



*Cultivating an appreciation of nature  
through learning and action*

# THE HERON

**WINTER 2019**

Newsletter of the  
York Simcoe Nature Club



## **President's Message**

*By Jeanne Bénéteau*

As we start a brand new year, January 2019 is in the full lion's roar of winter. I'm happy the plummeting temperatures have arrived along with the snow squalls. It means blustery walks on the Holland River. Equally, I'm happy to see that the days are longer by a couple of goose steps. I hope you all enjoyed the super moon, blood moon, wolf moon, total lunar eclipse (whatever you want to call it!) earlier in January. I hope you are taking time to bundle up and take some pleasurable nature walks.

This has been an unusually busy but interesting time for the YSN Club as far as doing our bit in keeping ourselves informed about the provincial government proposal of Bill 66. Thanks to our last two speakers, Debbie Gordon from the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance and Claire Malcolmson from the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, we have a better sense of the current issues regarding this bill and the concerns around what might be at stake with our natural world. We have been forwarding to our members some informational e-mails from various organizations stating their concerns with the bill, so that individual members may choose to support the organizations as they see fit. On behalf of York Simcoe Nature Club, we have signed on to various EBR submissions by Ontario Nature (ON), the Ontario Headwaters Institute (OHI), and the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance (OGA), as well as a letter to the Premier from the OHI and ON. It appears that our voices are being heard!

We have booked speakers for the next three meetings. One of my favorite topics, the weather, will be addressed by Rick Berry this February. He will speak to us about forecasting. In March, Kyla Greenham will be our guest,



*Barred Owl, Lynde Shores Conservation Area, Whitby  
Photo by David Eaton*

speaking to us about the initiatives of the East Gwillimbury Environmental Advisory Committee. For April, we will be entertained by Ian Cook, who will present the woodcock and other native birds, focusing on their displays. Sounds intriguing. I hope to see you all at the meetings.

As of yet, the executive positions of membership secretary, recording secretary, and treasurer remain open. There is still time before our annual general meeting in May for any one of our members to seriously consider and accept one of these positions. Please feel free to ask any of the current executives or acting executives for if you have any questions.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of The Heron. Thank you to all who have contributed to our newsletter.

## Club News

### YSN Membership Report

*By Sheila Gick and Linda Gilkes*

#### Membership

The Club ended the 2017/18 year on May 31, 2018 with 46 memberships, and following the January 2019 general meeting we have 43 memberships so far. Three are life memberships, 18 are single and 22 are family.

A big welcome to our 7 first-time members: Susan E., Barbara F., Karen O., Diane P., Heather B., and the family of Don M. and Sue S. We have had a dozen guests so far this year and a big thank you for making them feel welcome.

Sheila would like to thank Linda Gilkes and Sylvia Bowman for taking over the duties at the membership desk until a new membership secretary is found. Please consider the job; Sheila will train the new person for as long as needed.

#### Fundraising

Our main fundraising project for this year is the Ontario Nature Youth Summit, held annually in Orillia in September. For more information about the event, check out their website at <https://ontarionature.org/events/youth-summit>.

This will be our fourth year sponsoring a candidate for a sum of \$350.00. To date we have raised \$159.30. Past recipients have been Lindsay Van Vught of Beeton (2016), Aidan Kenny of Newmarket (2017) and Isabella Fiore of Newmarket (2018). Please let the executive know if you have a suggestion for a candidate who will be in grades 9-12 as of September 2019.



*Isabella with Jeanne, Oct. 9  
Photo by Judy Ritchie*

As we mentioned in the Fall 2018 issue, we are also raffling 2 colourful, matted paintings of birds at each monthly meeting, to help defray the costs of rental for the new meeting hall. The cost is 1 ticket for \$2 or 3 tickets for \$5.

### Social Activities



*Rogers Reservoir, Oct. 13  
Photo c/o Linda Gilkes*

On Oct. 13, Sylvia and Al hosted a “Pot Luck BBQ” at their place in Holland Landing. There were lots of tasty dishes and desserts shared by all. Al did wonders on the BBQ, flipping hamburgers and veggie burgers.

Sylvia led a hike through her property to the Rogers Reservoir Wetland Restoration Project located beside the Nokiidaa Trail. This project was implemented by the Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority. We really enjoyed seeing the fall colours and this new wetland.

Many thanks go out to Sylvia and Al for hosting this event. It was so well received that we are planning to make this a yearly event.



*Sylvia and Al's property, Oct. 13  
Photo by Janet Thompson*



*Carol Sing, Dec. 15  
Photo by Linda Gilkes*

On Dec. 15, our 2nd annual Carol Sing was held at Jeanne and George’s home on the banks of the Holland River in Holland Landing. We enjoyed a fun afternoon of conversation, tasty munchies, piping hot apple cider and hot chocolate, a cozy fire and of course the lifting of our voices in Christmas carols. Many thanks go out to Jeanne and George for hosting this event.

On Sat. Mar. 9, our 6th annual Wine and Cheese Party, for members and their spouses only, will be held from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Doug and Judy will be the hosts at their home in Newmarket. Details will be e-mailed out at a later date.

**Contact with Other Nature Organizations**

*By Rick Berry*

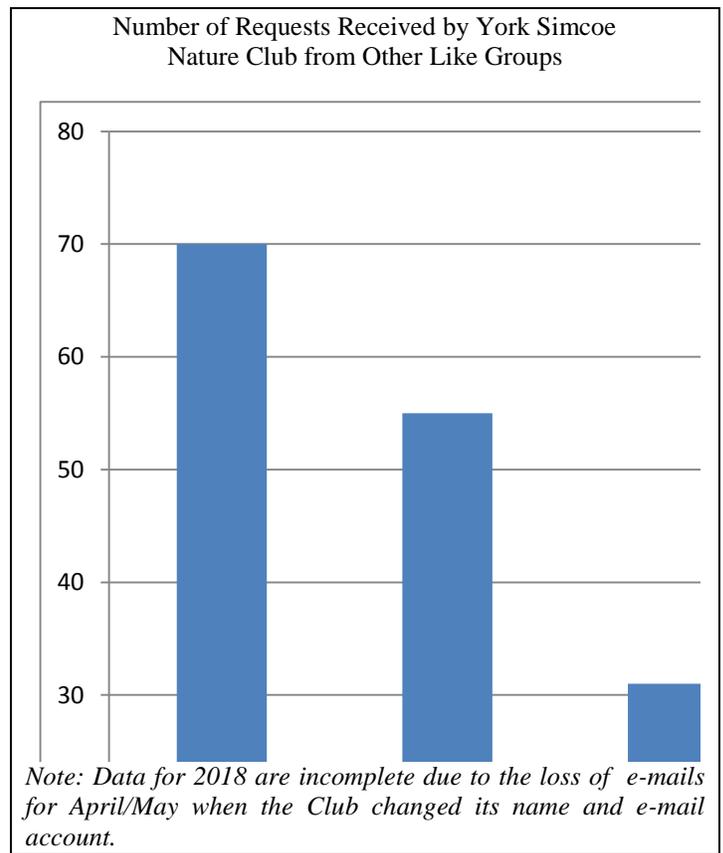
York Simcoe Nature Club is a member of Ontario Nature and has linkages to many other environmental/nature organizations as well as being a respected nature club on its own merits. As a result the Club receives many requests to engage with or adopt and express the views of other organizations. These requests fall into three broad categories:

- Invitations to meetings related to our environment
- Requests to support various initiatives
- Engagement in environmental activism activities such as signing petitions, writing letters to provincial and municipal governments and participating in protests

The chart below summarizes the requests received by the Club over the last three years. It was prepared using the archived e-mails to the Club as the York-Simcoe Naturalists and then the York Simcoe Nature Club. It does not include activities of the Conservation Director (Sylvia Bowman), which are directed specifically at her.

The actions on these requests depend on the nature of the request:

- Many are sent to members for information and/or action if suitable.
- Petitions to government(s) are signed onto on behalf of the club.
- Some are just filed as being:
  - not in the Club’s mandate (e.g., support sales of items);
  - being too far away for participation (e.g., a meeting in Thunder Bay);
  - too vague to act on, not enough information (e.g., please express your support, unfocused).



**Next Meetings**

Tues. Feb. 12 --- Rick Berry  
“Weather Forecasting Today: Global Scale Science “

Tues. Mar. 12 --- Kyla Greenham  
“The East Gwillimbury Environmental Advisory Committee”

Tues. Apr. 9 --- Ian Cook  
“Displays of the Woodcock and Other Native Birds “

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

## Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve

### Ontario Nature Tree Hike

Photos and story by Janet Thompson

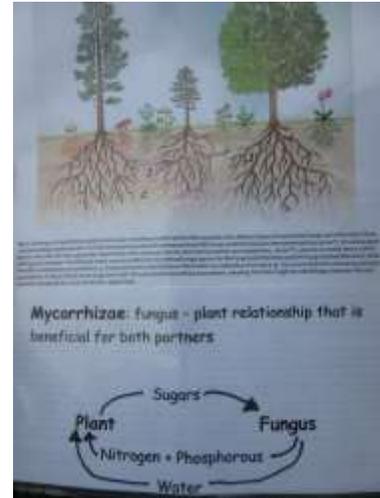


As an individual member of Ontario Nature (separate from being a member of YSN), I received an invitation to join a guided hike on Sept. 20 at the reserve. Nancy Dengler, a retired professor of botany at the University of Toronto and former board member of Ontario Nature, spoke on the symbiotic relationship between fungi and trees. (This tied in nicely with the presentation given in October to the YSN club by member Paul Cray, who spoke on “The Soil Food Web”.)



Carolyn Schultz, Executive Director of Ontario Nature (left, in red scarf), with Dr. Nancy Dengler (right).

Dr. Dengler spoke of the research of Dr. Suzanne Simard at the University of British Columbia. Fungi in the soil integrate themselves with the roots of trees and other plants. There are miles of networks of fungal filaments, and each network is attached to more than one tree. In this way trees can “talk” to each other, sharing carbon and water with neighbours as need arises. These networks help resilience in the face of climate change.



Many fungi are mutualists, which absorb water and nutrients from the soil and send them to the trees, while the trees make carbon and sugars and send them to the fungi.



We hiked the Yellow Trail. Dr. Dengler noted that ironwoods are related to birches and the species are often found growing together on sunny slopes, as shown above.



When we returned to the pond, Bob noticed a catalpa tree, which is a Carolinian species. An interesting end to a very informative tree hike.

## Conservation News

By Sylvia Bowman

### Local Issues

#### Town of South Bruce Peninsula Piping Plover Habitat

Last spring, Ecojustice successfully urged the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to issue a stop work order that halted planned beach grooming, by the Town of South Bruce Peninsula, on protected piping plover habitat.

The Town of South Bruce Peninsula has been pushing back ever since. In late October, Ecojustice participated in a hearing to ensure the order remains in place.

#### North Gwillimbury Forest

The Town of Georgina recently served DG Group with a stop-work order when it was discovered that DG was cutting trees on the Maple Lake Estates (MLE) property without proper permits.

In late November, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) met with the senior policy advisor to Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark. The topic was “the proposed transfer of planning approval”. This proposal would allow a subdivision on DG-owned prime farmland in Georgina, in the Greenbelt Protected Countryside, in exchange for DG giving up its proposed (MLE) project in the Paradise Beach-Island Grove Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW).

The previous government firmly slammed the door on the exchange when it issued the updated 2017 Greenbelt Plan, which said such land swaps were unacceptable. Now under Ontario Bill 66, the door is being opened again.

The North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance has appealed to the new Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (which replaced the Ontario Municipal Board) concerning the provisions in the Town of Georgina’s Official Plan that permit the MLE development in a PSW. They are still waiting for the Tribunal’s decision. They believe that there is a strong likelihood that Georgina’s plan will be amended to prohibit development on these environmentally sensitive lands.

The province and the town should tell DG group to build in the south Keswick area, which is already properly zoned for urban development and well served by Highway 404. This option has the benefit of reducing sprawl and avoiding leapfrog development.

### Provincial Government Issues

#### Ontario Bill 66

On Jan. 23, after widespread objections and protests, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark announced that the Ontario Government is removing Schedule 10 from Bill 66.

MPPs were under enormous pressure from the onslaught of letters, e-mails and protests all saying no to Bill 66 --- most specifically Schedule 10 and the “open for business by-law” provisions that would have undermined the *Clean Water Act*, the *Planning Act*, the Greenbelt Plan, the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. So a reprieve for now, but more battles to come.

Ontario Nature will be tackling the assault on the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan and the wholly deficient Made in Ontario Environmental Plan. And now the *Endangered Species Act* is also in the cross-hairs.

#### Cutting the Environment Commissioner’s Office

In November, the Ontario Government cut several independent offices that reported directly to the Legislature but are now subsumed into the Ombudsman’s Department.

Ontario Nature wrote a sign-on letter to the Premier expressing our dismay at the loss of such an independent voice. Fifty-seven organizations and Nature Network Members, including our club, signed onto the letter.

### Federal Government Issues

#### Plastic Waste

On Dec. 5, Parliament unanimously passed the private member’s motion M151, moved by Courtenay-Alberni MP Gord Johns. It calls for a national framework for the reduction and eventual elimination of plastic pollution in aquatic environments.

The motion draws on a University of Victoria Environmental Law Centre study titled “Seven Reforms to Address Marine Plastic Pollution,” and identifies essential actions to fill what is currently a legislative and regulatory void. The recommendations include regulatory action aimed at reducing plastic debris discharge from stormwater outfalls and the consumer and industrial use of single-use plastics.

The motion focuses on the need for dedicated, annual funding for cleanup and education. Hopefully some actions will come out of the resolution.

### Neonics Court Case

This case was finally heard in the Federal Court of Appeal in Toronto during the week of Nov. 19. In July 2016, Ecojustice filed a lawsuit on behalf of Wilderness Committee, Ontario Nature, David Suzuki Foundation and Friends of the Earth that argues that the way Canada currently regulates harmful neonic pesticides, like Thiamethoxam, is not only substandard, it is unlawful. They are asking the court to rule that the PMRA's "approve first, study the science later" approach is unlawful and that the practice of granting approvals without science cannot continue.

Neonicotinoids are systemic chemical insecticides that are found in all tissues of treated plants, including pollen and nectar. Studies show that these pesticides are also likely to harm "non-target organisms" like native bees.

In August 2018, Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) proposed to eventually phase out outdoor uses of two widely used neonicotinoid pesticides, Thiamethoxam and Clothianidin. However, the same day, despite recognizing the dangerous risks Thiamethoxam poses to the environment, the PMRA extended Thiamethoxam's registrations to December 2020 and proposed granting additional three-year registrations.

If successful, this case could pave the way for more rigorous reviews of toxic pesticides in Canada, particularly those with the potential to harm pollinators, like Thiamethoxam. To read more detail, visit the Ecojustice website.

### Federal Bill C-69

On June 20, the House of Commons passed 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*. However, the Senate is dragging its feet and has yet to pass the bill. You can sign a petition on the Ecojustice website urging them to do so.

### Lobby Day in Ottawa

Ontario Nature is working with Nature Quebec and Nature Canada to hold a Nature and Protected Areas Lobby Day in Ottawa on Tues. Apr. 9 to meet with MPs and Catherine McKenna, the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

They really hope that some of the Nature Network member groups will be able to join them. There will be more details soon.

### Your Executive for 2018-2020

#### Elected Positions

**Jeanne Bénéteau**, President

**Judy Ritchie**, Vice President

**Doug Jagger**, Past President

**Linda Gilkes**, Past Treasurer

**VACANT** - Recording Secretary

**VACANT** - Membership Secretary

#### Appointed Volunteer Positions

**Rick Berry**, Executive at Large

**Sylvia Bowman**, Conservation Director and Speakers

**Linda Gilkes**, Archives

**Jay Gutteridge**, Internet Director

**Judy Ritchie**, Stewardship Liaison to Ontario Nature

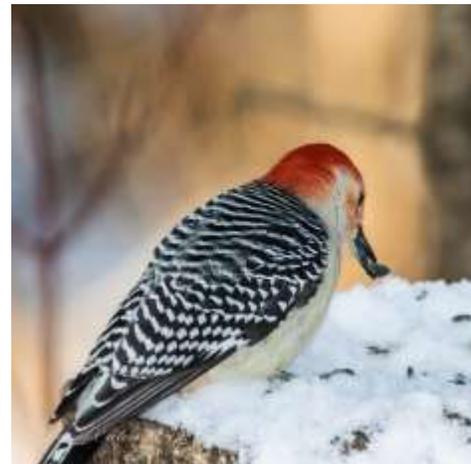
**Melissa Rosato**, Advertising Director

**Flo Sparling**, Refreshments

**Janet Thompson**, Newsletter Editor



*Common Redpoll, Aurora Arboretum  
Photo by David Eaton*



*Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Lynde Shores Conservation Area, Whitby  
Photo by David Eaton*

## Field Notes

### Dark Days and Other Fun

By George Keltika

A dark and windy winter's morning is complemented by snow squalls rolling in from the west. I stare out the window at the swirling frozen crystals from the confines of a warm kitchen. For now, the comfort of my chair and coffee feel too good for any prospect of an outdoor adventure.

The clear amber morning light reveals an impossibly red Northern Cardinal at the feeder. It is accompanied by a cabal of bickering Blue Jays, frenzied nuthatches and finches. The jumbled gathering of birds sprays seeds in all directions. Their activity prompts me to dispatch another bag for the fly through. The Mourning Doves, Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos all seem to take delight in foraging off the ground. So far, the winter's marginal offering of snow with the resulting open ground has provided more natural sustenance, so there are fewer birds at the feeder.

Looking back to November, we had a treat viewing a pair of Pine Grosbeaks in the junipers at the Torrance Barrens in the Muskokas. Jeanne and I ventured north to view celestial bodies in the dark sky environment there. The setting sun took with it any hint of warmth as the evening temperatures plunged. While in the company of other like-minded stargazers, we heard an odd rumbling sound unlike anything we'd ever experienced. Other more seasoned attendees told us it was freezing groundwater and a type of frost quake. Spooky!

We are now mid-winter, with mostly incredibly cold days. It does require a little more effort to spend time outside in the cold elements. Once bundled up with proper footwear, coat and hat, though, the winter's natural environment can be alluring, especially during those sunny, more desirable days. The Holland River now sports a foot of ice and is worthy of cross-country skiing or just a walk. The recent clear nights during mid-January provided a blue moon, plus a midnight eclipse and neighbourhood river skating.

I must resign myself that winter is here to stay for a while yet. Now is the time to take in the outdoors and defy the abyss of cold. You'll find it's not so bad and nature has its special rewards, even during January and February.

A hint of longer daylight is now evident. We need to celebrate the slow march to spring, which will eventually shine new light on another season of greenery.



*Pileated Woodpecker, Beattie Pinery, Alliston  
Photo by Dave Dennis*



*Coyote, Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve  
Photo by David Eaton*

Dave Eaton took this photo on Jan. 27 at the reserve. He says he saw three coyotes, but there might have been as many as five by looking at all the tracks.

**Birds of Prey in Winter**

*Photos by David Eaton*



*Red-tailed Hawk, Holland Marsh (above) and Nobleton (below)*



*Barred Owl, Lynde Shores Conservation Area, Whitby*

Only the barred owl and barn owl have brown eyes; all other owls have yellow eyes. The call of the barred owl is “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?”



*Snowy Owl, Holland Marsh*