

»»» NEWSLETTER «««

BRANT FOR NATURE

The beauty of nature



UPCOMING EVENTS

TURTLE CONSERVATION WORKSHOP

Guest Speaker Don Scallen

Saturday, May 11, 10am-2pm
 54 Henderson Rd, Brantford, ON
 (Brant Rod and Gun Club)



Join us for a workshop led by Don Scallen! Don has kayaked throughout southern Ontario, learning about the habits, distribution, and behaviour of turtles. He contributed hundreds of records to the Turtle Tally program at the Toronto Zoo. In 2008/09 he played a key role at the Toronto Zoo discussing how to help avert road mortality of turtles. Don Scallen is a lifelong naturalist, turtle lover and writer. He is a regular speaker on all manner of nature related topics. After the presentation we will go outside to build turtle nesting boxes.

Join us for a Herbiology Workshop guided by Laurel Winger. Laurel will be teaching us how to forage and make different items, such as herbal tea, using natural ingredients.



HERBOLOGY WORKSHOP

Sunday, May 26, 9am
 Lions Park, Paris

GEOTRAIL HIKE

Sunday, June 23, 1pm
 Chrome Radial Trail



Explore the Bruce Trail Chedoke Radial hike we will be learning about it along the way! Geotrails provide a guided hike using your phone. As you walk along the trail, you can read or listen to the trails, nature and history. The Chedoke Radial Geohike will include dolostones, waterfalls and sedimentary structures. Learn more by visiting their website or scanning the QR code to the right.

<https://geoscienceinfo.com/geohikes-welcome/>



Recent Events

➤➤ OWL PROWL



TREE PLANTING <<<



➤➤ WILDFLOWER WALK



WILDFLOWER WALK SUMMARY by Jeff Leader

We had a good showing for the Glen Morris Wildflower walk. The walk began by observing a newly arrived Baltimore Oriole in it's favourite Manitoba Maple tree. A few herbs were spotted including a small American Toad. As well, we observed two Eastern Garter Snakes, a Green Frog, and some Leopard Frogs on our walk. We were serenaded by the relentless calls of the Red-Winged Black Birds, Cardinals, and Song Sparrows. Starlings were busy bringing nest materials to the bridge. We also had a Red Admiral and an Azure (Holarctic or Northern) accompany us. A Carolina Wren was observed hopping around in the understory. We heard the calls of a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Red-Bellied Woodpecker. Canadian Geese were honking in the distance and we paused our walk listening to a chorus of American Toads which were calling for mates in an old mill race of long past. The following is a list of the plants, trees, and shrubs we observed on the walk (apologies if I missed something):

Native plants: White Trillium, Red Trillium (Wake Robin), Yellow Trout Lilly (Dog-toothed Violet), Eastern Skunk Cabbage, White Fawnlily (White Troutlily, Bloodroot, Christmas Fern, Mayapple, Wild Germanium, Wild Angelica, Wild Ginger, Tall Thimbleweed, Meadow Anemone, Woodland Anemone, Meadow Buttercup, Hooked Buttercup, Great Stinging Nettle (native to western Canada), Early Meadow-Rue, Purple Violet, Broad-leaved Dock, Blue Cohosh, Blackcap Raspberry, Field Horsetail, Canada Mayflower, and False Solomon's Seal.

Native trees & shrubs: Kentucky Coffee Tree, Tulip Tree, Red Osier Dogwood, Pagoda Dogwood, Common Ninebark, Chokecherry, Black Walnut, Eastern Hemlock, Eastern White Cedar, Eastern White Pine, Ironwood, Shagbark Hickory, Sugar Maple, White Ash (mostly dead with Turkey Tail fungus), American Black Currant, Manitoba Maple (debatable whether it's native to southern Ontario), Yellow Birch, and Hackberry.

Non-natives plant species: Garlic Mustard, Siberian Squill, Catchweed Bedstraw, Greater Celandine, Periwinkle, Coltsfoot, English Ivy, Japanese Barberry, and Siberian Alder.



*Canadian Wild Ginger
(Asarum canadense)*

We also discovered Scaly Pelt Lichen. However, Round-lobed Hepatica, Northern Spicebush, and Eastern Leatherwood were all past prime and we were unable to locate them along the rail trail. For those who stuck around for a short bonus hike, we gazed upon a carpet of Dutchman's Breaches and caught a short glimpse of a Snapping Turtle. Overall, we covered many species over a short distance. I am thankful for the biodiversity we have in the northern reaches of the Carolinian Ecozone. Thank you to everyone who took part in the walk.



*White Trillium
(Trillium grandiflorum)*



*Dutchman's Breeches
(Dicentra cucullaria)*

Spring Birds and Migration

By Duane Brown

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For some people, Robins are the first indicators of spring. It marks the first hope that warmer weather is on its way. Small groups of Robins will often spend the winter in our area. Normally they feed on worms, snails and insects however, during the winter months will eat fruits such as wild grapes, buckthorn berries, and sumac seeds.



Male Red-Winged Black Bird



Female Red-Winged Black Bird

While Robins might not be the first spring arrivals from the south, Red-Winged Black Birds certainly are. I anticipate the arrival of the first Red-Winged Black Birds during the first week of March. This year they were in our yard the middle of February. The male Blackbirds arrive first to search out nesting areas in marshes, rivers banks and other wetlands. The female Red-Winged Blackbirds will arrive a month or more later. Male Red-Winged Black Birds are black with red and yellow shoulder epaulets. The females are streaky brown, with a bit of a light or yellowish throat, a light eye stripe and might have hint of a red shoulder patch. Just to confuse you there are unmated males in the mix. These look like the adult males but will have some light coloured streakiness to their backs.

Slightly before the Red-Winged Black Birds arrive, Tundra Swans can be heard flying overhead. After spending the winter feeding on clams in Chesapeake Bay the swans will make their way to the far arctic to breed. They often will stop over in marsh and agricultural fields around the long point area. Flocks of several thousands along with sand hill cranes will congregate to feed on plants and spilt grains before their long journey. In our area, they may be found in local farm fields feeding. If the weather is favourable, the swans will migrate with out very many stops.

The loud HER-CUE-LEES! Calls of the male Red-Winged Black birds can be heard more and more as spring approaches. My favourite sound of spring comes around the beginning of February coinciding with maple syrup season. Chickadees change their call from the Chick-a-dee-dee call we are familiar with to the spring, high-pitched KEEVA call. Owls will begin their territorial hooting calls in December and January laying eggs in February. Resident Bald Eagles begin to collect sticks and add them to their nests starting in November and December. The eagles will continue to court by spending more time perched together near the nest and renovating the nest finally laying eggs the first week of February.

Once the weather starts to change there is a cascade of birds that begin to arrive shortly after the black birds including Killdeer, Eastern Phoebe, Song Sparrows, Great Blue Herons, Wood Ducks, Golden Eyes, Ring Neck Ducks and so on.



Great Blue Heron

During the winter months Juncos, Tree Sparrows and White Throated Sparrows come to our area from Northern Ontario. In April, the Juncos and White-Throated Sparrows will leave and go to their breeding grounds just north of us. The Tree Sparrows return to their nesting grounds in the arctic. The White Throated Sparrow has a beautiful high-pitched call OH-Cana-da-da da. Each individual White-Throated Sparrow has a slightly different call pattern and pitch.

Birds of Prey begin their spring migration around the end of March. Broad winged hawks spend the winter in Central America and will move through our area in April travelling 6,000 km to their Northern Ontario breeding areas. If the weather is favourable, they will form large flocks and migrate, sometimes up to 20,000 birds together. These circling flocks of hawks are called kettles. They use the rising heat off the earth called thermals to glide long distances. The great lakes do not heat enough to have thermals so the hawks do not like to cross the cold open waters of the great lakes. Instead during spring migration they will follow the southern shore of Lake Erie and cross into Ontario at Hamilton or Niagara escarpment. In the fall, they do the opposite traveling along the Northern shore of Lakes Erie and Ontario.

Turkey Vultures trickle in to Ontario as the weather warms. Turkey vultures feed on unfrozen carrion. and do not catch their own food. Usually we expect to see them in March-this year I saw some in February. Lately because of warm winters a small number of the vultures have been over wintering.

Back yard bird watchers are excited by the first sightings of the Baltimore Oriole. This bright orange and black bird is a favourite at bird feeders. The orioles will feed on grape jelly, oranges cut in half and hummingbird feeders Their arrival corresponds to the emerging of flowers and leaves on shrubs and trees. The Orioles will feed on nectar and flowers but also feed on a wide range of insects such as gypsy moths, forest tent caterpillars, grasshoppers.



Baltimore Oriole



Black Throated Blue Warbler



Yellow Warbler

Warblers are the prize that birders seek in the spring. Warblers are about the size of a Chickadee or smaller. Their plumage depending on species includes blue, yellow, bright red, orange, greens. Some of the warblers are named for their plumage ie; Black Throated Blue Warbler. You would think with such brilliant colours they would be easy to find, they are not. They spend most of their time up in the leaves of the trees searching for insects feeding before their voyage to the breeding grounds in the Boreal Forest. Most birders learn the Warbler calls and identify them that way. In the winter the warblers live in tropical places such as Cuba, Bahamas, Dominican Republic; in the spring time they will migrate at night navigating using the stars. Unlike the migrating hawks, Warblers will cross the great lakes and they do it at night. In order to make the lake crossing shorter the birds seek out land masses that stick out into lake Erie Point Pele and Long Point. These areas are great for warblers to land, to rest, to feed and for avid birders to try to find them. May is the best time of year for spring Warbler migration. By June the birds have migrated to their breeding areas and in July the migration south will begin.

Hogweed: What you should know

Hogweed is hazardous and can cause severe burns. The sap of hogweed is poisonous and if combined with sunlight causes the burns to occur. It is less hazardous during September and November and is not hazardous when dry.

If you come in contact with the sap, wash the affected area within 20 minutes of contact with detergent and water. Then, cover the area from sunlight for 48 hours.



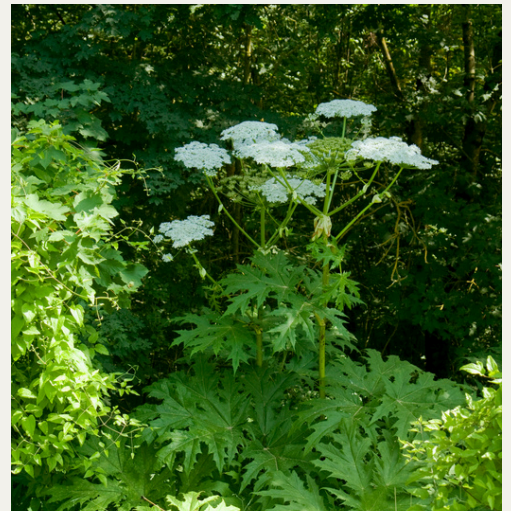
Burn to leg caused by giant hogweed sap - 5 days to 5 months after initial exposure.
Photo courtesy of Bob Kleinberg.
Used with permission from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.



Giant Hogweed leaves are sharp and uneven, they can be over a metre long. This picture is of Giant Hogweed that is not fully grown.



The flowers are umbrella shaped, white and about 10-20 cm wide, they are also flat-topped



Fully grown Giant Hogweed can be up to 5 metres high



The stems have red and purple spots

A special thank you to John Kemp for providing photos and information on Giant Hogweed. If you would like to learn more you can scan the QR Code to access John's Google Drive with loads of information on the subject such as where to report sightings and how it is spread. As well, you can connect with the Facebook Group on the Giant Hogweed Mitigation Project.



Google Drive



Facebook Group

Honourable Harvest

by Laurel Winger

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Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass* writes of Honourable Harvest, a set of best practices for using wild plants. Kimmerer is Potawatomi American Indian. Honourable Harvest is a cultural teaching and practice for her people as it is for many traditional, land-based peoples. For a wonderful, expanded reflection on Honourable Harvest, please refer to *Braiding Sweetgrass*. It offers much wisdom.

With the popularity of wild foraging and a large human population on Earth, ethical harvest of plants and fungi is even more important than ever. Honourable Harvest invites humans to be in reciprocal relationship with other living things. We are a part of Earth, we are animals too.



Scan here to view a short relevant video “The Honourable Harvest” by Robin Kimmerer

Here are the guiding principles of Honourable Harvest:

- Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken. Share.
- Introduce yourself. Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer.
- Take only what is given
- Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them.
- Never take the first. Never take the last. Take only what you need.
- Never take more than half. Leave some for others.
- Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.
- Give thanks for what you have been given.
- Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have been given.

References

1. *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Kimmerer
2. <https://thegaiaproject.ca/en/the-honourable-harvest-guiding-principles-to-restoring-our-relationship-to-the-natural-world/>

An Introduction to Turtle Stewardship in Brantford-Brant

by Jeff Leader

Turtles are omnivores, predators, scavengers, and most importantly they are a keystone species in wetlands, ponds, lakes, and rivers. Ecosystems depend on them for recycling nutrients and breaking down detritus. However, it is widely recognized that turtle populations have been declining at varying rates across Ontario, due to several factors including, road mortality, nest predation, and habitat loss/fragmentation. In fact, all eight turtle species in southern Ontario are listed as at risk federally and seven turtle species are listed as at risk in Ontario. Thankfully many grassroots groups have formed over the last decade to help mitigate the decreasing trend and increase awareness. In Brantford-Brant we have identified a stewardship gap.

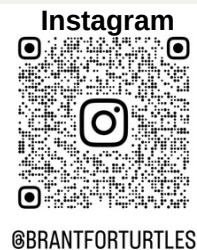
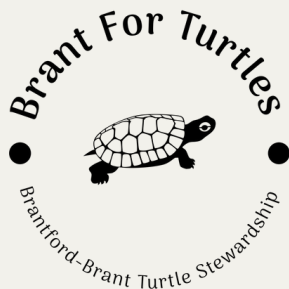
To fill the stewardship gap, our turtle stewardship incorporates five main areas of focus, such as:

1. Road Mortality
2. Nest Protection
3. Habitat Loss
4. Education
5. Data Collection and Monitoring

We are currently developing education and training materials and we will be looking for key members in the Community to connect with. It is anticipated that this stewardship work will be consistent with work that is being undertaken in adjacent communities and across the province.

We will be seeking volunteers for the following activities:

- Wetland Stewards
- Basking Surveying
- Road Watching
- Nest Sitting
- Nest Protection
- Nest Inspection/Maintenance
- Nest Protector Building
- Phragmites Surveying



@BRANTFORTURTLES



If you have any questions, would like more information, or would like to help, please visit our webpage at <https://brantfornature.ca/turtles> and fill out the contact form. If you require immediate assistance or encounter a nesting turtle, please contact our Turtle Helpline at 519-865-9873.

If you find an injured turtle, please contact Hobbitstee Wildlife Refuge at 519-587-2980 or the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (OTCC): 705-741-5000.

»»» COMMUNITY PARTNERS

At Brant For Nature, we're dedicated to preserving our planet through collaboration within our community. Our network has a diverse range of organizations working towards a common goal. Please explore our network of like-minded organizations below. Together, we're making a meaningful impact on our environment. We believe that everyone can make a difference, and by working together, we can achieve our shared vision of a healthier, more vibrant planet. Join us in celebrating these partnerships for a greener, more sustainable future.

Our Current Partnerships Include:

- Brant Waterways Foundation
- Brant Tree Coalition
- County of Brant
- Langford Conservancy
- Turtle Guardians
- Ontario Nature
- Canadian Chestnut Council
- Giant Hogweed Mitigation Project

