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# THE NATURALIST

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

## President's Message

The 2019-2020 season has certainly seen some changes for DRFN. It started off well. We had some great speakers, outings and newsletters. Then COVID-19 came along! Still have great newsletters! But meetings and outings for March, April and May have had to be cancelled. We must keep our distance and do our part to make sure our members stay well. We will have a May meeting but not our usual type of meeting. Please see Programmes to get more info on what we have planned.



The May meeting is also our AGM. We are always looking for new faces on the DRFN executive so now is your opportunity. The following will give you an idea of the duties and responsibilities involved in each executive position.

All executive members are expected to attend general meetings (8 per year) and executive meetings (5 per year) and provide reports and updates as well as an annual report for the May AGM

**President :** chair general meetings and executive meetings, answer e-mails and other forms of communications, pass on pertinent info to executive members and/or all members, participate in ON Nature Network Lake Ontario North meetings, Oh! And write the president's message for the newsletters

**Vice President :** chair general meetings and executive meetings when the president is unable to do so and take on special projects

**Treasurer:** look after DRFN financial requirements such as making deposits, writing cheques and keeping receipts, keep a set of Financial Books (manually or electronically), reconcile monthly bank statements, produce yearly financial statement in January, audit the books, prepare CRA Tax forms, pay invoices, and arrange facility rental

# 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')*

## **May 25, 2020**

Members Night and Annual General Meeting.

### **To be held via Zoom.**

Invitations to this video conference meeting will be sent by Otto Peter with instructions on connecting, via computer, tablet or phone including the URL and access code

## **September 28, 2020**

Matt Ellerbeck

"Turtle Conservation"

## **October 26, 2020**

Owl Foundation

"The Owl Foundation a Fly by Night Organization"

## **November 30, 2020**

Martyn Obbard

"How Black and Polar Bears Prepare for Winter"

# Newsletter

## Submissions

Please submit your pictures and articles for the May newsletter no later than September 15, 2020.

Email all submissions to Nancy Muzik at

john\_nancy\_m@rogers.com

Programmes: arrange for guest speakers (easier said than done), care for and set up sound system, computer and projector, introduce and thank speakers

Membership: keep track of members, take membership dues, set up and man membership table at general meetings

Newsletter: produce and edit five newsletters per year

Outings: arrange monthly outings to local natural areas and lead some of these outings or find a leader to do so.

Ontario Nature Contact: liaison and communicate with Ontario Nature personnel to let them know what we as a club are doing and to inform our club about ON projects and campaigns, attend and report at ON Nature Network Lake Ontario North meetings

Conservation: keep abreast of nature activities and those activities that affects nature in Durham Region

Publicity: keep the DRFN website up-to-date, repost nature related articles on Facebook, update our display boards and attend and represent DRFN at local nature festivals

Secretary: record minutes of the executive meetings and the AGM

Not a comprehensive list of duties but it gives you an idea. So please think of taking on one of these roles. An excellent club does not stay excellent without excellent hard-working people And, did I mention the potlucks! We executive members have two per year, one in December and another in June. Great fun!

As natural areas open up please continue to follow physical distancing protocols as regulated. Stay well! And I sincerely hope to see your smiling faces in the fall.

*Lois Gillette*

# Future Outings

## Upcoming Outings and COVID-19 Guidance

These are challenging times due to COVID-19. We all embrace nature and long to see our favourite wildflowers, birds, mammals, insects and other wildlife. DRFN will follow the guidance, laws and regulations of Canada, Ontario and local municipalities to limit the spread and minimize the danger. When "Stay at Home" guidance is lifted, DRFN will resume outings but limits on group size and social distancing will still apply. We will not car-pool or share optics so bring your own. Be prepared that washrooms may not be as available as in the past. Bring hand sanitizer. Bring your own drinks, and food since restaurants may not be available.

### **Saturday, June 13 at 6:00 PM**

#### **Carden Alvar**

- Leader: Don Docherty
- The Carden Alvar is a dramatically different experience with prairie smoke, cattle and grassland birds. Weather permitting; we may see Bluebirds, Wrens, Loggerhead Shrikes, Upland Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, a variety of Sparrows, Nighthawks, and Bittern. If you stay a little longer you may hear Whip-poor-wills and see fireflies at the roadside.
- Those who wish to drive as a group can meet at the Northview Library parking lot at 5:00 PM. (Alternately meet Don Docherty at Wylie and McNamee Roads at the Carden Alvar at 6:00 PM.) (Consider driving up earlier and have a picnic at the lift locks at 5:00 PM.)
- Difficulty: Light walking.
- Be prepared with water, sun screen and insect repellent.

### **Wednesday, July 01 at 1:00 PM**

#### **Butterfly Walk at Heber Down Conservation Area**

- Leader: Rayfield Pye.
- It's prime time to see butterflies. With construction south of the conservation area complicating driving, we'll meet in the peaceful north.
- Meet at the Northeast parking lot. From Highway 7 drive south on Cochrane Street.
- Bring water, sun screen and insect repellent.
- Difficulty: Light walking.

### **Saturday, August 29 at 10:00 AM**

#### **Nature Walk**

- Leader: Don Docherty
- Long Sault CA is a wonderful conservation area. It has a great variety of habitats and fine trails.
- Directions: Exit 401 at Waverly Rd. Travel North on Regional Rd. #57. Turn right at Regional Rd. #20. Turn left at Woodley Rd. The road ends at the parking lot where we will meet and start our walk.
- Pay and Display Parking is in effect at a cost of \$6 per vehicle/day.
- Difficulty: Check the weather forecast and dress accordingly. We'll be walking the trails so, weather permitting, the footing should be fine although there will be ups and downs.

### **Saturday, September 26 at 10 AM**

#### **Darlington Generating Station Parkland**

- Leader: Don Docherty
- Meet at the parking lot to the SE of the pond at Darlington Generating Station. (From the 401 East-bound, take the Courtyce Road exit, go east on Megawatt Dr east (changes to Energy Dr W) and south on Park Rd to the first (small) parking lot.)
- Darlington is a great place to visit any time of the year. Migration will be in progress. We'll have to concentrate but there will be warblers and other northern nesters to be found.
- Check the weather forecast and dress accordingly.
- Difficulty: Light walking on excellent trails.
- Bring water.

***Don Docherty***

# Butterfly Garden Spring Clean-Up

## Saturday, May 30, 10:00 a.m.

**Reminder: Spring Clean-up of the Butterfly Garden is coming up. There is plenty of space to practice social distancing so this event will continue as scheduled.**

There's lots to do to get the Garden ready for summer – edging, spreading wood-chips, weeding, pulling grass, pruning, cutting dead stalks, planting marigolds, cleaning up litter, etc. etc. Please come and lend a hand to keep this garden thriving. The pollinators will love you!

Bring garden tools, gloves, drinking water and dress for the weather.

Park on side streets Glencairn or Ansley, then walk a short distance to the garden on Rossland Road just west of the Oshawa Creek.

Note: Help is also needed over the summer – a couple of hours as often as you can come. Contact Dianne to arrange.

Questions: Dianne Pazaratz 905-433-7875 or dpazaratz@sympatico.ca.

## Ontario Nature Report

I hope you are doing well under these extraordinary times. Ontario Nature is closely monitoring the rapidly evolving situation to keep our staff and wider community safe, and to do our part to help flatten the curve of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have cancelled some [upcoming events](#) and may cancel events in the future depending on how the coming weeks unfold. If you have registered for an event that has been cancelled, we will provide you with ample notice and reimburse your registration fees in full. We are actively looking for a venue to host our Youth Conference in the fall, regional meetings are being held virtually, and we are adapting as best we can to make sure we are still monitoring environmental concerns. Stay connected by visiting our website, keep up-to-date on our blog, and read about ON in our online magazine.

Ontario Nature is reopening our Nature Reserves and trail systems. We know that getting outdoors to connect with nature is a critical element of your physical and mental well-being, especially at times like these as we grapple with COVID-19. Please visit only trails in your local area and only with members of your household. Maintain a distance of at least two metres from others and keep your dog on a leash at all times. Please do not touch any railings, signs or other surfaces. We are assessing trails and will resume maintenance when we are permitted to do so. Use of our trails is at your own risk. Please follow the current advice of health and government officials. Stay safe.

***Maria Prisciak***

# Spring Wildflowers in My Garden



Bloodroot by Lois Gillette

COVID-19 is preventing me from seeing and hugging my loved ones but it is not stopping me from enjoying my garden. Throughout the years we have planted many wildflowers. They all have their charms and I look forward to seeing their beautiful blossoms each spring.

First up in early April is the Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). It usually has eight petals which are snow white. The name comes from the blood red sap found in its rhizomes and stem. Folklore has it that early First Nations people used it to paint their faces. As children my brothers and I certainly entertained ourselves by streaking the juice over our faces.

Next to flower in late April to early May are the Trilliums. We have both the White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*) and the Red Trillium (*Trillium erectum*).

One of the white ones has a streak of green in it this year, not necessarily a good thing. According to The ROM Field Guide To Wildflowers of Ontario. (2004) it may be a sign of infection by a mycoplasma-like organism.



Trillium by Lois Gillette



Wild Ginger by Lois Gillette

Also blooming in my garden in early to mid-May is Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*). If you peak under the heart-shaped leaves you will find a lovely maroon tubular flower. The rhizomes have a gingery taste and smell. But the plant is not related to the spice we know as ginger.

Another flower that is blooming while I write this in mid-May, is Large-flowered Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*). The six-petaled yellow flowers look like drooping bells.



Bellwort by Lois Gillette



Wood Poppy by Lois Gillette

Wood Poppies a.k.a. Celandine Poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*) are at their peak now. Their bright yellow blossoms started appearing the end of April. Not to be confused with the non-native and invasive Greater Celandine (*Chelidonium majus*), which also has four yellow petals, smaller than the Wood Poppy's and blooms a few weeks later. Although native to Ontario, Wood Poppies are rare in the wild. They are now growing along the rail trail behind my house.

That's just a few of the wildflowers growing in my garden. Of course, there are many more species that will bloom and delight throughout the coming seasons.

For more info on wildflowers of Ontario visit <http://www.ontariowildflowers.com/>

**Lois Gillette**

# Piping Plovers- Darlington Provincial Park



Western Opening at Darlington P.P. by Rayfield Pye

In 2019, from mid-June to late July, Lake Ontario water levels were at record heights. The Piping Plovers had several nests get washed out.

July 18- 3 chicks hatch

July 26- Chick #1 disappeared

July 28-Chick #2 was found dead. The cause of death was an abnormal enlarged liver.

Aug 9- Chick #3 was found dead. The cause of death was a projectile trauma resulting in a through-and-through wound. (it had been shot)

Aug 11- the adult male was feeding on the beach on its own.

Nov 6- the adult male was seen at Fred Howard Park, Pinellas County, FL



Piping Plover by Rayfield Pye

for the Piping Plover volunteer program.

***Rayfield Pye***

In 2020, it is expected that the lake levels will be 30 to 40 cm below last year's levels. That is still above average. The barrier beach has two openings into McLaughlin Bay. The middle section of the beach is an island.

Darlington Provincial Park is open to day use only because of COVID 19 pandemic. The beach is currently closed to the public. The Piping Plovers, Killdeer, and Spotted Sandpipers will have the beach to themselves when they attempt to nest.

CWS staff are currently working from home. You cannot set up a protective cage around the Piping Plover nest from your computer. It will be the Piping Plovers vs their predators- Gulls, Mink, Racoons, and Skunks.

When things return to normal the club will send out an email about where you can sign up

# Nature FYI

## Migration Trivia



Long awaited first arrival of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird by John Muzik

Spring has arrived and most folks are looking forward to the long-awaited bird migration. But did you know that migration is not the simple north to south and back again system we think of? Arctic Warblers and Wheatears migrate south from Alaska to Borneo and Africa, while Shearwaters migrate north from Tasmania to the Bering Sea to feed and back south again to nest. Tundra Swans and Black Scoters travel from the Northwest Territories and Alaska across the continent to winter on the Atlantic coast. This long-distance migration where the entire population leaves the breeding grounds for a separate wintering location is called complete migration.

Some species have much more complex migration patterns. Some individuals or regional populations may migrate long distances or short distances and some in the species may not migrate at all. This is called partial migration. Examples are Blue Jays and Red-tailed Hawks.

Some species only migrate when their food supply is low. This is called irruptive migration. Boreal Owls, Pine Siskins, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks and White-winged and Red Crossbills are examples of species with irruptive migration. This was pretty evident this winter with plentiful food supplies keeping the winter finches north. DRFN members had to travel to Algonquin to glimpse winter finches.

According to National Geographic, the longest migration is held by the Arctic Tern. Arctic Terns in the North American Arctic travel about 22,000 to 25,000 miles round trip a year. But Arctic Terns who nest in Iceland and Greenland, travel a whopping 44,000 – 50,000 miles a year to Antarctica. But, wait you may say isn't the Wandering Albatross have the longest flights recorded? True to their name the Albatross wanders more than 114,000 miles per year but since their movements lack seasonal directionality it is not considered true migration.

The longest non-stop migration is attributed to the Bar-tailed Godwit. Fitted with a transmitter, scientists sponsored by National Geographic, followed one Godwit who flew from western Alaska across the Pacific Ocean to New Zealand in one non-stop flight. It was a 7,200-mile journey.

Not all migrating birds fly long distances. One of the shortest migrations is the Dusky Grouse. It migrates only a few miles and mostly on foot. However, it migrates up and down thousands of feet of elevation in the Rocky Mountains from the summer nesting grounds at lower elevations to high elevations in the winter where they feed on fir needles.

The many species of penguin migrate by swimming. The Adélie Penguin, known to trek an average 13,000 km (8,077 mi) every year, from their breeding colony to their winter grounds in the Ross Sea region of Antarctica and back. While most of the migration is completed by swimming, 30 plus miles of the migration is covered by walking over the Antarctic ice.

According to Audubon the Bar-headed Goose is the highest-flying migrator reaching .55 miles above sea level as they go over the Himalayas.

To prepare for the extremely taxing effort of migration, birds enter a state called hyperphagia, where they bulk up on food in the preceding weeks to store fat, which they'll later use for energy on their long journeys.

To read more about bird migration try these web sites

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/the-basics-how-why-and-where-of-bird-migration/>

<https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/migration-marathons-7-unbelievable-bird-journeys>

<https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/migration-marathons-7-unbelievable-bird-journeys>

**Nancy Muzik**

# COVID- 19 Backyard Birding Challenge

I sent out the COVID-19 challenge to our DRFN members on April 13. And I heard back from a few of you with some April results. All in all, there were 57 species counted. I am hoping that the May count will be much larger. Besides your backyard I extended it to your walkable neighbourhood.

But now some of our local natural areas are starting to open up, all be it with some restrictions. I would like to continue this challenge using the original parameters - your neighbourhood. Still up for it?

Because I suspect as things open up there are still many of us who want to continue to stay close to home. This disease is not gone yet. So, at the end of May, please send me your species count and we'll see how many we get. I have included a species list on our DRFN website, [www.drfn.ca](http://www.drfn.ca).

Stay well! Stay at home!

**Lois Gillette** [dlgill@sympatico.ca](mailto:dlgill@sympatico.ca)

Member's pictures were submitted in conjunction with the COVID-19 Backyard Birding Challenge

John and Dianne McFeeters had fun and submitted these shots with some very unusual birds in their yard.





Brian Reid submitted his backyard and neighborhood shots



John Muzik submitted his backyard pictures



## Great Canadian Birdathon 2020

Otto and I are participating in Birds Canada annual fundraiser again this year. We will probably do our Birdathon in May as that is the optimum month for species and we meet very few people where we go to observe the birds.

My goal is \$4,500 and currently I am over \$2,000. As a reminder DRFN gets 25% of the amount I raise. This money is used to sponsor students to attend Ontario Nature's Youth Summit in September. This year we hope to sponsor three students.

We hope you will continue to support this very worth-while organization. I have attached the link to my web page for donations.

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon20/page/diane-peter-help-the-birds-and-our-future-naturalists/>

If you would prefer to give me cash or a cheque, please contact me directly by email or phone.

Thanks for your previous support and I hope you can support me again this year.

***Diane Peter***