



The Peninsula Naturalist

Volume 247

Newsletter of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club

February 2018



PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

The Peninsula Field Naturalists' mantra is to advocate, educate and participate in the conservation of natural resources and green spaces in Niagara and elsewhere. Our club has achieved this in the past by coordinating a hike in a conservation area with the 9th Welland Cub Scouts, campaigning to preserve Niagara woodlots, and introducing a group of children from the Niagara Historical Society and Museum Kids Curators program to nature and bird watching.

More recently, the PFN presented a talk on conservation and birds at the St. Catharines Public Library. The presentation was aimed at older adults, retirees and seniors. And with a chat to girl guides on bird-watching to help them obtain a bird-watching badge in the works and future projects (Yes, future projects! More on that later.), I would say the PFN are doing a fine job in advocating, educating and participating in the conservation of natural resources and green spaces in Niagara. To all the members that have contributed to this effort, you have my thanks.



NOTICE: ALL PFN MEMBERS:

The annual membership fees for the 2018 year are due!

March 31/2018 is the final date to renew your membership. Be Advised!



Trees – Our Warriors to Climate Change: by Loretta Shields

It’s ironic that with all the talk about global warming and climate change, why trees don’t get the attention they deserve. Trees provide so many ecological and economic benefits. More than half of the earth’s land based species require the habitat of trees and forests, so why aren’t trees more protected?

We need to think of trees as living “air conditioners”. American Forests.org claims each one of us requires two mature trees to produce our annual oxygen needs. Trees help to maintain water quality by absorbing pollutants, and regulating water levels during high rainfall events. After all, oxygen and water are two basic ingredients for life!

But trees have economic benefits also. During the heat of the summer, trees lower temperatures by transpiring water and shading surfaces, lowering energy costs for air conditioning by up to 30%. In the winter, depending on the direction of the prevailing winds, well positioned trees can significantly lower heating costs.

Another very important function of trees is their ability to sequester (bind) atmospheric carbon. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is also known as a greenhouse gas. CO₂ absorbs infrared radiation that is emitted from the earth's surface, thereby causing increased levels of infrared radiation in the lower atmosphere, which causes temperatures to rise. This is known as global warming.

As the earth's population continues to grow, more carbon is emitted into the atmosphere from human activities such as burning fossil fuels and the manufacturing of electricity to heat homes, for transportation, and the production of cement for building projects. Carbon dioxide is also released into the atmosphere through the combustion and decomposition of plants and animals. The concentration of atmospheric carbon is currently greater than 400 parts per million.

Trees are able to remove more carbon from the atmosphere by photosynthesis than they return via respiration or decomposition and are considered a net carbon "sink". Oceans and soil are also capable of absorbing carbon, but not quite to the same degree as forests.

But what happens to the carbon that a tree sequesters? The process of photosynthesis uses light energy to convert carbon dioxide into a carbohydrate. These carbohydrates are used to produce cellulose, which gives structure to cell walls and ultimately provides the upright structure to trees. Sequestration rates vary greatly according to the age, composition, and location of trees and the type of soil, but a general rule of thumb is that approximately 50% of the dry weight of a tree is carbon.

It is estimated that in 2009, the average American was responsible for 5190 kg of carbon emissions. How many trees would be required to sequester this amount of carbon on an annual basis? The US Forest Service has developed a Tree Carbon calculator. This tool calculates the amount of biomass and carbon stored in a tree, as well as the amount of carbon sequestered annually. Using this tool, one can estimate that over 680 white pine trees aged 25 years old would be needed to sequester the carbon emitted annually by one person according to the 2009 estimation. This illustration provides a better sense of our carbon emissions and the importance of trees in reducing the effects of climate change.

Trees need to be protected. But what are the ongoing threats to their existence? There are many insects and diseases that are affecting the livelihood of our tree population here in Ontario. The emerald ash borer continues to decimate the ash population throughout Ontario. Its spread can not be stopped, although parasitic wasps have been introduced and some do show promise in one day of reducing the emerald ash borer populations. Asian long-horned beetle was detected in Toronto near the Lester B Pearson international airport. Surveys continue every year to detect infected trees in the hope of soon declaring the region free from this insect. Oak wilt disease is a disease that predominantly affects red oak and is spread by nitidulid beetles. Oak wilt is detected in Michigan and New York State, and is a serious threat to red oak populations in Ontario.

Developmental projects pose imminent threats to tree populations in Niagara as well. The Irish Grove Woodlot in Grimsby, the Thundering Waters development project in Niagara Falls and the Lockhart Drive Forest in St. Catharines have been topics in local newspapers throughout 2017. The Niagara wind energy development project in West Lincoln, Wainfleet and Haldimand resulted in several thousands of trees destroyed to allow for the development of transmission lines and access roads. After a full year of operation, the project only provided 24% of its nameplate capacity in energy. Residents were initially told that roadside trees would be replaced, but there is no news of the replacement of the trees to date.

Trees need to be protected and people need to be aware of just how valuable trees are in providing those life essential ingredients we take for granted every day. Otherwise, their removal will continue to have a negative on our environment.

(Loretta previously explained the importance of trees at the PFN November meeting, and graciously gave the above write-up to the "editor" for this version of " The Peninsula Naturalist" – Thanks to you!!)

January 7, 2018 Lake Ontario Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory Letter from John Black to Glenn Coady the Waterfowl coordinator:

This had to be one of our coldest counts. The combination of -16 degrees at the start and the development of strong winds later in the morning made counting difficult on January 7. Most of the shoreline had a scrambled ice shelf to about 50-100 meters from shore. Beyond that there were leads in open areas but much of the ice extended out beyond scope limits.

16 observers participated in the count. We covered the Lake Ontario shore line, from 50 Point to Niagara on the Lake, and the Niagara River up to the falls. We also drove out on the east side of the Port Weller piers.

Four Bald Eagles were observed. (3 adults, 1 immature).

SPECIES AND NUMBERS: Total Waterfowl 8525:

Double-crested Cormorant 24; Tundra Swan 3; Mute Swan 30; Canada Goose 1081;

American Black Duck 15; Mallard 476; Gadwall 2; Greater Scaupe 3; Scaup (sp) 3;

Long-tailed Duck 1320; White-winged Scoter 84; Common Goldeneye 660; Bufflehead 284;

Common Merganser 81; Red-breasted Merganser 764; Unknown Waterfowl 3705; Snowy Owl 2;

St. Catharines Christmas Bird Count, December 17, 2017 By Jean Hampson and Bob Highcock

The Peninsula Field Naturalists held their Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 17, 2017. The temperature remained below freezing throughout the cloudy day.

Thanks to all the participants who assisted with this years' count. Additional thanks to Mary and John Potter for organizing the round-up party and everyone that brought main courses and treats for all to enjoy. As usual, the round-up was in the North Pelham Youth Hall.

New high counts were recorded for Cooper's Hawk (19), Red-bellied Woodpecker (75), Dark-eyed Junco (1529), White-crowned Sparrow (318) and White-throated Sparrow (61). For only the third SC CBC, a Savannah Sparrow was recorded.

For this year's count, we had 50 participants (listed below):
Brian Ahara, Rhonda Armstrong, John Black, Peter Bonenfant, Paul Chapman, Sue Chapman, Barb Charlton, Paula Clark, Emily Cornfield, Rachael Cornfield, Trevor Cornfield, Carl Damude, Janet Damude, Rob Dobos, Philip Downey, Kathy Ellis, Chris Escott, Denys Gardiner, Steve Gillies, Lynn Glover, Lynda Goodridge, Bev Hadler, Jean Hampson, Sara Handrigan, Bob Highcock, Martin Howley, Pam Howley, Marcie Jacklin, Nabil Khairallah, Nabila Khairallah, Kara Kristjanson, Win Laar, Bob Manson, Gisele Mills, Bill Rapley, Kayo Roy, Marlene Sanders, Joyce Sankey, Karin Schneider, Tim Seburn, Loretta Shields, Bill Smith, Dave Smith, Nancy Smith, Roy Sorgenfrei, John Stevens, Katherine Stoltz, Sally Tasane, Tom Thomas, Rick Young.

Total Birds: Individuals numbers 24209; Total Species 80.

Canada Goose 4201; Mute Swan 16; Tundra Swan 2; Gadwall 2; American Black Duck 23; Mallard 847; Canvasback 7; Redhead 48; Ring-necked Duck 35; Greater Scaup 11; Lesser Scaup 3; White-winged Scoter 9; Long-tailed Duck 77; Bufflehead 66; Common Goldeneye 170; Hooded Merganser 30; Common Merganser 249; Red-breasted Merganser 116; Ruddy Duck 1; Wild Turkey 32; Common Loon 1; Double-crested Cormorant 79; Great Blue Heron 4; Northern Harrier 7; Sharp-shinned Hawk 7; Cooper's Hawk 19; Northern Goshawk 1; Bald Eagle 3; Red-tailed Hawk 97; Rough-legged Hawk 4; American Coot 1; Bonaparte's Gull 4; Ring-billed Gull 48; Herring Gull 140; Glaucous Gull 1; Great Black-backed Gull 18; Rock Pigeon 564; Mourning Dove 1546; Eastern Screech Owl 12; Great Horned Owl 7; Snowy Owl 4; Belted Kingfisher 4; Red-bellied Woodpecker 75; Downy Woodpecker 79; Hairy Woodpecker 14; Northern Flicker 33; American Kestrel 26; Merlin 1; Northern Shrike 2; Blue Jay 659; American Crow 67; Horned Lark 73; Black-capped Chickadee 238; Tufted Titmouse 4; Red-breasted Nuthatch 10; White-breasted Nuthatch 27; Brown Creeper 2; Winter Wren 1; Carolina Wren 18; Golden-crowned Kinglet 6; Eastern Bluebird 65; American Robin 767; Northern Mocking Bird 19; European Starling 7521; Cedar Waxwing 40; Lapland Longspur 2; Snow Bunting 223; Yellow-rumped Warbler 1; American Tree Sparrow 731; Dark-eyed Junco 1529; White-crowned Sparrow 318; White-throated Sparrow 61; Savannah Sparrow 1; Song Sparrow 9; Northern Cardinal 253; Red-winged Blackbird 31; Brown-headed Cowbird 23; House Finch 271; American Goldfinch 387; and House Sparrow 1572.

NOTICE: Save the date for 2018. To avoid an increase in the Hall rental fee, we went ahead and booked the Hall before the end of 2017. The 2018 St. Catharines CBC will take place on Sunday, December 16. Hope you can assist and we'll see you then.

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Somehow the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club seems to have its ups and downs, much like many other clubs, organizations, and human endeavours in general. So, when a severe fog developed on Monday, January 22, 2018, and the expected speaker was unable to appear, the Club was fortunate to have a replacement amongst our local ranks. Thus:

Speaker: John Black: An Albatross Birding and Nature Tour in Chile

John's companions on this trip were Marcie Jacklin, Lynne Freeman, and Ivor Williams. Their planned destination was to first spend some days in Santiago and vicinity, and next travel on to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. The intention was "an Albatross birding and nature tour" as John described it. After arriving and settling in Santiago, they went walking in a park where they saw a Austral Thrush. They also met a new guide, since their original guide had to help his family who were in a dangerous forest fires zone. On their second day, they went east from Santiago to a hilly ski resorting area, where they had some birding success. They saw or heard Cinerous Ground Tyrant, California Quail, Dusky-tailed Canastero, Moustached Turca, but had no success finding a Chilean Tinamou. At the Park Yerba Loca, they were not allowed to enter because of the fire dangers. They spent four more days in the Santiago area before flying south to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, at Punta Arenas (pronounced "Puntarena") for six days of birding.

In the Punta Arenas area and in Tierra del Fuego, their group was guided by Cristofer De la Rivera Morales, and their driver Henry. In the Punta Arena area, they saw Upland Geese, Giant Petrel, Chilean Skua, Steamer Duck, and Black-browed Albatross and other birds as well. The group was ferried to Porvenir in Tierra del Fuego, and John mentioned that there was good birding at the Magellan Straits. There they saw Albatross, penguins, petrels, diving-petrels, skuas and giant-petrels and shearwaters. On the way to a lake they saw a beautiful Variable Hawk. At the lake, they found Magellenic Plovers (a new bird family to John) and watched them nearly an hour. In all, from January 26 to February 6, they had seen 177 species of birds on their trip, and John had added the Family of the Magellenic Plover to his family list. (Thanks to John for his fascinating travelogue!)

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The Directors of the PFN Executive have developed a set of “Programs and Outings”, a pamphlet intended to keep you informed about outings, evening presentation by speakers, membership information, and much more. Copies of the printed pamphlet are usually available at the evening meetings. However, for members who have missed the info for whatever reason, we hope the following notes will help to bring you up to date.

OUTINGS FOR 2018 SPRING/SUMMER

SWAYZE FALLS HIKE

Saturday, March 10 at 10:00 a.m.

Meet at the parking lot for Short Hills P.P. at the Roland Road entrance

Bob Highcock 905-688-1260

HAWK-WATCH OPEN HOUSE

Good Friday, March 30

10.00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Beamer Conservation Area, Grimbsy

This is an opportunity to observe migrating raptors

LICHENS, MOSSES & OTHER PLANTS

Saturday, April 21, at 9:30 a.m.

Louth Conservation Area.

Meet at Rockway Community Centre on Pelham Road to carpool

Roman Olszewski 905-734-9574

SANDHILL VALLEY (FONTHILL KAME)

Saturday, May 5, at 9:00 a.m

Meet at Shoppers Drug Mart Plaza in Fonthill to carpool

Barbara West 905-935-5339

Marlene Sanders 905-414-9233

MALCOLMSON ECO-PARK – BIRDING

Tuesday, May 15, at 8:30 a.m.

A good site for warblers & other migrants

Meet at the parking lot off Lakeshore Road at Niagara Street

Barbara West 905-935-5339

RUTHVEN PARK (birds & wildflowers)

Tuesday, May 19, at 8:30 a.m.

Meet at Shoppers Drug Mart Plaza in Fonthill to carpool

Bring your lunch.

Carol Horvat 905-687-8562

Marlene Sanders 905-414-9233

ST. JOHN'S C. A. EVENING WALK

Tuesday, May 22, at 6.30 p.m.

Park in the small parking lot before the gate

(The gate is locked at 8:00 p.m.)

Bob & Jean 905-688-1260

BIGGAR LAGOONS

Sunday, June 10 at 9:30 a.m.

Meet at Prudhomme's to carpool

Rick Young 905-734-6226

Carol Horvat 905-687-8562

REEB'S BAY & MORGAN'S POINT

Sunday, June 17, at 9:00 a.m.

Meet at Shoppers Drug Mart Plaza in Fonthill

Bring your lunch.

Rick Young 905-734-6226

JAYCEE PARK (evening walk)

Thursday, June 28 at 7:00 p.m.

543 Ontario Street. Bring some money to buy ice-creams in Port Dalhousie

Jean Hampson 905 -699- 1260

WINDMILL POINT

Saturday, July 7, at 9:a.m.

Meet at Shoppers Drug Mart Plaza in Fonthill, and bring lunch.

Rick Young 905-734-6226

(NOTICE: In case of inclement weather, for any of the outings, it is advisable that you contact the leader(s) to ensure that the outing will take place.

INDOOR PROGRAMS

7:30 P.M. on the fourth Monday of each month from September to April.

February 26, 2018 ALBERT GARAFOLO

Topic: Lake Erie Coast Project

March 26, 2018 PATRICK MOLDOWAN

Topic: Mauritius

April 23, 2018 ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

Members with name beginning with A to M, bring a dessert or salad;

Those with name beginning with N to Z, bring a main course.

Bring your own plate, cup and utensils.

Contributions to our raffle table would be welcome.

For further information: Carol Horvat 905-687-8562

PFN ANNUAL PICNIC:

June 2018 LOCATION AND DATE to be announced!



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 .

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The Peninsula Naturalist

Published: February, April/May, October/November

We welcome written articles or artwork on natural history topics. Colour photos (jpg) accompanying articles are welcome Please submit typed paper items or emailed to: jmpotter068@gmail.com . Please send submissions by email to e-address above, or by snail-mail to the Club's postal address. New ideas and constructive criticism are welcome.

Editor: John Potter

Assistant: Mary Potter

Deadlines for 2018 submissions: **2nd week of February; June/July; November**