



Hart's-Tongue Herald

The Newsletter of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists Winter 2009
Volume 22, Number 3

Box 401, Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 5P7

Editor: Lorraine Brown



Members take in a beautiful fall sunset on Lake Huron during the October 17th trip to Inverhuron Provincial Park. See trip report on page 5. (Peter Middleton)

Loggerheads Find Freedom on the Bruce

This past summer saw two remarkable natural events in our area. First, the successful fledging of seven Piping Plovers from the beach at Sauble was celebrated with just cause, representing an intense effort by volunteers and the parent birds to protect the young from the mad crush of human beach activity and the ever-present threat of predation.

Second, and less publicized, was another endangered species successfully making a comeback on the Bruce. Loggerhead shrikes are, once again, breeding freely in several locations, while in the Dyer's Bay area, captive hatched birds are raised and released to augment the wild populations. Several of these birds, released in previous years, have returned to Ontario as breeding birds. This year, 24 more birds were released.

In August, I had the privilege of joining Kristen Theissen and Molly Astell, two field project personnel responsible for the 2009 Loggerhead Shrike recovery efforts near Dyer's Bay on the Bruce, to witness the successful release of 11 young Loggerhead Shrikes.

The early morning drive north hinted at summer's end. Grasses were ripe and doeskin blonde trees were hinting at the colours of the coming fall. Patches of fog lay here and there in pockets of cool air. There was a bracing freshness with temperatures two to five degrees above the freezing mark. At the site, the first order of the day was to prepare breakfast for the birds, so that they could have a good feed before release. Mice, grasshoppers, crickets and fat mealworms were counted out and placed in the bags for each pen. All was set. The walk through the glistening pastures to the rearing pens was accompanied by the sounds of cranes, geese and gently lowing cattle. A coyote ambled across the fields on the second morning, passing close to us with complete indifference. Our feet felt the coolness of the dew that cloaked each stem and leaf. For the birds in the pens, it was as any other morning had been over the summer. Feeding trays were distributed. Breakfast was served. Telescopes were set up strategically nearby. We settled in,

ready to observe the birds as they were released. Once all was in place, Kristen opened a large door on one side of the cage. Outside, a tray of food had been placed on a shelf to entice the birds. For a while the birds fed, preened and warmed up in the rising sun, unaware of the freedom at hand. Then the magic moment came when the first young shrike made the move to the shelf outside the pen, to feed. Apparently mystified by the sudden surrounding openness, it would inevitably hop back

supplied, to help them through the period of adapting to natural conditions and adjusting to hunting natural prey. Some will survive, others will not. But now they are free, carrying the genes that will perpetuate their kind and thrill those who may be lucky enough to see the sleek beauty of these superb hunters of the summer meadows in years to come. Another species has been given a ray of hope on the Bruce.

Peter Middleton



Shrike enclosure near Dyer's Bay (Photos by Peter Middleton)

into the security of the cage. This behaviour would then be repeated a couple of times before suddenly, it was out. On the wings of freedom, the bird would then soar high into the arching blue of the morning sky, before returning to perch close by - free in a whole new universe! Over a period of an hour or two this process would be repeated until all the birds had finally left behind the secure confines in which they had been reared. Now they took on the challenges of survival in the wider world. Over the next few days the birds would remain in the neighbourhood of the pens, which were left open and in which food would be



"My last free meal?" A captive-bred shrike considers breakfast. (Peter Middleton)

OSFN goes to the Archives

For the past ten years or so, Jean Maher has been faithfully keeping the OSFN archives -- cutting stories out of the newspaper and collecting photos and copies of the newsletter.

We had been intending to bring these archives to the Grey County Archives at Grey Roots, and we finally got around to doing that in October. The OSFN collection is currently organized under four headings:

1. Newsletters (a complete set, going back to our beginnings in 1989)
2. Photos (a good record of club events and activities which, unfortunately, ends around 2003, with the advent of digital cameras)
3. Club projects
4. The Plant Committee records. Joan Crowe had deposited all the plant record material in Grey Roots a few years ago. The card index includes all known records from herbaria, old publications and the MNR. To that, we have added correspondence and newspaper articles about our popular publications.

Cindy Cartwright had applied for an ISSN number for the Hart's-Tongue Herald, and arranged for copies of our newsletter to go the Library and Archives Canada as well. On a recent trip to Ottawa, I brought them a set of back issues.

So OSFN now has a presence at the National Archives and our County Archives. Who knows what researcher might find these useful in the future? It might be someone studying climate or habitat change. Or a student doing a Masters degree on the activities of naturalist clubs at the turn of the 20th century. In any case, it's good to know that our archives are protected and available to all in perpetuity.

Lorraine Brown

OSFN Newsletter now on FSC certified paper

With this issue, we have switched to Forest Stewardship Council-certified paper. FSC is an important international initiative to promote responsible forest management worldwide. FSC-certified paper contains recycled and alternative fibres and meets international standards regarding chemical treatment and effluent during paper production.

Get Ready for the e-HTH

We are sending this issue out through regular mail as well as by e-mail to those members for whom we have e-mail addresses. The e-version has colour photos and saves our use of paper (though there has been some interesting discussion of whether the electronic version creates a larger ecological footprint than the paper version.)

If you would like to receive only the electronic version from now on, please e-mail web@owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca to let us know.

New CAO at Grey Sauble Conservation

Following the retirement of Jim Manicom this fall, Grey Sauble Conservation now has a new Chief Administrative Officer - John Cottrill. John leaves his job as a policy advisor for the water resources section, lands and water branch of the Ministry of Natural Resources. He will move to the Owen Sound area to start his new job as CAO in early January.

John has a cottage at Port Elgin. He is an avid hiker and looks forward to hiking the trails in Grey and Bruce. John formerly worked for the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, and was a planner for the Credit Valley Conservation Authority.

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As owner/operator of Long Lane Bed & Breakfast near Warton for many years, Joanne provided excellent customer service to all her clients. She looks forward to providing you with the same attentive, professional customer service in every aspect of your real estate needs.

Joanne welcomes your call or visit at the newly renovated office at 900 - 10th Street West, Owen Sound.

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- Grey-Bruce Woody Plants

Meeting and Field Trip Reports

Mushroom Foray, September 9, 2009

On a warm sunny fall day, seven mushroom lovers hit the trails at Inglis Falls. Three weeks of warm dry weather didn't bode well for us, yet we found quite a few species. We were pleased to find the beautiful little salmon-coloured entoloma (*Entoloma salmoneum*), some gem-studded puffballs (*Lycoperdon perlatum*), and a smallish puffball (*Calvatia gigantea*).

Harriet Nixon took the edibles home to accompany steak that night. Her basket included a scaber stalk (*Leccinum insigne*), the puffballs, the two rooted oudemansiellas, and one fawn mushroom (*Pluteus cervinus*). We also found several species growing on wood, which is typical of dry falls.

The fall generally turned out to be pretty poor for mushrooms. But the shaggy mane (*Coprinus comatus*), one of the last mushrooms of the late fall, rewarded me with a large crop on our lawn. I picked them when they were still in the button stage, and pickled them. They'll be a treat in February.

Lorraine Brown



Identifying our finds. From left, Judy Barr, Harriet Nixon, Lorraine Brown (racking her brain for a species name), Cliff Keeling and Rachel Loughead (Cynthia Isber)

Looking for a conservation-related volunteer opportunity?

The Grey Sauble Conservation Foundation (GSCF) is a Canadian charity formed in 1993 to raise funds in support of Grey Sauble Conservation. The foundation is currently seeking volunteers to fill vacancies on its Board of Directors.

GSCF assists with trail development, interpretive signage, conservation area improvements and wildlife habitat improvement, and also supports many other conservation-related programs in association with Grey Sauble Conservation.

For information about volunteer opportunities, please contact Chris W. Ferris at 519-376-3076 Ext. 236 or email foundation@greysauble.on.ca.



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Meeting and Field Trip Reports

Inverhuron Provincial Park, Oct. 17, 2009

Sixteen members enjoyed this outing in superb autumn conditions. Norah led a great hike that gave a glimpse into the history and prehistory of the area and introduced us to the challenges of preservation of unusual species and ecosystems within park boundaries.

We found a good number of the threatened species Pitcher's Thistle, *Cirsium pitcheri*, nestled into the open sand blowouts that are part of the historic dune systems, which are well removed from the present day shoreline. Later at the shore we saw the remarkable new dune system that has built up over the past couple of decades. Norah showed us the globally rare grass species that is the stabilizing force of these dynamic landforms, and the challenges they pose for conservation strategies that must co-exist with recreational beach use.

It was an informative appetizer for many folks, who will now return to explore the park more fully on their own. Inverhuron truly is a gem.

Peter Middleton



Pitcher's Thistle (*Cirsium pitcheri*) is a Great Lakes endemic species, found in dune habitats around Lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior. It is listed as endangered on both the provincial and federal lists of species at risk. (Peter Middleton)



Members enjoyed a tree workshop with Jim Coles on Nov. 7. From left, Anne Cathrae, Cecile Moses, Bill Moses, John Thompson, Jim Coles, Monica Starr, Judy Duncan, Kay Thompson, and Jim Duncan. (Joan O'Reilly)

Walk 'n Talk Trees on the Coles Farm

On a brilliant Saturday afternoon in early November a keen group of OSFN members walked our farm looking at small conifer plantings, provincially significant wetlands with 'bad' beavers, and upland hardwood forests.

Much of the focus of the walk was on identification of species using keys. ID of evergreen species using a conifer key

was relatively straightforward; however, identifying deciduous hardwood species using twig and bud characteristics proved more difficult. Several features such as leaf scars and bud scales required the use of a 10x eyepiece. Species and their site preferences were also noted.

While looking at young conifers, the seasonal growth patterns in trees and the contents of overwintering buds were discussed. In the upland hardwoods, we looked at wood structure and the movement of water and nutrients up the tree, the production of sugars in the leaves and the movement of the enriched sap down the tree to storage areas in the wood.

It was a wonderful fall day to be in the woods scuffling through the downed leaves.

Jim Coles

An apology to Dorothy Crysler

The 20th anniversary issue of the Hart's-Tongue Herald (Spring, 2009) had a photo of Dorothy Crysler and her son Mark Wiercinski, on the cover. The caption accurately described Mark as a past-president, but inaccurately described Dorothy as our first editor. Our first editor was Dorothy Crocker. Our apologies, Dorothy Crysler!

Keppel Quarry Expansion - Not a Good Idea!

OSFN members are probably familiar with the existing Keppel quarry on County Road 170 near Copper Kettle. But did you know that plans are afoot to more than triple it in size, and turn it into a mega-quarry?

The expansion is planned to go down 55 feet, well below the water table. They will have to run pumps, day and night, for the 48-year life of the quarry. Imagine the greenhouses gases being created by all that pumping!

The quarry operation is planned to take 22,000 truckloads of aggregate out of the area each year. Sutherland plans to tunnel under County Road 170 to connect the two quarries. The new quarry is also planned to have an asphalt and a redi-mix plant, sending toxic by-products into the air and groundwater.

The new quarry is adjacent to the provincially significant Shouldice Wetland, an ANSI, which will receive wastewater from the quarry. This wetland is the headwater of Park Head Creek, Shallow Lake and other waterways in Grey and Bruce County. The wetlands also feed McNabb and Francis Lakes through underground springs. The whole area is underlain by karst topography. MNR quarry experts are uncertain as to what the impacts could be. Quarrying could disrupt groundwater regimes. Local residents may find their wells going dry.

Apart from a story in the Sun-Times this past summer, the quarry expansion has seen very little interest locally. But that situation may soon change. On October 1, a group of concerned people met at Shouldice United Church. Representatives of the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE), the Grey

Association for Better Planning (GABP), and OSFN were there, along with around 50 local residents. A steering committee was formed, and a decision was made to organize lawn signs protesting the expansion.

OSFN executive helped by contacting local organizations and asking for permission to include their logos on the

(This note from Joe Johnson was submitted in July 2009 for the fall newsletter, but it was not published in that issue.)

I noticed mention of this club in the winter '08 (Vol. 21 #3) Hart's-Tongue Herald - "Long Time Ago in Owen Sound". Its name and spelling were as

above (except sometimes there was an 's' at the end of Naturalist, or not). I still have its newsletters (The Grey-Bruce Naturalist) from January 1972 until the final newsletter in December 1973. It had existed for some years prior to my arrival in the area in August 1971 and my hearing about the club in December '71. There was a membership fee (\$2.00 per year in 1972) and a meeting most months, always in Owen Sound, and the great bulk of the members lived in and around the city. The name of our present club would have been very apt for this earlier club.

STOP the
Keppel Quarry Expansion

Our mission is to protect the water, the rare species, the health and lifestyles of people, and the agricultural community. Join us to protect this fragile Provincially Significant Wetland and Area of Natural and Scientific Interest in the Escarpment Greenbelt.

GABP Grey Association for Better Planning

Ontario Nature

Owen Sound Field Naturalists

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SAUGEENFIELD NATURALISTS

BPEG Bruce Peninsula Environmental Group

PERL Protecting Escarpment Rural Land

For more information contact: nokeppelquarryexpansion@comcast.net

signs. Seven organizations agree to lend their voices to the fight. Ginger Press Bookstore has offered to be the distribution point for the signs. We urge you to pick one up (they're free) and put it up in a high profile area, but make sure it's on your own property.

For further information, google Keppel Quarry Expansion, visit nokeppelquarry@comcast.net, and read about the pre-OMB hearing on the quarry expansion application taking place on December 1.

Lorraine Brown

More about the Grey-Bruce Naturalist Club

Tom Murray and Floyd Deiter (now of Paris, Ontario) and Nels Maher, among others, were active in the club. John Miles and Dennis Scott, both of whom soon moved away, were also very active around 1972. Tom, Nels, and John are now deceased. Peter Middleton hadn't yet arrived in the area.

I tend to question the mention of "a small informal group of naturalists" meeting "from time to time in Owen Sound" after that (ie after the club folded at the end of '73) because in the '70s and ever since, to the best of my recollection, I wasn't hearing of it. I've checked with three people who would be likely to have known of this group if it existed, and none were at all aware of it.
Joe Johnson

New Banding Lab At BPBO Migration Monitoring Station

In August 2009, with funds from the HIVA environmental fund, the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory (BPBO) was able to put a new banding lab into operation at the Cabot Head Research Station (CHRS). Previously, the banding component of the migration monitoring work done at Cabot Head had, out of necessity, been in the cramped and poorly lit pump house. While functional, this setup had made it very difficult for visitors to effectively see bird banding in progress.

BPBO has always seen public education as a means of informing people of important issues concerning bird migration, bird populations, and bird habitat on the Bruce, in Ontario, and elsewhere (such as Nicaragua). At 10' x 14', the bright new banding lab allows up to 15 people at a time to comfortably view the banding process, to ask questions, and discuss birding issues with the station scientist. The station now has the capacity to handle school classes who may wish to use the site as part of their environmental education studies. BPBO will be assisting a number of classes with bussing costs for possible visits to the CHRS.

BPBO wishes to say thanks again to the HIVA environmental fund for the generous grant and to the volunteers who helped with the interior finishing and exterior painting to get the CHRS's new banding lab ready to go!

Rod Steinacher



CHRS's new bird banding lab ready for its first visitors at the September 2009 Open House. (Rob Cotton)

More Exotic Trees Discovered in Owen Sound

A couple of sharp-eyed tree lovers (Ryan Patterson, greenhouse manager at OSCVI, and Bill Moses) have discovered a pecan tree in the back left-hand corner of the garden behind the Billy Bishop Museum at 948 3rd Avenue West in Owen Sound. The pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) is a species of hickory native to the south-central United States and Mexico. According to Joan Crowe, it's amazing that this tree has survived, being so far north of its usual range. Joan estimates that the tree is over 100 years old.

Merle Gunby also found another interesting tree in Owen Sound - an English Walnut (*Juglans regia*) on 6th

Street, just south of 6th Avenue West on the right hand side.

Both trees will be included in future printings of the OSFN/

Bruce-Grey Plant Committee publication, Exploring an Urban Forest.

Lorraine Brown

Christmas Bird Counts in our Area

**Saturday, Dec. 19, 2009
OWEN SOUND CHRISTMAS
BIRD COUNT**

Contact Freeman Boyd, compiler,
fboyd@brucetelecom.com or
519.538.4368.

**Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009 WIARTON
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Contact Joe Johnson, compiler:
519.534.2736

**Sunday, December 28, 2009
Meaford Christmas Bird Count**

Contact Lynne Richardson, compiler,
lynne.richardson@ontario.ca or
519.599.3618

**Saturday, January 2 Saugeen
Shores Christmas Bird Count**

Contact Cindy Cartwright, compiler,
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The Winter Program

Saturday, Jan. 16, 2010
OUTING: SNOWSHOE HIKE
AT THE SAUGEEEN
CONSERVATION
HEADQUARTERS,
HANOVER
with John Reaume

We will explore the trails of the Headquarters Conservation Area on foot or snowshoes depending on conditions, in search of nature's winter wonders - plants above the snow, animal tracks, winter birds, and more. Call the leader in advance if you need to borrow or can lend extra snowshoes. Meet at 1:30 p.m. at the Resource Centre of the Headquarters Conservation Area, 5 km south of Hanover and just east of County Rd. # 10. The outing will finish by 4:00 p.m. with indoor refreshments. Please contact John Reaume at 519.334.9861.

Indoor Program

Thursday,
Feb. 11, 2010
TOTAL SOLAR
ECLIPSE IN THE
MIDDLE KINGDOM
(Tibet)
with Donna Giesler

There was more than just Olympic fever drawing people to China in the summer of '08! Twelve members of the Bruce County Astronomical Society travelled to the Middle Kingdom for a TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE. Join the Star Lady as she presents highlights of this unforgettable experience. A thrilling laser-studded Sky Tour of the Winter Hexagon will follow this presentation - weather permitting.

Please contact Willie or Audrey at 519.376.3959 or sweetwater@bmts.com.

Saturday, March 13, 2010
MARCH BREAK FAMILY
OUTING TO WINGS OF
PARADISE BUTTERFLY
CONSERVATORY,
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Walk amongst butterflies in a lush tropical paradise and imagine you are in Costa Rica or the Philippines. Learn about butterfly metamorphosis while you watch butterflies emerge from their chrysalides! For Group Discount, please contact Dian by March 5th at saublebeach@hotmail.com or 519.422.1514.

Indoor Program

Thursday,
Jan. 14, 2010

ANSIs: SPECIAL
LANDSCAPES OF
ONTARIO
with Bob Gray

ANSIs: what are they, where did they come from, where are they going? Are they an important part of our natural heritage? Are they protected? Should they be protected? Why do Grey and Bruce counties have more ANSIs than anywhere else in the province?

Sunday, Feb 21, 2010
SNOW SHOE/X-COUNTRY
SKI BRUCE NATIONAL
PARK - the GROTTO with
Willy Waterton and Audrey
Armstrong

Willy and Audrey will lead this excursion to share the drama of the National Park in mid-winter and the unique beauty of the ice-clad grotto. Meet: 10:00 a.m. - Cypress Lake parking lot BPNP. Limit of 15 participants. This outing is weather-dependant. Bring cross-country skis, snowshoes, or ice-grips for hiking boots. Bring lunch and drinks.

Congratulations **Mike and Judith!**

At the Ontario Field Ornithologists convention in October, OSFN members Mike Pickup and Judith King received certificates of appreciation for their contributions to the birding community.

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Indoor Program
Thursday,
March 11, 2010

THE MAKING OF
CANADA: 4 BILLION
YEARS OF EARTH
HISTORY
with Dr. Nick Eyles

This talk will summarize the long geological evolution of Canada. It is an immigrant country made up largely of far-traveled crust brought together by plate tectonics. Its history begins 4.1 billion years ago with a small landmass (preserved as the Slave craton in the present day Northwest territories) and ends with glaciations of the last 2 million years which have profoundly shaped the landscape. Knowledge of Canada's geologic history is key to understanding many modern environmental issues. The Annual General Meeting will follow this presentation.

Indoor Program
Thursday,
April 8, 2010

BIRDWATCHER'S
STEW!
with Fred Jazvac

Join Fred for an overview of the many ingredients that make up a recipe for more successful bird watching.

Saturday, April 17, 2010
SONGS OF SPRING...
FROGGIES AND
WOODCOCKS IN LOVE with
Jim Hastie.

Limit: 20 people. Register to find out where we'll meet up. Please contact Jim Hastie at jimdian@bmts.com or 519.371.4096.

Sunday, April 19, April 26,
May 3, May 10, May 17, May
24, 2010
NATURE HIKES with Dave
Fidler @ 6:00 p.m.

Come join Dave for one or all of his fabulous nature hikes on his wooded property called Fidler's Green. No registration is required-just show up! Directions to Fidler's Green from Owen Sound: Turn right at Jackson on Hwy 21. Go one block north and turn left at the "T" junction. Go one block west and turn right on Old School Road. Fidler's Green is about 1 km on your left.

Saturday May 15, 2010
Native Woody Plants with
Bill Moses, 1 pm to 4 pm

This event will begin with a tour of the Arboretum Nursery at Grey Sauble Conservation headquarters. The importance of native trees and shrubs will be discussed. Following this there will be an opportunity to tour a few local properties to see how native trees, shrubs and vines can be incorporated into the landscape. To register, contact lorraine@apropos.ca.

Welcome New Members

SPEED, Dianne
McLAREN, Kate
IONSON, Gord and Lois
SPRINGER, Gunter and Vicky
THOMPSON, John and Kay
TRIMBLE, Maggi
HEARD, Lee, Jessie, Maxwell,
Aubrey, Caley
ANDERTON, Margaret
BEAUPRE, Kristen Shaw and
Craig
F.O.O.C.E.
LUPTON, Carole
NANNI, Norma and Ed

Finally!

Toronto has passed regulations requiring buildings to be made safer for migrating birds. It's the first such rule in North America and has Michael Mesure, head of FLAP (the Fatal Light Awareness Program) and the author of a macabre field guide to the birds that die from flying into Toronto high-rises, swooning with delight!



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A Productive Summer on the Edge of the Long Swamp (by Joan Crowe)

Despite a very late start to the summer of 2009, nesting birds on our property seem to have been more numerous and successful than ever before. We saw newly fledged offspring of eight species.

In July we had a family of five robins worming on the front lawn - mom and pop and three young. In August, there were young of cardinals, grackles, chickadees and hummingbirds. Particularly noticeable were immature purple finches and rose-breasted grosbeaks still coming to the feeders in September with their parents long gone. In mid-September, I was putting out seed and was confronted by a young blue jay, still with some downy feathers and a nictitating membrane across one eye, but he could fly. On September 15, there was a cardinal still feeding a young one who was fully fledged.

Another cause for excitement was the visitation of our local bear, who wrecked all our feeders one night in May. A couple of days later he was strolling across the back lawn - almost two metres tall and bulky - so it must have been a male. This was confirmed when we went away for the weekend and came back to find that the old tin trunk in which we keep the bird seed had vanished! Moreover, the deck supporting pole, to which it had been anchored, was flat on the ground.

After searching for some time, we found the trunk unopened in the middle of the vacant lot next door. Evidently, the bear had picked it up by the side handles and carried it away - wrecking a wooden composter en route - and had dumped it

when he couldn't open it. Containing about 30 kg of seed, it took the two of us to bring it back. It is now anchored to two poles that are cemented into the ground!

Incidentally, Barb and Dave Fidler also had their feeders wrecked at about the same time. They live on the other side of the Long Swamp. Our two properties would be well within the territory of a male bear.

After the feeder episode, we started taking them in every night and I devised a simple one from a small flower basket which has proved enormously popular with the small birds and the young grosbeaks. The chickadees love it. At least one pair of red-breasted nuthatches started nesting in late August, and were back and forth, picking up seed for their offspring from it, well into the third week of September. We were really surprised that young nuthatches eat seed. Towards the end of September a mother cardinal was

picking out sunflower seed for her young one while he waited eagerly for his titbit.

It has also been interesting to see how our population of blue jays has rebounded. It dropped off dramatically at the time of the West Nile virus scare. Though, whether that had anything to do

with it is a moot point. Populations go up and down over time. Our goldfinches disappeared about three years ago and are just starting to come back. Squirrel populations also fluctuate. We lost our red squirrels completely

a few years ago and we were overrun by black squirrels to the point where we started getting colour variations. Then they crashed and the reds started to come back. We are almost back to even numbers now, as we were 16 years ago.

Raccoons, too, are not nearly so numerous as they were 10 years ago when, at one point, we had quintuplets and quadruplets in the same year! The one mammal which has completely disappeared is the rabbit. We have not seen one for over a year now.

We do know that there is a flourishing population of coyotes - we saw three deer



A red-breasted nuthatch enjoy's Joan's homemade feeder. (Walter Crowe)

carcasses in the swamp last winter - so it is possible that they are the cause of the rabbits' disappearance. We do still see snowshoe hare tracks in the swamp in the winter.

One other treat we had this year was a cute baby porcupine. We have to admit we deter them from chewing our deck and shed etc. by spraying the stuff that stops horses from chewing their stalls. It seems to stop porcupines, too.

At the end of September, we were astonished to spot a sharp-shinned hawk perched on the clothes line, obviously attracted by the mob of blue jays gulping seed from the feeders. It was amazing

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Joan's "bird feeder". (really more of a mammal feeder, wouldn't you say?) (Walter Crowe)

how quickly they all vanished. Blue Jays are not silly when it comes to anything unusual. However, a little natural culling might not be a bad thing in their case!

There is one final mystery. A few years ago, I became tired of lifting gladioli corms every fall and replanting in the spring, so I left them to naturalize and they seem to have done well. This year there were 14 blooms but, as they matured, somebody started to break them off and neatly chew off the flowers. First it was one each night, then the rest disappeared all at once. I just managed to rescue the last one that was still in bud. It bloomed in the house and turned out to be pure white, which we had never planted, so it must be a genetic variation from a seed. On the whole, we suspect a racoon did the damage. It seems a little fiddly for a bear. Has anyone else had a similar experience and caught the culprit? We would be interested!

Turmoil Over Turbines

As an environmental organization, it would be fair to estimate that the membership of the OSFN supports research and implementation of safe, efficient, renewable energy projects. Community meetings convened by the Grey Bruce Health Unit in October explored the impact of wind turbines and helped illuminate a more complex issue than was previously known. The

meeting was well attended, emotional and featured a speaker, Dr. Ray Copes who recently joined the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion as the Director of Environment and Occupational Health. Dr. Copes reviewed the mostly European-based literature on wind turbines and fielded questions from a very engaged audience who urged him to establish an Ontario-based research project on health impacts. This

public meeting became a catalyst for what has become a daily chorus of public opinions on safety and effective parameters for industrial wind turbine development in Ontario.

Critics of the province's new Green Energy Act suggest that the latest regulations governing setbacks for the placement of large-scale wind turbines in Ontario don't go far enough. New industrial wind turbines have to be at least 550 metres away from the nearest homes. According to Energy and Infrastructure Minister, George Smitherman, new restrictions on wind turbines will apply to projects with five turbines or less, and residential setbacks will increase with the number and sound level of additional turbines. The only exception will be wind turbines that have already been erected or proposed to be built in noisy areas, such as near a highway.

The new regulations in the province's Green Energy Act will also prohibit large-scale solar panel projects from prime agricultural lands, a move that some energy companies suggest will force them to look elsewhere for receptive landowners. Under the new rules, a feed-in tariff, or the amount paid to producers of renewable energy, will range from 10.3 cents per kilowatt hour to 80.2 cents. It's been designed to encourage large and small scale energy production, with

the highest rate reserved for residential solar rooftop projects of 10 kilowatts or less. The Canadian Wind Energy Association (CanWEA) applauds the Ontario Government for the introduction of Ontario's new Feed-in Tariff (FIT) program, the first of its kind in North America, as this program sets a fixed price for renewable energy projects.

A spokesperson for Wind Concerns Ontario, reports that since February 2009, more than 100 men, women and children that live near industrial-scale wind installations in Ontario have developed health side effects such as cardiac arrhythmia, vertigo, chronic migraines, nosebleeds and depression. The most common problem she cited is sleep deprivation.

In October, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Murdoch's called for a province-wide moratorium on wind turbine projects until the province's chief medical officer of health could confirm there were no associated health problems. The bill was defeated in the legislature on October 31st. Some residents in Grey Bruce and their municipal councilors are concerned that the new Green Energy Act takes away municipal controls on wind turbine placement, threatens people's health and allows wind energy proponents to avoid consultation and discussion with local municipalities.

Premier Dalton McGuinty has responded to these and other health concerns by suggesting the Ontario government hopes the legislation will protect Ontarians and help to create thousands of new jobs that will help Ontario meet its goal to close all coal-fired electrical generation by 2014.

Beth Anne Currie

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The Winter 2010 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, Jan. 14 ANSIs: SPECIAL LANDSCAPES OF ONTARIO

Thursday, Feb. 11 TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE IN THE MIDDLE KINGDOM (Tibet)

Thursday, March 11 THE MAKING OF CANADA: 4 BILLION YEARS OF EARTH HISTORY

Thursday, April 8 BIRDWATCHER'S STEW!

Outdoor Programs

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

Saturday, Jan. 16 SNOWSHOE HIKE AT THE SAUGEEN CONSERVATION HEADQUARTERS

Sunday, Febraury 21 SNOW SHOE/X-COUNTRY SKI BRUCE NATIONAL PARK - the GROTTO

Saturday, March 13 FAMILY OUTING TO WINGS OF PARADISE BUTTERFLY CONSERVATORY

Sunday, March 28 HULLET MARSHES: WATERFOWL IN SPRING with Peter Middleton.

Saturday, April 17 SONGS OF SPRING... FROGGIES AND WOODCOCKS IN LOVE

Monday, April 19 & 26, May 3, 10, 17, & 24 NATURE HIKES with Dave Fidler @ 6:00 p.m.

Membership Application and Renewal Form

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone..... E-mail.....

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

Membership Category: Single (\$20)..... Family (\$30) Return with cheque to:
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By signing this form, I am agreeing that OSFN may contact me by phone or e-mail.
We hereby confirm that e-mail and mail lists will not go beyond the OSFN. (See privacy policy at osfn.ca)

Signature: