

# ***Hart's Tongue Herald***

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**The Newsletter of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists**

**Spring 2015**

**Box 401, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P7**

**Volume 28 Number 1**

Website: [owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca](http://owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca)

*Editor: Norah Toth*



## *President's Report*

Once again, I hope and trust that you have had a safe and pleasant winter, enjoying at least a few of the many activities that are possible in our part of the world to help us *Know Nature Better*.

Naturalists, whether serious or casual, can enjoy many aspects of winter. Winter birding can be a treat, offering a different array of visitors to our feeders and to our forests, fields and shorelines. Christmas Bird Counts and other regular birding expeditions also provide valuable social settings for naturalists to see what they can find and to share their observations with like-minded associates.

Our outings in winter can also show us the pathways used by four-legged and two-legged creatures. Jeff Kinchen's tracking outings these past two years have been superb – identifying tracks and activities from coyotes, deer, porcupine, wild turkeys, grouse, rabbits, mice and their many co-habitants.

The forecast I am looking at now suggests there will still be lots of snow to exhibit the highways and bi-ways of the critters for Jeff's planned outing on Saturday, March 7.

This is also an excellent time to capture the beauty of nature through photography, sketching and/or painting. Some of my favourite paintings by our talented local and/or national artists are those set in winter in Canada – Quebec or Lake Superior, the far north, west coast or right here in Grey and Bruce counties.

Story-telling, whether through poetry, prose, drama or song, can also be a powerful and satisfying way to celebrate the magic of nature.

More and more folks have taken up snowshoeing or Nordic skiing to get through the deep snow in the woods, to experience nature up close in its many forms – whether it is the silence and the solitude, or the music of the wind. Even a brisk walk or casual stroll can bring rewards of nature sightings in your own neighbourhood.

Then, there are those who either reluctantly put up with our winters or simply go elsewhere for all or part of this season, of course, to experience nature elsewhere.

Here are a few nature photos I am sharing:

**Cover Photo:** *Snow Bunting, Bruce County.* **Credit:** *Bob Taylor*



Taken decades ago along one of the trails at Colpoy's Bay, this Beech tree bark shows claw marks from climbing bears.



These impressive excavations by a Pileated Woodpecker were likely done while I was excavating my driveway from generous snowfalls.



Snow-laden trees and bright morning sunshine beckon me forth on this exquisite path of discovery at the Glenelg Nordic Ski Trails.

## **President's Report continued**

Your club recently assisted Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) financially during the acquisition of the naturally-significant "Tomlinson" property in Northern Bruce Peninsula. We also continue to sponsor Young Naturalists to attend a nature-themed summer camp, a high school student to participate in Ontario Nature's Youth Summit and support the Bluewater Science Fair.

I would like to remind everyone that the much-respected publications of the club, produced by the former Plant Committee, are still available for purchase at the Ginger Press Book Store. These have earned a reputation of excellence and are a valuable resource for anyone wishing to learn or study the various topics these books address.

At this point I would like to extend my thanks, on behalf of the club, to former Program Director Andy Koshan, who stepped down from that position recently. Andy's keen sense of adventure and appreciation of the diversity of nature, has brought us many inspiring, educational and entertaining Indoor and Outdoor Programs, in recent years. Andy will still be an active club member and will be leading outings from time to time.

Many of us just can't wait for this record-setting winter to be over. For me, a sure indication of spring is when I see a store sign offering a clearance sale on in-stock snow blowers; and the next week, the same sign is offering you --- a new lawn mower!

*With a Song in My Heart,*  
John Dickson,  
February 26, 2015

## **Cold Feet**

In early February, to ensure the birds could all access food quickly and easily in the bitter cold, I shoveled out a large, flat "feeding tray" area in the snow around (not under) the hanging feeders. I scatter fresh birdseed over this wide area daily. Many species are more comfortable ground-feeding, so they took to this tray area en masse, particularly the siskins, goldfinch, juncos, redpolls and cardinals.

I soon began to notice behavior in the juncos that the other birds did not display. The other species would hop and peck energetically across the feeding area. The juncos however would take a few steps, then stop, raise one leg up into their body and quiver it into their feathers. They would shift legs periodically. They would also hunker down onto the snow, so as to cover both feet at the same time with their belly feathering.

It was obvious the juncos had cold feet. The other species however, did not, or at least did not tuck up or hunker down on their feet in the same manner as the juncos. Again with a little observation the reason became apparent. Juncos have big feet! Their toes were perhaps twice as long as the other species hopping about in the snow. Unfeathered and therefore uninsulated legs and feet are big sources of heat loss in birds, so it would make sense that the bigger the feet the greater the heat loss.

According to an article on the topic by Paul Erlich, "to minimize such loss, by standing on one leg and tucking the other among its breast feathers, a bird reduces by half the amount of unfeathered limb surface area exposed; by sitting down and thus covering both legs, heat loss from the limbs is minimized."

My final observation on this behavior was that the juncos did not have to warm their big feet in temps that ranged down to about -5C. Colder than that and they were back to tucking up and hunkering down.

Keep thermoregulation in mind when you are watching birds in the cold. It adds to your observation skills in bird behavior.

Submitted by: Lynne Richardson

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# Club News

## Young Naturalist's Winter Activities

While adult out trips took a hiatus for part of the winter, the Young Naturalist's snowshoed at Bognor Marsh in January and at the Grey Sauble Administration Centre in February so that they could experience building a campfire, making bannock and finding ways to stay warm!



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# *Christmas Bird Counts*

## **Owen Sound Count: Compiler Freeman Boyd**

The 44<sup>th</sup> annual Owen Sound Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Saturday, December 20, 2014. Twenty-seven participants, in 8 teams, fanned out to cover the 12 km radius Count Circle which is centred on the 10<sup>th</sup> Street bridge. 6166 birds (low) from 52 different species (low) were counted.

Highlights for the 2014 count include: 18 Mute Swan – an all time high; 134 Wild Turkey – their numbers have stabilized after a high of 340 in 2009; 3 Golden Eagle – this is an all time high. It is the 4th year they have been recorded. They were first recorded 2001; 1 Merlin – recorded 8 times, including the last three years in a row; 5 Snowy Owl – tied for all time high; 10 Red-bellied Woodpecker – all time high, first recorded in 1991 and every year since 2003; Very few winter finches – 31 Pine Grosbeak, 1 Pine Siskin, 4 Common Redpoll; 135 Mourning Dove – this is the lowest number in 20 years, numbers increased in mid 1980s and peaked in mid 2000s.

You can see the full 44 years of Owen Sound CBC data at:  
<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>

Thanks to all the hearty volunteers that make this day possible! Also, thank you to Maryann at the Ginger Press for a yummy supper and a cozy place to do the tally.

## **Tobermory Count: Compiler Rod Steinacher**

Maybe you saw some of them, about a week before Christmas, standing along the side of the road in the snow and wind, with binoculars in hand. Or even along the highway near Tobermory in the pre-dawn dark (without the binoculars!). These hardy souls were participants in the 42nd Annual Tobermory Christmas Bird Count (and the 114th consecutive year for these counts in North America, making it the longest running, as well as the largest, "citizen science" project in the world), held Wednesday, December 17, 2014. They were also, it turns out, completely harmless.

The most determined of the 35 birders participating in the 42nd Annual Christmas Bird Count spent up to 12 hours in the field. One Great Horned Owl and three Eastern Screech-Owls

were heard by one group before dawn, after which the whole crew fanned out to cover an area which covered the tip of the Bruce Peninsula north and west of the Johnson Harbour Road and McVicar along Highway 6 and Emmett Lake in the National Park. This includes a lot of shoreline and bush, but not many roads, and several of the 10 groups spent nearly the entire day walking bush roads and trails. While it was snowy on and off during the day, it was a big improvement over last year's frigid temperatures and horizontal snow.

After all that field work, birders felt that there weren't many birds out there to be seen, so the final tallies were a bit of a surprise to the participants! A total of 43 bird species were observed for the day, which is about average for the 42 years of the count (mean = 41, max = 50, min = 24). 1,866 individual birds were observed, which is well above average (med = 1,503, max = 3,102, min = 453).

There were some real holes in what was observed, though. Only 1 Red-breasted Merganser (avg. = 12), 6 Common Goldeneye (avg. = 51), 3 Mallards (avg. = 10), and 0 Bufflehead (avg. = 26) were spotted. The early freezing of the bays and inlets, as well as the inland lakes, in November probably drove most ducks southward well before the count, even though most water was open on count day. Also appearing in very low numbers were our small winter finches. Just 8 American Goldfinch (avg. = 117), 2 Pine Siskin (avg. = 37) and 28 Common Redpoll (avg. = 60) were observed. Since there were plenty of bird feeders in the area, which normally bring these little rascals in to where they can be seen, it looks like they just weren't in the Tobermory area.

Other than the gulls at the dump (four species, 720 individuals), the 531 Black-capped Chickadees (avg. = 525) observed means that they remain the most common bird on the Christmas count. The 92 Blue Jays that were recorded is well above the yearly average of 39 individuals and the 10 Cardinals was pretty much on the average of 11 birds.

A special thanks to Bruce Peninsula National Park staff for the support they provided for the Christmas count. A hot breakfast got the gang going and out the Visitor Center doors for a good



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day of birding and the hot food at the end of the day powered many tired bodies through the wrap up process. Thanks also to Sheila and Tom Williams for hosting the lovely pre-count get together the evening before the count. And of course a big thanks to the participants, some from as far away as Owen Sound, Eugenia and Port Elgin, and most of whom are already raring to go with the 2015 Tobermory CBC! Hopefully, 2015 will also see the inauguration of a "kids" bird count as well.

### Warton Count: Compiler Lynda Steinacker

The Warton CBC fell on its earliest possible date this year, Sunday, December 14, 2014. The day was consistently grey and cloudy with a fairly steady temperature between 1C and 5C. While moving and Great Lake waters were open, the smaller lakes and waterways were mostly frozen over.

We had a good solid turn out yet again with 20 birders and 6 feeder watch participants covering 7 sub-areas of the Warton circle. It was a relatively quiet year for the birds with a total of 3833 birds seen and 48 species reported. No count week species were reported.

Unusually high counts for the year included Long-tailed Duck (20), Ring-billed Gull (189) and Pileated Woodpecker (6). Unusually low counts included Blue Jays (70) - quite a drop from the high of 385 last year and Bufflehead (59). Counts for Hooded, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers remained low for a second year.

2014 turned up 4 Snowy Owls (only their 3<sup>rd</sup> time to appear on the Warton Count since appearing in 2001) and one Golden Eagle juvenile which was seen between Berford and Isaac lakes.

### Meaford Count: Compiler Lynne Richardson

The 44th annual Meaford CBC was held on Sunday December 28, 2014. The days leading up to and including the count were mild and all snow cover had totally disappeared by count day. Georgian Bay water was open, with no ice edge; all but a few small ponds were also ice-free. Despite the warm temperatures and mostly clear weather, counting was slow; but the 17 participants in six parties managed to find a higher-than-average 49 species.

However, overall numbers were down (3456), especially considering that 1000 birds were of a single species - one

glorious blizzard of Snow Buntings! No record highs, no new species. Cumulative total remains at 118. One record low was tallied - only 2 House Sparrows found the entire day. Their numbers have been continuously declining over the last 10 years. Mourning Doves were at their lowest in 34 years, at 14. Despite some speculation to the contrary, it is doubtful that their new designation as a game species had anything to do with that.

Interesting observations for the day included 2 Evening Grosbeak; 1 Golden Eagle - which continues their status as an over-wintering species in the Beaver Valley; Bald Eagle numbers continue to rise/stabilize; 1 uncommonly counted Common Loon with a bill injury and 1 lingering Great Blue Heron (10 x each in 44 years); 3 Snowy Owls; and a red-phase Eastern Screech-Owl roosting in a nest box was a great find at the end of the day.

### Cape Croker Count: Compiler Jarmo Jalava

The fourth "official" Cape Croker CBC was held on Sunday, December 14, 2014. The count circle includes more water than land, as it includes Colpoy's Bay, Hope Bay, Barrow Bay and open Georgian Bay. Inland areas extend from Malcolm's Bluff in the south to Rush Cove in the north, with the spine of the Niagara Escarpment winding its way along the western edge of the circle. As with most other southern and central Ontario counts in December, it was a most pleasant day to be out, with temperatures hovering between 2C and 5C, little or no wind, under overcast skies and a bit of very light intermittent drizzle in the afternoon.

The total of 39 species (plus a count-week American Robin) found by 14 observers was below the four-year average of 41, but the total number of individual birds (1,417) beat the previous high of 1,233 set in 2012 but was almost double that of the frigid, blizzard-conditions of the 2013 count. The 2014 high was thanks largely to a record count of 457 Snow Buntings. New species for the count were Mute Swan (2) and Ring-billed Gull (7). Notable was a single Glaucous Gull, seen only once previously.

For what it's worth for such a young count, other record "high" numbers were: Horned Grebe - 8 (previous high - 2), Rock Pigeon - 4 (1), Eastern Screech-Owl - 12 (tied previous), Great



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“This seems clear enough:  
When truly present in nature, we do use all  
our senses at the same time, which is the  
optimum state of learning.”

Richard Louv



Horned Owl - 3 (2), Downy Woodpecker - 17 (13), Hairy Woodpecker - 7 (6), Blue Jay - 107 (49), White-breasted Nuthatch - 27 (15), Golden-crowned Kinglet - 12 (11) and Common Redpoll - 70 (46). One wonders if the high numbers of woodpeckers, jays and White-breasted Nuthatches has anything to do with the superabundant crop of acorns this year. In the "where-were-they-all?" department, the sparrow family was represented by a lone American Tree Sparrow and four Northern Cardinals.

One of the most heartening happenings of the count was when one party, having hiked nearly five kilometres from the nearest passable road, encountered a kayaker cleaning up litter from the Georgian Bay shore. The gentleman was packing the garbage into his kayak, and eventually headed out across the frigid December waters towards Wiarton to dispose of it properly. Nothing like witnessing someone doing a random act of planetary kindness!

### **Saugeen Shores Count: Compiler Norah Toth**

The Saugeen Shores CBC was held on Friday, January 2, 2015. Winds were light (up to 15km) and there was minimal snow cover. This was a pleasant change to the snow squalls the day before and we were pleased when the sun visited us for part of the afternoon.

The Lake Huron shoreline was ice free. There were good-sized waves on Lake Huron, however, most of the inland lakes had a thin layer of ice and the streams and rivers were primarily frozen except in areas of greater water flow.

A total of 35 people participated in the count. In total we saw over 11,000 individual birds and 55 species. This is just above the average number of species for the count.

An unusual date for an Eastern Towhee at a feeder in Southampton was recorded.

Although there was a lot of open water on Lake Huron the number of ducks and duck species anticipated was low. The number of Bald Eagle (35) was high but not the highest it has been, Golden Eagle are consistently found along the Saugeen River (3), most finch species were either absent or in lower numbers, Snowy Owl were above average at 11 sightings, 3655 Canada Geese was well above average, while House Sparrow and European Starling were both well below average.

Thank you to all who participated in the count.

### **Kincardine Count: Compiler James Turland**

The 2014 Kincardine CBC (KCBC) was held on December 17, 2014 and many birds were missing. Birds of prey were particularly hard to find with no American Kestrels, Merlins, Northern Harriers or Rough-legged Hawks seen at all. The one Bald Eagle and three Snowy Owls found are average. Feeder birds like chickadee, goldfinch and Morning Dove were also unaccounted for. The dozen Mourning Doves seen is less than a visit at a single feeder on a good day. One bird to buck the low trend was

Common Raven. Ravens made their first appearance on the KCBC in 2008 as a trio. Ravens historically ranged over most of North America but with the arrival of European settlers the ravens retreated to the northern and mountainous regions. Recently they are reclaiming some of their lost territory. For the past 4 years they have nested within the town of Kincardine and can often be seen scavenging the roadside along the Highway 21 bypass. Interestingly, four known raven nests in Bruce County are all on man-made structures such as towers, bridges and barns.

The mild weather leading up to the count had participants hopeful that some lingering summer migrants might be found. Fields were green and all roads passable as compared to many years when snow has been deep and all water frozen.

Participant numbers and effort was consistent with other years. So why were so few birds found? The weather is very influential on bird activity. The day started with cold rain that changed to snow midday. Views out over the lake were severely hampered by high waves and winds that drove the cold rain and snow into binoculars and face. The story goes how some participants got so desperate to see a bird that they started shaking the trees in the hopes of an encounter!

The 42 species seen is 13 below the recent count average of 55. Even though bird numbers were low; spirits remained cheery. Birders tend to be grateful for whatever is offered but often long for more. The less likely a bird is to be seen the more highly it is sought after. In my dreams, I believe there must be some hidden Bird Shangri-La right here in Kincardine where the birds can disappear to on such bad weather occasions. I would be most intrigued if anyone finds such a place.

For more information on the KCBC, other nearby Christmas Bird Counts and good local places to bird check out the Bruce Birding Club website <https://sites.google.com/site/brucebirdingclub/>

### **Summary**

If you are interested in finding out more about Christmas Bird Counts all results of the past 100 years can be accessed on the Audubon web site.

#### **OWEN SOUND FIELD NATURALISTS**

**June 11, 2015**

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Hall**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING—6:45 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.**

**&**

**EVENING PRESENTATION—7:15 p.m.**

**BLACK BEARS ON THE BRUCE PENINSULA**

**Jody Scheifley, Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry**

The Northern Bruce Peninsula contains significant amounts of uninterrupted forest. This makes a great ecosystem and enables the black bear to thrive here. Black bears are smaller than their grizzly and polar cousins weighing anywhere from 100 to over 250 kilograms. They eat anything that is available so remember: "IF YOU FEED A BEAR - YOU KILL HIM."

*(The AGM will be preceded by a potluck dinner—everyone welcome.)*

# **Program Listings Spring 2015**

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

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

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

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

## **Outdoor Programs**

Enjoy the outdoors with like-minded people.

**Saturday, March 7, 2015 - 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**  
**Who Made Those Tracks and Why? An Interpretive Late Winter Tracking Hike with Jeff Kinchen**  
**Register:** Jeff Kinchen, cheshires\_grin@hotmail.com  
or 519-372-7499 **Limit:** 12 participants

**April, 2015 – Date & Time to be announced**  
**Cabot Head Geology Hike with Darryl Cowell**  
More information will be available at  
www.owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca in the early spring.

**Sunday, April 26, 2015 - 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**  
**Wonderland of Rocks #2 - Cliffscape Ecology Hike at Rural Rootz with Tom Ashman**  
**Register:** Tom Ashman, ruralroots@sympatico.ca  
or 519-534-2522 **Limit:** 15 participants

**Saturday, May 2, 2015 - 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
**A Visit with Old Growth Trees with Bob Knapp**  
**Register:** Bob Knapp, rmknapp@yahoo.com  
or 519-371-1255 **Limit:** 15 participants

**Mid-May, 2015— Date to be confirmed - 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**  
**Wildflower Walk Through Area Trails with Barbara Palmer**  
**Register:** Barbara Palmer, barbara\_p@rogers.com  
or 519-372-0355 **Limit:** 12 participants

**Saturday, May 23, 2015 - 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**  
**Wildflower and Fern Hike at Pottawatomi Conservation Area with Joan Crowe**  
**Register:** Joan Crowe – 519-371-8193  
**Limit:** 12 participants

**Thursday, May 28, 2015 - 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.**  
**Spring Wildlife Observation via Canoe or Kayak: Pike River Bridge North with Andy Koshan**  
**Register:** Andy Koshan, akoshan@yahoo.ca  
or 519-372-9480 **Limit:** 10 participants

**Tuesday, June 9, 2015 - 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**  
**Nature Ramble at Bayview Escarpment with Norah Toth**  
**Register:** Norah Toth, ntoth@rogers.com  
or 519-376-2918 **Limit:** 10 participants



# *Indoor Meetings*

Indoor meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of the month from September to June (with the exception of November).  
They start at 7:00 p.m. at the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library, 824 1st Avenue West, Owen Sound.  
Remember, bring a coffee mug to meetings.

**March 12, 2015 Dr. Lyle Friesen**

## **LUST AND DOMAIN: THE NATURE OF BIRDSONG**

Dr. Friesen is a songbird biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service. He has been studying the effects of forest fragmentation and encroaching development on Wood Thrush (among other topics) in the Forested Hills ESPA of Waterloo.

**April 9, 2015 Robert Knapp**

## **OLD GROWTH FORESTS IN THE OWEN SOUND AREA**

Bob is an experienced hiker, educator and explorer who will show photos of the extraordinary trees that have lived to an old age in our area. This presentation will provide you with fascinating and interesting details about this area's old growth trees.

**May 14, 2015 Dr. Andrew Peregrine**

## **LYME DISEASE & RACCOON ROUNDWORM: IS THE RISK OF HUMAN INFECTION INCREASING IN ONTARIO?**

Dr. Peregrine, Associate Professor, Department of Pathobiology at the University of Guelph, will discuss the relationship between Lyme Disease and Raccoon Roundworm. He will include the predicted impact of climate change on these two potential human infections. This is important information for all those who venture out into the field.

**June 11, 2015 – 6:00 p.m. SHARP \*\*\*\* Last meeting of the year  
ANNUAL POTLUCK SUPPER & PRESENTATION**

*Please note the location is not at the Library.*

*St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 865 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue West, Owen Sound*

Bring your own plates, cutlery and cup or mug, as well as a food dish, with serving utensils, to serve 8-10.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING—6:45 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.**

**EVENING PRESENTATION—7:15 p.m. \*\*\*\* All welcome  
Jody Scheifley, Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry**

## **BLACK BEARS ON THE BRUCE PENINSULA**

The Northern Bruce Peninsula contains significant amounts of uninterrupted forest. This makes a great ecosystem and enables the black bear to thrive here. Black bears are smaller than their grizzly and polar cousins weighing anywhere from 100 to over 250 kilograms. They eat anything that is available so remember: "IF YOU FEED A BEAR - YOU KILL HIM."

### **Did you know?**

Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park operate with a Park Advisory Committee (PAC). This PAC was created to assist Parks Canada with the development of Park Management Plans when the parks were established in 1987.

This PAC continues to meet regularly. It advises Parks Canada on matters relating to Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park; it receives information from Parks, communicates with members of individual groups and provides feedback to Parks; it undertakes initiatives that benefit both the parks and the local community.

Jan Pugsley, a member of the OSFN, sits on PAC.



**Nature in the City** is being planned to draw attention to the 45th Anniversary of Earth Day. On Tuesday April 21, Wednesday April 22 and Thursday April 23, the club will be offering evening hikes throughout Owen Sound. These hikes will be open to the general public. Watch for further details about meeting times and locations.

# What's All the FLAP About?

Have you ever seen or heard a bird hit a window? Did you think it was an isolated incident? Not so. Bird collisions with windows is one of the leading causes of bird mortality – ornithologists estimate that in North America alone over one billion birds are killed annually by hitting glass and mirrored walls. It seems obvious: reflective, transparent glass panes are everywhere in our homes and workplaces, and migratory birds that make their homes in woodlands or wetlands (generally far from human habitation) can easily be fooled by the reflection of a tree or shrub in the mirrored glass. Or they see the large



*Birds have the illusion of being able to fly right through the window and will hit the glass..*

potted plant inside a building and think they can land there. Or worse still, windows on either side of a building give birds the illusion that they can sail right through to the trees on the other side. Migratory birds simply have no concept of glass.

Paloma Plant of the Fatal Light Awareness Program Canada (FLAP) delivered this sad

message at the November 2014 OSFN meeting but she had good news to share as well. We can each be part of the solution. It's as simple as making the glass visible to birds – *from the outside*. Birds need “visual markers” to alert them to the presence of a barrier to flight. One hawk silhouette positioned in the corner of a large pane of glass will simply not do it. The Yellow-rumped Warbler or Hermit Thrush or Downy Woodpecker could be flying towards the opposite corner of the window. The bird might be lucky and survive the crash with only a nasty headache. Or the result could be severe injury or death, especially if the bird is flying at 40 kilometres an hour which is travelling speed for most songbirds.

There are simple things we can do to protect birds. Affixing anything opaque to the outside of a window will work if the markers are no more than 4 inches apart on the vertical or 2 inches on the horizontal. In other words, to be truly bird-friendly a window or expanse of glass must have no reflective openings larger than 2 inches by 4 inches (which represents the wingspan of most songbirds).

Otherwise, small birds such as vireos and kinglets are still in danger. Hanging wind chimes or old CDs or even ribbons on the outside of a window – as long as they are 4 inches apart – will do the trick. So will whitewashing or soaping your window although the latter may have to be repeated after a rainfall.

Luckily, more ideas and solutions are popping up all the time. Acopian BirdSavers or Zen Wind Chimes are 1/8-inch diameter nylon parachute cords hung outside the glass. Take some quick measurements of your windows (instructions on [www.birdsavers.com](http://www.birdsavers.com)), then put in your order (with proceeds going to wildlife preservation). Or buy some parachute cord at an army surplus store, follow the directions on the website and make your own. Elegant and effective.



*Interrupting the sight lines of birds alerts them to barriers to flight.*

Another do-it-yourself kit comes from Feather Friendly® Technologies. The film uses a marker-only application to the exterior surface of the glass developed in consultation with an ornithologist who has studied the issue of bird strikes with windows for over three decades. The kit is made of 100-foot rolls of marker tape, two measuring strips and installation instructions. (Approximately six feet of tape is required for every square foot of glass so one roll of 100 feet would cover a 30-inch by 80-inch patio

door.) Convenience Group, (the parent company) is donating a portion of the proceeds from the sale of this product to FLAP. Visit [www.featherfriendly.org/feather-friendly-other-technologies.php](http://www.featherfriendly.org/feather-friendly-other-technologies.php). Window screens or netting are another option. For more ideas, visit [www.flap.org](http://www.flap.org).

Paloma also spoke about FLAP's origins and our other raison d'être. In 1993, a motley group of bird lovers (me included) was wandering the streets of Toronto's Financial District searching for nocturnal migrants that had hit the brightly lit office towers and plummeted to the concrete below. We decided that rescuing the ones that were still alive, rehabilitating them if necessary where possible and taking them for release in more appropriate areas/habitat, and donating the dead to the Royal Ontario Museum simply wasn't enough. We needed to work with the management of the office towers to get them to turn lights out. A few years later FLAP discovered that daytime collisions with windows and mirrored structures was an even bigger issue and volunteer patrols began around highly reflective office complexes. To date, FLAP has recovered over 61,000 birds from 167 species including 21 Species at Risk such as the Canada Warbler, Whip-poor-will, Wood Thrush and Rusty Blackbird. About a third of those birds survived and were released.

Most recently, FLAP developed the ultimate Bird Safe® Building Standards and Façade Risk Assessment, a tool for determining how likely each façade of a particular building is to experience bird strikes. This can be applied to residential or (more often) commercial buildings.

For more suggestions on how to protect our feathered friends, please visit [www.flap.org](http://www.flap.org) or call 416-366-3527 (FLAP).


Submitted by: Reenie Fedun



*Black-throated Green Warbler. PHOTOGRAPH © CAROL L. EDWARDS*

#### What to do if you find an injured bird

If you find a bird that has hit a building, gently place it inside an unwaxed paper bag or small cardboard box with tissue or a paper towel to give the bird something to "perch" on. Place the box/bag in a quiet area of the house, away from pets and children. Make sure the bird is sitting upright to aid respiration but do not handle more than necessary. If the bird is leaning to one side, make a donut shape using tissue or a paper towel and place the bird in the centre. Do not give food or water. If the bird is alert and starting to move about inside the bag within an hour, release it in a wilderness area away from buildings. If the bird has suffered severe injuries (blood on beak or eye, a broken wing...) contact the Toronto Wildlife Centre at 416-631-9942 or a local rehabilitator for instructions.

	<p><b>MIDDLEBRO' &amp; STEVENS LLP</b> Barristers &amp; Solicitors P.O. Box 100, 1030 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. East. Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 5P1 <a href="http://www.mslaw.ca">www.mslaw.ca</a></p>
<p>EDMUND (Ted) J. STEVENS KELLY L. GRAHAM JOHN D. MIDDLEBRO' JILL T. SAMPSON FIONA M. HAMILTON Tel: (519) 376-8730 Fax: (519) 376-7135</p>	<p>General Law Practice</p> <p><b>TRUST. HELP.</b></p> <p><b>ANSWERS.</b></p>

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The Owen Sound Field Naturalists Board would like to establish a team of three, two members of the club and one member of the Board, to conduct a review of the OSFN Constitution. This will require several brief meetings with the goal to complete the review prior to the Annual General Meeting on June 11, 2015. Please contact John Dickson, [jwdickso@gmail.com](mailto:jwdickso@gmail.com) if you are available to help the club in this way.



### Hospitality at Meetings

At each meeting, coffee and tea have been provided so that you have the chance to socialize. At this time, no one has stepped up to help with hospitality for the winter. If you are able to spend an extra hour prior to the meeting helping out the club by preparing and serving coffee and tea, please contact Norah Toth—[ntoth@rogers.com](mailto:ntoth@rogers.com)

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

**Don't forget!**

**Bring your mug to indoor meetings!**

Thank you to the members who have provided content for this newsletter or who have proofread. Submissions for the next issue can be sent to [ntoth@rogers.com](mailto:ntoth@rogers.com) prior to July 15, 2015.

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### Join Ontario Nature today

Ontario Nature takes action every day protecting wild species and wild spaces in every corner of our province – from your backyard to the boreal forest and beyond. But birds, butterflies and badgers are not the heart and soul of our organization. People like you are. Will you join Ontario Nature today, and become a part of our growing conservation success story? For more membership information, please visit [www.ontarionature.org/give/membership/index.php](http://www.ontarionature.org/give/membership/index.php).

The Owen Sound Field Naturalists is a federated club member of Ontario Nature. Remember, that being a member of a local field naturalist club does not mean you are a member of Ontario Nature. Start, or renew, your membership with Ontario Nature today.

### **Ontario Nature Supports Province's Plan to Restrict Neonicotinoid Pesticides**

Ontario Nature welcomes the Province's plan to achieve an 80% reduction in the use of neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) by 2017. The plan responds to growing public concern about the harmful effects of these pesticides, and to the substantial body of evidence implicating neonics in pollinator declines. Ontario is the first and only province in Canada to propose a dramatic reduction in the use of neonics.

Ontario Nature, along with partner organizations including the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and the David Suzuki Foundation, has been urging the Province to ban the use of neonics in Ontario. Though the causes of pollinator decline are not fully understood, habitat destruction and the use of pesticides are significant threats. Ontario Nature hopes that the Province's Pollinator Health Action Plan will help Ontarians to better understand and address all of the causes of pollinator decline.

For more information, contact Anne Bell at [anneb@ontarionature.org](mailto:anneb@ontarionature.org)

**Huron Fringe**  
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# Snowy Owls in our Fields

The fields of southern Ontario are host, for a second winter, to significant numbers of snowy owls. The irruptive occurrences of snowy owls in southern Ontario is one of ongoing fascination. There are many accounts as to why they occur. This article is in response to some questions that I have received.



*Female Snowy Owl. Credit: Peter Middleton*

The reason for the appearance of snowies is linked to the age-old balance between prey and predator. As prey increases so do the dependent predators. Conversely, as the population of a prey species decreases, likewise, predator populations drop in response. Snowy owls are known for such widely oscillating population numbers. They are also known for far ranging movements of individuals, in response to seasonal changes and the need to find a stable food source for their personal survival and successful breeding. During many trips to the Arctic, these patterns were pretty obvious, with years when collared lemming and snowies were both common and years when it was really tough to find either, if any.

The summer of 2013-14 was one of exceptionally successful lemming reproduction in the eastern Arctic. Snowy owls adapted rapidly to abundant food resources. Large clutches were observed and produced eight or more fledglings, most of which survived. The following winter of 2013/14 was one of massive dispersal movements for this bumper crop of snowies. It was one of the most memorable winters for snowy owls in memory. A couple of individual birds even reached Florida and Bermuda. Not unexpectedly, the majority of these birds were juveniles (heavily barred over all the body), but a significant number were large adult females

(significantly barred, but with significant white areas of plumage) and adult males (almost pure white). Many of the birds that winter successfully here will return off and on over many years. When they do head north at winter's end they are not likely to return to areas they previously occupied as breeders, or to the area in which they were hatched. Food is the key.

The winter flight of 2014-15 represents an "echo" of last year's incursion. It is not nearly as large. This is an indication of reduced lemming populations, and a diminishing source of food for snowies. Predator populations taper off over a number of years shadowing the decline of prey. Reproduction rates of snowies are adjusted accordingly, producing smaller clutches and fewer successfully fledged young. When lemming populations bottom out, few snowy owls will be hatched and, fewer still, reared successfully. Big flights to the south occur about once every seven or eight years.

As new technologies enhance field observations, new



*Male Snowy Owl. Credit: Peter Middleton*

information is constantly emerging. I am sure that over the next few years the science behind snowies' southern movements will become better understood. However, the mystery of it all will never be lost and I am happy about that. It is the wonder of these enigmatic birds that makes them so engaging. Where were they hatched, where have they wandered? The ever changing Arctic provides endless challenges for these ghostly hunters of the north. Yet, they

continue to survive and prosper.

We are indeed lucky to have snowy owls appear with regularity in our winter landscapes. Seeing one of these superb birds is truly a privilege. Keep your eyes open as you drive the winter roads.

## ***Have Your Say: Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plans***

On February 27, the Government of Ontario launched a co-ordinated review of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan, as required under their respective legislation. These four provincial land use plans work together to manage growth, protect our agricultural lands and natural environment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support economic development in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe and Greenbelt.

We heard from many stakeholders and municipalities about the need to co-ordinate the reviews of the four plans to enable a more efficient and effective consultation process. To ensure this is a fully co-ordinated process, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and the Niagara Escarpment Commission are also working closely with a number of other ministries.

The co-ordinated review has two rounds of consultation. The first seeks input to inform the development of amendments to the plans, and the second is to consult on proposed amendments, if any.

For the first round, we want to hear your ideas on how to make the plans stronger and work better together. We also want to know what parts of these plans you see as working well and should remain as they are. The document *Our Region, Our Community, Our Home* is intended to help inform and guide discussions. It describes the plans and their objectives, highlights important policy issues and sets out questions that we hope to address during the co-ordinated review.

You can submit comments and ideas by mail, email, through the consultation website (<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10882.aspx>) or posting on the Ontario Environmental Registry (the Registry number is 012-3256). We will also be holding town hall meetings across the region where you can ask questions and speak directly with staff from a number of ministries, offer input and submit comments. Visit our website (<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10882.aspx>) for town hall meeting locations and times as well as more information on the co-ordinated review and how to make your formal submission.

**The deadline to submit comments in the first round of the co-ordinated review is May 27, 2015.**

We look forward to receiving your ideas and suggestions for how we can improve the plans and continue to strengthen and support communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Greenbelt.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Ted McMeekin  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
17th Floor, 777 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 2E5

The Honourable Bill Mauro  
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Suite 6630, 6th Floor, 99 Wellesley Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1W3

## **The Blue Dot - David Suzuki Foundation**

At a recent OSFN meeting, a member introduced us to the Blue Dot project from the David Suzuki Foundation. More information below and at <http://bluedot.ca/join-us/>

**People like you stand up.** Across the country, Canadians believe in our inherent right to a healthy environment – clean water, fresh air, healthy food and a say in decisions that affect us. One by one, people like you stand up to say this right should be recognized.

**Neighbours come together to change a city.** This growing movement of Canadians calls upon their local communities to pass municipal declarations respecting people's right to live in a healthy environment.

**Cities come together to save a province.** Community by community, this movement will inspire decision-makers across our provinces and territories to take notice. With so many communities calling for action from all levels of government, the next step is to have our provinces follow suit and pass environmental bills of rights.

**Provinces come together to save a nation.** When seven out of 10 provinces, representing more than 50 per cent of the Canadian population, have recognized our right to a healthy environment we turn toward the ultimate goal: amending the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

**Canada recognizes your right to a healthy environment.**

Recognition in the Charter is the final step in protecting the right to clean air, fresh water and healthy food for all Canadians. This ensures that we all benefit from a healthy environment, world-class standards and a say in the decisions that affect our health.

***Will you stand up for the people  
and places you love?***

[www.bluedot.ca](http://www.bluedot.ca)

Monies from the OSFN Conservation Fund assisted the Nature Conservancy of Canada with the completion of the purchase of the Tomlinson Property on the Upper Bruce Peninsula.

In order to understand more fully the natural resources that are found on this property, the Nature Conservancy is proposing to carry out a spring outing or bioblitz in late May.

If you are interested in being kept up-to-date with these plans, please contact John Dickson at [jwdickso@gmail.com](mailto:jwdickso@gmail.com)



## Nominations for Honorary Life Membership and Community Conservation Awards; Get in Touch with us Today!

At the Annual General Meeting in June, the OSFN Board would like to recognize an **Honorary Life Member**. Nominations from the membership are welcome. To be eligible for consideration, they must be someone who has been an OSFN member for ten years or more. They must also fill **one or more** of the following criteria:

1. He or she has made a major contribution to the study of the natural world either through their career or through their hobby and interests.
2. He or she has made a major contribution in education about the natural world, either as a particularly dedicated school teacher or adult educator, or through being active in organizing the activities of the Young Naturalists club or

similar organizations for ten years or more.

3. He or she has made a major contribution to the OSFN, either through a high degree of participation in OSFN projects or by being a member of the Executive for 15 years or more.
4. He or she has made a major contribution to the protection and preservation of natural areas in Grey and Bruce Counties.

**Community Conservation Award.** At the AGM, the OSFN Board would also like to recognize citizens within the community (Grey - Bruce) who in some way have made a significant contribution toward the welfare of the natural world through stewardship, restoration, protection or other actions deemed beneficial to natural habitats or species.

Please speak to John Dickson, President or Lynne Richardson, Secretary to determine the established nomination process.

### 2014-2015 OSFN Board of Directors

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**Junior Naturalists:** Elaine Van Den Kieboom, 519-371-1989, ekieboom@queensbush.ca & Krista McKee (Grey-Sauble Conservation Authority), 519-376-3076

**Supporting the Board**

**Resource Assistance:** Elaine Mason, masonfam@sympatico.ca

**Newsletter:** Norah Toth, 519-376-2918, ntoth@rogers.com

**Website:** Bill Moses, 519-371-4559, bill.mosesos@gmail.com

**We welcome our new members: Allan Stone & Jane Wood, Larry Kerr**

## Membership Application and Renewal Form

**Name**.....

**Address**.....

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

**Membership Category:** Single (\$25)..... Family (\$40)..... Student (\$15).....

**Donation for Conservation Projects**..... **Donation to Conservation Trust Fund**.....

For your ease and ours, pay on-line using our PayPal option at [www.owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca](http://www.owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca)

Or, return with cheque to: Owen Sound Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 401, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P7

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

We hereby confirm that e-mail and mail lists will not go beyond the OSFN. (See privacy policy at [owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca](http://owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca))

Membership is due in September each year and can be paid in cash or by cheque at any indoor meeting or by PayPal on the website. The OSFN Membership is current from September 1 to August 30 each year.

Please complete and detach this form. It should be submitted with your payment.



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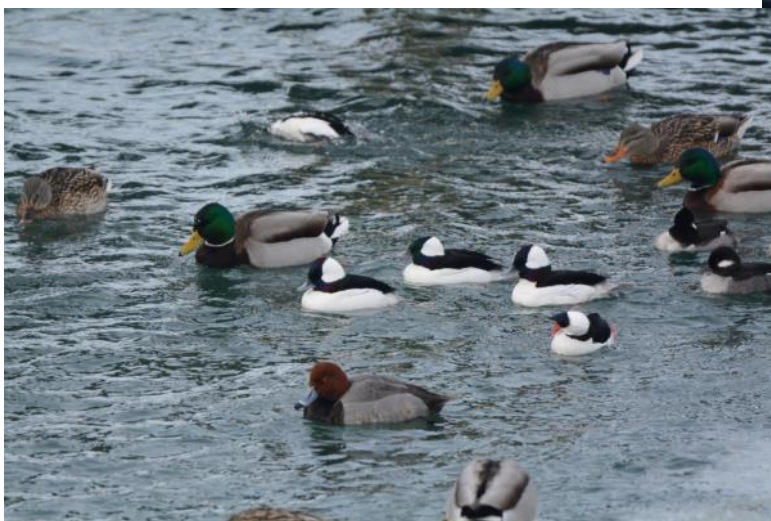


## Knowing Nature Better

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



*Red Fox Southampton Harbour. Credit: Carole Lupton*



*Mallard, Bufflehead and Redhead Kincardine Harbour. Credit: Bob Taylor*



*Cardinal. Credit: Bob Taylor*