Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

The Esquesing

Jan – Feb 2019 Newsletter
Volume 53, Number 3

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President's Message

A challenge for many is mustering the motivation to get outside in this season – but do try. The frozen world offers attractions: rollicking flocks of snow buntings sweeping over stubbled farm fields, the cheerful chatter of chickadees, the croaking of ravens on high, and the yank, yank, yank of nuthatches as they probe nooks and crannies for dormant insects.

How about some tracking? The winter woods are far from lifeless. Proof positive is found in the snow that records the foot-falls of warm-blooded travellers. We'll seek the wanderings of coyotes, mink, porcupines and others and try to read the stories of their varied personal quests.

Winter is the season of owls. At least six species live among us in this cold time, but they aren't easy to find. Masters of stillness, they hide in piney boughs during the day, patiently waiting to be reanimated by the setting of the sun. We'll look for them again this winter and I hope we'll have assistance from club members like Alexis Buset who can conjure owls from their shadowy retreats. I'm woefully inept at finding owls myself and I wouldn't recommend counting on Laura Weihs either. In the fall she triumphantly identified a snowy owl which promptly transmogrified into a plastic bag.

Being much better at finding trees than owls, I'll lead at least one winter tree identification outing. Trees are not nearly as secretive as owls and are rather large and immobile.
We'll also likely go to the shores of Lake Ontario to be caressed by arctic-like gusts that somehow manage to penetrate even military-grade snow pants and long-johns. This as we gaze with astonishment, through watery eyes, at the scaups, buffleheads and long-tailed ducks preening, diving and gamboling as if they were vacationing along the French Riviera. Reminds us that these birds evolved in cold climates, while we got our start somewhere much, much warmer.

Please join us on some of these quests. A crackling fire and a mug of hot chocolate, enhanced by a favourite intoxicant, offer even greater delights after a brisk winter's outing. But if you only venture out to the meetings, well that's ok too. We'll have a wonderful exhibition of nature photography from our own Gary Hall in February sandwiched between insects in January and spiders in March.

Happy New Year and stay warm,

Don Scallen

Talks and Walks

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

Tuesday January 8, 2019

Laura Timms, PhD: *The little things that run the world: Trends & issues in insect conservation*

Laura Timms works for Credit Valley Conservation. Katie McDonnell, also with CVC, provided this description of Laura's presentation: "Headlines around the world have been discussing a potential "Insect Armageddon" as a recent study from Germany found a 75% decline in insect biomass in protected areas over 30 years, and other researchers have been noting alarming trends in insect decline. Laura Timms an Ecologist at CVC with a background in entomology, will discuss this study and provide some general context about global trends in insect populations, why you should care, and what we can do."

To learn more:
http://theconversation.com/insect-armageddon-five-crucial-questionsanswered-86171

Tuesday February 12, 2019

Gary Hall: Nature Photography: *How to get from Here to There: Practical Tips to Take Your Nature Photography to the Next Level*

Club member Gary Hall counts teaching and Bruce Trail stewardship among his many pursuits. He is also an excellent nature photographer. We had a taste of his photographic expertise at the Pot Luck dinner when he showed us a series of superb images he took while on safari in Africa. The quiz in this newsletter features more of his impressive work.

Tuesday March 12, 2019

Catherine Scott: *Eat Prey Love: The Secret Lives of Spiders*

Catherine Scott has studied spiders around the world and is working on her PhD from the University of Toronto researching spiders, particularly the reproductive lives of Black Widow Spiders. Her presentation will highlight aspects of the natural history of spiders near and far. A passionate spider advocate, Scott will challenge common assumptions about just how dangerous our North American spiders are. This quote captures her take on spiders: "Spiders are among the most misunderstood animals we humans share this planet with, but a glimpse into their world of ingenious silk traps, masterful masquerade, and dangerous liaisons will show that they are far more fascinating than fearsome."

To learn more visit Catherine Scott's cleverly coined blog: http://spiderbytes.org/

Outdoor Events

NEW: Please bring gloves and a bag to pick up any litter. Let's give Mother Nature a helping hand, you'll get some extra exercise out of it with bending and stretching! You will be participating in "Plogga" or "Plogging"! Read more on page 20.

Sunday, January 6, 2019 at 12:30 p.m.
Snowy Owls, Snow Buntings and other winter songbirds.
We will head to the Shelburne area, with a stop at Luther Marsh enroute, in search of winter birds. This is a good year for finches so we may see Common Redpolls, Pine and/or Evening Grosbeaks, and possibly the sublime Bohemian Waxwing. Please contact Fiona at (Fiona.reid7243@gmail.com) for last-minute updates, changes due to weather, and to confirm your spot. Space may be limited. **Meet at Winners.**

Sunday January 13, 2019 at 1:00 pm
Winter Trees and Birds in the Hand
Don Scallen will lead this walk on the east side of Bronte Provincial Park in Burlington. Bronte PP offers an excellent diversity of trees. Some, like black oak and sycamore, are close to the northern limits of their natural ranges here. A bonus on this outing will be the possibility of hand feeding nuthatches and chickadees. Bring seeds (peanut chips are favourites) if you want to give this a go.
Be aware that unless conditions are icy, we will descend into the valley to see the sycamore trees that are restricted to the Bronte Creek floodplain. If we do, the difficulty level will be moderate.
Meet at the Bronte Creek campsite parking lot where the eastern stretch of Upper Middle Road ends. **There is a parking fee.**
https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Oakville,+ON/Bronte+Creek+Provincial+Park+(camping+area)/@43.4197949,-79.7663257,16z/data=!4m13!4m12!1m5!1m1!1s0x882b5b8b8f729979:0x5037b28c7231bd0!2m2!1d-79.6876659!2d43.467517!1m5!1m1!1s0x882b67378776538f:0x159ea74f8b57b78!2m2!1d-79.7647049!2d43.4177837

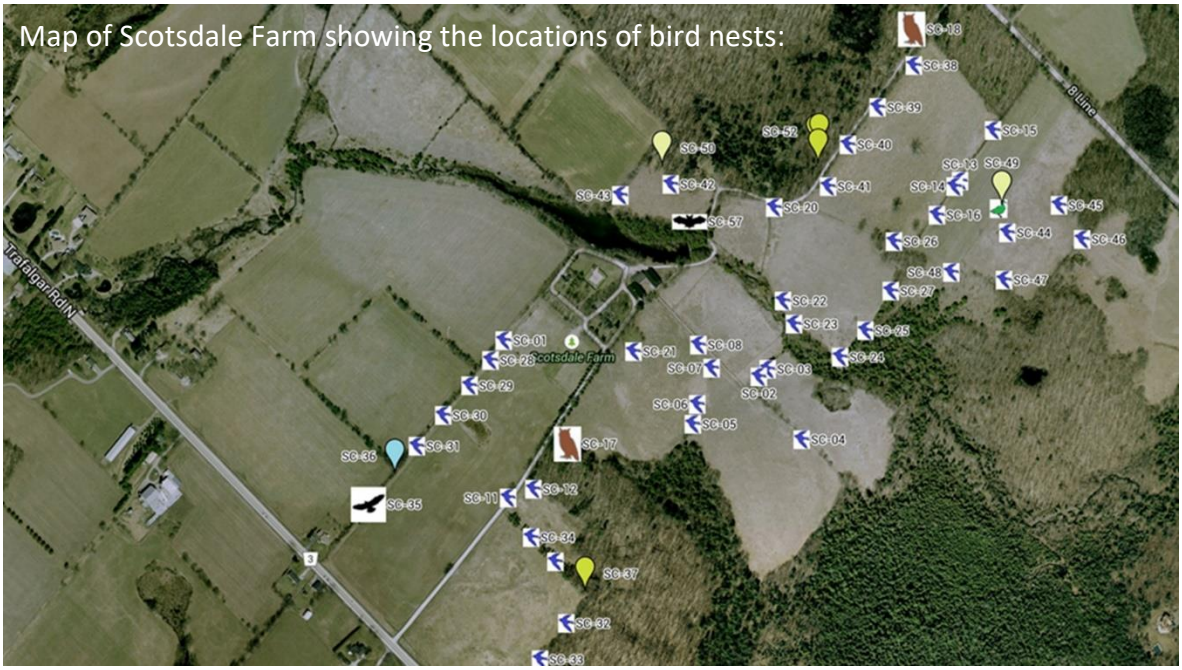
Sunday February 17, 2019 at 10am
Animal Tracking
Don Scallen will lead this walk at Terra Cotta Conservation Area. Last year we tracked coyote, deer and a porcupine among others. Hope for snow, but this outing will go ahead regardless. In snow's absence we'll look at trees, birds and anything else that sparks our curiosity.
The difficulty level will be moderate. There will be some off-trail exploration that will require movement over uneven ground.
Meet at the main Terra Cotta Conservation Area parking lot just west of Winston Churchill Blvd. **There is a parking fee.**
https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Terra+Cotta+Conservation+Area,+14452+Winston+Churchill+Blvd,+Terra+Cotta,+ON+L0P+1N0/43.7225591,-79.9569395/@43.7226439,-79.9579686,415m/data=!3m2!1e3!4b1!4m8!4m7!1m5!1m1!1s0x882b0dcdcd317beb:0x2444463edd265c5d!2m2!1d-79.9591026!2d43.7217099!1m0

TBA: Watch your inbox for other winter outdoor events which could include searching for owls and visiting Lasalle Park in Burlington for over-wintering waterfowl.
Outdoor Event Questions? Contact Don Scallen at dscallen@cogeco.ca

Results of the 2018 Monitoring of Bird Boxes Established at Scotsdale Farm, Halton Hills

W.D. McIlveen

In April 2014, the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club initiated a network of bird nest boxes at the Scotsdale Farm located at Silver Creek north of Georgetown. Initially, sixteen boxes were placed at Scotsdale and three more were set up at St. Albans Church in Glen Williams. In 2015, 27 boxes were added to the trail at Scotsdale. It was decided that 13 old boxes already at Scotsdale would also be monitored. In April 2018, about half of the boxes were moved to new steel posts away from the hedgerows and trees because they had become overgrown by trees and vines. Some old boxes were effectively discontinued because they had deteriorated.



As previously reported, the majority of boxes were of a standard design suitable for Tree Swallows or Bluebirds; however, two boxes were designed for owls and one was for kestrels. The old boxes had mostly been designed for Tree Swallows but at least one was intended for nesting ducks. Each box has a unique identification number to assist with the monitoring. Monitoring in 2018 was continued in the peak of the breeding season with visits made on June 11 and 12. The boxes were cleaned in mid-October 2017 and the contents of each box was noted (Fig. 3). The present report considers the results for only those boxes at Scotsdale because the St. Albans' boxes were not monitored. In total, 47 boxes were monitored in 2018.

Using a mirror to view contents of the nest.

The results of the monitoring for 2018 are summarized in Table 1. Data for the boxes in the four previous years are also included for comparison on the next page.

Table 1. Contents of bird boxes at Scotsdale Farm 2014-2018									
Species	**2014**	**2015**		**2016**		**2017**		**2018**	
	June	**June**	**Oct**	**June**	**Oct**	**June**	**Oct**	**June**	**Oct**
Bl-cap Chickadee						1	1	1	1
Eastern Bluebird		1	2	2	0	4	4	3	4
House Wren	1	4	4	2	3	6	11	6	11
Tree Swallow	2	12	8	6	6	8	5	10	4
Unknown		9	17	13	20	0	0	4	16
Empty	19	30	25	30	22	34	32	23	11
Total Boxes	22	59	59	59	58	53	54	47	47

During the June 2018 visit, the nesting birds had either eggs or young at different stages of development. The contents included the same four species that were encountered in previous years (Table 2). The total nestlings at the time of the monitoring was 42 and unhatched eggs was 22. It is presumed from observations made during the cleaning in October that the majority of the eggs had hatched though the one Chickadee egg seen in June was still present in October. Three of the Tree Swallow boxes were subsequently used by House Wrens though it was not possible to know whether those boxes produced young or were simply used as dummy nests.

Table 2. Nest box contents in June,2018		
Species	**Eggs**	**Nestlings**
Black-capped Chickadee	1	6
Eastern Bluebird	5	2
House Wren	6	5
Tree Swallow	10	29
Totals	22	42

In addition to the birds, the boxes were noted to be used by mice (3 boxes) and a Red Squirrel (one box). Nearly one half of the boxes were reported as empty at the time of the June visit but by October, about half these had been provisioned by miscellaneous materials that were possibly nests that could not be conclusively identified or assessed.

In 2019, a few older boxes need to be replaced or repositioned since they have not attracted use in four years. One box was on a tree that fell though the box was not damaged. While adjusting and replacing the boxes could potentially increase the nesting along the trail to some degree, the number of unused boxes suggests that the demand for nest boxes has been met and exceeded at Scotsdale.

6 baby Chickadees and one egg, as well as blue bird eggs viewed in a mirror held above the nests!

Results of the 2018 Halton Hills Christmas Bird Count

W.D. McIlveen

The 28th annual Christmas Bird Count for Halton Hills was conducted on December 27, 2018. The weather that day was quite different to that of the frigid conditions during the 2017 Count. Although it was a chilly -8.5°C at the start, it did warm up a bit to near 0°C later in the day that remained overcast for most of the time. What was notable was the near absence of snow. This likely was a major factor in the low count of birds since they were less-attracted to bird feeders.

The results of the tally for Count Day and Count Week are summarized in the attached table. The total number of species reported was 60 which equalled the previous high number set in 2017. The total number of birds tallied was 7379 which is slightly higher than in 2017. As usual, Canada Geese dominated the tally with nearly half of the individual birds reported. Along with the non-native Rock Pigeon, Starling, and House Sparrow, these four species accounted for nearly 70% of all birds seen. One new species, Greater Scaup, was added to our grand list bringing the total of species seen during the 28 years of counts to 105.

Five species (Ruffed Grouse, Great Blue Heron, Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl and Swamp Sparrow) were found within the Count Week but were not tallied on Count Day. Only Brown-headed Cowbird had a new high number. As well, Canada Goose, Wild Turkey, Rock Pigeon, and Pileated Woodpecker had counts notably higher than the long-term average. Excluding the irruptive kinds, thirteen species had counts that were only about half that of their respective average numbers. This caused many observers to remark on how difficult it had been to find normally common types. The weather and the absence of snow was a likely factor in this situation. Hopefully, this is not part of any real trend in winter bird populations. For now, we can claim some satisfaction of quality (fairly good species diversity) over quantity.

The 32 participants who contributed to the 2018 Count included Ray Blower, Dilys Bowman, Alexis Buset, Angela Cacciarru, Mimi Chan, Pam Forsythe, Aaron Keating, Christina Kovacs, Sarah Labrie, Reuven Martin, Mark Mastantuono, Bill McIlveen, Jacky Miller, Rob Palin, Pedro Pereyra, Paloma Plant, Lynne Ragsdale, Fiona Reid, Dawn Renfrew, Helen Ross, Don Scallen, Adhara Scholten, Yves Scholten, Dan Schuurman, Sue Sibley, Drucella Stroud, Rick Stroud, Shirley Stroud, Janice Sukhiana, Patrick Tuck, Laura Weihs, and David Williams.

Many thanks as always to Larry May for arranging access to the Maple Lodge Farms property and to Bill Elgie and Dan Richer for accommodating the team visit to the Upper Canada College property. A special thank you to Alexis Buset and Yves Scholten for hosting the wrap-up session. And we must not forget the traumatic experience of Lavender, one of Fiona Reid's flock, in attracting the Red-shouldered Hawk that made it onto our Count Week list!

A table of the results for the 2018 Halton Hills Christmas Bird Count are on the next page.

Results of the 2018 Halton Hills Christmas Bird Count

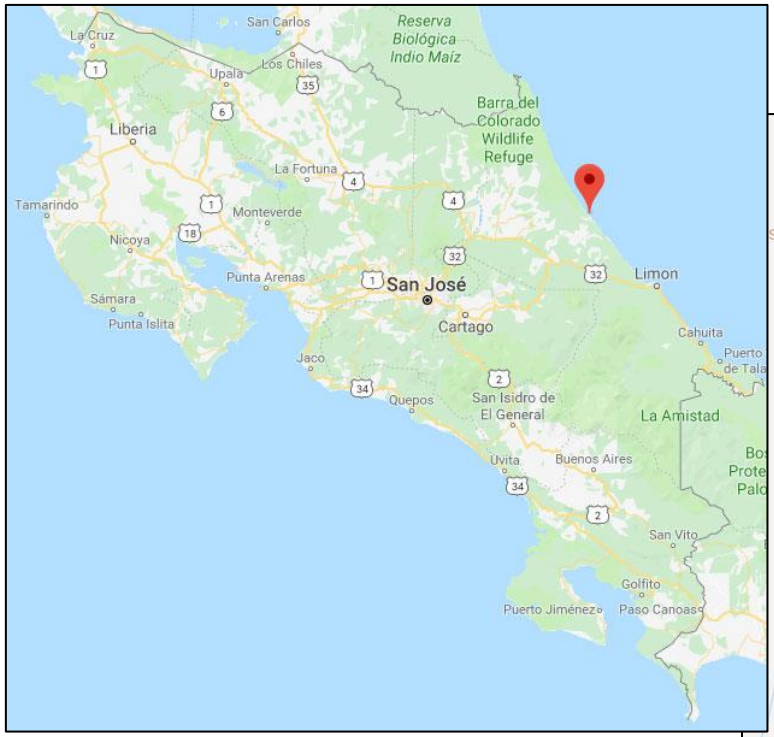
Species	Total	Avg	Low	High	Species	Total	Avg	Low	High
Snow Goose	1	0.7	0	1	Blue Jay	64	146.0	60	333
Canada Goose	3486	2261.5	229	4577	American Crow	133	344.1	55	692
Cackling Goose	1	0.3	0	1	Common Raven	8	3.5	0	10
American Black Duck	8	21.0	2	67	Black-capped Chickadee	271	598.7	243	1211
Mallard	821	513.4	26	1636	Red-breasted Nuthatch	11	8.4	1	22
Greater Scaup	2	0.0	0	0	White-breasted Nuthatch	57	43.3	19	82
Bufflehead	2	2.6	0	11	Brown Creeper	3	2.8	0	8
Common Goldeneye	12	7.1	1	26	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	6.1	0	30
Hooded Merganser	2	5.7	2	10	American Robin	1	61.2	1	266
Common Merganser	14	12.8	1	66	Northern Mockingbird	2	1.9	0	5
Ruffed Grouse	CW	3.2	0	8	European Starling	571	1836.0	485	3490
Wild Turkey	60	39.2	0	195	Cedar Waxwing	100	89.4	3	346
Great Blue Heron	CW	1.3	0	4	American Tree Sparrow	100	295.9	55	837
Bald Eagle	2	1.6	0	3	Song Sparrow	1	5.1	1	22
Northern Harrier	1	3.0	0	11	Swamp Sparrow	CW	1.0	0	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	3.9	1	11	White-throated Sparrow	2	2.4	1	10
Cooper's Hawk	3	3.2	0	10	White-crowned Sparrow	2	5.1	1	21
Red-shouldered Hawk	CW	1.3	1	2	Slate-colored Junco	178	301.6	91	693
Red-tailed Hawk	54	59.1	35	117	Snow Bunting	60	205.6	0	1118
American Kestrel	2	8.8	0	16	Northern Cardinal	67	60.3	22	101
Peregrine Falcon	1	0.5	0	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	106	7.8	0	36
Ring-billed Gull	19	140.3	1	2010	Pine Grosbeak	0	13.6	0	39
Herring Gull	13	34.3	0	222	Purple Finch	5	10.8	1	52
Rock Pigeon	625	551.3	210	1455	House Finch	34	185.4	23	456
Mourning Dove	200	624.8	191	1385	Common Redpoll	1	211.3	0	1670
Great Horned Owl	1	2.1	0	5	Pine Siskin	32	18.6	1	63
Barred Owl	CW	0.5	0	1	American Goldfinch	134	221.9	37	499
Belted Kingfisher	3	2.8	1	7	House Sparrow	392	569.1	196	1316
Red-bellied Woodpecker	15	7.1	0	21					
Downy Woodpecker	52	51.8	21	91	**Species**	**Total**	**Avg.**	**Low**	**High**
Hairy Woodpecker	25	18.3	2	33	**Total Birds**	**7379**	**9743.8**	**3131**	**15507**
Pileated Woodpecker	10	3.2	0	12	**No. Species**	**60**		**41**	**60**

Pura vida in Parismina

By Margaret Beaudette

There is a business in a town not so far from my home that uses the catch phrase, "It's worth the drive . . .". In March, my husband and I traveled to a community on the east coast of Costa Rica that could use this phrase, but with a few changes. "It's worth the five hour flight from Toronto, followed by the two hour bus ride from San Jose to Siquirres. In Siquirres, change buses for the two hour ride to Caño Blanco, then take the twenty minute water taxi ride to Parismina. But, before you even get on the first bus, go to an ATM for Costa Rican colones in order to pay for your transportation and accommodation." There is no ATM in Parismina and only local currency, in cash, is accepted. All this for baby turtles?

Below: Map of Costa Rica



Below: Map of Parismina within Costa Rica

Who knew, when I joined the Halton North Peel Naturalist Club, it would result in a new interest for me and the inspiration for an amazing trip. The guest speaker at one of the first meetings I attended talked about sea turtle conservation in Costa Rica. That immediately piqued my interest because I had been to Costa Rica three different times and had always talked about going back.

I began by researching volunteer sea turtle rescue organizations but quickly discovered there is almost always a "middle man" one has to pay. For example, following one of my inquiries, I received a phone call from an organization based in Texas! A second inquiry resulted in a call from England! The money to pay those people for their phone calls and their offices, has to come from somewhere. These organizations all charge $250 and more, just to accept your application. I guess I know how these people get paid! I took my husband's advice and contacted the college professor whose talk had inspired me. Josh Feldham, of Fleming College in Peterborough, connected me with ASTOP (Association Save The Turtles Of Parismina). Their $50 fee goes directly to the community of Parismina and their work with turtle conservation.

In 1999, Costa Rica banned sea turtle poaching and the sale of products made from sea turtles. In 2001, Parismina, in conjunction with the Costa Rican Coast Guard, established the not-for-profit organization ASTOP, when they realized the number of sea turtles nesting on their beaches was diminishing due to poaching and environmental concerns. This was difficult for the community, as they depended on turtles and eggs as food, and, the sale of these items provided a much needed income for families.

The people of Parismina, who used to depend on revenue from turtles came up with a home-grown solution. Local families who desire it, can provide accommodation for tourists. We chose this option for our week's visit. They receive payment for room and board which helps them provide for their own families.

Another source of income is tour guides for the nightly beach patrols. The patrols are undertaken to discourage poachers from taking eggs and turtles. Participating in beach patrols is expected of visitors to Parismina. Of significance is the fact that some former poachers are earning a legal living now by guiding the beach patrols. We patrolled the beach every night for four hours. When a nest was located, it was marked so it could be found in the daylight and the eggs moved to the hatchery.

Under the supervision of ASTOP, we cleaned the beach for the establishment of the hatchery. It was during this activity that I discovered how immense the plastic pollution problem really is!

Despite how difficult it was to walk the beach in the dark, heat, and humidity each night, the experience was well worth having.

Left: Beach garbage

Below: Cleanup crew

I followed ASTOP's Facebook page after our trip and was able to observe the hatchlings making their way to the ocean.

It is very impressive that a small, poor, isolated community of four hundred inhabitants has tackled their problems locally. This has led to a success rate of 98% of the hatchlings getting to the ocean, up from 38% when the project began. In addition, the people have more ways to make a living. Along with welcoming strangers into their homes and feeding them and leading beach patrols, they make and sell crafts.

The upshot of this experience is I have developed a real interest in the plight of sea turtles and the problems caused by pollution for some of the world's most important sea creatures. It is also clear that a local solution has a far greater likelihood of success than something imposed from the outside. I plan to take part in this type of activity again and would happily talk to anyone about participating in such an experience.

***Pura vida!**

* Pura Vida has a simple English translation but a far more profound meaning to the people of Costa Rica and anyone spending any amount of time in this majestic country. Pura vida. Pronounced POO-rah VEE-dah, in English means, "Pure Life".

Winter visitors

Article by Don Scallen with photos by Fiona Reid

This winter is shaping up to be one of the best in years for winter finches. Ron Pittaway's Finch Forecast http://jeaniron.ca/2018/wff18.htm has thus far proven remarkably prescient.

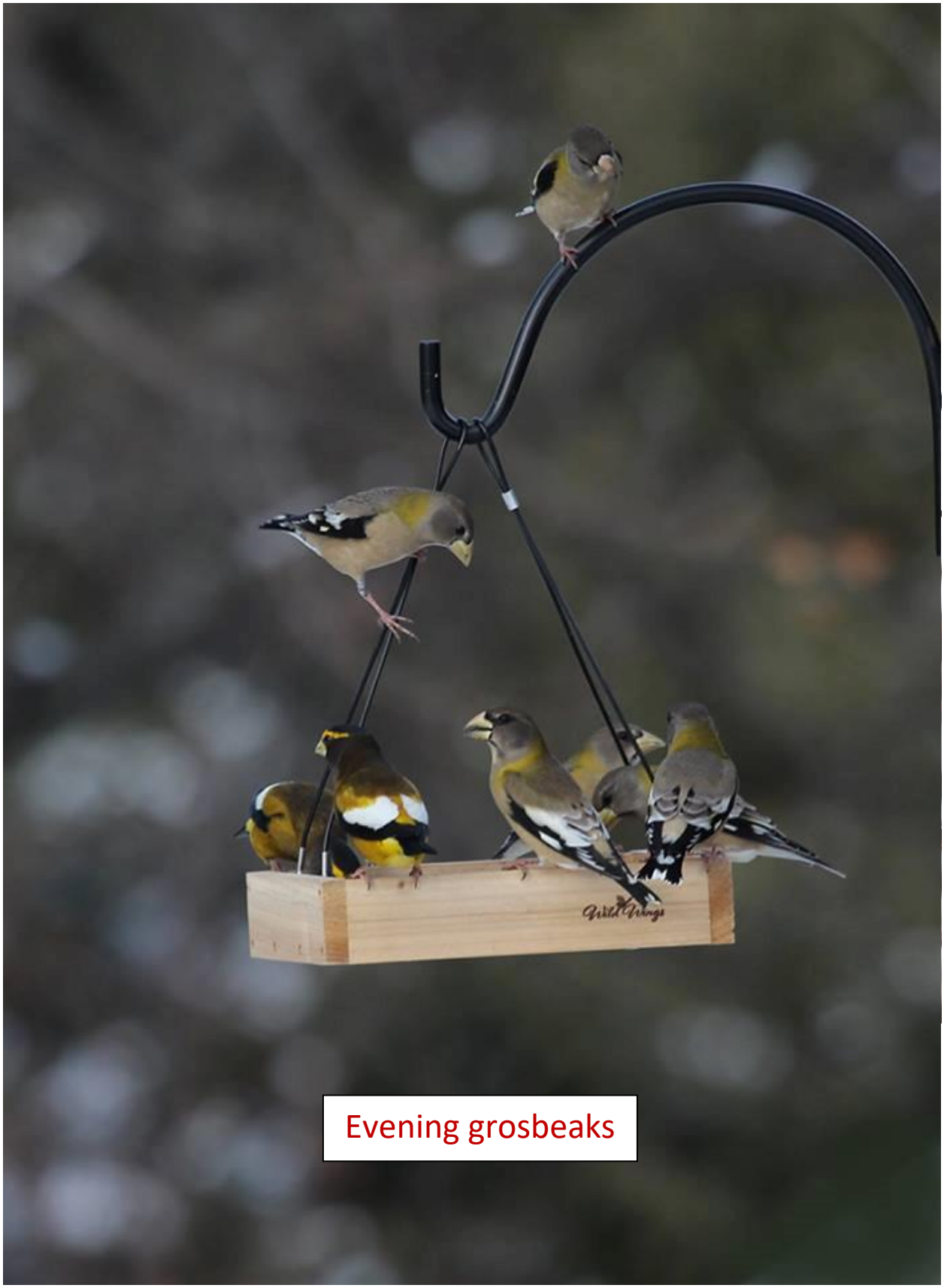
Just north of the club's bailiwick in Dufferin County, redpolls and pine grosbeaks have been found. Evening grosbeaks have also been seen in Dufferin County and in Brampton by club member Renzo Dalla Via and by Ian Jarvie at the local birding hotspot that is Tweedle Street in Glen Williams.

Exciting non-finch birds that are also gracing us with their presence this winter, include magnificent Bohemian waxwings, snowy owls, northern shrikes and snow buntings.

Fiona Reid's wonderful images on the next page show the beauty of three of these northern species.

Bohemian waxwings

Pine Grosbeak



Evening grosbeaks

Two New Insects in Ontario

W.D. McIlveen

The first of two new insects is the European Firebug, *Pyrrhocoris apterus*. In general appearance, it resembles the Boxelder or Milkweed Bugs which are common in our area. The name comes from the conspicuous red and black coloration and has nothing to do with a stinging bite like Fire Ants. The wing covers are red one large and one small black dot. This pattern will help distinguish this species. Like the Boxelder Bug, it will form large aggregations on the ground. Unlike the Boxelder Bug, it cannot fly.

European Firebug (*Pyrrhocoris apterus*)

Box Tree Moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*).

The Firebug feeds on the seeds of mallows and Linden. In some ways, this may be beneficial in controlling the non-native mallows (e.g. Dwarf Mallow, Musk Mallow, Rose of Sharon and Linden). It has yet to be evaluated with respect to native mallows or American Basswood which is related to Linden. Its native range is palearctic in Europe and Asia. It was discovered in Utah around 2008 but only recently in the GTA where a few populations have been found in Etobicoke, Mississauga and Brampton.

The second insect is probably a brand new record for North America. This is the cute little Box Tree Moth (*Cydalima perspectalis).* It is generally white with a black border on all sides of the wings. As the name suggests, it feeds on hedges and specimens of Boxwood. As such, it has the potential to be a significant pest for horticultural use of the Boxwood for landscaping purposes. Although not native to North America, Boxwood is a significant component of the plant market for Sheridan Nurseries. The moth was first noted in Toronto in the general area of High Park in 2018. It is native to Eastern Asia (e.g. China, Japan, Korea, India) but started to spread extensively in Europe only in 2008. With such a world distribution, it would be difficult to know whether the Toronto specimens came from the original population or if the Toronto moths represent an extension of the European invasion.

HNP members should be aware of these two insects so that we can monitor their spread.

CSI Investigation: Sam the Salamander implicated in the disappearance of Bob the Burying Beetle

By Don Scallen

It will be difficult for Sam the spotted salamander to deny involvement in the death of Bob the burying beetle. A CSI probe into Bob's disappearance has revealed damning evidence linking Sam to the incident: mites clinging to his body.

Bob the Burying Beetle carrying mites

Why is this evidence significant? Bear with me. The mites found on Sam the spotted salamander, are normally found on burying beetles. They catch rides on burying beetles, as we do on taxis or busses.

You see, mites and burying beetles share the same rather distasteful quest: they both seek cadavers. Upon finding a dead critter – a mouse, a shrew, a small snake – burying beetles lay eggs on it and then, honoring their name, bury it.

They bury the body not out of respect for the deceased, but to hide it from pesky flies whose maggots would compete with their larvae for the mouldering flesh.

Ah, but it's a given that some flies will lay their eggs before the burying beetle inters the body. That's where the mites come in. They feed on fly eggs and maggots, not on the dead critter itself. With me so far?

So the mites and the burying beetle have a tidy arrangement. The mites, despite their eight-leggedness, have mobility issues. Riding the fast-moving burying beetles solves that problem for them. And then the mites reciprocate by killing the maggots that compete with the burying beetles' larvae.

I know what you're thinking. Get to the point! How does all this implicate Sam the salamander in the tragic disappearance of Bob the burying beetle? The mites on Sam's body are key. The prosecution in his upcoming murder trial will argue that the mites clambered off Bob and onto Sam… when Sam swallowed Bob!

Sam the spotted salamander is being held without bail. The mites are expected to testify against him. Justice will no doubt be served.

Above: Sam the Spotted Salamander before the disappearance of Bob the Burying Beetle.

Below: Sam the Spotted Salamander with mites. Photo taken with CCTV after Bob the Burying Beetle's disappearance!

This article first appeared in Don Scallen's blog at *https://www.inthehills.ca/2018/11/csi-natureworld-the-case-of-burying-beetle-bob/*

Trash Talk!

By Laura Weihs

The first meeting of the Litter & Waste Reduction Committee met on November 22, 2018 with five members in attendance.

We discussed the possibility of hosting a fall event. The ideas below were considered:

- Provide samples of eco-friendly products (plastic take out containers, cutlery, cups, straws etc.) to restaurant owners to consider to lessen their environmental impact.
- If not businesses, we could target the general public and have samples of water bottles, mugs, reusable bags and take out kits to keep in their car etc. We could survey people to see what changes they would like to see in stores, then go to businesses with feedback and facts.
- We will investigate partnering with an event such as the Eco-film event in the fall. We could engage people by playing the Waste/Recycle game and give tips.

These ideas have given us a starting point and a plan of action will be determined at a future meeting. The issue of single-use water bottles is coming to a head in the media, so perhaps we don't need to put effort into that area.

There was talk of creating a cute acronym for the things you should have with you before you leave home: Keys, Reusable Bags, Mug, Bottle, Doggie Bag Kit etc.

We discussed ways to spread tips such as reminding people to turn off Christmas lights, for example: Letter to the Editor of IFP, Acton Tell & Sell and putting a note in your mailbox asking for no delivery of junk or general delivery mail. Publish an article once we have built a history with pictures to document progress. Creating a Facebook page, blog, or mailing list for e-blasts was not something the group was interested in at this time.

We'll bring garbage bags and gloves from the Works Department to give to club members at the next meeting to create an attitude where club members automatically bring these things to outdoor club events so that litter is picked up. Make this part of being outdoors and since we all love nature, let's protect it! We discussed 'Plogging' which is picking up litter while walking or doing any kind of outdoor exercise. (More info in the next article.)

It was agreed that we should continue to do some group litter pickups. There was discussion about covering our own individual areas vs having one meet up point to make it convenient for people and expand the area. Tracking our hours and what is picked up is detailed in the 'Plogging' article. As well, Earth Day was brought up but we didn't make any decisions about if we would participate on the day or in the events during Earth Week.

Next meeting will be at Fiona's residence Tuesday, January 15th at 7:30 pm.
Please RSVP fiona.reid7243@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

Naturalists get "Plogging" to Give Mother Nature a Helping Hand

By Laura Weihs

Above the Outdoor Events listing you'll have noticed our request to bring gloves and bags on club outings to help pick up litter while enjoying the environment. You don't have to wait for an organized event, please read on and see how…

"Plogga" or **"Plogging"** is a New Swedish trend catching on globally. It's a movement created and followed by people with the same urge to live in a clean world! The word comes from the words picking up garbage and jogging mixed into one. Plocka (pick up) + jogga (jog) = plogga. This is exactly what Plogga is – picking up garbage on the streets while getting exercise. It can be anything from a hike, bike ride, stroller walk to canoeing or any outdoor activity. Erik Ahlström is the founder of Plogga and for more information see: https://swedesinthestates.com/plogga-new-trend-will-save-planet/

At the new committee meeting we discussed the fact that club members could get "Plogging" and collect litter on our normal walking routes on a regular basis over the next couple of months and on club outings. As well, we could try to document what types of litter we are finding in a few different parts of town. This will allow us to look more closely at how and if litter varies by region, season etc., as well as what types of litter we are finding, and possibly how they may have come to be there (blown out of curbside blue boxes, dropped by drivers/pedestrians etc.). The hope being that with this information we will be better able to tackle the question of how to change things for the better. With these findings we can also ask the town to place extra garbage and recycle bins in problem areas.

There is an app called "Litterati" to track litter that we are picking up. By using Litterati to photograph litter, then tagging and uploading it, this information can be used to show where the problem areas are as it maps our entries. I would suggest that one person photos/uploads while another picks up litter as it is time consuming and cumbersome to do both yourself! If possible, please record the number of hours you log and at some point it would be interesting to see the amount of time our club puts into this activity.

There has been some question whether litter that is dirty can be put in the recycle. I spoke with someone at the Region of Halton and she said that if for example a water bottle is completely covered in dried mud it will get tossed out in the separating process because a laser will be used to determine if it is recyclable plastic or not and when it hits the mud, it will be rejected. If the bottle is only partly covered, there is a chance that the laser will hit a clean spot and accept it. At some point it will get washed and will not contaminate a batch. Often the litter on side roads and in ditches is completely covered in mud and should be considered garbage: in other words waste for the landfill. All water bottles must be empty. Also, remember that in Halton Region takeout coffee cups go in the green compost bin vs the blue box. This has been a source of confusion.

Do something good for yourself and the environment. Don't wait for an organized event just get outdoors, pick up litter while getting some exercise and toning your muscles! You and the environment will both look and feel better. Give Mother Nature a helping hand!

Citizen Science Opportunities

1. The 2019 Great Backyard Bird Count will take place February 15 through 18.
To participate go to **www.BirdCount.org**

2. Ontario Wild Turkey Census. Jennifer Baici a PhD candidate at Trent University is asking Ontario naturalists to report turkey sightings to eBird or INaturalist from December 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019.

From the Web:

Fiona submitted these very informative links not only on "the Birds and the Bees" but the importance of the "native plants" too!
https://www.audubon.org/news/yards-non-native-plants-create-food-deserts-bugs-and-birds
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/23/scientist-unveils-blueprint-to-save-bees-and-enrich-farmers?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Caddisfly Larvae Cases: aquatic objets d'art

Article and photos by Don Scallen

In their larvalhood many caddisfly species build snug protective retreats called "cases." They do this by gluing materials together with sticky silk produced by their salivary glands. This use of salivary silk reveals the relationship between their order, Trichoptera, and the Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies). Silk used by moth caterpillars to spin cocoons, is produced by salivary glands as well. And, like moths and butterflies, caddisflies pupate and transform into flying adults.

A caddisfly case is analogous to the shell a hermit crab uses. Both are mobile homes that offer protection. The difference of course is that caddisflies build their homes, while hermit crabs find theirs.

Caddisfly larva, case made of shells and cedar needles.

While caddisfly cases surely reduce the threat of predation, there are animals that eat caddisfly larvae, cases and all. Research at the Queen's University Field Station revealed that map turtles were using their strong jaws to crunch caddisfly larvae along with crayfish and zebra mussels.

It's worth noting that not only do caddisfly cases offer physical protection, but serendipitously, because they are made of materials that carpet the bottoms of ponds and other bodies of water, they easily escape notice, even when hundreds may be in clear view. (To see them focus intently on a pond bottom, watching for movement. The typical length of a caddisfly case is approximately one inch.)

I'm fascinated by the tremendous diversity of cases that caddisfly larvae build. Different species in precisely the same environment will choose unique materials for their homes. In a vernal (temporary) pool on Fiona Reid's property, most caddisfly larvae use materials that are abundant to build their cases: sticks, plant fibres and cedar sprigs for example. But others eschew those readily available materials and use only mollusk shells in construction, even though mollusk shells are certainly a scarcer commodity. This case building diversity reminds me of the nest building choices of our songbirds. While many songbirds incorporate uber-available sticks and grasses in their nest building, there are notable exceptions. Baltimore orioles for example, use no sticks at all. Instead they seek milkweed fibre to weave into their distinctive bag-like nests.

Caddisfly larva, case made of assorted materials.

Caddisfly larva, case made of mollusk shells.

An obvious question to ask is the fidelity that caddisflies (and birds for that matter) have to particular building materials. Would caddisfly larvae that build with mollusk shells in their natural habitat, change their behaviour to use other materials if deprived of those shells? What would Baltimore orioles do if they were denied plant fibres, with only sticks available to build nests?

A partial answer, at least for caddisflies, comes to us from a French artist who pulled larvae from their cases and placed them in an aquarium with gold flakes and tiny gemstones. The caddisfly larvae built new cases with those items. Of course, his caddisflies may have been ones that build natural cases of pebbles, like many of our stream dwelling caddisflies do. If so, no great behavioural change would be necessary to substitute small gems for pebbles.

Caddisfly larvae are found in all sorts of wetlands, including ponds, lakes, streams and rivers. As mentioned, those in flowing water tend to make cases out of pebbles – readily available and providing a little weight to help in turbulent waters. Some stream dwelling caddisfly larvae even build funnel-shaped "nets" out of silk or pebbles to capture food: algae, tiny invertebrates and other organic matter.

Various Caddisfly larva with cases and their unique materials

Caddisfly larvae are endlessly fascinating. I look forward to finding many more of their wonderful cases come spring.

Were You Paying Attention?

1. Which 4 species accounted for nearly 70% of all birds seen in the 2018 Christmas Bird Count?
2. What is the current success rate of the turtle hatchlings getting to the ocean and what was it when the Sea Turtle conservation efforts began in Parismina, Costa Rica?
3. What are the names of the 2 new insects in Ontario?
4. What arrangement do mites and burying beetles have?
5. What is the definition of Plogga or Plogging?

Winter Poem

Coming down
out of the freezing sky
with its depths of light,
like an angel,
or a buddha with wings
it was beautiful
and accurate,
striking the snow and whatever was there
with a force that left the imprint
of the tips of its wings –
five feet apart – and the grabbing
thrust of its feet,
and the indentation of what had been running
through the white valleys
of the snow –
and then it rose, gracefully,
and flew back to the frozen marshes,
to lurk there,
like a little lighthouse,
in the blue shadows

From *White Owl Flies Into and Out of the Field by Mary Oliver*

Photo credit Ian Jarvie

Halton Climate Collective Meeting Report

By Laura Weihs

The Halton Climate Collective (HCC) held 4 charrette meetings in November to engage the communities of Halton and help them discuss the effects of climate change. The meetings consisted of multiple activities from short surveys to group thinking activities. The charrettes brought the communities of Halton together and allowed them to discuss climate action with their fellow citizens. If you are not familiar with the word "charrette" it means a meeting in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions.

These charrettes were held in the Town of Halton Hills, Milton, Oakville and Burlington. The room at the Active Living Centre was filled with approximately 80 participants and our club had 8 members in attendance! It was noticeably an older crowd and it would have been nice to see more 'younger' participants.

We sat in groups and were asked specific questions. One individual recorded our answers, then the moderator asked us to share the main points with everyone. At one point we were shown pictures and were asked to record our reaction to them on a sticky note to be put on the wall beside the picture. They later analyzed these and found quite different reactions in the four separate geographical areas. I was able to attend a meeting to review the responses and it was evident that the gut reaction of the participants was specific to the effects of climate change in their own area. A few examples that I recall were: participants in Burlington were sensitive to pictures of flooding, Milton participants were especially reactive to lost crops - apples on trees ruined by early snow and the Town of Halton Hills participants were quite sensitive to pictures of the ice storm.

If I understand the strategy of all this correctly, the HCC would like to pinpoint what it is we love and what we want to protect. They are trying to find the button to push in order to motivate us to make changes to reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions and move towards a more sustainable community.

You can also participate and help by completing the HCC online survey:
We NEED YOUR help to guide us on our path for Greenhouse Gas Reduction
<https://ca.surveygizmo.com/s3/50033614/Share-Your-Thoughts-About-Climate-Change>

Work Toward a Zero Waste Lifestyle!

Read more about the HCC and consider their
"5 Tips to Reduce Your Greenhouse Gases"
on the following page.

Halton
Climate
Collective
The Halton Climate Collective (HCC) is a group of local organizations focused on transforming Halton into a low-carbon, climate-resilient community. The Leadership Team of the HCC is comprised environmental leaders and engagers from Conservation Halton, Town of Oakville, Town of Halton Hills, City of Burlington, Halton District School Board, Halton Catholic District School Board, University of Waterloo, Region of Halton and the Halton Environmental Network.
haltonclimate@gmail.com
@haltonclimate

5 Tips to Reduce Your Greenhouse Gases
Reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse
Be a mindful consumer, purchase less stuff, refuse excessive packaging, buy used, try to repair items and reuse. When recycling and composting follow regional guidelines.
Drive less and drive smart
Thinking of a new car? Think about an electric vehicle. Avoid idling and try to drive less. Participate in active transportation, walking, and biking. Carpool and use transit.
Think about your energy
Reduce your consumption of energy, purchase energy star certified products, reduce phantom power by unplugging electronic and chargers when not in use.
Eat healthy
Eat less meat, try to increase your intake of local fruits and veggies. Cook seasonal, check out recipes that incorporate local ingredients for health dishes.
Get Involved
Get involved in your local community, build awareness, talking to your neighbours, friends and family about your efforts to reduce your Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

January/February Quiz

Photos by Gary Hall

Answers on the last page.

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

Executive

President: Don Scallen	(905) 876-6180
Past President: Fiona Reid	(905) 693-9719
Vice President: Ian Jarvie	(905) 877-1441
Secretary: Ann Fraser	
Treasurer: Janice Sukhiani	(647) 408-9515

Appointments

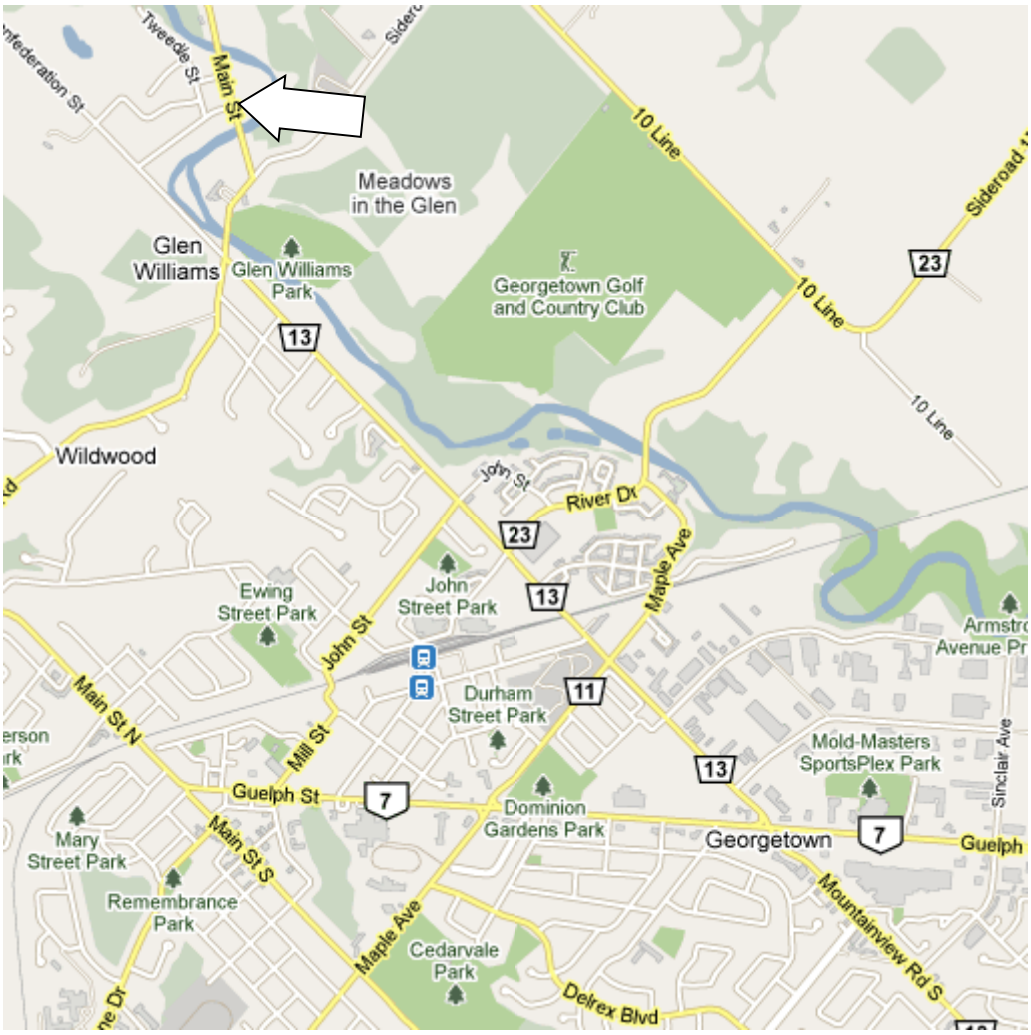
Membership:	Lorysa Cornish
Newsletter:	Laura Weihs
Ontario Nature Representative:	Don Scallen
Webmaster:	John Beaudette
Crozier Property Steward	
Hardy Property Steward	Ray Blower

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

www.hnpnc.com

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

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



Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club Membership Form

_____ Renewal or _____ New Member(s) Date_____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

New 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)

Would you like to make a donation to help send a youth to the **Ontario Nature Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership**? If yes, amount of donation: _____

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: _____

****

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

Answers to the January/ February Quiz

1. Barred Owl
2. Boreal Owl
3. Great Horned Owl
4. Eastern Screech Owl
5. Great Grey Owl
6. Short-eared Owl
7. Snowy Owl
8. Long-eared Owl
9. Saw Whet Owl
10. Northern Hawk Owl

Answers to "Were you Paying Attention?"

1. As usual, Canada Geese dominated the tally with nearly half of the individual birds reported. Along with the non-native Rock pigeon, Starling, and House Sparrow, these four species accounted for nearly 70% of all birds seen.

2. Parismina, Costa Rica's Sea Turtle Conservation efforts have led to a success rate of 98% of the hatchlings getting to the ocean, up from 38% when the project began.

3. The two new insects in Ontario are the European Firebug, *Pyrrhocoris apterus* and the Box Tree Moth (*Cydalima perspectalis).*

4. The mites, despite their eight-leggedness, have mobility issues. Riding the fast-moving burying beetles solves that problem for them. And then the mites reciprocate by killing the maggots that compete with the burying beetles' larvae.

5. Plocka (pick up) + jogga (jog) = "plogga" or "plogging"

Anything concerning the newsletter can be e-mailed
to Laura Weihs at biker_chic@sympatico.ca