

The Woodland Observer

Newsletter of the Nipissing Naturalists Club

www.nipnats.com

October 2020



North American Beaver (Castor canadensis)

Karen Major

From the Editor

Welcome to the October edition the *Woodland Observer*. Our cover photo this month, courtesy of Karen Major, pictures an engaging Canadian beaver in a rather comical pose. Is she giving a royal wave “Hello”? Or bidding us “Farewell”?

Despite the on-going need to maintain physical distancing and other pandemic precautions, club members have been able to access on-line presentations and engage in many outdoor activities. In the past month we have enjoyed on-line presentations on Australian biodiversity and an introduction to *iNaturalist*. The results of the Photo Contest are presented below and attest to the enthusiasm of members for sharing their nature experiences with others in creative ways. Also, in this edition, there are a number of announcements about opportunities to participate in citizen science projects including trail mapping, marsh ecology, moss monitoring, and the Third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas.

As always, I am happy to receive any observations, articles, book reviews, and nature-related information that you wish to share. Any suggestions for additions or improvements to the newsletter are also more than welcome! Just e-mail me at: grant.mckercher705@gmail.com.

Recent Meetings and Club Activities

On-line Presentation – 8 September 2020

“Biodiversity in Eastern Australia”

Text and photos by Bill Crins

In 2017, I travelled to eastern Australia to visit friends and to get my first taste of the biodiversity of this amazing country. I spent 6 weeks (19 September – 30 October) exploring parts of the states of Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania, with a brief few days in Sydney, New South Wales at the end of the trip. I planned my trip around places where I knew friends and colleagues that I had worked with in the past, or with whom I had travelled in other parts of the world.

I began my trip in Queensland, visiting friends in the Airlie Beach area in the central coastal part of the state. We spent several days exploring the nearby area (which incidentally had been hit severely by Cyclone Debbie on 28 March 2017), including trails in Conway National Park, and coastal areas in nearby towns. The diversity of birds was spectacular, including many forest and scrubland birds such as Varied Triller, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Red-winged Parrot, and Eastern Yellow Robin, as well as coastal birds such as Silver Gull, Sooty Oystercatcher, and Little Egret.



Fan-tailed Cuckoo Conway National Park –
Honeyeater Track



Silver Gull at Conway Beach



Victoria's Riflebird, Paluma



Blue-banded Eggfly, Djiru National Park, Licuala Day Use Area

Following my visit to the Airlie Beach area, I worked my way north as far as Cape Tribulation and Daintree, north of Cairns. I stopped at several locations to bird, botanize, and look at other elements of the biodiversity. Some of these stops included Paluma, Licuala, Mount Hypipamee National Park, Hasties Swamp National Park, Yungaburra, Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Daintree National Park, and Cattana Wetlands.



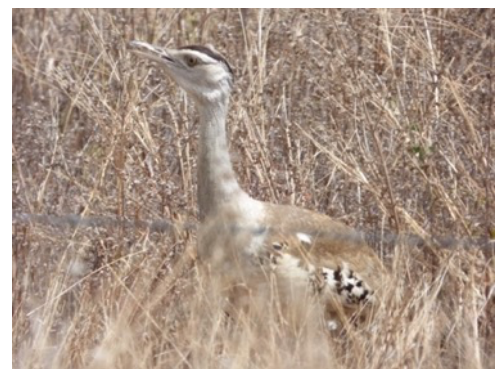
**Plumed Whistling-ducks with Magpie Goose
Hasties Swamp National Park**



Giant (White-lipped) Tree Frog, Mareeba Wetlands

The further north I ventured in Queensland, the more tropical the vegetation and associated biota became, on the east side of the mountains. On the west side, however, conditions were much drier, and grassland species predominated there. One of the highlights was seeing an Australian Bustard in this drier area.

My visit to Queensland ended in Cairns, where I visited the botanical garden and then flew south to Melbourne to visit friends in the state of Victoria. They live in a rural area southeast of Melbourne, in the village of Narracan. We visited several protected areas in the vicinities of Narracan, Werribee, and Inverloch.



Australian Bustard, Mount Carbine



New Holland Honeyeater, Royal Park, Melbourne



Yellow Gum, Royal Park, Melbourne

In addition to our visits to these areas in the vicinity of, and east of Melbourne, we travelled to a much drier area to the northwest of Melbourne, centred on Terrick Terrick National Park. An entirely different biota awaited us there. We camped for several days and did day trips to surrounding areas in and near the park.



Common Bird-orchid, Uralla Nature Reserve



Baillon's Crake, Western Treatment Plant, Werribee



Galah, Terrick Terrick National Park



Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Terrick Terrick National Park

The last major leg of my trip was to the island state of Tasmania. I spent two and a half days on Bruny Island south of Hobart, searching for some of the island's endemic birds, such as Black Currawong and Tasmanian Nativehen, and enjoying the coastal heath vegetation there.



South Bruny National Park, Luggaboine Circuit, coastal heath vegetation



Tasmanian Nativehen, Fern Glade Reserve, Burnie

I then worked my way around the eastern and northern coasts of the island, visiting such places as Douglas-Apsley National Park, Waterhouse Conservation Area, and Narawntapu National Park, until I reached the Burnie and Rocky Cape National Park areas. There, I visited with friends, birded with them in several reserves and walked some fantastic coastal trails.



Short-beaked Echidna, Little Swanport



Green Rosella, Ulverstone Golf Course

I ended my trip with a couple of days in Sydney, New South Wales, where I visited the botanical garden, the opera house, the Olympic Park, and other green spaces in the vicinity of the city. There were ample walking opportunities in these places, and the birding was excellent in some of these parks, as well. It was a nice way to wind down after lots of driving and prepare for my flight back home. I thoroughly enjoyed all of the areas of eastern Australia that I visited, and I'm looking forward to visiting other parts of Australia in the future.

On-line Presentation – 16 June 2020

“My Journey with iNaturalist”

Brent Turcotte

In this on-line presentation Brent described how people can use the *iNaturalist* app to document their nature sightings. It is a very powerful database to explore all types of lifeforms from your own backyard, or anywhere in the world.

There are a number of ways to contribute to *iNaturalist* including:

- Uploading photographic observations
- Helping to identify others' posted observations and improve accuracy for scientific research
- Participating in specific projects

Brent is able to keep track of all his nature sightings and monitor his progress in finding species that he has not seen or identified before. He was even able to identify a new species of insect, the American Whitebelt (a type of hover fly) that was not in the *iNaturalist* database (see the Hover Fly article later in the newsletter). Through careful assessment of Brent's documentation, the *iNaturalist* Curators confirmed the sighting and added it to growing number of life forms on the *iNaturalist* database. A great example of citizen science in action!

In the discussion period of the presentation participants wondered whether *iNaturalist* might be a means to connect more club members, while we continue to practice physical distancing. Could it be used to document all the species that people see in Laurier Woods and/or the Nipissing area? Is there a way to post that information on our webpage?

For information on *iNaturalist* click: <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

2020 Photo Contest Winners!

As you will see the entries this time were of very high caliber, making for a close contest. There were, in fact, multiple “ties” among the winning entries.

Eighteen NipNat members submitted 46 photos to the contest. Fifty members voted on the entries in Wildlife category, 42 in the Plant Life category and 39 in the People and Pets category.

Congratulations to all the winners! And a big thanks to all who submitted photos, and those who voted. A special thanks to Keith Pearson who coordinated everything and made it possible to view all the entries and vote on-line.

Wildlife



First Place – Karen Major

This photo of a common loon with its chick was taken while kayaking on Trout Lake at the Narrows into Four Mile Bay.

Second Place – Buddy Myles

“I used a fast shutter speed to capture the wing beat of the ruby-throated hummingbird.”



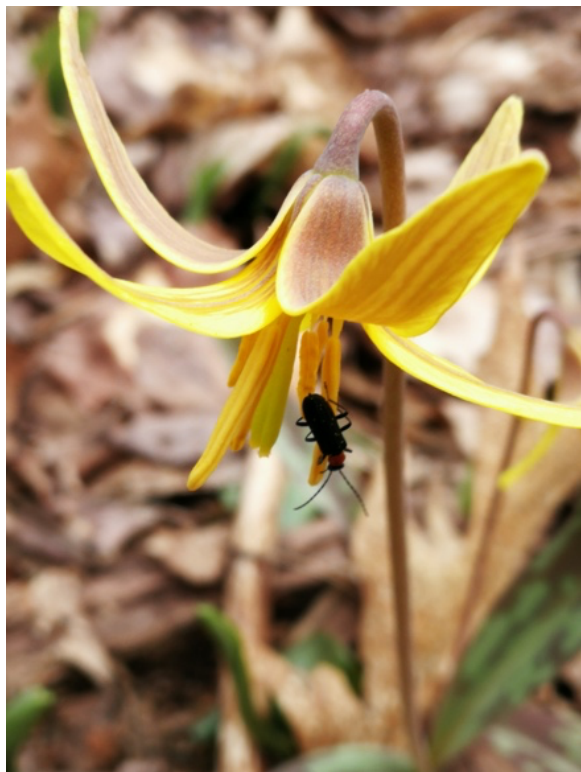
Third Place – Gary Chowns



“We are always watching for Spring Peepers on our Daylilies after finding one there once before. This little guy rewarded us in the morning light and interesting background.”

Plant Life

First Place (tie) – Beth Tomlinson



“Trout lily experiencing spring pollination.”

First Place (tie) – Kent Jones



Hieracium aurantiacum - Devil's Paintbrush - Orange Hawkweed. Shot in Laurier Woods June 26, 2020.

Second Place (tie) – Corinne Urrutia



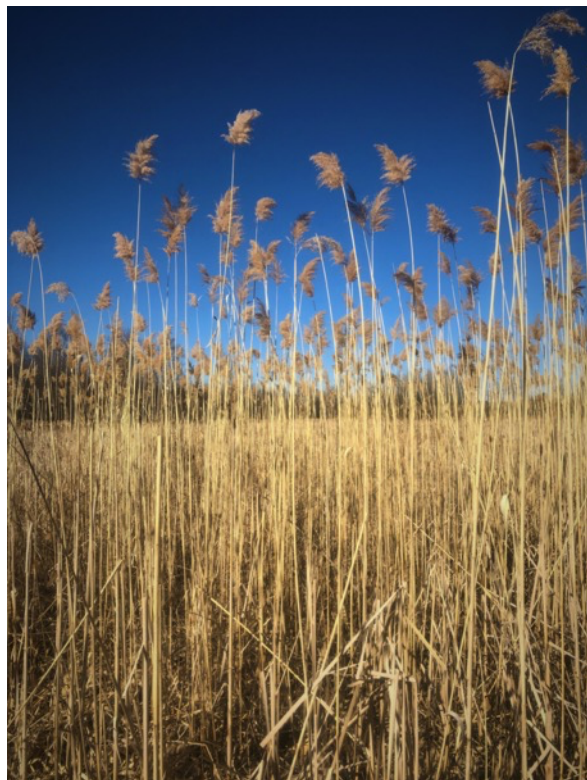
“Sweetman’s Garden is such a treat to visit, I’m glad it’s open to the public here in North Bay! I’ve seen some of my first bird ‘lifers’ here and always enjoy the changing color palettes that emerge from Spring to Summer. Black-eyed Susans bring me happiness and my photo ‘Joy’ is a small thank you note to all who take care of the garden.”

Second Place (tie) – Kaye Edmonds



“American goldfinch on mock sunflower plants. This is in my backyard. I love that they are so happy to find these cheerful yellow plants in my yard each summer.”

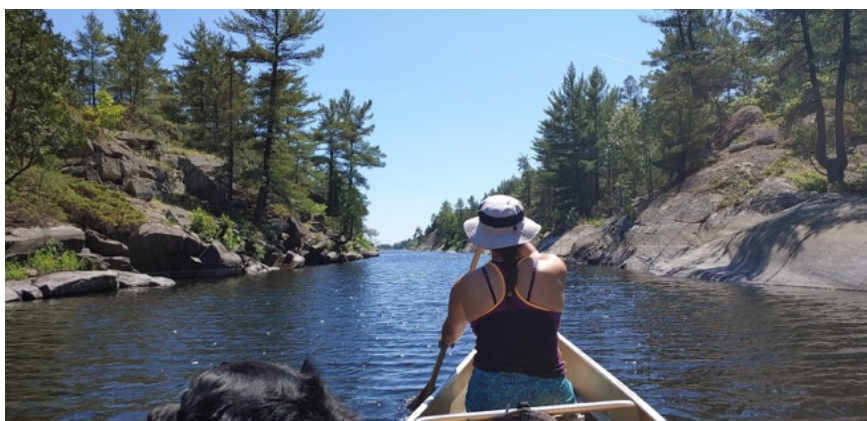
Third Place – Fred Pinto



“The contrast between the tall tan-coloured phragmites (an invasive species) and the bright blue sky caught my eye this spring. The photo was taken with an iPhone.”

People & Pets Enjoying Nature

First Place (tie) – Rick Tripp



“The photo was taken this spring at the mouth of the French River and is of my daughter Katherine and dog Murphy. Katherine had asked me if I wanted to go on a canoe trip to a place that she wanted to explore. Katherine did not know that she had traveled nearly the identical route about 18 years ago when she was still in diapers. The photo was taken with an LG G8 phone that had been rescued from the bottom of the river once already before I took this shot. (I always have goggles ready on a canoe trip).”

First Place (tie) – Grant McKercher



“Our neighbours’ dog, Lola, was anxiously watching as the family was kayaking near the shoreline. This was in May and the water was still pretty chilly for her take the plunge! She just hopped from rock to rock following them along.”



Second Place – Kent Jones

*Fishing off the government dock
Callander July 31, 2020.*

Third Place – Karen Major

*“The person kayaking is my husband Chris kayaking
into Cherries Bay on the Mattawa River system.”*



Submitted Articles

The Hover Fly

Text and photo Brent Turcotte



One of my most notable observations that I have uploaded to *iNaturalist* is an American Whitebelt (*Leucozona americana*), a type of hover fly which I observed June 23, 2018 along Gray's Road in North Bay. When I originally uploaded it, I gave it an initial ID of genus *Volucella*. This was wrong. Bastiaan Wakkie, a syrphidologist from Europe improved the id to genus *Leucozona*. Jeremy Hussell, a software developer for Birds Canada, then gave an id of Blotch-winged Hoverfly (*Leucozona lucorum*). I initially agreed with the id since he provided a link to a species profile on an old online (though incomplete) field guide to hover flies for Northeastern North America. I noticed, however, that all the Blotch-winged Hoverfly sightings were from Europe, except mine. I checked the Syrphidae Nearctic Checklist and *Leucozona lucorum* was not on it. I then checked the PDF for the online field guide called “Genera of Nearctic Syrphidae”, an issue of the Canadian Journal of Arthropod Identification. It stated that “*Leucozona americana* is resurrected from synonymy from *L. lucorum* based on our unpublished morphological data. *Leucozona lucorum* (Linnaeus, 1758) is thus restricted to the Old World”. Essentially that means that *L. lucorum* has been split taxonomically into *L. lucorum* and *L. americana*.

It turns out that *L. americana*, or American Whitebelt, was not a species in the *iNaturalist* database. Whoa! So, I posted a link to the genus profile *Leucozona* from the key to the “Genera of Nearctic Syrphidae” and asked Even Dankowicz, a prolific identifier of flies on *iNaturalist*, and a curator with the authority to add a species to *iNaturalist*, to add this species. He did so, and then several other people agreed with the identification, including myself, and now the sighting is labeled as “research grade” (an observation that has location, species name, time and two agreeing identifications).

A fairly satisfying observation despite the fact that the photo itself wasn't great.



Making an observation that results in an addition to the *iNaturalist* database is not a common event in this part of the world. In tropical areas where the biodiversity is high and population density is not, lots of species are not in the database. Here, enough people have contributed observations that most of the species a person could see are already in the database.

American Whitebelt is actually only ranked as an uncommon fly, not rare. As of this writing there are nine sightings in North America on *iNaturalist*. *The Field Guide to the Flower Flies of Northeastern North America* shows about fifty. The *Checklist of Syrphids of Ontario* lists 5 to 10 sightings in northern and central Ontario.

Flower flies on *iNaturalist* are still poorly observed. Only 152 of the approximately 300 known species in Ontario have been recorded on *iNaturalist* (only 77 at the time I made that observation). Flower flies are difficult to identify – almost a third require a microscope.

Upcoming Events & Speakers (Calendar of Events)

Video conference talks for Nipissing Naturalists

Date	Start Time	Speaker	Topic	Comments
Tuesday October 6th	7:30 pm	Mike Cadman , Coordinator of Breeding Bird Atlas-3	“The Third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas”	Find out what the atlas project is about and how you can get involved. You need to register for this webinar at: https://ofo25.wildapricot.org/event-3997748 .
Tuesday October 13th	7:00 pm	Roseanne VanSchie , PhD candidate, University of Toronto	“Wolves of Temiskaming”	
Tuesday October 20th	7:00 pm	Mary Laronde , Elected member of the Teme- Augama Anishnabai Traditional Council	“A cultural landscape perspective of Anishinaabe place names in the territory of the Temagami Anishinaabe, called nDaki-Menan”	
Tuesday November 10th	7:00 pm	April McCrum , Ecologist and Environmental Consultant	“Reducing Environmental Impacts Due to Construction” 	The speaker will discuss field surveys she has conducted and appropriate ways to reduce impacts to wildlife during construction activities.
Tuesday November 17 th	7:00 pm	Dr. Ken Abrahams , Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Scientist	“Geese in Ontario” 	This presentation will review the status, distribution, and abundance of geese in Ontario, including the populations and subspecies of Canada Geese, Cackling Geese, Lesser and Greater Snow Geese, Ross's Geese and Brant.
Tuesday December 8th	7:00 pm	Dr. Sarah Campbell , Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Toronto	“An Historical Review of Fish Stocking in the Laurentian Great Lakes”	This presentation will review motivation, historical records, and impacts of fish stocking in the Laurentian Great Lakes fish communities, with particular focus on salmonids.

Other Announcements/Information

Ontario Nature Trails

Don Knight

Greetings, I am Don Knight, the Chief Trail Enthusiast for Ontario Nature Trails, second only in importance to my wife, Mel, who is the Chief Data Entry person.

Allow me to introduce you to Ontario Nature Trails, <https://ontarionaturetrails.com/>, a data base of hiking trails in Ontario. Our data base of over 1,200 trails, all in Ontario, is searchable by Region, Community, Trail name, and various feature tags. This website is a retirement project emanating from my lifelong interest in nature and the great outdoors. Although a member of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists I cannot profess to be a naturalist. I cannot even admit being a birder – an admission that might not resonate with most of you.

Ontario Nature Trails had its inception, in 2016, out of my passion for hiking. Not the strenuous back country type of trekking, but the shorter variety along trails ranging from 1K to 10K. Hikes where the main motivation is a walk within, and a bonding with, nature. Launch was May 1, 2017.

Now, I've hiked the Bruce Trail from end to end (albeit in shorter sections at a time) and revelled in the challenge. But I much prefer the shorter jaunts. So, thus the idea to put together a database of such shorter hikes for those of you who enjoy that kind of excursion and for those who want a respite from the longer jaunts. Reality, however, has necessitated the inclusion of much longer hikes. Our trail data has lots of information but in most cases is lacking in information on the flora and fauna one would experience on a particular hike. And a number of trails do not have mapping, although I have tried to link to as many trail maps as possible. And, perhaps most importantly, I may have missed trails that only a local would appreciate or know about AND maybe some of the information on trails already posted is inaccurate.

Thus, my reaching out to the Nipissing Field Naturalists as I am doing to other Field Naturalist Clubs, throughout Ontario. I am requesting the help of your club and/or individual members to help contributing or correcting the trail information on the ONTARIO NATURE TRAILS website. Your help would be critical to ensuring that the most relevant and appropriate information is provided for each trail.

The two areas in which help is requested is as follows:

TRAIL MAPPING

I would be grateful if one of your members would take it upon themselves to walk one of the trails that would be in your area, whether on the website currently or not, and track the route with their Garmin or other trail logging app on their smart phone. I would ask that they then forward this in a **.kml file** to me and I could post it on the website just like this one in my area: <https://ontarionaturetrails.com/trail/nels-maher-side-trail/> Any photo they took along the way

could be submitted also, separately. If a person does not have a stand-alone Garmin or other GPS instrument there are two smart phone apps I could recommend: GPS Logger for Android OR Map Plus for i-phone.

FLORA AND FAUNA INFORMATION

A short narrative of the flora and fauna found along an individual trail would be very helpful. I would then post it to the website just like this one:

<https://ontarionaturetrails.com/trail/bruce-alvar-nature-reserve/>

Keeping the narrative to a max of around 250 words would be appreciated. I would propose that credit is provided on the site in the manner of “This information/mapping provided courtesy of NIPISSING NATURALISTS CLUB” and would provide a link to your club website if you wish. Alternatively, we could credit the individual who provided the information. Your choice.

I would really appreciate the help. I'm sure that you will have questions about this request. **Contact me at don@ontarionaturetrails.com or just give me a call at 519-371-3385**

Thanks in advance,

Don Knight
Chief Trail Enthusiast

Help Requested by Nipissing University Students

Melissa Gregoire and Cindy Gadoury are doing a directed study with Dr. Dave Hackett at Nipissing University. The study entails collecting information and photos of wetlands around North Bay- specifically, Cranberry Marsh, Cache Bay Wetland, Oakridge Bog, and Highview Fen. Presently, the information on these sites is scattered. Accordingly, their goal is to compile a list of flora and fauna, and other information gathered by different organizations for these wetlands. The information will be used to prepare Field Guides. These field guides will be subsequently used in the OWES (Ontario Wetland Evaluation System) Course offered through Nipissing University.

If you have any photos and sightings for the specified wetlands, please contact Melissa Gregoire by email: mlgregoire342@community.nipissingu.ca

The Canadian Bryomonitoring Project

What is bryomonitoring?

Biomonitoring refers to using plants or animals to monitor the environment. **Bryophytes** (mosses) are ideal for monitoring air quality since they receive all their nutrients from the atmosphere rather than the soil. While setting up and maintaining air quality monitoring stations can be difficult and expensive, moss is free and found almost everywhere! That's why we chose **bryomonitoring** to help us gain an understanding of air quality across Canada.

“We are a citizen science initiative that hopes to engage academics, field researchers, students, hobbyists and general members of the public in collecting moss for air quality analysis. Join us in our 2020 and 2021 field seasons to collect moss all over Canada!”

For more information on this project and how you can get involved see: Bryomonitoring.ca

The Third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas

Annual surveying for The Third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas will begin next year and continue over five years. The webinar below will provide an introduction to the project and how to become involved. Nipissing Naturalists Club and Bird Wing members participated in the previous atlas surveys, documenting evidence of breeding bird species in the Nipissing area. I have agreed to be a coordinator for the area and will keep you informed of the project's progress, as well as looking for volunteers to participate in the field surveys! Editor

Atlas-3: It's Here! A Webinar by Mike Cadman, Atlas-3 Coordinator
Tuesday, October 6, 7:30 - 8:30pm

Please join Mike Cadman, Coordinator of Atlas-3, the third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, to find out what the atlas project is about and how you can get involved.

Every 20 years, Ontario birders survey all breeding birds, including owls and marsh birds, across the whole province over a five-year period: **Atlas-3 begins in 2021**. This data is vital for conservation and planning. Mike Cadman, who was also the Coordinator for the first two atlases, will outline how the project works, how the data are used and how every birder can participate.

This event is open to all - you do not need to be an OFO member to attend. Note, that although this is a Facebook Live event you **do not need a Facebook account to attend**.

Please register at <https://ofo25.wildapricot.org/event-3997748>. The link will be sent with your registration confirmation.

The webinar will be recorded for those who cannot attend the live event.

Lynne Freeman
OFO President
lynnef.to@gmail.com

Address Correction for Mailing Membership Fees

In the September *Woodland Observer* newsletter our treasurer's address to mail membership fees to was incorrect. Connie Sturge's postal address is: Club Treasurer, Connie Sturge at 537 Hwy 534, Powassan, P0H 1Z0 for members who wish to send cheques. Membership fees can also be E-Transferred to sturge@sympatico.ca

You also have the option to pay for 2 years instead of one year for a discount. If you have already paid for one year you can send the difference to extend your membership to 2022. Paying for two years makes membership administration easier.

MEMBERSHIP FEE ANNOUNCEMENT - Great News!

In addition to the regular annual membership we are pleased to again offer 2-year memberships.

This is a time limited offer only for memberships renewed or purchased between October and the Club's Annual General Meeting in January 2021.

The cost of membership will be discounted, saving you money, and it will simplify administration for the Club as well.

1 Year Single membership \$ 20, New 2 Year Single membership \$35

Family membership \$ 30, New 2 Year Family membership \$50

So, take advantage and renew ASAP, saving on your cost and continuing your membership in this great club dedicated to nature and its enjoyment.

Renewal for Bird Wing can also be included with your NipNat renewal. Cheques can be sent to our Club Treasurer, Connie Sturge at 537 Hwy 534, Powassan P0H 1Z0 or an e-mail transfer can be sent to sturge@sympatico.ca.



Board of Directors 2020

Fred Pinto, President fredpinto1@gmail.com

705-476-9006

Rick Tripp, Vice-president
Connie Sturge, Treasurer
Oriana Pokorny, Secretary
Sarah Wheelan
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Steph Romaniuk
Jeremy St. Onge

Bird Wing

Dick Tafel, Chairman rtafel@sympatico.ca
Gary Sturge, Treasurer
Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Coordinator

705-472-7907

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/>.

Grant McKercher, Editor grant.mckercher705@gmail.com 705-499-5577

Contributors to this issue: Bill Crins, Brent Turcotte, Karen Major.

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**

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

