

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

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

**Summer 2020**

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

**Volume 33 Number 2**

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

Editor: *Norah Toth*



## *President's Report*

Well suffice to say my term as President has started off with a backpack of full challenges! Covid-19 has disrupted the human world immensely but, thank goodness, nature doesn't care. We still had a great spring full of migrating birds, spectacular flowers, blooming shrubs and trees and lots of fresh air to entice us outside to enjoy and reflect on how much we can manage on our own without large groups. One thing great that has come out of Covid-19 is "Ask a Biologist"! Don't you all agree?

Before I forget, I want to say some important "thank you's". Kate McLaren has mentored me in many ways. After six years, her chair at Board meetings will be empty. Her advice will be missed. We will also miss the knowledge and enthusiasm of Gord Edwards and Julie Lamberts.

Gordon Toth will continue on the Board as Past-president having been President for the past two years. Thank you Gordon, I'm glad you are the ace in my back pocket! I welcome Brendan Mulroy, Vice-president and Jody Pettit and Ange Flynn who are the team overseeing and mentoring the Young Naturalists program. We continue to have a vacancy on the board; we need a Secretary. John Dickson, our programming guru, could also use an assistant. Consider how you can help the OSFN.

Our Board has many new strengths and several new members but thank heavens enough experienced ones to keep us from getting too outside the box. We are excited to rise to the challenges and use our critical thinking skills to solve any new or ongoing issues.

Stay tuned as we somehow will continue our meetings as a membership together whether over the computer or as smaller indoor groups. We have several tasks to keep us occupied standing up for conserving the precious land around us such as Stoney Orchard Park in Owen Sound, the TCE project, and several MNRF downloads.

### *We Welcome New Members:*

Jake Bates, Nigel Eves, Margaret Glendon, Tammy Green, Gordon Humphrey, Ellen Kerr, Virginia Plater, Frances Turner, Andrew Wilson, Tamara Wilson

*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*

Please look into our stewardship program. What a fantastic way to practice what we preach! Exciting new properties seem to keep coming our way. These include the Oliphant Fen extension and Trout Hollow. With the board, I have a few projects to tackle such as the Master Naturalist program availability, updating the public display boards to show our works in progress and keeping up with the Young Naturalists program.

A goal for the Board and me is to try to get to know all our new members so we have an idea where our strengths are to benefit our entire group. Please feel free to introduce yourselves to me as I try to get to know my fellow "outside people" and "Nature Nuts"

I have always said during my career that the more you know and understand the more you realize how much you don't know. This certainly pertains to "Knowing Nature Better". I do know lots about many things but am definitely not an expert in any. I'm excited about growing more with all of you. By drawing on the incredible knowledge of many of the membership, I hope to use that foundation to build on and continue the excellent work our group does. Our Website and Facebook page are awesome, our finances are sound, our programming excellent but with new discussions, opinions and assistance from each other we can evolve further and stronger and learn more together.

Looking forward to the next 2 years!

Pam Kinchen, 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

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## **Environmental Heroes—Ontario Nature's 2019-2020 Conservation Award Recipients**

Stewart Hilts, a resident of Meaford and a member of the OSFN, received the 2020 **Ontario Nature Achievement Award** for his lifelong commitment to conservation and his dedication to helping Ontario Nature achieve its goals.

For over 35 years Stew has developed programs to encourage private landowners in rural southern Ontario to conserve natural areas such as woodlands and wetlands on their land. His initial concept of one-on-one personal landowner contact expanded to become a private "stewardship" concept.

He has written resources for landowners and others engaged in stewardship programs with the goal of interpreting science into terms the average landowner can use.

His research on farmland preservation policies and local food systems in southern Ontario led to establishing the Ontario Farmland Trust, a non-profit organization devoted to fostering farmland preservation.

He has helped to coordinate the Bruce Trail Conservancy's land stewardship program in the Beaver Valley region.

He is adding the Ontario Nature Achievement Award 2020 to a host of other awards -

Distinguished Extension Professor, Ontario Agricultural College; Teaching Award, North American College of Teachers of Agriculture; Carolinian Canada Lifetime Achievement Award,



2010; Latornell Conservation Pioneer Award, 2010; University of Guelph Medal of Merit, 2011.

Congratulations Stew!



### **Together they are Celebrating Birds!**

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival Organizing Committee was the recipient of the **W.E. Saunders Natural History Award** for its successful program that raises awareness of nature among people of all ages.

You might recognize some of members of the Huron Fringe Birding Festival Committee as members of the OSFN. Others you may have met at the Festival or while attending events organized by one of our sister organizations, the Huron Fringe Field Naturalists or the Saugeen Field Naturalists.

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival, a committee of the Friends of MacGregor Point Park, organizes and delivers this annual festival that celebrates birding and advocates the appreciation of the natural history of MacGregor Point Provincial Park and other unique local environments.

The Committee has adopted the following values which

relate directly to this award - their goal is to provide positive outcomes by ensuring enjoyable learning experiences in nature; they strive to demonstrate a greater understanding and advocacy for nature; they wish to ensure participants and the greater community gain an increased knowledge of the natural importance of MacGregor Point Provincial Park and the wider local area; and they are continually working toward building and maintaining positive liaisons with the community.

The dedicated people who make up this committee are (left to right):

Back: Marilyn Ohler, Bette Jean (BJ) Martin, Norah Toth, Doug Pedwell, Arlene Richards, Judy Duncan, Becky Grieveson, Jim Duncan, Fred Jazvac Front: Kathleen Chayer, Margaret Anderton, Bruce Edmunds, Liz Addison, Norma Nanni, Nancy White, Carole Lupton, Anne Cathrae, Lynne Richardson Missing: Doug Martin, Bob Taylor

# **George Peck, Distinguished Ornithologist**

## **Honorary Life Member, OSFN**

Many members of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists will remember George Peck, an Honorary Life Member of the OSFN. George was an active member of the club for many years and was a popular presenter at indoor meetings. His spectacular photography was always accompanied by his vast knowledge of natural history.



**DR GEORGE K. PECK, 1925—2020**

George passed away in June, at the age of 94.

As well as being a full-time practicing Veterinarian, George had a distinguished career in ornithological research in Ontario for over 50 years. He was the Coordinator of the Ontario Nest Records Scheme for 48 years and was appointed a Research Associate at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1976, in association with this work. His expertise in the particular area of nests and eggs, led to the publication of the definitive two-volume 'Breeding Birds of Ontario - Nidiology and Distribution' which contributed greatly to the scientific knowledge of Ontario birds, and continues to be used to inform conservation and environmental programs and policies. He was the recipient of the Ontario Federation of Ornithologists (OFO) Distinguished Ornithologist award in 2001.

George was a prolific wildlife photographer, travelling each spring on extended field trips across Canada and through all the US states, in a personal quest to photograph every North American bird species, with his particular focus on nests and eggs. He published numerous images and

articles, in over 90 books, magazines and journals. Many of his images can be found in both Ontario Breeding Bird Atlases.

George was a talented lecturer and educator and some club members were fortunate to attend his Lifelong Learning lecture series on Birds and Birding in Thornbury.

George made significant contributions to our understanding and conservation of birds in Ontario, and his legacy for birds will carry on through his many accomplishments.



George is survived by four children, who wrote: "George led a wonderful life surrounded by family, friends, colleagues, his extensive book and photographic libraries and collections, science, jazz, food, and sports."

The Ontario Field Ornithologists will be honouring George with an article celebrating his life and accomplishments in the August issue of 'Ontario Birds'.

**Submitted by:** Lynne Richardson with notes from Mark Peck and Birds Canada

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.



## Earth Week Activities 2020

The 50th Anniversary of Earth Day was on April 22. To recognize this, the OSFN converted the Celebrate Earth Week event (originally to be held on the Chi-Cheemaun) to an online format. We were treated by Jarmo Jalava and his son Noah. Jarmo lives in Bruce County and is a retired ecologist, birder and naturalist. He continues with his passions and combines them with his skills as a singer-songwriter. If you missed this informative and entertaining presentation, it is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q67x2NCEDTE>



Jarmo Jalava  
entertains. **Credit:**  
Supplied photo.

Earth Day was first celebrated on April 22, 1970 as a way to help people and organizations recognize how they can reduce their environmental impact. Earth Day has now become the world's largest environmental movement with more than a billion people in 193 countries participating in Earth Day activities each year. Thank you to Stew Hilts for bringing the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day to our attention.

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The club offered "an introduction to how to attract and identify moths" led by Alan Macnaughton in late July. Held in the late evening at MacGregor Point Provincial Park, public health guidelines dictated the size and parameters of the event. It was very successful. Stay tuned, Alan has offered to hold another moth night.

## North American Butterfly Association Count

The North American Butterfly Association Count administered by MacGregor Point Provincial Park was held on July 4, from 10 am to 4 pm. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, results were tabulated remotely, rather than at a gathering in the Provincial Park.



Barbara Martin has been an active participant in the MacGregor Point butterfly count since its inception.

**Credit:** Audrey Armstrong.



White Admiral. **Credit:** Bruce Edmunds

Audrey Armstrong conducted this annual butterfly count along with her daughter Bella Waterton and Barbara at the property of Pat and Barbara Martin along the Saugeen River near Port Elgin. Audrey reported: "we recorded fewer than usual monarchs. The World Wildlife Fund data from the Mexican overwintering sites showed a drop by about half the monarch population compared to last year. However, the second generation is increasing in numbers now, with all the excellent milkweed habitat in Grey Bruce. Canadian Tiger Swallowtail numbers were up, this year as were Great Spangled Fritillary. Perhaps all the invasive wild parsnip is contributing to the swallowtail abundance?"

Did you know that Past-president, Lorraine Brown was very involved in setting up the MacGregor Point Provincial Park Butterfly Count?



## Grange Hollow

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## Club News continued



House Wrens are a small wren with a personality all their own! They are fiercely territorial and have been known to destroy the nests of Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows and other cavity nesters. This wren selected a clothes pin basket and, as a result, changed Pam Kinchen's use of her clothesline this summer. Her payment was being serenaded by their energetic, flute-like song. Five young fledged from this nest. **Credit: Pam Kinchen.**

*androsaemifolium*). This perennial plant is characterized by reddish-green branched stems which extend up to 1 metre tall. When broken, these stems exude a milky white sap. **Credit: David Morris & Nancy Brown.**



What bugs are living in the stream, specifically the Indian Creek in Georgian Bluffs? Julie Lamberts led a small field trip on August 19. She started by demonstrating the "kick and sweep" method for collecting benthic invertebrate samples. Then her sample was divided among all participants, each of whom had the opportunity to sift through and identify bugs using a magnifying glass and some charts. Benthic invertebrates were identified to Family. Discussions about how benthic communities are used as bioindicators of stream health took place. Julie was fortunate to have John Bittorf of the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority on hand to provide additional information including local conditions affecting stream health. **Credit: Julie Lamberts**



David Morris identified a number of plant species during his Rail Trail Ramble in early July. Enjoying some of the dry open areas and shady forests was Spreading Dogbane (*Apocynum*



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## **PROGRAM LISTINGS**



*A family of Red Squirrels. Credit: Pam Binnendyk*

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 250 members and are a member club of Ontario Nature.

**Adjustments are being made to address Covid-19 restrictions and Public Health guidelines.**

**Until further notice, all our INDOOR MEETINGS are being held virtually using ZOOM.**

**Please note that e-Heralds will advise of location changes.**

**Indoor meetings** are held on the **second Thursday** of the month, September to June. In a normal year, 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 or cancellation – visit [www.osfn.ca](http://www.osfn.ca)**

## **Ongoing Campaign to slow the advance of Dog Strangling Vine**

To help, contact team leaders Bill Moses at [bill.mosesos@gmail.com](mailto:bill.mosesos@gmail.com) or Nancy Brown at [lonelmm82@gmail.com](mailto:lonelmm82@gmail.com)

Sat Sep 12, 1:30 - 3:30 pm - **Trout Hollow** with **Robert Burcher**  
(alternate Sep 13 and if there is enough interest, a repeat on Sep 19 (20). Robert will lead an easy hike to the Trout Hollow site where John Muir lived for two years in the 1800s. History, nature, archaeology and discussion of the recent "Muir as a racist" controversy, all in one afternoon! Register: [burcherphoto@gmail.com](mailto:burcherphoto@gmail.com) or 519-599-6195

Tue Sep 15 (& Wed 16), 1:30 pm - **Sarawak Saunter** with **David Morris**

Explore the diverse flora near Indian Falls with David Morris. The focus this year will be on goldenrods (six species) and asters (seven species). Register: [davidtmorris@rogers.com](mailto:davidtmorris@rogers.com) or 519-376-1304.

Thu Sep 17 &/or Sep 24, 9:30 - 11:30 am - **Autumn Rambles at Anglesea** with **Don Rawls**

Ferns, trees, erratic boulders and history at Anglesea Nature Trails & Managed Forest in the Klondike Hills. Register: [rawfam46@gmail.com](mailto:rawfam46@gmail.com) or 519-794-0561

Sat Sep 26, 10 am - **Ferns, Mosses, Geology** with **Jenna McGuire**

Learn about the evolutionary history of ferns and mosses, identification features, their lifecycles, their role in the ecosystem and relationship to the Peninsula's bedrock. Approximately 2 hours, medium difficulty, 3.6 km. Near Hope Bay. Register: [m McGuirejennae@gmail.com](mailto:m McGuirejennae@gmail.com)

Thu Oct 1, 10 - 11:30 am - **Stoney Orchard Trail** with **Elaine Mason**

East side walk along this City trail. (rain date October 2) Register: [masonfam@sympatico.ca](mailto:masonfam@sympatico.ca) or 519-372-0597.

Wed Oct 7, 9:30 am to Noon - **Lake Eugenia Water Birds** with **David Turner**

Discover the avian delights of this birding hot spot. Register: [fleshertonartgallery@gmail.com](mailto:fleshertonartgallery@gmail.com) or 519-924-3560.

Date & site TBA - **Nature Hike in the Beaver Valley** with **John Burton**

Sun Nov 8, 10 am - 2 pm - **Birding Around the Bay - Waterfowl**

## **and More with Erik Van Den Kieboom & Kiah Jasper**

A fall tradition! Meet at the front of the Owen Sound Bayshore Community Centre. Register: [erikkieboom@outlook.com](mailto:erikkieboom@outlook.com) or [kiahjasper@gmail.com](mailto:kiahjasper@gmail.com)

Dec 14, 2020 - Jan 5, 2021 - **Christmas Bird Counts**

OSFN members are invited to participate in Counts across Grey-Bruce. Watch e-Heralds for dates and contacts. To find a count and co-ordinator near you: [www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc/index.jsp?targetpg=mapviewer&lang=EN](http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc/index.jsp?targetpg=mapviewer&lang=EN)

Feb 2021, date TBA 10 - 11:30 am - **Nordic Ski** with **Beth Anne Currie & John Dickson**

Ski Sarawak fields and along the Indian River. Meet at Beth Anne's, 319197 Grey Rd 1 at 9:45 am. Register: [bethannecurrie@sympatico.ca](mailto:bethannecurrie@sympatico.ca) or 519-376-7237

Sat Feb 27, 1 - 4 pm - **Who Made Those Tracks and Why?** with **Jeff Kinchen**

An interpretive late winter tracking hike. Learn how to observe and recognize Nature's clues. Register: [bognors.finest@gmail.com](mailto:bognors.finest@gmail.com) or 519-374-4246

**Earth Day/Earth Week** – April 22 is Earth Day. Watch for Special Events during Earth Week.

Sat March 27, 9:30 am - Noon - **Early Spring Birding in the Beaver Valley** with **David Turner**

Migrating Tundra Swans and more. Register: [fleshertonartgallery@gmail.com](mailto:fleshertonartgallery@gmail.com) or 519-924-3560

Wed June 23, 1 pm - **Piping Plovers** with **Lynne Richardson**

Visit Sauble Beach to learn about these super-cute and super-endangered birds and their valiant efforts to raise their wee golf-ball sized chicks on a busy public beach. Register: [lynnerrichardson@rogers.com](mailto:lynnerrichardson@rogers.com)

Thu June 24, 10 am - 3 pm - **Saugeen Valley Lookout** with **Brian and Clare Maher**

Enjoy Nels Maher and John Weir's fern garden, orchids and birds on this 40-acre naturalized property near Durham. Bring lunch. (rain date June 25) Register: [brianmaher599@hotmail.com](mailto:brianmaher599@hotmail.com) or 705-728-1507

Date & Site TBA - **Butterflies and More** with **Chris Rickard**

Weather decides. All ages. Register: [crickard@sympatico.ca](mailto:crickard@sympatico.ca) or 705-444-6671

*Thank you*

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



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.



## **Indoor Meetings**

Indoor meetings are most commonly at 7pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month from September to June. The Bay Room in the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre, Owen Sound has been reserved for OSFN's Indoor Meetings. However, until the City of Owen Sound's COVID-19 restrictions and provincial and public health guidelines change, meetings will be held virtually, via ZOOM. (Changes will be posted at [www.osfn.ca](http://www.osfn.ca) or available through an e-Herald.) All events and times are subject to change.

### **September 10, 2020 Jenna McGuire - The Life of Fungi**

Jenna will help us take a closer look at fungi and their mushrooms. We will learn about how they live and contribute to the ecosystem; their lifecycles and how they are divided into groups. We will dive deep into the soil of the forest floor to see this mysterious world!

### **October 8, 2020 David Morris - "Resident Aliens"**

David will focus on a selection of plants that have been here so long that we all take them for granted as being part of the landscape; except, they are all introduced species. Most are herbaceous but there are a few woody ones too. Alien plants are still being set loose into the environment, even today.

### **November 12, 2020 Resilience – Transforming our Community**

This uplifting film, with Scientist Dr. John Anderson's climate change research, and directed by Liz Zetlin, is designed to inspire action, and offers ways to build resilience in ourselves and our community by transforming the way we live.

### **December 10, 2020 Dr. Nick Eyles - Geology in the age of LiDAR: What new technology is telling us about Canada's last great ice sheets.**

Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology is the key to autonomous driving and is also changing how the science of geology is done by allowing mapping of the earth's surface in unprecedented detail.

### **January 14, 2021 Bella Waterton and Paul Scriver - Exploring the Polar Regions: A Guide's Perspective**

Bella and Paul have been working in the polar regions for the last decade, most recently along the Hudson Bay coastline guiding at, and managing, a National Geographic Polar Bear Lodge. They will speak about their experiences, the wildlife of this area, plus tourism there and in the broader polar regions.

### **February 4, 2021 (IF in the Bay Room at the Bayshore Community Centre) OR February 11, 2021 (IF Virtual/ZOOM) Pam Kinchen and Tanzania: Cultures of Maasai and Lions and Zanzibar: A World of Spices.**

A Dream Trip realized to see it All before it's Gone. Three weeks of "Pinch me - I'm really Here."

### **March 11, 2021 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 yours with Brian Robin at [robin.brian@gmail.com](mailto:robin.brian@gmail.com) or 519 363 3204

### **April 8, 2021 Alexis Burnett - Foraging for Edible and Medicinal Plants**

This presentation will focus on learning how to ethically harvest plants for food and medicine from the wild. We will talk about both native and non-native plants and explore what it means to work with these groups of plants in a way that helps to sustain and regenerate local populations.

### **2pm Saturday, April 17, 2021 Celebrate EARTH WEEK**

#### **Beth Gilhespy - Reflections on Wildlife and Wild Space Conservation**

Beth Gilhespy, our Keynote Speaker, will share her experiences and insights. Watch for details at [www.osfn.ca](http://www.osfn.ca)

Sponsored by 

**May 13, 2021 Marg Gaviller - The Horses of Sable Island....Plus the journey "back to Newfoundland"**

The Sable Island horses, originally domestic animals, are now the main occupants of the island. They roam freely in the natural environment, comfortably in the temperate summers but battered by high winds and ferocious storms in the winter, and without human interference. These feral horses are, indeed, a joy to behold.

**June 10, 2021 David Turner - Birding Different Habitats in the Beaver Valley**

Explore and discover where in the Valley, and why, so many birds call it home, or at least a nice place to visit. Enjoy David's exquisite photographic images, and his contagious passion for Nature.

All events and times are subject to change. Visit [www.osfn.ca](http://www.osfn.ca) or check e-heralds for updates and added events.

**Young Naturalists – 2020/2021**

New members – \$20/person or \$40/family (Returning? – we are anticipating your fee will be waived.) Meetings are on **Sunday**.

**SEPTEMBER 27** - 2pm registration at Grey Sauble Administration pavilion. Clean bird boxes or salmon hike along spawning grounds.

**OCTOBER 25** - Hike the KOA trails – observe changes in the forest, collect leaves. Parking in the KOA campground.

**NOVEMBER 29** - Noticing invasive species hike. "How to be a good Steward." Bill Moses leads us on a stewardship hike of one of the OSFN steward properties.

**DECEMBER – NO MEETING**

**JANUARY 31** - Snowshoe hike with Deb Diebel at the Outdoor Education Centre including a bonfire, hot chocolate, bannock après hike.

**FEBRUARY 28** - Snowshoe outing at the Pottawatomi River with Judy Robinson.

**MARCH 28** - Nature crafts at the Georgian Bay Centre for the Arts including an urban nature hike in downtown Owen Sound with Kate McLaren.

**APRIL 25** - Keppel Croft Gardens for spring birding with Bill Loney or Hike the Greystone Trails on Grey Road 1.

**MAY 30** - Huron Fringe Birding Festival at MacGregor Point Provincial Park.

**JUNE 27** - Explore Piping Plover chicks at Sauble Beach. Hike and lunch at Evergreen Resort in Red Bay.

For further information: Ange Flynn at [angeflynn@hotmail.com](mailto:angeflynn@hotmail.com)

***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



## *Slip Sliding Away!*

Back in April, at the height of the C19 social isolation measures, any diversion on those long, lonely days was welcome! So early one morning it was pretty exciting to see a mysterious meandering swath-mark in the snow. It looked like something (or someone!?) had been dragged over the ground. What was going on here? I had to investigate so I went outside, armed with my camera, and followed this path. It started somewhere behind the garage, went across the lawn, the deck, down the bank to the lake and onto the beach.

There were no footprints alongside this trail, so it occurred to me I might have some sort of animal dragging its belly through the snow (a much better option than a body being dragged into the lake in the night!)

My mind flipped through the possibilities – a weary, newly emerged groundhog? A racoon? Skunk? A beaver? None quite fit. Then I thought of a mink, which frequently lope by along the shore and are known to occasionally make snow slides for self-tobogganing. But the ample width of this track eliminated the sleek and slinky mink.

At that point I realized I otter know what this was! For sure, it otter be an Otter! After all, I remembered I had seen an otter in the wotter a week previous.

I checked my 'Mammals of Canada' for an otterbiography on this slip-sliding, toboggan-riding visitor. Otters are amphibious, curious and very intelligent. They're quite sociable and they play well with otter otters. They're very family-oriented except for a period after the pups are born, when the male is temporarily banished. At that point the male is on the move, keeping an eye out for the company of another otter, until he can return to his significant otter and his otterly adorable pups.

I have often thought I otter get a deck cam, and now I'm otterly disappointed that I didn't have one set up that night! It would have been otterly wonderful. Still, even without a picture, the slide swath alone was an otterly magical discovery! I have no otter words to describe it.


I hoped I would have a repeat performance from this visitor another day, but other than that one, there's been no other sightings of any other otters.



Ok, sorry, enough of that! I think I got it otter my system.

Otter and out.

**Submitted by:** Lynne Richardson



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# *The mob mentality of social wasps*

***The mob mentality of social wasps can create a furious swarm when even just a single insect is aggravated, here's the reason and why it matters.***

There is nothing like a mad swarm of irked hornets or yellow jackets hot on your tail. It's scary and potentially painful and for those with allergies, life threatening. There are some who prescribe to the school of search and destroy – that eliminating wasp nests at all costs is the best approach. And obviously if they present a clear danger, that's understandable. But what many people don't realize is that these weaponized insects happen to do a lot of good, despite their ability to inflict a bit of agony now and then.

There are many thousands of identified species of wasps, and although we are most familiar with the ones with whom we do battle with at picnics, there are many that do not sting. Wasps come in two styles, social and solitary – and in fact, most varieties are solitary and non-stinging. Colony-building social wasps, like hornets and yellow jackets, make up around 1,000 species.

But the remarkable thing about wasps, as National Geographic points out, is this: Nearly every pest insect on the planet is preyed upon by a wasp species, either for food or as a host for its parasitic larvae. Wasps are so adept at controlling pest populations that the agriculture industry now regularly deploys them to protect crops.

From flies to beetle larvae to every kind of garden pest that vexes, it's likely that their numbers are controlled by wasps. Plus, wasps offer some pollinating services as well. While not as effective at getting pollen from one place to another as bees, wasps still do their best. And some species are rock stars when it comes to pollinating – fig wasps, for example, are responsible for pollinating almost 1,000 species of figs.

It behooves us to do our best to get along with wasps, and part of that is better understanding their behavior. Social wasps in distress send out a pheromone that is like a 911 call to the nearby colony; the result is a swarm of pissed-off wasps in an aggressive frenzy.

So the best thing to do is to avoid angering even a single wasp. The UC Davis Integrated Pest Management program offers these tips to avoid bees and wasps, noting that unless a person collides with or swats one, they are unlikely to sting (and/or get mad and send out a call to the troops).

## **How to avoid wasps**

Bees and wasps can be attracted to, or may react to, odors

in the environment. It is best not to use perfume, cologne, or scented soaps if you are going into an area of bee and/or wasp activity.

Avoid going barefoot in vegetation, especially clover and blooming ground covers.

Also avoid wearing brightly colored or patterned clothing.

If you remain calm when a bee or wasp lands on your skin to inspect a smell or to get water if you are sweating heavily, the insect eventually will leave of its own accord. If you don't want to wait for it to leave, gently and slowly brush it away with a piece of paper.

When swimming in pools, watch out for bees or wasps trapped on the surface of the water. If you find bees or wasps in the water, it's best to remove them to avoid being stung.

Stinging incidents often occur when nesting areas of social insects are disturbed. Be observant of the area around you. If you see insects flying to and from a particular place, avoid it.

And while not provoking wasps is good, for bees it may be even more important – wasps can sting over and over, but a bee stings once and then it dies.

And bee populations need all the help they can get. So respect the bees and wasps and they'll continue playing their important roles in the ecosystem ... and you may have a few less stings to agonize over.

*This story, updated June 28, 2019 was first published in 2016.*

**Written by:** Melissa Breyer

Results for the **2020 Lewington Eastern Bluebird Trail** in Bruce County are as follows:

Eastern Bluebird	95 eggs	83 young	78 fledged
Tree Swallow	168 eggs	155 young	132 fledged
House Wren	62 eggs	62 young	62 fledged

The Great-crested Flycatcher's nest failed this year.

*This year we had 74 boxes on our trail, which, with two at each stop, makes for 37 sites, as we always put 2 boxes within 12 feet, as a bluebird would take one, and a Tree Swallow the other.*

*This now makes a grand total of **3,050** Eastern Bluebirds that we have fledged in the 35 years we have been involved in hoping to increase the population of the Eastern Bluebird. We have also fledged well over 7,000 Tree Swallows in 35 years.*

**Submitted by:** Dennis & Gwen Lewington, members of the OSFN & winners of the 2020 Norah Toth Award, Huron Fringe Birding Festival for their stewardship of the Eastern Bluebird.



# *Ontario's Cormorant Hunt is not a 'Cull'*



*Double-crested Cormorant. Credit: Nigel Eves.*

The double-crested cormorant is a native bird to Ontario. Cormorants were almost wiped out by the insecticide DDT in the 1950s and '60s. Their historic comeback in Ontario has led many to believe the cormorants are an invasive species, rather than the ecological victory they actually represent. Cormorants are now subject to a hunt to reduce their numbers.

The Ministry of Natural Resources dug deep into their Orwellian thesaurus and announced Ontario's newest sport hunt as a "fall harvest" of the double-crested cormorant. While the words conjure up images of brimming garden bounties, bundles of corn husks and gourds ripening in farm fields, make no mistake: the cormorant kill is not a "harvest," a proper wildlife management plan, nor a cull. It is a new hunt based on misinformation and anecdotal stories that inevitably fail when scientific rigour is applied.

Merriam-Webster defines "cull" as "to reduce or control the size of (something, such as a herd) by removal (as by hunting or slaughter) of especially weak or sick

individuals." Oxford Dictionary is more direct, defining it as "a selective slaughter of wild animals." What is common to most definitions is that the kill is selective or controlled. The Ontario cormorant hunt is not controlled, selective, managed nor sustainable; as such, it is not a cull.

The fall hunt is set to run from Sept. 15 to Dec. 31, and hunters may take 15 birds each day under their small game hunting license. The stated purpose is to "protect fish stocks and natural habitat from the harmful effects" of the double-crested cormorant. But the government has set no targets for reducing the population in Ontario and no requirements to report the numbers killed. Targets cannot be met if no one reports on their hunt.

What is the government's goal? A 10-per-cent reduction in cormorant numbers? Fifty per cent? More or less? The unmanaged hunt of an inedible native bird that was virtually wiped out in Ontario but for a couple of dozen nesting pairs presents an ethical dilemma for conservation-minded hunters and anglers. With no management plan in place, the hunt is at best almost completely devoid of scientific grounding, and at worst, live target practice.

In proposing the hunt, Natural Resources Minister John Yakabuski said, "We've heard concerns from property owners, hunters and anglers, and commercial fishers about the kind of damage cormorants have caused in their communities, so we're taking steps to help them deal with any local issues." Absent from his list of advisers are conservationists, birders and scientists.

The Ford government has shown a healthy ability to change direction when needed. But in order to have an informed debate we need to agree on basic terminologies. A cull is a controlled or selective reduction in wildlife numbers associated with an overarching management plan. The Ontario cormorant hunt is none of the above.

**Submitted by:** Bruce Cox

Bruce is a birdwatcher, angler and former executive director of Greenpeace Canada.

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*Margaret Mead*



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## ***NeighbourWoods North***

NeighbourWoods North was busy in the spring and early summer in the hospital forest. There continues to be a significant tree death rate; any saplings are welcome. A rally of the troops on a few watering nights helped get the forest through the drought we had in June, with minimal casualties.

In late June, NeighbourWoods North members converted the barren traffic island in front of the hospital's main doors into a Welcoming Garden. Krista McKee shared this report: *The Welcoming Garden Committee is overwhelmed with the local support for our project! Funding from the TD Friends of the Environment has been the backbone of this project along with a generous donation from the Grey County Master Gardeners. The Committee shopped locally in sourcing the plants, mulch and the excavation of the island at the front of the Owen Sound hospital. A special thank you to Adam MacDonnell as the support of the wonderful staff at Grey Bruce Health Services Owen Sound Hospital has been much appreciated. Our project is not completed - shrubs and bulbs will be planted in the fall and the final touch to the garden will be an art piece. So, stay tuned as the garden continues to take shape.*

Plans are still moving forward for the 1.4-kilometre Healing Pathway around the hospital, but no start date has been established. On August 22, a successful yard sale was held to raise funds towards the purchase of more trees for the Healing Pathway. Congratulations to those involved! \$1200 was raised. Lloyd Lewis has indicated that, although they will not start to dig out the path this fall, they will begin planting trees along the planned course of the path. Watch for these changes!

**Submitted by:** Brendan Mulroy



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## **Micro-ecosystems are also impacted by graffiti vandalism!**

Skinner's Bluff on the Niagara Escarpment in North Keppel offers an iconic, spectacular view from the Bruce Trail footpath. And the caprock underfoot presents a fascinating study as well for those who look (read on!). So, when hikers discovered spray painted graffiti vandalism on the rock surface in early July Facebook posts were quick to spread the word.



*The big lookout at Skinner's Bluff. Nature's perfect work of art.*

*Senseless defacing of this iconic spot is akin to someone painting a mustache on the Mona Lisa! (IMHO) Credit: Deane Atherton*

A group of dedicated citizens quickly sprang into action and, with some effort, managed to scrub away the paint. Deane Atherton described the effort in a Facebook post:

*We scrubbed off the last of the chalk-based spray paint in the rain this morning. It was a bit of a challenge clearing the pigment out of the solution pockets. As I was doing this, I started to wonder what might be living in those small depressions, so I took a bit of muck out of the bottom of a few and brought it home. I did a bit of digiscoping at my microscope to create a video showing the wee beasties that inhabit a few smudges of muck from a solution pocket. In order of appearance you'll see a filamentous algae, a Diptera larva (probably a midge) and rotifers, loads and loads of rotifers. These pockets are micro ecosystems, and larger ecosystems are the sum of their parts. Guess it ain't a good idea to pollute these small places with pigments eh? The rotifers will get mad.*

We thank the cleanup crew for their good work, and sincerely hope that no rotifers will be harmed at Skinner's Bluff in the future by graffiti artists with misplaced talents!

**Submitted by:** Lynne Richardson using Facebook comments from Deane Atherton

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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.



*Bog Laurel (Kalmia polifolia) is a small, evergreen shrub that grows in bog-like conditions. **Credit:** Barbara Palmer*



*The antics of Eastern Bluebirds feeding in the field. **Credit:** Nigel Eves.*

## 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.