



# Nature Guelph

invites you to hear

Vol 44, #3  
Jan/Feb 2014

**Jenn Bock  
and Kyle Horner**

**SMARTER  
FASTER  
STRONGER  
WILD ONTARIO  
IS WILD ABOUT  
BIRDS OF PREY!**

**Thurs. Jan 9  
2014  
7:30 pm**

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE — Peter Kelly

Sometimes the best Christmas gifts arrive when you least expect them. For myself, this past Christmas marked one such occasion.

My morning was spent in Grand Bend at my sister and brother-in-law's house nestled amongst an oak and pine forest laden with snow (Grand Bend was spared the frozen rain that crippled much of Southwestern Ontario). After a morning stroll along the Lake Huron shoreline, our family celebrated Christmas Day like many others did with good food, good conversation, some laughs and a rousing exchange of gifts. We then piled into two cars and headed into London to spend the afternoon and Christmas dinner with our mother.

The forests, farms, farmhouses and hedgerows of rural Ontario never look better than when they are poking out from under a blanket of snow. I was soaking up this wintery beauty when something out of the corner of my eye caught my attention.

"Snowy Owl!," I yelled. "Snowy Owl!!!"

Snowy owls are simply beautiful creatures and as Canadians we feel snowy owls resonate with our collective snowbound psyches. Every few years an irruption of snowy owls occurs in Southern Ontario which affords us greater opportunities for encounters with these magnificent birds. The abundance of lemmings, their principal food supply, largely determines the distance these nomadic birds must wander from their summer tundra breeding grounds to secure an adequate food supply for winter (and therefore influence the numbers we are apt to see here in Ontario). In good lemming years, snowy owls can raise as many as a dozen nestlings, usually on bare hilltops, hummocks or boulders. In bad years, they may not even breed.

At 1.5 to 3.0 kilograms, snowy owls are North America's

heaviest owls and, like other owl species, they eat their prey whole and regurgitate the indigestible bits. As part of my Master's degree field research, I was fortunate to spend two summers in the Truelove Lowland on the north shore of Devon Island in the Canadian High Arctic.

A small hill overlooking the lowland was littered with the bones of thousands of lemmings who had met their fates at the hands (I mean, talons) of snowy owls. On one visit I filled a film canister just with lemming jaws! While there are no lemmings in southern Ontario, snowy owls frequent large open areas in pursuit of other rodents like meadow voles or deer mice. Snowy owls will also predate rabbits, squirrels, waterfowl and songbirds if the need arises. Henry David Thoreau even observed a snowy owl on a pond at the edge of a hole in the ice, taking fish with its talons.

Since my Christmas snowy owl had escaped the attention of my fellow riders (my sister Lynn and

my nephew's fiancée Sarah-Lyn), we carefully circled back to get a better look. The owl then lifted off, flew a short distance toward us and then landed on a post right next to the road! It then proceeded to give us its full attention. While this was one of the rare occasions when I had decided to leave my camera behind, I was happy to let Sarah-Lyn document our visit while I simply enjoyed the view.

While I had been fortunate to see snowy owls on several occasions in the past, I had never encountered one this close. Lynn and Sarah-Lyn had never seen a snowy owl before and for Sarah-Lyn it was the first time she had ever seen an owl. I'm not sure if the real Christmas gift for me was seeing the owl itself or sharing the moment with family who were experiencing this special event for the first time. This was a Christmas present not soon forgotten.



*Photo by Sarah-Lyn Amaral*

## 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 (Mar/Apr) to [Susan Atkinson](#). The deadline is February 20th. Thank you to all contributors. Stephen Lewis is our front page artist — thank you Steve.

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## INDOOR PROGRAM — Peter Kelly

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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.natureguelph.ca](http://www.natureguelph.ca). 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.** We ask that you do not use perfumes out of respect for people who are allergic to them. The entrance to the Arboretum is on College Avenue just west of Victoria Road. For a map see: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/arboretum/thingstosee/printmap.shtml>

**Thursday January 9th — SMARTER, FASTER, STRONGER – WILD ONTARIO IS WILD ABOUT BIRDS OF PREY! Jenn Bock, Program Director, and Kyle Horner, long-term volunteer, Wild Ontario**

Jenn and Kyle will give us an “up close and personal” look at some of their non-releasable birds of prey which they use in educational programs for groups of all ages. See [www.ourwildontario.ca](http://www.ourwildontario.ca) for more details on the program.

**Thursday February 13th — LYME DISEASE AND THE RACCOON ROUNDWORM: IS THE RISK OF HUMAN INFECTION INCREASING IN ONTARIO? Dr. Andrew Peregrine, Associate Professor, Department of Pathobiology, University of Guelph**

Dr. Peregrine will review current information on the importance of both diseases in wildlife populations, and the risk of human infection. He will include the predicted impact of climate change on these risks.

**Thursday March 13th — ONTARIO'S GEOLOGY: 3 BILLION YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE Dr. Nick Eyles, Professor, Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences, University of Toronto**

Dr Eyles will explore our long and often violent past of plate tectonic collisions, plus our diverse fossil record. He will also review other major milestones which help us to understand our remote past.

**Thursday April 10th — OUR CHANGING VIEWS OF THE NIGHT SKY Paul Delaney, Senior Lecturer, Department of Physics and Astronomy, York University, Toronto**

Join Dr. Delaney in this exploration of the stars as he describes and illustrates some of the highlights of modern astronomy. Constellations and planets waltz across the sky from season to season, colourful aurora dance along magnetic lines of force, and all the while astronomers the world over rejoice at the images they see, with and without telescopes!

**Thursday May 8th — BIRDS AND DINOSAURS OF THE ALBERTA BADLANDS Jody Allair, Biologist and Science Educator, Bird Studies Canada**

Ms. Allair will highlight some of the unique natural history of this region, especially the prehistoric life and the fascinating link between modern birds and their ancestors – the theropod dinosaurs.

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## TWO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS FOR KIDS

*Get Outside - Have Fun - Do Science - Enjoy and Respect Nature Together*

Young nature-lovers in Guelph have had so much fun counting birds in the past that we decided to run two CBC 4 Kids events this year!

*First Event:* Sunday January 5th, 2014 8:00am – 1:00pm at The Guelph Lake Nature Centre

*Second Event:* Saturday January 11th, 2014 8:00am – 1:00pm at The J.C. Taylor Centre, U of G Arboretum

*Please join us for one or BOTH dates!*

Enjoy a quick introductory lesson before heading out with experienced bird-watching volunteers. Binoculars provided. Share your team's sightings and enjoy refreshments at the count tally. Results will be submitted to Bird Studies Canada. FREE event. RSVP to [www.natureguelph.ca](http://www.natureguelph.ca) or [www.natureintheighbourhood.ca](http://www.natureintheighbourhood.ca)

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## ONTARIO NATURE REPORT — Mary Ellen Pyear

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On Saturday, November 2nd, Peter Kelly and I drove to Formosa, ON to attend the fall meeting of the Great Lakes West region of Ontario Nature which was hosted by the Saugeen Field Naturalists club. In the morning session, along with our sister clubs, Peter and I presented the latest happenings at Nature Guelph, highlighting our new name change and our new logo. In the afternoon session, Ontario Nature announced that the 2014 Annual General Meeting of Ontario Nature will be held on June 20-22, 2014 at the YMCA Geneva Park facility on Lake Couchiching in Orillia. A few of our members have attended these AGM's in the past, so any Nature Guelph members who are interested in attending this upcoming event can get detailed registration information at [www.ontarionature.org/agm](http://www.ontarionature.org/agm).

The speaker for the afternoon was John Urquhart of Ontario Nature and the topic was "Massassauga Myth-busting on the Bruce Peninsula." He explained how ON ran this summer's program through guided hikes, workshops and presentations, attendance at farmers' markets and other community events, and door-to-door canvassing in Wiarton, Sauble Beach, Hepworth, Ferndale, Lion's Head and Stoke's Bay. Surveys were

filled out before and after all contact with locals to see if attitudes had changed after some education had taken place. ON determined that outreach is indeed an effective method for changing negative opinions about the Massassauga rattlers, for increasing the stewardship of the snakes' habitat, and for decreasing their persecution. This project has and will continue to have strong ties to the Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas and its telephone apps which are available. By teaching people how to identify the Massassauga rattlesnake correctly and by lessening the fear around this amphibian, ON hopes to get more reportings sent in to the Atlas and thus determine the Massassauga rattlesnake range in Ontario which is presently unknown. In fact, a sighting and a photo has already been received by the Atlas which found one of the snakes further south than would have been expected. For more information on this project, there is a very detailed and interesting six-page article in the Winter 2013/2014 **ONnature** magazine.

The spring regional meeting of Ontario Nature will be held on April 26, 2014 and it will be hosted by the Friends of MacGregor Provincial Park.

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### ON NATURE MAGAZINE

Winter has arrived and with it the winter 2014 issue of ON nature magazine. In it you can read about:

- Ontario Nature's efforts to bust the myths surrounding Massassauga rattlesnakes
- winter camping: how to prepare for it and what to expect
- intrepid owl enthusiasts who brave winter to seek out these elusive birds
- four new groups who joined Ontario's Nature Network this year

To read back issues of ON nature, visit [www.onnaturemagazine.com](http://www.onnaturemagazine.com).



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### JOIN ONTARIO NATURE TODAY

Ontario Nature takes action every day protecting wild species and wild spaces in every corner of our province – from your backyard to the boreal forest and beyond. But birds, butterflies and badgers are not the heart and soul of this organization. People like you are. Will you join Ontario Nature today, and become a part of a growing conservation success story? For more membership information, please visit [www.ontarionature.org/give/membership/index.php](http://www.ontarionature.org/give/membership/index.php).

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### PHIL GOSLING - MEMBER OF ORDER OF CANADA

NG congratulates Phil Gosling on his being named a Member of the Order of Canada. He was recently awarded the Ontario Nature W.W.H. Gunn Conservation award following our nomination. We are proud to count him among our members.

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**THE FOLLOWING LETTER WAS RECENTLY SENT TO THE CITY OF GUELPH FROM NATURE GUELPH AND OTHERS:**

Todd Salter, General Manager of Planning Services, City of Guelph, 1 Carden Street, Guelph ON N1H 3A1  
December 12, 2013

RE: REDESIGNATION OF UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH LANDS ON VICTORIA ROAD

Dear Mr. Salter,

We are writing with respect to the development proposal for the University of Guelph Victoria Lands. The University of Guelph is asking to have the area redesignated from Major Institutional to General Residential. We have serious concerns about this proposal as it appears to be inconsistent with the City of Guelph Official Plan, the Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The site proposed for development is a natural area/meadow. The portion of the subject property proposed for development has a Non-Core Greenlands Overlay in the current OP and is designated as “natural area” in OPA 42. It is surrounded by and linked to Significant Woodland, Significant Valleyland, Significant Wildlife Habitat and Provincially Significant Wetlands on all sides. This list includes the Torrance Creek Swamp to the east in Puslinch Township; the linkage to the TCS is identified in the 1999 Torrance Creek Watershed Study.

Residential development on this site would reduce the connectivity, biodiversity and buffering of the Natural Heritage System of which this site forms a centrally-located part. The proponent dismisses the linkage, biodiversity and wildlife habitat functions provided by the meadow and suggests--without providing scientific justification and contrary to the 30 metre buffer requirement in OPA 42--that a 15 metre buffer to the wetland will provide adequate protection to the adjacent NHS. The locally-significant wetlands adjacent to the proposed housing are devalued under this proposal and treated as buffers to the Provincially Significant Wetland.

This proposed development provides no meaningful contribution to fulfilling the City’s Places to Grow requirements. It is an isolated greenfield development that is not contiguous with any other developed area. The intrusion of a housing development into the centre of a Natural Heritage System directly contradicts the intentions of the GGH Growth Plan to reduce urban sprawl

and to Protect What is Valuable. Development of this site would, instead, erode an already diminished natural heritage/open space system within the City.

Background documents for OPA 42 recognize 1) the ecological value of protecting /renaturalizing “cultural” areas adjacent to more pristine natural features; 2) the decline of birds that depend upon meadow or grassland habitats; 3) the importance of biodiverse blocks of forested habitat interspersed with wetlands and open habitats on the eastern margins of the City to significant breeding bird species; 4) the importance of maintaining ecological linkages that contribute to the sustainability of the NHS as a whole. (Guelph Natural Heritage Strategy Phase 2 March 2009) The site in question fulfils all of these important functions and is worthy of protection.

In order for an area to be withdrawn from the protection of a Non-Core Greenland Overlay an EIS must demonstrate that no negative impacts will occur on the natural features or the ecological functions which may be associated with the area OP Section 7.13.6. Furthermore, the Official Plan recognizes that not all development proposals require approval:

6.3.1 e) In the approval process for an environmental impact study, it may be determined that a particular development proposal should not be approved. This could occur where a proposed development would have a substantial negative impact on the studied features and their associated ecological functions as to render the features/functions lost or severely degraded.

We respectfully request the City Planning Department to reject the development application for this site.

Yours truly,

Peter Kelly, President, Nature Guelph

Hugh Whiteley, Living Rivers and Greenways Group  
Guelph LRG3

Judy Martin, Regional Representative, Sierra Club  
Ontario

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**LETTER TO NG FROM GUFF**

The following letter was recently received from GUFF, Guelph Urban Forest Friends, regarding possible OMB reforms. If you wish to submit your own comments, the information on how to do so is included at the bottom.

As you may know, the province of Ontario is currently conducting a public consultation about possible reforms to the OMB process. One suggestion is to restrict what types of cases could be appealed to the OMB. For example, it could be argued that in situations where significant public consultations have occurred (such as Official Plan Amendments--as was the case for the City’s Natural Heritage Strategy), those matters would not be able to be appealed to the OMB.

So it would be helpful for individuals and groups to send comments to the province supporting the notion that Official Plan amendments should not be appealable to the OMB. The deadline for comments is January 10, 2014. Below are links to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing site with more information about the land use planning consultation and how to submit comments.

Judy Martin for GUFF

Overview of land use consultation: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10355.aspx>

How to submit comments: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10357.aspx>

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## YOUNG NATURALISTS and NATURALISTS IN TRAINING — Ann & Tamara

NITs are currently registering for Winter programs. (Nats program is full.) For information please see the [Naturalists in Training brochure](#) and the [Young Naturalists brochure](#) on the Nature Guelph website, [www.natureguelph.ca](http://www.natureguelph.ca) or phone the Guelph Lake Nature Centre at 519-836-7860.

### SOME PICTURES OF THE YOUNG NATURALISTS BIRD BANDING ON DECEMBER 7TH

*All photos by Marilyn Swaby*



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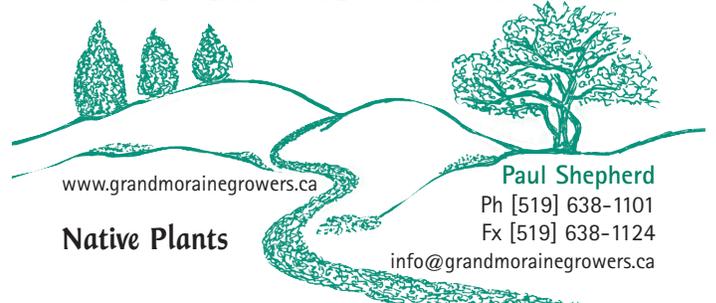


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## Notes for Novices #9 — Pine Trees by Kathleen Brown

Do all pine trees look about the same? Examine their needles and cones, and you will be able to give them names.

Two native pines most often seen here are White Pine and Red Pine. It is easy to recognize White Pine because its soft, flexible needles are in bundles of five. Other pines mentioned in this note have two-needle bundles. White Pines have long slender cones, while Red Pines have short, stubby cones and brittle needles that break when bent. Both have long needles, up to 15 cm. Jack Pines — also native but less common in southern Ontario — grow on poor quality soil or in rocky places, and are not as tall as White or Red Pines. Their spread-apart needles are short (2-4 cm), and the small, curved cones are in small clusters. A resin bond holds the cones tightly closed for as long as 20 years, until fire or very

hot weather releases the seeds.

Non-native Scots and Austrian Pines are used in ornamental or other plantings. Scots Pine has orange bark when young and twisted, blue-green needles, only 4-8 cm long. The short, conical or ovoid cones are in small clusters, pointing back along the stem. Austrian Pine needles are longer (8-16 cm), stiff, straight and do not break cleanly when bent. Cones are ovoid (5-8 cm) with small prickles on the scales.

In spring, pine trees have both pollen and seed cones. Pollen cones, like yellow, orange or red catkins, cluster in a lower part of the crown, disappearing after shedding pollen. Seed cones, often on the same tree, are usually in the upper part of the crown and mature over two years. Pine cones are food for squirrels, chipmunks, porcupines, rabbits and various birds. Deer eat the bark and foliage.

### LETTER (EDITED TO FIT SPACE) RECEIVED FROM TYLER MCEACHERN - A PARTICIPANT SPONSORED BY NATURE GUELPH AT THE 2013 YOUTH SUMMIT FOR BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN SOLUTIONS

I'm 17 years young, was born in British Columbia and now live in Guelph. I currently attend GCVI where I participated in the CELP (Community Environment Leadership Program) in Grade 10. The whole experience was another way of learning outside a classroom environment and much more down-to-earth. Earlier this year, my teacher from CELP, Joel Barr, asked if I would like to be sponsored to go to the Youth Summit. I looked into it a little bit and it seemed like it would be a great experience. Joel put me into contact with Peter Kelly with whom I had gone winter camping in 2012 in Algonquin Park. After a short registration process I was set to go to the summit in September, knowing nobody but myself.

At the summit, it was truly eye-opening to see other adolescents with similar interests and concerns about pressing issues, all brainstorming together to bring about a brighter future. The weekend was a great refresher of all the little things that we adolescents can do to make a big difference. If we all were to do our part individually, it would literally do a world of good. Words cannot even begin to describe how much the weekend meant to me as a young environmentalist. I couldn't have experienced such an incredible weekend without the sponsorship of the Guelph Field Naturalists (*now Nature Guelph*). Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart!!

*Sincerely, Tyler McEachern*

*Note: Funds to sponsor Tyler (and Taylor Szabo - see previous newsletter) came from the Reinder Westerhoff fund. If you wish to donate to this fund, please choose Get Involved, then Donations from our website [www.natureguelph.ca](http://www.natureguelph.ca)*



**Guelph Lake Nature Centre**  
Sun. Jan. 19th Big Foot Lives 2-4pm  
Sat. Feb. 15th Valentine's Moonlit Snowshoeing 7-9pm

Meet at GLNC. Registration Required

Please Visit [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca) for more information about all GRCA family programs



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**BIRD WING — Larry Staniforth [staniforth.larry@rogers.com](mailto:staniforth.larry@rogers.com) 519-767-2693**

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This will be my last year for running Bird Wing. I have been coordinating Bird Wing for almost 10 years, and it is time to pass the torch. I would urge someone from the group to consider taking over the job. I would be more than happy to assist anyone who wants to take over the reins. I have thoroughly enjoyed all of the activities, and am very proud of the advancement in expertise that the core of the group has achieved participating in Bird Wing. *Larry*

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### BIRD WING HIKES

- Hikes are bi-weekly on Thursdays until April, weekly in May/June. The exception is Wednesday December 4th.
- As usual all hikes are weather permitting in the target area. Most hikes are all day outings. We will usually lunch at local restaurants, and stop where possible for nature breaks. Bring any refreshments you deem necessary.
- Hikes usually depart from the parking lot of Wild Birds Unlimited. Departure times will be stated for each hike.
- Please dress appropriately for the weather conditions. Weather related cancelations will be done at the WBU Parking lot on day of hike. (If the weather in the target area is not good, we may go elsewhere.)
- Primarily these hikes are meant to be bird viewing outings, and as such it is essential that the group stays together and remains relatively quiet (the best way to find birds is by their songs). We will from time to time encounter exceptional natural sights during our hikes, and we will endeavour to enjoy these encounters when they occur, e.g. foxes, coyotes, bears etc.
- Non-members of Nature Guelph are welcome to join in our hikes and meetings, but please consider becoming a member of Nature Guelph if you find them enjoyable.

January 9th	- Metz - Arthur - Hawkesville, 9am
January 23rd	- Hamilton South Shoreline, 9am
February 6th	- Hamilton North Shore, 9am
February 20th	- Fisherville, 9am
March 6th	- Long Point, 8am

### BIRD WING MEETINGS

Meeting are held the last Monday of each month from September thru May 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.

January 27th	- Chris Earley - <i>The Birds and the Bees: The fascinating relationship between nesting birds and nesting bees and wasps</i>
February 24th	- Lyle Friesen - <i>Birds of the Kalahari</i>

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### NATURE IN THE CITY

Nature Guelph will be hosting a six-part series of introductory programs about nature in and around our city. It will be free and is to be held evenings at the Guelph Public Library. It consists of "intro" topics aimed at immigrants, newcomers and students, rather than established Nature Guelph members. To see the poster, look on our website under [Community](#), and encourage anyone you know who might be interested or you think could benefit to check it out. Families especially would enjoy these programs.

January 22nd	– Backyard Birds
January 29th	– Mammals, Friend or foe?
February 5th	– Birds, Bees and Butterflies
February 19th	– Outside and Beyond
February 26th	– Take it to the Trails
March 5th	– Slime and Scales

### BIRD HIKES FOR BEGINNERS

Want to go birding but don't know where to start?! Here's an idea: **Wild Birds Unlimited** has planned some hikes in the area just for you.

Upcoming hikes:

Sat. Jan. 18 - Preservation Park Meet in the Wild Birds Unlimited parking lot at 10am. Hikes will return to the store around 12 noon. We will carpool as necessary, all hikes are weather permitting. Some binoculars are available for loan. We will also have seed available to hand feed the birds! So come enjoy the birds with us, at no charge!

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## TRACKING CLUB — Tamara Anderson

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If you are interested in going tracking with a group of like-minded people, join the "Tracking Club." These outings will not be guided hikes, but rather an opportunity to get outdoors and find some interesting tracks and signs of Ontario wildlife with other "trackers." Please bring a lunch, water and a tracking field guide (Mark Elbroch's *Guide to Mammal Tracks* is excellent). Dress to be outdoors! It's a good idea to bring snowshoes if you have them. If you would like to borrow snowshoes for the outing, please e-mail Tamara at [frogforest@hotmail.com](mailto:frogforest@hotmail.com).

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| January 26th  | – Guelph Lake Nature Centre 10am  |
| February 23rd | – Luther Marsh (Meet at the Guelph Lake Nature Centre at 9am to carpool)    |
| March 23rd    | – Rockwood (Meet at the entrance to the Rockwood Conservation Area at 10am) |
| April 27th    | – Luther Marsh* (Meet at the Guelph Lake Nature Centre at 9am to carpool)   |
- \*Bring your Rubber Boots!

We will carpool to the tracking locations. Outings will be between 2-4 hours depending on the location.

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### NEARBY NATURALIST CLUBS' MEETINGS

**KITCHENER/WATERLOO** See [www.kwfn.ca](http://www.kwfn.ca)

**Monday Jan. 27th** *Peregrines* with Mark Nash

**Monday Feb. 24th** *Our Fragile Planet* with Peter Raspberry

**HALTON NORTH PEEL** See [www.hnpnc.com](http://www.hnpnc.com)

**Tuesday Jan 9th** *TBA*

**Tuesday Feb. 11th** *FLAP - Fatal Light Awareness Program* with Paloma Plant

**HAMILTON** See [www.hamiltonnature.org](http://www.hamiltonnature.org)

**Tuesday Jan. 20th** *Where are the Whip-poor-wills?* with Audrey Heagy

**Tuesday Feb. 24th** *Birding in Bhutan* with Bob Curry and Glanda Slessor

RARE

See [www.raresites.org](http://www.raresites.org)

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### GUELPH HIKING TRAIL CLUB (GHTC) HIKES

GFN members are welcome to join in any hikes of the GHTC. Go to [www.guelphhiking.com](http://www.guelphhiking.com) and download their latest newsletter. Most of their hikes, apart from the long 'strenuous' ones, include time to take a look around at the natural areas you are walking through.

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### HURON FRINGE BIRDING FESTIVAL

#### **Keep the Dates**

May 23rd - May 26th and May 29th - June 1st 2014

at MacGregor Point Provincial Park, Port Elgin

[www.friendsofmacgregor.org](http://www.friendsofmacgregor.org)

Online registration starts Feb 1st

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### THE MANDRAKE PLANT

Harry Potter fans will no doubt remember the herbology lessons where students had to wear earmuffs when repotting the baby mandrake plants in the greenhouse. The mandrake, *Madragora officinarum*, is a plant which has a root that sometimes looks like a human. Ac-



According to legend, when the root is dug up, it screams and kills all who hear it, hence the earmuffs.

The mandrake plant has been used since ancient times as a medicinal plant and has a tradition associated with magical activities. It is a member of the nightshade family

*Solinaceae*. Medically, it has been used as a pain killer and a sedative. It was used in ancient times for surgery though an overdose can be fatal. The plant is mentioned in the works of Donne, Shakespeare, Conan Doyle, Beckett, and Steinbeck as well as Rowling.

The plant is a good size, often over 30cm across, and grows low to the ground in Mediterranean regions. The flower is either mauve or off-white, and the leaves are dark green and resemble those of tobacco. The photo shows one growing on a hillside in Sicily.

*Margaret Hull*

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## NATURE GUELPH — EXECUTIVE

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# Nature Guelph

## NG CALENDAR – UPCOMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Sun Jan 5	CBC4Kids	Guelph Lake	8:00am	GLNC
Thur Jan 9	Bird Wing Hike	Metz-Arthur-Hawkesville	9:00 am	WBU
Thur Jan 9	Indoor Meeting	Wild Ontario	7:30 pm	Arboretum
Sat Jan 11	CBC4Kids	JC Taylor Nature Centre	8:00am	Arboretum
Thur Jan 23	Bird Wing Hike	Hamilton South shoreline	9:00 am	WBU
Sun Jan 26	Tracking Club	Guelph Lake	10:00am	GLNC
Mon Jan 27	Bird Wing Meeting	Chris Earley - The Birds and the Bees	7:30 pm	Ellington
Thur Feb 6	Bird Wing Hike	Hamilton North shoreline	9:00 am	WBU
Thur Feb 13	Indoor Meeting	Lyme Disease	7:30 pm	Arboretum
Thur Feb 20	Bird Wing Hike	Fisherville	9:00 am	WBU
Sun Feb 23	Tracking Club	Luther Marsh	9:00am	GLNC
Mon Feb 24	Bird Wing Meeting	Lyle Friesen - Birds of the Kalahari	7:30 pm	Ellington
Thur Mar 6	Bird Wing Hike	Long Point	8:00 am	WBU
Thur Mar 13	Indoor Meeting	Ontario's Geology	7:30 pm	Arboretum
Sun Mar 23	Tracking Club	Rockwood	10:00am	Rockwood CA
Thur Apr 10	Indoor Meeting	Night Sky	7:30 pm	Arboretum
Sun Apr 27	Tracking Club	Luther Marsh	9:00am	GLNC