



October 2009

FROM THE EXECUTIVE

By the time you read this our Fall Speaker Program will be underway, kicked-off by a great presentation from the University of Guelph (see report under “Bits & Pieces” Pg. 3). Joanne has been busy organising an exciting array of speakers for this fall and winter.

Fall and winter are normally quiet times for field trips but we do have a couple in the planning process. We also have a confirmed trip for November 1 to the Alton Grange to see how nature prepares for winter.

Many of the area’s Fall Fairs have taken place and the club put on a display at the Orangeville, Shelburne and Grand Valley fairs. We would like to thank all those members who volunteered their time to help staff the club’s display. We did get some new members as a result and, equally important, we did get out in front of the community and did what we could to educate them.

A number of you have requested a repeat of the Beginners Birding Course that was held a couple of years ago. We are pleased to announce that we have organised another which will be held on Saturday October 17 and you’ll find details inside this issue.

MEETING SCHEDULE & PROGRAM

The Club’s regular meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the last Tuesday of the month at the Orangeville and District Senior Citizens Centre at 26 Bythia Street in Orangeville. Meetings are held from September to November and January to April of each year. For directions, see the map on the next page where you will also find the program for the next few club meetings.

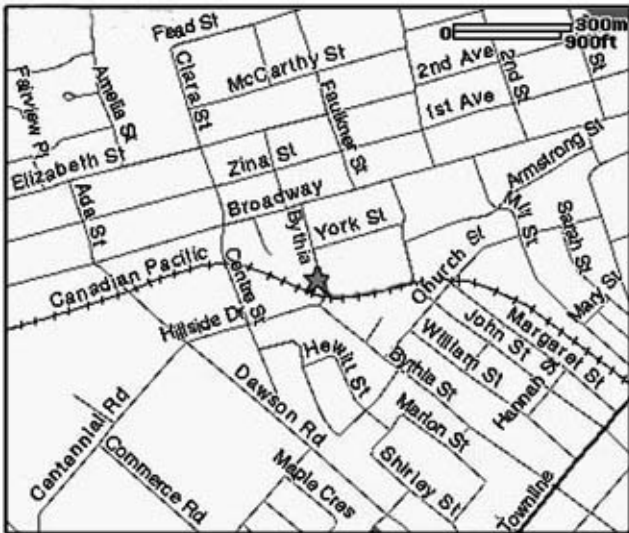
ABOUT THE UPPER CREDIT FIELD NATURALISTS

The Upper Credit Field Naturalists is made up of people who share a common interest in the natural environment: enjoying it, preserving it, and learning more about it, in all of its incredible complexity and beauty.

We organize a variety of activities throughout the year, including the ever-popular Spring and Christmas bird counts, wildflower walks and other field trips. The regular monthly meetings (Sep. - Nov. and Jan. – April) are a cornerstone activity of the club at which top-notch speakers are brought in to inform and delight all who attend.

The Club was founded in 1986 and is managed by an Executive Committee that is elected by the membership each year. The meetings are open to the public, and anyone who shares our interest in all things natural is welcome to take out a membership.

See inside for meetings schedule, speaker profiles and membership rates.



Oct. 27/09: Turtles at Risk - Suzanne Robinson. Suzanne is the Species-at-Risk Biologist for the MNR's Midhurst district and she will talk about the conservation and recovery of some of the turtle species in our area.

Nov. 24/09: Edible & Medicinal Plants - Alexis Burnett. Alexis is a naturalist and tracker from Meaford, Ontario, who runs a series of programs and classes on plant identification, harvesting, drying and preparation of edible and medicinal wild plants.

Jan. 26/10: Reintroduction of the Salmon in the Headwaters area - Mark Heaton
Mark is a fish and wildlife biologist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. He works with a variety of programs including species-at-risk and community involvement.

Feb. 24/10: Ferns & Lichens
(To be confirmed)

Mar. 24/10: Frogs & Salamanders - Don Scallen Don's a popular and frequent presenter and field trip leader at our club. He is also well known for his articles in the *In the Hills* magazine.

Apr. 28/10: Climate Change Impact on Wildlife, Insects & Plants - Dr. Paul Gray
Dr. Gray is a senior adviser with the Ontario MNR and is the coordinator for their Climate Change Program.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS & OTHER EVENTS

The Field Trip Coordinator is Mark Whitcombe (mark.whitcombe@sympatico.ca or 519-939-0020)

If you wish to participate in field trips and are not on the notification list, please let Mark know. Detailed information is given to those on the list by email. If you have signed up for a trip you will be notified if there is a plan change.

Mark would also like to hear from any and all members who have suggestions for future field trips so that the club does address everyone's preferences rather than just birding enthusiasts.

Sunday, November 1st, 10am: Interpreting the Landscape: Preparing for Winter.

Meet at the Alton Library at 10am and then wander through the property, looking at any and

2009/2010 Club Membership Dues

Just a reminder that club dues for the 2009-2010 year were payable at the September meeting or immediately thereafter. Your prompt attention in this matter will ensure that the club remains solvent and continues to offer top-notch speakers and field trips.

If you can't make it to a meeting, please send a cheque, made out to Upper Credit Field Naturalists, to the treasurer: Linda McLaren, R.R. 7, Orangeville, Ontario, L9W 2Z3
The fee schedule will be found on the back page

all signs of the natural world preparing for winter. Mark Whitcombe, our resident biologist, will lead but hopes this might be an opportunity to share our general knowledge and join in together.

Other trips are in the planning stage so make sure you're on the "Field Trip Notification List".

TRIP REPORTS

Botanical Tour of Mono Cliffs Provincial Park, Sunday, Sept. 13 Trip Report by Linda McLaren

When I first moved to Dufferin County some forty years ago, residents would ask, "Wanna see the caves?", sure that as a native of that flat boring area between London and Chatham I would be impressed. And I was! Back in those days, long before the area now known as Mono Cliffs Park was a park, you could drive your pick-up right through if you didn't mind the muffler scraping on rocks. Sure enough along the escarpment there were clefts from which eerie cold air would escape even in sultry August.

On a beautiful September morning this year, we met our field trip leader, Kathy Lindsay, for a foray into Mono Cliffs Park with botany as our focus. We entered from the tiny hamlet of Mono Centre. (There is usually ample parking space at the Community Centre but be warned that parking on the side of the road can earn you a ticket.) Kathy gained an intimate knowledge of the park's flora while preparing a report that contributed to the creation of the park. She is also an outdoor education specialist at Mono Cliffs Outdoor Centre.

We began by looking out over the pond near the entrance where several Canada geese and a kingfisher were seen. Kathy told us about the recent history of the area. It was hard to imagine that the stream which is not more than a trickle now could have powered a mill only a hundred

years ago. Then she took our imaginations back even further – 10 or 12 thousand years – to the retreat of the last glacier, when meltwater would have gouged out the deep narrow valley we would follow.

The combination of escarpment limestone and cooling spring water seeping out in various areas makes a perfect habitat for a variety of ferns. Kathy helped us identify several species such as sensitive fern, wood fern and beech fern. She mentioned that the walking fern seems to be rarer in the park than it was when she did her study about 20 years ago. An excellent book for identifying ferns can be obtained from the Owen Sound Field Naturalists, much of it compiled by the late Nels Maher.

We scrambled among huge boulders at the base of the cliffs, many of them covered in a thick pelt of moss, another primitive plant that flourishes in the area. Although not the forest primeval, the woods around us is about as old as you'll find in such a populated area. It's an interesting mix of deciduous and coniferous with many trees so tall that binoculars came in handy to actually make an identification. On the other hand, there are the tiny cedar trees clinging to the side of the cliffs that have been proven to be several hundred years old. There were just too many herbaceous plants to mention, from wild ginger to blue cohosh, many of them bearing fruit or seeds rather than flowers at this time of year.

Finally, there were several examples of mushrooms including a beautiful and possibly deadly amanita. I believe everyone came away thinking we had only begun to appreciate the wonderful diversity of plants in Mono Cliffs Park.

BITS & PIECES

Read It and WEEP

Even for those who were familiar with the birds that the University of Guelph brought to the club on September 29, the experience of seeing them up close and personal was, frankly, awe-inspiring.

Jen Brock and her team from UofG's Wildlife Education and Environmental Program (WEEP) gave a great presentation illustrated with a Peregrine Falcon, Broad-winged Hawk, Great Horned Owl and, last but not least, Socrates the Turkey Vulture. Each had a tale to tell that illustrated the adverse impact of mankind on these wonderful creatures. In some, the "impact" was obvious and literal. In others, the imprinting of humans on the bird in its early development meant that they could not be released back into the wild.



Jen pointed out the inflatable valve in a Peregrine's nostrils that close when it dives to prevent internal damage from the intense air pressure caused by diving at over 300km an hour!

The practical examples of how our hearing differs from an owl's and its ability to hear in both the vertical and horizontal plane had us listening to the squeak of a toy red-tailed hawk with our eyes closed (you had to be there!).

The star of the show was undoubtedly Socrates who has been with the program for 22 years, and was actually one of the reasons that the program was started. This incredibly intelligent vulture bonds with his handlers and, quite understandably, prefers young women with long blond hair and will bite anyone else who comes too close. Such is his preference for the fair ladies that he will groom their hair and eyebrows. His memory is prodigious and he has been known to recognise handlers after a 10-year absence!

It was a truly memorable experience.



Back by popular request.....

Beginners Birding Course

Saturday October 17, 9:30am

To be held at the Alton Library followed by practical birding sessions at the Alton Grange property nearby.

Open to UCFN and Alton Grange Association members and their friends. Suggested age limit 12 - 99 years old.

We have organised a Beginners Birding Course as a joint project with the Alton Grange Association. It will be held at the Alton Library (directions below). We will run about 2½ hours of classroom sessions followed by accompanied groups outside in the nearby Alton Grange property for some practical birding experience. For those not wanting to venture outside, or if the weather does not cooperate, there will be an indoor fun quiz to reinforce some of the lessons learned. Wild Birds Unlimited of Guelph will have a display of binoculars and feeders, and will also present the segment on Binoculars for Beginners.

Attendance is free to members of the UCFN and the AGA and their friends. While there will be some fluid refreshments, courtesy of the Alton Grange Association, we suggest that those staying for the practical birding sessions or the quiz bring a sandwich.

The course will include: Basic Birding; Habitat recognition; Where to go birding locally; Binoculars for Beginners; Reference material; Attracting Birds to Backyards; Feeder Watch Program.

Bring your binoculars if you have them.

For planning purposes, we would be grateful if you would let us know if you hope to attend. If you forget to tell us it will not be a problem if you attend anyway, but it helps if we know how many will be coming.

Contact Joanne Avison or Chris Punnett (contact details on back page)



Directions from Orangeville:

Go south on Porterfield Road (County Road 136). It curves round to the west and becomes Queen St. East.

Follow Queen St. E. into Alton and at the junction with Main St. turn left onto Main St. (still County Road 136).

Go 300 metres and then turn left onto Station St.

The Alton Library is 200 metres up Station St. on the right, just before the railroad tracks.

Oak Ridges Moraine

The Save The Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (STORM) announce a series of guided tours of private properties in that area: Wednesday Oct. 14 - A Stroll through the Caledon Countryside; Saturday Oct. 17 - Ramble over an exceptional Pontypool Property; Sunday Nov. 1 - Guided trail hike in Uxbridge. For more information visit www.stormcoalition.org and click on "Upcoming Events".

Note on Illustration Quality

A number of members have asked if we could include more illustrations in this newsletter. I am reluctant to do so because this newsletter, or at least the paper copy, is reproduced on an ordinary photocopy machine and any illustrations suffer in quality as a result. The photocopying is done by a club member who generously donates the paper and doesn't charge for the copying either. This represents a significant cost savings for the club.

If you have requested the electronic version then the issue of illustration quality doesn't apply!

I have included some photos of the live birds that we had as part of the presentation from the University of Guelph and I am hoping that these illustrations reproduce well enough for you to enjoy the details.

.....Chris Punnett, Editor

Chimney Swift Towers

You will be aware that the Chimney Swifts are suffering a significant decline in this area and in other locations throughout North America.

Encouraged by efforts by the Driftwood Wildlife Assoc, in Texas, some Ontarians have started erecting Chimney Swift towers to encourage these birds to nest in this area. One such tower has been erected at the Willow Park Ecological Centre in Norval. Design plans for the tower were shared with us at the Orangeville Fall Fair by Pat Kelly who built the tower.

If anyone wants a copy of the plan, contact Chris Punnett. Further information on the efforts to help these birds may be found at www.chimneyswifts.org.

2008/2009 CLUB EXECUTIVE

<i>President:</i>	Rob Best	bluestone3@sympatico.ca	519-942-0042
<i>Vice-President:</i>	<i>Vacant</i>		
<i>Past President:</i>	Dave Rayner	dmjrayner@sympatico.ca	519-941-9404
<i>Treasurer/membership:</i>	Linda McLaren	linda.mclaren@sympatico.ca	519-925-6040
<i>Secretary:</i>	Darcie McKelvey	mckelvey@pathcom.com	905-880-7846
<i>Newsletter & Publicity:</i>	Chris Punnett	cpunnett@sympatico.ca	705-435-3527
<i>Field Trips:</i>	Mark Whitcombe	mark.whitcombe@sympatico.ca	519-939-0020
<i>Ontario Nature Rep.:</i>	Ron Jasiuk	rjasiuk@sympatico.ca	519-942-2972
<i>Speaker Program:</i>	Joanne Avison	javison@rogers.com	519-925-3968
<i>Refreshments:</i>	Marg Rayner		
<i>Raffle:</i>	Dave Rayner		

If you have comments, concerns, suggestions and/or material for "Bluebird", please contact the editor: Chris Punnett, 996248 RR#1, Mansfield, ON L0N 1M0 705-435-3527 or cpunnett@sympatico.ca

MEMBERSHIP RATES

Adult: \$20.00, Family: \$25.00, Seniors & Students: \$15.00

Visitors & Guests: Voluntary Donation

Membership dues are to be paid at the September meeting, or the first meeting you attend.