



Owen Sound
Field Naturalists



Hart's-Tongue Herald

The Newsletter of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists

Box 401, Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 5P7

Fall 2005

Volume 18, Number 2

Editor: Lorraine Brown



Nelson Maher (1933 - 2005)

The children, the naturalists, even the ferns and orchids of Grey and Bruce Counties will all miss their friend and champion, Nelson Maher. Nels died on Friday, August 26, in his 72nd year. Please turn to page 2 for our tribute to a great naturalist.

Remembering a Great Man: Nelson Maher

Back in June at our last indoor meeting, we presented honorary lifetime memberships to Nels and Jean Maher. Little did we know that in this fall newsletter, just three months later, Nels would be gone, and we would be once more talking of his achievements in fond memory.

As I write this, Nels' funeral has not yet taken place, and the Sun-Times has not yet written about him as I'm sure they will in the coming days. There will be many well-deserved tributes to Nels, outlining his full and generous life. I thought I would focus on his achievements as a naturalist.

Nels was probably best known as a fern expert. Even though he did not study botany formally, he was recognized as one of Ontario's prominent experts on ferns. Although he did field trips with University of Guelph botanist Donald Britton, proving the high level of his knowledge, he also had a hands-on understanding of ferns. They are notoriously difficult to grow from spores, yet Nels did it, and grew them in his back yard.

He combined his printing expertise with his love of ferns to create a series of beautiful fern prints. His one-page hand-out on ferns has introduced many of us to the ferns of this area, and has even turned up on a t-shirt thanks to Sue Allison at Trophies Two. Probably his crowning achievement with ferns, the one that will live on as his legacy, is his book, A Guide to the Ferns of Grey and Bruce Counties, Ontario.

Nels played a central role in the production of all the rest of our series of nature books on Grey and Bruce Counties. With his knowledge of printing, he made sure all of the books were printed and bound well.

Nels was also quite expert on orchids, leading trips for our club and many others, including groups from Toronto and the United States. He was also an excellent photographer, and when he wasn't out studying and photographing ferns and orchids, he was giving talks on them.

Back in the early days of OSFN, we took on many big projects, such as the Oliphant boardwalk, a trail between the two senior residences on the east hill, and the avian viewing platform at Baie du Dore. Nels played a central role in all of these projects. He really knew how to build boardwalks. With the Rotary Club, he also built boardwalks through the woods, wetlands and fields at Hibou.

This list of achievements, however, doesn't capture Nels' personality. He was a remarkably friendly man, and he and Jean's home was always open to their friends, family, and the students from other countries who came and lived with them. Nels was always approachable, always positive. We will miss his presence as a human being even more than we'll miss his contributions to our club.

Mac Kirk asked that we also remember Nels' contribution to the protection of significant natural areas. "It was Nels who came to me and told me that we had to protect his beloved "Cinnamon Bog", now known as the Galbraith natural area

after the family that donated their land so it could be protected," Mac said.

I'll let Peter Middleton's words, written on his hearing of Nels' death, finish this tribute:


"Family, scouts, seniors, naturalists, citizens of Owen Sound have all been the recipients of his enthusiasm and passion. His final project – the atlassing of notable trees in Owen Sound, is but one example of his endless dedication to nature and his fellow travellers on this planet. He goes, as I am sure he would have wished, picking elderberries for his annual batch of winemaking. In that, he was enjoying once again the munificent fruits of nature, trusting that, despite his illness, he would be here to make and taste this year's vintage. With that thought, I toast a wonderful man and the legacy he leaves."

We send our sincere sympathies to Jean and the rest of the Maher family.

Lorraine Brown



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My Impressions of the Carden Alvar

By Mike Pickup, Port Elgin

The day the Bruce Birding Club decided on a trip to the Carden Alvar for their June birding trip, I knew this was one trip that I would not miss.

I had heard of the Carden Alvar, but knew little of this area and had no idea what to expect for our pending outing. Dave Schaus, our leader for the day, had done at least a couple of scouting trips and had a well planned itinerary that would take us on a tour and show off the natural history and birding for the area. As we travelled from Southampton to Orillia we met up with others, and finally to Tim Horton's at the corner of Hwy #12 and Memorial Ave. where we all gathered.

We were now ready for a truly fantastic day of birding. I had heard that the Carden Plain or "Alvar" (an Estonian word that describes a basically flat limestone plain, covered with scattered vegetation that endures very extreme wet and dry conditions) had been designated as an IBA (Important Bird Area) for Ontario. Alvars, I had read, are endangered communities, that occur only in

certain areas of the world. One is the Great Lakes Basin and the other, the southern parts of Sweden. Therefore, living in Ontario, this was a place I just had to see for myself.

This area east of Orillia is the last stronghold for the Loggerhead Shrike and for grassland birds in Ontario. If I was to see only a few birds, then the Loggerhead Shrike was at the top of my list, along with Upland Sandpiper and Grasshopper Sparrow. Leaving Orillia at 9:00 am, our morning stops included Dalrymple Lake, Cameron Ranch, Canal Lake, Prospect Rd., Eldon Station Rd., Rockview Rd. and lunch at the Kirkfield Lift Lock and ice cream at the restaurant. The afternoon took us to McNamee Rd., Wylie Rd. and Windmill Ranch, other stops along Wylie Rd., Sedge Wren Marsh, Alvar Rd., Lake Dalrymple and back along County Rd's. #6 and #46 to Orillia with a stop at "The Bird House" nature store and supper at Weber's restaurant on Front St. at approximately 5:30 pm. Thanks again to Dave and his wife Jean who planned this trip to give us all a very good look at the area. We recorded a total of 71 species, for the day, with good views of the Loggerhead Shrike, at the designated spot on Wylie Rd., Upland Sandpipers whistling their calls to attract the females (as all males

are wont to do), the Grasshopper Sparrow that posed on the fence post for us, American Bittern that gave us a fly past and the calling Least Bittern at the swamp on Prospect Rd. Other birds of note were the Marsh and Sedge Wrens that called at various spots along our travels and the Caspian, Common and Black Terns at Dalrymple lake.

During the afternoon we met a couple who were birding in the area as well. Stopping to talk, as I am not afraid to do, I had a wonderful chat with David Homer and his wife Bonnie. While talking with them and finding out that they lived in this fantastic part of the country, they shared information with us on where to look for certain birds. Their knowledge of the area is of great importance to all, who hold the conservation of sensitive areas close to their heart.

The Carden Plain needs to be protected and the efforts of all are to be commended. The Cameron Ranch and Windmill Ranch are significant plant and birding areas we cannot do without and I will support the continuing efforts for their protection. Habitats for Loggerhead Shrikes and Upland Sandpipers keep declining so we need to keep protecting. The last Loggerhead



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Shrike I have seen locally was back in the early 80's near Arkwright, Ontario.

My lasting impressions are of the wafting, mauve flowers waving in the breeze, Long-Plumed Purple Avens or Prairie Smoke as they are more commonly known. It is one sight I will not forget, as I had never even seen or heard of them before. Listening to the whistled calls of the Upland Sandpiper, and watching the Loggerhead Shrike forage over the fields on Wylie Rd. and the many Osprey nests also give one an image that will be forever on my mind.

The Carden Alvar to me is a special place where one can escape the everyday humdrum of life. This will be a place that I will come to each year from now on, as it has become one of my favourite birding spots in Ontario to visit.

Inverhuron Re-Opens to Campers

On August 25th, a large group of park volunteers, campers, government officials and native people met in a clearing at Inverhuron Provincial Park to celebrate the official re-opening of Inverhuron as a camping park. Before the ribbon was officially cut, we listened to speeches and to Ojibway prayers and songs delivered by Paul Nadjiwon, the new Chief at Cape Croker.

Listening to Paul as he sang and played the drum against a background of buzzing cicadas, it wasn't hard to imagine Inverhuron on a similar hot August day before Europeans arrived, when native people gathered here to hunt and gather food for the winter.

Archeological digs show that there has been human activity at Inverhuron for the past 4500 years. The sand dunes have created very good conditions for preservation of archeological remains.

In the 1850s there was a dolostone quarry and saw and grist mills within what are now the Park's boundaries. The nearby town of Inverhuron did not grow into a commercial centre as residents had hoped. Instead, it became a popular resort area.

Inverhuron Provincial Park was first opened in 1959 and quickly became one of Ontario's most popular parks. The opening of a heavy water plant at the nearby Bruce Nuclear Power Plant, however, raised concerns about campers being adversely affected by possible sour gas emissions from the plant, and in 1976 Inverhuron became a day-use only park. To make up for the loss of camping at Inverhuron, Ontario Hydro purchased the land at MacGregor and gave it to the Ministry of Natural Resources so they could establish MacGregor Point Provincial Park as a camping park.

I remember wandering through Inverhuron Provincial Park around 15 years ago, and feeling kind of spooky as we walked past the old campsites. Weeds and trees were reclaiming the sites, growing up around the old posts where campers had once put their notices announcing that this spot was taken.

The Bruce Nuclear power station stopped producing heavy water in 1998, paving the way for Inverhuron to become a camping park once more. There are now 150 camp sites open. When the project is complete, Inverhuron will offer 250 campsites, along with new trails, comfort stations and an amphitheatre.

For the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the staff stretched the ribbon between one of those old posts from the past, and a brand new post representing today's new park. It was an emotional moment for many people who had worked in the park back in the 1970s, and who were there for the re-opening ceremonies.

Lorraine Brown

In Memoriam – Dorothy Crocker

We are sad to announce the death of one of our long-time members, Dorothy Crocker. Dorothy died on Mother's Day, May 8, 2005 at the age of 76.

Dorothy was the first editor of the Hart's-Tongue Herald. She lived in Hope Bay with her husband, the Revered Robert Crocker. After his death she moved to Tara. Dorothy was active in the Girl Guides of Canada for more than fifty years.

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Meeting and Field Trip Reports

Rocks Beneath Our Soles – April 24

This outing with Torben Hawksbridge had to be postponed by two weeks due to a late winter storm. The new date was a beautiful sunny day. Around 20 people participated in this outing, and really enjoyed it. In the right hands, geology can be very interesting!

The group started at the rock outcrop on Highway 6 at Rockford. This outcrop is actually a bioherm – an ancient coral reef in simpler terms. At the rocks exposed at Inglis Falls, Torben pointed out the contact between the Cabot Head Formation and the Fossil Hill Formation.

Then the group proceeded (by invitation) to the crevice caves on the property of Bob and Marie Knapp, which lies below the Escarpment rocks on the west side of Owen Sound. They finished up at the Indian Falls Conservation Area, where Torben pointed out the features of a typical Escarpment waterfall.

Kolapore Explorations, May 28, 2005

The weather was cool and cloudy but not raining, as eight members joined Lynne Richardson to explore the Kolapore Uplands. There weren't a lot of spring migrants going through, but they did hear some forest interior species including Black-throated Blue Warbler and Northern Water Thrush along Kolapore Creek. A highlight was seeing a Scarlet Tanager. They also found showy orchis in bloom.

The group visited the crevice caves at Metcalfe Rock and found them to be quite disturbed by climbers and mountain bikers. Bikers try to ride through the long crevice and usually can't make it, so they end up carrying their bikes through. This takes a toll on the ferns and other vegetation in the crevices.

Trip to Chantry Island, June 19, 2005

Eighteen participants met at the Southampton dock for the outing to



Hummingbird Clearwing (*Hemaris thysbe*) Photo by Larry Lebel

Chantry Island. The day was one of the first of those sunny, hot days that would come to characterize this summer. On the island, the group enjoyed the carefully restored lighthouse and keeper's house. A volunteer skillfully brought to life the daily routines and lifestyles of the keepers who looked after this historic and important marine landmark.

From the top of the light, participants were provided with spectacular vistas of the coast and, closer to hand, superb views of Chantry's nesting colonies. The trees were festooned with breeding birds and nests. Egrets occupied the penthouse level. Below, Great Blue Heron nests filled the middle layers. Double-crested Cormorants occupied the ground-level flats. Young gulls, still flightless, but highly inquisitive, explored the beaches and waters around the shores of the island.

When the time for departure arrived, the return to the boat was at best a relaxed straggle. The fact that nobody seemed in any rush to leave speaks to the enjoyment all seemed to experience.

Peter Middleton

Trip to Pinery Provincial Park, June 24 –25, 2005

Nineteen members of the OSFN spent the weekend of June 24 to 26 at the 'bunkie' in Pinery Provincial Park. The bunkie is an excellent facility featuring 12 rooms with two single beds each, a kitchen and a large common area. It is located in an area of the park in which a prescribed burn was conducted in 2003. These burns are meant to sustain the oak savannah.

Once a habitat covering millions of hectares in central North America, the Pinery contains the largest remaining fragment of oak savannah on the continent. Right outside our door was evidence of the unique flora and fauna of the savannah: two nesting pairs of Red-headed Woodpeckers!

Jan and Peter Middleton were our guides as we explored the diversity of the Park from early walks for the dawn song to twilight rambles looking for Whip-poor-wills, coyotes and flying squirrels. The highlight for me: a freshly hatched Hummingbird Clearwing moth.

Freeman Boyd

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Ringlets. There also seems to be a declining trend happening with Canadian Swallowtails. Their numbers are dropping every year. It might just mean that we are missing their peaks times.

There is also some good news. The Monarch numbers had increased from their low count last year. And we had a new record. The first Atlantis Fritillary was seen at this year's NABA.

We would like to thank MacGregor Point Provincial Park for letting us host the NABA count and also for the great munchies.

Mary & Tony Rapati

Annual Butterfly Count Breaks the Record for Species

What a wonderful day we had for the NABA count! It was hot but not humid – a perfect day for butterflies and the people who love them. We had 23 attendees who covered seven segments of the circular count area. The total number of species counted was 44. This is incredible: 41 was our highest number in the past.

We have noticed that with the warm/hot spring/summer, some species have peaked earlier this year. An example is the European Skipper, which peaked about 2 weeks before our count. The weather might also account for several record high numbers of species for the NABA:

- Common Wood Nymph: 305 (In the past our highest was 61 in 1999)
- Aphrodite Fritillary: 74 (In the past our highest was 45 in 2004)
- Northern Pearly Eye: 122 (In the past our highest was 29 in 2000)
- Pearl Crescent: 95 (In the past our highest was 4 in 2004)
- Acadian Hairstreak: 36 (In the past our highest was 6 in 2004)
- Dorcas Copper: 46 (In the past our highest was 1 in 2002)

Clouded Sulphurs and Coral Hairstreaks were also up in numbers.

Some species were down in numbers, but it's possible again that the peak times had shifted. Examples are the Baltimore Checkerspot and Common



Audrey Armstrong (left), Marjorie Thomson and Lorraine Brown identify a butterfly at the NABA count (Ross Thomson)

The Moss Foray of 1938

Norah Toth recently passed on to me a copy of an article that was published in *The Bryologist* in December 1938 outlining the highlights of a moss collecting field trip that took place in the Grey-Bruce area in June of that year. Norah's aunt ran a guest house in the family home – Buchan Manor – and was also an amateur moss collector. It was in her home that the party assembled.

Between the two world wars, there seems to have been a strong interest in botany among a group of Owen Sound residents. Nels and I have come across evidence of this several times. Miss Buchan was part of it, but Eugene Moxley appears to have been the guiding light. With his friend Clarence Hand, he was the leader of this expedition. On the first day they toured several places, including Harrison Park and Inglis Falls. I am happy to say that many of the species they recorded are still to be found, in particular *Cratoneuron filicinum* which is abundant in the springs along the Inglis Falls Road, and *Thamnobryum allegheniense* which festoons many of the moist, shaded rock faces near the falls. However, several were mentioned that I have not seen, particularly in the Sydenham Rive area.

They also visited the West Hill (ie. West Rocks) that day and the following day went back to roughly the same area, "...but further west; not a mile out of town. Here the woods are richer, and the crevices larger and more accessible." Many of the species they mention collecting off the rocks are still abundant. But there is one that is a real enigma.

Orthothecium intricatum was listed from "rich, shaded talus at the foot of a cliff." This was unfamiliar to me so I looked it up in *The Mosses of Eastern North America* (Crum & Anderson, 1981). It has only been reported from two places in North America – once by Macoun in 1883 from Anticosti Island and the other by Moxley from the West Hill in 1929. Crum and Anderson cast doubt on both reports. They say that *Orthothecium* was searched for in 1961 on the West Rocks, but that the area had changed and it was not found.

What they do not seem to have been aware of is that Moxley led that foray in 1938 and there were at least two prestigious bryologists in the party: Dr. William Steere and Henry Conard – the writer of the article. Steere was Crum and Anderson's mentor and their book is dedicated to him. Conard was co-author of the *How to Know the Mosses and Liverworts in the Pictured Key* series. They, apparently, were satisfied that *Orthothecium intricatum* was there in 1938. In spite of the development that has taken place in that area, there are still places such as Black's Park where shaded talus can be found and I suspect there is quite a lot of this moss that is inaccessible now at the back of the houses. Who knows? It may still be lurking unseen.

Moxley himself had previously written an article in *The Bryologist*, March 1930 in which he describes "prowling about that ravine under the north wall" of the West Hill and coming to "a cave-like fissure in the rock". He describes going in and then, at the end, turning west, going down a drop of ten feet and finding "a hall perhaps twelve or fourteen feet wide, fifty feet high on the north side and about half that on the south". *Orthothecium intricata* is among the species he lists for that location and that would be the source of the reference in Crum and Anderson.

It is highly improbable that he took his party in 1938 into what was obviously a dangerous crevice cave. So in the meantime, he must have found it elsewhere. That cave, too, must still be there somewhere if we could only locate it.

That afternoon they moved on to Sauble Beach, and how it has changed since 1938! "East of a very gently sloping beach and storm-beach of very fine sand the dunes begin. And between the rows of dunes are strips of bog. Here are pitcher plants by the score, with *Pogonia ophioglossoides* and *Calopogon pulchellus*. Along a small stream *Catoscopium nigratum* flourishes and fruits in pure sand."

It was in this very area that Moxley accidentally discovered Curly Grass a decade before (for an account of this

discovery, see *Three Fern Mysteries in A Guide to the Ferns of Grey and Bruce Counties*). The habitat described is almost all gone now, flattened and drained to build cottages. Even the beach is flattened and compressed with the machinery that they drive up and down it to tidy it up, and the shore dunes have snowmobiles running over them in the winter. It is a sad travesty of the pristine area it must have been 70 years ago. Interestingly, *Catoscopium nigratum* was collected last year by a bryologist friend of mine but at Petrel Point, not Sauble Beach.

On the third day they "did" the Bruce Peninsula getting as far north as Lion's Head. They describe a bog just outside Lion's Head and find *Paludella squarrosa* – a new record for Ontario! But they say, "This isolated bog has a drainage ditch through it. The bogs along the beach are being drained also. The distant Bruce Peninsula is being 'civilized'!"

From there they crossed over to Oliphant and found masses of *Scorpidium turgescens* which at that time in North America was only known from Davis Straits and the Rocky Mountains in B.C.. But again they say, "The marsh had been drained!"

The article concludes by saying, "Thus ended three glorious sunny days in Ontario", so it appears even the weather was better in those days! It is interesting to reflect on how much things have changed. But we also have to be grateful for how much has survived. There is much greater public awareness today of the importance of ecological integrity and the need for conservation and we are so fortunate in this area that forward-thinking people like Mac Kirk have managed to preserve so much.

It is important that we continue to be vigilant so that in another 70 years, it will still be possible to find and appreciate the flora and fauna of these unique places.

Joan Crowe – April 25, 2005

The Fall Program

Indoor Program **Thursday, September 8,** **2005**

Lichens – Nature's **“Mysterious** **Partnership”** **Joan Crowe**

Lichens are everywhere, from the Arctic to the tropics, on rocks, soil, trees, walls and roofs, but not in the centre of cities! At this session we will experience a little of their amazing diversity.

Thursday, Sept. 8, **11 a.m. Visit to** **Clendenan Dam Forest**

Mac Kirk is hoping to protect 25 acres of old growth forest that is contiguous with the Clendenan Dam Conservation Area in Thornbury. The land is owned by Miller Paving. Mac is leading a group from the Grey Association for Better Planning on Sept. 8, and has invited interested OSFN members to come too. Meet at the Leonard Shore Memorial Library in Thornbury at 11 a.m. Bring lunch.

Indoor Program **Thursday, October 13,** **2005**

Polar Bear Provincial **Park with Jean Iron**

In July and August 2002 and 2003, Jean was a member of an Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources crew banding Snow Geese, Ross's Geese and Canada Geese on the Ontario coast of Hudson Bay in Polar Bear Provincial Park. Her story is about the geese, birds, wildflowers, mammals and wilderness of the Hudson Bay coast.

Sunday, Sept. 25, 2005 **Mushroom Foray**

Join Lorraine Brown and Russ Hamilton on a fall mushroom hunt at Inverhuron Provincial Park. The park has kindly agreed to waive the “no picking” rule for us for one day. Participants will have to pay the day use rate of \$7 (\$5.50 for seniors).

Bring lunch and comfortable walking shoes. For collecting, bring a basket, mushroom book if you have one, a small sharp knife, and some squares of wax paper in which to wrap specimens for identification.

Some of us may camp in the park on the Saturday night before. Please register by contacting Lorraine by phone (372-0322) or e-mail (lorraine@apropos.ca.) Maximum 30 participants.

Saturday, Oct. 15, 2005 **A Night Under the Stars**

Join us for an evening of astronomy with amateur astronomer John Hlynialuk speaking on the hobby he loves the best. Travel with him through the cosmos as he reviews recent discoveries in astronomy. If the weather allows, the session will be followed by an evening of gazing at the moon, Mars and other astronomical objects with his telescope. Please call John at 371-0670 to register and get details about time and place for this program.

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Indoor Program **Thursday,** **Nov. 10, 2005**

Fungus Among Us **John Klironomos, Ph.D.**

Mycorrhizal fungi are Nature’s stress manager. Mycorrhizal fungi live in and around the roots of most plants. Learn about this unique fungi and its importance in our Grey-Bruce area.

Sunday, Nov. 20, 2005 **Fall Waterfowl Tour** **with Fred Jazvac**

Join Fred on this annual survey of waterfowl on “the bay”. With winter’s onset, lakes are cooling rapidly and waterfowl are on the move. This is an ideal time to experience the autumn passage of loons, grebes, ducks and gulls through local waters.

Meet at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Arena main parking lot on the south side at 10:00 am. Warm clothing is a must. Bring a packed lunch and a thermos of hot beverage.

Registration: Fred Jazvac (797-3332)
Limit: 15 participants

Indoor Program **Thursday,** **December 8, 2005** **Members’ Night**

Various members will present a potpourri of slide shows and 15 minute presentations. Contact Lorraine Brown to register (372-0322) or lorraine@apropos.ca

BPBO's Fund-Raising Dinner – Saturday, November 12

The Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory (BPBO) will hold its second annual fund-raising dinner at St. George's Anglican Church in Owen Sound on Saturday November 12.

Last year's dinner was a splendid evening, much enjoyed by all who participated. This year we're planning to focus on a Central American theme in honour of BPBO's partnership with a banding agency in Nicaragua.

We're planning to feature a delicious meal of Spanish-influenced foods. There will also be a silent auction table where you can do some Christmas shopping.

BPBO relies on events like the fund-raising dinner to offset the cost of running its migration monitoring station at Cabot Head. Even if you're not a birder, you'll find this to be an interesting and fun event.

For more information, visit bpbo.ca or call Lorraine at 372-0322.

Calling All Young Naturalists

The Young Naturalists have an exciting season planned for kids between the ages of 8 and 12. The Young Nats meet on the last Sunday of each month at the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority. This year, they are offering programs on using a compass, edible wild plants and how to preserve them, pit cooking, native culture, tracking, leather work and how to prepare for camping trips. Their year will culminate in a camping trip near Tobermory.

The first meeting takes place on September 25. For more information, contact Nancy White at the Conservation Authority (376-3076) or Bob Fletcher at 372-0355.

New Escarpment Rock Exposed Along Hwy 26

If you've headed down Highway 26 from Owen Sound toward Meaford this summer, you've driven through a gigantic construction site. They're widening this stretch of the highway, which had become dangerous, especially in winter conditions.

Highway construction is one of the evils of summer, but this particular project has a silver lining – at least in my view. It has necessitated blasting through and exposing much more of the Niagara Escarpment as it crosses the highway.

I've always enjoyed getting up close and personal with the Escarpment along this stretch of highway near Woodford. It's a little reminder that you're in Niagara Escarpment Country. Now, there's far more escarpment rock exposed than there was before.

These rock outcrops are part of the Amabel and Fossil Hill Formations, laid down during the Middle Silurian, about 420 million years ago. Their relatively large fossil brachiopods are evidence that these rocks were created in a deep, quiet marine environment.

Lorraine Brown

A Greenway for Grey and Bruce?

We've all heard about how the Ontario government is trying to protect green spaces around the Greater Toronto Area, partly to ensure a safe drinking water supply for residents, but also to make certain that planning includes enough land set aside for nature and nature recreation. What about extending this good planning to other areas of Ontario – to Grey and Bruce Counties for example?

Ontario Nature and the Owen Sound Field Naturalists are taking steps in that direction. We are planning a workshop called Put Nature First:

A Greenway for Grey and Bruce Counties to be held Saturday, October 15, 2005 in Owen Sound. The Bruce Resource Stewardship Network and the Grey County Forest Stewardship Network are sponsoring this one-day event.

Participants will explore the potential for connecting existing green spaces in Grey and Bruce Counties, and the possibility of filling in breaks in the green spaces with easements or even possible acquisition of lands in the future. Ontario Nature has chosen OSFN and the Essex Field Naturalists to generate discussion about how Ontario Nature can work in partnership with local groups to further existing initiatives to support both local and provincial conservation. They chose OSFN because they felt that our group was strong and well organized, after we worked together on the Ontario Nature Annual General Meeting in 2003.

Ontario Nature will provide a keynote address in which they will outline their vision for a system of protected natural areas across all of southern Ontario. The rest of the speakers will be local planners and people involved in the protection of green spaces.

We are not planning to open this event up to the general OSFN membership and the public. But watch for coverage in the local media. Also, we'll promise to provide a detailed description of the event, including information on its outcome and future initiatives, at upcoming OSFN meetings and in the winter newsletter.

Lorraine Brown

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SFN Turns 30!

The Saugeen Field Naturalists, our sister club to the southwest, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

On April 21, 1975 a group of thirteen people met in Durham to discuss the possibility of forming a naturalists club in the Durham/Hanover area. The Grey-Owen Sound Naturalists Club, a forerunner of OSFN and the only club that had been active in the Grey – Bruce area around that time, had disbanded some years earlier.

Members came from as far away as Meaford and Thornbury in the east, the Bruce Peninsula in the north and from communities along the Lake Huron shore almost as far south as Goderich. As membership grew on the fringes of the core area, two groups coalesced to form separate clubs – the Owen Sound Field Naturalists Club and the Huron Fringe Naturalists Club. Now there is also a Bruce Peninsula Environment Group that meets in Lions Head.

Before these new groups split away, the Saugeen Field Naturalists grew to a high of around 180 memberships, representing approximately 400 people. Their logo was designed in 1977 by Peter Middleton.

The Saugeen Field Naturalists are having a party on October 1st at the Elmwood Community Centre, just north of Hanover, to celebrate their 30th Anniversary. The festivities will begin with an open house from 2 - 4 P.M. where you will be able to meet and greet friends and members of the club, past and present. There will be exhibits by the club and like-minded groups, memorabilia and refreshments.



What is it? A butterfly egg ? Some kind of tiny fungus? A magnified pollen grain? If you think you know, please send me your guess by e-mail (lorraine@apropos.ca). The answer will be in the winter newsletter.

At 5:30 P.M. there will be a social time, dinner at 6 P.M. and then our speaker, Doug Cunningham of the Bruce County Astronomical Society, will give a presentation entitled “Isn't The Universe Beautiful”. Doug and other members of the society will be setting up their telescopes in the parking lot so we can have the opportunity to view the magnificent night sky.

Tickets are \$25.00 each.

For more information please contact Marnie Willisie,
Chair Anniversary committee
e-mail: dou-mar@sympatico.ca
519-369-5703

If you find a banded bird...

Last June, a neighbour dropped over with a bird band that he had collected from a dead Indigo Bunting he'd found on the side of the road down in southwestern

Ontario. I contacted the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory to see what we should do with the information from the band.

The bunting was a young bird, sex unknown, that had been banded on August 25, 2004 in Ruthven Park, 2 kilometres north of Cayuga, Ontario.

BPBO put me in touch by e-mail with Louise Laurin, Senior Bird Banding Administrator at the Canadian Wildlife Service in Ottawa. She said that it is very important to report all bird bands found or observed. They also want to know when and where the bird was found dead and how (road killed, hit windows, found dead on ground etc.).

The Canadian Wildlife Service would appreciate it if anyone who finds a bird band would call 1-800-327-BAND (2263). If you send them your mailing address, they will send you a Certificate of Appreciation.

Lorraine Brown

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New Niagara Escarpment Plan

The Niagara Escarpment Commission has recently published the third revision of its Plan. According to Lynne Richardson, planner with the N.E.C., there are no changes that will affect Grey and Bruce Counties in a major way. The revisions are mostly concerned with wineries in the Niagara Region.

Roundup may kill more than weeds...

The herbicide Roundup is widely used to eradicate weeds. But a study published by a University of Pittsburgh researcher finds that the chemical may be eradicating much more than that.

University of Pittsburgh assistant professor of biology Rick Relyea found that Roundup, the second most commonly applied herbicide in the United States, is "extremely lethal" to amphibians. This field experiment is one of the most extensive studies on the effects of pesticides on nontarget organisms in a natural setting, and the results may provide a key link to global amphibian declines.

In a paper titled "The Impact of Insecticides and Herbicides on the Biodiversity and Productivity of Aquatic Communities," published in the journal Ecological Applications, Relyea examined how a pond's entire community – 25 species, including crustaceans, insects, snails, and tadpoles – responded to the addition of the manufacturers' recommended doses of two insecticides – Sevin (carbaryl) and malathion – and two herbicides – Roundup (glyphosate) and 2,4-D.

Relyea found that Roundup caused a 70 percent decline in amphibian biodiversity and an 86 percent decline in the total mass of tadpoles. Leopard Frog tadpoles and Gray Treefrog tadpoles were completely eliminated and wood frog tadpoles and toad (Bufo) tadpoles were nearly eliminated. One species of frog, spring peepers, was unaffected.

"The most shocking insight coming out of this was that Roundup, something

designed to kill plants, was extremely lethal to amphibians," said Relyea, who conducted the research at Pitt's Pymatuning Laboratory of Ecology. "We added Roundup, and the next day we looked in the tanks and there were dead tadpoles all over the bottom."

Relyea initially conducted the experiment to see whether the Roundup would have an indirect effect on the frogs by killing their food source, the algae. However, he found that Roundup, although an herbicide, actually increased the amount of algae in the pond because it killed most of the frogs.

"It's like killing all the cows in a field and seeing that the field has more grass in it – not because you made the grass grow better, but because you killed everything that eats grass," he said.

Previous research had found that the lethal ingredient in Roundup was not the herbicide itself, glyphosate, but rather the surfactant, or detergent, that allows the herbicide to penetrate the waxy surfaces of plants. In Roundup, that surfactant is a chemical called polyethoxylated tallowamine. Other herbicides have less dangerous surfactants: For example, Relyea's study found that 2,4-D had no effect on tadpoles.

"We've repeated the experiment, so we're confident that this is, in fact, a repeatable result that we see," said Relyea. "It's fair to say that nobody would have guessed Roundup was going to be so lethal to amphibians."

Lecture Series Planned by ECO

The Escarpment Centre Ontario may not yet have the money it needs to build an Escarpment Visitor Centre, but they're keeping the idea alive with a series of lectures focusing on the Escarpment. The series takes place at the ECO Discovery Centre (formerly the Nature Shop) at Inglis Falls. This beautiful historic stone building, all that's left of the Inglis Falls grist mill, will be an interesting and cozy venue for these talks. It's also interesting that the organizers chose mostly Saturday nights. Here's the list. You'll recognize many of the speakers' names...

Sept. 10, 7 pm – Monitoring Migration at the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory – Lorraine Brown

Sept. 11, 3 pm – Children's Discovery Hike – Chris Hachey

Sept. 24, 7 pm – Lilliputians of the Plant World: Lichens and Mosses – Joan Crowe


Oct. 15, 6:30 pm – Mushroom Walk and Talk – Freeman Boyd

Oct. 29, 7 pm – Geology and Landforms of Grey & Bruce – Bob Gray

Nov. 12, 7 pm – Life on the Edge: a Closer Look at the Bruce Peninsula – Ethan Meleg

Please support ECO and learn more about the Escarpment environment by attending this free lecture series.

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The Fall 2005 Program at a Glance

Indoor Programs

All indoor meetings will take place in the auditorium of the Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library at 7:00 pm. 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 8 – Lichens – Nature’s “Mysterious Partnership”

Thursday, October 13 – Polar Bear Provincial Park

Thursday, November 10 – Fungus Among Us

Thursday, December 8 – Members’ Night

Outdoor Programs

Thursday, September 8 – A Visit to the Clendenan Dam

Sunday, September 25 – Mushroom Foray

Saturday, October 15 – A Night Under the Stars

Sunday, November 20 – Fall Waterfowl Tour

The outdoor program of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists is designed to help members discover new areas, add to their knowledge of natural history, or just to enjoy a “stroll in the woods” with like-minded people. Note that each trip has its own specific time and meeting place. Registration is required for all outings. Please call the contact person indicated about a week before the outing.

Membership Application & Renewal Form

Name.....

Mailing Address.....

Telephone.....E-mail.....Check here if Renewal.....

Membership Category: Single (\$18).....Family (\$25).....

Return with cheque to: Owen Sound Field Naturalists, Box 401, Owen Sound, Ont. N4K 5P7

Membership cards can be picked up at indoor meetings. Check here if you want your card mailed to you.