



The Esquesing

Sept-Oct 2016 Newsletter
Volume 51, Number 1



Talks and Walks

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

Tuesday September 13, 2016

Colin Cassin: Invasive Plants

Colin Cassin is “Project Liaison” for the Ontario Invasive Plant Council. Colin will highlight some of the invasive plants currently threatening ecosystems in Ontario and will offer guidance on options to stop or mitigate their advance.

Tuesday October 11, 2016

Neotropical Nature: Eugenio Garcia or Fiona Reid

Regardless of who speaks on this evening, expect a visual feast of images from the New World Tropics. Eugenio is a native Costa Rican who operates Journey South EcoTravel. He supports his extensive knowledge about the birds and animals that inhabit his country with remarkable photos. Our own Fiona Reid also leads trips to the tropics, with the Amazon as one of her favorite destinations. Her talk will focus on the rich diversity of life in that greatest of all remaining tropical forests. Expect exquisite images from Fiona as well.

Wednesday November 8, 2016

Fungi: Linda Kohn, Professor University of Toronto Mississauga

Linda is an enthusiastic booster of fungi. She has studied these remarkable organisms for years and will stoke our interest in their natural history. Linda knows fungi and, though November is not prime fungi time, she will be pleased to identify fungi from a physical sample or an image.

Tuesday December 13, 2016

Annual Pot Luck dinner

Come for gustatory pleasure of Ray Blower’s legendary bean salad and for general conviviality. There will be an opportunity to show slides after we eat, but due to time constraints, please limit your images to ten or less.

Outdoor Events

Sunday September 11, 2016, 7 a.m. at Forks of the Credit Provincial Park

Meeting place: Parking lot just west of McLaren Road between Forks of the Credit Road and Charleston Road, Caledon.

Leader: Don Scallen



For all you morning people! We'll congregate just before dawn. With luck temperatures overnight will have dropped below the dew point and, with the rising sun, we'll discover spider webs bespangled with dew. We'll seek out the various species of orb-web weavers on this walk but will also be on the lookout for other things. Late summer meadows are alive with all sorts of insects: katydids, praying mantids, walking sticks, bumblebees, wasps, beetles and on. We should see some migrating birds as well. So, if you're not averse to getting up in the wee hours, please join us at the Forks!

Sunday October 2, 2016, 10 a.m. at Scotch Block Reservoir

Meeting Place: Fiona's House in Speyside (email Fiona.reid7243@gmail.com to RSVP and for directions)

Leader: Fiona Reid

Fall birds, scenery and more. We will start at Scotch Block where we usually see various ducks and waders, then continue on to La Salle and other destinations in Burlington. We will probably eat lunch out or bring a lunch if you prefer.

Saturday October 8, 2016 at 1 p.m. at Scotsdale Farm, nest box check

Meeting Place: Parking lot of Scotsdale Farm off Trafalgar Road, Ballinafad

Leader: Bill McIlveen

We will enjoy a pleasant fall walk on this meadow and forest property checking the club nest boxes and cleaning them out in preparation for next spring.

President's Message

Wonder is a big reason we are naturalists. We are delighted by discovery and nature offers an infinite variety of surprises. I was reminded of this in talking to members of the club this summer. Kim and Ramona Dobson told me of a pair of “dancing” pileated woodpeckers in Glen Williams and wowed me with video of their remarkable observation. Also in the Glen, Ian Jarvie thrilled to the appearance of another woodpecker – the red-headed. This bird, of jaw-dropping beauty, appeared at one of his feeders. Once more common in our area, it has, for reasons that are poorly understood, fallen on hard times.

John and Margaret Beaudette enjoyed not one but two bluebird broods in their backyard this summer. In contrast to the red-headed woodpecker, the numbers of these lovely songbirds have increased in recent decades in response to a housing boom – bluebird boxes erected across their range in Eastern North America.

The bugs that feed our birds also stoked our curiosity this summer. On the Monday evening walks I always looked up expectantly when Irene McIlveen approached with her trademark plastic vial. Invariably, housed within, would be a fascinating arthropod. My favorite Irene capture this summer was a tortoise beetle larva. This tiny creature glues its own feces to its back to protect its soft body from predators. It even has the ability to raise and lower its “shell” of hardened feces to warn off predators. How's that for an example of reusing and recycling?



Aphid Lion by Fiona Reid

Inspired by Irene, Fiona Reid discovered a tiny predatory insect called an aphid lion. This one carries, not feces on its back, but the desiccated bodies of its victims! So well disguised was this little creature that Fiona initially thought she was looking at a ball of

fluff. As she approached with her camera it waved a body of one of its victims in her general direction.

Tanya Piko's delight in holding various snakes – garter, milk and a water snake that we found on summer walks was a joy to behold. Tanya has an affection for these much-maligned creatures. But that's what naturalists are all about isn't it? We appreciate nature in all its diversity. Instead of recoiling from "creepy crawlies" we embrace them, we cherish their otherness and we advocate for their welfare.

For me, the summer's highlight was a luna moth at Fiona's house. I had grown a few luna caterpillars last year from eggs sent to me by a gentleman in P.E.I. I overwintered their cocoons and when a female emerged this spring, I left her out overnight on Fiona's deck. I knew she would release pheromones after dark, but had little faith that she would attract a mate. Imagine my delight then, when I found a male with her the next day! I was ten years old the last time I saw a truly wild luna moth. To finally meet one again was a great thrill.

I'm glad we have this small community of nature lovers that is the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club. It is fun to be able to share our experiences in the natural world with others.

We have a fine roster of speakers lined up this fall to satisfy your thirst for discovery. And please remember our walks and hikes.



Luna Moth by Don Scallen

These are unscripted opportunities to discover the diverse nature in our own backyards. Wonders await.

Yours in nature,

Don Scallen

The Changing Lakefront of Halton and Peel

by W.D. McIlveen

For most people in the GTA, any mention of “The Lake” means that they are referring to Lake Ontario. More specifically, and justifiably, they mean the lake in its current location. But that lake and its shoreline have not always been located in their present locations. This account is a summary of the history of the lakes that had their shores associated with what we recognize as Halton and Peel. To understand the history of the lakes, it is necessary to consider the history of the glaciation of the area.

The most recent period of glaciation is known as the Wisconsin period. In North America, the ice sheet, named the Laurentide Ice Sheet, reached as far south as the northern parts of the United States. More locally, one lobe from that ice sheet moved through the Lake Ontario Basin from east to west to cover Halton and Peel before moving out of Ontario and into the United States. Over the thousands of years of the Wisconsin glaciation, snow accumulated as ice to a depth of up to 3 kilometers. Such a weight of ice not only pressed down on the land and rocks beneath, the ice became somewhat plastic in nature. As such, it could flow across the landscape. The rate of flow was very slow but inexorable. But at a point in time about 14,000 years before the present, the earth began to warm and the ice started to slowly melt. The edge of the glacier then retreated slowly to the north and east back through Lake Ontario. Depending upon the local topography, the melt water accumulated at the edge of the melting ice. Over the course of time, a complex set of temporary freshwater lakes formed and disappeared at different places and times in Southern Ontario depending upon the positions of the possible drainage outlets mainly towards the Atlantic Ocean. This account deals only with those lakes associated with Halton and Peel.

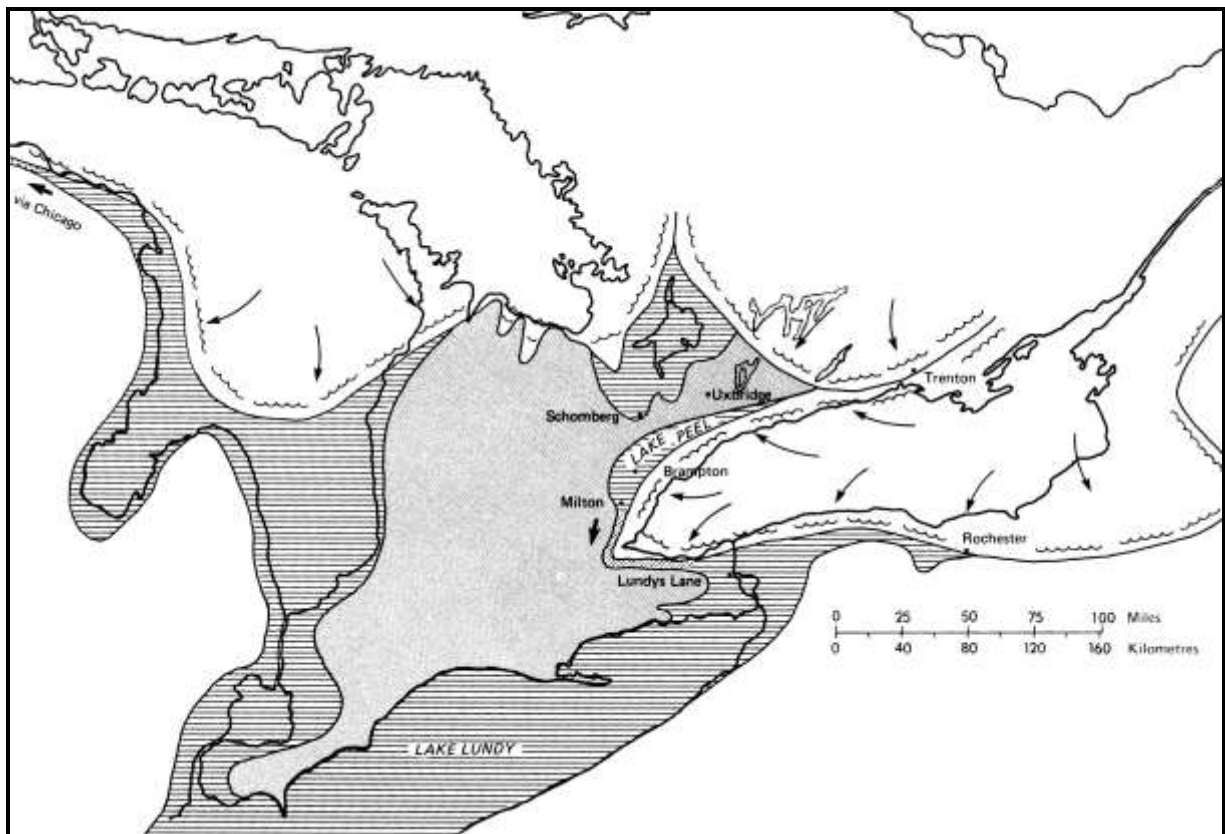


Figure 1. Map of Lake Peel

The earliest lake of interest here is Lake Peel (AKA Peel Impoundment) (Fig.1). It formed between the Niagara Escarpment on the west and the retreating ice to the east (Fig. 2) and generally covered the flat land located between Brampton and Milton. It was short-lived, perhaps lasting for 500 years until around 12,500 years before present. This shallow lake is significant in that this is the location where the clays of the Chinguacousy and Oneida soils were laid down to form the Peel plain. The general appearance of how the lake might have appeared when viewed from about Crawford Lake is shown in Figure 3.

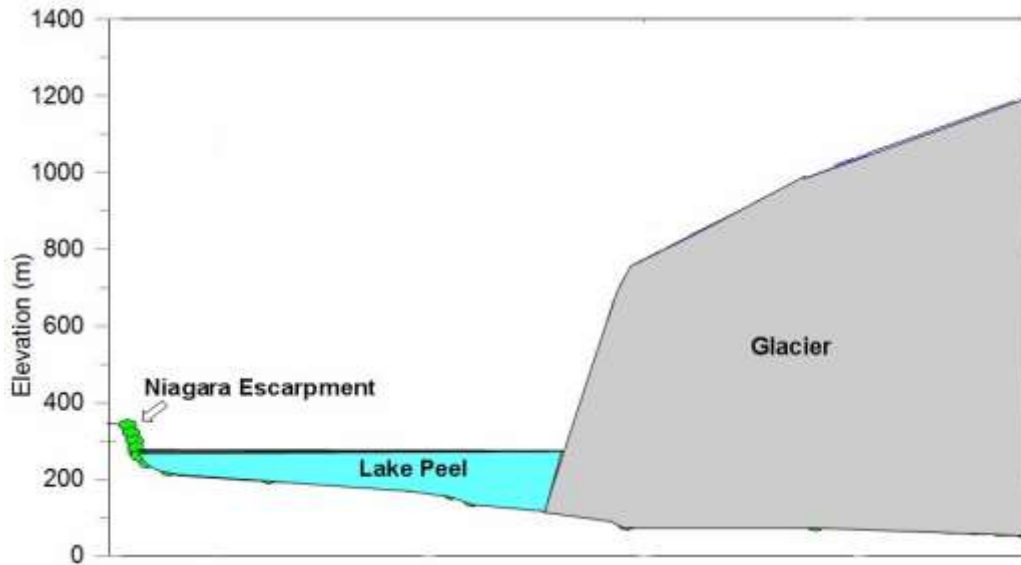


Figure 2. Profile of Lake Peel with glacier



Figure 3. Lake Peel at Rattlesnake Point with retreating glacier, painting by W. D. McIlveen

In a later stage of the glacial history, Lake Peel disappeared and Lake Iroquois occupied the Lake Ontario basin. The melt water still could not flow out to the east because the ice sheet blocked the route to the Atlantic along the St. Lawrence River. Generally, Lake Iroquois filled the Lake Ontario basin but the water levels were somewhat higher than at present. At this stage, the sandy soils on the present Lake Ontario were deposited along the shoreline. The edge of the lake is defined as a ridge several kilometers inland from the present shoreline of Lake Ontario (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Map showing position of Lake Iroquois in relation to current Lake Ontario

Eventually, the ice blocking the access to the St. Lawrence River melted to the point that the ice plug was breached and the water from Lake Iroquois flowed freely to the ocean. The level of the outlet was at least 20 meters lower than the present lake level. The resulting lake was therefore substantially smaller than the present lake and was known as Lake Admiralty (Fig. 5). But Lake Admiralty did not last in its early form. The reason for the change relates back to the great weight of the ice that had once covered the land. That great weight had pressed down on the rock underlying the glacier. The rock was compressed and as a result the level of the outlet was lower than the present level. But with time, the rock expanded due to isostatic rebound. The net effect was that the level of the lake was raised to cause the outlet to become established at its present level and so the present Lake Ontario was formed. If left to its own, the levels of Lake Ontario would rise and fall in a cyclical pattern, just like in the other Great Lakes, though perhaps with a temporal delay owing to its lower position in the drainage sequence. But the level of Lake Ontario is now quite closely managed because of the strict requirements of the St. Lawrence Seaway to avoid grounding of ships.

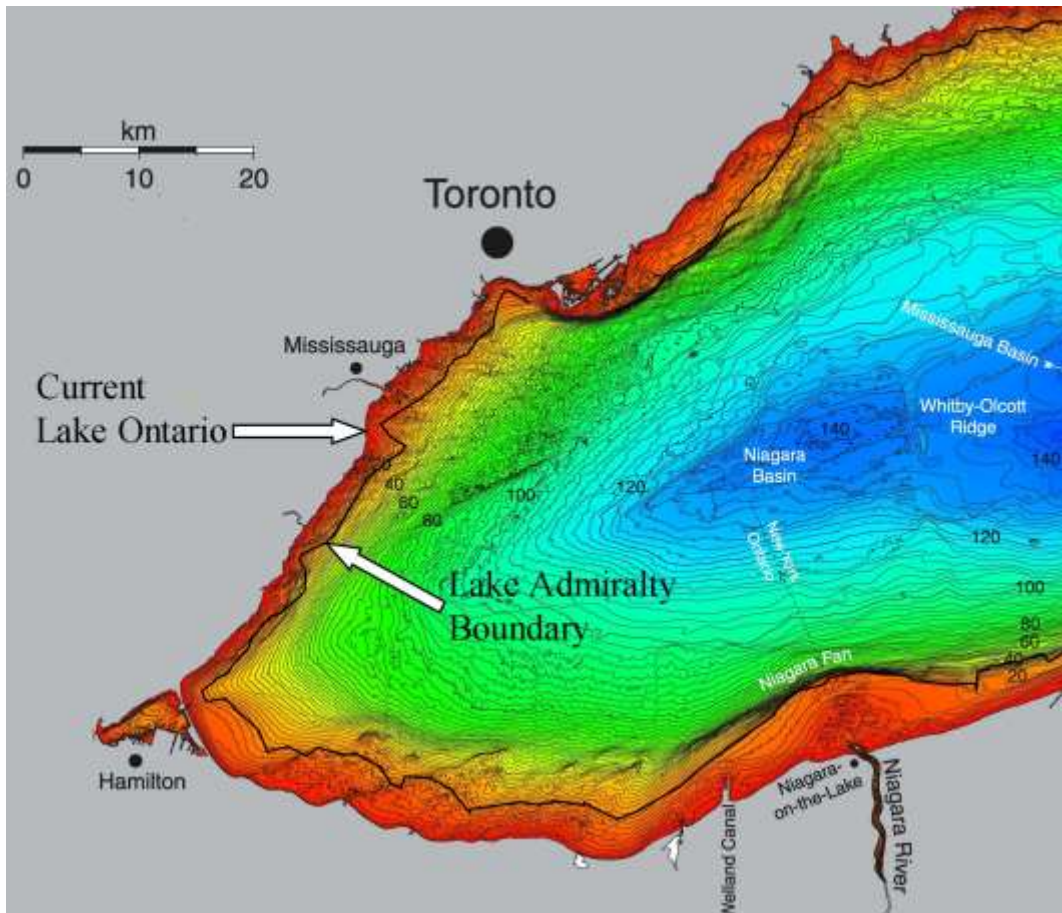


Figure 5. Map showing bathymetry of Lake Ontario and position of Lake Admiralty

Although three of the lakes that once served as waterfront for Halton and Peel are long gone, if one knows what to look for, small signs and bits of evidence of their former existence can still be found.

In Praise of Meadows

by Don Scallen

Meadow ecosystems, in the parlance of a comedian from yesteryear, get no respect. Naturalists are justifiably outraged when proposals are floated to cut a local woodland or fill a wetland. Meadows however, are bulldozed on a regular basis to build houses, or simply disappear quietly as trees reclaim them.

This is not a plea to save all meadows from the inevitability of natural succession. Lord knows our human

the Esquesing



dominated world needs more trees and woodlands as well. But I propose that certain places should be maintained as meadow habitat and that means the active cutting or burning of woody vegetation.



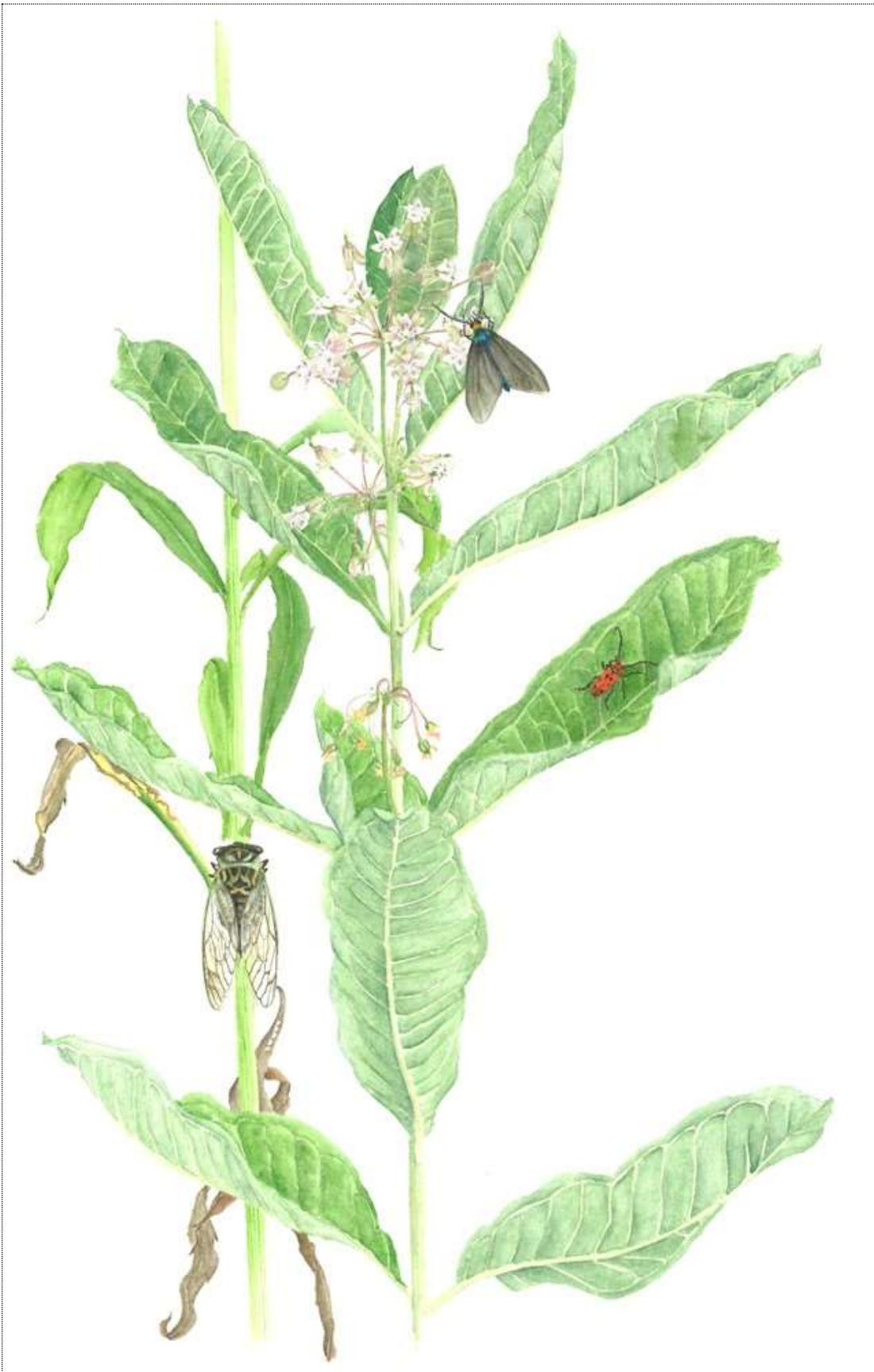
Meadows are an immensely important component of the matrix of habitats that exist in this area and throughout eastern North America. If you think not, consider the flora and fauna they support. The unfiltered sunlight that bathes meadows, powers the growth of exuberant vegetation which feeds legions of arthropods, which in turn, feed a diversity of birds, amphibians and reptiles. A meadow's tremendous diversity of flowering plants provide pollen and nectar to bees, wasps, butterflies and beetles.

A tiny sampling of species largely dependent on meadows includes milkweed, asters, monarch butterflies, meadowlarks, grasshopper sparrows, praying mantises and katydids. Meadows are favourite foraging sites for at-risk swallows of various species. They provide food and sustenance for overwintering redpolls and snow buntings.

We need to become more sophisticated in the maintenance of the meadows in our midst. Tree planting is too often the default option when their management is considered. And though challenging tree planting is akin to challenging motherhood and apple pie, it is not always advisable. We need to look at our public spaces with new eyes, recognizing the ecological value of not only woodlands but meadows, old fields, and shrub land as well. Our club is currently advocating for the control of woody vegetation on some of the existing meadowland habitat at Forks of the Credit Provincial Park. This management may begin this fall and club members will be invited to participate. The initial management area will be quite small, but may be expanded in the future.

It would be lovely to see Forks of the Credit Provincial Park designated as a "Meadowlands Park" with signage educating its many users about why meadow habitat is worth preserving. Such a designation would be a positive step towards a wider recognition of the value of these often overlooked habitats.

photos by Don Scallen



Milkweed in August, painting by Irene McIlveen

Report on Evening Walks for 2016 – South Peel Naturalists and Halton North Peel Naturalists



Sunset over St Helena Road pond, Speyside, by W. D. McIlveen

The South Peel Naturalists and Halton North Peel Naturalists clubs have hosted evening walks for the members for over 25 years. The summer of 2016 was no exception with a total of 17 evening walks between May 9 and August 29. All walks were done in various areas of Halton and Peel Regions as indicated in the following table along with the names of the leaders and the numbers of participants on each walk. As in previous years, an attempt was made to alternate sites in the south and the north part of the area. Overall, there were seven different leaders (Ray Blower, Kirsten Burling, Emily Dobson, W. McIlveen, Fiona Reid, Dawn Renfrew, and Don Scallen).

2016	Location	Leader	Attendance
May 09	Sherwood Forest Park Wildflowers	Bill McIlveen	10 people
May 16	Acton Swift Watch	Emily Dobson	4 people
May 23	Scotch Block Warblers	Fiona Reid	6 people
May 30	Hewick Meadows	Bill McIlveen	5 people
Jun 06	Scotsdale Bird Box	Bill McIlveen	2 people
Jun 13	Lowville Park	Bill McIlveen	5 people
Jun 20	Forks-of-Credit	Don Scallen	6 people
Jun 27	Riverview Park	Bill McIlveen	3 people
Jul 04	Mahon Tract	Dawn Renfrew	13 people
Jul 11	North Park, Oakville	Bill McIlveen	8 people
Jul 18	Hardy & Crozier Tracts	Ray Blower	10 people
Jul 25	Riverwood	Bill McIlveen	13 people
Aug 01	Dublin Line Extension	Bill McIlveen	6 people
Aug 08	Swift Night Out	Emily Dobson	14 people
Aug 15	Nassagaweya Townline Ponds Bats	Fiona Reid	11 people
Aug 22	Shanahan Tract	Dawn Renfrew	6 people
Aug 29	Rattray Marsh	Kirsten Burling	17 people

Tree swallow nestlings, by Tanya Piko



The event on May 16 suffered from a forecast of impending rain so only four people arrived. The 'pre-watch' walk was good but the rain did start just before the count of the Chimney Swifts began. Only a single Swift was observed during the rain. The planned check of the Scotsdale bird boxes was essentially a complete rain out. During the summer, the numbers of participants ranged from two to seventeen. The overall average number was 8.2 participants per walk; however, if the two rainy nights are excluded, the average was 8.9 people. This is slightly lower than in 2015 but

still much higher than the earliest of the years for which such statistics were kept.

As in 2015, two of the walks were timed to allow people to participate in two Chimney Swift watches. As mentioned, the first suffered from a rain problem but the one at the former Oakville Trafalgar High School was very successful. The tally of Chimney Swifts that evening was 105 birds entering the chimneys. The walks at Hewick Meadows, Riverview Park, and Riverwood were intended to be the first parts of an eventual 'end-to-end' walk along the planned Credit River Valley Trail.

Overall, the participants appeared to enjoy their time on the walks. They had opportunities to see various plant species, mammals, insects, birds, amphibians and snakes. Common Water Snakes were observed on two occasions. A few of the other highlights included encounters with Muskrat and Mink, Barred Owl, Screech Owl and Common Nighthawk, and Green Frogs among others. Owing to the success of the walks in 2016, we hope to conduct a similar schedule of outings in 2017.



Naturalist Club members at Rattray Marsh lookout August 29 2016 by W. D. McIlveen

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

Executive

President: Don Scallen (905) 876-6180
Past President Fiona Reid (905) 693-9719
Vice President: Ian Jarvie (905) 877-1441
Secretary: Emily Dobson (647) 408-9515
Treasurer: Janice Sukhiani (647) 408-9515

Appointments

Membership: Lorysa Cornish
Newsletter: Tanya Piko
Ontario Nature Representative: Johanna Perz
Public Relations: Rose Barcarse
Webmaster: John Beaudette
Crozier Property Steward
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

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?

How did you hear about our club (newspaper/website/friend/other)?

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**

