



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS

SLSN is an incorporated not-for-profit Member of Ontario Nature.

Post Office Box 1044 Sutton West, Ontario, L0E 1R0

Telephone 905-722-8021

www.slsnc.ca

Research Partner with The Zephyr Society of Lake Simcoe (www.zephyrsociety.ca)

Member: Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

Member: Greenbelt Alliance

Note: Please renew your membership to receive future Newsletters

E-NEWS BLAST

Earth Hour March 29, 2014

This year the Earth Hour is Saturday March 29. Club member Beth Daw-Ryder is coordinating the club evening walk in Sibbald Point Provincial Park. This is a popular annual club event. We will meet at the Park Parking lot at 8:30 p.m. and hike for One hour. Paul Harpley will lead the hike. Hooting for owls and related activities will occur. Dress for the weather. Visitors welcome. Phone Beth at 905-830-8089 for more details.

Outings: All regular outings – Note: **Only paid-up members may participate (for insurance compliance).**

- Saturday, May. 3* **Spring Birding and Nature Study:** The annual Spring Birding trip along Lake Simcoe will concentrate on waterfowl and shorebirds. Rare migrants can sometimes turn up unexpectedly so be prepared. Later in the day we may do some hiking and general nature study in one of our local natural areas. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Tim Horton's in Sutton on Dalton Road. Dress for the weather. Bring binoculars. Phone Paul at 905-722-8021, if you plan to participate.
- Saturday, June 7* **Nature Hiking:** An afternoon adventure in a Regional Forest location in the South Lake Simcoe area. Actual details of the trip will depend on weather and existing conditions. Meet at Coffee Time, Highway 48 south of Baldwin at 1:00 p.m. Dress for the weather. Phone Paul at 905-722-8021 if you plan to participate.
- September T.B.A.* **Mothing:** Come and take part in one of the most popular new naturalist activity. Mothing is a special evening outing to search and find moths in our area to identify. The activity is growing everywhere and in England it has become quite the rage. Executive member Mary Green, and husband Gerry have offered their property and experience to introduce members to the activity. This event in September 2011 was popular. Meet at the Greens' at 8:00 p.m. Phone Mary at 705-437-1262 to confirm for participation and details.
- Sunday, Dec. 28* **Sutton Christmas Bird Count:** The Annual Count this year is an official Audubon Society and Bird Studies Canada Count. Call Paul to register 905-722-8021. Coordinated by Paul and Debra Harpley.

2015

- Date in January* **Rouge National Park Winter Bird Count:** Call Paul Harpley to register 905-722-8021. Date to be announced later. Area 10 organized by Paul Harpley.
- Date late February* **Deer Census in Rouge Park National Park:** Call Paul Harpley to register 905-722-8021. Date to be announced later. Organized by Paul Harpley.
-

Meetings:

All Meetings start at 7:30 p.m. at the York Region Police Building Meeting Room (Baseline Road between McCowan and Civic Centre Road) unless noted otherwise. Paid up members events (for insurance compliance).

- Tuesday, April 8* **Winter Adaptations of Birds and Mammals:** Our birds and mammals have evolved physical adaptations, behaviour strategies and skills to survive the coldest and snowiest winter weather that Southern Ontario can deliver. Hear some of the ways Chickadees to Snowshoe hares and more do this. Member researched and presentation evening.
- Tuesday, May 13* **Bird Houses:** As the migratory birds arrive, and our Canadian birds that spend the winter here come into our area, they are preparing to nest and have young. Bird houses are one thing we can do to attract them to our properties and help them be successful. Hear and see what diversity there is in making and installing bird house. Bring some examples of them to the meeting. Member researched and presentation evening.
- Tuesday, June 10* **Adventure in South Africa:** Club members Carol McDermott and Pat Stanojevic recently completed a Tour of South Africa visiting many areas of natural and cultural heritage. They will take us on a travelogue of their journey at the meeting. **Do not miss this presentation!**
- Tuesday, Sept. 9* **Old Growth Forests:** These forests are remnants of the once extensive, deep, and dark mature tree forests that once were widespread in Southern Ontario pre-European settlement. Members will research and report on them in the province and in our local area. Member researched and presentation evening.
- Tuesday, October 14* **Bees and Agricultural Pesticides:** Barbara Meyers will present current knowledge regarding neonicotinoids pesticide use in Canada. Don't miss this must see presentation! Everyone welcome. There will be a small silent auction and baked goods for sale as in past years. Club members please donate few, but unique auction items. Paid up Club members reserve seats with \$5.00 donation by September 20. Non-members \$15. as space allows. At this point, the event this year will be at our regular meeting place, York Region Police Building Meeting Room (Baseline Road between McCowan and Civic Centre Road). Limited seating. Phone Carol 705-437-2993 or Mary 705-437-1262 for further information.
- Tuesday, Nov. 11* **Northern Lights:** The night sky in the autumn is occasionally alive with turning, swirling colours in Georgina. We will investigate research and

report on the aurora borealis here and in the far north. If anyone has good pictures please bring them to the meeting. Member researched and presentation evening.

Sutton Christmas Bird Count 2013

Sutton CBC Report 2013-12-29

Twenty-one birders and thirteen feeder watchers participated in the annual Sutton CBC on Sunday December 29, 2013.

A total of 42 species on the day, and three Count Week bird species, were seen (lower than most years as Lake Simcoe was almost fully frozen in). Highlights for the count were Great Blue heron (1), Sharp-shinned hawk (2), Franklin's gull (1), Great Black-backed gull (1), Snowy owl (1), Belted kingfisher (1), Red-bellied woodpecker (6), Brown creeper (1), N. Mockingbird (1), Bohemian waxwing (5). Count Week species were Brown thrasher (1), Am. Kestrel (1), Bald eagle (4).

Temperature was seasonally warm at -4 to +4 Celcius. The lake being ice and snow covered from previously cold weather the week preceding the Count meant waterfowl were almost completely absent.

Paul Harpley

Provincial Fish Strategy - Ontario

The Ministry of Natural Resources recently posted the draft Provincial Fish Strategy to the Environmental Registry, for an extended 120 day comment period (EBR Registry Number 012-0291). I was asked to consult for the MNR Fisheries Policy Section on a Stakeholder Review Workshop in late February. In my view the proposed Strategy is a great improvement to the current rather idiosyncratic angler driven Policy framework that seems to drive the current Fisheries system. The new Strategy would take a Broader Landscape Approach to Fisheries management, with a more ecosystems based Policy framework. Some forward thinking innovations have been built in including the case for change in thinking, systems approach to planning and Climate Change planning provision, and recognition of the importance of focusing on invasive species management. For more specific details please phone me at 905-722-8021.

Paul Harpley SLSN

Members can view the Provincial Fish Strategy: Fish for the Future, at

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/stdprodconsume/groups/lr/@letsfish/documents/document/stdprod_110232.pdf

Environmental Issues – Local

SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS

CURRENT ISSUES and RESEARCH SUMMARY

Issues 2013 – Habitat loss

Briarwood Development

Ancient Seashore Development

SUD Development

North Gwillimbury Forest

Greenville Development

Ballymore Development

Species at Risk legislation – weakening – Ontario Gov.

Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)

Provincial Fish Strategy

Lake Simcoe / Georgian Bay Clean-Up Fund \$29 M.

Planning Georgina: Official Plan Process – **Greenlands Study – forest and grassland meadow**

Trails and Recreation Facilities Study

Sedore Property

Research Scientific Papers 2014 - Present

Applications of GIS in Lake Simcoe – Breeding Birds – Fleming College 2012

Probing the Land/Water interface at Rivers and Streams – 2013 Lake Simcoe Science Forum Paper

Biodiversity Decline of Forest Birds – South Lake Simcoe – 2013 Carolinian Canada Conference

Official Plan Review – Town of Georgina

The Town of Georgina is in the process of preparing an update to its Official Plan. An Official Plan is a long range planning policy document. The Official Plan Review focuses on guiding principles and objectives, growth management and sustainability strategies, and the overall policy framework for land use within the area subject to this review, which is shown on the key map below.

The second Public Workshop #2 was held Monday, March 24, 2014 at The ROC Chalet.

Building on the outcomes of the visioning, objectives, and guiding principles discussion at Public Workshop #1, this workshop was designed to help identify the planning policy directions that need to be considered for inclusion in the Official Plan. The Public Workshop began with a brief presentation of the background research and public input received to date. Participants were organized into smaller groups to discuss and provide input on specific policy directions.

I had contributed to natural heritage and rural/agricultural in Workshop #1 so I focused on Growth Management in Workshop #2. Our primary concern as naturalists is identification and conservation of natural habitat and wildlife. This can only be achieved through good Growth Management. Our primary concern with the current Georgina Official Plan is our continuing problem with the lack of process on developing the original Greenlands Strategy for the Town over 15 years old. Many of the key recommendations for detailed work (including original field work) have never been implemented. Simple aerial photo based forest mapping blocks are identified but this is very low resolution investigation and documentation no longer acceptable.

Clear core and corridor areas must be established based on detailed assessment, detailed inventory, and geographic and biological functional analysis. Specific conservation strategy, for all areas need to be developed and new updated core and corridor areas plans, implementation and management actions taken. An immediate secession of forest cutting in many areas of the Town is needed as some estimates approach current forest loss at 2 % per year. Grassland meadow (most significant for declining prairie associated birds) in declining at an even faster rate in the Town through agricultural expansion, agricultural methods and planting changes and urban and industrial encroachment.

The Region of York, with the Town of Georgina must act on this immediately. This will have to happen within the provision of Growth Management in the new Official Plan. These points and

others must be made by all naturalists and others to Town planners and consultants in the coming months.

Paul Harpley SLSN

Two Important Notices/Reminder:

Town of Georgina Campaign Finance Reform

Wednesday, March 26, 2014 - 7:00 PM

On Wednesday, March 26, 2014 Reverend Jim Keenan and Robert Eisenberg made deputations to Georgina Town Council to request that all the candidates in the upcoming municipal election only accept donations from individuals, and that they not accept donations from corporations or unions.

Rev. Keenan is running for Council in Ward 5 and is a director of the North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance. Mr. Eisenberg is President of Municipal Campaign Fairness and is a director of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition.

In the 2010 election, the sources of financial support for various candidates varied widely, as can see from the summary below:

Councillor	Corporate & union donations as a percentage of total campaign contributions
Mayor Robert Grossi	87%
Deputy Mayor Danny Wheeler	83%
Councillor Naomi Davison	0%
Councillor Phil Craig	0%
Councillor Dave Szollosy	61%
Councillor Ken Hackenbrook	0%
Councillor Brad Smockum	11%

Jack Gibbons
Chair, North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance

The delegations were #10. On the Council Meeting Agenda, as below.

10. DELEGATIONS/SPEAKERS/PETITIONS Pages 49-62

10.1 Rev. Jim Keenan deputation Wednesday March 26th at Georgina Town Council on Municipal Election Finance Reform. He will be presenting arguments with respect to the negative impact that the receiving of corporate or union donations by candidates for municipal elections has on the political process. Pages 63-64

10.2 Robert Eisenberg addressing campaign finance reform.

You can see repeat Broadcasts of the Council meeting at <http://www.georgina.ca/meeting-live-stream.aspx>

North Gwillimbury Forest

Development approval swap meeting a step in the right direction

A development approvals swap – where permission to develop new housing is transferred from the Maple Lake Estates wetland and significant woodland property to a more appropriate location – could be the answer we are looking for to protect the North Gwillimbury Forest. So it is good news that discussions of how such a swap might take place finally got underway last week, with a first meeting between North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance, the Town of Georgina, the Region of York, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Metrus Developments.

It is no secret that there are at least two options: move the development to farmland on the south side of Deer Park Drive that is also owned by Metrus. Or incorporate additional development in Keswick, where Metrus also owns property.

We see a number of disadvantages with the first option. The land on the south-side of Deer Park Drive is farmland approximately one kilometre away from the north end of the area designated for urban growth in Keswick. It is also within the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside. So any development there has the potential to be classic urban sprawl located away from existing municipal services and urban areas.

This kind of development is costly: the Town of Georgina estimates that it currently recovers only 43% of the cost of accommodating such “greenfield” development through development charges. The shortfall is recovered by raising our property taxes.

It is also unhealthy, with study after study showing that such isolated car-dependent communities lead to longer commutes, more stress and reduced physical activity.

The second option which puts additional development where it is meant to be – inside the lands designated for urban growth in Keswick – will help Georgina meet both Regional and Provincial targets

for creating more sustainable communities. It will also help to create a more vibrant and fully integrated community around Keswick instead of another standalone subdivision.

This is why we will be at the negotiating table talking about how to make any development approvals swap a win-win by both protecting natural areas in our forest and creating healthy, liveable communities that don't eat up important farmland or undermine the Greenbelt.

You can help by contacting Mayor Grossi and Georgina councillors and encouraging them to also support a vision of a liveable, well planned urban community located within Keswick's existing urban growth boundaries.

Source:
Jack Gibbons
Chair, North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance – Feb. 28, 2014

York Region Forest Cutting – Spring 2014

The Region's timber harvest contractor will be undertaking work in the Clarke Tract, Hall Tract and Eldred King Tract this week. The operation is expected to last until Mid-April. It is then expected to resume Mid July.

For the safety of the public and workers please keep clear of the operation. Please feel free to forward this email to other forest users. If you have any questions regarding this operation please contact me at the contact information below.

[Current Ontario Nature News](#)

As nature lovers, we find joy and peace when we stand in nature. Ontario Nature members also stand up for nature.

What are we standing up for in 2014?

You'll help us stand up and stake our claim to a new and ecologically important property to expand our Lost Bay Nature Reserve.

You'll be standing with us in court, demanding justice and protection for species at risk in our lawsuit against the government. We are standing up to insist on real protections for endangered species.

Together, we'll stand up for the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Greenbelt and the Niagara Escarpment.

We must continue to limit land development in our natural areas. Your membership supports research and monitoring to ensure these and other vital natural areas provide rich habitats for species, as well as the clean water and fresh air we depend on.

Your Ontario Nature membership means you are taking action for species and spaces you cherish.

Together, we will stand up for nature in your back yard, our boreal forest and beyond.

Yours for nature,



Caroline Schultz,
Ontario Nature,
Executive Director

SLAPP Suites

Enough is enough. Political posturing and needless delay tactics at Queen's Park risk preventing the passage of a new law intended to protect our right to speak up for a healthy environment. We all need to tell our MPPs and political leaders that we expect better. It's time they got back to work to pass Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, 2014.

This proposed law would protect citizens from meritless lawsuits known as SLAPPs – Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. SLAPPs are deliberate attempts to silence and intimidate citizens, and to prevent them from exercising their right to speak up on environmental issues of concern. They are an insidious form of courtroom bullying.

For example, a former Markham councillor was hit with a SLAPP by a developer because she supported a proposed foodbelt in Markham as a way to preserve valuable farmland in the area from encroaching development. In the end, the court dismissed the case, but not without significant personal and financial cost to the councillor. As her experience clearly demonstrates, SLAPPs waste time and money and put a chill on democratic decision-making.

Recently, some northern mayors wrote a letter denouncing Bill 83. Ontario Nature's boreal program manager, Julee Boan, defended the bill in a powerful letter to The Chronicle Journal in Thunder Bay.

Ontario may be facing a spring election, and time is running out to pass Bill 83. Please ask your

MPP and political leaders to pass this law by Earth Day (April 22). Ontarians need to be able to exercise their democratic right to speak up for a healthy environment without fear of a SLAPP.

The most effective action you could take would be to phone or write to your MPP to let them know that this issue matters to you, one of their voting constituents.

Another easy option is to send a letter to the leaders of the major political parties by clicking the link below.

Source: Julee Bowen, ON – March 4, 2014

Draft Responsible Aggregate Standards

This is a follow up to Caroline Schultz's email from February 12, regarding the Cornerstone Standards Council's voluntary certification program and the opportunity to comment on the draft Responsible Aggregate Standards. As Caroline explained in her email, the overall purpose of this initiative is to create and implement a voluntary certification program for aggregate operations that achieves an environmental and social standard significantly higher than required through current regulation.

Attached, for your information, are Ontario Nature's draft comments on the proposed standard. If your group would like to provide comment on the standards, please feel free to borrow, use or adapt our draft comments in preparing your own. Alternatively, if you would like to simply sign on to our comments, based on the draft I've provided here, you are more than welcome. Note, however, that you would need to let us know by Wednesday March 19, as we will be submitting the comments on the due date, Friday March 21. Note also that we will be continuing to revise and add to our comments between now and the due date.

There are a many excellent components in the draft standard. But it needs to be strengthened in some key areas. Your input will help to ensure that this happens. Please phone Paul Harpley in South Lake Simcoe for follow-up.

Source: **Anne Bell, Ph.D.**, Director of Conservation and Education, Ontario Nature

Ontario Nature Annual Gathering

Ontario Nature is holding our 83rd Annual Gathering, *Loon Calls on the Lake*, on June 20-22 at YMCA Geneva Park on beautiful Lake Couchiching in Orillia. It's the perfect opportunity to connect with old friends and new, and have a weekend of fun outdoors. Before you register, be sure to check out our 'bring-a-buddy' special offer for our members. After all, spending time in nature is always more fun with a friend.

Highlights include:

- Hands-on [nature workshops](#) on gardening, nature photography, dragonflies, salamanders and more.
- Keynote from David Philips, Environment Canada's Senior Climatologist (previous speaker at the South Lake Simcoe Naturalists Annual Meeting).
- Guided field trips to the Carden Plain, Minesing Wetlands, Altberg Wildlife Sanctuary.

You can also join us in celebrating our shared conservation successes and discussing our vision for the year ahead at Ontario Nature's Annual General Meeting. We will be honouring the achievements of eco-heroes at the Conservation Awards ceremony.

If you have any questions, or to register, please feel free to contact Lauren Wright at laurenw@ontarionature.org or 1-800-440-2366 ext. 271.

Environmental Issues - Province

Round 2 Goes to the Turbines

In January, the Ministry of the Environment and Gilead Power argued against the Environmental Review Tribunal (ERT) ruling that revoked the approval of the Ostrander Point wind turbine project. Justice Nordheimer decided that the Tribunal erred in its ruling. The Prince Edward County Field Naturalists (PECFN) are disappointed with the Divisional Court ruling, and will seek leave to appeal it to the Ontario Court of Appeal. The cost of the ERT appeal and subsequent defense of its decision has been very expensive and the PECFN need your help. To learn more about how you can support their efforts, visit <http://www.saveostranderpoint.org/>.



Photo Courtesy of Les

Science Cafe to Discuss TransCanada's Pipeline Proposal

Ontario Nature's Boreal Office, in collaboration with Science North, the Thunder Bay Chapter of the Council of Canadians and Citizens United for a Sustainable Planet will hold a Science Cafe in Thunder Bay on March 18th. The event will include a panel discussion on TransCanada's Energy East pipeline proposal. In Ontario, the project would result in the conversion of almost 2,000 kilometres of existing pipeline (from natural gas to diluted bitumen), the construction of 104 kilometres of new pipeline and the building of 30 pumping stations, all with

inherent risks to our environment. For more information about the Science Café, contact Julee Boan at juleeb@ontarionature.org.



Best Practices Guide to Natural Heritage Systems Planning

The dual crisis of climate change and biodiversity loss demands a broad approach to how we build and grow communities. Ontario Nature's Best Practices Guide to Natural Heritage Systems Planning will help planners do just that. The guide features 50 examples of effective natural heritage systems policies taken from more than 20 municipalities across southern and eastern Ontario, and explains how planners identified and protected greenways of connected natural cores and corridors. For more information or to obtain an electronic copy of the guide, contact Josh Wise at joshuaw@ontarionature.org.

Help Remove Milkweed from Ontario's Noxious Weed List

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food is proposing that milkweed be removed from the Schedule of Noxious Weeds and that dog-strangling vine be added. Milkweed provides an important habitat and a larval food source for the monarch butterfly, which is experiencing an alarming decline in numbers. Dog-strangling vine is an invasive plant that can be difficult to control once established. It is also a hazard to monarch butterfly populations because, though monarch butterflies are attracted to it, any eggs they lay on the plant will not survive. The proposed amendment is available for public comment at <http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTIxNzQz&statusId=MTgyNDQy&language=en>. The deadline for comments is April 14, 2014.

Genetically Modified Salmon in Canada!

It's only weeks into 2014 and we are already launching a new case!

Ecojustice lawyers have filed a lawsuit, on behalf of Ecology Action Centre and Living Oceans Society, against the federal government for permitting the manufacture of genetically modified salmon in Canada.

Our clients believe the government violated its own laws by failing to consider information regarding invasiveness of the genetically modified salmon, thereby putting wild salmon and the environment on which they depend at risk.

With iconic species such as wild salmon at stake, it is vital that decision-making be in accordance with the law, based on the best scientific knowledge available, and subject to public debate.

Your support got us here, we look forward to keeping you informed.



Tanya Nayler, Staff lawyer | [Ecojustice](#)

Migration Reports

Hummingbird News: March 26, 2014

By Mary Hosier

Over 100 first Rubythroat and Rufous sightings came in this week — including one from a research vessel in the Gulf of Mexico!

SIGHTINGS

Image of the Week



[Rescued at Sea](#)

News: Surprising Stopover and First Sightings

Refuge on the Gulf

One hundred miles off the coast of Louisiana, research scientist Allison Heater welcomed some surprise visitors. On March 22nd, 3 or 4 hummingbirds found refuge on the research vessel, Atlantis. "After spotting the hummingbirds we quickly rigged up some sugar water feeders."



[Refuge on the Gulf](#)

Allison Heater

They're Back

Rubythroats have moved up into Tennessee, North Carolina, and Missouri this week. "Woo-hoo, finally first of the season," exclaimed a Louisiana spotter this week.

Greenwood, South Carolina

"Put a feeder out on 3/21/14 and saw my first hummer this evening at 7:30pm. Couldn't tell if it was male or female, but do know this... They're back! Soon my backyard will be buzzing!" 03/24/14



[Resident Meets Migrant](#)

Ronnie Sherrill

Knoxville, Tennessee

"Male ruby-throat at feeder, one week earlier than last year." 03/24/14

Jonesboro, Georgia

"Male ruby throat! He was so hungry...visited feeder all day. Ate and ate!" 03/23/14

Rufous first sightings continue to be reported from California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.


Zigzag, Oregon

"Looked out the back door and a male rufous was looking in! Got my feeders out in a hurry." 03/20/14



[Dogfight at the Feeder](#)

Photo: John Doerper

	
Observers reported more FIRST sightings than WAVES for the first time.	Image of the Week

With robins returning, we salute another sign of spring: the lowly earthworm.



[Signs of Spring](#)

Photo: R. Bushby

News: Slow and Steady Progress

Source: American Robin Journey North – 2014-03-18

Weather and Songbird Migration

Tomorrow is the first official day of spring, and the migrants are getting anxious! That cold front that moved across the country last week has kept the birds confined to the southern half of the country. One birder on the Alabama coast reported "insane numbers" of White-eyed Vireos, along with many Yellow-throated Vireos, Blue-headed Vireos, Prothonotary Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrushes, and the first Orchard Oriole of the season. New arrivals in Florida included Great-crested Flycatcher, Ovenbird, Indigo Bunting, and always spectacular Painted Bunting.

Slow Week in Western Gulf Region

Texas was the only state to report significant influxes of migrants. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Hooded Warblers, and Black-and-white Warblers were commonly seen, along with the first Summer Tanager and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Over the last day or two, winds have shifted to the south, allowing a few migrants to continue migrating. The first Louisiana Waterthrushes have been seen here in Tennessee, Black-and-white Warblers, Purple Martins, and Barn Swallows showed up in Oklahoma, and Prothonotary Warblers have arrived in Ohio, but that is as far north as migrants have gotten.

New Arrivals in Western U.S.

A slow, steady stream of migrants is coming in, but even they are starting to make some progress northward. Bell's Vireos, Hutn's Vireos, Lucy's Warblers, Orange-crowned Warblers, and Western Kingbirds were all seen in Arizona, New Mexico, and California, and the swallows (Tree, Northern Rough-winged, and Violet-green) have made it to Nevada, along with the first Hooded Oriole.

Source: Journey North – 2014-03-18

Monarch Butterfly Migration

Estela witnessed a dramatic departure on March 13th:

"The massive leaving is occurring right now! Monarchs are clouding our town, flying by the towers of our downtown churches in a majestic performance as if dancing to music!"

A Critical Time

A mating frenzy was underway this week, according to Estela. The monarchs are in reproductive condition now, so the biological clock is ticking. With energy directed toward reproduction, they'll race northward to produce the next generation. Most of these monarchs will reach the end of their lives by early May.

Critical Habitat

The size of the first spring generation will largely be determined by the quality of breeding habitat in Texas, and neighboring states to a lesser extent. Reproduction is concentrated in this region in early spring because the vegetation is most advanced and temperatures are favorable. The next 6 weeks will be critical.



Source: Journey North – 2014-03-20, Elizabeth Howard

Great Backyard Bird Count – National Audubon Society

It was another exciting, record-breaking year for the **Great Backyard Bird Count**. The final 2014 GBBC results are in! Participants in 135 countries around the globe submitted more than 144,000 checklists. Canada made a stellar contribution with 13,458 checklists.

The Northern Cardinal appeared on more checklists than any other bird, while the Red-winged Blackbird was the most numerous species, with more than 1.6 million individuals counted.

A Warm Welcome Home for Canada's Migratory Birds

Although wintery weather is still lingering in parts of the country, spring is on the horizon. At this time of year, our thoughts turn to two of Canada's most popular hobbies: birdwatching and gardening. And these fun pastimes go hand in hand!

The benefits of creating an inviting and diverse backyard ecosystem are far-reaching, for you and for Canada's birdlife. Bird Studies Canada thanks Home Hardware for sharing the article "**7 Meaningful Ways You Can Help Birds this Spring** from Bird Studies Canada" in the spring issue of *Home at Home* magazine. Be sure to pick up your free copy at your local Home Hardware or Building Centre.

Conservation

Can You Help Us Find Chorus Frogs in Ontario?

If you're able to identify **Western Chorus Frog calls**, you can help us learn more about the distribution and habitat of this species, which is threatened with extinction in central Ontario. Over the next month, please keep track of where you hear chorus frogs and report your information online to the Ontario Chorus Frog and Marsh Bird Species at Risk Project. Bird Studies Canada is interested in learning more about where chorus frogs occur throughout Ontario, and we are especially keen for reports from targeted locations along Lake Ontario.

You can also assist by conducting frog surveys for our Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program. Survey previously-monitored routes near your home, or create a new survey route at a location where chorus frogs are currently found. We will use the information, in part, to improve habitat for chorus frogs on private land.

This project is supported by the Government of Canada.

Politicians urging Brock residents to speak out on Greenbelt Plan

Public meeting set for Sunderland

Brock Citizen, March 24, 2014

By Scott Howard

(BROCK TWP.) Durham Region is looking for public input on the Greenbelt Plan -- and local politicians hope that Brock Township residents give them an earful.

The provincial legislation is up for a mandatory 10-year review in 2015 and the Region wants to know what residents think. It has retained the consulting firm of Urban Strategies Inc. to conduct a series of open houses, along with an online survey, interviews with municipal politicians and staff and focus groups organized around key issues.

The consultations are expected to wrap up by the end of March, with a public session set for the Sunderland Town Hall Thursday (March 27) from 6 to 9 p.m.

The Greenbelt Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan were put in place by the Province in 2005 to preserve farmland in the Golden Horseshoe area by limiting development to urban areas. In Durham, it covers more than 80 per cent of the overall geographical area, extending into each of the Region's eight municipalities and blanketing Brock Township.

"We need to get some land exempted from the greenbelt or get some sort of concessions for future growth," said Regional Councillor Debbie Bath, urging local residents to attend the session.

"The citizens of Brock need to be involved," added Durham Region Chair Roger Anderson.

"Or the only thing going up in Brock Township will be the taxes. That's the only option, besides reducing maintenance and service levels."

The Region is also setting up the Greenbelt Review Working Group, with representatives from relevant agencies and other stakeholder organizations with an interest in the Greenbelt, to help the consultant to understand the perspectives and interests of local stakeholder groups. Membership in the group will include representatives from the eight area municipalities, the five conservation authorities in Durham, Regional citizen advisory committees, the agricultural and environmental sectors, and the development industry.

Durham's consultations will be used to develop a discussion paper that will be the foundation of the Region's submission to the Province.

For more information, visit www.durham.ca/greenbeltreview

See Durham Region's online survey. If you could please send this email out to your members and urge them to attend and speak out for protecting the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine in Durham and complete the online survey. The consultation closes April 4th, 2014.

Link to the [online survey](#) here or download and mail in [the workbook](#).

Submitted by SLSN member Denise Sheedy.

Other News of interest to Naturalists

Some unfortunate news has surfaced recently for naturalists planning trips in northern Ontario. A little over a month ago northern residents were notified by Algoma Central Railway (CN Railway) that the federal government (Ministry of Transportation) is cancelling funding to the Algoma Passenger Train from Sault Ste Marie to Hearst. It is a concern that without this funding CN will not be able to operate the service. Transport Canada did not consult with any stakeholders in regard to this decision and have performed no analysis of the economic and employment benefits of the Algoma passenger train or the impacts of its cancellation.

CN decided to delay the cancellation until April 29, 2014 as many community, business and personal concerns were brought forth detailing the economic and personal impact of this abrupt and unexpected decision. Canada's federal government is now reconsidering Transport Canada's decision. All interested parties including tourists to the region that are affected have been encouraged to fill out the Algoma Passenger Train Survey to describe the impact of a cancellation such as this. The survey is on our website at:

<http://email.wildernessisland.com/lt.php?id=Nx1XVA4EUgBECApVT1VeBwE%3D>

Source: Erringtons Wilderness Resort North, Ontario.

Spring Bear Hunt in Ontario Again?

Recently, Ontarian government officials made the decision to reinstate the spring bear hunt. Concern has been expressed as to its potential impact on Ontario's bear populations and orphan bear cubs at a time when they need their mothers the most.

The spring bear hunt has been banned for 15 years. The science of this decision is being questioned by many. It is my understanding that most researchers and bear biologists believe bears and humans can coexist with education and resources devoted to social change and human behaviour. The apparent lack of consultation and political motivations of this recent announcement by the liberal Ontario Government is deplorable. It is suggested e-mails and phone calls be sent to Premier Kathleen Wynne as soon as possible.

Paul Harpley SLSN.

International Wildlife News

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, **Chitwan National Park** has been called the "jewel in Nepal's crown." But if huge railway and highway construction projects are allowed to proceed, that jewel – and the animal species that call it home could be lost forever.

Last July, Nepalese Finance Minister Shankar Koirala proposed two major transport projects in

the south of Nepal: the East-West Electric Railway and the Tarai Hulaki Highway. The possible routes of both the highway and the railway cut directly through Chitwan National Park.

Over the last forty years, endangered tiger and rhino populations have called the park home, which has helped both species survive threats from poaching and environmental destruction. Cutting down huge swathes of trees or digging kilometres' worth of tunnels to make room for a highway and a railway will set back those conservation efforts by decades.

The projects may also damage eco-tourism in the region; in 2013 alone, more than 150,000 people visited Chitwan National Park to marvel at its beauty and take in sights that are inaccessible anywhere else on Earth.

Perhaps worst of all, it's not even necessary to disrupt the ecosystem of the park: going around the area altogether would only add a few dozen kilometres to the tracks and roads, and it would save the animal and plant populations of the park for years to come. Putting in another transit corridor in Nepal just isn't worth it.

For more information: actionalerts@care2.com

Source: Care 2 Petition Site 2014

Invasive Species in the Great Lakes Region

Current invaders:

Crustaceans: [Rusty Crayfish](#) | [Spiny Water Flea](#)

Fish: [Goby \(Round\)](#) | [Goby \(Tubenose\)](#) | [Rudd](#) | [Ruffe](#) | [Sea Lamprey](#) | [White Perch](#)

Mollusks: [Quagga Mussel](#) | [Zebra Mussel](#)

Plants: [Curly-leaf Pondweed](#) | [Eurasian Watermilfoil](#) | [Phragmites \(non-native\)](#) | [Purple Loosestrife](#)

Viruses: [Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus \(VHSv\)](#)

Potential invaders:

Fish: [Asian Carp](#)

What's New

Invasive species may be key to understanding death of hundreds of loons

Minnesota Public Radio (3/11)

While no one is sure what killed more than 900 loons around Lake Michigan last fall, scientists believe that many were likely killed by the complex interplay of several different invasive species.

100% of ships entering St. Lawrence Seaway had ballast water tested for invasive species, working group says

North Country Now (3/1)

The Great Lakes Ballast Water Working Group says that 100 percent of ships bound for the Great Lakes via the St. Lawrence Seaway from outside the 200-mile coastal zone last year received a ballast tank exam.

Study: Asian carp unlikely to stow away in barges

The Associated Press (2/28)

Asian carp are unlikely to reach the Great Lakes by stowing away on commercial vessels in Chicago-area rivers and canals, the U.S. Coast Guard said Thursday.

Acid test: Threat to oceans may also harm Great Lakes

Great Lakes Echo (2/26)

The increased carbon dioxide changing the water chemistry and ecology of oceans may also be affecting freshwater and the organisms that live in it.

The Toledo Blade (2/26)

A recent study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers takes an in-depth look at four potential flash points here in Ohio that Asian carp or other invasive species could use to breach the now frighteningly porous natural barrier that has separated the two water systems for millennia.

Sea lamprey public enemy No. 1 among invasive species

Northumberland Today (2/25)

Of all the invasive species threatening the Great Lakes, public enemy number one remains the sea lamprey, as no other species has caused more damage to the lakes and the lakes' tributaries.

Source: GLIN, Great Lakes Restoration 2014.

Members. Please consider sending in natural heritage articles, sightings or environment related information for the Newsletter.