



THE BLUE HERON

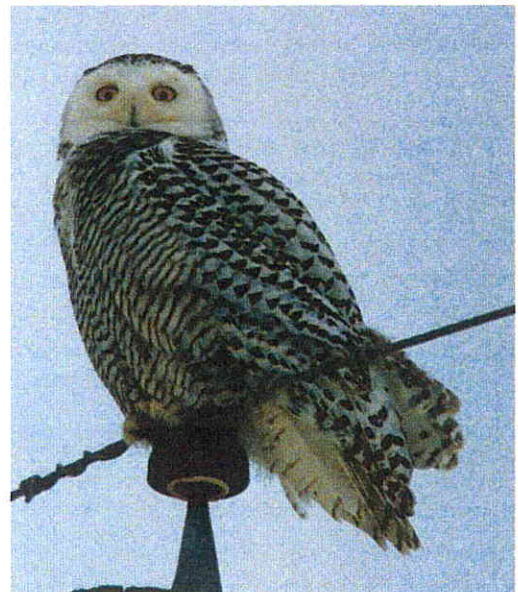
SPECIAL 60TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION VOLUME 55. No.3

The Official Publication of the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club of Barrie

Special edition edited by Lynne Gibbon E-mail – bwg@backland.net

Simcoe County Bird Hot Line – (705) 739-8585

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BACKLAND**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this I can't help but note that celebrating a 60th Anniversary of any sort is a major event. I am sure the 35 people who met in February 1951 to form the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club all had great hopes for the success of the club, but I wonder if any of them would have thought we would still be going strong 60 years later.

While the BFNC 60th Anniversary may not have quite the same status as my parents' 60th Anniversary last year, it is still something the needed to be celebrated in fine style. Our "One Week, 60 Years of Nature" events are just such a celebration. By now I hope many of you have been able to participate in and enjoy the many field trips that have been going on this week. Remember there are still a couple of trips on Friday to Mayer's Marsh in the morning and the Russell Hunter Trail in Midhurst in the evening, and trips to Matchedash Bay on Saturday and Tiny Marsh on Sunday.

The major accomplishment of the establishment of the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club Helen Emery Award at Georgian College will help students in the environmental program with their educations. The very generous bequest of \$10,000 from Helen Emery and the matching contribution from the Ontario Government means we will be able to help students for many years to come.

I need to thank our Corporate Sponsors who provided funding and donations to help make this week possible. Without their support we would not have had the great events we did.

Many thanks to:

T D Friends of the Environment;

Larche Communications, better known as KICX FM106 and The DOCK FM;

The Barrie Advance;

Georgian College;

Ontario Waste Management Association;

Bradford Greenhouses Garden Gallery;

Stewart Estin, Barristers, Solicitors and Trademark Agents;

Silver Birch Wealth Management;

Eric Taves Law Firm;

Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority;

The Bird House Nature Company;

Canadian Tire.

I may be President of the BFNC, and by default on the 60th Anniversary Committee, but most of the hard work has been done by those who volunteered to be part of the 60th Anniversary Committee. A lot of meetings later they can almost relax. Pat Duncan took the leadership of the Committee into her very capable hands and kept us going in the right direction. Rob Cook played the major role in securing corporate sponsorships and Ian Cook and Alex Mills put together the outstanding field trip program. Inga Brinckmann looked after the ticket sales for the Gala Dinner and arranged for our wonderful birthday cake. Al McNair made contact with the Mayor's Office to arrange the proclamation and flag raising events and contacted the Town Crier. And last but not least Phyllis Tremblay worked hard

with Pat to make the arrangements with Georgian College and helped with the decorations for the dinner amongst many other tasks. My heartfelt thanks to all members of the Committee. So our big week is almost over and it is now time to look forward to the future. With the interest in all things environmental these days I know there is a place for the BFNC to continue its work with the various regulatory agencies and to help bring our love of nature to the public and get the next generations interested in continuing the aim of the BFNC "to protect our natural heritage. Our aims are to acquire and share knowledge of natural history, to protect wildlife, and to stimulate public interest in nature and its preservation". I challenge all members to give some thought as to how we can reach out to that next generation of naturalists and share those thoughts with the BFNC. Can we run a young naturalist program? Can we get into the elementary and high schools? Let's make this our mission for the next few years. With our help now who is to say there will not be a BFNC 100th Anniversary.

Bruce Wilson
Barrie, Ontario, Canada
Life Member NMRA

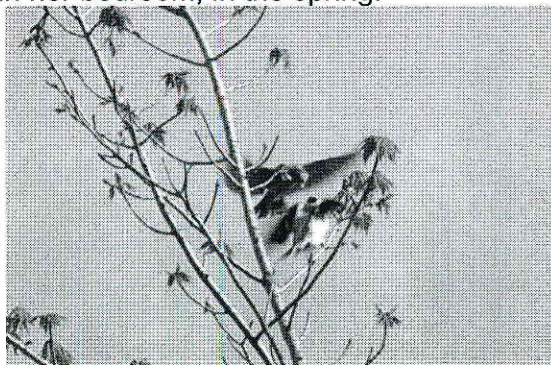
As part of the 60th Anniversary celebrations, the executive decided that a special newsletter should be published that outlined events, first sightings and former members from the past 60 years of newsletters. Following are some of the excerpts taken from past history.

The first Brereton newsletter was published on April 25, 1956. At that time the club had received \$208.71 during the year. Membership was \$1.00 for the year. A highlight of interest was the list of spring arrivals and when they were first viewed by members— some examples: Horned Lark February 25, Song Sparrow March 12, Purple Finch March 17, Robin March 18, Red Winged

Blackbird March 18, Bluebird April 15, April 22 Loon, April 23 Lesser Yellowleg. This record was kept only for a few newsletters.

Fran Westman was one of the founding members. In the May 1st newsletter she writes the following entitled "An Interesting Visitor".

"For several days last October I had hear the scolding notes of a wren at various bushes about the back of the house. Each time I thought the little winter wren must be the author of the sounds, but I was never successful in seeing him. At last on October 32, a glorious balmy October day, with Holboell's grebes dotted all about the bay, I actually heard a winter wren sing his lovely burbling warble, in a late burst of song seeming to prolong summer. Of course, after that when I again heard the loud scolding in the juniper bush, I was quite sure it was the winter wren, but I wanted to see him so I streaked around the house to come up unseen. Imagine how surprised I was when I saw this was a big reddish wren with a white stripe over his eye – none other than a Carolina. He hopped in under the verandah, then out again and into the cedar, then past me down the bank uttering little squeals as he went. I was quite delighted as I knew this was only the 3rd record for a Carolina wren for Simcoe County, and the first record for the autumn. I felt sure that he might stay for the winter, as Carolina wrens are not migratory." She continues with the story, stating that the wren did stay all winter and fed from her feeder, eating sunflower seed, but refusing raisins and currants. He even came to visit her in her bedroom, in the spring!



Bluebirds were an early interest of the Brereton. In March 28th 1958 the following report was written by Jean Gable: " Twenty-five Bluebird houses were made by my son Ronald last spring. They were built according to Dr. Musselman's instructions and painted a drab gray. Each was numbered and a record kept according to the numbers. They were distributed to suitable places in Vespra and Innisfil and Essa townships. Reports were received on 24 of the 25 houses. Some of the houses were not occupied and some were used by other species. However, one family of bluebirds was raised in each of six houses, and two families were raised in two other houses. Since each brood usually has four young, that would be about 40 Bluebirds".

It was interesting to see that the former Chief Librarian of Orillia Public Library, Grace Crooks (Leigh), wrote book reviews in the early newsletters. In January 1966, she promotes the book by Reider Brodtkorb called Flying Free. A Norwegian, he lobbied against the ruthless killing of eagles in his country. A photographer, he spent much of his life studying the eagle and broadcasting on radio and television to promote the bird's protection.

The involvement of the Brereton membership in the development of Little Lake is not a recent event. The April 1967 newsletter describes the early initiatives. " Our club reacted enthusiastically to the invitation of the Little Lake Committee to advise it on how the 295 acres could be used to preserve nature and to benefit the people in this district. Past Presidents Lloyd Smith and Gordon Johns, after exploring the proposed park lying east and north of Little Lake on March 18, agreed that this area had great possibilities. When Roy Macklem who was in the party went through the ice of Willow Creek, Gordon Johns was alleged to have shouted, "Keep cool, keep cool!" While keen minded Lloyd Smith later observed that this was the first trip from which a naturalist returned stiff – frozen or otherwise. Mr. Macklem jokingly remarked that thanks to the Little Lake project he had the distinction of initiating the bathing season for Canada's Centennial Year!"

In the January 1968 newsletter, the report on the Christmas bird counted of 1967 stated: " The Sharp-shinned Hawk, Turkey Vulture and Coot were recorded for the first time on our winter count."



Another first was recorded in the April 1969 issue.

"On June 22, 1968, E. M. Johnson and I found a pair of Cerulean Warblers feeding one young bird on Willow Creek a short distance from its outlet into the Nottawasaga River. Previously, 11 other singing male Ceruleans had been counted. We watch the three birds at close range for some minutes, after which the female and the young bird disappeared from view... O.E. Devitt informs me this is breeding species No. 149 for Simcoe County, and that J. L. Baillie of the Royal Ontario Museum indicated the discovery marks a northern extension of the breeding range of the Cerulean from Toronto."

In the April 1969 issue, it was noted that new members to join the club included Cliff MacFayden and Mr. and Mrs. A. Ironside of Washago. In the same issue, Edna and Anna West were amazed to notice an unusual bird at their feeding tray – a Red Bellied Woodpecker and a look at the "Birds of Simcoe County" revealed that this was a new bird to the area.



PRESIDENTS OF THE BFN OVER THE YEARS

1951 Bill Bell
 1952 Fran Westman
 1953 Mrs. R. S Carman
 1954 Dr. Ernie Bilkey
 1955 & 1956 Alex B. Cockburn
 1957 Mr. A. Carmichael
 1958 Mrs. S. E. Lewis
 1959 Bill Bell
 1960, 1961, 1962 Unknown
 1963 Mr. R. G. Freeman
 1964 Mr. G.M. Johns
 1965 Miss Anastasia Hughes
 1966 Mr. L. B. Smith
 1967 Mr. L. J. Westman
 1968 Mr. W. E. Catley
 1969 R. H. Macklem
 1970 Mr. L.D. Cooper
 1971 Cliff MacFayden
 1972 Cliff MacFayden
 1973 Lloyd Smith
 1974 W. Allen Fisher
 1975 Mrs. Grace Leigh
 1976 Mrs. Grace Leigh
 1977 Russell Rickwood
 1978 Russell Rickwood
 1979 George Donnelly
 1980 David Newberry
 1981 David Newberry
 1982 Wyman Jacques
 1983 Wyman Jacques
 1984 Joan Ann Clark
 1985 Betty Hill
 1986 Betty Hill
 1987 Norm Cramp
 1988 Norm Cramp
 1989 Betty Hill
 1990 Mabel Tuckett
 1991 John Boos
 1992 John Boos
 1993 Helen Emery
 1994 Helen Emery
 1995 Brian Gibbon
 1996 Brian Gibbon
 1997 Ian Cook
 1998 Ian Cook
 1999 Alex Mills
 2000 Alex Mills
 2001 Al McNair

2002 Al McNair
 2003 Donna McQuay
 2004 Jack Thompson
 2005 Jack Thompson
 2006 David Walsh
 2007 David Walsh
 2008 Lyn Pope
 2009 Phyllis Tremblay
 2010 Phyllis Tremblay
 2011 Bruce Wilson

In 1981, Rita MacDonald, who lived at 113 Strabane Avenue, reported a Dickcissel feeding on the ground with sparrows in November. This was the first siting of this bird in Simcoe County.

In 1970, "Ron Scovill reported seeing a Ferruginous Hawk five miles west of Creemore on April 12. The light-phased bird was sketched at the time of the observation by Ron and a check-out of the field marks leaves little doubt about the identity of this dramatic buteo."

Grace Crooks and Monty Leigh reported the sighting of a bobcat in Oro Township on the Oro-Orillia town line. "silhouetted against the white snow of the field and with the fading light in the sky behind him, he was sitting on the fence, ears pricked up, turning to look at us. We saw a broad face with wide large cat-like ears with no tufts visible... we believe it to have been a bobcat because its body was two and a half or three feet long, tracks a good two inches across, fur dark with light under the chin, no tail visible."

Of note is the fact that in 1971 the club had 15 student members. These students took part in a detailed inventory of the orchids in Minesing Swamp in earlier years.

In that year in September, a hawk watch took place in the Horseshoe Valley area. Nine species were identified, with a total of 34 individuals. Four others were sighted but were too far away for positive identification. The total tally was: Turkey Vulture (3), Goshawk (3), Sharp shinned Hawk (1), Coopers Hawk (2), Red-tailed Hawk (13), Red shouldered Hawk (1), Broad-winged Hawk (8), Pigeon

Hawk (1), Sparrow Hawk (2). A quiz for younger bird watchers – what is the current name for the last 2 hawks?

In 1972, the following was reported: "It was recently announced that the Nottawasaga River Conservation Authority had purchased a substantial number of acres of the Minesing Swamp. Ever since the Brereton Club was formed we have been forwarding at every opportunity to the F.O.N. and to various government departments, briefs about the necessity of preserving this swamp."



In October 1981, Anastasia Hughes undertook to write the story of the beginning of the BFN, as part of the 30th anniversary. Her history follows: 'In January 1951, a small group of Barrie citizens attended a meeting called by Bill Bell, to explore the possibility of forming a naturalist club. Agreeing that there was a real advantage and challenge in having such an organization, committees were set up to bring in recommendations on a constitution, name and slate of officers. On March 2, 1951, the committee reported back, their suggestions were passed, and the Brereton Field Naturalists Club of Barrie was ready to operate. At that time, Dr. E. L. Brereton was a dentist in Barrie, but many of us knew him better as a keen naturalist who shared his knowledge with those who were privileged to know him. He had been urged many times to start a club, but he kept saying that he might when he retired. Unfortunately, death came

first. It was only natural, I think, that we should wish to perpetuate his name in the club. Our first honorary president was Major Mark Robinson, a retired Algonquin Park Naturalist, living in Barrie. After Major Robinson's death, Dr. R. E. Ives of Stayner became our Honorary President. Both of these men contributed much to the club in its formative years. Up to 1956, our only publication was notices of our meetings and field trips. However that year, Alex Cockburn was president, and on his suggestion, we produced a larger bulletin for our annual meeting on April 25, 1956, called the Blue Heron. At first just an annual, the Blue Heron was produced three times a year. Because of the cost, it comes out only twice a year now. The name Blue Heron was chosen because our field trip into the heronry in Minesing Swamp – a very important event of the early years. One of our greatest achievements was, I think, our Centennial Project – the revised edition of the Birds of Simcoe County by Ott Devitt. Fran Westman made the suggestion, which the club decided to take on. A committee was set up under Fran's chairmanship and was soon at work under Mr. Devitt's directorship. To everyone's amazement, the 1200 copies printed were soon sold and all the money borrowed to finance the project was repaid. The book is a collector's item now. Most of our members in the early days were from Barrie and surrounding area. Gradually others joined us and we had members from Stayner, Collingwood, Midland and Orillia. Eventually, Collingwood, Midland and recently Orillia members formed their own clubs. Some from these clubs also belonged to the Barrie group and we hope that they will continue to do so. "

In the same issue it is noted: "One of our members, Alex Mills, has produced a book "A Cottager's Guide to the Birds of Muskoka and Parry Sound" which is presently on sale in several local book stores. The book is well researched and a mine of information on the birds you are likely to observe in this area."

This brings the history to the 1980's. Watch for an additional newsletter in the fall which will bring the history of the BFNC to date.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT												
SPECIES	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	
<u>DUCKS, GEESE & SWANS</u>												
Canada Goose				1				1	5			
Wood Duck									1			2
Gadwall								1				
American Wigeon								CW				
American Black Duck	7	12	17	15	7	7	6	8	1	13	13	
Mallard	18	29	11	56	38	41	45	62	34	97	152	
Blue-winged Teal			1									
Green-winged Teal		1										
Northern Pintail						1						
Canvasback Duck			4	11				18				
Redheaded Duck						2		1				
Greater Scaup	12		CW			5	-	2				
Lesser Scaup								4				
Scaup species						4						
Common Goldeneye	33	7	40	37		50	43	80		75	80	
Common Eider								1				
Oldsquaw	2	1										
Black Scoter			1									
Surf Scoter						1						
White-winged Scoter		6								CW		
Bufflehead		1	CW			4				1		
Hooded Merganser	3	3				3	10	1				
Common Merganser	106	62	151	207		62	291	284		270	299	
Red-breasted Merganser	2	2	9					2				
Ducks species				2								
<u>GROUSE & TURKEYS</u>												
Ruffed Grouse	15	16	19	21	25	12	2	34	5	29	13	
<u>LOONS</u>												
Red-throated Loon						1	1					
Common Loon	1		1	1			2	7		1		
<u>GREBES</u>												
Pied-billed Grebe						1	1	1			1	
Horned Grebe	2		4	5				1				
Red-necked Grebe			4	1				1				
<u>HERONS & BITTERNS</u>												
Great Blue Heron		1	2			1	CW	CW		1	1	
<u>HAWKS & EAGLES</u>												
Northern Harrier			1									
Red-tailed Hawk	11	5	12	17	27	3	5	17	10	11	5	
Rough-legged Hawk	4	4	9	11	9	5	6	7	5	8	13	
Sharp-shinned Hawk		2			1					1		
Sub-total	216	152	286	385	107	203	412	533	61	507	579	

SPECIES	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Bal Fwd	216	152	286	385	107	203	412	533	61	507	579
Cooper's Hawk					1						
Northern Goshawk			CW	4	3	1		2		1	1
Acipiter (sp)				1					1	1	2
Buteo (sp)				1	2						1
FALCONS											
American Kestrel	3	1	10	8	9	7	4	4	1	7	6
Merlin			1								
Falcon (sp)											1
RAILS & COOTS											
American Coot						CW		1			
SANDPIPERS											
Common Snipe					1						
GULLS & TERNS											
Ring-billed Gull	20	4	232	22	12	17	137	11	1	41	41
Herring Gull	356	22	241	43	165	182	227	179	1	763	2,477
Iceland Gull				1			1			1	1
Lesser Black-backed Gull											1
Great Black-backed Gull											6
Glaucous Gull					2	1		2		3	8
Gull (sp)			4	2	10	28	9				51
PIGEONS & DOVES											
Rock Pigeons		755	967	447	620	572	517	768	381	426	373
Mourning Dove	11	115	11	54	172	7	4	4	2	35	14
OWLS											
Common Screech-Owl			CW		1					1	
Great Horned Owl		3	5	5	2	CW	1	4	1	3	3
Barn Owl							CW				
Snowy Owl	1		1	2			2				
Barred Owl			1							CW	
Long-eared Owl			2								
Short-eared Owl								1			
Owl (sp)											1
KINGFISHERS											
Belted Kingfisher	1		1	CW	1		CW	CW	1	2	3
WOODPECKERS											
Red-headed Woodpecker		1									
Red-bellied Woodpecker				1							
Downy Woodpecker	21	14	54	72	33	28	10	55	33	49	26
Hairy Woodpecker	8	11	37	39	16	14	5	13	17	26	10
Black-backed Woodpecker			1								
Three-toed Woodpecker									1		
North'n Flicker				1	2	1	1				1
Pileated Woodpecker	2	3	4	4	6	1	4	4	3	1	4
Sub-total	639	1,081	1,858	1,092	1,165	1,062	1,334	1,581	504	1,867	3,610

SPECIES	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Bal Fwd	639	1,081	1,858	1,092	1,165	1,062	1,334	1,581	504	1,867	3,610
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker								1			
SHRIKES											
Northern Shrike	3	4	13	16	6	9	7	4	2	6	6
CROWS & JAYS											
Blue Jay	120	179	96	86	520	142	111	279	156	101	79
American Crow	50	89	228	132	339	170	105	332	451	294	236
LARKS											
Horned Lark		5	2			22					1
CHICKADEES											
Black-capped Chickadee	200	312	642	514	623	370	356	746	450	733	555
Boreal Chickadee	1	1		1							
NUTHATCHES & CREEPERS											
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8	11	21	12	30	14	7	7	8	11	5
White-breasted Nuthatch	15	7	30	30	36	11	8	56	21	33	12
Brown Creeper	3	5	7	1	7		2	15		4	7
WRENS											
Carolina Wren			1								
Winter Wren											2
KINGLETS											
Golden-crowned Kinglet		16	19	2	2	2	2	17	3	21	45
THRUSHES & STARLINGS											
Hermit Thrush			CW		1				1		
American Robin	1	1	1	CW	1				2	2	
European Starling	210	285	523	264	462	494	187	820	309	731	875
THRASHERS											
Brown Thrasher				1	1						
WAXWINGS											
Bohemian Waxwing				CW							
Cedar Waxwing			5	1			20	16	7		2
WARBLERS & TOWHEE											
Yellow-rumped Warbler								CW			
Rufous-sided Towhee	CW				CW					CW	1
SPARROWS											
American Tree Sparrow	149	153	253	519	135	238	30	187	222	122	132
Field Sparrow	CW							1			
La Conte's Sparrow								1			
Song Sparrow	3	2	8	8	1	1	1	7	4	3	4
Swamp Sparrow			2	1				2			1
White-throated Sparrow	CW		3		1			2			2
Dark-eyed (Slate col) Junco	19	50	90	127	53	72	37	52	82	23	37
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco					1						
Lapland Longspur			18	2					2		
Snow Bunting	202	82	11,393	807	71	117	239	32	782	473	403
Sub-total	1,623	2,283	15,213	3,616	3,455	2,724	2,446	4,158	3,006	4,424	6,015

SPECIES	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Bal Fwd	1,623	2,283	15,213	3,616	3,455	2,724	2,446	4,158	3,006	4,424	6,015
CARDINALS											
Northern Cardinal	8	1	3	14	11	7	8	13	26	16	24
BLACKBIRDS											
Red-winged Blackbird		6	1		4		1	1			
Rusty Blackbird	CW		1	1	3	CW					
Eastern Meadowlark	1										
Common Grackle	4	1	5		5	1	CW	9	1	2	1
Brown Headed Cowbird	CW	1	3		9		2	20	16		10
Blackbird (sp)			1								
Meadowlark (sp)					1	1					
FINCHES											
Pine Grosbeak	11		216	128		150			128	199	
Purple Finch			CW	4	17	8		1	8		21
Red Crossbill			10	11						1	
White-winged Crossbill				10	1	2				1	
Common Redpoll	135	10	12	90	16	257	55		222	438	
Pine Siskin	15	3	186	8	5	5	2		9		
American Goldfinch	17	12	487	573	134	76	208	48	104	30	126
Evening Grosbeak	459	337	566	534	22	697	238	808	594	214	207
IMPORTS											
House Sparrow	383	973	534	682	705	710	264	1,407	1,185	769	314
Grand Total	2,656	3,627	17,238	5,671	4,388	4,638	3,224	6,465	5,299	6,094	6,718
Total Species	45	50	63	55	52	51	46	59	44	48	53
Number of Participants	9	12	22	18	19	17	18	18	13	16	16
Number of Groups	4	4	7	7	7	8	8	9	7	8	7
Note - CW indicates that the bird was seen either three days before or after actual count date											
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT											
These statistics have been transcribed and re-organized from a compilation originally prepared by											
Millie Bittman											
Bernadette Loftus											
Mary McQuade											
Prepared for - Robert Copeland											
INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS											
1976 - Common Snipe											
1979 American Coot											
1982 - 1st. Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls											
1980 - Three-toed Woodpecker											