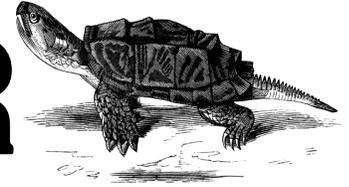




Autumn 2010

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# The SNAPPER



## KFT member enjoys Kawartha camp

### Mission Statement:

*The Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation is dedicated to conserving biodiversity, promoting sustainable communities, and partnering in research, monitoring, outreach and education.*



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The human spirit needs places where nature has not been rearranged by the hand of man.

By Colleen Dale

Earlier this year our Youth representative and Port Rowan student, Megan Wilcox, was nominated by members of the K4T committee for the 'Margaret and Carl Nunn Memorial Camp Scholarship' conservation award by ON Nature. This scholarship is awarded to youth between the ages of 10 – 14 who display interest in natural heritage interpretation and education and have the potential to take an increased leadership role within their club's programs. Not only is Megan a part of the K4T committee, but she is actively involved in the club's programs and displays leadership to younger children. Megan is always willing to lend a hand and volunteer her time with K4T activities as well as other

conservation programs within the community.

It was so exciting to find out Megan had won the scholarship award!! Megan was recognized and presented with a plaque on May 29th at ON Nature's Annual General Meeting. Along with the plaque, Megan was also awarded with 4 days at Camp Kawartha.

We are so proud of you Megan! Congratulations!!

Following her attendance at the camp, Megan said:

Camp Kawartha was awesome! We did all sorts of water sports including canoeing, sailing, wind surfing, kayaking (of course we tipped everything) and swimming. Other daytime activities we took part in were archery, land-side sports, rock climbing, squirrel, nature sculpting and an Eco hike.

In the evening, the whole group, about 60 to 80 of us, did an activity together. The first night it was a game called "escaping animals," in which the leaders were dressed up as animals and we had to chase them down, ask questions, get their 'signature', and then find another animal. We were all working in groups, which were



our cabins, and my group was only two short of the winner.

On the second night there was a garbage chase, in which you had to collect silver rocks and not get touched by the garbage (leaders dressed in costumes with garbage attached to them and painted black and green). If you got touched by the 'garbage,' you were frozen until either "G.I. Love Nature" or "R.U. Eco Friendly" tagged you again.

During the third evening, a puppet group performed a play on the importance of planting trees and then we had a camp fire.

What I learned that stands out most, however, is that if you put a big scared slug on your tongue, your tongue goes numb. This is because the slugs secrete some orange gluey stuff when they think they're going to be eaten so that its predator remembers and doesn't eat any more slugs. It's kind of a plan to help the entire species.





# Why did the turtle cross the road?

Bernie Solymár, Biosphere Reserve Coordinator  
Long Point Biosphere Reserve Foundation

On his first day of on the job this spring I took my student, Mark, on a tour of the Causeway, where he would be spending a good part of his summer, walking the entire length twice (both sides of the



*A Snapping Turtle prepares to lay her eggs at Big Creek Marsh.*

road and using a GPS to record where he found any road killed animals. We stopped at the MNR parking lot beside the Sand Boy Marina to have a look at the scenic Inner Bay. As we turned around to get back in my van I spotted a small object on the other side of the road that was moving slowly towards us. The 7-inch long Spotted Turtle, intent on reaching the east side of the road, was oblivious to two vehicles approaching, still some distance away. I quickly crossed the road and picked her up. When the cars had passed I brought her across the road and placed her down in some vegetation facing the same direction she had been travelling. After a few seconds she resumed her slow and ambling way to look for a sunny, gravelly slope to lay her eggs. We felt elated, not only at having actually seen such a rare and beautiful

creature but having, no doubt, saved her life.

So, here's a question: Why did the turtle cross the road?

Answer: To get to the other side of course!

But why, you ask. Very simple – most adult turtles encountered on roads are females. In the spring, female turtles leave their watery homes in marshes, ponds and lakes to look for places to lay their eggs. A perfect location is a south-facing gravelly slope where her buried eggs are incubated by the hot summer sun. This helps ensure

those eggs will hatch into tiny replicas of herself in late summer and early fall. These vulnerable little creatures then need to find their way back into a marsh or pond – a very dangerous journey for 1 inch long baby turtles.

The degradation, fragmentation, and destruction of natural wetland habitats due to human activities are undoubtedly the biggest threats to turtle populations in the Great Lakes region. The Big Creek Marsh, protected from such activities, is managed as a National Wildlife Area by the Canadian Wildlife Service. It is one of the largest intact and undisturbed wetlands in Ontario, with a rich and diverse flora and fauna, and serves as an important migration stop-over for tens of thousands of waterfowl every Spring and Fall. The Marsh also supports one of the most significant populations of Spotted Turtles, Blanding's Turtles, and

Northern Map Turtles. All of these, along with the Snapping Turtle, are considered "species at risk" – species in danger of eventually disappearing from our landscape.

Although protected from human activities such as draining of wetlands and development, Big Creek Marsh turtles still face other life-threatening hurdles – heavy predation by "subsidized" predators like raccoons, as well as weasels, skunks, mink, foxes, blue herons, and snakes. Added together you've got a very scary statistic – on average 95% of turtles don't make it through their first year!

However, most turtle biologists argue that the loss of adult, breeding turtles has a much bigger impact on a local population than the loss of eggs or hatchlings. That makes a lot of sense when we take the Snapping Turtle as an example. This species may take at least 15 to 20 years to reach sexual maturity and can live to 50 years or more. At an average of 40 eggs per year, a 50-year-old female Snapper (which has been laying eggs for 30 years) has produced 1,200 offspring. If only 5% of those make it to adulthood she has successfully left her genes in 60 young turtles.

Adult turtles face their own

*KFT members Jaden and Liza Barnie check out Snapping Turtle eggs that had been eaten by a predator at Big Creek Marsh.*

share of risks – number one is road mortality by vehicles, especially in areas like the Big Creek Marsh. Think about the odds of a female turtle making it across the road on a long weekend when an average of 10,000 vehicles cross the Causeway! And there is one more, very sinister, danger – poachers – those who collect turtles for the illegal pet trade and Asian food market. Most people don't even know they are around but occasionally wildlife officials are lucky enough to catch poachers at their trade. For example, a recent arrest in Wallaceburg resulted in a 150-day jail term and fine for a man who was found with three Spotted Turtles, a Snapping Turtle and 13 Bullfrogs in his possession.

Considering turtles are such an integral part of wetland ecosystems and an ecological indicator of the wealth of biodiversity in Big Creek Marsh, the onus needs to be on us, as a community, to protect these fascinating creatures. In our next issue we'll discuss ways in which we can help conserve and protect our turtles.



## Long Point Turtles at Risk

Spotted Turtle	Endangered
Blanding's Turtle	Threatened
Stinkpot	Threatened
Spiny Softshell	Threatened
Northern Map Turtle	Special Concern
Snapping Turtle	Special Concern
Midland Painted Turtle	Not at Risk



# Autumn Nature Watch Checklist

*Photos, unless otherwise noted, by Marg Werden*



**WOOLLY BEAR**

The larval stage of the Isabella Tiger Moth, the Woolly Bear is often seen crossing roads and driveways around the time of the first frosts. According to “rural legend,” the width of the orange band can be used as a predictor of the severity of the coming winter, with narrower bands forecasting colder winters.



**WILD TURKEY**

A native of North America, European explorers took Wild Turkeys to Europe from Mexico in the early 1500s and English colonists brought them back with them when they settled on the Atlantic Coast. The domestic form has retained the white tail tip of the original Mexican subspecies, while wild turkeys have chestnut-brown tail tips.



**MILKWEED PODS**

The leaves of the milkweed plant are the primary food of the Monarch butterfly. The seeds of the milkweed have a bit of fluffy silk attached to them making them super light and able to float on a breeze, helping to disseminate the seeds to the surrounding area. The dried silk of the seed pods can be used as kindling to start a fire with just a spark.



**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE**

The Black-capped Chickadee, a frequent winter feeder visitor, can remember where it hid its food for at least 28 days after putting it in its hiding place. At night, the Chickadee drops its body temperature at by 10 to 12°C below its daytime body temperature to conserve energy.



**RED SQUIRREL**

The most widespread of North American squirrels, the Red Squirrel's Latin name “Tamiasciurus, means “the steward who sits in the shadow of his tail”. Red squirrels can cut one white spruce cone per second and eat 40 to 50 cones a day in winter. Red squirrels will scold any intruders into their territory.



**A TREE WITH ATTITUDE**

Fungal growths on trees can take a variety of forms and this one makes the tree on which it is growing look like the tree is sticking its tongue out at passersby. Trees are susceptible to a wide variety of fungus growth problems that can create cosmetic damage as well as severe infection and death.

## KFT hosts 2nd annual Eco-Kids Nature Camp

*By Colleen Dale*

We couldn't have asked for nicer weather for the 2nd annual Eco-Kids Nature Camp held on October 23rd and 24th. Thirteen very eager eco-kids gathered at Backus Heritage Conservation Area for two days full of environmental activities, hikes, games and field trips.

The camp began with a short presentation on Biodiversity, and then it was off into Backus Woods to go exploring for the rest of the morning! Despite it being the end of October, the kids were able to find a wood frog, and both red-backed and blue-spotted salamanders. The afternoon was filled with creativity and imagination as the kids were led by local artist, Sally Gable, to create their own spirit masks.

First thing Sunday morning the children boarded a bus and headed to the Long Point Bird Observatory for a bird banding tour by biologist Jody Allair. Many species of birds were caught, banded and released including sparrows, chickadees and a blue jay. After a tour along the Long Point dunes, the bus headed to Wagon Wheel Produce and Corn Maze for an outdoor lunch and an hour of corn maze madness! The kids were given a map of the maze along with some nature questions they were to answer using hidden plaques throughout the maze. There was no time to spare as everyone boarded the bus and returned to Backus to meet Elisabeth Van Stam and our next activity – Geo caching. Each group had a great time using the GPS unit to find their way to the na-

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# KFT Coming Events

## KIDS FOR TURTLES LONG POINT- NORFOLK CHAPTER

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lpwbrf.ca

### Committee:

Bernie Solymár (Chair)  
Marg Werden (Secretary)  
Wanda Backus-Kelly  
Chris Bowyer  
Sally Gable  
Terri Groh  
Arden Koptik  
Rick Levick  
Janice Robertson  
Jen Smit  
Debbie Solymár  
Kaela Vanwynberghe  
Megan Wilcox

Co-ordinator:  
Colleen Dale

### OWL PROWL

Saturday, February 19, 2011: 7:00 p.m.

Have you ever been in the woods at night and heard the deep hooting of a Great Horned Owl? Or the horse-like call of the Eastern Screech Owl? If not, you don't want to miss out on this opportunity! Join us for a walk in the woods as we play the calls of some local owl species and wait for their response. It is sure to be a hootin' good time! Don't forget to bring a flashlight and to dress warmly. Meet at Hay Creek Conservation Area at Radical Road and Port Ryerse Road.

### SIMCOE WILDLIFE FESTIVAL

Saturday, March 12 and Sunday, March 13, 2011

This weekend is all about wildlife! Drop by the Kids For Turtles booth and learn about all the events and activities we have planned for 2011. Our theme is "Forests" and we are excited to have hands-on activities, displays and the very popular 'Sciensational Ssssnakes' to keep you entertained!! Takes place at The Aud at the Norfolk County Fairgrounds.

### CELEBRATING EARTH DAY

Saturday, April 30, 2011: 12 - 4 p.m.

Earth day is a day dedicated to inspiring awareness and appreciation of our earth, by participating in local activities and events. Join us for an afternoon filled with family fun activities including tree planting, guided nature hike, earth friendly crafts and so much more! This event is a joint partnership between the Kids For Turtles, Long Point Region Conservation Authority and Norfolk County Community Services Department. Meet at Backus Heritage Conservation Area.

### LONG POINT – CAROLINIAN NATURE FEST

Saturday, May 28 & Sunday, May 29, 2011: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.

NatureFest is a celebration of our local nature and features a weekend of birding, wildflower identification walks, salamander monitoring, frog and amphibian walks, tree identification, kids activities, displays, workshops, crafts and local foods. There is something for the whole family! Join us at Backus Heritage Conservation Area and throughout the Long Point Biosphere Reserve to experience the best of what Norfolk's nature has to offer.

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ture caches which contained a puzzle piece and their next clue. Once all the caches were found, all the groups worked together to put the puzzle together.

At the end of the camp we had a wrap-up session to get the participants' feedback to make next year even better! A big thank you to Bird Studies Canada and Long Point Region Conservation Authority for delivering another fantastic camp!

*Thirteen participants in the KFT Eco-Kids Nature Camp enjoyed beautiful fall weather for their activities at Backus Heritage Conservation Area.*

