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Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 43, Number 3

January - February 2009

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.

Feb 10: Peel Natural Area Inventory (NAI). Dawn Renfrew, Coordinator, NAI Project, Credit Valley Conservation will be giving a talk on this project to identify significant and natural heritage features and functions through out the Credit River watershed in Peel.

Mar 10: Bee Colony Collapse in Ontario. Alison Skinner, Ontario Beekeepers Association will talk about the research and conclusion for the collapse of the bee populations in Ontario.

Apr. 14: Using Wasps to find the Emerald Ash Borer. Philip Careless, M.Sc. Candidate Insect Systematics Laboratory, Department of Environmental Biology, University of Guelph will be talking about the research and findings on using wasps to control the emerald ash borer.

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.

Jan. 18: LaSalle Park and Burlington Area Meet 10:00 am at the Travelodge, downtown Burlington. Chili lunch at Andrew and Kelly's before leaving for LaSalle Park at 1:30. Call or email Kelly or Andrew so they know who is coming and then maybe a car pool can be arranged from Georgetown - (905) 681-3701 or andrew.kellman@sympatico.ca

Mar.14: Returning Swans at Long Point. Flocks of Tundra Swans stop at Long Point to rest and feed on their way to their breeding grounds in the far north. Many other species of waterfowl, early returning songbirds, Bald Eagle and Short-eared Owl may also be seen on this long day trip. Bring lunch or money for the restaurant, binoculars, scopes and warm clothes. Call Ray Blower, (519)853-0171, to arrange car pooling and meeting spots and times.

Apr. 18: Beamer Conservation Area Hawk Watch, Grimsby. Meet 9:00 am. On this trip we stop at the Scotch Block reservoir, Islay Lake, and La Salle Park on the way to the Beamer Hawk Watch at the top of the escarpment in Grimsby. The number and variety of hawks has been quite variable over the years; but, we always see some. In addition, a good variety of songbirds and waterfowl are seen. Some things to bring: binoculars, scope, water, lunch, hat and sunscreen. Call Ray Blower, (519) 853-0171 with any questions.

President's Message

As we start 2009, let us look back and see what the club has accomplished over the years. As many of you are longer serving members than Kelly and I there may be some errors or omissions.

We have helped fight a few development battles in the Town of Halton Hills and Milton and in the Region of Halton. I do not know of any issues in Brampton that we have participated in, but if there are any let us know. We serve as stewards of an Ontario Nature reserve and a few agreement forests in Halton. We have assisted the Ministry of Natural Resources, Credit Valley Conservation and Conservation Halton with environmental monitoring in our area. We also helped the Ontario Vernal Pool Association when it was starting out; now they are doing a great job of educating others in the province. We have also assisted with many projects at Willow Park. We have lent support when needed as a club to other organizations in terms of people, money or letters, even in just being there.

We have members that have done a great job running events like the Christmas Bird Count, the town clean-up effort, tree planting, purple loosestrife removal, even natural area inventories. Others have led trips to further away places like Rock Glen, Ojibway Prairie or Kingston and Long Point. Our club has also led many close to home hikes that have involved members of the community.

Now we need to ask ourselves, Where we want our club to go in the future? First, do we want to continue as a club? The reason I ask this is someone in the Halton Hills/Brampton area really needs to run the club. This is the last year that I will be on the elected executive. Neither Kelly nor I have the time to properly run the club as shown by our lack of attendance at meetings. It may be less than an hour away but having a young child and commuting is not conducive to running the club. The membership deserves better. That is shown by our lack of involvement in activities, as a club, in the town and surrounding area.

I know a lot of people are busy with other things and commitments in their lives. We know the people in the club are good people and care about the local environment and what is happening around them.

I know a number of you have been on the executive at one time or another and felt you put in your time but if nobody comes forward we will have to start seriously looking at what the options are for next year for the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club. There is nothing in the constitution that deals with disbanding the club, if it comes to that. I hope that is not the case because the club has done a lot of good in the past and I am sure we can continue in the future.

I just looked at an old membership list from 1995 when we had over 100 members. We now have 35 members. This is why we need your help on deciding the club's future.

Andrew Kellman

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

Executive

President: Andrew Kellman (905) 681-3701
Past President Kelly Bowen (905) 702-1132
Vice-President: Vacant (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: Vacant
Public Relations: Vacant
Young Naturalists: Nancy Kovacs (905) 702-1132
Webmaster: Andrew Kellman

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

Results of the 2008 Halton Hills Christmas Count

The 2008 version of the Christmas Bird Count for Halton Hills took place on December 27. The weather was unusually mild, reaching 16°C. Unfortunately, the mild conditions were accompanied by rain and dense fog, particularly in the rural areas, and this severely curtailed the viewing of birds.

The 2008 Count represents the 18th version of the modern version of the Halton Hills Count. Recently, I was given some old information collected by the Naturalist Club and it contained data for unofficial bird Counts in 1971 and 1973 for essentially the same circle as we now use. The numbers of species reported in those two years were 30 and 28 respectively. At least 20 counts have now been carried out at Halton Hills and it would be interesting to obtain additional records if those exist.

The results for the 2008 Count are summarized in the attached table (see page 4). For comparison, the average and high numbers recorded for the previous 17 years are included in the table.

The total number of species recorded for the day plus Count Week was 49 which exactly matches the long-term count average. The total number of birds (6763) was well below the long-term average of 9742. The lower numbers almost certainly reflect the impaired viewing conditions. No new species were seen in 2008 so the

cumulative number of species remains at 96. Four of the species are included on the list by virtue of their having been seen in Count Week, rather than on the Count Day proper.

Twenty-nine out of the 49 species were observed in numbers lower than average. This is consistent with the overall reduced total numbers seen. The only species with new high totals were White-winged Crossbill (40) reported for only the second time in the Count history and Eastern Bluebirds (8). American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, and American Goldfinch were the only species where the numbers were notably higher than average but these were still lower than the respective maximum number.

In total, 25 people participated in the count, either as observers or as feeder watchers. Thanks to the following participants. Madeline Austen, Doug Biggar, Judy Biggar, Ray Blower, Dianne Blowes, Gerry Doekes, Ross Evans, Lauren Lucyk, Les Lucyk, Larry Martyn, Irene McIlveen, W.D. McIlveen, Cecil Morris, Fiona Reid, Dawn Refrew, Lesley Rudy, Marie Rudy, Norm Rudy, Don Scallen, Dan Shuurman, Rick Stroud, Janice Sukhiani, George Wilkes, Marg Wilkes, and Dave Williams. Appreciation is extended to Larry May for arranging access to the Maple Lodge Farms property and to Halton Regional Police for use of the community boardroom for the wrap-up session.

by *W.D. McIlveen*



Owl Prowl Family Night, Mountsberg Conservation Area

Saturday January 24, 2009, 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Pre-registration required.

Join Mountsberg staff for an unforgettable visit with some special feathered friends, as we explore the night-time world of owls. The program includes a puppet show and storytelling on Family Nights, an up close visit with our resident owls, and a moonlit walk through the woods to call for owls in the wild

Call 905-854-2276 or email mtsberg@hrca.on.ca or visit the Mountsberg Conservation Area, Campbellville –website - <http://www.hrca.on.ca/events.cfm?itemid=7710e>.

Results of the 2008 Christmas Bird Count at Halton Hills							
Species	2008	Avg.	High	Species	2008	Avg.	High
Great Blue Heron	1	2	4	Common Raven	1	2	3
Canada Goose	1234	1846	3534	Black-capped Chickadee	678	695	1211
American Black Duck	5	20	67	Red-breasted Nuthatch	5	10	22
Mallard	288	532	1636	White-breasted Nuthatch	28	46	82
Bald Eagle	CW	2	3	Brown Creeper	2	3	8
Northern Harrier	2	4	11	Golden-crowned Kinglet	3	8	30
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	4	7	Eastern Bluebird	8	4	4
Cooper's Hawk	2	2	5	American Robin	41	31	206
Northern Goshawk	CW	1	2	Northern Mockingbird	1	2	5
Red-tailed Hawk	39	64	117	Cedar Waxwing	130	73	240
Rough-legged Hawk	3	8	45	European Starling	1492	2196	3490
American Kestrel	1	11	16	Northern Cardinal	62	59	95
Ruffed Grouse	CW	4	8	American Tree Sparrow	216	313	837
Wild Turkey	2	28	55	Song Sparrow	2	5	22
Ring-billed Gull	3	201	2010	Dark-eyed Junco	259	265	565
Herring Gull	2	47	222	Red-winged Blackbird	1	7	12
Rock Pigeon	284	635	1455	Brown-headed Cowbird	CW	4	10
Mourning Dove	720	719	1385	House Finch	185	248	456
Great Horned Owl	2	2	5	White-winged Crossbill	40	15	15
Belted Kingfisher	3	3	7	Common Redpoll	31	316	1670
Red-bellied Woodpecker	3	2	6	Pine Siskin	2	14	50
Downy Woodpecker	30	53	91	American Goldfinch	292	180	470
Hairy Woodpecker	7	17	32	House Sparrow	286	687	1316
Pileated Woodpecker	2	4	12				
Blue Jay	118	164	333	Total Birds	6763	9742	15507
American Crow	242	345	692	No. Species	49	49	57

Ontario Nature's 4th Annual Youth Writing Contest

We bet you've had a great experience with some part of nature. Perhaps it was collecting and studying frogs at the lake this summer? Perhaps it was climbing your favourite tree in the park close to your home

We'd like to hear about what *you* think about nature.

The challenge: -Think about it and be creative. - Your topic is: *Every day we make choices that could help or harm our environment. What are you doing that has a positive impact on our environment?*

What you need to know:

- You must be an Ontario grade 7 or 8 student.
- It can be an essay, a story, or a piece of creative writing, with a maximum count of 700 words, typed and double-spaced.
- The top three entries will be published in *ON Nature* magazine, the award-winning nature and environment magazine in Ontario.
- The winners will receive cool prizes for their work, and will be honoured for their achievement at Ontario Nature's Annual General Meeting & Conference.

• Send your original entries by **February 25, 2009** to:
 Youth Writing Contest
 Ontario Nature
 366 Adelaide Street West, Suite 201
 Toronto, ON M5V 1R9

Experiences with Monarch Tagging, 2008

In mid-September, 2008, I tagged a number of Monarch butterflies at Lakeside Park in Mississauga. That park is located on the shore of Lake Ontario just west of the PetroCan oil refinery at Clarkson. There are treed areas there but much of the park is open with old field characteristics. In the areas that are not mowed, there are many goldenrod plants and a good number of asters as well. Previous experience at Rattray Marsh, located a short distance to the northeast, suggested that Monarchs tended to move along the shoreline of Lake Ontario in a westerly direction. The park habitat at Lakeside did indeed attract Monarchs and that is where the netting of the butterflies took place.

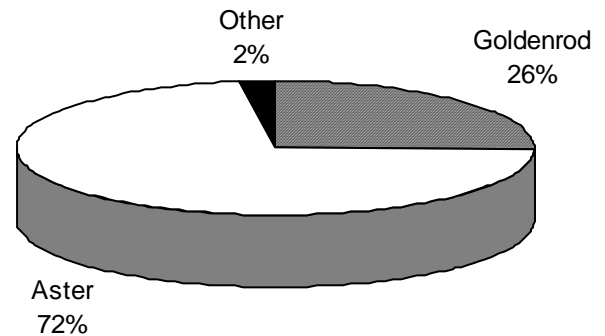
Tagging of the butterflies was undertaken on two days, September 16 and 18, 2008. In total, 47 butterflies were netted but with little more effort, this number could have easily been very much higher. During the process, the sex of each butterfly was determined as required by the project organizers. As well, the nectar plants (or other circumstances) on which the butterflies were caught were also noted. This report is a brief account of the results of the Monarch-tagging experience in 2008.

	Male	Female	Total
Aster	19	15	34
Goldenrod	5	7	12
In flight		1	1
Total	24	23	47

As mentioned, 47 butterflies made up the sample. Of this, there were 25 males and 22 were females. Males therefore had a slight advantage (53.2%) in the proportion the butterflies caught but this number is not too different from an equal sex ratio in the population. The sample dates were too close together to allow for any realistic

determination as to whether the different sexes have different preferred migration periods.

The second observation was that the preferred nectar plant for the butterflies was asters, particularly the New England Aster. Although the number of different flowering species was not counted, the asters made up only about 10%, perhaps as much as 20% of the total population. The results indicated that 72.3% of the butterflies were caught on the asters. Clearly, the butterflies preferred to use the asters as a nectar source despite the lower proportion of asters among the flowering plants.



It would be highly desirable to have a series of tagging stations along the shore of Lake Ontario so that the migration speed and patterns could be assessed if the butterflies can be re-trapped further along their flight route. Additional information is needed regarding the temporal differences in migration by males and female if indeed this exists. This could only be documented by a much longer season during which the tagging is carried out. Other morphometric information could also be collected including parameters such as size measurements, colour variation, and general condition. Additional detailed data regarding the availability of preferred nectar plants should be gathered at each tagging station.

by *W.D. McIlveen*

