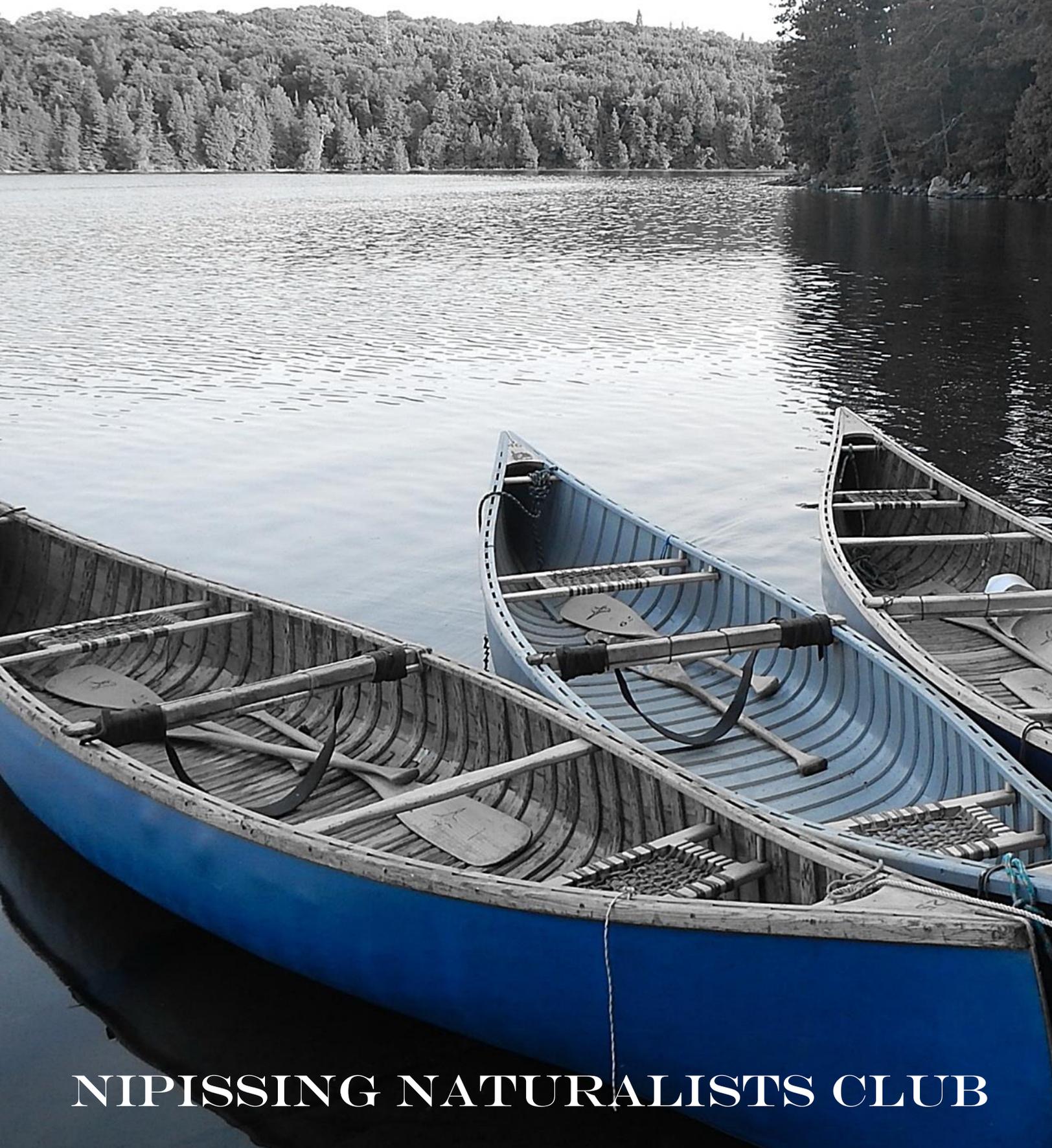


# THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

JUNE 2017



NISSING NATURALISTS CLUB



*Renee Levesque*

**From the editor:**

## **The varied joys of summer**

Summer will soon be upon us, officially as of Wednesday, June 21, and time to “roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer”, unless, of course, you are Peter Ferris or Oriana Pokorny, both of whom take long and arduous canoe trips during their summer.

Oriana’s photograph of canoes at Camp Temagami where during the summer months she instructs young people in the art of traditional canoeing is the cover of this month’s newsletter. It is a photograph that conveys summer in our northern environment with the iconic canoe in the foreground. We can leisurely paddle around in one of any number of Northern Ontario lakes, take a short journey or take on a very long and tough journey as Peter did last August on Hayes River. You can read about his journey in this issue. His heart-felt article is accompanied by some wonderful photographs, including a collage of wild creatures he encountered.

Peter is also our newest Board member. There is a short bio of him in this issue with a link to his website where you can view even more of his wonderful photographs. Rob Rodger and Mary Lord have moved from North Bay and although they are still club members, they will no longer be able to serve on the Board unless they plan to commute a great distance!

We received a letter from a young man, Caleb Beck, who is looking to find the cardinal flower in our area. See his letter immediately following “From the editor”.

Clubmosses were of interest to a small group of us who, with Brent Turcotte as our leader, made our way back to an area off Songis Road and saw four types of the possible 12 to 13 types of clubmosses that grow in our area.

And then there are the birds, which we get to see up close unlike so many of our other wild animals. We see them in our own backyards, in our cities and suburbs, and in our woods and forests. Therefore, it is no wonder so many people like birdwatching, even those who don’t

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consciously do so. When I lived in Hamilton and heard the song of the White-throated Sparrow from my inner city street in the days before I knew the name of any type of sparrow, its song would bring back poignant memories of growing up in Northern Ontario. I don't think I was ever consciously aware of its song when I was young, but the song was, nevertheless, forged in the smithy of my soul, to paraphrase James Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

May is certainly bird month in our area when so many migrants pass through or settle here to nest and raise their young. In this issue, there is an article on the May bird walks in Laurier Woods, led by Dick Tafel, and an article on owls by Paul Smylie, one of the many participants in April's owl survey. (His article borrows its heading from an Elton John song in keeping with a quote in the first paragraph of his article from the same Elton John song.) And because everyone is fascinated by owls and because there have been many species of owls seen in our area this past year, there is also a collage of photographs of owls seen by members.

And speaking of birds, our club hopes to get a Motus Tracking System installed in North Bay. You can read about what a Motus Tracking System is in this newsletter or on our website, <https://www.nipnats.com/motus-tower-project/>. To help raise the \$10,000 required for this system, your donation would be appreciated. A direct link to make an online donation is in the newsletter and website articles.

Laurier Woods walks will take place over the summer and through to December. Two of these walks are listed in this newsletter, one on Canada Day and one in October. Details of other walks will be made available once confirmed.

This summer also marks the fourth anniversary of the Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival to take place at Laurier Woods on August 19.

As always, club meetings have been replaced by summer outings and we have two great outings – one to Dokis First Nation and one to Eagle Lake, both in July. Details are inside the newsletter. Meetings will resume in September, as will this newsletter. I too get time to roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer! In the September issue, you will get to read about all summer outings, including the climb to the Three Crosses and the open fire cooking demonstration, both held earlier this month, as well as Paul Chivers' article on his June presentation to club members.

Enjoy your summer and any celebrations in which you may be taking part to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Confederation of Canada.

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



*Blackburnian Warbler, Renee Levesque*

# Have you seen this flower?

My name is Caleb Beck. I was born and raised in North Bay and am currently studying marine biology at Dalhousie University in Halifax. I will be starting the second year of my bachelor's degree in September.

Over the summer, I am doing some volunteer work for my botany professor who is researching two wild populations of the **cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis***, one in Algonquin Park and one in Arizona. He is looking to compare the genetic differences between the two populations because each grows in such drastically different climates. Finding the most southern and the most northern population of these flowers will yield the best result for his research. Since I live in the area, he has tasked me with finding a population that is further north than his current one in Algonquin Park.



*Renee Levesque*

**Cardinal flowers grow close to calm shores of lakes, rivers and streams. They bloom throughout August and are a bright red bell shape.** (See photo above.) They are loved by hummingbirds.

I already know of populations throughout the Parry Sound area, on the Pickerel River and on Memesagamesing Lake in Port Loring. Since the watershed flows (roughly) away from Lake Nipissing through those areas towards Georgian Bay, I am hoping there are populations that follow the water further north towards Lake Nipissing.

I will be searching for the cardinal flower by boat/canoe throughout August, but since time is limited, I would like to reach out to you with the hope of getting a lead on where I might find some wild cardinal flowers. If you have ever seen any growing in the area, I would greatly appreciate any information you can share. You can email me at [ohcalebbeck@gmail.com](mailto:ohcalebbeck@gmail.com).

*(Editor's Note: After his search, and information from members, Caleb, for a subsequent newsletter, will provide us with a map as to where the cardinal plant can be found in our area.)*

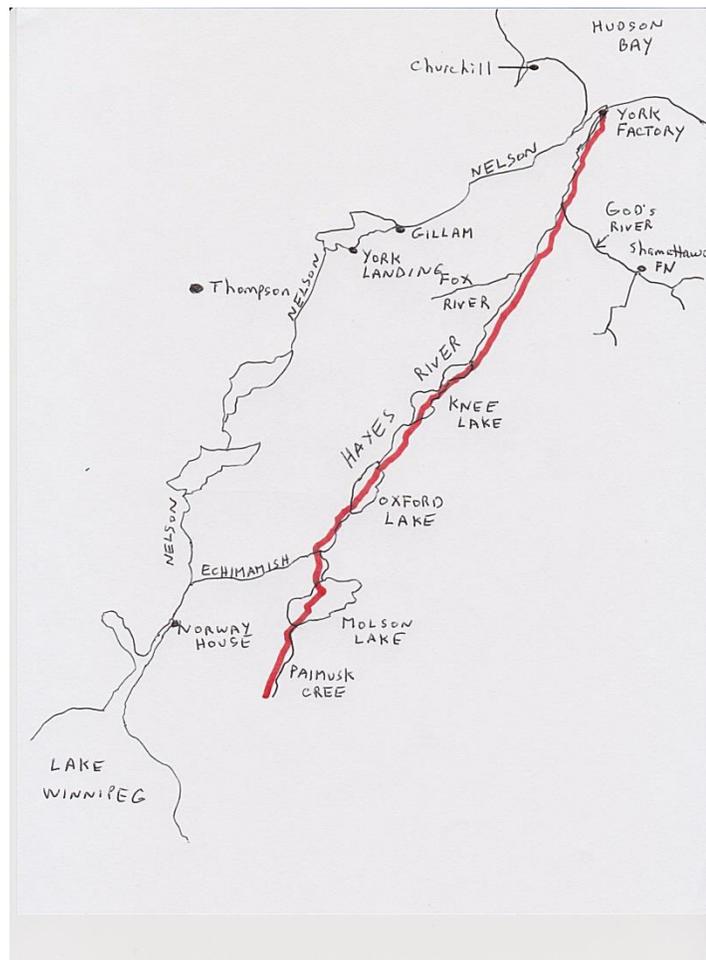


# A journey back through time

*Text and photos by Peter Ferris*

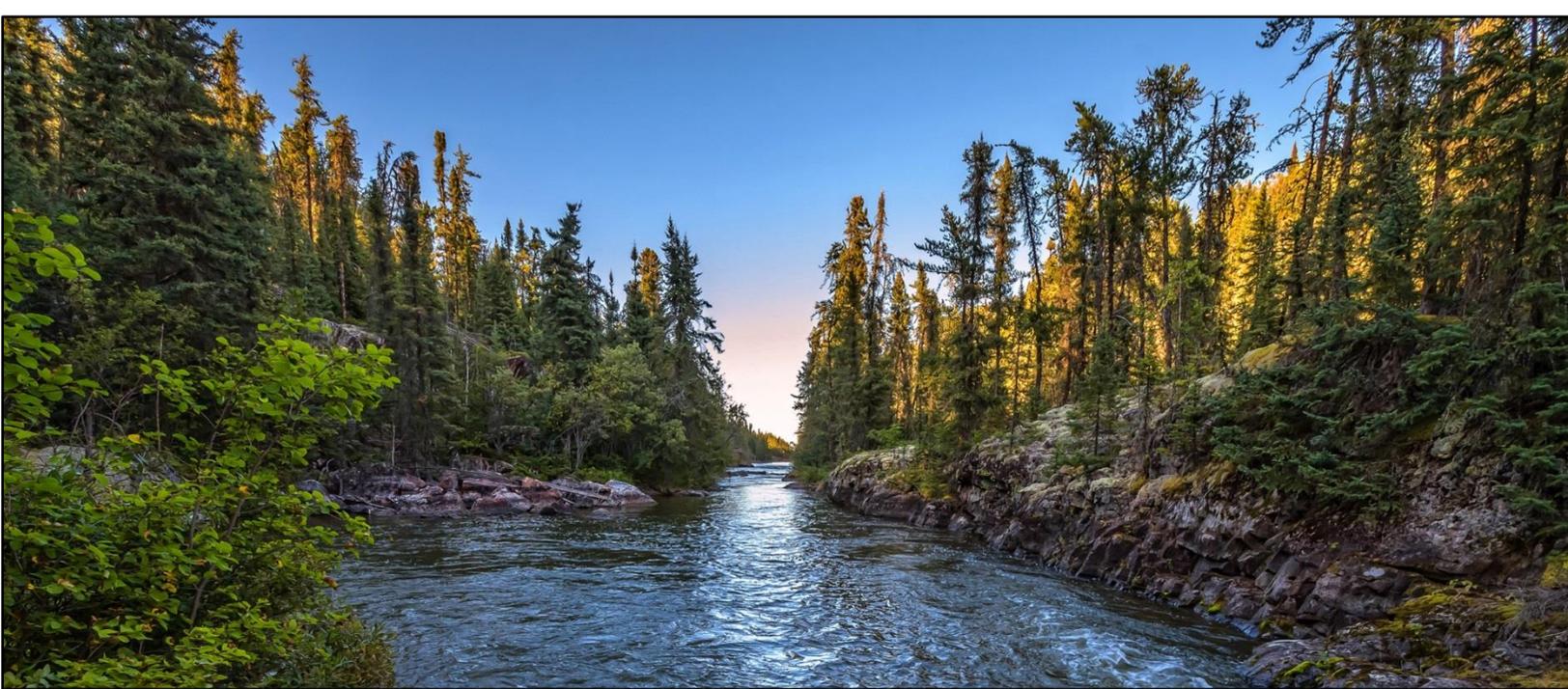
I am a longtime avid canoeist and last summer I decided to canoe Manitoba's Hayes River. I had studied the history of the Hayes and wanted to experience firsthand the pristine country it flows through. This historic waterway is one of 42 designated Canadian Heritage Rivers. During the fur trade era, it was a major transportation route between York Factory on Hudson Bay and the interior of the Canadian west. It was also the route by which the first settlers reached the Red River colony (modern day Winnipeg) and by which all supplies reached the new colony up until the 1860s.

After a three-day drive and two days in Norway House to attend the community's annual York Boat and Treaty celebrations, I began my trip on Paimusk Creek at the south end of Molson Lake, just northeast of Norway House. For the next 630 km and 28 days, I was carried by the river as it flowed through a landscape that has changed little in the last 300 years. There has been no significant industrial development along the entire course of the Hayes, and in fact there is less traffic on the river today than at the height of the fur trade era when York boats would transport trade goods, supplies and furs along its route. Free of modern development pressures, the river's ecosystem still supports healthy wildlife populations and traditional harvesting activities by First Nations people.



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Just below Whitemud Falls, the Hayes River picks up significant volume and speed as the Fox and Gods Rivers join forces with it. It encompasses nine lakes; long sections of challenging rapids; deep valleys and gorges, including the insanely beautiful Hell's Gate Gorge; the historic mile-long Robinson portage where can be seen remnants of the original tramway that used to carry boats and supplies; many pictograph sites; the magnificent Robinson Falls; and, closer to York Factory, the Hudson Bay Lowlands and the tidal flats. About five days south of York Factory, at the beginning of the Hudson Bay Lowlands, the dense spruce forests start to thin out and difficult rapids and falls are no longer great obstacles.



The experience of travelling on the Hayes, as with any journey on a wild river, is difficult to fully describe to someone who has not experienced the pull of moving water on the paddle, the thrill of navigating difficult rapids, the weight of a heavy pack on a portage, the sense of freedom and self-reliance, long periods of solitude in a remote environment where one is more likely to encounter wildlife than another human, and the constant awareness that an error in judgment may result in a serious injury or loss of equipment vital to a successful trip. You can view any number of videos on YouTube to gain a vicarious and visceral sense of what a wilderness canoeist experiences. I was lucky to have some of these experiences early in my life and the love of moving water and wild spaces has remained with me ever since.

I have been asked by many people if I get frightened or lonely when I take my trips. While I would sometimes prefer the company of a like-minded soul, circumstances and my comfort with solitude have usually resulted in my travelling solo. I am very comfortable in wilderness environments and feel a deep sense of wholeness and connection with the land I am travelling

## THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

through. I find that without the distractions that rule our daily lives, wilderness travel encourages deep contemplation about our relationships and our place in the world. The experience also instills a strong sense of humility. There is no choice but to respect the power of nature's forces and adapt to ever-changing weather and water conditions.

At every stage of my journey, I was deeply conscious of how the Hayes is richly steeped in a long history of exploration, the fur trade and the relationships with Indigenous people who have shaped the building of our nation. My journey through such a pristine area also served to heighten my concern and sadness at how rapidly wilderness areas are disappearing in our country. Even in a nation as vast as Canada, it seems that efforts to protect large expanses of wilderness are often met with opposition from the mining, forestry and hydro industries.

I experienced numerous magical moments while travelling the Hayes River. Witnessing the Northern Lights as I crawled out of the tent at 2:00 a.m. to answer nature's call was awe inspiring, as

was the howling of a wolf pack directly across the river from my campsite. Other awe inspiring experiences included being checked out by a courting pair of Northern Harriers; surprising Woodland Caribou as they



crossed the river; coming face-to-face with a bull moose; spotting a wolf eying me from behind a small tree; watching a mink hunt for crayfish directly in front of my campsite; observing young Bald Eagles getting ready to fly; and always seeing large numbers of Canada Geese, White Pelicans (seen above) and various species of shorebirds, including Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plovers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Solitary Sandpipers and, as I got closer to the Bay, many Snow Geese and Tundra Swans. While I had hoped to encounter a Polar Bear, I had to settle for seeing fresh tracks at York Factory.

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Every journey involves some degree of risk and mishaps can happen even with the best preparations. While I portaged several times without incident and successfully paddled 40 or so rapids, my dignity suffered a temporary setback when I ungraciously descended the final section of a rapid in reverse. Except for having to pull ashore to empty the canoe of some water, the only damage was to my ego!

After 28 days on the river, I pulled into York Factory where I was warmly received by the caretaker who prepared me a meal of fresh hamburgers and brought all my gear up to the camp compound, fenced to protect visitors from roaming Polar Bears. After eating freeze-dried foods for 28 days, words cannot describe how satisfying those hamburgers were! After a good sleep and tour of York Factory, a designated Canadian historic site, I flew by float plane from York Factory to Gillam, Manitoba. There I boarded a train for a twelve-hour trip to Wabowdin where I had arranged for my vehicle to be delivered by a Norway House member who had stored the vehicle for me.

This was truly a soul-satisfying trip. With so many other rivers waiting to be explored, I will likely never paddle the Hayes again, but it has left me with precious memories that I hope will never fade.



# The Wild Side

Photos by Peter Ferris





From Parks Canada website

# The outpost between two rivers

By Renee Levesque

York Factory, one of the first fur-trading outposts established by Hudson's Bay Company, was built in 1684 on the narrow peninsula that separates the Hayes and Nelson Rivers. (See Peter's map on the previous pages.) It was named after the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Duke of York, and the term factory indicates that it was here that the chief trader, or factor, of the area lived.

With both rivers flowing into Hudson's Bay, York Factory was built in a key location to bring furs from the interior to ships docked in Hudson's Bay. Because of mud flats along the mouths of both rivers, ships docked in Hudson's Bay were not able to get any closer than 11 km from York Factory, so smaller boats transferred the goods to and from the ships.



The location of York Factory changed several times during its history because of flooding and raids, but by the mid-1800s, it was rebuilt into a township consisting of 30 to 50 buildings, built in an H-shape. These

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buildings included the depot which was the dominant building, guest and resident houses, a doctor's house, an Anglican Church, a hospital, a library and a smithy.

Hayes River was the preferred route from the interior because it was deep enough to handle the large canoes that were eventually replaced by even larger craft called York boats. These boats could handle up to six tonnes of freight.

With the advent of the railroad, Hudson's Bay Company eventually transferred its headquarters to Winnipeg and York Factory became but a coastal trading post. In 1931, the last ship left York Factory, and in 1957, after 273 years in operation, York Factory was closed. In 1968, the property was transferred to the federal government and made a National Historic Site. It is now operated by Parks Canada.

All that remains today at the site is the large depot and a small outbuilding, although archeologists have found remains of earlier structures, as well as the camping areas of the visiting First Nations people. Aside from a summer residence for Parks Canada, no one lives at the fort, but it is open to the public for self-guided tours from July 2 to August 30. If anyone requested and received the free Parks Canada pass to our national parks and historic sites for the 150th anniversary of Confederation, you might want to consider a trip! There is a fenced compound with restroom facilities where visitors can camp. See Peter's photo below.



Peter Ferris

## THE WOODLAND OBSERVER



*Renee Levesque*

# May birds of Laurier Woods

*By Renee Levesque*

**May 6:** Despite a steady and sometimes heavy rain, 11 bird watchers took part in the first bird walk of May. I would like to say they were rewarded with seeing plenty of birds, but alas that was not the case. Still, we all enjoyed ourselves, probably because many of the participants were young students and their enthusiasm was contagious. They were excited at learning about any of the birds they saw and reporting back to their instructor, Oriana Pokorny, who was no doubt amazed at the knowledge they picked up from the leader, Dick Tafel, and those of us who have been birding for some years.

Species seen were: Canada Goose, Mallard, a surprising male and female American Wigeon, Ring-billed Gull, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, American Crow, Common Raven, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Swamp Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow. Heard but not seen was a **Virginia Rail**. It is seen at right in a photo taken a couple of years ago in Laurier Woods by **Matt Walter**.



*Virginia Rail, Matt Walter*

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At the end of the walk, Dick awarded a prize to **Jackie Manella** for her choice of a **White-throated Sparrow** as the most interesting bird seen. Not to take anything away from this beautiful little sparrow, but I would have thought the American Wigeon or the Virginia Rail would have been Dick's choice.

However, the White-throat is so patriotic with its poignant song, *Oh sweet Canada Canada Canada*, and it is our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, so Dick chose well and Jackie is a deserving winner.

**May 13:** With better weather, though overcast and with a few drops of rain, 19 people took part in the second May bird walk. There were still not a great many species, but more than the previous week. Oriana's students participated yet again – one keeping



*White-throated Sparrow, Stephen O'Donnell*

notes in her little red book, one taking pictures, one very quiet, and one noticing everything, including a Blanding's Turtle – my first sighting of one in Laurier Woods.

Species seen this Saturday that were not seen the Saturday before were finally some warblers: Black and White Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Nashville Warbler and Ovenbird. Other birds not previously seen were: Tree Swallow, Least Flycatcher, Pileated Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Although we saw a few White-throated Sparrows the Saturday before, this time we saw a **host** of them – at least 22. Host is the term for a flock of sparrows. For the proper names of flocks of different species see:

<http://www.birdnature.com/groupnames.html>.

**Herb Johnson** won the prize for naming the **Black and White Warbler** as the most interesting species seen and it was not hard to agree with Dick, who was the judge of what constitutes the most interesting bird seen. Black and white is definitely an

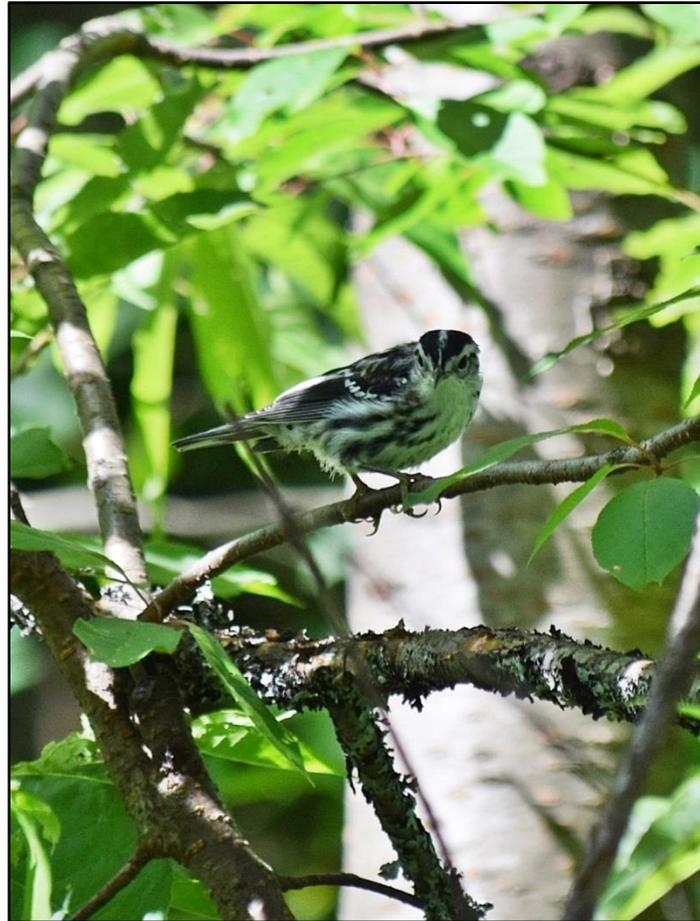


*Pileated Woodpecker, Kaye Edmonds*

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appropriate name for this warbler that creeps along tree trunks and branches, more like a nuthatch than a warbler. It is a cooperative warbler, giving us birdwatchers plenty of time to see it unlike so many other warblers. The male and female look very similar, but the male has a black throat and the female a white throat, as pictured at right.

**May 20:** Sunny weather for a change, though cool initially. A morning for dressing in layers for the 10 bird watchers who participated in the bird walk, a walk which lasted three hours instead of two. (We missed Oriana's ornithology students, and though I have a feeling they may have seen some interesting birds elsewhere, like the Indigo Bunting, they missed a fine walk!)



*Black and White Warbler, Renee Levesque*



*Yellow Warbler, Lisa Hackett*

The sunny weather brought with it good views of many warblers we hadn't seen on the previous two walks – the Canada with its black necklace and white spectacles; Common Yellow-throat with its black mask and yellow throat; the only extensively yellow warbler, the Yellow, the male with rusty breast streaks; the black and yellow Magnolia; Wilson's with its black cap; numerous and very busy American Redstarts, the males showing off their bright orange patches; the spectacular Blackburnian with its fiery orange throat; the *pleased, pleased, pleased to meetcha* Chestnut-sided; and the other warblers previously seen - Nashville, Black and White, Yellow-rumped, and the Ovenbird.

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It was definitely a warbler walk!

Other birds not previously seen made themselves available. The Veery, one of the spotted thrushes, gave us excellent views. It is the least spotted of all the spotted thrushes. There was a wonderful view of the Great Blue Heron flying over Arum Pond, and then there were the Warbling Vireos, one which sang its languid warble, somewhat similar to the song of the Purple Finch. We also saw the Gray Catbird. It didn't call or sing, but instead moved rapidly through the undergrowth near the start of the trail. (One participant saw three of them.) Interestingly, on the two previous walks, we did not see or hear the Song Sparrow, but this time we heard it sing. Nor had we previously seen an American Goldfinch, but this time we saw a male outstanding in his brilliant yellow coat against the verdant green of the trees.



*Veery, Renee Levesque*

The prize was awarded to **Bonnie McGory** for finding the **Canada Warbler** to be the most interesting of the species seen.

The Canada Warbler is a feisty warbler not often seen, and another good choice for Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



*Canada Warbler, Stephen O'Donnell*



**CANADA 150**  
1867-2017

# Saturday night's alright for owling

*By Paul Smylie*

Maybe it's a sign of age, or it could be that it's an anomaly of personality that draws people together on a Saturday night to participate in venturing out into the cool April night air to listen and watch for winged denizens of the dark. But this isn't Hallowe'en, so why are we seeking winged dinosaurian creatures in the month juxtaposed to that most haunting of pagan celebrations? What has brought four bird-brained folks together on a night- that according to Elton John may be more suited to a belly full of beer and a good brawl - is to see if we can hear and, if we are lucky, get a glimpse of those mysterious creatures we call owls.

Four members of the Nipissing Naturalists club, Sarah Wheelan, Marc Buchanan, Fred Pinto and I put on our woollies – or at least we wish we had – and made our way up Lee's Road to survey for owls along a route that was established by former Nipissing Naturalists member, Craig Hurst.

The objective of standing around in the dark in the middle of nowhere is to add another annual click to the database in an effort to monitor long-term population trends of owls. This is citizen science, a to-the-point term that means everyday citizens with an interest in and concern for owls can help scientists in a way that can only be done by collecting information over a wide area. And to do this requires a lot of people-power. Fortunately there are a lot of people interested in birds and owls in particular.

The Nocturnal Owl Survey Program was initiated in 1995 as a joint venture between Bird Studies Canada and the Wildlife Assessment Program of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. The motivation to monitor owl populations and their distributions is to examine the effects that logging practices have on the health of owl populations and to determine breeding range limits.



*Great Gray Owl, Renee Levesque*

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The focus is on four of the eight species in Ontario, the Barred Owl (seen at right), the Great Gray Owl, the Boreal Owl and the cute as a plush toy Northern Saw-whet Owl. There are close to 300 established routes in Canada with over 1000 people willing to venture out into the night air for a rare sighting of these seldom observed creatures. Surveys are done slightly differently in the Northern and Central regions of Ontario, with the 47<sup>th</sup> parallel as the dividing line. North Bay, at about 46 degrees latitude, just squeaks into the central region, where the focus is on the two most common species, the Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owls. The Great Gray Owl and the very elusive Boreal Owl, similar in size to the Saw-whet, are the species of focus in the Northern region.

As most of you know, owls are rarely heard and seen even less frequently. Luckily, during breeding season, males become territorial and don't like the idea of a potential suitor attempting to steal a prospective mate or take over his piece of real estate. This behaviour lends itself well to using what are called 'playback calls' to stimulate owls into responding to what it thinks is an intruder of its own kind.



*Barred Owl, Brandi Cramer*



*Northern Saw-whet Owl, Dave Palangio*

Along central Ontario routes, ten stops are made at a minimum of two km intervals. A loud beep indicates the start of the 12 minute listening period. The initial two minutes is passive listening, after which either the Barred or Boreal Owl call is played at two minute intervals, each followed by a two-minute listening period. For anyone who feels that time is fleeting, I can promise you that I have found a solution for that: Listening for owls for 12 minutes on the side a dirt road in the dark and cold slows down time, and metabolism. Each year I do this, I tell myself to dress warmly, but I am always amazed at how fast one cools down in that one-fifth of an hour. Biology and physics connect!

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Not long into our outing, we were all rewarded with a shot of metabolism-boosting adrenaline at our second stop on Hazelton Lane. Shortly after the first playback call of a Barred Owl, deep from the tall hardwood forest emanated a loud, *WHO COOKS FOR YOU, WHO COOKS FOR YOU A AAA L-L-L-L-L!* We became giddy with excitement when a second owl responded, in duet with the first with what sounded more like gorillas in the jungle, what with their *OOO, OOO, OOO, and AAA, AAA, AAA's*. And to add to the fun, an owl soon swooped silently over the road to take a perch in a nearby tree to get a good look at just who this intruder was that so boldly decided to make a play for his territory. The second owl soon made an appearance and was last seen as she stealthily and silently maneuvered through the trees to be swallowed by the dark.

For the remaining eight stops, we all held out hopes for hearing more owls – maybe even the elusive and rarely seen Boreal Owl. With anticipation and ears cocked, some of us stamped our feet or went for quiet brisk walks to stave off the cool night air. At our stop along Carmichael Drive, a rather barren area behind North Bay's Jack Garland Airport, we were greeted with the rather nasal, if not lonely *peent* call of an American Woodcock (seen at right), and by our listening intently, we could faintly hear another.



*American Woodcock, Renee Levesque*

Shortly after midnight, we concluded our last owl survey in Feronia in what appeared to be an owl's paradise. Alas, it was not to be, but no results are just as important in the world of science as results, because this is how we determine what is happening with our owl populations. By this time, we were all getting a bit weary, and despite our best efforts, a little cold. We may not have been overwhelmed with these mysterious winged creatures of the night, but this is owling. And like fishing, you never know what your efforts will produce – at least we didn't get skunked. We all went home to our warm beds feeling a little bit better about ourselves, knowing that our efforts will help to ensure there will be owls in the future to captivate our imaginations.

Each fall, Hilliardton Marsh Conservation Reserve near New Liskeard has an owl banding program that is open to the public. This is a chance to see owls up close and maybe even get to hold one! See <http://www.thehilliardtonmarsh.com/> for more information. Owl banding starts the second Wednesday of September through to the Saturday of the Thanksgiving weekend.



Clockwise from top left: Long-eared Owl, Kaye Edmonds; Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk Owl, Renee Levesque; Short-eared Owl, Lori Anderson; Great Grey Owl, Renee Levesque; Centre: Great Horned Owl, Renee Levesque.

# Motus tracking system will monitor migrations

Nipissing Naturalists Club is working towards installing a Motus Wildlife Tracking System in the city. It is a system used to track and study the movements of birds and other small animals using coordinated automated radio telemetry. (Motus is Latin for movement and is not an acronym.)

It will be the second Motus Wildlife Tracking System in Northern Ontario. There is only one other in Northern Ontario, at Hilliardton Marsh Conservation Reserve near New Liskeard. Our club is working with North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority to secure a site where the tracking tower can be located, possibly at Laurentian Escarpment Conservation Area.

From Bird Studies Canada's website: "Motus is a coordinated hemispheric tracking system for all migratory bird species, and is the world's most ambitious bird tracking initiative. The project's goal is to understand the connections between breeding, migrating, and wintering locations for every Canadian bird species by 2030.

Motus enables researchers to track the movements of birds, bats, and other flying animals at local and regional scales, and over vast distances. This project is providing critical new details about the exact breeding and wintering habitats, and migration routes, of birds in the Western Hemisphere. This information will help us identify priority habitats for protection.

Motus technology is the first of its kind in the world, and involves a combination of miniaturized radio transmitters and a new, expansive network of receivers. The nano-tag tracking devices are light enough to track even the smallest animals, such as hummingbirds, dragonflies, and butterflies.

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System is a program of Bird Studies Canada, in partnership with collaborating researchers and organizations." Visit Motus [news](#) and [maps](#) pages for more information.

To become a vital part of the world's most ambitious and innovative tracking system, our club needs to raise \$10,000. If you are willing to help by donating money, you can do so through North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority's secure website hosted by Canada Helps. You will receive a tax receipt immediately. Click on <https://www.canadahelps.org/dn/14239> and select Motus Wildlife Tracking Tower in the drop-down box.

As of June 6, the following organizations and individuals have donated funds towards the Motus Wildlife Tracking System: North Bay Lion's Club, \$500.00; Marc Buchanan, \$100.00; Grant McKercher, \$100.00; Fred Pinto, \$100.00; Kaye Edmonds, \$30.00; Lori Anderson, \$25.00; Sheldon McGregor, \$25.00; Steph Romanuik, \$25.00; and Sarah Wheelan, \$25.00.



*Possible Motus site, Sarah Wheelan*

## At one with nature in Laurier Woods

*By Valerie Murphy, Regulations Officer, North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority*

On Saturday, June 3, on one of the first sunny days yet this spring, families took to the Laurier Woods trails for a scavenger hunt. There was a good crowd of 24 comprised of many interested children, a very good sign indeed of things to come, and demonstrating the theme of this year's Earth Day Canada's campaign of encouraging children to connect with nature and their environment and, thereby, to grow up with the motivation to protect the planet.

The kids were so excited to find all the items listed on the scavenger hunt list, including birds, animal tracks, bugs and turtles. They also matched all the lush and bright green colours seen on the trails with green paint colour swatches they each had.

Not only did the kids run through the trails trying to find the items listed, but they also learned about plants, animals, reptiles and fish that may live in the wetlands. They also learned the difference between coniferous and deciduous trees and tried to identify as many as they could. And although they did not see any beavers, they did find a beaver home.



*Fred Pinto*

Closer to the end of the hike, we gathered together to quietly sneak into one last wetland. We so wanted to check off seeing a turtle. Luckily enough, even with the high water levels, we were able to see one basking Painted Turtle. And so, we were able to check off each item on our lists.

All the kids were inquisitive and enthusiastic. They were curious about their environment and they felt at home in nature. They were definitely a true group of young environmentalists!

Thanks to everyone for coming out to join in the scavenger hunt. My son, Anderson, and I had a great time meeting you all. We enjoyed the sunshine, the great company and the diversity of Laurier Woods. See you all again next year for more exciting finds!



*Blue Ground Cedar, Renee Levesque*

# Clubmosses in an outwash plain

*By Brent Turcotte*

On May 13, I led a small group on a repeat trip to the outwash area on an abandoned logging road that borders Balsam Creek, off Songis Road. This time the themes were geology and clubmosses. I chose geology as a theme as a follow-up to the last trip in October 2016. (See *The Woodland Observer*, January 2017, <https://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/>.) And I chose clubmosses as a theme because the area seemed to have a good variety of clubmosses on our previous trip despite the low diversity of the plant order.

The habitat here is unusual for our region because it is underlain with sand and just sand and this lowers biodiversity. Most areas have a mixture of rock sizes. From maps I believe the area is an outwash plain formed by the meltwater of a receding glacier. In an outwash plain, the material is sorted with bigger material near the start of the ancient glacier, with finer material further away.

I had with me two maps, a Quaternary Geology map and the Soils of the North Bay Area. (See May's issue of *The Woodland Observer* for links to both these maps.) What is the use of these types of maps? For the amateur naturalist, finding uncommon areas on these maps may lead to finding uncommon habitats which support uncommon or rare flora and fauna.

The second theme was clubmosses. Clubmosses are an ancient lineage of plants. They are among the first plants with a vascular system, although they still use spores instead of seeds to reproduce. At one time the clubmosses formed large trees and were much more diverse. Today there are only 400 species worldwide, of which twelve or thirteen possible species are in our area. To aid in identification, I developed a key to clubmosses and to two spikemosses which I handed out to participants.

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The dominant species encountered were Blue Ground Cedar, *Diphasiastrum tristachyum*. Mixed in with this was Hickey's Tree Clubmoss, *Dendrolycopodium hickeyi*, seen below. Past the turn-off for Balsam Creek was Bristly Clubmoss, *Spinulum annotinum*. And near the end of the trail, was Common Clubmoss, *Lycopodium clavatum*, seen at right. My key failed for this species, so I took a sample home and identified it with my *Peterson Field Guide to Ferns*.

Near the start of the trail and just off it, Kaye Edmonds showed us a field she had discovered on a trip she took on her own after our October outing.



*Common Clubmoss, Renee Levesque*



*Hickey's Tree Clubmoss, Renee Levesque*

Strangely the mosses were growing in rows as if it used to be a garden. The moss in these rows was deep. Was this feature natural or man-made? (*Editor's Note: We speculated whether this area had been dug up for the planting of more Black Spruce trees like those that had been planted nearby and then for whatever reason, were not planted.*)

For the bird lovers in the group, the birds were unfortunately sparse, but a Broad-winged Hawk was spotted on our way there and at our location, we identified two Blue-headed Vireos, an Ovenbird and a Nashville Warbler. For the lichen lovers, lots of British Soldiers. And for ant lovers, a colony of ants and large ant holes.

## Local bat monitoring underway again

*By Rebecca Geauvreau, Renee Levesque and Fred Pinto*

The North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat) is an international, multi-agency program seeking to monitor bats at local and landscape scales to provide reliable data about bat populations over the long-term.

For the second year, Nipissing Naturalists Club has installed and deployed four bat audio recorders in our NABat bat square east of the city. Sarah Wheelan, Karl Dittman (both pictured in photo below), Jim Hasler and Fred Pinto installed the bat recorders in May.



*Fred Pinto*

Sarah Wheelan and Rebecca Geauvreau, project lead, went out the night of June 6 to do the first driving transect. Reports Rebecca, “We were encouraged to see bats flying and foraging ahead of us! We were also lucky to see two Barred Owls who were also foraging over the road – dangerous for our bats! We also saw a large bull moose.”  
*(Editor’s note: Interesting about the owls because there were none to be heard or seen in the same area during our owl survey on a cold April’s night.)*

The data is analyzed by FRi Ecological Services and sent to the Provincial NABat Coordinator for consolidation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s central database.

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The NABat team anticipates producing annual reports for all of North America to determine an estimate of changes in abundance and diversity of bats.

Rebecca did a quick run of the data from June 6 and reports that Big Brown, Hoary's and Silver-haired bats were picked up – 25 bats in total.

The second driving transect, with Rebecca and Fred Pinto, took place on the beautiful moonlit night of June 9. Data showed Big Brown, Hoary's and Silver-haired Bats, as well as one Little Brown Bat – 36 bats in total.

Rebecca reports that multiple harmonics are not usually picked up, “but the recordings of the second driving transect are quite interesting, especially for those who are interested in physics or are musically inclined, because second and third harmonics were also recorded.”

Rebecca will take a more thorough look at the data at a later date and report on her findings.



*Karl and Fred install the equipment, Fred Pinto*

## Upcoming club outings

**The History and Culture of Dokis First Nation: On Saturday, July 8, an all-day outing.**

Norm Dokis will lead us around Dokis First Nation, showing us various historic and cultural sites. And if that is not enough, Norm will be preparing traditional foods, including freshly-caught fish!

**Cost is \$20.00/person. Please confirm your participation by emailing Fred Pinto at**

**[fredpinto1@gmail.com](mailto:fredpinto1@gmail.com) or**

**indicating you plan to attend through the Nipissing Naturalists Club event page on Facebook.**



*From Dokis First Nation website, used with permission from Norm Dokis*

**Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the former Visitors' Centre for carpooling.** We should arrive at the Pow Wow grounds of Dokis First Nation around 11:00 a.m. We will depart around 5:00 p.m. and should be back in North Bay around 7:00 p.m.

We will be outdoors and walking along uneven trails, so be sure to wear clothing for the outdoors, keeping in mind biting insects and possible inclement weather. Bring water and snacks.

This outing is for Nipissing Naturalists Club members only.



**Ecology of the Common Loon: On Saturday, July 15, from 1:00 until 3:30 p.m.** at Eagle Lake near South River, with Marilyn Twiss, retired biologist, who has a master's degree on Common Loons and factors affecting their decline in Ontario.

**Meet at the former Visitors' Centre at noon** for carpooling. The exact location on Eagle Lake will be emailed to members at a later date.

## Meet your newest board member for 2017



Peter Ferris was born and raised in North Bay and spent his childhood and teenage years exploring the woods and waters in the North Bay, Temagami and Algonquin areas. When he was a young man, Peter moved from North Bay to pursue his education and career.

Over the years he lived and worked in several northern communities, including Moosonee, Timmins, Kirkland Lake and Fort Frances. He returned home to North Bay in 2006 and after working for several more years, he retired in 2012.

Peter states, “I have had a lifelong love affair with exploring and understanding nature.” His favourite passions are wildlife photography, wilderness canoeing and exploring our many parks and wild spaces. I eagerly plan new adventures each year.” And these are some adventures – like the 630-kilometre Hayes River wilderness canoe trip Peter took on his own! If you didn’t hear Peter speak at the last club meeting, be sure to read his article based on his presentation in this issue of the newsletter – and be sure to read it even if you did hear him speak! It is accompanied by some wonderful photographs.

As a father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Peter is “very aware of the importance of helping to instill a love of nature in those who will follow us and doing what we can to protect the natural world that we love and enjoy.”

With nature so well entrenched in Peter’s soul, he will make an excellent board member.

You can visit Peter’s website <https://www.pjferrisphotography.com> to see more of his remarkable photographs.

# Guided walks in Laurier Woods

**On Saturday, July 1, from 10:00 a.m. until noon, Brent Turcotte** will lead a walk to look for butterflies, dragonflies and other insects found in Laurier Woods

Conservation Area. This will be a great Canada Day event for young and not-so-young alike.

**On Saturday, October 7, from 10:00 a.m. until noon, Paul Chivers**, noted photographer, will lead a walk on Nature Photography. Paul will talk about and demonstrate techniques to extract details of the spectacular autumn colours from the visual chaos of the forest as demonstrated in Paul's photo below.

Paul's photographs have been published in newspapers, books, magazines and promotional literature throughout North America, and his photographs have been shown

at Canoe Expo; Wilderness Canoe Association Symposium; Canadian Heritage Rivers System; Celebration of the Wilderness; The Canadian Club; Nipissing University; Canadian Federation of University Women; and several Ontario Provincial Parks.



*Monarch, Renee Levesque*



*Paul Chivers*

Join us annually every 3rd Saturday in August for the

# Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival

in the heart of the city at  
Laurier Woods Conservation Area

Hosted By:



The Louise de Kiriline Nature Festival will be held at Laurier Woods on **Saturday, August 19, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

This fourth annual event is hosted by Nipissing Naturalists Club, Friends of Laurier Woods and North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority. As in the previous three years, there will be fun and exciting nature activities for the whole family. There will be a variety of kiosks to visit and events in which to participate. To keep abreast of what will be taking place, visit our Nipissing Naturalists Club festival website at: <http://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/nature-festival/>.

Below are a couple of photos from last year's festival taken by Fred Pinto.



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## Board of Directors, 2017

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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.

The Bird Wing newsletter is published each month, except December, and sent to members by email and posted on Nipissing Naturalists Club website, <http://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/>.

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

**Editor:** Renee Levesque: [rlevesque1948@gmail.com](mailto:rlevesque1948@gmail.com)

**Contributors this issue:** Lori Anderson, Brandi Cramer, Paul Chivers, Kaye Edmonds, Peter Ferris, Rebecca Gauvreau, Lisa Hackett, Renee Levesque, Valerie Murphy, Stephen O'Donnell, Dave Palangio, Fred Pinto, Oriana Pokorny, Rob Rodger, Paul Smylie, Brent Turcotte, Matt Walter and Sarah Wheelan.

**Special thanks to:** Dokis First Nation for use of their photo: <http://www.dokisfirstnation.com/>; Bird Studies Canada: <http://www.birdscanada.org/research/motus/>; and Parks Canada.

## 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 fee is paid directly to Bird Wing.



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