



The Woodland Observer

Enjoy Nature!

Nipissing Naturalists Club

September 2011

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Ontario
Nature

A Tourists View of the Galapagos

Review and Photo's by Lois Filion

At our June meeting Dr. Jean-Marc and Lois Filion presented their tour of the Galapagos islands from a tourist's perspective. In February this year, Dr. Peter Nosco showed us a Charles Darwin version of the Galapagos Islands and his take on the theory of natural selection. These two presentations provide a very interesting, informative, visual and complex understanding of these 19 remote volcanic islands.

Beginning in Toronto, our journey took us to Miami then to Quito Ecuador where we saw a modern city built upon the ruins of the Inca that were conquered by the Spanish in the 1500's. Quito was established high in the mountains to guard against many of the tropical diseases endemic to the area. A trip to the Equator demonstrated the power of centrifugal forces... water flowing directly down a basin without rotation. The many species of hummingbirds and beautiful flowers and plants were everywhere.

Next was a short flight to the small Galapagos island of Baltra followed by a bus ride to a water taxi to the island of Santa Cruz and a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Station and of course a visit with the famous "Lonesome George", the last remaining Pinto Island giant tortoise of his kind. At age 80, scientists are encouraging George to mate with two female tortoises of a different subspecies. (in 2008 George stunned conservationists by mating for the first time in 36 years of captivity)



It was there in Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz Island, that we boarded our catamaran for 7 more days of visiting remote volcanic islands of stunning diversity and beauty. Using zodiacs to transport groups from the catamaran to various island shores, we visited the beautiful white sand beaches, black volcanic flats and beaches, red sand beaches, tall volcano cones, giant prickly pear cactus forests and mangrove swamps of many of the islands. We swam with wild sea lions and penguins – what a thrill! We observed yellow land iguanas and the famous marine iguanas that forage for food at sea, mating green sea turtles, dolphins, sting rays, leopard rays, white tipped Galapagos sharks, penguins, Sally Lightfoot crabs as well as a wide variety of birds including the Galapagos hawk, the lava gull of which only a few hundred remain world-wide, mockingbirds, the Galapagos gull which is the only gull in the world that has learned to hunt at night, bright pink flamingos, yellow warblers, Darwin's finches, blue-footed boobies, masked boobies, red-footed boobies and magnificent frigates whose males after constructing their nests puff up their bright red chests and call out to impress potential mates.

Welcome! - New Members

April McCrum
Herb Johnson

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Nip Nat Award Winners Represent Canada at ESI 2011

In April, the Nipissing Naturalists Club awarded James Ross and Isaiah Saunders with an Award of Merit at the regional science fair, for their project "Going Green: The Aspen Solution." In May, these young men attended the Canada-Wide Science Fair, where they were selected to be members of Team Canada at the prestigious MILSET Expo -Sciences International 2011, being held in Bratislava, Slovakia.



Isaiah with the opportunity to share Canadian values, ideals and culture with young scientists from around the world.

Although they won an Award of Merit, James and Isaiah made it clear that ESI 2011 was not about the competition. They explained, "ESI was about meeting and learning about other cultures and obtaining lifelong friendships and global connections. The memories

James and Isaiah gave the Nip Nats an overview of their project and information on what it was like to attend CWSF in June, just prior to joining 1500 students from more than 75 countries from around the world at MILSET, a Youth Science celebration. The Expo -Sciences provided James and

and experiences that we obtained will have a lasting affect on their lives, and we are grateful for all those who contributed their time or other equities so that these opportunities were made possible."

Galapagos, con't



It was so thrilling and unique to walk within feet of all of these birds and animals and be able to observe their behaviours without disturbing them, for these creatures have not learned to fear man. Natural predators have failed to survive possibly due to the lack of fresh water, which certainly deterred any permanent human settlement until the 20th century. Each of the 19 islands has its own ecosystem, each literally overflowing with life including species unknown elsewhere in the world (example the marine iguana). Perhaps this is what makes the experience of visiting the Galapagos Islands a priority on "the bucket list."

IT'S A

GIRL!

Announcing the newest and youngest member of the Nip Nats!

Congratulations to Lucy Emmott and Jeremy St. Onge on the birth of their daughter, Myrica Emmott St.Onge.

Born on Thursday, June 9, Myrica weighed in at 8 pounds, 2 ounces.

Congratulations!

Energy Cost Comparison

Have you ever wondered what the best fuel was to heat your home? You can access an interesting Energy Cost Comparison website at:

<http://energy.cas.psu.edu/EnergySelector.html>

You can select two energy sources, input what your unit price would be, and compare the cost. The Energy Selector Chart used the following data:

1. The thermal energy contents of the two energy sources being compared,
2. The overall thermal efficiency for each energy source and its combustion unit,
3. The unit price of each energy source.

Calendar of Events

Next General Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 13, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

Topic: History of Laurier Woods and its Future

Speaker: Dick Tafel, long time member and former President of the Nipissing Naturalists Club.

Laurier Woods, North Bay's largest park, was initiated by members of the Nipissing Naturalist Club. Club members continue to play an important role in the park. Today, Laurier Woods is home to many kilometres of walking trails, excellent bird watching, outdoor education for city primary school and university students and all the while it provides us with free ecological services such as detoxification of fresh water, provides wildlife habitat and reduces the rate of storm water discharge. The park is situated between Lake Nipissing and Trout Lake causing a pinch point for migrating wildlife and human travel. Laurier Woods will provide future generations of North Bay residents, both human and not, a green island that will continue to link northern and southern Ontario within a matrix of urban development.

Tuesday, October 11, 2011

Topic: Bristlecone Pines of the White Mountains in California

Speaker: Jeff Dech, Assistant Professor, Nipissing University

Find out more about the world's oldest non-clonal organism in this fascinating part of the world.

Photo Contest - Get Ready!

We're already at September, and before you know it, it will be time to submit your favourite pictures from this year for the annual photo contest! All submittals will go to: nipnats@gmail.com

Consider Volunteering!

There are many positions in the club that take less than an hour per month to perform. Consider volunteering, to keep the club running smoothly and efficiently. Contact Jeremy St. Onge to get more involved with your club! Call 705 497-7785 or email jeremy_st_ong@hotmail.com

Contact Jeremy St. Onge at 705 497-7785 if you have speaker or trip suggestions.
He'll get things moving!

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

Topic: Wolves, Coyotes and Nature Connection

Speaker: Alexis Burnett

Alexis Burnett is a Naturalist, Tracker, Wilderness Skills Practitioner and Canoe Guide from Orangeville, ON. He resides in central Ontario, spending his days tracking and running his Outdoor School and Wilderness Canoe Tripping company, Earth Tracks. Alexis is lead guide for the wilderness canoe trips and head instructor for all the programs and classes. He has been practicing indigenous skills, pursuing naturalist/tracking studies and guiding canoe trips for over ten years. Alexis teaches classes both for Earth Tracks as well as through various organizations, for people of all ages. Some of these workshops have focused on such topics as Wilderness Survival, Wildlife Tracking, Wild Crafting & Herbal Preparations and Naturalist Studies.

This talk will focus on learning about the biology and behaviour of wolves and coyotes and nature connection. We will discuss how these animals relate to each other, the landscape and the eco-system as a whole. Part of the presentation will also focus on 'Coyote Mentoring' and how we use these teachings and techniques to draw us towards a closer relationship with nature. Alexis has spent over 12 years tracking and following wolves and coyotes as well as mentoring and teaching others about the natural world. Through stories, fact, myth and personal experience you will begin to see the world through the eyes of the 'wild canines'

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Topic: Nature around Iqaluit and Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

Speaker: Dan Strickland, retired Chief Naturalist of Algonquin Provincial Park and researcher on gray jays

Send observations, events, stories, trip reviews and pictures for newsletter to: nipnats@gmail.com

Monthly Bird-Bash

Saturday & Sunday:

Sept. 10 & 11; Oct. 1 & 2; Nov. 5 & 6; Dec. 3 & 4

Spend some time observing our local birds and report on how many species of birds you saw. Submit reports to Dick Tafel, rtafel@sympatico.ca or 705 472-7907.

Birdwing Meeting

Fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. The summer meetings are held outside! Meet at the Information Centre next to the Dionne Quints home, and we'll go to wherever the birds are!

Protect Wild Species and Wild Spaces

From Ontario Nature

Over the last 150 years, the landscape of Ontario has been fundamentally altered. In the regions surrounding the Great Lakes, where vast expanses of pine and hardwood forests once flourished, factories, shopping malls and endless rows of houses stand. This change has been at the expense of our wildlife, wetlands and woodlands. The loss of natural areas, wildlife habitat and overall biodiversity is so widespread that it has become a matter of great concern. Ontario Nature works to protect and restore the species, spaces and landscapes that represent the full diversity of nature in Ontario.

Ontario Nature's conservation work is accomplished through:

Habitat Protection:

Ontario is rich in habitat biodiversity from the sprawling forests of the far north to fragile alvars in central Ontario to tallgrass prairie and oak savannah in the south. Unchecked development, pollution and climate change threaten the integrity of these ecosystems and the biodiversity they support. Ontario Nature is committed to conserving this province's wild spaces through our Greenway Initiative to protect southern and eastern Ontario's landscapes, our nature reserve system and our Trees in Trust program, through which you can save a piece of the forest forever.

Endangered ~ Snapping Turtle

From Ontario Nature

The snapping turtle is Canada's largest freshwater and terrestrial turtle, and can be found most often in shallow waters, hiding under soft mud and leaf litter, although at one time they were a common sight crossing roads during the summer in search of nesting sites, food and mates.

The snapping turtle is listed as a species of special concern both federally and provincially. Threatened by hunting, road mortality and habitat loss, the snapping turtle is in decline in Ontario. Found primarily in the southern part of the province, snapping turtles are a legally hunted game species with an allowable take of up to two snapping turtles per person, per day. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) does not monitor the hunt.

Ontario Nature is deeply concerned that a species at risk is legally hunted in this province. In 2009, Ontario Nature members passed a resolution requesting that MNR remove the snapping turtle from the game list under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. MNR did not take action. In 2010, under the Environmental Bill of Rights, Ontario Nature

Species Protection:

Every year, more plants and animals are added to Ontario's endangered species list. Globally, almost one in four mammals, one in eight birds, and one third of all amphibians are in jeopardy.

Ontario Nature is committed to protecting this province's wild species through our Reptiles at Risk program, our Reptile and Amphibian Atlas project and our Breeding Birds Atlas of Ontario.

All of these projects depend on volunteer participation and the dedication of citizen scientists. Please help us slow the decline of Ontario's wildlife.

Campaigns:

As Ontario's leading conservation organization, we have undertaken habitat and wildlife campaigns from the Lake Erie shoreline to the vast boreal forests of the north. Our focus is on preserving wild species and their habitat, restoring a place for nature in more developed landscapes, and pushing for the protection of endangered species.

We advocated for boreal forest protection and the conservation of endangered plants and animals. We also demand that mining projects be subject to environmental assessments and that industrial uses of natural resources be sustainable. And we protect migratory birds with our Birds and Buildings campaign.

For additional information, go to: www.ontarionature.org



Snapping turtle - photo by Joe Crowley

formally requested a policy review of the hunting regulation. In February 2011, MNR rejected the policy review request stating that the hunt was sustainable.

However, Ontario Nature's conservation staff question the sustainability of hunting snapping turtles. Snapping turtles have a delayed sexual maturity with reproduction beginning at 20 years of age; typically only seven in 10,000 eggs laid survive to adulthood. This species is especially vulnerable and any increase in adult mortality will have detrimental effects on a population.