

The Rambler

A newsletter of the **Bert Miller Nature Club of Fort Erie**

Oct., 2016



A WARM WELCOME

By Lynda Goodridge

Welcome back to a new season of programs and outings. It's hard to believe that we are well into the fall already. We have a wonderful line-up of speakers this year, and club member, Marcie Jacklin, started us off with a colourful trip to Colombia. Topics for our monthly meetings range from gardening to attract wildlife and Canada's only lizard, to mysterious, marvelous mammals and impacts of asteroids on climate change. There is something of interest to all of us.



Our club was able to bring the award-winning Canadian documentary, "The Messenger", to our community in early October, with the help of

Fort Erie bingos. Extra funds allowed us to present showings at the Fort Erie Public Library's Centennial and Crystal Ridge Branches. Many thanks to the library for providing the space and equipment and to our sister clubs for helping to promote the event.



Monies from Fort Erie bingos allow us to do extra programs and events, such as the Ridgeway Summer Festival and the Butterfly Festival, as part of our community outreach. During the past year, we averaged about 5 bingos per quarter. Without our volunteers, we would be unable to participate. We are required to send two volunteers for each of our scheduled sessions, which last approximately two hours. Our job is simply to provide a presence for our club and to help keep the tables neat and tidy. We are always looking for extra volunteers so that the commitment for each of us is minimal. If you can spare a couple of hours every few months, please consider joining our team. Thanks go out to Lorraine Brown-Joyce, Alida Osborn, Dawn Pierrynowski, Deb Sherk, John Weisz, Amy Brunning, Greg Ballinger, Janet Kellam, Tim Seburn and Yours Truly. Special thanks to Tim Seburn for coordinating our assignments.

In keeping with The Bert Miller Nature Club's mission, we will continue to advocate on

behalf of our natural environment by expressing our concerns through various public forums. We are continuing to support the efforts to protect the wetlands and forests in the Thundering Waters development in Niagara Falls and have submitted comments and concerns regarding a number of provincial policy reviews. Our green space is fast disappearing in Niagara, and it is imperative that we raise awareness of these important environmental issues.

My appreciation is extended to those of you who support our club through your memberships. This not only provides funds for our operating costs, but also adds to our credibility as stewards of our natural environment. I look forward to sharing our exciting speakers' line-up with you each month.

SWIFTS & SUMMERFEST

By Lynda Goodridge



Although our club did not have any formal meetings during the summer months, a number of us were kept busy with club-related activities.

For about five years now, club members have acted as citizen scientists for Bird Studies Canada by participating in the annual Swift watch. From May to September, we monitor a number of chimneys in the former downtown area of Fort Erie to count the Chimney Swifts roosting and nesting in these structures. This year, we added a new chimney at Niagara Christian Collegiate, thanks to the keen eyes of Lorraine Brown-Joyce and Ken Joyce.

Swifts have been in decline for a number of years and are a species of concern. We were thrilled, however, to witness over 100 birds

gathering for their migration south at one of the chimneys in late August. It is quite a sight to see swarms of these aerial acrobats circling in the sky, trying to catch their last snack before entering the chimney for the night. It has been several years since we have recorded numbers like this. Thank you to our dedicated group of Swift watchers: Janet Kellam, Alida Osborn, Maria Featherston, Michael Featherston, Lorraine-Brown Joyce, Ken Joyce, Marcie Jacklin and Yours Truly.

Another summer activity is our annual participation in the Ridgeway Summer Festival in July. Our coordinator for the past two years has been Rob Eberly, and he deserves a vote of thanks for taking on this daunting task. Having done this job for the previous 6 – 7 years, I fully appreciate his help.

As in the past, Stan Miksovsky brought his reptile and amphibian collection, while Dave Gibson, from Sky Hunters International, joined us with his birds of prey. Scott Sherk rounded up some of our native species to add local flavour to the other live displays.

Our booths were very popular and the button-making table was a hit with the younger set. Both kids and adults had fun with Dawn's nature memory game and Peter's bird photo album.



This event is very labour intensive: set up and take down each day, in addition to providing club representatives all day, each day. Without the following people, we would not have been able to participate: Rob Eberly, Scott Sherk, Dawn Pierrynowski, Rick Stockton, Tim Seburn, Deb

Sherk, Alida Osborn, Viki Busche, Lorraine Brown-Joyce, Ken Joyce, Ron Goodridge, and Janet Kellam. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

WHEN NATURE CALLS

by Earl Plato

The late Dr. George Marcy while at his Abino Woods farm encouraged us to take the pasture walk south to the butterfly fields. He said, "There's plenty of butterflies where there's stands of milkweed and boneset." "Boneset?"

It's there in the lower pastures we found this unusual member of the sunflower family. Butterflies like this plant and feed on its flat-topped clusters of dense dull-white flowers. These plants in the Marcy meadows were over three feet tall and even taller in some places. What is so unusual about this plant? Check its scientific name - *Eupatorium perfoliatum*. Its name suggests that the stem appears to be growing through the leaf. Dr. Marcy was a noted orthopedic surgeon in



nearby Buffalo, N.Y. Our early doctors who worked with broken bones thought that if boneset leaves wrapped inside bandages and supported with splints would aid in setting a broken bone. No truth to this claim, however, boneset tea made from dried leaves was long used as a tonic. Our early settlers thought that it was effective in treating colds, coughs and even constipation! Look for boneset in Fort Erie.

It was a wet, miserable day in late

November some years ago. With two of our grandchildren in tow, my wife and I headed to Seaway Mall, Welland. We had never visited the Serpentarium there. We had heard good things about it. Armed with a coupon, senior citizen status for me, and one of the two grandchildren who was five, we saved several dollars in admission. We had arrived at 10:00 a.m.; it didn't open until eleven. Once inside we were pleasantly surprised. Turtles of various sizes, some with strange shapes and pure white underbodies, were swimming in huge holding tanks. The grandchildren were fascinated with them as these animals dove and rose to the surface. We walked to our left. There were tanks and cages on both sides of the aisle. A huge Boa Constrictor was opposite an enormous Orinoco Crocodile that grows to a maximum 18 ft.. Which side to choose was a problem so we decided to do the outside tanks and then return to see the glass cages of the venomous and non-venomous snakes and reptiles. They actually had a functioning lab in which snake eggs such as cobras are hatched. Amazing! We were able to see our resident Massasauga rattlesnake and a fine specimen of a Timber Rattlesnake that once existed in our Niagara Glen Gorge not too many years ago. There were lizards and Gila Monsters all presented in as natural settings as possible. Our two grandchildren seemed to enjoy the adventure but I'll return to view these animals alone at a more leisurely pace. We had promised the grandchildren a treat after the viewing and three-quarters of the way through they remembered.

Grandparents, treat your grandchildren to various nature settings this Fall.

BUZZING NEWS UPDATES

By Dawn Pierrynowski

The third Butterfly Festival was held at the Stevensville Conservation Area in June. It was organized by the Bert Miller Club and hosted by the Fort Erie Conservation Club. A beautiful sunny day was on hand for the estimated 400 who participated in the many family friendly activities and exhibits provided by the pollinator enthusiasts below.

Bert Miller Nature Club
 Fort Erie Arts Council
 Fort Erie Conservation Club
 Friends of Fort Erie's Creeks
 Land Care Niagara
 Little Wolf Apiary
 Niagara Beeway
 Niagara Falls Nature Club
 Niagara Parks Commission
 Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority
 Niagara Pollinators
 Niagara Region Health Unit
 Niagara Region Public Works
 Niagara Restoration Council
 Niagara Woodcarver's Association
 Peninsula Field Naturalists
 Stevensville Public School

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority's, Kerry Royer, organized a community planting event with native species purchased from Sassafras Farms. A special thanks to those who helped plant in the hot, dry concrete-like conditions. You deserve a medal.

Let's make the 2017 Butterfly Festival another success. It is booked for Sunday, June 11, 2017. Save the Date.

NIAGARA LAND TRUST UPDATE

by Paul Philp and Tim Seburn

This past spring the Niagara Land Trust held what turned out to be a very interesting environmental event. Held on June 11th at The Riverstone in Welland, titled, "A Night of Wetlands & Jazz Bands". The event was intended to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands and the impact of the new biodiversity off-setting policy by combining serious discussion with an informal evening of music and socializing with conservation-minded friends.

Paul Robertson and Laura Dunkley of the Niagara Land Trust were the hosts for the evening. The entertainment featured The Deacons of Jazz, a local jazz group, along with an excellent performance by the Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School jazz band. In addition Steven Hounsell, the chair of Ontario's Biodiversity Council and past president of Ontario Nature, gave an informative talk on bio-diversity offsetting and how it supports land use planning. As well there was a delicious snack buffet and a silent auction featuring Niagara artists, wines, and woodcrafts.

Around 140 people attended the event which was generously supported by a large number of donors. Almost \$4,000 was raised by the event. The Niagara Land Trust will use these funds to secure a woodland in West Lincoln and for stewardship of the wetland it recently acquired in Wainfleet. The Niagara Land Trust would like to thank all its supporters who helped to make a "Night of Wetlands and Jazz" a terrific event. Together there is much great conservation work that can be done across Niagara with your continued support of the Niagara Land Trust.

Looking forward to next year's event.



Informative seminars, highlighting the importance of bees, were given by George Scott of Niagara Beeway and Walter Zimmermann of Little Wolf Apiaries'.

Excited bugsters were led in small groups by Paul Philp, Margaret Pickles, Peter BonEnfant and Rick Stockton in search of minibeasts and anything else that make up the areas unique ecosystem.

The Greenbelt, the Niagara Escarpment and Our Future



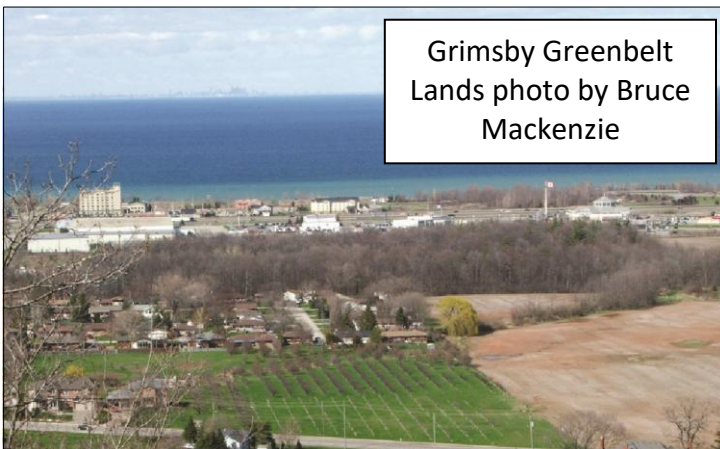
by Bruce
Mackenzie(left)
and Gord McNulty

The Province of Ontario has stretched out The Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review, CLUPR, for a long time now and it ain't over yet. I would like to think the process is like aging wine where the vintage will just keep getting better but there is always a fear that you could end up with vinegar. The CLUPR entails the review of:

- *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- *The Greenbelt Plan
- *The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and
- *The Niagara Escarpment Plan

Together these plans are incredibly important to all of us and in our area the Greenbelt Plan, and the Niagara Escarpment Plan, NEP, are critical to how our landscape will look tomorrow and to how we will live in the future.

The NEP has been in place now for over 40 years and has survived virtually intact since its conception even with various governments in power. The Greenbelt Plan was initiated in 2005 and came up for review in 2015. The Provincial Government chose to review all four plans at the same time rather than to have four separate



Grimsby Greenbelt
Lands photo by Bruce
Mackenzie

reviews. In the future their review dates will be aligned. For any individual citizen to follow the complete reviews and understand them would be a herculean task. Many citizens have adopted

particular sections of one plan or two to comment on during the CLUPR.

The Province started by tasking a committee chaired by David Crombie to review the four plans together and bring a report to the Province. This was completed in late 2015 and 87 recommendations were presented in the committees report. The report from the Crombie Committee did not include any mapping. The Province reviewed the report and in the spring of 2016 produced its draft CLUPR document based on the Crombie report and this time mapping was included and provided to the public. The maps showed what lands are to be included in the Greenbelt and the NEP and to what level of protection they will receive. From a high altitude view, the maps stayed the same and this was excellent news. Along with these maps are the planning guidelines telling all how to build and grow liveable complete communities.

So now that the draft plan from the Province has been released, municipalities, the land development industry, the agricultural community, the public, you and me, have until September 30th to send in our comments on it. Again it is critical for citizens to make their concerns known to the Government. After September 30th the Province will review the comments submitted by all parties. In late 2016 or more likely 2017 the Province will release its final CLUPR document. It will set out the guiding planning principals and maps for our part of the province until at least 2025.

Some municipalities and developers may be using this comment period to continue to refine their arguments and ramp up their lobbying with government staff and Provincial politicians to weaken the plans. While municipalities and lobbyists may be sending in their comments all parties were given the opportunity to speak to ministry staff at the recently held Open Houses. Citizens are encouraged to send in their comments into the review office by email or mail. Your comments will be shared between the applicable staff.

“Leading conservation and environmental groups are urging the province to grow the

Greenbelt to include additional prime farmland and sensitive natural heritage systems. Environment Hamilton, for example, has called for all of Hamilton's urban river valleys to be added to the Greenbelt. Twenty-one major river valleys in the Toronto area would be protected and Environment Hamilton has made a strong case that Hamilton's should be protected as well. Sustainable Brant, for its part, has urged the province to include Brant's prime agricultural lands, natural heritage and water resources including the Grand River watershed.

Other significant recommendations from Environment Hamilton include putting in place new rules to restrict infrastructure in the Greenbelt including highways, energy generation and transmission, sewage pipes and fuel lines, and to address fill issues across the Greenbelt. EH is also urging the province to hold the line on current municipal urban boundaries in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and freeze them for 10 years. EH would also reinforce Smart Growth by better aligning the growth plan with the Big Move transit plan objectives and address climate change by dedicating revenues from cap-and-trade to programs that restore and enhance the Greenbelt's natural landscape and further reduce emissions.

We often hear from municipal politicians that urban growth is necessary for the success of their town. As an example in parts of Hamilton and in Niagara, lobbyists and some members of councils are asking the Province to remove lands from the Greenbelt.

Let's assume for a moment that all of the tender fruit lands in Grimsby below the escarpment were released for development tomorrow. It would be safe to say that within 10 to 15 years the lands would all be built on. What would the town do after all of these lands are paved? The next generation would not be able to use urban sprawl as a tool for revenue collection. The next generation would have to use smart management strategies to manage the town and make it a livable community without sprawl. Development and growth in the town will still take place but it will be smart development that does not gobble up the few remaining precious agricultural and natural lands. The Provincial

Government in its implementation of the Greenbelt Plan, the NEP and the other plans are telling the municipalities that they have to be smarter now. They are no longer being allowed to take the easiest route and build car dependent communities in green fields and remove the unique farm land and the few natural areas that are left. The next generation has to be given a chance to benefit from what little of the untouched lands that we are leaving them. As former Minister Ted McMeekin stated during the first Greenbelt Review Open Houses " Fifty years from now no one will criticize us for keeping these precious agricultural and natural lands as they are now".

Photo by Bruce
Mackenzie

In Hamilton
and Niagara,
municipal
politicians offered



news lands to be included in the Greenbelt during the Crombie Committee Review in exchange for smaller pieces of land to be removed from the Greenbelt that the municipalities want opened up for development. Fortunately the Province in its draft document and mapping took up the offer of putting the newly offered lands into the Greenbelt but it did not take the original pieces out of the Greenbelt. Since 2014 members of the HNC and other naturalists clubs and many members of the community have been opposing the construction of a proposed arterial road through the Irish Grove Woodlot and into the last piece of remaining Tender *Peach tree blossoms and honey bee* Fruit Greenbelt lands below the Escarpment in Grimsby. The mapping of the Province's draft Greenbelt Review document keeps these lands in the Greenbelt and it is essential that these lands remain protected and not traded away. The future of the provincially significant Irish Grove Woodlot and the remaining Tender Fruit Lands in Grimsby depends upon a strong Greenbelt and vision.

There is a certain beauty in all of the work being done by the Province. The Province takes a view of the landscape from a high altitude and looks at it over a much longer time period than any municipality can. This has been proven by the

success of the NEP over the last 40 years or more. Yes, to some, there have been some issues with the NEP on a local scale but just imagine what the NEP planning area would like if the Province, under the leadership of the former Premiers John Robarts and William Davis, had not put in place the Niagara Escarpment Commission and Plan and left the planning for these lands in the hands of individual municipalities. The entire Escarpment area today would look like a checkerboard of mismatched developments and the ecological integrity and cultural significance of the Niagara Escarpment would be lost forever. There would be no Bruce Trail. The Greenbelt, The Oak Ridge Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment are too important to allow individual municipalities with nebulous and self serving intentions to have their way with them.

"It is significant that the Niagara Escarpment Commission has proposed that the province expand the Niagara Escarpment Planning Area by about 45,000 hectares to provide greater protection for this irreplaceable resource. The 45,000 hectares were part of the original NEP Planning Area, but were not included for political reasons. Many supporters of the Niagara Escarpment believe it's imperative that the provincial cabinet approve the NEC's recommendation."

We will not have a better opportunity than now to let the Provincial Government know that we support the draft for the new Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan. I know they listened during the first review and now we must be heard again.

All members of the HNC are asked to let the land use review office and their local MPP and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing know how important it is to keep the Greenbelt and NEP as they are proposed in the draft plan.

Comments can be made at

www.ontario.ca/landuseplanningreview

Or by writing:

Land Use Planning Review
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay St. Suite 425 (4th Floor)
Toronto, Ont. M5G 2E5

The Honourable Bill Mauro
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5

The Honourable Kathryn McGarry
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Suite 6630, 6th Floor, Whitney Block 99
Wellesley Street West
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3

For more information please review the recent document "Shaping Land Use in the Greater Golden Horseshoe" available at www.ontario.ca/landuseplanningreview

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A Warm Welcome To Our New or Rejoining Members

Maria Featherston

George Ginther

We are happy to have you join with us in celebrating our natural heritage.

A Wonderful Day at Shagbark

by Dawn Pierrynowski

What a great morning we had at the Shagbark Nature Park stewardship walk Sat. Oct 1st.. It started out overcast but the rain didn't materialize and as the group exited the woods they enjoyed the sunny blue skies. The fields were filled the vibrant yellows, and purples of fall.

A big thank you to the team that helped to mark the trail with new posts, clipped back some overgrowth and picked up the litter along the trails. A very special thanks to a most knowledgeable, Rick Young, who took excellent pictures and supplied us with an inventory of his observations.



Capped Chickadee, Red Tailed Hawk, Tufted Titmouse, Gt. Blue Heron and Summer Azure.

Nature Ramblings

by Paul Philp

There is something magical about nature, being part of wonderful nature organizations, and contributing to something that is wonderful. Thank you so much for all of you who have submitted photos and articles for the newsletter and everything else you do that helps maintain the various environmental clubs in the region.

Many of us see the connection between what happens outside of our homes to what happens inside our homes. We understand that what you throw out your car window, or down the drain, can affect your personal life, that of your family, or someone else's. How do we spread that insight? How do we get everyone to make minor changes to their habits to make life better and healthier for us all? This is particularly difficult when in our society, the economics of living goes counter to the sustainability of living. I need not say more.

In the next Rambler I would like to highlight some personal experiences with Wind Turbines. It will start with trying to hear a turbine and the traffic noise was so loud Rick Stockton and I couldn't hear it, to actually hearing four different sounds on Station Road in Wainfleet. That is where this once horizontal turbine now is vertical and operational.



Species observed included: Small White Aster, New England Aster, Teasel, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Dandelion, Heath Aster, Common Milkweed, False Solomon's Seal, Tall Goldenrod, Blue-stemmed Goldenrod, Elm-Leaved Goldenrod, White Vervain, Yarrow, Lance leaved Goldenrod, Cow Vetch, White Snake Snakeroot, Panicked Aster, Frost Aster, Virginia Knotweed, Black Raspberry, Sugar Maple, Red Oak, Virginia Creeper, Gray Dogwood, Multiflora Rose, Shagbark Hickory, Amer. Beech, Amer. Basswood, Hop Hornbeam, Black Walnut, Bladdernut, Agrimonia gryposepala, Barberry, Dark Green Bulrush, Myrtle Warbler, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Towhee, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Amer. Goldfinch, Northern Parula, Black