



North Durham Nature

The Board of Directors has put its mind to what we want to be as we morph from a fledgling club to an important part of the natural history community of North Durham. Part of this journey involves branding of the “club” so our message and interest is clear. To this end, we will henceforth be known as North Durham Nature to better reflect that we are not just a club, but a gathering of interested individuals who share a vision and passion for Nature – a welcoming to all who care and want to learn more about natural things!

Beyond Our Borders

On the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s “All about Birds Blog”, Charles Eldermire, Bird Cams Project Leader recently shared his thoughts as to how birds survive the coldest weather, while we sit at home wishing for warmth. Here are his insights:

1. Get some friends to hang out with

Having other birds around makes it less likely that something will eat you; more eyes = less chance a predator will get you.

2. Eat. As much as possible

Find food - the heaviest, fattiest foods possible, like black-oil sunflower and suet - and eat! However, don’t eat too much, because it also makes you more likely to get eaten as you won’t be fast enough to escape!

3. When you can’t eat more, get puffy and rest

Your fluffy down feathers help complete the food + feathers = warmth equation. With food in your belly, you can use your metabolism to generate heat. Feathers, in addition to keeping cold air away from your skin, do great jobs of trapping body heat instead of letting it dissipate. If you get the chance, tuck a foot or a whole leg up in there.

4. Stay out of the wind

Here’s an important hint: if the wind is blowing, go to the *other* side of the tree and avoid it. Seems simple, right? But it works—.

5. Roost in a cavity



Eastern Screech-owl

You'll never find a warmer spot to sleep than nestled in a nook small enough that you can warm it up with your own body heat. Old woodpecker cavities, crannies beneath the eaves of houses, even a tunnel in the snow... they're all warmer than spending the night (literally) out on a limb.

6. (Bonus step) Put it all together

Finally, whenever possible, combine tips 1-5 for the ultimate in toasty warm nights and a healthy awakening the next day!

Protecting Seabirds on the Isles of Scilly



A project aimed at protecting internationally important seabird populations on two of the Isles of Scilly (Gugh and St. Agnes) by killing more than 3,000 brown rats, is under way. The islands, which are located off Cornwall, are home to breeding populations of 14 seabird species and approximately 20,000 birds.

The project is part of a multi-year program to protect "internationally important" seabird numbers including Manx shearwaters, storm petrels and many more species around the world.

"Among many challenges our seabirds face, the greatest threat on land is predation of eggs and chicks by brown rats," said Jaclyn Pearson from the Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project. "The brown rats



were accidentally introduced to islands from shipwrecks in the 18th Century," she added. Baiting started last November and monitoring will be ongoing throughout 2014 and beyond.

Other successful rat eradication projects have been undertaken on South Georgia, Ramsey Island off Wales, Lundy Island off Devon and the Isle of Canna in the Scottish Hebrides.

Tony Whitehead, from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), said: "Eight out of ten islands around the world now have

rats, including remote places such as Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic and Henderson Island in the South Pacific. The predators are known to have impacted the populations of 75 species of seabird, from albatross to shearwaters to small petrels.”

By Chris Ellis for BBC News Online and published by Focusing on Wildlife

A plea for help from The Advisory Committee on Natural Spaces of the Willow Beach Field Naturalists

Re: Cobourg Harbour

The Willow Beach Field Naturalists need your help in combating plans to expand the Cobourg Marina that would fill much of the Cobourg outer harbour and the area in front of the current west parking lot with boat slips, new boat launch areas and boat removal gantries. This would necessitate deep dredging of the west side of the harbour, thus encroaching on the previously very productive west headland.

As the Advisory Committee on Natural Spaces of the Willow Beach Field Naturalists, we have argued before the Council (see the YouTube video at <http://youtu.be/5DdASTZbLkc>) that this would be ruinous for the natural habitats in and around the harbour, which provide shelter and food for an amazingly large number and diversity of birds. We feel strongly that Cobourg Harbour is an important area for birdlife, a prime, year-round birding location, well-known to and highly valued by a great many Ontario birders, both locally and from much farther afield.

We would ask you as interested individuals, to write a letter of support for a rethinking of the extent of the Marina expansion to preserve much more of the harbour’s important natural environment.

Please address your letter to:

The Mayor, Council, and CAO of the Town of Cobourg c/o Lorraine Brace
lbrace@cobourg.ca

or

The Mayor, Council, and CAO of the Town of Cobourg Municipal Offices, Victoria Hall, 55 King Street West, Cobourg ON K9A 2M2

Please copy Richard Pope rpope@yorku.ca and/or Margaret Bain mjcbain@sympatico.ca

Thank you for your efforts on our behalf!

Willow Beach Field Naturalists



Closer to Home

Poison Ivy – Don’t Be Fooled!

It feels good to shake winter's cold, ice and snow from our boots and jackets. Who knew the “Polar Vortex” could bring bone-chilling temperatures for so many days? Now that spring is here, we appreciate the greening of the trails and welcome back those animals that

hibernated or migrated to warmer places to survive.



It's with anticipation that we head out for walks now. What flowers will be blooming? Did you hear that bird's song? What just hopped off into the bushes? What kind of bush is that? And of course, the perennial admonishment: watch out for poison ivy!! Yes, "leaves of three – LET IT BE!" However, there are many friendly plants with three leaves. How do we know which plant bears the dangerous triplets?

Wild strawberry, clover, wood sorrel, wild raspberry, bracken fern, trilliums, young anemones, and young Virginia creeper all may have three leaves. Be serious - are you going to take the time to count each and every leaf on trail-side plants? NOT likely!!! Take the time to learn what poison ivy looks like, and then enjoy your rambles.

The catch is that, unlike the image of the maple leaf on our flag, poison ivy leaves can be quite variable in their appearance. Some have deep lobes, others are slightly toothed, and some have almost completely smooth edges. They can range in colour from light to dark green, sometimes with a reddish sheen. The plant may

grow as a vine, as individual low plants to those growing over a meter in height.

What they all have in common is the means of attachment of the leaves to the stem. They grow off the vine or stem alternately as a compound leaf, in groups of three leaflets on a long stem. The middle leaflet almost always has its own short stem while the two side leaflets attach directly – no stems there. The leaves look dark green and waxy with a lighter fuzzy appearance below, although the shininess may disappear for a while after it's rained.

The fruit of poison ivy are small, round berries, translucent and creamy white in colour. The berries may stay on the plant over the winter and through the spring. The twigs are nondescript but the plants prefer to grow in sunnier areas, particularly in sheltered places near fences and stone walls, and along the edges of forests and trails. It can become the predominant ground cover, choking out other plants in the vicinity, or growing as vines up and around supportive trees.

For those unlucky enough to contact the plant, thorough and immediate cleaning with soap is the best treatment.



Out on the trail, look for the succulent stems and leaves of jewelweed, also known as touch-me-not. Crush the stems to release the sap, and rub it on the affected skin. It's not a fail-safe treatment, but will remove a good deal of the urushiol oil that causes the reaction on the skin.

There's no "safe" season when it comes to poison ivy. The twigs and berries contain the oil year-round. I can verify that it's possible to contract poison ivy in the depths of winter, but it's most potent in the summer months. Skin reactions vary from a mild redness to angry, weeping blisters. The best treatment is getting to know this plant, then avoid it. Happy trails!

The Nature Nut is freelance writer Nancy Melcher. Her regular column appears monthly in "The Uxbridge Cosmos" newspaper. You can ask questions about sights along your trails at TheNatureNut@bell.net. Her website is www.nancymelcher.ca. Photos accompanying this article taken by Nancy.

Book



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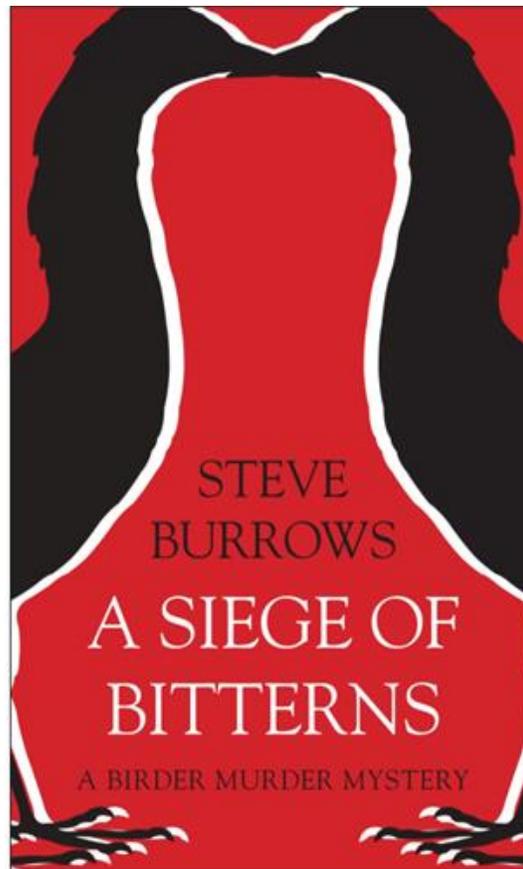
Presents

A SIEGE OF BITTERNS

A Birder Murder Mystery

by Steve Burrows

Steve is a well-known Durham resident and author who has just published his first novel

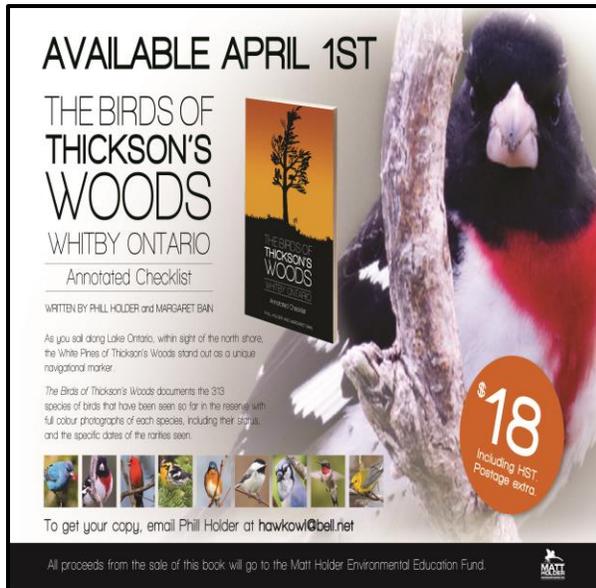


about birds and intrigue – a birder murder mystery.

Here's what the book is about: Domenic Jejeune is a reluctant police hero but an enthusiastic bird watcher. Promoted to a post in the heart of Britain's birding country, his first case involves the murder of a leading environmentalist. Torn between his loyalty to his job and his hobby, Jejeune faces both the skepticism of his colleagues and his own self-doubts as he works to solve the case.

Interested in meeting Steve? Come on MAY 10 between 12:00 – 2:00 to BLUE HERON BOOKS, 62 BROCK ST. W., UXBRIDGE and get your own copy!





The Birds of Thickson's Woods, Whitby Ontario - Annotated Checklist

By Phill Holder and Margaret Bain

Documenting the 313 species of birds that have been seen in the Thickson's Woods reserve with full colour photographs of each species, including their status and the specific dates of rarities seen.

Thirty years ago this year a fund raising board was organized to buy Thickson's Woods and save them in perpetuity. Later expanded to include the Meadow to the north. Thickson's Woods has become an important oasis for migrating and breeding birds - the only mature stand of White Pines on the north shore of Lake Ontario.

This new publication marks the 30 year anniversary of "saving the woods" and is dedicated to Phill's son Matt who passed away suddenly in 2011. Matt loved birding the woods and in his memory all proceeds from the sale of this book will go towards the: **Matt Holder Environmental**

Education Fund. This fund will provide grants to under 18 year olds either from schools, groups or individuals.

Durham Festival of Birds

The Pickering Naturalists, the Durham Region Field Naturalists and North Durham Nature are collaborating on an exciting adventure to celebrate our wonderful heritage of birds in Durham Region. A great day is planned, so mark your calendar now:



Sunday, May 25th

There will be two major components to this exciting event.

'Wings Over Whitby' – This is a birding event focused on helping **novice birders** develop their skills as a **family or group of friends** while having lots of fun exploring excellent birding sites and winning prizes. There will also be

workshops to help you learn how to identify birds and how to use binoculars. There will be some “loaner” binoculars, provided by binocular manufacturers, for those who might not have their own pair. Participants will gather at Whitby Marina on the morning of the 25th. After participating in a couple of optional workshops, they can explore the harbour and several other locations along the lakeshore looking for migrating and/or nesting birds. You’ll get lots of help from local experts along the way to see how many species can be found in this wonderful birdy spot.

‘Durham Skies Big Day’ – This event is focused on **4 person teams competing** for trophies and prizes as they spend 24 hours finding as many species within Durham as they can. This event is for serious birders, who will scour the woods and fields of Durham Region, trying to find over 100 species in a single day – and probably many more!

Registration deadline will be May 10th and we’ll have the registration site ready soon. Mark your calendar, tell your friends and family members. We will be providing more details in the weeks ahead.

Food For Thought

Region of Durham Community Climate Adaption Plan

We’ve all heard climate change is coming and I won’t delve into the “who is right and when will it happen” of it. Suffice to say, something is

going on and Durham has developed a committee to see how best to prepare for the climatic changes that are forthcoming. I sit as Chair of the Ajax and Durham Environmental Advisory Committees, and I also sit on the Expert Task Force on the Natural Environment.

So what can we expect for Durham Region? Well according to climate modeling, done by Senes Consultants Ltd, who were hired by the Region to do this study, we can expect big changes. Looking outward to 2040-2049 (sounds like a long time away, but it’s not really) ...

Compared to the period 2000-2009, Uxbridge will experience:

- more significant rain events (83% more days with >25 mm of rainfall);
- 40% increase in the “one day maximum” rainfall;
- 28% decrease in the amount of snow we can expect on a single day;
- 64% decrease in the number of days it will snow >5 cm;
- average daily high temperatures will increase from 25C to 29C, with extremes going from 35C to 44C;
- winter daily minimums will rise from -9C to -2C, with extremes going from -27C to -14C;
- the number of days/year the temperature will be <-10C will decrease from 36 to 2;
- the number of days the wind chill will be <-20C will go from 23 to 0;
- the potential for violent storms will increase – the number of days we might expect high lightning potential will go from 25 to 32/year; and
- high wind events will drop, both in frequency and velocity.

Scugog and Brock will experience similar changes. These are somewhat different than what is predicted for the Lake Ontario shoreline communities, as our micro-climate is unique and is not influenced by lake effects. How accurate these predicted changes are will be proven over time, but for now I'm keeping my long johns and sunscreen just in case!

By Geoff Carpentier

Club Events

TALKS

April, Thurs. 24th, 7 pm - **Amphibian and Reptiles** - Tanya Pulfer at Port Perry Library

May, Wed 28th, 7 pm - **Algonquin Park Birds** - Ron Tozer at Uxbridge Seniors Centre

WALKS



April, Saturday 5th – **Port Perry Waterfowl** – Geoff Carpentier – see website for details

April 24th – night walk - **Listen and look for Amphibians** - James Kamstra, 9 pm follows talk by Tanya Pulfer at Port Perry Scugog Library



May 17th - **Beaver River Wetland** – Marsh monitoring – Derek and Mark

June 14th - **Carden Alvar birds** – Derek & Geoff

June 22nd - **Bird box monitoring, Lafarge Pit**

July 13th - **Butterflies, Uxbridge Countryside Preserve** - James Kamstra

Citizen Science Projects & Opportunities

Ontario's Herpetofaunal Atlas

In 1984, Ontario became the first region in North America to create a reptile and amphibian atlas, the Ontario Herpetofaunal Summary (OHS). Since that time, Ontario Nature's Reptile & Amphibian Atlas was established and the data generated by these 2 projects have greatly benefited herpetofaunal conservation in the province. To celebrate this 30-year milestone, Ontario Nature and our partners will host several "herp blitzes" in 2014. To learn where and when these blitzes

will be held, contact Tanya Pulfer at tanyap@ontarionature.org.

Finding Chorus Frogs in Ontario

Over the next month, please keep track of where you hear chorus frogs (including the Spring Peeper) and [report your information online to the Ontario Chorus Frog and Marsh Bird Species at Risk Project](#). Bird Studies Canada is interested in learning more about where chorus frogs occur throughout Ontario. Website - www.bsc-eoc.org



Secret Gardens

Exploring North Durham's Nature

Nonquon Sewage Lagoons

Some of the best waterfowl and shorebird habitats occur where sewage ponds have been established – especially those where disturbance is minimized and where varied habitat is allowed to persist. In Scugog just such a place exists – the Nonquon Sewage Lagoons.



Comprised of seven lagoons, all easily accessible by wide flat pathways and access roads, it is a wildlife haven. Only one lagoon, the northwesterly most one, is generally not attractive to wildlife as it is constantly aerated – but, even there, birds sometimes use it as it opens up earlier in the spring and stays open later in the season than the other lagoons.

The rest of the lagoons attract myriad wildlife whenever they are ice free. Depending on the year and the water levels, hundreds of ducks, geese, a few swans, many species of shorebirds, and rails, and herons use the lagoons for resting, feeding and breeding. Along its banks, sparrows, blackbirds, all six species of swallows, and wrens forage and hide. The lagoons are surrounded by many varied habitats from fields to scrub to mature mixed woods, where woodpeckers, flycatchers, warblers and thrushes abound. Overhead hawks migrate in the fall and Ospreys nest along the south edge of the site. Never seen a Merlin? come here in the fall and you will. It is also a good place to look for Nelson's Sparrows in the fall, as they migrate from their haunts along the James and Hudson Bay coasts. Not just about birds, this is one of the best places to study dragonflies & their allies and butterflies in the area. The diverse botany of the site will also excite itinerant botanists.

Permits

Everyone entering the lagoons must purchase an annual permit to visit the site.

The permits may be purchased at the Durham Region Transfer Site located at 1623 Reach Rd, Port Perry during the following business hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and

Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and
Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 6 p.m.

To get to the transfer station, travel north on Hwy 12 past Port Perry [Hwy 7A] to the next traffic lights [Regional Road 8 Reach Rd.] and travel east to #1623 on the north side of the road.

Directions: The lagoons are located one road north of the transfer site on Concession Rd. 8. Don't get confused as, despite the fact that these roads are both numbered "8", they are two different roads - one is a regional paved road, the other a dirt concession road. Access to the lagoons is only possible from the east end of Conc. 8 (because the bridge is out west of the lagoons).



All photos in this newsletter taken by the editor, unless otherwise specified.

For more information about NDN

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