



150 Years: The Nature London Story 1864 to 2014

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150 YEARS THE NATURE LONDON STORY

THE MCILWRAITH FIELD NATURALISTS OF LONDON

150 YEARS: THE NATURE LONDON STORY

1864 TO 2014



Welcome to the History of Nature London

2014 was the 150th anniversary year of the formation of the first iteration of Nature London. Our archivists, long-time members, and former editors of *The Cardinal*, Winifred and David Wake, scoured the Nature London archives, back issues of *The Cardinal*, and other sources to write the story of our club. It was published in *The Cardinal* in six installments, beginning in February 2014. Several other club members or friends wrote articles, remembrances of the club, and reports of commemorative activities.

This publication brings together reprints of the six parts of The Nature London Story with selected remembrances of the history of the club that were published in *The Cardinal*, beginning with the November 2013 flight (No. 233) and continuing through to April 2015

(No. 239). In the “Contents” list below, the source of each item is given in brackets.

Compiled and edited by
Hugh Casbourn and Betsy Baldwin
Winifred and David Wake

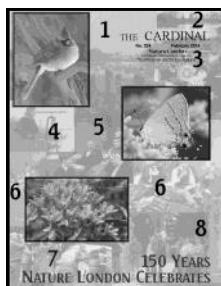
The Succession of Club Names

- 1864** – London Branch of the Entomological Society of Canada (of Ontario from 1871)
- 1890** – Botanical, Geological, Microscopical and Ornithological Sections formed
- 1903** – Ornithological Section became McIlwraith Ornithological Club
- 1965** – McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London
- 2009** – Nature London

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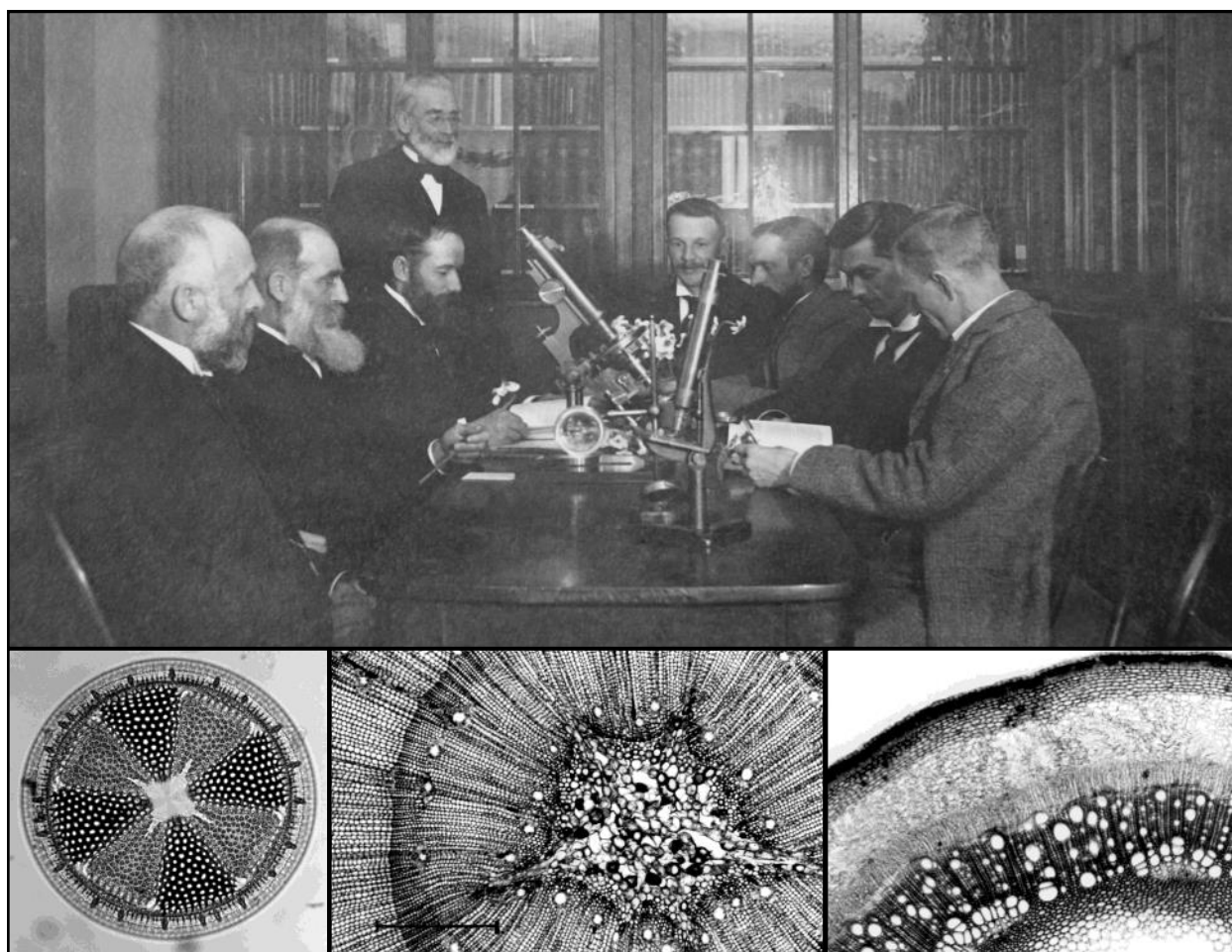
150TH ANNIVERSARY COVER

In February 2014, *The Cardinal* celebrated the club’s 150th with a colour photo montage on the front cover. The downside of the montage is that you have to bear with lengthy captions.

Background: To give a sense of time passing, which seems appropriate for an anniversary equal to that of the Charlottetown Conference of 1864, we have pulled older photos (1 to 7; most photographers unknown) from Nature London’s archives. At the **top left (1)** a group of teachers learns about Saunders Pond in 1925. **Top right (2)** shows another water body of significance to Nature London, Redmond’s Pond at Sifton Bog, in 1959. **Below the pond (3)**, W.E. Saunders relaxes with Mel Dale in the early part of the last century. **Below the cardinal (4)**, a young Frances Girling is spotting with a telescope in 1937, possibly at Rondeau (photo by Bill Girling). To the

right and below (5) is William Saunders and family in Ottawa in the late 1800s (see also page 4.) **Below left and right (6)** are two parts of a photo taken during the 1936 Federation of Ontario Naturalists conference, held at another place of significance to Nature London, Wonnacotts’ farm. At the **bottom left (7)** of the page, is a 1950s club outing to Hawk Cliff at Port Stanley. At the **bottom right (8)**, Mary Lord’s photo shows a leader and participants on the 2012 club trip to Mount Pleasant Cemetery, a place with important ties to club founder William Saunders (see pages 4 and 61).

Foreground: Colour photos highlight the major interests of Nature London’s early incarnations. The top photo, which we hope needs no identification, was taken by Gerard Pas and gives a nod to the Ornithological Section and later the McIlwraith Ornithological Club. Paying homage to the Entomological Society, the origin of our club, the centre colour photo by Stan Caveney shows a Grey Hairstreak butterfly. At the bottom, the early Botanical Section is recognized by Cathy Quinlan’s photo of Butterfly Weed (Orange Milkweed).



COVER of the April 2014 flight (No. 235) of *The Cardinal*: **Top:** Members of Botanical Section, Entomological Society of Ontario. Seated, from left: Alexander McQueen, J.A. Balkwill, Alexander Hotson, James H. Bowman, John Dearness, Robert Elliott, Frank Lawson. Standing: John Alston Moffat. In Society's room at YMCA, between 1896 and 1904. (Photo from the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library.) **Bottom:** Photos by **Barbara Bain** of microscope slides from John Dearness's collection. From left: Diatom (an alga) in Gum Thus (plant resin; slide dated 1894); cross-section of Scotch Pine twig (1901, scale bar about 500 micrometres); cross-section of Bittersweet vine (1900).

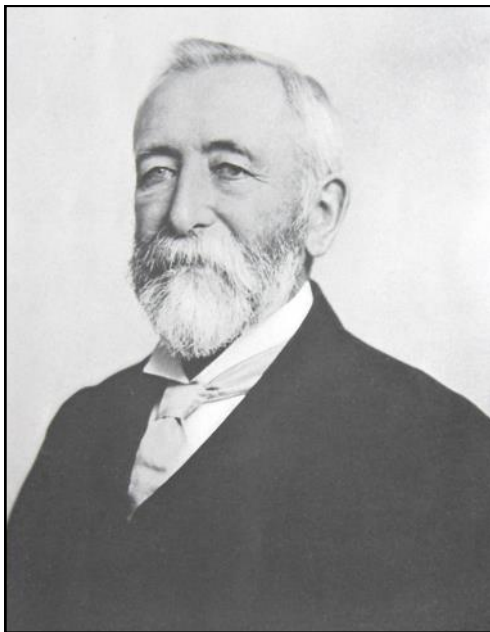
COVER of the August 2014 flight (No. 236) of *The Cardinal*: Our cover insect honoured Nature London's origin as the London Branch of the Entomological Society (see page 6). **Robin McLeod** took this photo of a **Common Green Darner**. These large dragonflies are indeed common in the London area. Look for them hunting smaller insects over meadows or ponds, or migrating southward – sometimes in large numbers – in the fall.

**150 YEARS:
THE NATURE LONDON STORY**

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William Saunders in later life. "He was before all things a lover of nature, and his passion found an outlet in the study of insects and plants." (Photo from the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library.)

time? William Saunders did so in a life of dazzling accomplishments. He was born in 1836, son of an English shoemaker, and the family emigrated to London, Canada when he was 12. He became an apprentice to James Salter, a druggist, a few years later. When he was 19 he opened his own drugstore on Dundas Street and that was the start of his very successful career.

William Saunders became dissatisfied with the drugs he could obtain for his store and started preparing his own medicinal extracts, the first person in Canada to do so. This led him to manufacture drugs which he sold to wholesale drug companies. He exhibited his drugs in various places including the World's Fair in Paris, 1886. He joined the American Pharmaceutical Association when he was 24 years old, became chair of the committee on the drug market in 1876, and in 1877 president of the Association. He was an original member of the Canadian Pharmaceutical Society which was formed in 1867, and after the Ontario College of Pharmacy Act in 1871, he helped found the Ontario College of Pharmacy (he was 35 years old). He served as its vice president for eight years, three years as president and then was on the Board of Examiners for five years. During this time he gave scholarly addresses on botanical drugs of the new world. When the new Western University of London Ontario (now Western University) opened in 1881, he taught *Materia Medica* in the medical faculty for the first two years. And his business success led to his election as a Director of the Huron and Erie Mortgage Corporation in 1876. He was president of the company from 1879 to 1887 and retired from the board in 1910.

The drug store, the pharmaceuticals – these were his career and he became very successful and highly respected. However, he earned even greater success and international distinction from what he considered his hobbies: an interest in the natural world and in horticulture. He collected a

Businessman, chemist, distinguished naturalist, agricultural researcher of note, academic lecturer, first director of Canadian Experimental Farms, president or director of several professional societies and founding member of two, distinguished award recipient: can you believe that a self-educated pioneer had accomplished all this in his life-

WILLIAM SAUNDERS

FOUNDING FATHER OF NATURE LONDON

Roslyn Moorhead



large number of natural specimens, particularly insects. His passion for entomology led him to co-found, along with Rev. C.J. Bethune, the Entomological Society of Canada in 1863 (see page 6). The following year, Saunders founded the London Branch of the ESC, the genesis of Nature London today. As important an event as that was for Nature London it was a minor item on the list of Saunders' achievements. He was president of the parent society in 1864/1865 and 1876 to 1887 and served as an officer for about 20 years. From 1873 to 1886 he was editor of the Society's internationally recognized scientific journal, *The Canadian Entomologist*, and contributed at least one paper in every issue after its inception until he resigned as editor in 1886. At the request of the Canadian government, the Society exhibited an insect collection at the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, and Saunders' collection of Lepidoptera formed a significant part of the display.

Gardening was a joy, and Saunders planted a huge number of fruit trees and bushes, as well as some flowers and native species, at first in his own garden, then on a 70-acre farm he acquired on Dundas Street just east of Pottersburg Creek and later on a six-acre plot he bought at what is now part of Mount Pleasant Cemetery. He was an early proponent of planting native trees for horticultural purposes. He developed a strong interest in plant diseases, drugs and insects and wrote many scientific papers carefully reporting his observations and findings. In 1870 (he was 34) the Ontario government asked him to investigate Colorado Potato Beetle which was becoming a major pest, and he wrote a thorough report detailing localities affected so far and steps taken in the US to deal with it.

Just as a lack of good drugs led him to start manufacturing his own, so too a scarcity of information prompted Saunders to publish *Insects Injurious to Fruits* (1883), which for decades served as the standard reference book on the topic. Similarly, the difficulty of finding good seeds for



William Saunders and his wife Sarah, their son Fred, and probably their daughter Annie, on the steps of the family home at the Experimental Farm in Ottawa.
(Photo from Nature London archives.)

the Canadian climate led to his work on hybridizing plants. He reported the results of his pioneering work on gooseberry, blackberry, grape, raspberry and pear hybrids to the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association in 1872. In 1875 he received praise for his red and black currant, raspberry and gooseberry hybrids. He developed two new roses, and in 1885 exhibited 29 varieties of grapes and nine seedlings all produced by himself. He became a director of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association in 1868 and the president in 1882. In 1885 the Association met in London and attention was drawn to the large number of trees which had been planted in the previous decade. For the first time London was referred to as the "Forest City". John Dearness wrote that "... many of the trees which are found on the streets of the city and its environs [are] due to the influence of William Saunders. He was one of the makers of London."

In 1885, the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa asked Saunders if he would investigate and report on the state of agriculture and agricultural research in Canada. He submitted his report in early 1886 recommending the establishment of Agricultural Research Stations. Parliament adopted the recommendations a few months later and Saunders was appointed Director of Experimental Farms. He tendered his resignations as president of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association and of the Entomological Society, and as editor of *The Canadian Entomologist*, and moved his household to Ottawa that year. Sons William and Henry stayed behind to run the business. His hobby had finally become his career and for the next 25 years he established and directed the Experimental Farms System, undoubtedly the crowning achievement of his many accomplishments. In his first year he established five experimental farms from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, which were known as the Dominion Experimental Farms. Other experimental stations were subsequently established. He did pioneering work in crossing species, and became one of the outstanding agriculturalists of his time. In 1911 he retired from his position as Director.

Saunders was the recipient of many honours. Among them was an honorary LL.D. degree from Queen's University

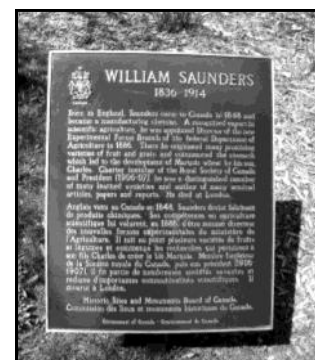
in 1896 and from the University of Toronto in 1904. He was awarded the CMG by his Majesty, King Edward VII in 1903. The first edition of the *American Men of Science* (1906) listed not only his name, but those of four of his five sons (including Will for his work in Ornithology, Oology and Botany), a notable distinction for a family and gratification indeed. Also in 1906 he was elected president of the Royal Society of Canada.

After retirement, William Saunders and his wife went on a trip to England and then returned to London, to a home at 355 Dufferin Street. He died in London in 1914 and was buried in the family plot at Mount Pleasant Cemetery. In 1936 a bronze plaque commemorating William Saunders was unveiled at the new William Saunders Building at the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa. In London, a plaque in his memory was erected in 1952 at the site of the Saunders family home, 380 Dundas Street.

(Ros Moorhead wears many Nature London hats. She is a member of the 150th Anniversary Committee and the Cardinal Editorial Committee.)

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Plaque to William Saunders at Campbell Park. (Photo by Dave Wake.)

During its 35 years in London (1871 to 1906), the library of the Entomological Society of Ontario grew steadily. Although most volumes pertained to insects, many were devoted to other aspects of natural history or to learning in general. The collection, now housed in the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library, included many rare and old books, including these.

(Photos by Dave Wake.)



Above: *The Cabinet of Oriental Entomology*, Westwood, J.O. (London: W. Smith, 1848). John Obadiah Westwood was an English entomologist and archaeologist who left his career in law to pursue his scientific interests. This copy of his work was donated by Eleanor O. Ormerod (1828 to 1901), a prominent British entomologist, to the Entomological Society of Ontario in 1887.

Far Left: *Caroli Linnaei Faune Svecica*, Linnaeus, Carl Von (Lugduni Batavorum: C. Wishoff Et G.J. Wishoff, 1746).

Left: *Systema Naturae*, Linnaeus, Carl Von, 9th ed. (Lugduni Batavorum: T. Haak, 1756).

These are two of the original publications by Carl Linnaeus (1707 to 1778) that were part of the original ESO Library.





THE NATURE LONDON STORY

PART I: THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS (1864 TO 1889)

Winifred Wake and David Wake

Tracing Nature London's history back to its roots entails a circuitous and fascinating journey. The story begins before 1864, with a remarkable young man named William Saunders, who operated a pharmacy in London (see page 4). On the side, Saunders was an accomplished botanist, entomologist and plant breeder. In 1862 Saunders and fellow insect enthusiast, the Rev. C.J.S. Bethune (then of Cobourg), teamed up to bring entomologists together in a formal organization. On April 16, 1863, they and seven others met in Toronto and founded the Entomological Society of Canada (hereafter referred to as the Society), with headquarters at the Canadian Institute in Toronto.

THE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY IN LONDON

The Early Years (1864 to 1867)

William Saunders' organizational skills and boundless energy soon resurfaced in his home city. On July 1, 1864, Saunders established the London Branch of the Entomological Society, with about a dozen members. Like Saunders, many were already proficient, self-taught entomologists. The list included John M. Denton (merchant tailor) and Edmund Baynes Reed (lawyer). Although the study of insects was the stated focus, many members also had interests and skills in other aspects of nature. Saunders, Reed and Denton were to provide many years of dedicated leadership to both the Branch and the parent Society.

In the early years, the London Branch held its monthly meetings in the homes of members. William Saunders was a regular and hospitable host. Sometime after his drugstore and living quarters were destroyed by fire in March 1864, he moved his growing family (eventually to number six children) to a large two-storey residence at 380 Dundas Street (currently the location of Campbell Park). Meetings were filled with lively discussions, and members assisted each other with identifications. At that time, the only way to accurately identify insects was by comparing them to specimens in a reference collection or to plates in the few, expensive books then available.

Members worked hard at developing both personal and Branch insect collections. Initially, the focus was primarily on Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) and Coleoptera (beetles). The modus operandi involved catching insects

(often in nets), then transferring them to collecting jars. Dead insects were pierced by long-shanked pins and mounted on boards. Beneath each specimen a neatly printed label gave its name, location, date and collector. For easy transfer to show-and-tell sessions at meetings, pinned

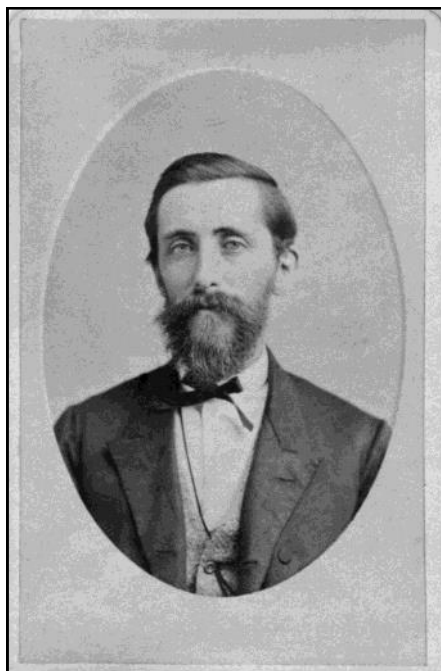
specimens were placed in cigar boxes, whose bottoms had been lined with sheet cork. Permanent collections were placed in cases made of wood and glass.

The Branch facilitated collecting efforts by buying large quantities of pins, setting boards, entomological cork and other supplies and reselling these to members at cost (e.g., 1000 pins for \$1). Among the exhibitors at the Provincial Agricultural Exhibition held in London in September 1865 were Reed (18 cases of native insects and six of English insects) and Saunders, still rebuilding his collection after the fire (15 cases of native insects). Over the years, these and other Branch members, including Denton and G.M. Innes (minister) were frequent prize winners at fairs and made it a policy to donate their earnings to the club.

There was much interest in studying the habits and life cycles of insects. In this pursuit, William Saunders played a prominent role. A report of a regular monthly meeting is illustrative. "Mr. Saunders exhibited specimens of the Tree Cricket, *Aecanthus niveus*, with examples of their destructive work on raspberry canes, and the

young wood of plum trees; this insect deposits its large eggs in a row in the centre of the twig or cane, and thus weakens it so as to cause it to break off from the weight of foliage in early spring . . ."

Weather permitting, field excursions were held on Monday mornings during the summer. The railway right-of-way, overgrown in weeds and shrubbery, was a favourite destination. Foliage was beaten with a stick to dislodge insects into an opened umbrella. The catch would be carefully examined and selected insects placed in jars. Saunders frequently brought home larvae plus accompanying food plants. Rising early each morning, he made notes on the progress of his charges. Attuned to the thinking of the times, Saunders was interested in assigning status to insects, categorizing them as either beneficial or injurious to humans and their crops. To do so, he amassed evidence of their behaviours and needs during all stages of their life cycles and in all seasons. He watched carefully for insects



William Saunders (1836 to 1914). As a young man he was so thin and spare of frame that others believed he would not live a long life. (Photo from the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library.)

that were susceptible to disease or parasitism or predation. He examined the contents of birds' stomachs to study the role birds played in controlling noxious insects. His observations formed the basis of hundreds of scientific papers.

The City Hall Years (1867 to 1872)

In the spring of 1867, the Branch moved to permanent quarters. This seems to have been part of an ambitious plan to substantially raise the profile of the club in the city and to attract new members. City Council agreed to provide space, rent free, on the top floor of City Hall on Richmond Street. A flurry of activity ensued as the rooms were fitted up. There were expenditures for lamps, coal oil, a screen stand, whitewashing and wall-papering. Furnishings included a table, chairs, cabinet, book case and books. Rooms at City Hall provided a central location where the Branch's insect collection and library could be built up and a common space where members could meet. The new location also enabled the Branch to showcase its activities by opening its doors to the public from time to time.

As the Branch was sorting out details of the move, its best-documented foray into ownership of optical equipment was also getting underway. A "lantern" (oxyhydrogen microscope and dissolving-view apparatus) was imported from England at a cost of \$195 – approximately \$5000 in today's money! The purchase was financed through advances from seven members, principally Saunders, Denton and Reed. The decision to assume such a large debt appears to have been a calculated one: the lantern was expected to pay for itself by means of public entertainments at which it was used to popularize the study of entomology. The microscope part was illuminated by burning limestone under a current of oxyhydrogen gas (a rather flammable arrangement!). The associated dissolving-view apparatus allowed a slide or object such as an insect to be projected on the wall. A prime use for such equipment was wowing an audience with displays of hugely magnified insects.

Fortunately, Saunders was experienced in handling explosion-prone chemicals.

In April and May 1867 the lantern was featured at several highly successful public open house exhibitions at City Hall. The apparatus projected slides of scenery, entomological illustrations and even some comic views (as well as the projectionist's fingers). There were also exhibits (presumably of insects) with commentary by Saunders, Denton, Reed and others. And, to ensure there was entertainment for every interest, there was a string band, a pianist and a show of gaseous lights! On one evening alone, attendance was estimated at 300. Membership in the Branch shot up to more than 50.

The parent Society in Toronto reacted with a sharply worded reprimand. It most decidedly did not approve of attracting new members through public entertainments of this sort. Without a sanctioned means of raising funds to pay for itself, the lantern became a white elephant. It was, however, later used intermittently for more modest educational efforts in other venues, including churches. The apparatus proved expensive to maintain and two years after purchase was put up for sale. There were no immediate takers, but finally, in February 1872, the Branch received \$100 for the lantern, and all outstanding loans were repaid.

More rewarding efforts at community outreach included popular talks about insects, delivered by Denton, who carried a large case of specimens with him. Saunders and Reed also visited Hellmuth College to judge collections of native insects made by students during summer vacation. The winning boy's entry contained 140 species in seven families, some species being new to the adjudicators!

A highlight each year for London entomologists was the local club's annual picnic. In 1868 the group also hosted the parent Society's annual meeting (which often took place in London). Five members from Toronto joined nine London members for the meeting, then stayed over to attend the Branch picnic the next day. "The following morn-



Field Day of the Entomological Society, east of London, July 8, 1868. **Standing**, left to right: Mr Symonds, Charles Chapman, John M. Denton, Rev. C.J.S. Bethune, William Saunders (with son, William E. Saunders in front), Dr J.H. Sangster, son of Dr J.H. Sangster, Professor Henry Croft, Rev. R.H. Starr; **sitting** on middle of fence: William Osler; **lying** on fence at right: Edmund Baynes Reed; **seated** on ground: Isaac Waterman and Mr Symonds. The Sangsters, Croft, Osler and Bethune were from the Toronto area; the others are from London. The photograph was taken by J.H. Griffiths, a member of the London Branch. (Photo from the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library.)



380 Dundas Street, home of William Saunders and his family from the mid-1860s until 1886, was the venue for many meetings of the London Branch and of the Entomological Society of Canada/Ontario. The insect collection destined for the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876 was prepared here.

Over the years many internationally renowned entomologists were hospitably entertained. In the backyard, William studied the natural history of countless insect species and carried out experiments on hybridization of fruit trees. The site is now occupied by Campbell Park.

(Photo from *The Canadian Entomologist*, 1939.)

ing, Wednesday, July 8, the members met at 8:30, and drove a few miles into the country for an entomological field day and picnic. On arriving at the selected place all betook themselves to the woods, fields and river side, and spent a few hours in the capture of insects of various orders; many rare and interesting specimens were taken . . . Two photographs of the members, in a group, were taken by Mr. Griffiths, as a memento of this . . . pleasant gathering . . . The next day, Thursday, a few of the members made an excursion to 'The Ponds,' a few miles south of London, and captured a number of very interesting specimens, including several *Polyommatus epixanthe* [Bog Copper] . . . The members from a distance all expressed themselves highly delighted with the unbounded hospitality and kindness of their London friends."

From its founding in 1864, the London Branch stood out as the strongest and most active of the divisions of the Entomological Society of Canada. For a few years before and after 1870, membership hovered around 30. Local members were well represented on the Council (executive committee) of the parent Society and had a strong voice in decisions made. Meanwhile, the Society operated from its home base in Toronto, at first publishing its proceedings in the Canadian Institute's *Canadian Journal of Industry, Science and Art*. In 1864 a preliminary list of Canadian Lepidoptera (144 species) was compiled, followed by an 1865 update that added 350 more species. The year 1867 saw the publication of the first list of Coleoptera (prepared by Saunders), which covered 55 families, 432 genera and 1231 species. Members of the Society were committed to the study of both scientific and economic entomology. The latter was a relatively new field, which pertained to insect pests that had an economic impact on farms and forests.

At the urging of Bethune and Saunders, the Society decided to produce a monthly periodical, *The Canadian*

Entomologist. Bethune, who then lived in Erindale (20 miles west of Toronto), was appointed editor. The first number, eight pages in length, came off the press on August 1, 1868. Thus was established the oldest entomological journal on the continent. In 1871, the production of *The Canadian Entomologist* was transferred to London. Bethune continued as editor assisted by Saunders, Reed and Denton, allowing the journal to expand.

News of *The Canadian Entomologist* spread rapidly. By 1871 it had taken its place as a respected international journal; many leading academic and professional entomologists from across the United States regularly contributed to its pages. During the 1870s, subscriptions flowed in to London from the far corners of the United States, Europe and the world.

In 1870, in recognition of the importance of entomology to agriculture, the Society received a grant of \$400 from the Ontario government. The funding was used to produce a report on insects noxious to agriculture, to expand *The Canadian Entomologist* to 240 pages per year, and to enhance both publications with a greater number of wood cuts. Prepared on behalf of the Society by Bethune, Reed and Saunders, the 64-page "Annual Report" on insects injurious to field and fruit crops for 1870 came out in early 1871. It consisted of three papers – on apple, grape and plum. So thorough was the account and so well written at a popular level that a printing of 3000 copies was speedily exhausted.

The upshot of the great success of the first "Annual Report" was that, in early 1871, Hon. John Carling, Commissioner of Agriculture for Ontario (and member of the legislature representing London) had legislation passed to incorporate the Society. By law, the Society's name became the Entomological Society of Ontario, with the Society to receive a yearly grant of \$500. In return, the Society had to continue to publish *The Canadian Entomologist* and to submit an "Annual Report" on insects injurious to agriculture, together with suggested remedies. Despite the name change, the Society continued to operate as a national organization. Following incorporation of the parent, the London Branch altered its bylaws to conform with the Society's new constitution.

When the Colorado Potato Beetle first appeared in Ontario, the Entomological Society was asked to investigate. Saunders and Reed visited the affected area (near Amherstburg), assessed the situation, studied the beetle's life cycle and experimented with various methods of control. Within weeks they submitted a report to the government. Saunders, a practising chemist familiar with arsenic, found Paris Green to be effective. The government was so impressed with the detailed information and practical utility of the report that the Society was firmly established as the government's go-to agency whenever farmers needed timely advice on how to control any new insect pest. In 1874 the Society's annual grant was increased to \$750.

Over the years, the "Annual Reports" of the Society continued to be so valuable to the agricultural community that the government distributed them widely throughout the province, where they were eagerly read. The reports contained basic life history information on insects injurious to agricultural crops, including fruit trees. They also offered practical advice on methods of suppressing pests of current

concern, whether by rotating crops, destroying egg masses during the winter, spraying foliage with Paris Green in the spring, or applying a mixture of soap and washing soda to tree bark.

In the early 1870s, the Society underwent an unprecedented surge in activity as it fulfilled its obligations to the government. Although Bethune in Port Hope continued to play a major role, the Society's operations came to be concentrated in London, where they were capably executed by a small number of members of the local Branch. In May 1871 renovations were undertaken to improve the London Branch's quarters at City Hall. Also in that year the parent Society's extensive insect collection was transferred to London. But with most major undertakings of the parent Society being handled in London, the Branch's rooms at City Hall were no longer adequate.

The Years at 216 Dundas Street (1872 to 1880)

On July 1, 1872, the parent Society officially transferred its headquarters from Toronto to London. At this time, Society membership stood at 300, about half the members residing in Canada and half in the United States, plus a few in England. Most members were *de facto* subscribers to *The Canadian Entomologist* rather than active workers. To accommodate the final phase of establishing the Society's operations in London, the London Branch arranged for the rental of larger rooms to house Branch and parent in combined premises. These "more accessible and convenient apartments" were located on the second floor of 216 Dundas Street, above Brown and Morris Hardware. The new quarters were a bright and cheerful space, with south- and east-facing windows and a side entrance on Clarence. "Members and visitors will find in these rooms the cabinets and library of the Society, and every facility for the comparison and study of specimens." Library books, insect collections and associated furniture all had to be integrated. Branch members looked after curatorial duties.

Over the years, the Society's holdings gradually grew, by means of purchase, donation and bequest. During the 1870s, the Society earmarked funds of as much as \$100 annually to buy books, with a committee of London members empowered to make selections. While most acquisitions related to insects, wide-ranging interests in natural history are illustrated by samples of ores, books on birds and plants, and even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In 1872, the Society was the recipient of a bequest of "a large cabinet of 15 drawers and a good useful microscope."

Insect collections were augmented when opportunities arose. In early 1874 donations of numerous Coleoptera specimens from New York and several boxes of European insects from the British Museum were received. Over the decades the Society's rooms in London welcomed many youngsters and adults who dropped in with a question about an insect or to spend time viewing the collections. One teenager, T.H. Hill, was so well mentored that he was inspired to develop a collection of 20 cases of local insects.

In 1873, Bethune resigned as editor of *The Canadian Entomologist* and was replaced by Saunders. Henceforth, all aspects of editing, publishing and distributing the journal were consolidated in London. Under Saunders' watch, *The Canadian Entomologist* maintained its position in the

foremost ranks of scientific journals of its type. Included in it were papers on both scientific and practical (economic) entomology, with an emphasis on the latter. Yet, perhaps mindful of grumblings from some quarters that the journal was too scientific, Saunders introduced monthly instalments of "Entomology for Beginners". Saunders himself was a prolific writer. From Volume 1, Number 1 in 1868 until he resigned as editor in 1886, he wrote at least one article in every issue for a cumulative total of hundreds of papers. A perusal of *The Canadian Entomologist* reveals papers were submitted for publication from far and wide. In reference to Volume 9 (1877), Saunders, ever the scientist, commented with measured pride: "The contributors [45] . . . included the names of nearly every Entomologist of note on the continent. During the year we have published two handsome lithographic plates, one on wood-boring beetles, illustrating eight species; the other, which is printed in colours, exhibits the full-grown larva of that rare and interesting moth, *Samia Columbia*." By 1876, the print run for the publication was 600.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the Society's "Annual Reports" to the Legislature of Ontario also originated in London. Although interested parties elsewhere in the province contributed information and, to some extent papers, many of the authors and papers hailed from London. Saunders and Bethune were invariably the primary writers, but contributions also came from Londoners such as Reed and Joseph Williams (chemist). While the editorial content and illustrations were assembled in London, the actual printing was done in Toronto, under the auspices of the Legislative Assembly. In 1874, thanks to the government grant, authors were paid \$2 per page (up from \$1 the previous year).

Seeing to the journal and the "Annual Report" to the government was time consuming. Shortly after the Society's headquarters and these two undertakings became established in London, the number of members in the local Branch dropped off. Perhaps not surprisingly, the names of some of the "missing" members appear among the hardest workers for the parent Society. In all likelihood, local entomologists lacked sufficient time and energy to contribute



216 Dundas Street, where rooms on the second floor served as home of the London Branch and its parent Society from 1872 to 1880. During this period the ground floor was occupied by Brown and Morris hardware.

(Photo taken in 1960s by W.W. Judd, from Nature London archives.)

significantly to both Branch and parent, and some chose to focus on just one. Amazingly, Saunders, despite enormous involvement with the Society (president from 1876 to 1887, editor from 1873 to 1886, and a primary overseer of the “Annual Report” of Injurious Insects from 1870 onward), was the most active and faithful of all Branch members during the 1870s.

After the arrival of the parent Society in London in 1872, the Branch continued to annually elect an executive, which included representatives to the Council (executive committee) of the parent. In addition, several other Londoners (some of them also active in the Branch) usually occupied key positions with the Society. By this arrangement, current and former members of the London Branch, through the medium of the Council (which met locally as needed throughout the year) made the decisions that governed the day-to-day running of the parent group. The full Society Council generally met once a year at the annual general meeting, which was often held in London.

In March 1875 a request from the Dominion Parliament was passed on to the London Branch, which agreed to oversee the preparation of an exhibit on behalf of the parent Society. The task was to assemble a large collection of insects, drawn from the private collections of Society members, to represent Canada at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. The collection, which ultimately consisted of 86 glass cases, including 45 of Lepidoptera, was assembled at the home of William Saunders. During the summer of 1875 two out-of-town members of the Society stayed at the Saunders home for many weeks, working on the display by day and playing chess by night.

In 1876, John Denton described the involvement of the London Branch in assembling the exhibit: “. . . interest and zeal was especially apparent during the earlier months of the year, when the collection of the Parent Society was being prepared for exhibition at Philadelphia. Then meetings were frequently held, and labours in connection with this undertaking assiduously followed day after day, and we believe that to the efforts of the members of the London branch may be attributed a large measure of the success which has attended the preparation of this collection . . .”

The exhibit was duly shipped to Philadelphia, where it attracted rave reviews, being pronounced by those in the know as the most complete collection of North American insects ever assembled. The government of Canada later minted a special silver medal, and presented it to the parent Society. In February 1877 the Branch held an open house to allow the public to view the recently returned exhibit from Philadelphia. This proved to be a great success.

Regular Branch meetings had been suspended in 1876 while members were busy preparing the Philadelphia ex-

hibit. When it returned, there was a brief resurgence of energy. “The experiment of placing the Centennial Collection on exhibition in the rooms was so favourably received by the public, that it has been decided to take steps to the more frequent admittance of non-members, and in this way it is hoped and believed something may be done to create a wider and deeper interest in our favourite branch of science.”

Despite those brave words by a member of the Branch executive, thereafter the frequency of meetings tapered off.

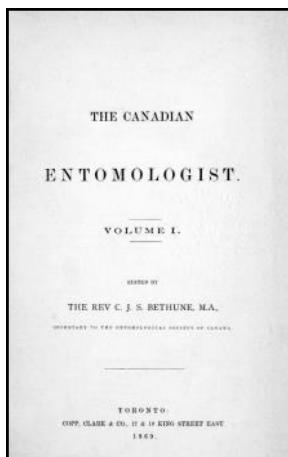
Victoria Hall at 394 Clarence Street (starting in 1880)

In 1880, the annual grant to the Society from the provincial government was raised to \$1000, and remained at that level through the decade. After eight years above the hardware store, in 1880 the parent Society requested a change, and new quarters were obtained. Members of the Branch moved Society possessions to the top floor of Victoria Hall at 394 Clarence Street, the recently opened headquarters of the Y.M.C.A. The London Branch remained there until it was disbanded, after which the parent Society occupied the rooms until 1896. Thus, in the Society’s quarters in Victoria Hall, on March 12, 1881, the Council of the parent group met to formally agree to the request by the London Branch that it be dissolved. On the surface, this would appear to be a sad occasion. It was tempered, however, by the announcement that, beginning that very evening, the Society would start holding regular meetings every month.

In suspending its operations, the London Branch merged its work and membership with that of the parent Society. A definite advantage of the demise of the Branch was the elimination of the need to keep two sets of books, elect two sets of officers, run two sets of meetings and to apportion expenses and ownership within shared premises. Whatever the actual reasons, it is certain that the move to suspend the Branch had the blessing of William Saunders, for he was both an active member of the Branch and the president of the Society.

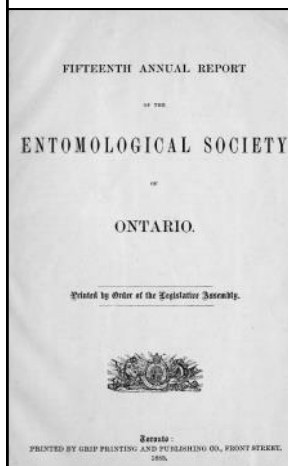
As the guiding light for both groups, Saunders ensured the transition to the model of holding regular “ordinary meetings” of the parent Society was a smooth one. It was decided to meet every second Friday evening. Interest in the Society grew and several new members signed up. Attendance increased, one evening reaching a high of ten. Donations of books and specimens were received, and a new microscope was purchased. The count of volumes in the library reached 550.

No ordinary meetings were reported during 1882 or 1883 and only two were documented in 1884. In 1882 the Federal Minister of Fisheries asked the Society to prepare a display of Canadian insects to send to the International



Above: Cover of *The Canadian Entomologist*, volume 1, published 1869 (including numbers 1 to 12, 1868-1869).

Below: Cover of the *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Entomological Society of Ontario*, 1884 (published 1885). (Photos by Dave Wake.)



Fisheries Exhibition in London, England in 1883. Reed assembled and sent 40 cases of insects that were either injurious to fish or eaten by fish. The exhibit was awarded a very handsome silver medal. A government grant of \$200 covered costs.

In 1886 William Saunders left London to take up duties as the first director of the Dominion Experimental Farm system based in Ottawa. At that time he stepped down as President of the Society, and relinquished the editorship of *The Canadian Entomologist*. Bethune reoccupied the role of editor. Saunders, genial friend and driving force behind the London group, had never missed a Branch meeting or a regular meeting. Given the important work he was doing on many fronts, and especially with the Society, it is truly remarkable that he never wavered in his commitment to the little group of entomologists in London. Perhaps he realized that every truly great organization is underpinned by healthy grassroots that give it strength and depth. Saunders always had time for nurturing and educating others, for it was he who provided much of the content for meetings of London entomologists from the 1860s to the 1880s.

Although the Society maintained its official headquarters in London, it appears that the local members did not have the capacity to carry on regular club meetings after Saunders' departure. London members, occupying key positions on Council, continued to care for the library and collections and to run the Society's affairs. In the latter half of the decade, much of the work seems to have been carried out by Reed, Denton and W.E. Saunders, son of William Saunders.

Meetings, however, are not the only indicator of activity. For example, in 1886, at the request of the Dominion government, the Society's entire collection of Canadian insects (some 10,000 in all) was sent to the Indian and Colonial Exhibition in London, England. London entomologists assisted in preparing and shipping the exhibit.

The Society's rooms, with their well-filled cabinets of insects and well-stocked bookshelves, remained in place. Insect collections were augmented and the library grew steadily, with additions of volumes on mammals, birds and botany as well as insects. By 1889, under the care of the kindly and efficient Reed, the library contained more than 1000 volumes. In that year, the Society's rooms and collections "had frequently been opened to the public and . . . many very pleasant evenings had been spent among the microscopes, books and cabinets."

The Canadian Entomologist continued to be printed and mailed in London. The collection of electrotypes grew

over the years. Specimens in the Society's collection were the basis of engravings used to illustrate the "Annual Reports," which now relied on a greater diversity of authors than in the 1870s.

The Entomological Society, during its first 25 years, was sustained by a small but very competent and dedicated group of amateurs. Their efforts had raised its work and its reputation to professional levels, attaining international respect in scholarly and economic arenas. At the same time, the Society still accommodated in a small way those ordinary citizens who aspired to nothing more than a love of nature and insects as an abiding hobby.

As the 1880s drew to a close, big changes were in the wind for the Entomological Society. Watch the next issue of *The Cardinal* for an account of a reawakening of local organized activity of the Entomological Society in London.

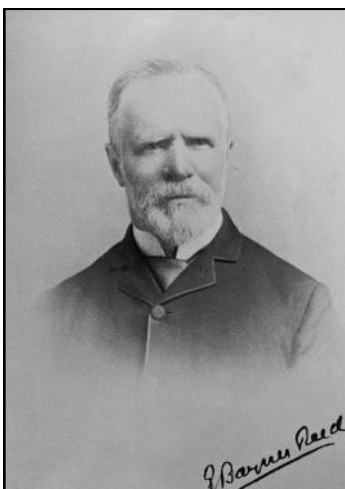
(Winifred and Dave Wake are Nature London's Archivists and members of the club's 150th Anniversary Committee. They share a long-standing interest in the club's history.)

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to Pat Dewdney for editorial help in shortening a much longer earlier version of this article.

SOURCES

The number of sources in which we were able to find information pertinent to this article is truly amazing. Included are newspapers of the day, minute books and account books of the London Branch of the Entomological Society of Canada/Ontario, and minute books of the Entomological Society of Canada/Ontario. Also consulted were branch reports, council reports, financial statements, annual reports, librarian's reports, president's addresses, historical accounts, anniversary summaries, memorial tributes, etc. of the Entomological Society of Canada/Ontario contained in *The Canadian Entomologist*, the *Canadian Journal of Industry, Science and Art*, and the *Annual Report of the Entomological Society of Ontario*. Numerous miscellaneous documents and papers relating to the Entomological Society and its members have also been examined. The above material has been variously accessed in the Nature London archives, the London Room of the London Public Library, the Taylor Library

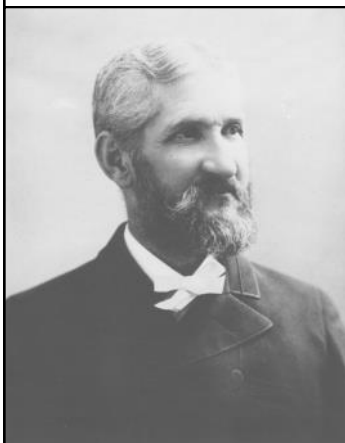
at Western University, the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library, and online. We are indebted to W.W. Judd for his annotated minutes and account books, as well as his books on early naturalists and natural history societies, and to Elsie Pomeroy for her book on the Saunders family.



Two tireless workers in both the London Branch and the parent Entomological Society:

Edmund Baynes Reed (above), a London lawyer, active until he moved to Victoria, BC in 1890, and John M.

Denton, a merchant tailor, active until his death in 1896. (Reed photo from the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library; Denton photo from the Nature London archives.)





THE NATURE LONDON STORY

PART II: 1890 TO 1913

David Wake and Winifred Wake

Authors' Note: In Part I of this series, we discussed the first 25 years of Nature London's precursor organizations, including the founding of the Entomological Society of Canada in 1863 and the London Branch of the Society in 1864, the renaming of the Society as the Entomological Society of Ontario in 1871 and its move to London in 1872, and the closing of the London Branch in 1881. In Part II, we consider activities of London naturalists from 1890 to 1913.

The year 1890 brought significant changes for the Entomological Society of Ontario (ESO), and especially for its operations in London. Edmund Baynes Reed, a founding member, left London for British Columbia. Reed was described as "active and zealous", having served at various times as Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, Auditor, Librarian and Curator. He contributed many articles to ESO Annual Reports and was instrumental in the acquisition of important scientific books for the Society's library. London entomologists keenly regretted the loss of this valued member.

In April 1890, local members met to explore the possibility of establishing sections that would "... extend the operations of the society beyond the strict limits of entomology". Special interest groups were already active in other learned societies of the day, including the Canadian Institute, the Hamilton Scientific Association, the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

ESO members in London set about establishing four sections, dedicated to the study of Botany, Geology, Microscopy, and Ornithology. An organizational meeting took place on May 3, 1890 in the ESO rooms, then located in Victoria Hall, 394 Clarence Street.

Sections functioned independently, electing officers, setting membership fees and arranging regular meetings. Some individuals were active in more than one section. As they had done for the previous 25 years, London members continued to play an active role in the activities of the parent Society. In the Annual Report for 1891, we read that "the formation of these sections has proved so successful and that it has led to an increase of our numbers and the performance of much valuable work".

In 1892, the Society's President, the Rev. Dr. C.J.S. Bethune reported: "The results have been most satisfactory, and the cheerful assistance given by the members of one section to those of another has been most useful ... The result is to make London, the headquarters of the Society, a

centre of scientific work for the peninsula of Ontario, and to attract its residents, especially the young, into the delight-giving paths of Natural Science." In 1894 another President, W.H. Harrington of Ottawa, referred to London as "the Entomological Mecca to which we annually resort to renew our strength and zeal ... and to arrange our plan of campaign for the coming year."

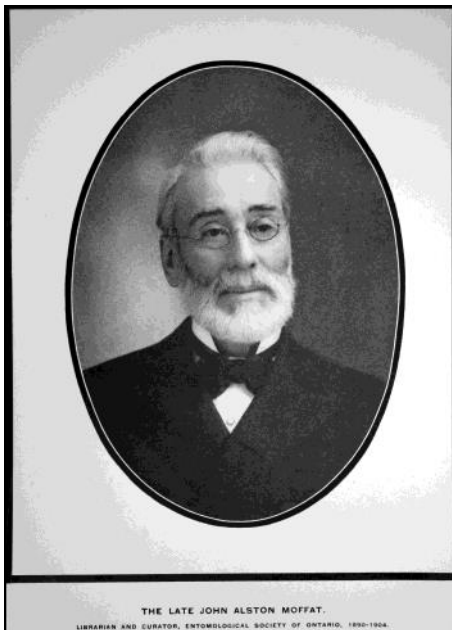
In 1890 John Alston Moffat, supported by a modest honorarium, moved from Hamilton to become the Society's Librarian and Curator. In his new position, Moffat, a long-time insect collector and contributor to *The Canadian Entomologist*, made arrangements for the rooms to be open on a regular basis for visitors. He soon established himself as the Society's welcoming face. In 1891, he reported 1168 volumes in the library.

Each year, in the Society's Annual Report, there are words of commendation regarding Moffat. In 1896, for example, John Dearness of London, President at the time, expressed "satisfaction with the careful manner in which the Curator, Mr J. Alston Moffat, continues to look after the collection of specimens, scientific instruments and library of the Society. Visitors have found him in constant attendance even outside of the hours at which he is expected to be present. Any one, whether allied with the Society or not, seriously studying any phase of insect life, has been cheerfully assisted by him."

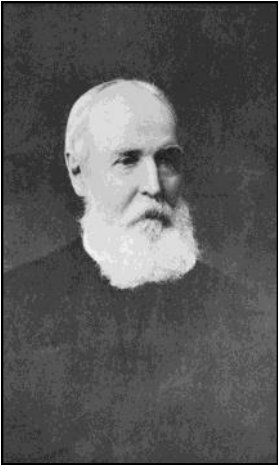
John Denton, an original member of the London Branch in 1864, died in 1896 at age 66. In three decades of devoted service, Denton served on the

Executive of the London Branch, on the Council and Executive (including as Treasurer and Vice-President) of the parent Society, and Vice-Chairman of the Microscopical Section. Although a tailor by trade, Denton held natural history as his passion. Bethune, in praising Denton, referred to him as an authority on economic entomology who "was frequently called upon to address meetings of farmers and fruit growers and give them the benefit of his knowledge and experience".

In November 1896, after 16 years in Victoria Hall, the Society moved its headquarters to the "fine new building" of the YMCA, on the west side of Wellington Street, south of Queens Avenue. The new rooms were "more accessible, commodious and better lighted". Members were pleased to "escape from the beating of drums and other noises from the Salvation Army", which had occupied the lower level of Victoria Hall. Unfortunately, heating in the new space was inadequate.



John Alston Moffat was appointed ESO Librarian and Curator in 1890. (Photo from the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library.)



C.J.S. Bethune was a founding member of the Society, active for many years, and a resident of London for a few years. (Photo from the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library.)

John Dearness, in his presidential address for 1896, encouraged members to promote nature study for children. In his professional life, Dearness was an educator, and would later publish a book entitled *The Nature Study Course*.

In 1899, the Society's activities in London were strengthened by the arrival of the Rev. C.J.S. Bethune from Port Hope. Since the ESO's founding in 1863, he had worked tirelessly for the Society in many capacities, including many years as editor of *The Canadian Entomologist*. In London, Bethune became active in the Botanical and Microscopical sections and continued his editorial duties.

While Bethune brought new energy to the local group, the expansion of the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) in Guelph had a negative influence on the Society's London operations. Over a period of years, key members moved from London to

Guelph. William Lochhead, active in the Botanical and Microscopical sections, left London in 1898 to become Professor of Biology at OAC. S.B. McCready, a year after being elected Chairman of the Botanical Section, relocated to Guelph in 1905 to assume duties at OAC.

The Society suffered a significant loss in February 1904 when the esteemed and much-loved John Alston Moffat died at the age of 80. In tribute, Bethune remarked that Moffat "endeared himself to all with whom he came in contact by his kindness and courtesy. It was always a pleasure to him to identify specimens, and to exhibit the beautiful objects in the Society's cabinets to anyone interested in natural history."

After Moffat's death, Bethune assumed the responsibilities of Librarian and Curator. By 1904, the room at the YMCA was considered to be "... too small for the steadily increasing library and collections", the tally of books by then numbering 1832. That fall, after eight years at the YMCA, the Society moved next door to the Public Library, at the corner of Wellington Street and Queens Avenue.

By 1903, the Geological Section had suspended opera-

tions, although the other three sections remained active, and study of entomology continued. In 1903/1904 entomology meetings took place on Saturday evenings, alternating with those of the Botanical and Microscopical sections. In the following season, however, there were no formal meetings of the sections, but "classes" were held twice a month for "practical instruction in the elements of entomology . . ." In the spring of 1905, botanical outings were held. Efforts at public outreach continued, with lectures in London and area by Bethune (insects) and Saunders (birds).

Now we will take a look at each of the four sections.

Botanical Section

The Botanical Section first met on May 3, 1890, "immediately following the adjournment of the general meeting" at which the creation of sections had been approved. The group decided to meet on Saturday evenings, and arranged to purchase copies of H.B. Spotton's *Flora*. At meetings, knowledgeable members used pressed specimens to teach others how to identify plants. The first field trip took place at Springbank on June 14. In July, six members travelled to Komoka by train for a field day. Disembarking "one mile west of the station", they walked through the swamp, returning along the tracks to the station. Meetings continued until September and resumed the following February. At the end of the 1891 field season, the Section's herbarium held 300 specimens.

John Dearness, the first Chairman of the Botanical Section, was a long-time member of the Entomological Society. He was also a key figure in the Microscopical Section and served the parent Society as Vice-President from 1893 to 1895 and President from 1895 to 1897.

Through the 1890s, field trips were organized to places such as Pond Mills, Delaware, Dorchester, and Woodstock. Some trips were shared with other sections. For example, the microscopists invited the botanists along on an outing on May 7, 1892. Individual members also travelled widely, with John Dearness visiting the Niagara peninsula, and Dearness and others collecting plants in the Port Franks area.

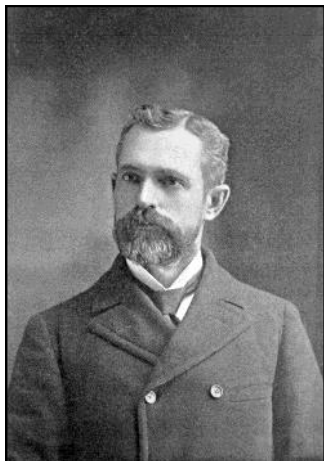
At the May meeting in 1893, W.E. Saunders presented a paper on the "Plants of May in the London District". Many of the wildflowers discussed can still be seen today. Exceptions include Yellow Ladyslipper (*Cypripedium pubescens*) at "Griffith's Pond" (Saunders Pond). Alas, this species is now unknown at Westminster Ponds. The Pink



The ESO moved to the YMCA on Wellington Street in 1896 (left) and then to the London Public Library on Queens Avenue at Wellington Street in 1904.

(Photos from the Nature London archives.)





John Dearness about 1900.
(Photo from the Archival and
Special Collections of the
University of Guelph
Library.)

Ladyslipper (*C. acaule*), also found at the ponds, has fared better, and a few specimens can still be seen in the 21st century.

To aid in recruitment of new members, in 1892 the Botanical Section developed a circular “setting forth the benefits to be derived from membership . . .” The minute book unfortunately is silent on the success of this circular. Over time, a pattern developed, by which the Botanical Section met during spring and summer, and the Microscopical Section met during fall and winter, with many members in common.

As the 1890s drew to a close, interest in the Botanical Section declined and attendance

dropped. No minutes were recorded between July 1898 and May 4, 1901. Some botanical work was being carried out, however, as the parent Society’s Annual Report for 1899 cites three new plant species found.

In 1900, W.E. Saunders (son of William, see page 4) presented a paper entitled the “Planting, Care and Pruning of the Trees in the Parks and Streets of the City” at a joint session of the parent Society and the London Horticultural Society. Saunders was highly critical of current planting and tree-care practices. He advocated the planting of a greater diversity of species, including nut trees, “which render the parks attractive to the squirrels and the birds and the children . . .” The ESO subsequently passed a resolution calling on City Council to have its shade tree program handled by a “small committee of citizens”. Clearly, the Society’s interests were broader than insects only.

In 1902, the Botanical Section held only one field excursion, “to Komoka, favourite collecting ground near London; it was thoroughly enjoyed by the few botanists and entomologists who attended.” Indoor meetings during the early 1900s involved review and identification of specimens that had been collected by members.

The Botanical Section operated until 1904. In the final season, nine indoor meetings were held, between May and October. The average attendance was nine with a high of 17. Only two “field-days” took place, one in Dorchester, and one in Komoka. Part of each indoor meeting was devoted to the study of plant life, with the remaining time devoted to the classification and history of collected specimens. Although the section held no formal meetings in 1905, classes in botany were offered during the spring. Plants collected during field excursions were identified in subsequent indoor sessions.

Microscopical Section

In Victorian times, there was great interest in all things scientific, including the natural world. This passion for knowledge of nature led to the founding of the Entomological Society in the first place. Microscopes were one of the tools used by the Society in its study of insects. It is natural, then, that members wanted to improve their skills in microscopy. Organizations devoted to microscopy existed

throughout North America – in 1893, an American publication, *The Microscope*, published a list of 50 such organizations, three of which were in Canada. At that time, the London group owned two microscopes – a Carpenter and Westley monocular, and a Zentmayer binocular.

At the first meeting of the Microscopical Section on November 15, 1890, James H. Bowman was elected Chairman, soon to be replaced by John Denton. At this meeting and the next, Bowman, a professor at the Medical School, gave instructions on how to use the microscope. Members who owned microscopes brought their instruments in to share with others. Meetings of the Microscopical Section mostly took place during fall and winter. Some members of the section, including Professor Bowman, were active in the Botanical Section during the summer.

At indoor meetings, members took turns providing instruction on topics such as preparation of slides; treatment of samples to be placed on slides; and examination of algae, green plants, fungi, bacteria and insects. In October 1891, a field trip to Pond Mills yielded specimens that were examined at an indoor meeting the next day.

During the 1891/1892 season, the Microscopical Section met 13 times. The total membership was 12, with an average attendance of nine. That season, the section gave demonstrations at the Teachers Association and at Hellmuth Ladies College. John Dearness, prominent in both Botanical and Microscopical section meetings, provided instruction on various aspects of microscopy and biology. A number of microscope slides prepared by John Dearness (see front cover) are still extant at Western University.

Discussions at the Microscopical Section sometimes ventured into other topics. On October 22, 1898, there is mention of recent bird sightings and a story about a mink. At the same meeting, W.E. Saunders discussed the new Bausch & Lomb – Zeiss field glasses, “which contains 3 sets of prisms and for which many advantages are claimed”.

The Microscopical Section organized special events for external groups, including the 1903 exhibition for the “Daughters of the Empire”. In the final season, 1903/1904, there were 13 meetings with an average attendance of nine. The last minutes of the section record the meeting of April 23, 1904, when 12 people were present. The topic was Practical Microscopy, presented by John Dearness.

The Microscopical Section was the most successful of the four sections formed in 1890 – it met each winter from 1890 to 1904, without the “gaps” experienced by other sections.

Geological Section

The first meeting of the Geological Section took place in the Society’s rooms on Friday, May 14, 1890. Dr Solon Woolverton was elected Chairman, a position he held for most of the next 13 years. Woolverton, a dentist, had a great interest in Geology, and lectured on the subject at Western University from 1895 to 1920.

The section met weekly on Wednesday, from May through November of 1890. The first outing was a field trip to St Marys on July 1, and, in mid-July, the geologists joined the Botanical Section in a field trip to Komoka. Lectures at weekly meetings were organized like a course in Geology, following the textbook by the British geologist Geike.



Members of the Geological Section of the Entomological Society of Ontario in the “rooms” at the YMCA on Wellington Street. Around the table, **from left:** (Unidentified), George Kirk, William Percival, Solon Woolverton (Chairman), Josiah Wilson, Mr Spettigue, James F. Sangster. John Alston Moffat is partially obscured in the right background. (Photo from the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library.)

During 1893/1894, the Rev. C.H. Andras became Chairman of the Geological Section. Often accompanied by Woolverton, he travelled around the region energetically searching for minerals and fossils, which he exhibited at meetings. In November 1893, he reported on his geological trip up the Medway. Alas, Andras did not stay long in London, and the section lost an important member when he moved to Alberta.

In 1894/1895, the number of members increased, with attendance at meetings reaching as high as 15. A highlight of the year was an October visit to the Mammoth Caves in Kentucky, undertaken by Dr Woolverton and Mr William Percival. Upon their return to London, Woolverton and Percival provided detailed reports about this trip at several meetings.

Members travelled farther afield in search of geological features in 1896. George Kirk visited mineral deposits in BC; Mr Brown was prospecting along the north shore of Lake Superior; Mr A. Blackburn was “opening mines” in the Lake of the Woods district; and Dr Woolverton collected samples from the gold fields of Hastings County. During summer excursions in later years, Woolverton visited the Parry Sound area and Manitoulin Island. Other members visited the “oil districts” near Dutton and Sarnia.

Locally, there are occasional references to the place we know today as the Sifton Bog Environmentally Significant Area. Each of the sections reports visits to the “Spruce Bog” or “Redmond’s farm.” In 1899, the Geological Section undertook investigations at the “peat bed” on Redmond’s farm, to examine the feasibility of mining peat for fuel. Exploitation of science for economic benefit was a recurring theme in Victorian times.

A highlight in 1900 was the discovery of bones, thought to be from a mastodon or mammoth, in West Nis-souri Township. Woolverton visited the site, and the bones were displayed at the Western Fair. There was talk of establishing a local museum for items such as these, but nothing happened.

Presentations at indoor meetings sometimes strayed

from geology to topics that included astronomy, production of heat by the human body, and the mystery of circulation. Little wonder then that the minutes of September 24, 1901 record a motion directing future meeting topics to be limited to paleontology, mineralogy and geology.

There are no entries in the minute book after this meeting, but other sources report continuing activity during 1901 and 1902, with weekly meetings and a number of field expeditions. In 1903, the Report of the ESO Council mentions that the Geological Section had suspended its operations. It is not clear what factors led to the demise of the Geological Section. Eight members were present at the meeting in September 1901, and the newly elected Chairman, George Kirk, was described as a capable and energetic member.

Ornithological Section

The first meeting of the Ornithological Section took place on May 5, 1890. W.E. Saunders was elected Chairman. The group settled into a schedule of meeting once every two weeks during May and June. When the Section reconvened in September, it met once a month. Most meetings were held in the ESO’s rooms, but two took place at the home of W.E. Saunders, 240 Central Avenue.

In 1891, the group held monthly indoor meetings from January to June. In March, there was a comment about the abundance of Snowy Owls during the winter, with members having heard of eight or ten. At the same meeting, there was mention of the first Carolina Wren for Canada, which had been shot near Forest.

On the first known outing (January 10, 1891), three members visited Peters Swamp (south of Oxford Street, west of present-day Proudfoot Lane). The only bird recorded was a chickadee, although the party observed tracks of several mammals. A second trip was scheduled for February 25 to the “Spruce Swamp”, and a third to Komoka on May 16.

In 1891, the ornithologists published a “List of Birds Known to Breed in Middlesex County Ontario”. Birds were placed in three categories, based on their feeding habits: (a) decidedly beneficial, (b) neutral or nearly so, (c) possibly injurious. Crow, Blue Jay and Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s hawks were all identified as possibly injurious. Classifications were likely related to perceived impact on agriculture.

Regular meetings continued through 1892 and 1893 but, by 1894, the Ornithological Section stopped meeting. In addition to being Chairman of the Ornithological Section, W.E. Saunders was



The home of W.E. Saunders as it was in the early 1900s, when the Ornithological Section met there. (Photo from the Nature London archives.)



J.E. Keays was elected Chairman of the Ornithological Section in 1900. (Photo from the Nature London archives.)

the Secretary of the ESO and participated in some activities of the Botanical and Microscopical sections.

The Ornithological Section was revived in January 1900 when J.E. Keays was elected Chairman and W.E. Saunders Secretary. At the first meeting, Saunders reported on his experiences at the November 1899 meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union in Philadelphia. Meetings during 1900 took place at the homes of members, with most at the residence of W.E. Saunders where he kept study skins of many species of birds in a "bird room" on the third floor.

In 1901, the Ornithological Section discussed reports of opossum, a species that had not been recently recorded in Southern Ontario. One specimen was taken at Port Colborne and two at Rondeau. It is interesting that the "bird" group was taking note of mammals! During that year, membership stagnated, with an average attendance of three or four at the nine meetings held. During 1902, the section gathered one Friday a month at Saunders' home, where papers were presented by members. These were later published in the *Ottawa Naturalist*.

At a February 1902 meeting members discussed a new book by C.W. Nash, *Birds in Relation to Agriculture*, which advocated the shooting of hawks and owls. Saunders criticized this position, telling of a Great Horned Owl whose stomach contained 13 mice. He argued that "on the basis of 5 mice per night, these owls would consume in the neighbourhood of 2000 per year. It was considered that a valuation of 1 ct each for the damage a mouse might do in its lifetime was very moderate and at this rate, each [owl] is worth \$20.00 a year to the farmer . . ."

Following a request by the section to the ESO, the new name McIlwraith Ornithological Club came into effect in February 1903. The year-end report of August 31, 1903 noted the loss of two important members. Mr Harry Gould, described as "one of our most active workers", moved to Alberta. Robert Elliott of Plovers Mills died at the age of 44. Held in high regard by the members of the ESO, Elliott was considered as "probably the best all-round Naturalist in this neighbourhood, being well versed in Ornithology, Botany, Geology and Entomology, and . . . also without a peer among the local students of Mammalia."

The September 1903 meeting took place in the bird room of the Saunders home, with ten members present. Discussion centred around a collection of birds, eggs and mammal skins, some of which had been collected by Saunders on a recent trip to Alberta. There was also talk of preparing a long-delayed update of the list of Middlesex birds (an earlier version had been published in 1891). There is no record of further meetings in 1903, and no formal list of the birds of Middlesex County was published until 1933.

The ESO Moves to Guelph

In 1906, the Rev. C.J.S. Bethune, a founding member of the Society and London resident since 1899, was appointed Professor of Entomology at OAC, with an effective date of June 1.

In May, the ESO's President, Mr. J.D. Evans of Trenton, had sent a letter to members of the ESO's Council, which included officers and directors representing identified regions, proposing that the Society should also leave London and outlining his reasons. Council voted 11 to 4 in favour of the move, with one abstention. By August, the headquarters of the ESO, together with the library and collections, had been transferred to Guelph. Through special arrangements with OAC, Bethune continued to look after the Society's library and collections in their new home at the college.

The headquarters of the Society had been in London since 1872. For more than 30 years, London members had been the backbone of the organization, conducting research on insects, carrying the bulk of the administrative load, overseeing the day-to-day operations of entomological activity in the Society's rooms, and ensuring that monthly issues of *The Canadian Entomologist* were published and Annual Reports compiled in a timely manner. The Annual Reports were submitted to the government of Ontario. Each one documented the operation of the Society; provided detailed information, largely based on investigations by members, regarding insects injurious to agricultural crops; and offered practical advice on methods of suppressing pests of current concern.

No doubt the move of operations to Guelph was a severe blow to the remaining members in London. At the Annual Meeting in Guelph in 1906, a new Secretary was elected, ending the tenure of London's W.E. Saunders, who had held the position since 1887. Not only had the physical possessions of the Society departed but so too had the key administrative roles traditionally held by Londoners.

We have found no official list of the reasons for the Society's move to Guelph, but it was likely a combination of factors. The report of Council for 1906 states "interest in entomology has almost entirely died out in London, and there seemed to be no one there available for the supervision and care of the library and collections. The sections also of Botany, Ornithology, Geology and Microscopy had, one after the other, ceased their active operations, and no meetings of any of them have been held during the last two years." Perhaps an even more important factor is found in another line of the same report: "removal to Guelph would be in the best interests of the Society as well as in accordance with the wishes of the Ontario Department of Agriculture." The government wanted the Society to relocate to Guelph to help consolidate entomological work there and so that OAC would have the benefit of direct access to the Society's library and collections. In considering the concern over waning interest in London, it is pertinent to note that, over a period of several years, London ESO members who had been most prominent in carrying out entomological research had been drawn to Guelph to assume paid academic positions. At a time when entomology as a practical science was shifting from the hands of competent amateurs to formally educated professionals, London did not have an academic institution that specialized in agriculture or entomology. The handwriting was on the wall for the ESO in

London and, as the Ontario government provided an annual grant that funded the ESO's two flagship endeavours – publication of *The Canadian Entomologist* and the Annual Report – the government's wishes prevailed.

The death of John Alston Moffat in 1904 was likely another contributing factor in the decline in activity in London and the timing of the removal to Guelph. Moffat had been a welcoming presence in the Society's rooms, and made extraordinary efforts to keep the library and collections open and available for members and the public. When Bethune took on the role of Librarian and Curator in 1904, he was already busy as Editor of *The Canadian Entomologist*. In 1905, the rooms were open only three afternoons a week.

Natural History in London after the Departure of ESO

For the period from 1906 to 1915, there is no written record of any formal nature study group in London. W.E. Saunders remained very active in the study of natural history, especially birds. He was also busy travelling, and continued to collect birds and write about his experiences. From 1906 to 1914, he published at least 57 articles (mostly about birds, but some about mammals and plants) in a half-dozen different journals.

Other Londoners also maintained an interest in birds. The first London Christmas Bird Census took place in December 1909, conducted by two teenagers, Floyd Jones and Alex Eastwood. Beginning in 1910, E.M.S. Dale, J.F. Calvert, and C.G. Watson carried out the annual count, adding J.A. Cameron to the crew in 1913. These four men were poised to become significant players in the events that were about to unfold.

Meanwhile, Solon S. Woolverton, long-time Chairman of the Geological Section, continued to lecture in Geology

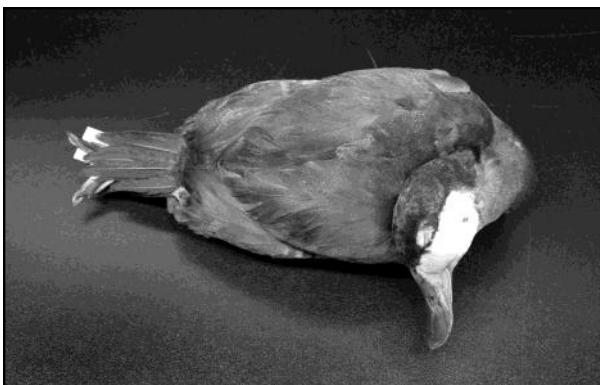
at Western University, and established his own natural history museum on the third floor of his home. John Dearness, a key figure in the Botanical and Microscopical sections, maintained his interests in botany, mycology and the teaching of nature study.

The groundwork had been laid, and men having a strong interest in nature, as well as a high degree of competence, were still present in London. For much of the decade after the 1906 departure of the ESO to Guelph, London naturalists pursued their interests alone or as part of small, informal networks. That was about to change, however – the years 1914 and 1915 were marked by a resurgence of interest and two new rejuvenation initiatives. Watch for Part III of the Nature London story in the next issue of *The Cardinal*.

(Dave and Winifred Wake are Nature London's Archivists and are members of the club's 150th anniversary committee.)

SOURCES

The major sources for Part II included branch reports, council reports, financial statements, librarian's reports, president's addresses, and other accounts published in various numbers of the *Annual Report of the Entomological Society of Ontario* and *The Canadian Entomologist*. Publications prepared by W.W. Judd were helpful, including the annotated minutes of the four sections, and his books on early naturalists and natural history societies. Newspapers of the day provided additional information. The above material has been variously accessed in the Nature London archives, the London Room of the London Public Library, the Taylor Library at Western University, the Archival and Special Collections of the University of Guelph Library, and on-line.



Study skins originally from the collection of W.E. Saunders.
Top left: Southern Bog Lemming, *Synaptomys fatuus* (now *S. cooperi*), "Spruce Swamp" (now Sifton Bog), 1902. This specimen seems to appear in the November 14, 1902 minutes for the Ornithological Section: "... Mr. Elliott's Pine mice and lemmings were again discussed and examined, along with one lemming taken by the Secy [W.E. Saunders] at the Spruce Swamp."
Lower left: Ruddy Duck, London, 1881.
Right: Rose-breasted Grosbeak, London, 1883.
 (Photos by Dave Wake.)





THE NATURE LONDON STORY

PART III: 1914 TO 1939

Winifred Wake and David Wake

Authors' Note: In Parts I and II of this series, we described the founding of the London Branch of the Entomological Society of Canada (Ontario) in 1864, the rise and waning of the Branch and of the four Sections established in 1890 (Microscopical, Botanical, Geological, and Ornithological [McIlwraith Ornithological Club]), and the transfer of the headquarters (administration, library, collections, and monthly and annual publications' programs) of the parent society (Entomological Society of Ontario) from London to Guelph in 1906. We also discussed the period from 1907 to 1913 during which London naturalists did not hold formal meetings but continued to associate through an informal network that saw the establishment of the Christmas Bird Count in London (beginning in 1909) and the ongoing documentation of local and regional natural history by individual naturalists.

1914: The London Biological Club

A small notice appeared in the *London Advertiser* on Friday, February 6, 1914 inviting interested parties to gather that evening in the office of the Middlesex County Department of Agriculture to organize a biological club. Twelve men attended. At its second meeting, held on March 7, the London Biological Club (LBC) approved a constitution and bylaws, and adopted a motto – “Learn to live and live to learn”. The fledgling club had lofty ambitions, making provision for the establishment of 17 possible sections (archaeology, botany, ornithology, bacteriology, agriculture, etc.).

W.E. Saunders and J.F. Calvert arrived at the March meeting with resolutions, which were approved by those assembled. To the City's water commissioners went requests that the firing of arms be prohibited in Springbank Park and that additional waterfowl habitat be created. Federal and provincial ministers were urged to address the plight of native birds whose numbers had been depleted due to overhunting. They were asked to enact gun licensing, enforce existing firearms laws, and establish sanctuaries in which hunting was prohibited. At the club's April 3 meeting, convened at the Institute of Public Health, another

resolution submitted by W.E. Saunders was endorsed. It called on the provincial government to recognize and fund Jack Miner's waterfowl sanctuary in Kingsville.



E.M.S. (Mel) Dale was among the most dedicated and competent of the MOC's active field men. He kept the bird records, and organized the Christmas Bird Count.

There is no record of any further meetings of the LBC. During its short lifetime, 20 men were listed as members. A number of these had been active in the Entomological Society of Ontario (ESO) or its Sections prior to 1906 (i.e., J.H. Bowman, John Dearness, J.E. Keays, William Saunders, W.E. Saunders, and Solon Woolverton). In a nod to past associations with the ESO, the LBC named ESO co-founder and current president, Dr C.J.S. Bethune, as its first honorary member. Three new faces in the short-lived LBC went on to become long-serving naturalists in the London community – J.F. Calvert, E.M.S. Dale, and C.G. Watson.

The Ornithological Section was the only section ever established under the auspices of the LBC. It seems to have remained active longer than its parent group. A newspaper account prepared for the Ornithological Section and published on July 4, 1914 lists spring arrival dates for 158 species of birds recorded between January 1 and May 31 of that year. The article indicated the Section planned a public meeting for mid-July but this apparently was not held. Following the newspaper article, no further records of the LBC or its Ornithological Section can be found. After such an auspicious start, one wonders why the club fizzled so quickly. Whatever the reasons, in the early summer of 1914, after only a few months of existence, the London Biological Club slipped quietly into oblivion.

1915: Revival of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club

On February 5, 1915, nine men and one woman met in the home of W.E. Saunders on Central Avenue to officially reorganize under the name of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club (MOC). The MOC had not held a formal meeting since 1903, when it had operated under the wing of the Entomological Society of Ontario. The old MOC minute book was put into service and an executive elected: J.F. Calvert (president) and C.G. Watson (secretary). The reconstituted group decided “to have no constitution or Bylaws but to run the Club in a friendly free and easy style with as little red tape as possible and to meet at the call of the Sec'y.” The evening's program, a talk by E.M.S. Dale on the birds of the Kawartha Lakes, had been planned at the final meeting of the Biological Club's Ornithological Section.

Seven meetings of the MOC took place during 1915. Three were held in Saunders' home and four in the Collegiate Institute (where Calvert was a teacher). Attendance ranged from eight to 24 and averaged 15, with a maximum of eight women present. At the March 4 meeting, a membership fee of 25 cents was set. W.E. Saunders figured very prominently in the club's programs throughout the year – introducing the 1830s journals of wildlife artist William Pope of Port Ryerse, presenting papers on the birds of Pelee Island and Algonquin Park, and using his splendid collection of study skins of birds and mammals to teach the finer points of identification. Two of the formal papers delivered that year were later published in the *Ottawa Naturalist*.

The minutes record two outings during 1915. On April 24 the group travelled to Komoka swamp to hear the song of the woodcock, and, later that season, visited Joe Beck's farm 13 miles northeast of London to observe Cliff Swallows. Club members organized the annual Christmas Bird Census in December. Through the year, individual members were active in the field, alone or in small informal groups. Photos taken at Goldenwing Woods in Byron on May 24 illustrate the tradition of Victoria Day outings, when as many bird species as possible were noted. At each MOC meeting, records were submitted to update the annual Middlesex County bird list and to document the earliest arrival dates of migrants.



Above: From 1915 to 1919, MOC meetings were held in the Collegiate Institute. The school faced Dufferin Avenue, west of Waterloo Street. It was destroyed by fire in 1920.

Below: Group of naturalists at Goldenwing Woods, May 24, 1915. Standing, from left: John C. Higgins, Miss Luta Brown (later Mrs J.F. Calvert), Mel Dale, J.C. Middleton. Seated from left: Mrs Middleton, Mrs Dale, J.H. Cameron, Mrs Cameron. (Photo by J.F. Calvert.)



The December minutes report the revived club's first action on bird protection. A resolution was passed urging the provincial government to enact legislation to protect wildfowl at Jack Miner's Kingsville sanctuary from hunters stationed nearby.

1916 to 1927: Settling into a Pattern

The pattern of activities established in 1915 continued. Monthly meetings were held in the winter and spring, with none in the summer and a few in the fall. From six to nine meetings took place each year. Average attendance was 20. An exception was 1918 when only one regular meeting was held. From 1915 to 1919 the club's meeting place was the Collegiate Institute on Waterloo Street at Dufferin Avenue. From 1920 to 1927, the YMCA on Wellington Street

near Queens Avenue served as the regular venue. At meetings, the bird list was updated, interesting observations from near and far were shared, and a program enjoyed. Annual meetings were held in January or February. The president generally held office for two years.

In the fall of 1916, the annual membership fee was set at \$1. In 1919, income consisted of \$16.50 in membership fees. Disbursements went mainly to a subscription to the *Ottawa Naturalist* (\$5) and unspecified printing costs. Thereafter, annual receipts (including membership fees) never exceeded \$30. Expenditures generally fell below \$20, and covered items such as postage, occasional printings of the annual bird list, advertising for a public lecture, and expenses for speakers from out of town. In 1922 and 1923, only \$17 and \$7, respectively, were received in membership fees. End-of-year balances ranged from \$6 to \$33. A perusal of the limited financial information available suggests that no rent was paid for meeting rooms.

Meeting Programs. Over time, some meetings became associated with specific activities. The first fall meeting was devoted to members' reports of their birding adventures and sightings over the summer. In November, W.E. Saunders gave a detailed account of his experiences attending the annual meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU). The Christmas Bird Census was planned in December and reported on the following month. January also saw the commencement of the annual bird list. Lining up interesting programs during the winter and spring was challenging. Knowledgeable outside speakers were welcomed when available. W.D. Hobson of Woodstock visited twice, imitating bird songs and showing lantern slides. In 1917 Jack Miner, also aided by slides, told of his success in protecting wild geese and ducks. Dr C.K. Clarke of Toronto used lantern slides to depict the bird life of Kingston. In 1920, Hoyes Lloyd, Ornithologist with the Parks Branch of the Department of the Interior in Ottawa, explained the new Migratory Birds Convention Act, which came into force in April of 1918. Ten club members later filled in applications to become honorary game wardens under the MBCA.

Over the years, "regular" club members occasionally delivered meeting programs. Mel Dale gave several talks, sometimes telling of a recent trip, or providing instruction in the identification of a particular family of birds. Other members who spoke a time or two included J.F. Calvert, Pete Patterson, J.C. Middleton, J.R. McLeod, J.E. Keays, Mrs Dale, and Mrs Berry. Most meetings consisted of informal talks or the reading of prepared lectures, the only props being study skins or occasionally snapshots ("views") that were passed around. Only rarely were technological innovations of the day enjoyed. The first references to lantern slides and moving pictures appear in 1916. The next year, "two records imitating the songs of several well-known birds were rendered by the Victrola." Meeting topics almost invariably related to birds, with a very infrequent presentation on some other aspect of natural history. A talk on reptiles drew an all-time low attendance of eight.

Most years, W.E. Saunders was the main speaker at about three-quarters of the club's meetings. In 1927, he provided the program for all six. During a typical presentation, he focussed on a particular season or group of birds, such as winter birds or sparrows, illustrating his talk with study skins, never lantern slides. Saunders occasionally

diverged from birds to deliver a lecture on mammals, nature in times past, or the wildlife he had seen on his travels. Even when he was not the evening's featured speaker, Saunders was a prominent presence, sharing bird sightings and news from his large network of colleagues around the province and in the United States. Saunders was a born raconteur, and MOC members never seemed to tire of listening to his stories and learning from his inexhaustible and ever-expanding store of knowledge about the natural world.

Public Entertainments. When opportunities arose, the MOC periodically brought in a well-known outside speaker, booked a large venue, and invited the public. Thus, in 1916, Jack Miner showed pictures of his Kingsville waterfowl sanctuary to an audience that completely filled the YMCA auditorium. The same venue hosted another lantern-slide show in 1921, when Harrison Lewis, Chief Migratory Officer for Ontario and Quebec, spoke on the birds of Nova Scotia. The Club paid \$7.56 to cover expenses. In 1925 and 1926, Stuart Logan Thompson, one of Canada's most influential popularizers of natural history, gave an address on birds and their songs to audiences of 350 and 400 at the Normal School. His presentation included pictures, as well as demonstrations of his famous ability to imitate bird songs.

Middlesex County Bird Records. Mel Dale was among the most dedicated and competent of the MOC's active field men. It was he who kept the club's bird records

and organized the annual Christmas Bird Census. Results were forwarded to the National Audubon Society for publication in *Bird Lore*. At 34 species, the 1926 census was deemed the best since the first London count in 1909. Keeping an annual county bird list was a top priority for the MOC. Periodically, a more extensive summary document was compiled. Dale and Charlie Watson prepared a schedule of average spring first-arrival dates (covering a 40-year period), which was printed in *The Advertiser* in February 1919. Two hundred copies were distributed

these practical, hands-on ways to help birds. They experimented with different feeder and nest box designs and tried out various types of feed. During meetings they reported on their experiences and traded tips.

In February 1917, the MOC asked the Public Utilities Commission to put up nest boxes in Springbank Park. By November, the MOC committee promoting winter feeding of birds at Springbank Park reported it had erected a number of feeding boxes. That winter the boxes were well patronized, attracting goldfinches, Purple Finches and juncos; the chickadees became tame enough to feed from the hand. In 1920 and 1921 MOC committees arranged an exhibit of nesting boxes and feeding slabs at the Western Fair. In the spring of 1922, the club organized a bird house competition between Ryerson and Lord Roberts schools, attracting approximately 100 entries. The MOC paid out \$3.25 in prize money. The next year, the club distributed 200 pamphlets entitled "Bird Houses and Their Occupants" to schools and interested persons.

Protection of Wildlife. In the early 1900s, attitudes were slowly evolving away from the view that species were good (useful to humans) or bad (having negative impacts on human interests). Naturalists contributed to, were a part of, but also helped to drive, the changing philosophy. In 1916, after receiving a submission from Saunders, the Public Utilities Commission agreed to stop the wanton killing of wild birds and animals within Springbank Park. The same year, the club asked City Council to have police destroy some of the large numbers of crows nesting in London. The noteworthy issue in 1917 was the cat, and its harmful effects on wild birds. Saunders read extracts from a bulletin issued by the State Ornithologist of Massachusetts, and the club appointed a Cat Committee. Alas, the committee took no action on the problem.

In October 1923, a committee was empowered to seek bird sanctuary status for three ponds on Wellington Road. The Saunders property around the western portion of Saunders Pond already functioned as a private sanctuary. At a meeting held in 1926, Mr Griffith, owner of the east portion of Saunders Pond, agreed to cooperate with the club in keeping people off that body of water.

An ongoing concern for the MOC was the freedom with which citizens could carry guns and shoot wildlife at will. Representations were made to government in 1919, 1922, and 1925 requesting restrictions on firearms. In 1927, a resolution asking that the killing of hawks and owls be prohibited was passed. The MOC was clearly a dedicated part of a long, slow process that, over many decades, eventually resulted in a great sea change in public attitude.

Field Outings and Picnics. Records of MOC field trips during this period are scarce, probably because outings were rarely planned in advance. Instead, a few members might contact each other closer to a prospective date and meet very early in the morning to maximize good bird sightings. All-day censuses on New Year's Day and Victoria Day are thought to have been carried out in this manner. An exception occurred in the spring of 1916, when club members as a group were conveyed by autos to the Hamilton Road swamp to see nesting Long-eared Owls.

Perhaps because they required more coordination, picnics are mentioned many times in the minutes. Destinations were private properties that included features of interest to naturalists and where permission had been obtained

Some Bird Visitors and Dates of arrival; Compiled from figures of Last 40 years by the McIlwraith Ornithological Club of London, Canada.

Species	Years	Av.	Earliest
Parula	12	Feb. 24	Jan. 10-13
Robin	12	Feb. 24	Jan. 10-13
Bluebird	12	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Pine Siskin	12	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Song Sparrow	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Robin	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Red-tail Hawk	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Meadowlark	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
House Wren	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Hooded Merganser	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Red-shoulder Hawk	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Junco	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Mailbird	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Killdeer	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Red-wing Blackbird	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Town Sparrow	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Cowbird	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Black Duck	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Canada Goose	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Phoebe	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Sparrowhawk	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Golden-crown Kinglet	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Pied-billed Grebe	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Blue Jay	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Cooper Hawk	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Vesper Sparrow	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Kingfisher	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Woodcock	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Fox Sparrow	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Marsh Hawk	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Sharp-shin	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Great Blue Heron	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Winter Wren	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Migrant Shrike	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Indigo Bunting	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Flicker	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Song Sparrow	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Lesser Scaup	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25
Redhead Duck	40	Mar. 12	Feb. 21-25

First part of the schedule of average spring arrival dates for birds, compiled by Mel Dale and Charlie Watson in 1919.

to members. In April 1927, Dale updated the list of early spring arrival dates based on 17 years of data. This was published in the newspaper, and 500 copies were printed for members.

Bird Feeding and Nest Boxes. In the 1910s, nest boxes and bird feeding stations (often referred to as feeding slabs or feeding platforms) were coming into vogue. Saunders brought reports of the latest innovations discussed at AOU meetings. MOC members took a great interest in

from the owner. A “picnic” consisted of a Saturday afternoon outing, during which people rambled about in small groups noting any aspect (but especially birds) of natural history that caught their eye. Afterwards they gathered around a fire to cook supper and compare notes on what they had seen and to enjoy a social time and friendly conversation. Annual spring picnics in the 1920s were held at a variety of places such as a heronry near Thorndale, a Cliff Swallow colony, and Saunders Pond. On May 30, 1924, 30 people were conveyed in seven motor cars to a “very charming spot” at Wonnacotts’ farm in Komoka where fires were built and the supper spread. This was the first recorded picnic at a destination that soon became a club favourite.

The first autumn outdoor meeting was held in 1926 at the Queen Alexandra Sanatorium at Byron. Wood was provided for a fire on the river bank, corn was boiled and a very happy evening spent by all 22 persons present.

Annually, beginning in 1924, MOC held a “special bird observation morning” for the Normal School. Two hundred student teachers were transported in motor cars to Saunders Pond for a 6:00 am bird walk. They were conducted in groups by up to a dozen of the club’s field men.

Liaison with Other Groups. In 1919, the Ottawa Field-Naturalists’ Club (OFNC) called for cooperation among naturalist clubs and urged that its publication, the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*, be the common organ. The MOC became an affiliate of OFNC, sending in an annual \$5 fee. W.E. Saunders was a strong proponent of working together to achieve conservation goals and believed the *Canadian Field-Naturalist* to be a viable outlet to which naturalists could submit their work. Although the relation-



Above: MOC used the Normal School for special public events. On occasion, regular meetings took place here.

Below: Field Trip to Saunders Pond in 1925. W.E. Saunders conducted this bird hike for teachers taking a special summer course on nature study and agriculture.



ship was not always smooth, MOC continued its affiliation and support of the publication. The MOC was also beginning to develop working relationships at the local and regional level. On several occasions there were communications with the Hamilton Bird Protection Society (established in 1919) exploring the possibilities of working together to advance each other’s goals.

The most prestigious affiliation in the MOC’s history came about when a letter from Hoyes Lloyd in Ottawa asked the club to appoint a member to the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), based in Cambridge, England. In January 1927, W.E. Saunders was so appointed.

Newspaper Columns, 1920 to 1923. In April of 1920, W.E. Saunders suggested the MOC place daily bird

In the early 1920s, the “field men” of the club wrote a daily newspaper column, reporting on the arrival of migrants. In this column from April 1921, T.D. “Pete” Patterson reminds readers that the field men are also game wardens.



notes in London’s two newspapers. The membership concurred, and the series, which documented newly arriving birds as they returned from the south, ran for four years during spring migration season (late March to mid-June). In all, 158 columns were produced. These were written by the club’s most active and knowledgeable field men, each being assigned one day of the week. Over the years, nine members served as authors: J.F. Calvert, E.M.S. Dale, J.R. McLeod, J.C. Middleton, T.D. Patterson, E.N. Perkins, W.E. Saunders, C.G. Watson, and A.A. Wood. The “Bird Notes” were a very visible way in which to engage the interest of the wider community in birds in general and migration in particular.

During the 12 years after its re-establishment in 1915, the MOC developed into a small but solid organization. A band of skilled ornithologists, under the tutelage of W.E. Saunders, was actively increasing its own knowledge, documenting county bird records, educating others through public events, and taking action on conservation issues.

1928 to 1939: The Late 1920s and the Depression Years

The late 1920s showed an upswing in the fortunes of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club. Average attendance at meetings jumped from 20 to approximately 40, remaining there throughout the Depression. Membership figures are available for just three years: 1935 (40), 1936 (33), and 1938 (70). The number of actual “Bird Club” members is likely higher, however, as some memberships include more than one person. The membership fee continued at \$1 annually. Starting in 1938, teens could join for 25 cents. A financial report is available for just one year – 1936. It shows annual revenue consisting almost entirely of membership fees. Predictable expenses included affiliation fees (\$10.50), honorarium to caretaker (\$5), and paper, enve-



The Wellington Street side of the London Life building in downtown London. In 1928 the club moved its meeting place to the auditorium in this recently opened building. MOC continued to meet there until the fall of 1938. Members entered using this Wellington Street door. During the 1930s, members also met at this doorway to arrange car-pools for field trips. (Photo in 2014 by Dave Wake.)

lopes, stamps, printing, etc. (\$11.40), for a total of \$26.90. Seven or eight monthly meetings were held each year. In 1928 the club began meeting in the new London Life building on Dufferin Avenue. It remained there, rent free, until 1938, when it moved to the Normal School on Elmwood Avenue.

Communications. MOC used various approaches to communicate with its members. In 1928, 500 cards were “printed for notification of meetings in the future”. These cards were apparently mailed to inform members of upcoming meetings. In January an annual program was printed and distributed. By May 1929, one-page notices containing details of meetings and field trips were being mailed multiple times a year. They always included a nature poem or two, and, from 1933 on, a bird drawing by Bill Girling.

A monthly two-page bulletin was first published in October 1939. It contained meeting information, and three short articles: banding bats (Keith Reynolds), recent bird sightings (W.E. Saunders), and a fungus discovered by Eli Davis (W.D. Sutton). Bill Lott was named editor.

While it was not an official club undertaking, in November of 1929, W.E. Saunders began writing a popular newspaper column entitled “Nature Week by Week”, which ran until his death in 1943.

Regular Meetings. Monthly meetings continued on Monday evenings, following the format established during the previous decade. W.E. Saunders remained the most prolific lecturer, serving as principal speaker more than 25 times, and contributing substantially to the program on countless more occasions. The frequency of his presentations decreased over time, however. He spoke four times in 1928, but only once in 1939. Invariably Saunders talked about birds or subjects related to birds. His array of possibilities seemed unlimited, much like the bird specimens he displayed in conjunction with his talks. If Eli Davis or the Dales had accompanied him to an AOU conference, on their return, they helped present the summary to the MOC. Mel Dale also delivered a number of slide talks on bird identification.

During the 1930s, the use of slides increased greatly. Early ones were black and white, but colour began to creep in. Mrs Calvert’s presentations featured her own hand-

Three Canadians at the AOU convention in Charleston, South Carolina, November, 1937. From left: P.A. Taverner, J.H. Fleming and W.E. Saunders. Saunders attended the AOU meeting each year, and provided complete reports at MOC meetings.



coloured slides. Moving pictures became more prominent. The

federal government maintained an extensive catalogue of films on nature, available for loan to the public. The club frequently borrowed these to show at meetings. Some MOC members were developing skills in nature photography; Bill Girling provided several programs on the how-to’s of this topic.

Club members involved in bird banding supplied several meeting programs. In 1938, John Higgins told of his banding operations near Lobo; by then, he had trapped and banded 1500 birds, Song Sparrows being the most numerous, followed by White-crowned Sparrows. In the late 1930s, Gord Cummings established a small banding station near Byron; he told of the venture at a meeting in 1939.

Several biology professors gave presentations: N.C. Hart, botanist; Helen Battle, fisheries biologist; and John Detwiler, entomologist and conservation advocate. Club members Pete Patterson (reptiles and amphibians) and Eli Davis (mammals) also spoke. The inclusion of non-bird topics in meeting programs reflected the growing interest by members in other areas of natural history. The MOC was sometimes visited by professional ornithologists. Dr Harrison Lewis of Ottawa came several times, usually talking about seabirds. L.L. Snyder of the Royal Ontario Museum gave a talk on bird science.

Some programs cultivated the literary and artistic interests of members. W.F. Tamblyn lectured on birds and poets, and G.W. Hoffer spoke on bird artists and their paintings. Travelogues allowed club members who had enjoyed trips to far-flung places to recount their experiences. Members who had spent a lifetime as a birder or a naturalist sometimes told their stories. In a departure from the usual fare of wild birds, Cuthbert Watkin gave a presentation on Carrier Pigeons. “Mr. Watkin brought three pigeons in a cage, two homers and one carrier. The dramatic escape of one homer added zest to the meeting.”

The meeting of October 14, 1929 was most likely an awkward one. Past-president J.H. Cameron gave a presentation entitled “Bird Friends and Enemies”, illustrated with slides and identifying some hawk species as enemies. Saunders, who at the time was actively campaigning for the protection of all raptors, responded to Cameron’s talk by deploring that birds of prey were so rapidly diminishing.

Public Lectures. The MOC continued to organize public lectures. Among speakers, the perennial favourite was Stuart Thompson of Toronto. Between 1928 and 1937, he spoke under the auspices of the MOC five times, drawing crowds of from 275 to 375. His topic was always birds. Three other speakers came once each. R.M. Anderson of the National Museum in Ottawa (large mammals); Edward Avis of Springfield, Massachusetts (coloured slides and imitations of bird calls); and T.M. Shortt of the Royal Ontario Museum (moving picture reel of Alaskan wildlife). These presentations attracted from 200 to 400 people and helped raise the MOC's profile in the community.

Middlesex County Bird Records. As it had done for years past, the MOC maintained an annual county bird list. It encouraged members to list birds observed on January 1 and May 24, and solicited records throughout the year. It continued the annual Christmas Bird Census, during which small groups scoured the valley of the Thames River from London to Delaware plus a sampling of spots elsewhere. For 25 years, Mel Dale directed all these efforts. As his health declined, in 1937 the Christmas Census became the responsibility of Keith Reynolds.

Protection of Wildlife. Beginning in the 1920s, it was a personal crusade of W.E. Saunders to seek protection for birds of prey; in this he had the backing of the MOC. The elite Brodie Club in Toronto, of which Saunders was a member, was also a driving force behind the movement. A key problem was Saunders' long-time friend, Jack Miner, who continued to slaughter hawks unimpeded. In light of his conservation work on behalf of Canada Geese, Miner had a huge public following, and his views and actions were highly influential. Things came to a head in 1930 and '31, after Miner issued a misleading pamphlet entitled "Facts about Hawks" in support of his position. The Brodie Club responded with a pamphlet refuting Miner's pamphlet. The MOC passed a resolution demanding that the unlawful killing of birds of prey be halted and deploring the lack of enforcement of laws. This was sent to other clubs, newspapers and government officials. The MOC also established a committee to work for greater protection of birds of prey.

But old habits die hard, and attitudes change slowly. Throughout the 1930s, Jack Miner continued to shoot and pole-trap hawks. In 1936, Saunders was again deploring the lack of government willingness to protect birds of prey. Even in the MOC, attitudes were slow to evolve, with some members clinging to old ways of thinking while others became supporters of conservation of all species. Although Saunders was an early leader in the campaign to protect birds of prey, he continued to shoot other birds for his own collection, though this diminished as the years went by.

Another issue taken up by MOC involved birds killed by flying into lighthouses. In 1929, after Saunders received a shipment of more than 1200 dead birds from the Long Point lightkeeper, government officials were pressured to address the problem. Other groups, including the AOU, were recruited to take up the cause.

In 1930, the MOC aligned itself with the Royal Ontario Museum and the Toronto Field Naturalists in support of their campaign to conserve wildflowers. Locally it established a committee and called on City Council to prohibit the sale of lady-slipper orchids in the London Market.

Field Outings and Picnics. As always, MOC's best

field men and women practised their craft on their own time, most often early in the morning when birds were most active. Depending on the season, Saunders, Watson, Davis, the Dales, the McKones, and others might be found at Springbank Park, along the Thames, at Redmond's Pond (Sifton Bog), Saunders Pond, Goldenwing Woods, the Coves, Komoka, Dorchester swamp, or even farther afield. The late 1920s and 1930s, however, saw a marked increase in the number of outings organized by the club. Generally aimed at inexperienced birders, these were held on Saturday afternoons and/or evenings and often incorporated carpooling, a guided walk, a picnic and a social time.

Until well after World War II, there were few high-quality natural areas in the city or close by that were open to the public. There were no conservation areas, and parks such as Springbank were operated with the aim of maxim-



From left: Frances Jacobs, Mel Dale and Keith Reynolds at the "old farm" of W.E. Saunders, overlooking the Thames River, in 1937. In 2014, this location is occupied by the London Hunt and Country Club. Saunders owned this property from 1903 to 1909, but naturalists continued to visit it long after he sold it.

izing recreational usage, not wildlife habitat. Private properties owned by friendly landowners were important destinations for MOC outings.

Wonnacotts' Farm in Komoka. Wonnacotts' was the all-time favourite destination for MOC field trips. Bordering a loop of the Thames, the property included fields, woodlands, ravines, extensive marshy flats and a view of an active Bald Eagle's nest. Beginning in the 1920s, a spring picnic at Wonnacotts' became an annual club tradition. This account from June 2, 1928 gives the flavour of the event: "Though the day was cloudy an enjoyable afternoon was spent in rambling through the woods. Fires were built and a delightful picnic supper enjoyed." Fifty members and friends were in attendance. Because of its excellent birding possibilities, many club members also visited Wonnacotts' on their own throughout the year.

Queen Alexandra Sanatorium (on Sanatorium Road; in 2014, the location of CPRI). For several years beginning in 1926, MOC members and friends enjoyed an annual September corn roast at the Sanatorium. The event generally attracted between 20 and 30 people and was entirely social in nature.

Higgins' farm in Lobo Township. The MOC held its first outing to the Higgins farm in 1930, and soon began holding an annual fall picnic there. The property included fields, woods, a ravine and bottomland along Oxbow Creek. An interesting addition to the September, 1937 picnic was a snake that played dead for several hours before slithering away under cover of darkness.

Komoka Swamp. Komoka swamp was visited annually on a late-April evening to see woodcock and snipe. This wetland was located north of present-day Glendon Drive and east of Amiens Road.

Heronries. Spring outings to heronries were sometimes arranged. Destinations changed as colonies moved around. Sometimes both Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron were observed.

Series of Spring Walks. In spring 1929, the MOC began offering a series of three Saturday-afternoon bird walks in late April and early May. These were primarily for the benefit of beginning birders and the general public. Leaders were Dale, Davis, and Saunders, among the best birders in the club and also strong believers in education and outreach. For the first few years, venues were in or near the City: Saunders Pond, Springbank Park, and Goldenwing Woods. Later, Komoka swamp, Wonnacotts' farm and Thorndale heronries became destinations. The series petered out by 1937. Attendance ranged from 15 to 40.

The Great Pilgrimage of 1934. Billed as "the most daring and stupendous undertaking ever launched by the Mellwraith Ornithological Club", the Great Pilgrimage of 1934 was indeed ambitious. In the depths of the Great Depression, the club had the audacity to plan an expedition to Kingsville, with the expectation that all club members would attend. Scheduled for March 30, the goal was to observe masses of returning waterfowl as well as other spring migrants. On March 12, Saunders and Dale conducted an evening session entitled "Preparations for the Great Pilgrimage". In addition to presenting an overview of what might be expected, they used lantern slides and specimens to instruct participants on the distinctions among various species of ducks (Dale) and hawks (Saunders).

The original plan called for everyone to arrive on the same day, but complications arose when adverse weather delayed the arrival of the swans until March 31. The first three carloads of naturalists (18 persons) journeyed to

Kingsville on March 30. Others travelled when convenient during the next week. Some stayed overnight, and others returned the same day. While in the area, their primary activities were visiting Point Pelee,



From left: Charles Maddeford, Keith Reynolds, and Bill Girling at Point Pelee, during the "Great Pilgrimage" of 1934. Charles Maddeford was President of the MOC at the time.

viewing up to 1000 swans along the lakeshore, and seeing geese at Jack Miner's sanctuary. In all, between March 30 and April 8, 53 people participated in The Great Pilgrimage of 1934, a truly amazing achievement in the annals of the MOC.

Affiliations. MOC continued its affiliation with the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, publisher of the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*. Periodically, MOC collaborated with other organizations, including the Brodie Club of Toronto, the Toronto Field Naturalists, the Kent Nature Club and the Hamilton Bird Protection Society. From 1931 on, the MOC was a member of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, for which it paid an annual membership fee of \$3.

Federation of Ontario Naturalists. In early 1931, conservation groups in southern Ontario were embroiled in a campaign to gain effective protection for birds of prey, in direct opposition to Jack Miner's ongoing and indiscriminate slaughter of hawks. During this tumultuous period, the MOC received a communication from Professor Dymond of the Brodie Club, proposing the creation of a Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON). Together, groups would formulate and advance policies promoting the protection of wildlife. Before the year was out, the MOC had endorsed the aims of the new organization and become a founding member.

W.E. Saunders was named the first FON president, a title he held until his death. Saunders was uniquely positioned to hold such a job, as he was widely known and respected across the province and beyond, both in naturalist circles and by academic and government conservationists. In his role as president of FON, Saunders travelled constantly, acting as FON's ambassador to its grassroots membership and delivering the conservation message to countless groups in countless corners of the province. In London, he regularly provided updates on FON affairs at MOC meetings and outings.

In 1934, FON began promoting regional gatherings to help bring cohesiveness to its widely spread members and clubs. That spring five carloads from London attended the gathering at Rondeau Park. In May 1936 the London club hosted more than 200 FON members at Wonnacotts' farm. In September, MOC organized a two-day "school-in-the-woods" FON gathering at Rondeau.

The MOC supplied the field leaders for the regional gathering in Woodstock in June 1937. In June of 1938, it hosted its second FON gathering at Wonnacotts'. A year later it organized the large FON regional gathering held at Kettle Point. Indefatigable and well organized, E.H. McKone invariably headed up the committee that arranged the MOC-hosted regional gatherings for FON members.

At FON gatherings, people arrived in the early afternoon, always at a place that held promise of interesting finds for naturalists. Leaders who had expertise in numerous departments of nature study were provided, and attendees joined one of many small groups. After the walk, fires were lit and a picnic supper cooked. Later, leaders gave reports of the afternoon's discoveries. Part of the day's agenda always included an address by W.E. Saunders, bringing members up to date on the current issues of concern to the FON and encouraging their enthusiasm for conservation and natural history. Saunders served as a vital link between the small group of Toronto-based FON policy makers and rank-and-file members.



In May 1936 the London club hosted more than 200 members of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists at a regional gathering at Wonnacotts' farm. Cooking fires were built.

The MOC supplied the field leaders for the regional FON gathering in Woodstock in June 1937. Here, naturalists are listening to W.E. Saunders, bringing members up to date on the current issues of concern to the FON and encouraging their enthusiasm for conservation and natural history.



Outreach. The MOC and its members demonstrated commitment to public outreach by operating field trips for beginners and external groups, organizing public lectures, and providing information on nature through local newspapers.

Normal School Outings. Through the 1930s, MOC continued to conduct a spring outing to Saunders Pond for student teachers. The last such outing, held in 1939, marked the end of a very successful 16-year liaison between the MOC and the Normal School.

Public Health Nurses Outings. For three years in the early 1930s, MOC organized a May nature walk and breakfast picnic for Public Health Nurses. The first destination was Goldenwing Woods, but walks later shifted to Wonnacotts' farm. Attendance numbered approximately 20.

Other Outreach Initiatives. The May 1929 minutes contain a report of recent lectures given under the auspices of the MOC. Saunders had spoken at West Lorne and Woodstock, while Dale had given presentations at Sharon, Byron and Muncey. Periodically the club discussed ways to increase membership and attendance. One suggestion was to show more bird films. This seemed to work to some extent, as numbers were higher at some meetings where moving pictures on nature were prominently featured.

There was a desire to get more young people involved as members and at meetings. In 1930, Calvert brought six of his students from South Collegiate to tell of their experiences with birds. Over many decades Calvert had a very positive influence in getting students interested in birds and directing them to MOC. Charlie Maddeford, Bill Girling and Bill Jarman are examples of students he mentored. At the Normal School, McKone encouraged Frances Jacobs

(later Girling) to join the club. During 1937 complimentary memberships were given to a dozen high school students (from Beck, Central and South) who had top marks in biology or nature study. Over the next few years, some of these students became quite involved in MOC.

Banquets. On two occasions the MOC held a banquet to pay tribute to a much-loved member. In February 1929, W.E. Saunders was feted at the Grill Room of the Hotel London. And, in March 1936, John Dearness was honoured at a testimonial banquet at Wong's Café. These events were covered in local newspapers.

Despite very straitened economic times, the decade of the 1930s was a highly successful one for the McIlwraith Ornithological Club. The "Bird Club" ran a series of monthly meetings, occasional public lectures, and an expanded program of field outings. It was heavily involved in the activities of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and, as the decade ended, began publishing a monthly bulletin. Hale and hearty in his 70s, W.E. Saunders continued to be the dominant figure in the group, but several fine young naturalists were increasingly taking on leadership roles. The commencement of World War II, however, foreshadowed an approaching time of loss and retrenchment.

(Winifred and Dave Wake are members of Nature London's 150th Anniversary Committee. They have been instrumental in arranging many events, including the anniversary displays and talk at the London Public Library and Museum London.)

All photos are from the Nature London Archives, unless otherwise noted.

SOURCES

The major sources used in the preparation of this article are the minute books of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club. MOC programs, meeting notices, and bulletins from the 1920s and 1930s were also consulted. Numerous period newspaper columns and articles in the *London Advertiser* and *The London Free Press* proved helpful. Many, many miscellaneous items in the Nature London archives provided additional information.

Articles in *The Cardinal* by Frances Girling (Nos 196 and 197, August and November 2004), Florence Cummings (Nos 199 and 201, April and November 2005; Nos 203 and 204, April and August 2006; Nos 206, 208 and 209, February, August and November 2007), and Winifred Wake (No. 202, February 2006; No. 224, August 2011) were the sources of additional material.

Our research was supplemented by a number of publications by W.W. Judd: *More Naturalists and their Work in Southern Ontario* (1992); *Catalogue of Meetings 1890 to 1987, McIlwraith Field Naturalists* (1988); *Annotated Minutes of Meetings, McIlwraith Ornithological Club 1915–1919* (1975), *1920–1923* (1992), *1924–1927* (1994), *1928–1931* (1995), *1932–1935* (1996), *1936–1939* (1997); *Catalogue of the "Spring Bird Notes". . . 1920–1923* (1967); and *Catalogue of Columns on Natural History by W.E. Saunders and J.K. Reynolds . . .* (1969).

The foregoing materials were accessed in the Nature London Archives, the London Room of the London Public Library and our personal library.



THE NATURE LONDON STORY

PART IV: 1940 TO 1964

Winifred Wake and David Wake

Authors' Note: In Parts I, II and III of this series, we described activities of the Entomological Society of Canada (Ontario), including the founding of its London Branch in 1864, the rise and decline of the four Sections established in 1890, and the transfer of the Society's headquarters from London to Guelph in 1906. Also covered were the period from 1907 to 1913 during which London naturalists met informally, the short-lived London Biological Club of 1914, and the 1915 reincarnation of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club, whose affairs were chronicled through a time of gradual growth and consolidation.

OVERVIEW: 1940 TO 1964

The first portion of this article provides an overview of McIlwraith Ornithological Club (MOC) activities from the early days of World War II through to 1964. A later section explores themes and highlights in more detail.

1940 to 1945: The War Years

In late 1939, the McIlwraith Ornithological Club, otherwise known as the Bird Club, was focussed on moving forward, even in the shadow of war. In October it began publishing a two-page monthly bulletin, with an introductory blessing from W.E. Saunders, the group's beloved patriarch. Several talented young naturalists were taking on leadership roles, and the future of the group looked rosy. Ahead, unfortunately, loomed a period of loss and retrenchment.

Club activities went on much as usual during the first part of 1940. It was perhaps a sign of a growing preoccupation with the war that a public lecture by Stuart Thompson, the well-known Toronto nature writer, attracted only 100 people, far fewer than during his previous London visits. By year's end, the bulletin had disappeared and plans for a December banquet were quietly shelved.

Gradually, MOC members slipped away to join the war, making it difficult to find speakers for meetings, or people to organize club activities. Field trips decreased owing to gas rationing, and attendance at meetings dropped. Suspending rural picnics and traditional field trips, the club kept its outings close to the city. The leadership gap was bridged in several ways. W.E. Saunders often chaired a meeting, provided the program, updated the bird list, or reported on the Christmas census. Administrative duties were covered, in part, by combining positions, re-



W.E. Saunders in the field, March 1942.



Picnic at the Higgins' farm, fall 1941. From left: Pete Patterson (foreground), RAF airman (behind Patterson), John Higgins Jr, W.E. Saunders (seated), Don Higgins (standing), Mrs Dale (seated), two RAF airmen, Mel Dale.

cruiting students, and recycling former executive members. Women played a larger role, and older club members, including John Dearness, sometimes filled in as speakers. A new face, Hal Hitchcock, served a term as president. Thus, MOC's core operations continued — monthly notices mailed, meetings scheduled, the bird list maintained.

War was not the only agent of unwelcome change. November 1940 brought the death of Mrs E.H. McKone, one of the club's most active members. W.E. Saunders fell ill in the winter of 1943 and passed away in June in his 83rd year. In August, his cousin and frequent field companion, Mel Dale, died. These men had been key members of the club since 1915 (and, in Saunders' case, since the 1870s).

The war years were not entirely an inactive period for the MOC. Several conservation issues were addressed: illegal shooting, protection of birds of prey, and the possibility of designating Saunders Pond as a sanctuary. Individual members were involved in bird banding. The club began meeting in the new public library on Queens Avenue.

In November 1944, Stuart Thompson returned to London, this time attracting an audience of 250, a harbinger of better times to come. Attendance at meetings began to creep upward. The year 1945 got off to a fine start when 100 people attended a colour film on Ontario birds. As the months passed, it was evident the war was drawing to a close, and spirits lifted accordingly. The Komoka woodcock outing and spring and fall picnics resumed. The boys in service began to trickle home. Gord Cummings, Lee Marsh, Keith Reynolds, Bill and Harry Girling, Bill Jarman, and others reappeared at the Bird Club. Bill Lott was not so lucky. Before enlisting in the Royal Canadian Air Force, he had been MOC's secretary, bulletin editor and a dedicated bird bander. He was listed as missing in action on October 13, 1942, aged 25.

The newly returned men soon became active in the club. At the annual meeting in December 1945, their names occupied key positions on the MOC's slate of officers. The bulletin was reactivated. A new surge of energy was poised to carry the club into an exciting post-war era.

1946 to 1949: The Early Post-War Period

Gordon Cummings served as president of the Bird Club in 1946 and 1947. Keith Reynolds occupied the chair next and was succeeded by Bill Girling. These three ex-servicemen would make significant long-term contributions to the knowledge, appreciation and conservation of nature. It was Gord Cummings who brought the Audubon Screen Tours (AST) to London in 1946. The series, organized by the New York-based National Audubon Society, consisted of five speakers who crisscrossed the continent each fall and winter, lecturing and showing movies on wildlife. This nature education initiative was aimed at the general public, who responded enthusiastically in London. For the next 25 years, the Audubon film series was MOC's signature undertaking, adding thousands of dollars for many new projects, including the W.E. Saunders Memorial Library and a scholarship fund to send London students to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' nature camp.

During the late 1940s, attendance at Bird Club meetings averaged more than 60. Programs often featured wildlife films, with colour and sound. Presentations usually related to birds, but there were also evenings devoted to topics such as reptiles, mammals, insects and holiday trips to enjoy nature. Increasingly, the club spoke and thought of itself as a nature club, not just a bird club. The field trip program, severely curtailed from 1942 to 1945, was expanded. Traditional outings were reinstated and new destinations added. As always, the club maintained its annual bird list and records of first-arrival dates, and conducted the Christmas bird census. A significant achievement for the MOC in 1949 was hosting the annual meeting and conference of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON), the first ever outside Toronto. During the meeting, the FON released a memorial volume on W.E. Saunders.

1950 to 1955: Ongoing Initiatives and Many Firsts for the MOC

During the early 1950s, the McIlwraith Ornithological Club reached a pinnacle of energy, ideas and achievements. Under the leadership of three dynamic presidents – Bill Girling, Don Sutton and Florence Cummings – the Bird Club not only maintained established programs but achieved many firsts. Its flagship initiative, sponsorship of the Audubon films, was ongoing. FON camp scholarships were awarded; books and films were purchased for the Saunders Library. As will be seen, much more was also accomplished, including very significant contributions to FON's operating funds. Club membership gradually increased – from 70 in 1950 to 130 in 1955. In keeping with interests of the day, meeting programs began to include topics such as reforestation and soil conservation. When Eli Davis spoke on mammals in 1952, his presentation included both study skins and Kodachrome slides, signalling the final transition from the old way of illustrating talks to the new. As cameras improved and people had more money for travel, many meetings featured slide shows of visits



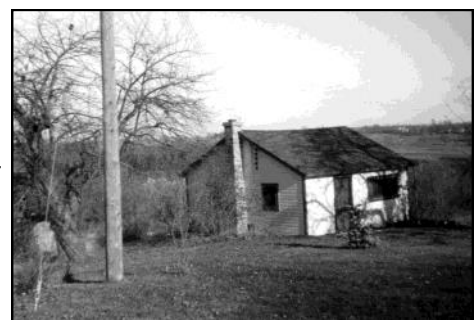
The first annual banquet in 1951. Standing, from left: W.D. Sutton (president) and Richard Saunders (guest speaker); seated: Mrs. J.W. (Edith) Leach (secretary-treasurer), Dr W. Sherwood Fox, and Mrs. G. (Florence) Cummings (vice-president).

to natural destinations.

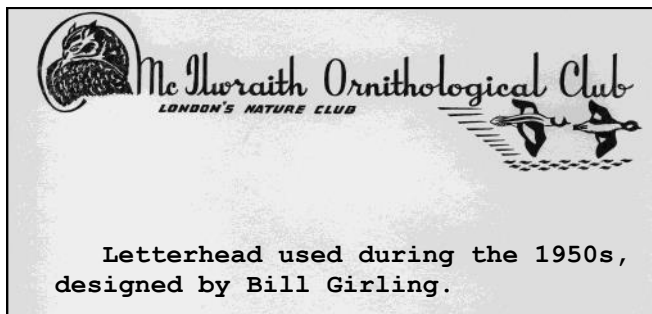
The first half of the 1950s was not a particularly active time for field trips. There were outings to Wonnacott's (Komoka) and Higgins' (Lobo) farms, plus occasional trips elsewhere. In 1954 the club arranged its first waterfowl expedition to the newly created Fanshawe Lake. A possible reason for the reduced number of local MOC trips is that many of its best field people were heavily involved in running out-of-town regional gatherings for FON, at places such as Point Pelee, Rondeau, Springwater, and Hawk Cliff. In January 1955, a duck count was organized. Beginning that year, participants in the annual Christmas bird census gathered at J.K. Elliott's cabin in Byron for lunch. Some efforts were made on the conservation front. During 1953 and 1954, the club president made repeated attempts, with little success, to interest the Town Planning Board in the concept of preserving open spaces around London.

Several new undertakings were commenced in the early '50s. MOC first participated in the London Hobby Fair, held at the YMCA. It established the club magazine, *The Cardinal*, and inaugurated an annual club banquet. Florence Cummings became the MOC's first woman president; it would be almost two decades before there was another. Retired UWO president Sherwood Fox was named the first honorary member. Dr Fox had previously been active in FON and conservation circles and now became more involved in the MOC. Another innovation was the formation of the Fanshawe Wildlife Sanctuary Committee. The Bird

Mr and Mrs John Elliott's cabin on the Thames River west of Byron, in the area we know today as RiverBend and Kains Woods.



Club set up a booth at the Home and Garden show at the Western Fair Grounds. Many of these activities were financially supported by profits from the Audubon Screen Tours. The early 1950s was a golden period for the MOC, but an ominous sign emerged in 1954/1955, when the Audubon series failed to attract a full house and revenues began to drop.



1956 to 1959: Marking Time

The latter half of the 1950s was a time of belt tightening and few new initiatives. Despite insistent pleas from FON, the Bird Club's substantial financial support of the federation gradually diminished. The club began soliciting new members at the Audubon films. It is difficult to understand why this was not done sooner. A possible explanation is that the MOC held a somewhat elitist view of itself as an organization of serious birders and committed naturalists. While there was a great willingness to educate and entertain (and make money from) the general public, the club was reluctant to open membership to the masses. In 1956, there were 101 paid-up members; in 1958, the number stood at 150.

Jim Leach served as the Bird Club's migration secretary throughout the 1950s. When reliability of bird sightings became a concern, it was decided that records of rare species would be accepted only if verified by two qualified observers. In 1957 a telephone chain was established for alerting people to sightings of unusual birds. Doug Dow prepared the first Checklist of the Birds of Middlesex County in 1958.

The MOC was active on several conservation and outreach files. Letter-writing campaigns were periodically launched to advocate for the preservation of Springwater, and then-president W.W. Judd spearheaded a huge effort to protect Byron (Sifton) Bog. Maurice Comfort led a Save the Bluebird campaign aimed at rural school children. Gord and Florence Cummings taught conservation to Boy Scout leaders.

The number of outings increased. An excellent new field trip leader emerged in the person of Frank Cook, who, in 1958, led seven of the eight club field trips. Attendance at these ranged from 10 to 50. MOC continued to help organize and run FON gatherings at Rondeau, Point Pelee, and Springwater; participation rates, however, began to drop off.

Meeting programs in the late 1950s consisted of a mix of films and slide talks on various aspects of natural history. On one occasion members visited the Cronyn Observatory at Western for a lecture and a peek at the night sky. Many presentations showcased members' increasing photo-

graphic skills. Only rarely was the evening's topic devoted to birds, except for the occasional film. The single significant new initiative of this period was the establishment of a Junior Nature Club in 1957.

1960 to 1964: A Time of Transition

In the early 1960s, some programs wound down or were reorganized and several long-serving members passed the baton to successors. Income from the Audubon films continued its downward trajectory and, by the end of 1964, the situation was approaching a crisis. To generate revenue, in 1962, the annual MOC membership fee was doubled to \$2 per household. The number of members hovered around 100.

The majority of meeting programs consisted of pleasant nature travelogues to exotic destinations, but there were also programs of a more local and regional flavour. The meeting of November 16, 1964 was probably one of the liveliest ever experienced by the group, when a talk on the timely but touchy topic of pesticides led to a very heated discussion. Field trips most frequently went to traditional favourite locations, but there were also other destinations. Club members remained active in the FON weekends at Point Pelee and Rondeau. In a new and very successful venture in 1962, a chartered bus transported 41 members to the Royal Ontario Museum for behind-the-scenes tours with museum staff.

As the 1960s progressed, MOC members pursued a number of environmental issues. Bill Jarman kept tabs on bird mortality at the CFPL TV transmission tower during fall migration. Bill Morris championed the cause of erecting bluebird nesting boxes. The club appointed a representative to the Parks Board of the Public Utilities Commission, and the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests requested input on possible nature reserves. There was ongoing advocacy for the protection of Saunders Pond, Byron Bog and Springwater. In the spring of 1963, club members witnessed the shooting of a young Bald Eagle at Wonnacott's, and aided in the prosecution of the case. The shooter was fined \$50.

The early '60s brought other changes in long-established patterns. Jim Leach retired from the position of migration secretary in 1964, but not before the club's Christmas count area had been brought into conformity with stated rules. This was done by naming Byron Bog as the centre of the London count circle. Don Sutton retired as editor of *The Cardinal* and was replaced by F.A.E. Starr. Gord Cummings died suddenly and Bill Morris took over the running of the Audubon films. The last Home and Garden Show was held in 1964. The



John Higgins rings the bell outside his home in 1962.

Junior Nature Club faded away, and the Fanshawe Sanctuary Committee was disbanded.

Several innovations were introduced in the early '60s. A Student Naturalist Group operated briefly in 1961. Also that year, the centenary of the birth of W.E. Saunders was celebrated through displays, articles and a talk. The most ambitious undertaking of all was hosting the FON's 30th annual meeting and conference in April 1962. Under the chairmanship of Frank Cook, 40 club members orchestrated a very full weekend program for 400 delegates. Featured speakers included CBC personality Lister Sinclair, and Blair Fraser, the editor of *Maclean's* magazine.

For more than two decades, the topic of changing the McIlwraith Ornithological Club's name to something simpler had been intermittently discussed. In 1964 a decision was finally made. The new name – McIlwraith Field Naturalists – would come into effect in January 1965 and launch the club into a new era of accomplishments.



FON Conference, London, 1962. From left: Bill Girling, William W.H. Gunn, Frank Cook, David Fowle, Blanche Jarman, Fred Bodsworth. The FON logo in the background was designed by Bill Girling.

THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

In the preceding chronology, we summarized the activities of the MOC from the wartime period to 1964. During these 25 years, several overarching themes emerged. Highlights are also evident in the evolving relationship between the McIlwraith Ornithological Club and its members, and the larger community. We shall now explore some of these themes and highlights by topic.

Audubon Screen Tours

A pervasive theme of this period in the club's history was the allocation of resources. In 1946 the MOC brought the Audubon Screen Tours (AST) to London. Under the leadership of Gord Cummings, arrangements were made with the National Audubon Society, the 1600-seat auditorium at Beal Technical School was booked, and club members peddled tickets at \$1 for the season. Eventually 1450 tickets were sold and the money poured in. The great success of the 1946/1947 series led to the AST becoming an

Programme brochure for the 1963/1964 season of Audubon Wildlife Films.



annual event. By the third season, all tickets were gone months in advance. Suddenly the club had the happy problem of deciding what to do with hundreds and even thousands of dollars in profits.

The MOC maintained its regular club finances distinct from its Audubon balance. The annual membership fee was \$1 per household and income was approximately \$100 per year. The separate account for Audubon films allowed various things to be done that could not otherwise have been contemplated. Bank debentures were purchased, and honoraria were provided to the two AST volunteers who carried the biggest workloads: Gord Cummings and J.F. Calvert. Annual scholarships sent worthy students to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' summer nature camp. The W.E. Saunders Memorial Library was established, and an annual banquet was inaugurated. One dream that took several decades to come to fruition was the purchase of land for a sanctuary; in the meantime, funds for this purpose accumulated interest. Beginning in the early 1950s, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists was in desperate need of large annual cash infusions. The MOC, being one of FON's oldest and strongest member clubs, was called upon to render significant financial support.

Meanwhile, times were changing and the public's appetite for big-name speakers and their big-screen wildlife films was beginning to wane. By the 1956 season, one-quarter of the seats in the Beal auditorium were empty. As the '50s ticked along, attendance continued to fall. With so many initiatives depending on Audubon film income, the club executive spent many hours considering options. Ticket prices were doubled to \$2, advertising was increased, bonuses were offered, and ticket-selling drives were mounted. Yet, by the start of the 1960 season, only



Members of the Bird Club, opening night of the Audubon films, 1946. From left: Mrs Woods, Dr John Dearness, Eli Davis, Dr Gordon Cummings.

877 tickets had been sold. For 1963, the price of a season's ticket was raised to \$2.50, a move necessary for the Audubon Wildlife Films (the name had been changed in 1959) to merely break even.

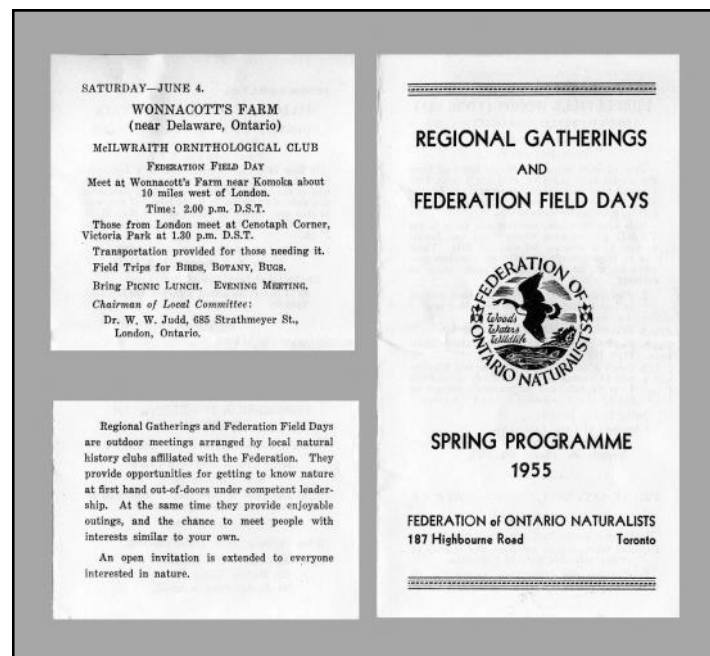
Attendance kept dropping and, by December 1964, the series was \$400 in the red. Drastic action was necessary – Beal Tech was asked to reduce rent, and a cheaper venue was sought. Despite the financial crisis, the Audubon film series in London still had a number of years of life in it. Alas, Gord Cummings died in October 1964. Since 1946, he had been the mastermind, backbone and workhorse behind the MOC's sponsorship of the Audubon films. To him goes much of the credit for generating the revenue that enabled the club to carry out so many worthwhile endeavours over many years.

Relations with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists

An ongoing theme in the history of the MOC is its relationship with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the FON was at a crossroads. One burning issue was whether to affiliate with the US-based National Audubon Society (NAS). Affiliation with NAS would mean an influx of much-needed cash, but at a risk of losing Canadian independence. The debate was eventually resolved in 1950, under the leadership of Sherwood Fox (FON president from 1948 to 1951). The decision to eschew American money in favour of Canadian autonomy had significant financial implications for FON's member groups, including MOC.

A second urgent issue concerned FON's lack of an office and full-time staff. As the number of federated clubs and the complexity of operations grew, it became increasingly difficult to sustain the federation by volunteers alone. Thus, early in 1952, the FON made a bold move, hiring its first executive director and opening an office in Toronto. Half of the \$8000 annual cost was to be borne by members and federated clubs.

At the time, MOC's basic annual income was approximately \$100, mainly derived from membership fees, and its Audubon profits were largely committed to other projects. Yet, by the fall of 1952, the MOC had raised \$600 for the FON cause. This was achieved by pressing individual members for contributions and hosting an additional visiting lecturer showing wildlife movies. Thereafter, FON assigned MOC the responsibility of contributing \$600 annually and sometimes asked for even more. More public lectures/movies were sponsored, and members were repeatedly exhorted to make significant personal donations. Sut-



Excerpts from the 1955 FON regional gatherings brochure, including an outing to Wonnacott's farm organized by MOC.

ton and Fox, both past presidents of FON, were particularly vocal on behalf of the federation.

As income from Audubon films steadily fell through the late 1950s and early '60s, MOC's financial situation deteriorated (though it resisted dipping into reserve funds). In 1957, though hard pinched financially, MOC managed to remit \$600 to FON once again. It also remitted profits from the sale of FON Christmas cards and paid directors' expenses. Thereafter, MOC's annual payments to FON were substantially reduced, though it still forwarded funds to the extent that revenues allowed.

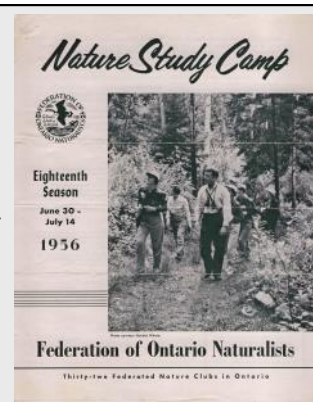
MOC members also worked very hard on the ground for FON. They helped organize and lead several FON regional gatherings a year – White's Bush (Springwater), Rondeau, Wonnacott's farm, Hawk Cliff and Point Pelee. Over time, interest in regional gatherings waned and attendance dwindled at some locations. Despite intense pressure from FON, MOC was simply unable to deliver the large crowds that FON wanted at its events.

Still, throughout the 1950s and early '60s, MOC remained unswervingly loyal to the federation and its conservation and nature education work. For many years, MOC

Scholarships to FON's Nature Camp

The establishment of MOC scholarships arose directly from Audubon Screen Tours' profits. These enabled high school students who were club members to develop proficiency as field naturalists through attendance at the FON annual summer nature camp in Muskoka. The MOC scholarship covered fees and transportation costs for the two-week session. Beginning in 1949, up to three scholarships per year were funded, depending on the number of applicants and the club's current financial position. Beginning in 1957, students at London Teachers' College were also eligible.

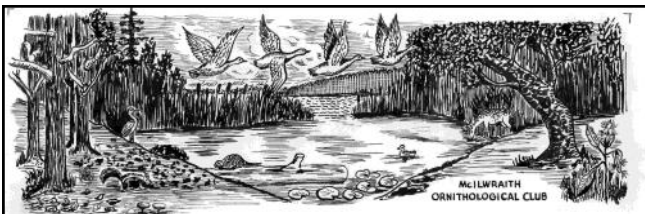
MOC member, Frank Cook (with binoculars), was a regular FON nature camp leader.



sacrificed to support FON financially and continued to organize and provide leaders for those regional gatherings (such as Pelee camping weekends) that could yet attract a crowd.

The Cardinal

In April 1951, the first issue of *The Cardinal*, MOC's magazine for members, appeared, with Bill Girling and Don Sutton as co-editors (two years later Sutton became sole editor). The cover featured a handsome four-coloured cardinal design, later rendered in a single colour, which was in use until 1964. Not surprisingly, the bulk of the content of *The Cardinal* focussed on birds: seasonal and annual lists, records of nesting birds, and results of Christmas bird censuses from Middlesex, as well as neighbouring counties. Issues were rounded out by articles of more general interest.



In 1959, Bill Girling created new headers for monthly notices, one for summer (above) and one for winter.



A supporting team handled typing, printing (via stencils), and collation. Expenses for *The Cardinal* were underwritten by profits from the Audubon films, though costs were partially recouped through sales – 10 cents a copy for members and 25 cents for non-members. In 1957 a Gestetner was purchased for \$225 and installed in the home of Gerd Muller, who faithfully ran off each issue of *The Cardinal* for the next 27 years. Beginning in 1962, the magazine was mailed to members free of charge. *The Cardinal* did not contain announcements of upcoming meetings and field trips. Such information plus other relevant news was communicated by mail through one-page, monthly flyers referred to as club notices.

By the mid-1950s, *The Cardinal* was becoming a noticeably slimmer bird. The length and frequency of reports of bird sightings diminished and fewer feature articles were submitted. At the end of 1960, Don Sutton retired as editor and was replaced by F.A.E. Starr. Starr served as editor of *The Cardinal* for three years, his tenure marked by intermittent health problems that affected the publication schedule. Under Starr, two special issues were produced. One consisted of an annotated list of the birds of Middlesex County (by Jim Leach and Bill Jarman), the first such up-

date since 1933. Starr also put out a special issue of *The Cardinal* in connection with the annual meeting of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, hosted by MOC in 1962.

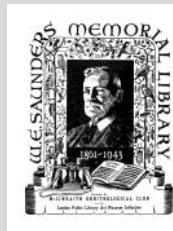
In 1964, Bill Jarman became interim editor. The period of instability was resolved when Frank Cook assumed the editorial reins early in 1965.

Outreach to Youth: Junior Nature Club and Student Naturalist Group

In 1957 the MOC established a Junior Nature Club for children in grades 4 to 8. Frances Girling was the leader, assisted by Mary Green and others. Meetings were held outdoors on the first Saturday morning of the month, usually at locations within walking distance of a bus line. Participants were recruited by a flyer sent to school principals before each outing. In addition to the committee, about ten knowledgeable members of MOC assisted at each of the Junior Club's nature walks and other activities. In general, children were divided into small groups (about ten) with a leader or two for each group. During the walks, items of natural interest such as trees, plants, birds and fossils, were examined.

The Junior Club was an immediate success. The first meeting attracted 100 children, and subsequent outings were also well attended. During the next three years, about seven walks were held annually, with attendance ranging from 40 to 150. Meetings were held at Gibbons Park, Springbank Park, Thames Valley Golf Course and Fanshawe Lake. One year, the Junior Club was given 50 wren houses to put up. It is believed the Junior Nature Club ceased functioning in June 1961. The probable cause for its demise was diminishing support from MOC members, who no longer attended Junior outings in sufficient numbers to deliver a viable program.

As the Junior Nature Club was winding down, another MOC initiative aimed at young people was getting underway. The Student Naturalist Group operated briefly during the first half of 1961, under the leadership of Bill Girling. About eight or nine high school students (mostly boys) met several times at the downtown library. They held joint outings with the senior club and, on their own, visited Dead



W.E. Saunders Memorial Library

When Audubon Screen Tours profits began to flow, one of the first club expenditures was on wildlife books and films for the London Public Library. The first grant – \$200 – was made in 1948. Florence Cummings was in charge of selections.

Bill Girling designed a bookplate (at left), and the collection was designated the W.E. Saunders Memorial Library. In the 1950s, books cost a few dollars each, but films ran about \$50 apiece. Unlike films purchased directly by the library, those donated by the MOC circulated without a fee. In appreciation of the club's ongoing generosity, for many years MOC held its meetings at the library rent-free. In the past 65 years, Nature London has contributed many tens of thousands of dollars to the Saunders Memorial Library. The club currently donates \$1000 a year.



Members of the Junior Nature Club created designs for a possible crest for the group. This whimsical submission (artist unknown) is one of six that survive in the Nature London archives.

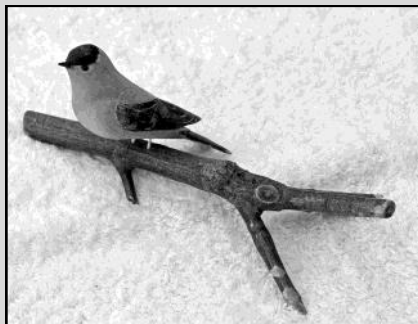
Horse Canyon, Trott's Swamp and the university to view the collection of bird study skins. That spring, student members helped with the Hobby Fair at the YMCA. Indoor meetings lasted only a few months and field trips perhaps a little longer. By this time, the student group as a separate entity from the parent club seemed to be petering out. Its members may have been happy to participate in the regular activities of the MOC and did not need an extra level of organization in their lives. A year later, in May 1962, however, boys from the student group were again active in the Hobby Fair.

Annual Banquet

One of the long-lived innovations of 1951 was the inauguration of an annual banquet. For many years, about 125 attendees gathered in St George's Parish Hall to enjoy a turkey dinner served by the ladies of the church. Generally billed as Christmas banquets, these events were classy affairs, with grace, a toast to the Queen, special table decorations, a singsong of carols, and an out-of-town speaker of note. Since the banquet replaced the December MOC meeting, which had been the traditional time for the club's annual meeting, the AGM was incorporated into the banquet agenda. Eventually most of the business of the AGM was transferred to the January club meeting, though the election of officers continued to take place at the banquet. Monies from the Audubon fund subsidized the event. Initially, tickets sold for \$1.25 but, by 1960, the price was \$2. In 1960, the banquet venue was changed to Rowntree Memorial Church.

At the 1955 MOC banquet, Thomas Hill, who had attended the first Ornithological Section meeting in 1890, presented the club with three carved birds.

A cardinal went to the club president, a Blue Jay to the secretary and a goldfinch to the treasurer. When incumbents retired from their positions, the birds were to be passed along to their successors. The goldfinch is shown here, the jay reappeared in 2008 (see the August 2008 *Cardinal*, No. 212), but the cardinal disappeared in the late 1980s. Does anyone know where the cardinal is? (Photo by Dave Wake.)



Community Outreach: Hobby Fair and Home and Garden Show

Some of the projects undertaken by the MOC in this time period were not only for members, but for the community at large. The Audubon film series was a prime example. Several other efforts at nature education for the general public were made. In addition to those previously mentioned, club participation in the Hobby Fair and the Home and Garden Show functioned as significant outreach initiatives of the MOC that also helped to raise the club's profile in the community.

In 1950, the MOC mounted its first exhibit at the YMCA-based London Hobby Fair, an annual involvement that continued until 1966. The event was held during the first week of May and was aimed at London's youth. MOC was in charge of the Department of Nature Study, and a technical advisor from the club served on the Hobby Fair's planning committee. Many members of the club assisted with setting up exhibits, judging, and acting as attendants at the booth. In addition to regular Hobby Fair prizes, prizes donated by MOC were awarded to the winners of entries in various categories of natural history. Bird Club prizes usually consisted of nature books and magazines, plus membership in the MOC.

A first-time venture for MOC in 1954 was a presence at the newly established Home and Garden Show. This event was held annually in March at the Western Fair Grounds. Each year the Bird Club selected a different nature-related theme. A crew of club members then created an elaborate exhibit in the allotted 12-by-12-foot space. Records of nature sounds were often played and, in 1963, nature pictures were shown on an automatic projection machine. Bird Club members staffed the booth throughout the week. In addition to highlighting MOC, the work and name of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists figured prominently in this endeavour. The club participated in the Home and Garden Show each year until 1964, after which the event was discontinued (its name by then being the Modern Living Show).

Fanshawe Wildlife Sanctuary

For many years the MOC had been interested in establishing a wildlife sanctuary and had been investing some of the Audubon profits towards this end. Early in the 1950s, however, an opportunity arose to establish a sanctuary without having to purchase any land. As Fanshawe dam and lake were taking shape, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority staff invited MOC to evaluate lands adjacent to the lake for their conservation potential. In 1953 the MOC formed the Fanshawe Wildlife Sanctuary Committee, which made numerous field visits to assess vegetation and create maps. Eventually a report was produced containing recommendations as to appropriate uses of various sections.

The MOC was offered a parcel of land along the north-east shore of the lake on which to establish a sanctuary. In those days, the concept of sanctuary was somewhat different from that of today. The Authority was to fence the area, while members of the MOC were to do the work of developing the site – planting trees, wildflowers and food shrubs; erecting nest boxes and feeding stations; provisioning feeders; planting water-bird food in shallow areas; set-



MOC's display at the Home and Garden Show in 1960. The theme that year was Nature in Books. Club president, Dr H.A.U. Monro, is standing at right.

ting out corn during bird migration; and labelling various flora and other items of interest. Over several years, committee members cleared a nature trail and built and installed hundreds of signs identifying trees and shrubs growing along the way.

The Fanshawe Wildlife Sanctuary Committee was active from 1953 to 1958. A visit by club members in 1964 found the trail unused and overgrown. Since the area

was judged to be at high risk of vandalism, it was decided not to renew signs. This appears to have been the end of the Fanshawe Sanctuary.

For the McIlwraith Ornithological Club, the period 1940 to 1964 represented a transition from the difficult war years to an era of organizational growth, technological innovation, and public outreach. The MOC became more than just a "Bird Club". Stay tuned for Part V.

(Winifred and Dave Wake are Nature London's Archivists, and members of the club's 150th Anniversary Committee.)

All photos are from the Nature London Archives, unless otherwise noted.

SOURCES

The primary sources consulted were the minute books of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club for the period in question. Also reviewed were numerous additional documents preserved in the MOC archives in the London Room of the London Public Library. These included *The Cardinal*, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, miscellaneous papers, and club records, bulletins, notices and correspondence. Publications by W.W. Judd and articles by Frances Girling and Florence Cummings were also helpful.



CONGRATULATIONS ON THIS YOUR 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Editors' Note: Nature London received this e-mail letter from Mary Lund in May. She has gave permission for us to reprint it.

I read about it in *ON Nature*, and was very much interested, because my love of birding grew and expanded within the aura of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club in the 1940s. In 1939 my family moved to Byron, at that time a small village to the west of London. My father was minister in the United Church, and one of the members of the church was Eli Davis, who, we soon discovered, was an ardent and knowledgeable birdwatcher, a friend of W.E. Saunders, John Dearness, and many of the other well known names of that time. Our family became friends with Eli and his family, and the first time we went out birdwatching with them, when I was 10, was to Won-nacotts' farm. I walked along beside Eli, and he pointed out songs to me and told me how to recognize them ("That is a Field Sparrow: it sounds like a bouncing ball, the notes getting closer and closer to each other like a ball getting closer and closer to the ground"). The seed was planted and I was converted on the spot. I lay in bed that night with my mother's old bird book (one that came out long, long before Peterson's), and looked up all the birds I had seen.

After that, I went on many outings, with Eli Davis, with Dr Dearness, with "W.E." to all the good birding locations in the London area. Once I rode my bicycle to Saunders Pond before school, with a friend. We encountered a "warbler wave" and both agreed that it would be a

crime to leave it just to get to school (London South) on time. The school secretary was not very understanding and gave us both detentions. But it was worth it . . . we didn't mind. I went to Club outings too, and to Club meetings. During the war, the young birders were all away, in the forces, and Eli took over as president until they returned, and Bill Girling became president.

I left the London area to go to university and then my family moved away from Byron. But I have always kept a very warm spot in my heart for your club, whatever its name, and for the groundwork in birding I received from the club, particularly from Eli Davis.

I have been out birding all day today, at Thickson's Woods, in Whitby, and at Second Marsh . . . since I live in Toronto now, these are our favourite close places. I did not hear or see a Field Sparrow, but did hear many warblers that brought back specific memories of sightings with the McIlwraith Club.

Congratulations, and I hope the club continues to thrive and bring the joy to others that it brought to me.

Mary Lund
(nee Mary Harvey)

Eli Davis at Won-nacotts' farm in 1937. Davis was an active member of the MOC, and a close associate of W.E. Saunders. (Photo from the Nature London Archives.)





THE NATURE LONDON STORY

PART V: 1965 TO 1989

David Wake and Winifred Wake

Authors' Note: In Parts I to IV of this series, we described activities of the precursors of Nature London: the beginnings of the London Branch of the Entomological Society of Canada (Ontario) in 1864, the rise and decline of the four Sections established in 1890, and the revival in 1915 of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club, whose progress was outlined through to 1964.

Introduction

On the surface, activities of the McIlwraith club in 1965 looked very similar to those of preceding years, but big changes were afoot. During the ensuing quarter century, the group would embark on a number of new and exciting ventures.



Helen Inch was the McIlwraith club's second woman President and a frequent trip leader. (Photo from Nature London files.)

As if to mark the dawn of a new era, in February 1965, Frank Cook became editor of *The Cardinal*, remaining at the helm for 23 years. During this time, the field trip program expanded dramatically and the club acquired a nature reserve, but the group's major outreach and revenue-generating undertaking, the Audubon film series, was in trouble.

Membership increased greatly and the new energy of a younger demographic fuelled a proliferation of new committees and initiatives. Women became increasingly prominent in the club; during the 1980s three women served terms as president.

Meanwhile, the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* fired a growing awareness of nature's fragility throughout North America. Members of the McIlwraith club responded enthusiastically to the environmental challenges of the 1960s. Soon conservation activism was a signature activity of the group. We will now examine in more detail what was happening in London's nature club during the heady years when the environmental movement was sweeping the continent.

A New Name and a By-law

In February 1965, members voted to change the club's name of 60 years – McIlwraith Ornithological Club – to McIlwraith Field Naturalists Club. The thinking was that the new name was simpler, and more accurately reflected the society's focus. Many people, however, continued to refer to the group as the “bird club”. (Throughout this article we will use the short form MFN.)

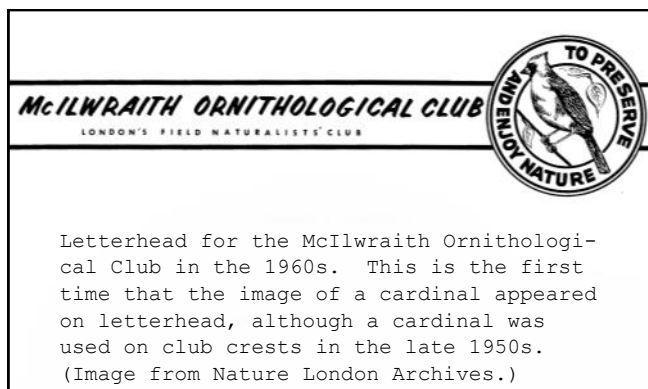
For many years, MFN had dreamed of owning property. Enthusiasm for the concept grew during the late 1960s and on into the '70s and '80s. As successive Executive

Committees worked toward this goal, they learned that it would be necessary for the club to first develop a more formal governing structure. An important step was the adoption in 1970 of a constitution. At that time, the name was adjusted to McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London Ontario. The next hurdle was incorporation.

The process by which MFN became incorporated under the laws of the province and then secured federal registration for income tax purposes proved to be lengthy and arduous. The 1970 constitution was revised and amended to become a by-law. The “Executive” became a Board of Directors. Incorporation was achieved in 1972, but MFN did not receive authorization to issue tax receipts until 1979, after further amendments had been made to the by-law. A taxation number facilitated the club's efforts to attract donors for a variety of projects.

Audubon Wildlife Films

The mid-1960s was a time of crisis for the once-popular Audubon film series. The huge financial success of the venture during the early post-war years was not sustained. By the early 1960s attendance was in decline. In January 1965 it was clear that MFN would lose money unless operational changes were made. Short-term relief came when the London Board of Education waived fees for the rental of the 1600-seat Beal auditorium for the remainder of that season. The following year, the series moved to the smaller (670-seat), more-affordable facility at London Teachers' College (today known as Elborn College). The season was financially successful, with between 400 and 500 people attending each of the five films. The return to profitability enabled MFN to offer a scholarship for a student to attend the summer camp of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON). During the next few years, sales of seasons' tickets grew and, in 1968, the series sold out. The Audubon films' fund was in its best position ever. Subscription sales remained strong through the 1970/1971 season but thereafter the number of attendees declined each year. Finally, in November 1976, the MFN Executive voted to discontinue sponsorship of the Audubon Wildlife Films at the end of the 1976/1977 season.





Left: Junior naturalists at the pond at Cedarcroft on the day of the official opening, May 29, 1983. (Photo by Bob Leigh.)

Centre: Carol German (left) and Nathan Garber at the official opening of Cedarcroft in 1983. (Photo by Bob Leigh.)

Right: Laverne Shipley (left, representing the estate of Lionel Shipley) and MFN President Bill Rapley cut the ribbon for the expansion of Cedarcroft, March 14, 1987. (Photo by David Wake.)

The Quest for a Nature Reserve

During the late 1940s, when the Audubon films were generating revenue, members of MFN started to talk about the possibility of acquiring a sanctuary. Funds were invested, and the goal of owning property for conservation purposes persisted over many years. To advance this dream, a Property Committee was appointed in 1968. A wetland tract near Melbourne was investigated but that attempt ended because the price was too high. Committee members attended property seminars sponsored by FON, and assessed the need for MFN to be incorporated.

In 1977, a renewed effort to find a suitable property commenced. The possibility of expanding MFN's purchasing power through co-operation with a conservation authority was explored. In January 1979, club members approved the expenditure of \$13,000 in support of land acquisition by the Kettle Creek Conservation Authority (KCCA), in what is today known as Kirk-Cousins Management Area (KCMA). Negotiations on habitat management principles went on for almost three years. Finally, in December 1981, the MFN Board notified KCCA that it would not participate in the project. In March 1989, after a new proposal came forward from KCCA, MFN contributed \$2000 toward the purchase of a significant wetland at KCMA. Later, KCCA waived the permit cost for MFN members to enter this area.

During fall 1981, former club president Fred Bates raised the possibility of selling his country retreat near Delaware to MFN. A new Property Committee was formed and, in May 1982, club members voted \$16,000 to purchase this 10-acre (four-hectare) parcel, which consisted of a combination of wooded valleys and former fields reforested with conifers. Fred and Jan Bates retained a long-term interest in the cabin, and were to be involved in a Management Committee. The committee was to "control activities, plan projects, set priorities, establish budgets and arrange for necessary funds." The transfer of ownership took place in the summer of 1982, and the property was subsequently given the name Cedarcroft.

It rained for the opening celebration on May 29, 1983, which included a ceremonial tree planting by Robert Eaton, MPP. As reported in *The Cardinal*, "When there wasn't rain coming down (13.3 mm of it) there was mud oozing

up." Master of ceremonies for the day was Spencer Inch, who said MFN, with this property, would "try to demonstrate the value of the naturalist perspective to our elected and appointed officials . . ." Alas, defining the naturalist perspective for Cedarcroft became a challenge for MFN. The Bateses had their own vision for the property; other members of MFN held differing views. A Planning Committee developed a Master Plan for Cedarcroft, placing emphasis on retaining native species and discouraging the planting of non-native ones. The report also proposed a reduction in the amount of lawn being mowed, and reduction or elimination of the use of pesticides. MFN adopted these recommendations, and this caused lingering unhappiness on the part of the former owners.

In November 1986, MFN members approved \$6000 for the purchase of an additional 18 acres (seven hectares) adjacent to Cedarcroft. This acquisition was possible because of a generous bequest from the estate of a long-time member, Lionel Shipley. An opening celebration for this additional property took place in March 1987.

Cedarcroft has been the location for countless MFN activities over many years. Work parties have engaged in tree planting, trail maintenance, bridge construction, fence building and other essential tasks. Field trips, corn roasts, potluck picnics, photography workshops, skating parties, junior naturalist camps and other events have provided and continue to provide many wonderful memories for MFN members.

Conservation Activities

In an editorial in *The Cardinal* in February 1966, Frank Cook pondered the issue of conserving threatened flora and fauna, and asked the question, "Can naturalists' groups make even a minor, worthwhile contribution?" A long-time member of MFN, Gladys Abbott, responded to that question in a letter published in the next issue of *The Cardinal*. Her answer was, "Yes", and in May 1966 she was appointed the very first Conservation Secretary for the club. Although MFN had been involved in conservation initiatives from time to time through its earlier history, the creation of a special position for this purpose was a new and significant move.

A committee was assembled, setting the stage for

In one respect, every natural area has a common uniqueness – it takes everyone forever to preserve it, but only one person and one time to destroy it.

E.J. Koestner

From the introduction to the
London Ecological Site Survey, 1977.

MFN's growing commitment to conservation. At the time, Canada was preparing to celebrate its Centennial in 1967. It was the new Conservation Committee that devised, organized and delivered MFN's centennial project – a series of three public lectures on conservation topics. In its early years, the Conservation Committee educated MFN members and encouraged action on a wide range of issues. These included the seal hunt and development in Canada's Arctic and, provincially, the protection of Rattray Marsh, Oshawa Second Marsh and the Niagara Escarpment. The committee also began taking positions on local issues, urging the City to retain its land holdings in the Broughdale area and supporting the preservation of Sifton Bog. Concerns were expressed about hunting at conservation areas such as Wildwood and Sharon Creek.

In the late 1960s, MFN was part of a renewed campaign to protect White's Bush, today part of Springwater Conservation Area. About the same time, MFN and other conservation-minded groups vigorously opposed the federal government's proposal for expansion of recreational facilities at Point Pelee National Park. After much public input, a new plan for management of Point Pelee was brought forward. MFN supported this plan, which provided for closure of some roads and campgrounds. With such gains achieved, MFN joined others to push for a ban on duck hunting within the park, a goal that was finally achieved only in 1989.

In conservation circles, it is well known that sometimes a natural area must be saved repeatedly yet, sadly, just one action may cause it to disappear altogether. Residential development in woodlands adjacent to Reservoir Park illustrates this point. The possibility of construction first appeared in MFN minutes in 1969, and the club opposed development there during an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearing in 1975. In later years, other groups took the lead, and the site remained intact until a City Council decision in 2011 sealed its fate.

In 1967, MFN was countering threats to Westminster Ponds and, by 1969, the club joined the chorus of London residents opposing expansion of the garbage dump south of Commissioners Road at Adelaide Street. In 1970, two MFN members, David Wake and Carl Hearn, collaborated on a publication entitled *Ponds Profile*, which brought attention to the threats facing the area, and called for its protection. One of those threats, the proposed extension of Adelaide Street between Commissioners and Southdale roads, re-emerged several times over the years, and each time was vehemently resisted by MFN.

In 1966, Osmund Langtvet of the University of Western Ontario (UWO) proposed that a wilderness park be established in the Kilworth-Komoka area. MFN helped advance his vision, and Komoka Provincial Park was the eventual result. The club played an important role in docu-

menting natural features of the park and continues to act as a watchdog on behalf of Komoka Park's ecological integrity.

In the early 1970s, possible routes for the new Highway 402 between Strathroy and London were being investigated. MFN helped to influence the ultimate location of the highway by urging that high quality habitats, such as those found at Wonnacotts' farm, be avoided.

Times were changing, and MFN began to realize that, in other Ontario communities, systematic investigations of natural areas were being undertaken to identify those that warranted protection. In the spring of 1976, a sub-committee of the Conservation Committee was formed under the leadership of Stewart Hiltz, then of the Geography Department at UWO. MFN members commenced a multi-year project to investigate significant natural areas in Middlesex County. Their work was augmented by university student projects in 1977 and 1979.

One of the first sites flagged by the study for its important natural features was Golden-wing Woods (Warbler Woods). Not long after, MFN member Rosemary Walters learned that a portion of the woodland had been sold, and residential development was imminent. MFN immediately joined with neighbourhood groups in efforts to save Warbler Woods. Between 1976 and 1984, a series of decisions by City Council and the OMB ended with the configuration of Warbler Woods Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) as we know it today. MFN's efforts brought about an increase in the amount of woodland protected (66 acres [26 hectares], rather than the 50 originally proposed), but a



Above: London landfill south of Commissioners Road and Adelaide Street in 1970. MFN and others pressed for the operation to be moved away from Westminster Ponds.

Below: In 1971, MFN obtained approval to install advisory signs at Westminster Ponds. The City provided the signs and MFN the labour. Here, near Spettigues Pond, Carl Hearn (left) and David and Walter Wake install one of 12 signs. (Photos courtesy of David Wake.)





At the Girlings' property, "Murkwood", west of Melbourne in May 1976: the first field workshop for the Middlesex Natural Areas Survey. (Photo by Rosemary [Kelley] Walters.)

Inset: *Significant Natural Areas of Middlesex County*, editors Stewart Hilts and Frank Cook. (Nature London Archives.)

nationally significant portion of the site was lost. Through skilful use of experts and lawyers, the club had gained new respect at City Hall. In July 1983, City Council passed a resolution requiring early consultation with MFN for future proposals affecting natural areas.

As early as 1977, MFN began advocating for the establishment of an Ecological and Environmental Advisory Committee for the city. Advisory bodies of this type were established in other Ontario municipalities in the 1970s, but not until much later in London.

The multi-year study of natural areas mentioned above culminated in 1982 when MFN and the University of Guelph published *Significant Natural Areas of Middlesex County*. This 190-page volume identified 65 significant natural areas in Middlesex County and the City of London.

In the early 1980s, a portion of Meadowlily Woods came into City ownership, and the Medway Valley lands around the Elsie Perrin Williams estate were about to be opened to the public. These areas were to be administered by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), which was responsible for parks in the city. Members of MFN worked diligently, striving for protection of the natural values in both areas.

In 2015, London is fortunate to have many green spaces that are protected as part of the city's "natural heritage system". In the 1970s and '80s, there was no protection for most of these sites. Places such as Sifton Bog, Westminster Ponds, Medway Valley, Meadowlily Woods and Warbler Woods would not have been "saved" to the extent they have been without the very significant leadership efforts put forward by members of MFN over many years. There were four thrusts to this leadership: 1) advocacy on behalf of individual sites, 2) studies identifying the natural values of the sites, 3) tireless efforts that led to the City of London adopting policies by which such lands could be protected, and 4) ongoing vigilance for threats arising.

After a decade of urging, the PUC agreed to the formation of a Natural Areas Advisory Committee, and in February 1989, Jim Cushing and Mary Smith were appointed as MFN representatives. Also in 1989, MFN made input to the City's Draft Official Plan, the first to specifically identify "Natural Areas".

Realizing, as time went on, that more comprehensive

information on a site's natural features was needed in order to achieve protection, MFN hired professional biologists to prepare life science inventories in Medway (1986) and Meadowlily (1987). In 1988, MFN sponsored a further study in the Medway, extending north to Arva. Funding from the Ontario Heritage Foundation in 1989 enabled MFN to retain a biologist to conduct preliminary life science inventories of The Coves, Kains Road Forest, and the North Thames River between Adelaide Street and Highbury Avenue (Killaly). All of these studies have provided important background and benchmark information for subsequent investigations and have advanced the protection of these sites by the City.

John Cartwright arranged for periodic meetings of MFN and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). These proved productive – when MFN volunteers conducted a preliminary life science inventory in Skunk's Misery in 1983, MNR provided a small grant to the club. On a similar basis, a 1986 bird census was conducted in Komoka Park.

Also in the 1980s, federal funds supported Environment Week activities. In 1987, a grant to MFN paid for a sign at Westminster Ponds and publication of a brochure about the area. The Conservation Committee organized guided walks at the Ponds each evening, two hikes on Saturday and a special dedication ceremony on Sunday – 377 people attended the events that week. The following year, Environment Week funds supported publication of a brochure on Meadowlily (right) and again MFN hosted public walks during the week.

Club volunteers helped construct a new boardwalk at Sifton Bog in 1989, thanks to a grant obtained by MFN under MNR's Community Wildlife Improvement Program (CWIP). In December that year, MFN members participating in the Master Plan for the Medway Valley opposed bicycle paths and bridges across the creek.

The foregoing presents but a sampling of the many complex and often-contentious issues taken on by the Conservation Committee. In addition, to support its initiatives, especially those requiring professional legal and biological expertise, the committee spearheaded fundraising campaigns that raised tens of thousands of dollars. By the end of the 1980s, MFN's Conservation Committee had established itself as a pivotal player in the identification, protection and management of the City's natural areas.



Field Trips

From 1965 to the late 1980s there was an increase in the frequency of MFN field trips. Six outings were scheduled in 1965, following the pattern of earlier years. The long-established tradition of a spring trip to Wonnacotts' farm in Komoka continued to 1980. Another long-standing trip, to the Higgins property in Lobo, consisted of a nature walk and picnic supper. Always scheduled in September and billed as the first meeting of the fall season, it persisted until 1984.

The number of field trips rose to 15 in 1967. A new destination that soon became a regular one was the Bates country retreat, which later became Cedarcroft.



MFN fall outing and picnic supper at the country home of John and Vyra Higgins in September 1971.
(Photo by David Wake.)

Local naturalists had more opportunities than ever before to join an MFN outing in 1973, when 21 events were offered. For the first time, a New Year's Day walk took place along the Thames River from Wonderland to Springbank, a tradition that has continued ever since. Another first in 1973 was an August field trip to the Strathroy sewage lagoons.

The year 1975 saw the introduction of Wednesday evening walks in May, which are still part of MFN's annual program. The next year, the trip program expanded to 24 events, including several innovative ventures. A 4:00 am visit to Westminster Ponds was found to be too early for the birds. A year later, the same trip was scheduled for 4:30 am, with more success. An October 1976 boat trip from Port Stanley searched for pelagic birds, and the first MFN canoe outing, from Thamesford to Dorchester, was offered in 1977. A bus trip to the Royal Botanical Gardens was a highlight that fall. Two visits to Meadowlily Woods in 1978 mark the first time this site appears in the list of outings.

Energy and enthusiasm were abundant in 1979 and the number of field trips surged to 43. New trips included a winter visit to Pinery Provincial Park, a trip to Michigan in search of the Kirtland's Warbler, and a fall bus trip to the Guelph Arboretum. Early morning birding trips were organized for Tuesdays in May.

In the early 1980s, a number of winter trips encouraged the use of skis or snowshoes. Some of these took place in Warbler Woods, a popular destination in all seasons. In April 1980, a full-day bus tour of geological features around the London area was offered. In 1981, three



MFN trip to the Strathroy sewage lagoons in April 1974. Lagoons were becoming popular birding places at the time.
(Photo by David Wake.)

trips to the St Clair River and Wallaceburg areas were undertaken in co-operation with Detroit Audubon.

When Cedarcroft came into MFN ownership in 1982, it became a frequent venue for events throughout the year. The first annual corn roast took place in September 1983, a tradition that continued for many years. In 1984, no fewer than ten of the 40 scheduled trips were held at Cedarcroft. That fall, MFN organized a bus trip to the Metro Toronto Zoo, and encouraged members to participate in Natural Heritage Day, an event organized by MFN in co-operation with several other city groups.

Starting in September 1983, bird-banding workshops at Fanshawe Conservation Area took place under the leadership of Dave Martin. This activity continued each fall, and sometimes in spring, for a number of years. The first MFN trip to Komoka Provincial Park was organized for May 1986. Club members led spring wildflower walks for the Parkhill Conservation Area in 1987 and 1988.

The MFN field trip program remained strong in 1989, with nearly 50 trips identified on the year's schedule. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the steady growth in the number and diversity of outings reflected the interests of new, younger members, who had different ideas about where and how to explore the natural world. It also indicated the increased availability of suitable publicly owned sites, including those belonging to the City and regional conservation authorities.

Indoor Meetings

Following long-established practice, monthly meetings were held on Monday evenings at the London Public Library on Queens Avenue. The January 1965 meeting, co-sponsored by the library and open to the public, featured a special speaker. Dr Doug Pimlott of the University of Toronto addressed a large and appreciative audience on the topic of wolves.

That fall, due to construction at the downtown library, MFN meetings were moved to the Richard E. Crouch branch library on Hamilton Road, where they remained for two years. Auditorium availability at Crouch dictated a change of meeting day to Fridays, and Friday night meetings have persisted ever since. Work at the Central Library was finished in time for MFN's centennial lecture series in the fall of 1967. For the next three decades, MFN continued to enjoy rent-free meeting space at the downtown library, thanks to ongoing relationships with staff, regular donations to the Saunders Library fund, and the educational value to the public of speakers at MFN meetings.

Attendance at regular meetings during the late 1960s ranged from 40 to 75, with higher numbers attending for special topics. A talk on Peregrine Falcons in 1968 brought out more than 100 people, while a presentation on Australia attracted 90. In the early 1970s, the number of attendees at meetings increased gradually, with figures between 80 and 100 becoming more common. When Kay and Larry McKeever spoke about their work with owls in October 1973, 130 people were present.

Attendance was not always recorded, and some sign-in registers have been lost, but records from the mid-1980s show meeting numbers regularly reaching 100 to 150. Audience size likely reflected the overall increase in club membership in this time period. The number of members grew from 118 in 1965, to 230 in 1976, and 436 in 1989.

Membership fees rose from \$2 in 1965 to \$20 in 1989.

Banquet

A highlight of MFN's year was the annual dinner at Rowntree United Church, which usually featured a prominent speaker. For the 15th banquet in December 1965, author Fred Bodsworth attracted 160 attendees, the largest gathering of the club to that time. Tickets sold for \$2. The Annual Meeting, including the election of officers for the following year, took place at the end of the evening.

In 1977, the banquet was moved to Wesley-Knox United Church, remaining there for many years. By 1980, ticket prices had climbed to \$7 each, and by 1989 to \$14. Artist Robert Bateman was the guest speaker in 1981, when attendance at the banquet exceeded 200.

The year 1980 marked the first time that awards were presented at the banquet, a tradition that continues today. A fundraising component was introduced in 1986, with a silent auction for an Osprey print. The sale of jam made from wild grapes grown at Cedarcroft raised more than \$100 for the junior naturalists.



Left: At the November 1988 banquet, Dorothy (left) and Frank Cook and Margie Wake received the first two W.E. Saunders Awards.



Right: Spencer Inch presenting a Conservation Award to Dave McLeod in 1989. (Photos by David Wake.)

Junior Naturalists

After several years without a program for young naturalists, MFN tried to form a group in 1968. During the school break in March, 70 young people attended an organizational meeting at Central Secondary School. A month later, 23 youth enjoyed an outing at Westminster Ponds, but there is no record of further activity. In 1971, another effort was made and this group functioned successfully for a couple of years. A report from early 1972 mentions 65 members.

After a gap of a few years, a junior club was organized in 1977. Meetings took place once a month on Saturdays, and 25 members were on the list. Many events were held at the YMCA's George White Outdoor Centre on Clarke Road, overlooking the Thames River. When Ann White took over leadership in 1979, the 15 to 20 members continued to meet once a month. An annual campout became a feature of the program. In the 1984/1985 season, the group travelled to Cedarcroft, Springwater Conservation Area, and Pinery Provincial Park.

Don Lodge became chair in the fall of 1985, and the

Junior GNats visiting Long Point in April 1989. (Photo from MFN Archives.)



club adopted the name Junior GNats, because "we may be small but we make our presence felt." From 1986 to 1988, the juniors used the Children's Museum for their monthly indoor meetings. A second monthly meeting was held outdoors. The number of members increased from 10 in 1986 to 28 two years later.

In 1989, the GNats undertook a letter-writing campaign, protesting the use of pole-traps. The proposed spring bus trip to the Kortright Waterfowl Park in Guelph was cancelled after Kortright learned of this activity. Kortright claimed that protests by groups, including MFN and its juniors, were costing it money for legal fees to defend the practice of trapping hawks!

In fall 1989, the GNats moved their indoor meetings to an office space on Richmond Street, and reports indicate that there were 23 keen members.

The Cardinal

The Cardinal featured a diverse offering of bird records, news, announcements, conservation reports and natural history articles. In response to increasing postal costs, the separate mailing of monthly notices of club activities ceased after 1978. Starting in February 1979, *The Cardinal* was published four times a year, and contained all announcements of club meetings and field trips.

In 1983 an Editorial Committee was formed to assist the editor, and a major redesign of *The Cardinal* took place in 1985. Starting with the February issue, MFN member Carl Hearn generously arranged to print the publication at Hearn/Kelly Printing Company – provided the club paid for the paper and produced a quality product. The new design was brought to life by Vivian Sturdee, who set a high standard in attractive layout.

In 1988, Frank Cook retired as editor, and was replaced by Winifred and David Wake.

Conferences and Courses

MFN continued its long-term connection with FON, having been one of the federation's founding groups in 1931. In addition, MFN developed ties to the newly formed Canadian Nature Federation (CNF). Created in 1971 through a restructuring of the former Canadian Audubon Society, CNF looked for opportunities to become better known across Canada. One such opportunity was the holding of its annual conferences in locations across the country. The CNF conference in 1974 was hosted by MFN, with the theme "Nature and Urban Man". It included lectures, field trips and a nature art exhibit, and attracted visitors from coast to coast. The 250 participants received a warm welcome, and for many years to come, CNF members spoke favourably of the conference in London.



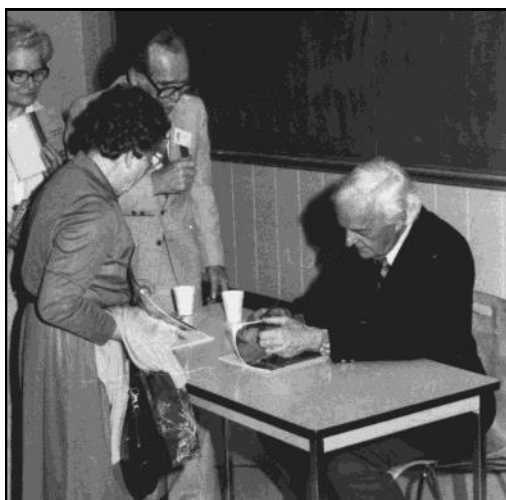
Nature and Urban Man was the theme for the 1974 conference of the Canadian Nature Federation, hosted by MFN. (Image from Nature London Archives.)

MFN welcomed FON's 50th anniversary conference to London in 1981. For two years beforehand, MFN members diligently planned and prepared for this important event. In the 1970s and 1980s, FON conferences were very popular events, and MFN pulled out all the stops in

order to make the May 1981 meeting a resounding success. Capacity crowds registered to hear presentations by prominent Canadian photographer Mary Ferguson, popular television producers/cinematographers John and Janet Foster, and the one and only Roger Tory Peterson. In a report on the conference in *The Cardinal*, we read "Total registration exceeded 625, making this one of the largest FON Conferences on record. Registrants came from all over Ontario, and from out-of-province locations including Montreal, Edmonton, New York State and Ohio." The conference turned a profit of \$10,000. In accordance with the agreement between MFN and FON, the profit was shared fifty-fifty.

During the 1970s there was increasing interest in the environment across society. New members were swelling the ranks of MFN. Many of these people, as well as the public in general, were eager to learn more about nature. MFN's solution was to offer mini-courses, delivered by knowledgeable members. The venture began in 1978 with a two-session course on birdwatching skills, held in Helen Inch's home. The next year, longer springtime courses on plants and birds were presented at the library. The 1980 offerings included two evenings on landscaping for wildlife, and a geology course. The latter consisted of four evenings plus an all-day bus tour. In 1981, there was a course on non-flowering plants, and another series on bird identification.

No courses were offered in 1982, but a new series commenced in 1983. "Exploring Spring" was developed in partnership with Fanshawe College, as part of its non-credit program. This course provided four indoor lectures and three field trips. MFN was paid by the college. Partici-



MFN member Mary Abbott (back to camera) has her copy of *A Field Guide to the Birds* signed by Roger Tory Peterson, at the FON Conference in May 1981. (Photo by Bob Leigh, from Nature London Archives.)

In conjunction with MFN's April 1988 symposium, Trees for London organized a tree planting and dedication at the Elsie Perrin Williams estate. Mary Smith addresses the gathering. (Photo by David Wake.)



pants received a 16-month membership in MFN. This highly successful series continued into the 1990s, educating numerous people about nature, and bringing many new members into the club.

In the late 1980s, MFN sought to reach a wider general audience by hosting symposia on topical themes. In 1986, MFN's Education Committee, in conjunction with the London Public Library, organized a one-day seminar entitled "Our Disappearing Wetlands". Wetlands were an important public policy issue at the time, and the MNR provided support through CWIP. MFN published proceedings of this conference in 1987.

"Our Natural Heritage: Responding to Environmental Challenges" was the title of a day-long symposium in April 1988. Sponsored by MFN and the London Public Library, this event attracted nearly 50 paying participants. In conjunction with the symposium, a Cucumber Magnolia tree was planted at the Elsie Perrin Williams estate.

Trees for London

Beginning in 1984, Trees for London (TFL) operated as a committee of MFN. The brainchild of David Thomson, the concept involved raising money for the purchase of trees, which were then planted by the PUC, at that time responsible for trees and parks. This program was developed to increase the number and diversity of tree species being planted in the city, and to address concerns about the advanced age of many of the existing trees in parks and on boulevards.

The first TFL fundraising campaign was initiated during Natural Heritage Day festivities in September 1984, when a tree was planted at Ivey Park. In the first year of operation, funds raised by TFL supported the planting of more than 350 trees. In subsequent years, TFL raised thousands of dollars and regularly organized special tree-planting events. Trees for London played an important role in stimulating renewed interest in the planting of trees, especially native ones, in the City of London.

Publicity and Planning

MFN was eager to get its name into the community to advance environmental causes and attract new members. Informative displays were regularly set up at malls, libraries and other venues, and taken to annual FON conferences. In 1971, 7500 brochures were published for distribution in the community (top of page 41, left). A redesigned brochure (top of page 41, right) premiered in 1976.

For many years, the club had a presence at the Home



and Garden Show. Each spring, Bill and Frances Girling and Turner Bedgood organized the popular exhibit of living wildflowers.

The Publicity Committee developed a list of media that provided free publicity to charitable organizations. In the 1980s, information about club

events was sent monthly to 40 newspaper, radio and television outlets.

MFN came to recognize that new members joining the club might have new ideas. In order to tap into this pool and encourage a general rejuvenation of the club, a Planning Workshop took place in September 1982. Break-out groups discussed many aspects of MFN programming, and the club began implementing the recommendations. A second workshop three years later touched on many of the same issues as the first one had, and also explored fundraising. Both workshops helped to shape MFN activities in subsequent years.

Federation of Ontario Naturalists

MFN remained an active member of FON, sending representatives to Board meetings, conferences, regional meetings, and sometimes providing volunteers for field gatherings. Through the 1970s and 1980s, FON assumed a leadership role in environmental issues across the province and helped to educate member groups. FON's well-researched positions on complex issues underpinned positions taken by MFN on local and regional issues.

FON's increased environmental role required increasing budgets, and there were frequent and often-urgent requests to local clubs for financial aid. In 1978, when FON changed the membership fee structure for its affiliates, the annual fee for MFN jumped from \$16 to \$250. MFN stayed the course, and continued to strongly support FON and the programs it delivered. At other times when FON found itself in financial difficulty MFN offered encouragement as well as monetary aid. For example, in 1985, MFN donated an additional \$750 to help fund the staff environmentalist position.

Birds and Birding

True to its traditions as the "bird club", MFN devoted much time and energy to the study and enjoyment of birds. Recent sightings and updating the annual list were important features of monthly meetings. Reports of bird observations in Middlesex County, both seasonal and annual, continued to be compiled by the Migration Secretary and summarized in *The Cardinal*. A London Christmas Bird Count was organized each year, with an end-of-day potluck supper becoming an added feature, beginning in 1976.

In June 1976, Spencer Inch initiated an early morning survey of breeding birds along the Thames River, from Fanshawe to Byron. Following the count, participants gathered in Gibbons Park for breakfast. This annual survey

continued each year until the early 1990s.

When Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) inaugurated the Baillie Birdathon, MFN birders became regular participants, raising funds for both LPBO and MFN. During the early 1980s, many MFN members were avid volunteers for Ontario's first Breeding Bird Atlas.

September 23, 1988 marked the beginning of the Birding Wing under the leadership of Pete Read and Dave Martin. For the first season, monthly Birding Wing meetings took place in a meeting room at the Central Library. When this space became too crowded, the meeting location was moved first to Fanshawe College, and later to UWO.

Conclusion

At the end of the 1980s, MFN had risen to a level of activity and influence never before reached since its rebirth as the Ornithological Section in 1890. The club had weathered the loss of the Audubon film series and replaced it with a highly successful educational outreach course offered through Fanshawe College. Membership was at an all-time high and growing. A junior naturalists program flourished. The governance structure had been updated, the quarterly publication modernized, an awards system developed, an archives founded, a nature reserve acquired, and significant conferences of provincial and national affiliates hosted. The club's core programs of meetings, field trips, and bird record-keeping thrived. Trees for London and a Birding Wing had been established. Thanks to the tireless efforts of its Conservation Committee, MFN was at the forefront in identifying significant natural areas and shaping City policies and structures that enabled them to be protected.

All in all, the McIlwraith Field Naturalists had become a highly respected member of London's volunteer community. What would the 1990s bring? Find out in Part VI.

(David and Winifred Wake are Nature London's Archivists. As members of the club's 150th Anniversary Committee, they were very involved in preparing the anniversary exhibition on the club at Museum London [see page 62].)

Sources

The main documents used in the preparation of this article are the MFN minute books (1965 to 1989), which contain the records of Board meetings as well as regular club meetings. Other important sources were club notices (to 1979) and *The Cardinal*. Numerous miscellaneous documents from the MFN Archives were also searched. Additional material came from the memory and personal files of David Wake, who joined MFN in January 1965.

A junior naturalists' field trip along the Thames in Springbank Park, likely in 1971.
(Photo by David Wake.)





THE NATURE LONDON STORY

PART VI: 1990 TO 2014

David Wake and Winifred Wake

Authors' Note: In Parts I to V of this series, we described activities of the precursors of Nature London: the beginnings of the London Branch of the Entomological Society of Canada (Ontario) in 1864, the rise and decline of the four Sections established in 1890, and the 1915 rejuvenation of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club (McIlwraith Field Naturalists from 1965 onward), whose progress was outlined through to 1989.

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1980s the McIlwraith Field Naturalists (MFN) was enjoying a period of unprecedented energy and activity. By 1989, membership had climbed to 436. Two years later, just prior to an economic recession, numbers peaked at 452, then trended downward through the 1990s. By 1996, membership had fallen to 317, where it stabilized for a time before dropping to 304 in 2000. In the new millennium, numbers gradually increased, reaching a high of 386 in 2013.

Lower membership levels created challenges for MFN, especially in finding volunteers to fill executive positions and run the club's many programs. Restructuring in 2004 produced a streamlined Board, which currently consists of ten directors. Twenty-eight additional people occupy appointed positions, and countless more contribute in many other capacities.

Building on a 1980s tradition, MFN organized planning workshops in 1991, 1996 and 2002. At each event, recommendations were developed and, where feasible, later implemented. The most recent workshop took place in 2013; the Strategic Planning Committee and the Board continue to pursue initiatives flowing from that event.

In 2009 MFN adopted a simpler name – Nature London – as the club's new public identity. The McIlwraith name was retained for formal business purposes. In this article, we generally use McIlwraith Field Naturalists (MFN) when discussing events that happened between 1990 and 2009, and Nature London (NL) for later activities.

CORE OPERATIONS AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

In this section we summarize MFN's many core activities, as well as long-term ones that commenced prior to 1990.

Indoor Meetings

MFN met on Fridays (since 1965) at the London Public Library (LPL) (since 1940). This arrangement ended in 1995 when LPL ceased to be open on Friday evenings. Initially, the club moved one block east to First-St Andrew's Church, then to the Civic Garden Complex in 1998. Six monthly meetings are currently held (eight in the early 1990s). Since 2012, non-members have been asked to donate \$5 per meeting attended.

From 1993 to 1999, attendance at meetings averaged 70, but rose to 80 between 2007 and 2013. Turnouts are usually larger for travelogues featuring exotic wildlife des-

tinuations and smaller for members' nights and conservation or environmental topics. Among other program subjects are various types of fauna and general natural history. In 1996 MFN began holding joint January meetings with the London Branch of the Canadian Wildflower Society, always on a botanical theme. The tradition continued until 2008, by which time the wildflower group was no longer operating.

Technology at monthly meetings changed with the times. Carousel projectors were standard equipment in the 1990s. In 2006, the club purchased an LCD projector to facilitate PowerPoint presentations by computer.

Field Trips

Organized field trips under experienced leaders offer instruction on species identification and introduce participants to significant natural areas. In the past 25 years, 20 to 45 field trips have been held annually, with spring being the busiest season. Attendance varies, depending on weather, publicity and general interest in a destination. In 2013/2014, for example, 20 leaders conducted 30 outings and attendance averaged 22, with a high of 50 on January 1 at Springbank Park.

Non-members are welcome on many club outings. Since 2000, however, due to liability concerns, only members can attend field trips to private property and out-of-town destinations. All participants are required to sign a waiver form before setting out.

Cedarcroft has been the most frequent destination for outings (up to five per year). NL's most venerable field trip is the New Year's Day bird walk at Springbank, which hasn't missed a year in four decades. The fall outing to Kettle Point (inaugurated in 1989) has the second-longest continuous record. Several other trips are offered most years: Killaly Meadows (woodcocks), Hawk Cliff (raptors), and Long Point and Aylmer (waterfowl). Additional well-frequented destinations include Fanshawe, Westminster Ponds, Komoka Provincial Park, St Clair River, Hullett Marsh, Sifton Bog, and Meadowlily Woods. Dozens of other sites have also been visited on NL outings.

Most club trips focus on nature in general but a substantial number are devoted to birds, especially during migration. Wildflowers are often the highlight of spring outings. Since 1975 MFN has offered Wednesday evening walks from late April to mid-June. The 1990s saw MFN sponsoring Saturday-morning bird banding demonstrations at Fanshawe. Joint outings are occasionally arranged with



Field trip in the Medway Valley, May 1994. Leader Jack Lorimer is kneeling; Doug Bocking is on right. (Photo by David Wake.)



MFN field trip to the Bruce Peninsula, June 1997.
(Photo by David Wake.)

other naturalists' groups in the region.

During the 1990s, workshops were offered on various topics. In that period MFN also reserved group camping spaces during migration seasons at Point Pelee National Park. Since 2007 the club annually visits the Bruce Peninsula for spring birding weekends.

Birds, Birding and Birding Wing

Birds are a traditional interest for MFN. After the Birding Wing was formed in 1988, many bird-related undertakings came under its auspices. In the 1990s Birding Wing met monthly at the University of Western Ontario (UWO), moving to the Civic Garden Complex in 1998. Dave Martin lines up speakers on bird topics. Since 2003, Birding Wing has held five monthly meetings (formerly six). Attendance has remained steady over the years, at about 60, but may reach 100 at times.

Since 1983 Pete Read has maintained bird records for Middlesex County and co-ordinated the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). To mark the 100th CBC in London in 2008, a pin was created. In 1990, pins celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Ornithological Section. The county bird checklist is updated regularly, most recently in 2014.

In the 1990s, MFN members were active in delivering field birding courses through the continuing education programs at Fanshawe College and UWO. More recently a club member has been offering spring and fall birding courses through the London's Parks and Recreation Department. Birding Wing strives for a good representation of bird outings on the club's field trip roster.

The London Birding Line was launched in 1993 to provide record-

ed phone messages telling where to find interesting birds. In 1998, this became the Nature Line and now delivers weekly updates on nature sightings and NL activities.

A June Breeding Bird Census along the Thames River continued until 1992. In the early 2000s, MFN members were very active in the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project. Many also take part in population-monitoring schemes, including FeederWatch, the Breeding Bird Survey, and the Great Backyard Bird Count. Nature London members participate in the Baillie Birdathon each spring, raising funds for Bird Studies Canada and the club. Several young London birders have benefited from the Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists' Workshop at the Long Point Bird Observatory.

Many local birders use eBird and the regional Listserv, an electronic forum for posting natural history sightings in Middlesex, Elgin and Oxford counties.

Conservation Activities

At the beginning of the 1990s, MFN's Conservation Committee had up to ten members, and a bulging dossier of issues. Not much has changed, except the name (now the Conservation Action Committee).

In the 1990s MFN continued to seek funding and provide management for life science inventories – e.g., Wyton Station Woods (1993) and Dingman Creek (1994). Hands-on activities included loosestrife pulls, removal of Gypsy Moth egg cases from tree trunks, and the re-naturalization of lands along the Highbury Avenue hydro corridor.

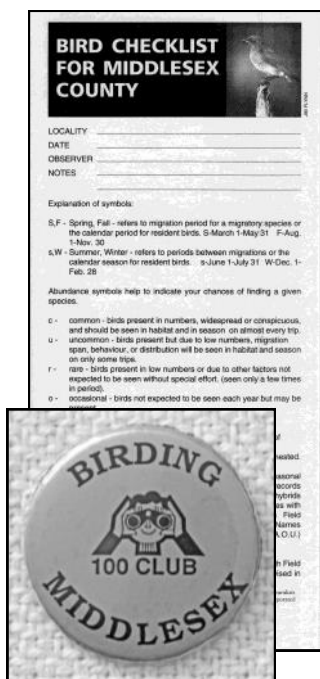
The monitoring of activities at City Hall, however, remained a primary focus. The City's 1990 Official Plan was the first to provide protection for designated Natural Areas (now called Environmentally Significant Areas – ESAs). Five sites were on the list – Sifton Bog, Warbler Woods, Westminster Ponds, Meadowlily Woods, and Medway Valley. Others were added later. An advisory committee was formed in 1992, but City Hall culture excluded the committee from the decision-making process. Finally, in 1993, 16 years after MFN first began urging formation of an ecological advisory committee, London's first Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee (EEPAC) was formed.

Buoyed by this success, some in MFN began talking of redirecting club efforts to focus on education, since protection of natural areas now seemed secure. Yet in 1995, MFN President Rosemary Kelley stated "Our conservation team is spending more and more time at City Hall trying to protect our ESAs and shrinking natural areas."

What went wrong?

Alas, MFN had discovered that designation as a protected area is merely a starting point. Many threats continue from development proposals, as well as management policies and activities. Insistent and ongoing advocacy may result in some actual protection but there are no guarantees. Read on for a very small sampling of the conservation issues addressed by MFN in the past quarter-century.

MFN's conservation file contains many recurring themes. For example, in 1990, City Council passed a by-law prohibiting paved bicycle paths in the Medway Valley; 25 years later MFN is still actively opposing bicycles in ESAs. Another recurring theme is stormwater management. In 2011, a stormwater facility was constructed partially within the Medway Valley Heritage Forest ESA.



This Middlesex County bird checklist (top) was compiled in 1996. The new 2014 checklist is available on the Nature London website (under Publications). Buttons were awarded to anyone who recorded 100 species of birds in Middlesex County in 1990.

Despite safeguards in municipal and provincial policies, constant vigilance by the conservation community is required.

Early in the 2000s, MFN members began registering concerns over the excessive cutting of “hazard trees” near trails in ESAs. Over time, the City and Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) began to recognize the wildlife value of such trees and, since 2013, tree cutting in ESAs has been reduced.

Design and management of trails in ESAs remains an important issue. MFN worked with City staff and other community groups to develop a trails’ standards document, which was approved by City Council in 2012.

In the early 1990s, *vis-a-vis* a new subdivision near Killaly Road, MFN urged the City to protect a provincially rare Black Maple stand and a nesting colony of Bank Swallows bordering the river. The swallow habitat was destroyed, but 40% of the Black Maple stand was preserved.

Although ESAs had been granted protection in the Official Plan, other natural areas remained vulnerable. Advice and support from MFN helped neighbourhood groups protect or partially protect Highland Woods (1994) and Clara Brenton Woods (1999), though efforts were unsuccessful for a Teeple Terrace woodlot (1992).

In 2006, City Council approved criteria for the designation of Significant Woodlands. Over the next five years the development community launched a series of appeals in an unsuccessful attempt to have the decision overturned. During this period, to bolster the likelihood that City policy would be upheld, Sandy Levin retained a lawyer and a planner to testify before the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), and MFN assisted with fundraising.

Following is a brief summary of some ESA-related issues addressed by MFN since 1990.

Medway Valley Heritage Forest. MFN activity on behalf of the Medway has continued almost unabated for more than 25 years. Among issues of concern are trail footprint, too-easy access to sensitive areas, sewer lines in the valley, re-naturalization, appropriate setbacks and buffers, paved and unpaved roadways, and proposals for creation of a paved bicycle transportation corridor with multiple bridges. Despite stalwart efforts by MFN and others, since the Medway was accorded protection as an ESA, it has experienced a very significant amount of City-approved damage and degradation. Nature London is currently participating in development of a new Conservation Master Plan for the Medway ESA.

Sifton Bog. For more than half a century, protection of



1993 Conservation Award winners. Left to right: Anne Hurd (for exceptional leadership), Maaïke Froelich (for Sifton Bog protection) and Rosemary Dickinson (for environmental activism). (Photo by David Wake.)

Sifton Bog has been on MFN’s radar. Issues since the 1990s include invasive species, buffers, drainage into and out of the wetland, proposals for adjacent high-density development (MFN aided neighbourhood groups in an OMB challenge, 1994), high deer numbers causing damage to sensitive vegetation, and the need for regular water monitoring (finally implemented in 2014). MFN members helped shape the Conservation Master Plan for Sifton Bog that was approved in 2009.

Kains Woods. In the mid-1990s, MFN unsuccessfully opposed the Oxford Street extension across the Thames River near the Hunt Club. The new road alignment cut a broad swath through the core of the forested lands along the west bank of the river. Having sponsored an earlier Life Science Inventory of the area, MFN monitored ESA protection related to the RiverBend development. In 2007, a narrow woodland corridor beside the river was opened to the public as Kains Woods ESA. In 2013, MFN participated in a group that provided advice to City staff regarding ways to reduce the environmental impact of the Kains Woods trail.

Westminster Ponds / Pond Mills. Westminster Ponds was a major MFN focus in the 1990s, first when a development scheme (eventually rejected) for lands northwest of Southdale Road and Adelaide Street went to an OMB hearing. In the late 1990s MFN took a lead role in opposing proposals by local hospitals to develop lands (including forested areas) north of Saunders and Spettigues ponds. The club engaged community groups, secured financing, and retained a lawyer to help make the case for protection of the ESA. In 2000, City Council approved a plan that addressed most of the concerns of the environmental community. MFN served on the advisory committee that helped prepare the updated Conservation Master Plan (approved in 2005). Since 2013, the club has been providing input to an ecological inventory and the development of recommended management zones.

Meadowlily Woods. In the 1990s Meadowlily was bisected by the construction of a storm sewer extending from the Summerside development to the Thames, but a proposal for a football stadium adjacent to the ESA did not go ahead. Management issues of current concern include inappropriate uses and trail degradation. At present, Nature London is participating in the process leading to an update of the Conservation Master Plan.

Additional Issues. MFN has been active on matters relat-



MFN members study a map in the Kains Road area (April 27, 1991). **From left:** Dorothy McCallum, Anne Hurd, Sharon Critchley, Cathy Quinlan, Winifred Wake, John Critchley. (Photo by David Wake.)

ing to Komoka Provincial Park and sits on the Middlesex County Woodlands Advisory Committee (with a special interest in Skunk's Misery). The club has also taken action on numerous other topics of conservation interest, e.g., Summerside wetlands, encroachments, UWO / Gibbons Park wetland, Thames valley corridor plan, forestry policy, mining in protected parks, Provincial Policy Statement review, Planning Act revisions, and Official Plan amendments and updates.

Speaking up on behalf of species, habitats and natural areas in need of protection is ongoing and not for the faint of heart. MFN and London are privileged to have such a dedicated Conservation Action Committee in place. New members and more help are always welcome.

Community Engagement

MFN's Education Committee organized annual Exploring Spring courses (four lectures, four field trips, \$60 fee) at Fanshawe College until 1995, when public interest waned. Exploring Spring was last offered (free) at the London Public Library in 1998.

MFN provided leaders for nature walks in ESAs during Environment Week in June 1990. Throughout the decade, club members conducted tours of London's ESAs each fall for Natural Areas Day (later renamed Nature Nearby). In 2003 Doors Open London began including MFN-led ESA walks in its program. Such events were popular with the public: for example, in September 2001, 700 people came to Westminster Ponds. In 2009 MFN participated in Ontario Nature's Nature Discovery Family Day at Springbank Park.

An MFN representative serves on the London Advisory Committee on Heritage (LACH). To launch Heritage Week in 1995, MFN arranged a five-speaker event highlighting the Thames River. The club actively supported the community campaign to have the Thames designated a Heritage River (achieved in 2000). It also participated in the 1996/1997 Celebrate the Thames initiative by offering a dozen field trips along the river, co-sponsoring a two-day conference (Focus on the Thames), and helping to publish the proceedings (see cover at upper right).

In 1999 MFN organized the annual provincial conference of citizen representatives to municipal environmental advisory bodies (e.g., EEPACs), which attracted 80 delegates. To celebrate the millennium and Earth Day in 2000, MFN hosted a public lecture by Michael Runtz at Fanshawe College (attendance of 175).

In 2005 and 2006 MFN assisted the Rotary Club of London West in its Walk on the Wild Side walkathon at Westminster Ponds. From 2010 to 2013, NL partnered with the Rotarians in a plank project that raised thousands of dollars for construction of boardwalks at Westminster Ponds.

During the past quarter-century MFN has made generous donations to many worthy causes. Projects supported include a Lambton County insect study, publication of photo field guides, a prairie planting at Sharon Creek, a Warbler Woods bird study, purchase of conservation lands, and initiatives of Carolinian Canada and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON).

Several MFN members are available to deliver talks and lead field trips for community organizations. Portable displays on nature topics have been mounted at various city libraries. In recent years, MFN has been educating Londoners through articles on nature and conservation in the *Londoner*. For decades MFN's sales department has carried items such as nature-themed cards, calendars, T-shirts, posters, and books. Sales not only raise funds for the club but the products serve outreach and educational purposes.

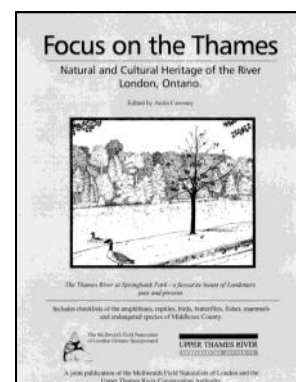
Many club members participate in monitoring and atlas projects (e.g., marsh monitoring, lady beetle surveys, and mammal, tree, and reptile and amphibian atlases).

Publicity

Publicity for MFN events includes a weekly recorded telephone message and notices in newspapers and other local media. When opportunities arise, display panels are set up at public venues and events.

In 1997, MFN acquired its first web presence, which was followed by a number of years of growing pains. The Nature London website has since matured and become an excellent source of information about the club's activities. More recently, a Facebook presence has been added.

During the 1990s a general MFN promotional brochure was available, and sheets listing upcoming field trips and meetings were often distributed to non-members on field trips. Since 2003 a club brochure that includes meetings and field trips has been available (now updated twice a year).



Left: Barbara Bain prepares to lead a hike at Westminster Ponds for Natural Areas Day, October 1993. (Photo by David Wake.)

Right: Part of the crowd gathered for the opening of the new Rotary Club of London West boardwalk at Westminster Ponds, October 2002. (Photo by David Wake.)





From left: Frances and Bill Girling, Rosemary Kelley, and Eileen and Bill Stewart, recipients of W.E. Saunders Awards at the 1996 banquet. (Photo by David Wake.)

Conservation Awards Banquet

An annual banquet in November brings club members together for a fine meal, a notable speaker and the opportunity to recognize significant contributions to the environment. Conservation certificates are presented annually and, when suitable candidates are identified, W.E. Saunders and Special Recognition awards are given out. Since 1990, banquets have been held at the Ivanhoe, the German Canadian Club, Wesley-Knox Church, the Lamplighter, the Civic Garden Complex, Fanshawe College and the Hellenic Centre. In the early 1990s, banquet attendance approximated 200; in recent times 115 is a more typical number. From 1990 to 2014, ticket prices rose from \$25 to \$35. Bucket raffles and silent auctions help subsidize banquet costs.

The Cardinal

The Cardinal appears four times annually, for a total of 100 issues, two supplements, and 4000 pages since 1990. Length and sophistication have grown steadily, and individual issues now frequently run to 48 pages. In this period the magazine has been edited by two husband-and-wife teams (transition in 2004), assisted by an editorial committee. *The Cardinal* offers a wide range of content on natural history and conservation, with a strong emphasis on local and regional material.

In the past quarter-century the magazine has undergone many production changes. The early 1990s saw illustrations and typewriter-derived text pasted onto master sheets by means of an electric waxer and a light table. Printing was courtesy of Hearn Kelly. Volunteers collated and stapled each issue, stuffed envelopes and added address

labels. Saddle-stitch binding was adopted in 1993. In 1990 *The Cardinal* obtained second-class postage privileges, enabling it to be mailed at very low cost for many years. Today, an agreement with Canada Post governs mailing arrangements.

Since the late 1990s, magazine production has become increasingly reliant on computer technology for editing, layout, database storage of graphics, and electronic submission to M&T Instaprint, the printer since 1993. From 2006 to 2013, paid advertisements in *The Cardinal* generated revenue that was applied to printing and mailing costs.

Relations with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists

Since the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (from 2004, Ontario Nature) was formed in 1931, MFN has been a strong supporter. In the early 1990s, two past presidents of MFN became FON presidents: Mary (Kerr) Smith and John Cartwright. Each spring and fall, representatives from Nature London meet with other Ontario Nature member groups at the Carolinian West regional council. Here the club is kept well informed about provincial issues.

Ontario Nature provides leadership on parks and protected areas, land-use planning policies and conservation science. Some major initiatives are undertaken as collaborative efforts. In 1997, for example, FON joined with the World Wildlife Fund and the Wildlands League to form the Partnership for Public Lands, which campaigned for completion of the provincial parks system. In 2007, Ontario Nature urged greater protection for species at risk through a new, stronger Endangered Species Act. Six years later, together with Ecojustice and the Wildlands League, Ontario Nature launched a lawsuit against the provincial government to oppose industry exemptions to the Endangered Species Act. Nature London vigorously supports these and many other Ontario Nature initiatives.

Cedarcroft

At MFN's nature reserve, club members enjoy hikes, picnics and work days. They participate in re-naturalization of selected areas; and trail, cabin, fence and infrastructure maintenance. In a property of woodland ravines, repair and replacement of bridges is ongoing. In the early 2000s, volunteers with FON's Working for Wilderness program built two bridges. The pond, culvert and standpipe require attention at intervals. Bird feeders near the cabin were kept filled each winter until 2006. A prolonged boundary dispute with a neighbour was resolved in 1992.



Left: At the Hearn Kelly Printing Company plant, Barb Yeo seals envelopes to ready the freshly collated *Cardinals* for mailing, 1992. (Photo by Anita Caveney.)

Right: In the fall of 1995 a joint MFN and West Elgin Nature Club field trip included a visit to Cedarcroft and its new bridge. (Photo by David Wake.)





Ann White (facing) leading a group at Cedarcroft, June 10, 1990. (Photo by Barbara Bain, Nature London archives.)

In 2014, a brochure containing a map of Cedarcroft's trails was produced and a significant planting of Carolinian trees was undertaken. Cedarcroft is managed by a hard-working committee, which is currently updating the property's management plan.

Junior Naturalists

The Junior GNats program flourished throughout the 1990s. One indoor and one outdoor event were held each month. Indoor meetings often involved crafts or a speaker from the senior club. Occasionally bus trips were organized (e.g., Guelph Arboretum and Toronto Zoo). The GNats met in a succession of places, including an office space, Fred and Jean Heagy's basement, the coach house at Grosvenor Lodge, St Jude's Church, the Montessori School on Victoria Street, and the Landon Library.

In January 1993, membership in the Junior GNats stood at 29. A field trip to Westminster Ponds attracted 50 participants, including helpers and parents. At the MFN annual meeting that spring, 12 juniors received certificates for successfully completing the FON BirdQuest program. In 2000 three members attended FON Young Naturalists Summer Camps in Haliburton, two of them supported by MFN's Cummings Scholarships.

By summer 2000, the Gnats were suddenly leaderless, and the highly successful program of 23 years folded. Later efforts to revive the group came to naught.

Despite setbacks, NL remains committed to encouraging junior naturalists. For many years family bug walks were held at Meadowlily Woods. The club sponsored a teenaged member at Ontario Nature's Youth Summit in Orillia in 2013. In December 2014, the first annual Christmas Bird Count for Kids was organized.

Trees for London

Through the 1990s, Trees for London raised funds for tree planting. A 1990 project celebrated heritage trees through a plaque program. In 1993, the City assumed responsibility for memorial trees, and Trees for London began to focus on habitat restoration plantings. The first such event took place at Greenway Park in April 1994, when 500 trees



The Bur Oak at the southwest corner of the Oxford Street bridge, 1992. The tree was marked with a heritage tree plaque (inset) in 1990 through a program of Trees for London and the Public Utilities Commission. (Photos by Anita Caveney.)

and shrubs were planted.

The committee's founding chairperson, David Thomson, died in 1996, leaving a legacy of tree, shrub and wild-flower plantings in the public spaces of the City. Mary Kerr became chair and the work of Trees for London continued. By 2005, the MFN Board recognized that organizations such as Reforest London were better positioned to carry on the work, and a final planting ceremony was held at Greenway Park in April 2006.

In 22 years, Trees for London raised tens of thousands of dollars, greened the City with native plants, naturalized parks and boulevards, initiated a renewal of London's tree canopy, and educated Londoners on the value of native trees.

Archives

In 2006, after 40 years at the helm, Bill Judd retired as MFN's founding archivist. In addition to other contributions, from 1992 to 2002 he produced ten volumes of annotated minutes of MFN's regular club meetings, covering the years 1920 to 1969. In 2005 he published a catalogue of the meetings of the Birding Wing from 1988 to 2004.

The current archivists, while continuing to add to the fonds (i.e., collections) and responding to inquiries, are digitizing accession lists and descriptions, transferring materials to acid-free storage containers, and reorganizing the fonds according to currently accepted practices. From time to time, lectures have been given and displays relating to club history have been mounted. The MFN archives are housed in a restricted-access area of the London Room at the London Public Library. By the end of 2014, the master catalogue listed 725 accessions, many of which include multiple items.

W.E. Saunders Memorial Library

For many decades MFN has been contributing funds to purchase books and other materials on nature and environmental topics for the London Public Library. The club currently donates \$1000 per year, half being directed towards children's material. In 2000, MFN provided volunteers and financial support for LPL's children's summer reading program on the theme of bugs.

NEW INITIATIVES COMMENCING IN THE 1990s

1990 Celebrations

In 1990, MFN celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Ornithological Section of the Entomological Society. A highlight was the installation of a plaque honouring W.E. Saunders, the founding chair, at Westminster Ponds.

Junior naturalists admire a cake celebrating 100 years since the founding of the Ornithological Section, predecessor of MFN. (Photo at Cedarcroft, June 1990, by David Wake.)



Other anniversary projects included a ceremonial tree planting and birthday party at Cedarcroft, the creation of items bearing the cardinal logo, the construction by the Junior GNats of a bird feeder for Cedarcroft, and the presentation of Cummings Awards to two local schools in recognition of environmental projects carried out. The biggest undertaking of the year was hosting a five-day Canadian Nature Federation conference at UWO, attended by 200 delegates from across the country. In November 1990, Professor Thomas McIlwraith addressed MFN on the life of his great-grandfather, pioneer ornithologist Thomas McIlwraith, after whom MFN was named.

Grosvenor Lodge

From time to time, MFN considered the possibility of renting a space that could be used for Board and committee meetings, and as a home for the junior club. In 1992 a coalition of heritage and environmental groups began operating Grosvenor Lodge as a public centre. Buoyed by financial health and peaking membership numbers, MFN rented the upper floor of the property's coach house and moved in in July 1992.



Exhibits in the Junior GNats' clubhouse at Grosvenor Lodge coach house, November 1992. (Photo by David Wake.)

The coach house proved to be a great success. The GNats were delighted to have a "clubhouse" where their belongings could be left between meetings, and senior club members enjoyed having a "boardroom" available. Unfortunately the move came at a time of economic downturn, just as a significant decline in club membership and revenues was getting underway. Almost immediately, the monthly rental fee and the expectation of involvement in general Lodge activities became burdensome. Despite several renegotiations, the MFN Board terminated its relationship with Grosvenor Lodge in early 1996.

The McIlwraith Field Naturalists Foundation

Following background work and legal advice, the MFN Board launched the McIlwraith Field Naturalists Foundation of London, which was incorporated in September 1990. The hope was that a foundation would prove beneficial in raising funds for projects related to conservation and natural history education.

The new foundation had a very short life. Early on, some MFN Board members expressed doubts about the value of a separate organization. It was eventually determined that there was no advantage and, in June 1991, the MFN Board voted to dissolve the foundation.

Turtle / Reptile Initiatives

From 1994 to 1999, MFN partnered with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority to study and protect the Eastern Spiny Softshell turtle. MFN helped develop proposals, sought funding and provided general oversight. Club members assisted in educational endeavours, nest protection and enhancement of nesting habitat. The project soon also included Queen Snakes and landowner stewardship. Between 1996 and 1999, MFN was successful in obtaining more than \$100,000 in grants to support the work of the turtle team at UTRCA.

In 2002, the club again partnered with UTRCA to carry out research, conservation and education on four species of at-risk reptiles in the Upper Thames watershed. During the next five years MFN secured a total of \$155,000 from the Trillium Foundation. In addition to obtaining funding, MFN oversaw its wise expenditure and ensured quality reports were submitted.

Project Peregrine

When wild Peregrine Falcons began appearing in London in the mid-1990s, a steering committee was established and a gravel-lined nest tray installed on a ledge of the City Centre tower. MFN's Pete Read assumed a prominent role in ensuing activities. For a decade, he annually assembled volunteers to monitor peregrine activity, carry out educational functions and engage in protective actions when needed.

From dawn to dusk during the crucial few weeks each year when young peregrines were developing flying skills, monitors were stationed on the ground or high up in One London Place to track the whereabouts of the youngsters. Whenever a young falcon got into trouble, trained volunteers raced to the scene, scooped it up and carried it via elevator to the roof of City Centre, where it was released.

Media and public interest in the peregrines was high. In the late 1990s open houses staffed mainly by MFN members attracted up to 700 people per event. Visitors viewed activities on the nest ledge through telescopes set up on an upper floor of One London Place.

Dozens of MFN volunteers participated in Project Peregrine, educating the public and adding 20 healthy young peregrines to the population. Although Peregrine Falcons continue to be present in downtown London, no young have been raised since 2006.

Guide to Natural Areas

In the early 1990s MFN periodically considered publishing a guide to local natural areas. A 1994 donation from the Hunt family provided seed money and Shirley Lorimer was appointed editor. In 1995, 400 copies of the 70-page book were printed and priced at \$3 each. In 1996, 800 copies of the second edition went on sale for \$5 each. By early 1998 MFN had realized a profit of \$2000. A third edition, with an initial print run of 1000, appeared in 1999. The fourth edition (2000 copies) followed in 2007; for the first time, a coloured cover was featured but the price remained at \$5. During 2014, new editors commenced work on a fifth edition. In the 20 years since MFN's *Guide to the Natural Areas of London & Vicinity* came into being, the book has been a fine fundraiser and outreach tool.



Project Peregrine at One London Place. **Left:** Peregrine Falcon chick, newly banded in the boardroom. **Centre:** An empty office in One London Place was made available to birders; telescopes were set up for watching the peregrines on the nest. Sifton Properties Ltd was given an MFN award in 1998 in appreciation. **Right:** Banders, including Ministry of Natural Resources staff and Don Fowler of the Hawk Cliff raptor banders, ascending by window-washing platform.

(Photos by Spencer Inch, July 1996. Nature London files.)

Butterfly Count

In 1996, butterfly record keeper, Ann White, brought MFN back to its entomological roots when she organized MFN's first butterfly count. Initially, counters visited sites around Middlesex County, confirming southwest Middlesex as a butterfly hotspot. A checklist was compiled in 1996 and updated in 2000. The next year the annual Skunk's Misery Butterfly Count was launched, following criteria specified by the North American Butterfly Association. Counts conclude with a potluck supper and social gathering. Over the years the number of participants has increased and the skill level improved – 41 observers recorded 55 species in 2014.

NEW INITIATIVES COMMENCING IN THE 2000s

Thames Talbot Land Trust

The mid-1990s were challenging times for the environmental movement, as government support withered. One response explored by members of MFN in the late 1990s was the establishment of a trust to protect conservation lands. MFN played a pivotal role in the birth of the Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) – officially launched in 2000 – serving as a leading partner until TTLT achieved incorporation and charitable status. The club helped secure initial funding from the Trillium Foundation and provided significant financial support during the trust's early years.

The two organizations continue to maintain a close working relationship. In 2002, when TTLT received its first property donation, Meadowlily Nature Preserve, MFN contributed to the stewardship fund. Since then, MFN has donated to many TTLT acquisitions, including the Tanager Tract, Wardsville Woods, and the Lusty Family Tract.

Inch Bequest

After the deaths of two former club presidents, Spencer and Helen Inch, in 2001 MFN received a bequest of \$136,000. The club donated a total of \$40,000 to UTRCA in four yearly instalments to support community forestry and re-naturalization efforts. A gift of \$94,000 went to the Thames Talbot Land Trust to assist with purchase of Joany's Woods, an extensive tract of natural habitat bordering the Ausable River.

Chimney Swift Initiatives

In 2004, MFN volunteers monitored Chimney Swift

roosts during fall migration and launched SwiftWatch. In subsequent years the program also identified nesting chimneys, monitored breeding-season roosts, contacted land-owners, created educational materials, and refined protocols. Administration of the many-faceted program proved time consuming and, in 2008, Bird Studies Canada agreed to assume management of most aspects of the London initiative and adopted the SwiftWatch name. Before long, however, BSC drastically scaled back its involvement in London programs, and these have since operated at a much reduced level.

At present, Nature London carries out a limited agenda of swift initiatives, under the direction of a Chimney Swift liaison. One undertaking involves collaboration with wildlife rehabilitation facilities to arrange optimal release sites for hand-reared swifts, which now regularly come to London from as far away as Ottawa and Québec.

Nature in the City Public Lecture Series

In 2006, MFN partnered with the London Public Library to launch Nature in the City, a free six-week series of talks on nature aimed at the general public. Nature London organizes the program and handles publicity, while the library prints flyers and provides the venue. Two features of the series stand out: all speakers donate their services free of charge, and Nature London's volunteers work tirelessly to tap into free publicity and ensure large audiences.

The first year, attendance averaged 63, then doubled in year two, necessitating a change from the Stevenson-Hunt Room to the Wolf Performance Hall. By 2010, an average of 260 people came out each evening. Attendance peaked at over 300 in 2012 and 2013. Many audience members are not members of Nature London, though 62 have joined since 2010 through a membership incentive. The series has been very effective in raising Nature London's profile and communicating the conservation message.

150th Anniversary

During 2014, Nature London celebrated 150 years since the 1864 founding of its original ancestor, the London Branch of the Entomological Society of Canada. Many events were held throughout the year, including heritage field trips, an anniversary lecture, special talks, an exhibit at Museum London, an anniversary banquet, plaque unveiling, tree plantings, and numerous articles in *The Cardinal* and elsewhere.

CONCLUSION / LOOKING FORWARD

As we look back over 150 years, there is one recurring theme: it is the imagination, energy and untiring efforts of the members that have made the group successful. The concept of volunteerism may not have been recognized as such in 1864, but it is clear that the work of unpaid amateurs founded the London Branch of the Entomological Society and kept its successors going through 15 succeeding decades.

Through six articles, we have highlighted some of the activities, events, and accomplishments of Nature London and its predecessors. We have also touched on the important contributions of a few key people, but there are many other heroes.

Today, most members of Nature London are over 50, but many of us still have productive years ahead of us. In addition, promising younger naturalists in our ranks inspire us as we look to the future. There will continue to be friendships to share, nature to enjoy, and citizen-science projects to undertake. There will also be policies and legislation to review, community members and politicians to engage and educate, and species at risk and threatened hab-

itats in need of defenders. Happy 150th Nature London, and many happy returns!

(Winifred and David Wake are among those "many other heroes" of Nature London. Had they been inclined to include them, their names would have been associated with many of the initiatives described in this article. The club owes the Wakes a large debt of gratitude for their enormous effort in creating this comprehensive history of Nature London's 150 years.)

SOURCES

Our main sources for this article have been *The Cardinal*, MFN minutes (of Board, committees and general membership meetings), and annual reports. We have also consulted numerous miscellaneous documents in the Nature London archives and elsewhere. Additional information came from our own memories and personal files.

(All uncredited images from the Nature London archives.)

Below: Plank at Westminster Ponds, created during Nature London's "Donate-a-Plank" project. (Photo by Eric Auzins.)



CHARLES WATSON – ORNITHOLOGIST

Charles and Bill Maddeford



Editor's Note: Charles Watson was a prominent member of our club and an executive with the wholesale grocers, Elliot Marr and Co. This article about Charlie Watson was published in The Cardinal in October 1965, at the time of Watson's death. Bill Maddeford has added some of his own memories to those of his father, Charles.

Our club has always been blessed with a large number of fine field men. Particularly was this true during the 1920s. At this time at least a dozen men were outstanding not only in the field of bird study but also in at least one other field of natural history. The excellence of W.E. Saunders had a tendency to overshadow the others to quite an extent. One of the finest of the group was a tall, thin, rather quiet man called Charles Watson.

Charles was born in Grey County and later moved to London. He came under the influence of W.E. Saunders and became a dedicated bird student. He joined the McIlwraith Ornithological Club about 1910 and was secretary of the club for many years. He became a prominent member of the inner group of field men who were designated as qualified to answer questions.

Charles had one quality that would seem curiously to handicap a bird student. He was quite colour blind. A cardinal would flash across his path as a grey coloured bird. This handicap became an asset because he learned to ignore colour and became one of the best authorities in the club on bird song.

One outing that he had of special interest was the annu-

The Thames River in flood. (Photo from a canoe by Wayne Tingle.)



al boat trip from Dorchester. Mel Dale, Charles Watson and W.E. Saunders shipped their canoe to Dorchester and proceeded to float to London. Apparently bird observations were made on the way. Since this trip was carried out in the spring when the Thames River was in its annual rampage, the three voyageurs must have found it difficult to watch birds and keep the canoe right side up at the same time.

Not only was Charles interested in nature but he was widely read in poetry. He was not satisfied to only read it, but he remembered it and would often stop on one of his field trips to recite some lines of a poem that just seemed to fit the situation in which he found himself. His favourite poets were Canadian.

Bird study was more than a hobby for him. He kept very accurate notes and sent them to the Fisheries and Wildlife Department in Washington. In 1961 he received a citation from Washington for reporting, for use in scientific investigation, observation on the distribution, migration, and abundance of North American birds for 25 years during this period of 1910 to 1940.

Charles Watson passed away at his home in the spring of 1964. It is fitting that this article should be completed

with a paragraph from the letter he wrote in 1961 accepting his citation:

I am proud to know that I have contributed something worthwhile to your records for so many years. My efforts represent the findings from bird walks between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., during almost every morning of April and May. Much work but many very wonderful experiences are ample reward.

Bill Maddeford's Recollections of Charlie Watson

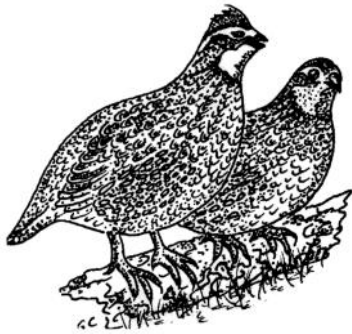
A very tall, quiet man always in a suit and fedora. He always wore a pair of dark blue purplish-toned rubber boots which I envied and eventually inherited. His bird song knowledge was very educational to me. I learned a lot from him on early morning hikes, mainly to Westminster

Ponds, Wonnacotts' farm, Warbler Woods and Byron Bog. Birding time was a time to quote poetry which he remembered well.

Besides the glorious rubber boots, his gleaming Packard camel-coloured car was very elegant and quiet compared to our Ford. He planted a Ginkgo tree on his lot at Ridout Street. It is still quite healthy today.

He was a solid citizen and a good naturalist.

(Charles Maddeford too was a prominent member of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club [see pages 24 and 25]. His son Bill is a member of the club's 150th Anniversary Committee; his work on historical articles and field trips is evident in every 2014 Cardinal).



Dougald Murray lived in Ekfrid Township in Middlesex County and farmed 300 acres there until his death at 85 in 1997. He took over the farm in his 20s, a descendant of five Scottish brothers who had settled in this corner of Middlesex County. At one time he was Reeve of the township and active in the community.

According to his son David, he loved farming and good political arguments. His biggest hobby was being a birder, and his farming operations would be interrupted if a bird needed a closer look.

In the 1960s Dougald was a member of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists (Nature London) as well as the West Elgin Nature Club and contributed items to *The Cardinal* over a number of years. He was a keen observer and had an Orchard Oriole that returned to the birch tree in his front yard year after year, and Barn Swallows that returned to his nearby barn. Once he reported that a Yellow Rail from his hay field was inadvertently killed while he was cutting hay. He had a wide variety of birds in his area that were not always seen elsewhere in the county:

Sandhill Cranes, Bobwhite quail and, I believe, a Harris's Sparrow on one occasion.

The big draw of the farm for McIlwraith birders



Some of the birds of Dougald Murray's farm that drew McIlwraith Field Naturalists members to visit.

Above: Northern Bobwhites (drawing by Gladys Carey).

Left: Red-bellied Woodpecker (photo by Ted Henderson).

Right: Orchard Oriole (drawing by Rose Chambers).

MEMORIES OF DOUGALD MURRAY

Bill Maddeford



was woodpeckers. Dougald's farm had a lot of dying elms and had resident Pileated, Red-headed and Red-bellied woodpeckers. Red-bellied were fairly rare in this area at that time. John A. Livingston recounted a visit to the farm in his write-up on the Red-bellied Woodpecker in *Birds of the Eastern Forest* by J.F. Lansdowne and Livingston. As well, the farm's big woodland beside the Thames had many of our summer resident breeding birds.

Dougald was protective of his forest and fields (and I got the impression from his son Dave that he is of the same mind as his Dad). I enjoyed visiting this man on many occasions. He was always very eager to talk about birds and well aware of what was to be found on his farm. Sometimes he would go on a walk with you. In coveralls and faithful rubber boots, he would greet you with a big smile and get a small notebook out of his pocket and thumb through well-scribbled pages of his daily observations.

He attended many McIlwraith meetings, driving in winter from Ekfrid. His enthusiasm and folksy humour drew you to him. Besides bird talk, I heard how one courted in the old days and learned the definition of an "expert": a person expounding on any subject when he was 100 miles from his home.

He was one of the strong club members of the 1950s and 1960s and worthy of mention in this 150th anniversary year.

(Bill Maddeford is a member of Nature London's 150th Anniversary Committee. He has also written about Wonnacotts' farm; see page 52. There was a field trip to the Dougald Murray farm in June 2014.)





SUNDAY MORNING AT WONNACOTTS' FARM

Bill Maddeford

The gravel crunches under our car wheels as we pass Brigham Road and continue past (now) Komoka Provincial Park and down a steep hill to the floodplain. It is 6:30 am and in the pale light of the awakening day the wondrous sight of billowing mist hangs over the Thames River, rising up 100 feet on a wave weaving across the countryside, a sight I will always remember. It is mid- to late April, 1946, and we make our first stop by a small creek that runs into the nearby Thames.

The resident phoebe that builds a nest yearly under a small bridge greets us, one of a chorus of birdsongs that fills the crisp morning air. There is no sun out yet but the eastern sky is brighter and mist glistens. I, the 11-year-old, emerge from the back seat of the Packard coupe (always impressive) as my dad Charlie and his birding buddy Charles G.D. Watson climb out of the front seat where they have been swapping poetic verse and lots of worldly talk as well as bird talk. We sneak up to the nearby river's edge (in case there are ducks). However, the billows of mist hide the water and we are to be content with the chorus of towhee, Field Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, bluebird, robin, Blue Jay and many other members of the choir.

Shortly we drive off and over the old rusted iron Komoka bridge. Here we will stop again and look and listen. I am quite sure this bridge is wide enough for two cars. The spot just to the north of the bridge always gets mention as where the Little Blue Heron was once. All we get today is a Great Blue, lumbering off up the river.

A short ride past fields and one small gravel pit at the corner and we are at Komoka. It had no Little Beaver Restaurant, but perhaps a gas station; west again past Komoka Creek and Camp Kee-Mo-Kee (no Pete and Sue Read) and soon we are turning into a long sandy lane that leads to Wonnacotts' farm, our main destination.

The Wonnacott family and our family, the Maddeford, had several connections. My father Charlie and Gord Wonnacott were both secondary school teachers in London. Our families both attended Calvary United Church on Ridout Street. Gord's son Tom and I both were in the same Cub pack at Calvary United and we both went through our five years at South Collegiate at the same time.

I think W.E. Saunders started the McIlwraith Club journeys to the Wonnacott farm years before our Sunday morning in 1946, and the Wonnacott family had left a welcome sign out for all club members. The family all seemed to love their farm and did a lot of upkeep with crop and cattle care.

We always arrived by 7 am and departed by 10 because Mom at home and church at 11 am awaited us. Our course rarely varied. Walk through the field to the west of the farmhouse, old even then, and look for Vesper and Savannah sparrows. From the hill bottom and the flats would come the chorus of marsh birds and from the oak upland forest, White-throated and White-crowned sparrows, Myrtles and other early warblers – Black-throated Green, Nashville, Black-and-white. Sapsuckers and Hermit Thrushes

would often be present in goodly numbers.

The air would still be crisp but now the sun was burning off the mist in the field. Man, that air was good to breathe in. Now I think I was often self-absorbed with these feelings and didn't pay attention to my mentor.

We reach the ravine that cuts deeply from the field to the north through the soft and sandy soil down to the river flats. Here is where the prize is. This oak-pine forest upland is a 15-plus-acre area on the east side of the ravine. In June it becomes an area where we are allowed by the Wonnacott family to have a club picnic and where members bring their picnic baskets. As I remember, there are walks, lots of talk, a campfire for toasting wieners, blankets on the ground and friendly companionship.

The prize is there. Floating up from below comes the strong melodic chant of the Louisiana Waterthrush, at that time the only place the species was to be seen; it is now a threatened species in Ontario. This bird's song is a real experience for anyone as it rises up out of a deep ravine.

After walking a trail along the edge of the ravine we turn towards the flats and walk down the long sandy road. In April or early May the cattle were not usually down on the flats. This is a huge area that the Thames empties over in flood times. The ravine streams were very clear and cool, and bubbled on and disappeared into two to three acres of cattails. Now this area has filled in with silt from erosion of the ravine. Then it was full of marsh sounds. Often rails or bitterns made mysterious noises and occasionally allowed you a glimpse of them peeking around a bulrush. There was a need for wearing rubber boots and trying not to overflow the boots. The whole hillside bottom here is a huge

seepage area of many acres that has cedar and Tamarack and habitat for Great Horned Owls, Winter Wrens, thrushes and many migrants. Between this wooded area and the marsh is a very soggy meadow with sedges, Marsh Marigolds and



W.E. Saunders at Wonnacotts' farm. (Photo from Nature London archives.)

other plants. Yellowthroats love it. We slog through, squishing with our rubber boots and trying to not overflow them. Here we join a farm trail where the cattle are led to the flats in the late spring. I think the marsh and the pond to the east were part of the old oxbow of the river that was here long ago. The pond is alive with swallows, Yellow Warblers and Common Yellowthroats, coots and Pied-billed Grebes. We approach a series of small ponds from the old riverbed and do the duck sneak. Often teal, Wood Ducks, Ring-necks and mergansers are here.

We continue south past a hawthorn area where often towhees and Brown Thrashers call. There we approach many large old elms and cottonwoods along the widened end of Komoka Creek where it joins the Thames. Here again we do the duck sneak and approach quietly, hoping to get a closer look at a Wood Duck, which often happens.

Across the creek there lies the "island", which really isn't one, but is a mysterious spot covered with huge Sycamores, elms, cottonwoods and overgrown vines. There is a jungle-like appearance and the island is often difficult to walk through because of downed timber and flood debris.

In May, this area houses Cerulean Warblers and tanagers, but today, having survived crossing the creek on a fallen log without incident, we see a shadow fly past us. A harsh cackle begins that tells us the Bald Eagle has spotted us. There are young in the nest, a huge stockpile eight to ten feet high in a large Sycamore at the end of the land. We don't approach it but are content to watch our friend sailing near us to remind us we are trespassing. Eagles have nested here for years and, fortunately, after an absence

when DDT decimated their numbers, they have returned to the flats in higher numbers.

Recrossing the log (without incident) we go to the hogsback corner of the hillside by the creek and begin the long ascent. This hill is not for the weak. It has been logged here and is more open, with rotted stumps; it is good habitat for Hognose Snakes. We met one here on the path one day and it went through its bag of tricks for us – puffing up its head like an adder and rolling over to play dead when it saw we weren't running away.

Finally at the top, depending on time, we may walk along the forested hillside above the creek for a while or may just turn west. It was then, one Sunday at 10 am, that I heard my first Blue-winged Warbler. I was excited beyond belief. But I could only raise token enthusiasm from Dad who had the pull to church at 11 am on his radar. Getting a really good view of our first Blue-wing did not overrule "Get me to the church on time"! Such was the fate sometimes of many a good



Blue-winged Warbler. (Drawing by Beth Stewart.)

bird sighting.

As we round the corner of the barn, the air is filled with the chattering of Barn Swallows. We head for home, me especially anxious to get back for another Sunday trip to this beautiful nature park. I feel grateful now in 2014 that the Wonnacott family have been very sharing of their beautiful natural farm area.

(Bill Maddeford writes that this article came from the writings of his Dad, Charlie Maddeford, and his own 11-year-old's memory. See Bill's article about Dougald Murray on page 51. There was a field trip to the Wonnacott farm in June 2014).



The Bald Eagle nest at Wonnacotts' farm. **Left:** The nest high up in a tree. (Photo courtesy of Tommy Cummings.) **Middle:** Eaglets at 11 weeks. (Photo by Keith Reynolds, courtesy of Tommy Cummings.) **Right:** Juvenile eagle and W.E. Saunders. (Photo by H.M. Halliday, from *W.E. Saunders – Naturalist*. Eagle photos from Nature London archives.)



W.E. Saunders
Wonnacott's Farm May 29, 1941

MEMORIES OF SAUNDERS' POND

Kathleen E. Ball

Editors' Note: This article consists of excerpts of a longer article published in the April 1990 Cardinal, No. 140. We are sorry to report that Kathleen Ball, granddaughter of W.E. Saunders and sister of the girls shown below, died recently.

When my grandfather, W.E. Saunders, purchased the land around what is now known as Saunders' Pond and came home to tell my grandmother, she was surprised . . . and not too pleased. But we all grew to love "the farm" as we called it, though it was never a farm in the strict sense with crops or domesticated animals – it was more of a recreational and horticultural area. My grandmother had a flower and vegetable garden (I particularly remember her wonderful star dahlias) north of the cottage and an asparagus bed to the east, while my grandfather planted lilacs and honeysuckles around the cottage and a variety of fruit trees behind it.

The cottage itself was rather dark inside and we didn't use it very much, except to escape sudden rain showers during picnics. There were two small bedrooms, a living room (where we once found a drawer full of baby mice), a back kitchen and a good-sized front porch. Near Wellington Road was another cottage where the caretakers lived – John Morden first, then Mr Paul and Mrs Beck; they kept the trail from Wellington Road to our cottage open, dug the garden and mowed the lawn that went from the front of our cottage to down near the pond where there was a dilapidated canoe house containing a leaky canoe. My oldest sister had had canoeing lessons at a girls' summer camp so she was allowed to take the canoe out. One day she and Hilaire (Cowie) Little, in a brand new white bathing suit, took a short paddle when the canoe sank; by the time they pulled the canoe into shore Hilaire had on a grey bathing suit and there was a large catfish swimming in the canoe! Unfortunately the canoe sank for good before I was considered old enough to use it.

Next to the canoe house was a large Shagbark Hickory with a swing, and to the east an enormous elm tree shading part of the lawn. We used to have 24th of May picnics there with several London families (Harveys, Pattersons, Tenants) . . . the men would light the rockets so they scattered their stars over the pond – an impressive sight. We children were only allowed to handle the sparklers.

W.E. Saunders Ltd company held several annual picnics on this lawn. There were fierce games of croquet and

various kinds of races – three-legged, feet in a sack, and a timing race where you had to reach the finish line after exactly one minute. My grandfather would count one thousand and one, one thousand and two, etc. figuring he would touch the line at one thousand and sixty and be the prize winner . . . however, one of the staff had an excellent timing sense and somehow always seemed to win.

Close to the lawn was a fine wild strawberry patch where we spent many happy hours picking and eating – the strawberries were very small but very delicious. In the middle of the patch was a large boulder, handy to sit on for the eating and home base for tag or run-sheep-run.

Do you know the expression "it's not over til the fat lady sings"? We had an example of that one hot August day when a group of people thought they'd sneak through the bushes and take a swim to cool off. A very large lady among them waded out in the mucky bottom too far and got thoroughly stuck . . . so they finally had to call for John Morden, our caretaker at the time, to help. John brought down

one of the neighbours and they managed to pull the lady out with – you guessed it – the neighbour's tractor!

In early May my grandfather would wake me and we'd meet at the farm with other McIlwraith members, Mel Dale, the Girlings, Charlie Watson, Keith Reynolds, Pete Patterson, etc., at 5 or 6 am and walk the three ponds, Saunders', Spettigue's and the Fish and Game before breakfast; this gave our bird lists a real boost with the spring warblers and other spring migrants. There used to be a marshy area where the Dearness Home now stands that had nesting Wood Ducks and Green Herons . . . and of course there were always happy surprises such as curlew flying over or a Hooded Merganser on the pond. Lots of happy memories. W.E. had a phrase "never let the weather bluff you" so we came rain or shine, in a great downpour or in a blizzard, and sometimes we would see a rare bird blown into the area and prove his point.

W.E. grew old gracefully, always young at heart and full of enthusiasm . . . as he said, he was born at a good time – when he was young he had a bicycle and when he was old he had an automobile. One of his pleasures was to bring groups . . . friends, teachers, school children, scouts, it didn't matter . . . and to share his love of nature with them at the farm.



Mrs F.H. (Muriel) Fetherston (left) with her parents, W.E. and Mrs Saunders, and daughters Marjorie and Norah in front of the cabin at Saunders' Pond, 1921. (Photo from Nature London Archives.)

A HISTORY OF THE WELL-DRESSED LONDON NATURALIST

Roslyn Moorhead and Winifred and Dave Wake

Come 2014, Londoners will have been enjoying insect watching, birdwatching, hiking, and other outdoor pursuits, all under the auspices of Nature London and its predecessors, for 150 years. Today Nature London's field trips are advertised and open to all members, but such organized field trips are a relatively recent phenomenon. Historically, a "field trip" was more of a private affair, consisting of a small group of friends deciding to go birding or botanizing or geologizing or star gazing together. Expert birders tended to flock together and didn't invite novice birders to come and join them. Back in the 1930s junior birders would scheme to "just happen" to meet up with an expert group at popular field destinations, such as Westminster Ponds. They would then casually "bump into" the elite birders at intervals to ask questions or glean what they could from overheard discussions. But one had to wear the right clothes. What did the well-dressed naturalist wear?

1915



Mcllwraith Ornithological Club, outing at Goldenwing Woods, May 24, 1915. Left to right: J.C. Higgins, Mrs E.M.S. Dale, Mrs J.C. Middleton, E.M.S. Dale, Mrs J.H. Cameron, Miss Luta Brown (later Mrs J.F. Calvert), J.C. Middleton, J.H. Cameron.

This gathering looks all dressed up for a party. In fact, they are on a field trip to Goldenwing Woods (now called Warbler Woods), and a century ago this was the typical dress for such an outing. Jackets and ties were de rigueur for the men, long skirts, stylish jackets, and hats for the women. Note that something is missing in this photo: a gun or two and a bag for collected specimens. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, birders commonly carried guns and shot birds for identification and collection purposes. Naturalists of various stripes also collected

eggs, butterflies, plants, and just about anything else they could cart home. W.E. Saunders (see 1925 photo) was an expert marksman and shot many birds. Skinning his take of dead birds immediately after an outing was the perfect ending to a successful day. Perfect, except for the birds, that is. Fortunately, by 1915 guns had generally ceased to be a necessary fashion accessory.

1925

Ten years later, as seen in this 1925 photo taken at the Wellington Road entrance of Westminster Ponds, a field trip still looks like a dressy affair. The men have jackets and ties and dress shoes. The women all wore mid-calf length skirts. Sailor blouses with ties were in fashion. But most of the women have shed their hats; it's the men who were well-topped with summer hats or berets. It was a very natty expedition.



Teachers gather for a bird hike during a summer course on Nature Study and Agriculture. The person on the far right is Professor Detwiler, instructor for the course. Second from the right is W.E. Saunders, a leading member of the Mcllwraith club and owner of the property at the ponds.

1930s

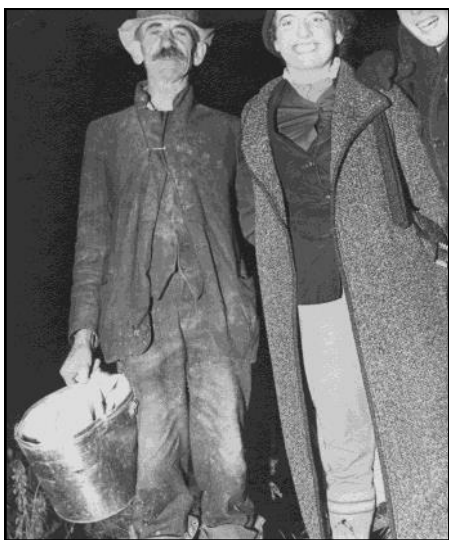
Birdwatching in the thirties, and Frances Jacobs (later Girling) is breaking new sartorial ground for women on field trips. Her riding breeches were a first for women in



An outing to Goldenwing Woods, 1937.

London. Frances grew up on a ranch in Alberta and was used to riding horseback to and from school. The horseback riding demanded such clothing, and when she moved to London she brought the fashion with her. Frances continued to wear riding breeches until slacks for girls came into vogue. She is also wearing a fashionable hat and short jacket. To her left, a young Keith Reynolds is dressed more casually than men in the earlier pictures. Mel Dale, on the right, is more formally garbed. Note that it must be muddy and wet; all three members of the party are wearing waterproof boots unlike the dressier shoes of the previous photo.

Is that a tramp (below) with Frances Jacobs (Girling)? No – it's Fred White, a farmer who owned White's Bush, now Springwater Conservation Area. A confirmed bachelor, Fred was the subject of many stories and much chuckling relating to his lack of culinary and housekeeping skills



At a time when Beavers were exceedingly rare in Southwestern Ontario, a small colony was resident in Fred White's farm pond. Here Frances joins Fred on his way to feed the Beavers. At the sound of Fred's voice, the Beavers would swim to the edge of the water and accept his offering of cut-up apples. (Photo by Bill Girling, fall 1936.)

and his absence of fashion sense. Fred is definitely not worried about fashion! His clothes are rumpled and of questionable cleanliness, and his coat is even fastened with a big safety pin. Frances has a long stylish coat and sports her trademark slacks, with long, warm stockings pulled up and over. But, take a closer look – she seems to have borrowed a page from Fred's fashion book. She too wears a big safety pin to fasten a mysterious fashion accessory under her jacket. However, she has drawn the line at adopting Fred's wrinkles, unlaced boots, and aversion to laundry day. And what is that hat that Fred is wearing?

1940s

It is a field trip to Dorchester Swamp and the weather is snowy (below). The gentlemen are still wearing ties, and Harry Girling has a dress-type coat on. Keith Reynolds is in military uniform. Frances Girling is in nylon stockings and short boots, wearing a fancy hat and a new grey karacul-fur (i.e., Persian lamb) coat that she has purchased for her wedding and is very proud of. Are their boots and shoes waterproof? Brrrrr – it looks cold – are they warm enough? Perhaps goose bumps are considered a fashion accessory. Mel Dale, in country hat, tall boots and thick mitts may be the most comfortable member of the crew.



Left to right: Mel Dale, Harry Girling, Frances Girling, and Keith Reynolds. (Photo by Bill Girling, February 1941.)

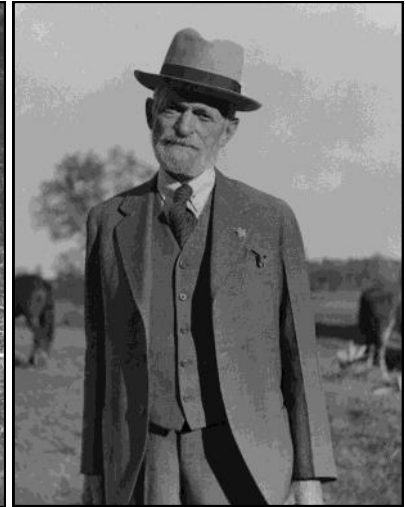
For many decades, field trips would end with a light repast cooked over an open fire. W.E. Saunders was famous for his ability to quickly start a fire under any conditions, and for his unchanging menu – burnt toast and bacon on a stick. No dishes required! He ate it right off the stick it was cooked on.

On the next page, John Dearness and Eli Davis carry on the tradition and share a meal. Davis, who operated a commercial greenhouse, appears comfortable in his pith helmet and shirtsleeves. Dearness, who was famously formal in his dress, is unusually informal, wearing a casual jacket, slacks, and cap. Even on field trips he habitually wore a dapper three-piece suit, white shirt, tie, formal hat, and low rubbers over well-polished dress shoes (see next page). Perhaps, after a long career as principal of the Normal School (teachers' college), he found it difficult to relin-

quish dressing as a role model for prospective teachers. Incidentally, Dearness was 92 when this photo was taken and he lived another 10 years.

Left: Dr John Dearness and Eli Davis at the St Thomas Waterworks, 1944. (Photo by Keith Reynolds.)

Right: Dr John Dearness, dapper in his regular field trip clothes. (Photo by Bill Girling, 1937.)



1950s

Like our members do today, naturalists went on field trips to Hawk Cliff in the fall to observe kettles of raptors in migration. No suits and ties; no skirts either. Formal hats have disappeared. There is only one long coat; everyone else is wearing a short jacket. Dress has become far more casual, comfortable, and practical.



Club outing to Hawk Cliff: on left, Jim and Edith Leach, both holding binoculars, with Florence (Tommy) Cummings in between. Gord Cummings (with pipe), is leaning against the car (probably of '52 to '54 vintage).

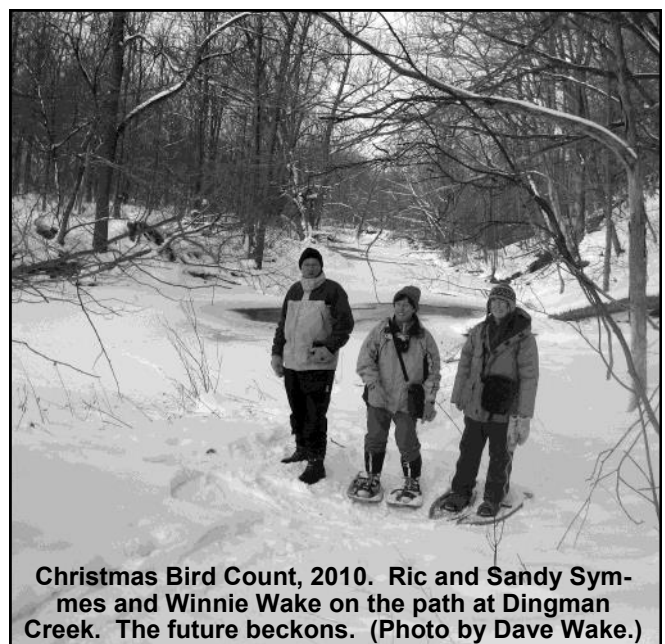
2000s

Today, a century later than the time of the first photo, we have definitely jettisoned the long skirts, the suits and ties, and gone for comfort and a more casual style. We have lightweight highly insulated jackets and waterproof breathable fabrics rather than heavy wool or fur coats, warm boots rather than dress shoes, and tuques rather than berets or homburgs.

(Roslyn Moorhead is a member of the 150th Anniversary Committee and is the Cardinal Representative on the Board of Directors. Winifred and Dave Wake are Nature London's Archivists and are also members of the 150th Anniversary Committee.)

(All photos, except the last, are from the Nature London archives. Individual photographers are acknowledged where they are known.)

Authors' Note: Nature London's January 2014 Indoor Meeting will be a celebration of our 150th anniversary. Join us! Celebrate our history. And for fun, if you like, come dressed in yesteryear's naturalist fashions.



Christmas Bird Count, 2010. Ric and Sandy Symmes and Winnie Wake on the path at Dingman Creek. The future beckons. (Photo by Dave Wake.)

AN OPEN LETTER TO NATURE LONDON FROM FLORENCE “TOMMY” CUMMINGS AND REPLY FROM SUE READ

October 26, 2014

To all my friends in Nature London,

Thank you so kindly for the invitation as a past president to the dinner celebrating your 150th year. Sadly, at 108 years of age, among the many other things that are decreasing, my mobility is one and I'm finding trips out more and more difficult so I'll have to decline.

My memory is on that list of decreasing faculties also, however not to the point yet where I can't remember the wonderful times Gord and I shared with Nature London, then the McIlwraith Ornithological Club, and all its interesting members.

We were married and moved to London in 1936 and it wasn't long after that I was introduced to the McIlwraith Ornithological Club. What a wonderful way for a young Toronto girl to meet new friends in a strange city. We made not just acquaintances, but in many cases, friendships that developed and lasted our lifetimes.

Sadly many of those names are now part of history, however the friendship shown, the knowledge shared, and observations made by them shall last forever. Some connections are still active, Mary Harvey's letter in the recent "Cardinal", Bill Maddeford, and you'll be hearing from Peter Middleton at your meeting, all second generation of members in my days.

My son John has been receiving some copies of "The Cardinal" and delivering them to me. Oh the memories they've brought back to life. Those wonderful field trips to Higgins and their pet skunk, Wonnacotts and the eagle's nest, to our "shack" at Byron, and those marvellous long weekends in May to Pelee where W.E. Saunders once asked me to fry up this large package of chicken for the group supper, only to find out later it was muskrat that he'd picked up from his trapper friends earlier in the day.

The "admin" side we played a part in also paid great returns. Although it seemed like a lot of work at the time, in looking back it brought us such wonderful memories. I believe I was the initial lady president and I believe Gord served as president also.

One of our favourite "admin" tasks was running the Audubon Screen Tours. This was a series of five or six nature talks accompanied by marvellous moving pictures presented as a fundraiser for the McIlwraith Ornithological Club over the winter season. It began as a real gamble because it wasn't inexpensive to operate, the Beal Tech auditorium had to be rented, the speakers were professionals so fees and expenses had to be paid, tickets and advertisement had to be looked after. Well the gamble paid off, the lectures were magnificent, the crowds came and profits were made. I can't remember how many years they continued.

A bonus for our family was that we nearly always entertained the speakers for dinner at our home on the evening of their lecture. Some great friendships were developed with some very, very interesting and talented people. We visited back and forth with Dick and Ada Bird in western Canada for years and I noticed just the other day an illustration in a birding magazine by one of Karl Maslowski's sons. My sons John and Tom still treasure their autographed "Peterson".

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank all those active members who have been so kind and helpful to me since I began to "slow down" and moved north to Hanover. Dave and Winnie Wake, Betsy Baldwin, Pat Tripp, and all the others who have dropped in for a visit or sent a note.

This message has gone on too long – thanks again for the kind invitation and the very best of luck in the next 150 years.

Florence "Tommy" Cummings
(as dictated to her son John)

Editors' Note: Florence "Tommy" Cummings died on December 12, 2014. The Cardinal noted her passing in the February 2015 flight.



Winnie (left) and Dave Wake visiting Tommy Cummings in June 2014.
(Photo courtesy of Dave Wake.)

December 4, 2014

Dear Tommy,

What a delight it was to receive your letter! I read parts of it at the awards banquet and it will also be published in *The Cardinal*. How wonderful to hear of your memories of McIlwraith.

Peter Middleton did indeed remember you from his early years in the club and you and Gord were named as two of his nature mentors. What an inspiration you have been to so many people over the years!

I'm enclosing a list of living former presidents of McIlwraith. I'm sure many names will be familiar to you. We were pleased so many presidents could attend the banquet. You were there in spirit!

Many of the people at the banquet remembered you fondly.

My husband, Pete Read, is still the migration secretary, a job he has done since the early 80's. He says hello and sends a big hug!

Thank you so much for taking the time to write me and pass on some of your precious club memories. The banquet audience especially enjoyed hearing about the "chicken" that ended up being a muskrat! Eric Ball was at the banquet. He is Wm Saunders' Great-great-grandson and W.E.'s Great-grandson. He got a kick out of that story!

You and Gord have made a huge contribution to the club and we are so happy you were able to be part of our 150th Anniversary.

Sincerely,
Sue Read

(Editors' Note: Sue Read was the chair of the 150th Anniversary Committee.)



A YEAR TO REMEMBER: OUR 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Here is a list of activities that took place to commemorate Nature London's 150th anniversary. For field trips, brief historical notes have been provided. Thanks to the Anniversary Committee (Bill Maddeford, Ros Moorhead, Pete Read, Sue Read [Chair] Susanne Sutherland, Pat Tripp, Dave Wake, Winnie Wake) and others who played such an important role in organizing so many fabulous ways to celebrate!

ANNIVERSARY EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

Winter 2013/2014: A plethora of Snowy Owls comes south to help celebrate the club's 150th anniversary

2013/2014: 150th anniversary totes available

January 1: New Year's Day bird walk at Springbank Park (annually since 1973; other outings since 1800s)

January 17: 150th Anniversary Kickoff Celebration (period costumes, anniversary cake, club history, future vision)

January 18: St Clair River birding (first held 1981)

February 8: Winnett's Swamp walk (area known to naturalists in the 1800s; now known as Huron Street Woods; occasional visits since 1950s)

February 15: Greenway Park walk (river corridor known in 1800s; modern field trips began in 1970s; annual event since 2012)

March 1 to 31: Invitation to Nature London members to shop at Columbia Sportswear Employees' Store

March 4: Illustrated talk: Our Native Land and Modern Footprint: Ecological Change Through Time by John Riley at the central London Public Library. Welcome

ceremony by Dan and Mary Lou Smoke.

March 23: Aylmer Wildlife Management Area (regular trip since 1978)

April 13: Hullett Marsh near Clinton (first visit was 1985)

April 22 and May 6: Spring birding at Westminster Ponds (a favourite destination for London naturalists as early as the 1860s; first known club field trip here in 1868; many outings reported from the 1890s, through the 1920s and up to the present)

April 26: Cedarcroft (a frequent location for field trips from 1967 to present)

April 29: Mount Pleasant Cemetery tree planting, 150th Anniversary plaque unveiling, and guided walk of tombstones of individuals with historical connection to Nature London, including Saunders family

April 30: Woodcocks by the Thames at Killaly (woodcock trips held annually from 1915 to the 1950s, reinstated in 1991 at new site, Killaly Meadows)

May: Planting of trees and shrubs at Cedarcroft

May 3: Higgins' farm near Lobo (former owner and one-time President, John Higgins, hosted annual picnic 1930 to 1984; current owners welcomed club in 2004)

May 10: Backus Woods walk near Port Rowan (first club visit mid-1980s)

May 14: Killaly Meadows (first outing mid-1950s)

May 17: South Branch of Thames River near Pottersburg Creek (several trips since 1990s)

May 21: Warbler Woods walk (first outing to "Golden Wing Woods" 1915; frequent trips in 1920s, 1930s; many visits 1977 to present)



Awards Banquet 2014: Nature London (McIlwraith Field Naturalists) Presidents past and present.

Standing, from left: Bill Rapley, Ian Platt, Mike Dawdy, John Cartwright, Don Lodge, Ted Maddeford, Cathy Quinlan, Pete Read, Sue Read, Nathan Garber, Alan German, Jim Rule, Jim Cushing. **Seated:** Karen Auzins, Muriel Andrae, Barbara Yurkoski, Barbara Bain, Katherine Turner, Anita Caveney. **Inset:** Florence (Tommy) Cummings, a President of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club, sent her greetings to the banquet. (Photos by Dave Wake.)

- May 23 to 25:** Bruce Peninsula birding (occasional club trips since 1982, annually since 2009)
- May 31:** Cavendish Park walk (previous walks in 1997 and 2011)
- June 1 to mid-July:** Display depicting Nature London history, London Room, London Public Library
- June 4:** Trees of Mount Pleasant Cemetery (frequent trip since the mid-1990s)
- June 6:** Sifton Bog, night insects (formerly Spruce Swamp, Redmond Bog, Byron Bog; a destination for naturalists since the 1800s; more frequent trips since 1970s, with introduction of boardwalk)
- June 8:** Birding along the Thames at Dougald Murray's farm near Melbourne (first trip 1953 to see Red-bellied Woodpecker, then considered unusual)
- June 14:** Wonnacotts' farm, site of many trips from 1924 to 1980
- July 6:** Skunk's Misery Butterfly Count, an annual event since 2001 (site for several field trips 1960s to 1980s)
- September 6:** Cedarcroft picnic (fall corn roasts in 1980s)
- September 13:** Oil history at Oil Springs (recalling 1890s field trip for geologists)
- September 20:** Pollinators at Westminster Ponds (original focus of our ancestor club, the Entomological Society, was insects)
- October 1 to November 20:** Display on William Saunders, London Room, London Public Library
- October 1 to 31:** Invitation to Nature London members to shop at Columbia Sportswear Employees' Store
- October 5:** Kains Woods, a field trip site since the 1930s
- October 26:** Medway Valley walk (first trip 1959)
- October 28:** Illustrated talk about William Saunders, at London Public Library
- November 2:** Kettle Point birding (geology trip in 1890s, birding trips since 1978)
- November 16:** Fanshawe Conservation Area (field trip destination since 1953)
- November 21:** Nature London's Annual Awards Banquet, 150th Anniversary Edition, former member Peter Middleton as speaker
- December 6:** Club's first "CBC4Kids" (Christmas Bird Count)
- December 20:** London Christmas Bird Count (established in 1909, now stands as the longest continuously running count in Canada)
- December 20, 2014 to March 29, 2015:** Nature London at 150, exhibit at Museum London, including Curator's Tour February 8, 2015
- February 7, 2015:** Tour of Western University Biology collections (including specimens collected by early club members)

NATURE LONDON WEBSITE

Special section created to promote anniversary events throughout the year

BIRD CHECKLIST

Birds of Middlesex County Checklist updated by Pete Read, available for download on Nature London's website; hard copies available at Birding Wing meetings

ANNIVERSARY LOGO

Special 150th anniversary logo, designed by Hugh Casbourn, used to highlight heritage activities

THE CARDINAL

Special covers (February, April, August, November): See front and back cover, and pages 2, 3, and 63 for examples and explanations.

Feature articles: All the articles in this volume were part of the 150th celebration.

Reports of selected heritage field trips: See *The Cardinal*, No. 234 to No. 239.

ANNIVERSARY ARTICLES IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS

ON Nature – Spring 2014: "Nature London is 150 Years Old" by Lisa Richardson

Ontario Nature Website – Posted April 1, 2014: "Nature London: 150 Years Old and Counting" by Anita Caveney

Londoner – February 20, 2014: "Nature London Celebrates 150th Anniversary"

Londoner – February 27, 2014: "Nature London: Our Changing Landscape" by Winifred Wake

The World Outdoors (*London Free Press*) – March 1, 2014: "Nature London Looks to Future" by Paul Nicholson

Londoner – October 23, 2014: "William Saunders and the Forest City" by Roslyn Moorhead

London Free Press – December 23, 2014: "Nature London celebrates its roots" by Joe Belanger

Londoner – December 24, 2014: "Nature London celebrates 150 years"

London Community News – January 1, 2015: "Sharing Nature London's 150th" by Sean Meyer

GUIDE TO THE NATURAL AREAS OF LONDON AND REGION

Revised by editors Jim and Roslyn Moorhead, 2015

IN THE WORKS

Historic Plaque to be erected by the Historic Sites Committee of the London Public Library

Sue Read, Chair, 150th Anniversary Committee
Updated by Winifred and David Wake, May 2015

This drawing of a bridge at Cedarcroft appeared on the cover of a special Cedarcroft Supplement, *Cardinal* no. 129b, November 1987. (Drawing by Michael Rouse.)





CUCUMBER MAGNOLIA PLANTING AND PLAQUE UNVEILING AT MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY



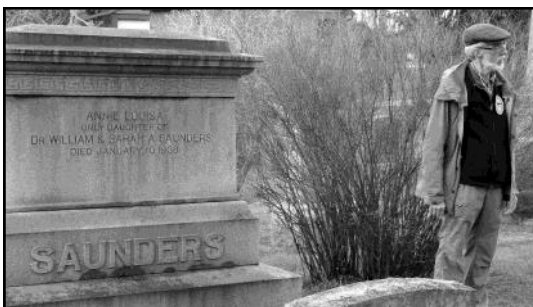
Left: Sue Read opens the April 29, 2014 program for Nature London members and cemetery staff (photo by Rob Rodger). **Centre, right:** the planters, Bob Goodden of Mount Pleasant and Bill Maddeford of Nature London (by Mary Lord). Following the planting, the plaque was unveiled. It was donated by Mount Pleasant Cemetery and is beside the newly planted tree.



Left: Linda Fitches, cemetery manager, and Karen Auzins (by Linda Bristow) after they unveiled the plaque (**right**, by Jim Bristow).



Left: Jim Moorhead beside Mel Dale's headstone (by Jim Bristow). **Right:** Dave and Winifred Wake, Linda Fitches (by Rob Rodger).



Left: Dave Wake by the headstone of William Saunders, his wife and daughter (by Linda Bristow). Saunders founded the London Branch of the Entomological Society, our club's predecessor, and helped found, and plant trees in, the cemetery. **Middle, right:** Smaller stones of Saunders' sons, including W.E. Saunders, shown by Dave Wake (middle) (by Rob Rodger).



Left: End of tour of naturalists' graves and trees (by Rob Rodger). **Right:** Sue and Pete Read (by Mary Lord).

We leave a tree and plaque recognizing former naturalists and helping renew the cemetery's legacy of native trees.



“NATURE LONDON AT 150” EXHIBITION AT MUSEUM LONDON



OPENING RECEPTION, JANUARY 30, 2015

There was a good turnout comprised of approximately 50 Nature London members and 100 members of the public for the Opening Reception, which started with wine and hors d'oeuvres, followed by a welcome from Brian Meehan, Executive Director of Museum London. Visitors then proceeded to other areas of the Museum to view the four new exhibitions, all having a nature theme: “Nature London at 150”, “Nature’s Handmade”, “The Art of Nature” (a student exhibition), and “Jane Buyers: Gather . . . Arrange . . . Maintain”. Curator of Regional History, Amber Lloydlangston, and Nature London Archivists and members of the 150th Anniversary Committee, David and Winifred Wake, who had spent many hours gathering materials and organizing the displays, were on hand to answer questions about the Nature London exhibition. The “Nature London at 150” exhibition ran from December 20, 2014 to March 29, 2015.

Museum London and the Wakes did Nature London proud, producing an attractively laid-out, very interesting, and educational exhibition highlighting the many activities embraced, and contributions made, by our organization under various names since 1864. Whereas the Wakes encouraged the Museum to organize an exhibit, and assisted the Museum in identifying artifacts to be considered for display, Amber Lloydlangston and the team at Museum London identified the themes, selected the materials, and designed the exhibit.

Displays in the well-lit exhibition room covered a large variety of materials, including some that had belonged to leading lights William Saunders and W.E. Saunders, among other eminent naturalists. Display items were made available by Museum London, Western University, University of Guelph, and members and friends of Nature London, including Pete Read (Peregrine Falcon); Gary Irwin, Will Lyons and Gerard Pas (photographs for the major theme panels); and Paul Roedding (Chimney Swift video). Memories were jogged and comments exchanged as Nature London visitors viewed materials associated with events that had happened within their lifetime. They were fascinated by the exhibits from earlier times. Nature London can be very proud of the efforts made by members over the past 150 years to advance science, through record-keeping and publications; protect

the natural environment; and foster an appreciation of nature among people of all ages, through education and outreach.

The following is a selection of some of the items on display:

- Dominion of Canada silver medal specially minted for the “Entomological Society – London” in recognition of its Collection of Insects shown at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876 (both sides shown above; photos by Dave Wake)
- Nineteenth-century bottles from the William Saunders Pharmacy and the W.E. Saunders & Co. Pharmacy
- Pressed plant specimens from the Eli Davis and W.E. Saunders collections
- Insect collections and collecting equipment
- Photos of John Dearness (below; photo by Dave Wake) and E.M.S. (Mel) Dale, along with bird and plant logbooks and other materials
- Covers of the first volume of the *Canadian Entomologist*, and both early and recent coloured-cover issues of *The Cardinal*
- Photo of W.E. Saunders together with one of his wooden bird-nest boxes, a pair of antique binoculars, and raptor study skins from the Western University taxidermy collection
- Antique shotgun, representing early method of bird collecting for identification
- Some publications of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists and Federation of Ontario Naturalists, such as guides to natural areas
- Publications by William Saunders, including a second-edition copy of his book *Insects Injurious to Fruits* (loaned by Stan Caveney)
- McIlwraith Field Naturalist publications on Wetlands (1986) and Dingman Creek (1994)
 - Chimney Swift video, thank-you certificate, and other “SwiftWatch” materials
 - Posters about “Trees for London” and the “Nature in the City” series of illustrated talks



In addition, the exhibition featured some activities in which visitors could participate, such as butterfly-colouring opportunities for children, a scavenger hunt, and a question asking “What could you do without to protect the environment?”, with Post-it Notes provided

for the participants to post comments on branches of a cardboard tree on the wall.

CURATOR'S TOUR, FEBRUARY 8, 2015

This event was attended by approximately 100 people, including Nature London members and members of the public. Curator Amber Lloydlangston gave an excellent presentation to the visitors gathered in the "Nature London at 150" exhibition room. She spoke knowledgeably about the history of Nature London from its origin in 1864 to the present, covering many interesting aspects of the organization and how it has evolved over the years. She then invited the audience to proceed to the theatre in the basement level to view the screening of the new Canadian comedy film, *The Birder*. This, too, was well attended. If viewers had expected to witness a lot of birding in the movie, they would have been disappointed. Although the main character is an accomplished birder, with an eye on the prestigious post of Head of Ornithology (HOO) at a fictitious provincial park (based on a national park in Essex County!), most of the 80 minutes was taken up with interrelationships among the comic characters – all of them human, not avian! The film was enjoyable and humorous, if somewhat whacky, and featured at least a bird or two.



Anita Caveney examines an early taxidermy kit and stuffed bird specimens at the exhibit.
(Photo courtesy of Museum London.)

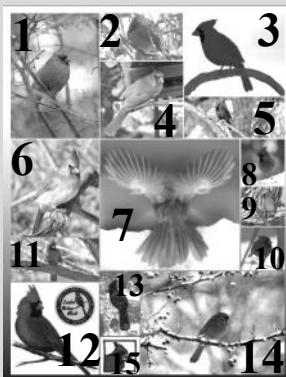
Many thanks to Amber Lloydlangston, Museum London, and the Wakes for an excellent exhibition, which made the public more aware of Nature London and its history, and celebrated the club's sesquicentennial.

Anita Caveney

THE LEGEND OF THE LAST NATURE LONDON 150TH ANNIVERSARY COVER

The flights of The Cardinal that bookended the 150th anniversary year were made special by bringing colour to the covers. The front cover was first seen on the February 2014 (No. 234) flight. The back cover had the same location for the November 2014 (No. 237) flight; here is that flight's legend to this special montage:

Long, long ago, or so it must seem to the tireless 150th Anniversary Committee, the Chair, Sue Read, made a suggestion that it might be fun to invite you, our members, to submit photos or art of Northern Cardinals to grace the cover of the last flight of *The Cardinal* during the 150th Anniversary year. The committee successfully petitioned the Board to have this cover be printed in colour. You hold the result in your hands. Many people submitted their work for the cover and we have supplemented with a few items that were just waiting for the opportunity to be printed in colour or added an historical ambience. Thanks to everyone who helped to make this cover one that we are certain our readers will enjoy.



Back Cover (back cover of the November 2014 flight): 1 is by Rob Rodger; we wonder how he got the cardinal sharply focused while the foreground and background are fuzzy and possibly in motion. 2 shows a male cardinal taken by Jim Bristow. 3 is by one of Nature London's youngest birders, Hayden Bilty, who clearly also has artistic talent. 4, taken by Carol Agocs, captures a view that many of us enjoy daily. 5 shows one of Gail McNeil's cardinals waiting for his turn at Gail's feeders. 6 is a shot of a female by Gene Lobb. 7 has languished in our image database waiting for this back-cover opportunity; Gerard Pas took this photo of a cardinal's back. 8 was taken by Mike Boucher. 9 is a female photographed by Gail McNeil. 10 was taken by Dick Day. 11 was taken by Jim Tuckerman, also in winter. 12 is a card drawn and painted by the late Gladys Carey, while the crest is a link to our club history: the 1957 McIlwraith Ornithological Club (a.k.a. London Nature Club) crest. 13 is a photo by Leslie Rockwell of her Suncatcher Award. Many club volunteers have received Suncatchers in recognition of their service. 14 is another nod to our history, courtesy of Barbara Bain. The photo was taken by the late Mary Abbott and published in *The Art of Canadian Nature Photography* edited by J.A. Kraulis. Last and most unusual, 15 is a cross-stitch created by Catherine Burr.

