

Don't Forget to Renew Your Membership.

See Diane Peter at the November Meeting or call her at 905-725-0982. Complete Form on page 8

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Bucket Raffle

The November meeting features our annual bucket raffle. Bring your donations of gently used nature books and other nature items, wine, chocolate, preserves, fair-trade coffee etc. to the meeting. Raffle tickets will be sold prior to the meeting: 3 tickets for \$2 or 10 tickets for \$5.

THE NATURALIST

DURHAM REGION FIELD NATURALISTS
CONSERVATION THROUGH EDUCATION
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President's Message

Your gold may be killing the planet! Well, maybe not the gold you are wearing right now. Seriously it is not the gold itself that is the problem - it is the mining of it that is. According to Wikipedia "As of 2016, the [world's largest](#) gold producer was [China](#) with 463.7 [tonnes](#).

The second-largest producer, [Australia](#), mined 287.3 tonnes in the same year, followed by [Russia](#) with 274.4 tonnes". "While most of the gold is produced by major corporations, tens of thousands of people work independently in smaller, [artisan](#) operations, in some cases [illegally](#)." Brazil, Peru and Ghana are 3 countries where illegal mining is rampant. Mercury is often used in these illegal placer mining operations. Why am I on about this now? Well I just caught the latest edition of a CNN documentary series [The Wonder List](#) with journalist Bill Weir. Through this series Bill takes us to those places in the world that are being destroyed and changed forever. Places like Madagascar which is now almost completely deforested. I was there, I saw it. Top-soil leaching into the rivers and ocean can be seen from space. And places like the Amazon Basin of Peru. In this show I saw "Bill Weir gets a firsthand look at the devastating impact illegal gold mining is having on Peru's Amazon rainforest". He enters the area through Puerto Maldonado. I was there! It is an area full of lush rainforest teeming with macaws and other wildlife. The devastation he shows us is heartbreaking, hectares of forest gone. Replaced with sand and toxic pools of standing water. You can watch for yourself at

<http://www.cnn.com/videos/travel/2017/11/06/the-wonder-list-peru-1.cnn>

Bill suggested that we need to know where our gold is coming from. When I looked it up on Wikipedia I discovered that there is indeed a movement toward that very idea. According to Wikipedia "there are clear moves to create a more sustainable and environmentally friendly mining industry. The primary way this is being achieved is via the use of



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')

November 27

Dr. Todd Morris "The Unusual Life Histories of Freshwater Mussels" and Bucket Raffle

December – no meeting

January 29, 2018 – TBA

February 26, 2018

Lois Gillette – Southern Africa Safari

Newsletter

Submissions

Submissions for the January newsletter: deadline January 19, 2018. Email articles and photos to Nancy Muzik at, john_nancy_m@rogers.com

so-called 'clean' or 'ethical' gold. The aim is to get all end users/retailers of gold to adhere to a set of principles that encourage sustainable mining. Campaigns such as 'No Dirty Gold' are driving the message that the mining industry is harmful "and so must be cleaned up. Also, NGOs are urging the industry and consumers to buy sustainably produced gold." The use of fair-trade (a term we are all familiar with) gold was also mentioned.

So, you see there may be hope yet that illegal mining operations will be curtailed, if not completely shut down, by looking more closely at the origins of the gold we purchase

Lois Gillette

dlgill@sympatico.ca

Future Outings

Sunday, November 26

Niagara Gulls

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Leader: Rayfield Pye

Niagara Falls is a common destination for gulls in the winter. In past years we have seen a variety of interesting birds including Lesser Black-backed, Slaty-backed, and California Gulls; Black-legged Kittiwake; Brant; Purple Sandpiper; Red Phalarope, Canvasback; Common Loons; etc. Niagara is also home to Tufted Titmice so a handful of seed may get you a lifer.

Meet to car pool at the southwest corner of the Pickering GO station. The drive to Niagara Falls should take approximately 2 hours.

Difficulty: It can be very cold, wet and/or snowy beside the Niagara River. Dress to stay warm and dry. Wear layers of clothing for flexibility. Casual walking on sidewalks will be required.

Bring water and a lunch or prepare to dine at Tim's in Chippawa.

Sunday, December 17
Durham Christmas Bird Count

Contact Rayfield Pye to participate: 905-436-7998 or raypye@interlinks.net

A sign-up sheet will be available at the November meeting. Check for weather forecast and dress accordingly.

Saturday, January 6, 2018 - 8:45 a.m.
Annual Winter Bird Feeder Tour and Potluck Lunch

Contact Don Docherty

Organized with the help of Judy Bryson. Meet at Mount Zion United Church to drop off food. 9:00 a.m. departure time for a driving tour of feeders. Lunch around noon at Mount Zion Church.

Dress warmly!

Address: 3000 Concession 8, Goodwood (drive north on Westney Road past highway 7 to concession 8, turn right)

Note: In the event of a forecast of bad weather, an email will be sent to the DRFN distribution list the evening before a trip, with trip cancellation or re-scheduling information. If you are not on the list, you may check the DRFN web-site or call the outing leader.

Past Outings

Heber Down Mushroom Walk
Saturday, October 14, 2017 with Duncan Vipond



Submitted by Maria Prisciak

On a beautiful October day, seventeen members of DRFN huddled under the Norway spruce trees at Heber

Down

Conservation area, in Whitby, looking at large white basidiomycetes with distinctive gilled caps. Lead by Duncan Vipond, DRFN members were getting down to earth, mushroom hunting through the forest. On rotting logs, rummaging around downed trees, and searching under damp leaves with field guides in hand, the group was able to unearth a surprising variety of species. It was a dry, hot September so the foraging was more difficult, but the many eyes helped. Fungi work hard, rotting wood and breaking apart tough debris in a forest, decomposing litter making room for other plants to grow. But fungi and their variety of shapes and colours are also a wonderful part of the forests' fall colours. Artists' fungus (polypore) were jutting out like shelves on the trees. Turkey tails looked like lace on the tree logs, undulating on the edge of the bark in a variety of colours. Black, hard carbon balls fungus, and orange jelly (witches' butter) were spotting fallen logs. Large, deep wine coloured resinous polypore fungi adorned the foot of trees, and tiny brown fairy ring mushrooms jutted up delicately from the forest floor. The conversations were good, the weather was perfect, there were very few bugs, and a good time was had by all.

Maria Prisciak



Submitted by Maria Prisciak

Lake Ontario Marshes

Sunday November 5

The weather radar predicted that everything would be clear shortly after we started but the weather did not cooperate and we had a very soggy outing.

Hopes of hawks evaporated but the ducks were not bothered in the least.

Upon arrival at Hall's Road I saw a dozen Turkey scouring a field on the west side. Predatory Chickadees seemed to think that the small number of people present would supply the same haul of seed that they normally collect on a bright, warm day.

The marsh had a healthy collection of ducks and many were in close proximity to the hawk watch platform. Hooded Mergansers, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, and Mallards were all present. There were no Great Egret to be found but 6 Great Blue Heron were seen.

Our next stop was a field on the Northwest corner of Highway 2 and Lakeridge Road where we saw a Cattle Egret standing amongst cattle. There seems to have been a recent influx of these birds to southern Ontario and Durham got its share. There had been 2 in the field on the previous day but one remained on Sunday.

Our final stop was Pumphouse Marsh. We saw more Gadwall, Mallards and an American Widgeon.

At this point, we had reached our saturation point. We headed home to dry out and warm up.

Don Docherty

Ontario Nature Report

We need your support on Giving Tuesday to help make Ontario a safe haven for wild species. Giving

Tuesday, taking place on November 28th, is a day for people to give to the causes and charities that mean the most to them using savings from Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Every dollar you donate will be matched up to \$12,000 by our proud partners at Ontario Power Generation.

On sale now – Ontario Nature holiday cards. Wish your family and friends a festive holiday season with our exclusive 2017 holiday cards featuring a beautiful boreal owl photo.

Get your Ontario Nature gifts of membership today to wrap up your holiday shopping. With just a few clicks, you're done! Each gift of membership includes a special bonus bag of Birds & Beans Ontario Nature blend of organic, fair trade, bird-friendly coffee (with your choice of regular or decaf!), five issues of our award-winning quarterly magazine ON Nature, and a 2018 Ontario Nature membership. Get your gifts of membership now and know you're helping to protect the nature you love.

Maria Prisciak

Piping Plovers- Darlington Provincial Park (2017)



Submitted by Rayfield Pye

The high-water levels on Lake Ontario presented problems for any shorebird attempting to nest on

the beach. On days with south winds the waves would wash away any nest on the beach.

Three different pairs of Piping Plovers attempted to nest 4 times before they were successful. The male nested at Darlington last year and the female was a first-year bird that hatched at Presqu'ile Provincial Park last year.

July 15- 3 eggs hatched

July 19- adult male moved the young chicks to the west beach, 1 chick is missing.

August 8- 1 chick has an injured leg and is picked up and sent to the Toronto Wildlife Centre. It does not survive.

August 11- last remaining chick starts to fly.

August 21- all of the Piping Plovers are gone

August 24- an un-banded young Piping Plover is photographed on the beach

A big thank-you to the over 50 volunteers who covered 140 3-hour shifts watching the Piping Plovers.

A big thank-you to Ian Fife (MNR) who ran the Piping Plover program this year.

Rayfield Pye



Submitted by Rayfield Pye

Project Feeder Watch



Red Bellied Woodpecker submitted by John Muzik

November 11 marks the beginning of the 2017-2018 season of Project Feeder Watch. What is Project Feeder Watch? Project Feeder Watch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada. It is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project Feeder Watch. Feeder Watch data help scientists track broad scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

This will be my fourth season participating in the program. To date, I have observed 27 species in my backyard during the count period. When you sign up for Project Feeder Watch, you are provided with an instructional kit including a tally sheet to record your observations. You do your count over a 2-day period each week. You can count for as little time or as much time as you like. After the count is complete you submit your counts to the Feeder Watch website, along with the weather conditions during the count. If you go away during the winter not to worry. You can add a location and count where you are or simply do not enter counts for weeks away. It's fun, easy and gives one a good

feeling to know that you are contributing to ornithological research.

You can still sign up and participate for the 2017-2018 season. For more information, please visit www.feederwatch.org.

John Muzik

Winter Finch Forecast 2017-2018

An excerpt from Ron Pittaway's report



Pine Siskins Submitted by John Muzik

“General Forecast: Cone crops in the Northeast are bumper in 2017. It is the best cone crop in a decade or more. This will be a banner winter to see boreal finches in central and northeastern Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, northern New York, and northern New England States. White-winged and Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins have moved east to areas of abundant seed crops. The Big Question is: will finches concentrate in areas of highest cone abundance (more likely) or be spread out across the Northeast?”

The report carries on with a species by species forecast. Ron is predicting a good showing of Red-Crossbill, Common Redpoll, Hoary Redpoll, Pine Siskin and Red-Breasted Nuthatch in Eastern

Ontario. Ron goes on to predict excellent winter finch watching at Algonquin Provincial Park this season where many species not seen in southern Ontario may be found. To read Ron Pittaway's full report visit Jean Iron's website at <http://www.jeaniron.ca/2017/wff17.htm>

Here in Durham region we have already had reports of Pine Siskin. This bodes well for viewing winter finches on our next two events, the Christmas Bird Count, December 17 and the annual Winter Bird Feeder Tour and Pot Luck, January 6, 2018.

Nancy Muzik

Mega Eradication of Invasive Species

When we think of invasive species in Canada many of us think of things like the zebra mussel, phragmites, the emerald ash borer and dog strangling vine. We do not have any destructive invasive mammals that can cause total extinction of species in Canada. Imagine an island where there are no large or small mammal predators, where the wildlife such as birds, reptiles and amphibians have evolved to live near the ground never having to worry about a predator eating it, its eggs or its young. Now introduce mammals such as cats, rats, weasels or brush-tailed opossums and see what happens. This kind of event has happened on thousands of islands around the world over at least 7 centuries causing the extinction of a myriad of birds and small vertebrate species. In almost every case the introduction of the invasive species has been caused by humans.

Around the world, many countries have become aware of the serious nature of these threats and have begun to work at eradicating these destructive invasive species from islands especially in the South Pacific. In the past 20 years more than 1,000 islands have been cleared of invasive species

through mega eradication programmes at a huge cost. These programs are child's play when compared to what New Zealand as a society has decided to do. The government announced a programme last July that would eliminate all invasive vertebrate predators — rats, brushtail possums, stoats and more — from New Zealand by 2050 to protect the country's rare endemic species. This is true for especially the Kiwi, the iconic bird of New Zealand which is faring poorly against the predators. They started with a four-year project to eradicate all invasive mammals from Rangitoto and Motutapu, two inhabited islands with a combined size of 38 square kilometres. After two years of planning and consultations with local people, rats were wiped out in 3–4 weeks; conservationists then moved on in stages to deal with rabbits, stoats, hedgehogs and feral cats. The effort was complicated by the presence of human inhabitants, and by the islands' proximity to Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, which provides a deep pool of potential re-invaders. Although many boats arrive frequently hitchhiking rats and mice are intercepted about once a year, but the island has remained pest-free for the past five years.

Now they want to try a mega eradication program using some very innovative programs to rid the North and South Islands of all invasive vertebrate predators. A lot of the heavy lifting will be done by a poison, 1080, which has been in widespread use since the 1950s and is an effective pesticide. Of course, all of this has to be done in such a manner that it does not harm domestic pets or game animals such as deer and pigs (which are also introduced species, but not the target of eradication efforts); it also threatens the kea (*Nestor notabilis*), a native alpine parrot. However, there are groups who do not want the widespread use especially by helicopter drops of the 1080 pesticide. There is already a trap on the market with a skull-crushing piston that is powered by compressed gas. It can reset itself 24 times (clean-up is provided by scavenging birds and cats). There will be

backyard battles as well in urban areas where it will be difficult to eradicate everything unless everyone takes part. However, the country is already home to thousands of volunteer community groups that spend their free time setting and checking traps. People in the Wellington suburb of Crofton Downs, for example, think that the region is already free of predators after they managed to get a trap placed in every fifth backyard. New Zealand is in a relatively unique position, where people are really willing to kill for conservation. It's kind of a national pastime according to one researcher.

We can wish that the Kiwis will be successful in achieving this difficult goal. It may be time in Canada to look at some of our invasive species like the European Starlings that have had such a hugely negative effect on our song birds and see if we can try to at least decrease their numbers so we can help our native birds.

Otto Peter

Global Warming

By John Pratt

Our climate gets warmer every year;
And causes our glaciers to disappear.
These sources of rivers will be no more,
And rivers will dry up by the score!

Grass and trees will die as well
Wherever water tables seriously fell.
Desert will grow from shifting sand,
People will crowd on remaining good land.

Rising sea, from melting ice and snow
Will cause many islands and river deltas to go.
Man already over fishes lakes and sea,
These events cause starvation for many, you'll see.

People wish they had studied the weather;
These adverse changes work together.
Vast reforestation and cutting the use of fossil fuels
Are needed to save our planet from destruction by fools.

November 17

Membership Application Form

Please check the appropriate area to indicate membership type.
For Family membership please indicate the number of family members.

Individual (\$25) _____

Family (\$35) _____ # of People _____

Life Member (\$300) _____

Family Life Member (\$450) _____ # of people

Kindly complete all sections of this information form in order that we can update our address & telephone records.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Town: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

The membership year is September to June. Memberships not renewed by November 30th are considered lapsed.
Membership fees may be paid by cash or cheque at the DRFN General Meeting, or a cheque may be mailed, payable to:
Durham Region Field Naturalists, Box 54031, 8 King St. E., Oshawa ON, L1H 1A9
Do not send cash by mail.
Revenue Canada Charitable: No. 891631574RR0001.