



Owen Sound
Field Naturalists



Hart's Tongue Herald

The Newsletter of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists Fall 2010

Box 401, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P7

Website: owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca

Volume 23, Number 2

Editor: Lorraine Brown



Junior Rangers insert new boards into the boardwalk at the Oliphant Fen after vandals set fire to the boardwalk in two areas. From left to right, they are: Logan Poetker, Max Couture, Dave Higginson, and Keesis Nadjiwon. Photo by Peter Middleton. See story on page 2.

OSFN Returns to the Oliphant Fen

This was our year to get involved once again at the Oliphant Fen.

As many of you will remember, the very first big project OSFN ever took on, back in 1989-90, was to build a boardwalk through the fen, providing access to a great spot for viewing unusual wildflower species. The boardwalk had the added advantage of making it impossible for ATVs to race through the fen. Their tire tracks are still visible on the wet ground there, years later.

The work began when we decided to go after funding to develop a new interpretive panel on the wildflowers of the fen. The Bruce County Stewardship Network and MNR's CFWIP program came through with the money, along with OSFN, SFN and FOOCE (Friends of Oliphant Coastal Environments).

I called Joe Johnson to request his help in deciding which species we should cover. He visited the fen in March, and called me to report that vandals had set fire to the boardwalk in two places. Shortly after that, we had a call from Craig Todd, the Bruce County Stewardship Co-ordinator, asking us to do emergency repairs to the boardwalk so it wouldn't be a hazard to visitors.

Rob Kearns, our official steward of the Oliphant Fen boardwalk, did those repairs right before the Easter long weekend in March, using plywood to replace the burned-out boards.

Meanwhile Joe, Joan Crowe and I worked away on the wildflower panel content. I solicited free photos from local photographers

known for their wildflower photos:

Doug Pedwell, Marg Gaviller, Ethan Meleg, and Carol Edwards. Walter Muma, a very knowledgeable wildflower photographer who maintains an excellent wildflower website (ontariowildflowers.com), was able to fill in with photos of lesser known species that no one else had.

The panel presents excellent photos of 24 wildflower species that grow in the fen. The range of blooming dates for each species is given, so that visitors will know which species to look for during their visit. Meanwhile, the



Junior Rangers put the finishing touches on boardwalk repairs with help from Peter Middleton (centre) and Rob Kearns (right). Photo by Stew Nutt

boardwalk needed to be properly repaired. It occurred to us that this would be a perfect job for the junior rangers. So we contacted Bob Gray, who runs that program for MNR, and made the necessary arrangements.

Using Peter Middleton's list of materials needed to repair the boardwalk, Rob went out and bought the lumber, nails etc. On August 16, Peter Middleton, Stew Nutt, Rob Kearns, Dave Fidler, ranger co-ordinator Bob Gray and



*Down A Country Lane
Bed and Breakfast*

Gord and Ellie Cox
R.R. #3
Warton, Ontario, Canada
N0H 2T0

Phone: (519) 534-3170
E-mail: gefcox@bmts.com
Website: www.bbcanada.com/1055.html

six rangers made the repairs to the boardwalk.

Meanwhile, back to the wildflower sign: With the content and design complete, Don Miller of Miller Photoplaque in Williamsford was hired to deliver and install the fabricated interpretive panel. In late August the the panel (which is being fabricated in Quebec) will be installed. The panel artwork was too large to run in the newsletter, but we're hoping to have it up soon on the OSFN website.

Thanks to everyone who played a role in the Oliphant Fen boardwalk renovations. If you're in Oliphant this fall (possibly as a participant in Dian Wood's September 25 outing), stop at the fen and check out the new panel. It will help you to find Kalm's Lobelia, Ohio Goldenrod, and several other unusual wildflowers that bloom in

the fall.

Lorraine Brown

Experience The Difference



**W.D. Keeling
Printers Limited**

T: 519.376.5843
F: 519.376.5879

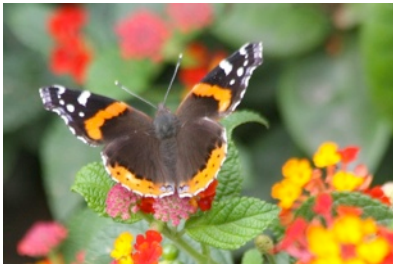
240 9th Avenue East
Owen Sound, ON N4K 5R1
sales@weprint.on.ca
www.weprint.on.ca

• BROCHURES	• BUSINESS CARDS	• LABELS	• HISTORY BOOKS
• NEWSLETTERS	• INVOICES	• POST CARDS	• MAGAZINES
• LETTERHEAD	• CALENDARS	• CARBONLESS FORMS	• PRESENTATION FOLDERS
• ENVELOPES	• FLYERS	• CATALOGUES	

Red Admiral Population Explosion

Did everyone notice the huge numbers of Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) butterflies back in June? Dozens of them could be seen nectaring on our lilac bushes – truly an amazing sight. Lepidopterists in Ohio and Wisconsin also reported a Red Admiral population explosion, the likes of which has not been seen for 15 years.

Red Admirals are migratory, as are Monarchs and Painted Ladies. In the southern parts of their range, they fly year-round; in northern areas like Canada, they overwinter both as adults and as chrysalides. In cold winters with little snow, overwintering individuals may not survive. When this happens, migrants from the south recolonize the northern areas.



So why the population explosion this year? Experts speculate that the exceptionally snowy winter of 2009-2010 may have helped the over-wintering adult butterflies survive till spring. Favourable weather conditions during their migration from the south in April and May could be another factor that contributed to the large populations this year.

Ontario's Pesticide Ban: The Results, One Year Later

(Adapted from an article by Christine Lepisto)

In April 2009, it became illegal to use pesticides for cosmetic lawncare in Ontario. The results can already be seen in surface waters.

168 stream water samples were taken over 2008 and 2009, representing the water quality before and after the ban took effect. Sampling points were selected in areas mainly influenced by residential run-off -- away from golf courses, sewage treatment plant effluents, and agricultural applications. The samples were analyzed for 105 pesticides and pesticide degradation products.

The results are dramatic: three pesticides estimated to account for half of lawn care product applications dropped by 86% (2,4-D), 82% (dicamba), and 78%

(MCPP: 2-methyl-4-chlorophenoxyacetic acid).

On the other hand, concentrations of glyphosphate (Roundup) and carbaryl did not drop significantly. The results for Roundup are attributed to continued use of this pesticide in certain exempted applications. The carbaryl results are not explained; it may be due to the persistence of carbaryl in sediments.

Roadside Cleanup

The lovely weather on the day we cleaned the roadside north of Springmount was such a surprise we hardly knew how to dress. Eleven people shared the job. The MTO supplied two kinds of bags so that we could separate the recycling responsibly, though handling the two bags required some working out. We occasionally had thoughts about the people who threw garbage onto a public roadway, but we also wondered about the stories behind the items that obviously got there by mistake - such as an enormous cut-out of a fish, rather charming even with its dirty face. Thanks to everyone who pitched in.

Joan O'Reilly



(Below) Dian Wood poses with one of the more interesting bits of "garbage" that the team found during the roadside cleanup. (Joan O'Reilly)



(Above) The red-vested ditch bird (aka Lynda Swan-Matthies) inhabits shallow ditches along the sides of busy highways. This species often collects detritus. (Joan O'Reilly)

JOANNE VEERMAN B.Sc., B.Ed.
BROKER

900 10th Street West
Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 5R9

(519) 376-9210
Direct: (519) 270-2780 • Fax: (519) 376-1355



ROYAL LEPAGE
RCR Realty, Brokerage
Independently Owned & Operated

veerman@royallepage.ca
www.joanneveerman.ca

Meeting and Field Trip Reports

April 11 - Songs of Spring

On a rather chilly Saturday evening, a small group of naturalists headed into the wetlands at Hibou Conservation

Area to listen to frogs and toads, and catch a glimpse of American Woodcocks going through their mating ritual.

The cool weather had turned off a lot of the amphibian crooners. We heard only spring peepers and toads. The leopard frogs heard earlier in the day were not singing.

As for the woodcocks, we seemed to be surrounded by them, yet we couldn't see them. We heard their buzzy "peent!" calls to our left, then our right. We moved several times, and they seemed to move with us. Are these birds ventriloquists?

In his mating ritual, the male woodcock flies upwards in wide circles, his wings making a twittering sound as he flies higher and higher, in ever-tighter circles. As he descends back to earth, he makes the "peent" sound.

Finally it was dark and we headed home. Maybe another year we'll get to see the woodcocks as well as hear them.

OSFN Birding Hike - May 22

Fourteen people came out to enjoy four hours of birding that netted 67 species. Alfred Raab previously

scouted and then led the hike that proved most rewarding for all participants. We gratefully extend our warm thanks for his competent efforts.



Happy birders. From left to right: Bill Kline, Werner Suksdorf, Eileen O'Connor, Alfred Raab, Jim Smith, Beryl Lougher, Lynne Richardson, Judy Duncan, Donna Kearns, Rob Kearns. (Photo by Fred Jazvac)

The weather was warm; there was a light rain from time to time that had no bearing on the success of the day. We started at the Hepworth Legion parking lot to leave a few cars. There we saw a pair of nesting Ospreys along with seven other species. In the area behind the Sauble Beach Community Center we picked up 15 species but the bird that received the most attention was the unseen but heard Yellow-throated Vireo. Thanks to Dave Fidler for that one. A special side trip was made to see the endangered Piping Plovers at Sauble Beach and they did not disappoint. From the beach we headed to the highway again and turned right on the first road just past the Sauble River. We parked after crossing a second bridge and were welcomed by a singing


Wood Thrush. We saw or heard another 12 species of birds in that location. Moving on to Boat Lake we again saw an Osprey sitting on a nest and in the adjacent waters

we tried in vain to see the Least Bittern that had called out but were rewarded instead by good looks at a Swamp Sparrow. Our next stop was Isaac Lake where another 14 species were netted. The teaser bird was a Virginia Rail that sang but refused to be seen. Off in the distance were Sandhill Cranes that entertained us but were totally oblivious to our presence. At our last stop at Sky Lake, Alfred's goal was for us to see four species - all excellent birds - Black Tern, Pied-billed Grebe, Bald

Eagle and Marsh Wren. We collected these birds along with four others to end our day.

Thank you Alfred for your efforts and for making our day an enjoyable one.

Fred Jazvac



Toby Bruce & Kelly Rogers
RR 4 Chatsworth, Ontario
N0H 1G0
☎ (519) 794-3335
✉ kellybee@log.on.ca

Chatsworth Honey

HONEY • POLLEN • BEESWAX • POLLINATION SERVICES

Invasive Species?

From time to time, hysteria erupts about some alien species invading and out-competing our native plants. For a long time Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) topped the billing. This plant is originally European but has been in North America for at least 200 years. It is a plant of drying up wetlands which has become invasive over the last few decades when development and road building, with associated draining of wetlands, has accelerated all over North America.

The latest candidate is Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), also known as Pampas grass, which is being touted as a foreign invader destroying our beaches and waterways. It has nothing to do with Australia; *australis* simply means south. It was formerly known as *Phragmites communis*. Under this name it was listed in a checklist for the Bruce Peninsula produced by the Royal Canadian Institute in 1940 as "Rather common in swampy ground and shallow water". Volume 25 of The Flora of North America published in 2003 says "*Phragmites australis* grows in wet or muddy ground along waterways, in saline or freshwater marshes, and in sloughs throughout North America. Its tall, leafy, often persistent culms and plumose panicles make it one of our easier species to recognize. It is also one of the most widely distributed flowering plants growing in most temperate and tropical regions of the world, spreading quickly by rhizomes. (They do not recognize any subspecies or varieties) Its uses include thatching, lattices, arrow shafts, construction boards, mats and erosion control."

University of Guelph scientists say that *Phragmites australis* is an introduced genetic variation that is more invasive than the native varieties, but if it is a variation, it could just as easily have originated here. So, why is it now invasive?

Could it be that the lake levels have been dropping, thus creating more habitat? Or that warming temperatures have favoured it?

It could also be that it is resistant to pollution. There have been many examples of polluted beaches this year. In that case, having it present might be an advantage as it probably absorbs pollutants. It cannot threaten the rare species on sand dunes, as it does not grow on dry sand. The biggest threat to dunes is the invasive species known as *Homo sapiens*. Does that last word really mean "wise"?

So-called invasive species move into disturbed areas sometimes created by natural events such as fires. Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*) is a good example. We don't see much of it these days.

Our highly disturbed roadsides are crammed with invasive species, many of them of European origin such as Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*) and Bird's Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*). However, goldenrods and asters - all native species - are equally invasive. Just look at some of the abandoned fields around here. They are also very invasive in Europe where they were horticultural introductions still highly popular with gardeners.

The fact is that all these species are the first steps in a succession. If left alone, other species will move in gradually and eventually, in many areas, a forest will regenerate, but we can never wait that long. Besides, we have to tidy things up so that areas do not change. These "control" measures just recreate the conditions that brought the "invasive" species there in the first place. Also many controls, especially chemicals, go beyond eliminating the undesirable and actually damage the environment. We need to learn to let nature take its course!
Joan Crowe

(If anyone would like to comment on Joan's opinions on alien invasive plants, we'd love to hear from you and publish your ideas in the next HTH - The Editor)

Mystery Crop

In mid-July, we were walking on the John Muir Trail near Meaford when we passed a field covered in snow-white flowers. For a moment, I thought it had been invaded by Wild Carrot (Queen Anne's Lace) but closer examination showed leaves that were not lacy but short-stalked and arrow-shaped and the individual flowers were much larger with a ring of five petals, eight stamens and three styles. Most conspicuous were the small triangular fruits that were forming.

It was clearly a crop but I was having difficulty identifying it so I consulted Freeman Boyd who told us it was buckwheat, a member of the Polygonaceae - Smartweed or Knotweed Family. This ancient crop originated in the Middle East like many of our cereals. We had never noticed it before. Apparently, it was introduced into the southern states early on, where buckwheat cakes are a standard item of diet. Clearly, it is coming into its own here now that so many people have gluten intolerance, as buckwheat flour is gluten-free.

One other item:

After we saw Lionel Gould's story in the paper about Peter and Jan Middleton seeing egrets and herons, among other species, along the rail-trail west of Benallen, we decided to take a walk there on the morning of August 5. We saw three Great Blue Herons gliding with wings spread and then we spotted a congregation of Great Egrets and counted at least 14. I think that is the largest group we have ever seen in one place. An added bonus was spotting two Belted Kingfishers. We were not lucky enough to see any of the Green Herons the Middletons reported.

Joan Crowe

A Muskrat Mystery

Last year I reported on the non-native plant known as water soldier that had invaded the pond near our house. We removed 3 canoe-loads full of this plant. This year, we quickly removed the few that put in an appearance, so I think this alien invader is now officially gone from the pond. Unfortunately, so are the fish.

Now goldfish may be another non-native species that can upset the balance, but this bulldozed, agricultural runoff pond of ours isn't exactly a natural situation in any case. Several years ago we put in a few dozen small goldfish known as "feeder fish" from a local pet store, and each fall we accepted from friends the few goldfish that had lived in their small backyard pond in Owen Sound over the summer, and needed a place to overwinter.

The goldfish grew, some of them reaching lengths of around 20 cm (8 in). It was fun to watch them thrashing around while spawning in the spring, to see their small brown offspring, and to watch the kingfishers and great blue herons that the fish were attracting. We even had a green heron on our clothesline one day. The situation seemed to be in balance, and I jokingly referred to our pond as the biggest feeder in Grey County.

Then a muskrat moved in. We don't let these aquatic rodents stay in the pond because they burrow into the banks, and next thing you know, the ground around the pond begins slumping. I called our trapper friend, Pete van Aalst, but we were a little too late in the season. The first light snows were making it hard for him to see the paths the animal makes into its burrows. He promised to come back in the spring

When spring arrived, we looked forward to the first slow-moving orange ghosts that we would normally see through the thinning ice. But the fish were all gone. Could the muskrat have eaten

them? Andrew thought so, but I argued that muskrats are mainly herbivores. How would one muskrat eat a whole pond full of fish?

So I contacted a colleague at the Canadian Museum of Nature – Donna Naughton, a mammalogist. She thought it was quite possible that the muskrat was the culprit. Here's what she wrote in an e-mail to me:

"Although Muskrats are primarily herbivorous, they will take slow-moving fishes, especially in winter when herbaceous forage is scarce. Cold goldfish probably fall into the slow-moving category. Muskrats are voracious eaters capable of consuming 25-30% of their body weight daily depending on the food quality. Animal flesh is a higher quality diet so the percentage would probably fall to less than half of those numbers. Even so I could see it eating all of the fish over one winter if herbaceous food was scarce." (remember, I had removed all those water soldiers so there wasn't a lot of vegetation in the pond.)

Pete came back and trapped a muskrat out of our neighbour's pond, but he didn't find any signs of our muskrat. Again, Donna had some thoughts:

"The animal may have left once the food was gone (I have seen road-killed Muskrats in late winter while the ground was still snow-covered and the ponds still frozen). Or perhaps it starved after consuming all of the fish."

The pond has seemed rather lacking in life this year, though we still have lots of frogs and larval salamanders – enough that the kingfisher has hung around all summer, and no doubt young great blue herons will spend a few days feasting on frogs here before the pond freezes up and they head

south. And of course there are lots of dragonflies that keep the kingbirds happy. My plan now is to try to keep non-native plants and animals out of there, and let the pond return to a more natural state. Bye bye, goldfish.

Lorraine Brown



Bird Populations in Decline

Have you felt that there have been fewer birds around than there used to be? The following appeared on the Birds Studies Canada website back in March:

The United States' Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced the release of the *State of the Birds 2010* report at a press conference on March 11. The publication follows a report published a year ago, which indicated that nearly a third of the 800 bird species of the U.S. are endangered, threatened, or in significant decline. The 2010 report concludes that climate change threatens to further imperil hundreds of species of migratory birds, already under stress from habitat loss, invasive species, and other environmental threats. The publication is a collaboration among federal and state wildlife agencies and several scientific and conservation organizations. Visit the **State of the Birds website** for more information and to read the full report.

Lorraine Brown

The Fall Program

Indoor Program **Thursday, September 9**

Freedom 35: A Photographer's Adventure

Last year, at 35 years old, Ethan Meleg sold his house, bought a camper van and began an epic one year photo road trip around the continent. See the photos and hear the stories from his travels, living the dream as a wanderlust photographer! The presentation showcases the best photos and adventures from his travels, with a sprinkling of humor and inspiration.

Sunday, September 12, 1 to 3 pm

Ferns of the Niagara Escarpment

Join GSC staffer Chris Hachey and hike the Inglis Falls trails to find common and unusual ferns that flourish in the woods along the escarpment.

Meet: 1:00 p.m. Grey-Sauble Conservation parking area
Limit of 20 participants.
Please register with Andy Koshan (519) 372-9480 or akoshan@yahoo.ca.

Saturday, September 25, 1 to 4 pm

West Coast Landscapes: Alvars and Fens

Join Dian Wood on a trip to explore the Oliphant Fen system along the Huron coast. Many fen plants are still blooming at this date: Kalm's lobelia, Ohio goldenrod, smaller fringed gentian, small-flowering purple gerardia, and nodding ladies tresses, among others.

The trip will start at St. Jean Point, then move to Petrel Point, and finally Oliphant.

Meet at the Tim Horton's in Warton and we'll carpool from there. Register with Peter Middleton (519) 376-3242 or peter.middleton@sympatico.ca.

Sunday, October 3, 1 to 3 pm

Trees of Owen Sound

Well-known botanist and OSFN Life Member Joan Crowe will take us on a walking tour of the streets of Owen Sound to see some of the rare, large and unusual trees of the city. We'll walk some of the routes featured in the OSFN publication Exploring an Urban Forest - Owen Sound's Heritage of Trees.

(Available from the Ginger Press, \$14.95)

Meet in the parking area on the west side of the OS farmers' market, near the river, at 1 pm. Please register with Andy Koshan (519) 372-9480 or akoshan@yahoo.ca.

Indoor Program **Thursday, October 14**

On the Wind: A Discussion on the Wind Industry's Impact on Raptors

Kevin Dance will present the findings of his Master's research into raptor behaviour and mortality at the 66-turbine wind facility near Port Burwell on the Lake Erie shore. His findings may surprise you. He will also compare his research with similar studies in California, Spain and Norway. Kevin has done pre- and post-construction monitoring at close to 20 wind farms in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta.

Saturday, October 16, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Karst Topography of the Bruce

Karst specialist Daryl Cowell will take us on a tour of the St. Edmund's karst cave system. We'll start at the entrance to the system behind the St. Edmund's Museum, then drive down to Little Cove and hike along the shore to the place where the cave system empties out into Georgian Bay.

Meet Daryl at Hwy 6 and Little Cove Road. Please register with Andy Koshan (519) 372-9480 or akoshan@yahoo.ca.

Sunday, November 7, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Around the Bay Waterfowl Outing

Join Fred Jazvac for the annual waterfowl tour around Owen Sound Bay. With winter approaching, waterfowl are on the move. Target species are loons, grebes, scoters and flotillas of other diving ducks.

Meet at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Arena south parking lot at 10:00 am for this 4-hour outing.

Dress appropriately for a waterfront environment. Bring lunch and drinks.

Contact Fred Jazvac to register: 519-797-3332 or jazvacfb@bmts.com.

Please Support our Sponsors!

The companies whose ads appear in these pages help to offset the cost of the newsletter's production. Please bring them your business and tell them you read about them in the Hart's-Tongue Herald.

The Fall Program

Indoor Program **Thursday, November 11**

The Secret Lives Of Bats

Join world-renowned bat specialist Professor Brock Fenton of the University of Western Ontario as he takes us deep into the lives of bats. Topics during this presentation include basic bat biology, echolocation, conservation (including the arrival of White-Nosed Syndrome among Ontario bats), and the relationship between bats and people. Professor Fenton will share the results of many years of observations that he and his research team have made about bats both here in Canada and throughout the world.

December: Christmas Bird Counts

Watch the Hart's-Tongue Herald and the e-Herald for dates for this year's CBCs in Owen Sound, Wiarton, Meaford, Saugeen Shores and Port Elgin.

Indoor Program

Thursday, December 9

Member's Night hosted by Jim Ansell

A potpourri of OSFN members' slides, displays, art, collections and compositions focusing on natural history. Limit of 10 slides and 10 minutes. Register your entry ahead with Jim at 519.376.2775 or email at jansell@sympatico.ca.

Sunday, January 9, 2011 **Snowshoe Outing in Harrison Park**

Join our new program director, Andy Koshan, on a snowshoe hike to experience the joys of winter.

With a little luck it will be a sunny, clear, cold day. We'll follow up with hot chocolate at the Harrison Park Inn.
Meet at the Inn at 1 pm.

Saturday February 12 or 19 **Signs of Winter Wildlife**

Trapper Verle Barfoot will lead us on a search for signs of winter wildlife in The Glen Conservation Area near Copper Kettle. This trip will take place either Feb. 12 or 19, depending on the conditions. Bring snowshoes or skis, and meet at The Glen parking area at 10 am. Bring binoculars, a snack and thermos of hot drink. Limit: 20 people.

Register with Lorraine:
519-372-0322 or
lorraine@apropos.ca.

Indoor Program **Thursday, January 13**

India: Temples, Tigers and Peacocks

As one considers the second most populous nation in the world, conjured images of India rarely turn to diverse landscapes and fascinating wildlife. It is an ancient land teeming with people and intriguing cultures, but it also possesses a wonderful array of wild creatures and spectacular birds. Peter will take us on a tour to this spellbinding sub-continent and some of its remarkable parks. If winter is getting to you, this program will be the perfect antidote.

Chimney Swift Surveys

When one thinks back, inevitably it is to times when things seem better than they now are. Halcyon days. This is certainly the case when one considers the once

ubiquitous insect-eating birds that coursed above the cities and towns of Ontario during the hot and hazy days of summer. What we find today is but a sad remnant of these superb birds: Nighthawks, Purple Martin and Chimney Swift are all but gone. Memories.

In early June, several members of the OSFN undertook surveys to detect the presence of Chimney Swifts in the city, noting locations and possible nesting/roosting chimneys. Based on these findings, the group split up during subsequent surveys to monitor specific chimneys to document their use by swifts.

Only three chimneys were identified as possible breeding chimneys. A visit to Alexandra Public School and a top inspection of the chimney found no signs of occupancy. The chimneys of West Side United Church and Calvary Missionary Church on 10th Street West were found to have swifts entering on a regular basis. The chimneys were occupied into early August.

The Old Courthouse was the only chimney where each evening one could be thrilled by swirling groups of twittering swifts, suddenly dropping into an improbably small opening. Up to 114 birds have been seen dropping in on any one evening this summer.

These are sadly the only three sites identified as possible breeding sites in the city. Most chimneys have been capped, or equipped with metal liners.

Survey results have been forwarded to Bird Studies Canada. Future actions by the club, including the possible construction of false "chimneys" will be considered. In the meantime, I wish to thank those members of the club who volunteered for this project: Anne and Stan Cathrae, Judy and Jim Duncan, Barbara Palmer and her daughter Anna Fletcher, Merle Gunby and Lionel Gould.

Peter Middleton, Survey organizer

The Long Swamp

The Long Swamp, in the Township of Georgian Bluffs, on the outskirts of Owen Sound, is well named. It is at least 10 km long and is part of an extensive wetland complex extending towards Copper Kettle and draining from the Escarpment. In post-glacial times the swamp would have been a lake that gradually accumulated sediments from the escarpment. This marl was mined in the Shallow Lake area over a century ago for cement production.

Underlying the sediments in the Long Swamp are karst deposits that make for very complicated drainage so that, in places, springs bubble to the surface. In the past, these springs were used to water the horses used in logging operations. All the large white pines were removed; this species is only now becoming prominent again in the swamp. Probably hemlock was harvested too. Cedar fence posts were harvested up to the middle of the 20th century. Part of the swamp belonged to a brick company and provided firewood for their kilns.

A swamp is defined as a wooded wetland. The dominant species here are cedar and red maple. It is not acid like a bog and has a much more varied flora. Although classified as swamp, due to the proximity of the escarpment and the underlying sediments, the open areas would probably be better rated as fens with a fairly high pH and little Sphagnum.

Drumlins running through the swamp, oriented northeast to southwest, create islands of dry land with typical deciduous forest including the much-valued maple. In fact, there is still one logging company that owns part of the area. There was some marginal

farming for a while, in lots that had the drier land. Other people acquired lots with no farming and little logging potential as speculative properties, on the assumption that sooner or later the road allowances would be cleared, the swamp would be drained, and development would take place.

Unfortunately for them, attitudes towards wetlands have changed,



The Ram's Head Lady's Slipper is a rare orchid, one of 17 orchid species that grow in the Long Swamp (Photo by Doug Pedwell)

especially since Walkerton, and the Long Swamp has been classified as a provincially significant wetland so that the road allowances will not be opened. However, there is still pressure on the township to allow landowners to nibble away at the edges and there is one landowner who still wants \$1000.00 per acre for his 175 acres that are totally inaccessible except with hip waders!

The Long Swamp complex acts as filter for the ground water that drains into the Pottawatomi River and thence into the bay. It also provides a reservoir for the many shallow wells supplying properties on its perimeter so it has great importance to the health of this area.

Mac Kirk was one of the first to realize the value of wetlands and the presence of some unusual plants in the Long Swamp thanks

to botanists like Joe Johnson and Nels Maher (the latter had been exploring the swamp since he was a young boy). While Mac was head of the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority in the 1970s, he enabled the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (now Ontario Nature) to buy a 100 acre lot in the centre of the swamp that is now known as the Malcolm Kirk Nature Reserve.

In 1993, when Walter and I moved into a house on the Keppel-Derby town-line, which comes to a dead end at the swamp, we knew nothing about it. Shortly after moving in, the 94-acre lot with the beautiful spreading beech right opposite our house came up for sale (6 acres had already been developed) and we discovered that a developer had been intending to build on it but, luckily, had gone bankrupt. We are on the very edge of a drumlin and only a few metres from the wetland. The thought of the

environmental destruction that building even one house would create stimulated us to buy it, at that time, for about the price of a new car! We decided to donate it to the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

At the same time, an opportunity arose for the NCC to buy 200 acres next to it at a very reasonable price and our donation helped facilitate that. The latter two lots had been owned for many years by the Barwell family and they were also anxious to have the area preserved.

These lots make a link between the Malcolm Kirk reserve and the one we donated so that a solid block of 394 acres is under preservation. Since then, with the help of the OSFN, the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy has acquired 50 more acres of swamp

along Highway 6. EBC also holds another two lots on the other side of the highway. The privately owned 175 acres lies between the EBC property and the NCC properties. We would love to see it preserved but not at \$1000.00 per acre!

Plant surveys in the protected area found 269 vascular species. This includes 20 species of ferns and fern allies, 17 species of orchids of which five are rare in this area, 39 species of sedge, eight conifers, and 12 deciduous tree species, one of which is the endangered Butternut. The American elm is also flourishing in the swamp. The surveys also identified 49 mosses, 22 liverworts, 15 lichens and a few fungi but, especially in the last two cases, there are probably many more present.

A particular attraction was the stand of Small Round Leaved Orchis found by Nels. This is a species with a much more southerly range. On the other hand Calypso orchid, which is also recorded, has a much more northern and western distribution. Ram's Head Lady's Slipper, listed as provincially rare, is another surprising record.

The swamp is also home to a great variety of small mammals -- lots of deer and, fortunately, some coyotes to keep them in check. Although last year, we did have to persuade some avid coyote hunters to call off their dogs, which were chasing the coyotes in the NCC property! There is at least one resident bear who, in the fall, feasts on the wild blackberries on the drumlin - you can tell by the smell! There is not much information about birds but there are lots of small ones. Ravens are seen from time to time and there are definitely pileated woodpeckers as well as the smaller species of woodpecker. On occasion, there have been barred owls. Sandhill cranes are heard in spring and fall, but whether they nest there is not known. The areas

that would attract them are difficult to access.

The Owen Sound Field Naturalists have an interest in the Long Swamp for several reasons. First, OSFN is part of Ontario Nature and therefore has a stake in the Malcolm Kirk Reserve. Secondly, the NCC relies on local organizations, such as OSFN, to monitor their properties and there is an agreement to that effect. Thirdly, we do the road cleanup twice a year along the section of Highway 6 that runs through the swamp.

When we first came here, snowmobilers were using the old logging trails through the swamp. Their club was doing immense damage, clearing the edges every year so that it was gradually becoming wider and creating serious edge effect. Then, as ATVs became popular, they started to use the trails and did even more serious damage than the snowmobilers who, at least, mostly only used the trails when they were frozen. However the registered snowmobile clubs recognized the damage they were doing and the trail was removed from the map. The ATVs were still a nuisance until it was pointed out to the township that they were trespassing on private property and the trails they were using were not road allowances or rights-of-way so they put in a rock at the end of our road to block access. The rock, incidentally, was a huge erratic that happened to be sitting in a large puddle and only needed hauling out! The swamp is now becoming a haven for wildlife and hopefully, as time goes by more of it will come under strict protection.

Joan Crowe

Are You Interested in Bird Migration?

On Saturday, September 25, from 9 am to 2 pm, the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory will hold its annual open house at Cabot Head Research Station at Wingfield Basin, up near the tip of the Bruce Peninsula.

At this event you can see birds being banded and find out what else goes on at a migration monitoring station. A buffet lunch will be available; donations accepted. For more info and directions: www.bpbo.ca.

foto art CAMERA AND FRAME SHOP

842 2nd Avenue East, Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 2H3
Telephone (519) 376-4592 Fax (519) 376-3973

*For all your outdoor photo needs
Cameras, film, binoculars, scopes, outdoor gear
and tripods*

 **BAYSHORE**
COUNTRY FEEDS LTD.

Sunflower Seeds & Wild Bird Feed Mix

Bulk & Bag Birdseed
Indoor & Outdoor Bird Feeders
And A Full Line Of Pet Foods
Mon. - Fri. 8-5:30 Sat. 8-4
TEL: 519-376-5830 FAX: 519-376-6246
1304 2nd Avenue East, Owen Sound

 **SUNTRAIL**
SOURCE FOR
adventure

*Quality Outdoor Equipment
and Clothing for the Backpacker,
Canoeist, Kayaker, Cyclist and
Cross Country Skier*

www.suntrail.net
Hwy. #6, P.O. Box 29 **Hepworth**, ON N0H 1P0
Phone: 519-935-2478

Attention Naturalists!

Learn How to Help Ontario's Turtles

Long hours spent exploring wetlands means that Ontario's field naturalists quite often come across some of Ontario's eight species of turtle, seven of which are considered "at risk". Unfortunately the declines in many species has led to less and less of these sightings. If you are interested in learning more about how to both identify and assist these animals, then register to take part in this **FREE** workshop. This is an incredible opportunity to take home valuable information to your fellow naturalists about what can be done both individually and as a group to help a species at risk.

Naturalists are an important group of citizens and we are proud to host an event that is dedicated to you.



**Saturday October 23rd
10am-2pm**

**Toronto Zoo Administrative Centre
361A Old Finch Ave
Scarborough, ON
North of zoo front entrance,
off of Meadowvale Road**



Workshop will consist of:

- A presentation on local turtle species including identifying characteristics and habitat preferences
- A demonstration on how to make turtle nest protection devices and how to identify turtle nests
- A wetland walk to explore natural and restored wetland habitats
- A visit to constructed nesting beaches that can serve as a models for other community projects

Come Prepared! This workshop will involve a wetland walk

Register by contacting Erin Nadeau at

416-392-5999 or enadeau@torontozoo.ca

Attendance is limited to no more than two representatives per naturalist club/group

Lunch will be provided; Event will take place rain or shine

<http://www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/>



Around the Sound

Local Food Market

Fresh bread, eggs, fish, meat, cheese, cereals, sweets and much more from as close to Owen Sound as we can find them.

Bring this ad for a 10% saving on your purchase!

972 1st Avenue West, Owen Sound
519-370-2333
www.aroundthesoundfood.com

Does this HTH look different?

It has a new font (Arial replaces Times) and was done using new, much simpler software (goodbye Quark Express, hello MacIntosh Pages - yay Mac!) It also occurred to me that we don't need a hyphen in Hart's-Tongue. It is now gone from our masthead. Looks cleaner, no? (*The Editor*)

The Ginger Press Bookstore
848 Second Avenue East
Owen Sound, Ontario
N4K 2H3
519 376-4233
1 800 463-9937

The Fall 2010 Program at a Glance

Indoor Programs

All indoor meetings take place in the auditorium of the Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library at 7:00 p.m. Following a social time and announcements, the speaker of the evening will present at 7:30, followed by club business, sightings and reports.

Thursday, September 9 FREEDOM 35: A PHOTOGRAPHER'S ADVENTURE

Thursday, October 14 ON THE WIND: A DISCUSSION OF RAPTORS AND THE WIND INDUSTRY

Thursday, November 11 THE SECRET LIVES OF BATS

Thursday, December 9, 2010 MEMBERS' NIGHT

Outdoor Programs

The outdoor programs of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists are designed for OSFN members to discover new areas of natural interest, add to their knowledge of natural history, or simply enjoy a walk in the woods with like-minded people. Note that each trip has its own specific time and meeting place. Registration is required for most outings. Please call the contact person about a week before the outing.

Sunday, September 12 FERNS OF THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

Sunday, September 25 WEST COAST LANDSCAPES: ALVARS AND FENS

Sunday, October 3 TREES OF OWEN SOUND

Saturday, October 16 KARST TOPOGRAPHY OF THE BRUCE

Sunday, November 7 AROUND THE BAY WATERFOWL OUTING

Sunday, January 9, 2011 SNOWSHOE OUTING IN HARRISON PARK

Membership Application and Renewal Form

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone..... E-mail..... Check here if renewal.....
(for OSFN e-bulletin and last minute notices)

Membership Category: Single (\$20)..... Family (\$30) Return with cheque to:

Owen Sound Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 401, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P7

By signing this form, I am agreeing that OSFN may contact me by phone or e-mail.

We hereby confirm that e-mail and mail lists will not go beyond the OSFN. (See privacy policy at osfn.ca)

Signature: