

TRAIL & LANDSCAPE



*A Publication Concerned With
Natural History and Conservation*

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

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May, 2003

TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

President

Garry McNulty

Objectives of the Club: To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse the information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

Club Publications: THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada, and TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a quarterly providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on Club activities.

Field Trips, Lectures and other natural history activities are arranged for local members; see "Coming Events" in this issue.

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The 2003 Soirée, and the OFNC Awards for 2002

*Robert E. Lee and Karen McLachlan Hamilton,
with photographs by Ken Taylor*

For the first time in many years, the OFNC Soirée was held in a new location (St. Basil's Church on Maitland Avenue) and at a new time (the evening of Saturday, April 26th, instead of the usual Friday).

Soirée events always begin informally, with the opportunity to catch up on news with old friends, and meet fellow OFNC naturalists you've only heard about. A number of nature photographs by OFNC members were on display. This year a group of singers was added to the festivities.



Five young Macoun Club members stood by the natural science exhibits they had prepared, keen to discuss their favourite subjects with interested adults. Simon

Wenzowski had been motivated to do some research on shrews after seeing one on a Macoun Club field trip. Kathleen Watt's project on parrots grew out of her close involvement with pet budgies. Life in Archaen times was the subject of Sara Potvin's work; her brother Julian had investigated the symbiotic relationships involving leaf-cutter ants and fungi. Stephen Watt presented the results of a second year of well recorded wildlife observations in his own backyard Study Area.

In another move away from traditional patterns, this year Soirée projects were not competitively judged. However, OFNC member Janet Castle carefully evaluated each of them, and later gave an enthusiastic account of their substance and merits to the assembled OFNC members.

Stephen Darbyshire (who hasn't been a Macoun Club member for more than 30 years) also had an exhibit on katydids of Ottawa, and Christine Hanrahan set out a display on the Fletcher Wildlife Garden.

The first speakers of the evening were Kevin Burke and Andy Zhu, the Co-Presidents of the Macoun Club's Junior group. Each in turn talked about the outdoor and indoor components of the Club — the all-season, all-weather field trips to their Study Area in Stony Swamp and to lands made available by Mary Stuart and Gerry Lee, in the Pakenham Hills, and the succession of informative talks by nature experts at the Museum of Nature.



Kevin Burke



Andy Zhu



Nathan Judd

Nathan Jubb, President of the Intermediates, also spoke about his experiences with the Macoun Club in the Pakenham Hills, remembering especially the rainy late-winter day when he quietly carried dry firewood in his knapsack, and produced it at just the right moment to save the group's foundering lunch fire at a critical time. Nathan offered the group's thanks to the many naturalists and scientists who come in each weekend to talk about their work and interests.

Wintertime experiences in the woods also featured prominently in Eric Smith's account of the Senior group's year. As President, he has injected great energy into the group, and he conveyed this enthusiasm in his speech to the OFNC. Macoun Club, he said, had got him out into the wild places and taught him much, but he had then been amazed to discover what wildlife there was to observe in his own urban environment.



Eric Smith

Following these lively speeches was the award portion of the evening. The Club recognised three members and one non member for their contributions to the Club and the community in 2002. The following are some of the highlights; complete citations will be published in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*.



Bill Royd's contributions on behalf of the OFNC and the community were particularly outstanding this year, thus he was a fitting recipient of the 2002 Member of the Year Award.

Bill's contributions to the OFNC extend well before 2002, but during this last year he had been particularly active in serving as the link between the OFNC and the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital (GACC). Once joining the Greenspace Alliance he quickly became an integral

part, serving as Vice-chair and currently, as Co-chair. As webmaster for the GACC's website, Bill ensures an efficient exchange of information between the OFNC and the GACC which allowed profitable exchanges of ideas and issues that benefited both groups.

One of Bill's biggest contributions is his solid understanding of legislation at all levels. His knowledge of current municipal legislation made him a natural to lead in preparing the OFNC Briefs of the new Ottawa Official Plan. In 2002 he spent a lot of time ensuring the OFNC's views on natural areas preservation were clearly and cogently represented.

It is his deep appreciation for nature that drives his total commitment to protecting natural areas and the environment. He works exceptionally hard to make a difference wherever and whenever he can.

This year the OFNC recognized the contributions of David Hobden with the George McGee Service Award.



David Hobden with OFNC President Gary McNulty

Since his retirement, David has been a very active member of the Club's Conservation Committee and the Fletcher Wildlife Garden Committee, dealing with all committee affairs with quiet competence, but always with a glint of humour in his eyes.

After joining the Fletcher team, David has served the committee in many ways. He has served as Treasurer, as chair on council, and as liaison between the Club and Agriculture Canada. He is currently leading critical negotiations with the Department on the use of the property and the building that are at the very foundation of Fletcher Wildlife Garden. As one member states, "His patience and perseverance have made our relationship with the Department one of mutual trust and respect." Another noted, "When David offers a comment at a meeting, everyone listens, because we know it will be thoughtful and thought-provoking. Most importantly, he picks up on things that many of us forget or lose sight of in our haste to make a quick point."



Philip Fry with Vice-President Michael Murphy

Philip Fry's dismay over the number of wildflowers that succumb to the bulldozer prompted him to purchase six hectares of abandoned farm land near Oxford Mills and establish a refuge for orphaned and threatened wild plants.

He studied the soils, water conditions and topography of the land, then meticulously drew up a plan for his "The Old Field Garden." He thinned cedar stands, dug ponds and increased the forest loam to develop a natural community for thousands of rescued plants. Philip also developed techniques for wildflower propagation which are shared with the general public through educational workshops and tours of the Garden. The products of this propagation are now available for anyone interested in establishing a wildflower garden. He has done such a good job on his garden that other wild plants, and animals, have moved in. The successful rehabilitation of this unused farmland is a model for others.

Philip's outstanding contribution to plant conservation and to the re-establishment of a wildlife habitat on abandoned lands was recognised by the Club by awarding him the Conservation Award for Members.



The 'Turtle Crossing' signs seen at various locations in Ottawa are the result of the work of Michèle André-St. Cyr. Michèle's story shows what one individual can do when motivated by a desire to bring about change.

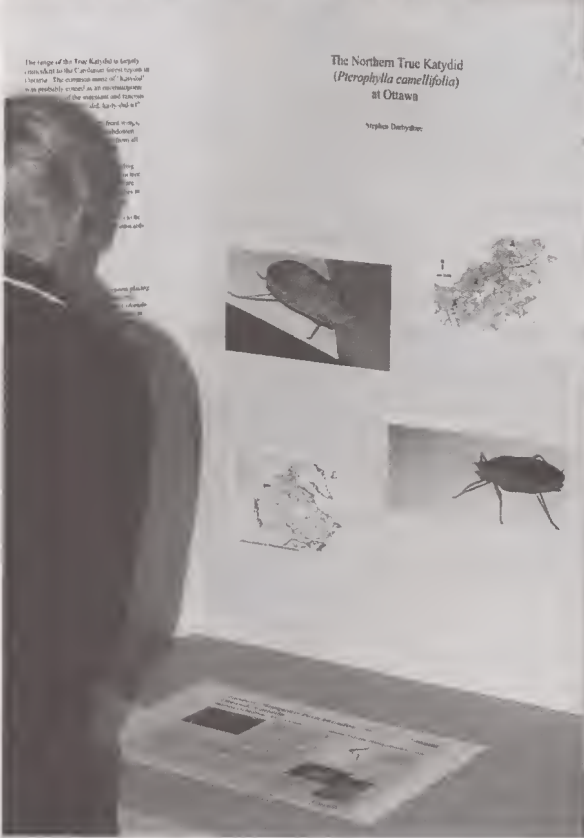
Concerned about the number of dead turtles on the roads, Michèle decided to do something about the problem. She produced 'Turtle Crossing' signs and has them erected at known turtle crossing sites. Those diamond-shaped yellow signs depicting a black turtle with tire tracks with the months May-June written below is the result of her efforts.

Michèle acquired the necessary funds to place the first 14 signs on local roads. Since then, similar signs have been, and

continue to be, put up throughout Ottawa. As of March 2003, numerous municipalities in Ontario have adopted her signs, and interest has been expressed from outside Ontario.

Michèle also formed the group TURTLE S.H.E.L.L./TORTUE S.H.E.L.L. whose mandate is to educate and train "teachers, students, public officials and other members of the general public" about the life and ecology of Ontario turtles. The booklet, "*Let's Talk Turtles!*" is one of the group's productions. Michèle hopes to see TURTLE S.H.E.L.L. establish a turtle rehabilitation facility.

Other remembrances of the evening are the following:



Report on the 2003 Ottawa Regional Science Fair

Kathy Conlan and Susan Laurie-Bourque

Susan Laurie-Bourque and I were invited to judge the science projects submitted for the OFNC award for the 42nd Ottawa Regional Science Fair, held at the Canadian Museum of Nature on April 5, 2003. There were 85 projects which were divided into the categories of Life Sciences (27), Physical Sciences (20), Earth and Environmental Sciences (19), Engineering (13), Biotechnology (4), and Computer Technology (2). Juniors (grades 7 and 8) presented 67% of the projects, intermediates 27% and seniors 6%. Susan and I were impressed by the diversity of the projects and the effort that the students put into them. Their presentations were polished and the subjects well researched. On behalf of OFNC, we selected the following for awards:

Junior:

“How to Grow Bigger and Better Corn,” by Christopher Janz, Henry Munro Middle School. This project was an investigation of different environmental factors such as nutrients, day length, and water supply that would affect corn growth, that was conducted at Christopher’s cottage over the summer in Nova Scotia.

Intermediate:

“La Solution par l’Évaporation.” by Ghadi Antoun and Marisa Rossi, Collège Catholique Samuel-Genest. They worked on the development of a sun powered evaporator system for supplying drinking water from salt water and the effectiveness of the system for removing contaminants.

Did Eastern Tailed Blue and/or Common Buckeye Overwinter?

Linda Jeays

In *T&L* (36:3), I reported sightings of two butterflies, the Eastern Tailed Blue (*Everes comyntas*, now reclassified as *Cupido comyntas*) and the Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*) for the year 2001. The Blue is designated a rare migrant in the Ottawa area, and the Buckeye is an extremely rare migrant.

I am delighted to be able to describe further sightings of both species in the year 2002. Further, the question of whether one or both of these species overwintered arises, since the sightings of both species were made at or near their 2001 locations.

The following documentation is the first record for Eastern Tailed Blue at the same location in two successive years in the Ottawa area (the 50 km radius around the Peace Tower). Also, this is the first report of Common Buckeye seen within a short distance of the previous year's location.

Eastern Tailed Blue

Territory

In the year 2001, I saw Eastern Tailed Blue at two locations, 1.5 miles (2.5 km) apart. Location 1 was a wet meadow at Twin Elm, near Richmond (Lat. 45° 12' N; Long. 75° 49' W). Location 2 was an alfalfa field off Eagleson Road, near Richmond (45° 11' N; 75° 49' W). All sightings of Eastern Tailed Blue in 2002 were at Location 2.

The poor spring weather in 2002 was not conducive to many butterflying expeditions and, of course, I was not expecting to see rare Blues again. I did visit Location 1 regularly in June, but visited Location 2 only once. However, beginning on August 20 (a date indicated by my August 22, 2001 observations), I began to search Location 2 for Eastern Tailed Blue and I found one male and two females on the first search day.

All Blues seen in 2002, except for two, were on the south side of the field. Here the alfalfa crop, about 18" high in August, gave way to a disjointed strip of Alsike Clover (*Trifolium hybridum*). The clover strip was about 30' at its widest, and about 800' long. Observations were made in an area of just over half an acre.

The butterflies congregated in two main sections: the east end, and about 400' away, the west end. In August, both sections were sheltered by stands of Purple Loosestrife, goldenrod and tall grasses. By September, the main flowering plants were New England Aster and other asters. All the butterflies, except one, were seen among the Alsike Clover.

I should emphasize that in 2002, Eastern Tailed Blues in the west section of Location 2 were precisely where I found a male and a female Blue, a month apart, in 2001. . . within 10 feet. In addition to the butterflies seen on the south side of the field, on August 20 a male and female Blue were seen on a sandy track, about 600' from the main territory nectaring at Alsike Clover and basking on sunlit pebbles.

Description

A description of the adult male and female Eastern Tailed Blue can be found in *T&L* (36:106-109). During August and September of 2002, I saw Eastern Tailed Blue on 25 occasions (probably 24 individuals): 9 (10) males and 15 females. All the butterflies, except one, were in perfect condition, tails intact and showing all diagnostic markings. Some males were deep iridescent blue; some were blue-pink.

One female, captured August 28, was faded to a dusky brown on the upperside. The orange caps on the hindwing had turned to yellow and the smaller black dot was indistinct. She seemed simply old.

Of the 18 individuals that I differentiated (by marking the hindwing underside with a permanent ink marker), nine Blues had a wingspan of 1" (25 mm). Eight others were between 1 3/16" (21 mm) and 1 3/16" (30 mm). One female was surprisingly large, 1 7/16" (37 mm), well beyond the normal upper range limit of 26 mm given in *Butterflies of Canada*.

Other than on the same tagging day, I did not relocate any previously marked individuals on subsequent days. Note below that the maximum number of Blues seen on one day was six. Marking and repeat visits were necessary to definitively recognize 18 individuals. While individual butterflies presented themselves quite openly — often basking spread-winged on the low plants — the colony as a whole was somewhat elusive.

Sightings

August 20-30

During this 11-day period I identified Eastern Tailed Blue 21 times during afternoon observations lasting about two hours each. Specific dates and numbers were as follows:

August 20	1 male	2 females
21	0 males	3 females
23	1 male	4 females
25	1 male	2 females
28	3 males	3 females
30	1 male	0 females

August 28 was a day of major activity for the Blues. One male tangled in quick succession with a Common Ringlet, a moth and a Clouded Sulphur!

September 12

The alfalfa was harvested in the first week of September. This did not significantly affect the areas of Alsike Clover and a moderate supply of fresh flowerheads was available throughout the month. Searches for Blues were unsuccessful on September 6 and 9, but on September 12, I found an adult male Eastern Tailed Blue in the east section of the south side.

September 25, 26

Searches on September 13, 15, 17 and 23, were unsuccessful. However, on September 25, I briefly saw a male Blue in the east section among the alfalfa. Returning the following day, I captured a female and again saw a male (probably the September 25 individual). It was patrolling the field edge too fast to capture.



Eastern Tailed Blue. Photograph by Henri Goulet.

Common Buckeye

Territory

In *T&L* (36:106-108), I reported two Common Buckeyes on August 24, 2001 at Location 1 (the Twin Elm site). In 2002 I saw one Common Buckeye at Location 2.

Sighting

September 17, 2002

On a hot sunny afternoon, at 3:15 pm, a Common Buckeye landed in the alfalfa about 30' from the field edge. I was not able to capture the butterfly, but I identified it by the white subapical bar and large eyespot on the forewings. It is an unmistakable species.

Commentary

Did Eastern Tailed Blue overwinter? Did Common Buckeye overwinter?

When deciding whether it is likely that one or both of these species overwintered in the Ottawa area in 2001-2, the following factors should be considered:

1. Available records show no other local occurrences of either the Blue or Buckeye in the same location in successive years, or in any year subsequent to the first sighting. Individual records of both species by all other observers in other years, were at widely distant locations.
 - In the situation under discussion six Blues were seen in exactly the same patch of plants as in the previous year: 18 (19) others within half an acre—a substantial colony. The 2002 Buckeye was 1.5 miles away from a pair seen in 2001. Buckeye are known to wander. In independent sightings, another observer saw Buckeye and Blue near Location 1 and 2 in 2002 (see Note). One other report of a Blue in 2002, on August 18 on Roger Stevens Road, came from the same observer.
2. The Blue is designated rare in the Ottawa area. Available records from all observers report sightings at 20 locations in nine out of the last 21 years; eight of these locations were reported in 1999. Common Buckeye is designated extremely rare. Available records from all observers report sightings at 13 locations in seven out of the last 21 years. Five of these locations were reported in 1981 when breeding populations were established.
 - There were virtually no regular migrants in spring 2002. For example, my own 250 hours of field work produced one Red Admiral, no Question Marks and one Lady spp. There were few Monarchs. Other observers had similar experiences.
3. Environment Canada figures indicate a balmy Ottawa winter of 2001-2, with temperatures very much above normal. The lowest temperature was -21.9°C in February. By comparison, the breeding populations of Common Buckeye in 1981

did not survive the following winter temperatures which were significantly below normal, down to a low temperature of -30.7°C in January.

- Other observers reported the overwintering of Red Admiral and Painted Lady, regular migrants to the Ottawa area in 2001-2 (see Note).

The arguments above seem sufficiently strong to encourage Ottawa naturalists to search diligently for both species in sunny, open, weedy environments. Eastern Tailed Blue should be looked for along the edges of fields of clover and other plants in the pea family. The above documentation on the Eagleson Road colony should encourage observers to search in spring, as well as during the summer. Repeat visits of one to two hours to new or previously known locations for Eastern Tailed Blue are indicated.

As an added incentive to Ottawa naturalists to visit suitable habitats, there are now eight local records for both rare species. Common Buckeye and Eastern Tailed Blue, being seen at the same location either on the same day, in the same year, or up to 17 years later.

Note

While researching local records for Buckeye and Blue, I learnt that on August 18, 2002, Tom Hanrahan saw Eastern Tailed Blue at Richmond Lagoons, less than a mile from Location 2. In another supportive sighting, he saw Common Buckeye on September 22, 2002 at a sandpit on Moodie Drive, south of the Nepean Dump. This location is 1.5 miles from Location 1 (Jeays' Buckeyes in 2001) and 2.5 miles from Location 2 (Jeays' Buckeye in 2002).

The overwintered Painted Lady was seen by Peter Hall on April 30, 2002 and the Red Admiral by Ross Layberry on April 18, 2002.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to David Allison, Ken Allison, Bob Bracken, Paul Catling, Jeff Crolla, Peter Hall, Tom Hanrahan, Ray Holland, Don Lafontaine, Ross Layberry, Diane Lepage and Chris Lewis for kindly sharing their records and experiences.

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Singing The Blues

Linda Jeays

The fields of childhood fill imagination
with their unhappy memories: a girl dragged
from hips and haws and blackberry bushes
stained fingers fighting to be free;
pulled by pigtails, tugged by gingham sleeves
lifted bodily from sandal-soaking minnow streams
led reluctant down the path from Primrose Hill
spilling cowslips, daisy chains and handkerchiefs
– lost among bluebells in Cold Comfort Wood.
Always time to go home: slowness scolded
because of father's dinner, brother's bath
the rent man's visit, washing day or bed.

Later comes the idyll: sitting cross-legged
on the edges of fields wide enough to house
all childhood's villages. Hours are measured
by train wheels, and companionship by the dip
of Cessna wings eliciting response.
History is hill-topping log cabins tumbled
into crops of boulders and undergrowth
beneath a summer sky watercolour-washed with cloud.

There are things to wish for in a field:
plump pink-and-cream heads of honeysweet clover
visited by rare butterflies; insects ticking
rubbing rhythms into bee-buzz and wind clamour;
little knots of trefoil yellow, chicory cartwheels
the tinfoil shiver of long grasses in small winds
on a hot day. The mistake is purpose:
blue wings struggle in the net, pressed together
squeezing down folds, releasing childhood's
sad remembrances, exacting guilt and compliance;
finally, the flight into freedom.

The Morphology of Sugar Maple Trunks and Bark in Beechwood Cemetery and in Gatineau Park

Pierre Landry

Beechwood Cemetery is one of Ottawa's natural jewels. We can find many living Sugar Maples that were part of the primeval forest during the 1840's when the city's founder, Colonel By, set up his camp. Due to their preservation and to the excellent care by the cemetery's keepers, we can observe and study an interesting range of Sugar Maple age and development.

Interestingly, when we look carefully at the Beechwood trees, we find two kinds of Sugar Maples growing there. One type is now called the "typical Sugar Maple," or *Acer saccharum* Marsh. subspecies *saccharum*, while the other is known as the "Black Maple" variant (*Acer saccharum* Marsh. subspecies *nigrum* (Michx.f.) Desm.).

The following photographs are a result of a systematic study of trunk forms and bark patterns that are observed in the two subspecies along with numerous intermediates. There are two trunk forms and six bark types; five of which are in the Beechwood Cemetery, the sixth is found in Gatineau Park. A scale marker where each division represents 0.5 metres has been included in each photograph.



Figure 1 Presence of fluted bark pattern. Figure 2 Absence of fluted bark pattern.

The first mystery regarding this species is the different trunk patterns. There seems to be two types. Some of the trees have a fluted bark pattern produced by the vertical grooves (Figure 1) while some do not (Figure 2). Why are there two forms?

The second question has to do with the bark of these mature trees. There seems to be four basic "trunk" types. However, these types are interspersed by numerous intermediates or slight variants. The trunk types are described as having scales (Figure 3), vertical plates (Figure 4), deep grooves (Figure 5), or flanges (Figure 6).



Figure 3. Scales.



Figure 4. Vertical plates.



Figure 5. Deep grooves.

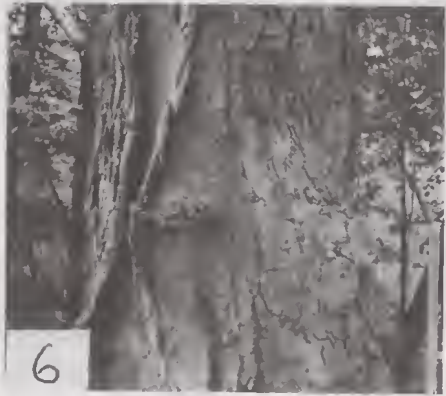


Figure 6. Flanges

When a tree is overmature, the bark becomes spotty or partially bald. The bald spots are in fact a thin layer of minute pale scales that have formed and have subsequently caused the larger pieces of bark cork to shed. This balding is part of the natural aging process. Eventually these pieces will rot and be transformed into root food. Notice in Figure 7 the bark debris on the ground around the tree. When a tree reaches this stage it will soon die of old age.



Figure 7. Slight overmature tree.



Figure 8. A very old tree.

Figure 8 is an exceptional tree. This tree is rare because most Sugar Maples usually die before reaching this very overmature stage. We found this noble tree at the beginning of the "Trail of the Hickories" in Gatineau Park. It can be easily recognized by its complete baldness. Its age is unknown for deciduous trees the only accurate method to age a tree is by counting the growth rings inside the trunk. Since for us this was impossible, we can only estimate and say that this tree is possibly 200 or more years old.

If anyone wishes to become a global Maple fan, I suggest the following book: De Jong, P.C., D.M. Gelderen, and H.J. Osterdoom. 1994. *Maples of the World*. Timber Press Inc. Portland, Oregon, USA.

Watching the Islands Go By

Adrienne Sinclair

Every landscape tells a story.

“There is good reading on the land, first-hand reading, involving no symbols.

The records are written in forests, in fencerows, in bogs, in playgrounds, in pastures, in gardens, in canyons, in tree rings. The records were made by sun and shade, by wind, rain, and fire, by time; and by animals.

As we read what is written on the land, finding accounts of the past, predictions of the future, and comments on the present, we discover that there are many interwoven strands to each story...”

May Theilgaard Watts, 1975

Watts (1975) read many stories on the land. She told one particular story of watching an island going by. The story of an island's succession was read from the downstream tip, where there is continual renewal, to the upstream end, where the chapter ends. She told the order and means of arrival of the island inhabitants from Lamb's-quarters, milkweed, and goldenrod, to shrubs of Sandbar Willow, to a mixture of willow, Silver Maple, cottonwood, and ash, to the final chapter of an upstream end dominated by elms. Erosion of the upstream end is the final sentence of a chapter, and deposition at the downstream tip, the first sentence of the next chapter. She wondered how the story would continue for the island if there were no dams or other changes in the water levels of the river; but only placid steady advance. I began to wonder what story could be read in the islands of our region? What has been told, what happens next and how does the chapter end? Have we been sitting on the shore watching our islands naturally go by? Or has their natural succession been interrupted by other factors?

Several naturalists have told various stories about islands in the Ottawa region. Twenty-five years ago, botanist Albert Dugal carried out a resource inventory of the Petrie Island woods (Dugal 1977). A few years later, Kettle Island and Upper and Lower Duck Islands were three of 23 areas in the Ottawa region for which biological inventories were carried out by Dickson and Darbyshire (1980). Soon after, Darbyshire (1981a, b) told the stories of Kettle, Upper and Lower Duck Islands in

T&L and Darbyshire, Letourneau, and Manga (1984) provided an account of a Macoun Field Club trip to Kettle Island. Over a decade later, stories about the Petrie Islands began to be told. Hanrahan and Darbyshire reported (1998) and described (1999) the natural values and ecological significance of the Petrie Islands. The latter story is filled with the islands' ecology, primary habitats, land-use designations, and development plans, as well as impressive preliminary lists of plants, birds, butterflies, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Brunton (1999) then carried out a comprehensive natural environment inventory. A review of the available information on these islands reveals several highlights of each island's story.

Upper Duck Island is located on the Ontario side of the Ottawa River, directly north of Rothwell Heights, and was last inventoried in 1979 (Dickson and Darbyshire 1980). One hundred and seventeen plant species were recorded (12 non-native) and three amphibians were recorded. Four vegetation zones (a type of ecosystem) were identified made up of 15 vegetation units (a community within a zone). According to the most recent list of significant vascular flora of the Ottawa region, the island had one provincially significant species, *Prunella vulgaris* (SE3, a rare to uncommon exotic), and two regionally significant species, *Sparganium fluctuans* (rare, only four known populations) and *Sagittaria cuneata* (rare, only three known populations) (Brunton 1998) (ONHIC 1997). The shoreline vegetation, the Silver Maple, Swamp Maple, and hackberry community, and the ash-dominated forests were identified as particularly significant areas on the island. Hackberry swamp forest is an extremely rare vegetation community in Ontario (ranked S1, usually five or fewer occurrences or very few remaining hectares) (ONHIC 1997). Overall, Upper Duck Island was found to be an extremely significant biological area with fragile vegetation units and it was recommended that the island receive Class 1 protection. Several preventative measures were suggested to best manage the island. These involved preventing large-scale recreational activities (allowing only minor interpretative facilities), planting or removing of vegetation, constructing rock walls around the island, and preventing ostrich fern collecting. It was also pointed out that the island would not be destroyed by erosion unless change in water flow occurred. It would simply carry on with its placid steady advance.

Lower Duck Island is located in the Ottawa River opposite Beacon Hill North in the Township of Gloucester and was last inventoried in 1979 (Dickson and Darbyshire 1980). At the time of the inventory, the National Capital Commission owned the island, which was zoned as a Class 1 environmental area. One hundred and fifty-two plant species (16 non-native), three amphibians, and two reptiles were noted. Three vegetation zones consisting of 10 vegetation units comprised the island. Six regionally significant species were found: *Sparganium fluctuans* (rare, four populations), *Carex aquatilis* (sparse, seven to ten populations), *Carex stricta* (sparse, six populations), *Glyceria septentrionalis* (rare, two populations), *Panicum boreale* (rare, four or five populations), and *Carex lenticularis* (rare, four

populations). The aquatic and shoreline communities were highlighted as highly significant as well as a large colony of hackberry cited as the finest in the region, similar to the stand on Upper Duck Island. Overall, Lower Duck Island was found to be one of the most biologically significant areas in the Ottawa region that should be zoned as a Class 1 Conservation Area. It was suggested that the island be protected from extensive development due to the fragile nature of the vegetation units and that heavy recreational activity be prohibited due to presence of many significant plant communities and individual species (rated as numerous rare and uncommon). It was also suggested that the island could be used for interpretation of river ecology and the history of the Ottawa River. A fine candidate for reading the landscape of Ottawa.

Kettle Island, just south of Gatineau on the Québec side of the river, is the largest island in the Ottawa River within the Ottawa region. It was last inventoried in 1979 (Dickson and Darbyshire 1980) and at that time owned by the Canadian International Paper Company. One hundred and eighty-five plant species (28 non-native), 22 birds, and 10 reptiles and amphibians were recorded. Three vegetation zones consisting of five vegetation units comprised the island. A number of regionally significant species were found there: *Sparganium fluctuans* (rare, four populations), *Sagittaria cuneata* (rare, three), *Potamogeton vaseyi* (rare, five or more), *Carex aquatilis* (sparse, seven or more), *Juncus alpinoarticulatus* (sparse, six or more), *Uvularia sessifolia* (sparse, six), *Brasenia schreberi* (sparse, nine), *Galium obtusum* (sparse, six), *Solidago squarrosa* (sparse, seven), and *Staphylea trifolia* (rare, four populations). The sloughs between sand ridges that provided excellent habitat for many wetland animal species, as well as the forested vegetation zone with hackberry scattered throughout, were cited as particularly significant areas of the island. It was suggested that the island be legally protected by zoning as a Class 1 Environmental Area, as it was considered a prime area for conservation, and that no tree cutting or construction be permitted. An important feature of Kettle Island was its undisturbed nature. What accounts of the past could this Island tell?

The Petrie Islands occur near the southern shore of the Ottawa River in northern Cumberland and were last surveyed in 1999 (Brunton 1999). At the time of the survey, the islands were owned by the City of Ottawa with the exception of private holdings on East Island and on Causeway Island. The islands have been zoned as a Class 2 Provincially Significant Wetland and recommended as a provincially significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). The Official Plan for Ottawa included the islands as Significant Wetland and Waterfront Open Space. Four hundred and thirty-seven plant species (113 non-native) have been recorded along with 111 birds, 22 butterflies, 23 mammals, and 19 reptiles and amphibians. The islands are comprised of eleven vegetation zones (ecosites) consisting of 18 vegetation units. Provincially significant species formerly found on the islands include Black Tern (S3, rare to uncommon) (OHNIC 1997) and Least Bittern

(vulnerable). Numerous regionally significant species have been recorded on the islands (rarity and number of populations indicated in parentheses; R = rare, 5 or fewer populations; S = Sparse, 6 to 10 populations; from Brunton 1998):

<i>Panicum gattingeri</i> (R, 1)	<i>Scirpus pedicellatus</i> (R, 4)
<i>Carex brevior</i> (R, 2)	<i>Sisyrinchium angustifolium</i> (S, 6)
<i>Carex typhina</i> (R, 3)	<i>Sparganium americanum</i> (R, 5)
<i>Carex folliculata</i> (S, 9)	<i>Staphylea trifolia</i> (R, 4)
<i>Carex foenea</i> (R, 4+)	<i>Toxicodendron radicans</i> (R, 5)
<i>Carex grisea</i> (R, 3)	<i>Verbena urticifolia</i> (S, 8)
<i>Eragrostis hypnoides</i> (R, 1)	<i>Vicia americana</i> (R, 4)
<i>Allium canadense</i> (R, 2)	<i>Polygonum arifolium</i> (S, 3)
<i>Cyperus diandrus</i> (R, 4)	<i>Brasenia schreberi</i> (S, 9)
<i>Cyperus odoratus</i> (R, 2)	<i>Chrysosplenium americanum</i> (R, 4)
<i>Echinochloa microstachya</i> (R, 4)	<i>Gnaphalium macounii</i> (R, 4+)
<i>Epilobium strictum</i> (S, 8)	<i>Hydrocotyle americana</i> (R, 4)
<i>Fibristylis autumnalis</i> (R, 3)	<i>Polygonum punctatum</i> (S, 9+)
<i>Galium obtusum</i> (S, 6)	<i>Ranunculus hispidus</i> var.
<i>Muhlenbergia frondosa</i> (R, 4)	<i>caricetorum</i> (S, 10)
<i>Panicum boreale</i> (R, 4+)	<i>Schoenoplectus fluviatilis</i> (S, 10)
<i>Rumex triangulivalvis</i> (R, 4)	
<i>Sicyos angulatus</i> (R, 2)	Cooper's Hawk
<i>Panicum tuckermanii</i> (R, 5)	Common Raven
<i>Potamogeton vaseyi</i> (R, 5+)	Map Turtle
	Blanding's Turtle

Provincially rare ecosites, the hackberry swamp forest (S1, extremely rare, five or fewer occurrences or very few remaining hectares) and the dry-fresh hackberry deciduous forest (S2, very rare, 5–20 occurrences), were among the particularly significant areas of the islands (OHNIC 1997). The extensive stand of hackberry was cited as the greatest known concentration in the Ottawa District.

Other particularly significant areas included the sandy shorelines, mature Sugar Maple-Eastern Hemlock forest (the Queenswood Forest), thicket swamp, organic shallow marsh, and submerged shallow water aquatic vegetation communities. The sandy shorelines support rich assemblages of Ottawa River beach flora. The Queenswood Forest is a rare forest type, remnant of that which formerly dominated the Ottawa region, and supports a rich assemblage of significant plants. The thicket swamp supports a high level of biodiversity and provides breeding sites for many marsh birds as well as food and shelter for small wetland mammals. The organic shallow marsh, with a great diversity of significant plant species, has the richest native biodiversity in the Petrie Islands area including large populations of marsh fauna. The marsh also provides important sites for turtle nesting and serves to

protect the structure of the island complex by mitigating the physical impact of river processes such as erosion and sedimentation. The submerged shallow water aquatic vegetation supports a rich natural biodiversity as well and provides an abundance of food and shelter for fauna such as fish and turtles. The pondweed submerged shallow water aquatic community was cited as an exceptional occurrence within the Ottawa region as it was atypically rich in diversity of aquatic species including an abundance of regionally uncommon pondweeds.

Overall, the islands were found to be an exceptionally significant biological area within the Ottawa region with more than 10 percent of the flora being regionally or provincially rare. The Petrie Islands area was found to be one of the few remnants of natural habitat left along the river between Ottawa and Montreal that is close to an original state and one of only a handful of island/wetland complexes remaining in a predominantly natural condition. It was suggested that only low impact recreational facilities and passive pedestrian travel be permitted beyond the physically disturbed portion of East Island. Due to being representative of the original landscape of the Ottawa region, Petrie Islands were found to offer the best opportunities in the Ottawa region for interpretation of Ottawa River dynamics and island formation. Another fine candidate for reading the landscape of Ottawa.

All of these islands have been cited as biological gems within our Ottawa region. Kettle Island, Duck Islands, and Petrie Islands are each unique landforms that support high levels of biodiversity and can tell a story about the formation of the Ottawa landscape and changes in the Ottawa River.

Biologist Stephen Darbyshire explains:

“The power of the river and its seasonal fluctuations have shaped these islands and made them a special habitat for plants and animals. Continual erosion and deposition of sediments around the islands provides a renewal of shoreline habitats providing shelter and abundant nutrients for a wide variety of plants and animals not found in the open river. The diverse mosaic of habitats, high-energy river shores, seasonally flooded forests, quiet backwaters, sand dunes, fertile clay soils, are all formed from the same processes, unique in the region to the Ottawa River. Today, flooding and water level control from hydroelectric projects, development, shoreline armoring, and farming have transformed the floodplain habitats. The natural environment of the shores, forests, and backwaters along the Ottawa River has all but disappeared and is long past regeneration, apart from a few areas such as the Petrie Islands.” (Hanrahan and Darbyshire 1998).

One can see from the review of information available on each of these remarkable biological areas that quite some time has passed since anyone has shared a story about Kettle Island or the Duck Islands. Up to date information on the flora and fauna of these islands is needed in order to evaluate any change in their natural values and ecological significance. The islands may have gained or lost significant biological features over the past two decades that may have depended on whether or not the suggestions for best management were taken. With the recent amalgamation of the City of Ottawa and the upcoming release of the Official Plan for the city, we should really be keeping watch over our islands.

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Spotted Garden Slug, *Limax maximus*

Andrea Howard



Limax maximus, photographed by Bev Wigney

Last summer Douglas Drew, from Ottawa, arrived at the Museum with a huge and fascinating creature that he'd found creeping about his compost heap. He was rightfully impressed, for this was no ordinary slug. *Limax maximus* the giant Spotted Garden Slug, was as mature and large a specimen as Museum Invertebrate Curator Wayne Grimm had ever seen.

Limax settled into its new home and became a valued member of the Museum menagerie. It was a featured beastie at the Kemptville Forest Fair and a hit in our Museum-in-a-Suitcase school programmes on the biodiversity of decomposition. It's photo even made the front page of two regional newspapers this fall!

Limax maximus is native to much of Europe, North Africa, Asia and parts of Scandinavia. It has been introduced to South Africa, Australasia and North America, in fact to nearly every temperate country in the world. It establishes itself in built-up areas where temperate rainforest or very moist habitats have been disturbed/cleared for agriculture, road building or settlement. It also regularly shows up in greenhouses.

Limax was first found in North America in the mid 19th century (there are records from Boston and New York). It is now found in most of northeastern North America in disturbed urban and rural habitats such as gardens and roadsides. It is abundant in Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, parts of Newfoundland, and along the southern edge of Canada where the climate is moderated by large water bodies. It can also be found all over the central and southern United States and in disturbed habitats on the Pacific Coast. The first record of *Limax* in the Ottawa area was in the late 19th century, and it has been reported several times since. Doug Drew had another live specimen in his compost in 2001 which unfortunately died before he could bring it to the Museum.

Like many land snails and slugs, *Limax* prefers damp conditions and temperatures around 15° C. It hides from dryness and light, and cannot endure a climate where the soil normally freezes to a depth of more than 3-4 cm. The microclimate of a compost heap evidently provides sanctuary from the gripping cold of Ottawa winters. Whereas native slugs feed exclusively on fungi and lichens, the introduced *Limax*, like its European relatives, adds green vegetation and most tubers to its diet, and it loves fresh mushrooms. Ergo, it is considered a pest!

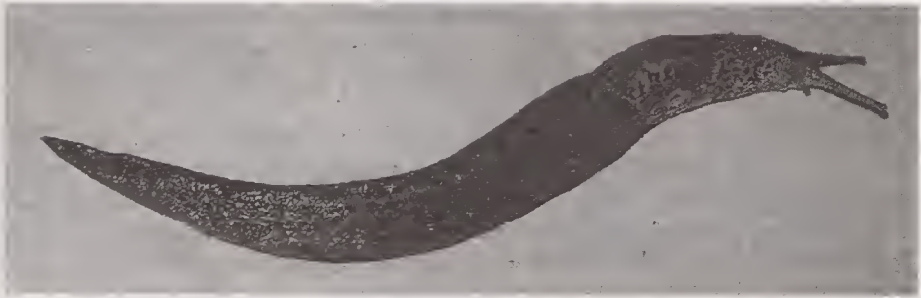
Slugs are actually evolved snails. After millions of years of selection, the slug still features a small vestigial shell, deeply imbedded in the tissue under the mantle (the dorsal skin surface at the midline). Made of calcium carbonate (lime), the shell remnant has the consistency of a brittle fingernail. This is the only aspect of this soft-bodied animal that is likely to be found in fossil form. Remnants of some *Limax* species have been discovered in Germany and Kansas in sedimentary deposits from 4-5 million years ago.

In the "Everything-is-Relative Department" the evolutionary advantage of being a slug is speed! Unencumbered by an unwieldy shell, slugs are the fastest of the land snails. At full throttle some can make it across a highway on a rainy night, unlike their slower cousins. Certain Ontario land snails are currently evolving in the slug

direction: *Vitrina*, for example, the featured creature in *The Almanack*, (Vol.3 No.1, Winter 2001). To compensate for the loss of its protective shell, mucous secretions protect the slug, literally “gumming-up the works” of any would-be predator. Some birds, however, such as Nutcrackers and Pacific Jays feed regularly on slugs and are adapted to the slime. These birds are indigenous to the Pacific Coast where we find all of the introduced slugs and more than 100 native species, including the Banana Slug, *Ariolimax columbianus*, North America’s largest native slug.

Though slug slime is usually toxic as well as prohibitively viscous, cooking must neutralize it as these molluscs may still end their days alongside their less gooey cousins as a delicacy in Asian cuisine.

Limax can attain at least six inches in length. Its colour varies from yellowish-gray to brown with black spots on the mantle near the head and black stripes extending along the rest of the body. The tail area is wrinkled, and the mucous is clear.



Photograph by Bev Wigney

All pulmonate land gastropods (those possessing a lung cavity) all have two pairs of animated tentacles. Atop the head is the longer pair, also known as eye stalks. Intriguingly mobile eyes perceive light and dark from their perch at the end of these. Each eye can also retract into the stalk, sliding down the length of the tentacle and contracting it in the process – sort of like pulling a sock inside out by the toe. The smaller tentacles, located below the larger, are for “sniffing”, though the entire body is chemosensitive. The large pore on the right of the mid body is the pneumostome, the opening to a pulmonate snail’s or slug’s lung cavity.

The mouth is situated on the ventral surface of the head, between the lower tentacles. It features a hard concave jaw made of chiton (the same tissue as an arthropod's exoskeleton) with a rasping radula behind the upper jaw. The radula is a sort of cartilaginous gristle studded with hundreds of tiny siliceous "teeth" in geometrically perfect lines. These chew and convey food to the snail's stomach. Every species of gastropod has a unique radula; some species can be identified only by their radular structure.

Limax will live three to five years and the adult will lay eggs once or twice a year, usually when the weather is cool and wet. Each laying will weaken the mollusc. A clutch contains four to 10 soft, membraned, translucent white eggs, 3 mm in diameter. The young, also approximately 3 mm in length, can actually be seen developing through the egg wall. They eat a lot and will increase their size ten-fold in less than two months.

Like the large introduced land snail, *Cepaea nemoralis*, and many other land snails, *Limax maximus* is hermaphroditic. Each individual sports both male and female genitalia and is capable of laying eggs. Though some *Limax* species can self-fertilize, it usually takes two to tango!

Malacologist Wayne Grimm was blessed one misty, warm October evening in Maryland, when he literally bumped into a mating pair suspended over the forest path he was strolling. After spluttering his apologies, he stood back to observe a truly remarkable dance.

The courting couple climb together to reach a horizontal surface some two metres or more off the ground. They crawl out along the underside of said horizontal object and circle one other for as much as two and a half hours, nipping and licking (snail kissing) each other all the while. Then they deposit a huge gob of very elastic coagulated slime on the branch, from which they lower themselves a metre or so. This locates them at about head-height for passing malacologists. How's that for a slap in the face!

Their bodies twist together and both evert their penises (like a sock pulled completely inside out) to a remarkable 10 cm in length. The penises then intertwine, forming a ball covered by the extended, thin wing-like penis comb. When each member is in a position to just touch the other's vaginal opening, a mutual exchange of semen occurs. The penises then unwind and are retracted and the slugs move back up the mucous strand, often eating it as they climb.

The sperm will then swim into the genital pore and lodge in the spermatheca, a storage sac in which sperm remain viable until needed for fertilization. After

ovulation, eggs will descend through the oviduct and pass the spermathecal duct where they are fertilized. Oviposition of 50 to 130 eggs takes place in a damp sheltered spot on or slightly underground. Development is direct and tiny slugs emerge after approximately one month. At least two years are required to achieve sexual maturity.

Sadly, our *Limax* recently died, at a very ripe old age. However, it left eggs and we wait in hope that they will prove viable. If anyone finds another live *Limax* that they would like to donate to the Museum we would be delighted to have it.

Andrea Howard is the Education Coordinator for the Eastern Ontario Biodiversity Museum in Kemptville. The original article was published in *The Almanack*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 2003, the newsletter of the Eastern Ontario Biodiversity Museum.

Annual Ottawa-Gatineau Fall Bird Count

Chris Lewis

This year's Fall Bird Count will take place from 3:00 p.m. **Saturday October 18** until 3:00 p.m. **Sunday October 19**. The count covers the entire Ottawa-Gatineau birding area (a 50 km radius from the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill). The main objective is to have fun and to discover what birds are out there in the fall in our region, as well as provide an opportunity to practice your bird counting skills. You don't have to be an expert to participate and you don't have to be out all day and night for 24 hours, but you do have a great post-count compilation and dinner to look forward to on the Sunday evening (free of charge for all participants)!

For those interested in counting birds on the Ontario side, please contact Eve Ticknor at 737-7551 or by e-mail at sandbird@magma.ca. To bird on the Québec side, you may contact Daniel St-Hilaire at 776-0860.

Strange Bedfellows

Dave Moore

On Thursday, March 27th 2003, I was out on one of my usual birding expeditions, (prefaced by a visit to my local Tim's, of course) and stopped by the Mud Lake/Britannia Conservation area. I had just settled down in the parking lot to enjoy my morning muffin and "cuppa" when three geese flew in and landed on the ice covered lake barely 20 meters from shore. At this time of year that's no big deal, but today the trio was made up of two Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) and one blue phase Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*). To my surprise, the Snow Goose and one of the Canada's paired off and started wandering about the ice, poking about the ice and looking at one of the muskrat mounds as if looking for a nesting site. The third goose of the trio, the other Canada, followed the pair about but was rebuffed by the Snow Goose that hissed and advanced menacingly towards the odd man out.

As the pair wandered about, first one would take the lead and then the other, so it seemed that the two considered themselves a couple, much to the disgust of the second Canada goose. It would certainly be interesting should these two set up housekeeping. I am unaware of any records of a Snow Goose breeding (even a mixed marriage) in this area.

Equally interesting was the fact that as the pair flew off, they were joined by the third who was allowed to fly in close formation with the others, forming a mini-v. Joining me in my observations on the 27th was Ian Clark, who took some photos and put them up on his fledgling website, <http://www.cyberus.ca/~iclark/>

The trio was observed again by Bev McBride on March 28th as they flew over Mud Lake.

Seedathon 2003

Chris Lewis

The highly successful annual (since 1981) Seedathon raises funds to purchase bird seed for the OFNC feeders, which are maintained by dedicated volunteers on public trails in the Ottawa-Gatineau area. Not only do the birds express their gratitude by availing themselves of these winter supplies year after year, but the "Seedathon Team" (Bob Bracken, Bernie Ladouceur and Chris Lewis) also acknowledges the generosity of the many faithful sponsors. . .and this year, we would like to give some of you a "year off."

On AUGUST 31 *or* SEPTEMBER 7 (weather and birding conditions will dictate the best date), we plan to run this "Big Day in the 50 K" again. However, this year we'll be doing it mainly for fun and tradition, and our goal will be to drum up some NEW sponsors. So, if you are a previous sponsor and don't hear from us this year, never fear, we haven't forgotten about you! Your contributions have been generous and we just think your wallets deserve a break.

To all sponsors, past and future:

Pledges can be made as a flat amount or an amount per species (for example, \$10.00 flat - or 10 cents per species, which would total \$10.00 if we find 100 species). You can make your pledge by contacting Chris Lewis by e-mail melanerpes_lewis@yahoo.ca. Please include your name, mailing address including postal code, and telephone number (important information, in order for us to follow up on pledges as well as send you an acknowledgment and a full report of our day). If you require a tax receipt (for pledges of \$10.00 or more) please indicate this as well.

We hope to see you out there birding this summer, and we'll have our pledge forms handy!

For maps and directions to the OFNC feeders, visit the OFNC web site and go to the birding page at <http://home.achilles.net/ofnc/birding.htm>.

Reporting Rare Birds

Ken Allison

All birders like to see new birds; most of us like to see rare birds. When you hear about an unusual sighting, you chase the rarity and see it (wow!). You add it to your list or lists (tick!) and that is the end of the process - or is it? What about supplying documentary evidence of your record so that it will be available for study in the future? In this way your hobby can contribute to a better scientific understanding of bird distribution. Today's rarity might be tomorrow's new local breeder, as has been the case with Golden-winged Warbler. Range and occurrence information in field guides and checklists is now based mostly on sight records, so it is vital that rare bird sightings be recorded *in writing*. If they are only recorded in the observers' personal notes, they will ultimately be lost or forgotten. Every rarity needs to be documented by at least one detailed, written report. It is preferable to have more than one independent record. An undocumented record is no record at all.

Even if you are not the first person to see the bird, do not assume that someone else will have documented it. This is not necessarily so - the immature Little Blue Heron that hung around Hull and Ottawa for a week in 1998 was seen by many observers, including me, but for many months *nobody* submitted a detailed written report to document the record. Even worse, I didn't take enough notes at the time to submit a meaningful report when I became aware of the deficit.

The OFNC Birds Committee encourages every birder to submit records of any rare species they see, even if the bird has been previously reported.

How do you know if a bird is rare enough to justify submitting a rare bird report? Obviously, any species which does not appear in *A Birder's Checklist of Ottawa* would automatically qualify (e.g. Bicknell's Thrush). For those rare species that have been known to occur in the 50 km circle, a list can be found on the OFNC website at <http://home.achilles.net/ofnc/birding/rarebirdlist.html>.

Remember that birds can be seasonally rare, as well as regionally rare. If you see a species that, according to the *Checklist*, should not be present when you find it (e.g. Great Gray Owl in June or Orange-crowned Warbler in January), it is worthwhile to submit a report. If you are not sure whether a report is needed or not, then complete a form—just in case.

To encourage members of the Ottawa birders' community to document their sightings, the Birds Committee thought that it would be helpful to provide some guidelines for putting together a suitable rare bird report.

The OFNC has a Rare Bird Report Form which you are encouraged to use when submitting a record. This form is available from the OFNC website (<http://home.achilles.net/ofnc/birding.htm>). A similar form is available on the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) website (<http://www.intlog.com/~ofo/report.htm>).

Let's walk through the OFNC form to see what is needed.

Date of report and date of sighting:

These are self-explanatory. I would just point out that it is important that the report should be done as soon as possible after the sighting so that the details are still sharp in your mind.

Species:

All that is needed here is the name of the species, usually the common name.

Number-age-sex:

How many individual birds? What age? Be as accurate as possible - juvenile, first winter, adult, immature, etc. Be aware that 'immature' is a very imprecise age for many birds, for example, gulls and eagles. What sex? It's not always possible to tell, of course, but note it if you can. Many birds can only be identified with certainty after their sex and age have been determined.

Length of observation (time of day):

Record how long you had the bird in view. There is a big difference in the amount of detail you will see in a quick fly-by and a 45-minute study. Give the time of day as well. This is the kind of detail that contributes to the thoroughness of the report.

Location:

Again, be as accurate as possible. This is where a GPS unit would be useful, but often a very brief reference to a well-known area might be sufficient (e.g. Ottawa Beach).

Habitat:

Be accurate and descriptive. Differentiate between trees and shrubs, marsh and open water, ploughed fields and pasture.

Weather/lighting:

The most important point of this section is to give the reviewer a clear idea of the

viewing conditions. Was it lit by full sun or silhouetted by back-lighting? Was fog or precipitation a factor?

Distance of bird:

It's not always possible to be accurate at longer ranges, but do the best you can. Again, the idea is to show how good a look you were able to get.

Optical equipment:

This is important! The degree of magnification makes a big difference. Give the power, make and model of your binoculars, scope, etc.

Photographs taken:

If you were able to get some pictures, attach copies to the report. Photographs have to show enough detail for the bird to be identifiable. This will vary with the species and the plumage. A tiny, distant image of an American Avocet might be definitely identifiable, but only a sharply-focussed close-up is going to be suitable to confirm your identification of a winter-plumaged Smith's Longspur.

Discoverer and other observers (as many as possible):

Get the name, address and telephone number of as many observers as you can. At the same time, encourage them all to complete a report. If you are alone, try to contact another birder to confirm the sighting. If your bird is the first sighting of the species in the region, the record will be placed on the 'hypothetical list' if it is seen by one observer only, so with 'firsts' it is very important to have another birder corroborate your report. At least two species have not been added to the Ottawa list because of this rule.

Describe circumstances of observation:

Give details! Start when you first saw the bird and continue through with the story of your experience to the point when you finished with your observations.

Previous experience with species:

Is this the only Northern Wheatear you have ever seen? Have you done a lot of birding in Texas where Scissor-tailed Flycatchers are common? Lack of experience does not mean your record has no value, but it does mean you have to be even more careful with your description to show that you saw what you think you saw. On the other hand, you certainly won't convince anyone with an incomplete report by claiming to have extensive experience with a locally rare species.

Did you use a field guide?
(please circle one)

- A) on location
- B) later
- C) not at all

Don't be too quick to get out the field guide. If you are planning to do a field sketch, do it before you are influenced by the artwork in the field guide. If you do look at a guide, make sure you describe what you saw - not what the guide shows. It is rare to find a bird that looks *exactly* like the picture in the field guide.

Description:

Describe only what was observed in the field! The rarer the bird, the more detailed this description will have to be. If there were several birds, note any differences among the individuals when you get to the detailed description. Take notes with the bird in view, if you can. If you wait until later you will forget details that might turn out to be important. It is a good idea to record field notes before spending valuable observation time looking at a field guide.

Size:

For size, do not give the length in inches or centimetres - very few of us can do that accurately without holding the bird in the hand. In fact, birds in the hand rarely look the same size that they do in the field. Compare the bird to something nearby or with something you know very well. Was the shorebird bigger or smaller than the Lesser Yellowlegs with which it associated? Was the songbird larger or smaller than a robin?

Shape:

This should include the overall impression - long and thin, short and squat, as well as details such as length of the neck, posture, etc. Again, it is a good idea to compare the bird to another species nearby.

Colour patterns:

When describing the plumage, be systematic in your approach - for example, you can start at the head, then move to the upperparts, wings, tail and underparts. Describe every major feather group, especially if there is variation in colour. It is helpful to learn the technical terms used to describe the topography of a bird, but do the best you can. If you see the bird in flight, describe the wing pattern from above and below, if possible. Don't forget the beak and legs. The description of the beak should be as detailed as possible, including shape, colour and length. Some birds, like many warblers, have strong patterns that

are easily described, while cryptically coloured birds, like shorebirds, may require much more attention to detail.

Song:

Songs can be difficult to describe, but it helps if you can make a reference to a song you know well. To give an example that most birders know, you could describe a Scarlet Tanager's song as being like that of a Robin, but hoarser, or you could describe a Yellow-throated Vireo as being like a Scarlet Tanager's, but slower and more widely spaced.

Call notes:

Differentiate between songs and calls if you hear both. The Gray Catbird's 'mew' call is well known, even to non-birders, but the song is much more complicated.

Behaviour:

Give as much detail as you can. How did the bird feed? How did it fly? Did it sit on a wire or skulk in the shrubbery? Did it bob up and down or wag its tail? Some birds can be spotted, or even identified, by their behaviour. Jaegers will often be seen harassing gulls or terns. Phoebes pump their tails.

Other diagnostic characteristics:

Sketches:

Don't be afraid to do a sketch! No one is looking for a Rembrandt here. I have included here two of my sketches which I attached to rare bird reports (Fig. 1, 2). Hopefully, after seeing these examples, you will be less intimidated about attempting a sketch yourself. All that is necessary is to show the basic shape and pattern of the bird. Use arrows and point-form notes. Write down anything that looks like it might be important. Draw the shape of the bird as accurately as possible, but if all your drawings of birds have the same shape, don't worry about it. Show the differences by showing the patterns. Draw the shape of the beak as accurately as possible. What is really important is that the field sketch is not an attempt to draw the illustration in a field guide. No doubt the paintings in the guide are better art than anything you or I can produce, but you want to show *your* bird. I must admit that I rarely have paper and pencil with me in the field when I spot a rare bird, but I always do at least a quick sketch and write down some notes *before* I look in the guide, usually when I get back to the car. If you look at the guide first it will be impossible to completely eliminate the influence of the image in the book from your sketch, particularly if the bird is no longer in view. Resist the tendency to fill

in the details you “should have” seen. It is a good idea to practice doing some sketches on commoner birds before you have to deal with a rarity report that will be shown to others. If common birds don’t motivate you enough, do a sketch with notes of any lifers you see, even if they don’t qualify as rare birds.

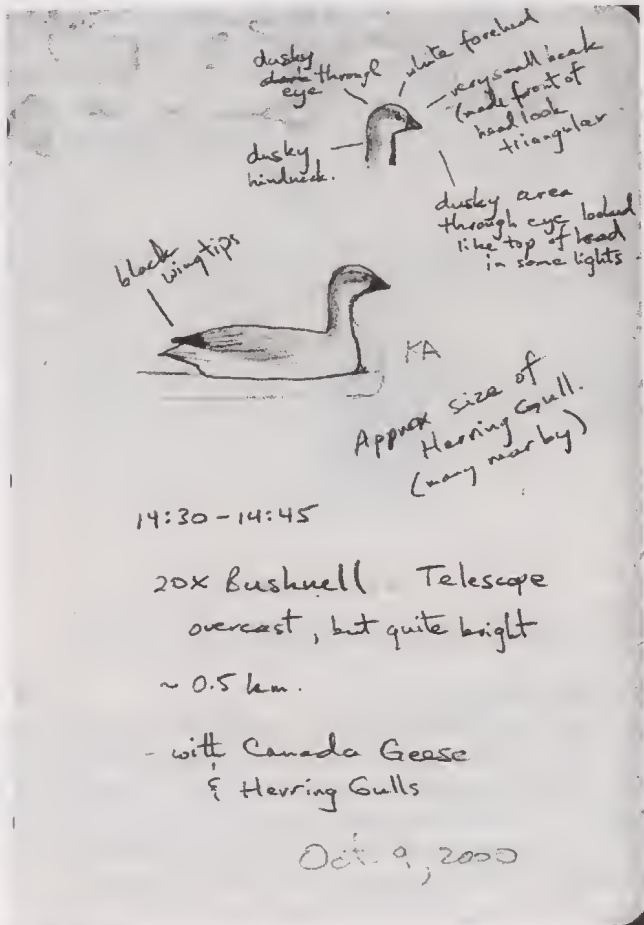


Figure 1. Ross's Goose, Nepean, Ontario. October 9, 2000.

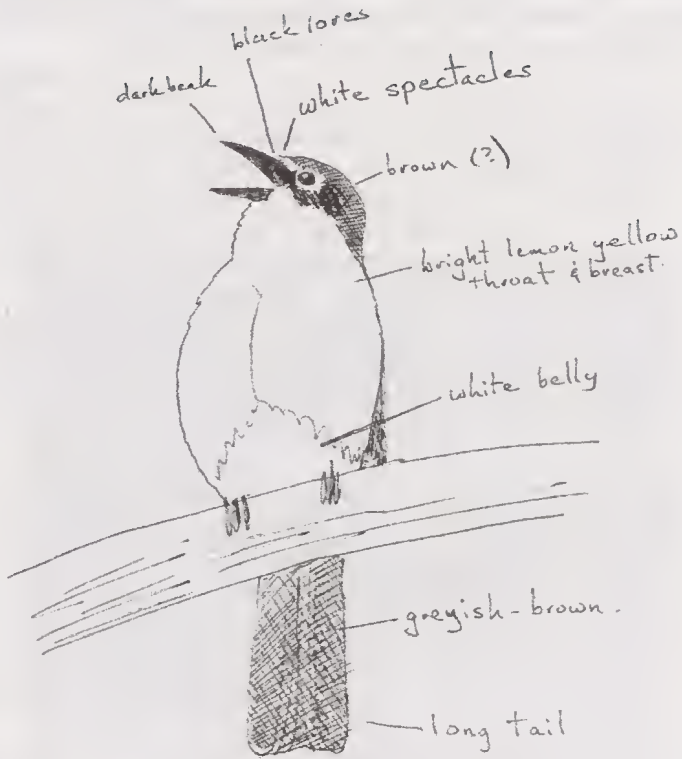


Figure 2. Yellow-breasted Chat, Kanata, Ontario. May 15, 2000.

Similar species/ how eliminated:

You have to show that you considered other possibilities, particularly similar common species. This is where you can explain how you eliminated the possibility of a Horned Grebe when you identified an Eared Grebe. List any marks that you used to decide on your identification, and don't forget those you checked for but did not see. Don't forget to mention other *rare* species that resemble your bird. How did you choose between Scissor-tailed and Fork-tailed Flycatchers?

Give your name and complete address and sign and date the report.

All Rare Bird Reports are evaluated by the members of the Bird Records Subcommittee of the Birds Committee of the OFNC. The Subcommittee will vote to accept or reject the report. This decision is based on whether your description of your sighting gives enough information to convincingly document the occurrence of the species. If your report is not accepted, please do not be offended. This does not mean that anyone is casting doubts on your honesty or even that you were mistaken in your identification. You just haven't provided sufficient detail to unequivocally identify the species—either because you couldn't see the necessary details or didn't record them in the report. In most cases of rejected reports, the problem is that similar species have not been completely eliminated. Be motivated to do a better job next time, both when jotting down notes in the field and in writing your formal report. If you can supply more data, do so - you can always re-submit a report if you have additional information available. Be cautious in your assessment of your own sightings. Sometimes it is hard to admit that our look at a potential rarity just wasn't good enough!

Accepted records of provincially rare species will be passed on to the Ontario Bird Records Committee for their review, so your record can contribute to the knowledge base for the whole province.

Every birder has the opportunity and the responsibility to contribute to our knowledge of bird distribution. We encourage you to do your part by submitting documentation of your rare bird sightings.

Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions & Lectures Committee.

For further information,
call the Club number (722-3050).

Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.

ALL OUTINGS: *Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.*

REGISTERED BUS TRIPS: *Make your reservation for Club bus excursions by sending a cheque or money order (Payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Box 35069, Westgate P.O., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 1A2, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing. Your cooperation is appreciated by the Committee so that we do not have to wait to the last moment to decide whether a trip should be cancelled due to low registration. In order for the Club to offer a bus trip, we need just over 33 people to register. If fewer than 30 register, we have the option of cancelling the trip or increasing the cost. Such decisions must be done a week in advance so we encourage anyone who is interested in any bus trip to register as early as possible. We also wish to discourage postponing the actual payment of bus fees until the day of the event.*

EVENTS AT THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE: *The Club is grateful to the Museum for their cooperation, and thanks the Museum for the use of these excellent facilities. Club members must be prepared to show their membership cards to gain access for Club functions after regular museum hours.*

BIRD STATUS LINE: *Phone 860-9000 to learn of recent sightings or birding potential in the Ottawa area. To report recent sightings use the 860-9000 number and stay on the line. This service is run on behalf of the Birds Committee and is available to members and non-members.*

Saturday
26 July
8:30 a.m.

MORRIS ISLAND

Leader: Chris Lewis

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, north-east corner of the parking lot, Richmond Road at Assaly Road.

The Odonata comprising the dragonflies and damselflies are an often overlooked and ancient fauna. The Morris Island Conservation Area with its wide expanses of relatively still water continues to be one of the most rewarding places to hunt for these insects. It offers a fantastic variety of species and habitat (55 species have been recorded to date) and promises a good time for all. Once again, join Chris in exploring for these amazing insects. Bring along a lunch and an insect net, if you have one.

Saturday
16 August
Time to be
decided

STARGAZING WITH THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Leader: Deborah Tigner

Meet: Pinhey's Point.

The Royal Astronomical Society is planning a star party. Every year a fair amount of stars and other personalities from the deep space community show up. Some are very well known figures of the night sky scene, Vega, Sirius and Polaris just to name a few, while some other big names suffer from stardom and require preferential treatment. That's where the telescopes come into play. Like powerful search lights, they help us to find hidden objects and put them into the limelight. Big names like the Andromeda galaxy, the Butterfly nebula and the Ring nebula simply love to be the centre of gravity. Please register at the Club number (722-3050) by August 1st. Further details will be supplied later. This excursion is limited to 25 people. Unfavourable weather could necessitate some rescheduling. If you need directions, call Philip Martin (729-3218).

Saturday
6 September
7:00 a.m.

LATE SUMMER BIRDS AND CONFUSING FALL WARBLERS

Leader: Roy John

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of parking lot, Richmond Road at Assaly Road.

A challenge to your ability to distinguish between the late summer birds with their often confusing plumage, as well as to recognise various migrating species. Bring along a snack, binoculars and a spotting scope, if you have one.

Tuesday
9 September
7:00 p.m.
Social & Club
Business

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
MEMBERS' SLIDE NIGHT

Meet: Auditorium, Canadian Museum of Nature, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets.

Admission: At least one natural history slide or a 50 cent donation to the Alfred Bog Fund.

7:30 p.m.
Formal
Program

Come and show your favourite or most recent slides of plants, animals, birds, insects, scenery etc. (15 slides max). It would be appreciated if you would talk about your slides but you do not need to speak for long. Please contact Philip Martin (729-3218) to prearrange your presentation.

Saturday
20 September
9:00 a.m.

ASTERS AND GOLDENRODS IN THE "MEDIOLA WOODS"

Leader: Albert Dugal

Meet: Blossom Park parking lot, off Bank Street, South Ottawa.

This is a new area for fall flowers that is probably unfamiliar to members of the OFNC. Asters and Goldenrods are easily recognized as they are prominent during this season; however, the various species can be difficult to tell apart. Test previously published field guides on these beautiful but perplexing plants. The guides can be found in *T&L* 29(3):89-99 and in 25(4):114-121. This is a half-day outing.

Sunday
21 September
3:00 p.m.
to
5:00 p.m.

MUSHROOM IDENTIFICATION

Leader: Otto Loesel

Meet: Fletcher Wildlife Garden

A short lecture on ways to progress in mushroom identification and the problems encountered when using morphological features. This will be followed by the identification of specimens. Participants are invited to bring specimens collected that day. The Mushroom Study Group will be active over the summer so check the Club website for event notices.

Saturday
27 September
9:30 a.m.
to
12:30 p.m.

GENERAL INTEREST WALK

Leader: Geoff Burbidge

Meet: Visitors' Centre, Gatineau Park, Scott Street, Chelsea.

A chance to see Gatineau Park in all its fall glory. Bring binoculars, lenses and field guides.

Tuesday
14 October
7:00 p.m.
Social and Club
Business

7:30 p.m.
Formal
Program

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
THE RIVERKEEPER PROJECT II

Speaker: Lara van Loon

Meet: Auditorium, Canadian Museum of Nature,
Metcalf and McLeod Streets.

Last year we heard an introductory talk on this important project. This time Lara will give us an update on the Riverkeeper Project, tell us what has been accomplished particularly concerning controlling pollution and enhancing ecological protection of the Ottawa River.



See what is happening at FWG this summer. The interpretive centre is open weekdays until late August and many Sunday afternoons in September. For up to date information check the FWG website. **Please note our new website address is <http://www.achilles.net/ofnc/fletcher.php>** or visit the garden and pick up the summer issue of *What's up at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden*.

DEADLINE: *Material intended for the October - December issue must be in the editor's hands by August 1, 2003. Mail your manuscripts to:*

Karen McLachlan Hamilton
2980 Moodie Drive, Nepean, ON, K2J 4S7
H: (613) 838-4943 email: hamilton@storm.ca.

ANY ARTICLES FOR TRAIL & LANDSCAPE?

Have you been on an interesting field trip or made some unusual observations recently? Is there a colony of rare plants or a nesting site that needs protection? Write up your thoughts and send them to Trail & Landscape. We accept email, diskettes and CDs, or submissions in traditional form- typed, written, printed or painted!

URL of our site:
<http://www.achilles.net/ofnc/>

WEBMASTER's email
ofnc@achilles.net

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