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Active January 2010

The Terrific Track Test
Chris Earley

Can you identify any of these tracks? All of these mammals likely occur in your neighbourhood, so see if you can figure them out.

The direction of movement is to the top of this page. And remember that you can’t tell what size they are from the photographs. And to make it worse, some have one footprint, some have two footprints and some have all four footprints in the photo.

If you want to learn more about winter tracks and the mammals that make them, check out our Mammals of The Arboretum book (call Bev Healy for details at 519 824 4120 ext 52358). Good luck!

Answers on Page 7
Our Fifth Volunteer Information Session was held on Wednesday October 7, 2009. A great turnout… approximately 22 volunteers/guests and 5 staff.

1. Honey tasting was the first order of business as volunteers arrived. Gard had supplied several honeys... a Lavender honey (from Provence), one from the Jura Mountains, a very special Vietnamese Honey, and finally a honey produced by our very own Bee Lab on Stone Road. And which was your favourite?

2. Overview/update - background and plans: Gard Otis
Gard is part of the School of Environmental Sciences... and teaches courses on insects during the winter term. He has worked with bees in the past... but is also interested in birds. He is currently Acting Director of the Arboretum (Sept. 1/09 - Apr 30/10). This is his 2nd term as Acting Director, first being in 2003. He is also director of a Vietnam project on honey/bees.

Regarding the Master Plan…. Gard had little to do with the development of this plan. The Italian Garden was largely completed at the time of his term as Acting Director. There are currently fewer staff, and The Arboretum operation is more difficult... we rely on volunteer effort to free up limited staff. The effort of ALL volunteers is so appreciated!

OAC had to take a 42% budget cut. Our biggest priority is to see the new greenhouse built and in operation. Gard continues to follow-up on the progress with Physical Resources to ensure we get this project up and running in the near future. The project has been approved by the University, then was sent for detailed drawing. City approval is needed. Funding is in place from the Gosling Foundation.

Fund raising initiatives:

a) Zavitz pines (College Ave. and Victoria Rd.) were originally planted by Dr. Zavitz about 100 years ago. Plans to dedicate trees for a fee. This portion of The Arboretum will be part of the historic walking tour of the University/Guelph. A historic plaque will be erected. The City of Guelph loves The Arboretum.

b) Gard is reviewing a possible joint event with the City for a fund raising opportunity. He's talked to the Mayor... but would love to hear any suggestions from our volunteers.

Some suggestions discussed at this session:

c) A joint event with the Pollinator group. One small event was held this year.

d) 'Heritage Trees'... could be a good idea to get The Arboretum involved in identification etc.

e) An event related to music and trees... i.e. 'Tree-O'... a celebratory event that could link both the physical (trees) and artistic (music) together. This could be a series of events.

f) Although not necessarily a fund raiser... more a public awareness of The Arboretum after the Memorial Forest Dedication... i.e. possible optional tours of The Arboretum after the dedication.

g) Tree/shrub dedication: Collingwood Arboretum has small signs posted 'Available'... to let people know that a particular tree/shrub could be dedicated for a fee.

h) Family Day... fun events at The Arboretum, related to children or family activities

i) Rose Festival... similar to what was held when the Auxiliary first started... having a number of events built around this day.

j) A collaborative event with the Guelph Centre for Urban Organic Farming for a joint fund raiser.

k) Climate change - an event relating to or pointing to action needed
A question was raised about the City growing and would the Nature Reserve land be expropriated. This would not happen, unless forced by the University. Besides, this area is very precious land (conservation function) and is classed as a significant wetland. On the University's most welcoming places to visit... The Arboretum is #2, #1 is Johnson Green. It's important to get the word out about The Arboretum and all it has to offer. Ric Jordan is on the Board of Governors of the University.

**Plant Sale Revenue:** Gross is approx. $19.6K, but final tally is not yet in. It was a smaller sale, due to limitation with no greenhouse this season.

Another item Gard would like to be involved with... a role of The Arboretum in conservation of lands within Guelph... but with limited staff it is difficult to be involved in some of these projects. A volunteer also wondered about the status of the OMAFRA land... and whether a Equine Park.... similar to a Kentucky Horse Park, could be established in Guelph.

### 3. Bell Volunteer Grant: Barbara Parke

Through Bell's Employee Giving Program Barbara was able to secure a volunteer grant for The Arboretum. Program is open to all Bell employees and retirees. Employee/retiree must accumulate 50 hrs of volunteer time in calendar year for eligible registered charity. Limit - only 1 Volunteer Grant per employee each year; limit of $2,500/organization. Barbara started as volunteer July 2006 but didn't quite accumulate 50 hrs that first year, however in 2007 & 2008 did receive a Bell Volunteer Grant and monies were designated towards the Italian Garden. In May 2009, along with other donations designated towards the Italian Garden over 300 perennials were purchased for the Italian Garden beds. Gardening Group volunteers, summer students and our leader, Lig Taurins, planted those plants. Come and see what a difference this makes to the Italian Garden. Once again in 2009 Barbara accumulated her 50 hrs of volunteer time for The Arboretum and received a Bell Volunteer Grant. The money is requested to be used to purchase supplemental tools for the Gardening Group so they can continue to maintain and enhance the formal gardens within The Arboretum. Barbara presented a cheque for $500 to Gard.

### 4. Arboretum Slide Show: Sean Fox

Sean presented an overview (words and pictures) of procedures/activities leading up to the Plant Sale. Also shown were several pictures of the Birch and Viburnum collection. There was a small funding from the Maple Endowment for an arborist from Full Circle Tree Services to do some corrective/selective trimming on several maples which could be faced with structural problems. Also a couple pictures of the recent Arboretum tour for Master Gardeners, a wedding at The Arboretum, cross-country race. Sean also identified that once again the National cross-country race will be held at The Arboretum... we receive a nice donation for allowing use of our property. Also a couple pictures of the COB bench, a project of the DaVinci program currently underway at the Nature Centre, the repair of the lathe house, the conifer collection, a 21 yr old English Yew, which was recently planted, The Wall-Custance Memorial Forest dedication service, and also trees being planted in the Memorial Forest.

### 5. Q&A session: all

Most questions were addressed earlier in our discussion. Many volunteers expressed interest in obtaining honey from our Honey Bee Lab. Gard will follow-up with Lab to see if some honey can be purchased and then e-mail volunteers re status/price.

### 6. Closing Comments: Barbara Parke

Barbara thanked all the volunteers for attending. To make these sessions useful/interesting for our volunteers and to ensure continued participation from the Arboretum staff we need your input regarding these Volunteer Info Sessions. Please feel free to contact Barbara… via phone or e-mail with your comments/suggestions.
DaVinci Program 2009 – A Unique project at The Arboretum
Barbara Parke

An interesting project was underway at The Arboretum’s Nature Centre. The project for this year’s DaVinci program involves Grade 11 students from all over the Upper Grand District School Board. The program is coordinated through John F. Ross Secondary School with both Susan Hubner and Martin Lacelle prime for the overall program. The program runs from 9 am until 3 pm at our Nature Centre. The technical resource is Adam Kropp, from Evolve builders.

The project started September 2, 2009 and was finished in October. And what is the project, you ask? It’s a bench of COB construction.

COB is a mixture of clay, sand, and straw and is considered an environmentally sustainable alternative to other types of building materials.

As to the process… first the students created a foundation with stones which they brought with them to the initial class. Next step… they went home and designed a bench… then one of the designs was chosen. A test batch of clay, sand and straw was made, baked in the sun and then tested for strength to obtain the proper consistency and amount for each of the materials involved. The students then worked on a tarp and mixed the proper quantities of clay, sand and straw, then they mashed with their feet… very similar to grape stomping. Now doesn’t that sound like fun? From there they rolled the mixture back and forth on the tarp to kneed it for shaping. Then they started to build on the foundation to create the bench. Final shaping of the bench will be done by hand or with tools and finally any additional materials will be added and then the finishing touches applied. Voila… a very peaceful bench that will overlook the entrance to the Gosling Gardens. Oiling of the bench is required every few years to ensure a proper finish.

A plaque will be placed by the bench describing this unique but interesting COB process, identifying that the bench was the creation of the DaVinci class of 2009.

Come out and view the bench now that it’s finished. Perhaps you will have a chance to sit and reflect about our national treasure, The Arboretum.

A Quiz With Some Facts About Provincial Floral Emblems
Marg Gillies

1. School children chose the Prairie Crocus in 1906 as the provincial flower of which province?
2. Which province has a provincial floral (common name) emblem named after a ship?
3. In which province did the Provincial Women’s Institute request the Purple Violet?
4. The Trailing Arbutus was adopted in 1901 by which province?
5. Which two provinces have protected flowers (Pacific Dogwood and Western Red Lily)?
6. Which territories have adopted each of the following: Fireweed, Mountain Avens, Purple Saxifrage
7. Which province was the last to adopt its official provincial flower?
8. Which province adopted the lady slipper in 1947?
9. Which province adopted the Pitcher Plant in 1954?
10. In 1930, school children chose the Wild Rose for which province?

(Answers on page 8)
Arboretum Auxiliary Activities
Barbara Parke, Volunteer Coordinator

The Arboretum has a variety of areas where volunteers can assist staff, expand their knowledge of trees and plants and have an opportunity to meet fellow enthusiastic nature lovers.

2009 activities are well underway for all of The Arboretum volunteer groups.

The Gardening Group has been hard at work under Lig Taurins, our Horticultural Technician/Gardener.

Auxiliary members normally start their work mid April once the weather permits them to work in the formal garden areas within The Arboretum. This spring was especially exciting for the Gardening group as they planted perennials in the Italian Garden on May 26 with the assistance of 3 summer students. Two beds are planted with Eryngium 'Sapphire Blue' (Sea Holly), one with Lavendula angustifolia 'Hidcote' (Lavender) and the last one with Salvia 'May Night'. Oh, what a glorious garden this will be!

Volunteers assist staff with Arboretum garden maintenance. Activities include perennial plant care (dividing, transplanting, deadheading, pruning), planting, weeding and spring and fall clean-up. The gardens are constantly changing with a great variety of perennials that bloom at different times throughout the garden season. Come check out the tranquility of the Japanese garden with its carpet of thyme that greets you outside the garden, or take a stroll through the OAC Park in the Garden and enjoy the display of grasses in one of the beds. Or wander over to the Gosling Wildlife Gardens and stroll through the Butterfly, Moth and Hummingbird Garden, the Lawn Garden, the Native Plants Garden, the Suburban Garden and finally the Small City Garden. Which is your favourite? I'm partial to the Butterfly, Moth and Hummingbird Garden.

Docent Docket
Susan Atkinson

The docent meeting of November 2nd was attended by about 9 docents, and docents-in-training, and was led by Chris Earley. As usual it started with a round-table discussion of everyone’s recent observations in the natural world around them. Topics raised and discussed were quite diverse, ranging from barn owls seen at Mountsberg Raptor Centre; to the many naturalized wildlife corridors being built as bridges or tunnels to allow wildlife safe passage across the major highways in the Alberta Rockies; and from discussing the area of Carolinian forest and prairie just south of Cambridge, to the many introduced and non-native species of plants and animals that often out-compete our native species.

Then Chris took our group outside to the Arboretum Courtyard and everyone was handed a set of paints and paper. We were instructed to each pick something that we could see around us that appealed to us, and to paint it.

At that moment it started to rain, which enhanced the “water-colour” aspect of the art work! After a few minutes we returned inside and each of us explained our pictures and noted how our powers of observation became heightened and focused when trying to reproduce a subject on a sheet of paper.

Chris suggested how this would be an excellent exercise to use with a group of visitors, to show them how to really focus their observation of the natural world around us.

(Auxiliary Activities continued on page 7)
Message from the Acting Director

Gard Otis, Professor in the School of Environmental Sciences and Acting Director of The Arboretum

I t was a pleasure to meet so many of you at your meeting in early October. For those of you who were there, thanks so much for your ideas about how to advance the Arboretum.

Given my 35 years career working with honey bees, honey seemed an appropriate item for me to bring to that meeting. The four different honeys you had an opportunity to taste came from the mountains of eastern France, the lavender fields of southern France, longan blossoms of Vietnam, and mixed flowers from the areas surrounding the Arboretum. Each was very distinct, reflecting subtle floral odours from the predominant flower species the bees had visited. When a single kind of flowering plant is abundant and attracts bees strongly with nectars rich in sugars, the bees can collect a large enough percentage of its nectar for the honey to take on a signature taste specific to that flower. Beekeepers can further increase their harvest of honey from that single floral source by giving their hives empty combs to fill when that species begins to bloom and removing the honey-filled combs immediately after that species has finished blooming in order to limit the storage of honey from other floral species.

The bees at the Bee Research Lab on Stone Road fly out in all directions searching for flowers with rewarding nectars and pollen. Much of their efforts are focused within a kilometre or two, but some foragers fly over six kilometres away in search of food! That means that the bees from a single colony forage over an area of more than 100 square kilometres. Every day the bees in a colony shift their foraging in response to changing floral conditions. Honey bees are more efficient at tracking the changes of flowering plants in their environment than all other species of bees in Ontario (and there are over 400 species of bees here!) because successful foragers can advertise the location and odour of high quality foods they have found to their nest mates through their recruitment dances. Young bees with no prior foraging experience can use the information from a dancing bee to quickly locate good quality resources. After making some 70,000 foraging trips, the bees in a colony will have collected enough nectar to produce about one kilogram of honey!

About the honey you may have purchased at The Arboretum…. It is from the University of Guelph bee laboratory located next to Wild Goose Woods. It is multifloral, meaning that it contains nectar collected from many different species, including ornamental flowers in downtown Guelph; basswood trees in parks, woodlots, and roadsides; buckthorn bushes in hedgerows everywhere; clovers and milkweed plants in pastures; and many other flowering plants. With the hives being located right next to The Arboretum, the honey is literally “the taste of The Arboretum.”

SNAP Volunteer of the Month Program

Barbara Parke

The Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington has partnered with SNAP Guelph, a monthly print publication serving Guelph and Wellington County, to profile one volunteer/group of volunteers from a Volunteer Centre member agency each month. This is an opportunity for member agencies to promote volunteerism, their organization, as well as to recognize the accomplishments of one of their volunteers or a group of their volunteers.

A 50 word nomination description must be submitted to the Volunteer Centre detailing the impact the nominee’s volunteer work has on the organization, how the volunteer’s dedication has helped to achieve the organization’s mission or a description of the time(s) the volunteer has gone above and beyond their volunteer position to assist the organization.

Member organizations can nominate a maximum of 2 volunteers per year. Nominations are accepted on a quarterly basis by the Volunteer Centre.

In the September 2009 issue of SNAP Guelph Marg and Alvin Gillies were featured as the “Volunteer of the Month”.

At the Volunteer’s Centre annual Open House, held on Friday December 4, 2009, all SNAP Volunteers of the Month were recognized and received their nomination article/picture on a wall plaque.

Thanks to all our dedicated Arboretum Auxiliary members.
Please join me in nominating another of your fellow volunteers in 2010!
Floral Emblem Memories
Marg Gillies

The year 1967 was a memorable one for many Canadians from coast to coast as they celebrated the 100th anniversary of Confederation. For many of us there are memories of special events that included attending EXPO 67 in Montreal. Perhaps some of us have somewhere in our home a memento or two from that special year.

As a special Christmas gift that year, I was given a pretty set of twelve dessert plates. The set was unique in that each plate had a representation of a provincial or territorial floral emblem. Over the years I have enjoyed using these plates even though it was rare at any one time for all twelve plates to have had their pretty flowers covered by some delectable, calorie-laden creation. It is quite probable too, that some plates have been used more than others due to the fact certain flowers were favoured over others!

As with many happenings in life, time changes history. Canada has changed since 1967 and thus my set of plates no longer completely reflects the reality of Canada in 2010. For example, for 36 years, the Madonna Lily, which looks similar to the fleur-de-lis on Quebec’s flag had been the provincial floral emblem. Since it does not grow in Quebec, the province in 1999 chose the blue flag as a replacement emblem.

Due to the division of the North West Territories some ten years ago, it would seem that my dessert set is no longer complete. It lacks a thirteenth plate with a representation of the beautiful purple saxifrage for Nunavut. Perhaps when Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary in seven years time, someone will come up with a provincial floral dessert set containing a baker’s dozen.
(Continued from page 4)

Answers: