



turtle tracks

400 Misery Bay Road
Evansville ON, P0P1H0

FALL 2025

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Manitoulin Island

from *Musings from Manitoulin*, by Eunice Sifferd

Sand, water and rock;
Cedar, birch and pines;
Cinquefoil and sand;
Gentians and rock;
Tansy in the angles of a grey rail fence;
And where there is no soil to hold it upright,
A cedar post supported by a pile of rocks
To mark a boundary line;
Gulls and sandpipers and rocks
And deer and bear and mink;
A squirrel laden with a mushroom
To hide for a winter meal;
A deliberate woodcock on a swampy path
And partridge feasting on wild raspberries;
Sand, water and rock -
 Always the rock -
 Bearing the imprint of the ages.

Editor's note:

Though this poem was written more than 50 years ago, it continues to reflect the silent beauties of our wonderful island. Welcome back to Turtle Tracks, folks. It's been a while, but it's time to celebrate our land and life at Misery Bay again.





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Updates from the Chair of Friends of Misery Bay

Hello Everyone,

Our Turtle is making Tracks again.

A hiatus was needed, as is common with all of nature, and perhaps particularly so with us human beings.

Oh, our small group got the necessities done, we just didn't take time to write about it.

- Volunteers walked the trails periodically: cleared, trimmed & sawed, & called for tree specialists when extra equipment and expertise was required.
- Financial concerns were diligently taken care of with detailed monthly reports, and dealings with bank, auditors, and funders undertaken.
- Membership records were kept, correspondence sent, and ideas to encourage more members were pondered.
- Discussions were had with Ontario Parks personnel as we plan with them the maintenance & on-going care and development of Misery Bay. Although Misery Bay was officially opened as an operating provincial park in 2012, its location, which is partly what makes it so unique, necessitates local folk to keep the superintendents informed and aware. FOMB appreciate their expertise and financing, and they in turn appreciate our many hours of labour, both indoors and out. With the exception of 2 years it has always been FOMB volunteers and summer staff who man the Interpretive Centre for 3-5 months for our many visitors. Ontario Parks tend to respond to many of our suggestions and over the years we have developed a mutually positive (if sometimes frustratingly slow) relationship.



This year saw the installation of a dozen sign posts to enhance park enjoyment.

Current plans include a new deck top and some trail benches to again enhance a walk through the park. Even non-seniors become weary on our trails and need somewhere to sit and rest and quietly enjoy their surroundings.



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We officially recorded 5,789 visitors this season and that is only June 2 - August 31, 9 - 4:30. Many people tend to come in the late afternoon in the heat of the summer, and spring and fall have beautiful trekking days. Only a hardy few partake of winter's glory. It's probably safe to estimate 9 - 10,000 visitors over all

The vast majority were from various locations in Ontario but we also had folks from 7 other provinces and 14 other countries.

My, how the word spreads: one woman from the middle east enthusiastically showed her husband and son around the Centre and then eagerly led them out to the trails. She had been here years ago and had always talked about Misery Bay as a special treat they must experience. A young couple from Sweden drove directly from Pearson airport to Misery Bay. European cross-Canada campers somehow find their way to us.

Kudos to our 3 summer student staff, Maylen Moffat, Rory Phelan, & Cameron Wiseman. Their "meet & greet" and information sharing was exemplary.

They led 11 guided hikes, both planned and unplanned, 1 school group, and 1 day care group of 16 children and 4 adults.

They developed children's activities and created nature related worksheets and booklets.

They kept track of attendance, sales & donations, and reported to board members with required info.

They raised pertinent concerns and lent a helping hand to any directors who needed their particular skills.

Any organization that has existed for 30 years with no permanent staff, as FOMB has, is not only incredible but is also bound to have an incredible amount of housekeeping to be done. History, reports old & new, projects old & new, merchants old & new, contacts old & new - so much to sort through & organize. This too was accomplished by our incredible staff.

All the while maintaining a clean, welcoming, cheerful, informative Centre for thousands from near and far to enjoy .

Kudos our 3 turtle-iers!





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We're delighted to welcome 5 new directors to the FOMB Board.

Our Board of Directors for the 2025-26 year are:

Peg Balkind	President
Dale Scott	Vice-President
Jim Cahill	Treasurer
Kathryn Ritzie	Membership & Volunteer Coordinator
Jean Bentley	Co-Secretary
Dave Edwards	Co-Secretary
Dave Hill	Member
Beth McQuarrie	Member
Michael Hobson	Member
Brian Tanner	Member

We are reminded again this year, with the passing of Tom Moore, at 95, of the very large shoes we have to fill. The son-in-law of Eunice and Cal Sifferd, I don't think there's a job at Misery Bay, either in the field or on the board, that Tom hadn't done. With their usual zest and good humour he and his wife Ellie carried on her parents' remarkable work and contribution. Always available and up to their elbows, they could not possibly have been more reliable. One of her many roles, Ellie was volunteer chair for 7 years keeping the Visitor Centre open 10-5 every

weekend from Victoria Day to Thanksgiving while student employees were the park attendants Monday - Friday.

Daughter, Mindy Kerr, continues a caring interest in Misery Bay and particularly the development of the Sifferd cottage as a research centre.

We also remember George Whyte, who was very much a part of the creation of this Misery Bay Nature Reserve. George & Helen Whyte knew Cal & Eunice Sifferd well and together they endeavoured to have the south shore from the western tip of Misery Bay to the eastern tip of Murphy Point conserved for future generations. In 1977, the Nature Conservancy of Canada purchased the Sifferd's properties & Misery Bay Nature Reserve became a reality.

George never missed our AGM and we miss his words of support and thoughtful suggestions. We're pleased indeed, that his enthusiasm has brought us a continuing relationship with other residents of Murphy Point.

Quoting John Diebolt in the Winter 2012 Turtle Tracks, "spreading the message about how special a place it is - FOMB members and volunteers do it with a fervour & dedication that would make even the crusaders proud".

We too must enthusiastically spread the word for there are 2 more generations to introduce this special



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place to. In spite of all our visitors, we have very few who actually become members and volunteer with us. It's such a shame to close the Centre at the end of August - let's see if next year we can get those weekends covered.

A few locals & near locals visit often, some every month or even weekly in the good weather, some who live further away once a year. We all know how lucky we are.

For those distant visitors who can only come once, they leave with a life-long memory of nature at its finest.

Best,

Peg Balkind

A Friend of Misery Bay





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2025 Trail Maintenance

As reported by FOMB Vice-President Dale Scott

A winter snowshoe hike identified a few trees down and noted for later clean up. This spring the red trail to the pavilion / shelter was cleared with Manitoulin Tree Service (MTS) managing a few of the large downfalls. This summer the yellow interior trail was inspected and smaller windfalls were removed and MTS cleared a number of the large ones. This summer the red interior trail and Mac's Bay were examined . Some clearing took place at the start and some windfalls are required for removal by MTS. this fall. The trails are in good shape and regular monitoring will be ongoing.

Memories of Misery Bay

by Mindy Kerr

This is a photo of Alex Kerr, taken August 28, 2025. Alex is Cal and Eunice Sifferd's great grandson. The photo was taken by me-(granddaughter Mindy Kerr) and shows Alex on the west shore below Cal and Eunice's summer home. As a child, Alex spent many summers at the Misery Bay cottage.

I am the daughter of Tom and Ellie Moore who were both active members of FOMB for many years. Ellie was Cal and Eunice's oldest of three daughters.



Alex Kerr

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The remains of Fort Stymo



Mindy Kerr and Tim Styza

Here are the remains of Fort Stymo. My cousin, Tim Styza, (son of Anne Styza, the youngest of the Sifferd daughters and the only sister still surviving) and I built Fort Stymo on the shore of Misery Bay south of the Sifferd cottage one summer when we were both around 11 years old. We built it circa 1967 or 1968. We used a pallet we found washed up on shore for part of one wall, an uprooted tree with dirt clinging to the roots for another wall, a dense cedar for a third wall, and limestone rocks piled up for the fourth wall. The top of the pallet had a sign where we painted the name. The name was a blend of our last names-I was Mindy Moore (Moore was my maiden name) and my cousin was Tim Styza. We were very proud of our fort and I recall the two of us walking down shore with our parents Bryce and Anne Styza and Tom and Ellie Moore, as well as grandparents Cal and Eunice Sifferd to proudly show them our fort.

As adults, Tim and I walked the shore together around 2012 and had a photo taken of us inside Fort Stymo. The pallet was still upright then, and the attached sign could still barely be made out to read Fort Stymo.



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The Healing Power of Nature

by Phyllis Cacciotti, FOMB friend and president of Manitoulin Nature Club

Sometimes winter can be long on Manitoulin Island and, with the lack of sunny days, my spirit can sometimes lag. However, in January of 2023, I was fortunate to spot an unusual bird at my feeders. For many years, I have been an active “backyard birder” and faithfully feed our beautiful, feathered friends. During the second week of January, I became aware there was a solitary bird out there with a beautiful range of colours on its breast—it looked like a sunset.

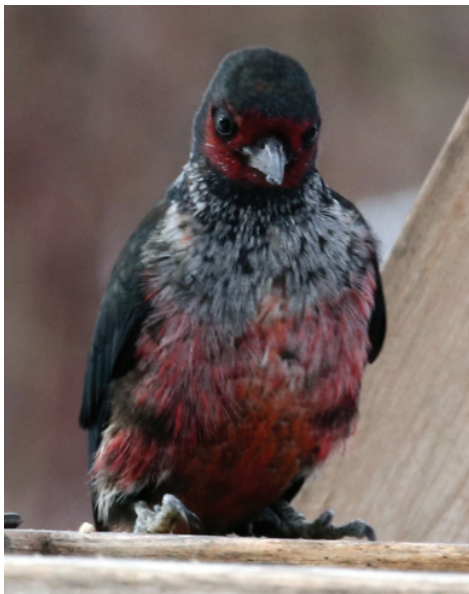


photo by T. Land

I kept paging through my “Sibley Birds East” guidebook but couldn’t pinpoint what this lovely bird could be. Then, a couple of days later, I saw it vertical on a tree and that narrowed it down to a species of Woodpecker. It had to be a

Lewis’s Woodpecker, *Melanerpes lewis*! But this wasn’t possible—its range is Southern British Columbia and on down through the Western United States. According to the guide, there are rare occurrences of this species in the south of the prairie provinces, but no note of Northern Ontario or Ontario at all. I did learn that the Lewis’s had been spotted only two or three times on other parts of the province.

I was beyond excited and by contacting a friend who was a photographer, we captured a photo and were able to confirm it was a Lewis’s Woodpecker. Now what to do? Do I share this amazing bird with fellow birders? I have to say, I was hesitant because I did not want to jeopardize this rare bird in any way in the middle of a northern winter. I knew it was eating corn out of a certain type of feed I put out so it was doing okay. However, I was unsure how it would weather our storms and if it would stay at all.

In the end, “Meriwether”, as one of my fellow birders dubbed him after Meriwether Lewis who, along with William Clark, discovered this species during their expedition from 1804 to 1806 in the Western US, stayed on Lake Kagawong with us until May 24, 2023.

How does this story tie in with healing? Meriwether healed me that winter by



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giving me purpose. We eventually had 299 people from across Ontario—most of them avid birders—come to see this extraordinary bird. Every day, I went outside to locate him and call to him. I made sure he had a fresh supply of food. I knew which trees he had chosen as his roost holes overnight. When he finally flew away, I was devastated but I also knew it was for the best as he certainly had no mate here. This bird continues to reside in my heart as a kind of “spirit bird” and I often have the occasion to talk about him. He also became well known on the island as there were two newspaper articles about him and this rare bird sighting was a first for Manitoulin.

The whole experience led me to get very involved with nature and all its many aspects on Manitoulin Island. I ended up becoming President of the Manitoulin Nature Club (I had been secretary prior to this) and have expanded my horizons in learning about the tremendous biodiversity which surrounds us here. Hikes and outings to various and beautiful locations and trails have become part of my life. I have made new friends through Meriwether and through my involvement with the club. I am enjoying myself while acquiring knowledge and I continue to feel a sense of purpose.

Here we are some two years later and the experience continues to bring

positive things into my life. The role of the Manitoulin Nature Club in conservation advocacy is evolving and the learning is ongoing. I have many lovely birds that continue to frequent our property including nesting Bluebirds and Tree Swallows in the spring. Sandhill Cranes came to eat corn in the yard along with Raccoons, White-tailed Deer, Canada Geese, and Mallard Ducks. We have a family of Barred Owls in our woods who make their signature call “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all?”. Our little slice of nature is good for the heart and soul and for one’s feeling of well-being and peace. How that little Woodpecker found us in the middle of a Northern Ontario winter here on the shores of Lake Kagawong will remain a mystery, but I am so grateful he did and that I got to know him up close and personal.



photo by L. Morton

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Shoreline Bouquet

by Marcel Bénéteau

Shorelines are vital places. Where the water meets the land is where the first life forms ventured out of their aquatic home to eventually cover the earth with plant and animal life. Shorelines have remained dynamic spaces, creating various and everchanging environments that support life forms that have adapted to sometimes harsh, sometimes nurturing conditions. Misery Bay's many kilometers of shoreline come in a variety of shapes and forms – smooth alvar pavements, sandy beaches and gentle dunes, rocky wave-battered outcrops, cobble beaches and marshy wetlands. Not surprisingly, these environments support a wide diversity of plant and animal life. In this issue, we will shine a light on some of the unique wildflowers that bloom in these spaces between the lake waters and higher ground.



Fig. 1 Beach Pea on sandy shore



Fig. 2 Close-up of flowers

Shoreline flowers are a varied bunch, and include species from many different genera and families. Some of them are restricted to one particular environment, while others thrive in a variety of habitats. Sandy beaches and dunes are the primary home of Beach Pea (*Lathyrus japonicus*), which blooms from late June till the end of August. As the name suggests, this

plant is part of the legume family and its showy pink to purple flowers are immediately recognizable as belonging to that group. The flower stalks grow out of long arching stems that can form large patches on the dunes (**Fig. 1 & 2**). This species is circumpolar, growing on the shores of fresh and salt-water bodies all across the northern hemisphere.

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Sandy beaches are also a good place to find Silverweed Cinquefoil (*Potentilla anserina*, aka *Argentina anserina*), although it can adapt to many other environments, ranging from marshy ground to gravelly roadsides. A member of the rose family, its bright yellow, five-petalled flowers resemble those of the many other Cinquefoil species that grow on Manitoulin. “Cinquefoil” is from the French *cinq feuilles* (five leaves) which describes the five-fingered compound leaf displayed by some of plants in this genus.



Fig. 3 Silverweed spreading along a beach



Fig. 4 Silverweed clump

Silverweed leaves, however, are actually composed of at least seven leaflets – sometimes as many as thirteen – giving them a somewhat fern-like appearance. Their flower stalks branch out the leaf nodes along the bright red runners that snake out along the beach. The plants can spread quickly, sometimes covering a large area. (fig. 3 & 4). The undersides of the leaves are covered in white silky hairs, which gives them their silvery appearance. The flowers bloom from late May to the end of August, although some persist well into October.

The next two plants are equally at home on sandy beaches and shoreline alvar pavements. Shrubby Cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticose*) does typically have five finger-like leaflets and, like Silverweed, also sports bright five-petaled flowers about 1½ to 2 cm across (**fig. 5**). It is, however, definitely a shrub with sturdy wooden stems, easily reaching more than half a meter in height. Various cultivars of this plant adorn parks and gardens the world over; it is, however a native plant throughout the northern hemisphere.

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Fig. 5 Shrubby cinquefoil

The next plant at first glance can be confused with Shrubby Cinquefoil, especially when the two grow together in the same environment. Kalm's St. John's-wort (*Hypericum kalmianum*) is roughly the same size as the previous species.



Fig. 6 St. John's-wort



Fig. 7 St. John's-wort, close-up of flower

Both have woody stems and five-petalled yellow flowers. However, even a cursory examination will pick up some notable differences. The leaves here are simple and not composite; they are long and lancelike with a blunt tip and have little or no stem. The flowers are quite striking, with dozens of stiff thread-like stamens springing out around the central pistil like tiny rays of sunshine. This is one of several St. John's Wort species that grow in Misery Bay and elsewhere on the island, but by far the showiest (fig. 6 & 7).

The next two species prefer cobble beaches and wet marly shorelines. Both are small, delicate and rather inconspicuous plants with lovely little blooms that make it well worth one's while to get down to their level and have a good look. Both are late summer plants.

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Fig. 8 Kalm's Lobelia

Kalm's Lobelia (*Lobelia kalmii*) blooms from the end of July to mid-October (fig. 8). It has tiny, exotic-looking flowers, less than a centimeter across, consisting of only two petals: the lower one is divided into three spreading lobes and the smaller upper one is divided into two erect lobes that resemble rabbit ears. The flowers are a pale lavender blue or purple with a white centre. You can see the short, curved style peeking out between the two upper lobes (fig. 9). (In case you were wondering, Pehr Kalm was an 18th century Swedish-Finnish botanist who was sent to North America in 1747 to bring back useful plants and seeds; he is credited with "discovering" many plants and animal species and naming them according to Carl Linneaus' new – and still used to this day – binomial Latin system for identifying flora and fauna).



Fig. 9 Kalm's Lobelia, closeup of flowers

Small-flowered Agalinis (*Agalinis purpurea*) is another diminutive beauty that grows in the same environment as Kalm's Lobelia. It is also known as Purple Gerardia and Small-flower False Foxglove. Formerly classed in the Figwort family, it is now placed among the Broomrapes. To complicate matters even more, there are apparently two varieties – small-flowered and large-flowered – which some authorities consider to be two separate species. None of this need detract from the beauty of these little flowers. Another late-bloomer, you can find it along most shorelines in Misery Bay throughout August and September. Small pink (not really purple) tubular flowers consisting of five fused petals grow from the leaf axils along the long slender stalk, supported by a five-pointed calyx. The flowers are one to one and a half centimeters in length and a bit less across. The petals are

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covered in fine hairs and the inside of the flower is white with pink spots set against faint yellow stripes. Plants growing in harsher, more exposed areas tend to have dark reddish-brown leaves and stems (fig. 10 & 11).



Fig. 10 Small-flowered Agalinis plant



Fig. 11 Small-flowered Agalinis

One last plant will wind up this survey of shoreline flowers. Bearing the rather unwieldy name of Sticky

False-asphodel (*Triantha glutinosa*), it has recently generated considerable interest among botanists, especially those interested in carnivorous plants. One member of the *Triantha* genus, Western False-asphodel, has been fairly conclusively determined to be in part carnivorous. It shares many of its characteristics with our own closely related False-asphodel. Both have stems that are covered with sticky glandular hairs. Small insects get stuck on these stems and, since the plants grow in rather poor nutritional environments, they have evolved to release enzymes enabling them to digest and absorb nutrients from this source.



Fig. 12 Sticky False-asphodel. Note tiny insects stuck to stems.

More study is needed to determine whether our eastern species is in fact carnivorous, but some of the evidence so far is pointing in that direction.

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Look for these unobtrusive little flowers on wet cobble and marly shorelines. They sometimes grow quite densely, their spiky stems supporting laddered clusters of small white flowers consisting of three petals and three sepals with red-tipped anthers. The stems are quite clammy to the touch and you will likely find small insects stuck to them (fig. 12 & 13).



Fig. 13 Sticky False-asphodel, closeup of flowers

This article is by no means a complete survey of the many wonderful plants that grow along Misery Bay's kilometers of shorelines. See how many more you can find on your next visit!

N.B. See "Late Summer Beauties" in Turtle Tracks, 2019 Fall issue for more shoreline specialties.

References:

- Dickinson, Timothy et al., The ROM Field Guide to Wildflowers of Ontario, Royal Ontario Museum, 2004.
- Minnesota Wildflowers: <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/search?family=Violaceae&w>
- J.K. Morton & Joan Venn, The Flora of Manitoulin Island, University of Waterloo Press, 3rd Edition
- Ontario Wildflowers: <https://ontariowildflowers.com/main/group.php?id=54>
- New carnivorous plant must balance trapping prey and being pollinated – UW–Madison News





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Love from the 2025 Summer Student Staff

This summer season Maylen, Cameron, and I welcomed over 5,000 humans, roughly 700 dogs, and exactly 1 cat to the Interpretive Centre! While some only stopped to ask about our parking situation or use the washrooms, many were genuinely curious about what Misery Bay had to offer and brought their children, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and friends to help find out. Most of these folks were from Canada, but many came from abroad. How lucky are we to have visitors from all over the world!

Beyond meeting, greeting, and teaching patrons, we have been hard at work at many exciting new projects. Much of this year was recuperating: cleaning and organising the office and centre, going through old resources, getting some merchandise up and running, building children's colouring books and activity sheets, creating activities and presentations for future school visits, leading guided hikes, installing signs with Will Kershaw and some lovely Ontario Parks rangers, searching for volunteers, reaching out to past guest speakers, making content for the FOMB social media, and, evidently important, reviving Turtle Tracks. It hasn't always been straightforward - a lot of systems and content has been lost to time and the ever-shifting board of directors - but we've made it work, and I am happy to say that it's paying off! We were lucky enough to have the second graders from C.C. McClean join us in early June, and led eleven guided hikes throughout the season. We are hoping that with all the hard work put in this season, staff and Board Members next year will be able to organise some fantastic events and guest speakers.

While not all of us are returning to Misery Bay next season, we wish all members, board members, volunteers, patrons, and future summer staff the very best, and hope that the systems and activities we've created this year can be of use for years to come!

All the very best,

Rory, on behalf of Maylen, Cameron, and myself





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Miigwech

a poem found in our guest book at the Friends' Gazebo, dated July 13th, 2025, and attributed to Jessie Cowperthwaite

Miigwech to this land
to the rocks
and the water
to the flowers and
moss
and the trees.
This is a place
of beauty and
spirit
this is a place
to protect
and hold.
From my heart
to yours
I give thanks

Thank You

A massive thank you to each and every one of you reading this. Friends of Misery Bay would not be able to continue without the love and support of each person that visits us, volunteers with us, becomes a member, joins our board, or even just visits our website. Your support is who we are, and we could not be more grateful for you.

All of our love and good will,
The Friends of Misery Bay

