



# turtle tracks

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Fall 2018

## FROM THE CHAIR

Happy fall!

As the seasonal use drops off at Misery Bay Provincial Park, I would like to give you a brief overview of this year.

Our AGM was well attended by all accounts, although I was unable to attend, having been struck down by a severe flu-like illness. I understand there was a pool among the executive as to the timing of my death. Happily, I am able to report that no one won!

The weather this summer was spectacular with hot sunny days and no rain in sight for weeks. The spring, however, was a different matter... We had hoped to have the all-access trail to Our Friends' Shelter finished by the start of June but the late wet spring hampered our efforts. John organized a final push with volunteers at the end of October that has brought us very close to the finish line – one more day in the spring of 2019 will do it!

Ken Mackenzie took over the volunteer schedule and has done a wonderful job covering weekends (see his report on page 6). Thank you Ken and thanks to all of you who volunteer your time here at Misery Bay.

Ontario Parks has been busy upgrading the Sifferd cottage and work is well underway to bring it up to park standards, thanks to a significant donation (see John's report on page 4 for details).

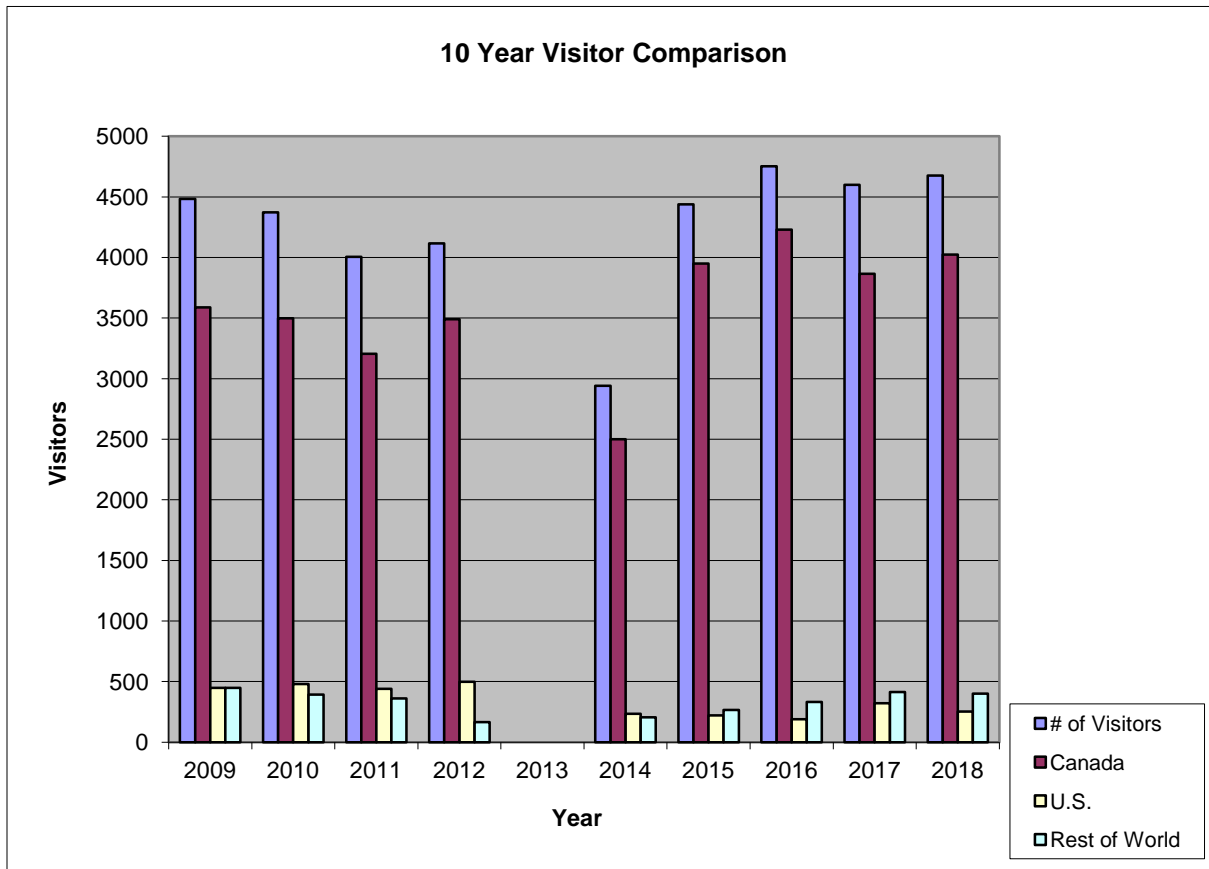
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The displays at the Visitor Centre were all functional this year and were very well received. We took a step towards reducing single-use plastic consumption by ending the sale of plastic water bottles at the centre. Instead, we installed a drinking water station that visitors can use to fill their own containers. Those who wish to do so are encouraged to leave a donation. We felt that this was the environmentally responsible route to take.

As winter is about to set in, I wish you a safe and happy snow season and hope to see you back at our piece of paradise next year!





## 2018 Visitors by the Numbers and Comments

Compiled by Gaynor Orford

This year the number of people “clicked in” was 4677, our second highest total to date. Visitors signed into one of 4 guest books in the Park, telling us where they are from, how many in their group and leaving comments about their experience. 86% of visitors came from 10 Provinces and Territories across Canada, including Nunavut, BC and Nova Scotia – coast to coast to coast. Visitors from 24 States, including Hawaii, and 18 other countries from around the world were greeted by our students, Brooke, Karly and Jesse, and our weekend volunteers.

With people from all over finding not only Manitoulin Island, but Misery Bay Provincial Park, it begs the question “How did you find us?” The simple answer provided was the Internet.

This was the year of the **garter snake, the mouse and the Monarch.**

A rather large garter snake took up residence on the steps leading down from the deck. There was a mouse problem in the centre, so the girls did some trapping. Every mouse caught was thrown out, and the garter snake cleaned up the problem.

For an endangered species, there sure were a lot of Monarch butterflies around. One hiker observed 30 caterpillars in the milk weed patch on the dunes, even though the plants were stunted due the hot and dry conditions. Hundreds of Monarchs staged in the Park in early September, getting ready for their long migration south. One visitor commented that he had to be careful where he walked

for fear of tripping over them! Another commented that Misery Bay was like a butterfly conservatory, and another declared the park "butterfly heaven". (The ROM's butterfly guide recognizes Misery Bay as a butterfly hotspot).

Visitors are often befuddled by the name Misery Bay. Over the years they have suggested name changes. However, this year visitors seemed to embrace the name:

- *If this is Misery, I love it*
- *As usual, Misery Bay has failed to live up to its name.*

Many find Misery Bay peaceful and pristine and return as often as they can:

- *Always come back to this place for re-energising*
- *Died and woke up in Heaven*
- *Most beautiful and serene*

Others commented on the trails, saying that they were awesome, well maintained and well marked, and the scenery, inspiring:

- *One of the most amazing hikes I've ever done; this coastal section is incredible.*
- *One of Manitoulin's many hidden gems*

Perhaps Bobby from Texas summed it up best:

**"Waahoo!"**

There are so many people who work hard to keep Misery Bay a great place: the trails people, the Centre attendants, the visitors who pick up the flotsam and jetsam along the shorelines. The Friends of Misery Bay cannot say enough "Thank you"s for all that you do.



## Survey Says!

This summer, Jesse, one of our summer students, conducted a brief survey with visitors returning to the centre after their hike. Although only a small number of the total recorded were polled, the results were interesting:

- 80% were first timers to the Park.
- 72% were very likely to return
- 91% would highly recommend Misery Bay to others
- 96% were satisfied with their experience.

Half our visitors heard about Misery Bay by "word of mouth", so a big shout out to all our MTA partners, businesses, and individuals, for recommending Misery Bay.

23% found Misery Bay through the internet, emphasising the importance of maintaining a good website, and reviews on Trip Advisor. (If you haven't rated Misery Bay on Trip Advisor do it!).

When answering what they liked most about Misery Bay, visitors had a hard time selecting just one of the Park's features.

18% checked all the boxes, indicating that they liked everything about the Park.



## The Sifferd Cottage Project

John Diebolt  
Special Projects Team FOMB

The ongoing support and commitment that our Friends of Misery Bay (FOMB) show for "All Things Misery" is truly amazing, as is that of Ryan Gardner, our Park Superintendent. Ryan of course is a strong supporter and enabler of all of our projects but he has made the Sifferd Cottage one of his – and thereby Ontario Parks' – major focuses for at Misery Bay Provincial Park (MBPP).

It is said that in order for any group or organization to move ahead it must know and acknowledge where it has come from. The Sifferd Cottage and the Sifferd family truly constitute one of the main cornerstones of MBPP. Those of us who have been connected with FOMB for some time know that the roots of our organization and of the park itself originate from the initiative two stalwart individuals – Eunice and Cal Sifferd – who had a vision and let that vision grow into "All Things Misery". There are of course a great number of other people who were and still are a part of this vision – but the Sifferds were the ones who started the pendulum of Misery Bay swinging.

Long-time members will remember that FOMB were always focused on upgrading the Sifferd Cottage and making it an integral part of an operating Provincial Park. I recall numerous board meetings and AGMs where the topic was repeatedly raised and discussed (at times somewhat heatedly). I also recall a time about five years ago where Ryan Gardner simply advised our group that the Sifferd Cottage was not our problem: it was an Ontario Parks initiative and that was that. (Let's be realistic- he was right. A "Friends of" group does not have the liability coverage, assets or operating capacity to look after the Sifferd Cottage.) He informed us at the time that he had been and would be continuing to put in a capital projects application to fund the necessary

upgrades to bring Sifferd Cottage up to the required Ontario Parks code.

He patiently and steadfastly did so for the past several years and in 2017 his efforts paid off and a lightning bolt in the form of over **\$100,000** hit MBPP: the funders at Ontario Parks had approved his capital project targeting improvements to the Sifferd Cottage. In the fall of 2017, a Manitoulin carpentry craftsman – Roland Aeschlimann – started the initial upgrades with the planned completion of them the following spring. Then another financial lightning bolt struck FOMB and MBPP in the form of a funding infusion of **\$150,000** into our bank account (*who says lightning does not strike the same place twice*). The money was donated to FOMB by the Sifferd Clan, led by Tom Moore (Cal and Eunice's son-in-law), along with Mindy and Brian Kerr (Mindy is Ellie and Tom's daughter), with the express purpose of completing the upgrade of their family's historical cottage. The renovated structure will be used by Ontario parks according to its own needs.

I can tell you that – with the gentle guiding hand of Mindy and the required approval of Ryan Gardner – the Roland Aeschlimann crew has made astonishing progress; according to Ryan and Roland the following has occurred to date and/or will be completed in 2019:

- All windows and doors have been replaced (some larger windows are also going in)
- Deck has been completely rebuilt
- All of the interior wall cladding and insulation has been removed and replaced with new insulation and vapor barrier and the perimeter of building sealed
- Outhouse has been rebuilt
- Rough in electrical wiring, switches, lights installed
- Tongue and groove cedar installation on ceiling and walls is starting as I type this

- A new stair access to second floor from main floor has been started
- Vinyl/click flooring to be installed on main floor (2019)
- Existing solar panels relocated to roof with two new ones added and the inverter/batteries moved inside building (2019)
- Inserts ordered for two fireplaces and chimneys capped (2019)
- Bulk head over dining room area removed- allows more light in

I likely missed a few items, but you get the message. The Sifferd Cottage – the foundation of “All Things Misery” – with the improvements made and planned – will once again become an integral part of everything that makes Misery Bay Provincial Park such a special place.

A big thanks to the Sifferd Clan and Ryan Gardner for making the rejuvenation of the Sifferd Cottage happen. Keep you posted.



*The above photo shows from left to right, Park Super Ryan Gardner, Tom Moore, Mindy Kerr, Brian Kerr and our builder-Roland Aeschlimann at a meeting with myself and Ted Kilpatrick last spring at the Sifferd Cottage*



## 2018 Visitor Centre Volunteer Summary

Friends of Misery Bay are again most appreciative of the 33 volunteers who staffed the Visitor Centre between May 19<sup>th</sup> and October 8<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers covered 90% of the possible shifts [assuming Gaynor's Mondays, two shifts on Saturdays and Sundays in July and August and one shift on those days for May, June September and October]. Our 18 seasonal volunteers covered 70% of the Visitor Centre shifts; but this proportion will no doubt change, as Peg and Eric Balkind are now permanent, having purchased a home in Gore Bay.

Many of our Visitor Centre volunteers have been involved with Misery Bay Provincial Park from its inception and have hosted visitors at the Centre since it opened its doors. In fact, many of our current volunteers often cover multiple shifts, which is a measure of their commitment. (It also simplifies my "coordinating" efforts.) However, should any of these active volunteers become unable to contribute as much time, FOMB would be hard pressed to provide such a visitor friendly face at the Centre. So, I am hoping that members have suggestions as to how to imbue new recruits with similarly generous dedication to the FOMB vision. These ideas could be forwarded to any Board member.

For those of you who may have missed it, check out the Seasonal Volunteer Story in the Wednesday October 5<sup>th</sup> of "The Manitoulin Expositor":

<https://www.manitoulin.ca/summer-residents-volunteer-efforts-contribute-to-manitoulin-flavour/>

Thanking you all for a rewarding season (not just for me but many visitors), I hope to reunite with you in May 2019.

Yours,

Ken Mackenzie



*Long-time seasonal volunteers, from left to right: Bill and Ann Sargent, Erwin Thompson, Barb and Bill Kling.*

## All-Access Trail Update

Volunteerism is alive and well on Manitoulin Island and especially at Misery Bay Provincial Park (MBPP).

Saturday, October 27 was a cold, rainy, sleety and miserable day. This Misery-able weather did not deter the group of volunteers who came out to work on the handicap access trail that the Friends of Misery Bay (FOMB) are building at MBPP.

For all you FOMB members who have been following this project, you will know that when the trail is completely upgraded with the required improvements, it will stretch 1.1 kilometres from the Visitor Centre to "Our Friends' Shelter" right on Misery Bay. It will make this trail that much more accessible to people of all levels of walking/hiking ability, and facilitate access by wheel chairs, baby buggies, people with walkers etc., all the way to the Misery Bay, allowing all users to view from 'Our Friends Shelter' the protected wetlands, sand beaches, coastal alvars and even some of the endangered species in that area.

The volunteers shovelled and wheel barrowed gravel for up to 900 metres. They then raked the gravel to fill in structures built from donated Manitoulin cedar poles. The gravel used is from Manitoulin limestone.



From left to right: Ken Mackenzie, Ted Kilpatrick, Will Kershaw and Dave Kains

Work on this trail started in the spring of 2016, with the building of a boardwalk to cross a vernal pool, a gazebo on the shore of Misery Bay (Our Friends' Shelter). In 2017 work started on the 1.1 kilometer trail, and with the efforts of the group on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the trail is now almost complete with over a dozen structures built along it and filled with gravel.

Another work day planned for the spring of 2019 will complete it, by making sandy parts of the trail more useable.

As with a lot of projects on Manitoulin Island, this trail has been built largely through the efforts of volunteers and a snapshot of the group that came out on Saturday, shows members coming from the following organizations; Manitoulin Nature Club, Manitoulin Streams, Ontario Parks, Friends of Misery Bay and the Little Current Fish and Game Club, as well as private business owners and other interested parties. Previous work days have seen the Stewardship Rangers of Ontario Parks on site, as well as the always present FOMB Special Projects members Peter Barnett, Mike Ewert and Ted Kilpatrick.

Our moniker 'Misery Loves Company' was once again fulfilled on that Saturday!

Cheers

John Diebolt for Special Projects Team



Our awesome volunteers from left to right: George Kopylof, Rose Diebolt, Sandy Cook, Ken Mackenzie, Anastasia Eranosova, Dave Kains, Ted Kilpatrick, Colin Frame, Mike Ewert, Will Kershaw (missing from photo: Peter Barnes, Liam Campbell and John Diebolt)



## So who else is in the Park?

by Gaynor Orford

Over the years, trail cameras have been set up at various locations throughout the park. First by Donnell, as part of her research work, then by Robert, to find out who was chewing up the picnic table, and this year, by Jesse to see what else is in the Park that may not be seen by our visitors.



This owl set off the camera located in the fen.



A young doe was captured browsing in a clearing in the red pine plantation.



We are often asked if there are bears in the Park. Well now we know. If the grass moving hadn't triggered the camera, this bear would have been front and centre, instead of exiting stage left. Again, it was caught in the red pine plantation clearing.



This sandhill crane and her chick were caught on camera in a wet area on the west side of the Park.



STEALTH CAM 073F 07-30-2017 21:13:20

The porcupine removed all the yellow paint off the picnic table, so a lacquer finish was applied. Apparently it did nothing to deter this pesky porky. The trail camera was set up on the window ledge inside the entrance door.



STEALTH CAM 060F 07-27-2018 06:55:49

These two bucks were caught on camera in the dunes east of Saunder's cove.

## YES! I want to become a Friend of Misery Bay!

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

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

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

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2018 Membership Fees

Student \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Adult \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Family \$40.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Corporate \$200.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Life \$350.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Fee Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I want to make a donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Mail To:*

FOMB, P.O. Box 114, Gore Bay ON P0P 1H0

## Thistle have to do...

By Marcel Bénéteau

Plant life in Misery Bay Provincial Park is wonderfully abundant and diverse, reflecting the varied environments and growing conditions contained within its boundaries. It certainly includes many rare and exotic species, from showy orchids to alvar-adapted flowers like Manitoulin Gold and Blazing Star to carnivorous Pitcher Plants and Bladderworts in its wetlands. But the park also includes many more mundane and well-known species that have also adapted to its various growing conditions. One such group of plants comprises the thistles of the *Cirsium* genus, which are part of the Composite or Aster family.

Thistles are not high on most people's list of favorite flowers. If you are a long time Friend of Misery Bay, you no doubt already know that the Park's flora includes two notably rare and threatened species. But to many people, all thistles look pretty much alike and can be dismissed as those ungainly prickly weeds that infest lawns, gardens and roadsides. But there is more here than meets the eye: Manitoulin Island is host to seven species of thistle – five of which can be found in the park – and while they all share some common features, each one is adapted to special conditions and displays its own unique characteristics. Much can be learned by taking note of these hardy plants.

As mentioned, thistles belong to the Aster or Composite family, the largest group of flowering plants in North America. Like the blooms found on goldenrods, dandelions, fleabanes and sunflowers, what appears as the thistle flower is in reality made up of numerous little flowers – or florets – grouped together in a head (hence the



Fig. 1 Pitcher's Thistle, with individual florets

name « composite »). The close-up of a Pitcher's Thistle flower (fig. 1) shows the individual florets that make up the head. All species, to greater or lesser extent, feature sharp spines on their leaves, stems or involucres (the cup or urn-shaped receptacle below the flower); these of course are designed to protect the plant from herbivores.



Fig. 2 Bull thistle, flower and involucre

Two common thistles that are found everywhere on Manitoulin are also present in Misery Bay. Both prefer open, fairly dry areas with disturbed soil. The above-mentioned Bull Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) is a European plant, widely introduced across North America. It is an impressive giant, with a widely branching stem growing up to two metres in height, (Fig. 3). Every part of the plant is covered with formidable spines. Its large purple heads with their globe-shaped involucre flower from late June to early October. Look for it at the edges of alvars and forest trails, as well as around the parking lot and Visitor Centre.



Fig. 3 Bull thistle plant

The other common species is the Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), another alien species, in spite of its common name. This is a much smaller plant (2-3 ft. in height). The leaves are forbiddingly spiny but the stems are largely smooth and bare; the cylindrical involucre are also relatively prickle-free. Several plants usually grow together, each one featuring numerous pinkish flowers no more than an inch in diameter (fig. 4). Occasionally, a single rather spindly plant can be found growing

along the lakeshore. A rare white-flowering form is sometimes encountered (Fig. 5); this should not be confused with one of Misery Bay's most important native species, Pitcher's Thistle, which also has a whitish flower head.



Fig. 4 Canada thistle



Fig. 5 Canada thistle, white form

Pitcher's Thistle (*Cirsium pitcheri*) is a Great Lakes endemic, found exclusively on sand dunes and ridges of Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior (Fig. 6). It is

considered endangered in Ontario, having an S2 designation (imperilled) due to its restricted range and to human encroachment of suitable habitats. According to the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks,



Fig. 6 Pitcher's thistle

there are only 30 known sites where it grows in Ontario: three of them on Lake Huron just south of the Bruce Peninsula, two in Lake Superior Provincial Park and the remainder on Manitoulin Island. Populations are at risk due to development of sandy areas for recreational purposes, in particular the use of ATVs, and also to the arrival of invasive plants such as Phragmites and Spotted Knapweed.

Pitcher's Thistles are perfectly adapted to the hot and dry conditions of sand dunes. The pale whitish-green leaves and stems help reflect the heat and retain water. The plant begins life as a small rosette of deeply-lobed leaves and can take several years before producing flowers (Fig. 7). These are creamy white or sometimes pale pinkish in colour (the latter

particularly among the Providence Bay population). The plants have very few spines – one at the tip of each leaf lobe and a few on the involucre. The stem, like the leaves, is covered with soft white hairs (which also help to retain water) (Fig. 8). The best area to see this plant in the park is the sandy area adjacent to Our Friends' shelter at the head of Misery Bay – take care not do damage the pale young leaf rosettes while walking about!



Fig. 7 Pitcher's thistle rosette

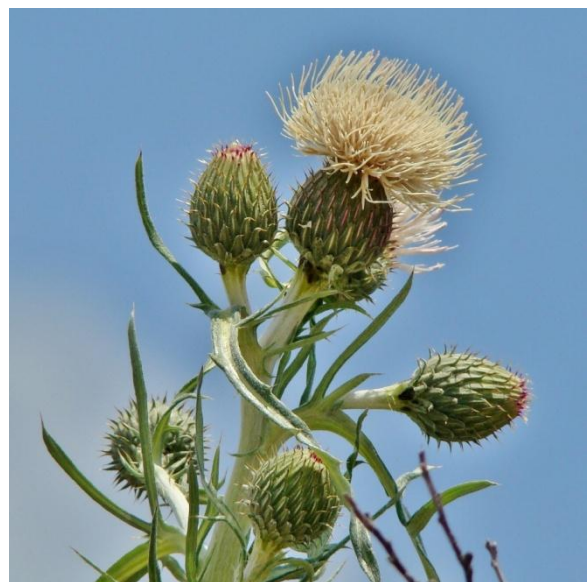


Fig. 8 Pitcher's thistle flowers and involucre

Manitoulin Island is also has the lion's share of the 64 reported sites for another vulnerable thistle – Hill's thistle (*Cirsium hillii*) (Fig. 9 and 10). This plant prefers sunny, open alvar grasslands bordered by Jack Pine, Eastern White Spruce and White Cedar. This is not a common habitat to begin with and, once again, human activity is the biggest threat to this species.



Fig. 9 Hill's thistle plant



Fig. 10 Hill's thistle flower and involucre

Hill's Thistle is a rather short (12-18 in.) sturdy plant with one or two disproportionately large and ragged flower heads that can measure up to 2 inches across. The leaves, stems and urn-shaped involucre sport a profusion of spines. It is not uncommon to see several of these plants growing in a straight line in the grassy areas of the park (Fig. 11); considering the thin soil cover on the alvars it is only natural that they would follow the fault lines in the dolostone below, where the soil and nutrients would be richer and deeper.



Fig.11 Pitchers thistles growing along buried fault line

One other native species rounds out the collection of thistles found in Misery Bay. The Swamp Thistle (*Cirsium muticum*) is a mostly solitary plant and it grows in marshes, fens and swamps. It's tall, graceful stem sports few leaves and it only branches off to produce a few flower stalks (Fig. 12). It has few a few short spines on the leaves (Fig. 13); the stem, however, is covered with short bristly hairs. The deep pink flowers sit at the end of greyish-green cylindrical involucre (Fig. 14).



Fig. 12 Swamp thistle plant

Thistles are an integral part of Misery Bay Provincial Park's amazing flora. Easy to overlook among the more exotic plants visitors come to see, the members of this family have found a way to fit into the various ecological niches of the park. All of them provide an important food source for pollinators and other insects. Birds use their downy seed plumes to line their nests. Stems and roots of the larger ones such as Bull thistles have been used for food and medicinal purposes for centuries. What may be unwanted in garden or lawn has a vital role to play elsewhere in our ecosystem.



Fig. 13 Swamp thistle leaf and stem



Fig. 14 Swamp thistle flower and involucre

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- Dickinson, Timothy *et al.*, *The ROM Field Guide to Wildflowers of Ontario*, Royal Ontario Museum, 2004.
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- Morton, John, with Joan Venn and Judith Jones, *A plant list for Misery Bay Provincial Nature - Reserve*, The Friends of Misery Bay, 1997.
- Morton, John and Joan Venn, *The Flora of Manitoulin Island*, University of Waterloo, 2000 edition.
- Ontario Government: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/pitchers-thistle>  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/hills-thistle>

## A message from George Whyte



George Whyte with the Misery Bay flotsam he picked up.

“Last week, a two-hour walk along the shores of Lake Huron at the Misery Bay Provincial Park netted my wife and I 10 birthday balloons—many still partially filled with helium—courtesy of our friends from Alpena and Rogers City, and the other settlements along the shores of neighbouring Michigan,” wrote George Whyte, of Murphy Point in Evansville, in an email September 3.

Mr. Whyte said, “We are now averaging about a hundred balloons a summer between Murphy Point and Misery Bay. The trend seems to have

started in earnest about 15 years ago when we found a fully inflated balloon with a message wishing little Mary from Alpena, Michigan a happy fifth birthday. Each year there are more and more balloons, along with plastic bottles and Styrofoam cups.”

“I can still remember my first hike along the south shore near Misery Bay as a five-year-old with my father in 1948,” said Mr. Whyte. “At that time, the only evidence of humans was the occasional wooden float from commercial fishing nets. We concentrated on looking at the wildflowers and the waves, and there was no need to carry a bag to collect the flotsam.” “It seems like our lakes and oceans are now becoming gigantic garbage cans,” wrote Mr. Whyte. “This past June, I read an article about an autopsy in Thailand on a dead pilot whale where they found more than 80 plastic garbage bags and other plastic items in its stomach. Apparently the whale had mistaken many of them for jellyfish. And the internet is replete with photos of birds and animals that have become trapped in the floating garbage. The ocean currents northeast of Hawaii are collecting plastic like a massive toilet bowl.”

“Maybe the whole story can be summed up by another piece of garbage that we found at Misery Bay last week,” said Mr. Whyte. “It was a rubber beer sleeve with the inscription, “Never Underestimate the Power of Stupid People in Large Numbers.”

*(This article first appeared in the Manitoulin Expositor on Sept. 7, 2018)*





## This Is Ned.



He likes to accompany visitors on their hikes, and in the last year has been on many adventures.

One of his favourite places is the beach, where he even went swimming last summer!



Ned also likes to build things like sandcastles and Inuksuk.



Ned loved all the flowers he came across in his adventures, like the Blazing star, Shrubby cinquefoil, Pearly everlasting, Reindeer lichen and Indian pipe.



Ned also learned about the geology of the Park. He discovered that the alvars are layers of sedimentary limestone rock, which can crack along natural fault lines, allowing mosses, lichens and vascular plants to move in. This can be rather an intimidating place, as temperatures in the summer may hit 45 C. But plants like the Lakeside daisy thrive in such conditions. Ned also came across the pitted rock, referred to as pit karren.



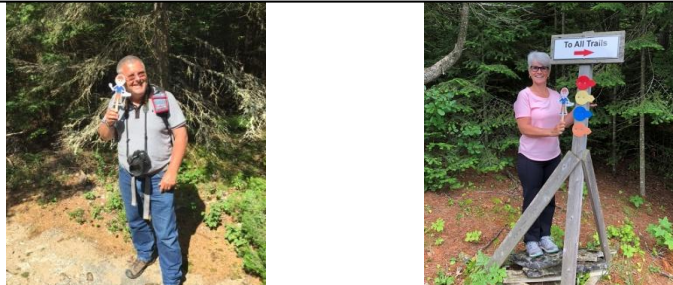
Ned liked to help out when possible. Here he is admiring the pile of Phragmites, an invasive species, removed from the east side of the bay, by Judith Jones and the Phrag Busting team. He also liked riding in the wheel barrow to get another load of gravel for the universal access trail. That pile of gravel is going to take a lot of work to move.



When out on a hike with the Callaghans, Ned met a turtle. He was upset that some visitors left garbage behind.



On rainy days, Ned likes to hang out in the Visitors Centre where he pretends he is swimming with the nautiloids in a shallow inland sea.



On behalf of Ned, we thank Jim, Karen and the Callaghans for sending us their pictures. Ned is always looking for new adventures. Make sure to take Ned with you on your Misery Bay experience next summer. Send us your pictures, and we will post them on our Facebook page, Misery Bay Provincial Park.

**Friends of Misery Bay Board of Directors 2018**

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