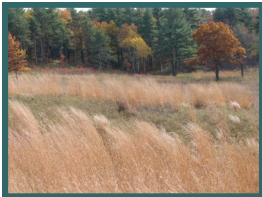




Photo by: Laura Mousseau

THIS ISSUE:



A look at the Rice Lake Plains

Pg. 2



Successful 2011 Prairie Day

Pg. 3



Rare and Unique Beetles

Pg. 4



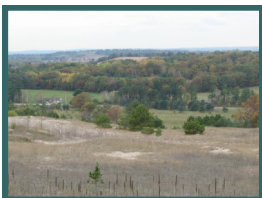
Educators—Free bussing to the Rice Lake Plains!

Pg. 4



Grassland Birds in the Rice Lake Plains

Pg. 5



NCC - Hazel Bird Nature Preserve

Pg. 5

UPCOMING 2012 EVENTS

GRASSLANDS IN CRISIS: CONSERVING A FORGOTTEN WORLD

Date: FEB. 22-23

Location: Royal Ontario Museum

This event will bring together researchers and advocates of grassland ecosystems, including Rice Lake Plains Members. This event is open to the public and sponsored by the Bison Collaborative. For more information visit www.rom.on.ca.

FREE BUSSING AND PROJECT PRAIRIE CURRICULUM

Date: WINTER 2012

Location: Alderville Black Oak Savanna

Visit the Rice Lake Plains! Bus costs fully paid for by RLPJI. Order your copy of Project Prairie: An Exploration of Tallgrass Prairie and Savanna Habitats in Northumberland County.

STARRY SKIES SNOWSHOE EVENT

Date: SAT. JAN. 21

Location: Alderville Black Oak Savanna

Enjoy a guided hike through the prairie and savanna. Snowshoes are limited. Please call 905-352-1184 to register.

RLPJI ON THE WEB

Our website has details on upcoming workshops, meetings, education programs, previous newsletters and volunteer days. It also includes information on species at risk, invasive species, maps of conservation lands and the popular "Ask Savvy" link to encourage learning about the Rice Lake Plains.

Visit www.ricelakeplains.ca or check us out on facebook under "Rice Lake Plains."

WHAT IS THE RICE LAKE PLAIN?



The Rice Lake Plain is one of the most intriguing areas on the Oak Ridges Moraine. It is an area of roughly 100,000 acres (40,469 hectares) located at the eastern end of the moraine, southeast of Peterborough. Historically, The Rice Lake Plains were dotted with oak savanna, dominated by massive Black and White Oaks, and tallgrass prairies where grasses like Big Bluestem, Indian Grass and Switchgrass grew more than two metres high! Diverse wildflowers like Wild Blue Lupine, Bergamot, Thimbleweed and Round-headed Bush Clover also blossomed.

Globally these habitats are rare, and oak savannas are considered among the most endangered ecological communities in North America. Grassland Birds like the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark and other rare species, including the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake, depend on this rare habitat to survive. To learn more about the Oak Ridges Moraine and Rice Lake Plains, please visit www.moraineforlife.org and www.ricelakeplains.ca.



Prairie habitat in the Rice Lake Plains

GRANTS AWARDED TO RLPJI



Spring 2012 marks the end of a two-year grant from the Trillium Foundation to promote increased awareness of tallgrass prairie and oak savanna habitats around the Rice Lake Plains. Brooke Stevens was hired as the RLP Outreach Coordinator and spent the first year publishing newsletters, designing programs, contacting landowners, facilitating workshops and organizing Prairie Day 2011. Thank you, Brooke for your hard work and the Trillium Foundation for your support! A new RLP Outreach Coordinator has been hired to continue these important efforts and can be reach at outreach@ricelakeplains.ca or 905-352-1184.

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture awarded the RLPJI a grant to help enhance the annual 2011 Prairie Day. Funds were used to secure the award-winning band Digging Roots, build a permanent stage and compensate artists and workshop leaders who make this such a popular event. This financial help was greatly appreciated!

4TH ANNUAL PRAIRIE DAY – A CELEBRATION OF NATURE ON THE RICE LAKE PLAINS

Prairie Day attracts a range of participants with a common interest in the beauty, ecology and curiosity of tall-grass prairie. Prairie Day 2011 was no exception. More than 300 people enjoyed entertainment provided by Barn Burners, Digging Roots, and the Sugar Island Singers. Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative partners had displays along with educational demonstrations by the Trent-Severn Waterway, Monarch Butterfly Teachers Network, Reptile Zoo and Willow Beach Field Naturalists. Kids enjoyed making unique buttons, face-painting and participating in an interactive puppet show called “Savvy Plants a Seed”, performed by Paddling Puppeteers. A new teepee, partially funded by the Alderville Community Trust was set up with artifacts to learn about traditional ways native people once harvested wild rice and game. Guided tours were also given of RLPJI restoration projects. Many thanks are extended to the Trillium Foundation, Celebrate Ontario and the Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program for funding this festival. The date for Prairie Day 2012, is set for September 8. Please make plans to join us!



RLP Members at Prairie Day 2011

TRINITY COLLEGE STUDENTS RETURN FOR A WEEK WITHOUT WALLS

Nine students joined Rice Lake Plains and Alderville First Nation Staff on December 13-15, 2011, to learn more about prairie and savanna ecosystems and to help out with volunteer tasks. Here are some thoughts from the students: “Thank you for giving us the opportunity to learn about all of the animals and plants in your area! It was a great outdoor experience and I had a lot of fun, thanks!” “I really enjoyed the tour and learning about the prescribed burns and invasive plants on the savanna.”

BEST WISHES, MIA FRANKL!

If you have had the pleasure of hiking through the Northumberland County Forest over the past several years, chances are you have either seen Forestry Management Officer and Weed Inspector, Mia Frankl, or witnessed her work at better defining, maintaining and promoting the County’s trail network. Ms. Frankl was instrumental in coordinating efforts to create a trail user’s plan for Northumberland County. To learn more about the beautiful trail system visit:

http://www.northumberlandcounty.ca/en/departments_countyadministration_countyforest/forest_trails.asp

The RLPJI offers many thanks to Ms. Frankl for her efforts in preserving and protecting natural resources throughout the Rice Lake Plains and wishes her well in her new endeavours.



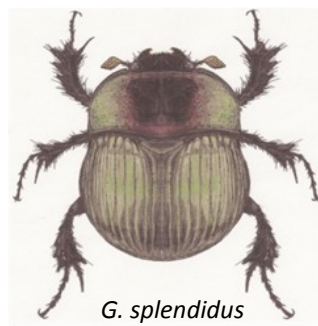
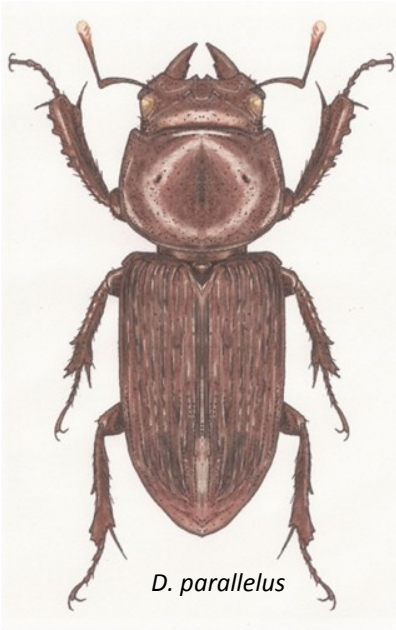
Mia Frankl

A farewell cake with a burning wish

COLEOPTERIST'S CORNER—THE BEETLES OF ALDERVILLE: RARE AND UNIQUE BEETLES

Dorcas parallelus, *Odonteus obesus*, and *Geotrupes splendidus*

In the summer of 2011 Professor David Beresford of Trent University and myself, an Undergraduate, set to work conducting an entomological survey of the Alderville First Nation Black Oak Savanna, a 110-acre community restoration project located near Rice Lake, Ontario. We set pitfall traps throughout the savanna in the summers of 2010 and 2011 with some exciting results. Our main focus was on the Beetle populations because



we felt their assemblages should reflect the major restoration efforts being undertaken at Alderville. We were hoping to find something interesting or rare and we were not disappointed.

Our 2011 collections yielded 3 notable species of rarely seen soil-dwelling beetles; *Dorcas parallelus* (left), *Odonteus obesus* (top right), and *Geotrupes splendidus* (bottom right). *D. parallelus* is a stag beetle from the family *Lucanidae* one of only 3 types of stags in all of North America, so we were very fortunate to capture this specimen. *O. obesus* is another rarely seen beetle from the Scarab Family. The male of the species is often adorned with a long, slender horn. This insect is smaller than the size of a dime so

finding this specimen was very lucky. *G. splendidus* is another rare gem. A true Scarab, its body is rounded and is a striking bright metallic green and red. All these beetles spend much of their time rooting in the soil, burrowing, and looking for mates so their discovery was very exciting. Both Professor Beresford and I had never encountered any of these beetles before our survey work of Alderville.

Drawings and article by Trevor Burt

ATTENTION TEACHERS: FREE BUSSING FOR FIELD TRIPS TO THE RICE LAKE PLAINS!

Bus costs can be paid for field trips to the Rice Lake Plains, thanks to conservation partners of the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative and a grant from the Trillium Foundation. Visit the Alderville Black Oak Savanna Ecology Centre for programs to learn about tallgrass habitat conservation.



Also this spring a new and exciting elementary curriculum package is being brought to you by the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative. **Project Prairie: An Exploration of Tallgrass Prairie and Savanna Habitats in Northumberland County** will be available March 2012. Contact the Rice Lake Plains office at outreach@ricelakeplains.ca or 905-352-1184 to order your copy!

DOCUMENTING GRASSLAND BIRDS IN NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY

Grassland birds have been declining across their ranges and this pattern is also present in Northumberland County. Typical grassland habitat consisted of a mixture of grasses and low plants with some scattered shrubs and trees. Grassland birds associated with the Rice Lake Plains habitat include Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Harrier, Bobolink, Eastern Kingbird and Eastern Bluebird.

Development, certain agricultural practices, removal of trees, shrubs and hedgerows, changes in land use and natural succession from grassland to woodland have resulted in the reduction and loss of open country and habitat for these species. In 2011, the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative received a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund to survey grassland birds throughout Northumberland County, looking at agricultural and natural sites.



Bobolink
photo by B. Hubick

Trent University and local bird experts sampled 84 sites which were visited 6 to 8 times during breeding season. Early results of these survey efforts have proven positive with the sighting of numerous grassland bird species. An additional field season of surveying will take place in 2012. Please stay tuned for our fall issue of the Savannah Sentinel for more information!

Todd Farrell

NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA (NCC)—HAZEL BIRD NATURE PRESERVE



A tour of Hazel Bird Nature Preserve

On December 5, 2011, thanks to generous support from the Willow Beach Field Naturalists, the Nature Conservancy of Canada purchased 290 acres of land north of Beavermeadow Road to create a nature reserve. NCC is a non-for-profit land trust dedicated to protecting important wildlife habitats, including natural prairie and oak savanna habitats of the Rice Lake Plains portion of the Oak Ridges Moraine. NCC named the property after the late Hazel Bird, a well-known local conservationist who loved the property and spent much of her time there while working on her bluebird conservation project.

NCC plans to begin restoration work on this property this winter. A local contractor will begin cutting non-native Scotch pine to control this invasive plant and restore grassland habitat. NCC will be holding an official “grand opening” of the property in the spring of 2012, and will be inviting local residents to join in the celebration.

Mark Stabb

NON-NATIVE SPECIES— SCOTCH PINE (*Pinus sylvestris*)

Scotch Pine is native to Europe, but has been widely planted throughout North America because of aggressive reproduction habits. These trees are shade intolerant and grow well on sandy soils causing them to shade out and kill native prairie species. To remove cut near the base ensuring that no limbs with needles are left on the stump.



Seedling pine



Mature pine

RETURN ADDRESS:

Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative
c/o
Nature Conservancy of Canada
Central ON Peterborough Office
106 Murray Street
Peterborough, ON
K9H 2S4

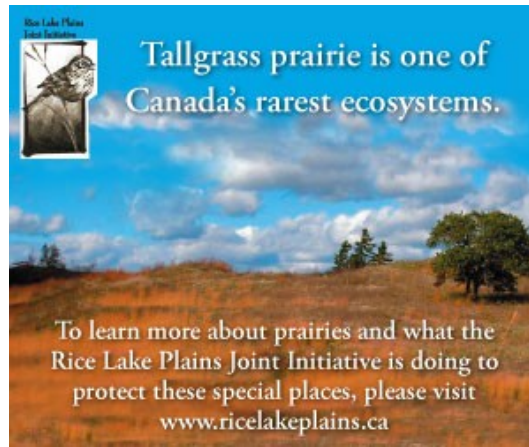
The **Savanna Sentinel** is a publication of the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative— dedicated to the identification, protection and stewardship of the best remaining tallgrass prairie and black oak savanna within the Rice Lake Plains, funded by the Ontario Trillium Association.

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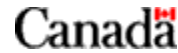
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THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS



Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program

RICE LAKE PLAINS JOINT INITIATIVE PARTNERS



The Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative is a partnership of local people, conservation groups and government agencies, all of whom share a vision: a landscape of protected, restored and sustainably managed tallgrass prairie and oak savanna ecosystems amid well-stewarded farmland, forest, wetland and riparian habitats of the Rice Lake Plains region. We are committed to being good neighbours in the community and to actively caring for our lands as a contribution towards a sustainable future for Northumberland County.