

THE NEST BOX, NUMBER 9, DECEMBER 2003

THE OTTAWA DUCK CLUB

726 Weston Drive, Ottawa, ON, K1G 1W2

<http://odc.ncf.ca>



CLUB NEWS

Anne Hackston

The Ottawa Duck Club would like to dedicate this issue of The Nest Box to the memory of **Anne Hackston** who died on October 12 after a brief illness. **Dale Crook** wrote:

Anne joined the club in 1997 and was a keen birder. She often birded places like Point Pelee and Presqu'île with her friend, **Lynn Ryan**. Each year they participated in the Baillie Birdathon and designated the Ottawa Duck Club to receive a portion of their pledged funds.

Anne's last write-up of her 2002 Birdathon Report, in which she reported on 98 species seen, was detailed and enriched with her personal observations, showing her love of birding. She ended her report with a quote: "Seeing the spring at Point Pelee is more than a casual visit. It is checking up on the rhythms of existence as they struggle up from the cold of winter. To walk in the sun among singing warblers and smiling faces is reassurance that life is rich, right and ongoing."

Our sympathies go out to her husband, David, and their sons, Andrew and Iain.

Insurance

Club members got an unpleasant surprise on August 10, when **Bill Bower** sent this message:

"We have received notice from our insurance broker (Balmoral Insurance Brokers Ltd.) that our insurance coverage will expire on August 15th (this Friday). Our insurance was with Glengarry Farmers Mutual. Apparently this

company is no longer willing to insure organizations such as ours. We have purchased insurance from them for over 20 years. Since this notification was received, our broker has attempted to find coverage with other companies but without success. Any coverage obtained would have annual premiums in the range of \$5,000 (minimum). We were paying just under \$1,000 annually. Obviously, the Club cannot afford premiums in the \$5,000 range, or higher.

We have to have insurance coverage to continue to operate on DND lands and this clause has been written into the MOU which was signed several months back. I will bring it to the attention of DND officials that we will not be able to operate at the sanctuary after the 15th until our insurance problem has been solved.

One issue that is working against us is the Club's responsibility for managing the storm water system control dams. This was written into the Operating Instructions and the Certificate. We have been completing our responsibilities for the past 10 years without incident and don't feel anything we have done or could do would lead to any type of claim.

Regardless, we will not be able to continue performing this function and will have to advise the City, DND, PWGSC and others accordingly. I will be in touch with **Ron** on this.

In the meantime, we will have to search the market on our own for coverage. If any of you know of agents, companies, contacts, or organizations such as ours that have coverage please make some inquiries yourselves and/or get back to me. Another company may look more favourably on our situation. Our agent (Lori Hogg) will continue to act on our behalf but there are no positive signs at this point. Any other advice would be appreciated.

According to the MOU we signed, the Club must carry \$1,000,000 of public liability insurance. We would also like to continue to carry insurance on our buildings and equipment. Depending on the rates, the latter may no longer be possible. Maybe someone else could comment on what coverage we should have.

I'm hoping this setback is only temporary and that we will find coverage at a reasonable rate. Feel free to throw out your ideas."

Apparently people did throw out some ideas and as a result the Ottawa Duck Club has now joined the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. We had learned that the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club, the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and the Innes Point Bird Banders all had insurance under the umbrella of the FON. It seemed timely and appropriate for the ODC to join the provincial body concerned with conservation that is also the voice of nature in Ontario. As an FON group member, we became part of a Nature Network of 125 member groups across the province. Regional forums are held twice a year where we can learn of other conservation work within our area and share the results of our efforts.

We have applied to LMS Prolink Ltd., for our insurance and we await their offer.

Bill also met the City of Ottawa and the people who manage their stormwater ponds (CH2M Canada Ltd.) and from now on the City will be responsible for all issues related to the stormwater management ponds, including stop log adjustments on all three control dams and reporting. This not only improves our chances of getting insurance at a reasonable cost, it also frees the club from a potentially dangerous activity.

Coming Events

No regular meetings are scheduled at this time.

ANNUAL MEETING - Tuesday March 16, 2004

Members

George Martin had an operation on one of his knees on November 27. He expects to be putting the boots to slackers this winter. Earlier that week, **Lee and Sarah Martin** became parents for the first time, a great-grandson for George.

****Don't forget to RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, using the handy renewal form and return address label enclosed. This would also be a good time for members to make a donation to the club. Tax receipts will be sent out soon for 2003. Some members (you know who you are) didn't pay their dues in 2003. We hope you'll renew your support in 2004. Even though you may not be an active member, your support is needed and appreciated..****

Summer 2003

Access to the sanctuary was pretty good in July as the Canadian Forces Small Arms Competition was cancelled. There was no word on whether that was because they ran out of bullets or soldiers.

Bill reported that all the floating nests on the Boegel Pond were used this year—two by mallards and five by geese. Predators got to one mallard nest and ate the eggs, while two goose nests were abandoned. The successful mallard's nest was on the structure **Don Davies** modified with a smaller opening to discourage squatting by geese. Looks like a winner.

On July 2, **Austin Taverner** sent the wood duck and hooded merganser stats for the summer box check and noted that: "The mosquitoes were the worst I've ever experienced around Dyke Pond after the rain yesterday. So far we have 538 WD eggs laid and 249 hatched (4 nests still active so I expect the final count will be around 50% WD hatch). This is better than 2000 and 2002 but not as good as 2001 where we had 64% hatch rate (524 eggs laid and 340 hatched). HM eggs

were 90 laid and 61 hatched for a hatch rate of 67% (67 - 70% is about normal for HM at our sanctuary).

"With the exception of predation last year, the low WD hatch rate is due to large nests (24 or more eggs) being abandoned or unsuccessful. I guess I shouldn't complain as the totals should be about 600 - 700 new WD chicks hatched at the sanctuary after we do the winter counts."

Here is a summary of Austin's year-end report:

Hooded mergansers: 90 laid, 61 hatched = 68%
Wood ducks: 544 laid, 290 hatched = 53%;
 (success rate was 32% in 2002 and 64% in 2001);
 70 eggs not hatched in successful nests; 172 abandoned; (is this a result of predators?) only one nest predated, with 12 eggs lost; 18 chicks were banded, but no hens.

This winter we need shavings for boxes, as always. We will also continue to install predator guards and review our supply of boxes.

The final mallard and black duck stats have not been tabulated yet, but Don's new floaties are a success. Bravo Don! We still have problems with cables and hooks breaking, though.

We didn't get an approximate count of goslings, but the geese appeared to have a successful summer. Likewise for the beavers who keep cutting down our trees.

Capping off a summer full of momentous events, **WE'VE MOVED**. That's right, while you were looked out in August, Dale packed up all the nest boxes and equipment and sheds and moved them to a secret new location.

Sorry. My mistake. Actually, it's only our Web site that's moved. We can now be found at <http://odc.ncf.ca>. Check it out.

Dale has even posted the Spring 2003 Nest Box on the site and plans to put up all previous issues as well. Churchy is chuffed.

Sightings

At the end of July, Bill noted that he counted at least 15 fawns one evening, eight of them on the cut field along with five does. He also reported seeing a wild turkey near control structure #1 (field office) and said that from its behaviour, he suspected there was either a nest or young nearby. And purple martins had returned to the sanctuary.

George and Lee Martin reported three wild turkeys at the sanctuary on November 23. Dale was out a few days later and saw a goldfinch eating niger seed, lots of chickadees, mourning doves and blue jays. He also saw a huge buck, many does and got this great picture of a snowshoe hare.



CHURCHY'S COLUMN

Well, the vacation is over, summer's gone, the power is back on. Heck, it's supposed to snow tomorrow. It's a good thing the power didn't go out on a Tuesday, can you imagine being out at the sanctuary without electricity?

On the day of the blackout, my family and I were camped at Darlington Provincial Park, on the outskirts of Oshawa. Duck Club members who visit

that area might be interested in stopping by the **McLaughlin Bay** and **Second March** conservation areas on the shores of Lake Ontario. The former borders the provincial park and is on property owned by GM Canada. In fact the GM headquarters building is right there. The Second Marsh is right next to it.

Mid-August isn't the best time for bird sightings, but in addition to a flock of mute swans on Lake Ontario, we saw a pair of tundra swans in the marsh, as well as a number of black-crowned night herons.

Here are some things I learned about birds while riding my bicycle this summer:

Number 1 - A bird in the hand makes it hard to shift gears. One Sunday in July as my wife and I were returning from our morning bike ride, we saw a cedar waxwing get hit by a car a few feet from us. My wife picked up the writhing bird to move it off the road, but we decided to see if we could get it to the Wild Bird Care Centre, so I rode the rest of the way home with a bird in one hand and the other on the handle bars. The bird suffered internal injuries but made a complete recovery and was released a couple of weeks later.

Number 2 - Canada geese don't see speeding bicycles as a threat to their health. On more than one occasion while riding to work along the Ottawa River Parkway, I've had to slow down or take evasive action to avoid geese nonchalantly wandering over the bike path and once actually sleeping on it (or was that a gull, I can't remember). Colliding with a full grown Canada might not be good for the bike or rider, and could really put number 1 (above) to the test.

Tail Feathers

From a real estate ad: "Take your children or your grandchildren for walks through acres of woodlands, listen to the seagulls and great blue herrings as they take flight..."

"Wealthy Britons imported Canada geese in the 17th Century as a replacement for peasants."
Michael Valpy, Globe & Mail, Apr.22, 1993

A Russian nobleman, visiting England, returned from a day of hunting. Asked by his host if he had had a good day, he replied, "Not good at all, I shot two peasants." "You mean pheasants," his host replied. "No," the Russian said, "I mean peasants. They were insolent."



The sign says: "There's plenty of room for all God's creatures. Right next to the mashed potatoes."

Happy Chanukah

Merry Christmas

Happy New Year

to all members and their families

from Churchy, Pogo, Owl, Porkypine and the rest of the gang at the Okefenokee swamp.