



STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

“Our Point is Pelee”

News Journal of the Friends of Point Pelee

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Message from the FoPP President...

Since you are reading this newsletter, you immediately qualify as one of my favourite people. It means, in all likelihood, that you are a member of the Friends of Point Pelee or that you have a connection to Point Pelee National Park of Canada. I would like to take this time to introduce myself; I am Denelle Dugal, President of the Friends of Point Pelee. Becoming President has

been a personal challenge. Without the assistance and support of my fellow board members, our General Manager and our staff this role could have been overwhelming. Thanks to all.

As President my goal is to continue to support the efforts and activities of PPNPs management and staff, as well as to preserve and protect the uniqueness of PPNP.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members and volunteers for your continued support to the Friends of Point Pelee. Looking forward to seeing you at the Annual General Meeting. We can always use more members so bring a family member or a friend.

Denelle Dugal
President, FoPP

FoPP MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends of Point Pelee through its Members, Volunteers and voluntary activities and contributions, and in Partnership with Parks Canada, is dedicated to protect and present a nationally significant example of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, Point Pelee National Park, and to foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure Point Pelee National Park's ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.

Skinks & Termites ~ Possible Link in Point Pelee National Park

Five-Lined Skink - Dr. Steven Hecnar, from Lakehead University has been studying skinks in this park since 1990. This study is unique because it is one of the few long-term studies of any reptile species in the world and it is generating knowledge that is becoming immediately valuable for the conservation of the five-lined skink in the park.

On July 5th, 2009 he completed the survey of the skink populations in the park and found that numbers seem to be a bit higher than previous years, with many juveniles found. He continues to recommend that woody debris continue to be placed by park staff and volunteers in back-beach areas of the park to continue to sustain the skink population

in the park. As a bonus, Termite researcher Dr. Graham Thompson from the University of Western Ontario, who was able to find termites at the park last summer, is working with Dr. Hecnar this summer to place termite traps in areas of high skink activity in an effort to investigate the links that might exist between skinks and termites in the park. Very interesting!

This summer, after the skinks have finished nesting, park staff and volunteers will continue to implement skink habitat restoration, as they have for many years.

Logs, which have washed ashore in prime skink nesting areas, are moved to the back-beach areas and dunes. Data is taken and the loca-

tion is noted for ongoing research.

This year we have an abundance of logs available for relocation, thanks to Hydro One, who last winter cut and trimmed trees along the power line corridors within the park.

The log relocation and data collection will **require extra volunteer help** to accomplish this task in 2010. If you are interested in helping out, please contact the park at 519-322-2365 ext 200 or by email pelee.info@pc.gc.ca to request a volunteer form. Indicate on the form “**Skink Habitat**” and a park staff will contact you closer to the project date in July with further details.

FoPP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 20, 2010

PPNP ADMINISTRATION
7:00 PM

Nominations for directors will be accepted at this AGM. Please contact:

info@friendsofpointpelee.com

for an application form by January 15, 2009



Five-Lined Skink



University of Western Ontario termite researchers with PPNP staff on the back-beach

SHOP THE NATURE NOOK GIFT STORE

LOCATED IN THE PPNP VISITOR CENTRE

ONLINE OR COME IN WEEKENDS 10:00 AM UNTIL 5:00 PM

HOT AND COLD BEVERAGES ARE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

CHECK OUT OUR NEW PRODUCTS ARRIVING FOR SPRING.....

"POINT PELEE NATIONAL PARK- VIRTUAL POSTCARD"©

BLACK WALNUT WOOD 256MB USB DRIVE

PRELOADED WITH 36 STUNNING PHOTOS OF THE PARK

\$18.99 + TAX

Enjoy your Point Pelee experience over and over or send it to a friend as a souvenir of your visit to mainland Canada's Southernmost point!!

TERMITES MAY SHED LIGHT ON EVOLUTIONARY PUZZLE

Story reprinted from the Windsor Star, December 9, 2008 Sharon Hill

LEAMINGTON— Termites from Leamington are helping a University of Western Ontario researcher learn more the home wreckers that could help in pest control and solve a Darwinian dilemma.

Using the theory that if termites are going to be anywhere, they will surely be at Canada's southernmost tip, assistant professor Graham Thompson dug up the termites on a Point Pelee National Park beach in the summer.

He caught them by burying custom-made cardboard rolls the size of a toilet paper roll. The cardboard is like candy to the wood-eating termites, he said.

"If you go back and hit it right at the peak, you pick it up and there'd be 10,000 termites on this toilet paper roll," Thompson said Thursday from his London office. "We've hit the jackpot a couple times."

Termites live in a cluster that can have a million termites with a king and queen.

Like bees, they have defined roles such as workers and soldiers.

This is where the question that dates back to the evolutionist Charles Darwin comes into play. Darwin's natural selection theory couldn't fully explain the existence of insects such as termites where the sterile soldier termite can't

pass on his genes.

"There's an evolutionary question there as to how genes for sterility... get from one generation to the next," Thompson said. "It's a question that Darwin did not have an answer for."

KIN ELECTION THEORY

English biologist William Hamilton's kin selection theory tried to answer that question.

Thompson is testing the kin selection theory that sterile termites help their relatives so they can reproduce and pass on the gene for sterility. There would be no evolutionary benefit to helping strangers reproduce, he said.

But how do termites recognize their kin? Thompson and his students are conducting experiments—sort of an arena competition in a Petri dish—to see if they are helpful or hostile to relatives and non-relative termites from another colony.

If the termites help their kin, then researchers could look for what's called an altruism gene. Such genes haven't been found in termites and researchers are only starting to find them in honey bees.

Thompson is also studying whether termites are genetically predisposed to do a task such as foraging, or if their

Termites from Leamington are helping a University of Western Ontario researcher learn more about the home wreckers that could help in pest control and solve a Darwinian dilemma.

behaviour is a response to environmental cues—a nature versus nurture argument.

More information on how termites behave could also help homeowners and municipalities battle the wood eaters.

Thanks to pest control companies from Windsor to Toronto that are sending samples from across southwestern Ontario. Thompson can use genetics to see when and how the termites invaded Ontario.

A 1989 Ministry of Environment report says termites were first reported in Ontario in Oxley, Essex County in 1929 and may have come from U.S. lumber brought in for cottages.

Termites were reported in Toronto in 1938, the report said.

In 2006, a homeowner asked Leamington council to expose the town's "dirty little secret" and help residents battle termites. At that time a staff report said the extent of the termite problem

w a s n o t k n o w n .

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MY FIRST TRIP TO POINT PELEE

written & submitted by Deborah Godin (who now lives in Leamington, 2km from the Pelee Gate

First, let me tell you that I've been a bird-watcher since the early '70's, in Toronto, where I lived in a tiny flat in the Annex. One day I was chatting with a neighbour, Peter Whelan, who many will remember as the author of a much loved bird column in the Saturday Globe and Mail. Peter was talking about the joys of watching birds, something I'd always enjoyed too, just never in an official way. So I said to him, "Gee, how do I become a bird-watcher?" He said to me "Easy; you get yourself a field guide, a pair of binoculars, and you say out loud: "I'm a bird-watcher." Or maybe he said "birder"; I honestly don't remember. I tried using "birder" for a while, I know it's the preferred term, but I don't like it. It sounds too aggressive. I'd rather be a bird-watcher than a birder, just as I'd rather be a whale-watcher than a whaler. But I digress.

My first trip to Point Pelee was in 1994. I had long since moved to Calgary, but was back visiting friends in Michigan. My friend and I decided that, since it was early May, we'd go to Point Pelee. To have one of the world's premiere migration hot spots so close, we would be crazy not to. So one morning we got

up early, had a good breakfast, and headed for the border. The drive from my friend's house to Point Pelee was, including wait time at the border, just under two hours, but after all the coffee we so rashly downed before we left, by the time we got there, we were as eager to find the Ladies Room as we were to find the birds. We entered the Park down that wonderful shady road, our eyes searching through the trees for a comfort station.

Before long, we spotted the building we needed, and pulled into the parking area. As I opened the door and swung out a leg, I said to my friend, "Let's take our bins with us to the loo, then we won't have to come back to the car after." She agreed, and we quickly gathered up our gear. The very second we shut car doors, the noise above us registered in our ears. What an explosion of musical chips and chirps, warbles and whistles, trills and buzzes—we both looked up agog. Birds? Everywhere? We

hardly knew where to look. One, then another, then... "Oh, and that one... that's a... and over there... there's a ...? On and on they went, branch after branch full of wildly colourful, loudly calling birds. Birds that, up until now, we'd only seen in bird books or heard calling on tape. Twenty minutes later, and we were still only a

few feet from the car, in sight of the biffy, but..."Oh wow!" "Look at that!" By the time some 45 minutes had passed, we were dancing around so much ourselves that we couldn't train our binoculars on the birds with any success, and so we finally paused to answer Nature's other call.



"Gee, how do I become a bird-watcher?" He said to me "Easy; you get yourself a field guide, a pair of binoculars, and you say out loud: "I'm a bird-watcher."



Here at **Fort Malden National Historic Site of Canada** we are gearing up for another busy season... Christmas. During our Christmas programming students in grades 1, 2 and 3 visit the Fort to experience the holidays as they were celebrated in early 1800's. The interactive tour draws links and comparisons between today's customs and traditions of that time period. The hour and a half programme visits the cookhouse where students take part in baking a very special Christmas cookie, a visit to the barracks, where they discover how a soldier lived, and a craft.

IT'S CHRISTMAS AT THE FORT!

Written & submitted by Meaghan Ruston, Marketing/Communications/Heritage Presentation Fort Malden National Historic Site of Canada/Lieu historique national du Canada du Fort-Malden

This year students will be making Christmas crackers filled with Fort Malden themed goodies. After singing "We wish you a Merry Christmas" together, the musket fires, signalling the end of the tour and the beginning of the festive season.

These Christmas crackers created by our young visitors will also be shared at the Olympic Torch Relay celebration on 23 December, 2009. Fort Malden NHS is thrilled to be hosting the Olympic Torch Relay. Our afternoon holiday open house runs from 1pm to 4pm and includes cookies, crafts and free commemorative gifts. This event will allow locals and tourists alike to witness the enchanting spirit of Christmas past. Parks Canada is pleased to announce free admission to Fort Malden on this special day so that all Canadians can

participate in community celebrations and enjoy a memorable experience. This event is in partnership with the Town of Amherstburg celebration which takes place at General Amherst High School from 1:30pm to 4:30pm. The theme of their event is "Play it Forward" which encourages individuals to donate gently used or new sports equipment.

The next month promises to be a busy one, but the staff and volunteers are eagerly awaiting the hustle and bustle of the season. We encourage everyone, young and old to attend the Olympic Torch Relay celebration and experience part of their history!

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/on/malden/index.aspx>

FRIENDS OF POINT PELEE
“OUR POINT IS PELEE”

1118 Point Pelee Drive
 RR1
 Leamington ON N8H 3V4

Phone: 519-326-6173
 Toll Free 888-70-PELEE
 E-mail: info@friendsofpointpelee.com



JOIN, DONATE & SHOP

“THE FRIENDS”

ONLINE TODAY!!!!

OR



In partnership with Point Pelee National Park, the Friends of Point Pelee support and raise funds through memberships, donations, retail sales. We also provide volunteer support to assist in the protection and to promote the ecological integrity of this Lake Erie peninsula for present and future generations to come. We achieve our purpose by focusing on three specific areas; educational support through messaging, services and literature, as well as scientific research, and ecological restoration / management.



What's coming up for 2010.....

Point Pelee National Park

Winter Hours Open Daily through March 31, 2010
 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM

Dec 23, 2009 - Olympic Torch Relay (AM) **FREE** Park Entry for this event. Park at the Visitor Centre and ride the shuttle to the festivities!

Skating at the Marsh Boardwalk will open when park staff determine the ice to be safe for all. For information regarding skating, please call the park **information line 519-322-2365 ext 3** or listen to **PPNP Radio FM 90.7 CJPP** for all park current updates and information.

February 6	Owl Prowl
February 15	Family Day Activities
March 15-19	March Break Program
May	Spring Migration “Festival of Birds”
July 1	Canada Day Celebrations (Free Entry)
July 17	Parks Day
August 7	Annual Butterfly Count
September	Monarch Exhibit



FOR ALL SEASONS