

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

MAY 2016



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From the editor:

Spring came – finally!

April was quite the chilly month that brought us almost 40 cm of snow on April 6 and 7. As I write this, there is still some snow in my yard and snow in the woods. For a time it was as if spring would never come and perhaps that is why the only person to send me a photo that actually depicted spring was Gary Sturge who sent me a photo of a tree in full pussy willow bloom. Below are some early April spring signs, or sighs as Gary aptly called them, taken shortly after the snowstorm. But then, as is inevitable, the snow slowly started to melt despite the continuing cool days and the American Robin could finally find its worm and pussy willows could be seen here and there.

The wildflower, Spring Beauty, which graced the cover of April's issue, was probably not seen this year in April, but it will be seen in May with plenty of other colourful spring wildflowers. In honour of these spring wildflowers that don't last long, I prepared a collage of some spring wildflowers, many taken in Laurier Woods and some taken at High Rock Lookout Park in Sundridge which is wonderfully carpeted in Ontario's provincial flower, the Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*), each spring. Try to get there to see them and other wildflowers, although if you don't get there before the blackflies, they will get you!



April 7



April 6

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In this issue is the continuation of Brent Turcotte's dragonfly and damselfly article and Oriana Pokorny's reminiscences of her trip last May to the Galapagos Islands. Is there anyone who doesn't want to go to see this fascinating archipelago? Steve Pitt submitted some photos of a White-tailed Deer and a European Starling taken after the snowstorm. I turned these photos into a photographic story, showing that in times of hardship, different species are sometimes there for each other. Bev Kingdon also submitted a truly delightful photo, one of a House Wren in a wreath.

I wrote an article about the bee hotel that is to be installed in Laurier Woods this summer. It may give you a bit of pause as to whether this man-made structure should be installed, but the structure will be monitored over the summer to determine whether it truly helps bees and/or other insects.

Lots of events and outings will be taking place over the summer and a list of these up to early June is included in this newsletter. The outings and events from August on will be highlighted in June's issue, but if you need to plan your summer, you can see all activities, events and outings posted on our website.

May brings Mother's Day and Queen Victoria Day, also known as the long May weekend and the May two-four weekend. Since 1845, it has been Canada's way to honour Queen Victoria and interestingly, we are the only country to do so with an official holiday, although in parts of Scotland it is also a holiday. In Quebec, the day is called National Patriots' Day.

Further to February's and April's issues, the Government of Ontario decided after all to maintain the current hunting regulations for Ontario's northern wolves and coyotes, as opposed making it easier to kill them to address Northern Ontario's declining moose population.

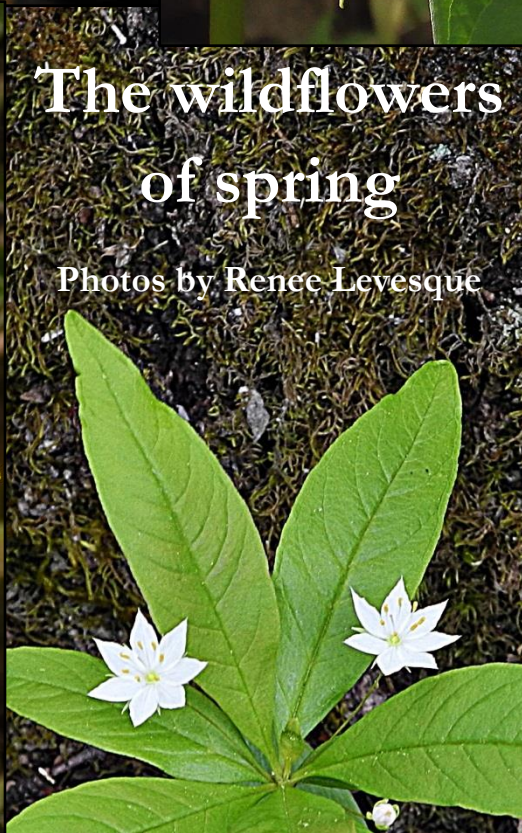
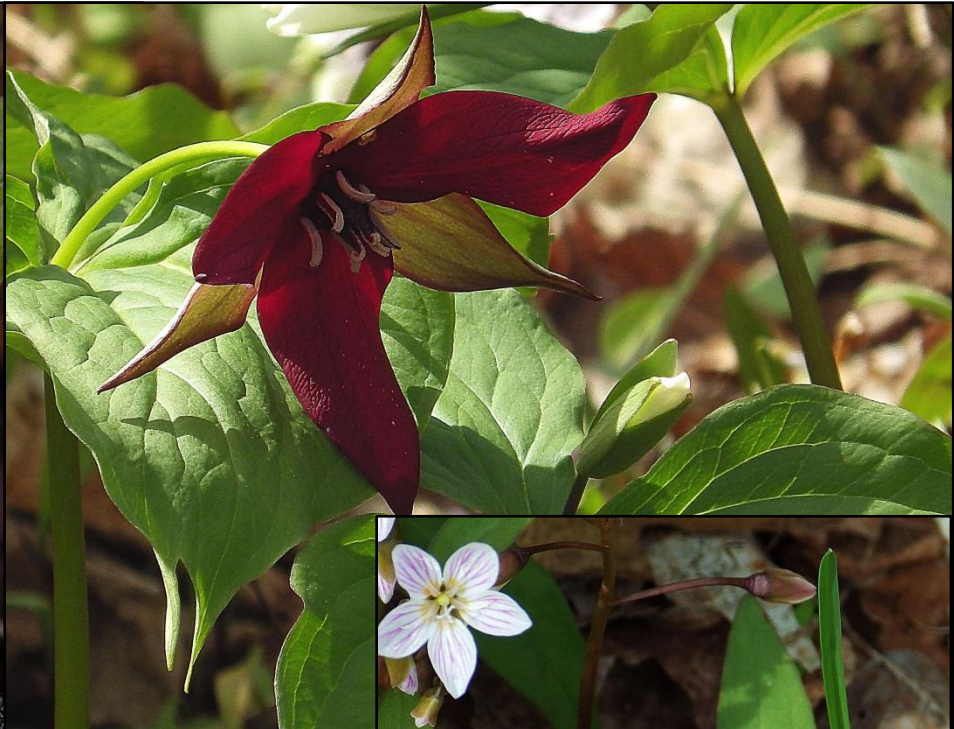
Past president Greg Boxwell has been ill. Many of us birders rely on Greg to let us know what birds are seen in his neck of the woods. We wish him a speedy recovery.



April 15



April 25



The wildflowers of spring

Photos by Renee Levesque



A trek to the Galapagos

Darwin's Bay, photo by Fred Pinto

By Oriana Pokorny

Editor's Note: At March's meeting of the Nipissing Naturalists Club, three biology students from Nipissing University, Vincent Evans-Lucy, Verna Valliere and Lauren Aarts, talked about their trip to the Galapagos Islands in May 2015. They were on a trip organized by Peter Nosko, along with 43 others, about 18 of them staff and students from Nipissing University, others from Laurentian University and others from the public in North Bay and Sudbury. They flew to Quito, Ecuador, and from there to Santa Cruz, one of the Galapagos Islands, where their adventure began.

One of the Nipissing University staff members who went on the trip was Oriana Pokorny. Her summary of the eight-day adventure on the Galapagos Islands and an introduction to the Galapagos archipelago follows.

Introduction:

The Galapagos archipelago belongs to Ecuador and having the Amazon, Andes and Galapagos all in one country is quite amazing. The Ecuadorian people are very proud of the diversity of life and habitats that exist in their small country and so they should be.

The Galapagos Islands and surrounding waterways are 97% National Park and are protected by the Ecuadorian Government, as well as by UNESCO. The remaining 3% of the land is made up of villages, towns and farmland. Only four of the 19 islands are inhabited. There are about 26,000 people who live on the islands, mostly in one of the four towns, each town on one of the four inhabited islands. These inhabited islands and towns are Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz; Puerto Baquerizo Moreno on San Cristobal; Puerto Villamil on Isabela; and Puerto Velasco Ibarra on Floreana. Tourists and researchers may visit the non-inhabited islands, but no overnight visits are allowed.

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To try and limit the population growth, and hence the impact of humans on the fragile ecosystem, only people born in Galapagos, or married to someone born in the Galapagos, may live and work in Galapagos.

People who live on the islands make a higher minimum wage than mainland Ecuadorians. It is not that the islanders have a higher standard of living than mainlanders, but rather that the cost of living on the islands is higher.

Much of the food and drinking water of the Galapagos people are imported. Fresh water is rare. The Galapagos are in an arid part of the world, and there are few ponds in which to store fresh water. The city water that comes from the taps is filtered brackish water. It is free of bacteria and microbes, but too high in salt. Good for showering, but not drinking.

There is also very little soil. Geologically, these volcanic islands are very young and soil hasn't had a chance to form yet. Most of the forests are growing up through boulder fields of jagged volcanic rock. Despite poor conditions and strict environmental regulations regarding fertilizers and pesticides, there is some farming, just not a lot. Produce that is farmed on the Galapagos includes bananas, plantains, coffee, papaya, guava, passion fruit, castor beans and potatoes. There are also many acacias which grow well in the arid climate and interest in using them as a new food source is rising. Even so, there is not enough locally-grown food to feed all 25,000 residents and 180,000 tourists who visit the islands annually.

Historically, many Galapagos species have become extinct due to introduced invasive species. The first sailors and explorers unintentionally brought diseases, seeds and rats with them, but they also deliberately brought flowers, vegetables, cats, pigs and goats. Goats in particular were left wild on islands as a future food source and caused mass destruction of many native plants, which, in turn, affected birds, iguanas and tortoises that depended on those plants as food and habitat. Therefore, many of the native species are extinct.

Because the people of the Galapagos do not want more invaders causing trouble, you and your luggage are thoroughly checked for biota before you leave mainland Ecuador and then again when you arrive in the Galapagos. Your bags are also checked before travelling between islands to prevent an invader that has infested one island from spreading to the other islands. Also, at every island pier there is an antimicrobial mat to kill any possible strays on your feet when you travel from one island to the next.

This is the world we stepped onto in May 2015.



Sea lion, photo by Lisa Hackett

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Day 1

With Galapagos just south of the equator, from the second I stepped off the plane, I found the incredible heat intense. Because I have lived my whole life in the Northern part of the Northern hemisphere, tolerating the heat was the hardest part of the trip for me and the only part that I did not enjoy. But it was worth tolerating to be in such a spectacular place. The scenery is beautiful, like nothing I have seen before. Dry, black, jagged volcanic rock. Cactus trees. Marine Iguanas everywhere. Birds with no fear of humans. It is truly amazing!

To visit most areas of the park, you need a National Park Guide. Since we were a large group, we basically had a guide for our whole trip. From the minute we arrived in Galapagos, we were told that although the animals are unafraid of us, we should still treat them with respect and care and keep a two-metre distance between us and them. That's all fine and well until a sea lion walks up to you and head butts you or an iguana is lying across your path. Every beach, pier and rocky shore was literally littered with sea lions, Marine Iguanas and Sally Lightfoot Crabs. It takes a little while to get past the awe and amazement of seeing them all the time. You simply can't stop to take pictures of every sea lion or you'd never get anywhere!

Day 2

The people on the Galapagos are very friendly and helpful. There is very little crime on the islands. On several occasions when we were swimming on a beach, our guides assured us our belongings would be safe left alone by the trees while we were in the water.

The beaches are spectacular. Some beaches are black with basaltic lava sand; some are soft and white with sand made of crushed shells; and others are sharp with shells that have not yet



Photo by Lisa Hackett

broken down. And all the beaches have our friends on them: sea lions, iguanas (above) and crabs. We also saw Great Blue Herons, Lava Herons, Galapagos Sharks, Brown Pelicans,

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Hermit Crabs, Portuguese Man o' War, Whimbrels, Blue-footed Boobies, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Lava Gulls and much more.

Where there aren't beaches, there are mangroves. All four main groups of mangroves are found on the islands: Red, Black, White and Button. They provide a great habitat for birds, crabs, molluscs and bryozoans.

Day 3

To get from island to island, you have to travel by boat. We flew into Santa Cruz and we flew back to the mainland from San Cristobal, but all the other islands are without airports. There are many reefs and small islands worth visiting, with breeding bird colonies and scuba diving spots that have herds of sharks and turtles. Our group took two medium-sized boats to Floreana, the first island that Darwin visited and the first island to have permanent human residents.

There is a famous post box on Floreana. Despite the absence of a postal service, you can still send mail from the island to anywhere in the world. It runs on a neighbour system. If the destination is on your journey or part of your journey, you take the mail and leave it for others to bring with them to their next destination and so forth. It is such a good system that several postcards left in this mail box actually arrived home before the postcards that were sent through the proper post!

We had several adventures on Floreana. We went swimming and scuba diving and had lunch at the only hotel on the small island, after which we took an open air bus up into the highlands at the centre of the island to see pirate caves. Back in the days before year-round habitation of the Galapagos, pirates and other sailors used to use the Galapagos as a stopping-off point on their way between the Americas and Asia. Some of the pirates stashed food, money and guns in the hills. The soft rock (see photo at right) on Floreana is easy to carve and there were a few pirates who carved themselves caves to live in. Not a bad place to hide out really.



Photo by Oriana Pokorny

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Day 4

We went snorkelling on all the islands we visited. The beaches and marine life underwater are two major reasons why many people visit the Galapagos. Besides, it's so hot most people are happy to be in the water. At each bay we visited, our group was split into two. Half would circle the bay clockwise and the other half, counter clockwise. Some people swam with the Marine Iguanas, some saw sea turtles (right), some saw jellyfish and some became friendly with a sea lion or two.

Day 5

Most of the islands of the Galapagos have a dead volcano at their centre, but Isabella Island, the largest island, is the only active volcanic island in the chain.

Isabella Island has a Marine Iguana breeding site and we saw dozens of baby iguanas. We also saw flamingos, egrets and penguins.

Isabella also has a tortoise breeding centre. Every island has its own unique breed of Giant Tortoise that is adapted slightly to the habitat of that island. Many of these breeds have been killed off by invasive species or by greedy humans. The breeding centre establishes breeds that are rare or re-establishes breeds that are all but gone.

One island is so overgrown with rats that the tortoises of that island were not able to survive on it. These re-established tortoises, therefore, live in this breeding centre until scientists and activists can find a way to remove the rats permanently. There is also a centre for sick or hurt tortoises. One tortoise with three legs was excited to see us and showed us how three legs did not slow her down in the least!



Photo by Amy Stillar



Photo by Oriana Pokorny

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Day 6

At the centre of Santa Cruz Island are two craters from long-dead volcanoes. They are completely grown over with vegetation despite being jagged black lava rock. We drove up to this site to admire the biota that grows in this wet environment. The hills at the centre of the island get much more rain than the arid coast despite being only 20 kilometers away. This is because they are almost 900 metres higher.

We saw many epiphytes hanging from the *Scalesia* trees, including bromeliads and orchids. *Scalesia* are one of the main trees of the Galapagos. They are a member of the Aster family and are an amazing site to see all on their own. But when draped with piggy-backing plants, they are even more stunning.

These wet highlands are also home to some farmlands. We visited a coffee and banana farm. Bananas and plantains are a staple cash crop for local farmers and a local staple food, as well as a successful export. Castor beans and papayas used to be the cash crops, and while you can still see them growing here and there, coffee has become the new crop of choice.

Seeing the working farm was interesting, but the main attraction was the tortoises. The wild tortoises migrate from the highlands to eat and from the lowlands to lay eggs. The farm we visited happens to be in the middle of a regular migration route and so the farmers legally have to give the tortoises access and preferential treatment.

The wild tortoises are amazing, but I was equally amazed at the wild forest they were passing through. I was able to pick and eat a passion fruit (above), although warned from touching the poison apple tree (*Hippomane mancinella*). It is one of the most deadly trees and



Photo by Oriana Pokorny

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is so toxic that just touching the bark can give you a rash. The aboriginals used to poison their arrow tips with its sap and they killed many Spanish sailors this way.



Day 7

We sailed from Santa Cruz to San Cristobal. It was one of our longest boat journeys and a journey on rough seas. It took longer than expected and many of us were feeling under the weather when we arrived. We did, however, get to stop twice, once to watch nesting boobies off the coast of a small island called Santa Fe (see photo above), and again to watch porpoises jump in the wake of our boats. We got to the island just before dark. There is approximately 12 hours of daylight all year round at the equator, with the sun rising around 6:00 a.m. and setting around 6:00 p.m., give or take a few minutes on each end. We had a fabulous dinner and then wandered around the tourist shopping district purchasing mementoes for friends and family back home.

Day 8

Darwin is a huge part of the Galapagos heritage. Every town has a Darwin street and both Santa Cruz and San Cristobal have centres named after him. At the Interpretation Centre on San Cristobal, we learned about the geological, biological and cultural histories of the island. Then we walked along a beautifully paved trail (leaving the trail means trekking across sharp lava rock while pushing through sharp spiny bushes and cactuses. I didn't have to be told twice to stay on the trail) to the natural harbour which was the first place the Beagle, the ship Darwin was on, landed in the Galapagos. There is a giant statue of Darwin there. But who has time to look at statues when there are frigatebirds nesting and sea lions swimming and pelicans diving? It was a lovely last day on the islands before flying back to Quito.

Note: The Galapagos Conservancy has an excellent website if you want to learn more about the islands: <http://www.galapagos.org/>



Peaceful co-existence on a wintry April day



Photos by Steve Pitt

Of Damselflies and Dragonflies

Part 2: the next six years



Photo by Renee Levesque

By Brent Turcotte

Part 1 of Brent's article Of Dragonflies and Damselflies, covering the years from 2006 to 2009, appeared in April's issue of The Woodland Observer.

2010: More time

In 2010, I was entitled to four weeks' vacation from work, enabling me, after my first daughter was born, to have more field time. Most years since then, I have taken holidays the second or third week of June to look for dragonflies.

My best find during this time in 2010 was likely a **Riffle Snaketail** that I found along the North River just off Songis Road. The Riffle Snaketail is aptly named because its primary habitat is riffles, although many other snaketails have similar habitats.

I also found a species that year that was likely a vagrant, a **Pronghorn Clubtail**. Or so I believed until April 4, 2016. After the editor of this newsletter showed me a photo she took of what she thought might be a Pronghorn Clubtail, I looked more closely at my old photos and decided my



Photo by Brent Turcotte

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photos were of the common **Lancet Clubtail** instead (right). Colin Jones, lead author of the *Field Guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies of Algonquin Provincial Park and the Surrounding Area* and also a co-author of *The ROM Field Guide to Butterflies of Ontario*, verified my mistake on Northeast Odonata. So with any observations of nature, mistakes happen and sometimes retractions like this have to be made.

2011: Some Humbling Moments

One of my most humbling moments came when I was exploring Four Mile Creek. The place I entered Four Mile Creek was unusual. It was a fish sanctuary. I asked someone at a Nipissing Naturalists Club meeting if he thought anyone would mind if I went looking for dragonflies there. He said not likely. But a passerby seeing me might not clue in that I was using an insect net and not a fishing net. Hmmm.

I found only one dragonfly the whole time I was wading. It was a clubtail, but what kind I'll never know. The clubtail spooked before I was close enough. It flew straight up for a long way and for a long time before it turned out of its vertical climb. I am not sure where it ended up because it seemed to leave the creek entirely.

One moment I am not proud of was the time I found my first **Swift River Cruiser** on Restoule Lake. I docked a paddleboat on shore and waded into the bay. I noticed a pair of dragonflies either fighting or mating. One got its wings trapped by the tension on the water's surface. This was my chance.

I netted the pair but ended up slightly submerging them. One escaped from the net and the other I examined. However, the one I examined was dead or nearly dead by the time I was done identifying it. Did it die from drowning, the struggle from being stuck on the water's surface, or was it already close to the end of its life? I'll never know, but I sure wasn't happy with the outcome.



Photo by Renee Levesque

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One of the highlights of 2011 was finding an **Ebony Boghaunter** (below), an inconspicuous but sought-after species that likes bogs and is usually found in the woods or on a trail beside a bog. To look for it, I walked along the Cranberry Trail in Callander to the cranberry bog where I waded for a while in the bog. Nothing. Ironically, I found what I came looking for, not in the bog, but at the base of a tree about 5 to 10 metres from the bog. I didn't need to wade in the bog after all and didn't need to haul those chest waders almost to the end of a fairly lengthy trail!

2012: Odonata at Home and Watersheds

In 2012, our second daughter was born, so naturally she consumed much of my free time. Nevertheless, I still managed to get two



Photo by Brent Turcotte

life odes that year. One was an **Ocellated Darner** (left) and I didn't have to go far to find it. My first daughter discovered it just outside my bedroom window early one morning. It is the only species of dragonfly we have had on our small property in the middle of North Bay and probably is associated with Chippewa Creek, three city blocks away from my home.



Photo by Brent Turcotte

Actually, Chippewa Creek, with the exception perhaps of upstream, is one of the worst places to look for dragonflies in our area. I suspect it is because this is one of our most altered waterways, altered to prevent flooding and erosion as it winds its way through town. Without erosion control, the creek would, over time, move across the landscape like all rivers. Many

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creatures, such as the endangered **Rapids Clubtail**, depend on habitats such as riffles, rapids and meanders, which have been created by natural erosion. Chippewa Creek, due to erosion control, is now one big rocky run.

Trying to figure out where to go can take odd turns. One of these odd turns is my discovery of technical documents put out by the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority. In these documents, the boundaries of quaternary watersheds are shown and in the centre of these watersheds is usually an important river to check out. One pattern that emerges is that it seems in some cases when you find an uncommon species, like an **Orange Bluet**, it can be found throughout that watershed but not appear in other nearby watersheds.

2013: Bog Exploring

In 2013, I added a GPS to my equipment and I added my first success in finding a bog-dependent bog species in bog habitat. In Restoule, a bog can be found by walking down an ATV trail for 20 minutes and then walking through about 5 to 10 metres of thick brush that gives way to a large open



Photo by Brent Turcotte

bog area. I waded through a short wet section under the sphagnum moss, after I had walked on relatively dry sphagnum moss with lots of sundews and a shrub here or there. After approximately 250 metres, I reached a small pond and close to this pond, I found the bog-dependent **Sphagnum Sprite** (above) and the **Northern Spreadwing**.

2014: Wader Trouble

In 2014, I found but a single lifer ode, a **Subarctic Bluet** (left). I read that this species likes conifer-edged wetlands and that it is known as having the northern most range of any damselfly in eastern North America. To find it, I visited the Roy Drive wetlands in the northern section of North Bay because this was the only place I could think of with the right habitat. The biting bugs were out in full force – mosquitoes, black flies and deer



Photo by Brent Turcotte

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flies all at once. As soon as I found some damselflies, I put my net gently on the water and let the damselflies fly up the net. Luckily the first damselfly caught was a Subarctic Bluet. Confirmation was quick as the species has a distinctive broken thoracic stripe, but I took a photo anyway for proof. As quickly as I was taking this photo, it seemed like an eternity with the biting bugs having a field day as I stood still to get the photo. Naturally once I took the picture, I got out of the area as fast as I could! In the rush to get away, my chest waders got stuck on a stick from a shrub and I put a hole in the waders. When I got to the car, I drained my chest waders and took off my wet socks. Later I fixed the waders with a piece of gorilla tape and that seems to have done the trick so far.

2015: Awesome Year

In 2015 my luck changed. I found two new damselflies and five new dragonflies. Outstanding! The only downside, mild at that, was only one of those species was self-found within the Blue Sky Region. Also, I still have not found any striped emeralds since 2011. The self-found species was an **Amber-winged Spreadwing** which lives in fishless habitats. It was an unexpected find. I was checking out a pond off Tower Drive in North Bay only because I had never looked there for dragonflies before.

Two more species were found on a twitch. A twitch is a birding term for following up on a report of a rare species which usually requires a bit of travel. In this case, two rare dragonflies were reported on Pautois Creek just outside Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park near Mattawa. Just a 40 minute drive, quite acceptable. These two dragonflies were the provincially rare **Maine Snaketail**, which is at the very western edge of its range, and a rather uncommon dragonfly, an **Extra-striped Snaketail** (right) which is new for the region. I missed the Maine Snaketail, but I nailed the Extra-striped Snaketail. Unfortunately, I literally nailed the Extra-striped Snaketail. I nearly cut it in half as I swung for it and it hit the rim of the net. There is a risk every time you use an insect net, but to damage a lifer dragonfly, especially one this beautiful really sucks. I wonder how long it survived after the



Photo by Brent Turcotte

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encounter.

The other four lifers were found on a trip to visit some birding friends in Peterborough. This year I decided to take the net and found four relatively easy southern species. The most satisfying find was a **Wandering Glider**. I managed to catch this dragonfly after about ten minutes of effort which consisted mostly of waiting for some dragonfly to fly low enough to net. The Wandering Glider is the most wide-ranging dragonfly in the world and is also the only dragonfly that occurs on Easter Island. I think the Wandering Glider will one day be found in the Blue Sky Region.

Future:

So where do I go with the Odonata in 2016 and beyond? Since by 2015 I have seen 85% of the known Odonata in the Blue Sky Region (seven of these have only been seen by me to date), so finding new species will be tough. Some strategies I could use to look for lifers include:

- Follow up on species reported by others.
- Visit new locations to find new types of habitat.
- Visit the locations with the highest and lowest elevations to find more
- northern and southern species respectively.
- Go out at sunset to look for shadow dragonflies, **Stygian and Broad-tailed**.
- Follow leads on uncommon habitats.

As well, I could spend more time identifying dragonflies without a net; do more contributing to the Ontario Odonata Atlas; and participate in dragonfly counts.



Photo by Fred Pinto



The Wren and the Wreath

By Bev Kingdon

A Carolina Wren, quite probably more than the one currently in residence, has built a nest in my wreath on the garage entrance door at the front of my house for about ten years.

When the wren constructed her nest in the wreath, she used fresh green moss and it blended in with the leaves in the wreath. Now that the moss has dried, half green and half brown, it blends in even better. I may be biased, but I think she has the most beautiful nest in the world!

She just laid her 5th egg and may lay more. She comes to the nest at 3 in the afternoon and sits for a while. He flies all around the property singing to her.

She is not bothered by our comings and goings, nor is she bothered by our dog. She posed beautifully for the camera allowing me to take this delightful photo of her.

Bee Hotel: Five-star or fleabag?

By Renee Levesque

Bee hotels have become popular because of concern in the declining population of pollinator bees, bees which play a vital role in the pollination of fruits, vegetables, plants and flowers.

In 2015, summer staff at the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority built a bee hotel, at right, using leftovers of natural building products and made up of various types and sizes of crevices that allow insects to hide, rest and recover.

It will be erected in Laurier Woods this summer if there are summer students available who can regularly maintain it.

But the question is: do these bee hotels work?

A three-year study was recently completed by melittologist (a person who studies wild bees) Laurence Packer, and his doctorate student, Scott McIvor. They tracked 200 bee hotels throughout Toronto, some erected by Fairmount Hotels and Resorts, with one on top of the Royal York in downtown Toronto.

Their findings are as follows:

1. Wasps checked into the bee hotels more frequently and regularly than bees.
2. Parasites were found roaming from room to room in bee hotels with thin walls and this could result in the mortality of everything in the hotel.



Photo courtesy of North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority

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3. They can become a home for insects, like ant colonies, they were not intended to become homes for, and spiders may build nests over the top to catch bees and wasps as they go in and out. They can also attract rodents.

The study found that, at their worst, bee hotels “may act as population sinks for bees through facilitating the increase of parasites, predators and diseases.”

To help reduce potential problems that could be caused by a bee hotel, the following is important:

1. Location. The hotel needs to be placed where the southeast morning sun strikes it. This will make it more attractive to bees. They like to be warmed by the morning sun before heading out on their pollinating journeys. If placed in the shade, the hotel will be more favourable to wasps.
2. Height. If placed at five storeys or higher, it becomes too much work for bees to continuously fly up and down. Most bees nest in the ground and if bee hotels are to be used to save native bees, a bee hotel placed too high won't save most of these native bees.
3. Maintenance. The hotel requires regular maintenance if it is not to become riddled with parasites.
4. Room size. Females are often bigger than the males and need the diameter of the hole to be larger. If it is too small for the females, the bees won't stay.
5. Condition of the tubes. The offspring of bees nesting in a hotel made of moulded plastic may not survive if the humidity causes the pollen to become mouldy.



Photo by Renee Levesque

Packer's concern “with the touting of bee hotels as a tool for native species conservation, is it becomes a checking-off box on a checklist instead of understanding the natural environment.” He says more research is required to determine exactly what bees like best. However, he doesn't think bee hotels are bad and he is not recommending people who have them in their backyards take them down. The study looked only at three years' worth of data and in the world of ecology

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this does not amount to much. (The link to the study is

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0122126>.)

Cory Sheffield, a research scientist and bee expert at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, hopes people are not discouraged by the study because the study took place only in Toronto and what you see in Toronto, in an urban environment, may not be what you would see in the orchards in which Sheffield conducted his studies. His studies show that the population of bees staying in bee hotels increased substantially.

In an urban environment, natural vegetation has been cleared and the land severely modified and, therefore, there is a greater abundance of exotic insects in this environment. The Toronto study did not take into account the diversity and abundance of insects using bee hotels. In other words, did the hotels favour exotic insects over native insects?

In case you are worried about wasps, McIvor reports that the wasps he found in bee hotels were not yellow jackets or hornets which live in groups in paper nests and are quick to sting, but, are solitary wasps and are more likely to fly away at the sight of humans than to defend their territory. Bee hotels also collect aphids, caterpillars and other insects that may be eating your vegetables and plants. Sheffield is also of the opinion that there are no negative consequences of having wasps nest in bee hotels.

McIvor feels it is time to promote wasps and their important role in biodiversity. He hopes this will be the year of the wasp, although a lot more positive publicity will be required to convince the public of that, especially if anyone has ever been stung by a wasp.

An insect or bee hotel was installed at Fletcher Wildlife Gardens in Ottawa last summer. I contacted Sandy Garland of the Fletcher Wildlife Gardens Management Committee to ask her if they plan to continue with it. She informed me the committee has decided that it is worthwhile even though they are still not sure what insects are using it. They have seen Grass-carrying Wasps and Leafcutter Bees making nests in it. Sweat Bees have investigated the stem tunnels, but are not using them because Sweat Bees dig tunnels underground.

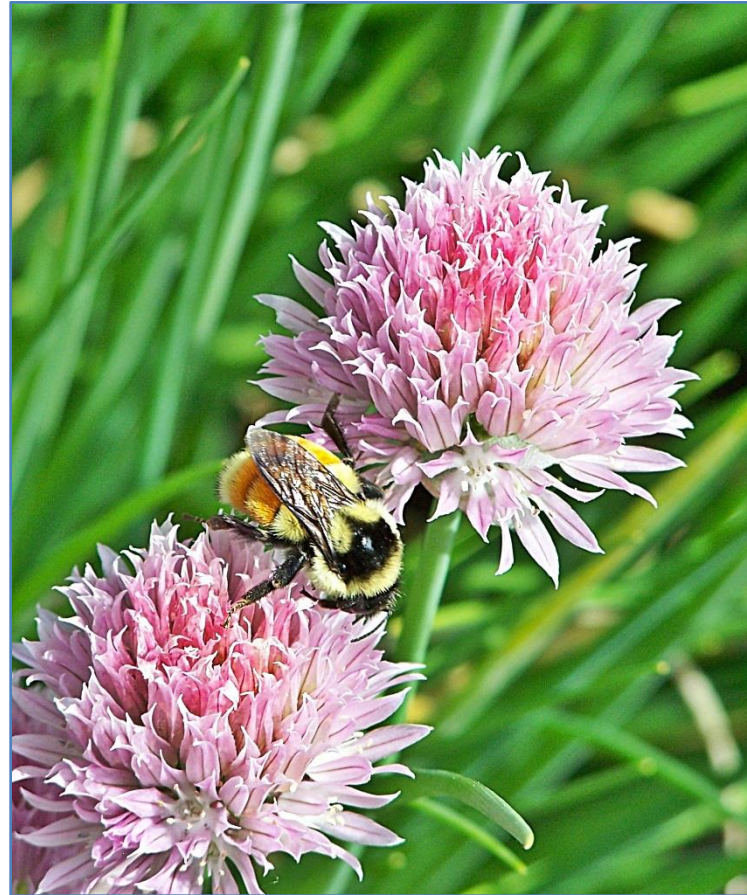


Photo by Renee Levesque

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Members found 40 intact bee cocoons in their mason bee box, a milk carton with paper tubes. They put these in their refrigerators over the winter and will be putting them back outside at the back of a new mason bee box at the end of April, sooner if the fruit trees start blooming, which is highly unlikely given our April so far. In mid-summer, the bee box will be checked to see how many of the cocoons hold live bees.

Sandy reports the mason bee boxes are easy to make and can be left outside over winter instead of keeping them in refrigerators, provided they are sheltered from the worst weather. The materials to make them are not expensive and, therefore, can be replaced yearly to keep them clean.

The Fletcher hotel also has containers of pine cones, walnut shells, grass and pieces of bark. Isabella Moths might curl up under the bark and Ladybugs might use the grass to overwinter in. But as Sandy reports, “We’re not sure about any of this. Everything is an experiment and we are still monitoring the hotel closely to try and figure out what DOES use it.”

The Fletcher Wildlife Gardens insect hotel certainly attracts a lot of attention. Even if not used by bees, it raises awareness. During guided walks, the leaders always stop at the hotel and talk about the insects seen in it, what the insects are supposed to do and any potential problems they may cause.

Fletcher Wildlife Gardens is a long-term project of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists’ Club. Visit their website at: http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/about/index_e.php.

A bee hotel raises many questions. It is not part of the natural environment and perhaps could do more harm than good. The bee hotel to be erected in Laurier Woods may help answer that.

*Information contained in this article was obtained from an article “Are bee hotels the answer to saving a species?” by Aaron Hutchins, Maclean’s May 25, 2015; from Sandy Garland, Fletcher Wildlife Gardens; and from Fred Pinto.
Photo by Renee Levesque.*



Online auction for LKL plaque



To help raise funds for the Ontario Heritage Trust plaque in honour of naturalist Louise de Kiriline Lawrence, Nipissing Naturalists Club is holding an online auction of a framed original drawing by Louise (below left), as well as three signed copies of her nature books, *The Loghouse Nest*, *To Whom the Wilderness Speaks*, and the book that won the prestigious John Burroughs Association Award, *The Lovely and the Wild*. You can also purchase prints of nature art work by local naturalist and artist, Paul Smylie. These prints, entitled *Baskers of Laurier Woods* (seen above); *Lakeshore*; *Royals of Cranberry Marsh*; and *Wasi Winter* are displayed on the auction site and can be purchased for \$20.00 each.

The auction began on March 29 and **will continue until May 9 at 9 p.m.** Bids can be made by accessing the online auction and sale through Nipissing Naturalists Club's website: <http://www.nipnats.com/>. Click on "Visit the Online Auction" in the centre green box on the home page to take you directly to the online auction page - and then bid! You will be notified automatically by email should someone outbid you, so you can raise your bid accordingly.

There is still time to bid, but bids are coming in at a fair clip, so be sure to get your bid in as soon as possible.



THE LOGHOUSE NEST



LOUISE DE KIRILINE LAWRENCE
WITH DRAWINGS BY THOREAU MACDONALD

An outing to Algonquin Park



By Marc Buchanan

Photo by Rebecca Wylie

Saturday, April 16, saw five intrepid Nipissing Naturalists Club members make a very early morning start to join Ron Tozer on an all-day OFO (Ontario Field Ornithologists) outing in Algonquin Park. Marc Buchanan, Irene Kasch, Lori Anderson, Sarah Wheelan, and Rebecca Wylie arrived at The Algonquin Visitor Centre just in time to join an enthusiastic group of 75 other birders from many parts of Ontario. Ron and Justin Peters of Quest Tours were two of several who led the walk, spotting birds and providing local history of the park. (See photo of club members with Ron Tozer at end of article.)

Our first stop was a short drive in convoy from the Algonquin Visitor Centre to Opeongo Road Park. Stopping frequently, we were able to see some exciting birds: a pair of Spruce Grouse (female below) sitting in spruce trees and a pair of Merlins letting us know quite clearly that they were in charge of the local skies. Swamps and small lakes produced Bufflehead, Mallards and Ring-necked Ducks. A Golden-crowned Kinglet showing its golden cap, a Northern Harrier and a very photogenic pair of Gray Jays provided opportunities for photos and, in the case of the Gray Jays, feeding by hand.

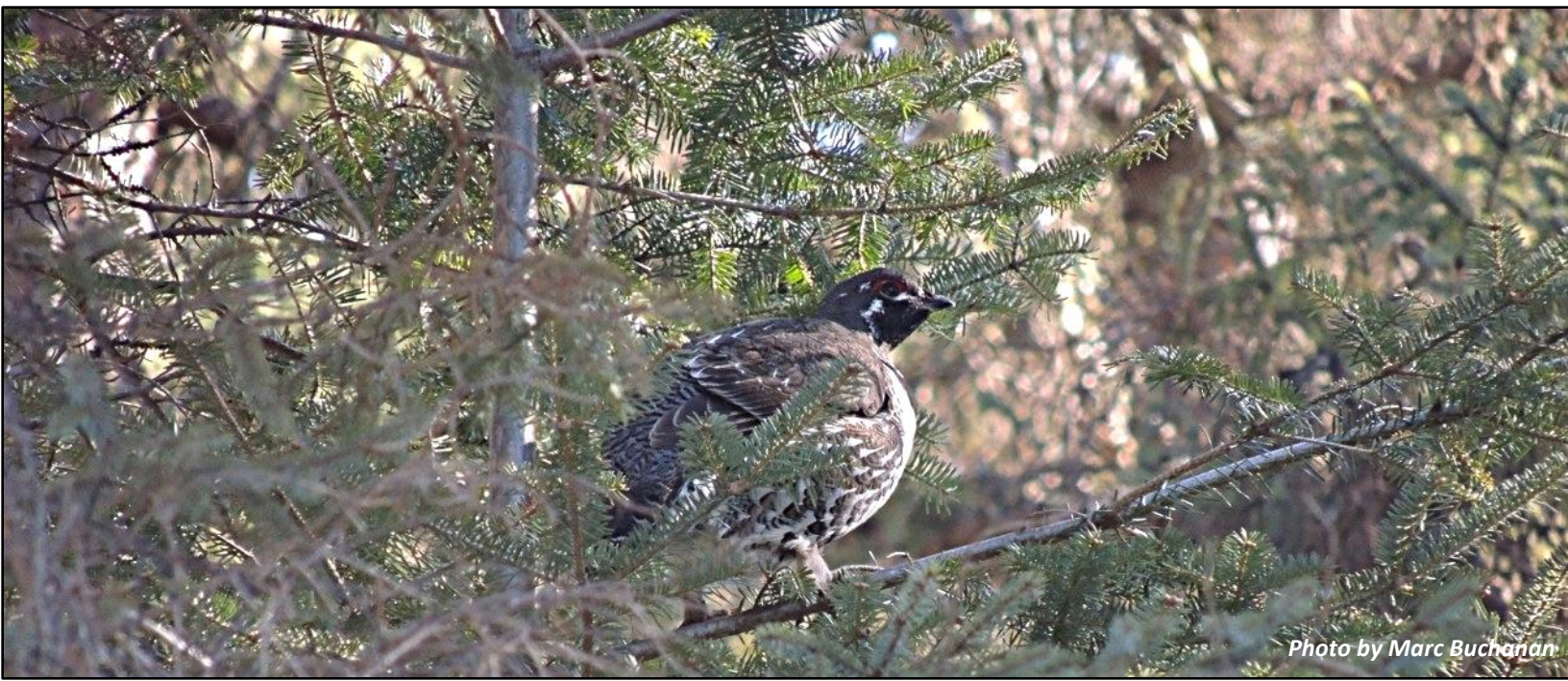


Photo by Marc Buchanan

Opeongo Lake is the largest lake in Algonquin Park and the most potentially dangerous for those canoeing. When paddling out of bays to the lake, high winds and waves have been known to create problems. On the drive back to the Algonquin Visitor Centre, two people could be seen at their easels painting, reminding us that people come to the park for many different reasons.

Lunch at the Algonquin Visitor Centre gave everyone a chance to see Evening Grosbeaks at the feeders. And on the large mural in the hall was a picture of our own Sonje Bols (right) feeding a Gray Jay! We all had a very enjoyable lunch, including a bag of jujubes for dessert!



Photo by Mike Kent, courtesy of Sonje Bols

There were several stops in the afternoon, the first being Spruce Bog Trail. This short stop gave us a chance to feed Chickadees (below) and Red-breasted Nuthatches. When nuthatches land on your hand, you really appreciate how small and delicate they are.



The next stop at Mew Lake Park gave us a chance to stretch our legs with a very long walk through the “Airfield” down to the shores of Lake of Two Rivers. Ron informed us that there are not actually two rivers, but just two branches of the Madawaska River, and that the airfield used to be a landing strip for tourists flying into Killarney Lodge. Before landing, the pilots would “buzz” the field to scare off the deer. The airfield is long gone and is now large fields of blueberry plants that provide a source of food for bears. Occasionally supervised burns take place to get rid of the scrub spruce that can overgrow the fields. Our long walk over these fields scared up one Wilson’s Snipe.

Photo by Renee Levesque

Seen on the shores of the lake on the bits of open water were Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, American Black Ducks and Ring-necked Ducks.

Heading towards the West Gate, we made a stop at Km 8 hoping to see a Black-backed Woodpecker and/or a Boreal Chickadee. Alas, it was not to be. And so, a future trip will be planned to see these more elusive birds.

Because there were 80 birders, we were spread out over a considerable distance, and while our little group saw about 40 species, the number of species seen by all of us as a whole was 55.

Note: If OFO trips such as this interest you, check out the OFO website at <http://www.ofo.ca/site/tripsupcoming> to see a list of trips planned for the year. Also, check out Algonquin Park's website at <http://www.algonquinpark.on.ca/> for live views, events and attractions.



Photo courtesy of Marc Buchanan



Nipissing Naturalist Club Spring Outings

On **Saturday, May 21**, there will be an all-day outing to Hilliardton Marsh to see migrating birds being banded. This is the height of the migrating season so there should be a lot of different birds to see. If you missed a warbler or two during your Laurier Woods walk, you may get to see them up close and personal at Hilliardton. Be sure to bring bug spray and a hat. Please note that banding is not done if it is raining. Banding is not done after noon, so it will be an early start from North Bay.

On **Saturday, June 4**, there will be an outing to **Carden Alvar** (see photo above) to view the birds and plants of the Alvar. This is a full-day outing that involves a two-hour plus drive to and from the Orillia area.

An alvar is a habitat of thin or absent soil cover with a limestone base. Globally it is a rare habitat, so we are very fortunate in Ontario that it can be found at Carden, on parts of Manitoulin Island and in the Almonte and Napanee areas.

Alvars create prairie-like nest grounds, which is perfect habitat for several bird species. That's why the Carden Alvar has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by Birdlife International. It is probably the only place in Canada you will get to see the endangered Eastern Loggerhead Shrike, seen at the top of the next page. Other birds to look for are grassland and scrubland birds, such as Upland Sandpipers, Eastern Bluebirds, Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks,

Eastern Towhees, Clay-colored Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows and Grasshopper Sparrows. In fact, there are 238 species of birds to be found in the Carden Alvar.



The Carden Alvar is not just known for birds, however. It also supports no fewer than 450 plant species, the most famous being the Prairie Smoke. One of the best times to go is in the spring when the Carden Alvar becomes a blanket of colourful spring wildflowers. There may not be many Prairie Smoke wildflowers in full bloom in early June, but they are just as wonderful a sight after they finish blooming as you can see from the photo on the left.

And if that isn't enough, Carden Alvar also supports 142 species of butterflies and dragonflies.

Details for both these outings regarding departure locations and times, as well as possible cancellations, will be posted on our website. Be sure to check: <http://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/outings-and-events/>

Club outings from mid-June forward will be listed in June's issue of *The Woodland Observer*; however, they are currently listed on our website.



Guided walks in Laurier Woods

On May 7, 14, and 21, the first three Saturdays in May, from 9 to 11 a.m., Dick Tafel will lead birding walks through **Laurier Woods**. This is prime time to see wood warblers and you are bound to see plenty of them in Laurier Woods. Warblers are colourful, active birds, smaller than sparrows, with thin needle-pointed bills. Most have some yellow in their plumage, like the Chestnut-sided Warbler in the photo on the right. And if you are fortunate, you might also see the very colourful Scarlet Tanager.

On Saturday, May 28, from 10 a.m. to noon, Lori Beckerton will lead a walk through Laurier Woods, pointing out the beautiful **spring flowers** that grow in Laurier Woods, like the Northern Blue Flag (*Iris versicolour*) pictured on the left. It was named in honour of *Iris*, a messenger of the Greek gods responsible for transporting women's souls to paradise. It represents wisdom, faith and courage.



Photo by Renee Levesque

On Saturday, June 4, from 10 a.m. to noon, Maxime Lefebvre will conduct a **Lady Slipper** walk through **Laurier Woods**. See and learn about this fascinating plant from Maxime, a Nipissing University graduate who did his 4th year thesis on the Pink Lady Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*). See Paul Smylie's article in *The Woodland Observer*, November 2015:

<http://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/>.

On Saturday July 2, from 10 a.m. to noon, Lori Beckerton will lead another walk through Laurier Woods, pointing out the **summer plants and shrubs** that grow in Laurier Woods, like the Common Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*), pictured on the left. It is native across North America and around the world, and so named because it can blanket a charred landscape after a fire with its pretty purple flowers.



Photo by Renee Levesque

Laurier Woods Walks from August on and the Nature Festival will be highlighted in June's issue of *The Woodland Observer*. However, these are now posted on our website at <http://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/outings-and-events/>



Photo by Kaye Edmonds



Photo by Renee Levesque

Other events

On **Saturday, May 14, from 4 to 7 p.m.**, there will be a **fundraiser for Laurier Woods** at the **Voyager Inn**, 123 Delaware Avenue, presented by the grade 4 and 5 students of King George Public School. This fundraiser will consist of a dinner and dance, a talent show and a silent auction. Tickets are \$10.00 each and can be purchased at the Voyager Inn lobby or at the FARM, Fashion Art Retail Market, 154 Main Street West, downtown North Bay.

On **Wednesday, June 15, at 7 p.m.**, Bev Kingdon will be giving a talk on **Trumpeter Swans** for the **Callander Horticultural Society at the Callander Community Centre** on Swale Street, off Callander Bay Drive. Meetings are open to the public and, as a special treat, **June's meeting also includes a Strawberry Social**. In the birding world and beyond, Bev is well-known for the work she has done to help in the restoration, conservation and security of Trumpeter Swans, once on the brink of extinction.



Photo by Renee Levesque

Upcoming speakers at monthly meetings

The speakers for our meetings in May and June should prove very interesting and informative, with presentations that take us from the Hudson Bay Lowlands and the Okavango Delta in Botswana, to our own northern woods and even our own backyards.

Meetings take place the second Tuesday of every month in the auditorium of Cassellholme, starting at 7:00 p.m.

On **Tuesday, May10**, Larry Dyke, retired geologist, Geological Survey of Canada, will talk about *The Role of Geology in Creating Wetlands, Havens for Animals*, focusing on the Okavango Delta of Botswana and the Hudson Bay Lowlands of Canada. Below is a wonderful photo taken by Larry of an elephant in the Okavango Delta.





On **Tuesday, June 14**, Mike McIntosh, Director of *Bear With Us Sanctuary and Rehabilitation Centre for Bears*, will talk about whether bears pose a threat to us; why food is such a driving force in a bear's life; how food relates to bear/human conflicts; and our general misunderstanding of bears.

Bear With Us and Mike are authorized annually by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to rehabilitate and release orphaned wild bear cubs; live trap and relocate perceived nuisance bears; and keep black bears in captivity.

The photo of the three bears minus Goldilocks, another wonderful photo, was taken by Mike McIntosh.

Your Board of Directors

Below are two of the last four profiles of the Nipissing Naturalists Club board members. It is hoped the final two will appear in the June issue.

Marc Buchanan, Vice President

Marc Buchanan worked for 35 years in the educational field as a teacher, department head, program consultant, vice-principal, principal and superintendent. He believed working in education was not a job but a way of life and a way of life that allowed him to work with students from all over the world and in a variety of settings. He is forever grateful for all the opportunities and experiences his vocation provided him.



Since retirement, Marc has pursued many interests, some of which are golfing and making golf clubs, painting, bird watching, deck building, travelling, volunteering and reading. While he has travelled extensively, one of his favourite reflective places is his deck overlooking Lake Nipissing from which he can observe the daily changes that take place on this third largest lake in Ontario, excluding the Great Lakes.

Marc's other favourite reflective places are Point Pelee where he goes to bird every May; Mer Bleue Conservation Area east of Ottawa; and St. Andrews, Scotland, where he has played golf on many occasions and where the photo of him was taken.

Marc, who is also a member of Bird Wing, has enjoyed his years with the Nipissing Naturalist Club - the people he has met and the variety of presentations.

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April Phelps, Treasurer

April grew up beside the Edenvale Conservation Area, on the banks of the Nottawasaga River where, with her sister, she spent hours and hours playing in the forest. As she got older, she replaced playing with hiking and exploring the many natural areas around her. She moved to North Bay when she was 16.

April has a six year-old son, Ronan, and her goal is to show him “how cool nature is.

Bugs, reptiles, amphibians, animals, trees, flowers – everything around us is so magical and I want to share that magic with him.”



April stumbled upon the ad for the first annual Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival when she was looking for activities to do with her son. The festival sounded like just the thing she was looking for, and so she and Ronan attended and learned about beavers, butterflies, salamanders, ticks, ponds and more.

She became a member of the club almost immediately after the Nature Festival, and the following January she became the treasurer.

April brings to the Board a business background. She has her B.A.in Business Administration-Marketing, with a unique specialization in consumer behaviour and non-profit marketing. She has work experience in business planning, funding proposals and lean marketing strategies.

Above is a photo of April at Duchesnay Falls and at left her son, Ronan, at the Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival.



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Board of Directors, 2016

Fred Pinto, President: fredpinto1@gmail.com 705-476-9006

Marc Buchanan, Vice-president

Joe Boivin

Sonje Bols-Hill

Irene Kasch

Mary Marrs

Stephen Mitchell

April Phelps

Oriana Pokorny

Paul Smylie

Sarah Wheelan

Past Presidents

Dick Tafel

Ted Price

Steph Romaniuk

Angela Martin

Greg Boxwell

Jeremy St. Onge

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

Bird Wing

Dick Tafel, Chairman: rtafel@sympatico.ca. 705-472-7907

Gary Sturge, Treasurer

Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe.

The Bird Wing newsletter is published each month, except December, and sent to members by email and posted on Nipissing Naturalists Club website, <http://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/>. Also posted on the website are the monthly Bird Bash results and Year-end reports by Dick Tafel; the Christmas Bird Count Reports by Lori Anderson; and photos of birds by members.

The Woodland Observer is published electronically each month from September to June and sent to members by email and posted on Nipissing Naturalists Club website, <http://www.nipnats.com/> under the link, "Newsletter".

Editor: Renee Levesque: rlevesque1948@gmail.com

Contributors this issue: Sonje Bols/Mike Kent, Marc Buchanan, Larry Dyke, Kaye Edmonds, Lisa Hackett, Bev Kingdon, Renee Levesque, Mike McIntosh, April Phelps, Fred Pinto, Steve Pitt, Oriana Pokorny, Amy Stillar, Brent Turcotte, and Rebecca Wylie.

Special thanks to North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority for the use of their photo of the bee hotel.

Membership Fees

Annual Nipissing Naturalists Club membership fees are: single \$20.00; family \$30.00.

There is an **additional annual \$5.00 membership fee for Bird Wing** which meets the **fourth Tuesday of every month in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.** This fee is paid directly to Bird Wing.



The Nipissing Naturalist Club is affiliated with Ontario Nature: <http://www.ontarionature.org/>.