



Mississippi Valley  
Field Naturalists

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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## About MVFN

MVFN is an active field naturalists club founded in 1988 to increase public interest, knowledge, understanding, appreciation, and respect for the natural world. We are a registered charitable organization (and member of the Ontario Nature Network) committed to increasing the knowledge and awareness of local species and their habitat, and of the importance of conservation.

We offer many activities, including monthly natural history talks, nature walks, field trips, canoe/kayak outings, citizen science and opportunities to explore many fascinating aspects of our natural world. Donations to MVFN and volunteer work coordinated by the organization, help to support a strong voice for the natural world in our region.

We are also dedicated to environmental education, conservation and habitat restoration and supporting young naturalists programs. The Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists club is run entirely by volunteers, from the Board of Directors, to leaders of outings, refreshment and audiovisual duty at nature talks/presentations, vital communication on activities and projects, and labour for habitat and trail creation projects. We are excited to have a program where participants pay to be a part of the Young Naturalists and this in turn allows us to hire a leader for the program.



# MVFN President's Report 2025

In 2025 we had no sitting President. However, business continued as usual with MVFN Board meetings on the 2nd Thursday of the month. 1st Vice-President Paul Frigon, Secretary Brenda Boyd, and Past President and Interim Chair Val Wilkinson, are acting as an executive team to lead administrative duties.

In 2025 our various activity committees were, very active offering a variety of environmental experiences across the Mississippi River watershed. These events are described in the subsequent pages of this Annual Report: 12 Birding Walks, Outings and Open Houses; 8 Paddling trips; 3 Outings and 8 Nature Talks. Congratulations to the committee chairs; Ken Allison, Art Solomonian; Gretta Bradley and Brian Gillespie, respectively. Unfortunately, Gretta will be stepping down as chair of the Outings Committee. We thank her for the excellent work she has done in organizing Outings for MVFN members for the for the last two years. This year the Paddling Committee ran a Waterwalker Film Festival in March that was a considerable success with over 130 in attendance. Unfortunately, 2025 was the second year their annual Fall Camp faced rain and high winds. This year the event had to be cancelled altogether.

MVFN members helped co-ordinate, through Birds Canada, the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts around Rideau Ferry (Alison Bentley), Carleton Place (Iain Wilkes) and Lanark Township (Jeff Mills and Remy Poulin) as well as the Mississippi Lake Loon Survey with the Mississippi Lake Association (Nick de Boer).

The Environmental Education Program Committee, chaired by Bob Smith, was active again this year, with its Monarch Butterfly program, Waterfest, and the Young Naturalists programs for schoolkids as well as: supporting the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority's "Kintail Christmas" efforts, with Brenda Boyd in a leadership role; and supporting the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust's Festival of the Wild Child.

This year the MVFN was able to award four Cliff Bennett Nature Bursaries: two 2nd year bursaries and two 1st year bursaries. 2025 was the first year the Cliff Bennet Nature Bursary Committee was able to provide 2nd year bursaries to qualifying students; through a grant from the Elizabeth Kelly Foundation (EKF) based on an agreement signed between MVFN and the EKF in June of 2023.

Our Spring Gathering this year was, well attended with over 100 people enjoying the presentation of Dr. Joseph Northrop on "the Polar Bears of Southern Hudson Bay" and the threats facing their current population; coffee and desserts served by the Civitan. Thank you to Louise Beckinsale and Sylvia Miller for organizing the event.

MVFN members also made an effort to support local environmental organizations both locally and across Ontario. MVFN provided letters of support to Ontario Nature and to the Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) Collaborative, on various advocacy issues relating to federal and provincial government activities. These are summarized in the Conservation and Habitat Restoration Committee report. MVFN is now part of the MVCA Phragmites Working Group and also has a member representing the natural environment sector, on the Working Group for the Lanark County Natural Heritage Systems (NHS) Strategy study. This study begins with mapping the County's NHS and ends with an implementation strategy for the Official Plan.

Thank you to our 2nd Vice-President, John Grierson, who not only filled the newly created role of "program coordinator", but is also spearheading MVFN's "IT Renewal" project. We are hoping this will provide improvements much needed by the by the Membership and Finance committees to modernize and streamline their processes. This project is still not complete, so stay tuned! Thanks also to Trish Larkin for stepping up to provide a Financial Review of our Financial Statements in such a timely fashion.

A special thanks to founding member Cliff Bennett who has faithfully led and advised the MVFN since its inception 38 years ago. Cliff stepped down as a member of the Board only recently. His presence and constantly cheerful support are sorely missed. We will be celebrating his achievements in 2026.

Finally: thank you, to the members, for your support; to the committee chairs, for your hard work; to all the volunteers; and a special thank you to the board members, for their patience and diligence in handling the administrative necessities of MVFN.

Paul Frigon, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President

Val Wilkinson, Past President

# Birding Committee Report 2025

MVFN's Early Morning Bird Walks were once again held each Wednesday in April.

The five walks were at:

- the Ottawa Valley Rail Trail south of Almonte, led by Rémy Poulin
- along Concession 12 to Taylor Lake, led by Rémy Poulin
- the James Naismith Way Walk, led by Ken Allison
- the Mississippi River Walk trail in Carleton Place, led by Iain Wilkes
- St. Fillan's Road East in Beckwith, led by Ken Allison

The Birding Committee also organized the following very successful birding outings:

- A morning walk on May 3, 2025 at the Perth Wildlife Reserve Conservation Area, Perth, led by Rémy Poulin.
- A planned walk at the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust's Marble Woodlands property on Saturday, May 10, 2025 had to be relocated due to an MMLT event planned for that day. Instead, Ken Allison led a morning walk on Concession 9 of Pakenham.
- A half-day walk along the Bottle Lake Road in Lavant Township on May 28, 2024, led by Ken Allison.



MVFN members also participated in the Grassland Ontario Projects administered by the Lanark County Stewardship Council in 2025. The aim of the project is to monitor the health of grassland bird species. This year Iain Wilkes and Ken Allison conducted surveys on one property that is hosting Grasslands Ontario projects. Good numbers of both Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks were observed.

Open Houses were held each Wednesday afternoon in September at the Mike McPhail Viewing Shelter at the Almonte Lagoon and the Carleton Place Storm Water Pond to view the fall migration. Ken Allison, Michel Gauthier, and Iain Wilkes provided scopes and offered their expertise and assistance to attendees.

As in past years, MVFN members were involved in three Lanark County Christmas Bird Counts in December: Rideau Ferry, organized by Alison Bentley; Carleton Place, organized by Iain Wilkes; and Lanark Highlands, organized by Jeff Mills. The 35th Rideau Ferry CBC took place on December 20, 2025. The 75th Carleton Place CBC took place on December 27, 2025. The 23rd Lanark Highlands CBC took place on December 30, 2025. The Rideau Ferry CBC had 5545 birds of 49 species. The Carleton Place CBC had 4785 birds of 48 species. The Lanark Highlands CBC had 3820 birds of 40 species.

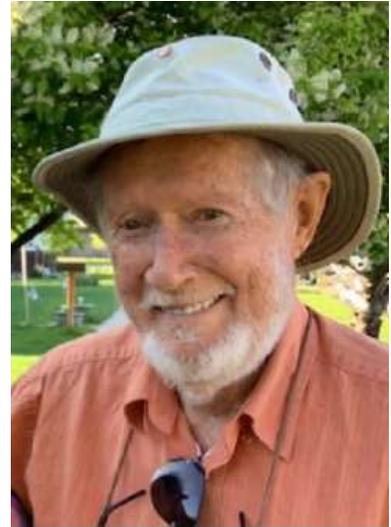
The Birding Committee and volunteers continue to provide nest boxes and bird feeders at the Almonte Lagoon property. Ron and Leslie Williamson, David Hinks, Chris Baburek, Ken Allison, , Don Johnston and Georgina Wigley, Bernhard Gesicki and Rona Bloomfield all filled feeders over the past year.

Members of the Birding Committee are Ken Allison (chair), Michel Gauthier, Rémy Poulin, Iain Wilkes, Nick de Boer and Mary Robinson (secretary).

The field work for the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas was completed this year and many MVFN members were involved.

Submitted by Ken Allison

# Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund Report 2025



Membership includes: Joachim Moenig (chair), Janet Johns (Secretary), Wendy Moenig, Renate Seiler, Robert Barnett and Rudi Mueller.

In 2025 an amount of \$1000 was awarded to each of four applicants meeting Bursary application criteria: two going into their first post-secondary school year and two already in their 2nd year. Related bursary materials were updated in 2024/2025 for school administrators and the media, in preparation for the 2026 bursary awards.

## Key Activities and Achievements:

- In all, 29 bursary reminder letters were sent to school administrators in early April 2025. The letters provided a brief history of the Bursary and its objectives , also enclosed was a poster which the school could print. Each poster included a QR code directing interested individuals to our website for additional information and the e-fillable application forms. The deadline for submitting applications is the same each year, May 1st .
- Three applications were received by the deadline and provided to each committee member for individual assessment: assessment based on a ranking scheme and template developed by former committee chair, Patricia Larkin and revised in 2024/2025 by committee member Wendy Moenig for ease of use.
- The bursary committee met 10th of June via Zoom and after considerable discussion agreed to award 1 st year bursaries to Tegan Leverette and Darwyn Baxter. Through funds provided by the Elizabeth Kelly Foundation (EKF), bursary awards have been available since 2024 to 2nd year post-secondary students who had already received a 1st year award. The protocol for awarding 2nd year bursary awards, developed by the bursary committee chair, is based on principles and procedures agreed in 2023 between the MVFN and the EKF. Application forms for 2nd year awards were designed by Wendy Moenig and a ranking system and questionnaire for 2nd year candidates was developed.
- The four 2024 recipients, in their 2nd year, were contacted and only two of the four returned completed applications. These were subsequently reviewed by the committee. Both Garrett Weese (Trent University) and James Renaud (Olds College of Agriculture & Technology) met the requirements for a 2nd year award.

A special thanks to Cliff Bennett who left the CBNB Committee this year. As founder and namesake of the bursary, our advisor, mentor and founder's wise counsel is sorely missed.

CBNB Committee Chair,  
Joachim Moenig BSc. MSc.

# Conservation & Habitat Restoration Report 2025

Paul Frigon/Sylvia Miller

The CHR committee presently has no Chair, but has an ad-hoc membership comprising of Paul Frigon, Nick de Boer, Denis Gallant, and Sylvia Miller. A variety of projects were undertaken in 2025, some of which were not directly involved with conservation or habitat restoration.

All bluebird nesting boxes have been sold; if we can find “material” and “time” donations, perhaps we can build a few more in 2026. The three nesting boxes at the Mill of Kintail were maintained by Lucy Carleton.

Almonte Lagoon Pathways were, again, mowed from May to September, thanks to Art Clarke; including the McPhail Viewing Shelter and Potvin Observation Tower connecting path. No other trail maintenance was undertaken. The Mississippi Lake Loon Survey, managed by the Mississippi Lake Association, is now being coordinated with MVFN through the Birding Committee and Nick de Boer.

MVFN attended the Ontario Nature (ON) Eastern Region meeting in the Spring. The meeting was sponsored by the Kingston Field Naturalists and was held at the Elbow Lake Centre north of Kingston. MVFN also attended an Eastern Region ZOOM meeting in the Fall.

MVFN supported several advocacy initiatives this year through Ontario Nature (ON) and the Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaboration (A2A); MVFN is a member of both agencies. These initiatives included providing letters of support regarding ON requests to:

- the Ontario Government asking the Budget to provide more investment in nature protection/restoration;
- the Provincial political parties to commit to protecting/restoring nature as part of their election priorities;
- the Federal Government to fund municipalities in strengthening local wetland conservation projects;
- the Ontario Government urging them not to proceed with plans in Bill 5 to scrap the Endangered Species Act, and replace it with the far weaker Species Conservation Act.
- the MVFN BOD supports ON in petitioning the Ontario Government to abandon their efforts in amalgamating Conservation Authorities (CAs) through proposed major changes to the structure of CAs. Support will be formalised in 2026.

At the request of A2A, MVFN membership was informed of the MTO widening of 401 through the Kingston area and the potential for MVFN members to comment on the need for improved wild life crossings in the Frontenac Arch/401 intersecting corridors.

MVFN is the sector representative for the Natural Environment in the Working Group (WG) for the Lanark County Natural Heritage Systems (NHS) Strategy project. The project will run over the next several years and there have already been two WG meetings. As a member of the group, MVFN will participate in the confirmation of the mapping of all NHS features in the entire County and, more specifically, in Mississippi Mills; building on the efforts of Tineke Kuiper and Tom Coleman in 2015-2017 when MVFN assisted the municipality in mapping its NHS features.

MVFN is a member of the newly launched Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) Invasive Phragmites Working Group (WG). The purpose of the group is to coordinate monitoring, mapping, and educating the community on Invasive Phragmites - recognized as Ontario’s worst invasive species. Sylvia Miller reported to the BOD that the current WG met in November to introduce the Ontario Phragmites Action Program but is not yet working on a strategy for control at this point. There will likely be a call for MVFN members to participate in further mapping and control activities; in the meantime, interested members are encouraged to join through the MVCA website: <https://mvc.on.ca/invasive-phragmites-working-group/>

# Environmental Education Program Report...December 2025

1. Monarch butterfly classroom program resumed in May with milkweed planting in 20 elementary schools in Mississippi River watershed area ie. Pakenham, Almonte, Carleton Place, Perth, and Lanark.
2. Waterfest'25 took place in Almonte in June. Students at Almonte H.S. Hosted about 140 elementary kids, interpreting for them demonstrations of the many issues around water, our most important resource. Thanks to the St. Lawrence River Institute for providing the 15 workstations.
3. In August the MMLT, the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust, holds an event called the Festival of the Wild Child, designed to attract youth to experience the natural world at High Lonesome, one of their wildlife sanctuaries. MVFN once again presented the Pollinator Path, showing the many types of pollinators that exist in the wild. More than 150 young people and families enjoyed this short jaunt through the meadow.
4. The fall component of the Monarch program has been altered by the recent declaration of the Monarch as an Endangered species, limiting our ability to bring full classroom release kits into the schools, since they can no longer be bred in captivity. This year we were able to supply only two larvae per school, taken from the wilds directly to the classroom. We will continue to tell the Monarch story, its migration, hibernation and threatened population.
5. The report on the Ontario Youth Summit summer camp below was submitted by the program coordinator Nick DeBoer. For several years MVFN has been sponsoring local youth to the Youth Summit for Mother Earth This program has fit in very well with the mandate for education and MVFN has sponsored very excellent candidates to this program. In 2025, Ontario Nature, in partnership with the Indigenous Community, changed the fee structure and as a result there was a major increase in the cost to sponsor a student. In this new 3 tier fee structure, MVFN would need to participate at the top tier in order to send a youth from our area to the Summit. The committee decided to take a more in depth look into the Ontario Nature program to evaluate what the program was providing to the youth and if this would be good value for the investment. The committee also felt more information was required to better understand the various learning sessions that the youth were being given.



The committee recommended to the Board that MVFN should take a pass on sponsoring any student for 2025 and re-evaluate the program again in 2026.

Submitted by Bob Smith for the Environmental Education Committee...Cate Arbour, Kathleen Teahan, Brenda Boyd, Scott Hortop, Karen Thompson.



# MVCA Kintail Christmas 2025

Every December many MVFN Christmas Elves volunteer to present some activities for children of all ages at the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority's (MVCA) annual Family Kintail Country Christmas, held at the Mill of Kintail Conversation area. MVFN has a close relationship with MVCA, as we use their facilities at the Mill of Kintail for our Young Naturalists Program, our Board of Directors monthly meetings, and office storage space.

18 MVFN members kindly volunteered to help with this event this year! These MVFN Christmas Elves had a lot of fun helping the children create their Christmas nature crafts, sending the kids out on a Nature Scavenger Hunt (with a small prize if completed), serving cider and chatting with the parents.

A special thanks to Lucy Carleton for her creative ideas for the crafts and scavenger hunt, gathering all the material needed and organizing us all!

Submitted by Brenda Boyd





# Nature Talks Committee Report for 2025

The Nature Talks Team is involved in presenting and planning our monthly Nature Talks. The members of our committee are: Chris Baburek, Victoria Miller, Anne Range, Mary Lumsden, and Brian Gillespie.

Members of our IT team are Heather Leong, Denis Gallant, and George Yaremchuk. Every month they set up the audio/visual equipment and run the “tech” part of our Nature Talks. They are responsible for sound, on screen presentations and video recordings. We truly appreciate their hard work and dedication to help the meetings run smoothly.

From January 2025 to May our theme was “Floating Through Nature”. In September the theme became “Celebrating Our Canadian Nature”.

In 2025 the Nature Talks Program featured the following speakers:

January 16- Jonathon Balcombe – What a Fish Knows

February 20 – Members’ Night and AGM -Anne Range -Bruce Peninsula Bifd Observatory and Iain Wilkes – Carleton Place Bird Count

March 20 – Marlis Butcher – Remote Qausuittuq National Park in the Canadian Arctic

April 17 – Spring Gathering – Dr. Joseph Northrop -Polar Bear Research

May 15 – Don Scallen – Native OntarioTrees

September 18 – Alberto Suarez Estaban – Nature’s Apprentice Farm – Can Agriculture Help Biodiversity

October 16 – Rick Scholes – Backyard Astronomy – Looking Up in Wonder

November 20 – Lewis Williams – Exploring Canada’s Wild Places by Boot and Paddle

We owe a big thanks to the following members for their faithful and continued support: Ken Allison- Nature Notebook; Suzanne Rebetz and the Social committee for providing refreshments; Rob Longair and Leslie Williamson for thoughtfully introducing our speakers; Leslie Williamson and Bill Pratt for preparing Thank You packages and cards for our speakers; Victoria Miller for thanking the speakers; Art Solomonian for handling Mailchimp duties; John Blais and the Board of Directors for providing honoraria for presenters and for Nature Team expenses.

In April the Team will begin planning for 2026/2027 Nature Talks. We are looking to add new members to the Team and IT group.

Submitted by Brian Gillespie.

Alberto Suarez Estaban



Marlis Butcher



# Outings Committee Report for 2025

The outings committee was comprised of John Grierson, Nancy Young and Gretta Bradley. The committee organized three outings for the 2025 summer-fall season.

## **Paddle in the Appleton Wetlands Saturday, July 5<sup>th</sup>**

In order to access the wetlands above the Queen St. Bridge in Almonte and the inlets adjacent to the Mississippi River, participants entered the river at the Almonte Fairgrounds. As the group made its way up the river in the direction of Appleton, group leader Nancy Young, pointed out the trees, plants, invasive species, birds and animals. People used nature apps to identify various shoreline species while Nancy gave additional information beyond identification. When we reached the inlet, we sat quietly in our canoes, and kayaks while Nancy explained why a Silver Maple wetland is different from other wetlands and discussed the health of the wetland following the building of the weir at Enerdu Project in this area of scientific interest. The outing was fully subscribed.

## **Hike on Linda's Loop Saturday, September 13**

Jeff Priest and his wife Laura led this hike along a section of the Rideau Trail known as Linda's Loop. Jeff and Laura had meticulously planned this outing to ensure our members had the best possible experience. Although both Jeff and Laura were very knowledgeable about the species encountered on this property on Gull Lake near Ardoch, Laura also pointed out the medicinal value of some of the plants. They have offered to lead other hikes in this area.



## **Night Sky Experience at the Fred Lossing Observatory at the Mill of Kintail Friday, October 24**

This outing was affected by the Blue Jays playing in the World Series. Initially, there were 36 people signed up, but only 10 people came out on the night of the event. Rick Scholes gave a tour of the facility, opening two of the three telescopes.

Gretta Bradley, Outings Committee

Gretta has managed a very successful outings committee for the last two seasons with interesting events and good attendance. She stepped back from the role in October and has announced her departure at the last two meetings but to date no one has stepped in to fill the position. We welcome contact from members interested in leading this group.

# Paddling Committee Report for 2025

The 2025 Paddle season was very successful, with eight trips logged.

We opened on May 25 with a very special trip up Constance Creek led by Andrea McCardy. The route is only available for a brief period when the Spring runoff in the Ottawa River subsides enough to allow small vessels to navigate safely, and the creek itself is still flooded.

In early June, John Willis led a popular trip on the Mississippi River upriver from Blakney.

Our second June trip was really special. We celebrated National Canoe Day on the Rideau Canal in the Nation's Capital. Arn and Janet Snyder hosted us at their beautiful property on the Rideau Canal, and arranged for the group to navigate the Hartwell locks then return to their place for a social gathering.



July found us on Bennett Lake, which we haven't explored for awhile, led by Rachel Collishaw and Anne Rimes.



Our second July trip was on Izatt Lake with John Willis. Again, Izatt is on our list, but we haven't been on it for awhile.

Pete MacEwen led a trip from Lanark Village to Kerr Lake on the Clyde in early August, and Kathy Pilon made her debut trip as a leader on the Mississippi River downstream from Pakenham. We don't normally go fishing on our day trips, but John Willis hooked a big one on this trip! We have no photo evidence, so you will need to ask John about it when you see him.

## Fall Camp

Our Fall Camp was booked for Sept 5 through 8th . An advance team went up on the 4th to set up the camp including the renovated tarp that had been damaged by wind last year. (Thanks John Grierson!) They were greeted by one of the sites and the road under water. Not to be deterred they went about setting up the huge shelter that was to be our home for the next three days.

On Friday, they woke up to temperatures below freezing and forecasts of 80km winds and heavy rain. With thoughts of the damage that weather had caused in the area earlier in the summer, Pete MacEwen made the right call. He was able to reach us back in Almonte in time to stop us from heading out. The emergency communication system went off perfectly, and we were able to reach all campers in time. Only one had headed out, and she detoured to another campsite.

We wrapped up the season with another new route - heading up the Madawaska River from a point just past Calabogie toward Norcan Lake, led by John Grierson. The successful day concluded with a gathering in the park back in Calabogie for pot luck snacks.

My profound thanks to the committee of John Willis, John Grierson and Pete MacEwen, and all of the leaders.

The call is already out for leaders for next season. Don't be shy!

Art Solomonian, Chair Paddle Committee

# Publicity Report 2025

The Publicity Committee is pleased to report on a successful year of outreach and engagement. The Spring Gathering 2025 was well attended and highly successful, featuring an engaging presentation by Dr. Joseph Northrup on polar bears that was greatly appreciated by members and guests. In March 2025, the committee also represented MVFN at Earthfest, helping to promote awareness and connect with the broader community. The Volunteer Appreciation 2025 event was held at the Mill of Kintail on November 8 and provided a meaningful opportunity to recognize and thank those who generously give their time and energy.

We sincerely appreciate all our volunteers—volunteering is not only vital to the work we do, but also a wonderful way to serve the community while meeting new people.

Submitted by  
Louise Beckinsale  
Publicity Chair



## Spring Gathering Report 2025

MVFN Spring Gathering — Highlights (April 17, 2025)

MVFN hosted its annual Spring Gathering featuring Dr. Joseph Northrup's talk, "Polar Bears of Southern Hudson Bay." The evening included an opening Arctic-themed video by Bill Pratt with music by Ian Douglas (performed by the Raintree Earth Ensemble), a light lunch by the Almonte Civitan Club, information stations, social time, and a raffle supporting the Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary. The event was emceed by Brian Gillespie, with Rob Longair introducing the speaker.



Key takeaways from the talk:

The Arctic is warming ~4x faster than the rest of the world; summer sea ice could be largely gone by 2050.

Polar bears depend on sea ice for hunting and survival; the Hudson Bay ice season is ~3 weeks shorter than in the 1980s.

Reduced ice time means longer fasting on land—especially risky for pregnant females that may fast up to 8 months.

Research shows declining condition: smaller/lighter bears, cub weights down nearly 50% (1980s to 2000s), and about a 20% population decline (2011–2016) in the Southern Hudson Bay group.

More time on land increases human–bear conflicts, often around landfills; communities are improving waste management to reduce attraction.

Dr. Northrup emphasized that protecting polar bears ultimately depends on addressing climate change. MVFN thanked organizers including Louise Beckinsale and Sylvia Miller.

Information supplied by Chris Baburek

# Young Naturalists Program – 2025



## Overview of membership numbers:

Winter/Spring 2025: We had 15 participants in the early session, and 15 participants in the later session, for a total of 30 participants.

Fall 2025: We have 16 participants in the early session, and 15 participants in the later session, for a total of 31 participants.

## February 2025

For this session we explored the topic of **Animal Scat**. We talked about being animal detectives and what types of things we can learn from studying scat. We then discussed how to identify the scat of various animal species that we might encounter in Eastern Ontario, including: mice, squirrels, rabbits, racoons, skunks, foxes, deer, wolves, bobcats and bears. We then headed outside and made use of the Mill's set of snowshoes to tromp around in the snow, while testing our identification skills. Once back inside, we created an artistic representation of scat using playdough and other craft supplies, with the purpose of working backwards from the scat to guess the animal.

## March 2025

Our topic this month was **Clouds**. We talked about how clouds are formed (touching briefly on the water cycle) and the different types of clouds and what they can tell us about the weather. Outside, we identified the types of clouds and engaged in a cloud themed game where each participant was a water droplet and we acted out the movements of the water cycle in cloud formation. Once back inside, participants had a choice of two crafts: a cloud finder wheel to help kids identify clouds when on the go, and creating representations of the different cloud types using cotton balls and paint. Most participants ended up doing both.

## April 2025

Our topic this month was **Dirt**, which you might imagine was a hit. We explored the idea of what dirt is made of, how it is formed, what the different types are and why it is important. We collected different types of dirt samples from around the Mill to see what they can tell us. We capped off our session by creating a messy dirt chart!

## May 2025

Our topic this month was a look at **the Snakes of Ontario**. There were a few participants in the program who were squeamish about snakes, so we aimed to make the topic as light as possible. We talked about the characteristics of snakes, how they help the environment, where they can be found, as well as going through the most common snakes in Ontario (we have 17 species of snakes that live in our province). Outside we aimed to find snake habitat (from a checklist) to help learn about the most likely areas to find snakes. We finished our session by making a snake hand puppet.

## June 2025

As a wrap up to the season we played a giant round of Predator and Prey for the first part of the session, before heading down to the stream study area to undertake a dipping survey. Everyone was provided with a net and a bucket to see what kinds of creatures they could find! As you are all probably aware, this activity is a bit of a fan favourite, and participants are generally pretty interested in showing their caregivers what they have found. To accommodate for this we asked that, if possible, pick up could happen from the stream study area, which was wildly successful with parents and siblings getting right into the water to try out the dipping activity.

## September 2025

Our topic this month was **Nature Journaling**. We talked about what a nature journal is, how to use one and the benefits of doing so. Each participant was provided with a small journal and we spent the remainder of the session practicing using them with a variety of different prompts and activities. These included creating a sound map, a guided journal walk and practicing with sit spots using the prompts, 'I notice', 'I wonder', and 'it reminds me of'. Local illustrator, and one of our wonderful volunteers, Sam Hamilton, was kind enough to share his own personal nature journal with participants and offer his perspective on the practice of noticing and creating art in nature.

## October 2025

Trying to tie our program into Halloween festivities, we decided to tackle **Bats: Nature's Nighttime Helpers** this month. We talked about bat characteristics, including food, habitat, flying and echolocation. We also talked about why they are important to our ecosystems. We played a true or false game to go through a couple of interesting facts about bats, and then headed outside to play an echolocation game (similar to Marco Polo) so that participants could try finding their 'prey' based only on sound. We then took a short hike and looked for bat habitat and roosting spots. Our craft for this session was to create clothespin bats that can hang upside down to mimic how they sleep.

## November 2025

**This month our topic was Animal Camouflage and Mimicry**. We talked about the differences between the two types of animal adaptations, how natural selection (or how we got here) plays a role, as well as the different types of camouflage and mimicry with examples of each type. We headed outside to play a game where the participants were divided into two teams, with each hiding differently coloured animals for the other team to locate (see photo example below). Our craft for this session was to create camouflaged monsters using a variety of natural materials.

## December 2025

The topic for December will be orienteering and learning how to use and make maps. I will be sending each participant home with a small compass, that can attach to their coat zippers to allow them to practice the skills they will have learned during the program.



Stephanie Cleland, Program Coordinator

# MVFN 2025 Annual Membership Report

The MVNF membership year begins 1 April and ends 31 March. Three months remain in the 25/26 Membership Year. However, the Membership List for 25/26 was most recently updated 31 December 2025. By that date there were 242 current memberships, including 2 complimentary family memberships for past Ontario Youth Summit sponsored candidates, 1 paid and 1 complimentary corporate, 2 perpetual and 48 New memberships for 25/26.

Membership Year	Memberships	Members
2025/26 (up to 31 Dec 2025)	<b>242</b> (236 paying, including 48 new 25/26 memberships; also 3 complimentary, 2 perpetual, family memberships)	<b>~351</b>
2024/25 (up to 31 Dec 2024)	<b>240</b> (207 paying, including 35 new 24/5 memberships; also 31 complimentary; 2 perpetual)	<b>~313</b>
2023/24	<b>217</b> (including two student YS '22 + 3 complimentary family YS'23; 35 new in 23/24)	<b>345</b>

As of 31 December 2025, 234 memberships will lapse on 1 April 2026

Call for MVFN membership renewal is scheduled for February 20, 2026.

NEW 26/27 Memberships will be accepted after 1 January 2026.

No candidates were selected for sponsorship by MVFN to attend the Ontario Nature Youth Summit for Mother Earth, held September 12-14, 2025. This was a result of Youth Summit Program modifications and the restructuring of fees. It was felt that there was neither time nor sufficient information available from Ontario Nature for the MVFN Board to properly evaluate Club support, nor to solicit candidate applications and selection.

MVFN Membership fees remain at \$35 per family (two adults and their children under 18 years); \$25 per individual; \$20 for seniors (65+); students \$10.

The auto-fill Membership Form with integrated PayPal function for collecting membership dues and donations (launched May 2018 on <https://mvfn.ca/membership>), remains the favoured choice for Membership Application and Renewal, and for donations to MVFN and to the Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary. Although E-transfer is a payment option ([etransfer@mvfn.ca](mailto:etransfer@mvfn.ca)) for transactions directed to MVFN, it is very important to indicate the purpose of the payment in the e-transfer message box. A completed MVFN Membership application is still required for successful registration of Membership.

The on-going MVFN Information Technology Renewal project will facilitate the selection and implementation of software which will allow automated membership confirmations, print-on-demand Membership cards, and donation receipts, among other data capture and manipulation technologies. MVFN Membership details will continue to be used on occasion to assist Committee Chairs in program planning and to identify volunteers interested in participating in MVFN administration and activities.

At this time, Membership cards continue to be issued to MVFN members and these indicate Membership expiration date. Letters of welcome and copies of Club brochures are sent to new members. Name tags of current MVFN members are available at MVFN functions

MVFN Promotion and information was made at manned booths during Carleton Place Earthfest on May 3, 2025, and at Mississippi Mills Community Open House September 12, 2025. Both events were well attended.

The 2025/26 Membership Committee consists of Sylvia Miller (Chair), with technical support from George Yaremchuk, and assistance from Louise Beckinsale, Patty Waters, and Brenda Boyd.

Submitted by Sylvia Miller

# Financial Reports 2025

## MVFN FY2025 FINANCIAL SUMMARY REPORT

Sheet 1 of 4

### RECONCILIATION

ITEM	AMOUNTS	NOTES
<b>QUICKEN MAIN LEDGER CLOSING BAL. PER FY2024 ANNUAL REPORT</b>	<b>44,632.37</b>	Last year's reported closing balance in Quicken with new balance calculated by voiding stale dated cheques
CHEQUE #544, 1-MAY-2024 DECLARED STALE AT FY2025 YEAR END	70.00	
CHEQUE #571, 17-OCT-2024 DECLARED STALE FY2025 YEAR END	150.00	
CHEQUE #559, 3-SEP-2024 DECLARED STALE FY2025 YEAR END	240.00	
<b>REVISED QUICKEN MAIN LEDGER CLOSING BALANCE FY2024</b>	<b>45,092.37</b>	
↓		
UNCASHED CHEQUE AT YEAR END, #574, CASHED 3-JAN-25	248.00	Further adjustments to Quicken FY 2024 closing balance to reconcile with BMO closing balance
UNCASHED CHEQUE AT YEAR END, #577, CASHED 3-MAR-25	90.39	
DELAYED BANK DEPOSITS AT FY2024 YEAR END	-254.34	
<b>BANK CLOSING BALANCE DEC 31, 2024</b>	<b>45,176.42</b>	
↓		
<b>BANK OPENING BALANCE JAN 1, 2025</b>	<b>45,176.42</b>	BMO FY2025 closing balance calculated from opening balance and all bank transactions
CLEARED BANK INCOME ENTRIES FY2025	27,248.64	
CLEARED BANK EXPENSE ENTRIES FY2025	-28,922.78	
<b>BANK CLOSING BALANCE FY2025</b>	<b>43,502.28</b>	
↓		
UNCASHED CHEQUE AT YEAR END, #651	-50.00	Quicken FY2025 closing balance calculated from BMO closing balance and outstanding transactions at FY2025 year end
UNCASHED CHEQUE AT YEAR END, #664	-50.00	
UNCASHED CHEQUE AT YEAR END, #665	-100.00	
UNCASHED CHEQUE AT YEAR END, #682	-264.17	
UNCASHED CHEQUE AT YEAR END, #683	-112.98	
UNCASHED CHEQUE AT YEAR END, #684	-1,404.88	
<b>QUICKEN MAIN LEDGER CLOSING BALANCE FY2025</b>	<b>41,520.25</b>	
NATURE TALKS ADMISSIONS & MEMBERSHIPS, FY2025, FROM PETTY CASH	60.00	Amount added to petty cash in FY2025
<b>TOTAL QUICKEN CLOSING BALANCE DEC 31, 2025</b>	<b>41,580.25</b>	
↓		
<b>CHECK</b>		This is a double check calculation for Quicken closing balance using Quicken income and expense totals
<b>REVISED QUICKEN CLOSING BALANCE FY2024 FROM ABOVE</b>	<b>45,092.37</b>	
QUICKEN TOTAL INCOME FY2025 (Sheet 2 of this report)	25,635.09	
QUICKEN TOTAL EXPENSES FY2025 (Sheet 3 of this report)	-29,147.21	
<b>QUICKEN CLOSING BALANCE DEC 31, 2025</b>	<b>41,580.25</b>	

Note: ↓ Arrow means calculation of summation continues

**MVFN FY2025 FINANCIAL SUMMARY REPORT**

**INCOME**

<b>11R - Membership Committee</b>		
11R - Membership Committee:Membership Sales		6,095.00
<b>TOTAL 11R - Membership Committee</b>		<b>6,095.00</b>
<b>12R - Nature Talks Committee</b>		
12R - Nature Talks Committee:Visitor Admission		145.00
<b>TOTAL 12R - Nature Talks Committee</b>		<b>145.00</b>
<b>13R - Canoeing &amp; Kayaking Outings</b>		
13R - Canoeing & Kayaking Outings:Member Payment		1,078.00
13R - Canoeing & Kayaking Outings:Water Walker Event		2,592.34
<b>TOTAL 13R - Canoeing &amp; Kayaking Outings</b>		<b>3,670.34</b>
<b>17R - Young Naturalists</b>		
17R - Young Naturalists:Donations, Young Naturalists		65.00
17R - Young Naturalists:Fees, Young Naturalists		5,180.00
<b>TOTAL 17R - Young Naturalists</b>		<b>5,245.00</b>
<b>18R - Conservation &amp; Habitat</b>		
18R - Conservation & Habitat:Donations, Conservation & Habitat		145.00
18R - Conservation & Habitat:Sales, Bird Houses - Cons. & Hab.		75.00
<b>TOTAL 18R - Conservation &amp; Habitat</b>		<b>220.00</b>
<b>19R - Other Programs</b>		
19R - Other Programs:Kintail Christmas Donations		85.75
<b>TOTAL 19R - Other Programs</b>		<b>85.75</b>
<b>20R - Spring Gathering</b>		
20R - Spring Gathering:Ticket Sales, Spring Gathering		3,500.00
<b>TOTAL 20R - Spring Gathering</b>		<b>3,500.00</b>
<b>23R - General Donations</b>		
23R - General Donations:General Donations		2,611.00
<b>TOTAL 23R - General Donations</b>		<b>2,611.00</b>
<b>24R- Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund</b>		
24R- Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund:Donations, Bursary Fund		810.00
24R- Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund:Elizabeth Kelly Foundation		2,000.00
24R- Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund:OCCU Interest		688.00
24R- Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund:Spring Gathering Raffle		565.00
<b>TOTAL 24R- Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund</b>		<b>4,063.00</b>

**TOTAL INCOME      \$25,635.09**

**EXPENSES**

<b>11E - Membership Expenses</b>		
11E - Membership Expenses:Postage		210.18
11E - Membership Expenses:Supplies		192.60
<b>TOTAL 11E - Membership Expenses</b>		<b>402.78</b>
<b>12E -Nature Talks Committee</b>		
12E -Nature Talks Committee:Cards & Gifts		299.20
12E -Nature Talks Committee:Honorarium		900.00
12E -Nature Talks Committee:Postage		46.97
12E -Nature Talks Committee:Prizes		150.00
12E -Nature Talks Committee:Speaker Dinner & Lodging		665.29
<b>TOTAL 12E -Nature Talks Committee</b>		<b>2,061.46</b>
<b>12EA - Birding Committee</b>		
12EA - Birding Committee:Bird Seed for Feeders		205.62
<b>TOTAL 12EA - Birding Committee</b>		<b>205.62</b>

- expenses continued next page

**EXPENSES - cont'd**

<b>13E - Canoeing &amp; Kayaking Outings</b>		
13E - Canoeing & Kayaking Outings:Emergency Equipment		90.95
13E - Canoeing & Kayaking Outings:Other Expenses		919.38
13E - Canoeing & Kayaking Outings:Special Occasion Insurance		27.00
13E - Canoeing & Kayaking Outings:Use of Facilities Fees		671.33
13E - Canoeing & Kayaking Outings:Water Walker Festival		966.86
	<b>TOTAL 13E - Canoeing &amp; Kayaking Outings</b>	<b>2,675.52</b>
<b>16E - Environmental Education</b>		
16E - Environmental Education:Festival of the Wild Child		500.00
16E - Environmental Education:Monarch Program		770.38
16E - Environmental Education:Water Festival		1,000.00
16E - Environmental Education:Youth Summit		900.00
	<b>TOTAL 16E - Environmental Education</b>	<b>3,170.38</b>
<b>17E - Young Naturalists</b>		
17E - Young Naturalists:Facility Rent		355.92
17E - Young Naturalists:Stipend		4,650.00
17E - Young Naturalists:Supplies		800.44
	<b>TOTAL 17E - Young Naturalists</b>	<b>5,806.36</b>
<b>18E - Conservation and Habitat</b>		
18E - Conservation and Habitat:Loon Survey		400.00
18E - Conservation and Habitat:Other		70.50
	<b>TOTAL 18E - Conservation and Habitat</b>	<b>470.50</b>
<b>19E - Other Programs</b>		
19E - Other Programs:Mill of Kintail Christmas		262.28
	<b>TOTAL 19E - Other Programs</b>	<b>262.28</b>
<b>20E - Spring Gathering</b>		
20E - Spring Gathering:Guest Speaker		500.00
20E - Spring Gathering:Meals		2,727.28
20E - Spring Gathering:Speaker Gift		24.85
20E - Spring Gathering:Supplies		236.22
	<b>TOTAL 20E - Spring Gathering</b>	<b>3,488.35</b>
<b>21E - Administration</b>		
21E - Administration:Facility Rent		1,048.96
21E - Administration:Insurance		1,411.56
21E - Administration:Memberships - Other Orgs		248.00
21E - Administration:Paypal Fees		373.16
21E - Administration:Postage & Box Rental		395.90
21E - Administration:Printing Costs		313.01
21E - Administration:Software		269.66
21E - Administration:Supplies		107.73
21E - Administration:Website		488.95
21E - Administration:Zoom Meetings		291.36
	<b>TOTAL 21E - Administration</b>	<b>4,948.29</b>
<b>22E - Miscellaneous</b>		
22E - Miscellaneous:Volunteer Appreciation Party		427.86
	<b>TOTAL 22E - Miscellaneous</b>	<b>427.86</b>
<b>24E - Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund</b>		
24E - Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund:1st Year Bursary		3,000.00
24E - Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund:2nd Year Bursary		2,000.00
24E - Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund:Advertising		227.81
	<b>TOTAL 24E - Cliff Bennett Nature Bursary Fund</b>	<b>5,227.81</b>

**TOTAL OUTFLOWS \$29,147.21**

**SURPLUS/LOSS -\$3,512.12**

**Bursary Funds Held in Bank of Montreal Bank Account**

Fiscal Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022	2023	2024	2025
Opening Balance	2,814.00	-201.00	-931.40	4,175.00	3,177.00	3,436.79	1,365.06
Income	985.00	1,857.00	10,514.50	1,002.00	4,505.00	1,093.00	1,498.00
Elizabeth Kelly Foundation							2,000.00
Spring Gathering						2,080.48	565.00
Transfer to OCCU						-5,000.00	
Expenditures	-4,000.00	-2,587.40	-5,408.10	-2,000.00	-4,245.21	-245.21	-5,227.81
Closing Balance	-201.00	-931.40	4,175.00	3,177.00	3,436.79	1,365.06	200.25

**MVFN Nature Bursary Endowment Fund at Ottawa Community Foundation**

Statement Date	31-Dec-20	30-Nov-21	31-Dec-22	31-Dec-23	30-Sep-24	31-Dec-24	30-Sep-25
Contributed Capital	13,560.66	13,560.66	13,560.66	13,560.66	13,560.66		
Beginning Balance						15,843.85	22,516.91
Donations						5,000.00	
Increase/Decrease in Capital	1,649.62	1,862.30	3,517.45	1,845.37	2,283.19		
Total Invested	15,210.28	15,422.96	17,078.11	15,406.03	15,843.85		
Investment Activity	1,048.77	1,858.92	-798.76	746.58	1,756.58	2,661.18	2,172.07
Service Fee	-219.09	-167.23	-231.32	-117.36	-178.52	-325.12	-257.29
Disbursements	-617.00	-616.00	-642.00	-649.00	-663.00	-663.00	-688.00
Balance	15,422.96	16,498.65	15,406.03	15,386.25	16,758.91	22,516.91	23,743.69

**Total Value of Bursary Funds (Bank of Montreal plus Ottawa Community Fund)**

**\$23,943.94**

**Note on Endowment Funds**

According to the agreement with the Ottawa Community Foundation which manages the Bursary Fund for MVFN, the fund is not an investment with liquid capital but is legally an “endowment fund”.

In Canada, an endowment fund is essentially a "forever fund" for a charity or non-profit. It is a pool of donated money that is invested to generate income, ensuring the organization has a stable source of funding for decades to come, rather than relying solely on year-to-year donations.

The core principle is that the **principal** (the original donation) remains untouched. Only the **income** (interest or investment returns) is spent on the charity’s mission. This allows the gift to support a cause in perpetuity (forever).

Submitted by John Blais, Chair of Finance

# Financial Review 2025

Report on Financial Statements of the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists

January 28, 2026

I have reviewed the financial statements for the period January 1 to December 31, 2025. My review included:

- An overview of the accounting system
- A review of the bank statements to verify the reconciliation of the beginning and closing bank balance to the beginning and closing bank balance in the books of the MVFN
- Tracing the bank account entries to the revenue and expense accounts
- Tracing the revenue and expense account totals to the financial statements.

In addition, my review included:

- Verifying compliance of the program area income and expenditures as compared with the budgets approved by the Board of Directors
- A review of the mechanisms for payment of expenditures.

Based upon the above, the financial statements of the MVFN reflect the operations of the MVFN for the period January 1 to December 31, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

*Patricia Larkin*

Patricia Larkin, PhD

# 2025 Board of Directors

<b>President: Vacant</b>	president@mvfn.ca
<b>First Vice-President: Paul Frigon</b>	firstvicepresident@mvfn.ca
<b>Second Vice-President: John Grieson</b>	
<b>Past President: Val Wilkinson</b>	pastpresident@mvfn.ca
<b>Treasurer: Peter Moller</b>	treasurer@mvfn.ca
<b>Secretary: Brenda Boyd</b>	secretary@mvfn.ca
<b>Chair of Nature Talks: Brian Gillespie</b>	naturetalks@mvfn.ca
<b>Chair of Finance: John Blais</b>	finance@mvfn.ca
<b>Chair of Publicity: Louise Beckinsale</b>	publicity@mvfn.ca
<b>Chair of Environmental Education: Bob Smith</b>	environmentaleducation@mvfn.ca
<b>Chair of Conservation and Habitat: Vacant</b>	
<b>Chair of Membership: Sylvia Miller</b>	membership@mvfn.ca
<b>Director at Large: Cliff Bennett</b>	directoratlarge@mvfn.ca
<b>Director at Large: Pete MacEwen</b>	directoratlarge@mvfn.ca
<b>Recording Secretary for the Board: Beverly Blais</b>	



**Thank you to all the members who supplied photographs for this report**



# Contact Us



General inquiries:

[info@mvfn.ca](mailto:info@mvfn.ca)

Young Naturalists Registration:

[mvfnyoungnaturalists@mvfn.ca](mailto:mvfnyoungnaturalists@mvfn.ca)

Membership: [membership@mvfn.ca](mailto:membership@mvfn.ca)

Website: [webmaster@mvfn.ca](mailto:webmaster@mvfn.ca)



[www.mvfn.ca](http://www.mvfn.ca)



Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists

P.O. Box 1617,

Almonte, Ontario, K0A 1A0

In Person:

**3rd Thursday of January, February,**

**March, April, May, September,**

**October and November**

Doors open at 6:30 pm

Almonte United Church

106 Elgin St., Almonte, ON