



the Esquesing

Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 43, Number 1

September-October 2008

Club Activities

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

Oct. 14: The World of Owls. Kay McKeever, Owl Foundation, Vineland will present a humorous but enlightening look into the world of owls.
The **Annual General Meeting** will follow the presentation.

Nov. 11: Green is NOT a Colour. Terri Meyer Boake, Associate Professor/Director and Undergraduate School of Architecture, University of Waterloo looks at over 10 years of the development of sustainable building in Canada and some of the systems that are used to assess "green" design.

Dec. 13: Annual Pot Luck and Members' Night. Limehouse Hall. Please bring your own plate, mug, cutlery, and a pot luck dish of your choice. If you take nature slides or have other show-and-tell items, please bring some to share with the other members. Doors open at 6:00 pm; dinner 6:30.

Outdoor: Trips begin at the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) parking lot at Guelphand 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. 13: Electrofishing in Silver Creek at Norval. Bob Morris will be the leader. Meet at the baseball diamond parking lot in Norval at 9:00 am.

Sept. 13: Monarch Tagging. Kerry Jarvis will be the leader. Meet at Tannery Park, Oakville (off Lakeshore Road on the west side of the Oakville Harbour). Depending on the number of monarchs, tagging will be done between 10:00 and 12:00. Tagging can be done on a drop by basis, so you do not have to stay the full two hours. Bring a butterfly net, camera, water. **Rain date: Sunday, September 14 – same time and location.**

Sept. 27: Hawk Cliff. This will be a long day trip to the fall hawk watch station near Port Stanley on the north shore of Lake Erie, south of London. Hummingbirds, dragonflies, and butterflies might still be seen migrating at this time. The Port Stanley sewage lagoons, equipped with excellent viewing shelters/blinds will also be visited. We plan to arrive at the hawk station around noon. Bring a lunch, brimmed hat, sunglasses, versatile clothing, and a snack to keep you until a possible late dinner. Contact trip leader Ray Blower (519) 853-0171 by Thursday, September 25 arrange meeting place, car pooling, etc.

President's Message

Welcome back to the beginning of another year for the Halton North Peel Naturalist Club! I especially welcome any new readers of the *Esquesing*! As I write this, I am sitting in the warm sunshine on the deck of our research ship, the *Limnos*, somewhere in the middle of a calm Lake Ontario. Unfortunately, there are biting stable flies (those housefly mimics) are pesky even out here. You would think that the abundant and diverse spider population on board would help deal with them! It's a bit too early in the fall for exhausted migrating birds to land on the deck for a rest. It's a unique bird watching opportunity, as we can often get quite close to them. Sometimes we find warblers, kinglets, vireos sheltering on board, many of which pick insects and spiders out of the webs for an energy boost. That food supply may not be enough, however, and some birds may turn up dead by morning, especially on cold nights. Natural selection, I suppose...

On another note, this promises to be a year of change and renewal for our club. As many of you know, Andrew and I have now moved to Burlington, and with the time challenges imposed by our 14 month old daughter, we are unable to continue as president and vice-president. We hope to still remain involved with the club, and help out where we can. So please, we look forward to hearing your nominations for all executive positions. Most of our executive has been in their positions for a number of years, and we are desperately in need of some fresh blood to renew the spirit and creativity of the club.

To that end, we are launching several efforts to attract attention to potential new members. Our website is finally up and running, and we think it looks good (www.hnpnc.com)! Check it out and let us know what you think! We are open to suggestions, and it has been set up in a manner that it is easy to update the content. We have also started a "Shutterfly" site as a means of sharing photographs (see the link on our website). We have started posting a few photographs of club activities, flora and fauna on the site, but we welcome others to add more. It is very easy to do! We will email instructions out to our members, and can explain further at our next meeting.

Secondly, we are planning on attending a promotional day at the Georgetown Market Place Mall on October 18 from 10 am to 4 pm. We are looking for a few volunteers to help staff our display board, even for an hour or two. Please let Kelly, Andrew or another executive member know if you're available!

Finally, our line-up of speakers for this year is nearly complete! Most of our meetings will once again take place at St. Andrew's United Church this year. However, we are still looking for ideas and volunteers to lead outings. Remember, you don't need to be an expert on its flora and fauna - you can simply help other club members explore an area you enjoy, or to visit a spot you would like to learn more about yourself!

Sincerely,
Kelly Bowen

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

Executive

President: Kelly Bowen (905) 681-3701
Past President Andy Kovacs (905) 702-1132
Vice-President: Andrew Kellman (905) 681-3701
Secretary: Janice Sukhiani (905) 693-8227
Treasurer: Marg Wilkes (905) 878-6255

Appointments

Membership: Christine Williams (905) 877-1539
Newsletter: Gerda Potzel (905) 702-1681
Ontario Nature Representative: Teresa Rigg
Public Relations: Vacant
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

www.hnpnc.com

Monday Evening Walks and a Bit About Butternuts

With our busy schedules it's not always easy, but I found it oh so rewarding to take a few hours each Monday evening getting away from appointments, chores, technology and hustle, to walk in peaceful places and focus on nature. It was also refreshing to see the cooperation and sharing in the group of participants that come out. Everyone had something to offer – questions, answers, insights, stories and a renewed sense of wonder at what nature has to offer us.

We saw bullfrog tadpoles waiting in the shallows of a pond at Terra Cotta Conservation Area while the adults called for “more rum” from the pond edge. We saw walking ferns, marginal woodferns, lady ferns, polypody ferns, spinulose woodferns, bulblet ferns, bracken ferns, sensitive ferns, maidenhair ferns and shining clubmoss, all on the Walking Fern trail in the Silver Creek area. Bill showed us a “bowl and doily” spider web and Irene found a chrysalis of a Compton's Tortoiseshell butterfly, rusty brown with 6 tiny silver dots at the Symmes property. We saw wild leek blooms carpeting the forest floor at several places and there was the little Wood Frog that Dan found that still had a bit of tail left from its metamorphosis in the Inglewood Slope Forest. At the Mississauga Road and 401 meeting spot we watched a Merlin chase a Red-tailed Hawk.

One of the special things we saw at several of the areas is butternut trees. The Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) is closely related to Black Walnut, and is provincially and nationally endangered. Butternuts occur as scattered individual trees in southern Ontario forests as far north as the Bruce peninsula and the edge of the Canadian Shield, and they have never been common.

In the past butternuts have declined as southern Ontario forests were cut down but now they face serious and rapid decline from infection by an introduced, invasive, fungus species that causes Butternut Canker. Butternut canker first appeared in Ontario in 1991 and by now many butternut trees show its effects – portions of dead crown. The tiny light fungal spores spread easily by wind, rain and probably by forest animals and insects that live in and on the trees. There is no cure for the butternut canker, so forest workers are trying to identify resistant trees so that seedlings may be grown from them for re-

planting and preservation of the species in Ontario and Canada.

Butternut leaves are pinnately compound – (many leaflets in a ladder-like pattern up the main leaf stalk). Butternut can be distinguished from black walnut (the most similar of the native trees that it might be confused with) by looking at the leaves and leaf scars. In butternut leaves, the leaflet at the tip of the compound leaf is as large as the adjacent leaflet. In walnut, the end leaflet is usually either smaller or is split into a pair of leaflets. Look at the twigs just below where the leaves are attached – you will see leaf scars where last year's leaves were attached before they fell off in the fall.

Butternut leaf scars are triangular with the point of the triangle pointing down the twig and with a little imagination the leaf scars look like they have faces on them (the eyes and mouth are vascular bundle scars – where the sugars that nourished the leaves were conducted). The “forehead” of butternut leaf scar faces is straight and “serious” (serious of course because of all that canker). Leaf scars of walnut also look like faces but the walnut faces have large “Mickey Mouse ears” (and are happy faces like all good mouseketeers).

At Terra Cotta Conservation Area we were able to see the butternut leaf and leaf scar features on a sapling and then we later found some mature trees in the forest, to see its characteristic bark. Looking up at the canopy and seeing large compound leaves is a first clue. The bark of mature butternut trees is light grey and looks like it started off with coarse ridges but then someone smoothed the tops of the ridges flat with a plane. Finding football-shaped nuts on the ground (walnuts are spherical) is a sure indicator as well. The group on the Terra Cotta conservation area walk learned well as they were able to identify butternut trees found on a walk a couple weeks later!

Dawn Renfrew



Biological Inventories at the Cheltenham Badlands

This summer, the Caledon Bruce Trail Club teamed up with the Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) project to conduct much-needed plant and animal surveys of the Cheltenham Badlands. This spectacular area along Olde Baseline Road between Chinguacousy Road and Creditview Road in Caledon features a vista of treeless, crumbling red shale and soil, streaked with grey bands, extensively eroded into a network of ridges and gullies. It is reminiscent of a small-scale version of the famous badlands of the Red Deer River in Alberta.



The NAI project is a collaborative effort led by Credit Valley Conservation with the South Peel Naturalists' Club, the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club, Toronto & Region Conservation Authority and the Region of Peel as partners and receiving financial support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The goal of the project is to assemble information on the biological resources of natural areas across the Credit watershed and the Region of Peel. Current, reliable existing data will be compiled along with data collected from field work conducted over the next several years by vegetation community, birding and botanical crews, in a single comprehensive resource. This information will be publically available and will be capable of serving many purposes.

One of the first sites visited by NAI crews this summer was the Cheltenham Badlands property. The Badlands are an exposure of red Queenston shales, originating from silt deposits in a delta along a coastal plain from about 460-440 million years ago. Queenston shales underlay all of the Niagara Escarpment rocks. The escarpment rises in the forest just across the road from the badlands, as rocks of the Whirlpool Sandstone formation, capped by harder more resistant dolomite. (By the way, it is the buff and brown Whirlpool Sandstone that appear in the Ontario Parliament buildings, Queen's Park, old Toronto City Hall and in Victoria College, University of Toronto.) The red colouration of the Queenston shale is due to iron oxides. Some of the red oxides are converted to green iron oxides by

ground water forming the distinctive grey-green bands visible at the badlands. Queenston shale breaks down easily to red clay on exposure to the atmosphere. Removal of the vegetation covering the shale outcrops for agriculture made the land very sensitive to erosion. It wasn't long before

the rains had shaped the badlands. During heavy rain, the creeks draining the badlands run red into the Credit River a few kilometres away. Badland topography is rare in Ontario and the Cheltenham Badlands is one of the best examples of this type of landform in the province. In 2000, the Badlands property was acquired by the

Ontario Heritage foundation and placed under the management of the Bruce Trail Association. A management plan is currently in the process of being drawn up and the NAI data will contribute to that plan.

From driving by the Badlands on a weekend it is clear that this is a popular spot for tourists and hikers. But it is also clear that this area is in need of protection from overuse and abuse. Human traffic on the crumbling shale soils exacerbates erosion. A look at the area beyond the bare soils shows that while it is possible for these hills to regenerate vegetation, the plants still struggle as the soil is not abundant or rich and dries out quickly. The Bruce Trail runs across the western part of the area and the club has done an excellent job of fortifying the trail surface and establishing the route to keep hikers on the path and protect sensitive hillsides and wetlands.

NAI crews have completed surveys of plant communities and breeding birds and the botanical specialist had made initial visits but will visit again later in the season to detect late-blooming species. When these results have been analysed we will have a more complete picture of just how special the Cheltenham Badlands are.

For more information on the NAI, visit www.creditvalleycons.com/NAI.

Dawn Renfrew

(Editor's note: photo from <http://www.ourgreenbelt.ca>)

Hiking Charleston Lake Provincial Park

In late August, Kelly and I took Sierra on her first camping trip to Charleston Lake Provincial Park, which is located about an hour northeast of Kingston. It is on a large lake that sits on the Frontenac Axis, a southerly extension of the Precambrian Shield that divides the St. Lawrence lowlands in two. To the south you can see across the St. Lawrence River to New York State.



There are a number of trails here that provide good hiking and we took advantage of a couple of them. The one we enjoyed the most was the Hemlock Ridge Trail (1.5km). We did this the day after an intense thunderstorm moved through, but luckily the only rain of the week. Along the trail we found at least 36 types of mushrooms but so far have been only able to identify a couple of them. Nonetheless, I had fun playing with our new digital SLR camera and took lots of photos. We tried using the *Mushrooms of Ontario and Eastern Canada*, by George Barron on the photo collection, but this book does not show them all. It is hard to stop too often when you are carrying a 1 year old, but by the end she did fall asleep.

The other hike we enjoyed was the Shoreline Centennial Trail (1.6 km). This took you through an area where native people occupied before Europeans arrived, but for some unknown reason they just disappeared prior to 1600. They sheltered under large overhangs that were formed when the softer rock eroded away leaving a harder rock above.

Finally, we hiked the Blue Mountain Trail which we accessed by paddling across the lake to the southern boundary of the park. Although it

culminates at the highest point in Leeds County, much of the route was wet and buggy. However, Kelly did find blackberries so it made it worth while. The view from the top was also very nice – somewhat reminiscent of Killarney Park.

Although wind can be a problem due to the size of the lake, Charleston is a nice place to paddle. Motorboats are allowed on most of the lake except the inlet adjacent to the campgrounds, but we didn't find them to be a problem. There are enough bays and islands to keep it interesting, and there are a few nice backcountry campsites (another year...). It would be a nice park to explore by sea kayak, although we chose to canoe as it is difficult to stuff a one year old into a kayak hatch! As it was, Sierra was generally very good, and was lulled to sleep by the waves.

We weren't out early (or late enough) to see much wildlife, but we did see a beaver, a mink, some turtles, and pumpkinseed and other small fish, including many juvenile smallmouth bass. Much of the Blue Mountain Trail was also hopping with young green frogs. There were a number of loons on the lake, some of which allowed us to approach quite close. We also saw



Caspian terns, osprey, gulls and of course turkey vultures and cormorants. We also spotted (or heard) the usual assortment of songbirds, but didn't try very hard to find them. Finally, we were treated to the calls of two barred owls one night. Overall, it was an enjoyable week in a park to which we would like to return.

Andrew Kellman

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

Membership for September 2008 to September 2009

_____ 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?

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: _____

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