



## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The executive has arranged for a number of interesting speakers for this year's meetings. Topics range from wind power to wildflowers, and from Madagascar to local wetlands. There will be both local knowledgeable speakers and internationally known speakers. We would like to welcome lots of new members to our club this year to experience these presentations and to take part in various projects: so please let all your friends and acquaintances know about our speakers, and invite them to take part in the club.

*Adrienne & Greg*

## Who We Are

**This is the fourth in a series profiling some of our members. This month we would like you to meet Dan Webb:**

It might seem like an unlikely place to get the nature bug, but Dan Webb's life-long love of the outdoors began in what is now the urban jungle of Oshawa. Paved over long ago and transformed into a steel and glass outgrowth of Toronto, the fields and woods north of Lake Ontario were an ideal place in the 1930s for Dan to learn about wildlife. His membership in the Boy Scouts of Canada played a key role. "We had a leader who was very good in the outdoors," Dan recalls. "This was the end of the Depression days.



Dan and Mary Webb at home

There wasn't a lot of money to spend, but he took us on a hike every weekend, year-round". "We had a camp in a farmer's field in a woodlot and did a lot of winter camping. Our leader taught us a lot about nature - tracks in the snow, birds, etc. This was my initial start in nature."

But the scout leader wasn't the only person to generate an interest in the outdoors. Dan's father, who was born in Midland and worked as a sailor, taught his son how to use a gun. And although his dad was not a hunter, Dan remembers growing up in a hunting environment. "I was a hunter for a short time," he says, "until I decided I didn't like killing." He says he never saw any Canada geese in his hunting days. Dan much preferred to do his shooting of nature through a lens. He recalls that while on a summer vacation - when he was 12 or 13 and working on a farm north of Elmvale - he learned to use an old box camera. "When I wasn't working, I would try to take pictures," he says. "It takes a lot of patience to lie beside a woodchuck hole waiting for him to come out, but it's amazing how

much nature you see when you lie virtually motionless for two hours". "I wish I could see some of the birds today that I saw back then," he adds.

Before settling in Midland 55 years ago, Dan's life took him from Oshawa to Montreal, Brantford and Orillia. His love of nature, though, always went with him, and he instilled it in others. His interest in birding really took off, so to speak, after he and Mary, his Midland-born-and-raised wife, joined the Midland Penetanguishene Field Naturalist Club in the late 1960s. "I really became knowledgeable when I began birding with Fran Westman," Dan says. "She was a great teacher in the identification of birds."

Not surprisingly, Dan and Mary's three children - Susan, John and Cathy - share their appreciation of the great outdoors. Susan, who works at the Huronia District Hospital, is the most active in nature. John is rated No. 4 in the province in mountain biking in the 40-and-older category. Much of the Webbs' love of nature was instilled through travel. "We travelled lots of times to Point Pelee in the spring for birdwatching." The sight of scissortail flycatchers made two trips to the Bruce Peninsula especially exciting, not to mention whale watching on a 50-foot schooner while on a tour of Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy. "We were surrounded by whales right alongside of the boat; we also saw sharks," Dan remembers. A research person onboard provided information that

*Continued on page 4*

Midland-Penetanguishene Field  
Naturalists Club  
Box 393  
Midland, Ontario L4R 2J8

Co-Presidents: Greg Lutick and  
Adrienne Jex  
Treasurer: Diane Marr  
Secretary: Shirley Tilson  
Past President: Joanne Scott

We're on the web!  
[www.csolve.net/~mpfnc](http://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.*

**Schedule**

*Here are the club meetings for the  
Fall season. Check the brochure  
for more information.*

**HURONIA JOINT MEETING**  
September 9, 2004

**SIX MILE LAKE (WILD RICE TRAIL)**  
September 11, 2004

**WYE MARSH FESTIVAL**  
September 18 and 19, 2004

**WOODLAND/RIVERSIDE WALK**  
October 9, 2004

**SEVERN SOUND - RAP**  
October 21, 2004

**ON HURONIA REGIONAL MEETING**  
November 6, 2004

**MYSTERY HIKE**  
November 13, 2004

**WIND POWER & THE ENERGY CRISIS**  
November 18, 2004

**CHRISTMAS POT LUCK AND  
105th AUDUBON BIRD COUNT**  
December 18, 2004

**WILDFLOWERS**  
January 20, 2005

**COOKOUT IN TAY TOWNSHIP**  
January 22, 2005



**THE NATURE BOOK CLUB**

The Book club decided to continue to meet over the summer. Our July book was "The Insect World of J. Henri Fabre". As Fabre was an early naturalist it turns out to be possible to find many of his books available online....I just googled and found them easily. Missed the meeting however so can't report..

The August book was "Arctic Dreams" by Barry Lopez. We all agreed his writing was very poetic and at the same time informative. I certainly learned a lot about the arctic animals and people I didn't know before. As with many other books about the natural world, we are reminded the influence of European humans has been very negative.

Our September book is "Wolf country" by John Theberge. He spoke to our group not too long ago so this will be a timely one to read. As always, we are happy to welcome more people to the meetings at any time. We are still meeting the last Sunday afternoon of the month.

As well as reading interesting books and enjoying the company of fellow field naturalists, there are always delicious refreshments too. What's a meeting without goodies? So don't be shy, join us.  
*Linda Whitehead*

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*  \*  
\* **MPFNC starts the chair rolling!** \*  
\* Our Our gift to Wye Marsh last year of a wheelchair seems to have \*  
\* started a wave of donations of equipment for the disabled to the Centre. \*  
\* The Ronald McDonald Foundation has donated money enabling the \*  
\* marsh to purchase 3 children's wheelchairs. The chairs have "bubble \*  
\* wheels" which can be used on ice and snow as well. There is also a new electric, 6 seater golf \*  
\* cart, courtesy of Trillium Foundation. This cart can be used to take those people who have \*  
\* difficulty walking out into the marsh down to the far viewing blind, so they can enjoy the \*  
\* broad expanse of marshland. \*  
\* Next time you're at the Marsh, have a look on the patio and see all these helpful things! \*  
\* *Dorothy Harper* \*  
\* \*\*\*\*\*

# CLUB NEWS



In May, Greg Herriott from Hempola Valley gave us a fascinating talk on industrial hemp. This plant is unfortunately misunderstood and under-utilized. It can be used for clothing, health and beauty products, food, animal fodder and other industrial uses. Those who bought some of his samples were certainly impressed with the quality of the product.

A Rural Walk with Rolf-Quite a large group of club members joined Rolf on a walk through his rural neighborhood in May. Birds were the main objects of interest, and a large variety of species were noted. They included bobolinks, a green heron, bluebirds, a red-bellied woodpecker, great crested flycatchers and many other species. A deer farm with beautiful garden and pond provided an interesting detour.

Our June pot-luck/meeting was held at Tiny Marsh, where we were able to take our usual annual walk and see the red-headed woodpeckers at their nest and a variety of marsh wildflowers. The last portion of the meeting was devoted to short presentations by some of our members. Presentations were on Norway, China, the West Coast and Florida.

For our June outing, Max Wagg invited us into his garden, and later into his home for a lovely tea. The garden includes easy-care perennials, many of them shade-loving. Max has developed an irrigation system using rainwater caught in a cistern. The result is an abundance of colours and textures all season long, a treat for all who visit Discovery Harbour. Greg Lutick

## MEMBERS' INBOX

### Saguenay Travelogue

Only a five-hour drive from Cornwall, Ontario this area produced several enjoyable bird sightings, plus superb marine mammals. On August 9<sup>th</sup> between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. we observed approximately 20 Beluga whales, numerous Minke whales, plus one Blue whale. One of the most interesting sightings was a horse-head Grey Seal. Most of these mammals can be seen at the mouth of the Saguenay River. The best place that we found to see them was at Les Escoumins, Quebec. This is where you can take the Ferry to Trois Pistoles. We also observed a number of birds: Black-legged Kittiwakes, Bonaparte's gull, Black guillemots, and White-winged Scoters to name a few. We found it was difficult to book passage on the boat and was very fortunate they had one space open. Sid & Dot Hadlington

### Norway Travelogue

Greg Lutick and Adrienne Jex traveled to Norway in March, staying with Greg's brother who has lived there for several years. We stayed mostly in the Lillehammer area, which is much like Muskoka or Maine-lots of water and rocks, but with higher mountains. It is a fairly rural area, with small mixed farms (many on steep hill-sides), much forested land and large open alpine areas. The people are generally friendly and fluent in English, and mostly oriented toward outdoor life. Hundreds of kilometers of cross-country ski trails are maintained in the immediate area. Many brochures and signs are in English, making it easy to get around. The weather was mostly mild but with plenty of snow for skiing. The waterways were just starting to break up, so the water birds were few in number and the summer birds still down south.

Magpies (*Pica pica*), hooded crows (*Corvus cornix*) and Great tits (*Parus major*) were everywhere. Thirteen other bird species were identified.\* Fox, Arctic hare and moose are present. Reindeer had been hunted prehistorically, as suggested by local petroglyphs. Pendulous birch and spruce are the dominant trees; *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (lingonberries or mountain cranberries) was observed in the woods.

\*Complete bird list: Magpie (*Pica pica*), Hooded crow (*Corvus cornix*), Great tit (*Parus major*), Blue tit (*Parus caeruleus*), Marsh tit (*Parus palustris*), Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), Green finch (*Chloris chloris*), Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Goosander (*Mergus merganser*), Gray lag goose (*Anser anser*), Black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Herring? Gull and Tree creeper (*Certhia familiaris*). Adrienne Jex

## BSC Data Demonstrate that Changes to Lighthouse Drastically Reduced Avian Mortality

21 January 2004 - Jason Jones and Charles Francis have just published the article

*The Effects of Light Characteristics on Avian Mortality at Lighthouses* in the *Journal of Avian Biology*. Using data collected by BSC's Long Point Bird Observatory from 1960-2002, the paper shows that the lighthouse at the Tip of Long Point can cause significant bird mortality. From 1960-89, the lighthouse killed 200 birds each spring and 393 each fall, with kills of up to 2000 birds in a single night. However, in 1989 the lighthouse was fully automated and a new beam was installed that was narrower and weaker than the previous system. The change brought about a drastic reduction in avian mortality at the lighthouse to annual means (1990-2002) of only 19 birds in spring and 10 in fall. The study shows the effectiveness of simple changes in light signatures in reducing the attraction of lighted structures to birds and reducing mortality during migration. The article concludes with two recommendations (reduce light intensity and change from fixed to flashing or intermittent system) on how to minimize the



Photo: Ron Ridout

impact of tall lighted structures on nocturnal migration.

from *Birds Studies Canada* newsletter

*Continued from page 1*

that enhanced the experience. Another unforgettable nature cruise took them to a fjord in Alaska, where they saw humpback whales and lots of shorebirds. Brother-in-law Fred and sister-in-law Callie have been great company on many outings, Dan says, adding that they have done a lot of nature trips on their own to far away places. So many wonderful memories. "I once saw five bears in a river I was fishing in," Dan recalls. "We got to within 100 feet and were anchored. As long as we came no closer, they were quite happy to ignore us."

While Dan says he never tipped a canoe, he did have one harrowing mishap in the outdoors - one that could have had tragic consequences. It occurred on the Grand Manan Island trip. "The trail goes along the face of a cliff and the fog rolls in fairly quickly. We were standing near an old lighthouse that was no longer in use and I was leaning on a pole looking out over the side of the cliff. It turned out that the pole was a new, automated foghorn, and when it went off. "I pretty near jumped off the cliff." But you didn't have to journey to Alaska or Grand Manan to take in the beauty of the natural world. Sometimes, you just have to look out the window - even at work. Before retiring, Dan worked for 25 years as a job co-ordinator in electrical construction ("doing estimates, purchases - you name it"). For the final eight years, he was lucky enough to have an office that overlooked a ravine, from which he could see barred owls and make many other wildlife sightings.

But with the perspective of someone who has seen so much change, Dan is troubled by how wildlife and wilderness are losing ground as man exploits the environment. "As we increase, nature retreats," he says. "There are too many people; the habitat is shrinking." Trips to Point Pelee are now more crowded than they were before, which makes birding difficult. Warblers used to be more abundant, Dan says, recalling the days when you could see six species in one tree at a time. Songbirds are becoming rarer, even if sandhill cranes are becoming more common. Bobwhites have almost vanished from Huronia. It's sad, Dan notes, how that farmer's field north of Oshawa where he first got the outdoors bug was long-ago swallowed by urban sprawl.

But not everything is negative. Dan is heartened by the health of the Midland Penetanguishene Field Naturalist Club and the dedication of its members. "The last five years or so have been the best for the naturalist club with more new younger members and excellent programs," he says. "The executive has worked hard to get excellent speakers and outings, and it has brought in more people." When people care, there's always hope. As a former president of the club, Dan Webb has done his part to make the organization what it is. And like that Boy Scout leader who instilled a love of nature in him all those years ago, Dan Webb has made a positive, lasting difference.

*Our on-site reporters for this article were Liz and Dave Schandlen*

## Reminder!!

Membership fees are now due. If you haven't paid yet, please see our new membership secretary,Carolynn Fishleigh, or mail your cheque in. The deadline is December 31!