



THE BLUE HERON

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT LYN POPE

Happy autumn to all!

It became very clear in my first few months as President how fortunate I am to be part of this club that is chock full of experts in so many fields. In addition, the Executive team is *extraordinary*. There is not enough room to mention each member at this time, however, it would be an injustice not to point out how much time and energy two individuals in particular dedicate to their roles in this club (including the extra task of guiding the new rookie President!). Both Brian Gibbon and Al McNair utilize their skills and abilities to benefit our club's persona while creating strong bonds that keep the club solid within ourselves *and the community* --- keep up the good work. Along with the knowledge and support of Phyllis Tremblay by my side as Vice-President, what more can I say.

Summer was very busy and very productive. Highlights include:

- The City of Barrie's requests for consultation meetings with us regarding the Gables Property and the proposed Little Lake Park. Our discussions will be ongoing with the City regarding these projects.
- Chris Evans making the news with his

exciting discovery of the Hine's Emerald dragonfly in the Minesing Wetlands.

- Lynne Gibbon's successfully pursuing support from Bell Canada to provide a pole to build an osprey platform.
- Jennifer and Jeff Howard's hard work on the Stream Stewardship program for which Jeff has received the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority's Youth Award program.
- Field trips led by Peter Mills – thanks so much Peter. Isn't it great to go on outings led by our youth?
- Win Bowser for her patients in recording our minutes as Secretary, and Hazel Smith our Treasurer for her concise and up-to-date financial management

The meetings and field trips booked for this year are very exciting (thanks to Volker Brinkmann and David Walsh respectively) and I look forward to getting to know each of our members and adherents a little better throughout the year.

Keep smiling and thanks for your support,

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The speaker for the joint meeting in January with the Barrie Garden Club will be John Beaulieu who will speak about butterflies and what attracts them.

An EXTREMELY RARE DRAGONFLY

Just when you are having self doubts and beginning to think all of those funny looks you get when you are out catching dragonflies might be justified, something incredible happens. You catch the first recorded specimen of Hine's Emerald *Somatochlora hineana* in Canada. Of course, you're too inexperienced to know

that, and with your novice zeal, miss-identify it as a Clamp-tipped Emerald *Somatochlora tenebrosa*. None of your references have Hine's Emerald. After all, it is unknown in Canada and while Clamp-tipped Emerald isn't a perfect match, it is still an uncommon and exciting find and "close is good enough. There must be some individual variation, right?"

Unfortunately, he doesn't survive the capture and hoping to donate his remains to science; you submit your record with photos and offer him to Colin Jones at the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC). Jaws hit the floor and emails fly back and forth, phone tag ensues and finally you get the news that your specimen is "not *S. tenebrosa* but something far more exciting, Hine's Emerald *Somatochlora hineana*!" "Could you spell that? How is this so exciting?" you ask. "Hine's Emerald is the only dragonfly officially listed in the USA as federally endangered and has never been recorded in Canada ... until now!" "I killed the first record of Hine's Emerald in Canada, a critically endangered species! Aaaarg!" Yep, that is more exciting than *S. tenebrosa*!

Colin Jones, Bob Bowles and I have been doing further field studies with the intent of putting together a field note for publication in an entomological journal. We feel it is very important to study this species and its habitat to determine how best to secure its survival.

This discovery highlights the importance of the contributions of amateur naturalists and their connections to professionals through groups like the Brereton Field Naturalists and forums like the Simcoe Nature Board. To link it all together for you, here's how this really came about. I got interested in dragonflies last year and searched the www for information on identifying them. This got me hooked back up with Bob Bowles who helped me with a few dragonfly ID's and gave me his Simcoe County Odonata checklist and the Simcoe Nature Board connection. Lyn Pope saw some of my Simcoe Nature Board postings on dragonflies and got me connected with the Brereton Field Naturalists. Nancy Ironside of the Orillia Naturalist Club came to one of the Brereton meetings and mentioned Colin Jones was speaking on dragonflies at one of their meetings last fall. I attended that talk and got the connection with Colin Jones who works for

the Ministry of Natural Resources – Natural Heritage Information Centre. So when I caught the Emerald in June and the only thing on Bob's list it could be was the fairly rare Clamp-tipped Emerald (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*), I was compelled to report it directly to Colin with photos and offer him the unfortunate victim of my inept netting. Thus Colin could properly identify it as the critically endangered Hine's Emerald (*Somatochlora hineana*). So without any one of those links, Hine's Emerald would have indefinitely been recorded as Clamp-tipped Emerald on my photos on my computer until such time as I happened to get a reference with Hine's Emerald and had some recollection that the appendages on that Clamp-tipped Emerald were not quite right. Each of you reading this contributed in some way to this discovery and its effect on the survival of the Hine's Emerald. Your interest in and pursuit of our world of nature are essential for its preservation.

Start questioning the value and sanity of your pursuits and you may be rewarded beyond your wildest expectations. (I haven't heard from the Nobel Foundation yet, but I'll keep you posted.)

We have since gone back and we have found several others including males and females, one female being gravid with ova extruding from her ovipositor.

Chris Evans

Editors Note

A report on Chris's discovery is in the November/December Canadian Geographic on page 54.

JUNIOR MEMBER HONOURED

Jeff Howard has received this years Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Youth Education Award under their Environmental Giants recognition program.

Many of you have met Jeff and remember his efforts along with his mother Jennifer in rescuing the Swan injured by a boater last year. This was not Jeff's first efforts; he has been involved in a number of activities, some of which have been affiliated with our club, such as working on the inventory of the Minesing Wetlands, various Bird Studies Canada surveys such as the loon survey. As well as being a

member of our Club he also belongs to 6-mile Lake Conservation Club, Kids for Turtles and Bird Studies Canada.

This past summer Jeff, Jennifer and a few other volunteers undertook to participate in a stream restoration program at Sandy Cove Creek in Innisfil Township. Such an undertaking involves doing an extensive aquatic inventory of the stream. Not only of fish but more importantly of the micro-invertebrates that live within the silt and the rocks, determining their type and numbers gives a current history of the health of the Creek and thus Lake Simcoe where the Creek terminates.

Before starting the project Jeff and Jennifer attended a special MNR training session and Jennifer was then given a special license to carry out the project in an approved stream. Throughout the survey they received assistance from various MNR personnel in order to ensure that standards were maintained in order that the study would be accepted as a valid scientific project.

The process involves establishing measuring stations approximately every 50 feet which are recorded on a map along with their GPS co-ordinates... At each station various procedures are used to collect the micro-invertebrates in containers and then the laborious job of identification and documentation begin. A form provided by the MNR has photos, description, sizes and proper names. A total of one hundred organisms are counted at each station. All fish found and live trapped are identified, recorded and released.

This was no weekend project; Jeff devoted his entire summer to the effort and no doubt will be involved in a similar project next summer.

The Innisfil Scope did a great article on their efforts and you can go on-line and read their article and I borrowed from it for this item...

At a time when we hear criticism of young people not having any ambition and only interested in computer games Jeff put the lie to all such talk. He is to be commended for his energy, enthusiasm, and dedication and is most deserving of the recognition and the award.

On behalf of the Club I would like to say congratulations and a job well done Jeff!

Editor



Jeff taking measurements from stream bank

NATURALIST'S NOTES

POTENTIAL BIRD KILLER

Samonellosis (samonella) is found in the digestive tracts of birds and is spread through their feces and can be a particular problem during mild weather. Large numbers of birds gathering at feeders can quickly spread the disease which results in the death of scores of small birds.

Periodic disinfecting of our feeders helps to control the spread, however, if you are finding increasing numbers of dead birds around your feeders or in your yard take your feeders down and clean up all seed on the ground around the feeders and disinfect your feeders.

Tray type feeders and the ground under silo feeders are the particular culprits areas.

REMEMBER to always wear rubber gloves when handling the feeders, dead birds, and during clean-up operations and than wash your hands thoroughly in warm soapy water afterwards.

DISINFECTING FEEDERS – first make sure you clean all seed residue from the feeders and then use a bath of one part chlorine bleach to nine parts water. Wash them well and rinse with clear water and let dry. Use a bucket to wash the feeders – **DO NOT USE THE KITCHEN SINK.**

This process should be carried out weekly until the problem clears up. It is good policy to periodically disinfect your feeders even if you have no signs of ill or dead birds.

Brian W. Gibbon

Member Moves to Peterborough

After 14 years of commuting from Barrie to Peterborough Ken and Diana Abraham have made the move to Peterborough.

We will miss Ken on the outings that he was able to attend. His knowledge of birds is immense and he was always willing to share in his quite way. Riding with Ken is always a pleasure. His passion is migratory waterfowl and geese in particular. His research work every summer on the James and Hudson Bay flats keeps him away from home for long periods at a time but when he was home he would always tell you about the out of the ordinary sightings that had occurred with background information to highlight his points.

We will miss Ken but we all wish he, Diana and family all the best in their new home. Our loss is Peterborough's gain.

Brian Gibbon

Sharp-tailed Grouse Viewing, Manitoulin Island **April 21-22, 2007**

Cooing, cackling, buzzing tails and stomping feet – these are some of the amazing antics the male Sharp-tailed Grouse performs to attract a female.

I accompanied the Orillia Field Naturalist's Club on a visit to the Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek (dancing ground) near the airport on Manitoulin Island. Rita & Steve Hall from the island, organized the viewing in the blind they built, big enough for 10 of us to squeeze inside. For 2 hours around sunrise 70 or more male grouse vigorously vibrate their tails and stomp up and down almost like an ad for Eveready batteries, while an occasional hen may be seen checking them out from the sidelines. When the grouse calmed down, we could hear Wilson's Snipe, Sandhill Cranes & Canada Geese calling in the distance.

The exceptional warm weather enabled us to experience the island's uniqueness. Steve Hall led us on a birding tour to see nesting raptors – Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl & Common Raven. Saturday afternoon we looked for rocks, fossils and the land forms of Manitoulin Island, under the guidance of Bill Darker. The Saturday night guest speaker was Bill Caesar, author of Manitoulin Fossils. On

Sunday, after a second opportunity to view the Sharp-tailed Grouse on their courtship arena, we visited Sand Bay on the southwest side of the island to search for dune plants, such as Pitcher's Thistle.

I have wanted to see the Sharp-tailed Grouse spring mating ritual for years, and the activities arranged by the Orillia Naturalist's Club made the entire weekend truly memorable.

Phyllis Tremblay



Entering the Blind .

Black-crowned Night Heron **August 3/07**

I went to the shoreline beyond the Little Lake Parking Lot just after 7:00 am. I looked up and noticed a Black-crowned Night Heron flying just above the trees! It landed on a dead tree limb and I had a good look, it was an adult. According to the Birds of Simcoe County, an immature was collected by H.B. Haugh at Little Lake September 11, 1925.

This is the first time I have observed one at Little Lake in all the years we have lived here.

Phyllis Tremblay

Sandhill Cranes **August 16, 2007**

Dave Lord reports that a friend observed two Sandhill Cranes with a young hatchling near Dave's cottage 12 miles north of Honey Harbour on Georgian Bay.

GRAMMER WILDLIFE RESERVE, LISCOMB, IOWA
OFFICIAL HAWK COUNT
SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

During a recent visit to my cousin in central Iowa it was an honour to be invited to join the

official hawk watch for 2007. The Iowa River provides a natural migration route from north west to south east across the state. A high embankment covered with mature forest and undergrowth hides the view of the river but creates warm up draughts for migrating hawks and other birds. Arriving at 9:00 am to find the co-ordinator and others already there we placed our chairs to sit and wait for the hawks.

Only the birds heading in a south east direction were counted and numbers for each hour recorded.

From the trees other birds called and flew about so a lull in the action was not such a hardship. For me it was a new experience to hear Red Bellied Woodpeckers calling all day, seemingly ignored by the other birders. In the group was a husband and wife team who between them had the highest number of sightings in Iowa while the co-ordinator was reputedly the best warbler expert in the state.

We stayed until 6:30 pm and counted 258 hawks of which 218 were Broad Winged Hawks, two being dark phase. Others were Sharp Shinned, Coopers, Northern Harrier, 1 Bald Eagle, 2 Peregrine Falcons, Red Tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Turkey Vultures, and Osprey. For my personal list I sighted 34 species though no 'lifers'.

As well as these, the following birds were also seen; Red Headed, Downy, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, White and Red breasted Nuthatches, Barn and tree Swallows, Chimney Swift, common Night Hawk, Double Crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Yellow Headed Blackbird, Red Winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadow Lark, Ruby Throated Hummingbird, American Crow, Blue Jay, Eastern Phoebe, American Goldfinch (state bird of Iowa), Purple Finch, Yellow Rumped Warbler, and Barred Owl.

This was my first hawk watch and what a way to start, sitting in a chair along side excellent birders, accepted as a friend and invited back next year. All these birds from the comfort of a chair in one location, it's the only way to go. Jim Spruce

Note # 1 Little Lake Park Management Plan

The City of Barrie's Community Services Committee is reviewing the proposed Little Lake Park Management Plan. Our club's

Conservation Committee has endeavoured to convince the city council and its committees that the park should be kept natural and passive.

Note # 2 Marsh Monitoring Program

Under the umbrella of Bird Studies Canada, I volunteered to monitor 2 study sites this spring at Little Lake to record calling amphibians and marsh birds. Locating nesting Virginia Rails again this year and learning to identify frog species by their calls were absolutely rewarding experiences.

Phyllis Tremblay

The Little Brown Bat

Look it's a bird, it's a plane, no it's a mammal! The little brown bat doges and weaves through our night sky hunting insects.

There are 19 species of bats found in Canada. The little brown bat is the most common bat in Canada, found across the country to the northern edges of the boreal forests and they are the prime bat in our area. Statistics – weight – 7 to 14 grams, Length – 8.5 cm., Wingspan – 22 – 27 cm Preferred food – aquatic insects such as mayflies, mosquitoes and midges. They have a tremendous appetite and are a controlling factor on these insect species

In the early evening as dusk is setting in sit out in your backyard and watch for the bats flicking across the night sky. They live in very close proximity to humans often taking up residence in our buildings.

They hibernate over the winter living on built up fat reserves, like all hibernators to conserve energy they slow their heart beat down from 200 beats per minute to as low as 20.

When your building birdhouses this winter to put up next spring consider building a couple of bat houses, we will all benefit – remember the West Nile mosquitoes? -; Well, bats are not finicky eaters; they go after them all.

Editor

Winter Birding

Many of you read Dr. Robert Alison's nature column in the Advance or Orillia Today, he is currently in Victoria B.C. and sent Lynne Gibbon the following e-mail on November 29th.

Editor

"I was photographing California Quail at a local bird feeder and there were golden-crowned sparrows there, and many Juncos. The Towhees winter here in huge numbers. For one thing we have lots of Rufus and Anna's Hummingbirds here right now. And, Black-headed Grosbeaks seem to be around still. I have seen dozens of Harlequin ducks in the past few days, and Common Murres are plentiful in the harbour here. There is a huge overwintering population of Widgeons, some are very tame. Some shorebirds such as Dunlins, winter here. Hundreds of Mew Gulls are here now. But, it is the ducks that are impressive. Tens of thousands of them just offshore, especially at low tide. This is really a great place to see birds in winter. Not so great in summer."

There you have it – don't have to go south this winter for birding just head west in our great country.

Brian W. Gibbon

Piping Plovers

July 27, 2007 CBC radio reported – There are three young Piping Plovers fledged again this year at Wasaga Beach Provincial Park. Apparently the father is still around supervising from a distance.

Submitted by Al McNair

Blue Jay Migration

On September 27, 2007 at Holiday Beach Conservation Area (just outside of Windsor) the Holiday Beach Bird Observatory reported the following: - " more than 52,000 Blue Jays and more than 1,200 Amer. Goldfinches were counted. The park is full of birds again with a good mix of Warblers, Thrushes and some early Sparrows. The usual mix of dabbling ducks is in the marsh as well as a few Soras.

The raptor count for the day was – Turkey Vultures 35, Osprey 1, Bald Eagle 2, Northern Harrier 27, Sharp-Shinned 323, Cooper's 10, Broad-winged 81, Red-tailed 9, Amer. Kestrel 47, Merlin 7, Peregrine 5, total for the day 547.

This is a great place to spend a few days in mid to late September. When the Jays are going through they are in large flocks, jokingly referred to as the "blue mist"

Winter Finch Forecast 2007-08

Ron Pittaway

Posted September 15, 2007 to Ontbirds and BirdChat. Excerpts from the full document are reprinted here.

This will be a quiet winter for most (not all) winter finches in Algonquin Provincial Park. Most of last years White-winged and Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins departed Ontario this past summer. However, other winter finches such as Pine Grosbeaks, Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches and Redpolls are irrupting or will irrupt southward out of northern Ontario.

Pine Grosbeaks: should wander south to Lake Ontario and even further in search of crabapples and planted European mountain-ash berries. At feeders they prefer sunflower seeds. Most will have returned north by late March.

Purple Finches: are expected to migrate out of Ontario this fall. Very few or none will stay behind at feeders.

Common & Hoary Redpolls: there will be big flights of Redpolls into southern Ontario and bordering United States. Expect Redpolls at bird feeders this winter.

Evening Grosbeaks: they will irrupt south of the boreal forest this fall due to poor seed crops in northeastern Ontario and western Quebec. Expect Evening Grosbeaks at feeders, but not in the large numbers seen during the 1970s.

Watch your feeders for larger numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches. Christmas Bird Counts (32 years) show a biennial (every two years) high and low pattern, with some exceptions. Bohemian Waxwings will wander south and east this winter. Watch for them eating buckthorn berries and crabapples. Should have a strong flight of Blue Jays this fall. There is also the possibility of Gray Jays and Boreal Chickadees moving into southern Ontario this winter.

If the small mammal populations crashes (as expected) this fall, then watch for Great Gray Owls, Northern Hawk Owls, and Boreal Owls to move south along with Northern Saw-whet Owls due to the decline of the red-backed vole

(a forest vole) the Sew-whet's prime food source.

Get out the warm clothes and clean the lens it could be a good winter. Watch your feeders and keep them filled.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Uhtoff Trail Walk April 14, 2007

John Doll led us on a very pleasant outing on Saturday along the Uhtoff Trail out of Orillia. There were lots of spring migrants as well as local birds and we also saw lots of beaver dams and one chipmunk. We had great weather for this trip, ate lunch at Grant's Woods. Everyone had a very nice time including K.C and myself despite the misplaced car keys but that is another story for another time.

On behalf of the group thanks John for a great day.

Birds Observed - American Crow, Wild Turkey (heard), Red-winged Blackbird, Song Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, American Robin, Tree Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Brown-headed Cowbird, European Starling, Canada Goose, Mallard, Greater Yellowlegs, Turkey Vulture, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Bittern, Osprey, Eastern Meadowlark Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Ring-billed Gull, House Finch, Red-tailed Hawk, Brown Creeper, Ruffed Grouse (heard), Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Mourning Dove.

Lyn Pope

The Gables May 2, 2007

Twenty-nine participants gathered at this city owned park for our club's first botanical field trip for 2007. The Gables Park (42.7 acres) is bordered on the south by Tollendale Mill Road, the north boundary is Kempenfelt Bay, Baylane is on the west and the backyards of the residents of Royal Oak Drive are on the east. The blooming profusion of wild and introduced flowers accented by the evening sun was stunning throughout our 2 ½ hour walk along the woodland trails.

Elizabeth Gillan helped with the plant identification and Al McNair highlighted historical events and oriented Councilor John Brassard to this spectacular oasis in the heart of Barrie. The temperature was 8-10°C. The bird sightings were scarce.

The City's Community Services Committee will be reviewing the need for the installation of a 7 meter wide water & sewer servicing corridor across the Gables Park. Our club's Conservation Committee has been recommending that this project be reconsidered.

Plants Observed:- Annual Honesty, Black Raspberry, Blue Cohosh, Canadian Yew, Celadine, Common Mullein, Curled Dock, Dame's Rocket, Early Meadow-rue, Field Pansy, Forget-me-not, Garlic Mustard, Large-flowered Bellwort, Lilac, Kidney-leaf Buttercup, Prickly Gooseberry, Sharp-lobed Hepatica, Shinleaf, Staghorn Sumac, Trout Lily, Two-leaved Toothwort, Virginia Waterleaf, Red Trillium, Ural False Spiraea, White Trillium, Wild Ginger, Wild Red Raspberry, Wild Leek, Wild Lily-of-the-Valley & Wood Anemone.

Garden Escapes:- Forsythia, Glory of the Snow, Grape-Hyacinth, Lesser Periwinkle, Lily-of-the-Valley, Perennial Candytuft, Sedum, Spring Squill & Yellow Anemone.

Birds:- Mallard & Bufflehead

Phyllis Tremblay

Little Lake Park May 15, 2007

We visited 2 sections of Little Lake Park again this year, with an added side trip to a recently established heronry

The sloping 250 meter path that starts at the Little Lake Parking lot and ends at the shoreline in northeast Barrie is the first part of our field trip. We birded these habitats of edge, swamp and cattail marsh for 45 minutes before motoring to the north side of the lake in Springwater Township. This second part is a 2 ½ hour walk on a loop trail following a treed laneway between agricultural fields, upland deciduous forests, swamp and marsh. Five members risked the stormy forecast on this weekday outing which actually offered a breezy mixture of sun, cloud and humidity exceeding the 25°C temperature.

Plants Observed:- Blue Cohosh, Common Cat-tail, Common Dandelion, Creeping Charlie, both Common & Red-berried Elderberry, Ferns:- Christmas, Crested Wood, Lady, Northern Maidenhair, Ostrich & Sensitive; Garlic Mustard, Herb Robert, Kidney-leaf Buttercup, Large-flowered Bellwort, Lesser Celadine, Marsh Marigold, May-apple, Plantain-Leaved Sedge, Poison Ivy, Red Trillium Sharp-lobed Hepatica, Solomon's-Seals:- False, Giant, Hairy & Starry False; Shinleaf, Small Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Spotted touch-me-not seedlings, Tall Meadow-rue, Trout Lily, Two-Leafed Toothwort, Violets:- Canada, Common Blue, Dog & Downy Yellow; Virginia Waterleaf, White Baneberry, White Lettuce, White Trillium, Wild Columbine, Wild Ginger, Wild Leek, Wild Lily-of-the-Valley, Wood Betony & a cluster of Zigzag Goldenrod plants.

Frank Cook has identified 3 mosses for me:- *Hedwigia ciliata*, *Dicranum fulvum*, and *Brachythecium populeum*. These mosses are growing on large igneous rocks in the mature deciduous woodland.

61 Bird Species Noted:- Grebe species, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Mallard, Common Goldeneye, Osprey, Hawk species, Wild Turkey, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Black Tern, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Wood Peewee, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling; Warblers:- Nashville, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Palm, Black-and-white, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, & Common Yellowthroat; Scarlet Tanager, Sparrows:- Field, Vesper, Song, Swamp & White Throated; Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole & American Goldfinch.

To conclude our field trip, we stopped at the heronry which can be seen from the 5/6 Sideroad (extension of Georgian Drive). We

counted 13 nests with several Great Blue Herons in/near the nests while Turkey Vultures circled overhead.

Phyllis Tremblay

Feversham Gorge June 2nd 2007

Well it was supposed to be the Kolapore trip but a change of plan took us to Feversham Gorge and Eugenia Falls. Five members attended, enjoying the Gorge with views from high above the Mad River on a narrow path where Yellow Ladies Slippers were growing at the edge of the forest. On arrival we were greeted by a White Tailed Deer just off the parking lot. It watched us nonchalantly for a minute then casually walked into the forest. Herb Robert, Clintonia, Marsh Marigold, Strawberry and Columbine were seen as well as Buttercups. At one point a Chipmunk crossed the path we were on.

At Eugenia Falls we saw more Yellow Lady Slippers.

It was a warm day which was suspected of keeping the bird count down but we did manage to see twenty five species as follows: Am. Crow, Turkey Vulture, Red Winged Blackbird, Barn Swallow, Am. Goldfinch Song Sparrow, Flicker, Blue Jay, Killdeer, Starling, Am. Robin, Red Eyed Vireo, Cardinal, Mourning and Rock Doves, Catbird, Winter Wren, Kingfisher, Wh. Br. Nuthatch, Hairy Woodpecker, Loon (in Eugenia Lake) Grackle, Black and White Warbler, Wild Turkey, Canada Geese and Common Yellow Throat.

Jim Spruce.

Copeland Forest June 23/07

Sunny and cool with a light breeze 60 – 62F. Four participants, Al McNair and I co-lead our adventurous little group.

At the Little Lake Parking lot we saw a Baltimore Oriole flying about. Out at Copeland it was quite pleasant, very few bugs, lots of butterflies, and birds flitting around. At the pond we saw 9 turtles sunning on logs.

BIRDS – American Crow, American Gold Finch, Blue Jays, King Bird, Red-winged Blackbird, Tree Sparrow, Tree Swallow, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, male & female Pied-billed Grebe,

mother is carrying baby chicks on her back, Common Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Oven Bird, Common Yellowthroat, Indigo Bunting, Turkey Vulture,

PLANTS – Canada Anemone, Bush honeysuckle, Common Black Berry, Swamp Smartweed, Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Blue Flag Iris, Water Lily, Bladder Campion, Philadelphia Fleabane,

BUTTERFLIES - Monarch, Admiral, Red Admiral, White Admiral, Painted Lady, American Copper, Cabbage White.

Brian Gibbon.

[ORO RAILTRAIL](#)

[June 30/07](#)

Lynne, Al McNair & I left the Little Lake Parking lot and went out across Georgian Drive, crossed Penetanguishene Rd. onto the 1st of Oro, about ¾ mile down the road we spotted the new Heronry on the right side, there were at least 10 nests with 12 Great Blue Herons (young & adults) on the nests. We turned left on the Ridge Road and proceeded out to the 7th of Oro, turned right down the hill to the Railtrail. We hiked north towards the 9th, preceded ¾ of the way and turn back at the little bridge/culvert.

The exceedingly low water levels in the ponds and marshes was very obvious right from the outset of our walk.

We had just started down the trail when a large jack-rabbit hopped out onto the trail and sat there while we had a good look at him, he had no sooner left the trail when a second appeared about 20 yards further down. It has been years since I've seen jacks around this area, so I guess the coyotes haven't got them all yet.

Birds – Brown Thrasher, American Crow, Robin, red-winged Black Bird, Grey Catbird, Blue Jay, Amer. Goldfinch, Brown-headed Cowbird, Morning Dove, Black-capped Chickadee, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal, Common Yellow Throat, Yellow Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Sparrows – Song, Tree, and White-throated Sparrow, Wood Thrush, Hairy Woodpecker, Mallard (female with young) Flycatcher (sp), American Bittern (heard)

Butterflies – Monarch, Viceroy, Painted Lady, Eastern Comma, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Admiral – Red & White, Cabbage White,

Northern Crescent, Orange Sulphur, Great Spangled Fritillary.

Plants – Wild Grape, Rag Weed (oh boy!!) Common and Swamp Milkweed, Ox-eye Daisy, Black-eyed Susan, Viper's Bugloss, St. Johnswort, Common Winter Cress, Bladder Campion, Goat's Beard, Philadelphia Fleabane, Tiger Lily, Cow Vetch, Common Mullein, Queen Anne's Lace, Butter-and-eggs (snap dragon family) Spreading Dogbane, Wild Rose, Sweet Pea, Sweet Clover, Yarrow, Jewell Weed, Herb Robert, Common Night Shade, Garlic Mustard, Forget-me-Not.

Animals - Jack rabbits, Red Squirrel, Chipmunk.

This has been a productive walk the last couple of years, to bad more don't attend.

Brian & Lynne Gibbon

[Vespra Trail](#)

[July 14, 2007](#)

Four hearty souls joined me on an overcast day with the odd scattered light shower. The temperature started out at 53F and rose to 60F. The cool weather kept the bugs down and made for pleasant walking. We took our usual route going in the un-opened road allowance off Wilson Rd at Carson Rd beside the old pioneer cemetery down into the valley, off the main trail and into "Farmer Browns" and back out again.

Birds , Indigo Bunting, Black-capped Chickadee, Song Sparrow Amer. Crow, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, House Wren, Wood Thrush, Blue Jays, Oven Bird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Red-eyed Vireo, Amer. Goldfinch, Turkey (heard),

Plants Daisy Flea Bane, Deptford Pink, Queen Anne's Lace, Black-eyed Susan, Ox-eye Daisy, Viper's Bugloss, Herb Robert, White Avens, Heal-all, Rough-footed Cinquefoil, Bladder Campion, False Solomon Seal, Yellow Goat's-beard, Wild Grape, Bracken, and Sensitive Fern, Wild Bergamot, St Johnswort, Hog Peanut, Enchanter's Nightshade, Chicory, Mother Wort, White Snake Root, Milk Weed, Goldenrod.

Brian Gibbon

Dragonfly Outing August 11, 2007

It was a very good outing and the weather was perfect for Odes. We saw and identified 11 species of Odes and saw at least one Somatochlora species we couldn't catch and likely an Aeshnidae or two which eluded us too, if memory serves, from 4 of the 9 families found in Simcoe County. If we had time to go to the Ferndale area we could have added to our species, but all in all a great outing.

The plant we were trying to identify is *Decodon verticillatus* – common name Swamp Loosestrife or Water Willow.

Dragonflies/Damselflies – Common Whitetail, Twelve-spotted Skimmer, Orange Bluet, Halloween Pennant, Blue Dasher, Eastern Pondhawk, Eastern Forktail, Widow Skimmer, White Faced Meadowhawk, Common Green Darner.

Chris Evans

North Simcoe Railtrail September 8, 2007

Our late summer wildflower fieldtrip from the Highway 26 Kiosk through Mayer's Marsh to Vespra Valley Road began with a bit of morning mist and a temperature of 12°C. Later at the viewing platform, 6 members were able to bask in sunshine and 21°C temperatures while 2 Northern Harriers circled overhead.

During the outing we were able to identify the large sweeps of Canada, Grass-leaved, Rough-stemmed & Tall Goldenrods that edged the trail, interspersed with the hues of white, mauve & purple asters:- Calico, Flat-topped, New England & Red-stemmed. The amazing 12 foot high Tall Blue Lettuce on the side trail was a personal highlight.

Additional Plants observed:- Bird's-foot Trefoil, Black Raspberry, Bloodroot, Boneset, Bull Thistle, Canada Anemone, Canada Thistle, Carrion Flower, Catnip, Climbing Nightshade, Common Arrowhead, Common Burdock, Common Cat-tail, Common Elderberry, Common Milkweed, Common Mullein, Common Plantain, Common Yarrow, Cow Vetch, Creeping Bellflower, Docks:- Curled & Swamp; Devil's Beggar ticks, Dogwoods:- Red-osier & Silky; Enchanter's Nightshade, Evening Primrose, Ferns:- Ostrich & Sensitive; Goat's-beard, Green-headed Coneflower, Hard-

stemmed Bulrush, High bush Cranberry, Hog-peanut, Lamb's Quarters, Motherwort, Panicked Tick Trefoil, Poison Ivy, Purple Loosestrife, Ragweed, Red Clover, River Grape, Scouring-rush, Sedum, Soapwort, Spiny-leaved Sow-thistle, Spotted Joe-Pye-weed, Spotted Touch-me-not, Spreading Dogbane, Starry False Solomon's-Seal, Tall Meadow-rue, Thimbleweed, Toadflax, Turtlehead, Viper's Bugloss, Virginia Creeper, White Snakeroot, White Clover, Wild Bergamot, Wild Carrot & Wild Clematis.

Other Birds Noted:- Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, European Starling, Wilson's Warbler, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird & American Goldfinch.

During my preview the previous week, large numbers of migrating Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were feasting on the orange flowers of the Spotted Touch-me-not. It was too bad the hummingbirds had departed.

Phyllis Tremblay

North Simcoe Rail Trail October 14, 2007

This late fall outing is always a little iffy weather wise but is usually worth it. At 8:00 am it was 40F, overcast, light misting rain off and on with periodic clearing and sun, the temperature rose to 48F by noon. Two people joined me – Phyllis Tremblay and Al McNair.

We had Juncos and 120 Canada Geese at the parking lot at Little Lake and a large Amer. Crow at the corner of Little Lake Dr. and Duckworth Street. The Hamner Street retention pond had about another 50 geese. The parking lot on Hwy 26 at the Railtrail yielded a flock of mature and immature White Crowned Sparrows. We had lots to see as we proceeded south along the trail to Willow Creek and then onto Josephine where we saw our 2nd Red-tailed Hawk. Despite the variable weather it was an excellent outing.

Birds – Slate-coloured Junco, Canada Geese, Amer. Crows, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, Blue Jays, Mourning Doves, Amer. Goldfinches (25), Robins (25-30), Grackles, Red-winged Black Birds, Great Blue

Heron (landing in the corn field) Rusty Black Birds, Ruby Crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-capped Chickadees, Swamp Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker (male), Mallard Ducks (4), Winter Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Raven, Turkey Vultures (3), Eastern Phoebe, Song Sparrow, Wood Ducks (heard in flight).

Plants – Evening Primrose, Flat-topped Aster.
Brian W. Gibbon

Eastern Bluebirds

In his *Illustrated Natural History*, Rev. John G. Wood (1827-1889) wrote:

In many respects the Blue-bird takes the place of the redbreast in the affections of bird-loving persons, and fearlessly associates with mankind, even though it is not driven to such companionship by cold or hunger.

I came across Wood's description a few years after my husband John had built and set up our first bluebird boxes. Someone else, 150 years before us, had felt the unique nature of the Eastern Bluebird.

Our first pair of nesting bluebirds arrived in late April, 1993. Thereafter, every spring--except 1997--up to 2004, bluebirds visited us and stayed. We could watch their activities through our kitchen window. The box sat on top of a metal post near the fence line between our eastern neighbour's horse paddock and our own manicured hay field. From our verandah, we often saw the parents swoop for insects and heard the crying of babies as they waited to feed. Many times, in the morning, we would awaken to the distinctive and almost imperceptible bluebird song. Summer wasn't right until the bluebirds came.

But, in 2004, the bluebirds did not have a second family here. By early July, they had disappeared. In April of 2005, 2006 and this year--2007--John put out the boxes as usual. We glimpsed passing birds. None stayed.

Enjoying a cup of coffee outside at our neighbour's to the west of us in late May, I heard bluebirds. Of course, I was delighted to learn their box had attracted a nesting pair this year. And sometimes, those bluebirds alighted on a branch of our butternut tree or settled on our windsock post. All too soon, it was quiet

once more. We knew they were raising a family in our neighbour's orchard.

Over three seasons of no bluebirds, we adjusted. The winter of 2005 was fine for the sighting of great gray owls. The occasional flash of red in early May of 2006 was a scarlet tanager. A northern oriole clung to our hummingbird feeder.

House wrens lived in our bluebird box through early summer this year. Their babies came and went. Suddenly, towards the end of June, we saw a male bluebird on the box. A female was perched on the nearby fence wire. Before we knew it, the pair had nested in our box and brought their first family with them!

Susan Vernon

In Praise of Osprey!

As I have researched and become more acquainted with the Osprey, my respect and admiration for the bird has increased. This piece will laud just a few of the wonderful skills this bird has developed. Formerly called a Fish Hawk, the *Pandion haliaetus* is the only hawk, aside from sea eagles, that feeds on live fish. Spotting a fish moving underwater from a height of a hundred feet or more and hitting it from a swift dive requires extraordinary vision. The Osprey's retina has eight times the number of visual cells at the foveae than the human retina has. Secondly, a pleated part called the pecten is attached to the Osprey's retina, which allows it to detect the slightest motion and to change courses instantly in mid-dive, if the fish it is after suddenly turns.

Each of the Osprey's eyes can focus independently, so that its vision can cover a much wider area. But when one eye has located a fish, both eyes must be used to judge motion and distance with accuracy. So the bird turns its head to focus both eyes on the prey. Then it can judge the distance, speed and direction of the fish's path. But the target is submerged. Refraction, the bending of the rays of light as they hit the water's surface, has to be allowed for. The Osprey knows to dive behind the fish to catch it.

Most hawks have three toes at the front and one at the rear; the Osprey can turn its front toe backwards – with two sickle-shaped talons in

front and two behind, it has a powerful grasp on the fish. Sometimes the fish can weigh as much as six pounds – more than the weight of the bird itself! If the fish is too large, it can drag the bird under and it will drown because it is unable to release the prey rapidly enough.

The Osprey wing is longer and narrower than that of other hawks; this allows the bird to soar more efficiently. The wing tips are deeply notched and the feathers are widely separated which gives the bird excellent control at low speeds and an ability to hover. When it dives, the Osprey folds its wings, like a falcon. It also has to climb out of the water with the burden of a fish without a takeoff run, so it needs unusual wing lift. It usually hits the fish from behind, so that the fish is facing forward as the Osprey flies up. If it is not, the bird will turn the fish so that there is less air resistance. It will often shake like a dog after it rises out of the water to rid itself of the extra weight of the water.

And I could go on! But this gives you some idea of the magnificence of this bird and why it should be preserved. I am very grateful that Bell took my emails seriously and has gone to great expense and trouble to help us provide a new nesting platform for these birds. The arrival of Spring and the return of the birds will demonstrate whether or not we have been successful!

Lynne Gibbon

[One of North America's Rarest Dragonflies Discovered in Canada](#)

The only dragonfly protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act, and one of North America's rarest is the Hine's Emerald (*Somatochlora hineana*). Prior to this year, the Hine's Emerald was only known from small sites in the United States, specifically Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri and Illinois. It was also once found in Ohio and Indiana but seems to have disappeared from those states. This summer, a population of Hine's Emeralds was discovered in the Minesing Wetlands in Simcoe County, Ontario, west of the City of Barrie.

The Hine's Emerald is a relatively large dragonfly with brilliant green eyes, and prominent yellow spots on the sides of the thorax (the middle portion of the body bearing

the wings and legs). They occur only in spring-fed wetlands overlaying dolomite bedrock. Such sites occur on the Bruce Peninsula and Manitoulin Island and have been the focus of several unsuccessful attempts in the past to find Hine's Emerald in Ontario.

On June 20, 2007, Chris Evans of Midhurst, Ontario was looking for dragonflies along the roadside adjacent to the Minesing Wetlands when he caught a dragonfly he initially assumed was the Clamp-tipped Emerald (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*), a species known to occur in Ontario and one that is very similar to the Hine's Emerald. Photos were taken and were sent to Colin Jones of the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC), Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. It was then realized that the individual was actually a Hine's Emerald.

On June 27, Colin Jones, along with Mike Oldham and Wasyl Bakowsky, who are also biologists at the NHIC, and Mike's son Robert visited the Minesing Wetlands and located several more Hine's Emeralds. Since then, Colin Jones, Chris Evans and Chris' dragonfly mentor, Bob Bowles have been working together to gather as much information as possible on the habitat of this rare dragonfly in the Minesing Wetlands. This information will be compiled into a scientific note and will be submitted for consideration to one of several possible entomological journals.

The Minesing Wetlands is a vast wetland of international significance spanning an area of over 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres). Minesing contains a complex of different wetland types including fens, marshes, swamps and bogs, each supporting a number of sensitive flora and fauna, some of which are rare or endangered. The Hine's Emerald is yet another rare species of the Minesing Wetlands and an indication of the extreme value of these wetlands to the conservation of Ontario's biodiversity!

From a press release

[To the Editor,](#)

Sir, It is with some hesitation that I ask your consideration once again for space in your newsletter. You have been very tolerant of my previous requests and I hope this one will be given due consideration.

A recently republished book about the backwoods of Muskoka describes the life of settlers there in 1878. New arrivals to the area were warned to be aware of certain types of wildlife which might be harmful to their health, especially as one might expect, the biting insects. Some locals warning newcomers that they could grow as big as butterflies! However a more fearsome creature was supposedly at large in the woods at that time which was reputed to be able to take a chunk out of a man's flesh. In the book this is referred to as THE GILLILOO BIRD. They are believed to have been trained by the more adventuresome residents to catch mice in barns. This may be a hawk or an owl, perhaps even a Hawk Owl. We would appreciate receiving any information your members could provide in order to properly categorize this species.

As a foot note there is mention in the book of Hodags and it may well be that your members are familiar with this term for the Bobcat or Lynx. The locals had a grand time startling the new arrivals with tales of the damage this could wreak on the unsuspecting. However I digress. Should you allow me the space once again may I request that all information be sent to me at www.gill@sympatico.ca. Any reports will of course be sent to you for publication.

Respectfully, W. Albert Ross.

The book referred to is titled *English Bloods, In the Backwoods of Muskoka 1878* by Frederick de la Fosse edited by Scott D. Shipman. It was first published in 1930.

BOOK REVIEW

The Happy Camper

In November, 2006, my husband John and I attended a Brereton Field Naturalists' Club presentation given by Kevin Callan on Quetico Provincial Park. It was a multi-media event: slides mixed with sound/video clips along with Mr. Callan's enthusiastic and knowledgeable commentary. I came away with a new appreciation of the cheap, collapsible chair and the horror of ticks in intimate places on the body. I learned that it is possible to savour a glass of wine in the middle of nowhere. And I

bought one of Mr. Callan's books, *The Happy Camper*, a deceptively appropriate title.

The Happy Camper is an inviting read. Vivid colour photographs mix with clear, conversational text. It is heartening to see in Mr. Callan's introduction that while *The Happy Camper* is about preparation, it is also about the importance of getting "out there." Even if my own years of family camping do not qualify me as a true "tripper," I don't feel excluded. Callan's narrative style easily wins me over, and I am tempted to tackle greater challenges in the wild.

This book is what it says it is: "an essential guide to life outdoors." It covers equipment (camp stoves, sleeping bags, backpacks, tents, types of food, recipes), offers tips for camping with children and pets, explains how to choose a good site for your tent or how to handle the absence of toilets, introduces some basic knots, explains the use of a map and compass, discusses bears, insects, first aid, weather, cold camping, the specifics of canoe camping and kayaking. Mr. Callan is generous with his own experience. His stories and personal recommendations—often derived from camping with his wife, Alana and his young daughter or with his many friends—fill the pages. He is gifted at combining the deadly serious with the absolutely hilarious. And, I enjoy how each section begins with short, often profound quotations from other writers about the wilderness.

Do not think I read every word; sad to say, I skimmed over the chapter "Map and Compass." However, I know I will come back to this book, perhaps when I feel smarter, or more desperate. Before I finished *The Happy Camper*, I started to read *The Flu Pandemic and You* which is not only about the possibility of a flu epidemic but also suggests answers to the broader question about what to do when the normal structures of society fail. In the middle of the book, I came upon the following statement by author Vincent Lam: "If you want to prepare for a pandemic, or for any other disaster, think about the first time you went on a canoe trip."

Susan Vernon