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# Whippoorwill

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## Springtime in the Mississippi Valley

You can tell it's spring when the scent of blossoms is complemented by the memorable notes of manure, when the cacophony of geese overhead compete with the peeping and harrumphing of the frogs, and the earth finally warms enough to accept the seeds of repasts you or the rabbits, skunks and groundhogs will enjoy later this summer. Springtime brings hope and energy, birth and rebirth, and inspiration to enjoy and celebrate the scents and scenes of our beautiful, natural world. Welcome to the rebirth of the MVFN newsletter. We hope to inform and inspire, perhaps even entertain. If you've got something you'd like to share with fellow members, please contact me. And let us know which critters got into your garden. ~ Eileen | [eileenmvfn@gmail.com](mailto:eileenmvfn@gmail.com)

### President's Message

I am very pleased to be at the helm of MVFN again. I have a wonderful Board of Directors, who are all very keen to get going with various programmes and activities. Please contact any BOD member if you have ideas or questions.

I am very proud of our new website, [mvfn.ca](http://mvfn.ca). Iain Wilkes and his team have really dressed up our web presentation. Please take a moment and scroll through for updates and information. Your comments are most welcome.

We are working diligently to get our canoe/kayak programme working again. Under the leadership of Sheldon Scrivens, we will be holding a training session on canoe safety and first aid in July. See details elsewhere in this email letter. Would you believe we now have 328 members in MVFN? We can still grow some more. Next time you attend an event, please feel free to bring along a few guests.

~ Cliff Bennett

# 2014/2015 Board of Directors

|                                       |                |                           |              |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| President                             | Cliff Bennett  | bennett@magma.ca          | 613-256-5013 |
| Vice-President                        | Brenda Boyd    | bjboyd@rogers.com         | 613-256-2706 |
| Past President                        | Ken Allison    | k.r.allison@explornet.com | 613-256-4283 |
| Secretary                             | to be filled   | to be filled              | to be filled |
| Treasurer                             | Robert McCook  | rfmccook@gmail.com        | 613-256-6739 |
| Program chair                         | Gretta Bradley | glbradley@icloud.com      | 613-256-4202 |
| Environmental Education Program Chair | Bob Smith      | bob_o_links@sympatico.ca  | 613-624-5307 |
| Environmental Issues Committee Chair  | Theresa Peluso |                           | 613-256-0872 |
| Public Relations Chair                | Iain Wilkes    | iain.wilkes@hotmail.com   | 613-257-1126 |
| Director at Large:                    | David Garcia   | davgarc@hotmail.com       |              |

MVFN offers many activities, from monthly natural history talks, nature walks, field trips, canoe and kayak outings and other opportunities to explore many fascinating aspects of our natural world. There are also opportunities to take part in habitat creation projects, trail building, citizen science work, environmental stewardship projects, writing about natural history for MVFN publications, communications and other volunteer work ~ rewarding and fulfilling on so many levels!

02

*Every so often one of our hard-working Board members will be profiled in this newsletter and, in this issue, we learn a little bit about ~*



## Brenda Boyd | MVFN Vice President

I have been professionally a retail assistant manager, an executive secretary, a teacher: elementary, secondary business studies, guidance with at-risk kids, and supply teaching locally since retirement in 2000.

Personally, I am a mom, a gran, an organic gardener for 40 years, a palliative care volunteer and a concerned environmentalist. My dad was a great naturalist, and when I joined the MVFN my interest in learning more about nature, rather than just enjoying it, was rekindled.

As a member of the MVFN Board of Directors, I have been in charge of Membership, Eastern Ontario Nature Network Representative, Chair of the Environmental Education Program, and now Vice President. I love new challenges!

## Janet Fytche | Secretary Retires

*After several years of dedicated and friendly service within the MVFN we are bidding adieu to our Board's Secretary, Janet Fytche.*

*In her words she will now have "more time for tennis and golf" and she certainly deserves it after taking care of us for all these years.*

***Thank you, Janet!***

# MVFN Research Task Force

**MVFN has formed a Research Task Force to investigate why the trees are dying in the provincially significant Appleton Wetland Swamp. The following article is part of that research.**

## **High Canopy and Forest Floor Bird Loss**

### **Due to Death of Soft Maples in Appleton Soft Maple Swamp**

Prior to the beginning of the new millennium, Appleton Wetland Swamp was a lush area of several hundred acres of soft maple and willow trees, reaching forty to sixty feet tall. Much wildlife was to be found in this swamp including otter, muskrat, beaver and many different species of high canopy and forest floor nesting birds.

Today (2014), the dying and dead trees have drastically altered the habitat of these animals and birds. During the five years of the 2nd Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (2000-2005 Cadman et al), the Appleton Swamp was part of the atlas square surveyed by the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists. Many species of birds nesting in the swamp at that time, are no longer to be found. The largest factor for the disappearance of these birds in the Appleton Wetland can be attributed to the loss of tree canopy because the trees are either dying or already dead. The resulting opening or removal of the canopy causes these birds to be vulnerable to predation by hawks. Also, nestlings are deprived of protection from the sun's heat when there are no leaves. When this happens, birds abandon their preferred nesting sites and either move on to other suitable habitat or fail to reproduce.

The following bird species, known and potential, are no longer present in the Appleton Wetland:

### **High Canopy Birds**

Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawk, red-shouldered hawk (on species-at-risk list), least flycatcher, American crow, wood thrush, gray catbird, warbling vireo, scarlet tanager.

### **Forest Floor Birds**

Winter wren, veery, hermit thrush', palm warbler, black and white warbler, ovenbird, Northern waterthrush, Canada warbler.

### **Other Forest Dwellers**

Black-billed cuckoo, olive-sided flycatcher, Eastern wood pewee, yellow-bellied flycatcher, Swainson's thrush, Acadian flycatcher, alder flycatcher, blue jay, wood thrush, blue-headed vireo, red-eyed vireo, mourning warbler.

A change in water management regime for this section (Reach 18) of the Mississippi River would help greatly in eventually allowing new growth of the trees and would encourage the return of many of these bird species.

Article written by Cliff Bennett

Reference: A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds, 2nd edition,

Paul J. Baicich, Colin J.O. Harrison, 1997

# Do We Have Issues!

**During the past year, the members of the Environmental Issues Committee have been very busy with several projects.**

**Designing and identifying a Natural Heritage System (NHS)** for inclusion in Mississippi Mills' updated Community Official Plan has been a major undertaking during the past 18 months. Tineke Kuiper, Tom Coleman, Cathy Keddy and Paul Smith have devoted countless hours – and I mean countless! – and they expect to continue work on this project for another year or two. This NHS builds on natural heritage features previously designated by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), such as wetlands, and the significant woodlands recently added by MNR.

The NHS also takes into account the unique location of Mississippi Mills, at the edge of the shield, which has an impact on the rich biodiversity here, as well as the need to provide connectivity between the various components within the NHS and regionally. The recently developed Concept NHS, which offers better protection, will be discussed with Council on May 20. It is fervently hoped that Council will support this endeavour, and that after further public consultation, the proposed NHS will be included in the revised Community Official Plan, as required under the current Provincial Policy Statement (2014). The NHS committee collaborates with the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority, especially with regard to Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping.

The NHS committee has also been asked (informally) by the staff of Mississippi Mills to comment and perhaps provide **Environmental Impact Assessment** oversight similar to what is being done by the Hamilton's Field Naturalists. Thus far, the Committee has been involved in four projects. The EIC will need to keep

track of Mississippi Mills Council meeting agendas to ensure protection of Natural Heritage features or areas as a result of various severance and rezoning applications.

Another major undertaking during the past year has been the work of Cliff Bennett and his task group to determine the cause of the **trees dying in the Appleton wetlands**. A large part of this work has entailed compiling data on the death of the swamp maples in the wetlands and on the increase in the river water levels since 2006. Cliff and his task group have presented their conclusion that continual flooding of the wetlands is causing the maple trees to die, at various meetings with representatives of the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Natural Resources. The task group will publish a final report on the Appleton Wetlands, and will continue to monitor the situation.

We are now starting to wind down the **Plastic Bag Reduction Project**, which began last March. The committee, headed by Theresa Peluso, conducted a campaign to increase public awareness in Mississippi Mills of the environmental damage caused by single-use plastic bags. If you were at last year's MVFN Spring Gala, you would have read our yellow information sheet and seen our banner depicting a sea turtle about to eat a plastic bag, mistaking it for one of the jellyfish it likes to eat.

The committee hosted information tables at various venues, conducted a survey of plastic bag use by local retailers, and organized a poster campaign in local schools. We will conclude this project with a follow-up survey of the same retailers that participated in last year's survey, to see if there have been any changes as a result of this campaign. This project could not have succeeded without the help of numerous volunteers. EIC members Peter Moller, Bob Smith and Cliff Bennett were assisted by Bobby Clarke, Pam Steele, Al Potvin, Chris Barlow, Pauline Donaldson, and John Fowler.

You may have heard of the **Blue Community Initiative** begun by the Council of Canadians. Basically it affirms the provision of water and sanitation as essential public services for everyone. This project was added to the EIC's list last year. Our focus is to discourage the consumption of bottled water, which not only removes bulk quantities of water from aquifers in other communities, but also increases carbon emissions by manufacturing and filling plastic bottles, and then transporting the bottled water to places like Mississippi Mills, which already have safe, clean drinking water. The town of Mississippi Mills is currently working on ways to encourage the consumption of tap water at public facilities and at local events, and Theresa plans to involve the EIC in assisting these efforts, where possible.

**Conservation of the Night Sky** is yet another project on our list. It is mostly managed by Pat Browne, who works closely with the municipality, the department of Public Works, and the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority to ensure that all new lighting design specifications satisfy the requirements listed in the Outdoor Illumination Bylaw for Mississippi Mills. She has, in this regard, made significant improvements to proposed lighting designs that showed little understanding of these requirements. In all cases, proper lighting levels are the key to ensuring diurnal rhythms in both wildlife and human activity, to ensure proper rest and restoration of tissues and metabolism. Conservation of the Night Sky directly conserves the natural human and animal requirement for attenuated light levels at night for night vision and night rest.

Since last summer, when plans by **Trans Canada Pipelines** to build a pipeline carrying crude oil from the Alberta Oil Sands through Mississippi Mills to New Brunswick, first came to our attention, we have been monitoring the situation, and working to identify the environmental impacts on our region of this decision.

As if these projects weren't enough to keep us busy, the EIC is also undertaking some new projects. Peter Moller is working on a plan to persuade the Council of Mississippi Mills to provide additional **refuse containers** around the Town and to pass a bylaw requiring retail outlets to do the same outside their businesses, in an effort to mitigate the proliferation of garbage in the municipality.

In addition, Peter Moller has initiated a proposal to inform the municipalities in Lanark County of the environmental harm caused by **hydraulic fracturing**, and to request that the municipal councils implement a resolution against this practice.

Last but not least, Bob Smith, in conjunction with other environmental groups, is currently working with municipal and county staff to ensure that road grading doesn't affect the **hatching of turtle eggs** on road shoulders.

As you know, our natural environment is beset on many fronts by threats to its integrity. We need to work diligently, at both a global and local level, to maintain its health and safety. This is a mammoth task, and needs many people to move it forward. Because the current members reside in Mississippi Mills, most of our initiatives are focused on this area. With more volunteers from other communities, we can increase our impact.

**We are an enthusiastic and friendly bunch, always looking for people to help out. The more, the merrier!**

*Report submitted (early May) by Teresa Peluso*

# Champion for Nature

David White |

Winner of the 2014 MVFN Champion for Nature Award

**In 2008, MVFN President Mike McPhail enthusiastically introduced the idea of MVFN Champion for Nature Awards, to recognize local conservation efforts, stating that the awards will go to “deserving individuals and groups that have demonstrated their commitment to wildlife conservation through active involvement as volunteers, or professionals. Their actions have helped raise awareness and contributed toward the protection of our local natural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.”**

At the recent Spring Gathering event, MVFN was pleased to present biologist David White with a 2014 MVFN Champion for Nature award. The award was presented by Program Chair Cathy Keddy: *“This evening the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists are awarding David White a Champion for Nature Award for his contribution to natural heritage conservation in Lanark County by creating and making accessible a flora for the County. David’s flora includes: descriptions and photographs of significant places for flora, photographs of special plants, and a list of all the plant species (aliens distinguished from native) found in the County including their degree of rarity,*

*habitat type, and locations. Further, David keeps the plant species names on this list up-to-date with new, published taxonomic literature—a huge task. This natural heritage resource has been developed and is maintained entirely through volunteer time. It is available online to all interested in our flora.*

*David’s flora has very practical nature conservation applications. One of the most important is in assessing the value of our natural areas and setting priorities for protection. By comparing a species list for a property to David’s species status information, we can determine the significance of the plant species found on the property and use this in the strategy for protecting it.”*

*Tomorrow, take the time to check out David’s flora at <http://www.lanarkflora.com>.*

*I am sure you will have no doubt that David is worthy of an MVFN Champion of Nature Award. Congratulations, David. - Cathy Keddy*

With the naming of David White as MVFN Champion for Nature, there have to date been nine Champions since the presentation of the inaugural awards by Mike McPhail at the 2008

AGM. MVFN’s Champions for Nature are Paul

Keddy, Jim Bendell, Mike Jaques, Paul Egginton, Neil Carleton, Cliff Bennett, Mike McPhail, Al Potvin, and David White. Please visit our website to view profiles of all our Champions for Nature. *Submitted by Pauline Donaldson*



Cathy Keddy presents the MVFN Champion for Nature award to David White. Photo Pauline Donaldson.

# AGM & Spring Gathering

## Another successful year for the MVFN

**The Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (MVFN) held their Annual General Meeting at the Almonte Civitan Community Hall on May 15th followed by their 'Spring Gathering' event which had record-setting attendance.** The AGM was conducted by Ken Allison, President of MVFN with attendance by the Board and club members. Ken provided the membership with an overview of the organizations activities and finances over the last year. This is the Club's 26th year as an organization and throughout this time it has been very active promoting the understanding and awareness of the natural world in our community, with its popular natural history lectures series, canoe, hiking and birding outings, environmental programs for children and youth, and strong support for local conservation issues.

The Treasurer, Robert McCook presented the finances which show a well-managed club which can continue to be very active. Ken introduced each of the board members for the coming year, and of special note is that Cliff Bennett, one of the founding members, will once again be President. The 2014/15 board members can found on MVFN's new website (mvfn.ca) under the About MVFN menu. The AGM was followed by the 'Spring Gathering' event which started with a reception, where old friends and acquaintances shared drinks and chatted; many visited the Young Naturalists exhibit and purchased raffle tickets in support of the MVFN Bursary fund, which supports young people going into the environment education field. Presentation of the 2014 MVFN Champion for Nature also took place. Botanist David White was presented with the award for his work in establishing a Lanark Flora which is

available on-line for public use and furthers plant and habitat conservation in our region.

The Almonte Civitan Club did an excellent job of providing top notch service and a very tasty meal. A special thanks to all the volunteers, especially Cliff Bennett who organized the team and co-ordinated the event.

The Master of Ceremonies, Iain Wilkes, MVFN's Publicity Chair and well-known leader of the Carleton Place Christmas Bird Count, enthusiastically guided the group through the evening culminating in a talk by Dr. Jayne Yack. Jayne provided a fascinating talk on the secret world of insect communications with a focus on butterflies and caterpillars, many of them native to eastern Ontario. Jayne played recordings of sounds caterpillars make and demonstrated that some butterflies can actually hear sounds made by birds, insects and even people.

It was a very successful and enjoyable evening, and everyone is reminded to put May 15, 2015 on their calendars for next year's gathering. This summer MVFN will be running its regular canoe/kayak program and annual summer walks, and the club's monthly natural history lectures will resume with a new series in September.

Please see our new website, mvfn.ca, for details of these upcoming activities and for membership information. The new site took roughly one year and hundreds of hours to

define, design and have implemented by MVFN's web team along with Chris Bruce, a local naturalist and web designer. The new site makes it much easier to see what activities MVFN is involved in and to find information in a user friendly manner.



Dr. Jayne Yack is presented with a thank you gift by MVFN's Publicity Chair Iain Wilkes following presentation of her groundbreaking research and intriguing details of butterfly and caterpillar communication.  
*Photo Pauline Donaldson*

# Woods or Water | Are You Safe?

MVFN, in conjunction with a qualified local provider is putting together a training program to ensure we have a happy and safe season, whether on the water or in the woods. The purpose is to have a core group of skilled canoe/kayak members trained in first aid and canoe safety, so that we would always have at least one trained person to accompany all MVFN day trips. This is an insurance and MVFN requirement before we can continue our programme this year.

Before committing to delivery of this program we need enrollments to ensure we have a minimum of 10 participants. You must pre-register beforehand for this event.

The training is planned for July 12 & 13, 2014 and the program includes:

- ✦ **Saturday, 10 am-2 pm** Red Cross Emergency First Aid Gatehouse, Mill of Kintail
- ✦ **Sunday, 10 am-3 pm** Paddle Canada Canoe Safety & Rescue Clinic Theory and Practical Almonte Beach at Fair Grounds

Details to follow upon registration. The cost for this training is only \$50/person with a maximum class size of 15 trainees. For registration and information, please contact Sheldon Scrivens: 613- 836-0309 or at [sheldon.scrivens@sympatico.ca](mailto:sheldon.scrivens@sympatico.ca)

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## Butterfly Count near Almonte!

The North American Butterfly Association has coordinated butterfly counts following the same format as for Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) for many years. These counts are published as part of an ongoing program of NABA to census the butterflies of North America. See <http://www.naba.org/counts.html> for more information. Volunteer participants focus on a 24 km diameter circle and conduct a one-day census of all butterflies sighted within the circle. As with CBCs, there is a \$4.00 charge to participants to support the publication of the results (not obligatory, but encouraged). This is also an especially kid-friendly event!

This is the seventh year that the Ottawa Field Naturalist Club (OFNC) will sponsor a count (and the 13th year that this count will have been conducted). The count area will be centred at Manion Corners (SW of Ottawa), a site used as a former non-OFNC count circle. It includes several important butterfly areas such as the Long Swamp and the Burnt Lands alvar.

Meet: in the carpool parking lot at the intersection of Dwyer Hill Road and March Road (NE of Almonte). If you need a ride from Ottawa please use the OFNC Facebook or Twitter accounts to try to find a ride share.

It is an all-day event so bring your lunch. No experience is necessary! We will put teams together on site and match up people so that everyone has a chance to learn from the experts.

### July 5 | 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

If you have binoculars and a butterfly net, bring them along. Butterflies may be captured and brought to the count compilation alive for identification and release. Rubber boots are recommended, as some of the sites have a lot of poison ivy.

We plan to meet at Fletcher Wildlife Garden at 6:00 pm after the count for a compilation and pot luck dinner. Please bring along some food to share plus your own drinks. We will have a collection of butterflies along to help people figure out what they saw and learn a bit more about these amazing creatures. We hope that everyone can make it to the compilation, as it will be a lot of fun; however, if you can't make it, we will get your data in the afternoon before you leave.

*If in doubt about the weather or for specific questions regarding this event call Jeff Skevington between 6:00-9:00 pm on Friday at 613-832-1970.*



L: Eastern Tailed Blue, photo Ken Allison  
R: Appalachian Brown, photo Ken Allison