

The Rambler!

A Newsletter of The Bert Miller Nature Club of Fort Erie
Spring 2014



Coming Up

BMNC

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

Lake Erie Coast Project

A review of the findings and plans for the future.
Mon., Mar. 17, 7:00 pm

BOS Bird Count

Sun., Apr. 13. Anyone interested should contact Marcie Jacklin, 905-871-2577 or email mjacklin@brocku.ca

Insect-opia

A look at the diversity and impact of insects in the Carolinian zone.
Mon. Apr. 21, 7:00 pm

Hiking Marcy's Woods

Learn about spring woodland flora & fauna. Meet at end of Holloway Bay Rd.
Sun. Apr. 27, 9:30 am
Contact: Tim Seburn, 905-871-2577

BMNC Award Presented at AGM

Congratulations to Albert Garofalo, the 2014 recipient of the Bert Miller Nature Club Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize individuals whose efforts have contributed to the preservation of our natural environment.



Photo courtesy of Ron Goodridge

Albert's accomplishments, both as a professional biologist and community volunteer, are impressive. He has been the lead researcher and field biologist for our club's Lake Erie Coast Project over the past three years. With the help of dedicated volunteers, he has conducted biological inventories along the Lake Erie shoreline from Fort Erie to Port Dover. His work on this project has raised the profile of the BMNC and has made our club a leader in this area. In addition, he has undertaken a number of other inventories and ecological evaluations in various regions of the province.

Albert's community involvement includes acting as Vice Chair of the Region of Niagara Environmental & Ecological Advisory Committee, Secretary of Friends of Twelve Mile Creek, and liaison for Carolinian Canada. A member of The Bert Miller Nature Club, the Niagara Falls Nature Club and the Hamilton Naturalists Club, he has led numerous outings for our club and other organizations. Those who have attended can attest to his passion for the environment and its various ecosystems. He is truly an advocate for conservation and is well deserving of this award.

Warbler Walk

Discover these beautiful migrants with leader Marcie Jacklin. Meet at Waverly Beach parking area.

Sat., May 3, 9:00 am
Contact: Lynda
Goodridge, 905-871-5856

Invasive Plant Species

A discussion about the types of species and their effects on the environment.

Thurs. May 22, 7:00 pm

Members' Night & Pot Luck

Share photos, digital pictures, and nature displays. Bring a place setting and a dish to share.

Mon., June 16, **6:00 pm**

Butterfly/Dragonfly Count

Bring a lunch and meet at Stevensville C.A.
Sun., June 22, 9:00 am
Contact: Paul Philp,
905-894-2723

Ridgeway Summer Festival.

Sat. & Sun., July 5 & 6
Contact: Lynda
Goodridge, 905-871-5856.

2nd Annual Butterfly Festival

Sat., Sept. 20, 10 am– 3 pm. Stevensville Conservation Area.
Contact: Dawn Pierrynowski, 905- 384-2476

From our President

Rather than review recent events, I decided that it would be fun to have you participate in a trivia challenge about the Club. Get your thinking caps on.



The Bert Miller Nature Club Trivia Challenge

1. Bert Miller was a:
a) draftsman by trade b) amateur naturalist
c) propagator of rare and native plants d) all of the above
e) none of the above
2. Bert Miller was born in Fort Erie and lived from
a) 1900-1980 b) 1893-1962 c) 1882-1973
3. The Bert Miller Nature Club was formed in 1995 by:
a) Tim Seburn b) Earl Plato c) Rick Stockton
d) Paul Philp e) Bert Miller
4. Dr. William Marcy came to Buffalo from Massachusetts in the 1890s to be the Chief Surgeon for the N.Y. Central Railroad. In the 1960s he:
a) purchased the land that became Marcy's Woods
b) built a rustic log cabin c) married an avid ornithologist and naturalist
d) none of the above e) all of the above
5. Preservation of natural areas of the Point Abino peninsula was the primary founding objective of the Club, and conserving Marcy's Woods was its initial focus.
a) False b) True
6. The Bert Miller Nature Club has accomplished many objectives. Which of the following is/are not true?
a) Launched large war canoes from the beach on Lake Erie at Marcy's Woods.
b) Conducted biological inventories of many

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**

Beamer Point Hawk Watch

An annual event to see migrating hawks.

Family friendly.

Good Friday, Apr. 18, all day. Contact: Don Mills, 905-892-3973

Niagara Glenn

Wear sturdy shoes & meet at Wintergreen Flats off Niagara Pkwy. Family friendly.

Sun., Apr. 27, 1:30 pm. Contact: Win Laar, 905-262-5057

Windmill Point

View the many fascinating plants in bloom along the Lake Erie shoreline.

Park & meet along road allowance.

Sat., July 12, 10:00 am.

Rain date: July 19.

Contact: Rick Young, 905-734-6226

PFN

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

www.peninsulafielddnats.com

remaining natural areas in Fort Erie

c) Carried out a study of old growth forests remaining in Niagara

d) Was instrumental in obtaining Marcy's woods for the Conservation Authority.

7. The website for the Bert Miller Nature Club has many interesting informative pages. If you were to visit the website, what address would you put into the search engine:
a) www.bertmiller.com b) www.bmnc.ca
c) www.bertmillernatureclub.org
8. Community outreach and environmental education are important parts of the Club's activities. Which of the following is not a club initiated event?
a) The Butterfly Festival b) The Children's' Water Festival c) The Ridgeway Summer Festival
d) The Friendship Festival e) Nature in Niagara
f) The Raptor Festival
9. Chimney Swift Monitoring is done for:
a) The Nature Conservancy b) The Owl Foundation
c) Bird Studies Canada
10. EAC is a group of volunteers who attend meetings at The Town of Fort Erie.
What does EAC stand for:
a) Environmental Advisory Committee
b) Environmental Action Committee
c) Environmental Ad hoc Committee

Answers: 1. d; 2. c; 3. b; 4. e; 5. True; 6. d; 7. c; 8. b, d, f; 9. c; 10. a;

Dawn Pierrynowski



Don't miss this year's
Nature in Niagara
presentation:

**The Sensational Lake
Erie Shoreline**
Wednesday
April 16, 2014
7:00 pm
Fort Erie Public Library
Centennial Branch

Speaker:
Albert Garofalo

Learn about the diverse
botanical and
geological features and
efforts being taken to
restore them.

Land Care Niagara &
Windmill Pt. Park
present

Hooked On Fishing

A family event
Sun., May 25
9 am – 4 pm
Windmill Pt. Park

Niagara Land Trust
www.niagaralandtrust.ca

Fundraising events:

Tour of Point Abino
Sat., Apr. 26.

Weekends on the Beach
May 16-19 & Sept. 12 –
14 with botany &
birding events. Attend
for a day or spend the
weekend in a lovely
cottage. For info
contact: Tim Seburn,
905-871-2577

Changes at the NPCA – Why You Should Care

When the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) advertised consultation on its Strategic Plan two years ago, I did not realize that what was being planned was an extreme change of direction. I was shocked to see on the NPCA website that the plan indicated a much more development friendly direction and that “surplus” lands were to be considered for disposal.

At the open house in November, the consultant on the Strategic Plan made much of the fact that employees with a “sandpaper attitude” (workers enforcing the by-laws?) had been let go. He also outlined the process of consultations where “stakeholders”, such as developers, were given private meetings to let them voice their opinions on what the NPCA should do.

A number of employees have been fired. In mid-November, one person was fired from the Watershed Development Services. On Nov. 22nd, the Director of Land Management's position was eliminated and that staff member was fired. His duties had included ensuring public safety and managing all of the Conservation Authority's lands, buildings, and staff who maintain the conservation areas.

On Dec 18th, it was announced at the NPCA Board meeting that Mr. David Barrick, who was on leave from this same board, was recruited for the newly created position of “Operations Manager in the Land Management Department”. This position was never publicly advertised. New positions are being created and filled with titles more in line with the Conservation Authority's anti-conservation bent. The CEO is being given a retirement package.

More conservation employees have been fired. On January 9th, four persons from the Watershed Stewardship Department were let go and three additional persons were fired, including the Site Administrator of Ball's Falls and the Conservation Planner (previously under Land Management). This means that in November and January, ten persons (nearly 20% of staff) were let go.

As naturalists in Niagara, we have worked with NPCA employees. We know them to be hard working individuals who are devoted to Niagara's natural heritage and its preservation. If we do not have the Conservation Authority acting as a front line protection for our forests and wetlands, but acting instead as an agency charged to make sure developers have no roadblocks put in front of them, Niagara will lose much of the nature that we love.

**The Bert Miller
Nature Club of
Fort Erie
2014
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Dawn Pierrynowski

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Submissions are always

welcome and can be

forwarded by email to

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distributel.net

Opinions expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of The Bert Miller Nature Club or its board of directors.

What can you do? Let the NPCA know how important the protection of wetlands and forests is to you. Contact the NPCA board member from your municipality

<http://www.npca.ca/corporate-services/board-of-directors/> and also let other regional and municipal councillors know your priorities. Feel free to email me for more information:

jsankey@cogeco.ca

Joyce Sankey

Creek and Wetland Restoration in Beaver Creek

Monday January 20, 2014 at 7 pm



Courtesy of UEM, Inc.

Speaker: Ian Smith has had 31 years of experience in Geomatics and GIS. He is a professor at Niagara College and Brock University. He also owns the consulting company, Urban and Environmental Management, Inc.

Synopsis: Ian began his interesting presentation by describing the restoration of Beaver Creek over the past two years. The three goals of this restoration project were to protect fish (especially the Grass Pickerel, which is a Species of Special Concern), enhance habitat, and keep the water flow moving well. The problem with creek restoration, especially in creeks used for agricultural drainage, is that farmers prefer the drain to be free of debris and flowing well, while fish and other aquatic animals need more debris for habitat and a slower moving current.

In 2007, it was determined that Beaver Creek had become an unstable stream. It was badly silted and had very low flow, and in drier months the water was barely moving. The Town of Fort Erie, Friends of Fort Erie Creeks, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Department of Fisheries, BMNC and environmental consultants worked together to create a restoration plan.

Since dredging the creek would have compromised the habitat, the following solutions were used: dig large pools for habitat, with ledges for young fish; replace major blockages lying across the flow with smaller blockages placed parallel to the flow; replace undersized culverts; install basking logs for turtles; and plant native grasses along the shoreline. The work took place between October 2011 and May 2012. Water quality monitoring will continue to take place for 15 years.

Ian's other projects include the Nith River restoration in Paris, Ontario and the Thames River in London, Ontario.

Deb Sherk

Fort Erie a Birding Hotspot

Last fall and early winter were great times for bird-watchers in and around Fort Erie.

Things started with a "tropical bang" in October when a BROWN BOOBY, normally found no farther north than the Florida Keys, showed up along the Buffalo waterfront. It stayed around for two weeks, to the delight of hundreds of birders who came from far and wide. Although it spent much of its time on the Buffalo side, it did venture into Canadian "territory" or "airspace" on several occasions, giving local listers coveted tick marks (first-ever sighting in Ontario and in the Great Lakes region).

Just about a month later, in late November, an ELEGANT TERN made its way from the California coast to the north end of Squaw Island along the Buffalo side of the Niagara River. Canadian birders had to be content with watching it perform across the river until one day, near the end of its stay, it made a surprise appearance along the Fort Erie shoreline near Gilmore Road.



Lark Sparrow. Photo courtesy of Ron Goodridge

At about the same time, a mid-western LARK SPARROW showed up in the north end of Fort Erie, around the intersection of Central Avenue and the Niagara Parkway. It stayed for several weeks, thanks in part to the generosity of several home-owners who made sure their feeders were stocked on a regular basis and allowed birders into their backyards to view the rare visitor.

About mid-December, a juvenile KING EIDER duck was found in the Niagara River, viewable from the pull-off adjacent to Nicholls Marine. While this species has been seen before in the river, this bird must be enjoying its stay because it (or its stunt double) was still present in the same location well into February.



Photo courtesy of Ron Goodridge

By far, the most notable birding event of the past few months has been the unprecedented "irruption" of SNOWY OWLS from the Arctic into lower Canada and the eastern United States, as far south as Florida. "Snowies" were everywhere -- along the lakeshore near Old Fort Erie, at the end of Stonemill Road, and near the Crystal Beach boat-launch. As many as six were seen in a single neighborhood in Welland. Three more could be found, on and off, near the new hospital in St Catharines.

Seeing any or all of these birds was a thrill, and, once again, high-lighted the great potential of our area for enjoying the past-time of bird-watching.

A Boost to the Economy?

A recent study of the economic impact of bird-watching across the Lake in Ohio produced the following findings:

"The objectives of this study focus upon the economic impact of bird-watching as it relates to substantial economic expenditures; tourism patterns of bird-watching along Lake Erie; and strategic partnership among the communities and industries to promote the local economy and to market bird-watching. The findings show that bird-watching at six Ohio natural areas along Lake Erie generated \$26,438,398 in 2011, created 283 jobs for those living and working in these coastal communities, generated \$8.9 million in personal income, and contributed \$1.9 million tax revenues directed to local and state coffers. Birders visiting Lake Erie provide significant revenue infusions to the regions year around."

(Philip F. Xie, Ph.D.,
Director and Associate Professor,
School of Human Movement, Sport and
Leisure Studies, Bowling Green State
University, Bowling Green, OH)

If you have ever been birding in Ohio, you know how much and how effectively they promote their birding locations. Fort Erie is looking for jobs and economic growth, right? Perhaps it might consider looking at one of its "natural resources" (birds) for economic development.

Welcome to our new members:

Diane Fleming & Ralph Snyder
Karen Buchanan
Klara & Nigel Young-Chin

Welcome back:

Pat Burke

The spring migration will soon be here and local birders may be interested in attending this highly regarded festival. Check out the details.



In Memoriam

It is with sadness that we announce the sudden passing of another BMNC member, Don Michael, on Friday, Jan. 24, 2014. Both Don and his wife, Ruth, have been members of our club for a number of years. Our thoughts are with his family during this difficult time.

Winter Outings

Fort Erie Waterfowl Tour

On Saturday, February 1st, a group of intrepid birdwatchers braved the cold weather and had a great day looking at waterfowl along the Niagara River. Highlights included the King Eider that had been seen in the area for most of the winter, White-winged Scoters, Ruddy Ducks, and Tundra Swans.



Photo courtesy of Ron Goodridge

Winter Tree Identification

On Sunday, March 2nd, Paul Philp led a walk through Stevensville Conservation Area, followed by a workshop in the clubhouse after lunch. Using twigs we had collected, Paul showed us how to use leaf scars and buds as clues to tree identification.



Photos courtesy of Rick Young

Funding Received

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources announced the award of \$42,975 from the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund to The Bert Miller Nature Club for a study entitled “Seasonal Habitat Movement of the Blanding’s Turtle in an Urbanized Setting”. This project is being carried out in collaboration with The Town of Fort Erie and local professional consultants.



Photo courtesy of Ontario Nature

The objective of this study is to survey the distribution and numbers of two provincially designated species at risk: the endangered Spotted Turtle and the threatened Blanding’s Turtle. When located, these turtles will be monitored to better understand their local habitat requirements and any threats to their survival. In addition, this project will provide educational opportunities for the Fort Erie community to become more aware of the exceptional natural richness of the area and how to preserve the habitats of our species at risk.

Rick Stockton

Editor’s Note: BMNC has also received funding from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund for the restoration and educational component of the Lake Erie Coast Project. Both of these projects are underway.