
Nature Niagara News



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Niagara Falls
Nature Club

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When I joined the nature club a half dozen years ago I felt excitement each spring as I filled my calendar with nature walks and outings for the year. I especially tried to get out to the spots that were new to me and I appreciated the club members who patiently repeated the names and features of plants along the way. While plants may be my 'thing' I've also been thrilled to discover birds, insects, fungi and myriad other species that club members have pointed out along the way.

Taking over the role of President this year, I am most grateful to Win Laar, the Board of Directors and the support of many members for the strong and reliable roots that are firmly grounding the club. I would like to warmly welcome all new members and invite you to get in touch with me, or any director, with questions or ideas.

The walks and outings have been planned, the brochures printed and a new field season for our Niagara Falls Nature Club is about to unfold. Some spots are old favorites promising familiar terrain, while others may take us down a new path. Join us on the journey.

Kerry Kennedy

ART AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE

Greg's impressive CV as a painter, art historian, curator and teacher was highlighted during his introduction to club members which also included a reference to Greg taking up his ukulele again after a long absence. One is reminded of the close relationship between music and nature and its influence on art. Vivaldi's "Four Seasons", Vaughan Williams "Lark Ascending" come to mind.

At the side of the room Greg displayed two original paintings of his own mounted on easels. His slide presentation described the historical, philosophical and cultural relationships between art through the ages beginning with pre-Socratic, Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Modern, and Contemporary periods in western civilization. The cave paintings in Europe (25,000 to 35,000 BC) mostly depicting animals and hunters with spears were briefly touched on but the lack of consensus among experts as to whether they truly represent art or were intended for pagan rituals and worship places them, for now, in another category from this presentation. I don't think we will ever know what was in the mind of these ancient painters.

It was fascinating to follow the changes that took place in art and the relationship between the powerful Church of Rome at the dawn of the Enlightenment period and the Age of Reason as science took a hold and challenged the religious orthodoxy that had resulted in the banning of anything the Church deemed to be sexual and erotic. The Renaissance saw painters producing life like portraits and scenes depicting life as it really is.

Paintings included in slide presentation:

Pirandello – cheetah 15th century

Backus crab art, star of Bethlehem oil on canvas 1520-23

Michelangelo statue

Parmigianino, conversion of St Paul 1527-28

Caravaggio 1599 basket of fruit. Still-life paintings

Rachel Ruysch, flowers and plumbs 1704

John Adams James – Audubon – rosette Spoonbill

American Robin 1980 watercolor 1980

Loggerhead and graphite turtles

American art – flamingo 2016

Tusk on oil 2015
 Mori series – white rhino 2015.
 Honey Bee – 2016 Oil
 Dying Gaul BC original – John Singleton Copley
 1778 oil
 Watson and the shark – Mako shark descending
 2016
 Great Auk 2017 oil
 Humpback whale 2017
 Pygmy throated sloth
 Nautilus 2017

These were followed by examples of modern and contemporary art in paintings and sculpture.

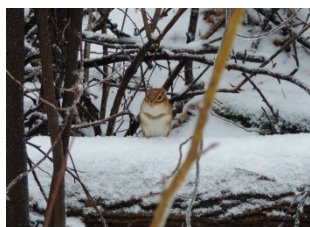
The presentation ended with a Q&A session with the artist and members. All in all, a very educational and entertaining presentation for which he received warm applause and thanks.

Mary & Michael Deely

DUFFERIN ISLANDS

On a snowy day in Mid-February a few members of the club and a gentleman with two young children visited Dufferin Islands.

We had the good fortune to have fine views of Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal, Downy Woodpecker, White- Breasted Nuthatch, Black-Capped Chickadee plus the ever present Mallards and Canada Geese. We also had an excellent view of an Eastern Chipmunk.



Eastern Chipmunk



Visitors

WINTERFEST 2017

On FAMILY DAY the Niagara Falls Nature Club and many other organizations took part at Heartland Forest with exhibitions of their activities.

Our club encouraged children to mark outlines of snakes and then cut the outline. Many children participated and were able to take home their endeavors.

We also had our display board plus displays of amphibians and information on our activities.



Children having a good time

NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY AWARD OF MERIT 22ND FEBRUARY 2017

Driving down the road....you come upon a group parked on the shoulder....looking through spotting scopes and binoculars or hunched down in a huddle inspecting something on the ground. Might seem strange to some but my guess is you have come upon a group of Niagara's nature enthusiasts and in my experience, included in that group would be a handful of members of one of Niagara's 3 nature clubs, perhaps, members of the Niagara Falls Nature Club.

The Niagara Falls Nature Club was forged out of the fight to preserve the natural area now known as Woodend Conservation Area. The catalyst, a lady named Mary Moses was joined by like-minded residents and with the support of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists held the inaugural meeting of the club on November 15th 1966.

Many of us have been regulars on the second Wednesday of each month between September and May, to hear from a host of engaging and informative speakers.... or on a Wednesday evening walk in the summer months following around the longtime members of the club acting like a sponge, soaking in their free flowing knowledge. Their special field trips and outings are always fun and leave you feeling hopeful if a little tired.

Over the years, the club has always been a huge asset to NPCA. As part of volunteer field crews, club members contributed over 1500 hours to the Natural Areas Inventory Project; participating on countless committees including being instrumental in the development and continued success of the Niagara Envirothon; they have offered well thought out comments and constructive criticism; shared their knowledge and data; offered an expert eye when an identification has proven difficult. The Awards Committee could not think of any local group more deserving this year.

In honour of the Club's 50th anniversary and their Conservation Award of Merit, NPCA will be planting 50 native trees at Smithness Conservation Area. These trees will stand as a reminder of the Club's contribution to our nature areas.

In the words of the club's very first president Gus Yaki back in 1966, "Although most of us do not know each other yet, we are here because we all have a common bond, and that is an interest in the natural world around us. Most of us find it pleasant and helpful to share our interests and enthusiasm with others. By joining together into a club such as this, we can enrich each other's lives." And that is just what the club has done...not just for its members but for each of us for more than 50 years. Please join me in presenting this much deserved Award of Merit in celebration of 50 years of Conservation that has enriched our lives, to the Niagara Falls Nature Club.

Deanna Lindblad



Joyce Sankey, Kerry Kennedy [Pres.], Kal Laar, Janet Damude, Win Laar, Carol Horvat, Rick Young.

SEVERE STORMS OF ONTARIO

On March 8th, when winds in Niagara of over 100 km per hour toppled trees and pushed sheds through fences, what more appropriate speaker at a NFNC meeting than David Chapman, storm chaser. David's vehicle says it, his vibrant enthusiasm says it, he loves the Severe Storms of Ontario.

While his Dad drives with eyes on the road, David directs with eyes on the sky. What we see as threatening clouds overhead, David sees as a dynamic symphony of aerial movement: cold air pushing here, warm air rushing in from there, sheer forces driving horizontally, dramatic dark shelf clouds, rotating wall clouds building energy, super storm cells, and then collapse.

Our evening started with a dazzling display of lightning, jagged bolts darting from sky to earth and back, or radiating out into the heavens, or dancing like firecrackers from behind the billowing layers of cauliflower clouds. We learned that when we feel our hair rise, lightning will strike nearby, and we should get indoors or crouch low, with head between our knees, heels together, hands covering our ears.

A bolt out of the blue can be fatal, as lightning can hit 25 to 50 km from a storm. If you hear thunder, wait 30 minutes before going out.

David showed several examples of funnel clouds, rotating masses wider at the top, and narrower at the bottom. As long as they are in the air, they are not dangerous. If they are reaching for the ground and coming toward you, take shelter. Only when they touch the ground are they called a tornado. The weakest forms of tornadoes are dust devils over dry ground and steam devils over water. A tornadic super storm can wreak havoc, tossing debris high into the air and destroying wide swaths below.

One can best see the mechanics of a storm from a bit of a distance, rather than right below it. One superb shot showed roll clouds under a thick storm, with stars shining brightly above, and Lake Erie below.

In question period afterward David shared how today was a lifer for him, the first time ever he had seen and photographed a moustache funnel cloud. He had been researching that rare phenomenon, and then there it was. He showed me a photo on his phone later, and it was a curved wisp of white cloud in blue sky, not something I would ever have recognised as significant. Which just goes to show, that once you have studied something, your eye starts noticing it more frequently. As the Friendly Giant said, "Look up, look way up...."

Win Laar

LONG POINT TRIP

In Mid March club members took a trip to the Long Point area especially to view Tundra Swans. We did find them in good numbers.

One of our first sightings was an immature Bald Eagle plus Red-Wing Blackbirds while at various locations we were afforded good views of Sandhill Cranes.

On Long Point Bay we had the good fortune to find rafts of waterfowl such as Ring-Necked Ducks, Gadwall, Redhead, Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneye, Hooded and Common Mergansers and

Bufflehead.

At the Old Cut we were treated to both White and Red-Breasted Nuthatches, an American Tree Sparrow and a Tufted Titmouse.

When we stopped at the Lee Brown Conservation area we found American Wigeons and American Black Ducks plus once again a Ring-Necked Duck.

Later at the Bird Studies Canada are we had the good fortune to find a large flock of Rusty Blackbirds plus two Trumpeter Swans.

Our final stop of the day was at the Port Rowan Wetlands where we sighted some Northern Shovelers.



Club Members at Port Rowan Sewage Lagoons



Tundra Swans by Greg Davies



Bald Eagle

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES

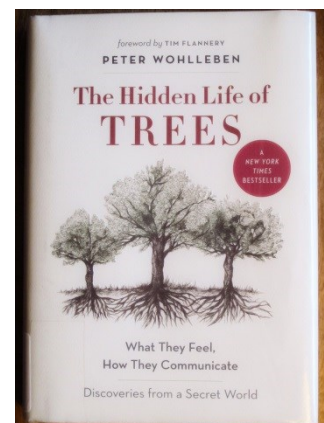
Peter Wohlleben introduces his book by saying that when he began his professional career as a forester he knew as much about the hidden life as trees as a butcher knows about the emotional life of animals. What a striking and apt image. Over the years he learned that trees communicate with each other, nurture their young, develop strategies for long-term survival, and contribute to the health and well-being of all the flora and fauna, including humans, which interact with them. They struggle with disease and predation; they compete, and most die as infants, while others live for thousands of years.

The root network is in charge of all chemical activity in a tree. When we learn that a 10 foot tall tree can have a root diameter of 20 feet, we can appreciate that a nursery grown tree of 10 feet that has had its root ball trimmed to 20 inches for ease of transplantation, is doomed to a sub-optimal existence and a shortened life.

New scientific tools have enabled researchers to peer into the dark world of the soil and illuminate the social network of trees. Mother trees recognize and talk with their kin through their rootlets. As a result of such interactions, trees in a family or community are protected and can live to be very old. In contrast, solitary trees, like street kids, have a tough time of it and in most cases die much earlier than those in a group.

Peter concludes that trees are more than just a commodity. We should care about them because of the little puzzles and wonders they present us with, the dramas and moving stories, something to think about when you walk next in the forest.

Win Laar



ANNUAL DINNER PRESENTATION BY PETER FERGUSON

Introduced by Joyce Sankey, Peter Ferguson a well-known and published nature photographer resides in the Niagara region and is a senior member of the Welland Camera Club. Following, is a brief synopsis of his presentation:

Peter stated that nature club members were likely to be a knowledgeable and appreciative audience for his PowerPoint presentation and his personal style for capturing photographic digital images of small birds. Most of his recommendations will be welcome reminders to club members.

Equipment, Props and Technique

Peter emphasized that expensive cameras and lenses are not necessary to photograph small birds if you can entice them to come closer to you by using “props” found nearby. Zoom lenses of up to 200mm and 300 mm are recommended, and sometimes 100mm lenses are adequate depending on how close you can position yourself.

Twigs and branches attached to a tripod or other support will suffice if a small seed container is positioned close-by. Birds will land on the “prop” to check for predators which is “the decisive moment” to press the shutter button before they leave this perch to take seed.

Modern cameras, whether point and shoot, smart phones or digital SLR’s all have fully automatic modes and, in most cases, will obviate the need for technical know-how as settings such as aperture, shutter speed, ISO, white balance and focusing will be automatically set.

Hand holding a camera and telephoto lens effectively will usually require built-in shake reduction to ensure sharp well focused images. Alternatively, use of a sturdy tripod and ball-head with a removeable camera plate, ideally, one that will allow height adjustment up to eye level without raising the center column is recommended and helpful if birds are high up in a tree. Position the tripod and yourself 10-15 feet away from the props so that birds will feel safe to approach your setup.

Bird Behavior

Finally, be ready and on the lookout for birds exhibiting unusual behavior and postures, landing and taking flight as they are more interesting and challenging than static images of birds and ducks. For example, some ducks will burst straight up from the water and others require a short run on the water to take off. Use a higher ISO and a

faster shutter speed and shoot off a few rapid frames to capture phases of this action. In all cases, take your time, be patient and aware of your environment.

Peter took club members questions after his presentation which was informative and well received.

Michael Deely

PLEASE NOTE

2017 Memberships are now due.

Single Membership \$25

Family Membership \$35

Student Membership \$15

CONTRIBUTIONS

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

Please send contributions to:

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Rick Young rick.y@sympatico.ca

BIRD QUIZ ? TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE BUCKET RAFFLE

Explore the Bruce Peninsula in the company of fellow naturalists and under the guidance of expert leaders. The cost for the weekend, per person, is \$20 leader/admin fee plus two nights? accommodation - \$236 (+ 13% taxes) including all meals and snacks (Evergreen Resort, Mar, ON)

This annual, weekend event is hosted by South Peel Naturalists? Club and we invite you to share the experience.

For further information: mail@spnc.ca or contact Donna at [905 815 0933](tel:9058150933)

46TH ANNUAL NIAGARA FALLS ON/NY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DECEMBER 27, 2016

As most of you probably know Kayo Roy has retired from compiling the Niagara Falls CBC after an amazing 32 years. His depth of knowledge and dedication to this task knows no equal. Many thanks Kayo for your years of organizing and compiling this count.

As for the count itself, it was a dreary day. It started with fog and a brisk cold wind made the temperature feel even colder than it was. Some of us felt the birds were taking the day off and the results reflect that feeling.

Despite that several records were set. A lone Trumpeter Swan was the second record for the count. The 14 Black Vultures and 46 Turkey Vultures were both record highs for the count. The 6 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 10 Winter Wrens were also record highs for the count. The two King Eiders, which were found tied for the highest count. The sole Chipping Sparrow was tied for record high.

The total number of species seen was 88. The number of individual birds tallied was 26,742. The accumulative total for the count remains at 164 species and the new accumulative total is 2,177,364 individuals. Many thanks to the 37 participants including members of the NFNC, PFN and BMNC as well as U.S. birders covering the New York State portion of the count. Thanks to Willie D'Anna who organizes the U. S. counters. We couldn't do it without any of you.

Marcie Jacklin

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>NY</u>	<u>COUNT</u> <u>TOTAL</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>ON</u>	<u>NY</u>	<u>COUNT</u> <u>TOTAL</u>
Canada Goose	671	1988	2659	Glauous Gull	1	0	1
Mute Swan	4	2	6	Gt Black-backed Gull	67	63	130
Trumpeter Swan	1	0	1	<i>gull species</i>	9	176	185
Wood Duck	3	0	3	Rock Pigeon	163	398	561
Gadwall	30	0	30	Mourning Dove	96	53	149
American Wigeon	40	0	40	Eastern Screech-Owl	0	1	1
Amer. Black Duck	32	3	35	Great Horned Owl	1	0	1
Mallard	291	27	318	Belted Kingfisher	4	0	4
Canvasback	41	5	46	Red-bellied Woodpecker	16	18	34
Redhead	10	27	37	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	0	2	2
Greater Scaup	31	182	213	Downy Woodpecker	37	37	74
Lesser Scaup	0	3	3	Hairy Woodpecker	1	6	7
<i>Scaup species</i>	0	1	1	Northern Flicker	3	6	9
King Eider	2	0	2	<i>woodpecker species 1</i>	0	1	1
W-winged Scoter	17	175	192	American Kestrel	6	3	9
Black Scoter	0	1	1	Merlin	0	1	1
Long-tailed Duck	211	253	464	Northern Shrike	0	1	1
Bufflehead	261	6	267	Blue Jay	34	21	55
Com. Goldeneye	185	171	356	American Crow	25	76	101
Hooded Mergan	18	0	18	Horned Lark	5	3	8
Common Mergan	56	2	58	Black-capped Chickadee	144	112	256
R-B Merganser	44	267	311	Tufted Titmouse	10	12	22

