

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

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

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

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

**Spring 2021**

**Volume 34 Number 1**

*Editor: Norah Toth*



## *President's Report*

Dear Members,

These last 3 months of winter have given us a bit of everything - rain with above zero temperatures to the very cold Polar Vortex and light fluffy snow. As the great nature beings that we are; we've all been out enjoying it. Right?

Your OSFN Board have been working too, exploring our history, guiding the club business and working on updates of our policies laid out by boards of the past.

Sadly Bill Moses, one of our tree experts, has stepped down from the Stewardship portfolio. He has offered to guide our new stewardship person through the ins and outs of this position. We need one of our members to volunteer for the job. Please consider helping do the work we all admire when it comes to overseeing our conserved places.

Also, due to COVID-19 many of our outings have had to be downsized to accommodate the rules. We hope you've all been able to catch a few of the things John Dickson has arranged for us. Our Zoom presentations have been going well and will continue until we can meet face to face.

A special "thank you" goes out to Erik Van Den Kieboom and Judy Duncan for their extraordinary contributions to the Great Canadian Birdathon, which is a fundraising program through Birds Canada. Birds Canada raised over \$200,000 for bird research and conservation projects across Canada through the efforts of people like Judy and Erik. They designated a portion of their pledges to go to the OSFN and those monies will be placed in LEAF – our Local Education and Action Fund.

I'm pretty proud of the fact that this fall the OSFN donated monies to the Nature Conservancy of Canada in support of the purchase of land at Britain Lake (Britain Lake Wetland and Woodlands) on the Saugeen Bruce Peninsula. The property itself is 135 hectares (335 acres) of provincially significant wetlands and woodlands. We used money from both the LEAF and the LBCF to assist with this purchase.

### *We Welcome New Members:*

Frank Barningham, Kim Harris, Lloyd & Mary Hayward, Roseanne Illman, Kyle Kralik, Tim Lahey, Lois Palmer, Janet Pounder, Anne Range, Rod and Pat Sein, Dianne Speed, Warren Steckle & Miriam Oudejans, Desire Van Dijk, Bella Waterton, Wilfred Yusek

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

Coming up at this year's Annual Meeting two of our fantastic board members will have had fulfilled their terms so PLEASE think about being part of the board to keep our club up and running. Contact any of our board, including myself, if you would care to be a part of the board. We would welcome you with open arms!!!

Things have been a bit quiet for our "ask a biologist" so get your questions answered by Mark. He is very enthusiastic about keeping us informed about nature.

The OSFN financially supports three magazines at the Owen Sound Public Library. The Audubon magazine's on-line version is available for library members through your Libby or OverDrive account. Check it out!

I've been happy to see how many other organizations have been asking for our assistance for speakers and presenters for their agendas. Guess we have a bit of a reputation as an active exciting group!!!!

The days are getting longer so please get out and enjoy the things nature has to offer regardless of COVID.

Keep in touch with us via emails to [info@osfn.ca](mailto:info@osfn.ca)

Pam Kinchen, President

### *Community Conservation Award*

The Community Conservation Award recognizes citizens within the community (Grey - Bruce) who in some way have made a significant contribution toward the welfare of the natural world through stewardship, restoration, protection or other actions deemed beneficial to natural habitats or species.

Do you know an individual or a group who you feel might meet these criteria?

Please contact a member of the Board to find out what information they will need to move forward with your recommendation.

The Ginger Press Bookstore  
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# Solitary Bees

First let me say that the purpose of this article is not to provide you with all the information anybody would want to know about solitary bees. There is no end of that kind of thing on the internet and YouTube. It is merely to whet your appetite toward wanting to peek into this aspect of the natural world.

Most of the time when people think about bees it is honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) that come to mind. (Fun fact: I kept bees for a number of years and we still refer to the extraction room I had set up as the "honey" room.) In a honey bee hive you have about 60,000 bees working in an organized fashion to gather enough honey (sugar) and pollen (protein) to live through the winter. They are huddled together to keep themselves warm, especially protecting the queen who will start laying eggs again in the spring. Like people who make more money than they need, if you make it easy for them, bees will do the same thing, make more honey than they need which is harvested by the beekeeper.

Can you imagine one bee being in charge of the same life cycle? Since eggs have to be laid and there is only one bee it has to be the queen. There you go. She does everything; well, there are males as well but after they have done their "job" they disappear from the scene.

Here we should point out that there are a lot of insects out there that sting but are not bees. In general, there are two groups, bees and wasps. Bees are vegetarians and wasps are carnivores. (We generally refer to wasps as hornets or yellowjackets.) Wasps eat larva and insects. Yellowjackets are the ones that appear in the fall trying to get into peoples' food and drinks. I understand that-sterile female wasps feed the larva in the nest but depend on the larva to digest this food and then feed some of it back to them. But guess what! As the weather cools, the queen stops laying eggs and the wasps are left to look elsewhere (people food).

Back to the bees. First, we should mention bumble bees. They are kind of like wasps but they gather nectar and pollen. They start off by laying eggs in the spring and when those eggs hatch, they help out looking after the larva. They might collect a cup of honey, not intended to be used in winter. Like wasps, bumble bees overwinter as mature fertilized females, ready to hit the ground running (flying?) in the spring. They are not considered solitary.

Now we are ready to zero in on solitary bees. Nobody has an accurate count of how many species of solitary bee there are. Let's just say that there are probably about 400 species in our immediate area. Of the estimated 400 species of solitary bee an estimated 70 percent of them live underground. Above ground each species will nest wherever they can find a cavity to their liking. Carpenter bees will bore into old or weathered wood. Others will set up homes in hollow plant tubes.

Let's start with a typical solitary female bee already mated in early spring. She will gather (by herself) a small pile of food for one larva and lay one egg on top of it. Then she will build a shell around it made of mud or leaves or fluff or other materials

depending on the species. She will do this a number of times. She can determine the sex of the egg she lays and will lay 4 or 5 female eggs and then 4 or 5 male eggs. The male eggs hatch and emerge first. They hang around until the females hatch and then "Bob's your uncle". The newly impregnated females then begin the process over again. There may be more than one cycle per year but during the overwinter cycle the males and females are in the pupa stage.

I must admit that until a few years ago, solitary bees were not on my radar. However, a friend in Germany said they were very popular there and lots of people would have one on their apartment balconies.

It was my interest in invasive plants that led me to discovering that phragmites tubes were being used to build solitary bee houses. I had to give it a try.

Like birdhouses and bird feeders, solitary bee houses have to be maintained. Used tubes have to be replaced but remember that the tubes may contain bees waiting to be hatched. Note: If



A Solitary Bee using tubes created from *Phragmites australis*.

we stopped keeping our lawns and gardens in such pristine shape it would help a lot as well.

Finally, it is very important to stress the significance of solitary bees in our environment. They are far more efficient pollinators than honey bees. They visit far more plants in a day than honey bees. Honey bees will travel up to 3 km to find nectar whereas the solitary bee normally travels no farther than 300 meters. Different species are attracted to different plants.

There is so much more that could be said. The purpose of this article is to leave you with the feeling of wanting to know more. I hope that has been accomplished.

**Submitted by:** Bill Moses

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.

## **Lorraine Brown**

Lorraine Brown's name is synonymous with the OSFN, but since her untimely passing in 2012, our membership has grown and we want to let everyone know more about "the mother of the OSFN". She was one of several people responsible for starting the Owen Sound Field Naturalists club in 1988.

Born July 6, 1949 in Belleville, Ontario she went to Queen's University for her BSc in biology. Lorraine spent ten years working at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa and a further ten years at the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto before returning to York University for a Masters in Environmental Studies.

Lorraine settled in Owen Sound in 1986 after marrying Andrew Armitage, and became active in the community of naturalists in Bruce-Grey. Four years later, she and two colleagues formed Apropos Planning, a company specializing in the development of museum exhibits. This work took her all across Canada and became a very successful enterprise. An avid naturalist and educator, she

served on the boards of Ontario Parks, The Grey Sauble Conservation Authority and its Foundation, and the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory.

In 1988, due to an expression of interest among a group of area birders, Lorraine, along with Ernie Johns, led in founding the Owen Sound Field Naturalists and Lorraine became its first president. January 1989, she chaired the club's first meeting with Dr. Doug Larson as guest speaker sharing his research on the ancient cedars of the Niagara Escarpment. For the next 31 years, the Owen Sound Field Naturalists meetings were facilitated at the Owen Sound Public Library. In the 23 intervening years with OSFN, she took on roles of president, editor of the Hart's Tongue Herald, program committee, field trip leader, program

presenter, grant application co-ordinator and even held a second term as president! Some highlights of the club under her leadership were; building the Oliphant boardwalk in 1991 (a combined project with Saugeen Field Naturalists) creating (with Nels Mahar) the original and the 2011 interpretive signage at the boardwalk. She also formed the Bruce-Grey Plant Committee (a sub-group of the OSFN with Joan Crowe as chair) which went on to publish; *A Checklist of Vascular Plants for Bruce and Grey Counties*, *A guide to the Orchids of Bruce and Grey Counties*, *A Guide to the Ferns of Grey and Bruce Counties*, *The Asters, Goldenrods and Fleabanes of Grey and Bruce Counties*, *Exploring an Urban Forest Owen Sound's*

*Heritage of Trees and Rare and Endangered Species of Grey and Bruce Counties*. She secured the club archives at the Grey County Archives...to name but a few of her many productive projects. In March 2011, an OSFN Honorary Life Membership was bestowed on Lorraine Brown. As President Freeman Boyd wrote, "while in past years, this honour was given for outstanding contributions in

nature research, education and conservation, Lorraine is the first member to be recognized specifically for her contribution to the club itself."

Lorraine was a museum designer, science writer, musician, knitter, canoeist, gardener, mycologist, mentor and conservationist. She was all of these things and more! She was an exceptional friend to many very fortunate people. As Peter Middleton wrote, "She lived a dream of active involvement with, and on behalf of, the natural world. She made things happen."

The Lorraine Brown Conservation Fund was one of the lasting things she made happen.

**Submitted by:** Audrey Armstrong



*Mushroom Forays with Lorraine were followed by a complete analysis of all varieties collected.*



## **Lorraine Brown Conservation Fund**

The Lorraine Brown Conservation Fund was created by Peter Middleton at the request of Lorraine shortly before her death in 2012. With seed money from Lorraine's estate the Fund was created "to support the acquisition of significant natural areas in Grey and Bruce counties and to support the stewardship of natural areas in Grey and Bruce counties for the purpose of restoration, preservation and natural interpretation, by the Owen Sound Field Naturalists. (OSFN)". With the continuous generosity of donors to the LBCF, money was recently granted to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for acquiring land near Britain Lake on the upper Saugeen Bruce Peninsula. To donate, please go to the [owensoundfieldnaturalist.ca](http://owensoundfieldnaturalist.ca) website homepage and click on the DONATE NOW panel on the right side, then use the FUND pull down menu and go the Lorraine Brown Conservation Fund. Thank you!



## **OSFN Honourary Life Members**

The Board of the OSFN will be accepting nominations for Honorary Memberships until April 1, 2021.

People who have been OSFN members for ten years or more are eligible for consideration for life membership if they fill **one or more** of the following criteria:

He or she has made a major contribution to the study of the natural world either through their career or through their hobby and interests.

He or she has made a major contribution in education about the natural world, either as a particularly dedicated school teacher or adult educator, or through being active in organizing the activities of the Young Naturalists club or similar organizations for ten years or more.

He or she has made a major contribution to the OSFN, either through a high degree of participation in OSFN projects or by being a member of the Executive for 15 years or more.

He or she has made a major contribution to the protection and preservation of natural areas in Grey and Bruce Counties.



[www.facebook.com/brucebio](http://www.facebook.com/brucebio)

The Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association is raising funds to support the endangered Red-headed Woodpecker and its habitat. Check out their online silent auction:



Register for free to attend our Virtual-Lite festival from May 28—June 6, 2021.

Andrea Gress, Ethan Meleg, Stephane Menu, Martyn Obbard, Mark Peck, Michael Runtz and Ian Shanahan will

delight you with their varied presentation styles and topics.

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



## **Great Scott!**

A rare southern visitor was in Grey County for a couple of months late last year. This visitor normally inhabits the high deserts and the mountain slopes of eastern California, northern Utah, the hill country of central Texas and south-west Mexico, where it is more at home with yuccas, palms, junipers, and pinyon pines than the forests of Grey County. The visitor was a Scott's Oriole.

The Scott's Oriole sighting, east of Chesley or approximately 40 km southwest of Owen Sound, was only the second documented sighting of this species in Canada, ever! The first sighting was at Silver Islet (Sleeping Giant Provincial Park) near Thunder Bay in 1975 (source: ebird.com).

Our involvement with this visitor started in late December when a friend shared a photo with my wife, Janet, of a brightly coloured black and yellow bird at her feeder and asked for help with identification. The photo was from a distance with minimal detail. The only bird coming to mind with similar bright yellow on the plumage was an Evening Grosbeak, but even from this photo, it was apparent this was not our bird. So, armed with our cameras, binoculars, and field guides, Janet and I visited our friend's yard the next day. Of course, it started snowing as we approached the location, but within 20 minutes, the bird arrived, on cue, at the feeder, vigorously feeding on suet. A beautiful bird!

We immediately recognized the bird as an oriole, but the question remained, what species of oriole? I must admit, I

## **NeighbourWoods North**

Despite the prediction for 6 more weeks of winter, the NeighbourWoods North (NWN) team has shaken off its winter torpor, and started planning for the 2021 season. Finishing touches are planned for the Welcoming Garden. Members will continue to do regular garden maintenance and weeding; the long-term plan is to hand responsibility for this garden over to a group from the hospital's volunteer program.

The sites for the Pollinating Garden have been established by the south entrance to the hospital. Planting there will occur in the spring.

The Bremont Property to the east of the hospital will soon be developed. NWN hopes to salvage many of the young spruce trees from that property, and transplant them onto the borders of the planned Healing Pathway. Excavation of the Healing Pathway should take place in the spring, but the details have not yet been worked out.

Left over energy will be directed to maintenance, mulching and further planting in the Forest of Hope.

**Submitted by:** Brendan Mulroy

was betting on a late migrating Baltimore Oriole with some peculiar colour variation, but why guess when you can reach out to the Bruce Birding Club! Within one day of contacting the Club, we were escorting a bird expert from the Ottawa area to our friend's yard and photos had also been shared with another bird expert in Michigan. Both confirmed the bird was indeed a Scott's Oriole.

Additionally, the Ottawa birder collected fecal samples for genetic sequencing to provide secondary evidence.

As a birder, seeing a rare bird in our area is a once in a lifetime event. The downside is this bird was a long, long way from home and must have somehow become disoriented to end up at least 3000 km from its normal range. A much colder climate and a diet quite varied from its normal meals of insects, fruit and nectar probably took its toll since it arrived in the area. The appearance of the bird was also less than ideal in late December with the feathers appearing slightly matted and tattered. So, it was likely a tragic end for our southern visitor as I sadly report the bird was last seen on December 31, 2020.

**Submitted by:** Bill Hatten



*Scott's Oriole,  
December 28,  
2020. Credit:  
Bill Hatten*

*"Nature is imperfectly perfect, filled with  
loose parts and possibilities, with mud and  
dust, nettles and sky....."*

from "Last Child in the Woods" Richard Louv



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# **PROGRAM LISTINGS**



*Muskrat Credit: Bruce Edmunds*

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)**

**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: [lynnerichardson@rogers.com](mailto:lynnerichardson@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

### **Young Naturalists – 2020/2021**

**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)



*In late December, the Young Naturalists had a chance to snowshoe along the Interpretive Trail at Hibou Conservation Area. Here they tried out their snowshoes and they listened for birds, observed a beaver lodge, noted tracks from small mammals and deer and checked out a variety of trees. **Credit:** John Dickson*

**Unless people learn to love and appreciate the natural world around them, they are not going to stand up to protect it. Gus Yaki**

This winter the Club formed a reciprocal arrangement with Master Gardeners of Grey Bruce. OSFN Members were invited to participate in "The Eco-Responsible Gardener", a series of three Zoom seminars intended to help you create and maintain an environmentally sustainable and beautiful garden. These events are free but require prior registration at [www.greycountymastergardeners.com](http://www.greycountymastergardeners.com)

**Thank you**  
**Caframo.**

**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.

### **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.

## *Online Learning*

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) is offering online learning opportunities. For example, Animal Crossing with Mark Peck describes how winter finches are irruptive migrants who plan their travels based on food supply.

A selection of programs is available at ROM at Home [www.rom.on.ca/en/rom-at-home](http://www.rom.on.ca/en/rom-at-home) or Collections & Research [www.rom.on.ca/en/collections-research](http://www.rom.on.ca/en/collections-research) Just like his father, George (we knew George as an Honorary Member of the OSFN), Mark Peck, has a penchant for teaching.

## *Ontario Nature Conservation Awards*

Do you know a conservation hero whose efforts and accomplishments deserve recognition? Now is your chance to nominate them for one of Ontario Nature's Conservation Awards and to celebrate their achievements!

Further information, including the Conservation Awards Flyer, Nomination Form and Procedure can be found at: [ontarionature.org/take-action/conservation-awards/](http://ontarionature.org/take-action/conservation-awards/)

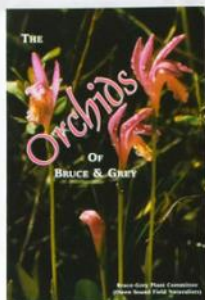
# Publications by Owen Sound Field Naturalists

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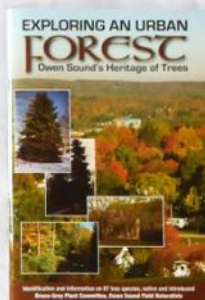
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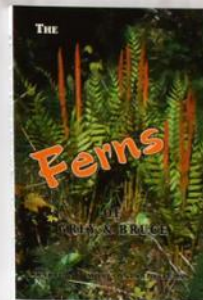
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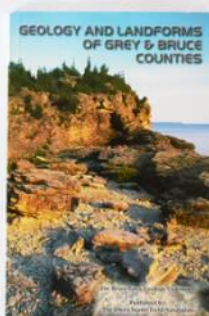
\$25.00



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\$30.00



\$10.00



\$10.00

*The Checklist of Vascular Plants for Bruce & Grey Counties* is out of print! A digital copy of the 2010 Edition, shown above, can be downloaded from the Website. We are looking forward to working with Tyler Miller who will be updating the checklist. Tyler is a botanist / ecologist from the Peninsula and will be completing this revision and update in 2022. Stay tuned for more information as it unfolds. **The Publications Committee**—Audrey Armstrong, Barbara Palmer & Norah Toth

## 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 2020-2021 Christmas Bird Count marked the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Owen Sound count. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, 31 participants tallied 7723 individuals of 67 species. Overall, a good number of species, however the number of individuals seemed to be down slightly this year. The weather was fairly cooperative throughout the day, with temperatures between -1.2 and 0.9°. Some heavy snowfall in the afternoon hindered birding and may have contributed to the low numbers we tallied. COVID-19 also had an impact on this year's count. Participants were encouraged to practice physical distancing and to bird their areas in separate vehicles and we unfortunately had to forego the traditional end-of-day meet up. We had less participants this year than usual, although for the first time in many years we had several participants stay home to do feeder watches.

Some highlights from this year's count included Ring-necked Duck, Black Scoter, Peregrine Falcon, Winter Wren, Common Grackle, and at least one Brown-headed Cowbird. The Barrow's Goldeneye that frequents the Owen Sound harbour in winter was tallied for the fourth count in a row this year. Only one species received a high count this year, Red-bellied Woodpecker (21). Several species were seen in lower numbers than usual, including House Sparrow (29) and Brown Creeper (1). One species completely absent this year was Golden-crowned Kinglet. This past fall, there was a massive southward irruption of northern finches, and although most had already passed through before the count date, we still were able to tally Pine Grosbeaks (7), Evening Grosbeaks (50), Common Redpolls (141), and a single Pine Siskin.

An additional three species were seen during the week of the count, but not on count day: Common Loon, Northern Goshawk, and Great Horned Owl.

**Submitted by:** Erik Van Den Kieboom

## **Saugeen Shores Christmas Bird Count**

On Monday, the 4th of January, 2021 19 field observers and 8 feeder counters participated in the 17th Saugeen Shores Christmas Bird Count. The temperature was quite mild (0°C) and the sky remained overcast all day.

A record high 68 species were recorded (previous was 64), which is way above the average of 53 species.

This increase was likely due to the mild winter that we are experiencing. Also, due to COVID-19, the areas were all divided up into smaller sections, with one household covering each. This definitively led to a more thorough coverage of the count circle.

The number of total individuals seen was 7,652, which is slightly above the average of 6,675, but well below the high of 12,225.

No new species were added to the all-time count list this year.

**Highlight birds included:** Iceland Gull (3rd record); Tufted Titmouse (2nd record); Eastern Meadowlark (2nd record); Great Blue Heron (4th record); Merlin (4th record); Chipping Sparrow (2nd record).

**Six species were recorded in record high numbers:** Greater Scaup - 58 (previous high 40); Common Goldeneye - 236 (previous high 168); Horned Lark - 39 (previous high 17); Bohemian Waxwing - 190 (previous high 148).

No low counts were recorded.

The only notable miss on the count was Snowy Owl, although it was recorded during count week.

Most of the winter finches have left Bruce County, but there were a few species present in low numbers. Pine Grosbeak - 6; Common Redpoll - 217; Pine Siskin - 3; American Goldfinch - 142.

**Submitted by:** Kiah Jasper

## **Warton Christmas Bird Count**

The 47<sup>th</sup> Warton Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 20. Temperatures hovered between 0.5°C and 1.8°C all day, with some fog, light rain and drizzle for the first part of the morning, and overcast skies for the rest of the day. Fairly steady 17-25 kph winds throughout the 24-hour period hampered owling efforts both pre-dawn and post-sunset. The waters of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron were open, as were faster-flowing creeks and rivers, but most inland water bodies were frozen, as were sheltered bays of Lake Huron. There was a thin layer of slushy snow on the ground.

Twenty-six socially-distanced participants and three feeder



## **Grey Bruce CBCs continued**

watchers tallied 55 species, well above the long-term average of 48.9 species, and slightly above the 10-year average of 52.6. The total of 3,816 individual birds was higher than the overall average of 3,431, but below the 10-year average of 4,185 birds.

One new species for the count was recorded: a resplendent male Baltimore Oriole visiting a feeder in Oxenden was seen by the homeowners on count day. The oriole raised the cumulative species total to 129 since the first Wiarton CBC in 1970. I was able to photograph the bird (pic attached) and speak with the home owners the day after the count.

Other excellent finds were a long-staying Common Yellowthroat at Sky Lake (3<sup>rd</sup>-ever count), a Gray Catbird near Hepworth (also 3<sup>rd</sup> count), an Iceland Gull on the ice at Oliphant (surprisingly only the 2<sup>nd</sup> count), and a Northern Harrier (7<sup>th</sup> count).

Tundra Swan was the only species observed in record high numbers (7, previous high 4). The 1,077 Canada Goose were just shy of the all-time high of 1,151. The 14 Red-tailed (average 5) and 14 Rough-legged (average 3.4) hawks, were relatively high totals, no doubt reflecting the abundant mouse and vole populations in the area this year.

This was the second count in a row without a Snow Bunting (otherwise annual since 1972). No grebes of any kind were observed, only the third time this has happened since the late 1980s. Aside from 233 Common Redpolls, irruptive winter finches had pretty much left the area since the heavy movement earlier in the fall, with just 2 Pine Siskins, 8 Pine Grosbeaks and 6 Evening Grosbeaks counted. Introduced House Finches were absent after being nearly annual for over 33 years, while House Sparrows (11) were found at only one location, reflecting generally low numbers in recent years.

Thanks to all the volunteers for your efforts!

**Submitted by:** Jarmo Jalava

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

The tenth annual Neyaashiinigiing (Cape Croker) Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 19, on the spectacular eastern coast of the Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula. It was a cloudy day with southerly 18-24 kph winds. Snow started to fall around 11:00 am, but amounted to only a few cm. Temperatures ranged from about -5°C during pre-dawn owling to 0°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 5-10 cm layer of snow on the ground.

Fifteen socially-distanced participants tallied a total of 39 species, very close to the average of 39.8. The 1159 individual birds was slightly above the average of 1027.

Highlights included the count's first-ever Winter Wren and Hoary Redpoll, as well as Northern Goshawk (4th count) and Common Grackle (4th count).

High totals were tallied for seven species: Ring-billed Gull (9,

previous high 7, average 2), Red-tailed Hawk (4, previous high 1), Rough-legged Hawk (4, previous high 1), Hairy Woodpecker (9, tied previous high) and Common Raven (39, previous high 36).

Low counts were recorded for Long-tailed Duck (2, average 14) and Horned Grebe (1, average 8 -- after an amazing 47 individuals in 2019). Other notable misses were Common Merganser (missed on 2 previous counts) and Red-bellied Woodpecker (annual until 2017, now missed 3 years in a row).

Chi Miigwetch to Neyaashiinigiing (Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation) community for hosting this always special birding event.

**Submitted by:** Jarmo Jalava and Miptoon (Anthony Chegahno)

### **Pike Bay Christmas Bird Count**

The count was held on December 29, 2020.

We tallied both our 2nd highest species count (51; high is 55 in 2015) and individual bird count (2735; high is 3327). American Kestrel and Great Blue Heron were added during count week (3 days before and after count day) bringing our total to 53 species. We just narrowly missed Hooded Merganser, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Sandhill Crane for count week. The crane was observed both before and after count week, but not during, which while rather frustrating is interesting to know that a bird that size could escape sight from the many observers. Looking back to 2015 I can't explain why we had such a high species count, although the two mega rarities (White-eyed Vireo and Eurasian Tree Sparrow) certainly helped. At any rate, our count this year was well above the 6-year average (40 species and 2253 individuals).

I think a count day total of 55 species is indeed a lofty goal to shoot for on future counts and will certainly need to include the recording of several owl species that are most certainly present but go unrecorded regularly. We have still never recorded Barred Owl on this count.

Three new species were recorded for the count which now stands at 84 species after our 7th season. American Wigeon, Turkey Vulture and the aforementioned Great Blue Heron. Harlequin Duck and Evening Grosbeak were removed from our "count week only" list, the latter thanks to 4 birds coming to a feeder. A Gyrfalcon had been present in the same region of the peninsula as last year's count so thanks to our one local team and I'm sure a bit of luck, we once again recorded this scarce southern Ontario winter visitor. One Red-winged Blackbird (2nd record) was recorded - they're pretty scarce in Grey-Bruce during the winter months.

Count day weather was really quite pleasant with single digit negative temperatures, light winds, partly cloudy skies, and little to no precipitation. Smaller, still water bodies were mostly frozen but the lake was open to wildlife on both sides of the peninsula and the inland rivers and channels were accessible as well.



### **Grey Bruce CBCs continued**

About every third species listed broke a count high record. Only two species showed lower than average numbers and I noticed similar results for both of these on all other counts this season.

**Submitted by:** Andrew Keaveney

#### **Cape Chin Christmas Bird Count**

Our tally of 37 species on count day, December 30, 2020, ties that of our first count in 2016 for highest species total but our total count of 1215 birds seemed rather low (2nd lowest in our 5 year history). Both the crumbly count day weather and the apparent lack of bird life in the upper Bruce this winter, especially in the woods, fits with our count results. Factoring in a further 5 count week species does leave us with our highest CBC total to date though, and that can be attributed to the many dedicated observers that were all frankly looking to get outside for something to do during this crazy time in history. Common Merganser (observed in count week once before) and Pine Siskin were two of the welcome count week additions.

What keeps these counts interesting for most birders is how different they can be. A casual birder might think a few chickadees, ravens and woodpeckers are all that's around to see but we know better! Rough-legged Hawk, Lapland Longspur and House Sparrow were new additions to the count and icing to the cake followed with Winter Wren, Northern Hawk-Owl and a Northern Saw-whet Owl during count week. While I'd asked the young observer who had a Saw-whet in a tree on his property to twist-tie its legs overnight so we'd get it on count day, he politely declined, citing the ethicality and legal issues.

The weather on count day was often unpleasant. Snow squalls plagued the morning and light to moderate rain soaked several of us out hiking in the afternoon. My poor pooch Kiera is now getting on in years and after 100+ CBC's, took it a bit easier this season. I had her out on a few of the 10 CBC's I completed and regrettably the Cape Chin CBC was one of them. Like us, she came dressed for cool weather, but I don't think the three of us were expecting rain so the round trip on Cabot Head road was a test in patience and true CBC vigour! I did have to throw her over my shoulders and trek a few hundred meters at one point which I think was fun for both of us.

While there were still several record high and low counts, none were all that significant except the Snowy Owls. Even though it's still early on in the history of this count the subtle highs and lows can be teased out by an astute observer. For instance, following in the footsteps of the Tobermory count, grebes and other sea ducks were difficult to come by on Georgian Bay. Finch diversity was largely missed, with one Dyer's Bay feeder hosting 50+ Evening Grosbeaks in the morning and an estimated 180 Common Redpolls mixing with Snow Buntings at dusk just north of "Tru Foods" on Highway 6.

**Submitted by:** Andrew Keaveney

#### **Meaford Christmas Bird Count**

The 50th annual Count was held on Monday December 28<sup>th</sup> under somewhat unfavourable conditions! Although the day started with a fine rain, continued with mist throughout the morning, graduated to snow and snow-squalls in the afternoon, visibility was poor all day, and counters were spread out in "COVID car convoys", the Count results were surprisingly great! I've attached the tallies for each Area, and the total results for your perusal.

Our 24 participants found 59 species, continuing the trend of the past 10 years of totaling over 50 species in the Meaford circle. Prior to that the average was 46 species. 59 species ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the all-time totals. Only back in 1975 were more species recorded (60).

Total individuals at 4324 birds were slightly over the past count average.

One new species was added to the 50-year cumulative total for this count – Hoary Redpoll – 2 of them. This addition brings the all-time cumulative total to 123 species.

Five additional species were found in "Count Week" (3 days before & 3 days after Count Day) which illustrates the potential for a mega-count one fine day in the future!

No exceptional all-time highs or lows were recoded this year (remember that lousy weather...) but diversity was good due partially to the lingering winter finches from this fall's "superflight" of those beautiful boreal birds! Bohemian Waxwing, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, the new Hoary Redpolls, and White-winged Crossbill all put in special and rare appearances.

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! This happened last year too!

Lingering migrants included several Northern Flickers, a White-throated Sparrow, and the Count Week Northern Pintail, Eastern Bluebirds and Red-headed Woodpecker (juvie).

**Submitted by:** Lynne Richardson

#### **Tobermory Christmas Bird Count**

On December 16th, 45 hardy birders fanned out across northernmost Bruce County to conduct the 48th annual Tobermory Christmas Bird Count. Light snow cover and mild



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### Grey Bruce CBCs continued

temperatures (-7° to -4°C) contributed to a productive and enjoyable experience. The format this year was modified to provide for physical distancing between household groups and, rather than gathering for breakfast at the Parks Canada Visitors Centre this year, the birding parties received breakfast sandwiches and bags of tasty snacks off-site.

The final group tabulation, done over a video call later in the evening, resulted in a tally of 1105 individual birds (average is 1613) of 42 species (average is 40).

A highlight was a count-first Golden Eagle seen flying near Driftwood Cove. Also notable was a new record high of 56 Common Mergansers (average is 9). Wild Turkeys have been observed every year since first detected in 2008. This year's count of 49 nearly doubled the previous high. Two each of Great Blue Heron and White-crowned Sparrow tied the highs for these species logged in 1997 and 1977, respectively.

Southern Ontario, including our area, experienced an unprecedented flight of the much-loved Evening Grosbeak this fall but none remained to be seen on the count. Other so-called "winter finches" were noted, among them 12 Pine Grosbeaks and 50 Common Redpolls.

Additional species that were missed on the day of the count, but seen within the count week period, included a Long-tailed duck in Little Tub, a Common Loon in Big Tub, a Snowy Owl in Corisande Bay, a flock of Bohemian Waxwings at the Golf Course and an American Robin on Big Tub Road.

**Submitted by:** Michael Butler and Tricia Robins

### Club News: Owl Prowl

Jarmo Jalava and Tony Chegahno led an Owl Prowl event on November 29. Featured were beautiful Short-eared Owls, swooping low as they hunted over a meadow. There were also good views of Rough-legged Hawks, a Bald Eagle and a bounty of Snow Buntings. Jarmo's joyful exuberance at seeing these magnificent owls was contagious.

Jarmo provided this eloquent commentary: "It's always a thrill to see these rather mysterious crepuscular creatures fluttering moth-like over the fields in the waning light in search of prey. I have no doubt there are several Short-eared Owls lingering on the Peninsula this autumn because of an exceptional abundance of mice and voles. Rough-legged Hawk numbers also seem higher than normal."

**Submitted by:** John Dickson

*In North America, this Rough-legged Hawk breeds in the tundra and taiga. It spends winters throughout central North America, including Grey-Bruce.*

**Credit:** Mike Tettenborn



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## **NEW – Checklist of the Birds of Grey-Bruce**

### **Grey-Bruce Bird Records Committee Report**

Have you ever wondered just how many species of birds have been recorded in Grey & Bruce Counties? Or how many species breed here? How many species are found here only in the winter? Or only during spring or fall migration? Of the 36 species of warblers that have been found in the two Counties, how many stay to nest here? Well, you don't have to search the 'net or refer to numerous field guides for the answers to these questions. This information can all be found in the newly updated **2020 Checklist of the Birds of Grey & Bruce**.

In 2012, the Owen Sound Field Naturalists Board appointed Dave Fidler to the task of updating the old 1998 Checklist. He revived the Grey-Bruce Bird Records Committee with reps from the OSFN (Peter Middleton, Lynne Richardson), the Huron Fringe Field Naturalists (James Turland) and the Saugeen Field Naturalists (Jerry Asling). This group produced a new Checklist updated to 2013, adding 21 new species to the total species found in the two counties.

Dave Fidler resigned from the Committee in 2016, and Peter Middleton stepped in as Chair. Michael Butler, representing the bird-rich Bruce Peninsula, and Gerrard McNaughton representing the southerly area of the counties, were welcome additions to the Committee.

The last few years have seen the Committee review numerous records of birds rarely found in Grey-Bruce, add 10 new species, revise the taxonomic order of the list to match the current eBird/AOU order, change the status of various species (e.g. from single sightings to more frequent sightings, non-breeding to breeding, etc), and added new status categories including 'Species at Risk' and Extirpated/Extinct. A note regarding the Birding Code of Ethics has been added given the ever-increasing popularity of birding and bird photography and the sensitivity of our feathered friends to disturbance. The Committee also decided to revise the Checklist from the previous 8-page cardstock format to a single (2-sided) page that can be posted on the Club's website and easily downloaded.

One species was removed from the Checklist – Thayer's Gull,

which was considered a separate species until 2017. It is now considered a subspecies of Iceland Gull. And there is one less warbler than there was in the 2013 Checklist as the Yellow-breasted Chat is now considered a separate species. These 'splits' and 'lumps' happen from time to time as our knowledge of the genetic makeup of bird species grows.

There is a lot of information packed into this little one-page checklist!

Ten species have been newly recorded in the two counties since 2013, bringing the total list of birds recorded in Grey-Bruce to **349** species:

Common Eider  
Eurasian Dotterel (a *Canadian* first!)  
Reddish Egret (an *Ontario* first!)  
Mississippi Kite  
Lewis's Woodpecker  
Cave Swallow  
Rock Wren  
Golden-crowned Sparrow  
Nelson's Sparrow  
Spotted Towhee

The Committee will continue to meet annually to review new records and keep the checklist up to date. Reporting forms can be downloaded from and submitted to the OSFN website ([www.osfn.ca](http://www.osfn.ca)) or any member of the Checklist Committee. The Committee is particularly interested in reports on birds not found on the new checklist, or any species noted as **C** or **A** (Casual, ie: vagrant/rare, or Accidental). Already, three more species new to Grey-Bruce are currently pending review, including the amazing Canada-second Scott's Oriole, and these will soon be added to the Checklist.

The Checklist has been posted on the OSFN website. Check it out! Download a copy for your next excursion. Go birding! Enjoy!

**Submitted by:** Lynne Richardson  
on behalf of the Grey-Bruce Bird Records Committee

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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.



*Evening Grosbeaks. Credit: David Turner*



*White-winged Crossbills have been sighted in many spots this year, and I have enjoyed their presence in spruce trees near the house. Winter has provided many close-to-home treasures in this season of lockdown/isolation! Credit: Merri-Lee Metzger*



*Red Squirrel dashing through the snow. Credit: Carol L. Edwards*

## Facebook

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