



# THE BLUE HERON

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Phyllis Tremblay

We have been through a full cycle of the seasons since I became the club's interim president last summer and its elected president in April. I have had a good opportunity to see how the BFNC operates throughout the year and I am thankful to the executive for their understanding and help while I was learning the president's job.

Many individuals spend hours in the field monitoring forest birds, piping plovers at Wasaga Beach, marsh birds and amphibians, reptiles, dragonflies, butterflies and Project Feeder Watch. Some members even have the privilege of having red-headed woodpeckers near their homes, and have been keeping track of arrival/departure dates and the nesting success of this threatened species. This year there were golden-winged warbler surveys carried out by teams from our club. Another team has been watching chimney swifts in downtown Barrie since May and the data from this, as well as from the other surveys, are sent

to Bird Studies Canada. The chimney swifts' status has deteriorated to a "threatened species" in Ontario. This winter our club hopes to address our "Bluebird Nest Box Project", too.

Significant efforts have been made to promote our club to the public. Supervised information

booths were set up during "Spring Tonic" at Tiffin and at "Let's Celebrate Barrie" in June. For two weeks we had a display at the Barrie Library. New business cards and bookmarks were produced and we were interviewed for "Rogers Daytime".

The Conservation Committee has made submissions on behalf of the club re: The Gables, Miller Drive Housing Development, New Barrie Official Plan, Ford Street Storm water Management Facility Retrofit and, Site 41 in Tiny Township.

We have arranged a good line-up of speakers, scheduled a number of field trips and encouraged individuals and their teams to continue pursuing their projects. Hopefully you can see opportunities to become more involved in our natural environment and its preservation.



Great Blue Heron

Brian Backland

## EDITOR'S NOTE

I would like to thank Brian Backland for his generous offer to utilize his photographs. He supplied a disk with dozens of pictures, many taken on our outings

## NATURALIST'S NOTES

Artist's Polypore – gets its name because the pores are so fine (less than 1/8<sup>th</sup> of a mm each) gives a fine smooth surface on the back which is an off white shade and if you draw on it with a stick the

lines comes out as light brown and it can also be coloured.

**Wild mint** All members of the mint family have square stems which aids in identification.

**Sweat Cherry vs. Pin Cherry** When trying to identify Sweat cherry turn the leaf over and examine the main vein if there is a mossy growth running along the vein it is a Seat cherry, this is lacking in the Pin Cherry.

Field notes from Don Jatiouk

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**Blue Bird Box Report.**

I cleaned the boxes on March 15/09. Trail is along the 25th Side road of Essa from CR 27 to the 10th Line of Essa. There are some boxes on the 11th Line north and south of the 25th. The boxes are in a mixed bag of repair. Some are beyond repair. Their tops have been torn off. Others are quite rotten. A few are on posts that have rotted and they are hanging down at bad angles from the wire. These aren't of much use. A fair number are in excellent shape. Most of them showed sign of having been used by birds. On the north side of the 25th it looks like Tangle Creek has erected a new fence. The boxes that were on the old one are gone. There is no sign of vandalism. All the damage is done by weather, age and the ravages of snow plow flung ice and snow. I do this cleaning early on a Sunday morning because that is when traffic is at its lightest. This road can be quite busy and there are areas where there is nowhere to pull fully off the road. I'm not sure how this traffic affects nesting or if the presence of a golf course does either. I'm sure there have been some studies on this matter. My opinion is that if the trail is to stay where it is some of the boxes need to be replaced, some need to be moved to better and stronger posts, and some need light repairs. All could use new locking screws as the old ones are rusting. Because of rot a lot of the drilled holes are stripped. It would probably be a good idea to have a few people go out and do a proper inventory of the boxes and decide whether it's worth keeping them where they are and replacing the ones that need it.

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**Bluebird Trail**

On June 10, 2009 Phyllis & Paul Tremblay checked 20 boxes. No bluebirds were observed. Tree Swallows were nesting in 2 boxes and tree swallows were nearby at other sites. House Sparrows were in or near 4 nest boxes.

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**Fall Roost**

**August 24, 2009:-** Watched the Queen's Hotel chimney 7:37 - 8:10 PM. A few CHSW flew by, but did not swoop this chimney. (sunset 8:09). Noticed CHSW circling further on downtown (west). We drove down Collier St. and could see them circling around the chimney behind Ruane's. I started my count at 8:15. Total =58, but at the end there were about 10 that kept going...towards Maple St.?

**August 27, 2009:-** Chimney Swift Watch was organized for BFNC. Brian sent out emails to announce the event. At 7:45 PM 13 people gathered on Collier Street beside the Collier St. Parking Garage. A few chimney swifts were observed flying by as we chatted, and waited for greater numbers of CHSW to arrive. Just after sunset (8:02), we could hear more chittering and by 8:10 PM 13 chimney swifts entered the chimney behind Ruane's. 3 chimney swifts kept swooping the chimney, about 15 times, but did not enter. There must other roosts. Temperature: 15C, Cloud: overcast, slight breeze

Phyllis Tremblay

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**Chimney Swifts in Barrie**

My fascination for chimney swifts began almost three years ago with a visit to the Russ Pittman Park in Houston, Texas. At this small urban oasis (about 2 city blocks in size), volunteers built a chimney swift tower (a bird house for chimney swifts) where the swifts have nested successfully. Learning to listen for their high pitched "chittering" calls as they slice through the air in graceful arcs alerts me to their presence wherever I am. It was amazing to discover that a swift's day is spent on the wing chasing insects, and then they gather for the night in large communal roosts in spring and late summer. But during breeding in May-June only one nest is built per chimney for a pair. A few non-breeders may use the nesting chimney to roost and assist the breeding pair. Chimney swifts historically used large hollow trees for nests and roosts, but as ancient forests were cut down, they adapted to chimneys and other structures instead.

Due to a drastic decline in the past 30 years or so in the chimney swift population, this species was listed as *threatened in Canada* in 2007 and this summer it was added to Ontario's *Threatened Species* list. One of the factors of their decline could be the loss of suitable chimneys for roosting and nesting. A suitable chimney can be as small as 2 standard bricks in width; the inside opening must be a minimum of 1 square foot with a rough interior surface so the birds can cling to the wall.

Concerned organizations and individuals have recognized the need to identify, monitor and protect chimney swift populations. Bird Studies Canada is coordinating a province wide monitoring survey to better understand the chimney swift behaviour and ecology. This spring members from the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club volunteered to assist in identifying possible nesting and roosting sites in Barrie and the number of swifts using them. Of the seven chimneys we assessed, we found only one being used as a colonial roost - the tall chimney behind the Queen's Hotel. At the end of the season, the chimney behind Ruanne's became a roost.

**Summary of our Observations 2009:**

May 31 - 21 entered the Queen's Hotel chimney roost  
June 4 - 87 " " " " "  
June 10 106 " " " " "  
June 18 - 3 entered the Barrie North Collegiate chimney (likely nesting)  
June 21 - 61 entered the Queen's Hotel chimney  
July 11 - 51 " " " " "  
July 19 - 54 " " " " "  
July 22 - Barrie North Collegiate chimney had been removed  
August 4 - 66 entered the Queen's Hotel chimney  
August 24 - 58 entered the Ruanne's Restaurant & Night Club chimney  
August 27 - 13 entered " " " "

Survey Results were sent to Bird Studies Canada. This year most of our observations of active chimneys were behind the businesses on Dunlop St. East. Next year we would like to enlarge our team so we can observe chimneys in other parts of Barrie. We hope you will consider joining the Chimney Swift Team (**CHSW Team**).

Phyllis Tremblay

**FIELD TRIP REPORTS**

**HORNED LARKS and TIFFIN PANCAKES**  
**Mar. 21/09.**

Sunny, light breeze, 3-4C  
Met at Little Lake Parking Lot, departed at 9:00 am with 9 cars but ended up with 11 cars and 24 individuals.

Followed the normal route – out Sunnidale Rd, right on Barrie Hill Rd, left on Seaton to George Johnstone, right to Minesing and left onto Ronald Rd., were we met Beryl Lougher, to South Glenn Gary Landing Rd, left on Hwy 26 to Strongville Rd around the Minesing Wetlands to the Brentwood Rd., left into Angus and onto Hwy 90 and then left onto McKinnon Rd. Back out to Hwy 90 left on 90 to

8<sup>th</sup>. Con of Essa Twp.turned right went up to Tiffin and joined the rest for pancakes, sausages, and baked beans. As usual John & Beth Doll had the kitchen crew well in hand (Linda Crome & Al McNair and several other volunteers)

On Ronald Rd we were treated to a sight of hundreds of Canada Geese out in a field including some Tundra Swans and a Blue phased Snow Goose as well as an assortment of ducks. We also watched a coyote trying to work is way in close to the flock for his lunch. In one of the wet areas by Strongville Rd we spotted a small flock of Sandhill Cranes, and it was in the same area that we had our one and only Snowy Owl also a Harrier sitting on the ground over a kill. After we broke off to go to Tiffin Beryl doubled back for another look at the Snowy and spotted the Hooded and Common Mergansers.

**Species seen** Canada Geese, Amer. Crows, Morning Doves, Ringed-billed Gulls, Bufflehead Ducks (on Willow Creek at G.J. Rd.), Blue phased Snow Goose, Tundra Swans, Ducks - Pin-tail, Golden-eye, Mallard, Widgeon, Black, Green-winged Teal, Hooded and Common Mergansers, Sandhill Cranes, House Sparrow, Killdeer, Rough-legged, Red-tailed Hawks, and Harrier Hawks, Song Sparrows, Blue Jays, Snowy Owl, Red-winged Black Bird, and of course a few Horned Larks. The larks were not plentiful and we only saw about a dozen in total

Brian W. Gibbon

**AMERICAN WOODCOCKS**

**April 15/09**

What a difference a week makes! This trip was scheduled for April 8. Knee deep snow forced a postponement, to April 15, and the ground was mostly bare, the skies clear and the weather fairly balmy.

The intent of this trip was to observe the mating display dance of the American Woodcock. Twelve naturalists met at Little Lake, and were rewarded with an Osprey and a singing Purple Finch at the parking lot. We then proceeded to an uncultivated field on the outskirts of Midhurst where Woodcock are known to display.

It was still quite bright out at 7:30 p.m. so we stalled for time by wandering aimlessly about the field. Another ( or perhaps the same) Osprey flew down Willow Creek, and we all watched as a Ruffed Grouse, 10 meters up in an aspen, gorged on catkins or buds. A pack of coyotes yipped and carried on the distance.

By 8:15 there was still no sign of our intended quarry. The mob started to get restless. There were rumblings of money-back guarantees and hot chocolate bribes, but at precisely 8:27, we heard one single, nasal "beent!". Within a few minutes the

ground call, similar to a Nighthawk's call, could be heard from several locations. These male birds, doing a little ground dance, would then burst into the air, their wings producing a high twittering as they ascend into the sky, becoming a barely visible speck in the darkening sky. Then they fall back to earth in a fluttering path reminiscent of a falling leaf, making remarkable tweets and clicks on the way. Eventually they land very near where they started.

This behavior can be exploited as when the birds take off, the quiet group can cautiously move to where the bird took off, and the Woodcock will land quite close to the group. We observed this behaviour for perhaps half an hour, and recorded 4 or 5 individual males. Presumably the females were there somewhere, carefully selecting the best presenter.

The group, mollified, seemed to be content with the show, and left without further incident.

Submitted by Ian Cook

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**MTM WATERFOWL VIEWING DAY AT TINY MARSH**

**April 18/09**

This outing took advantage of the MTM (Matchedash Bay – Tiny Marsh – Marl Lake) Waterfowl viewing day an annual event to promote membership awareness of the maintenance that is needed to benefit the natural resources and the environment.

The day started off overcast 9C with a shower of rain only at lunch time. We had a fair number of waterfowl. Total bird species was 44, the highlights being a Snow Goose amongst the Canada Geese with a couple of early spring migrant Yellow-rumped Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark, Brown Creeper and the Belted Kingfisher.

Our Club representative (MTM conservation partners) David Eales was busy dip netting with the children looking for bugs and creatures at the waters edge. Lunch at 12:15 pm was welcomed with a choice of a Hamburger or Hotdog with all the trimmings.

The MTM guest speaker at 1:00 pm was about the Great Lakes Piping Plovers in Ontario - very informative and after being a volunteer last year made it much more interesting to me. The purpose of the meeting was to encourage individuals to conduct surveys at regular intervals through periods when plovers could be breeding - all occurrences of birds should be kept confidential reporting only to the MNR. If you are interested in doing a Piping Plover Survey please contact Jodi Benvenuti Ministry of Natural Resources, Midhurst District 705-725-7513 [jodi.benvenuti@ontario.ca](mailto:jodi.benvenuti@ontario.ca)

Happy birding! Beryl Lougher.

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**The Gables**

**May 6/09**

In 2004 twenty club members participated in the biological inventory of The Gables Park. Every year since, our club conducts a field trip the first week of May to view the blooming profusion of wild and introduced spring flowers that impressed our team during those first few field study weeks in 2004. Fourteen people were in attendance including some of the original inventory team who again this year were on hand to assist with plant identification, describe the historical background and relate anecdotes about our experiences at The Gables Park. Participants were also made aware that the proposed installation of sanitary and water servicing through the park will alter this "urban wilderness" environment.

It was a cloudy evening, with a temperature of 12 C. On our 2 1/2 hour outing only a few songbirds were heard as we walked along the trails.

**Plants Observed:-** Annual Honesty, Black Raspberry, Blue Cohosh, Canada Yew, Celadine buds, Common Dandelion, Common Winter Cress, Common Mullein, Dame's Rocket, Early Meadow-rue, False Solomon's Seal, Garlic Mustard, Large-flowered Bellwort, Kidney-leaf Buttercup, Mayapple, Motherwort, Prickly Gooseberry, Sharp-lobed Hepatica, Staghorn Sumac, Trout Lily, Two-leafed Toothwort, Virginia Bluebells, Virginia Waterleaf, Red Trillium, Ural False Spiraea, White Lettuce, White Trillium, Wild Carrot, Wild Ginger, Wild Lily-of-the-Valley, Wild Leek, Wild Red Raspberry, & Wood Anemone.

**Garden Escapes:-** Forsythia, Glory of the Snow, Lesser Periwinkle, Saxifrage Pink plants, Sedum, Spring Squill, Striped Squill & Yellow Anemone.

**Birds Observed: -** Mourning Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin and Northern Cardinal.

Phyllis Tremblay

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**Little Lake Park and The Heronry**

**May 13/09**

Nine people participated on this mid-week outing. The temperature ranged from 12 - 17 C. Part one is a short walk to Little Lake from the parking lot where our club meets for most field trips. We spent 45 minutes identifying birds and plants along a trail edged with deciduous saplings and a few coniferous trees, swamp and cattail marsh habitats. An unusual feature at this site was the presence of Pine Siskins in our area at this time of the year.

After driving to the north side of Little Lake, we were greeted by singing Vesper Sparrows, and close-up views of Baltimore Orioles and Eastern

Kingbirds. This second part was a 2 1/2 - 3 hour walk following a loop trail through a treed laneway next to agricultural fields, mature and mixed age deciduous woodlands and a swampy side trail to the lakeshore. The carpets of White Trilliums were spectacular!

The convenient roadside-visible Great Blue Heron colony on the 5/6 Side Road of Oro-Medonte was our final stop. There has been a significant increase in the number of nests - close to 2 dozen now. The calls of the Sora and Virginia Rails were a high point for this wetland.

**Plants observed:-** Blue Cohosh, Common Dandelion, Creeping Charlie, Red-berried Elderberry, Ferns:- Christmas, Lady, Northern Maidenhair, Ostrich & Sensitive; Garlic Mustard, Herb Robert, Large-flowered Bellwort, Lesser Celadine, Marsh Marigold, Mayapple in bud, Poison Ivy, Red Trillium, Sharp-lobed Hepatica, Solomon's-Seals:- False, Giant, Hairy & Starry False; Small Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Spotted Touch-me-not seedlings, Tall Meadow-rue, Trout Lily, Two-leaved Toothwort, Violets:- Canada, Common Blue, Dog & Downy Yellow; Virginia Waterleaf, White Baneberry, White Trillium, Wild Columbine, Wild Ginger, Wild Leek, Wild Lily-of-the-Valley, Wood Betony and Yellow Lady's-slipper.

**The following completes the 39 bird species observed:-** Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, American Wigeon, Common Merganser, Killdeer, Gull Species, Caspian Tern, Great Crested Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Marsh Wren, Wood Thrush, American Robin, European Starling, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Pine Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Purple Finch, and American Goldfinch.

Phyllis Tremblay

### FEVERSHAM GORGE & EUGENIA May 23/09.

Bright overcast, clearing.

Nine species were listed before leaving Little Lake; Song Sparrow, Red-eyed Vireo, American Robin, Brown Headed Cowbird, Great Crested Flycatcher, American Goldfinch, Baltimore Oriole, Ring-billed Gull and Indigo Bunting.

Traveling to Feversham we noted Turkey Vulture, Pileated Woodpecker, Canada Goose and Red winged Blackbird.

A welcome returnee to the Gorge area was the Eastern Bluebird which has been absent for three years. Across from the parking lot is a bungalow with nesting boxes along the side, though we could not determine whether the bluebird was in residence

Barn Swallows buzzed over the fields and a Field Sparrow was heard just to the side of the trail. At this point we also saw Mourning Dove, American Crow, Yellow Warbler and Chipping Sparrow. Along the trail White Breasted Nuthatch and an almost dependable Northern Waterthrush greeted us loudly. In the forested area Northern Cardinal, Black and White Warbler, Black Throated Blue Warbler were also present. As we left the shelter of the trees and traversed the edge of the woods we were presented with a magnificent view of a pair of Rose Breasted Grosbeaks singing and fluttering from tree to tree. By this time the sun had emerged and we had very clear views of the males' magnificent rose coloured bib. Blue jay and Eastern Kingbird were seen on the way to Eugenia Falls along with Tree Swallows and as we crossed the lake Common Loon, Caspian Tern, Herring Gull, Bonaparte's Gull and Double Crested Cormorant were observed.

At the Falls Oven Birds were in fine voice, A Black Throated Green Warbler sang to us as Black Capped Chickadees reminded us of their identity. A Red Breasted Nuthatch was heard too. Common Raven was also reported at this time. Returning through Glen Huron were Win Bowser and Elizabeth, with Jim Spruce who saw a Great Egret at the village pond as well as Common Merganser and House Sparrows near the apple orchards.

Brian Gibbon and Dave Lord chose a different route back and were rewarded with Mallard, Winter Wren and American Redstart to give us a grand total of forty-four species.

Thanks to all fifteen members for coming out.  
Jim Spruce

### CARDEN NATURE AREA

May 30/09.

Weather was sunny with a moderate breeze that was quite chilly early in the morning. The temperature at 6:30 am was 8C warming up during the day to a high of 18C by 4:30 pm. We had one light sun-shower around 3:30 on our way home. We were by no means the only group in the area; we encountered a group from the ROM, another from the Peel Naturalists Club plus a dozen other groups as well as individuals doing point counts including our Vice-president Bruce Wilson and his wife Jean.

A total of seven people participated, six left the Little Lake parking lot at 7:00 to get an early jump on

the drive and to get there early enough to experience some good birding. We made a short pit stop at Tim Horton's in Orillia and picked up our leader Dave and proceeded with great confidence to the Carden area. Total for the day – 74 species.

Many of the birds were found by “ear” as the leaves were well out on the trees, that is not to say that we did not have some great visual observations such as two Brown Thrashers having a bath in a water filled pot-hole and joined by a Towhee, or the Upland Sandpiper sitting patiently on a fence post as we slowly drove by and latter two more courting on the road in front of us. We had three excellent nest sightings - a Warbling Vireo in her nest and fifteen feet away a Bobolink in her nest, latter we observed a Red-eyed Vireo building a nest. Phyllis and Elizabeth saw a Kestrel on their way home.

On our way we saw Ring-billed Gulls, a Caspian Tern, Amer. Crow, Red-winged Blackbirds and Canada Geese. We started our hunt and spent the bulk of our time on Wylie Road, a very productive area and latter moved to several other areas.

**BIRDS** - Blue Jays, Chickadee, Mourning Dove, Turkey Vulture, Rock Pigeon, Bluebirds, Common Snipe, Killdeer, Meadowlark, Kingbird, Savannah Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Sora Rail, Amer. Goldfinches, Common Grackles, House Wren, Warbling Vireo, Baltimore Oriole, Tree Swallow, Bobolink, Least Flycatcher, Robin, Rose Breasted Grosbeak, Song Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Towhee, Starling, Brown Thrasher, Barn Swallow, Alder Flycatcher, Common Yellow-throat, Black-billed Cuckoo, Marsh Wren, Golden-winged Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Purple Finch, Sandhill Crane, Red-eyed Vireo, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Gray Catbird, Ovenbird, Yellow Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Great Crested Flycatcher, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Wood Pewee, Black-throated Green Warbler, Northern Water Thrush, Winter Wren, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Harrier, Amer. Bittern, Swamp Sparrow

Dave Lord

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**Wooping Whip-poor-wills**

**June 5/09**

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, about a dozen members and guests met at Little Lake for an evening visit to the county forests near Anten Mills. Our purpose was to find whip-poor-wills, a mysterious nocturnal species. If you've had any encounter with this species, it was probably hearing its loud, repeated “whip-poor-will” song during a spring or summer night. Chances are pretty good too that if you have heard it, you are older, because the species was much more widespread in the past (more common a generation ago, and even more common two generations ago).

In fact, on May 4 of this year, this species was the most recent bird species added to Canada's threatened species list.

When we arrived at our destination, it was still too early to hear “whips.” We enjoyed listening to a few other birds, most notably hermit thrushes. We also saw a few moccasin flowers, including one with a pure white flower.

Eventually, we had no trouble hearing whip-poor-wills. They began calling about 9:35. We were able to lure more than one bird in with a recorded call, with an intention to capture one or more for banding, but we were not successful. The mist net was too small or too low or set up in too unsuitable a spot for capture. I have caught and banded birds here before (including last year), and I had hoped we might re-capture last year's bird.

We enjoyed ourselves all the same. At twilight, the almost full moon rose, and during our wooing of the whip-poor-wills, we heard one or more nighthawk flying over (another threatened member of this family).

Alex Mills

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**Vespra Rail Trail Walk**

**June 13/09**

Weather – Sunny, light breeze, at 8:00 am temp. 10C/50F by end of walk 19C/69F .

Met at Little Lake Parking Lot and proceeded out St. Vincent to Midhurst crossed to Hwy 26/27 and went out to the Minesing Station sight were the rail trail crosses Hwy 26. Total participants – 9. The weather was perfect, very few bugs and very comfortable for walking.

Walking the section between Vespra Valley Road and George Johnson Road after crossing over the large culverts the flooded area on the South side had hundreds of Green Frogs and Bullfrogs swimming and calling like crazy throughout the flooded area, no one had ever seen so many frogs. Also along this stretch on the North side we found three Garter Snakes, one had very bright orange stripes on its side. We were able to get an excellent look at them and Brian Backland got several excellent photos.

**BIRDS**- at the L.L. Parking Lot – Indigo Bunting, Cedar Waxwing, White-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Chipping Sparrow, Starling, Red-winged Blackbird. On the Trail – Robin, Common Yellowthroat Warbler, Song Sparrow, House Wren, Savannah Sparrow, Harry Woodpecker, Great Blue Heron, Phoebe, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Canada Goose, Belted Kingfisher, Common Grackle, Amer. Crow, Turkey Vulture, Baltimore Oriole, Least Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Veery,

Kingbird, Peewee, Black & White Warbler, Pewee, Blue-winged Teal, Red-eyed Vireo, Rock Dove, Morning Warbler, Black-billed Cuckoo, White-throated Sparrow, and a Blue Jay.

**PLANTS** – Canada Anemone, Cow Vetch, Nodding Trillium, Skunk Cabbage.

**REPTILES** – Bullfrogs, Green Frogs and Garter Snakes

Brian W. Gibbon



Garter Snake

Brian Backland

**Oro Railtrail Walk**

**June 27/09**

Weather – sunny, light breeze, 19C. Very pleasant day, with no bugs.

Six people met at the Little Lake Parking Lot. We went down Duckworth St. turned onto Georgian Drive and followed it right out across Penetangueshene Rd and made our first stop at the Heronry. We counted at least 18 nests with almost every nest having young, most had one or two while one nest had three young. We carried on out to Ridge Rd, turned north and went out to the 7<sup>th</sup> of Oro-Medonte at Oro Station, turning right we went down to the bottom of the hill and parked where the Trail crosses. We walked north towards the 9<sup>th</sup>. We went approximately a mile and half up the trail to where the creek crosses before returning to our cars and scouting a spot along the lake for shore birds – no luck. Called it a day and headed home.

**BIRDS** – At the parking lot – Great Blue Heron, Catbird, Indigo Bunting, Swamp Sparrow, Yellow Warbler, Amer. Redstart, Red-eyed Vireo, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Yellowthroat Warbler, Killdeer, Baltimore Oriole.

At Heronry – Great Blue Herons, Green Herons, Swamp Sparrow, Amer. Goldfinch, Cowbird, House Wren, Robin & Starling

On Trail – Song Sparrow, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Oven Bird, Northern Flicker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Morning Dove, Common Grackle, Rock Pigeon, Chickadee, Amer. Crow, King Bird, Winter Wren, Black-throated Green Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Northern Water Thrush, Cardinal, Cedar

Waxwing, Savannah Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, (38 Species)

**PLANTS** – Vipers Bugloss, Bladder Campion, Ox-eyed Daisy, Goat's Beard, Common Mullein, Saint John's Wort, Spreading Dog Bane, Valerian ( an escaped plant), Herb Robert, Bull Thistle, Heal-all, Clammy Ground Cherry, Buttercups, Sensitive Fern, Bracken Fern, Poison Ivy, Sweet Pea or Everlasting Pea,

**ANIMALS** – Muskrat, coyote.

**OTHER** – Ebony Jewel Wing Damselfly.

Brian W. Gibbon



Ebony Jewel-wing Damselfly

B. Backland

**VESPRA TRAIL**

**July 11/09,**

18 – 19C, heavy overcast sky, scattered showers. Skies cleared and became sunny by 11:00 am.

Two people joined me at Little Lake but it started to rain so we called off the walk which ended up being premature and unfortunate. When we were waiting we sited an Indigo Bunting. Drove back to my house and Don Jatiouk was waiting in my driveway. Sky started to clear a bit after about a half hour so we decided to brave it.

We accessed the trail from the north end of Dobson Road since our usual access point the unopened Carson Road allowance was now under construction with the road being pushed through.

At the start of the trail there were two large sugar maples with one have numerous Artist's Polypore, a large bracket type fungus, growing on it. (See *Naturalist's Notes for description*) We carried on eventually crossing the new Carson Road extension and ending up down in the valley know by many locals as "Farmer Brown's". We retraced our path getting back about 1:00 o'clock. The last few days of rain did bring out the bugs. It is always an enjoyable outing with Don along as he is always ready to impart tips on plant identification and other related useful facts.

**PLANTS** – Herb Robert, Bittersweet Nightshade, Burdock, Wild Lettuce, Heal All, Canada Anemone, Daisy Fleabane, Pineapple Weed, English Plantain, Hog Weed, Vipers Bugloss, Bladder Campion,

Queen Anne's Lace or wild carrot, Cow Vetch, Purple Hops, Birdfoot Trefoil, June Grass, Upland Bent Grass, Saladane ( a member of the sunflower family that blooms in August), Wild Mint, Black berry, Turkey-tail Fungus, Wild Ginger, Bouncing Bet or Soapwort, Sweat Cherry, Goats Beard, Crack Shield Lichen growing on Hawthorne bushes, Mallow, Curley Dock, Prickly Sow Thistle, Gill-on-the-Ground.

**BIRDS** – White-throated Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Black capped Chickadee, Northern Cardinal, American Crow, Cat Bird,

Brian W. Gibbon.

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**AUGUST STARGAZING**      **Aug.14/09**

August 14 was a clear Friday evening and held promise for our small band of stargazers. Al McNair was joined by Linda Crome, Lynne and Brian Gibbon, and guests Lawrence Gabinet and Cathy Reid .

We met at Scout Valley Park at Orillia with some members of the new Orillia Astronomers Club. We assisted Gord Michener, Don MacDonald and Scott Bobyk with setting up their telescopes and tried out some other fun digital gear for finding identifying stars, planets and other heavenly bodies. Many thanks again to Gord, Don and Scott for their kind help in touring us around the night skies.

As the sky grew darker, the Milky Way, our own galaxy, became brighter and more beautiful . Did you know that the dark streak appearing to separate the Milky Way, as it passes through the Summer Triangle stars of Vega, Deneb and Altair, is really interstellar dust that is obscuring many more stars behind it, including probably a black hole?

We were also able to see Jupiter and three of its moons, the Andromeda galaxy (M31), and several other deep sky objects. The Andromeda galaxy is our nearest spiral galaxy (only 2.3 million light years away), like our Milky Way, and contains around 1.5 billion stars. It shows up in binoculars as a hazy patch of light lined up from the upper half arrowhead of the familiar W shaped constellation Cassiopeia.

Anyone interested in more information on the Orillia Astronomy Club can check out their website at [orilliastars.ca](http://orilliastars.ca)

Al McNair

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**“KIDS for TURTLES” – Dragonfly & Butterfly Outing**      **Aug. 15/09**

. Kids for Turtles Environmental Education and Brereton Field Naturalists' Club Dragonhunter Apprenticeship Program on Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009 was a great success. Seven families (plus a

group of eight cyclists who dropped in) came out for an exciting day of history, mystery and magic at Fort Willow. We were greeted by Kevin Brookes and Dave (Rooster) Cockburn of The Historic Military Establishment of Upper Canada portraying Bulger's Company of The Royal Newfoundland Regiment as we entered the gate. They took us back in history to the War of 1812 and described the strategic role the fort played in shaping the history of this area and Canada. The Dragonhunter's Apprentice then engaged the group in the KFTEE Dragonhunter Apprenticeship Program with an interactive introduction to the magical art of catching, handling, identifying and releasing Dragonflies and Butterflies. The apprentices then set out to explore the Fort and North Simcoe Railtrail in search of the jewel of the Minesing Wetlands, the rarest Dragonfly in the world ... the endangered Hine's Emerald! At least one large Emerald was spotted within the palisades but it evaded capture and positive identification. The enthusiastic apprentices learned quickly and caught, identified and released many White-faced Meadowhawks including a mating pair, two male Brush-tipped Emeralds and a male Canada Darner. There were many Eastern Red-ribbed Millipedes (*Narceus americanus*) (aka American Millipede or Pink Millipede), American Toads and Boll's Grasshoppers. Unfortunately, it became too hot and humid for Dragons, Butterflies and Dragonhunters alike, so all, save a few, retired from the Quest by noon. Two of the more intrepid Dragonhunter Apprentices, Cinnamon and Andrew, captured and released an Eastern Garter Snake.

We have booked the Fort for Saturday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 to continue the Quest on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Dragonhunter Apprenticeship Program.

The Dragonhunter's Apprentice would like to extend his sincere appreciation to:

Kevin and Rooster of Bulger's Company for adding colour and history to the (hot!) day  
The Friends of Historic Fort Willow for the tremendous work they have done on the Fort

The NVCA, The Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Friends of Minesing Wetlands for their stewardship, promotion and support

All of the participants for their appreciative and enthusiastic participation on a very hot day.

Chris Evans

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**Orillia Rail Trail Walk,**      **Sept. 27/09**

The forecast was poor (high probability of rain) and the early morning sky was not promising. But five



BFNC members had faith and met leader Alex Mills at Little Lake at 8 am. The faithful were rewarded. The rains held off for the whole walk along the Rail Trail off Woodland Avenue. A level walk through a mellow early autumn wetland landscape proved highly pleasant. The sun even came out for a bit-enough for a few Painted Turtles to bask and some dragonflies to forage.

The hope had been to see some good numbers of fall migrant birds. We did see a good variety, but numbers were rather thin. Only three warblers were found-Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and two Orange-crowned Warblers (one of our target species). But there were other small songbirds around, including both kinglets, black-capped chickadees, winter wrens, purple finches overhead, a few early dark-eyed juncos, and several other sparrow species (Song, Swamp, White-throated). American Robins, a few Gray Catbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds and a few Rusty Blackbirds were also present. Two Green Herons were still present, and an American Bittern was the final species we tallied as we returned to the cars.

The only mammal was a mink that crossed the trail. Among the dragonflies were Autumn, White-faced, and Band-winged Meadowhawks and we saw some unidentified darners too.

Alex Mills

## [Ontario Nature Huronia Spring Regional Meeting](#)

**Ontario Nature:-** Five BFN members attended the Ontario Nature Huronia Spring Regional Meeting at

Killbear Provincial Park, May 2, 2009. Club reports were given, followed by 2 speakers.

1) Glenda Clayton - president of the Parry Sound Naturalists' Club spoke on the chimney swift nesting programme.

2) Kenton Otterbein gave a power point presentation on Fox Snake & Massasauga Rattlesnake Research at Killbear PP. This was followed by an excursion to visit an Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake habitat to participate in searching for snakes and observing the monitoring procedure. .

Fall Regional Meeting will be hosted by Kids for Turtles.

Phyllis Tremblay

## [Five Bird-feeding Myths](#)

Bird feeding for many people allows them to connect with nature and learn about the behaviour of our so-called "urban wildlife." However, we may worry that our activities actually harm birds rather than help

them. Here's the truth about five common bird-feeding myths:

**Myth:** Feeding birds prevents them from migrating.

**Fact:** Birds migrate in response to factors such as length of daylight and weather, not because of food availability. In fact, birds need more food during long migrations, so your feeder may be a welcome stop for species you don't normally see in your area.

**Myth:** Birds become dependent on feeders.

**Fact:** Most birds use many sources of food and do not rely on just one. If your feeder happens to go empty, most birds will find food elsewhere, although you'll have to work harder to bring them back to your yard. Loss of natural habitat due to human development does make it more difficult each year for birds to find the necessary food, particularly during the winter months, so providing a ready source of seeds, fruits or suet can give many birds a leg up.

**Myth:** The mixed seed at the grocery store is bad.

**Fact:** Some mixed seed can be bad, while other grocery-store varieties will provide quality for your feeder; the key is in the ingredients. Filler in cheap feed includes lots of milo, wheat, and barley. There may also be inedible objects such as sticks and empty hulls visible in the mix. These seeds are more likely to attract pesky birds and result in more wasted seed on the ground around your feeder. A good mix will have some form of sunflower seed and may also include peanut bits, safflower and millet.

**Myth:** Perches on feeders are bad for birds.

**Fact:** Birds' feet are unlikely to stick to metal perches in winter - they don't have sweat glands in their feet that would produce moisture to freeze onto the surface, and their legs and feet are made of mostly tough tendons that have little blood flow during cold weather. Also, a feeder with perches allows many birds to feed peacefully at the same time.

**Myth:** Uncooked rice can swell inside a bird's stomach and kill it.

**Fact:** Rice is a grain that many birds will eat, uncooked, in the wild; they have no trouble digesting it, as they would any other grain. Many wedding parties choose to throw bird seed instead of rice, as birds will be more attracted to the seed and eat it more quickly.

*Sources:*

Bird Watcher's Digest, [Top 10 Bird-Feeding Myths by Bill Thompson III](#)

The Great Backyard Bird Count, [Bird-feeding Myths](#)

HelloBirds.com, [Bird Feeding Myths](#)

The Birder's Companion by Stephen Moss. Firefly Books,

## [GEORGIAN BIRDING GROUP](#)

One of our members is to be congratulated on her imitative. Beryl Lougher has organized a group of

like minded people to do some midweek birding together on the assumption that 4,6,8, or 10 eyes see more than two.

Here is how Beryl describes the group. Just a group of friends birding together (we are not a club therefore no fees) learn as we go some will have more knowledge than others, there are no birding leaders (as such) only leader would be the friend navigating to the area that they wanted to bird (previously scheduled) also emails or telephones the group with details of their trip and checks out the restaurant/cafe near and arranges with them the time we would be eating.

A rough record of the sightings, weather and distance will be kept by a volunteer later given to Beryl for archiving.

At the beginning of each season (Winter/Spring/Fall) schedule will be set.

Friends to advise/contact Beryl of the areas that they would like to bird. Leave your name, telephone number or e-mail address so that an email contact list can be set up and distributed amongst the group

An e-mail will be sent (those without an email address will be telephoned) a couple of days before the trip with all the final details. Contact Beryl.

**DESTINATION:** according to schedule set up at beginning of season.

**DURATION:** depending on weather and location trips will end between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

**DATE:** the second TUESDAY of the month (July, August no birding).

**Beryl Lougher** [belo39@rogers.com](mailto:belo39@rogers.com)

Telephone (705)444-7992

Good luck Beryl, I hope Lynne and I will be able to get out with you a few times next year.

Editor

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**To the Editor,**

Sir, in 2007 you kindly published an account of a rare bird in Muskoka known as the Gilliloo Bird. Your members may remember it was thought to be a Hawk or an Owl, supposedly a fearsome creature and given to attacking humans occasionally.

Well there is news about a sighting of a Gilliloo Bird by a lone hunter in the Muskoka backwoods. His report suggests that it may be more tolerant of humans than historical records indicate.

While hunting the man came across a cabin in the forest which had been built in pioneering days and was occupied by a couple who preferred the quiet life of the woods. They kept a few chickens and it was with the chickens, much to our hunters' surprise, that the Gilliloo came down to feed.

He didn't hear it approach and it did not attack the chickens but began to mingle with them and feed from the ground. His description of the bird was

quite adequate to give us reason to believe he saw this rare species.

Plumage was described as being like a Hawk Owl but the most noticeable feature was a ruff he said like a Ruffed Grouse has. The ruff was not evident until the cat came, and though the cat was used to the chickens, it was curious about the new intruder. As it approached the Gilliloo, the bird made a grunting sound from the throat. The cat stopped, then began his crouching approach again. When the bird decided the cat was close enough it raised the ruff and made itself look much larger uttering the guttural throat sound again. This stalled the cat but we all know cats and if anything the display had made the cat even more inquisitive. At this time our hunter described the ruff as having light brown feathers with beige tips creating a 'halo' around it's head. The cat then raised its' hind quarters and started to growl. The Gilliloo began an astonishing display as the ruff began to vibrate and quiver and became curved towards the cat. Soon after the beige feather tips were vibrating so much that the hunter swore they were rotating like a spinning wheel. This is truly a magnificent account of these birds' defensive mechanism as well as silent flight and camouflage.

While this is an exciting report we still need more information on this amazing creature so any information no matter how trivial it may seem to the observer would be greatly appreciated to aid us in our ongoing efforts to determine that the Gilliloo is not extinct.

The cat was repelled by the display and returned to the veranda. The Gilliloo eventually flew into the trees and was not seen by the home owners again. The excited hunter reported to us as soon as he got home. We asked him not to reveal the location or mention this to none-birders. Talking about this bird to the unknowing almost certifies one as insane, in much the same way UFO sightings are received. We however will take all reports most seriously so as before they can be sent to me at [javascript:ol\('http://www.gill@sympatico.ca'\);](mailto:javascript:ol('http://www.gill@sympatico.ca');) Yours respectfully, W. Albert Ross.



Great Egret

Brian Backland