



THE HERON

FALL 2015

Newsletter of the
York-Simcoe Naturalists



*Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve
Photo by Melissa Rosato*

President's Message *By Doug Jagger*

When I prepared my report for the June newsletter, I was looking forward to summer. Now as I put pen to paper I look back on what was a great summer. For me it was time spent at our cottage where Judy and I watched a family of Loons or marveled at a family of 22 Common Mergansers or listened to the Pileated Woodpecker drumming on the old pine tree. I hope you had just as wonderful a summer and enjoyed some of the wonders of nature.

With the start of September, the club is back to its regular monthly meetings. We started with an inspiring presentation on Trumpeter Swans of Ontario given by Donna Lewis, one of our members. There is a great slate of other speakers coming up.

During the summer months your executive and some members were busy with various activities. Rick Berry organized the invasive species inventory at Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve, and prepared one report on the inventory findings and another on management/control of the species identified on the reserve. These reports were presented to Ontario

Nature and circulated to our members. See the article on p. 3 on this study as prepared by Rick.

The club had a booth with our display boards at the East Gwillimbury farmers' market in June, at the Bradford farmers' market in August and at the Newmarket farmers' market in September. We have found that attendance at these events is a great way to promote the club. Many thanks to Linda Gilkes, Sylvia Bowman and Sheila Gick for their work at these events.

Going back to the upcoming year, we will be working on the following initiatives:

- Increase membership. If you have not renewed your membership, please consider doing it now. You can send a cheque by mail to the club's mailbox in Bradford or at our next meeting.
- Sponsor a young person to attend the Ontario Nature Youth Camp. The sponsorship is our special project for the year. We are hoping to raise \$300.
- Continue with the stewardship of Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve including invasive species control, trail maintenance and input to the five-year plan being prepared by Ontario Nature.
- Update our website and display panels.
- Host a wine and cheese social.

We have a dynamic and growing nature club. Thanks for being part of this club and your contributions.

Fall Meetings

Tues. Oct. 13

Sarah Hedges on Ontario Nature Youth Council

Tues. Nov. 10

Rick Berry on South Central Ontario Trees

Tues. Dec. 8

7:30 p.m., River Drive Park Community Centre
20 Oak Avenue, north of Queensville Sideroad
River Drive Park, East Gwillimbury

Club News

YSN Membership

By Sheila Gick

The YSN Club finished the year 2014/15 with 44 memberships --- short of the goal of 50 memberships I set in September 2014. So here is another chance, another year to meet that target! The membership year runs from May 2015 to April 2016.

After the September 8th meeting, we had 29 memberships paid up, so a very good start. Membership fees are the same as last year --- \$25 per Single Membership and \$30 for a Family Membership. A great price for 10 months of informative speakers at a lively meeting where there are displays, free materials, coffee, tea and goodies and the company of friends old and new who can choose to contribute their own sightings/adventures of the previous month. There are many other organized activities as well as the ongoing stewardship of the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve.

Over the past few years we have, as a group, joined in the support of a recognized association working for the environment. Last year, we collected \$364.00 for our own stewardship program at the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve. At the end of the fiscal year, a cheque for that amount was written to Ontario Nature toward the cost of the trail inspection carried out at the reserve on May 15th by Treadscape. Their report highlighted areas needing attention/repair.

This year we are collecting funds to send a local young person to the next Ontario Nature Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership held each September. We will hear more about this cause from our October speaker, Sarah Hedges. A lucky teen will thank you for your donation when he/she attends the conference in September 2016. Drop a loonie or toonie in the decorated can on the membership desk when you pick up your name tag. Thanks for educating the next generation of naturalists.

Lastly, members of the executive participated in three farmers' markets --- East Gwillimbury, Bradford and Newmarket --- over the summer break. Our booth with displays and membership information attracted lots of interest and helped spread the word about who we are and what we do.

Thanks to those who gave of their time to spread the word to our communities.

Get involved in your club, in all the activities and opportunities, **and** bring a friend to introduce them to our wonderful club! A guest may attend a couple of times before joining, so that they get a taste of the wonderful club we are.

Looking forward to seeing you at the "desk" and getting to know you.

June Hike at Cawthra Mulock

Photos by Melissa Rosato



Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve

Located north of Green Lane/Miller's Sideroad between Bathurst and Dufferin streets, this 108-hectare hidden gem was donated to Ontario Nature in 2003 and has been under the stewardship of YSN since 2007. It is open to the public.

Recent Initiatives

By Doug Jagger

This summer has been very busy with various matters concerning the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve. As such, I would like to share with you an overview of the activities.

York Energy Centre: Sylvia Bowman and I met with Steve Fitzgerald, the manager of the centre, on June 25 to discuss funding initiatives at the reserve. The York Energy Centre is located off Dufferin Street just north of the reserve. Although the centre has funds available, Ontario Nature has advised us not to proceed with further negotiations at this time. We are currently seeking clarification on this decision from Ontario Nature.

Invasive Species Inventory: See the separate article on this initiative prepared by Rick Berry.

Trail Inspection: Ontario Nature retained the services of Treadscape to undertake an assessment of the existing trails in the reserve. The work was completed on May 15 and a report was issued in August. The club paid for the report from our special donation project. In summary, the trails are generally in good condition. There is a flooding issue at the west end of the red trail and the east end of the orange trail. The orange trail is temporarily closed until a boardwalk is constructed over the wet area. The bridge on the yellow trail needs maintenance as we know. Trail maintenance is needed in the summer due to plants. We are awaiting instruction from Ontario Nature prior to initiating any trail work.

Garbage: Sylvia Bowman contacted King Township and arranged for garbage removal from the Bathurst Street parking area. We are looking at installing "No Dumping" signs as a deterrent.

Salamanders: At the request of Ontario Nature, the club agreed to assist with a salamander monitoring program at the reserve. On July 29, Ontario Nature installed an array of 30 boards in the woods north of the pollinator garden on the red trail.

Ecosystem Inventory: During the first week of July, Ontario Nature staff completed an ecosystem inventory as input to the new five-year management plan for the reserve. Field data are currently being tabulated. We will receive a copy of the report when it is ready.

Nature Hike and Family BBQ: Ontario Nature hosted this event on August 29 for neighbours at the

reserve. It was well attended with more than 20 participants enjoying a wonderful introduction to the natural wonders of the reserve.

Invasive Species Survey

By Rick Berry

York-Simcoe Naturalists were appointed stewards of the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve in 2007. Under the terms of the current (2015) Stewardship Agreement with Ontario Nature, the YSN are expected to periodically carry out a survey of the property for invasive species. The first survey was carried out on May 31/June 1, 2015. Eleven volunteers braved wet weather and arduous off-trail walking through the forests and fields to do the observations along 10 north-south transects across the property, around the perimeter and along the marked trails. In addition, a detailed mapping of the periwinkle infestation around the east-side parking lot was carried out.

A report on the survey and the results has been submitted to Ontario Nature and we are now awaiting policy guidance before undertaking any remediation actions. The one exception is that we have been given approval to begin a "periwinkle pull" as soon as possible. The observations showed that buckthorn and garlic mustard are prevalent on the property. Along with the periwinkle, localized populations of dog-strangling vine and common reed (phragmites) were also found.

Once the guidance from Ontario Nature has been received, we will develop long-term plans for managing the invasive population(s) at Cawthra Mulock involving club members and others that may wish to help out. Many thanks to those who helped make this initial survey a great start.



Photo by Bridget Vogan

Field Notes

A Delightful Surprise on Our Way to P.E.I.

By *Jeanne Bénéteau*

This past August, my husband George and I decided to take a road trip, where we had a serendipitous experience observing Chimney Swifts. We were invited to spend time with an old friend on Prince Edward Island on the north shore of a sandy beach overlooking a calm stretch of the Gulf of St Lawrence. On our way, we explored the Gaspé then went down to New Brunswick's northern and eastern shores.

On the third day of travelling, we arrived in Bathurst, New Brunswick. Bathurst is surrounded by a river and the ocean. The weather was perfect with a shining sun and a light breeze. We stayed at a hotel located in the old part of town. We arrived just in time for a yearly music festival at the town park. After a seafood supper of clam chowder in a bread bowl, George and I decided to walk around to see the water and to go listen to the performing musicians. Dusk was approaching and we were getting tired. We left the park to return to our hotel which was only a block away. Suddenly, my ears were alerted to the distinctive chittering of Chimney Swifts. I looked overhead and there they were. At first, we saw half a dozen or more flying fairly low in the sky.

Excitedly, I said, "We have to find their chimney!" Having driven all day, George reluctantly agreed. Nearby, we spotted an old post office that had a medium sized chimney of the right colour --- red. Would we be so lucky as to have found their roost so quickly? It did not take long before more swifts started circling overhead. This was the most swifts that we had ever observed at one time and we could not count them all.

As we gazed skyward, people walking by were prompted to ask what we were observing. Before long, a small group of people had gathered and became quite fascinated with the many swifts flying overhead. The light was fading and we wondered if the birds were indeed going to descend down the chimney. Finally, one took the plunge, and soon the rest followed. What a sight. It was as though the chimney was a big vacuum cleaner sucking in these little birds. We tried to count them as best as we could as they entered the chimney. We estimated about 200 to 300 birds. We

stayed for a good while until finally the last trailing swift was in.

Once back at the hotel, I looked through our window, and discovered that the post office and its chimney was right in view. We could have had been watching directly from our room, and easier on our necks.

The rest of our trip was wonderful as well. P.E.I. was lovely. We saw piping plovers, bald eagles, many ospreys and other interesting wildlife. The trip was both restful and active, but the biggest highlight by far was the Chimney Swifts in Bathurst.

Your Executive for 2014 -- 2016

Elected Positions

Doug Jagger, President

Jeanne Bénéteau, Vice President

Rick Berry, Recording Secretary

Sheila Gick, Membership Secretary

Linda Gilkes, Treasurer

Appointed Volunteer Positions

Sylvia Bowman, Conservation Director, Speakers

Linda Gilkes, Archives

Jay Gutteridge, Internet Director

Melissa Rosato, Advertising Director

Flo Sparling, Refreshments

Janet Thompson, Newsletter Editor

Mike van den Tillaart, Stewardship Liaison to Ontario Nature