



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 2006-2007 Naturalists' Club season. I bring to the club my keen interest in nature and in particular my interest and knowledge of insects. I have always enjoyed attending the club's meetings and now am looking forward to them even more. I anticipate some interesting speakers and great outings this year.

Dan Whittam

Who We Are

We are continuing our series profiling some of our members. Here is someone well-known and loved by many members:

Retired high school teacher Max Wagg has almost come full circle. Max was born on the north end of Georgian Bay, on Manitoulin Island, where he spent the first 18 years of his life. He moved to southern Ontario to continue his education and later teach, then, 37 years ago, moved back to Georgian Bay - this time to its southern end - where he and his wife, Jean, raised a family and have been ensconced ever since. Max's father died young, but not before he and Max's mom instilled a love of the great outdoors in their son. "This was in the days before TV," Max explains. When the kids were young, the family went camping every summer, he recalls.

Young Max worked at a general store on Manitoulin owned by a great uncle. He moved to the Niagara Peninsula to finish high school, and for five summers worked full-time on a fruit farm. After graduating, he attended the University of Guelph, where he majored in farm mechanics and became increasingly interested in nature thanks to the course's fine outdoor program, tree planting, etc.

From there, Max started teaching math and science at a high school right away. He then got an opportunity to work in a farm mechanics shop, where he stayed for five years. Max's next career move was into the field of teaching auto mechanics, which he did for four years, before switching over to math and science.

Max met Jean while both were teaching at Niagara High School. They were wed in 1959 and had three boys (who now live in Colorado, Edmonton, Waterloo) and a girl (who calls Bradford home). The Wagg's moved to Huronia in 1969, buying Henry Forget's farm south of Wye-bridge in 1970 and building a house on the property in 1981. Max began teaching at PSS, taking over from a teacher who'd started an excellent environmental program. *Continued on page 3...*

Midland-Penetanguishene Field
Naturalists Club
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President: Dan Whittam
Vice President: Susan Hirst
Treasurer:Carolynn Fishleigh
Secretary: Shirley Tilson
Past Presidents: Greg Lutick and
Adrienne Jex

Schedule



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

WYE MARSH FESTIVAL

September 16 & 17, 2006

HURONIA JOINT MEETING

Friday September 22, 2006 7:30 p.m.

AWENDA PARK

Saturday September 23, 2006

MYSTERY SPEAKER

Thursday October 19, 2006, 7:30 p.m.

TINY RAIL TRAIL

Saturday October 21, 2006

ON HURONIA REGIONAL MEETING

October 28, 2006

LAND CONSERVATION

Thursday November 16, 2006, 7:30 p.m.

TAY SHORES TRAIL

Saturday November 18, 2006

CHRISTMAS POT LUCK AND 107th AUDUBON BIRD COUNT

Saturday December 16, 2006 6:00 p.m.

LOONS

Thursday January 18, 2007 7:30 p.m.



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.*

Pelee Island trip a success!

The last weekend of May, sixteen of our members took the ferry from Leamington to visit the most southern inhabited land in Canada, the unique Pelee Island, to immerse ourselves in diverse nature, tranquility and prestigious wines. The museum heritage centre, under the leadership of Ron Lesson, provided a program to suit our needs. Ron led us to see both natural and historical sights unique to the area. Honey Locust, with orange trumpet bell flowers, Kentucky coffee trees, shagbark hickory and hop trees, which all attract many bird and butterfly species, were some species seen. We were delighted to learn the waterfront area on the East shore is under negotiation for protection and purchase by a Canadian conservation group.

We were on the tail end of warbler migration, but saw purple martins, orioles, tanagers, thrushes, cuckoo, carolina wren, herons and egrets. Sid and Dot Hadlington did a super job counting approximately 100 species for the Baillie Birdathon.

Marg Celestino's hospitality in guiding us through her acres of rare Carolinian wildflowers delighted us again. It was a "must do." Her paintings of the area were a treat for our eyes. She has drawn and recorded 420 plant species of Lake Erie islands. We saw wild hyacinth, Miami mist, Virginia water leaf, Valerianella Umbilicata (corn salad), nodding onion, fragrant sumac, mayapple, Geranium Immaculata, horse gentian and narrow-leaved arrowwood.

Our accommodation in century-old farm house B&Bs was relaxing, comfortable and friendly, with good food, enticing us to another visit to this southern paradise.

Pat Taylor

Continued from page 1....

He was at the opening of the Wye Marsh in 1970 and has been a member of the Midland Penetanguishene Field Naturalist Club since the early 1970s, twice serving as president. "The club is a lot stronger now than ever, with good speakers, good turnouts and interesting outings," he says.

Part of his life-long appreciation of nature includes tapping trees each spring and making maple syrup, a skill Max learned from Henry Forget. Being interested in the process, Max helped Henry to make syrup on his property for about three years, till Henry gave it up. Max continued making syrup on his own, and when the Waggs sold their property to Jamie Hunter in 1994, both had a syrup operation until Jamie's was ruined by a fire. Even today, with the new owners, Max makes syrup on the old farm. Springtime is special, Max says, because it's a chance to listen to all the sounds of nature around him as things come to life after winter.

It was on such a morning, Max remembers letting out the family cat one day and immediately hearing a ruckus outside. He investigated and discovered that a wild turkey had the family feline pinned under a shrub. So Max looked around and found some turkey chicks that were unable to hop up on a wall where their mother was. He lifted them up and off scurried mom and chicks. Crisis averted. If only problems in the Middle East could be handled so easily.

One of Max's most interesting trips occurred in August 1971 when he was among 33 teachers on a 16-day canoe trip from Armstrong along the northern tip of Lake Superior. Also memorable were the treks to Algonquin Park the family took every year for a decade. Whenever the Waggs traveled, they always gave cities a wide berth. Max has never been a city guy.

He took his environmental classes to Matchedash Bay, and one day was teaching canoe techniques while docking. The student in the canoe with him stepped out on to the dock and gave a little flip as he did. Over the canoe went - splash! A spectacular demonstration of how not to disembark from a canoe.

In order to better plan his own trips, Max starting driving a bus 11 years before retiring from teaching. He continued driving coaches for PMCL for something to do. Now, he also plans trips for groups.

As for the future, Max believes people have to get serious about protecting the environment. "It's a pretty tall order," but we have no choice, he says. The amount of litter that covers the countryside is "unbelievable", says Max, adding that he can't understand the mentality of people who show such disregard for their surroundings.

But not everything is discouraging. As an example, Max recalls driving a bus-load of ball hockey players from PSS to a two-day tournament in Toronto recently. On Day 1, he announced to his young charges that he expected the bus to remain as clean at the end of the trip as it was at the beginning because there would be no chance to clean it up between trips each day. Both days the bus was left spotless and Max was really impressed. The kids are all right - or at least these kids were.

A hopeful sign, indeed.

David and Liz Schandlen (Edited by J Withers)

Betty's book Review

Bringing Back the Dodo: Lessons in Natural and Unnatural History
by Wayne Grady, McClelland and Stewart 2006

These essays were originally natural history columns for Explore magazine with a slant on contemporary human life. Edited and brought up-to-date using the point of view of an amateur naturalist on the impact we humans make on the rest of the natural world.

An essay titled Of Beans and Bears starts off mentioning Henry David Thoreau's ambivalence -- he liked to hunt and eat meat but he felt guilty gardening -- forcing the earth to grow "beans instead of grass," turning insects and woodchucks into enemies. We replaced bison with domestic cattle, a disaster for the Prairies. We threaten the biodiversity of the lands we claim to love. This essay ruminates(!) on "the complexity of our relationship with nature." "We want to save grizzly bears and wild ducks from extinction -- so we may hunt and kill them." Others, not us of course.

An essay headed War and Peace in Birdland invokes writers as different as Anatole France (Penguin Island), Aristophanes (The Birds), Konrad Lorenz (On Aggression), and Peter Matthiessen (The Birds of Heaven). All cite a great deal of aggression, be they writing fact or fiction. Studies have found "extraordinarily high testosterone levels in males at breeding time." The willow ptarmigan, widely distributed in the Arctic "is to all appearances a gentle bird." "It appears in native mythology as a demure, virginal creature." Its population crashes and booms every nine to ten years. No one knew why as no one had studied them. "Winter, in places inhabited by willow ptarmigan, does not lend itself to sedentary bird-watching" when the ptarmigan "flock amiably together." But. The most actively aggressive, testosterone-charged males ("if God had turned these birds into humans, you'd be able to recognize them by the size of their lawn tractors") with the biggest territories found partners quickly. Another group of males just hung about.

The observer, David Mossop, discovered that the breeders "did so much fighting, defended their breeding territories so vigorously, that they became weak with exhaustion," and "emaciated and scrawny," making them "less effective breeders." When the numbers of these were high, the crash in population would occur,

The dodo himself gets his innings as it has "the dubious distinction of being the first creature to become extinct as a direct result of human intervention." This brings us to a discussion of DNA and cloning and questions about our "tampering with an ecosystem about which we know too little."

This diversity of essays is written in simple, almost conversational language, about creatures and situations in which we as naturalists are intensely interested. Wayne Grady is one of Canada's most interesting writers on natural history subjects. We, the MPFN's Nature Book Club have also read about his adventures in our North and he is co-author with David Susuki of Tree: A Life Story which we have also discussed.

Bringing Back the Dodo is a book young and old can dip into, one essay at a time, and be treated to humour, insight and knowledge of nature every time. I bet you guessed: I recommend it.

Betty Carter

Save this Date!

Climate Action Tour Workshop

We Want Your Opinions!

The Wye Marsh is going to host a workshop on September 30th from 1-4 pm, presented by the Climate Action Network. It is part of a cross-country, national tour that is collecting ideas and opinions from Canadians on our role in greenhouse gas reductions. This feedback will be presented to the Federal Government in October, to help them formulate their "Made in Canada" plan for Climate Change. Please join us! There is no cost to attend, but pre-register by calling 526-7809 x205 or e-mail research@wyemarsh.com.

Susan Hirst



Site 41 Update

This fight is far from over. The Community Monitoring Committee has sent their comments on the draft Certificate of Approval of Site 41 to the Ministry of the Environment, naturally pointing out all the steps which have not been taken to assure the safety of the project. They have also requested a review of the treatment of the County towards the CMC. The CMC has not been given any power or recognition by the County. If they don't get a satisfactory response from the MOE about their treatment, they are going to take this issue to the Ombudsman and request a judicial review of their treatment. Stephen Ogden of the CMC says there is another way we can be part of the solution for this issue and that is at the Municipal elections coming up. Anita Dubeau, George MacDonald and Randy Robbins are all aggressively pushing for the dump. We can write letters to the local papers telling them that these people do not represent us if they plan to put this dump on top of our water. We can get behind candidates who are against it.

Carolynn Fishleigh