



whip-poor-will

Newsletter of the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists

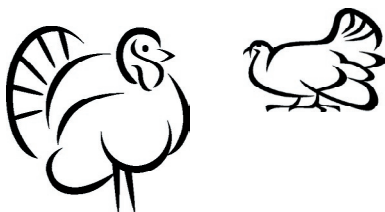
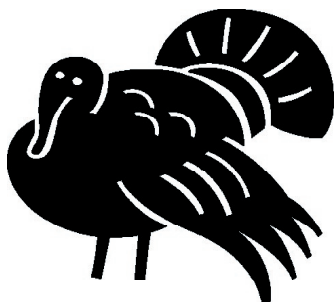
"Proud sponsors of Environmental Education Projects Program"

President's Message

-Mike McPhail

*M*VFN have had another truly outstanding year. This success can be directly attributed to the club's many volunteers who generously donate their time and expertise. It's truly amazing what can happen when people work together. I'm quite proud to be the current president of a club such as the MVFN - a hard working dedicated organization. A dynamic group made up of individuals who not only have a common bond in their love and appreciation of the natural world but are actively committed to its protection for future generations.

As we approach our goals for 2007, it seems an appropriate time to reflect upon the past year and I'd like to introduce you to my fabulous executive team & some of the many dedicated MVFN volunteers. I must first thank Michael Macpherson who passed me the reins of an extremely well run club and who remains very active on the Board of Directors and club committees.



President's message cont'd on next page

MVFN's new Vice President is Howard Robinson

MVFN's new Vice President, Howard Robinson, is a resident of the village of Clayton. Howard accepted nomination to MVFN's VP position at the AGM in May, noting that as a grandparent to young grandchildren, he and his wife Mary are especially concerned about the future of our natural environment. He is also a lake steward, for Buckshot Lake. As the photo below shows, Howard jumped, with great enthusiasm, into MVFN duties. He is pictured participating in the August Mississippi River Watershed water-temperature survey for the 75th Anniversary of Ontario Nature. The project was a success judging by the number of volunteers involved, and the publicity it received which was intended to promote awareness of climate change sensitivity in our own backyards. An estimated 80-100 people participated with approx. 500 temperature data points being obtained from lakes and rivers across the entire watershed. A full report on the survey findings should be ready soon.



MVFN's Howard Robinson, water-sampler in hand, gets ready to survey Palmerston Lake by canoe this summer.
Photo: Mary Robinson

President's Message cont'd:

I would like to welcome four new board members. **Vice President Howard Robinson** has been an extremely dedicated and committed volunteer on MVFN BOD and club committees. **Patricia Larkin as new Chair of our Environmental Education Projects Program (EPPP)** is busy implementing a Sustainable School Pilot Project at Maple Grove Public School. **Joyce Clinton** came on as chair of the **Program Committee** and is responsible for organizing the outstanding series of themed lectures, built around a Mississippi River Watershed theme. **Janet Fytche** our new Secretary stayed on as **MVFN Email Coordinator** and does a stupendous job in both roles.

Elizabeth Dunning, continues as **Treasurer; Chair, Finance Committee**; and does a stellar job of keeping us up-to-date on the 'bottom line'. The club is quite healthy with memberships on the rise and **Membership Chair Cathe Baker** has done a fantastic job of keeping our membership records up to date. **Publicity Chair Pauline Donaldson** has been doing an outstanding job!

It is wonderful to see the many relationships and partnerships with like minded organizations that MVFN have constructed over the years. We take these partnerships seriously. **Brenda Boyd** remains **MVFN's representative to Ontario Nature** and did a super job of organizing MVFN's hosting of Ontario Natures Eastern Regional Meeting held at the Mill of Kintail on Nov 4th. **Franziska von Rosen** remains **MVFN representative, Community Stewardship Council of Lanark County**.

Although **Jim Bendell** stepped down from the BOD in May, he continues to be MVFN representative on Lanark Highlands EAC, Forests Advisory Committee, and Lanark Mazinaw Forest Management Advisory Committee.

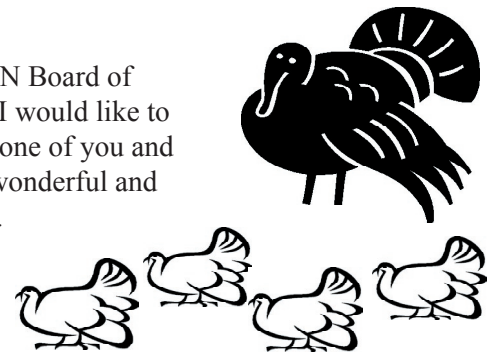
Christine Birkett has stepped down as webmaster of www.mvfn.ca after many dedicated years of service. Thanks so much Christine for all of your dedicated work and great web site design.

Paul Egginton and his **Climate Change Awareness Committee** has done an enormous amount of work, especially in conducting the volunteer-driven water-temperature survey of the Mississippi Watershed as MVFN's contribution to Ontario Natures 75th Anniversary. Other CC projects continue to bring member and public awareness to implications of climate change in our own backyards – i.e. Alberts Gardens tulip project, and ice-, frog- and spring wildflower- watch and frost-watch (see photo p. 7). I would also like to acknowledge **Sheila Edwards** efforts as a strong contributor of excellent news worthy MVFN articles and member of the Program committee. **Cliff Bennett's Canoe Trips, Christmas Bird Counts & Joel Byrne's Nature Walks** are superb opportunities to get together with other naturalists and visit places that you would not have otherwise, and increase your knowledge of the outdoors so that your enjoyment of it also increases. For winter buffs - there is an outdoor social & other some February outings in the works!

At this time, I would like to welcome all of the new members to MVFN and encourage you, if you have not already done so, to get active in the new year. Feel free to contact me to discuss how you can become further involved in MVFN activities (mcphail@hotmail.com or telephone 613-256-7211).

On behalf of the MVFN Board of Directors and myself, I would like to say thank you to each one of you and hope that you have a wonderful and happy 2007 New Year.

Best Regards,
Mike McPhail



P.S. Stepping outside at daybreak on a frosty morning is always a magical moment, but when you are confronted by eight wild turkeys waiting with baited breath, you know that you live in Wolf Grove and forgot to fill the bird feeders!

Can you help researchers find healthy Butternut trees?

Butternut canker disease is threatening the existence of Butternut across its entire natural range. In 2005, it was listed as an endangered species by COSEWIC. Rideau Valley Conservation and the Ferguson Forest Centre are running a Regional Butternut Recovery Program to locate and assess mature seed-producing trees exhibiting signs of resistance to the canker. They are widening the search for material and are seeking assistance from interested parties to inform them of locations of apparently healthy Butternut

trees, both urban 'backyard' trees and woodlot Butternut. Fax or email name, phone number, butternut location-name of landowner, phone, civic address, lot and concession, geographic township to Rose Fleguel, Butternut Recovery Technician; phone: 613-258-3678, fax: 613-258-6178, or email: rose.fleguel@rideauvalley.on.ca. For further information on the recovery program contact R. Dyck at the RVCA. For more information on butternut canker see <http://www.fgca.net/conservation/sar/butternut.aspx>.

“The Last Butter-and-eggs” -by Joel E. Byrne

“Butter-and-eggs is a common, two shades of yellow, roadside flower, Linaria vulgaris, in the snapdragon family. I tracked them this fall (2005) at a place... Playfairville rapids... in the Mississippi River not far from Lanark. When there were only a few left late in October, I began to feel an acute sense of the loss of all summer flowers, sunny days, warmth, etc. Thus this poem was born.”*

**Editors note: although we didn't publish Joel's poem last year when it was written, we thought you would still enjoy it.*

I came alone to the riverbank
There to take my ease,
To see the sounds and smell the sights
Of rapids, woods and breeze.

And on that slate-gray autumn day
I found a single flower,
So confident its sunny strength
I marveled at its power
To conjure thoughts of cobs of corn
Rolled on sticks of butter,
Of poking yokes with buttered toast,
Of round things warm and good to hold,

But dark thoughts irresistibly
Crept in with the cold:
There stood a living Butter-and-eggs
Amidst its ruined clan,
A host of shriveled faces,
And death was on the land---
Rank on rank the withered stalks,
And soon there would be snow.

I shuddered in the fading light,
And straightened up to go,
But that solitary flower
With yolk and butter suns,
That stalwart last snapdragon
With me was not yet done;
It drew me down and held me,
The dragon lips did part;

A soothing whisper issued forth,
Most cheering to the heart:
'Do not lament my passing
Or the dying of the throng,
This is the way it happens---
A sleep, and then ere long
The reappearance of everything:
The leaves, the flowers, the song'.

MVFN welcomes new members:

Sue ADAMS; David ALLISON; Cyan & Nolan
ATTERBURY; Ted BARNICOATT; Hilary
BARRETT; Fran BRYERTON; Monique
CAMERON; Orion CLARK; Terry CURRIE;
Don & Diane DUNCAN; Kim FISHER; Rona
FRASER; FRENETTE family; Tammy GILLIS; Ian &
Pamela GRIFFIN; Alison BALL & Peter HICKS; KEFFER family; Ed
LAWRENCE & Kate REID; Hal & Charlotte LEITCH; Anne MASON;
Lynn MAYER-JONES; Sylvia & Stephen MILLER; Natalie MILLS;
Grant NIXON; Jennifer RYDER-JONES; Joan SAMPSON; Anne
RAINE & James, Chloe & Daniel SCHATZ; Colleen THATCHER;
Alison & David STEIN; Phil & Gay WOOD; George YAREMCHUK;
Douglas YOUNGER-LEWIS.



Latest Species at risk from Climate Change

Due in part to too few of these newsletters this year, many members may not have seen accounts of several great hikes and canoe trips this past summer and fall. Sheila Edwards has been doing a wonderful job covering these outdoor events. It is worthwhile checking out the website for her stories - www.mvfn.ca.

“Michael Runtz brings to life the work of one of nature’s great engineers in the watershed - the beaver”



- an MVFN press release from September 2006, by Sheila Edwards

A large crowd gathered September 14th for Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists September lecture. Michael Runtz was the keynote speaker for the first of a series of talks exploring the “Mississippi Valley Watershed”.

One sign of a great educator is when an audience doesn’t realize how much they are learning. In his presentation “Beaver Ponds in the Watershed”, Michael Runtz showed he is one such educator. His enthusiastic delivery style brought to life information based on his astute observations of nature. A well respected naturalist, nature photographer, and author, Runtz captivated his audience with stories about beavers, the topic of his next natural history book. Based on the response at the lecture, it should prove as popular as his other Canadian best-sellers such as *Wild Wings*, *Algonquin Seasons* and *Moose Country*. Runtz showed us how beavers play the role of engineer when it comes to creating nutrient-rich ponds, teeming with life. Water levels are raised, new species are attracted, and the forest gradually acquires a pond, marsh, and ribbon of grassland. The habitats thus created by this impressive rodent are vital to the health of our watershed.

As the seasons change, a beaver pond changes as well. In the spring, nutrients will be washed out, enriching the water downstream; frogs will be at their noisiest, many birds will be arriving to nest in the forest and on dead trees standing in the pond; and the beavers will be busy feeding and working on their dams and lodges. Beavers feed on tree bark, the soft layer under the bark, and also herbaceous plants like pond lilies.

As fall approaches, the beaver becomes more visible during the day as it works on creating a food pile for the winter and does fall maintenance on its structures; the lodge’s insulation is upgraded by piling more mud on top

and the dam must be high enough to ensure the pond does not completely freeze. The lodge’s exits are about 1.5 m below the water’s surface, at a depth which hopefully will remain unfrozen throughout the winter. The beaver swims underwater to the food pile, eating the branches that are weighed down by less edible wood like alder. Beavers keep the lodge’s upper chamber clean for sleeping by eating and defecating in the lower chamber. Like the rabbit, the beaver has a ‘two-pass’ digestive system to maximize the nutritional benefit of its high-roughage diet.



Michael Runtz and MVFN Program Chair Joyce Clinton talk with the audience following the presentation. *Photo: Mike McPhail*

If you are interested in observing beavers, Runtz had some good suggestions. For the paddler, beaver can stay underwater for as long as 15 minutes, so if they startle and dive down, they could be gone a long time. For the XC-skier, if the hole at the top of the lodge is open, and surrounded by frost; the occupants are alive and well. When watching a beaver cutting wood, they may use their tail as a stool by leaning back on it; they will also use either their front teeth or side teeth depending on whether they are eating or cutting respectively.

Baillie Birdathon 2006

Did you know? Members and avid birders Cliff and Lynda Bennett, counted 76 bird species in our area during the 2006 Baillie Birdathon in May! MVFN members sponsoring them contributed \$145 to Bird Studies Canada, helping to support bird conservation activities across the country. Congratulations to Cliff and Lynda for their great count, and thanks to our members whose support goes to a fine cause.

Four more seminars coming up in MVFN's 2006-07 series 'The Mississippi River Watershed' -Pauline Donaldson

Two years ago, MVFN's speaker series explored biodiversity in natural populations. We learned how biodiversity helps nature cope with change. Last year we looked at the various kinds of changes which challenge the natural world. The program committee for this year's program, led by **Joyce Clinton**, has put together a speaker series with the "Mississippi Valley Watershed" as theme. In this series, our focus shifts to the ecosystem of the watershed in our own backyards. Speakers were chosen, with the goal to apply the information offered by our featured speakers to answer the question: what can we do to keep our watershed healthy? Some examples are listed on page 6 & 7.

In September, **Michael Runtz** started the series off with a flourish, with tales of the fascinating world of beaver ponds and how they enhance the larger world of the watersheds they inhabit. Those who missed this seminar should enjoy reading Sheila Edwards article on the previous page. In October, **Brian Potter** from OMNR in Peterborough, gave us a poignant look at the importance and plight of wetland habitats- why they are important, why they are threatened and why we should be concerned about them.

There are many vital wetlands in our watershed. Mississippi Valley Conservation recently provided us with

a table listing these by size, composition etc. Please let me know if you would like a copy.

In November, **Pat Ferris** spoke to us about MAPLE: The Mutual Association of the Protection of Lake Environments in Ontario, a volunteer group he helped found more than 20 years ago. Each summer MAPLE organizes boat convoys to bring plants, raised in MAPLE's own nursery on Christie Lake, to help rehabilitate shorelines. As many of us heard, this group is an incredible example of the power of a few volunteers and the catalytic effect they have had on other like-minded groups, e.g. RVCA, Lake Associations etc., for e.g. in adopting MAPLE's Shoreland Inventory and Classification protocols. A recent shoreline inventory of Otty Lake was a wake-up call to many of the property owners whose shoreline was marked red for 'ornamental'.

If you missed the Fall seminars, there are more to look forward to in the New Year. We will be hearing about the impact of forests, agriculture and development on watershed health, and in February there will be an in-depth look at "Water Quality." So mark your calendars for the first lecture of the New Year, **January 18, 2007**, featuring OMNR's Linda Touzin who will present "Managing Forests to Protect the Watershed".

2007 Indoor Program Schedule

Jan 18	Linda Touzin , OMNR	"Managing Forests to Protect the Watershed"
Feb 15	Paul Hamilton , Canadian Museum of Nature	"Water Quality"
March 15	Peter McLaren , Councillor,	"Agriculture in the Watershed"
April 19	John Edwards , Councillor,	"Development Issues in the Watershed"
May 5	Look for full details soon	MVFN Gala Fundraiser
May 17	Guest speaker - tba	Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Except for the AGM and Gala, indoor events are 7:30 p.m. at the Almonte United Church, 106 Elgin St. in Almonte. For further details contact Program Chair Joyce Clinton at 256-8241, or check our website at www.mvfn.ca or local papers close to event day. Directions to the hall can also be found on the website. For information on outdoor events, contact Cliff Bennett, 256-5013 or bennett@magma.ca.

**A bear goes up to a bar
and asks for a gin.....and tonic.
Bar tender: Why the big paws?**

Natural Resources Committee member Jim Bendell, who continues looking at Lanark County forest management issues and the Mazinaw-Lanark Forest 2006-2026 Forest Management Plan asks, *How is the OMNR managing our lands? How will it affect nature?* He says "....the first step is a new inventory for the forests. We should make sure the inventory includes an adequate report of all natural features".

Here are two ideas to enhance your bird population around your home this winter - Cliff Bennett

Bird baths in winter

Water is very important for birds in the winter although most of our northern species eat snow to gain the moisture they need. During very cold winters there have been cases of birds getting wet and then sticking to metal, so one has to be careful in choice of material. Plastic and concrete would be acceptable containers. Of course, when spring approaches, puddles on the road become a ready source of moisture and, soon after that the creeks are open.

Suet in Winter

Initially, one should put out some suet, to attract woodpeckers and nuthatches. Suet can be hung in blocks or put into a mesh bag and hung. You can melt it or grind it in a meat grinder and mix seeds, nuts and fruit into it. This mix can be frozen and cut into blocks or stuffed into holes in a log. To make a suet log, simply drill one inch holes into a piece of a cedar post and stuff the holes. Add two nails and a wire handle to the top for hanging. Leave a good space at the bottom of the log for woodpeckers to cling to.



Northern saw-whet owl photographed December 3 by Gloria Opzoomer and Paul Sprague. View the entire photo and others in the website photogallery.

Speakers offer wealth of information on watershed health



Ontario's big Mississippi River, from which our naturalist group takes its name, has its headwaters in Mazinaw Lake and runs approx. 125 miles through beautiful landscapes before joining the Ottawa River. According to MVC, the river's watershed covers an area of 4,450 square kilometres.

Michael Runtz - Beaver ponds in the watershed- What can you do?

1. Consider the natural cycling of areas inhabited by beavers. You might think you have a beaver problem but your beaver could well be one of those 2-yr old beaver who has just been kicked out of home and has set up a last minute den just to get through the winter. If so, he may go elsewhere the next year.
2. Get kids/grandkids off the computer and out into nature.
3. Value nature, it is the best show in town. Michael says, he never gives nature a bad review.

Brian Potter-Wetlands (marshes, bogs, swamps and fens) in the watershed-what can you do?

1. Remember that wetlands are not just water, not just land, but a vital link between land and water, and critical to watershed health - providing critical habitat plus playing an essential role in proper working of the hydrologic cycle i.e. for groundwater re-charge, natural water purification, flood control etc. Some significant wetlands in our watershed include Mississippi Lake, Wolf Grove wetlands, Kerr Lake, Clayton/Taylor Lake.
2. Wetlands are disappearing at an alarming rate. Encourage your municipality and conservation authorities to put resources into proper inventory of wetlands, and protection through good planning and vigilance. Look into programs available for individuals and groups to help preserve wetlands, e.g. *Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program* (www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/fishing/cfwip.html), *Wetland Habitat Fund* (www.wetlandfund.com), *Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program* (www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/cltip).
3. Support research on buffer zones around wetlands. As more work is done on this, researchers are finding more examples of species for which the current requirements for the size of buffers or upland areas are insufficient.

Pat Ferris of MAPLE - Shoreline rehabilitation- What can you do?

1. Mark off 10 m from shore and *do nothing*. This, in a nutshell is MAPLE's "MAPLE 10". A natural shoreline is the 'ribbon' of life which is absolutely essential for many species and for healthy water.
2. *Relax*. Need to revegetate your shoreline? Let low-maintenance native plants sprout from the natural seed bank. Native plants may also be available from MAPLE (see www.rideauvalley.on.ca/maple).
3. Remember the lesson of Bert and Ernie? *Build less, enjoy more*. The best erosion control is natural shoreline vegetation. Remove retaining walls and install only low impact docks.

MVFN are proud sponsors of environmental education

In May, Janine DeSalaberry retired as Chair of EEPP, the important BOD position in charge of our Environmental Education Projects Program. Many thanks for your years of dedication to EEPP Janine. A great variety of projects funded by MVFN took place in the 2005-06 school year. As Janine reported at the May 2006 AGM: *"Roughly 1,700 children and 90 adults were given the opportunity to learn about snakes and other small creatures. Both Paul Fry, with his excellent program, "The Critter Guy" and Jeff Hathaway, with his "Sciensational SSnakes!" were outstanding, providing vital scientific information with a hands-on experience. ...As the principal of Maple Grove Public School wrote: "the presenters were truly exceptional speakers and were able to engage the students throughout the presentations. The learning that occurred is still evident in the information that they are able to recall..."* Some of the other programs receiving an injection of financial support were visits by astronomer/author, Terrence Dickenson to Almonte schools, and a Grade 2 full day program of stream study and a land animal learning program at Mill of Kintail in June. In closing Janine welcomed **Patricia Larkin** the new Chair of EEPP for 2006-07,

and offered her continued support for the program. MVFN's EEPP typically funds both hands-on education in schools and field trips, such as a November class trip to MVC's Water Festival at Mill of Kintail. If you require further information on EEPP funding, contact Patricia Larkin at 613-256-5301 or by e-mail lkmarsh@magma.ca.

Application for the last \$5000 installment of the current Trillium grant has been made and EEPP is awaiting receipt. Late in 2006, the BOD enthusiastically launched work on another gala fund raiser for EEPP, which is to be held in 2007.

In September, MVFN's Board of Directors approved EEPP funding to Maple Grove Public School in Lanark for an exciting new environmental program, the **"Maple Grove EcoSchool Initiative"**. Under the guidance of Nature Works Learning, Grades 3-8 are learning more about their school in the areas of water use, energy use, waste/recycling and schoolyard landscape/planning. An 'EcoTeam' of teachers, support staff and students performed an 'audit' to see how school operations measure up in these 4 categories.

Having completed this they will develop action plans in the New Year to improve performance. Environmental literacy is the goal of student-produced newsletter articles, an EcoSchool Bulletin Board and an

"EcoTree" in the schools' entrance where good news 'leaves' are attached as the year progresses. We wish the staff and students of Maple Grove school much success in this project. Look for further updates on the EcoSchool project in the coming months.



Students at R.Tait McKenzie school get ready for frost watch, Nov'06.
Photo: Neil Carleton



Stream study at Mill of Kintail, June '06.
Photo: Pauline Donaldson

MVFN's Board of Directors for 2006-07

Past President ¹	Mike Macpherson	256-3043	mbmacp@gmail.com
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Vice-President	Howard Robinson	256-0817	howard.mary.robinson@sympatico.ca
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Environmental Education Project Committee Chair	Patricia Larkin	256-5301	lrkmarsh@magma.ca
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Public Relations Chair ⁴	Pauline Donaldson	256-9399	paulined@evergreenmaps.com
MVFN Representative on Ontario Nature	Brenda Boyd	256-2706	bjboyd@sympatico.ca
MVFN Representative on Community Stewardship Council of Lanark County	Franziska von Rosen	259-2847	fvrosen@superaje.com

¹also MVFN Representative on Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust Conservancy; ²also Environmental Issues Chair, Interim Website Photogallery; ³also MVFN E-mail Network; ⁴also MVFN Interim Webmaster, Newsletter Production

MVFN's special volunteers of 2006-07: special thanks to the following members who play invaluable roles in the ongoing activities of the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists:

Cliff Bennett: Canoe/hiking trips, Bird Counts, Climate Change Committee, Program Committee; **Jim Bendell:** Natural Resources Reporting including as member of the Lanark Forest Management Advisory Committee, the Lanark Highlands Environmental Advisory Committee and the Local Citizen Group for Mazinaw Lanark Forest Management; **Joel Byrne:** Nature Hike Guide, Program Host-Show/Tell; **Neil Carleton:** AOBG MVFN booth, Climate Change Project; **Sheila Edwards:** Program Committee, Press Releases; **Paul Egginton:** Climate Change Committee, Program Committee; **Paul Frigon:** Lanark County Trails Issues; **Chris Hume:** Outdoor Program, Press Release Editing; **Tine Kuiper:** Program Committee; and **Billy Wiles:** Program Refreshments.

Thankyou to the many people who sent items and ideas for this and previous newsletters. I hope that with your continued help we can put together more of these publications in 2007 than in the previous two years, so we can include more of your ideas -your editor!

The whip-poor-will is a publication of the



"Exploring nature in the Mississippi River watershed"

To contact us: write to MVFN, Box 1617, Almonte, Ontario KOA 1A0 or contact MVFN President Mike McPhail at 613-256-7211 or e-mail mcphail@hotmail.com. Visit our website: www.mvfn.ca

Please send newsletter comments, ideas and stories to paulined@evergreenmaps.com