



Here's the latest "daily" painting, a view of the Loughborough Wilderness, dated 15 October, which shows how many other things have served as interruptions since then. From <http://aletakarstad.com> you can scroll through this year's 45 posts of paintings, for details of journeys & work which will be barely hinted at here.

Hello Everyone,

**We'll begin with the obligatory boasting about descendents:** Rory has submitted his Ph.D. thesis, *Representing parliament: poets, MPs, and the rhetoric of public reason, 1640-1660*, and seems to have gotten his grumpiest review from his father-in-law (the methodological lament - *not quantitative enough!*). Jennifer says that the external examiner's review was so flattering that it was embarrassing. Basically it turns out Rory has introduced the idea of mechanism & process into the narrative of the formation of modern publics.<sup>1</sup> But the department took from September until it-will-be January to get a committee together to examine him. Now he's teaching & tutoring & grading at University of Ottawa and Algonquin – teaching a course at U of O on rhetoric that he's taught before & one at Algonquin on "technical writing" for which, all told, they're paying him a less-than-minimum wage.

Jennifer is looking for nannying jobs where she can bring Sam along as a junior staff member. She raised 140 meat chickens over the summer, and has 10 laying hens and a milking Goat now – her tactic being to buy creatures *via* the internet and then send her parents off to pick them up. She runs a facebook "*Ontario Resourceful Farm Share*" group, and produced a 2014 calendar on the theme of agricultural propriety. (Aleta made one about Fred's data acquisition & another on the theme of beautiful paintings<sup>2</sup>)

Samuel amazes us all every day with his vocabulary, balance, and command of concepts & relationships. Fred wrote recently "*this evening, after he finished studying my pens, we were colouring, with him half standing on the edge of the couch in a way I'd never let any other 19-month balance, and he called for a 'grey' crayon, handed it to me, and then identified the Bird I drew with it as a Raven. He knows all the numerals, most of the letters, colours including (evidently) grey, is a vocabulary fiend, goes through books as if reading them, co-operatively does what he's asked to do, laughs & smiles constantly when not concentrating on some problem, and denominates himself 'big guy.'*"

As noted in last year's letter, Jennifer had five years of nannying as practice, and before that her home-schooling majors in mammalian reproductive physiology & goat-whispering. She's teaching Sam with everything they do, as well as natural infant hygiene, co-sleeping, & chicken-house construction techniques, so we have to attribute his achievements to a collaboration of nature & nurture.

Corey continues to drive pizza for Mr Mozzarella, seeming trapped in a love-hate relationship with his situation; Adam has finished a rough semester at McGill; and Clay industriously continues classes at Carleton University after a rough stretch earlier in the year. Owen Clarkin was our field companion through much of the summer, turning our attention to species of trees rare because of over-exploitation.



Rory, Sam, Jennifer, Aleta, & Fred - photographed in what was regarded as an exceptional instance of colour co-ordination

All through another year we've been awaiting final payment for the Store building, from Serge Lemieux, who

1 see <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/features/2010/04/26/the-origins-of-the-modern-public/>

2 [http://www.zazzle.com/free\\_range\\_wall\\_calendar-158319768903951661](http://www.zazzle.com/free_range_wall_calendar-158319768903951661) – <http://karstaddailypaintings.blogspot.ca/2013/12/the-fred-calendar-for-2014.html> – <http://www.lulu.com/shop/aleta-karstad/aleta-karstad-en-plein-air-2014-calendar/calendar/product-21363468.html>

bought it unaware that the post-2008 financial system is set up to discourage small business, especially in rural areas. He's still jumping through hoops two years after purchasing the building, still paying us monthly interest & trying yet again to secure financing so that he can pay us off and proceed with his business. We've been talking about removing specimens & furniture from the building, but not having any place to put them, haven't done much. Our big project has been visiting land held by the *Nature Conservancy of Canada* (NCC) in their Frontenac Arch & Musquash Estuary "Natural Areas," (Ontario & New Brunswick), doing paintings & our usual surveys in each area. Overlaid on this have been both agricultural chores & many other field projects – we've said that most years 20% of our proposals are taken up, while this year the rate was 110%, so each time we've come home, we've barely had time to enter data & catch up on Sam's progress before heading out again.

**The remainder of this letter is edited down from 333 departure and 74 arrival records in the database** (4756 total records, 2086 GPS waypoints). Periodic departures included those to the South Nation Conservation Fish & Wildlife Committee (of which Fred is now chair),<sup>3</sup> the Kemptville Faith & Science group,<sup>4</sup> Sunday & Wednesday meetings (60 departures), Mudpuppy Nights in Oxford Mills (including an increasing number with community groups),<sup>5</sup> Limerick Forest frog research,<sup>6</sup> doing the streets,<sup>7</sup> and business (66 records). Aleta retired from the Spencerville co-op gallery,<sup>8</sup> because none of her pieces hung there had sold; she's been secretary of the *Ottawa Society of Botanical Artists*, Fred represents Aquatic Macroinvertebrates on the Board of the *Friends of the Jock River*, and we've been working with the *Dump-This-Dump-2*<sup>9</sup> group to prevent the spread of toxic landfills. The total account of departures comes to 91 pages, which we can send to any who wish to peruse our details.

**January's** work was writing accounts of the At-Risk Unionid mussels of eastern Ontario, winding up with a winter journey to a *Mussel Recovery Team* meeting in Burlington, taking Jennifer & Sam to visit the **Tanner grand-parents**, and a visit with **Doug Jamieson & Elizabeth Cunningham**, before they abandoned Eden Mills to follow grandchildren to BC. **February & March** were consumed by completing our book on the *Red Shale Hill*,<sup>10</sup> converting records of Unionid occurrence to Fisheries & Oceans format, and scrounging after funds, vehicle repairs, & supplies of firewood. **April** saw much of the same, (with the Unionid work replaced by the pursuit of Frog populations apparently diminished by the 2012 drought), until the 29<sup>th</sup>, when the season's whirlwind field work began.

You can read about some of **May's** travels in the blog: we set out listening for Chorus Frogs to and around the NCC's Frontenac Arch, scooping up drifted land snails at the mouth of the Rouge River in Scarborough, and tracking Fowler's Toads on Lake Erie's Crystal Beach. Our planned listening for the Toads all along the Niagara Peninsula population was thwarted by cold weather, and we zoomed home (briefly surveying the Welland Canal Feeder Canal & the Salmon River), to present "*St Lawrence tributaries as refuges for Unionid Mussels*" at the *St Lawrence Institute* meeting in Cornwall. This set our record for last-minute preparation of a talk – Aleta only began to convert Fred's ms to a powerpoint as we were rolling down the 401, and finished only 15 minutes before the presentation began. Then Aleta was off (378 km) to participate in the *Eden Mills Art Festival*, and Fred, with Owen, to Tamworth, surveying Rock Elms along the way, to present Unionid Mussels to the *Friends of the Salmon River*. Aleta headed to **John & Wandas'** in Tobermory, to survey Grey Treefrogs, which they had discovered on their deck last autumn. Having determined that the Treefrogs were only on the outermost Bruce Peninsula, presumably as the result of an introduction, Aleta launched west towards the NCC's Frontenac Arch *Elbow Lake Centre*, and Fred &

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3) 3 departures - <http://nation.on.ca/en/your-fish-and-wildlife/>

4) 10 departures - <http://www.stjameskemptville.com/index.php?page=faith-science>

5) 25 departures - <http://pinicola.ca/mudpup1.htm>

6) 25 departures – our decades of work here are represented on the web only at [http://www.carcnet.ca/past\\_meetings/2002/pastmeeting2002.php#Schueler](http://www.carcnet.ca/past_meetings/2002/pastmeeting2002.php#Schueler)

7) 341 records - [http://www.torontozoo.com/Adoptapond/pdfs/r&e\\_Tues6.FSchueler.pdf](http://www.torontozoo.com/Adoptapond/pdfs/r&e_Tues6.FSchueler.pdf)

8) 36 departures - <http://artscenespencerville.blogspot.ca/>

9) <http://ottawabotanicalart.blogspot.ca/> – <http://www.jockriver.org/> – <http://www.dumpthisdump2.ca/>

10) <http://www.lulu.com/shop/aleta-karstad-and-frederick-w-schueler-and-candice-vetter/island-of-biodiversity/paperback/product-20231924.html>

Owen launched west to meet her there.

By this time it was **June**, and, after various chores & obligations, we picked up Owen, and waypointed roadside Plants along the direct superhighway route from Ottawa to Gagetown, N.B., for the *New Brunswick Museum's* Bioblitz<sup>11</sup> of the flooded Grand Lake Meadows along the Saint John River. We nipped up through thunderstorms to the *Ayers Lake Unique Area*, and then (**July**), we were taken in by the community of Musquash as we “did” the NCC's Musquash Estuary Natural Area, on the Bay of Fundy just west of Saint John. We then waypointed west again, restoring Owen to children who had wondered if a father's month away from home was the same as forever, and made our way to Almonte Convention.

Then in **August** Fred was left to find that doing all the chores took up almost all his time, as the others flew west to the wedding of **Aven Karstad & Murray Morkin** at a lake north of Edmonton. Meanwhile, Fred & Owen went to the *Verona Cattail Festival* to demonstrate their nominal plant, and to waypoint Rock Elms. All summer, in contrast to last year's drought, there were downpours of rain, which, after a spring which seemed to be hard on Insects, produced massive crops on Apples and all other fruiting trees, from Rock Elm to Plums to Buckthorn to Sugar Maples. Aleta came back from Alberta via the *Wolf Lake pARTners* art camp for conservation of old growth Red Pine forests,<sup>12</sup> and Fred picked her up from **Caryn Colman's** RV at Breezy Hill Campground, where we again surveyed the super-abundant *Xerolenta* snails around the nearby quarry.

The flavour of the summer is given in a facebook status for 30 August: *“It's widely affirmed that our life is excessively adventurous, & here's an opportunity to test that hypothesis. Briskly looking forward to a day of work, we started out by trying to use the van to pull down the partially cut top of the Black Locust tree on the slope of the Septic Drumlin, at which point the rope snapped & took out the internet cable, broke the Weirs House window the cable comes through, & hurled a bike cable 100 m into a Manitoba Maple near the Goat Yard, and anyways Jenn & company are at a family gathering of the Tanner side, so we're beset by not-quite-sick-chicken chores, & Marigold the Dog can't go out because she interviews the Chickens, & when Fred sits down to sort clams he can't find anything to bag them in, or even a flat surface to sort them on, & it's 29°C, & Bentley the Cat litters the place with the posteriors of half eaten mice. Overnight, after a nominal thunderstorm without enough wind to do anything to throw down the 90%-cut-through Black Locust, there was a wonderful abundance of juvenile Toads & Treefrogs on the streets, & enough bags of drifted litter, winter coats, or piles of books, on alternative beds, while the cushion covers from the usual place of repose were being washed, that we had, like the Son of Man, no place to lay our heads, & slept on a duvet on the livingroom floor. Lest monotony intervene on Saturday morning, there were enough Dogs vomiting & pooping after having lapped up tubs of oil that were being used to dip Chickens' feet to control Leg Mites, to make sure that we're not free from chores, but at least the kitchen floor was washed. Meanwhile, there were field notes from the 30<sup>th</sup> of May to be entered, & cooked grain to be fed to meat chicks, & a Goat to be milked & stoked, & misplaced spectacles to be found... Like St Paul, we don't record this to boast, but merely to document what rural life is like in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”*

After the rain, and resulting high water, funding for a proposed survey of rare mussels only came through in early **September**, and most of our field work for the fall was visits to Golden Creek, Jones Creek, and finally, as we've been talking about since 1999, putting a canoe into the Ottawa River, to seek mussels on offshore islands. Water levels were so high that the search was implausible, though we did make some important discoveries.

Through this there were meetings – Owen & **Dave Seburn** drove Fred to the *Canadian Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Network* in Orford, Quebec, **Michelle Cavanaugh** drove him to **Kari Gunson's** meeting, north of Toronto, for developing a provincial roadkill-mitigation strategy, and **Barry Cottam** took him to the *Ontario Invasive Plants Council* meeting in Orillia. Aleta addressed the *Ottawa Botanical Artists* on *plein air* painting, and Fred spoke to members of the *Canadian Museum of Nature* at an opening of an exhibit about Frogs. We helped local folks document unauthorized destruction of wetlands near Kemptville, and Aleta participated in a Kemptville art show in the old Giant Tiger store where nobody sold anything.

The agricultural feature of **October** was fencing the yard between the houses with everything we could get our hands on, from panels of our old picket fence to old doors & sheets of roofing metal, to enclose free-range for the autumnal meat chickens. We camped for a week under **Al Stevens'** Shagbark Hickories at Loughborough Lake as we finished up the Frontenac Arch surveys & paintings. At the end of the month, we visited **Gray Merriam** to pick

11) <http://bioblitznb.wordpress.com/2013/06/21/a-poem-by-fred-schueler/>

12) <http://partnersforwolflake.ca/partners-for-wolf-lake-art-camp-launches/>

up Unionid shells collected by *Friends of the Salmon River*, and did such surveying of the upper reaches of the river as high water allowed.

**November** was marked by final short-day mussel work,<sup>13</sup> a road-ecology visit with Kari & Owen to the Raisin River CA & the Black Maplely Summerstown Forest, and an early onset of cold & snow, after an exceptionally late first killing frost. **December**, so far, has been catching up, writing, and Mudpuppy Nights in Oxford Mills.

This year those we're indebted for various help and hospitality to *Ken & Corrine Brownlee, Kari Gunson, John Francis & Wanda Thompson, the Karstad family, Barbara Brown, Caryn Colman, the Musquash Volunteer Fire Department and Community Centre committee, the Galbraith family, Donald McAlpine, Isabelle Picard & Jean-François Desroches, Trudy & Gerry Veaudry, Cheryl & Hans Schonewille, Marie Janicke, Al Stevens*, and at home *Jennifer & Rory Tanner, the Scotts, Clay Shearer, Corey Wood, Matt Keevil, and Adam Zieleman*.

**In 2013 we attended “open houses” held for “community consultation”** on three ecologically destructive projects. These events were strikingly unwelcoming to visitors, and routed public input into pre-determined channels, while restricting public contact with the employees of the proponent to individual conversations – rather than addresses to an audience – in which the same employee would give contradictory “information” in different conversations. At the end of the year, we see the release of the *National Energy Board's* approval of the *Northern Gateway pipeline*, in opposition to both almost everyone living in the area the pipeline will cross,<sup>14</sup> and all the evidence about both the danger of spills and the global & Albertan harm done by working the Tar Sands

We hear questions about the decline in support for research, scientists protest the suppression of evidence in government decision making,<sup>15</sup> we see serious structural problems in the way Species-at-Risk are "protected," and there's a currently popular song about the Canadian economy - "*The System isn't broken it was made that way.*"<sup>16</sup> This seems to be a kind of consummation of what we've worried about for decades. We have long wondered about the coincidence between the beginning of the decline in support for the National Museum (1977), and the publication by Museum staff, in the 1970s, of lists of endangered species & studies of climate change. On the "broken system" hypothesis, the decline of support for museum research & exploration would have occurred at the point where these activities began to threaten to impede exploitative economic activities rather than assisting them.

We receive pleas from NGOs to “take action” against such projects, and while the action they propose is to sign petitions & send them money, an action we propose is paintings & ecological assessments to gather evidence about sites where the route of the *Energy East* pipeline proposal crosses streams, from Saint John, to North Grenville, to Alberta.<sup>17</sup> We haven't worked out the details of this plan yet, but stay in touch to see if we're going to undertake this TransCanda survey, or spend 2014 in more mundane scampering about...

*...in response to a naturopathic e-mail warning that the seeds of New Brunswick's favourite invasive plant are toxic:*

*The toxic Lupine bean is found on the New Brunswick shore.  
It causes them to retch and scream and more and more and more...*

*If you should eat a Lupine bean on the New Brunswick shore,  
I'd need to call the medics out from Saint John once more...*

*So please sweep up those Lupine beans from the New Brunswick shore.  
I've slipped & twisted both my knees where you spilled them on the floor.*

all the best for a successful and carbon-sequestering 2014,



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13) <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/naturelist/90G9VcIIX9U>

14) <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/northern-gateway-pipeline-recommended-for-federal-approval-with-conditions-1.2470465> – <http://elizabethmaymp.ca/tag/northern-gateway-pipeline/>

15) <http://www.deathofevidence.ca/why>

16) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW9ZpnFLnJo>

17) this, of course puts us in the position of suggesting that others “take action” by sending us money or by bidding on the resulting paintings over the course of 2014.