

Macnamara Field Naturalists Club 2020 Annual Report – Field Trips

With the assistance of Maureen Carrier, the previous Field Trip Coordinator, I took over the duties in 2020 which began with the popular hike to Barron Canyon in mid February. Unfortunately, that was to be the last outing until COVID restrictions were eased in July. Despite the late start, the club hosted a total of nine outings in mostly perfect weather with 10 different trip leaders and a total of approximately 120 participants. Many of the trips were co-led which allowed for greater numbers to participate and a good number of participants came out on multiple trips.

While a number of the later trips were focused on trees in different locations and geared to participants of varying knowledge levels, and two other trips were narrowly topic specific (fungi and dragonflies), leaders and participants on all trips certainly did not ignore the many more interesting flora and fauna they encountered in the natural areas in which they were exploring.

We are extremely grateful to the knowledgeable trip leaders, some of whom lead multiple outings and who all took time to prepare so that participants would get the most out of the outing. We are also grateful to the participants for adding their knowledge, their photos, their post trip comments and for being so respectful of the COVID guidelines by wearing masks and keeping physical distance. A further thank you for their understanding, to those club members unable to participate when numbers would not allow. We hope that the blogs will encourage everyone to get out and explore these areas themselves whether they were on the outing or not.

We also hope that after the current Stay at Home regulations are eased that 2021 will open up for more outings with an even broader range of foci, skill levels and physical abilities. The information gleaned in the Board of Directors' calls to the members in the Fall of 2020 will be used to guide this as will offerings from potential trip leaders and leads from club members. Members are encouraged to connect with each other for self guided outings and we hope to help facilitate this. As always, members are encouraged to provide the executive with feedback and ideas that would help us make club membership better for all.

A brief summary of the 2020 outings follows:

Barron Canyon – February 16 – General Nature - Jeff and Angela Skevington

Highlights of the trip were the many birds (and the mad snowshoe chase for the elusive Spruce Grouse) and of course, the magnificent view from the top of the canyon.

Burnt Lands Provincial Park – 18 July – General Nature - Derek Dunnett and Erik Pohanka

Highlights of the outing to this unique alvar were the butterflies, 20 species of birds, a few tiger beetles, the topography and fossils. Due to the dryness and heat of this summer, the herps that were hoped for were not found. Other mysteries such as “Who ate whom here?” intrigued the participants.

Morris Island Conservation Area – 1 August – General Nature – Derek Dunnett and Erik Pohanka

Highlights of the outing were the spiders and snakes but the family of River Otters, birds and the dragonflies did vie for our attention. Many of the group photographed the *Argiope aurantia* spider wrapping their prey and were fascinated by other single-cell creatures inhabiting the two-dimensional world of a leaf.

Dragonflies – 15 August – Dragonflies, Damselflies – Owen Ridgen

This outing brought us to several gorgeous locations in Almonte, Packenham, Kinburn and Arnprior: Blakeney Rapids was a particularly beautiful. Participants learned basic species ID and how to tell the difference between male and female dragonflies and damselflies. Even a fly mimicking a bee was identified. A May 2021 outing is hoped for to locate the Rapids Clubtail dragonfly which is rare and endangered in Ontario but may be found along the Mississippi River.

Shaw Woods – 30 August – Trees – Jakob Mueller

Jakob imparted a wealth of information about many aspects of the diversity unique to this old growth forest on Shaw Woods' west side. Beech, Hemlock, Balsam Fir and Sugar Maple and other trees were noted as well as Beechdrops, a parasitic plant and many types of fungi. An adult Eastern Red-back Salamander was carefully caught, viewed in a special viewing box and safely returned to a spot near its original location. The East side trail led us to lookout over Shaw Pond from where the Bald Eagle's nest could be seen.

Trees on Macnamara Trail – 26 September – Trees - Dr. Owen Clarkin and Art Goldsmith

Owen and Art each led a group and discussed trees, shrubs, plants and fungi of interest. We learned that Balsam Poplar is the northernmost deciduous tree and that Emerald Ash Borer prefer Green Ash trees to Black Ash and like White Ash the least. The groups swapped leaders at the lime kiln where the Liverwort was showing and each group in turn went to see the Walking Fern and Rock Polypody. When Owen headed back, a few of us followed Art to the lookout for a wonderful view of the marsh.

Fungi on Macnamara Trail – 3 October – Fungi - Jonathan Mack and Lynne Ovenden

Again, the group was split in two with one group reporting a respectable 24 species and the other group, 26 species: Turkey Tail fungi, Coral mushrooms, Golden Trumpet, Shaggy Mane, Pink Waxcap, Purple Toothed Polypore and Stubby Brittlegill. Many identification points were discussed (colour, texture, sliminess, size, overall shape, edge shape, gills vs teeth vs pores, type of habitat and location found, and the veil etc.) and, the message that unless you are an expert in their ID, it is best not to eat any you find since many that may be edible are look-a-likes for ones which are poisonous.

Basic Tree ID – 7 November – Gillies Grove - Roger Bird and David Major

That this trail is right in Arnprior and so walkable was a great impetus for those looking for a less rigorous outing. Although basic tree ID was the focus, we did hear, and/or see 10 species of birds. Participants shared information and resources and engaged in active sleuthing to determine the differences in the leaf structure and the bark of trees and felt by the end that they could now reliably identify many species of trees. Roger was happy to discover some Canada Yew bushes on the way out, which for him was a rarity. All this culminated in a chorus of "Happy Birthday" to a little girl on a birthday outing with her parents.

Leafless Tree ID – 27 December - High Lonesome Nature Reserve - Erik Pohanka

Erik led participants to various areas of the reserve to show different stages of regrowth from farmland and pasture back to natural forest once farming had ceased. He discussed how the native and non-native trees and shrubs observed fit into the ecology of where they were growing and how the diseases (native Butternut – Butternut Canker fungus) and pests (Gypsy Moth) are endangering them. Erik showed examples of the many clues beyond leaf shape and colour useful for tree identification and showed how to distinguish the rare little Canada Yew from Balsam Fir and Hemlock.