



*Cultivating an appreciation of nature  
through learning and action*

# THE HERON

**SPRING 2018**

Newsletter of the  
York Simcoe Nature Club

*Proud member of*



*Osprey at Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve  
Photo by David Eaton*

## **President's Message**

*By Jeanne Bénéteau*

Another year has come and gone for the club. It was most certainly a busy one! We have had more activities than previous years it seems, and our speakers were excellent once again.

The most significant change this past year was the **name change**. The change comes with mixed emotions for me. I feel the new name is an excellent choice and it clearly defines us. It has a friendly and welcoming ring to it, but I have to say that I loved the old name as well. It will take me a while before I get used to saying "York Simcoe Nature Club" without having to think about it. In the end, we will always be *naturalists*, and we are the same wonderful club we've always been.

The name change has precipitated many other changes, such as new contact addresses. Our new e-mail is [yorksimcoenatureclub@gmail.com](mailto:yorksimcoenatureclub@gmail.com). The web address is now [www.ysnatureclub.com](http://www.ysnatureclub.com), and our new Facebook address is [Facebook.com/yorksimcoenatureclub](https://www.facebook.com/yorksimcoenatureclub).

As the general meetings break for the summer, the club business continues throughout the warm months with the stewardship duties. Being one of the volunteers,

I will be partaking in the trails inspection along with the other volunteers. It is a wonderful excuse to go to the beautiful reserve while completing an important service for Mother Nature. Having said that, I hope you all have an opportunity to visit many nature reserves this summer. (I have taken up water-colour, and have gone to the Cawthra Mulock Reserve to practise my new fledgling hobby while sitting with the bugs.)

Over the summer, I am inviting you to consider joining the **executive team**. We have three open positions that need to be filled: membership secretary, recording secretary, and treasurer. Linda Gilkes has agreed to remain as interim treasurer for the time being until someone steps up for the position. This position cannot be left unattended.

When various activities pause for the summer, I'm reminded of my days as a teacher, breaking for the summer vacations. While I'm welcoming a more relaxed pace, I'm also eager to start new adventures in September. I'm especially looking forward to the **new meeting space**, the Queensville Holland Landing United Church at 20453 Leslie Street in Queensville. It's like anticipating having a new classroom! It's exciting. I believe it will be most accommodating for us. There is ample parking and great amenities. We already have two speakers lined up to be the first ones to try the new hall.

I hope to see you in the fall ready for a new adventure with the York Simcoe Nature Club. Happy summer.

### **Next Meetings**

Tues. June 12 @ River Drive Park Community Centre  
"The Procyon Wildlife Centre"

Tues. Sept. 11 @ Queensville Holland Landing United Church  
"Agricultural Waste Stewardship and  
Farm Plastic Management"

Tues. Oct. 9 @ Queensville Holland Landing United Church  
"The Soil Food Web & What It Means to You"

All meetings start at 7:30 p.m.

## Club News

### YSN Membership

By Sheila Gick

The Club ended the 2017/18 year on May 31, 2018 with 46 memberships, and many have already renewed for the 2018/19 year which began June 1. Three are life memberships, 24 are single and 18 are family. We had 6 first-time memberships. Throughout the year we welcomed 20 guests, of whom 3 became members. Our goal for the past several years has been 50 memberships and we are on our way to reaching it, and hopefully surpassing it.

A change of name and venue was a major undertaking this spring and a good one, so a large thank-you to all the members who contributed ideas and opinions to make this a "whole club" project.

Members also accepted the need to raise fees after years of holding the line. We will now be in a better position financially for the future. Thanks again for your support and forward thinking.



Members Wine and Cheese Party, Feb. 14

Photo by Jeanne Bénéteau

The 2018 Wine and Cheese Party, for members only, was held once again at Doug Osborne's home in Bradford, on Saturday afternoon, Feb. 10. Eighteen members attended the afternoon gathering and were home before darkness settled. This time-slot pleased those of us who do not enjoy night driving, and especially pleased those with Valentine's parties to attend later that evening. A big thanks to Doug Osborne and his helper Cathryn Rees for their hospitality and all the members who contributed delicious treats to accompany the wine and cheese. This is an annual event not-to-be-missed.

Doug contributed the voluntary financial donations received at the Wine and Cheese party to the club. This totaled \$130.00 and was put toward sponsoring this

year's candidate to the Ontario Nature Youth Summit to be held in September 2018. On that note, as we had no internal candidates proposed by the members, the executive have sent a letter to appropriate staff of the six EcoCertified high schools in our region, seeking an interested candidate from amongst their students. In the event that no student applies from those schools, Ontario Nature will select a student from their list of applicants for us to sponsor. By whatever means we find this year's enthusiastic teen candidate, we will be sponsoring a student for the third year running and look forward to their presentation to the club at one of our general meetings following the Summit.

Thanks to all you generous but anonymous members who surreptitiously dropped money into the donation box for this year's recipient of our support, the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (formerly the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre). Also to those speakers who donated their speaker fee to the cause, imagine! Together you contributed a total of \$442.85 to the Centre, which we will forward to them.

Although I will not be at the membership desk in September, I do look forward to seeing everyone in the fall as we start the 19th year of the Club! Enjoy your summer and be as kind to Mother Nature as she is to you.

### Nature Walks

By Doug Jagger



Photo by Doug Jagger

The York Simcoe Nature Club continued its program of regular nature walks through the late winter and early spring this year despite weather issues. The heavy rain event immediately before the scheduled walk for February deterred anyone from showing up. Then the April walk at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area was cancelled due to the ice storm. However, the weather cooperated for the other walks.

On Mar. 3 we convened our 20th walk in this current series at the Holland Landing Prairie Reserve. There were eight people in attendance. Although the trail was icy in sections requiring some off-trail walking, we were rewarded by views of birds such as the **Common Raven** and **Cedar Waxing**. There was a good discussion of the differences between the Common Raven and American Crow. We tried the edible berries of the Staghorn Sumac and only looked at the berries of the Poison Ivy. Among many other observations we learned about the Wolf Tree, so called because it was once all by itself -- a lone wolf.

Our next walk, which 12 people attended, was on Mar. 17 at Whitchurch Conservation Area. No, wearing green was not mandatory! During the walk, we saw birds such as the **Hairy Woodpecker**, **Pine Siskin** and **White-breasted Nuthatch**, some of which were high in the treetops. As there was a logging operation in part of the area through which we walked, there was an interesting discussion on forestry.

The most recent walk was on May 16 at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area. Four people came out to enjoy the abundance of nature on this ideal spring morning. Flowers such as Trillium, May Apple, Bloodroot and Marsh Marigold were in bloom along various sections. There was an opportunity to discuss types of trees and shrubs, to marvel at various mushroom species, to appreciate the green mosses and horsetail and to relish the beautiful spring birds both visually and vocally. The highlights for most on the walk were the **Blackburnian Warbler** with its resplendent orangey-red breast almost iridescent in the sun, and the **Scarlet Tanager** low to the ground in full sun.

We will continue our regular walks, always hoping for good weather. Arrangements will be e-mailed normally several weeks in advance for your planning purposes. Please consider joining us.

## What Is the Relationship between Nature Clubs and Ontario Nature?

By Sylvia Bowman

People often ask what Ontario Nature does for us, the member clubs. The Nature Network consists of 154 clubs and organizations across the province. There are two part-time Regional Coordinators on staff at Ontario Nature dedicated to running the Nature Network. They are the contacts for the clubs with Ontario Nature and are there to answer questions and help however they can. They also facilitate liability insurance at a reasonable cost for clubs. No club can operate without insurance.

Apart from insurance, another benefit of being a member of the Nature Network is the chance to attend the twice-yearly regional meetings, where clubs can get together and learn from each other. The coordinators and

the regional director from the board help to organize and run the regional meetings. They update the clubs on Ontario Nature's initiatives and programs, and in turn the clubs update the group on their local initiatives and programs. There are also guest speakers on various issues and there is usually a hike of the local area. Remember, any club member can come to a regional meeting and we urge you to participate. Many of the member groups do amazing things.

The Ontario Nature board includes regional directors for seven regions. We are part of the Huronia Region. Each region elects a member to the board for a two-year term. I had the honour of being on the board for three two-year terms. The current director for Huronia Region is Dorothy McKeown from Nature Barrie.

Collectively the Nature Network gives Ontario Nature a strong voice by representing a large number of people when discussing policy matters that affect the environment with the government.

Ontario Nature also works with local clubs and gives them support and advice with their local issues. It can send out action alerts and write letters of support for local issues. One example of this is the North Gwillimbury Forest issue in Georgina.

What Ontario Nature cannot do however is give local clubs money. Ontario Nature is a not-for-profit registered charity that depends on donations from individual members of Ontario Nature and various grants from both government and non-government sources to run its programs. Grants are always attached to specific programs and the monies cannot be shifted. The only discretionary funds they have are the monies from individual members. These funds are mostly needed for administrative costs, one of which is running the Nature Network. That is why buying a membership in Ontario Nature as well as buying a membership in your local club is so important.



Barbara MacKenzie-Wynia, Regional Coordinator, Nature Network, with Jeanne in River Drive Park Community Centre when YSN hosted the Huronia regional meeting in April 2017. Photo by Sheila Gick.

## Conservation News

*By Sylvia Bowman*

### Ontario Greenbelt Alliance

Judy and I attended the meeting of this group (of which Ontario Nature is a member) in Guelph on Feb. 1. They have a website called [www.protectourwaters.ca](http://www.protectourwaters.ca) where you can look up ongoing updates on Greenbelt issues. There were presentations on the importance of continuing to pressure the government to expand the Greenbelt into Simcoe County and to incorporate the "Bluebelt" area to permanently protect water sources.

There were policy updates on other issues such as the Cornerstone Standards Council and its efforts to implement its certification program for gravel pits. The Ontario Soil Regulation Task Force (OSRTF) gave an update on soil dumping, and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) proposed new regulations on fill.

There was a presentation about the change of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) to the Local Planning Applications Tribunal (LPAT) and the pros and cons of the new regime.

### Ontario Nature

#### Bluebelt Proposal

In January YSN signed onto the Ontario Nature letter urging the Ontario government to incorporate the "Bluebelt" area into the proposed Greenbelt expansion to safeguard the region's moraines, headwaters, river valleys and wetlands. The proposed Bluebelt study area includes ground and surface water features in Simcoe, Dufferin, Brant and Wellington Counties and Waterloo Region. The building blocks of the proposed study area are moraines, cold water streams and wetlands.

#### Protected Places Campaign

In February the Canadian government announced a budget that invests \$1.3 billion over five years to support biodiversity and protect species at risk as part of their effort to reach 17% protected areas across Canada. The budget includes \$500 million, which will be matched to create a new \$1 billion Nature Fund to secure private land, support species protection, and help build Indigenous capacity to conserve land and species.

Ontario Nature continues to urge the Ontario government to do its part through their Protected Places campaign.

### Lake Simcoe Stewardship Networking Group

On May 2 I attended the meeting of this group in Bradford. Last fall the Network did a survey of organizations around the lake and their relationships and

interactions with each other. The meeting focused on the results of the survey and how these could be leveraged and better utilized in working to improve water quality in the Lake Simcoe watershed. It was very interesting to see the difference in connections between agricultural groups vis-a-vis environmental organizations.

There was also discussion on funding sources now that the Lake Simcoe Cleanup Fund is no more. There is some federal money available, see above.

### Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA)

#### Salt Levels in Lake Simcoe

LSRCA is concerned that winter salt concentrations are increasing steadily in the waters of Lake Simcoe and the rivers and streams that feed into the lake.

Canadian Water Quality Guidelines define two levels at which chloride affects aquatic life. The level for long-term exposure is a maximum of 120 milligrams per litre, and the level for short-term exposure is 640 milligrams per litre. While the lake is still far from these numbers, our streams and rivers are seeing concentrations that exceed the long-term guidelines in urban areas such as Newmarket, Aurora and Barrie.

Approximately 100,000 tonnes of road salt is applied to paved surfaces in the Lake Simcoe watershed each year. This equals around 500 pounds of salt per person every year. We know we can reduce the amount of salt we apply and still maintain public safety. In fact, studies suggest we could reduce our salt use by 70%. For more information on how to reduce salt use, see the LSRCA website at [www.lsrca.on.ca](http://www.lsrca.on.ca).

### Ontario Tree Seed Facility

Sadly, the government is going ahead with its plans to close this facility in September. According to its website, "The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry will be focusing on developing a Native Genetic Seed Archive to support Ontario's science needs rather than providing commercial services."

### Friends of Sauble Beach

Beach raking is an ongoing issue at Sauble Beach. Last year, Mayor Janice Jackson of the Town of South Bruce Peninsula bulldozed and cultivated most of it, disregarding the advice of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), many naturalists and the scientists hired by Friends of Sauble Beach (FSB) to create a beach management plan for the town. She also violated the Endangered Species Act by destroying

Piping Plover habitat. She has openly defied the MNRF by removing the foredunes and all of the sand fencing that was designed to trap and save blowing sand over the last 18 years. And in 2015, council modified the Dynamic Beach By-law by removing protection for the strand line that prevented raking within 10 metres of the water's edge. The mayor justified this in the name of attracting tourists. These actions resulted in the town losing its "Blue Flag" beach status, an international symbol of a clean natural beach. FSB and Ecojustice were on the verge of asking the courts for an injunction against the town's destruction, when the MNRF acted. It issued a stop work order and brought several charges against the town.

### North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance

The LSRC did issue a section 28 permit allowing the Maple Lake Estates (MLE) development to proceed on the Paradise Beach-Island Grove provincially significant wetland. One way that still remained to stop it was for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Bill Mauro, to issue a Zoning Order to prohibit development on the MLE wetland. However in early April the minister told TVO that he is NOT contemplating such an order. So the fight continues as an election issue.

### Neonics Lawsuit

In April Ecojustice learned that their lawsuit on behalf of Ontario Nature and other environmental groups will now proceed to a full hearing on its merits, and pollinators will finally get their day in court. Despite the growing body of science against these harmful pesticides, the federal government Pest Management Regulatory Agency continues to allow these pesticides to be registered for use and sale in Canada. The lawsuit argues that it is unlawful to approve pesticides for which there is not enough information to understand the risks they pose to the environment.

#### Your Executive for 2018-2020

##### Elected Positions

**Jeanne Bénéteau**, President  
**Judy Ritchie**, Vice President  
**Doug Jagger**, Past President  
**Linda Gilkes**, Treasurer  
**VACANT** - Recording Secretary  
**VACANT** - Membership Secretary

##### Appointed Volunteer Positions

**Rick Berry**, Stewardship Coordinator  
**Sylvia Bowman**, Conservation Director and Speakers  
**Linda Gilkes**, Archives  
**Jay Gutteridge**, Internet Director  
**Judy Ritchie**, Stewardship Liaison to Ontario Nature  
**Melissa Rosato**, Advertising Director  
**Flo Sparling**, Refreshments  
**Janet Thompson**, Newsletter Editor

## Ontario Nature Annual Gathering

*Story and photos by Janet Thompson*

I really enjoy going to the Ontario Nature Annual Gathering, held at a different location every year on the first weekend of June. It is a weekend event that features morning and afternoon workshops on Saturday, a Saturday night banquet with guest speaker, and a day-long field trip on Sunday. You have a choice of workshops and field trips, and you can attend all or part of the event.

The AGM is held on Saturday afternoon after the workshops, and the parts of the meeting I enjoy are the President's message, where she summarizes the activity of Ontario Nature over the past year, and the awards presentations, which honour individuals and groups for their contributions to nature. I find their stories inspiring.

This year the conference was held at Isaiah Tubbs Resort in Prince Edward County. I attended workshops on lichen and on alvars, and a two-part field trip within the County, as shown below. See the Ontario Nature website for more photos (at the bottom of the page):

<https://ontarionature.org/events/annual-gathering/>



*Beaver Meadows Wildlife Management Area*



*Hoary Puccoon plant in Sandbanks Provincial Park*

## Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve

### Tree Swallow Nesting Box Project

By Doug Jagger



Photo by David Eaton

The York Simcoe Nature Club was given permission by Ontario Nature to replace any existing nesting boxes with new boxes at Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve. There were 7 existing boxes, of which 5 were in the area of the pond/wetland and 2 were on the fence line near the wildflower garden. The boxes were built to specifications for a Tree Swallow, including area of cavity, depth of cavity and opening. New steel fence posts were purchased to mount the boxes as the original posts were not functional.

On Apr. 10, Bob Hansen, Dave Eaton and I installed the new houses to replace the 5 which we removed and 1 new one near the wildflower garden. Rick Berry measured the location of each of the now 8 Tree Swallow nesting boxes with GPS. The boxes are numbered. The information was forwarded to Ontario Nature.

If you are at the Nature Reserve, please check for activity at the boxes, note the date and box number, and forward to the Club e-mail account (the new one at [yorksimoenatureclub@gmail.com](mailto:yorksimoenatureclub@gmail.com)). Your assistance is appreciated. (*Editor's note: See follow-up on p. 8.*)



Tree Swallows, Apr. 27  
Photo by David Eaton

### Stewardship Report

By Judy Ritchie, Stewardship Liaison to Ontario Nature and Rick Berry, Stewardship Coordinator

The Executive Team met with Ontario Nature in January to discuss the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve Stewardship Agreement and Management Plan. We have submitted and will follow a plan that is in the best interests of club members to be successful in our role as stewards.

The Stewardship Team has been very active over the past several months. Visits to the Reserve to walk the trails and watch for non-permitted uses, full inspections of the Reserve and a Periwinkle Pull have all helped to preserve the ecological integrity of the Reserve. Reports on the visits are being filed with Ontario Nature, including recommended actions needed. Over 70 hours of volunteer time have been contributed over the April-May period.



Tree blown down, May 9  
Photo by Rick Berry

Ontario Nature has installed most of the new signage throughout the Reserve, but still no word on when the new kiosk will have information or when the new parking lot will be installed.

Ontario Nature has had an arborist come and assess the park for hazardous trees. There is a plan in place to remove the 180 Ash trees due to the Emerald Ash Borer. The work began in May and continues into June. Signage has been posted if the Reserve needs to be closed for the work party. We will update everyone as information is fed back to us.

Being a part of the Stewardship Team is a great way to make the Reserve a better place to be. Use this wonderful reason to get out and immerse yourself in nature. Please contact us for more information at [yorksimoenatureclub@gmail.com](mailto:yorksimoenatureclub@gmail.com).

**Field Notes**

**Spring Birding at Cawthra Mulock**

*Photos by David Eaton*



*Eastern Bluebird, Apr. 27*



*Solitary Sandpiper, May 9*



*Mallards, May 9*



*Northern Flicker, Apr. 27*



*Male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, May 20*



*Eastern Towhee, May 15*



*Female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, May 20*

**Tree Swallow Nesting Box Project a Success!**

*Photos by David Eaton*

**Lichens at Isaiah Tubbs Resort, West Lake**

*Photos by Janet Thompson*



*Exploring the box, Apr. 27*

*Note the construction details of the box: the ventilation holes under the eaves, and the handle for the floor, which is hinged for easy cleaning.*



*Making a nest, May 9*

