

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

MARCH 2017



NIPISSING NATURALISTS CLUB



From the editor:

World Wildlife Day ushers in March

Sturgeon River, March 23, 2016. Photo by Renee Levesque

With March comes spring, arriving this year on March 20 at 12:57 p.m. We got to March after shovelling through a couple of weeks of snow, snow and more snow. So in honour of the last of Old Man Winter, featured in this issue is a collage of shapes the snow can take. Some shapes look like animals and some like people. I see a horse, a crocodile, a caterpillar, a ghost sitting on a tree stump, and Old Man Winter himself climbing a tree.

On the cover this month is a photo of a Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) by Mary Lord. It is a wonderful photo of a truly handsome animal and an appropriate cover for March. Vixens usually give birth from March through to May. Inside the newsletter is another photo of a Red Fox, taken by VJ Rao in Algonquin Park, featured in an article by Sumati Mathur from Washington, D.C. who contacted Nipissing Naturalists Club by email in early January asking for some birding assistance.

The main feature is an article on canoe tripping at Camp Temagami by Oriana Pokorny based on her presentation to club members last month. Oriana's love and enthusiasm for traditional-style tripping shows through in her writing.

World Wildlife Day, with its message that collective conservation actions can be the difference between a species surviving or disappearing, is on **March 3**. And that article is followed by one on the free Discovery Passes that Parks Canada is providing to celebrate our 150th anniversary, with a reminder that ecological integrity is the first priority of our national parks, as was proclaimed in the Canada National Parks Act of February 19, 2001.

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Also featured are the Trumpeter Swan and the Brown-headed Cowbird, two birds that couldn't be more in contrast! Club member Bev Kingdon and Kyna Intini were in Vancouver in November 2016 for a presentation to the Trumpeter Swan Society on the state of Trumpeter Swans in Ontario, while in the Powassan area, a Brown-headed Cowbird found refuge for the



Photo by Renee Levesque

winter on the back of a horse called Santana. This little parasitic bird kept warm by sitting on Santana's blanket that he wore outside on cold winter days and by sitting on his luxurious mane on those warmer winter days. I recently had an opportunity to observe their relationship (left) and Santana certainly seemed very solicitous of the little cowbird.

For the second year, club members enjoyed some dog sledding with Rosanne Vanschie's Powder Dogs. From the photos it is obvious that

those who attended had as good a time as other members had last February.

Profiles of two of our new Board members, Connie Sturge and Guy Chartrand, are featured, and I expect the other two new Board members, Rob Rodger and Mary Lord, will be featured within the next couple of months.

Because of scheduling commitments, there has been a slight change in the dates for the speakers at our meetings in March and April. Instead of Steve Pitt talking about panning for gold in the Yukon at March's meeting, Steve will speak instead at April's meeting. At March's meeting, Norm Dokis will talk about how the Dokis Indians saved their timber.

Also at the March 14 meeting, the 2016 financial report will be presented and members in attendance who have paid their annual membership fee will receive a coupon for a 10% discount on items purchased at Lefebvre's Source for Adventures, 180 Sherriff Avenue, North Bay, during one shopping spree between April and the end of May.

Renee Levesque, editor, rlevesque1948@gmail.com

World Wildlife Day celebrates all flora and fauna

On December 20, 2013, the United Nations declared **March 3** to be World Wildlife Day, to be held every year from 2014 onwards. The day is set aside to raise awareness of endangered animals and plants, including wildlife crime.

One of the most endangered species on Earth is the Rhinoceros, a magnificent animal of Africa and Asia and the second largest mammal in the world after the elephant. It is killed for its horn which is sold for a huge sum of money in the illegal wildlife trade. As a result, the rhino is rapidly being pushed towards extinction.



Photo by Renee Levesque

The theme in 2017 of World Wildlife Day is *Listen to the young voices*. But both young and old have a role to play in protecting wildlife and their habitats. “Our collective conservation actions can be the difference between a species surviving or disappearing.”



Eastern Wolf or Algonquin Wolf, photo by Dawn Sherman, Algonquin Park

For more information on World Wildlife Day visit:

<http://wildlifeday.org/> and to see what species are at risk closer to home in Ontario, visit:

<https://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/species-risk-type>.



Point Pelee National Park, photo by Renee Levesque

By Renee Levesque

In celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary, Parks Canada is offering free day passes, known as Discovery Passes, to all 46 of our National Parks, as well as to all national historic sites and marine conservation areas. This is not a limited time offer. Discovery Passes can be ordered throughout 2017. To order your Discovery Pass, open the link below and click on Order Now.
<http://www.commandesparcs-parksorders.ca/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/en/parksb2c>.

Of the 46 National Parks, five are in Ontario: Bruce Peninsula National Park; Georgian Bay Islands National Park; Thousand Islands National Park; Point Pelee National Park; and Pukaskwa National Park. For a listing of all 46 National Parks, visit:
http://www.pc.gc.ca/listing/np-pn/recherche-search_e.asp?p=1. This site will also provide you with our national historic sites and marine conservation areas.

If you are planning on visiting any of our National Parks or historic sites, it might be best to go during the off-seasons, keeping in mind collective conservation actions. Parks Canada has been overwhelmed by people from Canada and around the world requesting free passes and this has conservationists concerned about possible harm to the ecological integrity of these national treasures.

Because more than 900,000 people ordered their free Discovery Passes in the first two weeks after they became available on December 1, 2016, conservationists' concerns include increased traffic on the highways with the possibility of more accidents and more animals killed; crowded attractions; too much garbage; and people feeding or getting too close to wildlife, especially those who are not seasoned campers or park-goers. These concerns seem to be more prevalent in the Rocky Mountain parks where there is enormous pressure for development and where in recent years the number of visitors has gone through the roof.



Tripping traditional-style

Text and photos by Oriana Pokorny

Paddling a canoe is so calming and reflective, but canoe tripping also requires strength. You have to be pretty rugged to flip and carry an 80-pound canoe 900 metres uphill.

I love the balance of gentle and rough, of history and new discovery. At age 22, I thought I was quite the seasoned canoe tripper. Then I discovered Camp Temagami and an entirely new way to trip that changed my life.

Camp Temagami is one of many traditional-style canoe tripping camps in Ontario and one of three on Lake Temagami. It is probably the smallest camp and that is what drew me to it. I was looking for a summer job that combined teaching and biology and a love for being outside and I found Camp Temagami. When I got the job there, I thought I knew how to trip, but I was mistaken. I had to learn the traditional style, a style I converted to wholeheartedly, and a style I will always use as long as I am able to trip.

When the campers arrive, we play a few games, but soon get down to the business of planning and packing. We plan routes, we plan menus, we pack gear, we pack

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food and then we pack ourselves up and go on a trip. (Photo at right shows a camper all ready to go.) The youngest kids are around 10 and go out for two nights and five nights. The oldest kids are 17 and 18 and sometimes go out for thirty-two days to places as far flung as Labrador! The goal is to teach the campers as much as we can each year. Sometimes it's the hard skills – cooking, sewing, sawing and chopping – and sometimes it's the soft skills – patience, understanding and acceptance. By the time the campers are adults, they have developed a great skill set to carry them through.



When I say traditional-style canoe tripping, I mean the whole gamut of little things camps have tried to retain over the years. They have upgraded some technology here and there for safety and comfort, but they are trying to keep the core of traditions intact. And, in fact, pictures of trippers from 200 years ago still look very similar to our campers today. The key differences between traditional and non-traditional tripping are wanigans, wood canvas canoes and reflector ovens.



Wanigans are wooden boxes that hold gear and food. We tie the wanigans tight with leather straps called tumps and use the same straps over our heads to carry wanigans on our backs. (photo at left) It is how the Ojibway travelled these same waters. Wanigans are also super handy around a campsite. They are stools and benches (see photo next page) and tables and cutting boards. They are generally animal and water proof. They are easy to load and unload from canoes. And they can be used to hang tarps and clothes.



We also use tumps for our portages. Again, like the Ojibway, we use two paddles as a yoke, tying the tump between them so that the weight of the canoe is split between our head and shoulders. This makes long portages much easier on your back and neck. It also is very handy when trying to go up or down steep rocky slopes because the weight is positioned straight down your back instead of digging into your neck.

Like the Voyageurs, we use wood canvas canoes because they are versatile, strong and readily repaired in the field. We take care of our boats, trying not to scratch them unnecessarily, but if we do, they can be repaired quickly with water tight glue. On white water, the cedar sheeting and ribs of these canoes will bend and give if you accidentally hit a rock. They are more forgiving than plastic or metal.



And if you crack a rib or a piece of sheeting, either can be reinforced with a couple of screws and a piece of tin.



Back at camp, we replace cracked ribs and sheeting if needed and we sew, patch and repaint canvas. We have canoes that are twenty years old and have been on dozens of hard trips and are still great boats. One boat cracked a rib on the Dumoine fifteen years ago, but continues to be used on trips every year with that cracked rib still there. I have witnessed canoes cracked in half, repaired on the trail and paddled home. Wood canvas is as rugged as the people who paddle them.

Another thing I learned at Camp Temagami is the art of cooking with a reflector oven. A reflector oven these days consists of two pieces of aluminum angled to catch the heat of the fire, with a grate in between on which to place bread or bannock. It used to be that simple yeast bread (photo below left) or yeast-free bannock/biscuits were typically all that got made in a reflector oven. But these days, our staff is very creative and use reflector ovens to make – with slight

variations of the original recipes – blueberry pies, bagels, cobblers, pizza, naan and cornbread.

We also dehydrate most of our food, partly to cut back on the weight we carry and partly to help food keep for thirty days in the wild. Almost anything can be dehydrated. As with baking, all it takes is creativity



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to have some spectacularly fun meals. Mac and cheese is still a favourite, but clam-bacon alfredo, shepherd's pie, dahl, spaghetti, curry and burritos are all popular too. Once you have the basics down pat, there is nowhere you can't go.

A well-seasoned group of campers can pack a varied, interesting menu for thirty days for six people and make it all fit in three canoes. And then that same group of campers will spend every day paddling, portaging, clearing portage trails, finding sites, sawing wood, chopping wood, pumping water, and still find time to make those delicious meals and play silly games and sing songs and swim and keep me smiling.

But it is hard not to smile when you wake up every day to gorgeous sunrises, calm misty mornings, oats and bacon and coffee – and then spend the day admiring old growth pines, waterfalls, clifftops, loons, herons, mergansers, butterflies, dragonflies – and the list goes on.

It is hard to come home after a good trip with good people. You want to spend another day. Five days is not enough, let's do nine next time. Nine is too short, we were just finding our rhythm, fifteen is better. Fifteen is too short. Twenty is too short. There is never enough time.



Santana and the Cowbird

By Renee Levesque with Teri Palangio

Long ago on the Great Plains of the U.S. and the Prairies of Canada, Brown-headed Cowbirds would follow herds of bison, eating the insects these great thundering animals flushed from

the grasses. Settlers at that time called these blackbirds “buffalo birds”. Today, with their original habitat diminished and the bison having been hunted nearly to extinction, Brown-headed Cowbirds are found coast-to-coast on lawns and in fields, pastures and meadows, and keeping company with cows and horses. They eat insects in the grass and ticks on the animals, as well as seeds and grain.

Because Brown-headed Cowbirds, and the Bronzed Cowbird of the U.S. southwest, are no longer confined to the Great Plains and the Prairies, their spread is not always heralded with delight. They are opportunistic birds, brood parasites that lay their eggs in the nests of over 200 species of other songbirds, many being the much smaller warbler.

The majority of these songbirds do not recognize the eggs as belonging to a bird other than itself. This is not good news for the host songbirds which are faced with

the tough task of caring for eggs and feeding hungry nestlings and fledglings not their own. And to make matters worse, cowbird eggs tend to hatch more quickly than other eggs, giving the cowbird a head start in getting food and developing faster than the chicks from the legitimate eggs. In fact, the hatched cowbird sometimes tosses the other eggs out of the nest and sometimes will smother the young nestlings with its larger



Male Brown-headed Cowbird, photo by Kevan Cowcill



Chick just out of the nest, photo by Tony LePrieur

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body. This parasitism has actually hurt populations of some songbirds. For that reason, cowbirds are not always well-liked. You can see the size of the chicks compared to the host parent in the photo below.

In choosing foster parents to raise and feed their young, cowbirds are only maintaining their tradition that was established when they followed nomadic herds of bison and depended on them for their food. If they needed to wander with the herd for their food, how could they stay put to nest? The answer: by not building nests at all and instead laying their eggs in the nests of other species and leaving their young in the care of these other birds. It is how they survived and it is not their fault that their habitat was reduced through urbanization and agriculture and the bison became almost extinct.



Cowbird chicks (right) being fed by a Savannah Sparrow, photo by Tony LePrieur

Despite being raised by foster parents, the interesting thing is that by the time these cowbirds are about a month old, they have figured out how to act like Brown-headed Cowbirds. How?

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From recent research posted on the Audubon website, it seems young Brown-headed Cowbirds are not totally abandoned by their mothers. Instead, it would appear their mothers keep a watchful eye on them and may even have some contact with them to prevent them from getting too close to their foster parents.

More amazing, this research also shows that the young leave their host nesting areas shortly after sundown and roost overnight in fields where Brown-headed Cowbirds typically live. Then, the next morning, they return to their foster families.

If this is the case, it shows that much effort has to be made by the chicks to learn to forage and sing and generally act like cowbirds.

Brown-headed Cowbirds do not normally remain in our area during the winter, but migrate south. However, this winter there is a surprising exception first brought to my attention by Brent and Laura Turcotte during January's Bird Count. Laura's friend, Teri Palangio, who has a hobby farm south of Powassan,



Cowbird aboard Santana, photo by Gary Chowns

contacted Laura to tell her about a bird keeping warm during the day in the blanket Teri puts on the back of Santana, the one horse she has on her farm that is comprised of 92 acres, mostly wooded, with some wetland and some cleared pastures.

Santana comes in and out of the barn whenever he wants. Teri leaves the barn and stall open, although Santana goes into his stall only when Teri puts grain in it. "He prefers instead to be outside and in continuous view of the horses across the road." It was on January 14 when Teri first spotted a bird on the blanket on

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Santana's back, although she had noticed bird droppings on the blanket about a week earlier.

Brent and Laura identified the bird as a Brown-headed Cowbird. Initially Brent thought it was a female, but Brent reports he showed the photo to a birder who thought it may be an immature male not yet transitioned into its adult colours. By mid-February when I saw the cowbird, I too would say it is a male.

Since January's Bird Count when it was seen by Brent and Laura and Gary Chowns who took some photos of it, the cowbird has continued to cling to Santana's blanket or his beautiful mane when Santana is outside, thereby living up to its true colours as an opportunistic bird.

Teri reports, "I'm guessing the bird spends all day, every day on Santana, although I notice it leaves Santana's back when he enters the barn, so I started feeding Santana grain outside. But there is also a shelter that Santana likes to spend time in and the bird will ride him into the shelter and sometimes fly up into the rafters. I didn't know what to do, so I put a suet feeder in there and maybe the bird spends the night in there. However, I have looked for the bird with my flashlight in the rafters of the shelter in the mornings and evenings, but it's in the dark and I don't see him, so maybe instead it overnights in a tree or elsewhere and not in the shelter."

As of the writing of this article, the Brown-headed Cowbird still rides Santana.

Editor's Note: Thank you to Bob Lefebvre and Tony LePrieur of Birds Calgary for use of Tony's photos. You can visit Birds Calgary at <http://www.birdscalgary.com/>.



Photo by Gary Chowns

Club members go dog sledding

Photos by Steve Pitt, Rob Rodger, Kaye Edmonds and Fred Pinto





Photo by Lev Frid

Braving Algonquin Park in January to see lifers

By Sumati Mathur

Editor's Note: For those who do not bird, a lifer is when you see a bird you have not seen before, but the bird must be in its natural habitat or environment. It doesn't count as a lifer if you see it in a zoo, for example.

It was raining in the Toronto area, but lightened to a drizzle and then broke open into a clear bright sunny day as we drove north and east from Toronto to Algonquin Park on January 8 to meet our guide, Lev Frid. As the sky cleared, our apprehension abated. We were on the hunt for specific birds – lifers for us – and all of our research had pointed to Algonquin Park and the Toronto area as the best places to find some of them.

The birds we wanted to see were: Northern Hawk Owl; King Eider; Northern Goshawk; Northern Shrike; Pine Grosbeak; Evening Grosbeak; Eastern Screech Owl; Northern Saw-whet Owl; Great Gray Owl; White-winged Crossbill; and Red Crossbill.

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Our research had been conducted by looking at past eBird sightings, historical data and the responses we received from Ontario birders who proved to be invaluable and eager to help us with our quest. Our inquiries reached the inboxes and phone lines of many active Ontario birders who took the time to send multiple emails to us and who offered their help in locating the birds on our list. We were impressed by how responsive and willing these birders were in assisting us.

(Editor's note: I came to be involved when Sumati emailed Nipissing Naturalists Club and Fred Pinto forwarded her email to me. Although the Evening Grosbeaks were being seen in the North Bay area, not many White-winged Crossbills, Red Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks were being seen, and these were three of the lifers on Sumati's list. Neither were we seeing any owls in our area at that time. Therefore, I directed Sumati to Algonquin Park and from the time I received her email until she got to Algonquin Park, I forwarded to her all the Algonquin Park sightings submitted to Ontbirds by Ron Tozer.)

We met Lev at Tim Horton's on the way to Algonquin's West Gate entrance and drove with him into the park. The brightness, Lev told us, would help us spot birds, but it was also a strong indication of how cold it was: minus 22 Celsius, bitterly cold for a couple of people south of the border from Washington, D.C.

We had dressed for cold weather with thermals, warm socks, insulated jackets, scarves, hats and gloves, but none of our clothing meant for the mild winters in D.C. prepared us for this! But the creatures we sought reveled in it, and so we counted ourselves fortunate!

Lev's first stop was at a part of the forest where he suspected Black-capped Chickadees would be, and there they were eagerly hopping onto our head and hands in search of food. We had no birdseed and after they tired of their living perches (which took only a few seconds), they flew off. As they flew off, we spied a distant Pine Marten racing away through the snow.

The next leg of our trek followed a winding snowdrift-edged road through forest, and rounding a corner we saw Pine Grosbeaks at the top of a pine tree, with some pecking grit



Pine Grosbeak, photo by Nicole Richardosn

on the road. Our first lifer of the trip, with the exception of the Pine Marten, an animal we hadn't seen before.

Our next stop was the Visitors' Centre where we saw our second lifer, brilliantly coloured Evening Grosbeaks at the feeders.

We also took that opportunity to stock up on additional socks and layer them three pairs deep. Finally equipped to deal with a cold Ontario January winter, we stomped back outside in our boots and drove to another trailhead. About a quarter-mile down the trail, we saw Gray Jays milling about a feeder.



Gray Jay, photo by VJ Rao

While watching the Gray Jays, we heard a sound behind us and when we turned around, there was a Red Fox, sitting and watching us, tail curled around its feet to keep its paws warm. We photographed the Gray Jays for a few minutes and then resumed our trek.

After another half mile, Lev pointed into the trees above us and signaled that he had heard something. Red Crossbills flew overhead and settled in the trees above us. Our third lifer! It was difficult to snap a clear photograph because they towered so high above us.

Another half mile of trekking brought us back to the trailhead. We warmed ourselves with a late lunch at the Visitors' Centre and then



Red Fox, photo by VJ Rao

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drove back to where we had first spotted the Pine Marten. This time, there were three! They were scurrying up trees, nibbling on food they had found, and leaping from tree branch to tree branch to traverse the forest floor without touching the ground. We spent countless minutes watching these adorable acrobats climb around the trunks and come as close to us as they dared. It was the perfect way to end our Algonquin birding trek.

The next day, we drove back to Toronto and met up with Murray Shields who took us to Colonel Samuel Smith Park where we saw King Eiders, our fourth lifer, and Greater Scaup, our fifth. We also saw Buffleheads, Trumpeter Swans and many other waterfowl.

Murray then drove us to an area where we fortunately saw an Eastern Screech Owl nestled in a tree, its face lit by the bright sun. Our sixth lifer! It was a rufous-morph, and with the bark of the tree also being a burnt rusty colour, it blended perfectly into its surroundings. A great way to end our trip!

We said our goodbyes and headed back to the States having seen a total of six lifers and one animal we hadn't seen before, the adorable-looking Pine Marten.



Pine Marten, photo by VJ Rao

There's no animal like a snow animal

Photos by Ernie Frayle, Kaye Edmonds and Renee Levesque





The elegant Trumpeter Swan

Photo by Erich Buss

Ontario results of the fifth Trumpeter Swan survey

By Kyna Intini, Julie Kee, and Beverly and Ray Kingdon

The fifth North American Trumpeter Swan Survey (NATSS) for the Ontario Region was completed in 2015. The survey was done in two parts, a wintering ground survey completed in January and early February in southwestern Ontario and a late August/ September aerial photographic survey in northwestern Ontario.

The winter portion involved 41 hours of aerial photographic surveys conducted by Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and Long Point Waterfowl (LPW), as well as by ground surveys over a two-day period conducted by the Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration Team (OTSRT), Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), Bird Studies Canada (BSC) and a large host of volunteers. The area covered the shoreline from Lake St. Clair to the St Lawrence River, as well as inland rivers and ice-free areas in southern Ontario.

The late summer portion of the survey was conducted by CWS & the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with the cooperation of the MNRF. This survey involved 68 hours of aerial photographic surveys in northwestern Ontario in the Kenora, Red Lake, Fort Frances and Dryden areas.

In the winter, a total of 924 swans (704 adults, 214 juveniles and six of unknown age) were observed. This count is 1.6 times higher than the 2010 estimate of 594.

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In the northwestern Ontario late summer survey, a total of 1,076 swans were observed. This count is 3.9 times higher than the 2010 count of 279 swans.

The results of the 2015 fifth North American Trumpeter Swan Survey for Ontario show a total of 2,000 swans. This is 2.3 times the total of the 2010 survey total of 873 swans. These results should be considered as the minimum known population numbers for Ontario. More work needs to be done in exploring the remote areas of northern Ontario to determine if further Trumpeter Swan populations not included in previous counts exist. Further research into the seasonal habitat preference and the ecology of the species will help in developing a more extensive survey protocol.

The Ontario banding program is unique to North America because it marks birds with patagial tags, as well as leg bands. Around 1,600 birds have been marked over the course of the 34 years of the program and records have been kept of each bird, including biographical data and sightings. Over the last 5 years, 507 birds (108 new adults, 281 cygnets, 118 tag replacements) have been caught for banding purposes. We estimate that 30-40% of the southern Ontario population has been marked with tags and bands, with a higher percentage still carrying bands but have lost their tags. The data gathered from this program has been used in several undergraduate theses. We are in the process of developing a new computer database system so that records can be kept current and future students will have access to this wealth of data.

Editor's note: In November 2016, this abstract on Ontario Trumpeter Swans was presented by Kyna Intini at the well-attended 24th Trumpeter Swan conference held in Vancouver. The authors of the above abstract wish to thank Shannon S. Badzinski, Canadian Wildlife Service, for his help.



Photo by Renee Levesque

Meet your new Board members for 2017

Over the next two months, profiles of the new members on the Board of Directors will be featured. This month features **Connie Sturge** and **Guy Chartrand**. Connie assumes the position of Treasurer.

Although **Connie** was born and raised in Toronto, her family camped frequently and, as a Girl Guide, Connie got numerous opportunities to learn about and explore nature.

After she graduated from Toronto General School of Nursing, Connie worked in Toronto as a nurse, but once she married her high school sweetheart, she and her husband, Gary, moved to Owen Sound where the three Sturge children were born in between Connie's nursing job, her learning to drive, camping and canoeing. After six years in Owen Sound, the family moved to Port Sydney until 1982 when the Sturges were off to live in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for two years. It was here that Connie gained a completely new view on nature, the beauty of the desert.

When the family returned to Canada, they settled in Mississauga. Connie was a stay-at-home mom for a few years, but then re-entered the workforce at an auto insurance company, later taking a position with Canada Life in downtown Toronto. When Canada Life purchased an insurance company in England, Connie spent several months in England. After Canada Life was sold to Great West Life, Connie retired early. However, she did not stay in retirement for long. Instead, she joined RBC Insurance and worked there as Director of Claims until she really retired in January 2016. Throughout her insurance career, Connie continued to camp and explore nature from coast to coast.

Today, Connie and Gary and their two dogs and indoor cat live on the South River just west of Powassan. They own a parcel of land near Trout Creek which they are turning into their private nature preserve. They spend many hours there every week in all seasons walking the trails, maintaining the property and bird watching, a passion for Connie and her family. Above is a photo of Connie on her property enjoying a winter walk with her dog Gussie and newly acquired puppy, Abigail.

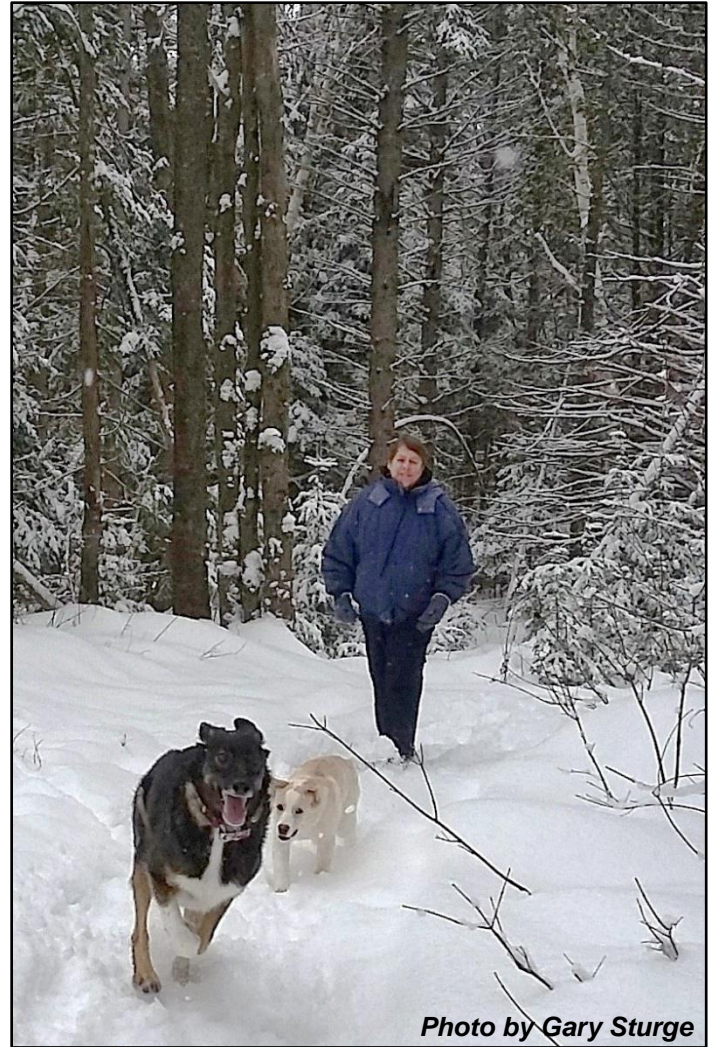


Photo by Gary Sturge

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Guy Chartrand was born in New Liskeard, but moved to Toronto with his family when he was 12. There he lived for more than 40 years. There he worked as a millwright. And there was where his daughter, who currently lives in Mississauga, was born.

Guy enjoyed travelling and camping throughout his working and family life.

Seven years ago, Guy retired, and two years ago, he moved to North Bay. He reports he was attracted to North Bay because he has family in the area and because he enjoys being surrounded by nature. “We are living with nature all around us and I want to explore and learn more about it.” And to learn more about it, Guy joined Nipissing Naturalists Club shortly after arriving in North Bay.

Guy attends many of the club outings, thoroughly enjoying them as you can see from the photo of him dog sledding during this recent Club event.

Guy’s pleasant nature, his enthusiasm and his desire to participate and learn will benefit the Club as he takes his place this year on the Board.



Photo by Rob Rodger

Upcoming speakers at monthly meetings

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

There has been a slight change in presentation dates. Instead of Steve Pitt speaking in March, he will now speak in April and on **Tuesday, March 14**, the speaker will be **Norm Dokis** (right) who will speak on **Eagles on the River: How the Dokis Indians Saved their Timber.**

Norm, a descendant of founding Chief Michel Eagle Dokis, will present an historical perspective on Dokis First Nation, situated 50 km west of North Bay downstream from the French River. Norm's presentation will include a video and discussion about the political and socio-economic foundations of his community, linking the human impact on the local environment. Norm will also provide some interpretation of the historic fur trading ledger of Michel Eagle Dokis, described by the Canadian Archives as the only known book of its kind in Canada.



Photo courtesy of Norm Dokis

On **Tuesday, April 11**, Club Member **Steve Pitt** will talk about **Panning for Gold in the Yukon.**

There are strange things done under the midnight sun, but one the strangest in the early 1980s was when lifelong city boy Steve Pitt joined his Yukon-born brother-in-law to stake a Klondike gold claim. Enduring two weeks of black flies, high heat, bachelor cooking and the occasional nosy bear, Steve and his brother-in-law crossed the same stream 42 times within half a kilometre as they

staked their claim in a remote Yukon valley.

They never found much gold, but nearly 35 years later, Steve turned the experience into a young-adult Hardy Boys-style novel called *The Wail of the Wendigo*, featuring two young boys, Yukon native Pierre Berton and city-born Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Steve sent a copy to our current Prime Minister, Pierre's son, and received a letter back from the PM letting Steve know he enjoyed the book.



Steve's brother-in-law, photo by Steve Pitt

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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/>.

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: Erich Buss, Gary Chowns, Kevan Cowcill, Norm Dokis, Kaye Edmonds, Ernie Frayle, Kyna Intini, Bev and Ray Kingdon, Julie Lee, Renee Levesque, Mary Lord, Sumati Mathur, Fred Pinto, Steve Pitt, Oriana Pokorny, VJ Rao, Nicole Richardson, Rob Rodger, and Gary Sturge.

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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 Naturalists Club is affiliated with Ontario Nature: <http://www.ontarionature.org/>.