

# The SPOTTED TURTLE

The Newsletter of the Friends of MacGregor Point Park

Volume 20

Issue 1

February 2014



**LET THE RENOVATIONS BEGIN!!!**

## **President's Message**

I hope everyone had a good Christmas and is surviving the 'good old fashioned winter' we are having. Despite the snowbanks and extreme cold, I am hopeful some of you are starting to think of the warmer times ahead and the return to MacGregor Point. The Friend's Board of Directors are and I would like to bring you up to date on some of the items we are working on.

**Visitor Centre Re-decorating:** Andrea and Michael LaBlance, our truly dedicated 'Store Committee' made the suggestion to spruce up the Visitor Centre this past Fall to make it more attractive for users. They are hopeful this will also draw more visitors to the Huron Fringe Shop. With the help of volunteers, they will be replacing the aging carpet with vinyl tile and will be giving the interior a fresh coat of paint. Be sure to stop by and see the results of their efforts. I am sure they would be happy to have additional volunteers for the work that is scheduled to start later in February.

**Watersnake Pond Viewing Platform:** As a result of some unavoidable financial setbacks last Summer and Fall, the construction of the new structure was postponed until the Fall of 2014. The new observation deck will replace the severely deteriorated boardwalk and pod at Watersnake Pond. The original facility was removed a year ago and the access trail closed. We are starting a new fund raising campaign to generate the necessary funds and are already 30% of the way there. A promotional leaflet is attached. I hope you will give consideration to providing a donation to this worthy project that will again show the commitment of the Friends, and the valuable service we provide to the Park.

**Membership:** The Membership Committee is looking at the possibility of revamping the membership structure and renewal schedule. Membership renewals have proven to be somewhat difficult, both for the members trying to keep track of their membership anniversary and for those working behind the scenes preparing renewal notices. We look forward to some suggestions from the committee and possible revisions that will make the process better for all.

**Friends Agreement:** The Friends operates under an agreement with Ontario Parks so that each is aware of their obligations and scope of responsibility. It is a five year agreement and our current one is up for renewal. The agreement tends to be generic in nature with the hope that is suitable for all Friends organizations across the Province. Unfortunately, each Friends group has some unique situations and we are currently in the process of negotiating the final wording so that our agreement is fair to both parties. We are hopeful the new agreement will be signed shortly.

**A Glimmer of Hope:** Bradley Fauteux, Managing Director of Ontario Parks, has placed the MacGregor Point Visitor Centre on the Ten Year Plan. The Board has expressed their support for a new facility. There is no specific timeline, but it is refreshing to at least know something may happen at any point during this timeframe.

**Huron Fringe Birding Festival:** As I am writing this, we are about to activate the on-line registration for this year's Birdfest. We anticipate lots of action as the registration process went live midnight January 31. Last year many were up in the early hours of February 1 to be sure to get onto their favourite events before they filled. Some were even registering from their winter vacation places in Florida. The Birdfest Committee has assembled a tremendous list of events and this year's festival should be another resounding success.

We're off to what should be a great year.

**Doug Martin**

## **COMING EVENTS**

**As of Feb. 1 -Huron  
Fringe Birding Festival  
Registration Open**

**Saturdays in Feb.— Ren-  
ovations of Visitor  
Centre**

**May 2—Deadline for  
May Spotted Turtle**

**May 23-26 & May 29—  
June 1, 2014—Huron  
Fringe Birding Festival**

**JUNE 21, 2014—**

**ANNUAL GENERAL**

**MEETING OF FRIENDS OF  
MACGREGOR POINT**

**3:00pm VISITOR CENTRE**



Beth Taylor ( artist ) & Leslie Turcotte (SDSS Drama Teacher)  
at 2013 Wild for the Arts



## The Silent Creatures of the night

- Mike Pickup

There are nineteen different species of owls that can be seen in North America, with a possible eleven that can be expected in Southern Ontario of which ten are possible in Bruce County.

Their soundless flight makes them quite difficult to locate, but one can look for regurgitated owl pellets and the telltale white wash at the base of trees where owls nest or roost. Most owls spend their days roosting, while out hunting at night.

Of the ten owl species that occur in Bruce County, the most common is the Eastern Screech Owl, the Great Horned Owl and the Northern Saw-whet Owl. Not so common are the Barred Owl, Long Eared Owl and the Short Eared Owl. Even less common are the Boreal Owl and the Northern Hawk Owl. The other two are considered winter visitors, the Snowy Owl and the Great Gray Owl. The Barn Owl may possibly still exist but is the rarest of them all and locations are usually kept secret. Great Gray Owls do erupt into Southern Ontario on occasion, mostly on the Bruce Peninsula, and Snowy Owls occur most winters in Bruce County. Some years there can be up to fifteen owls in the area.

In most owl species, males and females have similar plumages, and size can be an indicator to tell the differences, with females usually being the larger. The only North American owl where the male is the larger is the Burrowing Owl.

Facial features help to differentiate species. Some have heart shaped facial disks with a ruff of feathers, while others have round shaped facial disks with a ruff of feathers. Check the field guides to spot the differences between the owls. Owls are considered birds of prey and are equipped with strong talons and hooked beaks with which they catch their food. They have keen hearing, enhanced vision and feathers that muffle sound during flight. Most owls hunt during the night while roosting during the day. They glide through the dark forests silently with effortless ease, giving them the nickname "The silent Creatures of the night." Owls are considered very territorial often staying in one particular area all their life. Owl feathers have adaptations that contribute to their silent flight. First, every feather that forms the leading edge has a stiff comb-like edge. Second, along their trailing edge is a soft hair like fringe and third is a velvet layer that covers the the upper surface of the flight feathers. Owls are usually silent, but do vocalize to claim territory, alarm and alert for danger.

I have conducted Nocturnal Owl Surveys for bird Studies Canada each year and usually find Eastern Screech Owls, Great Horned Owls and on occasion Northern Saw-whet Owls. I also conducted owl surveys for research for the Breeding Bird Atlas projects with great success. Owl surveys are usually conducted in the spring when birds are on breeding territories. I have also gone in search of Barred Owls and Northern Hawk Owls on the Bruce Peninsula, Short Eared Owls and Long Eared Owls in Bruce County when I have heard of them from various other sources. During our winter months I can be found driving the countryside looking for Snowy Owls and from my previous article you know that I always go in search of Great Gray Owls on the Bruce Peninsula weather permitting, when they erupt into Southern Ontario. Material for this article was researched from a book "Owls of North America" by Frances Backhouse and the Breeding Bird Atlas of Ontario. I will finish with a special thought.

**"It is with great respect and awe that I observe owls in their natural surroundings."**



**NEEDED**

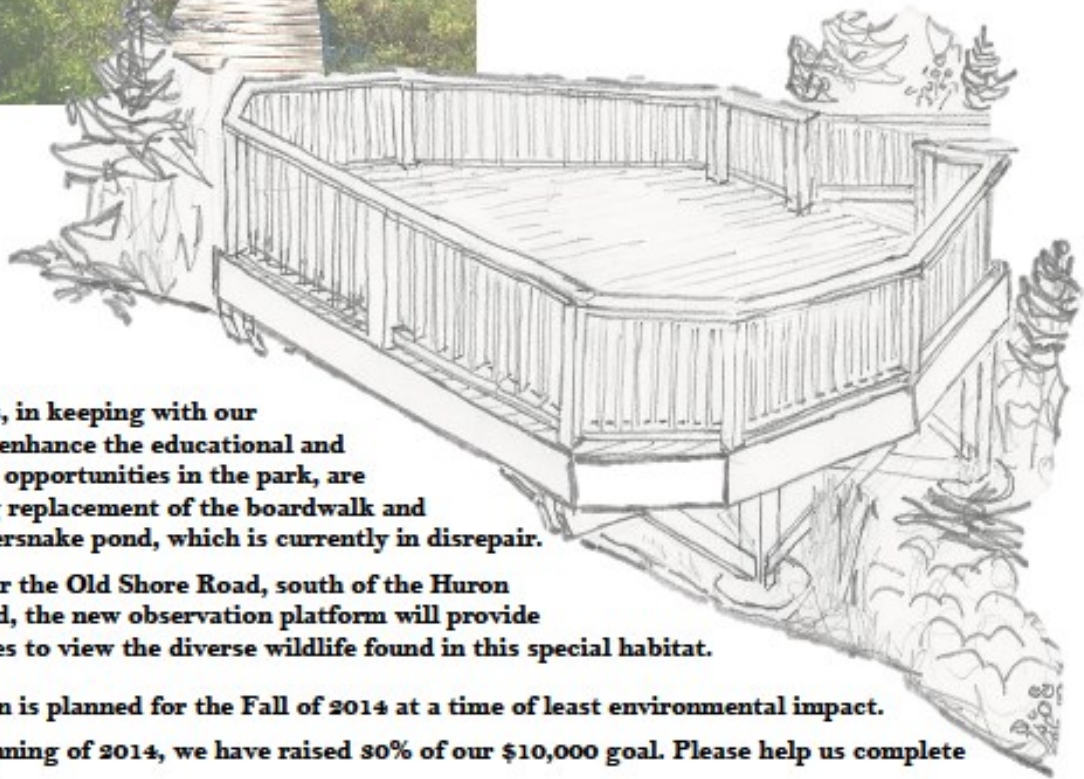
**STORE MANAGERS FOR HURON FRINGE SHOP –begin your training with current managers, Jan. 2015, travelling to gift show, then taking over store June 2015. email Michael or Andrea LaBlance for details, [malablance@bmts.com](mailto:malablance@bmts.com)**

**Spotted Turtle Editor - beginning June 2014 For details, contact Linda Mason, [masonfam@bmts.com](mailto:masonfam@bmts.com)**

**TREASURER— beginning June 2014 Contact Bev Carlisle [bevcarlisle@gmail.com](mailto:bevcarlisle@gmail.com)**

# Please Lend Your Support . . .

## THE FRIENDS OF MACGREGOR POINT PARK WATERSNAKE POND OBSERVATION PLATFORM



- The Friends, in keeping with our mandate to enhance the educational and interpretive opportunities in the park, are undertaking replacement of the boardwalk and pod at Watersnake pond, which is currently in disrepair.
- Located near the Old Shore Road, south of the Huron Campground, the new observation platform will provide opportunities to view the diverse wildlife found in this special habitat.
- Construction is planned for the Fall of 2014 at a time of least environmental impact.
- At the beginning of 2014, we have raised 30% of our \$10,000 goal. Please help us complete this project.

**Donations can be mailed to The Friends of MacGregor Point Park,  
1593 Bruce Rd. 33 R.R.1 Port Elgin ON N0H 2C5  
or dropped off at the Visitor Centre in the Park.**

**All donations of \$100 and higher will be recognized at the site.**

## A Breeze in the Trees Can Make You Sneeze

by Lilian Shen | April 30th 2012 |



Illustration by Adelaide Tyrol

If you're one of the 10 to 20 percent of the population who's afflicted with seasonal allergies, you know that spring is in the air – literally. While the itchy eyes and runny nose you're experiencing are classic hay fever symptoms, grasses have yet to flower. The allergy season is getting an early start thanks to other, less obvious blossoms.

Blame not the harmless pollen grain, but rather an antibody known as immunoglobulin E (IgE). IgE evolved to protect us from parasites, but some people are so sensitive to foreign substances that their body makes IgE when confronted with pollen. When IgE meets pollen in an allergy sufferer's airways, it causes tissue mast cells to release histamine. The result – swelling, itching, sneezing, and mucus production – is good for ejecting parasites, but also a source of misery.

The pollen-shedding culprits are everywhere. Most trees in the Northeast rely on the wind to waft their pollen from male to female flower parts. These trees flower in early spring, before leaves unfurl and get in the way of pollination. Wind-pollinated trees have pollen grains that are tiny, dry, and light. At about 25 microns long, it takes about 40 pollen grains, lined up end to end, to equal one millimeter. That's a handy size for blowing about, and for penetrating nasal cavities.

Because they don't need to attract bees, wind-pollinated flowers are generally greenish with scale-like petals. In many trees, such as oak, beech, and birch, the pollen-producing male flowers are massed on dangling catkins while the female flowers are separate. The anthers, the business part of the male flower, hang in the breeze and release millions of pollen grains. These vast numbers increase the likelihood of a pollen grain randomly blowing onto a female flower.

Female flowers can be easily overlooked on some trees. In red oak, for example, they are grouped on bud-like protrusions – each female flower is a mere one-eighth of an inch across. Large or small, what female flowers of most tree species have in common are feathery extensions, called stigmas, which catch airborne pollen.

Generally, we don't see tree pollen, with the exception of white pine. Its yellow, cone-shaped male flowers release large pollen grains in enormous quantities that can be seen drifting in clouds, making a visible layer on windshields and puddles. Pine pollen grains are three to four times larger than those of most other trees, due to a pair of inflated air sacs that help the pollen stay airborne.

Although it looks like the perfect recipe for a sneeze, pine pollen doesn't cause allergies. Oak, ash, and box-elder pollen provoke the strongest allergies.

While most trees are wind pollinated, 90 percent of flowering plants take advantage of insect pollinators. They produce typical flowers that lure insects in with bright colors, perfumes, and nectar in exchange for taking their pollen away and depositing it on the female parts of another flower. But allergy sufferers fear not: pollen from insect-pollinated flowers does not cause allergies.

Pollen from insect-pollinated flowers is designed to be readily picked up by an insect as it probes the flower for nectar. The pollen grains are big and rough, often revealing patterns of ridges or spines under the microscope. They are also covered in a viscous, oily fluid known as pollen kitt. This causes the pollen to stick together in clumps that adhere first to the insect and then to the prominently positioned stigma of the recipient flower. These sticky pollen grains don't blow around like dust, so they don't enter nasal passages and provoke allergies.

Despite being so tiny, pollen is more complex than it appears. It bears two sperm cells. After a pollen grain lands on a stigma, it germinates like a tiny plant and puts out a long pollen tube. This tube grows down into the flower's ovary. Here it encounters an ovule, which holds an egg cell and a large central cell. The two sperm cells burst from the pollen tube. One fertilizes the egg cell, which develops into an embryonic plant, while the other fertilizes the central cell, which grows into a source of stored food called endosperm. This process is called double fertilization. The embryonic plant and the endosperm are packaged together into a seed that, with any luck, will reach the ground and grow into a self-sufficient plant, such as a rose or an oak tree.

Unfortunately for allergy sufferers, trees are just the first in the yearly succession of wind-pollinated plants. Soon there will be grasses, although only a handful out of a thousand or so species cause hay fever. Ragweed will later round out the season.

Although scientists have identified several pollen compounds that provoke the immune system to make IgE, the reason why only some people are sensitive remains poorly understood.

**Li Shen is an adjunct professor at the Dartmouth Medical School and the chair of the Thetford, Vermont, Conservation Commission.**

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## **Out with all that old dusty, musty carpet!!**







**Ken and Matt fill in some of “those”holes !**

## **VISITOR CENTRE STILL NEEDS VOLUNTEERS**

**Work continues on the improvements. Volunteers are still needed to: 1.Paint 2. Install click flooring 3. Replace furniture and displays**

**If you are willing to assist with any of these jobs, please contact Andrea or Michael LaBlance:**

**519-797-3822 or [malablace@bmts.com](mailto:malablace@bmts.com)**

**Huron Fringe**  
*Birding Festival*  
May 23 - June 1, 2014

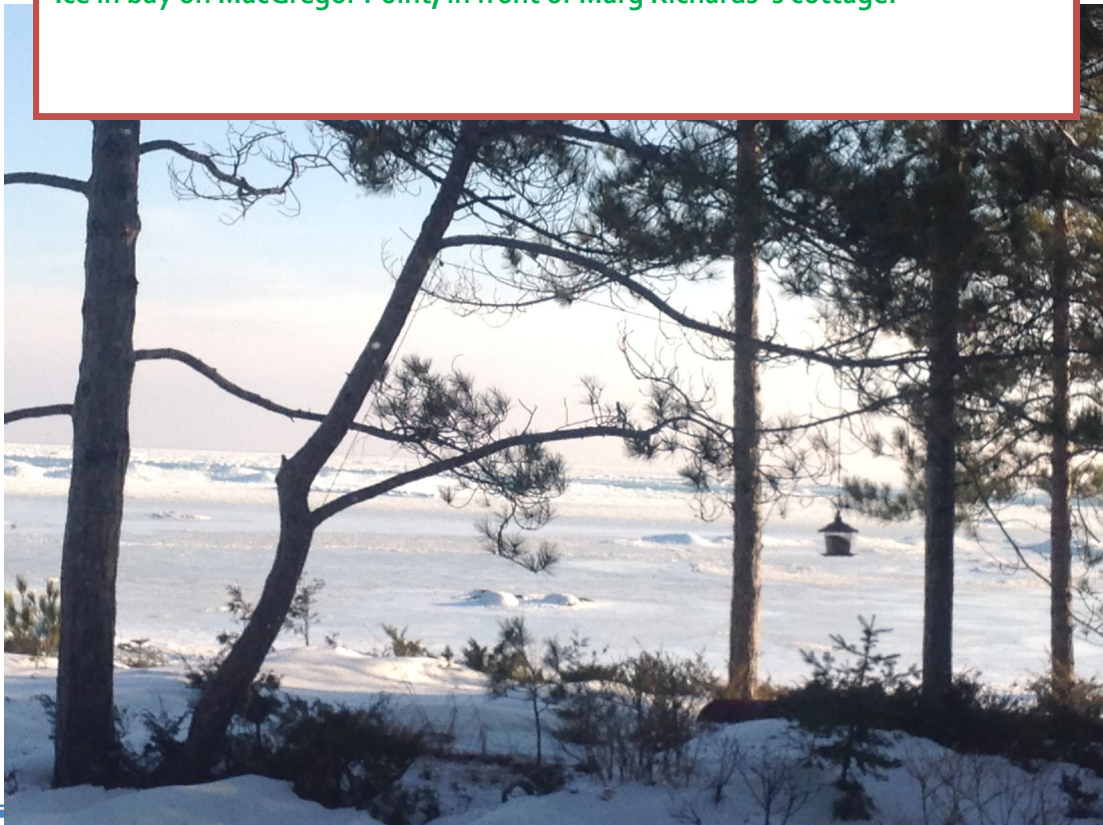


*One of North America's  
Premier Birding Festivals.*

Program and on-line registration available  
February 1, 2014 at [www.friendsofmacgregor.org](http://www.friendsofmacgregor.org) or by  
calling 519-389-6231 or 519-389-9056.

MacGregor Point Provincial Park • Port Elgin, ON.

Ice in bay on MacGregor Point, in front of Marg Richards 's cottage.



The Lake Range Road, now called Bruce County Road 33, is familiar to visitors of MacGregor Point Provincial Park as their driving or cycling access to the Park. In years gone by, it was a narrow track that mostly followed the inland boundary of the lake front lots. Winters saw its heaviest use, as sleighs loaded with cordwood or logs travelled from bush lots to Port Elgin.

Bill Boettger, whose childhood home was the farm at the corner of Concession Two and Highway 21, told many stories about the Lake Range. Here are some of his memories.

Coming north from the Bruce Saugeen Townline, teamsters used to see fields and an orchard on the land that is now part of the Park. As the land rose toward the hill known as “the hardwood knoll”, the horses had to work harder, and were usually given a rest when they reached the top. Sometimes you would see a hundred teams a day hauling logs and wood. Of course, the knoll was higher then, before it was cut down during road improvements. You can still see the old height from the banks.

Where the S bends [near Concession Two] are, starts a ‘given road’, called that because it does not follow the surveyed line, but uses land given by the farmers. This let the road stay on the higher ground, out of the wet hollow that you can see below [to the west of] the present road.

There was a camp in the hollow when men were lumbering in the area. There was a stable for horses and a work camp. A cook made meals, and quite a crew of local men worked there. They hauled logs to Owen Sound.

[Keenan Woodenware Manufacturing Company of Owen Sound had timber rights to several lots in the Lake Range for five years in the mid 1940s. They were entitled to cut ‘poplar and balm’ trees. Older readers may remember Keenan’s toothpicks.]

The orange pipe gate and “Punchy’s Trail” mark the old farm lane. Punchy Brill had a house, south of the gates. Punchy was a great outdoors guy. He had a [commercial] fishing licence, and fished off Sandy Bay, and some cabins in Port Elgin.

Where the creek runs under the Lake Range Road, north of the Park entrance, Seamans had a shingle mill. There were two houses on the west side of the road, one on each side of the ravine. You used to see the barn remains on the east side of the road. They kept cows, and watered them at the creek. Kids used to fish for speckled trout in the creek.

The land from the Park gate to the Fourth Concession was all cleared before they did the reforestation. Most of it was farmed.

Bill used to jump on a horse’s back on a Sunday afternoon and visit Seamans...that was the old way to get around.

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Anne Duke Judd, a neighbour of MacGregor Point Provincial Park, is a writer and editor with an active curiosity about the past.

**Please complete your membership renewal and mail to :**

**The Friends of MacGregor Point Park, R. R. 1, Port Elgin, ON N0H 2C5 . The Friends membership extends one year from the month you join.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR E-MAIL AS IT HELPS DECREASE MAILING COSTS \*\***

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Would you like to be contacted to volunteer at any of the builds or fund-raising functions(i.e.**

**BBQ's)? \_\_\_\_\_**

Payment by: Cheque \_\_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_\_ Mastercard \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Category:**

Individual - \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

Family - \$30 \_\_\_\_\_

Donation in addition to membership \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Official Tax receipts will be issued for all donations.