The Esquesing

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 61, Number 2

Nov - Dec 2026



A Young Blanding's turtle

Photo Credit: Don Scallen

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President's Message

The month of November has begun with fabulous warm temperatures and sunshine.

It was perfect weather to go to Scotsdale to clean out the bird boxes. This outing was led by club member Kim Dobson.

We also enjoyed great conditions a week earlier when we went to clear buckthorn from an area in Cedarvale Park, under the direction of Credit Valley Conservation staff. Quite a good-sized group showed up to do this, many of whom were high school students looking for community service hours. With the use of extractigator, spades, pruning shears and muscle, we made significant inroads in the area. If only I could get volunteers to remove the buckthorn from my yard! Following the work, we were invited to use the buckthorn to make a witch's broom for Hallowe'en decor. Unfortunately, no children came to my house to "trick or treat", therefore, there were no admirers of said work.

Members who didn't attend the CVC event had the opportunity to go birding in Oakville at Sedgewick Forest Park and Shoreacres/Paletta Park and then Streetsville Memorial Park to view the salmon run. This was a backup plan in case the trip to Hawk Cliff couldn't happen. As it turns out, the conditions on the planned date weren't suitable for seeing the raptor mingration so the backup plan was appreciated.

Our speaker in November is Adam Brylowski. He is the Director of Conservation and Trail at the Bruce Trail Conservancy. He will be talking about the Bruce Trail, a very favourite and popular trail in Ontario. No doubt many of our members have spent a lot of time walking the Bruce Trail, in search of peace and quiet from their busy lives and the political noise coming from south of the border.

Our December meeting will be a pot luck event like in past years. Members will be invited to share some of their pictures. More details will be shared closer to the December 8 date. As usual, we will participate in the Christmas Bird Count on December 27. Please make sure you put these dates on your calendar.

Of probable interest to our members is a film coming to the John Elliott theatre on November 18 at 7:00 pm. It is about Robert Bateman and Bristol Foster who are extraordinary champions for Mother Earth. The film is travelling across Canada and is receiving acclaim.

Yours in nature,
Margaret Beaudette

Complete HNPNC Program 2026-2027

September 8 Grant Linney - Outdoor Magic: The Power of Nature Connection
Grant Linney has been an outdoor and environmental educator for a career that spans 6 decades. Now retired, his last full-time teaching position for 8 years was as Senior Teacher at the Upper Canada College Norval Outdoor School. He lived in Georgetown for 16 years. Since retiring in 2009, Grant has delivered more than 1250 presentations on climate change to a wide variety of audiences. He has also written a book entitled Outdoor Magic: The Power of Nature Connection in which he recounts both his personal and teaching experiences in the outdoors.

For September 8th, Grant will draw on stories and images from his book as well as making the connection between regular, positive experiences in the outdoors and developing the spark and drive to tackle the existential issue of climate change. The book will be available for sale ($20 for paperback; $30 for hard cover).

October 13 - Tunde Otto - Willow Park Ecological Centre

November 10 - Adam Brylowski - Bruce Trail

December 8 - Member Slide Shows and Pot Luck

January 12, 2027 - Bill McIlveen - Algae

February 9, 2027 - Catherine Edwards - Town of Halton Hills Environmental Programs

March 9, 2027 - Elizabeth Szekeres - The Heart of the Arctic: Nunavik and South Baffin Island

April 13, 2027- Brenna Bartley - The Effects of Climate Change on the Maple Syrup Industry

May 11, 2027- Gloria Hildebrandt & Mike Davis - Gloria will give a summary of her book The Gift of Land: Living with Nature, her memoir about growing up on a piece of land and having it registered as a nature reserve with the Government of Canada. She will also talk about the book Views & Vistas about the whole Niagara Escarpment and their nature park. Mike will present some of his photos. Their books will be available to purchase.

Saturday, May 15, 2027 - Visit to Gloria and Mike's Nature Park

June 8, 2027 - Bird Box Monitoring @ Scotsdale Farm

June ??, 2027 - Bird Box Monitoring@ Forks of the Credit Provincial Park

Turtle babies – the “cute” factor

Article by Don Scallen



Northern Map Turtle

This year I had the opportunity to release hatchling turtles at Long Point on Lake Erie. The cuteness factor of these tiny imps is off the charts. Everyone in the release party gushed when the organizer lifted the lids on their containers.

Scientists have long been intrigued by the qualities that define cuteness in animals. Why do we find some creatures “cute” and not others? Some cuteness triggers include big eyes, rounded bodies, non-threatening behaviours, and perceptions of vulnerability.

Baby turtles have these qualities in spades, along with outsized heads and small bodies, giving them a “bobblehead” look. They are tiny, inoffensive and basically defenseless in a dangerous world. We are drawn to help.

Why do these traits pull at our heartstrings? Almost certainly because the same features are found in our own babies – features ensuring we devote time, energy and love to their survival.

Interestingly, caring in response to “cuteness” is usually reserved for our fellow mammals, although baby birds – awkward, big-eyed, and often comically adorned with fuzzy feathers – also evoke ohhs and ahhs. Turtles, however, are reptiles and other reptiles – think snakes and crocodilians – usually don’t register on the “cuteness” scale.

The importance of cuteness is far from trivial. Just as the cuteness of our babies focuses our attention on them, the cuteness of baby turtles encourages us to pay heed to them. As our modern world pushes many turtles towards the brink through the dual threats of habitat loss and road mortality, this attention is critical.

I find it remarkable that great apes like you and me have evolved to perceive cuteness in other species and respond with care, and even love. Being cute isn’t always a necessary prompt for us to do the right thing, but it certainly doesn’t hurt.

This story first appeared at https://www.inthehills.ca/2026/09/turtle-babies-the-cute-factor/

Fungi Recorded at Scotsdale Farm

W.D. McIlveen

The biological inventory of the Scotsdale Farm completed by Webber in 1983 did not extend to a number of biological groups including insects, butterflies, fungi and other groups. This is not an oversight as her report did cover the major biota seen in that year. In more-recent times, this author has made incidental notes and taken photographs of a number of the lesser-studied groups during visits to the Scotsdale property. The present account deals with the fungi and the slime molds noted.

The records available include 80 species of fungi which are comprised of 25 Ascomycetes and 55 Basidiomycetes. This but a tiny fraction of the potential or likely species to be expected on the property. Despite being a limited list, it does provide a basis for comparison for anyone so inclined to inventory the fungi present on the property.

Ascomycetes



Choke of Grass (*Epichloe typhina*), 2009



Beech Bark Disease (*Neonectria faginata*), 2015

The Ascomycetes appear mostly in close connection with a plant host where they form leaf spots, powdery mildew, and cankers. Two of these are notable because they represent invasive plant diseases. One is the Beech Bark Disease (*Neonectria faginata*). It is actually an insect-fungus complex created by the combination of a non-native insect, the beech scale (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*), coupled with the *Neonectria* fungus. It has been spreading widely and is affecting

many American Beech trees. It reportedly arrived in Nova Scotia in the 1890s and has been spreading ever since. The other is Butternut Canker which is caused by a fungus with a very long name (*Ophiognomonia clavigignenti-juglandacearum*). It has spread widely among Butternut trees since it was first confirmed in Ontario in 1991. It has been causing widespread damage to Butternut stands and individual trees since it arrived.

Some Ascomycetes form more-substantial bodies including cup shapes (i.e. *Peziza*) and morels (i.e. *Morchella*) which would align with general mushroom forms. A number of species such as *Rhytisma*, *Apiosporina*, and *Epichloë* as well as Powdery Mildews (*Erysiphe* sp.) produce bodies that are visible on the surface of their hosts.

Ascomycete fungi observed at Scotsdale Farm	
Scientific Name	**Common Name**
Apiosporina morbosa	Black Knot
Bisporella citrina	Lemon Drops
Botryosphaeria dothidea	Goldenrod Blister Gall
Diplocarpon rosae	Black Spot of Multiflora Rose
Epichloë typhina	Choke
Erysiphe cichoracearum	Powdery Mildew
Erysiphe cichoracearum f. lactucae	Powdery Mildew of Lettuce
Erysiphe graminis	Powdery Mildew of Cereals
Erysiphe polygoni	Powdery Mildew of Red Clover
Eutypella parasitica	Eutypella Maple Canker
Gloeosporium ulmeum	Elm Leaf Spot
Hydropisphaera peziza	Coral Spot Fungus
Kretzschmaria deusta	Carbon Cushion
Leucostoma kunzei	Cytospora Canker
Morchella esculenta	Yellow Morel
Mycosphaerella tussilaginis	Leaf Spot of Colt's-foot
Neonectria coccinea	Neonectria coccinea
Neonectria faginata	Beech Bark Disease
Ophiognomonia clavigignenti-juglandacearum	Butternut Canker
Peziza vesiculosa	Bladder Cup
Phyllachora pomigena	Sooty Blotch
Rhytisma acerinum	Tar Spot of Maple
Rhytisma punctatum	Speckled Tar Spot of Maple
Sarcoscypha coccinea	Scarlet Cup
Sawadaea tulasnei	Powdery Mildew of Norway Maple

Basidiomycetes

Among fungi, Basidiomycetes mostly have a more typical mushroom form and include gilled mushrooms, puffballs, corals as well as rust diseases. Of the 55 Basidiomycetes recorded, all but one is naturally-occurring. The exception is *Puccinia punctiformis*. Along with insect species with a similar role, it was purposely introduced to help control the invasive Canada Thistle.

Basidiomycete fungi observed at Scotsdale Farm	
Scientific Name	**Common Name**
Ascotremella faginea	Beech Jelly
Boletus pallidus	Pale Bolete
Calocera cornea	Clublike Tuning Fork
Calvatia gigantea	Giant Puffball
Clavaria fragilis	White Worm Coral
Clavulinopsis corniculata	Meadow Coral
Clavulinopsis laeticolor	Handsome Club
Collybia tuberosa	Tuberous Collybia
Dacrymyces palmatus	Orange Jelly
Dacryopinax spathularia	Fan-shaped Jelly Fungus
Fomes fomentarius	Tinder Polypore
Ganoderma lipsiense	Artist's Conk
Geastrum triplex	Collared Earthstar
Gloeophyllum sepiarium	Yellow-red Gill Polypore
Gymnopilus luteofolius	Gymnopilus luteofolius
Hericium americanum	Comb Tooth
Hygrocybe miniata	Fading Scarlet Waxy Cap
Irpex lacteus	Milk-white Toothed Polypore
Ischnoderma benzoinum	Late Fall Polypore
Lentinellus ursinus	Bear Lentinus
Lepiota cristata	Malodorous Lepiota
Lycoperdon nigrescens	Black Puffball
Lycoperdon perlatum	Gem-studded Puffball
Lycoperdon pyriforme	Pear-shaped Puffball
Mycena leaiana	Golden Fairy Helmet
Panellus stipticus	Luminescent Panellus
Phlebia radiata	Radiating Phlebia
Phragmidium rubi-idaei	Rust of Raspberry
Phyllotopsis nidulans	Orange Mock Oyster
Piptoporus betulinus	Birch Polypore
Plicaturopsis crispa	Crimped Gill
Pluteus cervinus	Fawn Mushroom
Polyporus alveolaris	Hexagonal-pored Polypore
Polyporus badius	Black-footed Polypore
Polyporus brumalis	Winter Polypore
Polyporus squamosus	Dryad's Saddle
Polyporus tsugae	Hemlock Varnish Shelf
Puccinia coronata	Crown Rust
Puccinia podophylli	Rust Disease of Mayapple
Puccinia punctiformis	Rust Disease of Canada Thistle

Basidiomycete fungi observed at Scotsdale Farm	
Scientific Name	**Common Name**
Puccinia solidaginis	Rust Disease of Goldenrod
Pycnoporus cinnabarinus	Cinnabar Bracket
Ramaria stricta	Upright Coral Fungus
Schizophyllum commune	Common Split Gill
Scleroderma bovista	Potato Earthball
Scleroderma citrinum	Common Earthball
Taphrina pruni	Plum Pockets
Thelephora caryophyllea	Carnation Ground Fan
Trametes hirsuta	False Turkey Tail
Trametes pubescens	False Turkey Tail
Trametes versicolor	Turkey-tail
Tremella concrescens	Sedge Jelly
Trichaptum abietinum	Violet Toothed Polypore
Trichaptum biforme	Violet Toothed Polypore
Xeromphalina caulicinalis	Fuzzy Foot



Gymnopilus luteofolius



Hemlock Varnish Shelf (*Polyporus tsugae*)



Potato Earthball (*Scleroderma bovista*),



Rust of Raspberry (*Phragmidium rubus-idaei)*.

Slime Molds

We have recorded the presence of two species of Myxomycetes or slime molds at Scotsdale. The number of species on the property, particularly within the Myxomycota group, is certain to be

much greater. The Myxomycetes are not true fungi but may be more related to animal than plant life. There are two general types. One type is the Myxomycota which are the true (plasmodial) slime molds and the other group is Acrasiomycota which are the cellular slime molds.



Coral Slime (*Ceratiomyxa fruticulose)*



Chocolate Tube Slime Mold (*Stemonitis splendens*)

Myxomycota exist as a mass of protoplasm without any cell walls. The mass moves about exhibiting a creeping movement like a giant amoeba. When they reach the reproductive state, they produce many spores with definite cell walls. Our known example here is *Stemonitis*.

Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa is a species within the Acrasiomycota group. It has a world-wide distribution. Its vegetative (active, growing, feeding) phase consists of a multinucleate amoeboid mass plasmodium. The plasmodium often appears as white frost-like growth or thin watery layers on wood. Sporangia bud from the plasmodium and develop spores that divide before releasing flagellated zoospores. After release, the zoospores pair off, undergo plasmogamy, and form zygotes that go on form a new plasmodia.

Four local sparrows

Sparrows have an image problem. Non-birders pay little heed to these small, brown birds. Even many birders largely ignore them, and label them dismissively as LBJ's (little brown jobs). Pity.

If nothing else, sparrows contribute greatly to summer's soundtrack with their emotive songs. Unless you have compromised hearing, you've been serenaded by these birds. I'll introduce four species in this story.

The most common of the four are song sparrows. These hardy birds rival American robins as harbingers of spring. Song sparrows return to our fields and hedgerows in late winter and then, as befits their name, sing non-stop.

Less common are vesper sparrows, birds I've always had some difficulty finding here, though a dedicated search will turn them up. "Vesper" means "evening song", but vesper sparrows will sing throughout the day. They are drawn to cropland, where they nest on the ground. The males though, usually sing from the tops of trees and utility poles.



Vesper Sparrow



Song Sparrow

It's a good bet that many of us don't know savannah sparrows. However, this is the species we likely hear more than any other as we walk, cycle or drive through open countryside. Males sing incessantly from fence posts spring to summer. Like the other sparrows they are subtly beautiful - worth a good look through a pair of binoculars.

The fourth sparrow in this piece differs from the others because of its weak voice. In fact, they are likely named for their insect-like calls. These tiny sparrows, sing their buzzy notes in dry short grass habitat, often near savannah sparrows. Even with good hearing, their voices are easy to miss. A few nest at Forks of the Credit Provincial Park each year, where grassland habitat is being preserved.



Grasshopper Sparrow



Savannah Sparrow

Our sparrows deserve more notice. They are prominent actors in the ecology of our fields and meadows, and they contribute to the pastoral soundscape that defines our countryside in spring and summer.

Sparrow songs.

Curious about the songs of these sparrows? Check these sources.

(Scroll down to find “songs” not “calls”)

song sparrow: https://xeno-canto.org/explore?query=song%20sparrow

vesper sparrow: https://xeno-canto.org/explore?query=vesper%20sparrow

savannah sparrow: https://xeno-canto.org/species/passerculus-sandwichensis

grasshopper sparrow: https://xeno-canto.org/explore?query=grasshopper%20sparrow

This story first appeared in https://www.inthehills.ca/2026/10/natures-sweetest-soundtrack/

A Note On Bird-friendly Cities

W.D. McIlveen

The recent designation of Caledon as a bird-friendly city was noted by Yves Scholten who passed along the information to the Naturalist Club. That prompted me to look further into this and to check on what places have already been honoured. The information available led to this note.

There is concern about birds whose populations have generally dropped by 25% over the last 50 years. That pattern raised the concern of Nature Canada. As a result, they devised a plan to reverse the pattern by honouring cities that have processes in place to increase the number of local birds. They devised a system for reviewing the actions of those cities and recognizing them as being bird-friendly when they undertake suitable measures. The needed measures include such things as mitigation of threats to birds, monitoring and observation and local protections for birds.

The local municipalities that have been designated as bird-friendly include the following places.

Municipality	First Recognition	Second Assessment
Hamilton	Feb 26, 2022	May 22, 2024
Burlington	Feb 28, 2022	May 22, 2024
Halton Hills	Apr 26, 2022	(Sept 27, 2024)
Guelph	Aug 11, 2022	(Sept 27, 2024)
Caledon	May 5, 2026	

We still have a few local municipalities that could earn the designation. That list includes Milton, Oakville and Mississauga. Each of them already has notable features that would support their applications. Designation of a city as bird-friendly takes a fairly extensive process that needs to meet mandatory criteria. The process requires a local birder team, measures to reduce threats, habitat protection and restoration, and commitment to outreach and education.

Any application by the remaining municipalities could benefit from an association with naturalist club members. That would include bird-monitoring activities and assistance with educating the public with lectures or field visits as well as providing appropriate statistics.

Information on the requirements needed for designation can be found by a simple internet search of the Nature Canada website and following the Bird-friendly sites. A map marking the locations of designated cities is available.

Quiz - Can you name the species of small bird?

Photo credit to Imogene MacMoffat



1



2



3



4



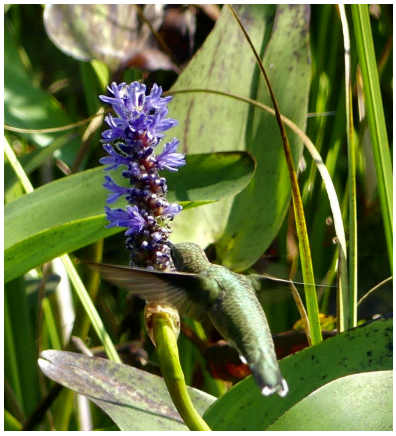
5



6



7



8



9

1. Palm Warbler
2. Prothonotary Warbler
3. Yellow Rumped Warbler
4. Ruby Crowned Kinglet
5. Yellow Warbler
6. Veery
7. House Wren
8. Ruby Throated Hummingbird
9. Red-breasted Nuthatch

Monthly Memes

when you used to be a savage but find peace and start vibin with nature



Them: What do you like to do for fun?

Me: Oh, just hang with friends and stuff.

Me and My Friends:



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.

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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

