

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

MARCH 2016

Nipissing
Naturalists
Club



From the Editor:

Ides, Easter and the Equinox

It was by chance that I chose for the cover of this month's issue a photo of South River where it flows under the bridge on Maple Hill Road in Powassan, near where Gary Sturge lives. So you can imagine my surprise when Gary submitted an interesting article on the halos, sundogs and light pillars he frequently observes in the same area. Two of his photos, a spectacular sunrise and a sun pillar, were taken over South River.

In this issue, you will find Part Two of Bill Steer's December presentation. Having been to England's Stonehenge, I now want to see our very own Stonehenge, not that far north of us. Pick at least one of the places Bill spoke about and be sure to get there sometime this year.

Highlighted in this issue are two local birders, Vic Rizzo who received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Ontario Federation of Ornithologists, and bird bander Chris Sukha who will be off in March to band birds in the bayous of Louisiana.

Also highlighted are profiles of four of your Board of Directors. The other seven will appear in the next two issues, although six of them still have to get their bios to me.

Some remnants of February remain in this issue, specifically Groundhog Day and a birding walk on a beautiful mild February day before the cold spell hit over the Family Day weekend.

Each year Easter falls on a Sunday sometime between March 22 and April 25, the exact date determined by some complicated calculation based on lunisolar cycles. This year, Easter is March 27, just after the Northern Hemisphere Spring or Vernal Equinox which arrives in North Bay on Sunday, March 20, precisely at 12:30 a.m. when most of us are asleep.

The Spring Equinox is the time when the sun crosses the celestial equator from south to north, bringing with it longer daylight hours, warmer weather, rejuvenation and regrowth. We are all aware, however, that there is a difference between the first day of spring and the first spring day; nevertheless, watch for signs, like the first migrating American Robin, always a joy to see.

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

Then there is the Ides of March on March 15. In modern times, the Ides of March is known as the date of the assassination of Julius Caesar, marking the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire. Caesar's death on his way to the Senate, after he had been warned by a soothsayer to "beware the Ides of March", is dramatized in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Act 3, Scene 1).

And finally there is St. Patrick's Day on March 17. In addition to it being a religious holiday, St. Patrick's Day also celebrates Irish heritage and culture. The myth is that St. Patrick drove the snakes out of a country in which there were no snakes – an allegory for driving the pagans out of Ireland when St. Patrick converted the pagan Irish to Christianity.

St. Patrick's Day is a public holiday in Ireland, as you would expect, but did you know it is also a public holiday in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Happy St. Patrick's Day

**May you always keep a
piece of sky over your
life.**



Photo of Ireland's north coast by Renee Levesque

More natural beauties on our backroads

*This is Part 2 of Bill Steer's presentation at the Nipissing Naturalist Club on December 8, 2015. In addition to the places highlighted in February's The Woodland Observer, Backroads Bill also touched on other areas and places. Some of these places and directions listed below are from notes taken by **Debra Johnson** during Bill's presentation, as well as from Bill's website.*

Elm Point (seen at right), with its view along the Mattawa fault line, is on the north side of the Mattawa River between Pimisi Bay and Samuel de Champlain Park, just east of the aboriginal ochre mine. It is a short walk from the sand beach up the slope along the east side of the cold water stream to the highest contour. Walk east about 400m. (WGS 84 N46° 18.307' W78° 56.347' 17 T 658644 5129962). It is Bill's thoughtful spot, a spot that allows him to contemplate a vista of spectacular beauty.

Paradise Lagoon near Wolf Lake, just east of Sudbury, is not an easy visit, but well worth it. Also known as Blue Lagoon because of its blue colour, it is spectacularly surrounded by majestic red pines and walls of granite and quartz.

For a day trip and direct access to the Blue Lagoon, the best course is at



Photo by Bill Steer



Photo by Bill Steer

the narrows between Matamagasi Lake and Lake Wanapitei. (N46° 45' 16.7" W80° 37' 17.4" or WGS 84 17 T E 528908 N 5177969). More detailed directions can be found at <http://northernontario.travel/northeastern-ontario/double-header-double-season-wolf-lake-blue-lagoon>

To see **Stonehenge** you don't have to travel to England. Instead, on the shores of Larder Lake, east of Kirkland Lake, are 18 huge rounded and mysterious boulders or erratics, their alignment matching exactly the rising and the setting of the sun on the winter and summer solstices. Erratics are rocks that differ in size and type to the native rock in the area in which they are now at rest. They were carried by glacial ice to their resting spot, often over very long distances.

To get to our Stonehenge, take Highway 66, through to Larder Lake. From the junction of Highway 66 and 624, at the community's fish monument, travel eastwards on Highway 66 for 6 km. Watch for an unmarked road on the right or south side (N48° 06' 56.4" W79° 39' 00.7" or WGS 84 17 U E 600464 N 5330036) just before the Bob Lake/Tournene roadside picnic area. Travel this side road for 1.5 km. When you come to the fork, veer left and proceed for about 200 m. (If you go right you will end up at Pearl Beach.) Park amongst the pines and walk southeast another 200 m and you will see the exposed bedrock, the large erratics and Larder Lake.

Look for **Mt. Cheminis** (seen above) which is visible in the distance from the shoreline. It is located on Hwy 66 just east of Virginiatown. Mt. Cheminis was revered by the early Ojibway

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

whose shamans would sometimes retreat to the top to fast and meditate. It is worth the climb, weather permitting.

For more information about “Stonehenge” in our own backyard, see:

<http://www.northernontario.travel/northeastern-ontario/stonehenge-in-northeastern-ontario>

Erratics, of course, can be found in many other places, most significantly and dramatically in the Ignace Boulder Field north of Sandbar Provincial Park, about 12 km. north of Ignace in northwestern Ontario. Closer to home, 10 km. north of Windy Lake Provincial Park on the east side of highway 141, just before Cartier, you will find a very large erratic; and on the shore of Lake Temiskaming, northeast of Dawson Point near New Liskeard, you will find a most interesting erratic with its wonderful bear icon (see below). Read Bill’s write-up on erratics and where many others can be found at <http://www.steerto.com/?p=777>.

Nipissing District has been fortunate to have the benefit of Bill’s vast knowledge and commitment to educating the public about the natural wonders found in Northern Ontario.

For more about Bill’s back roads, listen to Bill at http://www.steerto.com/?page_id=114 and read his columns at <http://www.steerto.com/>.



Photo by Bill Steer



You ain't nothin' but a groundhog

Text and photos by Renee Levesque

Canada's famous groundhog, Wiarton Willie, did see his shadow when he popped out of his burrow on February 2, meaning we will get six more weeks of winter. However, that other famous North American groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil from Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, as well as Canada's other well-known groundhog, Shubenacadie Sam from Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, did not see their shadows, meaning we will have an early spring. Whether that means spring will come early to the east coast and Pennsylvania but not to Ontario, we will have to wait and see.

Groundhog Day coincides with Candlemas, a Christian celebration that occurs on February 2, a period between the December solstice and the March equinox, winter's halfway point in the Northern Hemisphere. In Europe long ago, particularly in those areas of Europe that were German-speaking, it was the badger that predicted the coming of spring. This tradition was brought over to Pennsylvania, with the groundhog replacing the badger, and Groundhog Day was officially adopted in 1887. It didn't become popular in Canada until 1956 with the emergence of Wiarton Willie. As his fame grew, so did Wiarton's Groundhog Day festivities, until Wiarton Willie became a household name.

The groundhog is a member of the rodent family, a type of rodent known as a marmot, and is closely related to the squirrel. It is sort of a giant squirrel if you will. Although normally seen on the ground, it can climb trees and is a capable swimmer.

Another name for the groundhog is woodchuck and many of us are familiar with the tongue twister:

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood? He'd chuck all the wood that a woodchuck would, if a woodchuck would chuck wood. (or variations thereof)

How accurate is our rodent meteorologist at predicting the weather? Well, he is right 37% of the time. Not great, but not too bad considering he is but a groundhog.



Honouring Vic and the Brambling

By Renee Levesque

At the Bird Wing meeting on January 26, Vic Rizzo was presented with an Ontario Field Ornithologist (OFO) Certificate of Appreciation for hosting birders who came to see the Brambling, a Eurasian bird that sometimes strays into Alaska, but in November 2014 also strayed into Vic's yard in North Bay's west end.

Vic was one of 13 people in 2015 to receive a certificate. Every year, OFO pays tribute to individuals and organizations for their contribution to the birds and the birding community in Ontario. If you know of someone who provides access to a rare bird or assists birders in some way, you can send your nomination through the OFO website at <http://www.ofo.ca/site/canominate> or by email to Ken Burrell at kenneth.gd.burrell@gmail.com.

Although the 2015 certificate recipients were announced back in the fall and many received their certificates then, Vic's certificate just recently came to him by a circuitous route. When Dick Tafel was visiting his granddaughter, Kerri, in Markham over the Christmas holidays, she gave



Vic, his plaque and the Brambling, photos by Renee Levesque

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

him the certificate to give to Vic. How did she come to get it? Well, turns out she is a friend of Ken Burrell's girlfriend who somehow determined Kerri is the granddaughter of Dick. So although Vic was not at the presentation back in the fall when Ken presented the awards, he is but four handshakes away from Ken!

Vic presented quite a humorous rendition of the experience of hosting birders and photographers who came from far and wide. Although he said he wouldn't host anything like it again should a rare bird visit his large bird-friendly yard with its many plants, trees, shrubs and feeders, he nevertheless said it was "a good experience". It was a case of not realizing just how many determined birders there are who want to see a rare bird.

Below, with permission from Ken Burrell, is a copy of page 11 from the *OFO News*, October 2015, on the presentation of the OFO Certificates. Vic gets a mention, top right. You can get a good idea from the article to whom and why the certificates are presented and you will note they are presented not only to individuals, but also to groups. (You will need to zoom in to read it well.)

OFO Certificates of APPRECIATION

Each year, OFO recognizes individuals and organizations for their contribution to the birds and birding community of Ontario. By Ken Burrell

Again this year we have some very worthy recipients, but the list could be even longer. Please, whenever you are aware of a member of the public providing access to a rare bird or in some other way assisting birders, send in your nomination through the OFO website or via email to kenneth.gd.burrell@gmail.com.

The recipients of the 2015 awards are:

- * George Arevalo (Director of Golf) and the Carruthers Creek Golf and Country Club, for hosting birders on their property over several days while a Cattle Egret visited in November 2014.
- * Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall, in Oakville for allowing birders to park in their parking lot, to gain access to Sedgewick Park in the winter of 2014-15.

* Kathryn and Craig Corcoran, of Niagara-on-the-Lake for welcoming several hundred birders to their residence to view the Eurasian Tree-Sparrow over a four week period in November-December 2014.

* Geoff Carpentier, Margaret Bain, the Region of Durham and CH2M-Hill. To Margaret Bain and Geoff Carpentier for engaging the Region of Durham and their consultants and to the Region of Durham and CH2M-Hill for their willingness to incorporate elements into the operation of the Nonquon sewage lagoons that will enhance their value as migrant shorebird habitat.

* The residents of Arkendo Drive, Oakville, for hosting several hundred birders viewing the long-staying Painted Bunting in the winter of 2014-15.

* Sarah Rupert, for her long-standing effort in summarizing the Ontario section of the Christmas Bird Count.

* Rita and Ron Christie, for hosting birders viewing a Blue Grosbeak in April 2014.

* Lianne, Ken, Ryan, and Ryley Atwood, for hosting birders viewing the Painted Bunting near Huntsville in April 2014.

* Vic Rizzo, for hosting birders viewing the Brambling in North Bay in November 2014.

* Miranda O'Hara, for keeping alive a Cape May Warbler at her feeder during the winter of 2014-2015, in Markham.

* Bill Gilmour, for going above and beyond, helping with the 2015 OFO Birdathon. Bill scouted locations, helped with the planning and provided his backyard for the weekend to the young birders camping.

* Bruce Di Labio and Michael Tate, for providing and helping coordinate ongoing searches for the Little Egret in Ottawa, in June 2015.

* Michael Williamson, for coordinating the Iroquois Shoreline Raptor Watch for the past 15 years, while making a huge contribution to the understanding of raptor migration throughout Ontario and the GTA.

Left to right: Sarah Rupert, Ken Burrell, Rita Christie, Michael Tate, Bruce Di Labio, Michael Williamson and Henrique Pacheco on behalf of Bill Gilmour. Photo: Jean Ison



Of diamond dust and sun dogs

Text, photos and diagram By Gary Sturge

I'm not sure why it is, maybe a yearning to see the sun or a blue sky at this time of year when land and sky can be a greyish monotone, but looking at the sky I'm often thrilled to witness some interesting solar phenomena.

Our dogs want out before daylight, so I am up early, and get to see some spectacular sunrises, weather permitting, while sitting and drinking my morning coffee. I am also out with the dogs in the morning – we spend a lot of time together – so if it's clear and cold, the sun is there for appreciating. It is at these times, and likely because of the frigid temperatures, that solar phenomena such as sun halos, sun dogs and pillars can be observed. These phenomena occur due to innumerable minuscule ice crystals in various formations and alignments that are suspended in the atmosphere. Ice crystals can occur at any time of the year when the temperature drops with altitude, but they can occur very close to the earth with the onset of the cold weather.

Ice crystals are often found in cirrus clouds, generally have a hexagonal molecular structure and vary in shape from a flat plate to a column. Cirrus and cirrostratus are the thin wispy or lacy clouds that form at high altitudes, often before a change in the weather. The crystals can range in size from “hardly there”, less than 0.01mm, to larger than 1.0 mm. The optimal size for a halo is in the 0.1 to 0.5 mm range.

When the crystals are found near the earth, they are whimsically termed diamond dust, appropriate given that under certain conditions, the individual crystals can be seen sparkling. The crystals reflect and refract the sunlight passing through them, behaving much like mirrors and prisms, causing dispersion that breaks the light into colours. The shape and orientation of the crystals yield the different phenomena observed. Plate-type crystals float horizontally in the air like a falling leaf, while column-shaped ones tend to align vertically.

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

The most common types of phenomena are **halos**, **sundogs** and **light pillars**, although other more rare presentations can occur.

Halos are generally circular, appearing as large white rings around the sun (see photo at right). The most common is a 22-degree halo (actually 21.84 on average), seen away from the sun at approximately the width of an outstretched hand held at arm's length. Due to the optical properties of the ice crystal alignment for this halo, no light is reflected towards the inside of the



ring, resulting in a darker orb around the sun. These halos can be observed on as many as 100 days a year, more frequently than rainbows. All too often the phenomena are somewhat obscured in surrounding hazy clouds or diffused bright sunlight.

Parhelia are other extensions of the basic 22-degree halo. They can appear as a 46-degree halo (2 extended hands from the sun); a parhelic circle (a halo appearing as if horizontal above the viewer, but actually around the sun); and sundogs, the most commonly observed phenomena.

Sundogs, also called mock suns and perihelion, are glowing whitish spots or partial arcs around the sun, most often at the 3 and 9 o'clock position of the 22-degree halo (see photo below). The halo may be absent entirely except for the sundogs. Sundogs are most often viewed when the sun is close to the horizon and dispersion often occurs so that the area of the sundog closest to

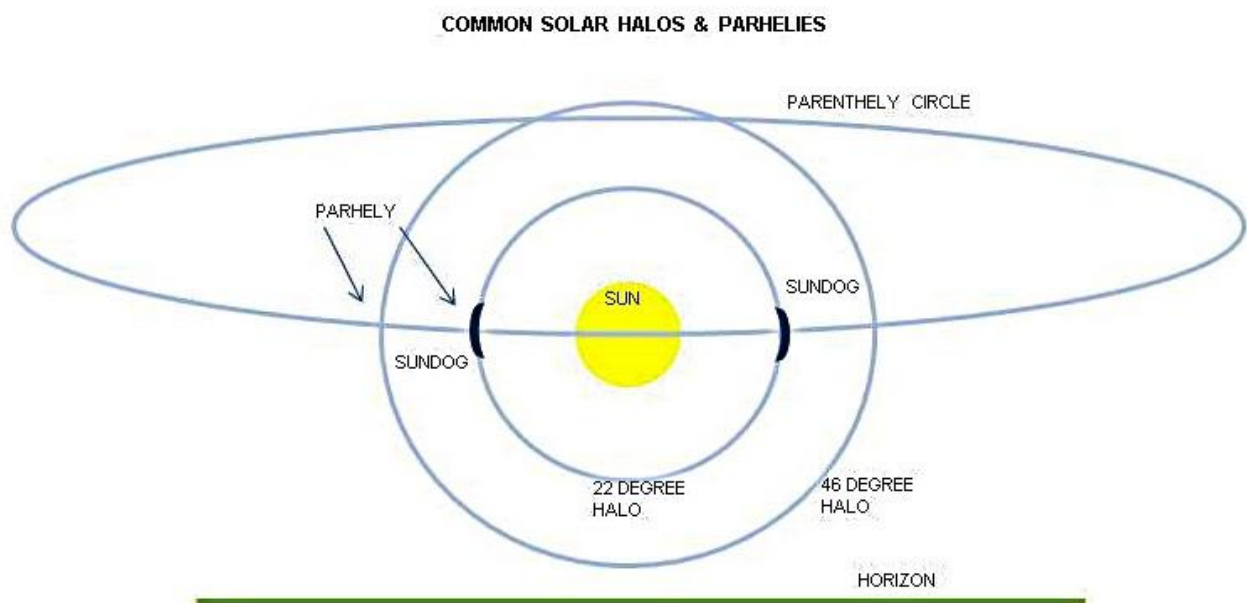
the sun is a reddish colour, progressing to blue and green further from it.

Halos and sundogs can also occur around the moon. When they do, they are called moon halos, moon dogs (surprised?) or paraselenes, but that's a story for another time.



Photo courtesy of Saskatchewan Farm News

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER



Light pillars (see photo below) are generally seen in colder climates or colder times of the year. They are viewed as columns of light emanating from above or below the sun, although they can also emanate from other bright light sources on the ground. They are typically seen at sunrise or sunset when the sun is close to or just below the horizon.

Not surprisingly, all these phenomena have variations and they account for a good number of the UFO sightings reported. So the next time you're up early or out for a stroll, take a good look at old Sol and you may be rewarded with a Solar Surprise!



A Northern birder and bander heads to the deep South

Chris Sukha, well-known area birder, has been banding birds for a number of years now. Birding began for Chris in 2000 when he became so fascinated by the world of birds that his goal was to one day become employed in the field. In 2010 he was trained in bird banding at Thunder Cape Bird Observatory, near Thunder Bay, and since then has worked as a bird bander in Northern British Columbia, the Yukon, Long Point Bird Observatory in southwestern Ontario and Hilliardton Marsh.

Chris recently applied for a position at the University of Southern Mississippi as part of a team doing a long-term study on Neotropical Migrants crossing the Gulf of Mexico and landing on the shores, woods, and swamps of Louisiana.

After going through an extensive interview process, Chris got the job. When he received word by telephone that he had been accepted, he could hardly contain his excitement and reported, “I did a rather undignified victory dance before going back outside to finish shovelling the snow in my large rural driveway.”



Photo courtesy of Hilliardton Marsh



Chris has seen many birds while banding and during his treks across Canada.

However, in his 28 years, he has not yet travelled outside Canada and is naturally very excited at seeing birds that are not usually seen north of the 48th parallel.

In Chris's words: “Louisiana! Land of beautiful birds, such as White Ibises (see top of next page) and Glossy Ibises, Little Blue Herons (seen above) and Painted

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

Buntings. Even our little ubiquitous Black-capped Chickadees will be replaced by very-similar-but-new-to-me Carolina Chickadees, and our familiar tiny Winter Wren which sings so incessantly will be replaced by the Carolina Wren, a species gigantic by comparison. All will be new to me. I have never been in the U.S.A. before, and here I am going so far south that both Mexico and Cuba will be closer than my native Canada.”

Chris’s work will entail “running the field element of the program, collecting the data for the biologists managing the study. It will involve working very long hours outside, approximately 10-12 hours per day, running about 30 fine nets used to gently capture the birds and applying Federal aluminum bands to their legs.”

Chris leaves for Louisiana by bus on March 12 and returns in May. He plans to write about his experience for *The Woodland Observer* before heading off to Hillardton Marsh for more bird banding almost immediately upon his return.

Chris has encountered many wild animals, including grizzly bears, in his bird banding travels, but “right now I am just a little concerned over the images on Google of very large alligators in the bayous of Louisiana.”



Photos of birds and alligator by Renee Levesque



In the land of the Chickadee

Text and photos by Renee Levesque

The National Bird Project allows Canadians to exercise their right to vote for Canada's national bird, to be determined in 2017, the year of our sesquicentennial. Current polls show the Black-capped Chickadee to be in fourth place. In first place is the Common Loon, followed in order by the Snowy Owl, the Gray Jay and the Canada Goose. The Black-capped Chickadee is only about 200 votes behind the Canada Goose, so for those who would like to see the Black-capped Chickadee become our national bird or, at the very least, get ahead of the Canada Goose, better get voting. You can vote at <http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/nationalbird/>, but if you have already voted, you cannot do so again. When on the above website, be sure to scroll down and click on *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, The National Bird Project, to view three comical ads for the Common Loon, the Canada Goose and the Puffin.

There are some who think the chickadee is too small and too cute to be our national bird, but it is a bird that is more than small and cute. It is curious and will follow you as you walk through the woods, and it is a lively, acrobatic bird, amusing us and brightening our day through some long, cold winters. It is ever-faithful to all our seasons, including winter, no matter how cold. It is a resilient, loyal bird, maybe even the first bird we all learn to identify and know. And although it is a tiny bird, it does have a relatively large head for its body, to say nothing of its distinctive and distinguished coat of feathers in classic colours of black and white.

Chickadees bond prior to their breeding season. The male-female bonds form in the fall when chickadees start forming foraging flocks. They pair with each other based on their hierarchy within the flock, meaning the alpha male will pair with the alpha female and so forth. During the winter, as you watch the chickadees flocking to your feeders, you will notice that there will be one, the dominant male, that chases off all other chickadees in the flock to allow his chosen mate

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

to feed. The female may get better access to food when paired with the dominate male, but the male uses up a lot of energy to ensure she does. As well, the male's potential for injury increases during aggressive interactions when keeping other chickadees at bay.

Despite the toll it may take on the dominant male, it is because of his protection that the female may lay more eggs, lay larger eggs or lay earlier in the season. Chicks that are born earlier are more likely to survive and are able to join their first winter flocks earlier, thereby becoming more dominant in the new winter hierarchy.

On February 2, with the woods newly white from a snowfall the evening before and with all the tree branches heavily laden with powdery snow, Dick Tafel, Chris Sukha and I went on our annual Field winter outing to search for the Black-backed Woodpecker, the Three-toed Woodpecker and crossbills. We found none of these, but on a beautiful walk along Lac Clair Road and onto South Shore Road (seen below), we were followed by six energetic chickadees. The flock increased to between eight and ten as we walked along. At one point, we stopped for a while and just watched these delightful little birds, forgetting totally about finding more unusual species. After a bit, the chickadees came to us despite the fact we had no food. They came first to Chris when he held out his hand, and then to Dick (above) and then finally to me. Not to boast, but Dick and Chris had only one chickadee at a time come to their hands, whereas I had two vying for my attention, both briefly perching on my hand at the same time. It was quite enchanting and I think had I not already voted for the Snowy Owl, I would have voted right there and then for the Black-capped Chickadee.



*Editor's Note:
Some of the
information
contained in this
article comes
from a student
blog post of Gates
Dupont at
feederwatch.org.*

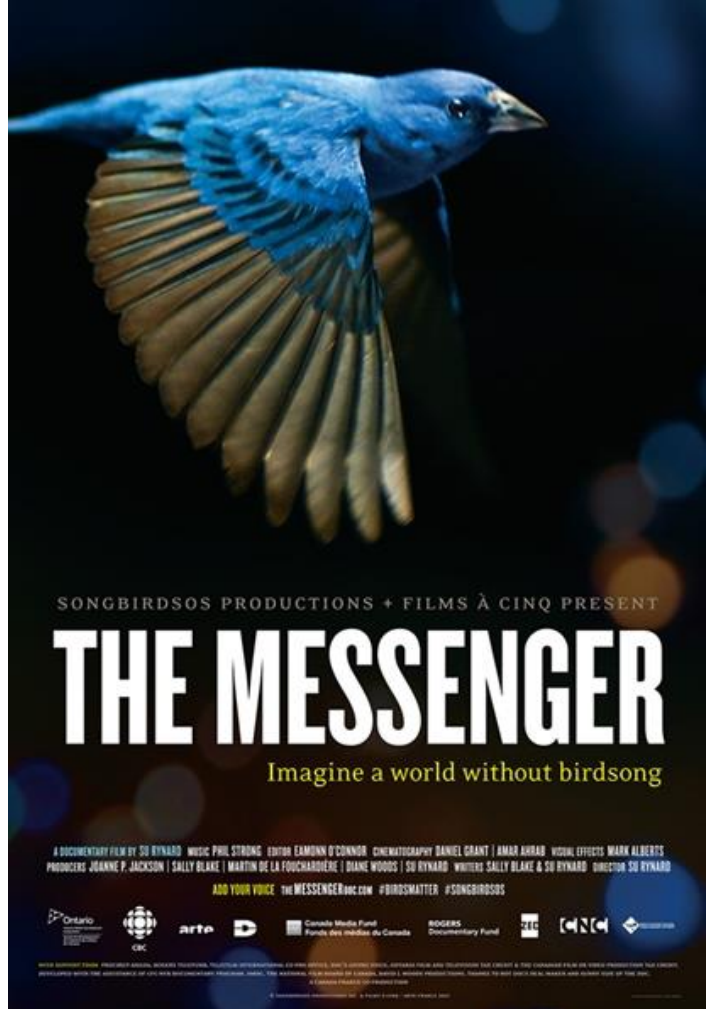
THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

Don't blame the messenger

By Renee Levesque

The Nature Film Festival, hosted by *Forests without Borders* at Nipissing University Theatre on January 22 and 23, showcased many excellent documentaries. (You can review a list of films shown and a synopsis of each of them in January's newsletter posted on our website.)

The documentary receiving the most publicity throughout North America is *The Messenger*, a full-length feature film highlighting the decline in the songbird population. Birds, as messengers, are not telling us in this powerful documentary to expect an early spring or a pending storm, but instead warning us they are imperiled.



Directed by Su Rynard, *The Messenger* won the Best Conservation Program at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival in 2015. It is beautifully filmed and visually thrilling to see songbirds, like the Blue Bunting, fly in slow motion.

Because most songbirds migrate at night and in silence, it was a challenge to film them during their migration flight. So the question became how to illuminate for the camera to capture these birds in night flight? The answer came in the form of a wind tunnel used by scientists at Western University's Advanced Facility for Avian Research. Worth watching is this video from behind the scenes of *The Messenger*:

<http://songbirdsos.com/portfolio/messenger-behind-scenes/>

Tell Your Friends!

Nature Film Festival

Where: Nipissing University Theatre
When: Friday, January 22, 7-9:30pm & Saturday, January 23, 10am - 4:30pm
* FREE Admission with voluntary donation to Forests without Borders (FwB)
**Seating is limited to 220 guests, first come first served

Brought to you by:
Forests without Borders
Forêts sans Frontières

Friday Night 7-10 pm

7:00 pm Introductions

7:25 pm FILM: "Amazing Grace" - 4 mins.
A Zambian man contemplates the effect of charcoal production on local forests.

7:30 pm SPEAKER: Sam Nsiah (FwB)
Speaks about FwB projects in Ghana.

8:00 pm FILM: "Unnatural Selection" - 53 mins.
This film provides scientific evidence about the human influence on animal evolution. Beginning on the Galapagos Islands where the idea of natural selection was born, taking us on a journey to different parts of the world showing what is possible and what is happening.

9:00 pm SPEAKER: Peter Nosko (Nipissing University)
Speaks about student trip to Galapagos.

Saturday Morning 10am-12pm

10:00 am Introductions

10:10 am FILM: "Birds for Peace" - 11 mins.
The Middle East is an important migratory corridor for over 270 species of birds. These birds are bringing people in this conflict ridden region together.

10:22 am FILM: "Deadly Mission Madagascar" - 28 mins.
Eight teenagers are sent to the frontline of conservation in Madagascar and wrestle with the issue of how to save the wildlife while still helping the people.

10:50 am SPEAKER: Fred Pinto (FwB)
Speaks about FwB projects in Madagascar.

11:20 am FILM: "Bluebird Man" - 20 mins.
What can a single person do to protect nature? Find out what this 93 year old idiosyncrasy has done for Blue birds.

11:40 am FILM: "The Origin of Birds" - 19 mins.
Reveals how scientists pieced together the evidence that birds are a lineage of theropod dinosaurs that survived mass extinction about 66 million years ago.

Break for lunch 12-1:30 pm
Food donated by local restaurants will be sold with all proceeds donated to the charity FwB.

Saturday Afternoon 1:30-5pm

1:30 pm FILM: "The Flight to Freedom, The Amur Falcon Story" - 12 mins.
Explores how people worked to find alternative livelihoods for people that hunted & killed thousands of Amur Falcons in NE India.

1:45 pm FILM: "Thin Ice: The Inside Story of Climate Change" - 57 mins.
An intimate portrait of the global community of researchers racing to understand our planet's changing climate.

3:00 pm FILM: "The Messenger" - 90 mins.
Winner of "Best Conservation Program", this film explores the decline of songbirds in a rapidly changing world.

FOR MORE INFO, PLEASE CONTACT US VIA EMAIL: SZERAN@CIF-IFC.ORG OR CALL US AT: (705)-744-1715 X530

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

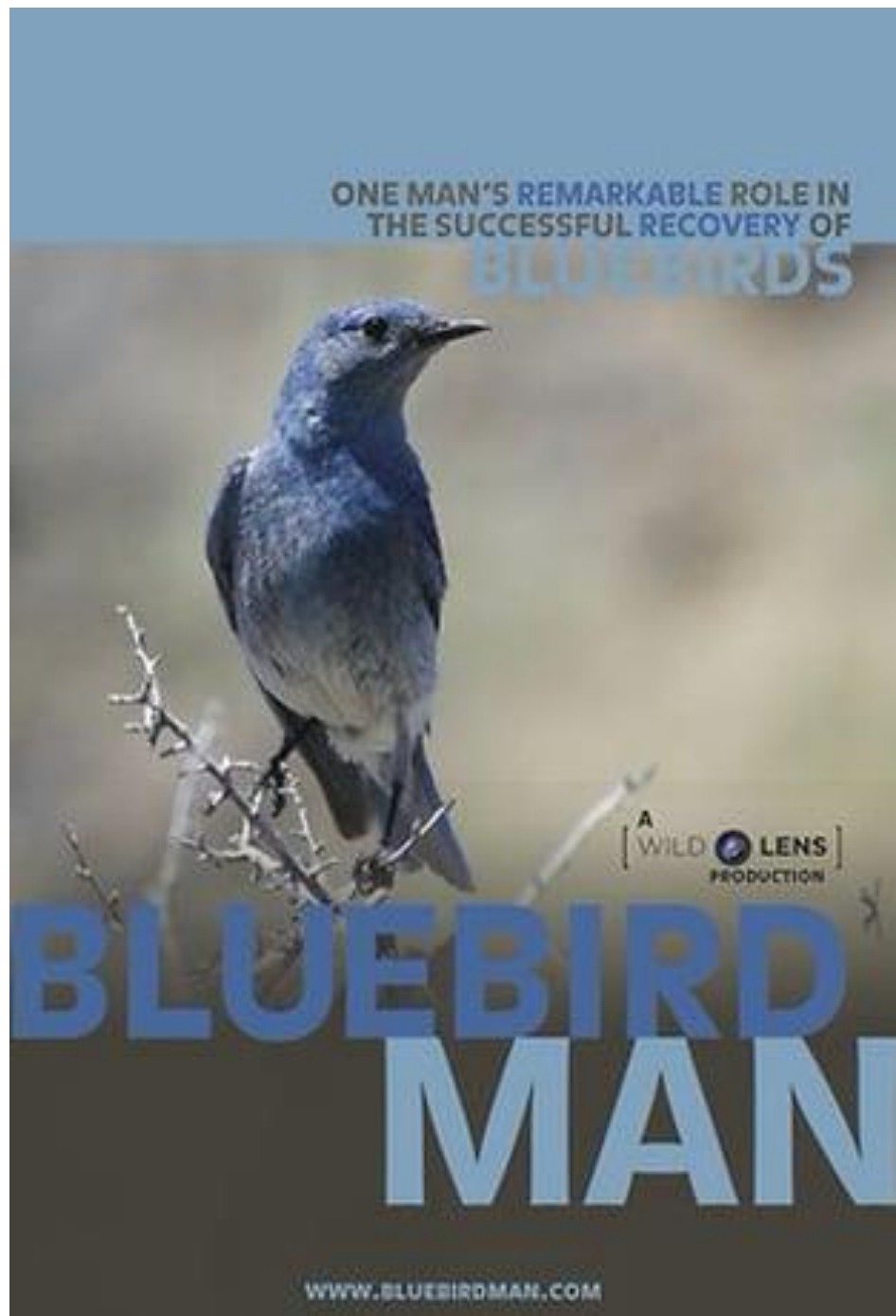
In fact, the entire website for *The Messenger* is worth checking out:

<http://songbirdsos.com/>

If you missed seeing *The Messenger* during the Nature Film Festival, there are other screenings in Ontario, although none nearby. However, you can book for a private screening. Information to do so can be found on *The Messenger* website.

One of my favourite short documentaries at the Nature Film Festival was *Bluebird Man*, about then 91-year-old Al Larson and his commitment over the past 35 years to preserving bluebirds. It too is a visually beautiful film, showcasing not only the bluebird, but also the remote Owyhee Mountains along the Idaho/Oregon border. Al set up 300 nest boxes for the bluebirds, birds in decline in part because of competition for nesting cavities from European Starlings and House Sparrows, both introduced species.

You can imagine the amount of time it takes Al to monitor all those boxes, many set up miles apart. *Bluebird Man* was nominated for an Emmy Award. To read more about this wonderful documentary and to purchase *Bluebird Man* for streaming see: <http://www.bluebirdman.com/>.



Your Board of Directors

Over the next two or three issues, we will be running biographical sketches of our Board Directors, starting with the first four Directors from whom sketches were received.

Fred Pinto, president

Fred wears many hats.

Foremost, he is a Registered Professional Forester and is the Executive Director of the Ontario Professional Foresters Association, the Association legislated by the province to govern the profession of forestry in



Ontario. Fred worked for many years for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

Fred is also the Chair of *Forests without Borders*, a registered charity that helps people restore forests and increases their awareness of sustainable forestry. The charity has projects in Canada, Ghana, Cameroon, Uganda, Zambia and Nepal.

Fred, who is committed to educating a new generation of highly trained people to work and care for our forests, has received awards from the University of Toronto, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Professional Foresters Association and Canadian Institute of Forestry. In 2011 he was a finalist for the United Nations Forest Hero award.

And last, but certainly not least, Fred is an avid birder as you can attest from the photo of him holding a Common Redpoll, banded at Hilliardton Marsh last winter.

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER



Paul Smylie

Paul spent much of his youth “mucking about in ponds, lakes and forests, searching for all manner of fascinating critters, from bugs to skunks.” His childhood interests led him to study biology. He eventually completed a Master’s Degree in aquatic ecology on zebra mussels in the Great Lakes.

Some of Paul’s more memorable experiences with

nature include capturing young Beluga whales for stress research in Churchill, Manitoba, and searching for endangered Willow Flycatchers in the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

Paul grew up in North Bay and despite his travels still loves and appreciates the bountiful opportunities of the natural world that we have in our area. He currently works as a biological technologist at Nipissing University.

In Paul’s words: “Having long understood the therapeutic benefits of nature, I thrive when I am outdoors and do my best to tailor my life to maximize my time spent in nature.”

The photo of Paul is from the little museum in a place called Tsiigehtchic, a small native community along the Dempster Highway, a route Paul bicycled this past summer. The skull beside Paul is from an extinct Steppe Bison found in the graveyard there.

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

Sarah Wheelan

Sarah first heard about the Nipissing Naturalists Club when she showed up at the bat box-building event at Home Depot last October. Impressed by the Club's objective to share and enjoy nature, she attended the next general meeting and joined the Club, and in January, she became one of two new Board members.

Sarah's new to northeastern Ontario, but not new to the north. Originally from Sault Ste. Marie, she has also lived in Thunder Bay while pursuing a degree in environmental science and biology.



Sarah's career path, however, took a different course and she currently works in communications for a charity. But different path or not, Sarah has never lost her love of the outdoors.

Besides, Sarah's communications skills have stood the Club in good stead. They have allowed her to begin revamping the Club's website, <http://www.nipnats.com/>

The photo of Sarah was taken at the bat box-building event at Home Depot. Her bat box now has a home on a friend's farm in Chisholm.



Oriana Pokorny

Oriana, our second new Board member this year, was born and raised in North Bay. After living abroad and teaching science in England - East London and Hampshire - for two years, she returned to North Bay with the hope of teaching science in her home town. Her hopes paid off and in 2010, she became employed at Nipissing University teaching Environmental Science.

Oriana also has a summer job at Camp Temagami. Here, she takes children on traditional style wilderness canoe trips. Traditional style means cedar strip canoes, wanigans for carrying supplies and “leave no trace” whenever possible.

Oriana is an outdoor enthusiast, taking every opportunity to be outside. Sometimes that means long adventures through the Canadian wilderness.

Sometimes that means taking students on outdoor field studies. Sometimes that means a hike with friends. And sometimes that means just a quick ski between classes. As Oriana says, “Just as long as I get outside, I’m happy.”

Certainly happy is how Oriana looks in her photo taken at Camp Temagami as she transports her canoe from its rack to the water’s edge.

‘...And I hope you like jammin’ too’

By Steve Pitt

To raise money to help pay for the Louise de Kirline historic plaque recently approved by Ontario Heritage Trust, more than a dozen musicians from Mattawa, Bonfield, North Bay and surrounding areas will be holding a fund-raising jam session at the **Bonfield Parish Hall, 408 Gagnon Street, Bonfield, on Friday, March 4.** Doors open at **6:00 p.m. and the session ends at 10:00 p.m.** There is a small cover charge of \$3.00 per person to pay for janitorial services and staff for the bar and canteen.

Everyone is invited. If you like to sing, play an instrument, or just listen to great live music, please come out and support this fundraiser. Country music tends to dominate, but depending on who is there, you'll also hear blues, rock and roll, French Canadian traditional and folk.

The Parish Hall is licensed and has a snack bar for light refreshments.

There will be a silent auction and Paul Smylie's prints will be on sale. If you have items you would like to donate for the silent auction or for door prizes, please contact Steve Pitt at **705-776-1683.**

For those not familiar with Bonfield, the Parish Hall is beside Ste Bernadette Church, the tallest building in Bonfield. If you are coming from North Bay, take Hwy. 17 E to Hwy. 531. Turn right on 531 and follow it until it comes into Bonfield (about 5 minutes). Turn left at the T junction of Maple and 531 and follow 531 as it crosses the railroad tracks. The road veers to the left as you climb a small hill. Turn right on Yonge Street and it will take you directly into downtown Bonfield. The church is on the left. For a visual, see Google photo at right.

**Bonfield Parish Hall beside
Ste Bernadette Parish Church
408 Gagnon Street, Bonfield**



Upcoming Club outings

In addition to the jam session on March 4 to help raise money for the Louise de Kiriline Lawrence plaque, there are two further outings for members to consider, thanks to Paul Smylie who organized them:

The first outing, on **Saturday, February 27**, is an exciting **dog-sledding adventure** starting at 10:00 a.m. at PowderDogs in Calvin Township, just past Eau Claire Gorge and 17 km from the north entrance to Algonquin Park. **A maximum of twelve people can take part at a cost of \$40.00 each** which includes a vegetarian chili lunch, hot chocolate and tea.



For those interested, please contact Paul Smylie at psmylie1@hotmail.com.

Meet at the Visitor's Centre for a 9:00 a.m. car-pooling departure.

Please be sure to dress warmly. Layering is strongly advised.

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

The second outing, on **Saturday, March 5**, is a trip to **Hilliardton Marsh** near New Liskeard to see the banding of winter birds, Common Redpolls in particular (seen at right) and perhaps some Pine Grosbeaks. This will necessitate an early departure because banding is conducted only in the morning until 1:00 p.m. Because this date is also a *For the Love of the Birds* event at Hilliardton Marsh starting at 11:00 a.m., Nipissing Naturalists Club members can have some private banding time with Bruce Murphy and Nicole Richardson starting at 10:00 a.m. However, members can remain *For the Love of Birds*. Hot chocolate will be served.



Photo by
Lisa Hackett

If you are not a member of Hilliardton Marsh, a **\$10.00 per person admission fee is required or in lieu of the admission fee, a donation of bird seed per person.** Alternatively, you can purchase a year's membership at \$20.00 which will allow you free access to all events at Hilliardton.

Meet at the Visitor's Centre for an 8:00 a.m. car-pooling departure. Bring snacks if you wish, but there will be a stop for lunch on the return trip.

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 March, April and May.

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

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 right, *photographed by Fred Pinto* who took the trip with the students?

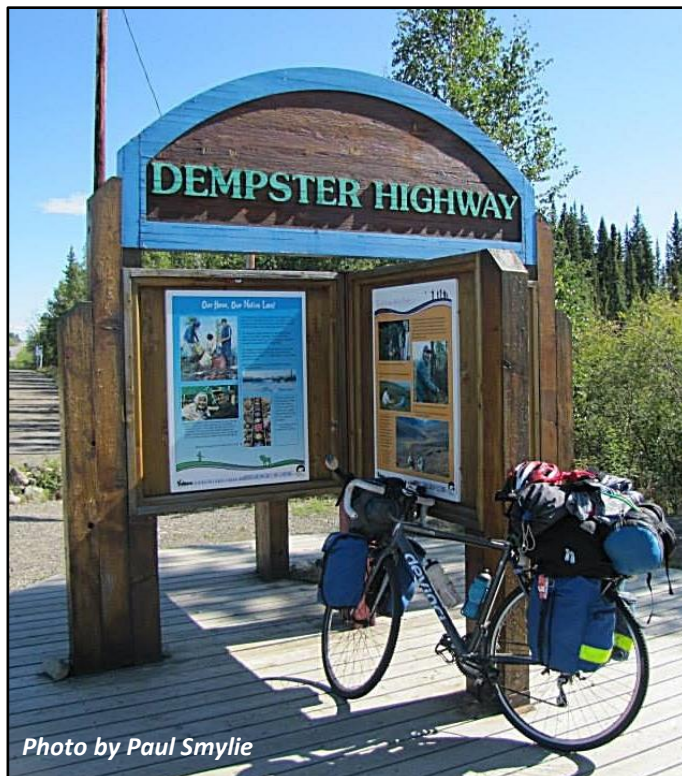


Photo by Paul Smylie

On Tuesday, April 12, Paul Smylie will talk about *Bicycling the Dempster Highway: Whitehorse to Inuvik*.

Last summer, Paul spent two weeks cycling alone along Canada's only all-weather road that crosses the Arctic Circle. Learn from Paul about his amazing journey and what it is to cycle alone along a gravel road in the Arctic.

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

On **Tuesday, May10**, Larry Dyke, retired geologist, Geological Survey of Canada, will talk about *The Role of Geology in Creating Wetlands, Havens for Animals*, focusing on the Okavango Delta of Botswana and the Hudson Bay Lowlands of Canada. (Below is a wonderful photo taken by Larry of an elephant in the Okavango Delta.)



THE WOODLAND OBSERVER



Board of Directors, 2016

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

Marc Buchanan, Vice-president

Joe Boivin

Sonje Bols-Hill

Irene Kasch

Mary Marrs

Stephen Mitchell

April Phelps

Oriana Pokorny

Paul Smylie

Sarah Wheelan

Past Presidents

Dick Tafel

Ted Price

Steph Romaniuk

Angela Martin

Greg Boxwell

Jeremy St. Onge

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

Bird Wing

Dick Tafel, Chairman: rtafel@sympatico.ca. 705-472-7907

Gary Sturge, Treasurer

Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe.

A Bird Wing newsletter is published each month, except December, and sent to members by email and posted on the Nipissing Naturalists Club website, <http://www.nipnats.com/> under Bird Wing.

The Woodland Observer is published electronically each month from September to June and sent to members by email and posted on the Nipissing Naturalists Club website <http://www.nipnats.com/> under Newsletter.

Editor: Renee Levesque: rlevesque1948@gmail.com

Contributors this issue: Larry Dyke, Lisa Hackett, Debra Johnson, Renee Levesque, Fred Pinto, Steve Pitt, Oriana Pokorny, Paul Smylie, Bill Steer, Chris Sukha, Gary Sturge and Sarah Wheelan.

Special thanks to Ontario Field Ornithologists for use of page 11 from the *OFO News*, October 2015; and PowderDogs Facebook, Saskatchewan Farm News 2006, The Messenger, Bluebird Man, and Hilliardton Marsh for use of photographs.

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.** This fee is paid directly to Bird Wing.



The Nipissing Naturalist Club is affiliated with Ontario Nature: <http://www.ontarionature.org/>.