



Events Bulletin and Conservation Outings/Meeting Information and Reports

SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS

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

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

As we enter the end of summer which has definitely been dry and, very warm and humid reaching record temperatures and drought conditions, unlike most past years. These conditions were shared with much of the rest of North America and indeed other parts of the world according to Environment Canada and other diverse climatological organizations. The shadow of climate change and impacts on our planet are many most obviously wildfires across Canada, the rest of the Americas and other continents.

Members, I hope everyone had a great summer, with family and friends in spite of the weather challenges. It is the start of our exciting fall season as birds and other wildlife prepare for winter, days become shorter, and temperature slowly drop. Planned Outings, and Meetings are as below. Be sure to add them to your calendar.

Tuesday September 16, Naturalists' Walk with focus on early bird migrants and fungi. Bender and Graves Tract, York Region Forest, 2-4 p.m.

Thursday October 9, Naturalists' Walk with focus on birds and reading the landscape at the South/East Keswick stream and wetland restoration site at suburban sprawl development from 2-4 p.m.

Sunday October 19, Meeting and Illustrated Presentation, “Birding in Ecuador”, by Richard & Susan Weatherston, Y.R.P. Station Meeting Room, Georgina, 4 – 5:30 p.m.

See below more details in the newsletter of the current autumn SLSN naturalist activities above.

The club executive has been busy working on annual administrative duties including annual financial, tax etc. duties to be shared at our October 19 meeting.

With regard to conservation, the Ontario Government Bill 5 pushed through readings at Queen’s Park facing much deserved opposition and concern. As per our June newsletter, our quick action on supporting petitions/letters particularly Ontario Nature’s formal notice was supported by SLSN. Actions taken by individual members, and friends/family, from quality review and comment with analysis of the future implications of this bill for nature and conservation in our province. Even though the legislation passed, we continue to stand up for nature.

The field work for the 5-year **Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas 2021-2025 project** has come to completion! I was designated principal birder for two official survey squares in our area in northern York Region (Vachel – Sutton, and Duclous Pt. McRae Pt. Georgina Is.). All SLSN club outings in this period in the survey areas bird observations contributed to the Atlas data. My own field data with Debra and other independent bird data contributed by members were included, as well as other Ontario birders visiting our area. This is a major naturalist science-based program considered a generational science contribution. I thank all members whether on SLSN outings or independently for their participation and hundreds of volunteer hours. Bruce Brydon, key contact and regional coordinator for survey squares in York Region, advises that,

“We have found 177 species in the region compared to 173 in Atlas 2. The species count includes things like Brewster’s Warbler and Yellow-billed/Black-billed Cuckoo and others, but things like that were counted in Atlas 2 also. Point counts in all the squares were completed and peak season hour targets were met. Well done everyone!”

Regrettably, the Federal Liberal government following their recent election win quickly proposed and approved the very damaging Bill C-5 in lock step with the Ontario Ford government's bill leaving us and our natural wildlife and places in considerable risk in the short and long term.

Other regional issues including Water soldier invasive species in Lake Simcoe at Keswick, a huge solar farm proposed in Carden Alvar near Kirkfield, in the Lake Simcoe watershed area, and farther afield, the Georgian Bay Wasaga Beach Provincial Park shrinking and Piping plovers at risk issue I have provided basic details and information sources. SLSN monitoring and researching these major issues and others for analysis in later documents and meetings.

Paul Harpley SLSN

Outings Notice: All planned regular outings/meetings. SLSN members in good standing include liability insurance coverage with recreational volunteer participation.

Tuesday September 16, Naturalists' Walk

Focusing on early bird migrants and fungi we'll stay on the trails at the Bender and Graves Tract, 17689 Kennedy Road, York Region Forest. Meet at the parking lot, southwest corner, CoffeeTime, Baldwin plaza on Hwy 48 south of Baldwin at 2 p.m.. Dress for the weather & bring binoculars. Plan for a minimum of 2 hours.

Thursday October 9, Naturalists' Walk

With focus on birds and reading the landscape at the South/East Keswick stream and wetland restoration site at suburban sprawl development. Meet at the Keswick Walmart parking lot near the bus stop at the south, 2 p.m.. Dress for the weather & bring binoculars. Plan for a minimum of 2 hours.

Meetings Notice: In-person

All Meetings start at 4:00 p.m. in the community meeting room at the York Region Police Building (Baseline Road between McCowan and Civic Centre Road) unless noted otherwise.

York Regional Police, 3 District Community Meeting Room
3527 Baseline Road, Georgina from 4:00-5:30 p.m.



Sunday October 19, Meeting and Illustrated Presentation,
“Birding in Ecuador”, by Richard & Susan Weatherston,
Y.R.P. Station Meeting Room, Georgina, 4 – 5:30 p.m.



Tandayayapa birding



Hummingbirds at feeder



Regionally Significant Conservation Concerns

Water soldier invasive species in Lake Simcoe at Keswick

A very serious Invasive aquatic species Water Soldier has been found for first time in Lake Simcoe
'If left unchecked, water soldier has the potential ... (to cause) significant harm to biodiversity and affecting property values, recreation, tourism and navigation,' warns MPP

Village Media Aug 18



Prior to being regulated as a prohibited invasive species, water soldier was used as an ornamental plant in water gardens, which is the most likely source of its introduction to the wild. The Water Soldier Working Group has confirmed the presence of an aquatic invasive plant called water soldier in Lake Simcoe waters for the first time.

Water soldier is a perennial aquatic plant, prohibited under the provincial Invasive Species Act, that has long, thin, serrated leaves that grow in a circular pattern. They form dense mats that crowd out other vegetation and may alter water chemistry, impacting native aquatic species, according to the organization's news release.

Water soldier can be submerged up to five metres under water but floats to the surface in the summer, posing a threat to summer recreational activities such as fishing, boating and swimming. Boat motors can break up plants, allowing them to spread and invade new areas.

"Ontario recognizes the importance of the prevention, early detection and management of invasive species that pose a threat to Ontario's native species and ecosystems. If left

unchecked, water soldier has the potential to invade lakes and rivers throughout Ontario and the Great Lakes basin ecosystem, causing significant harm to biodiversity and affecting property values, recreation, tourism and navigation in aquatic systems,” said Graydon Smith, minister of Natural Resources.

The Water Soldier Working Group members include provincial ministries, Indigenous organizations, municipalities, conservation authorities, universities, federal agencies, and other environmental organizations.

Read More: [Invasive water soldier found for first time in Lake Simcoe - Newmarket News](#)

What you can do:

You can help prevent the further spread of water soldier by:

- Learn how to recognize water soldier by visiting the [Invasive Species Centre Water Soldier Species Profile](#) and the [Invading Species Awareness Programs water soldier webpage](#).
- Report sightings of water soldier through the [EDDMapS](#) or [iNaturalist](#) websites and mobile device applications, or by calling 1-800-563-7711. A good report includes an accurate location of the sighting and photos.
- Clean, drain, and dry your boat when you leave Lake Simcoe and other waterbodies so that you aren’t moving water soldier or other invasive species on your boat. It’s the law in Ontario.
- Never buy or keep water soldier in your water garden. Water soldier is a prohibited species in Ontario under the Invasive Species Act. This means it is illegal to import, possess, deposit, release, transport, breed/grow, buy, sell, lease or trade water soldier.
- Dispose of water soldier in the garbage or on dry land in a manner that ensures that no part of the plant will re-enter the body of water or enter any other body of water.

Additional resources:

- [Water Soldier Factsheet, Ministry of Natural Resources](#)
- [Prevention and Response Plan for Water Soldier](#)
- [Water Soldier Webinar, 2023](#)
- [Ontario Invasive Species Act](#)
- [Best Management Practices for Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species: Guidance for watercraft users](#)

Lake Simcoe Watch letter: Further Info – take action

www.LakeSimcoeWatch.ca

Solar farm proposed in Carden Alvar in the Lake Simcoe watershed area

A huge solar farm is being proposed in Carden Alvar near Kirkfield, in the Lake Simcoe watershed area. INNERGEX Corporation a large multinational company founded in 1990 and headquartered in Canada has been present in Ontario operating hydroelectric and solar facilities for more than 20 years. Operations include Quebec, British Columbia, the United States, Chile and France.

The proposed project, should it be awarded by contract by the IESO, the 150-300 MW solar energy project would be sited on private land, located across two areas north of the Kirkfield lift lock facility in the City of Kawartha Lakes. This area is part of the International Bird Area Carden Alvar, a sensitive unique and globally rare ecotone site area, with avian species at risk, including the Nationally rare Loggerhead shrike!

I was asked that I be present at a project public information session at the Carden Recreation Centre the evening of August 19, 2025, by Ontario Nature as president of SLSN. I am very familiar with the alvar habitat as a seasonal property owner in the immediate area and having done field work for years in the Adopt-a-Site Loggerhead shrike and grassland bird field documentation work for Wildlife Preservation Canada (WPC).

Previously (some 40+ years ago) I was involved at the Toronto Zoo along with curatorial and keeping staff, with the original Loggerhead Species Survival Plan (SSP) for these birds as a senior staff project manager designing and undertaking original construction of Loggerhead shrike breeding facilities at the Toronto Zoo. This was the original work of the Zoo partnering with the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the Jersey Trust, UK (G.Durrell) in starting the original Endangered Species research and restoration ecology planning and logistics for the Loggerhead shrike in Eastern Canada.

The recent Carden Recreation Centre meeting was well attended, and many spoke about the potential negative impacts of the project on the sensitive alvar habitat and the potential consequences on birds and other animal and plant species. One important observation I made at the meeting was the lack of politicians in attendance, municipal regional, provincial or federal. I asked whether there were any level of politicians at any government level in attendance, and there were none.

From my past involvement in other large environmental issues like the original 40 year conservation battle to save the Rouge R. valley system (SRVS) from the mid-1970's in eastern Toronto and York/Durham Regions culminating in the establishment of the federal Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP), and the Lake Simcoe Act establishment with many others in the 1980's to 2000's. I strongly made the point that the local naturalists and other public volunteer conservation advocates and recreationalists make these broad political

representative contacts and engage them quickly in this issue! Please consider signing the Petition below by as soon as possible.

Paul Harpley

On-Line Petition, Protect Carden Alvar: <https://jumpinkawarthalakes.ca/online-petitions>

Petition prepared by Johanna Powell, Kirkfield ON

Wasaga Beach Provincial Park shrinking, and Piping plovers at risk

Up on Georgian Bay at the Wasaga Beach Provincial Park local municipality with the Province is proposing to shrink the beach, and Piping plovers at risk.

This is a new threat to the endangered Piping Plovers and to Ontario Provincial Parks. It would seem the Provincial government is proposing to change the rules protecting our Parks, to hand over our parkland to developers!

Information from Birds Canada outlines the issue and gives the link to a past official Comment to the Ontario Government: <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/025-0694>

Some petitions have been launched but are past comment periods, that give members more information and context to the planning and resource management potential changes that threaten this Park (or as some suggest all of our Provincial Parks moving forward), here are some links:

Green Party: https://gpo.ca/action_campaign/protect-piping-plover/

Chris Glover: <https://www.chrisglover.ca/saveourprovincialparks>

Kristyn Wong Tam: <https://www.thepetitionsite.com/549/969/931/tell-doug-ford-not-to-sell-part-of-wasaga-beach/>

<https://www.change.org/p/stop-ontario-giving-public-parkland-to-town-of-wasaga-beach-for-privatization>

<https://www.change.org/p/save-protected-beaches-and-provincial-parks-at-wasaga-beach>

Ontario Nature

There are recent advocacy campaigns urging the Federal Minister of Environment to take action to protect Wasaga Beach Provincial Park's critical piping plover habitat from development after the park lands were transferred from provincial to municipal control. Organizations like [Ontario Nature](#) and [Birds Canada](#) are calling for federal oversight, including a [Species at Risk Act](#) (SARA) compliance review and the possibility of a critical-habitat protection order under SARA.

Ontario Nature prepared and sent a letter to the Federal Environment Minister regarding the impact of the Wasaga Beach Provincial Park proposed changes, which I signed on behalf of South Lake Simcoe Naturalists. [Read More:](#)

August 6, 2025
Honourable Julie Dabrusin
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
ministre-minister@ec.gc.ca
Re: Critical Habitat Order for Piping Plover – Ontario

Dear Minister Dabrusin,

The Piping Plover is a migratory bird covered under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* and is listed as an endangered subspecies under the *Species at Risk Act*. In 2013, the Action Plan for the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus circumcinctus*) in Ontario was released. Yet, no critical habitat order was ever issued.

We are requesting that as per s. 58(5) of the *Species at Risk Act*, you recommend to Cabinet that a critical habitat order for the habitats identified in the 2013 Action Plan¹ be issued to protect this species from further threats.

¹ Environment Canada, 2013. Action Plan for the Piping Plover - [Piping Plover \(Charadrius melodus circumcinctus\)](#)

Critical habitat has been identified at four sites in Ontario: one site at Windy Point (Lake of the Woods), one site at Wasaga Beach Provincial Park (Georgian Bay), one site at Sauble (Saugeen) Beach and one site at Oliphant Beach (Lake Huron). Since 2013, additional nesting sites have been identified and it is imperative that Environment and Climate Change Canada comply with the provisions of the *Species at Risk Act* and *Migratory Birds Convention Act* to help this species recover.

The habitat order should include the dunes and wrack lines, not just the nests, to ensure the recovery of this species. The 2013 Action Plan specifies that critical habitat boundaries are defined by the extent of the Open Beach / Bar and / or Open Dune ELC community series by the water's edge and by the approximate area used by Piping Plovers during their breeding cycle.

A critical habitat order is necessary due to recent decisions by the Government of Ontario that remove protections under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* and risks to the critical habitat of Piping Plover at Wasaga Beach Provincial Park.

The 2013 provincial recovery strategy² recommended a habitat regulation that includes:

²[Piping Plover Recovery Strategy | ontario.ca](#)

1. All sites occupied by nesting Piping Plovers within the last 10 years and 10 years following occupation, and
2. A one-kilometre length of continuous beach habitat (generally centred around the nest site) to provide the requisites for life processes. The width of the continuous beach habitat would extend from the water's edge to the upper or inland edge of open beach or open dune plant communities or the beginning of anthropogenic features.

Yet, no habitat regulation was issued. With the passage of Bill 5 by the Government of Ontario in June, 2025, the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* is being repealed and replaced with the *Species Conservation Act* that limits the definition of habitat to just nesting sites, while doing away with recovery strategies. Once in effect, the *Species Conservation Act* and its regulations will not apply to species of migratory birds protected under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* and *Species at Risk Act*. This significant change in Ontario is counter to the Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk, signed in 1996, where the federal, provincial and territorial governments agreed to establish complementary legislation and programs for effective protection of species at risk.

As such, the recovery of Piping Plover in Ontario and the protection of its critical habitat is the responsibility of the federal government.

The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks is also proposing to transfer large portions of Wasaga Beach Provincial Park to the Town of Wasaga Beach removing these lands from management under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*. This further imperils one of the critical habitat locations in Ontario that has hosted 57 nests since 2008.

We also note that Environment and Climate Change Canada are still in the process of complying with a 2024 court decision, *Western Canada Wilderness Committee v. Canada*, which determined that habitat to which the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* applies and the associated protection statement under s.58(5.1) and (5.2) of the *Species at Risk Act* must mean more than nests³. The delay in implementing the court decision and recommending protection orders for the impacted species, including this.

³ 2024 FC 167 (CanLII) | *Western Canada Wilderness Committee v. Canada* (Environment and Climate Change) | CanLII

3 population of Piping Plovers, is leading directly to additional harms to listed migratory birds.

Sincerely, Andrés Jimenez Monge <i>Executive Director</i> Ontario Nature	Ted Cheskey <i>President</i> Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory	Tim Gray <i>Executive Director</i> Environmental Defence
Rob Potter <i>President</i> Friends of Nancy Island and Wasaga Beach Park	Miriam Robitaille <i>Stewardship Manager</i> Friends of Wye Marsh	Richard Heron <i>President</i> Huntsville Nature Club
Darren MacTavish <i>President</i> Nature Barrie	Margaret Prophet <i>Executive Director</i> Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition	Paul Harpley <i>President</i> South Lake Simcoe Naturalists

For the reasons listed above, it is imperative that as the Minister responsible for the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* and the *Species at Risk Act* a critical habitat order be issued for the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus circumcinctus*).

There is here an [Environmental Registry of Ontario](#) posting detailed summary of legislation proposing to transfer portions of Wasaga Beach Provincial Park to the Town of Wasaga Beach. Letters to M.P.P.'s or federal M.P.'s with regard to the endangered species act and protections should be sent by those especially having connections with the local Georgian Bay Wasaga Beach area.



Piping Plovers, The species is considered endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. (Randy G. Lubischer/Shutterstock)

Bill Shore death in April 2025

We were saddened by the news of SLSN member Bill Shore's death. Bill had been a member for a number of years but he rarely came to meetings. He followed our interests, outings and research by reading this SLSN newsletter while he was still using e-mail.

He was a supporter of our organization and environmental work in Georgina. He had given a couple of presentations to the club in the early 2000's on alternative energies, particular solar energy, and recycling and ways to save energy like hanging clothes out to dry. After retiring from teaching high school we knew Bill was expanding his alternative energy projects at his farm west of Baldwin by constructing more solar panels and a windmill. In recent years, I was engaged with Bill on issues in which SLSN were involved ie. subdivision sprawl in the Sutton area. He and I and other members met regularly on conservation efforts, in particular the Ainslie Hill developments. He joined with us in making presentations at Georgina council and a few others, as being a retired high school science teacher with a particular interest in Geology. He was able to bring issues of this development together with our broader SLSN submissions to inform and improve the final result of these developments. On a more personal note, in recent conversations about ecology, tree conservation, and habitat regeneration, I was able to learn a lot more about Bill's past particularly his early work when he came to Canada, and his work in northern Ontario and other parts of Canada (areas I was familiar with) and we remarked on how 'simple' working in the field was in those days. Rest in Peace, Bill.

Paul Harpley, SLSN