



Submitted by Lois Gillette

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Please submit your pictures and articles for the May newsletter no later than Sept. 15 to Nancy Muzik at john_nancy_m@rogers.com

THE NATURALIST

DURHAM REGION FIELD NATURALISTS
CONSERVATION THROUGH EDUCATION
www.drfn.ca drfn1955@hotmail.com

President's Message

I'm sure most of you know that Durham Region Field Naturalists is a member of Ontario Nature. But do you know what Ontario Nature does for our club? Or why you should become an individual member?



Our club along with more than 150 local conservation groups are a part of Ontario Nature's Nature Network. As is written on their website <https://ontarionature.org/> "The Nature Network is our eyes and ears on the ground. Together we are a powerful collective voice for conservation. Many of our conservation initiatives would not be possible without the help of the Nature Network member groups."

The Nature Network is divided into seven regional groups. DRFN is a member of the Ontario North group. Each regional group has two meetings per year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The meetings are hosted by one of the member groups. This spring Pickering Field Naturalists hosted the meeting. DRFN has hosted many meetings. At every meeting there are individuals from the groups, usually executive members, but other members are always welcome provided there is room and they have indicated before the meeting that they would like to attend. All clubs are given the opportunity to tell us about the issues affecting them and the exciting programmes, events or projects they are working on. And there are representatives from Ontario Nature who fill us in on the issues, projects and events and campaigns they are working on. They also provide information and offer their help to better guide us through the issues that we are facing.

So, what are the issues that Ontario Nature is dealing with? Well for one thing they have been "standing up for a strong Endangered Species Act" against a bill in which the Government of Ontario proposed "a drastic overhaul of Ontario's Endangered Species Act, 2007 (ESA) through changes put forward in Schedule 5 of Bill 108, an omnibus bill tabled on May 2, 2019." There are serious concerns that "the overall direction is to roll back protections for species

Upcoming Meetings

Meetings: last Monday of each month except June-August and December

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Place: Civic Rec Complex, Bobby Orr Room, 99 Thornton S., Oshawa.

Come a little early to enjoy conversation and refreshments ('lug-a-mug')

May 27, 2019

Members Night and Annual General Meeting

June, July and August – no meetings scheduled in the summer months

September 30, 2019

TBA

October 28, 2019

Dr. Andrew Peregrine, “Lyme Disease What is Happening in Ontario”

at risk and make it easier for industry and development proponents to proceed with activities that harm these species and their habitats” They also provided us with a kit of resources to better understand the issue (see the Ontario Nature report). I hope you helped them by signing their petition.

Ontario Nature has various projects, one being the Citizen Science where you are invited to aid them in determining the “distributions and spatial trends of reptiles and amphibians across the province over time.” Such a project was used to create the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. Other programmes include protection of the Boreal Forest, promoting Sustainable Forestry, seeking to create more Protected Places, etc. The Protected Places project started after 2010 when Canada endorsed the United Nations target to protect at least 17 percent of the planet’s land and inland waters by 2020. This [national commitment](#) was then adopted in the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy ([target 13](#)), opening the door to a new and welcome opportunity to protect the places we love. You can sign the declaration to show you care about protected places.

<https://ontarionature.org/campaigns/protected-places/>

Ontario Nature campaigned and helped stop the recent Government of Ontario Bill 66 schedule 10 that “would have overridden protections for water, natural heritage and farmland in municipalities across Ontario.”

They have a Pollinator campaign to “help protect bees and other wild pollinators”. They explain that “Bees and other pollinators are critical to the health of our ecosystems. Yet they are in serious decline due to the combination of habitat loss, disease, climate change and exposure to pesticides such as neonicotinoids (neonics).” You are invited to donate by visiting <https://ontarionature.org/campaigns/pollinators/>.

Other campaigns include: Wetlands, Migratory Birds and Natural Heritage Systems Planning.

Ontario Nature also invites you to take action by staying informed, advocate for nature, reduce your environmental footprint and by volunteering.

So, I hope I have given you an idea of how important Ontario Nature is to us. Please join them as an individual and add your voice to protecting nature.

Lois Gillette

Future Outings

June 7 – 9, 2019

DRFN Annual Weekend Outing

This year for our annual spring weekend outing we are going to one of my favourite parks, Sandbanks Provincial Park. It is situated in Prince Edward County along Lake Ontario not far from Picton and about an hour's drive from Oshawa. Derek and I usually go there in May during the spring migration. PEC, aka The County is well-known for its birds, its cheese and its wine. Sandbanks P.P. is famous for having the "world's largest baymouth barrier dune formation" (<https://www.ontarioparks.com/park/sandbanks>) and lovely sandy beaches. It has 8 km of walking trails "that allow visitors to experience the dune and wetland habitats of the park". Nearby, is Beaver Meadow Wildlife Management Area with walking trails through a deciduous forest and wetlands. So please join us for this exciting weekend of seeking out nature in this beautiful location, enjoying the company of fellow nature lovers, and sharing food on Saturday evening after a long day of hiking. Derek and I will be camping in the park but there are also B &B's and motels nearby. Wellington is the nearest town to the park. Note: if you do not wish to stay overnight you can still spend Saturday with the group. Contact me at dlgill@sympatico.ca.

Lois Gillette

Wednesday, June 12 at 5:30 PM

Carden Alvar

Leader: Otto Peter

An opportunity to experience the sights and sounds of the Alvar in the early evening. Weather permitting; we may see Blue Birds, Loggerhead Shrikes, Upland Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, a variety of Sparrows, Nighthawks, prairie wildflowers and listen to lovely Thrush songs (or coyote yelps) as the sun sets. (Stay late and you may see fire flies and hear Whip-poor-wills.)

Meet at the Northview Library parking lot. (Alternately meet at Wylie and McNamee Roads at the Carden Alvar at 6:30 PM.)

Difficulty: Light walking.

Bring water and insect protection.

Saturday, July 06 at 1:00 PM

Butterfly Walk at Heber Down Conservation Area

Leader: Rayfield Pye

It's prime time to see butterflies. With construction south of the conservation area complicating driving, we'll meet in the peaceful north.

Meet at the Northeast parking lot. From Highway 7 drive south on Cochrane Street.

Bring water, sun screen and insect repellent.

Difficulty: Light walking.

Saturday, August 24 at 10 AM

Samuel Wilmot Nature Area

Brian Reid will introduce us to the area and show us the main trails.

This is an opportunity to learn about this fascinating area. Expect butterflies, birds and flowers.

Take 401 to exit 436 for Highway 35/115 toward Lindsay/Peterborough. Merge onto Highway 115. Take the exit toward Newcastle. Merge onto Hwy 2. Turn right at Cobble Dick Road. Follow Cobble Dick Road south; parking lot is on the right.

Check the weather forecast and dress accordingly.

Bring sun screen, water and insect repellent.

Difficulty: Extensive light walking.

Don Docherty

Past Outings

Presqu'ile Provincial Park

March 23



Submitted by Lois Gillette

and American Wigeon were also seen.

Several different types of Woodpecker were active around the siting's board area. Some of the group saw Red-bellied, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers in close proximity.

Even though weather conditions were not seasonal, Song Sparrows had arrived. We knew that Spring was on the way.

Some of the birds seen were brand new (Life) species for some attendees. The Park's accessibility, even in a bad winter, makes it a great place to see waterfowl in March.

The weather was not pleasant and access was limited to some areas because of ice conditions but we did see most our target waterfowl species.

Canvass backs are not commonly seen in Durham but they are a beautiful duck. We managed to have good views from the Government Dock and benefitted by comparing them with Redheads swimming nearby. We also had close looks at White-winged Scoters from the same location. We had to walk into the Calf Pasture viewing area due to ice covered roads but were rewarded with fine looks at Hooded Mergansers and Ring-necked Ducks.

Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneye, Gadwall, Mallard



Submitted by Lois Gillette

Alex Robertson Park (Pickering) April 28

We had a chilly start to our walk but the trails were clear and not too wet. The woods and the marsh were quiet but once we reached some warm clearings, we started to see birds. Our first pleasant surprise was a Field Sparrow that posed on a short tree long enough for most to see it. There were small numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers as well as Song Sparrows in the shrubs and trees beside the path as we walked. The smooth water of Lake Ontario already had active Cormorants but a couple of Common Loons and a Red-necked Grebe were also present. As we watched, a small commotion got our attention and our first Common Tern of the year flew in with a fish in its mouth. A small nesting platform in the adjacent marsh will be their nest site so check periodically from the observation platform.

As we walked back, we saw a confrontation between a Red-tailed Hawk and a Common Raven.

Spring can be quite confusing since Pine Warblers and Chipping Sparrows sound similar. We walked to a clearing with some tall pines and deciduous trees where we located both these birds plus a Brown Creeper and Hermit Thrush.

Since a rare Hermit Warbler was being seen at Thickson's Woods, some of us headed there and were able to see it happily feeding on midges.

Visit Alex Robertson Park throughout the spring for migrants and scan the marsh for nesting birds.

Don Docherty

Wildflower Outing– Stephens Gulch C.A. May 18, 2019



Submitted by Lois Gillette



Submitted by John Muzik

This outing was originally scheduled to be held at Old Swamp Road Walking Trail and Yeo Side Trail (Murray's Woods) near Mosport. Due to a busy weekend at the racetrack, it was decided to move the outing to another venue more conducive to the quiet appreciation of nature. Hence Stephens Gulch C.A.! My apologies for any misunderstandings that may have occurred because of this last-minute change! None-the-less on a bright, sunny, warm morning 14 plant enthusiasts presented themselves at Stephens Gulch including our leader and plant expert Wilf Bradnock. As we walked the park's trail Wilf pointed out the many wildflowers, providing us with common and scientific names and relayed some natural history of each.

This spring has been a late and cool one. The forest was still carpeted not only with White Trilliums but also with

Red Trilliums (Wake-Robin) usually mostly gone by now. A few Spring Beauties persisted as did the Sharpe-



Submitted by John Muzik

Lobed Hepatica, some with pinkish blooms and some with blue blooms. The Blue Cohoshes were just starting to show their purplish 6-petaled flowers. We found Barren Strawberries next to the path, their small yellow flowers peeking out from their compound evergreen leaves. On the hillsides were patches of Large-Flowered Bellwort with their delicate drooping yellow bell-shaped flowers. The odd Trout Lily persisted. Canada Mayflowers and Foamflowers were just coming into bloom. Both plants have white, racemic flower clusters. Stephens Gulch C.A. delighted us with a splendid showing of spring wildflowers.

And for the bird enthusiasts among us there were Ovenbirds and Wood Thrushes calling. We spied Red-breasted Grosbeaks, an Indigo Bunting, a Chestnut-

Sided Warbler, a Black-Throated Blue Warbler and a Black-Throated Green Warbler to name a few.

It was a lovely morning! Thank you, Wilf, for leading us.

Lois Gillette

ahhhh finally, Spring warmth



Submitted by John McFeeters

Invest in the Future – Take a Kid Birding

Blog published April 25, 2019 on BirdsCanada.org

My husband and I have always been interested in the birds around us but it was our son who made a difference in our birding behaviour. As a Cub Scout, to earn a badge, he built a birdfeeder and had to observe and record



all activity at it for a month. He would watch while he ate breakfast and sit at the kitchen table to do his homework so he could observe the birds. I was instructed to watch the birds while he was at school! Since he showed such a keen interest, we encouraged his bird-watching and participated with him.

Our encouragement of young people has continued on several fronts. Since our grandson was 2 years old (he is now 11) we have taught him the songs and visual identification of the common birds that come to our feeders. It was great fun to watch him call the chickadees through our kitchen window with his enthusiastic “chick-a-dee-dee-dee “when he was little. He watches his feeder at home often and wants to know what we see here as we live in different areas. He has joined us several times when our local Naturalist Club has gone to Niagara Falls

for our annual “Gull Outing “in November. In the summer at our cottage north of Kingston he is always ready for a walk to look for all things in nature i.e. birds, insects, frogs, snakes and plants. He has also accompanied us twice to Ontario Nature’s AGM in June and taken part in workshops and outings. He has his own field guide and likes to try to find the birds he sees in it.

One Thanksgiving, while all our family was visiting, our son and 3 grandchildren made birdfeeders from pine cones, peanut butter and bird seed. We all went to Thickson’s Woods and hung them from various tree branches. The children were so excited when the chickadees ate from their hands.

Several years ago, the youngest member of our Naturalist Club, a Grade 6er, accompanied us on my Baillie Bird-a-thon. Our club also sponsored him for 3 years to attend Ontario Nature’s Youth Summit held every September for young people 13+ who are interested in nature. The funds returned to our club from the amount I raise each year on the Bird-a-thon are used to sponsor local youth who wish to attend ON’s Youth Summit. I am thrilled to say we will be sponsoring 3 teens this year. I challenge other participants to do the same. After all, the future of our natural world is in their hands.

Diane Peter

There is still time to help Diane support our club’s initiative to sponsor 3 youth [click here to donate](https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon19/page/help-the-birds-and-our-future-naturalists/)
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon19/page/help-the-birds-and-our-future-naturalists/>

Make Yourself a Toad Abode

Instructions from the Toronto Zoo



You'll need: clay flower pot or wooden box, an instrument for making holes in clay pot/box (drill, hammer and nail, etc.) and a large shallow pan.

1. Make a hole in the side of the clay pot or box, up far enough so it's accessible to the toad.
2. Dig hole large enough for the pot/box, about 3" deep or more, under plants to shade pot.
3. Bury the container under the bush, with entrance at soil level.
4. Set out a shallow pan of water nearby, close to the garden, so the toad can sit in it and drink.

Toads may not use your toad home if there are other hiding spots, but it is a nice garden ornament (with a message!)

Anne Hide

Antler Shed

Finding a shed antler in the Spring is quite a thrill. It indicates that sometime between late December and possibly as late as mid March a buck had passed within a few feet of where you are standing and dropped this once very important piece of headgear.

The purpose of antlers is to display for does, posture for dominance among rivals and in rare cases if necessary, fight another buck for the coveted Fall breeding rights.

Following the rut (breeding time) the now useless antler is shed in preparation for the growth of the buck's next set of antlers. This growth begins due to various hormones being released as a result of Spring's increased amount of daylight sending messages via the eye's optic nerve to numerous glands.

By the way, if you do find a shed antler, look around, the second antler is probably nearby.



John McFeeters

Spring Pics



The McFeeters Spring visitors to their Backyard submitted by John McFeeters



Spring walks and backyard visitors submitted by John Muzik

Ontario Nature Report

The following is an excerpt of a letter written by Caroline Shultz, Executive Director, Ontario Nature.

“On the afternoon of May 2, Ontario’s wild species came under unprecedented attack with the introduction of the omnibus bill (Bill 108) called the More Homes, More Choice Act, ostensibly aimed at increasing Ontario’s housing supply.

An omnibus bill is a proposed law that bundles related but separate parts. Bill 108 proposes changes to many seemingly unrelated laws ranging from the Cannabis Control Act, 2017, to the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to the Environmental Assessment Act, 1990.

Bill 108 contains much that is of concern to Ontarians. We would like to direct your attention to the proposed changes laid out in Schedule 5, more aptly dubbed the Extinction Schedule. If this bill comes into law, the Extinction Schedule could cause dozens of Ontario’s most vulnerable wildlife species to decline or even disappear from our province.

Although the deadline for comments on the Bill 108 has passed you can still take parts of this draft and contact your local MPP, the Premier, or the Environment minister to express your opposition to Bill 108.”

Below is a document prepared by Ontario nature on the ten things you need to know about the bill.

Save Ontario Species



The provincial government plans to amend the Endangered Species Act, 2007 (ESA). Here are our top 10 concerns.

1. “Pay to Slay”

Allow developers and other proponents of harmful activities to pay into a fund in lieu of fulfilling requirements for on-the-ground reparation for damage done.

2. Rejecting Science

Broaden COSSARO membership to include those who may not have adequate expertise in species assessment or may have a different agenda altogether.

3. Limiting Protections

Limit ESA protections so that they apply only in specific geographies or under specific circumstances. This could exclude important habitats and species from protection.

4. Deserting “Edge of Range” Species

Require COSSARO to base its assessments not on the status of a species in Ontario, but instead on its status throughout its range. For example, southern Ontario endangered species at the northern limit of their range may receive less or no protection, depending on their status outside Ontario.

5. Sweeping Authorizations for Harmful Activities

Create “landscape agreements” for proponents undertaking harmful activities in multiple locations.

6. Dodging Requirements

Allow activities approved under other laws to be carried out without any additional authorizations under the ESA, even if they harm threatened or endangered species or their habitats.

7. Goodbye to Expert Input

Remove the requirement for the Minister to consult with an independent expert prior to creating regulations that would jeopardize the survival of a species in Ontario.

8. Veto of Automatic Protections

Allow the Minister to have greater “discretion on protections,” including suspending protections for up to three years without public consultation.

9. Interfering with the Listing of Species at Risk

Allow the Minister to require COSSARO to reconsider its science-based listing decisions.

10. Delays, Delays, Delays

Multiple delays are proposed for the listing, planning and reporting on species at risk, undermining species recovery.

To find out more information and how you can help, visit:
ontarionature.org/endangered-species