

Samuel Wilmot Nature Area Advisory Committee
Minutes of Meeting of : September 14 2021 – 7PM
via Microsoft Teams

In Attendance: Kate, Leo, Rod, Meaghan, Tom, Ken

Regrets: Patrick, Brian

Absent: Corinna Trill

Motion to accept the agenda: Leo

2nd: Rod

No Additions

Carried

Motion to accept minutes of meeting of August 10, 2021: Tom

2nd: Meaghan

Carried:

Monarch Tagging update:

Kate took a small group out on Friday Sept 10th on the Port waterfront side. Not many butterflies, but tagged 3 (total) in 1.5h. Blossoming of the pollinator plants in this area was affected by dry weather and may have contributed to lower numbers than expected. Over email the subcommittee decided to move the tagging for the remaining days (Saturday, Sunday, Monday) to the Cobble Dick Rd. Side. On Saturday, no community members came out for the 10 AM slot, but Brian and Tom tagged ~30-50 monarchs. At the 12 noon timeslot, there were about 10-15 community members, and many butterflies were tagged (Kate, Tom, and Brian helped with tagging). At the 2pm timeslot there was a small group (3 community members) that came out, and Kate & Tom helped with the tagging. On Sunday the 10 AM timeslot was cancelled due to rain. Rod still went out and caught 12 butterflies (but didn't tag). Sunday at noon there were 6 community members, and Tom / Kate helped with tagging. At the 2pm timeslot, no one showed up but Brian and Tom tagged 64 monarchs. In total on Saturday / Sunday there were 188 monarchs tagged. Kate took another small group out on Monday evening, but there weren't many butterflies (likely too late for prime tagging), but still tagged about 15 more monarchs.

Some lessons learned:

1. Order tags in July so there is less chance of late arrival. Our tags this year arrived the day before our event was scheduled to start (in part due to COVID19 delaying mail from USA). We did have Tom's tags as a back up, but ordering tags earlier will allow us to advertise earlier.
2. Remind people to dress appropriately. Many people came in flipflop sandals and shorts instead of long pants and shoes/boots.
3. If we can do a big event that is probably preferable.
4. the evening time slots were not very productive. In fact, we observed monarchs beginning to roost by 6 p.m. The optimum time slot for tagging appears to be between 10 a.m. and 5-5:30 p.m.

Remaining tags will be split up among committee members to try and fill as many as possible before the end of the migration.

The group discussed trying to arrange for a late-fall mow of the wildflower area along the Port of Newcastle waterfront. Ken will follow up. Likely after first frost.

The question was raised as to whether the restored area of the Cobbledick Rd. side should be mowed. Tom will follow up with the folks at Wildflower Farm where we purchased the seeds to see what they recommend.

Kate acknowledged that the municipal team cleaning up around the SWNA is doing a great job as of late.

Update on Butternut tree planting:

- Ken stated that the file is with Steve, and they have not heard from the consultant since August. Brian had previously asked Steve if a walk-about with either or both of the contractor and our landscape architect could be arranged to allow our committee the opportunity to input into the locations of the planting
- Ken said that a Fall planning may still be possible.

Update on South Lookout:

- Ken said that it went out through purchasing this week. It required a total replacement, except footings. GRCA permitting is underway. It is possible that it will be completed this year.

Storm Drainage Pond near Toronto St. Parking lot:

- Leo explained how the clearing of the area around the storm water pond frustrated and saddened the committee members as well and numerous members of the community. Peter had told our committee that it would need to happen at some point, but there should have been better communication with the municipality, our committee, and with the community. The area was cleared, gated off, and the standing debris as been left there in a pile for week without any subsequent actions. Clearly they could have waited, and shouldn't someone from our committee or at least the municipality have known that Kaitlin was about to do this?.
- Other members of the committee also reiterated that this area is well known by our committee and our community as having significant biodiversity, and being an important spot for migrating monarchs in the Fall. If the developers had waited another few weeks it still could have provided that service for the migrating butterflies. In addition, a less invasive method of doing the required work should be possible. The committee asks that such be investigated.
- Tom highlighted that our committee knows the area well, knows the biological and ecological role the area plays, and has a good sense of how the community uses that area. Our committee has a strong interest in helping to advise how that area is developed.
-
- Committee members expressed a general frustration at the fact that no one was informed that this was going to happen.

Committee Vacancies:

- Need additional people, 3 positions now need to be filled.
- Carrie-Anne Atkins has indicated that she needs to step down due to other commitments but will continue as a member until the end of 2021 unless a replacement is named earlier.
- We need members who are willing to participate actively on the committee and will be here for at least a year of their term.

- Ken will follow up with the Clerk's Department regarding the official process, and will find out if we are allowed to advertise the position (e.g., on Facebook). If we are able to advertise, perhaps more people will know about it, and those people will have a better understanding of what our committee actually does.
- Ken will also find out if it is possible for our committee to see the list of applicants.

Fall Clean-up:

- Leo asked if there was any interest in running a Fall clean-up in SWNA, given that current COVID-19 restrictions may preclude a big group event.
- The committee acknowledged the large mess left annually by Fall anglers.
- The committee decided to run a small Fall clean-up on **Saturday November 6th**
- Ken can support this by providing bags/gloves and doing a pick up.

Next meeting: October 12th at 7pm. It may be in person. However with growing number of COVID-19 cases it is more likely to be virtual (via Teams).

Other business:

- Ken mentioned that some dead ash trees will be removed from the memorial forest because they have become a safety issue.

Roundtable:

- Kate is excited about her new puppy
- Tom shared his thoughts on how special where we live really is in terms of the Monarch migration, and how our community is increasingly engaged in monarch watching and spotting roosts. The fact that every year monarchs tagged in Newcastle are recovered in Mexico (when other people tag hundreds of monarchs each year and never have one recovered), speaks to the importance of our area, and the work our committee and our community does to protect and enhance the natural areas here.

Motion to adjourn: Leo

2nd: Meaghan

Carried.