

COMMANDA AND AREA NATURALISTS

Newsletter March 2009

It was wonderful to see twenty three people turn up for the club's first get-together on Wednesday March 25th. We are very grateful to the Commanda Community Centre's board of directors for allowing us the use of such a wonderful facility.

Commanda village was chosen as the club's hub for a number of reasons. Its location allows us to reach out to communities such as Loring, Arnstein, Golden Valley, Restoule, Nipissing, Powassan, Chisholm, Sundridge, South River, Trout Creek and everywhere in between. And the village community centre has ample room to accommodate club presentations and activities, not to mention its well equipped kitchen for future club potlucks.

The area surrounding the centre is rural with enough creeks, wetlands, forests and backroads to keep any naturalist busy.

The Commanda Community Centre will make a great home for our club. I hope to see many familiar and new faces at our next meeting.

Diane Bourdon



Next Meeting April 29th 7 - 9 p.m.

The Hidden World

A small independent filmmaker's fascinating account of the daily life and rearing of barred owl chicks in the family's backyard nesting box. Superb, high quality still & motion photography.

Learn to Recognize Owl calls

the common ones and those rarely found in guide books

Take Home an Easy-to-Follow Owl id Key

Build a Saw Whet Owl Roosting Box

Let me know ASAP if you would be interested in putting together a roosting box for your property. I will buy the materials and cut the wood to size ahead of time. Just bring (or share) a drill, a hammer and a multipurpose screwdriver. Cost to cover materials should be around \$6-\$8 I think. I will know more when I have an idea how many people are interested. Contact Diane at (705) 729-1438 woodlandpresentations@ontera.net

~ Bring a friend - We'll have a hooting time ~



April 22 - Earth Day

Did you know that Earth Day Canada is a national environmental charity founded in 1990 to provide us Canadians with practical tools and knowledge to reduce our impact on the environment? Check out www.earthday.ca for more information.

Surely as naturalists we could do something for the environment on Earth Day?

Perhaps next year we'll be better organized and plan an activity to coincide with this special day. In the meantime, we can still individually do our part:

Wednesday April 22nd

at The Blue Canoe, 100 Ottawa Street
in South River

**Edible & Medicinal
Slideshow 7 - 9 p.m.**

Cost: donation contact Alexis Burnett
earthtracks@gmail.com

- ❖ Change from paper utility and banking statements to electronic statements and reduce our use of 700 - 900 sheets of paper and 200 envelopes a year
- ❖ Think of ways to reduce our need for non-recycle and non-reusable waste such as plastic bottles and grocery bags
- ❖ Go for a walk on April 22nd and pick up all the trash we see along the way

March's Meeting

For those of you who could not make our first get-together, the evening began with displays by Woodland Presentations, a Restoule company that offers nature day camps for kids and nature presentations at provincial parks, clubs and local lodges. The displays included replica bird eggs, animal skulls and tracks, lichen, winter twigs and other nature - oriented materials.

Diane Bourdon, the evening's facilitator, then welcomed everyone, thanked the centre's board of directors for use of the facility and introduced the featured short film of the evening *Wild Adventures-World of Weasels* by Karvonen Productions.

We learned from the film that the three Canadian weasels (least weasel, long-tailed weasel and short-tailed weasel or ermine) turn white in winter. Other members of the Canadian mustelidae family—



“mustelids” referring to the musk anal glands of these animals—are the minks, fishers, martens (or martins), wolverines, black-footed ferrets, badgers, sea otters and their cousins, the river otters.

Although the skunk has musk glands and was mentioned in the film as being a member of the mustelidae family, biologists have more recently determined genetically that skunks descended the evolutionary tree from a different ancestor than mustelids. Skunks now have their own family designation—the Mephitidae.

The evening ended with an interesting round of wildlife sighting stories that ranged from an owl attacking hockey pucks at an outdoor rink to a weasel descending from an attic and running around the inside of a house.

Other sightings included wolf, fox, and marten tracks, a barred owl roosting on a tree limb, a starling egg found on a driveway on March 15th, a bald eagle flying above Restoule's dump (it has been there all winter), a gentle owl found sitting on a rear seat of a school bus, a weasel loitering in a barn, geese honking in the skies, and trumpeter swans swimming around the open running water of Restoule River at the bridge. One member observed a weasel with its white winter pelt walking backwards for quite a ways out of a snowbank with a mole or a vole in its mouth.

The group also discussed what was happening in the night sky. According to the astronomy website (www.pntelelescope.ca), which has a link to North Bay's astronomy club, Mercury remains in the morning eastern sky but is not very high nor well placed right now for viewing. Venus by the 25th of March had dropped too low to be seen, so the bright planet that we saw in our night sky was probably Saturn which rose just as the sun set in the southern sky and was visible all night long. Sirius of the constellation Canis Major (the big dog) was and is still the brightest star in the sky and can be seen to the southeast of the Orion constellation, low in the sky to the south.

The Commanda Community Centre has a coffee service available for us to use during our meetings. Please drop a donation in the box and help keep the area tidy.



Commanda Community Center Spring FLing

The annual spring dance

**Saturday April 18th
8 p.m.**

\$20 for non-members

\$15 for members

Purchase tickets at Gerry's
General Store in Restoule,
Renee's Café in South
River and the Commanda
Post Office

Music by Peter Cliche, Jim
Harney and their band

Unfortunately, the Almaguin News did not publish the short write-up with accompanying photos that was sent in after our first naturalist meeting last month. In the write-up, I extended an invitation to local nature writers, crafters and hobbyists to present their projects to us at future naturalist meetings.

Alexis Burnett, who attended our first meeting and who is presenting the *Edible & Medicinal Slide-show* this coming month at the Blue Canoe, has expressed an interest in doing a future presentation for us. He ran the Orangeville Tracking and Nature club for 7 years. I will pursue this.



**Please, feel free to send me (Diane)
information to include in upcoming newsletters**

It looks like Brenda Skinner, local author of *Utter Peace and Tranquility: A Year at Skinner's Pond*, will be presenting her book at our May meeting. We are finalizing details at this time.

As well, if you have any good/great photos of animals, plants, scenery, etc... that you would like to share with your fellow naturalists, bring them along in hard copy or disc/usb and I can put them up on the screen. Perhaps you might even share the story behind the photos.

