



The Peninsula Naturalist

Volume 227

Newsletter of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club

May 2011

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I began to write this item, I had just discovered that an Eastern Phoebe pair were starting to build a mud-nest in an alcove at the corner of my front porch. Curiously, their choice of location meant that they were starting their nest on the remnants of a series of mud tunnels left over from a mud-dauber wasp from last year. A bit of research, using information that I found in the latest Breeding Bird Atlas about Eastern Phoebe's nesting sites, confirmed that what I was witnessing near my front door was a typical location for this species. What also fascinated me, apart from the fact that the birds were recycling on this chosen site, was that a decade ago I wouldn't have known a Phoebe from a fence-post. That was before Mary and I became members of the PFN.

The next day, we also identified a group of unusual sparrows on our deck as being White-crowned Sparrows, thanks to 'Niagara Birds' having an excellent photo which provided much better colour than our aging copy of Peterson's 'Eastern Birds'.

Now, I'm not saying that I've become an accomplished birder - far from it! But the association with other naturalists (birders definitely included) has been a stimulus for learning more about the living world just outside my door. Granted, having a house situated at the edge of a ten-acre forest helps a lot. Also, having a healthy curiosity from when I worked as a researcher has been useful. Which leads me to wonder what has been the experience of other members of the Club?

I know that some of our members are or have been employed in science, some in biological

science, others in physical science. I also know we have members from a wide range of working occupations that require observational abilities. Clearly people from all kinds of backgrounds and occupations find fascination in the biological world around us. What turned you on to birding, or to studying tree species identification, or dragonfly photography? What are your stories? Are you willing to share them with the rest of us? If so, please write them up and send them to me by the method of your choice - email, hand-written letter, whatever. (Sorry, I don't do Facebook or Twitter!).

OUTINGS FOR LEADING EDGE CONFERENCE

At Brock University main campus, on May 26-27, 2011, the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) is joining with Brock's Department of Tourism and the Environment to sponsor 'Leading Edge Conference 2011'. The Conference speakers will be addressing the ways that businesses, educators, and tourism operators are striving to provide sustainable practices and attractions in this local Biosphere Reserve. For more information, check the NEC's website: <http://www.escarpment.org/>

In the "2011 Nature Summer Calendar" of this newsletter, you will find more information about Outings that Brian Calvert is organizing for the Conference. Please assist Brian, in particular if you know the geology, bryology or plant/bird life of the Escarpment, by volunteering to help facilitate an enjoyable and educational experience for the Conference visitors. Thanks!

2011 SUMMER NATURE CALENDAR

A variety of outdoor events (not all PFN-specific) for your consideration. For Niagara Falls Nature Club Wednesday evening walks, obtain their schedule. Walks may be cancelled due to bad weather, so phone the contact if in doubt. Bring insect repellent and suitable shoes; tuck pantlegs into socks to foil ticks. Please carpool as much as possible. For any other concerns, contact Brian Calvert 905-892-6267 or oddfinding@yahoo.ca

DUFFERIN ISLAND TO QUEENSTON HEIGHTS

Wednesday, May 25, 2011

The Peninsula Field Naturalists will host a series of walks to view the geology, birds and wildflowers. 1:00 Easy walk around Dufferin Island, or hike from there to the falls and back. 2:30 Admire the fossils in the walls of the church on Zimmerman Ave, and a quick look at the Whirlpool from the north lookout. 3:00 Easy walk at the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens, or strenuous hike in Niagara Glen. 6:00 Picnic supper at Queenston Heights, followed by nature walks. Bring your own food and dishes. Brian Calvert 905-892-6267.

LEADING EDGE CONFERENCE

Thursday & Friday May 26 & 27, 2011

A conference about the Niagara Escarpment and Long Point Biosphere Reserves, hosted by Brock University. See the Niagara Escarpment Commission website for more details.

DECEW FALLS TO VINELAND

Saturday, May 28, 2011, 9:30 a.m.

Carpool from Decew House on Decew Road, west of Merrittville Highway. Short stops to view Decew Falls at Morningstar Mill and Rockway Falls. 10:00 Geology hike on rough trails at Louth Conservation Area. 12:30 Picnic lunch in the park across from Butterballs, in the valley just west of Jordan. 1:00 Geology hike along 20 Creek on the Bruce Trail to Balls Falls. Brian Calvert 905-892-6267.

LONG POINT CAROLINIAN NATURE FEST

Saturday & Sunday May 28 & 29, 2011

Nature walks limited to 15 per group (so reserve early), meeting at Backus Woods,

PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS PICNIC

Saturday June 11, 2011, 10:00 a.m. (Rain date June 12)

We hope to see bluebirds in the nearby conservation area. Hosted by Don & Sue Minchin 905-562-1953. From St Catharines, drive west on Road 81 to 11th Street Louth, turn left (south), then right onto Robbins Avenue, continue to #2288 Robbins Ave at the end.

WATERFORD AGRICULTURAL TOUR

August 13, 2011, all day

Includes a winery, a lavender farm, a farm being converted into a botanical garden, an agricultural museum, and the Simcoe Agricultural Research Complex. Brian Calvert 905-892-6267

ST. WILLIAMS FOREST FEST

August 13-14, 2011

Free tours of the nursery and forest at St. Williams Forestry Station on Highway 24 west of Simcoe. Brian Calvert 905-892-6267

THRIFTY SUMMER WEEKENDS

If you are interested in carpooling to any of these places, contact Brian Calvert now at 905-892-6267 oddfinding@yahoo.ca.

July 8-10: Oak Ridges, including Windfall Ecology Centre in Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area, 13 km guided hike in Northumberland Forest.

July 15-17: Sifton Bog, Walkers Ponds, free concerts at Home County Folk Festival in London

July 30 - August 1: Bruce Trail hikes, caving, dance, talent show, at Unicamp south of Collingwood. Must reserve early!

August 27-28: Roches Point Eco-Park, Arnold C. Matthews Nature Preserve, other conservation areas near Lake Simcoe

September 2-5: Bruce Trail, free camping near Meaford.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Every year for the past few years, at least one of our members has chosen to enter the Baillie Birdathon. As you probably know, from the pledged amount of money that the birder collects, one-quarter is returned to the Club, while the other three-quarters supports the work of Bird Studies Canada.

This year, Donna Murphy entered the Birdathon on behalf of the PFN. We are pleased to announce that Donna was able to tally 96 species, including 25 new birds for her life-list. Well done, Donna! Now those of you who agreed to sponsor Donna should contact her, or expect a phone call, to honour your pledge. If you need Donna's phone number, feel free to call John at 905-892-2566 and I will provide it.

BAILLIE BIRDATHON SIGHTINGS 2011-05-13

An "(L)" INDICATES A NEW SPECIES FOR MY LIFE LIST

1. Pied billed Grebe
2. Double-crested Cormorant
3. American Bittern
4. Great Blue Heron
5. Green Heron
6. Turkey Vulture
7. Canada Goose
8. Mallard
9. Ringneck Duck
10. Northern Shoveler (L)
11. Gadwall
12. Lesser Scaup
13. Bufflehead
14. Red-breasted Merganser
15. Northern Harrier
16. Red-shouldered Hawk
17. Broad-winged Hawk
18. Red-tailed Hawk
19. Bald Eagle
20. Sora (L)
21. American Coot
22. Sandhill Crane
23. Killdeer
24. Wilson's Snipe (L)
25. Bonaparte's Gull
26. Ring-billed Gull
27. Caspian Tern
28. Mourning Dove
29. Eastern Screech Owl (L)
30. Chimney Swift
31. Ruby-throated Hummingbird
32. Belted Kingfisher
33. Red-headed Woodpecker (L)
34. Red-bellied Woodpecker
35. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
36. Downy Woodpecker
37. Northern Flicker
38. Least Flycatcher (L)
39. Eastern Phoebe
40. Eastern Kingbird
41. Blue-headed Vireo
42. Warbling Vireo
43. Blue Jay
44. American Crow
45. Purple Martin (L)
46. Tree Swallow
47. Northern Rough-wing Swallow
48. Bank Swallow (L)
49. Cliff Swallow (L)
50. Barn Swallow
51. Black Capped Chickadee
52. Red-breasted Nuthatch
53. Carolina Wren
54. House Wren
55. Ruby-crowned Kinglet
56. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (L)
57. Veery
58. Swainson's Thrush (L)
59. Hermit Thrush
60. American Robin
61. Gray Catbird
62. Brown Thrasher (L)
63. Cedar Waxwing
64. European Starling
65. Blue-wing Warbler (L)
66. Orange-crowned Warbler (L)
67. Nashville Warbler (L)
68. Yellow Warbler
69. Black-throated Blue Warbler
70. Yellow-rumped Warbler
71. Blue-throated Green Warbler (L)
72. Blackburnian Warbler (L)
73. Palm Warbler
74. Black-and-White Warbler (L)
75. American Redstart (L)
76. Yellow Breasted Chat (L)
77. Eastern Towhee (L)
78. Chipping Sparrow
79. Field Sparrow (L)
80. Song Sparrow

81. Swamp Sparrow (L)
82. White-throated Sparrow
83. White-crowned Sparrow
84. Dark-eyed Junco
85. Northern Cardinal
86. Rose-breasted Grosbeak
87. Bobolink (L)
88. Red-wing Blackbird
89. Common Grackle
90. Brown-headed Cowbird
91. Baltimore Oriole
92. Purple Finch (L)
93. House Finch
94. Pine Siskin
95. American Goldfinch
96. House Sparrow



Golden-Crowned Kinglet (by Donna Murphy)

SPRING SPEAKER SERIES SUMMARY

The Spring 2011 meetings of the PFN have featured a variety of topics by the several speakers who were willing to give their time to informing us. **Natalie Kiers and Jason Elliott** in January introduced us to the **Niagara Land Trust**. In February, **Dr. Fiona Hunter** explained and entertained on the topic of **Wood Ticks (A Tick Talk)**. In March, **Maggie Smiley** impressed us with the birding and sight-seeing opportunities **Along the Silk Road in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan**. For those who were present at these meetings, I believe from your interest and questions that you found each of these presentations to be informative. For those who were unable to attend, the following notes may give you at least a taste of what you missed.

The **Niagara Land Trust** was formed 3 years ago, with the intention of providing a mechanism whereby significant properties in Niagara could be placed under a permanent conservation agreement, at the request of the owners and if an appropriate arrangement could be negotiated. A considerable degree of administration was required to bring the Land Trust into being, since it must meet various requirements from governments for approval. A significant milestone was passed this spring, when the NLT concluded a successful agreement

with a landowner in the Short Hills area to place a conservation mandate on a 50-acre property with numerous important features. The owner, Jim Smith, was present at the PFN meeting to hear Natalie and Jason discuss this encouraging event. Various criteria must be met and documented before a property will be accepted for preservation under the Land Trust. However, the effort is worthwhile, with the benefit being that the landowner can be certain that his/her wishes will be met by future owners of the property.

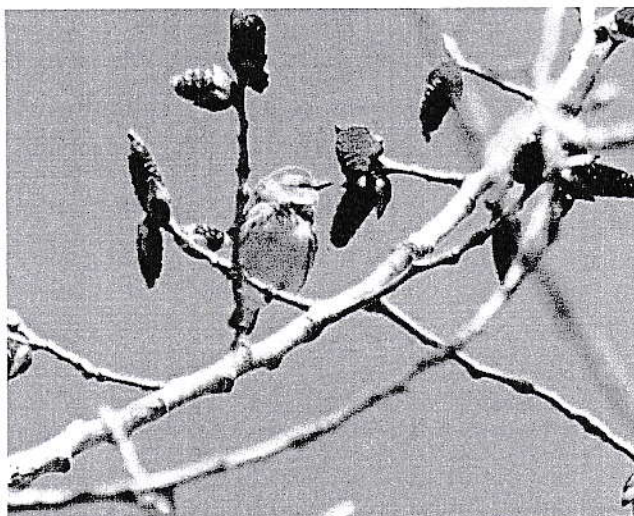
There is really nothing lovable about the **black-legged tick**, also known as deer tick or wood tick. Dr. Fiona Hunter made that plain when she discussed these parasites at our February meeting. As she demonstrated the feeding mouthparts of a tick, using a Pringles can and a spaghetti scoop for the hypostome and chelicerae respectively, it was crystal-clear that blood-feeding is not a happy event for the unfortunate host. Although six tick species are found in Niagara, the black-legged species is the most to be feared, as the carrier of the spirochaete bacteria that cause Lyme disease. The tick is present in Long Point, Point Pelee, Rondeau, Turkey Point, Presquile and St Lawrence parks, particularly in woods and sheltered areas, usually near animal paths. The pest has a 2-year life cycle, the first year specimen being a pinhead-sized creature on small mammals (mice, voles) and often the second year on deer - although the adult year

ould also be when humans or dogs can be parasitized. The bacteria (*Borrelia burgdorfi*) causes the distinctive 'bull's-eye' rash on humans, followed by symptoms similar to arthritis; dogs also can develop arthritis-like symptoms. Oddly, the deer immune system kills the bacteria, while the human immune system does not. Antibiotics will work in the first 24 hrs (the 'bull's-eye' stage) but the disease is more difficult to cure in the later stages. We were advised to remove embedded ticks with tweezers without crushing the tick, and to wear light-coloured clothing, tuck pantlegs into socks, do a full-body check after an outing, and use 'deet' insecticide.

MaggieSmiley's birding expedition through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan introduced us to an area of the world that few of our members have experienced first-hand. From a tourism point of view, the two countries were surprisingly different, with Uzbekistan seeming less rugged and more typical of an Arabic country in its architecture, with the elaborate mosaic designs in buildings and wearing apparel, and a gentler topography. Kazakhstan had more mountainous scenery, including glacial-fed lakes and a more alpine flora. The architecture in the capital of Kazakhstan in particular seemed rather bizarre, since a large number of architects had been retained to create fantastic building designs, which were grandiose yet seemed entirely out of context with each other and with the surrounding bare countryside. However, both countries provided a number of novel (to us) bird species, some obviously related to our own endemic species, while others were completely different from any birds we would recognize from Canada. Maggie mentioned that two men in the tour group had booked the tour specifically to add three rare species to their life lists, which for one man amounted to over 8000 species and the other around 6000 (if memory serves). It was obvious that, as the saying goes, "You had to have been there" to fully appreciate what Maggie had observed on her trip.

An Irish Proverb:

Every short dog is bold in the doorway of its own house.



Black-throated Green Warbler (*Donna Murphy*)

AFTER THE NAI - PART 2

In October 2010, I commented on the Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) to which a number of us from the Nature Clubs contributed our time and knowledge. Back then, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) were just starting the process of building what was called a Natural Heritage System (NHS) - basically a 'roadmap' of what natural features exist in Niagara, where these are found, and some well-considered scientifically-defensible decisions of how much natural habitat is needed to maintain a healthy natural environment.

In the long run, these decisions will provide the scientific background whenever any issues arise about land uses in the Region. Think of upcoming issues regarding the use of land in Niagara - the potential for a new transportation corridor, changes to the municipal boundaries of towns and cities, locations of aggregate pits and quarries, are just a few. Behind all of these land issues, one item stands out; namely, our sources of clean pure water. And most of us recognize that water reserves are closely linked to healthy forest cover. Thus, much of the NPCA's mandate is caring for our water reserves by maintaining enough healthy forests.

So far, a Scenario Development Committee has been developing a data-set of the types of land

parcels which would be beneficial to retain in a 'natural' state in order to ensure the necessary water reserves. The Committee is broadly-based across occupations, including farmers, builders, planners, aggregate producers, biologists, the OPG, and First Nations/Metis. The Committee's first task, a complex one, was to agree on types of land parcels which all stakeholders accept as being necessary to retain undisturbed. Next, the Committee agreed on an additional list of land uses which were seen as not contributing to the water reserves; for example, most of the land areas covered by buildings, paved roads, etc. Next, the Committee will be using the Marxan model (which I wrote about before) to determine how much of the 'natural state' areas we must maintain to provide for our current and foreseeable-future sources of water. The Marxan model will soon be crunching a massive amount of data, to provide the options of how much wildlife habitat, protection for species at risk, significant hydrological features, parks, urban areas, farmland, etc. do we consider necessary in Niagara. Then the "best-case" plans for land management will be developed by cooperative agreement.

Lately, in Niagara, the acronym 'NHS' has acquired unpleasant connotations for some people. As a result, although the folks who are working with the NPCA to develop their 'roadmap' know what we mean by 'NHS', a different name is needed for the final product. An Outreach and Education Committee has recently been formed to disseminate the suggested scenarios to the public, stakeholders and municipalities. This Committee is already considering a name, perhaps something like "Nature for Our Future", to describe the ecological roadmap we are constructing. Hopefully I will have more to divulge in our next Newsletter. (J.P.)

NIAGARA BIRDS – A SUCCESS STORY!

Quality, quality, quality! That formula has been the guiding principle of the authors of 'Niagara Birds' from start to finish, and the results of the work of John Black, Kayo Roy and their team of many contributing authors,

reviewers, helpers and understanding families has produced a marvelous volume of information and gorgeous photographs of birds that can be seen in the Niagara Region.

As well as producing an excellent resource book, John, Kayo and their team are to be congratulated for their generous contribution to the Region's educators. Thanks to a substantial Trillium grant, copies of the finished book have been placed in all Niagara Public and Municipal Libraries, all High Schools (Public, Catholic and Private), Brock University, Niagara College and Ridley College libraries. The helpful assistance of Manfred Fast of the local Trillium office was much appreciated.

It would be impossible in this space to mention all of the individuals who were involved in the production of the book, but it is fair to say that practically everyone in the Niagara birding world played some part in the successful production of the book. The final benefit will be in that sales are such that there will be a bursary for deserving students, as a result of the sales of the book. It is also gratifying that all of the Nature Clubs of Niagara and also the Buffalo Ornithological Society supported the production financially and in other ways.

To all who assisted in this production, and particularly to the two Captains of the ship....

WELL DONE!!



Ring-necked Duck (by Ed Skala)



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-FOV) and Nature Canada.

P.O. Box 23031, Carlton RPO., St. Catharines, ON. L2R7P6

EVENTS OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST

The **ANNUAL PFN PICNIC** will be hosted by Don and Sue Minchin on Saturday, June 11, 2011, starting at 10:00 a.m. (Rain date: June 12), at their home. Directions: From St Catharines, drive west on Road 81 to 11th Street Louth, turn left (south), then right onto Robbins Avenue, continue to #2288 Robbins Ave at the end. Contact: 905-562-1953. We hope to see Bluebirds at the Louth Conservation Area nearby – or perhaps in the Minchin's backyard. **Please advise Don and Sue if you plan to attend**, to assist them in planning for the crowd.

OTHER OUTINGS: NOTE THE SCHEDULE ON PAGE 2 OF THIS NEWSLETTER. ALL OUTINGS ARE WEATHER-DEPENDENT – IF IN DOUBT, CALL THE DESIGNATED CONTACT.



The Peninsula Naturalist Newsletter

Published: February, April/May, October
Circulation: 120 recipients per issue
The Editor welcomes written articles or artwork on any natural history topic. Hand-written articles will be accepted; if possible, please submit items on disks or email to jmpotter@talkwireless.ca
All pieces of artwork will be accepted, although line drawings are preferable, as they are better suited to photocopying. New ideas and/or constructive suggestions are always welcome.

Editorial Staff: John Potter

Labelling/Mailing: Kay Smith

2010/2011 PFN EXECUTIVE

President	John Potter	905-	
Past. Pres.	Roman Olszewski		
Vice-Pres.			
Secretary	Wendy Bradley		
Treasurer	Don Minchin		
Membership	Brian Calvert	905-	
Director	John Black		
Director	Brian Calvert		
Director	Lorraine Desjardins		
Director	Bryan Joule		

-please send submissions to the above email or postal address-

Deadlines for submissions 2011:

Jan. 28; April 10; Sept. 30