



Think Fall and Winter

Fall- 2011 Newsletter Sault Naturalists of Ontario and Michigan



Goodbye Summer--Welcome Fall and Winter

We've had a wonderful summer. Every week we've had an outing or field trip or another fun event. Val Walker and our hike leaders created an interesting group of adventures and if you missed them, you missed a good time. However fall and winter are coming and there will be lots of opportunities to experience nature in all its glory. Check your calendars and field trip schedules and mark the "can't miss" dates.

If you can't make the outings, then come to our monthly programs. The leader of our Program Committee, John Lehman and his committee members, Ron Prickett and Carrie Ginou, create programs that come from many corners of Ontario and Michigan, and some even further afield!!!!!!

On October 11, Dr. Jennifer Foote from Algoma University will talk about "Communication Networks in Black-capped Chickadee Dawn Chorus". She will explain why the birds call so early in the morning. Then on November 8, Laura Sanderson will give a presentation on Invasive Plants and the potential problems in our native forests. Our December 13th program is a time to



review some of our most interesting nature readings and on January 10 Marie Price will present a program that features her travels in the Arctic. These 4 programs in the fall and winter are just the start of a

winter of wonderful programs. See you at them all.

Dave Euler, President

<http://soonats.pbworks.com/w/page/8206039/About-the-Sault-Naturalists>

Ron and Val, Dave and Christopher canoeing on the Bachawanna River



Carl, Val and Sharon studying the intricacies of the Bottle Gentian



Showy Ladyslipper on our property on St. Joe's Island. This is one of about 150 plants.

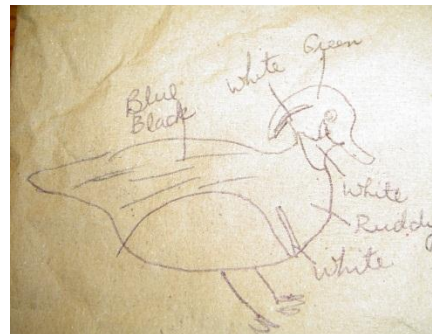


Birding in the Bahamas

By Gail Andrew

Green Turtle Cay, a small island in the beautiful turquoise waters of the Bahama Bank is an easy place to wander, listen and see birds. There are few vehicles and the only four-legged creatures are curlytails, Potcakes, feral cats and one old horse that has free run of the island. But birds are everywhere! I was hoping to see a Kirtland Warbler, but I did see Yellow-Crowned Night Heron, Bahama Woodstar, Western Spindalis and the rare and endangered Bahama Parrots. Others that I could easily identify were a small flock of chickens, a Brown Pelican, Northern Mockingbirds and a Great Blue Heron with his favourite perch on the dock post near our boat.

One day while visiting a Bahama Blue Hole, I saw a duck with very distinct markings. My guidebook was not nearby and my Sault Naturalists birder friends were 1500 miles away. I can do this! I thought. What did Tony Walker say? “-don’t rely on memory-sketch it.” So, on my lunch bag I drew my duck. My sketch won’t win any grand prizes for art but here it is.



Back in Sault Ste Marie, in the company of my birding friends and a guidebook, my

duck turned into a beautiful Wood Duck. Not rare or uncommon but new to me. And since I've been back home, I've seen it twice. But it will always be my "Bahamian Duck".



Editor's Note- Gail's account of her trip to the Bahamas and her sketch is a really good illustration of why it is important to make a rough sketch and notes when you see a bird that is new to you and you cannot identify it. You will be surprised how much information you can capture on paper and how helpful it will be. By the way, ask Gail What is a curlytail?

From Michigan here is Joy Cohen's picture of a Kirkland's Warbler. (thanks Joy)



Gear Review – Portable Speakers for Ipod

Don Hall

The times they are a-changin'! Bob Dylan

I have long wanted to broadcast bird calls to try to locate owls, rails, least bitterns and other secretive birds. Now and then I would borrow an old ghetto blaster and play calls from CDs, but it was always awkward and I was not inclined to pay for gear that really didn't work very well. Enter the ImaingoX with IBird Pro on the Ipod, a combination worth considering.

ImaingoX is a compact, portable speaker system that works with most Ipods, iPhones and touch-screen mp3 players. The size and weight are similar to a field guide, and it fits almost as well in a large pocket. A recent around-the-campfire survey of avid birders gave a "thumbs up" to the volume and sound quality.

The software, Ibird Pro should be the subject of a separate review. It includes photos, illustrations, songs, calls and detailed information for 924 species. Some people choose to carry Ipods rather than field guides, but I still like the durability and readability of a real book.

The ImaingoX is not available locally; but it's easily found on line. Don't buy one sight unseen, if you would like to try it out just give me a call, we'll arrange an opportunity. For specs and all the details, visit Imaingo.com.

Pros

- Amazing volume and sound quality for its size.
- Good protection for the Ipod.
- Touch screen controls work well.

Cons

- Managing the rechargeable battery is complicated.
- Does not have its own volume control – awkward at times.
- Not waterproof (but it works fairly well in a Ziploc bag)
- Price - \$70 (non-rechargeable Imaingo2 is much less)
- Requires an Ipod!

Overall – 4 ½ stars, recommended.

The ImaingoX



Featured Mushroom—the King

Bolete by John Lehman

Every year from late summer through early fall I look under an old oak tree in our yard to see if the king boletes are up. I have to be vigilant because if I miss the fruiting by even a day, the fungivores will have eaten their fill. Slugs love king boletes! That's not a big problem, since after careful cleaning the mushrooms are still edible, but I

begudge the loss of even a small fragment of this delicious mushroom. More troublesome are insect larvae (maggots) that drill tiny holes through the flesh. If there are only a few isolated holes in a mushroom I'll eat it anyway, but if the flesh is riddled with maggot holes I'll throw it out. A bolete in this condition is unappetizing and may make you ill.

King bolete is just one of many names for the species *Boletus edulis*, which is known as the penny bun in England, the cep in France, the porcino (meaning piglet) in Italy, and the steinpilz (stone mushroom, for the firm flesh) in Germany. It is unusual for a mushroom to have so many common names; only the most highly prized and the most deadly mushrooms have this distinction. Fortunately *Boletus edulis* is in the first category. It is one of the finest wild edibles, with a nutty, meaty flavour.

This is a sturdy-looking mushroom with a reddish-brown or cinnamon-buff cap that may be nearly hemispherical in mature specimens; a layer of tubes on the underside of the cap with white (when young) to greenish-yellow coloration; a swollen stalk with a white weblike array of tiny ridges (called reticulation) over the top third of the stalk; and firm white or cream-colored flesh having a pleasant odour. Some mushroom guides say that the king bolete grows only under conifers, but other sources say it is associated with deciduous trees such as birch and oak. Such confusion arises because the "king bolete" name seems to cover a group of North American species—called the *Boletus edulis* complex—whose members are almost indistinguishable. It may be that some of these species grow only under oaks and others only under conifers. It's not even certain that the mushroom we call

Boletus edulis is the same species as the European *Boletus edulis*. For that reason the North American species is sometimes referred to as *Boletus cf. edulis*, suggesting that we don't really know what we've got here. To anyone but a professional mycologist it doesn't matter—our *cf. edulis* is no less tasty for being ambiguous!

What does matter is whether the mushrooms you just collected for a gourmet meal actually meet the description of the *Boletus edulis* complex. To be sure about that you need a good mushroom guide, such as one described on *The Mushroom Page* in the SooNats wiki

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(soonats@pbwiki.com). One king bolete look-alike, *Tyopilus felleus*, is probably not poisonous, but it is extremely bitter so you aren't likely to eat enough to harm you.

It can be distinguished from *Boletus edulis* by its lighter tan to brown cap and brown webbing at the top of

the stalk. In mature specimens, after the spores have dropped, the tubes under the cap take on a pinkish color (the spores of *Boletus edulis* are olive-brown). More problematic is *Boletus huronensis*, which resembles *Boletus edulis* and has caused severe gastrointestinal upset and other nasty symptoms. To make sure you haven't collected this species, examine the top of the stalk and then cut a specimen in two and look at the flesh. If the stalk lacks the white weblike reticulation of *B. edulis* and the flesh is pale yellow, has reddish areas in the stalk, or (possibly) stains blue over time,

don't eat it! Yes, a *Wikipedia* article does say that "*Boletus edulis* is considered one of the safest wild mushrooms... as there are no poisonous species that closely resemble it," and some otherwise reliable mushroom guides describe *Boletus huronensis* as edible, but there are enough documented cases of poisoning by this species to suggest caution.

Once you're certain that the mushrooms you've collected are in the *Boletus edulis* complex, you're ready to cook them up for dinner. But be careful; some people have allergies even to perfectly "edible" mushrooms, so try a small piece at first. The



entire mushroom is edible when young; for older specimens the soft layer of tubes should be peeled away (a spoon works well for this purpose) because it will give the cooked mushroom a slimy texture. Clean each mushroom with a mushroom brush or a moistened paper

towel but don't use a lot of water and never dunk it in water. Although king boletes are sometimes eaten raw, that can cause stomach upsets so it's best to cook them. The simplest cooking method is to slice each mushroom and sauté the slices in butter or olive oil. But there are many other good ways of cooking boletes. Here's a simple recipe adapted from one in *Joe's Book of Mushroom Cookery*.

Fried Boletes

1 lb. king boletes, cleaned

2 eggs, beaten

1 1/2 cups cracker crumbs

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, divided

salt

Carefully remove the spongy tubes from the bottom of each cap (firm tubes of young specimens need not be removed). Cut the boletes in 1/4 inch slices. Put the beaten eggs and cracker crumbs in two separate shallow bowls. Dip the mushroom slices in the eggs and coat them with cracker crumbs. Heat enough butter in a large frying pan to fry 1/3 to 1/2 of the mushrooms. When the butter just starts to bubble, add as many mushroom slices as will fit in the pan in one layer and fry them until the crumbs are golden brown on each side. Repeat with the remaining butter and mushroom slices, then season to taste.



Val Walker describes life in a stream.

The Life of a Stream by Val Walker

Streams, rivers and creeks are all considered to be "lotic systems". This is a fancy word for moving water system as opposed to lentic or standing water systems like lakes and ponds.

Lotic systems have unique characteristics and are intricately connected to the surrounding landscape that they move through. Not only is the chemical composition of their waters affected by the surrounding landscape, so is the productivity of the system.

Total dissolved solids (TDS) like calcium, phosphates and nitrates that support aquatic life are easily dissolved from limestone bedrock, but not so easily from granite. As a result, these nutrients are in higher concentrations in limestone based streams. Higher total dissolved solids result in streams with a higher productivity in terms of biomass and species diversity.

The terrestrial environment that the stream flows through is also important. Leaves, twigs and other organic material fall into the water and serve as an important outside (allochthonous) energy source. These inputs are welcomed by a host of stream organisms, including many aquatic insects, that use them either directly or indirectly as a food source. Fungi and bacteria break down leaves and twigs and release important nutrients that are then taken up by aquatic plants.

Both fine and coarse organic particulate matter resulting from decomposition are filtered from the stream water by specialized aquatic insect larvae known as 'collectors'. These include certain families of larval

mayflies, net- building caddisflies and true flies like blackfly larvae. They often construct nets or use hairs on their bodies to strain food particles from the water.



Leaf litter can be eaten directly by some other specialized aquatic invertebrates called '**shredders**' such as certain families of larval stoneflies, case-making caddisflies and craneflies.



Flat headed mayflies larvae, water pennies, riffle beetles and some caddisfly larvae are called '**scrapers**'. They feed on the algae attached to aquatic plant material and rocks.



Of course, there are also many species of aquatic insect larvae that are predators, like dragonfly, damselfly and alderfly larvae that feed on other aquatic insects. The kingpins or top predators of the aquatic world are often fish and they are found where the food source is.

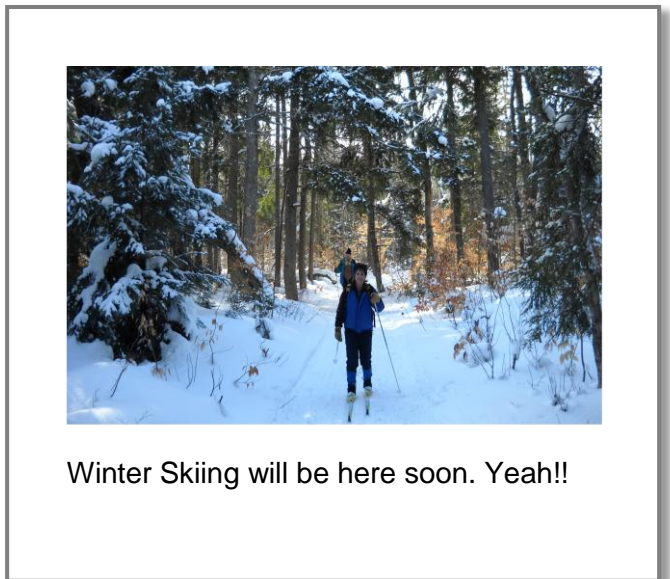


So, this fall when you are at a forest stream, think about those leaves falling into the water and the incredible diversity of aquatic life that they support. Go ahead, turn over a rock and see what you'll find. Don't worry, stream aquatic invertebrates don't bite. Well, most of them don't.

Images from:

East Fork Lewis River Water Quality & Aquatic Macroinvertebrates Study

http://www.bgsd.k12.wa.us/hml/jr_cam/macros/default.htm



Featured Bird



By Tony Walker and Ken McIlwrick

Red-bellied Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes carolinus*) are moderate-sized and vocally active birds of the family Picidae. They are typically a resident bird (i.e. found summer and winter) in an area but can sometimes be a short-distant migrant. They have the most restricted range of all the Ontario Woodpeckers and are rarely found on or north of the Canadian Shield. They are considered Rare to Common in Ontario but are not a Species at Risk. In the Sault they are at the northern limit of their range and are therefore Rare. Their numbers in some parts of southern Ontario have increased noticeably since the mid 80's and a spill-over into more northern areas like the Sault has occurred. Even though they were not reported during the most recent bird atlas in the Sault, their probability of observation seems to have increased. They are becoming a regular on the CBC (albeit only 1 to 3 birds) and are reported more and more frequently throughout the year.

In the city of Sault Ste. Marie, Red-bellied Woodpeckers are often associated with suet feeders and/or habitat areas containing some deciduous cover. Some nearby areas on the Ontario side that one might find a pair include Fort Creek Woodlot, Sault College Woodlot, Algoma University Woodlot, Sault Ste. Marie Golf Course

Woodlot, Gros Cap, St Joseph Island, Neebish Island and Pumpkin Point. They are also found in a number of wooded areas in Chippewa County, Michigan.

Thank you; Thank You

To Gail A., John L., Don H., V. Walker, Tony W. and Ken M. for contributions to this newsletter. Thanks also to the Executive of the Club for support to me and for the unseen work you do to keep the Club functioning. Thanks as well to our many field trip leaders and other "workers" in the club.

Thanks to the Platform Party crew; Tony W, Carl L., Ron P., Robert C., Don H. Bryan G., and to Dave E. the Site Super.

And a special thank you for the women who helped; Vivian Hall cut brush and baked, Gail Andrew set up the support structures and Gail Giuliani cooked the hamburgers. You're great!

