

## NATURE NOTES - July 19, 2018

Several of you have expressed surprise at the wealth of species found in the area of Rainbow and Little Silver Lakes. As can be seen from the table in the Lake Stewardship Plan, we have several which are classified as “Species at Risk”. Just recently, another species has been added to this list: the Five-lined Skink, Ontario’s only lizard species. Although the Carolinian population of this lizard is on the endangered list, this more northerly population is merely a “Species of Special Concern”. However, they are still pretty rare and it is quite exciting that an individual has been seen scuttling across the decks of two neighbours along Rainbow Lane! Thanks Eileen Barbeau for the photograph.



Why do we have so many species in this area? It is because we are located just a few kilometres from one of the richest biospheres in Ontario: the Frontenac Arch or Axis. The Frontenac Arch is a 50-kilometre-long extension of exposed Precambrian rock that runs through southeastern Ontario and upstate New York from Westport to the Thousand Islands. The Frontenac Arch links habitats of the Canadian Shield in the Algonquin Highlands with those of the Adirondack Mountains to the south. It is a unique area of biogeographic overlap between the northern Canadian Shield forests and southern Carolinian influences compressed over a few miles in a rugged landscape with remarkably varied landforms. The result is a narrow band that supports a globally significant biodiversity, including many rare species such as our friend the Five-lined Skink. We also regularly have Carolinian species which birders may travel as far away as Point Pelee National Park to see such as Yellow- and Black-billed Cuckoos, Golden-winged Warblers, and the threatened Cerulean Warbler.

So keep your eyes peeled and please let me know if you spot any of the species listed in the table in the LSP. Of particular interest was a comment from a LSRLPOA member at our annual meeting that she had seen swallows at Little Silver Lake. If they are Barn Swallows, that would be a significant sighting as this species has declined by 65% between 1966 and 2009, largely due to lack of nesting habitat as old barns become replaced by airtight modern structures and also due to a decline in insect populations thanks to pesticide use. If you have a shed or barn where Barn Swallows could nest, please encourage the swallows by creating an opening or leaving a way for them to enter the building. Ledges may be installed if rough vertical surfaces are not available. It is helpful to provide a source of mud near the building entrance, particularly during dry weather.

Alison Bentley, Rainbow Lake Area Rep.