



whip-poor-will

Newsletter of the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists *April 2010*

"Proud sponsors of Environmental Education Projects"

President's Message

Welcome spring! As I write this, we have just enjoyed one of the most beautiful Easter weekends on record. In honor of this season, the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists will be celebrating with a new social event. On May 20, 2010 we are planning a banquet and keynote address featuring the Adirondacks (see details at right) at the Carleton Place Curling Club. Our "Spring Gathering 2010" event will also celebrate our very successful year.

Your Board of Directors and committee members have been hard at work as usual. We have continued our history with a wonderful lecture series highlighting the Algonquin to Adirondack connection. In addition to the lectures, the program committee offered many wonderful day hikes, canoe outings and a spectacular weekend canoe camp in Algonquin Park.

As a club, Environmental Education continues to be a very important focus. This year, a highly acclaimed education program was offered to grade 8 students in 7 area schools. With funds provided by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, we were able to hire a local environmental education company, Nature Works Learning, to design and deliver a program called "Engaging Grade 8's in Source Water Protection Planning."

Following along with the education theme, the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists have accepted the responsibility of administering the Post Secondary Bursary Fund known as "The Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary." Many of the fund raising activities within the club, such as the Baillie Birdathon, have generated funds for this scholarship program. The Bursary fund has offered financial assistance to several students entering a post secondary Environmental Program.

As if all of the above was not enough, our club hosted a very successful Bioblitz in September 2009, has assisted the Mississippi Mills Recreation and Culture committee in reviewing local trails, has contributed to the Christmas Bird count, and built 170 Bluebird houses for habitat creation, to name just a few of our projects. We are very proud of the work going on within this organization. As a dynamic and energetic group we feel that we accomplish our goal of perpetual learning about our cherished watershed.

~ Joyce Clinton

Adirondack Park Comes to Lanark County!

Reserve now for Spring Gathering 2010
Thursday May 20, Carleton Place Curling Club

Where is North America's nearest and largest protected landscape? The Everglades, or Yellowstone National Park? No, by far the nearest and largest protected landscape is the Adirondacks, only a few hours drive from where we live.



Tahawus parcel in the Adirondacks

The Adirondacks, easily 8 times the size of Lanark County are just over the horizon-a vast reservoir of plants and animals already adapted to our northern climate. In fact, the Adirondacks are so close that many birds could spend the night in the Adirondack forests, and drop in the next day to Lanark County.

The wood thrushes, rose-breasted grosbeaks and yellow-rumped warblers are already making their way north to Lanark County, and may now be planning their last night of rest in the Adirondacks before dropping in to breed in our forests. Some may also carry seeds from their last meal to deposit here. It is entirely possible, that the Adirondacks and Lanark County are biologically linked. Did the beech trees of Lanark County spread slowly north after the ice age, or did they simply drop out of the sky as seeds in the crops of passenger pigeons? Yes, there are old records of passenger pigeons nesting south of Carleton Place, and beech seeds were one of their favoured foods. Since hunters eradicated

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cont'd Adirondack Park Comes to Lanark County

passenger pigeons, they are no longer carrying tree seeds north. But other birds may be taking up some of the slack.

A truly remarkable aspect of the Adirondacks is its similarities to Lanark County. The forests have northern tree species like white pine, red oak, sugar maple, and hemlock. Indeed, if you were dropped by helicopter on the shore of a small lake, you might not know whether you were in Algonquin, the Adirondacks, or northern Lanark County. Even the bird calls and frog calls would be the same. Early in its history, the Adirondacks experienced the same impacts as Lanark County. The area was logged and mined. Wildlife was trapped, forests were harvested, and charcoal was exported. By the mid 1800s, the wild landscape was beginning to show the negative impacts of human exploitation.

Then, remarkably, in 1892, in what was then a cutting-edge environmental decision, the state of New York decreed that the forests of the Adirondacks would remain "forever wild." Although much of the landscape had already been altered, the remainder, perhaps some 200,000 acres, remained intact, leaving one of the largest stands of old growth forest in eastern North America. So, if you want to see what Lanark County looked like in the really old days, drive south into New York State. Of course, not everyone has the time to drive to the Adirondacks, so we are bringing the Adirondacks to Lanark County with Dr. Jerry Jenkins, a well known biologist who has spent 40 years exploring the park. Jenkins, Forest Issues Coordinator for the Wildlife Conservation Society, will speak at MVFN's Spring Gathering 2010 being held May 20 in Carleton Place. Enjoy a banquet dinner beginning at 6 pm, and following the banquet, let Dr. Jenkins be your guide to the delights of the Adirondacks and their lessons for the future of Lanark County.

Spring Gathering 2010

Thursday May 20, Carleton Place Curling Club

Tickets (\$20)

Reception and banquet dinner 6 pm, followed by presentation.

Tickets must be purchased in advance by Friday May 14.

Tickets are available from MVFN's Brenda Boyd in Almonte (613-256-2706), or at Read's Book Shop in Carleton Place or the Nature Lover's Bookshop in Lanark, or send a cheque (must be received by May 14) to MVFN, PO Box 1617, Almonte, ON K0A 1A0, and tickets will be held for you.

~ Cathy Keddy, Programme Chair

Night Hunting by Common Diurnal Birds

It is a commonplace of natural history that the males of many species risk their lives to attract mates while the females remain inconspicuous and therefore relatively safer. We can see this "rule of nature" applied on quiet early summer evenings in the Ottawa Valley when the fireflies are in season. On our rural road the white gravel remains visible long after sunset and the fireflies float



across it in swarms. In the almost complete darkness of very late evening when all the birds of day would normally be safely roosting, we find numbers of robins and grackles squatting on the

white gravel of the road. We can identify these species as they fly against the last glimmer of sunset: the robin by its size and body shape, the grackle by its distinctive tail. From moment to moment one flutters up and snatches a low-flying firefly that has been so unfortunate as to flash his tail light over the bird's head. The birds are then able to land safely on the white gravel which remains dimly visible when the fields are a mass of darkness. They continue feeding long after dark.

To observe this behaviour you need to walk out on a gravel road through a low-lying area during fire-fly season. A warm, calm evening is ideal and you must be prepared to wait quietly for twenty minutes or half an hour. Once you stop moving, the birds soon ignore your presence and they will land very close to you, possibly because they are so absorbed in night hunting that all else is forgotten. The whole experience of the summer night under the stars among the fireflies and questing birds is fascinating.



- Terry Currie

May 21 is the deadline to apply for MVFN's Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Award for high-school students going on to studies in the natural environment

MVFN will present two awards of \$500 to area graduating secondary school students with a demonstrated love of and appreciation for our natural environment, who intend to pursue post-secondary studies related to the natural environment. Applications must be received by 5 pm Friday, May 21, 2010. The Bursary Selection Committee will announce the recipients on Friday, June 4th. Applicants must live in Mississippi Mills, Lanark Highlands, Carleton Place or Beckwith, be graduating from secondary school and accepted to a Canadian post-secondary institution for the 2010-11 academic year. Further details are outlined in the application form available in schools or posted on our website at www.mvfn.ca. MVFN recently took responsibility for the Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Award which was established three years ago by Eileen Henneman, Allan Stanley and many friends for Cliff's 75th birthday.

Our MVFN EcoTour to Cuba

The following is an account of a recent trip by a group of MVFN members, written by avid adventurer and naturalist Brenda Boyd. Brenda also finds time to work as a semi-retired teacher and volunteer as MVFN's Chair of Environmental Education Projects.

In late February, 16 intrepid naturalists embarked on a 10-day magical adventure to the western half of Cuba. We had two wonderful tour guides, Don from Quest Tours, Yuri Padrón, our Cuban guide, and our own bus driven by jovial Emilio. We changed locations every two nights, and did day tours from our hotel base, with optional pre-breakfast bird walks.



We saw a great variety of landscapes, from arid plains to lush mountains with towering pine and eucalyptus trees; from mangrove salt/fresh water marshes in the Zapata swamp to the City of Trinidad, founded in 1514; from rich agricultural land dotted with small villages to Havana, a city of two million.

At left Cuban Tody, photo by Howard Robinson.

We identified 117 species of birds, several of which are endemic to Cuba including the tiny, but exquisitely colourful and vocal, Cuban Tody, and many of our “own” birds such as the Baltimore Oriole, which enjoy the warm winters in sunny Cuba.

We visited an Orchidarium, stunning, even in a torrential downpour, which had been developed in a natural setting amongst outcroppings of limestone laden with fossils. The Orchidarium housed over 600 species of orchids, 200 endemic to Cuba.

We visited two rehabilitation and breeding centres for the endangered Cuban sub-species of the American crocodile and rare Cuban Parrot. It was fascinating to see and hear the interaction between the parrots in their breeding cages, and the wild Cuban parrots flying around them! A 40-kilometre causeway journey took us to Cayo Las Brujas (yes, 40 k.!!), built by the Cuban government to promote tourism on the islands offshore. We had a great day on a catamaran, observing the mangroves, shorelines, sea caves, wandering on a deserted beach, doing some snorkeling, and getting to meet some other fun-loving tourists.

The grand finale was a quick visit to Old Havana, which is now a World Heritage site, with beautiful centuries-old Spanish buildings, cobble-stone streets with only pedestrian traffic. Our last dinner at the magnificent Cafe Oriente was a page from the 1930's, complete with a live dance band and tuxedoed waiters.

In addition to the astonishing variety of flora and fauna that we saw and learned about, Yuri shared many fascinating stories of the history of Cuba, one of revolutions and economic upheavals. We learned a lot about life and attitudes in present-day Cuba, and realized that a strong commitment to the good of Cuba and each other is still very much alive and well. Cubans have an excellent free educational system (97% literacy rate), and universal health care. There are no homeless, and everyone is provided with basic food and shelter. As one Cuban said, “You have so much, and we have so little, but . . . we are happy!”

The best part of this incredible experience was the camaraderie amongst our group, and the development of friendships that will endure along with the marvelous memories of this experience of a lifetime! ~ **Brenda Boyd**



l-r: Eric Wilson (sitting), Pip Winters, Tineke Kuiper, Cliff Bennett, Emilio, Aileen Merriam, Gray Merriam, Janet Noyes-Brown, John Clinton, Brenda Boyd, Joel Byrne, Anne Mason, Don Shanahan, Mary Robinson, Howard Robinson (kneeling), Noel Noyes-Brown, Al Potvin, Joyce Clinton, Yuri Nápoles Padrón. *Photo Howard Robinson*



Banyan tree and crocodiles. *Photos Brenda Boyd*

Our lecture series *Algonquin to Adirondacks: Big Picture Conservation*



Our monthly lecture series is an important part of MVFN programming and is enjoyed by our audiences. This year's series *Algonquin to Adirondacks: Big Picture Conservation* is drawing to a close but has been quite a journey. The Algonquin to Adirondack (A2A) area is a natural wildlife corridor, an arm of the Canadian Shield stretching 300 km from Algonquin Park to Adirondack State Park in New York. The vision of the A2A 'conservation connection' requires us to consider protecting biodiversity and ecosystems on a broader scale than we are accustomed to thinking about. Our speakers addressed different aspects of 'Big Picture Conservation', from conservation connections and corridors, to large-scale biosphere reserves, to the study of species which can act as sentinels for entire ecosystems.

Our first lecture was presented by Emily Conger, President of the Adirondack to Algonquin Conservation Association. There is good conservation potential in the corridor; with poor agricultural land being abandoned, pioneer species are returning in some places. And there is evidence species do move along the A2A corridor, the most famous being Alice the Moose. However there are challenges to the preservation and enhancement of the A2A conservation corridor. There are the impacts of human activities in the busy St. Lawrence River area. Also no protected spaces in North America, including the A2A corridor, are really large enough habitat to be self-sufficient. Hardened shorelines around mainland and islands in the St. Lawrence is one conservation issue the A2A group is addressing.

In October we enjoyed a virtual visit to Algonquin Park (at one end of A2A) with Senior Park Naturalist Justin Peters. He began with a thorough historical overview of the Park. Limitations to its conservation potential are clear. For example, there are only 50 years left for the Big Crow White Pine area because natural fire is needed for young pines to grow. Secondly, he pointed out the park still supplies 45% of wood harvested in Central/Eastern Ontario; but is there the political will to reduce this? As for the importance of connectivity to conservation areas such as A2A for Algonquin wildlife, Peters said it is complex and depends on the species. Grizzlies will wander off, while wolverines need almost as much space as the bears, but will not cross roads. On the other hand, some black bear populations in the Bruce Peninsula have become isolated in pockets that are likely not large enough to sustain them. The Kirklands Warbler, extinct in the park, was recently heard at the Petawawa base near the park, which he says is hopeful because existing Jack Pines habitat in the park can now be enhanced in efforts to bring this species back. Interestingly, fishers, once eliminated in Eastern Ontario from all but Algonquin, are now returning, but genetic studies show they come from Bancroft, Gatineau and the Adirondacks, with very little input from Algonquin.

The third lecture, given by Don Ross of the 10000 Islands-Frontenac Arch UNESCO designated Biosphere Reserve (FABR), put into perspective the importance of this ecological region which stretches from the St. Lawrence River north to the southern tip of Lanark County. It is at the crossroads of the north-south A2A ancient granite Frontenac Axis and the east-west Great Lakes Basin to Atlantic Ocean migration link. It has many microclimates and the greatest diversity of life in Eastern Ontario. FABR is a unique not-for-profit group partnering with many other groups on a wide range of projects linking community values to conservation efforts for this biodiverse region. One example is the www.sustainingwhatwevalue.ca interactive website developed for the public to anonymously help describe, mark the location of, and photograph natural features of value to them. The mapping area covered includes part of Lanark County.

With our fourth lecture by historian Dr. Brian Osborne, our big picture expanded infinitely to encompass conservation issues through time and we were challenged to understand not only natural landscapes but also proscapes and inscapes. In *Shifting Perceptions of Nature: The Two-way Mirror of Landscapes, Proscapes and Inscapes*, Dr. Osborne likened the Eastern Ontario natural landscape to a palimpsest or a document with multiple layers written over top and earlier layers still visible in places. Nature was 'a home' - to first nations peoples and others, but became at various times 'a wilderness to be conquered', 'an icon', 'a commodity', and 'a resource'. The harsh natural landscape imposed limits on early settlers and in turn the impact of human activity is written on the landscape we see today. An example of an early inscape, a mental construction of reality, is seen in a well-known early painting of the Saguenay area which reveals how Canadians first saw their country. Proscapes are what our natural heritage is becoming, dependent on the influence of nostalgia, myth, fantasy, and identity.

With our fifth lecture we took a side road from the main direction of the lecture series with the wonderful presentation "*A September to Remember: Bioblitz Secrets of the Bell Bushlot Preserve*" by our own Tineke Kuiper, Tally Master of our successful MVFN Bioblitz 2009. An appropriate lecture as we held our first ever bioblitz and we are now in 2010, an International Year of Biodiversity.

Lectures 6 and 7 looked at indicator species and species at risk. In his presentation *A Stitch in Time: Monitoring Indicator Species to Diagnose Ecosystem Vitality*, Bill Crins explained that indicator species may not always be the ones you expect. They need to be not too common and not too rare. Ideally they are species that don't move (not large animals like moose) and are habitat specialists. A good indicator must also be easy to detect and measure, well known in terms of life history and ecological requirements, and it is helpful if it is colorful, charismatic or unusual in some way. No single indicator species is adequate. Indicators are needed on a coarse and fine scale. Examples of good indicator species on a coarse scale could be eastern wolf and beaver, on a medium scale, lake sturgeon, ovenbird, whip-poor-will etc. and on a fine scale the walking plant, fen plants, and pollinating insects. Other examples given were species which are good indicators in particular ecosystems e.g. for riparian corridors – ebony jewel wing, a damsel fly, for alkaline bedrock - the walking fern, for a mature forest - lichens on mature wood, for old growth forest-lungwort, and for fens- tawny cotton grass vs. a different cotton grass for cedar swamps.

In Paula Norlock's lecture *Bringing Species back from the Brink: Some Good News*, the good news is that the status of species such as peregrine falcons has improved. The other good news is that about 80 recovery teams are reviewing biology, habitat requirements and threats to improve the status of species at risk in Ontario including fish, mammals, plants, birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians, molluscs, & lichens

Finally, at the other end of the A2A conservation connection is huge Adirondack Park, one of the largest protected spaces in all of North America. This area has surprising similarities to Lanark County as Cathy Keddy outlines in our front page story. The Adirondacks will be the topic of our final lecture to be presented by Dr. Jerry Jenkins, keynote speaker for MVFN's Spring Gathering 2010 event on May 20.

Engaging Grade 8's in Source Protection Planning has been an excellent program offered by MVFN's Environmental Education Program (EEP)

MVFN's Board and EEP Committee are delighted with the success of the EEP program this year entitled *Engaging Grade 8's in Source Protection Planning* offered to Grade 8 classes in 7 local schools. The programme was launched with the financial support of an Ontario Ministry of Environment Drinking Water Stewardship Program grant. Nature Works Learning of Mississippi Mills was hired to deliver the program. Sessions, which were led by Patricia Larkin of Nature Works Learning, started in 2009 at R. Tait McKenzie Public and Holy Name of Mary Catholic School in Mississippi Mills, Caldwell Public and Notre Dame Catholic School in Carleton Place, Huntley Centennial Public School in Carp, and Maple Grove Public and Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School in Lanark Highlands. In all, over 185 students were engaged in some very interesting exercises bringing to life how water cycles in the environment, where and how drinking water comes to them, and what affects the quality and quantity of their drinking water.

During an introductory session students learned about the water cycle and how the Earth's fresh water supply is vital for all life - cycling as precipitation, Earth's water is taken up by plants, enters surface water (lakes, rivers etc.), seeps through the ground 'recharging' underground water reserves (aquifers), and 're-cycles' back to the atmosphere via evapotranspiration. Students then began hands-on hydrogeology exercises in which they created their own groundwater models, complete with 'wells' in large clear plastic containers. They followed what happened in their 'wells' when they pumped water out, when it 'rained' (simulating recharging of groundwater aquifers), or when they introduced a 'contaminant.' Students made deductions about what factors affect the quality of water in real-life underground aquifers such as those supplying most of Mississippi Mills, Carp, and Lanark.



Photos left to right: Notre Dame students with groundwater model; Eco-reviews in progress at Maple Grove, Lanark; Students tour Almonte Lagoons. *Photos courtesy Patricia Larkin*

To investigate surface water quality, students measured various properties of several local surface water samples (pH, turbidity etc.), and asked, Is this water good for drinking? Is this water good fish habitat? Why? They discussed many aspects of water quality and how threats to water quality at drinking water intake areas in surface water might be reduced, for example through improved stormwater management and maintaining wetland buffers.

Students also had the opportunity to investigate and improve practices in their own schools with respect to water use and water protection. During drinking water source protection eco-reviews, teams of students toured classrooms, hallways and bathrooms testing fixtures and conducting interviews with fellow classmates and school staff. Are students encouraged to use water wisely? Is water being wasted due to high flow rates in sinks, leaking taps and toilets, or from taps being left on? Are water-saving devices such as aerators, low flow toilets, and toilet dams being used? Do the school grounds allow adequate groundwater recharge? Are hazardous products stored properly, or are items such as batteries and electronics disposed of in a manner which will not prove a threat to drinking water sources? The students rated their school's practices and worked together to develop and implement 'eco action' plans for their own school.

In addition to these fun activities in the classroom, students also visited water and waste water treatment facilities in their own or adjacent communities. They saw and heard first hand from municipal operators and employees from the Ontario Clean Water Agency about how these facilities worked. In Mississippi Mills the field trips included a tour of waste water treatment facilities at the Almonte sewage lagoons. Students also toured the operating system for the two wells near the Almonte water tower. This included an explanation of the water distribution system and the role of the water tower. Students were also toured around side roads by bus, to get a sense of how long it takes for water contaminants to seep underground and reach the wells, and to understand the vulnerability of well-head protection areas to contamination. Carleton Place students toured the water treatment facility for surface water drawn from the Mississippi River as well as the waste water treatment facility in their town. Lanark students whose homes are largely served by private wells and septic, toured water and waste water treatment facilities at nearby Perth where surface water sourced from the Tay River is treated and treated waste water is returned to the river.

Follow-up eco-reviews, to see how the eco action plans are doing, are just now being completed in the schools. For further information about this program please contact MVFN's Environmental Education Chair Brenda Boyd at 613-256-2706 or bjboyd@sympatico.ca. To contact Nature Works Learning, e-mail natureworkslearning@gmail.com.

Bits on the Blitz-An inventory of nature on the Bell Property

Participants in MVFN's first ever 24-hr bioblitz held 3 pm Saturday, Sept 19 to 3 pm Sunday, Sept 20, 2009 on the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Bell Bushlot on Clayton Rd. proved you need not go farther than a forest in Lanark County to enjoy spectacular natural beauty and marvel at the diversity of life: the vivid greens of the snakeskin liverwort, the impressively large larvae of the imperial moth, incredible floral diversity, elusive but numerous red efts, the large mammals ever-present but seldom seen face-on. But why do such a detailed inventory of a piece of land? Jim Bendell puts this in perspective in the article which follows.



Stout, 3-inch long caterpillar of the imperial moth Photo © **Mark Garbutt**



One of many red efts, the terrestrial stage of the red-spotted newt Photo © **Karen Thompson**



A vivid green snakeskin liverwort, one of 16 liverworts found during the bioblitz, Photo © **Karen Thompson**

How can we care for our world if we do not know what is in it?

The Bell property is about 80 acres square along Clayton Road donated to the Nature Conservancy by the Bells approximately 60 years ago. Like most of Ontario (and North America) the land was put to use by logging and farming. But now it represents a young forest essentially free to grow and produce as climate and soils dictate. In September for a day and night, naturalists voluntarily recorded the natural features of the area including: geology, plants and animals, especially fungi, moths and butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.



A major outcome of the Blitz was the great enthusiasm and participation of many people. It showed their love of nature and willingness to learn and help in its care. The great success

*of their census work was the result of good planning and direction of the leaders. Their knowledge and joy of explanation reflected the pleasure of the participants young and old. Leaders were professionals and well informed laypersons. They and amateurs showed a good inventory could be done with little time and cost and much friendship, fun and photography. How to determine sex of a wriggling Red Squirrel or count the scales on a really, really big Garter snake? Is that a Forest Deer Mouse or a White-footed mouse and why is the latter spreading north despite infections from a bot fly with the magnificent scientific name: *Cuterebra emasculator*?*



An inventory of our land is no idle matter. How can we care for our world if we do not know what is in it? To be unknown is to be ignored and the root cause of ignorance. Much of value in our forests may be lost because of ignorance. Organisms that kill insect pests or produce chemicals useful in medicine and manufacturing may disappear if their requirements are destroyed in ignorant use of the forest. We have much to learn of what is in our forests and how these parts function to produce greater forest health and values.

An inventory, particularly of a protected area, is utmost for such areas guard our natural wealth and production. By comparing natural lands with lands of use we can measure the impact of our use and adjust responsibly. Plantations of Red Pine may acidify the soil and reduce its productivity. Where natural vegetation grows in the same soil without acidification, then the impact of the Red Pine is revealed and may be corrected. In nature, most plant requirements are recycled so the forest builds. Compared to our use of land, we remove essential components such as nitrogen, so productivity diminishes.

The natural landscape including plants and animals, changes over long periods of time, driven by climate and natural selection. We greatly modify natural change by our use. Protected areas are our one hope of seeing the full benefits of our lands through all stages of natural change from rockscapes to old growth forests; sugar maples and White Pines 300 years of age and older. In this change many new features and values appear such as plants and animals that live in particular and successive stages of forest growth. Our present highly modified landscape is beautiful but beautiful by far will be the stages of natural development. Protected areas offer this priceless bounty and beauty of nature.

~by **Dr. Jim Bendell**, former MVFN BOD member and small mammal expert during MVFN Bioblitz 2009

Large and small, we searched for them all during our MVFN 24-hr bioblitz:

BIRDS: 30 species were found. There were some surprises, but the population was much reduced except for a few stragglers which had yet to migrate. One of the first birds recorded was a barred owl answering back on the night walk.

VASCULAR PLANTS: at 261 species seen, this was the greatest number of species tallied for a single group, but represented just a fraction of the year-round biodiversity. Fall species such as asters, golden rods, daisies and ferns were well-represented, while spring ephemerals such as trout lily and others were not seen. Eight were rare for Lanark County.

FUNGI: 58 species were found. Fungi were very limited due to the bioblitz being held at the end of a warm dry period but there was no shortage of interesting names such as Brick Tops, Witch's Hat and Chicken of the Woods. Included were basidiomycetes, ascomycetes, a slime mold, and some fungi imperfecti.

MOSSES AND LIVERWORTS: 50 marvelous mosses and 16 lovely liverworts were found including the vivid green snakeskin liverwort shown at left, which was overall indicative of a woodland in good ecological condition.

INSECTS: 63 species Insects were most abundant in open areas with asters and goldenrods. Insects from 8 orders were found: beetles, bugs, grasshoppers & crickets, dragonflies & damselflies, butterflies & moths, scorpionflies, flies & bees.

INVERTEBRATES WITHOUT 6 LEGS (i.e. excluding insects): 17 species were found including 4 millipedes, a clam, 4 snails, 2 slugs, an earthworm, a sowbug, 3 spiders and a mite.

AMPHIBIANS: 9 species were seen or heard including the blue-spotted salamander, northern two-lined salamander, red-spotted newt, American toad, gray treefrog, spring peeper, green frog, northern leopard frog and wood frog.

REPTILES: There were two reptile species found. Both were snakes—a gorgeous smooth greensnake and an eastern gartersnake. Due to the lack of much permanent water, the conditions were not good for turtles and none were found.

MAMMALS: 19 species were seen, heard or identified by tracks /droppings. One of the first - a coyote answering back to howls from participants on the night walk. For small mammals such as mice, voles and shrews, live traps, bait and track tunnels were set up the day before the bioblitz.

FISH - Interestingly, despite the majority of the area being upland Sugar Maple forest, one fish species was found in the stream on the property—the Bluntnose Minnow.

These summaries are condensed from the bioblitz report by Cathy Keddy and Tineke Kuiper which is posted on our website at www.mvfn.ca. A full list of species found during MVFN's bioblitz can be found in the report.

Looking for Historical/Archival MVFN Material –Let's Write our History!

If you have documents or photos you are willing to donate temporarily for use in a project to document MVFN's history, please contact MVFN President Joyce Clinton. Joyce is gathering information, photos and other memorabilia illustrating MVFN's past, especially items which may pre-date storage vehicles such as websites and word document folders. If you let Joyce know what you have, arrangements will be made to photocopy or scan materials and return them.

Baillie Birdathon pledges to Cliff Bennett aid bird research and MVFN's Nature Bursary Programme

The Baillie Birdathon is a sponsor programme organized by Bird Studies Canada (BSC) to support bird conservation programmes and local nature clubs. The Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists receive a portion of all Baillie Birdathon pledges made to Cliff Bennett. When all pledges are in and registered with Bird Studies Canada, MVFN receives a cheque for our portion. This will be put towards our Nature Bursary Award Programme. The rest remains with Bird Studies Canada.

Cliff and Lynda Bennett go out in mid May and find as many species of birds as they can in a 24-hr period. You can sponsor them for so much a species or for a flat amount. Last year they tallied 107 species within the 24 hr period; they usually count at least 100 species. Pledges can be made on-line direct to Bird Studies Canada, at www.bsc-eoc.org/support/birdathon/donate.jsp?number+7938 (this directs your pledge to Cliff Bennett -participant 7938) and BSC will automatically let us know. Pledges accompanied by a cheque made out to MVFN may also be made directly to MVFN and money will be combined with other pledges and a cheque will be sent to BSC. For sponsorships of \$10 or more, on-line or via MVFN, you will be issued a receipt by BSC. Questions may be directed to Pauline Donaldson (613-256-9399) or paulined@evergreenmaps.com.

... a naturalist's spring, summer & fall schedule ...

MVFN's Outdoor Spring/Summer/Fall Programme - 2010

Thursday, May 20 - Don't forget our **Spring Gathering 2010**. Deadline for ticket purchase is May 14.

Saturday, May 29 - **Annual Spring Nature Walk**, NCC Webber Property, Wolf Grove

Saturday, June 19 - **A Field Day-Bugs at Big Creek**

Saturday, July 17 - **Rockside Geology-Lanark County Rocks!**

Sat or Sun August 14 or 15 (tba) - **Explore an area of Natural and Scientific Interest**

Sat or Sun September 25 or 26 (tba) - **Annual Autumn Nature Walk**

and the canoe/kayak outings ...

Sunday, June 12 or 13 (tba) - **Canoe the Richmond Fen**

Sunday, July 4 - **Canoe the Mississippi -Appleton to Almonte**

Sunday, July 25 - **Canoe the Mississippi-Pakenham to Blakeney return**

Sunday, August 8 - **Canoe Sharbot Lake**

Sunday, August 22 - **Canoe Clayton/Taylor Lakes**

Sunday, October 3 - **Fall Colours Canoe trip**

Sept 10-13 - **3rd Annual MVFN Canoe-Whitefish Lake, Algonquin Park**

Further details for these event will go out on the MVFN e-mail network and will be posted at www.mvfn.ca. If you have questions please contact Programme Chair Cathy Keddy 613-257-3089 or keddy01@gmail.com.



Natural History Workshops at Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS)

The following are natural history workshops offered at QUBS, a fantastic teaching facility in a wooded setting:

July 23-24 - The Secret Lives of Wildflowers (2-day workshop)

July 25 - There Be Dragons: Introduction to dragonflies and damselflies (Session #1)

July 26 - There Be Dragons: Introduction to dragonflies and damselflies (Session #2)

Oct 4-8 - Fabulous Fall Fungi (4-day workshop)

If you are interested in these workshops, please contact the organizers: Instructor: Richard Aaron at natureteacher1@gmail.com. QUBS website: www.queensu.ca/biology/qubs.html

2010 Youth Summit for Biodiversity



Ontario Nature will be hosting a two-day Youth Biodiversity Summit in Schomberg, Ontario for 100 high school-aged students from June 4th to June 6th. The registration deadline is May 14. Highlights include a keynote presentation by Dr. Roberta Bondar, interactive naturalist workshops, hiking & campfires, and leadership skills workshops. For more details, please contact Gabe Camozzi at gabec@ontarionature.org or by phone at 416-444-8419 x 241.



The Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists are members of the Ontario Nature Network

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