

Nature Guelph News

January/February 2017

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A Tiny Life in the Snow

By Jenn Bock, President, Nature Guelph

Doesn't it feel like this winter arrived suddenly? Don't get me wrong – I LOVE the snow, but it can certainly be tougher to get motivated to go outside. To help spark your wintertime nature curiosity, I'd like to introduce you to a fascinating tiny creature, who, likely unbeknownst to you, has been living right under your nose this entire snowy season.

Introducing... the snow flea! This tiny, jumping (springing, technically) arthropod tends to congregate on top of the snow at the base of trees on warmer winter days. They are wonderfully fascinating, and yet despite their high abundance, most people have never noticed one. Here are a few reasons that it's worth getting out to try to spot a snow flea.

What's in a name? The snow flea is not a flea at all. It's a teeny tiny,

2-4mm long critter that belongs to a group called the spring tails. They aren't technically insects, but are considered insect-adjacent.

Getting around: Like their name suggests, spring tails have a springy tail. They don't use their legs to jump, but instead make use of a spring-like mechanism called the furcula, located at the back end of their body. This mini spring is ready to explode in an instant if the animal feels threatened. In fact, this springy, erratic movement is often the only thing that alerts people to the presence of these animals that otherwise look a lot like specks of dirt.

On the menu: Snow fleas are part of nature's critically important compost crew. There's enough rotting leaf litter and other organic material out there to keep these little guys going all year round!



Keeping warm: Of course they aren't actually warm – arthropods are not endothermic – but they do manage to avoid becoming frozen solid, even on the coldest days. That's because these awesome little animals have built-in antifreeze! They use a special kind of protein that binds to ice crystals to prevent larger crystals from forming.

So, no more excuses... It's time to bundle up and head out to see if you can find a few of these far-flinging, compost-eating, anti-freezing tiny wonders! Happy "flea" hunting! ●

Dr. Bailey McMeans, Dept. of Integrative Biology, U of G

Greenland Sharks and Arctic Food Webs

Nature Guelph Speaker Series

January 12, 2017 – 7:30 pm – *Everyone welcome*
OAC Centennial Arboretum Centre, University of Guelph

Dr. McMeans will discuss the foraging ecology of the Greenland Shark, its importance to the Arctic ecosystem, and concerns that it too may follow the same trajectory of decline and extinction risk of many of its southern counterparts.

 Nature
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www.natureguelph.ca

Ontario Nature Report

By Mary Ellen Pyear

The Great Lakes West region of Ontario Nature (ON) held their semi-annual fall meeting at the J.C. Taylor Nature Centre on Saturday, November 5. Nature Guelph hosted the day-long event for about 20 people who enjoyed lunch and a walk around The Arboretum following the meeting. Sean Fox, Assistant Manager and Head Horticulturist at the Arboretum, kindly agreed to give the after-lunch talk, which focused on the history of The Arboretum, its collections, and his role in the propagation of new materials for The Arboretum. In the morning session after each Club had reported on its latest happenings, Lisa Richardson of Ontario Nature updated us on the following projects happening at the provincial level. Here are just some of the ones she mentioned:

- The Ottawa Stewardship Council is the newest member of ON. Its mandate, in conjunction with the City of Ottawa, is to steward natural areas in the region, produce a species-at-risk handbook, put bat boxes on local golf courses, and assist with the Carp River Green Banks program in conjunction with the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority.
- The date for 2017's Annual ON Gathering will be the weekend of June 2-4, 2017 at the Kempenfelt Conference on South Lake Simcoe. Book early and avoid disappointment!
- Ontario Nature, the David Suzuki Foundation, Friends of the Earth Canada, and the Wilderness Committee are taking the federal government to court to protect pollinators from harmful pesticides. Pesticides containing neonicotinoids, such as Clothianidin or Thiamethoxam are unlawfully registered in Canada. The Federal Pest Control Products Act requires the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to have reasonable certainty that a pesticide will cause no harm to the environment before it's registered. For more than a decade the PMRA failed to ensure that it had

the scientific information necessary to determine environmental risks.

- The Citizen Science project at ON is updating its app and online form – but it needs testers. For further information contact atlas@ontarionature.org. Currently there are 16 CS projects in effect with emphasis currently on vernal pools and mudpuppy sightings.
- Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) recently launched its new website: www.alus.ca. ALUS is making it possible for individual farmers and ranchers, foundations and corporations across Canada to offset their own environmental footprint through agricultural stewardship. This includes projects that produce clean air and water, create wildlife habitat and pollinator meadows, and other ecosystem services. The project started in Norfolk County in Ontario and has since moved into Grey-Bruce, Elgin and Ontario East. ALUS is projecting future growth in the counties of Peterborough-Lambton, Huron, and Chatham-Kent and Caledon.

For further information on the Biodiversity Offsetting Report for the province of Ontario, contact Sarah Hedges at sarahh@ontarionature.org ●

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Dear Nature Guelph Members,

As a grade 11 student at Centre Wellington District High School, I have been interested in nature and outdoor activities since I started participating in the Guelph Nature Centre Camps when I was six years old. My interests include many outdoor activities such as camping, canoeing, fishing and hiking.

I was honored to be invited to attend the Ontario Nature Youth Summit on behalf of Nature Guelph. I had many great experiences at the Youth Summit, including:

- Meeting new people who shared the same interests as me.
- Using information and experiences from the NITs program to understand the workshops I took part in.
- I learned about medicinal plants from a First Nations leader who provided a new perspective on plants and their healing qualities.
- I learned about a new app created by Ontario Nature that can identify different species of reptiles and amphibians. It also allows you to submit sightings of these animals and keep records. I would be happy to share how the app works with the group.

I would like to thank all of you for the opportunity and sponsorship to participate in the Ontario Nature Youth Summit. It will be something that I will always remember and use in future activities working with youth and in nature.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Vos

Reinder Westerhoff Education Fund

A well-loved member of Nature Guelph, Reinder died suddenly at 70 in 2013. A friend, teacher, scholar, mentor and instigator, he named Nature Guelph as a group that could receive donations in his honour. We've used the Fund to send two youth to the Ontario Nature Youth camp every year, and continue to accept donations through the Treasurer or the Canada Helps website:

canadahelps.org/en/charities/nature-guelph/

Select the Reinder Westerhoff fund from the drop-down menu. A tax receipt will be issued.

City Moves Towards Banning Outdoor Cats

From GuelphToday.com – Posted December 5, 2016 by Tony Saxon

New cat licences that are part of new animal control bylaw seen as step towards banning outdoor cats within five years

The City of Guelph is moving towards banning outdoor cats within the next five years.

Guelph City Council's Committee of the Whole approved a new animal control bylaw on Monday, which includes a \$25 cat licence by 2018. The recommended bylaw goes to full council on Dec. 19 for final approval.

But some of Monday's discussion centred on how the licensing of cats was part of the process moving towards creating a bylaw that will ban them from roaming outside.

The city's General Manager of Operations, Doug Godfrey, told a meeting of council's Committee of the Whole Monday that not allowing cats outdoors is something the city hopes to phase in over the next five years.

He said one of the benefits of cat licensing is "to encourage residents to show the benefits of keeping cats indoors," Godfrey said.

"I'd like to see us move in the direction of all cats be kept indoors," commented councillor Bob Bell.

Another big reason for cat licensing is to reconnect more cats brought in to the Guelph Humane Society with their owners. The Guelph Humane Society will take in roughly 600 cats this year, with only 13 per cent of those cats being reunited with their owners.

While there are far fewer dogs brought in to the Humane Society, roughly 80 per cent of those get reunited with owners.

The new animal control bylaw covers everything from exotic pets to goats.

The clause that calls for a \$25 cat licence passed by a 8-4 vote. Those voting against cat licenses were councillors Leanne Piper, Mike Salisbury, Christine Billings and Mayor Cam Guthrie.

The recommendations approved Monday are as follows. They now need

final approval from council on Dec. 19 to go into effect.

1. That the licensing of cats be phased in and not become mandatory until 2018, and that no collar or license tag be required if the cat is microchipped and the information is kept current
2. That the User Fee By-law be amended to include a \$25 Annual Licensing Fee for cats
3. That \$5 of each cat license sold be allocated to a program to be developed by the Animal Control Working Group, Guelph Humane Society and City Staff to address health and welfare issues for cats
4. That a requirement to restrict cats from being at large be reviewed in five years and staff be directed to continue to work with external partners to develop an education package regarding cats at large
5. That staff be directed, with input from representatives from pet stores and other stakeholders to develop regulations including the prohibition of dog and cat sales within the City's Business Licensing By-law
6. That roosters be prohibited in the City of Guelph
7. That the User Fee By-law be amended to include a one-time fee of \$25 for the registration of keepers of domestic poultry and breeders of reptiles
8. That an exception to the Prohibited Animal Schedule "A" be added to permit sheep and goats up to a limit of two on a single property for up to 12 properties, as an introductory program to determine the feasibility of the exemption
9. That City staff continue to work with the Animal Control Working Group to develop a Code of Practice respecting care and treatment of animals
10. That City staff continue to work with stakeholders to develop an education package and outreach materials to assist in providing information to help address wildlife conflicts within the City
11. That the fees for animal licensing provide a 25% discount for residents purchasing a licence for a second or subsequent licenses
12. That the licence fees be reduced by 50% for any resident who qualifies for other City subsidies, such as the Affordable Bus Pass.

An added recommendation that was approved saw the distance between chicken coops and neighbours reduced.

The old bylaws said there had to be 50 feet between a chicken coop and a neighbour's house. The new rule is 1.2 metres between coops and property lines and 3 metres between coops and neighbour's homes. ●



Calling All Guelph Community Activists! We need passionate advocates to promote *Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives in Guelph!* Activities will depend on your interests and the time you have available and could include:

- Distributing literature to neighbours, businesses, animal shelters, etc;
- Encouraging organizations to join our campaign as partners;
- Pitch your local paper to do an article about cats and birds in your area;
- Give presentations at events, schools or clubs.

We will supply all of the materials as well as a volunteer kit. If you're interested in this opportunity, please contact us at info@catsandbirds.ca.



Bird banding with Young Naturalists

On December 3rd, Nature Guelph's Young Naturalists (NATs) joined Dave Lamble on a bird banding adventure – a day that resulted in the capture and release of 49 birds including a Cardinal, Downy Woodpeckers, American Tree Sparrows, Chickadees and Juncos. The kids helped rescue the birds from the nets and band them. Some also threaded Cheerios on wire spirals to make bird feeders!



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Member Profile: Colin Oaks



Colin Oaks has been a member of the Nature Guelph Executive since 2011. He started as the University Student Liaison before taking on the Conservation Coordinator role.

Colin is employed as a project biologist at Trout Unlimited Canada. He also brings a wealth of experience from other past employment that included the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and a private consulting firm.

Colin has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Sciences from the University of Guelph where he majored in Ecology. He also has both Fish and Wildlife Technician and Technologist diplomas from Sir Sandford Fleming College's Frost Campus. Colin is also a certified family level Aquatic insect taxonomist by the Society for Freshwater Science. He has also completed both the Ontario Fishes Identification and the Ontario Fish Species at Risk Workshops offered by the Royal Ontario Museum.

Colin's interests include a passion for the natural environment and the function of an ecosystem as a whole. He has specialized in aquatic ecology through his training and job experience. He also has a strong belief in public outreach and education on the natural environment and especially enjoys facilitating hands-on experiences. He believes these kinds of interactions allow people to maximize learning and gain the most respect for their environment.

Outside of work Colin continues his passion for public awareness and education by volunteering for Wild Ontario, a wildlife education program that uses non-releasable birds of prey as ambassadors for education. He also volunteers his time as the Chair of the City of Guelph's Environmental Advisory Committee. ●



Welcome, Denise!

Denise Fell joins Nature Guelph Executive Team



Denise grew up in Muskoka (near Huntsville), and has lived in Guelph since moving here for university in the early 90s. She has a Wildlife Biology degree, a Restoration Ecology post-graduate diploma, and has worked as an Environmental Assessment Officer with Environment Canada in Burlington since 2001. She is the mother of two boys aged 11 and 13, Gavin and Logan. Denise enjoys hiking, canoeing, and camping, as well as reading and various artsy endeavours, including singing in the Guelph Community Singers choir. Her passion is to get people excited about nature and help them develop a deep connection and love for our wild species and spaces. Denise was a member of the Guelph Field Naturalists executive (pre-Nature Guelph) for many years doing Community Outreach and helping with the Outdoor Program and Environment Committee. She is very happy to be back volunteering with Nature Guelph where she can put her skills and passions to good use!

Photography: Courtesy Colin Oaks, Denise Fell

Join Nature Guelph! 2016–17 Membership Application

Choose One: New Member Renewal Update

Fill Out Your Personal Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I authorize Nature Guelph to communicate with me by email. *(Required)*

Yes No Signature: _____ Date: _____

I would like to volunteer! *(How would you like to contribute?)*

Select Your Membership:

Individual (\$25) \$

Full-Time Student (\$10) \$

Optional:

Newsletter printed, mailed (\$10) \$

Donation \$
Tax receipt issued for amounts over \$10, not including membership fee

Calculate Your Total: \$

Choose Your Payment Method:

Cash Cheque payable to *Nature Guelph*

Online at natureguelph.ca/membership

Upcoming Events

NATURE GUELPH MEETINGS & SPEAKER SERIES

Meetings occur on the second Thursday of each month. We begin with a brief business meeting, followed by a short break, then the speaker's presentation.

January 12, 7:30 pm
Greenland Sharks and Arctic Food
Webs: The Role of Top Predators

*Dr. Bailey McMeans,
Dept. of Integrative Biology,
University of Guelph*

February 9, 7:30 pm
Every Feather, A Story

Richard Tofflemire
This speaker is still to be confirmed.
Please check online for updates.

March 9, 7:30 pm
**Botanical Gardens and the
Conservation Imperative**

*David Galbraith, Head of Science,
Royal Botanical Gardens*

*OAC Centennial Arboretum Centre,
University of Guelph
270 Arboretum Road, Guelph*

Non-members are very welcome.
Goodwill donations gratefully accepted.

For confirmation and updates,
visit www.natureguelph.ca.

*We ask that you do not wear perfumes out of
respect for people who are allergic to them.*

NATURE GUELPH OUTDOOR EVENTS

January 8, 8:00–11:00 am
Christmas Bird Count 4 Kids

*Guelph Lake Conservation Area
Nature Centre
7743 Conservation Drive, Guelph*

Please visit www.natureguelph.ca for
other scheduled outdoor events.

NATURE GUELPH WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

January 18, 7:30 pm
**Surveying for Species of
Plants at Risk: Planning,
Conducting and Reporting**

*Monique Aarts,
Blazing Star Environmental*

February 15, 7:30 pm
Wild Fruits

*Bill McIlveen, Field Botanist
The Library, John McCrae Public School
187 Water Street, Guelph*

NEARBY NATURALIST CLUBS SELECT EVENTS

Halton/North Peel Naturalists Club
hnpnc.com

February 14, 7:30 pm
The Ethics of Nature Photography

*Mark Peck, Ornithology Technician,
Royal Ontario Museum*

*St. Alban's Anglican Church Hall
537 Main Street, Glen Williams
(Georgetown)*

Hamilton Naturalists Club

hamiltonnature.org

January 29, 1:00–3:00 pm
Hike: Exploring the Summit Bog

Bruce Mackenzie, Hike Leader
Check hamiltonnature.org/activities
for specific hike location

*Royal Botanical Gardens
680 Plains Road West, Burlington*

rare
raresites.org

January 14, 1:00–3:00 pm
Worm Science and Vermicompost

Heather Cray

February 9, 7:00–8:30 pm
Owl Prowl

Meet at rare ECO Centre

February 11, 10:00 am–12:00 pm
Winter Tree ID

Brett Woodman
Meet at South Gate (Whistle Bare Road)
rare ECO Centre
768 Blair Road, Cambridge
Admission \$8. Must pre-register online.

Waterloo Region Nature
waterlooregionnature.ca

January 23, 7:30–9:30 pm
**How Birding Field Guides
are Illustrated**

Peter Burke, Illustrator

*Knox Presbyterian Church Hall
50 Erb Street West, Waterloo*



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Canada, meet your national bird.

*Excerpt from Canadian Geographic
November 16, 2016 – by Nick Walker*

After weighing the opinions and preferences of tens of thousands of Canadians, as well as the expertise of our National Conservation Partners at Bird Studies Canada and other ornithologists and conservationists, as well as cultural experts and Indigenous Peoples, [the] list was narrowed to five birds. And one finalist best met all reasonable criteria.

We give you the gray jay. Also known as the whiskey jack or Canada jay, it is *Canadian Geographic's* official recommendation for National Bird of Canada.

*Read the full article at
[canadiangeographic.ca/article/
meet-our-national-bird-gray-jay](http://canadiangeographic.ca/article/meet-our-national-bird-gray-jay)*



We Need Your Talent!

Webmaster: Updating and maintaining our Wordpress-based website. Includes some email administration.

Copywriter: Contributing to various initiatives including our newsletter and website.

Interested in volunteering with Nature Guelph? Please contact Christine Bowen: volunteer@natureguelph.ca

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