



The Peninsula Naturalist

Volume 213

Newsletter of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club

April 2007

President's Message – April 2007

Has anyone ever accused you of procrastinating? Or, more likely, have you realized that you procrastinate? Compulsively? This issue of the PFN Newsletter is coming to you now, in April, because *Ye Editor* is a confirmed member of the Procrastinators Club. Y'see, normally after a February issue, the next newsletter would appear sometime about June. But back last summer, when the annual events brochure was being concocted, *Ye Editor* and the Outings Coordinator weren't sure of when or where the Victoria Weekend outing would take place, and likewise for the June Picnic outing. So we stated in the Brochure that the information would be forthcoming in the Newsletter. And hadn't decided in time for the February newsletter. So this quickie Newsletter is a make-up effort to keep you informed, hopefully 'before the fact' rather than after. (Now it can be told...)

EVENTS OF THE SPRING

Springtime is the season for outdoor activity to ramp up; a selection of interesting outdoor events follows:

EARTH DAY AT MALCOLMSON ECO-PARK

This day in the park will include cleanup, tree mulching, and shrub planting, as well as the

annual **Native Plant Sale**. The Earth Day celebration is Saturday, April 21, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and the Native Plant Sale takes place on both April 21 and May 5. Malcolmson Eco-Park is at Lakeshore Road and Niagara Street, St. Catharines. For further information, call Mary Potter, 905-892-2566.

EARTH DAY AT MEL SWART PARK

Join the Friends of Mel Swart Park and the Niagara College Ecosystem Restoration students for a day of fun and awareness. Events include tree planting, native drumming, eco-conscious exhibits, organic cuisine and more. This event is Saturday, April 21, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Mel Swart Park, corner of Beaverdams Rd & DeCew Rd, Thorold. For further information, call Ana RavenStar, 905-954-0734.

OPTICS FAIR

This is the first year for this Fair. It will take place at Beamer Memorial Conservation Area, site of the Niagara Hawk Watch, on Sunday, April 22, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. An opportunity to try out binoculars and telescopes – courtesy of Eagle Optics - and check out the latest squirrel-proof birdfeeders from Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop. For further information, call Marcie Jacklin, 905-341-6664.

FOREST SONG BIRDS – SURVIVAL?

Ask the question “Can forest songbirds survive in southern Ontario?”, and Dr. Erica Nol of Trent University might well answer: “It depends...”.

On March 26/07, after a rather nerve-wracking journey from Peterborough, Erica explained to the Club what threats a songbird faces while trying to live in what is left of ‘deep’ forests south of the Shield.

Depends on the bird species and its nesting preferences, depends on how much human development encroaches on the habitat, depends on what other bird species or predators are in competition.

And sometimes it depends on whether the bird species makes ‘foolish’ choices – like the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, which chooses to nest in openings in the forest even though these openings are more likely to produce greater parasitism by Cowbirds.

One necessity for many inner-forest birds is an abundance of snags (dead standing trees) which provide sites for cavity-nesters – as Erica pointed out, humans who like to ‘tidy up’ the forest by cutting snags are doing the cavity-nesters no favours. Some forest songbirds like ovenbirds nest near or on the ground – free-range house cats are NOT an asset!

In general, large squarish wooded areas of 20 acres or more are better for forest-nesters than thin strips or the small under-10 acre woodlots of Niagara – ‘edges’ are not beneficial.

Erica is grateful for the large wooded areas now protected by the Greenbelt legislation – as long as not too much ‘insertion’ of wooded estate homes takes place – and not too many research areas are spontaneously bulldozed by developers!

IMAGES OF ALGONQUIN

The Club was treated to a virtual guided tour of Algonquin Park on February 26/07, courtesy of Peter Ferguson of Fonthill, a tour enlivened by Peter’s enthusiasm and his marvellous photography.

Obviously an admirer of the Park and its history, Peter led us down old railway paths where logging-trains once puffed, by canoe across quiet lakes where moose browsed in the shallows, and by car along the sixty miles or so of highway that span the Park and provides so many roadside scenes of nature at its best.

Who would have known that Algonquin Park, which many of us assume to be ‘natural’ parkland, was once populated by a number of privately-owned cottages, and a site for railway hotels on the waterfronts of lakes, where genteel folk came to enjoy the scenery by train?

Who would have thought that, in the middle of a preserved wilderness larger than Prince Edward Island, there could be a radio-astronomy lab?

Who can match the curiosity of tourists who will stop at the roadside just because another car is parked there, hoping that the first arrivals are watching a moose?

And who but Peter has actually sat down and had a conversation with a moose (recorded on film for those who doubt the story!)?

As a confirmed admirer of moose and loons, Peter’s camera has recorded both species in all their splendour – one of his loon photos was the cover picture for ‘On Nature’ on its 75th year feature edition. On the other hand, his camera has captured many moments of quiet beauty without an animal in sight. As Peter says “It’s the light that makes the picture – it’s all about light.” The artistry of Peter’s craft held the Club spellbound – until his next quip! A thoroughly enjoyable evening....

OUT AND ABOUT

Victoria Weekend Outing

Planning for the annual Victoria Weekend Outing, May 18-21, is temporarily on hold, pending the interest of a few more participants.

Since this will be the last year to travel into the USA without a passport, the current plan is to travel to the Finger Lakes and Watkins Glen area in New York State.

Mid-May should be an excellent time for birding in the Finger Lakes district. John Rogers, who spoke to the Club about bluebirds two years ago, reckons that mid-May is his busiest time for checking the youngsters in his bluebird boxes.

Some members intend to camp at the Finger Lakes National Forest; motels would be available nearby in Watkins Glen. Montezuma Wildlife Refuge, which is also nearby, should provide glimpses of 'critters'. If you wish to sign up for this weekend, please call Brian Calvert at 905-892-6267.

SEASON'S END OUTING AND BARBEQUE

This outing will be held on Sunday, June 17, from 10:00 a.m. to 'whenever', at Woodend Conservation Area. Woodend CA is accessed from Taylor Road, off Glendale East from St. Catharines and south of the Niagara College Glendale campus.

The Woodend property offers many hiking trails, including a section of the Bruce Trail, and interesting flora and fauna, including paw-paw trees.

NOTE: June 17 was listed in the Bulletin as the 'rain' date; however, it became the only date that the barbeque chef was available! Veggie-dogs and -burgers will be available, as well as the regular carnivore fare.



Ye Editor has been a fan of Chris Browne's 'Hagar the Horrible' for a long time. In my humble opinion, this cartoon was one of his very funniest ones with a naturalist flavour to it. Your taste may vary...

Unfortunately, 'Hagar' has been dropped by the local newspaper – something about being out of date...

:PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB:

**ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER AND SILENT AUCTION
MONDAY, APRIL 23, 6:00 P.M. AT MOUNTAINVIEW CHURCH HALL
SURNAME A-L BRING FIRST COURSE, M-Z BRING SALAD OR DESSERT
ALL – PLEASE BRING CUTLERY, PLATES, CUPS**

**IF ANYONE HAS AN IDEA FOR A SPECIAL SPEAKER OR OUTING, OR WOULD
LEAD AN OUTING,
PLEASE BRING YOUR IDEA/ARTICLE/WILLINGNESS TO THE ATTENTION OF
ONE OF THE EXECUTIVE
(IT'S YOUR CLUB!)**

TO PAY YEARLY DUES, CONTACT MEMBERSHIP CHAIR BRIAN CALVERT

ENJOY YOUR SUMMER!



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 (ex-FON) and Nature Canada (ex-CNF).
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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 photo copying. New ideas and constructive criticism are always welcome.

Editorial Staff: John Potter

Labelling/Mailing: Kay Smith

– please send submissions to the above address –

Deadlines for submissions 2007:

Jan. 28; April 10; Sept. 30

2006/07 PFN EXECUTIVE

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