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**ONLINE PRESENTATIONS**

*Join us online March 22nd for our next \*virtual\* presentation! Watch your email for presentation and registration details.*

**JOIN OUR BOARD!**

*If you are interested in joining the WRN Board of Directors for the 2021-2022 season, please contact [pastpresident@waterlooregionnature.ca](mailto:pastpresident@waterlooregionnature.ca)*

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

*Our AGM will be May 31. Watch for details to have your vote counted.*



American Woodcock  
 Photo: guizmo\_68 [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

**American Woodcock**

*By Fraser Gibson*

One of the quirkiest birds in Waterloo Region during breeding season is the American Woodcock (AMWO). Classified as a shorebird, it is closely related to sandpipers but it chooses to live in young shrubby deciduous forests and moist, overgrown old fields far from a shoreline. Like grouse and pheasant it is considered a game bird, even though it weighs 25% less than a Rock Pigeon!

Besides these human imposed oddities it is also unique physically. Seeing this short legged, plump bodied, beady eyed, long beaked bird is always a surprise. Some observers jokingly suggest it was assembled from leftover parts.

Oddities aside, it is an incredibly well adapted bird.

The woodcock stalks its prey by walking slowly and listening for movement below the soil surface. Its 6 to 7.5 cm long beak is probed into soft soil searching for its favourite prey- earthworms. When one is found, the bird ably opens just the very tip of its long beak grasping the prey and pulling it from the ground without opening the full length of its beak! Its nostrils are placed very near the skull allowing the bird to make use of the full length of this specially adapted probing beak. The AMWO, aka Bogsucker or Timberdoodle can eat up to its own body weight in worms a day. It also consumes snails, beetles, crickets and grasshoppers.

*Continued on page 9*

**SUBMISSIONS WELCOME!**

If you have any articles, photographs, artwork, reviews, outing recaps, etc. you would like to see in our newsletter, please submit them to [editor@waterlooregionnature.ca](mailto:editor@waterlooregionnature.ca)

Tell us how you are staying connected to nature during the COVID-crisis!

Share your favourite hiking spots and nature sightings with members in the Heron.

## **WRN Directors**

### **President**

David Gascoigne  
519-725-0866  
president@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Vice President**

Janet Ozaruk  
226-748-9905  
vicepresident@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Past President**

Jenna Quinn  
519-362-7921  
pastpresident@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Conservation Director**

Levi Moore  
519-501-4031  
conservation@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Treasurer**

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

### **Membership Director**

Zack Stevens  
226-929-9393  
membership@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Secretary**

Jeremy Bannon  
519-588-9941  
secretary@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Outings Director**

Shannon Pennington  
519-239-3015  
outings@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Program Director**

Snehaa Suryanarayanan  
416-816-0036  
programs@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Publicity Director**

Jason Earle  
519-505-3797  
publicity@waterlooregionnature.ca

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

50 Erb St. West

**In-Person Club Meetings are currently cancelled for the duration of 2020-2021 club season due to COVID-19.**

## **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**

Jim Burrell  
birds@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Ontario Nature Representative**

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

### **Facebook Page Administrator**

Cathi Stewart  
facebook@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **WRN Kids Coordinator**

Giselle Carter 518-584-2205  
kids@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **WRN Teens Coordinator**

Marg Paré 519-500-3450  
teens@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **F. H. Montgomery Wildlife Sanctuary**

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

### **Kitchener's Natural Areas Program (KNAP)**

Josh Shea 519-741-3400 ext.3349  
knap@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Other Inquiries**

info@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Heron Editor**

Jenna Quinn  
519-362-7921  
editor@waterlooregionnature.ca

### **Submission Deadlines:**

**Fall Issue**  
July 15th  
**Winter Issue**  
October 15th  
**Spring Issue**  
February 15th



## President's Corner

By David Gascoigne

I just returned from a trip to the grocery store, and it strikes me how much we have become accustomed to the requirements imposed by COVID. I automatically reach for my mask before getting out of the car and know that I will be required to sanitize my hands before shopping. Practices that have become routine were unheard of a year ago. If I happen to run into friends, we stand two metres apart. No handshakes, no hugs, no contact of any kind. If someone wishes to borrow a book from me, they pick it up on the porch where I have left it for them. No longer are they able to come inside and share a coffee and a muffin or have lunch with us. The world has changed indeed!

Has it really been only a year? It seems as though it has been like this forever!

As naturalists we are less daunted by it all than are other segments of the population. Winter is proceeding as it always does, and in these bright cold days of February, we can look for Snowy Owls, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs and Horned Larks, and other birds that populate our snowy hinterland. Our feeders are hosts to Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins, supplementing the usual cohort of winter species. We are tuned to the signals the season offers us; we know that lengthening hours of daylight herald the approach of spring. We anticipate that over the next couple of weeks we can start to look for the first Red-winged Blackbird, the first American Robin, an early Killdeer perhaps. In the woodlots retreating snow will reveal spring ephemerals starting to poke their green shoots above the ground. The world is turning as it should.

Yet we are still unable to have regular meetings.

Your board of directors has entered into a working agreement with Nature Guelph to bring you Zoom presentations, in addition to filling the evenings when our normal meetings would take place. These opportunities to get together virtually are a very welcome way to keep us in touch with each other and they enable us to see familiar faces we have not seen in many a month. I am quite sure that we all miss the vibrancy of actual meetings; the face-to-face chats before the meeting starts, the catching-up that takes place during the break, the pleasure in having a flesh-and-blood speaker right there with us, the protracted goodbyes when the meeting is over. The vaccine holds out the promise that we may be able to resume regular activities in the fall, but the rollout seems painfully slow, and most of us have no idea when or where we will be able to get our shots.

In the meantime, hang in, stay safe and take solace in the sure knowledge that you are a part of a wonderful community of naturalists.

This is my final message as your President, in what has been a year like no other. Little did I know what was in store when I agreed to serve for a second time. In June, Janet Ozaruk will be taking the helm and I know that you will offer her the same level of support that you bestowed on me. It has been an honour and a privilege, and I urge all of you to consider a term on the Board of Directors. It is my fervent wish that we will be able to get back to the fellowship that we all enjoyed so much, reinstate our outings, and defend nature and the environment in Waterloo Region.

Thank you again for permitting me to serve our club.



# OUTINGS, ACTIVITIES, THINGS TO DO &

## Interested in Leading a Spring Outing?

With the recent lifting of the province's stay-at-home order and Waterloo Region being out of lockdown, we are interested in hearing from club members who would like to lead outings this spring.

As with the highly successful outings from last fall, spring outings would need to follow the most up-to-date public health guidelines and regulations for COVID-19, including for physical distancing and inter-regional travel.

If you are interested in leading an outing this spring, please contact Outings Director Shannon Pennington ([outings@waterlooregionnature.ca](mailto:outings@waterlooregionnature.ca)).

### Virtual Monthly Speakers & Meetings

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In place of our regular **WRN meetings on the fourth Monday evening of each month**, join us virtually over Zoom for invited speakers and presentations on a variety of nature-based topics. Watch your email or check the website for details of these monthly presentations.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on May 31, 2021. Details will be shared regarding voting with members via email and/or regular mail as the date approaches.

Additionally, our members are welcome and encouraged to enjoy **Nature Guelph's** monthly Speaker Series and Wildflower Series hosted virtually over Zoom.

Visit [www.natureguelph.ca/events/](http://www.natureguelph.ca/events/) or watch your email for more details and to register.

Upcoming presentation topics include:

- ♦ Stopping the Collapse of Nature (March 11 @ 7:30PM)
- ♦ From Seed to Mature Plant (March 17 @ 7:30PM)
- ♦ Small-Scale-Big-Impact Actions with Lorraine Johnson (March 30 @ 7:00PM)
- ♦ The Highgate Mastodon Story (April 8 @ 7:30PM)
- ♦ Edible Native Plants (April 21 @ 7:30PM)
- ♦ Wilderness Pleasures with Kevin Callan (May 13 @ 7:30PM)
- ♦ The Owl Foundation– A fly-by-night organization? (June 10 @ 7:30PM)



## ***If you have a bat box scientists want to know about it!***

Bats in Canada face multiple threats from habitat loss and disease. A bat box is a simple way to provide additional roosting habitat for bats, yet little is known about bat box use in Canada.



If you have a bat box and would like to participate in this study, please fill out this online multiple-choice survey with questions about your bat box. Your participation is important even if your box does not have any bats! [https://trentu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_86og8C3MlgO2ff7](https://trentu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_86og8C3MlgO2ff7)

This project is in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Canadian Wildlife Federation. More information on the project is posted here: <https://rrvfn.org/canadian-bat-project/>

## **City Nature Challenge 2021: Waterloo Region**

Let's show off the amazing biodiversity of Waterloo Region! Join us April 30—May 9 in making observations about the wild organisms you find in your backyard, neighbourhood, park, or natural area. We want to see all the bugs, plants, and animals you can find, anywhere in the region. Ten organizations across Waterloo Region have partnered to get our community outside and noticing the natural beauty around us. Taking part is easy while staying close to home and following COVID-19 public health recommendations:

1. Find wildlife. It can be any plant, animal, or any other evidence of life found in your backyard, neighbourhood or park.
2. Take a picture of what you find. Be sure to note the location of the critter or plant.
3. Share your observations through iNaturalist.

Visit the Idea Exchange website for more information at [www.ideaexchange.org](http://www.ideaexchange.org).

## **ID Help Needed!**

Dust off your field guides and keep your field skills fresh by helping fellow WRN members and the greater community identify local nature sightings on our iNaturalist project.

<https://inaturalist.ca/projects/waterloo-region-nature-local-nature-sightings>

Join the Waterloo Region Nature: Local Nature Sightings project and all nature sightings you post to iNaturalist from Waterloo Region will be automatically added.

New to iNaturalist? Visit <https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/getting+started> for help getting started.

## **Huron Fringe Birding Festival**

The in-person Huron Fringe Birding Festival for 2021 will be “migrating” into a virtual “Festival-Lite” which will run during our normal time frame of May 28 – 31 and June 3 – 6, 2021. The Huron Fringe Birding Festival Committee hopes that you will join us for our series of Webinars! They are planned for 7:00 pm on each of the seven evenings to ensure you have the opportunity to get out birding during the day. Visit the website below for registration details and an event schedule.

<https://friendsofmacgregor.org/page/huron-fringe-birding-festival>



## WRN Photo Gallery



Snowy Owl Photos: F. Gorenc



Black-capped Chickadee and Blue Jay  
Photos: D. Thomas

Thank You  
Volunteers!

TO ALL OUR  
WRN MEMBERS  
WHO TOOK  
THAT EXTRA  
STEP THIS YEAR  
TO HELP OUT,  
**YOU HAVE LEFT  
YOUR MARK!**



**Do you have nature or event photos to share? Send them to**  
**[editor@waterlooregionnature.ca](mailto:editor@waterlooregionnature.ca)**

## Nature Kids Corner

By Giselle Carter

Here are a few things your children can do to engage with nature as spring returns:

1. Some birds migrate to warmer places in winter. Can you name 5 birds that migrate? Have you seen any of them return already? Research how they know when to return. Is their food source already available? How do they survive when it is still snowy and cold here? (You can also mark on a calendar the date you see them return. If you have a safe place to keep it until next year, you can compare the dates. Did they come earlier or later than other years?)
2. Go to your local woods or creek. Look for footprints. Who lives there? Do you see the animals who belong to these footprints, or do you just see the footprints? How did these animal neighbours survive the winter?
3. Pick a tree (or two). Take a picture of the same branch every week. Watch the changes occur as spring comes. If you picked two trees, compare whether they are changing at the same rate or if one is ahead of the other.
4. Take a neighbourhood walk looking for bulbs coming up. Which bulbs come up first? What colours do you see? Can you see crocuses? Tulips? Daffodils? Grape hyacinth? Add your own to the chart and record your findings. Use a chart like this to tally your findings each time you go:



Photo: G. Carter

Date	Crocus	Daffodils	Tulips	Hyacinth	

5. Take a walk in your local woods. Look for the early flowers coming up and keep a tally each time you go. Watch the forest floor change as spring comes. If you don't know what these look like, research them first and draw pictures so you know what to look for. If you have a field guide, you can take it along as well. You can also research Ontario Ephemerals to find the names of other flowers that come up first on the forest floor.

Date	Trout Lily	Mayapple	Trillium	Bloodroot	Jack-in-the–

## Membership Report

By Zack Stevens

### Thank You to Our Donors

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 Our anonymous donors

### Welcome, New Members

Gary Adam	Daniel DeVries
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With sadness, we inform you of the passing of  
**Gloria Hazel Zimmerman** on November 20, 2020.  
 She will be remembered as a long-time WRN member  
 and volunteer, including former editor of the Heron.  
 Our sympathies are with all those missing Gloria.



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## American Woodcock

*continued from pg. 1*

Its large bulging eyes are placed well back and high on its head giving it the unique ability to see a full 360 degrees. These well placed eyes allow it to probe for food, yet still have a clear view of its entire surroundings. This unusual eye placement means its ears are found in front of its eyes. Additionally, its brain is upside down, unique among birds, and is positioned below its eyes.

The Timberdoodle is possibly best known for its spectacular flight display, a song and flight routine designed to attract female attention. In late March the male AMWO chooses a "singing ground" territory, an open area of young seedlings or an old field with a scattering of small trees. The male begins his serenade at last light by issuing a series of loud buzzy "peents." He then takes to the air, wing feathers emitting a twittering sound as he ascends in a widening spiral before disappearing in the darkening sky. Once reaching a height of about 300 feet he begins a zigzag descent while uttering a chirping sound, becoming silent just before

landing near his takeoff point. If impressed, a female flies in. After mating she leaves the immediate area and has sole responsibility for rearing young. The male returns to his attention seeking ritual and will do so for the following month.

Meanwhile, the female clears a small depression in leaf litter as her nest. She lays one egg a day and once completing the normal clutch of four eggs begins a 21 day incubation period. Adult Timberdoodles are amazingly well camouflaged and only flush from a nest when almost stepped upon. The equally well camouflaged chicks are precocial and leave the nest within hours of hatching. The hen broods her chicks frequently at first but they grow and learn to find their own food quickly.

Within one month the young are almost as large as their parents and fly skillfully and after two months they are ready to continue in the wingbeats of their uniquely adapted parents.



# COVID-19

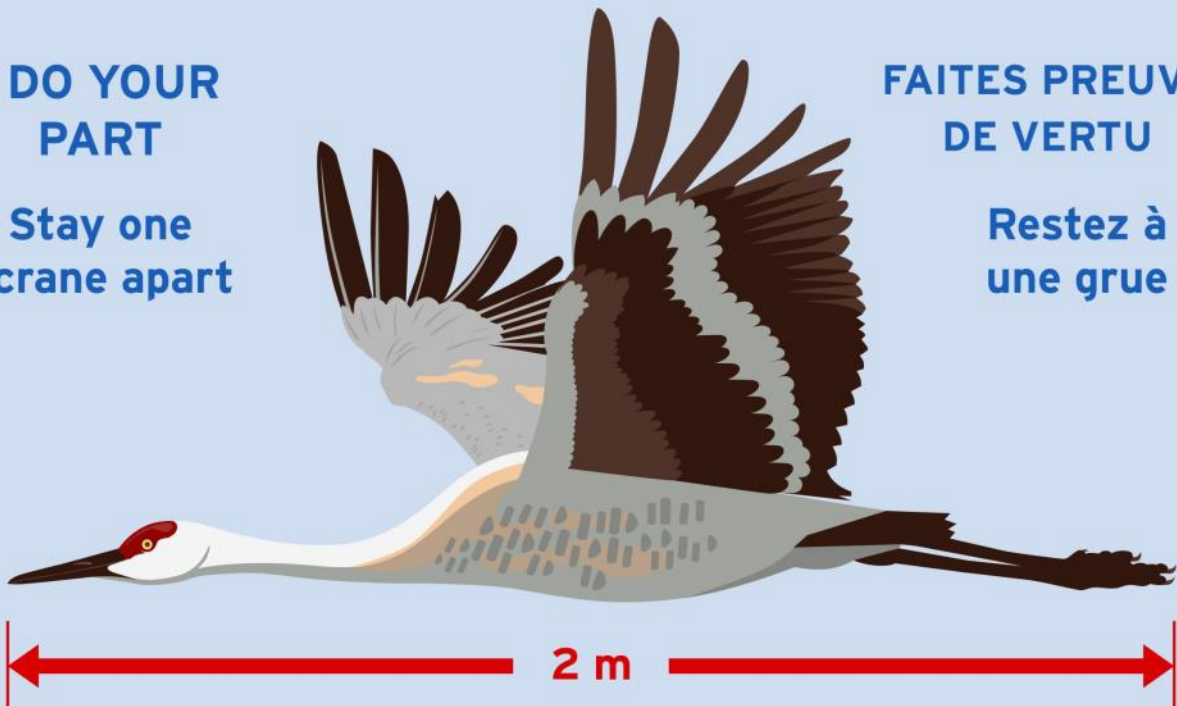


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PART**

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crane apart**

**FAITES PREUVE  
DE VERTU**

**Restez à  
une grue**



## Ontario Nature Report

By Fraser Gibson

### Minister's Zoning Orders (MZO)

The Government of Ontario is showing its true colours with recent moves to ride roughshod over protections for Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs). The first sign of trouble was a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) to demolish three PSWs on agriculturally zoned land in Vaughan so that a Walmart distribution facility could be constructed. The second was a decision to destroy a large coastal PSW in the City of Pickering to make room for a warehousing facility, again through an MZO.

Unfortunately, developers and their pals on municipal councils have found a new way to circumvent wetland protections: MZOs. This tool, the current go-to of the Ontario government, allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ignore provincial policy, bypass municipal planning processes and directly zone land for pet projects. The Minister does not have to give notice or consult with the public prior to issuing an MZO and there is no opportunity for appeal.



West Duffins Creek by The Cosmonaut via WikiCommons (CC BY-SA 2.5CA)

In cahoots with the Pickering Council, for example, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued an MZO to override policy protections for two large wetlands (each about 10 hectares) within the provincially significant Lower Duffins Creek Wetland Complex. That complex is among the largest remaining on the north shore of Lake Ontario in the Greater Toronto Area.

Ontario Nature is urging the Government of Ontario to respect and uphold protections for PSWs and to stop its misuse of MZOs.

### Dire Consequences of “Schedule 6” Amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act

The Ontario Government has ignored a deafening chorus of expert warnings, to instead reward the worst developers and land speculators by incapacitating the system that protects source water and guards Ontarians against flooding, landslides and other environmental disasters.

These changes will let developers dump, build and excavate largely unchecked in high-risk areas, risking impaired water quality, property damage, and environmental degradation, and endangering public safety across the province.

*Continued →*



The most damaging of the changes to Conservation Authorities include:


- ⇒ Natural Resources and Forestry Ministers (MNRF) can now ignore the science-based work of Conservation Authorities to force through dangerous development applications already reviewed and rejected by arms-length Conservation Authorities
- ⇒ That Minister can even usurp the entire permitting authority of Conservation Authority experts, making technical decisions about what will cause flooding or landslides through a backroom political process, without the watershed knowledge and specialized expert advice that would make a rational decision possible
- ⇒ When the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issues a MZO for development, Conservation Authorities will be forced to issue a permit – even if their own experts know it will cause flooding or erosion, and jeopardize human health and safety
- ⇒ Developers will be allowed to build within key protected ecological areas if they pay a fee, a failed process patterned after the one used in the U.S. often called “pay to slay”

The gutting of Conservation Authorities shows that this Ontario government ignores the people. It's a government for land speculators and the worst sorts of developers,” said Tim Gray, Executive Director of Environmental Defence. “This undermining of Conservation Authorities takes the province back over 70 years, to a more dangerous time when we didn't know better.”

“It's shocking how the government has ignored tens of thousands of Ontarians,” said Caroline Schultz, Executive Director of Ontario Nature. “There is so much at stake, yet the government has chosen to pander to its developer buddies at everyone else's expense.”

### Mark Your Calendar for Ontario Nature's 2021 Annual Gathering

Planning for the 2021 Annual Gathering has begun. The gathering will happen in early June and will feature Ontario Nature's Annual General Meeting and the 2020/2021 Conservation Awards. Because of ongoing restrictions on in-person gatherings, the event will look different than in past years but we are still planning to host a number of fun activities participants can join. Stay tuned to our Annual Gathering webpage for more details.



Baltimore Oriole

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Adult Individual \$35  
Senior (60+) \$30  
Student (19+) \$25  
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for youth (<18)  
Club year runs from  
Sept. to August; \*Membership  
fees are waived for 2020-2021

Cheques made payable to:  
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317 Highland Rd E.  
Kitchener, N2M 3W6

Membership details at:

[https://  
waterlooregionnature.ca/  
membership/](https://waterlooregionnature.ca/membership/)

**WRN is a registered  
charitable organization.  
Membership fees and all  
donations are tax  
deductible.**

### **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:**

Advertisement Size	Per issue	Full year ( 3 issues)
Full Page	\$200	\$520
Half Page	\$100	\$260
Quarter Page	\$50	\$130
One-tenth Page (business card)	\$25	\$65

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Information is written and  
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the authors and are not  
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