

Hart's Tongue Herald

The Newsletter of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists

Spring 2018

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Website: owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca

Editor: Norah Toth



President's Report

Lately (if your membership is paid up!) you may have noticed that you're getting frequent "e Herald" messages with notices about events with two of our sister organizations, Saugeen Nature and Bruce Trail. We're sharing information and events to deepen potential experiences for all of us. This is a welcome addition to our own programs. Expand your horizons and participate with these groups!

Too often the many people who work behind the scenes in organizations such as ours are doing some great work but get little, if any, recognition for their contributions. Every year about this time we turn our gaze on some of these individuals with a sharper focus: award season is here! There are several types of awards, some through OSFN and some through OnNature. Look for the list later in this newsletter and on our website. Please consider nominating someone who you think deserves special acknowledgement. Send me an email mudtown2@gmail.com or text 519 538 1897.

As you read this edition of the Hart's Tongue Herald, realize that it is Norah Toth, our editor, who puts it all together for you to read. If you like the newsletter please tell her so!

You are likely aware that recruitment for new directors to the OSFN Board is underway. Election will occur at our AGM and potluck supper in June. Already there are several members expressing interest in standing for nomination, to which I say YAY! It's so rewarding to have a strong team. Their diverse talents and various areas of interest and levels of experience make it a lot of fun while working to accomplish the goals of the OSFN.

At our indoor meetings we have a Suggestion Box on the sharing table; don't hesitate to drop something in. We're already following up on some great ideas!

Go Outside and Listen!

Kate McLaren, President

OSFN Community Conservation Awards

To recognize citizens within the community (Grey - Bruce) who in some way have made a significant contribution toward the welfare of the natural world through stewardship, restoration, protection or other actions deemed beneficial to natural habitats or species.

Send your nomination to the Board.

We Welcome New Members:

Tony Barton, Jarrett Boyd, Valerie & Tom Clarke, Cameron Collins, Meg Dean, Bev Falco, Kathy & Chris Moores, Michelle, Dale, Charlotte Parkin, Dennis Stier

Let Nature be your teacher.

William Wordsworth

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

Sssshhhhh

Walking my favourite section of the Bruce Trail near the Rocklyn Creek, in winter, alone, the noises in my head finally subsided enough to pay close attention to the music of nature around me. Wind was souging insistently through the tall white pines. When I closed my eyes it seemed that I was on a beach with waves rushing in over sand. Following the path as it entered cedar wetlands, the cold gusts couldn't penetrate and except for my own noisy walking it became remarkably calm and quiet. Every few paces I stopped just to listen.

Snowflakes landed audibly, like gentle cold kisses.

A lone chickadee practiced her two-note tune that is one of the first heralds of spring. A little premature I think!

Staccato hammering focused my attention on a magnificent maple; it was easy to locate the hairy woodpecker as it drilled for lunch.

In a waft of breeze that penetrated into the sheltered woods I heard the most genteel applause, soft yet crisp, from the smaller beech trees whose tenacious remnant leaves also gave a warm glow to the otherwise monochrome landscape. A more deliberate round of applause came from a couple of red oak trees that had not yet surrendered their last leaves. Little dangling ornaments of seeds on the white ash trees whispered

along.

Punctuating the stillness were occasional small firecracker snaps from mature trees protesting against the deep cold. Popcorn and cracking came from branches higher up in the canopy as they rubbed together.

Several nuthatches were sending their telegraph signals back and forth causing me to ponder what their messages might translate to. ("Where'd you find the seeds?") The usual suspects in this forest were noticeable for their absence. Jays, crows, ravens were all off on other missions, leaving the atmosphere much calmer than ordinary. It was so much quieter than I am used to that when there was an abrupt explosion beside me I jolted and then tried to slow down my pounding heart! I wonder which of us was more startled: the ruffed grouse or me?

I clambered my way alongside the steep ravine and the tributary that forms what we locals call the Step Falls. Down this extended series of small waterfalls the little creek's sibilant song greeted me like a dear friend. Which indeed it is! It's a mere stone's throw from my back yard. How lucky am I?!

For 35 years I've explored this same piece of Grey Sauble Conservation land and the section of Bruce Trail that crosses it. It never disappoints me.

Submitted by: Kate McLaren

Who Are Your Nature Heroes?

There is still time to submit your nominations for the 2017 Ontario Nature Conservation Awards. These annual awards recognize excellence by honouring individuals, groups, government agencies and corporations who have worked to protect nature in Ontario. All award recipients will be honoured at our Annual General Meeting on June 2, 2018 at Isaiah Tubbs Resort in Prince Edward County. **The deadline for nominations is March 26, 2018.** Visit <https://www.ontarionature.org/> for more information about the award categories and submission guidelines.



At the September meeting, the latest version of the OSFN Constitution was ratified. This allows the executive to go ahead and set up more convenient donation options for those who wish to financially support the ongoing charitable work of the Club. The website now includes a "Donate" tab, with secure access through Canada Helps. Canada Helps generates a receipt for income tax purposes. Donations can also be made in person, at the monthly meetings and via the mail.

I want to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Anishinabek Nation: the People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa and Pottawatomi Nations. I give thanks also to the Saugeen First Nation #29 and the Chippewas of Nawash unceded First Nation, collectively known as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, the traditional keepers of this land. As Field Naturalists we accept our responsibility to be good stewards of this land, in this time and into the future.

Christmas Bird Counts

Owen Sound Christmas Bird Count

The 47th annual Owen Sound CBC was held on Saturday, December 16, 2017. 33 observers in 8 groups recorded 6286 birds of 63 species. The number of species was slightly higher compared to very recent years, with 73 species in 2012 being the most recent high. The total number of individuals was only down slightly. The weather was good, alternating between cloudy and sunny with some light snow in the morning. <30 cm snow base, and a temperature between -14.2 C and -10.4 C throughout the day. This good weather probably contributed to the number of species seen.

There were several count highs this season, especially with woodpeckers. There were count highs for Red-bellied Woodpecker (16) and the second highest count for Hairy Woodpeckers (50). There were also count highs for Rock Dove (675) and Red-breasted Nuthatch (45).

Other sightings of note:

One male Barrow's Goldeneye, a species recorded only once before on a count in 1977.

The first Ruddy Duck ever recorded in the history of the Owen Sound CBC.

1 Broad-winged Hawk, previously only recorded on the count in 2006 (referenced on the Audubon CBC website for the Owen Sound area).

1 American Coot, a bird not recorded every year on the count and always in small numbers.

3 Brown-headed Cowbird, a bird not recorded in the count since 2002, and a Common Grackle, not recorded since 2012.

Other unusual birds recorded this season include 1 Tundra Swan, 4 Eastern Bluebird, 1 Northern Flicker, 2 Merlin and a Snowy Owl.

The lack of certain winter finches was notable, with no Purple Finch, Common Redpoll and only one Pine Siskin this season.

The wrap up was held at the Ginger Press. Many thanks to Maryann for providing a delicious dinner, after a day outdoors.

Thank you to all the volunteers for making this count possible.

Submitted by: Erik Van Den Kieboom

Meaford Christmas Bird Count

The 47th annual Meaford CBC was held on Thursday December 28, 2017 under cold, but windless conditions. The temperature held at around -19 C through the day, the morning was cloudy, and visibility along the waterfront was very limited by a heavy 'sea steam'/fog vapour rising from the lake. Fine snow particles in the air further reduced visibility. Deep soft snow limited off-road traipsing. However, the skies cleared by noon, and afternoon conditions were clear, calm, bright and sunny.

55 species were tallied; up from the last 20-year average of 49.7 and reflecting the continuing trend towards higher species counts over the more recent years of this CBC. 55 species is the third highest total in 25 years; 4th highest in all 47 years. Total individuals were 3817, slightly lower than average.

No new species were found, leaving the cumulative count total at 120.

Four new highs were recorded:

Red-breasted Merganser - 27 (18 in 2013)

Red-breasted Nuthatch - 26 (22 in 1972)

Dark-eyed Junco - 175 (81 in 2007)

American Goldfinch - 845 (718 in 2011)

Blue Jay numbers were up, for a second highest count ever - 254 (334 in 1980).

Less usual species included 1 Greater Scaup (3rd record), 1 Northern Flicker (11th record), 1 White-throated Sparrow (6th record) photographed at a feeder in Meaford on count day (and continuing).

Winter finches included 12 Purple Finches, 2 White-winged Crossbills and 16 Common Redpolls.

2 Canada Geese were low for recent years although they are absent altogether every several years. House Finch (including one male counted in the bill of a Northern Shrike!) were back to a low count of 10, after recent better years.

Bald Eagle was missed for the first time in 5 years. 2 Golden Eagle confirmed their continuing trend of overwintering in the area. Cooper's Hawk was absent for the first time in 10 years.

Two days after the count Mark Wiercinski called in 3 Eastern Bluebird going in and out of a nest box. Great birds for Count Week! Bluebirds have been recorded on 3 previous counts in 47 years. They're hardier than they look!

The elusive Bald Eagle flew by in Area 1 the day after Count Week, soaring over a Snowy Owl (also absent in Area 1 on count day) sitting on the shoreline. The Snowy flattened to the ground as it went over! Missed on the count but that's the way it goes!

Submitted by: Lynne Richardson

Neyaashiinigiing (Cape Croker) Christmas Bird Count

The seventh annual Neyaashiinigiing (Cape Croker) CBC was held on Saturday, December 16, 2017. Snow squalls that started on December 15th continued overnight, affecting pre-dawn owling efforts due to unplowed secondary roads. For the remainder of the day, the 35-50 cm (officially 37 cm) snow cover limited access to many areas normally visited on foot. The waters of Georgian Bay were open, but non-flowing inland waters and parts of sheltered bays were ice-covered. Count weather was otherwise not spectacular, with very light winds, scattered clouds and occasional "sunflurries", with temperatures remaining fairly steady between -8C and -10C.

Eighteen participants eked out a record low total of 35 species (previous low 37 in 2013; average 40.5) and 669 individuals (previous 757, also in 2013; average 1041).

However, two new species for the count were seen – Lesser Scaup (1) and American Coot (1), raising the composite seven-year total to 77. A count-week Ring-necked Pheasant was also new for the list.

All-time high counts were tallied for Canada Goose (3, previous 2), Hairy Woodpecker (8, previous 7) and Northern Cardinal (13, previous 12).

Low counts were recorded for European Starling (8, previous 16). This was the first count with no Snow Buntings, and only the second count during which Great Horned Owl and Red-bellied Woodpecker were not

Christmas Bird Count Continued

observed. House Sparrows were seen in declining numbers during the first three counts, and have now been absent for four years, mirroring reported trends in other parts of the province.

Submitted by: Jarmo Jalava

Warton Christmas Bird Count

The 44th Warton CBC was held on Sunday, December 17, 2017. The waters of Georgian Bay were open, but inland waterbodies were frozen, and shallower waters along much of the Lake Huron coast were ice-covered, in some areas to a distance of many hundreds of metres from shore. Count weather was crisp and cold, with almost no wind, few clouds, with temperatures rising from -16.5C in the early morning (according to Environment Canada; -21C on car thermometers) to -6.2C in the late afternoon.

Twenty-four participants and three feeder watchers tallied 50 species (close to the 44-year average of 48.4, and the 10-year average 50.5) and 3,818 individuals (44-year average 3,405, 10-year average 4,135).

No new species for the count were reported. A single White-crowned Sparrow visiting a feeder was only the second observation of this species in 44 years, the previous record being from the 2002 count. Winter Wren has been recorded on only three previous counts, with the two birds this year being found at the exact same location as a single bird was seen during the 2016 CBC.

All-time highs were tallied for Cooper's Hawk (3, previous 2), Pileated Woodpecker (12, previous 6), Blue Jay (445, previous 385) and Dark-eyed Junco (70, previous 58). No regularly occurring species had record low counts, but numbers of dabbling ducks, European Starling, House Sparrow and winter finches were well below average (and northern finches, besides Pine Siskin and Purple Finch, were absent).

Submitted by: Jarmo Jalava

Tobermory Christmas Bird Count

The Tobermory Christmas Bird Count was held on December 20, 2017. There were 40 participants.

Temperatures ranged from -5.3° C to 0.3° C. Wind: NW, 27.4 km/h to 59.5 km/h. There was mixed sun and clouds and no precipitation. (Data from [Bill Caulfeild-Browne's Tobermory weather station](#), thanks Bill!)

A total of 41 species were observed (average - 40). Additional Count Week species seen was Green-winged Teal, one near Cape Hurd.

A total of 1108 individuals were seen (average=1646).

Noteworthy Highs, Lows and Misses:

Wild Turkey: 29. Record high. Wild Turkey was first detected on the Tobermory count in 2008 and the growing numbers on the Peninsula reflect an ongoing increase throughout the Great Lakes area over the past decade.

Eastern Screech-Owl: 4. Tied for the second highest count (four were also detected in 2012). In 2013, seven were recorded (average=0.7).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 155. A record high (average=41).

Common Raven: 13. Lowest count since 1975 when six were recorded (average=58).

Herring Gull: 49. Lowest count since 1985 when 35 were observed

(average=270).

Great Black-backed Gull: 0. This marks only the second time in 17 years that the species was absent from the count (average=4).

Summary: Individual birds were scarce although the species total (41) was close to the 45 year average and up from last year's tally (36). This year's total of individuals (1108) was the lowest since 1985. You may recall that extreme winter weather last year made for tough birding conditions on count day.

The low totals for Common Raven and Herring Gull may reflect changes in how our municipal waste is managed at the St. Edmunds Landfill site. While I have no direct knowledge of how things are done at our dump, many landfills have recently adopted the practice of compacting and covering freshly dumped waste at the close of each working day. Not surprisingly, such sites are far less attractive to scavenging birds. We'll watch for this in the coming years.

Submitted by: Michael Butler

Cape Chin & Pike Bay Christmas Bird Counts

These two CBCs cover the central Bruce Peninsula and provide a great snapshot of winter birds present on the peninsula this time of year.

This was the second year the Cape Chin count has been held and Pike Bay just graduated from year 4.

What can I say about the weather... it was cold. There was snow. Lots of both. Also ice. So much ice. Lake Huron was iced well out from the bays. Georgian Bay was open but there was lots of lake fog. So birding conditions... yeah... could have been better.

That being said, over a dozen participants marched out on both days. The number of participants is going up slightly each year and I expect this trend to continue into the near future as word spreads. Participants came from Owen Sound, Tobermory, Saugeen Shores, Toronto and even London. The counts combined, just shy of 70 hrs. were spent in the field.

Pike Bay CBC (known for having Canada's first Eurasian Tree Sparrow on a CBC!!!)

37 species; 1607 individuals. There were no new species for the count. This ties the lowest count but there are only 4 to average from so it is still early days! The low totals and diversity clearly reflect the combination of frigid weather and dicey viewing conditions. Get this... in 2014 over 2000 Snow Buntings were recorded... more than the number of birds on the CBC this year!

Cape Chin CBC (one of the newest CBCs in Ontario, with some of the highest verticals - Cabot Head!)

31 species; 907 individuals. One new species for count: Common Grackle (feeder bird). This is down from last year's count of 37 species, again with severe cold and viewing conditions it's no wonder. Waterfowl just couldn't be seen out on Georgian Bay with that crazy 'lake fog' phenomenon that's been haunting these waters this winter. Hard to say if the sometimes numerous Red-necked Grebes were present or not... well... not on count day!

Winter Finches (combined counts):

Common Redpoll (172) - present in a few large flocks and scattered

Christmas Bird Count Continued

small numbers. Seen feeding on Eastern White Cedar and Yellow Birch. Surprisingly no Hoary Redpolls amongst them.

Pine Siskin (101) - scarce but 1 flock of 100.

Purple Finch - only 4 birds, so very scarce this winter.

Pine Grosbeak - 6 were seen on the Pike Bay count but they are very scarce on the peninsula this winter.

American Goldfinch - 280+ and relatively common at feeders and feeding on Eastern White Cedars.

Other Highlights: Bohemian Waxwing (26) - single flock (note - we have still never recorded Cedar Waxwings on either count... hmmm.); Horned Grebe (5); Red-necked Grebe (2); Snowy Owl (1).

Highs: Red-breasted Nuthatch - we had 51 and 21, respectively. These are both record highs, though the winter of 2015/16 had high numbers as well. This follows with most central and southern Ontario counts this winter where almost every chickadee flock contains a few Red-breasted Nuthatches and if you are a good "pisher" then big numbers have been easy to record on CBCs this winter.

Golden-crowned Kinglet - 29 and 8. Quite high for the Pike Bay count. Again, the result of pishing.

Brown Creeper - 3 ... yup just 3, but still a new high for Pike Bay CBC. They are notoriously difficult to find in winter.

Ruffed Grouse - 17 and 6. Smashes the old records. I do think it is a good year for them and that this isn't just an anomaly.

Submitted by: Andrew Keaveney

Saugeen Shores Christmas Bird Count

The 14th Saugeen Shores CBC took place on Wednesday, January 3, 2018 with 28 people participating and 10 feeder watchers.

Judy Duncan and "the Great Canadian Birdathon"

Bird Studies Canada through "the Great Canadian Birdathon" has sent Owen Sound Field Naturalists a cheque. A letter from Kristine Dobney, Birdathon Coordinator, arrived recently with a cheque for \$196.25. The letter stated that in 2017, \$240,000 was raised for research and conservation projects across Canada and that a member of OSFN had contributed and participated in the Birdathon.

Judy Duncan, birder extraordinaire, has been birding for 35 years and for 20 of those years, she has been active in the Birdathon. Every year, Judy lines up sponsors, picks a day in May and goes birding for hours! Judy contributes to another program called Project Feederwatch and is a regular in the Christmas Bird Counts at Owen Sound, Wiarton and Saugeen Shores.

Judy, thanks so much for your hard work. Good luck on your 2018 counts!

Submitted by: Elaine Mason

The weather threatened white out conditions and it was determined that in order to get people home earlier, we would finish the day at 3 pm. A southwest wind had speeds from 25 to 44 kilometres. Snow depths were listed as 45 cm with an additional 6 cm during the day. Visibility ranged from good to fair to poor. Highway 21 south of Port Elgin remained closed for part of the day. Creeks and inland lakes were frozen; the Saugeen River had a small amount of open water. The temperature was between -11 and -14 Celsius during the count.

We found a total of 3504 individual birds; representing 49 species which is below the average of 53. No species were new to the count so the cumulative total remains at 102 species.

Of interest is an Oregon Junco which was photographed at the same feeder where one was recorded during the 2017 count.

Some totals that may be interesting, are Snowy Owl (15), Brown-headed Cowbird (6, high for the count), Common Redpoll (40), American Goldfinch (733, 2nd highest for the count), House Sparrow (3, low for the count).

Thank you to all the participants, some of whom traveled a distance to help. Their time, effort and skills were greatly appreciated.

Submitted by: Norah Toth

Andrew Keaveney made this statement: "And to all the participants, the counts are only as good as the numbers you bring back in. Thank you for all your efforts in driving, trekking, watching and recording." All compilers would have to agree.

NeighbourWoods North

NeighbourWoods North's (NN) mission is to foster the Urban Forest of Owen Sound by planting trees and naturalizing spaces where tree planting is appropriate. Last fall, our first project was to plant a row of flowering trees along the Eddie Sargent Parkway at Kelso Beach. Thanks to volunteers from the OSFN, this project happened without a hitch.

NN is a committee of the OSFN. This spring NN plans to plant several thousand trees on the Grey Bruce Regional Health Services grounds. Final approval is imminent. The funding is in place and detailed plans are being conceived as we speak. We will be looking for volunteers to help with this planting soon; so please keep your ears to the ground.

As we go forward, we will be considering other project initiatives such as school grounds plantings and greening the mouth of the Potawatomi River. Financial donations are eligible for tax receipts and help us carry out our mandate. They can be directed through the OSFN.

Huron Fringe Birding Festival, May 25—June 3, 2018

Registration Started February 1, 2018



PROGRAM LISTINGS



A pair of Smooth Cliffbrake ferns on a rock. Credit: Brian Robin.

The Owen Sound Field Naturalists (OSFN) advocates and nurtures the appreciation, understanding and conservation of our natural world as is exemplified in our motto—Knowing Nature Better. We were created in 1989 to provide Owen Sound and area naturalists with the opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and to share activities that would allow them to increase their understanding of natural history and conservation. Today, we have over 300 members and are a member club of Ontario Nature.

Indoor meetings are held on the **second Thursday** of the month, September to May in the auditorium of the **Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library at 7:00 p.m.** In June, the meeting starts at 6 p.m. with a potluck supper and it's held at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Guest presenters are chosen to provide a wide range of topics. Their expertise covers natural history subjects that may be local, provincial, national or international in scope. Indoor meetings are open to the public.

The OSFN also provides a full schedule of **outdoor activities** throughout the year. On these outings, members learn and share first-hand knowledge about the flora, fauna and geography of this region. Participation numbers are limited on most outings to ensure the quality of the experience and to reduce impact on the environments visited. Pre-registration is required for outdoor activities.

Please note that all programs and schedules are subject to change. To avoid disappointment, please check www.osfn.ca for updates (changes to dates, speakers, locations, etc.) or watch for an e-herald from newsletter@owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca We thank you for understanding.

www.owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca P.O. Box 401, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P7

Outdoor Programs

Pre-registration is required. Participant numbers are limited on most outings to ensure the quality of the experience and to reduce the impact on the environments visited. Please call or email the listed contact to register.

All events and times are subject to change – visit www.osfn.ca

Saturday, March 3, 2018 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. Who Made Those Tracks and Why? An Interpretive Late Winter Tracking Hike with Jeff Kinchen **Register:** Jeff Kinchen, bognors.finest@gmail.com 519-374-4246 **Limit:** 12

April 22 is EARTH DAY Special Events TBA, during Earth Week

Saturday, April 28, 2018 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. Inglis Falls Arboretum and Propagation Area Tour with Bill Moses. A perfect opportunity to see what's happening at the Arboretum. **Register:** Bill Moses, bill.mosesos@gmail.com **Limit:** 12

Tuesday, May 15, 2018 10 a.m. - Noon Wildflower Walk at Old Baldy with Stew Hilts. Discover what is in bloom here, on the crest of the Beaver Valley. **Register:** Stew Hilts, shilts@uoguelph.ca 519-986-1475

Tuesday, May 22, 2018 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Grassland Birding across Farmer's Fields in former Sarawak Township (Church Road and Grey Road 1) **Register:** Beth Anne Currie, bethannecurrie@sympatico.ca 519-376-7237 **Limit:** 10

Sunday, June 10, 2018 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Field & Forest Birds of the Blue Mountains, with Lynne Richardson. Discover the birds of the mixed habitat of Loree Forest. **Register:** Lynne Richardson 519-599-3618 **Limit:** 15

Wednesday, June 13, 2018 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Botany on the Lower Bruce Peninsula. Barbara Palmer will lead us as we check out some well-known botany hotspots, including Petrel Point and the Oliphant Fen. **Register:** Barbara Palmer, barbara_p@rogers.com or 519-372-0355 All Ages. **Limit:** 12.

Saturday, June 23, 2018 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Butterflies of Bognor Marsh. **Register:** Chris Rickard, crickard@sympatico.ca or 705-444-6671 All ages.

"Two forces shape the world – nature and human nature." Paul Aird

Young Naturalists' 2017-2018

The Young Nats' Club is for boys and girls ages 7 to 12 years old. Younger and older children are welcome, however ages under 7 must be accompanied by an adult during each meeting. We typically meet the last Sunday of the month from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. (please note offsite trips are planned), but for some events the times may vary. The program operates from October to June; with no meeting in December. Parents or guardians are encouraged to stay and participate or volunteer if they wish.

January 28, 2018 (meeting at Bognor Marsh) Snowshoeing or hike at Bognor Marsh, Camp Fire, cook bannock & have hot chocolate. Parents are encouraged to join. (Directions to Bognor Marsh—Grey Rd 18 (Derry Line) east of Rockford, park.ng on 4th Conc. South Sideroad, (Strathaven Rd).

February 24, 2018 (*note date change*) Who made those tracks and why? An interpretive late winter tracking hike with Jeff Kinchen. Location details will follow.

March 25, 2018 Let's make a Toad House with Kate McLaren. Meet at the double doors at the back of the Farmer's Market Building—(located behind Owen Sound City Hall) This will include a hike to the Mill Dam.

April 29, 2018 Earth Day Hike - details will follow.

May 27, 2018 Spring Wildflower / Birding Hike at Sydenham Forest Management Area. Meeting at hike location. (Directions will follow.) Bring binoculars if you have them.

June 23, 2018 (Saturday) 1:30 to 4:30 Butterflies of Bognor Marsh with Chris Rickard. (Meet at Bognor Marsh parking lot.) Rain Date, Sunday, June 24.

The programs are outdoors. Please dress for the weather!

The Young Naturalist Club Program Coordinator is Elaine Van Den Kieboom (519 371-1989) or ekieboom@gbtel.ca.

Comments From a Parent: We just wanted to say thank you for such a wonderful outing last weekend with the Young Naturalists Club. Over the past week, my daughter has repeatedly referred to "her friends who teach her about trees". We are so thankful for the opportunities you provide for these kids. Please pass on our thanks to Kate, Brian, Bill, John, Elaine, and all the adults who take the time to listen and to respond with patience and good humour to our young naturalists. With thanks, Tabitha and Jason

Indoor Meetings

Indoor meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of the month from September to June. They start at 7:00 p.m. at the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library, 824 1st Avenue West, Owen Sound. Remember, bring a coffee mug to meetings. All events and times are subject to change. Visit www.osfn.ca for updates and added events.

March 8, 2018 Dr. Sonja Ostertag BELUGAS 'QILALUGAQ' IN THE ARCTIC

The annual migration of Beluga Whales, called qilalugaq in Inuvialuktun, presents an important opportunity for subsistence harvesting by the Inuvialuit of the western Canadian Arctic. It also allows for collaborative study on how environmental change may impact this species; plus unique insight for research and co-management.

April 12, 2018 Barry Kent MacKay BIRD ART: THE CHALLENGES TO BIRD ART & ILLUSTRATION, NOW & IN THE PAST

A respected ornithologist, acclaimed artist and naturalist, columnist and author, MacKay brings his expertise and passion to share with OSFN.

Sunday April 22, 2018 EARTH DAY SPECIAL EVENT

2:00 p.m. Keynote Address by Adam Shoalts - Author, Naturalist and Explorer - on board the newly renovated MS Chi-Cheemaun. Ticket details will be available at club meetings, on the OSFN website and through e-heralds. This event is made possible by the kind hospitality of the Owen Sound Transportation Company and the generous sponsorship of Caframo.



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May 10, 2018 Bob Rice Coordinating MEMBERS' NIGHT

A potpourri of OSFN members' slides, displays, art, collections and compositions focusing on the natural world. A limit of 10 slides and 10 minutes of presentation time is preferred. Register with Bob Rice at: riceman8@hotmail.com 519 477 1728

June 14, 2018 @ 6 p.m. SHARP (Last meeting of the year.)

ANNUAL POTLUCK SUPPER & PRESENTATION

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 865 1st Ave. W, Owen Sound

Bring your own plates, cutlery and cup or mug, and bring a food dish to share, along with serving utensils.

Followed at 7 p.m. by

Ted Armstrong, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? WHY WOODLAND CARIBOU NO LONGER ROAM MUCH OF ONTARIO

This former Grey County farm boy is currently a Thunder Bay Wildlife Biologist. Armstrong has worked extensively at developing species at risk recovery programs and policies, with a special focus on the iconic Woodland Caribou.

OSFN Honorary Life Members

Do you know anyone who you feel should be considered for an Honorary Life Membership? Here are the guidelines.

People who have been OSFN members for ten years or more are eligible for consideration for life membership if they fill **one or more** of the following criteria: he or she has made a major contribution to the study of the natural world either through their career or through their hobby and interests; he or she has made a major contribution in education about the natural world, either as a particularly dedicated school teacher or adult educator, or through being active in organizing the activities of the Young Naturalists club or similar organizations for ten years or more; he or she has made a major contribution to the OSFN, either through a high degree of participation in OSFN projects or by being a member of the Executive for 15 years or more; he or she has made a major contribution to the protection and preservation of natural areas in Grey and Bruce Counties.

Please submit your recommendation to the Board of Directors prior to April 1, 2018.

Local Nature Related Events to Mark on Your Calendar

Wednesday, February 21 to April 18 - **Adventure Talk Series**, Bruce County Museum. Varied lecturers from 10 am - 11 am every second Wednesday. Tickets can be purchased at the Museum.

Tuesday, March 27, 2018 - The Grey County Gardeners Club is hosting a guest lecture by Peter Middleton titled **Canada's National Parks, A Heritage to Treasure**. 7 - 9 pm at the Lutheran Church Hall, 1049 - 4th Avenue West, Owen Sound. Non-members \$5 at the door. Annual Club membership \$20.

Thursday, April 19, 2018 - The Grey Sauble Conservation Foundation is presenting the Earth Film Festival at 7 pm at the Roxy Theatre. Featured is **where the universe sings, the Spiritual Journey of Lawren Harris**. All funds raised benefit local conservation projects and student education grants supported by the Grey Sauble Conservation Foundation. Tickets are available at the Roxy Theatre.

Friday, May 4 to Sunday, May 6, 2018 - **Sources of Knowledge Forum** - Sharing Perspectives on the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Bruce Peninsula. Information available at <http://www.sourcesofknowledge.ca/2018-forum/>

Thursday, May 10 to Friday, May 11, 2018 - **Is the Coast Clear?** Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation Conference. Grand Bend. Information available at <https://www.lakehuron.ca/conference>

Thank you



**for supporting the Young Naturalists Club
& our Earth Day Keynote Lecture Series.**

Membership Application and Renewal Form

Name (s)

Address.....

Telephone..... E-mail (s) Check here if renewal.....
(your e-mail will be used for OSFN e-bulletin, last minute notices and digital receipt of the newsletter)

Membership Category: Single (\$25)..... Family (\$40)..... Student (\$15)..... (payable by cheque or at www.osfn.ca through Paypal)

Donation for LEAF (Local Education and Action Fund, promoting & fostering knowledge about nature).....

Donation to Lorraine Brown Conservation Fund (supporting land acquisitions & interpretive infrastructure in Grey/Bruce)

(Donations may be made by cheque or on-line using Canada Helps at www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/owen-sound-field-naturalists/)

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 owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca)

Membership is due in September each year and can be paid in cash or by cheque at any indoor meeting or by PayPal on the website. The OSFN Membership is current from September 1 to August 30 each year. Please complete and detach this form and submit it with your payment.

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Hooded Merganser X Goldeneye

On January 30, 2018, I noticed a strange duck in the Sydenham River in Harrison Park. It didn't look like any duck I'd ever seen, with gray sides, a green sheen on its head, a golden eye, and the bill of a merganser. After observing this strange bird for some time, I finally clued in as to what it might be. Sure enough, after some searching through field guides, my suspicions were confirmed. The strange duck turned out to not be a species at all, but a hybrid between a Hooded Merganser and a Goldeneye.



It is not uncommon for ducks in the same genus to hybridize with each other, however, the strangest thing is that the Hooded Merganser and the goldeneye species are in two different genera (<https://bangordailynews.com>). Although it is called a merganser, the Hooded Merganser is actually taxonomically intermediate between the typical mergansers (*Mergus*) and the goldeneyes (*Bucephala*), and it shares traits (especially courtship traits) with both these genera (<https://birdsna.org>). This might be why Hooded Mergansers and Goldeneyes are able to produce offspring, they may not be in the same genera, but they're still close enough.

For anyone interested in seeing this odd hybrid, it was on the Sydenham River, just north of the northernmost bridge in the park, on the 30th of January. Hopefully it sticks around!

<https://bangordailynews.com/2013/02/.../hybrid-duck-turns-heads-in-southwest-harbo...>

<https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/hoomer/introduction>

Submitted by: Erik Van Den Kieboom

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Getting Together with Friends

On January 20th Bob Knapp led a combined OSFN and Bruce Trail snowshoe hike on the Clearview/Pines Side Trails, where a distinct isolated valley, along with wetland, streams, old tree specimens, and signs of early settlers' habitation were noted. There was plenty of evidence showing the previous high water run-off and freezing that had taken place along the creek bed there, along with tracks of wildlife who also like to use the Bruce Trail on their own. A special highlight for fellow hiker Peter Harris and I was to catch a fleeting glimpse of a large



Members of the OSFN and Sydenham Bruce Trail Club enjoy an outing together. **Credit:** John Dickson.

snowshoe hare some distance away.

For some in attendance it was also an opportunity to visit the nearby historic Polish Tree, an American Beech tree, with Polish language carving including some of that country's national anthem, inscribed by a Polish soldier training here in 1942. A special thank you to Bob who is always eager to get people out to see the wonders of nature we have in the area. Twice during the following week, he and I skied in the area southwest of Kemble Mountain, and were treated to a rare sighting of the elusive Barred Owl.

Submitted by: John Dickson



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Barred Owl.
Credit: Bob Knapp



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Things To Do—Just for Kids

Krista's Campfire Bannock

- 3 cups of flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp salt
- 1/3 cup sugar
- (optional 1 tsp cinnamon)
- 1/2 cup of margarine

Cut margarine into the dry mixture until margarine is about the size of a pea. Slowly add water (about 1 and 1/4 cup of water - give or take) until it is the right consistency to roll into balls.

Roll the balls in a little bit of flour to reduce stickiness.

Best cooked over an open fire.

This recipe provides enough bannock for about 25 children.

Consider becoming a **Piping Plover** Citizen Scientist volunteer monitor during the summer of 2018. Information about the volunteer program and the Outreach and Education Coordinator position can be found on the Plover Lovers website at www.ploverlovers.com

This program is made available through Stewardship Grey Bruce.

PLOVER LOVERS
PIPING PLOVER WORD SEARCH

S	P	I	P	I	N	G	P	L	O	V	E	R	L
H	A	L	C	H	I	C	K	S	E	S	R	R	G
A	O	U	♥	S	O	C	U	T	E	E	P	L	I
R	N	f	B	V	A	W	E	O	V	S	P	H	V
E	B	C	O	L	E	T	Y	♥	R	A	R	E	E
T	L	K	O	B	E	R	L	T	B	S	O	L	T
H	G	D	C	L	X	T	O	F	E	T	T	P	H
E	U	R	H	R	D	L	F	C	A	R	E	T	E
S	L	G	A	N	E	♥	L	F	C	S	C	H	M
H	L	E	I	I	D	T	O	W	H	L	T	E	S
O	S	W	C	L	N	T	R	R	O	A	H	M	P
R	M	E	R	L	I	N	I	F	L	Y	E	P	A
E	S	T	O	R	M	S	D	R	U	N	M	A	C
E	A	T	W	B	X	L	A	Y	I	K	E	S	E
O	Y	E	N	D	A	N	G	E	R	E	D	X	P

RARE ENDANGERED PIPING PLOVER HELP THEM PROTECT THEM

SAUBLE TO FLORIDA STORMS WET WIND COLD

BEACH MERLIN CROW GULLS EAT YIKES RUN FLY

MA PA CHICKS SO CUTE AWE OfOBXL (Band combo for FlagBoy)

GIVE THEM SPACE CARE SHARE THE SHORE PL♥VER L♥VER

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better. It's Not.
The Lorax

Thank you to the members who have provided content for this newsletter or who have proofread. Submissions for the next issue can be sent to ntoth@rogers.com prior to July 15, 2018.

foto art

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Hospitality at Meetings

At each meeting, coffee and tea have been provided so that you have the chance to socialize. Audrey Armstrong and Norah Toth share this job. If anyone else is able to spend an extra hour prior to the meeting helping out the club by preparing and serving coffee and tea, please contact Norah Toth—ntoth@rogers.com

To help provide coffee supplies, a financial donation has been welcomed at the coffee table.

Let's G.O.! (Get Outside)

Young Naturalist's Club

Bognor Marsh

On January 28 the Young Naturalist Club had its annual winter visit to the Bognor Marsh, to snowshoe/hike on the trails there, see some animal tracks, and other winter nature highlights, and finish off with cooking their own bannock over an open fire while sipping their hot chocolate. It was very intriguing to see how one keen youngster latched on to Club member Bill Moses, for a little while, getting her own special tutorial about nature highlights at this popular location. Special thanks to Coordinator Elaine Van Den Kieboom for organizing this popular outing. OSFN President Kate McLaren reported -



"On a hike that took us along Bognor Marsh shore, through mixed forest and across meadows our group encountered every kind of slippery footing possible! Ice, wet snow, mud, trickling stream, packed snow, frozen earth - you name it. Snowshoes were useful in some places and a hindrance in others, but we all made it safely back to the bonfire and bannock.

"Along the way we watched for signs of creatures, mainly checking for tracks and deposits of scat. There was one puzzling pile of scat that baffled us all. The prints of deer were abundant. Coyotes had been out some days earlier, leading to the comparison of feline tracks vs canine: if claws are evident it's very likely canine (coyote, dog, wolf) as feline species (cats, foxes, lynx, bobcat, cougar) retract their claws unless they're actively using them.

"Rabbit, squirrel and mouse trails were evident and there was a long discussion about unusually elongated pellets suspected of being a sign of ruffed grouse. Further research is needed to make a positive identification.

"As well there was an investigation of galls on remnants of goldenrod, the woody bandaid the plant creates around the invading insect. Seeds still attached to the fluff from milkweed were scattered across the snow awaiting spring to sprout new life.

"Although a few chickadees were observed, and ravens were heard, most birds were laying low that afternoon but their signs were obvious. They had distributed the remains of cedar seeds after consuming the nutritious portion. Part of a nest had fallen to the ground causing us to ponder who the maker might have been.

"We saw a great variety of trees and shrubs, identifying them through their different sizes, shapes, textures and patterns. Former pasture has been reforested a decade or so ago with partial success, making pleasant small groves of conifers in the otherwise sunny meadow.

"With 28 people on the trail any wildlife in the neighborhood was in hiding!"

Submitted by: John Dickson



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An outdoor cat can damage your sustainability cred

If you install solar panels on your roof and avoid dousing your lawn with chemicals and pesticides, your online peers may consider you to be environmentally friendly. But this street cred can all be erased if you let your cat roam around outdoors.

A new study shows that bird lovers who allow their pet cats out of the house are judged to be less concerned about the environment by other members of the birder community on social media, even if the property owner is otherwise employing all of the same sustainable practices as those keeping cats indoors.

"We thought this was a very interesting opportunity to study group norm violations," said Hwanseok Song, a fifth-year doctoral student in communication at Cornell University and the paper's lead author. "What happens within this community when they see one of their members violate an important group norm? Do people notice cues that a member within their community is letting their cat outdoors? Do these people who notice those cues actually use that information to make judgments on that group-norm violator?"

To explore these questions, Song and his collaborators used Habitat Network (originally named yardmap.org), a socially networked mapping application that allows users to create and share virtual maps of their properties that highlight their sustainability efforts, essentially a show-and-tell for good conservation practices. The researchers created two identical profiles of a pro-environmental property with a small lawn, low chemical usage and solar panels. The only difference between the profiles: One version had an icon and an image indicating an indoor pet cat and the other an outdoor pet cat. Outdoor cats are a divisive issue for many nature lovers because of the threat they pose to wildlife, particularly birds.

Habitat Network users were asked to rate each property owner's level of sustainability. The researchers found that participants who didn't own cats negatively judged property owners with an outdoor cat and even considered them significantly less likely to engage in a variety of pro-

environmental behaviors, even though the maps made it clear these property owners had invested in solar power and used few chemicals on their lawns.

"Everything else in this map is pretty much signaling that this is a person already quite committed to sustainability causes. It usually takes a strong environmental commitment to install a solar panel. These findings say a lot about how we make judgments of others who are either violating, or complying with, these sometimes-parochial norms," said Song.

"This study is a reminder of how easy it can be to jump to conclusions about other people's behaviors on the basis of very little information," added Poppy McLeod, professor of communication, who co-authored the paper.

The study's findings have strong implications for online citizen-science projects that unite the sustainability community. While these projects can foster a sense of group solidarity and shared goals, unspoken biases and misperceptions could weaken progress in these projects.

Reference: Cornell University. "An outdoor cat can damage your sustainability cred." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 30 January 2018. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/01/180130140249.htm>.

Teaching children about the natural world should be treated as one of the most important events in their lives.

Thomas Berry



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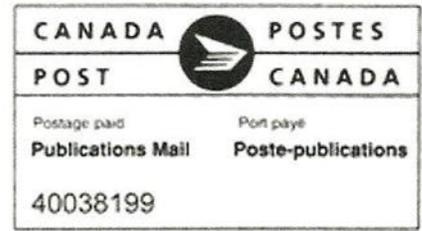


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Knowing Nature Better

The Owen Sound Field Naturalists advocate and nurture the appreciation, understanding, and conservation of our natural world. We are like-minded individuals who enjoy programs and activities that help us increase our understanding of natural history and conservation in Grey-Bruce.



A digiscopeed Snowy Owl sighted during the Meaford CBC count week. Credit: Lynne Richardson



Habitat Hike at Walter's Falls Management Area. An examination of hophornbeam seeds. Credit: John Dickson



Northern Shrike takes a male House Finch during the Meaford CBC. Credit: Ethan Gosnell