The Esquesing

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

www.hnpnc.com

Volume 60, Number 5 May-June 2026

Nuclea, 2026, a female descendant of Calvin perhaps?

Photo Credit: Don Scallen

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President’s Message

What you will read below is Bill and Don's recall of the 60th anniversary event.

They are so well written that I don't feel I should write my own message! I did add a paragraph or two. Why reinvent the wheel?

Thank you to each of the HNP Naturalist Club members who contributed to the success of the celebration. Thank you to all guests from many quarters and organizations for their enthusiastic participation in the event. A special thank you to former presidents of HNP who were able to be there. The list of presidents who were present includes: Jeff Kaiser (1986), Sandy Symmes (1989-1993) and her husband Ric, Bev Whatmough (1994-1996) and her husband Reed, Fiona Reid (2009-2014), Don Scallen (2015-2021), Yves Sholten (2021-2024) and Margaret Beaudette (2024-present).

The first presentation was given by Bill McIlveen. Bill's presentation reviewed the history of the organization as well as how we got to the present state and what the organization might face before we reach the 75 or 100 year mark. He discussed past executives, the various projects that the club has been involved in, and some details about such things as meeting locations, the nature of newsletters over time and the nature of meetings.

The early history of the club has been somewhat obscure. That was because the club initially had a different name, The Georgetown and District Naturalist Club. At some point, the name was changed to the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club. The lack of early information was at least partially solved when an old article appeared in the Georgetown Herald newspaper. It described the initial meeting of local naturalists who met with a representative of the Ontario Federation of Naturalists to discuss the logistics of organizing a naturalists' club. That meeting occurred on April 19, 1966. The first general meeting of the club did not happen until the fall of 1966 but a field event was organized at Glen Williams on June 25 of that year.

While the general interests and activities at meetings have remained similar over 60 years, there has been a large change in technology available for making presentations at meetings and in sharing knowledge via the newsletter.

The second presentation was given by Don Scallen. Don had the honour to extol the glorious virtues of nature in Halton/Peel Regions at the 60th anniversary of the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club. He lauded the Bruce Trail and the opportunities it has offered the naturally inclined for many decades. He spoke of the connectivity of nature – how plants sustain insects which in turn support songbirds, bats and other creatures. The importance of forests in sustaining wildflowers, birds and salamanders was celebrated, but Don also stressed the importance of protecting other habitats such as meadows and wetlands. He showed videos of spawning fish and the annual emergence of millions of mayflies from the Credit River. Turtles,

imperiled by urban expansion and the proliferation of cars on our roads, received attention as well.

Don finished on a positive note, showing images of birds and animals that have appeared in Halton and Peel in recent years after decades-long absences. Once more we have eagles and ravens nesting. Fishers and otters are reclaiming territory here, on the fringe of the biggest city in Canada.

We have extraordinary natural riches in Halton/Peel – an abundance of natural wealth worth protecting and enhancing as we grapple with an uncertain future.

Displays were set out showing some of the projects that the club members have been involved in over the years. Some are projects that were organized by the club while others were organized by other groups but supported by HNPNC members. Some projects were single events while others, such as the Christmas Bird Count have been ongoing for extended periods to over 35 years. At least 63 projects were identified.

Attendees were treated to cake especially decorated for the occasion. The precise attendance at the event isn't known, but the numbers gradually increased over the afternoon. By the end, there were at least 90 people present, possibly as many as 100. Participants appeared to enjoy the opportunity to talk to others present. It was often an opportunity to meet and greet people they had not seen for some time.

Past President Sandy Symmes gave a box of slides to the club. She said that the pictures include such things as the cleanup of the Crozier Tract. Bill has not checked out the contents of that box but it is his intention to scan those slides and get them into electronic format. He still has a scanner that he used for this kind of thing in the past. He states that he needs to retrain himself in the technique but it has been a long time since he last used it. Bill suspects that the last time he used the scanner was using his old office computer. He is on at least his fourth laptop.

I am adding my great appreciation to all who helped organize, set up the displays, cleaned up, and made sure we had a sound system so all could hear. I don't know where the club will be in the future but I hope our members have raised a new generation of nature lovers, or at least influenced younger people to care about the state of the natural world.

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.

Talks

May 12: Costa Rica Trip Photos and Observations by Des MacNeal
June 9: Bird House Checks at Scotsdale Farm

Upcoming Adventure Walks and Events

Butterfly Count
Credit Valley Conservation Authority annual Upper Credit River Watershed Butterfly Count for July 11th, from 9:30-3:00. The group will be meeting at Ken Whillans Resource Management Area and then splitting up into teams and visiting different sites. We've flagged Ken Whillans, Upper Credit CA, and Warwick CA as CVC properties within our count circle that we'd like to survey this year, although there are other possibilities as well if there are enough participants. Interested participants can contact Laura (laura.timms@cvc.ca) for more information.

Odonate Counts
Sat., June 20 (21). Speyside Odonate Count 1: base of St Helene Rd - off Hwy 25 south of 15 Side Rd., Milton, Pedro Pereyra, 905 320-7808, pmpergon@icloud.com

Sat. July 4(5), Hamilton Odonate Count, 9 am. Meet at the Kirkwall Presbyterian church - SW corner of Concession 8 and Kirkwall Road. Brenda Van Ryswyk, brendavanryswyk@gmail.com or Pedro Pereyra, fragenviron@gmail.com

Sat. July 11 (12). Speyside Odonate Count 2: base of St Helene Rd - off Hwy 25 south of 15 Side Rd., Milton, Pedro Pereyra, 905 320-7808, pmpergon@icloud.com

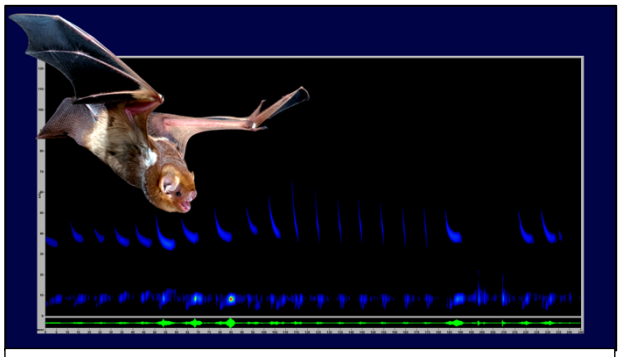
Photo's from the 60th Anniversary

Photos by Pedro Pereyra


Jaquith Slides
Dr. Lancelot Everett Jaquith (1895–1983) was a doctor who practiced medicine in Toronto but spent weekends near Terra Cotta. He and his wife Barbara Jaquith (1902–1988) were avid photographers who particularly liked nature and cultural topics. When Barbara died, their photo collection was donated to Ontario Nature. In turn, the collection was given to HNP in about 1989 to sort and manage.
Those slides relevant to HNP activities were kept and many were converted to electronic pictures. Some were passed on to relevant agencies.

How Moths Foil Bats

Article by Don Scallan



Eastern Red Bat Echolocation Graphic, Brock Fenton

Most bats can echolocate. Simplified, this means voicing “clicks”, generally beyond the range of human hearing, that bounce off objects and return detailed information to a bat’s oversized ears. Bats use this auditory feedback to navigate in the darkness and, importantly, to identify and pursue prey.

Moths are high on the list of desired prey items for bats. Many moths are large and nutritious, flying filet mignon for discriminating bat gourmands. However, there is a problem. The moths, unsurprisingly, don’t want to be on the bats’ menu and they have evolved a suite of ingenious countermeasures to foil attacks.

Pandorus Sphinx, aka Hawkmoth

Moths able to hear the clicks (not all moths have ears!) that bats emit, can simply drop to the ground and shelter in place. But several other strategies to avoid being eaten are far more creative.

Tiger moth species – several of which fly in our area – speak to bats with clicks of their own, telling the bats that they taste awful.

Hawk moths, aka sphinx moths, are among the most common large moths inhabiting this region. Like tiger moths, these fast-flying nectar feeders also produce clicks. But those clicks don’t tell bats that the moths are unpalatable. Instead, they “jam” the echolocation powers of the pursuing bats.

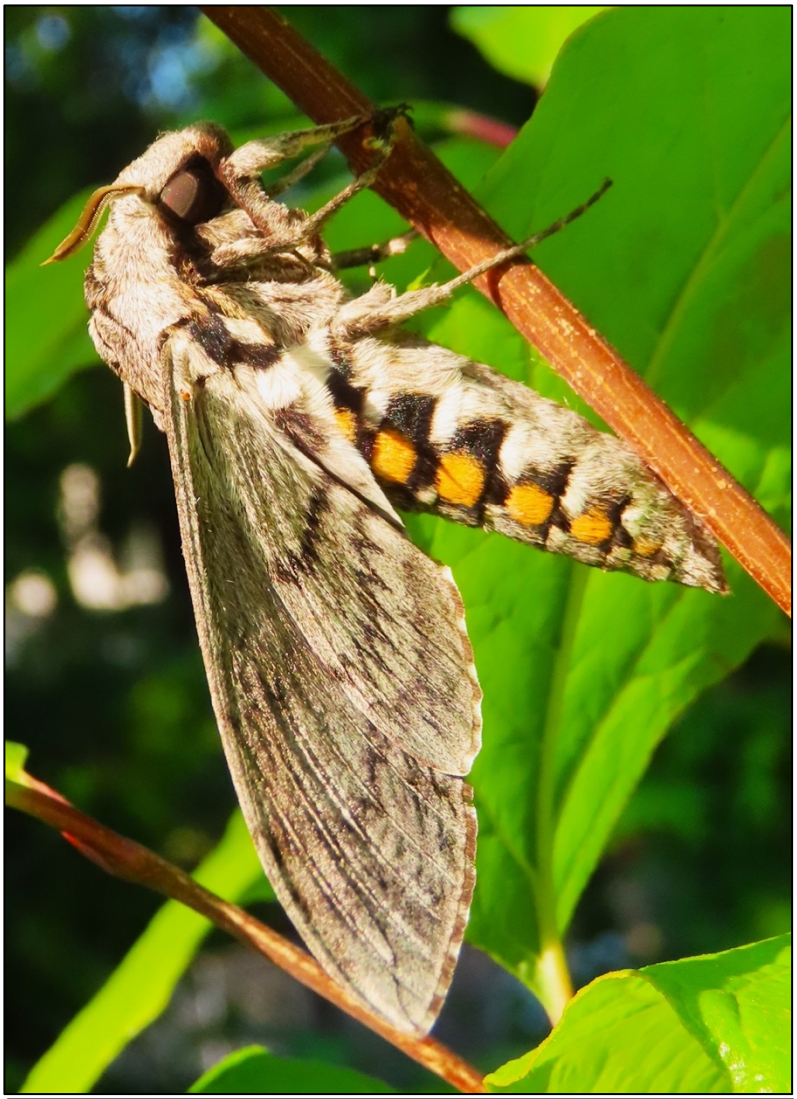
Virgin Tiger Moth

Some of our impressively large moths don’t have ears and can’t hear approaching bats. No matter. Luna moths have evolved long twisted “tails” on their lower wings that somehow appeal to hunting bats, luring them away from the moths’ heads and abdomens. The bats get mouthfuls of expendable “tails” leaving the vital parts of the lunas intact.

Other earless moths like cecropias and polyphemus have plush wings that absorb bat clicks and cloak their presence.

Bats aren't about to go hungry. They don't get fooled all the time. But the marvelous anti-bat strategies of moths work well enough to ensure that enough moths survive to reproduce. And they also remind us that after dark, fascinating life and death gambits unfold in our yards and natural spaces.

This article first appeared here:
https://www.inthehills.ca/2026/03/echo-evasion-how-moths-outsmart-hungry-bats/



Five Spotted Hawkmoth side view

American Chestnut In The Credit River Drainage Basin

W.D. McIlveen

In 2014, I undertook a survey to document the distribution of American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) within the Credit River catchment area. The information was assembled into a complete report. Subsequently, it was realized that the information was not easily available to the Naturalist Club members so a summary of that data is provided here.

American Chestnut was once the dominant tree species within the extensive forests of Eastern North America. The role of the species was severely reduced when the Chestnut Blight became established in North America. The range of the Chestnut forest included the Carolinian zone in Ontario but very few trees were growing naturally within the Region of Peel and Credit River drainage area. Peel represents the natural limit for the species.

The history of the American Chestnut will forever be entwined with the ravages of the Chestnut Blight caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica* (Synonym = *Endothia parasitica*. In 1904, the fungus was found to be attacking Chestnut trees in New York City. From there, the disease spread throughout the entire range of the Chestnut, entering Ontario via Niagara Falls in the early 1920s. The disease spread throughout Ontario and destroyed almost all stands of the host.

Fig. 1. Chestnut Blight Canker, Windsor, 2009

Fig. 2. Chestnut Blight Canker, Turkey Point, 1990

Infected trees were often killed outright, but since the fungus does not infect the root system, sprouts from the roots can become established. It may take some time but the sprouts usually also become infected. Some sprouts can sometimes grow large enough to produce seed.

Various control programs have been undertaken by the American Chestnut Council and the Canadian Chestnut Council. They have been working to develop disease-resistant trees. So far, none have been found but some trees with tolerance have been located though not with the right degree of resistance. Some of these trees are likely the source of the trees noted in this report. With a couple of uncertain exceptions, the trees observed were all planted.

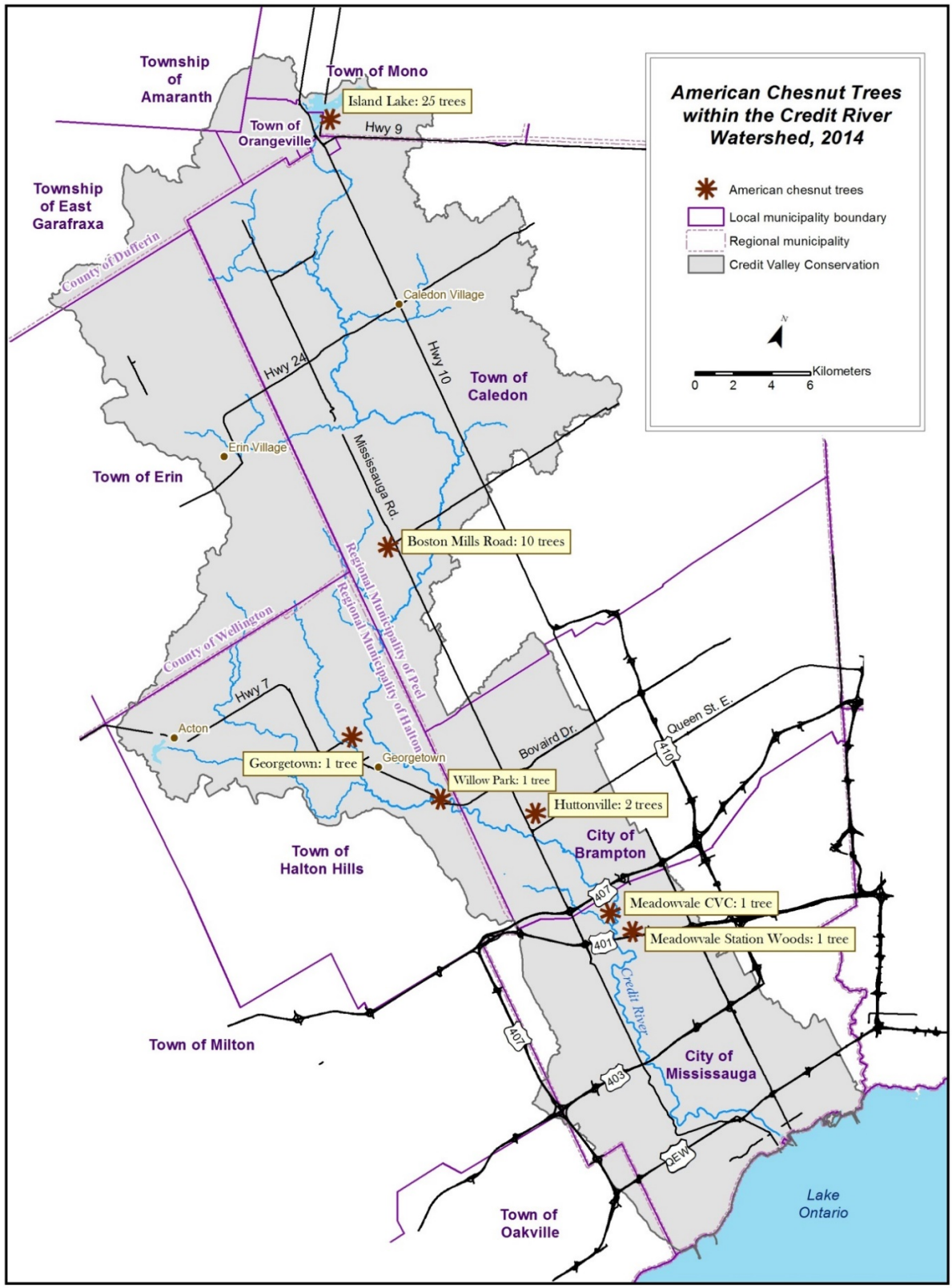
Over time, assorted bits of information about existing Chestnuts were acquired from a variety of sources including personal contacts, through individual land owners, personal discovery and communication with Credit Valley Conservation staff. All known locations were examined in late summer, 2014. The locations of each tree were documented by GPS, the DBH (diameter at breast height) was measured for all major stems, and notes were made on the general condition of the tree along with a record of the presence of fruit.

In total, forty one American Chestnut trees were found at seven sites spread through the Credit River drainage area (Map 1). The history of the individual trees evaluated is partly known. In most cases, it is suspected that the trees came to be in their various locations through some sort of planting program. Information regarding the locations and state of trees is provided in Table 1.

Although the population of American Chestnut within the study area is smaller than might be hoped for, it is still much greater than might have been presumed before the survey started. The remaining trees are obviously still susceptible to the Chestnut Blight and remaining trees will be damaged over time. Perhaps some disease-resistant strains of the Chestnut can still be found and planted and some healthy stands of the tree can be established.

Table 1. Summary of Chestnut Trees Found in the Credit River Basin

Location	No. Trees	Comment
Island Lake Conservation Area	25	All planted. Some on original nut farm. Various ages. Reasonable health but cankers present. Some producing fruit
Boston Mills Road	10	One known tree removed, possible damage in ice storm. All small and planted
Georgetown	1	Planted mid-1990s, fruiting
Norval	1	Planted in Willow Park, Severe blight
Huttonville	2	Multi-stemmed, at least 30 years old, fruiting. Origin of trees is uncertain. Site unlikely to be candidate for planting by original land owners
Meadowvale CVC	1	Old planting site at CVC head office. Lineage of tree is uncertain
Meadowvale Station Woods	1	Dead, mostly blackened remains of tree found in 2002



Map 1. Distribution of American Chestnut trees inventoried within the Credit River catchment area

What's in a name?

One answer is respect, empathy and connection.

The remarkable Jane Goodall knew this and graced all the chimps she studied at Gombe with names. For this she was initially ridiculed for the sin of "anthropomorphism" which attributes human traits to non-human animals.

Naming the chimps, however, allowed her and us to see them as the distinct individuals they were and, importantly, to form stronger emotional bonds with them. Among the chimps Goodall named were a prominent matriarch named Flo and her children: Figan, Faben, Freud, Fifi, Flint and Frodo.

I follow Goodall's lead in naming some of my favourite wild animals. There is Olive Oil, my green frog friend, who rose from the depths of my backyard pond on March 31 after hibernating under the ice. I fed her a fat dew worm – her first meal in five months.

Calvin

And then there is Calvin who I've celebrated in this space before. Calvin is a piebald, (leucistic) spotted salamander. He's a lovely animal and wonderfully unique. Calvin was first photographed at his pond in 2010. This year he appeared at midnight on March 31, looking robust and healthy. Allowing three years to reach maturity before his appearance in 2010, he is now at least 19 years old! Calvin was initially tagged as piebald salamander "C" – the third piebald salamander found at his pond. As he reappeared year after year though, I knew I had to dignify him with a name. Doing so has helped him become an amphibian celebrity. A recent Facebook post celebrating his 2026 appearance has racked up over 3200 hits thus far with many respondents clearly moved by his story.

Edwards, 2023. Calvins descendant perhaps?

Other piebald salamanders have been recorded in recent years including Ollie, Edward, Jason and Hermoine. Fancifully, I like to imagine that some may be Calvin's offspring. Like Goodall's Flo, perhaps Calvin has produced a robust line of descendants.

Regardless, naming wild animals elicits a depth of caring that nourishes the human desire for connection. It also inspires concern for the welfare of animals and the habitats they depend on.

This story originally appeared here:
https://www.inthehills.ca/2026/04/whats-in-a-name/

Christmas Count Data Revealing Population Trends Among House Finches

W.D. McIlveen

The House Finch is native to western North America though it spread naturally into British Columbia which made it a native species for Canada. The story of its occurrence eastern North America is a bit more complex. The species was not native to eastern North America. The story goes that certain pet dealers in New York were selling caged House Finches in 1940 as "Hollywood Finches". Worried that they would be charged by wildlife officers with illegal possession of a native species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, they decided to simply release the birds. The release was also illegal but the dealers who did so could not be caught with the birds in their possession.

The released birds found the City of New York to be quite acceptable habitat and they prospered and reproduced. The offspring spread in all directions and the population increased to such a degree that the eastern group and the western group have met to now range coast to coast across North America. Not surprisingly, some of the eastern group entered Canada. The species entered Ontario in 1970 when the first report was a sighting in Prince Edward County in 1972. Breeding in Ontario was not confirmed until 1978 when a nest was reported from Niagara-on-the-Lake.

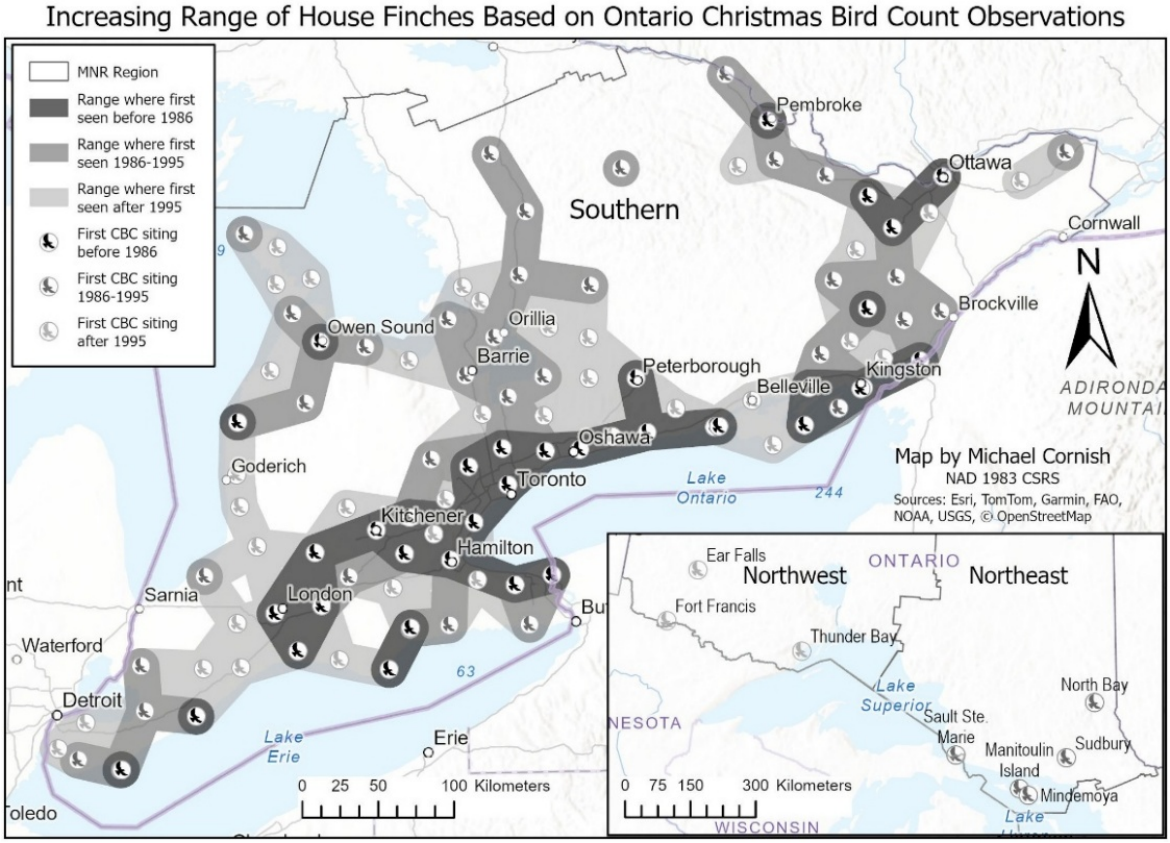


Fig 1. Mapping of the earliest House Finch observations illustrates range expansion through the late 1900s/early 2000s..

Fig. 1 illustrates the distribution of House Finches within three time periods. Early records generally show that they were mainly present in an area extending from London to Toronto and across the north shore of Lake Ontario. In later years, their range expanded further north across much of Southern Ontario.

By the end of the first Breeding Bird Atlas, the species had been reported from 187 atlas squares [Kozlovic]. The majority of these sites were located not far from the shores of Lake Erie and Ontario. By the time that the second Breeding Bird Atlas was completed, the number of Atlas squares with House Finches present had jumped to 930 squares [Leckie]. The majority of these were located south of the Canadian Shield.

The dramatic spread of the House Finch is not unidirectional towards larger populations. Rather, there is a notable complication factor in the form of disease. Two separate microbial diseases have been identified. The principal agent is *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* which occurs among chickens and other domestic fowl. It also attacks wild finches. It causes severe conjunctivitis and swollen eyes with runny or crusty discharges. There is no real cure for affected birds. While some infected birds recover, many die from starvation, exposure, or predation. The disease started on the east coast area at Washington in about 1994 and spread thought the eastern Finch population for at least the next four years. A similar spread of the disease occurred in the western population about ten years later. The second disease is *Plasmodium relictum* known as Avian Malaria. Less is known about that disease among finches than among domestic fowl. Generally, though, it is a common mosquito-transmitted blood protozoan of wild birds. The disease has variable effects on development, mortality, and effects on body organs.

The population trend for House Finches in Ontario as determined from Christmas Bird Count data are revealed in Figure 2. After first entering Ontario in 1972, the numbers increased steadily with time up until 1994. After that date, the House Finch population has decreased steadily by about 80%. Most of that decline has been attributed to the *Mycoplasma* epidemic. Despite the decline in numbers, the species has been extending its geographic range in Ontario. The story of the House Finch is one of a typical invasive species whose population has encountered a factor that imposes a constraint against unlimited spread.

References

Kozlovic, D.R.. 1987. House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*). Pp. 492-493. in M.D. Cadman, P.F.J. Eagles, and F.M. Helleiner (eds.). Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario. University of Waterloo Press, Waterloo, Ontario. 617 pp.

Leckie, S. 2007. House Finch. pp. 612-613 in: Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005. Cadman, M.D., D.A. Sutherland, G.G. Beck, D. Lepage and A.R. Couturier, Eds. Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Ontario Nature, Toronto, Ontario.

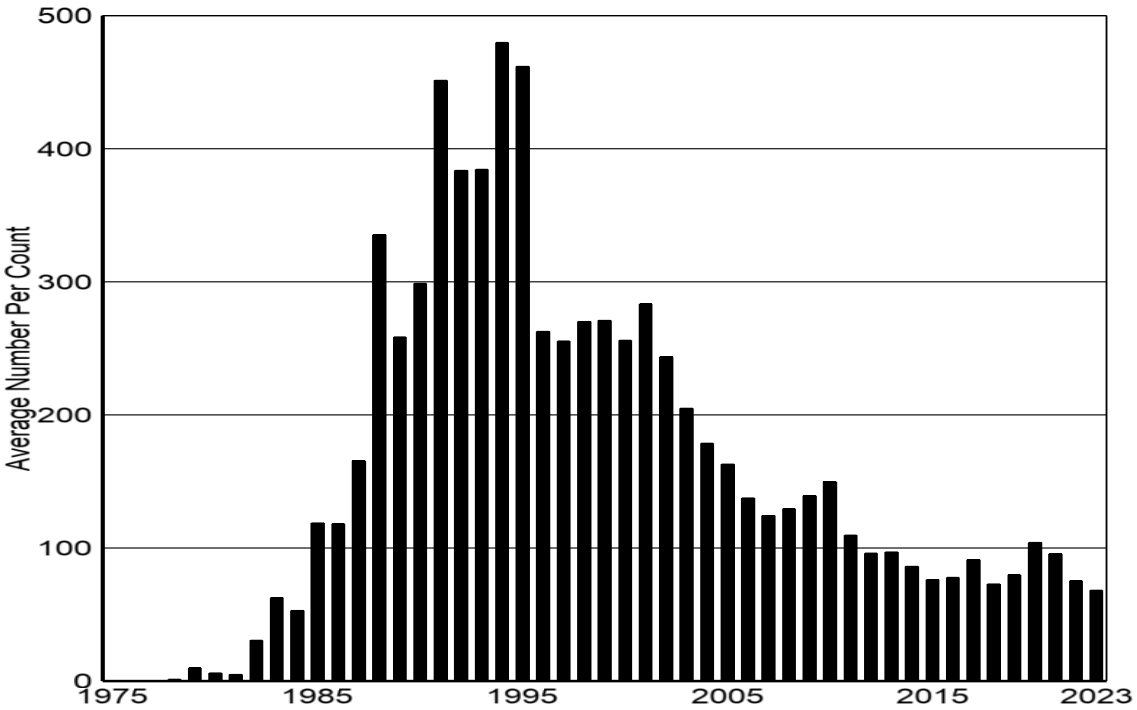


Fig. 2. Mean number of House Finches per Christmas Count in Ontario


House Finches, Milton, March 29, 2004

Quiz - Can you name the species of herbaceous plant producing these fruits?

1

2

3

4

5

6

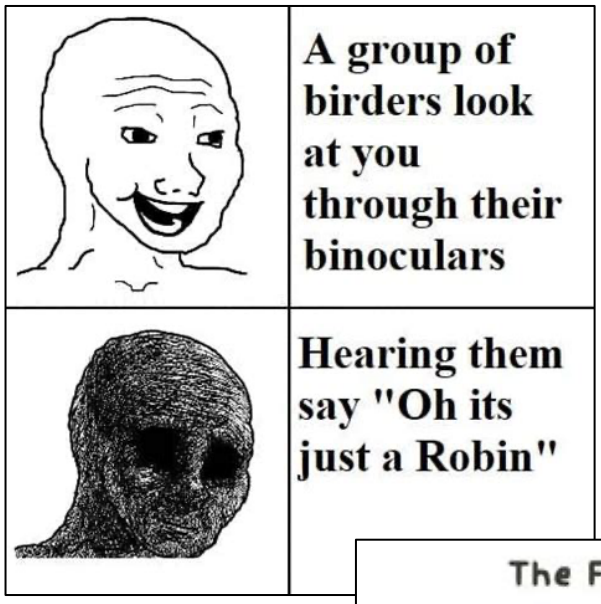
7

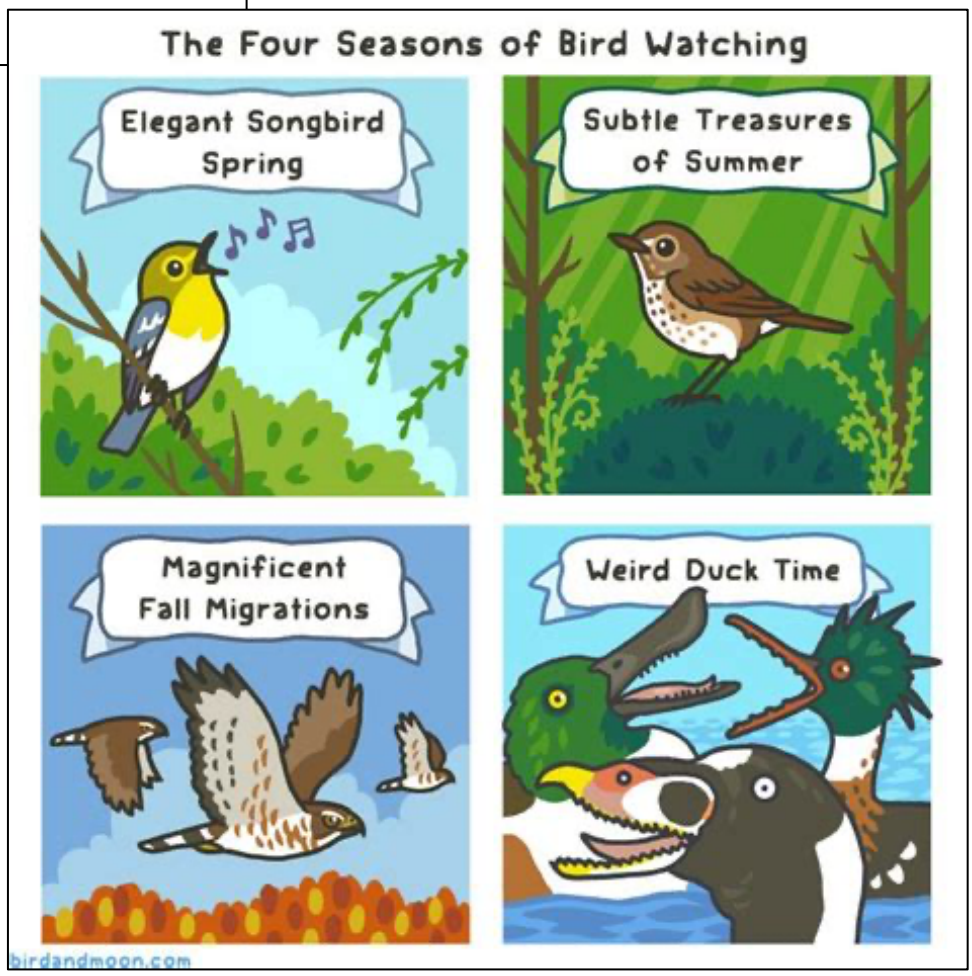
8

9

1 - Velvet-leaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*) Dutton
2 - Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) Windsor
3 - Wild Blue Indigo (*Baptisia australis*) Guelph Arboretum
4 - Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) Speyside
5 - Blue Cohosh fruit (*Caulophyllum giganteum*) Speyside
6 - Ginseng (*Panax quinquifolius*) Speyside
7 - Indian Strawberry (*Duchesnia indica*) Rattray
8 - Cockle-bur (*Xanthium strumarium*) Willow Park. Norval
9 - Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) Scotch Block Reservoir, Speyside

Monthly Memes





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.

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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