

Everyone,

Back around 1974, after we'd been asked to produce [Canadian Nature Notebook](#), we decided that our notions were so ecocentric that we'd try to mostly do things that we were asked to do by others, rather than implementing or promoting our own ideas. A home-schooling maxim states that *"random numbers often appear clumped,"* and this policy, once nobody asked us to participate in any long-term employment-like role, introduced a conspicuously random element into our scheduling.

We bring this up because 2016 has been one of those years when a multitude of requests came in, and folks started telling us *"I wouldn't have had the energy to do that when I was 19,"* in March, and have carried on in that vein through December. One sad consequence of this is that we haven't put much of what we've done into blog posts: <http://karstaddailypaintings.blogspot.ca/> has only 4 posts from 2016, and our new blog of results <http://doingnaturalhistory.blogspot.ca/> has only three posts, on hybrid Crayfish, invasive Reeds, & under-documented Salamanders. The lifestyle <http://adaptating.blogspot.ca/> blog has three new posts. We have kept up to date on the [database](#) (no unprocessed waypoints, 5597 records), and if you want to know what we found within 5 km of Alvinston (102 records, though many samples aren't yet sorted to species), or see a complete listing of departures, meetings, & publications (118 pages) just drop us a line.

Operationally, when we're home we're in [Weirs House](#), heated by wood pellets, the corpses of invasive alien shrubs, and [standing dead victims of alien pathogens from Francis & Joyce Cook's bush](#). In the field we live in the Boler trailer, pulled by our 2003 Ford 150 pickup. Our characteristic foods have been fruit & leaf smoothies with bannock made from home-milled Kamut grains (Aleta) and [Oats & weeds microwave quiche](#) (Fred). [Mudpuppy Nights](#) occurred on every winter Friday, Sunday Morning Meeting is at Brownlee/Hooey's on Temperance Lake Road, the *"how can you possibly believe that"* discussions of [the Faith & Science forum](#) continue in Kemptville, and Jenn & Rory & Sam had their first summer in [their house in Kemptville](#).

**We're suddenly bereft of domestic inquilines:** Jennifer dispersed the Goats & Chickens as they moved, Marigold the Dog has gone off to BC as a comfort to Pam & Ryan McKenzie, and during the drought Bentley the Cat switched from his mandated duties as Rodent Control Officer to species protected under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and was accordingly kijiied off to indoor premises in Barrhaven.

A big part of our nominally random upsurge in activity has been encouraging collaborations with conservation organizations. [Ontario Nature](#), with our colleague Tanya Pulfer as Conservation Science Manager, has engaged (& paid) our involvement in surveying & painting [their land on the Sydenham River](#). The [Ottawa chapter of CPAWS](#) has also put money into our involvement in surveys & painting in Quebec's wilderness [Dumoine River](#), for which they are seeking complete protection. Aleta's [BiotaNB paintings](#) this year were joint portraits of participants in the survey & their creatures. Our long-time association with [South Nation Conservation](#) has continued with Fred as chair of the [Fish & Wildlife Committee](#), and Aleta now the committee's only female member. This year SNC found money for a second year of spring frog call surveying, and Fred will be scientific advisor for their first mussel survey project as they deploy a [mussel-snagging brail](#). Our discovery of the 'endangered' mussel [Ligumia nasuta in Fishing Lake](#) had aided the [Nature Conservancy of Canada's purchase of some vulnerable-to-building-up land](#) on the shore of the lake, and we helped them in a [joint clean-up & survey](#) of a ruined cottage site there.

**In other conservation action,** Aleta attended the final hearings of the Pegg/Simard libel case; we presented ["Frontenac Arch Ligumia nasuta: what else hasn't been found?"](#) at the 2016 Canadian Freshwater Mussel



*if you fret about plaster falling from the walls of your studio, you're not working hard enough*

Research Meeting in Burlington, helped “[dump this dump too](#)” by hearing a Whippoorwill at the Boundary Road dump site, continued as members of the [A2A Road Ecology Committee](#), had our annual table at the [North Grenville Sustainability Fair](#); Fred went with Judy Courteau to Belleville for the “[Best Management Practices for Roadside Control of Invasive Phragmites](#)” meeting, and to North Bay with Ken Buchan for the [Ontario Rivers Alliance](#) general meeting & celebration of the withdrawal of the proposals for [meso-scale hydro projects](#) we'd assessed in 2012; we scooped snails out of dried wetlands in [Larose forest bioblitz with Christine Hanrahan](#), addressed the [Brodie Club](#) (thanks to Ed & Rosemary Addison) on the subject of [Mudpuppies](#), significantly [extending the known range](#) of the alien Obvious Snail, [Xerolenta obvia](#), on the way there & back. ...and there have been teleconference committee calls too numerous to mention.

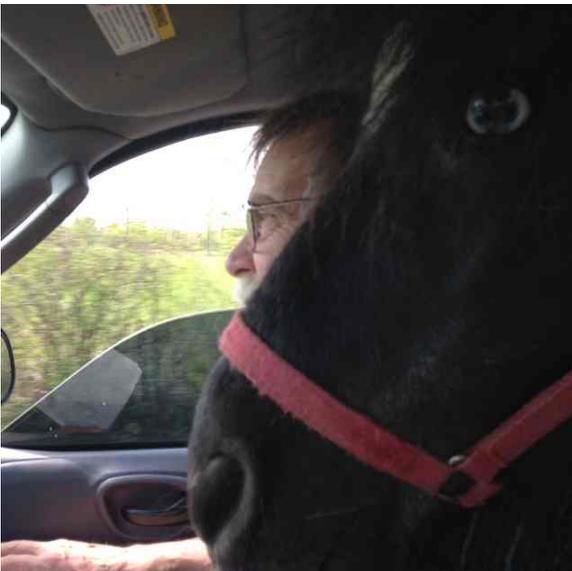
**This year we finally gave up on incorporating [Fragile Inheritance Natural History](#).** Without dedicated collaborators, we don't have time to administer FINH in addition to all of our ongoing projects, added to by a steady stream of new ones, with both institutional & individual partners, as well as a growing number of commissions for paintings. So we will continue FINH with a low profile as we have for the past several years: a registered name, website, and a non-profit (community group) bank account, capable of receiving & disbursing donations, with no charitable receipts except under the umbrella of one of our partners.

Fred has been a life member of the [Ottawa Field Naturalists Club](#) since the 1970s, but their meetings have always been just-too-far-north for us to attend, until the reactivation of the [Conservation Committee](#) with Owen Clarkin as chair (watch for a position paper on “Poison” Parsnip & a manifesto on Tree Planting). A recent bequeathal of money has launched an OFNC research fund, and from this we we received support for running our “more than one person can handle” auditory transects.

This support for auditory monitoring from OFNC & SNC came with [one of the driest springs in history](#), followed by an equally dry summer - the newsletters of organic farms protested that they'd “*never before had to irrigate the Potatoes & Jerusalem Artichokes,*” a situation in which, on our shallow soil, we also found ourselves. As in the 2012 drought, diverse other scamperings meant we couldn't take adequate advantage of low water levels to make anticipated breakthroughs in the study of eastern Ontario mussels, but, by going 150 m upstream from a traditional campsite, we did add the elegant Elktoe (*Alasmidonta marginata*) to the known fauna of the Petawawa River.

**Research collaboration** has included Mudpuppy samples for [e-DNA work at Trent](#), scooping up spring frogs for [Maria Vu's](#) work with Vance Trudeau on inducing captive breeding & the [Storeys'](#) work on gene action in freeze tolerance, and a survey of [South Nation sills](#) for land snails with Robert Forsyth.

Family events included bring a horse to Sam's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday party in the cab of the pickup, our beloved [Uncle John Schueler's](#) funeral in Syracuse, NY, and a family gathering of Aleta's siblings & parents in Edmonton & Kelowna, which Jennifer & Sam also flew out for. A couple of months after the reunion, Aleta's father Lars became debilitated by a serious salt imbalance, followed by a small stroke which blinded his left eye. By late autumn he'd recovered a healthy mineral balance, and with regular exercise, is regaining his strength as well, working up to hiking fitness for the spring. He continues his “[Catch of the Day](#)” blog with Okanagan nature observations, enlivened by trail camera videos of Bear & Deer in collaboration with his friend Paul. Aleta's sister [Karen](#) and her cousin [David Malcolm](#), are in recession with innovative therapies for kidney cancer.



“take me to your Sam”

In mid-September we went to the [Canadian Herpetological Society meeting at the Toronto Zoo](#), where we visited with colleagues, saw some of our friends elected to the Board of the society, heard a number of important talks, gave an unimportant talk about Turtles on roads (theme - [“yikes, I don't know what is](#)

*going on*"), and had a modest reception for our [proposed strategy for Two-lined Salamanders](#). We discovered invasive [Chinese Mystery Snails](#) in a drawn-down pond in Rouge National Park near the Zoo, reviving some of them that were solidly embedded in dry mud. Then we zoomed WSW -- Aleta got well started on two big paintings as we joined Ontario Nature for a mollusc-rich bioblitz along the Sydenham River, where we reveled in the richest Unionid mussel fauna in Canada. Also samples of land snail shells from the slopes of steep forested valleys, and a final cornucopia of drifted shells from a logjam across the river under a bridge.



*a Sydenham slope where alien Cepaea snails seem to be more heavily predated by Shrews than native Polygyrids are*

We rushed home for a [Doors Open Ontario](#) day, where Aleta demonstrated painting at the Bishops Mills event and Fred showed Sydenham Unionids at the Oxford Mills event, where he also talked with visitors about local Mudpuppies. Aleta then came down with an influenza, while, as the last obligation of the crowded September schedule, Fred went to a big meeting at the SNC office in Finch, gathering the first records of the invasive Rusty Crayfish from the main channel of the South Nation, and of the headwaters mussel *Lasmigoma compressa* from Paynes Creek.

Then October was scrubbed when Fred caught the flu. We consoled ourselves with Emma Darwin's letter to her son when, on their honeymoon in Germany, he & his bride had come down with something, and she expressed the opinion that being sick together in bed could be quite romantic. But, on Aleta's 7<sup>th</sup> day of fever Jennifer told her to call [Tele-Health](#), which sent us to the ER at [Winchester](#). The flu had been so severe that Aleta's underpopulated white cells (since getting past leukemia in 1991) didn't have the resources to fight what the Emerg doctor called an "opportunistic pneumonia," and she had gone seamlessly from the flu fever to a pneumonia fever, even though she'd kept warm & well hydrated, with diverse remedies & complete bed rest since the first onset of the sore throat. The Winchester Hospital emergency department was gentle & effective (*i.e.* they agreed with the diagnosis we came in with); they prescribed an antibiotic which did the job but provoked side-effects of its own until replaced by a penicillin, so by November we were able to resume the usual....

**On 25 November 2016 14h18, Fred wrote:** "...in the past 24 hours we've been clearing buried boards from under snow in the backyard to continue the repair of the woodshed roof, organizing plans for an environmental history of the township & a historical society meeting about this, getting a new iphone & besetting Fred with a phone number, Fred moderating a squabble about whether natural selection or a woo-woo physics God is responsible for the Universe, measuring & preserving an unfortunate Mudpuppy victim of sudden cold, Aleta getting an associate diagnosed for a mysterious ailment, conjugal bedtime, reformatting & app-ing the new iphone, Fred measuring blood pressure & sugar to determine

doses of drugs, Aleta digging through the snow for Honesty leaves to blend into a smoothie, dropping the blender in with the Crayfish & needing to dry it off, conference call with Ontario Herp Atlas publications committee, consoling the daughter about a headachy flu, making a linen pocket purse for new iphone, NO:Animalia on the streets (96% wet, 4% slush/snow, 3°C overcast, calm), associate off with the truck to take medical records to the bureaucracy, e-mails about controlling *Phragmites* & researching railways, announcing the Solstice Fire event, advising a colleague about sour Cherry juice for gout, sending off the 43 page report on our frog monitoring for SNC this spring & summer, some painting on the Sydenham River treescape, starting an article on a skip-back to earlier-calling species when a rainstorm tried to break the drought this July, and getting ready for Mudpuppy Night in Oxford Mills..."

Our family households were enlivened by Aleta & Jenn practicing & singing tenor & soprano in *Messiah* with the [North Grenville Concert Choir](#), culminating in three performances on 9 & 10 December. Aleta's original oil paintings are still on display for a few more days at [Alice's Village Cafe](#), 3773 Carp Road, in the village of Carp, Ontario, west of Ottawa (home to alien *Radix auricularia* snails), as well as at the [J D Stevenson Gallery in Chemainus](#), Vancouver Island, in the [That's Empressive Gallery, Empress, Alberta](#), and in the gift shop of the [Burlington Art Centre](#).

Facebook has been the year's great addiction, which has combined with responsibilities to make midnight bedtimes an impossible dream, but when we looked up "facebookers anonymous," it was itself a fb page, so for a final poemlet and social commentary, we leave you with this exchange:

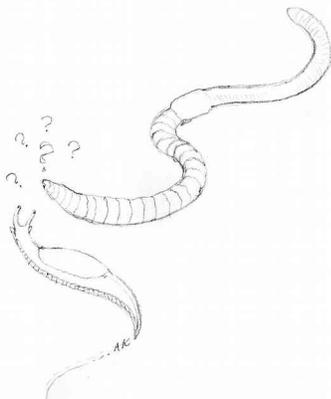
**Fred Schueler:** It's a congenital defect of humanity to dissociate their antics from the ecocide of the planet

**Jim Poushinsky:** I think it's a deliberate act on the part of the billionaire elite that control the fossil fuel industry, government, politicians, and the media. While it's true many people are unaware that there is a crisis, most others who are aware believe the authorities are going to deal with it by reducing Greenhouse Gas production incrementally over the long term. The few who realize this is not going to prevent widespread devastation from the increasingly severe effects of man-made heating of our planet are under great personal stress to do what we can to change things for the better. The question is how bad things have to get before our voices are heard, and what will be left of humanity and the Earth to salvage?

**Fred Schueler:** the billionaire, the billionaire,  
such a short-sighted bird -  
he flits and flaps and flaunts and farts,  
ignoring all he's heard.

For 2017, which you can follow on our [Water Paintings](#) calendar, we have once again resolved to "stay home" - hoping we'll be working with the [local historical society](#) on a [funded environmental history of our municipality](#), but this resolve is already compromised by plans to go (mostly singly, so as to leave one of us home) to Kelowna, McAdams (New Brunswick), the Dumoine River in Quebec, Thunder Bay, and Brandon (Manitoba). So in order to know where we are you'll need to hope we find time to post to the blogs before we show up in your drive with the Boler, pulled by our brand new, Corey-found, 5-cylinder 2004 XC90 Volvo SUV.

with love and caution,




30 July 2016: Aleta having finished her drawing she called to us & [our popcorn bags](#) from the Hurd Street bridge. Coming across the big boulders of the creek in 30-80 cm water, metaphor-master Sam emerged with soaking clothes and said: "I feel so heavy, as if I was a magnet and I was walking on the fridge."