

Nature Guelph News

September/October 2017



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Welcome Back!

By Brett Forsyth, President, Nature Guelph

Our lush summer break is, at the time of writing, swiftly coming to a close. However, that also means our Speaker Series will be starting up again. As someone that is fascinated by fossils, I can't wait to hear Beth Gilhespy's September presentation on her fossil adventures in the Rockies.

As your new president, I think it's only fitting I start by introducing myself. Originally from the west coast, I moved to Guelph four years ago with my family so my wife could pursue a degree in Organic Agriculture from the University of Guelph. Last year, we made the decision to put down serious roots and make Guelph our permanent home.

My background is in technology and education. I spent the better part of a decade teaching a variety of subjects at the Vancouver Film School. After the move, I figured it was a good opportunity to change careers myself and began to pursue conservation photography and technology. These days you are equally likely to find me out in the wilds photographing species at risk, or building devices to study them.

I feel very fortunate to be taking on the presidency of Nature Guelph from Jenn Bock. As I am sure you would agree, she has done an exceptional job as President. Under her direction, our organization is growing. Last year we had record attendance numbers at several of our Speaker Series events. Our reputation with other naturalist clubs in the province is excellent.

Jenn is not only staying on as Past President but is taking over our outdoor programs. I am excited to see the calendar of events she is putting together. (Check them out online.) On behalf of Nature Guelph, thank you Jenn for all your (continuing) hard work.

Since sincere thanks for years of dedicated service go out to departing executive members Mary Ellen Pyear (Ontario Nature Rep), John Prescott (Treasurer) and David Churchill (Membership). It was a pleasure getting to know each of you.

This also means I have the pleasure to introduce to you to new executive members:

Calvin Dowling is taking on the role of Ontario Nature Rep. He worked on the ON Youth Council for years and also has experience with his home club executive (West Elgin Nature Club).

Allie Mayberry is taking on the role of Youth Programs Coordinator – a new executive position that will serve to oversee the NITs and NATs programs in partnership with GRCA. She works at Shared Valued Solutions and has experience working with young people in a camp setting.

Val Wyatt, avid naturalist, long-time Nature Guelph member and co-owner of Wild Birds Unlimited Guelph and Vortex Optics Canada, is rejoining the executive after taking a hiatus when her kids were young. Now that they're growing up, Val is back to take on the role of Membership Coordinator.

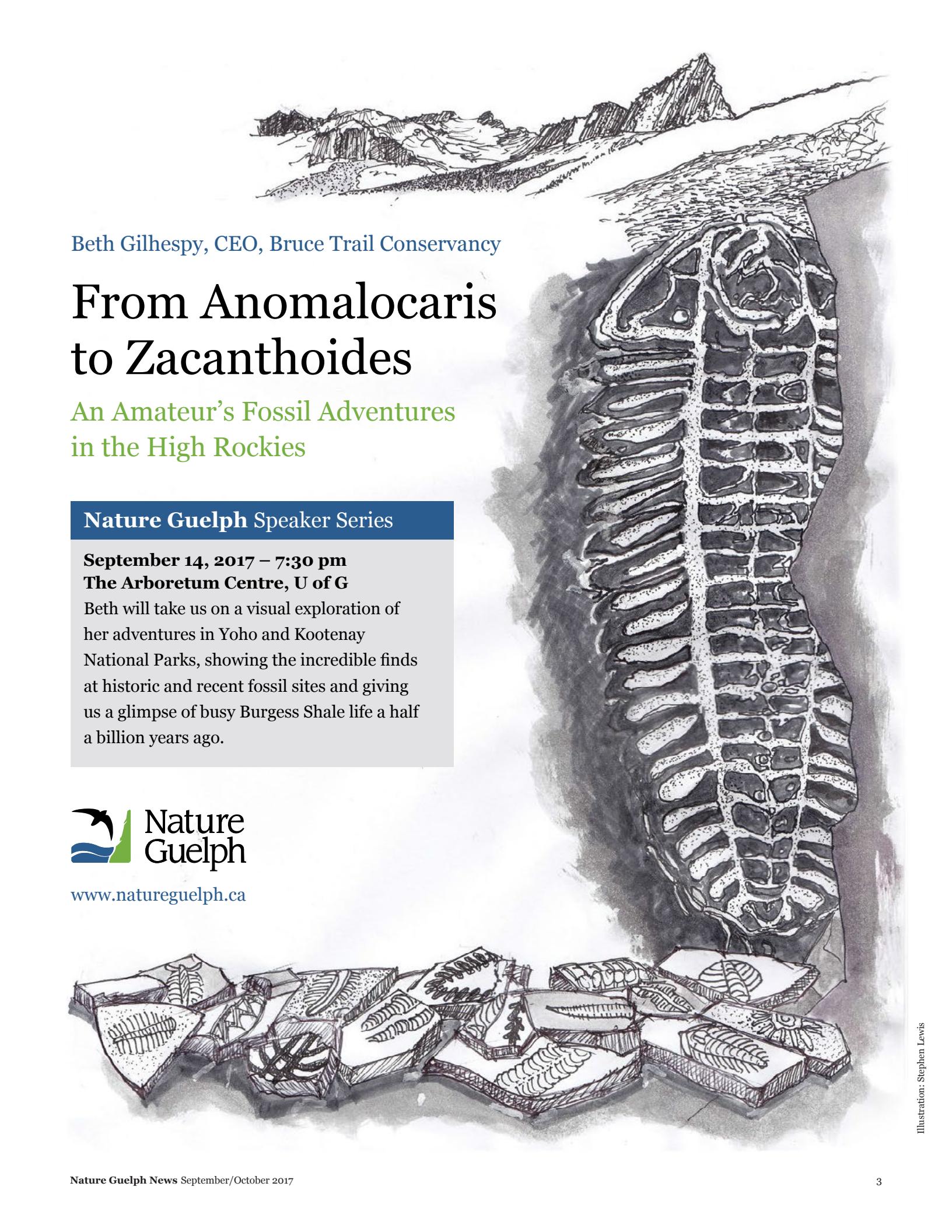
It's going to be another great year for Nature Guelph. I'm really looking forward to the fall! ●



This summer I accompanied NRSI to Rattlesnake Point for an evening of mist netting bats. NRSI is doing research on Eastern small-footed bats but capture many different species. Pictured here is a little brown bat that has just received a identification band and is ready for release.



Photos: Brett Forsyth (cover); Brett Forsyth, Randy Van Gerwen



Beth Gilhespy, CEO, Bruce Trail Conservancy

From Anomalocaris to *Zacanthoides*

An Amateur's Fossil Adventures in the High Rockies

Nature Guelph Speaker Series

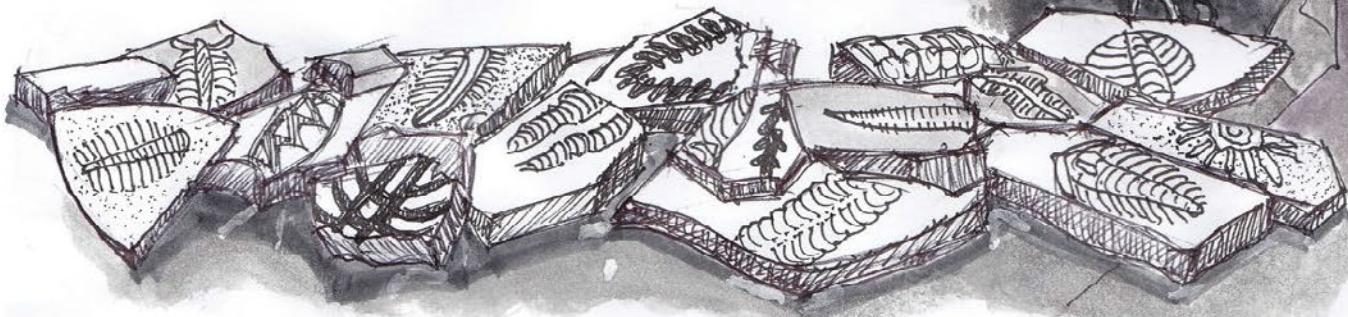
September 14, 2017 – 7:30 pm

The Arboretum Centre, U of G

Beth will take us on a visual exploration of her adventures in Yoho and Kootenay National Parks, showing the incredible finds at historic and recent fossil sites and giving us a glimpse of busy Burgess Shale life a half a billion years ago.



www.natureguelph.ca



Ontario Nature Report

by Mary Ellen Pyear

On Saturday, April 29, 2017 I attended the Great Lakes West regional meeting of Ontario Nature, held in Owen Sound's Harrison Park. The morning started off with the Clubs sharing their latest news and happenings. Lisa Richardson of Ontario Nature then reported on the following projects:

- **Ontario Snapping Turtle Hunt banned on March 31, 2017 by the provincial government:** 11,000 people signed the petition in 2012 and 7,000 more individuals signed a recent petition along with 27 Nature Network groups who signed. The collective voice really does get results!
- **Six new member groups joined Ontario Nature:** Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group, Leeds-Grenville Stewardship Council, Liberty Allotment Garden, Land Over Landings, Great Lakes Wildlife Research, and Ontario Beekeepers' Association
- **Endangered Species Act Lawsuit:** In April 2016, the Ontario Court of Appeal heard ON's case challenging a Divisional Court ruling that upheld the ESA exemptions. In October, the Ontario Court of Appeals ruled against Ontario Nature. Ontario Nature then appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. On May 4, 2017, the Supreme Court ruled against Ontario Nature's lawsuit.

- **Neonicotinoid Pesticide Use Lawsuit:** Ontario Nature is suing Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency because a) the proper environmental assessment of risk was not done, and b) the public was not consulted on the use of neonicotinoids, as required by law. The lawsuit was filed in July 2016 but government and industry respondents are trying to have the case dismissed. A federal court date of July 6 and 7, 2017 will determine if the case will proceed.
- **The Nature Guardians Program:** The Youth Council has been very busy with their pollinator campaign working in their communities to designate BEE friendly schools and BEE friendly cities. Thanks to the efforts of Grade 10 student Ethan Elliott, a member of ON's Youth Council, the City of Stratford just became the second Bee City in Ontario after Toronto.
- **Biodiversity Offsetting:** Two new reports are available online: a) *Biodiversity Offsetting in Ontario: Issues, Accomplishments and Future Directions*; and b) *Indigenous Perspectives on Conservation Offsetting: Five Case Studies from Ontario, Canada*. Check out www.ontarionature.org/offsetting.
- **Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas publication – and new Citizen Science Directory:** For more information, contact Emma Horrigan at emmah@ontarionature.org
- **Sustainable Forestry:** The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has drafted two national Standards documents and are holding a workshop with the FSC and Indigenous communities.
- **Climate Change Impacts:** Ontario Nature is reaching out to the public to research the impact of climate change on species.
- **Greenway Program:** Strong partnerships with the agricultural community continue with the successful launch of the ALUS program in Peterborough County. ALUS Canada launched their "New Acre" program which was highlighted in the Spring 2017 edition of the Ontario Nature magazine. For more information, contact joshuaw@ontarionature.org.
- **Greenway Program – Planning the Greater Golden Horseshoe area:** A new letter writing campaign is underway to ask the Premier to stand up for the Greenbelt. Individuals can sign a petition at <http://ontarionature.good.do./sprawl/email/>. Final plans for the Greenbelt are expected to be announced in the Spring 2017. Ontario Nature has submitted over 35,000 letters from Greenbelt Alliance groups and 2,500 letters from the "Greenbelt Hanging in Balance" petition. For further information, contact Joshua Wise at joshuaw@ontarionature.org. ●



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A Hidden Gem: The Gadwall

By Kyle Horner, onewordbirds.com



I have, for some reason, a fascination with birds that have one-word names. Of over 10,000 bird species, only 143 can claim this rare honour. But if you ever find yourself (as I frequently do) perusing the list of one-word-birds, you may notice that some families of birds are better represented than others. There are no one-word owls, for example, or woodpeckers. You won't find any gulls or penguins on the list either. What you will find though, is a disproportionate number of ducks.

One member of the duck family – the Mallard – may actually be the most commonly encountered one-word-bird in the entire world. Our familiar green-headed friend is in fine company too, with cousins including the Garganey, the Redhead, the Canvasback, the Smew and the undeniably adorable Bufflehead. But why does this single group of birds merit so many more mononyms than others?

The answer, I think, lies in who names birds, and it seems likely to me that different groups of birds have been named by different groups of people. Take the gulls, for example. These ubiquitous, mostly-identical, oft-maligned birds are unimportant in the eyes of most people, and as such there has never been a need for the lay person to distinguish one from the other. For this reason most people simply call them all 'seagulls' in complete ignorance of the fact that there are dozens of unique species.¹ The scientific community, then, is free to dream up some typically unimaginative monikers without pressure from the masses.

Ducks, on the other hand, are important to people mostly because they are delicious. Their tasty flesh makes people want to hunt them, and hunters have historically created easy, memorable names for the species they shoot. There's a certain elegant simplicity to names like Redhead and Canvasback, and in the hunter's vernacular they are complemented by others including Bluebill (for Lesser Scaup), Sprig (for Northern Pintail), Spooney (for Northern Shoveler), Sawbill (for Common Merganser), Skunkhead (for Surf Scoter) and even Greenhead (for our friendly, everyday Mallard).

Many of these colloquial names have disappeared over the years, giving way to the biologist's inclination towards standardization and consistency. Some have persisted though, and many of our extant one-word ducks are colourful and charismatic. All but one, really. And yes, that is the one I am intent on blabbering on about today. It may seem overly humble or humdrum to you, but in my mind it's practically a runway model: the Gadwall.

I must concede that in the bright and boldly-patterned world of waterfowl, the Gadwall doesn't exactly stand out at first glance. It is so dull, in fact, that it has become a bit of a running joke in my small circle of friends. The joke arose roughly like this:

I was once birding a particularly sweet waterfowl spot with a few friends, including a guy we'll call Kevin (his name is actually Kevin). While eyeing the ducks with a scope I paused on our

first Gadwall of the day and I asked if anyone else would like to have a look. A few took me up on my offer, but Kevin declined. When I asked him if he wasn't a fan of the Gadwall he glibly responded "It's not much of a duck, really." I put up some resistance on the Gadwall's behalf until, using an analogy with beer to drive home his point, Kevin boldly stated "The Gadwall is the Coors Light of ducks."²

Now I may have dropped the argument at that point (or many points later, who can remember?), but in the years following I have made it a small mission of mine to ensure that Kevin pays dearly for his cruel and unnecessary slight on this noble bird. Indeed we can scarcely pass within a mile of one without me reminding him of that fateful day and calling his character deeply into question. Even now, probably ten years on, I am thoughtlessly implicating him by name for the world to see.³ I don't even feel bad about it.

At this point I probably should admit that I may never have thought twice about the Gadwall before that day. But injustices of any sort should not go unmet, and it was the callousness of the attack that presented this little duck to me in a new light.

If you've never been fortunate enough to lay eyes on a Gadwall before, allow me to paint you a picture. The male Gadwall is an absolute symphony in gray. His head is gray, his back is gray, his sides are gray, his belly is gray, and his tail is also gray. The gray has a faint mottled pattern in which different shades of gray

Continued on following page

contrast slightly with each other. Oh, and the bill is also gray. The female is brown, but basically all female ducks are brown so we can hardly fault her for that.

The discerning observer will note that the male does possess three distinctive, colourful (sort of) field marks. First, the feathers on his hind end are black. Second, there are some white feathers in his wing which are sometimes visible. Thirdly, some of the feathers on his back edge over the border from gray into brown territory, making for some very lovely, if indeed subtle, contrast. His feet are also yellow, but since they're almost always underwater, that's not really important.

Now at this point you may be thinking that my interest in the Gadwall is more

based in stubbornness than in genuine appreciation, and you may be at least partly correct. But I must not be the only one who enjoys this bird, because it has held on to its special name in a time when many other ducks have not.

Making that fact even more surprising is that the name, which has been in use since at least the mid-1600s, doesn't seem to mean anything. At least not anymore. I like to think that maybe it never did. Maybe it was the result of some ridiculous argument between a couple of duck hunters in the English countryside, with one making disparaging remarks and the other defiantly assigning a unique name in protest. If I have somehow unknowingly carried on a centuries-old tradition of raising

hell over trivial, bird-related quarrels, my life would seem just about complete.

The next time you're strolling along the water, taking in the array of reds, blues and greens, remember that not all ducks are created equal. I urge you to take a moment to look beyond the rainbow for the little gray duck in the corner. He may not be bright, bold, or even beautiful, but the Gadwall deserves a little love too. ●

¹ Referring to a bird as a 'seagull' is a great way to get a free ornithology lecture, as no birder can resist vigorously correcting you on this clearly non-trivial error.

² I'm sorry if you happen to like Coors Light.

Mostly I'm sorry that you haven't discovered beer.

³ Well, the ten people that read this.

Ghost Pipe *Monotropa uniflora*

Ghost Pipe is one of a handful of plants without chlorophyll; its translucent, waxy, white tissue gives rise to the common name. The plant grows in small clumps with multiple short stems each topped with a flower. Before pollination, the flowers point downward creating a pipe-like shape. As the plant matures, the flowers tip upwards at a forty five degree angle to allow pollinators better access to the nectar inside. After pollination, the flowers tip fully upright while the seeds mature. At maturity the fruits become dry and papery, break open and the seeds are dispersed on the wind. The plant then becomes black or brown as it ages and is



often mistaken for a fungus.

Ghost Pipe has a complex parasitic relationship with fungi and conifers called *myco-heterotrophy*. Ghost Pipe is parasitic upon mycorrhizal fungi. The fungi in turn are symbiotic parasites upon

conifers. The fungi provide water and enhanced nutrient uptake to the conifers, and the conifers provide carbohydrates to the fungi. Ghost Pipe takes carbohydrates from the fungi without any apparent reciprocal benefit.

Ghost Pipe has a large range in northern conifer forests with moist to wet soil around the world – but it is not common. It is facing foraging pressure by herbal medicine collectors and is disappearing from some areas. The complex mycorrhizal relationship makes propagation and cultivation extremely difficult. This is a plant that should be enjoyed when found but left where found. ●

Join Nature Guelph! 2017–18 Membership Application

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Welcome New Executive Members!



Calvin Dowling

Ontario Nature Rep

I am currently studying zoology at the University of Guelph. I work seasonally/occasionally as an educator/keeper with Sciensational Sssnakes!! – along with a year-round volunteer commitment to Wild Ontario. In both of these positions, I both care for *and* educate people about native Ontario wildlife. I've also dabbled in field work surrounding endangered turtles in the province, but education and keeping are my true loves! I also enjoy running, reading, and birding... between my crazy school schedule!



Laura Rundle

Treasurer

I studied Environmental Geography at Nipissing University and Environmental Management at Niagara College. I'm a conservation lands planner at Credit Valley Conservation – most of my work focuses on coordinating Master plans and related projects at our beautiful conservation areas. I am currently on maternity leave and just moved to Rockwood with my husband, son, dog and two (indoor!) cats. We love hiking, camping and all things outdoors!



Allie Mayberry

Youth Programs Coordinator

I studied wildlife biology at Mount Allison University (in New Brunswick) and human geography at the University of Guelph. In past lives I have worked as a volunteer coordinator at an ethical Asian elephant tourism operation in Thailand, and as a grizzly bear viewing guide on British Columbia's central coast. I'm currently a consultant at Shared Value Solutions in Guelph, where my work involves conducting traditional knowledge and land use studies and wildlife ecology work with First Nations communities.



Valerie Wyatt

Membership

Val Wyatt is a former environmental consultant, has co-owned Wild Birds Unlimited for 20 years, and first started attending Nature Guelph meetings with her father over 30 years ago. She enjoys sharing her love of birds with everyone who will listen. Her favourite bird is the Rose-breasted Grosbeak because of the way it appears like magic in May – a true harbinger of spring!

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Copywriters: Nature Guelph is looking for copywriters and copy editors to contribute to various communication initiatives including our newsletter and website.

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volunteer@natureguelph.ca*

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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.

September 14, 7:30 pm

Fossil Adventures in the Rockies
Beth Gilhespy, Chief Executive Officer with the Bruce Trail Conservancy

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

October 12, 7:30 pm

Love Your Greats: The Search for Environmental Optimism
Jen Pate is a geographer and entrepreneur fascinated by human-environment interaction

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

Non-members are very welcome.
Goodwill donations gratefully accepted.
Snacks and coffee available for a nominal fee. Please bring your own coffee mug.

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

NATURE GUELPH OUTDOOR EVENTS

September 24, 4:00–5:30 pm

Guelph Pollinator Park Tour
Victoria McPhail and Kevin Butt

Meet at The Arboretum Centre's parking lot at 3:45 pm to carpool.

October 1, 7:00 am–4:00 pm

Hawk Cliff Road Trip
Kyle Horner

Meet at The Arboretum Centre's parking lot at 7:00 am to carpool.

NATURE GUELPH WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

September 20, 7:30–9:00 pm

Annual Identification Night
*The Library, John McCrae Public School
187 Water Street, Guelph*

October 18, 7:30–9:00 pm

Gardening for Butterflies
Thelma Beaubien

*The Library, John McCrae Public School
187 Water Street, Guelph*

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NEARBY NATURALIST CLUBS SELECT EVENTS

Hamilton Naturalists Club

hamiltonnature.org

September 18, 7:30–9:30 pm

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory
*Burlington Seniors' Centre
2285 New St., Burlington*

rare

raresites.org

September 21, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Phragmites Management
*Meet at Lamb's Inn
1679 Blair Road, Cambridge*

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Ontario Nature Conservation Awards



This summer, Ontario Nature presented conservation awards to recognize and celebrate the dedication of individuals, organizations and cities for their outstanding environmental leadership and conservation efforts to protect wild species and wild spaces across Ontario.

Nature Guelph nominated local conservation heroes in two categories, and both were successful! Members Karen

Bateman and Marilyn Swaby received the Richards Education Award for their long-time commitment to connecting children and youth with nature as treasured volunteers with Nature Guelph's Young Naturalists Program. Guelph's Wild Ontario received the Ontario Nature Corporate Award for its science-based environmental education in Ontario using live, non-releasable birds-of-prey.

In addition, Nature Guelph member Bill McIlveen received the W.W.H. Gunn Conservation Award for his dedication to surveying and writing about Ontario's wildlife and plants. He has authored more than 300 articles and reports on nature in the province.

Congratulations to the winners! ●

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Nature Guelph News

Please submit all contributions for the next issue to Sandra MacGregor by email on or before Oct. 10, 2017.

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