



COMING EVENTS

- **Friday, October 30, 2009, 7:30 p.m. - General Meeting, Cobourg Public Library**
Speaker: **Jeff Hathaway from Scienstational Ssnakes!** Topic: **The “Reptiles at Risk on the Road” project.** This is an excellent opportunity to learn more about Ontario's reptiles and to see many of our native species up close and personal. Also Joe Crowley, the Ontario Herpetofaunal Atlas Project Coordinator, will provide you with information about and how to get involved in the new atlas program. Bring the children.
- **Saturday, November 14, 2009 - Closing of Peter’s Woods**
- **Friday, November 27, 2009, 7:30 p.m. - General Meeting, Ruth Clarke Centre, 81 Mill St., Port Hope** Speaker: **Hugh Currie.** Topic: **Peru.** Hugh will do a slide presentation on its flora and fauna.
- **Saturday, December 19, 2009 - Annual Christmas Bird Count.** For more information, contact Roger Frost, 905-885-9615 or ekrf@eagle.ca
- **Sunday, December, 20, 2009 - Presqu’ile-Brighton Christmas Bird Count.** For more information, contact Maureen Riggs, 613-475-3604 or mriggs@sympatico.ca

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Tim and Jane Tottenham

New Press Secretary

Tim and Jane Tottenham have offered to take over the role of WBFN Press Secretary. This is a very important job, since this is how we let the community know what we are doing.

Tim and Jane were the recipients of the free membership that WBFN had donated at the Living Green Fair.

Thank you!

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

- Sympathy of the club is extended to long-time member, Harry Knapper, who has lost two brothers recently.

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The editor is most grateful to those who have contributed to this issue of the Curlw. Copy for the November 2009 issue should be received by October 31, 2009. Rare or interesting sightings should be reported to Elizabeth Kellogg and Roger Frost at 905-885-9615, ekrf@eagle.ca, or Norma Wallace (885-5552) for the November Curlw. Correspondence for WBFN should be addressed to: "The Willow Beach Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 421, Port Hope, ON L1A 3Z3."

Gleanings from the Northumberland Bird Database

GLOBAL WARMING II

by Clive E. Goodwin

Last May I discussed global warming, and presented an analysis showing a pattern of earlier arrivals in a small group of bird species over the four most recent decades of the database, using the average arrival date for each decade. It was a rather complicated exercise, and the information it revealed certainly wasn't obvious from a simple examination of the records.

At the time I was also starting to look at breakouts of records by month and year, as part of a revision of the Birds of Northumberland County website. It wasn't long before I found clear evidence of warming in front of me, without any additional manipulation needed, among the very species that I'd concluded would not give reliable results for average arrivals.

American Robins, for example, had been dismissed because they winter in small numbers; so a robin in, say, February was as likely to be one of the wintering birds as a newly arrived migrant. But when all the records are shown broken down by year and month, an inescapable pattern emerges:

	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08
Jan.	19	2	108	20	12	101	399	2	40	12	38	156
Feb.	21	1	4	0	14	6	226	121	148	13	152	91
Mar.	343	32	272	189	1086	984	887	225	263	399	324	214
Apr.	143	157	323	655	976	708	981	523	612	678	347	645
May	244	242	350	340	378	484	533	253	170	347	510	514

Totals of Late Winter and Spring American Robins by Month: 1993-98 and 2003-08

In the extract above the full picture can only be partly displayed; but note the two months of January and February. In both 1993-8 and 2003-8 robins displayed their traditional winter pattern, of few in some years and quite numerous in others; but in the 90's birds became more scarce in February, presumably as food became more difficult to find and wintering birds failed to survive or moved away. This is a typical pattern for birds wintering towards the northern limits of their winter ranges.

In the 2000's the picture is quite different: in three of the years shown there is a marked increase in February, and even in the two high wintering years numbers in February were still almost 60% of those in January. The 21 birds in 1993 were the highest total ever to that date, and in only two other years did it reach double figures; yet since 1999 all totals have been higher than 10, and in 2009 [not shown, but with a fairly harsh winter] a new high of 301 was achieved. It appears robins are arriving earlier in some numbers.

Robins are not alone. A dozen other species show similar patterns, and a different suite of species show patterns of later departure in fall. It might be argued that the better coverage of

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recent years could account for these patterns, but some of the species involved, like the Tree Swallow, have declined in recent years, so more birds were being seen in, say, the 1980's, yet not appearing earlier in those years.

But certainly the larger numbers of recent years do confuse the issue for many species. Song Sparrows *look* as though they're arriving earlier, leaving later and wintering more often, but there's always variation from year to year, and the higher figures in the key months may be no more than a composite of that plus the enhanced coverage. The story is the same for several other species: conceivably someone using more sophisticated analyses might find clearer support but that's not what I set out to do: I was looking for clear evidence from the tables themselves.

On the other hand, a wintering species should not display a pattern of arriving earlier and leaving later. We should expect that, with global warming, a bird that winters here would leave earlier and arrive later, because conditions would be more hospitable on its nesting grounds. Depending on just where in a species' wintering range we are situated we might also have more birds wintering here or fewer, but the point is that global warming would mean fewer birds in some months rather than more.

My numbers problem would not necessarily go away, because higher counts could still conceal the pattern, and indeed that's exactly what does seem to be the case with the first two birds I looked at, American Tree Sparrow and Snow Bunting. But then, enter the Dark-eyed Junco!

Mo.	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08
J.	79	10	28	56	63	40	210	321	135	78	105	421
F.	47	8	7	1	38	41	291	273	173	191	89	0
M.	70	7	37	20	26	135	137	70	107	107	97	19
A.	113	110	67	248	2659	791	78	59	114	265	323	87
M.	1	8	3	14	121	8	2	3	8	7	3	6
J.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
J.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.	50	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
S.	17	10	47	3	35	92	0	4	44	2	21	2
O.	1020	76	186	91	2065	1927	481	265	1593	197	381	73
N.	101	37	116	24	374	922	256	178	307	132	49	55
D.	97	320	605	515	517	450	1509	1014	2446	771	1439	1501

Totals of Dark-eyed Juncos by Month: 1993-98 and 2003-08

...And reveal a quite fascinating set of comparisons! In January and February the pattern is the familiar one with many species: higher numbers in the 2000's, likely reflecting the better coverage in this period. The differences are less striking in March, but still there, but then both April and May reveal some reversal, with higher counts in the '90's. The birds are, as expected,

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almost absent in June and July; but then August, September and October again have higher counts in the 1990's, with November slightly higher as well; and it is not until December that the 2000 decade is again unequivocally higher, and in fact dramatically so. When one considers that the counts for most species are consistently higher in the current decade, the pattern revealed above is even more striking. It suggests excellent numbers in December followed in the New Year by a steady decline [a gradual movement north?], with an analogous return pattern in fall. But whatever the actual junco movements are, there is clear support for the 'leave earlier and arrive later' scenario of a warming climate.

So, for some species at least, the database itself, with only minor manipulation, can show evidence of birds' responses to this relatively new, and worrisome, phenomenon of global warming.

Ontario Nature Regional Meeting Saturday, October 31, 2009, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Our hosts this year are the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. The meeting will be held at the **Ganaraska Forest Centre** at 10585 Cold Springs Camp Road, Campbellcroft.

The new Ontario Herpetofaunal Atlas Program will be discussed with Joe Crowley, the Ontario Herpetofaunal Atlas Project Coordinator. Come and learn more about how your club can become involved.

We will also have a presentation on "Planning 101 and How to Effectively State Your Case on Natural Heritage to Your Local Municipality".

Ontario Nature, in partnership with the Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF), the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) and other governmental and nongovernmental groups, has begun work on a new Ontario Herpetofaunal Atlas Program. The purpose of this project is to compile records of reptile and amphibian observations in Ontario through public solicitation of observation data, field surveys and amalgamation of existing databases.

We encourage volunteers to submit observations of reptiles and amphibians found throughout Ontario. Observations can be submitted via an online form, an Excel spreadsheet (useful for submitting a lot of data) and a printable data card. The Excel sheet and data card are available on the Ontario Nature Herpetofaunal Atlas website www.ontarionature.org/herpetofaunal_atlas.html and the online reporting tool will be available in the near future.

For more information, contact WBFN's Ontario Representative, Carole Payne at bookbind@cogeco.ca

THE HUMBLE BUMBLEBEE

by Margaret Bain

I am fond of bumblebees – they seem to be attractive, industrious creatures, humbly bumbling around without the brisk buzzing of honeybees or the aggressive dive-bombing “that’s MY peach” of wasps. So I very much enjoyed Sheila Colla’s talk at the Willow Beach meeting on September 25th. Who knew that there are over 50 species of bumblebees in North America and at least 15 in Ontario? And how many of us realize that their numbers have plummeted catastrophically in recent years? Unlike honeybees, bumblebees can forage under cold, rainy, and cloudy conditions. Through pollination of native plants, bumblebees provide many wild birds and animals with food and shelter, and they can also pollinate a wide variety of crops. Currently, suspected threats to wild bumblebees include habitat loss, widespread pesticide use, introduction of diseases from managed honeybees, and climate change.

I live in a very old house, the oldest house in Cobourg so I’m told, built in 1824, with a fieldstone basement and nothing beneath the main livingroom at the back but earth. Every May, bumblebees take over my basement! They don’t come in through the back door, so must burrow through the basement walls, only to discover that they are not outside in the fresh spring air. Not surprisingly, they are very confused, and I have to keep my rescue-kit of a glass tumbler and a stiff file-card ready to help them to where they want to be – among the spring flowers in the garden. I have two indoor cats too, who true to their nature think that bumblebees are prey objects, meant to be played with before

they are finally killed. It’s hard to rescue every bumblebee as they appear haphazardly over a couple of weeks and the cats do enjoy their play - this last spring there were at least 20, and I was able to save about three-quarters of them.

Most of my friends look at me a little strangely when I tell this tale. Bumblebees in the basement? Sounds more like bats in the belfry they seem to be thinking. To my great relief, at Sheila’s talk, two other Willow Beach members with an old house in Port Hope described exactly the same spring home invasion. And Sheila was able to explain to us what was happening – queen bumblebees burrow into earth or mulch to hibernate for the winter, then burrow out again when the weather warms up, ready to feed on fresh flowers, build nests in holes in the ground, and lay eggs. New queens are born, as well as workers and male bumblebees, but only the new queens survive the summer and the cycle begins again.

Sheila has a great website at www.savethebumblebees.com Her advice on helping bumblebees includes planting a variety of native flowering plants in your garden - bumblebees prefer pink, purple and yellow flowers. Don’t make your garden too tidy! Piles of mulch and old logs will provide nesting and wintering habitat, and of course avoid using pesticides and insecticides as much as possible. I’m sorry that the bumblebees I saved in May won’t be sheltering in my basement walls again this winter, but Sheila’s talk will redouble my rescue efforts next spring!

The Piping Plover - A Success Story

by Bill Crowley

In 2006 and 2007, I organized the AGM of the Field Botanists of Ontario (FBO) in Owen Sound. I enlisted the assistance of a couple of members who were also members of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists and, after attending a couple of their meetings, I became a member of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists (OSFN).

There was an announcement at one of the meetings that Piping Plovers, which had been extirpated in Ontario, were nesting at Sauble Beach. Sauble Beach is at least as big as the beach in Cobourg and may attract even more visitors. I learned that an effort was being made to protect these birds. Little did I realize just how extensive this effort was.

This past summer, I visited the beach and found signs informing the public about the Piping Plovers. An area around each nest was roped off because once the birds are hatched, they run around a fairly large area around their nest. Cages had been placed over the nests to protect the birds and the eggs from predators. These cages had no sides, but had a roof which prevented predators from attacking the nests. Each roped-off enclosure had a volunteer guard to both protect the birds and answer questions posed by the public. These volunteers worked in shifts and provided 24 hour protection 7 days a week.

Seven birds were fledged in 2009. As I watched a couple of these birds race around the beach, I couldn't help but marvel at this success story of man helping nature.

In recognition of his efforts in protections and nurturing these birds, Ontario Nature presented Stewart Nutt with the W.E. Saunders Conservation Award at their AGM in 2009. The following information is reprinted from OSFN's newsletter, the Hart's Tongue Herald, and was contained in the OSFN's nomination of Stewart Nutt for the award. I think it tells the story of the Piping

Plover much better than I can.

Steward Nutt was the central figure in the efforts to protect the Piping Plovers that arrived at Sauble Beach to nest in both 2007 and 2008, and a second pair that nested at Oliphant in 2008. Thanks to Stew and the army of volunteers he co-ordinated, this endangered species is now a little further away from the brink of extinction.

When the birds were first seen to be nesting on the beach in spring 2007, Stew was hired by MNR to co-ordinate a major volunteer effort to protect the birds, keep the beach the way they needed it, and ensure their nesting success.

Stew worked through local organizations such as the three local naturalist clubs, the Friends of Sauble Beach, the Bruce Birding Club, Friends of MacGregor Park and the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory to line up around 120 volunteers to keep watch on the beach. He did an excellent job as a volunteer co-ordinator, both in ensuring there was always someone on the beach, and in making each volunteer feel that his/her efforts were critical to the success of the project. Stew personally trained most of the volunteers. He wrote daily e-mail reports and sent them out to all volunteers, keeping everyone aware of the birds' progress. He recognized the volunteers' efforts with T-shirts, certificates and a wrap-up barbecue both years.

Stew passed along to the volunteers his passion for the survival of the birds. We all cheered their success and mourned their losses. Stew also passed this passion along to local residents who visited the beach often to find out how the birds were doing. The birds became a part of our life.

Stew worked with government agencies in Canada and Michigan to ensure good com-

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munications among all agencies involved at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. As part of these interactions, he became well versed in the complexities of endangered species legislation, and its implications for the local situation.

Stew also did a masterful job of getting the work out about this exciting natural phenomenon taking place in our midst. He worked with media outlets including the CBC, who came to cover the story. He put together a terrific AV presentation and presented it to dozens of organizations in Grey and Bruce Counties and beyond. He also arranged to have copies of the presentation on DVD given out to each volunteer in 2007 and 2008.

Stew steered through some challenging political situations with expertise, showing respect for all opinions but managing to ensure that the birds came first. The town of South Bruce Peninsula has raked the beach for years, removing the wrack line of seaweed, driftwood and other materials that drift

ashore. The birds find a large part of their diet of insects in the wrack line, so it was critical that the raking be discontinued at the north end of the beach while the birds were there. Stew convinced the town to stop raking, and ensure that volunteers were briefed so they could communicate appropriately with local residents who might have preferred the raking to continue.

Through the whole breeding period in both 2007 and 2008, Stew was never far from the beach, sometimes even around the clock. In 2008, when Piping Plovers also showed up at Wasaga Beach, Stew helped out with getting a similar program up and running.

Through his goal-directed leadership, his perseverance, his excellent work ethic, and his positive and personable style, not to mention his passion for these small shore-birds, Stewart Nutt managed to bring the whole community on side, tell the world about the plovers, and run an excellent volunteer effort to ensure that the birds bred successfully. His efforts paid off: three birds were fledged in 2007 and two more in 2008.

UPCOMING EVENTS

● **Wednesday, November 4, 2009, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. - Species at Risk Workshop**

Alderville Black Oak Savanna Ecology Centre, 8467 County Rd. 18

25 minutes north of Cobourg off Hwy 45

Learn about local species at risk & the Endangered Species Act with special guest Melissa Laplante, MNR SAR Biologist

This is a **FREE** workshop. Registration is appreciated but not required. To register please contact Ashley Wilson at 613-394-3915 x 225 or ricelakeplains@ltc.on.ca.

For more information visit moraineforlife.org and www.ltc.on.ca

RECENT SIGHTINGS

compiled by Roger Frost

Snow Goose	Sept. 30	1 blue	Presqu'ile PP	DSh, MR
Cackling Goose	Sept. 25	4	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	Sept. 30	1	Presqu'ile PP	DSh, MR
Northern Shoveler	Sept. 2	2	Cobourg Harbour	KN
Long-tailed Duck	Aug. 29	5	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
	Sept. 30	2	Presqu'ile PP	CEG
Common Merganser	Sept. 22	25	Port Hope west beach	RF, EK
Horned Grebe	Sept. 13	2	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
Red-necked Grebe	Sept. 12	2	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
White Pelican	Sept. 2	1	Rice Lake near Harwood	LG
American Bittern	Sept. 27	1	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
Green Heron	Sept. 11	1	Lucas Point, Cobourg	CEG
Bald Eagle	Sept. 1	1 imm	Cobourg Harbour	B&LB
Merlin	Sept. 16	2	s. of Colborne	JF, KB
	Sept. 30	2	Cobourg Harbour - plus several single sightings	CEG
Peregrine Falcon	Sept. 18	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	Sept. 27	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
American Golden Plover	Sept. 13	1	Candlewick Woods, PH Ward 2	RF
	Sept. 30	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	Sept. 14-24	1	Cobourg Harbour	M.Ob.
Whimbrel	Sept. 11	3	Presqu'ile PP	RP
Western Sandpiper	Sept. 5	1	Presqu'ile PP	GC
Baird's Sandpiper	Sept. 7	11	Presqu'ile natural beach	MB
Stilt Sandpiper	Sept. 1	2 juv.	Presqu'ile Beach 3	MB
	Sept. 5	4	Presqu'ile PP	DSh
	Sept. 17	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	Sept. 30	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Aug. 31, Sept. 1/5	1 juv.	Presqu'ile Beach 1	FH, Ontbirds, MB/ GC
Long-billed Dowitcher	Sept. 5, 7, 9	2 juv.	Presqu'ile Beach 3	GC, MObs
Red-necked Phalarope	Sept. 9	1	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
Black Tern	Sept. 1	3	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
Forster's Tern	Aug. 29	1	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
Parasitic Jaeger	Sept. 9	1	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Sept. 25	1	Lake St. Trail, Port Hope	EK
Common Nighthawk	Sept. 2	20	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
	Sept. 21	10	Cobourg Harbour	KN
	Sept. 22	9	Cobourg Harbour	MB
	Sept. 23	15	Cobourg Harbour	KN
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Sept. 13	1	s. of Colborne	JF

Sightings - cont'd.

Red-headed Woodpecker	Sept. 9	1 ad	beside Hwy. 2 west of Colborne	MB
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Sept. 27-30	2	Centennial Dr., Port Hope	ERM
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Sept. 1	1	Presqu'ile PP, Calf Pasture	BG
Yellow-throated Vireo	Aug. 29,30	1	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
Philadelphia Vireo	Sept. 12	1	Alderville Black Oak Savanna	RF, SP, EK
	Sept. 18	1	Cobourg Harbour area	LW
Blue Jay	Sept. 15	410	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	Sept. 19	500	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	Sept. 24	1580	Durham St., Port Hope (in 1 hr.)	EK
Cliff Swallow	Sept. 13	2	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Sept. 4	1 imm	Cobourg backyard	MB
Veery	Sept. 24	1	Lucas Point, Cobourg	CEG
Gray-cheeked Thrush	Sept. 16	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	Sept. 27	1	Cobourg backyard	MB
Golden-winged Warbler	Sept. 4	1	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
Orange-crowned Warbler	Sept. 17	2	Donegan Park, Cobourg	BL
	Sept. 27	1	Cobourg birdbath - with a Nashville, among 13 warbler species passing through backyard 5-6 pm	MB
	Sept. 27	1	Durham St., Port Hope	RF, EK
Northern Parula	Sept. 27	3	Cobourg backyard	MB
Yellow Warbler	Sept. 23	1	Cobourg Harbour area	LW
Palm Warbler	Sept. 26	10-20	Cobourg Harbour	KN
Bay-breasted Warbler	Sept. 12	1	Alderville Black Oak Savanna	RF, SP, EK
Mourning Warbler	Sept. 24	1	Cobourg west headland	MB
Canada Warbler	Sept. 19	1	Presqu'ile PP	FH, Ontbirds
White-crowned Sparrow	Sept. 16	3	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	Sept. 19	1	Vimy Ridge Rd., Hamilton Twp	JGe
Dark-eyed Junco	Sept. 19	1	Vimy Ridge Rd., Hamilton Twp	JGe
Lapland Longspur	Sept. 25/26	1	Cobourg west headland	KN
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Sept. 14-24	1m	Centennial Dr., Port Hope	ERM
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Sept. 7	1	Presqu'ile Polishing Ponds	DG
Rusty Blackbird	Sept. 30	203	Cobourg Harbour	KN

Observers: MB=Margaret Bain; B&LB=Bryan and Louise Baxter; KB=Kim Braat; GC=Geoff Carpentier; JF=Jo Foster; RF=Roger Frost; DG=Dennis Garratt; JGe=John Geale; BG=Bill Gilmour; CEG=Clive Goodwin; LG=Linda G.; FH=Fred Helleiner; EK=Elizabeth Kellogg; ERM=Ted McDonald; BL=Bill Logan; KN=Ken Niles; Ontbirds=OFO listserv; SP=Sarah Petrusek; RP=Richard Pope; MR=Maureen Riggs; DSh=Don Shanahan; LW=Lori Wensley;

WANTED Your Involvement

Ganaraska River Watershed Public Open House

Date:

Saturday, October 24, 2009

Time:

2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Place:

Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority
2215 County Road 28, Port Hope

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority invites you to attend an information session on the Ganaraska River Watershed Plan.

Watershed Planning Public Open House

Date:

Saturday, October 24, 2009

Time:

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Place:

Newcastle Community Centre
20 King Avenue West, Newcastle

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority invites you to attend an information session on the Wilmot Creek, Graham Creek, Lovekin Creek, Bouchette Point Creek, and Port Granby Creek Watershed Plans.

Learn what issues and opportunities exist in the watershed, and what actions can be taken to address them.

Let's work together to preserve this natural treasure for generations to come.

For additional meeting opportunities, please stop in at the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority Administration Office on Monday, October 26, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

For more information, please contact
Pam Lancaster
Stewardship Technician
Source Water Protection Technician/Communications

Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority
2216 County Road 28
P.O. Box 328
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Visit our website: www.grca.on.ca

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Family - \$25 Single - \$23

Cheques for membership should be made out to Willow Beach Field Naturalists and sent to: The Treasurer, Willow Beach Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 421, Port Hope, ON, L1A 3Z3. A receipt for Income Tax purposes will be provided for your membership fee as well as for any donation. Willow Beach Field Naturalists is a Registered Charitable organization.



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