

The Rambler!

A Newsletter of The Bert Miller Nature Club of Fort Erie
Spring 2015



Coming Up

BMNC

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

Birding By Ear

A family-friendly introduction to identifying birds by their songs. Speaker: Nadine Litwin, Field Ornithologist
Mon., Apr. 20, 7:00 pm

Hiking Marcy's Woods

Bring the kids to explore the woodlands and dunes with BMNC naturalists.
Sun., Apr. 26, 10:00 am
Meet at the end of Holloway Bay Rd.
Contact: Tim Seburn, 905-871-2577

Nature in Niagara Series

"Return of the Eagle"
A look at the remarkable

Announcing the 2015 BMNC Award Recipient



Photo courtesy of Ron Goodridge

The winner of the Bert Miller Nature Club Award for 2015 is Elmer Miskolczi. Mr. Miskolczi has contributed an amazing 47 years of volunteer service, leadership, and outstanding accomplishments for the community of Fort Erie. Thirty-five of those years have been in the environmental sector with Friends of Fort Erie's Creeks and the Fort Erie Conservation Club. Many members of both organizations were on hand at the nature club's February 16th meeting to help recognize and celebrate Elmer's accomplishments.

Elmer helped to create Friends of Fort Erie's Creeks, which began as the Black Creek Clean-Up Committee in 1980, when neighbors of the Creek petitioned the Town to do something about its condition. Whether President, as he is currently, or serving in one of the many other roles he has fulfilled over the years, Elmer has always been a key leader in helping Friends of Fort Erie's Creeks undertake tasks such as: removing truckloads of trash from creeks; conducting water quality testing; solving Frenchmen's Creek manure and dump run-off problems; solving industrial plastic contamination; protecting grass pickerel and spotted turtle populations; and providing environmental training and employment for over 100 young people along the way.

Elmer has also played a pivotal role in the Fort Erie Conservation Club since shortly after its founding in 1983 and is currently the

comeback of this majestic bird.
Fort Erie Library,
Centennial Branch
Wed., Apr. 29, 7:00 pm

Dinosaurs

A fascinating topic for all ages. Presenter: Paige Au. NOTE date change: **Thurs., May 21, 7 pm**

Warbler Walk

A joint outing with The Niagara Falls Nature Club. Details on date and time TBA. Leader: Marcie Jacklin. Contact: Lynda Goodridge, 905-871-5856

Members' Night and Pot Luck Supper

Share your photos, digital pictures or nature displays. Bring your own place setting and favourite dish to share. Mon. June 15, **6:00** pm

Family Butterfly & Dragonfly Hunt

Bring binoculars, field guides, nets & lunch. Stevensville Cons. Area Sun. June 21, 9:00 am Contact: Paul Philp, 905-894-2723

Treasurer. The Conservation Club constructed and maintains the hall, where the Bert Miller Nature Club meets, and provides trail maintenance and mowing for the Stevensville Conservation Area. The Conservation Club regularly partners on projects with schools and community groups to run fishing derbies, operate bird feeding stations, and support rattlesnake conservation, as well as constructing and distributing nesting boxes for birds and bats.

Those who have volunteered with Friends of Fort Erie's Creeks or the Fort Erie Conservation Club know Elmer to be practical, reliable, kind and selfless and have enjoyed working with him as a result. But for Elmer, his favorite memories are working with kids. Elmer started his volunteerism by coaching the Bertie Royals baseball team, as well as an all-Ontario champion hockey team, while raising his family and working as a transport truck driver. When asked what he remembers most about his years of environmental volunteering, Elmer said, "Working with 10 kids pulling purple loosestrife from the creek by hand. Hard work, but you know what? It worked! Great kids - and the loosestrife didn't return either."

Tim Seburn

Reflections of a Past President



The 2015 Bert Miller Nature Club Board
Photo Courtesy of Ron Goodridge

As of our Annual General Meeting on February 16th, Lynda Goodridge is now taking over the reins of the presidency for The

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

A yearly event to watch for migrating hawks. Good Friday, Apr. 3, all day. Contact: Don Mills, 905-892-3973

Niagara Glen

Wear sturdy shoes and meet at the Niagara Glen parking lot. Family friendly outing. Sat., May 2, 1:30 pm Contact: Win Laar, 905-262-5057

Ruthven Birds

Bring a lunch and meet at the Fonthill Shoppers Drug Mart. Family friendly. Sat., May 9, 9:00 am Contact: Ian Darling, 905-892-0206

Bert Miller Nature Club. As Past President, I am confident that the Club is in strong, capable hands with her at the helm. Many thanks to those who chose to continue on the board and to those who are new and willing to learn about how the Club operates. You are its future.

I would like to take this opportunity to reminisce about the last two years.

Farewell to 2 great years of:

- planning and executing two Butterfly Festivals with the NPCA and Stevensville Conservation Club;
- helping with the two day Ridgeway Summer Festivals;
- watching the developments of the Lake Erie Coastal Project take root and grow;
- working with the High School students who made boardwalks and planted beach grass;
- participating in the Ridgeway Crystal Beach High School Earth Day programs;
- taking part in the Nature in Niagara Series in partnership with the Fort Erie Public Library;
- helping to develop the wonderful programs of outings and speakers;
- collaborating and forming partnerships with other clubs and agencies;
- experiencing the ideas from other clubs at the Ontario Nature Carolinian East regional meetings;
- surviving the challenges of e-bingo;
- conducting the business of the Club;

It was all possible because of a talented, experienced, hardworking board. Their expertise, volunteerism, support, and friendship are much appreciated.

Dawn Pierrynowski

EDITOR'S NOTE: Many thanks to Dawn for her invaluable contributions to our club and her excellent leadership. She will definitely be a hard act to follow. Fortunately, she has agreed to stay on the board for a term to help with the transition. Her guidance will be much appreciated.

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.peninsulafieldnats.com

A Warm Welcome To Our New Members

Henry Au

Brandie O'Reilly

Ernie & Glennis Giles

Jim Schultz

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

The “Blue Darter”

What a hawk! The Northern Goshawk is one powerful bird. My drawing below shows the large hawk ready to pounce on its favourite prey in Northern Ontario, a grouse.



The Goshawk is a heavy-bodied hawk. It's about two feet (66 cm) in length, with a wingspan of 42 in. (1.1 m). It has a dark, blue-gray back. Note the black crown and the conspicuous white eyebrow. The under part is pale gray - a strikingly handsome hawk.

The Northern Goshawk is an uncommon winter visitor from the north. It mainly lives in coniferous forests and feeds on its main prey: the Ruffed and Pine Grouse. When there are periodic declines in the grouse population, the Goshawk moves into Southern Ontario. Here it may end up in our deciduous forests. The Audubon text says, “The swift flight of a Goshawk chasing a grouse has given the bird the name, “Blue Darter.”

It is fearless in defence of its nest and will boldly attack anyone, including humans, who ventures too close. Some years ago, two local incidents were reported in the St. Catharines Standard. One was about a 12 year old girl who was walking along a path in the woods near a Goshawk nest. The bird swooped down, cutting her scalp in a sudden attack. Later, a 70 year old woman was struck by a Goshawk, again from behind, so severely that she was knocked to the ground. She, too, suffered severe scalp wounds. Nature lovers, if you know about a Goshawk nest this spring, inform the area neighbours.

A WARNING: Many of us enjoy the outdoors. As it warms up, ticks carrying Lyme Disease might appear. I know that it may be unlikely BUT, after the walk, check your body for any ticks and bites. A hot shower is a good idea. If there are signs of any tick bites, see a doctor right away!

Save the date for our

3rd Annual Butterfly Festival

Saturday, Sept. 19th

11 am to 3 pm

Stevensville

Conservation Area

Volunteers Needed

Contact Dawn

Pierrynowski

905-384-476



**The Bert Miller
Nature Club of
Fort Erie
2015
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The Rambler

Newsletter Editor:
Lynda Goodridge
With the help of
Peter BonEnfant

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welcome and can be
forwarded by email to
lynda.goodridge@
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.

John Teal and Keith Bailey of Fort Erie saw a few robins last week. Daughter, Diane O'Brien, of Port Colborne, saw several at her home. A good sign of spring? I hope so!

Earl Plato

The "Eureka Moment"!

The conservationist, Baba Dioum, displayed keen insight into human behaviour when he addressed an international assembly with these words: "In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we have been taught." I would like to add a corollary to this amazing statement. How we are taught is often a vital component of this understanding.

Like Baba Dioum, the Niagara Restoration Council clearly believes in environmental education. "We believe that it is only through education that long lasting changes can be made."

This is where "The Eureka Moment" comes into play. The term "Eureka" ("I have found [it]") is thought to be what Archimedes exclaimed when he noticed that stepping into a bath raised the water level. This observation led to increased knowledge and other insights and discoveries.

Personally, I believe environmental education needs some "Eureka Moments" to lead to increased knowledge, insights, discoveries, and positive actions. These moments aren't just an information transfer. They hold a personalized experience that carries a deeper meaning.

As an example, all that garbage along the highways is one clear signal that learning isn't happening, and that love for the environment is minimal for those individuals who litter. So what happens when it comes to more complex issues, such as not developing significant woodlots or wetlands?



Photo courtesy of Paul Philp

This all reminds me of one of my "Eureka Moments". While leading a special needs group in the quest for wood frogs, we searched for places where a wood frog would find food,

moisture, protection from predators, etc. The student who found the first wood frog was so excited about her special find that, in a thank you letter, she stated that she would never litter again. Seeing that same frog in a textbook, TV, or a museum wouldn't have conveyed the same meaning. She made the connection between an amphibian experience and her personal actions.

Let's all continue to do those things that create that knowledge, maybe love, and ultimately conservation. Activities vary, yet each is effective. Quality teaching should come at different levels of complexity and form to meet individual learning styles.

The following is just a few of the many activities available in the region that could help someone have a personal experience: helping to restore a natural area by planting trees and wildflowers or creating a wetland; learning how to identify various frogs by their sounds; tagging a butterfly; participating in an environmental festival; planting a pollinator garden; taking photos of dragonflies; discovering a different bird at a feeder; participating in a citizen science program; discovering various patterns and textures in tree bark; and learning how to identify wildflowers.

Each of the above activities could elicit a "Eureka Moment", as they are real and personalized. Remember, we want learning to create environmental love so that conservation is the ultimate action. An amphibian "Eureka Moment" can help to reduce littering for a young student on a hike. Who would have thought?

Paul Philp

Land Trust Acquires First Property

Through many years of hard work by dedicated volunteers, and the generous support of kind donors such as the Jackman Foundation, the Niagara Land Trust has purchased the Margaret Canby (1920-2010) estate forest in Wainfleet. As a proud resident of Wainfleet and a member of the Wainfleet Historical Society, Ms. Canby would have been pleased and honoured that a piece of her family's estate is being conserved. Ms. Canby contributed to the Chronicles of Wainfleet which notes that it was her ancestor, Thomas Canby, who first came to Niagara from St. John's, New Brunswick, in 1837. The Wainfleet property came into the Canby family's possession in 1888.



Margaret Canby

The Niagara Land Trust is hoping everyone will attend its 4th Annual Trivia Night, on March 21st at Heartland Forest, and an Earth Day dinner event that will be held on April 18th at Club Castropignano in Port Robinson. It is our hope that these events will raise money for a stewardship fund for the Canby property.

The work of the Niagara Land Trust has just begun, and your support is more important than ever. Volunteers are needed to help with fundraising. If you can help, please call Tim at (905) 871-2577. More importantly, the Land Trust needs members. Every adult over the age

of 18, who is interested in and committed to conservation in Niagara, can now join the Land Trust with the payment of an annual \$20 membership fee. Membership fees are tax deductible. The simplest way to become a member is through the Niagara Land Trust website using your credit card. If you would rather pay by cheque, please note our snail mail address has changed to Niagara Land Trust, 27-200 Fitch Street, Suite 233, Welland, Ontario L3C 4V9. We can accomplish more working together through the Niagara Land Trust than we ever could individually.

Tim Seburn

Grant Update

The Bert Miller Nature Club's Lake Erie Coast Project will continue to mobilize the local community to help protect and restore this corner of the Great Lakes. This spring, more high school and college students, along with members of local cottage associations, surf clubs and nature clubs, will be at it again, planting locally harvested beach grass and building more boardwalks to protect Lake Erie's coast. Continued support for this project is provided by the Government of Ontario's Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund.

As soon as the snow melts, our next plantings will begin at Pleasant Beach and Wyldewood Beach. We are also hoping to include some of Fort Erie's beaches. Mr. Teal's class at Lakeshore Catholic High School and Mr. Mattei's class at Port Colborne High will be constructing more boardwalks for us to use. Interpretive signs will also be installed providing information about coastal ecosystems and nearby plants and animals to raise awareness of these unique coastal environments.



Shoreline outing in Fort Erie last June to promote awareness of this unique environment.

Photo courtesy of Paul Philp.

Our Club is also sponsoring a project to create a shoreline stewardship brochure to use for educational purposes. The goal of the brochure is to encourage landowners and stakeholders in the Niagara Region and Haldimand County to help protect, restore and enhance the ecological integrity of the Lake Erie shoreline through increased naturalization of altered shorelines and preservation of existing natural areas to promote biodiversity. This project is made possible through the Ministry of Natural Resources COA (Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem) funding.

Albert Garofalo



Winter Tree Identification

Twelve hardy souls braved the elements on Saturday, March 7th, to join leader Paul Philp for a walk through Heartland Forest.



Photo courtesy of Rick Young

Paul pointed out things to look for when identifying trees this time of year and stressed the importance of observing the entire tree from top to bottom. We gathered twig samples with leaf buds to examine indoors after lunch.



Photo courtesy of Rick Young

The interpretive centre at Heartland Forest was a wonderful place to do the follow-up workshop, and Paul had a great PowerPoint presentation to help us identify the trees we saw using the twig samples. Altogether, we identified almost a dozen trees, including: Sugar Maple, Red Maple, Blue Beech, Red Oak, American Beech, Hop Hornbeam, and more. Many thanks to Paul for putting together an interesting outing. The weather cooperated, and we all enjoyed a nice winter walk.

Lynda Goodridge

Return of the Eagles



Photo courtesy of Ron Goodridge

After several months without a sighting of the Port Colborne Eagles, we were delighted to find them sitting together above the channel along Weir Road in Port on February 23rd.

When everything else is frozen solid, this fast-moving channel of open water affords them a place to fish and hunt for the many ducks which also use it in winter. Still no activity yet at the nest site at the Inco-Vale property, visible from both Reuter Road (with binoculars) or Durham Street (with a scope), but we will continue to watch.

We hope this sighting is a good omen for the upcoming "Nature in Niagara" program on April 29th, jointly sponsored by the BMNC and the Fort Erie Public Library, which will tell the conservation success story of the "Return of the Eagle". It will focus on the comebacks of the Bald Eagle and other raptors from the endangering effects of DDT and other pesticide usage during the middle of the 20th century.

Ron Goodridge