The Esquesing

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

www.hnpnc.com

Volume 58, Number 1 Sept - Oct 2023

Spring Peeper *(Pseudacris crucifer)* on Purple Coneflower *(Echinacea purpurea).* For most naturalists, the resounding, high-pitched calls of the Spring Peeper signal the end of winter. After mating season they stop calling, and, given their very small size and nocturnal habits, they essentially disappear. However, I have found them to be very common in my garden at night, clambering amongst the flowers that are most sought after by pollinators, such as Purple Coneflower, goldenrods and others. They employ a sit and wait strategy, grabbing moths and other insects that visit these flowers for nectar.

Description & Photo Credit: Fiona Reid

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President's Message

Welcome back to the HNPNC 2023-24 season!

September is the season of "back from summer vacation", back from the cottage, and Back to School for many of us. In our case, of course, it also means 'Back to the Glen' this time, as we not only return to our monthly schedule of Club meetings, but also have the opportunity to return to our old meeting spot at St. Alban's Church in Glen Williams! We are looking forward to kicking off a fresh new season coming together in a familiar and cozy gathering spot we have known for years.

The season is lining up nicely with some great speakers, as always! This Fall we have our own Vice President, Ian Jarvie, kicking off the season with a presentation on the marine wildlife of the Baja California, a unique ecosystem on the southwestern edge of North America. His skills of observation and photography are a phenomenon and a joy in their own right, and not to be missed!

Later this Fall, Dr. Heather Kharouba will be joining us from the University of Ottawa to give a talk on insect and plant ecology in the era of climate change.

Our Saturday Adventure Walks have been popular and will continue this Autumn with outings to look for raptors and other Fall migrants. Be sure to join us for some great outdoor jaunts!

Check out the excellent newsletter too, of course, with its beautiful photography and fascinating articles. This edition features articles on Ontario's Black Bears, Carnivorous Plants and much more. Special thanks have to go out to Laura Weihs, who has blessed the club for the past six years with her tremendous editorial talents in producing our newsletter and making it spectacular every time! Your efforts are greatly appreciated by us all, Laura. Thank you!

Looking forward to seeing you all at the meeting next week!

Yves Scholten

Indoor Events - Talks

Time/Date: 7:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month
Location: **St Alban's Hall,** 537 Main Street, Glen Williams, ON L7G 3T1
Map on last page of the newsletter.

Tuesday, September 12 at 7:30 pm
Ian James Jarvie: Whales - Baja, California
Our speaker for this evening will be **Ian James Jarvie**, HNPNC Vice-President.
Baja, California is one of the best places on Earth to view whales. Find out why!

Tuesday, November 14 at 7:30 pm
Dr. Heather Kharouba: Insect Ecology in the era of Climate Change
More details to follow closer to the date.

Outdoor Events - Walks

Please Note: More details will follow closer to the event date. Please confirm your participation for each outing to adhere to the ever changing Covid safety protocols.

Please watch your inbox for news of autumn outdoor adventures. Likely possibilities include:

September migrant birds and a canoe trip to Luther Marsh:
On Saturday 16 Sept, after our first club meeting on 12 Sept, we are planning an outing to Luther Marsh. This is a large man-made shallow lake with wonderful habitat for herons, sandhill cranes, shorebirds and ducks. We will be on the water in canoes or kayaks. It will very much depend on the weather - if the forecast is for any significant wind that day, we will plan an alternate outing. Being a wide open shallow lake, it can develop quite a chop on the water if there is wind. Stay tuned for more.

October a hawk viewing outing may be offered. More details to follow closer to the date.

Black Bears in the Georgetown Area

Article by W.D. McIlveen

"***If you go down in the woods today, you're sure of a big surprise***."
From: The Teddy Bears' Picnic, 1907

On Thursday, May 18, 2023, an interesting wildlife story happened in Georgetown. The story involved a visit from a Black Bear. It ended happily enough with no serious damage reported, no one injured, and the bear was safely removed.

1) The details for the day included the following: A bear was first spotted at the Georgetown District High School at 6 AM. About 90 minutes later it was seen in the Arborglen and Eighth Line area. At 6:50 AM a bear was seen near Sideroad 10 and 8th Line (near Gellert Centre) where it crossed to the south. Later in the morning, a bear was spotted at the 8th Line and 5 Sideroad. At about 7:00 PM, a bear was reported to be at McKinnon Avenue and Barbour Drive. The bear was discovered in a tree at about 9:45 PM where it was tranquilized and removed. Unless there was a second bear, the bear involved in this story first travelled a considerable distance south and then returned to Georgetown. The distance it covered in one day was at least 14 km.

The story involving a bear in Georgetown is rather unusual. At the same time, it must be accepted that it is not totally unique for there are a number of records of bears in this general area. The following is a summary of the local bear sightings in the last 20 years. The published information covers about a dozen bear sightings but there are many sightings that don't reach the general public.

2) A Bear was sighted in Milton on May 13, 2012 by a resident of the Town. Other residents apparently saw the bear but details of any encounters were not provided. There were three separate sightings of a Black Bear in Milton, during the week of May 16, 2012.

3) A Black Bear was observed in a small wooded area at Mount Forest Park, Burlington on May 16, 2012. Without resources to tranquilize and remove the bear, the police had little choice other than to shoot the bear.

4) On June 3, 2017, a sighting of a mother bear and cub was made by a member of the public. The site was in the area of East-West Garafraxa Townline near Dobbin Street on the east edge of Belwood. Police were not able to contain the bear but they did issue warnings to local residents of the sighting. The full story about the bear family is not known but involvement of the cub is an unusual detail. It was an amazing distance for such a young animal to travel if it came from within the expected distribution of Black Bears in Ontario or else the mother gave birth in a den much further south than the normal range of Bears.

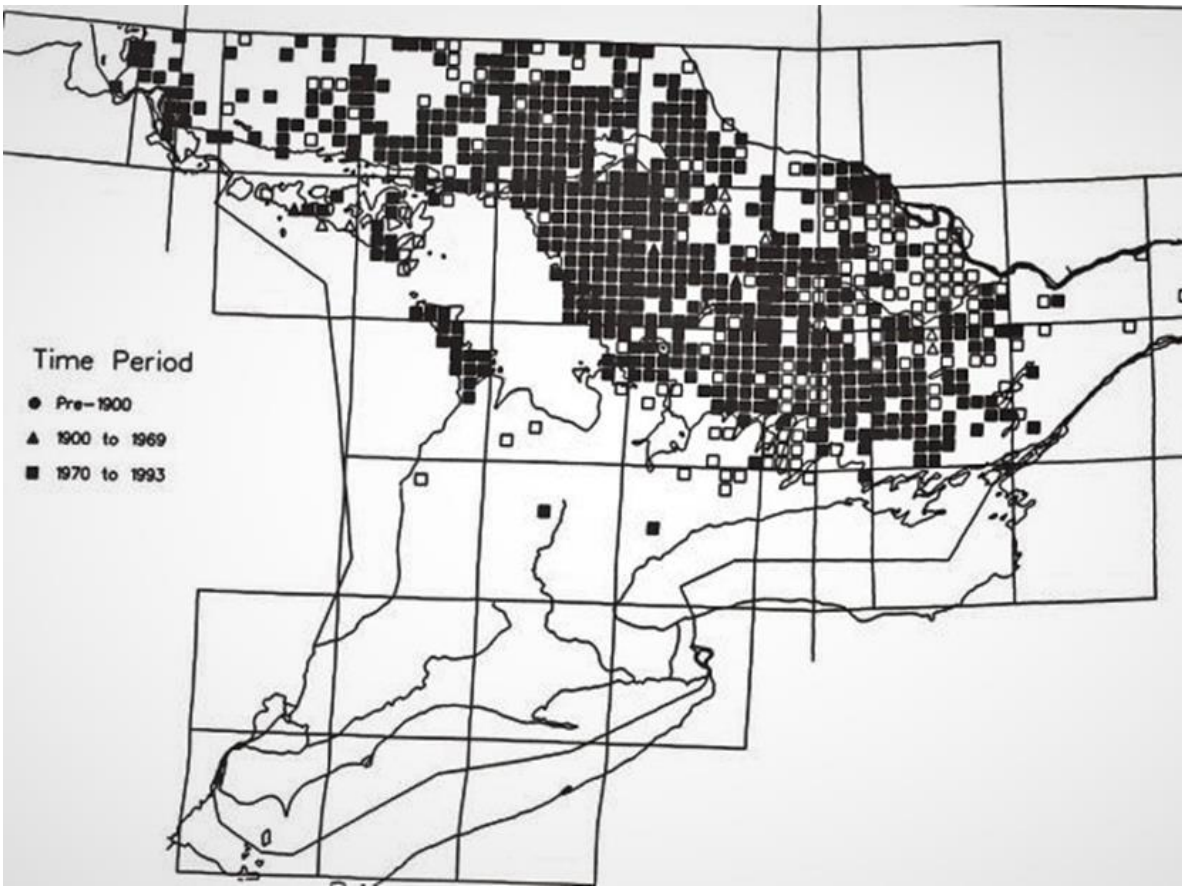
5) On May 26, 2019, there was a report of a possible Black Bear in the area of First Line and Erin-Garafraxa Townline, Erin. On May 27, there was a second sighting in the area of Fourth Line and Halton-Erin Townline. The third sighting was made on Wednesday, May 29 on Wellington Road 124 just south of Guelph Lake.

6) Although Milton is mentioned in the title of the report, the Black Bear sighting from 2020 was actually made at the northern border of Halton north of Acton. The report involved a small bear seen in a wooded area south of Regional Road 25 and Number 32 Side Road – north of Acton. The bear did not appear to be causing any problems and its fate is unknown.

7) In May, 2022, the owner of three beehives located just north of Acton suffered significant damage to those hives. The obvious culprit was a bear.

Since the beginning of 2021 until May 17, the Bear Wise reporting line had 35 reports of bear sightings in the Guelph District, including 10 in the rural area around Acton and Rockwood. It is highly unlikely that these all referred to single animals.

8) This story is an illustration of why a certain level of verification of wildlife stories is needed. A report was made that two small bears were present in a conservation area in the area of Old Derry Road and Second Line West in Mississauga. When checked, it was determined that the animals involved were actually Beavers. Such stories may warrant a bit of derision from those of us in the know. We cannot expect all of the public at large to know how to know all species of plants and animals in the area. We would hope though that nearly everyone would at least know how to recognize a bear.



Distribution of Black Bears in Ontario after Mammals of Ontario

The distribution map of Black Bears in Ontario as revealed in the Mammals of Ontario clearly indicates that they are closely confined to sites on the Canadian Shield and the tip of the Bruce Peninsula. There are only two Bear sites in Southern Ontario not related to the Shield and those could have been derived from encounters such as those noted in the records summarized here. It is feasible that bears seen in this area came from the tip of the Bruce by following along the edge of the Niagara Escarpment. Merely wandering from the edge of the natural range to a site like Acton entails a trip of about 150 km. It is a challenge to understand why a bear would continue on a course for so long while away from more-familiar habitat.

One thing that stands out in the available data is the fact that the vast majority of the southern encounters is that they have occurred in late May or early June. This would suggest that the bears involved are those that would have recently emerged from their winter hibernation. Such a pattern could indicate that the bears were confused by their emergence after the winter or that they were having difficulty finding enough food.

References

1) Garbutt, H. 2023. Black Bear spotted in Georgetown neighbourhood. The IFP.ca. May 18, 2023

2) ctvtoronto.ca. 2012, Milton residents spot Black Bear. ctvtoronto.ca, published Monday, May 14, 2012.

3) CBC News. 2012. Black Bear shot dead by Halton police.

4) GuelphToday Staff, 2017. Police warn of bear sighting near Belwood.

5) Guelph Mercury. 2019. Guelph Lake bear sighting prompts police warning. May 29, 2019.

6) Wilkinson, C. 2021. Bear spotted north of Milton. FM101 Milton Now, Dec 5, 2021.

7) Garbutt, H. 2022. Bear damages Acton beehives. Independent Free Press. Tuesday, May 17, 2022.

8) Patrick. J.G. 2020. Pair of bears on the loose in Mississauga. insauga: Local Breaking News Sep 30, 2020.

Our Local Contribution to the Welfare of the Trumpeter Swan

Article by W.D. McIlveen and Fiona Reid

At one point in time, Jesuit missionaries recorded sightings of Trumpeter Swans in Ontario. Overhunting in the 1800s resulted in population decreases and eventually the species was extirpated from Ontario. That situation did not satisfy Henry Lumsden, a staff member of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. In 1986, he was able to obtain some Trumpeter Swan eggs from Wisconsin and Alaska. Through his efforts and that of the Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration Group (OTSRG), the project eventually resulted in a self-sustaining population of well over 2000 Trumpeter Swans in Ontario. That whole story is quite amazing; however, the present account is restricted to the role that the local area has played in the Swan Restoration program.

The site involved is a pond and wetland system that crosses the Nassagaweya-Esquesing Townline north of Sideroad 15. The birds involved are a pair of Trumpeter Swans whose life has been well documented. The details and sightings related to this pair of swans is presented below.

The birds involved are a well-established mating pair. The individuals have been given unofficial names of 'Nancy' and 'Beefy' by the Swan Restoration Group. The male wears the tag 'O31'. He is known to have hatched in 2006 to parents identified as '632' & '426'. He was tagged at LaSalle Park in November 2006. His tag number has been fading and it needs to be refreshed. His mate is 'J28'. She was tagged and banded as an adult in February 2011, again at LaSalle Park. At the time, she was in the company of '031'

Earliest Date when the Swans appeared at the roadside ponds was March 22 which matched an 'ice-out' by that date that year. There are 4 records in March and 6 records in April with April 21 being the latest Spring date. The Fall dates ranged from September 19 to November 3 with three of the five Fall dates falling within October. There were two mid-season records. One was July 31 and the other being August 12.

Trumpeter Swans may form pair bonds as early as their second winter and some may nest for the first time at three years of age. Most Trumpeters, however, don't nest until they are four to six years old. The earliest record of the swans on-site is indicated in Fig. 1. We have no specific records as to whether they attempted to mate that year which was 2012. Based on the known age of the male, he would have been six years of age and certainly within the age when Trumpeter Swans begin to breed.

Fig. 1. Trumpeter Swan pair,

The age of the female is uncertain but she could have possibly been three years old at this time. We have no information to conclude that breeding was or was not attempted in 2012. Odds seem to favour no breeding that year.

By 2013, circumstances proved that this pair were capable of reproducing. The records from 2013 to 2020 show that the pair produced 20 young. This included one year (2000) for which there are no records and one year (2021) when one cygnet fledged but disappeared a few days later. In 2022, two young fledged from the nest, which had been monitored throughout the nesting season by Alan Davies. We do not know how many of the young reached an adult state or an ability to fly from the ponds, presumably to LaSalle along with their parents. We have photographic evidence (Figs 2 and 3) that single cygnets had grown to a significant degree in 2015 and 2020. In those years, the pair had produced 2 and 1 cygnets respectively. Those were years of particularly low clutch sizes.

Fig. 2. Adult Swan with cygnet, Oct 3, 2015.

Fig. 3. Swan pair with cygnet Aug 13, 2020.

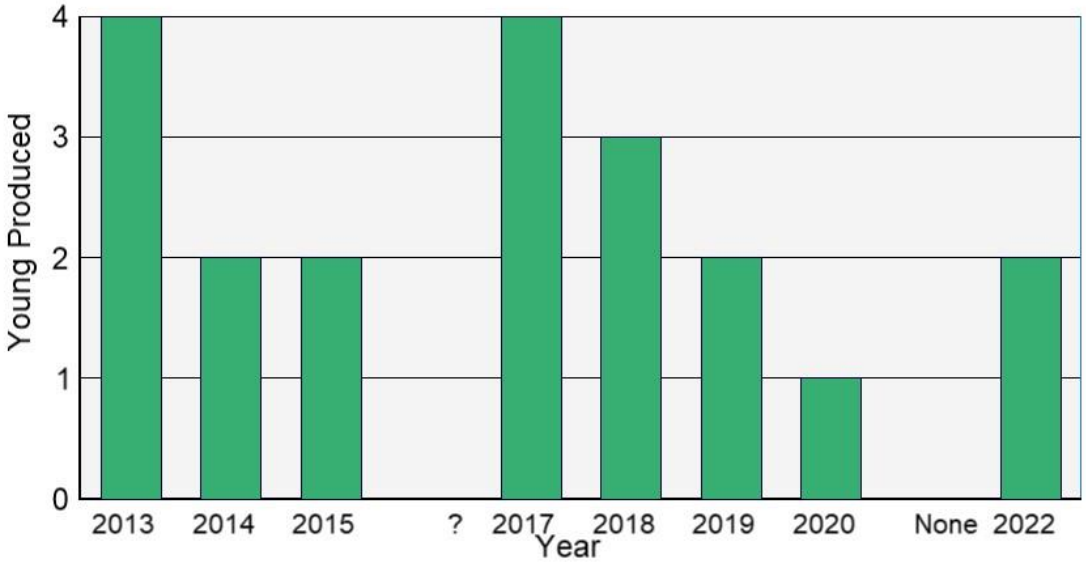


Fig. 4. Young produced by Trumpeter Swans J28 and O31 from 2013 to 2022

The efforts to reintroduce Trumpeter Swans to Ontario has been a great success. The same can be said about bringing back the Wild Turkey which was also in about the same state as the Trumpeters. The Canada Goose received encouragement from Jack Miner to come back into Ontario. Some may argue that whatever was done was too successful. There is a number of other species in Ontario whose numbers have changed over time. In some cases,

this has involved an increase then a decrease followed by stabilization. Such a pattern can be seen with Eastern Bluebirds, all as the result of human activity. Similarly, Chimney Swifts obtained great benefits when humans started to build chimneys. Some species benefited when humans introduced buildings like barns or cleared forested land for hay crops. Some species numbers have changed naturally or from a variety of causes that frequently relate to human activity. These various changes fall beyond the scope of the present report. We can safely conclude that the comeback of the Trumpeter Swan is a real success story and we have a local connection with how that happened.

The authors will readily admit that they had to use only minimal effort in participating in this project. The Swans did most of the work and the Swan Restoration Group did most of the rest. We got to see the results and to enjoy the benefits that happened in what was nearly our own backyards.

Acknowledgements
The efforts of Bev Kingdon and Gary Lane in providing the raw data held by Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration Group are very much appreciated.

Some of the Trumpeter Swans overwintering at Lasalle Park, Burlington, Nov. 29, 2014

Midsummer Pollinator Plants

Article and Photos by Don Scallen

Throngs of flying insects come to my mid-summer garden to sip nectar and collect pollen. Here are six of their favourite flowering plants.

1) Mountain mint. I grow two species – Virginia mountain mint and hoary mountain mint. Mountain mint flowers dance with pollinators on sunny afternoons, so many that they jostle each other as they seek nectar. Among them are blue-black spider wasps and great golden digger wasps. Both are impressively large. If you suffer from sphekophobia (fear of wasps), know that they are gentle giants.

Great Golden Digger Wasp on Virginia mountain mint

2) Hoary vervain. All vervains are excellent bumblebee plants. Hoary vervain is a stalwart member of this tribe, offering purple flower spikes over much of the summer. Hoary vervain grows on dry gravel slopes near the parking lot at Forks of the Credit Provincial Park, demonstrating its remarkable drought tolerance.

Bumblebee on hoary vervain with incoming leafcutter bee

3) Purple coneflower. The various cultivars of purple coneflower are garden mainstays. No wonder. They are beautiful, bloom for weeks, and are bee friendly. The lovely green sweat bee – the official bee of the City of Toronto – lingers on purple coneflowers, collecting pollen to feed its larvae in underground nests.

Bumblebee on purple coneflower

4) Butterfly milkweed. This gorgeous member of the milkweed family brings brilliant orange to my garden, matching the intensity of the monarch butterflies that visit it. Honeybees and bumblebees enjoy its nectar as well.

5) Kalm's St. John's wort. This low growing shrub has fluffy yellow flowers that, for reasons unknown, inspire bumblebees to dash around manically. The same bees are the essence of calm when visiting other plants.

Bumblebee and honeybee on Kalm's St. John's wort

6) Anise hyssop. This plant produces purple bottlebrush spires that bumblebees find irresistible. It grows quickly and blooms over an extended period.

These plants are ecological stars, supporting a vast array of pollinators and other insects. I benefit too. Stepping into a garden abuzz with bees and wasps is one of my elemental summertime joys.

For more pollinator pictures please visit this site:
https://www.inthehills.ca/2023/08/midsummer-pollinator-plants/

Vegetable Carnivory

Article and Photos by Don Scallen

Carnivorous plants are simply spectacular. Not convinced? Charles Darwin dedicated years to their study, culminating with the publication of his *Insectivorous Plants* in 1872. During research into his favourite genus, the *Drosera* or sundews, he wrote that "… at this present moment I care more about *Drosera* than the origin of all the species in the world."

One of the abiding attractions of carnivorous plants is the astonishingly different ways they've evolved to capture insects. A timeworn, but apt phrase is useful here: necessity is the mother of invention. The necessity for these plants is finding enough nitrogen and phosphorus, in their low-nutrient habitats, to fuel their growth. The solution, common to all, is to get those essential chemicals from small animals – mostly insects. Ah, but the methods are wildly diverse. In the Carolinas perhaps the most awe-inspiring example of inventive vegetable carnivory can be found – the well know Venus fly trap (*Dionaea muscipula*). Its leaves have evolved into traps that snap shut in the blink of an eye to capture insects.

But though carnivorous plant limelight might shine brightest on Venus fly traps, other species also delight with their evolutionary creativity. In the north, where I live, various species of sundews (*Drosera*), bladderworts (*Utricularia*), butterworts (*Pinguicula*), and pitcher plants (*Sarracenia*) also offer wonder and carnivorous intrigue, using water filled pitchers, sticky leaves, and minute traps to catch the prey they need.

Common butterwort with fly prey

On a recent early summer botanizing trip to Ontario's fabled floral wonderland, the Bruce Peninsula, which extends deep into Lake Huron, I was mesmerized once again by these fascinating plants. The site I visited along the Lake Huron coast wasn't acidic bog – the habitat commonly associated with carnivorous plants. The immediate shoreline habitat was alvar, consisting of limestone or dolomite pavement with shallow or no soil. The moisture of alvars varies dramatically through the year, often inundated in the spring and then parched later in the summer. These extremes and the lack of deep soil keep most trees at bay, or at least limit their growth, allowing a suite of alvar adapted shrubs and herbaceous plants to thrive.

Carnivorous plants, needful of reliable moisture, aren't generally found on these alvars, but along Lake Huron they do grow at the interface between the shoreline alvar habitat and the adjacent wooded habitat above the high-water mark. For these carnivorous plants, this narrow transition habitat, between the shade of the trees and the punishing extremes of the alvars, is the Goldilocks zone. Here purple pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), slender-leaved sundew (*Drosera linearis*), horned bladderwort (*Utricularlia cornuta*), and common butterwort (*Pinguicula* vulgaris) flourish.

The abundant sunlight and generally moist conditions of this transition zone are key to their survival but the limestone substrate is also vitally important. This rock which underlies the adjacent alvars, has been pocked by millennia of naturally acidic rainfall. The rain collects in slight depressions and gradually erodes the alkaline rock. Then, over time, organic matter accumulates in the depressions, creating soil that is eventually colonized by the vegetable carnivores. Their storied carnivory compensates for the nutrient deficiency of the thin soil.

The purple pitcher plants (*Sarracenia purpurea*) I admired on my botanizing trip boast lovely urn-shaped leaves partially filled with water that drowns insects and other prey that fall in. Adding to their macabre appeal are blood-red "veins" networking the "pitchers". The quirky beauty of this species has elevated it to the rarified status of provincial flower in Newfoundland and Labrador, where bog habitat dominates much of the landscape.

Not long ago, researchers in Algonquin Park in Ontario rocked the botanical world by revealing that pitcher plants included vertebrates in their diets. They discovered that 20% of the pitcher plants in an Algonquin bog had "swallowed" juvenile spotted salamanders!

Where pitcher plants grow, sundews are often found. The species I encountered on the Lake Huron shoreline was the slender- leaved sundew, aka linear-leaved sundew, (*Drosera linearis*). Like pitcher plants, sundews are suitably named. These tiny carnivores have leaves festooned with droplet-tipped filaments that sparkle in sunlight, like morning dew. This allure portends danger, however. Tiny creatures keen on supping that dew tempt fate – if they touch the sticky dew-capped threads they risk becoming ensnared.

Slender-leaved sundew has leaves that are indeed slender and linear. They extend outward from the hub of the plant like the questing tentacles of an octopus.

This species is something of a floral oddity because most of its global range is in Canada. It is found from the Canadian Maritimes through to eastern British Columbia, with cross-border outposts in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

A relative, round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), commonly found in bogs and fens, has by contrast, an enormous range in the northern hemisphere. It grows from the British Isles to Japan and from the Pacific to the Atlantic in North America.

These temperate sundews are small plants, and careful scrutiny of their habitats is often necessary to find them. Many of the round-leaved sundews are rosettes no larger than a Canadian two-dollar coin. But searching for these beguiling plants is well worth the effort.

Sender-leaved sundew

Round-leaved sundew

Growing among the sundews and pitcher plants near the Lake Huron shoreline was common butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*). This species, like round-leaved sundew, can be found over a vast range including much of Canada and Europe and parts of the northern United States and northern Asia. It is a calciphile, favouring alkaline habitats. The pocked limestone shoreline of the Bruce Peninsula satisfies its needs.

Where numerous, common butterwort is easy to find, despite its small size. The bright yellow-green leaves punctuate the dark rock that it grows on. It seems to need only a tiny amount of soil. The leaves are sticky, with enough adhesive power to hold small flies and other insects. Enzymes gradually digest the prey allowing the leaves to absorb nutrients.

According to a research paper from Michigan State University butterworts survive the winter as rootless “buds” known as hibernaculums. It is thought that these tiny buds, untethered to soil, allow butterworts to disperse via the action of wind and water.

The fourth carnivorous species I found in the transition zone between alvar and trees along the Lake Huron shoreline was horned bladderwort (*Utricularia cornuta*). This species grows in damp sand covering the pocked limestone. Its prolific early July flowers daub the sand yellow. Their namesake bladders are chambers with little doors that open suddenly to invite insects in, and then, like a horror movie trope, close quickly. Trapped inside, the prey dies, and the nutrients are gradually absorbed. Observing this carnivory isn’t possible, however.

The bladders are tiny, and they operate underground and out of sight – in contrast to the bladders of aquatic members of this genus like common bladderwort (*Uticularia vulgaris*) that are attached to floating roots and easily visible.

Common bladderwort showing bladder traps

In recent years research has suggested that the bladders of bladderworts are much more than simple trapping devices. The liquid inside the bladders teems with microbes including bacteria, fungi, protozoans, and algae. This diverse microbiome has spurred speculation that there is more going on in bladderwort bladders than simply the digestion of small animals.

Matt Candeias in one of his Defense of Plants podcasts offers this: "The traps of these plants harbor extremely rich microbial communities, far richer than the microbial diversity of other carnivorous plant traps. In fact, the richness of these microbial communities [are] more akin to the richness seen in the rooting zone of terrestrial plants or in the *gut of a cow."* (Italics mine)

The implication? Bladderworts may consume more than tiny animals. The microfauna (gut fauna?) living in their bladders also appears to break down plant material – algae. Thus, bladderworts may be more accurately defined as omnivores, not carnivores.

More revelations about our fascinating carnivorous plants will undoubtedly come to light in future years. They will continue to captivate 21st century botanists and naturalists just as they did the great Charles Darwin in the 19th century.

This article was originally published in Blazing Star the newsletter of the North American Native Plant Society.

From the Web

A wonderful story, uncovered by David Williams, reaffirming the value of beaver in the landscape, highlighted by a whimsical, but true, tale of beaver paratroopers.
https://earthsky.org/earth/parachuting-beavers-dams-fire-resistant-wetland/

The aliens have landed. Ominous posters of novel invasive insects that have arrived on Canadian soil or are knocking on our doors. Among them is the box tree moth which I found in my Georgetown yard this summer. And then there is the Spotted Lantern Fly that evokes a lyric from an ancient tune: "A pretty face can hide an evil mind". (Johny Rivers "Secret Agent Man") The Spotted Lantern Fly is exotically beautiful but has malevolent designs on our fruit crops. This prospective menace has recently invaded Buffalo New York, a mere river's width removed from us.
https://canadainvasives.ca/reporting-priority-invasive-and-migratory-insects/

Think you're a good bird photographer? Maybe you are… who am I to argue? But these bird pics, forwarded to me by David Williams might bruise your ego. Hard to find an adequately lofty superlative to celebrate these remarkable images. Check out the length of the Red-naped Sapsucker tongue. Mick Jagger, eat your heart out!
https://www.audubon.org/news/2023-audubon-photography-awards-top-100

This link takes you to a wonderful nature podcast by Matt Candeias called "In Defense of Plants". The latest episode is all about the value of moths as pollinators, something esteemed club member Fiona Reid has been touting with evangelical zeal for years!
https://www.indefenseofplants.com/podcast

Arbor Day Activities of Robert Little

Article and photos by W.D. McIlveen (unless indicated otherwise)

As noted previously, the recognized origin of Arbor Day in North America is 1872. The celebration soon spread from Nebraska to other states and Canadian provinces. Arbor Day was first declared to be a school holiday in Ontario in 1885. Arbor Day-type activities in Acton, however, predated these recognized points in time thanks to the efforts of Robert Little.

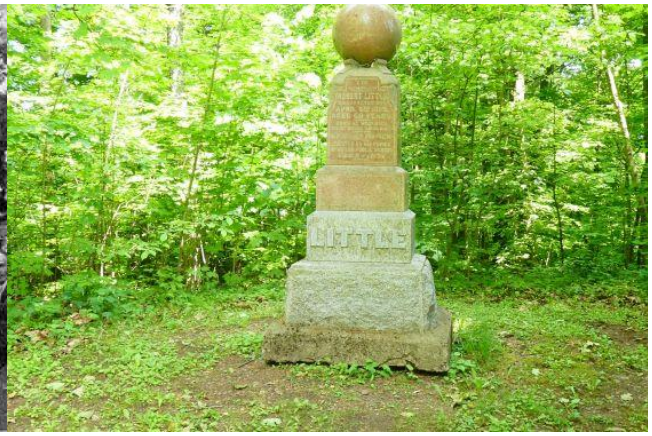
Robert Little became the Principal of Acton Public School in 1863. During his tenure, Little gained the respect and confidence of both pupils and parents. In 1952, the Public School was renamed for him and it is now recognized as the Robert Little Public School [Anonymous]. While Little was in charge of the school, his efforts included sending pupils into the neighbouring woods to bring back small maple trees for planting. He assigned students to each tree for watering and care [Niblock]. Rightly or wrongly, his efforts were credited for the existence of the many fine trees on the present Robert Little School grounds.

Four largest remaining Sugar Maples in Robert Little School yard, 2021

For perspective, the Public School was built on its own lot. Next door to the south was the private property owned by Sidney Smith. It was a high-end property with a luxury home. That house became the Acton Continuation School. The Smith property includes the lot where the Acton Library is presently located. The former Smith home was removed with the expansion of the Public School.

Robert Little died in 1885 when he was only 50 years old. It is not certain how many of the trees on the school grounds came directly from his efforts. Considering the date of Little's death, any trees remaining from his tenure would now be 150 years old. Only four Sugar Maple trees of any notable size and age remain having any prospect of being planted during Little's time in Acton. Some other trees of good age on the school grounds likely post-date Little. Even one of these is likely to have been part of the Sidney Smith estate. Another large Maple growing in front of the Acton Library can likely be associated with the Smith property.

Unveiling Robert Little tombstone Fairview Cemetery 1900 EHS000001439



Robert Little tombstone Fairview Cemetery 2021

In addition to the trees associated with the original school yard, the adjacent Sidney Smith residence has some trees on the property (Halton Atlas, 1877). Such illustrations are not always precise owing to artistic licence to make the properties appear as luxurious as possible for those paying for the artwork.

References:

Anonymous, 2021. Robert Little Public School History. Robert Little Public School Website.

Niblock, F. 1993. What's in a School Name? The Acton Tanner April 23, 1993, Pg. 4

Pope, J. H. 1877. Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Halton, Ont., Walker & Miles. Toronto, 93 p.

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Application Type: New_____ Renewal_____

Membership Type: Single ($30)____ Family ($40)____

If "Family Membership", please list additional names:

_____

The membership year is September 1 to August 31. Renewals are due in September. For new members who join after April 1, the fees are applied to the following year's membership.

****

Participation in our outings involves walking or hiking on various trails. By voluntarily participating, you assume full responsibility for all risks of personal injury. Make sure that any outing you choose to participate in is within your fitness level. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

****

Please fill out this form and bring it to our next indoor meeting, or mail it along with a cheque payable to Halton/North Peel Naturalist club to:

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club,
P.O. Box 115,
Georgetown, Ontario,
L7G 4T1

Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

Box 115, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4T1

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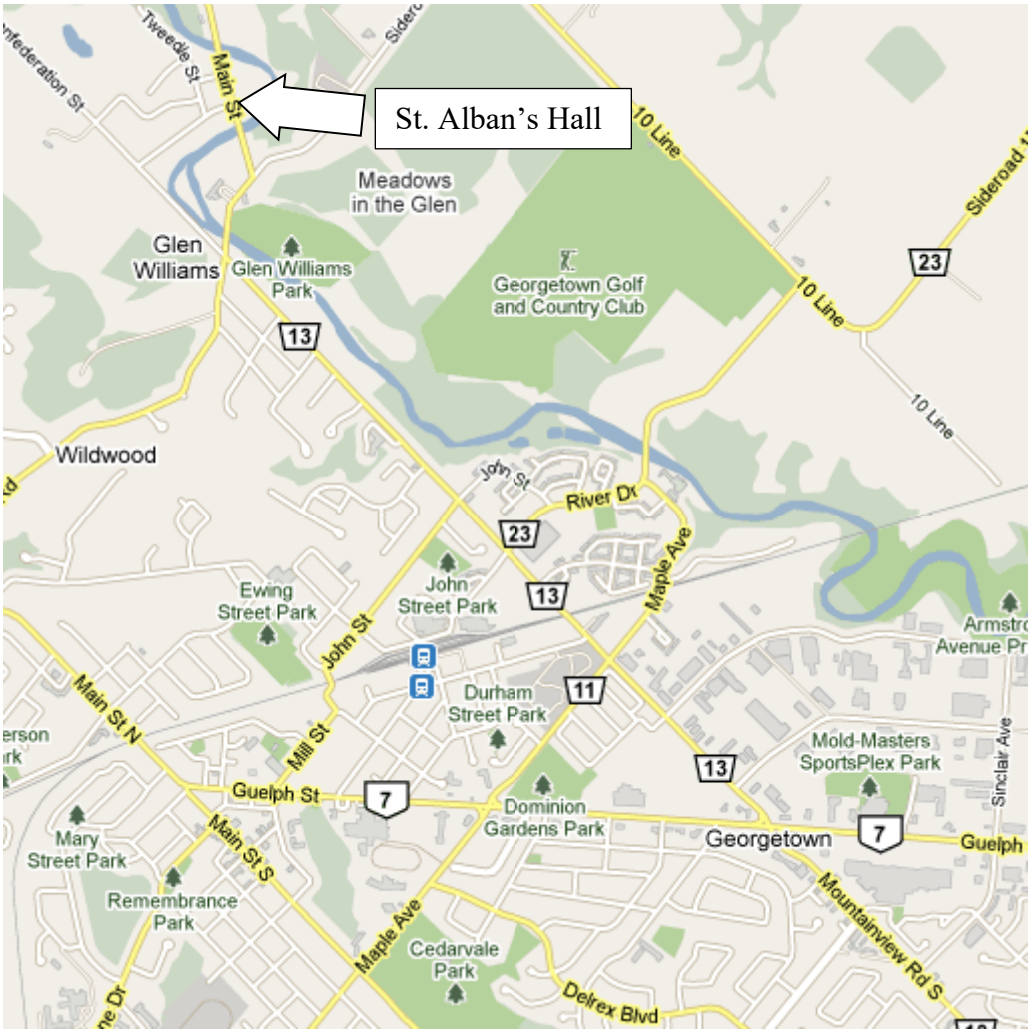
Board of Directors

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

Appointments

Membership: Leslie Bissegger
Newsletter: Laura Weihs
Webmaster Communications Director: John Beaudette
Member at Large: Fiona Reid
Ontario Nature Rep: Don Scallen
Roving: William McIlveen
Hardy Property Steward: TBD
Crozier Property Steward: Pedro Pereyra

Meeting Time/Date: 7:30 pm on **the second Tuesday of the month**

at

St Alban's Hall, 537 Main Street, Glen Williams, ON L7G 3T1