



THE HERON

OCTOBER 2011

Newsletter of the York-Simcoe Naturalists
a member of Ontario Nature



Club News

Club Meetings

- Date: **Tues. Oct. 11**, 7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Antonia Guidotti, Royal Ontario Museum
Topic: Domestic Arthropods
(insects, spiders, crustaceans ... oh my!)
- Date: **Tues. Nov. 8**, 7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Gloria Marsh, YREA
(York Region Environmental Alliance)
Topic: Shop Like the Planet Is Watching
- Date: **Tues. Dec. 13**, 7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Kevin Shackleton
Topic: Birds of Central America
- Date: **Tues. Jan. 10, 2012**, 7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Carolyn Schultz, Ontario Nature
Topic: Preserving Wild Species and Wild Spaces

New members are welcome! Club meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month. Admission is free. Please join us at the River Drive Park Community Centre, 20 Oak Avenue, off Queensville Sideroad.

YSN Executive Committee 2011/2012

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • President | OPEN |
| • Past President | Paul Barker |
| • Vice-President | OPEN |
| • Recording Secretary | OPEN |
| • Membership Secretary | Sharon Hamilton |
| • Treasurer/Archivist | Linda Gilkes |
| • Conservation Director | Sylvia Bowman |
| • Stewardship | Mike van den Tillaart |
| • Speakers | OPEN |
| • Publicity | Valerie Liney |
| • Social Convenor | Jeanne Beneteau |
| • Website | Ross Riley |
| • Newsletter | Janet Thompson |

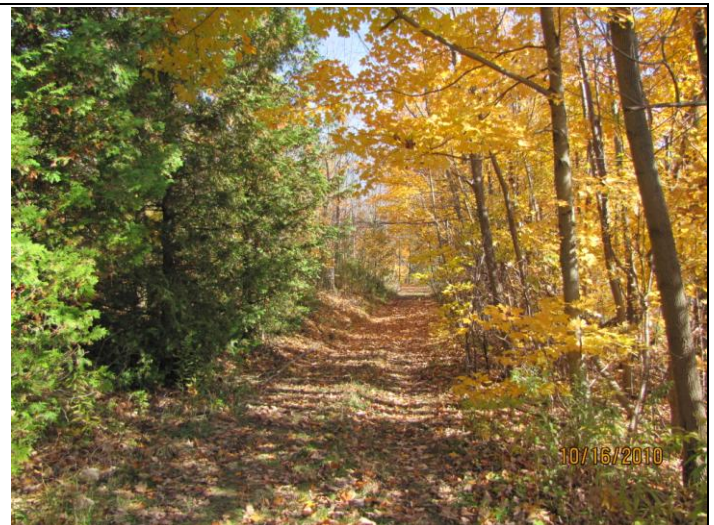


photo by Janet Thompson
Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve
King City

Stewardship at Cawthra Mulock

Join us for the fall tree and shrub planting event at the nature reserve on Sat. Oct. 15, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Meet at the Dufferin Street entrance. Please see p. 5 for more details.

Membership Dues

Thanks to all who have already paid their dues for the year 2011/12. If you haven't done so yet, Sharon will be delighted to accept your payment for this year. Fees remain the same, at \$25.00 for a single membership and \$30.00 for a family membership.

Birding

The Passing of the Sewage Lagoons in York Region 2011

Story and photos by Kevin Shackleton

Those of you who live in or near York Region will know of its population growth over the last two decades. I mention 20 years as it was in October 1987 that my family moved into the region. We settled in Newmarket, which then had a population of 20,000 and was already on the York-Durham Sewer System, the “Big Pipe”, and had de-commissioned its sewage lagoon. Smaller communities in the region remained off the Big Pipe and retained their lagoons. Now the region has more than doubled in size and the smaller communities around it are growing rapidly too.

I became an active birdwatcher in April 1989 and joined the West Humber Naturalists in October that year, thanks to an invitation from my friend and Baillie Birdathon rival Bruce Brydon. Some time soon after that a colleague from my firm mentioned that I lived very close to a good place to go birding, the Holland Landing sewage lagoons. He gave me directions and I found them without difficulty, overcoming my scruples about trespassing to enter the area by assuring myself that as a property-tax payer I should be entitled to use the property of York Region responsibly for my new hobby. Over the years I learned about and visited the equally large Schomberg lagoon complex and the single lagoons at Mount Albert and Sutton. I have been to others in Comber, Essex and Port Perry, but to my eyes the ones at Holland Landing are the best.

The four lagoons of differing sizes at Holland Landing are the jewel of sewage lagoons for the beauty of their setting. One usually approaches them along an upward sloping gravel road that runs between patches of mixed forest. On reaching the first pond or lagoon, one is looking across the water to low, tree-covered hills. This, combined with the forest that runs along the north side of the complex, creates an effect that makes it seem as though the lagoons are in a bowl. With the blue sky and fluffy clouds overhead, often reflected in the still waters of the ponds, it appears as the almost perfectly natural setting for a picnic. Reeds and phragmites grow along the edges of the lagoon banks and small willows have taken hold on the tops of the embankments created to

hold the water pumped in to allow solids to settle out of it before it is released into the river system.



Holland Landing sewage lagoon

I have had some eureka moments in the lagoons. There was the cool September morning when I saw my life **Peregrine Falcon**. It came in from the north and froze all of the shorebirds feeding in the shallow water of the pond. On the Thanksgiving weekend in 1996 I found my life **Hudsonian Godwit** in the fourth lagoon. It was in with a flock of Yellowlegs and when they flew I noticed its distinct black-and-white wing pattern. Other times, I have been with excellent birders who helped me sort out the peeps and I have been able to apply those lessons when on my own.

To my mind Schomberg’s setting never compared well with that of Holland Landing. The farm fields to the south and the small patch of forest around the northeast corner of the third lagoon don’t measure up to the atmosphere created by the walls of green around Holland Landing.

Regretfully, I must report that they are now in the final stages of de-commissioning and are being turned into “Wildlife Habitat”. Increased population in Schomberg means that sewage now has to be treated mechanically, likely the fate of the lagoons in Holland Landing in the not-too-distant future.

I was there on a Saturday morning in early September to see what was happening at the request of Dr. Henry Barnett, noted conservationist and driving force behind the preservation of the Happy Valley Forest in King Township. When we arrived in the parking lot of the new recreation centre, a perfect

overlook of the old lagoons, we found a bulldozer busily shoving muddy soil around to fill in any damp spots.



Schomberg sewage lagoons being “naturalized”

The prospect of any shorebirds or ducks lingering there seemed remote, but a second visit and a bold drive up to the gate of the sewage treatment plant gave us a chance to look into what was in the middle lagoon. Here again we found the bulldozer moving muck about, but away from its machinations, on tiny bits of damp ground, we found five **Killdeers**, two **Lesser Yellowlegs**, two **Semi-palmated Plovers** and a **Semi-palmated Sandpiper**.



Semi-palmated Sandpiper and Semi-palmated Plover

Sadly, a service centre on the shorebird migration highway is being shut down, and these long-distance migrants will have to find another place to rest and fuel up before they resume their journeys to South America. York Region’s birders will have to look far and wide to find other convenient places to view the windbirds.

Owl Banding at Scanlon Creek

The Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation is hosting Owl Banding Workshops with Nigel Shaw. The group workshops will be held on Friday and Saturday nights in October from 8:00 p.m. to midnight at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area. There will also be private owl banding sessions available on weeknights. Each workshop will start indoors with an overview on owl banding and then the group will go out to the nets where Nigel will show how owls are caught and demonstrate banding.

The cost is \$15 per person or \$50 for a family of four. There is a maximum of 10 people per evening (no age limit). Please RSVP with Judy Milner at 905-895-1281, ext. 241, or for more information call Brenda Winter at ext. 263.

Hiking

Town of East Gwillimbury Trails Committee

Walks held second Saturday of every month

Date: **Sat. Oct. 29**, 6:00 p.m.

Haunted Hallowe’en Walk

Place: Anchor Park Trail, Holland Landing

Note: Meet at the picnic shelter for stories, activities, and a haunted walk for kids. You must register for this event with the Town of East Gwillimbury at 905-478-4282.

York Regional Forest

Walks held monthly

Date: **Sat. Oct. 15**, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Place: Hollidge Tract, 16389 Hwy 48

Theme: **Forest, Fish and Fungi**

“Enjoy an educational walk with an Ecologist and Forester to a stream, look for fish and learn how we protect aquatic forest resources that provide habitat for brook trout. Learn about the interesting life of fungi with our ‘fun-gal’.”

Date: **Sat. Nov. 5**, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Place: Hollidge Tract, 16389 Hwy 48

Theme: **York Regional Police K-9s in Action**

“Watch working police service dogs demonstrate their skills in searching for people and assisting our frontline police officers. After the demo, hike with Forestry staff and learn about how to find your way in the Forest.”

Native Plants and Gardens

Native Shrubs in My Backyard by Janet Thompson



Sept. 18 -- Berries on Grey Dogwood (*C. foemina*)



Sept. 22 -- Berries all gone! -- eaten by birds

I planted my Grey Dogwood shrubs along a sunny west-facing fence in sandy soil. I never water them and they thrived even during this summer's drought. After three years they are almost six feet high, quite bushy and a good privacy screen.

I bought these shrubs in person from Native Plants in Claremont, www.nativeplants.org, but there are other options for sourcing them – see the next column.

Local Enhancement/Appreciation of Forests (LEAF) Backyard Tree Planting Program

Sat. Oct. 15

Newmarket Farmers Market
www.yourleaf.org

Native trees and shrubs ready for pick-up on Oct. 15 or delivered to your door anytime in the fall! View their selection online and place an order.

Available for pick-up Oct. 15

- small trees (3 to 5 feet) \$25-\$35
- shrubs \$20
- prices include mulch

Available for delivery Sept. to Nov.

- large trees (5 to 8 feet) \$100-\$150
- shrubs \$25
- prices include delivery and mulch
- evergreens are 2 to 5 feet
- minimum \$100 order

If you live in southern York Region (including Newmarket and Aurora), a site consultation in your yard with a certified arborist and full planting service are available along with delivery.

North American Native Plant Society (NANPS) Fall Plant Sale and AGM

Sat. Oct. 22

12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.
Markham Civic Centre
www.nanps.org

“This is a wonderful opportunity to meet other NANPS members, pickup some more native plants for your fall garden, learn more about NANPS, and enjoy several informative and entertaining speakers.”

- Paul McGaw Memorial Conservation Awards
- Garden/Restoration Awards
- guest speakers
- native plant sale
- silent auction

Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve

Located north of Green Lane/Miller's Sideroad between Bathurst and Dufferin streets, this 108-hectare hidden gem was donated to Ontario Nature in 2003 and has been under the stewardship of YSN since 2007. It is open to the public.

Ontario Nature Annual Fall Planting Sat. Oct. 15

Ontario Nature will host another public tree and shrub planting event on Sat. Oct. 15. Please join us in our restoration efforts! Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Dufferin Street entrance.



Last year we planted in the area west of the pond to help prevent erosion of the soil into the stream.



This year we will be planting in the old sod field by Dufferin Street that is being restored to wetland.

Ontario Nature "Legacy Grove" Planting Oct. 5, 2011

Photos by Ross Riley

On Oct. 5, Ontario Nature hosted a planting event to honour those who have passed on and left a gift in their will to Ontario Nature. About 40 trees, a combination of sugar maple, white pine and American beech, were planted by the participants in an area east of the pond. A new sign will be installed that lists the names of those who will be remembered.



Conservation News

LSRCA East Holland River Watershed Management Plan Committee

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) is hosting a public open house on the management plan for the East Holland River Watershed on Sat. Oct. 15 at the Holland Landing Public School. Come on over to the lunch BBQ at noon, walk along the river and visit the open house in the afternoon after the planting event in the morning at the Cawthra Mulock reserve!

Ontario Nature Huronia Regional Meeting

The next meeting for Huronia Region clubs, which includes YSN, will be held on Sat. Oct. 29, hosted by the Friends of Minesing Wetlands at the Tiffin Conservation Centre near Barrie. It is a great opportunity to visit this wetland complex and also learn more about the other clubs in our region. Let Sylvia know if you would like to attend.

York Region Seeking Volunteer Naturalists

YSN member Kevin Shackleton is stepping down from his membership in the Regional Forest Advisory Team (RFAT) and is looking for a replacement. The duties of members are:

- Attend regularly scheduled RFAT meetings (six times a year).
- Assist the Region with the management of the York Regional Forest by acting as technical resource on a particular forest use or subject, providing input on proposed management activities or changes to the management of the forest and bringing concerns or comments forward from their respective user group.
- Occasionally assist with the delivery of the Nature's Classroom Program. This may include assisting at a forest festival or leading one of their monthly "Take a Walk in the Forest" events.

Please contact Kevin for more information.

Autumn in Hollidge Tract York Regional Forest

Photos by Ross Riley



White Baneberry (?)



Pretty Poison Ivy!



False Solomon's Seal