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Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 45, Number 1

September-October 2010

Club Activities

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.

Sept.14: Nature by Kayak. Over the past three years, Don Scallen has paddled his kayak in southern Ontario looking for wildlife. Like mariners of yore, he endured great privation to achieve his goals. He has been caught in the rain, was once savaged by a mosquito and on another trip he forgot his Tim Horton's chicken club sandwich in the car and was forced to subsist solely on granola bars. However, overcoming these sacrifices was well worth it. Don has accrued a pot pourri of photos of aquatic flora and fauna that he will share with the club.

Oct. 12: Vancouver Island's Wild West Coast. Dawn Renfrew, a marine biologist, currently is working for Credit Valley Conservation as the Natural Areas Inventory Project Coordinator who once called the left coast of Canada her home. She lived in a tiny community on the outer coast of Vancouver Island for 18 years where she grew to love the scenery, the storms, the temperate rainforest and the abundant and diverse underwater life.

Nov. 9: Mountsberg Raptors. This is an opportunity for club members to get up close and personal with some impressive birds of prey. Amy Fennell who works at the Douglas G. Cockburn Centre for Birds of Prey, at Mountsberg Conservation Area will be the likely speaker. The Mountsberg facility, also known simply as "The Raptor Centre" provides a home to more than 30 native Ontario birds (approximately 14 different species) that can no longer survive in the wild due to permanent injury. Most of these birds have been directly and negatively impacted by human activity, and they provide a unique opportunity to closely observe Ontario's native wildlife while at the same time illuminating some of the common issues faced by our native species when sharing their habitats with humans. Amy will bring 3 or 4 avian ambassadors to this meeting. Availability will depend on who is available on a particular day and what their mood is. Grumpy candidates will be left at home - probably a good idea considering the weapons these birds possess. We can expect some of the following to appear: Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Eastern Screech-owl, American Kestrel, Barred Owl, Merlin, Broad-winged Hawk.

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.

Outings begin on page 2.

Memberships are due in September – Form on page 6

President's Message

Greetings to everyone after the long break; hello and welcome to all new members!

It has been a great summer, but now fall is clearly on its way. This time of year there are so many animals on the move. Not only are birds migrating south, but skunks are looking for a place to hibernate, hummingbirds stocking up at the feeder before departing, frogs finding a suitable burrow (I surprised a leopard frog deep in my garden soil) and caterpillars crossing the path in search of a suitable place to spin a cocoon and overwinter. My son Ian almost ran over a rather spectacular caterpillar with his skateboard, but stopped in time and I managed to get a picture as it sped away (see photo page 5).

We have a great line-up of speakers this year, and hope to see you all every month. Don't forget to join our outdoor walks as well; they are a great way to get to know other club members and also to learn about different aspects of nature in our area.

Happy naturalising to you all,

Fiona Reid

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

Executive		Appointments	
President: Fiona Reid	(905) 693-9719	Membership: Christine Williams	(905) 877-1539
Past President Andrew Kellman	(905) 681-3701	Newsletter: Gerda Potzel	(905) 702-1681
Co-Vice President: Don Scallen	(905) 877-2876	Ontario Nature Representative:	Vacant
Co-Vice President: Ray Blower	(519) 853- 0171	Public Relations:	Vacant
Secretary: Janice Sukhiani	(647) 408-9515	Webmaster	Andrew Kellman
Treasurer: Marg Wilkes	(905) 878-6255	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

Outings – continued from page 1

- Sept. 18: Electrofishing at Silver Creek, Norval** What Kind of Fish are in Silver Creek?
This volunteer electrofishing event at Silver Creek upstream of Hwy 7 in Norval starts at 9 am and will likely take about 3 hours. Please bring water, snacks and appropriate clothing. You are welcome to bring your own chest waders as long as they are not the breathable kind. If you don't have waders, we will supply them. There is no cost for this event. Remember that this site has been adopted by the Halton-North Peel Naturalists, so it would be great to see some of the members out. Please register on the volunteer page at www.creditvalleyca.ca or by phone at 905-670-1615 ext 221 if you are planning on attending. Contact Jon Clayton at (905) 670-1615 x434 for more information and meeting location.
- Oct. 10: Fall Ducks at Scotch Block Reservoir.** Fiona Reid will lead this outing for fall ducks and other late migrants. Call 905-693-9719 or email Fiona.reid@xplornet.com for time and meeting place.
- Oct. 24: Mount Nemo Conservation Area.** Andrew Kellman will lead this fall outing by showing one of the best cliff ecosystems on the Niagara Escarpment. Meet 1 pm at the Mount Nemo parking lot, 5317 Guelph Line, Burlington. Please confirm whether you are coming by email andrew.kellman@sympatico.ca or call (905-681-3701).

Juvenility

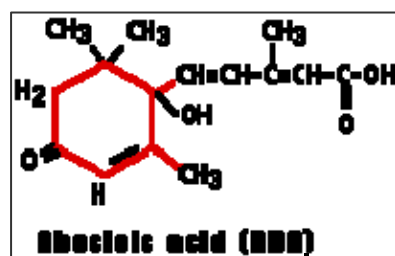
No doubt, naturalists on a walk in our local hardwood forests have observed that young American Beech trees will retain many leaves through the winter when most other hardwood species will have lost all of theirs. Other species, like some of the oaks (English and Pin Oaks) planted as landscape specimens will frequently exhibit some of the same leaf-retaining characteristics. This article will hopefully provide an explanation of the phenomenon.



In the natural scheme of nature, it is natural for old leaves to fall from plants. This is rather conspicuous in the autumn in the Northern Hemisphere where we reside. In some ways, the loss of foliage, whether seasonal or as an ongoing process, may appear wasteful but it is in the plant's long-term interests to shed the leaves. They are lost primarily because living leaves demand water that is not available during the winter; they could accumulate excessive loads of ice and snow that would lead to breaking of branches; and also eliminate foliage that has acquired much damage by pests and disease over its life. Plants have developed a specific mechanism for detaching themselves from their parent. The detachment occurs at predetermined places, mostly at the point where the leaf attaches to the stem of the plant. Such predetermined locations can occur at other locations such as the junction of leaflets. At such locations, there a layer of special tissue that develops when the correct point has been reached in the growing season. The layer, known as the abscission layer, acts as healed tissue that is dry and intact when the leaf finally detaches. In this way, the plant does not lose valuable water when the leaf has fallen. Often, we can use

the patterns left in the abscission layer to identify the species of plant.

The abscission process is predetermined and occurs under the control of hormones internal to the plant. In particular, the hormone that controls the process is appropriately known as abscisic acid. (ABA). ABA has a number of critical functions in a plant. Its name comes from the first confirmed function within the plants that promotes abscission of leaves and fruits at appropriate times. It is also the hormone that triggers closing of the stomata when soil water is insufficient to keep up with transpiration. It controls the expression of genes encoding proteins that protect cells from damage when they become dehydrated. ABA can stimulate root growth in plants that need to increase their ability to extract water from the soil. It is essential for seed maturation and enforcing seed dormancy. ABA mediates the conversion of the growing shoot tip into a dormant bud with some newly developing leaves become converted into stiff bud scales that will protect the growing point during the winter. ABA in the bud acts to enforce dormancy so if an unseasonably warm spell occurs before winter is over. It inhibits stem elongation by its inhibitory effect on other hormones such as gibberellic acid. ABA moving up from the roots to the stem cooperates with auxin produced in the growing shoot tip to suppress the development of lateral buds.



The connection between ABA and leaf retention comes through the phenomenon known as juvenility. Juvenility is a state where characteristics of young plant tissue are retained for an extended period. Generally, the juvenile state is identified as the period in the life of a plant when it is not mature enough to be reproductive (flowering, setting seed). This period may be very short in some species yet extend for many years in others, notably in woody species.

Plants can exhibit both juvenile and mature tissue in the same plant. In our Beech example, the juvenile tissue occurs in the middle of the crown while mature tissues occur in terminal tissues of the shoots. ABA exerts control over the tissues, keeping the tissues (internal to the crown) in an ongoing juvenile state. A characteristic of juvenile tissues is that they do

not typically have a well-developed abscission zone and thus they do not readily detach in the autumn. Instead, the leaf tissues die, dry out and remain attached for much of the winter. In that condition, they come to our attention.

By W.D. McIlveen

Credit Valley Conservation – Upcoming Events

Belfountain Salamander Festival - Saturday, Oct 2nd, Time: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Belfountain Hamlet & Conservation Area, 10 Credit St., Belfountain (30 km north on Mississauga Rd. from the 401 interchange). Cost: Free entry with coupon from CVC booth in hamlet of Belfountain

Fun for the whole family including an art & farmers' market, music & dance, wild bird show, Scienational Ssnakes demonstration, pumpkin contest, hot breakfast & BBQ lunch, silent auction, bake sale, free wildflower seeds & tree seedlings, fly-tying, electrofishing demonstrations, and more!

Nature Photography 101 - Saturday, Sep 25th, Time: 1:00 a.m. - 1:30 a.m.

Watershed Learning Centre at Terra Cotta Conservation Area, 14452 Winston Churchill Blvd.

Cost: Free with admission to conservation area, donations gratefully accepted

Contact: www.creditvalleyca.ca/education / 905-670-1615 ext. 221

Brush up on your photography skills with Ernie Silhanek, an instructor of nature photography at Fleming College. Bring your own camera and gear to learn basic tips and tricks in this beginner level program.

Caw-Caw-phony of Crows - Saturday, Oct 16th, Time: 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Watershed Learning Centre, Terra Cotta Conservation Area, 14452 Winston Churchill Blvd., Halton Hills

Cost: Free with admission to conservation area. donations gratefully accepted

Registration: www.creditvalleyca.ca/education / 905-670-1615 ext. 221

Come for a hike and learn about the folklore and more of the American crow. These highly intelligent and social birds have gained a wise guy reputation and are known for outsmarting humans and other animals. Bring your binoculars or borrow a pair to share

Halloween Haunted Forest - Saturday, Oct 30th, Time: 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Watershed Learning Centre at Terra Cotta Conservation Area, 14452 Winston Churchill Blvd.

Cost: \$5 per child in advance or \$7 at the door. Accompanying adults are free.

Registration: 905-670-1615 ext. 418

Enjoy an evening of spooky fun for children 10 and under, including a haunted spirit walk, scary pavilion, storytellers, bonfires, indoor games, BBQ and more. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Barking Up the Right Tree - Saturday, Nov. 13, Time: 10 - 12 p.m.

Watershed Learning Centre at Terra Cotta Conservation Area, 14452 Winston Churchill Blvd.

Cost: Free with admission to conservation area. Donations gratefully accepted

Registration: www.creditvalleyca.ca/education / 905-670-1615 ext. 221

With an expert biologist, take on a new nature challenge this fall and learn how to identify trees from their buds and bark. In late fall, leaves on the ground will back up our new powers of identification.

The Elliott Regional Forest Stand Report

The Elliott Regional Forest is on Second Line, north of 15th Sideroad, Nassagaweya. It is comprised of 77 acres, the majority of which is passively managed mixed forest. Red and white pine fill the plantations. A quarter of the pines are 56 years or more. A small creek runs through the rear of the property where it is lower and this enables many cedars to thrive. During January 2010, after the ground finally froze, two of the plantations were thinned.

To top-off our year of assistance in stewardship to Halton Regional Council, Chief Forester Ron Reinholt took the committee to the Elliott. This was a follow up of watching the actual logging machines working last January.

To the right of the entrance road “row thinning” had occurred and many young ash had sprouted. Row thinning removes a whole row from the plantation allowing in more light to encourage growth of hardwoods. This way they can also selectively remove misshapen trees or others on each side to allow more light to penetrate.

Additional light also brings up swaths of herb Robert, wild grapes, humongous dandelions, raspberry canes, and all those opportunistic seeds that have been lying quietly awaiting the right conditions. We slowly bumbled and stumbled over the tops and discarded parts of cut trees hidden under all the new green growth.

The Regional received a little more than \$10,000 for the wood harvested in January. Ron said the management practices are of greater value than the dollar value.

A very different type of management was on display in another plantation deeper within the tract. Here about 6 acres of a hillside stood mostly open with about 40 trees marked with a blue slash left standing. In forestry, blue signifies the tree is to be left. Most were white pine, ash, and a few spruce. One lone Scots pine seemed an anomaly and Ron said it would be removed as they are too invasive.

This type of management is referred to as “shelter wood” the idea being that the remaining blue slashed trees will produce seeds soon and will germinate throughout the cleared area. Ron’s concern was that seeds won’t flourish if they fall into dry areas of pine needles and leaves. They require the underlying soil to spout and thrive. Shelter wood is somewhat passive management “letting nature take its course” planting. He mentioned he may have to send a machine to stir up the earth at some future time.

It was an enjoyable nature walk. We were in and out within an hour, before the bugs found us!

By Marg Wilkes



This spectacular creature is a Banded Tussock Moth caterpillar. It was on its way to find a place to spin its cocoon, which it laces with many of its own setae (hairs). I used Caterpillars of Eastern North America, by David Wagner, to identify it. This is a great book and well worth buying

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

Membership for September 2010 to September 2011

_____ Renewal or _____ New Member(s)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

_____ Single (\$30.00) _____ Family (\$40.00)

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