



## THIS ISSUE

Birds of Thickson's Woods -  
One to look out for:  
Bell's Vireo

Bat Surveys +

Igniting a passion for Moths

Flower Flies of Thickson's Woods

Moths of Thickson's Woods

Pandemic Pastime

Fungi of Thickson's Woods

A fantastic photograph of a normally skulking Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis* (Ed McAskill)

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# The Birds of Thickson's Woods

One to look out for:  
by Margaret Bain

A close-up photograph of a Bell's Vireo perched on a thin, brown branch of a juniper tree. The bird is facing right, with its head slightly turned. It has a brownish-grey head, a dark eye, and a pale, pinkish-brown beak. Its body is a mix of olive green and yellowish-green, with a prominent yellowish-green patch on its wing. The background is a dense, out-of-focus green of juniper needles, with a clear blue sky visible through the branches.

**Bell's Vireo**

Bell's Vireo *Vireo Bellii* (Mike McEvoy)



# The Aquila

Bell's Vireos *Vireo bellii* are much sought after rarities in Ontario. They are primarily birds of the central and southwestern United States but do appear north of the border from time to time. They are confusingly similar to several other small bird species including Ruby-crowned Kinglets and White-eyed Vireos and many reports submitted to the Ontario Bird Records Committee are quietly turned down. So much so that birders lucky (or unlucky) enough to find a Bell's Vireo often hesitate to submit their observation. Unless of course they have photographs as superb as these ones taken by Mike McEvoy at Point Pelee on 6 May, 2019!

A Bell's Vireo is a very small, very active bird, usually staying low in dense scrubby vegetation. Olive-green above with one bright white wingbar, it is whitish below with yellow flanks. Its grayish head shows a faint eyeline and a faint spectacle around the dark eye, not as pronounced as in most other vireos. Its long tail is often cocked up and bobbed around as it flits through low bushes and thickets. The Bell's Vireo song is very distinctive: a distinctly bad-tempered, fast, episodic chatter with some harsh, scolding notes.

Bell's Vireo records in Ontario are nearly all in Spring, though Thunder Bay Bird Observatory banded one in September 2007. There is only one other record for the north of the province: a bird seen and its song recorded near Rabbit Lake, Kenora in June 2018. Point Pelee, not surprisingly, has had the majority of observations with at least 15 accepted records between 1952 and 2018. There was one at Rondeau in 2006, the Hamilton area has had at least four, with singles at London and St.Catharines over the years.

In the Fall, some small migrants that should be southbound become disorientated and travel eastward instead to end up on the shores of the Atlantic. In Nova Scotia, a Bell's Vireo reached Seal Island in late October, 2016; Halifax has had two singles, both well-photographed and staying for several days, in November 2010 and October 2016, the former in a small flock that also included a Yellow-breasted Chat and an Orange-crowned Warbler! Another lost migrant was photographed near Sydney, Cape Breton in late November 2020.

There are two populations of Bell's Vireo in North America, our eastern birds being brighter and more colourful than the duller, greyer westerners. The only Canadian record of the western variety is the one small grey individual photographed by many at Island View Park north of Victoria on Vancouver Island, British Columbia from 5-11 September 2020.

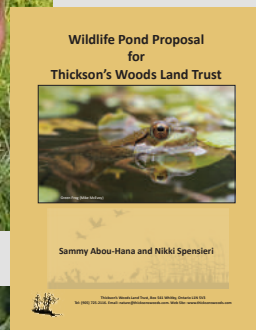


Although not yet recorded in Thicksen's Woods Nature Reserve, the Bell's Vireo *Vireo Bellii* could be easily overlooked. This incredible series of photographs were taken pre-pandemic on May 6, 2019, at Point Pelee (Mike McEvoy). It is my prediction that we will be adding this rarity to our checklist in the not too distant future. Phill Holder

## Bat Surveys +



Nikki Spensieri (Phill Holder)



We were very fortunate this summer that Thickson's Woods Land Trust hired two exceptional young students to carry out invasive plant control. Both were eager to learn and asked if they could participate in any surveys to enhance their experience.

Two areas of particular interest to me were a wildlife pond and conducting a bat survey.

The wildlife pond has been on my list for a while. Thinking about the low numbers of reptiles and amphibians in the reserve, I wondered what impact there would be if a small pond, free from the pollutions of Corbett Creek, was created in the Meadow. It would be a great project to document how the pond is populated over time.

Both Nikki and Sammy enthusiastically took up the challenge and worked on and produced an excellent proposal. At some point I hope to offer the proposal to the Thickson's Woods Land Trust Board for discussion.

Spurred on by the proposal, I decided to build a small pond in my back garden with a waterfall, and only a couple of weeks passed after completion before a Green Frog arrived, followed by a second frog just a few weeks after the first one arrived. It's remarkable how quickly wildlife finds suitable habitat.



The second Green Frog at my new pond (Phill Holder)



Sammy Abou-Hana (Phill Holder)

The bat surveys are showing excellent results. Nikki and Sammy have over 300 recordings and have pushed the equipment to the limits.

They have recorded more bats in the reserve this year than in any other survey year - these were mainly Big Brown but also Silver-haired, Hoary and good numbers of Eastern Red Bats. A little more difficult to analyse are the Species at Risk, but we are certain Nikki and Sammy recorded Little Brown myotis.

At the end of their formal contract with TWLT, they volunteered to continue the bat surveys until Sammy found employment in Sudbury. Nikki continued with the surveys and found, a previously unknown roost in a residential house, of Big Brown Bats. A minimum of 58 bats left the roost just after dusk on one evening.

Toby Thorne our bat expert joined Nikki and Sammy, on one of the surveys to share his knowledge of sonogram analysis and answer the many questions they had.

I'm looking forward to the final report, when the surveys are complete, and sharing the results.

Phill Holder



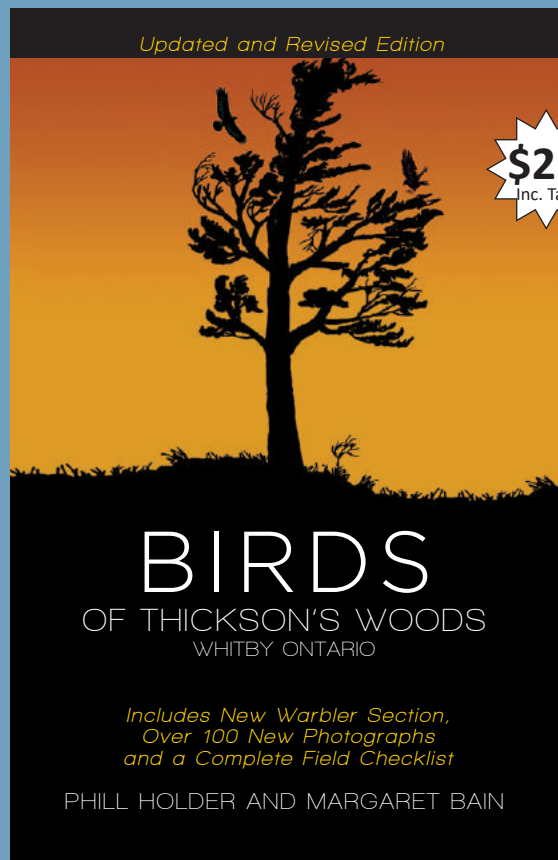
## Birds OF THICKSON'S WOODS

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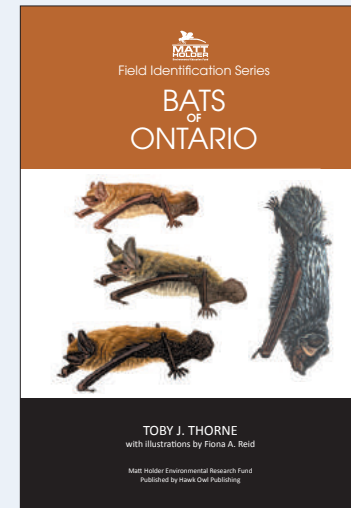


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# Igniting A Passion for Moths

By Ed Poropat

Dennis Barry had repeatedly invited me down to Thickson's Woods to join in an evening and morning of mothing. It was circa 2015 and I was in the midst of an all-consuming career in education. Although I very much appreciated each and every invite, I declined repeatedly due to the long drive, busy family life, etc.

In 2017, I organized a bioblitz here in Haliburton County for the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust. I threw out an invitation to the Thickson's Moth crew, hoping they might be interested in participating. Thankfully, they agreed. Dave Beadle, Mike King, Phill Holder, Mike McEvoy, Dennis Barry, Phil Reyenga and Margaret Carney all made the trek up to the Dahl Forest for an evening of moth trapping. Again, due to my commitments to organizing and running the event, I was unable to assist directly. Despite the rather cool night, the team still ended up finding almost 200 species of moths, many of which were new to them (and the County records!). When I stopped by to check in on them, they were all busy doing their thing.....traps were being emptied, and tables were slowly filling with small pill bottles (each with a beautiful moth inside). Tripods with cameras were quickly erected, stages were set up, and slowly the meticulous process of photographing and documenting each moth was initiated. After photos, every moth was released to return back to its home. After the event, the team was impressed with the area enough that they vowed to return. Besides, I had to see what this "mothing" was all about.



Giant Leopard Moth *Hypercompe scribonia* (Ed Poropat)



Owl-eyed Bird-dropping Moth *Cerma cora* (Ed Poropat)

Later that summer, we decided to gather at our house in Haliburton Village, and work the area hard. The team rolled in around dusk on a mid-July evening and set up with almost military-like precision. Sites were chosen around the property, traps were set up here and there, extension cords and splitters crisscrossed the area like snakes traversing a field. I watched in awe, trying to assist, as everyone scurried about. They had this down to a fine art, it seemed. In short order, the team was quickly done. With several 150W bulbs set up at various locations in the yard, I was convinced we were likely easily visible from space! With all the required equipment set up for the night, we headed off-site to trap with lights and sheets near a roadside fen.

As darkness fell on that sultry, summer night, our sheets slowly filled with moths. I stood there on the quiet roadside absolutely enthralled with what was happening in front of me. A few moths soon gave way to hundreds, as the sheets filled up with crawling insects. Winged creatures of every size, colour, and pattern dotted the scene....tiny, almost imperceptible Leaf Blotch Miners all the way to large, jet-fighter shaped Sphinx

Moths. Some were stunning, pearly white gems with golden gleaming bands, others were intricately patterned with a mosaic of thin black lines, adorned with red spots. It was nothing short of surreal! All of these creatures lived in my “backyard”, and I was completely oblivious to their existence!

The next morning, we gathered in the early hours to begin opening the traps. Egg cartons were lifted carefully, and Dave (with his encyclopedic knowledge) would call out all the species he was seeing. Margaret would quickly record the name on paper. Again, I was flabbergasted at the knowledge this team possessed. Some of the commoner species everyone had seen before were released immediately, but many of the more interesting ones were jarred so they could be photographed. As I watched and listened, the transformation that had begun the night before intensified. I was now hooked! I needed to get on this ride!!

The day melted away, and the team slowly departed, heading back home to southern Ontario. But, not before I had a few questions answered. Where does one buy a moth trap? How much are they? How could I get one? Thankfully, Phill Holder was kind enough to build me a trap. I picked it up a few weeks later. My obsession had officially begun.

Since those early days in 2017, I have been passionate about moths. I have since retired from teaching, allowing me to spend more time exploring this largely nocturnal world. Much like the team from Thickson's, I spend quite a bit of time photographing them also (mostly because I can get assistance from experts in identifying difficult species or genera on platforms such as iNaturalist). Last year, in particular, with the “stay at home” order issued by the government due to Covid-19, I trapped almost nightly in my yard from early April to early November.



*Plusia magnimacula* (Ed Poropat)



Snowy Urola *Urola nivalis* (Ed Poropat)



# The Aquila



Orange Virbia *Virbia aurantiaca* (Ed Poropat)



Orange-headed Epicallima *Epicallima argenticinctella* (Ed Poropat)



Harris's Three-spot *Harrisimemna trisigmata* (Ed Poropat)



Virgin Tiger Moth *Grammia virgo* (Ed Poropat)

So what has this latest learning curve revealed? Well, as I write this piece, I have recorded over 1125 species just in my 1 acre yard!! In my wildest dreams, I would never have predicted those sorts of numbers. And, every time the trap goes out, one or two new species continue to show up. My wife Barb likes to jokingly point out that I am now on a “random reinforcing loop”, like an addicted gambler. Every time I am rewarded with something new, the trap goes out again.

Tonight is looking good for moths.....warm, humid, not much wind. I think I'll set the trap out again on the back deck. I wonder what precious little gift tonight will bring?



# Thickson's Woods Flower Flies



Spotted Wood Fly June 6, 2021  
at Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve (Phill Holder)

## New for Thickson's Woods and Durham Region Spotted Wood Fly *Somula decora*

We often catch flies and bugs in our traps and are increasingly looking more closely at the incredibly diverse array of these beautiful creatures.

I was particularly excited to photograph a hover fly we caught on the night of June 6. Initially it looked like other hover or bee flies we have seen, but Mike McEvoy thought it was different, and he was right!

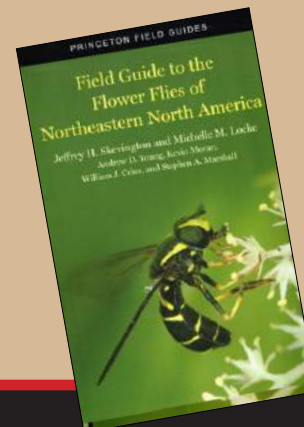
I was able to identify it as a Spotted Wood Fly. Interestingly, there are only two *Somula* species worldwide. The Banded Wood Fly is very rare and occurs in the southeast USA. The Spotted Wood Fly is uncommon in Ontario, this is the first record for Durham Region, another great find in Thickson's Woods.



Confusing Conifer Fly August 21, 2021  
at Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve (Phill Holder)

## New for Thickson's Woods Confusing Conifer Fly *Dasysyrphus intrudens*

Another "new" fly to us was discovered in our trap on August 21. This is the more common Confusing Conifer Fly. Thickson's Woods provides ideal habitat for this species which occurs in forests and meadows.



A fantastic resource for Flower Fly identification is the excellent ***Field Guide to the Flower Flies of Northeastern North America*** by Jeffrey Skevington et al. (Princeton Press),





Twenty-spotted Lady Beetle *Psyllobora vigintimaculata* at Thickson's Woods, August 21, 2021  
(Phill Holder)

## New for Thickson's Woods

### Twenty-spotted Lady Beetle *Psyllobora vigintimaculata*

I almost missed this tiny lady beetle as it was just visible in the bottom of an egg carton. I wasn't sure it was even a bug until it started to move, so I quickly put it into a container for later scrutiny.

I had never seen anything like it; very small and very active which made getting a decent photograph difficult, but once photographed it looked to me like a lady beetle so, I was able to quickly identify it as a Twenty-spotted Lady Beetle using the Toronto Wildlife web site <http://toronto-wildlife.com/Insects/Beetles/Ladybug/ladybugs.html>

At only 3mm this tiny lady beetle is native to North America and feeds on fungus, mostly mildew. It is usually found at the base of Skunk Cabbage in early Spring. (There is no Skunk Cabbage in Thickson's Woods, the closest records according to iNaturalist are Ajax and Heber Down, Whitby).

In the summer and early fall the beetle moves to any plant with mildew. It does not seem to be listed as threatened and appears to be fairly common in Ontario but iNaturalist shows only two previous records for Durham Region, a great addition to the Thickson's Woods insect list.

## Flowering Cucumber Tree



Flowering Cucumber Tree in the Meadow, June 6, 2021 (Phill Holder)



Richard Woolger planted several Cucumber Trees in the meadow in the 80s and this year for the first time they flowered. See the article by Margaret Carney in the Thickson's Woods Land Trust Fall 2021 Newsletter 60. Contact [nature@thicksonswoods.com](mailto:nature@thicksonswoods.com) for the free e-newsletter.



# Moths of Thickson's Woods

I think most moth-ers will agree that this year has been somewhat disappointing with regard to both numbers trapped and species identified, not to mention the infestation of non-native LDD moths *Lymantria dispar dispar* (previously called Gypsy Moths) that have caused devastation in many areas. These invasive insects are cyclical, and outbreaks occur every five to ten years. There has been so much bad press about LDD moths that any talk about moths invokes negativity.

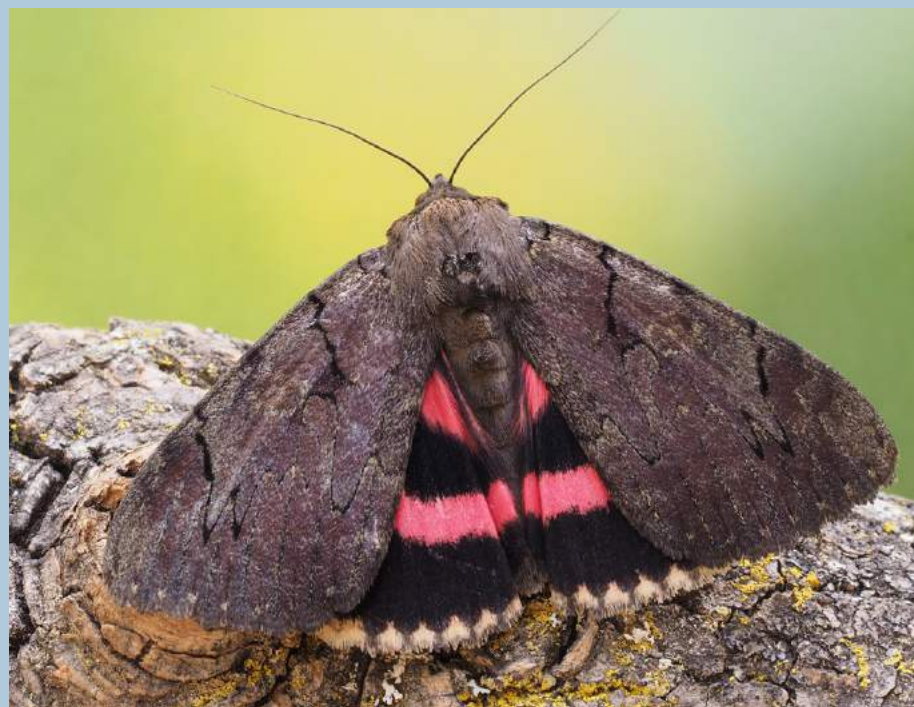
**These photographs of very different beautiful moths are a reminder of why we love moths so much.**

Phill Holder



Hummingbird Clearwing Moth *Hemaris thysbe*, July 23, 2021 (Phill Holder)

Rarely do we catch these moths in our light traps, but we caught two on this particular night and this one seemed to like resting on Margaret Carney's hand.



Darling Underwing *Catocala cara*, August 21, 2021 (Phill Holder)

The moth that started it all. The beautiful Darling Underwing was the first species of moth we caught in September 2014. David Beadle, Steve LaForest, Carolyn King, Dennis Barry, Margaret Carney, Glenn Coady and myself were there, all gathered around a white sheet in Glenn's back yard in Thicksion's Woods.



Celery Looper *Anagrapha falcifera*, August 21, 2021 (Phill Holder)

The group must have hundreds of photographs of these prehistoric-looking looper moths. They are so photogenic and irresistible, and always so well behaved, as they sit motionless while you take their photographs.





Willow Ghost Moth *Sthenopsis thule*, July 14, 2021 (Phill Holder)

We have been expanding our moth study to other Ontario locations, and have recorded some very interesting ones, like this rare Willow Ghost Moth trapped at our Orono site.

# Ontario Moths

## A Checklist

David Beadle Michael King Phill Holder

The authors have researched all published moth 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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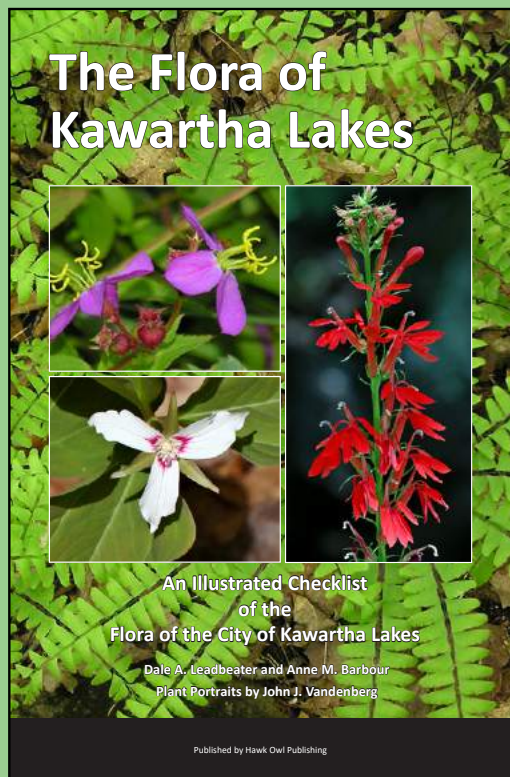
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Dale A. Leadbeater and Anne M. Barbour

Plant Portraits by John J. Vandenberg

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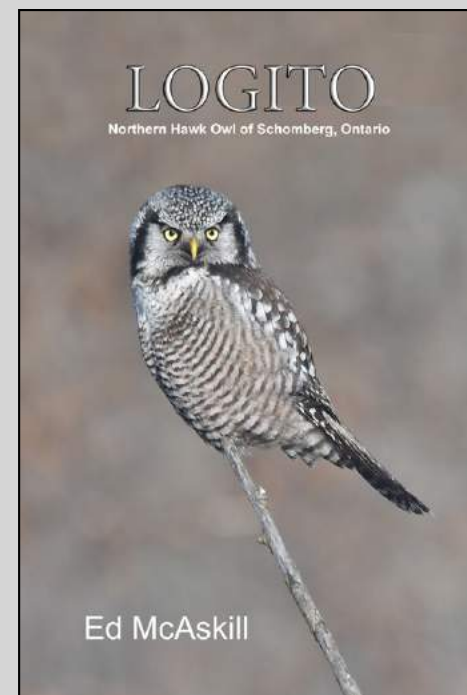
## LOGITO

Northern Hawk Owl of Schomberg, Ontario

*This is the story of Logito, the Northern Hawk Owl that made Dufferin Marsh in Schomberg, Ontario its home in the winter of 2019/20. This is not a scientific account but an extensively illustrated book with photographs documenting Ed's observations during the owl's stay. It also tells the story of how Ed led a collaborative effort to give back to the town of Schomberg.*

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## PANDEMIC PASTIME



I built a large tray and lined it with a pond liner and placed it on saw horses, making sure it was level. I then filled it with water and placed rocks, lichen and branches at the far end for effect. I built another saw horse as a sturdy table for a tripod head and/or bean bags. I even built a chair! (Phill Holder)



The blind I used covered the saw horse and chair and I was able to sit quietly for a couple of hours at a time often watching the birds and forgetting to take photographs. (Phill Holder)

The ordeal of staying at home during this “Pandemic Spring” led to a desperation to get outside. I spent way too much time watching YouTube videos, but came across a UK video of how to build a reflection pool, so I decided to build one. The goal was to use it to photograph spring migrants hopefully attracted to the pool as they passed through Thickson’s Woods.

Although this Spring we did not get the usual huge fallout of warblers, I enjoyed sitting in the blind photographing whatever decided to visit.

I didn’t get the rarity I was hoping for, or an award winning portrait of one of our beautiful warblers, but I had fun, learned a lot and will definitely be using the pool again as it was a surprisingly calming and relaxing experience.



This Black-capped Chickadee, not surprisingly, was the first to arrive, attracted to a few sunflower seeds I placed on the branch. (Phill Holder)

Thanks to Dennis Barry and Margaret Carney for allowing me to set up next to the wood pile in their yard.



# The Aquila



This Red Squirrel, was cute to start with but chased off any birds that attempted to land. After I removed the sunflower seeds, birds were attracted to the pool, and the squirrels and chipmunks moved on. (Phill Holder)



I could hear the Winter Wren singing from the woodpile next to the blind and I was happy I was able to photograph it when it came for a drink. (Phill Holder)



Not all the birds obeyed the rules. They are supposed to sit on the pretty landscaped, far end of the pool. This curious Red-breasted Nuthatch repeatedly came to the side of the pool, almost too close to photograph and seemed to be watching me. (Phill Holder)



I photographed several warblers including this Yellow-rumped Warbler. Most of the warblers were very brief visitors, barely allowing time to focus. (Phill Holder)



# Fungi of Thickson's Woods



*Leucoagaricus leucothites* (*L. naucinus*)  
October 11, 2020 (Mike McEvoy)



*Geastrum triplex*, October 11, 2020 (Mike McEvoy)



*Lycoperdon curtisii*, October 11, 2020 (Mike McEvoy)



*Coniophora puteana* (*Sensu lato*), October 11, 2020 (Mike McEvoy)



*Arcyria denudata*, October 11, 2020 (Mike McEvoy)

## Eight New Species Added

Thanks to Richard Aaron for his time and expertise in surveying, identifying and educating us on our wonderful fungi world.

**114 Species now recorded**

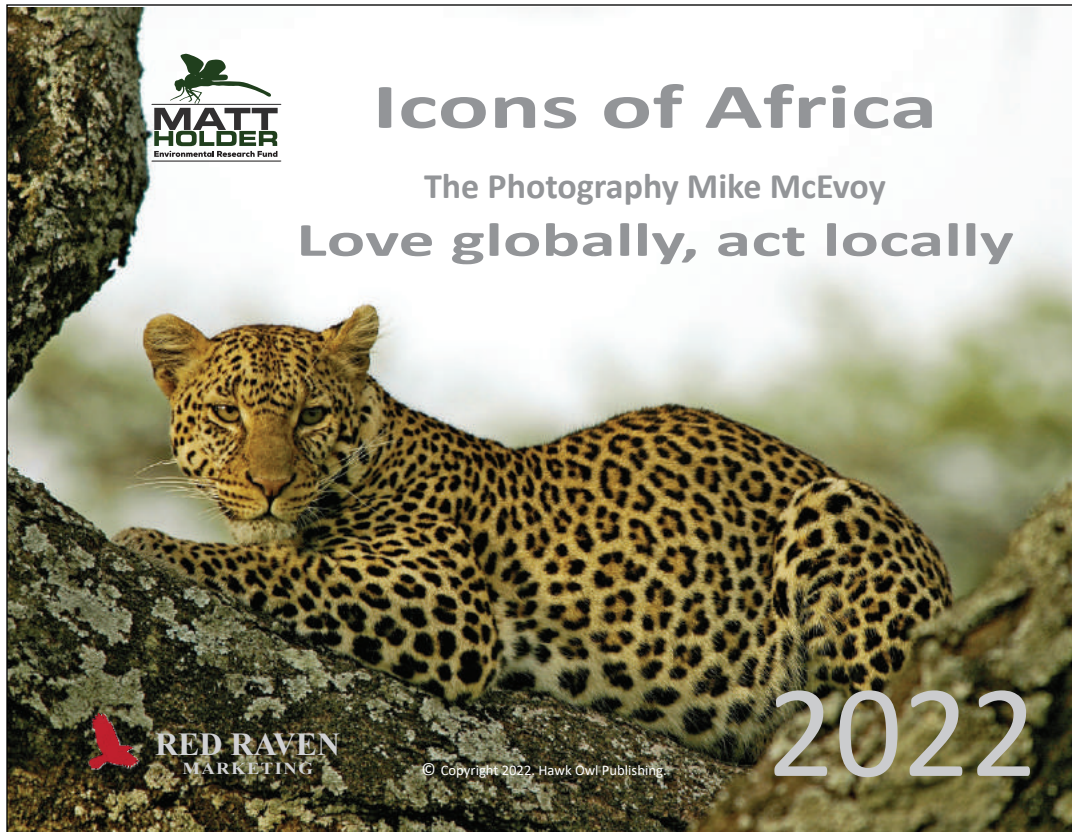
### New Species

Gilled	<i>Gymnopilus penetrans / sapineus</i> Not photographed
Gilled	Smooth Parasol <i>Leucoagaricus leucothites</i> ( <i>L. naucinus</i> )
Puffballs & similar	Collard Earthstar <i>Geastrum triplex</i>
Puffballs & similar	Curtis's Puffball <i>Lycoperdon curtisii</i>
Parchment & resupinates	Wet Rot <i>Coniophora puteana</i> ( <i>Sensu lato</i> )
Tar spots	<i>Rhytisma solidaginis</i> Not photographed
Slime moulds	Carnival Candy Slime Mold <i>Arcyria denudata</i>
Slime moulds	<i>Arcyria stipata</i>



*Arcyria stipata*, October 11, 2020 (Mike McEvoy)





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# A Hallowe'en Treat



This is a female Cross Orbweaver Spider (*Araneus diadematus*). A common non-native spider which was introduced from Western Europe. Unlike other non-native species this spider is not considered a pest or a threat to our native spiders. Harmless to humans, it can be found in various habitats including woodlands, meadows and gardens. Many people dislike spiders but you have to respect their ability to build such an intricate web. Phil found this spider just hanging around waiting for dinner to arrive. (Phil Reyenga)

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