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Thirty years of boxes: the Schueleremic Annual Letter, 2009

(if you're reading this in hard copy, you'll be able to see that the original format is blue with remote hyperlinks, and if you're interested in them, the electronic version can be downloaded from <http://pinicola.ca/2009letter.pdf>)

GREETINGS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY!

In September we hit upon the expression "altruistic free-lancing for essential but meagrely understood ideals" to describe what we've been doing towards Conservation, Education, & Documentation for the past 40 years. This annual round has been another attempt to support ourselves while promulgating these ideals. We've been at it for so long that it may be helpful to remind everyone that if we'd been unleashed into an ideal world, we'd be doing ***Insect Surrealism*** and the ***ecology & phylogeny of the morphogenesis of Ranid pigmentation patterns***.

This year's attempts to make more orderly progress has resulted in repeated neatening-up of various premises, in which portions of our facilities temporarily advanced from the appearance of a terrorist's incursion into a museum's backlog holding area into that of a residence with specimens shoved into the corners. The activities listed below are accordingly those that involved the haulage of boxes & furniture and the creation of neatness. For other kinds of events, such as [bioblitzes](#), Mudpuppy Nights, International Biodiversity Days, and natural history observations, see the [NatureList](#) archives, and Aleta's [painting blog](#), which Rory has put up for her.

What we've accomplished this year has only been possible because of the people who enrich our existence here in Bishops Mills. We remember a time in what now seems like the distant past when we considered ourselves a solitary couple, pursuing work that few others knew about and none of our neighbours understood. Now we feel like the hub of a busy community of tenants and family-like associates, with a growing roster of colleagues and partners... but the neighbours still don't seem to understand what we do!

Judy Courteau, our Assistant for the Snail book, came every day to help through last winter as Matt Keevil, Fred, Robert Forsyth, and Aleta finished the manuscript. We miss her comfortable presence now that she's called away by family obligations, but look forward to collaborations in the future.

Corey Wood, our adopted son, who early in 2009 moved back with us in Bishops Mills from his 3 year residency in Quebec, is making good progress in acquiring the last of his high school credits, and shares Apartment 1 with us. With Corey's 9 years of experience in our family and establishment, he fills a valuable advisory role, and is Vice President on the provisional Board of the newly formed non-profit organization that will support and direct long term monitoring projects such as the 30 Years Later Expedition.

Lorraine Leader, Aleta's best friend since 1979, is in her second year of contented country living in "Pipers House," painting portraits, tending a bountiful vegetable garden for us all to share, and keeping track of our income & expenses in QuickBooks - which she's begun to teach to Aleta.

Jaimie Lyn, loyal and helpful tenant of three years standing, occupies Apartment #2 with her teenage daughter **Brianna** and 3 very fine English Labrador dogs. Jaimie loves to share her food with us, and is always happy to take care of Chickens, Rabbits, and **Marigold the Dog** whenever we're on the road.

Leah Laprade, Jaimie's friend and partner in dog-breeding, became tenant of "Weirs House" this summer, with her teenage son and a few healthy, well-behaved dogs of various sizes. This necessitated the removal of much of our furniture & stored belongings. As a result, the front of the 'Lab' downstairs is congested with boxes of still-to-be-sorted stuff, stacked in beside the older piles of studio supplies & archival artwork that were moved out of Pipers House to make room for Lorraine in the spring of 2008, and, for a while, Corey's stuff from his apartment. Since both Lorraine and Leah have made substantial improvements in the houses, we happily tolerate their disruption of our disorganization.

Adam Zieleman came to visit Corey from Hull, Quebec, at about the time that Leah moved in, and he proved himself so useful with every task we set him, briskly accomplishing plumbing, carpentry, computer maintenance, and every kind of technical troubleshooting, that we engaged him as resident handyman and assistant to the 30 Years Later Expedition. His residence & work space is the former "white office" downstairs, from which most of our holdings of stored & unfiled documents were removed to Aleta's studio - but she paints and draws in the Gallery these days anyway.

With all of this activity we find ourselves spinning faster and faster, and soon (this coming spring) will lift off as a UFO (Unleashed Fieldparty Outwardbound) on the Ontario portion of the 30 Years Later Expedition, supported by the Canadian Museum of Nature and whatever donations we can raise ourselves.

annals of haulage:

....The Steering Committee of the [Ontario Herp Atlas](#) met in the Gallery on 2 Feb, after we cleared a sufficient area from specimens to accommodate the crowd. This Atlas has successfully staggered from one bolus of funding to the next, in the approved modern manner.

....on 26 Feb, with some residual neatness from the Steering Committee remaining, we received **Joanne Dicosimo** and **Mark Graham** from the [Canadian Museum of Nature](#), gave them a tour of the Lab, exhibits, library, & offices, followed by a tour of the hastily neatened-up collections, with special note of the Grimm snail collection, the "4th largest Unionid collection in Canada," and the "[Canadian Library of Drifted Material](#)." They were most interested in our proposal for a [30 Years Later Expedition](#), revisiting of localities with historic records, and suggested that the CMN would support the Expedition, as part of their celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

....At the end of March we took the book ***"Identifying Land Snails and Slugs in Canada: Introduced Species and Native Genera,"*** by Wayne Grimm, Robert Forsyth, and us, to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in Ottawa. Revisions, by **Isabelle Picard**, of the French translation are now complete, and the book should be printed early in the spring of 2010. [Watch](#)

[for announcements of its availability](#)

... on 1 June we held a planning meeting with 19 friends, associates, & partners to discuss our work, the BMNHC facilities, fiscal challenges, & [options for the future](#). There was general agreement on mortgaging the building to pay taxes and relieve excessive interest, and that we should continue our work (within or without the building) but there wasn't a consensus to form an organization to see the BMNHC's work carried on into another generation.

...twice this summer Fred & **Kari Gunson** ran a 232 km route to survey 40 computer-model selected road-kill "hotspots" & "coldspots." Kari's [GIS model of where Animals are likely to be road-killed](#), is a cornerstone of the activities of the new [Ontario Road Ecology Group](#).

... In June Jennifer & Rory slept in a tent behind the houses here to avoid the mold in their Carling Ave apartment, and in July they found & moved into an apartment which would not trigger her newly-realized mold allergies, right in the middle of his essays and exams for required coursework for his PhD program and Jennifer's continued work as a nanny. However, they overcame these challenges and emerged still happily married. Rory finally paid his "brideprice" by helping to dismantle exercise tables that Jennifer had stored in our garage since 2004.

...in mid-August we spent an intense week with volunteers from [Friends of the Tay Watershed](#), [surveying the Tay River for clams and crayfish](#), and several weeks afterwards [curating specimens so we'd be ready to write the report](#).

...Our Villager minivan having failed, Aleta & Corey biffed off to Toronto to buy a 2001 Mercedes SUV to haul J&R's Boler trailer, and from 10-20 Sept, Aleta, Fred, & Adam took a successful 2000 km pilot trip through Quebec & Ontario to revisit and survey for the introduced crayfish [Orconectes immunis](#). Travelling internet communications were tested, as well as a new GPS system. Aleta produced one painting a day during the course of this trip, and uploaded the images and journal accounts enroute to a [blog](#).

...as soon as we were home, **Ulrich Schnepat** had arrived from Switzerland, and we showed him our local slugs (including the first specimens [Task Force Limax](#) has had from Canada). He spent a week [teaching a panoply of eminent naturalists](#) methods of identifying and dissecting slugs. The upshot of this, as soon as he was gone, was that Aleta became, [on the pages of a national newspaper](#), the "expert" on *Arion* in Canada, and continues to dedicate herself to the taxonomy of introduced slugs, under Ulrich's long-distance supervision.

...on 18 October we again cleared the gallery, for the founding meeting of "[Fragile Inheritance](#)," an NGO to support independent ecological monitoring, with the promotion of long-term human understanding of Canada as its underlying goal.

...Robert Forsyth visited for a while after the November COSEWIC meetings in Ottawa, and while we had to clear a bedroom for him to sleep in, he did carry off a substantial quantity of specimens. He & Fred confirmed the [first eastern Ontario record of the land snail *Xerolenta obvia*](#).

...Jenn & Rory came down for a whirlwind weekend of putting the trailer away, and bagging the vast quantities of loose pelleted styrofoam which has long been one of the perplexing features of the Store's barn.

...then we filled the Mercedes with specimens for a big donation to the [New Brunswick Museum](#), waited for a break in the weather (12-16 Dec), and [scuttled east to Saint John](#), visiting with Lyn and Donald McAlpine, meeting many people who had previously just been e-mail addresses,

revisiting coastal sites, and surveying *Phragmites* and [Japanese Knotweed](#) along our route. And almost as soon as we were back [it was time for our annual solstice fire and festivity](#).

You'll be pleased to receive, as your seasonal gifts, the usual revisions of perennial documents: the accumulated wisdom of our commonplace book...

"I bet that's interesting to you in ways that you can't explain to me,"

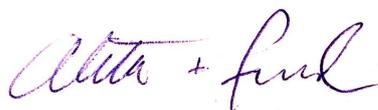
...and the rollicking assessment of nature and society in...

"The Devil's Addendum."

...there's also a prepublication look at [Scientific Songlines in the Scientific Dreamtime](#), and one of this year's few poems....

Wishing everyone that they may enter the new year with minimal stress and maximum delight,

Best wishes, and love to all,



Thanksgiving in Bishops Mills, still neat in the aftermath of the slug workshop: Judy, Fred, Aleta (really there, in the glare of the track lights, not photoshopped in), Adam, Jennifer, and Rory. Corey was in Sudbury with relatives for Thanksgiving.

Subject: this morning

Date: Sat, 24 Jan 2009 09:25:11 -0500

From: Frederick W Schueler <bckcdb@istar.ca>

To: Aleta Karstad <karstad@pinicola.ca>, etc.

We need a sonnet about how the ponderous rumble of the heavy plow pushing nothing alerts the poet's wife to the fact that only an inch of snow has fallen overnight.

We need a sonnet about winter weeks when each day dusts a crystal skim of snow and footprints of the Hares among the Cedars are always crisp across the dimples of old tracks.

We need a sonnet about the mystery of scheduling that sends such a mass of steel so loudly out in pursuit of so little snow, as if the drivers of Eastern Ontario were from Missouri or Toronto.

We need a couplet to sum all this up
Bureaucracy's "ho, ho," and nature's "yup."

