



THE HERON

SEPTEMBER 2011

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



Club News

Club Meetings

Date: **Tues. Sept. 13**, 7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Ryan Redvers, Certified Arborist
Topic: Selecting and Caring for Your Trees

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: 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

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

Bumblebees swarm goldenrod in September.
Native plants support pollinators.

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. For more details, please see pp. 4-5.

Membership Dues

Thanks to all who have already paid their dues for the year 2011/12. Yes, we have begun another YSN year. 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. Welcome back everyone!

Birding

Location, location, location!

Story and photos by Kevin Shackleton

It's a real estate mantra that the three keys to property values are "location, location, location". I always assumed that something similar was at work when birds chose nesting sites. Lately, I have been reconsidering. This spring, one of the staff at Ontario Nature shared photos on Facebook of an American Robin's nest in a basket on the handle bars of a bicycle **in her garage**. About 15 years ago, while on a Baillie Birdathon, a boat owner asked me to move another robin's nest from the steps over the stern of his trailered boat. I simply picked up the mud and grass cup and put it in a nearby bush. When my mother-in-law told me about her neighbours at the cottage having a bird nesting in the cup holder of their pontoon I figured the likely party was another robin. Not so.



Canada Day saw me at the cottage on the shore of Lake Couchiching for the first time this year. It didn't take long to notice the Eastern Kingbirds swooping around the neighbours' pontoon craft. I soon saw one of the parents, likely the female, set down in the cup holder while the male foraged about over the water and the lawn of the cottage. I had my camera and started taking photographs which caught the attention of the neighbours. The son told me there had been four eggs, but there were only three nestlings. His mother told him to open the gate between the properties so I could board the vessel and get a closer look. Initially, I declined the offer as it sounded like the birds were disturbed enough as the neighbours had no intention of not using their pontoon for the three to four weeks it took the eggs to hatch and the young to fledge. Especially since this was the **second year in a row** that the birds had nested in the same cup holder!

When the family wanted to use the pontoon, they simply lifted the cup holder out, left it on shore in the shade and returned it when they docked the pontoon.



I watched that process happen in the afternoon. Members of the family decided to go out on the lake for a swim. A large male wearing a baseball cap was given the honour of removing the cup holder to land on the theory that his head was somewhat protected from the wrath of the members of the tyrant flycatcher tribe. The Kingbirds never connected the movement of the cup holder with their nestlings and spent the half hour the swimmers were away foraging, landing on the dock support posts and maybe arguing about what a stupid place it was to put a nest or that one of them had lost the nest. Once the pontoon was docked, the female returned to the replaced cup holder, ate a fecal sac and then proceeded to brood the young. The male foraged for a few minutes before bringing a tasty morsel to the female. All seemed to be in order by the time I stopped watching.



I don't usually have much luck finding birds' nests, but this was dead easy. I took photographs, a GPS reading and made notes about what I had seen to report it to the Ontario Nest Records Scheme: <http://www.birdsontario.org/onrs/onrsmain.html>

No doubt others in the club have had similar experiences. It could be the start of a series of whacky nest site articles.

Hiking

Koffler Scientific Reserve at Joker's Hill

Please register online at <http://ksr.utoronto.ca>

Date: **Sat. Sept. 17**, 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Place: 17000 Dufferin St., south of Hwy 9

Theme: **Autumnal Birds Nature Walk**

“Fall is an important season for birds as they ready for winter’s long journeys or harsh weather. Find out how different species spend the final days of summer with Dr. Jason Weir, bird expert and evolutionary biologist from UTSC.”

Free. Registration opens Aug. 15, 2011.

York Regional Forest

Walks held monthly

Date: **Sat. Sept. 24**, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Place: Hollidge Tract, 16389 Hwy 48 and Eldred King Tract, 16232 Hwy 48

Theme: **Nature’s Creations Forest Festival**

“Come out and see some of the things made from nature. Local artisans and wood crafters will demonstrate their art; lovely, local, hand-crafted products will be available for sale or to simply admire. Ride on a horse-drawn wagon or walk the trails on a guided hike at 11:00 am or 1:00 pm.”

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’.”

Town of East Gwillimbury Trails Committee

Walks held second Saturday of every month

Date: **Sat. Oct. 8**, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Place: Metropolitan Radial Line

Meet: Rogers Reservoir Conservation Area parking lot on Green Lane east of Second Concession

Scanlon Creek Conservation Area

Please contact Brenda Winter at 905-895-1281, ext. 263.

Date: **Sat. Sept. 24**, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Place: Nature Centre

Instructor: Peter Burtch

Theme: **Basic Outdoor Digital Photo Workshop**

Peter Burtch is a Watershed Coordinator at the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and an avid photographer.

“In this workshop, Peter will teach you about light and camera settings, image composition, taking close-ups, landscapes and wildlife. The last hour of the workshop will be conducted around Scanlon Creek Conservation Area where participants will have the opportunity to photograph trees, birds and landscapes. The workshop is geared for those in the basic to intermediate level and a tripod would be an asset.”

Cost: \$40. Fee must be received by Tues. Sept. 20.

Date: **Sat. Oct. 1**, 10:00 a.m.

Place: Nature Centre parking lot

Theme: **BWG Trails Day Hike**

“Enjoy the fall colours, trees, trails and fresh air of Scanlon Creek! The Town of Bradford-West Gwillimbury is sponsoring Trails Week and there will be three hikes offered that day plus a barbeque at noon.”



Photo by Linda Gilkes

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.

Piezometer Installation, June 14

Photos by Janet Thompson



As part of our Adopt-a-Stream project, Heather Lotimer of Ontario Streams helped YSN volunteers to set up four piezometers on the old sod field near the Dufferin Street entrance.



These data loggers will measure the moisture in the field to see if it is becoming more of a wetland. They are inserted within a long PVC pipe for protection.



Ross Riley did some hard digging in the clay soil ...



... which quickly filled up with water. This had to be pumped out before the pipe could be installed.

Wetland Plant Inventory, Aug. 8

Photos by Janet Thompson

The next step in the project was an inventory of any plants in the field that indicated a return to wetland habitat. We approached the task by trying to identify anything that was not a goldenrod, the predominant (upland) species. In addition to the red-osier dogwoods that we had previously planted, we found several wetland species of forbs and grasses, a promising sign.



David Gambin & Heather Lotimer from Ontario Streams YSN volunteers Sylvia Bowman, Mike van den Tillaart, Andrew Wilton, Kevin Shackleton



Woolgrass (a sedge)
(our best guess)



Reed canary grass
(we think)



Spotted Joe-Pye weed

Ontario Streams Media Event, Aug. 17

Photos by Ross Riley

Ontario Streams held a media event to celebrate a \$165,300 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for 25 new projects under the York-Simcoe Adopt-a-Stream program. The event was held at the reserve to demonstrate their partnership with local groups like ours.



Michael Giza, President of the Board, Ontario Streams



Helena Jaczek (centre), MPP for Oak Ridges/Markham



Staff from Ontario Streams demonstrated electrofishing



Steve Pellegrini (Mayor of King Township), Doug Forder (Field Supervisor, Ontario Streams), Michael Giza, Helena Jaczek, Paul Howe (Ontario Trillium Foundation)

Lake Simcoe Stewardship Network Showcase Tour, Wed. Sept. 21

We're excited that the reserve will be part of the Newmarket-area bus tour on Sept. 21 showcasing local stewardship projects. Sylvia Bowman will be explaining the work done to remove the dam on the property and the restoration of the wetland upstream of the dam.



Sylvia Bowman *Photo by Ross Riley*

Ontario Nature Inaugural "Legacy Grove" Planting, Tues. Oct. 5

"On October 5, 2011 we will be planting a legacy grove to honour those who have passed on and left a gift in their will to Ontario Nature. We will be planting 40 trees. They will be a combination of sugar maple, white pine and American beech and each one will be in honour of an individual who has left a gift in their will to Ontario Nature. We will also unveil a sign that will list the names of those who will be remembered."

YSN members are invited to this event. Meet at the Bathurst Street entrance at 10:00 a.m.

Ontario Nature Fall Tree & Shrub Planting Sat. Oct. 15

Ontario Nature will host another public tree and shrub planting event on Oct. 15. Please join us in our restoration efforts!

Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Dufferin Street entrance.



These shrubs need your help!

Conservation News

By Sylvia Bowman

Local Groups

Maskinonge River Recovery Project (MRRP)

The third annual “Up the Maskinonge With a Paddle” event will be held on Sat. Sept 17. It will highlight the shoreline restoration projects done on 30 properties along the river in the past year. The York Environmental Stewardship (YES) Rangers also did work on removing some purple loosestrife, helping build five turtle mounds and installing several wood duck boxes. This year we have an exciting door prize of a kayak complete with a PFD! Come on out for your chance to win.

Meet by 9:30 a.m. at the Boston Pizza parking lot, 253 Queensway Street, Keswick.



Lake Simcoe Stewardship Network

The tour of stewardship projects in the Lake Simcoe watershed is happening on Wed. Sept. 21. The exciting part is that the Cawthra Mulock reserve will be one of the stops on the Newmarket-area tour.

To sign up for the tour, please contact: jackie.mccall@ontario.ca, 519-826-4586

York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA)

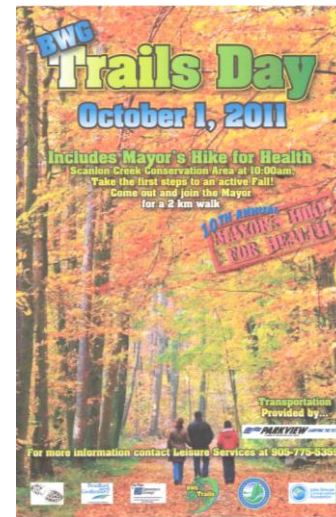
I have arranged for YREA to present their workshop “Shop Like the Planet Is Watching” at our November general meeting. Be sure to attend this presentation to see how you can shop responsibly.

Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Committees

Scanlon Creek Revitalization Committee

Scanlon Creek Conservation Area had a great opening of the Adventure Play Garden on June 26. The next upcoming event is the Bradford-West Gwillimbury Trails Day on Sat. Oct 1.

Guided hikes begin at 10:00 a.m.



East Holland River Watershed Management Plan Committee

This committee had their first meeting on July 26. There will be a public open house 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!

See p. 5 for information on the planting event.

Holland Landing Conservation Area Management Plan Committee

This committee is nearing completion of the plan for this area in conjunction with the Town of East Gwillimbury and the provincial parks department.

See the April 2011 issue of *The Heron* for more information on this initiative.

Upper York Sewage Solutions Public Committee

I attended the first meeting of this group on Aug. 17. They explained the plan to build a state-of-the-art sewage treatment plant that will empty into the Holland River. This is to handle the sewage from 2031 onwards. It will reduce the amount of inter-basin transfers of water out of the Lake Simcoe watershed. This plant includes reverse osmosis which will remove a lot of the phosphorus and prevent it from going into the river. The controversial aspect of the project is to sell nutrient-rich water that has had secondary treatment but not the reverse osmosis treatment for use on sod farms and golf courses etc. This will hopefully reduce the amount of fertilizer needed by these types of businesses. There are some concerns that this water will still contain bioactive molecules from pharmaceuticals that can impact wildlife. However currently these molecules are not removed in the water that is going into Lake Ontario from the Duffins Creek plant.

The current plan to send sewage down the "Big Pipe" will still be built and is to handle growth up to 2031. This project has been delayed due to severe cost overruns when the contract was tendered, and there are conflicting timelines about the date work will start. I have heard anything from one to three years.

Ontario Nature

Oak Ridges Moraine

Ontario Nature has partnered with Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) and Earthroots in a campaign called "The Moraine Can't Wait" to highlight areas of the Oak Ridges Moraine Act that need revising in order to properly protect the moraine.

Huronian Regional Meeting

The next Huronia Regional Meeting 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 me know if you would like to attend.

Rally for Nature

On Wed. Sept. 21 Ontario Nature will be presenting its Charter for Biodiversity to the premier at an event in Toronto. Unfortunately I won't be able to attend as I will be on the Lake Simcoe stewardship tour talking about the Cawthra Mulock reserve.

The rally begins at 11:00 a.m. Please visit www.ontarionature.org/rally4nature



----- Mouse Tales

In August we went canoe camping for a few days on Georgian Bay in the Massasauga Provincial Park. When we got up the first morning, there was a yellow shredded napkin in front of the tent which rather puzzled us. The night before I had heard a scuffling noise near the tent. When we took the tent down at the end of our four days, we found a little mound of the yellow napkin in a hollow under the tent right near our heads!

A couple of days later we went to the plane and the grass around the plane was quite long. There are also old airplane tires as markers for the tiedowns. While we were taking off the covers, what should run out but a mouse! Thus I have dubbed August the month of the mouse.