



Thickson's Woods Land Trust

Summer 2015
Newsletter 48

You'll Never Guess who's Coming to the Festival!

by Dennis Barry

Is it **Ellen** and her crew from **Home Depot** to help young carpenters build some exciting creations? They'll be there, but that's not the secret.

Is it **Elizabeth & Roger** letting visitors get up close and personal with sparrows and warblers as they place tiny bands on their legs to track their flights to their winter homes? They'll be there too, weather permitting, but you haven't guessed it yet.

Is it hungry **chickadees** begging for food and landing on your hand when you offer them sunflower seeds? Hardly. Our chickadees aren't very good at being secretive.

Is it **Rayfield** and the other naturalists who are eager to show you some of the many natural wonders of the nature reserve in fall? That will certainly be exciting, with lots of surprises, but no.

Is it **Liz** from **Mitchell Lumber** helping you with rock painting? Well, Liz does have something new this year. We'll keep that a secret for now, but this secret is way bigger than that.

Is it **Muskoka Wildlife** with their always exciting animal performers? Their name has changed to **Speaking of Wildlife**, but their two shows will still be highlights of the festival. Actually you're getting warm, but no, not quite.

Is it **Creepy Critters** showing up at noon? Hmm, now you're thinking, but sorry, that's not it.

Is it something at the **silent auction** or the **bake sale**? You're on the right track. It is in a tent, but a smaller one.

Is it at the **Enchanted Garden Walk**? That's a really good guess! There are lots of new and exciting secrets there to discover. But this secret is alive. Or I should say they're alive.

Oh well, I'm not very good at keeping secrets. I just heard the news yesterday and I'm really excited!!

As you may know already, the **Matt Holder Environmental Education Fund** has been conducting research in Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve this summer, and there have been many amazing surprises. (Read the article by **Phill Holder** later in this newsletter.)

In the course of doing research on bats, Phill met with staff from the **Ontario Specialized Species Research Centre**. Because world bat expert **Toby J. Thorne** is going to be at the festival, they are willing to bring some of their live bats on September 19. And not just any bats, Egyptian Fruit Bats, Jamaican Fruit Bats and vampire bats.

So now you know. I bet you're just as excited as I am to meet them. Don't worry, the vampire bats will have already been fed before they arrive. Anyway, they'll be in a secure enclosure. But you will be able to get up close and personal with the Jamaican Fruit Bats.

Oh yes, where can you meet these astounding guests? At the **Matt Holder Environmental Education Fund** display just southwest of the platform.

And don't forget on Friday evening before the Festival we will have a Bat Walk and Talk. **Toby** will tell you some interesting facts about bats. Then **Jessica** and **Nigel** will take you on a walk to show you how detectors can reveal what kinds of bats are out searching for breakfast. Later, after dark, we will demonstrate how we conduct our moth research.



Common Vampire Bat (Ontario Specialised Species Centre).



COMING EVENTS

Saturday November 28

Garlic Mustard Dig



Meet at the entrance to the woods on the Waterfront Trail at 9:00 a.m. to help in the annual fall blitz against garlic mustard. **Can't make it that day? Call 902-725-2116 any time and arrange to join a work crew on some other sunny morning.** Warm work gloves will be helpful. Bring your favourite weapon for attacking the alien invader, and your best level of energy and enthusiasm. (You might also want to bring some sunflower seeds to feed the chickadees that will likely come to supervise.) **Rain Date: Sunday November 29**

Thickson's Woods Caps and Sweatshirts

Attractive colourful sweatshirts and T-shirts, or handsome caps decorated with the Thickson's Woods white pine logo, make great gifts.

Email nature@thickson's Woods.com or call 905-725-9846 to place an order, or look for the display at the fall festival.

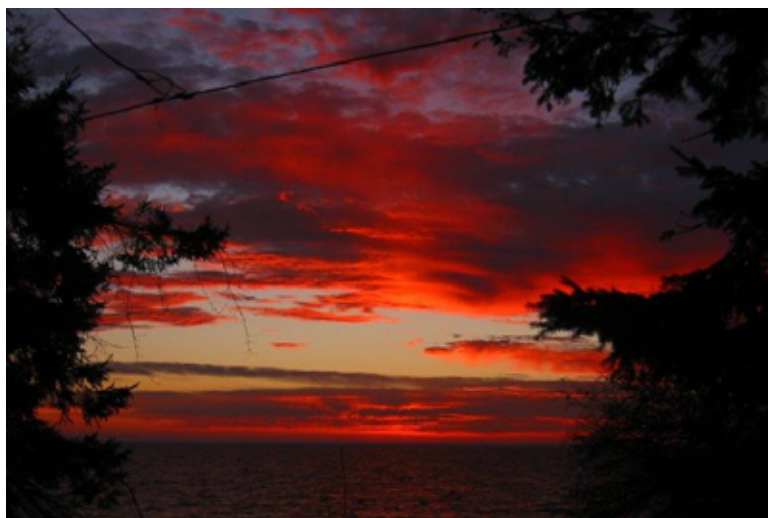
IN MEMORIAM

Recent donations have been made in memory of these special people:

Ken Carmichael

Mitch Hunt

Maisie Robertson



We join their families and friends in mourning their passing, and acknowledge their unique contribution to the rich web of life on planet earth. On our website we recognize all past donations made in memory of friends and loved ones.



2016

the moths of thickson's woods



Photography by David Beadle

In support of the Matt Holder Environmental Education Fund www.mattholderfund.com © Copyright 2015. Hawk Owl Publishing.

Last year's **Birds of Thickson's Woods** calendar was extremely popular and sold out quickly. This year's edition, **Moths of Thickson's Woods**, also produced by the **Matt Holder Environmental Education Fund**, will be even more in demand. There are lots of bird and butterfly calendars on the market, but where else can you find a calendar with spectacularly colourful larger-than-life photos of unique moths? The answer is "Nowhere!"



David Beadle taking photographs of the moths we caught during the research. (Phill Holder).

David Beadle, co-author of the **Peterson Field Guide to Moths of Northeastern North America**, spends countless hours to get the perfect photograph of each species of moth he encounters. You will be truly amazed when you see the results. Maybe you've always thought of moths as being dull brown and unattractive. After you see this calendar, you'll never think that way again. Each calendar comes with an envelope for mailing to friends and family far away.

Visit the **Matt Holder Fund** tents at the Nature Festival to get your copy, or contact Phill Holder at hawkowl@bell.net. Or buy on line at mattholderfund.com/shop. Don't forget to check out the other Fund publications. There are books on shorebirds, bats, techniques for bird identification and other interesting themes.

All money raised goes to expanding research in the Thicksion's Woods Nature Reserve, so that the reserve can be vibrant and healthy for generations to come.

Dog Strangling Vine Control and Beach Cleanup with Yanfeng Automotive Interiors

On August 21, fourteen volunteers from **Yanfeng Automotive Interiors** helped to collect garbage along the beach to the east of the woods. They also dug out several large patches of Dog-Strangling Vine that were growing south of the marsh. We are very grateful for their help in controlling the growth of this invasive species and for removing a large amount of plastic from the beach. The hardworking group collected twelve large bags of garbage and weeds.

We would also like to thank **Yanfeng Automotive Interiors** for their generous financial donation to Thicksion's Woods.

Bats, Moths and Marshland Health

by *Phill Holder*

Since Sue and I started the **Matt Holder Environmental Research Fund**, we have discovered so much about Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve that at times we have felt overwhelmed. Money from sales of **The Birds of Thickson's Woods** has enabled us to provide resources to some of the most talented young biologists in Ontario. Our research follows protocols that enable all data collected to be easily integrated into larger provincial studies. Consequently we have gained the respect of some of Ontario's top universities and organizations.

What we have discovered has surprised all of us. Though it's been known historically as a bird migration hot spot, with the White Pines attracting northward migrating birds, we are now making discovery after discovery about the biodiversity the nature reserve offers and its importance year-round.

This spring we restarted warbler migration surveys, and we will be comparing data collected with historical information from twenty years ago to determine what changes have occurred. **Dennis Barry** walked set trails and counted the birds seen and heard every day in May, as well as noting detailed weather conditions.

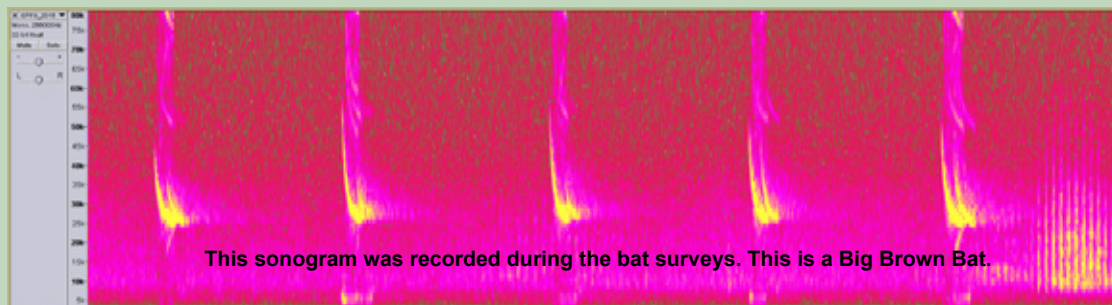
We knew that local residents frequently saw Eastern Milk Snakes, and decided that we should determine more about this Species of Special Concern. **Rava Lee** is a biologist with experience conducting population studies of milk snakes. With the help of **Nigel Parr**, she has started a multi-year program to determine the population in the reserve and how healthy it is. **Brock University** researchers are helping with our study and using the data as part of an Ontario-wide investigation.

Over the years a few bats have been seen flying around the reserve and some residents have had bats roosting behind shutters and under porch roofs. I like bats, and Matt worked on the effect that wind turbines had on bats in Alberta. So I thought maybe there was a way that we could study the bats of the reserve. WOW! Can we study bats!!!



One of "our" Milk Snakes (*Rava Lee*)

With the help of bat expert **Toby Thorne** from the **University of Western Ontario** and **Nigel Parr** from **Toronto Zoo** we started a bat survey, conducted by biologist **Jessica Kroes**. We purchased several bat detectors that record the bats' vocalizations as they fly about. The data is then downloaded into advanced software that converts it into sonograms to determine what species live in the reserve. So far we have confirmed five of the eight Ontario species, including Little Brown Bat, a Provincially Threatened one. This data is critical to bat researchers. The next step is to determine just how many



individuals of each species live here. In addition to the research, we have sponsored several very successful "Bat Nights" to let everyone share in the excitement of these little understood flying mammals.

This year butterfly numbers and species diversity have been very low in the reserve. Although we had two butterfly walks conducted by **Rayfield Pye** and biologist **Jenna Siu**, we were somewhat disappointed not to provide the 40-plus participants with more to see.

It would be easy to speculate that we have so many bats because of the spectacular diversity of moths we are discovering during our moth surveys. When **David Beadle** told me that we could get a thousand species of moths in the reserve, I was, to say the least, skeptical. As naturalists we are trained observers and spend many hours in the field during daylight hours. Surely if there were a thousand species I would have seen at least a hundred! But the truth is, I could probably count on both hands the number of moths I had seen – and those were the big colourful guys coming to porch lights. I paid no attention to the tiny ones, hardly distinguishable from the mosquitoes buzzing around my head.

I had no idea! Not a clue when we started the survey, that we would attract over 250 species IN ONE NIGHT and see alien creatures with shapes and colours that would shatter my understanding of nature and evolution. “Mothing” is a drug, plain and simple. David said we would get hooked.

Expert **David Beadle** with **Mike King**, **Mike McEvoy**, **Dennis Barry**, **Margaret Carney**, **Phil Reyenga** and I make up the team in various configurations. Without **David Beadle** present to make instant identification at a glance, it takes us a lot more time. In fact, one morning emptying the traps, I committed two hours to the project as I had stuff to do – and seven hours later I reluctantly left the scene.

It has been an incredibly successful program. We set up traps and white sheets overnight, illuminated by special bulbs that emit the right colour spectrum. In the early morning we empty the traps and attempt to photograph each species before they fly for cover – not as easy as it sounds!! All moths are released unharmed.

So far over six hundred species have been recorded, with new ones added every time we set up. We even attracted a moth that had never been seen in Ontario and only once before in Canada. In fact we found this species on more than one night, suggesting there may be a resident colony. Quite a coup for Thickson’s Woods.



The Ailanthus Webworm is between 11 and 15 mm long and spectacular (*Phill Holder*).

Macro photography is an essential part of moth research. It’s amazing to see through the lens the shape and colour of a 3mm long moth, often sitting aggressively, obviously upset at being disturbed. I have no idea why moths have such vibrant colours, since they come out after dark. Camouflage, you would think, can’t be the reason. We have sponsored “Moth Nights” so participants can experience some of these wonders, too.

So our research has been very effective in this first year and shows that even in 2015 we can still be in discovery mode. And there is much more to uncover. We are not looking closely at the many beetles, flies, leafhoppers, ants and spiders we attract. These are projects for the future.

Thickson’s Woods Nature Reserve, small as it is, is proving to be very important not just for bird migration, but for much, much more. A treasure of biodiversity. Who knows what else we may find?

Now the bad news. The meadow is in need of attention. Fire Ants are multiplying and Dog-strangling Vine has invaded. This is well known and Thickson's Woods Land Trust is in the process of looking for solutions.

A major concern of the **Matt Holder Environmental Research** program is Corbett Creek Marsh, three acres of which are owned by Thickson's Woods Land Trust. I have looked at Marsh Monitoring data and found that the wetland is woefully lacking in species diversity. Very few frogs or toads have been seen this year. The only turtle found was a snapper, and at night during bat and moth surveys the marsh is deathly quiet. A healthy wetland should be noisy and vibrant after dark.

The conclusion is that Corbett Marsh is in very poor condition and we need to determine what is wrong and what can be done. One obvious cause could be pollution from upstream sources, but we don't know that for sure. **Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority** (CLOCA) monitors water quality and marsh health, so I've asked the Land Trust board to inquire as to why they think Corbett Creek Marsh is in such poor health.

We intend to carry out a marsh bioblitz to determine fish species, invertebrates, etc., and have experts on hand to determine what is wrong and then help in a restoration program. It sounds daunting but we have no choice. The marsh is a critical part of the ecosystem and will have an impact on the biodiversity of the whole reserve.

If you would like to volunteer your time and expertise, please contact me at hawkowl@bell.net.

Attention, Shoppers! Goodies from the Silent Auction

by Margaret Carney

No matter how busy it gets amidst the flurry of the nature festival, or what task I'm doing, I always take time to visit the silent auction tent. You never know what goodies are waiting there, donated by a motley bunch of Thickson's Woods supporters. Over the years I've bid on a wide range of items and taken home some great stuff.

First thing in the morning, I run in and put an opening bid on **Lin Sweet's** foot massage. I've lucked out and "won" soothing treatments from this professional reflexologist for three years running, she's that good—worth outbidding all competition. I won a tune-up from **Bicycles Plus** one year, and am planning to join the bidding again, if they donate, given how the brakes on my bike are squeaking.

From garden stepping stones to kitchen gadgets, artwork to aardvarks (stuffed ones on the kids' table), there are always treasures to be found. Lois Gillette won a Port Merion teapot that matches her china set. Barb Haynes takes home big bags of bird seed donated by the **Urban Nature Store**. Susan Smyth found a whole set of nature books for her grandkids, who always want to go for a walk in the woods when they visit.

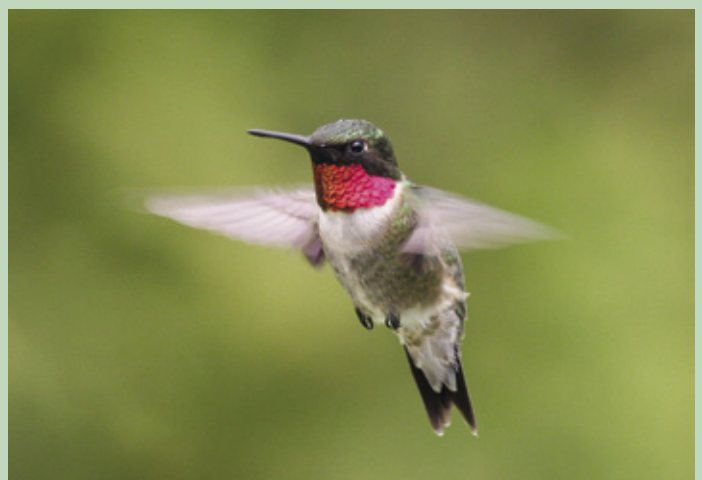
One of my own prized finds was a pair of long, dangling necklaces, one red, one blue, dripping with beads, stones and coins with llamas on them. **Margaret Bain**, on a birding trip to Peru, bought three from a woman selling her wares along a road high in the Andes. Margaret kept the green one, being a redhead, and donated the others to the silent auction, where I managed to outbid all comers. The

exotic talismans hang over my fireplace, bringing good feng shui for my own foreign travels.

Just before the silent auction closes I race back to the tent and top up that bid on **Lin Sweet's** foot massage, and anything else I've just gotta have. Win or lose, it's all in good fun, and for a great cause—support of the Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve.

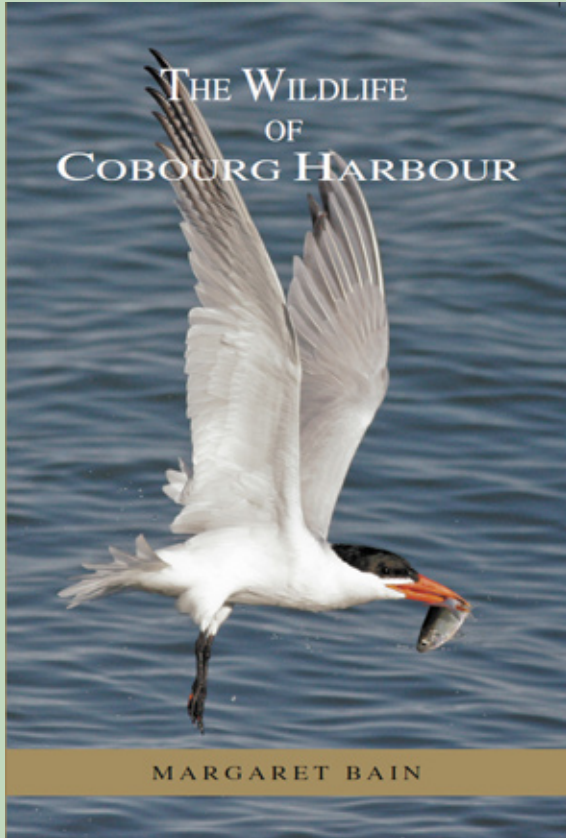
Don't forget to bring some of your yummiest creations for the bake sale.

And if you have any treasures you'd like to donate for the silent auction, call Dianne at 905-433-7875



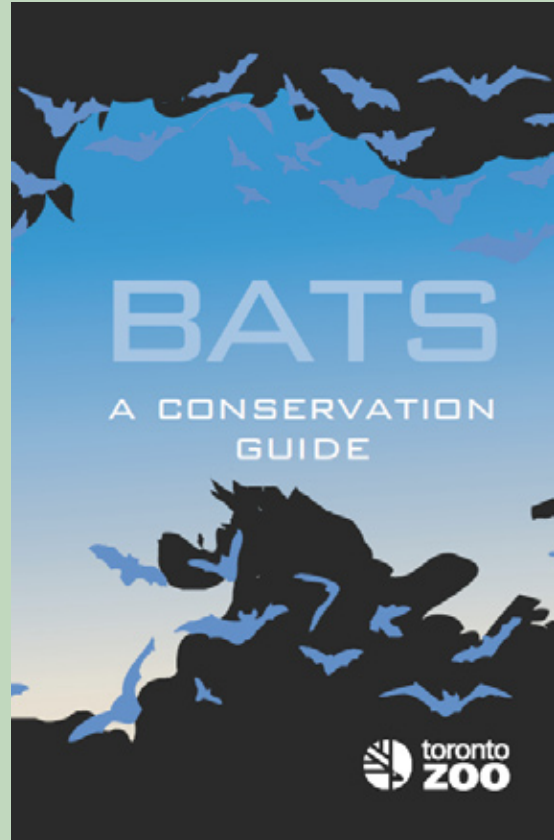
Ruby-throated Hummingbird's are on the move. Be sure to keep your feeders clean and topped up. (*Sherwood McLernon*).

New publications from Hawk Owl Publishing in support of the Matt Holder Environmental Education Fund



Cobourg Harbour, its Headland, its Ecology Garden, and its West Beach form one of the town's finest assets – a restful and restorative place to walk in beautiful surroundings, enjoying the constantly-changing lake and the wide sky.

But this well-loved spot also hosts exceptionally rich and diverse wildlife – the hundreds of birds, insects, and plants that live or visit here through the year. This booklet illustrates some of the surprises and delights to be found through each of the four seasons. From the first bright wood-warblers racing north in spring, through the butterflies of summer and the scarlet leaves of fall, to winter's diving ducks and white-winged gulls from the Arctic, you should find much to search for and savour in these pages.



Bats are perhaps the most misunderstood animals on Earth, yet they play vital roles in many of the planet's ecosystems. Our research at Thickson's Woods has recorded five of the eight Ontario species so far this year and our "Bat Talk and Walks" have been very popular.

In partnership with Toronto Zoo we have published **Bats A Conservation Guide** which answers many of the questions asked at the Bat Nights about how to protect these wonderful creatures.

Both \$10.00 inc. tax

**Available on line at www.mattholderfund.com/shop
or available at the Nature Festival on September 19th at the Matt Holder Fund Display.**

Yes, I want to help protect Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve. It's a very special place!
We need spaces where plants and animals can thrive and people can relax in nature.

Here is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____ Date _____

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ Prov/State _____ Postal Code _____ Tel. _____

e-mail _____

Cheques can be payable to Thickson's Woods Land Trust.

Mail to: Box 541 Whitby, ON L1N 5V3 (Charitable Registration # 0674382-52-13)



14th Annual Birds, Beavers & Butterflies Nature Festival



Learn about nature from the experts!

Fun for all the family!

Saturday, September 19

9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Enjoy a host of exciting family activities!

Adults \$5 Kids \$2 Families \$10

(For the protection of wildlife, dogs are not allowed in the nature reserve.)

**All proceeds support
Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve**

Directions: from Hwy 401 in Whitby, take Thickson Road south of Wentworth Street to the Waterfront Trail.

Follow the signs.

Information: 905-433-7875 or

www.thicksonswoods.com

E-mail: nature@thicksonswoods.com

Join the Experts!

- ❖ Beekeeping
- ❖ Bugs and botany ID
- ❖ Bird banding
- ❖ Guided nature walks

Special Events!

- ❖ Enchanted garden walk
- ❖ Build your own nature box
- ❖ Speaking of Wildlife 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
- ❖ Creepy Critters 12:00 Noon

More Festival Fun!

- ❖ Silent auction
- ❖ Yummy bake sale
- ❖ Refreshments by Divine Dining
- ❖ Face painting
- ❖ Rock & shell painting
- ❖ Wishing tree
- ❖ Nature art & gifts
- ❖ Lots of displays

(Please lug-a-mug/
water bottle.)