Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

The Esquesing

March – April 2021 Newsletter
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President's Message

As we enter the "home stretch" of winter's last weeks, it is easy to feel that change is in the air. It has been a mild winter, for the most part anyway, but the longer days and at least a few days with positive temperatures have been most enjoyable. Those who have been out with their binoculars will have noticed that early spring migrants have already started to show up. This struck me the other day when I looked up at the sound of a Grackle calling as it flew overhead, the first I have seen this year. Snowy Owls that had haunted the same patch consistently for the past few months have disappeared, apparently having felt the time was right to begin the long flight back to the tundra. And multiple reports surfaced the other day of Tundra Swan flocks along Lake Ontario, one of the more spectacular early migration heralds!

But it isn't Spring just yet! The Winter Birding Challenge is still on until March 19th, giving us a little time yet to add to the impressive list already compiled by our club's sharp-eyed birders. You may yet find northward-bound boreal Finches, or be the first to spy a newly-arrived Killdeer or Woodcock.

Birds are, of course, not the only critters to watch for in March. As the ice and snow begin to melt, the Salamanders will make their annual trek to their breeding ponds in startling numbers. A few insects may brave the temperatures on the warmer and sunnier days, mammals like Skunks and Opossum will come out of hibernation or dormancy, and Garter Snakes are quite capable of emerging from their dens to catch some rays before the snow is all gone.

Whether or not you catch some of those late winter-early spring observations, I hope you will join us for the club meetings. Our excellent line-up of speakers continues: This month, on March 9th, we will have Arnaud Desbiez joining us from the tropical heat of Brazil to talk about the South American giants, the Giant Anteater and the Giant Armadillo. Giant Armadillos are ecosystem engineers, digging huge burrows that are used by more than fifty other species. He has been studying them for ten years and will share his insights into the importance of these amazing and endangered animals.

Next month, on April 13th, we will enjoy a talk by Sam Jaffe of the Caterpillar Lab. Sam will be discussing these fascinating creatures, their importance in biodiversity and the ongoing work of the Caterpillar Lab.

In May, we will be joined by Rich Hoyer. Rich will give a talk about the wildlife of the Pribilof Islands. As these islands are located in the Bering Sea off Alaska, and mostly consist of rocky cliffs and tundra, they are noted for seabirds, which nest there in the millions.

Hope to see you at the meetings!

Yves Scholten

Talks and Walks

Talks

As you know your executive will continue to hold Zoom meetings online for the time being. Meetings will still begin at 7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month and will start with a half hour business meeting, hosted by our new president, Yves Scholten, then we'll be treated to a captivating presentation as listed below. Zoom login details and information will be sent out closer to each event date. We hope you'll join us!

Note: If you wish some support from Alexis to ensure your Zoom connection is functioning smoothly, please log in to zoom at 7:20 pm, prior to the meeting, for helpful zoom tips.

Zoom meeting Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. Zoom login details will be e-mailed out.
Arnaud Desbiez: Saving South American Giants.
Arnaud has spent 10 years studying Giant Armadillos, and more recently his team started work on conservation of Giant Anteaters. These iconic mammals are highly endangered. Giant Armadillos are the "ecosystem engineers" of the South American landscape, digging huge burrows that are used by more than 50 species.
For more information go to: www.giantanteater.org, www.giantarmadillo.org and https://whitleyaward.org/winners/conservation-of-giant-armadillos-in-the-cerrado-brazil/.

Zoom meeting Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at 7:30 pm Zoom login details will be e-mailed out.
Sam Jaffe: Fascinating Caterpillars and the work of the Caterpillar Lab
Sam Jaffe of the Caterpillar Lab will be discussing these fascinating creatures, their importance in biodiversity and the ongoing work of the Caterpillar Lab.

Zoom meeting Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 7:30 pm Zoom login details will be e-mailed out.
Rich Hoyer: The wildlife of the Pribilof Islands
Rich will give a talk about the wildlife of the Pribilof Islands. As these islands are located in the Bering Sea off Alaska, and mostly consist of rocky cliffs and tundra, they are noted for seabirds, which nest there in the millions.

Zoom meeting June 8, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. Zoom login details will be e-mailed out.
Dan Stuart: Ontario Prairies, Savannahs and Grasslands.
Dan Stuart is a consulting botanist and ecologist, and sits on Tallgrass Ontario's Board of Directors. He'll showcase the importance of tallgrass prairies and oak savannahs in Ontario as islands for rare and protected species, as well as their restoration and conservation.

Walks

We will slowly ramp up walks and field trips again over the coming months, while adhering to necessary Covid precautions. We'll keep you updated in future e-blasts.

Earth Day April 22, 2021

Give thought to what you and others can do for Earth Day. *Make Earth Day every day!*
https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2021/

Spring Bird Challenge

Last Spring our club managed, despite stringent Covid restrictions, to tally 176 species of birds from March 21 through June 21. This year we're challenging members to find 200 Ontario species.

Ian Jarvie awaits your sightings at auldscot1@cogeco.ca He'll compile a weekly list that John Beaudette will share on our website. Ontario's diverse array of hawks, owls, ducks and songbirds await. We look forward to your contributions!
(Club members only please.)

Environmental Issue of Concern

The proposed route of the GTA West 413 highway will run from highway 400, cross north Peel, turn south just prior to Georgetown and connect with the 401 approximately at the 9th line and Steeles Avenue. As such it will impact a large area of the territory served by the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club. Click on the links below to learn more. As naturalists most of us will likely oppose this highway, but it is important to understand both the pros and the cons to be able to respond to the proposal in an informed manner.

Check your inboxes for word on a public forum on the GTA West highway currently in the planning stages for Halton Hills. The Canadian Federation of University Women is proposing a Zoom conference that could take place in late March. Four stakeholders representing various interests and perspectives will be invited to speak and there will be an opportunity for participants to ask questions.

https://environmentaldefence.ca/stop-the-413/
https://financialpost.com/opinion/opinion-toronto-needs-highway-413

Global Day of Action event
Saturday March 20, 2021:
Stop the 413!

Halton Hills climate action!

Half hour, distanced events in Georgetown and Acton.
Bring your sign or we'll give you one.

Reminders to follow or go to:
https://www.haltonhillsclimateaction.com/news-and-events
(You can sign up for local e-news at the bottom of that webpage.)

Documenting Woodcock and Other Shorebirds

Article and Photos by W.D. McIlveen

We have already entered into the field work period for the Third Breeding Bird Atlas for the province of Ontario. The previous editions of the Atlas [Cadman *et al*.] were truly great documents concerning the distribution and abundance of breeding birds in Ontario. There is every expectation that the current version will be at least as valuable. The value of any version of the Atlas is directly dependent on the quality of the data that goes into it. The present article considers one particular species – the American Woodcock. Woodcock is still classed as common but their numbers may actually be in decline. The fact that Woodcock is a game species does little to enhance their overall populations. The present proposal serves a double purpose by supporting the Breeding Bird Atlas and extending our general knowledge about the numbers and local distribution of the species.

Woodcocks utilize habitat that can be described as old field, shrubby, clearings in wooded areas, and riverine sites. The clearings and areas with relatively short vegetation allows the males to be visible when they are making their spring mating displays. In addition, the preferred sites have moist soils. Moist soils provide the birds with their preferred food which includes earthworms, snails, spiders, and assorted arthropods. Woodcocks probe moist soil with their long bills (Fig. 1) in search of their prey.

Fig. 1. Feeding evidence for American Woodcock, Dowling, Ontario, 1982. Multiple feeding probe holes appear as dark dots in the picture.

Fig. 2. American Woodcock on nest Windsor, Ontario, 2011.

Fig. 3. American Woodcock eggs, Ojibway Prairie, Windsor, 1989.

Confirmation of the breeding of Woodcock or its presence in a particular area during the breeding season can be made by several methods. Confirmations include direct sighting of birds in the area, breeding displays (aerial displays), calls (a twitter during the aerial display) or a nasal 'peent' while on the ground, by the presence of feeding probe holes in the soil, by the discovery of nest or eggs (Figs. 3 and 4), or the presence of young birds. We would like to know the present breeding distribution of American Woodcock in our local area (Halton and Peel). The precise locations can be determined as described [McIlveen] to accommodate future mapping.

Multiple records from a single Atlas square are requested. If breeding evidence has been acquired in previous years, that would be excellent. While such records cannot be used for the current Atlas, that knowledge could lead observers to sites preferred by the birds or add to historical distribution information.

Surveys for breeding Woodcock should obviously be conducted during the breeding season at sites that offer the most suitable habitat. As a crepuscular species, surveys for calling birds should be done at twilight (e.g. after 8:00 pm). The location, season, and hour are the major guides to confirming the presence of the species but it can also be encountered opportunistically at any time. People wishing to contribute data to the project have several options. They can conduct surveys at locations of their own choosing within Halton or Peel. They can work with a person that has volunteered to look after a particular Atlas square. We can assist in matching up any potential Woodcock surveyor with the Atlassers needing help. Finally, we could assign particular survey routes to volunteers. Such routes would likely involve ten stations separated by 0.8 km with listening periods of 5 minutes. More details regarding survey procedures can be provided to volunteer observers who chose this last option.

The table below presents some information regarding the five shorebird species that are known to breed in our area. Upland Sandpiper has been largely extirpated locally but did nest in the past. The early arrival dates were those dates reported by Curry [2006]. The egg dates were determined from Peck and James [1983]. Some nests with eggs have been noted as early as the dates shown. The dates of more typical nests with eggs are also indicated.

Species	Early Arrival Date	Early Egg Date	Typical Egg Date
Killdeer	March 5	April 1	May 18
American Woodcock	March 12	April 2	May 2
Wilson's Snipe	March 27	April 24	May 15
Upland Sandpiper	April 19	May 12	May 27
Spotted Sandpiper	April 21	May 14	June 7

Breeding evidence should be submitted to the Breeding Bird Atlas for surveys in the next 5 years. Alternatively, any information past or current can be sent to Bill McIlveen at wmcilveen@sympatico.ca.

References Cited

Cadman, M.D. D.A. Sutherland, G.G. Beck, D. Lepage, and A.R. Couturier. 2007. Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario: 2001-2005. Published by: Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Ontario Nature. 706 pp.

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Peck, G.K. and R.D. James. 1983. Breeding Birds of Ontario: Nidiology and Distribution. Volume 1: Nonpasserines. Life Sciences Miscellaneous Publications. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. 321 pp.

Bird Names of Yore

Submission by Don Scallen

Here are former names of some common northeastern North American birds. Taken from *The Birds of John Burroughs.* John Burroughs (1837-1921) was an American farmer, naturalist and writer in New York State. His voluminous body of nature essays were written in the latter half of the 19th century and early 20th century. **See how many of these birds you can tag with current names.**

Answers on page 21

Canada Sparrow
Cedar-bird
Chewink
Golden-crowned Thrush
Hairbird
High-hole
Log Cock
New York Water Accentor
Orchard Starling
Pine Linnet
Red Owl
Red-shouldered Starling
Slate-colored Snowbird
Tip Up or Water Wagtail
Yellow Redpoll

Staying at home

Reflections from a 19th century naturalist that resonate in this time of Covid.

One has only to sit down in the woods or the fields, or by the shore of the river or the lake, and nearly everything of interest will come round to him, -- the birds, the animals, the insects; and presently, after his eye has got accustomed to the place, and to the light and shade, he will probably see some plant or flower that he has sought in vain, and that is a pleasant surprise to him. So, on a large scale, the student and lover of nature has this advantage over people who gad up and down the world, seeking some novelty or excitement; he has only to stay at home and see the procession pass. The great globe swings around to him like a revolving showcase; the change of the seasons is like the passage of strange and new countries; the zones of the earth with all their beauties and marvels, pass one's door, and linger long in the passing. What a voyage is this we make without leaving for a night our own fireside!

John Burroughs

Let the Frogs Sing

Article and Photos by Don Scallen

From the annals of the truly absurd comes a recent story out of France about property owners being forced by authorities to fill in a pond because of frogs singing.

This in response to neighbours complaining about the volume of frog calls during their breeding seasons. The pond was condemned despite the presence of frog species considered at risk in France.

This is an indictment of the inability of many people to live and let live. But it is also terribly sad. Frog calls are the soundtrack of a healthy environment. The ponds the frogs breed in are also home to newts and other salamanders and innumerable insects and crustaceans. This abundant life supports birds and other vertebrates. Birds also nest and forage in the lush vegetation that surrounds the margins of ponds and other wetlands. Draining ponds eliminates not only frogs but myriad other creatures.

Ecological illiteracy, which I've written about before, may underpin this story. If the complainers knew how many life forms depended on the pond, if they realized that the frog voices were signaling a healthy environment, if they realized that complex and wondrous connections exist between insects, frogs, birds and mammals, they might have been less likely to demand the pond's removal.

But perhaps they simply don't care and that is even more troubling. What do you say to someone who doesn't understand or appreciate the poetry of frog calls, those beautiful life-affirming noises of spring?

Here in Canada, here in Halton and Peel, I thrill to the trilling of toads, the snores of leopard frogs, the banjo plucking of green frogs, the quacking of wood frogs and, of course, the shrill piping of spring peepers along the Escarpment and other remnant areas of natural habitat. I'd be delighted if frogs sang me to sleep in suburban Georgetown. Alas we've eliminated frog habitat to build our cities, perhaps not with conscious intent like the imminent filling of this pond in France, but with the same unhappy result.

A final note. I listened to the report of this minor tragedy on CBC's As It Happens. It was offered as light-hearted filler, told with the wit and clever word play that As It Happens is famous for, intended to evoke chuckles from listeners. A brief interlude of levity between serious stories about Covid stranded Australians in Canada and clothing magnate Peter Nygard's arrest on sexual assault charges.

But there was nothing funny about the frog report either. It should have been treated with the same gravity as the other stories, representing as it does, something much deeper than simply the loss of a few frogs: the depth of our detachment from nature and the damage wrought by ecologically illiterate (or indifferent) people everywhere.

Let the frogs sing!

Masthead Photo…

Downy Woodpecker, (*Picoides pubescens)*
Photo by Fiona A. Reid

Downy Woodpeckers are smaller than Hairy Woodpeckers, but a more useful feature for identification is relative bill length – in a Downy it is less than half the length of the head, in a Hairy it is longer than half the head length. Also, the white outer tail feathers of a Downy are spotted; in a Hairy they are unspotted.

You may have noticed that goldenrod galls often have holes drilled in them – this is usually the work of a male Downy Woodpecker. Males exclude females from feeding on smaller branches and stems. If males are experimentally removed, the females will start feeding on small, and often more productive, food sources.

From the Web

*An astonishing close up look at a **monarch butterfly overwintering site** in Mexico, courtesy of a hummingbird drone with an embedded camera:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWOySU_hAz0

*A trailer for **"My Octopus Teacher"** available on Netflix. This documentary is wonderful. Octopi are otherworldly but, in some respects, similar to us. They are intelligent and their adaptations for hunting and evading predators are astounding. Go to:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-lbIJHlmbE

***Freshwater mussels** are seldom considered by naturalists, but they deserve to be. Several, including southern Ontario species, have evolved adaptations for dispersing their eggs that beggar belief. The species in the video is equipped with a foot that mimics a darter (a common bottom dwelling fish). The mussel's "darter" is designed to lure large mouth bass. When the bass clamps its jaws on the "darter" the mussel releases its young (called "glochidia) into the mouth of the fish, where they parasitize the gills.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0YTBj0WHkU

***Giant Trevallies** are oceanic fish and awesome predators. In this video they hunt seabirds, going as far as launching themselves to capture them. Go to:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4pxLHG0Wzs

Bird (Black-browed Babbler) believed extinct for 170 years spotted in Borneo! https://phys.org/news/2021-02-bird-believed-extinct-years-borneo.html

A few years ago, workers digging to create a power plant in New Zealand discovered a 60-ton trunk from a kauri tree, and according to researchers, it has captured the last collapse of the Earth's magnetic field. ***Ancient trees*** show turning point in Earth history 42,000 years ago at: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSig4MyLQ0o&t=1s**

More at: ***Earth's Magnetic Field Broke Down 42,000 Years Ago, Causing Massive and Sudden Climate Change*** *https://www.ecowatch.com/earth-magnetic-field-climate-change-2650723403.html?rebelltitem=2#rebelltitem2*

A Thorny Issue

Article and Photos by W.D. McIlveen

In Ontario, fences were required to be erected around cleared land before new settlers could claim a clear title to their new property. Early fences included pine stumps and cedar rails. At some later point in time, wire fences and barbed wire were invented. These would have been too expensive for many so they would have been rather uncommon. According to some information, barbed-wire was not produced until 1874. Considering that much of the land occupancy and clearances in Halton would have happened before 1874, we can be fairly certain that barbed wire did not have a major role in creating the needed fences.

One other option for fencing was to use plants that had spines that would deter livestock from escaping from the pastures or to protect crops from some types of wildlife. We have no evidence that there were any programs in place to encourage the planting of spiny plants. Nurseries that could produce trees were indeed rare if they existed at all. The first Provincial tree nursery at St. Williams did not even become established until 1908. If anyone had wanted to plant a hedge of spiny trees, they would surely have done so under their own initiative, perhaps by locating a source of seed and planting those.

Regardless of the strategy employed, we have evidence of the use of at least two such species as hedgerows in our local area. These are described below but we have no specific information regarding the date of their creation they almost certainly postdate most land clearances.

Honey Locust

Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) is a native species in Ontario. Its known natural range in the province is quite limited. Herbarium collections include only about a dozen sites in the far southwest and in the Niagara area (Fig. 1). The Tree Atlas project identified about a dozen additional sites for the province. But overall, the species, as a native, is quite rare.

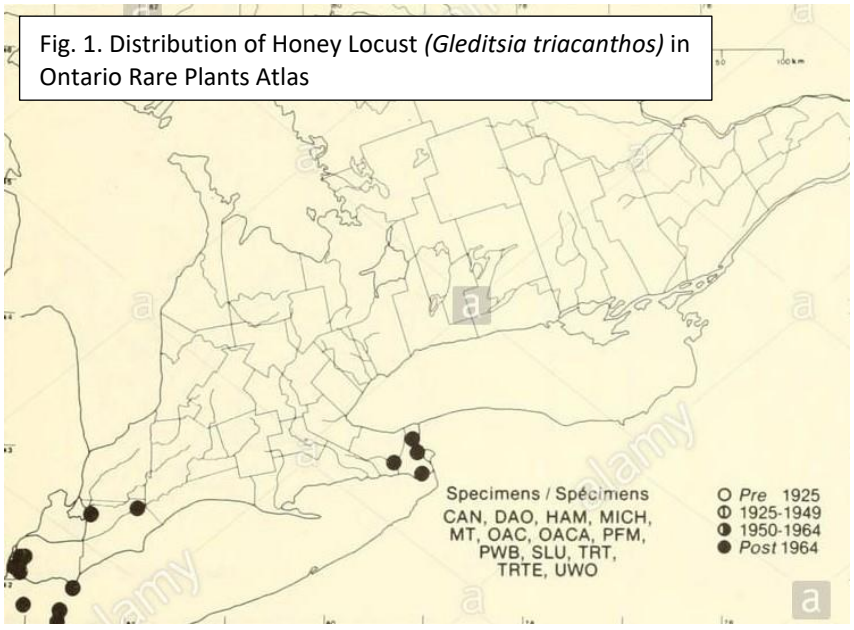


Fig. 1. Distribution of Honey Locust *(Gleditsia triacanthos)* in Ontario Rare Plants Atlas

Despite this, it is now found everywhere because it is widely planted as a roadside tree and as landscape specimens. The reason that the species is so widely grown is that the domesticated form '*inermis*' lacks thorns and is widely promoted. Several cultivars are sold including selections with names such as 'Shademaster' that are used for horticultural purposes. Such thornless varieties would simply not serve the purpose of a spiny hedge.

The high use of the thornless form does cloud the issue of distribution of the species. We can quickly sort the cultivated forms from the native form by the presence or absence of some rather vicious-looking thorns (Fig. 2) that are present only on the native form.

Fig. 2. Thorn on stems of Honey Locust, Milton, 2003.

The presence of thorns does not guarantee that a particular tree is actually a native in the location where it is found. Confusion could easily arise if the tree is a solitary specimen. When a thorny tree is discovered, it should be determined whether that tree occurs with others. If the tree falls within a hedgerow or in a line with a number of other trees of similar age, then planting should be suspected as the likely origin.

There may be a number of local occurrences of planted native Honey Locust trees but these have not been systematically documented. We do have several sites around Milton where the trees appear to have been planted (Table 1). The sites are marked on the attached map (Fig 3). A part of one of the Locust hedgerows south of Milton is shown in Fig. 4.

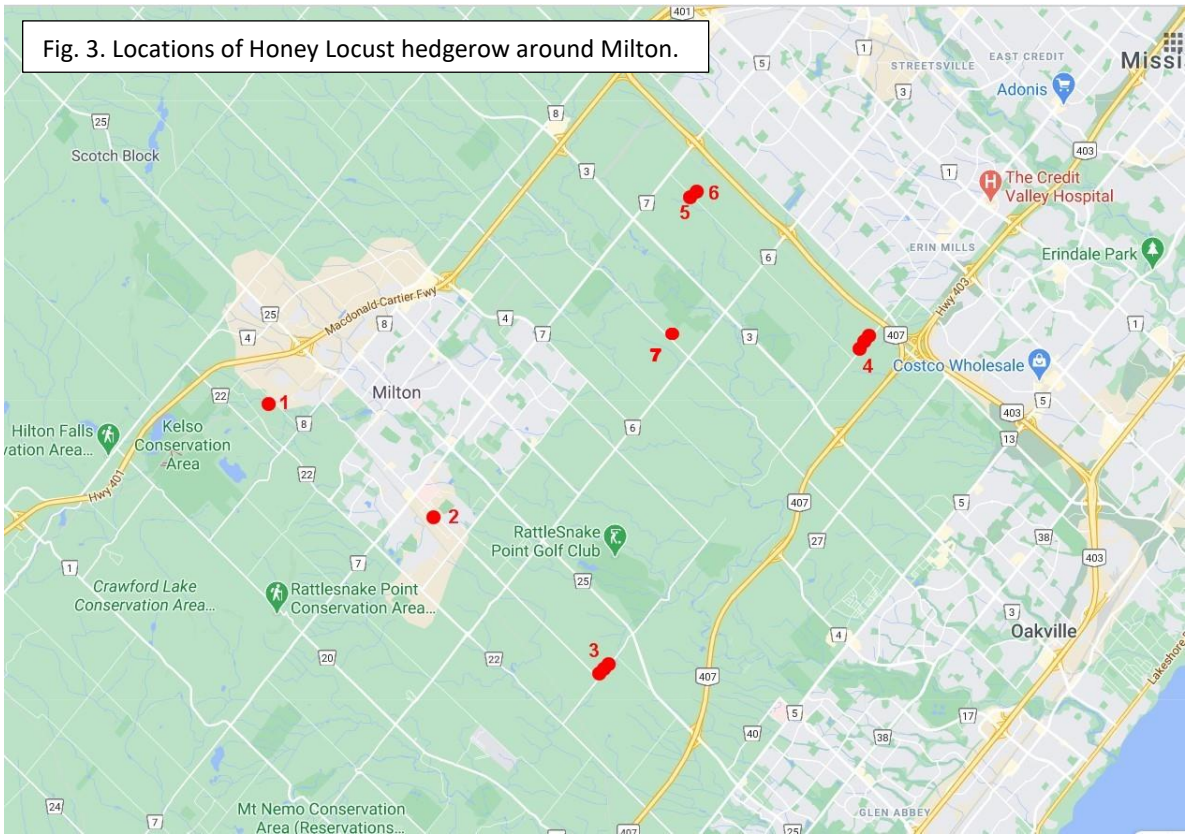


Fig. 3. Locations of Honey Locust hedgerow around Milton.

Fig. 4. Hedgerow of Honey Locust on Lower Baseline east of Trafalgar Road, 2020.

Table 1. Summary of information relating to native Honey Locust plantings in the Milton Area			
Site	**Number/Length**	**Location**	**Comment**
1	About 12 trees	Peru Road	38 and 39 cm DBH in 2015
2	At least one tree present in 2003	Bronte Road north of Britannia Rd	Removed in spread of urban Milton, likely part of longer row
3	About 200 m	Lower Baseline east of Bronte Rd	
4	About 250 m	Lower Baseline east of 8th Line	
5	About 10 trees	West side 8th Line south of Derry Rd.	
6	About 10 trees	East side 8th Line south of Derry Rd.	
7	About 6 trees	5th Line north of Britannia Road	

Osage-orange

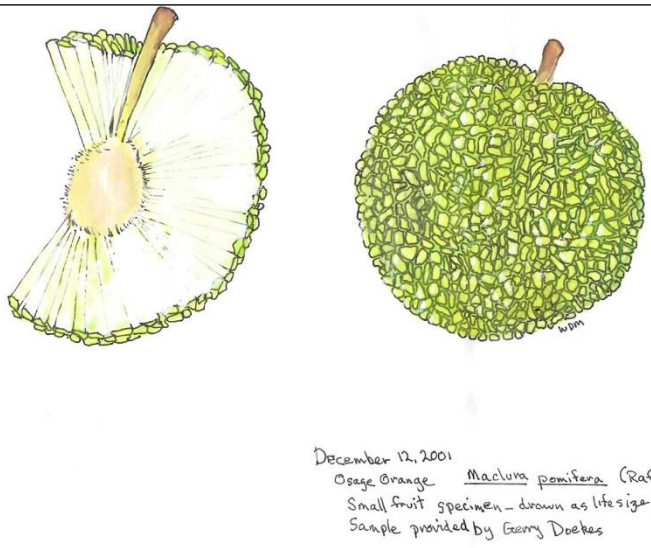
The Osage-orange (*Maclura pomifera*) is generally regarded as not native in Ontario. The current native range is viewed as eastern Texas and Oklahoma but it is planted in many other locations. The species was apparently present in Ontario in the warm period between

the last and second last ice ages in Ontario as shown by the fossil evidence from the Don River Valley in Toronto (McIlveen, 2012).

Osage-orange does have substantial thorns on the twigs but they pale in comparison to the thorns of the Honey Locust. A notable feature of the species is the large, compound green fruit which helps to confirm that the species is related to the mulberries (Figs. 5 and 6).

Fig. 5. Fruit of Osage-orange at Highway 5, Oakville, 2004.

Fig. 6. Illustration of Ontario Osage-orange fruit by WDM, 2001.



Osage-orange trees have been observed locally at three locations. Two of these sites are on Dundas Street in southern Halton. One small section of a hedgerow was still present in 2004 (Fig. 5) at a site east of Sixteen Mile Creek on the south side of the road. It has apparently been removed during the

construction that has been happening in that area in recent years. The other site was on the north side of Dundas nearer to Appleby Line. The tree has not been observed for many years and is presumed missing. The third location is on the west side of Torbram Road a short distance north of Old School Road. The stand there consists of a hedge that extends for about 300 metres. It was still there in October 2020 (Fig. 7) with a few of those trees producing fruit. There is no apparent immediate threat for that hedgerow as it is not near an urban development area.

Fig. 7. Hedgerow of Osage-orange on Torbram Road north of Old School Road, 2020.

Overall Considerations

All of the trees noted in this article were in roadside hedgerows though some consisted of only a few remaining trees. Regardless of species, all trees appeared to be of similar age. Even the rows of different species appeared remarkably similar. It would be easy to conclude that the trees were the same age and planted at approximately the same time. Two of the Locust trees had been measured in 2015 at 38 and 39 cm DBH. By one assessment, the trees might therefore be about 85 years old. By this calculation, the trees would have been planted around 1940. This timing is substantiated in an old photo from the family photo album. The date can be placed as 1953 based on the model of the car in the photo. The distant background shows a hedge fence along the side of current Mississauga Road between Mayfield Road and Old School Road. The photograph thus substantiates a faint memory of a Locust hedgerow in that location. The hedge appears to be young and trimmed to the usual 4 to 5 feet height for fences. A planting date during the 'War Years' would be quite consistent for the hedge to reach that particular size in 1953 and would match with the remaining hedgerows documented at Milton.

If the estimated planting dates are accurate, it might be fair to wonder why such trees had been established at that time. The estimated date of planting would fall within the period of World War II. With that temporal connection, we are reminded that the war effort included a high demand for metals. That demand included assorted public drives to collect large quantities of scrap metal and even metals that were in current use. This thinking extends a little further to imagine a shortage of metal that would be needed to create woven or barbed wire fencing. In the absence of wire, some reliance on nature might just be appropriate. The product of that is a relatively inconspicuous alteration of the living landscape in agricultural areas in Ontario.

We have not been able to establish the existence of any particular program that promoted the planting of Honey Locusts during the War years. In light of the particular distribution of the old hedge remnants around Milton, it seems rather unlikely that so many plantings occurred by chance alone. One could fairly conclude that some sort of communication among the local farmers regarding fencing needs had taken place. In addition, the farmers involved would have all needed a source of seeds or seedlings with which to create the hedges. In light of the known distribution of native Honey Locust, it seems likely that seeds had to be obtained from other parts of the Province.

To complete this article, other disparate but related facts are mentioned here. The use of Honey Locust hedges on farms in the United States was strongly promoted by George Washington. Following the 'Dust Bowl' years in the mid to late 1930s, Osage-orange hedging was used as both fencing and windbreaks throughout the mid-west and other places well outside the native range of the species. Lastly, the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa and other locations across Canada have maintained a collection of hedges since 1889. One of the species in that original collection was Honey Locust but it was removed in 1938 because it "grew beyond bounds" [Cole]. The collection appears to be geared to hedges for residential use rather than for farm fencing.

Finally, if any reader is aware of any additional information concerning comparable hedges in our area, whether past or present, the author would be delighted to receive that information.

References

Cole, C.T. 2006. Hedges for Canadian Gardens. Publication 899, Information Services, Agriculture Canada, Ottawa Research Station, Ottawa. 25 pp.

McIlveen, W.D. 2012. Early botany in Ontario: Evidence from Quaternary deposits in the Don Valley, Toronto. Field Botanists of Ontario Newsletter. Vol. 24: 1 Spring 2012 pp 9-11.

Frog Photo Quiz

Photos by: Don Scallen

Answers on page 20

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Mudpuppies

Article and photos by Don Scallen

Streams and lakes in Ontario are home to fantastic animals that most of us will never see – the whimsically-named mudpuppies. Our largest salamanders, they ultimately grow about the length of your forearm.

As carnivores, they crawl from hiding spaces under stones and rock ledges in the dead of night, to prowl streambeds for fish, crayfish, and carrion. In the darkness they likely track their prey by following chemical cues.

Due to their nocturnal habits and bodies patterned like river stones, they are seldom seen. My guess, however, is that they are far from rare.

Mudpuppies, unlike most other amphibians, do not undergo metamorphosis and they retain their gills – fleshy growths on the side of their heads – throughout their lives.

They also differ from most of their amphibian relatives by remaining active throughout the year. In fact, mudpuppy searches are usually conducted after dark in winter.

Speaking of which, I was invited to search for mudpuppies in a Wellington County stream last December. Five of us, donning chest waders over layers of clothing, slipped into the icy water at about 9pm. We searched the bottom with headlamps and flashlights.

All I noticed were sleepy fish – reward enough for a naturalist like me – but soon a voice rang out that a mudpuppy had been found. I plowed through the current to behold the first live mudpuppy I had ever observed in its natural habitat. Thrilling!

The great salamander patrolled the bottom in a slow, methodical manner. If it was unduly bothered by our flashlight beams it didn't show it.

Now in my seventh decade, I continue to be thrilled by new discoveries like this mudpuppy. And it's great to know that nature has a store of surprises that I will never exhaust. I will never want for wonder.

For a video of the Wellington mudpuppy go to
https://www.inthehills.ca/2021/02/mudpuppies/

Frog Quiz Answers:

1) Green Frog
2) American Toad
3) Leopard Frog
4) Chorus Frog and Penny
5) Bullfrog
6) Male Treefrog
7) Mink Frog
8) Spring Peeper
9) Wood Frog
10) Pickerel Frog

Bird Names of Yore, Answers:

Canada Sparrow *Tree Sparrow*

Cedar Bird *Cedar Waxwing*

Chewink *Towhee*

Golden-crowned Thrush *Ovenbird*

Hairbird* *Chipping Sparrow*

High-hole *Flicker*

Log Cock *Pileated Woodpecker*

New York Water Accentor *Northern Waterthrush*

Orchard Starling *Orchard Oriole*

Pine Linnet *Pine Siskin*

Red Owl *Screech Owl, red phase*

Red-shouldered Starling *Red Winged Blackbird*

Slate-colored Snowbird *Slate-colored Junco*

Tip Up or Water Wagtail *Louisiana Waterthrush*

Yellow Redpoll *Palm Warbler*

*named for one of the chipping sparrow's favourite nest building materials at the time: horse hair

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

Box 115, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4T1
Charity Registration number 869778761RR0001
www.hnpnc.com

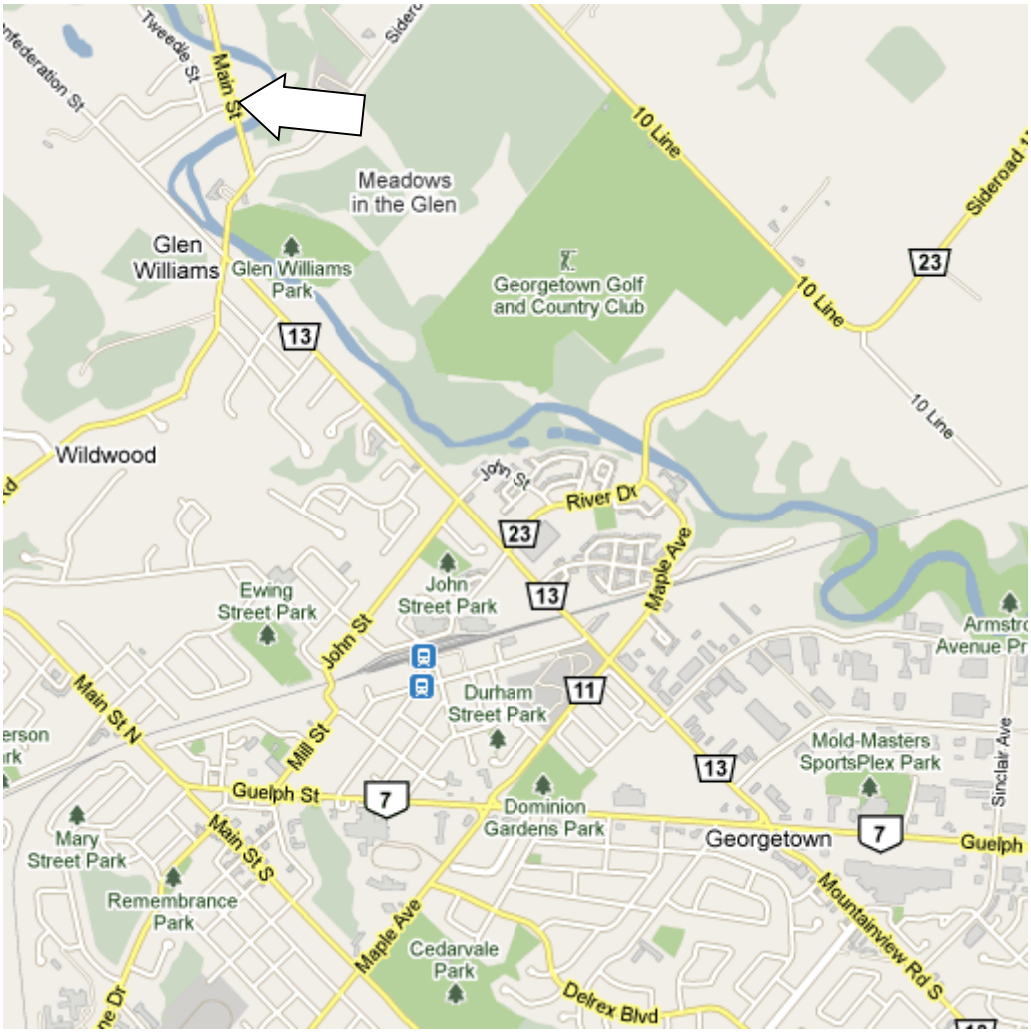
Executive

President: Yves Scholten yvesjs9@gmail.com
Past President: Don Scallen (905) 876-6180
Interim Vice President: Ian Jarvie (905) 877-1441
Secretary: Helen Pinchen (519) 766-8876
Treasurer: David Williams (905) 877-1539

Appointments

Membership: Lorysa Cornish
Newsletter: Laura Weihs
Webmaster Communications Director: John Beaudette
Member at Large: Fiona Reid
Member at Large: Andy Kovacs
Ontario Nature Rep: Don Scallen
Roving: William McIlveen
Hardy Property Steward: Ray Blower
Crozier Property Steward: Vacant

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

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership Renewal:	_____ Single ($30.00) _____ Family ($40.00)
New members only for the period:	
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