



## Midland-Penetanguishene Field Naturalists Club

*Warren Jacklin, founding member and former president, will be at our 40th anniversary dinner. He has sent us some of his thoughts on Thoreau.*

### A PROPHET FOR OUR TIME

Henry David Thoreau, one of America's greatest writers, has been appreciated by many. Gandhi and M. L. King were among his disciples. In the 1960's, America's youth heard him, and gave the country a chance to be a great nation instead of only a military power. He saw the kinship of the forest and the animals beyond their outer appearance, and that they are a necessary part of us. In "Walden" he invites us to see and to think about this relationship.

Today, we hear of the extinction of 30,000 species per year and of the destruction of the rain forests. That should be sufficient warning to now listen to Thoreau.

*Warren Jacklin*

## OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER!

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This year we are celebrating our 40th anniversary as a club. What a perfect way to celebrate by launching our first newsletter and by going "online" with our website. A great big thank you to our hard-working, energetic committee for faithfully donating their time to complete these endeavors. I look forward to many more issues.

*Liz Schandlen*

## THE MIDLAND-PENETANGUISHENE FIELD NATURALISTS' FORMATIVE YEARS

*(Bob Whittam relates our past for us in this interesting article.)*

The Midland-Penetanguishene Field Naturalists' Club's (MPFNC) first meetings were held in 1961 with several interested founding members from the area. Principal among these were two teachers from Midland Secondary School. Ed Cable was Head of Commercial and then Geography and Warren Jacklin was Head of Science. The FON was represented by Marshal Bartman.

For several years the Club met in the YMCA building in downtown Midland. This was the beginning of a long standing group of naturalists who would be instrumental in the formation of the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre. The first years were tenuous and the Club folded for a couple of years but was re-established by Warren Jacklin. About 1963-'64 Warren wrote a brief to Bill Cranston who had been the Publisher of the Free Press and a well known entrepreneur. He asked him for help with attracting a Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) interpretation program to Midland and so the MPFNC had its first major project underway. They did not know how significant was to be their foresight.

The CWS had established a 'Plan to Appreciate Canada' by proposing the establishment of an ecology interpretation centre in each of the biotic regions of the country. Their aim was to establish programmes close to well traveled routes or near urban centres. Knowing about "The Plan...", Bill Cranston and Warren Jacklin subsequently met with Dr. Dave Munroe, Director of the CWS to persuade him to construct the first in this chain of centres at the Wye Marsh.

*Cont'd on page 2*

Midland-Penetanguishene  
Field Naturalists Club

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President: Liz Schandlen  
1st Vice president: Joanne Scott  
2nd Vice president: Adrienne Jex  
Treasurer: Diane Marr  
Secretary: Joanne Scott  
Past President: Pat Taylor

We're on the web!  
[www.wyemarsh.com/mpfnc](http://www.wyemarsh.com/mpfnc)



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To study and appreciate nature.  
To protect and preserve wildlife and the environment.  
To stimulate public interest in, and promote protection and preservation of nature.

*From page 1*

The timing was perfect as the MPFNC needed a project and the CWS needed a local group. Bill Cranston had been instrumental in developing the reconstruction of the historic mission at Ste. Marie among the Hurons, which along with the Martyrs' Shrine gave the Wye Valley a triumvirate of tourist attractions for history, religion and nature.

The Club worked on this venture for several of its formative years and in 1969 the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre opened and became their headquarters. The official opening was held in 1969 officiated by a young Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Hon. Jean Chretien. The same year the wildlife centre assisted by the MPFNC hosted an international symposium on nature interpretation with the theme of 'More Effective Communication'. The centre had been built under the direction of Yorke Edwards who had pioneered the well known interpretation programmes in the Provincial Parks of B.C. He had already hired Bill Barkley as the first Biologist-in-Charge of the Centre who would also become active in the MPFNC serving as President for a term. It was Bill Barkley who in 1969 hired an infectious enthusiastic and well known naturalist named Fran Westman. Fran is an Honorary Life member of the club and has served as a mentor for many field naturalist members and staff at the Wye Marsh since its beginning.

The MPFNC along with students from MSS constructed some of the first trails and displays at the centre. The club later became involved with erecting osprey platforms in the marsh and with many natural history inventories. They were not the only local group to be involved with the wildlife centre's early days. The Midland Camera Club also took up residence at the centre meeting on Mondays while the Naturalists' Club claimed ownership of the third Thursday of the month which is still 'their night'.

The third Thursday tradition has hosted a wealth of natural history speakers and events in a tradition which has educated and informed the area's residents. Together with the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre the MPFNC represent the public's growing concern with conserving wetlands, interpreting them to the public for more than thirty years.

*(thanks Bob!)*

**Bob Whittam Jan. 2001**

It is with great regret that we learned of Fran Westman's death last month. A celebration of her life will take place on June 23, 2:30 p. m., at the Wye Marsh. We would like to dedicate this first newsletter to Fran.

# 2001 Schedule of Events

See the club brochure for more information

PHOTO TOUR TO NEW ZEALAND  
Thursday March 15, 2001, 7:30 p.m.

WYE MARSH SWEETWATER FESTIVAL  
March 25 & 26, 2001

40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
Saturday March 31, 2001  
An all day celebration with club members at the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre followed by a meal and special slide presentation. Franco Mariotti from Science North will be giving us an exciting talk on his work with Jane Goodall in Tanzania on the filming of a IMAX movie to be released in 2002.

CONSERVATION BIOLOGY OF CANADIAN TURTLES  
Thursday April 19, 2001, 7:30 p.m.

WYE MARSH SWAN DINNER  
April 27, 2001

*Our 40th anniversary Celebration!  
March 31, 2001  
Mark it on your calendar!*



MINESING SWAMP  
Saturday April 21, 2001 9:00 a.m.  
ORCHIDS  
Thursday May 17, 2001, 7:30 p.m.

WALK IN THE CLOUDS OF THE HALIBURTON FOREST & WILDLIFE RESERVE  
Saturday May 28, 2001 8:00 a.m.

WYE MARSH SWAN SWIM  
May 26, 2001

CARDEN PLAINS ALVAR  
Saturday June 9, 2001, 8:00 a.m.

FON 70<sup>th</sup> AGM AND CONFERENCE  
WOODS TALK  
June 14 - 17, 2001  
York University, Toronto.

POT LUCK AND MEMBERS NIGHT  
Thursday June 21, 2001  
Tiny Marsh



## 101<sup>st</sup> National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count December 16, 2000

When Frank Chapman thought up the original Christmas Bird Count in the Fall of 1900 it seems unlikely that he expected his idea to outlast the "side hunt" he hoped it would replace. The origins of the side hunt may be steeped in time but over the last 100 years participants in the Christmas Bird Counts have certainly counted far more birds than were ever shot on all Christmas Day hunts combined.

The Christmas bird count is increasingly accepted by ornithologists and conservationists alike as the best, if not only, tool available for assessing the long-term trends in the early winter bird populations of North America.

Without probably realizing it, our bird count this year was joined by over 1800 other bird counts and by more than 52,000 other participants.

Our bird count this year was very well attended with 31 participants divided up into 8 sections. The day started out very overcast and windy but by the afternoon rain was the order of the day and seemed to send the birds into hiding.

The total count for 2000 was down from 1999 due mainly to the fact that a cold December froze all the inland bays and a good portion of the shoreline. Thus shoreline birds were down considerably.

Of the 31 participants, there were a few first-timers which was great to see and we hope they will continue.

This is my 7<sup>th</sup> year as a CBC compiler and to all the club members who are faithfully there every year to volunteer their time, a big Thank You.

A few highlights this year were 3 owls (hawk, barred and great horned), a rufous-sided towhee, and a chipping sparrow.

As always the day was topped off by a delicious potluck supper at the Wye Marsh, which is always well attended. The silent auction after supper featured some great and unusual gifts, all in fun. Some \$200 was raised for the McKeever owl foundation.

Next year's count, the 102<sup>nd</sup>, is Dec. 15 2001. *Dave Schandlen*



## Ontario's second Breeding Bird Atlas, 2001-2005



Ontario's second Breeding Bird Atlas project will get underway in the spring of 2001 and will run through 2005. Like the first atlas (1981-1985), the project's goal will be to produce detailed maps of the distribution of all the bird species breeding in the province. Volunteer birders, known as atlasers, take on one or more 10-km squares and look for breeding evidence of every species breeding in the square. This time, we are also going to be collecting information on the abundance of each species in each square.

Atlasing is fun and challenging, and the results are valuable. The first project was a great success, with over 1300 birders logging over 100,000 hours of field work, and amassing more than 400,000 records. The *Atlas of The Breeding Birds of Ontario* is the standard reference book on bird distribution in the province, and the atlas' computer data base has been used for numerous conservation and research projects.

Regional Coordinators are in place for most regions in Southern Ontario, and are quickly assigning squares! Be sure to contact your RC soon to get the square you'd like before it's gone! To get some preliminary background on the project or to register to participate, please visit the atlas web page at [www.birdsontario.org](http://www.birdsontario.org). Also, watch for the winter issue of *Seasons* which features an article on the Atlas project.

*The preceding article is from the FON. Our regional coordinator is Bob Bowles. If you are interested in volunteering for this exciting activity, call him at (705) 325-3149 or email him at [bowles@bconnex.net](mailto:bowles@bconnex.net).*

***We are online!***

The Midland-Penetanguishene Field Naturalists are going into cyberspace! Thanks to the efforts of club member Peter Tillson, we now have a web site. And thanks to the generosity of the Wye marsh, we are located on their web site, as one of their "pages." We will have interesting articles, as well as information about upcoming events, and who knows what else?! Please check us out at [www.wyemarsh.com/mpfnc](http://www.wyemarsh.com/mpfnc)



***Field Nats Online!***

### Provide Nesting Materials for Backyard Birds

*From club member Marilyn Lawrence*

In spring, many birds are on the lookout for materials to build their nests. But, depending on the weather and location, it's not always easy to find good materials. You can help birds out and encourage them to nest around your property by providing sources of mud and nest-lining materials.

#### **Mud**

Find a good spot at the edge of a flower or vegetable garden to establish a mud hole. Use a hose or carry water to the spot and pour it into the earth. Squish the soil with your hands, a stick, or a shovel until it reaches a muddy consistency.

#### **Nest-lining materials**

Stuff an old mesh onion bag with such materials as hair (human, cat, dog, etc.), cotton, wool, dried grass, feathers, bulrush down, bits of fabric, twigs, and loose bits of thread, string, and yarn (not too long, so the birds don't get tangled up). Hang the bag from a clothes-line or tree branch in your backyard.

#### **Maintenance**

Keep the mud hole moist with a regular sprinkling of water. Replenish the onion bag with nest-lining materials as needed. You only need to supply these materials during the two or three months of late spring and summer when nest building is under way.