

## **A Short History Lesson of the Years 1934 - 1999**

Prepared and Presented by Betty Cooper in June 1999

as part of the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

I shall read from the first minutes:

May 10, 1934

“In response to a letter sent out by Roy Dickson, C.B. Price, Fred Montgomery, Frank Shantz, and Gerry Knechtel, a group of 10 people interested in the study of nature met at the Y.M.C.A. on Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss the formation of a Nature Club in Kitchener and Waterloo.”

Two meetings were scheduled and a field trip was arranged for Sunday morning, May 13<sup>th</sup>.

Here is the outing report:

“Shortly after 6:00 this morning a group of 13 gathered in Breithaupt’s Woods to study birds, flowers, etc. The weather was cool and the sky overcast making the visibility very poor, but in spite of these handicaps the party identified from 50 to 70 species of birds and several spring flowers and plants.”

You certainly couldn’t do that today! Here’s another item of interest from the October, 1935 minutes:

“It was moved, seconded and carried that the membership fee be voluntary, the suggested amount being 50 cents for those better able to contribute, and 25 cents for others.”

These were the Depression years. You know, at least 5 of those founding members were school teachers, and I find it interesting that they kept an attendance record for the first several years!

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In 1935, the name “the Kitchener-Waterloo Field Naturalists” was adopted and we affiliated with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, hosting their Regional gathering in May at Steckle’s Woods, attended by about 200 people.

Regular meetings were held at the Y.M.C.A. with an average attendance of 22. Junior and senior members presented topics of general interest, illustrated with reflected slides and specimens. It was chiefly a study group. As field guides were generally unavailable, mimeographed sheets were prepared for members. In 1941 we moved across the street to the Old Carnegie Library’s Story Room where we were affectionately known as 'the Bug Society'. When the new Library opened in 1962 we moved there. Needing more space, we moved to Highland Road United Church in 1981, and in 1990 to our present

location (Dutton Dr., Waterloo).

A Christmas Bird Count has been done each year, even though we disbanded during WW II from February 1942 to 1946.

In 1953 we brought Audubon Wildlife Films to this area – these were personally narrated by the photographer. Many matinees were presented at schools. Profits raised were set aside, and in 1962 a Sanctuary Committee was formed to locate land for a Nature Sanctuary. An 87 acre site south of Galt was decided on and purchased with the help of the Grand River Conservation Authority, who took over development and management. In August of 1964 the F.W.R. Dickson Wilderness Area was opened to the public and it's been a popular spot ever since. As you stand at the parking lot

and gaze over the meadow to that wooded slope, remember that Club members planted 1300 trees there in 1966, and another 1000 in '67.

In 1964 we were involved in setting aside the Bannister Marsh – Wrigley Lake area, again with the co-operation of GRCA. As more and more natural areas became threatened by development, a Conservation Committee was set

up to keep the directors informed.

We hosted the Annual FON meeting of 1967.

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In 1968 the Hallman property in the Roseville Swamp became available and

was purchased (named the Founders' Property at our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1984).

As we held ownership of this property and an abandoned heronry, it was felt

wise to incorporate, and this was accomplished in 1969.

In 1973, an area of river flats along the Nith River near Haysville was purchased (named the F.H. Montgomery Wildlife Sanctuary for our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1974).

By the late 70's land values had escalated out of our reach and Audubon films were seen on T.V. so ticket sales fell as expenses rose. By 1981, after

28 years, we dropped out of the Audubon Wildlife Film circuit. Our conservation efforts focused on sending knowledgeable representatives to meetings and hearings to present an environmentally sound point of view.

Thanks to many astute treasurers and directors, it became possible to contribute to land purchases by larger groups, as we're doing tonight.

In 1984, for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we hosted an FON Annual meeting.

In 1988, there was the Peregrine Falcon Release project, when we raised five chicks to free-flying birds.

In 1990, the Great Tree Hunt in Waterloo Region, and on Earth Day in 1991

we honoured the winners by planting 100 native trees in Bechtel Park, Waterloo. It was Kitchener's turn in 1992 and we planted 100 native trees at

Gzowski Park. In 1994, as part of our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we planted another 100 trees in Cambridge behind the Preston High School – in a very coarse gravel moraine! – and started a Prairie planting at the Erb Street Landfill Site

which is an on-going Club project.

*Happy 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!*

(Unfortunately this leaves “out” as much as is “in”, due to the full agenda for the evening.

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**KWFN Founders:**

F.W.R. (Roy) Dickson, Gerry Knecktel, Fred H. Montgomery, Clarence B. Price, Edmund Pugsley, Frank Shantz, Viola (Snyder) Hanson, Marjorie (White) James, Tom Withington