



*Black-crowned Night Heron
Photo by David Eaton*

THE HERON

SPRING 2019

Newsletter of the
York Simcoe Nature Club



*Cultivating an appreciation of nature
through learning and action*

President's Message

By Jeanne Bénéteau

Another season for the York Simcoe Nature Club has passed and we now break for the summer. We have had many accomplishments this past year. I would like to thank all members who have helped making this another successful year. I'm always inspired by meeting our members and chatting with those who can make it to the general meetings and outings. We all share a common and worthwhile interest and the club helps to connect us all. I am happy to be able to continue being president for one more year.

We are now in good standing with the executive team for this year. All positions have been filled except the vice-president position. I'm confident someone will step up for this position. You are welcome to join the team anytime.

The list of presenters for this upcoming year already looks great. Sylvia has been busy with the bookings and we are well on our way! They cover a variety of topics. If you know of a potential speaker, please let us know as there are still spots available.

I would also like to remind you that membership fees are now due for the 2019-2020 year.

I wish you a happy and safe summer full of opportunities to be out into nature!



*Indigo Bunting, Scanlon Creek Conservation Area
Photo by David Eaton*

Next Meetings

- Tues. June 11**--- Ian McLaurin, "The Threat of Soil Dumps"
- Tues. Sept. 10** --- Kate Whibbs, "Fresh Water Mussels"
- Tues. Oct. 8** --- Sue Sherman, "The Wildlife of Laikipia, Kenya"
- Tues. Nov. 12** --- Tehmeena Chowdry, "Exposure of Migratory Birds to Neonicotinoids in Natural and Agricultural Nest Sites"
- Tues. Dec. 10** --- Doug Jagger, "Nature of the South American Cone"

Meetings are held at Queensville Holland Landing United Church and start at 7:30 p.m.

Club News

YSN Membership Report

By Sheila Gick, past membership secretary

Elections

First of all, great news! A warm welcome and many thanks to the new membership secretary for 2019/20, acclaimed at the Annual General Meeting in May. Janet Thompson has been a member of the club since 2009 and has been the editor of this Heron newsletter from that time. Now she has stepped forward to also fulfill this new role. As this membership secretary role requires desk attendance at each monthly general meeting to greet members, accept memberships, collect funds, etc. it can be difficult to always be there. Therefore, Janet would appreciate any help you can give her at any meeting and especially at times when she cannot be there. Life happens ...

Sylvia Bowman was also acclaimed at the AGM as the Recording Secretary for 2019/20. Thank you, Sylvia, for stepping up yet again.

And thank you to the executive with whom I worked for the past four years --- a dedicated, warm and interesting group of people.

Membership

The Club ended the 2018/19 year on May 31, 2019 with a total of 45 memberships, of which 3 are life memberships, 19 are single and 23 are family. We have renewal in the club with 5 first-time memberships. Throughout the year we had 15 guests at our monthly general meetings.

It's time to renew! You can renew at the membership desk at the general meeting on June 11 or Sept. 10, or by mail to our mailbox (see address at the bottom of the page). The fee is \$40 for a single and \$45 for a family membership. We look forward to welcoming both seasoned and "green" members this spring and next fall.

Social Activities

On Mar. 9, Doug and Judy Jagger graciously hosted the 6th annual Wine and Cheese party at their home in Newmarket. It was a full house and a wonderful chance to mingle outside the usual meeting and nature walk settings. The food was plentiful and delicious. Thank you both for the time and effort you put into this social event and thanks to those other members who contributed as well.

Thanks again to Doug Jagger for leading the informative monthly walks, despite an injury while off on a nature vacation. We wish you a full recovery!

Fundraising

The Club chose sponsoring a student for the 2019 Ontario Nature Youth Summit on Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership as our main fundraising project for this past year. This will be our fourth year sending a student. Thank you to members and generous speakers for donating and helping us reach this year's cost of \$375.00 for the weekend. The Summit will be held the weekend of Sept. 20-22, 2019. Once again, the executive sent a letter to the Guidance Department of the eight Eco-Certified high schools in our region, seeking an interested candidate from amongst their students. We found an enthusiastic candidate, Paryse Reed, from Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Newmarket. Congratulations, Paryse, and we hope you will learn a lot and have a good time at the Summit. We look forward to your presentation to the Club at one of our fall general meetings.

We raffled off two or three bird paintings at each general meeting and the proceeds went a long way to helping pay for the hall rental. It is a much more convenient space due, in part, to the onsite storage for our equipment, supplies and display boards. No more sore backs, knees and hips, hooray! Hopefully, it is a convenient venue to get to (even on a bus route) for members and speakers. And the space itself is bright, roomy and efficient.

Have a busy-as -you-want summer, enjoy nature and come back renewed in September.

Your Executive for 2019-2020	
<u>Elected Positions</u>	
President.....	Jeanne Bénéteau
Vice President.....	Vacant
Treasurer.....	Linda Gilkes
	(and archives)
Membership Secretary.....	Janet Thompson
	(and newsletter editor)
Recording Secretary.....	Sylvia Bowman
	(and conservation, speakers, and Ontario Nature liaison)
Past President.....	Doug Jagger
<u>Appointed Volunteer Positions</u>	
Internet Director.....	Jay Gutteridge
Advertising Director.....	Melissa Rosato
Executive at Large.....	Rick Berry
Refreshments.....	Flo Sparling

Monthly Nature Walks

By Doug Jagger



*Eastern Phoebe, Scanlon Creek Conservation Area
Photo by David Eaton*

The Club is continuing its monthly nature walk program. The walk in January this year was cancelled as I had torn my Achilles tendon and was on crutches. In February, Jeanne Bénéteau led a walk from their place along the frozen West Holland River. This was the second time the walk was along the river. Those that participated enjoyed this outing. In March, Rick Berry led the walk in the Hollidge Tract of the York Regional Forest. The trail led through mixed hardwood, a pine plantation and a wetter section with Eastern White Cedar.

By April, I was again mobile and was able to lead a walk along the Nokiidaa Trail on a section between Old Yonge Street and Second Concession Road. It was a cool but pleasant morning. There were still no wildflowers due to the later spring, and only Red-Winged Blackbirds as a herald of spring.

The May walk was in Scanlon Creek Conservation Area. Maybe it was the sun and warm temperature or maybe spring fever, but 12 people came for the walk, including 4 visitors. The tree buds were just bursting which created a lacey light green hue through the forest. Spring flowers such as May Apple, Trillium and Trout Lily carpeted parts of the forest floor. We saw many spring birds such as Indigo Bunting, Eastern Phoebe and Chipping Sparrow which were photographed by David Eaton of the club. Participants viewed 3 Spotted Sandpipers along the creek bank in the reconstructed pond area.

There will be a walk in June but not in July or August. The monthly walk program will recommence in September. Thanks to everyone who participates.

Warbler Quiz

Photos by David Eaton

Can you identify these warblers? Answers on p. 8. These photos were taken in Thickson Woods in Whitby in May.



No. 1



No. 2



No. 3



No. 4

Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve

Plans for the Reserve in 2019

By Rick Berry



Club and student volunteers, periwinkle pull, Apr. 28



Tarping experiment, periwinkle pull, Apr. 27

Ontario Nature

Ontario Nature is planning significant changes at the Reserve. Moving the eastside parking lot to the area near the gatehouse is a priority to resolve the safety and security issues and dumping problems. Concurrent with this will be the construction of an accessible trail starting from the new parking lot.

The existing trails require remediation work to address issues with erosion, water ponding, and sections that are too steep. An action plan is being developed that will see closure of some existing trail sections and re-routing of others.

YSN Stewardship Team

The Club's stewardship team has once again embarked on a full set of activities. This calendar year we have 17 members who will be doing 14 site visits, participating in two periwinkle pull events (spring and fall), and helping with trail maintenance. We are always looking for members who want to learn more about the Reserve and help preserve its habitat integrity.

Our periwinkle pull event in April cleared an additional 16 square metres and brought the total plant waste removed to 815 kg. Student volunteers from two area high schools came out to help. In addition to plant removal, we also tarped two areas as part of an experiment to see if this will be a viable option in some of the larger areas to be cleared. It will take two to three years to see how successful this will be.

Spring Birds at Cawthra Mulock

Photos by David Eaton



Eastern Bluebird, Apr. 18



Tree Swallows on bird box, Apr. 18

Conservation News

By Sylvia Bowman

The past few months have been very busy, to say the least, with all of the changes the provincial government is trying to introduce. There have also been many important issues both nationally and internationally that need attention.

Provincial News

Bill 108 and the Endangered Species Act

The proposed Bill 108 will impact 15 different provincial Acts: Cannabis Control Act, 2017; Conservation Authorities Act; Development Charges Act; Education Act; Endangered Species Act, 2007; Environmental Assessment Act; Environmental Protection Act; Labour Relations Act, 1995; Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act, 2017; Municipal Act, 2001; Occupational Health and Safety Act; Ontario Heritage Act; Ontario Water Resources Act; Planning Act; and Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. Many of the proposed changes are being made to supposedly cut red tape, according to the government.

In particular, the changes proposed to the Endangered Species Act in Schedule 5 of Bill 108 will essentially take an act that was a model for others and gut it.

Ontario Greenbelt Alliance: The OGA is endorsing a resolution made by the towns of Oakville and Aurora who are concerned about the impact of this bill.

Ontario Nature: Ontario Nature has been very active in fighting the proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Our club signed onto their submission done in conjunction with the David Suzuki Foundation and Ecojustice. Hopefully many of you also sent in your own submissions and signed the petition. The comment period for this bill ended on May 18, but you can still contact your MPP and let them know your concerns about this bill.

The top 10 concerns are:

1. "Pay to Slay" --- Allowing developers of harmful activities to pay into a fund in lieu of fulfilling requirements for on-the-ground reparations for damage done.
2. Rejecting Science --- Extending membership in the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO) to people other than scientific experts.
3. Limiting ESA Protections --- Applying protections only in specific geographies or under specific circumstances. This could exclude important habitats and species from protections.

4. Deserting Edge of Range Species --- Requiring COSSARO to base its assessments not on the status of the species in Ontario but on its status throughout its range, so a species at the northern limit of its range in Ontario may receive less or no protection depending on its status outside of Ontario.
5. Sweeping Authorizations for Harmful Activities --- Creating landscape agreements for proponents undertaking harmful activities in multiple locations.
6. Dodging Requirements --- Allowing activities approved under other laws to be carried out without any additional authorizations under the ESA, even if they harm or threaten an endangered species or its habitat.
7. Goodbye to Expert Input --- Removing the requirement for the Minister to consult an independent expert prior to creating regulations that would jeopardize the survival of a species in Ontario.
8. Veto of Automatic Protections --- Allowing the Minister to have greater discretion in protections, including suspending protections for up to three years without public consultation.
9. Interfering with the listing of Species at Risk --- Allowing the Minister to require COSSARO to reconsider its science-based listing decisions.
10. Delays, Delays, Delays --- Proposing multiple delays for the timelines for listing, planning and reporting on species at risk, undermining their possible recovery.

Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition has been meeting with MPPs in the watershed and is planning to make delegations to all the town councils about the importance of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (LSSP) and the upcoming review of the plan. The government has not yet indicated how the review will proceed.

Federal and International Issues

Neonics Court Case

The Federal Court decided to dismiss the neonicotinoid pesticide case on mootness grounds related to the timing of the case. It said that the regulatory changes made during the years fighting this case rendered it moot. This means that in the case heard in November 2018, the court didn't make a decision either way on whether the Pest Management Regulatory Agency's (PMRA) actions fundamentally undermine the precautionary nature of the Pest Control Products Act by registering possibly harmful products without understanding their impact on ecosystems.

Ecojustice's clients, the David Suzuki Foundation, Friends of the Earth Canada, Ontario Nature and the Wilderness Committee, brought this case in 2016 because the PMRA has long failed to live up to its legal responsibilities as a regulator. The lawsuit challenged a decades-long history of conditional registrations of Thiamethoxam neonicotinoid pesticides by the PMRA. The PMRA has repealed the conditional registrations regulation and conducted more research on pesticide impacts on pollinators.

Now however the Ecojustice team will soon be back in court to ensure the PMRA lives up to its responsibilities as a regulator. In this new case, they are challenging what the PMRA is calling a "phase-out" period for Thiamethoxam. In April 2019, the PMRA concluded that Thiamethoxam presented an unacceptable risk to bees and other pollinators. But at the same time, it also decided to delay restricting the use of this insecticide and allow it to be used for another two years. There's no reason --- according to the law, or common sense --- to wait. This two-year delay is arbitrary and unlawful. So they are going to court to force the PMRA to restrict Thiamethoxam right away, not in two years.

Bill C-69

Bill C-69, which replaces the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act with a new Impact Assessment Act and replaces the National Energy Board Act with a new Canadian Energy Regulator Act, passed the House of Commons some months ago and has been held up in the Senate. The Senate recently approved it with 240 amendments and it has now been sent back to the House. These amendments were primarily sought by the petroleum industry. Some of the amendments include:

- Allowing offshore oil and gas companies to bypass the federal review process for exploratory wells, if a regional assessment has been conducted.
- Adding more discretion to exempt potentially harmful activities from review
- Backsliding on the original intent of the bill to give less power to industry-captured regulators, by undoing changes that would have restricted their role on impact assessment review panels. The amendments would allow regulators, including offshore boards, to both chair the review panels and represent a majority on these panels.
- Restricting the ability of people to go to court when the assessments fail to follow the law.
- Removing language requiring the approvals process to consider Canada's climate commitments made under the Paris Accord.

Ecojustice says that most of the 240 amendments proposed would disrupt the integrity of Bill C-69 and derail what it was trying to achieve. This would be a clear overreach by the Senate, an unelected body, on a bill that months of consultation had shaped into a compromise among the interests of industry, First Nations, communities and the environment. This balanced bill is about to be sharply tilted towards industry, threatening Canada's best chance to put in place a fair law that works for industry while protecting nature, our health, and our climate.

Global Loss of Biodiversity and Species at Risk

Species are at risk not only in Ontario but also nationally and globally. On May 6, the UN's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) announced that close to one million species are nearing extinction globally. Nature's decline over the past 50 years is "unprecedented" in human history. Natural ecosystems have declined by 47%; 85% of our wetlands have been lost and more than 40% of amphibian species are threatened. The UN report suggests that only through "transformative change" can nature be recovered; that we need to remove the subsidies and incentives that are given to the energy, industrial agricultural, fishing and forestry sectors, and invest instead in protecting and restoring nature.

Canadian Species at Risk

On the same afternoon as the UN report was released, Canada's Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) announced its revised list of national species at risk. The number of threatened and endangered species in Canada has now grown to 1,063.

The federal Species at Risk Act is not working. Recovery strategies and action plans eventually get written, often after long delays, one species at a time, but stewardship action on the ground and on the water to conserve species at risk has simply been inadequate.

Nature Canada participated in the Species at Risk Advisory Committee meeting to make recommendations on how the government can better protect more species at risk in Canada. They are strongly advocating another approach --- by taking an ecosystems-based, multi-species approach, we can better protect more species at risk and keep common species common.

The continued growth of species at risk emphasizes the importance of actions such as Ontario Nature's Endangered Species Campaign in helping species at risk in Ontario.

Plastic Waste Update

Canada's embarrassing role in the world-wide plastic waste crisis has been much in the news lately. We are now taking back tons of contaminated plastic waste wrongly sent to the Philippines.

In Switzerland on May 10, more than 180 governments agreed to establish legally binding restrictions on trade in plastic waste. Starting next year, in wealthy countries and corporations under the amended Basel Convention, exporters will need consent from the governments of receiving nations before shipping the most contaminated, mixed, or unrecyclable plastic waste. This important change should help reduce international plastic dumping masquerading as "recycling", and add further pressure on countries to stop producing so much plastic in the first place. The single most important driver of global oil demand growth in the next 10 to 15 years will be petrochemicals --- which is what 99% of plastics are made from

Climate Change and the "Tragedy of the Commons"

Politicians and industry often claim that we don't have to do anything about greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions because Canada is such a small contributor to global GHG emissions at less than 1.5%. This leads to a problem known as the "tragedy of the commons". The term was first coined by ecologist Garrett Hardin in 1968. Hardin used the example of a common grazing area shared by many herders. As each herder adds one more animal to the common grazing area, that individual herder gains the positive economic benefit of that additional animal. However, the negative impact of that additional animal, resulting in slightly less food available to all the other animals in the grazing area, is spread across all herders. Therefore, a rational herder will keep adding more animals to the common area because he or she gets the full benefit of each added animal and only shares partially in the negative consequences. Each herder argues that they are only a small contributor to the decline of the commons because they own only a small percentage of the total animals on the common grazing area. If all herders act in this way, the commons becomes overgrazed, collapses, and is of no value to any of the herders. Therefore, access to the commons must be regulated to avoid bringing ruin to all.

The science tells us that we have 11 years to keep climate change in check. Meeting this critical deadline will take changes in behaviour and in the law — from all of us. Otherwise, we face very real threats to human health, safety and security, and our cultures and way of life.

Field Notes

By Club Members

Backyard Bird Sightings

May 13, Al B., Holland Landing: "Busy day at the feeders --- Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-bellied Woodpecker, five Baltimore Orioles, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, many Blue Jays, Nuthatches, Hairy and Downies, Starlings etc. The Baltimore Orioles loved the suet and the hummingbird sugar. They are extremely competitive, chasing each other away even from other feeders they are not at."



Baltimore Oriole

May 22, Cathryn R., Bradford: It was a very wet spring. The flooding on Cathryn's property attracted a curious Canada Goose.



Flooding in Bradford

May 28, Sheila A., Bradford: “[Attached] are four of our less common backyard birds that I was able to photograph. Ken confirmed my identification of the second one as a Fox Sparrow at our last meeting. The others are well known as Cedar Waxwing, Indigo Bunting and White-Crowned Sparrow. The Fox Sparrow and Cedar Waxwings were April sightings. May has been a fantastic month for unusual backyard sightings. We also saw a Veery, a Blackburnian Warbler, a Yellow Warbler, a Baltimore Oriole and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak.” Two of Sheila’s photos are shown below.

May 23, Bob L., Sharon: Bob had both a Red-breasted Grosbeak and a Baltimore Oriole at the feeder at the same time.



Fox Sparrow



Cedar Waxwing



Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole

Nature Sightings in Ruskin, Florida

By Jeanne Bénéteau



Black-bellied Whistling Ducks



Manatee

Answers to Warbler Quiz from p. 3:

1. Yellow Warbler
2. Magnolia Warbler
3. Chestnut-sided Warbler
4. Black-throated Green Warbler