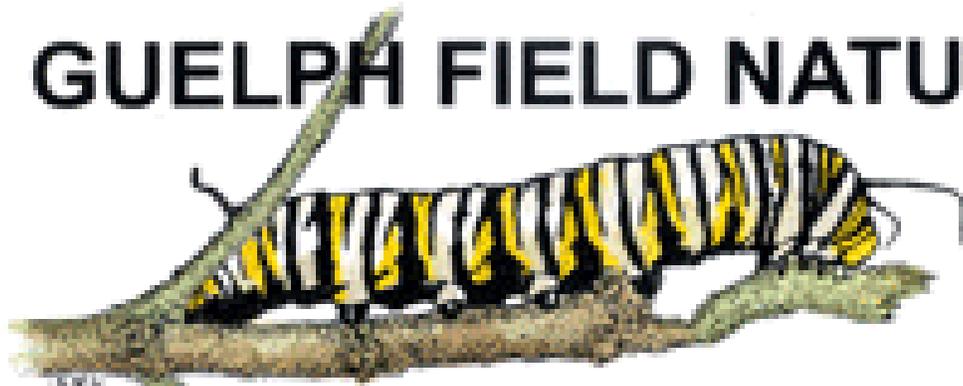


GUELPH FIELD NATURALISTS



Vol 43, #5
May/June 2013

Invite you to hear

TYLER FLOCKHART

Monarch Butterflies, Near and Far

Thurs. May 9th 7:30PM



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www.guelphfieldnaturalists.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE — Peter Kelly

Another Guelph Field Naturalists' year is drawing to a close (unlike the traditional Gregorian calendar, the Guelph Field Naturalists' calendar ends in June!) Our Annual General Meeting is coming up on May 9th and as usual will be held before our last speaker for the year: Tyler Flockhart who will be speaking on the migration and ecology of Monarch butterflies. At the AGM, your Executive has put forth a motion to change the name of our organization from the Guelph Field Naturalists to Nature Guelph. On behalf of the Executive, I thought I would outline some of the reasons that we felt that this change would be a positive step for our club.

First and foremost, we feel that the name Nature Guelph is more representative of the evolving interests of our membership. While the club will always be home to the field naturalist community in Guelph, we have a good portion of our membership that doesn't fall into that group but instead are more concerned about larger scale environmental issues or potential threats to our natural heritage. Others simply love getting out into nature with their friends or family but don't necessarily feel the need to bring field guides on outings. None of these individuals are 'field naturalists' *per se*. More importantly, what portion of the community have we not connected with because they are intimidated by or don't understand the name? We have discovered that some people do feel that they need a certain level of expertise to join the 'Guelph Field Naturalists' but this is obviously not true (to us but not to them!). You certainly don't need to be a field naturalist to enjoy talks on climate change, food and the environment, threats of mining to the boreal forest or volcanoes, to name just a few of the topics for which we have had speakers recently.

As well, a continuing and growing concern amongst naturalist clubs is the aging demographic of our mem-

berships. This was brought up yet again last week at the Great Lakes West Regional Meeting of Ontario Nature that we hosted at the Guelph Lake Nature Centre. Members clubs are trying to figure out how to attract a younger audience. We feel that the name change would help tremendously in that regard. It broadcasts a more modern message that would appeal to youth. The name change to Nature Guelph would also fit in nicely with our other modernization initiatives including our Facebook page (which now has 115 members, many of whom are University of Guelph students), a new web-site (slated for September 1st) and a new logo.

The name change also aligns nicely with our parent organization who changed their name from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists to Ontario Nature for similar reasons in 2004. We also feel that the role our club plays in the community is better represented by Nature Guelph especially to 'non-nature types'. We've all had those quizzical looks and frowns. What is a naturalist, are you nudists?! Even the word 'field' is confusing to some people. Those that have never done 'fieldwork' assume going into the field quite literally means going into a field! (I sometimes wonder if my mother still thinks that I have spent an inordinate amount of time in fields). We can shrug our shoulders and laugh and discard those types as unworthy candidates for membership but isn't this an audience we should be striving to reach? After all everyone should know what 'nature' means.

The new name would continue to represent our strong field naturalist community, and be more inclusive beyond that core group. The programming would not change to suit the new name, but the name would catch up to where we feel the club has evolved from its field naturalist beginnings.

AMENDMENT TO NOTICE OF MOTION

The following motion for the AGM was posted with an error in the last newsletter:

...that Guelph Field Naturalists change its name to Guelph Nature.

As it has already been posted it will still be brought forward, then immediately be followed by this amendment:

...that the name be changed to Nature Guelph instead of Guelph Nature.

NEWSLETTER — Margaret Hull and Susan Atkinson

The newsletter is published five times a year – every two months except July and August. Please send all contributions for the next issue (Sep/Oct) to Susan Atkinson who has kindly stepped up as Newsletter

Assistant. The deadline is August 20th. Thank you to all contributors. Stephen Lewis is our front page artist — many thanks Steve.

INDOOR PROGRAM — Kirsten Middleton

All meetings begin at 7:30 pm (December and June excepted) on the second Thursday of each month, and are held at the University of Guelph's Arboretum Centre. For confirmation and updates, please visit our website at www.guelphfieldnaturalists.org. We begin with a brief business meeting, followed by a 10 minute break then the speaker's presentation. **Non-members are very welcome and goodwill donations are gratefully appreciated - suggested contribution is \$2 per person.**

The entrance to the Arboretum is on College Avenue just west of Victoria Road. For a map see: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/arboretum/ArbOverview/Directions.htm> The path to and from the car park is unlit in places - bringing a flashlight would be a good idea.

Thursday May 9th, 2013 — AGM AND MONARCH BUTTERFLIES, NEAR AND FAR Tyler Flockhart, PhD candidate in the Department of Integrative Biology, University of Guelph

Monarch butterflies migrate long distances between three different countries during their life cycle. But where are they going, where are they from, and why are they moving at all? Tyler will discuss how individual butterflies migrate long distances to reach Guelph, what butterflies do once they arrive, and how habitat conditions here in Guelph sustain the population along the entire life cycle in a delicate and fragile web of dependence. GFN's AGM will precede the speaker.

Thursday June 13th, 2013 — ANNUAL PICNIC / BBQ Belwood Lake Sailing Club

A new venue for our annual picnic. The sailing club is on a promontory on the south side of the lake, and has picnic tables, washrooms, BBQs and shelter. Bring your own food and drink, and plates, mugs and cutlery. After we eat, we will do a fun Bioblitz of the area. To reach the club, from Fergus take Wellington County Road 18 (Belsyde Avenue) east about 4 km, past the conservation area, and turn left on Ninth Street. After about 500m, Ninth Street takes a sharp right hand turn then reaches the lake at a T junction. Turn left and go all the way to the end. Park to the left just inside the club gate.

** Please note early start time of 6:00 p.m. for this event. To carpool, meet at the Canadian Tire parking lot at Woodlawn Rd. and Woolwich St. at 5:30 pm.

Thursday September 12th, 2013 — ONTARIO NATURE Caroline Schultz, Executive Director

BAILLIE BIRDATHON 2013

Canada's Baillie Birdathon was established in 1976 as a national fundraiser to support the research and conservation of wild birds. Funds raised benefit the work of Bird Studies Canada, designated bird observatories in the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network, the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund (which provides research grants to amateurs across Canada) and participating conservation and naturalist clubs. All contributions to the Birdathon are tax-creditable.

During a 24-hour period in May, the participants attempt to find as many bird species as they can, sponsored at a flat rate, or on a per-species basis. Each year several GFN members participate in the Baillie Birdathon, designating the Guelph Field Naturalists to receive a portion of the funds they raise. To sponsor one or more of our participants this year, go to the Donations page of our website www.guelphfieldnaturalists.org

NOMINATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

President:	Pete Kelly
Vice-President:	Jenn Bock
Secretary:	Candice Talbot
Treasurer:	John Prescott

If there are any other nominations for these positions, they can be sent to Carol Koenig or made in writing or verbally at the AGM. Each requires a nominator and a seconder and the agreement of the nominee.

EXECUTIVE POSITION NEEDS FILLING

We are still in need of a volunteer for Membership Co-ordinator. Please contact Carol Koenig if you are able to help the club in this capacity.

YOUNG NATURALISTS and NATURALISTS IN TRAINING — Ann & Tamara

For information please see the *Naturalists in Training brochure* and the *Young Naturalists brochure* on the Guelph Field Naturalists website, www.guelphfieldnaturalists.org or phone the Guelph Lake Nature Centre at 519-836-7860.

YOUNG NATS AT EARTH SCIENCES MUSEUM MARCH 9TH

The Young Naturalists and their families attended a tour and fossil dig at the Earth Sciences



Museum, University of Waterloo. Peter Russell is the curator and leader of our tour. We learned about dinosaurs, fossils, oil drills and mining in Ontario and marvelled at the beautiful exhibits.



YOUNG NATS MARCH 23RD

Running through the woods to find pictures and details of our native mammals was enjoyed on a perfect early spring day. Then we met a bunny and an opossum which Diana brought in. We could see the pouch on the opossum too! Next, Ann brought out animal pelts one by one. By the time the bear was displayed, the children immediately pounced all over it. This was a very thrilling and busy day!

YOUNG NATS AT GREEN LEGACY APRIL 13TH

First we were led on a hike through the woods by Hailey the dog, Brenda, her daughter Hanna and Martin. We geo-cached five stations learning interesting facts about coniferous and deciduous trees. Then we got busy transplanting two year old white pines into bigger "pot" trays. We all got our hands into the project. Most Nats were determined to fill whole trays. It's actually an addictive and relaxing exercise for us grownups too. The morning was cold, rainy but memorable. We thank such interesting leaders presenting a superb programme.



YOUTH SUMMIT — CALL FOR ENTRIES

The Guelph Field Naturalists have allocated \$600 to send two high school aged students to the Ontario Nature Youth Summit for Biodiversity, September 20-22, 2013 at Lake Couchiching in Orillia. Funding for this initiative will in part be coming from funds donated in memory of Reinder Westerhoff.

The students should be GFN members or family of GFN members, with a prior interest in environmental issues. If you know a student who might qualify, we would like the student to submit a 500-word statement of interest as to why they would like to attend, along with their contact info to: info@guelphfieldnaturalists.org by June 1st.

WHEN HUMANS ARE GONE *from the Globe and Mail, April 18, 2013*

The Korean peninsula's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) is 250 kilometres long and four kilometres wide. "Aside from rare military patrols or desperate souls fleeing North Korea, humans have barely set foot in the strip since 1953," says *Discover* magazine. "Before that, for 5,000 years, the area was populated by rice farmers who carved the land into paddies. Today, those paddies have become barely discernable, transformed into pockets of marsh, and the new occupants of these lands arrive as dazzling white squadrons of red-crowned cranes that glide over the bulrushes in perfect formation, touching down so lightly that they detonate no land mines. Next to whooping cranes they are the rarest such birds on Earth. They winter in the DMZ alongside the endangered white-naped cranes, revered in Asia as sacred portents of peace."

CANADA'S LARGEST NATIVE PLANT SALE, MARKHAM

The North American Native Plant Society (NANPS) is holding their sale on Saturday May 11, 2013 in Markham, Ontario from 10 am to 3 pm in the atrium of the Markham Civic Centre, 101 Town Centre Blvd. NANPS is a volunteer-based non-profit, registered charitable organization dedicated to the study, conservation, cultivation and restoration of native plants.

www.nanps.org

Native wildflowers, shrubs, trees, ferns, vines, grasses and sedges provide food and habitat for birds, butterflies and other desirable wildlife. They thrive without fertilizer, pesticides or supplemental watering. NANPS plants are of local origin - ensuring hardiness and genetic suitability. All plants come from NANPS-approved ethical growers. Sun, shade, wet or dry, there's something for every garden condition.

2 RIVERS FESTIVAL

GFN is once again participating in this festival celebrating Guelph's rivers, the Speed and the Eramosa. This year the dates are June 9th - 16th. For details about all the events planned, go to www.2riversfestival.ca Activities included hikes, canoeing the rivers, water-related talks, performance, etc.

LOCAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

Waterloo Wellington Wildflower Society is holding a Native Plant Sale on Saturday May 25th from 9 am to 12 noon at 29 Waterworks Place off York Road. There will be native perennials, trees, shrubs and vines from members' gardens or ethical plant rescues. It is held in partnership with the Guelph Enabling Garden Sale featuring non native plants.

SAVE OSTRANDER POINT

We recently received a letter from Cheryl Anderson, the past president and long-time member of the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists (PECFN). This fellow field naturalist group is currently in court fighting the construction of a 9-turbine wind project in an Important Bird Area (IBA) in Prince Edward County and needs to raise funds for the legal action.

In December, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment gave Gilead Power the green light to proceed with its industrial wind turbine project at Ostrander Point. The PECFN launched an appeal of that decision and as a result are now in hearings before the Environmental Review Tribunal.

Ostrander Point is a special place, rich in biodiversity and wildlife. Many bird species travel through here: loggerhead shrikes, short-eared owls, king rails, bobolinks, red-headed woodpeckers and barn swallows. Eastern whip-poor-wills and Blanding's turtles can also be found at Ostrander Point, and it is one of the few places in the province where there is a rare alvar ecosystem.

Ontario Nature, Nature Canada, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, BirdLife International, Audubon Society, the David Suzuki Foundation, Sierra Club and Environment Canada all agree with PECFN that Ostrander Point is the worst place for wind turbines.

Expert witnesses will testify about endangered species in the IBA, the cumulative effect of wind projects in the eastern end of Lake Ontario on wildlife, the importance of Great Lakes migration stopover areas such as this one, the impact of roads on the ecology of Ostrander Point, and the impact of turbines on migrating monarch butterflies. PECFN are fund raising to pay for the appeal. For more information about Ostrander Point, the hearing, and their fund raising efforts, please visit: www.SaveOstranderPoint.org

SALAMANDERS IN CRISIS!

An Overview of why Salamander Conservation is Needed

By Matt Ellerbeck - Salamander Conservationist

Although they are rarely given much thought, and often overlooked when they are, salamanders are in a terrible crisis. Around half of all the world's salamander species are listed as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These species are all facing a high risk of extinction. A further 62 species have been designated as near-threatened with populations rapidly dwindling. This means they are quickly getting closer to threatened status and to the brink of extinction. Salamanders have been on the earth for over 160 million years, and the terrible state that they now find themselves in is due to the detrimental acts of humans.

For many people the thought of declining species conjures up images of exotic animals found in far away lands. However,

Ontario is home to many salamander species. These include the Blue-Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*), Eastern Red-backed Salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*), Four-toed Salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*), Two-lined Salamander (*Eurycea bislineata*), Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*), Northern Dusky Salamander (*Desmognathus fuscus*), and many more!

Several of Ontario's salamander species have been designated as Species At Risk. Such as the Allegheny Mountain Dusky Salamander (*Desmognathus ochrophaeus*), the Jefferson Salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*), and the Small-mouthed Salamander (*Ambystoma texanum*). Even more devastating is the fact that two salamander species that used to exist in Ontario have been completely exterminated from the province. The Eastern Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) and the Spring Salamander (*Gyrinophilus porphyriticus*) are

both listed as Extirpated (extinct in Ontario).

One of the biggest issues affecting salamanders is the loss of their natural habitat. Many areas that were once suitable for salamanders to live in have now been destroyed for developmental construction and agriculture. Habitats of all kinds are being lost at an alarming rate. Wetlands are drained, forests are logged and cut down, and waterfronts are developed. Salamanders are literally

losing their homes and they are losing them rapidly. The expansion of urban areas threatens the suitable habitats that still remain.

Breeding sites, often in the forms of vernal pools are particularly important. The loss of such areas in the form of habitat destruction can negatively affect the entire population and its reproductive output. According



Yellow-Spotted Salamander (Ambystoma maculatum)

to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), there is some evidence that certain salamander species have individuals that return to the pond in which they were born once they reach maturity.

Habitats are often isolated and cut off from one another by the roads and highways that now run through them. Countless numbers of salamanders are killed on roads and highways every year when they are hit by vehicles. Salamanders that are migrating to breeding and egg-laying sites often must cross over roads to reach such areas. Here many of the mature members of the breeding population are killed. Removing members of the breeding populations greatly limits reproductive output, this makes it incredibly hard for salamander numbers to rebound.

To find out how you can help see: www.savethesalamanders.com

ONTARIO NATURE — Mary Ellen Pyear

The Great Lakes West region of Ontario Nature met on Saturday, April 13th at the Guelph Lake Nature Centre with GFN hosting the meeting and several GFN members in attendance. Lisa Richardson, ON's Education Coordinator, and Tim Hayward came from the GTA to represent ON. Lisa is also the Nature Network Coordinator for all regions in the province. Tim, a Research and Policy Analyst for ON, is in charge of environmental policies with a focus on aggregate extraction. At the end of the meeting, Dave Lamble, a local bird bander, gave a demonstration on netting and banding birds.

The morning portion of the meeting began with Peter Kelly introducing the GFN club and talking about our programs. Mary Ellen Pyear reported on environmental updates and recent happenings in the Club. The other clubs followed, giving updates on their activities. Lisa Richardson highlighted the following activities/events that are happening at the provincial level:

- Ontario Nature's AGM has been moved to the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve just north of Newmarket. Any GFN members wishing to attend that event on June 8th can register online or contact Lauren Wright at ON. (www.ontarionature.org or 1-800-440-2366)
- Victoria Foote, editor of the *Ontario Nature* magazine, has left the organization. John Hassell will be filling in temporarily in the role of editor until a new person is hired.
- Caroline Schultz, Executive Director of Ontario Nature, has been booked by GFN as the speaker for the September 2013 meeting to help launch our 2013-14 season.
- A letter signed by most clubs in the province was sent to Premier Kathleen Wynne on March 1st urging her Liberal government to support the Endangered Species Act.
- The fourth annual Youth Summit for Biodiversity will be held for teens at Geneva Park in Orillia on September 20-22, 2013. See page 4 for details of GFNs sponsorships.
- Sauble Dunes Nature Reserve is ON's latest purchase and their 24th reserve in the province.
- Rouge Park, Canada's only national urban park, will hold a Bio-Blitz in Toronto on Sept. 14 and 15, 2013. It is interesting to note that 1260 species have been found in this urban park!

UXBRIDGE QUARRIES

Tim Hayward talked about his work with owners of quarries in the Uxbridge area which is part of the Oak Ridges

Moraine. Local producers have been very cooperative when it comes to listening to ON's environmental concerns about the future of the quarries and are open to amendments to existing site plans.

400 HIGHWAYS EXPANSION

The main discussion of the afternoon centred on highway expansion in the Golden Horseshoe area. Several years ago, the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario began an environmental assessment for a new superhighway, the GTA West Corridor, which would link Hwy. 400 through Vaughan to the west. The study included areas to the north and east of Guelph. After years of investigation and public consultation, the MTO has now put forth a new proposal which would see the superhighway link Hwy. 400 through Vaughan, proceed west across the north side of Brampton and then cut south, joining the 401 at the intersection of the 407. From there or from Regional Road 25, the 401 would then be widened to 10 lanes (from the current 6) to the Hanlon in the west (or possibly even further west to the Kitchener-Waterloo area). Cause for concern in Guelph is that the Hanlon would eventually have to be widened from 4 to 6 lanes due to increased traffic especially from trucks that might use the Hanlon to get from the widened 401 to the proposed new Hwy. 7 West. Guelph City Council turned down a staff report that recommended that the MTO reconsider routing the proposed GTA West Highway to the north of Guelph to connect with the proposed new Hwy. 7. Such a new northern route would have a significant environmental impact on the Niagara Escarpment with its numerous wetlands and woodlands which are home to many rare and significant wildlife species. GFN supported this decision made by Guelph City Council in a letter to the *Tribune* published on March 14, 2013. Chambers of Commerce from Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge are all pushing for changes to occur to the north of Guelph rather than to the 401 and possibly Hanlon widening. Ontario Nature's belief is that the widening of the 401 will happen at some point in the future, but in the meantime, they are closely monitoring the situation. Some of the topics discussed as options to the proposed new superhighway(s) included covering costs of increasing transportation through toll roads and better and more frequent bus and train connections from places as far west as Stratford east to Toronto. Car pooling and more efficient use of the high occupancy vehicle lanes were also discussed.

Notes for Novices #6 — How to Become a Field Naturalist by Kathleen Brown

The previous Note described field naturalists. But, how does one become one? Persuade a field naturalist to be your mentor and go on weekly walks with you. Avoid people who just name things. Look for someone who can explain why mushrooms do not necessarily appear at the same time, in the same place, every year, and how habitat determines where things live.

If you cannot find a mentor, get some books, take frequent walks and figure things out for yourself. Do not try to learn about everything at once. Select a topic and become knowledgeable about it. For instance, if you choose ferns, you need to learn some new vocabulary, e.g., the difference between pinna and pinnule. Which characteristics distinguish one fern from another?

Which ferns grow in which habitats? Make a collection of pressed fronds. When you feel comfortable with ferns, tackle another topic. After a few years you will discover that you have become a field naturalist.

Some clubs offer little help to novices. Talks and walks are more suited to those who already know the basics. Walk leaders, expert in the subject, may not be educators. They name everything but explain little. Here are

some examples. A botanist led a group to look at goldenrods. He did not find out how much the participants already knew, but walked on, naming dozens of plants. The novice, who had no idea how he told one goldenrod from another, would like to know how to identify a few goldenrod species and leave the rest for another time. On a typical mushroom walk, everyone is sent to collect whatever might be a mushroom. All is spread on a picnic table and the expert names each one faster than the novice can write it down.

Once again, the leader knows much, but the novice learns little about mushrooms and has no idea how to identify even one species. On a winter walk, birders call out, “Downy”, “Golden-crowned”, “Hairy”. Back at the cars, a puzzled novice asks, “What is that bird over there?” It is a chickadee. All afternoon, she had no idea what people were talking about.

Some people want to know more about the natural world but are unsure how to get started. Perhaps clubs could develop a training program for walk leaders and plan some events for novices. Unless, of course, the club has no novices. Why not find out?

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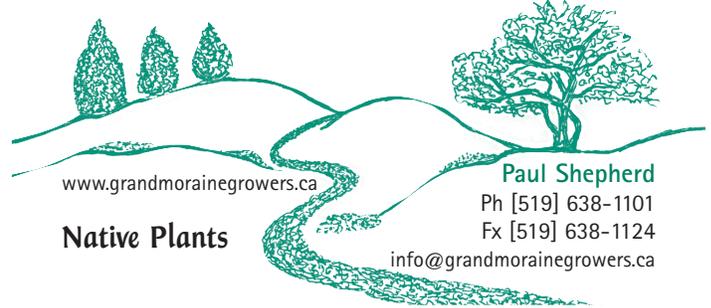


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BIRD WING — Larry Staniforth staniforth.larry@rogers.com 519-767-2693

BIRD WING HIKES

- *Bi-weekly hikes are now held on Thursdays. **Note:** during the month of May hikes will go weekly on Thursdays except for May 9th. Please note there will be no Wednesday hikes in May as Mr. Salvadori is to be out of the country during that time.*
- *Most hikes are all day outings unless otherwise specified. Bring lunch and refreshments as necessary.*
- *We will usually visit a local restaurant for lunch, and stop for nature breaks where possible.*
- *Hikes usually depart from the WBU parking lot at Gordon and Kortright - check the departure time carefully.*
- *Go or NoGo will be determined at the WBU parking lot and depends on the weather at the target location. If the weather is not good there, we may decide to go somewhere else. Please dress appropriately for the weather.*

Thurs. May 2nd - Long Point, 6 am
Thurs. May 9th - No Hike, replaced with May 13th
Mon. May 13th - Pt. Pelee, 6:30 am - Lunch at park

Note - Pt. Pelee hike will begin at the Visitor Centre at Point Pelee at 6:30am. Register with me by e-mail or phone (staniforth.larry@rogers.com) 519-767-2693. I will already be at Pelee, so I will not be organizing car pools. Bring lunch, and dress appropriately for the weather.

Thurs. May 16th - MacGregor Point PP, 6 am - lunch at park - fees
Thurs. May 23rd - Luther Marsh, 6am - lunch at park - fees
Thurs. May 30th - Forks of the Credit, 7 am - lunch at park - fees
June 5th - 6th - Carden Plain - Over Nighter - We will be visiting the Carden Loggerhead Shrike Captive breeding facility on either the Wednesday or Thursday.

Note - We will stay at Comfort Inn at Hwy 12 and Prospect in Orillia (near Tim Hortons). Wednesday June 5: leave Guelph around 5 am, return June 6 approx 6 pm. We will carpool. You must register to take part in this trip (staniforth.larry@rogers.com) or 519-767-2693. Limited to 15 participants. Each participant will be asked to contribute \$10 towards a donation to the Shrike Facility to help in carrying out this valuable work. All meals will be at local restaurants. Bring any refreshments you deem necessary, be prepared for inclement weather, hikes will go rain or shine, and bring bug spray.

OTHER BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES

Sat. June 15th - 2 Rivers Festival Bird hike - 8 am from the Covered Bridge (2 hrs)

BIRD WING MEETINGS

We have moved the monthly meeting dates one week later to the last Monday of each month from September thru May. All meetings will be held in the basement common area at the Ellington Residences, 168 Metcalfe Street at 7:30 pm. Entrance is via the covered ramp on the north east end of the building.

Mon. May 27th - **Rachel Darbyshire - Gray Jay Research**

No June Meeting



*Marilyn Swaby
Rock Art Painting*

Marilyn has been creating lovely painted rocks as gifts for our outdoor presenters, and now you can have a specially

commissioned one for yourself for only \$35!!
Contact Marilyn at p.m.swaby@rogers.com

ORNITHOLOGICAL CROSSWORD

You have another few months in which to puzzle over Dave Brewer's acrostic in the last issue of the GFN newsletter. The answers, and maybe some explanations, will be printed in the September/October issue.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES — Jessica Klawunn

SATURDAY MAY 25TH — WILDFLOWER WALK, MARDEN TRACT

Come see the colours of spring! The explosion of springtime wildflowers is one of the most beautiful and exciting events of the season. Come join leader Charles Cecile for a guided wildflower tour through Marden Tract. Bring your hiking shoes and a lunch.

Marden Tract is on Silvercreek Parkway North (Wellington Co. Rd. 39), north of Woodlawn Rd., just south of the intersection with Marden Road (Wellington Co. Rd. 30). You can park on both sides of the road. The trailhead of the Kissing Bridge Trailway is just across the road. Rain date May 26th. Time 9 am - 11:30 am

SATURDAY JUNE 1ST — MOTH NIGHT!

Close cousins to the much more famed butterflies, moths are an incredibly diverse and extremely beautiful, mysterious group of insects. The Arboretum has been found to harbour hundreds of species of moths, including uncommon and rare species. Come out for a night to become better acquainted with these nocturnal characters and be sure to bring a flashlight!

Meet our leader Candice Talbot at the Arboretum parking lot near the Arboretum Centre at 9 pm.

FRIDAY JUNE 7TH — APIARY TOUR

Have you ever wondered where the honey in your tea and on your toast comes from? Well wonder no more! Join Paul Kelly for an up close glimpse into the life of bees and the inner workings of an apiary. Please print and fill out the medical form (which can also be accessed from our website) and bring to the tour. There will be a small number of forms on site for those who have no access to a computer and printer. Local bee products will also be available for purchase after the tour.

Meet at Townsend House Honey Bee Research Centre, 308 Stone Road East. Time 4 pm - 5 pm.

BALD EAGLES AT RBG

By Susan Atkinson

Bald eagles were once common on the shores of Lake Ontario, but in the mid-20th century everything changed. A new agricultural pesticide called DDT was finding its way up the food chain and into the bodies of eagles and other predators. The toxic chemical caused the birds to lay brittle eggs, and mothers would often crush them simply by sitting on them. Because of this, bald eagles disappeared from much of North America.

DDT was officially banned in Canada in 1989 and bald eagles have begun to recover. Their return to Lake Ontario has been slow however, and there hasn't been a nest on the Canadian shore in decades. RBG has been working hard to create the right conditions for these birds, and their current pair made their first nest in 2009. After several failed attempts they finally hatched chicks in 2013— the first baby bald eagles on the Canadian shore of Lake Ontario since the 1950s!

The eagle nest can best be seen from the Marsh Boardwalk in Cootes Paradise. The massive nest can be seen in a tall pine tree, but binoculars or a spotting scope are useful to see the birds in detail.

NEARBY NATURALIST CLUBS' MEETINGS

KITCHENER/WATERLOO

Monday May 27th, 7 pm

Following in the Footsteps of the Group of Seven by Jim Waddington
See www.kwfn.ca

HALTON NORTH PEEL

See www.hnpsc.com

HAMILTON

Monday May 13th, 7:30 pm

Underground Infrastructure and Its Influence on Ecosystems by Michael Cook
See www.hamiltonnature.org

RARE

Saturday May 4th, 8 - 10 am

Bird Banding Demonstration with Kevin Grundy
See www.raresites.org

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES TO NOTE

Huron Fringe Birding Festival May 24-27 & May 30-June 2
www.friendsofmacgregor.org
Carden Nature Festival May 31-June 2
www.cardenaturefestival.ca

TRACKING CLUB — Tamara Anderson

TRACKING TRIP TO THE CUMNOCK FOREST TRACT, MARCH 17TH

It was a gorgeous sunny day with blue sky overhead. After exiting the car at the Cumnock Tract, we discovered a fresh cat trail heading across the path and into the field. Further afoot, the group noticed fresh rabbit tracks in the light dusting of snow on a hard-packed crust. A wee mouse had managed to tunnel a hole into the snow nearby, leaving only its footprints and a tail drag behind. We ventured into the forest, pausing at a well-chewed apple tree branch and marvelling at the workmanship of hungry rabbits. We followed a deer trail, wandering astray for a short while when we came upon a grouse trail. We continued on the deer trail into a cedar grove and discovered (to our delight!) a group of four recently slept-in deer beds underneath the shelter of the cedar trees. Several blue jays called overhead as we meandered along a new-found trail with a front paw and a back paw side by side. Upon closer inspection, we decided that it was a raccoon trail and we followed it for a while. We were almost tempted to give up on the trail when we came to a tall, dead stump with a hole in the side. The tracks ended here. We peeked up into the tree and voila - we saw a giant furry raccoon bottom wedged into the hole. Triumphantly we tracked ourselves back to the car and retrieved a lost water bottle along the way. It was a great day to celebrate the beginnings of spring!



Finding a raccoon at the end of the tracks

TRACKING AT ITS BEST — LUTHER MARSH, APRIL 14TH

The spring ice storm gave way to glorious sunshine on the April tracking trip up to Luther Marsh. We were greeted by the sound of sandhill cranes and a pileated woodpecker within minutes of stepping onto the soft, grassy trail beside Mallard Pond. Muskrat tracks, scat and push-ups were seen along the edge of the marsh. Going into the bush we were walking on a thin layer of snow on top of a winter's culmination of melting snow crust. These conditions would prove to be excellent for tracking as we spotted an old, stone foundation covered in snowy mounds. Several animals were using this hidden gem in the forest. Soon we noticed a well-used skunk trail and a den. Nearby, the tracks of a raccoon waddled beside a porcupine trough. It was then that we noticed an exceptional track and trail – one that I had never seen before...

The tracks were round, 5.5 cm x 7cm. The pattern of tracks was a walking gait with a stride length of 27 cm and a straddle of 21 cm. Something fascinated me – there were no claw marks! Could it be? I wondered if we had finally happened upon the elusive bobcat, of which the most recent documented sighting was 17 years ago. Humming and hawing, tracking gear strewn across the trail – this is tracking at its best. We all looked closely at the footprints and something kept nagging at me. I kept counting 5 toes. Cats do not have five toes. But who else has roundish pawprints and no claws? The measurements brought us to the page marked... perhaps



The fisher track

you have already guessed it: the fisher (pékan in French). This giant member of the weasel family with brown and black fur is otherwise known as a Fisher Cat probably because of its semi-retractable claws. We had found a fisher trail! Fantastic! Fishers are one of the few predators that can eat porcupine. They also eat snowshoe hare — both of which are bountiful at the Marsh. The tracks eventually disappeared into the mud and the trees (of which they can climb) and we meandered into the coniferous forest with excellent viewings of grouse, wild turkey, snowshoe hare, deer and porcupine tracks. The porcupine trail became arboreal as we found ourselves staring at a live porcupine nestled into the bough of a white pine tree. We decided to head back to the parking lot along a deer run beside the marsh. We were once again humbled by the amazing wilderness and beauty of the grand Luther Marsh.

Our Tracking Club will continue again in late fall 2013. Please consider joining us!

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GFN CALENDAR – UPCOMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Thur May 2	Bird Wing Hike	Long Point	6:00 am	WBU
Thur May 9	Indoor Meeting	AGM & Monarchs	7:30 pm	Arboretum
Mon May 13	Bird Wing Hike	Point Pelee	6:30 am	Pt Pelee
Thur May 16	Bird Wing Hike	MacGregor Point PP	6:00 am	WBU
Thur May 23	Bird Wing Hike	Luther Marsh	6:00 am	WBU
Sat May 25	Outdoor Activity	Wildflower Hike	9:00 am	Marden Tract
Mon May 27	Bird Wing Meeting	Gray Jays	7:30 pm	Ellington
Thur May 31	Bird Wing Hike	Forks of the Credit	7:00 am	WBU
Sat June 1	Outdoor Activity	Moth Night	9:00 pm	Arboretum
W/Th June 5-6	Bird Wing Hike	Carden Plain	5:00 am	WBU
Fri June 7	Outdoor Activity	Apiary Tour	4:00 pm	308 Stone Rd. E.
Thur June 13	Annual Picnic/BBQ	Bio-blitz	6:00 pm	Belwood Lake
Sat June 15	Bird Wing Hike	Two Rivers Festival	8:00 am	Covered Bridge
Thur Sep 12	Indoor Meeting	Ontario Nature	7:30 pm	Arboretum

STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT: DUNG BEETLE NAVIGATION *from the Globe and Mail Jan 28th, 2013*

A species of South African dung beetle has been shown to use the Milky Way to navigate, making it the only known animal that turns to the galactic spray of stars across the night sky for direction. Researchers have known for several years that the inch-long insects use the sun or moon as fixed points to ensure they keep rolling dung balls in a straight line – the quickest way of getting away from other beetles at the dung heap. But scientists have puzzled over how the beetles achieve a straight line on moonless nights. To prove the Milky Way theory, scientists at Johannesburg's Wits University took beetles into the university planetarium to see how they fared with a normal night sky, and then one devoid of the Milky Way. "But when we turned off the Milky Way, the beetles got lost," said Prof. Marcus Byrne. – *Reuters*