

The Talon

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NEWSLETTER COVID-19 edition #11

SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS

SLSN is an incorporated not-for-profit Member of Ontario Nature.

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Research Partner with The Zephyr Society of Lake Simcoe (www.zephyrsociety.ca)

In recent weeks, as anticipated, Ontario businesses continued to open up in regard to COVID-19 lockdowns of the Fourth Wave. A provincial staged opening strategy is in effect, and we are in Stage 3 with increasing delta variant wreaking havoc in western Canada and much of the rest of the world. Outdoor programs include day-use in parks, and recreation activities in local parks continue.

Outdoor events are only possible given provincial and municipal guidelines, and our communities priority moving forward, with vaccinations (noting that people are in various stages), masks and social distancing remain important.

Naturalists want to be outside as much as possible, and done safely, helps keep us healthy. **Consequently, we continue our outings this fall. This COVID year we have planned two interesting local outings on October 6 and 29th with details below. We will continue to follow the advice and guidelines of provincial and municipal public health officials.**

P. Harpley

Outings: All regular outings – Note: **Paid-up members in good standing may participate (for insurance compliance).**

2021 Summer

Wednesday October 6: Birding and Nature Study Walk: We will do some light hiking and area birding and wildflower identification, as conditions determine, in an interesting diverse forest area with flat trails . Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the parking lot for the Metro Road Tract, York Region Forest (1763 Metro Rd. North), located on the south side of Metro Road approximately 2.5 km. west of Jackson's Point, visit (www.york.ca/forestry for more location details). Dress for the weather and conditions. Bring binoculars etc.

Friday October 29: Nature Study Expedition and Birding: With the rainy autumn, this afternoon outing will include searching for and identifying native mushrooms, ferns, and their allies. The forest and regrowth meadow/wildland includes a dynamic Pefferlaw river area stream section. The outing will offer light hiking and area birding as conditions determine. Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the Pefferlaw Library parking lot. Check Pefferlaw Library location, visit (https://www.google.com/search?q=georgina+libraries&rlz=1C1CHBF_enCA941CA941&oq=Georgina+Libraries&aqs=chrome.0.0i512j69i64.12856j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 for more location details). Dress for the weather and conditions. Bring binoculars etc.

Meeting/Outing Report

Our SLSN members outdoor meeting/walkabout on August 22 was at the Udora Hall Wildlands. The event respected protocol principles, advice, and guidelines of provincial and municipal public health officials. Nine members, an interested and committed group, met briefly at the pavilion and talked about current affairs and activities during COVID-19 summer and details of other naturalist information.

Heading out on the main trail the recent warm and droughty weather meant the ground and forests and fields were rather dry so the plan to search for August fungi was limited. One lowland forest cedar swamp was so dry the older trees seemed water stressed and a few were dying or dead. Fortunately,

as is always the case in nature, there was so much else to see and experience on our walk.



There were diverse habitats in the area, including grassland meadows, Red pine forest regeneration areas, wet Cedar forest and mid-successional forest fen. The plant diversity associated with these habitats was interesting. In this regard a partial list of notable wild plants is listed below.

Wildflowers

Black-eyed susan
Wild grape
Cypress spurge
Jewelweed
Wild cucumber
Cow vetch
Wild parsnip
Herb Robert
Garlick mustard
Early meadow rue
Wild Lily of the valley
Joe Pye weed
Indian Tobacco
False Solomon's seal
Burdock
Yellow wood sorrel
Viper's bug loss
Queen Anne's lace

Trees

Aspen polar
Cottonwood
E. White spruce
White birch
Basswood
E. White cedar
American elm

Butterflies

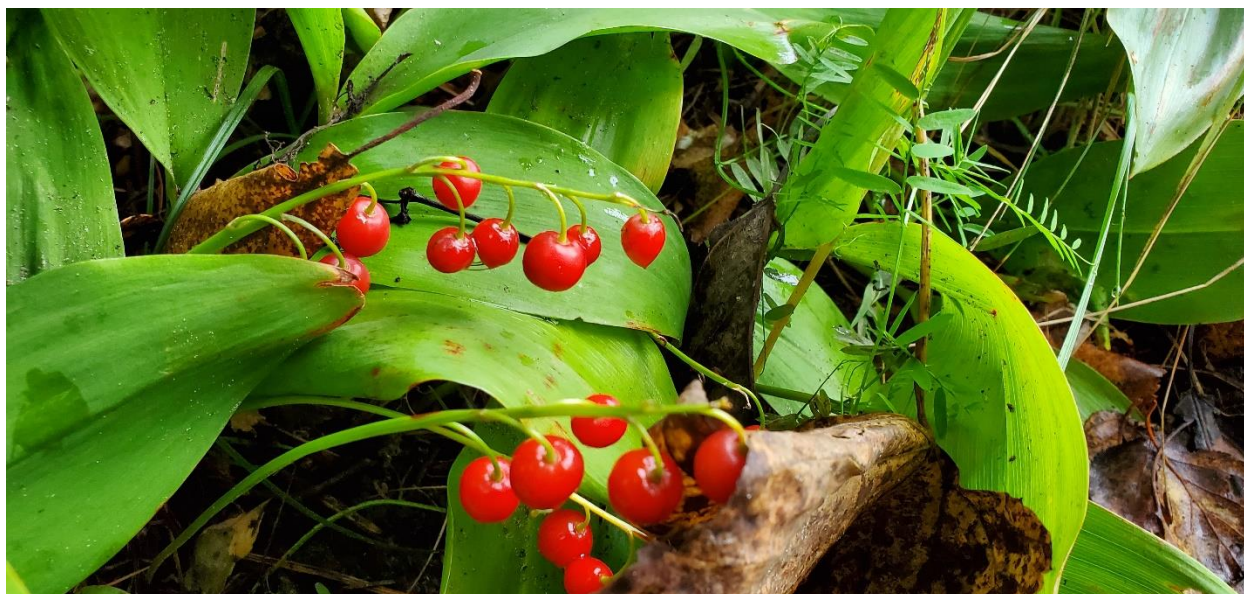
Cabbage White
Monarch

Ferns

Lady
Ostrich feather
Woodsia



Herb Robert



Lily of the Valley

P. Harpley

Bird Watching News

Member Jeff Boylin in early September is already cleaning out his bird boxes for the winter ready for next year's spring avian arrivals. He advises

“It's a great time if year to clean out those nesting boxes. Instead of using disinfectants, I scrape and brush out the inside and allow them to air dry for a few days. This way it should take care if any insects or parasites that want to overwinter. Interesting all the different items the birds use to build their nests”.



Bluebird house



Some of the many items bluebirds use to make nests

Mid-August birding

Irving Himel did a bird sweep August 18th between Island Grove, Willow Beach, and Jackson's Point starting at 9:47 a.m. Typical expected species were observed but a surprise Great Black-backed gull was a highlight. His brief report of full observations is below.

Today is calm and very overcast. On a drive to Jackson's Point from Keswick I note that the Osprey nests are being made smaller, and the fledglings are flying. The Purple Martins are gone south. The female Common Mergansers are again present as I also saw my first of the season BONAPARTE & GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.

OVER the weekend my backyard feeders were very busy as the Grackles had ascended on mass, but sharing with Mourning Doves, Cardinal and a lot of Blue Jays. The chickadees come in 4 or 5 at a time, each chasing each other away Downy Woodpecker, both nuthatches and a few Chipping Sparrows are feeding. Goldfinch are devouring the niger seed, and a few Hummingbirds are delightfully sipping the sugar-water.

On the lake there are also Mallard, Canada geese and Cormorants.

On Bruce St it was deader than ever with Osprey, A turkey Vulture a few Robins, a Crow or two and at the odd GREAT BLUE HERON

THAT'S IT FOR THIS past few days

Fall Migration

Wet field ponds in our area in the last two weeks have been active with water birds especially sandpipers. Blue-winged teal are around up here for a few weeks, saw 3 on the Black River the other day, but a lot of ducks have not made it through the last few weeks of hunting there. Some Wood ducks have been able to rest and feed on some flooded farm fields while preparing to fly south. The Egypt Park Rd./Frog St. area field ponds have been a local hot spot with a number of migrant shorebirds including Black-bellied and Golden Plover, Semipalmated Plover are highlights, and White-rumped Sandpipers. Birder Bruce Brydon advised me he got 9 sandpiper species in the area on the 26th. Also, a Hudsonian Godwit had also been seen. It has all happened real fast this year's shorebird migration with rain events for ponding water.

With these continuing significant rain events, parts of sod and other grass fields are saturated and it is taking a long time for water to draw down. It should be noted that these fields are very important for food stops for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds if they are not tiled to drain away water fast. The wet fields are important conservation habitats in South Lake Simcoe. Many of these birds have long migration journeys to wintering grounds and need these stopping off wet field areas, disappearing in many urban areas to the south. Most Septembers this much continuous rain does not happen here (Climate Change?). Over the years especially about a decade ago we had very droughty autumns and comparatively fewer shorebird species were around in the fall compared to recent years.

P.H.

2021-09-27

Irving Himel advised he birded the Holland Landing Sewage lagoon September 26th with friends. Highlights included White-throated sparrows, in spring/summer.

“Near the lagoon BLUE JAY. Flying high WHITE-THROATED SPARROW. A bunch flitting around the underbrush and confirmed by Merlin HAIRY WOODPECKER NORTHERN HARRRIER NORTHERN FLICKER. Several times LESSER ? YELLOWLEGS RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS up to 50 amassing BLUE-WINGED TEAL WOOD DUCK. Male females and young SCAUP, WOODPECKER, almost all white, larger than hairy??

TURKEY VULTURE

RING-BILLED GULL

Canada goose

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER. Mostly female. Probably 100 or more.

*There are **2 great black-backed gulls** in the same strip just west of Homestead Rd. sitting on rafts”*

Irving (Itche) Himel irving.himel@gmail.com



Flicker fledgling Harpley property Frog St. 2021-08-18 P. Harpley photo

Members, please consider writing and submitting an article to the Talon Newsletter.

Phone Paul 905-722-8021 or Norma 905-476-4747 for further information about meetings and naturalist outings.

Southern Ontario Environmental Issues, and Beyond

2021-10-02

Environmental Defence

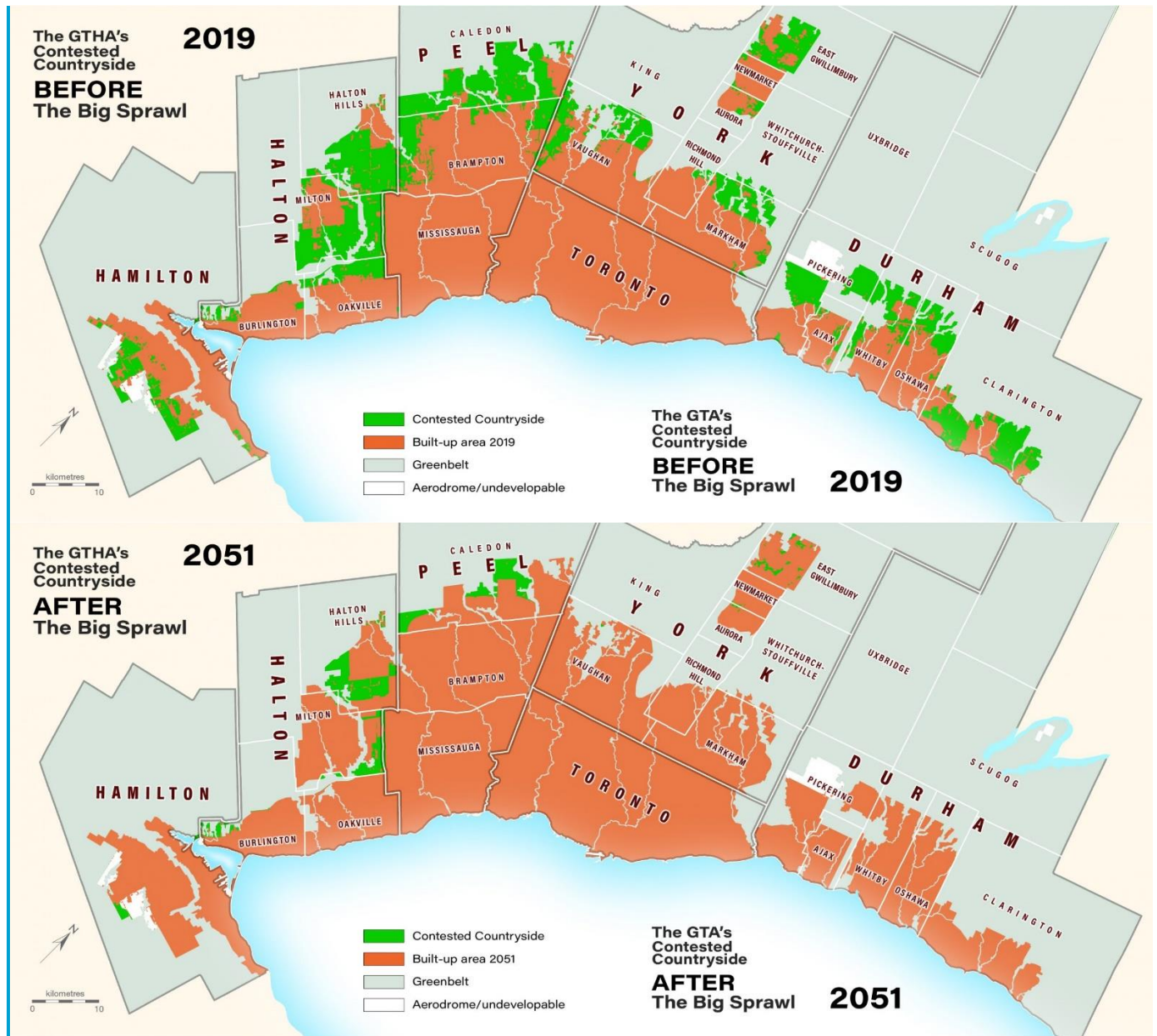
The Big Sprawl

Last year, Ontario imposed THE BIG SPRAWL, a set of policies designed to enrich land speculators by pushing 81 per cent of new households and jobs over the next 30 years into car-dependent suburbs, often on farmland, and to exclude them from the walkable & transit-friendly existing neighbourhoods where people want to live and work.

Unless we stop it, THE BIG SPRAWL will destroy green space, worsen urban flooding, waste millions in extra infrastructure costs, prevent us from meeting our climate change targets, and squander the millions of new homes and workplaces that are our last best chance to repair the post-war suburbs Ontario is saddled with already.

See below to find out more about THE BIG SPRAWL and how you can help fight it.

Use this interactive sliding map to see all the farmland and natural areas (in green) that will be lost and paved over if the Big Sprawl goes ahead.



WHAT IS THE BIG SPRAWL?

Large swathes of Ontario's best farmland, most vital natural heritage, and most beautiful rural landscapes, are at risk of being swallowed up by car-dependent sprawl. Between now and July 1, 2022, the provincial government will be forcing Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities to engage in processes that the province has rigged to rapidly expand the territory available to developers, and lock in 30 more years of outdated and environmentally damaging residential and commercial sprawl.

For more information: <https://environmentaldefence.ca/the-big-sprawl/>

2021-09-22

Change.org

Ontario's controversial double-crested cormorant hunt has returned for a second year, and over 10,000 people are calling for its end. Introduced last year by the Ontario government, the double-crested cormorant hunt allows hunters to kill up to 15 birds a day from mid-September to the end of December. Opponents of the hunt say it is wasteful, as the birds cannot be eaten. If you agree the hunt should end, sign the petition now.



Stop the Fall Hunt of Double-Crested Cormorants in Ontario



10,767 have signed Cole Swanson's petition. Let's get to 15,000!

To **Minister John Yakabuski**, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry

Cc: **Premiere Doug Ford** (doug.fordco@pc.ola.org), **Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada** (Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca), **Ontario's Regional Director General's Office** (ec.grandslacs-greatlakes.ec@canada.ca)

August 6, 2020

Dear Minister Yakabuski;

On July 31, 2020, the Government of Ontario announced a 90-day fall hunt of double-crested cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) where a hunter can take 15 birds per day. **As concerned residents of Ontario, we oppose this hunt on the grounds that no scientific evidence was provided for its justification.**

The claims made in both the original proposal (November, 2018) and the announcement of the hunt (July, 2020) are that double-crested cormorants decimate commercial fish stocks, compromise trees and vegetation to a significant degree, pollute water systems, and impact other colonial bird nesting sites. To date, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has provided no scientific research validating the accusations that double-crested cormorants have impacted the aforementioned environmental systems to a significant degree, or that the population control measures involved in this hunt will improve the health of the ecosystem.

The MNRF has not provided any scientific data required to qualify the bag limits as sustainable to the overall cormorant population. There are an estimated 197,000 registered small game hunters and only 143,000 individual cormorants in Ontario; if 0.5% of hunters reached the daily limit for ten days, the Minister's hunt would allow the numbers killed to exceed the estimated breeding population in Ontario.

The results of this hunt could be disastrous for both the populations of cormorants in the province, but also for birds of similar appearance, like the common loon (*Gavia immer*), the red-throated loon (*G. stellata*), the pacific loon (*G. pacifica*), and rare cormorant species sighted in Ontario, including the great

cormorant (*P. carbo*) and the neotropic cormorant (*P. brasilianus*). Furthermore, the Minister has presented no information as to what steps his enforcement officers will take to ensure that daily bag limits not exceeded and ensure the proper disposal of carcasses. To date, the Minister has not indicated how his staff will measure health of the species, as the federal government does for other migratory birds. Finally, the Minister has not indicated if his Ministry will report on the impacts of the hunt overall.

Minister Yakabuski, we call on you and your government to provide a science-based, detailed and peer-reviewed report that analyses the announced fall cormorant hunt.

At a minimum, the report must address the following:

- Why are cormorants designated as “game” birds when they are not as demonstrated by the amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act which allows hunters to waste the birds?
- Cormorant population (numbers of breeding birds and colonies) and harvest goals, including analyses on hunt levels of 15 birds per day, the incorporation of other ongoing management activities (e.g., cull on Middle Island Point Peele National Park) and an estimate of how the population will respond to the harvest to ensure a sustainable population.
- Will the number of cormorants killed be collected and if so, how and when?
- How will the incidental take of other species, like the common loon, be assessed?
- How will the MNRF coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in managing the interior and migratory population of cormorants?
- Why did your Ministry choose a provincial wide hunt instead of targeted localized management approaches, specifically with respect to fish populations believed to be impacted by cormorants and impacts to habitat?

Cormorants are a species native to Ontario. A significant amount of financial resources was invested in creating a healthier environment which allowed them to recover; their abundance is a conservation

success story. We demand that the MNRF uphold their commitment to environmental sustainability by engaging with scientific research in the planning and implementation of a double-crested cormorant hunt. **Until the scientific rigour demanded herein is demonstrated, plans for a hunt must cease.**

Scientific data and support for this petition has been provided by Dr. Gail Fraser (Ecologist & Double-crested Cormorant Specialist, York University) and the Animal Alliance of Canada.



OCT
05

Introduction To The Georgina Island Fixed Link Project

Actions and Detail Panel

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/introduction-to-the-georgina-island-fixed-link-project-registration-166658332559?keep_tld=1

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Event Information

About this event and the Project development

What Is the Georgina Island Fixed Link Project?

The Georgina Island Fixed Link Secretariat is hosting a virtual information session for Lake Simcoe Living subscribers. This session will provide a project overview for those interested in learning more.

- Date: Tuesday, October 5th, 2021
- Time: 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing required Zoom login information to join the meeting.

To learn more about the Georgina Island Fixed Link Project visit: www.gifixedlink.com

This issue was highlighted and recommended by member Bette Banks, a local issue for us in Lake Simcoe territory . . .

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A number of municipalities have now endorsed the Holland Marsh pollution reduction project and we need to keep the momentum building.

No images? [Click here](#)



Sept. 17 2021

Support growing for Holland Marsh pollution reduction project

The Towns of Bradford West Gwillimbury and Georgina have [unanimously passed motions](#) calling on the federal and provincial governments and the Region of York to work together to build the Holland Marsh phosphorous pollution reduction facility.

Councillor Cria Pettingill will bring a similar motion before Brock Council on September 27th.

Councillor Lorelea Carruthers is also working on a motion with the East Gwillimbury Environmental Advisory Committee. The Committee is meeting on October 5th and their recommendation will go to East Gwillimbury Council later in October.

The Holland Marsh pollution reduction project is the single largest action we can take to reduce Lake Simcoe's phosphorous pollution.

Last year, the Government of Canada [pledged to invest \\$16 million in this \\$40 million project](#).

Unfortunately, the Chair of York Region, Wayne Emmerson, [is unwilling to support this project](#) unless the province gives Aurora, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury permission to dump their sewage into Lake Simcoe.

In addition, the Government of Ontario has so far failed to provide financial support for this project, which is needed to clean-up Lake Simcoe.

