



THIS ISSUE

Birds of Thickson's Woods -
Pileated Woodpecker

The Checklist of Butterflies of
Thickson's Woods

Moths of Thickson's Woods
The Display of the Melonworm Moth

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Pileated Woodpeckers
Dryocopus pileatus
(Mike McEvoy)

The Birds of Thickson's Woods

by Margaret Bain



Pileated Woodpecker

Dryocopus pileatus

Pileated Woodpeckers are among the largest woodpeckers in the world, surpassed in size only by the sleekly handsome Black Woodpecker of Eurasian forests and the legendary, now almost certainly extinct, Ivory-billed Woodpecker of the Americas. Seeing this magnificent woodpecker in full flight reminds you that birds evolved from dinosaurs. With its large size, long neck, great wings, and deep wing beats this woodpecker could be a descendant of the original archaeopteryx.

During the extensive clearing of land for settlement in eastern North America, woodpecker numbers declined significantly, but over the last 100 years or so, through the resurgence of wooded areas and the maturing of forest trees, Pileated Woodpeckers, though never common, have been slowly regaining their former numbers and range. They prefer mature forests, deciduous or coniferous, especially where there are scattered large dead trees and a good supply of decaying wood. Carpenter ants are their main food source, chiselled out of the wood forcefully by strong pile-driver necks augmenting pick-axe bills. The piles of large fresh wood chips on the forest floor beneath these excavations can be impressive.

Pileated Woodpeckers also seek out caterpillars and the larvae of wood-boring beetles, and almost a third of their diet can include foraged berries, fruit, and acorns, especially during the breeding season. A new nest is excavated in early spring almost every year, usually fairly high in the main trunk of a large forest tree, but sometimes in much more public places, not infrequently including roadside utility poles! Both partners take part in nest-excavation and also share incubation duties and the feeding of young by regurgitation.

Adult male Pileated Woodpecker showing its magnificent scarlet crest and bright red moustachial stripe. (Ed McAskill).



Adult female Pileated Woodpecker in full flight, with extremely broad wings, widely-splayed “fingers” at the wingtips, and striking black and white underwings. (*Ed McAskill*).

The amazing cover photograph of this issue of *The Aquila* shows a typically huge, oblong-shaped, deeply excavated nesthole, together with a flamboyantly-crested male Pileated Woodpecker feeding two feisty nestlings – looking carefully you will even be able to tell that one young one is male and the other female! Families like this will often stay together until the fall, when these yearlings must leave to find new woodlands of their own, replete with new, thriving populations of carpenter ants.

Along with Red-headed Woodpeckers, which admittedly are hard to beat, Pileated Woodpeckers are among my favourite birds. Their stately flight, their accelerating drum-rolls and wild, high-pitched calls are fascinating, almost other-worldly, and a privilege to experience.

Margaret Bain

Adult female Pileated Woodpecker with a less extensive red crest and black moustachial stripe. (*Mike McEvoy*).



Thickson's Woods has been a Nature Reserve for close to 40 years and has been a mecca for Spring birding, recognized as one of the best places to see warblers as they migrate northwards, looking their absolute best. From my perspective, having researched this rich biodiversity, there is no place like it, this close to human habitation, anywhere along the lakeshore, all year long.

We have to thank the Thickson's Woods Land Trust Board (past and present) for ensuring that this wonderful wildlife refuge is, and continues to be protected and accessible, which is all the more difficult with the increasing numbers of visitors.

The Covid Pandemic has highlighted just how vulnerable the Reserve is to some people who believe they are entitled to wander as they please and potentially harm or damage habitat, or species which rely on the reserve as protection, in particular leaving the trails and disturbing owls.

It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the few rules that are in place are followed so we can continue to enjoy this natural treasure. A few visitors believe rules do not apply to them, and they should note that the Reserve is private property and access can be restricted or even denied to anyone or everyone. Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve is protected for wildlife. It is a bonus we get to experience it.

Phill Holder

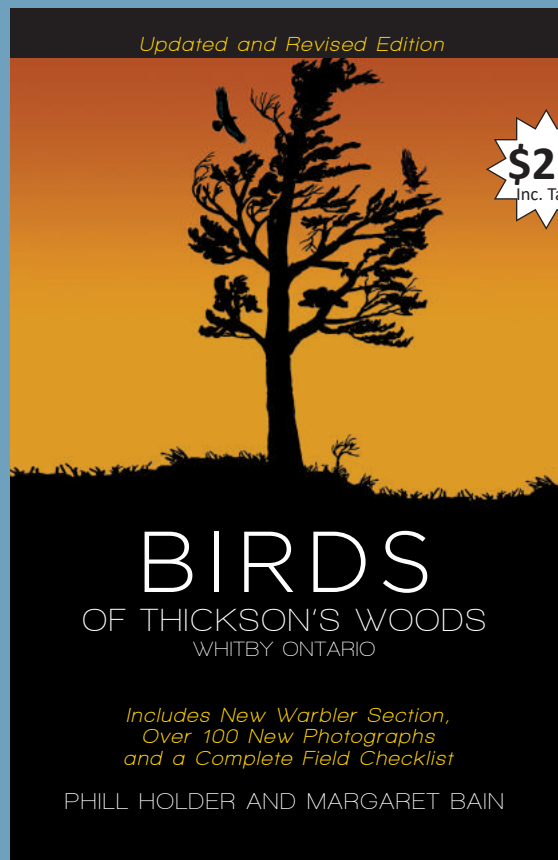
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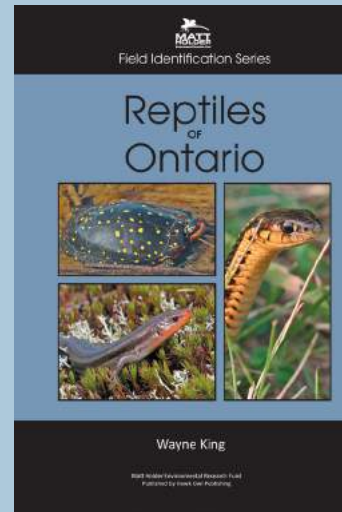
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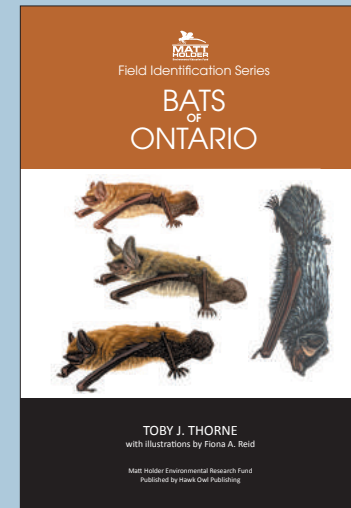
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This completely revised second edition, designed for use in the field, documents 323 species of birds that have been seen so far in the Reserve. Illustrated with exceptional full colour photographs of each species, including status and the specific dates of the rarities seen, this is a must have book for all birdwatchers.

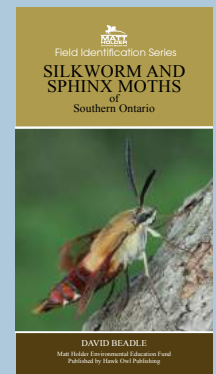
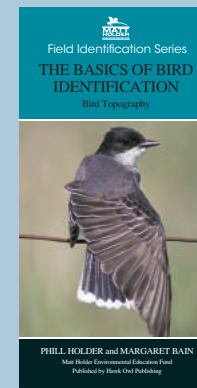
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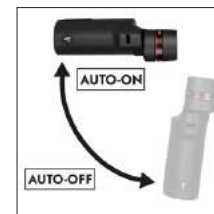
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Photo Checklist of the Butterflies of Thickson's Woods

With these gloomy cold winter days and over a year of this pandemic, I thought I would try and cheer us all up with a photo checklist of the butterflies recorded at Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve.

Warmer days are coming!



Least Skipper *Ancyloxypha numitor* (David Beadle).



European Skipper *Thymelicus lineola* (Mike McEvoy).

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Wild Indigo Duskywing *Erynnis baptisiae* (Mike McEvoy).



Pipevine Swallowtail *Battus philenor* (Mike McEvoy).



Black Swallowtail *Papilio polyxenes* (Mike McEvoy).



Giant Swallowtail *Papilio cresphontes* (Phill Holder).

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Canadian Tiger Swallowtail *Papilio canadensis* (Mike McEvoy).



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail *Papilio glaucus* (Jenna Siu).



Spicebush Swallowtail *Papilio troilus* (David Beadle).



Cabbage White *Pieris rapae* (Mike McEvoy).

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Clouded Sulphur *Colias philodice* (Mike McEvoy).



Orange Sulphur *Colias eurytheme* (Michael King).



Bronze Copper *Lycaena hyllus* (Mike McEvoy).



Acadian Hairstreak *Satyrium acadica* (Michael King).



Coral Hairstreak *Satyrium titus* (Michael King).



Banded Hairstreak *Satyrium calanus* (Michael King).



White M Hairstreak *Parrhasius m-album* (Michael King).

White M Hairstreak *Parrhasius m-album*

Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve is one of the few unique places along the northshore of Lake Ontario where anything can turn up at any time.

Such was the case on the afternoon of August 23, 2012 when Margaret Carney found a White M Hairstreak, a very rare migrant to Ontario from the South East United States .

Margaret, was walking back to her house, with visiting family, when she saw a vibrant iridescent blue butterfly in the grass, just steps from her front door.

Instantly she knew it was a Hairstreak, but having never seen one just like this, she consulted the fieldguides and along with Dennis Barry made the incredible identification.

There are only a handful of sightings in Southern Ontario, several of them during 2012. The vibrant upper wing colour is not visible on a resting butterfly, but the French common name *Porte-queue saphir*, says it all
Phill Holder

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Eastern Tailed Blue *Cupido comyntas* (Mike McEvoy).



Spring Azure *Celastrina ladon* (Mike McEvoy).



Summer Azure *Celastrina neglecta* (Mike McEvoy).



Silvery Blue *Glaucopsyche lygdamus* (Mike McEvoy).

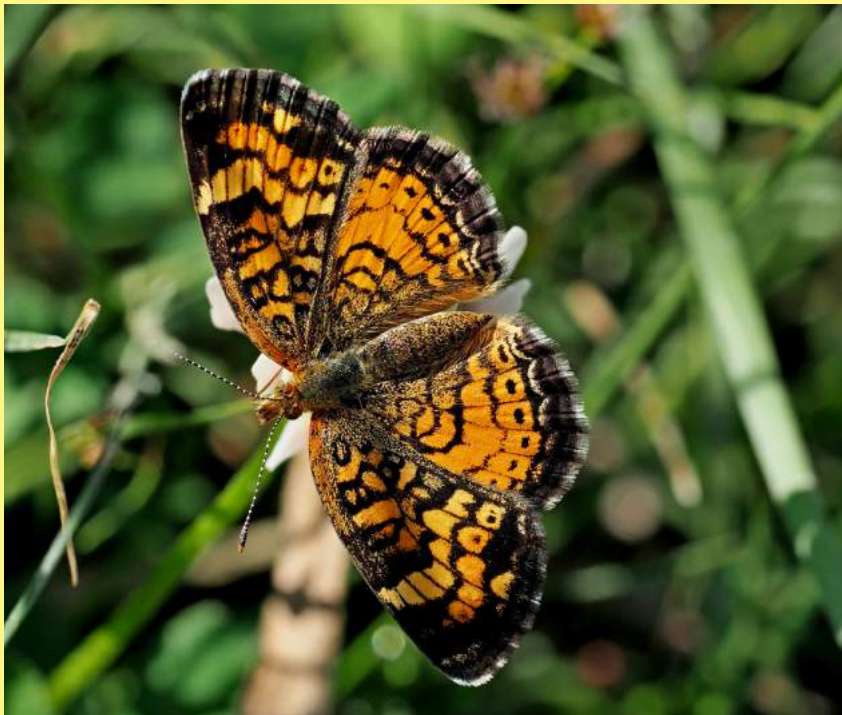
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American Snout *Libytheana carinenta* (Mike McEvoy).



Great Spangled Fritillary *Speyeria cybele* (Mike McEvoy).



Pearl Crescent *Phyciodes tharos* (Mike McEvoy).



Northern Crescent *Phyciodes cocyta* (Mike McEvoy).

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Question Mark *Polygonia interrogationis* (Mike McEvoy).



Eastern Comma *Polygonia comma* (Mike McEvoy).



Mourning Cloak *Nymphalis antiopa* (Ed McAskill).

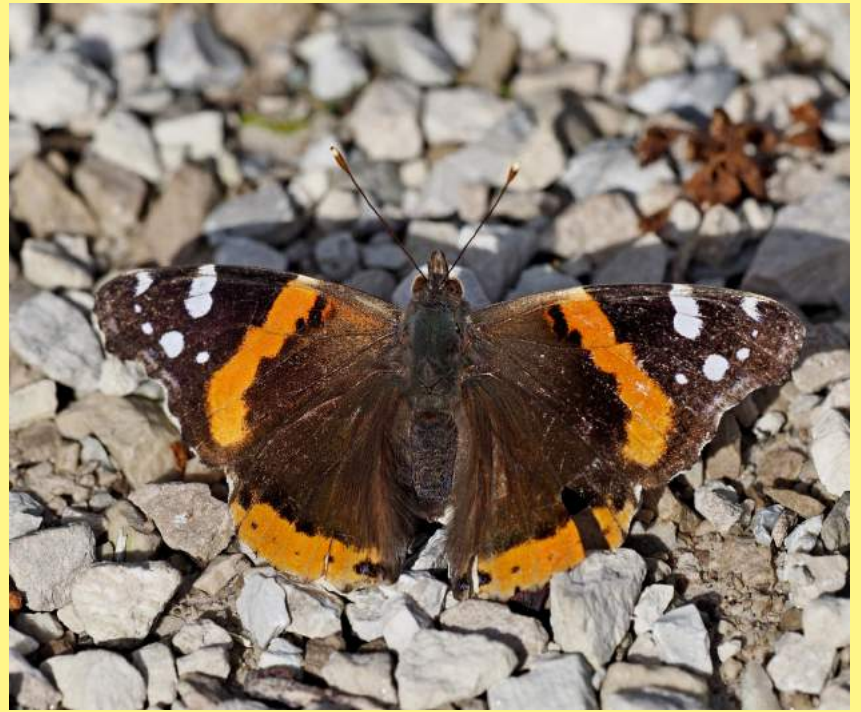


American Lady *Vanessa virginiensis* (Mike McEvoy).

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Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui* (Mike McEvoy).



Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* (Mike McEvoy).



Common Buckeye *Junonia coenia* (Mike McEvoy).



White Admiral *Limenitis arthemis arthemis* (Phill Holder).

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Red-spotted Purple *Limenitis arthemis astyanax* (Michael King).



Viceroy *Limenitis archippus* (David Beadle).



Eyed Brown *Satyrodes eurydice* (Mike McEvoy).



Little Wood Satyr *Megisto cymela* (David Beadle).



Common Wood-nymph *Cercyonis pegala* (David Beadle).



Monarch *Danaus plexippus* (Mike McEvoy)

Ontario Moths



A Checklist

David Beadle Michael King Phill Holder

Matt Holder Environmental Research Fund
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Ontario Moths

A Checklist

David Beadle Michael King Phill Holder

As more and more naturalists discover the enjoyment of identifying and appreciating moths, comes the inevitable urge to put together a personal list, but first there has to be a definitive provincial list.

The authors have researched all published records and private collections to publish the first complete and most up to date checklist of the 3187 verified moth species recorded in Ontario.

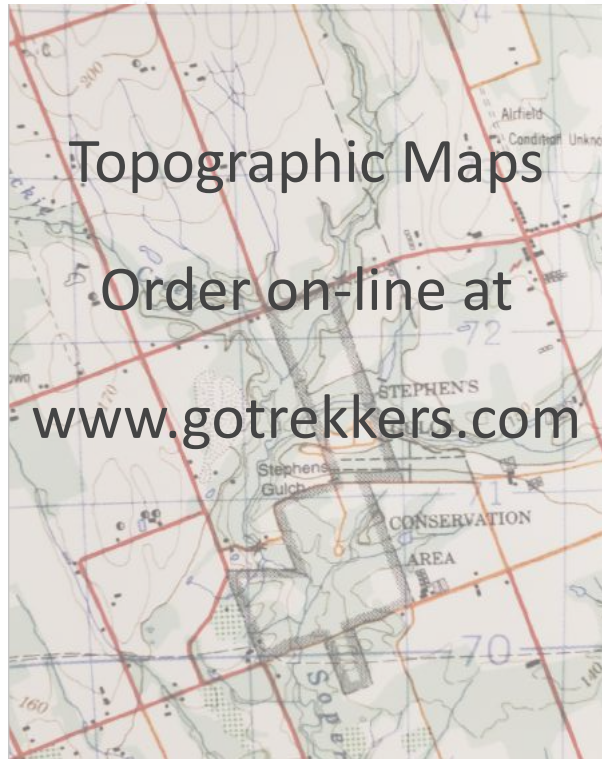
The main checklist includes photographic plates with examples of the family of each species. Separate sections include photographic additions to the list and a few records awaiting verification. All these records include dates, locations, and finders' names.

With more than 230 photographs and spiral bound for easy use, we believe this checklist will be invaluable to all moth enthusiasts from beginner to expert.

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Moths of Thickson's Woods

The Display of the Melonworm Moth

We have recorded over 1100 species of moths since we started the Thickson's Woods moth study project in June 2015.

Emptying the moth traps just after dawn is always exciting as we never know what we will find. We carefully place the moths into containers while we set up to photograph the night's haul. Often, identification comes after we have taken photographs, so the anticipation of getting the perfect shot can be both fun and frustrating.

Unlike butterflies, most moths seem to enjoy having their photo taken and will sit quietly - but not always, some moths decide to instantly fly off or wait until everything is set up, and then take off.

So the pressure is on to both ensure a good identification image is obtained and not to let the moth fly off before everyone gets the opportunity to document the rarity. It's amazing how testy we get when a moth flies before it's been photographed and how blame is instant!

The incredible diversity of moths never fails to amaze me, but one species we caught on October 18, 2016 at Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve is unmatched in its unique behaviour.

The Melonworm Moth *Diaphania hyalinata* is a member of the Crambidae family, normally found in the Southeastern United States, south to Central and South America. In Ontario it is considered a very rare fall vagrant.

This moth has a wingspan of 25 - 28mm and its length is 10 - 15mm. The wings are pearly white and semi-translucent, bordered by a dark brown band. The abdomen is white and has orange brushy tufts extending from the tip.

Our Melonworm Moth, thankfully, was a perfectly well-behaved specimen and sat there as I excitedly took its photograph.

I had taken only a few photographs and was about to release the moth when it started to display the most incredible behaviour.



To see the amazing video, click on the link

Original music called "Mothetherisis" is written and performed by Paul Andrew Smith Canadian Recording Artist and founder member of the band Wednesday.

Sitting perfectly still it started swaying its bushy abdominal tip from side to side while the bristles "floated" like a sea anemone on a coral reef. It was amazing. I quickly turned my camera settings to video and captured this most remarkable display.

It seems that both male and female moths have the "bristles" and they wave them around emitting pheromones to attract a mate. I am not aware of other moths doing this.

This incredible behaviour has to be seen to be believed. I was so impressed, I asked a friend to write music to accompany the video. Click on the photograph to see the amazing display.

Phill Holder

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Watch Phill Holder check out the new Stabilized binoculars from Kite.

If you have sightings of butterflies or any observations of wildlife within Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve, please pass on the sighting with all the details to help us document the biodiversity.



(Mike McEvoy)

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