

# THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

APRIL 2018



NIPISSING NATURALISTS CLUB



From the editor:

## Celebrations of the natural world

Renee Levesque

*Our population and our use of finite resources of planet Earth are growing exponentially, along with our technical ability to change the environment for good or ill.*

– Stephen Hawking, 1942–2018.

With the installation of the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, we have the technical ability to change the environment for good. The Eco Fair, with its emphasis on the environment and a sustainable future, takes place on **April 13 in the lobby of Canadore College**. We will have a booth there to show what the Motus Wildlife Tracking System is all about. Details of the event are inside this issue.

And nine days later, on April 22, is Earth Day. Canada's emphasis this year is again on children - on protecting and creating outdoor play opportunities for all children. Its slogans are consume less, play more; and less screen time, more green time. In the United States, the emphasis is on ending plastic pollution, reforesting our Earth and building sustainable communities.

Other special days in April according to Nature Canada are Beaver Day, April 7; Look up in the Sky Day, April 14; Bat Appreciation Day, April 17; and World Fish Migration Day, April 21.

**Pick one or more of these days, including Earth Day, and let me know what you did on that day in keeping with the theme of the day – or even just send me a photo illustrating the theme.**

Usually before the end of March, I see an American Robin in my yard. But with all the snow still in my yard, I probably will not see one in it before April. Of all the harbingers of spring, the robin is the most pleasing, and that's why one graces the cover of April's issue. I took the photo last April 17th. I recall one birder saying a couple of years ago when she saw her first robin, "It

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made me clap my hands in glee!” Another harbinger of spring is the Red-winged Blackbird with its *conk-la-ree*, the classic call of the wetlands. Many have heard or seen a Red-wing during the last week of March. The robin can’t be far behind. Ken Gowing saw nine robins in Chisholm Township on March 27. Perhaps by the time this issue is distributed to members, many will have seen one or more.

Inside this issue, you will also find a tribute to Louise de Kiriline Lawrence who died on April 26, 1992; an article on the rescue of two Big Brown Bats and two Snowy Owls, one right at Canadore College; Shannon Kelly’s overview of her volunteer work in South Africa; Rick Tripp’s heart-warming story of Gunner, a tale he told to participants at this year’s dogsledding event; Debbie Faith’s grades 1 and 2 kids and their Trumpeter Swan research project – and I can’t mention Trumpeter Swans without an update on Ava; and late winter interesting sightings, the Ermine and the Flying Squirrel.

Stephen Hawking also said, “*Books are a uniquely portable magic.*” And indeed they are! For the past few issues, I have been featuring book reviews, in this issue, one by Marc Buchanan.

**Book reviews are always welcome.**

Some other events worth noting – Ontario Nature’s Northern Regional Meeting in May and Ontario Nature’s Annual Gathering in June. Details of both these events are inside. We hope many members can come out to the Northern Regional Meeting as Nipissing Naturalists will be acting as hosts.

And finally, April’s speaker at our Club meeting on April 10 is Larry Dyke who will be talking about climate change, the jet stream in particular. Whether it ties in to Larry’s talk or not, the photo on the previous page was taken at the West Arm of Lake Nipissing on April 8, 2017. The photo below was taken on the south shore of the lake five years earlier, April 8, 2012.

- Renee Levesque, [rlevesque1948@gmail.com](mailto:rlevesque1948@gmail.com)



## Four wildlife rescues in the space of six days

*By Renee Levesque, with Frederik Ladouceur and  
Jeremy St. Onge*

On March 9 and again on March 12, two Big Brown Bats were found by Canadore College student Frederik Ladouceur, a student of Jeremy St. Onge, former president of Nipissing Naturalists Club.

The first one, a female Big Brown, was found on March 9 by Frederik in the snow outside Canadore College. Because it was unable to return to its roost, the bat was brought by Frederik to his classroom, where Jeremy and the students cared for it. Frederik reports it was malnourished, thirsty and freezing. It was given water using an eyedropper.

Jeremy contacted the nearest wildlife rehabilitation centre, Turtle Pond Wildlife Rehabilitation in Val Carron,

([http://www.ontariowildliferescue.ca/wildlifecentres/detail.s.php?wildlifecenter\\_id=1522](http://www.ontariowildliferescue.ca/wildlifecentres/detail.s.php?wildlifecenter_id=1522)) and made arrangements

with the rehab centre to care for the bat. Then he and his friend drove the bat part way to Val Caron where they met up with personnel from the centre who took the bat the rest of the way.



Photo by Sara Woolman



Big Brown Bat, photo by Angela Proudfoot

Now I know the odds of this are very slim indeed, but three days later, on March 12, Frederik, who also works at Best Buy in Northgate Shopping Centre, saw another Big Brown Bat, this one falling onto the floor of Best Buy a few feet from him! (Photo by Best Buy employee at left.) Frederik took the bat home to his apartment, where, after consulting with fellow classmate Angela Proudfoot, he cared for it with the help of his girlfriend, Christine Whalen, and with the help of PetSmart, a pet food store which was able to get a package of live mealworms for Frederik and Christine to feed to the bat. The next day, Frederik took the bat to Turtle Pond Wildlife Rehabilitation.

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Both bats did not appear to have white-nose syndrome and by all accounts both are doing well at Turtle Pond. If they survive, they will be released, depending on the weather, sometime between May and July within a mile radius of where they were found.

And if that coincidence wasn't enough, there was also a Snowy Owl rescue at Northgate Shopping Centre on March 11, the day before the bat rescue there. If you haven't already read the story of this rescue, you can read about it in the March 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the *North Bay Nugget*, in an article by Jennifer Hamilton-McCharles:

<http://www.nugget.ca/2018/03/15/snowy-owl-rescued-at-northgate>.

Unfortunately, a Snowy Owl and perhaps even the same one as the one trapped in Northgate's parking garage was struck by a vehicle on Franklin Street in North Bay during the morning of March 14. Aurel St. Jean was crossing the tracks on Franklin Street in his truck when the owl hit the side of his vehicle. When Mr. St. Jean ascertained that the owl was still alive, he carried it back to his truck and contacted Wild at Heart Wildlife Refuge Centre (<http://wahrefugecentre.org/>) in Lively. He took the rest of day off to drive the owl to the centre for care of its concussion and broken wing. Mr. St. Jean donated some money to the wildlife centre and is following up on the owl's progress. See the March 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the *North Bay Nugget* in an article by Jennifer Hamilton-McCharles: <http://www.nugget.ca/2018/03/16/owl-brought-to-refuge-centre-after-getting-hit>.



Deserving a round of applause are many good Samaritans: Jeremy St. Onge, Frederik Ladouceur, Christine Whalen, Angela Proudfoot, and the students of Jeremy's class; Best Buy employees; PetSmart; Turtle Pond Rehabilitation Centre; a concerned customer at Northgate Shopping Centre who alerted security when he saw a Snowy Owl behind the signage at the corner of the parking garage; Paulette Gagnon, general manager of Northgate Shopping Centre; Luke Thomson of Thomson Bird Control whom Ms Gagnon called for advice; Bruce Dudley from the shopping centre's sign company who, on the advice of Mr. Thomson, removed a section of the sign to enable the Snowy Owl with its eight-foot wingspan to fly out of the parking garage where it had found itself trapped after pursuing a Rock Pigeon; Aurel St. Jean; and Wild at Heart Wildlife Refuge Centre.

(Note: The photo of the Snowy Owl is not the owl involved in either of the above two rescues. Instead, I decided to go with a photo from Wikimedia Commons.)

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*Courtesy of Shannon Kelly*

# A truly amazing experience

*By Shannon Kelly*

In August 2017, I volunteered for three weeks to work and live at Glen Afric, an animal sanctuary comprised of approximately 32,375 hectares (80,000 acres), located 20 minutes from Pretoria, one of the three capital cities of South Africa, and 40 minutes from Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa. Glen Afric is located in the North West Province, with views of the magnificent Magaliesberg mountain range, one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world.

The animals in this sanctuary include lions, hyenas, leopards, cheetahs, zebras, elephants, giraffes and hippos, as well as buffalo, horses and tigers, the latter not indigenous to South Africa nor even to the continent of Africa. These animals are rescued animals, some from zoos, some from other sanctuaries, and some from cruel situations. The sanctuary's goal is to care for them and keep them safe from poachers in a habitat similar to their natural environment. Sadly, poaching is a huge issue in South Africa. Animals cared for on a sanctuary cannot be released to the wild, unlike those cared for in rehabilitation and release centres.

Some of the day-to-days tasks I did six days a week were mucking out the horse stables and the elephant barn; cleaning up the sanctuary and the animal enclosures; building/fixing fences and

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water troughs; feeding the animals; running errands; and much more. But it was not all work. For a period of time on Wednesdays, we were able to play and interact with the lion cubs and with a 20-year-old Cheetah named Oliver. (Sadly, Oliver has died since I was there.) And we had Sundays off.

When I was not working, I visited Johannesburg, Pretoria and other nearby communities. I went to the incredible Cradle of Humankind, a World Heritage Site, home to about 40% of the world's human ancestor fossils. This 47,000-hectare (about 116,500 acres) paleoanthropological site, containing a complex of limestone caves, is about 50 km northwest of Johannesburg.

I met many local people, tasted their food and experienced their art, music and literature. I also visited a reptile sanctuary, did some sky diving, went four-wheeling, and went horseback riding in the mountains.

The weather during my visit was perfect for me and the physical work I was doing. South Africa's dry season runs from April through to October, and August is their winter. The nights and early mornings were chilly at around 6 degrees C, but warmed up to between 15 and 20 degrees C by mid-afternoon.

I have never experienced anything quite like South Africa. I had some truly amazing experiences for the short time I was there and can't wait to get back some day.

*Editor's Note: For more information on volunteering at Glen Afric, see <https://www.glenafrik.co.za/gave.html>. Shannon was responsible for paying her own air fare, accommodation and meals.*



*Courtesy of Shannon Kelly*



Renee Levesque

## Interesting late winter finds

*By Renee Levesque*

**Stoat:** It is like an apparition in the winter, white on white. If it weren't for the prominent black tip at the end of its tail, you might not even notice it – the Stoat (*Mustela ermine*) or Ermine or Short-tailed Weasel, a small weasel with a long body and a cylindrical trunk. It has an elongated neck, a triangular-shaped face with round, black eyes that protrude slightly, short rounded ears and long whiskers.

In summer, its coat is a sandy brown, although its undersides remain white and the tail remains black-tipped. (The difference in winter and summer coats is less apparent in southern forms of the species where some stay brown all year.) Its winter fur is dense and silky; its summer fur rougher.

It has sharp claws suitable for catching prey – mice, chipmunks, squirrels, shrews and even rabbits. If those animals are scarce, it will add small birds and fish to its diet. It is an efficient climber and swimmer. Populations naturally fluctuate with the abundance of prey, especially rodents. It falls prey to foxes, raptors, badgers and fishers.

The Ermine is primarily a nocturnal animal, but can often be seen during the day. In late February I saw one in my yard at mid-day. At our February Bird Wing meeting, some members mentioned they also had seen one this winter.

Found across Canada, the Ermine, categorized as Least Concern, is in every province and territory. It is also found in parts of the United States, as well as Europe, Japan, Asia and Greenland, but not Iceland. Unfortunately, it was introduced to New Zealand to control the population of rabbits and hares, but with a devastating impact. It has become a major threat to the native bird population.

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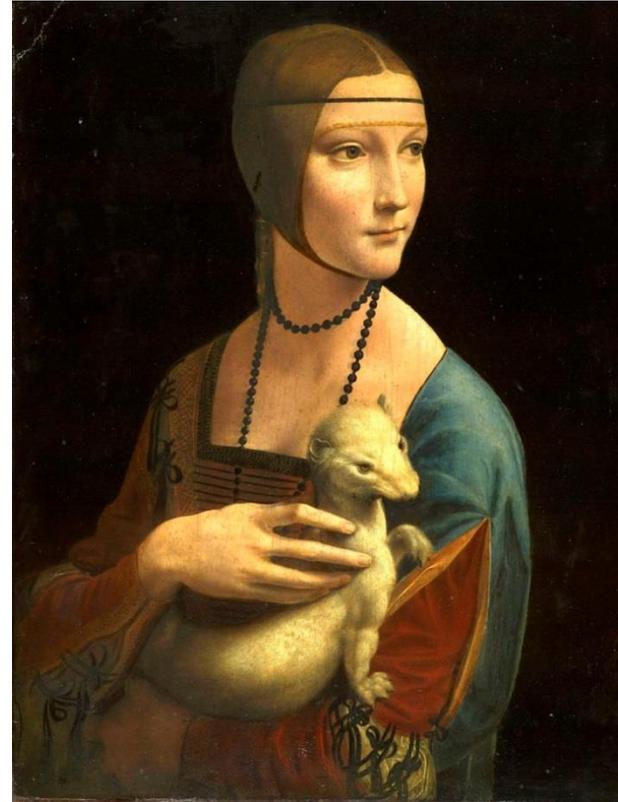
Male and female Ermines live close to each other, but not together, in burrows and nest chambers of rodents, in old and rotting stumps, under tree roots, in heaps of brushwood, in haystacks, in rock piles and in abandoned buildings.

It matures quickly and mates in late spring to early summer, although there is an 8 to 9 month delay in implantation. The young, a litter of 4 to 9, are born the following spring. It is not a monogamous animal and the male plays no part in rearing the young.



The Ermine's winter coat is prized by the fur trade, especially for trim on coats and stoles. It was a symbol of high status, the fur of royalty, nobility and clergy. The painting of Queen Elizabeth 1, *The Ermine Portrait*, by Nicholas Hilliard (1585), seen at left, shows the Queen with an Ermine, a symbol of purity and majesty (note the crown around its neck). It was thought the

Ermine would rather die than soil its white coat. Leonardo da Vinci painted only four women, one of which, of course, is the *Mona Lisa* and another, *Lady with an Ermine* (1489-90), a painting I saw in the Czartoryski Museum in Krakow. The lady in the painting is the



mistress of the Duke of Milan, da Vinci's patron.

Called just a Weasel in Ireland, the Ermine has been mythologized in that country as a dangerous, mischievous and thieving animal, one that brings bad luck unless greeted as a friendly neighbour.

**Northern Flying Squirrel:** I have seen a flying squirrel only once in my life, in my backyard at dusk a few years ago. And because it was the first time I had seen one despite many years of living in the woods, I was quite excited seeing it "fly" from one tree to another. But Ken Gowing sees them regularly at his place in Chisholm Township and Gary Chowns saw some recently during the day when they were disturbed by Gary clearing snow off the roof of his Restoule cottage.

*Wikimedia Commons*

Flying squirrels don't really fly. Instead they glide from one tree to another by using a furry parachute-like membrane known as a patagium. It is a membrane that stretches from its wrists to its ankles.

There are three species of the flying squirrel native to North and Central America. The species we see here is the *Glaucomys sabrinus*, the northern species. It

is found in coniferous and mixed coniferous forests across most of northern Canada and in parts of the United States, including Alaska. A southern species, *Glaucomys volans*, inhabits the Carolinian forests of southern Ontario, but has been seen as far north as Muskoka, the Ottawa Valley, parts of Quebec and parts of Nova Scotia. Its territory partially overlaps that of the northern species, but the two species do not interbreed.

Using its patagia and long, flat bushy tail, the flying squirrel is able to steer and control its glide path and aerodynamic movements. It can adjust its angle to the right or left and even make a 180 degree turn. It usually glides anywhere from 5 to 25 m (16 to 82 feet), although it can glide up to 45 m (148 feet) or more. The tail acts as a rudder or an air brake. During mating season, it engages in spectacular acrobatics in the air. That would be something to witness, judging from photos I have seen online.

It has light brown fur with pale underparts and is about the same size as a Red Squirrel. It has large, dark, bulging eyes adapted for night vision and long, sensitive whiskers common to other nocturnal mammals' eyes. It has scent glands in its cheeks to mark its forest routes.

The flying squirrel is nocturnal and omnivorous. It feeds on lichen, mushrooms, fruit, seeds, buds, flowers, insects, tree sap, carrion and birds' eggs. It disseminates the spores of the fungi it eats. When food supplies are lower, it will cache its food in tree cavities and squirrels' nests. Gliding from tree to tree, the flying squirrel, in its foraging, can get through the forest more



Gary Chowns

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quickly and efficiently than a tree squirrel. It also forages on the ground, but on the ground, it is slow and clumsy.

It is an important prey for the Spotted and Eastern Screech Owls. Its other predators include the Great Horned Owl, hawks, martens, lynx and the Red Fox.

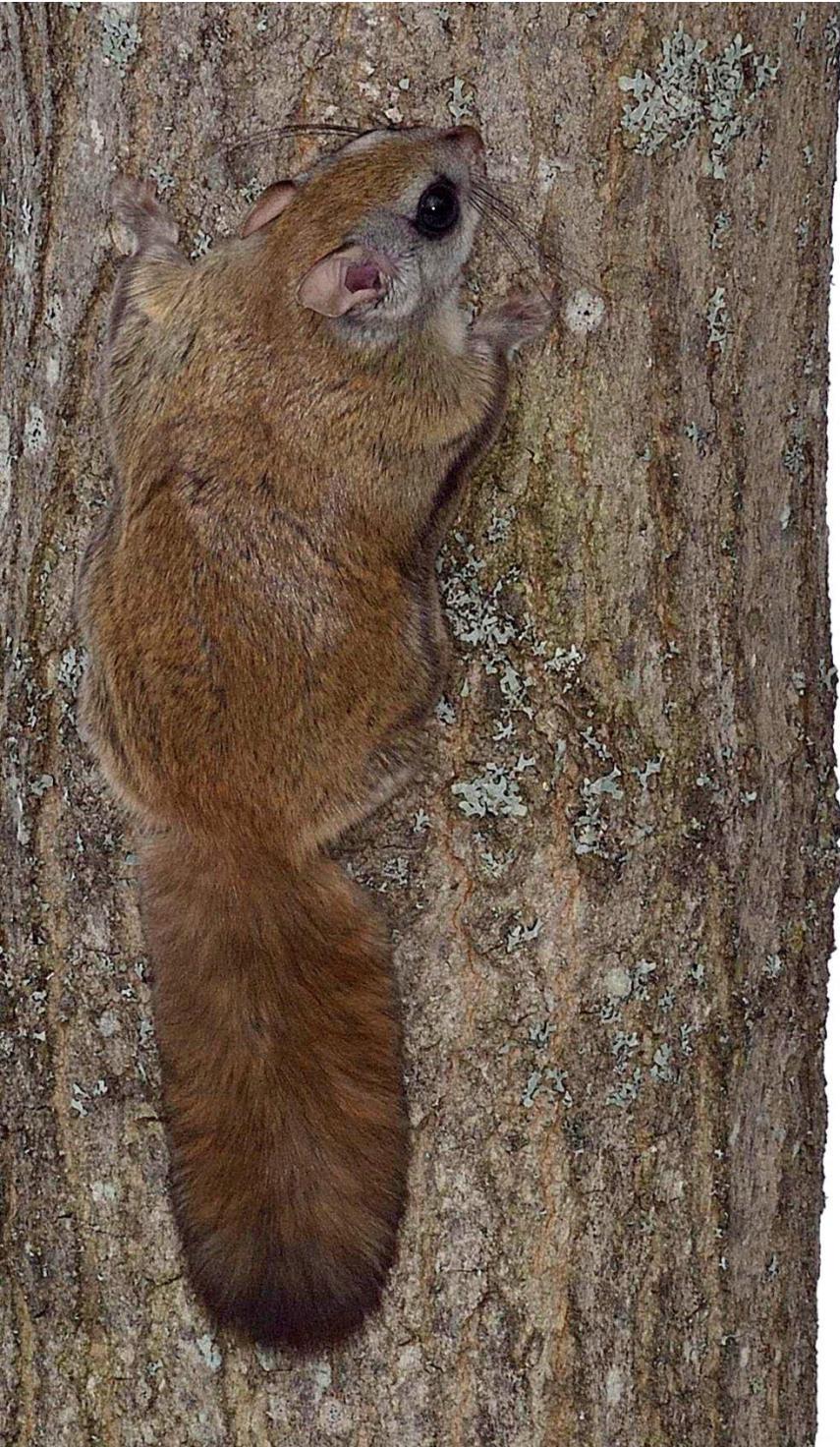
It breeds once a year and nests in tree cavities created by woodpeckers, especially those found in large diameter trunks and dead trees. But it also builds outside leaf nests and will nest

underground. (The southern species have been found to breed twice yearly.) The young are cared for by the female. At 5 weeks, they practise gliding and at 10 weeks, they are ready to leave the nest. Once the young are fledged, the flying squirrel changes its nest frequently.

During the winter, a number of flying squirrels, from 4 to 10 individuals, may stay together in one nest. This helps to maintain their body temperature as they do not hibernate or enter into a torpor state.

The population of the northern species is unknown as there is little monitoring data available. The southern species is listed in Canada as Vulnerable.

*Sources: Canadian Geographic;  
Canadian Wildlife Federation;  
Wikipedia*



## Book Review

**To See Every Bird on Earth**

**By Dan Koepfel**

**Hudson Street Press, Penguin Group (2005)**

**278 pages**

*By Marc Buchanan*

This well-written book, which was on The New York Times bestseller's list, is a memoir about a father and a son and the father's lifelong obsession with listing birds. Anyone who is a bird watcher and a bird lister of any kind, from backyard to world, will love this book. While the underlying theme is about the son's reconciliation with his father, it is also about his coming to grips with why his father and thousands of others have an obsession to see every bird on earth.

Koepfel describes in great detail his father's birding achievements and the negative impact they had on the family. He writes about the very few trips he took with his father and how they gave him some understanding about his father's obsession. In doing so, he also describes the lives of many of the big listers. The time, effort and money it takes to be a big lister are highlighted with many anecdotes. The reader is reminded that the big lister is highly disciplined and highly organized.

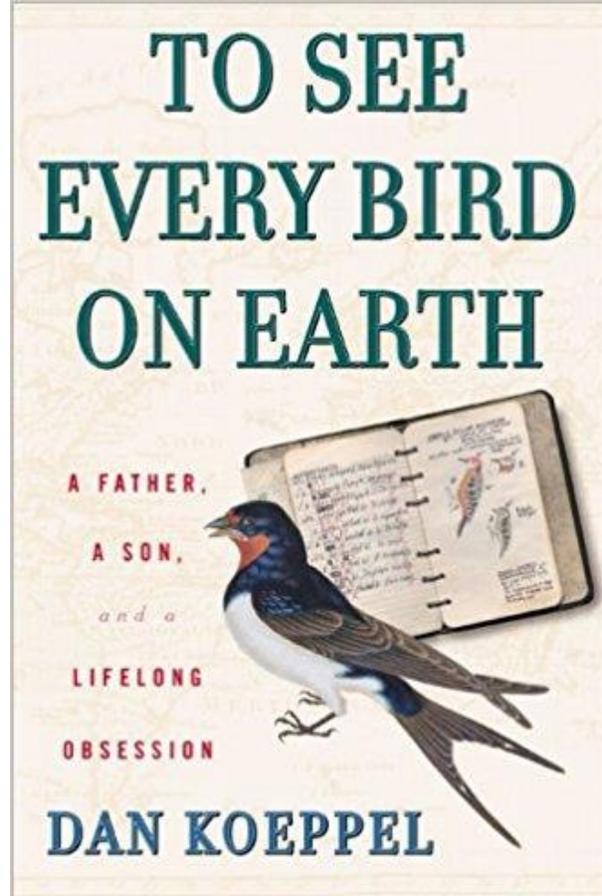
There is much valuable information on the ethics of birding, the development of big listers, the role played by the American Birding Association (ABA) in establishing the rules, including the controversy that still continues whether a bird heard is a bird seen. Many birders will not count heard birds, while many will.

The number of species of birds in the world has increased with the growth and travel of bird watchers all over the world. Once upon a time, a big lister would see 5000 to 7000 bird species; now, the big listers see over 9000 species. Big bird listing is not for the faint of heart, given the travels to remote and dangerous places, and is not for those who aren't financially well-off. It is an expensive hobby.

Koepfel tries to answer the question of why big listers need to do what they do. Is it because of their love of birds, because of the challenges involved, or because of the competitive aspects of listing? I think he only partly answers the question for himself. The reader may have a different opinion.

As a birder with a very modest life list, it was fun to read this book and live momentarily, vicariously, with those who are totally obsessed.

**Editor's Note:** *The author's father, Richard Koepfel, died of cancer-related causes in 2012. The book is also available in paperback, published by Plume; Reprint Edition (2006).*



# A special bond



*Dorothy deKiewiet*

*By Renee Levesque*

Research from the University of Alberta shows dogs and humans have had a close relationship for thousands of years.

In an ancient community near Lake Baikal in Siberia, anthropologist Rob Losey has been excavating dog remains buried alongside human remains, suggesting dogs held a special place in the lives of humans. Some were buried with decorative collars. In one case, Losey found a man believed to be about 5,000 to 8,000 years old buried in the same grave as his two dogs, one on either side of him.

Although these dogs were companions and were loved and cared for as we love and care for our dogs today, they were also working dogs, working closely with the people of the area - hunting, transporting and protecting.

Losey is now investigating a new site in Siberia where there are the remains of more than 100 ancient dogs. It is the largest archeological collection of dogs in the Arctic and shows early evidence of sled dogs. You can hear Losey talk about his research on this YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28111bTBpY>

It is believed that modern dogs are descended from the Eurasian Grey Wolf. Wolves began foraging around human campsites, gradually becoming less inhibited, with one subspecies branching off and becoming genetically recognizable as dogs.

“The big question in the field now is when and where exactly dogs emerged from wolves, but I don't think that tells us very much,” Losey says. “What can we learn about people's relationship with dogs in the past? The history of our working relationships with animals, and our emotional relationships, is what interests me.”

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*Here follows a story by Rick Tripp about his relationship with his dog, Gunner. Rick was one of this year's participants in the dogsledding outing that took place in early March at Roseanne Van Shie's in Calvin Township, a highly popular outing that Paul Smylie, Director, Nipissing Naturalists Club, has arranged with Roseanne for the last three years. Photos in the collage following Rick's story are from Renee Levesque and Fred Pinto.*

*By Rick Tripp*

We did not choose Gunner. He chose us. During the Christmas holidays, about 20 years, two children and five dogs ago, we offered to look after a large Golden Retriever who was part Labrador and part Newfoundland. We spoiled the big guy with many off-lead walks on trails and sidewalks. We had no children that Christmas and so had no problem spending a generous amount of time with Gunner.

When the holidays were over, Gunner returned to the big city where he ran away on more than one occasion. We like to think he was looking for us.

Not long after, we had the call... could we take him?

We lived between the downtown core of North Bay and Laurier Woods for most of Gunner's life. I would often cycle downtown on the road while he ran unleashed on the sidewalk. He would stop, sit and go on command while I judged traffic. He was happy waiting outside while I did my shopping, but was often invited inside.

Gunner did not roam, could be left unattended without worry and could be trusted without fail. I remember leaving for the afternoon and forgetting that he was outside. We had a traditional open porch at the time and found him sitting on the deck upon our return. He developed a bit of a following in our neighborhood. We were approached by strangers with offers to look after him if we needed help. Once while we were on a long walk with Gunner, a young boy came up to us and asked, "Is that Gunner from Hammond Street?"

Mrs. McMahon, who lived two doors down from us and was probably near 80 at the time, had a soft spot for Gunner. From her back yard, she would ask if Gunner could visit. I would give him the okay and he was off to see her on his own, returning some time later with a small bag of cookies tied to his neck.



*Rick Tripp*

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Gunner would often accompany me on mountain bike excursions through Laurier Woods before the property was a conservation area. He would always take the same route through the woods that we had taken on previous rides. My sister-in-law was visiting on a day when my wife and I were working and was looking for something to occupy her time. She decided to bike to Laurier Woods and through the woods with Gunner even though she didn't really know her way. Our only instruction to her was "follow the dog".

Gunner's proudest moment occurred after a walk through Laurier Woods and down the old Callander Road. It was not usual for Gunner to be out of my sight on a walk, but on this particular walk after I lost sight of him for a few seconds, I found him rolling around in a nice rack of moose ribs as if he were a towel in a clothes dryer. Words cannot describe the stench from the sticky clumps of fur that now formed our dog's coat. But my goodness he was proud, his tail pointed straight up the entire walk home, despite the fact that he had to walk alone and far behind me!

On a portage not too far from Kiosk, Gunner and I were shuttling a canoe when we came across a young bull moose standing in the middle of the portage about 30 metres away. While the moose considered his options, I was worried Gunner would start something he could not finish, and although my heart was racing, Gunner stayed very calm. Eventually the moose was - or was not - impressed and left the trail.

On another Algonquin trip, Gunner fell asleep during a blockade of Maple Creek by a very large bull. Initially, we were cautious and quiet in deference to the moose, but two hours later we realized that the moose would leave when he was ready no matter what noise we made.

Gunner's last canoe trip was in Algonquin Park on an unseasonably warm September week. He seemed fine until one of our longer portages. He had just waded through a rather nasty bit of marsh - wet, black and smelly - when he could walk no further. I am guessing that his legs were feeling the effect of the extra swamp water that he was now carrying. As Gunner weighed in at 90 pounds dry, I would experience the heaviest and smelliest portage of my life. After a swim and a good night's sleep, the rest of the trip was without incident.

We currently live with dogs 4 and 5 and although they are unique, Gunner was a very special dog.





# Louise de Kiriline Lawrence lives on

By Renee Levesque

On April 26, 1992, Louise de Kiriline Lawrence died at the age of 98, after an illustrious career as an ornithologist and winner of the prestigious John Burroughs Medal for her book, *The Lovely and the Wild*. In this book she describes the feeding, flight, nesting and migration habits of birds she saw from her loghouse nest on Pimisi Bay, and, in so doing, expresses her “profound joy at being part of the limitless world of nature.”

And so in April 2018, 26 years after Louise’s death, here are some items commemorating her time with us.

Martin Parker sent to me, via Brent Turcotte, an obituary article that appeared probably in one of the Toronto newspapers. (Martin found it in a book that was previously owned by a reader from Toronto.)

Fred Pinto wrote a short article on Louise that appeared in the February 2018 issue of OFO News, the newsletter of the Ontario Field ornithologists. I was given permission by OFO News to reprint it. See next page.

In addition to the Ontario Heritage historic plaque installed at Pimisi Bay in August 2016 - thanks in part to funds raised by Nipissing Naturalists Club with the help of many donors - there are now four highway signs, two as you travel east and two as you travel west indicating the plaque at Pimisi Bay. These were erected late last summer with no charge to our Club thanks to Dick Tafel and Eric Doidge in particular, and the Ministry of Transportation.

Because this issue also features the dogsled outing in early March, I am running again the photo of Louise with her sled and dogs as she went about her winter nursing duties.



## Celebrated Naturalist Dies

On April 27, 1992, acclaimed naturalist Louise de Kiriline Lawrence died in North Bay at age 98. Well known for her nature books, Lawrence also had articles published in *Audubon* until she was 91.

After spending time as a Red Cross nurse during the Russian Revolution, the Swedish-born aristocrat headed the Dionne quintuplets’ nursing staff during their first year, and later retired to a log cabin in the Mattawa area, about 40 kilometres north of North Bay. Drawing on decades of observations of birds and other wildlife, Lawrence wrote *To Whom the Wilderness Speaks* in 1969, for which she became the first Canadian to receive a prestigious medal from the American Ornithologists Union.

# The legacy of Louise de Kiriline Lawrence

A commemorative initiative by the Nipissing Field Naturalists

By Fred Pinto

Louise de Kiriline Lawrence (née Louise Flach), a long-time resident of Bonfield near the city of North Bay, was a passionate naturalist who made many contributions to the Nipissing naturalist community and beyond. She was born in Sweden, served as a nurse in Denmark during the First World War, and then sought refuge in northern Ontario after her first husband, a soldier in the Czarist army, was killed by the Soviets. In addition to her naturalist pursuits, she is remembered by older residents around North Bay for her work as a nurse and midwife, as well as her role in caring for the Dionne quintuplets during the first year of their lives.

Louise published five books and many articles based on her local observations of nature, especially birds. Many of her observations were made on her property along Pimisi Bay, a part of the Mattawa River. She was the first Canadian to win the John Burroughs Medal for her book *The Lovely and the Wild*, published in 1969. Other recipients of this award include Rachel Carson, Roger Tory Peterson, and Ernest Thomson Seton.

In 2016, the Nipissing Naturalist Club led an initiative to install a provincial heritage plaque to recognize Louise's contributions as a naturalist. The Nipissing Naturalists undertook many different activities to raise the money needed to install the plaque. These events also connected us to people who knew her, many of whom came forward to share their memories. The plaque has been installed in the picnic area off highway 17 on Pimisi Bay just west of Mattawa. Looking past the plaque you can see Louise's log home, which she called her "log-nest home," on the eastern shore of the bay.

Over four years ago, the Nipissing Naturalists, Friends of Laurier Woods, and the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority decided to organize an annual nature festival: the Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival. This free family event debuted in 2014 and occurs annually on the 3rd Saturday of each August in Laurier Woods Conservation Area. We think it fitting to have the festival named after Louise de Kiriline Lawrence, and held outdoors where participants can experience nature just as she did.

*Fred Pinto is the President of the Nipissing Naturalists Club.*





Debbie Faith

## The snowball of learning...

*By Debbie Faith*

Grades 1 and 2 students at South Shore Education Centre in Nipissing Village are curious learners, full of awe and wonder of the world around them.

They were discussing characteristics of birds when curiosity and excitement was sparked over photos of Trumpeter Swans that I, their teacher, had taken on my visit to LaSalle Park in Burlington. They wanted to learn more about these beautiful swans and so with the use of iPads, they began their research. They found quite a bit of information about them, as well as the Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Program in Ontario.

Based on their findings, the students went to work creating a Trumpeter Swan bulletin board in the hall of our school to share their learning with others in the school. To demonstrate Trumpeter Swan habitation, they painted water, tore construction paper to make cattails and reeds, drew and cut out swans and brought in some real Sumac to add at the shoreline. They Googled Bev and Ray Kingdon and found photos and articles to add to the bulletin board. (See photo next page.)

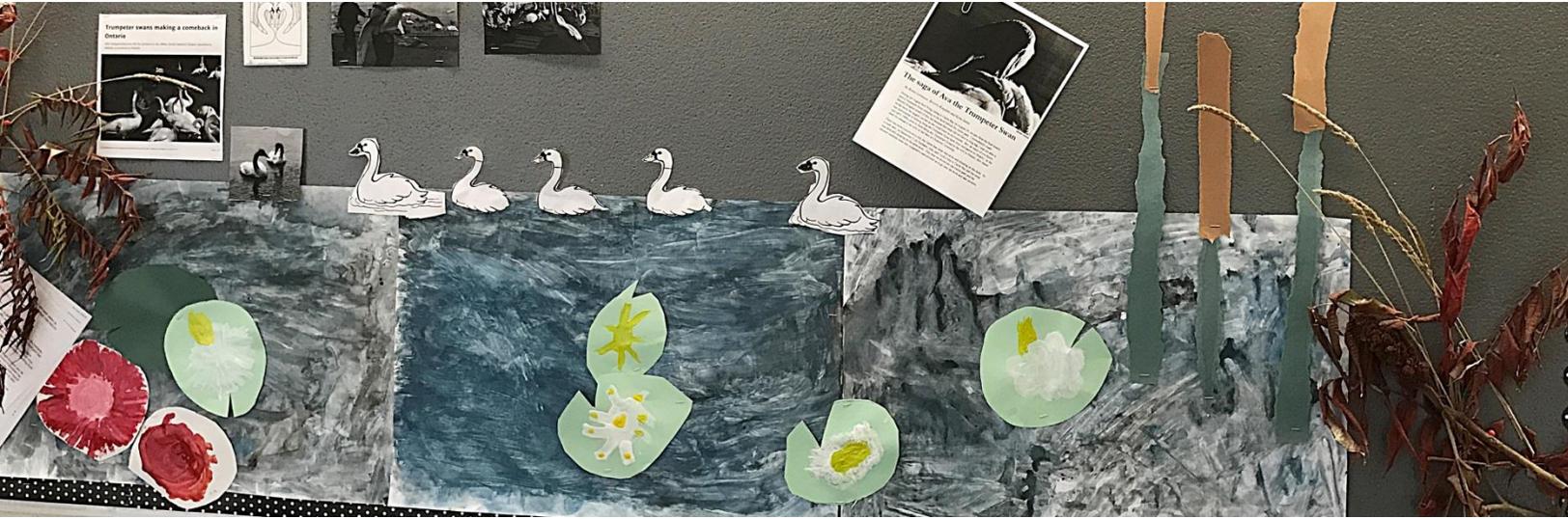
You can imagine the excitement the next morning when a life-size plastic Trumpeter Swan arrived at their classroom door with Beverly and Ray Kingdon! The Kingdons, who presented a slide show of their work with Trumpeter Swans, were delighted to be invited to share their wealth of knowledge to a group of involved young learners.

The students, who were amazed at the size of the swans, asked many thoughtful questions and so the snowball of learning was in progress! They learned how Trumpeter Swans are caught, tagged and released; where sightings can be reported; where the swans winter; what they eat; and the changing characteristics of their young.

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We were encouraged to be great stewards of our environment and its preservation. A pamphlet was given to each of the students to take home to share with their families, further extending the learning.

What a great collaborative learning experience it was for the students and teachers at South Shore Education Centre.



Bulletin board, Debbie Faith

## ...Trumpeters on the move

*By Renee Levesque*

Three Trumpeter Swans were seen by Gary Chowns in late February in Restoule River, readily seen at that time from the Restoule Bridge. None had tags. (Photo below.) However, some Trumpeter Swans migrating north will have tags and if you see any with tags, please note the number and location and report your sightings to Kyna at [trumpeterswan@live.com](mailto:trumpeterswan@live.com)

Or if you wish, you can let me know and I will pass the information along to Kyna.



Gary Chowns

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I have a particular interest in L95, or Ava as she is more affectionately called. My interest in her is because she is the only swan in all my years who has eaten out of my hand. Some may recall Ava's poignant survival story and her sojourn for a while late last summer at Cache Bay while she was moulting.

Ava did make it eventually to LaSalle Park in Burlington where all winter, Bev Kingdon and other volunteers fed her and the many other swans corn. Bev recently informed me that Ava's tail is slightly crooked, leaning to the left a bit. I looked through the photos I took of Ava last summer and even though we did not notice it at the time, her tail did lean to the left even then. You can see this in the photo at right.

Julie Kee, a volunteer with Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration, also looked through some of her photos that she took of Ava in December near Midland and they too show a left-leaning tail. Perhaps this is as a result of her accident in Pennsylvania.



Ava, Julie Kee



Ava, Renee Levesque

I asked Julie if Ava's left-leaning tail will affect her ability to fly. Julie's response: "Apparently not. She has been flying good distances with her crooked little tail! And she has a healthy appetite too. I think she's going to be just fine." Julie's photo of Ava in early March at LaSalle Park shows not only that she has a healthy appetite, but also that she likes to ham it up for the camera!

As of mid- March, Ava did not have a mate and was still at LaSalle Park with two of her siblings.

# THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

## Your Board of Directors

### Gary Sturge:

Gary was raised in northwest Toronto, now the City of York. It was more of a rural area then – fields, wild parkettes and ravines. As a child, Gary constantly roamed these areas, developing a love of nature.

After attending what was then called Ryerson Polytech where Gary studied Civil Engineering, he worked with a consulting firm designing and constructing roads and highways.

After he married Connie, whom he met in kindergarten, the couple lived just north of High Park in Toronto, as close to nature as you could get in the area at the time.

Gary began working for Bell Canada in engineering in 1973 when he and Connie moved to Owen Sound. Gary reports this move opened up “a wonderful introduction to rural Ontario and the more natural wonders of the province.” He and Connie had their family there and started serious camping in a small trailer.

The family relocated to Huntsville for a period of time “to experience the joys of living in the Canadian Shield.” After other relocations, including two tours in the Middle East “where we discovered the wonders and joys of the desert,” they returned home to Ontario. They lived in Mississauga in an area that was just being developed, an area in which there were deer, foxes, coyotes and many birds.

After Gary semi-retired in 2001, he and Connie bought their current house just west of Powassan on the South River. Gary moved up in 2006, although Connie continued to work in the GTA, commuting to Powassan on weekends. Reports Gary, “This separate lifestyle gave me quite a bit of time to wander around the area, to discover the extent and diversity of the nature of the area.

Over my life, I developed a deep love for nature and since Connie’s retirement in 2016, we are now out every day walking, birding and running our two girls, Gussie and Abi. Wow, am I lucky!”

The photo of Gary was taken on Stillaway Line where Gary takes his girls for a walk most mornings and where he sees many interesting birds, like the Northern Goshawk, the Great Horned Owl and the Black-backed Woodpecker.



*Connie Sturge*

# Eco Fair: It's about making a difference

On **Friday, April 13**, Nipissing Naturalists Club will be participating in the Eco Fair to be held in the lobby of **Canadore College from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Jason Harris, one of the organizers, reports that the theme of this Eco Fair is about moving people towards believing that a sustainable future is within their grasp. One event at the fair will be a demonstration on vermicomposting, a method of composting that uses various species of worms to produce a nutrient-rich fertilizer and soil conditioner that can be used on either a small or large scale. Another event will be the showing of the 2012 documentary film *Revolution*, a documentary about climate change, environmental degradation, species loss, ocean acidification, pollution, water/food scarcity and the need to do something about these issues.

Our club's booth, hosted by Louise Simpson and Kaye Edmonds, will be much the same as the one at the Science Festival held last November at Nipissing University. Louise will be promoting the Motus Wildlife Tracking System with an information poster (right) prepared by Louise and Bird Wing, and by demonstrating what a Motus Wildlife Tracking System is all about using her laptop. Kaye will have a display of her painted bird rocks (below) and will help kids paint some of their own as a way of getting them involved in the importance of birds.



Renee Levesque

To follow up on Gary Sturge's presentation of the Motus Wildlife Tracking System at our meeting on March 13, birds provide valuable clues to the changes in our ecosystem. They pollinate plants, spread seeds and control insects. We cannot afford to lose them and yet so many species are vulnerable. If we want to protect them, we have to protect their habitat along

their migration route and in their breeding and wintering grounds. And this is why the Motus Wildlife Tracking System is invaluable. It consists of tiny tracking devices and hundreds of receiving stations positioned strategically throughout the western hemisphere to help pinpoint the greatest threats to vulnerable species, enabling us to direct our efforts to where they are needed most for optimum impact.



Kaye Edmonds



## Club hosts Ontario Nature regional meeting

Nipissing Naturalists Club will be hosting the **Ontario Nature Northern Regional Meeting from Friday, May 11 to Sunday, May 13** at the **Canadian Ecology Centre, Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park, Mattawa.**

Some of the topics, presented by regional and local experts, will include bat monitoring, Chimney Swifts, the Eastern Wolf, local geology and the history of the voyageurs and the fur trade. And if that is not enough, you can take part in a tree marking exercise and visit a White Pine harvest site. The photo **above**, courtesy of Fred Pinto, is an aerial view of a White Pine stand after harvest and regeneration treatment.

If you want to stay over, the Canadian Ecology Centre has 32 modern cabins, all heated. You must book your own accommodations directly with the Ecology Centre. Booking began on March 5, so best to book a cabin right away if you plan to attend and stay over. A special price is being provided for participants of this event, \$115.00 per night, plus HST. To view the cabins, see

<http://www.canadianecology.ca/cabin-rentals/> and to book, contact Coral Bissett, Education & Events Coordinator, Canadian Ecology Centre, at 705-744-1715, ext. 636, or email at [coral@canadianecology.ca](mailto:coral@canadianecology.ca)

As a Nipissing Naturalists Club member, you can join in the events whenever you can, although you need to let Barbara know. (Her email address and telephone number are below.) Saturday, everyone will be out in the field for most of the day until about 4:30 when refreshments will be served before dinner. You can bring to this event your own beer or wine for sharing and you can stay for the dinner and the evening presentation. Meal costs are to be shared – lunch is generally \$5.00 and dinner \$10.00.

For more information about the Ontario Nature Northern Regional Meeting, contact Barbara MacKenzie-Wynia, Regional Coordinator Nature Network, at [Barbaraw@ontarionature.org](mailto:Barbaraw@ontarionature.org).

The event flyer can be accessed on our website, <https://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/>, under Club Activities.

# Ontario Nature's 87<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering: A Weekend in the County

*From Jaklynn Nimec, Executive Assistant, Ontario Nature*

Ontario Nature is holding its 87<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering, *A Weekend in the County*, on June 1–3 at [Isaiah Tubbs Resort](#) in Prince Edward County. It's the perfect opportunity to connect with fellow nature lovers and have a weekend of fun in the outdoors. See overview of the resort in the photo below provided by Isaiah Tubbs Resort.



Highlights of the weekend include inspiring speakers, expert-led nature workshops and guided field trips to local ecological treasures.

The Annual Gathering is also a time to celebrate shared conservation successes, to discuss the vision for the year ahead and, at the Conservation Awards Ceremony, to recognize the achievements of conservation heroes.

Space is limited, [so register today!](#) The deadline to register is **April 17<sup>th</sup>**.

Please [visit our website](#) for important event details, and if you have any questions, please contact Jaklynn at [jaklynn@ontarionature.org](mailto:jaklynn@ontarionature.org) or 1-800-440-2366 ext. 271.

## Speaker for April's meeting

Meetings are now being held at our new location, but still on the second Tuesday of every month, from September to December and from February to June. The new location is: **176 Lakeshore Drive, at the northeast corner of Lakeshore and Gertrude in the former Tweedsmuir Elementary Public School.**

**On Tuesday, April 10**, Dr. Larry Dyke, geologist, will speak on a very relevant topic, climate change, and in particular, *The Jet Stream – Messenger of Climate Change*.

Global climate forecasts have been news and the subject of innumerable documentaries for many years. But how will the anticipated changes in mean temperature, for instance, actually be felt? Atmospheric circulation, in particular the jet stream, seems to hold clues. Larry's talk will explain the jet stream phenomenon and how it is already responding to greenhouse warming.

The photos below show the spring snow pack in the Vancouver watershed during the drought of 2015 compared with a "normal" year, 2016.



April, 2015



April, 2016

same pond →

# THE WOODLAND OBSERVER



## Board of Directors, 2018

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## Bird Wing

Dick Tafel, Chairman: [rtafel@sympatico.ca](mailto:rtafel@sympatico.ca). 705-472-7907

Gary Sturge, Treasurer

Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe.

Monthly Bird Wing reports are sent to members by email and posted on the Nipissing Naturalists Club's website, <https://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/>. Here you will find in date order monthly Bird Wing reports; monthly Bird Bash reports; Year-end reports; and Christmas Bird Count reports.

*The Woodland Observer* is published electronically each month from September to June and sent to members by email and posted in date order on Nipissing Naturalists Club website, <https://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/>.

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**Contributors this issue:** Marc Buchanan, Gary Chowns, Dorothy deKiewiet, Larry Dyke, Kaye Edmonds, Debbie Faith, Julie Kee, Shannon Kelly, Frederik Ladouceur, Renee Levesque, Fred Pinto, Angela Proudfoot, Jeremy St. Onge, Connie Sturge, Gary Sturge, Rick Tripp, and Sara Woolman, with special thanks to Jaklynn Nimec and Barbara McKenzie-Wynia, Ontario Nature..

## Membership Fees

Annual Nipissing Naturalists Club membership fees are: single \$20.00; family \$30.00.

There is an **additional annual \$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 membership fee is paid directly to Bird Wing.**



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