

## *This issue is dedicated to the memory of Vivian Bell and Hazel Smith*

Please see pages 8, 9 and 10 for their stories.

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### *Editor's Notes*

*I* have decided to call this the Autumn issue. It arrives on the tail of warm summer natural breezes and is chilled down like a fine white wine by the cooler evenings. We don't have the full colours out yet but everyone is probably seeing one or two trees that are turning early. The harvests are still late summer harvests like my not-so-red tomatoes and peaches. It was a cooler summer all around the province. The birds and animals seemed to have changed up a bit now as I am seeing larger flocks and slightly different birds around. The butterflies seem more in a hurry. The deers look fatter too.

What is the difference between fall and autumn? I checked with our government on how we choose which word to use. Here are some of their guidelines. For most Canadians, fall is the informal, everyday choice. Use fall when speaking—autumn seems overly formal and a bit pretentious in most everyday contexts. In writing, both autumn and fall are correct. But when we need a more formal word (or one with two syllables), we speak and write about autumn. We look on autumn as more scientific (autumnal equinox), more

...continued ...

literary—and certainly more poetic.

For our winged friends it is of course the last few weeks of building up their muscles and fat reserves to allow them to undertake the great migrations to the south. It's a perilous journey for them. Human dangers are first in my mind. The highly dangerous big mirrored windows and lights from the glass towers in the cities, the barrier lineup of metal wind turbines scattered around the waterfronts that have taken their share of birds, the speeding cars and trucks that barrel along the land and the disappearance of the natural habitats for resting and feeding along their path.

Natural dangers are the various large winged predators that hunt along the migration routes, the ground predators that wait for them to rest on the land, the sudden storms that block their routes, starvation from lack of food, getting lost, diseases and exhaustion.



It truly is a wonder that they survive at all anymore. Happily, for the most part, they do. I read that most people have not idea of the challenges bird face when they migrate and often just think of it as "something that birds do." End of story for them.

Well I feel it is our duty as naturalists to educate people on these matters. I strongly suggest doing this without being a pushy, overly opiated "nature nut". We must educate people (and ourselves) on how their very clean glass balcony glass is not doing birds any service and is indeed causing their very untimely demise. Perhaps then show them the pile of carcasses on the grass nearby as evidence. Give them a solution with ideas on how to recitify the situation by sticking things on the glass to identify it as a solid glass. Ask them to not clean it perhaps so perfectly that it then mirrors the skies and thus distorts the safe environment for the

birds. Lets go on the assumption that they like birds and their songs that fill the air.

We must do our bit by creating a safe environment for the migrants around our houses and properties. Keep your cats inside, put up bird feeders to help them with food, clean out the bird baths and refresh it every week, don't use pesticides on your plants as this will harm the birds when they eat off of it. Plant native plants as these will provide natural foods for the birds to have. Research ideas online as to what you can do. It's not just for the generation of birds that come by this fall. It's also for the next generation.

*Photo by Janet Sauve*



# WALKS & TALKS

## Wednesday September 10, 2014 at 7 p.m.

Joint Meeting with 3 other Huronia clubs.

Speaker: Dorothea Hangaard "Eco Footprints" Hosted by Carden Field Naturalists at the Carden Recreation Centre, 258 Lake Dalrymple Dr., Sebright.

## Saturday September 20, 2014

Trip Leader: Brian Gibbon

Meet at Little Lake parking lot, departing at 8:30 am.

Join the Brereton Field Naturalists' for a early fall morning walk on some of the trails through the natural setting of Springwater Provincial Park right on Barrie's doorstep. Watch for fall flowers and birds beginning to flock for their annual fall migration. Easy walk, bring water and light snacks.



## Friday, October 17, 2014

Mike Burrell, Bird Studies Canada Talk about "Ontario Important Bird Areas"

The Important Bird Areas Program is a global initiative to identify, monitor, and conserve the world's most important sites for birds and biodiversity.

Mike Burrell has been a keen naturalist since a young age. He completed a Bachelor of Science at Trent University and a Master of Science in Forestry from the University of Toronto, both while completing field work and theses on bird ecology in Ontario. He currently works for Bird Studies Canada on the Important Bird Area program, and devotes much of his spare time to Citizen Science projects like eBird.

Monarch photo, by Kelly Murtha

## Friday, November 21, 2014

James Kamstra on "The Insect Life Cycle"

James Kamstra has been an active field naturalist in Ontario for over 40 years and is particularly knowledgeable on insects, herpetofauna, birds and botany. He is the Eastern Canada regional editor for the North American Butterfly Association and has compiled two butterfly counts for over 15 years. He works as an ecological consultant for an environmental /engineering firm largely on environmental impact studies. James has conducted full biophysical inventories of a number of natural areas in southern Ontario including the Severn River Corridor in Muskoka and Awenda Provincial Park.



## SATURDAY December 20, 2014

Meet at 6 p.m. for dinner at 6:30 p.m. for the Christmas Bird Count Potluck dinner.



## Friday, January 16, 2015

Dave Featherstone, NVCA on "Marsh Monitoring in Minesing Wetland"

Dave Featherstone is an ecologist, a naturalist, and has been the Manager of the Watershed Monitoring Program at the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority from 2003 to present.



Photo by Chris Evans  
Sandhill Cranes in the Minesing Wetlands

**June 14, 2014****Carden Alvar Trip**

Trip Leaders: Jim Spruce & Brian Gibbon

The day started our cold (7C.) windy, and with a heavy overcast by lunch time the sun was out and the temperature got up to about 17C. Nine people in total made the trip; there were two ladies from Midland Club making up our little group. We met Bruce and Jean Wilson who took us in on Windmill Ranch where we had some excellent observations such as the Clay Coloured and Grasshopper Sparrows. Although it was a long day, it was very satisfying. Many of us got lifers – that is always a good day.

Some of the birds we saw are listed in sequence of sightings except for the sparrow grouping.

American Redstart, Red Eyed Vireo, Cedar Waxwing, Mallard, Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Wood Pewee, Rose Breasted Grosbeak, Sparrows: Song, Tree, Savannah, Field, White Throated, Swamp, Clay Coloured, Grasshopper, Vesper, and Chipping Sparrow. White Breasted Nuthatch, American Kestrel, Ring Billed Gull, Common Raven, Red Winged Blackbird, Double Crested Cormorant, Eastern Kingbird, Bobolink, Green Heron, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Eastern Meadowlark, Wilsons' Snipe, Brown Thrasher, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Marsh Wren, Great. Crested Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, House Wren, Grey Catbird, Ruffed Grouse, Eastern Phoebe, Golden Winged Warbler, Upland Sandpiper, Eastern Towhee, Sedge Wren, Northern Harrier, Osprey.

*My apologies to those of you who were told 60 species, I had Cedar waxwing listed twice. 59 is still a good day though. Thanks for your contributions. Jim Spruce*

Baltimore Oriole

Photo by Janet Sauve



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail  
Photo by Janet Sauve

**June 28 2014 Oro Rail-Trail**

Trip Leaders Brian & Lynne Gibbon

Five participants joined us on a sunny and warm day. We first stopped at the Heronry and then went on to the Rail-Trail at the 7th. Concession of Oro-Medonte. The heronry continues to diminish, there were only a few nests occupied by Great Blue Herons, those that had nested all had one to two young in their nests and one nest was taken over by an Osprey.

Heronry – Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Eastern Kingbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Amer. Robin, Mallard Duck, Wood Duck, Green Heron. Baltimore Oriole, Tree Swallow,

Rail-Trail – Hairy Woodpecker, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat Warbler, Turkey Vulture, Black-capped Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Swamp Sparrow, Amer. Redstart, Song Sparrow, Amer. Crow, Amer. Goldfinch, Blue Jay, Indigo Bunting, Pileated Woodpecker.

Lots of poison ivy along both sides of the trail and one patch of dog strangling vine.

Photos from the Carden trip and the Oro Trail Outing



All photos by Janet Sauve  
Clockwise from top left:

- White Admiral Butterfly top view - Oro Trail walk
- White Admiral Butterfly top view
- Prairie Smoke from Carden walk
- Breretons on Carden walk
- Common Yellowthroat - Carden walk



Submitted by Phyllis Tremblay

### 2014 Barrie SwiftWatch Report

Our 2014 Barrie SwiftWatch team consisted of 22 dedicated volunteers comprised of both BFNC members and non-club members. The team was coordinated by Phyllis Tremblay and Inga Brinckmann.

Chimney Swifts were first observed in Barrie this year on May 6, 2014.

Bird Studies Canada (BSC) provided a data logger that was installed in the chimney of Unity Christian High School (UCHS) on May 8, 2014 by Chris Evans and Ruth Noland-Flores. The data logger records temperature and light conditions that will be analysed by Birds Studies Canada’s biologists.

BSC biologist, Carolyn Zanchetta informed the grade 12 biology class at UCHS about the unique behaviour of chimney swifts that nest in their school chimney.

Swift Night Out in collaboration with BSC took place in downtown Barrie on May 28, 2014. This event was organized by Inga Brinckmann and reported in the Spring Issue of The Blue Heron.

National Population Roost Monitoring Blitz counts were performed on May 21, May 25, May 29, and June 2

Spot-checks of previously identified chimneys occurred Tuesday evenings from May to the end of August weather permitting.

### Results of 2014 Chimney Monitoring

Total Previously Occupied Chimneys identified as Active in 2014	Total Previously Occupied Chimneys identified as Non-active Chimneys in 2014	Potential Chimneys monitored and identified as Non-active in 2014	Totals Chimneys Monitored in 2014
20	10	22	52

### Results of 2014 National Population Roost Monitoring Blitz Counts

Chimney Location	May 21	May 25	May 29	June 2
The Queen’s Hotel	79	56	108	91
The Clarkson	0	0	0	0
The Jail	2	2	2	1
Barrie Central Collegiate	4	5	3	2
Unity Christian High School	2	1	0	2
Studio 24	----	2	----	1

\* numbers refer to the number of chimney swifts entering chimneys on each date.

**BRERETON FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB**

**COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF ASSETS & EQUITY  
AS AT MARCH 31, 2014**

	2014	2013
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Current		
Bank - General account	\$ 2,945	\$ 5,882
- Conservation account	1,522	1,522
- Reserve Fund account	722	722
Float	40	40
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 5,229</b>	<b>\$ 8,166</b>
<b>MEMBERS' EQUITY</b>		
Balance March 31	\$ 5,229	\$ 8,166
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' EQUITY</b>	<b>\$ 5,229</b>	<b>\$ 8,166</b>

**AMALGAMATED STATEMENT OF REVENUE & EXPENSES  
AS OF MARCH 31, 2014**

	2014	2013
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
General Fund	\$ 3,228	\$ 3,149
<b>TOTAL GROSS RECEIPTS</b>	<b>\$ 3,228</b>	<b>\$ 3,149</b>
<b>DISBURSEMENTS</b>		
General Fund	\$ 3,661	\$ 2,743
<b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS</b>	<b>\$ 3,661</b>	<b>\$ 2,743</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>\$ (433)</b>	<b>\$ 406</b>
<b>BEGINNING SURPLUS</b>		
General Fund	3,343	3,772
Conservation Fund	1,522	1,522
Reserve Fund	722	722
<b>Ending Surplus</b>	<b>\$ 5,154</b>	<b>\$ 6,422</b>

**COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF REVENUE & EXPENSES  
AS OF MARCH 31, 2014**

	2014	2013
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Fees & dues	\$ 1,992	\$ 2,120
Resale Items	25	-
Donations	465	700
Auction	161	126
Baillie Birdathon	-	93
Pancake Lunch	585	-
Banding Workshop	-	110
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$ 3,228</b>	<b>\$ 3,149</b>

<b>DISBURSEMENTS</b>		
Speakers fees	\$ 150	\$ 150
Blue Heron Newsletter	532	100
Membership fees (FON)	75	75
Insurance - liability	714	694
Hall rental	866	735
Postal box	194	158
Donation	850	470
Supplies	30	53
Helen Emery Award	-	59
Website	237	237
Bank charges	13	12
<b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENT:</b>	<b>\$ 3,661</b>	<b>\$ 2,743</b>
<b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>\$ (433)</b>	<b>\$ 406</b>

<b>SURPLUS</b>		
Beginning Balance	4,178	3,772
Current Surplus(Deficit)	(433)	406
<b>Ending Surplus(Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ 3,745</b>	<b>\$ 4,178</b>

**CONSERVATION FUND  
AS OF MARCH 31, 2014**

	2014	2013
<i>No Activity</i>		
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Donations	\$ -	\$ -
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>DISBURSEMENTS</b>		
Bluebird boxes	\$ -	\$ -
Bird Feed	-	-
Wildlife Centre	0	-
<b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENT</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
Beginning Surplus	1,552	1,552
<b>Ending Surplus</b>	<b>\$ 1,552</b>	<b>\$ 1,552</b>

**RESERVE FUND  
AS OF MARCH 31, 2014**

	2014	2013
<i>No Activity</i>		
Beginning Surplus	\$ 722	\$ 722
<b>Ending Surplus</b>	<b>\$ 722</b>	<b>\$ 722</b>

PREPARED WITHOUT AUDIT

By Alex Mills

**The** members of the Brereton Club have a long-standing and enjoyable tradition where older members mentor younger ones. I benefited from this tremendously in the 1970s as a teen birder, and there was no one more supportive of me and my interests in this sense than Vivian Bell.

I was sorry to hear of her passing when I returned from a grand birding trip this summer to northern Manitoba with Ian Cook and Chris Evans, and I was equally sorry that I missed her funeral. In a sense, I was in Manitoba because of her and other supporters like her who helped to turn me into a naturalist, and I am very thankful for having known her and experienced her generosity.

I joined the Brereton Club in 1972, and Vivian was a central figure in the club at that time. She was a mother of a growing family of boys (four of them), and despite running that household, she managed to be an unfaltering member in the club, serving on the Executive, attending most field trips, and showing an interest in all the younger members who had a newly-discovered interest in nature.

Vivian Bell lived not too far from my house in the east end of Barrie, and



## Vivian fell in love with Purple Martins in the 1970s.

early on in my involvement in Brereton events, she made it clear she was willing to pick me up and get me to the field trips. Surely this was to the great appreciation of my parents; in the 1970s, we met most Saturdays at 6:30 am during the height of spring migration!

A friend of mine who has since moved away, Mark Forler, often joined us too, as did Vivian's son Jim. There was rarely a 1970s birding trip that did not include Vivian's car and one or more of us young keeners. I hope we were appreciative enough! I know I was in retrospect. I saw numerous

lifers through her car windows, or at places I had travelled to with her. She'd laugh when we ate our lunches at 9:30 am, and she refused to drive fast through the muddy roads, despite our urging her to do so!

One September about 1975, Vivian made arrangements to take her son Jim and me on a boat trip on Lake Ontario to see pelagic birds. What excitement for me that was! Although we didn't see the jaegers we had hoped for, we did see other interesting birds on what was a very exotic adventure for us. We stayed at the house of one of Vivian's relatives, and Vivian annually recollected to me (including earlier this year!) about how excited (and silly) Jim and I were on that adventure.

Vivian fell in love with Purple Martins in the 1970s. This was still a widespread species in the county then, and I'm sure it was a progressive and lingering sadness for Vivian to have watched the disappearance of this species from first Barrie, and then the county. But in the 1970s, she purchased a substantial metal martin house



and erected it in her Melrose Street back yard. She established a large colony of martins, and I was ...continued



Vivian Bell, *continued from Page 9-*

... only too willing to climb a ladder and help her check contents when needed. I built a wooden house at that time, and although I had martins land on it, they never chose to nest on it. Vivian was a fan of the metal house, and she was probably right.

Vivian was a supporter of other club initiatives too. Around the same time, the club established its first bluebird trail. Vivian purchased much of the wood for the boxes, and hosted a building workshop at her house. Not surprisingly, she was always willing to transport some of us younger members to the trail to check the contents. This was a happy time, as it was the decade that Bluebirds started to recover in this part of Ontario.

I moved away from Barrie for about twelve years beginning in 1978. When I returned to Barrie and the club in 1990, I was pleased to find that Vivian was still a stalwart member of the club. Over the next 24 years, she remained a faithful member and a supporter of club events and initiatives. As she aged, she could do less, but she always continued to attend. I have a nut allergy, and every BFNC pot luck I've been to she'd make sure she told me which dessert was hers, and wanted me to know it was a nut-free delight. What a thoughtful person! I will miss her.

*by Alex Mills*



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## Dear Family and Friends of Hazel Smith and Vivian Bell,

Two Honorary Life Members of the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club passed on earlier this year. On April 12th, 2014, Hazel Smith passed away and on June 28th, 2014, Vivian Bell passed away. Circumstances prevented me from expressing my condolences on the loss of your loved ones until this time. I am taking this opportunity to express my deepest and most sincere condolences to you and to pay tribute to these two wonderful women who each have made such great contributions to the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club for many, many years.

Hazel was the cheerful, dedicated treasurer of the BFNC when I joined, around 2005, and continued to serve in that role until health issues made this impossible. Such dedication and perseverance are truly inspiring. Hazel brought this cheer and enthusiasm to her participation in all of the club's activities and outings. Hazel's generous work inspires my own, and motivates me to focus on serving others through the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club. Her spirit lives on through the Members of the Brereton Field Naturalists' Club.

I don't believe Vivian held any active position on the Board of the Club when I joined, however, others will reflect on her accomplishments on the Board and Committees. In my brief experience, her joyous and enthusiastic participation in club activities and events and her sharing of knowledge of nature demonstrated to me how valuable each Club member can be to the Club, and to society, as a whole.

Vivian, one of the longest standing members of the Club, welcomed me in such a way that immediately made me feel included and important. While this manner of welcoming generally pervades the Club, there was something very special in Vivian's personality that touched me. *continued....*



As President, I pledge to do my very best to honour Hazel and Vivian by remembering their gifts and their spirits in all that I do.

In Loving Memory of Hazel and Vivian,

Chris Evans

President - Brereton Field Naturalists' Club



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## Vivian

was one of the first BFNC members who introduced herself when I attended my first meeting. She made me feel welcome and encouraged me to become involved in the club's activities. Occasionally, she would drive me home after field trips. I was able to return these favours by giving Vivian a ride to and from meetings in her senior years.

Vivian was a mentor, as I learned about birding. She often quoted from that valuable reference, "The Birds of Simcoe County" by O.E. Devitt, even generously giving me her copy of the text. Afterwards she would remind me to answer my own questions about birding by referring me to that book.

In 2005, the last year of Ontario's Second Breeding Bird Atlas, Vivian accompanied me to some good birding habitats in the Springwater and Oro-Medonte Townships sections of my assigned square. We frequently kept in touch in order to keep current on the latest bird sightings.

Vivian was always ready to provide baking for coffee break at monthly meetings and brought ample casseroles for pot lucks.

I treasured her friendship and I will miss her.

*By Phyllis Tremblay*



## What did I do this summer?

By Clare Holden

### ***An Amateur Naturalists Introduction to Being a Naturalist***

Just newly retired, with a promise to myself not to volunteer for anything for two years. I thought I would just rest & relax, put my feet up and hang out.

Well, best laid plans go astray & Bob Bowles appeared on the horizon. 'We're doing an inventory of Tiny Marsh. I need help.....all aboard for an adventure, sign up here'.....or something like that!

I wasn't alone, about 30 others agreed this was something they could help with. The intro (loosely) went something like this ' I don't care if you know an Eagle from a Thrush or a Dandelion from a Daisy. Just follow me around & write down what we see. No problem, I could do that. I offered to help with the plants. There were lists for birds, dragonflies, fish, mushrooms, mammals, insects, spiders, snailly stuff etc. but I'm sure you get the general idea.

The first inkling that I might be in trouble came with the list itself. Would you believe there were 1579 plants, all listed in Latin with a Common name to help. Nothing was in alphabetical order...not even the Latin. " Don't worry, you'll know it all by summers end" I was encouraged. And, learn the plants, we (almost) did. Over the course of 15 days we analyzed leaves, counted petals & rubbed stems. But there were other learning's too.

Here are a few I'd like to share with you...



#### 1. Vernal Pools are NOT the same as Thermal pools (Think spa).

Apparently the female Salamanders come to the surface of their vernal pools to mate, when the temperature has been just right for the required number of days & the rainfall has warmed the waters. Several of her most favorite suitors, will then dance around her in gay abandonment. While I did have visions of enjoying an evening of watching the romance, with fellow stalkers. In actuality my feet got frozen in my rubber boots. I don't think any of us actually got to witness an event ( "too cold this spring" said Bob). I'm sure they were quite active after we left!!

#### 2. Invasive species does not mean little green men with red eyes.

These plants should be taken seriously. Garlic Mustard plants, for example, are taking over the pathways. They seem to follow the routes taken by man. The seeds are being spread by boots and vehicle tires. Glossy Buckthorn, whose seeds are being spread by berry-eating birds, are choking out our native vegetation. And Dog-strangling vine, well that's strangling our dogs !!

#### 3. Turtles. They aren't coated in chocolate & show up under the Christmas tree.

Yes, we do love them but they need our help. You might think there are lots of them and you might be right. But, did you know you're mostly seeing males. The poor females make their way to a nice gravelly spot, to lay their eggs. ( Think edges of roads) Then along comes a car.... Game over. And, if that wasn't enough, the raccoons pilfer their nests. In fact the Midland Painted Turtle is the only species not in trouble.

*continued....An Amateur Naturalists Introduction to Being a Naturalist*

4. Dragonflies are not in any way related to their mythical ancestors. They are not ugly and do not emit fire if caught. In fact the large Canadian Darner is really quite beautiful, sporting a green/blue stripe across it's thorax, somewhat resembling the state of Florida. Out on the dyke, there are several equally attractive species; the Calico & the Halloween, with their heavily patterned yellow, orange or red bands. And then there are the Racket-tailed Emeralds, which we witnessed hanging in clusters on a branch, drying out their wings.



There were many more wonders to observe, such as the Osprey fishing, the tiny Twin flower pushing its way out of the forest floor, The Cecropia caterpillar munching it's way through the bushes. Something for everyone to enjoy.

In all, it was a summer well spent. A lot of learning and a lot of laughs, in the company of a great bunch of selfless people. All of us wanting to assist, preserve and enjoy our natural surroundings. The survey will be wrapping up this fall. The finale should be the emergence of the baby turtles which we have been trying to protect throughout the summer. If you are out at the marsh this fall and happen upon one of these little critters, report your sighting at this email [rbowles@rogers.com](mailto:rbowles@rogers.com) We have put up 3 signs at the entrance to each dyke with this information on them.

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## Annual Ontario Nature AGM Report

Phyllis Tremblay the previous rep and I attended the Ont Nature AGM at lovely Geneva Park the weekend of June 21st, as did Clare Holden and Lane Henderson.

One of the highlights was hearing the Youth Council members tell of their wonderful experiences meeting fellow young nature enthusiasts at the annual Youth Summits. It is inspiring to offer such students these networking opportunities when you hear about their achievements - 3 of the Ontario Youth Council members are among the Top 25 Environmentalists under 25, as recognized by the Starfish Canada. They are Jayden Rae, Moe Qureshi, and Noa Bridson. Two of their projects the Pollinator Campaign and the formation of university environmental clubs, are in the summer Ont Nature magazine.



By the deadline of this newsletter, the board of BFNC has not yet finalized the sponsorship of a Barrie high school student at the Youth Summit on Biodiversity and Community action in September, at Geneva Park. Our sponsored student may come to talk at a future meeting about his/her experience. I hope we may be able to sponsor more than one student in future years,

*continued....Report from Ontario Nature AGM*

but we would have to entertain ideas on fundraising before that can occur. All facets of the AGM were informative and entertaining. After breakfast Doug Tozer of Bird Studies Canada spoke about Loons and how aggressive they can be.

At the Raptor identification workshop by Mark Stabb of Nature Conservancy of Canada, we learned how to id them by their calls, size and body shapes. Perhaps we should plan a raptor viewing in Grimsby next spring from the escarpment, as he recommends. At the workshop on Gardening with Ontario Native plants by Colleen Cirillo of Ontario Nature showed some beautiful pictures of her own native garden. She also had great reference guides and was great at answering our specific gardening questions.



David Philips, Canada's Senior Climatologist was very entertaining talking about weather extremes, after dinner. There were many field trips offered for Sunday. The Carden Alvar Cameron Ranch trip did not produce many butterfly sightings despite the warm windless sunny day. The wildflower species were amazingly diverse in such a difficult environment - thin and dry soil. Cows are allowed in this newly designated provincial park to keep it as grasslands rather than allowing it to become wooded over. This was a great venue to chat with other nature club's members, make new freinds, and hear about the best birding sites!

## **The Copeland Forest and the Stewardship Initiative**

By Dave Lord

The Copeland Forest is a huge tract of land almost 4 square miles in total area approximately 25 kilometres north of Barrie. It is the highest quality of mature upland deciduous forest in the region and contains the headwaters of three major watersheds that drain into Georgian Bay.

To further understand the magnitude of this magnificent forest realise that there are 26.2 kilometres of double track trails and 55 kilometres of unofficial single track trails. A double track trail is defined as one where 2 persons can walk abreast, single track where we walk single file. It is currently managed by the Ministry of Natural resources (MNR) as a resource management area but they have entered into an agreement with the Couchiching Conservancy to try and bring "friends of the forest" into a relationship with MNR that will help care for the forest at a community level. A stewardship committee guided by the Couchiching Conservancy, has been formed which it is hoped will form such a basis for a caring partnership.

Your Stewardship Committee is starting to work on recommendations for a Governance Model which will be presented in due course to the MNR for their consideration. As alluded to earlier, as a result of the trail complexity, a subcommittee of the Stewardship group is developing a trail map which will hopefully accommodate the diverse interests of the forest users.

As a member of your executive I have been proud to serve on this Stewardship Committee. Everyone is encouraged to visit the Couchiching Conservancy website to keep updated on the activities of the forest and the work of the committee.

The link is <http://www.couchichingconserv.ca/copeland-forest>.

Do take the opportunity to visit this jewel in our area.

# UPCOMING

**The Ontario Nature Fall Regional Meeting** is scheduled for Saturday, October 4, 2014 at the Walkers Point Recreation Centre outside of Bala. It will be hosted by the Muskoka Field Naturalists. Al Sinclair has agreed to do a mushroom foray to Hardy Lake Provincial Park in the afternoon. The Muskoka Watershed Council and the Muskoka Field Naturalists will provide a presentation on their work in the local region. These meetings are great networking opportunities, and are open to all BFN members. More information will follow on the agenda and map to location. Contact the Muskoka naturalists website for more details.  
<http://muskokafieldnaturalists.com/>

**Nature Conservancy Canada** brings you Nature Talks: **Science Behind the Weather**. Thursday September 18. 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. On the Serendipity Princess on Lake Simcoe. \$25 per person. Boarding between 6:30 - 7:00 p.m.

**Featuring senior climatologist with Environment Canada- David Phillips.**

Discover more about the science behind the weather, local trends and hear tales of the extreme and emerging patterns. Forecasting our weather's future- wet, warm and wild.

Order tickets at [natureconservancy.ca/ON-NatureTalks](http://natureconservancy.ca/ON-NatureTalks)

## Nottawasaga River Canoe Route Map Available

The Nottawasaga River offer canoeist and kayakers of all levels of ability an opportunity to explore a wide variety of ecological habitats. The main branch of the river runs 121 km, starting near Alliston and ending at Wasaga Beach. In between lies the internationally-significant Minesing Wetlands, with 15,000 acres of swamp, fen and marsh to explore. The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority's Canoe Route Map has been recently updated, and is available to help plan your trip along the river. It can be downloaded at [www.nvca.on.ca](http://www.nvca.on.ca) or contact the NVCA office at 705-424-1479 to request a paper copy. Photo attached. Caption (if you need one): Enjoy spectacular dune formations and a great variety of plants and wildlife as you paddle the lower reach of the Nottawasaga River.

Canoeing Nottawasaga photo by Paul Forde



Dune shoreline photo by Sarah Campbell, NVCA



**NOTE:** The editor( seen above on left) and his wife have gone on this river with a Sojourn store outing a couple of times over the last few years and have thoroughly enjoyed the bird life seen along the river. Flycatchers, Orioles, Bank Swallows, Egret, Heron, possible sighting of an immature eagle and many others may be found. Contact me if you have any questions or contact the NVCA and get their map. I found it easily on their webpage.

## Grants available for Conservation Projects

Through the Healthy Waters Program, NVCA is offering free site visits, technical support and funding for projects that improve stream habitat and water quality.

The grants cover between 30 to 100% of project costs for eligible projects in the Nottawasaga Valley watershed including:

- stream- and lake-side native tree, shrub and meadow planting
- fencing to keep livestock out of waterways and wetlands
- nutrient management plans and strategies
- improving fuel, chemical and pesticide storage
- well decommissioning
- and more!

Call Shannon Stephens, Healthy Waters Program Coordinator, at 705-424-1479 ext. 239 or visit [nvca.on.ca](http://nvca.on.ca) for Healthy Waters Program information or to book a site visit.

Volunteers use natural materials to help restore stream banks, improving aquatic habitat and water quality.



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## 2014 Bluebird Report

By Pat Duncan

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This year was BFNC's fifth year of maintaining a nest box trail in the Simcoe County area. The newest trail set up near Barrie Hills Farms proved to once again be very successful and our more established trail near Tangle Creek Golf Course was also a success. The trail in northeast Barrie (on Ski Trails Road) was a bit of a concern at first, but as it turned out we had two very late nests there.

In total we recorded 59 fledged bluebirds and in the past five years, a total of 185 have come from our nest boxes.

The first Bluebird sighting on the BFNC trail was April 11th – about 2 weeks earlier than last year. The first nest was observed on the Barrie Hill trail on April 20th and the first eggs were laid on April 27th. In 2014 we had a total of 17 pairs of Bluebirds (up from 10 pairs in 2013).

continued ....

### continued... Bluebird Report

23 nests were constructed and 97 eggs were laid. The mortality rate this year was quite high (59 fledglings from 97 eggs).

Tree Swallows were active throughout the trail laying 144 eggs in 28 nest boxes. To date we have fledged a total of 384 Tree Swallows from our nest boxes. Overall the summer of 2014 was a very successful Bluebird season.

We have a number of other volunteers who have expressed an interest in building nest boxes. In September we will be hosting a Nest Box Building Workshop. We have 24 nest box kits that need to be built and once this is done we hope to be able to install them before the snow flies.

We would like to thank the BFNC volunteers for their dedication in monitoring and record-keeping throughout the 2014 season. I would also like to thank Bruce Wilson's son, Cameron, for cutting sheets of plywood into nest box building kits.



Photos by Pat Duncan.



By Phyllis Tremblay

## Grassland Birds in Little Lake Park July 2014



Open grassy wet meadows and weedy fields edged in hawthorn are a sharp contrast to the wetlands and mature deciduous woodlands usually associated with Little Lake.

In mid-April eastern meadowlarks, killdeer and American woodcocks were observed in the parkland off Crompton Drive, southwest of Little Lake. On returning a few times in July at least 2 eastern meadowlarks, a bobolink, as well as eastern kingbirds, gray catbirds, common yellowthroats, indigo buntings, red-winged blackbirds, American goldfinches and other common birds were using the area.

In late July a visit to the grassy shrubby field on the northwest side of Little Lake... *-continued...*



*Compton Lake continued...*

yielded a least flycatcher, chestnut-sided warblers, eastern towhee, field sparrows and indigo buntings. Seeing these birds in suitable nesting habitat in July is a good indication that they are breeding in Little Lake Park's grasslands.



*Photos by Janet Sauve*

The open field off Crompton is within city limits and both areas are in parkland owned by the City of Barrie. During most winters northern shrikes can be observed in these two locations.

## **Study Surprise: Many Bird Species Exposed to "Eye Disease"**

August 14, 2014



Photo by Shirley Gallant

A recent press release from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology explains how the bacteria that causes house finch eye disease is found in many species, and not just feeder birds.

"The results were shocking," says André Dhondt, director of Bird Population Studies at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "More than half the bird species we tested have been exposed to the bacteria responsible for House Finch eye disease." A paper recently published in the online scientific journal PLOS ONE shows that a bacterial parasite previously thought to infect only a few species of feeder birds is actually infecting a surprisingly wide

range of species, though most do not show signs of illness. "This organism, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, is much more widespread than anyone thought," Dhondt explains, "although in most species there are no signs of conjunctivitis".

Species testing positive for exposure to the bacteria include feeder favorites such as Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and American Goldfinches. But exposure was also detected in forest species, such as the Wood Thrush.

Black-capped Chickadees, though exposed to the mycoplasma bacterium, do not show symptoms of eye disease.

*Bird Studies Surprise continued...*

"That was another surprise," says Dhondt. "How on earth do Wood Thrushes get infected with mycoplasma? They're not a feeder bird at all. Everyone has always assumed that feeders play a major role in the transmission of the disease and this study shows that's not necessarily so."

Dhondt's team trapped and tested nearly 2,000 individual birds from 53 species, looking for evidence of current infections (bacterial DNA) or past infections (antibodies) by *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*. The birds were trapped in and around Ithaca, New York, between January 2007 and June 2010. The diagnostic tests revealed that 27 species of birds were infected by this bacterium. The actual number of species exposed to the bacteria could be even higher than suggested by this study because the test for antibodies is known to produce false negatives.

House Finch eye disease first appeared in North America in 1994 when people watching backyard feeders started seeing birds with swollen, runny eyes. Dhondt says that a strain of the bacteria, usually found in poultry, was able to grow successfully in House Finches. The House Finch lineage of the bacteria has been mutating since it was first detected.

"The organism could mutate into a form that is much more virulent among other bird species and create a new epidemic," noted Dhondt, who added that while we know that many species of songbirds are exposed to *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, we still do not know whether the bacteria in other species of songbirds are identical to that living in House Finches in the same area.



This male House Finch shows obvious signs of eye disease. Photo by Errol Taskin

While many species of songbirds can be infected by this bacterium, only House Finches regularly exhibit swollen eyes as a result of infections, and citizen-science participants in the Cornell Lab's Project FeederWatch are still tracking the occurrence of disease in these finches. The take-home message for people who feed backyard birds remains the same: keep the feeders clean. If you see sick birds, leave them alone, take down the feeders and clean them, being sure to wash your hands thoroughly afterward.

The paper, Diverse Wild Bird Host range of *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* in eastern North America, is co-authored by André Dhondt, Jonathan C. DeCoste, and Wesley M. Hochachka from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and David H. Ley. The work described in this paper is part of a larger collaborative research project that has received funding from both the NSF and NIH through their initiative to study the Ecology and Evolution of Infectious Diseases.



When I venture out into the wilds my spirit unwinds.

It is my therapy I think it's cheaper than a shrink but with the price of fuel and my gear- maybe not. But I will keep up with this kind of therapy. You never know what to expect when you head out into woods. You don't know who or what you will see. Always scanning

the horizon looking on the ground and up in the trees. Try not to have tunnel vision while walking in the woods and take your time to sit, listen and look. Bring a note pad and take some notes as it could be useful at a later date or to just remember what you did that day.

-continued...

*Wade's World continued...*

Earlier in the spring I was out in the 12 Mile Bay Rd area to do a little exploring. I was on full alert because there are rattle snakes in the area. I had never spent any time in this area in warm weather before, so I was hoping to see one, but also was hoping not to see one at the same time. My eyes were focused on the ground this day-way more than usual- as I walk through an open area that was an old skidder trail from when the area was last logged.

The sun was shining and it was getting quite warm. I was thinking to myself that this would be a likely spot to see one. Sure enough my eyes caught a glimpse of a snake up ahead. I stopped walking and didn't move. My head turns from side to side scanning the ground for any more snakes. Nothing else is spotted so I move in for a bit of a closer look.

The tail was under a log so the rattles were not visible....but I stepped slowly again, crunching some leaves and then heard the rattle. It was not a very big snake, and the rattle was not very loud. It was like a buzzing sound, much like a bug would make. So I took a few pictures, said goodbye and moved along, constantly still looking at the ground. Seeing the Massasauga Rattlesnake in its wild and natural environment was the highlight of my day.

My destination was a pond that I saw on a topographical map. I'm always looking for new place off the beaten path to do some camping or fishing. I made it to the pond and of course there was some Mallards sitting in it. They high-tailed it out of there pretty quick though. I have not gone back to this pond again but it's on my list of things to do as it looks like a promising destination to get away and unwind.

When out walking through the woods I'm always looking for a water source and a place to camp. Sometimes it's just a nice place to stop and build a fire, have a snack and make some tea, all the while taking mental notes of my location. It is so relaxing to sit by a fire and drink a tea and absorb all nature has to offer at that moment. It's priceless, really. Just sitting by a fire is relaxing and I can feel the stress evaporating. It's an awesome feeling. This is a little bit of my world.



# The Online Chirp



The Brereon Field Naturalist Facebook page now has 77 members.

Now the fact is that the Blue Heron can only cover so many projects and news articles regarding nature, birding, animals, conservation, ecology or other such topics. One can find online an enumerable quantity of websites that cover far more topics and projects and endeavours regarding these topics and more. It cannot be said more so that one must search these out. You will be pleasantly surprised by the volume of information out there that is easily available online. I have included just a few such sites here. But please don't stop at these.

NestWatch - Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
<http://nestwatch.org/>

Project Passenger Pigeon  
[passengerpigeon.org/](http://passengerpigeon.org/)

The ROM plans to reopen an exhibit to mark the 100 years since the last Passenger Pigeon died. Web site says there are passenger pigeon skins at "Barrie High School" We are trying to find out if that would be BCC or North Collegiate? We also would like to know if Simcoe County Museum has specimen(s)?  
<http://www.ontarionature.org/connect/blog/>

### On the lighter side of the wild side....

Two Turkey Vultures talking. One says, "I'm getting too old to fly north for the summer. Let's take a plane." So they board the plane, each one carrying a dead armadillo. The stewardess says, "Can I check your armadillos?"

"No." replies one of the Turkey Vultures. "They're carrion."

## Brereton Field Naturalists Club Membership

### Annual fees:

- Family - \$30
- Individual - \$25
- Student - \$10
- Corresponding - \$15



Memberships run from January 1st to December 31st. Members get into meetings at no charge, are eligible for discounts at local nature stores and have access to "Members Only" content of the web site.

To join the BFNC, please come to one of our meetings or complete **downloadable application form from our website and send with your payment.**

**WWW. BFNCLUB.ORG**

Visit us on our Facebook page !

