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Newsletter of the Halton / North Peel Naturalist Club

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Volume 47, Number 1

September-October 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, September 11: Finding the legendary whip-poor-will.** Emily Dobson will speak to us about one of our most fascinating nocturnal birds – the whip-poor-will – and will fill us in on why this species is declining in numbers. Emily has a special interest in species conservation.

**Tuesday, October 9: Turkey Vultures.** Chris Hamilton of the Hamilton Conservation Authority will regale us with stories about everyone's favourite scavenger, the turkey vulture. After the talk we will hold our AGM.

**Tuesday, November 13:** TBA

**Tuesday, December 11:** Annual Pot Luck dinner at 6:30 p.m. Note earlier start time. Bring a favourite dish and if you wish a few images to share with club members after the meal.

**Important Note:** In February 2013 we will meet on the **Third Tuesday, Feb 19**, not Feb 12!

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**Outdoor:** Trips begin at the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) parking lot at Guelph and Mountainview Road, Georgetown unless stated otherwise. If you would like to meet the group at the trip site, please speak to the trip leader.

**Sunday, September 23: Scotch Block Reservoir and area.** Join Fiona Reid on an afternoon trip to the reservoir, which can be very productive for birds at this time of year. We should see some ducks, shorebirds, and fall migrants. Please call Fiona (905-693-9719) for carpooling information and directions.

## President's Message

This summer has been a great one for butterflies and moths. Record numbers of Red Admirals were seen in our area. The drought through July and August has been hard on trees, plants and numerous amphibians, as well as other wildlife.

We have a great line-up of speakers and events for fall and winter this year, and I look forward to welcoming old members and new at our first meeting in September, as well as throughout the season. Don't forget to fill out the attached membership form and drop it off with your payment – thanks!

*Best wishes to all,  
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  
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](http://www.hnpnc.com)

**Volunteers needed!**  
**Are you interested in a position on our board??**  
**Email Fiona: [Fiona.reid@xplornet.com](mailto:Fiona.reid@xplornet.com)**



Yellow-banded Underwing Moth (photo by Fiona Reid)

## Bobolinks and Forks of the Credit Provincial Park

In mid-July I watched a flock of bobolinks at Forks of the Credit Provincial Park. They were gathering prior to their incredible 10 000 km journey back to the pampas of Argentina.



Male Bobolink

The bobolinks of Forks of the Credit Provincial Park are good news for a species in sharp decline in Ontario and beyond.

Breeding Bird Survey data indicate an alarming 52% drop in Ontario's bobolink population over the last fifteen years. In part this is because of their penchant for nesting in hayfields - hayfields that are often cut in June when bobolink young are still in their nests.

At the Forks bobolinks needn't worry about whirring blades. But alas, even here, the future of bobolinks may be in jeopardy.

Forks of the Credit Provincial Park is gradually returning to its primeval state – forest. Ash, maple and choke cherry are reclaiming the meadowlands cleared by intrepid farmers long ago. Left alone, trees will prevail and the bobolinks will be gone.

Bobolinks though, are only one patch in the quilt of the glorious grassland ecosystem that exists at the Forks. Many other birds such as meadowlarks and a wealth of sparrow species including savannah, grasshopper and clay-colored will disappear as the trees return. And the extensive milkweed stands will vanish along with their famous patron, the monarch butterfly.

Park officials here (and I'm sure in other jurisdictions in Eastern North America) face difficult choices in the management of former agricultural lands in their care.

Should they honour the natural inclination of the land and allow trees to return along with the birds, animals and wildflowers that depend on them? Or should they intervene and kill the trees to save grassland and the myriad species it supports?

We need to start a conversation about the future of the grasslands at the Forks and elsewhere.



Forks of the Credit in Fall (photo by Fiona A. Reid)

This story appeared originally in Notes from the Wild at [inthehills.ca/blogs](http://inthehills.ca/blogs)

*by Don Scallen*

## **Dust Devils**

Earlier this Spring on two successive days, I was driving along our gravel road and noticed a 'dust devil' at the same location each time. I am sure that everyone has seen such things at some point in their lives. Seeing one is not at all unusual but noting two in the manner that they occurred prompted me to prepare this little note.

The conditions that must exist to form the dust devils will likely occur many times but they remain invisible. We only see them when they cause fine dust, leaves, paper and similar light materials, rarely snow, to be swept up into a circular funnel. Without the telltale visual evidence, we pay no attention for we simply cannot detect them. Similarly, we seldom have the opportunity to photograph them. They typically only last a few seconds so unless we have a camera already at hand, we don't get a fair chance to document their existence.

In many respects, they are like miniature tornados with a spinning vortex.

‘Whirlwind’ is a fairly good description. They may be as small as meter wide and ten meters high to rare ones that might be ten times as wide and one hundred times as tall. The motion is nearly always upwards in the form of a swirling updraft under sunny conditions during fair weather. A basic requirement is that there are areas with a differential in heating of different air pockets. The devils form when hot air near the ground surface rises quickly through a small pocket of overlying cooler, low- pressure air. Under the right conditions, the air may begin to rotate. As the air rapidly rises, the column of hot air is stretched vertically, causing intensification of the spinning effect. A fully-formed dust devil is a funnel-like chimney through which hot air moves, both upwards and in a circle. Additional hot air rushes in toward the developing vortex to replace the air that is rising. As the hot air rises, it cools, loses its buoyancy and eventually ceases to rise. As it rises, it displaces air which descends outside the core of the vortex. The spinning motion cause the dust devil to move forward. The upward speed of the air within the vortex has been reported to be at least 40 km/hr. On occasion, wind speed in the rotating air can reach as high as 120 km/hr.

Dust devils are most evident in flat terrain that lacks vegetation, or in fields, deserts, or tarmac. Such conditions favor the build-up of heat near the ground surface as well as the increase the chance that dust or sand may be swept up. Clear, or relatively clear, skies enable solar energy to easily reach the ground to warm the surface yet have cooler air above. Ambient wind needs to be very low or absent or else there would be too much mixing of the cooler upper air with the heated air at ground level. If two distinctly different air temperature

regimes cannot be established, then a dust devil cannot form.



Dust devil photographed at Lake Bogoria, Kenya, 2001 (Photo by W.D. McIlveen)

Somewhat similar vortices form in the center of large fires like forest fires where there is a rather obvious source of heated air and smoke. Vortices also occur in the lee of buildings that are exposed to winds, depending upon the size and shape of building and other characteristics of the surrounding environment. The latter are notably different in origin, arising from mostly lateral winds. The swirling motion can cause snow to form drifts and other debris to form circular piles on the downwind side of the structures. These materials fall to the ground in the centre of the vortex which lacks the air speed to keep the materials suspended.

Dust devils seldom cause significant damage or injury, simply because they are limited in size and do not last. On occasion, they might do limited damage if the particular conditions allow the wind speed to be unusually high. The wind movement could potentially move materials from one place to another and this may be undesirable from a human perspective. Dust might become entrained in the wind and this might be quite undesirable. They could cause the components of the dust or creatures near

the ground surface (e.g. insects, plant pathogens, weed seeds) to become airborne and moved to new locations. Occasionally small rodents could be forcibly moved from one place to another. In general though, dust devils are mostly just fleeting visible indicators of the fact that our physical environment is constantly in flux.

*by W. D. McIlveen*

### **Spring outing to Speyside area, May 26, 2012.**

We had a great outing that spring day. We started at my house in Speyside where we heard a Scarlet Tanager but did not see him, then saw a resident Indigo Bunting. We went to Town Line Road, seeing a Mallard on the pond, which is now very overgrown. Farther down we encountered a very large patch of Yellow Lady's Slipper, a plant I have not seen in this area before. We also saw Rose-breasted Grosbeak.



We went over to the corner of Sixth Line and 15 Side Road where we had a wonderful time watching nesting Bluebirds, and we located 2 Porcupines and a Raccoon sleeping in three separate trees, and watched a Meadow Vole dash across the road. We also saw Eastern Kingbird, Indigo Bunting, Alder/Willow Flycatcher, Song Sparrow, Northern Flicker and Blue Jay.



Photos by Jim Hughes

We then went to Third Line south of 15 where we had fun watching a field full of Bobolinks, plus a few Eastern Meadowlarks, Red-winged Blackbirds, a Savannah Sparrow, and Barn Swallows. At the Scotch Block Reservoir we saw a lone Painted Turtle, many Northern Orioles, Northern Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart and Warbling Vireo. The only water birds were Canada Geese, but a Great Blue Heron did fly overhead, as did a Red-tailed Hawk.

Thanks to Valerie Dobson, Jim and Joan Hughes, and their sharp-eyed guest Christine Rumble for coming along!

*by Fiona Reid*

## 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' fee:  
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**

