

## The Conservaiton Corner

# Field, forest, hedgerow

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When I first took an interest in nature as a young lad on the farm, there was only one book available to help newcomers in the painstaking procedure of identity - Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds - and that was it. Then came more guides as interest in birding escalated, followed by guides on wildflowers and other aspects of natural history.

For the most part, these guides were quite adequate, but because most dealt with North America as a whole, species were included that one would seldom encounter in these parts. Then came guides to nature in Ontario, and life as a local nature enthusiast started getting even easier.

Although there has been a reference book done on the birds of the County, and a recent publication on the reptiles of the area, never has there been an identification guide compiled on any aspect of flora or fauna in this County - until now.

"Field, Forest, Hedgerow - A Hiker's Wildflower Guide for Prince Edward County" is a praiseworthy attempt at selecting some of the colourful wildflowers of Prince Edward County and offering them a full colour pocket guide that hikers can easily slip into their pocket or backpack. Author and photographer Court Noxon is a well-known Prince Edward County resident who has done a magnificent job of selecting 225 species of Prince Edward County's plants and arranging them in this handy guide. The main title is broad enough to include not only wildflowers commonly recognized as such, but also other plants one might typically encounter on a hike including field crops such as barley, oats and wheat, various grasses mosses, lichens, shrubs, aquatic plants, and even a few trees. All are superbly depicted by glossy full-colour photographs, some containing insets showing either distant or close-up shots. It's a field guide to wildflowers, shrubs, mosses, fungi, lichens and trees, specific to Prince Edward County, in one compact traveller's guide.

Especially appealing, although it might not be to the purist in the field of botany, is Court's reluctance to include scientific names. Only common, colloquial names are used in this guide, which might cause some confusion as many plants have several common names, but I had no problem at all following the names that Court has decided to use in his book. For those who may be intimidated by wildflower waters who seemingly enjoy spouting off bewildering

nomenclature Latin names as they walk along, this feature alone will endear anyone to this guide. The book is attractively organized according to colour, and refers to not just the colour of the flower, but any feature of the plant that may have attracted the observer's attention, such as a leaf, bud, or seed pod. Therefore we find plants like barberry in the red colour coded pages because of its berries, poison ivy in the green pages, etc.

The field guide also contains a page of other resources pertaining to plants, and concludes with a list of his favourite places, including Beaver Meadow, Macaulay Mountain, Point Traverse and Massassauga Park. Book reviewers search diligently for weaknesses in a book, for that is their job. But try as I might, I could find only two minor errors in his book, none of them contained in the main body of the text. The fact that Point Petre is not a conservation area and Long Point is South Marysburgh Ward is not a provincial park, are both only moot issues. Certainly, in no way, does this oversight take away from the integrity of the book. Text is restricted to short descriptive paragraphs, leaving plenty of room for the stars of the book the wildflowers themselves. The text, design and photography were all done by Court Noxon. Photo of the author was by Bloomfield resident Don McClure. It is a "County" book in every sense of the word. The book was printed by Allan Graphics Ltd. in Kingston, and contains a total of 126 pages, with an easy to follow index at the back of the book.

In his introduction, Court laments that many wildflower habitats are looked on by their owners as waste land... "Thoughtless use of motorized vehicles has caused much loss of habitat... Perhaps, in our increasing urban environment, we have failed to pass on to our children due respect for the world of nature around them."

Congratulations to Court Noxon for a super, long overdue book on Prince Edward County plants. The book is available locally from Books on the Bay on Main Street in Picton. Phone 613-476-3037.

*This column is prepared weekly by Quinte Conservation as a public service to residents on the Prince Edward County, Napanee and Moira watersheds.*