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23 December 2007

Waiting for the Snails: the Schueleremic Annual Letter, 2007

(if you're reading this in hard copy, you'll be able to see that the original format is just blue with remote hyperlinks, and if you're interested in them, the electronic version can be downloaded from <http://pinicola.ca/2007letter.pdf>)

Everyone,

Looking through material for the composition of an annual letter, we find the whole year foretold in an account of the third of January 2007, which is presented as an appendix. If you refer to this you'll see most of the themes that were acted out in the course of the year: worrying about money, Crayfish, Chickens & Rabbits, support from our friends, Marigold the Dog, vehicles, conservation struggles, incessant communication, Rory Tanner, and late nights.

From the perspective of December, it's pitiful to think that in January we thought that the funding for the Snail Book ("[*Identifying Introduced Land Snails and Slugs in Canada, with a guide to native genera*](#)") would come through in February. We'll leave to your imagination the complexity & anxiety of being continuously ready to start work on this project from November 2006 until the contract was signed in August and the first cheque finally arrived at the end of October (though it's unlikely that anyone could imagine finding & reviving a dehydrated *pro bono* lawyer on the porch of the Store to wage our negotiations with CFIA about "intellectual property rights" for the book). In the interval, we forgot everything we'd known about terrestrial Gastropods, while Matt Keevil diligently curated Wayne's collection, Judy Courteau sorted his papers, and "real malacologists" Robert Forsyth and Isabelle Picard laboured over the text.

It seemed to us that all we'd done this summer was to have worried about money and invented a way to improve our local lawncare reputation by feeding the Rabbits and hens on grass clippings from our new reel mower, but we realized that we'd done a fair amount of field work when we assembled an account of it in November as the inaugural issue of the "[Popular Clammer](#)" Unionoid newsletter. We're also working with the Toronto Zoo on *Project Crayfish*, to popularize and atlas Ontario Crayfish, painting [portraits of sparrow-like Birds](#) for the Green Bird Network, and trying to erect herpetological obstacles in the path of billion-dollar habitat-destruction proposals in Ottawa and [Kemptville](#).

While the year was prolonged by contractual non-events, the big real event occurred on the 25th of August, when an immense body of best wishes, and the convergence of many traditions, were assembled in Oxford Mills for [Jennie & Rory's wedding](#). They honeymooned on Amherst Island, and scored a hat-trick with remote follow-up receptions with relations in Phoenix, New York, and Cambridge, Ontario. After living in Apartment 1 over the Store for a couple of months, they've now [moved to a rented half-house](#) in Fitzroy

Harbour, at the north end of the Dwyer Hill "magic road." Jennie is nannying for a family in Stittsville, and Rory is finishing his master's thesis on the Puritan hermit-vegetarian Roger Crab, and planning to expand his acquaintance with the 17th Century in a Ph.D. on the different voices in which Parliament was written about during the English Revolution.

Fred's mother, Loise Stone Schueler, had been declining through the year, with [Jenn & Rory's wedding](#) and their Phoenix reception her last out-of-town events. After a variety of diagnoses, and faithful support from Ted & Jeannie, she died peacefully at home in Syracuse on 22 December.

Corey has spent the year as a Québec resident, in Gatineau, studying all the ways in which computers can be reformatted, planning his education toward a career as a law clerk. He spent quite a bit of time in Bishops Mills over the summer, and is always on call as BMNHC computer technician.



Descartes, who always worked in bed, was fond of the motto "KOG 1T0, ergo sum" -- *from a photo by Jennifer Tanner*

In a sense it's like there's two newly-wed couples, since we're now home alone with only our work, our buildings, our long-term monitoring projects, our tenants, our website, our plumbing, our animals, our gardens, our collections, our computers, our e-mail, our vehicles, Mudpuppy Night in Oxford Mills, the Ontario Freshwater Mussel Recovery Team, the Ontario Road Ecology Group, the South Nation Conservation, and the management of our county forest to worry about.

It has been careless of us to have allowed ourselves to have gotten into our 50s before finding some way of making a living, but this year has ended with convulsions of neatness transforming the lab & houses, and the hope that having less and better-organized stuff

will allow us to better assess what we ought to be doing. We're always most effective when we not only both know what we're doing, but also have time to be able to help each other do it.

You'll be pleased to download, as your seasonal gifts, the usual batch of regifted revisions of documents you've seen before (reviews, additions, and contributions for any of these are always welcomed): Our commonplace book <http://pinicola.ca/kitchen.htm>, "How to live in Eastern Ontario, A guide for Human People" <http://pinicola.ca/HOW2beta.pdf>, and "The Devil's Addendum" <http://pinicola.ca/devildic.pdf>.

Best wishes, and love to all,



Appendix: a synopsis of 3 January 2007

“...Aleta was up early to worry about money, Fred stayed in bed and opened a batch of Crayfish reprints sent to him in August, and read them over a breakfast of egg and bagel, as he 'did' his blood, and put drips in his cataract-operated eye. As Aleta read her Bible, Fred fed the Chickens and went out to clear paths through Cedars with Marigold the Dog, who crashed through the thickets in her characteristic tight frantic circles.

“Then over to the Lab where Matt Keevil was diligently working on curating [Wayne Grimm's specimens](#), and Fred settled down to write e-mails rounding up data for Wayne's specimens, and for analysis of [Chorus Frog populations](#), agreeing to speak at a 2008 "Herps of Winter" symposium on 'Overwintering choices in a stochastic environment: Leopard Frogs (*Lithobates pipiens*) in Grenville County, Ontario,' and fretting on the NatureList about [monitoring Great Blue Heron colonies](#), as Aleta and Jennie headed out to Kemptville to register the Focus stationwagon and to find that the Villager van needs an emission test before it can be registered for 2007.

“Then to Merrickville to work at the [Baldachin](#) where they clean rooms (under Aleta's Rule that "many people pay that much to work out in a gym"), but Aleta had to leave Jennifer working and dash back to Bishops Mills to retrieve the documents that the bank requires to process her request for a loan to tide us over the next month until the money begins to come in for work on the snail book.

“Time was of the essence if they were to get a cheque and then visit Cheryl Doran for supper and then get to Wednesday Night meeting on time. They left at about 16h30 for Larry Pegg's place south of Ottawa to pick up the cheque for a day of ecological assessment we did in the Bowesville area where Larry had designed an ecologically friendly [Sports Park](#).

“While Jennifer was driving, Aleta planned their route from the map, and cell-phoned Larry, Cheryl, Rory, Annie, Fred, and Wes, as well as Brownlees to let the Brockville meeting know they wouldn't be there. They reached Cheryl's place (she's one of the protagonists of [our work](#) along the planned [Ottawa Light Rail](#)), and had lasagna with her family, and she sent some lasagna home for Fred and opened her car trunk to reveal a load of groceries specially bought for us as soon as she knew we were coming. Meanwhile Fred ate a delicious supper of millet cooked with peanut butter and shrimp sauce, and then finished up an environmental assessment about the trails of the [Johnstown ATV Club](#).

“Then to the Ottawa Wednesday Night meeting at Annie Oulton's -- attended by Jennie's young man, [Rory Tanner](#), who's a masters student at the University of Ottawa. The only call they hadn't made was to [Storeys](#), to let them know that they were dropping off a winter-caught Redbelly Snake, packed in snow, to be tested for

freeze-tolerance. It turned out that Storeys were at home and not in bed yet when Aleta and Jennie pulled into their place after meeting. Wes von Papineau was not home, however, so they left the Christmas-wrapped half-loaf of stollen on his doorstep (having cell-phoned Fred so he could look up Wes' house number on Aleta's computer) and continued home.

“They bought another \$20 worth of gas in Kemptville with some cash Aleta found in her wallet, and deposited Larry's cheque. The way home from Kemptville was turbulent with a serious discussion about how aggressive Jennifer becomes if they have a discussion when she is tired. Then home at 23h34, and after diverse finishings-up, Fred had done his blood and dripped his eyes, and his watch rang 02h00 before we finally turned the lights off and rolled over to sleep.”