

The Esquensing



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Yellow Garden Argiobe Orb Spider

Photo Credit: Don Scallen

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President's Message



hat a wonderful, warm, and colourful fall!

Some say the colours aren't as vivid as usual, perhaps due to the change in climatic conditions, such as a hot, dry summer, lots of wildfires, and other factors. Still, we are very fortunate to live in this amazing country. We may feel angry or annoyed about what is happening over the border. The positive result of these unsettling times with our nearest neighbours is a huge interest in travelling within Canada's borders. It is true that one feels more strongly about protecting something one is familiar with!

A lot of political type messages about the environment arrive in my email from various sources. I feel awkward mentioning the various petitions and political gatherings at our meetings, but here is a quote I think is very important:

"People often say, with pride, I'm not interested in politics. They might as well say, I'm not interested in my standard of living, my health, my job, my rights, my freedoms, my future or any future. If we mean to keep any control over our world and lives, we must be interested in politics."

This statement was made by Martha Gellhorn, an American war journalist in 1984. We often have the opportunity to take part in political action but believe someone else will do it. It seems to me that we need to realize how much influence we have if we take the time to be well-informed and take action. Remember the Greenbelt controversy? People power had the desired effect. Additionally, it was local political action that stopped a major solar farm development on the Carden Alvar, a favourite birding location of many of our members.

November 11 is our next meeting date. Brenna Bartley of Halton Conservation is speaking about the discoveries that have been made about Crawford Lake. It's a very special body of water located just south of Campbellville. In December, we are having our pot luck dinner meeting. Bring your own dishes and cutlery. We are unable to start until 7:15 so you might want to eat something light before the meeting.

Thank you for your financial support of Ontario Nature's Youth Summit. If you know of a youth passionate about nature or wanting to learn more about the environment, let an executive member or a director know. We want to continue assisting young people as they further their knowledge of and interest in environmental issues. Our planet depends on future generations caring for it!

Yours in nature,
Margaret

Talks and Walks

Indoor Events - Talks

Time/Date: 7:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month

Location: **St Alban's Hall**, 537 Main Street, Glen Williams, ON L7G 3T1
Map on last page of the newsletter.

November 11

Brenna Bartley of Halton Conservation is speaking about the discoveries that have been made about Crawford Lake

Upcoming Adventure Walks and Events

Christmas Bird Count

27th December

More details to come

Bird Box Use at Forks-of-the-Credit Provincial Park, 2025

By W.D. McIlveen and Kim Dobson

Members of the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club first established a network of ten bird nesting boxes at the Forks-of-the-Credit Provincial Park in Caledon in 2017. Based on the success of that initial group of boxes, the network was expanded to 22 boxes in 2018. Each year since, the boxes have been visited twice. The first visit is made in the peak of the breeding season in early to mid-June. The second visit is made in the fall season to clean the boxes and assess the contents for use since the in breeding-season visit. In 2025, the two visits were made on June 13 and October 6 respectively. Each year, the results of the box use have been reported in the Naturalist Club newsletter. The latest of these was McIlveen and Dobson (2024).

The pattern of box-use by the different species in 2025 was generally comparable to that of previous years. Bluebirds and Tree Swallows were the first to use the boxes but, later on, the House Wrens tended to take over many of the nest boxes. It is not certain whether all boxes with Wren nests were actually used for breeding or if some of the nests observed were ‘dummy’ nests. Depending upon the date of evaluation, a time difference of only a few days could greatly alter the relative numbers of eggs and nestlings observed. In 2025, only one box was unoccupied at the time of the first visit but all had seen some level use prior to the late-season visit. The box use by the different species and the production of eggs and nestlings in 2025 is summarized in Table 1. The total number of observed young and eggs was 72 though this might not include some reproduction carried out or completed outside of the visit dates.

Table 1. Summary of bird box use at Forks-of-the-Credit Provincial Park 2025				
Species	Box Use		Box Contents June 13	
	Jun 13	Oct 6	Eggs	Young
Eastern Bluebird	5	7	0	4
House Wren	8	17	29	3
Tree Swallow	8	11	29	7
Empty	1			
Total	22	35*	58	14

* Total nests exceed total boxes due to reuse of boxes, primarily by Wrens

For comparison of the results for 2025 with that of earlier years, the data have been included in Table 2. Note that results for 2017 include only 10 boxes in the first year of operation. Tree Swallows and House Wrens show those species to have comparable higher numbers but we are not certain exactly how many Wrens raised young due to dummy nest potential and generally later breeding. Black-capped Chickadees used the boxes in only one year (2020). One notable productivity trend is evident in the case of the Bluebirds. In the first three years, only one or two boxes were used. Subsequent to that, Bluebird nesting attempts increased to seven with the highest number occurring in the latest two years. It would appear that the nestbox program has been increasing the local Bluebird population. The same pattern has been noted with the numbers of Wrens and Swallows.

Table 2. Annual production of young birds (eggs plus nestlings) at Forks-of-the-Credit Provincial Park, 2017-2024									
Species	Year								
	2017*	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Eastern Bluebird	1	1	2	6	5	5	6	7	7
House Wren	9	17	12	14	15	16	15	26	32
Tree Swallow	4	18	13	12	11	9	11	29	36
Black-capped Chickadee	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total Nesting Attempts	14	36	27	34	31	30	32	27	35
Eggs + Young**		62	89	87	75	75	60	62	72

*Only 10 boxes operated in 2017; **Only those eggs and young seen were tallied

Based on the results of the nestbox program, continued monitoring of the boxes in future years is definitely warranted. Due to the human resources available and the challenge for access to the Park, it is not likely that additional visits will

be done. Ideally though, more checks of the boxes (i.e. earlier in the season, later in the Bluebird breeding season, during the Wren breeding season) could reveal more information about the breeding behavior of the different species.

References

McIlveen, W.D. and Kim Dobson. 2025. Bird Box Use at Forks-of-the-Credit Provincial Park, 2024. *The Esquesing*. Vol. 59 (3): 15-16.

Charlotte the Spider

By Don Scallen

Charlotte A. Cavatica was a barn spider, a rather nondescript arachnid of the orb-weaver persuasion. Ah, but Charlotte's loyalty and smarts outshone her rather plain looks in E.B. White's book *Charlotte's Web*.

Her thoughtfulness and creativity saved the life of her porcine friend Wilbur who faced the imminent threat of being turned into bacon. Charlotte, as you are likely aware, inscribed "Some Pig" into her web, which had the salutary effect of making Wilbur a celebrity. People came far and wide in tribute to his greatness.

Other words followed: "Terrific", "Radiant", "Humble". Wilbur's fame grew. Eventually farmer Homer Zuckerman, Wilbur's owner, is persuaded not to slaughter Wilbur. Instead, clemency is granted allowing the gifted pig to live out his days in barnyard bliss.

But the real gifted character in this tale was obviously Charlotte. She was the humble behind-the-scenes mover responsible for Wilbur's fame and salvation.

Few orb-weaving spiders have the off-the-charts abilities of Charlotte. But all of them deserve our notice and admiration. Though Charlotte's literacy is unique, other spiders like her in the Araneid family are all skilled web weavers.

They spin intricate orb webs of great beauty and the cool, dewy mornings of late summer and earliest fall offer the best opportunities to appreciate them, as I write in my book *Nature Where We Live*: "I shiver in the cool air as the first rays of the sun peek over a nearby hill to reveal spider webs glistening with dew. The webs hang like fishing nets between asters and goldenrods, some with their architects clinging to their centres. They are exquisite works of art."

In contrast to the earthy colours of a barn spider like Charlotte, some of those architects are gloriously hued. But though prettier, they can't compete with Charlotte's selfless altruism.

This story first appeared in <https://www.inthehills.ca/2025/10/orb-weaving-spiders/>



Bridge Orb Weaver – Charlotte, a barn spider, looked something like this



Marbled Orbweaver



Orb Web

The Trees of Scotsdale Farm

By W.D. McIlveen

In 1983, Jocelyn Webber conducted a biological inventory of the Scotsdale Farm located at Silver Creek. The inventory included lists of the flora and fauna encountered during a number of visits to the farm. In subsequent years, W.D. McIlveen and members of the Halton/North Peel Naturalists made many visits to the property. During those visits, additional records of the biota were made on both a directed and an incidental basis. The present report is a summary of the records of the tree species encountered.

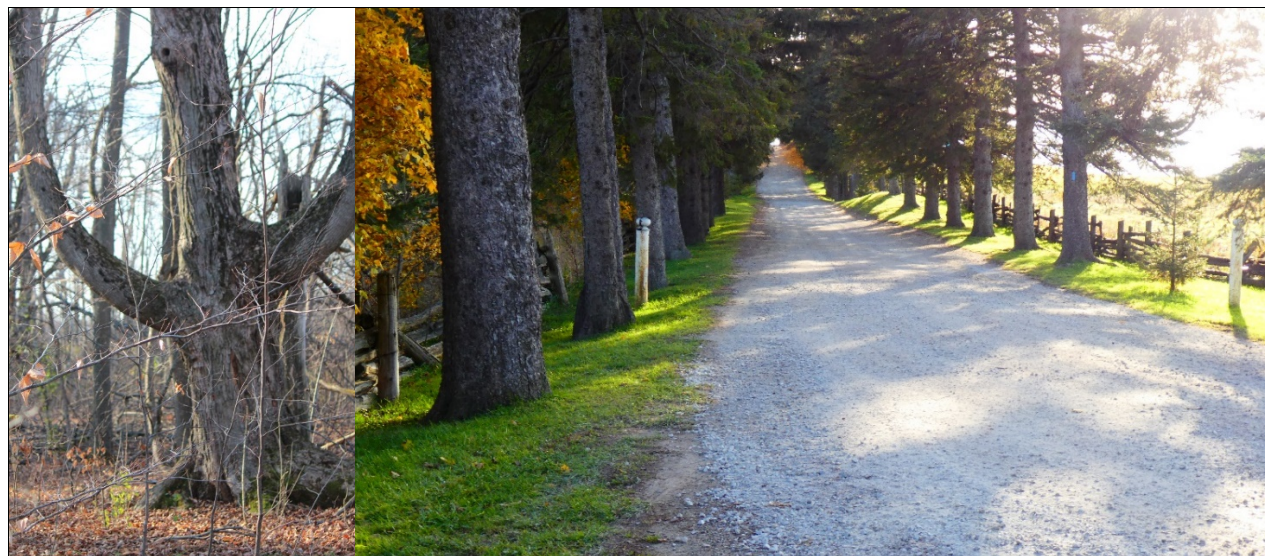
The Webber report lists 51 species but this total requires some comments. The first consideration relates to the species that are trees and those that are considered to be shrubs. It is easy to understand that those species groups have some members close to the boundary for sizes that define trees or shrubs. In the present report, the three Hawthorn species considered to be trees by Webber have been relegated to the shrub group. Five shrub species as listed by Webber do reach sizes that can be considered to be trees. These have been included as trees for purposes of the present summary. The current tree list includes 12 conifer and 46 hardwood species. Surprisingly, there are no records for Manitoba Maple. Other species might still be discovered but, overall, the list generally reflects a normal group of species for the area and the habitat available. The Webber report lists the presence of Silver Maple. Later site visits did not show Silver Maple but Freeman's Maple was listed. Freeman's Maple (*Acer × freemanii*) is a naturally-occurring hybrid maple which is a cross between *Acer rubrum* and *Acer saccharinum* and is very common in Halton. The hybrid nature of the species was not widely-known at the time the Webber study was carried out and therefore would have been considered as Silver Maple. It is possible that a true Silver Maple was sighted and cannot be ruled out. It is maintained in the present list but the chances are good that the trees sighted in more-recent times were Freeman's Maples.

List of conifer trees observed at Scotsdale Farm			
Family	Scientific Name	Common Name	Status
Cupressaceae	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Eastern Red Cedar	
	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	Eastern White Cedar	
Pinaceae	<i>Abies balsamea</i>	Balsam Fir	
	<i>Larix laricina</i>	American Larch	
	<i>Picea abies</i>	Norway Spruce	Planted. Alien
	<i>Picea glauca</i>	White Spruce	
	<i>Picea mariana</i>	Black Spruce	
	<i>Pinus banksiana</i>	Jack Pine	Planted. Alien
	<i>Pinus resinosa</i>	Red Pine	Planted
	<i>Pinus strobus</i>	Eastern White Pine	
	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scots Pine	Planted. alien
	<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	Eastern Hemlock	

The present list stands at 58 species for trees on the Scotsdale Farm. This includes 13 species that are not native to Ontario. Of these, there are 9 species that were purposely planted. This includes the native Black Walnut and Red Pine that are present, due only to purposeful planting.

References

Webber, J.M. 1983. The vegetation, flora and fauna of Scotsdale Farm/Bennett Estate. A reconnaissance biological inventory. A report prepared for the Ontario Heritage Foundation. 61pp.



Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), 2014

Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*) laneway planting, Scotsdale, 2021

List of hardwood trees observed at Scotsdale Farm			
Family	Scientific Name	Common Name	Status
Anacardiaceae	<i>Rhus typhina</i>	Staghorn Sumac	
Betulaceae	<i>Betula alleghaniensis</i> <i>Betula papyrifera</i> <i>Carpinus caroliniana</i> <i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	Yellow Birch Paper Birch Blue Beech Ironwood	
Cornaceae	<i>Cornus alternifolia</i> <i>Cornus rugosa</i>	Alternate-leaved Dogwood Round-leaved Dogwood	
Fagaceae	<i>Fagus grandifolia</i> <i>Quercus alba</i> <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i> <i>Quercus rubra</i>	American Beech White Oak Bur Oak Northern Red Oak	
Juglandaceae	<i>Carya cordiformis</i> <i>Juglans cinerea</i> <i>Juglans nigra</i>	Bitternut Hickory Butternut Black Walnut	Planted
Malvaceae	<i>Tilia americana</i>	American Basswood	
Oleaceae	<i>Fraxinus americana</i> <i>Fraxinus nigra</i> <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i> spp. <i>subintegerima</i> <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i> spp <i>pennsylvanica</i>	White Ash Black Ash Green Ash Red Ash	
Platanaceae	<i>Platanus acerifolia</i>	London Plane-tree	Planted. Alien

List of hardwood trees observed at Scotsdale Farm			
Family	Scientific Name	Common Name	Status
Rhamnaceae	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	European Buckthorn	Alien
Rosaceae	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i> <i>Amelanchier laevis</i> <i>Malus pumila</i> <i>Prunus nigra</i> <i>Prunus serotina</i> <i>Prunus virginiana</i> <i>Pyrus communis</i> <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Downy Serviceberry Smooth Serviceberry Common Apple Canada Plum Wild Black Cherry Choke Cherry Common Pear European Mountain-ash	Alien Alien Alien
Salicaceae	<i>Populus balsamifera</i> <i>Populus deltoides ssp. deltoides</i> <i>Populus grandidentata</i> <i>Populus tremuloides</i> <i>Salix alba</i> <i>Salix fragilis</i>	Balsam Poplar Eastern Cottonwood Large-tooth Aspen Trembling Aspen White Willow Crack Willow	Alien Planted. Alien Alien
Sapindaceae	<i>Acer nigrum</i> <i>Acer platanoides</i> <i>Acer rubrum</i> <i>Acer saccharinum</i> <i>Acer saccharum</i> <i>Acer spicatum</i> <i>Acer x freemanii</i>	Black Maple Norway Maple Red Maple Silver Maple Sugar Maple Mountain Maple Freeman's Maple	Planted. Alien
Ulmaceae	<i>Ulmus americana</i> <i>Ulmus pumila</i> <i>Ulmus rubra</i> <i>Ulmus thomasii</i>	American Elm Siberian Elm Slippery Elm Rock Elm	Alien

My Green Friend, Olive Oil

By Don Scallen

As evening thunder rumbled across the heavens last June, Olive Oil hopped out of her natal wetland and struck off across country. In the morning I met her. She was perched on a stone beside my tiny garden pond.

Olive (we're on a first name basis now) had somehow navigated to my mini oasis in the heart of suburbia.

Olive is a female green frog (*Lithobates clamitans*). Tympanums (eardrums) the width of her eyes signal her gender. Male green frogs have tympanums larger than their eyes.

Olive and I began to spend quality time together. Frogs spend much of their days doing nothing, sitting sphinxlike for hours, studies in patience. Our affair is a contemplative one.

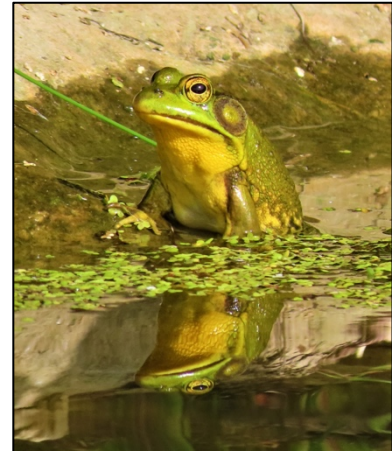
I've only seen Olive catch two insects. One was a small ant. The second was a yellowjacket. The wasp landed beside Olive to sip water. Olive's sticky tongue was the last thing it saw. Yellowjacket stings hurt, and I expected Olive to flinch. But she revealed no sign of discomfort. She simply settled back into her sphinxlike posture, to do what she does best – wait.

As our relationship grew, I started to dine with Olive. I'd feed myself cheese and crackers and I'd feed Olive worms. She gradually learned to stretch upwards and grab these squirming creatures from my fingers.

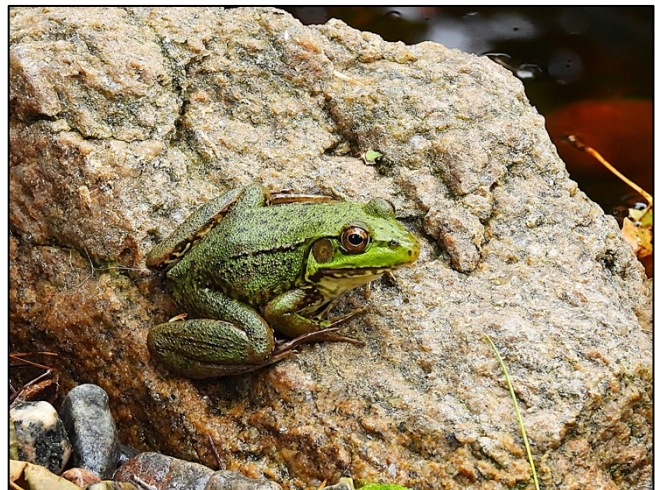
Frogs can learn, as Olive's acceptance of a big hand hovering over her demonstrates. They can also discern subtleties. Fiona Reid says that frogs in her garden pond react with fear when she wears sunglasses, altering her appearance.

Frogs actively seek prime feeding locations. Once I encountered a dead beaver. Plump green frogs perched on the carcass, scarfing blue-bottle flies.

With winter knocking, Olive now practises her stillness mastery on the bottom of my pond. In the near freezing water, she'll absorb vital oxygen through her skin thanks to the turbulence of a small waterfall. I look forward to her soulful eyes breaking the surface in the spring and to the rekindling of our relationship.



Green Frog Males have large tympanums (eardrums) and yellow throats



Olive Oil perched beside my pond

The Herptofauna of Scotsdale Farm

By W.D. McIlveen

In 1983, Jocelyn Webber made series of visits to the Scotsdale Farm located northwest of Georgetown. During those visits, she made extensive notes on the flora and fauna on the property. Various subjects were photographed and plant specimens were collected and prepared for herbarium preservation. The information was compiled into a report prepared for the Ontario Heritage Foundation (Webber, 1983). In addition to the Webber studies, the property was examined by the Natural Areas Inventory project for Halton and the comparable project conducted by Credit Valley Conservation covering the Region of Peel and the Credit River drainage area. In addition, personal records were made by the author, by Irene McIlveen, and by other local naturalists. These records have been (or will be) compiled into a series of articles relating to various biological groups known from the Scotsdale property. The present report which relates to the amphibians and reptiles known from the Scotsdale property is one in the series of reports.

Overall, nine species of amphibian and six reptile species have been documented. Specific comments on the various species are provided below. The individual species observed are included in the table below.

Herptofaunal species reported from Scotsdale Farm			
Group	Species	Scientific Name	Status
Frog	American Bullfrog	<i>Lithobates catesbeianus</i>	S4
	American Toad	<i>Anaxyrus americanus americanus</i>	S5
	Gray Tree Frog	<i>Hyla versicolor</i>	S5
	Northern Green Frog	<i>Lithobates clamitans melanota</i>	S5
	Northern Leopard Frog	<i>Lithobates pipiens</i>	S5
	Pickerel Frog	<i>Lithobates palustris</i>	S4
	Spring Peeper	<i>Pseudacris crucifer</i>	S5
	Western Chorus Frog	<i>Pseudacris triseriata</i>	S4
	Wood Frog	<i>Lithobates sylvaticus</i>	S5
Salamander	Jefferson Salamander Complex	<i>Ambystoma laterale-jeffersonianum</i>	S4
	Spotted Salamander	<i>Ambystoma maculatum</i>	S4
Snake	Dekay Brown Snake	<i>Storeria dekayi</i>	S5
	Eastern Garter Snake	<i>Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis</i>	S5
	Eastern Milksnake	<i>Lampropeltis triangulum</i>	S3
	Northern Red-bellied Snake	<i>Storeria occipitomaculata</i>	S5
Turtle	Midland Painted Turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta marginata</i>	S5
	Snapping Turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>	S3

Amphibians

The amphibians include nine frog species and two salamander species. The frogs present are mostly species that are common in the area as long as suitable water bodies are present for breeding. Bullfrogs are not as common as some other frog species. The presence of the Chorus Frog is notable as recently it has not been as common as it once was in the area. The presence of the Pickerel Frog is especially noteworthy as the species tends to be more northern in habit. Its occurrence at Scotsdale is one of the most southern sites known for the species. Overall, the probability of any additional frog species is extremely remote.

By contrast, the chances that other salamander species are present are very good. Species that could reasonably be expected include the Blue-spotted Salamander, Red-spotted Newt. Leadback Salamander, and Eastern Red-backed Salamander. Some directed surveys should be able to determine the presence of these kinds.

Reptiles

The reptiles documented include four species of snake and two species of turtle. It is unlikely that further work would find additional turtle species. By contrast, several other snake species could possibly yet be found on the property though their discovery would be deemed fortuitous. The species that might still be found include the Eastern Ribbonsnake, Northern Watersnake, Ring-necked Snake, and Smooth Greensnake.

Records of any amphibians or reptiles on the Scotsdale property would be welcome, especially if the numbers of individuals present could be quantified. Such numbers would be useful in knowing whether the population is increasing, decreasing or remaining constant. Having numbers would be most helpful in knowing this. Visitors to the property are also encouraged to be on watch for the salamander and snake species listed as possible additions to the list.

References

Macadam, L. 1999. The Herpetofauna Atlas for the Halton Region. Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club, Georgetown, Ontario.

Webber, J.M. 1983. The Vegetation, Flora and Fauna of Scotsdale Farm/Bennett Estate. A report prepared for the Ontario Heritage Foundation. 61 pp.

Monthly Quiz

Plant Galls – All of these galls were photographed locally. Can you match the names and pictures?



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12

List of Galls presented		
A	Erinaceus Mite on American Beech (<i>Acalitis fagerineum</i>) Lions Valley	
B	Maple Crimson Erineum Mite (<i>Aceria aceris</i>) Speyside	
C	Ash Flower Gall (<i>Aceria fraxiniflora</i>) Cawthra Woods. Mississauga	
D	Oak Hedgehog Gall (<i>Acraspis erinacei</i>) Norval McNabb Park	
E	Oak Apple Gall (<i>Amphibolips confluenta</i>) Mount Nemo	
F	Strawberry Cylindrical Gall (<i>Diastrophus fragariae</i>) Acton	
G	Mossy Rose Gall (<i>Diplolepis rosae</i>) Burlington Canal	
H	Grape Phylloxera (<i>Daktalsphaira vitifoliae</i>) Speyside	
I	Goldenrod Ball Gall (<i>Eurosta solidaginis</i>)	
J	Basswood Leaf Gall (<i>Phytoptus abnormis</i>) Acton	
K	Grape Filbert Gall (<i>Schizomyia coryloides</i>) Cheltenham Rail Trail	
L	Thistle Stem Gall (<i>Uphora cardui</i>) Georgetown Dominion Seedhouse Garden	

Answers:

Picture	Answer
1	E
2	B
3	C
4	K
5	F
6	H
7	D
8	I
9	A
10	G
11	J
12	L

Monthly Memes

When you're freaking out over a rare and beautiful bird but the veteran birder is unimpressed...



Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Application Type: New _____ Renewal _____

Membership Type: Single (\$40) _____ Family (\$50) _____

If "Family Membership", please list additional names:

The membership year is September 1 to August 31. Renewals are due in September. For new members who join after April 1, the fees are applied to the following year's membership.

Participation in our outings involves walking or hiking on various trails. By voluntarily participating, you assume full responsibility for all risks of personal injury. Make sure that any outing you choose to participate in is within your fitness level. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

Please fill out this form and bring it to our next indoor meeting, or mail it along with a cheque payable to Halton/North Peel Naturalist club to:

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club,
P.O. Box 115,
Georgetown, Ontario,

L7G 4T1

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

Box 115, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4T1
Charity Registration number 869778761RR0001
www.hnpnc.com

Board of Directors

President: Margaret Beaudette
Vice President: Ian Jarvie (905) 877-1441
Treasurer: Helen Pettingill
Secretary: Pedro Pereyra
Past President: Yves Scholten

Appointments

Membership: Leslie Bissegger
Newsletter: Imogene MacMoffat (geniemac16@gmail.com)
Webmaster Communications Director: John Beaudette
Roving: William McIlveen
Ontario Nature Rep: Don Scallen (905) 876-6180
Crozier Property Steward: Pedro Pereyra
Hardy Property Steward: TBD

Meeting Time/Date: 7:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month
at
St Alban's Hall, 537 Main Street, Glen Williams, ON L7G 3T1

