

# The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

## 2012-2013 Annual Reports

### Awards Committee

Eleanor Zurbrigg, Chair

The Awards Committee manages the process to annually recognize those OFNC members and other qualified persons who, by virtue of their efforts and talents, are deserving of special recognition. In 2013, nominations were received and evaluated (see awards criteria <http://www.ofnc.ca/awards.php>), seven nominations were recommended to Council for approval, and biographies were written for publication in the Club's journals. The awards were presented at the annual Soiree in April. The recipients' names, type of award (in brackets) and rationale for recognition follow below:

- Dr. J. Bruce Falls (Honorary Member) – For his immense contribution to the investigation, documentation and protection of natural features and landscapes in Ontario and throughout Canada.
- Peter Hall (Honorary Member) – For his work on butterflies among other species, the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and biodiversity conservation, and for over 30 years of service to the Club.
- Jay Fitzsimmons (Member of the Year) – For his work managing the electronic publishing of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* (CFN) and also for his enthusiastic and far-reaching promotion of the journal.
- Connie Clark (George McGee Service) – For over 10 years of active service with the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, leading walks for the Club, committee work and writing *Trail & Landscape* articles.
- David Seburn (Conservation Award - Member) – For significant efforts for over a decade in turtle research and conservation in the Ottawa area.
- Biodiversity Conservancy International and the National Capital Commission (Conservation Award - Non-Member): PT Dang (President BCI), Eva Katic (NCC) – For the sand dune conservation project at the Pinhey Forest in Ottawa.
- Diane Lepage (Anne Hanes Natural History Award) – For her independent study of and publication in *Trail & Landscape* on the moths of the Larose Forest.

Committee members: Irwin Brodo, Julia Cipriani, Christine Hanrahan, Ann MacKenzie

### Birds Committee

Chris Traynor, Chair

The Birds Committee organized the Fall Bird Count (2012) and along with the Club des Ornithologues de l'Outaouais participated in the 2012 Christmas Bird Count. The Peregrine Falcon Watch 2013 had a mixed season. The pair at the Data Center had a successful year fledging their one chick. However, once again, the downtown pair's eggs did not hatch. The Bird Record Subcommittee met during the year to review rare bird reports and is putting the finishing touches on a new checklist for Ottawa. This project was stalled by the passing of long-time committee member

Gordon Pringle who was a key player in the development of the checklist. Members of the committee were active as volunteers with the very successful BirdLife International Congress held in Ottawa in the summer of 2013. Committee members are also involved in bringing the Ontario Field Ornithologist's Annual Conference to Ottawa for 2014. The committee continues to operate a series of bird feeders throughout the Ottawa Greenbelt. The committee is also in discussion with FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program) to place a chapter in Ottawa. This program deals with how to avoid the damage caused by bird/window collisions.

## **Conservation Committee**

### **Owen Clarkin, Chair**

The OFNC conservation committee was officially re-activated in late 2012, following a time of hiatus. In the past year, the CC has tackled a range of conservation issues in Ontario. We have written several letters on conservation matters, such as the issue of cottage lease extensions in Algonquin Park, the issue of overly enthusiastic mowing practices of meadow areas by the municipal authorities, and a plan to expand a hydro dam in the town of Almonte downstream from the sensitive Appleton Wetland ANSI. Other similar projects have been initiated such as the impact of housecat predation on wildlife, the implications of a possible oil spill from rail or pipelines on our local ecosystems, the turtles being stranded on the road in the vicinity of Mud Lake and a bioblitz near a proposed landfill site near Carlsbad Springs.

A major focus of the new chair is flora conservation, and to this end a few "personal" projects have been initiated. These include: public walks with emphasis on the ecology of and the how-to of plant identification, and the current status of uncommon, rare, or declining native plants in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec. In this vein, an inventory of the flora of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden has been initiated and is expected to be completed late 2013 or early 2014.

Many other talented and dedicated members of the OFNC CC continue to work on their own personal conservation projects. A committee meeting will be held in late 2013 to brainstorm about increasing CC member engagement, and new approaches to preserving the ecosystems and indigenous species of our region.

## **Education and Publicity Committee**

### **Lynn Ovenden, Chair**

The primary duty of this committee is to make the Club, as well as natural history, known to the community. It is responsible for the club's publicity, providing speakers/walks as requested by outside groups, considering special educational projects, assisting with membership drives and coordinating the sale of club materials.

Committee members have diverse skills. We make things and sell them, we write, we edit, we create displays and fly the club banner at local events, we ask people to give nature talks. We have not excelled at PR but there is hope: a new member of the committee will focus on publicizing OFNC events and accomplishments. During the past year, the committee experienced a change in chair, lost a few valued members and gained some new ones. We met 6 times, about every two months.

2012 was a big year for sales of club materials such as bird and butterfly checklists, lanyards, 10X loupes and books. Five new creations bear the club logo: a banner, a bookmark, an OFNC sign atop the entryway sign to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, a lanyard and a lens-wipe (the latest toy). For next year we are considering how to standardize the use of OFNC's logo and brand across many club activities.

We brought OFNC displays to the Soiree in April, the Lac Deschenes Bird Fair at Andrew Haydon Park in May and an Environment Fair at Place Vincent Massey in June. New this year was a regional selection process for OFNC's sponsorship of a youth who attended Ontario Nature's Youth Summit in September.

Many club members share their natural history expertise with other community groups. We especially thank the generous souls who said "yes" to requests made directly to OFNC:

- Dave Moore and Bev McBride led a nature walk to Mud Lake for visitors from Friendship Force in June. Dave also presented a birding talk to the Seniors Program at the Unitarian Church in September.
- Eleanor Thomson gave a nature talk to the women's group at the Lord Lansdowne Residence.
- Joan Harvey visited Uplands Catholic School to advise the students about extending their butterfly garden.
- Jeff Skevington and Carolyn Callaghan were judges for the OFNC special awards at the Ottawa Regional Science Fair.

## **Excursions and Lectures Committee**

**Julia Cipriani, Committee Member**

Over the course of 2013, the excursions and lectures committee coordinated 40 hikes, 5 workshops, 9 monthly meetings, the annual awards celebration and the annual business meeting. In addition to bringing back many tried and true events and leaders, several new events were promoted.

The hikes and workshops covered a wide breadth of topics, including: general natural history (6), birds (15), insects (8), spiders (1), plants (8), amphibians and reptiles (3), mammals (1), fish (1), nature photography (1), lichens (1) and fungi (1). Highlights included workshops on invasive plants, lichens, nature photography, arthropods of your home and crane flies, as well as a tour of our national insect collection, an overnight trip to the Kazabazua sand-plain, our annual butterfly count and an exploration of Brewer Pond life. Monthly meetings continued to be held in the Museum of Nature and included talks on birds (5), mammals (1), conservation (1), canoeing (1) and salamanders (1). Committee members included Rob Alvo, Holly Bickerton, Julia Cipriani, Hume Douglas, Jakob Mueller and Jeff Skevington (chair). If you have any new ideas for events or would like to be a leader, please contact Jeff ([jhskevington@gmail.com](mailto:jhskevington@gmail.com)) or other members of the committee.

## **Finance Committee**

**Barbara Chouinard, Chair**

As a result of the major changes to the OFNC's financial reporting systems over the last couple of years, Council continues to benefit from the now smoothly running financial reporting system. With the revision of the OFNC's detailed chart of accounts last year, information is now more accurate and detailed with respect to the club's revenues and expenditures. The financial reports provided by the OFNC Treasurer several times a year are a useful tool for Council and committees.

The Finance Committee met several times during the 2012/2013 fiscal year to discuss several issues. In March, the Finance Committee proposed a new methodology in allocating investment income. This was done to make the allocation of interest income less complicated at year end. This new methodology was approved by Council, the Camfield Family and the OFNC's auditor.

In May, the Finance Committee was asked to update Council on the current status of honoraria in the OFNC. This information was presented to Council, and a motion was made to resume the honorarium paid to the CFN Manager. This motion was passed by Council.

Lastly, in September, the 2014 budget discussions resulted in a motion to provide FWG with their 2013 budgeted funds. However, in the future, no funds will be transferred to FWG without prior approval through the budgetary process. This is to bring FWG in line with all the other OFNC committees. Budgets are determined by each respective committee, and Council approves the budget. Payment is then made upon approved expenses against the budget. This process provides greater transparency and allows for the timely matching of revenues and expenses.

The club is continuing to run a deficit though it is projected to be lower this year than in recent years. With an improved financial reporting system, it is easier to identify the issues. There are areas that the Finance Committee intends to review in the near future for Council's consideration. This would include issues such as the uncollectible subscriptions invoices, the decrease in OFNC membership numbers, the possible restriction of access to the electronic CFN to only paid members and the declining CFN institutions subscription revenue.

## **Fletcher Wildlife Garden**

**Barry Cottam, Committee Member**

This has been a busy year for the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. All of the usual activities have proceeded apace, along with a number of other activities, events and achievements. Many of these have involved other groups. Several subcommittees have worked on a number of changes to how things get done at the FWG. This report presents highlights of these as they occurred throughout the year.

Our year kicked off on April 7 with a Spring Fling, inspired by the successful end-of-2012 potluck for volunteers. This was more than a social event, as group and habitat managers provided volunteers with work plans and the FWG treasurer gave an overview of the financial situation. On April 9, the first meeting in several years between Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and FWG representatives proved productive, with a number of issues being addressed. We have had a very positive working relationship with AAFC and continue to maintain this relationship through other means, such as the Central Experimental Farm Advisory Committee (CEFAC).

Shell grant: FWG's application for funding to dredge the pond and do related work, approved by council and AAFC, was not accepted by the Shell FuellingChange program. Further effort is in abeyance pending the results of an environmental assessment by Environment Canada.

FWG Volunteer Groups: The Butterfly Meadow group and the Friday morning group continued to expand in scope through the hard work of volunteers under the able direction of their managers. The Tuesday Invasive Species Group was much reduced in numbers and hours of operation in a take-stock year, trying to assess the value of its efforts in regard to DSV. This highly successful invasive plant is a limiting factor in our efforts to improve and maintain the habitats. Rather than attempting to cover the FWG as a whole, specific areas were targeted for intensive effort. Brush cutters were tested for effectiveness and AAFC mowed a couple of monocultural stands of DSV in July. Inventories and maps of invasive shrubs and trees are being prepared. The October annual meeting of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council provided, as in the past, useful information on both current research and attempts by other organizations to control invasives. The Monarch Way Station was the focus of milkweed planting work bees in June and September. Planting, DSV removal and development of the Bill Cody Fern Garden continued in the Ash Woods. A job description for Habitat Managers is in final stages of preparation. Outreach to potential volunteers through our membership in Volunteer Ottawa has been more consistent and successful this year.

Activities involving Outside Organizations: A number of organizations participated in special work projects and other events. These included two full days from the Stewardship Rangers, a return visit from PricewaterhouseCoopers, and 80 students from a Carleton University environmental studies class. Walks and tours were undertaken by several outside organizations, including the Canadian Wildlife Federation and the Ottawa Horticultural Society. The FWG was a site for the inaugural Ottawa Sustainability Tour, although we had more volunteers on hand as greeters than tour participants. A potentially useful liaison with a professor in the Carleton University Biology department was established. The OFNC Bug Day, held at the Interpretation Centre/Backyard Garden, was a roaring success.

Research: The FWG has been the object of new research this year. Researchers from the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste Marie and the University of Guelph Microbiology Department are conducting several experiments in attempts to understand the soil chemistry of a number of 'mystery' circles, found at various locations. These circles are characterized by a lack of DSV within and a perimeter of small, yellowed DSV plants, with normal DSV growth beyond. Even more significantly, the FWG is slated to be one of the test sites for the release in 2014 of larvae of the moth *Hypena opulenta* that feed on the leaves of DSV. Special notice must be given to completion this year of Renate Sander-Regier's PhD thesis on the FWG, "The Power of a Small Green Place: A case study of Ottawa's Fletcher Wildlife Garden."

Communications: The newsletter has been resurrected and revamped by our new editor; the photo galleries on PBase continue to be well received; the website is recovering from a loss of data; social media including Facebook and twitter provide further outreach.

Interpretation Centre: A job description was drawn up for the new role of Interpretation Centre manager. Two OFNC members volunteered and they started in September.

Finances and first budget: The annual plant sale, our major fundraising effort, was very successful again this year, raising about \$4000.00. While questions remain regarding the relationship between OFNC and FWG funds, recent attempts to clarify them have resulted in the first ever annual budget for the FWG.

Management: The management committee continues to operate with a rotating chair. This is working reasonably well in regard to month-to-month business. However, the roles of the chair and the MC and other matters such as longer-term planning and council's role with regard to the FWG are up for discussion. The lease and collaborative agreements between AAFC and the OFNC are to be renewed by April 1, 2014. Preliminary discussions between the parties have been positive. Our year wraps up with a fall potluck on November 24.

## Macoun Field Club Committee

Robert E. Lee, Chair

The Committee held one planning meeting ahead of the Macoun Club's start-up in September and put together the month-to-month program by telephone and e-mail. An up-to-date schedule and illustrated record of the weekly activities was maintained on its website ([macounfieldclub.ca](http://macounfieldclub.ca)). Committee members supervised or gave presentations at 19 indoor meetings and led 15 regular field trips during the school year; they also led another four special trips, two jointly with the OFNC and two with SOS Dunes (Pinhey Sand Dunes). Indoor sessions were held in the Fletcher Wildlife Garden's Interpretation Centre. Most field trips took place either at the Macoun Club's nature-study area in Stony Swamp or on private properties in Lanark County. The Committee produced issue no. 67 of the Club's annual publication (*The Little Bear*), and the seventh and eighth annual notebooks of sightings in the Stony Swamp study area (bound in hard cover), all for distribution to members.

## Membership Committee

Henry Steger, Chair

The distribution of the membership for 2013 on September 30, 2013 is shown in the table below, with the corresponding numbers for 2012 shown in brackets. "Others" represent, for the greatest part, affiliate organizations that receive complimentary copies of the Club's publications. The decrease in total membership of 28 continues a long-term overall trend but one that follows an average reduction of 21 per year during the period from 2006 to 2012. Local membership (within 50 km of Parliament Hill) decreased to 617 from 633 in 2013 and 2012, respectively.

	Canadian		U.S.A		Other		Total	
Individual	324	(351)	12	(13)	0	(0)	336	(364)
Family	288	(285)	0	(1)	1	(1)	289	(287)
Student*	11	(10)	0	(0)	0	(0)	11	(10)
T and L	2	(3)	0	(0)	0	(0)	2	(2)
Honorary	21	(21)	0	(0)	0	(0)	21	(21)
Life	45	(47)	1	(3)	1	(1)	49	(51)

Other	23	(23)	1	(0)	1	(1)	24	(24)
<b>TOTAL</b>	714	(740)	15	(17)	3	(3)	732	(760)

\*Student membership which was initiated in 2012 to encourage interest in natural history among high school and university students has remained consistent in 2012 and 2013.

## Publications Committee

**Daniel F. Brunton, Chair**

Publications Committee members in 2013 were Carolyn Callaghan, Paul Catling, Jay Fitzsimmons, Sandra Garland, Tony Gaston, Karen McLachlan Hamilton, William Halliday, Elizabeth Morton, Frank Pope, Jeff Saarela and Dan Brunton (chair). We met formally twice during the year to discuss a wide variety of issues and to provide advice and information to both the OFNC Council and to the editorial teams. A great number of informal communications were also conducted electronically amongst committee members on a variety of publication topics, primarily in regards to *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*.

The challenge of getting *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* back on schedule has been virtually achieved. This is the result of several years of tremendous effort by the current and former editorial teams. Editor-in-Chief Carolyn Callaghan has overseen the publication of five issues of the journal this year, 126(3) through 127(3). The final issue of the 2013 volume is to be posted and circulated within the first few weeks of 2014. With the journal entirely back on schedule, we expect the publication of four issues in 2014.

As many manuscripts had been received by October 2013 as had been received in all of 2012, which already had seen a 20% increase over recent years. We take this as confirmation of the journal's increasingly appeal for the appropriate and timely documentation of important field-oriented natural sciences research. Great strides have also been made by Journal Manager Jay Fitzsimmons and others in the unglamorous but critical area of publication production, with efficiencies achieved with indexing and improved printing turn-around times. Colour images continue to enhance the appearance of more papers than was possible in years past.

All in all, progress has been most encouraging. The full achievement of a 'normal' publication schedule for *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* will now allow us to put more focus on logistical and administrative improvements. That will simplify production and make life easier both for the members and subscribers receiving the journal and for the largely volunteer effort required to make these happen.

Editor Karen McLachlan Hamilton and her team produced the four issues of *Trail & Landscape* in their usual timely and efficiently manner. *Trail & Landscape* fulfills an important newsletter function and also continues to document important ecological information on the regional biodiversity and its conservation needs.

Discussions of a possible special publication addressing the biodiversity of an important Ottawa Valley natural area were initiated in 2013. This may proceed to the production of a stand-alone document in 2014.

## **Treasurer's Report**

**Ken Young, Treasurer**

Financial Position: At the time of writing, the Financial Statements have not been finalized. However, it appears that revenues will exceed expenses.

Insurance: This year, our insurance coverage was expanded to include Directors' & Officers coverage as well as Commercial General Liability.

Committee Budgets: This year more attention was paid to the preparation of the annual budget. As a result the budget presents a more comprehensive forecast of OFNC revenues and expenses than in the past.

Violetta Cszak Bequest: The Club received a bequest from Violetta Cszak. I have been appointed as executor of the estate. We are proceeding with the sale of her condominium, but in the current real estate market this is a slow process.

Routine Events: Most of the Treasurer's duties continue from one year to the next. They include:

- Filing the Charities Information Report with the Canada Revenue Agency;
- Preparing T4A returns for people receiving honoraria or contract fees from the Club;
- Obtaining Proof of Insurance certificates for Club events;
- Updating the Club's information with our bank, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and our online payments processor, PayPal;
- Depositing cheques received and writing cheques to pay expenses;
- Making financial reports to Council and Committees, such as for *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, the Seedathon, the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and the Macoun Field Club.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the assistance that I have received from Frank Pope, the past Treasurer, and Ann MacKenzie, who handles the investment activities of the Club.