

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

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

**Spring 2020**

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

**Volume 33 Number 1**

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

*Editor: Norah Toth*



## *President's Report*

My two years as president of OSFN have gone quickly; and they have been busy!

We met the challenge of outgrowing our space at the library by moving to the Bayshore Community Centre. Average attendance since we moved has been over 150 people in attendance at our indoor meetings. We would have been overwhelmed without a larger space and the Board is glad we took this step. To the Owen Sound & North Grey Library we are forever grateful as they gave us our start. Without their support for over 30 years we would not have the opportunities for our membership that we have today.

Our incorporation of NeighbourWoods North as a committee of the OSFN has brought a new focus for us. Through them, our club continues to be involved in enhancing the hospital site for the entire Grey Bruce area! This is a hard working committee and we are proud of all they have accomplished in such a short period of time.

The Young Naturalists program saw a change of leadership this past year. We are very appreciative of the work Elaine Van Den Kieboom did on behalf of the youth and have welcomed Jody Petit Johnson who accepted the challenge of ensuring that the Young Nats have worthwhile and fun outdoor learning experiences. After all, they are our future and deserve the best.

It is difficult to say thank you to just one member of the Board without mentioning them all. We have worked well as a team. There is, however, one person, John Dickson, who does stand out. No longer on the Board, John works tirelessly for the club. He writes a monthly column for the Owen Sound Sun Times, coordinates all our activities—both indoors and outdoors and I believe he is seen at pretty well every one! John has also moved us into new partnerships. We have partnered with Grey Roots for indoor environmental programming and are looking into supporting environmental farming-themed programs at

the Harmony Centre. He has also maintained a positive relationship with Caframo and the Chi-cheemaun for the financial support of Earth Week and youth programming. John has definitely placed the name of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists in the forefront of people's minds.

We have continued to share information about issues and environmental concerns about which we feel our membership should be aware. Some of these have included the hunting of Double-crested Cormorants and the proposed changes to the Black Bear hunting season on the Bruce Peninsula. Recently we have also ensured the membership is aware of the environmental damage that the TC Energy proposed pumped storage project will have on rare, threatened and endangered species as well as the pristine escarpment lands located within the Department of National Defences property near Meaford.

Gordon Toth, President

*You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make. —Jane Goodall*

.....  
**The OSFN Annual General Meeting**

**6 p.m. June 11, 2020**

**Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre immediately after the Annual Pot Luck.**

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**Hibou Free Family Fun Day**

**Hibou Conservation Area**

**County Road 15, Owen Sound**

**Saturday, June 20, 2020**

**Afternoon**  
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.....  
***We Welcome New Members:***

Lynn Barnes, Robyn Budgeon, Colette Ferneyhough, Ann Fleming, Eleanor Huff, Gerd & Joseph Hulshof, Maxine Iharosy, Joan MacDonnell, Tom & Karen Sweiger, Gottfried & Jeanette Walter

*If you feel you are not receiving your e-heralds, please notify Norah Toth at [ntoth@rogers.com](mailto:ntoth@rogers.com) or 519-376-2918*

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## Young Naturalists Club Outing

Kate McLaren attended the Young Naturalists Club activity on Sunday February 9, 2020. She reported as follows:

"While Elaine Van Den Kieboom and Jody Johnson prepared the bonfire to heat hot chocolate and apple cider, Doug Van Den Kieboom led a long string of 12 children and just as many adults on winding trails through his forest in Sydenham township.



*Snowshoeing through winding trails. Credit: John Dickson*

Their property is a haven for birds including chickadees, Ruffed Grouse and Hairy, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers. Within the mixed forest are some butternut trees, although most showed evidence of the fungus that is killing them throughout their range. Doug pointed out the stripped tree bark on cedars that was evidence of the resident porcupines. Coyote tracks criss-crossed with deer and skunks, although we didn't spot them. We were a talkative group! Some followed Doug on a second loop while others chose to remove their snowshoes and cozy up beside the fire.

Elaine had previously prepared snow benches for everyone to sit on as they toasted bannock and marshmallows over the fire and talked about what they'd seen and heard."

On February 23, the Young Naturalists Club spent a beautiful afternoon exploring the area around Jones Falls. They were led by Judy Robinson. The kids experienced life as either a porcupine, fox, skunk, coyote or rabbit - looking for food, shelter and avoiding prey. They also created nature art of their selected animal.

## Birding Around the Bay

On Sunday November 10, Kiah Jasper and Erik Van Den Kieboom teamed up to plan and lead OSFNs fall feature entitled *Birding Around the Bay – Waterfowl & More.*



*Checking out the Bay. Credit: John Dickson*

In our Grey Bruce area, we are fortunate to have these young birders. They are proving themselves to be two of the most skilled local birders by both sight and sound. Both of these young men are leaders in the 2020 Huron Fringe Birding Festival.

Forty-one species were documented on this sometimes rainy day. Highlights included a Barrow's Goldeneye, which has now spent 3 winters in the Owen Sound Bay near the marina and a Rough-legged Hawk.

Flesherton resident David Turner observed that it was "A good day for ducks."

Many thanks to Erik and Kiah for this very successful day. of birding.



*This male Barrow's Goldeneye has overwintered in the Owen Sound Bay for the past 3 winters. When side-by-side with the Common Goldeneye, the Barrow's has more black on its sides, a stubbier bill and crescent-shaped, rather than round, white spot in front of the eye. Credit: David Turner*

## **A Break from Winter**

After decades of stimulating talks with wonderful photographs, commentary and often a touch of poetry, Peter Middleton feels he is ready to hand over the reigns to a younger generation. His deep knowledge of the natural sciences, including botany, zoology, ornithology, geomorphology, and many more will be missed on the speaker's circuit.

Clarke Birchard, who worked with Peter in outdoor education for many years, shared this description of Peter: *Peter Middleton spent most of his professional career sharing his extensive knowledge and passion for nature with others. He was a teacher at the Toronto Island Natural Science School, a teacher and later the Director of the Outdoor Education Centre for the Bruce County Board of Education and the Bluewater District School Board. During those years he inspired thousands of students, colleagues as well as teachers and parents that accompanied the classes. He led nature tours for adult groups on weekends and during summers. Following retirement, nature tours grew into almost a second career for Quest Nature Tours and other agencies. These tours took him to the Arctic, the Antarctic, India, South Africa, his birthplace of Scotland and numerous other locales. He played a major leadership role in the early years of the Saugeen Field Naturalists and later became active in the*



Peter Middleton with Brian Robin. **Credit:** Bill Hatten

Owen Sound Field Naturalists, and was President from 2010-2012.

*Peter has had numerous speaking engagements and led nature walks in Owen Sound, Grey, Bruce and beyond. He has also been a director of Ontario Nature and chair of the nature reserves committee.*

On February 13, an assembly of around 180 people stood together to acknowledge him. We had been enthralled by his story of his recent trip to Brazil with his wife, Jan. The trip had been well researched in advance and they were successful in experiencing most of the target species they were aiming for. Peter made their adventures alive for all of us as he imitated the sounds of Howler Monkeys and various anteaters and shared stories of behaviours they observed.

Thank you, Peter, for sharing your experiences and gifts with us.

**Submitted by:** John Dickson

### **Wolves and Coyotes in Ontario: Population Status and Recent Research**

At our indoor meeting in January, Dr Brett Patterson, Research Biologist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, provided an update about the status and ecology of wolves and coyotes across the province. He has been involved in research that focuses on the population dynamics of wolves, coyotes and their prey in temperate and boreal regions since 2001. In this photo he is taking biometrics and other data from a wolf in northern Ontario.



**foto art**

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## **Pine Warbler**

In mid-December I noticed a mystery bird frequenting my feeders. At a quick glance it could easily be overlooked as a winter-plumaged American Goldfinch, but on a better second look the “gizz” revealed it to be a Pine Warbler. It stuck around to be counted on the Christmas Bird Count and by that time a second mystery was revealed. The bird seemed to be making a lot of visits to the feeder for just one bird. It turned out that “it” was not one Pine Warbler but two! The pair have continued their daily visits to the feeder since then, usually together now, and so appear to be settled in for the duration this winter.



*Digiscoped Pine Warblers. Credit: Lynne Richardson*

Lingering migrants provide added interest to winter bird feeders, and so I have spent some time (ok, a lot of

time) studying this pair and researching Pine Warblers in general.

The Pine Warbler is among the earliest warblers to arrive in spring and latest to depart in fall. The limit of their breeding range extends just north of the Great Lakes. They are relatively short-distance migrants, going only as far as the southern US for the winter. This partially explains this pairs’ failure to depart – not having too far to go so not going at all, or perhaps migrating from just a slightly more northerly breeding territory to Thornbury. They are the only warbler known to consume seeds which also supports their ability to overwinter in these northerly parts. Despite providing seed feeders, this pair have an exclusive preference for peanut butter (natural), suet and peanuts, in that order.

**Submitted by:** Lynne Richardson

## **Inglis Falls Arboretum Alliance**

The Inglis Falls Arboretum Alliance (IFAA) features an area behind the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA) headquarters which is known as the Trees of the World. North of this, is the Trees of Grey-Bruce Trail featuring woody trees, shrubs and vines known to be “native” having been recorded growing here at the time of European settlement. The IFAA has enhanced the property further, with a Wildflower Meadow, Pollinator Garden and Woodland Naturalization Garden.

A primary goal of IFAA is to increase public knowledge and appreciation of indigenous trees, shrubs and vines and the vital ecological role native species play. Through various educational programs, they promote the use of native plants in home landscapes.

Each year, IFAA volunteers propagate trees and shrubs from seed and use these plants to reforest the Arboretum. Plants are also available to the public by donation – the Alliance is entirely self-supported by the generous donations of friends and visitors.

The Inglis Falls Arboretum Alliance is looking for volunteers at the nursery and in the arboretum. Tasks include weeding, watering, mulching, potting, tree sales, seed propagation, student planting day and tree planting.

Please contact [nurseryIFAA@gmail.com](mailto:nurseryIFAA@gmail.com) for details.

**Arbour Day Tree Sale** - GSCA , Saturday, April 25, 8 a.m.

**Submitted by:** Julie Lamberts



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

## Preparing for Winter

Animals often adapt to winter conditions in impressive ways. Their survival mechanisms can sometimes be compared to life-and-death dramas that can start long before most humans are in winter mode. How moles and shrews prepare for winter is a testament to their underappreciated sophistication and survival skills.

### **Moles**

The underground lifestyle of moles provides some protection from cold weather. They don't hibernate and, as a result, can go hungry if they don't stock up before winter sets in.



*Some moles prepare for winter by stocking their burrows with live earthworms, which they first immobilize by biting into their front segments to prevent escapes. Credit: Cezary Korkosz/Shutterstock*

Earthworms are a key food source for moles — which can eat nearly their own body weight in earthworms per day — yet they may become harder to find as soil chills above the frost line. To create a long-lasting winter

food cache, moles have developed a macabre hoarding strategy: they keep live earthworms as prisoners.

Moles do this by biting the worms' heads, causing an injury that immobilizes their prey. Some moles even have toxins in their saliva that can paralyze earthworms. They store the live worms in a special dungeon chamber within their tunnel network, feeding on them as needed during the winter.

### **Shrews**

Shrews are more closely related to moles than to rodents. Like moles, they spend much of their time underground, or

hidden from view by burrowing through leaf litter. They're larder hoarders that imprison live prey to help them get through winter.

Shrews don't hibernate, but some enter a state of torpor similar to chipmunks, stirring periodically to refuel with food. Some shrews are also known to shrink their skulls to help them survive winter, losing as much as 30 percent of their brain mass.

The Northern Short-tailed Shrew is venomous. They use their toxic saliva to incapacitate prey. They have both neurotoxin and hemotoxin in their saliva, which they can introduce into a wound by chewing. Their diet consists mainly of invertebrates like earthworms, insects and



*A Northern Short-tailed Shrew investigates an almond in Quebec.*

**Credit:** Gilles Gonthier [CC BY 2.0]/Flickr

snails, although their venom can also help them subdue larger prey, such as salamanders, frogs, snakes, mice, birds and even other shrews.

Short-tailed shrews are voracious eaters, often eating their own body weight in food every

day; even going a few hours without eating could be fatal. The energy needed to stay warm in winter can push their dietary needs even higher, requiring as much as 40 percent more food to maintain their body temperature. Their venomous saliva helps them deal with this problem, allowing them to establish larders of live prey similar to those of moles. An individual shrew may have enough venom to kill 200 mice, but smaller amounts can also merely paralyze prey while keeping it alive. In one study, the Northern Short-tailed Shrew cached 87 percent of all prey it caught.

**Adapted from:** *Surprising Ways Animals Prepare for Winter* by Russell McLendon, Mother Nature Network



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## **PROGRAM LISTINGS**



*Young Naturalists twig art in the snow. Credit: Jody Johnson Pettit*

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 150 members and are a member club of Ontario Nature.

**Indoor meetings** are held on the **second Thursday** of the month, September to June. They are held at the **Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre, 1900 3rd Ave E, Owen Sound, at 7:00 p.m.** 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; however, we encourage non-members to make a donation to help defray costs.

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 usually limited on most outings to ensure the quality of the experience and to reduce impact on the environments visited. Pre-registration is required for outdoor activities.

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

[www.owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca](http://www.owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca) P.O. Box 401, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P7



## **Outdoor Programs**

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

All events and times are subject to change – visit [www.osfn.ca](http://www.osfn.ca)

### **APRIL 22, 2020 is EARTH DAY Special Events**

**Saturday, April 25, 2020 • 9:30 a.m. - Noon. Birding the Waters of the Beaver Valley** with David Turner. Tundra Swans & more during spring migration. **Register:** 519-924-3560 or [fleshertonartgallery@gmail.com](mailto:fleshertonartgallery@gmail.com) **Limit:** 16.

**Wednesday, April 29, 2020 • 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. An Interpretive Hike Searching for Trail-marker Trees at Neyaashiinigmiing** with Lenore Keeshig. Bring lunch. Meet at intersection of the Boundary Road & Sydney Bay Road. **Register:** [lenorekeeshig@gmail.com](mailto:lenorekeeshig@gmail.com) **Limit:** 12.

**Tuesday, May 19, 2020 • 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. A Spring Visit to Anglesea Nature Trails & Managed Forest** with Don Rawls. Klondike Hills, Chatsworth area. **Register:** 519-794-0561 or [rawfam46@gmail.com](mailto:rawfam46@gmail.com) **Limit:** 16.

**Wednesday, May 27, 2020 • 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Springtime Woodland Stroll** with John Bakker & Christina

Milani. A tour of their richly diverse and mostly wooded property. **Register:** [milanicvm1999@gmail.com](mailto:milanicvm1999@gmail.com) or 519-376-7098 **Limit:** 16.

**Sunday, June 7, 2020 • 7 a.m. - 11 a.m. Birding, Botany & Ecology at Bayview Escarpment Forest** with Mark Wiercinski. Tune your ears and open your eyes to experience the forest in spring. **Register:** 519-379-0437 or [Mark.Wiercinski@forces.gc.ca](mailto:Mark.Wiercinski@forces.gc.ca) **Limit:** 20.

**Wednesday, June 24, 2020 • 1 p.m. Piping Plovers** with Lynne Richardson. Visit Sauble Beach to learn about the valiant efforts of these (super cute) endangered birds who raise their wee cotton-ball chicks on a busy public beach. **Register:** [lynnerrichardson@rogers.com](mailto:lynnerrichardson@rogers.com) **Limit:** 15.

**Mid to Late June TBA Butterflies & More** with Chris Rickard. All ages. **Register:** 705-444-6671 or [crickard@sympatico.ca](mailto:crickard@sympatico.ca)

### **Grey Roots—Spring Lecture Series**

**Tuesday, March 24, 2020 • 1 p.m.** and repeated at 2:30 p.m. Complementary refreshments.

**How Green is Green Energy?** With Dr David Holah, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Chemistry, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay

Dr Holah will talk about moving away from fossil fuels and the increased use of green energy. He will introduce a few metals that have a significant environmental cost.

This lecture is free to OSFN members.

For more information: <https://greyroots.com/>

### **March Break—Back to Your Roots!**

**Friday, March 20, 2020 • 2 p.m.**

**Location:** Grey Roots Theatre

**Moths in the Winter** with Brian Robin

Brian's fun presentation will help you learn about moths and what they do in the winter.

This event is sponsored by the Owen Sound Field Naturalists. OSFN members, including Young Naturalists, can attend for free. Bring your OSFN name tag.

For more information: <https://greyroots.com/exhibit-event-program/march-break-back-your-roots>

### **The Young Naturalist Program** — Set aside these dates —

**Sunday, March 29, 2020**—Nature crafts at The Workshop (downtown Owen Sound). Hike to look at urban nature.

**Sunday, April 26, 2020** — Bird house cleaning at Grey Sauble Arboretum, build bird nesting boxes and a nest game.

**Sunday, May 31, 2020** — Huron Fringe Birding Festival at MacGregor Point Provincial Park.

**Sunday, June 21, 2020 • 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** — Explore Piping Plover chicks at Sauble Beach. Hike and lunch at Evergreen Resort in Red Bay.

E-heralds will be sent out with specific information about all Young Naturalists activities. For details, contact Jody Johnson Pettit, 519-370-2000, [jljohnson@hotmail.com](mailto:jljohnson@hotmail.com)



## **Indoor Meetings**

Indoor meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of the month from September to June. They start at 7:00 p.m. and are held at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre, 1900 3rd Ave E, Owen Sound. Remember, bring a coffee mug to meetings. All events and times are subject to change. Visit [www.osfn.ca](http://www.osfn.ca) for updates and added events.

### **March 12, 2020 Members' Night - Brian Robin Coordinating**

A potpourri of OSFN members' slides, displays, art, collections and compositions focusing on the natural world. A limit of 10 minutes for each presentation is preferred. Register your presentation with Brian Robin at [robin.brian@gmail.com](mailto:robin.brian@gmail.com) or 519-363-3204.

### **April 9, 2020 Resilience – Transforming our Community**

Scientist Dr. John Anderson's climate change research makes this global crisis a personal issue, right in our own backyard. Designed to inspire action, this uplifting film, directed by Liz Zetlin, offers ways to build resilience in ourselves and our community by transforming the way we live.

### **May 14, 2020 Bob Bowles - A Turtle Talk**

If Turtles Could Talk. Learn about Ontario's Turtles and more with Bob Bowles, a turtle's best friend. Bob will advise what people can do to help turtles. "They are coming under great pressure now with habitat loss due to development, increased traffic and people who have no regard for these interesting creatures."

**June 11, 2020 @ 6 p.m. SHARP Last meeting of the year.  
ANNUAL MEETING, POTLUCK SUPPER & PRESENTATION**

**NEW LOCATION - Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre, 1900 3rd Ave E, Owen Sound**  
Bring your own plates, cutlery and cup or mug, and bring a food dish to share, along with serving utensils.

### **7 p.m. Alexis Burnett *Foraging for Edible and Medicinal Plants***

This presentation will focus on the ethical way to harvest plants from the wild for food and medicine. Alexis will talk about both native and non-native plants and will explore what it means to work with these groups of plants in a way that helps to sustain and regenerate local populations. As the popularity of foraging increases, it is more important than ever to learn what plants can be harvested in a sustainable manner.

## **Celebrate Earth Week with Jarmo Jalava, Renowned Ecologist**

**Saturday, April 18, 2020 2 p.m. on the MS Chi-Cheemaun**

### ***Relationships with Nature, as told through slides, stories and song with Jarmo Jalava***

In this multimedia presentation, ecologist, writer and songwriter, Jarmo Jalava will explore perspectives gained working and traveling as an ecologist, conservationist, avid birder and keen naturalist in a range of cultures and settings across Ontario and around the world. \$5 Tickets available at indoor meetings and ticket outlets—Sheila Gunby at OS Farmers' Market, Ginger Press, and Chi Cheemaun office at Springmount. For more information [www.osfn.ca](http://www.osfn.ca)

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## **How Can Food Systems Regenerate Our Earth?**

A Talk Series with Q & A

with Dr. Thorsten Arnold, Farmer, Scientist, Climate & Food Systems Advocate

Sunday, March 15, 2020 • 1:30 p.m. Biosphere Self Regulation of Its Climate

Sunday, April 5, 2020 • 1:30 p.m. Regenerative Agriculture & the Biosphere

Sunday, APRIL 26, 2020 • 1:30 p.m. Food Systems for the Biosphere

Sunday, May 3, 2020 • 1:30 p.m. Making Holistic Land Use Decisions

**Location:** Harmony Centre, 890 4th Ave E, Owen Sound, ON N4K 2N7

**Sponsored by:** Grey Bruce Sustainability Network, Climate Action Team Grey Bruce Owen Sound, Eat Local Grey Bruce, St. George's Anglican Church, Owen Sound, Owen Sound Field Naturalists

Donations Welcome

### **Spring into Moreston!**

**Hibernation and more** with Jenna McGuire

**Date:** Saturday, March 28, 2020 • 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**Location:** Grey Roots Theatre

A part of *Celebrating the Changing of the Seasons with Spring into Moreston!*

This presentation is made possible through a partnership of Grey Roots Museum and OSFN.

OSFN members free - Name tags recommended.

**More details at** <https://greyroots.com/exhibit-event-program/spring-moreston>



OSFN has convenient donation options for those who wish to financially support the ongoing charitable work of the Club. Our website includes a "Donate" tab, with secure access through Canada Helps. Canada Helps generates a receipt for income tax purposes. Donations can also be made in person, at the monthly meetings and via the mail.

**Thank you**

***Caframo***

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

### **Membership Application and Renewal Form**

**Name (s)** .....

**Address** .....

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

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

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

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

**Donation** to NeighbourWoods North—Urban Trees .....

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

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

We hereby confirm that e-mail and mail lists will not go beyond the OSFN. (See privacy policy at [owensoundfieldnaturalists.ca](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 and submit it with your payment.

Owen Sound Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 401, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5P7

Charitable Registration # 76335 4321 RR0001



# *Grey Bruce Christmas Bird Counts*

## **Owen Sound Christmas Bird Count**

The 48th Owen Sound Christmas Bird Count was on December 14, 2019. Thirty-three participants took part in the count, tallying a total of 59 species. The temperature was fairly mild, fluctuating between -2 C and 1 C throughout the day. No rain or snow, slightly windy, and lots of open water, only small ponds being frozen over.

Overall numbers were relatively low this year, however a few species either set new record highs or tied with previous highs. These include White-winged Scoter (8), Rock Pigeon (701), Red-bellied Woodpecker (16), and Eastern Bluebird (5). Two new birds for the count were found: Pine Warbler (1), and Field Sparrow (5). The Barrow's Goldeneye also returned for the third year in a row!

The 2019 Owen Sound Christmas Bird Count was very successful.

A big thanks to all who participated!

**Submitted by:** Erik Van Den Kieboom

## **Tobermory Christmas Bird Count**

Forty-five intrepid birders participated in the 47th annual Tobermory Christmas Bird Count on December 18, 2019.

Minimal snow cover allowed for better than usual coverage of backcountry areas; however, the weather was less favourable. Bracing northwest winds gusting to 63 km/hr combined with -8 to -12 C temperatures to create a wind chill of -24 C. Inland lakes were frozen but streams and coastal waters were largely free of ice.

Our birders reported the customary good camaraderie and also much lower than average numbers for species (28; average is 40) and individuals (1033; average is 1624). The species count of 28 was the lowest recorded since 1977, the fourth year the count was conducted.

No new species were observed but at 124, the Blue Jay count was a record high (average is 41; only 4 seen in 2018!) A single Horned Lark seen on McArthur Road was an excellent find (seen on only three previous counts). The European Starling was absent for the second year running and only the third count ever (average is 27).

The weather mellowed in the days following count and some fine birds made it onto the count week tally including Harlequin Duck, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Northern Shrike and American Tree Sparrow. The Harlequin Duck, seen again in Big Tub on Christmas Eve, was the first observed since 2003 and only the fourth ever on the count.

Many thanks to all who participated in the count or helped out with preparation and clean-up of the delicious breakfast and dinner. Thanks as well to Bill and Judy Caulfeild-Browne for again hosting a cozy and tasty pre-count gathering on Tuesday. We're also grateful to Tim Elitharp and Dave Kerlina who opened their home to overnight guests from away.

**Submitted by:** Michael Butler and Tricia Robins, Co-compilers

## **Warton Christmas Bird Count**

The 46th Warton Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 15, 2019. Temperatures hovered around -5 C all day, with brisk northwesterly winds and generally sunny skies interspersed with scattered snow flurries. The waters of Georgian Bay were open, as were faster-flowing creeks and rivers, but most inland waterbodies were frozen, as were the more sheltered bays of Lake Huron.

Eighteen participants and two feeder watchers tallied 51 species (+3 additional count week species), above the 45-year average of 48.7 species, and slightly below the 10-year average of 52.8. The 2,833 individual birds counted was well below the 45-year (3,436) and 10-year (4,417) averages.

One new species for the count was found, Eastern Phoebe. The only other unusual species was White-crowned Sparrow (3rd count). A count week Belted Kingfisher was the first since 2012.

White-winged Scoter was the only species observed in record high numbers (18, previous high 8). American Robin (12) and Cedar Waxwing (32) numbers were relatively high, no doubt a reflection of abundant wild berry crops.

Introduced House Finches (23) and House Sparrows (53) seemed to have a bounce-back year after several years of decline.

This was the first count without a Snow Bunting since 1972, when the species was only recorded during count week (this year, flocks were noted within the circle the day after count week ended, but not during count week). The 13 White-breasted Nuthatches was the lowest tally for this species since the 1970s. Aside from 4 Pine Siskins, irruptive winter finches were absent.

Thanks to all the volunteers for your efforts!

**Submitted by:** Jarmo Jalava

## **Neyaashiinigmiing (Cape Croker) Christmas Bird Count**

The ninth annual Neyaashiinigmiing (Cape Croker) Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 14, 2019 on the Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula. Unlike some other parts of southern Ontario that day, count weather was near-perfect, with overcast skies, very little wind, good visibility and pleasant temperatures ranging from -2 C during pre-dawn owling to +2 C in the afternoon. The waters of Georgian Bay and streams were open, but non-flowing inland waters were partly to fully ice-covered, with thin layer of snow on the ground.

Twenty participants tallied a total of 42 species, slightly above the average of 39.5. The 828 individual birds almost exactly matched the 9-year average.

Highlights included the count's first-ever Red-headed Woodpecker, an excellent bird on any CBC in Ontario and exceptional this far north. Other good finds included 14 Bohemian Waxwings, the count's second-ever Mute Swan, Black Scoter, Iceland Gull and American Robin, and third-ever Northern Goshawk.

All-time high counts were tallied for 11 species: Common Goldeneye (159, previous high 154, average 61), Common Merganser (9, previous high 4, average 1.5), Horned Grebe (an amazing 47, previous high 10, average 4.2), Great Black-backed Gull (4, previous high 2, average 0.8), Common Loon (4, previous high 3, average 0.8), Barred Owl (4, previous high 2, average 0.2), Blue Jay (129, previous high 107, average 45), Red-breasted Nuthatch (19, previous high 10, average 6.3), Brown Creeper (6, previous high 4, average 1.2), American Robin (4, previous high 2) and Golden-crowned Kinglet (16, previous high 13, average 8.8).

This was the first Neyaashiinigmiing CBC with nary a Hairy Woodpecker. American Tree Sparrow, Snow Bunting and northern finches also went unrecorded. House Sparrows have now been absent for six years.

Chi Miigwetch to Neyaashiinigmiing First Nation community for hosting this special birding event, and thanks to Rhonda and her helpers at Cozy Cats B&B for the delicious breakfast and dinner feasts.

**Submitted by:** Jarmo Jalava and Miptoon (Anthony Chegahno), Co-compilers

#### Cape Chin Christmas Bird Count

The 4th Cape Chin count was held on December 28, 2019. Six field observers and 1 feeder watcher participated.

Temperatures throughout the day stayed around 1 C. There was a mild wind and virtually no snow on the ground. Counters experienced cloudy to partly clear skies with no precipitation. Georgian Bay was open, as were rivers and any moving water but interior ponds were frozen.

Thirty-five count day species were reported and a further 2 count week species brought the total to 37 species. 1512 birds were seen in all.

Unusual birds were 12 Cedar Waxwing (new to count) and 1 American Kestrel. Record high numbers of Ruffed Grouse (20), Wild Turkey (66), Common Loon (2), and Rock/Feral Pigeon (95) were noted. Record low numbers of Herring Gull (1); probably all went to Lion's Head harbour!

**Submitted by:** Andrew Keaveney

#### Pike Bay Christmas Bird Count

The 6<sup>th</sup> year in the count's history was held on December 29, 2019. Ten field observers and 6 feeder watchers participated.

Temperatures were similar to the Cape Chin count the day before; but light freezing rain and wind gusts started slightly after 10 a.m. and picked up into an all out rain event in the afternoon. As a result, observers found less birds on Count Day than would have been expected because many of us retreated to the warmth of our homes.

Lake Huron's inner bays were mostly open this year but for whatever reason waterfowl were still few and far between and most of our sightings came from the Georgian Bay area of the bird count circle.

Thirty-five Count Day species (identical to the Cape Chin CBC) were reported and a whopping 8 more Count Week species followed, many of which would have been observed on Count Day had it not been for the difficult weather conditions for observations.

A total of 2287 birds were seen.

Unusual birds were 45 Cedar Waxwings (new to this count as well!), 1 Song Sparrow, and a rather incredible sighting of over 200 dabbling ducks consisting of mostly Mallards, a dozen American Black Ducks and a lone male Green-winged Teal was made even more miraculous when an adult gray morph Gyrfalcon (a large falcon of the Canadian arctic that only rarely visits southern Ontario) swooped in and was witnessed hunting the ducks for over a half-hour. This was something the coordinator had never observed on the Peninsula before and will surely be a highlight of these bird counts for many years to come.

A Common Grackle, Harlequin Duck, and a jaeger (the latter two very rarely observed on the Peninsula) were unusual species observed during Count Week. Record high number of American Goldfinch (334), American Crow (503), Mourning Dove (33), Mallard (205) and American Black Duck (14) were noted. There were record low numbers of Wild Turkey (1), Rock/Feral Pigeon (6), and Common Raven (10).

Some of the species missed on both the Pike Bay and Cape Chin counts, that are expected to occur, are Great Horned Owl,



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Eastern Screech-Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, American Robin and House Sparrow.

**Submitted by:** Andrew Keaveney

### **Meaford Christmas Bird Count**

The 49th annual Meaford CBC was held Saturday December 28, 2019 in pleasant conditions - temps above 0 C, light winds, virtually snow-free, and a touch of afternoon sunshine. Georgian Bay was completely open, with no ice-edge as were moving water bodies; still waters had only a skim of ice.

The centre of the Meaford Count is the hamlet of Griersville. The circle takes in a 20km stretch of Georgian Bay shoreline to the north, the towns of Meaford and Thornbury, the Bighead River, the Beaver River framed on both sides by the Escarpment, and west across fields and forest to the village of Walter's Falls.

Our 19 participants found 54 species, continuing the trend of the past 10 years of totaling over 50 species in the Meaford circle. Prior to that average was 46 species. 54 species ranks 5th highest in the all-time totals.

Total individuals at 4494 birds were slightly over the past count average.

After a 'new-species' drought over the last three years, two new species were recorded this count - Peregrine Falcon, classically chasing Rock Pigeon, and Pine Warbler, conveniently coming to the compiler's feeder. These additions bring the all-time cumulative total to 122 species. The Pine Warbler continues daily at my feeder, favouring peanut butter (crunchy, all-natural).

6 Pileated Woodpecker made for a 30-year high (topped only once by 7 in 1989).

A tie for high was Merlin - singles have been recorded on three previous counts, and 5 Bald Eagle, which match the 5 seen in three recent count years.

Lingering migrants included 1 Northern Pintail, the count's 5th ever, 1 Eastern Bluebird, recorded 7 times over the years, and 1 Northern Flicker, recorded quite frequently.

Infrequently found count species included 2 Red-necked Grebe and 6 White-winged Scoter.

A glaring miss was Mute Swan. This species has not been missed since it first appeared in 2006! Mutes swim by here 364 days of

the year! What made them skip Dec 28th! Another miss was Golden Eagle which was first recorded in 2001 and have been seen most counts since.

It was a good count.

**Submitted by:** Lynne Richardson

### **Saugeen Shores Christmas Bird Count**

On January 2, 2020, twenty-nine participants and four feeder watchers tallied birds on the 17th annual Saugeen Shores Christmas Bird Count. The weather was unseasonably warm, starting out at 1 C and maxing out at 5 C in the afternoon. We also got lucky with the weather, as the whole count day was sun and cloud. The wind was S/SE all day. Likely due to this weather and the amount of open ground, feeder bird counts were very low. This has been the case across all of Bruce County Christmas Bird Counts, so low numbers were not too surprising.

Fifty-nine species were recorded, which ties 2011 for the second highest species count, but is slightly lower than the high count of 64 recorded in 2015.

8628 individual birds were seen, this is above the average of 6449, but considerably below the high count of 12225.

Three new species were added to the all-time count list, bringing the total up to 102. The new additions were: Eastern Bluebird, Chipping Sparrow and Eared Grebe (the best bird of the count by far). Two count week species were recorded, Northern Flicker and Hooded Merganser.

Some other notable birds were: Cackling Goose (2nd record), Golden Eagle (7th record), Glaucous Gull (7th record), Iceland Gull (2nd record), Belted Kingfisher (4th record), Eastern Meadowlark (2nd record) and Red Crossbill (2nd record).

High counts were recorded for the following species: Greater Scaup (63), Common Goldeneye (241), Sharp-shinned Hawk (4), Iceland Gull (2), Great Black-backed Gull (27), Golden-crowned Kinglet (16), American Robin (66), Red Crossbill (5).

Some surprising low counts/misses were House Sparrow (16 birds recorded, average of 118.) and Ruffed Grouse (0! This is the first count that missed Ruffed Grouse).

**Submitted by:** Kiah Jasper

**Thank you to the many volunteers who participated in the Christmas Bird Counts across Grey Bruce.**



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### **Plover Lovers**

Interested in being a Citizen Scientist?

Do you want to do outreach on Sauble Beach by helping others learn about an endangered species, the Piping Plover?

Volunteer this spring/summer with the Plover Lovers on Sauble Beach. For further information contact Norah Toth, Lynne Richardson or ploverlovers@gmail.com

## **Staying Engaged with the Club**

One of the duties of an OSFN past-president is to search for members who are willing to stand for nomination to our Board of Directors. This year John Dickson and Deane Atherton have helped find those volunteers, for which I am sincerely grateful. I am delighted to welcome Bill Moses, Ange Flynn and Jody Petit Johnson as appointees to the Board this winter. At our Annual General Meeting in June their names will be on the list of nominees for official election. We always accept nominations from the floor as well (do you recall how Gordon Toth became our president??!!) so if you are interested, please get in touch with one of us. Or surprise us at the AGM!

Serving on the OSFN board is a privilege that deepens connections with the membership and enhances understanding of the club's activities. Much is being done that doesn't get discussed at the regular indoor meetings; there's already so much we want to hear that time runs out. At Board meetings you have the opportunity to steer the club, take action, support, educate, promote....

The value of a club like ours is the potential to influence decisions or actions that affect our natural heritage. Often we are in a position to improve, protect, monitor and celebrate the geology, waters, flora, fungi and fauna around us. Sometimes actions are prohibited by our status as a charity, but individual voices are just as significant

when controversial issues arise. It's really important, if we want to hear positive news about any aspect of nature and our environment, that we all do our part!

Let's try to do what our recognition of being on traditional indigenous territory says we'll try to do: to be stewards of the land, now and into the future.

Now, go outside!

**Submitted by:** Kate McLaren

### **NeighbourWoods North**

With the continued support of the hospital CEO, Gary Sims, NeighbourWoods North is proceeding with projects at the Owen Sound Hospital. They include carrying out the basics of site preparation and developing design ideas for the hospital's Welcoming Garden. At the same time plans for the Healing Pathway are going ahead. Pathway construction will begin in March when 350 metres of stone dust trail will be laid in the southwest corner of the property. In order to carry out the work at the hospital, large boulders from the undeveloped land opposite the Season's Retirement home will be relocated to the hospital site.

Brendan Molroy will be taking over the portfolio of NeighbourWoods North on the OSFN Board at the AGM in June. Thank you to Gord Edwards for his service on the Board.

### ***2019-2020 OSFN Board of Directors***

**President:** Gordon Toth, 519-376-2918,

**Vice-President:** Pam Kinchen, 519-370-0527,

**Past-President:** Kate McLaren, 519-538-1897,

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**Treasurer:** Elaine Mason, 519-372-0597,

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**At Large:** Deane Atherton,

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**Owen Sound CBC:** Erik Van Den Kieboom,

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#### **Board Liaison**

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**Ontario Nature:** Audrey Armstrong

**Piping Plover Committee:** Lynne Richardson

**Rankin Resources Group:** Beth Anne Currie

**Stewardship Grey Bruce:** Norah Toth



## **Give Spring Bees a Boost**

Homeowners who are eager to dust off mowers and welcome spring with a freshly cut lawn are encouraged to slow down and smell the dandelions. These yellow flowers, in North America they were introduced from Europe, are most prevalent during spring and provide a critical food source to bees and other early pollinators coming out of hibernation.

Although it has been proved that dandelions don't offer a complete nutritional package for insects; their abundance in early spring is a lifesaver for everything from honeybees to butterflies. Each flower, containing up to 100 florets, is packed with pollen and nectar.

Before you become spring obsessed with lawn care, consider a bit of 'bohemian untidiness' for the backyard. This will give early pollinators a boost and won't look like neglect! However, If embracing a bohemian backyard is not in your future, at the very least increasing the height of your cut or leaving a small strip of lawn to act as a "pollinator oasis" will help pollinators.

If you consider dandelions common weeds; you need to



*We all benefit from 'bohemian untidiness' in a backyard. The result? Dandelion blooms that benefit pollinators. Credit: Henry Wah*

get beyond that and think about the creatures that rely on their early spring flowers. Consider the bumblebee that has spent the winter living in a hole in the ground and needs to eat; the butterfly that needs nectar to give it the energy to find a mate; the moth whose caterpillars eat dandelions, or the birds that eat the dandelion seeds.

Think pollinators

before you kill your dandelion flowers.

**Adapted from:** *Give Spring Bees a Boost with Dandelion Blooms* by Michael D'Estries Mother Nature Network

## **Huron Fringe Birding Festival**

**May 22 - 25 & 28 - 31, 2020**

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival is based out of MacGregor Point Provincial Park and celebrates birds, birding and nature. Events explore the Park, the 'Huron Fringe' of land along Lake Huron's shore, up the Bruce Peninsula and many significant natural areas of Bruce and Grey Counties.



*American Redstart  
Credit: Carol L. Edwards*

In 2020, 95 events over two 4-day weekends are being offered! We capture both the end of migration and the beginning of the nesting season, ensuring an abundance of birds. Morning, afternoon, all-day and evening events are available. You can choose one, some, or pick a full-Festival package! All events are led by top local, provincial and global tour leaders.

Whether your interest is strictly 'for the birds', or if you wish to delve into another aspect of natural or cultural history, you will be sure to find interesting, informative and fun events.

On-line registration opened March 1, 2020 at 6 a.m.

Registration is available at [www.huronfringebirdingfestival.ca](http://www.huronfringebirdingfestival.ca) or [www.hfbf.ca](http://www.hfbf.ca)

*Celebrating Birds*

## **The Climate Is Changing – Will We?**

The annual Sources of Knowledge Forum, April 24 – 26, 2020 at Tobermory, is intended to demonstrate how research in Bruce Peninsula National Park, Fathom Five National Marine Park and the surrounding community contributes to knowledge of the Bruce Peninsula's natural and human history. Since 2009, this event has been held to present research activities, their results and their implications related to decision-making.

2020 Forum registration opened February 1, 2020. The early bird price is \$80 if you register before April 1, 2020. After April 1 it is \$90.

To learn more visit: <https://www.sourcesofknowledge.ca/>



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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.



*This photo of an immature male King Eider was taken February 12, 2020 at the mouth of the Saugeen River in Southampton. It was first discovered at that location on February 5 during a Bruce Birding Club outing . Initial ID by Kiah Jasper. It is believed to be a re-sighting of the 7th record of a King Eider in Bruce County which was reported near Inverhuron earlier this year. **Credit:** Bruce Edmunds*



*Preparing the fire during a young naturalists outing. The fire was used for making bannock. **Credit:** Jody Petit Johnson*

## Facebook

Do you use Facebook? Both the Owen Sound Field Naturalists and NeighbourWoods North have active Facebook pages. Consider becoming a Friend so that you can keep informed about a variety of nature topics of interest both locally and at a distance.