

# THE BRODIE CLUB



*Established 1921*

Website: <http://thebrodieclub.eeb.utoronto.ca/>

## **THE 2014 FIELD DAY AND PICNIC OF THE BRODIE CLUB**

The annual field day and picnic of the Brodie Club took place at Carden Alvar Provincial Park on Sunday, June 15, 2014. Field day organizers were George Bryant, Bob Curry and Hugh Currie.

Twenty Brodie Club members and nine guests participated (29 total).



Standing L to R: Peter Kotanen, Jim Rising, Alan Scott (guest of Tomlinson), Leslie and Simon Kotanen (guests of Peter), Glenda Slessor, Trudy Rising, Ron Pittaway, Jean Iron, John Carley and guest Victoria Carley, Bob Curry, Wendy Dey (guest of Risings), Glenn Coady.

Chairs L to R: Jeremy Hussell, David Hussell, Hugh Currie, David Tomlinson, Bruce Falls, Ann Falls, Pat Woodford and Jim Woodford (guests of Dunn & Hussell).

Ground L to R: Stephanie Bryant (guest of George), George Bryant, Ed Addison, Stephen Rowe (guest of Risings), Rose Addison, Ricky Dunn, Sid Daniels. (Photo by Curry)

Members and guests met in the parking lot of Cameron Ranch parking lot at 9:30 am. The day had a promising start with the spotting of a Shrike east of the parking lot as members gathered. We car-pooled for the morning expedition into the Cameron Ranch property. The highlight of the morning was the spotting of a Kirtland's Warbler, but a wide variety of plants and wildlife was observed (see accounts below). The group enjoyed a lunch break was at the Kirkfield Locks watching the lift lock

operations and visiting over picnics. In the afternoon, we visited the Sedgewren Marsh. Overall, a wonderful day spent in a very special ecosystem, with friends sharing knowledge and enthusiasm in nature.

### **Background on Carden Alvar Provincial Park** - Pittaway and Iron

Carden Alvar Provincial Park was established in March 2014 by regulation under the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. It is classed as a Natural Environment Park and protects at least 9 types of globally significant alvar communities. Its 4737 acres comprise the former Cameron and Windmill Ranches, and Katherine McGuaig MacDonald Nature Sanctuary. The two ranches were purchased by The Nature Conservancy of Canada in 2003 and 2006 with support from Ontario Parks, Couchiching Conservancy, Ontario Field Ornithologists and Toronto Ornithological Club. The province contributed half the purchase price of the two ranches and ownership was deeded to Ontario Parks.

Carden is a very special park where controlled cattle grazing will continue to provide short-grass habitat for the endangered Eastern Loggerhead Shrike and other grassland birds requiring short grass such as the Upland Sandpiper. Carden Alvar Provincial Park is buffered by conservation reserves owned by The Nature Conservancy of Canada and Couchiching Conservancy. However, Carden being a provincial park has additional advantages compared to private nature reserves including stronger legal protection, patrol and enforcement by Park Wardens, and access to Ontario Parks staff and MNR scientists. Brodie Club member John Riley wrote that "The Carden Alvar is Ontario's second most important birding destination" in his recent book (2013, p. 216) "The Once and Future Great Lakes Country - An Ecological History" published by McGill-Queen's University Press. The alvar formed at the end of the last Ice Age, when huge volumes of water from glacial Lake Algonquin flowed southeast through the Kirkfield outlet across Carden washing away glacial deposits leaving the flat limestone plain which we now call the Carden Alvar.



### **Carden Plant Notes** – Bryant

On the open alvar, dominant flowering plants change from one week to the next. On June 15 we were a week too late for the Prairie Smoke spectacle of pink and a week early for Viper's Bugloss sea of blue. In the open fields of Cameron Ranch the main components were yellow Balsam Ragwort and white Oxeye Daisy interspersed with orange King Devil. We noted a few herb specialists: Harebell, Rock Sandwort, Wild Bergamot, Hairy Beard-tongue, and Tall Cinquefoil. Most shrubs were not in flower—Fragrant Sumac now in fruit and Gray Dogwood still in bud.



Fragrant Sumac  
(R.Addison)

At Sedgewren Marsh we observed Ontario's only white buttercup species, White Water-buttercup (there are 20 yellow species), along with yellow Tufted Loosestrife.



White Water Buttercup  
(www.nps.gov)



Tufted Loosestrife  
(observeyourpreserve.org)

### Wildlife-Bryant

The bridge at Sedge Wren marsh proved a focus for wildlife observation. Debris from beaver dams supported five Water Snakes, one Ribbon Snake and one Garter Snake. A huge beaver dragging an alder branch swam to the bridge, hesitated on seeing Brodie members, dove, and swam under the bridge. It came into view on the far side still underwater, and entered a tunnel to the lodge, the leafy branch waving like a flag behind it.



Beaver at work (D. Hussell)



Bronze Copper feeding on  
Narrow-leaf New Jersey Tea  
(R.Addison)

Two adjacent shrubs of Narrow-leaved New Jersey Tea, with showy white round clusters, proved to be a magnet for Viceroy, Bronze Copper (photo above) and Northern Crescent butterflies. Other butterflies seen are pictured below.

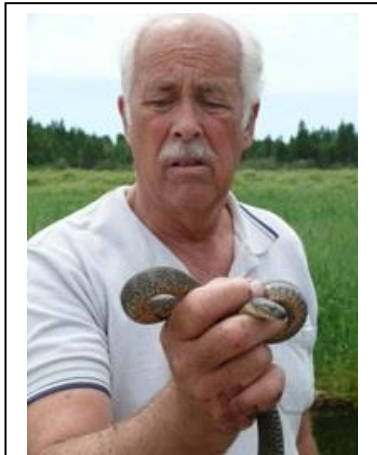


Northern Cloudywing (Curry)



Banded Purple (Curry)

Daniels: Several Northern Water Snakes (NSW) were seen sunning around a tangle of material near the base of the Sedge Wren marsh bridge. Sid Daniels caught one by hand and held it for members to observe. Of all the Ontario snakes, the NSW needs the least provocation to bite. During the time Sid held the snake, it bit him five times. No effort was made to restrict the snake's head (to avoid bites) in order to demonstrate the natural behaviour of the NSW. As well as being quick to



Sid Daniels with  
Northern Water Snake

bite, the Northern Water Snake will release a foul odour from its musk glands and evert its cloaca to discharge a very pungent material to deter its predators.

The scales on the back of the NWS are keeled and dull. This may enhance camouflage and make the snake less obvious than if the scales were shiny. The dullness may also increase heat absorption. The black and brown patterning on the back shows more contrast in younger snakes, becoming less pronounced with age.

Patterning on water snakes varies more than on other Ontario snakes.

The belly scales are smooth and porcelain-like. This is typical of all snakes and enhances ease of motion and discourages dirt from clinging. The belly scales of the NWS are light in colour.

The eye of the snake was clouded, indicating that the snake would soon shed its skin. Many snakes become more reclusive during this time as they can't see as well. During the week prior to a moult, a milky fluid forms between the old and new skin. The fluid is slippery and facilitates the shedding of the old skin. In the 24 hour period prior to the actual spilt and shed, the fluid becomes clear once again.

NWS young develop from eggs inside the female and are born live (ovoviviparous) the last week of August. The newly hatched young are about 6 inches in length.

In general males snakes tend to have longer tail after the split anal scales in proportion to their body length. Tails of female snakes tend to taper immediately after the anal scales.

Bryant and Curry: Within a few minutes of our arrival at the old ranch house in the centre of Cameron Ranch, Bob Curry announced he was hearing a Connecticut Warbler or something like it. Others thought it reminded them of a Northern Waterthrush. Regardless, we were in the middle of a shrub alvar—the wrong time and place for Connecticut. Bob insisted the songster be identified and charged toward its direction. A few minutes later, he shouted "Kirtland's Warbler". There it was, big and tail-pumping, singing atop a hawthorn. This was not only the wrong habitat (they nest among small Jack Pines), but also the wrong geographical location (99% nest in Michigan) and the wrong date (any migrants should have passed through). Most participants were able to view this rare bird as it continued to sing from various shrubs. What a feat of ornithological legerdemain.



Kirtland's Warbler (Curry)

N.B. Apparently, there is one other record of Kirtland's Warbler for Carden.

Curry and J. Hussell – full bird list

Canada Goose  
 Mallard  
 Blue-winged Teal  
 Turkey Vulture  
 Red-tailed Hawk  
 American Kestrel  
 Sandhill Crane  
 Killdeer  
 Upland Sandpiper  
 Mourning Dove  
 Black-billed Cuckoo  
 Downy Woodpecker  
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
 Northern Flicker  
 Pileated Woodpecker  
 Olive-sided Flycatcher  
 Alder Flycatcher  
 Least Flycatcher  
 Eastern Phoebe  
 Great Crested Flycatcher  
 Eastern Kingbird  
 Loggerhead Shrike  
 Warbling Vireo  
 Red-eyed Vireo  
 Blue Jay  
 American Crow  
 Common Raven

Black-capped Chickadee  
 Tree Swallow  
 Barn Swallow  
 House Wren  
 Sedge Wren  
 Marsh Wren  
 Eastern Bluebird  
 American Robin  
 Gray Catbird  
 Brown Thrasher  
 European Starling  
 Cedar Waxwing  
 Brewster's Warbler  
 Yellow Warbler  
 Kirtland's Warbler  
 Chestnut-sided Warbler  
 Ovenbird  
 Common Yellowthroat  
 Mourning Warbler  
 American Redstart  
 Eastern Towhee  
 Chipping Sparrow  
 Clay-colored Sparrow  
 Field Sparrow  
 Vesper Sparrow  
 Savannah Sparrow  
 Grasshopper Sparrow

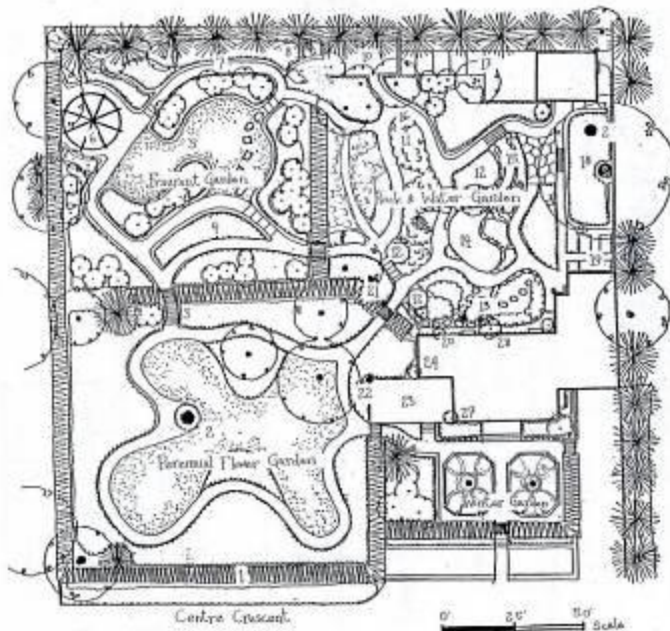


Eastern Towhee (Iron)

Song Sparrow  
 Swamp Sparrow  
 White-throated Sparrow  
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
 Indigo Bunting  
 Bobolink  
 Red-winged Blackbird  
 Eastern Meadowlark  
 Common Grackle  
 Brown-headed Cowbird  
 Baltimore Oriole  
 House Finch  
 American Goldfinch  
 House Sparrow

On behalf of the participants, the secretaries extend thanks to George Bryant, Bob Curry, and Hugh Currie for organizing this year's field day. We also thank those who contributed wonderful photographs. These pictures and others, especially of participants, will be posted on the Brodie Club website (address in newsletter banner, password = TBC1921).

**CORRESPONDENCE**



Merlin's Hollow

- 1 Cedar Hedges
- 2 Sculpture
- 3 Long Arch
- 4 Herbs
- 5 Thyme Lawn
- 6 Gazebos
- 7 Fern Walk
- 8 Butterfly Log Rte
- 9 Dry Bed
- 10 Compost
- 11 Acid Bed
- 12 Bog Bed
- 13 Alpine Bed
- 14 Frog Pond
- 15 Stream
- 16 Snake Hibernaculum
- 17 Filter Aquatics
- 18 Woodland Bed
- 19 Cold Frames
- 20 Bat Box
- 21 Bird House
- 22 Bird Feeder
- 23 Deck Vegetable Garden
- 24 Mason Bee Box
- 25 snag Tree
- 26 Butterfly Box
- 27 Lady & Bug Box
- 28 Robin Shelf

Brodie Club member, David Tomlinson, and his wife Dierdre open their 3/4 acre garden (1500 plants) in Aurora several times every summer.

There are two open days in July, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. David invited Brodie Club members to visit, between 10 am and 5 pm, free of charge.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be the traditional Members' Night. It will be Tuesday, September 15 at 7:30 pm in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Laboratories of the University of Toronto.

All members are encouraged to consider giving a short presentation at Members' Night. Please contact Bruce Falls at [jbruce.falls@utoronto.ca](mailto:jbruce.falls@utoronto.ca) (416-444-4596) or Ed Addison at [ecolink@rogers.com](mailto:ecolink@rogers.com) (905-727-4476).



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