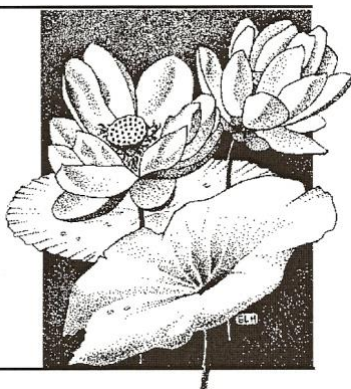


# Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



APRIL 2020



## How Can “We” Manage the Plastic Crisis?

With permission from Laura Weihs, Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club

A segment on BBC regarding plastics in the oceans prompted me to write this article. I'm sure you've all seen images of water entirely saturated with floating plastic items in “the Great Pacific Garbage Patch” as well as similar areas in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. We shake our heads in dismay, but are “we” personally doing anything about it? There are so many reasons that we need to address this issue that I don't know where to start... the amount of information available on the internet is incredible. Finally, the momentum to do something about it is starting to build!

For about six years I've regularly picked up litter on the beaches in Florida. I started when I found out that many sea turtles die when they eat plastic bags and party helium balloons that have gotten loose, sunk and the print has washed off. Sea turtles think they are jelly fish which are their favourite food. They eat them, can't pass them, then die. You would wonder how many of these balloons could end up in the ocean... well one day at St. Augustine Beach I picked up 26! Hard to believe, but they were probably all cut loose after an event. Apparently, they are a problem here too. I understand that when there was a club outing a few years back at the tip of Long Point, the beach was littered with spent helium balloons. Not only unsightly, but potentially bad for wildlife.

Just last week here in Florida a sea turtle was brought in for examination to see what had killed it. Perhaps that sea turtle's death wasn't caused by litter, but it is a common occurrence and litter can also trap fish and animals. I've picked up many fishing lures with rusty hooks and pieces of sharp glass just waiting for someone walking the beach in bare feet to step on, so collecting litter not only

helps the environment in many ways, it also helps other people. People will often say a heartfelt ‘thank you’ when they see what I'm doing which is an unexpected gift in itself on top of feeling like I'm doing something for the health of our wonderful planet!

Creatures everywhere are affected by this litter problem. Further down are suggestions as to how we individually can make a difference on a daily basis. I challenge you to avoid using plastic wraps, straws, bags and so many things that are ingrained

in our daily lives that we don't even give a second thought to. For leftovers use glass containers with lids to save money on disposable wrapping and not have the worry of chemicals leaching out of plastic into the food. Avoid buying prepackaged meat with Styrofoam trays, plastic wrap and chemical filled pads that your meat sits on for days. You'll avoid that extra packaging at the butcher and can confirm that the meat is locally sourced and humanely raised.

If possible, grow your own veggies or buy them unpackaged at the Farmer's Market.



Photo: <http://earth911.com/eco-tech/stop-plastic-pollution>

Cont'd. on p.2

Also, help with litter clean ups. This is done so easily on your own or as a group. What is on the land often ends up in the water. Every day should be “Earth Day” not just once a year. We can make a difference both individually and together... please consider my challenge to you at the end of this article!

Ten helpful suggestions to reduce plastic pollution are listed below:

These are taken from

<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/10-ways-reduce-plastic-pollution>

**1. Wean yourself off disposable plastics.**

Ninety percent of the plastic items in our daily lives are used once and then chucked: grocery bags, plastic wrap, disposable cutlery, straws, coffee-cup lids. Take note of how often you rely on these products and replace them with reusable versions. It only takes a few times of bringing your own bags to the store, silverware to the office, or travel mug to Starbucks before it becomes habit.

**2. Stop buying water.**

Each year, close to 20 billion plastic bottles are tossed in the trash. Carry a reusable bottle in your bag, and you'll never be caught having to resort to a Poland Spring or Evian again. If you're nervous about the quality of your local tap water, look into using a water filter.

**3. Boycott microbeads.**

Those little plastic scrubbers found in so many beauty products—facial scrubs, toothpaste, body washes—might look harmless, but their tiny size allows them to slip through water-treatment plants. Unfortunately, they also look just like food to some marine animals. Opt for products with natural exfoliants, like oatmeal or salt, instead.

**4. Cook more.**

Not only is it healthier, but, making your own meals doesn't involve takeout containers or doggy bags. For those times when you do order in or eat out, tell the establishment you don't need any plastic cutlery or, for some serious extra credit, bring your own food-storage containers to restaurants for leftovers.

**5. Purchase items secondhand.**

New toys and electronic gadgets, especially, come with all kinds of plastic packaging—from those frustrating hard-to-crack shells to twisty ties. Search the shelves of thrift stores, neighborhood garage sales, or online postings for items that are just as good when previously used. You'll save yourself a few bucks, too.

**6. Recycle.**

It seems obvious, but we're not doing a great job of it. For example, less than 14 percent of plastic packaging is recycled. Confused about what can and can't go in the bin? Check out the number on the bottom of the container. For the specifics in your area, refer to your local recycling directory or municipal website. For additional information go to <https://earth911.com/>

**7. Support a bag tax or ban.**

Urge your elected officials to follow the lead of those in San Francisco, Chicago, and close to 150 other cities and counties by introducing or supporting legislation that would make plastic-bag use less desirable.

**8. Buy in bulk.**

Single-serving yogurts, travel-size toiletries, tiny packages of nuts—consider the product-to-packaging ratio of items you tend to buy often and select the bigger container instead of buying several smaller ones over time.

**9. Bring your own garment bag to the dry cleaner.**

Invest in a zippered fabric bag and request that your cleaned items be returned in it instead of sheathed in plastic. (And while you're at it, make sure you're frequenting a dry cleaner that skips the perc, a toxic chemical found in some cleaning solvents.)

**10. Put pressure on manufacturers.**

Though we can make a difference through our own habits, corporations obviously have a much bigger footprint. If you believe a company could be smarter about its packaging, make your voice heard. Write a letter, send a tweet, or hit them where it really hurts: Give your money to a more sustainable competitor.

Cont'd. on p. 3

## Plastic Crisis? ...continued from Page 2

If you are interested in more, there are 50 ideas on reducing or eliminating plastic usage at:

<https://www.reefrelief.org/2013/01/51-ways-to-reduce-plastic-use-or-completely-eliminate-it/>

Are you tired of people littering and dumping in your city or neighborhood? At [http://www.litter-bug.org/report\\_littering.asp?STATE\\_PROVINCE=Ontario](http://www.litter-bug.org/report_littering.asp?STATE_PROVINCE=Ontario)

You can post your witness account, description and evidence of littering and dumping! Neighbors,

communities, and law enforcement can use Litter-Bug.org data to help prevent and deter future littering and possibly catch perpetrators of illegal dumping activity.

I'd love to see more clean ups to preserve habitat and shield our local wildlife from the harmful effects of plastics and litter. I challenge you to individually or in groups pick up litter, as well as make changes in your daily life to reduce your use of plastic products. Take action ASAP to make a difference. Every little bit helps and remember to spread the word and encourage others to do the same!



## CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE NORFOLK COUNTY LOCATIONS?

- 1) A whelping spot
- 2) The Gobbler's Knob
- 3) A famous 1773 tea party
- 4) The location of a witch's gate
- 5) In this village you cannot see the \_\_\_\_\_ for the trees
- 6) An angler's meadow
- 7) A judge's domain
- 8) A village balancing on the brink of a precipice
- 9) A significant sheep's trail
- 10) One of the three little pig's houses
- 11) Where bagpipes and thistles abound
- 12) A red harbour

Boston	Forestville
Dog's Nest	Courtland
Turkey Point	Woodhouse
Port Rowan	Wooley Road
Fisher's Glen	Doan's Hollow Cemetery
Teeterville	Scotland

Answers on page 7



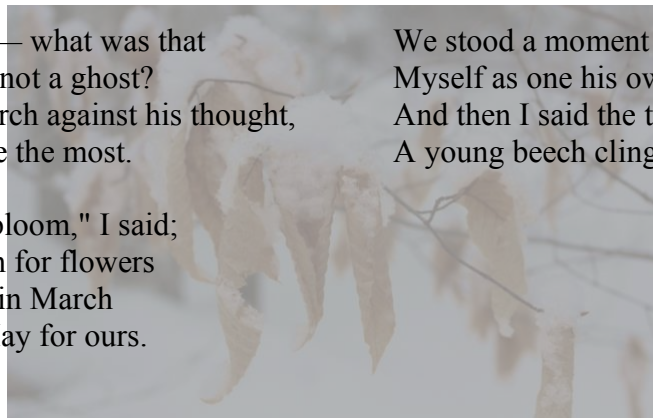
On our Tree ID Hike, Cindy Presant told us about this poem regarding the Beech tree.

### A Boundless Moment by Robert Frost

He halted in the wind, and — what was that  
Far in the maples, pale, but not a ghost?  
He stood there bringing March against his thought,  
And yet too ready to believe the most.

"Oh, that's the Paradise-in-bloom," I said;  
And truly it was fair enough for flowers  
had we but in us to assume in March  
Such white luxuriance of May for ours.

We stood a moment so in a strange world,  
Myself as one his own pretense deceives;  
And then I said the truth (and we moved on).  
A young beech clinging to its last year's leaves.





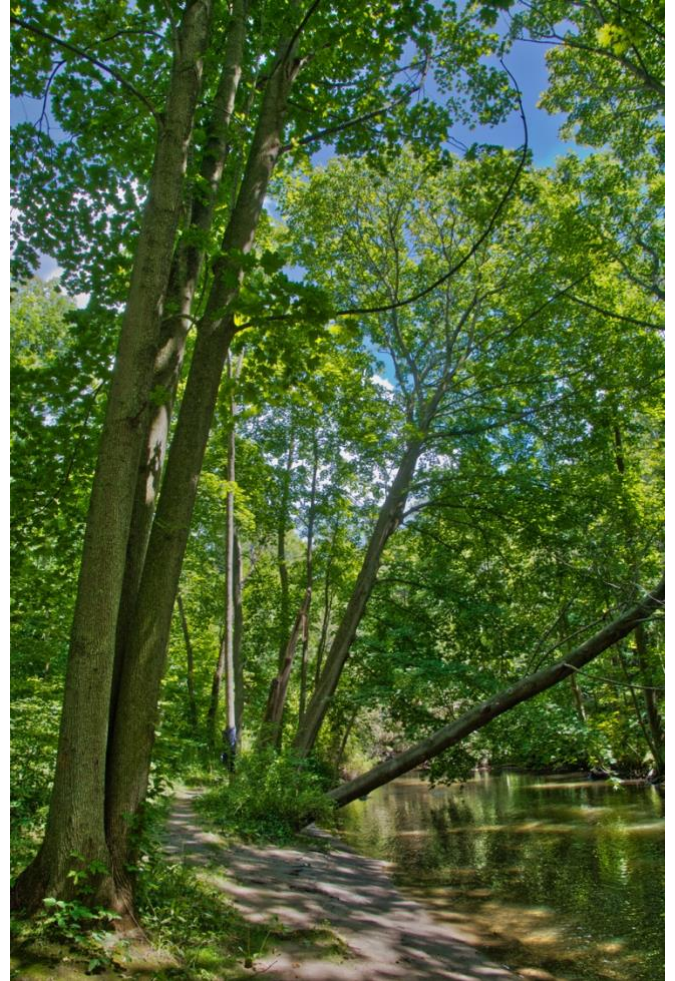
## LOOKING AT THE BRIGHT SIDE

By Inga Hinnerichsen, President, NFN

We all live in troubled times with the dark clouds of the COVID-19 virus hanging over our heads. It all erupted so suddenly that most of us feel quite overwhelmed. We are advised to practise social distancing and some of us have chosen self-isolation as a safeguard. Hand washing and sanitizing have become second nature. It seems that all these rules and restrictions are going to be the new normal ... for now. They may also affect us psychologically. I found myself getting grumpy, irritated and even depressed ... until I looked at this situation from a brighter perspective. We are very fortunate to live in an area that isn't densely populated like urban communities. Even isolation doesn't mean house arrest. The days are longer and warmer as spring is beginning in earnest. Nature is still wide open for visits. Getting out of the house tending to spring clean-up chores in your yard and garden or going for a walk in the forests or on the beach, will lift your spirits. Now is a perfect time to practise some Forest Bathing — see the Lotus February issue. The fresh air and the calmness in the forest affect you like meditation. You will feel refreshed and re-energized. Social distancing can be difficult for many of us. We are, after all, social animals! Although get-togethers are not allowed, we can still keep in touch with family and friends by phone, email, social media and Skype. I even wrote an old-fashioned paper letter to my brother in Finland! (He likes real paper letters.)

I decided to make a note of at least one good thing that I can be happy about every day. Look at your note during the day. Even the smallest things, like “The sun peeked out from the clouds this morning” or “The robins were singing in the trees today”, will bring a smile to my face. As time passes, stay vigilant! It only takes one person to get sloppy and we might all be in trouble.

We should also be so grateful for all our family, neighbours and friends who've offered to help with errands and chores; all the dedicated people in the businesses and the healthcare sector who are providing goods and services risking their own wellbeing. Thank you!



Lynn River Trail

Photo by Jan Grincevicius



American Robin

Photo from Wikipedia

## INTERESTING INFORMATION

### SCIENCE QUIZ

What is the difference between  
Bioluminescence and Biofluorescence?  
Go to page 7 for the answer.

From the **Canadian Wildlife Federation**  
To find information and tips on making your  
garden/property more wildlife friendly, go to:  
[http://cwf-  
fcf.org/en/resources/downloads/booklets-  
handouts/gardening\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/downloads/booklets-handouts/gardening_guide_en.pdf)

The **Gananoque Lake Nature Reserve** is  
Ontario's 26<sup>th</sup> reserve, thanks to support from  
members, supporters, and a gift of land from  
the Farber family. There are three properties  
totaling 169 hectares (417 acres) within the  
Frontenac Arch area of eastern Ontario. The  
rugged granite ridges, rich wetlands, extensive  
shoreline and mature hardwood forest that  
characterize these properties are now  
permanently part of a critical wildlife corridor  
for many birds, insects and animals with large  
home ranges, such as fisher, black bear and  
moose. This biodiverse area is home to over 24  
species at risk and one of the highest densities  
of rare species in our province.

From **TVO**  
To learn more about sandhill cranes, go to:  
[https://www.tv.o.org/article/why-southwestern-  
ontario-is-currently-home-to-thousands-of-  
sandhill-cranes](https://www.tv.o.org/article/why-southwestern-ontario-is-currently-home-to-thousands-of-sandhill-cranes)

To watch a young **Prothonotary Warbler**  
leave the nest for the first time, go to:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwGPjvrMXw8  
&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwGPjvrMXw8&feature=youtu.be)

### Spiders — Orb Weavers

Orb weavers are nature's poster spiders.  
Their spiralling orbs with strong support lines  
make a highly effective insect snare. From start  
to finish a web, which can contain up to 20  
metres of silk and 1,000 to 1,500 connections,  
may be created in a mere 30 minutes.  
Remarkably, an orb weaver spider can weigh  
more than 1,000 times the weight of the web  
on which it lives. Orb weavers will eat and  
remake webs every few days – or sometimes  
daily – recycling 90 percent of the silk used for  
the original web.

Orb weavers rotate trapped insects with their  
forelegs while their hind legs pull out silk from  
the spinnerets to wrap the victim. Despite  
possessing eight eyes – arranged in two rows  
of four – an orb weaver's vision is poor,  
rendering it dependent on sensing vibrations  
from its web.

Ontario orb spider species include: Yellow  
Garden, Banded Garden, Cross Orbweaver,  
Furrow Orbweaver, Bridge Orbweaver,  
Shamrock Orbweaver, Starbellied Orbweaver,  
and Conical Trashline Orbweaver.



Bridge Orbweaver — Photo by Ferran Turmo Gort

For more information, go to:  
[https://onnaturemagazine.com/spiderguide.htm  
l#orbws](https://onnaturemagazine.com/spiderguide.html#orbws)



# Species in Focus

## BLANDING'S TURTLE

### Status

**Threatened** — “Threatened” means the species lives in the wild in Ontario, is not endangered, but is likely to become endangered if steps are not taken to address factors threatening it.

### Date added to the Species at Risk in Ontario

**List** — The Blanding's Turtle was already assessed as threatened when the Endangered Species Act took effect in 2008. A reassessment in May 2017 confirmed this status.

### What it looks like

The Blanding's Turtle is a medium-sized turtle easily identified by its bright yellow throat and chin. Unlike most Ontario turtles that have wide, flatter shells, the Blanding's Turtle has a domed shell that resembles an army helmet. Its shell is black to brown with yellow flecks and streaks and can reach 27 centimetres long. Its head and limbs are black-grey and the bottom shell is rich yellow.



Photo from Ontario Nature

### Where it lives

Blanding's Turtles live in shallow water, usually in large wetlands and shallow lakes with lots of water plants. It is not unusual, though, to find them hundreds of metres from the nearest water body, especially while they are searching for a mate or traveling to a nesting site. Blanding's Turtles hibernate in the mud at the bottom of permanent water bodies from late October until the end of April.

### Where it's been found in Ontario

The Blanding's Turtle is found in and around the Great Lakes Basin, with isolated populations elsewhere in the United States and Canada.

### What threatens it

The most significant threats to the Blanding's Turtle are loss or fragmenting of habitat, motor vehicles, and raccoons and foxes that prey on eggs. Illegal collection for the pet trade is also a serious threat. Blanding's Turtles are slow breeders – they don't start to lay eggs until they are in their teens or twenties – so deaths of breeding age adults can have major impacts on the species.

### What you can do

**Report a Sighting** — The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry tracks species at risk such as the Blanding's Turtle. You can use a handy online form to report your sightings to the Natural Heritage Information Centre.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/report-rare-species-animals-and-plants> Photographs with specific locations or mapping coordinates are always helpful.

### Be a good steward

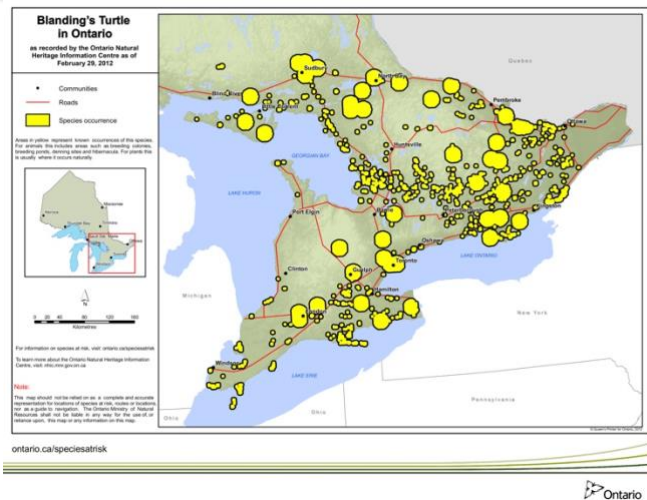
- Private landowners have a very important role to play in species recovery. If you find Blanding's Turtle on your land, you may be eligible for stewardship programs that support the protection and recovery of species at risk and their habitats.
- The Blanding's Turtle is at risk due to the loss of wetland habitat. You can help by protecting any wetlands and surrounding natural vegetation on your property.
- Every year, turtles must cross busy roads to get to their nesting sites. Female Blanding's Turtles sometimes mistake gravel shoulders of roads as good nesting sites! Watch for turtles on the roads, especially between May and October.

Cont'd. p.7

Wildflower expert, Brian Carson, has made a speciality of finding (and cultivating) rare trillium varieties and mutations — before developers' bulldozers can wipe out their woodland habitats. See full story at [https://view.publitas.com/ontario-nature/spring\\_2020/page/24-25](https://view.publitas.com/ontario-nature/spring_2020/page/24-25)

To receive selected information by email, you can sign up:  
**ontarionature.org**

### Species in Focus — BLANDING'S TURTLE From p.6



### Norfolk County Locations Answers

- 1) Dog's Nest
- 2) Turkey Point
- 3) Boston
- 4) Doan's Hollow Cemetery
- 5) Forestville
- 6) Fisher's Glen
- 7) Courtland
- 8) Teeterville
- 9) Wooley Road
- 10) Woodhouse
- 11) Scotland
- 12) Port Rowan

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

The next BoD Meeting was scheduled for April 28, 2020, but **is cancelled due to self-isolation requirements related to COVID-19.** Any decisions made by email by the Board members will be in the Summer issue of the Lotus.

### Answer to the Science Quiz

Bioluminescence is a reaction by luciferin enzymes (fluorescent proteins) in organisms such as Fireflies. Biofluorescence happens when an organism absorbs sunlight and gives out some of it, such as some moulds, fungi and other mushrooms.

## Welcome New NFN Members

Terry and Karen Boys, Charlie Mitchell, Terry Norman, Monte Smith and Wanda Nelson, and Robert Thom

We look forward to meeting you and hope you will participate in and enjoy all the NFN indoor presentations and field outings.

The Norfolk Field Naturalists wishes to recognize, with gratitude, the following participants in

**The 2019  
Great Canadian Birdathon**  
for their fundraising efforts  
on behalf of NFN:

**Peggy McArthur,  
Mike McMillan, George Pond,  
Lisa Timpf and Anne Wynia.**

NFN received \$6,467.32  
**Thank you!**

## Upcoming NFN 2020 Spring Events

**On occasion, circumstances beyond our control may require cancellation of a planned event. All event cancellations will be posted on the NFN web site.**

**Sunday, May 10, 2020,  
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.**

### **Mother's Day Spring Wildflower Hike**

Join us on a leisurely stroll through the south tract of Backus Woods. Colleen and Bernie will identify and discuss the diversity and natural history of spring ephemeral flowers along the wooded trail.

**Sunday, June 7, 2020,  
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Meet at the Forestry Farm Interpretive Centre, go for a tour and then have a picnic lunch.

**Wednesday, July 15, 2020,  
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**

### **Norfolk Sand Plain Restoration Tour**

Mary Gartshore and Peter Carson will take participants to several restoration sites which represent various habitats and stages of maturity.

**Friday July 17, 2020,  
8:00 to 9:30 p.m.  
Bat Hike**

Liv Monk-Whipp of NCC will tell us about the general biology of bats and the different species that are in our area. Once it starts to get dark, we will go on a short hike looking and listening for bats.

## Thank You!

**From Norfolk Field Naturalists  
to**

**Will & Morgan Partridge  
Guardian Computing  
For hosting our website**

## NFN Meetings

Norfolk Field Naturalist meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month from September to May.

Meetings take place at the **Simcoe Seniors Centre, 89 Pond Street.**

The meetings are free and visitors are always welcome. Doors open at 7:15 pm, programs begin at 7:30 pm.

## NFN Mailing Address

**Norfolk Field Naturalists  
PO Box 995, Simcoe, ON  
N3Y 5B3**

## Next Lotus Issue:

**Summer 2020  
Input deadline:  
Friday, May 29, 2020**

## About the NFN

Norfolk Field Naturalists members participate in meetings and field outings, many of which are family-friendly. **Membership fees are \$20 Individual and \$30 Family.**

Donations are eligible for income tax credits. Charitable registration # 11905869RR00001

Guest speakers present programs on interesting and relevant natural history and conservation topics. Club members receive the Lotus newsletter with articles on local natural history and club activities. Copies of the Lotus are available at meetings, by mail or by email and posted on the NFN web site. Articles published in the Lotus reflect the views and opinions of the authors, but not necessarily those of the NFN.

**[www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org](http://www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org)**

## 2019 - 2020 NFN Executive with Contact and Project Information

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<b>Director-at-large</b>	vacant		
<b>Director-at-large</b>	vacant		

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**Butterfly Counts** (appointed) Adam Timpf 429-4147  
**Christmas Bird Counts** (appointed) Adam Timpf - Woodhouse Count 429-4147  
Linda Thrower - Fisherville Count 905-774-1230

**Honorary President:** George Pond  
**Honorary Directors:** Anne and Dolf Wynia