



# THE HERON

**SPRING 2015**

Newsletter of the  
York-Simcoe Naturalists



*Hummingbird Clearwing Moth*  
Photo by Melissa Rosato

## President's Message

*By Doug Jagger*

Since our last newsletter the club has completed and initiated many tasks. You can read about our accomplishments in the report on the 2014-2015 Annual General Meeting on p. 2. A couple of these items I want to focus on.

First of these items is the T-shirts which turned out to be amazing. Many of you have ordered these T-shirts which will be available at future meetings. If you had not ordered one, there are a few extras. Otherwise let us know since we would consider placing a second order if there are sufficient requests. Thanks to Jeanne Beneteau for her time and effort.

The business cards order is at the printer and should be available shortly. We will have cards available for members to use to promote the club. Thanks to Jay Gutteridge for his work on the design.

Over the past year there was a lot of attention given to Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve. There is a separate report on p. 3 on the highlights of the stewardship and status at the reserve. With a work plan in place we are proceeding with activities at the reserve. One of these activities is addressing invasive species through identification and removal. Thanks to Rick Berry for his time and organization on this important matter.

Ontario Nature has selected the reserve for an amphibian and reptile monitoring program. Please see the article on p. 5 for details.

For the second year the club is participating in SwiftWatch for Bird Studies Canada. Last year we identified a chimney on Ontario Street in Newmarket used by a pair of Chimney Swifts. Jeanne Beneteau has prepared an article on p. 5 on this year's focus.

With the completion of another year for the club, I thank all those who have helped to make 2014-2015 an interesting and productive year and the members who are part of the fabric of the club. I look forward to the new year with its challenges, learning and fun. I hope that you will renew your membership to continue to be part of the club.

### Fall Meetings

**Tues. Sept. 8**  
**Tues. Oct. 13**  
**Tues. Nov. 10**  
**Tues. Dec. 8**

7:30 p.m., River Drive Park Community Centre  
20 Oak Avenue, north of Queensville Sideroad  
River Drive Park, East Gwillimbury

### Your Executive for 2014 -- 2016

#### Elected Positions

**Doug Jagger**, President  
**Jeanne Bénéteau**, Vice President  
**Rick Berry**, Recording Secretary  
**Sheila Gick**, Membership Secretary  
**Linda Gilkes**, Treasurer

#### Appointed Volunteer Positions

**Sylvia Bowman**, Conservation Director, Speakers  
**Linda Gilkes**, Archives  
**Jay Gutteridge**, Internet Director  
**Melissa Rosato**, Advertising Director  
**Flo Sparling**, Refreshments  
**Janet Thompson**, Newsletter Editor  
**Mike van den Tillaart**, Stewardship Liaison to Ontario Nature

## Club News

### Annual General Meeting

The York-Simcoe Naturalists held its 2014-2015 Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 2015 between approximately 7:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. prior to our speaker for the regular monthly meeting. There were approximately 30 members and visitors in attendance. Doug chaired the meeting.

Since this year is the second year of the two-year term for the elected executive, there were no elections and the executive remain the same for 2015-2016. The club year runs from June 1 to May 31 of the following year. There is also no change to the appointed volunteer positions. See the insert box in the newsletter for details. Doug thanked all those who assist with the administration of the club and members who support the club.

Under business, the minutes of the 2013-2014 Annual General Meeting were approved. Linda Gilkes, Treasurer, reported on the financial status of the club and answered questions from the members. As of May 12, 2015 the club had a balance of about \$4,300.00. Some of this money is in reserve for special projects yet to be determined. Sheila Gick presented the membership report. The club finished the year with a total of 44 memberships including individual and family. It is a record number for the club.

Doug in his annual report outlined the major accomplishments of the club over the past year and the plans for the forthcoming year. The club's accomplishments included the following items:

- Nine club meetings featuring diversified topics presented by excellent speakers
- Annual club outing
- Newsletters to inform members of activities and other environmental matters
- Donations for a special project at Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve
- Club T-shirts
- Initiation of business cards
- Promotion of the club through attendance at various events
- Membership recruitment
- Developed and initiated a successful new website, [www.ysnaturalists.com](http://www.ysnaturalists.com)
- Changed email address to [ysn.naturalists@gmail.com](mailto:ysn.naturalists@gmail.com)
- Joined Neighbourhood Network

- Responded to various environmental issues including the policy reviews being conducted by the provincial government, and a proposed development in Beeton
- Kept abreast of various conservation issues
- Stewardship of the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve
- SwiftWatch for Bird Studies Canada

For the next term the executive want to continue to grow and strengthen the club through our regular monthly meetings, attendance at events such as Farmers' Markets and club activities such as outings and Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve stewardship.

### Membership Report

*By Sheila Gick*

Here we are heading into the 2015-2016 membership year in the YSN club, starting June 1, 2015. We already have 6 renewed family memberships, 5 renewed single memberships and 1 new family membership after the May meeting! You can renew for the same price as always -- \$25 for a single or \$30 for a family membership.

This past year 2014-2015 we had a total of 44 memberships of which 4 were life memberships, 21 were single and 19 were family. This was a record for the club and we are confident the club will continue to grow; tell your friends or, better yet, bring them out to a meeting.

As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, the club has many new initiatives on the go and they all require support from the membership, whether time, funds or just attending meetings and sharing your sightings, ideas and enthusiasm for nature.

The funds collected at the membership desk this year totalled \$364.00 and will be used to support our own stewardship work at the Cawthra Mulock property. Thanks to each and every member who dropped any amount from dimes to dollars into the can at the membership desk -- your generosity helps fund the work of our recipients and therefore they can continue their work. Each year the club sponsors a different organization/project and therefore we will have a new cause for the coming year, to be announced soon.

Have a wonderful summer enjoying nature wherever you go, and especially at home in our beautiful York Region and I look forward to seeing you in September.

## Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve

*Located north of Green Lane/Miller's Sideroad between Bathurst and Dufferin streets, this 108-hectare hidden gem was donated to Ontario Nature in 2003 and has been under the stewardship of YSN since 2007. It is open to the public.*

### Stewardship Meeting with Ontario Nature

*By Doug Jagger*

As you are likely aware, the York-Simcoe Naturalists club is the steward for the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve which is owned and managed by Ontario Nature. On April 16, Sylvia Bowman, Jeanne Beneteau and I met with representatives of Ontario Nature to resolve some of our stewardship issues with Ontario Nature. The meeting was quite productive.

Ontario Nature indicated that their priority for this nature reserve was about the accessibility and condition of the trails. They retained the services of Treadscape for this assessment which has since been completed on May 15. See the report by Rick Berry. Ontario Nature advised that repair of the access road off Bathurst Street and any change in that parking area was of lower priority at least until a decision is made as to the future of the gate house. If the club wants to proceed with repair and changes, it needs to prepare and submit a formal proposal to Ontario Nature. We indicated that the club has some funding available to assist with special projects such as road repair.

Ontario Nature is working on two plans for its reserves. One plan is for corporate sponsorship funding and the other is a strategic communication plan, both of which will be forwarded to the club when completed. This year the stewardship plan for the reserve is scheduled for review. We will have input into the review process.

The compensation agreement between Ontario Nature and York Region for land loss due to the widening of Bathurst Street is still in draft. Once the agreement is finalized, we will receive a copy. It is unlikely that any work which entails landscaping and vegetative plantings in the old sod farm lands at the west end of the reserve will proceed until road work along Dufferin Street is completed.

It was agreed that the club could proceed with an invasive species inventory on the reserve as well as the removal of periwinkle around the former house off Bathurst Street. The inventory is being coordinated by Rick Berry. We decided to defer the

periwinkle removal until April 2016 due to hard ground conditions and inclusion of other species.

Other matters such as the bridge and boardwalks were discussed as part of the previously mentioned topics. The result of all the discussion was an annual work plan for the reserve which we received several days after the meeting. A copy of this work plan can be provided to interested members.

### Sustainability of Cawthra Mulock Trails

*By Rick Berry*

Ontario Nature wants to make the experience of the Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve accessible to the public on a year-round basis. On May 15 an assessment was done on trail sections known to have problems with seasonal access -- the western reaches of the Red Trail and areas of the Orange Trail that become submerged during parts of the year. The assessment was done by staff from Ontario Nature and a contractor/specialist in trail construction and routing. Rick Berry of the YSN executive accompanied the group to provide insight and be part of the discussions.

Options discussed included construction of boardwalks, trail re-routing and seasonal closures. Once the contractor prepares a report, Ontario Nature will make decisions on how to address the issues of public access, costs and long-term sustainability of the trail system. York-Simcoe Naturalists has offered to help offset some of the specialist fees.



*Photo courtesy of Dana Buchbinder*

## Conservation News

*By Sylvia Bowman*

### Ontario Nature

#### Lake Ontario North Regional Meeting

The spring meeting was held on April 11 at the Alderville First Nation Black Oak Savanna Ecology Centre near Rice Lake. It is one of the few remaining examples of tall grass prairie in the region. Debbie Crandall did a presentation on the 2015 provincial review. She emphasized that the more people who do a submission the better, because if certain themes are highlighted many times they will be areas the review panel will look at for their recommendations to government. Some areas that need more emphasis are keeping to the present urban boundaries, and not removing lands from the Greenbelt.

We took a hike through the prairie although it was a bit early for spring wildflowers.

#### Huronian Regional Meeting

The spring meeting was held at Killbear Provincial Park on April 18. Pam Fulford of the Carden Field Naturalists gave a presentation on the proposed Strawberry Island development in Lake Simcoe. This island was formerly a Catholic Church retreat but has since been sold to a developer. Pam was planning to do a presentation to Ramara Township on May 11 urging them to keep the island's rural zoning, and not develop one of the last remaining undeveloped islands in the lake. There was also a presentation about the programs run by the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserves.

We took a hike to look at the road underpasses in the park that help protect the Massasauga rattlesnake from becoming road kill. We also visited some rattlesnake hibernaculum areas in the park. However it was a cool day and no snakes graced us with an appearance. Another issue in this area is the die-off of beech trees from a fungus which is spreading across Ontario.

Remember any club member can go to the regional meetings of Ontario Nature which are held twice a year in the spring and fall. At these gatherings you get to hear about the many programs other clubs are doing as well as hear interesting presentations and go on a hike. If any of you would like to go to a fall regional meeting please talk to me or Jeanne who as Vice President of the club is our Ontario Nature representative. The Huronia fall regional meeting is on Sat. Oct. 17 in Barrie.

#### Ontario Nature AGM

The AGM was held on May 23 at the Rare Eco Reserve in Cambridge. This is a nature reserve

between the cities of Cambridge and Kitchener which has many rare and endangered species, and does a lot of research and public education in this region. There is also a regional rail trail along the Grand River that goes through the property.

The opening address was given by Grant Linney called The Hero's Journey to Sustainability. Grassy Narrows First Nation received the J.R. Dymond Public Service Award for its commitment to environmental justice and sustainability in the Wabigoon-English River watershed, northeast of Lake of the Woods. Chief Roger Fobister who accepted the award gave an unexpected but very moving speech about their struggles to preserve their communities and way of life. They are the group who have suffered from their land and fish being contaminated by mercury from pulp and paper operations in the past, and have been blockading roads to prevent clear-cutting for the last 12 years.

### Local Issues

#### The 2015 Provincial Review

The 2015 provincial review of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Places to Grow Act for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Niagara Escarpment Plan has now completed its first phase as of May 28. After the province has reviewed all of the many submissions, a second phase of consultations will begin. The exact form of the next phase has not yet been announced. YSN has done a submission and signed on to the joint submission done by Ontario Nature, Earthroots, STORM and Eco-spark. The main tension in the review is between those groups wanting to strengthen the protection of natural heritage areas and contain growth and urban sprawl versus those who want less restrictions on development and expansion of areas where development can occur.

#### Beeton Woods

Earlier this year the club was approached for help by a group in the Town of Beeton trying to save a forest near the town. It is owned by a developer who farms it and said he wanted to cut down the trees to increase the amount of farm land. The citizens got the town to impose a temporary injunction on further cutting. The arguments were heard by the county on April 14. YSN and Midland Penetang Field Naturalists supported Aware Simcoe's submission, given by Kaye Harries. They reserved a decision on the stop work order until May 13 when the injunction was removed, as there was no legal basis to continue it.

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## Field Notes

### Chimney Swift Monitoring

*By Jeanne Beneteau*

Each year, Bird Studies Canada asks for volunteers to help gather information on Chimney Swifts. These wonderfully unique birds are considered “threatened” in Ontario. Because of this, the Chimney Swift and its habitat are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

One of the activities through the SwiftWatch program is called The National Chimney Swift Blitz. This is a four-night monitoring of swift roosts throughout many towns and cities in various parts of Ontario and the Maritimes.

This spring, a small group from YSN is participating in this activity. After exploring the downtown core of Newmarket for potentially swift-friendly chimneys, Melissa Rosato, Doug Jagger and I have been monitoring a few chimneys at the south end of Main Street. The first two evenings, we were delighted to observe two little swifts enter one of the chimneys. It is amazing the great speed at which they enter. Four swifts were seen and heard overhead, but two were not seen entering, although they may have entered into the chimney while we blinked. Chances are that there are other chimneys around town that the swifts occupy. Last year, we monitored a chimney at the north end of Main Street that housed three swifts on a regular basis.

These two chimneys are most likely nesting chimneys. To be considered a roost, there needs to be a much greater number of birds entering the chimney. Our observations lead us to believe that there isn't a high population of swifts in Newmarket. Many of the larger chimneys in town have been capped for one reason or another.

Diana Teal, the regional coordinator, has told me that Aurora has a couple of roosts just off Yonge Street. One of the chimneys roosts about 60 birds. Phyllis Tremblay from the Barrie group told me that one of their chimneys had 84 swifts entering the first night of the blitz. What a sight that must have been!

By mid-June, pairing swifts leave their roost to find a nesting chimney and the others stay at the main roosts. Maybe our little Newmarket swifts are just early birds planning ahead.

After our blitz, we will be continuing to monitor the chimneys periodically throughout the summer. If you wish to join us one evening, please come on down!

### Amphibian and Reptile Monitoring

*By Doug Jagger*

Ontario Nature has selected Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve to monitor for salamanders and snakes. We have agreed to collect the data for the next few years to track if and how populations are changing over time.

The kick-off event is on Wed. July 29 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. starting at the Bathurst Street parking area, and will be led by Ontario Nature. We will put down salamander and snake boards followed by a short hike. Everyone is welcome.