



# THE BULLETIN

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE RICHMOND HILL NATURALISTS

SEPTEMBER 2010 — No. 491

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Thanks Russ!



The mind-boggling journey to Mexico has commenced! Monarchs have been seen gathering in greater numbers in York Region and according to Journey North's Monarch Butterfly Migration Tracking Project, they have begun advancing down the Atlantic Coast. To participate in tracking the Monarch's travels see the website: <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/>

## Next Meeting: The Appalachians and their Margins with speaker Peter Money

Accessible by only a few hours' drive from Richmond Hill, the Appalachian mountain region is an ancient system extending from coastal Labrador to the northern reach of Florida. You might not have known that fossils of the oldest known multicellular life are found there, along with an impressive array of living fauna from puffins and moose to salamanders, pelicans and armadillos and many flowering plants. Toronto Field Naturalist and retired geologist Peter Money will be joining us on October 21 to give

a talk about "The Appalachians and their Margins". His own expert photography and intimate knowledge brings this area to life.



Photo courtesy of <http://flickr.com/photos/forestwander-nature-pictures/>



# THE BULLETIN

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE RICHMOND HILL NATURALISTS

The Bulletin is published 9 times per year, from September to May inclusive, by the Richmond Hill Naturalists, and is mailed free to members. The Bulletin is the official publication of the Richmond Hill Naturalists, a non-profit organization the objectives of which are to stimulate public interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation of our natural areas.

Address Correspondence to:  
Richmond Hill Naturalists, P.O.  
Box 32217, RPO Harding,  
Richmond Hill, ON, L4C 9S3

Deadlines: The editor encourages submissions from any member on any topic related to nature or conservation, and in particular, any issue that might be of interest or concern to members of this club. e-mail: editor@rhnaturalists.ca Deadlines are the 2nd Thursday of each month.

Bulletin Advertisers have been selected because of their relevance to member interests. Members are encouraged to patronize our advertisers and please mention that you saw their ad in our Bulletin.

Change of Address: Any change of email or street address should be sent to Mike Turk who prints the envelopes for the Bulletin mailing.

Denise Potter, Bulletin Editor:  
editor@rhnaturalists.ca

647-504-4586  
Mailing Address: 128 Pugsley  
Av, Richmond Hill, ON

Mailing Database: Mike Turk

Distribution: Athena Antiochos

Visit our Website at  
www.rhnaturalists.ca

See the Executive List for  
additional contact information.

## 2008 / 2009 RHN Executive

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Past President.....	Natalie Helferty
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Field Trips.....	Joe Agg (trips@rhnaturalists.ca)
Environment.....	Position Available
Publicity.....	Position Available (publicity@rhnaturalists.ca)
Bulletin Editor.....	Denise Potter (editor@rhnaturalists.ca)
Membership.....	Mike Turk (membership@rhnaturalists.ca)
Events.....	Position Available
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## Membership



Renewing your membership? Rates for a single membership are \$30; rates for a family membership are \$35. If you didn't make it to the Corn Roast and annual club kickoff on September 11, the Membership Application Form is available at each General Meeting from Mike Turk, or in our club brochure, available from any executive member. You may also sign up or renew by clicking on the Membership link at: [www.rhnaturalists.ca](http://www.rhnaturalists.ca)

## You can still donate to the Baillie Birdathon and Richmond Hill Naturalists

Here's an easy way to help Bird Studies Canada, the Richmond Hill Naturalists AND get a tax receipt! 25% of your donation at this link below will be given back to the Richmond Hill Naturalists. The rest of your donation will be used by Bird Studies Canada to help in the conservation and study of wild birds.

<http://bsc-eoc.org/support/birdathon/?targetpg=donate&lang=EN&number=59091>

During a 24-hour period in May, participants in the Baillie Birdathon attempt to find as many bird species as they can. Denise and Rod Potter scoured the Long Point - Backus woods area in a frigid day in mid-May and managed to log 105 species (although technically we're still arguing about the prothonotary warbler).



Cape May Warbler

## Coming Events



**Saturday, September 25 from 11:30am to 2pm. Saigeon Trail Opening -**

**From Yonge Street, go west on Gamble Road to Rollinghill Rd; go north on Rollinghill Rd to French Royalist Park. Joe Agg will be leading a walk starting from the park at 12:15pm.**



Wednesday, October 13 - Bird Studies Group. Topic: Herring and Black-backed Gulls. Host: Barbara Jackson, 20 Fashion Roseway, Suite 311, Willowdale. All welcome. For more information contact Gene Denzel at 905-889-7888.



Thursday, October 21 - General Meeting. Speaker: Peter Money - "The Appalachians and their Margins".



Saturday, October 30, 2010- 10:00 a.m. - Ontario Nature Fall Regional Meeting. All club members are welcome to attend. Hosted by the Durham Region Field Naturalists. Location at the Darlington OPG



Saturday, October 2, 9am to 12pm. Tree Planting at Lynde Creek, #9760 Ashburn Road, Whitby Help Ontario Streams plant trees and shrubs along a tributary of Lynde Creek. Rain or Shine. Shovels and gloves will be provided. A complementary BBQ will also be supplied following the event. The site is located 10 minutes north of Brooklin. Drive north on highway 12 to Myrtle Road, head west to the hamlet of Ashburn, and then north on Ashburn Road to #9760. If you pass the railway tracks, you have gone too far. Signs will be posted. For more information check out [www.ontariostreams.on.ca](http://www.ontariostreams.on.ca) or please contact: Christine Pritchard, Project Biologist, Ontario Streams, Tel: 905-713-7399; email: [christine.pritchard@ontariostreams.on.ca](mailto:christine.pritchard@ontariostreams.on.ca)



Saturday October 30th and Sunday November 7th, 2010 from 10am to 12:30pm: Humber River Brown Trout Spawning Surveys, Caledon: Castlederg bridge Ontario Streams is once again recruiting interested volunteers for their annual brown trout spawning surveys in the Humber River watershed! Volunteers will be led by experienced biologists and fishermen. Each group will walk a section of the Humber River, spotting brown trout redds and recording their locations. No experience necessary! Please dress appropriately for the weather. Chest waders and polarized sunglasses will be provided, however if volunteers have their own it is suggested that they bring them. Light refreshments will also be supplied. Take Hwy #50 north from Bolton and turn west onto Castlederg Rd. The Castlederg bridge is located on Castlederg Rd just west of Duffy's Lane and east of Humber Station Rd. For more information check out <http://www.ontariostreams.on.ca> or please contact: Christine Pritchard, Project Biologist, Ontario Streams, Tel: 905-713-7399; email: [christine.pritchard@ontariostreams.on.ca](mailto:christine.pritchard@ontariostreams.on.ca)

Please note: Richmond Hill Naturalists welcomes anyone to volunteer as an outing leader. Contact [trips@rhnaturalists.ca](mailto:trips@rhnaturalists.ca) if you would like to organize or promote an outing.



# What did you do this summer?

Hard to believe that summer has come and gone already. Seems like only moments ago we were celebrating the return of spring and watching for migrating warblers, and now already the nights are chill, the leaves are turning red and the warblers have stopped singing, thrown off their bright plumages and have started to head back south again.

What marked this summer and made it special for you? What stands out in your memory? We are looking for photos, stories of exploration and discovery, whatever Richmond Hill Naturalists might have done over the summer. We'll print those tales over the next few months to help keep us warm when the snow flies.



*A harbinger of winter? Nope, icebergs are a summer event in the Arctic. Those tiny people in the Kodiak were fortunate enough to get close to an iceberg without having any of the melting pieces fall on them.*

## Arctic Excitement

Several club members were fortunate enough to find space on an Arctic cruise this summer. Gene and Charlene Denzel, and Glenn Reed and Theresa McKenzie were among those who sailed from Greenland to Resolute in reasonable comfort (most of the time).

Always ready to experience something new, Glenn fully immersed himself in the Arctic, jumping in to the frigid waters while scantily clad for a Hawaiian party and with a flower clutched in his teeth. Amazingly he survived and lived to tell about it. There IS video of this experience but it's available on a "need to know" basis only!

At various times as the ship made its way through the incredible seascape, the voyagers saw polar bears, walrus (from a distance) and other spectacular arctic creatures. Charlene was entranced by the view of two polar bear cubs,



*Ice berg photos by Gene Denzel*

with their mother, on a huge ice sheet: the youngsters were slapping their paws down on the ice in imitation of their mother who was hunting for seal blowholes

(we're told).

Altogether it was an amazing experience.

Brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!

## Shorebirds passing through



### Coming through!

A fearless Lesser Yellowlegs strides purposefully within a few meters of Richmond Hill Naturalist Rod Potter at Frenchman's Bay in September, 2010. One of many shorebirds passing through on their way from the far north to the tropics, this juvenile Yellowlegs will face many obstacles on its way South. Also like many shorebird species, it will face them all the entire journey without guidance from older Yellowlegs.

The total population of this species was estimated at 500,000 in 2007 (according to <http://www.borealbirds.org/birdguide>), and is thought to have

declined greatly since the early 1900s, like most shorebird species. Though it weighs in at only 65 to 95 g (2.4 to 3.3 oz), the bird was heavily hunted for food and sport in the 1800s and early 1900s. Although it seems relatively adaptable, able to forage in mud puddles and swamps, and eating anything from insects and small fish to seeds, its population has not totally recovered from those times.

Data is not conclusive but the Breeding Bird Atlas data suggests that the population is remaining relatively stable at this reduced level and the species is currently considered one of "least concern" in Canada.

Known in French as Le Petit Chevalier, virtually all Lesser Yellowlegs breed in the Boreal Forest from Alaska to James Bay. Some will winter in Florida and along the southern coast of the US, but some will travel as far south as Tierra del Fuego. The largest numbers are found along the northern coast of South America. In February they will start moving north again, reaching their breeding grounds as early as mid-April. By mid-June failed breeders will be on their way back, followed by successfully breeding females in mid-July and males a little later. The juveniles are left to find their way south in August and September completely on their own.

# Province says "Peaker Plant" will be built despite legal action by concerned citizens

Site preparation work is under way for the "Peaker Plant", a hotly contested natural-gas fired power plant to be built in the Holland Marsh area. A protest was to be held Monday, September 20, at the site, which is beside a canal on Dufferin Street just north of Highway 9.

The provincial government has granted numerous exemptions to the project. It never had to go through an Environmental Assessment and in August the province officially agreed to waive the Planning Act to allow the project to proceed, just a week after a coalition of citizens groups launched a legal action to stop the province from ignoring its own Planning Act.

The coalition included Concerned Citizens of King, the Ontario Green Party, and others.

Officially known as the York Energy Centre, the 393-Megawatt project is being built by Calgary-based Pristine Power.



The province insists that the Peaker Plant is required to keep the lights on in Vaughan with population and power consumption expected to triple

in the coming decades; environmentalists, local politicians and farmers contend the plant could be built somewhere other than in the flood-prone prime food-growing area of York Region. Why not in the industrially-zoned and already degraded area along the 404, closer to the population and industrial centres of York Region?

See the Toronto Star article from Saturday, September 18

<http://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/article/862991--holland-marsh-power-plant-under-fire?bn=1>

Keep your eyes open for more news about this project.

## Moraine Hero

*From Ontario Nature news*

The Monitoring the Moraine project invites nominations for the 2010 Moraine Hero Awards. These awards, celebrating those who make the Oak Ridges Moraine a better place, will be presented at the Monitoring the Moraine five year anniversary event on November 6 at the Ganaraska Forest Centre. The nomination deadline is September 30. To Nominate someone, go to:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/moraineheroawards>

or for more information contact Allison:

[allison@ecospark.ca](mailto:allison@ecospark.ca) or (647) 258-3280 x 2008.

Subsized backyard tree planting program available in York Region  
LEAF <http://yourleaf.org/> (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) has officially launched its

"Do-It-Yourself Backyard Tree Planting Program" in central and northern York Region. The program is supported by York Region, Ontario Power Generation and the Ontario Power Authority.

The Do-It-Yourself Backyard Tree Planting Program <http://www.yourleaf.org/lesson/overview-program> is an alternative model that affordably gets native trees and shrubs planted on residential properties. LEAF offers education and personalized advice through online videos and

interactive tools to residents of central and northern York Region (Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King Township, Newmarket, and Whitchurch-Stouffville).

This program compliments LEAF's Full Service Backyard Tree Planting Program <http://www.yourleaf.org/home-owners> where LEAF staff visit each household to do an in-person consultation. This program is currently offered to residents of southern York Region and Toronto.



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## News from Bird Studies Canada

Project Feeder Watch  
gearing up for 2010-2011  
season

It's almost time for the Feeder Watch! Bird Studies Canada will start shipping kits in October. Early kits are shipped by bulk mail, so delivery times vary from one to four weeks. If you have not signed up yet, please do so soon to assure that your

kit arrives before the season starts. If you have already signed up and do not see your kit by November 1, please contact Bird Studies Canada. You can sign up online at:

<http://www.birdscanada.org/shopping/membership.jsp>

Please ensure that you request a Project FeederWatch kit if you are renewing.

### Best habitat for diversity

*from Bird Studies Canada*

Researchers with Long Point Waterfowl and the University of Western Ontario have published the paper "Seasonal Abundance and Species Richness of Birds in Common Reed Habitats in Lake Erie" in the September issue of the Journal of Wildlife Management. The study determined that: total relative abundance and species richness of birds were greater in common reed habitat compared to cattail or meadow marsh habitats; relative abundance of marsh-nesting birds was greater in meadow marsh habitat than in cattail and common reed during summer; and irrespective of habitat type, habitat edges had higher total relative abundance and species richness of birds than did habitat interiors.

Common reed seems to provide suitable habitat to a diversity of landbirds during summer and autumn, but only limited habitat for many marsh-nesting birds during summer.

The authors recommend restoration of meadow marsh habitat through reduction of common reed in Great Lakes wetlands where providing habitat

for breeding marsh-nesting birds is an objective. They also suggest that managers consider reducing the size of non-native common reed stands to increase edge effect and thus bird use. Email [tbarney@birdscanada.org](mailto:tbarney@birdscanada.org) for a copy of the article.

**Tracking Osprey Migration**  
Bird Studies Canada is partnering with the Friends of the Osprey in the Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario to track the migration of adult Ospreys. In May 2010, two nesting adult female Ospreys were fitted with solar-powered satellite transmitters. The transmitters were attached to the Ospreys using a backpack-style harness made of neoprene and Teflon.

The objectives of this project are to determine the migratory routes and wintering areas of Ospreys from the Kawartha Lakes region. One female has already commenced her migration, and is now in South Carolina. Movements of the two Ospreys can be followed on BSC's Osprey Tracker webpage. For more information about the program, please visit the Friends of the Osprey website.

## Thanks Russ!



Once again this year, Russ Tilt graciously hosted the RHN's annual corn roast in his wonderful backyard (a.k.a. urban woodland/farm). Thanks also to Graham for cooking the corn to perfection and everyone who helped with kitchen duty, set-up and clean-up. This year, club members were also treated to a fascinating Biochar demonstration by Lloyd Helferty. If you missed it, you can learn more about Lloyd's work with biochar at: <http://biochar-consulting.com/>

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## The AGG REPORT

by Joe Agg

My sister Stephanie lives in London England and makes frequent trips to Cornwall which is in the extreme southwest tip on the country. She rented a small cottage on the cliffs near Kynance Cove on the Lizard Peninsula. It is the most southerly point in the country. Late in the evening there was a loud knock on her door which rather frightened her as she was alone. She looked out and it was a young man and when she opened her door he frantically explained that his dog was chasing seagulls and had fallen down a cliff. He had survived the fall because he had landed in the water and had swum to a rock and was perched on it. The tide was coming in so he had swum to a ledge on the cliff and was stuck there with no way back.

Cell phones do not work at this location but there is an emergency phone which my sister used to call for help. A team of 15 Rescue people soon arrived and they set to work. (The English Love their dogs) These volunteers and are famous for rescues at sea. Many have given up their lives to help others.

Soon they had lowered a rescuer down the rocky cliff and plucked the uninjured dog from the ledge.

My sister was astonished that when the joyful owner got his dog back he did not put it on a leash. (Was it a leash free area perhaps?)

### Planning for Action Workshop

*Sunday, September 26th, Richmond Hill Library, Rooms A & B, 1 Atkinson St., Richmond Hill, ON Sunday, Sep 26, 2010. 1:00PM-5:00PM*

Enough talking, let's get into action! In collaboration with the YREA, Transition York Region is

holding a 4-hour workshop designed to get you moving, connecting, and creating. This is where the ideas really start to turn into action! There are still spaces available and it is shaping up to be an exciting event. For more information or to register and reserve your spot, please contact [fiona@yrea.org](mailto:fiona@yrea.org).

Through facilitated dialogue and activities, participants will have a chance to generate real local solutions to real local problems surrounding peak oil and climate change. Here we will create grassroots projects, both big and small, that will help our communities reduce our environmental impact, AND increase our local strength and resiliency.

Have your voice heard, your ideas tabled, and the fruits of your collaborative efforts materialized into a workable project plan! Bring a friend. \$5 Donation or Pay What You Can.



### Upcoming Mushroom Workshops with Richard Aaron

Mushroom Workshop at the University of Guelph Arboretum: Come out October 1 or October 2 for an all day workshop that will focus on developing your fungal identification skills. The guest instructor will be Richard

Aaron. For more information, visit:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/arboetum/ProgsWrkshps/ProWrkshp2.htm#Workshops>.

Fabulous Fall Fungi at Queens University Biological Station: In this 4-day workshop held October 4-8, you will learn to identify the wide variety of mushrooms and other fungi growing in great abundance at this time of year. The guest instructor will be Richard Aaron. For more information, visit [www.queensu.ca/biology/qubs/events/workshops/fabulousfungi.html](http://www.queensu.ca/biology/qubs/events/workshops/fabulousfungi.html).

Mushrooms on the Moraine: Come out to U of T's Koffler Scientific Reserve on October 9, and learn to identify many of the fascinating mushrooms and other fungi found on the Oak Ridges Moraine. The workshop will be led by Richard Aaron. For more information, visit <http://ksr.utoronto.ca/MUSHROOMS-on-the-MORAINE>.

Tour de Greenbelt  
Saturday, September 25th –  
York Region/Newmarket

Sunday, September 26th –  
Durham Region/Uxbridge

Tour de Greenbelt is a cycling event for all ages and skill levels. You can choose your distance, riding as little as 1k and up to 55k. Each route allows for scenic stops at natural attractions, farms and vineyards in the Greenbelt and riders are encouraged to enjoy the ride as well as the countryside and experiences along the way. Each day concludes with a BBQ using locally grown food with live entertainment and kids activities.

Visit <http://www.tourdegreenbelt.ca> for more information and to register.

## Perennially Cheerful : Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia Hirta*)

*Forced to stillness by unwished-for knee surgery this summer, artist and Richmond Hill Naturalist Valerie Kent spent the summer months studying and exploring the beauty in her own backyard...and received a gift she had not expected.*

*Photograph, artwork and text by Valerie Kent*

No one can guess the future, and it seems that it is always right out of the blue that we may be brought up short, and something gets our total attention, something important. It may even be said that we meet up with our, sometimes long term, sometimes short term, destinies. This spring I had a set back, but many others have had much more severe set backs. I needed a knee replacement. I did not see it at the time as a gift. As a busy individual, and a working visual artist I fought the frustration of slowing down, of not being able to be and do all the things I have always done. Today, after having had the surgery, I realize with gratitude that it was not life-threatening, and that for now, I could concentrate on getting better on a day by day basis. I am so fortunate.

So, not being able to travel far this summer, I concentrated on the perennials I planted over the last ten years, and had not really had time to



study and enjoy them. I found time to cut and bring them into the house and put them into vases extending their beauty into my everyday surroundings. And then, last week, I was finally able to get out the paints and brushes and do watercolour sketches. These Black Eyed Susans line the pathway to my recovery: from a flower bed of them close to the house, to the vase on the dining room table to their beauty at the tip of my brush loaded with golden sunshine.

When we successfully overcome an obstacle in our lives and go on to become well again, we become stronger and engage a more personal resilience than we have ever possessed before. We realize that we can do so much more with our lives, do so much for others. It becomes almost a rallying cry, a call to action. Let the time we have discovered to be so precious be used to create, to build on our skills, to do good for others.

When sorrow is heavy, when things are not as could be wished, think of the Black Eyed Susan and may its perennially cheerful sunny disposition be the connection that provides the strength to carry on.

For more information on Valerie, please see her blog at: <http://valeriekent.fineartstudioonline.com/blog>

## Passings

MARGARET RILEY passed away July 8, 2010 days after her 90th birthday. A longtime and loyal member of the Richmond Hill Naturalists, Margaret worked for 26 years for the department of Forestry and Botany, University of Toronto's Glendon Hall, sending seeds out to countries that requested them. She corresponded with a veritable commonwealth of friends around the world, many of whom she visited after retiring from the University of Toronto. Margaret was also very interested in birds and went on two guided birding trips to Australia and Africa. She was always thrilled when a robin nested in her yard.

Margaret arrived in Canada in 1946 after accepting an airmail proposal to marry her childhood friend Len. They built their home and gardens on a veteran's acre in old Thornhill. Margaret and Len were proud parents of David, John and Mari. Margaret taught her children to love and appreciate nature, with the help of the creek off their very own backyard. We know her

son John Riley through his work in the Rouge Park and the Conservancy of Canada.

Margaret was a strong advocate for issues and nature, making many phone calls and writing some wonderful letters. Recently she had sent us copies of the letters sent to the University and the Province regarding the Dunlap Observatory.

Margaret was founder of a War Bride group, member of the Thornhill United Church (60 years), Richmond Hill Naturalists, Royal Canadian Institute and Women's Institute, and a supporter of compassionate and environmental causes of all kinds. She maintained her centuries-long family tradition in horticulture, as Life Member of the Thornhill Garden and Horticultural Society (President, Secretary) and Honourary Member of the Alumni Association of the Niagara Parks Commission School of Horticulture.

Marion Martindale, Marianne Yake and Katherine Lindsay (Riley)

