

Family connects over love of birding



By Chris Drost

One family didn't let a pandemic take the wind out of their sails when it prevented them from getting together for their favourite pastime, birding.

This was all in good fun, not something serious says, local resident, Jane Mayberry. Various members of her large family live in various parts of Ontario and in the west but that didn't stop them from getting together virtually to share their love of birds.

'We created AMMO, which stands for 'Annual Mayberry Meeting of Ornithologists. It is neither annual nor are any of us actually ornithologists,' explains Mayberry with a smile. The group of family members meet monthly over Zoom using the 45-minute time limit. They have almost always had full attendance by the ten family members who participate.

Just to add to the fun, they have a lifetime membership fee of seven dollars. One of the younger members developed a logo and they have purchased such things as hats, t-shirts, badges and hoodies with the AMMO logo. One of the younger members is the treasurer and someone else has taken on the role of secretary, taking some 'very funny' minutes of their meetings. Members are able to select the bird of their choice for their membership card which is laminated and sent to them.

'I would not see some of these people if it were not for this, largely because of geography. We have a common interest, and this provides an opportunity to learn from each other. Members range from age 12 and up,' says Mayberry.

At each online meeting, members take turns sharing a 'bird story' from their area. Because family members are spread far and wide, this can make for some interesting stories about birds that the others may never encounter.

Mayberry is pleased that they have found a way to connect all interested members of the family. She is especially happy that the love of birding is being passed along from one generation to another.

Since COVID-19 has subsided, the family members have had the opportunity to do one field trip together to Long Point, but they still look forward to their monthly AMMO meeting.

In sharing her story, Mayberry hopes it may inspire other families who may live at a distance from each other, to connect in this way

over a common interest.

?It is just for fun,? says Mayberry.