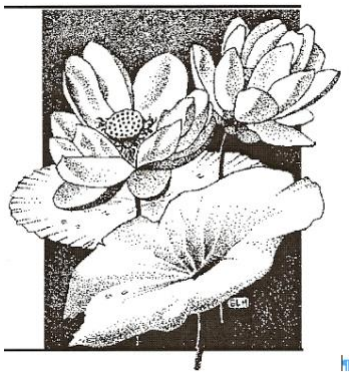
DECEMBER 2025

Lotus

Newsletter



2025 Harry B. Barrett. Bursary Awarded to Two Students in 2025!

by Bernie Solymár

Norfolk Nature has awarded the Harry B. Barrett Bursary to two University of Waterloo students in 2025. The bursary honours one of our founding members who was a dedicated naturalist, teacher, and local historian as well as author of several books on local history and nature. Harry B. Barrett passed away in 2017 at the age of 94. The bursary is awarded to an outstanding student specializing in nature, the environment and doing conservation and environmental science-based study and field work in Norfolk County.

Our recipients in 2025 are Amanada Armstrong and Lauren Weeks.

Amanda's Master's thesis project addresses conservation efforts for the long-distant migrating species, the silver haired bat. Amanda's study will help identify key prey species and their seasonal availability and assess how a changing climate may disrupt food webs.

Lauren's Masters work revolves around an iconic species – the Eastern whip-poor-will. Her goal is to characterize aspects of the migration ecology of this species at risk across age and sex classes by characterizing the preferred diet and prey selection strategies.

WE are excited to see the results of these two exemplary students and have already talked to them about presenting their findings to our members at a later date. Amada has also agreed to host a community "Bat Night" in Norfolk next summer to engage the public in bat conservation through education.

Len Grincevicius, Amanda Armstrong, Bernie Solymar. Unavailable is Lauren Weeks.

Can Owls Really Turn Their Heads 360 Degrees?

Owls are incredible and awe inspiring! No, they can't turn their heads a full 360 degrees, but they sure can turn pretty far. Owls can twist their necks almost 3/4 of the way around to look over their shoulder—way further than a human can! Their neck anatomy gives them the extra flexibility they need to perform this feat. Learn more in this quick video from Bird Academy.

Eastern Screech Owl

Goats Destroy Invasive Buckthorn One Bite at a Time

Fifty goats took only two days to tackle a couple of acres of dense shrubs.

The level of buckthorn clearing the goats accomplished in two days — by mouth no less — would normally take weeks if not months to pull out and chop down by hand.

In recent years, property owners, conservation authorities and municipalities have turned to "eco-herds" to chow down not only buckthorn but also phragmites, Manitoba maple, dog strangling vine, vetch and Canada thistle, to name a few.

To read more, go here.

Goats – Photo from CBC

Fearless Flyer: Spotlight on the Red-winged Blackbird

Is this blackbird riding a Great Blue Heron, or attacking it? Find out when you watch this spotlight video, featuring fascinating tidbits about one of the common birds inhabiting North America.

Male Red-winged Redbird – Photo by Len Grincevicius

Developers, Hot on the Heels of Industry, Traumatize the Locals

by Harry B. Barrett
July 30, 1975

I was particularly pleased to read letters to the editor regarding the wooded area east of the river near the old brickyard property. This 14 acre tract skirted by the abandoned rail line to Jarvis on the west and north boundary includes the steep clay slopes left years ago by the brick yard operation. For fifty years or more Nature has worked her charm in covering those man-made scars.

For almost as many years, it has been a familiar spot to me for relaxation and peaceful enjoyment. The predominate growth on the clay banks and ravine are majestic red oak, maple, ash, basswood and other species typical of climax forest cover grow there as well. Except for a small area west of Scott Street to John Street there is really no level ground in the whole tract. A large part of its appeal over the years has been its wild state, where on the edge of town, rabbit and racoon, squirrel and great horned owl live peacefully and in harmony with man.

Drawing by Liz Barrett-Milner

The small level upland is covered with grasses and soon will be a riot of purple and gold as asters and goldenrod present their fall faces. Aspen are moving in from the west as nature's predictable successions of growth move toward eventually reforesting this area with southern hardwoods. In the lower, wetter areas many shrubs and trees provide dense cover for youngsters and wildlife alike. Huge honeysuckle and barberry seeded by birds from nearby gardens, mingle with chokecherry and viburnums to provide a wide variety of food for birds and other wildlife.

As my wife and I strolled leisurely along one of the many trails, robins and cotton tails seemed to accompany us rather than flee from us. Overhead a cedar waxwing fed red chokecherry berries to her mewing brood of four fledglings, while others, were already forming a loose flock for autumn feasting on nature's store.

A catbird chided us for invading his domain and seconds later a song sparrow poured out his evensong from a weathered post. All around us kingbirds, barn swallows in company with bank and rough-winged swallows swooped and dived for inspects. For a full minute a phalanx of chimney swifts noisily patrolled above us for mosquitoes and midges before moving across the yacht club property below us.

Soon grackles began arriving among the taller oaks where a colony of them have nested and roost throughout the summer. Mingling with them were several catbirds, starlings and red-wings. Their numbers will continue to increase until by September huge flocks will arrive nightly, moving out in early morning to feed in the marshes and harvested farm fields on grubs and shelled grain and corn.

Suddenly pandemonium reigned among them as a shallow-like, long-tailed hawk dived into their midst to emerge beyond them in a stiff-winged climb. His intent was to take a fat starling for his evening meal but they had evaded him at the last instant and were now noisily aware of his presence

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Developers ...continued from Page 3

among them. Thwarted the sharp-shinned hawk moved off quickly up the valley of Black Creek.

But what of those letters to the editor. Like the roosting grackles we too are under attack by a very efficient, expert, often ruthless group of newcomers. They follow in the wake of industry and new growth. The industrial development, with its accompanying change and disruptions to our familiar way of life, that are beginning to become evident in our area, are creating a choice habitat and feeding ground for this new form of predator.

The wooded slopes of Black Creek and the old, abandoned brickyard are slated for multi-storied apartments and tiny, sterile playgrounds. The lower ground will be landscaped, cleared of the unsightly, cool undergrowth and provided with a community swimming pool, supported by the tax dollars of the residents of the City of Nanticoke. The big city developer is expert at allaying the fears of we smalltown and rural natives, who have been fortunate so far to have a backyard with mature trees and well over twenty feet of space or more between us and our neighbours.

All of this must be lost to give room to the seven, or is it ten, perhaps twenty thousand newcomers, destined to be distributed over the smiling farmlands and quiet woodlands that presently cradle the “quaint little fishing community” of Port Dover. They talk of beautiful sub-divisions with brick homes on large, treed lots and population densities of 12 per acre, so I guess 12 human animals per acre is a reasonable living space to expect.

But our dollar is shrinking. Our government demands control, inflation is rampant, our all-powerful developer must profit or he might leave us in the lurch. Housing authorities and industry now seem to tell our local politicians to “get lost”, and our beleaguered regional planning people to quit dreaming. Thirty-five to forty people to the acre is reasonable and realistic, after all. Why most of Toronto is far denser than that. The permanent “green belt” to the east of town is better than ticky-tacky housing, they claim. If you are serious about opposing stacking people on the brickyard property, you are really just selfish, grasping humans who are afraid of normal progress.

I hope local residents will give this serious thought and if you would like to see y our town and area retain even some shreds of charm that drew many of us to it in the first place, make your views known. We could still save the brickyard, with government grants to help, for $150,000. If we had zoned it recreational, or parkland earlier it would have been ours now for $6,000. What familiar natural area will be next? What do you propose to do about orderly planning to control what, to date, we have all taken for granted?

Fluffy to Fearless: Top 5 Great Horned Owl Highlights

Oh, the memories! Relive the magic of Cornell Lab’s 2025 Great Horned Owl Cam with these Top 5 highlights featuring Athena and her adorable owlets at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas.

Male - photo by Mary Rumple of Macaulay Library

Wild Birds Revealed

Cornell Lab

Get ready to see birds in a whole new way.

In the video series *Wild Birds Revealed*, acclaimed wildlife cinematographers Tim and Russell Laman, slow down the fascinating behaviors of some of our favorite wild birds—showing their flight, diving, hunting, and nesting skills in stunning detail.

From the adorable Atlantic Puffin to the aerial mastery of the Tree Swallow, to the unrivaled fishing dives of the Osprey—each episode, gives a rare access to the hidden lives of familiar birds.

Episode 1 Ospreys
Episode 2 Tree Swallows
Episode 3 Atlantic Puffins

Atlantic Puffins **Photo by Jan Grincevicius**

Starlings in Winter

by Mary Oliver

Chunky and noisy,

but with stars in their black feathers,
they spring from the telephone wire
and instantly

they are acrobats
in the freezing wind.
And now, in the theater of air,
they swing over buildings,

dipping and rising;
they float like one stippled star
that opens,
becomes for a moment fragmented,

then closes again;
and you watch
and you try
but you simply can't imagine

how they do it
with no articulated instruction, no pause,
only the silent confirmation
that they are this notable thing,

this wheel of many parts, that can rise and spin
over and over again,
full of gorgeous life.

Ah, world, what lessons you prepare for us,
even in the leafless winter,
even in the ashy city.
I am thinking now
of grief, and of getting past it;

I feel my boots
trying to leave the ground,
I feel my heart
pumping hard. I want

to think again of dangerous and noble things.
I want to be light and frolicsome.
I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings.

Ontario Nature BRIEFS

Protecting Ontario's Wetlands — A Nature-based Climate Solution

Nature-based climate solutions are actions that protect, manage and/or restore natural ecosystems to enhance their climate mitigation and adaptation benefits. Read more here.

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

Welcome New Members

2025 - 2026 Season

Carol and Doug Williams

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

Thank You!

From Norfolk Nature to

Will & Morgan Partridge

Guardian Computing

For hosting our website

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello Norfolk Nature members!

The holiday season is fast approaching and most of us are looking forward to time with family, festive activities, good food, mulled cider by the fire and watching kids and grandkids open presents. I also love this season for celebrating the Winter Solstice. Spiritually, it symbolizes a time of ending and beginning, representing the rebirth of light after the longest night and the hope of renewal. It is seen as a period for introspection, rest, and rejuvenation before the new year, as well as a celebration of resilience, with ancestors often connecting it to the return of the sun's power.

Hope you are starting to warm to our new operating name, *Norfolk Nature*. It is certainly a change for your directors as we update our logo, social media and website, and correspondence. Our legal name will remain Norfolk Field Naturalists but for donations, etc. we have also registered as Norfolk Nature with the CRA (thanks to our treasurer, Peter Black).

At our November director's meeting we approved celebrating our 65th anniversary with a Nature Fest in May 2027 that will feature numerous activities and events including guided hikes and paddles, family-friendly activities, evening programming, guest speakers and a gala dinner. We will be seeking an event coordinator to help us plan and deliver the festival and seek partnership with several of our other local conservation organizations, as well as Norfolk County.

On behalf of the Board of Directors we wish you a festive, fun and heathy holiday season. Keep those bird feeders stocked and remember to get outside and embrace the season of cold and snow.

Warm Regards, Bernie

The next BoD Meeting will be held on January 27, 2026. The report from this meeting will be in the February issue of the Lotus.

Upcoming NN Events

Sunday, December 14, 2025
Woodhouse Count (Norfolk County)
Contact Adam Timpf,
adam.timpf@gmail.com
Saturday, December 20, 2025
Long Point Count (Norfolk County)
Contact Stu Mackenzie,
stu.a.mackenzie@gmail.com
Sunday, December 28, 2025
Fisherville Count (Haldimand County)
Contact: Sarah Sharp,
sarahgrace273@gmail.com

Long Point Bird Observatory Newsletter

Advancing Conservation: in the Field with Butterflies

Imagine you're going on a long road trip — you can't forget to get gas or charge your car. Monarch butterflies are similar. To prepare for their almost 5,000 kilometre-long fall migration, monarchs also need fuel. But their fuel is nectar from flowering plants. Read the rest of the article here.

Photo by Bernie Solymár

Norfolk Nature Meetings

Norfolk Nature meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month from September to April.

Meetings take place at the **Simcoe Recreation Centre, 182 South Drive, Simcoe.** The meetings are free and visitors are always welcome. Doors open at 6:30 pm, programs begin at 7:00 pm.

NN Mailing Address

Norfolk Nature
PO Box 995, Simcoe, ON
N3Y 5B3

Next Lotus Issue:

February 2026
Input deadline:
Friday, January 23, 2026

About Norfolk Nature

Norfolk Nature members participate in meetings and field outings, many of which are family-friendly**. Membership fees are $30 Individual and $50 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 Norfolk Nature web site. Articles published in the Lotus reflect the views and opinions of the authors, but not necessarily those of NN.

www.norfolknature.org

2025-26 Directors and Coordinators with Project Information

Email: info@norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

Board of Directors	
President	Bernie Solymár
Vice-President	Bernd Mueller
Treasurer	Peter Black
Secretary	Amber Zuber
Membership Secretary	Jan Grincevicius
Director for Environment	vacant
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Director-at-Large	Keith Hekker
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Field Events Coordinator	Bernie Solymár
H.B. Barrett Bursary	Len Grincevicius, Bernd Muller, Bernie Solymár
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Website Coordinator	Lisa Timpf
Archives Coordinator	Inga Hinnerichsen
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Butterfly Count Coordinator	Adam Timpf
Christmas Bird Counts Coordinators	Adam Timpf - Woodhouse Count Stu Mackenzie - Long Point Count Sarah Sharp - Fisherville Count
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