



Submitted by John Muzik

What's Inside

President's Message

Up Coming Outings

Past Outings

Christmas Bird Count

Ontario Nature Report

Great Backyard Bird Count

Starlings

Youth Summit Report

Exciting Encounters

2017 Financial Report

Newsletter

Submissions

Please submit your pictures and articles for the March newsletter no later than March 15, 2018. Email all submissions to Nancy Muzik at john_nancy_m@rogers.com.

THE NATURALIST

DURHAM REGION FIELD NATURALISTS
CONSERVATION THROUGH EDUCATION
www.drfn.ca drfn1955@hotmail.com

President's Message

Are you a citizen scientist? Would you like to become one? What is a citizen scientist anyway? During my working life I was an analytical chemist. I thought of myself as a scientist although somewhat limited in my scope. And besides chemistry I also studied biology and biochemistry in university. But does that make me a citizen scientist? According to the online dictionary citizen science includes “the collection and analysis of data relating to the natural world by members of the general public, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists.”



So how can we become citizen scientists? Well there are a few projects you can become involved in. Ontario Nature has the Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Program. It is a “citizen-science project that tracks distributions and spatial trends of reptiles and amphibians across the province over time. The over-arching goal is to increase the collective knowledge base of reptiles and amphibians. Equally important, however, is the engagement of non-scientists of all ages and abilities, in all parts of the province, in nature study and conservation.” You can download their atlas app “a digital pocket guide for all of Ontario’s reptiles and amphibians” When you next sight a reptile or amphibian on your nature hike or even in your garden you can use this app to report your sighting. Easy! And there is another app to report mudpuppy sightings

https://www.ontarionature.org/protect/species/herpetofaunal_atlas.php.

And if you want more, Ontario Nature has a directory of Ontario Citizen Science projects. <https://www.ontarionature.org/directory-of-citizen-science/home.php> You may be interested in Frog watch Ontario or Ontario Mammals to name but a few.

Bird Studies Canada has several citizen scientist programs. DRFN members participate yearly in the Christmas Bird Count. This annual

Upcoming Meetings

Meetings: last Monday of each month except June-August and December

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Place: Civic Rec Complex, Bobby Orr Room, 99 Thornton S., Oshawa.

Come a little early to enjoy conversation and refreshments ('lug-a-mug')

January 29, 2018

James Kamstra – Lifecycle of Insects

February 26, 2018

Lois Gillette – Southern Africa Safari from Victoria Falls to Cape Town

March 26, 2018

Martyn Obbard - Polar Bears and Climate Change

April 30, 2018

Josh Brandon – Ontario Badgers

May 28, 2018

AGM and Members Night

event was started in 1900 and now “happens in over 2000 localities throughout the Western Hemisphere. The information collected by thousands of volunteer participants forms one of the world's largest sets of wildlife survey data.”

<http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc/index.jsp>. Their Great Backyard Bird Count this year is February 16-19, 2018.

DRFN has been asked to participate in a bio blitz in Durham Region. It is still in the planning stages and would be a great opportunity for members to practice their citizen science skills. More info to come.

Lois Gillette

Future Outings

Saturday, February 10 at 10:00 AM

Casual Winter Bird Walk

Weather permitting, we'll walk the feeder trail and Lynde Shores and may take a short drive to see other winter visitors.

Meet at the parking lot of Lynde Shores Conservation Area, 1285 Victoria Street West in Whitby. Parking charges apply.

If you're inclined, bring some seed or nuts for our feathered friends.

Leader: Don Docherty

Difficulty: Easy walking.

Dress for the weather conditions

Saturday, March 03 at 10:00 AM

Leslie Street Spit / Tommy Thompson Park

The Spit is a man-made oasis in an urban desert. We'll walk the 5-km length in search of winter birds. Raptors, finches, sparrows and diving ducks are usually seen.

Leader: Don Docherty

Directions: Meet to car pool at 9:00 AM at the old GO Station parking lot off Simcoe Street South near the Highway 401 on-ramp. Parking is available at the side farthest from the street. (Don will be at the parking lot at the Spit at 10 AM. Take Lakeshore Boulevard to Leslie Street and drive south to the gate.)

Difficulty: There will be extensive walking. Wear appropriate footwear.

Dress to keep warm. There is no shelter available. In the event of extreme cold, we will limit our walking to the foot of the spit and drive to some accessible locations for bird viewing. Bring a lunch. No food or drink will be available.

Past Outings

Annual Bird Feeder Tour and Potluck Lunch – January 6, 2018

The weather for our tour was bright and clear. In contrast with recent years, we didn't have to worry about slipping on ice. It was a little chilly at -25 degrees and this had a big effect on attendance.

We saw 13 species of birds. This result is a bit lower than usual which is in line with our Oshawa Christmas Bird Count. It's also likely that we missed some birds because we didn't linger long outside the warmth of our cars.

Even though temperatures were low, we were treated to a cottage bird at Ed White's feeder. The White-throated Sparrow was a refreshing sight. Another interesting sighting was a raptor that flew from the Claremont Conservation area to a stand of trees and quickly disappeared. The bird was likely a Harrier.

We also found a couple of new feeder hotspots that will be worth checking again next year. Hopefully, the weather will be more pleasant too.

Thank you to Judy Bryson for arranging for the venue and to the church ladies for brightening our day and warming up our potluck food.

Don Docherty

63rd Oshawa Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 17, 2017

Weather: We started the day at -17 (wind chill -25) and warmed up to -8. There was about 10 cm of snow on the ground. Most of the water was frozen over.

Counters: Ron Tozer, Pat Tozer, Doug Tozer, Don Docherty, Charmine Anderson, Kristen Osbourne, Fred Ford, Dennis Barry, Margaret Carney, Glenn Coady, Otto Peter, Diane Peter, Joan Ellis, Dianne Pazaratz, Satu Pernanum, John Muzik, Nancy Muzik, Jim McKnight, John Foster, Ted Chrichton, Dave Worthington, Mary Beth Worthington, Tyler

Hoar, Peter Hogenbirk, Rayfield Pye, Alan Johnston, James Kamstra, Greg Moon, Mark Saunders, Cathy Galberg, Lois Gillette, Derek Gillette, Elane Medicino, Fiore Mendicino, and Jim Robinson

Feeder Watchers: Judy Bryson, D Pazaratz, M McVarish, Shirley Penny, Brian Reid, Bonnie Hyderman, Jake Munroe, Nancy Miller, Mike McEvoy, Mike Ferguson, Craig McLauchlan, Irene and Ted Warren, Diane Peter, Judy Pell, John and Dianne McFeeters, and Yvonne Dodgson

Thank you to Diane and Otto Peter for hosting the wrap up party.

Thank you to Otto Peter for inputting the data into a spread sheet.

The data will be entered into the Audubon's Society web site.

Rayfield Pye



Submitted by John Muzik

SPECIES	2017
Canada Goose	6817
Mute Swan	63

SPECIES	2017
Trumpeter Swan	8
Gadwall	47
A Black Duck	113
Mallard	1239
Redhead	32
Ring-n Duck	1
G Scaup	2495
L Scaup	2
Harlequin	1
White-w Scoter	20
Long-t Duck	634
Bufflehead	241
C Goldeneye	1115
H Merganser	2
C Merganser	159
Red-b Merganser	440
Ruffed Grouse	1
Wild Turkey	38
R T Loon	1
H Grebe	1
G B Heron	2
N Harrier	8
S S Hawk	1
Coopers Hawk	9
N Goshawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	47
Rough-l Hawk	1
Ring-billed Gull	500
Herring Gull	177
Iceland Gull	3
Glaucous Gull	1
Great BB Gull	12
Rock Pigeon	1132
Mourning Dove	1036
E Screech Owl	1
G H Owl	1
Snowy Owl	3
Long-eared Owl	1
B Kingfisher	2
Red-Bellied Woodpecker	11
D Woodpecker	92

SPECIES	2017
H Woodpecker	36
N Flicker	7
Pileated Wood	5
Merlin	7
AK	2
PG	1
Northern Shrike	4
Blue Jay	176
American Crow	266
C Raven	18
Horned Lark	4
B-cap Chickadee	764
Red-b Nuthatch	98
White-b Nuthatch	57
Brown Creeper	4
Winter Wren	1
Golden-c Kinglet	29
Hermit Thrush	1
American Robin	164
N Mockingbird	6
E Starling	2791
Cedar Waxwing	44
Snow Bunting	7
A T Sparrow	295
Savannah S	1
Song Sparrow	19
Swamp Sparrow	4
W-t Sparrow	24
Dark-eyed Junco	857
N Cardinal	196
Red-winged BB	1
C Grackle	1
B-h Cowbird	34
Purple Finch	1
House Finch	100
Pine Siskin	1
A Goldfinch	643
House Sparrow	275

Ontario Nature Report

Sign Ontario Nature's Protected Places Declaration

We want you to be the first to know about our ambitious campaign to get the governments of Ontario and Canada to meet an international commitment to protect at least 17 percent of our lands and inland waters by 2020, in accordance with a target set under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Ontario Nature is reaching out to invite Nature Network groups and their members to endorse the Protected Places Declaration. It is a key element of a collaborative protected areas campaign, and will help us to build and demonstrate strong public support for achieving this goal in Ontario. Visit our website to learn more about our Protected Places campaign and the declaration, and please help us send a strong message to the governments of Ontario and Canada.

Grow the Greenbelt to Protect Ontario's Nature

The Ontario government is proposing a potential expansion of the Greenbelt and officials want to hear from you. They are seeking public input through a series of open houses starting on January 31, 2018 in Barrie. Subsequent open houses will be held in Guelph, Orangeville, Alliston, Brantford and Kitchener. These sessions offer an important opportunity for you to let the provincial government know that you want stronger protection for southern Ontario's natural areas and watersheds. Open house dates and venue details are available on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs website.

TFN Wants Your Help to Make Toronto Islands a Bird Sanctuary

The Toronto Field Naturalists invites you to sign their petition to help make Toronto Islands a bird sanctuary. Toronto Islands are a critical stopover for 286 species of migratory birds, including songbirds, shorebirds, raptors and waterfowl. Your signature would support Councillor Joe Cressy's motion asking Toronto City Council to request that the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change designate the Toronto Islands a bird sanctuary under the Migratory Birds Act. The designation Bird Sanctuary will permit more stringent controls

on human use of critical foraging habitat--such as destruction of vegetation or off-leash dog-walking. Go to ON website for links for this petition.

Ontario Nature's Lake Ontario North (LON) Regional Meeting will take place at the Goodwood Community Centre in Goodwood on Sunday, May 6, 2018. Our hosts are the Oak Ridges Trails Association. All are welcome.

Maria Prisciak



The annual Great Backyard Bird Count is fast approaching. I hope many of you will get outside at least once or count the birds you see from your window in your toasty warm house over the February 16-19 weekend. If you have never participated before, it is easy.

1. Count birds any time anywhere you like over the weekend. It doesn't have to be your own backyard. It can be anywhere you are in the world! It is recommended the minimum time be 15 minutes but you can count as long as you like.
2. Keep track of the number of birds you see of each species and how long you watched. Make your best estimate for very large flocks.
3. Enter your list on birdcount.org or ebird.org for each new day, each new location, or same day same location if you counted at different time of the day. You may also use the free ebird mobile application to enter data. It is a great time saver.

Note: if you do not have an account on ebird or on birdcount.org you are required to set one up. It is free and easy.

For more information visit <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/>. You will find a getting started tool kit, tips on identifying tricky species, links to free applications and more.

Photo Contest: There is also a photo contest for photos taken during the count weekend. Photos are judged in 6 categories: overall, habitat, behavior, group, composition and people. Visit the website and view the phenomenal photo contest winners from 2017.

Nancy Muzik

Starlings



Submitted by Otto Peter

In an article I wrote recently I said that European Starlings are an invasive and disruptive species that should be extirpated from Canada. Recently I read an article in the ABA's Birding magazine titled "The Bird that Birders Love to Hate" written by Trysten Loeffke where I learned a lot of interesting unusual things about this widely loathed species that might make me change my mind.

-Despite what we may think European Starlings do not have winter and summer plumages. The spotted plumage seen in the fall wears down over the winter and spring to produce the gorgeous glossy metallic sheen of violet, green and blue plumage we see in the summer. European Starlings also keep their plumage in shape by using their bills to rub ants against their feathers to release formic acid which is

felt to be a natural insecticide against harmful feather mites.

-Scientific evidence shows that European Starlings who are cavity nesters may have not displaced Bluebirds to a great extent in many areas where they intersect. They are here to stay with a population of over 200 million in North America.

-European Starlings have an adaptation that allows them to probe the ground for invertebrates using what is termed open-billed probing. As they probe the ground they pry open a hole allowing their tongue to forage for and grab prey. This action also aerates the soil providing a service to the ecosystem. As well, European Starlings have huge eyes with excellent colour and low light vision that are placed forward on their heads that can swivel in their sockets. This allows them to look directly into their bills to see its food.

-European Starlings are naturally gregarious and hang around in huge flocks sometimes descending in upon farmer's fields decimating fruit and grain crops. However Common grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds which are more numerous may be just as destructive.

-European Starlings are dutiful parents where both sexes will make up to 400 trips a day to feed their young. They also bring the foliage of certain plants back to the nest that act as a natural insecticide.

-In their natural range in Europe, European Starlings have suffered substantial population losses of more than 80% in recent years actually putting them on the IUCN "conservation Red List of Threatened Species". We noted in our travels of continental Europe last fall that we saw very few European Starlings.

As Ms. Loeffke wrote we can continue to grumble about European Starlings when we see them but we should also "consider just how amazing these resourceful, plucky, aggressive, successful, intelligent and frustrating European Starlings are."

Otto Peter

2017 Youth Summit

I just wanted to say thank you for sponsoring me to attend the ON Youth Summit back in September. As always, it was a great experience. There are so many nice and like-minded youth and the workshops are always fun and interesting. You get

to learn so much from them; as they are led by learned and inspiring people.

The highlight of this summit was my bee box building workshop. I was very excited to be able to build my own bee box when I first selected it as a workshop. I haven't hung it, as it was too late in the season, but it is definitely going up this year.



Submitted by Corry York

My other favourite workshops included 'Salamander Sleuthing', which I had attended twice before. It is always one of my favourites because there are always new things to see and learn, and the search for them is always an adventure.

We actually

managed to find two blue-spotted salamanders, which was a first to me.

The other highlight was the Fresh Water life workshop where we waded into the lake in search of any organism we could find: damsel fly larvae, small fish, diving beetles, water striders etc. While wading there was a green heron in a tree that stretched out over the lake, it seemed to not care we were there and we managed to get quite close; he bathed in the lake, basked in the sun and preened until finally deciding to fly away. I really enjoyed observing him. In addition, one of the other youth caught a goby, and we were then left with the decision of killing it, or releasing it. After a group discussion the majority decided to release the fish. Their logic was that one fish could not do anything truly harmful to the ecosystem and that they have probably secured a place in the food chain because of how long they have been there. The others claimed that the one fish could reproduce to create larger quantities that could harm the environment.

I also got to see friends made last year, which is always nice. I also got to meet new people, which is just as good, if not better because that means more people are getting involved. I never have anything negative to say about the summit, I just enjoy it so

much. The summit is always an amazing experience, and I really can't thank you enough.

Thank you.

Corry York

Exciting Encounters



Submitted by Ed Zotz

Almost every day throughout the year I make some time in my daily routines to enjoy the outdoors and the local conservation area wildlife. The thing I enjoy most of all is feeding the birds out of my hand. My main visitors are of course the chickadees. In one area, when they see me approaching they wait and chirp until there is some feed in my hand. There is a certain priority in their group and some individuals are always first to feed while others wait patiently for their turn. When they are all very hungry some mild threats occur but I always make sure I bring enough for everyone. Some just sit on your hand and others sing and chirp. There is one that picks under my fingernails. They all have their own personalities and special behaviors. When danger is suspected, a shrill call is made (by the chickadees or blue jays or others) to communicate the need to hide. Everyone will disappear until the area is clear, then all returns to normal.

There are several other species that will come to see me and feed from my hand. A joy to behold are downy woodpeckers, song sparrows, blue jays, and white breasted nuthatches. They all make their own sounds at you as if to ask for permission to take some food.

Last spring a male white breasted nuthatch came to feed many times during my visits and I suspect he was gathering food to give to his mate on the nest. Later in early June both he and his mate came to

my hand apparently to gather food to feed the babies. This went on until the middle of the month when several more nuthatches appeared to take my sunflower seeds. I wondered "Could these be the young ones?" Then one day something extraordinary occurred. The parent nuthatches flew across the front of my face in an X fashion many times. It made me take notice and wonder what thoughts were going through their heads. Then came the answer. The young nuthatch came and landed on the container of feed in my shirt pocket and sat there for about a minute (or what seemed that long). By carefully turning my head to

the left I could closely observe the little ball of fluff and down. I hardly dared to breathe. Then it flew to my shoulder and sat there for a while. All the time the parents were mildly chirping nearby. Oh, how I wish I could understand what went on. My heart was pounding and I was breathless as I thanked them for letting me experience that moment.

Ed Zotz

2017 Financial Report

Financial Statement Dec 31/2017

Cash Balance as of Dec 31/3016 - \$2,511.94

ASSETS		LIABILITIES	
Bird Studies Canada	\$912.75	Bank Fees	\$76.48
Donation Received	\$340.00	Communications	\$306.23
Float In	\$225.00	Donations Out	\$1,015.81
Memberships	\$2,195.00	Dues	\$83.00
Raffle	\$235.00	Float Out	\$225.00
Refreshments	\$47.00	Miscellaneous	\$54.08
		ON Insurance	\$830.52
		Rent	\$744.94
		Speakers	\$650.00
TOTAL ASSETS	\$3,954.75	TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$3,986.06

$\$2,511.94 + \$3,954.75 - \$3,986.06 = \$2,480.63 + \$50.00$ uncashed Chq. # 81* = \$2530.63 cash balance on hand as of Dec 31/2017

* Cheque # 81: Oct. Speaker Fee – Mark Cadman

Investment: CIBC GIC(as of Nov25/2017) - \$2,329.08 @ 0.5500% Matures Nov 27/2018

Ted Crichton