

The Woodland Observer

Newsletter of the Nipissing Naturalists Club

www.nipnats.com

February 2020



A Canada Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) surveys its territory from the top of a spruce tree on Cooks' Mills Road off Hwy 11N.
17/01/2020 Grant McKercher

From the Editor

As we move into the depths of winter, I hope that we can embrace the season by continuing to participate in the various activities of the Nipissing Naturalists Club. For those who enjoy getting out into nature, despite the cold, we are continuing with the popular snowshoe hikes of last year. As well, at our monthly indoor meetings, we will have a number of presentations to keep us looking forward to warmer-weather hiking and paddling, and thinking about other natural-related activities.

In this month's edition of the *Woodland Observer* there is a review of recent Club activities, including our Annual General Meeting, the Banff Mountain Film Festival, our first snowshoe hike of 2020, and a gallery of the runners-up from the 2019 Photo Contest. Fred Pinto has provided a book review of *The Mapmaker's Wife*, an historical novel which he read in conjunction with his trip to Ecuador last spring.

As always, I welcome any nature-related observations, photos, or articles of interest for inclusion in the newsletter. I can be reached by e-mail (gmckercher@mac.com) or phone/text (705-499-5577).

Recent Meetings and Club Activities

2020 Annual General Meeting

The Club's Annual General Meeting and pot-luck dinner was held on 14 January 2020 at 176 Lakeshore Drive, and presided over by Fred Pinto, President.

In his President's Report, Fred reminded us about some of the Club's history, including its origins in 1966 as the Nipissing Field Naturalist Club, and incorporation in 1992 as the Nipissing Naturalists Club Inc. We are the oldest environmental group in North Bay. Our club has a rich history of enjoyment and education about nature, and organization of many fieldtrips, workshops, and public information events. The club is run by a volunteer board of directors composed of no more than 12 individuals, who are supported by many other members who take on additional tasks.

The Club objectives are:

- To observe and enjoy the nature around us, through **field trips, meetings and discussion**
- To stimulate and increase personal and public interest in and understanding of our natural history
- To promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources including soil, water, woodlands, plants and animal wildlife
- To co-operate with other organizations and agencies having the same or similar objectives

In 2019, the club Directors were:

Fred Pinto, President and Speaker Coordinator
Marc Buchannan, Vice President
Connie Sturge, Treasurer
Oriana Pokorny Secretary
Sarah Wheelan, Website and Facebook

Paul Smylie, Trip Coordinator
Matt Procunier, Refreshment Coordinator
Gary Sturge
Louise Simpson Rick Tripp
Katie Tripp

While these individuals were taking care of the legal and administrative obligations of the corporation, other members were instrumental in supporting roles in running of the club. Special thanks go to:

- Everyone who brought refreshments to regular meetings and tonight's event
- Renee Levesque, as editor of the club newsletter, *The Woodland Observer*, and the *Bird Wing Report*
- Dick Tafel, Chair of the Bird Wing group
- Rebecca Gauvreau, who worked with Louise Simpson, Sarah Wheelan and others to lead the bat monitoring project
- Sarah Wheelan, who managed the club's website and Facebook pages
- The many members that led winter hikes
- Kaye Edmonds, Bill Marsh, Jim Hasler, Irene Kasch, Connie, Gary and Rachel Sturge who helped with the 2019 Louise de Kiriline Nature Festival
- Lori Anderson, coordinator of the Christmas Bird Count, and all members that participated.
- Mel Alkins, who led the establishment of the Nature Garden at the waterfront
- Allison Bannister and Grant McKercher and many others who helped organize Chimney Swift monitoring.

Thanks to all our volunteers!

The President thanked our out-going Directors, Gary Sturge, Marc Buchanan, and Paul Smylie for their service to the Club in 2019. The nomination slate for 2020 Board of Directors was presented by the Nominating Committee (Marc Buchanan) and consisted of Matt Procunier, Louise Simpson, Fred Pinto, Connie Sturge, Keith Pearson, Grant McKercher, Oriana Pokorny, Rick Tripp, Katie Tripp, Irene Kasch and Sarah Wheelan. The nominees were acclaimed by the membership.

Connie Sturge, Treasurer, provided the Financial Report for 2019; and Dick Tafel, Chair of Bird Wing, provided the Bird Wing report for 2019.

After the meeting, there was a silent auction, that raised \$252.00 for the Club. Four new members joined the Club, bringing our membership numbers to around 80.

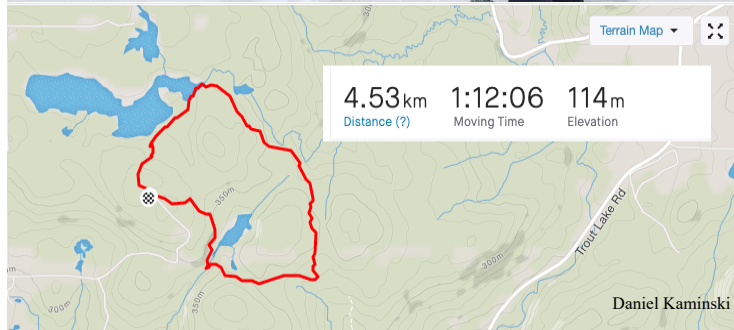
Thanks to all members who donated auction items, brought pot-luck dishes, helped set up the auction and serving tables, and helped in the kitchen!

Banff Mountain Film Festival

Selected films from the [Banff Mountain Film Festival](#) were presented at the Capital Centre in North Bay on 23 January 2020. This year's tour featured a collection of the most inspiring action, environmental, and adventure films from the festival. The North Bay event was organized by Mark Bassam and sponsored by Lefebvre's Source for Sports. It was extremely well-attended by an enthusiastic audience who filled much of the Capital Centre seats. Proceeds from the evening were generously donated to the Ecology Centre and the Nipissing Naturalists Club. We also donated a number of memberships to the Club as door prizes.

Snowshoe Outing to the Tower Drive Trails

A group of Club members went out to snowshoe the Tower Drive trails on 25 January 2020, led by Daniel Kaminski and Andree Morneault. The group had lots of fun traversing a trail marked out by Andree the day before:



A three-headed person was seen on the hike!



This American Beech has marks from Black Bears that have been climbing it for many years. You can see the fresh marks from last autumn. Beech is being killed by an exotic fungal disease called Beech Bark Disease. This disease has arrived in central Ontario and will reduce the availability of beechnuts, an important food source for many wildlife species.

2019 Photo Contest winners – Runners Up!

Thank-you again to all of the participants, and a special congratulations to all of the winners! (A link to all of the winning entries (1st, 2nd and 3rd place) can be found at the [NipNats Facebook page](#).)

Flora



Buddy Myles - 2nd place

"I used a macro lens and was shooting wildflowers in an open meadow. These ones looked perfect but took a couple of tries to get it just right."



Fred Pinto - 3rd place

The trees seem to be reaching for the azure blue sky and the cirrus clouds in this photo taken during a Club hike to the Brent Crater last autumn.
Editor

Fauna



Gary Chowns - 2nd place: Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*)

"The picture was taken at our house, after we saw it fly through the yard and land on our cedar tree. All it wanted to do was sleep, but the chickadees kept mobbing it. Its only reaction was an occasional chirp."

Nikon 7100, ISO 400, F7.1, 1/200 sec, 110 focal length, RAW format



Corinne Urrutia – 3rd place (tie)

A very ghostly photo of a Barred Owl (*Strix varia*). Editor



Laura Turcotte - 3rd place (tie)

This beautiful photo of a Palm Warbler (*Septophaga palmarum*) was taken in Laurier Woods.

"There were oodles of them hanging around the Turtle Pond with many other species of warblers. The best spot was at the back of the pond off the maintenance trail."

Landscapes



Rick Tripp – 2nd place



Buddy Myles – 3rd place

“Out for a drive at the crack of dawn (near Verner), and saw this nice field. I just had to photograph it with those colours!”

People Enjoying Nature



Karen Major -2nd place

“A picture of my husband Chris on Pimisi Lake, going towards the Talon Chutes.”

F5.6, ISO 800, 1/80 sec exp. And 200 mm focal length



Laura Turcotte - 3rd place

This photo was taken at the Eau Clair Gorge.

“The water levels were very low, and someone had made an inuksuk on the portion of the dry riverbed, so my daughter Victoria decided to try making her own!”

Book Review

***The Mapmaker's Wife*, Robert Whitaker, 2004. Basic Books. New York, NY. 352 pp.**

by Fred Pinto

In the spring of 2019, I was in Ecuador with forestry students on their international field trip. In preparation for this field trip my review of the literature led me to read about a major scientific expedition that was mounted by the French in the mid-1770's. This expedition led to the acceptance of Isaac Newton's ideas on gravity and new methods to more accurately map the world. This resulted in safer navigation that in turn led to increased exploration, trade and colonization.

I read a historical novel, *he Mapmaker's Wife*, that described the social context and adventures of the French expedition. Much of their work, as well the harrowing travel across the Amazon forest of Isabel Grameson-Godin, is documented in books that the individuals on the expedition published on their return.

Here are some photos from my trip that gives you some idea of what it is like making your way through the Andes and across the Amazon rain forest.



Fred Pinto

A night photo of the centre of Quito. Rather than seeing it captured by the Spanish, the original Inca city was burned to the ground by in Dec 1534 by a chief who was an ally to Atahualpa, the ruler of the northern part of the Inca Empire. The Spanish built a new city over the ashes of the old city that then became a major centre of administration of the Spanish colonies in South America.



Fred Pinto

Crossing one of the many streams that flow into the tributaries that drain into the Amazon River. Isabel Grameson-Godin had to walk across similar muddy, rugged terrain, build rafts and canoes to float down unexplored rivers, and survive biting insects that lay their eggs under human skin.



Fred Pinto

Mount Chimborazo, one of the still active volcanoes in Ecuador. This mountain was thought to be the highest in the world until Mount Everest and other mountains in the Himalayas were surveyed and the calculations completed in 1856. The Vicuna in the foreground, with their golden lightweight and very warm wool were reserved for use by the Inca rulers only. After the Spanish conquest the Vicuna in Ecuador were hunted and killed until they were extirpated. These Vicuna are a result of a successful re-introduction by Ecuadorians of these native animals to their original range.

The Mapmaker's Wife

From the 1500's onwards there was a change in policy by several European nations to use scientific experimentation to determine the laws of nature, especially those laws of nature that allowed countries to benefit economically. This was the time when several European nations saw the enormous benefit to ocean travel for trade and access to resources through colonization. One of the difficulties of navigation was the determination of longitude. While Galileo had a solution, that is to have two different observers record the time when they simultaneously observed a specified celestial event such as the eclipse of one of Jupiter's moons, this could not be tested and used until an accurate measurement of time could be made. This solution had to wait until 1657 when Christiaan Huygens invented the pendulum clock that had the necessary accuracy to measure time.

The story in this book spans the time between 1735 and 1793 in France, Spain, the Caribbean, Ecuador and Brazil. It covers the scientific discourse and colonization of the Americas during that time. The story is interwoven with the rivalries between individuals, countries, and different administrations within S. America. For example, Isaac Newton predicted our planet would bulge at the Equator while others such as Cassini who was employed by the French, predicted the planet bulged at the poles. An accurate survey of the planet together with an accurate depiction of the earth's surface would help with maps, determining boundaries and navigation.

The French Academy of Sciences, established by Jean Baptiste Colbert, the Minister of Finance of French King Louis XIV held its first meeting in December 1666. It was made up of the leading mathematicians, astronomers and geographers from Holland, Italy and Germany and included Cassini and Christiaan Huygens. The Academy made the drawing of an accurate map of France a priority. French astronomer Jean Picard set out to determine the earth's circumference using both celestial and solar measurements from a precisely laid out baseline using wooden rods, a quadrant and two telescopes. The map work was led by Cassini and a decade later resulted in a startling new map of France where some cities moved 100 miles and the coastline was 1.5 degrees closer to Paris. It also led King Louis XIV who did not understand geography to

exclaim that the work caused him to lose a major portion of his realm! This work led many other people and countries to start using the same methods to redraw maps of different parts of the world. It also led to the organization of a French scientific expedition to South America and to Lapland to determine the shape of the surface of Earth as it had implications for calculations involving gravity as well as mapping.

The book describes the challenges and disagreements the French scientists encountered with the Spanish administrators and their two Spanish scientists. While waiting and getting organized in S. America the French studied and described other aspects of nature and geology. For example, La Condamine, one of the French scientists, on his way from Quito to Lima in 1737 stopped to investigate a famous anti-malarial cinchona tree on the eastern slopes of the Andes. There are many species of cinchona and not all of them have antimalarial properties. He wrote a detailed description of the cinchona bark. The inner bark comes in 3 colours, white, yellow and red, with the red being the most bitter and most potent antimalarial.

The wife in the book's title refers to Jean Godin's wife Isabel Grameson who had been born in what is now Ecuador. They married in 1741. At the end of the expedition Jean travelled to French Guiana where he was to arrange for the transport of his wife and daughter back to France. This would not happen for another 19 years during which his daughter would die, and his wife would make a harrowing trip across the Amazon. They made it back to France where Jean wrote about his exploits and Isabel's harrowing trip became a best seller.

Fred Pinto

Calendar of Events

Club Meetings (176 Lakeshore Drive, North Bay P1A 1J8)

Tuesday February 11, 2020

"Canoeing the Broken Skull and Nahanni Rivers" - *presentation by Peter Ferris*

Tuesday March 10, 2020

"Hiking the Ontario Temiskaming Highland Trail" - *presentation by Keith Pearson*

Tuesday April 14, 2020

"Freshwater Mussels" - *presentation by Paul Smylie*

Tuesday May 12, 2020

"Bird and Animal Calls and Their Meaning" - *presentation by Steve Morrin*

Other Announcements/Information

New Trip Coordinator

Daniel Kaminski is the Club's new Trip Coordinator, taking over the role from Paul Smylie. Thank-you Paul for all the great outings and trips that you organized during your tenure!

While Daniel will be organizing upcoming trips, he will not be leading all of them! If anyone has suggestions for an outing or is interested in leading one, please contact Daniel at dkaminski@gmail.com.

SwiftWatch 2019 Report

Last year was the 10th anniversary of Ontario SwiftWatch. The Nipissing Naturalists have been involved since 2013, collecting data and reporting this back to *BirdsCanada*. I received this correspondence recently from Megan at *BirdsCanada*, providing a link to the [2019 Report](#) and encouraging us to start thinking about the upcoming 2020 SwiftWatch season.

“Thank-you all for your hard work in 2019. I’ve attached a link to the annual report just uploaded to our website. It takes a lot of time and effort from all participants and the Regional Coordinators to make this all come together, and I really appreciate all your efforts.

Looking ahead to the 2020 season I’m starting to think about Swift Night Out events and had a poster designed by a professional for advertising them. I now have a really nice poster to insert the date, place, time and partner logos whenever you need it, so I thought I’d share (none of the information on this example is correct, it’s just a filler). Thank-you so much for your time, effort, and support.” Megan, BirdsCanada.



Trek Across Canada

We recently heard about this on-going trek across Canada by Dr. Sonya Richmond who explains, below, her purpose in taking on this epic cross-country walk to increase awareness of nature:

“I am in the midst of hiking across Canada along The Great Trail, formerly the Trans Canada Trail, (www.comewalkwithus.online) trying to get youth outdoors and reconnected with nature promoting hiking, birding, and Citizen Science involvement. So far we have hiked across Newfoundland, Cape Breton and Nova Scotia, as well as Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and now Quebec! In November 2019 we concluded our first year of hiking along Canada’s Great Trail in Quebec, which is

our 5th province and after trekking over 3300 km in 2019. At the outset of May 2020 we will be continuing our #hike4birds across Canada resuming in Riviere Du Loup, Quebec and trekking through Ontario and into Manitoba. We are hoping to get the message out to youth, teachers, families, and outdoors organizations about the benefits of spending time in nature by becoming interested in birding and the Citizen Scientists.

As we hike the Great Trail, we will be **raising awareness of the importance of protecting migratory birds and bird habitats such as the Boreal Forest, as well as protecting areas of Scientific and Environmental Importance (IBAs)**. We will emphasize the many opportunities available for becoming active participants in the vibrant outdoor recreation, conservation, and Citizen Science communities across Canada. Our focus will be on **connecting families and youth to nature through birding, promoting healthy active lifestyles, and inspiring a passion to become lifelong explorers, outdoor enthusiasts, and sustainable stewards of the nation's resources**. A major goal of our walk is to get youth active and involved in experiential education opportunities in their own backyards and communities.

Over the course of the next three years we **are inviting people across Canada to 'Come Walk With Us', either by joining us for a few kilometers on the trail, by following our progress online, or by asking us to give a presentation**. We intend to share a positive message aimed at encouraging and inspiring youth to focus their online and screen time toward becoming Citizen Scientists, to experience the benefits and rewards of spending time in nature, and to become lifelong explorers and protectors of important natural areas.”


We have been in contact with Dr. Richmond and she has expressed an interest in presenting to the Nipissing Naturalists Club when she passes through the Nipissing district in September 2020. For more information, and to follow her journey, you can connect at www.comewalkwithus.online. Editor

Special Film Screening



the Woman Who Loves Giraffes
The story of ANNE INNIS DAGG

Forests without Borders
Presents
the Woman Who Loves Giraffes
March 5th
Doors Open @ 6:30 PM
Film Starts @ 7:00 PM
Nipissing University, Weaver Auditorium
Admission: By Donation to Forests without Borders

 Forests without Borders
Forêts sans Frontières

Forests Without Borders will be sponsoring a special screening of this [award-winning film](#) about a woman who was a pioneer researcher on the ecology of giraffes in the 1950's.



Board of Directors 2020

Fred Pinto, President and Speaker Coordinator

fredpinto1@gmail.com

705-476-9006

Rick Tripp, Vice-president

Connie Sturge, Treasurer

Oriana Pokorny, Secretary

Sarah Wheelan, Website and Facebook

Matt Procnier, Refreshment Coordinator

Louise Simpson

Katie Tripp

Irene Kasch

Keith Pearson

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Dick Tafel

Angela Martin

Ted Price

Greg Boxwell

Steph Romaniuk

Jeremy St. Onge

Bird Wing

Dick Tafel, Chairman rtafel@sympatico.ca

705-472-7907

Gary Sturge, Treasurer

Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Coordinator

Monthly Bird Wing and Bird Bash reports are sent to members by e-mail and posted on the Nipissing Naturalists Club's website: <https://www.nipnats.com/bird-wing/bird-wing-meetings-outings/>, and <https://nipnats.com/bird-wing/bird-bash-reports/>.

The Woodland Observer

The Club's newsletter, *The Woodland Observer*, is published electronically September to June, and sent to members by e-mail and posted in date order on the Nipissing Naturalists Club's website: <https://nipnats.com/newsletters/>.

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Contributors to this issue: Fred Pinto, Daniel Kaminski, Buddy Myles, Karen Major, Laura Turcotte, Rick Tripp, Corinne Urrutia, Gary Chowns

Membership Fees

Annual Nipissing Naturalist 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 each month from 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. (location may vary depending on venue availability).

This membership fee is paid directly to treasurer of the Bird Wing.

Nipissing Naturalists Club is a member Ontario Nature:
<http://www.ontarionature.org/>.

