

WELCOME TO THE MARSH MATTERS NEWSLETTER, A MONTHLY PUBLICATION TO KEEP OUR VALUED MEMBERS, VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS IN THE LOOP ABOUT THE HAPPENINGS OF THE WYE MARSH!

Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, including the trail system, Visitor Centre, and Birds of Prey Field remain **temporarily closed** to aid in stopping the spread of COVID-19.



Please stay tuned for further updates regarding Wye Marsh's re-opening.

For more information and updates to Wye Marsh's re-opening plans, [please click here](#).

## DID YOU KNOW?

February 2 is **World Wetland Day**, meant to draw attention to the importance and beauty of wetlands. Whether lush and green or under a blanket of snow, wetlands play an important role in our environment. They provide shelter, food, habitat or a stopping point for countless species.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of World Wetlands Day celebrations. The theme for World Wetlands Day 2021 is **Wetlands & Water**.

Wetlands are essential for their ability to filter the waters and improve water quality, as well as to act as a buffer between times of drought and flood. Countless species are dependant on, or benefit from wetlands and the clean water they provide—including humans!

This is why it is crucial to protect these beautiful spaces. Learn more about wetlands on page 2...



# WORLD WETLAND DAY:

**Wetlands are distinct ecosystems that are flooded by water—either temporarily or permanently. Marshes, fens, swamps, and bogs are all examples of distinct types of wetlands.**

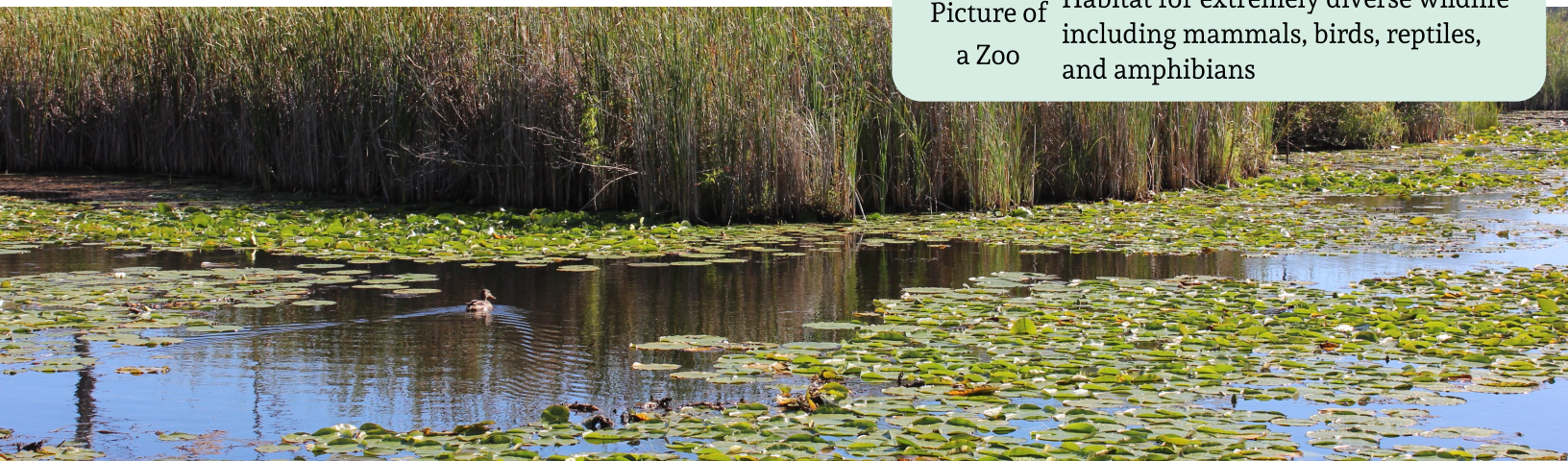
While wetlands account for only 6-7% of Earth’s surface area, they breathe life into incredibly diverse biospheres. Beyond biodiversity, wetlands are crucial for a number of reasons:

1. We are in a global fresh water crisis. Only **2.5% of water on Earth is freshwater**, & only **1% is usable**. It is imperative to protect wetlands which act as natural filters for clean water.
2. Of all water sources, biologists believe that **wetlands are the most depended upon** by wildlife & humans.
3. **Aquaculture is an emerging solution to world hunger**, with crops such as rice paddies and fisheries harvested in wetlands.
4. Wetlands offer a boost to global economies, with over **1 billion people relying on wetlands for their income** including aquaculture, recreation industries, and biologists.
5. Wetlands **absorb over 1.5 million gallons of water annually**, preventing or lessening damaging floods.
6. Wetlands, such as peatlands, **absorb 2x as much carbon as forests**, thus helping regulate climate change.

It is estimated that 50% of the world’s wetlands have disappeared to urbanization, pollution, water drainage, unsustainable use, invasive species, and other causes. They need our help.

### How YOU can help wetlands:

- Support conservation centres including volunteering at shore-line clean-ups or BioBlitz surveys
- Compost and recycle to cut down on pollution
- Limit chemicals in your garden that could filter into a wetland
- Avoid invasive species in gardens, opting for native plants instead
- Increase your water efficiency to avoid waste
- Enjoy wetlands sustainably - never litter, respect the wildlife, and making sure you aren’t introducing invasive species or chemicals
- Encourage your town to integrate wetland health *into* development
- Most importantly—help educate others!



## TEACHING ABOUT WETLANDS



You can use household items as a metaphor to help visualize or teach your family & friends all the ways that wetlands help the world around us!

Object	Metaphor for Wetland Function
Sponge	Absorbs excess water caused by runoff and releases it in times of need
Pillow	A resting place for migratory species including birds and butterflies
Egg Beater	Mixes nutrients/ oxygen into water
Cradle	Provides shelter, protection, and food for young wildlife
Strainer	Strains salt and debris from water to keep the water clean
Coffee Filter	Filters smaller impurities from water such as excess nutrients or toxins
Antacid	Neutralizes toxic substances
Garden	Provides nutrient rich foods for wildlife and humans
Soap	Helps clean the environment
Picture of a Zoo	Habitat for extremely diverse wildlife including mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians

# ON THE WILD SIDE:

Wye Marsh is very excited to welcome two new residents to the Birds of Prey field - in fact, we just can't help *RAVEN* about it!

Both Edgar and Allan came to Wye Marsh from a rehabilitation centre where they coincidentally, and sadly, both had wing amputations due to separate injuries sustained in the wild. While in the rehabilitation centre, the two Ravens formed a very close companionship and so they have come to Wye Marsh together. Edgar & Allan will share an enclosure that has been customized to their abilities.

The pair are named for the famous poet and author of *The Raven*, Edgar Allan Poe, and affectionately known as the 'Poe Boys' by staff. Thank you to Grounded Coffee Company Inc. for your support in adopting Edgar & Allan.



*Edgar & Allan the Ravens are settling in well to their new home.*

## GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The Great Backyard Bird Count is **February 12-15, 2020**. Another bird count you ask? Well, YES!

The main point of the Great Backyard Bird Count is just FUN - to connect birders all over the world.

Birding is an incredibly popular pastime globally, and this initiative by Birds.org is meant to highlight the fun and benefits of it and bring the world together for the love of birds.

This year, the connections will be digital. Simply get outdoors, look for birds, and share your sightings to encourage others to do the same!

[You can learn more on Birds Canada's website, here.](#)

*A White-Throated Sparrow.*



## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2020

Thank you to all of the birders who participated in the Christmas Bird Count this December and January. Here are the results of the 2020 Christmas Bird Count as organized by the Midland-Penetanguishene Field Naturalists Club on December 19, 2020. These findings include a 24km<sup>2</sup> area encompassing both Wye Marsh and Tiny Marsh.

**53 species** recorded

**4160 individual birds**, the most since 2013

**Record high counts** for Pileated Woodpeckers (14); White-Throated Sparrows (2); & Northern Cardinals (34)

**Notable sightings** included Double-Crested Cormorants (not recorded since 2006) and Red-breasted Mergansers (not recorded since 2014).

The **most sighted bird** was the European Starling, with 702 recorded.

You can view the Midland-Penetanguishene Field Naturalists Club's entire count and the total count results from 1900 to the present at the [Audubon website by clicking here.](#)

Count Code: **ONWM**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

The Wye Marsh is certainly quiet these days, to the point the animals are moving back to the land that was once theirs. Every morning brings new rabbit, coyote, and other animal tracks right outside the doors of the Centre. Like a lot of people I regularly check the COVID-19 daily case numbers and while they are much higher than we all want them to be, as of the writing of this post they are trending downwards giving us hope that as we continue through 2021 we will return to somewhat normal operations. With that in mind we are busy planning for spring and summer activities, looking forward to when hiking, canoeing, kayaking, and bird watching can start once again. A number of federal and provincial organizations have grant funding available and staff have been busy preparing and submitting applications. I am also happy to report that we have been taking wedding reservations for the latter half of 2021, and we look forward to hosting these joyous events. Of course circumstances may change, but rest assured we will do our best to open as soon as circumstances allow and we are looking forward to seeing everyone soon.

### Achievements to be proud of over the last month:

- \$1,000 grant from Tay Township for animal proof bins for Swan Landing
- Arrival of Edgar and Allan, the Ravens
- Donations in December 2020 exceeded amount raised in 2019—THANK YOU!
- Exceeded goal for Annual Fundraiser with the completion of our 50/50 Draw—THANK YOU!

**- Mary Ann Milne, Executive Director**



*Sometimes the beauty of nature is in the smallest details—like these mushrooms!*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Hello to all of our faithful supporters,

I hope you are all doing well. While it is unfortunate that the Marsh trails have to be closed it is encouraging that, in the past few days, the numbers are moving in the right direction. Hopefully that trend will continue and we can welcome you all back in the near future.

The Friends of Wye Marsh Board has been very fortunate in adding 5 new members (bios on pages 5-6) over the last few weeks. The new folks bring with them a diverse range of experience and talents that will benefit the work we are trying to do. One skill we are still in need of is accounting. A Treasurer always performs an important role but even more so now, considering we will be making a transition from our current Executive Director to a new Executive Director this summer. I suspect the individual we need is reading this newsletter. If you are give me a call at 705-245-0529.

As a volunteer swan feeder I can assure you our feathered friends are enjoying our hospitality. There were 36 Trumpeter Swans on Saturday, and 42 on Sunday. Those numbers included 6 cygnets each day. The new generation is alive and well! Hope to see you soon. Keep tuned to the web site and stay safe.

**- Dave Robertson, President of Friends of Wye Marsh Inc. Board of Directors**



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

Each of our volunteers is invaluable to the success of Wye Marsh, and we appreciate every role that is taken up.

This volunteer spotlight is meant to highlight some of the great work done by our team of volunteers.

The last 12 months have been particularly unusual for Wye Marsh as for the rest of the world, and so we deeply appreciate the adaptability, readiness, and patience of our volunteers as we take things one step at a time.

**Thank you all!**

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: ELIZABETH WALKER

Elizabeth retired from teaching Chemistry, General Science and Math at Parkdale Collegiate in Toronto in 1998 and moved to Midland in 2002.

Along with volunteering at Wye Marsh, Elizabeth is a member of Probus, Pursuits, Golf, Curling, Lawn Bowling Clubs as is on the board of Sistema Huronia Music Academy.

Elizabeth began volunteering at Wye Marsh after enjoying visiting and believing in the important protection of the wetlands and education programs for schools and other groups. Elizabeth is instrumental in keeping track of statistics of visitors, groups and schools, and assisting with accounting. When she began this task, it was by reading the tapes of the cash register before Wye Marsh had a computer on the front till - which is pretty incredible.

Elizabeth also assists with Sweetwater, winter activity days, and other special events. She used to wrap holiday presents in benefit of Wye Marsh at Huronia Mall as well.

We are grateful for Elizabeth's long-time dedication to Wye Marsh, and all the work she does. We are very proud to recognize Elizabeth as the volunteer of the year for 2020.

## MEET THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Join us in welcoming the new members of the Friends of Wye Marsh Inc. Board of Directors. We look forward to seeing the impact that each individual will make in the future of our organization!

### **Alasdair MacLean, Director**

Alasdair has lived in Tay Township for 30 years. He worked for many of those years at one of the local automobile dealerships, and is now retired. Recently elected to the Board. Alasdair's interest in conservation started at a very early age in England; he has been involved in local trail management for some years, and brings to the Board considerable knowledge of the Wye Marsh and its extensive trail system. Alasdair has been a long-time member and active volunteer with Wye Marsh for the past few years, including guiding canoe tours, hikes, and leading bannock roasting among other things.

### **Natalie Majer, Director**

Hailing from the Niagara Region, Natalie involved herself in activities that the landscape provided including hiking, rowing, and working her summers with the Niagara Parks Commission. With the intention of becoming a high school geography teacher, she made a complete career 180 trading her cartography maps in for a pair of police boots. Joining the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) in the early 1990's, Natalie completed postings and deployments all over the province in a variety of sectors and roles. She has focused the majority of her career in Central Ontario where currently she is stationed at the Southern Georgian Bay OPP detachment in Midland as a Staff Sergeant, Operations Manager. Having a sense of community and commitment to organizations, Natalie feels passionate about being steered to the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre. With a focus on leadership and partnership skills with area community members and tourists alike, she inspires action that levers the task at hand. Natalie is thrilled to be part of an amazing team of volunteers promoting and showcasing the Wye Marsh, its trail systems and its species that requires everyone's protection and support.



*A beautiful Wye Marsh sunset captured by Alasdair.*

## MEET THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

### **Rebecca Cowie, Director**

A passion for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and hiking introduced Rebecca to the Wye Marsh. Upon graduating from the Masters of Applied Nutrition Program at the University of Guelph Rebecca returned to the Midland area to work in healthcare and promptly obtained a membership to the Wye Marsh to enjoy outdoor activities year-round with a camera in hand alongside her family, and her Shetland Sheepdog, Cassie.

Prior to returning to the Midland area Rebecca worked as a post-secondary educator at Conestoga College; committed to developing educational materials and fostering a positive learning environment. With this experience Rebecca strives to assist with current education programs and development of resources available to visitors.

### **Susan Molenda, Director**

Susan is a newly retired Executive from Nestle Purina Petcare where she was the Vice President of Marketing, overseeing areas of strategic planning, product development, advertising, events and consumer research. She also had a unique opportunity to bring a not-for-profit Pet Experience Centre to life in 2004 -2014 called PawsWay In downtown Toronto.

Susan grew up in Penetanguishene, raised her 3 children in Newmarket and after retirement, as returned to the area full time, residing in Victoria Harbour. Susan is an outdoor enthusiast for hiking, biking, kayaking, boating, skiing and snowshoeing which brings her to the Wye Marsh often.

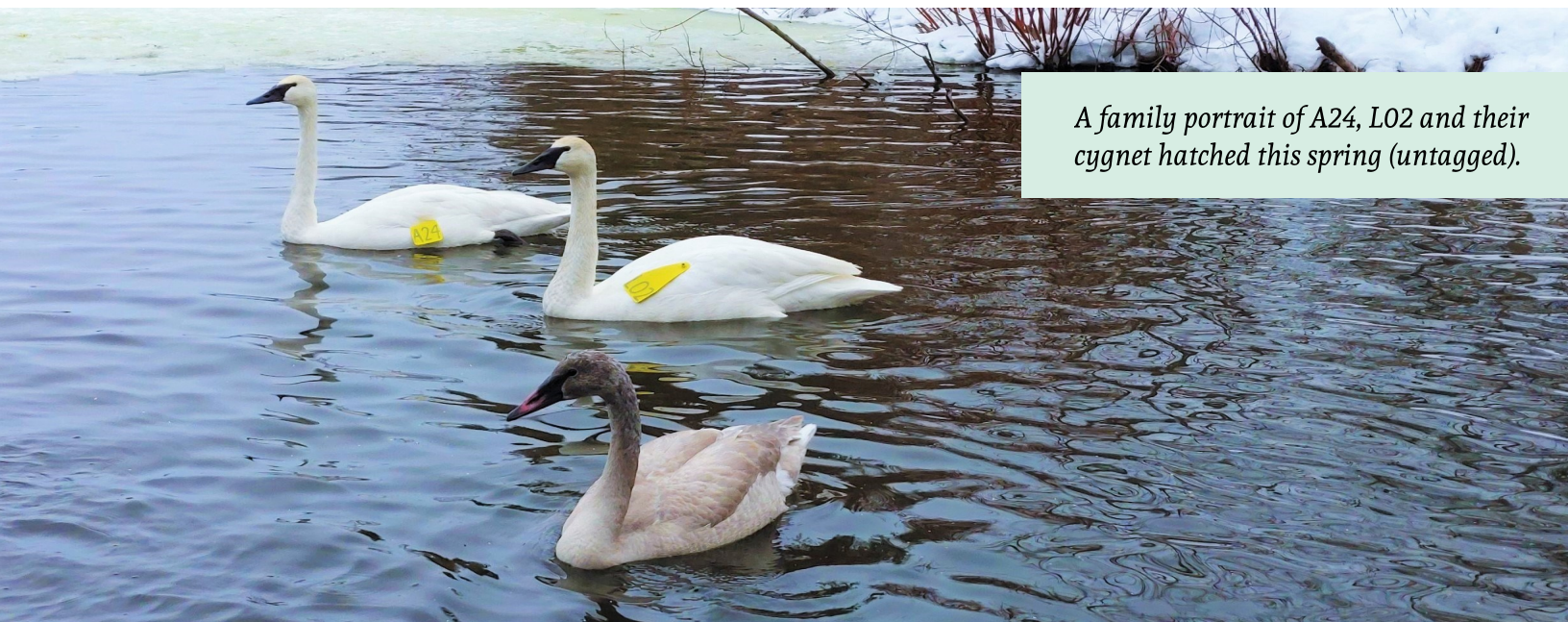
She is very keen to be of assistance to the Wye Marsh board where her time and skills can be dedicated to helping work towards its mission and to enrich the visitor experience that keeps bringing us back to the Wye Marsh.

### **Tim Martin, Director**

Tim and his wife Karen moved to Midland in 2011. He is retired having worked in the IT industry for nearly 40 years. Tim specialized in the Canadian retail sector managing technical staff, large projects, and infrastructure. He rounded out his career as an experienced senior retail consultant. Tim also has a financial background.

Tim has been active in the community serving on the board of the Georgian Bay General Hospital for 3 years, and on the Georgian Bay General Hospital Foundation's board for 2 years. He has also served on the board of a private non-profit family corporation for over 30 years.

Tim is very interested in wildlife conservation and has had a cottage in the Kawarthas for 50 years.



*A family portrait of A24, L02 and their cygnet hatched this spring (untagged).*