



Sources of Knowledge Newsletter

Sharing Perspectives on the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Bruce Peninsula

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Sources of Knowledge Update

As the summer of 2013 begins to wind down it is helpful to reflect on some of the activities undertaken by the Sources of Knowledge Board over the past few months.

- The Forum on May 2-4 brought together about 150 people interested in discussing the condition of Lake Huron and looking at ideas about how the Lake might be improved.
- The Barrow Bay and District Sport Fishing Association was recognized for their conservation and fish habitat restoration efforts with the Sources of Knowledge Achievement Award.
- The \$1000 Sources of Knowledge Bursary was created and awarded to Josie Mielhausen and Rachel McLay, students at Bruce Peninsula District School for their interest in pursuing a career related to the environment and conservation.
- An ongoing series of articles in the *Peninsula Press* helped to generate interest in the local community about Sources of Knowledge activities.
- A Facebook page was created to help the organization stay connected to its supporters.
- In cooperation with Parks Canada, a juried art show is currently housed in the Parks Canada Visitor Centre Gallery. The show is titled "Wild About the Bruce" and displays the talents of many local artists.
- The effective Sources of Knowledge website is regularly updated to provide

users with resources and information related to the mandate of the organization.

The Board continues to be busy developing the theme and program for next May's Forum, considering new ways of gathering and sharing research information about the local environment and issues, and generally engaging people in dialogues about challenges and opportunities in the northern Bruce Peninsula.

Citizen Science Alive and Well on the Bruce Peninsula

Citizen science is a term used to identify scientific research conducted by amateur or non-professional scientists as part of an overall project or data collection effort. In many cases, the volunteer work of citizen scientists allows researchers to carry out studies that would not otherwise be possible given the scope and time constraints of the tasks.

The volunteer citizen scientists benefit by their activities, including learning new skills, networking with other like-minded people, and being outside contributing to field work. They get a chance to see more closely how scientists approach problems and test theories.

New information and communication technologies have been a boon for citizen scientists. Smart phones make it easier to capture and share data than previously, including apps for such things as monitoring birds and counting meteors. GPS tagging has been used to study spatial distributions of species and other subjects such as archaeological artefacts. Of course, the Internet plays a key role in recruiting

volunteers, organizing activities, and communicating data.

Birders were some of the first groups to take advantage of citizen scientists, with amateur birders regularly reporting sightings and locations. The Audubon Society's Christmas bird count has been going on since 1900 and is well represented in our local area with activities coordinated by the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory (<http://bpbo.ca>).



A volunteer extracts a bird from one of the mist nets used at the BPBO's Cabot Head Research Station. (Source: BPBO)

Two Sources of Knowledge Board members have made names for themselves as part of the citizen science community. Bill Caulfeild-Browne collects detailed weather information from his weather station at his home. The data is made available to researchers through WeatherLink, an international weather and climate centre that coordinates data from over 13,000 weather stations. See Bill's WeatherLink page at <http://www.weatherlink.com/user/billcb/index.php>. Bill also publishes a monthly column in the *Peninsula Press* that attracts considerable interest in the community.

Board member John Greenhouse tackled the question 'Does Tobermory have tides?' in a Sources of Knowledge technical report published on the organization's website. John used Fisheries and Oceans Canada water level data readily available on their website to analyze water fluctuations at Tobermory. He concluded that indeed there are tides, but their significance is overshadowed by other water-level variables, including seasonal fluctuations and wind directions.

The Bruce Peninsula Environmental Group (BPEG) uses the efforts of volunteers to carry out some of their programs including such activities as developing ecological gardening techniques. A current effort by the group is a mortality study of amphibians and reptiles on roads in the municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula. The coordinator asked local residents to report sightings of dead snakes and turtles so a map of mortality hot-spots can be produced, perhaps leading to the development of strategies to reduce mortality rates.



An example of road kill on local roads. (Source: BPEg)

Overall, participation by local volunteers has a great potential to help efforts to study and protect the water and land ecosystems of the Bruce Peninsula.