



# *The Woodland Ob-* Nipissing Naturalists Club September 2014

*Enjoy Nature!*



President: Fred Pinto — fredpinto1@gmail.com — 705-476-9006

## Lesser Known Facts about the Passenger Pigeon

By Fred Pinto

A lot of media stories will restate well known facts about the Passenger Pigeon this month— 100 years after the last one died on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1914 . Let's see if you can answer these questions. The answers were given during a presentation at the 1<sup>st</sup> Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival and are also found elsewhere in this newsletter.

1. How long did it take for Passenger Pigeons to go from 5 billion to zero?
2. Did First Nation people in Ontario have a name for Passenger Pigeons?
3. Were they common in Ontario? How about Nipissing District?
4. Were they always abundant?
5. What were the social and technological changes in the USA during the time the Passenger Pigeon went extinct?

## Nipissing Naturalists Establish Monarch Butterfly Field

In early spring we obtained milkweed seed from a group promoting the establishment of this plant, the favoured food of the Monarch butterfly caterpillar. This summer Nip Nats and students from Nipissing University grew milkweed plants. These seedlings were then planted on the old city dump



site on Marsh Drive.

Monarch butterflies have declined in abundance from around 350 million to about 80 million in the past two decades. One of the reasons for the decline of this attractive orange and black butterfly that migrates from Mexico to Canada is the loss of milkweed. Here are some photos resulting from this project:



*Planting the milkweed at the Marsh Drive dump site*



*A Monarch caterpillar feeding on milkweed at the old dump site in August*



# Introducing the Inaugural Louise de Kiriline Nature Festival

The Nipissing Naturalist Club hosted the first ever Louise de Kiriline Nature Festival on Saturday, August 23rd. It was a successful and fun day with a full roster of events at both Laurier Woods and Nipissing University. Activities included bird-banding, benthic sampling, stations to learn about wetlands, butterflies, dragonflies, rocks and minerals, dendrochronology, presentations on Louise de Kiriline, Savannah Sparrows, Orioles and Passenger Pigeons and a folk sing-along. Given the rave reviews of this event, it was the first but definitely not the last Nature Festival to be held in the North Bay area!



**Nipissing Naturalists Club has a new Facebook page**

If you have a Facebook account, click here to visit our new page: <https://www.facebook.com/nipissingnaturalistsclub>

“Like” us so that you get updates.

<http://hqvectors.com/image/shutterstock-eps-53799700>

## Calendar of Events

### Next General Meeting

**Tuesday, September 9, 2014**

**Cassellholme Auditorium @ 7:00 pm**

### Upcoming Speakers

**Date: September 9, 2014**

**Speaker: Dr. Katie Clow, Department of Pathobiology at the University of Guelph, Ontario**

**Topic: Deer Ticks: The newcomer in Ontario's forests**

This talk will provide you with an exciting glimpse into the world of the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). We will explore the ecology of the deer tick, the basics of Lyme disease and the current situation in Ontario, both in relation to the deer tick and the disease. You will have an opportunity to see specimens and learn the field technique for tick surveillance.



#### Monthly Bird Bash — Saturday & Sunday

Spend some time observing our local birds and report on how many species of birds you see. Contact Dick Tafel for dates: [rtafel@sympatico.ca](mailto:rtafel@sympatico.ca) or 705 472-7907.

#### Birdwing Meeting

Fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm. Bird watching topics will be discussed. Meet at the library (auditorium). Contact Dick Tafel at 705 472-7907 or email [rtafel@sympatico.ca](mailto:rtafel@sympatico.ca)

**Biography:** Dr. Katie Clow graduated from the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) in 2011. Following graduation, she practiced at a rural small animal clinic in Renfrew, Ontario. She then went to the Office of Animal Biosecurity at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, where she helped develop proactive biosecurity guidance documents for goat and dairy producers. Katie returned to the Ontario Veterinary College in September 2013 to begin her PhD in the Department of Pathobiology. Her research focuses on the ecology of Lyme disease in Ontario, examining both the biotic and abiotic factors that influence the spread of the deer tick. She has a keen interest in veterinary public health, and hopes to continue her career in academia, with a strong focus on vector-borne disease research, teaching and international development.

**Date: October 14, 2014**

**Speaker: Don Willis, Professional For-  
ester and manager for Jiffy Products**

**Topic: Lyme Disease: A Personal Story**

Find out what this North Bay resident had to face in order to determine his diagnoses of Lyme disease and how he fought the disease.

### Photo Contest Announcement

Once again all members are invited to send in by November 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 a maximum of 2 photos for each category:

1. Fauna
2. Flora
3. Landscape
4. People enjoying nature

Members will be invited to vote for the best photos in each category during the December meeting. Prizes to be won.

Send your photos to Kelly Major:  
[kelly.major@gmail.com](mailto:kelly.major@gmail.com)



## Largest Roost of Endangered Bats in Ontario found in Nipissing Region

Ontario's largest maternal roost of the endangered little myotis bat has been found in the Nipissing region. Nipissing Naturalists and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources staff who volunteered their time searched for bats in North Bay and a few surrounding areas recently. They confirmed the largest maternal roost of little myotis bats in Ontario in a region affected by a newly arrived bat fungal disease called White Nose Syndrome. This roost site is located outside of North Bay. No bats were found in previously known roost sites within the city.

*Using bat detectors to count bats exiting their roost*



Answers to questions about the Passenger Pigeon:

1. How long did it take for Passenger Pigeons to go from 5 billion to zero?

Answer: It took 50 years

2. Did First Nation people in Ontario have a name for Passenger Pigeons?

Answer: Yes, the Ojibway called it Omeme. Today there is a village on the Pigeon River west of Peterborough that is called Omeme. The river banks used to be a place for the Passenger Pigeon to feed on acorns, beech nuts and hickories. The Mississaugas that lived west of what is now Toronto called the mouth of the Humber River Mimico or place where the pigeons roost. A researcher with the Ministry of Natural Resources while working on a predictive map of tree species in parts of S. Ontario showed that tree species that were an important food for the Passenger Pigeon grew along the Humber and Credit Riv-

ers. The lower Humber River used to have a lot of chestnuts, hickories, beech and oaks.

3. Were Passenger Pigeons common in Ontario? How about Nipissing District?

Answer: There were very abundant across Ontario. They are records of Passenger Pigeons being sighted in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in all districts of Ontario except Nipissing. This does not necessarily mean there were no Passenger Pigeons in Nipissing it just means that there are no written records or archeological evidence of them here.

4. Were they always abundant?

Answer: Archeological evidence, genetic tests and ecological niche analysis all suggest that Passenger Pigeon numbers varied tremendously at different times.

5. What were the social and technological changes in the USA during the time the Passenger Pigeon went extinct?

Answer: The American Civil War was fought and had ended. The people were anxious to rebuild the economy and their lives. The forests were allowed to be cleared and much of the clearings were used to grow crops for people. The food supply for Passenger Pigeons was rapidly dwindling.

Railways were being built that connected the resources of the interior to cities along the coasts. The Passenger Pigeon and bison were plentiful and easy to kill making them profitable commodities creating an industry that almost anyone could participate in. making it very difficult to control human activities that were detrimental to the Passenger Pigeon's survival.

