

# The Peninsula Naturalist

Volume 195

Newsletter of the Peninsula Field Naturalist Club

October 2000

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here we are at the beginning of another program year. Your Outings and Programs Committees have done an outstanding job - again - to bring you a varied and intriguing schedule. Please keep your brochure close at hand so you won't miss out on the many activities they have planned.

As always, I encourage you to consider how you might become involved in the activities of the PFN - as a Member of the Board, contributor to the newsletter (we always need people willing to write a brief summary of field trips), baker of cookies, greeter of visitors at meetings and outings, participant in study groups, and generator of new ideas!

It hardly seems possible that this will be my last opportunity to write to you as President of the PFN. The last four years have passed quickly, filled with challenges, good times, and much learning on my part. I have especially appreciated the opportunity to work with many knowledgeable and skilled people in our organization and have developed a deep respect-for your dedication to nature, ecology and conservation. Your willingness to step forward to help with programs, outings and the many club activities has been outstanding and inspirational. I am sure that willingness to share will continue well into the future.

I particularly want to acknowledge the hard work and unstinting support of all those who have served on the Executive Committee during my two terms of office. Thank you so much.

Some of those who have made major contributions to the PFN over the years are no longer with us. Most recently, our hearts were saddened this spring by the death of Dr. Robert Fisher, someone who opened the eyes of many of us to the world of mushrooms. We will miss his presence, his many astute questions of speakers, and his willingness to share his expertise and artistry.

As we look ahead, there are many opportunities for those committed to the protection of the natural environment.

Together we have the interest, the commitment and the perseverance to make a difference.

- Maggie Smiley -



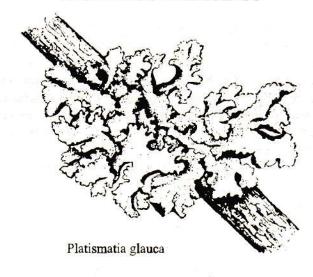
A Remembrance from Robert Fisher April 18, 1923 - June 4, 2000

HOPE

To know screnity The tragic must by times invade our lives That the bitter and the sweet each give to each dimension And peace of mind, though fragile thing its moments short and evanescent Can with central strand of love the pain surmount And make for each a haven. Do not despate To love is such a precious gift it will prevail And momentary sadness Sink with time beneath tranquility.

- R. W. Fisher -

### PAST INDOOR MEETINGS



### LICHENS - AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP MARCH 27, 2000

Roman Olszewski has an unusual and fascinating hobby. Some people may find it odd but for Roman, searching for and studying lichens has become second nature, and his enthusiasm for them carried over into his lecture to us. With his excellent slides he showed us the variety of colours, shapes, sizes and habitats of these small fungi.

Lichens are unusual because they are really a meshwork of two different living organism, a fungus and a green algae, which co-exist in a symbiotic, mutual beneficial relationship. The algae produces food through photosynthesis which the fungus consumes. The fungus provides protection for the algae in an environment that the algae could not exist in on its own. The fungus produces acids that roughen surfaces. This roughness allows the lichen to anchor itself virtually on any surface.

There are three main types of lichens; Crustose lichens which are flat and crusty as the name implies, Foliose lichens which look like small leaves crowded together, and Fruiticose lichens which form bunches of twisting branches resembling tiny shrubs. Lichens reproduce by pieces breaking off and budding into new plants, or by minute spores which are dispersed by the wind.

Lichens can survive anywhere - on hot dry deserts, in the freezing arctic and high up in windy mountains. There are more than 350 different species in the Antarctic alone. They can survive in a desiccated form on only air, light and a few minerals. Since most of the minerals come from the air and rain, lichens are good indicators of the pollution present in the environment. Scientists know that the air contains pollutants when lichens begin to die.

Although lichens are relatively easy to collect and

store, you do require a high magnification microscope to study them in detail, since all of their structures (such as spores) are produced in miniature. Many of the lichens are quite beautiful to look at due to their vibrant colours, as well as their unusual, interesting shapes. Bright yellows and blue-greens are common among lichens. The "British Soldier" lichens sport scarlet caps on pale grey stalks.

Lichens are useful to us in ways that are as diverse as the lichens are themselves. They can be used as tiny trees in scale model train sets. Some produce a gelatinous substance that is used in the preparation of puddings. Others are used in bacteria culture media, and two types of lichens are used to produce the pink/blue colour changes in litmus paper. Lichens, however are very bitter-tasting because of the acid they produce and are generally not consumed by humans or animals, although a few animals such as reindeer are adapted to feed on them.

Thanks Roman for bringing the story of the lichens to us. On our nature walks we will be more aware of yet another part of our amazing natural world.

- Joyce Blaikie -

### PAST OUTDOOR EVENTS

### PAUL CHAPMAN'S MYSTERY TOUR APRIL 16, 2000

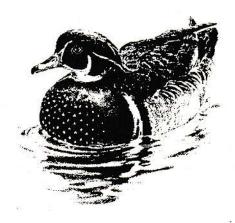
On April 16, nine of us met Paul Chapman to accompany him on his scheduled "Mystery Tour". We proceeded to Cindy Drive and parked our cars at the crossing of Walker Creek. We followed the nature trail in a North-Easterly direction along the creek. As we approached the lake the natural area increased in width with huge weeping willow trees and bordering the lake a sand dune some twenty feet in height. Below the dune lay the Garden City Beach with beautiful sand. On the lake we spotted Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Cormorants and a flock of White-winged Scoter. Inland we had good views of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

We then drove to an old railway right-of-way, crossing York Road at No. 2 Concession road, just east of St. Davids. Paul told us that the original line was built in 1854 and ran from Niagara Falls to Niagara-on-the-Lake. It was removed from service in 1960. We traversed the right of way in a Southerly direction to a point of junction with the Bruce Trail. The trail was well maintained and Blood Root was already in bloom along the edges. We passed the site of a huge lime kiln, constructed, 'naturally', of limestone rock and located at the crest of the escarpment above the right-of-way. We found an old cast iron pipe about 12 inch in diameter

and fifteen feet in length. It was well preserved even at 150 years old. Cast iron pipe was used for culverts because concrete and galvanized iron pipe were not yet available.

We all thanked Paul for a most enjoyable and interesting morning.

- Robert Millman -



SPRING BIRDING AT MUD LAKE, MORGAN'S POINT AND ROCK POINT SUNDAY MAY 7, 2000

It was time once again to join the Millman's for their annual outing to Mud Lake and the shores of Lake Erie. The day started early at 7:30 am so that we would get a chance to spot some of the early spring migrants that were passing through. Mud Lake is a favourite location for birders because it is comprised of a number of different habitats all located within an easy walking distance of one another. Circling the lake, one encounters. thickets with plenty of dense underbrush, forested areas, open meadow, marshes, and open water. These habitats can support a myriad of different birds that either breed in the area or use it as a resting spot during migration. This year however proved to be disappointing for those of us who were hoping to spot some of the 'regulars' that are often seen in these various habitats. Very few warblers were spotted in the thickets and underbrush. The lake water was calm but no water fowl were making use of this refuge. The open field area was silent of the distinctive 'ping pong' call of the Field Sparrows. We did see a higher than usual number of Northern Cardinals that flitted from one cedar bush to another. A walk around the lake always brings its rewards. We heard the call of a Virginia Rail in the marsh area and also got a good close-up look at a Black-throated Blue and a Black-throated Green Warbler.

We then headed towards the shores of Lake Erie where we had a quick stop at Morgan's Point. The wind was coming off the lake from the south and acted like an air conditioner. Though the rest of the peninsula was

experiencing temperatures in the mid twenties, the temperature along Lake Erie was about 10 degrees below that. Some us had dressed for the warmth and were not prepared for the blast of cold air off the lake. The birds also were taking refuge in the underbrush and were difficult to spot. The highlight at Morgan's Point was the sighting of a pair of Eastern Towhees which for some of us was something that we don't get a chance to see every year. We also spotted a Wood Duck off the shores.

We stopped at Rock Point for a quick picnic lunch where we were entertained by singing Yellow Warblers feeding in the willows. Because of the better than usual spring conditions, most warblers were not stopping on their migration up north so the numbers here were very low. We were amazed however at the number of Baltimore Orioles, counting as many as 20 at a time in the trees above.

In total we spotted 55 species for the day. As always, even though we didn't see some of the birds we expected, we did get some surprises along the way. Thank you Marg and Bob for once again giving us an enjoyable day.

- Karin Schneider -



NIAGARA FALLS ARBORETUM WALK WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2000

PFN club members & guests were met with an invigorating autumn wind as we all embarked on one of the first outings of the fall season at the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens. Horticulturalist Nancy Luft led the group first through the recently-renovated Herb Garden, then through the magnificent Arboretum.

The entire property is just over 100 acres situated between the Niagara River Gorge and an Ontario Hydro Power Canal. Once considered unproductive farmland, the gardens were developed in 1936 by the Niagara Parks Commission as a School of Horticulture to train

apprentice gardeners. The School is now the only residential school of its kind in Canada.

Despite the nip in the air, the Herb Garden was still in full bloom. The entire lay-out had been redesigned the year before to better group the plants and define proper walkways. The group enjoyed the fragrant displays of herbs categorized as Native, Culinary, Commercial, Dye Plants and Pot-Pourri. One of the most interesting sections was "Poisonous Plants" which featured the rather common catnip (Nepeta cataria) and an unidentified Goldenrod. It was a good reminder for us all to use caution when identifying plants for personal use.

Heading over towards the Arboretum, the group passed through the Specimen Tree Area. These trees had all been chosen for various unique features: the London Plane Tree (Platanus acerifolia) for its mottled bark and resistance to pollution; the Golden Rain Tree (Koelreuteria paniculata) for its clusters of yellow flowers in spring; the Silk Tree (Albizia julibrissin) for its wispy powderpuff-like flowers and the Dawn Redwood (Metasequoia glyptostroboides) for its status as a living fossil. The Dawn Redwood is native to China and is the only living member of its genus. It was known only by fossil imprints until a living specimen was found in 1941.

Trees in the Arboretum are grouped according to Family. Nancy was able to help us learn how to identify individual species by bark, leaf and fruit. Starting with the conifers, we learned that the cones of spruces hang down from the branches while those of firs sit above the branch. Nancy also suggested good conifer cultivars to plant for particular sites. As darkness fell, we wound our way through the oaks, ashes, mulberries, poplars and maples. We realized that the best way to learn them all was by making notes and sketches - and by revisiting them often! Fortunately, the gardens are open year round and admission is free. Best of all, the trees are labeled if you get stuck on your i.d.!

- Kelly Grant -

# A JOURNEY INTO MARCY'S WOODS SUNDAY APRIL 30<sup>TH</sup>, 2000

Today I revisited a most wonderful place where you can lose yourself in the majestic beauty of a natural wonderland. Here you can forget your trials and tribulations of the previous week and revitalize your spirit. This place harbours one of the few remaining natural sand dunes found in Southern Ontario. It is located along the Lake Erie shoreline and is known as Marcy's Woods.

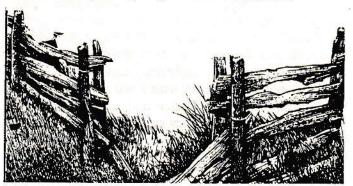
My colleagues and I arrived at about 9:15 a.m. and as we entered the property we were immediately greeted by a chorus of songbirds. Among the songsters we rec-

ognized both species of Kinglets (Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned) as well Chipping Sparrows, two or three Eastern Towhee, several White-throated Sparrows. Robins, Blue Jays, Cardinals, Chickadees, and a Tufted Titmouse who sang his little heart out. Hermit Thrush were also spotted as they flew across the path and disappeared into the dense shrubbery where one paused briefly to allow us to identify it.

As we ventured deeper into the forest we left our chorusters behind. As their beautiful voices faded the silence became almost deafening; only our footfalls and our hushed voices could be heard. Suddenly the sound of a male Ruffed Grouse silenced us, forcing us to halt and make certain we weren't hearing things. After a brief moment the drumming began only to disappear as quickly as it started. We were about to continue our journey when a Winter Wren darted in front of us and quickly disappeared into the undergrowth of fallen logs and branches. The silence returned and so we turned our attention to studying the wildflowers that grew on both sides of the path. We identified several of them which included Hepaticas, Marsh Marigold, Dutchman's Breeches, both Red and White Trilliums, and Bellworts. Suddenly the song of a Winter Wren drew our attention away from the wildflowers, and even though I never spotted it, I will never forget the melodious song.

Our journey continued down the well worn path when our eyes were drawn skyward by the flitting movement of small birds. We identified more Kinglets and Chickadees and to our surprise one lone Palm Warbler was also spotted. This small mixed flock continued on its journey up the ridge as we continued ours.

Up ahead a bend appeared in the path and as we neared it the call of a Red-bellied Woodpecker hastened our steps towards it. As we rounded the bend we noticed a clump of Yellow Birch which had seen better days nestled in the background surrounded by younger trees and shrubs. The Red-bellied Woodpecker called again and there, three quarters of the way up the trunk, where several branches reached skyward, tucked down in the centre we spotted our caller. After admiring it for a few moments our attention was drawn to the right by the song of a Baltimore Oriole. I thought I had spotted it, but due to the poor lighting I couldn't be certain.



Before we could confirm this sighting, the bird flew off and disappeared deeper into the forest. As one bird disappeared another was found. One keen colleague located a Black-throated Blue Warbler. After a careful search the rest of us got a good look at this beautiful bird and were able to hear its song. Just then another colleague spotted a Black and White Warbler, allowing us all to get a good look at this splendid warbler.

As we approached the sand dunes, another lull in bird activity allowed us again to turn our attention to more wildflowers including Mayapples just beginning to open, Jack in the Pulpit not yet opened and Wild Ginger. Another flurry of activity attracted our attention. Once more, a large mixed flock of birds was spotted consisting of more kinglets and chickadees as well as several Yellow-rumped Warblers. We retraced our steps back to the main path and headed towards the Marcy Cabin where we were greeted by an Eastern Phoebe. As morning approached noon several of the forest denizens began to settle down for an afternoon nap. My colleagues and I made our way back to the parking lot.

I really regretted leaving this small piece of paradise and it's inhabitants, and although some birds will move on to their northern breeding grounds; others will remain and raise their young. In the fall, many will take the long, arduous journey down to their wintering grounds, and their cycles of life will go on.

As for me, I will leave Marcy's Woods with fond memories of a brief respite, quiet moments observing and enjoying nature's simple wonders.

- Gary T. Pieterse -

NO SPORTS FIELDS FOR BRADSHAW PARK!

More often then not, we include reports about our few remaining natural areas being threatened or lost to development. It therefore gives me great pleasure (in case you missed it) to report that a recommendation has been put forward by the Pelham general committee members to the Town Council that Bradshaw Park be kept in a natural state with no sports field allowed.

The property in question was willed to the town by Harold S. Bradshaw who passed away in December 1982. The town took possession of the property in January 2000. Council originally endorsed a concept plan that incorporated both active and passive uses of the park through a trail system and soccer fields. In 1999 an environmental impact study found some unique natural features worth preserving, and suggested that both types of development could be accommodated.

Since then the Friends of Bradshaw Park have been

working for more than a year through petitions, presentations and documentation to convince Council to keep Bradshaw in a passive state. Their hard work and diligence finally paid off when the committee members voted unanimously on September 26 to approve several recommendations concerning this important 50 acre parcel off Chantler Road. These include initiating passive uses for the property, which would incorporate a soft trail system, benches, removable washroom facilities and a gravel parking area. A targeted sign would be erected denoting Bradshaw's intent to open up the land for the benefit of all Pelham citizens.

The idea of creating a sports field on this property was abandoned because of the extensive development and servicing costs involved, as well as the fact that the rural location was not readily accessible to active local sports. A recommendation was also made to create a volunteer stewardship committee to take over the operation and maintenance of the park once initial development was complete.

The adoption of the recommendations still needs to be approved by Town Council but for all intents and purposes we can say with some confidence that another special area in Niagara has been saved from development and will be there to be enjoyed by future generations.

- Karin Schneider -

(information taken from an article by Carolyn Mullin in The Voice of Pelham, Wed. Sept. 27, 2000)



"Thank God! ... Those blasted crickets have finally stopped!"

## PFN 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST WINNERS

This year once again the photography contest at the annual potluck in April was a huge success. There were many entries which indicated to us that members are effectively using photography to capture those special sightings on their outdoor walks. Thank you to all the participants for sharing your memories with us.

The winners for each category were selected by fellow members.

1) Birds: Tina Summerskill
2) Mammals: David Moore
3) Wild Flowers: Mary Deer
4) Reptiles/Amphibians: David Moore
5) Insects: Wayne Berridge
6) Owls: Mary Deer
7) Nature Scenes of Niagara: Margaret Kormendy

8) Miscellaneous:

HUNTING IN PROVINCIAL PARKS

Harry Hodgins.

Recent media reports confirm that the provincial government is considering plans to open wilderness class parks to hunting in response to lobbying efforts by groups such as the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Wilderness Class parks include Killarney, Quetico, Wabakimi and Woodland Caribou. These parks currently receive the highest level of protection and are off limits to hunting and motorized access. They are supposed to be areas where nature is allowed to evolve on its own terms.

Ontario already has one of North America's most permissive hunting policies; hunters currently have access to almost 96% of public lands. Hunting is currently permitted in several classes of parks if it can be shown that this activity does not threaten wildlife populations. However, no hunting is currently permitted in parks designated as Wilderness or Nature Reserve. This may be about to change.

The move to introduce hunting in Wilderness parks was not part of the Ontario Living Legacy draft report released in March of 1999; instead, it was inserted as a new use in the final draft of the document, released in June of 1999. This occurred despite survey results indicating that most Ontarians were opposed to hunting in our parks. These are not merely the sentiments of those living in southern Ontario; a February 2000 Oracle Research poll found that 77 % of northern Ontario residents also oppose hunting in parks.

It is expected that Killarney Wilderness Park, located on the north shore of Georgian Bay, will be the first park to be threatened by the new proposal: its management plan is due for revision soon. This popular park is still heavily used by (non-hunting) visitors during hunting season (which begins in mid August for bears), and is surrounded by Crown land where hunting is already permitted. In addition to hunting rights, hunters are also seeking motorized access to the heart of the park, which would result in significant additional stresses on the landscape.

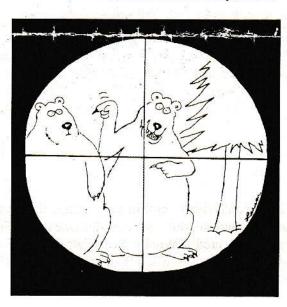
The introduction of hunting in Killarney and other parks has the potential to disrupt sensitive predator-prey relationships in ways that may not currently be understood or easily measured. Hunting everywhere would also result in the loss of a benchmark against which the impacts of human activities can be measured and would diminish the value of such parks as places where one can experience nature without the interference of hunters and motorized vehicles.

Opening wilderness parks to hunting without public consultation would be a violation of the Forest Accord signed by the government in 1999.

### What You Can Do

Please take a few moments to write the Minister of Natural Resources, John Snobelen. Indicate your opposition to sport hunting in wilderness class parks such as Killarney and demand province-wide public hearings before this proposal is given any further consideration. Provincewide consultations may *not* be held if the public does not express its desire for it. The address is: The Hon John Snobelen, Minister of Natural Resources Room 6301, Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley Street West Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

- Bernie VanDenBelt -Taken from The Cardinal No. 179, April 2000



### UP COMING EVENTS

Bring a Friend Night & Dessert Pot Luck Monday, November 27, 2000 7:30 pm at Lakeport Secondary School.

This is a great night to introduce a friend to what the PFN club has to offer. Mary Gartshore will share her knowledge on "Working with Warblers". The talk will be followed by a dessert pot luck for us to indulge in. So bring a buddy with your favourite dessert and leave the diet behind.

### Project Feeder Watch starts end of November.

This is a great way to learn about the birds that visit your feeder. The information you gather is invaluable in helping track bird populations from year to year. Feeder Watch participants record the maximum number of each species seen at their bird feeder on count days (once every two weeks). The amount of time spent watching your feeder on your count days is up to you. Participants can enter and retrieve data and information via the Internet at http://www.bsc-eoc.org The current registration fee for participants is \$25.00. Contact: Becky Whittam, Bird Studies Canada, 1-888-448-BIRD or (519) 586-3531, bwhittam@bsc-eoc.org, http://www.bsc-eoc.org.

### Niagara Gull Festival

December 01 to 03, 2000

Come out and see why hundreds of birders travel to Niagara at this time of year. Special events for this weekend are still being planned. Contact Carla Carlson for more information closer to the event at (905) 562-3746.

### Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas-Pilot Project

Just a reminder that if you are interested in participating in this project, you should be contacting the atlas coordinator now. See the spring issue for details.

Tel: (519) 826-2094 Fax: (519) 826-2113

E-mail: atlas@ontarionature.org

### WINTER WOOLIES

Do Woolly Bears lurk in your garage during the winter? It's quite possible that they do! One day in February, I discovered a Woolly Bear Caterpillar, of the common red-brown and black banded variety, lying curled up on the garage floor. When I picked it up, it

moved and was obviously alive despite the cold temperature. I put it back on the floor, where it remained for two weeks, and then I put it in a container and moved it to a sheltered spot beside my house. I was curious to find out whether its presence in the cold garage was a normal part of the species' life cycle. The Woolly Bear is the larva of the Isabella Tiger Moth. Pyrrharctica isabella, a widespread species in North America. The caterpillar eats dandelions, plantain and other low-growing plants. Winter is spent in the caterpillar stage, so my friend in the garage was indeed doing what comes naturally. Depending on the species, moths and butterflies spend the winter at different stages of their life cycle. Wintering as a pupa is a common strategy, hence the trendy term "cocooning." Some, such as the Mourning Cloak butterfly, overwinter as adults and are out and flying at the first spell of warm weather, even if there is still snow on the ground.

I have always had a soft spot for Woolly Bear Caterpillars, and as a small child I thought they were the neatest things alive. Once, when I was about six years old, I had 13 Woolly Bears of various sizes in an old cooking pot. I tried to feed them with plants from the field where I had found them, but they turned up their little noses at everything I offered. Then I slipped them samples from my mother's house plants and found one kind they liked (I don't remember what it was). Unfortunately, Mother soon became suspicious as the leaves began to disappear, and I knew there was no way she would agree to sacrifice her plants to a gang of caterpillars. Reluctantly, I released the Woolly Bears into the field and waved them good-bye.

Now I am waiting to see whether my Woolly Bear from the garage will wake up and resume its life when spring arrives.

- Barbara Bain -

Taken from The Cardinal, No 179, April 2000.

#### WINTERIZE FOR WILDLIFE

As the weather turns colder and gardens die back, there's still plenty you can do to help wildlife in your garden.

-Build a brush pole where birds and small mammals can hide from predators and take refuge from the bitter cold.

-Create a toad hibernaculum or snake den. Toads and snakes eat large amounts of grubs and other insects and can help reduce the need for pesticides.

Contact the Canadian Wildlife Resource centre for details about these and other habitat projects.

### Note from the Editor

And finally, as the new editor for the PFN newsletter I encourage you to submit articles about any naturalist theme. You can mail your articles to the address listed below or preferably to me directly at the following address:

Snail mail: 4175 Hixon Street, Beamsville, L0R 1B7

Email: karin@niagara.com

Please attach the file to your mail message.

All submissions will be edited for grammar and punctuation so don't be afraid to send in your thoughts.

Advertisement will be allowed in the newsletter for naturalist related items at the cost of \$25.00 for business card size. Costs will be waived for non-profit events.

The PFN executive and editorial staff has the right to determine final content of the newsletter.

#### Points on Canada's Wilderness

- Canada ranks 36th among the world's nations in protecting wilderness.
- -Over half of Canada's major habitat types still have little or no protection.

### Illustration Credits:

Page 1. Illustration by R. Fisher

Page 2. Lichen, www.fs.fed.us.

Page 3 Oak leave, Harter, J. Plants, Dover Pub. 1988., Wood Duck, Bennet and Tinner, Up North Again, Reed Books, 1997.

Page 5,6 Larson, G. The Far Side Gallery, Andrews and McMeei, 1984.

Page 8 and 9. Larson, G. The Far Side Gallery. Andrews And McMeel, 1984.



### The Peninsula Field Naturalist 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 the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Canadian Nature Federation.

P.O.Box 23031, 124 Welland Ave.

### The Peninsula Naturalist Newsletter

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The editor welcomes written articles or artwork on any natural history topic. Handwritten articles will be accepted, and if possible, please submit typewritten articles, or computer disks containing your file. All pieces of artwork will be accepted, although line drawings are preferable, as they are better suited to photocopying. New ideas and constructive criticism are always welcome.

Editorial Staff: Lorne Stobbs, Karin Schneider, Steve Beierl

Labelling/Mailing: June Corey, Kay Smith

--Please send submissions to the above address--Deadlines for submissions: Sept.2, Jan. 1, Mar. 31

### 2000 PFN EXECUTIVE

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