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# Nature Niagara News



Bulletin No. 311  
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Niagara Falls  
Nature Club

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Post Office Box 901, Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2E 6V8  
<http://niagaranatureclub.tripod.com>

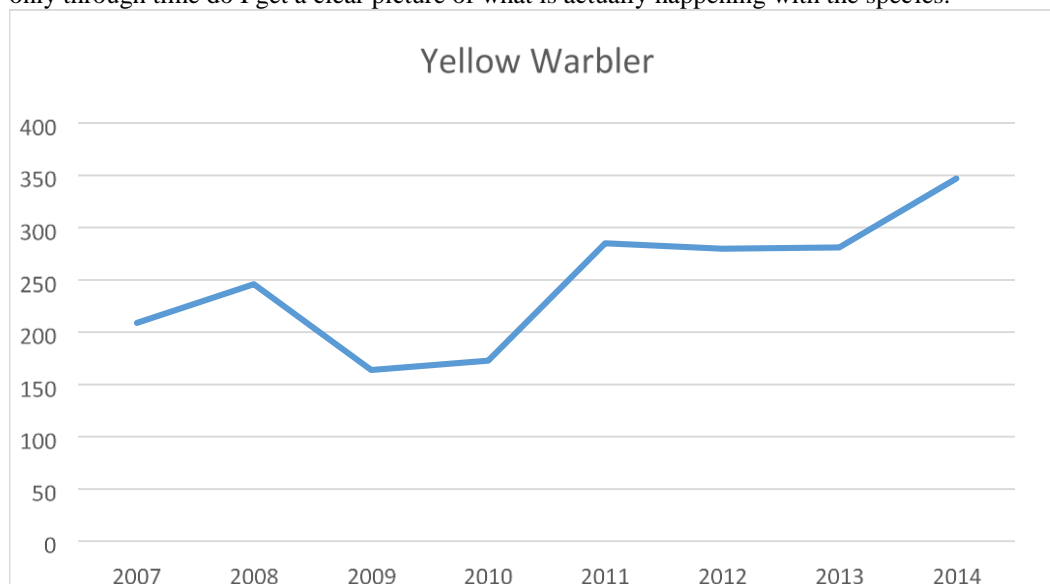
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## ROCK POINT BIRD BANDING STATION 2014

Many of you are familiar with my banding station and I take this opportunity to thank individual members who volunteer, the club for financial support, and others for their participation in annual meetings and visits to the station. It is all of this that enable me to continue to enjoy what in this year will be my 15<sup>th</sup> year in running the station.

Bird banding may be controversial to some because of the perceived harm that occurs to the birds. I would be remiss in saying that we never, ever, have anything happen. I can say with assurance that the incidents are few and far between and are not always as a result of our handling birds. If this was not the case, my love for birds would preclude me from participating in banding. Instead I must say that I perceive the stations of the Canadian Migration Network as the front line in determining the health and long term trends in various species.

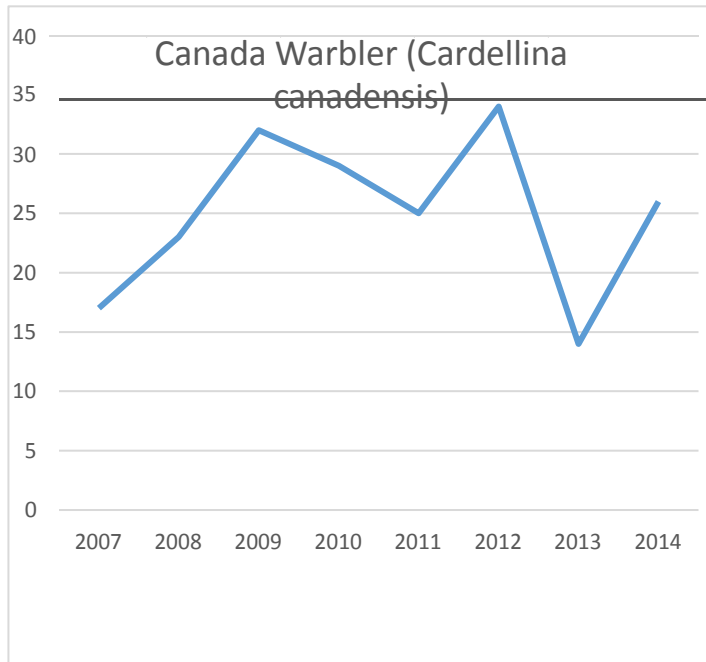
Off the top of my head I have to say that over the 14 years the trend on most graphs is showing a downward projection. I was happy to see that at least for last year that Yellow Warbler numbers were up. So many variables come into this evaluation that only through time do I get a clear picture of what is actually happening with the species.



Bird Studies Canada is the go to organization when it comes to planning and implementing conservation measures based on an analysis of data from all Canadian Migration Monitoring Stations. The individual stations give an insight to different species in parts of Canada allowing a more comprehensive picture of species declines or increase either as an ongoing phenomena or as a cyclic event. Such things as the absence or abundance of Spruce Bud Worm can change the success of a breeding season from year to year for a number of Wood Warblers.

Canada Warbler which is now considered a threatened species is one of the last birds to migrate north and also one of the first birds to migrate south. Historically banding stations have not started banding until September 1. I have found that if I am not out in the last two weeks of August I may very well have few banded Canada Warblers. Certainly not a deciding factor in having a bird designated as threatened since Bird Studies Canada and other organizations are able to look at a much larger picture than is available to me.

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
17	23	32	29	25	34	14	26



Last Fall was certainly weird in relation to migration. The summer like September seemed to keep birds from thinking about migration. We did get the species we expected but not in the numbers. October had species normally seen in September. Species normally gone appearing again in some cases in higher numbers than in September. We had Magnolia Warblers hanging around into late October meeting, perhaps, for the first time Orange-crowned Warblers which normally are late migrants. Nashville Warblers also hung around later than expected. This made for a disappointing September and a more than interesting October.

A highlight of the season was an Olive-sided Flycatcher which I had seen on one of the dead trees but a few days later it was caught and banded. Of course I was off that day. These are not commonly caught birds and to my memory only one other has been banded in Haldimand. It was strange that we caught relatively few White-throated Sparrows this season, 195 in comparison to 358 and 387 in the past two years. We had more than normal Bay-breasted Warblers with 13 rather than single digits in most years. So ups and downs from year to year and only through looking at a number of years does a clear picture emerge as to how the species are doing.

Jim Smith



Canada Warbler



Yellow Warbler

## BRUCE KERSHNER TRIBUTE

Those of us who have been blessed to be involved with the Niagara Falls Nature Club for the past decade have benefited greatly by our association with Bruce Kershner. While he died on February 16, 2006 at the age of 56, memories of his passion and intelligence live on.

Bruce resembled a giant of our ecosystem, the towering White Pine, which, unless logged out, towers over our forests. A typical moment of his life was in September 2003, when he was in the town of Norway, Maine, and discovered an old growth tract of White Pine giants more than 140 feet in height, exceeding the previous state record of 132 feet. Bruce also found giant trees in his home town of New York City. He confirmed reports of a Tulip tree giant in Alley Pond Park on a successful tree stalking expedition on a busy Queens highway.

Moved by a devout Jewish faith, Kershner had all the amazing qualities of an enthusiastic Jewish intellectual, which caused him to refuse to buckle to the obscurantist smoke screens of paid “experts” of developers. One day doing successful field work preparing for an Ontario Municipal Board, (OMB) hearing in which he rescued a threatened forest containing endangered species on Garner Road in Niagara Falls, I got a little taste of this. He told Jean Grandoni, a dedicated conservationist, and me, “These experts won’t even accept the Redwoods of California as old growth. They say that there are other trees in association with these giants which do not conform to old growth forest criteria. This is like saying that a nursing home is not full of seniors, since they depend on the younger nursing staff.”

Kershner had a wonderful magnetism to motivate people to get out there to protect nature. Typical was the effective way he mobilized the public’s attention to defend an old growth forest near Syracuse, New York. Volunteers were lured effectively in the campaign by an appeal to those with a “love of trees”, “thrill of discovery” and an “ability to explore all kinds of terrain” to join in. Those who did would be rewarded with being able to “Stand in awe under the inspiring primeval forest of Green Lakes State Park! See the Wizard of Oz Ancient Oak Grove, the actual woods that inspired Frank Baum to create the “Enchanted Forest of the Wizard of Oz”.

Win Laar of our Niagara Falls Nature Club has expressed how she was privileged to discover under Bruce’s guidance new wonders of the Niagara Gorge. She was stunned to encounter “an area of seeps where the water dripped continually down the cliff face, creating both stalactites and stalagmites, and deep cushions of green mosses where little wrens peered out with shining black eyes. It was magical like nothing else I had seen. How he knew it was there was a wonder to me.” Bruce also took Win to see a grove of old growth cedars deep in the Niagara Gorge, that were entirely clones of the same tree.

One of Kershner’s most gruelling battles was to rescue the then 70 acre Klydel wetland (named after the developer), which eventually became, largely through his efforts, the North Tonawanda Audubon Nature Reserve. Like similar Pin Oak swamp forests that dominate much of eastern Niagara, it is full of vernal pools that provide breeding habitat for amphibian species. Kershner used Klydel’s refusal to allow him access to the site for a field inventory to create a public relations disaster for the corporation on television.

Another battle where Kershner had to do a lot of litigation to get onto the lands of threatened forest was a property formerly owned by Klydel in Niagara Falls. Here after litigation at the OMB by the lawyer for Jean Grandoni, Eric Gillespie, Bruce was able to gain access to the site. He discovered an endangered species, the White Wood Aster. After he issued a blistering Witness Statement against expert evidence that proposed to relocate this threatened species, the developer gave up before the scheduled hearing. The 11 acre forest full of vernal pools, a rare Buttonbush community and another threatened species, the Round-leaved Greenbrier, was subsequently donated as a protected landscape to the City of Niagara Falls.

Less than two years after his death on September 8, 2008, the “Bruce Kershner Old Growth Forest Preservation and Protection Act,” was passed by the New York State legislature. It protects from development all the state-owned old growth forests. It recognizes how these forests are important to “transpire water and to provide shade and woody debris to streams, rivers and creeks to provide habitat for endangered species...and retain moisture that enhances water quality and quantity.” The law also acknowledges “the ability of old growth forests to sequester carbon, thereby helping to avoid an increase in the level of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere.”

While Bruce’s heroics at OMB hearings may seem a difficult act to follow, this year there is an easier way to have your passions to protect the earth have an impact on public policy caused by the 2015 Greenbelt Review. This is a wonderful opportunity to document the ecological wonders of our threatened Niagara Region by gathering evidence and speaking out in appropriate forums, that all the currently designated agriculturally and environmentally zoned lands and significant forests be protected from sprawl. In doing this you will also honour one of our most inspired champions of the earth, Bruce Kershner

John Bacher

## BIRDING ALONG LAKE ONTARIO

It was great to be part of the annual Lake Ontario shoreline waterfowl hunt. The event started at Tim’s in Vineland where carpooling was arranged. It was a cool day for mid. November hovering around the freezing mark all day. The first stop at Victoria Avenue yielded Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Ring-billed Gull, and Bufflehead. Numbers seemed a bit lower than in previous years. From there we travelled to Grimsby to 40 Creek Park at the foot of Elizabeth Street. It is a scenic little bay and park where the waters of 40 mile creek empty into Lake Ontario. There we spotted Red-tailed Hawk, Mallard, a domestic Mallard, American Black Duck, Great Blue Heron, Herring Gull, White-winged Scoter, Hooded Merganser, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, and Canada Goose. Also of interest was a large fish swimming along the shoreline which was judged to be a salmon. This is a spawning creek for Salmon, a bit late in the season for this one maybe. There is a trail that follows the creek which is excellent for songbirds leading right from the parking lot. From there we went to Murray St. Park in Grimsby where most of the same species were again seen. After a quick washroom break at Niagara Gateway we proceeded past

50 Point Park on to Lawrence P. Sayers Park where there were a number of Long-tailed Ducks, White-winged Scoters, and Common Mergansers. The leisurely drive along the service roads yielded many Red-tailed Hawks. The next stop was Windermere Basin where a few other species were spotted. The list included Gadwall, American Coot, Hooded Merganser, Double-crested Cormorant, and Mallard. And on to the canal at Hamilton Bay where there again seemed to be fewer species than normal. At this point the group went on to La Salle Park and Karin and I stayed on a few minutes watching a ship appear out of the fog. It was eerie but the wait did yield us a Northern Mockingbird. Thanks to Rick for sending his summary of birds sighted that day. At La Salle Park Trumpeter Swan, Eastern Screech Owl, American Black Duck, Greater Scaup, American Coot, Mallard, and Horned Grebe were all seen. Then on to Hendrie Valley where Northern Shoveler, Song Sparrow, and Cedar Waxwing were added to the list. It was good day overall. Thank you to Don and Gisele for leading the hike. One of the highlights of the day for us was the socializing with fellow naturalists. Looking forward to next year's hike.

Karin & Paul Philp



**MEMBERS AT  
WINDERMERE BASIN**

### **GULL OUTING**

A dozen or more folks from all three Nature Clubs in the Niagara Region gathered at the control dam above the falls on the Niagara River at 9.30 am in early December for our annual Gull Outing

This outing as it has been for many years was once again led by Kayo Roy.

At this location we had Herring Gulls. Greater Black Backed Gull and a Glaucous Gull. In addition to some Bufflehead.

Since a European Tree Sparrow had been reported in Niagara on the Lake Kayo decided to check that out first. Fortunately the bird was seen by most of the group at a feeder among a flock of House Sparrows.

After a coffee break we checked out the mouth of the Niagara River seeing Mallards, Oldsquaw, Bufflehead and a Redhead consorting with a female Scaup.

Our next stop was at the Queenston Dock hoping to see a Little Gull but no luck. We did see a number of Bonoparte Gulls.

Moving on we stopped at the Adam Beck power station to check out the gulls below the Robert Moses power station on the New York side. We did see one Iceland Gull among the more common ones.

Summarizing, Kayo figured the number of migratory Gulls this year was low perhaps due to the fact that there was still plenty open water to the north of here.

Rick Young



**QUEENSTON OVERLOOK**

# CONTRIBUTIONS

Your editing team would like to thank you for your contributions that make this an interesting and valuable newsletter.

Please send contributions to:

Carol Horvat [chorvat1@cogeco.ca](mailto:chorvat1@cogeco.ca) or

Rick Young [rick.y@sympatico.ca](mailto:rick.y@sympatico.ca)

## PLEASE NOTE

**IT IS NOW TIME TO RENEW YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP FOR 2015**

**Dues can be paid at regular meetings  
or mailed to**

**Niagara Falls Nature Club  
P.O. Box 901 Niagara Falls Ontario  
L2E 6V8**

**\$25 for individuals \$35 for families**

## DECEMBER MEMBERS NIGHT

Our festive Christmas Party was a very pleasant evening. Wonderful goodies were contributed by club members. Rick young started the program by showing us 'birds in hand' from the Rock Point Banding Station where he volunteers. He had a good cross selection of warblers, sparrows, thrushes and hawks. The audience was amused at the female Cardinal with a 'bad hair day' and wondered where the orange was on the Orange-Crowned Warbler. The juvenile Common Yellowthroat warbler looks very different from the parents. Rick stated the fall migration this year was at its peak in October not the usual September.

Next, Preston Darling, age 10, with a little help from his father, Ian, talked about the group outing to the Skins Room of the Royal Ontario Museum. Preston was impressed with the long corridors in a large room filled with storage cabinets. Each cabinet had multiple drawers containing of fifteen to twenty bird 'skins'. Mark Peck of the ROM explained that every bird was tagged with species, when received, where it originated and in some cases who donated it. Preston talked of the Pacific Loon and of the Bird of Paradise's lovely long curve tail. Ian told the story of the Rufous Hummingbird, Anna, which was donated by a member of our club and is still in the tiny box it was received in.. Preston showed pictures of the egg collection. He held the egg of the extinct Elephant Bird. In all there are about 140,000 skins at the ROM.

Win and Kal Laar have been walking sections of the Bruce Trail since 2011. This summer and fall they experienced the areas of Terra Cotta Conservation Area, Devil's Pulpit and the Forks of the Credit River. Win most enjoyed a field of milkweed with lots of butterflies and dragonflies. Fringed Loosestrife, Mayapple, Squawroot numerous fern types lined the paths. A lot of the trail here is along the road that allowed a stop for hot cider at Spirit Tree Cider Restaurant. A steep section near Devil's Pulpit was a challenge but the reward was Eastern Bluebirds in the apple trees. They encountered an infestation of Dog Strangling Vine that is so difficult to eradicate. A lovely Cedar forest and a very large Hop Hornbeam brightened one day. Much was enjoyed. Hopefully Win will share more another time.

Iqaluit, capital of Nunavut is just south of the Arctic circle but is considered to have an arctic climate. Joyce Sankey with son Brian flew up to visit son Philip who has lived in Iqaluit for three years. Of the roughly 7,000 people sixty percent are Inuit. The city is sprawling with unpaved roads and very friendly people.

Most buildings are built on stilts to preserve the permafrost. However some modern ones have thermosypanes. Everything comes in by plane or by sealift during the short time the harbour is free of ice. Art is everywhere. Artwork is displayed in the streets, in homes and in galleries. The Anglican Church is shaped as an igloo. In nearby Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park the river is fished for char. Hiking here revealed the very low plants that form a cushion to create a microclimate. The lichens were great but the Willow trees barely showed above the boulders. They saw Blueberries, Artic Cotton Grass, lots of sedges and the Artic Poppy. Many plants have dark hairs that attract the heat. There was much to see and learn. Joyce would like to go again.

Albert Garofalo is the liaison and representative for the nature and the nature clubs on the citizens advisory committee for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. This committee meets every two months and has representatives from agriculture, development, wineries and municipalities.

At the November meeting the topic was a master plan for Cave Springs. This is a fantastic park with access from above and below the escarpment.

Folklore is associated with the site and stone First Nation Artifacts. It has needs that should be addressed. Albert will try to report after each meeting.

Thanks to these great speakers for entertaining and enlightening us.

Janet Damude



# NIAGARA FALLS ON/NY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2014

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>ONTARIO</u>	<u>NEW YORK</u>	<u>COUNT TOTAL</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>ONTARIO</u>	<u>NEW YORK</u>	<u>COUNT TOTAL</u>
Cackling Goose	1		1	Lesser Black-backed Gull	1		1
Canada Goose	3007	2477	5484	Glaucous Gull	1	3	4
Mute Swan	6		6	Great Black-backed Gull	47	32	79
Gadwall	4		4	<i>gull, sp</i>	52		52
American Wigeon	12		12	Rock Pigeon	330	445	775
American Black Duck	18	2	20	Mourning Dove	181	129	310
Mallard	266	72	338	Eastern Screech-Owl		4	4
Northern Shoveler	3		3	Great Horned Owl	1		1
Northern Pintail		1	1	Snowy Owl	2	1	3
Canvasback	1		1	Belted Kingfisher	3		3
Redhead	14	24	38	Red-bellied Woodpecker	18	27	45
Greater Scaup	78	67	145	Downy Woodpecker	38	42	80
Lesser Scaup		24	24	Hairy Woodpecker	4	9	13
Surf Scoter		1	1	Northern Flicker	9	11	20
White-winged Scoter	7	139	146	Pileated Woodpecker		2	2
<i>surf/black scoter, sp</i>		6	6	Northern Shrike		1	1
Long-tailed Duck	95	240	335	Blue Jay	128	182	310
Bufflehead	69	6	75	American Crow	47	72	119
Common Goldeneye	192	206	398	<b>Common Raven</b>		2	<b>2</b>
Hooded Merganser	22	1	23	Black-capped Chickadee	119	89	208
Common Merganser	80	60	140	Tufted Titmouse	7	7	14
Red-breasted Merganser	32	351	383	Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	7	10
duck, sp	4		4	White-breasted Nuthatch	36	32	68
Ring-necked Pheasant	1		1	Brown Creeper	11	1	12
Wild Turkey	7	2	9	Carolina Wren	30	6	36
Red-throated Loon	4	24	28	Winter Wren	1	4	5
Common Loon	2	2	4	Golden-crowned Kinglet	8	4	12
Horned Grebe	4	10	14	Eastern Bluebird		27	27
Red-necked Grebe		3	3	Hermit Thrush	1	1	2
Double-crested Cormorant	16	25	41	American Robin	247	104	351
Great Blue Heron	22		22	Northern Mockingbird	14	12	26
Black Vulture		7	<b>7</b>	European Starling	6802	1254	8056
Turkey Vulture		36	<b>36</b>	Yellow-rumped Warbler		2	2
Bald Eagle	2	2	4	American Tree Sparrow	74	88	162
Northern Harrier	2		2	Chipping Sparrow		1	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	4	7	Song Sparrow	2	5	7
Cooper's Hawk	7	2	9	Swamp Sparrow	1	2	3
<i>accipiter, sp</i>	1		1	White-throated Sparrow	9	26	35
Red-tailed Hawk	37	60	97	White-crowned Sparrow	2	2	4
American Kestrel	8	3	11	Dark-eyed Junco	255	154	409
Merlin	1	1	2	Northern Cardinal	111	109	220
Peregrine Falcon		1	1	Red-winged Blackbird		1	1
American Coot	8	1	9	Brown-headed Cowbird	3		3
Bonaparte's Gull	1349	48	1397	House Finch	30	49	79
Ring-billed Gull	389	810	1199	Pine Siskin		4	4
Herring Gull	2288	789	3077	American Goldfinch	84	102	186
Thayer's Gull	1		1	House Sparrow	385	452	837
Iceland Gull	2	6	8	<b>Eurasian Tree Sparrow</b>	1		<b>1</b>
				<i>birds, sp</i>		7	7

**TOTAL SPECIES**  
**TOTAL INDIVIDUALS**

**90**  
**26190**

**NIAGARA FALLS NATURE CLUB**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31 2014**

REVENUE	2014	2013
Memberships	\$ 1,845.00	\$ 1,690.00
Donation     H.S. Martin Memorial Award Conservation	\$ 286.00	\$ 559.00
Bank Interest		\$ 143.78
Fund Raising (Draws Coffee Profit Crest Books Plant Sale)	\$ 132.75	\$ 100.48
Other Income: Annual Dinner Meeting	\$ 1,539.00	\$ 1,700.00
	\$ 3,802.75	\$ 4,193.26
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Bulletins (printing, envelopes, postage)	\$ 130.59	\$ 231.80
Meetings (incl. "Directions" Meetings, Rent, Speakers)	\$ 676.00	\$ 722.50
Printing (Schedules)	\$ 111.88	\$ 111.88
Liability Insurance (F.O.N)	\$ 453.60	\$ 440.64
Rental P.O. Box	\$ 169.50	\$ 169.50
MISC.	\$ 17.10	\$ 32.04
Administration		\$ 70.29
Annual Dinner Meeting	\$ 1,588.00	\$ 1,706.50
Donations-   The Owl Foundation	\$ 350.00	\$ 350.00
Brock University (H.S.M. Memorial Award)		\$ 60.00
Computer & Office Program		\$ 1,245.26
Bruce Trail	\$ 75.00	\$ 50.00
Adopt-A-Pond (Toronto Zoo)	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00
Haldimand Bird Observatory	\$ 250.00	
Fatal Light Awareness	\$ 100.00	
Climate Action Niagara	\$ 30.00	
Memorial Donation	\$ 25.00	
Committee Expenses		
Archives		
Awards	\$ 33.90	\$ 39.55
Subscriptions and fees:		
Friends of the Land Trust	\$ 150.00	\$ 150.00
Ontario Nature (F.O.N.)	\$ 83.00	\$ 75.00
Canadian Nature Federation (C.N.F)	\$ 75.00	\$ 75.00
Long Point Bird Observatory	\$ 35.00	\$ 35.00
	\$ 4,403.57	\$ 5,614.96
Excess of Revenue over expense	\$ (600.82)	\$ (1,421.70)
Balance of assets January 1/2013	\$ 10,781.83	\$ 12,203.53
Balance of Assets December 31 ,2014	\$ 10,181.01	\$ 10,781.83
Bank Account #124851369	\$ 2,651.01	\$ 3,251.83
Certificate of Deposit	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,500.00
Membership Floater	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00
	\$ 10,181.01	\$ 10,781.83
Assets consisting of:-		
Current Account	\$ 8,092.53	\$ 8,229.35
Designated Conservation	\$ 1,430.00	\$ 1,894.00
Howard Martin Memorial Award		
Funds for Fieldwork	\$ 658.48	\$ 658.48
	\$ 10,181.01	\$ 10,781.83

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**The Nature Club Outing on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2015  
to Fisherville and Selkirk.**

**We will now depart Fonthill at 8.30 am sharp  
rather than 9.30 am.**

**The intention is to attend the Haldimand AGM where  
Jody Allair and Jenna McDermott will be giving presentations.**

**In the afternoon we will visit Fisherville to  
check for Owls etc.**