



Owen Sound  
Field Naturalists



# *Hart's-Tongue Herald*

The Newsletter of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists  
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Editor: Cindy Cartwright



Young Naturalists volunteer co-ordinator Stephanie Hargrave poses with the two winners of the 2007 OSFN Young Naturalists Writing and Drawing contests.

**Hannah Woodhouse** (right) won with her excellent drawing of a great horned owl.

**Rheanne Perry** (left) took the award for her well-written article about how young people can help fight climate change.

Both girls attended Camp Kawartha this summer, courtesy of the OSFN.

## Wrap-up Dinner a Great Night Out

*Lorraine Brown*

The wrap-up event of OSFN's 2006-7 season was a pot luck dinner with speaker at the Harrison Park Inn. As usual, the dinner was delicious, with a good blend of hors d'oeuvres, main dishes and awesome desserts.

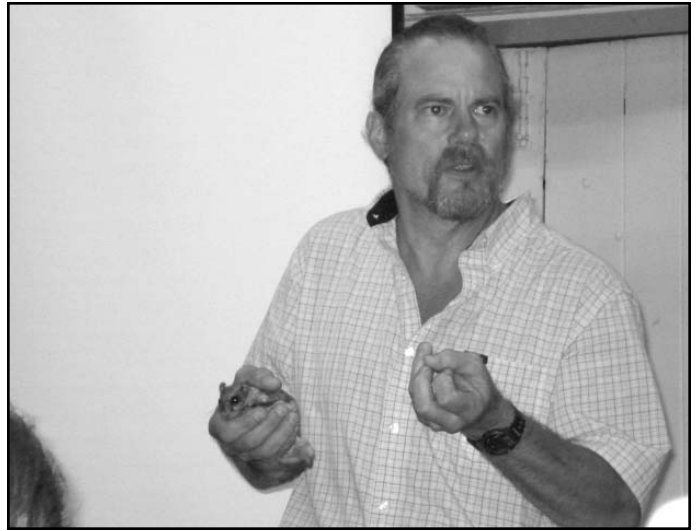
The speaker was equally excellent. Steve Patterson, along with his furry friends, Sabrina and Scooter, kept us informed and entertained as we digested our dinners.

Sabrina is a northern flying squirrel, a common species in Canada's coniferous forests. Scooter, half again as big as Sabrina, is a southern flying squirrel. It was endangered up until 2006, when it was delisted. Climate warming has southern flying squirrels moving northward into locations that were once the sole domain of the northern flying squirrel. Steve has been studying flying squirrels since 1994, and at one point had almost 400 nest boxes up all over Grey and Bruce Counties.

Steve talked about the squirrels and what his research has discovered of their little-known ecology and habits. He illustrated his talk with photos and short video clips of these fascinating mammals of the night. For much of his talk, Steve was "wearing" the squirrels under his shirt. Every now and then they'd peek out, appearing at his upper arm or neck. They are very cute little mammals and they seem to have great affection for their keeper.

The finale of his presentation was a flight, but the squirrels weren't being too co-operative. After much prodding though, Scooter finally left his high perch and flew about 20 feet to Steve's shoulder.

We thank Steve for his terrific presentation.



## Adopt-a-Highway Roadside Clean-up

*Lis Falk*

The Owen Sound Field Naturalists have participated in the Ministry of Transportation Adopt-A-Highway Program since 1999. Over the years, many members have volunteered their time to help clean the section of Highway 6 from Springmount to the Wilcox Sideroad.

OSFN's section of Highway 6 looks great again following the spring clean-up on April 21, 2007. Thanks to the following members who came out to help: Anne and Stan Cathrae, Joan and Walter Crowe, Karen Saliwonchyk, Jamie Fay, Liz Squires, and Lis and Trevor Falk (co-ordinators). Thanks also to Megan Davis, who joined us during her visit with her grandparents, Joan and Walter.

The next highway clean-up will be planned for late September or early October, 2007. Please consider volunteering to help us then. It really helps to have at least 10 people who can come out, and a few extra people as back-up, in case someone can't make it at the last minute. With 10 volunteers, it only takes about 2 hours to complete the clean-up.

If you think you might be able to help in the fall, please call Lis at 519-794-0889.

## Indoor Program

**Thursday, Sept. 17, 2007**

An Inconvenient Truth

Victoria Serda will be giving a live presentation about the effects of climate change in our region, in Canada and around the world. She has been trained by Al Gore to give his slideshow presentation and will show how we can turn this climate crisis around when we do our part, work together and rise to the challenge.

**Thursday, October 11, 2007**

Monarch Migration & Conservation

Monarch butterflies that leave Grey and Bruce each fall migrate over 4,000 km to Mexico. Audrey Armstrong, teacher and conservationist, will share her experiences in Mexico and her work with the Bruce Peninsula National Park through the Species at Risk Education Awareness program. The slide show will feature photographs by Willy Waterton who traveled with Audrey to Mexico in 2006.

**Thursday, November 9, 2007**

Caribou – The Untold Story, with Evan Ferrari

Are caribou on the road to extinction in Ontario? In little more than a century, they have lost almost 50% of their range. Woodland Caribou thrive best in forests that are 50 to 100 years old. Our logging and development practices throughout the province have put them on the brink of extinction. Few people in southern Ontario are aware that this slow motion extinction could happen in our children's lifetime.

**Thursday, December 13, 2007**

Members' Night

A potpourri of OSFN members' slides, displays, art, collections and compositions. 10 – 15 minutes each. Register your entry ahead and early with Joan Crowe (519-371-8193). Don't be disappointed!

An excerpt from: **A Journey To Nature**

by J. P. Mowbray –1901

A description of an October sunrise

Page 205

-- Six o'clock of an October morning, and two men of the world, mind you, standing by the side of a cow shed, drunken with the prospect; actually struck dumb for a few moments by the blazonry of the regularly uneventful. The sun was coming up behind the distant trees. We looked at it as if it were a revelation. My idea of a sunrise was something placidly grand; a kind of orb and systematic attention to business; something superbly unperturbed and inevitable and too far off to elicit more than a respectful awe. But this sunrise had a reckless dance in it.

We had caught the old orb unawares in a positive dithyramb, and as I watched the choric rhythmus in the trees, flashing and leaping amid the gnarled branches that took on grotesque involutions – in one blessed instant I felt sure there were satyrs and fauns, wet with cool dew cavorting in Attic exuberance under those trees.

On the opposite side of our outlook the groves along the high ground were beginning to breathe in colours at the top in a long rim of deepening dyes, with measureless chasms of changing shadows at the bottom, that opened depth after depth of colour as the light crawled down. There were some gray clouds outstretched above, like spectral arms in benediction, and as we looked, they softly receded blushing, like belated ghosts, as the king in his majesty came reveling up. . . .





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## WHAT KIDS CAN DO TO STOP GLOBAL WARMING

BY: RHEANNE PERRY  
GRADE 4, HCCS

If we don't try to help the Earth much of our world will be destroyed within our lifetime. Our Earth is not just a place where we live it's a place where plants and animals make their homes too. We're the ones who are creating the pollution and the other innocent life forms out there are going to get killed and that's not fair. There are many things adults can do to help, but there are things that kids can do to help because we're the next generation of humankind.

We don't have to wait until we're grown-ups or for the federal government we can start helping now. Every little action helps.

- ✓ Kids should make a petition against factories spewing out greenhouse gases and when it's full send it to all the different levels of government. We could even do this by using the Internet and websites such as Facebook, Youtube and Myspace.
- ✓ To save electricity, kids can stop watching so much T.V and stop playing on the computer as much. Also, when leaving a room we can turn off the lights
- ✓ We can plant trees to help absorb some of the carbon dioxide that is in the air.
- ✓ We can recycle more because that means less trash goes to the dump. The three R's Reduce, Reuse and Recycle mean less waste, and less waste means less things need to be manufactured in factories.
- ✓ We can ride our bikes or walk places within short distances. The more we leave the car at home the better.
- ✓ We can grow food at home and we can buy food at local markets. That way greenhouse gas spewing trucks don't have to carry it to us over long distances. The fruits and veggies will also be fresher and healthier for us too!
- ✓ We could compost our fruits and veggies so less goes to the dump and it also makes the soil better too.
- ✓ Finally, adults just love saving money. So we can tell or show a parent the easy and cheap things they can do around the house to save energy and our Earth and they'll go crazy to help out.

## Donation to OSFN

Evelyn Wismer, who lived in Walkerton and Wiarton, died this past May. Evelyn loved nature and was an avid bird watcher. Linda Brechbuhler, who was Evelyn's goddaughter, Linda's mother Betty Hatch, Evelyn's best friend for 62 years, and Linda's sister Wendy Thomas, have made a donation of \$100 to OSFN in memory of Evelyn. We send our condolences to Evelyn's friends and family, and our thanks for their donation.

## Birds up the Bruce - May 26

With newly arrived birds singing on territory and a few late migrants still going through the birding was excellent on this OSFN outing to the northern Bruce Peninsula on May 26. Our leader, John Haselmayer took us to a wide variety of habitats from Dyers Bay to Crane Lake to Cabot Head, and Dorcas Bay to Tobermory and this produced a list for the day which totalled a very satisfying and respectable 95 species.

The day started off with a close-up study of an un-alive Whippoorwill which John found on the road on his way to meet us, and ended with Nighthawks flying over as we wrapped things up in the afternoon. Neither of these "goatsuckers" is a common sight anymore. Throughout the day we had an unusually cooperative Black-billed Cuckoo pose in the open long enough to get our scopes on it, and similar good luck with various other bird sightings. The group had great looks or enjoyed the songs of just about every 'target' bird we hoped for in the wetlands, lakes, shorelines, fields and forest habitats.

Other highlights of the day included a staring contest with a Black Bear at the side of the road, a successful search for Massassauga Rattlesnake in the beautiful escarpment-backed alvar meadow at Cabot Head, some botanizing at Dorcas Bay to see the Ram's Head Orchid in full display and other Bruce Peninsula rarities and specialties like the Dwarf Lake Iris, Gaywing, and Bastard Toadflax, (really).

This was a treat of a trip thanks to the great birding, great weather, the spectacular setting of the northern Bruce Peninsula and the awesome skills of our leader!



Photo by Beryl Lougher



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## Young Naturalists

The Young Nats will be starting the 2007-08 program on September 30th.

The Youngs Nats, for children ages 7 – 12, meet on the last Sunday of the month at 2:00 pm at the Grey Sauble Conservation Administration Centre, 237897 Inglis Falls Road, Owen Sound

For further information please contact Krista McKee, 519 376-3076 ext 224 or Stephanie Hargrave. 519 376-8571

## Maher Farm and Mark Cressman's Property - June 14

June 14 was a beautiful warm sunny day, as members of OSFN and SFN gathered at Jean Maher's rural farm property near Durham. Jean was born and raised on this property. Her brother John lived there for many years. With John and Nels now gone, Jean continues to enjoy the property with her family and friends. She showed us photo albums full of photos of her ancestors that went back to Victorian times.

We began our walk with a visit to the fern garden, originally established by John then maintained by Nels and Jean. It's a remarkable collection of many different species. A visit to the fern garden is a great way to learn to identify ferns. Jean handed out identification cards with numbers for each species that match numbered rocks with the different species of ferns in the garden.



We visited a couple of old farm ponds, one with a cabin, then walked along Jean's mowed paths that run throughout the property, from way up on a hill right down to the Rocky Saugeen River. It was a great way to see the countryside. There were lots of bluebirds, early summer wildflowers and butterflies.

After lunch we headed down the driveway to a spot under some big spruce trees where Nels and Jean had planted Queen orchids that they had rescued from a site that was about to be developed. The large pink slipper orchids were in full bloom. The cameras were out in profusion.

Leaving the farm, we headed over to Mark Cressman's property in nearby Priceville. Mark and his wife live in the village, but they own a large piece of property nearby where Mark has a well-managed woodlot (he was an MNR forester before retiring) and several acres of prairie. Many prairie species such as cup plant (*Silphium*

*perfoliatum*), blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*), blue flax (*Linum lewisii*), different species of coneflower, wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) and many others. Mark burns the prairie every few years to keep woody vegetation out.

It was an enjoyable day and a great way to wrap up our year of outdoor programs. Thanks to Jean and to Minerva Cook for putting this program together.

## Outdoor Program

### **Saturday, September 15, 2007**

Native Plant Nursery outing with Lorraine Brown to the nursery operated by Art Wiebe and Janice McKean of Tiverton. Register with Lorraine at (519) 372-0322 or by email: [lorraine@apropos.ca](mailto:lorraine@apropos.ca).

### **Sunday, September 23, 2007**

#### Mushroom Foray!

Fungophiles Russ Hamilton, Lorraine Brown and Andrew Armitage take the fall mushroom hunt to nearby forests. For collecting, bring a basket, squares of wax paper to wrap specimens, mushroom guide, a small knife and a lunch. Pray for rain! Register with Lorraine at (519) 372-0322 or by email: [lorraine@apropos.ca](mailto:lorraine@apropos.ca).

### **Saturday, October 13, 2007 (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)**

#### Rocks Beneath Our Soles!

Torben Hawksbridge, one of the authors of *Geology and Landforms of Grey and Bruce Counties*, has offered once again to lead a day of touring geological highlights of the area. Meet to car pool at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Arena on 3rd Ave. E. in Owen Sound at 10 a.m. Bring sturdy hiking boots and suitable clothing for the weather. Limit of 15. Register with Torben at 519 376-2275.

### **Saturday, November 10, 2007**

#### Waterfowl Tour Around The Bay

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 lunch. Limit: 15 participants. Register with Fred at 519 797-3332.

## Cats and Catbirds

Lorraine Brown

One morning in early May, I noticed a pair of gray catbirds on our front lawn. One of them was pulling long fibres out from the vegetation along the foundation of the house. The other seemed to be supervising. (the female, perhaps?)

From then on, I heard the crazy catbird song frequently, and noticed a lot of coming and going around the shrubs right where I'd first seen them.

On June 3, I found the nest, about a metre off the ground and a metre from the house in a spirea bush. The shrubs have formed a dense thicket all along that wall, so even though the nest was dangerously close to the ground, it was very well hidden. There were two bright blue eggs.



Catbirds are quite used to living near people. I could walk by the nest, even stop and look in, and see a pair of beady little black eyes looking defiantly back at me. The male Gray Catbird uses his loud song to proclaim his territory. He uses a softer version of the song when near the nest or when a territorial intruder is nearby. The female may sing the quiet song back to the male.

On June 12 the eggs hatched. Over the next few weeks, I watched as the naked, helpless young grew bigger, developing down and then pin feathers.



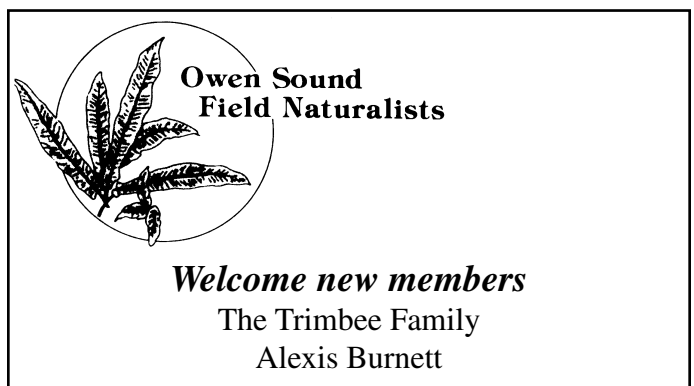
On June 24 I was out on a nearby porch and I heard the cat-like “mew”. The young had left the nest, and were spending their first few precarious hours in that shrubby thicket. I was only a few steps away from them.

Later that day, I was sitting at a distance with my binoculars, watching as the parents came and went, their beaks full of bright red elderberries. Congratulating myself for putting red elderberry into our wildlife plantings, I continued to watch as our neighbour's big fat tabby cat, Charlie, came over and made a bee line for the thicket. Charlie knew the birds were there and had trouble on his mind!

I carried him out to the driveway and he came right back. So I carried him further away, and once again, he headed straight for the catbirds. So then I carried Charlie, hissing and squirming, right over to the neighbours and asked if they would mind keeping him in for a few days. I did the same with my older cat Dinah, who is still allowed out.

A few days later the young had left the thicket. I enjoyed watching the catbird family up in the trees and on the wires around the house. Every morning, sometimes even before dawn, we were awakened by the crazy song. By mid-July, I was still seeing them, skulking in the thicket of wildlife shrubs.

If I hadn't intervened, Charlie would have destroyed those babies. It was a personal reminder of the impact of cats on birds – not just feral cats, but even fat, well-fed tabbies. I'm a cat lover, but my two new cats will be indoor cats for the rest of their lives. I used to think this wasn't fair, especially to rural cats. But now I'm a convert. Bruce and Owen don't get fleas or worms from eating small mammals. They get to watch the birds, squirrels and chipmunks, and sniff the fresh summer breezes, from Kitmo – their cozy little enclosure on the front porch. You can have your cats and your wildlife too!



## Melanistic Eastern Chipmunk

Lynne Richardson

One morning while checking out my birdfeeders, I observed a small, totally black "rodentia" eating bird seed on the ground. Through binoculars I saw what looked like a very miniature black squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*). However, after observing it stuffing its cheek pouches and scurrying off time and again I realized the 'squirrel' was obviously an Eastern Chipmunk (I), in a melanistic (black) colour phase.



From what I have researched, completely melanistic chipmunks occur randomly and infrequently; perhaps even less often than albinism occurs in the species.

A neighbour has since told me that this is the third summer he has seen the chipmunk at his feeder. Three years is the generally-quoted lifespan of a chipmunk so it will be very interesting to see if this one returns next spring. If he doesn't it certainly won't be for lack of food – he has by now cached at least a 10-year supply of my peanuts!



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### And the winner is ... Lionel Gould

Many of us enjoy Lionel Gould's bird articles on the front page of the B section of Saturday's Sun Times. Apparently we aren't the only ones who think these articles are worth reading. Lionel has won the top two prizes for column writing and placed third in photography at the national outdoor writing awards. This annual competition recognizes and rewards excellence in outdoor communication. Congratulations Lionel!

## Area Events

Bruce Peninsula Environmental Group will be holding their annual **Renewable Energy Tour** on **Saturday, September 8th**. Cost is \$25. and includes lunch. Tickets and more information are available through Peter Prinsen at 519-534-3442.

The 15th Annual **"Evening for Conservation"** dinner will be held **Friday, September 7th** at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre in Owen Sound. More information is available from the Grey Sauble Conservation Foundation. Tickets are \$50.

**Wild for the Arts** is a festival that celebrates nature as a source of inspiration for creativity. A full schedule of events and activities will be offered amid the autumn beauty of MacGregor Point Provincial Park on the weekend of **September 21-23**. Hikes and workshops will explore nature photography, story writing, visual arts and more! More information is available on the Friends of MacGregor Point Park website:

<http://www.friendsofmacgregor.org/arts/arts.htm>

**Saugeen Field Naturalists** have an interesting slate of guest speakers and outdoor events for the fall season.

More information is available on their website:

<http://web.mac.com/reaumejohn/iWeb/SFN/Events.html>

## Youth Outdoors EXPO 2007

Jason Ritchie

In this age of cell phone's, video games and new technologies on an almost daily basis it can be hard to get our children to understand the values of nature, our environment and outdoors sports. With many cities expanding and even rural areas becoming crowded and built up in many cases, gone are the days when most kids had a 'backwoods' to explore, admire and build a relationship with nature in. The loss of such opportunities may lead to the loss of a connection with the land and the belief that humans can exist without natural areas to help purify our air and water and provide us with sources of heat and food. These children could become adults believing that we do not need to coexist with wildlife or that we do not need large open natural areas to recreate in and get in touch with nature. Outdoor activities such as hiking, hunting, and fishing promote a healthy and safe lifestyle involving exercise. Any of these activities can be done together as a family and offer rewarding accomplishments to children, such as spying a majestic bald eagle on the wing, completing a five kilometre hike for the first time, or bagging one's first grouse or brown trout.

The organizing committee for the 2007 Youth Outdoors EXPO believe that children still have a keen interest in these activities but need opportunities to be introduced to them in a 'hands on' manner. To facilitate this introduction to the 'Great Outdoors' we have organized the 2007 Youth Outdoors EXPO. The goals of the organizing committee are to "introduce kids to a wide variety of nature based activities and instill the values of and an appreciation for our natural heritage". We wish to "foster a broader appreciation of fish, wildlife, habitats, ecology and nature based activities". Each child will participate in several demonstrations, archery, a nature/wildlife hike, fly fishing/casting activity, bird banding, shooting .22 calibre rifles and an aquatic 'critter dip' in the Sydenham River where the kids will have the opportunity to capture several river bottom creatures, identify them and learn about each one. During their lunch time and after they have registered the kids are free to peruse the booth section which will include booths demonstrating the importance of wetlands, wildlife calling, wood carving, taxidermy and many others.

The event is scheduled for **September 8th 2007** at the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association Clubhouse near Rockford, and is open to children ages 10-14. The day is free for the children and will include a free BBQ lunch. Parents are encouraged to spend the day with their

children, but will be required to pay five dollars for their lunch. Although the day is free, preregistration is required and spaces are limited. **If interested please contact Jason at 519-371-8468.**

The organizing committee consists of representatives from Bruce Grey Bird Studies, Grey County Forest Stewardship Network, the Institute for Outdoor Education and Environmental Studies, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Owen Sound Field Naturalists, Saugeen Field Naturalists, Saugeen Valley and Grey Sauble Conservation Authorities, and the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association. The committee greatly thanks all supporters thus far for helping to make this a great and memorable day for the children and all involved.



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## Historic Nesting at Sauble Beach

*Cindy Cartwright*

Years ago, the beaches at Southampton, Sauble and Oliphant were prime breeding grounds for the Great Lakes population of the Piping Plover. Encroachment by humans looking for groomed, recreational areas soon drove the plovers from these beaches. The last nest documented in this area by the Ontario Nest Records Scheme was in 1966 at Oliphant. During the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, a pair of Piping Plovers were observed over several weeks in 2003 but unfortunately, they did not stay and nest.

On May 12, 2007 (Mother's Day) Brendan and Kim Toews were walking on the beach near the mouth of the Sauble River. Kim pointed out a pair of Killdeer to her son. Brendan quickly and correctly identified the birds as Piping Plovers, an endangered species. This was the start of a huge endeavour that would involve over 100 volunteers and multiple levels of government, all determined to help this pair of birds have a successful nesting.

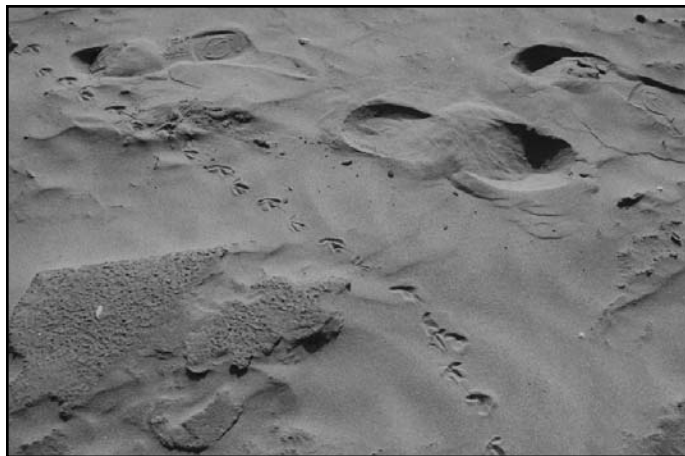
The adults were colour-banded, allowing us to identify them as birds from the Michigan Piping Plover Recovery Program. Four eggs were laid, incubation started on May 31st, and an enclosure was erected to keep people, pets and wild animals away from the nest.



Photos by Peter Middleton

Four young chicks hatched and left the nest. The parents were diligent in defending their young against gulls and the occasional Merlin. The volunteers were equally busy

preventing unsuspecting beach-goers from disturbing the young family as they foraged in the grass between the dunes and the water. Unfortunately, we lost one of the chicks in the first week.



The three young chicks grew, gained strength, and learned to fly over the following weeks. Visitors from around the world stopped to learn more about these endangered birds and their habitat. The female plover left the area first, normal behaviour for this species. The male stayed with the chicks until July 28th, the last day that anyone saw the plovers at Sauble Beach.



And then they were gone...a little more than a month after the first egg hatched...our babies had fledged and started their new lives successfully, thanks to the hundreds of volunteer hours spent keeping them safe. A nest is considered a success if at least one of the chicks fledges. To launch three chicks is amazing and everyone involved should be very proud of this extraordinary accomplishment!

# The Fall 2007 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 pm. Following a social time and announcements, the speaker of the evening will present at 7:30.

**September 13**  
**October 11**  
**November 8**  
**December 13**

An Inconvenient Truth  
Monarch Migration and Conservation  
Caribou – the Untold Story  
Members' Night

## Outdoor Programs

The outdoor program 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 most outings. Please call the contact person indicated about a week before the outing.

**September 15**  
**September 23**  
**October 13**  
**November 10**

Native Plant Nursery  
Mushroom Foray  
Rocks Beneath Our Soles  
Waterfowl Tour Around the Bay

### **OSFN BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2007- 08**

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*Where are Sabrina and Scooter?*

