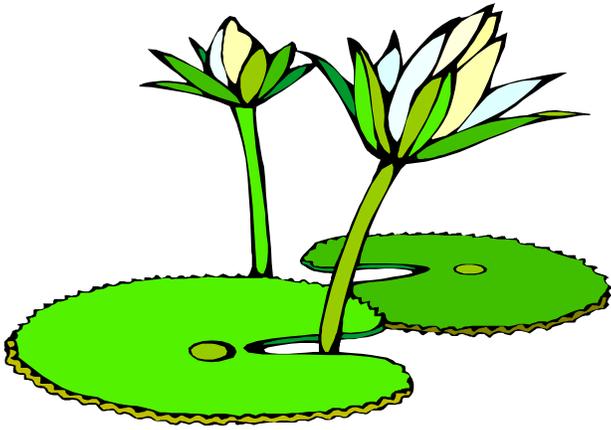


THE LILYPAD

Volume 2, Issue 3
Fall 2002



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What wonderful summer weather we've had this year! Hopefully, you've been able to spend lots of time in the great outdoors, enjoying all that nature has to offer.

Now that fall is fast approaching, your executive has planned a host of interesting speakers and exciting outings that will keep us all busy until next summer. We've added an overnight trip to the Echo Valley Observatory in October, as well as an extended outing to Manitoulin Island as our grand finale, in June.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at our first meeting in September, and welcoming you back. Be sure to invite friends or neighbours who may be interested in any of our speakers or trips. There is always room for new members! See you soon.

Joanne Scott

Who We Are



This is the first of a series profiling some of our members. We start with probably our best-known, best-loved colleague, Bob Whittam

Bob Whittam was born in Toronto in 1946 and spent a lot of his early years in the out of doors camping with his parents. Bob feels that what really got him started in nature study was a school teacher who was an avid birder. This teacher used to bring Bob and other students on birding excursions all over the province in an old Land Rover, and even helped Bob to start up the "Bexhill Bicycle Birders Club" (Bexhill was the street in Scarborough where Bob grew up). The Whittam family cottage, on Clearwater Lake near Washago, also had a large influence on Bob. He graduated from York University in 1968 and after working as the tip warden for a short time at the Long Point Bird Observatory he began his Master's Thesis the next year at Bishops University in Lennoxville, Quebec. He wrote his thesis on the Swamp Sparrow, a common bird to the Wye Marsh. He married his wife Judy MacDonald in June, 1969 (their first date was a canoe ride on Clearwater Lake!) and worked that winter at the Royal Ontario Museum. He spent several summers working as a naturalist at various parks, including St. Lawrence Islands National Park

and Bon Echo Provincial Park.

He started with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Ottawa in 1972 where he worked for York Edwards. The following year he moved to Midland to replace Bill Barkley as Biologist-In-Charge at the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre. He held this position at Wye Marsh working for CWS until 1984. Bob worked with Fran Westman until her retirement in 1976 and then hired Eva Kaiser to carry on the work that Fran had done at the Marsh.

The CWS crisis for Wye Marsh came in November, 1984 when the Minister of Environment announced that the federal government would withdraw funding for all interpretation programs run by CWS at the end of that fiscal year in March, 1985. With Bob's help and perseverance, The Friends Of The Wye Marsh, a non-profit group, took over operation of the Centre on April 01, 1985 and have managed it ever since. Bob was hired as Executive Director working for the Friends Of Wye Marsh until his early retirement in 1997. During his time at the Marsh, he helped reintroduce the Trumpeter Swan to the area, and established the Severn Sound Remedial Action Plan. He also helped start the Wye Marsh Wildlife Festival in September, 1986 to raise funds to support the Centre. The Festival was modeled

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Midland-Penetanguishene Field
Naturalists Club

Box 393
Midland, Ontario L4R 2J8

President: Joanne Scott
1st Vice president: Greg Lutick
2nd Vice president: Adrienne Jex
Treasurer: Diane Marr
Secretary: Shirley Tilson
Past President: Liz Schandlen

We're on the web!
www.csolve.net/~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.*

The Greater
Georgian Bay
Reptile Awareness
Program

New location, new students, and new species: it has been a busy summer for the Greater Georgian Bay Reptile Awareness Program.

Our program is now based in the West Parry Sound District Museum. The museum receives approximately 10,000 visitors per year. We are working on a reptile display and programming for next spring. This is an excellent opportunity to increase awareness of the program and the species.

Two students have joined the Reptile Awareness Program: Anne Charbonneau and Laura Bjorgan. These positions were made possible by a generous grant from the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship

Program for Species at Risk. Anne is based at Tiny Marsh and is finished in mid-September. Laura is based in Owen Sound and will be with the program until December. In addition to conducting workshops, they have been working on a portable display and a Grade 10 education package.

We have offered 26 workshops to a total of 3,400 people so far this year. There are several workshops planned for the fall. We welcome opportunities to speak to a variety of organisations.

And new species! COSEWIC has added 4 reptiles to the "at risk" list. These include the Eastern Milk Snake, Northern Ribbon Snake, Stinkpot Turtle and Northern Map Turtle. If anyone has good images of any of these species, we would be very interested in getting copies. The addition of these species, new contact information and partnerships means that many of our communication materials will be up-dated this autumn.

The monitoring program is gaining momentum. Last year, we had 18 sighting reports. This year, we have over 90 reports. The majority are from the Parry Sound area and include the Eastern Fox Snake, Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, Blanding's Turtle and Five-lined Skink. There are a few reports of Spotted Turtles and Eastern Hognose Snake. We still have fingers crossed that one day there will be a confirmed Wood Turtle sighting!

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Reptile Awareness Program Co-ordinator
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after a Waterfowl Festival Bob had attended in Maine, and was an immediate success. Not only is it a festival for wildlife, but also a popular folk music festival attended by thousands of visitors and many talented musicians every year. One year, Bob was asked to go on stage himself to give his impersonation of Elvis Presley, and was an immediate hit! It was at the first Festival in 1986 that I first started to work with Bob at the Wye Marsh and we have worked together at the Festival every year since, including this year. Bob started a radio nature column for the Canadian Broadcasting Company in Toronto about ten years ago, and can be heard regularly as the resident naturalist for Ontario Morning giving programs on various aspects of nature. Bob has run a Breeding Bird Survey at Byng Inlet along the east side of Georgian Bay for 25 years. He started the first official Christmas Bird Count in the Midland area with the Wye Marsh CBC first run in 1980. He started Forest Bird Monitoring Program sites in the Wye Valley. During the 24 years that he worked at the Wye Marsh, he taught and influenced many young people who worked as permanent or summer staff. Many of these "Wye Marshians" launched their career in biology with Bob's help. His knowledge of natural history benefited visitors and staff alike. He worked hard to build the Wye Marsh to the nationally known conservation and education centre that it is today, and there are few people in this area that do not associate it with Bob Whittam. That is why he is still called Mr. Wye Marsh by some of the early supporters of the Centre. Chris Harris, a friend and student of Bob's writes the following: One of Bob's most enduring qualities is his wonderful dry sense of humour. One Christmas, I was home from university visiting family in Barrie. Myself and another former Wye Marsh seasonal naturalist made a trip to the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre to see Bob and others there. Upon arrival, I mentioned to Bob that we had stopped to look for a Snowy Owl recently seen at nearby Tiny Marsh. Bob, who was bending over several boxes as I was recounted this story, said, without cracking a smile, "Did you say Snowy Owl? You want to see a Snowy Owl? Now let me see... this box has Great Horned Owl and this one has Short-eared Owl...Here is the Snowy Owl!" Much to our utter astonishment, Bob pulled out of a box a live Snowy Owl!!! It turned out that this owl had been found injured, likely the bird we were looking for, brought to the Wildlife Centre and Bob just happened to be packaging the owl for shipment to the McKeever's Owl Rehabilitation Centre in Vineland when I came in and told him of my search for this owl. Another time, Bob was over on Beausoleil Island for a media event in which a friend and colleague was performing an operation to place a radio transmitter inside a Massasauga Rattlesnake. One of the reporters, asked Bob whether this kind of work on poisonous snakes was dangerous. Bob, without missing a beat, said "I have been bitten hundreds of times and I don't care any more." I wish I could have seen the look on the reporter's face when Bob said that. Bob and Judy have three children, Dan, Becky, and Paul whom they raised in the Midland Area (and, of course, at their own cottage on Clearwater Lake). Dan followed in his father's footsteps and is a keen naturalist whose main interest is dragonflies. He has added much to the database of this fauna for Simcoe County. Similarly, Becky has also taken after her father and is working as a biologist for Bird Studies Canada at Long Point. Paul, who works in Orillia, seems to prefer the indoor pursuits but also enjoys spending time at Clearwater Lake. Bob still gives freely of his time to help the Wye Marsh. I would like to thank Becky Whittam and Chris Harris for their input and comments.

(This article was written by Bob's friend and co-worker, Bob Bowles)



Schedule

Here are the first few club meetings. Check the brochure for more information.

HURONIA JOINT MEETING
Friday September 13, 2002, 7:30 p.m.

CARDEN PLAIN – CAMERON RANCH
Thursday September 19, 2002, 7:30 p.m.
To Be Held At Tiny Marsh

WYE MARSH FESTIVAL
September 21 and 22, 2002

ONTARIO'S OWN SERENGETI
Saturday September 28, 2002 8:00 a.m.

STARRY STARRY NIGHT
Thursday October 17, 2002, 7:30 p.m.

ECHO VALLEY OBSERVATORY
October 19 and 20, 2002

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN-UP OF ANTARCTICA
Thursday November 21, 2002, 7:30 p.m.

TINY TRAILS
Saturday November 23, 2002, 10:00 a.m.

CHRISTMAS POT LUCK AND
103rd AUDUBON BIRD COUNT
Saturday December 14, 2002 6:00 p.m.

BALL SITE DIG
Thursday January 16, 2003 7:30 p.m.

MOUNTAINVIEW SKI HILLS
Saturday January 18, 2003, 10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS' INBOX

The Perils of Bird Parenting

We were enjoying watching a pair of chipping sparrows raise their brood in our cedar hedge. Three young ones were crowded into the tiny cup of a nest. One hot, sunny afternoon, we noticed the parents flying madly about and making a lot of noise, as one of their offspring sat on our lawn. It didn't look ready to fly, so I gently scooped it up, planning to place it back in the nest. I pushed aside a branch and looked right into the eyes of a garter snake, curled up defiantly on the nest!

I couldn't return the warm little body in my hands to this situation, so my husband donned a pair of gloves and tried to remove the snake to our backyard. The snake was having none of that, though, and moved off quickly into the hedge. A search for it, a la Steve Irwin (Crocodile Hunter!) didn't find the snake, so the young sparrow was returned to the nest (the other two were no longer there.) The parents quickly got over the trauma of the afternoon, and resumed feeding the one remaining. It stayed in the hedge for a few days, then was gone, so we hope the story had a happy ending!

Susan Hirst

A Close Encounter

At the beginning of August, the Midland Hiking Club had one of their annual camping weekends at Stokes Bay on the Bruce Peninsula. One day we canoed and kayaked out to some nearby islands for a swim and lunch. While sitting on some rocks near the shore having our lunch, a large rattlesnake suddenly slithered out from beneath a rock very close to a bare foot. Well you never saw twelve people scatter so quickly! They are an endangered species and we watched as it curled up at the base of a nearby tree and prepared to bask in the sun. Prior to lunch we had been collecting wild berries in the bushes and most of us were just wearing sandals. Yep, they're still around folks.

Marilyn & Don Britton

Useful Common Wild Edibles

The following plants are found throughout Canada. They are abundant, easy to identify and least likely to absorb pollutants:

Goldenrod

These plants are found in dry, open areas well-exposed to the sun and flower during summer to early fall. Young leaves near flowers can be boiled and eaten as a potherb. Small leaves and flowers can be dried or used fresh to make anise-flavored tea. Seeds can be crushed and added to stews for thickening.

Plantain

These plants are found in waste ground and disturbed soils throughout city habitats. Young leaves can be boiled and eaten as a potherb. Seeds can be dried and ground into flour or dried, boiled, and served as a hot cereal. The crushed leaves are a powerful remedy for minor wounds, stings, bruises, and sprains. Seeds are high in the B vitamins. Take 1 or 2 pods daily as an insect repellent.

Marilyn Lawrence

2001 - 2002 Income & Expense Statement For the Year Ended Aug. 31, 2002

INCOME

Memberships 842.00
Coffee Fund 79.25
Donations 191.57
Festivals, Crafts, Beans 686.00
Christmas Auction 270.00
Bird Count 16.25
F.O.N. books, etc 75.00
Bank Int. 0.44
F.O.N. Conference 1.87
TOTAL \$2,162.38

EXPENSES

Own Foundation 270.00
Couchiching Conservancy
re: Fran Westman 500.00
Donation 135.00
F.O.N. Membership 75.00
Insurance 150.00
Office 58.30
Program Printing 9.76
Postage 133.54
Rent 374.50
Service charge 10.20
Gifts, Speakers 639.84
Bean Supplies 211.13
Newsletter 195.19
TOTAL \$2,762.46

Opening balance Sep. 1, 2001 933.02
Income 2,162.38 Expense 2,762.46
Bank balance as of Aug 31, 2002 332.94
Actual bank balance Aug 31, 2002 340.36
less o/s cheque 7.42 332.94
G.I.C. held at Toronto-Dominion Bank \$3,737.67

At our June meeting, we voted to raise our membership dues by \$2.00. Hardly an pinch in the pocket-book you'll agree, and it will help with all our many projects.

CLUB NEWS



Members night in our club is a celebration of a full year of learning about and participating in many activities related to nature. It is a relaxing evening of food and learning about how your fellow members spend their time in everyday living. Over the years we have learned from a chemical engineer about how he traveled to other countries to help the local people develop a paint factory and other industries in their homeland. We learned how mushrooms and blueberries are a year round operation, with a month by month schedule how they are grown. One of our members displayed examples of his nature photography from a few years ago, when he had to send his negatives or slides away to a lab to be printed. Now with the advance of technology, he can print high quality photos on his own computer at home. Through members eyes, we have traveled to Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, Central America, South America, Africa, and to places right next door -- all of them interesting. If you have not shared with us the unique way you spend your time, please plan on doing it this year. All we ask is 10 or 15 minutes of your time to tell us about you!! Please tell us what makes your life interesting. Please call, me Don Belfry at 534-3453, or see me at one of our meetings to discuss it. I would be glad to arrange a time for you.

On Saturday, June 22nd a small group of our club's members spent a most enjoyable and informative day with Jean & Nelson Maher who are members of the Owen Sound Field Naturalist Club. They led us on a fern walk where we visited three sites in the Woodford / Bognar Marsh / Owen Sound area. We were fortunate to see 18 different species of ferns. To me, by far, the most interesting ones we saw were the rattlesnake, and the walking fern which takes several years to reach any significant size.

Tom Marr

The Christmas Bird count is coming up in December. Don't forget to save the date, December 14, to join a group to look for wintering birds, and then to enjoy our Pot Luck supper. See Dave Schandlen to sign up.