

March 2011



What's Inside

KWFN Contacts	2
Info for everyone	3
Native Plant Nuts	4
Ontario Nature	5
Outings	6
Brenda Van Ryswyk – Exploring and Understanding	7
Vernal Pools Recap	
WSN Report	9
President's Corner	10
Outings at a Glance	11
Update Board of Directors	

REFRESHMENTS – A CHANGE

The Board, after some deliberation and consideration of past and current experiences in this regard, decided to discontinue the availability of tea and coffee service at our general meetings. This was a service that was used by few, if any of our members

Next Club Meeting:

March 28, 2011 at 7:30PM

Wing 404/Rotary Centre, Dutton Dr., Waterloo

The Natural and Cultural Legacy of the Grand River In Pictures Warren Stauch

The Grand River, a Canadian heritage river (1994), has been in existence since the end of the last ice age and over those thousands of years, it has evolved into the wonderful watershed it is today. Over its 298 kilometre distance from its source near Dundalk to its mouth at Port Maitland, the watershed encompasses several forest zones, climatic regions and a variety of landscapes. For over 9,000 years, human habitation has occurred in the watershed, first with the aboriginal occupation and then more than 200 years ago, the arrival of the European settlers, the United Empire Loyalists, the Pennsylvania German Mennonites, the Scots, the English, the Irish and the Germans. Today, the watershed is very multi-cultural in its makeup and each group has embossed their influence upon it.

Warren Stauch is a retired high school Geography teacher with a strong interest in local history.

KWFN Contacts for the 2010/2011 Season

Directors

President

Mary Ann Vanden Elzen (519 741-8272)
mave@microverse.on.ca

Vice President

Fraser Gibson (519 576-9287)
fn.gib@sympatico.ca

Past President

Levi Moore (519 747-2080)
lcmoore_04@yahoo.ca

Conservation

Valerie Hill (519 578-8113)
vhill@therecord.com

Treasurer

Jim Cappleman (519 885-0380)
jim@mcdsigns.com

Membership

Larry Hamel (519 894-5140)
hamell@sympatico.ca

Secretary

Katharina Walton (519 954-6478)
hamptonstreet@rogers.com

Programs

Janet Ozaruk (519-893-0490)
janeto@golden.net

Publicity

Levi Moore (519 747-2080)

Outings

Mary Voisin (519 884-6881)
maryvoisin@rogers.com

Other

Editor

Deb Fowler (519 576-2788)
deb.heron_editor@rogers.com

Noteworthy Bird Sightings

Ken Burrell (519 699-4695)
kenard89@hotmail.com

Mailing Team

Rick and Jan Hook (519-742-7419)
rjhook@sympatico.ca

Librarian Archivist

Betty Cooper
(519 743-3827)

ON Representative

Fraser Gibson (519 576-9287)
fn.gib@sympatico.ca

Native Plant Nuts

Wayne Buck (519 662-2529)
waylyn2@cwisp.ca

Young Naturalists

Pat Bigelow (519-888-7516)
bigelow@sympatico.ca

Waterloo Stewardship Committee

Representative

Neil E. Taylor (519 893-6469)
neiletaylor@sympatico.ca

KWFN Web Site Manager

www.kwfn.ca
Larry Hamel 519 894-5140 hamell@sympatico.ca

Kitchener's Natural Areas Program

Josh Shea 519-741-3400 ext 3349, Joshua.Shea@kitchener.ca
Fraser Gibson 519-576-9287, fn.gib@sympatico.ca

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

As of January 31, 2010, KWFN has 153 Memberships and 221 Members. Please note that the Family/Couple and Senior Couple Memberships each represent two members. The numbers, as of June 30, 2010, were 159 Memberships and 237 Members. This is good news as it shows we are closing in on the level we were at last year!

HALF PRICE FOR NEW MEMBERS

For the balance of the 2010-2011 membership year the membership fees for new memberships are half the listed prices. A brief summary of the fees for the different types of memberships is listed on the last page of The Heron. You may also go to the web site, www.kwfn.ca, for complete details.

INCOME TAX RECEIPTS

Receipts for income tax purposes that were not picked up by the end of the February meeting will be mailed to the recipients following the meeting. Contact the Membership Director if you have any concerns about your receipts.

Submissions for the Heron need to be received by the 15th of the month.

Submit via email,
<deb.heron_editor@rogers.com>
or mail to 30 Calmcrest Drive,
Kitchener N2E 1V3

Information for everyone

The **2011 Champion Tree Hunt of Waterloo** will be starting in May and nominations will be accepted until the end of September. The Tree Hunt's website (from which this project will be driven) will officially be promoted to the general public starting mid-March. The organizing committee will be presenting a brief update at the March 28th meeting. Promotional brochures will be available at the meeting.

ATTENTION PARENTS AND KEEN TEEN BIRDERS

The Long Point Bird Observatory is looking for keen teen birders to apply for the **2011 Doug Tarry Natural History Fund - Young Ornithologist Workshop** to be held from Friday, July 29 to Sunday, August 7. Participants will receive hands-on training in field ornithology including bird banding, censusing, field identification, birding trips, preparing museum specimens, guest lectures, and more. Six of Canada's most promising ornithologists between the ages of 13-17 will be selected to attend, and will receive the Doug Tarry Bird Study Award to cover all on-site expenses. For those traveling long distances, special grants may also be available to help offset air travel costs. Applications are due April 15, 2011. For more information and an application form, visit the following websites:

lpbo@birdscanada.org

www.birdscanada.org/longpoint

WANTED

FOR PERIWINKLE MURDER

**OLD OR DAMAGED
WINTER POOL COVERS
TARPAULINS (PREFER BLACK)
ANY SIZE**

If you would like to make a donation (\$10 or more) to the Sanctuary Fund for the purchase of new tarps you will receive a Charitable Donation Tax Receipt.

Please contact **Graham Macdonald**
grahammaacd@execulink.com
519-634-5633
to arrange pick-up

SIGNS of SPRING

Submitted by Wayne Buck

I was going through the seeds in our seed fridge the first week of February, listing the seeds that we have stored there, when I came across 3 bags in which the seeds had already germinated; i.e. they had a rootlet about 1.0 cm long. They were American Plum pits, Choke Cherry pits, and Running Strawberry seeds. I got some soil and filled some cells and pots and put them under some lights on a timer in our basement. On Feb. 13 I noticed some cotyledons sticking up above the soil; surely a sign of spring.

At the end of January I was hiking the Bruce Trail along the old (former) now unused portion of the Welland canal with Fraser and Ken when we spotted some leaves of Wayfaring Bush (a non-native relative of Nannyberry) that had opened; also surely a sign of spring.

I checked in a log book we keep to record the first arrivals of some spring migrants and saw that we have entries for grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds for the first week of March. Male Eastern Bluebirds usually arrive by the middle of March to establish their territories before the females arrive 2 weeks later.

Ahh yes, spring is surely on its way.

Winter Weather Notice to Members:

In the situation where a winter storm may arise, please tune to 105.3 Kool FM or 99.5 KFUN for meeting cancellation notices. Weather cancellations should also be provided on their websites. Information will also be available on our website, www.kwfn.ca

CONESTOGO BIRD FEED

4003 Line 73
RR 1 Newton ON NOK 1R0
1-519-595-7587

*Manufacturers of Quality Wild Bird Mixes
Over 100 styles of Bird Feeders
Droll Yankee, Aspects, Duncraft, Audubon and more*



Also at St. Jacobs Farmers Market
****And now at the Stratford Farmers Market****



Drynan

One of my favourite places to walk in the region is the Drynan Regional Forest. Judging by the number of outings that visit this tract annually, it's one of a lot of other people's favorites, too. Located on Dumfries Rd. north of Banister and Wrigley Lakes, Drynan is near the northern terminus of the Carolinian Zone in the region of Waterloo. Since it is I within the Carolinian Zone, it holds many plants that are not found only a few kilometres farther north such as, Poke Milkweed, Witch Hazel, Pignut Hickory, Pointed-leaved Hepatica, and New Jersey Tea. The trails are well defined and easy to walk with few elevations to climb. Several wetlands provide a variety of habitat. The parking lot on the west side of Dumfries Rd. is small and easily missed as you drive past.

There used to be a Red Pine plantation through which you walked to gain access to the trails that took you to the oak woodland farther west. But that (i.e. the plantation) is all gone now. Two years ago the Region of Waterloo decided to remove the plantation since many of the trees were already dead or dying. The understory was almost devoid of plants due to the lack of light. The Region asked the Waterloo Stewardship Network (WSN) if they would like to take on the challenge of transforming this man-made plantation area into something more in keeping

Native Plant Nuts

By Wayne Buck

with the area once the pines were removed.

People on the WSN Drynan committee were of 2 minds. One faction wanted to treat the area as a true restoration; not planting anything after the removal of the trees, allowing the nearby woodland to seed itself in and "Let nature take its course". The other faction wanted to plant different areas of the site as different habitats; prairie, savannah, woodland, etc. to illustrate the some of the different plant communities once indigenous to the Region but not necessarily here at Drynan. We compromised and planted dozens of small areas, or nodes, with trees and shrubs that were already present in the nearby woodland, leaving large areas in which natural regeneration could take place.

The transformation began in the winter of 2010 with the removal of the pines by a timber company using a short wood harvester. These are amazing machines to watch at work. The machine clamps onto the base of the tree and cuts it just above the ground. Then, it turns the whole tree 90 degrees (on its side) and proceeds to remove the many branches by passing the trunk through a device which prunes them off even with the trunk. The branches fall to the ground where they are left as mulch. It then cuts the trunk in 2-3 m lengths and stacks it in piles

where it will later either be chipped up or taken to a mill where it will be sawn into lumber; likely 2X4's.

Last spring, a class of local high school students made trails that wind through the area and then planted the trees and shrubs in small groups of 3 or 4 called nodes. Later in the summer, the stewardship rangers, under the guidance of Beth Anne Fischer, wheel-barrowed more woodchips onto the trails and planted more trees and shrubs. In August, when I toured the area along with 3 other WSN committee members, we were pleased with the large number of trees and shrubs that had survived the summer. We could also see that a natural regeneration of oaks, chokecherry and elderberry has already occurred along with a wetland component coming that was into it's own at the south end of the newly opened area.

A memorial area to honour previous WSN members is being set up in the back (northwest) corner. Several large stones will have the names of past WSN members attached to them and memorial trees will be planted.

I hope you will have an opportunity to visit Drynan in the near future and can monitor and enjoy its transformation in the coming years. I am anxious to see how many of the trees and shrubs survived predation by the deer, rabbits and mice during the winter.

Province Fails to Protect Threatened Caribou *from Ontario Nature's website*

Leading conservation organizations are concerned that the McGuinty government has placed woodland caribou and its own North American-leading species legislation at risk by exempting a swath of industries from accountability under Ontario's Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The proposed exemption to the ESA announced Jan 24, 2011 will grant industries like forestry, mining and hydro full access to most of woodland caribou habitat despite the fact that the threatened species was listed as a "fast-track" species for habitat protection when the ESA was enacted in 2007.

The Province missed its original deadline (June 2008) to enact a habitat regulation for woodland caribou. Now, more than two years later, the government announced it is asking the public to comment on a proposed approach that includes a broad exemption for industries operating in caribou habitat.

"Allowing industry full access to most of Ontario's remaining woodland caribou habitat represents an abysmal failure to implement the Endangered Species Act as it was intended," says Anne Bell, Ontario Nature's Senior Director of Conservation and Education.

"Rather than shielding industry, the government should be providing the leadership necessary to save species and spur a vibrant economic future in the north," said Rachel Plotkin, Policy Analyst for the David Suzuki Foundation.

"Logging, roads and mining throughout the southern boreal forest have squeezed caribou out of its habitat," says Anna Baggio, Director, Conservation Land Use Planning with CPAWS Wildlands League. "Now pressure is mounting in the northern reaches of its habitat as well, where rampant exploration activities outpace progress on land use planning. How will the caribou survive that?"

"The ESA is excellent legislation with broad public support in both northern and southern Ontario," adds Justin Duncan of Ecojustice. "Government should spend public resources

on implementing the ESA to protect species and using the tools contained in the Act to assist with industry compliance rather than work for years to create massive exemptions."

"How can the ESA possibly be upheld if industry isn't required to comply with this vital piece of legislation when it comes to caribou habitat? This will set a dangerous precedent for the future of Ontario's threatened species," states Amber Ellis, Executive Director of Earthroots.

For more information, please contact:
Victoria Foote, Director of Communications, Ontario Nature: 416-444-8419 ext.238 victoriaf@ontarionature.org

Fifth Annual Carden Nature Festival

Submitted by Lou Probst, Carden Field Naturalists
The Carden Nature Festival is back and better than ever! Come out June 4-6 to enjoy a smorgasbord of 100 environmental delights celebrating the remarkable biodiversity of the Carden Plain. For more information, please visit www.cardenguide.com/festival or call 705-326-1620.

Outings Schedule



By Mary Voisin

A Winter Walk In The Woods
Wednesday, March 2, 2011
Marco DeBruin
519-658-5372

Meeting Time/Place:
9:30 a.m. at the parking lot on the Morningside Drive side of the "roundabout" at Blair Road and Fountain Street S., in Cambridge. (Just south of Highway 401)

Join Marco for a morning walk in the woods. The trail conditions are fairly flat. Bring your binoculars, dress appropriately for the weather and cross your fingers for co-operative birds and furry creatures.

Owl Prowl
Laurel Creek Nature Centre
Friday, March 4, 2011
Karen Buschert
519-880-8321

Meeting Time/Place:
8:00 pm at the Nature Centre off Beaver Creek Rd. (not the Conservation Area!). Take Fischer Hallman Rd. or Bearinger Rd. to Laurelwood Drive. At the roundabout, take the 1st exit onto Beaver Creek Rd. Entrance is on the left.

Come join the evening fun as we explore the forests at Laurel Creek Nature Centre for signs of roosting Screech and/or Great Horned owls. Using iPod technology, we will call them and hope that they respond back!

Health Valley Trail
Tuesday, March 8, 2011
Meet, Greet and Explore! A shared experience!

Meeting Time/Place:
9:00 am at the Riverworks parking lot, St. Jacobs, at the extreme east end (follow the signs for buses and campers)

Bald Eagles at *rare*
Saturday, March 12, 2011
Andy Steinberg
519-744-8961

Meeting Time/Place:
8 am at *rare* Administration Centre, 1679 Blair Road, Cambridge

A coordinated Bald Eagle monitoring effort has been underway at *rare* since the winter of 1999/2000. The location of the eagles is monitored between 7 and 9 am every second Saturday morning January through March. Come and join Andy to learn about *rare*'s monitoring efforts and hopefully we will see some of these majestic birds. Bring your binoculars, scope (if you have one) and field guides. Wear warm clothing and hiking boots as we may have time to explore some of the old growth forests on the *rare* property.



Early Spring Breeding Birds
Dickson to Wrigley Trail
Saturday, March 19, 2011
Levi Moore
519-747-2080

Meeting Time/Place:
9:30 am at Wrigley Corners

Come to Wrigley Corners and Hike the Dickson to Wrigley Trail, scouting for early spring breeding bird activity and perhaps feeding some chickadees along the way. The woodpeckers are already drumming and the nuthatches are singing!

Huron Natural Area
Tuesday, March 22, 2011
Fraser Gibson 519-576-9287

Meeting Time/Place:
9:00 am at the Pavilion area – 801 Trillium Drive
Take Fischer Hallman south turning left onto Bleams Rd. Turn right at Trillium Drive and follow it until reaching the park entrance on the right at 801 Trillium Dr.

This 360 acre park, officially opened on October 19, 2007, is Kitchener's largest natural area park. Strasburg Creek, a cold water stream runs through it and feeds several ponds. The park is valuable for its diverse habitats including wetlands, ponds, meadows and upland forest. It was also recently discovered to be the home of a First Nations settlement. Join Fraser as we explore the trails and watch for birds and other wildlife.

Brenda Van Ryswyk – Exploring and Understanding Vernal Pools

Submitted by Michael Frind

What do most people think of when vernal pools are mentioned? Are these more than merely temporary wet spots? Are they important ecologically? Brenda Van Ryswyk, a natural heritage ecologist at Conservation Halton and a member of the Ontario Vernal Pools Association, gave a wonderfully insightful overview of the origin and role of vernal pools, including why many species depend heavily on them. Her superbly organized, well-balanced presentation included many excellent photographs from her fieldwork.

Vernal pools are distinct from year-round wetlands because of three distinguishing attributes. Firstly, they are ephemeral: they fill seasonally then dry up, usually on an annual basis. Secondly, since they are not connected to streams of water bodies, they are hydrologically isolated; however, they can be connected to groundwater systems. Thirdly, they are home to biologically unique communities: they provide habitat for species adapted to seasonal drying, and that are vulnerable to predatory fish. In fact, their temporary nature and the high nutrient influx per unit volume (overland runoff, leaves from trees, etc.) make them very attractive to species that are adapted to this type of environment.

Vernal pools are often found in upland forests (and some definitions restrict vernal pools to woodland settings), but they are occasionally found in non-wooded areas as well. They can extend some distance, but they tend to be smaller and shallower than a small

pond or lake. They can range from 6 inches to four feet deep, or more.

The shape can be quite compact, or they can sprawl for some distance.

The term “vernal pool” is merely one of several synonymous names.

Other terms are equally valid: ephemeral ponds, intermittent ponds, spring pools, salamander ponds, woodland pools, and vernal ponds. Because the term “vernal” is simply Latin for “springtime”, and given that not all such ponds fill in the spring, it could be argued that *ephemeral* is a more accurate term.

Since vernal pools are temporary, the inhabitants must be prepared to deal with this. Their only options are to mature and leave (as frogs and salamanders do), or lay eggs that remain until a subsequent filling. Meanwhile, in the realm of flora, the basin of a vernal pool can be either barren, or it can merely consist of forest-floor duff (leaves) or grasses, or it can be home to a variety of plants.

Vernal pool inhabitants have various ways of surviving the dry period. Desiccation-resistant eggs, which simply rest in the dry-period soil or organic debris, are common: they only hatch when immersed in standing water. These eggs can also be transported by wind, animals, or movement of mud and vegetation.

Examples of non-drying eggs include *Daphnia*, and various Copepods, Fairy Shrimp, and Odonates (dragonflies and damselflies).

Some species become dormant when

the pond is dry. They include Amphipods, Clam Shrimp, and various snails, clams, and aquatic worms. These ones tend to bury themselves in the mud, or they protect themselves with cysts (similar to non-drying eggs).

Other species, such as toads and frogs, only use pools for egg-laying and tadpole stages, and thus migrate terrestrially when the pond dries up. These ones tend to return to their native pond when dry. Salamanders are well-noted for their strong homing instinct: even after habitat destruction, they will try in vain to find the pool in which they were born.

Vernal pools can be visited by migrating individuals as well. Predacious Diving Beetles and Water Scorpions, which prefer pools that hold water for extended periods, are two examples of species that do not survive the dry period of vernal pools. Instead, they must migrate each year from elsewhere. Meanwhile, snakes and turtles can also visit, but they tend to stay a short while, eat their fill, and move on. Birds and mammals also make use of vernal pools as a source of drinking water, and some occasionally dine there as well. For these reasons, vernal pools can provide excellent wildlife-viewing opportunities.

Brenda highlighted the close interplay of two obligate vernal-pool species: the Fairy Shrimp and the mole salamanders. (Spotted and Jefferson Salamanders fall into the mole group, which is named after their habit of hiding in mole holes and other damp spots.) Female shrimp produce multiple broods, with eggs that must be dried and rewetted before they will hatch. Their rapid development enables them to make use of vernal pools in late winter and early spring, and so they can avoid the peak predator season. Being filter feeders, they can make use of bacteria, plankton, protozoa, and general detritus. Meanwhile, larval salamanders are voracious, and will eat anything they can fit into their mouths (including their own siblings, as well as shrimp



Our Optics are Worth Looking Into

We carry
Bushnell, Celestron,
Nikon, Vortex,
EagleOptics, Kowa &
Swarovski.

We also have a great line
up of field guides, feeders
and birdfood.



“Your Backyard Birdfeeding Specialists”

Birdfood * Feeders * Baths * Optics * Gifts * Shade - Grown Coffee

Wild Birds Unlimited
951 Gordon St., Guelph
519-821-BIRD (2473)
<http://www.guelph.wbu.com>

Concluded on page 8

Brenda Van Ryswyk – Exploring and Understanding Vernal Pools (concluded)

and other small fare). Fairy Shrimp, which require vernal pools to survive, thus serve as a key food source for salamanders.

Brenda noted that the identification of a vernal pool must be done through an examination of the animal species, since there are no obligate vernal-pool plant species. To confirm whether the pool is vernal, without a year of observations, it is considered sufficient to find breeding evidence for at least one obligate species and two or more facultative species.

Designating wetlands and nearby vernal pools as provincially significant wetlands (PSWs) is a valuable protective measure. The MNR's detailed Wetland Evaluation System provides a standardized means by which wetlands and vernal-pool areas can be classified. Ontario's Provincial Policy Statement enables significant wildlife (amphibian breeding) habitat to be designated as such. Protection can also be conferred through conservation easements and land trusts, thus enabling private landowners to ensure that their sensitive habitat remains protected for future generations.

For those interested in detailed examinations of vernal pools, Brenda suggested several field guides. These include *A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools* (Kenney and Burne; Massachusetts Vernal Pool Association), *Science and Conservation of Vernal Pools in Northeastern North America* (Calhoun and DeMaynadier; CRC Press), and *Vernal Pools: Natural History and Conservation* (Colburn; McDonald and Woodward Publishing). Other references, plus additional information regarding vernal pools, can be found on the Ontario Vernal Pools Association website at ontariovernalpools.org. Brenda noted that vernal pools are inherently fragile. Even well-intentioned changes, such as "cleaning up" of dead branches and debris, can destroy the egg-laying sites upon which amphibians depend. Care should also be taken to accord the same reverence to the surround-

ing landscape, since the runoff from the surrounding slopes feeds the vernal pool. Protection of the landscape should also include keeping chemicals (pesticides, fertilizers, hydrocarbons, road salt, etc.) away. Any spill of a contaminant could harm the vernal pool. And, because groundwater recharge commonly occurs in forests, and because vernal pools often contribute to groundwater recharge as well, keeping potential pollutants far away from these areas means groundwater protection too.

Road mortalities, if documented, also provide useful insight into impacts on vernal pools. Frequent observations of vernal-pool areas near roads can pinpoint amphibian crossing times and locations. With such information on hand, municipalities can temporarily close roads, or special crossing culverts (EcoPassages) can be built when the road is upgraded. The Ontario Road Ecology Group has set up an online reporting utility which enables centralized recordkeeping. Unfortunately, because many species simply freeze when confronted by approaching vehicles, even lightly traveled roads present problems.

Brenda's daily work occasionally takes her to areas where land development is imminent, or where habitat has been intentionally degraded in anticipation of development. She notes that much research is still to be done. For example, no one knows exactly how much road salt vernal pools can safely withstand. No one knows if salamanders, with their strong homing instinct, eventually move to different vernal pools when their native ones vanish. And, no one has done a comprehensive long-term study on the health of vernal pools when housing subdivisions cause nearby rural forests to transition into ordinary urban woodlots.

With the modern trend of urban expansion continuing at a rapid pace, one often hears about attempts at mitigating the impacts of land-use changes by mimicking natural systems as closely as possible. But the ubiquitous storm water-management (SWM) ponds are impossible to convert into vernal pools: the sudden influxes of warm, contaminant-laden water ensure this. While SWM ponds can be home to dragonflies and mos-

quitoes, they tend to be inhospitable to amphibians and crustaceans. Creating vernal pools artificially is in fact extremely difficult: the natural hydrology and hydrogeology is impossible to imitate.

One common question that arises with vernal pools is that of buffer zones adjacent to land development. With land being at a premium and suburban growth continuing rapidly, and with perennially inflated suburban-housing prices being the norm here, there is a strong incentive to shoehorn the maximum possible number of housing units into each farm field that has been rezoned residential. Issues such as contaminated runoff, invasive species, acid rain, and roaming pets compound the problem, but it is clear that current buffers (often just a few dozen metres) are woefully inadequate.

Several of Brenda's references recommend 500 metres as a suitable minimum distance between a vernal pool and the nearest development. But an even larger value may be appropriate in some situations, for example if the rainfall catchment area extends for some distance, or if urbanization is encroaching on all sides. The wandering distance of the local species assemblage needs to be considered seriously, and ideally a substantial buffer between the outermost edge of the vernal pool's "life zone" range itself and the development would be implemented. Large numbers of amphibians and reptiles appearing on roadways and in backyards are one sign of insufficient buffers. Windmiller and Calhoun, who have written extensively on impacts and conservation, consider 1000 metres to be more a suitable buffer. Additionally, no one knows what the effects of climate change on vernal pools will be, albeit increases in extreme events and changes in species ranges have already been noted. Changes in the dynamics of ponds will occur: some ponds might benefit, while others might decline.

Sincere thanks to Brenda Van Ryswyk for her comprehensive overview of vernal pools, and for her brilliant insight into the key importance of preserving these unique, easily overlooked ephemeral ecosystems.

Neil E. Taylor
KWFN Representative
Waterloo Stewardship Network
February, 2011



Waterloo Stewardship Network (WSN)

"providing Waterloo Region with knowledge necessary to continue responsible stewardship of the natural resources we all share"

Project Updates

Drynan Activities – A plaque has been installed. A U. of W. course was held there this month. A dedication date is being planned for late April. There is a potential for negotiations with adjacent landowner re. the properties.

Envirothon – Another training day will take place in early March. Neil Taylor will lead a session re. Oral Presentations. The Envirothon will take place at 'rare' in April.

Environmentally Sensitive Landscape Meeting - November 25th with speakers talking about invasive species and biodiversity at Camp Heidelberg from 6:30 to 9:00.

Prairie Projects - A burn at Branchton is planned for this spring. Seeding and collection will also be done on a volunteer coordination type basis.

Aquatic Renewal Workshops - Discussion is ongoing to possibly turn this into a university level course through the University of Guelph.

Rural Landowner Stewardship Guide - Another workshop for rural non-farm landowners is being planned with a wider advertising audience in concert with the GRCA.

Spring Events - Earth Day Waterloo, Kitchener Earth Day, Waterloo Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival, Ecofest, Envirothon, etc.

Kossuth Bog Committee - All parties are interested. Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory (formerly Wings of Paradise) is interested in organizing this committee. A meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

Trees From Seed - Packages have been completed by Wayne Buck. Steve May will start contacting schools this week using contacts from Karen Buschert and Josh Shea.

Respectfully submitted,

Neil

"Study nature; love nature; stay close to nature. It will never fail you." Frank Lloyd Wright

ICELAND

Aug. 3-15 Direct/nonstop from/to TORONTO

Land tour, 16, with Janice Bock, escort. \$4695 + air tax.

Glaciers-Waterfalls-Geysers-Canyons-Blue Lagoon-

Volcanoes-Meadows-Folk Museum-Whales-Puffins....

worldwide.on.ca Scott Allen-886- 7700 (Waterloo)

Our New Members

Laura Ehnes
Dave McNee

Our Donors

Betty Cooper
(Sanctuary Fund)

President's Corner

By Mary Ann Vanden Elzen

Do Crows Count?

"I don't get no respect." Famous words from comedian Rodney Dangerfield.

Those words could just as well be uttered ...or squawked... by certain birds. Like crows, for instance. Why is it that no one gets excited when they see them? No joyous exclamation, "Hey, there's a crow; they're so beautiful!" In fact, a flock of crows is referred to as a "murder." How charitable is that?

Same goes for cowbirds, catbirds and Canada Geese.

Is it because their names all begin with 'c'? Can't be. Gulls and grackles suffer the same fate. Neither are held in high esteem.

It's not just these that get short shrift. I once pointed out a flock of pigeons flying overhead but everyone else was riveted on the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and paid no heed.

Or another time. "Hey, look. There's a starling."

The response: "Oh, is that all. They're as common as dirt."

Maybe that's the answer. 'C' stands for common. There's too many of them. That's why they're ignored.

Over the years, I've been on quite a few outings with the club. Everyone is thrilled at the sight of a Pileated Woodpecker or awed with the flight of a Sandhill Crane. Bald Eagles are truly inspiring.

So, what is it with these unpopular birds?

On the subject of starlings, I've witnessed angry grandpas rapping on windows shoos them from birdfeeders. "Get lost! I didn't put that food out for *you*." In times past, kids and grannies shot them with BB guns to keep them from robbing cherries from trees.

House Sparrows endure the same dismissal – so very common and, sometimes, pesky. They are simply discounted.

The 2005 Breeding Bird Atlas mentions declining cowbird populations in Ontario. Do we care?

So then, just what attracts us to some birds and not others? Several elements, in fact. A splash of colour - a zippy yellow American Goldfinch or a striking red Northern Cardinal. Strength and size - the American Bald Eagle is legendary. And, finally, grace and beauty - the distinctive flight of the Magnificent Frigatebird.

The only time we take notice of the unbeloved plain avians is

when they're engaged in something spectacular. Like badgering a distraught Red-tailed Hawk. Like snatching a vole from its snowy tunnel. Like congregating by the thousands, black bodies silhouetted on bare skeletal branches.

...or helpful.

One of my favourite sightings is watching a flock of starlings pulling grubs up from our lawn. Very satisfying indeed!

Can you imagine someone declaring, "My favourite is the cowbird. It's so ingenious at parasitizing other nests. No need for home building and parenting. No teenagers to look after. No stress. Just relax."

Trouble is, we frequently overlook some of their amazing talents. Starlings, for instance, beaded along a swaying hydro wire – who gets excited about that? We should at least credit them for their tenacity and superior gymnastic abilities. Crows are amongst the most intelligent of birds; they use tools and can count. And, *few* can mimic like a catbird.

Why is it that some birds get no respect? It all comes down to two words - common and plain.

The Region of Waterloo has issued helpful hints for maintaining your green bin during the winter:

1. Place a piece of cardboard, newsprint or egg cartons at the bottom to prevent the food waste from freezing to the bin.
2. Layer the food scraps with paper waste such as shredded paper or facial tissue.
3. If you're not using paper compost bags, bundle up compost in sheets of newsprint or in boxboard boxes, like cereal boxes.
4. Set out your green bin in the morning by 7 a.m. rather than the night before
5. Clear away snow to ensure the green bin is visible and accessible.
6. Never put any plastics in the green bin even if its identified as compostable.

For more information visit www.regionofwaterloo.on.ca/waste

Valerie Hill
KWFN Conservation Director

March 2011 at a Glance - refer to page 6 of this Heron for full outing details

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Woods near Blair 9:30 am	3	4 Owl Prowl at Laurel 8:00 pm	5
6	7	8 Health Valley Trail 9:00 am	9	10	11	12 Eagles at rare 8:00 am
13	14 March Break Week	15	16	17	18	19 Breeding Birds Wrigley Corners 9:30 am
20	21	22 Huron Natural Area 9 am	23	24	25	26
27	28 KWFN meeting	29	30	31		

Update from the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors met February 7 and discussed the following topics:

- Soliciting ads for the *Heron*
- Nominations Committee
- Marketing Committee
- Conservation Committee
- Founder's Wildlife Sanctuary
- Collaboration between environmental organizations
- Update on the Young Nats program
- Membership Report
- Family membership
- Membership list for the Archives
- Updating the KWFN Bird Checklist

The minutes of the February meeting will be approved at the Board's next meeting March 7. The approved minutes can be viewed in the KWFN library at club meetings, or you can request to receive a digital version from Katharina Walton.



Kitchener, ON N2M 3W6
317 Highland Road East

Kitchener-Waterloo Field Naturalists

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

Canada Post Publication
Mail Sales Agreement
No. 40037542

Membership Fees September to August (After Feb.1/11 - 1/2 price*)

* new members only
(senior = 60 yrs)

Family/Couple
\$35.00

Senior Couple
\$30.00

Adult Individual
\$30.00

Senior Individual
\$25.00

Student \$25.00

18 and under Free

Bring payment for membership to the next meeting or mail to KWFN at 317 Highland Rd E Kitchener N2M 3W6

Objectives of the KWFN

- to acquire and disseminate knowledge of natural history
- to protect and preserve wildlife
- to purchase and hold appropriate parcels of land for the advancement of conservation
- to support public interest in nature and its preservation by supporting the enactment of wise legislation and by other means as falls within the scope of the Corporation

General Information

Meetings are held monthly from September to May, on the fourth Monday of the month with the exception of December. Our meetings are free and visitors are always welcome. Outings are scheduled almost every month.

KWFN is a registered charitable organization. Membership fees and all donations are tax deductible. KWFN is affiliated with Ontario Nature (FON) and Nature Canada (Canadian Nature Federation)

www.kwfn.ca



"The Heron" is the official publication of the Kitchener-Waterloo Field Naturalists' Club and is produced by volunteer members of the club. It is published nine times yearly from September to June, except for December.

Copies of "The Heron" are available at meetings but will be mailed (free of charge) to members if not picked up.

Articles reflect the views of the authors and are not necessarily the views endorsed by the KWFN club.

Pesticides in Ontario It is KWFN's policy not to use pesticides on any club property or during any club activity. (November 2000) In April 2009 the use of pesticides for commercial reasons was banned in the province of Ontario. This ban overrides all municipal by-laws. The main exceptions are for agriculture, human health and safety, golf courses, sports fields (though not parks), forestry, and in some instances to protect natural resources. Any pesticide identified as Class 9 is not allowed for residential or cosmetic use. To report non-compliance with the ban please contact the Guelph OMNR office at (519) 826-4955. For more information go to: <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/land/pesticides/>