



# Thickson's Woods Land Trust

Summer 2019  
Newsletter 56

## Birds, Beavers & Butterflies Nature Festival

Saturday, September 21, 9:00 to 3:30  
(Rain or shine, but hoping for "shine")

"Max the Magician" has agreed to return once again to confuse and entertain guests of all ages. And our resident chickadees, including this year's crop of youngsters, will be eagerly awaiting your arrival, so bring along a pocketful of sunflower seeds to get to meet them up close and personal.

New this year, Zoo to You will bring some of their exotic animals to thrill young and old. And the always popular Speaking of Wildlife, featuring native ones, will be returning.

New also is an addition to the insect display, including a specimen of the biggest "bug" in the world. Plus there'll be opportunities to explore the meadow to see what creatures are living there. This year there's been a bumper crop of monarchs. Many should be nectaring on goldenrod blossoms. Green darner dragonflies will be migrating too, so it's a good time to watch them and their relatives zip about the clearings in search of a meal to fuel their journey south.

Some of the biggest smiles are on decorated young faces appearing from the face painting corner, or on kids clutching creations they hammered together in the Home Depot tent.

September 21 is prime time for broad-winged hawk migration. Keep your fingers crossed for sunny skies and brisk north winds to push their kettles south over the meadow.

Sunny skies also mean that bird banders will be able to give you closeup looks at warblers and sparrows. A lucky few may get to hold a banded bird before releasing it to continue its travels.

All this exercise and excitement will make you hungry, so don't forget to bring along some cash for a hotdog, or some goodies from the bake table.

And be sure to bid on a favourite treasure at the Silent Auction tent!



### Calling all Bakers

Thanks to the skill and dedication of everyone who brings their delicious creations, the bake sale is a favourite destination of festival visitors. Unfortunately, the offerings are so tasty, they all disappear before late-comers have a chance to enjoy them.

If you're someone with a secret recipe for producing irresistible treats, we hope you'll share the results of your talents by bringing along something to tempt festival guests.



## Coming Events:

### Saturday, November 30, 9:00 to Noon - Invasive Plant Removal

Unfortunately, due to government funding cuts, we weren't lucky enough to have summer staff to help with invasive species removal this year. So we really need your help to control both garlic mustard and dog-strangling vine.

Late fall is a good time to remove garlic mustard plants that would otherwise flower next spring, producing thousands of seeds to reinvade the woods. The weather is cool, so biting insects aren't a bother, and most annual plants have died back, making the green garlic mustard easy to spot.

Dress for the weather and bring your favourite tools for the job. Or just come and we'll provide the equipment.

Late fall migrants will still be on the move, while wintering birds should be arriving. And resident chickadees will be looking for a handout, so bring a few sunflower seeds in your pocket.

In case it's rainy on Saturday, we'll try again on Sunday at the same hour. And if you can't make it, but would like to help any other time, contact us at [nature@thicksonswoods.com](mailto:nature@thicksonswoods.com) or 905-725-2116.

## TD Friends' Trees are Flourishing

Is there anything more hopeful than watching a baby tree grow up? Most of the saplings planted on the Lake Ontario clifftop last May are doing very well, with leaves and twigs peeking out the top of specially designed deer-and-bunny guards protecting them. Twelve native species were chosen for their value for wildlife, as well as sturdy root systems to help stabilize the eroding lakeshore, given the high waters permitted by the International Joint Commission since 2014.

Thanks to a generous grant from TD Friends of the Environment, oak, hickory, mountain ash, tulip tree, paper birch, sycamore, sugar maple, redbud, black cherry, dogwood and basswood trees were planted there on the south edge of the nature reserve by a troop of volunteers. The enthusiastic crew came from the Thickson's Point community, the Thickson's Woods Land Trust board, and Lakewoods Public School and G. L. Robert High School. Vince Chacinski of Pickering showed up

with a fine collection of tools and dug nearly half the holes for the trees. Local resident Patrick Kelly capped off the day with a barbecue for all the happy planters.

Special thanks go to Whitby arborist John Rousseau, who volunteered his time and expertise feeding the saplings with a special mix of mycorrhizae to help their roots get established. And he's coming back in the fall to fertilize them, giving them the best start possible.

Brett Woodman of Natural Resource Solutions helped fine-tune tree placement, considering each species' requirements, and delivered the state-of-the-art tree guards, as well as a few hard-to-find trees. Thanks for your valuable contribution!

So glad for the baby trees, so grateful to everyone who helped! And fervent thanks to TD Friends of the Environment for the generous grant that made it happen.

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

**Jim Gartshore   Clive Goodwin   Barbara Kalthoff   Hans Wenckstern**

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.

# News from the Matt Holder Environmental Research Fund

by *Phill Holder*

After a poor spring, June really took off at the reserve.

Moths were out in full force and we were delighted that the silkworm and sphinx moths were in exceptionally good numbers. In fact, this is the best year we have had for this large, spectacular group of moths since we started surveying moths at Thicksen's. The good news is that reports from other areas of Ontario echo what we are finding.



Azalea Sphinx Moth (*Phill Reyenga*)

We've added several new moths to our list, including the beautiful Azalea Sphinx and delightfully named Moonseed Moth. Just recently we recorded our second ever Green-spotted Looper, which is special to us, as our first was the thousandth species recorded. We now have a remarkable 1040 species on the checklist.

This biodiversity project has been so educational for us. Discovering what a wonderful place Thicksen's Woods is to "play" in if you are at all into nature (we can hardly call it work when you are having so much fun) is always a joy.

We are finding so much that we did not know even existed in the reserve. Flies, for example. I have included a photo of a beast of a fly that appeared recently. It's a female Black Horse Fly, *Tabanus americanus*, 30mm long. I had never seen a fly this size before, so much bigger than a regular horse fly. I was very careful taking the photograph, as I can only imagine what it could do to me if I annoyed it!!

On a smaller scale, another odd-looking fly we had never recorded before was the Tomato Bristle Fly, *Hystricia abrupta*. Strange things, these flies; another exciting area of biodiversity to study.



Moonseed Moth (*Phill Holder*)

Black Horse Fly (*Phill Holder*)



We are very grateful to expert Richard Aaron, who came to Thickson's Woods to help us start documenting the fungi found there. With the help of Mike McEvoy's brilliant photographic skills, we plan to publish an illustrated fungi checklist in the future.

Harvey Medland, who worked on fungi in the reserve many years ago, provided the photo of *Xylaria hypoxylon* to add to the list.

Tomato Bristle Fly (*Mike McEvoy*)



*Xylaria hypoxylon* (*Harvey Medland*)

# New Addition to the Checklist of Birds

In preparation for his book **Birds of the Greater Toronto Area**, Glenn Coady has delved into more historical documents than anyone thought even existed, and discovered an old record of Canada Jay.

“On February 21, 1931, the recently formed Marshall Saunders Woodland Bird Study Club of the Oshawa Collegiate and Vocational Institute took a hike to

“The Pines” (the colloquial name for Thickson’s Woods from the 1900s to the 1930s) and the 10 members of the club, along with their teacher and hike leader Arthur Slyfield (the school librarian) found a Canada Jay, both crossbills and Evening Grosbeak among a couple of dozen species.”

## A Day I Will Never Forget

by Jax Nasimok

Saturday April 27 was cold, wet and dreary. However, since it was migration season, my dad and I figured it couldn’t hurt to check out Thickson’s Woods. So off we went to Durham’s best spring migration hotspot; it certainly lived up to its reputation.

Upon arriving at Thickson’s Woods, we found very few cars parked there, adding to our dismay. We got out, completed our usual bug spray routine, and headed off. We decided to check out the little loop on the right upon entering the woods. We split up, each walking a different way, in case one of us flushed

something. Having noted nothing other than a few Ruby-crowned Kinglets, a Yellow-rumped Warbler and a White-throated Sparrow on my side, it didn’t look like it was going to be a good day. We met up at the tip of the loop near the small row of cedars, to see if anything would fly in.

Within seconds, a Black-throated Green Warbler called from just out of view. A few seconds later, I noticed a warbler in the trees above us. Upon zooming in with my camera, I saw a bird with a dark back, light undersides, and a yellowish head, matching a brief description of a Black-throated Green Warbler. If it had been a busy day at Thickson’s, I would have dismissed it and kept going. That day was not a busy one.

I followed the bird with my camera, and things just didn’t look right. I couldn’t quite place it but I knew something didn’t fit. I considered a Hermit Warbler, but how could it have ended up here? It was then I realized that I should just trust my instinct, and called out to my dad, “GET ON THAT BIRD!!!” It was a good thing I did. A few seconds later, it disappeared into the conifers and never returned to that spot.

By now, I was starting to get excited, but I didn’t want to risk calling the wrong ID. I knew it was probably a Black-throated Green, but there was a nagging feeling at the back of my head telling me that that was wrong. It really looked like a Hermit. I knew a Hermit Warbler would be rare, really

Hermit Warbler (*Jax Nasimok*)



rare, but it looked like one! I also knew I had to get the word out as soon as possible, as it could leave at any time. Luckily, my dad had a data plan on his phone, and right away I told him to look up Hermit and Black-throated Green. Now I was getting confident it was a Hermit. It had a plain, golden yellow head, a small black bib not extending down the sides, no streaking on the flanks, and a blue-gray back that matched Hermit but not Black-throated Green. I considered how unlikely it was for a Hermit to end up here, and ran off to find another birder to verify it.

I left my dad to keep watch for the bird while I went jogging off. Being a quiet day in dreary weather, very few birders were to be found. Finally, I ran into Rayfield Pye. I probably didn't look like the most promising person to be coming over the hill, a teenager with a camera around his neck, jogging and accidentally spooking the Blue-headed Vireo he was watching. Not only that, but to then ask him to verify my possible Hermit Warbler sighting. Nonetheless, he greeted me kindly and took the time to review the photos. It looked like a Hermit Warbler, but we concluded we should find Dennis Barry, as he would know.... Dennis Barry was nowhere to be found. Rayfield decided we would go out to his car, where he had a guide. Then we would be able to make a more conclusive identification.

Fast forward a few minutes and we have the Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America. Inside, he opened to the warbler section, where there were many western vagrants, including Black-throated Gray

and Townsend's Warbler but no Hermit. By now, I was out of options but to go home, forty minutes away in Markham, and post the pictures online to get an answer. After a quick check to see if the warbler returned, but it hadn't, we left.

On the way out, we ran into the Pickering Naturalists Club on a scheduled outing. They asked if we had seen anything interesting. Still not positive on the identification, I said they could see the photos of the Hermit Warbler for themselves. They had mixed opinions. To be fair, it is not easy to make a conclusive identification on the bird while viewing it on a three-inch camera screen in bad light. So off we went to post it, and off they went to keep an eye out for the bird.

Upon arriving home we posted my images online to Toronto and Southern Ontario Birding, and within two hours got a definite response: it was a Hermit Warbler! From then, news of the bird was shared through multiple sites online, including the Ontario Bird-alert, eBird, the Ontario Birds Facebook Page, and many more. Over the next two days and the early morning of the third, it was seen by hundreds of birders, many getting a life bird with this little warbler. I feel so lucky to have found this bird and I am so glad so many birders got a chance to see it. Going back that afternoon put a smile on my face, to see so many excited birders enjoying this bird. If only all the rarities showed up on weekends!

(Reprinted with permission from the Aquila Newsletter, publication of The Matt Holder Environmental Research Fund)

## Gerdau to the Rescue Again!

We wish to publicly thank our largest, closest neighbour, Gerdau Steel, for saving the day a second time. Gerdau staff orchestrated the delivery of boulders from their latest earthworks, placing them along a stretch of seriously eroding shoreline to protect the road for residents in the Thickson's Point community. Thank you everyone at Gerdau! Your generous, neighbourly assistance is avidly appreciated.

## Gifts That Will Last Forever

Metres of the nature reserve have been saved in the name of:

### Isla Paterson

Thank you to everyone who gave a friend or loved one a share in this living legacy  
—a gift that will last forever!

On our website we recognize all past donations made to honour friends and loved ones.

# What's New in the Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve.

by Dennis Barry

The natural world changes constantly. That's what's so fascinating, and why those who live in and for the out-of-doors never get bored.

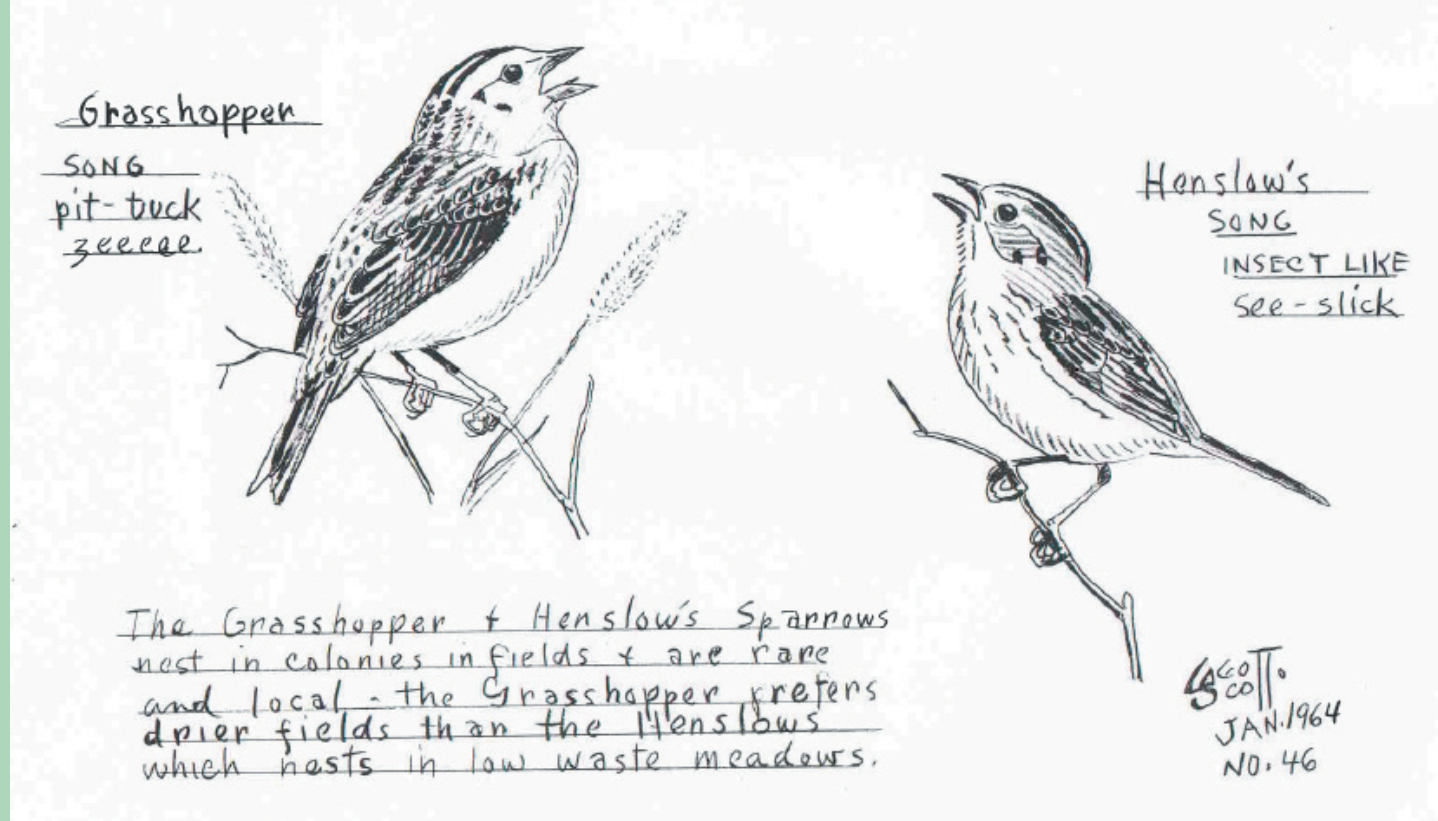
George Scott explored the same woods and valleys, marshes and lakeshores in the Oshawa area week after week, year after year for decades. He kept meticulous notes, made detailed sketches, collected and preserved plant specimens, made study skins of birds found dead along the way. And never once did he give any indication that he was bored. On the contrary, he was just as enthusiastic pointing out an obscure sedge as he was in showing an exquisite delicate blossom. And the greatest excitement of all came when he discovered a new plant to add to his list.

His notes chronicle the changes in the plants and animals and, indeed, the countryside of his favourite haunts.

I remember one summer day when he took Margaret and me out along the edge of Corbett Creek Marsh. In two hours we travelled no more than a hundred metres as he pointed out countless plants we'd had no idea existed there. Monkey flower, scarlet pimpernel, marsh cinquefoil, water-horehound, marsh skullcap, and innumerable other intriguing names we'd never heard before. Though I still recognize a few of those plants when I come across them, most are long forgotten. I truly wish George was still here to once again lead us deeper into the "hidden" world of the marsh.

But even for those of us who lack the depth of knowledge and patience of George Scott, there are always new and exciting treasures to discover even in a small backyard. George's yard on Bloor Street, within sight of the General Motors plant where he worked for some years, was small. But he was very proud of it, though not because it was neatly manicured. On the

A sample of George Scott's meticulous notes



contrary, he delighted in each new plant species that sprouted there. Clearly George Scott was way ahead of his time. Or maybe it was because he was from an era before we were brainwashed and brow-beaten into believing we had to kill those nasty dandelions and crab-grass, or be the bane of the neighbourhood.

Since our backyard is Thickson's Woods, the possibilities seem endless. Just this afternoon Margaret was able to get a close look at an intriguing new species of butterfly we've seen zipping frenetically about the garden over the past couple of weeks. The American snout is a migrant from father south that has been showing up in Southern Ontario in unprecedented numbers this summer. It's medium-sized, black, white and orange, with superficial resemblance to a painted lady.

For the past several years, giant swallowtail butterflies have been appearing more frequently and in greater numbers. There's been one in the garden every day recently. Today there were three at once. They're easy to spot while nectaring because they rarely stop fluttering their wings. It seems their bodies are too heavy for most blossoms to support their weight if they actually land on them. Perhaps that's why the resident hummingbirds see them as competition and constantly chase them off the zinnia flowers.

A number of years ago Richard Woolger planted common hop trees in the meadow, as well as about twenty-five cucumbertrees. The hop trees are a food plant for giant swallowtail caterpillars. They're shrubs that now are producing fruit each summer, fruit that was once used as a substitute for hops. The cucumbertrees, sometimes called cucumber magnolias, can grow to be large stately giants up to twenty-five metres high. The largest in the meadow are now more than five metres tall. I keep hoping for the year when the first blossoms appear.

High water levels in Lake Ontario this spring have caused serious erosion on the bluff, as well as flooding in neighbourhood yards and basements. Less serious flooding two springs ago killed a number of white cedar trees along the barrier beach to the east of the last houses. This year's higher, longer-lasting flood will kill more.

But in nature, what's deadly for some species may benefit others. Wood frogs lay their eggs in temporary ponds in low areas along the barrier beach. In years when the ponds dry up quickly, their tadpoles die. When the water remains high for several weeks, they have time to complete their transition into adults. The advantage of using temporary ponds is that predators such as fish and dragonfly nymphs aren't present to eat the eggs and tadpoles. American toads use a similar strategy.

Fringed gentians that were being shaded out by cedars may now recover, if they themselves survived the flood.

It's unclear if higher water levels benefit the American mink now thriving in the neighbourhood. They're equally at home hunting on land or in water. As a climax predator their numbers have rebounded dramatically since the use of DDT and similar pesticides has been curtailed. On land they prey on chipmunks, mice and voles, whose numbers have declined dramatically with the explosion in mink numbers. Squirrels are usually able to escape, as they are more agile climbers than mink.

Thickson's Point residents living near Corbett Creek Marsh were pleased to once again hear toads and frogs calling from the marsh, but not happy to find beavers and Canada geese swimming about on their flooded lawns.

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)**



# Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve

18<sup>th</sup> Annual

# Birds, Beavers & Butterflies Nature Festival

Learn about nature from the experts!  
*Enjoy exciting activities - fun for all the family!*

**Saturday, September 21**  
**9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Adults \$5 Kids \$2 Families \$10 (Cash only)

Please note that for the protection of wildlife, dogs are not allowed in the nature reserve.  
(Please lug-a-mug / water bottle.)



**Special Events!**

- ❖ Hammer with Home Depot
- ❖ Wildlife Shows at 10:00 a.m. Noon and 2:00 p.m.
- ❖ Max the Magnificent 11:00 a.m.



All proceeds support Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve.

**For Kids 2 to 92!**

- Face painting
- Wishing tree
- Hawk Watch
- Lunchtime Nature Concert

**Join the Experts!**

- Astronomy / Solar observing
- Bugs and botany ID
- Bird banding
- Beekeeping
- Geology
- Guided nature walks

**More Festival Fun!**

- Silent auction
- Yummy bake sale
- Refreshments for purchase
- Nature art & gifts



Directions: from Hwy 401 in Whitby, take Thickson Road south to the Waterfront Trail.  
Follow the signs.

Info: 905-433-7875 or [www.thicksonswoods.com](http://www.thicksonswoods.com) E-mail: [nature@thicksonswoods.com](mailto:nature@thicksonswoods.com)