

Ontario Nature
**2015 Youth Summit for
Biodiversity &
Environmental Leadership**

NDN sponsored two students to attend the 2015 Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership, hosted by Ontario Nature.

Ontario Nature's 6th annual Youth Summit was held from Sept 25-27, 2015 at beautiful Geneva Park on Lake Couchiching. 95 youth from 57 communities across the province attended for an action-packed weekend of fun, learning and friendship building.

One of our sponsored youths, Aidan Bowers writes:

“The camp was a blast! I absolutely loved the facilities and the people, as well as the workshops, group challenges and keynote speakers. I learned a lot about pollinators



photo by Brendan Toews and Noah Cole

and pollinator gardens, which has been a focus of the Ontario nature youth council for the past 2 years. ... I would have liked to have had some more workshops or time dedicated to making change in my own community and I would have loved to have the summit last longer.”

Our other sponsored youth, Declan McDowell, a 16 year old recalls:

“I am really appreciative that [NDN] sponsored me to attend the Environmental Youth Summit in Orillia. I wish to have a career in the Ministry of Natural Resources/Fish and Wildlife so I was extremely excited to be a part of this summit. I enjoyed meeting and connecting with youth my age who share similar passions.

I enjoyed the nature hikes through Geneva Park. On one of the hikes, I found many different species of salamanders and I also came across a giant puff ball in the forest.

One of the workshops that I attended taught me how to make fishing flies. I found this extremely interesting as I learned a lot of new things about fly fishing, including the different types of rods, reels, float lines and sink lines. I had the opportunity to make my own fly from feathers, wool and thread. We were able to practice casting in a field. I think my fly was the best.

The medicinal plant workshop was really neat. I learned about how to make different creams from medicinal plants found in your own back yard. I made a lotion from plantain leaves, comfrey leaves, bees wax and olive oil that you can use for cuts, scrapes, sore muscles and arthritis.

Falconers from the University of Guelph came with a Red-tailed Hawk, American

Kestrel and an Eastern Screech Owl. I found this interesting as I got to learn about birds that you don't get to see all the time and about ways to protect them.



We also listened to a speaker who talked to us about protecting the environment. I would jump at the opportunity to attend the summit next year; I learned so much from others and enjoyed sharing my experiences with people who share the same interests. I realize now more than ever it is important to protect the environment. We have to make sure that it preserved for years to come.”

Local News

2015 Results from the Countryside Preserve Bird Boxes

By Derek Connelly

This year was the best ever. I had so much help with the bird boxes - the birds and I are grateful. Our goal was to assist the Tree Swallow and Eastern Bluebirds to nest successfully in the Countryside Preserve.

Spring began with cleaning out the 25 boxes, moving some into better locations and designing an experimental predator control system. This system consisted of either a juice can or plastic tube fixed to some boxes to discourage larger birds and squirrels from accessing the nest entrance area. The Uxbridge Scouts were great helpers with the installation of this predator control system.

Here are the results as of August 6th:

Twenty swallow pairs, 5 wrens and 1 chickadee were successful in raising young. This demonstrated an increase in the local swallow's population. Perhaps our efforts throughout all of Uxbridge over the years have played a part in this victory. Uxbridge Preserve swallows nested closer together than expected and were seen competing with Bluebirds for boxes. Sadly, the Eastern Bluebirds were unsuccessful this year, abandoning 5 eggs in one and starting nests but leaving them eggless in two other boxes. Last year 2 of 4 bluebird nests were successful.

Wren success dropped from 17 boxes last year to 5 this year as a result of a reduction in numbers of boxes and placement. This is a management success as the wrens outcompete bluebirds and swallows if boxes are placed in their preferred habitat close to bushes and trees. Increases in Scots Pine and other trees continue to degrade open meadow habitat suitable for bluebirds and Tree Swallows. Swallows and wrens accepted the new predator system nesting successfully both in boxes with covers and those without. Whether this was a factor in the Eastern Bluebird's lack of nesting success is not known as none nested in predator proof boxes.

Vandalism by humans destroyed one chickadee nest and eggs and competitive wrens destroyed four other attempts by swallows. Other predation evidence and competition was present, but not easily determined.

Volunteers also had their ups and downs. Timing to get out there to watch, juggling summer activities, weather and of course what the birds are up to impacts how much we can do. If it's raining, we can't monitor boxes. If the mother bird is on the nest, we can't see to count the eggs. If the eggs have settled deep into the nest, we might not see them very well without causing some disturbance. If the babies are almost ready to fly, we don't want them getting out too early. All of this has to be taken into account during monitoring and then there are the ugly parts.



Birds die, eggs don't hatch, baby birds and adult birds die of exposure, or are killed by predators. Some starve and some succumb to disease. All this requires a lot of patience and perseverance, so the actions of the volunteers are commendable. Seeing birds fledge after all that nature has to throw at them and just being part of this wonderful natural activity are the rewards we reap.

Thank you to the following who gave of their time to give nature a little help on the Countryside Preserve: Bill Allen, Aidan Bowers, the Uxbridge Scouts, Bruce

Cohen, Diane and Ingrid Czerwenka, Jane Hewlett, Kit Purdy, Karen Jacobs, Shirley Kimmis Lyne and Cheryl Niemuller. There is still work to do so if you would like to lend a hand contact Derek Connelly at ndnature7@gmail.com

More on nesting species by Derek Connelly

Lafarge – Regan Pit Bird Box Results 2015 vs 2014

Number of boxes that fledged young.

YEAR	2014	2015
Tree Swallow	19	25
Eastern Bluebird	5	7
House Wren	0	2
Black -capped Chickadee	1	0

This year saw an increase in successful fledging of Tree Swallow and Eastern Bluebirds. House Wrens appeared in two boxes for the first time probably scaring off the Black-capped Chickadee that tried to nest. The timing of our monitoring of the boxes may have affected results this year as well. In 2014, we monitored once a month starting at the end of May, and then at the beginning of June, July and Sept. We skipped August. This year we monitored twice in May and June, skipped July, and monitored in August. Missing a month can mean we miss the young fledging, leaving us to estimate success based on the contents of the box. This can lead to errors. All Tree Swallows appeared to only raise one brood both years. Eastern Bluebirds nested on top of used swallow nests after the swallows

had fledged in June but no swallows were observed nesting in bluebird boxes after bluebirds had started. Bluebirds attempted two broods. Seven nests in each year produced some dead birds of both species. We found that cleaning out a box mid-summer can increase chances of renesting and success.

The gravel pit was more active this year as the east side was being used for storage of gravel for the 407 construction. May and July were slightly hotter this year than 2014, while June and August were slightly cooler. Total precipitation values for the four months of summer showed no overall significance between years, although it appeared there was more rain in June 2015 than 2014 but more rain in July and August in 2014. Many thanks to John and Lee Fisher, David Taylor and Paul Rothsfell, who assisted me this year.

Sunderland Butterfly Count

Photos and story by James Kamstra

This was the 19th year for the Sunderland butterfly count which took place on July 5, 2015 in the peak of the butterfly season. The area of this count is a 25 km diameter circle centered on the village of Udora that



is evenly divided between Uxbridge, Brock and Georgina Townships.

The Sunderland count recorded 52 species which is slightly lower than the long term average of 54. Overall the numbers of butterflies were lower than usual and there were no particularly uncommon species observed. Twelve parties with 32 eager observers makes Sunderland one of the best attended butterfly counts in the province. The sedge skippers were particularly low in numbers this year but due to the late spring the butterflies were barely emerging from their pupa by the count date. Migrant species, which include Monarch, Question Mark, Painted Lady and American Lady, were all low this year except for Red Admiral which was found in average numbers. Only one species, Coral Hairstreak, had a record high count.



Another unusual find was an aberrant very dark or melanistic Meadow Fritillary. Occasionally a butterfly is encountered with a pattern very different from what the species is supposed to possess. I first thought it was a Baltimore but the colour was not right. I ran after the strange butterfly to catch or photograph it but was never able to get closer than about 5 m.

Results of the count appear in the table below.

BUTTERFLIES OBSERVED ON SUNDERLAND COUNT IN 2015

SPECIES	Sunderland
	05-Jul
Black Swallow tail	7
Canadian Tiger Swallowtail	5
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	25
Mustard White	69
Cabbage White	401
Common Sulfur	315
Alfalfa Orange	7
Harvester	1
American Copper	3
Bronze Copper	7
Coral Hairstreak	24
Acadian Hairstreak	18
Banded Hairstreak	1
Striped Hairstreak	8
Eastern Tailed Blue	15
Summer Azure	127
Silvery Blue	3
Great Spangled Fritillary	157
Meadow Fritillary	31
Pearl Crescent	30
Northern Crescent	893
Baltimore	116
Question Mark	6
Eastern Comma	23
Gray Comma	16
Mourning Cloak	10
American Lady	6
Red Admiral	53
White Admiral	19
Red-spotted Purple	2
Viceroy	10
Northern Pearly-Eye	52
Eyed Brown	142

Appalachian Brown	13
Little Wood Satyr	40
Common Wood Nymph	124
Inornate Ringlet	30
Monarch	20
Silver-spotted Skipper	24
Northern Cloudywing	13
Least Skipper	94
European Skipper	938
Peck's Skipper	127
Tawny-edged Skipper	97
Crossline Skipper	28
Long Dash Skipper	229
Northern Broken Dash	31
Little Glassywing	22
Delaware Skipper	39
Hobomok Skipper	38
Broad-winged Skipper	2
Dion Skipper	3
Dun Skipper	87
TOTAL SPECIES	52
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	4,626
Butterflies / hour effort	47.7
No. of Participants	34
No. of Parties	12
Km. on foot	105
Km. by car	313
Hours on foot	88
Hours by car	9
Total Hours	97

Eastern Comma



Eyed Brown



What a great day - thanks to all who helped out with this important census.

81st Durham/TOC Ornithological Club Fall Field Day

by Brian Henshaw

This was the 81st year of the Durham Fall Field Day which has been undertaken since 1934. Twelve birders recorded 149 species in Durham Region, well short of the all-time record of 164. Their efforts made the day a success. The highest team total was 117 (the previous record remains at 134 spp.). Temperatures varied from 9C to 22C.

Great Egrets (22) set a record high count and so did Trumpeter Swans (21). Dabbling ducks were present in moderate numbers and diversity as water levels were high. However, diving ducks were almost absent; only Common Mergansers bucked the trend with a record high count (114). Two young Buffleheads were new arrivals - for those that could pick them at Nonquon. A good flight of raptors was a highlight of the day

and included at least 2,696 Broad-winged Hawks, less than 100 short of a new record (and at a rather late date). Merlins were found in record high numbers with 14 and Bald Eagles showed well at 8. One pair of Sandhill Cranes called at Osler Tract.

Mudflats were scarce with very few little habitat for birds to use. Nine species of sandpipers was probably an all-time record low. Excluding Killdeer, only 25 individual shorebirds were seen. A fine juvenile Red-necked Phalarope at Nonquon was the only highlight.

Woodpeckers were generally up with three species at record high numbers (Red-bellied (5), and Pileated (4) and Hairy (7)).

Red-necked Phalarope



Overnight saw a huge movement of thrushes and record high counts of Hermit (7), Swainson's (244) and Gray-cheeked (48) ensued from just two spots for an hour or two over Uxbridge. It is interesting that the next day only a handful of these species could be found anywhere. One nocturnal team also saw the Aurora Borealis, a super bright Venus, two shooting stars and a Southern Flying Squirrel; not bad prior to dawn. The 23 species of warblers was quite good but the 175 individuals was relatively low.

A Yellow-throated Vireo at Thickson's Woods was noteworthy. The biggest misses were Green Heron, Wood Thrush, Northern Mockingbird and of course shorebirds. Overall, no new species were added but 11 record high counts were made.

Other observations included twelve species of mammals, 5 kinds of herptiles, including 262 Leopard Frogs and 10 species of butterflies plus several Odonates.

Another great day in the field was topped-off with food and drink coordinated by Kim Baker.

Note: for the complete list of species seen please visit the NDN website.

Interested in learning more about Ontario's reptiles and amphibians? Visit this link ...

<http://www.ontarioinsects.org/herpatlas/>

Secret Garden

Jim Baillie Nature Reserve

Text and photos by Mark Stabb

Secreted away in the lower reaches of the Uxbridge Brook watershed lie a collection of protected nature reserves owned and



managed by the Toronto Field Naturalists. These properties, about 182 hectares/450 acres in total, are mostly wild habitat, with few human visitors. The Jim Baillie Nature Reserve, however, is open to visitors and offers local birdwatchers and naturalists access to a classic lowland forest, very different from the high, dry woodlands many of us are used to exploring upon and around the Oak Ridges Moraine.

The Toronto Field Naturalists (TFN) was established in 1923 and is one of the leading natural history clubs in the province. They are affiliated, like North Durham Nature, with Ontario Nature. You can visit their website at

<http://www.torontofieldnaturalists.org/index.htm>

TFN named the property in honor of James L. Baillie, a past president of their club, an active hike leader and, at the time, the Assistant Curator of Ornithology at the Royal Ontario Museum, where he worked for 48 years. Baillie was a keen interpreter of nature and wrote a bird column for the Toronto Telegram that ran for 29 years. He was also a mentor to many a budding naturalist, biologist and nature artist. (Here's a link to a short biography on James L. Baillie

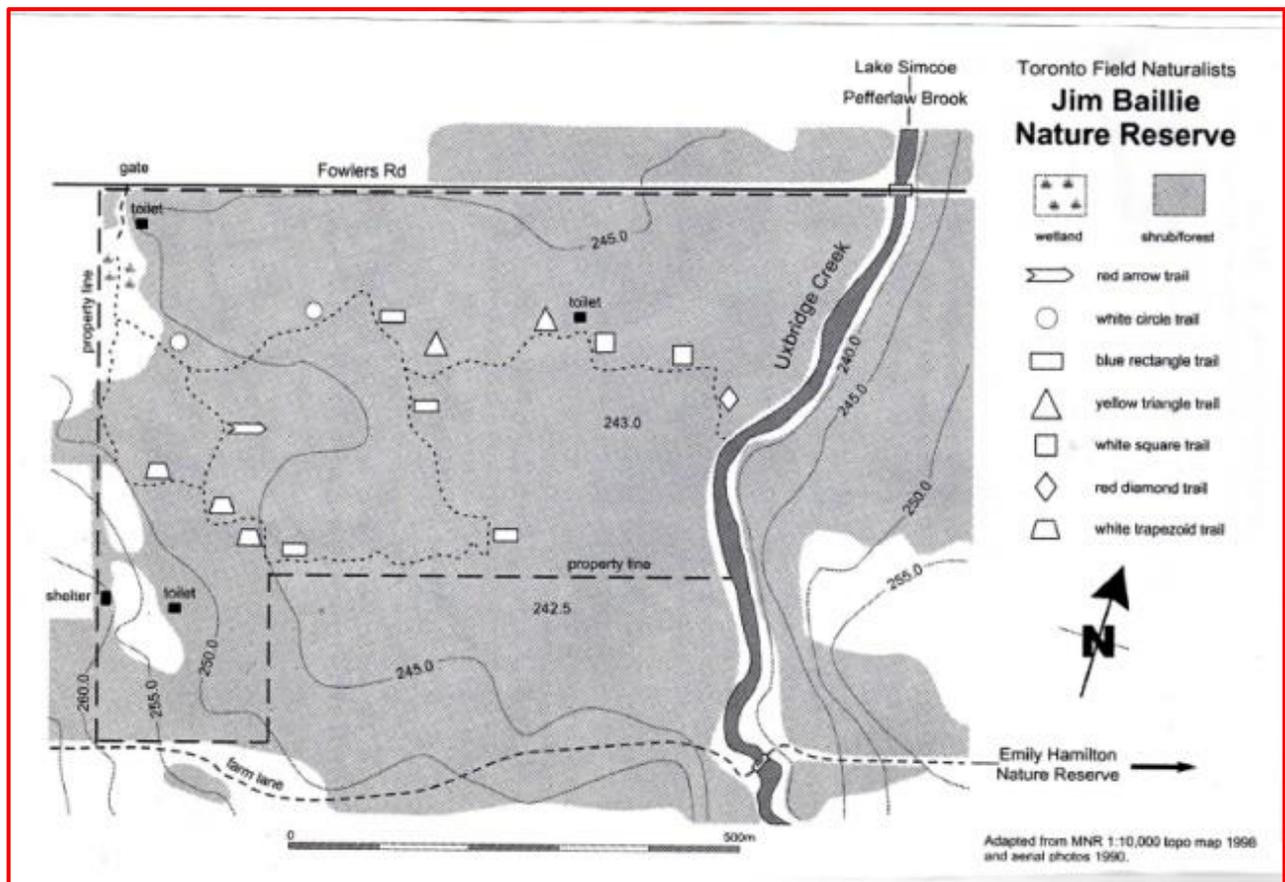
http://www.birdscanada.org/download/JLB_MFBarnettOnBaillie.pdf)

The club purchased the 14 hectare/35 acre reserve in 2 pieces in 1970 and 1973 and, after a lane and parking lot were created and some trees planted, the forest has been

left wild ever since. It is a mainly lowland swamp and moist forest. It has a definite



northern Ontario feel to it. A series of boardwalk sections have been built, added to, and rebuilt over the years. Some are in various states of decay due to the wet swampy conditions. NDN members have



begun to help the TFN members manage and maintain these trails, and we hope this collaboration will grow in coming years. A picnic shelter and rustic outhouses are also available.

The trails wind through the wet forest of White Cedar, Balsam Fir, White Birch and poplar, with White Spruce and Tamarack mixed in. Some trees are quite substantial in size. There are a series of creek tributaries that wind through the forest, sometimes disappearing beneath the mucky soil and then reappearing nearby to continue on to Uxbridge Brook. The brook itself is wide and clear, fed by springs from the reserve and empties into Pefferlaw Brook just north of the reserve, on its way towards Lake Simcoe.

North Durham Nature Club members have led a couple of hikes through the reserve, and plan to do more.

So watch for more trip notices. In the meantime you can drop by for a visit, but you may need to climb the gate to get to the trails. It is a great place to search for mushrooms and other fungi at this time of year. And it has abundant bird life during breeding season and migration. If you enjoy getting “soakers”, there is ample opportunity at this reserve. Otherwise you may choose to bring rubber boots.

To get to the reserve take County Rd 1 north of Leaskdale (south of Udora) to Fowlers Road – head east where you will see the gate to the reserve on the south side of the road. The reserve stretches east to Uxbridge Brook.

Nature Nut

Lacy Arachnid Snare Construction (aka cobwebs)

photos and text by Nancy Melcher

We’ve all experienced it. One minute you’re walking along a trail enjoying the beauty surrounding us, then <smush>, you’ve got spider web smeared all across your face. For some it’s just a matter of gently wiping away the gossamer threads, but others are thrown into an “arachno-leptic fit” with full-body action, jumping and thrashing about wildly with flailing arms, clawing at the offending filaments to a long drawn out scream.

Spiders (arachnids for you scientific types) eat insects. A few are hunters, actively pursuing their prey with leaps and bounds.



Most are sneakier, building some sort of trap instead. They don’t expend a lot of energy chasing prey - it comes to them

instead. However, there's a lot of work that goes into building a web.

First the spider sends out a long filament into the breeze. When the spider feels it has stuck onto something, it tightens that thread and attaches it at the starting point. The spider walks across this bridge thread, releasing a second looser thread that loops below the first. From the centre of the loop, the spider lowers itself to another anchor point to make a Y. Reinforcing threads are added to enclose the Y in an inverted triangle.

Now the real work begins. The spider lays out more threads from the centre of the Y to the edges of the web. They look like spokes in a triangular bicycle wheel. To this point, the spider has only spun threads that are not sticky. Starting at the outer edge and working inwards, the spider lays a spiral of more non-stick threads to the



centre of the web.

The final step is to spin sticky threads following the same spiral path from the outer edge around and around to the centre. The spider eats the first spiral as it lays out the second one. The non-sticky spoke threads allow the spider to move around the web, and the sticky spiral threads snare passing bugs. Once that happens, the spider rushes to the trapped insect, bites it to inject venom, and then it wraps the bug in silk to keep it from tearing up the web. The venom turns the insect's insides into liquid, which the spider then sucks out. Yummy!

It's not much consolation to know that at any time you're not likely more than 3 meters from a spider web. Taking a walk along a trail one misty fall morning will help to reveal these wonders to the eye. Since webs are nearly invisible when they're dry, it's very difficult to avoid the occasional web stretching across the trail. The inevitable consequences of these chance encounters are annoying at best, and hilariously funny to watch for those who are not put off by such things. Happy trails!!



Club Outings & Events

The Moose: A Year in the Life of a Twig Eater

By Cara Gregory and Derek Connelly

130 people from across North Durham and the surrounding area all gathered at the Roxy Theatres in Uxbridge on the afternoon of September 20th for a sold-out premier showing of this film by award winning nature filmmaker Susan Fleming. The film followed a mother moose and her calf for a year in Jasper National Park, focusing on their trials and triumphs. It also included spectacular footage of a number of other wildlife indigenous to that area. Those involved in the making of the film were available for questions from the audience following the film and gave several fascinating insights into its production.



\$1300 was raised from this event, in support of North Durham Nature. A portion of these funds were used to send two students from North Durham to the

Ontario Nature Eco-Youth Summit. A special thanks goes out to: Susan Fleming and her film crew for the film, for Moose photos for advertising and for allowing us the opportunity to raise funds for NDN; the Roxy Theatres for hosting the evening, to Cathy Christoff for providing the venue, the correct projector, and for creating the poster, and to *Presents, Presents, Presents* (Uxbridge) and *Eco-Port* (Port Perry) for helping to get the word out and selling the tickets. Catch the film's TV premier October 15th at 8:00 p.m. on *The Nature of Things*.

Nature in Art

By Cara Gregory and Derek Connelly

This year's gathering of Nature Artists displaying their work was enjoyed and attended by approximately fifty North Durham residents. There were a number of displays to view, while listening to the beautifully played music of the *North Durham Strings*. North Durham Nature (NDN) is fortunate to have several artists to celebrate who depict nature in a variety of forms. Special non-NDN guests featured at this event included Annabelle Murray (Painter and Poet), Kim Lowes (Wildlife Photographer), Hanneke Koonstra (Fine Art), Daniella Boerhof (Metally Twisted Art), members of the *Artists of Uxbridge* among many others, including NDN artists displaying their hand made bird houses, photos, and jewellery. Thanks to all of the artists who helped to make this night possible.

NDN - Beaver River walk

By Carol Apperson

On a sunny morning, members joined Mark Stabb for a walk on the Beaver River Trail. The weather was perfect, the leadership superb and the company great. Amongst the 32 species seen, we found a pair of Marsh Harriers hunting over the marsh (where else would you expect them?). Great-crested Flycatcher, Belted Kingfisher, Willow Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo and Green Heron were also seen.



Perhaps the highlight of the walk, adding to the American Bittern sighting we had already experienced, was a pair of Least Bitterns that flushed at the bridge, giving us a rare opportunity to see these elusive birds.

Invasive Species Walk

Uxbridge Countryside Preserve

By Cara Gregory and Derek Connelly

Despite a rainy night and threats of thunderstorm activity, ten people joined Cara Gregory and Derek Connelly for a walk through the Preserve. We started with a few invasive plants we had extracted from the garden to get our observation skills warmed up and show people how to use the Invasive plant guide. We identified Gout Weed, Periwinkle and Garlic

Mustard, which many have growing in Uxbridge gardens. Returning the plants to a sealed garbage bag in our car, we then ventured into the Preserve to see what other Invasives were growing. We made a number of stops identifying native, alien and invasive plants with Cara giving us a definition of each term. Cara had a number of identification cards for the Invasives including the insect pests like the Emerald Ash Borer, the Beech Scale insect and fungi attacking our trees.

Most were able to identify the Dog Strangling Vine, Buckthorn, Norway Maple and Scots Pine we found in the Preserve. A number of plants were keyed out using photographs in the Audubon guide. Paul had a plant book, with a key based on structure, which was also helpful. As noon approached so did the black thunderclouds but thankfully we all returned without getting wet.



As a highlight, a small number of monarchs were observed on the many common milkweeds and evidence of a caterpillar was found on one milkweed plant.

Many thanks to Barb, Cathy, Coral, Donna, Ken, Lynne, Paul, Pippa, Rebecca and Serenity for joining us and sharing their knowledge.

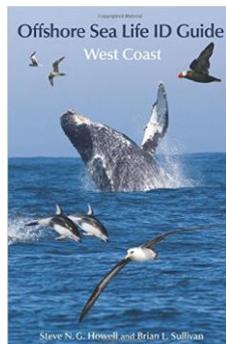
Quiz: Who am I?



Book Notes from Around the World

Offshore Sea Life ID Guide – West Coast
by Steve N.G. Howell and Brian L.
Sullivan, Princeton University Press, 2015.
56 pages. \$14.95 USD.

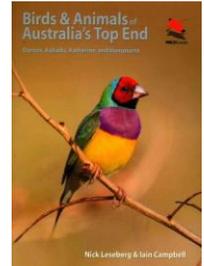
This is a unique pocket sized book that will introduce you to most of the birds you might encounter along the west coast of North America. Three hundred photos show comparative field marks of species, with side by side plates to help solve the confusion of these marine critters. Not just about birds, sea mammals, some fish and reptiles are included. I had the good fortune to travel with Brian Sullivan to the Antarctic a few years ago and was impressed with his skill at birding and his photographic expertise. His stamina was unsurpassed - I don't think he ever slept or



ate on the entire trip – he certainly is driven, and it shows in this excellent book.

Birds & Animals of Australia's Top End
by Nick Leseburg & Iain Campbell,
Princeton University Press, 2015. 273
pages. \$27.95 USD.

Part of the Wild Guide series, this is another fine example of the high quality of Princeton University Press books. Packed with information about the birds, mammals and reptiles of this vast region in northern Australia, this book will be an indispensable part of any traveler's needs. I wish I had a copy when I travelled there many years ago. Bird books about Oz's avifauna, but mammal and reptile books are much harder to find. Pack this one in your bag on your next journey to Oz!

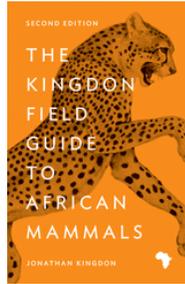


Britain's Butterflies by
David Newland, Robert Still,
Andy Swash and David
Tomlinson. Princeton
University Press, 2015. 240
pages. \$25.95 USD

Britain is not known for huge numbers of butterflies and in fact hosts only 75 species. But if you are an itinerant traveler like me and want to know as much about the countries you visit as I do, this is a must have book. Lavishly illustrated with hundreds of gorgeous photographs, you will find yourself thumbing through the pages even if you're not going to the UK. Notes on behaviour, similar species, life history, range maps and detailed notes on where and when to look round out the advantages of this great book.



The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals by Jonathan Kingdon, Princeton University Press, 2015. 640 pages. \$49.50 USD



I have only had the opportunity to travel to Africa once, but the memories of that 5 week adventure will last the rest of my life. In a word – spectacular. Any of you who have journeyed there will understand. Most of the books on African mammals are outdated and don't properly reflect the status or science surrounding these mammals. Kingdon's book, now in its 2nd edition, will update you and in an admirable fashion. Every species from all over Africa is covered. Excellent paintings accompany each species account. Range maps, food, behaviour notes, identification features and the conservation status are provided for over 100 species. Don't miss getting this book for your library, whether you've been to Africa and want to relive the adventure or you're planning on going. It's the best African mammal book I've ever encountered.

For more information about NDN

Visit our website at:

www.northdurhamnature.com

Note: All photos and text in this newsletter by Geoff Carpentier unless otherwise stated

Answer to Quiz:



I nest in trees in northern Canada and love to come to southern Ontario for the winter! I can be found in the thousands on the Niagara River in November and December. In the fall, I feed on insects at the Nonquon lagoons – often in the hundreds. I am a swift and accomplished flyer that can outrun many predators, but I am also graceful as I swoop and dip over the water in search of prey.

I am a Bonaparte's Gull

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