

# *The Rambler*

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

October, 2017

## **SHAGBARK EMERGES AS A GEM FOR BIRDS AND BIRDERS**

by Peter BonEnfant

It says something about Shagbark Nature Park that I had been birding for a year and a half before any of my birding mentors thought to take me there. It was a nice walk in the woods, but uneventful for someone interested in birds. I remember Eastern Towhees singing, and not much else. That was in the Spring of 2010, and so it continued for years afterwards: the park looked like it should be good for birding, but we seldom found it so. In the result, we ignored it on counts and rarely included it in our casual outings.



Whether in the park or merely our knowledge of it, things started to change in the autumn of 2016. A visit well into the fall migration yielded a surprising number of warblers as well as other species. Subsequent trips were also good but soon the migration was over. Shagbark was forgotten again for the winter and stayed that way through the spring of this year, as we focussed on

established hot spots for finding spring migrants. Starting in late July, however, curiosity and the sure knowledge that the birding community had not been paying attention to the park drew some of us in, and we were rewarded.

I won't attempt to list all the species that we found at Shagbark in July and August, but among the notable ones, and at least some of which were probably breeders, were Pileated Woodpecker, Indigo Bunting, Orchard Oriole, Black-billed Cuckoo, Blue-winged Warbler and Chestnut-sided Warbler. Since late August, birders have seen and photographed a wide variety of migrating warblers in the meadows and the woods, including such rare species for our area as Mourning Warbler, Canada Warbler and – probably never previously recorded in Fort Erie – a Connecticut Warbler found and photographed by Marcie Jacklin September 5th (see photo).

Marcie checked her Ebird records to help with this article. This year alone, with more information yet to be added, she has had at least 74 species of birds at Shagbark, including 20 species of warblers. She believes that the fields have improved in recent years, but suspects that the park's recent emergence as a special birding area is due to the fact that birders have been spending more time there.

Long underbirded and underappreciated, Shagbark is a gem. Is it as popular with spring migrants as it is with autumn birds? Do Blue-winged and Chestnut-sided warblers breed there? Do any other species that may surprise us? Next spring and summer could be interesting indeed.

**Canada Warbler by Peter BonEnfant**



Shagbark Nature Park is owned by The Town of Fort Erie and is located west of Burleigh Road, north of Dominion Road and south of Nigh Road in Ridgeway. Bert Miller Nature Club is the steward of the park under agreement with the Town. Access is via a parking lot on Burleigh Road, just north of Dominion Road. If you go, take all precautions against ticks, including (most importantly) staying on the mowed paths.

## **A TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND OF BMNC**

by Lynda Goodridge

Rob Eberly, long-time member and former president of BMNC, is starting a new chapter in his life. He retired in July from his job with the Town and is planning to move to Alberta to be close to his son and family. He is looking forward to exploring the natural areas near his new home and learning about the flora and fauna that inhabit them.

Rob led the fight to save Marcy's Woods from development a number of years ago and served as president of the Club from 2001 - 2006. For the past several years, he has taken on the job of coordinating our displays at the Ridgeway Summer Festival. Rob is a passionate advocate for our natural environment and he will be missed by many of us.

As a way of recognizing Rob's contributions over the years, the Board presented him with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of our Club at the September 5<sup>th</sup> board meeting.

Although we will soon be saying good-bye, Rob has generously invited any of us to contact him if our travels take us to Bonnyville, Alberta. He will be happy to welcome us and introduce us to the natural areas that he has discovered.



## **2017 Ridgeway Summer Festival**

by Lynda Goodridge

Our displays at this year's Ridgeway Summer Festival were, once again, very popular. A new arrangement that featured a number of free activities at our end of the street was definitely a bonus. The family-friendly arrangement was a good fit for our public education efforts.

Dave Gibson, with his birds of prey, and Stan Mikovsky, with his amphibians and reptiles, partnered with us again and attracted good crowds. Scott Sherk also brought some native species to add local interest. The Club's main tent was kept busy with lots of kids making buttons, playing our nature games and exploring the collection of insects in acrylic.

Many thanks to all who helped this year, including: Rob, Dawn, Rick S., Tim, Peter, Viki, Janet K, Marcie, Deb, and John.

## **IMPORTANT**

Now that Rob Eberly is moving, we no longer have someone to coordinate the festival. The Board members have too many other responsibilities, so we are asking someone from the membership to take this on. If no one steps forward, we will have to cancel our participation in this event. Please contact Lynda Goodridge or another Board member if you are interested. We will support you in your efforts.

## **Mystery Wasp**

submitted by Dawn Pierrynowski

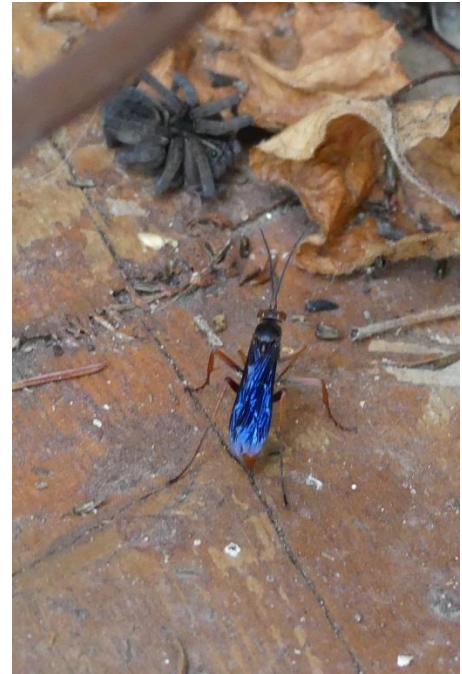


What is that dragging a spider across the deck? I raced to get my camera. It has iridescent blue wings, reddish legs and eyes, and its abdomen is striped. It moved very quickly considering the load it was dragging and did everything it could to avoid me and return to its prey. It was not aggressive and resumed dragging the spider away after I finished taking pictures. (email from Daniel Marlos)

I wrote to <https://www.whatsthatbug.com> to ask for help identifying it and was surprised at how quickly they replied and they even posted my inquiry and pictures on their website.

"Dear Dawn, This is a Spider Wasp in the family Pompilidae, and female members of the

family hunt and paralyze Spiders to feed to the developing brood. Your species, *Tachypompilus ferrugineus*, does not have a species specific common name. According to BugGuide: "Adults are often found taking nectar from flowers (*Daucus*, *Pastinaca*, and *Eryngium*). Females provision nests mainly with Lycosids". Note that Wolf Spiders are in the family Lycosidae.



## **2017 Butterfly Festival**

by Dawn Pierrynowski

What a wonderful it was day for a festival. I would like to express my appreciation to the Bert Miller Nature Club volunteers who give freely of their time and expertise at this festival as well as other festivals, meetings, outings and bingos. It has been decided that we must focus the efforts of the Club on other endeavours and so I say farewell to the public and the many organizations made the 2017 Butterfly Festival a success, especially the:

Book Depot

Fort Erie Arts Council

Niagara Region Public Health

Sassafras Farms

Niagara Beeway

Niagara Region Public Health

Waste Management, Public Works  
Niagara Restoration Council  
Fort Erie Communities-in-Bloom  
Niagara Peninsula Cons. Auth.  
Niagara Falls Nature Club  
Peninsula Field Naturalists  
The Niagara Parks Commission  
Niagara Wood Carvers  
Land Care Niagara



## BMNC RECEIVES AWARD

by Lynda Goodridge

On August 20, 2017, The Bert Miller Nature Club received a Special Recognition Award from the Communities in Bloom Committee of Greater Fort

Erie. The award was presented during the committee's annual awards celebration, held at the Lion's Club Banquet Hall in the Leisureplex. Councillor Stephen Passero made the presentation, stating that our Club has made a "lasting impact on the environmental health of Fort Erie" through such projects as:

- Our stewardship of Shagbark Nature Park
- Our partnership with local schools to plant dune grass and build boardwalks to create and protect our sensitive shoreline dunes
- Our educational programs at the Butterfly Festival and our speakers series
- Our continued inventories along Lake Erie's north shore
- Just to name a few of many projects

He closed with a thank-you to the BMNC for helping to protect Fort Erie's natural environment for generations to come.

I was proud to receive this award on behalf of the Club, and we can ALL be proud of our achievements over the years.



A Warm Welcome To Our New or Rejoining  
Members

Sara Handrigan

Doug Gillard

Sue Weidemann

Maureen and Marc Goodwin

Cynthia Skinner

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



## **Respected Voice in Niagara's Environmental Community No Longer Has Seat On One Of Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority's Key Committees**

Posted on October 2, 2017 by dougdraper

NPCA board's decision not to reappoint Alberta Garofalo to community liaison committee comes in same week more front-line environmental staffers being fired out the door by NPCA's management

"Now the NPCA is moving further away from what should be its mandate of environmental protection. Those in Niagara who love natural spaces and want to preserve habitat for our wildlife species are left without a voice. The NPCA board could have learned a great deal from Albert Garofalo if only it had listened." – Joyce Sankey, conservation director, Niagara Falls Nature Club

### **A Brief Foreword by Niagara At Large reporter and publisher Doug Draper –**

The purge of individuals, including more front-line staff and others, continues at a Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority that has, for all intents and purposes, gone rogue with millions of dollars of our tax money.

Albert Garofalo, a well-known and respected citizen conservation and the kind of

## **Alternative to Chemicals**

Dave and Sandy Mitchell worked as a team to naturalize their land (they called their farm). In so doing they searched for natural biological products. "This product search resulted in the establishment of their business Natural Insect Control (NIC for short) which is in its 24<sup>th</sup> year of operation supplying a variety of places which includes Bird Kingdom, the Butterfly Conservatory, and the City of Toronto." This quote is part of the presentation for Dave when presented with the Bert Miller Nature Club award in 2013.

It is wonderful to see their legacy continue. NIC is still in full swing and even getting creative. Their building was recently painted. Thank you for the photos Ron Goodridge.



person walking in the spirit of the late Doug Elliott and Mel Swart, people who helped found a Conservation Authority in this region more than five decades ago, learned on the last week of this past September that he will not be re-appointed to a committee that is supposed to offer some input and advice from the larger community to the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

Garofalo had the respect and the support of a number of nature groups across the region for his desire to continue serving on the committee, but that didn't seem to matter. The NPCA board, made up mostly of municipal councillors and mayors appointed by the Caslin administration at the regional government level, decided not to reappoint him anyway – a decision that fits into a narrative expressed by growing numbers of citizens, MPPs and the Ontario Public Services Employees Union representing some of what is left of the frontline workers at the NPCA, that this Conservation Authority is purging itself of individuals who place too much of a priority on conservation and environmental protection, and not enough on the interests of developers.

Mark Brickell, the NPCA's CAO, recently countered that narrative with the following statement – "The public has demanded greater accountability, wiser financial stewardship, improved customer-service and better communications. The staffing changes made today (a reference to the date late this past September when eight more NPCA employees were let go) address these concerns while ensuring the delivery of our core mandate is strengthened."

Apparently, the rest of us are supposed to be stupid enough to believe that.

Now here is a brief commentary by Joyce Sankey, the conservation director for the Niagara Falls Nature Club, on Albert Garofalo.

*No Voice For Environmental Community On NPCA  
Committee*

**A Message from Joyce Sankey –**

Way back in 2014, when the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) announced the creation of a Community Liaison Advisory Committee (CLAC), the three Niagara-based nature clubs were excited about having a voice to advise the politicians who run the NPCA.

We knew we needed a representative with deep knowledge of ecology and the environment. We needed someone who would not be afraid to speak out. The three nature clubs agreed that Albert Garofalo was our man and we wrote letters to nominate him. To illustrate why, here is a section of the letter that the Niagara Fall Nature Club submitted to the NPCA in 2014:

"Mr. Garofalo has given presentations to the club on various subjects including his salamander research and the Lake Erie Coast Project. Members of our club have accompanied him on his surveys of the Lake Erie Coast where we had the opportunity to benefit from his knowledge. He provided assistance to our survey teams when some members of our club volunteered on the NPCA's Natural Areas Inventory. Several years ago he led us on an aster and goldenrod identification walk and he also worked with families at a Niagara Falls Nature Club – Follow That Frog – event which was held at Heartland Forest.

"Albert has a profound love of the environment and nature in Niagara. He expresses his ideas clearly and is always willing to give deep consideration to the issues.

"The mandate of the NPCA to preserve our land and water is important to the nature club. We know that Albert Garofalo would speak to those issues."

During Albert's time on the CLAC committee, the NPCA further changed its focus from protecting Niagara's natural areas and environment to assisting developers. Albert spoke out. He was strong and truthful and knowledgeable. The committee was tilted against those who favoured environmental protection but Albert persisted in speaking out. It was made much more difficult because committee meetings kept getting cancelled.

Last June the environmental community was sent letters asking for nominations to the CLAC committee. Albert had indicated that he would like to serve another term and was told he would be considered if one of the groups nominated him. Albert was nominated by the Bert Miller Nature Club, the Niagara Falls Nature Club, the Peninsula Field Naturalists, the Hamilton Naturalists Club, Hawkwatch, The Preservation of

Agricultural Lands Society, Trout Unlimited, Friends of One Mile Creek and the Niagara Land Trust.

Another person, someone none of the environmentalists I have spoken to know, was chosen by the NPCA. The formerly named representative of environmental sector position has been renamed “representative of conservation sector.” The chair of the board of the NPCA, Sandy Annunziata, has said that conservation does not mean environmental protection.



Now the NPCA is moving further away from what should be its mandate of environmental protection. Those in Niagara who love natural spaces and want to preserve habitat for our wildlife species are left without a voice. The NPCA board could have learned a great deal from Albert Garofalo if only it had listened.

– Joyce Sankey

**NIAGARA AT LARGE** encourages you to join the conversation by sharing your views on this post in the space below the Bernie quote.

A reminder that we only post comments by individuals who also share their first and last names.

**For more news and commentary from Niagara At Large** – an independent, alternative voice for our greater bi-national Niagara region – become a regular visitor and subscriber to NAL at [www.niagaraatlarge.com](http://www.niagaraatlarge.com).

*“A politician thinks of the next election. A leader thinks of the next generation.” – Bernie Sanders*

## Analyzing information : Is it true or is it fake?

by Marcie Jacklin

Our busy lives are becoming complicated because we seemed to be inundated with more and more information every day. Sometimes it feels like this information is questionable or biased. Can we tell the difference between the truth and “fake news”? In many cases we can ask some key questions which may help to understand if the information is true or fake. As an example I will use the 5 key areas to explore based on the CRAAP test; Currency, Relevance, Accuracy, Authority, and Purpose.

**Currency** is important because sometimes “older” information may be inaccurate. It is always best to use the most up-to-date information.

**Relevant** information proves the point the author of the information is trying to make. Sometimes writers try to distract the reader by discussing information that isn’t relevant. Other writers may provide information for a specific audience, i.e. telling them what they want to hear.

**Accurate** information can be verified by checking that the facts are true. For instance, if the author quotes some statistics or financial information, the sources of this information (minutes of meetings; reports etc) should be listed including the dates and pages where the reader can easily verify the information to make sure it is true and has been interpreted without bias.

**Authority** is the most important question. Who wrote the information? Is there an author? If not then the information can’t be verified easily. Also does the author of the information have credibility, i.e. do they have a background, preferably education or professional expertise on the topic? Is the author biased, in which case the information will likely be biased. The information therefore isn’t factual, it is just an opinion. This leads to a slippery slope called “common knowledge” or “everyone knows.” These are usually opinions tossed around at the coffee shop or

other social gatherings and can be rumours but some people like to use them as facts to make their case stronger. Again this is just an opinion unless they can cite where the information was originally produced so it can be verified.

The author could be a government department etc but it needs to have credibility and even government departments can have a bias.

Wikipedia is a good example of a commonly used web site but the pages do not have authors. This information can't be used as a verified resource however there are some articles listed at the bottom of each article which may lead to credible information.

**Purpose** is also important. Why was this information produced? Is it informative? Or is it biased and unbalanced? Was it created to distract people from asking about more relevant information?

I hope these tips give you insight into examining information and the ability to ask questions when something doesn't sound true.

\*\* Meriam Library, California State University, Chico. "Evaluating information – applying the CRAAP test."

[https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval\\_websites.pdf](https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf)

## **Land Trust to Acquire West Lincoln Woodland**

by Tim Seburn

The Niagara Land Trust is in negotiations with Glen and Joyce Robbins to acquire their 29+ acre property in West Lincoln for conservation. This entirely forested parcel, part of the East Smithville Slough forest system, is mostly designated as Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW). However, it also, interestingly, has upland forest, where only a thin layer of soil lays over the bedrock. An intermittent stream crosses the property, along which cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) grows, and white wood aster (*Eurybia divaricate*), a threatened species, has also been found. The property is currently designated as an Environmental Conservation Area.

The Niagara Land Trust needs your support to permanently conserve this property and the other properties we are working on. Every dollar you contribute goes directly towards conservation of lands in Niagara. The Land Trust is also in dire need of volunteers to help with committee work, particularly fund-raising. Please consider giving your support to the Niagara Land Trust. Together, we can do great things for conservation in Niagara.

## **Winter Tree Identification**

This is a family friendly event on Saturday Feb. 24, 2018. Although still a long way off thought I would include information as this is the only



newsletter before that time and it is an out of town event.

There will be 2 meeting places for carpools. One carpool will leave the Stevensville CA at 9:30 and meet up with others at the Tim Horton's at Vineland Station exit 57 from the QEW at about 10:15.

From there we will proceed to a spot on the Red Hill Valley Trail. It is near an arena so washrooms are available, and the trail does have a paved surface. After lunch we can visit Albion Falls and/or Van Wagner's beach.

Bring binoculars and lunch.

Hopefully this year it doesn't rain.

Contact Paul at 905-894-2723 or [p.k.philp@gmail.com](mailto:p.k.philp@gmail.com).