

THE CARDINAL

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Nature London

The McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London Inc.

"To Preserve and Enjoy Nature"



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Cathy McCrae (standing) introduces CBC participants to the woodpeckers they might see. (Photo by Dave Wake.)

FIRST CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FOR KIDS



On Saturday, December 6, 2014, Nature London hosted its first Christmas Bird Count for Kids. About two dozen young birders accompanied by parents and Girl Guide leaders met at the church hall of St George Catholic Church at 9:00 am for a brief introduction on the use of binoculars and on the likely bird species that they would encounter. Then the birders were provided with binoculars to use for the count, if needed, and divided into four groups along with experienced birders from Nature London. Each group birded its own section of Springbank Park or the riverside leading back to Guy Lombardo Bridge until 11:15 am.

After the birding, the whole group reassembled to compile our results and to share interesting sightings. Overall, we tallied 27 species and almost 1500 individual birds in just an hour and a half. All groups saw at least one Bald Eagle. One group found a raccoon lazing in a tree. Another was able to feed Black-capped Chickadees by hand. After some well-deserved snacks, the young birders headed home, some promising to come to the New Year's Day walk or other Nature London events. This great event would not have been possible without help from a number of people. Bernie VanDenBelt (my co-organizer) and I would like to thank: St George Catholic Church for graciously allowing us to use its wonderful facility at a reduced rate; Erin Mutch from the Thames Valley District School Board and many Nature London members for providing us with enough binoculars so that each young birder had her or his own pair for the event; and our expert group leaders Paul Nicholson, Bill Maddeford, Dave and Winnie Wake, Ros and Jim Moorhead, Carol Agocs, Gail McNeil, and Hayden Bilty. With continued support from Nature London and others, we hope that this can become an annual event.

Cathy McCrae

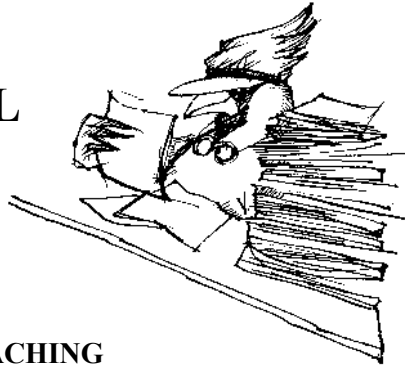
A Bald Eagle visits the ducks and geese during the CBC for Kids. (Photo by Lisa Bilty.)



COVER: As part of Nature London's 150th Anniversary celebrations in 2014, the club held its first Christmas Bird Count for Kids in December. The event was very successful (see page 9).

Attracting chickadees to eat seeds from their hands was a highlight for the participants. Nature London member **Lisa Bilty** photographed three of the kids – (from left) Haely Bower, Rachel Cumming, and Avery Vallas of the 98th London Girl Guide Unit – feeding Black-capped Chickadees in Springbank Park during the count.

ASK THE CARDINAL



MORE FOOD CACHING

Dear Cardinal,

In a previous Ask the Cardinal (February 2013, *Cardinal* No. 230), caching behaviour of Blue Jays was described. How many bird species do this storing of food? I know this is a big question, so I'll restrict the question to birds one might expect to see in Middlesex County.

Curious

Dear Curious,

A big question, indeed! My resident friends the Black-capped Chickadees (*Poecile atricapillus*) and both Red-breasted and White-breasted nuthatches (*Sitta canadensis* and *carolinensis*, respectively) do indulge in caching, and I have seen American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) and, yes, Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) do the same. (See the November 2014 *Cardinal*, page 38, for interesting information on chickadees.) My human informant tells me that Eastern Screech-Owls (*Otus asio*) and shrikes (*Lanius* species) use caches, the latter in a peculiar way by putting their prey on hawthorn thorns. Going far from Middlesex County, the Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), whose home is in California, Arizona, or farther south to Colombia, gains its name from the special holes it drills in trees or other wood for caching acorns.

While caching seems to be widespread among several families of birds, species like House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) and House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), and even American Goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*), seem to regard feeding as an activity of the moment, judging from the way they spend such long times at feeders. Do hawks and owls cache their prey, or do they eat it up as soon as it's caught? Casual observations suggest the latter. Almost obviously, it seems caching by seabirds doesn't exist, but there may be examples.



A Red-breasted Nuthatch approaches a feeder. Will it eat the seed immediately or cache it? (Photo by Gene Lobb.)

Caching is a fascinating process, and the seemingly uncanny detection of hidden or buried seeds apparently relies on visual memory. So much for the derogatory human adjective "bird-brain"; in this case, bird brains outdo those of humans.

It would be interesting if readers could supply observations of other species indulging in caching behaviour. Send us anything you come across. This could be a "citizen science" project leading to a list of those birds of Middlesex County that indulge in caching.

The Cardinal

CHIPMUNK ENTERTAINERS IN WINTER

Dear Cardinal,

Where I live, there is a family of chipmunks whose antics provide entertainment over much of the year. This extends as well to the winter season, when occasionally we see those energetic small balls of fur torpedoing their way across the snow. Why aren't they hibernating under the snow or in their underground dens? How can they stand below-freezing temperatures?

Amused by Chipmunks

Dear Amused,

I'm told that our Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*) is, in fact, classed as a true hibernator. That is, it wakes up from sleep in its underground den every few months to pass wastes and eat small amounts of stored food. It will have fattened up in its underground burrow before hibernating, but not enough to last the three to six months of hibernation periods. It uses up most of its fat reserves during wake times by its vigorous runs to the surface, and eats from its underground stores before going back to sleep. When hibernation starts, its body temperature drops in a few hours to nearly freezing, and heart rate drops from 350 beats per minute to as low as four after a few months.

Other mammals have related but individual hibernation behaviour. The differences among all mammals are now attributed to slowing down of metabolism at different rates, which results in different lowering of body temperatures. For Black Bears (*Ursus americanus*), the heart rate drops from 50 to eight beats per minute over several months; body temperature stays much the same. This allows bears to wake up quickly, and use one of the escape routes from their dens if danger threatens. Most male bears sleep through the winter, but females wake in mid-winter to give birth, then go back to sleep while their cubs nurse. Of course, they must have fattened up to provide energy reserves over a long winter. Groundhogs (*Marmota monax*) carry sleep to extreme lengths. They have been found to enter their dens in early fall, emerging only in late spring – or, perhaps, on the remarkably same Groundhog Day each year.

As for me, winter is fun – I like hop-



Eastern Chipmunk. (Drawing by Cathy Quinlan.)

ping in the snow to look for those luscious black sunflower seeds around a feeder, except when it's stormy, when I retire deep into the nearest thick evergreen tree or bush.

The Cardinal

DAYTIME SURPRISES



Dear Cardinal,

I think of animals like raccoons, skunks, and foxes as nocturnal, but I have been seeing them during the day more often than I used to. Why would this be?

Daytime Observer

Dear Observer,

You are right that all three of these mammals are usually nocturnal (active at night). I'm told that books about mammals, both old and new, all say the same sorts of things about Northern Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), Striped Skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*), and Red Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*): "primarily nocturnal", "nocturnal and crepuscular", "mainly nocturnal, but sometimes seen by day", etc. (Crepuscular means active around dawn and dusk.) In fact, most carnivorous mammals have similar patterns of activity. They are often most active around twilight, perhaps because this is the best time for hunting: there is a chance of catching prey that is active during the day (diurnal) and other prey that is active at night, and many insects – food for smaller carnivores – are most active at twilight. As an early-morning and late-afternoon feeder myself, I'm glad

these mammals aren't generally hunting birds like me!

But things in nature are rarely quite as simple as they may seem. The night and day activity patterns of all three mammals can vary with the age of the animal and the season, and sometimes to take advantage of some kind of food that happens to be abundant. Red Foxes, for example, are more active during the daytime in winter than at other seasons. Their eyes work best in low light, but they can see quite well in daylight.

So, why have you been seeing these mammals more often during the day lately? Perhaps you were looking more often at a time of year when they are more likely to be active during the day. But that doesn't seem like a very satisfying explanation.

I have another idea. Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) have become more common in the London area in recent years. They too fit the pattern of being mainly nocturnal but occasionally seen during the day. Coyotes also happen to be bigger than raccoons, skunks, and foxes, and while they wouldn't normally hunt any of the three species, they would be capable of killing them, and could certainly chase them away from their territories. A human friend of mine tells me that she witnessed a complete change in Red Fox behaviour when Coyotes arrived in an area where they had never occurred before. Before Coyotes, foxes were seen rarely, but after Coyotes arrived, foxes were seen regularly during the day. Apparently being out during the daytime was less risky for the foxes than encountering Coyotes at night.

I don't want to chip too loud an alarm, but there is another reason why these mammals are sometimes active during the day: illness. If you see a raccoon, skunk, or fox during the day that is acting strangely – having trouble walking, for example – **stay away!** The animal might have a disease such as rabies or canine distemper, and can be reported to your municipality.

A day creature myself,
The Cardinal

Northern Raccoon
(above left) and
Striped Skunk.
(Drawings by Rose
Chambers.)



MUSEUM LONDON EXHIBIT FOR NATURE LONDON'S 150TH

Museum London is excited to present an exhibition marking the 150th Anniversary of Nature London. Developed in collaboration with Nature London members David and Winifred Wake, this exhibition explores the "who, why, what, and when" of this amazing organization. You will meet its earliest members and discover that they learned about the insects, birds, and plants of the region not only because they loved nature, but also because they wanted to help farmers and others prosper through their economically useful scientific findings. As the times changed, the

organization that became Nature London added a commitment to preservation. Its members could not and did not sit idle while urbanization and industrialization threatened species and their habitats with destruction. Over 150 years, as you will see, Nature London members have shared with others through field trips, lectures, and publications, their joy in, and enthusiasm about, nature.

As well as featuring treasured objects and images held by Nature London, the exhibition includes material from the collections of Museum London, the University of Guelph, and the Departments of Botany and Zoology at the University of Western Ontario. **The exhibition opened on December 20, 2014 and will run to March 29, 2015.**

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)



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.

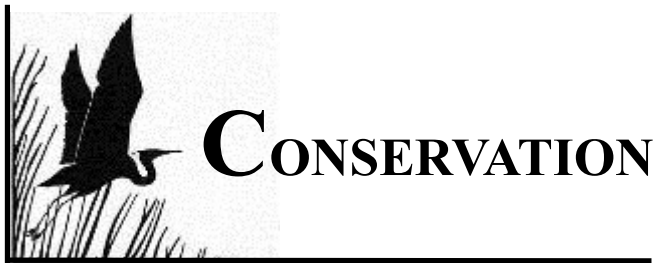
My husband, Pete Read, is still the migration secretary, a job he has done since the early 80's. He says hello and sends a big hug!

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: See Page 4 in this Cardinal to read "Remembering Florence 'Tommy' Cummings".)



MEDWAY VALLEY HERITAGE FOREST ENVIRONMENTALLY SIGNIFICANT AREA (MVHF ESA)

On November 18, 2014 a Public Participation Meeting was held before the Planning and Environment Committee (PEC) of City Council on the development application at 161 Windermere Road. The PEC referred the application back to City staff.

The final version of the natural features inventory conducted by Dillon for the City was presented to Council's Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee (EEPAC) on January 15, 2015. The report may be seen at www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Natural-Environments/Documents/Medway%20NHI-Eval-Final%20Report-Public%20Use-Jan2015.pdf.



In the Medway Valley Heritage Forest ESA.
(Photo by Gerard Pas.)

THE COVES ESA (EUSTON PARK / HIGHLAND WOODS)

At its meeting on November 4, 2014, City Council accepted the Conservation Master Plan (CMP) for The Coves. The CMP may be seen at www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Natural-Environments/Documents/Coves-CMP-October2014.pdf. The ESA has been formally adopted under the Adopt-an-ESA program by Friends of The Coves Subwatershed Inc., whose activities will be in accord with the CMP. A Coves CMP Implementation Committee will be organized and begin meeting early in 2015 to begin work on priority projects such as invasive species removal, trails at the East Pond, and a canoe launch. A \$45,000 National Trails Coalition / Economic Action Plan grant proposal for trail and canoe launch construction has been successful. The City has also budgeted \$100,000 in this year's draft capital budget for future Coves projects. In 2015, this ESA will be added to the

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) ESA management contract.

An Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearing will be held on April 27, 2015 concerning the proposed high-rise development on Springbank Drive near the West Pond. The hearing will begin at 11:00 am in the Hearing Room on the lower level at City Hall, and three weeks have been scheduled for its completion. Anyone interested in speaking at the hearing should attend at 11:00 am on April 27 to be accepted as a formal participant.

MEETING CITY COUNCIL

The Conservation Action Committee (CAC) invited the new Mayor and the City Councillors elected in the October 27, 2014 election to informational meetings, possibly including a tour of an ESA, concerning the work of Nature London and the CAC as well as current challenges in protecting London's natural heritage. Thus far we have met with Mayor Matt Brown and with Councillors Michael Van Holst (Ward 1), Mo Mohamed Salih (Ward 3), Maureen Cassidy (Ward 5), Phil Squire (Ward 6), Josh Morgan (Ward 7), Anna Hopkins (Ward 9), Virginia Ridley (Ward 10), Tanya Park (Ward 13), and Jared Zaifman (Ward 14).

SPRINGBANK PARK AND RESERVOIR HILL WOODLAND

On November 19, 2014, a public information meeting was held concerning plans for protecting this woodland, which are at a very preliminary stage. Beacon Environmental has been retained by the City to examine the areas and provide information for development of a Woodland Management Plan (WMP), which will include removing non-native trees and other plants, replanting, erosion control, management of trails, and education for stewardship. Further public input will be sought following the initial formulation of the WMP.

THAMES VALLEY PARKWAY

The City is developing plans to create a link in the Thames Valley multi-use pathway between Ross Park on Richmond Street North and the Huron Street Woods west of Adelaide Street. The first Public Information Centre was held on January 29 to show possible alternate routes for the link. The display boards will be available afterward at www.london.ca/residents/Environment/EAs/Pages/TVP-Extension-North-Branch.aspx. Construction could include two new bridges over the North Thames River.

WESTMINSTER PONDS / POND MILLS ESA

EEPAC critiqued the recent work by North South Environmental, which was an update to the CMP to apply the document *Planning and Design Standards for Trails in Environmentally Significant Areas* (2012) to this ESA and to do water quality analysis. It raised concerns about the quality of the work (the hydrologists on EEPAC were not in agreement with the conclusions of the water quality work) and the application of the *Standards*. CAC, too, is concerned about how the Standards are being applied for trail planning in other ESAs to which the document was not intended to apply, and Nature London will be asking Council to mandate that staff undertake a review of the document as soon as possible.

ONTARIO'S POLLINATOR HEALTH ACTION PLAN

Nature London representatives participated in the public discussion in London on December 9, 2014 on the Ontario government's plan to reduce the use of neonicotinoids by 80% by 2017 (see page 5). Following the discussion, the CAC and Nature London made submissions to the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) Registry that were supportive of the plan and made suggestions to improve its implementation.

BUDGETARY ADVICE

By invitation, CAC made a presentation in January to Ontario Minister of Finance Charles Sousa concerning priorities for natural heritage conservation in the next provincial budget. Also in January, CAC spoke to Council's Strategic Policy and Priorities Committee suggesting new or added funding for conservation in London's next budget.

Conservation Action Committee

COMMENT ON LONDON'S DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

The City has published a draft Strategic Plan that will drive spending plans for the fiscal years 2016 to 2019. It may be seen at: www.london.ca/city-hall/Civic-Administration/City-Management/Pages/Strategic-Planning.aspx. The document includes a section on a "Strong and Healthy Environment", but it ignores London's Natural Heritage system, including its ESAs. Citizens are asked to comment. Possible suggestions might

include "Provide funding to implement rapidly the recommendations of Conservation Master Plans for Environmentally Significant Areas", or, alternatively, to add the underlined phrase to Section 3 Item E of the "Building A Sustainable City" part of the Plan as follows: "Protect the environment through implementation of key plans such as the Conservation Master Plans for Environmentally Significant Areas, the Thames Valley Corridor Plan, the Source Protection Plan, the Thames River Clear Water Revival Initiative, and the Pollution Control and Prevention Plan."

NAMES OF SOME WELL-KNOWN WINTER FLOWERS

Have you ever wondered where some flowers get their names? Here are a few answers for two familiar winter flowers, coming mostly from a book called *100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names*, by Diane Wells, which I purchased at the recent library book sale.

POINSETTIA

This is a well-known flower seen in abundance and used as Christmas decorations. Once it was always red, but now it can also be bought in pink or white from nursery gardens. It comes from tropical Mexico, where it can grow to 16 feet (five metres) tall. Between 1825 and 1829 the USA sent an ambassador to Mexico, which was a newly independent republic. His name was Dr Joel Roberts Poinsett, a keen botanist and gardener. He introduced the American Elm to Mexico and sent the Poinsettia, named after him, to the US. Unfortunately, he was unpopular in Mexico because of his policies, and the Mexicans coined a word for officious, unwelcome behaviour as "poinsettismo"!

The plant's beauty comes from its brilliant scarlet bracts, not its flowers, which are small and yellow. It is a plant which only sets flowers when the days are short and the nights are long. It was used at Christmas to decorate the Mexican churches. Mexicans called it "flor de la noche buena", which translated is nativity flower.

The Poinsettia is a member of the Euphorbia, or spurge, family. The name spurge comes from the French word *espurge*. These plants were used in the Middle Ages to rid the body of "evil humours", like melancholy and black bile. In quantity, euphorbias are poisonous and the sap can cause a blistering rash.

CYCLAMEN

This, like the Poinsettia, is used for decoration at Christmas and can be bought at plant nurseries. Wild Cyclamens are small, pretty plants that grow in Europe. They also grow in North America south of Climate Zone 5 (just south of us). The hothouse Cyclamen originated in Persia, and the plants we know today are a result of the Victorian craze for gigantism. The Cyclamen is known historically, starting with Pliny the Elder's first-century *Natural History*. He claimed the roots of a plant, *Aristolochia*, were used by fishermen to poison fishes. This was disputed by the botanist Nicolo Leoniceo, who said it was the Cyclamen they used and he had seen it being used himself. Another naturalist, smoothing the quarrel, stated many plants were used this way and both men were correct. The name is from the Greek, *kyklo*, which means "circle" and refers to the seed stalks that curl up after flowering. The Greek name for Cyclamen was *chelonion* (tortoise), because the tubers look like little turtles.

During the Renaissance, it was believed that the appearance of different plants indicated the use for which they had been created! Thus the Cyclamen, with leaves shaped much like an ear, was used for earaches. The English botanist, William Turner, warned that it was such a powerful aid to childbirth that pregnant women would be in danger of losing their baby if they so much as stepped over Cyclamen roots.



Wild Cyclamen, *Cyclamen purpurascens*. (Public Domain photo by H. Zell.)



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 (see page 6).

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.

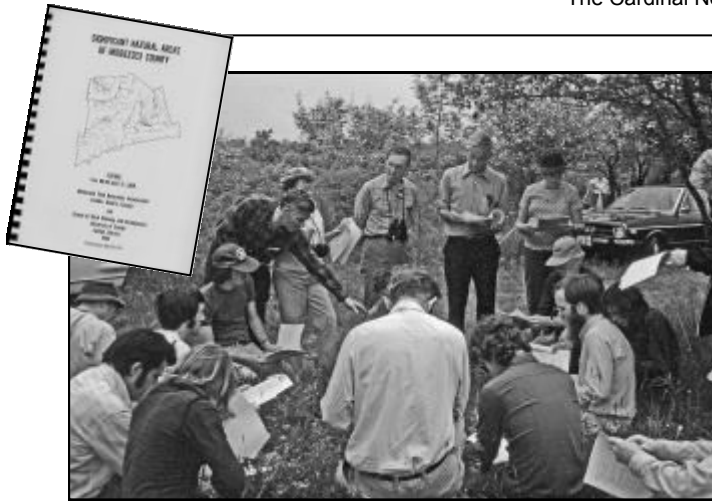
One of the first sites flagged by the study for its important natural features was Golden-wing Woods (Warbler Woods). Not long after, MFN member Rosemary Walters learned that a portion of the woodland had been sold, and residential development was imminent. MFN immediately joined with neighbourhood groups 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 fea-



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

tures around the London area was offered. In 1981, three 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.

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



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



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

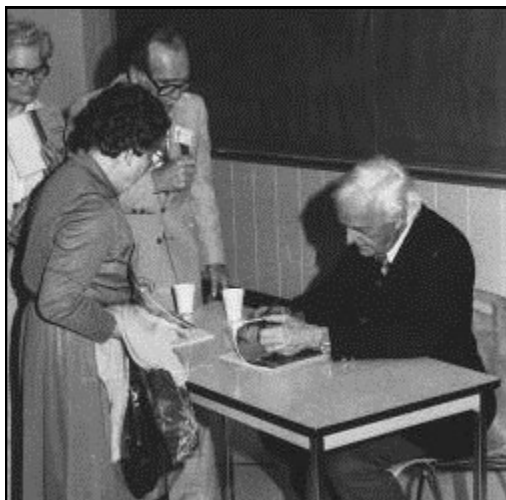
bers spoke favourably of the conference in London.

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



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.)



three field trips. MFN was paid by the college. Participants 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 current anniversary exhibition on the club at Museum London [see page 8].)

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.)

