



THE HERON

WINTER 2016

Newsletter of the
York-Simcoe Naturalists



Dark-eyed Junco
Photo by Doug Jagger

President's Message

By Doug Jagger

I am pleased to report that the club is continuing to flourish. There were some great presentations at our general meetings this past fall and winter. My special thanks to club members Rick Berry and Karen Stephenson who volunteered to give talks. Karen is doing an article on wild foods for the newsletter (see p. 5). I find that she is an inspiration. In fact I collected some White Pine needles and made a tea as suggested. My first attempt was weak but I now know to add more needles.

We have our speakers arranged until the June meeting which will be a hike, the location of which will be announced soon. For the March meeting, Judy and I are giving a presentation on our trip to Peru last October. We have some great nature pictures of birds, animals, plants and butterflies along with the social and archaeological environment. Our biggest challenge is keeping the presentation to an hour. See the insert in the newsletter for meeting details.

Sheila has prepared a membership report (see p. 2). One of my concerns this year is the loss of nine members from last year. However, after reviewing the reasons there is a legitimate cause for the non-renewals, such as a death, a relocation or a change of interest. Thus our challenge is to search for new members to

grow the club. We have business cards and brochures which you can take to hand out to interested people.

Stewardship activity at Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve was quiet this fall as we await direction from Ontario Nature. However, we are planning to initiate a periwinkle control program in the spring. Details will be forwarded shortly. We will need members to assist with the removal (see p. 2).

From a regulatory viewpoint, the club provided comments on several provincial matters of concern through Ontario Nature (see pp. 3-4). One issue concerned reflected light which, if enacted, could result in more bird impact deaths. The second issue concerned the reintroduction of the spring bear hunt, mainly to attract foreign trophy hunters. Most recently the province wants to lessen controls to permit more killing of wolves and coyotes. The change means that anyone with a small game licence can kill up to two wolves a year and an unlimited number of coyotes, supposedly to help restore the moose population. It is unfortunate the direction in which the current government is going with our wildlife.

Winter/Spring 2016 Meetings

Tues. Feb. 9

“Amphibians and Reptiles”
Crystal Robertson, Toronto Zoo

Tues. Mar. 8

“Peru Travelogue”
Doug and Judy Jagger

Tues. Apr. 12

“How Bacteria Move”
Dr. John Dutcher, University of Guelph

Tues. May 10

“Rehabilitation of a Hairy Woodpecker”
Sue Flinders-Adams, Master Gardener

Tues. June 14

Hike

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 continues to attract new members. We have five new memberships so far this year in addition to 35 renewed memberships. Once again, I set a goal of 50 memberships so there is still room to grow over the remaining three meetings this year. Our membership year runs from May 1 to Apr. 30. Spread the word of our upcoming speakers outlined elsewhere in this newsletter. A guest may attend a couple of times before joining, so that they get a taste of the wonderful club we are.

Our members have been wonderfully generous in donating to this year's cause, the 2016 Ontario Nature Youth Summit. Thanks to all the anonymous donors for stopping by the desk and contributing when you pick up/return your name tag. You know who you are. Thanks for educating the next generation of naturalists.

The T-shirts ordered last spring have been picked up/paid for. Jeanne ordered some extras in all sizes so have a look on the desk if you are interested. A shirt costs \$13.00. Thanks to all who wear their membership proudly on their backs when they go out into the community.

Another delightful benefit for members is the annual wine and cheese party. This year Doug and Judy Jagger are looking forward to hosting at their home in Newmarket on Sat. Feb. 6. This is an opportunity to get better acquainted while enjoying great wine, cheese and other goodies. There will be a donation can if you wish to contribute.

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

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

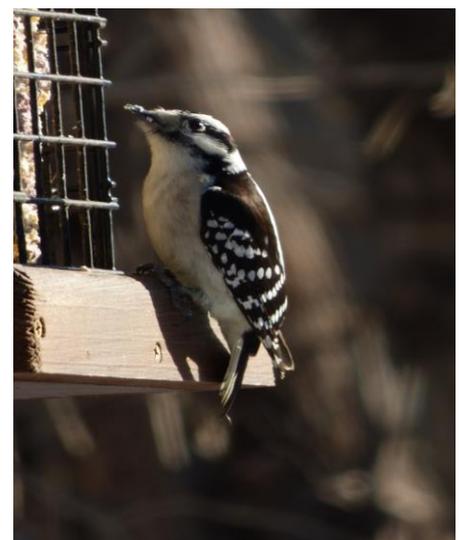
Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve

By Rick Berry

The survey of invasive plant species at the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve we completed in 2015 revealed a serious infestation of Common Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*). The owners of the property (Ontario Nature) have encouraged YSN to take action to control this problem plant. As a result a "periwinkle pull" has been tentatively scheduled for the weekend of Sat. Apr. 2/ Sun. Apr. 3. More information will be forthcoming as the dates approach, but please reserve one or both dates if you can help. It will be "close-to-the-ground work" but all participating will work at their own pace.



Common Periwinkle



Downy Woodpecker
Photo by Doug Jagger

Conservation News

By Sylvia Bowman

This has been a very busy time in Ontario for environmental initiatives, both the good, the bad and the ugly!

The Potentially Good Things First

2015 Planning Review

The 2015 review of the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area has ended its first phase. Many groups made submissions and there were many public meetings held. Ontario Nature, Earthroots, Ecospark and STORM formed a coalition and made a joint submission thanks to funding from the Greenbelt Foundation. The preliminary report of the committee headed by David Crombie with 87 recommendations has now been released. To read the recommendations go to the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website, www.mah.gov.on.ca. In the coming months there will be further opportunity for input. One of the main concerns that came from many of the submissions was the need for Simcoe County to be included in the Greenbelt plan to help rationalize planning in that area. It is not currently included. For more information on this aspect, visit AWARE Simcoe's website, <http://aware-simcoe.ca>.

Strategic Plan for Ontario Wetlands

Ontario is poised to take a significant step forward with the development of this plan. Ontario is blessed with an abundance of wetlands that provide many important environmental, social and economic benefits. Yet, historically we have lost over 70 percent of our wetlands south of the Canadian Shield. Sadly, the losses continue today.

This past October, Ontario Nature submitted the following recommendations:

1. An overarching goal for the strategic plan to achieve a net gain in wetland habitat and function – supported by clear, ambitious targets and timelines.
2. Clear protections for Provincially Significant Wetlands and coastal wetlands, setting them strictly off limits to all forms of development, and protecting them from the negative impacts of development on adjacent lands and water recharge areas.

3. A requirement that wetland evaluation (to determine significance) occur prior to the granting of development approvals so that Provincially Significant Wetlands are identified and benefit from policies intended to protect them.

In addition to these policy improvements, the province needs to invest in implementing the strategy, including wetland evaluation, restoration, monitoring and enforcement of policies. Such investment is needed to conserve and enhance critical ecosystem functions, and to advance other provincial priorities related to biodiversity conservation and climate change.

In partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada, Ontario Nature hosted a successful workshop on Oct. 26 examining wetland policy and biodiversity offsetting, with more than 85 participants. For more information, see the Ontario Nature website at <https://ontarionature.thankyou4caring.org/pages/protect-our-wetlands>.

Endangered Species Act Appeal

Ontario Nature has been awaiting news about leave to appeal the Ontario Divisional Court's 2015 decision to uphold a provincial regulation that exempts major industries from the strict protection standards outlined in the *Endangered Species Act*. The Ontario Court of Appeal will hear the case on Apr. 19, 2016. The appeal challenges the lower court's ruling that puts already endangered species at further risk of extinction.

Now for the Bad

Increased Hunting of Coyotes and Wolves

Ontario proposes to address the decline of moose populations in northern Ontario by killing more wolves and coyotes. These keystone predators play a profoundly important role in maintaining the function, composition and diversity of natural systems. Removing these animals, even locally, can lead to a cascade of problems including the rapid and unwanted expansion of other species, increased disease transmission and significant changes in vegetation. Ontario Nature has made a submission opposing this new hunt. For more information, see the Ontario Nature website at <https://ontarionature.thankyou4caring.org/war-on-wolves-and-coyotes>.

Expanding the Spring Bear Hunt

The Ontario government has extended the two-year spring bear hunt pilot for another five years, and opened it up to non-residents. The excuse? Public safety. The reality? Study after study shows that shooting more bears does not reduce human-bear conflicts.

Ontario's spring bear hunt was originally cancelled in 1999. For the next 15 years, black bear hunting was limited to the fall. But in 2014 the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) decided to reinstate a limited spring hunt as a pilot. That very same year, a team of MNR scientists confirmed the ineffectiveness of a spring hunt in reducing human-bear conflicts. It found that conflicts were "not correlated with prior harvests, providing no evidence that larger harvests reduced subsequent HBC [human-bear conflict]." There is quite simply no evidence to support the expansion or extension of the hunt from a human safety perspective. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario agreed in his 2014-2015 Annual Report (online at http://eco.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2014_2015-AR.pdf).

If the government is genuine in its desire to reduce human-bear conflicts, it should invest in educational initiatives and work with municipalities to effectively implement the Bear Wise program. This would involve, for example, educating people about ways to avoid or deal with bear encounters (e.g., by leashing their dogs and properly storing food and garbage), encouraging municipalities to pass and enforce stricter garbage by-laws, and training police in bear management and the use of tranquilizer guns.

Ontario Nature submitted a comment opposing the reinstated spring bear hunt. For more information, see the Ontario Nature website at <https://ontarionature.thankyou4caring.org/pages/spring-bear-hunt>.

And Lastly the Downright Ugly

Bird Collisions with Windows

One of the greatest threats to birds is collisions with glass windows. Ontario Nature has been working with Ecojustice to address this issue since 2010.

In 2013, an Ontario court ruled reflected light from building windows to be a "contaminant" under the *Environmental Protection Act*. The court confirmed that the province had the legal authority to require building owners to deal with light

reflected from windows that were at high risk of killing or injuring birds. Yet, instead of acting upon the findings of the court, this November, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) is now proposing to give up its power to protect migratory birds from reflected light. The proposed regulatory amendment would remove the requirement for owners to deal with light reflected from tall commercial buildings. The 2014-2015 Annual Report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario called out the MOECC for abdicating its responsibilities.

Voluntary approaches will not address the problem. Based on over two decades of work by the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) Canada, it is clear that most commercial building owners will not take voluntary action (see their website at www.flap.org). Millions of birds, including many species at risk, will continue to die if the problem of reflected light is not adequately addressed. Sadly, these deaths are preventable. Technical solutions are available, but they will continue to be ignored without the compliance and enforcement measures in place to drive uptake by commercial building owners.

For more information, see the Ontario Nature website at <https://ontarionature.thankyou4caring.org/protection-for-birds>.

Ontario Nature's 85th Anniversary and Annual Gathering

From Ontario Nature: "The Bruce Beckons! Save the date to join us at Evergreen Resort, South Bruce Peninsula on June 3-5, 2016 for our annual gathering! We will explore local ecological treasures and a great diversity of habitats, including field trips to Ontario Nature's Petrel Point and Malcolm Bluff Shores nature reserves. Members will also have the opportunity to vote at our annual general meeting during the weekend. More details will be available on our website in February. We'll also celebrate our 85th anniversary with 85 outdoor events held throughout the year. Stay tuned for more information about activities near you!"

For more information, see the Ontario Nature website at www.ontarionature.org/discover/annual_gathering.php.

Field Notes

The Mighty Tasty Pine

By Karen Stephenson

Pines (*Pinus* spp.) are considered to be the most ecologically and economically significant tree genus in the world, and they are a great food source as well. There are a total of 111 species worldwide with the most common pines in our area being the white, red and jack pines.

Breathing in pine scent as we take a hike through a forest is incredibly intoxicating -- can you imagine the taste? The Eastern White Pine is the most studied in terms of nutrition and medicinal qualities. Pine needles are loaded with vitamins A and C. By comparison, the vitamin C levels are so high that they are on average five times greater than lemons. This means that one cup of pine needles will yield more than 400 mg of vitamin C per cup of tea.

Pine needles and inner bark also contain vitamins B1, B2 and B3 as well as calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium and sodium. In addition, pine trees also contain protein, fat, carbohydrates and fibre.

Many of us have heard about the power of resveratrol -- pine needles contain this amazing antioxidant. They also contain carotenoids, quercetin, flavonoids, tannins, pine oils, anthocyanins, phytosterols, proanthocyanin and much more.

- Vitamin C and proanthocyanin are important in preventing cancer.
- Pine oils, according to Russian studies, are useful to control weight, lower cholesterol and lessen blood pressure.
- Proanthocyanin and resveratrol are potent anti-aging compounds.

So here we have an incredible tree that gives us a wealth of nutrients -- what do you do with it? First of all be mindful when collecting pine needles -- we do **NOT** want to take a lot from one tree. Be sure the needles are green and from a living tree. Dry them then grind them into very tiny pieces and store in a brown paper bag (or mason jar) in a dark cool location. Make tea, pine cookies, muffins, pancakes, etc.; let your imagination go wild!

My website has all sorts of wild food ideas, so to find out how to make pine cookies and pine muffins, visit www.ediblewildfood.com.

Important note: If you want vitamin C from pine or any plant (including vegetables), never place it in boiling water. Let boiled water cool first to about 71 degrees Celsius (160 degrees F) because vitamin C denatures when over 71 degrees C.



Eastern White Pine needles
Photo by Karen Stephenson

Big Bend National Park, Texas

Photos by Allan Bowman



Roadrunner



Javelina