

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

DECEMBER 2015



Nipissing
Naturalists
Club





Roses in December

By Renee Levesque, editor

For the cover of the December issue, I chose a photo I took in Restoule of two Trumpeter Swans. I think it quietly, yet majestically, celebrates the season, and ties in with the article on the Christmas Bird Count, started in North America in 1900, and 115 years later still going strong. North Bay has been holding one for the past 36 years, and Burk's Falls for the past 35 years. The data gleaned from the Christmas Bird Counts have been invaluable for scientists.

Birds are also featured in this issue in the article by Fred Pinto on the installation of the Osprey platform in Laurier Woods Conservation area. It will be exciting to see if any Osprey use this platform come spring, as well as the one recently installed at the La Vase Portage Conservation Area.

I do like getting stories from club members and this month, one came from Debra Johnson about the fawn she and her neighbours met in Chisholm Township. This issue also features three local artists and their passion about nature. There is an opportunity to support them, at the same time supporting Nipissing Naturalists Club.

To mark the last month of Laurier Woods' 25th anniversary, Dick Tafel will be leading a walk in Laurier Woods on December 5, talking about the history of this little gem in the city. Although Laurier Woods Conservation Area was established 25 years ago, it is an area that goes back a billion years as you will read in Elaine Hurst's in-depth and excellent article on its geology.

Our last guest speaker of the year is Bill Steer and judging by his columns in *Community Voices*, we should be well entertained while learning about the history of our area.

This past November, a month normally thought of as dull and dark, will be recalled as a month that gave us many warm, balmy and sunny days. People were out walking the area trails, biking and even canoeing and boating, enjoying the November summer days before the snow and cold set in. You will find a couple of photos by members in this issue reflecting those days.

As we head towards the shortest day and longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere with more snow and colder temperatures, there is still much to delight us in December. Rachel Sturge's photo of the super moon eclipse, seen in this issue, seems appropriate to end the year. Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and peaceful holiday season.

Lunar Eclipse, Ithaca New York, 10:15 p.m., September 27, 2015



Photo by Rachel Sturge



Photo by Renee Levesque

By Renee Levesque

The information in italics below is from Bird Studies Canada, Canadian Christmas Bird Count Coordinator, Mike Burrell, who recently replaced Dick Canning, coordinator for over a decade. Following our national election in October this year, Mr. Canning began a new career as an NDP member for South Okanagan-West Kootenay, British Columbia.

Started in 1900, the Christmas Bird Count is North America's longest-running Citizen Science project. Counts happen in over 2,000 localities throughout the Western Hemisphere.

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The information collected by thousands of volunteer participants forms one of the world's largest sets of wildlife survey data. The results are used daily by conservation biologists and naturalists to assess the population trends and distribution of birds.

Each Christmas Bird Count is conducted on a single day between December 14 and January 5. Counts are carried out within a 24-km diameter circle that stays the same from year to year. They are organized, usually as group efforts, at the local level, often by a birding club or naturalist organization.

North Bay Christmas Bird Count: This year, North Bay marks its 37th year participating in the Christmas Bird Count. It will hold its count on **Saturday, December 19**, with a pot luck dinner and tabulation of the results to be held that night at the home of Marc Buchanan.

Last year we counted 2,835 birds, representing 34 species.



Photo by Lori Anderson

Lori Anderson, Nipissing Naturalist Club and Bird Wing member who one year had a White-crowned Sparrow keeping warm on her Christmas lights, is the compiler and has organized teams in our set seven areas as follows:

Area 1, Airport and Four-Mile Lake –with leaders Fred Pinto and Marc Buchanan

Area 2, Thibeault Terrace and Cedar Heights – with leaders Lori Anderson, compiler, and Ken Gowan, compiler's assistant

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Area 3, Downtown Core – with leaders Brent Turcotte and Laura Chowns

Area 4, West Ferris and Pinewood Park – with leaders Grant and Shirley McKercher

Area 5, Callander, Corbeil and East Ferris – with leaders Gary and Connie Sturge

Area 6, Trout Lake south and Centennial Crescent – with leaders Dick Tafel and Renee Levesque

Area 7, Trout Lake north, Hwy.63 and Feronia – with leaders Craig and Elaine Hurst

If there are any volunteers who wish to take part as field or feeder watch participants, please let Lori know as soon as possible by emailing her at lori.anderson58@hotmail.com. Lori states that with some planning, some areas could benefit from having two separate groups. We have some large areas to cover by car and by trail. Feeder watchers are always welcome, but they must register their intent with Lori as soon as possible and they must live within a 24 km. or 15 mile radius of North Bay.

It would appear West Nipissing and Mattawa are not holding a Christmas Bird Count this year. Perhaps this is something that needs to be looked into for next year so that the District of Nipissing is better represented.

Frosty the Snow Bunting



Photo by Renee Levesque

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Burk's Falls Christmas Bird Count: For the 39th year, Burk's Falls will also be participating in the Christmas Bird Count, with Martin Parker as compiler. Its count will be held on **Wednesday, December 16.**

The areas will be the same as previous years and are as follows:

Area 1, Lake Bernard – with leader Steve O'Donnell

Area 2, Burk's Falls – with leader Warren Wanless

Area 3, Ryerson Township – with leader Dan Bone

Area 4, Magnetewan - with leader Alex Mills

Area 5, Chapman North – with leader Keith Thornborrow

If you wish to participate, and there is always room for volunteers, please let Martin know as soon as possible by emailing him at mparker19@cogeco.ca.

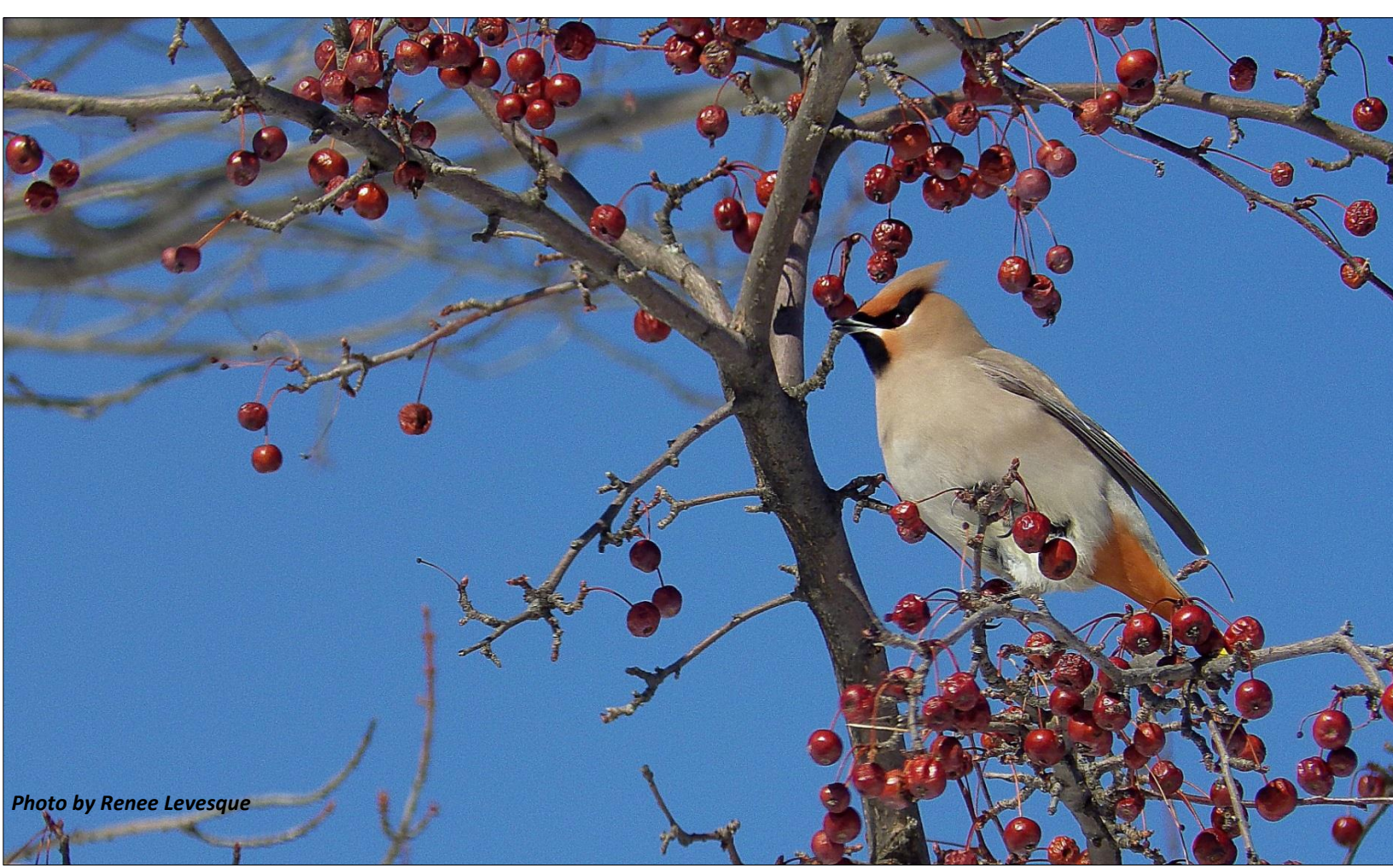


Photo by Renee Levesque

Laurier Woods Rocks!

Photo by Renee Levesque

By Elaine Hurst

Walking on rocks that are a billion years old is quite the experience. On Saturday, November 7, Larry Dyke, a retired geologist who is still actively involved in work with Parks Canada in the Hudson Bay area, led an enthusiastic group of about thirty rock hounds on an interesting geological journey through Laurier Woods Conservation area.

As an introduction, Larry showed us mineral samples of marble, white quartz, pink and white feldspar, shiny mica, black hornblende, and dark green diopside, explaining that these were some of the minerals

It has been estimated by some that the Earth is around four and a half billion years old. Rocks of the Canadian Shield are some of the oldest on earth. The Ancaster Gneiss of Nunavut has been aged at four billion years, while the rocks in Laurier Woods, in the Granville Province area of the Shield, are closer to one billion. Over the last 40 years geologists have been working between North Bay and Lake Ontario to increase understanding of how the Canadian Shield came to be.

Our first stop was at the outcropping lookout by the first pond. Larry pointed out the dark bands are a mixture of iron, magnesium, hornblende and micas, and the light bands are made up of quartz and quite a large amount of pink feldspar. Layers or banding are usually horizontal, but here they are almost vertical, which means that they have been tilted, possibly by a turbidite sequence, the layers having been built up by underwater landslides.

These rocks have been so metamorphosed, changed by tremendous heat and pressure, that it is difficult to know what the original rock was. The recrystallization took place about a million years ago, at a temperature of between 500 and 600 degrees Celsius and probably at a depth of between 10 and 20 kilometres below the surface. Therefore, these rocks were at that depth at one time and then were uplifted.

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A darker coloured rock can be seen cutting across the grain of the gneiss. This is a volcanic intrusion and is a much younger rock.

Our second stop was at the boardwalk to the Yellow Trail. Here Larry discussed the properties of the Canadian Shield and explained isostatic rebound. This is the movement of the earth's crust upward after having been compressed by the tremendous weight and pressure applied by thick ice during the Ice Age. The crust was pushed down into the mantle of the earth, but because it is lighter, it floated. The Continental Ice Sheet receded from North Bay about 11,000 years ago.

The boardwalk area of Laurier Woods is at low spot and, according to Larry, more than four thousand years ago there was probably a large waterway here linking Lake Nipissing and Trout Lake. However, due to isostatic rebound this drainage was cut off about 4,000 years ago. North Bay continues to rebound between twenty and thirty centimetres each century.

Once over the boardwalk, we climbed up the hill to our third stop, an outcrop which was substantially covered with reindeer lichen. Larry talked about the issues that lichen can cause for geologists. He was right. The faint banding was much harder to see

Lichen growth (see photo below) and the cover of glacial sediment have been obstacles for geological mapping. To assist, Seismic reflector lithoprobes have been used. This is a method which explores the properties of the earth's subsurface. The sound waves reflect the differing layers and the structure of the crust can be deduced to a depth of between 30 and 40 kilometres. Along with radiometric dating, or radioactive dating, geologists are putting together a more complete picture of the Canadian Shield. The Grenville Province pushes north to the Grenville Front, which in turn pushes against Superior, which is about two million years old. Superior in turn pushes towards Hudson Bay with even older rocks.



Photo by Renee Levesque

Larry demonstrated how a compass may measure the strike or direction of the layering of the rock. The line marks the intersection of the inclined plane with the horizontal plane of the earth's surface. The strike here is 140 degrees. He also pointed out how the quartz and feldspar bands are standing out a little higher than the surrounding bands which show preferential weathering.

The fourth stop was the outcrop of rocks next to the #12 post.

The glacial surface is polished here with visible striations, or scratches, in the surface of the rock made by ice during the ice age. Larry took another strike measurement which was within 10 degrees of the other measurement taken half a kilometer away. This shows that the Laurier Woods Conservation Area rocks are very consistent in the direction of layering. The banding here is steep, showing how pressure has pushed the layers off horizontal. This causes the crust to shorten, probably by around 50% horizontally, and consequently the vertical crust is thickened.

The last observation was a rock at the Brule St. entrance parking lot, a rock with a mica hole. Mica is an ore formed with a large amount of water which causes it to be one of the last minerals to crystalize. Consequently, the crystals are larger in size.

Our thanks to Larry whose vast knowledge gave us the gift of new insights and perceptions on our morning hike and enriched our appreciation of the gem we have in Laurier Woods.



Larry Dyke, in black cap, talks to walkers. Photo by Craig Hurst

25th Anniversary Walk, Laurier Woods

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of Laurier Woods this year, guided walks were held the first Saturday of each month starting in May. The walks were very successful with many showing up to learn about birds, glaciation, aquatic insects, wild edibles, seedless plants, tracks and geology.

To mark the end of the 25th anniversary, on **Saturday, December 5, from 10:00 a.m. until noon**, Dick Tafel will lead a walk while talking about the *History of Laurier Woods*. Dick is well-equipped to do so because he was involved from the very beginning in preserving this little jewel in our city, saving it from urban encroachment. For his efforts, Dick was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 2012.

Should the weather be inclement, Stradwick's Flooring, near the Brule Street entrance, has offered Dick a room in which to give his talk. Meet at Laurier Woods' Brule Street parking lot and from there it will be determined whether a room at Stradwick's will be necessary.

In the photo to the right, taken in the spring of 2010, Dick is regaling a group at Laurier Woods during its 20th anniversary. You will now have an opportunity to see Dick five years later, on the 25th anniversary of Laurier Woods. Has Laurier Woods changed in these past five years? Dick can tell you.



Photo by Craig Hurst

A Fish Lover's Nest

*By Fred Pinto
and Renee Levesque*

On October 24, volunteers from Canadore College and Friends of Laurier Woods, with staff from the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority, installed an Osprey nest platform in Laurier Woods Conservation Area. Atop the pole, which is a decommissioned lamp post from Canadore College, is a wooden platform with a few inviting sticks placed in it as a start for a potential Osprey nest. The lamp post is aluminium and its smooth sides are expected to deter climbing nest predators, such as raccoons.

Declines in bird of prey populations observed in the 1970s led to a number of studies to determine what was causing these declines. These studies then led to the development of strategies to halt and reverse the population declines. One of the first strategies used was an attempt to increase the availability of nest sites. This strategy was used successfully as early as 1977 to help Ospreys increase in number in the United States.



Photo by Renee Levesque

Ospreys build large stick nests at the top of tall, strong structures that offer the birds a clear view of their surrounding areas, with space to manoeuvre. Although they are very adept at soaring

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and diving, Ospreys are not nearly as maneuverable as other hawks and, therefore, require open areas to transport their heavy load of caught fish. Their diet consists almost exclusively of live fish and they are the only North American raptor to live on such a diet. As a result, they are the only North American raptor with the ability to dive vertically into water to catch fish. They must then lift themselves out of the water with the heavy fish, which they position in their talons for optimum aerodynamics, and fly back to their nest.

Ospreys prefer shallow fishing grounds with an adequate supply of fish within a maximum of 12 miles from their nest.

Ospreys have high nest-site fidelity and tend to return yearly to existing sites. If they abandon their nests, it is probably because of nest predation. Predators consist of raccoons, crows, ravens, eagles, other hawks and owls.

The platform installed in Laurier Woods Conservation Area is located on a high rocky ridge. There is also one that was recently installed at La Vase Portage Conservation Area. Birders and bird watchers will be on the lookout in the spring for returning Ospreys to see if any breeding pairs consider either site suitable for nesting. And if not this spring, there will be another spring.

You can watch the CTV News video clip on the installation of the Osprey platform in Laurier Woods by clicking on the link below. (Be patient through the ad.)

<http://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=735632&binId=1.1142313&playlistPageNum=1>



The Fawn

By Debra Johnson

As I stood talking with my neighbour in his driveway one late August day, I heard an animal call that was unfamiliar to me. It was coming from near the base of a tree which was about eight feet from where we stood. The call sounded like the bleat of a lamb, but higher pitched, and seemed to be the call of an animal in distress.

I started towards the source of the call when a very tiny fawn came out of the flower bed and approached us. I am talking about a fawn weighing less than 15 pounds which still had the dried nub of its umbilical cord attached, indicating that it had been born within the past week. Startled by this unexpected sight, for one thing that a fawn would be born so late in the year, we considered the implications of the fawn's plight.

Having moved to the rural farming area of Chisholm Township ten months earlier, I was unaccustomed to such a sight. As neighbours came around and were duly consulted, we determined that it is not an unusual occurrence for a doe to leave a fawn very close to human dwellings. It is surmised that they do so because their young are less likely to be found by carnivores, such as the occasional wolves and increasingly numerous coyotes which populate Chisholm Township. Fred Pinto later commented that deer are not the only animals to employ this tactic to protect their young, that this also the custom of giraffes.

Fawns are known to lack a scent and often lie silently when the doe leaves them. This fawn was not behaving according to typical behaviour. We questioned whether perhaps the fawn had been left too long by a doe who had fallen to prey.

In the end, the fawn was left in the same general area for her doe to find. Nature was to take its course.

*(Editor's note:
The picture of
fawn at right is
not Debra's
fawn, but was
taken by **Kaye
Edmonds** in
Laurier Woods.)*





If You Build It, They Will Come

By Fred Pinto

Nipissing Naturalists Club was the only group in Eastern Canada to register with batweek.org and join hundreds of groups in North America to build bat houses on October 31. This was an appropriate and fun end to Bat Week which ran from October 25 to October 31.

Bat Week is an annual awareness campaign for bats and a celebration of the role of bats in nature. It is organized by a team of representatives from Bat Conservation International, Organization for Bat Conservation, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Acoustics, Lubee Bat Conservancy and the Save Lucy Campaign.

This year it is hoped a world record will be achieved for the number of bat houses built in North America on Halloween Day. The goal was to build 5,000 new bat houses.

Bats can die in small bat houses in northern climates, and, therefore, our club opted to build larger, four-chambered bat houses. The size of these bat houses allows larger maternal colonies to huddle together and keep warm in northern climates. Because bats need very high roost temperatures during gestation and after birth, it is thought that the periodic cold events we get here are fatal to bats.

Nipissing Naturalists Club partnered with Home Depot to help participants construct and assemble bat houses at an approximate cost in materials of \$45.00 each. Home Depot generously supplied the material for 24 bat houses, cut the wood to size and provided an area to assemble the houses.

On Halloween morning, many parents arrived with their children dressed in their Halloween costumes. (See photo at right, with Batman himself front and centre!) Home Depot hosts workshops for children on Saturdays, and it being Halloween, they came in costumes. Many of their parents stayed to help build the bat houses. In total there were approximately 54 participants.

Some participants bought additional material and Home Depot staff cheerfully cut the wood to the appropriate



Photo courtesy of Fred Pinto

dimensions. This resulted in another nine bat houses being built, bringing the total to 33 bat houses.

The photo on the right shows how two young boys, Joshua Hergott-Dumoulin, left, and Cyrus Hachkowski, right, painted

finishing touches on

the bat houses to ensure

there is no mistaking that the house is definitely for the bats! The photo below shows Nipissing University students with the bat house they built at Home Depot,

Photos and signed affidavits of the number of bat houses built were submitted to batweek.org and to Guinness World Records. We should know soon if we helped set a world record. Even if we don't set a record, we do know there are a lot of people in North Bay who care about bats – and that is a good thing!

Click on: <http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Local+Shows/Ontario/Up+North/ID/2678148715/> to hear Fred's interview on CBC Radio.

A big thank you to Home Depot, club members and all the participants who made this event an overwhelming success.



Photo by Connie Hergott



Photo by Fred Pinto

Birds Are a Hit at Corbeil Culture Days

By Renee Levesque

From September 25 to 27, with the weather sunny and warm, the second annual Corbeil Culture Days was held at Corbeil Park Hall. As Bill Vrebosch, Mayor of East Ferris stated, the event showcased that “art and culture play a significant role in the development of the creative, social and economic fabric” of a community.

There were a number of booths in which artists displayed their paintings and photographs, many of which were for sale. One of the things that struck me was the number of paintings and photographs of birds. In fact, Matt Walter, a member of Bird Wing, won first prize for his painting of a woodpecker. As winner, he received a cheque for \$1,000.00 donated by cartoonist Lynn Johnson. Matt’s winning painting of a woodpecker is seen at right. Note the texture of the birch tree.

Matt, who was born in Southhampton in 1987 but now lives in North Bay, says he has been drawing his whole life. He took art in high school and later developed a passion for birds and wildlife. He began by photographing them and then painting them using watercolour, gouache, acrylic, and later, oils. Currently, he paints primarily in oil.

In addition to his paintings, Matt also makes and sells prints, posters, cards, t-shirts, throw cushions, shower curtains, duvet covers and tote bags. You can view what he has to sell at www.matthewwalterart.com. If you are interested in purchasing any, you can contact Matt at matthewwalterart@gmail.com.

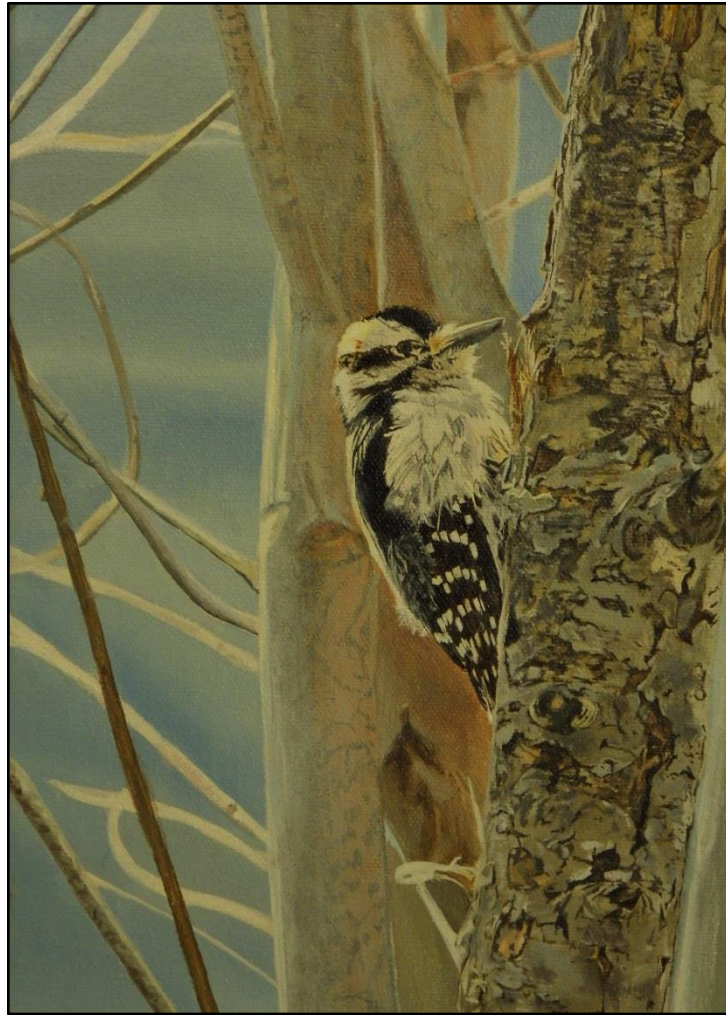


Photo by Renee Levesque

Another young painter is Alex Dubien, age 16, who lives in North Bay. Alex, who is home-schooled, has a love for bird watching and painting birds, inspired in this passion by the “diversity of their shape, size and colour.” Alex has been painting for three years, using mainly watercolours, but sometimes acrylics.

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Following the Corbeil show, Alex had a booth at the Friendship Centre on November 7 and at Ferris Glen Public School in Corbeil on November 21.

If you are interested in purchasing any of Alex's paintings or cards, you can contact him at adubien@cogeco.ca.

One of Alex's watercolour cards, the Sandhill Crane, which I purchased to give to a crane lover, is seen at right.



Photographer Luc Trudel is originally from Sturgeon Falls and now lives in North Bay. He began taking pictures of landscapes, weddings and sporting events in 1983. He did his own darkroom work in the days before digital. However, his main love is for intimate landscape photography, whereby the focus is on small, unique details of the larger landscape scene. He prints, mats and frames his photos himself and does a wonderful job of it. Recently he began doing gallery wraps and printing on fine art paper, such as metallic paper, German etching paper and exhibition fibre paper. In all his photographs he tries to achieve simplicity, good lines and forms, symbolism, texture and contrast with depth, as can be seen in his photograph of the Blue Heron below.

Luc sold quite a few of his photographs at Corbeil Culture Days and was subsequently invited to show his work at Artscape Show and Sale held in late October at the Caswell Resort Hotel in Sundridge. This annual event is sponsored by the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council. Like Alex, Luc also had a booth at the Ferris Glen Public School in Corbeil on November 21.

In addition to his prints, Luc also makes and sells cards.

If Nipissing Naturalists Club members wish to purchase any of the above artists' work, Matt, Alex and Luc will generously donate 15% of their sales to the Nipissing Naturalists Club.

With Christmas coming, you might want to think about supporting these artists and Nipissing Naturalists Club. You can contact me or Fred if you wish to make a purchase from Luc, and you can email Alex and Matt at their email addresses provided above.



Shhhhh... It's a Silent Auction

By Renee Levesque

During the first meeting of the New Year, on **Tuesday, January 12, 2016**, at our Annual General

Meeting and pot luck dinner, there will be a silent auction, always a fun and exciting event. Will someone outbid you on the one item you really, really want?

Save some Christmas money for this event because not only will you potentially get something you always wanted or even sort of wanted or even needed, but you will also be adding money to the coffers of the Nipissing Naturalists Club, funding that will go towards the Louise de Kiriline Lawrence plaque at Pimisi Bay.

Donations are required to make the silent auction a success. You can donate whatever you feel others might like to bid on. It doesn't have to be related to nature. Consider books, paintings, prints, ornaments, china, jewellery, carvings, jigsaw puzzles, historical documents, among other items. Whatever you would like to donate, please do so. Bring your donation item or items to **January's meeting to be held in the nature classroom of the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority, 15 Janey Avenue, North Bay, starting at 6:00 p.m.**

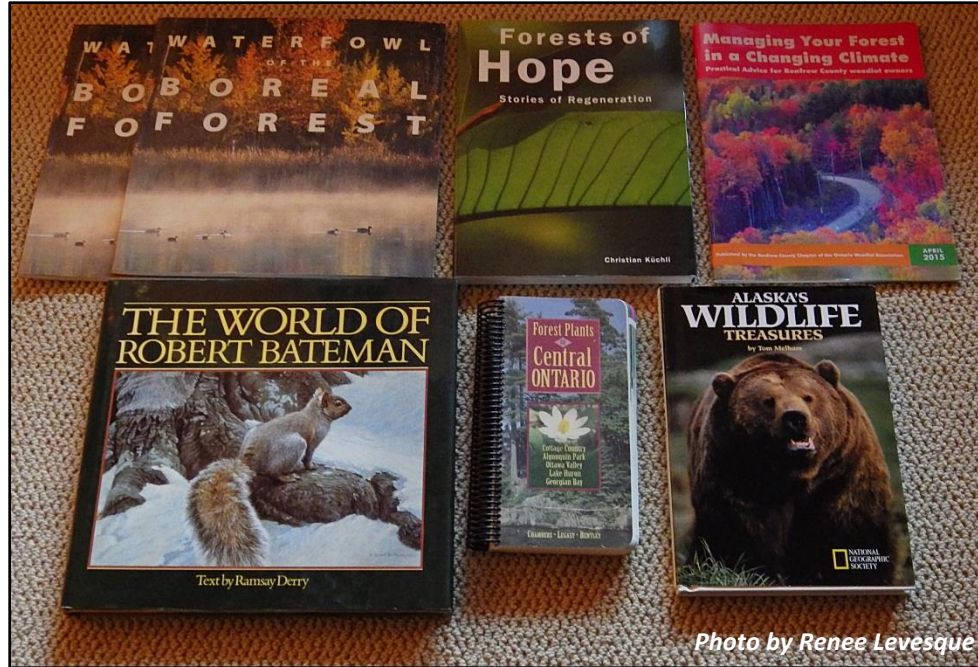


Photo by Renee Levesque

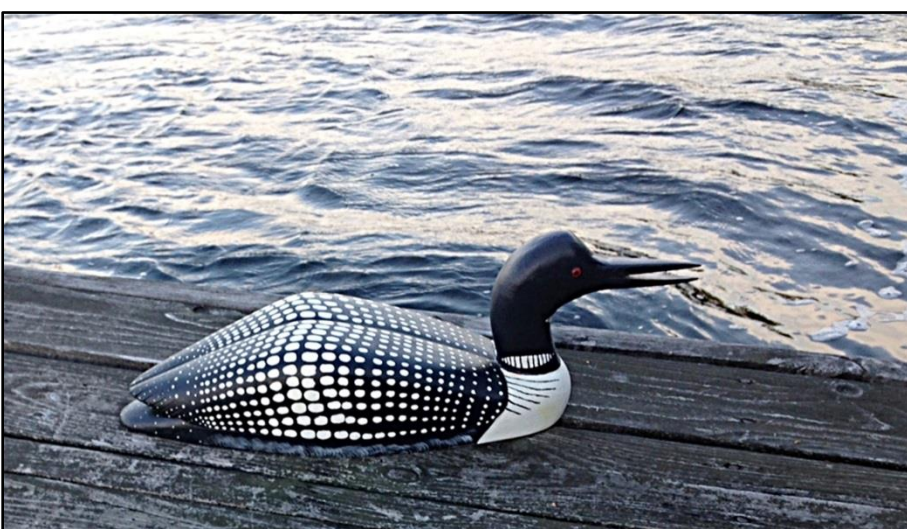


Photo by Dick Tafel

Many items have already been donated, as you can see in the photos above and to the left. It's always good to get a new book to read, and who wouldn't want a loon carved by local woodcarver John Ducharme. A 2016 calendar by local nature photographer, Frank Pierce, has also been donated.

In addition to the silent auction, cards by local photographer, Luc Trudel, will be for sale at \$4.00 a card, with \$1.50 of that price going to Nipissing Naturalists Club.

Upcoming Speakers at Monthly Meetings

As you will see below and on the next page, a roster of informative and interesting speakers has been lined up for December, our last meeting of 2015, and for February and March of the New Year. Our Annual General Meeting, auction and pot luck dinner will be held in January.

Meetings take place the second Tuesday of every month starting at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium of Casselholme.

On Tuesday, December 8, Bill Steer, local author, columnist, historian and environmentalist, will talk about the natural and cultural history of northeastern Ontario. A dynamic speaker,



Bill will be sure to provide us with many interesting insights and point the way to some off-the-beaten-tracks, tracks Champlain may have put down.

On Tuesday, January 13, Nipissing Naturalists Club Annual General Meeting will be held at the **North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority, 15 Janey Ave., North Bay.** The business meeting will consist of the following:

- President's report of 2015 activities
- Bird Wing report
- Minutes of 2014 AGM acceptance
- Treasurer's report
- Election of Directors

There will be a potluck dinner, so be sure to bring a dish of your choice and your utensils. There will also be a silent auction. Please bring an item(s) you wish to donate.

On Tuesday, February 10, Kathi Hunnisett, marine biologist and veterinary technician, will present *A Summer of Sand, Sun and Sea Turtles*, based on her research in Panama of Leatherback Sea Turtles (seen at right). Kathi has a strong love and passion for the ocean and its creatures, especially sea turtles. In her talk, she will share her knowledge of sea turtles and how they have been affected negatively by humans, but how we, through education and conservation, can become a positive force.



On Tuesday, March 10, several students from Nipissing University will describe their experiences during their school trip to the Galapagos Islands. What can they tell us about the creature on the left, *photographed by Fred Pinto* who took the trip with the students?



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Editor: Renee Levesque

Contributors this issue: Lori Anderson, Kaye Edmonds, Connie Hergott, Craig Hurst, Elaine Hurst, Debra Johnson, Renee Levesque, Fred Pinto and Dick Tafel.

Special thanks to Rachel Sturge for her lunar eclipse photo, and to Alex Dubien, Luc Trudel and Matt Walter for permission to use their art and photography and for their generous support.

Membership Fees

Yearly Nipissing Naturalist Club membership fees are: single, \$20.00; family, \$30.00

There is an **additional \$5.00 membership fee for Bird Wing** which meets the **fourth Tuesday of every month in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.** That fee is paid directly to Bird Wing.



The Nipissing Naturalist Club is affiliated with Ontario Nature. Check out its website at <http://www.ontarionature.org/>.

The Nipissing Naturalist Club website is found at <http://www.nipnats.com/>. The Woodland Observer and the Bird Wing monthly newsletters are posted there under "Newsletters and Bird Wing". Click on that link found on the left side of the home page.