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Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 46, Number 4 March-April 2012

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.

Tuesday April 10, 2012: Silence of the Songbirds. Bridget Stutchbury, Professor of Biology at York University has written two very well received books on birds. Her first, *Silence of the Songbirds*, was a finalist for the Governer General's Award in Canada. The product of years of research into the decline of woodland birds, *Silence* is a clarion call for anyone interested in the plight of our glorious woodland songbirds. This is a meeting you don't want to miss.

Tuesday May 8, 2012: Amazing Bats around the World. Club President Fiona Reid will talk about bats – their incredible diversity in appearance, habits, roosts, and diet. She will also tell us about the spread of a fatal disease, White-nose Syndrome, that is moving into Canada from the US and devastating local bat populations.

June 12, 2012: A local walk is our traditional way of wrapping up the Naturalist Club activities prior to summer. This year we'll explore the Credit Valley Footpath just east of Georgetown. Meeting time: 7:30 Location: park along River Rd east and west of the bridge over the Credit River (Near the old mill site) Parking is limited, so carpooling is encouraged. Difficulty of walk: Moderate - some hill climbing. Duration: two hours maximum. Call Don Scallen at 905 877 2876 for further details

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Outdoor

Easter Weekend (April 6-8, 2012) Salamander outing: We are not setting a firm date yet, as weather conditions affect salamander movements, but Fiona and Don will be leading an evening outing to Silver Creek to look for Spotted and Jefferson's Salamanders, frogs and other early arrivals. If you want to join us, please email or call Fiona (Fiona.reid@xplornet.com, 905-693-9719) and you will be contacted with the date and time one or two days in advance.

Saturday April 14, 2012: Beamer Conservation Area Hawk Watch, Grimsby. On the way to Grimsby we begin with stops at Scotch Block reservoir and La Salle Park to see waterfowl and early songbirds. Beamer C.A., at the top of the escarpment in Grimsby, provides a large clearing and two fabulous lookouts to search the sky for migrating hawks. Walking trails in the surrounding woods show early wildflowers and more songbirds. Bring a lunch, water, hat, sunscreen, binoculars, etc. Call Ray Blower (519-853-0171) for starting location and time.

Sunday May 20, 2012: Spring Birding at Thickson Wood, Lynde Shores Conservation Area and Cranberry Marsh. For decades I have been recommending this as the best day-trip

location for spring birding. This collection of very good birding sites provides a wide variety of habitats including mature forest, meadows, swamps, marshes, old fields and Lake Ontario and its shoreline. The result is a diverse collection of bird species, especially during spring migration. Scheduling on the Sunday of the Victoria Day weekend has resulted, so far, in trouble-free driving to and from these Whitby birding hot spots. Bring a lunch, water, hat, sunscreen, binoculars, etc. Call Ray Blower (519-853-0171) for starting location and time.

President's Message

Hello everyone,

After such a mild winter we have had a few colder days in March, but now spring really seems to be in the air! Many birds have been reported as showing up exceptionally early this season, so be on the lookout for rarities and spring migrants in your area. Also please note our speaker for April is acclaimed author Bridget Stutchbury who will be talking about the plight of songbirds. It would be good if we can spread the word about this talk within our community.

Soon the salamanders will be on the move, the spring peepers will be calling, and I for one will be spending a lot of time outdoors!

I hope to see everyone at our next meeting.

Best wishes,

Fiona Reid

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: Nicole Charlton	(519) 993-6870
Ontario Nature Representative:	Vacant
Public Relations:	Vacant
Webmaster;	Andrew Kellman
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

Pygmy Grasshoppers

W.D. McIlveen

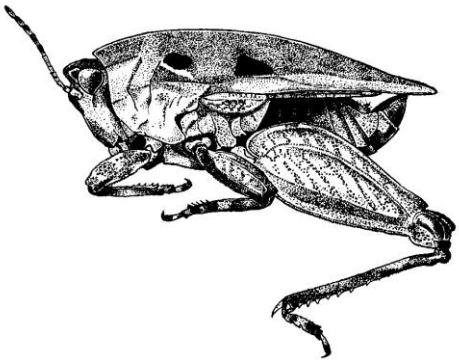
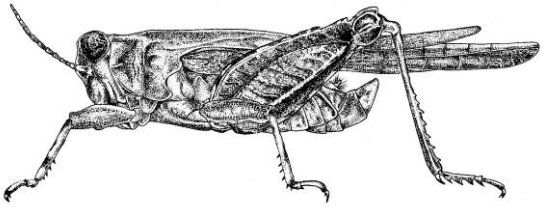
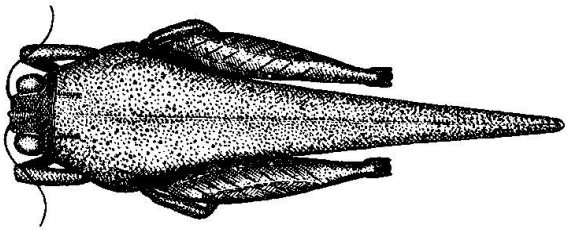
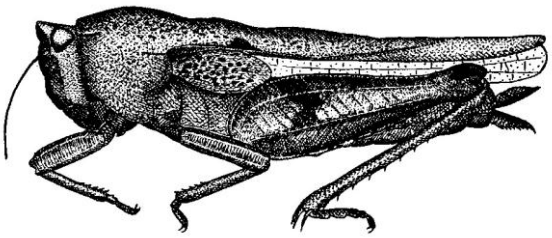
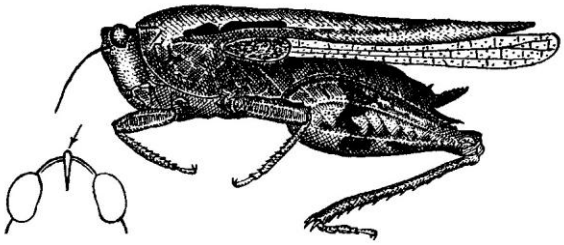
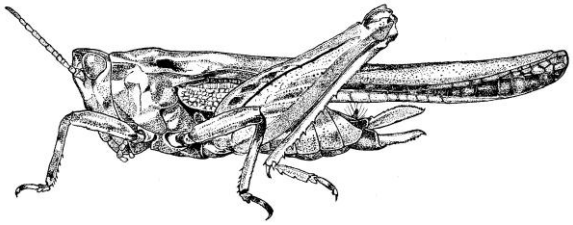
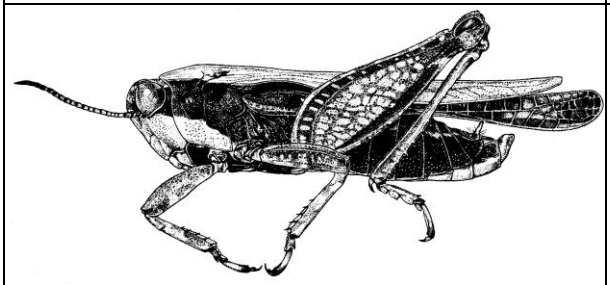
Particularly in Spring, a walk in the woods might turn up a very tiny grasshopper among the dead leaves. These are likely Pygmy Grasshoppers, not 'baby grasshoppers'. They are also known as 'grouse locusts' or 'grouse grasshoppers' or in one case, a 'frog groundhopper'. Pygmy Grasshoppers are members of the suborder Tetrigodea and most occur in the Family Tetrigidae. One exception is *Tettigidea lateralis* that occurs in the closely-allied Family Batrachideidae. The seven species that are known to occur in our area are listed in the following table and samples are illustrated in the attached pages.

These grasshoppers, as their name implies, are quite tiny with adults ranging from about 7 mm to only 14 mm (half inch) in length. Females are slightly larger than males. Because of their small size and generally cryptic coloration, they are easily overlooked. They can be of various colours, browns though gray and mottled, but never green. Their eyes are rather pronounced and the pronotum is often elongated along the back to cover the thorax. The antennae are short and they lack auditory and stridulatory organs. Wings may be long or short.

Although they can tolerate slightly drier sites, most prefer to live on the ground in damp, muddy situations, frequently close to water. They are reported to feed on vegetation debris and microscopic algae that accounts for their preference for moist habitats. Eggs are laid in soil or mud. Because they over-winter as adults, they are likely to be active shortly after the snow melts in the spring. Given the mild winter this year that gives prospects for an early start to the season, we could expect to see these little fellows out and about in the very near future.

Table 1. List of Pygmy Grasshoppers in Ontario

Latin Name	Common Name	Size Range (mm)		Habitat
		Male	Female	
Nomotettix cristatus	Crested Pygmy Grasshopper	7.6-8.4	8.7-10.3	Old fields, woodland edges, roadsides, pastures, *Vaccinium* areas in deciduous woods
Paratettix cucullatus	Hooded Pygmy Grasshopper	9.2-10.7	11.1-12.7	Margins of streams, ponds, lakes with moist sandy areas
Tetrix arenosa	Sanded Pygmy Grasshopper	8.4-10.7	10.1-12.3	Moist stream banks, to dry open woodland
Tetrix brunneri	Brunner's Pygmy Grasshopper	8.3-11.8	9.5-13.5	Meadow, bogs of forest regions
Tetrix ornata	Ornate Pygmy Grasshopper	7.6-8.2	8.7-9.8	Damp grassy areas to drier areas along woods, sandy hills
Tetrix subulata	Awl-shaped Pygmy Grasshopper	10.0-10.5	11.9-12.5	Moist sandy soil, or drier cultivated or forested areas
Tettigidea lateralis	Black-sided Pygmy Grasshopper	7.2-11.3	9.5-14.2	Dry and moist areas, dry open woods, near water

 *Nomotettix cristatus*	 *Paratettix cucullatus*
 *Tetrix arenosa*	 *Tetrix brunneri*
 *Tetrix ornata*	 *Tetrix subulata*
 **Tettigidea lateralis**	Pygmy Grasshoppers occurring in Ontario

Nomotettix cristatus

Paratettix cucullatus

Tetrix arenosa

Tetrix brunneri

Tetrix ornata

Tetrix subulata

Tettigidea lateralis

Pygmy Grasshoppers occurring in Ontario

Forest Stewardship Committee - Report to Halton /North Peel Naturalist Club

Marg Wilkes

We are presently attempting "certification" of the Regions' forests, and this is a complicated involved process. This "certification" is a response to growing concerns surrounding our forests' sustainability. Foresters have developed a process for certifying forest management processes to a predetermined set of standards. Independent third-party auditors evaluate operations in the bush to ensure that managers and operators comply with stated management standards. These standards were originally started and developed within Algonquin Park. Certification assures consumers and forest owners that the production of wood products from their land has not damaged the overall health of the forest and its sustainability. Certification is a voluntary process, and works to ensure that practices are consistently applied. As this is a costly process, our committee and Regional Forester, Ron Reinholt are hearing from several delegations.

The Forest Health Report covers trees in all Regional Forests, landfill sites including those that are closed, Park lands, and waste water sites. This report is done annually, in perpetuity, and examines plant species, tree diseases, invasive species, non-native species and insects.

Emerald Ash Borer has been reported, but is not very visible in forests, and seems mostly in urban street trees. This is not too worrisome, as the component of ash in this area is +/- 6%, and there is much regenerating of ash trees.

There was found one 100 square foot patch of Dog Strangling Vine in the Britton Tract. It was sprayed with herbicide in summer of 2011, and will be inspected again this year. They noted some Beech Bark Disease and Butternut Canker.

Within the Currie Tract, Ontario Hydro intends to cut the brush down under their lines when freeze-up occurs. A boardwalk about 90 metres long will circumvent the swampy area about one mile in from Guelph Line.

The Conley Tract, north of 20th Side road on the First Line is getting a culvert to drain away run-off.

Next report likely in May.

Alternative feeding habits of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Late last spring/early summer we watched a Yellow- bellied Sapsucker, which was very busy feeding on the fruit of a Serviceberry (a small sized native tree, known for attracting wildlife) at our place. I had never noticed feeding habits like this before by this species. During nesting season, one might be more likely to see this species feeding at the sap troughs that it pecks out in tree bark. The bird fed on this tree for a few more days, and at times it was feeding there at the same time as a chipmunk, (the latter being seen before, feeding in this tree).

Local Sightings;

There was some unexpected sightings during the past fall bird migration, over the UCC property:

Oct. 5, Immature plumaged Golden Eagle
Dec. 2, Sandhill Crane

Gerry Doekes

King Road closed to protect Jefferson salamander

City of Burlington and Conservation Halton Joint Media Release

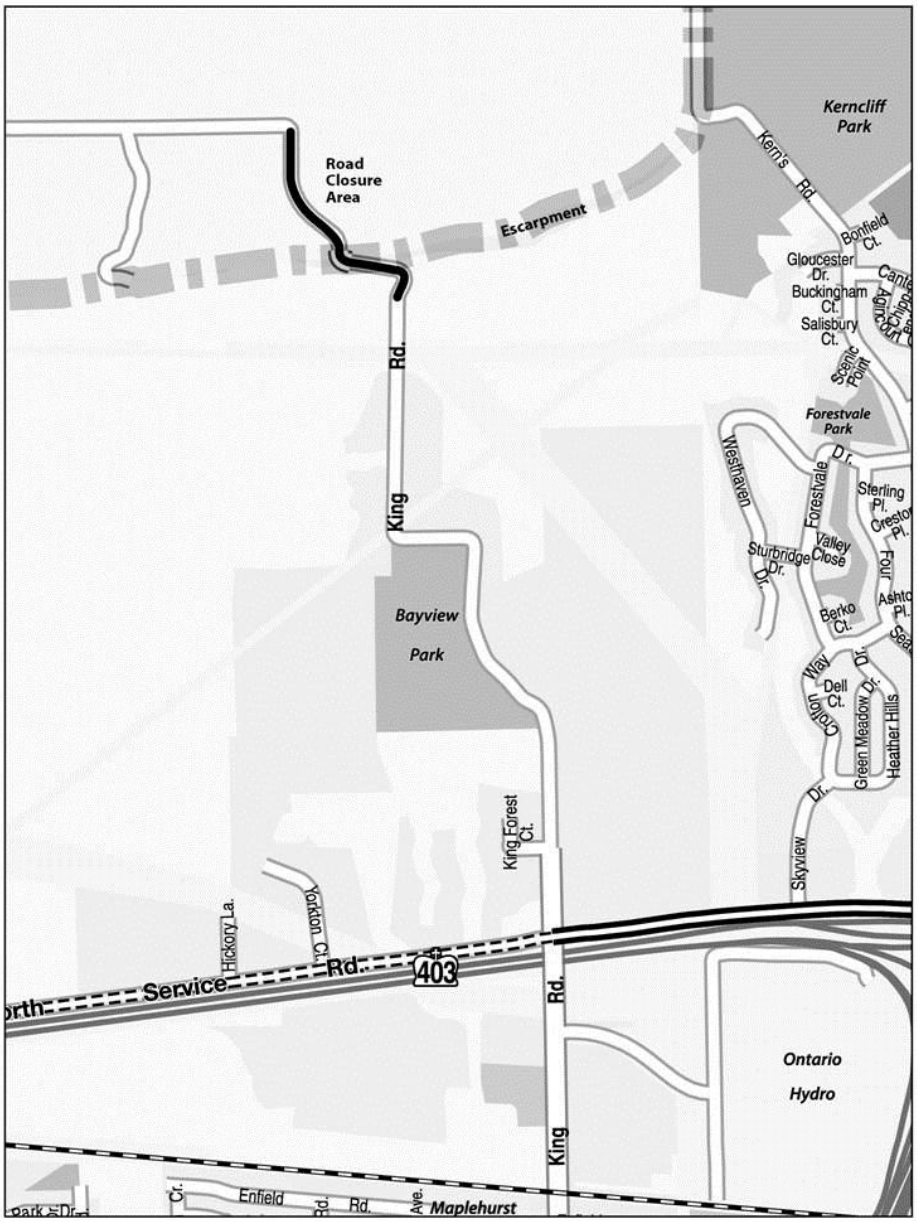
Burlington, Ont., March 7, 2012– King Road, between the base of the Niagara Escarpment and Mountain Brow Road, will be closed March8 to March 29 to allow the endangered Jefferson salamander safe passage during its annual migration to lay eggs. In Canada, the Jefferson salamander is found only in Southern Ontario, mainly along the Niagara Escarpment. Burlington is home to one of the few pockets of Jefferson salamanders in the province.

Historically, the city attempted a voluntary closure of a stretch of King Road to protect the species. In 2011, Conservation Halton conducted field research on the impact of vehicular traffic on the Jefferson salamander during breeding season. That research recommends a full closure for the duration of the migration. "We tried voluntary overnight closures as a temporary solution," said Ward 1 Councillor Rick Craven. "But with such a small population, losing even a few of these endangered salamanders is too many. A three week closure is a small price to pay to preserve a species." According to Conservation Halton, a typical Jefferson salamander colony is small – with a population no more than 100 – and confined to a specific area.

Conservation Halton is committed to preserving native biodiversity and protecting species at risk through activities such as protection of natural heritage systems, the creation of wildlife corridors, and increased public awareness through education, outreach and partnerships with local organizations.

"With the road closure, the City of Burlington has taken a tremendous step to help protect and preserve the Jefferson salamander for future generations," said Ken Phillips, Conservation Halton's chief administrative officer. "Conservation Halton applauds the city for taking such a bold step."

Local Jefferson salamanders spend the winter on one side of King Road, then cross the road to seek temporary ponds formed by spring run-off. "The annual migration takes place during dark, rainy periods in March, in exactly the type of weather where you probably won't even see the salamander," said Bruce Zvaniga, Burlington's director of transportation, "The road closure is key to preserving the population."



Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club Membership Form

_____ Renewal or _____ New Member(s) Date_____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership fee for the period

from September through to August	_____ Single ($30.00)	_____ Family ($40.00)
from December through to August	_____ Single ($22.50)	_____ Family ($30.00)
from March through to August	_____ Single ($15.00)	_____ Family ($20.00)
from June through to August	_____ Single ($ 7.50)	_____ Family ($10.00)

Do you have any suggestions for programs or field trips?

_____

_____

_____

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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: _____

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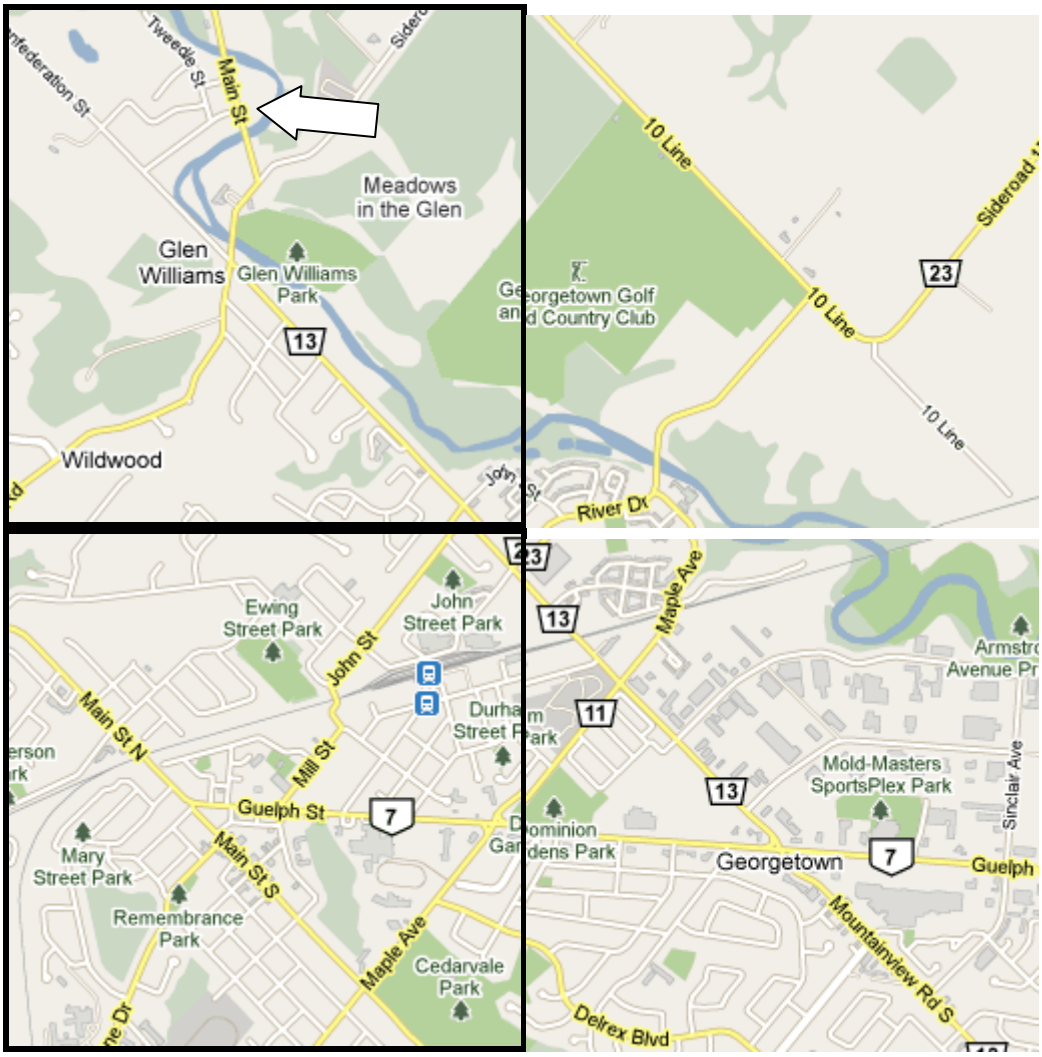
Meetings are at St Alban's Church in Glen Williams (see over) starting at 7:30 p.m.

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