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Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

Volume 46, Number 5

May-June 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 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

Outdoor

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 array 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.

Saturday May 26: Birding in Speyside. Join Fiona Reid for spring birding in the Speyside area. We will visit a couple of different tracts and beaver ponds in search of warblers, orioles, bobolinks and more. Please call or email Fiona (905-693-9719) Fiona.reid@xplornet.com for more details of meeting place and time.

Summer evening walks to commence May 21st – please see the attached schedule at the end of this issue.

President's Message

Greetings to all,

I'd like to welcome some new members who have joined us partway through our year, it is great to have you join us and I hope you will enjoy our club!

Ah May, what a wonderful time of year. I took a bike ride today through Halton Regional Forest. It is fun to hear the songs of newly arrived migrants, pause for a moment before remembering that strange yet familiar call. Thrushes, vireos, warblers, and numerous frogs were calling in the forest today. I've also enjoyed seeing the Rose-breasted Grosbeak visiting my feeder, the Great Crested Flycatcher calling in the woods, and perhaps best of all, a pair of Eastern Bluebirds taking up residence in a bird house they have used before, but did not visit last year – welcome back!

We have a great program of summer evening walks starting soon. I hope to see you all at one of our outdoor or indoor events.

Best wishes, Fiona A. 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: Freyja Forsyth
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



Tough, tenacious turtles

By Leanne Wallis, Credit Valley Conservation

Spring time is a time of new life and new beginnings: trilliums bloom, maple buds burst and red fox kits playfully tussle. At this time adult turtles are also thinking of new life, as they search out mates, breed and lay eggs. Turtles are fascinating creatures: there is fossil evidence that turtles have been around for 200 million years, which means they existed alongside dinosaurs. And turtles survived whatever catastrophic event(s) that led to the extinction of 90% of plant and animal species, including dinosaurs¹.



Eastern Snapping Turtle, gravid female (with eggs) Photo: Joana Marques, CVC

Turtles are tough and tenacious. But the last two hundred years has seen the human population grow exponentially and impact their way of life. We all know some of the changes they've faced: wetland draining and filling, hunting, removal from the wild, roads built through wetlands and other habitat, road mortality, intentional persecution (particularly of Eastern Snapping Turtles).

The effect of turtle road mortality in particular is compounded by the inherent biology of turtles. Turtles have a high egg and hatchling mortality rate with very few making it to adulthood. Also, turtles take years to reach sexual maturity, in some cases 15 years or more. So when adult turtles are hit by vehicles, the impact on the population is much more severe than it would be on species which have greater reproductive success (e.g. raccoons). Tenacious turtles are still with us today, but population threats have led to 7 of the 8 native Ontario turtle species being considered species at risk of extinction or of disappearing from the province.

A critical time of the year for turtles is approaching: nesting time. Nesting occurs between late May and July and results in turtles moving around to find breeding partners and nesting habitat. In doing so, they may walk across roads, especially roads near wetlands. They also may use the sandy or gravelly edges of roads to nest. While turtles may cross roads from April to October, their movement is at its peak in early summer.



Yes, turtles are tough, but they could use some helping hands. They haven't evolved to handle humans in automobiles and earth-moving equipment... or maybe it's more accurate to say that humans haven't evolved to handle turtles. But some advances are happening right here in our watershed. In 2009, along a stretch of Highway 10 south of Orangeville where wetlands exist on both sides of the road, the Ministry of Transportation installed fencing to keep turtles off Highway 10 and direct them through a culvert under the road.

As early summer approaches, and you watch new life unfold, think of the prehistoric reptiles around you, these creatures of an ancient lineage, learning to cope in a new world with asphalt roads, fences, culverts, and two-tonne vehicles driving 100km/h through their home range. Imagine a turtle on a road shoulder about to cross, its eyes only 3 or so inches off the ground - such a limited field of vision - and knowing it will take some time to get across. I've seen a turtle stand on the road shoulder, faced as if it was about to cross, with cars whipping by, and looking like it was trying to find the right moment and work up the courage to cross². The adult females of at least two of our turtle species risk their lives on dangerous roads due to something called nest-fidelity: the desire to return to where they were born to lay their eggs in the same place. So, many of the turtles you encounter on roads will be females carrying eggs or that have just nested. Like parents of other species, they are willing to put their lives on the line for their young.

So consider lending a hand to the turtles this nesting season. Drive slowly and scan the road, especially around wetlands, and if it is safe to do so, help turtles across roads. Be careful with Eastern Snapping Turtles which can bite (The Toronto Zoo and Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre have youtube videos available on how to move a turtle across a road). If you encounter an injured turtle, contact the Toronto Wildlife Centre which admits injured turtles for rehabilitation. Consider sending observations of live or dead turtles to an organisation such as the Toronto Zoo's Adopt-a-pond which runs the Ontario Turtle Tally.

Notes

1. Some scientists still consider our birds to be descendants of dinosaurs, although recent research suggests otherwise.
2. I was able to get this turtle across, but it took me a few minutes to find the right moment, and I had a much better view (and a bright jacket).

A message to HNPNC from Grebe Lodge

Picture an area with globally, nationally and provincially rare species; an area with one of the highest concentrations in Canada of these rare species; an area that is only a few hours' drive away.

Would your club members like to explore it?

Now you can, while supporting a major naturalist program at the same time. Stay in Grebe Lodge for only \$40 per person per two night stay for groups of 10 or more.



An attractive stone building that **accommodates a maximum of 12 people**, the Lodge sports an open-concept common room, with an enormous central fireplace and large windows offering expansive views overlooking beautiful Georgian Bay. The lodge has a well-equipped kitchen and a dining area. There are two large bedroom units, each of which are equipped with 3 comfortable

bunk beds and en-suite bathrooms. Guests are asked to bring their towels, soap, sleeping bag & pillow case. As no meals are provided, guests are free to craft menus that suit themselves and their budgets. "Off the grid", but with the comforts of home, Grebe Lodge offers a true wilderness experience.

With the support of the Ontario Parks and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory (www.bpbo.ca) began spring and fall migration monitoring at its Cabot Head Research Station in 1990. The Bird Observatory now makes Grebe Lodge available to groups for nature appreciation or educational purposes. Income from Grebe Lodge supports the important programs of BPBO, and helps to maintain the research station facilities.



Grebe Lodge is nestled into the Cabot Head Provincial Nature Reserve, near Tobermory, and features the rugged cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment and the deep, pristine waters of Georgian Bay. The Nature Reserve contains a rich mosaic of habitats including wetland, alvar, expansive forests, boulder beaches and cliff face. Consequently, a large natural diversity is found at Cabot Head. Home to ferns, orchids, snakes, bears and hundreds of bird species, Cabot Head is a paradise for naturalists, artists and photographers.

To learn more about this wonderful opportunity and to book please contact BPBO Administrator Don Douma at: dnrdouma@hotmail.com **(519) 795-7901**. Bookings are available from early May to mid-June and from after Labour Day to Thanksgiving. We do hope you will be able to share the magic of this wonderful retreat with us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rod Steinacher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Rod Steinacher
President
Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory
1 (519) 962-2003
www.bpbo.ca

Beavers – Natural Habitat Planners

By Fiona A. Reid (beaver photo: Michael Patrikeev)

Every day I try to get in a walk to a natural habitat in my area. Sometimes it is just a stroll in my own backyard forest, but often I head over to Halton Regional Forest, or the St Helena Road area. The big draws of these two sites for me are the ponds, and the ponds would not be there were it not for the industrious activities of our local beavers.



About four years ago, I was very disappointed to find one of my favorite beaver ponds off Sixth Line was empty. The grass was starting to fill in. I worried about the frogs, the dragonflies, and all the other animals that rely on that body of water. The two water snakes that shelter in the rocks and

come out to sunbathe were nowhere to be seen. A passerby told me that Conservation Halton had removed the beavers and their dams in order to get more water into Hilton Falls, as the waterfall had dried up. They had placed very solid metal grilles projecting out in front of the flowing water so the beavers could not dam the stream at this narrow point where it passed under the track.

Returning to the same area a few months later, I was happy to see that a pond had reformed. It took me a while to figure out what had happened, but when I crawled under the bridge, I saw what the beavers had done. Our industrious engineers had gone around the back of the culvert and stuffed it full of branches, positioning each branch parallel to the water flow, not perpendicular, as is their custom. The effect was the same, the water flow had almost ceased and the pond had refilled!



Pretty soon, the beavers added to their habitat restoration work by constructing a second dam upstream from the culvert, and order was restored. The branches in the culvert were swept away by storms, but the beaver pond lives on, the water snakes bask, the frogs croak and all is good!



Trilliums of our Watershed

By Leanne Wallis, Credit Valley Conservation

It's a lovely time of year to get outside for a romp through a nearby forest. By braving the mud and puddles, you can often be rewarded by some solitude from the regular summer and fall crowds, and wildflowers in spring are quite a sight.



Red Trillium
Photo: Leanne Wallis, CVC

One of the best-known flowers of spring is the White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflora*), our provincial flower. In fact, if you encounter any Trillium in our watershed, it is likely to be this one. Its large petals give it an alternate name of Large-flowered Trillium. Its petals are the longest of the four trilliums in our watershed. Its petals are indeed white, but can take on a pinkish hue with age. It is found in rich deciduous woods and often grows so abundantly as to appear to carpet the forest floor.

In addition to White Trillium, three other species are found in our watershed: Red Trillium, Painted Trillium and Nodding Trillium. Red Trillium (*Trillium erectum*) is the second-most common Trillium species in our watershed. It has brilliant crimson petals and is a thrill to

encounter. It is reported to have a bad odour, giving it the alternate name of Stinking Benjamin. It is found in moist woods.

Painted Trillium and Nodding Trillium are quite rare in our watershed. In fact, I'm aware of only one location for Nodding Trillium, which is on private land a few kilometres from Caledon Lake. Painted Trillium is also quite rare in our watershed. It was known from only a historic record (1947) for our watershed until quite recently, but Natural Areas Inventory field work done since 2008 has found this species in three natural areas, one of which is Caledon Lake (NAI field work also made the Nodding Trillium observation). Nodding and Painted Trilliums are species of moist woods.

Trilliums are perennials that grow each spring from underground rhizomes. They are long-lived with White Trillium able to live at least 70 years. White Trillium flowers are primarily pollinated by bumble-bees and their seeds are dispersed by ants.

The Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) carries out vegetation community mapping, and performs flora and fauna inventories throughout the Credit River Watershed and Region of Peel. 2012 will be our 5th field season. If fellow naturalists are aware of any locations of Nodding or Painted Trillium in our coverage area, I'd be happy to hear about it.

Leanne Wallis
NAI, Credit Valley Conservation
905-670-1615

Naturalist Club Evening Walks - Summer 2012
Halton/North Peel Naturalists and South Peel Naturalist Clubs

All walks are on Mondays and start at the meet location at 7:00pm sharp.
Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear and be prepared for biting insects.

Date	Location	Meeting Place	Leader
21-May	Acton Woods	Acton Shopping Plaza	W. McIlveen
28-May	Speyside Resource Man. Area	Hwy 401at Hwy 25	Freyja Forsyth
4-Jun	Cheltenham Badlands Trail	Mississauga Rd at King St	Dawn Renfrew
11-Jun	Halton Agreement Forest	Hwy 401at Hwy 25	Fiona Reid
18-Jun	Robert Baker Forest	Mississauga Rd at King St	Dawn Renfrew
25-Jun	Sideroad 25 ROW	Hwy 401at Hwy 25	W. McIlveen
2-Jul	Maple Avenue Extension	Hwy 401at Trafalgar Road	W. McIlveen
9-Jul	Terra Cotta Forest	Mississauga Rd at King St	Leanne Wallis
16-Jul	Cheltenham Rail Trail	Mississauga Rd at King St	W. McIlveen
23-Jul	Silver Creek	Silver Creek Outdoor Ed	Leanne Wallis
30-Jul	Jacquith property	Mississauga Rd at King St	Dawn Renfrew
6-Aug	Irwin Quarry	Silver Creek Outdoor Ed	Dawn Renfrew
13-Aug	Limehouse	Limehouse C.A.	W. McIlveen
20-Aug	Ratray Marsh	Green Glade School	Kirsten Burling

Meeting location descriptions

Acton Shopping Plaza – Hwy 7 east side of Acton at Sobeys' shopping plaza near Churchill Rd – meet near bank

Hwy 401at Hwy 25 – Commuter parking lot at SE intersection of Hwy 401 and Hwy 25, Milton

Mississauga Rd at King St - Public school at the SW corner of Mississauga Rd and King St.

Hwy 401at Trafalgar Rd - Commuter parking lot at NE intersection of Hwy 401 and Trafalgar Rd

Silver Creek Outdoor Ed – Parking lot for Outdoor Ed Center NW corner of Fallbrook Road and SR 27

Limehouse C.A. – Parking lot at ball field south of Limehouse on east side of 5th Line

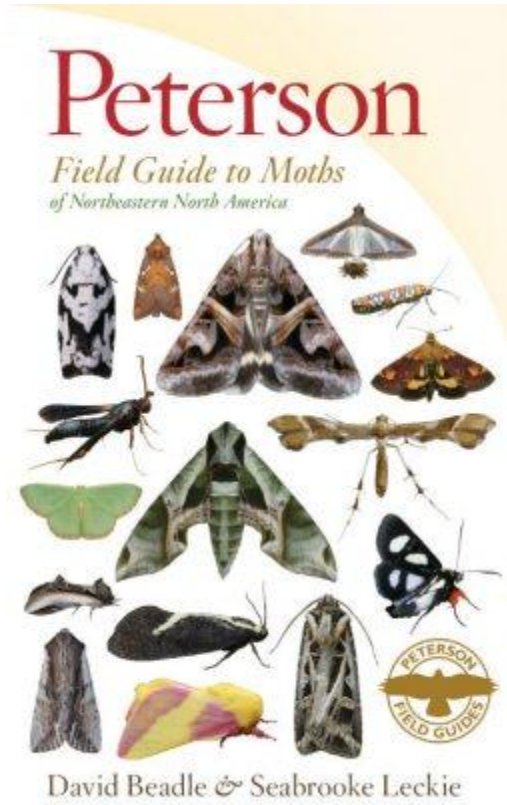
Green Glade School – Green Glade off Meadow Wood Road, Clarkson

Not as advertised! Some destinations may change if preliminary site visits determine that a site lacks sufficient interesting items. In such cases, the meeting location will remain unchanged but the trip destination will be altered to a location nearby.

For more information, call Bill McIlveen (519) 853-3948 or cell (905) 867-9294

New Field Guide to Moths!

This all-new full color field guide to Northeastern moths was written by two Canadians. It features about 1,500 species in good quality photos of living animals (not spread and pinned as in older guides). Although this is a heck of a lot of moths, the book is not complete, even in our area. Nonetheless, it will be extremely useful for us moth-watchers who struggle to identify even fairly distinctive looking species.



The book is available for purchase from amazon.ca for about \$23.

You can read more about the book from one author's blog: <http://seabrookeleckie.com/the-new-peterson-moth-guide/>. Seabrooke grew up here in Halton Hills, on 17th Side Road in Speyside.

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?

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

