

## Spring 2020 Newsletter

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## President's Message

Hello Everyone

As I sit here working remotely at my makeshift desk, I can see that most of the ice has left the Bay except for what the west wind pushed into Snug Harbour. I imagine it makes you all think about summer on the Bay.

In these very unusual and difficult times, we are all wondering what this summer will be like but right now I hope you are all keeping safe and practicing social distancing to stop this disease as soon as possible.

The West Carling Board has been busy over the winter. The Membership Committee continues to meet by conference call as it has always done and continues to search for new ways to increase membership and to make it easy for members to renew. They have also been looking at our events for this year but all of that will be on hold for now.

There has been a lot of activity on the Lighthouse Project with the Township. They have been looking into the possibility of new signage and developing a plan to ensure the lighthouse continues to be a landmark and the buildings properly looked after. I hope there can be a presentation by the Committee at our AGM.

The Board also had the opportunity in February to review the budget for 20/21 with Kevin McIlwain. He reviewed all the areas in the budget and where there is discretionary spending. Unfortunately, very little is within the control of the Township. I think that the Board members who heard his presentation understood this and were for the most part comfortable with the meeting.

We are continuing our conversations with the North Sound Association and are making progress on the amalgamation of the two Associations. The most important thing is to ensure both organizations will benefit from getting together.

The GBA has formed a Coastal Affairs Committee, originally to look into the potential amalgamation of municipalities by the provincial government. This did not occur but GBA felt it would be useful to have a committee to work with all our municipalities on a number of issues such as official plans, by-laws, septic systems, to see if there are opportunities to co-ordinate and develop a best practices document. The first step is to review each municipalities plans and by-laws. This will be done with the municipalities co-operation and assistance. As I am on that Committee, I will keep you updated on the progress.

At the moment, our events like the July 1<sup>st</sup> pancake breakfast, the AGM and our picnic are on hold. Keep watching the [website](#) to see if anything changes.

I look forward hopefully to see us all on the Bay this summer.

Until then, please stay safe and take care.

Pam

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## Carling Turtle Project

By Alanna Smolarz

I have been spending summers at my cottage on Georgian Bay for as long as I can remember. There is no doubt in my mind that these experiences played a role in my career choice as a biologist. I still love catching turtles and snakes, but now it's my full-time job! After completing my Master of Science at McMaster University in 2017 and working in my field for a year, I was lucky enough to land a job with the Lands and Resources Department at Magnetawan First Nation near Britt.



My commute to work from my cottage where I was staying at the time often meant I was driving the roads when turtle sightings are most common (in the morning and evening). In previous years, I had noticed countless nests along certain parts of Dillon Road that had been dug up and the eggs eaten by predators. In general, populations of turtles can withstand some level of nest depredation seeing as it is a part of the natural food web and provides a food source for predators like foxes and racoons. However, roadsides substantially increase predation rates. Road shoulders are a common nesting area because of the loose substrate (i.e. soil) and heat absorbed by the road pavement which provide ideal incubation conditions for the eggs. In locations where these ideal conditions are located along wetlands, or in the case of Dillon Road, cross large wetlands and bodies of moving water like the Shebeshekong River (with a single-lane bridge, no less), hatchlings are already at a much higher risk of being hit by cars when they emerge. Road shoulders are also more accessible to predators, and therefore tend to become a buffet-style resource for predators who quickly realize these areas are hotspots for nests. In these areas where predation rates may be unsustainably high, nest protection or other recovery strategies may be warranted (Ontario Nature).

With this in mind, I decided to take on a little project of my own last year to cage turtle nests along Dillon and Sand Bay Roads because I would be driving this route every day on my way to and from work. The cages I made are constructed of wood and chicken wire with a little exit for the hatchlings; I weigh them down with rocks to deter predators and put flags, reflective tape, and a little sign on each of them. While I worked along the road (with a safety vest on at all times of course!), people often stopped to say hello and ask questions. It was a good feeling to see the public getting interested! I had no idea, that I would stumble upon so many nests (25 to be exact), but the turtles just kept coming! There were nests of Snapping Turtles, Northern Map Turtles, Blanding's Turtles, and Painted Turtles. One nest was unfortunately dug up by a predator, and one never hatched which could be the result of many factors: if the eggs were not fertilized, they will never develop; the nest location may have been too dry, wet, hot, or cold to allow proper egg development; if it was a Northern Map or Painted Turtle Nest, there is also a chance that those hatchlings will emerge this spring as these two species are sometimes known to exhibit this behaviour in northern populations. But in total, 23 clutches that I covered hatched successfully!

I was even more motivated to try and help because all of Ontario's eight turtle species are listed as Species-at-Risk, both provincially and federally. This is a result of many factors including nest predation as well as habitat destruction, discriminate killing, and road mortality. These threats are magnified by the fact that turtles are extremely long-lived species which means that it takes a long time for them to reach an age when they can mate. The chances of making it to that age and surviving adulthood is extremely low, even in a balanced ecosystem without the threatening factors I've listed. Therefore, things like road mortality and predation substantially reduce their chances of survival to an upsetting low.

To put it into numbers, if the nest is not depredated and the eggs develop properly, given appropriate temperature and moisture conditions are maintained in the nest cavity, there is an approximately 6% chance of a single hatchling from that clutch surviving its first year of life. If it survives the first year, there is a **less than 1%** chance that it will reach an age where it can reproduce (roughly 20 years old). So, the chances that a single turtle egg will reach adulthood is much **MUCH MUCH** less than 1%. Based on research from the Algonquin Provincial Park on Snapping Turtles, it can take up to **1400 eggs** for the chance that one of them will reach maturity and thus replace their mother in the population. However, even if this one egg survives to adulthood, it will only stabilize the local turtle population. In order for these populations to recover and grow, this number needs to double! It is also why it is so incredibly important to keep adult turtles alive because their existence is practically a wildlife miracle! Roadsides are especially dangerous to turtles as you can imagine. Adult turtles themselves are surprisingly terrestrial; females and males will sometimes make long overland trips to their preferred nesting areas and overwintering wetlands. This means that they often need to traverse roads and highways to get to these areas, thus putting them at risk of being hit by a car. The Ontario Turtle Trauma Center is a turtle specific animal hospital which will take injured turtles (such as ones hit on roads) and do their best to repair, rehabilitate, and return these turtles to the wild so that they can continue contributing to their population growth. For those asking why we'd want more turtles around, especially Snapping Turtles, did you know they are the janitors of waterways? Like most other turtle species, they eat dead animals and fish. They are quite docile if you don't bother them and are often caught up in their own business of just surviving day to day. You also have to keep in mind that they were here **LONG** before us, so we need to learn to share our space with them!

As a biologist, I am sometimes overwhelmed with the environmental issues happening around the world today. Part of my job is to understand the impacts humans, development, and climate change are having on populations of reptiles and I can tell you it is quite concerning. When I am faced with these struggles, I remind myself that "every little bit counts" and even though I may not be making a huge dent in helping preserve turtle populations in Carling, I can at least say that I tried. If there was the slightest chance that you could make a difference, however small, wouldn't you try? "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." (Dr. Seuss)

I have partnered with the Biosphere Reserve to make and sell turtle nest cages that are available for purchase at their office at 11 James Street, Parry Sound, for a minimum donation of \$15. All proceeds will go towards covering the costs of the nest cage materials and funding future turtle conservation work in the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve. There are several citizen-science programs available where you can help researchers learn more about turtles in our area. These volunteer opportunities are done with as much or as little time you have available. Visit [gbbr.ca/citizen-science](http://gbbr.ca/citizen-science) to learn more or contact Tianna at the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve: [biologist@gbbr.ca](mailto:biologist@gbbr.ca). If you have any other questions, please refer to the online resources listed below or contact me at [alannasmolarz@hotmail.com](mailto:alannasmolarz@hotmail.com).

#### Resources

- Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve
- Ontario Turtle Trauma Center
- Saving Turtles at Risk Today (START) Program, Scales Nature Park
- Ontario Nature
- Canadian Wildlife Federation
- Canadian Herpetological Society

## How Our Lighthouses Came to Bee

*By Bruce Davidson*

There are three principal lighthouses in Carling Township, namely Red Rock, Snug and Jones. (The latter two have forward companions). Each has an interesting story to tell, but in the limited space available we can only touch on a few highlights.

A good start to the tale would be with famed explorer Sir William Parry who managed the incredible feat of penetrating northern ice fields in 1819, and in 1821 set the record for the farthest north penetrated by man at 82° 45' in the Canadian Arctic, a record that would stand for 50 years. He was knighted for this achievement. Small wonder that admiralty surveyor Henry Bayfield in 1820 named the well-protected harbor at the mouth of the Seguin River Parry Sound.

Georgian Bay was pretty much isolated from the south by land, until a railway was constructed from Toronto to Collingwood in 1855. William Gibson arrived at Parry Sound in 1856 as a land surveyor, secured a timber limit and constructed a sawmill. Brothers William and John Beatty purchased Gibson's fifty square mile timber limit in 1863 and in our confederation year of 1867 acquired the lands upon which the Town now sits.

William Beatty Jr. unquestionably an astute businessman recognized that Bayfield's old charts were not going to do the trick in allowing ships to get safely from the open Georgian Bay to his mill in Parry Sound. So he asked Ottawa to build a lighthouse on the Mink Islands and agreed to pay half the cost. Well guess who got the building contract? Surprise: J. and W. Beatty, of course. The light was placed in operation on what is now called Tower Island in 1870. This lighthouse was swept away in storms and a new lighthouse was constructed 900 meters south on Red Rock in 1881. Again the engineers underestimated the power of the Georgian Bay storms and the structure had to be replaced. Finally they got it right, with perhaps a tad of overkill, by constructing in 1894 a steel cylinder 12 feet high and 45 feet in diameter and filled with stone masonry and Portland cement to serve as a foundation. This was modified in 1912 to the 57-foot cylindrical tower that we see today.

Remembering that Red Rock came into operation in 1894, it is no coincidence that the Snug light and the Jones light, each with their forward companions, also came into operation that same year. The logic was simple. A ship passing south of the Red Rock light on a compass bearing had to be in a fairly narrow corridor or it would come to grief. Accordingly, they built two lights, Snug and Walton that would line up to show the correct path. Once south of the Snake Islands the Gordon Rock and the Jones light would come into alignment off the starboard side and they would turn to keep these two in alignment. Finally, when they were a quarter mile from Gordon Rock, yet another light called Hugh Rock would come into view and they would steer towards that. Pretty clever as long as you could see, but not so much in a fog.

The story of Jones Island before the lighthouse was built is fascinating. It is named after David Jones who **used the island for breeding bees that he gathered from Cyprus, Syria and Palestine!** Imagine that. This was in the era before airplanes and automobiles. So our intrepid beekeeper would be travelling, not in luxury like on an early version of the Queen Mary, but probably in a Greek tramp steamer. He and his entourage would have swarmed aboard in some decrepit eastern Mediterranean port and spent more than two weeks fighting the combers in North Atlantic storms while making a tortuous beeline for the former British colonies in North America. Even then he would have had to sail or travel by horse drawn coach from Montreal to southern Ontario. How did he keep the bees alive during this extended passage? Clearly David Jones was a worker not a drone; he chose a small island in the middle of nowhere in a body of water

accessible only by steamer from Collingwood to breed his bees. Remarkably, he was so successful that his hometown of Clarksville Ontario was renamed Beetown (now Beeton) in 1874.

Your Association has been instrumental in providing input to Carling Township with regard to the preservation of the Snug Lighthouse, now that Carling has assumed ownership. We are also following the process of the transfer of ownership of the Jones Light, which is a virtual twin of Snug. Interestingly enough, these two lighthouses are not the only surviving examples of this style of lighthouse...but darn close. There is one other, constructed in Nova Scotia also in 1894 that is still standing. The fact that Carling has two of the only three left makes them very special indeed!

All in all the Carling lighthouses make for a honey of a story. While William Beatty may have been stung by the storms that destroyed the original light on the Minks, the sweet success of the Snug Light seems assured now that West Carling Association is closely working with Carling Township. If you have personal time to support this worthy effort we can make Snug Light the buzz of the Bay.

## The Hunt for the Steamship Asia

*By Glen Parr and Nanci Wakeman*

Finding SS Asia, lying somewhere off the east coast of Georgian Bay, is the “Holy Grail” to people who search for wrecks in the depths of the fresh water “ocean” that is “The Bay” to those of us who love its waters. The summer of 2020 will see a plethora of searchers who hope to win the prize.

The Asia set off from Owen Sound at about midnight on September 14 1882, loaded with 10 workhorses, cargo and 128 passengers and crew destined for the French River. Ten miles out the channel, the ship stopped at Presqu’ile to pick up wood for fuel.

Due to the darkness and a brisk wind, the Asia delayed heading out to the open waters until daylight (6:30 am). A decision was made to make the 7 to 8 hour trip with a SE breeze. By 9 am, the wind increased drastically and changed direction to the NW. Cargo was thrown overboard and the horses were put down. By 11 am, the Asia was floundering in gale-force winds and high seas. About 11:20 am, the ship sank. Being flat-bottomed and top heavy (having been built for use in canals), the Asia was no match for the “gales of November come early.” There were neither enough lifeboats nor flotation devices so all but two passengers were lost.

One of the most ardent searchers, Chris Kohl, a diver, writer and historian, and co-author with Joan Forsberg of **Shipwreck Tales of Georgian Bay**, may be on the hunt for the Asia this coming summer. He was one of a team of divers that found two wrecks in east Georgian Bay: the J.H. Jones and the Manasso in 2018.

A diver actively searching for wrecks must have a license and can’t take pictures or go near a wreck if one is located. A find must be reported to the Receiver of Wrecks, Coast Guard.

If you are a shipwreck enthusiast you might like a snorkelling outing to Carling Rock where the wreck of the Atlantic is located. Near the Mink Islands the sunken wreck of the Seattle can be found. Both are in fairly shallow water and can be seen from the surface.

## Swimming on The Bay

*By Kate Nickerson-Crowe, summer resident of West Carling and proclaimed island-hopper and water-lover!*

My daughter and I have been startling kayakers and boaters alike for the past many summers. Likely it is difficult to detect us on windy blustery days in the troughs of waves, when white caps disguise our propulsion forward through the clear cold waters of Georgian Bay. This past summer we were regularly swimming 4-5 kilometres several times per week; one fateful day we reached 6 kilometres. This swim included circumnavigations of several islands; Bonaire, Middle and Snug Island.

I grew up doing what my family called “island-hopping”. As a kid my favourite destination to partake in this made-up sport was the Umbrella Islands, which offered many close hop skip and swims, as well as longer challenges. We would flatten ourselves against the pink granite of a leeward rock, then plunge back into the chilling water and on to the next foreseeable island. My own children now enjoy doing the same on the west side of the Snakes, the Mink Islands and this past summer even the Limestones. I swam the full perimeter of the South Limestone, which was unbelievably beautiful on the eastern side. The shallow waters make the white limestone rocks and pebbles pop with brilliance on a sunny day. I will forever have images of my kids gleefully launching themselves out of the boat, swimming for the first available island where they skitter up the steep sides of the rock and across the top, sun bleached heads disappearing, stopping only to wade through a rainwater pool in a crevasse or to lay flat, hugging the warmth of the ochre coloured rock of the Snake Islands. I also enjoy watching them as they catch frogs, or taunt water snakes on the way by a pond made by juts in the rocks. I’ve seen them work for great lengths of time on their journeys to set a bass free from a landlocked puddle of rainwater. I hold these images close in the dreary months of winter.

You may wonder why we swim such lengthy distances. My daughter is a competitive swimmer and we do joke that her feet are webbed and she appears to be developing gills. She spends more time in the water than out. It was a natural fit this past summer for her to accompany me training for the Swim Run World Championships, which I unknowingly qualified for in my first race in over a decade. Canada sent two women and two men to this open event, held in the Adriatic Sea in Italy this past September. I was unprepared for the currents and tide, but I was pleased that we swam in all kinds of inclement weather in the bay, as I was strong through the uncommonly enormous waves at the event this year. Swim Run is a popular sport in Europe. People tune in all over the continent to watch the world’s best perform over the challenging course beginning in the historic city of Grado. I am learning that the event always includes elements of natural awe, and danger. Competitors swim with their running shoes on and run while holding swim paddles. And you must finish the event with all the equipment you begin with or you are disqualified. I did receive many quizzical looks when I ran down Nobel Road in the summer with a swim cap and goggles on my head and swim paddles in my hands as I prepared for the event. The race in Italy was 25 km of running on beaches and wading through sandbars, canals and about 7 kilometres of swimming. It was run between 5 historic and beautifully uninhabited islands which are part of a biosphere reserve. Competitors are not allowed to throw their race gels, or toss cups listlessly aside as they do in marathon or even triathlon events. It is a sport that celebrates the beauty of the natural environment and takes care not to disrupt it. This year’s qualifying race in Canada is fatefully being held in Parry Sound on July 26th (Canaquasports.com). Perhaps we can inspire a few more distance swimmers to join us in the bay, or perhaps to come out and watch the fun. There will be clinics in different areas around the province to inspire people to try this relatively new to Canada sport. I will be running one with my team-mate at the Flatwater Centre in Welland, Ontario.

I am in part sharing this with you as- West Carling residents or part time residents- to alert you to the fact that we are out there in the water from May to October. Wetsuits prolong our season and despite the bright yellow buoy I attach to myself you need to be aware as we are not readily in peoples' sight lines. I feel like the road bikers of the sea and I am constantly on the lookout for boats or distracted drivers who may come too close or not see us at all. In the water is the optimal position to enjoy the beauty of Georgian Bay. We know when the bass are laying eggs, when the gobbies are less plentiful; we know when there has been a storm or when one is coming by the temperature of the water; we know when the giant snapping turtle is back to hunt at the dock. There is lots to be learned from the feel of the water. We can't wait for the summer.

## **West Parry Sound Health Centre NON-Urgent Care Clinic 7 Days a Week through the summer**

Every summer from the July long weekend until the end of August, your local Emergency Department at the West Parry Sound Health Centre operates a NON-Urgent Care Clinic 7 days a week from 12 PM to 4 PM.

This clinic offers patient care outside of Emergency Care (ER care is 24 hours 7 days a week). This means if you have the sniffles, a cold that won't go away, a splinter you can't remove, a fishhook from trying to catch the big one, need a prescription renewed, have an earache, sore throat, rash, leg or arm pain/injury, skin infection, infected bug bite or one of the various health irritants that get in the way of a terrific day on the water, you can come to ER during the NON-Urgent clinic hours (12 PM to 4 PM) and be seen quickly.

The process is a 'walk-in' and you present at the Triage Desk in ER. The Registered Nurse will assess you and determine if you can be seen in the NON-urgent care clinic and then directs you through. But as in any visit to a nursing station, if you have something bigger going on you are directed to ER for a more thorough examination.

Hundreds of patients attend through the Non-Urgent Care Clinic annually but still others don't know about this service.

**From 12 pm to 4 pm July Long Weekend to the end of August the NON-Urgent Care Clinic is offered for your good health and convenience.**

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