



BRUCE PENINSULA ENVIRONMENT GROUP

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Annual Report 2014

The year kicked off with the AGM potluck punctuated with musical interludes from BPDS students and local musicians, and as usual was a memorable experience. At this time we didn't have much of an idea about what sort of winter we were going to be in for, having been lulled into a false sense of security by a long string of mild winters. In December we heard an update presentation about the progress in cleaning, by way of prevention, our (peninsula's) river systems of agricultural effluent from Neils Munk. This was the first year of a multi-year ambitious project taken up by BPBA, supported by BPEG. We learned that Neils was developing solar powered water systems in conjunction with fencing cattle out of the streams, and that it required a combination of farming experience and the ability to innovate technologically since every situation is different and there are no off-the-shelf packages available to perform this function.

January was to be a review and revision for members, but that was shifted to February since even local residents were unable to get out for much of January due to heavy snow and high winds. On Feb. 5 we met, broke into small groups and came up with a list of issues to work on. The two which have seemed to have gotten the most traction this year have been the non-toxic cleaning products promotion and the phragmites location and control project. The other issues to keep in mind for the future (in addition to the traditional energy conservation and tree planting, and education) that came up were: saving bees, advocating for GMO free products, eliminating disposable water bottles, improving signage in sensitive areas, and zero waste. The other winter meeting was something new where members were invited to share images and stories, related to amazing landscapes, from their own lives.

In April we heard from Shelly Petrie about the activities of the Greenbelt Foundation in regards to NEC lands, but their mandate did not seem to have a lot of significance for the peninsula since their mandate is primarily to protect agricultural land from urbanization. In May Karen Alexander came from the Lake Huron Center for Coastal Conservation to speak about an issue that she was passionate about, namely the ecological damage being done by the invasion of common reed (*Phragmites Australis*), a non-native species which is opportunistically taking lands exposed by low lake levels and being spread by vehicular traffic and wind. This has become a BPEG project where members can volunteer to map areas of their choice on the peninsula in order to direct future activities of awareness and control.



In May, as chair, I spoke to a conference at the Outdoor Education Center about the state of our forests. This well attended event went by the title of Bruce Talks, or Meeting of Scientific Minds on the Bruce. This was also the month when the library bench, built by & paid for by BPEG and BPTC (Bruce Peninsula Trail Club), was installed to honor the 38 years that Larkwhistle Garden has been attracting visitors to the peninsula to enjoy the beauty of nature.

In June we learned about a related project that involved both common reed and ATV traffic on beaches from Theresa Stafford & Lee Burton of FOOCE, the Friends of Oliphant Coastal Environments. This is a group on the peninsula that is structured similar to BPEG, and has a similar mandate for a more limited geographical area. In July we kept the new tradition of having a meeting outside alive by accepting an offer from new members Michael Virtolli and Monika Ghent. They wished to contribute by sharing their knowledge and skills with plants. The meeting took place in a meadow where they led us through the identification, gathering and preserving phases of common plants with healing properties. They also wished this event to be a fundraiser, so there was an admission charge and it attracted the limit of 30 participants.

In August we kept up another tradition by inviting Stephen Scharper to show a film "Lost Rivers" at our meeting. The only part that needs some work of such meetings in the future, is that Stephen is excellent at leading discussions, but it seemed that the social time after, that BPEG members enjoy at each meeting, took the place of discussion time.

In September, long time bird observatory manager Stephane Menu described his personal experiences both here on the Bruce and in the Arctic with migratory bird counting and what it tells us about the ecology over time.

In October we invited Jennifer Barratt-Parker to speak about the Bluewater District School Board's cost cutting measures and the threat to school closures in our area in order to garner more community support for BPDS and St Edmunds. Jane Thomson, candidate for School Trustee and Patricia Grieg, candidate for Deputy Mayor joined her to answer questions from the members. This was in

recognition of the importance of education to the environment and the impact of busing on the children and the environment.

Fundraising over the year took several forms. BPEG had a table at the Lion's Head market on two Saturdays to offer rain barrels and hoop houses, built by Tony Barton, for sale. There were fridge magnets produced in ceramic showing images of endangered species native to the peninsula. This is in addition to the already mentioned herb walk.

The year has generally gone very well in no small part to the excellent contributions of the board members and the skill sets that they have graciously contributed to our 25th year of education, advocacy and hopefully enlightenment for the community of the Bruce Peninsula.

Jim Kuellmer
Chair

