



The Rambler!

A Newsletter of the Bert Miller Nature Club
Spring 2011

Coming Up

BMNC

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

Medical Entomology in Service to the Public

Wayne Gall draws from 7 case studies to show how the work of medical entomologists benefits the public and helps protect public health.
Mon. Mar. 21, 7:00 pm.

Nature in Niagara Series:

Go Native: Growing Native Plants in the Home Garden

Theresa Forte, noted columnist and garden consultant, will be the guest speaker.
In partnership with the Fort Erie Public Library
Wed., Mar. 23, 7:00 pm
Centennial Branch
Call 905-871-2546 to reserve your space.

2011 Bert Miller Club Award Presented

One of the founding members of The Bert Miller Nature Club is the 2011 recipient of The Bert Miller Club Award. Tim Seburn was presented with the award at the February 21st meeting in recognition of his efforts to preserve, restore, protect and improve the natural resources and environment within the Niagara Peninsula.



Tim developed a love and appreciation of the natural world at an early age through the inspiration of local naturalist (and BMNC namesake) Bert Miller. Since that time, he has been a tireless advocate for environmental and natural heritage issues.

Some of his contributions to our club are:

- Serving on the executive almost continuously, taking on the treasurer's duties for the last 2 years
- Overseeing the BMNC bingo responsibilities as the main contact for the Town's Bingo Committee
- Spearheading the development of the BMNC website
- Drafting action plans and statements outlining the BMNC's objectives and concerns
- Leading group nature outings, including school classes

In addition to these duties, Tim is an active member of the Town's Environmental Advisory Committee, striving to promote Town planning based on sound environmental principles. He has also been involved with the Friends of Fort Erie Creeks and their

Northbound Shorebirds

Jean Iron, a well-known birding expert, offers tips and tricks for shorebird identification.
Mon. Apr. 18, 7:00 pm

Hiking Marcy's Woods

Savour the spring flora & fauna in this lovely nature preserve. Meet at the end of Holloway Bay Road.

Sat., Apr. 30, 10 am
Contact: Tim Seburn,
905-871-2577

FrogFest 2011

Join us at Heartland Forest, on Kalar Rd in Niagara Falls for this annual springtime festival.

Sat. May 7, 9:00 am
Contact: Paul Philp
905-894-1994

Spring Migratory Birds

Celebrate Migratory Bird Day as we search out these annual visitors. Meet at the Old Fort parking lot on Dominion Rd.

Sat., May 14, 9:00 am
Contact: Peter BonEnfant, 905-894-3214 or Marcie Jacklin 905-871-2577

activities. He serves on the board of the Niagara Land Trust and was a member of the steering committee that developed the organization in 2008.

Congratulations, Tim! You are, indeed, a worthy recipient.

NOTE: As part of the award, the BMNC will be making a donation to the Niagara Land Trust on behalf of Tim.

Road Ramble

On the day of the Great Winter Bird Hunt, February 19th, 17 of us gathered and decided that even though the weather wasn't ideal for birding, we would start out and see what happened. On the way to Port Colborne, there were a few Wild Turkeys, Tree Sparrows, Canada Geese of course, and a few other species, but nothing of note. The corner of Forks and Yager Roads, however, is worth checking out in the future if you are birding in Port Colborne.

Wainfleet seemed to be the hot spot of the day. At the feeders on Morgan's Point Road, we had about 10 species of birds that included Redpolls and Pine Siskins. This location apparently is often a good place to check out the birds.



Station Road proved to be a worthwhile stop. When we scouted this out earlier, we had a Northern Flicker, Bluebirds, a number of Buntings, and both colour phases of the Rough-legged Hawk. Fingers crossed, we hit that area again. In came the dark phase of the Rough-legged Hawk, giving us a wonderful look as it soared through the area.

In my excitement to get people out of their cars, I left our scope unattended. That is not a good idea on a windy day. We did get lucky on that one, as it blew over into the ditch. Some also got to see the lighter colour phase of the Rough-legged Hawk, as well as a Red-tail that soared around in the distance.

Nature's Aerial Jewels
Cheryl Tyndall, from the NPC Butterfly Conservatory tells us all about Niagara's native butterflies and how to attract them
Mon. May 16, 7:00 pm

Nature in Niagara Series:

Nature's Jewels
In partnership with the Fort Erie Public Library. Club members highlight local butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies.
Wed., June 8, 2:00 pm
Crystal Ridge Branch
Call 905-894-8373 to reserve your space.

Members Night & Pot Luck Supper
Bring a place setting & your favourite dish. Share your photos, digital pictures or nature displays, etc.
Mon. June 20, 6:00 pm

Ridgeway Summer Festival
Help set up, tear down, man a table, make a craft
Sat. & Sun. July 9 & 10
Contact: Lynda Goodridge
905-871-5856

On we went back towards Port Colborne, where a few Horned Larks, but not much else, were seen. At the feeders on Barrick there were a number of Downy Woodpeckers and other feeder birds, but no Rusty Blackbirds. We wrapped up the day looking for Buntings around the manure pile at Second Concession and Troup Road. Nothing that day, but this area again can be interesting to visit.

With the number of challenges the various species of birds face in their lives, we are fortunate to see what we do see.

Paul Philp

The Rail

Back from our Bruce Peninsula break, I headed west on the Friendship Trail on my trusty scooter, the Rambler. Low humidity and bright sunshine prevailed. My goal was controlled by time - half hour out and half hour back. My trusty binoculars were around my neck when I heard a familiar call. "Meow. Meow. Meow," the familiar catbird's call, sounded to the north of the Trail. Same location as always. Same results. No bird movements in the underbrush.

I keep looking. Then, I hear it. To the north, not far from the catbird hiding place, I hear a call I haven't heard in years. "Hip...hip...hip..." It was a dry, raspy call - unmistakably the sound of a King Rail.



King Rail

It was at Mud Lake in Port Colborne years ago that I heard and saw this elusive bird. It repeated its raspy calls. The King Rail is a fairly large, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling marsh bird.

This land off the Trail is a wetland area. Oh, to see this Rail! It mostly walks and seldom flies. I remembered its sides were

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**

Beamer's Point Hawk Watch

View migrating hawks, falcons, & eagles. Enjoy nature displays & more.
Good Friday, Apr 22
All Day
Contact: Don Mills
905-892-3973

Rock Point Provincial Park

Enjoy the many birds, butterflies, & flowers. Bring a lunch & meet at Fonthill Shoppers Drug Mart. Park entrance fee.
Sat., May 14, 8:30 am
Contact: Rick Young
905-734-6226

Queenston Heights Pot Luck Supper

Meet at the picnic area for dinner, followed by a walk in the woods. Bring a place setting & dish to share.
Wed., June 15, 6 pm
Contact: Gisele Mills
905-892-3973

strongly barred with white and dark brown. I sat and waited, glasses in hand. I had seen and heard the smaller Rails, the Sora and Virginia, at Mud Lake. No luck this time. I will return. Hey, life is great in nature. God has given me more time and I intend to use it.

Two roadside plants that caught my attention both on the Bruce peninsula roads and local rural roads were the Queen Anne's Lace and its showy white heads. Much closer to the ground was the bright yellow Birdsfoot Trefoil. "Birdsfoot" - this showy plant was introduced from Europe. When? Probably with our forefathers. The yellow pod arrangement resembles a bird's foot, hence the name. It has three ovate leaflets (clover-like). The Trefoil on the Bruce seemed to be a few inches taller than our Fort Erie plants.

Earl Plato

A Stinky Story

Odour is strongly connected with memory, and whenever the evening air is fragrant with the gentle scent of skunk, it reminds me once again of the time I had the misfortune of being sprayed by one while on a date. My girlfriend lived out in the sticks and we were returning to her house after a walk to see the endangered shoe tree. It was a moonless night. There were no streetlights. As we approached her home, I bent down to pet her dog who had come out onto the road to greet us. It was so dark it took me a few seconds to realize it was not her dog but a skunk I was petting.

My girlfriend ran back to her house. The date was clearly over. Her mother finally agreed that she had to allow me onto the property to retrieve my car. I raced home with all the windows rolled down, passing through a posse of Outlaw bikers who gave me the strangest looks.



As I arrived home, the family must have smelled me as I hit the top of the driveway. They met me at the back door, catching their breath and half-gagging. There was no way I was being allowed into the house. After making me back off a few paces, my mother put a change of clothes, laundry soap, hot water and tomato juice on

PFN

Monthly indoor programs held 4th Monday, 7:30 p.m., at Mountainview United Church, 150 Glendale Ave., St. Catharines. For details on speakers, www.peninsulafieldnats.com

Lichens & Mosses at Rockway

Meet at the Rockway Community Centre to view the falls and identify lichens, mosses & early wildflowers. Sat. Apr 16, 10:00 am
Contact: Roman Olszewski 905-732-9955

Short Hills Sanctuary Clean-up

Help the Hamilton Naturalists Club with their annual maintenance of this sanctuary, Metler Rd & Centre St. east of North Pelham. Bring a lunch and tools for weeding. Sun., May 1, 10:00 am
Contact: John Potter 905-892-2566

Swayze Gorge & Short Hills Provincial Park

Meet at the Roland Rd. entrance to the Park to view the falls and spring wildflowers. Sun., May 15, 2:00 pm
Contact: Brian Calvert 905-892-6267

the porch for me. I washed up and buried my clothes.

That is, all my clothes except my jeans, which were too important to part with. Those of you who were teenagers in the '60s will understand. My mother washed them several times but they still stank like skunk. I took them back to school in Waterloo and had my landlady wash them several more times for me, to no avail. Finally, I put them on the clothesline in the back yard and simply forgot about them all winter.

One warm morning the following spring, I looked in the back yard and noticed my jeans lying in the snow, having fallen off the line some time during the winter. They smelled as fresh as the spring day it was and now had the sought after worn look so prized back then. No smell of skunk remained. After washing and drying them one more time, I decided to wear them to a final exam I had to write in the gymnasium the next day.

It proved to be a lengthy, difficult exam. As we entered the second hour of testing, I suddenly smelled skunk. My perspiration must have somehow reactivated the stench. As much as I tried not to sweat, skunk scent began to waft across the room. Students closest to me became distracted by the smell. It was getting bad. One of them finally called the professor over. Although she was whispering, I distinctly heard her say the word "skunk" to the professor. The professor began navigating in circles, his nose high in the air. I felt like a fugitive with a bloodhound closing in on me. I projected my score based on the questions I had already answered. Confident of at least a passing grade, I handed in my paper and vacated the premises.

Being a true conservationist, however, I still did not want to throw my jeans away. The stinky area was located mostly below my knees, so I turned my jeans into cutoffs, which had become popular, and wore them for many more years.

Tim Seburn

OMB Pre-hearing Date Set For Speedway Challenge



Get Ready for Spring !!
Don't Miss
Malcolmson Eco-Park
Native Plant Sale Days
Saturday,
April 30th 8 am – 1 pm
May 14th 8 a.m. – Noon

Wildflowers for Monarch butterflies and beneficial insects; trees & shrubs; native grasses & grass seed. A wide selection available.

Location: Lakeshore Road at the north end of Niagara St. in St. Catharines, just west of Lock One of the Welland Canal.

For information, contact:
Joshua Diamond, NPCA,
905-788-3135 ext 246



A warm welcome is extended to the following new members of the Bert Miller Nature Club:

Nichole Bonner
Joan Dunn
Irene, Mike & Natalie Kiers
Marie Janicke
Paul Maine
Janine Oakley

We are pleased to have you join us in discovering the wonders of our natural environment.

If you thought a twelve story condo tower on the beach would change the face of Fort Erie, hold on to your hat.

The proposed speedway development, which has been designed to desecrate 821 acres of mainly prime agricultural land that includes environmentally protected areas and wildlife corridors, will clearly change the character of Fort Erie's semi-rural, quiet lifestyle forever!

Concerned Citizens of Greater Fort Erie, a not-for-profit grass roots group, is preparing for the David and Goliath challenge of an Ontario Municipal Board Hearing. The pre-hearing is set for Friday, April 8, 2011 at 11:00am in the Council Chambers of the Town of Fort Erie and is a public meeting. You are urged to attend and show the OMB that many area residents stand in opposition to this development.

CCGFE is acutely concerned about the loss of wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, and the degradation of two creek systems that will result if the speedway development is allowed to proceed. We encourage those who care about the quality of life in Fort Erie to join with us to show how incompatible a noisy, polluting speedway will be in the middle of Greater Fort Erie.

One of CCGFE's fundraising efforts is the 2nd annual barn sale which will take place in early May (date dependent on the OMB hearing date which will be set at the pre-hearing). When you are doing your spring cleaning, CCGFE will be happy to take your lightly used, saleable items as a donation to our cause. CCGFE is accepting donated items now, as well as asking people in search of that elusive treasure to attend the sale. (Specific details on the date/location will follow.)

Please get involved. Every voice and every dollar helps! Call to make a cash donation of any size.

Sandy Vant, Chairperson, CCGFE, www.ccgfe.org
ccgforterie@gmail.com; Phone: 905.994.7422

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2011
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Visit the BMNC
website at
www.bertmillernatureclub.org

Lake Erie Coastal Project Report

The Great Lakes coast supports some of the rarest and most threatened ecosystems in Canada. Lake Erie, the southernmost Great Lake, is a hotspot for species diversity and supports a number of species at risk, including Hoptree, Hooded Warbler, and Fowler's Toad.

The Bert Miller Nature Club has been conducting field surveys of this important coastal area in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources-Vineland, the Natural Heritage Information Centre, the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Clinton Herbarium, the Ekert Herbarium, the Peninsula Field Naturalists, the Niagara Falls Nature Club, and the Niagara Frontier Botanical Society of Buffalo, New York. Support for this project has been provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund.

The goal of this project is to inventory parts of the shoreline that lie in Ecodistrict 7E-5 (the Haldimand Clay Plain Physiographic Region), and selected areas in the adjacent Niagara Frontier Region of Western New York, to identify the occurrence and distribution of species at risk and their habitats. The Niagara Frontier Botanical Society has recently completed a "Botany on the Beaches" survey across the border and have partnered to assist in continuing this survey on the Canadian side.

Extensive cottage development and urban boundary expansions are a direct threat to the biodiversity of this important coast. A number of significant species are historically known from this area. However, most records date back from the late 1800's to the mid-1900's and an up-to-date survey does not exist for much of this area. For example, in a 1942 edition of This Week Outdoors, a group of hikers from Buffalo visited the recently reconstructed ruins of old Fort Erie and reported seeing a provincially rare plant called Biennial Gaura (*Oenothera gaura*). As part of this study, we confirmed that this plant species is still growing at that location almost 70 years later.



Swamp Rose Mallow

To date, 11 species at risk have been recorded in the study area. These are: Hoptree (*Ptelea trifoliata*), Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*), Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), Shumard Oak (*Quercus shumardii*), Swamp Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*), American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*), Red-headed Woodpecker, Hooded Warbler, Peregrine Falcon and Fowler's Toad.

Many other provincially significant, regionally restricted and locally rare plant species have also been recorded. New and historic populations of significant species such as Kalm's St. Johns Wort (*Hypericum kalmianum*), Beach Pea (*Lathyrus japonicus*), and Sand Cherry (*Prunus pumila*) have been reconfirmed or documented as part of this study. Unfortunately, the Beach Pea has seen a decline from its historic range. Currently, the number of historic plant collections sitting in herbariums outnumbers the living locations for this beach plant.



Beach Pea photo courtesy of Rick Young

If funding is made available, the next steps for the Lake Erie Coast project include another field season of surveys and an education component for landowners and cottage associations focusing on the stewardship of this unique and fragile coast.

If you are interested in volunteering with surveys or are a landowner who would like to participate, please contact Albert Garofalo at (905) 732-5084 or albert.garofalo@gmail.com.

NOTE: Good news! We have just received confirmation that the funding proposal for the continuation of this project has been approved.



Getting Ready for the Native Plant Workshop on March 23rd

Lynda Goodridge, Dawn Pierrynowski, and FEPL Board Chair Ann McLaughlin (center) don gardening gear to promote the first program in the 2011 Nature in Niagara Series.

Get Wind Power Right

Wind energy is a clean, abundant, renewable source of energy that can contribute to combating climate change. But poorly placed turbines pose a threat to vulnerable bird populations. Help Nature Canada tell federal and provincial regulators to enact energy policies that fight climate change while minimizing the dangers to wildlife near Important Bird Areas where birds congregate, migrate and breed.

You can read about and then sign their petition at the following: <http://www.naturecanada.ca/advocate/wind.html>

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