wallis
30-Jun-2014	Iroquois Shoreline Park	Iroquois Shoreline Park	Bill McIlveen
7-Jul-2014	Limehouse Area	Limehouse School	Dawn Renfrew
14-Jul-2014	LaSalle Park	LaSalle Park	Bill McIlveen
21-Jul-2014	Limehouse Area Springle	Limehouse School	Dawn Renfrew
28-Jul-2014	Beachway Park	Lakeshore Road at Lakeshore Ct.	Bill McIlveen
4-Aug-2014	Limehouse Area	Limehouse School	Ray Blower
11-Aug-2014	Windsor Weekend	Contact leader	Bill McIlveen
18-Aug-2014	Limehouse Area	Limehouse School	Ray Blower
25-Aug-2014	Ratray Marsh	Green Glade School	Kirsten Burling

Milton at Hwy 401 at Hwy 25– Commuter parking lot at SE intersection of Hwy 401 and Hwy 25, Milton

Indian Ridge Trail – Residential area Bridlewood Trail at Glenridge Drive near QEW and 3rd Line Oakville

Mississauga Rd at King St - Public school at the SW corner of Mississauga Rd and King St.

Reeves Gate north– Parking lot at north end of Reeves Gate at Upper Middle Road, Oakville

8th Line & Sideroad 27 - Take Trafalgar Road north to Silver Creek then go east on Sideroad 27 to 8th Line which is closed. Meet in former intersection.

Iroquois Shoreline Park – Parking lot for woods at Joshua Creek Drive south of Upper Middle Road, Oakville

Limehouse School – Parking lot in front of public school at intersection of Sideroad 22 and 5th Line, Limehouse

LaSalle Park – Burlington, North Shore Boulevard East at LaSalle Park; Meet at pavilion

Lakeshore Road at Lakeshore Ct. – Burlington near canal; parking lot west side of Lakeshore Road just north of underpass with Burlington Skyway bridge.

Windsor Weekend – Visit to tall grass prairie & oak savannah sites in Windsor on Saturday; possibly other locations on Sunday including Point Pelee depending upon participant interest; Contact leader for more details

Green Glade School – Green Glade off Meadow Wood Road, Clarkson

Not as advertised! Some destinations may change if preliminary site visits determine that a site lacks sufficient interesting items. In such cases, the meeting location will remain unchanged but the trip destination will be altered to a location nearby.
For more information, call **Bill McIlveen (519) 853-3948 or cell (905) 867-9294**