



The Rambler!

A Newsletter of the Bert Miller Nature Club
Fall 2013

Coming Up

BMNC

All indoor programs held at Stevensville Conservation Area Clubhouse, W. Main St. & Ott Rd.

**Into the Unknown:
Exploring in the 21st C**
Adam Shoalts takes us on a journey to previously unexplored areas of Canada's north.
Mon., Oct. 21, 7:00 pm

**Lake Erie Shoreline
Tour**
Waverly Beach, Windmill Point & Abino Bay. Meet at Waverly Beach, end of Helena St.
Sun., Oct. 27, 10:00 am
Contact: Albert Garofalo, 905-732-5084

**Aboriginal Trail
Marker Trees**
Paul O'Hara discusses these unusual formations in southern Ontario.
Mon., Nov. 18, 7:00 pm

Greetings From Our President

Welcome back for a new year of exciting speakers and events.

When we think of summer, we think about the Ridgeway Summer Festival. It was a well-attended, successful event, highlighted by our displays, which included reptiles, birds of prey, and, of course, the Bert Miller Nature Club tent. Name that Bird, Nature Memory Games, and the ever-present button machine were a hit with the kids. I would like to thank all who contributed their time and expertise during the two days. The generous donations for prizes and draws were much appreciated.



Janet Kellam & Lynda Goodridge at the Ridgeway Summer Festival

The first Butterfly Festival at the Stevensville Conservation Area was made possible with the support of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (Kim Frolich, Darcy Baker) and the Fort Erie Conservation Club (Connie Charron, Elmer Miskolczi). Over twelve organizations were represented, promoting the importance of pollinators and increasing awareness of the environment through their wonderful displays and activities.



Patty's Monarch display at the Butterfly Festival

Shagbark Nature Park
Stewardship plans &
cleanup while exploring
the trails. Bring a
garbage bag & gloves.
Sun., Nov. 24, 10:00 am
Contact: Dawn
Pierrynowski, 905- 384-
2476

**St. Catharines
Christmas Bird Count**
Sun., Dec. 15, 2013
Contact Marcie Jacklin
at 905-871-2577 or
mjacklin@brocku.ca if
you are interested in
participating.

**Holiday Pot Luck &
Silent Auction**
Margaret Pickles warms
us up with a trip to
Trinidad. Bring a place
setting and a dish to
share.
Mon., Dec. 16, **6:00 pm**

**Creek & Wetland
Restoration**
Find out about the
newest techniques for
naturalizing these
important habitats.
Mon., Jan., 20, 7:00 pm

**Fort Erie Waterfowl
Tour**
Visit the hot birding
spots along the Niagara
River. Meet at parking
lot opposite Old Fort
Erie (riverside).
Sat., Feb. 1, 10:00 am
Contact; Denise Ball,
905-382-2081

A rainy day did not stop Ridgeway-Crystal Beach High School student volunteers (Teacher: Bill Connors) from completing the community planting. Hikes were conducted in the rain and newly hatched snapping turtles were discovered. Hearty thanks go out to the volunteers from the Club: Patty and Jason Moss, Paul Philp, Lynda Goodridge, Peter BonEnfant, Deb Sherk, Janet Kellam, Denise Ball, Viki Busche, Rick Young, Janet Damude, Margaret Pickles, Brigitte Bonner and Christine Knighton. You rock!



Kids Activity: Deb Sherk

Beyond festivals, another important event happened over the summer. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment provided a grant of \$42,975 for the study of two provincially designated “species at risk”: the endangered Spotted Turtle and the threatened Blanding’s Turtle. This project will be carried out in collaboration with the Town of Fort Erie in an effort to preserve, protect and restore the natural environment.

I am looking forward to the upcoming year with its impressive roster of speakers and events. Working with an outstanding board of directors and with Club volunteers makes it all possible.

Dawn Pierrynowki

Editor’s Note: Congratulations to the winners of our free draw during the Butterfly Festival: Anya Willson of Ridgeway and Alex Remollino of Niagara Falls. And many thanks to Dawn for an awesome job of organizing!

Tornado at Marcy’s Woods?

Early in the morning of Saturday, July 20, 2013, a number of us met up with Albert Garofalo at the end of Holloway Bay Road to do a tour of Marcy’s Woods in support of Carolinian Canada’s Stand Up & Paddle event.

As we began hiking along the roadway into Marcy’s Woods, we

Fracking 101

An introduction to this controversial method of extracting fuel from earth.

Mon., Feb. 17, 7:00 pm

Winter Tree Identification

Identify local trees and collect twigs to use at a follow-up workshop in the clubhouse. Bring a lunch and meet at the Stevensville

Conservation Club.

Sun., Mar. 2, 10:00 am

Contact: Paul Philp,
905-894-2723

Invasive Flora Species

A discussion about these plant species and their effects on the environment.

Mon., Mar. 17, 7:00 pm

NFNC

Monthly indoor programs held at Niagara Falls Public Library, Victoria Av., 3rd Wed., 7:00 p.m.

Speakers on a variety of topics. Complete schedule online:

**niagaranatureclub.
tripod.com**

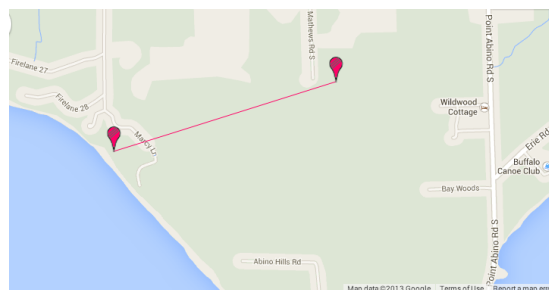
soon ran into Dave from the Kennels. He asked us not to go through to the woods as there were trees and power lines down all over the place. Several men with chain saws were hard at work clearing fallen trees from the roadway. One had earlier helped free Patty Marcy from her cottage.

Not being able to safely enter the woods along the path, we decided to head over to the alvar area instead. As we neared the Pt. Abino drain, we found a swath of destruction about 100 feet wide, just south of the drain, but visible from the North side of the drain. Hundreds of trees were either knocked down or snapped in half and strewn in every direction. We followed the path of damage and found it continued in a nearly straight line almost parallel to the drain; from the Kennels property behind the meadow all the way to the end of Matthews Rd., a distance of over one kilometer.



Photo courtesy of Marcie Jacklin

The next day, some of us returned to take photos. Marcie Jacklin forwarded some of her photos to Environment Canada. The same day a number of tornados were reported in Ontario, and we were curious to see if, in fact, it was a tornado that had caused the damage we were witnessing. Environment Canada later sent a fellow to check it out. He concluded that the damage was likely caused by a burst of damaging winds with speeds of around 90 kilometers per hour.



Path of destruction

So, it appears not to have been a tornado, but very unique storm damage. And, as noted by Peter BonEnfant, it will be interesting

Lake Ontario North Shore

Bring a lunch and meet at the Tim Horton's at Prudhommes Landing.
Sun., Nov. 17, 9:00 am
Contact: Gisele Mills,
905-892-3973

Gulls Galore

Bring a lunch and meet at the control structure above the Falls.
Sun., Dec. 8, 9:00 am
Contact: Kayo Roy,
905-892-4433

Christmas Bird Count

Plan to participate in this important census.
Fri., Dec. 27
Contact: Kayo Roy,
905-892-4433

Waterfowl Along the Niagara River

Bring a lunch and meet at the parking lot at Dufferin Island.
Sun., Jan. 19, 9:00 am
Contact: Gisele Mills
905-892-3973

to see what species regenerate along this clearing over time.

In 1792, there was a similar storm in Pelham that downed trees in a swath ending at Pelham Road. The pioneers moved the downed trees and took advantage of the resulting path, calling it Hurricane Road - a name the road still bears today.

Tim Seburn

Beautiful Butterflies

At our September 16th meeting, Rick Cavasin gave a fascinating talk on the Butterflies of Ontario: Habits and Habitat. Rick grew up in the Port Colborne area and began collecting butterflies as a young boy. He now lives in Ottawa and has maintained his connection with butterflies through his photography and his naturalist websites.



Photo courtesy of Ron Goodridge

There are five families of butterflies in Ontario:

1. Skippers – small, moth-like butterflies
2. Swallowtails – large, charismatic butterflies (eg. Eastern Swallowtail)
3. Whites/Sulphurs – eg. Cabbage White
4. Gossamer-Winged – small butterflies
5. Brush-footed – eg. Monarchs and Checkerspots

Butterflies have a life cycle that consists of an egg, larva, pupa and adult. Some butterflies cycle once a year, some two to three times per summer and others (like the Arctic butterflies) have a 2 year cycle. Some butterflies over-winter as adults, living under bark, in leaf litter or in a garage. Others over-winter as a larva or pupa.

Butterflies live in forests, bogs, marshes, rocky barrens, savannah, tundra and alvars. Their larval food and nectar sources include blueberries, cranberries, milkweed, black eyed Susan's, wild lupins, willows, thistles or poplars. They don't range very far from their larval food source.

Predators of butterflies are birds (especially at the larval stage), dragonflies, spiders, ambush bugs, parasitic wasps, and hornets.

Dufferin Island

Enjoy a leisurely winter walk. Be sure to dress warmly. Meet in parking lot.

Sun., Feb. 2, 2:00 pm
Contact: Carol Horvat,
905-687-8562

Birding Fisherville & Selkirk Prov. Park

Meet at the Fonthill Shoppers Drug Mart
Sun., Feb. 23, 9:00 am
Contact: Rick Young,
905-734-6226

Tundra Swans at Long Point

Dress warmly, bring a lunch and meet at the Fonthill Shoppers Drug Mart.

Sat., Mar. 15, 8:30 am
Contact: Don Mills,
905-892-3973

PFN

Monthly indoor programs held 4th Monday, 7:30 p.m., at Mountainview United Church, 150 Glendale Ave., St. Catharines. For details on speakers and outings, visit www.peninsulafieldnats.com

The decline in the butterfly population has been due to loss of habitat, loss of larval food plants, and pesticide use.

The best time to photograph butterflies is on a cool, sunny day. They will be opening their wings to warm themselves. For more information, or to share your observations and photographs, go to www.ontariobutterflies.ca or ebutterfly.

Deb Sherk

Lake Erie Coast Project Update

Assistance for this project was provided by the Government of Ontario and the following project partners: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Natural Heritage Information Centre, the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Eckert Herbarium at Buffalo State College, the Clinton Herbarium of the Buffalo Museum of Science, the Niagara Community Foundation, the Peninsula Field Naturalists, the Niagara Falls Nature Club, and the Niagara Frontier Botanical Society of Buffalo, New York.

The Bert Miller Nature Club has recently completed a three-year study of the Lake Erie coast that was started in 2010. The project would not have been possible without the help of the above organizations and the many volunteers who devoted their time, interest and keen observations.



Albert showing a plant species to a young naturalist

The goals of this project were to inventory parts of the Lake Erie coast, from the Niagara River to Port Dover (Ecodistrict 7E-5), and to identify the occurrence and distribution of species at risk and their habitats.

During this project, 21 species considered to be at risk were observed and reported. An additional 12 species at risk that were historically known to be in the study area could not be relocated, despite extensive field work. This represents a 36% loss of species at risk from the study area.

To help protect and enhance habitat for the species at risk

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Nature Club
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Newsletter Editor:
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With the help of
Peter BonEnfant

Published twice a year

Submissions are always
welcome and can be
forwarded by email to
lynda.goodridge@
distributel.net

**Visit the BMNC
website at**

www.bertmillernatureclub.org

documented during this project, the Bert Miller Nature Club plans to continue the Lake Erie Coast Project as a coastal restoration and enhancement project.

The goals of this new project proposal are to restore and enhance natural beach topography and sand dune ecosystems of the Lake Erie coast in the Niagara Peninsula of Ontario in partnership with the City of Port Colborne, local cottage associations and high school students. This will be achieved by:

1. Planting locally harvested Beachgrass to restore natural beach and sand dune topography.
2. Building boardwalks to protect globally rare ecosystems by keeping foot traffic off sensitive sand dune habitats.
3. Installing interpretive signage to provide information about coastal ecosystems and nearby plants and animals to raise awareness of this unique coastal environment.



Sample Boardwalk - Photo courtesy of Pinery Prov. Park

The Great Lakes basin is home to the largest system of freshwater dunes in the world. Some of the finest examples of freshwater dune habitats can be found on Lake Erie in the Niagara Peninsula. Occasionally exceeding 100 feet in height, these sand dunes and adjacent open beaches support globally significant vegetation community types such as: Beach Grass sand dune, Cottonwood treed dune and Sea Rocket open beach.

This proposed project will mobilize the local community to protect and restore this corner of the Great Lakes. If you would like to contribute or participate, please contact the Bert Miller Nature Club.

Albert Garofalo

Tale of a Toad

At our meeting on Thursday May 23, 2013, our speaker, Ann Yagi, gave us an update on the Fowler's Toad, one of our "species at risk." Ann is a biologist with the Ministry of Natural Resources who works on stewardship and outreach materials in connection with the Fowler's Toad Recovery Project (FTRP).



Photo courtesy of MNR

The FTRP began in the 1980s at Long Point Provincial Park. Since 1986, Fowler's Toads have moved from a designation of "special concern" to "endangered." Ann told us that a full recovery is possible, however, because all of the threats facing the Fowler's Toads are human related.

In Canada, Fowlers Toads are found only in Ontario at three sites – Rondeau, Long Point and the Niagara area. Their closest relative is the American Toad. Fowler's Toads move through many ecosystems during their life in order to survive: from beach to dune to shoreline to rocky pools – sometimes moving through all these areas in one day. Due to their widespread daily movement, these amphibians have an increased chance of facing predation, storms, and human interaction. The Fowler's Toad population at Long Point has been greatly reduced by vehicles on the beach at night, the constant grooming of beaches, removal of algae beds, and loss of habitat for breeding. Joad the Toad,

the FTRP mascot, outreach to landowners, educational signage, habitat enhancement and eco passages are all being used in support of the species.

Ann ended her interesting presentation by awarding tote bags to Cam Williams and Peter BonEnfant for having the most correct answers on the TOADOLOGY quiz. Ann left us with this thought regarding Fowler's Toad: "There is so much to do and so little time".

Deb Sherk

The Persimmon Tree

Near the end of July, Rob Eberly called. He, Rick Stockton and Jason Moaa had been out exploring and found a Persimmon tree at McAfee Cemetery.

After dinner that same evening, my mom and I went to the cemetery. Following Rob's directions, we were able to find two old Persimmon trees. We were absolutely thrilled to find one extremely heavy with fruit - quite a surprise this far North. Under the shade of the Persimmons, mom noticed many gravestones bearing the surname Miller.



Photo courtesy of Tim Seburn

I made note of some of the Miller names and later did some genealogical

digging. One of the graves belonged to Bert's father, Edward Kerr Miller. He died on November 9th, 1894, when Bert was only twelve years old. Did losing his father at such a young age trigger Bert's interest in genealogy, history, and nature?

Bert Miller gave my Aunt Glenna a large, elaborate Miller Family Tree he had created in 1909. At the base of this family tree Bert inscribed:

“Andrew Miller was born in New York State in the United States in October 1766. When he was a boy his people were all killed by the Indians and he alone was taken alive by them. In 1779 the Indians brought him into Niagara a prisoner boy. Here he was redeemed from them by John Burch Esq. with whom he lived until he was grown up. He married the daughter of a UE Loyalist and with a feeling of deep gratitude toward his benefactor John Burch, he named his oldest son after him, John Burch Miller. In 1793 he took up land on the frontier in the County of Lincoln (Welland) Canada. This was on the Niagara River about five miles below Fort Erie at the end of an Indian trail leading back through the woods to Port Colborne. He did not receive a deed from the Crown for this land until the year 1801. Later on he took up other lands from the Crown in different parts of the Province. In June 1809 he was appointed to be an Ensign in the Third Regiment of Militia in the District of Niagara, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Warren. His Excellency Sir Francis Gore was then Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Upper Canada. Andrew Miller lived on the land he first received from the Crown until he died in January 1843 and his family and descendants will be found on the Tree above. To the best of my knowledge the above is correct. Albert W Miller, Fort Erie, Ont. Canada Feb 25, 1909.”

Imagine the joy Bert would have experienced discovering this information, and the healing he experienced caring for the persimmon trees he planted by his father's grave - turning his

grief into a bit of joy for his disciples 125 years later!

My Aunt is not sure what to do with the panel. Do you have any idea? She is wondering whether the club would be willing to take it, but I'm not sure where we would keep it.

I am going to photograph it so it can be posted online for those with a genealogical interest. It is probably best to keep the original in Fort Erie, if we can find a safe place for it.

Tim Seburn

In Memoriam

Our club lost another long-time member when Sandy Mitchell passed away on June 1, 2013, at Greater Niagara General Hospital. Sandy was an active conservationist, working to protect and preserve our local flora and fauna. Together with her husband, Dave, she established an all-natural, environmentally friendly insect control business in Stevensville. She was also an active member of the Fort Erie Conservation Club Women's Auxiliary. Our sincere condolences are extended to Dave and his family for their loss.

Welcome to our new members:

Dave & Tracy Wilby
Sue Weidemann
Ed Weidemann
Cindy Marr
Jayne Hyslop

Welcome back:

Rob Eberly
Brigitte & Tim Bonner