



The Woodland Observer

Nipissing Naturalists Club

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Enjoy Nature!



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Backpacking through Asia:

Chitwan National Park - Land of the Wild Elephants

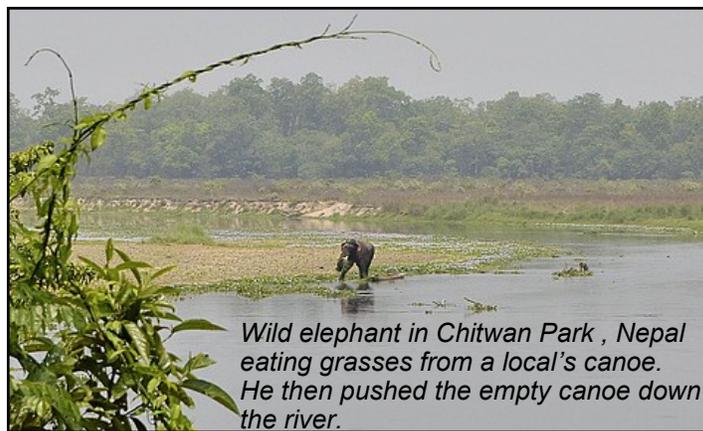
By: Corinne Arthur (with James Hallworth)

Approximately 3 months into our backpacking trip we found ourselves crossing the haphazard border from northern India into Nepal. After a whirlwind few days in Nepal's intriguing capital Kathmandu, we took the bus to Chitwan National Park. Nepal's first park, its known for its one-horned rhinos, park-people conflict management, and extensive bird biodiversity (>540 species). The village around Chitwan consisted of dirt roads and wooden shacks, with a few guesthouses and restaurants. The transportation mode of choice was elephants.



We booked a full-day guided trek through the park for the following morning. At 6:30am, with our guides Rom and Chundra, we took a small canoe across the river that acts as the park boundary. Before entering the jungle Chundra described the rules for the day: Rom would walk in front, James and I in the middle and then Chundra at the back. Both Chundra and Rom carried poles for warding off any attacking animals. If we saw any dangerous animals we must stop and wait for our guides to assess the situation and tell us whether to

stand our ground or run. The guidelines varied for the different species that could potentially attack us. If we saw a rhino: climb a tree, sloth bear: circle together to look big, elephant: run in zigzag, tiger: back away slowly.



Wild elephant in Chitwan Park, Nepal eating grasses from a local's canoe. He then pushed the empty canoe down the river.

Then it was time to enter the jungle. An hour or so into the hike we came upon a rhino lazing around in a mud hole below us. We kept seeing bubbles coming up to the surface as it farted into the water. An hour later we came across a pair of crocodiles sitting so still in a muddy stream that they almost looked like logs. Mid-morning, while taking a break on a high bank overlooking the river, Chundra spotted a large wild elephant in the distance. It was walking towards the river about a hundred metres away, with wetland grasses swaying beneath it. We saw that it was heading towards an old man paddling downstream in a canoe. The man then bolted into the forest when he noticed the elephant's advance. The elephant walked across the river and started munching on the grasses that the old man had bundled into his canoe. After finishing his snack, the elephant pushed the canoe into the river and ambled on his way, going into the forest in the direction of our trail. Our guides recognized this

male elephant. He was known to be extremely dangerous and had already attacked and killed three or four villagers that year. They instructed us to wait about 45 minutes to make sure he had gone deeper into the forest before proceeding very slowly, silently and cautiously ahead. We eventually came across the man whose canoe had been raided by the elephant. He was angry with our guides for not alerting him to the elephant when we saw it approaching the canoe from afar.



One-horned rhinoceros in Chitwan National Park, Nepal.

Throughout the day the guides used a hand signal system for the treks to alert of dangerous wildlife. Whenever we heard the crash of an animal, the guide who was nearest would signal to the other whether it was deer, monkey, elephant, rhino, etc and whether we could continue. Near the end of our hike we spotted a mama and baby rhino walking through the forest ahead of us. The baby was really cute! At 6pm we arrived back at the park boundary, ready to canoe back. But the park still had more surprises in store for us! While waiting for the canoe we noticed two gharial crocodiles by the water's edge. They are an endangered crocodile species with a long narrow snout. Sadly though one of the gharials had a fishing net tangled around his snout. Our guides said that that type of net was disallowed in the park for this reason and that the gharial would die of starvation in a day or two if no one helped him. They said that they'd alert the rangers who could catch the gharial in a net, cut off the tangled net, and release him. We also saw 12 new bird species that day. We were very impressed with our guides who were knowledgeable, friendly, great wildlife spotters, spoke English and kept us safe! What a great day!

The following morning we went for an elephant safari. We rode on the back of an elephant for an

hour through the park. We saw two more rhinos in a mud hole, rhesus macaques, spotted deer, muntjak, sambar deer and peacocks. I loved the slow rhythmic pace of the elephant's walking.

Its worth mentioning that Chitwan Park is known for its people-park conflict resolution strategies. The locals relied on the resources in the park for their livelihood until they were banned after its establishment in 1973. This caused a lot of conflict. There have been improvements in the last few decades such as allowing locals into the park once a year to collect grasses for fodder. The elephant eating the man's grasses and the gharial entangled in the illegal fishing net show that there are still issues. Also, our guides pointed out a number of locals who had swam across the river and were illegally collecting grasses from the park. Locals are often killed by the park wildlife because they are illegally collecting grasses with their heads down and so they're not aware of wildlife approaching.

*Have you had an adventure in nature?
Send us your story.*



Christmas Bird Count Results

Here is a summary of the results of the 38th Annual Burk's Falls CBC. It was held in the eastern section of Parry Sound District (along Hwy 11 Corridor between Burk's Falls, Sundridge and Magnetawan) was held on Thursday, December 18 in much warmer weather conditions than last year. The 22 participants and 4 feeder watchers observed a total of 37 species consisting of 1798 individuals. Highlights included seeing a Northern Goshawk – first since 2007, a Rough-legged Hawk - only 8th time see on count, Snowy Owl – the first time on this count due to lack of fields and 28 Downy Woodpecker – ties the highest count record from 1992.

Calendar of Events

Next General Meeting

Tuesday, January 13, 2015
Cassellholme Auditorium @ 7:00 pm

Upcoming Speakers/Events

Date: January 13, 2015

Event: Nipissing Naturalists Annual General Meeting

This will be a potluck dinner and will include a silent auction. Bring your items that you would like to donate to the event. Bring a dish to share and your own utensils and cutlery. The winners of the annual photo contest will also be announced!! Please arrive between 6:30 and 6:45 so that the potluck can begin at 7:00pm sharp.

Date: February 10, 2015

Speaker: David Moore

David Moore is a trained social anthropologist, who studied in the UK and who has carried out ethnographic fieldwork in Peru (for a M.Litt. in Quechua) and Bolivia (for a D.Phil. in Social Anthropology). After leaving England in 1986, he moved to Denmark and lived 18 years in various parts of Denmark. For the last three years of his time in Denmark, with his Canadian partner, Laurel, he had a very small sheep farm on the island of Møn, on the Baltic Sea. When in 2005 he moved to Canada, David and Laurel

set up and ran for five years a small alpaca farm in Tweed, Ontario. In 2011, David and Laurel moved to rural Powassan, and enjoy the sight of wolves, coyotes, deer, beaver, moose, black bears, otters, skunks, foxes, white tailed hawks, owls, and snapping turtles at various parts of the year. David continues to work in development worldwide.

Topic: Mining and indigenous peoples- Canadian miners operating in Peru and British Columbia compared

Date: March 10, 2015

Speaker: Joseph Boivin, Nipissing University

Topic: Asleep at the switch: how seed dormancy helps some plants to survive

Find out what evolutionarily benefits some plants obtain by producing seed. Some of these seed producing plants have seed that goes dormant. How does seed dormancy occur and what benefit does it confer on a plant? Our relationship with seeds, agriculture's green revolution, and the use of genetic engineering will be presented, raising questions about how best to grow crops and feed over 7 billion people today and possibly 9 billion people in the next 40 years.

Date: April 14, 2015

Speaker: TBA

Date: May 12, 2015

Speaker: Lesley Lovett-Doust

Topic: Endangered Species—Endangered Spaces: The ecology of the Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus, an Endangered Species in Canada

Monthly Bird Bash — Saturday & Sunday
Spend some time observing our local birds and report on how many species of birds you see. Contact Dick Tafel for details rtafel@sympatico.ca or 705 472-7907.

Birdwing Meeting
Fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm
Bird watching topics will be discussed. Meet at the library (auditorium). Contact Dick Tafel at 705 472-7907 or email rtafel@sympatico.ca

36th Christmas Bird Counts Results

By: Fred Pinto

36th Christmas Bird Count Results

The numbers from the 36th Christmas Bird Count have been tallied by the Coordinator for North Bay, Lori Anderson. A total of 18 people participated and contributed 42.75 hours of observation. Participants found 2835 birds representing 34 species. The most numerous birds at 579 were Black-capped Chickadees once again. Last year only 150 of this species was counted, a historic low. Although no records were broken this year, the total number of individuals for Bald Eagle and Song Sparrow tie the all-time high number.

Lyme Disease: Don's Adventure in Health Care

By: Kelly Major

...cont'd from Dec 2014 newsletter... Treatment is also complicated. As CLDC is usually caused by several bacteria, viruses and fungi, no one anti-biotic can cure a patient. Instead, the process is a trial-and-error approach, trying to destroy each pathogen, or at least knock it down to a point where the body can keep them suppressed. It is believed that CLDC never truly goes away, and relapses are common.

Lifestyle changes are also critical. A patient must avoid any food likely to contain metals and contend with any newly acquired food allergies. They must also adopt an extremely fit and healthy lifestyle to ensure their immune system is strong

and able to suppress the infections. After years of effort, anti-biotics and various therapies, Don has overcome CLDC, but is ever vigilant should symptom relapse.

Don concluded with his top three Lyme disease myths.

All Lyme disease carrying ticks will cause a "bull's eye" rash at the bite site. FALSE, only 30% of patients develop a rash. Only 9% produce a classic bull's eye.

Tick nymphs do not carry Lyme disease. FALSE, most cases of Lyme disease result from Nymphs (perhaps because they're more common than adults).

If your doctor says that your Lyme disease test came back negative, you must not have it. FALSE, the tests performed in Canada are, in Don's opinion, inaccurate. Additional tests can be purchased from private clinics online.

It's worth noting that Lyme disease has never been contracted in North Bay nor have any monitoring programs been able to find it here. None-the-less, as infected ticks can travel north on mammals and birds; all biting ticks should be removed from the body within 24 hours and be brought to the North Bay-Perry Sound District Health Unit for testing. Tick testing is free and reliable.

