



The Peninsula Naturalist

Volume 243

Newsletter of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club

October 2016

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Conservation and preservation in the Niagara Region have proven to be a never ending campaign. The Greenbelt in Grimsby and the Thundering Waters Forest in Niagara Falls quickly come to mind. Many concerned residents in this region have voiced their concerns and want to see the tender fruit lands, woodlots and provincially significant wetlands saved for future generations.

Part of the work in saving natural environment areas for future generations is to educate them. To inspire is all that is required when taking some kids for a morning hike. I was pleased when the Niagara Historical Society and Museum reached out to me regarding a collaboration between the Peninsula Field Naturalists and the museum's summer program for children. The photo that accompanies Jean's article in this issue is reassuring and I would not be surprised that a member from this group became the next Colton Tew or Owen Bjorgan.

Colton is a Grimsby Secondary School Student and he received an award from the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada for his work with the Save the Woodlot campaign. Owen recently graduated from the University of Guelph and has been a great spokesperson for the Save Thundering Waters Forest movement. Owen has organized nature hikes, led cleanups of wetlands and created a non-profit organization called Biophillic World.

There are many facets to protecting our natural areas in the Niagara Region and leading a group of children through a woodlot in Niagara-on-the-Lake and taking a cub scout troop on an outing in a conservation area is a good way to start. Keep up the good work, members of the PFN!

ROCK POINT AREA OUTING

On May 28, Rick Young led the trip to the Rock Point area. Unfortunately, this year's outing did not include a visit to the Rock Point Bird Banding Station. Master Bander Jim Smith is retiring from bird banding, and the Station was officially closed a few days before the nature club's visit to Haldimand County. The Peninsula Field Naturalists would like to thank Jim for allowing its members to visit the Station during previous outings in the provincial park and we wish him all the best.

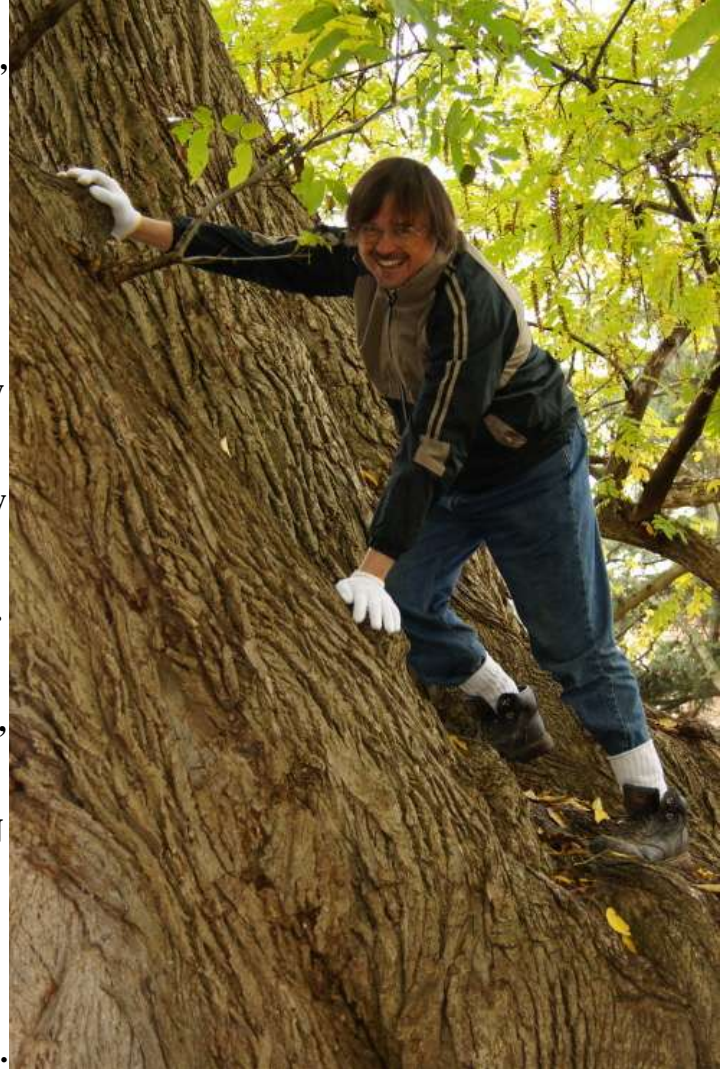
Our group hiked along the shoreline and through the woods in the provincial park. Shorebirds observed included Killdeer, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, and Dunlin. Warblers viewed during the outing included Tennessee Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Yellow Warbler, and Blackpoll Warbler. While relaxing at a picnic table, the group had great views of a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird sitting on its nest. The afternoon was spent birding spots on the Rock Point area before returning to Niagara. A beautiful day that included a total of 53 bird species, plant identification, and of course, ice cream. (See the shore-birds photo on page 5, later in this issue).

Brian Calvert: August 8, 2016

It may come as a shock to many of the PFN to learn that, on August 8, 2016, Brian Calvert died in his 63rd year. For those of us who knew him in the PFN, we will recall him leading nature walks, bringing salads of home-grown vegetables to dinners, or supplying vegetable seeds from his gardens. The walkers of the PFN will also remember him leading a party along his favoured Louth Trail. He was a man of various interests and talents, from mathematics and geology, to science, to camping. We will recall his hearty laughter, or his sigh "Oh, well..." about things beyond his control. Generosity and kindness were his hallmarks.

Brian was the eldest son of the late Harold and Betty Calvert of London. Brian's siblings included Donna, Tom, Ruth Ann, and Peter. Brian was also the uncle of 8 and great-uncle of 3 younger relatives.

A memorial service was held at 11 a.m, Saturday on August 13 at the Unitarian Congregation of Niagara, Church Street, St. Catharines, and also at 4 p.m at Unicamp on the same day. The attending congregation included a number of members of PFN and NFNC, along with family members, Brock U. members and various Unitarians. Among others, Roman Olszewski commented on Brian's activities with the PFN and the Geology Club, and the Librarian at his favoured Library commented at his keen interest in books - and the Library's computer..



Speakers for the remaining PFN Meetings in 2016-2107

Sept. 26	Adam Shoalts	Alone Against the North: Expedition into Unknown Landscape
October 24	Justin Peter	A Naturalist's Rambles in India
November 28	Janet Rose	The Importance of Composting (Also our dessert night)
January 23	Anne Yagi	Topic to be determined
February	Ian Smith	Stream Restoration
March	Rick Ludkin	Kenya

Nature in the City

Our club had a great walk this year at Jaycee Park. Not only did the weather cooperate this year but we saw some interesting wildlife and met up with some good friends. We all met at the parking area and walked along the water until we reached the pedestrian bridge that would take us to Rene Park. We had some great looks at Baltimore Orioles, Song Sparrows and Eastern Kingbird, to name a few. Then we crossed the bridge for fabulous views of Cliff and Barn Swallows as they hawked insects out of the air to feed their young. The bridge is an ideal nesting spot for them as it is the type of structure they prefer and close in proximity to water and mud which they use to build their nests. That is, in a normal summer there is usually mud, but with our hot dry summer their building material was in short supply.

This is where our good friend, Paul Summerskill comes in. He met up with us just as we crossed the bridge and told us that he daily rode his bike from his Port Dalhousie home with a bucket of water to pour on the ground to create a puddle for the swallows. A good friend indeed! We were feeling great after this story, and watching a common tern feed her two fluffy chicks, spying a beaver swimming in Martindale pond and of course after we all had our ice cream cones. *By Jean Hampson*

Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site Spring Outing

After enjoying a fall hike in 2015, the Peninsula Field Naturalists revisited the Glenridge Naturalization Site this past spring on Saturday June 4.

Blooms observed during the outing included Smooth Blackberry, Black Locust, Swamp Rose and the invasive Leafy Spurge. We saw and heard a total of 34 bird species. Highlights included Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Indigo Bunting and Baltimore Oriole. A variety of colour in that list.

Spring and fall colours are always abundant at the former quarry so the PFN will be visiting the site again this fall. *By Bob Highcock*



Jaycee Park & Glenridge Quarry

Canada's "National Bird" Contest

The contestants for the National Bird Contest have been reduced to these five:
Common Loon; Snowy Owl; Gray Jay; Canada Goose; Black-capped Chickadee.

Which one would YOU choose?

The final selection will be printed in the Canadian Geographic Magazine, December 2016 issue. Until then, keep your thinking-caps on!

Picnic 2016



The weather on June 25, 2016, wavered between 'very warm' and 'just plain HOT', but not too hot to dissuade the PFN from holding their annual summer picnic. The venue this year was Merritt Island Park in Welland, to give Don and Sue Minchin a respite from their several years of hosting this event. Considering the weather, the 20 attending picnickers were fortunate to have the Park Pavilion for lunchtime.

For those who have never been to this Park, it is basically a spit of land in Welland, nestled between the Welland River and the Welland Canal. When the Canal was constructed in Welland, nearly a hundred years ago, a large amount of earth had to be removed from the canal basin. This earth was piled on the spit and then was planted with a variety of trees and shrubs, adding to the natural plants along the shore of the Welland River. The result is that now a paved trail caps the top of the spit, and lower down a walking trail follows the Welland River. This walking trail has an interesting mix of native and domestic trees and plants,

including numerous Catalpas, and the ubiquitous Phragmites and Poison-ivy. In some places near the river, one can see standing trees which have been partially chewed by beavers.

After depositing the 'fix-ins' for the lunch in the covered pavilion, many of the 20 attending members followed President Bob along the shaded walking trail, checking out the wildlife. Bird species seen included Northern Cardinal (male feeding young), Common Grackles (feeding young), Black-capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Gray Catbird, Mallard (female with young), American Robin, Brown-headed Cowbird and Cedar Waxwing. A highlight of the walk was the discovery of a family of weasels, with Mama leading a batch of 4 juveniles trailing along, all of them trying to be inconspicuous - unsuccessfully.

The lunch under the pavilion included a variety of sandwiches, several cold salads and veggies, coffee, bottled water and other fluid drinks - more than enough to feed the hungry group. Thanks to Roman for arranging the use of the Pavilion and for directions to Merritt Island Park, and to those who provide the 'fix-ins'.





The Kids Curators Walk *(by Jean Hampson)*

On August 18, The Peninsula Field Naturalists (Carol, Rick, and Jean) had the pleasure of leading a hike for The Kids Curators group from the Niagara Historical Society and Museum. The aim was to introduce the children to nature and bird-watching in their neighbourhood. We toured the Commons and Paradise Grove in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Thirteen children (11 girls, 2 boys) accompanied Carol, Rick and I as we observed Turkey Vultures, a Red-tailed Hawk, and an Eastern Wood-Pewee. I don't know if we have created any birders, but I think we gave them some interesting stories to tell.



"West End of Lake Ontario" Water Bird Count

As some of you are aware, the PFN assist as caretakers for the Niagara River Corridor Important Bird Area (IBA). We will be requesting your assistance with the Gull Census later this year. For now, Amanda Bichel (Ontario IBA Coordinator at Bird Studies Canada) is seeking help to count waterbirds, with counts taking place once a month from October to April. If some PFN members could help Bird Studies Canada with this important count for the West End of Lake Ontario IBA, please see Pres. Bob for a copy of the information document explaining all you need to know to assist Amanda. As Amanda said: "It's fun; you love waterfowl; and the Bird Biodiversity Area database needs your input."

Save the Woodlot, Save the Greenbelt

Over a year ago, many PFN members may remember Bruce Mackenzie from Grimsby, and his campaign to prevent some of the Grimsby authorities from clear-cutting an old-growth woodlot called "The Irish Grove", located on the Greenbelt below the Niagara Escarpment and south of the QEW. At that time, Bruce was apprehensive about the possibility of a new street being built through the woodlot, which has some rare tree species, some over 200 years old. Thus far, the woodlot has not been destroyed.

In the Province of Ontario's first draft of the Greenbelt Plan, the tender fruit lands in the Greenbelt in Grimsby below the Escarpment were to stay as they were back in 2005. However, some local Grimsby authorities are lobbying the Province to open the Grimsby Greenbelt for development. The Irish Grove Woodlot is in the Greenbelt. If the land around the Woodlot is opened to development, then the Woodlot's future is at risk.

Recently, in February 2015, the Province produced four growth plans - The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe; The Greenbelt Plan; The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan; and The Niagara Escarpment Plan. These plans were made available for comment by 'stakeholders', the public, Indigenous communities, and an Advisory Panel chaired by David Crombie. The government is now about to propose changes to the four plans.

Some of the Province's considerations (changes) are:

Expansion of the Greenbelt outside of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area where important water resources are under pressure from urban growth;

Obtaining technical information from municipalities, conservation authorities, and landowners in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area to determine if refinements (development?) to the Greenbelt will be required;

Supporting implementation through documents and the mapping of natural heritage and agricultural systems outside the Greenbelt.

The concern of Bruce and other Grimsby citizens is that if the Greenbelt is opened to development, and the population of Grimsby increases, possibly doubling, the Irish Grove Woodlot may be opened for road and housing/commercial purposes. Bruce accepts that a GO Train Station can be located on the edge of the Greenbelt, but that does not need a road to be built through the Irish Grove Woodlot. He envisions rather that trails could be developed to allow for recreation and enjoyment of natural areas and rural landscapes.

What all this means is: The public can make comments about the Province's plans, up to October 31, 2016. As is typical with government, the public have to follow certain rules to tell the Province what they like or don't like about the plans.

Bruce and friends have printed "postage-paid" postcards with a "Save the Greenbelt" message which can be sent to the Greenbelt Review Office. He asks your help to send these cards and "Save The Woodlot", so that the Ontario Government knows that the public want the Greenbelt to stay as it is in Grimsby below the Escarpment.

To obtain one (or more) of Bruce's postcards, ask President Bob – there is half a month still to send the Ontario Government a message.

2016 Fall Outings

Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site

Saturday, October 15, 1:00 p.m.

Meet at the parking area for the site on St. David's Road (Regional Rd. 71)

Leaders: Bob Highcock, Jean Hampson, (905-688-1260)

Mud Lake Conservation Area

Sunday, October 23, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at Elm St. entrance to Conservation Area

Leaders: Bob Highcock, Jean Hampson (905-688-1260)

Centennial Gardens

Sunday, November 6, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at the parking area at 321 Oakdale Avenue, St. Catharines

Leaders: Jean Hampson, Bob Highcock (905-688-1260)

In Search of the Purple Sandpiper

Sunday, November 13, 8:30 a.m. to ?

Meet at the yellow gate at the end of Seaway Haulage Road

Leader: John Black (905-684-0143)

Christmas and Winter Bird Counts

St. Catharines (PFN) Christmas Bird Count: December 18, 2016

Contact Bob Highcock (905-688-1260) re birding;

After-Birding Roundup at North Pelham Youth Center – call Mary/John Potter (905-892-2566)

Counts by Other Clubs and Organizations

Niagara Falls (NFNC) Christmas Bird Count: December 27, 2016

Port Colborne-Buffalo (BMNC) Christmas Bird Count: December 31, 2016

Lake Ontario Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory (Duck Count): January 8, 2017

Peach Tree Christmas Bird Count: January 2, 2017 (B.Mackenzie 905-973-4869)

Remember:

The Peninsula Field Naturalists Club is a voluntary organization, and is managed by members who give their time, talents, and knowledge for the benefit of the members as well as for the benefit of the community at large.

Our members apply their knowledge, their talents, and their enthusiasm to provide interesting and factual information to the Club members, and to the community.

Every member of the Club, whether a member-at-large or a member of the Board, has a talent for activity such as leading a walk, identifying a living creature, or a capacity for organization, and every member can assist the Club by offering their talent(s).

In the monthly meeting in November, besides enjoying pre-Christmas goodies, we have the Election of our Board, a group of members who donate their time and abilities to keep the Club active and interesting. If you would be interested and willing to help the Club in its efforts, please consider speaking to any Board member and offering your time – you will be glad you did!



The Peninsula Field Naturalists Club

A non-profit organization started in 1954 with the objectives to preserve wildlife and protect its habitat, to promote public interest in and a knowledge of the natural history of the area, and to promote, encourage and cooperate with organizations and individuals having similar interests and objectives. Affiliated with Ontario Nature and Nature Canada .

P.O. Box 23031, RPO Carlton, St. Catharines, ON. L2R 7P6

Website : peninsulafieldnats.com

The Peninsula Naturalist Newsletter

Published: February, April, October/November

The Editor welcomes written articles or artwork on any natural history topic. Please submit typed reports on paper or by email to: **jmpotter068@gmail.com** Colour photos (jpg) accompanying articles are welcome. New ideas and constructive criticism are welcome. Please send submissions by email to the above address or mail to the Club's postal address.

Editor: John Potter
Assistant: Mary Potter

Deadlines for submissions 2017:
February 4; April 1; October 7

