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Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 48, Number 1

September-October 2013

Club Activities

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

September 10, Catherine Kavassalis, fern aficionado; Ferns are ancient, lovely and, I think it's fair to say, underappreciated. Fern expert Catherine Kavassalis will introduce us to their fascinating evolution and diversity, with a particular focus on our native species. Catherine is a scientist, an educator and is passionate about conservation.

October 8, Lesley Sampson of Coyote Watch Canada; Coyote Watch Canada advocates on behalf of these controversial canines. Lesley Sampson celebrates the coyote and seeks to defuse the hysteria that can arise from coyote-human interactions. Sampson has worked with several southern Ontario communities to develop coyote management plans that emphasize respectful co-existence.

November 12, Fiona Reid and life in the night garden; Our president Fiona Reid is perhaps best known as a mammal expert and the author of the Peterson's Field Guide to the Mammals. Lately however, Fiona has become obsessed by nocturnal visitors to her garden, especially Lepidoptera. Eschewing sleep she prowls her flowerbeds after dusk, finding and photographing a multitude of moths, spiders, ambush bugs and more.

December 10, Our annual pot luck dinner; Bring your sumptuous offerings to St. Alban's at **6:30** pm. Note time change. As usual, after the feast members will be invited to share their nature images. Bring a memory stick or disk with no more than ten pics please.

Tuesday January 14, 2014; T.B.A.

February 11, (Date may change) Paloma Plant Program Coordinator, Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP); For years FLAP, headquartered in Toronto, has been battling the carnage that results when migratory birds strike office windows. In 2012 FLAP found 3734 birds of over 90 species felled by collisions with buildings in Toronto. Most were dead but a significant minority was found alive and later released. These totals, of course, represent the tip of the iceberg. Many millions of migrants die each year in cities across North America. FLAP does more than simply recover downed birds. It has also been involved in court cases involving businesses that fail to take measures to protect migratory birds. Ms. Plant will give us an overview of the actions FLAP engages

in to rescue birds and of the initiatives FLAP is involved in to mitigate the terrible toll of window collisions.

March 11, Sheila Colla, Bumblebee identification and conservation; Sheila Colla Ph.D. is a project coordinator for Wildlife Preservation Canada. Her Ph.D. research at York University focused on the conservation and ecology of bumblebees in Eastern North America. Her research has been featured on Quirks and Quarks, the Discovery Channel and the Nature of Things. Sheila will help us identify native bumblebees and, more critically, inspire us to get involved in their conservation.

President's Message

Hello and welcome back,

After a rather cool summer it already feels like Fall is here, and with it comes a new season of club meetings and events. We have a great program already in place for the next few months, and I look forward to seeing you all at our indoor meetings.

It is a great time of year to get outside and enjoy the colorful goldenrods, asters and other late blooming wildflowers, and start to look out for fall migrants heading south. We are always looking for new leaders for outdoor walks, so don't be shy, let us know if you have a favorite place you would like to show other club members.

*Best wishes,
Fiona*

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

Executive

President: Fiona Reid (905) 693-9719
Past President Andrew Kellman (905) 681-3701
Vice President: Don Scallen (905) 877-2876
Secretary: Anne Fraser (905)-877-1844
Treasurer: Janice Sukhiani (647) 408-9515

Appointments

Membership: Valerie Dobson (905) 828-1729
Newsletter: Jeff Normandeau
Ontario Nature Representative: Freyja Whitten
Public Relations: Vacant
Webmaster; Sarah Lalonde
Crozier Property Steward Marg Wilkes
Hardy Property Steward Ray Blower

Membership for one year: \$30 Single; \$40 Family
The Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club is an affiliated member of Ontario Nature.

www.hnpnc.com

Volunteers needed!
Are you interested in a position on our board??
Email Fiona: Fiona.reid7243@gmail.com

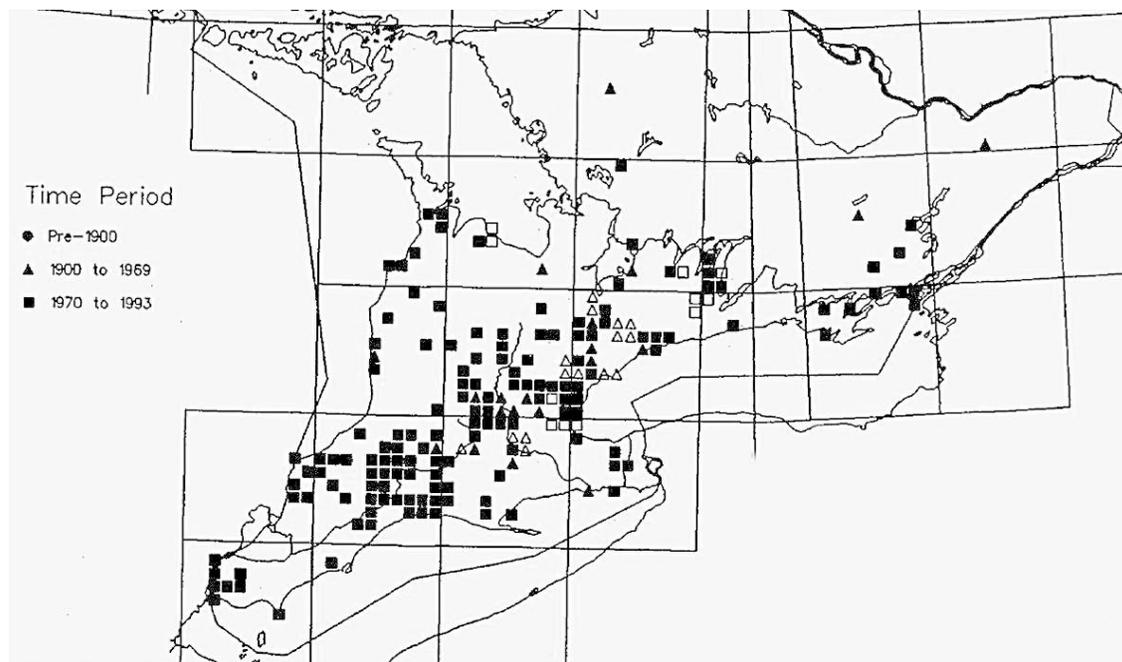
Disappearance of European Hare from the GTA

W.D. McIlveen

Ontario is home to five species of rabbits and hares. These include the Arctic Hare (*Lepus arcticus*), White-tailed Jack Rabbit (*Lepus townsendii*), Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*), Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), and the main subject of this report, the European Hare (*Lepus europaeus*). The first two species do not extend into our area at all. Arctic Hare barely get into the most northern parts of the province while the White-tailed Jack Rabbit is included on the basis of a few records from the Rainy River District. The Snowshoe Hare is our most widespread species in Ontario but we are situated at the southern edge of its range so we do not often encounter it unless we travel a short distance further north. In our area, the species that we are most likely to encounter is the Eastern Cottontail. Their populations go through a cycle of

abundance and scarcity. It was seldom if ever encountered by European settlers until the mid-1800s and is regarded by some as a species that has expanded its range into Ontario. Skeletal remains found in a First Nations village in Oxford County prove that the species was here long before the supposed arrival in Ontario in 1868

[MacCrimmon, 1977]. There is little doubt though that after its recent arrival, their populations have dramatically increased as the species spread across all of southern Ontario [Dobbyn, 1994] (Map 1). As well as the five wild species noted above, from time to time, the Domestic Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), escapes from captivity or is purposely released by owners that no longer wish to keep them as pets. These animals do not persist in the wild for any significant period after they are released.



Map 1. Distribution of European Hare in Southern Ontario (Dobbyn, 1994)

The story of the European Hare is quite well documented [MacCrimmon, 1977]. They were introduced to Ontario just

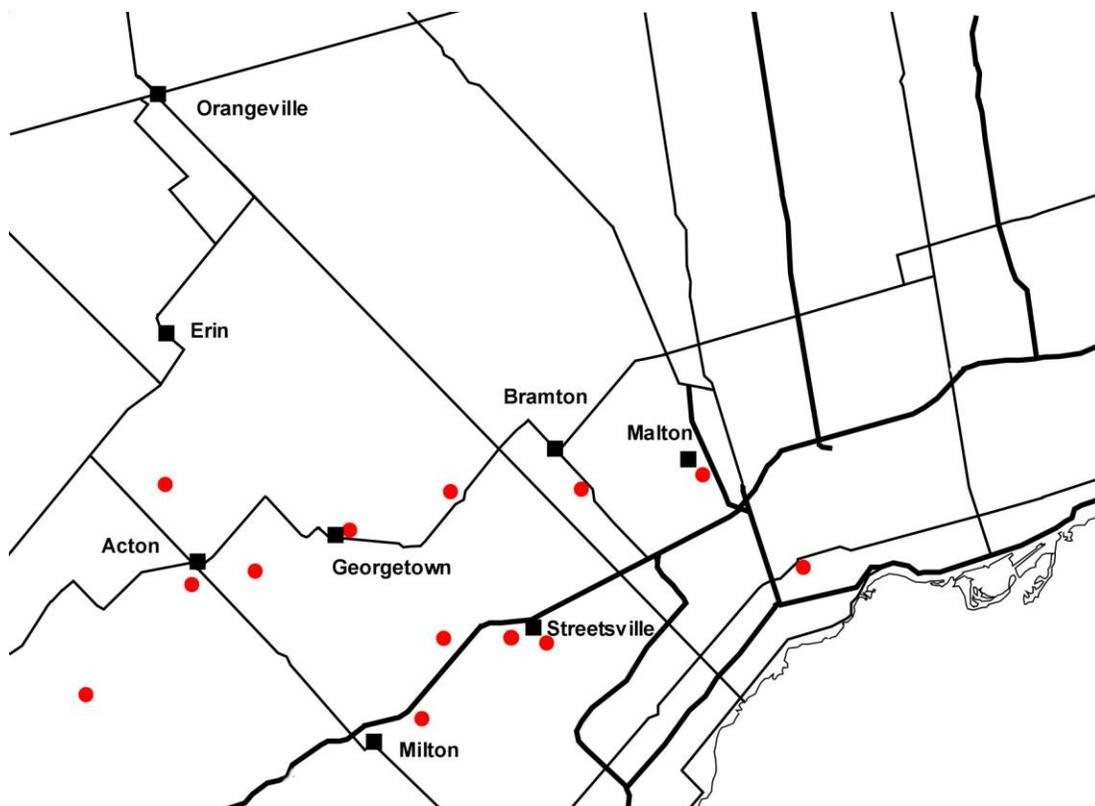
over one hundred years ago although some of that species was introduced some years earlier in the eastern United

States. In 1912, Otto Herold, the manager of Bow Park Farm located near Brantford imported seven female and two male hares from Germany. Inevitably, they soon escaped. Their numbers increased and they soon spread in all directions from the Bow Park Farm. It expanded its range to cover most of the area south of the Canadian Shield [Dobbyn, 1994]. The peak populations in Ontario appear to have been reached by about 1950. Later attempts to introduce the species to Thunder Bay and Cochrane areas as a new game species were not successful as the hares could not tolerate the conditions in the north.

In 1921, Howitt [1925] reported quite successful hunting of Jack Rabbits in Beverly Township in Wentworth County about 15 km southeast of Cambridge which was then named Galt. This was only nine years after the Hares had been released.

While the hunting community was happy to have a new game animal, farmers trying to grow grain (e.g. winter wheat,) alfalfa, clover, or orchard crops had to contend with a new pest that damaged their crops, especially during the winter. Wild plants were also consumed by these relatively large animals.

As a youngster growing up on a farm on Mississauga Road, it was fairly commonplace to see these animals in the fields. We viewed these animals, usually referred to as Jack Rabbits, as a normal part of the local fauna and we were generally oblivious to the fact that they were not native. Species such as Groundhogs because of their burrowing and Starlings because they were ‘dirty birds’ were a much greater concern. As well, foxes that occasionally took a turkey from the field were a particular nuisance.



Map 2. Location of European Hare sightings in the GTA since 1987.

In 1985, we returned from the North to live in this area. A few years later, I began to include mammal sightings in my records and included observations of the European Hares. While the annual numbers of observations were never large, I had records of the species from 1987 to 1998. The records from the GTA are summarized below and the locations are shown in Map 2. Many of the records were made during travel from Acton to Toronto along the Go Train routes. Since 1998, I have not seen the species. The realization that it had been several years since the last observation prompted this report. While there may be other reasons for the disappearance, it would seem that decline in Hares coincided with the increased populations

of Coyotes. A parallel decline in numbers of Groundhogs has also occurred in the same general time period. By contrast, Cottontail populations have continued to go through a cyclical pattern.

The local Conservation Authorities (C.V.C, and Conservation Halton) were consulted to determine what records they had in their databases for European Hares. Most of their records were actually ones that I had contributed. The only recent record for the species was a sighting of a Hare at the Frank Tract in Nassagaweya Township by Bob Curry on June 3, 2003. That makes it ten years since we have had a report of the species for our area.

Date	Place	Number
26-Jan-1987	Streetsville	1
31-Mar-1988	Kipling Go Station	1
11-May-1988	Milton	1
21-Aug-1989	Meadowvale Go Station, Streetsville North	1
10-Nov-1989	Acton	1
11-Jun-1990	Railroad 2 km east of Trafalgar Road Esquesing	1
12-Jun-1990	Railroad 2 km east of Trafalgar Road Esquesing	1
22-Jun-1990	Field east of 4th L north of railroad Esquesing	+
22-Mar-1991	Go Tracks between Mississauga Road and Highway 7	1
29-Mar-1991	First road east of Highway 25, 3 km north of Erin Twp.	1
13-Jul-1991	Georgetown at Dominion Seed House property	2
31-Jul-1991	Railroad east of Highway 27 Woodbine Racetrack	1
4-Nov-1993	Steeles Ave west of 8th Line Trafalgar south side	1
7-Apr-1994	Brampton - Farmhouse Court	1
14-Feb-1997	Brampton - Farmhouse Court	1
8-Jan-1998	Brampton - Farmhouse Court	1
5-Mar-1998	Brampton - Farmhouse Court	1
3-Jun-2003	Blue Springs Swamp: Frank Tract	+

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are extended to Jacqueline Kiers (C.V.C.) and Brenda van Ryswyk (Conservation Halton) for reviewing their agency records of European Hare.

References Cited

- Dobbyn, J. 1994. Atlas of the Mammals of Ontario. Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Don Mills, Ontario. 118 pp.
- Howitt, H. 1925. Another Invasion of Canada. Can. Field-Nat. 39: 158-160.
- MacCrimmon, H.R. 1977. Animals, Man and Change. Alien and Extinct Wildlife of Ontario. McClelland and Stewart Ltd. Toronto. 160 pp.

Monarch Butterfly- RIP 2026

by Don Scallen

The eastern migratory population of monarch butterflies is no more. Lepidopterists (butterfly and moth scientists) confirmed earlier this year, that the once familiar orange and black butterflies are essentially extinct. Their awe-inspiring north-south migrations, linking Mexico, the United States and Canada have ceased.

Most of us are old enough to remember when monarchs were a frequent sight in meadows and gardens.

The monarchs' demise was not unexpected. For decades, people in all three North American countries ratcheted up their assaults on these iconic insects. The monarchs' overwintering sites in the oyamel fir forests of Trans-volcanic Mountains of central Mexico, while nominally protected, were steadily reduced in size by illegal logging.

Criminal gangs with the tacit assent of corrupt government officials plundered the forests under the cover of darkness.

At the same time, land use practices in North America conspired to reduce milkweed, the monarchs' larval food plant. Round Up, a potent herbicide was sprayed on thousands of hectares of genetically altered "Round-up Ready" corn and soy, eliminating all of the milkweed in and around agricultural fields.

Homeowners throughout North America could have extended a helping hand by growing milkweed for monarch caterpillars and offering flowers with abundant nectar to the adults. Most people however, in thrall to their lawns, continued to primp and preen those biological wastelands at the expense of birds, butterflies and bugs.

The monarch is dead. No longer will it startle with its beauty. No longer will it inspire with its improbable journey from Canada to Mexico. And no longer will the imaginations of children be carried aloft on its gossamer wings.

Postscript: In 2006 at a monarch overwintering roost in Mexico I met Lincoln Brower, a pre-eminent monarch butterfly researcher from the United States. He predicted that the eastern North American monarch – our monarch – had "about twenty years left". I fervently hope he was wrong, but with populations this year at their lowest ebb ever, his dismal forecast may come true.

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?

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

