



Nature  
Guelph

invites you to hear

**Dr. Todd Morris**

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

**ONTARIO'S  
FRESHWATER**

**MUSSELS:**

**A VANISHING TREASURE**

**Thursday 7:30 pm**

**March 10**

**2016**

Vol 46, #4  
Mar/Apr 2016

U OF G  
ARBORETUM CENTRE  
EVERYONE WELCOME

<http://natureguelph.ca/>

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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE — Jenn Bock**

Growing our Greenbelt – what's in it for me? There has been a lot of talk about this important issue lately, so let's sort out the facts.

Let's start from the beginning... What exactly IS the Greenbelt? In 2005, the Government of Ontario passed legislation to PERMANENTLY protect 1.8 million acres of farmland, forests, wetlands and watersheds in an area surrounding our most populated and fastest-growing area—the Golden Horseshoe. This region, which follows the lakeshore from Niagara Falls to Oshawa, is projected to grow to 11.5 million people by 2031. Greenbelt legislation protects the outlined spaces from development pressure due to this population growth. The Greenbelt, which originally focused on agriculture protection, prevents municipalities from rezoning and developing on existing farmland, also includes significant features like the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. Sounds great, but is it enough to protect the land and water that we all need in the face of such rapid urban expansion? Probably not.

Fast-forward to today: our provincial government is currently discussing where and how much to expand the Greenbelt. Ontario Nature has collaborated with other special interest groups and local stakeholders in each region to come up with a proposal. Affectionately known as “the Bluebelt”, the proposal focuses on protecting additional land but also valuable water resources, including critical surface and groundwater features that are currently outside of the protected area. This addition would protect an additional 1.5 million acres.

Locally, this would mean a couple of really interesting things:

1. Protection for large parts of Wellington County according to current borders. The City of Guelph would not be able to expand out into county space. Any future development would have to occur within current city limits.
2. Additional protection of the Speed River, even right through town. This sounds great, but would obviously take some careful cooperation with the municipality.
3. Protection for the Paris-Galt and Orangeville Moraines, which is where we get our drinking water. I'm sure this is something we can all agree on.

Last summer Nature Guelph submitted a letter in support of the proposal—we think it sounds great! And word on the street is that we should be able to expect another public comment period some time soon, so please take some time to read up on the issue and submit your comments! This could be a really huge, positive change so please speak up and join the movement!

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## **NEWSLETTER — Sandra MacGregor 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 (May/June 2016) to [Susan Atkinson](#). The deadline is **Apr. 20th**. Thank you to all contributors. Stephen Lewis is our front page artist — thank you Steve. **PERSONAL WANT ADS:** As a service to members we run personal “want” ads or “for sale” ads of a nature theme at no charge. Contact Susan if you have anything to sell or there is something you want to acquire.

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## INDOOR PROGRAM — Peter Kelly

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 web-site 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>

**Thurs, Mar. 10: "ONTARIO'S FRESHWATER MUSSELS: A VANISHING TREASURE" Dr. Todd Morris (Fisheries and Oceans Canada)** During his talk Dr. Morris will provide an overview of this fascinating yet often overlooked group. Through the use of underwater video footage we will dive into the world of one of North America's most endangered groups and learn about what makes them work, what role they play in aquatic ecosystems and why they are rapidly disappearing across the continent. Special emphasis will be placed on the complex reproductive strategies which have evolved in this group to facilitate their requisite parasitic life history.

**Thurs, Apr. 14: "FREQUENT FLIERS: NEW DISCOVERIES IN SONGBIRD MIGRATION" Dr. Bridget Stutchbury (Dept. of Biology, York University)** Each fall, billions of songbirds leave Canada on an epic journey to their far-away wintering grounds in Central and South America where many live in tropical forests shared by toucans, howler monkeys, and jaguars. Dozens of species have experienced serious, long-term population declines that are driven in part by the threats that these birds face on migration and while in the tropics. But only recently has it been possible to track the entire migration of individual songbirds to find out how they accomplish their amazing 10,000 km (or more!) round trip and to map out critical habitats used during migration and for surviving until they return in spring. Bridget Stutchbury will reveal her surprising migration tracking results for purple martins, red-eyed vireos and wood thrushes and discuss how this research can help us save songbirds.

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### The Bucket Raffle Was A Success!

At our February 11th indoor meeting, our annual Bucket Raffle took place. This event is an opportunity for members to empty their basements of any unwanted nature-related items, books etc, and allow the items to find new homes, and raise money for Nature Guelph in the process. This is recycling at its finest, and \$140 was raised for our club. What a wonderful success! Many thanks to all who participated!

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### SAVE THE DATE: NATURE GUELPH'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY!

Be sure to mark Oct. 16th, 2016 in your calendars! Nature Guelph will be celebrating 50 wonderful years as a nature club at the River Run Centre and we would like to see you all there to help us celebrate this auspicious occasion!

### Calling All Missing in Action Members!

Do you know the contact information for any previous Nature Guelph/Guelph Field Naturalists members, who have since moved away, and may not know about our 50th anniversary celebrations coming up in October? If so, please pass their information on to Brett Forsyth at [info@brettforsyth.com](mailto:info@brettforsyth.com) or call Susan at 519-837-9470 and we'll let them know about the upcoming festivities.

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## Nature in the City 2016

This is a “Welcome Spring with Nature Guelph” event. This will be a 40-50 minute introduction in the Guelph Public Library on a Saturday afternoon from 2-3 PM, with a 1-1.5 hour guided walk usually on Sunday.

The presentations are aimed at relative nature novices and newcomers to Guelph, but everyone is welcome.

Leader	Topic	Talk date (Saturday; 2-3 PM)	Walk date (Sunday)	Site of walk
Jenn Bock	So you want to be a birdwatcher?	April 9	April 10, 10 am	Starkey loop
John Ambrose	Exploring our Native Trees	April 16	May 15th, 1:30 pm	Arboretum main parking lot (Note walk date; trees will be in leaf)
Kyle Horner	Slime and scales: Reptiles and amphibians of Guelph	April 23	April 23 (Saturday evening) 8 pm	Arboretum; West entrance, Arboretum Rd off East Ring Rd, near Athletic Centre
Judy Brisson	Beauty in our midst: Wildflowers in Guelph	April 30	May 8th, 1 pm	Starkey loop (Jane's Walk)

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### Have Your Say on the Pollinator Health Action Plan

The Province is proposing a Pollinator Health Action Plan (PHAP) and you are invited to submit feedback on it. The PHAP is a plan for government, stakeholders and the public to work in partnership to help Ontario's beleaguered pollinators and strengthen their populations. It is the third component of Ontario's Pollinator Health Strategy that was designed to address the four main stressors pollinators face: habitat loss, diseases and genetics, pesticides and climate change. The deadline to comment on the proposal is March 7, 2016. *Text taken directly from ON website.*

### ESA Lawsuit Appeal Scheduled for April 2016

On April 19, 2016, the Ontario Court of Appeal will hear Ontario Nature's case challenging a lower court ruling that puts already endangered species at further risk of extinction. The appeal challenges the Ontario Divisional Court's decision to uphold a provincial regulation that exempts major industrial activities from the strict protection standards outlined in the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In many instances, these exemptions give industries a free pass to kill endangered or threatened species and destroy their habitat, as long as this harm is 'minimized'. Visit the [Ontario Nature website](#) to learn more about this important court action. *Text taken directly from ON website.*

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## Help Nature Guelph Make the Arboretum's Windows "Bird Friendly"

Glass kills between 100 million and a billion birds annually in North America. Nature Guelph has an agreement with the Arboretum, University of Guelph, to donate the cost of covering its 10 large plate glass windows with FeatherFriendly "dots" (<http://www.conveniencegroup.com/featherfriendly/feather-friendly>).

The intention of this project is not just to "bird proof" the Arboretum windows, but it is really to provide a demonstration site in Guelph and publicly inspire others to address this important issue. Costs for professional installation of the dots on the 10 large windows and signage will be \$8,100. **The Gosling Foundation will match private donations by up to \$1500.** Donations can be made on-line to Nature Guelph via [Canada Helps](#) or by cheque to "Nature Guelph". Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued through Canada Helps or by Nature Guelph.

## WILDFLOWER SOCIETY MEETINGS

### Indoor Wildflower Society Programs

Meetings are the third Wednesday of the month from September thru May in the basement common area at the Ellington Residences, 168 Metcalfe St. at 7:30 pm. Entrance is via the covered ramp on the north east end of the building.

### **Wed, March 16, 7:30 pm**

Annual Seed Workshop, University of Guelph Potting Shed

Join us at the Potting Shed to plant a tray of native plant seeds and take it home to grow. Close to fifty species of native plant perennials, vines, shrubs, trees and grasses will be available. Growing instructions, trays, potting medium and seeds provided. Free for Nature Guelph members, \$20.00 for non members.

Directions: Go west on the South Ring Rd from Gordon St (turn right if heading south from College, turn left if heading north from Stone). You will drive past the greenhouses. Park in the lot numbered P 59 on your left at the end of the road. The Potting Shed is a small building to the right of the Biodiversity Centre. Look for a sign on the door.

### **Wed, April 20, 7:30 pm**

Pollinator Park Progress, Ellington Residences, 168 Metcalfe St Guelph

Victoria MacPhail from Pollination Guelph will discuss progress on the creation of pollinator habitat at the Eastview Landfill site and throughout Guelph including plant selection, successes and setbacks.

### **Sat, April 30, 2:00 pm**

Guelph Public Library

Spring Wildflowers in the City

Nature in the City Presentation

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## Ontario Nature Report – by Mary Ellen Pyear

### CONGRATULATIONS TO ONTARIO NATURE (formerly FEDERATION OF ONTARIO NATURALISTS)

As Nature Guelph plans to celebrate our 50th anniversary in the coming year, Ontario Nature is proudly celebrating their 85th Anniversary in 2016. In 1931, 28 members from seven naturalist clubs in the province came together in their love of nature to form the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON). Currently, ON can boast an increase from the original seven groups to over 155 member organizations.

ON has accomplished much over their 85-year history - from a 1934 report which led to the creation of wilderness areas in Algonquin Park, to the accumulation of 24 nature reserves which protect 2,788 hectares of land across the province. In 1937, Ontario Nature campaigned to persuade the provincial government to restore protection for eagles and ospreys. The organization also advocated for the original Endangered Species Act in 1971 and they are currently vigilant when it comes to ensuring that the present Act is effective.

ON continues to introduce generations of children and adults to nature through their Nature Network and the Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas which has over 3600 volunteer citizen scientists. Nature Guardians and the Youth Council very actively lead the charge for a green, vibrant and sustainable Ontario. These are only some of the highlights of what ON/FON has accomplished over its 85 year history. A more detailed list of their accomplishments over 85 years can be found on their website [www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org). Click on the “Discover” section on the Home Page and then click on “History/Milestones”. If you are not already a member of Ontario Nature, perhaps it is time to think about joining such a worthwhile nature organization!

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### TRACKING CLUB MEETINGS

#### **Sunday, April 17th, 7:00 am**

Bird Language Tracking (run in partnership with Chris Green and the Guelph Outdoor School.)  
Meet at the Guelph Lake Nature Centre

#### **Outings will run for approximately 2.5 hours.**

Birds are the “alarm system” of the forest, broadcasting the whereabouts of hawks, owls, foxes and more through their calls and postures. During this tracking club outing, we will spend one hour sitting and listening for bird songs and alarms and observing the landscape for signs of mammal activity. Each person will choose their own location to sit so we can return together at the end of the session to share stories and piece together the patterns of the landscape. We will map out our experiences from a birds-eye view. Beginner birders are welcome! Please bring a small notebook, a waterbottle and your six senses (the 6th sense is your sense of wonder).

The Tracking Club will continue all year. If you would like to be on the contact list, please email Tamara at [frogforest@hotmail.com](mailto:frogforest@hotmail.com). Find dates of future Tracking Club activities and follow the discoveries on its blog: <http://natureguelphtracking.wordpress.com/> which can also be found on our website under Programs/Outdoor.

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## Nature Guelph Outdoor Activities – Marnie Benson

### **Saturday March 5, 1:45pm A guided tour behind the scenes at the Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory.**

Meet in the parking lot at 1:45 pm for a 2 pm tour. 2500 Kossuth Road, off Hwy 24 south towards Cambridge. There is a cost associated with this one - admission fee plus \$4.50 for the tour. Admission fee is reduced if we have 20+ people. Total cost for adults is \$16-20 depending on our numbers; \$11-12 for children; seniors rates reduced as well. You must RSVP for this one - please contact Marnie at [outdoorprogs@natureguelph.ca](mailto:outdoorprogs@natureguelph.ca) or mobile (519) 830-4412 by Feb 25 to confirm attendance.

### **Sunday March 20, 2pm Social Hike: Silvercreek Conservation Area.**

Join us to explore some of the beautiful trails along the escarpment at the headwaters of Silver Creek, a Credit river tributary. We are all gathering in the parking lot at the old Legion (now "AirU Guelph") at 919 York Rd to carpool.

### **Friday March 25, 10am (Good Friday) Hawkwatch Open House at Beamer Memorial Conservation Area.**

Live Bird Demonstration, 'Hawk Talks', group displays and on-site concessionaire. This spot is renowned as the best vantage point in the Niagara Peninsula to observe the annual spring hawk migration. Beamer Memorial Conservation Area also offers one of the area's most breathtaking and panoramic views of the Niagara Escarpment and Lake Ontario. We are all gathering at the Wild Birds Unlimited parking lot, 951 Gordon Street to carpool.

### **Sunday April 10, 9 am The Ancient Cedars of the Niagara Escarpment at Mount Nemo.**

Peter Kelly will guide us to Mount Nemo Conservation Area for a morning hike to learn about the old-growth forests of the Niagara Escarpment. These eastern white cedar trees grow right out of the escarpment cliff face and are hundreds of years old. We are all gathering at the Wild Birds Unlimited parking lot, 951 Gordon Street to carpool.

### **Sunday April 17, 2pm Social Hike: Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve.**

An abandoned quarry at this site was rehabilitated, resulting in the creation of a rare fen plant community type of wetland. Join us for a casual stroll to explore this interesting area just south of Guelph. We are all gathering at the Wild Birds Unlimited parking lot, 951 Gordon Street to carpool.

### **Saturday April 30, 7:30 pm Herps Exploration at Sudden Tract.**

Join us for an evening exploration to find all the frogs, snakes, salamanders, toads and other slimy, scaly creatures of the night. We will arrive at the site just before sunset when the chorus of mating sounds from the wetland will be rising, then see what we can find along the wetland and trail as darkness falls. Rubber boots and headlamp flashlights are good things to bring for this trip. We are all gathering in the parking lot behind Goodness Me 36 Wellington St W, next to the baseball diamond to carpool.



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## News from Nature Guelph Wildflower Society–Judy Brisson

### Is Wild Food Foraging Sustainable?

In a few weeks *Allium tricoccum* (ramps or wild leek) will be raising its leaves above the leaf litter in forests across Ontario. Many will be ripped from the ground by local wild food foraging enthusiasts, killing the plants and preventing them from reproducing. Other spring ephemerals including spring beauty and trout lily will suffer the same fate. These plants are fragile, relying on about six weeks of sunshine in the spring for their entire season's growth and most take seven to ten years to reach reproductive maturity from seed. Foragers recommend taking no more than 10% of the plants from an area; with such slowly reproducing plants, an annual 10% harvest will reduce the population by half in the years it takes for replacement plants to grow. In Quebec and several Eastern US states, wild leek is now on the endangered species list due to years of wild harvesting.

Wild food foraging has become a trendy hobby in the past few years with web-based discussion groups and hotlines providing tips, recipes and locations. Professional foragers harvest entire patches of leeks and fiddleheads to sell at market or to restaurants, leaving no plants behind and paying no fees for the privilege. Unfortunately for the plants, there are few controls or regulations on the practice of wild harvesting. These plants could be a sustainable source of income for local small farms with woodlots and would provide incentive for farmers to convert marginal land back to forest, but not if they are competing with foragers who have no land expense.

We do not allow unrestricted harvesting of mammals and fish from our wild areas; hunting licences, catch limits, season restrictions and very strict regulation or outright ban of commercial harvest are normal practice. Is it time to call for foraging licences, season limits, harvest limits and a ban on commercial harvest? Should Ontario Nature investigate the impact of hobby and commercial foraging on wild plant populations and lobby for regulation?

In the meantime, what can you do? Restrict your foraging to collecting fruits and nuts and forgo digging roots and bulbs which kills the plant. Research invasive and non native plants as wild food sources and collect them instead of our rarer native plants. Garlic mustard, dandelion, plantain and burdock escaped from early settler's gardens and can be foraged guilt free. If you spot foragers digging plants, remind them that this kills the plant and is illegal in public park or conservation land.

*Photo Credits: Spring beauty and leek in the public domain, fiddleheads New Brunswick Tourism via Creative Commons.*





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## NEARBY NATURALIST CLUBS' MEETINGS

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

**Monday March 28, 7:30pm**

The Year with No Summer: Hudson Bay in 1816 - Roger Suffling  
Knox Presbyterian Church, 50 Erb Street West, Waterloo, Ontario

Note: This is the new location for WRN/KWFN meetings

**Monday, April 25, 7:30pm**

All About Butterflies - Thelma Beaubien  
Knox Presbyterian Church, 50 Erb Street West, Waterloo, Ontario

Note: This is the new location for WRN/KWFN meetings

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

**Tuesday, March 8, 7:30pm,**

Don Scallen: Pond Life

**Tuesday, April 12, 7:30pm**

Jack Imhoff: Navigating the Biodiversity of Canada's Stream Corridors

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

**Monday March 14, 7pm – 9pm**

Speaker: Lorraine Johnson, Growing Edible Natives  
Royal Botanical Gardens, 680 Plains Rd West, Burlington.

**Monday April 11, 7pm – 9pm**

Speaker: Matt Ellerbeck, Save The Salamanders

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

**Wednesday, March 23, 2016 7:00pm to 8:30pm**

Owl Prowl. Meet at rare ECO Centre (Slit Barn)

Please register in advance, fee is \$8.

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## NATURE GUELPH — EXECUTIVE

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**President:** Jenn Bock (519-400-2918)

[president@natureguelph.ca](mailto:president@natureguelph.ca)

**Past President:** Peter Kelly (519-824-4965)

[pastpresident@natureguelph.ca](mailto:pastpresident@natureguelph.ca)

**Vice President:** Brett Forsyth

[vicepresident@natureguelph.ca](mailto:vicepresident@natureguelph.ca)

**Secretary:** Christine Bowen (905-865-3771)

[secretary@natureguelph.ca](mailto:secretary@natureguelph.ca)

**Treasurer:** John Prescott (519-823-5013)

[treasurer@natureguelph.ca](mailto:treasurer@natureguelph.ca)

**Membership:** David Churchill (519-763-4432)

[membership@natureguelph.ca](mailto:membership@natureguelph.ca)

**Indoor Program:** Peter Kelly (519-824-4965)

[indoorprogs@natureguelph.ca](mailto:indoorprogs@natureguelph.ca)

**Outdoor Program:** Marnie Benson (519-830-4412)

[outdoorprogs@natureguelph.ca](mailto:outdoorprogs@natureguelph.ca)

**Newsletter Editor:** Sandra MacGregor (519-823-5068)

[newsletter@natureguelph.ca](mailto:newsletter@natureguelph.ca)

**Young Naturalists:** Ann Schletz (519-836-7860)

[nats@natureguelph.ca](mailto:nats@natureguelph.ca)

**Naturalists in Training:** Tamara Anderson

(519-822-1049) [nits@natureguelph.ca](mailto:nits@natureguelph.ca)

**Outreach/Publicity & Newsletter Assistant:** Susan

Atkinson (519-837-9470) [publicity@natureguelph.ca](mailto:publicity@natureguelph.ca)

**Conservation Coordinator:** Colin Oaks

(519-766-2613) [conservation@natureguelph.ca](mailto:conservation@natureguelph.ca)

**Ontario Nature Rep:** Mary Ellen Pyear (519-763-4347)

[onrep@natureguelph.ca](mailto:onrep@natureguelph.ca)

**Website & Social Media** Kyle Horner (519-835-0944)

[webmaster@natureguelph.ca](mailto:webmaster@natureguelph.ca)

**University Community Liaison:** Jessica Tartaglia,

[uogliaison@natureguelph.ca](mailto:uogliaison@natureguelph.ca)

**Wildflower Society:** Judy Brisson

(519-824-9476) [judybrisson@rogers.com](mailto:judybrisson@rogers.com)

Write to us at:

Nature Guelph

P.O. Box 1401

Guelph, ON N1H 6N8

Our website address

[www.natureguelph.ca](http://www.natureguelph.ca)



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### NG CALENDAR – UPCOMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

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**Thurs, Mar. 10, 7:30 pm:** Indoor Meeting, Arboretum, “Ontario’s Freshwater Mussels: a vanishing treasure” with Dr. Todd Morris

**Wed, March 16, 7:30 pm:** Wildflower Society Meeting, Annual Seed Workshop, University of Guelph Potting Shed

**Sunday March 20, 2 pm:** Social Hike: Silvercreek Conservation Area.

**Thurs, Apr. 14, 7:30 pm:** Indoor Meeting, Arboretum, “Frequent Fliers: New Discoveries in Songbird Migration” with Dr. Bridget Stutchbury

**Sunday, April 17th, 7:00 am:** Tracking Club Hike, Bird Language Tracking

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*“It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade.”*

*Charles Dickens*

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