

Peninsula Naturalist

Peninsula Field Naturalists
P.O. Box 23031, 124 Welland Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2R 7P6

No. 175

September 1994

PRESIDENT'S GREETING

Our club has participated in many successful events since the last newsletter in March.

The Pot Luck dinner was certainly the culinary highlight of the last few months. Many thanks to Mildred Heatherton and her crew for organizing all the delicious food and refreshments. Thanks to all the cooks who allowed us to sample some of their recipes. The slide show was greatly appreciated by those in attendance and provided some beautiful memories. Last, but not least, special thanks to Peter and Kerrie Graham for running the bucket raffle. They managed to raise \$311.00 as a result of all the generous donations from club members.

Ange Leahy and the Outings Committee have been at work this summer putting together a great outdoor program for the upcoming months. Vice-President Ana Lorraine Stirling has also been busy putting together what promises to be a lively indoor program for the 94/95 season.

As always Kim Robertson, our newsletter editor, has come through in a pinch, battling late write-ups from this president and other unforeseen difficulties to produce a top-notch newsletter.

As you can see, the PFN depends on volunteers to do everything, and right now we have a great team. But, we could use some help. If you are interested in serving on one of our committees - Refreshments, Welcoming, Environmental, Newsletter, Publicity or Outings, then please let me know. Right now Mildred could use some help with the Refreshment Committee. You could help her lug coffee urns to and from her car, maybe provide some cookies, or help in some other way.

Another way you can help is by offering to write articles for the newsletter. Volunteers to write up recent indoor talks or outdoor walks are always appreciated.

Cheers,
Marcie

DESSERT NIGHT

One of my favourite events of the year is quickly approaching. Every November we celebrate Christmas a little early by holding a dessert feast at the end of the monthly indoor meeting. Don't forget to bring a dessert, your own plates and utensils and an empty tummy!! If you can lend a hand helping out that night contact Mildred Heatherton.

1994 PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS EXECUTIVE

OFFICERS:

President..... Marcie Jacklin
Vice-President..... Ana Lorraine Stirling
Past President..... Carla Carlson
Secretary..... David Moore
Treasurer..... Catherine Smith
Membership..... June Corey

Editor..... Kim Robertson.....

DIRECTORS:

Colin Burns.....
Mildred Heatherton.....
Tracy Jennings.....
Richard Knapton.....
Bob Millman.....
Donna Scorfield.....

THE PFN LANDOWNER CONTACT PROGRAM

Recently, our club was asked if we would be interested in undertaking a landowner contact venture through a provincial initiative called the Carolinian Canada Program. This program involves contacting landowners in five local ANSI areas (Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest), namely, the Fonthill Sandhill Kame, Willoughby Clay Plain Marsh, Caister-Canborough Slough Forest, Jordan Valley and Point Abino. The goal of the program is to inform people of the significance of the area they own and provide them with, or lead them to, information about their environment. Armed with this knowledge, landowners can then make educated land use decisions that will help them to maintain the integrity of the Carolinian ecosystem of which they are a part.

Since the program's goals are so closely tied to the club's goals and objectives, and there is a chance to contribute to a land conservation initiative, the executive thought this would be a worthwhile project for the club to become involved in.

The 1994 Carolinian Canada program would be a continuation of previous programs run in 1985, 1987 and 1989. The most important people to contact are new property owners who may not be aware of the significance of the area they own.

This type of approach to conservation may be more practical than the past conventional methods. In reality, the private landowner has the potential to have the largest impact on the ecosystem since the majority of ownership in this region is private. This program hopes to encourage positive impacts.

The main hurdle for this program is the idea of continuity. Until now, summer students were hired to contact landowners, but once the summer was over that contact ends. Since our club is established, we can offer continuous contact for landowners. Our club also possesses an extraordinary wealth of knowledge within its membership from which landowners can benefit. This is a huge endeavour for our club, but we are confident that there are members who can envision the benefits of such a program and will offer their support.

Such a program requires a large resource base upon which we can draw. Landowners will have many questions about plant and animal identification, endangered species, aquatic habitats, etc. If there are any members who can offer books (or anything else) on Carolinian species, animal population information, identification, maps of the aforementioned areas, or anything else you feel may be relevant, please call me at (905) 892-6952.

We are also in need of financial assistance to make this program a reality. Marcie has attempted, in earnest, a fund raising venture, but to minimal avail. Any cash donations would be greatly appreciated. Send them to Marcie Jacklin, c/o Peninsula Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 23031, St. Catharines, Ont., L2R 7P6. A tax receipt will be issued to all donors.

The benefits of maintaining Carolinian Canada are as diverse as the populations living within it. If you have any questions regarding the program feel free to contact me at 892-6952, or Marcie Jacklin at 892-3108.

- Tracy Jennings -

NS&T FONTHILL SPUR - RECREATIONAL GREENWAY TRAIL

At the Pot Luck dinner in April, Dr. David Brown, Professor in the Institute of Urban and Environmental Studies at Brock University, described an exciting opportunity in this area. Due to the NS&T Fonthill Spur rail line being abandoned in July, the possibility of acquiring this land for a 'rail to trail' project was conceived. The old CN spur rail line runs from Fonthill to Thorold. The southern end of this rail line has already been decommissioned and forms part of the Steve Bauer Trails system in Pelham. Several other areas in the province have developed rails to trails and they have been tremendously successful.

David Brown was pleased with the response he received from our club. Many members signed a commitment sheet to support the proposal, attended a public meeting in May and wrote letters to local and regional governments. On the club's behalf, I wrote letters to the Mayors of the City of Thorold, the Town of Pelham, and the Regional Municipality of Niagara indicating the club's interest in this venture. As of July 12th, the Regional Municipality of Niagara and the Town of Pelham have endorsed acquisition of the NS&T Spur for the establishment of a rail trail. The City of Thorold has given its approval in principle towards this acquisition.

The next step will be to form a committee of interested stakeholders to investigate questions of price, cost-sharing, maintenance, fund raising, and landowner concerns. If anyone is interested in being on this committee as the PFN representative please contact me for further information.

- Marcie Jacklin -

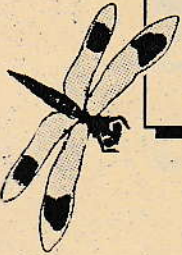
EARTH DAY 1994

The PFN celebrated Earth Day on April 23rd. Mark McDonell organized the planting of over 1,000 trees and seedlings in Mary Malcolmson Park. Many club members, as well as a class from a local high school, were on hand to assist with the planting. Mark was also able to get donations from many companies. The folks from Consumers Gas gave us hats, hot dogs and cold drinks for lunch. Laidlaw provided a dumpster for the trash. "Glad Bags" donated garbage bags. Hulse and English Funeral Home provided a free ad in the St. Catharines Standard. Canada Trust's "Friends of the Environment Foundation" provided a grant of \$1,600.00 for the purchase of the trees. Many thanks to Mark for organizing this TREEmendous event to celebrate the club's fortieth anniversary.

- Marcie Jacklin -

HELP!

Regretfully, after several years serving as Chair of the Publicity Committee, Mike Featherstone is resigning. Thanks for all your help, Mike. If anyone is interested in volunteering for this position please talk to one of the executive as soon as possible.



SUMAC

Perhaps the only time we really appreciate sumac is in the fall when so much of our countryside is aglow with the beautiful reds of the staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*). In the winter we carefully check every stand of sumac in the Fenwick and Fonthill areas in case a bluebird is feeding on the seeds (sometimes we are lucky), and now that wood carving is enjoying a resurgence, the wood of sumac has been rediscovered for the beauty of its grain and the wood for its ease in carving.

Staghorn sumac is a member of a genus of about 120 species found in subtropical and temperate regions, many of them occurring in southern Africa. The tree we are so familiar with gets its name from the shape and velvety covering of the branches, which resemble the velvet covered horns of the buck deer. This is a tree of open spaces; if timber has been taken out of a woodlot, staghorn sumac will soon make an appearance in the cut area, but as soon as the larger woodland species tower over it, it will die out. It is not generally welcomed in gardens because of its habit of putting up suckers.

The familiar dense, deep red velvety cones are found on the female tree. The seeds have a lemony flavour which can be very refreshing on a warm day. However, before sampling, one would be well advised to check and double check for insects.

Smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*) is a close relative and can also be found here. As the name suggests, this species lacks the velvety covering of its relative, but otherwise is very similar in appearance. Poison sumac is also found occasionally here. Growing in wetter locations than the other two, this tree does not have the cone-like cluster of red seeds, its fruit is a loose cluster of whitish, waxy, round berries. When the oils of the tree come into contact with the skin (directly or via clothing, a dog, etc.) a severe rash is caused and, as with poison ivy, all parts of the plant are extremely dangerous at all times of the year. But, as with poison ivy, the berries do provide food for some wildlife and birds in the winter when other food can be scarce.

- Audrey Barnsley -

reprinted from a previous PFN newsletter

SUMMER CAMP

The student we planned on sponsoring for summer camp was unable to attend. Unfortunately, we were unable to find a replacement. Watch for an announcement about next year.



OUTING PROTOCOL FOR NATURE HIKES

Some reminders to keep our outings safe and pleasant for everyone:

- on roads that vehicles travel, walk facing the oncoming traffic. If a car approaches, move quickly off the road!
- please don't exceed the speed limit -- this way, we won't lose any vehicles or scare any passengers.
- please do not talk when the outing leader is speaking.
- please speak in low tones so as not to frighten away birds and other wildlife.
- please do not pass the outing leader, and stay on paths unless told otherwise.
- supervised children are more than welcome on the hikes that are not specifically marked for children -- but please remember that on these outings, behaviour that is distracting to the rest of the group is not appropriate or appreciated.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

EARLY MORNING BIRD SONG & BREAKFAST - Sunday, May 29, 1994

Margaret Litke thinks it's been 20 odd years since the last 'dawn chorus' hike was held. When she suggested that we try it again, I just couldn't imagine anyone responding to the 5 a.m. meeting time -- so I suggested we also offer a nice breakfast to help entice people out. Even then I didn't think anyone would show up! I had this early morning rising hanging over my head for weeks before the dreaded day (I stay up toooo late -- bat watching fits in better with my lifestyle). The day arrived and I arose and got there a bit early expecting to console Margaret about no one showing up, prepared to eat as much of her breakfast as I could all by myself. Well, lo and behold, there were cars there ahead of me. Would you believe it -- 16 people attended (and this was the FON Conference weekend, so there potentially would have been even more).

In darkness we trooped down along middle road to the entrance of their lower property. Jake Litke had mowed paths for us to travel on and in the darkness we surely needed them. Then I knew why so many people had attended -- the darkness ever so slowly lifted, the mist from 15 Mile Creek drifted around us, the sliver of moon waned above and the first bird called out. Then another and another as people identified their calls for us -- a Red-eyed Vireo, a Catbird, warblers, a Great Blue Heron who fishes in this bit of creek every day flew low overhead, an Eastern Meadowlark went by -- it was as though we were in an enchanted place. And, in fact, I guess we were!

We wandered away from the creek towards a farmer's field, the smell of garlic growing stronger and stronger. Waves of 'Field Garlic', *Allium vineale*, were everywhere (the local story the Litkes told was that a truck travelling along highway 8 lost its load of garlic one day when there was an accident forty years ago or more. The creek, it would seem, which flows north towards Lake Ontario has carried the garlic as far as the Litke's property on Middle Road!). Off in the distance, we had a clear view of a deer that they occasionally see. It started towards us, a sight to see when she threw her head up and froze, as she suddenly became aware of us. Off she bounded.

As we listened and saw birds flitting by, we wandered through the tree species that the Litkes have planted on their property -- maples, pines, spruce, Black Locust and Walnut, White Birch -- nine acres of trees, field and yard. It was so lovely out, that by the time we were hungry, Margaret and her daughter (visiting from Halifax and willing to help), served us scrambled eggs, sausages, fruit, muffins and cereal on their patio.

Margaret and Jake hosted this breakfast as a gift to our club, which we accepted happily, (thank you!), and as well they have extended an invitation to members who read this and want to come by to bird on their lovely property. (I think you should go by to see their Moon Flowers -- they only come out at dusk! The Moon Flowers, not the Litkes!) Anyway, give them a call first (684-7838), you'll enjoy yourself!

- Carla Carlson -

NATIVE STONE TOOL MAKING - Sunday, June 12, 1994

We had a wonderful outing on Sunday, June 12th. Under the direction of Brock University geologist, Bill Parkins, we visited a cobble beach at Fort Erie to learn about the raw materials early native people used to make their stone tools. There were about thirteen or fourteen of us; people kept moving about, so I couldn't get an accurate count. It was really fascinating to learn so much about our early ancestors, all of whom used stone tools to some degree. My respect for my ancient forefathers increased considerably. I will certainly never again refer to them as "primitive". They used different types of rock for a variety of purposes, such as hammers, anvils, net weights, boiling stones, and, of course, cutting implements. By the way, the artifacts we call arrow heads very rarely are actually arrow heads. Bows and arrows were only introduced about 1300 years ago, and the average age for the found "arrow head" is about ten thousand years. The implements in question were usually knives, or sometimes spear-points.

Bill explained and demonstrated the stone-tool culture to us in the morning, and after lunch we were treated to a demonstration of flint-knapping by Dan Long. It was a memorable experience to see Dan transform a slab of black chert into a sharp and eminently usable knife. One could have easily shaved with the finished product. That's what Bill told us; he himself has a luxuriant beard. It was intriguing to note that the flint-knapping hammer commonly used was, and is, a lump of moose or deer antler. This is apparently of the ideal composition for splitting the chert without shattering it.

The weather turned out to be warm and sunny. The lake was calm, the views of Buffalo were excellent. Several species of birds and plants were evident. Add to all of this the company and the topic, and the result was one of the best field trips I have ever been on.

- Ted Theobald -



ARROWHEAD JEWELLERY: Dan Long, who demonstrated the making of an arrowhead for us on the above outing, has beautiful arrowhead necklaces for sale. They are made of different materials collected from different places in North America, including the Onendaga flint that local Natives would have used. Since those on the outing were so interested in purchasing these unique necklaces, we wanted to let the rest of you know about them. They would make a lovely present for both men and women. Call Dan Long for information: (905) 295-4864.

CITY WEED WALK - Wednesday, June 29, 1994

When we got there, there were 24 people and we got to put our own name tags on. There was a weed on the side of the sidewalk. It was called a Wild Carrot. Carla told us to rub our fingers on the weed and smell it. It smelled like carrots. After a while, we got back to where we started and went into the Cellar Bench restaurant. We had a salad made of flowers and I had a piece of cake. THE END.

- April Devitt, age 10 -

A GIFT FROM DAN LONG

To my delight, a package arrived in the mail containing the chert knife that Dan Long created on our native stone tool making outing. Dan has graciously donated this beautiful piece to our club. It will be on display at our September meeting. Many thanks, from all of us, for this special gift.

- Carla Carlson -

RACCOON RABIES

Way back in May of this year, Marcie asked me to write an article on raccoon rabies for our newsletter. At the time, I happily agreed. Then summer came and, like many of us, I became caught up in my summertime activities and forgot about the article. Or at least I forgot about the article until last week when I was bitten by a 150 lb Neapolitan Mastiff(ie. a very big dog!). Needless to say, rabies suddenly became a very real concern of mine.

The strain of rabies that has been in Ontario for decades is the arctic fox strain and is carried mostly by foxes and skunks. Raccoon rabies is a strain that, as its name implies, is carried by raccoons. Raccoon rabies has been evident in Florida since the 1940's and has been slowly working its way up the east coast of the U.S. According to the information I have at this time, raccoon rabies has not yet reached Ontario, although it has been reported in New York State and is expected to reach Ontario sometime this year. For this reason, the Ontario ministries of Natural Resources; Health; and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; as well as, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Niagara Regional Health Department, police, humane societies and other agencies have mobilized to block the spread of raccoon rabies within our borders.

Rabies (including raccoon rabies) is a viral disease that is carried in an animal's saliva. Both humans and other animals can be infected with the rabies virus by being bitten and/or licked by an infected animal. The virus attacks the brain and is fatal if appropriate antidotes are not administered.

Rabid animals exhibit two different behaviour patterns known as "dumb" or "furious" rabies. With dumb rabies the animal will be depressed, will isolate itself, may appear to lose its fear of humans, and may show signs of paralysis in its face or hind limbs. With furious rabies, the animal will show signs of extreme excitement and aggression. It may bite and gnaw its own limbs, and it may attack stationary things or other animals. Bouts of furious rabies may alternate with periods of depression. Eventually, an infected animal will die.

If you come into contact with a rabid animal neither approach nor touch it and report your findings to the humane society (for the Lincoln County Humane Society the number is 905-682-0767) or the police. If you have been bitten by a rabid animal, wash the wound thoroughly and see a doctor immediately. The treatment for rabies is a series of five injections given over a one month period.

Preventing exposure to all strains of rabies is of utmost importance. Having your pets vaccinated for rabies (today's vaccines include protection from raccoon rabies) is a critical first step. Potential pet owners beware, however, that the vaccinations that include rabies protection are expensive (in my experience \$100 per dog per year). But unless you can keep an eye on your pets every minute of every day, rabies vaccines are a must for any responsible pet owner. Raccoon-proofing your home and warning the members of your family to avoid stray and wild animals are also ways individuals can prevent exposure to raccoon rabies.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is also going to execute a Trap-Vaccinate-Release (TVR) Program in the Niagara Region as soon as raccoon rabies is identified in the Niagara Peninsula. This program will involve live-trapping raccoons, vaccinating them, marking them with ear tags, and releasing them. The program intends to vaccinate 60 to 70 per cent of the raccoon population. Point-control programs will also be carried out by MNR staff when rabid raccoons are confirmed. In urban areas, this will involve euthanizing all raccoons within a 2 km radius of a confirmed case and vaccinating raccoons within an additional 2 km radius. In rural areas, 4 km radii will be covered as above.

To obtain more information regarding raccoon rabies you may want to send for the series of fact sheets available at the Natural Resources Information Centre, Room M1-73, MacDonald Block, 900 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C1 (416-314-2000).

Well, much to my relief, the mastiff that bit me had been vaccinated for rabies this year. His owner and I are still on speaking terms and have worked out an arrangement that should prevent another unfortunate incident. My only discomfort has been having to stand up while I wrote this article!

- Ana Lorraine Stirling -

BIRDATHON: Thanks to my sponsors, this year I was able to raise over \$500.00 for my Birdathon. The PFN will receive about \$125.00 as part of their share. By the way, I saw (or heard) 131 species in 24 hours! Not a bad day!

- Marcie Jacklin -

INDOOR MEETINGS

BACKYARD PRAIRIES in ONTARIO - Monday, March 28, 1994

Last March, Larry Lamb talked to us about Prairies in Ontario. Larry is President of the Canadian Wildflower Society and one of its founding directors. I first met Larry when he visited Mary Malcolmson Park and gave us lots of valuable information on creating a prairie in this area. Larry's slide show was a marvellous adventure to some of the remnant prairies left in Southern Ontario. One of the most dramatic and extensive sites is on Walpole Island, on the St. Clair River, where many distinctive prairie plants such as Iron Weed, Coreopsis, coneflowers and many grasses and sedges flourish. Larry discussed Black Oak savannahs, a highly endangered habitat in Canada. Examples are found in Norfolk County and, surprisingly, in High Park in Toronto. Some of the best examples of prairie plant communities are found along railway lines, for example, around Brantford and Waterloo-Guelph. For a grand finale, Larry showed us slides of a prairie that was established at the University of Waterloo and his own backyard prairie - full of many delights all year round. His slides inspired Richard and I to plant our own mini-prairie this year. Maybe one day our yard will look as wonderful as some of Larry's slides.

- Marcie Jacklin -

The PFN would like to welcome the following new members:

Diane Aruvee of St. Catharines
Nancy Devitt of St. Catharines

Charlie Parker of Beamsville
Wm. Spring of St. Catharines



WAINFLEET BOG UPDATE

In March of this year, the PFN was informed of the Ministry of Natural Resources' new "Keep it Wild" campaign. As part of the campaign, the MNR proposed that a 230 hectare section of the Wainfleet Bog be included as a Nature Reserve within the provincial park system. Several members of the PFN attended a public meeting and I wrote a letter to the MNR endorsing this project on the club's behalf.

The Wainfleet Bog is considered to be the second most significant botanical site in the Niagara area, in addition to being the only remaining significant bog in southern Ontario. The Wainfleet Bog is also a significant area for nesting birds and may still contain a remnant population of Massasauga Rattlesnakes. The classification of 'Nature Reserve' would allow only low-intensity recreational activities such as walking and birdwatching. Under this designation, hunting, snowmobiling and the use of all-terrain vehicles would not be permitted.

Unfortunately, this designation was not obtained for the Wainfleet Bog nor for several other areas. According to a FON media release on April 13th, 1994 this is a result of an organized campaign by "local sportsmen who have been packing local public meetings and bombarding the Government with hostile criticism over possible loss of hunting and recreational opportunities." The Government succumbed to these bullying tactics and threats, even though 80% of the province is Crown Land where hunting is generally permitted. Another interesting statistic is that 18.3% of the people of Ontario take non-consumptive trips and outings compared to 5.4% who hunt.

If you are as concerned as I am about the Government's failure to stand firm on its policy to "Keep it Wild", then please send a letter to Howard Hampton and Bob Rae. Their addresses are found elsewhere in this newsletter.

- Marcie Jacklin -

VOICING YOUR CONCERNS

It is important to remember that elected officials are our employees and that everyone has a right to voice their concerns to these people on various issues. This method of lobbying does work! Recently, the federal government decided to close a railway line that would result in increased rail traffic through Algonquin Park. As a result of intense public lobbying which opposed this move, including a eloquent letter written by Bob Millman on the club's behalf, this decision is in the process of being reversed! For your interest, here are some important addresses:

Christel Haeck
NDP MPP for St. Catharines-Brock
125 Queenston St., St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 2Z6

James Bradley
Liberal MPP for St. Catharines
2 Secord St., St. Catharines, Ontario L2N 1K8

Peter Kormos
NDP MPP for Welland-Thorold
60 King St., Welland, Ontario L3B 6A4

C.J. (Bud) Wildman
Minister of Environment and Energy
12th Floor, 135 St. Clair Ave. W.,
Toronto, Ontario, M4V 1P5

Howard Hampton
Minister of Natural Resources
6th Floor, Room 6301 Whitney Block,
99 Wellesley Street West,
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1W3

Bob Rae
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Legislative Building,
Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

Sheila Copps
Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of the Environment
28th Floor, 10 Wellington St.,
Hull, Quebec, K1A 0H3

UPCOMING EVENTS

A conference linking research, planning and community in the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve will be held this fall at Hockley Valley Resort in Mono Township. Forms for registration will be available at the September meeting.

The Royal Botanical Gardens is offering the following night course, Advanced Ornithology and Bird Identification from September 15th to December 1st. To register contact the RBG at P.O. Box 399, Hamilton, Ontario L8N 3H8 or (905) 527-1158 before September 2nd.

NATURE SLIDES : A REMINDER

Eventually, for those who have an accumulation of slides, the time will come when the disposal of that collection is a reality for someone. How about sooner rather than later?

Good nature slides can be put to effective use at the WOODEND ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE where programs serve all grade levels. If possible, please include identity of subject, when and where taken, and name of photographer.

The packet of slides can be left at any Lincoln County Board of Education school - elementary or secondary. Label the packet: Mr. Bill Hughes, Woodend Environmental Centre (LCBE)

- Bob Layton -

The following article was originally published in the PFN's bulletin, *Niagara Naturalist*, in May 1966.

POISON IN THE BACK YARD

This article prepared by the St. John's Ambulance Association
Submitted by Gustave J. Yaki

A potentially deadly plant in your living room? It's not so surprising, for poisonous plants are everywhere - in the house, in the garden, in the woods and along the roadside.

The U.S. Public Health Service reports that about 12,000 children every year ingest potentially poisonous plants. A recent study of 100 child poisonings in the Seattle area showed that nearly 10% or 9 of the youngsters had eaten toxic plants. Interestingly enough, in six of these cases, the parents of the children had no idea that the plants were dangerous.

Many poisonous plants are so common and seemingly innocuous that one doesn't suspect their toxic qualities. Who would guess that the beautiful oleander bush, grown indoors and out-doors all over the country, contains a deadly heart stimulant similar to the drug digitalis? So powerful is this toxin that a single leaf of the oleander can kill a child. And many people have died merely from eating steaks that had been speared on oleander twigs and roasted over a fire.

It's easy to be deceived by plants, for one part may be edible while another is poisonous. For example, twigs of cherry trees release cyanide when eaten. Peach tree leaves contain hydrocyanic acid, one of the most dangerous poisons known. Five children became ill recently after drinking "tea" brewed with hot water and peach leaves.

Even two of our most popular vegetables, the potato and tomato come from plants related to the deadly nightshade. Although fresh tomato fruits and potato tubers are harmless, the foliage and vines of both tomato and potato plants contain alkaloid poisons that can cause severe digestive upset and nervous disorder.

Most dangerous of all plants in the vegetable garden is the rhubarb. Its stalk, commonly used in baking and cooking, of course is not toxic, but the leaf blade contains oxalic acid which crystallizes in the kidneys, causing severe damage.

Herewith is a list of common poisonous plants, toxic parts and symptoms:

Hyacinth, Narcissus, Daffodil - bulbs - nausea, vomiting, diarrhea. May be fatal.

Oleander - leaves, branches - extremely poisonous, affects the heart, produces severe digestive upset and has caused death.

Poinsettia - leaves fatal. One leaf can kill a child.

Rosary pea, Caster bean - seeds - fatal. A single rosary pea seed has caused death. One or two castor bean seeds are near the lethal dose for adults.

Mistletoe - berries - fatal. Both children and adults have died from eating berries.

Larkspur - young plant, seeds - digestive upset, nervous excitement, depression. May be fatal.

Monkshood - fleshy roots - digestive upset, nervous excitement.

Autumn crocus, Star-of-Bethlehem, Lily of the valley - leaves, flowers - irregular heart beat and pulse, usually accompanied by digestive upset and mental confusion.

Iris - underground stems - severe, but not usually serious digestive upset.

Foxglove - leaves - one of the sources of the drug digitalis, used to stimulate the heart. In large amounts, the active principles dangerously cause irregular heart-beat and pulse, usually digestive upset and mental confusion. May be fatal.

Bleeding heart - foliage, roots - (Dutchman's Disease) May be dangerous in large amounts. Has proven fatal to cattle.

Rhubarb - leaf, blade - fatal. Large amounts of raw or cooked leaves can cause convulsions, coma, followed rapidly by death.

Daphne - berries - fatal. A few berries can kill a child.

Wisteria - seeds, pods - mild to severe digestive upset. Many children are poisoned by this plant.

Golden chain - bean-like capsules in which the seeds are suspended - excitement, staggering, convulsions and coma, may be fatal.

Laurels, Rhododendron, Azaleas - all parts - fatal. Produces nausea, vomiting, depression, difficult breathing, prostration and coma.

Jessamine - berries - fatal. Digestive disturbance and nervous symptoms.

Yew - berries, foliage - fatal. Foliage more toxic than berries. Death is usually sudden without warning symptoms.

Wild and cultivated cherries - twigs, foliage - fatal. Contains a compound that releases cyanide when eaten. Gasping excitement, and prostration are common symptoms that often appear within minutes.

Oaks - foliage, acorns - affects kidneys gradually, symptoms appear only after several days or weeks. Takes a large amount of poisoning, children should not be allowed to chew on acorns.

Dieffenbachia (Dumb cane), Elephant ear - all parts - intense burning and irritation of the mouth and tongue. Death can occur if base of the tongue swells enough to block the air passage of the throat.

Elderberry - all parts, especially roots - children have been poisoned by using pieces of the pithy stems for blowguns. Nausea and digestive upset.

Black locust - bark, sprouts, foliage - children have suffered nausea, weakness and depression after chewing the bark and seeds.

This will give a small idea of the common flowers, herbs, seeds, and common trees that are around the house, garden and surrounding area. The only safeguard, authorities say, is to keep all plants away from very small children who may nibble on them and to teach children never to eat or put in their mouths any plant or berry not commonly used as food.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PROTECTS THREE MORE SPECIES

Three more species have been included under Ontario's Endangered Species Act. Henslow's Sparrows, Wood Poppies and Hoary Mountain Mint are now protected by this legislation. Unfortunately, for Henslow's Sparrow, this protection may be too little too late since very few birds have been sighted in Ontario within the past few years. The Wood Poppy is found in Canada only in the London area. The Hoary Mountain Mint is a herb whose only known Canadian habitat is near Hamilton. For further information contact Rosemary Hnatiuk, Minister's Office, Ministry of Natural Resources, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1W3. (416) 314-2208.

- Marcie Jacklin -

PFN ANNUAL ELECTION

With our new constitution, our annual meeting of members is held in November. It is at this time that our yearly election occurs. Anyone interested in running for election at the November 1994 meeting please contact Carla Carlson at 562-3746. The new executive will not take up their duties until the January 23rd, 1995 meeting.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As I may be returning to the Gaspé this fall, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped to make my job as editor an enjoyable one. I'd especially like to thank Carla Carlson, June Corey, Marcie Jacklin, and Ange Leahy for being my regular proof readers; as well as Betty Copeland, June Corey and Kay Smith for getting the newsletter out to you; and all the other people who have helped me with the newsletter at one time or another. I'd also like to thank my former employers at Arcturus Environmental for their generous support. Over the past year and a half, Arcturus Environmental has supplied the recycled paper for newsletters and outings brochures, and allowed me access to their computer system, printer, and photocopier. This, as you can imagine, has saved our club a substantial amount of money, and has allowed us to redirect funds to other worthy causes. And last, but not least, I'd like to thank those of you who have submitted articles for publication.

Please send your newsletter submissions to: The Newsletter Editor, Peninsula Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 23031, Midtown Postal Outlet, 124 Welland Avenue, St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 7P6. The submission deadline for the November issue of the *Peninsula Naturalist* is October 20th. Please get your contributions in early.