

---

# Nature Niagara News



Bulletin No.317  
August 2016

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year

ISSN: 0829-1241

Niagara Falls  
Nature Club

---

Post Office Box 901, Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2E 6V8  
[niagarafallsnatureclub.org](http://niagarafallsnatureclub.org)

---

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings, fellow nature club members, As daylight hours dwindle we reflect on the summer months just passed, and look ahead to another exciting fall season.

Our Wednesday evening walks included several new participants, always welcome, with everyone learning a little more about the flora and fauna of Niagara region, and about each other.

We participated in the Bert Miller Club's Butterfly Festival in June, an excellent opportunity to engage young people and their parents in activities and discoveries in nature.

At the Coronation Centre we talked with and handed out walks brochures to many interested seniors.

Concern about the Thundering Waters development proposal remained a major issue throughout the summer. See Joyce's article on the subject.

Through our new website and our page on Facebook, we were contacted by Patricia Turnbull Parker, granddaughter of Roy Sheppard, one of our founding members. She was interested to know how the club is doing, and I was happy to tell her that we are thriving, and that our conservation award is named in memory of her grandfather. She recalls him as being happiest with gardening and teaching others the joys of backyards and what our earth has to offer in ways of insects, bugs, plants and birds.

Lynda Goodridge, president of the Bert Miller Nature Club, has taken the initiative to involve the three sister clubs and Niagara Beeway in sponsoring a public showing of the documentary film, *The Messenger*, to be shown at the Fort Erie Public Library Thursday,

October 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. and again the afternoon of Tuesday, October 11. This visually beautiful, thought-provoking and at times gut-wrenching film explores our deep-seated connection to birds and warns that the uncertain fate of songbirds might mirror our own.

You'll notice two new destinations in our Programs and Outings brochure, with a day visit to Riverwood Conservancy on the Credit River in Mississauga in October, and a June trip to the University of Guelph Arboretum.

A wide-ranging roster of speakers is ready for our fall indoor meetings. We'll start with a recommendation from Mary Houston of her former student, Dan Doucette, in September. Dan works for the NPC over the summer, then heads out exploring with just his backpack over the winter. He will take us into the wilds of Bolivia, Chile and Easter Island, far from those areas visited by tourists.

In October our own Kiera Newman will tell us of the secrets of successful migrants, starring the Monarch Butterfly.

And in November, fifty years after our club's inaugural meeting, we'll host Owen Bjorgan, whose videos and insightful commentary about the meaning of biodiversity in old growth slough forest first raised doubts in the minds of both regional and city councillors about the wisdom of biodiversity offsetting. I expect Gus Yaki, our founding president, would applaud the dedication of this young man to educating others about the importance of protection and preservation of our natural environment. Owen will bring his new film, *Hidden Corners: East Andes Ecuador*. He

might also describe his experience with Dengue Fever in Argentina this summer.

Lastly, I wish to draw attention to the importance of membership dues. Some years ago, while we were still in the euphoric stage of first having three nature clubs in our area, we considered a policy that would allow a person who was a member of any one club to enjoy the privileges of all three clubs. Then reality set in. Each club has fixed expenses which must be paid, and each club needs your support. Whether we have 50 members or 150, we still must pay for insurance, speakers, room rental, printing of brochures and newsletters for those who still need a hard copy, as well as from time to time replacement of our laptop and projector and display board, plus various other sundry expenses.

We would prefer not to burden you with constant requests for donations, but please remember, we cannot operate without your annual membership payments.

Let us treasure our final Wednesday evening walks, and then gather again at the first meeting of the new season, Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m., at the Niagara Falls Public Library.

Win Laar

## **SPENCER GORGE & LA SALLE PARK**

In late May a group of Nature Club members took a trip to Spencer Gorge in Dundas, Ontario.

This spectacular conservation area has glorious vistas of ravines and waterfalls. It is a forested area with many species of trees, shrubs and vascular plants.

Among those plants were Solomon's Seal, Wild Sarsaparilla, Maple-leaved Viburnum, Yellow Pimpernel and Wild Geranium. Among the trees we found examples of Red Oak in flower plus Choke Cherry, Black Cherry and some very old Eastern White Cedar.

Some of the birds observed were Rose-breasted Grosbeak, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-eyed Vireo and Turkey Vulture.

On the return to Niagara the group stopped at La Salle Park in Burlington where birds such as American Redstart, Oldsquaw and Great-crested Flycatchers were seen. Some of the group found a fine example of Fragrant Sumac in flower.

Rick



Club Members at Spencer Gorge



Yellow pimpernel



Toews Falls

## **RED BAY WEEKEND**

The Bruce beckoned, as thirteen club members eagerly set out for Red Bay for the June 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> weekend.

As we approached our home base of Evergreen Lodge, Yellow Lady's Slipper and vivid red Indian Paintbrush dotted the entrance roadway. Delicate pink Gaywings peaked out by the step to our cottage, and a Great Egret stalked the water's edge beyond our deck. A promising beginning to our weekend!

Friday after dinner we visited Petrel Point Nature Reserve, a Great Lakes Coastal Meadow Marsh, on the Lake Huron side of the peninsula. Here a boardwalk leads one through a cedar forest and out around an open area marked by truncated and weathered Tamarack intermingled with Sweet Gale and Shrubby Cinquefoil. Silvery white tufts of Green-keeled Cotton Grass caught the evening sun, as did the glowing reds and golds of Pitcher Plant and Spatulate-leaved Sundew, both carnivorous plants.

Saturday morning, after a short detour to admire the delicate pinks and whites of Showy Lady's Slipper, we headed up to the globally rare habitat of Bruce Alvar Nature Reserve. Although overnight rain had decimated the yellow petals on many of the Lakeside Daisies, the rich ochre, cinnamon and chocolate brown of the mosses and lichens on the exposed bedrock pavement were all the more vivid. Rain-sparkled spider webs shimmered on the crimson Wild Columbine, the gold Balsam Ragwort, and the creamy spikes of

Whorled Milkwort. The whites of Starflower and Bunchberry shone within the Jack Pine forest.

Already feeling that we had had a successful weekend, we headed south and east to Lion's Head for a relaxed picnic overlooking the waters of Georgian Bay. Thence to a forest interior section of Bruce Trail, where we noted Northern Holly Fern and Fragile Fern, neither found in Niagara, as well as Balsam Fir, with its blisters of fragrant resin. Here were large colonies of Wood Betony and Blue Bead Lily, with its delicate yellow flowers.

That evening we returned to Oliphant Fen, last seen in our fall 2015 club outing. Alerted by a heads up from Audrey of the South Peel Naturalist Club, we were successful in finding two plants new to us all, Horned Bladderwort, and Butterwort. In a low nutrient environment, these insectivorous plants have evolved to capture what is available below and above the surface of the water. The Bladderwort has bladders, or chambers, on its roots, which open when they sense a passing insect and contain it for eventual digesting. The Butterwort holds a tiny blue flower above a basil rosette of yellow-green leaves that are slippery like butter to entrap their prey. Back at the lodge we watched the sun set into Lake Huron, the hunting Great Egret darkly silhouetted against the burnt orange waves. Final morning was spent along the Bruce Trail in Malcolm Bluff Shores Nature Preserve, where the true magic of the Bruce Trail was experienced midst the ancient gnarled cedars along the vertical cliff edges overlooking distant Colpoys Bay. Over lunch near Wiarton Willie we enthused about the riches of the Bruce Peninsula and the convenience of our accommodation, and expressed our hopes that we may return, perhaps in the fall of next year.

Win Laar



Lakeside Daisy



Identifying a Plant

Bruce Alvar



Yellow Lady's Slipper



Blue Flag Iris

Oliphant Fen

## BMNC 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL

Once again, the organizational skills of BMNC member Dawn Pierrynowski resulted in another exciting Butterfly Festival. On Sunday, June 12, the club house and surrounding grounds of Stevensville Conservation Area were alive with lots of activities for butterfly enthusiasts. Over 300 people enjoyed the day. Families could play butterfly themed croquette, make wooden butterflies, decorate butterfly cookies, and gather lots of information about the environment at the displays of many local organizations. Local Monarch Guardian Patty Moss was on hand sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm about the Monarch Butterfly.

NFNC club members Keira Newman, Joyce Sankey, Tara Darling, and Margaret Pickles hosted our club display. As well as showing off our fantastic array of pictures we offered people an opportunity to look at butterfly wings under the microscope and gave away milkweed seedlings. We also invited all to make a pipe-cleaner butterfly or dragonfly.

Keeping with the theme of Pollinator week both guest speakers came from the world of Honeybees. Walter Zimmerman of Little Wolf Apiaries shared his thoughts on all we should know about honeybees, and George Scott of Niagara Beeways gave us an update on bee decline and the devastating effects of neonicotinoid pesticides.

Those who wanted to wander further afield could join the bird hikes led by Rick Stockton and Peter BonEnfant, or a bug hike led by the dynamic duo of Paul Philp and Margaret Pickles. Several families had the treat of seeing Bluebirds and blue damselflies. Others participated in the NPCA planting of a pollinator garden.

It was a great day with something for everyone! We look forward to next year's event.

Margaret Pickles





NFNC Display

## NIAGARA COLLEGE'S FIRST BIOBLITZ

NFNC members Julie Falsetti and Margaret Pickles lead students on an inventory hike during the NC BioBlitz.

In the midst of one of the coldest springs on record we had a sunshine and 16°C weather on April 16<sup>th</sup>. The timing could not have been better as Niagara College Office of Sustainability staff, student volunteers, and local naturalists were on hand at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus to spend the day doing inventories for a 12 hour day! The occasion was Niagara College's first Bioblitz.

Conceived and spearheaded by Gina Pannunzio of the NC Office of Sustainability, the day was planned and run by an enthusiastic group of environment and ecosystem students. These capable young people needed little input from me in my role of Faculty Mentor. Being part of this event made me feel 28 years young again!

In a final report the committee summarized the day as follows: *Students, staff and community members spent the day identifying plants and animal species on the NC campus including the ponds and lower escarpment. Expert scientists led citizen scientists on hikes around the property while identifying and cataloguing the bugs, birds, amphibians, mammals, and plants. The event also involved student organizations participating in a litter cleanup, and tree-planting organized by the Student Administrative Council, as well as an invasive species removal organized by the Society for Ecological Restoration student group on campus. In total, 138 different species were identified and added to the existing list of species found on campus. Some of the day's species highlights include:*

- *Western Chorus Frogs 'singing';*

- *Painted Turtles on a log (one group counted 18 on one log);*
- *Salamander eggs both in a creek and in a log;*
- *Counting 49 bird species around campus including Great Egret,*
- *identifying 12 different moss and lichen species.*

*We would like to thank all that made this day possible: Walker Industries, TD Friends of the Environment, and our Niagara College Student Administrative Council. Without their support, this event would not have occurred.*

*As well a big thank you to all our experts who shared their knowledge with the volunteers and community members. Their expertise was vital in ensuring species were correctly identified and cataloged.*

*Finally, thank you to all the volunteers who assisted in planning and participating in the event. This event could not have been successful without your help.*

*Remember: completing a BioBlitz does not mean the species count is over! We are cataloguing new species we find on our campus every day. Our species list is a living document that is constantly updating. We hope to continue to hold BioBlitz events to ensure our species list is as accurate as possible.*

- Margaret Pickles with excerpts from NC BioBlitz Report



Participants

## THUNDERING WATERS

Thundering Waters, also called Ramsey Road Forest or the Niagara Falls Slough Forest, is a 270 hectare area with Provincially Significant Wetlands, locally significant wetlands, old growth forest, meadow and savannah situated within the urban boundary of Niagara Falls in the southwest portion.

Thundering Waters caught our attention again after the meeting at Balls Falls last December where over 250 people braved winter weather to come out and voice their opposition to bio-diversity offsetting (BDO) in provincially significant wetlands (PSWs). This policy would allow developers to destroy the PSWs if some were to be created elsewhere or money set aside for this purpose. The board and CAO of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) insisted that forested swamps could be easily re-created which we all know is not true.

The NPCA backed down on BDO in PSWs, at least until the new Ontario Wetland Review comes out. Locally significant wetlands can be destroyed under current provincial policy. The NPCA at this meeting denied having chosen a pilot project site, but attendees suspected that Thundering Waters was the area they had earmarked. This was confirmed on April 7th when the Region tried to pass a resolution allowing some of the wetlands to be destroyed. This motion was withdrawn thanks to great work by Ed Smith, John Bacher, Owen Bjorgan and others.

This is not the first time Niagara's environmentalists fought to save the forest. In 1992 a developer illegally cut down a forest north of Oldfield Road and in 2000 a developer was given permission to cut more of the forest for the Thundering Waters golf course. In 2008 John Bacher, Jean Grandoni and others fought an attempt to destroy even more of the forest south of Oldfield Road. Thanks to John Bacher for help with the historical background.

Now we are fighting to preserve the slough forest complex again. The threat comes from GR Investment Co., Ltd., who are promoting the development with the promise of money from Chinese investors to persuade city council to allow them to destroy the forest to build another subdivision in Niagara Falls. The investor claims to be an environmentalist but the environmental impact statement shows that she plans to leave only the PSWs alone and destroy the rest because

she can under provincial policy. Even in the wetlands she plans road and bike paths that would degrade them. A speaker at a secondary plan meeting inquired whether city council should heed more the needs of an investor who is here to make money or the long-time residents of Niagara who enjoy this area because of the natural features we love.

Many caring Niagara area residents have spent countless hours fighting this development. It has been heartening to see so many diverse groups of people come together. Naturalist clubs, members of Environmental Advisory Committees, students, young residents of Niagara, Council of Canadians, and First Nations have joined forces to save the forest.

We were all inspired by words of First Nations supporters who held rallies, spoke at meetings and are asking for a moratorium on the development of the Thundering Waters Forest until a clear, transparent, public process can decisively establish the full social, environmental and economic benefit of this forest remaining completely intact.

Niagara once had a large ecological gem for all its residents and visitors to treasure. Now we are fighting to save the last of this natural area which although smaller is still rich and worth saving.

Get involved. Come to meetings opposing this development. Write and call city and regional politicians to let them know that you love Niagara because of the remaining wetlands and forests.

The wetlands, forested swamps, at Thundering Waters support critters such as blue-spotted salamanders and snapping turtles. While marsh monitoring north of Oldfield road, I rejoiced on hearing tree frogs in the wetlands. The savannah is rich with bird species such as blue-winged warblers, wood thrush, barn swallows, towhees, and flycatchers. Habitat for insectivorous bird species is scarce and we cannot afford to destroy more. Old growth trees can be found here along with a diversity of flowers, sedges, mammals and insects. A provincial park, along the lines of Shorthills, would add to Niagara's quality of life and to our tourism potential. Joyce Sankey



Thundering Waters

## WEDNESDAY EVENING WALKS

Despite a hot and humid summer our walks were reasonably well attended.

Our walk through Marcy's Woods in early May attracted many as did the walk at Cave Springs Conservation area later in May. On both these outings many interesting plants were observed such as Dutchman's Breeches, Spring Cress, Mitrewort, Early Saxifrage and Canada Violet.

Another walk that proved interesting was at Niagara College Ponds where a variety of birds such as Great Egrets, a family of Wood Ducks and Eastern Kingbirds were seen. In addition Muskrat and Opossum were observed.

Rick Young



Dutchman's Breeches  
Marcy's Woods



Club Members at Swayze Falls

## IN MEMORIAM

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Brian Calvert on August 8th. Although not a member of our club, Brian occasionally joined us on our Wednesday walks, sharing his expertise and enthusiasm for plants and the natural world around us. Many who attended Seedy Saturdays benefitted from various seeds collected and packaged by Brian. He believed in a softer footprint in living on our earth. We will miss this gentle man.

It is with regret that we hear of the passing of Margaret Veall. She and her late husband Allan were long time members of the Niagara Falls Nature Club. Both were avid birders and naturalists. Margaret was also the club's archivist for many years. It is saddening to hear of the passing of so many of our naturalist friends.

Your editing team would like to thank you for your contributions that make this an interesting and valuable newsletter.

Please send contributions to:

Carol Horvat [chorvat1@cogeco.ca](mailto:chorvat1@cogeco.ca) or  
Rick Young [rick.y@sympatico.ca](mailto:rick.y@sympatico.ca)