

## **The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club**

### **2013-2014 Annual Committee 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 2014, nominations were received and evaluated (see awards criteria <http://www.ofnc.ca/awards.php>), three nominations were recommended to the Board of Directors for approval, and biographies were written for publication in the Club's journals and posting on the website. The awards were presented at the annual Awards Night in April. The recipients' names, type of award (in brackets) and rationale for recognition follow below:

- Mark Brenchley (Member of the Year) - For his creative and enthusiastic development of educational and promotional materials and promoting the OFNC at events.
- Karen McLachlan Hamilton (George McGee Service) – For over 12 years of dedicated service as editor of Trail & Landscape.
- Angelika Skevington (Mary Stuart Education Award) – For sharing her knowledge and wonder of nature with students at Huntley Centennial Public School in Carp, Ontario.

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

#### **Birds Committee** – Chris Traynor, Chair

The Birds Committee organized the 2013 Fall Bird Count and with the Club des Ornithologues de l'Outaouais, the 2013 Christmas Bird Count. Both events continue to be very popular. This year's Peregrine Falcon Watch was a success at the Heron Road site but once again the downtown pair did not produce any young. The Bird Records-sub Committee continues to work on a revised checklist of the Birds of Ottawa. The new Ottawa chapter of FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program) is in its first season of operation and has affiliation with the Birds Committee.

A very successful conference of the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) was held in Ottawa this fall with members of the Birds Committee being heavily involved. As well as organizing many aspects of the conference the committee members were very active as trip leaders. The committee continues to maintain a number of bird feeders in the Ottawa region.

#### **Conservation Committee** – Owen Clarkin, Chair

Two major activities occurred this year:

1. Gervais Property acquisition for permanent conservation:

In January 2014, we were alerted to a major conservation possibility: a property for sale along the Ottawa River with special karst geology, including the longest network of underwater caves found in Canada, and northerly examples of significant calcicolous flora. The committee

considered the features of the site and identified the Gervais Property near Pembroke as a significant natural history feature worthy of conservation. We recommended that the OFNC participate in its protection, drawing upon recently acquired bequest funds to do so. Following a review of the proposal with the evaluation process identified by a specially-assembled OFNC bequest committee, the OFNC Council approved the donation of \$200,000 to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The property has since been successfully acquired for conservation.

## 2. Launch of Annual Biothon program:

This year the committee launched what is intended to become an annual event, a year-long bioinventory ("bio-thon") of a significant natural area in the Ottawa region. The goals of this project are to acquire a thorough and reliable set of biodiversity data regarding a particular significant natural area and to engage the public into participation in natural history activities. We chose the Constance Bay area for our study site, and the event officially launched on the weekend of August 23-24. Working with the OFNC Events Committee, we have held several outings at the site, and others are planned for Constance Bay before the study period ends in August 2015. We have already collected a large amount of data, with hundreds of species observed.

A number of other projects are in progress or are planned thanks to our members which we will briefly mention. These include:

- turtle roadkill and population study along Roger Stevens Drive in Marlborough Forest, aimed at keeping populations healthy with the construction of fencing if necessary.
- daily turtle hatchling rescue at the Mud Lake along Cassels Street
- new strategies to prevent turtle nest site predation
- monitoring of populations of uncommon or declining native plants and naturalizing non-native species. This long-term project is occurring in the urban area (especially for naturalizing non-native plants) and in rural areas (especially for uncommon native plants), with an aim to build on the foundation of data already available in published reports of our region's flora.

This has been among the most productive periods for active OFNC conservation in some years, and I thank everyone for their hard work conserving our natural heritage.

## **Education and Publicity Committee – Lynn Ovenden, Chair**

This committee provides information to the community about natural history and the OFNC itself. We meet every two months to plan and advise each other on our various responsibilities. One of our tasks is managing a display of various OFNC and natural history items at monthly meetings. We do lots more. In spring, we judge projects at the Ottawa Regional Science Fair for OFNC's special awards; the winners this year were Aidan Gurung, Shamus McCoy and Emma Kirke. In early summer, we selected two local high school students (Emma Kirke and Emily Pollington) for OFNC to sponsor for Ontario Nature's Youth Summit. We manage OFNC's brand identity and the use of our owl logo, be it on signage, publications, certificates, or a tiny lens-wipe pouch that can clip to your camera or binoculars strap. We take turns bringing an OFNC display to natural history events around the city where we encourage visitors to join the club. The big public events this year were BirdDay, BugDay, Ottawa City Hall's Wildlife Speaker series, and the Ontario Field Ornithologists conference. This year, we made new travel-ready posters for

public events, with updated content about joining OFNC, its publications, Macoun Club and Fletcher Wildlife Garden.

A major accomplishment was Linda Burr's completion of the booklet *Larose Forest: A Naturalist's Guide*. It is a bilingual update of Christine Hanrahan's 2008 description of the forest and includes complete species lists of birds, mammals, herps, butterflies, odonates and vascular plants.

A year ago, when Sandy Garland (OFNC's webmaster) and Natalie Sopinka joined the committee, we broadened our perspective to include the use of social media in education and publicity. Natalie created an OFNC blog called *FieldNotes*. She has kept it lively with over 50 reports from several people on monthly meetings, local natural history events and profiles of OFNC members. We enlisted a student volunteer in UOttawa's Community Services Program to prepare blog posts about OFNC events this fall. Natalie and Sandy also turned up OFNC's Twitter feed and maintained a steady stream of event notices to OFNC's burgeoning Facebook Group and the Bulletin Board of ofnc.ca. We started to plan a more modern website for OFNC but realized we first needed more clarity about the club's communication goals and target audiences.

Education & Publicity also tries to find speakers, walk leaders or good advice as requested by local organizations that are planning a nature activity. These requests, 16 this year, come from teachers, seniors' programs, and community and youth groups. Many thanks to the many OFNC members who share their knowledge with others.

#### **Events Committee – Julia Cipriani, Chair**

The Events Committee coordinated 63 outings, 5 workshops, 10 monthly meetings and the annual awards celebration. The outings and workshops included: amphibians and reptiles (3), birds (32), butterflies and moths (3), other insects (6), plants/trees (9), geology (1), photography (3), general natural history (11).

In addition to bringing back many tried and true events and leaders, several new events were offered. Jon Ruddy initiated a spring hawk migration watch, leading 14 outings over an 8 week period to track the migration of hawks, eagles, falcons and vultures. Owen Clarkin, chair of Conservation, launched a one year biothon for Constance Bay. Eleanor Thompson was willing to host "An April Night in the Wilds" at the Thompson cabin near Calabogie, ON. Unfortunately it was cancelled due to the late spring, cold temperatures and the absence of visible amphibians.

The Club's biennial trip to Pelee was sold out – appreciation to Fenja Brodo, Roy John and John Cartwright for their roles in the success of the trip.

Monthly meetings were held in the Museum of Nature until December 2013. The January business meeting was held at the Fletcher Interpretation Centre. In February 2014 the monthly meeting moved to the Neatby Building, thanks to Jeff Skevington. Monthly meetings included talks on birds (2), mammals (1), conservation (1), ecology (2), geology (1), insects (1) and plants (1).

Committee members – Robert Alvo, Holly Bickerton, Hume Douglas, Jakob Mueller, Jeff Skevington and Julia Cipriani (chair) with support from Owen Clarkin, Chair of Conservation.

If you have ideas for events or would like to lead an outing or event, please contact Julia ([julia\\_cipriani@sympatico.ca](mailto:julia_cipriani@sympatico.ca)) or other members of the committee.

### **Finance Committee** – Barbara Chouinard, Chair

The OFNC's financial reporting systems are operating smoothly and efficiently. The OFNC Committees have adopted the budget process to look forward to the immediate future to plan their projects and prioritize items. Special projects are presented to the Board for approval and if approved the item is then included in the year's budget. The financial reports provided by the OFNC Treasurer several times a year are a useful tool for the OFNC.

Over the June to September period, the Finance Committee compiled the budget for the next fiscal period, based on submissions and input from each of the OFNC Committees. The Finance Committee had several discussions concerning the budget and provided the draft budget for circulation to the board at the September 2014 meeting. Further discussions and revisions to the budget were made and the board approved the budget at the October 2014 monthly meeting.

The OFNC continues to benefit from unexpected donations which allow committees to think about special projects that otherwise would not be possible. The board has been considered these proposals and a couple have been approved for the coming fiscal period and are included in the budget. The 2014/2015 fiscal budget forecasts a large deficit; however the OFNC has the funds to cover the shortfall.

The Finance Committee continues to promote fiscal responsibility and the OFNC's financial results reflects this operating mandate.

### **Fletcher Wildlife Garden** – Barry Cottam, committee representative on board of directors

This is been another busy year for the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. The usual activities have proceeded apace, along with a number of other events and achievements. These are highlighted here; further information may be found in the monthly FWG reports to the Board.

On Feb. 17, the OFNC Board hosted a special meeting of the Board, the FWG management committee (MC) and interested volunteers to discuss the mission and strategic objectives for managing the FWG. These objectives address Outreach & Education, Habitat Improvement, management options for the Control of Invasive Species and Natural History. Participants also made many suggestions regarding volunteers, without whom the FWG could not exist. A document summarizing the discussion and decisions has been formally accepted by both the MC and the Board as a guide for future activities of the FWG.

We had our annual spring potluck on April 7 and the three volunteer groups began their activities in May. In addition to the regular work of maintaining the Backyard Garden, the William Cody Fern Garden was re-established in the east end of the Backyard Garden, with a new flag stone path through it laid down under contract by a local landscaping firm. The Butterfly Meadow group was supported in its efforts by the Invasive Species group, which worked primarily around the perimeter of the BM, creating a series of plots to try different methods of controlling DSV. The annual plant sale, held the first Saturday in June, was the most successful ever.

Both the FWG and the OFNC received awards during Ottawa's first Garden Days event, held at City Hall on June 13. This was but one of a number of events relating to efforts to have a botanical garden established on AAFC lands bordering the FWG on the south. An FWG representative attended a

stakeholders meeting in February hosted by the Canadensis Botanical Garden Society; we followed quite closely the Society's Beyond the Edge: Artists' Gardens art installations, held over the summer on the field south of the AAFC's red barn. One of the participants, landscape artist Karl Ciesluk, received permission from the MC to construct two art pieces at the FWG. The recent Garden Symposium provided further information on the status of Canadensis and a partner project, Canada Flora 2017.

The application to Environment Canada for approval of a dredging project to rejuvenate the Amphibian Pond still awaits approval, although we have reason to be cautiously optimistic. A plan for managing the New Woods is beginning to take shape, but we are undecided on what to do with the Old Field. This summer the AAFC removed from the Ash Woodlot 56 ash trees killed by the Emerald Ash Borer. Replanting efforts have begun, and this habitat goes back to its original name, the Old Woodlot.

Volunteers from the Stewardship Rangers, PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Royal Ottawa Hospital and the University of Ottawa helped out in the BM, the BYG and refurbishing the Bill Holland Trail. FWG volunteers led group tours for the Ottawa Horticultural Society, Monarch Teachers Network conference and the Weeds Across Borders conference. Our volunteers took a tour of their own at the Canadian Wildlife Federation's wildlife gardens.

DSV continues to be a serious limiting factor in our efforts to improve and maintain the habitats. Two potentially conflicting initiatives began this year. The AAFC overwintered about 500 larvae of the moth *Hypena opulenta* that feed on the leaves of DSV. The larvae were released at a site on the CEF and hopefully will eventually spread to the FWG. Participants in the Feb. 17 meeting approved the use of glyphosate, a broad-leaf herbicide, in a test area at the FWG for a period of two years. One application of glyphosate by the AAFC killed off the flowers and seed pods of the treated DSV. Efforts to assess the significance of the 'mystery circles' – small areas where DSV does not grow – continue, particularly mapping and monitoring; scientific research has not yet produced any clear results, however.

Communications were again an active area, with the FWG Communications Committee liaising with Nature Canada on its Naturehood program, including establishing the FWG on YardMap, and discussing ways to better inform visitors of what's going on at the FWG. The newsletter continues to be published on a regular basis, our brochures are being revamped and new possibilities explored for the website and social media. The management committee continues to liaise with AAFC through membership on the Central Experimental Farm Advisory Committee – which also closely follows developments relating to the botanical garden – and with the Friends of the Experimental Farm. An FCEF member has joined the MC for a two-year term and an MC attends FCEF team leader meetings in spring and fall. The 5-year lease and collaborative agreements between AAFC and the OFNC regarding the use of the Interpretation Centre and management of FWG lands were renewed in April 2014.

The management committee continued this year with a rotating chair. Despite periodic discussion of this situation, the roles of the chair and the MC require clarification. The MC is also wrestling with such issues as longer-term planning in a purely volunteer environment.

#### **Macoun Club Committee – Robert E. Lee, Chair**

The Committee put together the month-to-month program for the children 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)). On most Saturdays during the school year, Committee members supervised or

gave presentations at the indoor meetings (held in the Fletcher Wildlife Garden's interpretation center) or led field trips (one of them jointly with the OFNC, at the Brewer Park Pond). Most field trips took place either on private properties in Lanark County or at the Club's nature-study area in the National Capital Commission's Greenbelt (Stony Swamp). For about a decade, Macoun Club members and leaders have been attempting to control the initial occurrences of certain invasive species in their study area. In 2014 the Club worked closely with the National Capital Commission there, helping to map Garlic Mustard and Dog-strangling Vine, and continuing to remove them where possible. The Committee produced issue no. 68 of the Club's annual publication, *The Little Bear*, and distributed it to members.

**Membership Committee – Henry Steger, Chair**

The distribution of Club membership for 2014 on September 30, 2014 is shown in the table below, with the corresponding numbers for 2013 shown in brackets. The increase in total membership of 48 halts a long-term trend of decreasing membership, Local membership (within 50 km of Parliament Hill) increased to 658 from 617 in 2014 and 2013, respectively. The number of new members reached 130, the most since the late 1990's. A positive sign for the future of the Club was the increase to 20 in Student Membership, which was initiated in 2012 to encourage interest in natural history among high school and university students.

	Canadian		U.S.A		Other		Total	
Individual	354	(324)	10	(12)	0	(0)	364	(336)
Family	296	(288)	0	(0)	1	(1)	297	(289)
Student	20	(11)	0	(0)	0	(0)	20	(11)
<i>Trail &amp; Landscape</i>	1	(2)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(2)
Honorary	24	(22)	0	(0)	0	(0)	24	(22)
Life	45	(45)	3	(1)	1	(1)	49	(49)
Other*	25	(23)	0	(1)	1	(1)	26	(24)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>(715)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>(15)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>(733)</b>

\*Other represents, for the greatest part, affiliate organizations that receive complimentary copies of the Club's publications.

**Publications Committee – Dan Brunton, Chair**

Publications Committee members in 2014 were Carolyn Callaghan, Paul Catling, Jay Fitzsimmons, Tony Gaston, Karen McLachlan Hamilton, William Halliday, David Seburn, Frank Pope, Jeff Saarela and Dan Brunton (Chair). Meetings were held 28 April and 8 October to discuss a wide variety of issues and to provide advice and information to both the OFNC Council and to the editorial teams. As well, a great number of informal communications were conducted electronically amongst committee members on a

variety of publication topics, particularly in regards to management and operations of The Canadian Field-Naturalist (CFN).

The CFN continues to be produced on schedule and within the production targets established for the current year (typically, approximately 400 pages/ volume). A shortage of copy editing resources has put extra pressure on the already fully-tasked editorial team, however. We are actively in search of more help in that area. Similarly, the operations and management of our subscription base has experienced process difficulties of late. Satisfactorily addressing those difficulties is the primary issue before the committee at present.

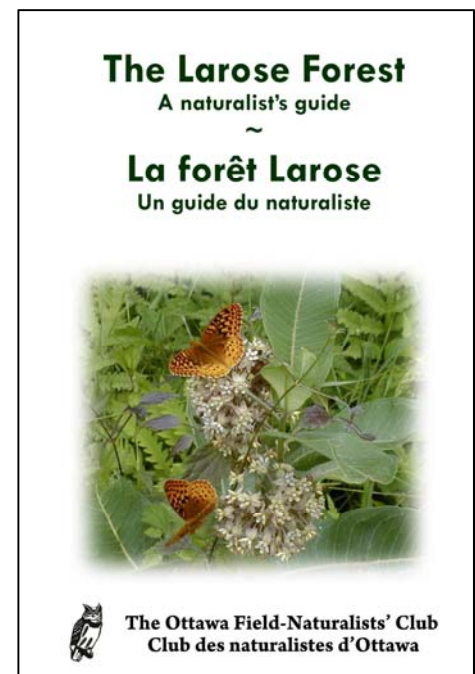
CFN Editor-in-Chief Carolyn Callaghan and Assistant Editor Trina Rytwinski and their team produced four issues of the journal this year, 128(1) through 128(4). The increased number of submissions noted with the last two volumes has continued, resulting in an ample supply of quality material in various stages of development for volume 129 issues. Colour images continue to enhance the appearance of more papers than was possible in years past. Unfortunately (for us) Trina Rytwinski is retiring from her position early in the new year to put more focus on other priorities in a busy personal and professional life. She played an especially important role earlier in the year as Acting Editor for 128(1) and 128(2) during Editor-in-Chief Callaghan's winter sabbatical.

We are confident that measures being implemented will eliminate the present CFN operational challenges in the coming year. Accordingly, we look forward to a successful 130th year of publication in 2015.

Four issues of Trail & Landscape were produced by Editor Karen McLachlan Hamilton and her team in the current year. The OFNC web page is becoming an increasingly important vehicle for communications with and amongst OFNC members. Nonetheless, after almost 50 years of publication T&L continues to provide an important newsletter function and to be a significant source of documentation of regional biodiversity and conservation needs.

One Special Publication appeared in the current year, that being "The Larose Forest, a naturalist's Guide", under the editorship and production direction of Linda Barr. Two hundred copies of our first completely bilingual publication are in distribution, particularly in the Prescott-Russell area of the Ottawa Valley where the Larose Forest is situated.

As with most OFNC committees, the demands on personal and professional time often constitute the most significant deterrent to prospective participation. Since a new Publications Committee chair has been confirmed for 2015, arrangements have been made to share participation in OFNC Council and other meetings amongst Committee members. This will lessen the time commitment previously required of the Chair position. My personal thanks to those on and off the Committee who so effectively encouraged and supported the OFNC's unique and nationally significant publications program during my term in that capacity.



## **Treasurer's Report – Ken Young, Treasurer**

### **Financial Position**

- Revenues exceed expenses as a result of improved membership results, and donations and bequests received.
- The major sources of revenue for the Club are membership fees, donations and bequests, and subscription charges and authors' charges for the Canadian Field-Naturalist.
- Membership fees are stable. There was a large distribution from the Cszak estate during the fiscal year, which increased donations and bequests. CFN revenues declined somewhat.
- Every two years, there are significant revenues from the Pelee trip, with corresponding expenses.
- Expenses were also stable during the year, after allowing for the Pelee trip.
- The financial statements have been prepared by our accounting firm, Welch LLP. They have conducted a review of our financial records.
- The Club financial statements are prepared using the fund method of accounting. In the financial statements, the first table presents the financial position of all the Club's funds in a consolidated manner. The remaining tables present the statement of operations of the general fund, the internally restricted funds and our one endowment fund.

### **Violetta Cszak Bequest**

The Club received a large bequest from Violetta Cszak. I am the executor. The estate is close to being wound down. An initial disbursement of \$200,000 was made from the estate to the Club during 2014. In the current (2014-15) fiscal year, more has happened. The initial disbursement has been spent, by donating it to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, to support their purchase of a property on the Ottawa River near Pembroke. This will protect a significant geological feature known as the "Gervais Caves". An additional 161,987.07 has been distributed to the Club. Additional disbursements to the OFNC will be made, probably in the neighbourhood of \$625,000.

### **Budget for the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year**

The budget for FY2014-15 was approved by the Board of Directors on October 20, 2014; it is attached to the minutes of that meeting and is available on the OFNC website where minutes of the board of directors' meetings are kept, at <http://ofnc.ca/council/minutes.php>.

### **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;
- Assisting the reviewer in the production of the annual financial statements.



I would again 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.