

Nature Guelph News

May/June 2019

Photographing
Bumble Bees *p. 3*

In Search of Tundra Swans *p. 6*

A Time to Act

By Brett Forsyth, President, Nature Guelph

Back in February, you likely saw information circulating about changes the Province was considering making to the Endangered Species Act. On April 18th, the Province officially released their proposed changes.

Ontario Nature has provided a good breakdown of some of the worst of the

changes (ontarionature.org/endangered-species-act-review-top-ten/). I highly encourage you check it out. There is a 30-day public consultation period for the proposal, so please contact your MPP and Minister Phillips (which you can do on the Ontario Nature page) with your concerns, if you haven't done so already.

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to not shrug this one off. The changes, if they go ahead as proposed, will significantly weaken species protection in Ontario. ●

You can read the entire document here: <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/013-5033>



Travis Steffens, Lemur Researcher, International Fellow of the Explorers Club, Founding Director of Planet Madagascar

Planet Madagascar

Building Sustainable Forest Communities

Nature Guelph Speaker Series

May 9, 7:30 pm – Everyone welcome
OAC Centennial Arboretum Centre,
University of Guelph

Travis has been travelling to Madagascar since 2007 conducting research, guiding groups, leading expeditions, and running conservation projects. He will take you on a journey to this island of lemurs showing off one of the most diverse places on earth.



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Photos: (Cover) Brett Forsyth; Courtesy Travis Steffens

Say *Bees!*

How *Not* to Bumble Your Bee Photography

by Angela Gradish



There's been a buzz in the air about bees lately, and for good reason: Bees are major pollinators of both wild plants and agricultural crops, and some species are declining because of threats like habitat loss, climate change, and agricultural intensification. Many people assume the honey bee is the top pollinator among bees. But bumble bees, the honey bee's bigger, hairier, and louder cousins, are just as important for pollination.* (For some plants, bumble bees are even better pollinators than honey bees.) North America is home to 46 bumble bee species that collectively visit hundreds of types of plants. Also, a few bumble bee species are commercially reared and sold to growers to pollinate certain crops, like blueberries and greenhouse tomatoes. Unfortunately, some bumble bee species are declining or endangered, and the status of many other species is unknown. Bumble bees are historically understudied, and so for some areas, there aren't many bumble bee records (documented sightings of individual bumble bees

with associated reference information, like sighting location, date, and species name). Without good records, it's difficult to know how many individuals of certain bumble bee species there are now and how large their geographic range is, and how their population sizes and ranges may have changed over time. Brett Forsyth, a photographer and naturalist from Guelph, hopes to help address this problem and raise awareness about bumble bees with his new online project, Photographing Bumble Bees for Identification.

Originally from British Columbia, Brett became interested in bumble bee conservation when he moved to Ontario. Currently, there are three bumble bees on the Species at Risk in Ontario list: the rusty-patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*, endangered), the gypsy cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus bohemicus*, endangered), and the yellow-banded bumble bee (*Bombus terricola*, special concern). Brett decided to figure out how to photograph these at-risk species, and in the

process, he discovered that there are relatively poor records of many Ontario bumble bees, especially in the northern and central areas of the province.

Brett saw a way to improve our knowledge of Ontario bumble bees** via iNaturalist, an existing online citizen science project aimed at documenting and sharing observations of global biodiversity. Users create free profiles and upload photos of their biodiversity finds, where they can then be viewed by other users and identified by experts.



Photos: Brett Forsyth

iNaturalist educates people about the natural world, but it also can provide scientists with valuable data that can be used to track changes to species' geographic distributions and population sizes. For those data to be useful, the species in the uploaded photos must be identifiable, which requires high-quality images that contain key body structures needed to identify the organism. But as anyone who's ever tried will tell you, getting a bumble bee to sit still for a picture is tricky. As a photographer, Brett saw an obvious solution to that problem: simply teach people to take good pictures of bumble bees with their mobile devices, and in turn, get better data on Ontario bumble bees.

In a series of videos on the Photographing Bumble Bees website, Brett takes viewers step-by-step through the process of taking pictures of bumble bees and

uploading their photos to the Bumble Bees of Ontario project on iNaturalist. He also provides a free, printable pocket guide that outlines the most important tips for photographing bumble bees and gives descriptions of the three at-risk species in Ontario. Brett has four general tips for getting great pictures of bumble bees. First, get as close as you can to the bumble bee. (Don't be scared of that stinger—bumble bees really aren't very aggressive!) Second, get separate shots of the bumble bee's back, side, and face. These areas contain features that are important for identifying bumble bees. Third, slow motion video can be used to get good images of fast-moving insects: It produces a bunch of still images that you can sort through later to find the perfect shot. And fourth, find an app that will allow you to manually focus your phone's camera.

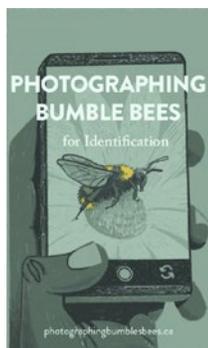
Brett hopes his project will inspire 250 people to join the Bumble Bees of Ontario project on iNaturalist and generate at least 1,000 new bumble bee records from central and northern Ontario. More generally, he wants to get more people interested in bumble



bees and the underappreciated world of insects. So help scientists help bumble bees: Grab your phone, get outside, and start snapping photos. ●

**This article is focused on bumble bees, but there are many other types of bees. In fact, there are around 4,000 species of bees in Canada and the US. All of those bees are also very important pollinators, and many of them may also be at risk. (We know even less about other bees than bumble bees.) So please learn about other bees too!*

***Maybe you're not in Ontario, but don't let that stop you from using these tips to photograph bumble bees in your area. Information on any bumble bee species from anywhere is important!*



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Photos: Brett Forsyth

Victory Tour!

Nature Guelph Celebratory Guided Hike
of the Eramosa River Corridor Property

Thursday, June 13, 6:30–8:00 pm

RSVP to rarsitesrep@natureguelph.ca by June 6

Come celebrate the recent purchase of this ecologically-significant property by *rarsites*; made possible in part with a significant contribution by Nature Guelph and its members. *To carpool, meet at The Arboretum Centre parking lot at 6:00 pm, or drive directly to the site at 5174 7th Line, Guelph-Eramosa Township. Bring waterproof boots, bug spray and binoculars.*

Butterflies at Belfountain

Join the Butterfly Count June 29

By Bill McIlveen

Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) is hoping to strengthen its butterfly database within the Credit River catchment area in 2019. They are encouraging people to submit their own observations of butterflies via iNaturalist or e-butterfly. Observations can also be submitted directly to CVC or to me, as I am interested in eventually compiling all available records of butterflies and moths for Halton and Peel.

A notable addition to the general observations of butterflies in 2019 will be the initiation of a brand new Butterfly Count. It will be centred at Belfountain. The Count operates very much the same way that a Christmas Bird Count does. The Count circle extends westward into Wellington County and includes a significant part of Erin Township. The data will be submitted to the North American Butterfly Association (NABA).

The Count will happen on June 29 (rain date June 30). We will meet at the Belfountain Conservation Area parking lot at 9:00 am and teams and sample areas will be assigned at that time.

Please contact me at wmcilveen@sympatico.ca if you'd like to participate. NABA requests a participation fee of \$3 to cover the costs of operating the Count.



Using Green Infrastructure Policy, Planning & Design to Preserve Groundwater Integrity: Stories of Green Infrastructure Success

Wednesday, May 8 • 7:00–8:30 pm • 10C, 42 Carden St • 4th Floor

Mark Schollen

Principal of Schollen & Company
Landscape Architect

Rohan Lilauwala

Green Infrastructure Foundation
Program Manager

protect our
moraine

#RethinkClairMaltby
rethink@protectourmoraine.ca
ProtectOurMoraine.ca

Protect Our Moraine is a coalition of concerned Guelph citizens and groups who want the City of Guelph to rethink the Clair-Maltby development: Nature Guelph, Guelph Urban Forest Friends, The Guelph-Wellington Branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, Wellington Water Watchers, The Foundation for the Support of International Medical Training, Families for Rolling Hills and others.

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Adventures with Young NATs

By Marilyn Swaby

Mmmapple Syrup March 23

We had a wonderful morning under clear blue skies and to the drum of the melting ice on the lake. After Tamara demonstrated how to make syrup, we had a scavenger hunt and boiled down some sap over the campfire. We then enjoyed some waffles and real maple syrup.

Turtle Day April 6

We spent most of the day outside playing a turtle game. By the end, we learned about all the perils the mothers and hatchlings face each year. Out of 30 eggs, two may survive. That's about the average the kids discovered in their own "nests." Then we got to meet the resident turtles, Tina and Thompson.

Frog Frolic April 19

It was cold and rainy but we had fun. What did we net? A wood frog, fairy shrimp, polliwogs, snails, a worm and a dead snake. We said goodbye to them all while releasing them back to their home.

Tundra Swan Outing to Aylmer Wildlife Management Area

By Larry Staniforth

The weather was mostly sunny with temperatures ranging from -1C to 7C when we left for Long Point at about 11:45 am. The sunny conditions enabled spectacular views of the estimated 800+ Tundra Swans and hundreds of Canada Geese in the main ponds in front of the viewing stands. As we watched the swans that had already arrived at the ponds, new swans and geese continued to arrive. It is truly a wonder of nature to watch these graceful birds in flight. We then drove around to the south side of the WMA where there is a second viewing platform. From this viewing stand we saw another 300-400 swans, giving a total of more than 1,000 in the WMA proper.

In addition to the swans and geese we found several other species of waterfowl including Mallards, Green-winged Teals, Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, and American Black Ducks. Three



Sandhill Cranes were spotted to the distant east of the ponds. In the fields around the WMA, we were treated to outstanding views of Bluebirds. With the sun behind us they were almost fluorescent. We also had great views of Eastern Meadowlarks, a Northern Mockingbird, Song Sparrows, House Sparrows, American Goldfinch, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, Northern Cardinals Northern Harriers and Red-tailed Hawks. En route to the WMA we spotted about 15 Wild Turkeys in a farm field.

We now continued our outing and headed for Long Point, picking up an American Kestrel and some Turkey Vultures along the way.

After lunch we headed to the viewing stand at Big Creek. Here we found many Ring-necked Ducks, a Bufflehead, several Canvasbacks, plus two Sandhill Cranes very close to the parking lot on the side of the canal. An adult Bald Eagle caused many of the ducks in the marsh to get up. There were a few Mute Swans out in the marsh, as well as Canada Geese, Ring-necked Ducks, a Pied-billed Grebe and a lone Bonapartes Gull. In the distance to the north we noted a newly

built eagle's nest that appeared to have an eagle in it. From the marsh we went a short distance further to the new lookout on the south shore of the inner bay near the marina. The inner bay is mostly open now and there are very good numbers and variety of waterfowl, although we could not see any Tundra Swans. We noted Greater Scaup, Ring-necked, Buffleheads, Redheads, Canvasbacks, Hooded and Common Mergansers and Mute Swans. I am sure there were other species there but we could not properly scope them out due to time constraints. Also present was a Juvenile Bald Eagle, and Tree and Song Sparrows.

Our final stop of the day was at Lee Browns Pond. En route we found about 15 Sandhill Cranes in a farmer's field. I expected to see the pond still frozen over but to my pleasant surprise it was open and full of waterfowl. We noted American Wigeons, Northern Shovellers, Northern Pintails, Gadwalls, a female Canvasback, Canada Geese, Ring-necked Ducks and a single Killdeer.

Overall a very enjoyable trip on which we tallied all of the target species. Total species count for the day was 43, which is very respectable for early spring. ●

Upcoming Events

NATURE GUELPH MEETINGS & SPEAKER SERIES

May 9, 7:30–7:45 pm
Annual General Meeting

May 9, 7:45–9:00 pm
Planet Madagascar: Building Sustainable Forest Communities
Travis Steffens, Lemur Researcher, International Fellow of the Explorers Club, Founding Director of Planet Madagascar

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.

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

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

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

NATURE GUELPH OUTDOOR EVENTS

June 9, 7:00 am–2:00 pm
Birding Forks of the Credit Provincial Park
Larry Staniforth

Forks of the Credit Provincial Park is home to many varieties of grassland birds, including Meadowlark, Clay-coloured, Field and Savannah Sparrows, Bobolink and several species of warblers.

To carpool, meet at Wild Birds Unlimited, 951 Gordon St., Guelph at 7:00 am.

This event is kid-friendly but will involve some hiking on trails ranging from easy to moderate. This event is NOT dog-friendly. Please dress for the weather. Bring refreshments and a light lunch. We will eat in the park at the picnic tables just off the parking lot.

While there is no formal visitor centre or entrance gate, parking fees will apply. A machine is on site.

June 13, 6:30–8:00 pm
Eramosa River Corridor Property Tour

Come celebrate the recent purchase of this ecologically-significant property along the Eramosa River by *raresites*, made possible in part with a significant contribution by Nature Guelph and its members.

*To carpool (preferred option), meet at The Arboretum Centre parking lot at 6:00 pm. Alternatively, you can drive directly to the site:
5174 7th Line, Guelph-Eramosa Township*

Bring bug spray and binoculars. The hike will be moderately strenuous, with flat ground on unimproved trails. Waterproof boots are recommended.

RSVP to raresitesrep@natureguelph.ca (John Prescott) by June 6.

NATURE GUELPH WILDFLOWER SOCIETY

May 15, 6:30 pm
Spring Wildflower Walk: Little Tract
Spring ephemerals must flower, set seed and store food, while sunlight penetrates to the forest floor in the short six weeks between snow melt and tree leaf out.

Little Tract, Concession 4, Puslinch

To carpool, meet at the Zehrs Hartland parking lot near Dollarama at 6:30 pm. If not carpooling, meet at the entrance to Little Tract. Follow Downey Rd. south, turn right onto Concession 4. The entrance is just past Sideroad 10.

May 25, 9:00 am–2:00 pm
Native Plant Sale

Held in partnership with Guelph Healthy Landscapes, Guelph Wellington Master Gardeners, Pollination Guelph and The Enabling Garden.

*Guelph Water Works,
20 Water Works Place (off York Rd.)*

Drop off your labelled donated plants between 2:00 and 7:00 pm on Friday, May 24 or bring to the sale on Saturday.

June 9, 11:00 am
Potting On: Seed Workshop Part II

Bring along your tray of seedlings from the March seed workshop and any small pots you may have. We'll help you pot up and instruct you on how to keep them growing. Potting soil and a limited number of pots will be available.

10 Hartwood Court, Guelph

June 19, 6:30 pm
TBA Plant Walk

To carpool, meet at the Zehrs Hartland parking lot near Dollarama at 6:30 pm.

Plant sale leftovers will be available, and you are invited to bring along your extra plants for the plant exchange.

Visit www.natureguelph.ca
for event details and updates.

Bruce Peninsula Nature Weekend May 24–26

Nature Field Trips Bucket Raffle and Bird Quiz

South Peel Naturalists' Club invites you to join us and explore the Bruce Peninsula and its variety of ecosystems. This annual event provides the opportunity to see the best of the Bruce with expert leaders and in the company of fellow naturalists.

The cost per person for the weekend:

- \$20 registration fee to cover cost of bucket raffle prizes and lodging for volunteer leaders
- \$244 (+ 13% taxes) for two nights' accommodation at Evergreen Resort, Mar, Ontario (includes all meals and snacks)

For further information:
mail@spnc.ca or contact
Donna at 905 815 0933 or
Audrey at 905 820 2571

Nature in the City

FREE Family-Friendly Talks & Walks

Indoor talks at the main **Guelph Public Library** followed by guided outdoor walks. Join us inside, outside or BOTH!

Roots & Shoots

Learn about Jack-in-the-Pulpit and other wildflowers with curious names.

TALK: May 11, 1:00 pm

WALK: May 12, 1:00 pm

Wildflower Hike at Starkey Hill
Meet at Starkey Hill parking lot,
735 Arkell Road

Fins & Shells

What aquatic insects, fish and crustaceans live in the Eramosa and Speed Rivers?

TALK: May 25, 1:00 pm

WALK: May 26, 1:00 pm

Eramosa River Aquatic Search
Meet at Barber Scout Camp
entrance, 733 Stone Rd. E.

Scavenger Hunt

Explore Preservation Park and Hanlon Creek to find as many species as you can.

June 2, 1:00 pm

Meet at Preservation Park entrance,
505 Kortright Road W. Park across
the road in Hanlon Creek Park.

For details: natureguelph.ca
or info@natureguelph.ca



Stay informed with *Nature Network News*

Stay up to date with happenings in the naturalist community. This monthly electronic newsletter features informative articles about conservation issues throughout Ontario and a listing of events hosted by Nature Network member groups. It is offered free of charge to all nature lovers and members of Nature Network groups who want to be part of an informed naturalist community. Visit ontarionature.org/about/nature-network/ to sign up today.

Check out Nature Guelph's active Facebook community:
facebook.com/natureguelph

Call for Volunteers

Nature Guelph is looking for an **Outdoor Programs Coordinator** to help organize our outdoor events.

Please email Christine Bowen,
Volunteer Coordinator at
volunteer@natureguelph.ca

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