



Our Mission -

"TO ENSURE THE PRESERVATION OF THE CHARACTER AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF WAGNER NATURAL AREA FOR EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH PURPOSES."

Friends of the Fen

WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Upcoming events:

2020

Weed Control and Site Management

Limited work parties scheduled
Saturday / Sunday, June 20 and 21.

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. both days; let
us know when you can help.

Please pre-register by email---
info@wagnerfen.ca

Weeds to pull, wire to roll, and trail to
trim. Training and tools provided!!

Further details provided to registrants.

2020 Activities

**To comply with COVID-19 health
recommendations, no guided tours
until further notice.**

**Please enjoy our Marl Pond Trail
safely; practise physical distancing.**

**Help us by picking up any litter and
disposing it in your home garbage.**

Visit our website:

www.wagnerfen.ca
for more information
about Wagner Natural
Area.

**All stories and photos
by Dave Ealey, unless
otherwise noted.**

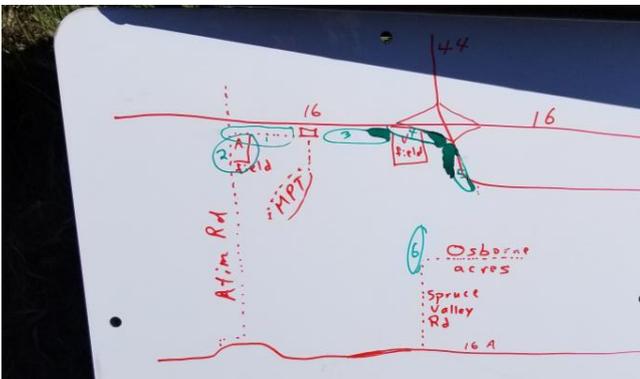
Queries to
info@wagnerfen.ca
Submissions welcome!

Site Management—COVID Style

Thanks to all the helpers who came out to the Spring Clean-up on May 24. Everybody did well at practising physical distancing. Thirteen volunteers joined me for two shifts and collected 23 bags of trash...delightful to see the access road clean...at least for a little while! Thanks to Barb, Steve, Mark, Patsy, Doris, John, Thuy, Alan, Robert, Irl, Dave, Jill, and Joanne.



Vests for volunteers for safety, washing station, individual pick-up sticks, water and snacks laid out for contact-less, COVID-friendly activity. We even used a map to show people where we wanted to clean up.



The most unusual find was part of a front fender for a Ford compact car...sorry, we didn't save it for Lost and Found!

We'll be doing another clean-up in the fall, if you want to plan ahead.



Great flowering marigolds along trail.

Following the clean-up bee, Robert and I did some work along the Marl Pond Trail. The water level has been exceptionally high this year, and because of the saturated soil, has not drained. We've had to create one small detour along the trail near signpost #3 and laid out a number of planks to assist walkers. It is still a good idea to wear rubber boots, and with the rain in early June, the trail may be wet for quite a while. Be prepared!



One extensive stretch of soggy trail is located near a massive blowdown area...the downed trees are likely having an effect on the surface water flow in that area. We hope the warmer temperatures will begin to dry this out. As long as we don't get too many thunderstorms, we should have a drier trail for everyone.



The short detour (and planks!) near signpost #3 will be removed once the large pool along the trail has dried.

Research and Citizen Science

Ongoing research into the success of a tree-planting project in the hayfield in northeast Wagner Natural Area, involves periodic measurement and assessment of the health of the spruce trees. Derek Johnson, Science Director for the Wagner Natural Area Society, has been compiling the data over several years and plans to report on the results in due course. In mid-May this year, Derek continued measuring the tagged trees with help from plant specialist Dave F., and myself.



The tree at far right was one of the tallest observed at well over 3 m in height. The growth success around the field was quite variable, with some seedlings planted at the same time being much less than a metre tall.



This spruce tree (centre pic) is severely damaged from deer rubbing their antlers along the main stem.



May Species Counts

We surveyed birds and flowering plants on the last weekend in May (30th and 31st). We regretted not being able to invite the public to participate this year, but grateful to continue this ongoing project.

I conducted the bird surveys along with Sheila H. As usual, we completed a thorough survey along the Marl Pond Trail and the adjacent central field and old beaver pond at the west edge of the field. Our second survey covered the southeast corner of the natural area.

Total species observed or heard was 46 and the total number of individual birds detected was 506. Results were posted to eBird under the Wagner Fen hotspot. No new species were recorded, although a Northern Harrier was seen on both surveys, an uncommon species for the natural area. The most interesting observation was a Blue Jay loitering on the ground at the edge of a marl pond; we inspected the area where the jay was hanging about and found a large school of tadpoles that we are certain the jay was eating!

Toad tadpoles - a jay's breakfast!



Solitary Sandpiper occupying abandoned beaver pond.



American Goldfinch - this female was part of a small group of goldfinches noisily chasing each other over the beaver pond.

Patsy Cotterill and a few others conducted the May Species Count for flowering plants over several days, starting May 30th. A total of 59 species was recorded, which is on the high side of average number for flowering plants at the end of May.

Notable species in full blossom included Bog Rosemary, Bishop's-cap, Marsh Marigold, Woodland Strawberry, Saline Shooting-star, Bog Violet, Currant and Dewberry. Cottongrass was past flowering and will soon have its distinctive plume of white seed tufts.

Pale Coral-root orchid had started blooming and some Yellow Lady's-slippers were also showing their vibrant hue. These orchids should be in full peak through the second and third weeks of June. Father's Day (June 21) will be at the end of the blooming period, but there should still be some in flower then. We won't be able to run our usual guided walks at that time, but visitors are welcome to hike the trail themselves and enjoy the show!

Recent photos from Patsy (Bog Rosemary) and Manna (Yellow Lady's-slippers).



Recent Outreach Activity

While we have not been able to host groups onsite or visit classes or make presentations, we have been active in communicating about Wagner Natural Area and its importance as one of Parkland County's environmental gems!

On May 26, Wagner Natural Area Society was able to participate by teleconference in a Parkland County public hearing into rezoning for the Legend Estates subdivision immediately northeast of the interchange for Highways 44 and 16. I spoke briefly to County Council and described the dependence of the natural area upon groundwater flow. The County will be applying a new Overlay for the planning for development in that area. If the Overlay is followed by developers and subsequent property owners, there will be less likelihood of impact upon our groundwater discharge area.

Council seemed to understand and appreciate our concern about the vulnerability of the groundwater regime and took some time to confirm the capacity of administration to ensure the Overlay was effectively enforceable. We will monitor what happens next and will obtain a record of our participation in this County process for the WNAS archives.