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## ATTEND A WRN OUTING!

Visit [waterlooregionnature.ca/outings](http://waterlooregionnature.ca/outings) to see the full calendar of events and to register



*Photo: Mary Ann Vanden Elzen*

# THE HERON

## WINTER 2023

RECEPTION HALL  
 WATERLOO KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
 50 ERB STREET WEST, WATERLOO



## GeoTime Trail Learning Together Outing Recap

*by Judy Watson*

**O**n a beautiful September morning, Dianne Garceau, Mary Ann Vanden Elzen, Michelle Stelter, Sandy Heise and Judy Watson walked four million years on the Geotime Trail.



Yes! Four Million Years. The trail is based on four million years of geological history of Waterloo Region. Each kilometre covers a million years of history with many very informative trail signs. Some of the interesting facts we learned were that there were volcanos in the area at one time, there was coral growing and our area was once in the southern hemisphere before there was a significant geological shift on the planet.

We also enjoyed learning together about plants, and birds and even a sun dial. Each person happily did their 'homework assignment' to do a wee study on a certain topic which provided us with interesting knowledge. We learned cardinals mate for life and that their feathers are red as a result of their diet. We learned there are many species of goldenrod that attract different pollinators including several bees that are oligoleges (specialist pollinators) of *Solidago* spp. (Goldenrods).

We learned Gray Dogwood has a grey stem, the fruit feeds many species of birds and it is an aggressive native bush. When we reached the sundial we learned that as the earth moves around the sun, a shadow is cast and changes throughout the day. The 'dial' is not like a regular clock face but rather there is a portion that is blank which represents dusk to dawn.

Along the way we inspected both orange and yellow jewelweed and each of us had to try out the bursting seed pods. We saw a puffball, some wild cucumber with beautiful leaves and seed pods. There is a part of the trail that always seems to have many types of birds because of a variety of backyard feeders. We were all pleased to see a few hummingbirds stocking up for their long flights.

The time passed quickly as we walked the four million years. It was a great outing for all.

## **WRN Directors**

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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 FREE**

All parking access is off Dupont Street.

## **Positions of Responsibility**

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### **Submission Deadlines:**

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

We are always looking for volunteers to fill positions of responsibility and sit on the Board of Directors. Please reach out to pastpresident@waterlooregionnature.ca if you want to learn more.

# President's Corner

*By Heather Polan & Brett Fried*

**A**s we embrace the fall season, we wanted to highlight and remind our members about the incredible bird watching in Waterloo Region. Waterloo Region's diverse ecosystems and picturesque landscapes offers birdwatching enthusiasts a captivating array of species. And fall is the perfect time to join the vibrant community of birders!

In total 310 species have been recorded in Waterloo Region! Some of the region's top birding locations include Columbia Lake, Laurel Creek Conservation Area, **rare Charitable Research Reserve**, Hespeler Mill Pond, Lakeside Park and the Huron Natural Area. These sites offer a chance to observe waterfowl, herons, birds of prey and passerines in their natural habitats. It is a perfect time of year to visit these hotspots to experience migrants as they pass through our area.

For those interested in birding, the '[Waterloo Region Birds' Facebook page](#) is an excellent resource to share sightings and learn from the local birding community. This online community includes experienced birders and enthusiastic amateurs, all sharing their sightings, photos, and knowledge about local avifauna. It serves as a hub for engaging discussions and sharing tips on where to spot rare and migrating birds, creating a dynamic platform for

local bird watchers to connect and learn from one another.

For those seeking guidance and a curated birding experience, look no further than our very own WRN outings. These guided outings offer insights into the region's birdlife, taking enthusiasts to carefully selected hotspots, and conservation areas. The knowledgeable guides share their expertise, pointing out unique species, identifying birdcalls, and sharing interesting facts about the region's ecological balance. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned birder, WRN outings provide an opportunity to immerse yourself in the diversity of Waterloo Region's avifauna.

As we approach winter it is also time to start thinking about the Christmas Bird Count. This is one of the most anticipated events in the birding calendar as it gathers enthusiasts in Waterloo Region for a day of winter birding. This annual event involves volunteers counting birds within a designated area, helping scientists monitor trends in bird populations and migration patterns. Are you interested in participating in the Cambridge or Kitchener Christmas Bird Count? More information will be available on the WRN website or you can visit:

[www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/christmas-bird-count](http://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/christmas-bird-count)

Happy Birding!!



*Photos: Brett Fried*



# OUTINGS, ACTIVITIES, THINGS TO DO &

We had a busy late summer and early fall, with many outings offered by club members. Thanks to everyone who stepped forward to share their love of nature! There are a few more outings this fall and we also have some birding dates for next spring (visit [waterlooregionnature.ca/outings/](https://waterlooregionnature.ca/outings/) for the details).

Let Kathy Mortimer, Outings Director, know if you would like to lead an outing! You may want to share your expertise in an area, or you might just want to share your passion for fungi / plants/ or some other part of the natural world.

Please feel free to invite a friend along on the outings. It's a great way to spend time with friends, and they might just want to join the club!

## UPCOMING CLUB OUTINGS

**All outings require advanced registration by visiting [waterlooregionnature.ca/outings/](https://waterlooregionnature.ca/outings/)**

Unless otherwise specified, meeting point locations will be provided upon registration.

Non-members are welcome to register and attend outings but must sign a waiver.

In the event of rain and unless otherwise specified, outings will be cancelled and not rescheduled.

Participants should check the website the day before to confirm if the outing is proceeding in the event that rain is a possibility.

## Bluebird Nest Box Workshop

Sunday, November 19 from 1:30pm to 4:30pm

[Register online!](https://waterlooregionnature.ca/outings/)

Build a bluebird nest box with guidance from Eric, a local carpentry instructor. Tools and materials are provided, and you will learn how to make a nest box recommended by the [Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society](https://www.ontarioeasternbluebirdsociety.com/). Take home a nest box that you can mount on your own property, gift to your rural friends or your favourite bluebird trail manager!

Materials will be pre-cut and assembly will involve hand tools – saw, hammer, chisel, etc. Appropriate for teens and adults. Cost \$60.



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## Cozy Nature Book Club

2023 Dates: November 20, December 11

2024 Dates: January 15, February 19, and March 18

[Register online](#) to receive an emailed zoom link to attend.

The book club runs online, from November to March, during the coldest months of the year when staying home and reading is an excellent, cozy activity! Bring something to share - a nature book, old or new, a nature-based film, radio show or talk, piece of art, special sighting or... it's up to you.

Each person takes about 5 minutes to share and there are a few minutes for questions. You are encouraged to make yourself a cup of tea or other hot beverage, to enjoy during the meeting.

## WRN Holiday Walk

Monday, December 11 at 7:30pm for approximately 1 hour

Waterloo Park. There is free parking in the Seagram Dr. Parking Lot.

We'll meet at the edge of the parking lot by the trail going into the park.

Join us for a stroll around lovely Waterloo Park to enjoy the festive lights display and early winter weather. Dress for the weather. Bring a thermos of cider or hot chocolate, or money to buy some there (if available for sale). Washrooms available. **Registration NOT required.** Hope to see you there!



## Christmas Bird Count 2023

Counts happen in over 2000 localities throughout the Western Hemisphere. Each CBC is conducted on a single day between Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> and Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>. Counts are carried out within defined diameter circles that stay the same from year to year. They are organized, usually as group efforts at the local level, often by a birding club or naturalist organization.

Find a count near you at: [www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/christmas-bird-count](http://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/christmas-bird-count)

Kitchener CBC: December 16, 2023

Cambridge CBC: December 17, 2023

## Cross-Country Skiing at the Schneider Property

Saturday, January 6 from 10:00am to 12:00pm

[Register online!](#)

Bring your skis and join Janet to ski in 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 are a variety of trails to choose from and we can design a loop suited to our group. Bonus fact! In July 2023 it was announced that the Schneider family donated almost 100 acres of this land to [rare Charitable Research Reserve](#) in order to preserve its natural state.



## Looking Ahead: 2024 Outings

Monday, April 1: Birding at Long Point Provincial Park

Tuesday, May 14: Birding at Rondeau Point Provincial Park

Wednesday, May 29: Birding in Glen Morris



## Monthly Member Meeting & Nature Presentations

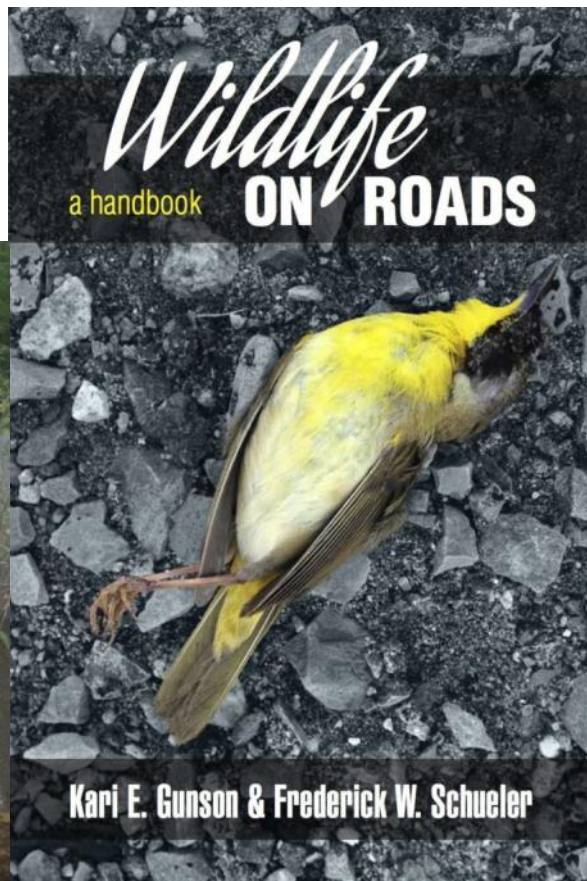
Anyone with an interest in nature is welcome to attend our free monthly meetings. We start with a few announcements of noteworthy upcoming events, conservation issues or projects. We welcome new members and guests and we invite all to share their recent local noteworthy nature sightings. The **main presentation begins shortly after 8pm** featuring a guest speaker on one of a variety of interesting topics.

Meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month at 7:30pm in **hybrid** format. Join in person at Reception Hall, Waterloo Knox Presbyterian Church, 50 Erb St. West, Waterloo or register at [waterlooregionnature.ca/meetings/](http://waterlooregionnature.ca/meetings/) to join on zoom.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS:** For full presentation descriptions and presenter biographies and register to attend online visit: [waterlooregionnature.ca/meetings/](http://waterlooregionnature.ca/meetings/)

### **Monday, November 27, 2023 @ 7:30pm – Implementing Road Ecology into Municipal Road Projects: A Recipe for Success!**

Kari Gunson, Project Manager for the Road Ecology Working Group with the Long Point Biosphere Foundation, will provide an overview of road ecology and its application to road projects in Ontario. She will focus on particular case studies of road mitigation for a variety of wetland-forest animals such as turtles. For each project she will discuss the challenges and successes of the project highlighting efforts of her monitoring work. In conclusion, Kari will synthesize lessons learned to provide recommendations for improvement. She will conclude with a summary of her 'Wildlife on Roads' Handbook and how complete and accurate 'wildlife on roads' data can be used by community scientists to promote inclusion of necessary wildlife mitigation in our regional road projects.



### **Monday, December 11, 2023 @ 7:30 – WRN Holiday Walk**

Join us for a stroll around lovely Waterloo Park to enjoy the festive lights display and early winter weather. See details on pg.5.

**Monday, January 22, 2024 @ 7:30pm** – Biological control of invasive phragmites  
Claire Schon, PhD student, University of Waterloo

**Monday, February 26, 2024 @ 7:30pm** – The Science and Mystery of Bats  
Liam McGuire, Associate Professor (Biology)  
University of Waterloo

There are over 1,400 species of bats worldwide, but most remain mysterious to most people. As nocturnal animals that fly above our heads and vocalize at frequencies we can't hear, most people don't get to experience bats up close. Dr. Liam McGuire has been fortunate to have made a career studying these fascinating animals and has lots of fun stories to share, some about the science he does and some about the mysteries still to be solved. We will explore some amazing bats from around the world, and learn about the species closer to home.



Hoary Bat © Sherri & Brock Fenton

**Monday, March 25, 2024 @ 7:30pm** – *presentation to be announced*

**Monday, April 22, 2024 @ 7:30pm** – Wetlands, Rebecca Rooney, Associate Professor (Biology)  
University of Waterloo

**Monday, May 27, 2024 @ 7:30pm** – Moths All Around Us, Alan MacNaughton, Vice-President  
Toronto Entomologists' Association

**Celebrating Birds**

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**MacGregor Point Provincial Park**

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& May 30 - June 2, 2024**

**www.huronfringebirdingfestival.ca**

A photograph of a black and orange bird, likely a Red-winged Blackbird, perched on a branch. The bird has a black head and back with a bright orange patch on its wing. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

## Pipits Outings

WRN members are invited to attend Pipits club outings. Pipits outings typically run on Sunday mornings and WRN members can attend for \$15 per outing, or can purchase a membership for \$40 (single) or \$50 (family).

To learn more about the group and outings, please visit: [thepipits.com](http://thepipits.com).

## Interested in leading an outing?

Offers to lead outings for any season are always welcome. Remember, you don't need to be an expert to lead an outing. Please contact the Outings Director at [outings@waterlooregionnature.ca](mailto:outings@waterlooregionnature.ca).

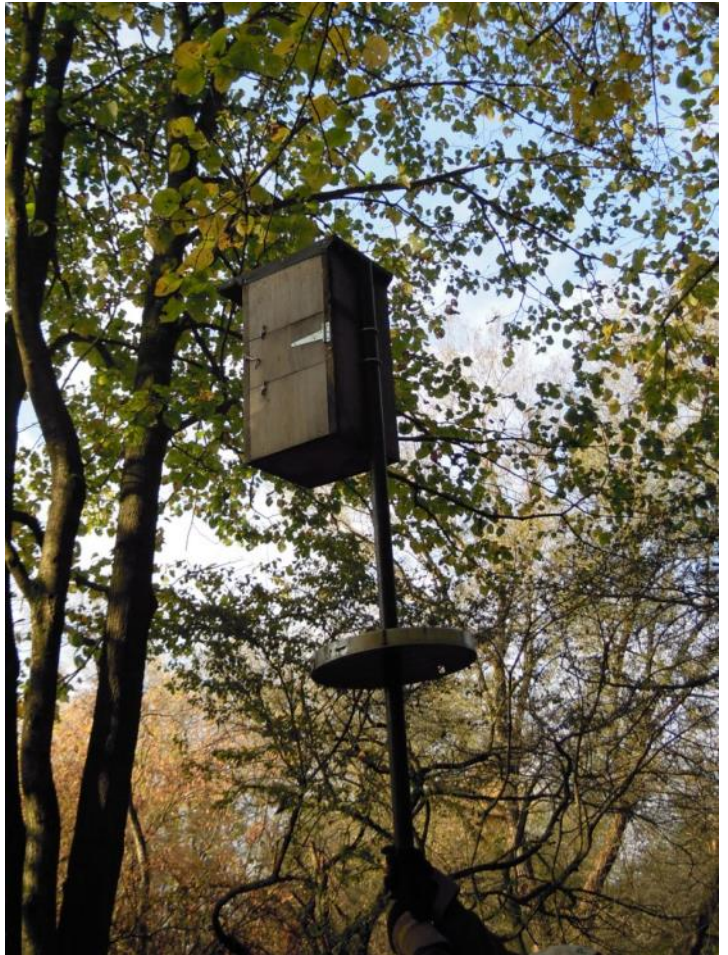


## Wood Duck Boxes at Montgomery

*By Paul Bigelow*

On Friday, October 13, 2023, the Montgomery Committee performed our usual fall maintenance on the two Wood Duck boxes we have at the F.H. Montgomery Wildlife Sanctuary. The boxes are cleaned out and new wood shavings are added. There is always a bit of suspense ahead of opening the boxes.

The boxes are mounted fairly high up on a pole with a predator guard. Each mounting pole is unlocked and then it swings down so that the box can be opened and cleaned.



The first box we opened had a large amount of fluffy down in with the wood chips.

The egg shells look like predation might have occurred, since normally we find membranes and shell fragments broken up by the ducklings moving around just before they leave the nest.







At the second box we discovered that there had been two different residents over the summer.

There was some trepidation in removing the Yellowjacket nest, but it had already been fully vacated.

An owl pellet and feathers were obvious clues as to the second resident. There is a reason that Blue Jays are not fond of owls.

This year was missing some of the excitement of two previous years, when a surprised occupant went for an unexpected ride.



## SUBMISSIONS NEEDED!

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)

Photos: Paul & Pat Bigelow



## WRN Teens Report

By Marg Paré

**W**RN Teens and adult volunteers did **weekly monitoring of four projects** at SpruceHaven this summer! It was lots of work but we're proud to have another season of data on salamanders, tree frogs, snakes, and the inhabitants of our nest boxes (Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and House Wrens).

**Monitoring snakes** was new this spring. We're learning the Ontario Nature Long-term Snake Monitoring Protocol. In spite of flipping those huge boards in the hot sun every week, we never did count any snakes! We saw a couple of impressive Eastern Gartersnakes but never when the stopwatch was running so they weren't 'official.' Hoping for more snake interaction next year!

We took a break in August and started **Teens Year 6** in September 2023! In the fall, we **monitor only salamanders and tree frogs**. We had great numbers of Red-backed Salamanders -- over 40 on one day! After fall monitoring ends, our **data team** will put all that data into spreadsheets. Other Teens will prepare for our second regional **Envirothon** competition at UW in the spring. Our first time participating, we surprised ourselves by placing first at regionals and fourth at provincials! Another proud moment this fall was having a WRN Teen attend the **Ontario Nature Youth Summit**. Thanks to WRN members for sponsoring Matt!

As well as monitoring and teams, we also have one or two **learning or work projects** each month. In July, we toured the **Earth Sciences Museum** at the University of Waterloo and used microscopes in the lab to identify rock and mineral samples. In September, Teens set up **moth traps** with Alan Macnaughton at SpruceHaven. Overnight we caught a great variety of moth species that share our area with us! At the end of September, Fraser Gibson taught us **forest ecology and tree identification** at Breithaupt Park where a cooperative Eastern Screech Owl posed for photos!

In October, we visited the new **Mike Schout Wetland Preserve** in New Hamburg with Phil Holst, the preserve's designer. The space improves water quality and manages flooding, while providing habitat for terrestrial, aquatic and avian species! We hope to go back to learn what species make this their home and to see changes as the young

trees mature. **Upcoming Teens activities** include collecting wildflower seeds for pollinator projects and fun joint events with WRN Kids!

**If you're a teenager or in high-school or almost either of those, look up Waterloo Region Nature Teens!**

Register at [waterlooregionnature.ca/teens](https://waterlooregionnature.ca/teens) or write to Marg at [teens@waterlooregionnature.ca](mailto:teens@waterlooregionnature.ca) for more information.



WRN Teens Activities Photos: Marg Paré



## Waterloo Region Nature Kids!

*By Rachelle Swayze*

What a wonderful start to the WRN Kids! In September we had two outings. The first was to Breithaupt Park where we learned about squirrels and played a fun squirrel game.

Check out our blog: <https://waterlooregionnature.ca/2023/10/01/wrn-kids-squirrels-2023/>

Our second outing was to Bechtel Park where we found some deer beds, snakes and salamanders. We also built shelters in the woods with sticks, ropes and sheets.

Check out our blog: <https://waterlooregionnature.ca/2023/10/08/wrn-kids-shelter-building-2023/>

Our October outing is to Huron Natural Area where we will be playing a predator-prey game and hopefully hand feeding the friendly chickadees. In November we are hosting Scienstational Sssnakes! The WRN Teens will be joining us for this very interesting educational program complete with live snakes. In December we are meeting up with the Teens for a bonus outing to SpruceHaven to trim branches and plants along the trails. We can keep the trimmings to make seasonal home decorations.

Some outing ideas we are working on for the winter include: Christmas Bird Count for Kids, snowshoeing and owl prowling.

It is great to be out in nature learning and playing together! You can register at <https://waterlooregionnature.ca/kids/>



WRN Teens Activities

Photos: Marg Paré



## September Birding Outings, recaps

*By Stew Macdonald*

### ***September 2nd, 2023***

Fourteen enthusiastic participants met at the Stork YMCA in Waterloo for a two hour excursion along the fringe of Laurel Creek Conservation Area. We were greeted by generally sunny skies and warm and humid temperatures.

A spotting scope was set up in the parking lot to view a juvenile Osprey in its nest, just prior to its departure for its wintering grounds. From there, the group proceeded westward from the YMCA to search for birds.

We were rewarded by a flyover of a few Great Egrets, which was one of our target birds for the day. A Green Heron was spotted as well. The group took notice of numerous sightings of Blue Jays during the outing. Their numbers seem to be increasing which is encouraging.

As we proceeded along our route, the group heard a Warbling Vireo. The late summer berry crop attracted the attention of a large flock of Cedar

Waxwings and a few American Robins. Two Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks were spotted, in fall plumage along with several Red-Winged Blackbirds.

I was able to get permission from a local homeowner in advance of the outing to set up the spotting scope on his property. We were rewarded with an excellent viewing of a perched adult Black-Crowned Night Heron, one of our target birds! In addition, another Great Egret was spotted. All from the homeowners front lawn!

Long distance views with the spotting scope provided sightings of Pied-Billed Grebes on Laurel Lake. Other notable birds on the outing included American Goldfinch, Common Yellowthroat and Gray Catbird. The weather started to turn very humid near the end of the outing, and the bird activity settled down.

Thanks to all participants who joined in on this fun excursion.

### ***September 30th, 2023***

Ten outing enthusiasts were greeted by sunny skies and mild temperatures as we met at the Waterloo Recreation Complex and proceeded with our walk into the Waterloo Park area.

The walk proceeded around Silver Lake where a number of Double-Crested Cormorants and a cooperative Great Blue Heron were spotted. The group then hiked into Waterloo Park.

The highlights of the outing were a Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker that provided good views. Numerous Song Sparrows and American Goldfinches were spotted throughout the morning.

The bird activity increased once we walked beside Laurel Creek. A Belted Kingfisher put on quite a show for us, bobbing and weaving along the creek. We were fortunate to observe a flock of 20+ Cedar Waxwings gorging on fall berries, along with American Robins.

A couple of surprises awaited us. An Eastern Phoebe was observed gleaning insects off of a light fixture. And an unexpected Tennessee Warbler in fall plumage provided excellent views! A small group of White-Throated Sparrows were spotted in a wooded area. In addition, flights of Blue Jays entertained us, along with sightings of Downy Woodpecker and Northern Flicker.

Walking back to the rec center, one of our group spotted a perched Red-Tailed Hawk and we were able to share this sighting with a group of excited youngsters who were on the path with us.

Over 25 species of birds were spotted, and along with the fall colours in the park, made for a fun excursion for all.



## WRN Photo Gallery



***Do you have local  
nature or WRN event  
photos to share?  
Send them to  
editor@  
waterlooregion  
nature.ca***



Clockwise from top left: Treefrog (Photo: WRN Teen Nicole); Monarch Butterfly (Photo: WRN Teen Owen); Sandhill Cranes (Photo: Mike Weissmann); Praying Mantis (Photo: WRN Teen Brynn); Milbert's Tortoiseshell (Photo: Mike Weissmann)

## Membership Report

By Judy Watson

A reminder to members to renew your membership for the September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024 year. You can renew online or you can mail a cheque along with the renewal form you can print from the WRN website. <https://waterlooregionnature.ca/membership/>

### Welcome New Members!

Carla Aquino  
Conrad Barrington  
Lynne Barrington  
Kathleen Barsoum  
Sabine Behnk  
Linda Bree  
Beverly Church  
Anne Dahmer  
Parick Douglas-Meis  
Penny Douglas  
Steven Furino  
Julie Hillwood  
Linda  
Karen Medsger  
Richard Nancarrow  
Mary Jane Oates  
Kathy Puskas

### Thank You Donors!

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Fraser & Nancy Gibson	Sandy & Jamie Hill & David Westfall
Geoff & Ruthann Moore	Selwyn Tomkun & Victoria Ho
Graham MacDonald & Margaret Lewis-MacDonald	Wayne & Lynda Buck



Kruti Leelo Illustration

### Rock Sandwort (*Sabulina michauxii*)

Illustration by Kruti Patel

Following the WRN Alvar field trip in  
June 2023.



# Ontario Nature Report

By Fraser Gibson

## New Toolkit for Advocacy

Ontario Nature has revised and expanded their tipsheets on speaking up for nature. There are four tipsheets that make up the toolkit: [Influencing Decision Makers](#), [Letter Writing](#), [Media Outreach](#) and [Making a Delegation](#). Please consider reading the tipsheets most relevant to you and use your skills to advocate for nature.

## New Wetlands Resources Now Available

Ontario Nature has released two new wetlands resources – an online [primer](#) and a corresponding [brochure](#) highlighting wetlands as nature-based climate solutions. The brochure, provides a high-level introduction to the climate mitigation and adaptation benefits wetlands provide.

For those who want to dive deeper, the online primer expands on these benefits and connects readers with a suite of additional resources.

These new resources can help increase your awareness about the climate value of wetlands and strengthen the case for wetland protection and restoration in Ontario.

## The 2023 Youth Summit for Mother Earth

The Summit was held September 22–24 at Camp Wahanowin. This annual, cross-cultural event for youth across Ontario brings together young people aged 14–20 for a weekend of nature exploration, environmental learning and outdoor fun.

WRN covered the costs for two teens to attend the event. Matt, a WRN Teen whom WNR sponsored to the Youth Summit enjoyed his experience though he wasn't able to participate in the whole weekend.



Kestrels in a tree. Photo: Mike Weissmann

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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; New member-  
ships 1/2 price after Jan.31st

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the next meeting or mail to:

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Suite #353  
5-420 Erb Street West  
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Membership details at:

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

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Please see page 2 for  
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