



The Rambler!

A Newsletter of the Bert Miller Nature Club
Fall 2009

Coming Up

BMNC

All indoor programs held at Stevensville Conservation Area Clubhouse, Main & Ott Rd.

Risky Business

What can we do about a number of our local species that are either threatened or seriously at risk? Speaker: Lisa Wren, DFO
Mon. Sept. 21, 7:00 pm

All About Bats

Dr. Brock Fenton explores the lives of these mysterious creatures and the disease that is threatening them.
Mon. Oct. 19, 7:00 pm

Autumn Birding

Bring your binoculars & look for birds at our Shagbark Nature Park.
Sat. Oct. 24, 10:00 am

Sex & Weapons in the New Zealand Weta

What on earth is a weta?? Darryl Gwynne, Entomologist, discusses this unique creature.
Mon., Nov. 16, 7:00 pm

Holiday Pot Luck

Bring your favourite dish and a place setting. Marcie Jacklin will give us a

A Summer to Remember

The summer of 2009 will be remembered by some for its cloudy skies and rainy days, especially on the first day of the Ridgeway Summer Festival. Sky Hunters International brought their magnificent raptors and Stan Miksovski's reptile menagerie was as popular as ever. I even got to enjoy the company of the reptiles in the craft tent as the rain tumbled down around us. Some brave souls, who dared the weather, took in the Club's wildlife displays and consulted with the volunteers. We were fortunate to have great weather for the second day and the crowds were out to enjoy all the festival had to give. It almost made up for the previous day. Luckily the snapping turtle wasn't in the mood for little girl that day, after she fell into its case. She was shocked, but no harm was done. I would like to extend a heart-felt thank you to the volunteers who made these two days a success by promoting the Club, its activities and providing entertainment and environmental education for the community.



Ingredients for fun: Ron, Lynda, Janet & Paul



Rob helps a snake find a friend

I met with the Fort Erie Communities in Bloom Committee and the national judges of Communities in Bloom at Shagbark Nature Trail in August. The judges were very appreciative of the efforts being made to preserve the area as a natural habitat and congratulated the Club for its efforts. Club members can take pride that our stewardship of the park has been recognized by Communities in Bloom.

Work has gone on at Shagbark this summer. As you stroll along the trails you will notice that the area around the Chimney Swift tower has been landscaped and native species, such as Elderberry, have been added with more plantings to take place as plant material becomes available. Thanks to the hard work of Cyril Nieuwland (Cyron Nurseries), this will grow to be a beautiful area, and it will act as a food source and habitat for birds. He is working on improving the gravel trail, and the mud

preview of the new book about birds in Niagara soon to be published.

Mon., Dec. 21, 6:00 pm

The Buzz on Bees

George Dubanow, from the Ontario Beekeepers Association, gives us the scoop on honey bees and Colony Collapse Syndrome.
Mon., Jan. 18, 7:00 pm

Niagara's Natural Areas (Annual General Mtg)

Discover the wealth of plant life recently documented throughout Niagara.

Speaker: Deanna Lindblad, NPCA

Mon., Feb. 15, 7:00 pm

Restoring Our Natural Environment

A representative from the Niagara Restoration Council highlights some of the past and current restoration projects they have undertaken.

Mon., Mar. 15, 7:00 pm

NFNC

Monthly indoor programs held at Niagara Falls Public Library, Victoria Av., 3rd Wed., 7:30 p.m. Speakers on a variety of topics.

Complete schedule online:
**niagaranatureclub.
tripod.com**

Rock Point Provincial Park

Sat., Sept. 26, 8:30 am.

Bring a lunch & meet at Fonthill Shoppers Drug Mart. Contact: Rick Young, 905-734-6226

trails where ATV's have left their ugly tracks, clearing fallen trees and bush hogging grasses that have grown out of control. The Town of Fort Erie's Bingo has made this work possible. With autumn soon arriving, take in the beauty of Shagbark's many species of native plants and watch for the deer. I had a friendly encounter on my walk. The deer was about 15 feet away and we watched each other for a time before we went our separate ways. I don't know who was more astonished.



Landscaping around tower



Swamp Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus palustris*)

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority's restoration project at the E.C. Brown Wetland in Welland is well worth the trip to view what has been accomplished in a former corn field near the Welland River. Upon entering the parking lot on River Rd., across the street from the Welland-Port Colborne Airport, one can take a path leading through a meadow area which has been seeded with native wildflowers and grasses. A large man-made pond and wetland has been established near the Welland River and a trail winds around its perimeter and branches off to follow the river. This is a relatively easy walk with educational signage along the way. Pit and mound areas have been established and a vernal pool occupies the site.

In August, Lynda Goodridge and I enjoyed attending the Native Plant Workshop there. We received a valuable resource binder full of restoration information. It includes a list of area native plant suppliers. These are local suppliers that take care of where their stock comes from in order to preserve its genetic biodiversity and to provide plant material that will grow best in specific geographical regions. The binder includes lists of Niagara native trees and shrubs, herbaceous plants and vines, and aquatic plants. Finally there is a section about Niagara's least wanted invasive species. Take care not to come in contact with Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) while visiting the area. It can cause severe skin dermatitis, activated by the sun. You can learn more by searching "Plants You Don't Want to Touch" on your computer. It's on OMAFRA's web site: omafra.gov.on.ca

Dawn Pierrynowski, President

Bert Miller Goes to Camp

On a warm, sunny day in mid-August, four intrepid BMNC members went to the Fort Erie Public Library's KidsQuest Summer

Hendrie Valley (RBG)
Sun., Oct. 18, 9:00 am
Bring a lunch & meet at
Tim Horton's,
Prudhomme's Landing
Contact: Don Mills, 905-
892-3973

**Ducks Along Lake
Ontario**
Sun., Nov. 22, 9:00 am
Bring a lunch & meet at
Tim Horton's,
Prudhomme's Landing
Contact: Gisele Mills,
905-892-3973

Gulls Galore
Sun., Dec. 6, 9:00 am
Dress warmly & bring a
lunch. Meet at the control
structure above the falls.
Contact:
Kayo Roy, 905-892-4433

**Waterfowl Along the
Niagara River**
Sun., Jan. 24, 9 am
Bring a lunch & meet at
the parking lot at Dufferin
Island.
Contact: Gisele Mills,
905-892-3973

PFN

Monthly indoor programs
held 4th Monday, 7:30 p.m.,
at Mountainview United
Church, 150 Glendale Ave.,
St. Catharines. For details
on speakers, contact John
Potter: 905-892-2566

Camp to share their knowledge and enthusiasm about birds with a group of youngsters ages 6 – 12 years..

An audio-visual presentation by Lynda & Ron Goodridge got the ball rolling, as the group learned about why birds are important. It was surprising and gratifying to see how much the kids already knew about this topic.

Next we looked at pictures of about 12 different bird species that are commonly found in the area. After a brief demonstration on how to use binoculars, the kids were divided into four groups and headed outdoors to see what they could find. Alida Osborn and Dawn Pierrynowski served as group leaders, along with Ron and Lynda, and the hunt was on! The hot, muggy weather kept most birds in cool, sheltered places, but the kids did manage to find a number of different species. And, of course, the binoculars were definitely a hit. Thanks to Paul Philp for lending his supply for the event.



Each child also received a small gift of a magnetic bookmark with a picture of a bird (what else??) on it. The kids also enjoyed looking at the real hummingbird that Dawn brought to show. This little bird met its demise in her sunroom and, with permission from the Ministry of Natural Resources, she was able to preserve it and mount it for display purposes. The collection of nests and samples of owl pellets were both popular as well.

It was a great opportunity to get youngsters excited about nature and to emphasize the importance of protecting these beautiful creatures.

Lynda Goodridge

An Environmental Disaster

The BMNC Board, in keeping with our constitutional objectives, is sharing the following information about a commercial development that will affect all aspects of our environment.

The Town of Fort Erie is processing a proposal to develop a "Canadian Motor Speedway complex" on a 821 acre site S.W. of the Bowen Rd./QEW interchange. This site includes a Provincially Significant Wetland and is 79.6% prime agricultural land.

If developed, this complex will include:

- A 1 mi paved oval and a 2.5mi paved road course.
- A grandstand seating 65,000 (expandable to 100,000) spectators.
- 150 days of racing per year and all other days used for test driving.

Kleinburg Art & Nature

Sun., Sept. 27th, 9 am
 Bring a lunch & enjoy the nature trails. Arrange carpool with Brian Calvert 905-892-6267

Sparta Quaker Village

Sat., Oct. 3rd, 9 am
 Bring a lunch and enjoy historic village & conservation areas. Arrange carpool with Brian Calvert 905-892-6267

Dutton-Dunwich Trails

Sun. Oct. 4th, 9 am
 Meet at John E. Pierce Prov. Park. Bring a lunch. .
 Arrange carpool with Brian Calvert 905-892-6267

Wainfleet Lichens & Mosses

Sun., Oct. 25th, 10 am
 Meet at parking lot end of Erie Peat Rd. Wear long pants & boots.
 Leader: Roman Olszewski 905-732-9955

Heartland Forest

Sat. Oct. 31st, 10 am
 Kalar Rd between Brown & Chippawa Creek Rds.
 Leader: John Potter 905-892-2566

- Parking and camping areas covering 327 acres to accommodate over 27,000 vehicles.
- A 74 acre commercial complex (shops, restaurants, theatre, etc)
- A 66 acre business park.

If permitted, this development will impose, by far, the greatest environmental and social impacts upon the people of Fort Erie of any project in the Town's history.



Consider the following:

1. A major event will draw twice the number of spectators as the total population of the Town.
2. The noise generated by the racers will be heard throughout large areas of F.E. and will be oppressive for those who live in Crescent Park (2km from speedway) or closer. At other similar sites, noise standards are frequently violated and noise is a major source of resident's complaints and discomfort.
3. Traffic congestion will make travel along the QEW and Bowen Rd. corridors all but impossible for hours – an influx of 20,000 vehicles could easily tie up all of the international bridges and the QEW from F.E. to Niagara Falls.
 - Lined up, 20,000 vehicles would occupy at least 80Km to 100 km of highway.
 - If parked at 1/second, it would take 5.5hours to park and the same to leave.
 - If 10,000 vehicles cross the international bridges – it would take about 167 hrs of inspection time (@1minute/vehicle).
4. The air pollution from both the racers and the attending vehicles is likely to violate air quality standards.
5. The rural character and natural heritage of a large portion of the town will be destroyed forever.

This project would destroy both the natural and social environments that many of you identify as being essential to your lives in Fort Erie. The proposal violates both the codes and the intent of the F.E. Town Plan and Regional and Provincial policies – all of which will require major variances. We urge everyone who cares about preserving the natural heritage of the Town of F.E. to contact the Town Clerk (Carolyn Kett) immediately, in writing, and register your opposition to this pending environmental disaster: Town of Fort Erie, 1 Municipal Centre Dr., Fort Erie, ON L2A 2S6 (905-871-4022)

Rick Stockton

Louth Conservation Area

Sun., Nov. 1st, 12:30 pm
Meet at parking lot on Staff Rd.
Leader: Rick Young
905-734-6226

St. Catharines Christmas Bird Count

Sun., Dec. 20th
Contact: Marcie Jacklin

Duck Count for MNR

Sun. Jan. 3rd or 10th
Call John Black 905-684-0143 by Dec. 15th for details

Why Should I Care About Biodiversity?

Humans are a part of nature, and biodiversity plays a fundamental role in maintaining our health and well-being. We depend upon it for food, fresh water, clean air, and medicines. It also provides us with wood, fibres, and other raw materials without which we wouldn't have homes to live in or clothes to wear. Nature's products, such as timber, fish, precious metals, and aggregates are the basis of our economy. In short, without biodiversity, we wouldn't survive.

Taken from the Interim Report on Ontario's Biodiversity 2008

The following is an excerpt from the text of a video that Tim Seburn wrote in partnership with Jeremy Knapton, a budding young videographer who club members may know as Marcie Jacklin's son. The text for the video was based on a presentation that Tim and Rick Stockton made to Fort Erie Town Council as members of the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC). The video will soon be available for viewing on the BMNC website, www.bertmillernatureclub.org

A Call to Action

The Earth, our home, is seriously imperilled by human behaviour. Climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, and infectious diseases are accelerating. The cost to humanity is already significant and may soon become incalculable. Many of the changes we are causing are irreversible, particularly the extinctions of species.

Our biological systems, that once provided food, medicine, materials, and purified our air and water for free, are all noticeably in decline. Water from the lake, the river or from one of the now forgotten natural springs, must be treated to be safe to drink and our beaches are increasingly unsafe for swimming. Many of our children now suffer from asthma.



Our native woodland species, like trillium, scarlet tanager, and flowering dogwood, and wetland species like cardinal flower, wild calla, and wood frog, now occur only in the dwindling number of pockets that have remained undisturbed. And most of these individual pockets of native woodlands have lost more than half of their diversity as a result of infection from nearby populations of invasive species.

This decline is accelerating as a result of continuous development and, more recently, an invasion of foreign species; zebra mussels and gobies in our water; phragmites and purple loosestrife in our wetlands;

So, what are some of the steps we can take together in Fort Erie to preserve the life that sustains us?

Hands-on Nature! Exploring Biodiversity

A travelling exhibit
from the ROM

Sept. 19th – Nov. 15th

Balls Falls Conservation Area Centre for Conservation

Preserving the diversity of life on Earth is not only beneficial to humanity but essential. Learn about different aspects and levels of biodiversity, and join the NPCA in protecting, preserving and restoring native habitats and species.

Admission:

(includes day use at Balls Falls CA)

Adults: \$5.00

Child/seniors: \$4.00

For information call
905-562-5235

Birders Bring Bucks

A recent report put out by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service shows that one out of every 5 Americans watches birds. In doing so, birdwatchers contributed \$36 billion to the U.S. economy in 2006 (most recent year that data was available).

Source: Birding in the United

Several years ago our Club worked with the Town to complete a biological inventory of natural areas in rural Fort Erie. This proved to be very helpful in revising our Town's master plan. Now we need to complete mapping and biological inventories for our aquatic systems and identify the aquatic species that are at risk.

We need to take every opportunity to reduce the percentage of surfaces that are hardened and the use of culverts; and to learn to make better use of our wetlands. Directing ground water to the lake through a beach, as we typically do, contaminates the sand and the beach, whereas sending ground water through a wetland allows plants and animals to purify the water before it reaches the lake. Learning to be good neighbours to those with whom we share Great Lake waters will also help to ensure our precious public beaches remain safe for our children to enjoy.

We have partnered with the Town to manage Shagbark, an urban nature reserve in Ridgeway. We need to ensure there will be urban nature reserves for each area of Fort Erie, so all our children have a healthy opportunity to better experience their connection to nature



You can help by choosing to dedicate a portion of your yard to native species. Core native trees such as red and pin oak and tulip trees need to be extensively planted. And if rare native trees like cucumber tree, butternut, and sweet chestnut, and rare native shrub species like flowering dogwood, eastern wahoo, and hop tree, and even rare native herbs species are sufficiently represented throughout Fort Erie, not only will this have a positive impact on our Town's biological services and quality of life, it will also help to ensure our biological heritage is well-protected for our children.

If we do this together, it will lead to an accelerated improvement in the natural heritage values for neighbourhoods. Our air will be noticeably sweeter, perfumed by native wildflowers and shrubs. Native birds and butterflies will be seen much more frequently in our urban areas.

We imagine a future where the few remaining native woodlands and wetlands are well-protected from development. And where development does elsewhere occur, the Town, the developer and new residents all working

**Fort Erie Public
Library**
In partnership with the
**Bert Miller Nature
Club**
presents
**“Nature in
Niagara” Series**

Seminar:

**Wonderful Waterfowl
Wed., Feb. 3, 2010, 7 pm
Location TBA**

Local birding enthusiasts will guide the beginner in the identification of birds along the Niagara River. Learn how to use binoculars and other optics to locate birds in their natural environment.

Outing:

**Birding Along the
Niagara River
Feb. 6 or Sun., Feb. 7,
9:30 am**

(weather permitting)
Meet at Old Fort parking lot
on Dominion Rd.

Seminar:

**Fabulous Flora & Fauna
in Marcy Woods
Wed., April 21, 2010, 7 pm
Centennial Branch**

Discover the many varieties of wildflowers, birds, and amphibians that inhabit this pristine woodland.

Outing:

**Take a Walk on the
Wild Side**

Sat., Apr. 24, 2010, 9:30 am
Meet at the end of Holloway
Bay Rd. Guided tour only.
(Permission is needed to enter
as this property is privately
owned.)

together to make the natural heritage values of the site better than beforehand.

As we all work towards making FE a better place for us to live, let us be mindful that our spiritual, mental and physical health and ultimately all human economy, is entirely dependent on this planet's biological systems which result from its diversity of life.

BMNC Donates Book

The Fort Erie Public Library's collection of books on birds got a boost last spring when the Bert Miller Nature Club donated a copy of the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario*. This 700 page volume is chock-full of information and is especially useful for those looking to increase their birding life lists. The Atlas has detailed listings of birds that have nested in a particular area and the relative abundance of each species. The book represents an incredible 150,000 hours of time in the field, resulting in 1.2 million individual breeding bird records.

It was only fitting that Marcie Jacklin, one of our members who helped with the data collection, made the presentation. On hand to receive the Atlas was acting CEO, Maria Brigantino, pictured here with Marcie.



The book may be borrowed for three weeks by anyone with a Fort Erie Public Library card. If it is not available at your local branch, just ask to have it sent up from Centennial Branch.

Lynda Goodridge

Creating An Environmental Ethic

One of the main goals of the Bert Miller Nature Club is to protect and preserve our natural environment. Over the past decade, our town has come under increasing pressures from development, resulting in the loss and/or degradation of significant natural habitats, both wetlands and woodlands.

**2009
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The Rambler

Newsletter Editor:

Lynda Goodridge

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welcome and can be forwarded
by email to [lynda.goodridge@
distributel.net](mailto:lynda.goodridge@
distributel.net)

Before we can mobilize support from the community at large to resist harmful development, we must help them to discover the beauty of nature and its inherent value. To this end, the BMNC board has embarked on an outreach initiative that we hope will engage the public.

Last August, members introduced the library's summer camp kids to the joys of bird watching. This September, we have focused on aquatic species at risk for our regular indoor program. Local community leaders have received a special invitation and announcements have been sent to area media to encourage the general public to attend.

Looking ahead to 2010, in partnership with the Fort Erie Public Library, we have planned two educational seminars that will be paired with field outings to discover "Nature in Niagara".

The first seminar, on Wed., Feb. 3rd, 7 pm, will highlight the many varieties of waterfowl that can be seen in the area. It will introduce beginning birders to identification techniques and the use of binoculars and other optics. The environmental message will be incorporated into the program, as well. These new skills will be put to use in an outing along the Niagara River the following weekend (either Sat., Feb. 6th or Sun., Feb. 7th, weather permitting).

Marcy Woods has long been a draw for local residents. To enhance our outing to Marcy's, scheduled for Sat., April 24th, another Wednesday evening seminar, on April 21st, 7 pm, will explore the fabulous flora and fauna that can be seen in this pristine habitat. This will also give us an opportunity to get the conservation message across and to emphasize the importance of preserving our existing wetlands and woodlands.

BMNC members are encouraged to attend these seminars and to help spread the word so we can engage as many people as possible in efforts to preserve our natural heritage for future generations.

Lynda Goodridge