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THE HERON**WINTER 2017**

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**RiverSong Musings— Ospreys**

By John Pries

UPCOMING SPEAKER

Join us November 27th for a presentation by Peter Russel on the Mastodon and other ice age giants.

See waterlooregionnature.ca for details, and pg. 14&15 for information on more upcoming speakers!

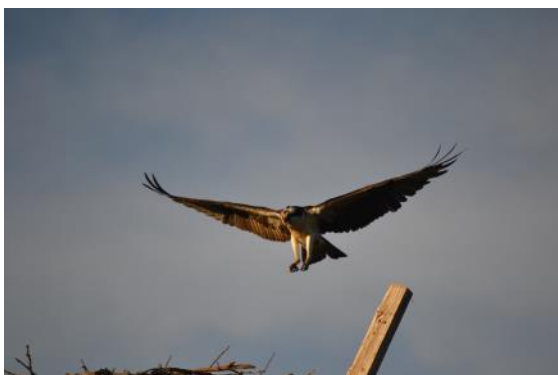
OUTINGS, OUTINGS, OUTINGS

Read inside for more information on upcoming outings, and check your email for further updates, cancellation information, and new outings added.

AWARD NOMINATIONS OPEN

Nominations are now open for the WRN Conservation Award and the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award.

See pg. 3 for more information.



Osprey coming in for a landing on the nesting platform at RiverSong. Photo: J. Pries.

We have a pair of osprey who have taken up residence on the platform I built onto the top of a power pole that a local company then installed for me in fall 2016. It is breathtaking seeing these large birds of prey up close, flying around often with fish in their talons. We had seen three ospreys take notice of the platform in early April and by mid-April they had begun building the nest. On April 24th the male was doing a display where, after catching a fish, he flew up into the air whistling incessantly, then partially folded his wings and dove down a short distance, then flew up again, folded the wings, and dove down, and kept doing this until the female landed on the nest. Once she was settled, he dropped in with the fish as an offering.

Over the next several weeks they put the finishing touches on the nest, but were easily agitated by people or cars passing by. However, by mid-May the female osprey seemed to have gotten to the point where it was not quite as disturbed by us walking near its nest when we went to pick up our mail. It still made noises, a sharp whistle, but did not get up onto the edge of the nest and flap its wings. I was afraid for a while that they might abandon the nest because they were both so skittish. When they seemed to be getting used to people and traffic, I did a bit of research and determined that the reason for the female not leaving the nest was because she had begun to lay and incubate eggs.

It has been so interesting observing the habits of these birds. On one occasion, I watched as the male was eating a fish. The fish must have been close to 30cm long and the osprey was holding onto the branch it was perched on with one talon and had the fish clamped into the other talon and had some of its weight on the fish that was resting on the branch. While it was tearing away at the fish, it was quite comical to watch as it struggled to keep its balance when it grabbed onto and pulled back on some of the tougher parts of the fish. The fish was slippery and would slide down the branch a short distance surprising the osprey, or so it seemed.

Continued on pg. 10

WRN Directors

President

Jon Walgate
519-590-8328
president@waterlooregionnature.ca

Vice President

Joshua Shea
519-208-8442
vicepresident@waterlooregionnature.ca

Past President

Stephanie Sobek-Swant
226-600-0261
pastpresident@waterlooregionnature.ca

Conservation Director

Anita Smith
519-500-2676
conservation@waterlooregionnature.ca

Treasurer

Paul Bigelow
519-888-7516
treasurer@waterlooregionnature.ca

Membership Director

Anne Godlewski
519-886-4608
membership@waterlooregionnature.ca

Secretary

Erin Bannon
519-616-0519
secretary@waterlooregionnature.ca

Outings Director

Graham Macdonald
519-634-5633
outings@waterlooregionnature.ca

Program Director

Rachael Edwards
306-850-9276
programs@waterlooregionnature.ca

Heron Editor

Jenna Quinn
519-362-7921
editor@
waterlooregion
nature.ca

Submission Deadlines:

Spring Issue

February 15th

Fall Issue

July 15th

Winter Issue

October 15th

Positions of Responsibility

Web Site Manager

Paul Bigelow 519-888-7516
web@waterlooregionnature.ca

Mailing Team

Rick and Jan Hook 519-742-7419
mailing@waterlooregionnature.ca

Archivist

Mary Ann Vanden Elzen 519-741-8272
archivist@waterlooregionnature.ca

Noteworthy Bird Sightings

Ken Burrell 519-699-4695
birds@waterlooregionnature.ca

Ontario Nature Representative

<http://ontarionature.org/index.php>
Fraser Gibson 519-576-9287
onrep@waterlooregionnature.ca

Native Plant Nuts

Wayne Buck 519-662-2529
plants@waterlooregionnature.ca

WRN Kids Coordinator

Margaret Paré 519-585-2377
kids@waterlooregionnature.ca

F. H. Montgomery Wildlife Sanctuary

Marg Macdonald 519-634-5633
montgomery@waterlooregionnature.ca

Kitchener's Natural Areas Program (KNAP)

Josh Shea 519-741-3400 ext.3349
Fraser Gibson 519-576-9287
knap@waterlooregionnature.ca

Waterloo Stewardship Council

Josh Shea 519-208-8442
wscrep@waterlooregionnature.ca

Facebook Page Administrator

Cathi Stewart
facebook@waterlooregionnature.ca

Other Inquiries

info@waterlooregionnature.ca

waterlooregionnature.ca

All WRN Club
meetings are held
in the Reception
Hall of the
Waterloo Knox
Presbyterian
Church

50 Erb St. West

Regular Meetings
begin at 7:30pm.
Doors open at
7pm.

**All parking is
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All parking access
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Autumn has arrived. The White-throated Sparrows have returned. I'm looking out of the window while I should be typing, and on cue the first White-crowned Sparrow of the season has arrived.

Two hundred years ago, people still debated where the birds went during the winter. In an era when travel was arduous and expensive, it shouldn't surprise us that the answer wasn't obvious. The Ancient Greeks knew that storks and hawks traveled south to Egypt; the flocks passing overhead must have been hard to miss. But they thought that smaller birds hibernated in caves, or changed their forms. Aristotle, for example, thought that the summer's redstarts must transform into the winter's robins – not so unreasonable a hypothesis, if you've observed adult birds in transitional plumage.

Medieval scholars were more creative, imagining that birds wintered at the bottom of muddy ponds and rivers, or transformed into fish. The Barnacle Goose, which arrives in Britain around this time from its breeding grounds in the subarctic, was thought not to fly south but to hatch as adults from, well, barnacles. Hence the name. Many authorities repeated this myth, and even claimed to have observed it happening, perhaps to reassure themselves that as seafood the geese could be eaten on religious fast days.

In the seventeenth century, the English scientist Charles Morton proposed that most birds did migrate long distances... to the moon! Where else could they

have gone, he argued, when so many species seemed to vanish completely? One excellent piece of evidence he offered was the flight of woodcocks – he had been told they returned to earth on summer evenings not from the east, west, north or south, but directly from the heavens above. We can confirm the accuracy of this scientific observation... if not the conclusion!

In truth, the reality of migration is just as outlandish – tiny sparrows, only a few months after hatching, fly a thousand miles or more to overwinter in places they've never seen. Birds brave hurricanes and cross oceans, trading summer in the pine forests for winter in the tropics. When this was finally established conclusively in nineteenth century, thanks to the scientists in Denmark who invented bird banding, it was one of the first and best examples of the power of citizen science! At first, it was clear that some of the Danish birds returned year after year... but where had they gone meanwhile? A nearby cave? Africa? (As I say, it's not so obvious which is more likely!) Then reports came in from observers across southern Europe of birds that had been caught *with rings* – confirming that individual birds travelled south.

Today, we're on the verge of a similar revolution in 'citizen ornithology', as mist netting is supplemented by eBird, miniaturized radio and satellite tracking, radar detection, and more. We can track albatrosses circumnavigating the southern ocean, and trace the paths of Blackpoll Warblers across the Atlantic. It's fascinating stuff!

Nominations are now open for the WRN Conservation Award and the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award.

Due before December 15th.

Please contact Jon for more details.
president@waterlooregionnature.ca

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The following outings are confirmed for Winter 2017-2018. A reminder notice will be sent out by email to WRN members approximately 5 days before the outing. In the event of change or cancellation, WRN members will also be notified by email. Outings are free unless otherwise noted. **WRN thanks the various property owners for so generously sharing nature on their land.**

Birding Laurentian Wetlands _____ **Family Friendly Outing**

When: Saturday November 11, 2017 (no rain date) from 2:00pm for 1 to 1.5 hours
Where: Meet at Sunrise Centre (corner of Fischer Hallman and Ottawa) in the Home Depot parking lot closest to Kelseys Roadhouse.
Who: Fraser Gibson 519-576-9287 fn.gib@sympatico.ca

This 22-acre wetland is one of the City of Kitchener's natural areas. The 55-acre parcel containing the wetland is now surrounded by commercial and residential development. Duck species such as Northern Shoveler, American Widgeon, Northern Pintail and Hooded Merganser are possibilities. A short level walk on a lawn is involved. A few vantage points may be visited. Bring your scope (if available) and binoculars for some easy viewing. No washrooms available, dress warmly. No RSVP necessary.

Cozy Nature Book Club (An Indoor Outing!) _____

When: Five Mondays at 1:30pm for 2 hours maximum (join as many or as few as they like): November 20, 2017; December 18, 2017; January 22, 2018; February 12, 2018; and March 19, 2018
Where: Mill-Courtland Community Centre, 216 Mill St, Kitchener. (Please note: Mill-Courtland CC is nut free.). On bus route. Parking behind building as well as in front. Enter by front door (as other doors are usually locked). No stairs.
Who: Lynn Conway 519-886-0812 (H) 519-501-2553 (C; texts only please)
lynnconway@rogers.com

Here is a chance to meet other nature lovers, relax, drink tea and share our favourite nature books. The first month please bring any nature-themed book you have enjoyed. This may be a recent title or a book you have read in the past that you would like to share. You may want to choose a short passage to read aloud and tell us what the book meant to you, why you read it or what you learned from the book. We can decide at the first meeting if we want to pick topics for future nature book club meets. *RSVP to Lynn would be appreciated but not required.*

Christmas Bird Counts

Three annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) take place in our region:

2017 Dates	Location	Coordinator	Contact
December 16	Kitchener Area	Mike Burrell	mike.burrell.on@gmail.com
December 17	Cambridge Area	Levi Moore	levicmoore1@gmail.com
December 29	Linwood Area	Ken Burrell	kenneth.gd.burrell@gmail.com

There is a specific methodology to the CBC, and all participants must make arrangements to participate in advance with the coordinator within an established circle, but anyone can participate. Count volunteers follow specified routes through a designated 24-km diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally—all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day.

If you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher. If your home is within the boundaries of a CBC circle, then you can stay at home and report the birds that visit your feeder on count day as long as you have made prior arrangement with the count compiler.

Cross-country Skiing at the Schneider Property —————*Family Friendly Outing*

When: Saturday January 13, 2018 at 1:00pm

Where: Meet at the first entrance to the property on Carmel Koch Road closest to Wilmot Line. If you go past the nun's residence then you've gone too far west. Phone if unclear of meet-up location.

Who: Janet Ozaruk 519-893-0490 226-748-9905 (C)

This is one of the best areas around for cross-country skiing, with a mix of open field, hardwood forest, plantations, and creeks. The trails are kept in good condition as trail use is limited only to skiing (no foot traffic) in the winter. There is a variety of trails to choose from and we can design a loop suited to our group.

This outing is dependent on a good base of snow & favourable conditions, so phone if conditions look at all questionable.

Raptors of Wellesley and Peel Townships

When: Sunday January 28, 2018 at 9:00am for about 3 hours (but you can leave anytime)

Where: Meet at Canadian Tire on Erb St., W.

Who: Jim Burrell burrellsc@golden.net

We will tour the townships by car, looking for over wintering raptors and whatever else we can spot. Bring binoculars, scopes and warm clothes. There will be no washrooms available.

HAVE AN OUTING SUGGESTION?

Contact: outings@waterlooregionnature.ca

Next outing deadline is February 15, however ideas are welcome at any time!

Winter Snowshoe Hike —————*Family Friendly Outing*

When: Saturday February 3, 2018 from 9:30am to 12:30pm
Where: Meet at **rare's** North House, 681 Blair Rd., Cambridge
Who: Jenna Quinn 519-650-9336 x111 jenna.quinn@raresites.org

First-timers welcome to join on this snowshoe hike around **rare's** Springbank Gardens. We will look for animal tracks and explore the (hopefully) snowy outdoors. Snowshoes provided for those who do not have their own, and in the absence of adequate snow we will still enjoy a winter hike. Afterwards, warm up and join us for some hot chocolate and coffee indoors at **rare's** North House, a solar-powered, green housing prototype that is used as a living lab by researchers and provides a science and technology site for **rare's** school programs. Washroom available at start and finish. Dress for the outdoors. Some uphill hiking. RSVP welcome but not necessary.

Great Backyard Bird Count 2018 —————

When: Saturday February 17, 2018 from 9:30am to 1:15pm
Where: Meet at Highland Hills Mall (Highland Road West and Fischer-Hallman Road, Kitchener) at 09:30 in front of the Beer Store.
Who: Mary Ann Vanden Elzen 519-741-8272

This will be a "progressive" activity as we will visit 3 different hosts to view and record their feeder activity. We will adhere to a flexible schedule as we travel from one site to another. Each host will offer a snack and a good view of their feeder activity. Bring a pair of binoculars and wear appropriate clothing for a short outdoor walk.

Please RSVP to Mary Ann in advance or be at the meeting place for details on the exact locations of the 3 stops.

Schedule:

09:30 -meet to carpool – Highland Hills Mall
 09:40 to 09:45 - travel to Sandhills Rd., Baden
 09:45 to 10:15 - view and record
 10:15 to 10:45 - travel to **rare**, Cambridge
 10:45 to 11:15 - view and record
 11:15 to 11:45 - travel to Lakeside Park, Kitchener
 11:45 to 12:15 - short bird walk in the park
 12:15 to 13:15 - view, record and lunch

Winter Birds in Riverside Park, Cambridge —————*Family Friendly Outing*

When: Tuesday February 20, 2018 at 9:30am for 1 to 2 hours, depending on weather and enthusiasm
Where: Meet at the entrance to Riverside Park (off King Street) in Cambridge, just outside the gate along the wall.
Who: Marco & Donna DeBruin

Join Marco & Donna for a refreshing walk in Riverside Park in Cambridge. Weather permitting, this could be a good opportunity to see up close and photograph some of our winter birds. The terrain is fairly level with a good portion of boardwalk. If time permits, we could take a short walk along the Speed River and check out some of our over-wintering waterfowl. Dress appropriately and don't forget your binoculars and your camera.

North Shore of Lake Ontario

When: Saturday March 17, 2018 at 8:00am (all day outing)

Where: Meet at the commuter parking lot on Highway 6 just south of Hwy 401.

Who: David Gascoigne 519-725-0866 226-747-7299(C)

theosprenest@sympatico.ca

First stop will be at the DesJardins Canal in Dundas where a wide range of waterfowl is possible, including close views of Hooded Merganser. A few Double-crested Cormorants generally persevere here through the winter. The vegetation should yield a variety of species including American Tree Sparrow, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers – and who knows what else?

We next head to LaSalle Park in Burlington where the largest concentration of Trumpeter Swans in Ontario will be present, in addition to many species of gulls and waterfowl. The boardwalk through the woods might yield Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Screech Owl, woodpeckers, sparrows and the chance to hand feed Black-capped Chickadees.

Next stop will be Sioux Lookout Park, often a reliable location for Long-tailed Ducks at close range. The water is very clear and the ducks can be seen “flying” underwater. Large rafts of Common Goldeneye are usually present, by now well into their entertaining courtship routine. All three scoters are possible, as are Red-breasted and Common Mergansers, Bufflehead, Mute Swans and others.

Proceeding eastward along the lake, we stop at various points (e.g. Paletta Park, Bronte Harbour, Lakeshore Promenade) being guided by recent reports, and the time of day. Somewhere we hope to encounter Red-necked Grebes and possibly Horned Grebes.

Plenty of washroom stops along this route and we will stop to have lunch together. This is a full day's outing so pack a lunch and snacks if you need them. Dress according to the weather, bring binoculars, a scope if you have one, a field guide and lots of enthusiasm.

For report of last year's outing, see: <https://travelswithbirds.blogspot.ca/2017/03/waterloo-region-nature-outing-to-north.html>

Waterloo Region Nature Kids Update

Waterloo Region Nature Kids, the club for nature-loving 7- to 12-year-olds and their adults started a new season with an amazing discovery walk in September. The next outing is a photography scavenger hunt on November 25.

See what we've been up to on our blog: <https://wrnatureclub.wordpress.com/blog/>

Questions? Contact Marg Paré at kids@waterlooregionnature.ca



Photos: Alex Matessich (left) and Linda Dutka (centre and right)

waterlooregionnature.ca

Successful Nesting of Bald Eagle in Kitchener, Part 2

By Bill Wilson

During the late afternoon of 29 January 2010, I discovered a probable Bald Eagle nest which was confirmed the next morning by Jerry Guenther and me during Bald Eagle monitoring (Photo 1).



Photo 1: Initial Bald Eagle nest at RiverEdge GC, Kitchener, Feb 2010. Photo M. DeBruin taken from 750m away at 401 & Morningside Dr. Cambridge

This nest raised both hope and concern among those of us monitoring wintering Bald Eagles along the Grand River. Hope that a pair of eagles would nest in Waterloo Region (see Part 1, July 2017 The Heron); concern that human disturbance, unintentional or otherwise, would prevent a pair from doing so. In winter 2010, no individual eagle – and certainly not a pair – was known to remain throughout a year. Winter observations of Bald Eagle, November to March, were expected; sightings in late spring, early fall unusual and in summer extremely rare.

Nest building by a pair of eagles is suggestive but no guarantee of breeding success according to Pud Hunter, Bald Eagle Specialist, OMNR. Bald Eagles learn to nest and to successfully raise young by experience; “playing house”, Hunter termed their behaviour. As described in Part 1, young eagles fledged successfully from this nesting site in 2016 and 2017. That six years could pass before this success was not unexpected (pers. comm. Hunter) pending experience and ages of the eagles, their fertility, the quality of nesting and foraging habitat and environmental conditions

including human disturbance.

With the successful comeback of this species throughout North America, one might ask in hindsight why the concern? In 2010, the decision to keep the nest location confidential was a precautionary approach, i.e. no public announcement about the nest or its location would be made. Because of the status of the species, Special Concern in southern Ontario at the time, and being a notable nesting record for Waterloo Region, club president Mary Ann Vanden Elzen and Conservation Director, Valerie Hill, agreed with this precautionary approach. Art Timmerman, OMNR biologist, contacted the land owner; Timmerman and Wilson, with recommendations from Hunter, prepared guidelines for the landowner.

Bald Eagle is one of the most studied species in North America measured by peer-reviewed research papers. This literature, as well as local monitoring of eagle activity helped formulate our approach to best ensure successful nesting. In his review of the literature, David A. Buehler (2000) highlighted the reasons for a precautionary approach: repeated human disturbance may lead to nest site abandonment; tolerance for human development varies widely among populations and among individuals within a population. Our focus was on a successful nesting along the Grand River within our monitoring area.



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From 2010 to 2017, any observations of this nesting site were undertaken in a manner to minimize disturbance and not attract attention. For example, observations of the nest could be made by telescope from three distant (750+m), but convenient locations. Would this particular pair of eagles tolerate human presence along this river corridor, a 15km stretch of river that offers: quality foraging due to much improved sewage treatment facilities (Servos 2016); relatively undisturbed shorelines with suitable perch, roosting and nest sites; winter closures along the river at *rare*, Blair-Moyers Landing; and four golf courses? Winter 2011, the last of overwintering Bald Eagle monitoring, a number of monitors continued their watch along the river corridor where the local pair nested and foraged.

In March 2012, Wilson met Kitchener resident, Oliver Jahn, whose residence overlooked the nest site from a distance of about 700m. Independently and unknown to the Bald Eagle monitoring team, Mr. Jahn had looked down on the nest daily – time permitting – from his living-room window. Although he observed “lots of activity” about the nest as late as 2 May, the nest was unsuccessful.

On 9 March 2013, the Wilsons were invited to Jahn’s residence to view the nest. Jahn’s continued observations determined that incubation had been initiated; however, he reported that the nest was abandoned on/about 12 April. Observations within the corridor confirmed that the pair remained until at least early May within their foraging river corridor.

In December 2013, an massive ice-storm moving though southern Ontario had significant consequences for the 2014 nesting season – the nest “disappeared”. Freezing rain had resulted in 1000s of broken tree limbs in Waterloo Region. In early March 2014, the DeBruins observed an adult with a “four-to-five-foot stick in talons” flying upstream of Blair. On 9 March, Bill Read described a new-found nest off Fountain Street 125m from the Grand River. This nest was also unsuccessful. Was this nest replacing the one upstream?

In mid-March 2015, monitors identified a newly constructed nest in the same wooded area as the

first nest but in a different tree. Jahn reported that incubation began 18 March 2015, continued for 3.5 weeks, then abandoned. Subsequent conversation with Hunter (OMNR) suggested many reasons for failure but optimism for the future.



Photo 2: Occupied Bald Eagle nest at RiverEdge GC, Kitchener, 29 Feb 2016. Aerial photo Josh Shea.

On 29 February 2016, during a deer count by helicopter over the City of Kitchener, occupation of the nest was confirmed by Elaine Gosnell, Josh Shea and Art Timmerman (Photo 2). Continued observations throughout spring into summer finally confirmed successful nesting (see Part 1).

References:

Buehler, David A. 2000. Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus), version 2.0. In The Birds of North America (P.G. Rodewald, editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bna.506>

Servos, Mark R. 2016. Monitoring and Cumulative Effects Assessment of the Grand River – research conducted 2012 – 2014. Canadian Water Network report 7pp.

Wilson, Bill 2010 to 2016. Birding journals.



Photo 3: Both micro- and macro-habitat variables exist that provide suitable habitat for a successful nesting pair of Bald Eagles within Waterloo Region. Photo Josh Shea

Membership Director's Report

By Anne Godlewski

Thank you to our donors:

Welcome, New Members!

Genie Berger

Paul and Pat Bigelow

Lynn Conway and Alex White

Marco and Donna DeBruin

Chris DeGeer

*David Gascoigne and Miriam
Bauman*

Ruth Kroft

Denise Leschak

*Graham Macdonald and
Margaret Lewis-Macdonald*

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Kim Fellows

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Ellen Mably

Jenna Stirling

RiverSong Musings— Osprey, *continued*

By John Pries

On several occasions, I noticed that the male continued to bring branches to build up the rim of the nest during the incubation period. I am wondering if he did this to help keep the chicks from falling out of the nest.

I had been unaware that the male will take turns incubating the eggs. I observed him fly up to the nest and land. The female got up, stretched her wings and seemed to say "Hey, what took you? It's been a long night" and then she flew off and he settled on the eggs.



Photo by: John Pries

The ospreys incubated the eggs for about 6 weeks before they hatched out. Again, a change in the female's reaction of being more tolerant to people being close by was the clue. From my vantage point

upslope of the nest I observed at least two young in the nest through my scope, growing fast. As they grew, the female spent less time on the nest in close proximity to her young, and more time perched on an extension of the nesting platform. However, during the heat of the day her position on the nest changed, as an astute neighbour who was watching the nest noticed after being disappointed that the female had its back to us and was obscuring our view of the young. Her disappointment turned to awe when she commented that the osprey was shading her young so that they would not get too hot. When she mentioned this, it made sense to me since the female was also opening her wings just a bit to maximize the shade.

Upon return in spring, we will continue to keep an eye on these majestic birds. As with all wildlife, there is much to be learned by simply observing.

If you wish to see the osprey, RiverSong is located along the west bank of the Conestogo River about 3km west of St. Jacobs. It hosts a wide range of flora and fauna and has been our home and business for the past 10 years. Susan and I are happy to have you enjoy our property during our RiverSong cafe/bakery business hours.

See details at www.riversongbakerycafe.com.

WRN Photo Gallery



Bird sightings from VP Swan Islands. Photos: H. Russell.



Wildlife sightings at the Confluence (Grand and Speed Rivers). Photos: D. Thomas.



Some of the sightings from the Big Sit Photos: P. Bigelow.

Cape May Warbler. Photo: D. Thomas.

Do you have nature or event photos to share? Send them to editor@waterlooregionnature.ca

waterlooregionnature.ca

Ontario Nature Report

By Fraser Gibson

2018 Annual Gathering

Ontario Nature's 2018 Annual Gathering will be held June 1-3, 2018 in Prince Edward County. Save those dates for an opportunity to explore a beautiful part of Ontario.

Neonicotinoid Court Action to Proceed

In an unexpectedly quick decision, a Federal Court Case Management Judge ruled that our court [action to protect pollinators from neonicotinoid pesticides should proceed](#). A hearing was held to determine if the court action that Ontario Nature, Wilderness Committee, David Suzuki Foundation and Friends of the Earth Canada had brought against the Pest Management Regulatory Agency for its continued registrations of 2 neonicotinoids should be heard by the courts. The lawsuit argues that the Pest Management Regulatory Agency failed to live up to its legal responsibilities as a regulator, and continues to unlawfully register a number of pesticides containing the neonicotinoids. We are pleased with the outcome of that hearing, and will keep you informed on how the action proceeds.



A Wetland Conservation Strategy for Ontario is Released

Good news! With its new [Wetland Conservation Strategy for Ontario](#), the Province has confirmed that provincially significant wetlands and Great Lakes coastal wetlands will continue to be off limits to development. Current policy protections will be upheld as the government develops a new wetland offsetting policy. Though we are disappointed with some aspects of the final strategy, it is an improvement over the draft version. Thank you to all who raised your voice for wetlands. It really does matter.

Ontario Trillium Foundation Makes Significant Investment in Environmental Conservation on Farms and Ranches

Agricultural producers in Ontario will soon have more opportunities to establish ALUS conservation projects on their farms, thanks to a \$695,900 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF).

"We are so pleased that OTF has reaffirmed their commitment to ALUS as an excellent way to protect and restore ecosystems on agricultural land in Ontario," said Gilvesy (ALUS Canada's CEO).

The OTF funds will help establish five new ALUS communities in Ontario—ALUS Lambton, Peterborough, Middlesex, Niagara, and Chatham-Kent—involving 750 participants and nearly 2,500 acres, and will also help transform three existing pilot communities—ALUS Elgin, Grey Bruce and Ontario East—into permanent ALUS programs.

"Ontario Nature is dedicated to helping ALUS Canada grow the program in Ontario," says Ontario Nature's Executive Director Caroline Schultz. "Through its incentives, ALUS is an incredible model to support the leadership role farmers play stewarding their land for the greater good."

ALUS is expanding rapidly in Ontario, but also in other Canadian provinces. In total, it is already stewarding more than 18,000 acres, an area the size of 45,000 hockey rinks, dispersed among 21 ALUS communities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and PEI.

Nature Network News

Ontario Nature publishes a monthly Nature Network Newsletter from which I draw material for the Heron. If you wish to see each newsletter they are posted on the Ontario Nature website at: [Nature Network News](http://www.ontariounature.com/nature-network-news).

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Also at St. Jacobs Farmers Market

****And now at the Stratford Farmers Market****

The Baneberries

By Wayne Buck



Photos by: Wayne Buck

I was out this morning in the rain sowing some White Baneberry (*Actea racemosa*) seeds that I had recently collected and cleaned to germinate next spring. I had sown some Red Baneberry (*A. rubra*) several weeks before because they ripen just that much sooner. I like to sow spring ephemerals as soon as I collect the seeds instead of storing them in the fridge over the winter and sowing them in the

spring when the soil is warmer. I think they germinate more dependably, and besides, there is already enough to do in the spring without adding more tasks to the list. We sow our seeds in wooden frames in an area shaded by two large old apple trees. I also scattered some seed into other shaded areas that we are naturalizing, hoping that they will be a potential seed source in years to come.

There are two species of baneberry native to Ontario: the aforementioned White Baneberry and Red Baneberry. I like the shiny candy-apple Red Baneberry that matures a month or more before the White species. But the White Bane berry is so striking in early autumn with its oval white berries with a black dot in the centre making them resemble an old fashioned Doll's Eye, its other common name. To add to its attractiveness, the berries are

supported on pinkish-red stalks making for a striking contrast. Both are found in woodlands, preferring to grow in shade. The name Baneberry refers to the poisonous nature of the berries of both plants. According to Newcomb's Plant Guide, as few as five or six can make you ill; more can cause cardiac arrest. Both plants grow to a height of about 50 cm (19 in.) and have attractive foliage with open branching.

The flowers of the two species differ in appearance and in their time of blooming. Red Baneberry flowers are **white**, are about **as wide as tall** and are **attached to the main stalk by a thin stalk**. White Baneberry flowers are also **white** but are **taller than wide** and are **attached to the main stalk by a thick stalk**.

You will sometimes see white berries with a **THIN** stalk or pinkish berries as opposed to deep red berries. These are probably the result of hybridizing, where pollen from one species is deposited on the sticky stigma of a different species. According to the Montana Plant Life webpage, Native Americans used the juice from baneberry fruits to poison arrows. Although toxic, the root of baneberry was sometimes used in small doses as an alternative to Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) to relieve menstrual cramps and for a variety of other conditions such as applying a poultice of chewed leaves to boils. I don't know what if anything happened to the person who chewed the leaves.

With the attractive flowers in spring, the brightly-coloured berries in mid to late summer, and the foliage lasting through until the first heavy frost, they both make an excellent plant for a shady garden setting.

Upcoming Speakers and Meeting Programs

Meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month at 7:30pm. Meetings are free and visitors are always welcome.
Meeting Location: Reception Hall, Waterloo Knox Presbyterian Church, 50 Erb Street West, Waterloo

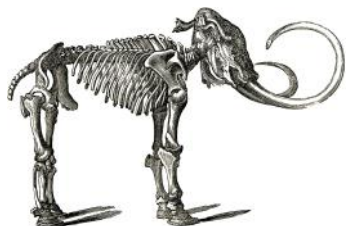
Read full presenter biographies at waterlooregionnature.ca/meetings

NOVEMBER

November 27, 2017

A Mastodon in a Biscuit Box

Peter Russel



The Presentation: All museums receive fascinating donations from time to time, often accompanied with stories of their provenance. Although these origins often amount to only a couple of lines, some are comprised of a fantastic story. One of these enthralling histories came from the artifact known as 'Shirley's Box', a mysterious box of teeth from Highgate, Ontario, donated to the University of Waterloo's Earth Sciences Museum. What started as a few

unidentified remains was revealed to be the teeth and lower jaw tusk of a mastodon whose history elicited information on the pre-history of Ontario. No, we didn't have dinosaurs roaming the province, but we did have giants of the ice age: mammoths, mastodons, giant beaver and more!

The Presenter: This month, WRN has the pleasure of hosting Peter Russel, past curator for the University of Waterloo's Earth Sciences Museum and recipient of the prestigious Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement.

DECEMBER

December 11, 2017

Annual Holiday Party! ****Note the special date & time**** December 11, 2017 from 7 - 9:30 p.m.

Information:

- Heads up! **Waterloo Region Nature's Annual Holiday Party! Come spend a fun evening with good company, festive music, and delicious food. Many creative and dedicated volunteers give their time every year to decorating the hall in order to make the night a great success.
- Potluck: please bring appetizers or desserts to share!
- Fair trade, bird-friendly, shade grown coffee will be provided, as well as hot mulled local apple cider.

JANUARY

January 22, 2018

From Bats to Boas and Back: The Flora and Fauna on the northeast coast, Costa Rica,
Cano Palma Biological Station **Dr. Kimberley Snarr**

The Presentation: Lying in the middle of the Costa Rican rain forest, Cano Palma Biological Station has been a draw for North American and International Researchers, citizen scientists, and nature lovers since its inception in 1991. This small dynamic biological station began to collect long term baseline data on various taxon starting in the early 2000s. Since then, the station has used simple but effective data collection methods to study mammals, birds, flora, reptiles, and even marine turtles! Training of budding biologists and citizen scientists has aided in this important work, allowing delivery of sound baseline knowledge to the local and national environmental offices in Costa Rica. This information assists in the creation of informed management plans and their work has been widely disseminated. Come out and hear the fascinating history of Cano Palma, the work they do, and get a little taste of what it's like to live and work in the jungle!

JANUARY *(continued)*

January 22, 2018

The Presenter: Dr. Kimberley Snarr is an Environmental Anthropologist and has worked with Cano Palma Biological Station for the past decade mainly as the Director of Conservation and Research, and currently as the Chair of the organization which owns and manages the station, Canadian Organization for Tropical Education and Rainforest Conservation, COTERC. For more information see <http://www.coterc.org/>



FEBRUARY

February 26, 2018

Who Said Trees Couldn't Walk? Exploring the Movement of the Northern Treeline in Response to Climate Change Dr. Andrew Trant

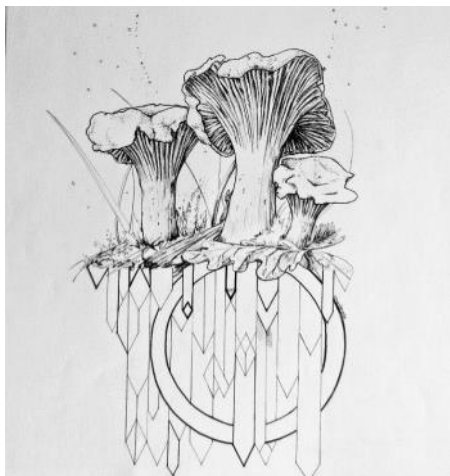
The Presentation: We've all heard of the dramatic effects climate change is having on ecosystems around the planet, including drastic alterations in species compositions. Understanding how the trees will adapt to changing temperatures is extremely important as this response will have extensive ecosystem impacts. Starting in 2013, the international Global Tree Range Expansion Experiment (G-TREE) seeks to increase our understanding of the mechanisms controlling the circumpolar treeline migration. G-TREE is a high impact, widespread ecological experiment that includes representatives from 10 countries and 28 field sites. The project aims to describe large-scale patterns that are limiting this tree-line expansion. Come out to the February monthly meeting to hear one of the scientists behind this influential experiment!

The Presenter: Dr. Andrew Trant is a professor in the School of Environment, Resources, and Sustainability at the University of Waterloo. Andrew's research focuses on exploring eco-cultural legacies that have arisen in this human dominated era. For more information, check out his Eco-Cultural Legacy Lab's website: <http://andrewtrant.com/research/>

MARCH

March 26, 2018

What Lies Beneath: A Closer Look at the Universe of Soils Meaghan Mechler



The Presentation: There are more living organisms in a handful of soil than humans on our entire planet. Though soils seem inert, with a closer inspection we find that they are actually thriving universes of their own! Soils have strong interactions with our globe's hydrosphere, atmosphere, and biosphere and exploring their complexity is key for understanding and protecting terrestrial systems. Come out to March's meeting to be introduced to the wild world of soil life and explore ways you can continue to steward the land from the ground up.

The Presenter: Specializing in soil science, Meaghan Mechler is a graduate student in the Faculty of Environment at the University of Waterloo. She promises that the interactions happening below our feet will be far more thrilling than you imagine!

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Membership fees and all
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Objectives of WRN

TO acquire and disseminate knowledge of natural
history.
TO protect and preserve wildlife.
TO purchase and hold appropriate parcels of land for
the advancement of conservation.
TO support public interest in nature and its preservation
by supporting the enactment of wise legislation and by
other means as falls within the scope of the
Corporation.

General Information

Meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month,
September to May with the exception of December.
Our meetings are free and visitors are always welcome.
Outings are scheduled almost every month.

Advertising Rates for The Heron:

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Quarter Page	\$50	\$130
One-tenth Page (business card)	\$25	\$65

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