



## Bruce Peninsula Environment Group *Annual Reports for 2012*

### From the Chair

#### **Highlights:**

- Successful film night (*The Last Mountain*) in November 2011 with Angela Bischoff of OCAA
- BPEG Visioning meeting (“What do we want BPEG to be?”) in February 2012
- Participation in Black Out Speak Out in June (thanks to Rick Roman’s wizardry on the BPEG website)
- Input about environment as part of Municipality’s official plan review – and many changes now made
- Garden Network grant awarded from EarthDay Canada for period May 2012 to June 2013
- MNBP volunteers recognitions to Joan McIlraith, John Baker and Jan MacKie on May 6<sup>th</sup>
- Very successful Yard Sale fund-raiser on June 30<sup>th</sup> (special thanks to Donna Baker, the Yard Sale committee, all the volunteer helpers, and Betsy & Frank Burrows for the use of their yard!)
- Student Environmental Awards to Josie Mielhausen and Emma Thomson (Sept 2012)

In response to suggestions from our **Visioning workshop** in February, the educational component of regular monthly meetings has been more varied. In addition to speakers on a variety of topics (some of which came from email suggestions by members), we have held several workshops & demonstrations. [See the Media report for more specifics.]

When we have speakers, they are asked to spend some time encouraging discussion about what WE can do locally. Some examples: After the session on *Save Those Birds!* by Paloma Plant from FLAP, members tried a variety of different “glass treatments” to reduce accidental collisions. Following the *Alien Plant Invaders - Invasive Species* presentation by Fraser Smith, a group at Summer House Park under the guidance of Darci Lombard removed garbage bags full of garlic mustard!

The session in September on *Reptiles and Amphibians in Our Ecosystem*, provided an opportunity for Tricia Stinnissen to report back on the “road hotspots” project done in collaboration with Nature Conservancy Canada.

In July, we had a workshop at Jim Kuellmer and Jan MacKie’s on the topics of *Composting, Sack Gardens, and Portable Season Extenders*, and in September at BPDS on *Preserving the Harvest*. A special session on *Seed Saving* with Jenna McGuire and Alain Charest was held on August 15th, and Tony Barton and Tim Spencer will offer a workshop demonstration on *Portable Hoopstyle Greenhouses* on Nov 14<sup>th</sup>.

For 2013, an interesting line-up of speakers and workshops is already taking shape. Suggestions for other topics and speakers are encouraged; they can be submitted on-line via our website or in the suggestion box in the Parish Hall.

We have continued to **work closely with other local groups** — most notably Transition Peninsula, the schools, and the Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association. BPEG members continue to serve as judges at the annual BPDS Ideas Fair and supported successful garden efforts at both BPDS & St. Edmunds School. BPEG also sponsors an annual Student Environmental Award, and this year the recipients were

Josie Mielhausen and Emma Thomson. In addition to preparing excellent Science Fair projects (which is the key factor used by BPDS in making the selection), both are youth members of BPEG and serve on the Boards of the Biosphere and BPEG respectively.

In collaboration with Transition Peninsula and the schools (BPDS and St. Edmunds), this year BPEG was a recipient of a *grant from the Earth Day Canada Community Environment Fund*, supported by Sobeys, for the “*Planting for the Planet - An Ecological Garden Network for the Bruce Peninsula*” project. Rachel McLay, a student at BPDS, was hired as a student gardener-coordinator during the summer. In addition to tending and making improvements to the BPDS garden, she wrote several gardening articles that appeared in the Peninsula Press. A “Sack Garden” initiative at St. Edmunds school, in partnership with the Bruce Peninsula Grandparent Connection, was extremely successful -- thanks to Judi MacLeod and her group of dedicated “sack-captain” volunteers who watered and picked over the dry summer. Bee hives under the care of Tony Barton are doing extremely well. The grant also supported the recent purchase of several varieties of apple and pear trees that were planted on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>. Additional fruit and nut trees and berry bushes will be purchased and planted in the spring at both the BPDS and Westover gardens. More activities are planned for the coming year – keep watch for notices! Although the grant funding finishes in May 2013, we are optimistic that the Garden Network will continue its work long into the future. Special thanks go to Tony Barton, Betsy Burrows, Alain Charest, Terri Munn, Jenna McGuire and Tim Spencer for all their work with this project.

Our *membership* now stands at 153 members registered and dues paid. Jim Kraemer, as Membership Coordination, deserves special recognition for improving the renewal process and updating the email list. Member volunteers are vital to all of BPEG’s efforts, and members have helped in numerous ways - - working on projects, in committee work, in support of other groups (via memberships and collaborative efforts), and in advocacy initiatives. Thank you!

### ***BPEG Officers***

The 2012 BPEG Board has been: Tony Barton, Past-Chair; Jacqui Wakefield, Chair; Jim Kuellmer, Vice-Chair; Carol Longworth, Treasurer; Val Scott and now Elaine Wasserman, Secretary; Loretta Plomley and Jan MacKie, Media Co-Chairs; Tim Spencer and Jim Kraemer, members-at-large; and Emma Thompson, Youth Member.

Tim, Tony, and Emma have finished their terms and will step down this year. Many, many thanks go to them for their significant contributions over the years.

### ***Committees (see individual reports for more details)***

#### **Media**

The BPEG Media Committee has done fine work in promoting and publicizing our meetings and other activities. Their informative articles appear regularly in the Bruce Peninsula Press and Warton Echo. The renewed BPEG website under Rick Roman’s management has received many positive comments from both members and visitors to the site. Check it out at [www.bpeg.ca](http://www.bpeg.ca) ! Jeremy Thorn, as Communications Director, has helped with the website and has launched us on Facebook!

#### **Bees Gardens and Seeds**

In addition to the activities noted above related to the gardens initiative, soil improvement has continued at Westover and the garden should be in excellent condition for 2013. Tim Spencer has been Chair of this committee, and we thank him for all his work over the past few years! Jenna McGuire is now leading the Garden Committee, and we welcome her to this important role.

## **Waste and Recycling**

Three BPEG members continue on the renewed committee. The Waste Management Plan recommendations of the external consultants have been reviewed. A new 2013 *Towards Zero Waste* calendar is in development, with photos from the Bruce replacing the artwork -- thanks to the graphics work of Jan MacKie!

## ***Bruce Peninsula Environmental Film Festival – collaborative event with Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory***

Significant changes took place in 2012, with the films being concentrated over a week-end in July. Major changes are now being discussed for 2013. More to follow...

## ***Additional specific BPEG member involvements – special thanks!***

- Ruth Tompkins and Joan Barton have managed the BPEG library. Please read their report, as they have asked for a review and have posed some important questions about this resource.
- Dale and Shirley Thompson organized and led spring and fall Ferndale road clean-up.
- Joan McIlraith coordinates refreshments for our meetings, arranges gifts for speakers, and handles the grocery store tapes. Don McIlraith handles the recycling of batteries and ink cartridges, as well as providing guidance to the Chair, Vice-Chair and Past-Chair.
- Dale Thompson has served as a key member and Environment Representative on Grey, Sauble, Saugeen, and Northern Bruce Peninsula Source Protection Committee. The committee hosted a public meeting/consultation at the Municipal offices on May 1, 2012.
- Ziggy Kleinau has represented BPEG in difficult deliberations related to the proposed Deep Geologic Repository for nuclear waste. Bob Patrick represents us on CONE.

As I finish my term as Chair, I want to personally thank members of the Board for their help, guidance and support and all the members of BPEG who have helped so much in so many ways over the past two years. We encourage everyone to “pitch-in” .... whatever you can do. This is what will make our work for the environment meaningful and relevant for the years ahead. We welcome your comments, criticisms, ideas and suggestions.

Respectfully submitted by  
Jacqui Wakefield, Chair

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## **Media News Report 2011-2012**

**Our Media Group** consists of Donna Dilschneider, Don McIlraith, Barbara Bobo, Bev Sawyer, Jan MacKie (co-chair) and Loretta Plomley (co-chair)

**Website:** Rick Roman, Jeremy Thorn

The past year was a busy one with not only our regular meetings held every 1st Wednesday hosting a special guest speaker, but also some interesting workshops and events were held throughout the year that brought in financial support and or community interest.

## **Guest Speakers and Topics included:**

**November 2011** AGM: Storytelling, Roger and Loretta Plomley

**December 2011:** Effects of Genetic Engineering on Organic Farming - Ann Slater of Ecological Farmers of Ont.

**January 2012:** "Nature - Conserve or Conquer?" Bruce Trail Conservancy on the Peninsula with Don McIlraith

**February:** "What do you want BPEG to be?" Membership Survey and Visioning Discussion

**March:** Organic Farming is the Future with Sean McGivern

**April:** Bird Fatalities, A National Tragedy with Paloma Plant of FLAP

**May:** Least Wanted - Invasive Plant Species by Fraser Smith

**June:** Introducing Native Plants into Your Garden with Brenda Sutherland and Judy Larkin of EarthBound

**July:** Workshop on Composting, Sack Gardens, Season Extenders: Jim Kuellmer, JudiMacLeod, Tony Barton, Alain Charest

**August:** The Loggerhead Shrike with Aija White

**September:** Reptiles and Amphibians in our Ecosystem with Tricia Stinnisen

**October:** Preserving the Harvest (preserving and canning workshop) with Jenna McGuire and Terri Munn

### **Special Events:**

a) **The Film Festival** on The Healing Power of Nature, held in partnership with the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory this past July. Jan MacKie made a beautiful bookmark for distribution with the theme and times of shows on this.

b) **The Bruce Peninsula Yard Sale** in June, hosted with the Transition Group. This was well advertised in the press, on the BPEG web site and later given press coverage.

### **Special Recognition:**

Also in the news, BPEG received a special grant by the Earth Day Canada Community Environment Fund to be used toward an educational garden network.

**Website:** Jeremy Thorn has joined the social media and website section of BPEG media and has done an excellent job updating the website monthly and giving us Facebook status. Rick has been in touch with Jeremy giving excellent tips and helping in the process.

Thank you Rick and Jeremy!!

Thank you to our present Media Committee and a special thanks to Barbara Bobo who took on the summer writings for the press.

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## **BPEG Waste Reduction Committee Report**

The Nov. 2011 meeting of the Waste Diversion Group was spent reviewing the Waste Management Plan (actually a series of recommendations with very little proactive ideas tailored to the local situations) that was prepared by the consulting firm.

The June 2012 meeting introduced the summer student, Elyse Meneray, hired to monitor the waste and recycling sites and prepare a report. In the process, the recycling sites were kept tidy. The waste sites are now stockpiling mattresses to be shipped to a newly set up recycling facility off peninsula. We discussed the need to promote the use of the re-use buildings which seem to be underutilized. An invitation was sent to involve some building contractors on the committee to help address the recycling issues surrounding construction waste, which can comprise a sizeable proportion of the total.

The Aug. 2012 meeting a powerpoint presentation of the findings of the student was given and this could be made available to interested parties. The Sources of Knowledge award for outstanding contributions to conservation and environmental education was presented to the committee, presumably in response to the publication of the calendar.

There is current progress on reprinting the Zero Waste calendar for the next year (2013) with encouragement and participation from BPEG members.

Jim Kuellmer, Oct. 9, 2012

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### **Report of the Bees, Gardens and Seeds Committee of BPEG for 2012**

This Committee was formed four years ago to create a clean, organic, local and sustainable food program for the community in which we live and, if successful, demonstrate to other interested people how this might be accomplished. The impetus stems from a feeling that our present food supply has become seriously contaminated through genetic modifications (GM) of staple products such as grains (including corn), manipulation of meats, poultry and fish by the use of agribusiness raising techniques, and the obvious attempt to take control of the seed supply by a few very large and apparently insensitive corporations. This has led in part to a very dangerous situation wherein the majority of the diversity of seeds available to feed our society has been greatly reduced, opening us all to the possibility of famine in future. There has been further evidence that pollinators such as bees are in serious decline due to poor management techniques within the industry but also affected by pollutants within the environment around us.

There are also concerns that the alarming rates of cancer occurring within our society in both humans and other animals is in part due to our inability to properly digest and assimilate much of our GM and processed food -- throwing into jeopardy our bodily cellular functions. Further, it appears as if the safeguards our societies have put in place, have long since been seriously compromised by special interests who constantly lobby our governments with "donations" to political parties, and others in government, and by misleading the public through hugely expensive and ethically barren information campaigns to promote the ideas that treating the symptoms of disease is preferable to the promotion of wellness.

Having stated a few of the reasons why this Committee was formed, I am very pleased to proclaim that I feel we have laid the foundations to move our community, and hopefully many others, forward to a healthier and stronger future food supply for all.

I'm sure you are all aware of the many times I have reported, in a rather lacklustre form, how we have worked to secure the Westover plot as a future Community Garden through demonstrating sound soil husbandry over the last four years. I think I can assure the membership here that your support has been indeed fruitful and that the plot is well prepared to grow wholesome food in accordance with good organic practices. The success or failure of this portion of the project will rest solidly on the shoulders of people who may wish to carry the operation of this potential garden to a successful conclusion. It has been done in many other communities and can be accomplished here as well. The site is prepared!

Much thought has been given to the "garden" portion of our program which leads us to supporting "personal" or home gardening. Because of our collaboration with the local Transition Community and the Schools, collectively we are showing that educational programs related to composting, building raised beds (BPDS) and sack gardens (St. Edmunds School), building hoop houses for winter and shoulder season gardening, saving and preserving the harvest, and numerous other topics to come will continue to "cultivate" interest in all of us moving toward the BGS goals. The community interest in all of these items seems to be almost rampant as the time for good food is evidently upon us. I also want to point out how joyful these gatherings seem to be as one and all absorb and contribute to the programs. Personally, I shall offer a seminar in the spring of 2013 on the dynamic subject of dirt. We invite one and all to come and participate in a subject only slightly more interesting than watching paint dry. But do you know that the population here on "earth" lives on less than 2 cm. of topsoil? We cannot all eat fish and kelp. I cannot express how surprised and delighted I am to see the grass roots level of interest we have here in the BGS project.

The "bees" portion of this endeavour is well underway as well. This past spring, Tony Barton and I built a couple of conventional Langstroth Beehives using Florida juniper wood which is mildly aromatic. I had noticed that in Florida, bees seem to like this wood and that it seems to inhibit the growth of fungi somewhat. So far we seem to have no signs of Colony Collapse Syndrome in four hives, two of which are now housed in Top Bar Hives of conventional construction. We will liaise with the Canpolin project at Guelph on this subject this fall. Much honey has been produced, but we will leave the majority of it to overwinter the bees. Experimentation is ongoing to keep predators like bears and racoons away from the hives and to date these have been successful using electric fencing. The plan for next year is to enlarge the number of hives through natural swarming and the introduction of select queens; we will diversify the hives as opportunities arise. I think there also will be more emphasis on other pollinators, including birds and butterflies in future. Many thanks go to Tony Barton, Jenna McGuire and our resident beekeeper, Glen McFarland from Mar, for their many and timely efforts.

The "seeds" part of BGS has been a bit slow to show results, which is to be expected. But with the guidance of Master Gardener Alain Charest, input from Transition and Tim Spencer, we should see some positive results through seed offerings this coming spring. There was a good response to the "Seed Saving" session with Alain and Jenna in August and there will be a "seedy day" publicised at a later date -- at which time there will be seeds made available to the public which have been grown locally and should be of good quality. BGS is striving to offer known varieties of open pollinated garden seeds at this event. They are being propagated for purity to variety, nutrition and flavour, and they should be

appropriate to our local conditions. Several so-called “heritage varieties” should be available. We hope to encourage as many as are interested in growing and saving seeds and plants as time goes by. At present, we have no plans to have the varietal seeds certified by Ag. Canada.

This brings me to the trees. BPEG acquired over 225 trees in a project with Transition, thanks to Tim Matheson. They were planted by volunteers at the Westover site so that we may grow them to a larger and more sustainable size at which time they will be sold or otherwise distributed to the community at large. A gravity watering system was purchased and installed onsite to assist the trees and future endeavours at Westover’s. With the help of an Earth Day Grant supported by Sobey’s, we and Transition and the schools have acquired funds for new gardening initiatives. This has allowed us to purchase some fruit trees this fall, as well as hiring a student this past summer. Rachel McLay, a student at BPDS, worked enthusiastically -- helping to monitor the Westover site and doing a great deal of hands on work and encouraging students and visitors at BPDS to enjoy gardening. It has always been a bit tough to tend the BPDS gardens in the “off” season, but Rachel solved this very nicely.

This past year saw several personnel changes on the BGS Committee -- including the resignations of long-time supporters, John Baker and Stuart Burgess. I have spent many hours tilling the Community Garden with these chaps, and I wish to thank them for their efforts to date. John tended the first garden plots attempt last year, and Stuart left us a nice sign by the road indicating what was transpiring at the Westover site.

I have also resigned as the chair of the BGS Committee, as I feel it is time to move along and give it a fresh coat of paint at the least. Jenna McGuire has graciously agreed to take on the chair, with the caution that she may have to leave the Bruce in pursuit of employment as she was terminated, as were many others, by Parks Canada on orders of the “Harper Government”. Jenna is a great asset to our community and may she stay here in her home as long as she wishes. If anyone may be able to help in this endeavour, this place will be a lot better off with Jenna here!

Personally, I wish to thank BPEG for having the foresight to make this ever so important environmental project possible through the support of wonderful volunteers and the membership. When it began, I made a promise to Brewster and Cathleen Kneen that we would try to do this rather complex program here on the Bruce while they were trying to form a national citizens’ coalition on food in Canada. I think we all have succeeded at least in part, and it is now time to toss the stone in the pond and let the wavelets take their examples everywhere. Please feel free to toss one or more yourself.

Brewster is just finishing up his latest book (whose title I do not know) but suffice to say it will bring into sharp focus his and Cathleen’s over sixty years of hard and unswerving work to save the freedoms in Canada to grow and eat our own food and to help others in this world do the same. I defy the large agribusiness interests to find a way around this one!

With love to all you little eaters,  
Tim Spencer

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## Library Report

The BPEG Lending Library has been in operation for almost 5 years – the first books were borrowed in January 2008 – and we feel it is time for a review :

Is the library serving its purpose ?

Are there ways it could be made more useful ?

Do we need a library?

The books have been donated, and are still being donated, through the generosity of members of this group. We try to draw attention to the library, sometimes by reviewing a book of particular interest, sometimes by setting out volumes that relate to the topic of the evening. From time to time we cull some of the books because of limited shelf space. Some of them are offered to the school (BPDS), some sold at our yard sale. At present, the library includes approximately 90 volumes: of that number just over half have been borrowed one or more times, the others not at all.

Christ Church has been generous in allowing us storage space and the church wardens are quite willing to continue this arrangement. However, because of the limited use of the books, we suggest an alternative way of storing them. We could maintain a list of books that members are willing to share, listing owner, title, author, publication date and possibly a brief description of the content: the books themselves would be kept by the owner and request for loans would be made directly to the owner.

Eg.	Title .....	Author .....
	Borrowed from .....	Borrowed by .....
	Date .....	Date returned.....

BPEG has also been subscribing to several magazines, and our practice is to keep issues for one year and then offer them free for the taking . In addition members have donated back copies and speakers have often left behind promotional materials. Again, however, we have found that very few members make use of these offerings. We wonder whether our paid subscriptions are justified.

Ruth Tompkins and Joan Barton, librarians.