



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

Inside this issue ...

ECFNC Activities at a Glance	1
ECFNC Contacts.....	2
Annual Bluebird Report.....	3
Member Meetings in Review.....	11
PawPaw Project	12
Pt. Pelee and Comber Fall '11	14
The Great Grey Owl Plus.....	15
Christmas Bird Count History	16
Cedar Creek CBC	17
Point Pelee CBC.	19
Point Pelee Annual Summary	20
ECNFC Trip to Pelee Island	21
Research and Researchers.....	22
Executive Resignations.....	23
Activities and Excursions	24
Membership Form.....	26

ECFNC Monthly Meetings

Except for our outdoor meetings in July and August and our annual dinner in November, monthly members' meeting are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm at Ojibway Nature Center, 5200 Matchette Road, Windsor, 519-966-5852.

Upcoming ECFNC Activities

March 13 – Annual General Meeting

April 11- ECFNC hosts Artist Dawn Banning

April 22 – Earth Day 2012- Buy Local Food Challenge

April 28 –Bluebird Tour

April 29 –Nature Conservancy on the Canard River

May date TBA – Inspection and maintenance tour of Shaughnessey Cohen Memorial Savannah and Ontario Nature Stone Road Reserve on Pelee Island.

May 5 and 6 – 18th Annual Weekend Trip to Pelee Island

May 9 – Jonathan Choquette speaks about snakes and the parkway project

June 3 – Natural Landscape Tour

June 13 – Dr. Trevor Pitcher will be speaking about his research on salmon.



Gayle Smith

In memory of ECFNC Executive Member Gayle Smith, many native trees which she had propagated have now been planted at the farm of Field Nat. V.P. Dave Kraus. Thank you to Rob Smith for entrusting them to our care and thanks to Dave for providing a patch of land dedicated to our dear Gayle.

Dave Kraus planting Gayle's trees



About the Club ...

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club was incorporated in March 1985. We are a registered charitable organization which promotes the appreciation and conservation of our natural heritage. ECFNC provides the community opportunities to become acquainted with and understand our natural world through identification, maintenance and preservation of the natural areas within Essex County and surrounding regions. ECFNC is affiliated with Ontario Nature/Federation of Ontario Naturalists. *The Egret* is published quarterly. To receive information on the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club or to submit articles, letters, reports, etc., please write to:

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Information

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Ojibway Nature Centre
519-966-5852
Point Pelee National Park
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519-776-5209

ECFNC Contacts

President: Phil Roberts (519-776-8315)
Vice-President: Dave Kraus (519-825-7491)
Secretary: Margaret Jennings (519-250-0705)
Treasurer: Teresa Austrin (519-322-0004)
Directors: Don Bissonnette (519-738-3279), Karen Cedar (519-966-5852), Jesse Gardner Costa, Denise Hartley (519-735-1926), Linda Menard-Watt (519-734-1879), Ron Muir (519-736-6507), Sheeva Nakhaie, Gerry Waldron (519-736-1276), Carl Maiolani (519-972-1399)

Chairpersons/Liaisons:

Membership Secretary: Carl Maiolani
Ontario Nature Liaison: JoAnn Grondin
ERCA Liaison: Phil Roberts/Tom Hurst
Carolina Woods Liaison: Ruth Junge
Point Pelee Liaison: Phil Roberts/Mike Malone
Bluebird Committee Chairman: Don Bissonnette
NHRP Seed Collection: Bruno Sfalain
Special Events Coordinator: Karen Cedar
Essex County Stewardship Network Liaison: Linda Menard-Watt
Ojibway Liaison: Karen Cedar
Citizens Environment Alliance Liaison: Phil Roberts
Windsor Planning Advisory Comm. Liaison: Phil Roberts
Canada South Land Trust Liaison: Tom Hurst
Detroit River Canadian Cleanup Liaison: Phil Roberts/Ian Naisbitt

Committees:

Egret Editorial: Betty Learmouth, Karen Cedar, Jesse Gardner Costa, Sheeva Nakhaie
Field Trip: JoAnn Grondin, Margaret Jennings
Heritage: JoAnn Grondin (coordinator), Margaret Jennings, Dave Kraus, Betty Learmouth, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Bruno Sfalain, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Shirley Grondin, Cathy Lapain
Annual Dinner: Heritage & Special Events Committees
Little River Enhancement Group: Ian Naisbitt, Tom Henderson
Fish Book: Teresa Austrin, Joe Parent, Dave Kraus, Phil Roberts, Jesse Gardner Costa

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club's Bluebird Committee Report 2011

Don Bissonnette

Bluebird Production:

Bluebird production was down from 2010. We had a total of 21 successful pairs of Bluebirds in 2011. These birds produced 101 fledgling Bluebirds. That's a drop from 2010, where 24 successful pairs of Bluebirds produced 154 fledgling Bluebirds.

One reason for this decline was the severe weather during the 2010-2011 winter. Harsh winters result in higher-than-usual mortality rates, for Bluebirds. This resulted in fewer pairs at the start of the nesting season.

Another factor in this decline is the cold, wet periods through the spring. Bad spring weather always drives down the Bluebird's number of eggs laid. It also drives down the percentage of eggs that hatch, and nestling survival.

According to the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society's Fall Newsletter, we are not alone. Most of Ontario's Blue birders report lower numbers of Bluebirds fledged, compared to previous years.

We started the nesting season with optimism. After all, we were collecting data from 256 Bluebird Houses. That's an increase from 2010, where we collected data from 184 Bluebird houses.

Still, on a positive note, our Club's 53 Bluebird houses did well. They hosted 15 successful pairs of Bluebirds, which produced 74 Bluebird fledglings. These 74 fledglings represent 73% of the Bluebird fledglings in our data.

Factors, such as weather conditions, cannot be controlled. But there are ways for us to lighten bad weather's impact on the Bluebirds:

1. Provide winter food for Bluebirds. Plant Junipers, Sumac, Pokeweed and other native plants, which produce fruit for wintering Bluebirds. Also, set out dried fruit, such as cranberries, currants and raisins if wintering Bluebirds visit your property. They will return daily, for your handouts.
2. Install a heater in your birdbath. Bluebirds, and other birds prefer heated water in the winter.

Eastern Bluebird Photo courtesy of Graham Brown



3. Make sure your Bluebird houses are clean, and in good repair, through the winter. Small flocks of Bluebirds will sleep in clean, sturdy birdhouses in the winter. They avoid dirty, drafty and leaky birdhouses.

Thank You to all the County Folks who practice any of the above points. You are providing food, water and shelter to our Bluebirds.

“FIRSTS” for 2011

1st Bluebird Singing: reported on Thursday, March 17th, at Tuckette Farm. (Don B.) This was 2 weeks behind schedule.

1st pair of Wood Ducks: reported by Gerry Waldron, at his place near Malden Centre on Friday, March 18th.

1st Tree Swallow: John Balga saw this solitary bird in his backyard in Essex on Monday, March 21st.

2nd Tree Swallow: was reported on Monday, March 21st. Bob Tanner discovered this bird, while monitoring at the Doyle's, near Harrow. This feisty bird dive-bombed Bob three times.

1st Bluebird Nest: discovered by Bob T. on Tuesday, March 29th. This mostly-complete Bluebird Nest was at Godard's near Harrow.

1st Purple Martin: Lyle Papps reported a few Martins at this Charing Cross home on Monday, April 4th. As the day progressed many local Martineers reported their first 'Scouts'.

1st Bluebird Egg: A tie between Bob T. and Don B. Bob T reported his egg on Sunday, April 17th at the Woodiwiss Trail. On the same day, Don B. reported his egg at the Harrow Research Station.

1st Oriole: Again, a tie between Bob T. and Don B. On May 2, both fellows reported a Male Baltimore Oriole in their backyards; however, Bob's report was far superior. His Oriole was taking turns at the feeder with a Ruby-Throated Hummingbird. This hummer was also a 'first'.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 17

- The Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Eastern Bluebirds Society will be held at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington, Ont. For more info, visit www.oeks.ca

March 22 -25

- Great Plains Sandhill Crane and Bluebird Festival, held at the Holiday Inn and Convention Centre, Kearney, Nebraska. This event will include speakers, crane viewing and workshops. For more info, email info@bbne.org. Hopefully someone from Essex County can go, and represent us E.C. Blue birders.

October 4-6

- 34th Annual North American Bluebird Society Conference, at The Radisson Hotel, New Port Beach, Southern California. This all ages event will include lectures and birding field trips. Learn more about Mountain and Western Bluebirds. For more info, visit www.nabluebirdsociety.org. Will someone go and represent our E.C. Bluebird Committee? You've always wanted to visit Southern California, admit it!

Van Ert Traps for Sale

The Bluebird Committee will be selling Van Ert Traps. They should be here in late February, and will be sold at cost. These traps move fast so please order early. Traps can be picked up at the spring meeting of the Purple Martin Club, or the Field Naturalists' Club. To order, call Don Bissonnette at 738-3279.

The Bluebird Brunch

On Saturday, October 15th, 15 of us local Blue birders and friends met for our Annual Bluebird Brunch at Rose's Kitchen, in Essex. It was a good opportunity to share stories and collect data.

The Top Producer of Bluebirds in 2011 was Don Bissonnette. His trails hosted 5 pairs of Bluebirds, with 28 young Bluebirds fledged. Bob Tanner won 2nd place for Top Bluebird Producer. His trails had a total of 6 pairs of Bluebirds with 25 young Bluebirds fledged. Together, these two men produced over half of the young Bluebirds fledged on our Data Sheet! Both fellows win a Year's Subscription to the Bluebird Journal.

In 2011, the Top Producer of Tree Swallows in Gil Breton, who hosted 42 pairs of Tree Swallows with 154 young Tree Swallows fledged. He wins a Bluebird House, which will be delivered to him later this winter.

Tree Swallows in Trouble!

According to recent scientific research, Tree Swallows and most aerial foragers are in decline across North America. During the last several summers, Tree Swallows seem plentiful here in Essex County. However, they are becoming sparse in Northern Ontario. In light of this, we are now recording "Number of Tree Swallows Fledged" in our yearly Report Chart.



This year, from 256 Bird Houses, we counted 186 pairs of Tree Swallows, with 805 fledglings. This averages out to 4.13 fledglings per pair. It will be interesting to see if these numbers change over the next several years.

'Back door' Style Bird Houses

The Bluebird Committee has built a new style of birdhouse over the past few years, which we call the 'back door' model. The backboard is hinged to the bottom of the floor using a 4" T-hinge with one of the sidewalls becoming the Mounting Board. This model lends itself well to cleaning, using Van Ert traps and photographing the nest. (In these photos, you can see a partially built Bluebird nest.)



These birdhouses are for sale from the committee in addition to the Peterson's and regular upright birdhouses. The Peterson and Upright have cupboard door style inspection doors.

Delivery and installation is also available. We use 1" thick pine board to build our birdhouses, insulating birds from both the cold and heat. Entrance holes are 1 3/8" x 1 5/8", allowing easy access for large male Bluebirds, but still preventing Starlings from entering. For more information or to place an order contact Don Bissonnette at 738-3279.

Redbud Trees For Sale

Locally grown Redbud trees in various sizes starting at \$16.95 with delivery and planting available. Contact Don at Don's Landscaping at 738-3279. 20% of Redbud Tree sales will go directly to the Bluebird Committee.

Garbage Hauling Available

Are you cleaning out your shed, barn or garage? Man with a truck will haul loads to the Dump. Most scrap metal hauled away for free! Call Don Bissonnette at 738-3279.

News From The Trails:

The Michinski's reported that a Purple Martin was behaving strangely this past summer. The Martin landed on a Bluebird house and peeked in. The house contained a brood of nestling Tree Swallows. The Adult Swallows dive bombed this intruder. The Martin was not bothered by the dive-bombing. In fact, he was observed peeking into some houses on several occasions.

John Balga's Tree Swallows learned a new 'survival skill' last spring. During cold spells, John tosses diced scrambled eggs to his Purple Martins. John's been feeding eggs to his Martins for a few years now. This year, the 3 pairs of Tree Swallows joined the Martins in catching the eggs. After each feeding session, both Martins and swallows will land on the lawn and pick up any missed pieces of egg.



Don Bissonnette frequently saw turkeys while monitoring the birdhouses at Tuckette Farm. Don took this photo on June 10th. The mother turkey strolled with her seven youngsters at the edge of the hay field. Six can be seen, although they camouflage very well in the grass. Did you know that baby turkeys are Poult?

Strange Bluebird Behavior

Each year, we Blue birders see sad cases where House Sparrows usurp Bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

Also, we see a few cases where Tree Swallows usurp Bluebirds. Usually the Bluebirds have a partially built nest. Occasionally, the Swallows may usurp Bluebirds with eggs or young.

This year, a pair of Bluebirds usurped a pair of Tree Swallows, Don B. reports. This happened in mid-May, at the Harrow Research Station.



The Tree Swallows had a complete nest lined with feathers, indicating that the female was soon to lay her first egg. The Bluebirds chased off the Swallows and built a new nest on top of the Swallow's nest. In a usual May, the Swallows are feisty and would chase off any Bluebirds investigating their house. However, this past May had periods of cool and wet weather. The Swallows were hungry, cold and weak, they couldn't fight off the Bluebirds.

The Tree Swallow nest was 3" high. The Bluebird nest was several inches high. That put the eggcup almost at the ceiling (see photo). A trough in the straw allowed the Bluebirds to move from the eggcup to their door. In time, their nest held five blue eggs. Unfortunately, 1 egg rolled out the door and smashed on the ground, a victim of gravity!

Upon discovering this loss, the monitor modified the nest. He removed a few inches of the lower Tree Swallow Nest. The brought the eggcup to lower than the entrance hole. The remaining four eggs were then safe from rolling out the door!

This pair of Bluebirds fledged two youngsters from this nest. Hopefully, the ousted Swallows relocated and nested successfully. We have seen a few other cases where Bluebirds have usurped Tree Swallows. Bluebirds have been known to usurp other Bluebirds, Tree Swallows also usurp other Tree Swallows.

Super Tree Swallow Nests

At Altenhof's 1 pair of Tree Swallows built a nest in birdhouse #2. On May 16th, she laid her first egg. She laid one egg a day and in time she had 9 eggs! This is the largest clutch of Tree Swallow Eggs I've ever encountered. We don't know if she laid all 9 eggs, perhaps 'egg

'dumping' was a factor here. On a June 18th inspection, it was discovered that the clutch had hatched. There were seven nestlings and two eggs were duds. The adults were successful in raising these seven nestlings. By late June, the seven youngsters fledged.

Another Tree Swallow nest containing nine eggs was discovered at the Coulter Side Road Trail. This female was almost in sync with the Altenhof's female. She laid her first egg on May 15th and by late May, her nest contained nine eggs.

On June 18th, it was discovered that all nine eggs had hatched! Unfortunately, keeping all nine fed proved to be too much for the parents and only five fledged, the other four were found dead in the nest. These four were feathered, and had died between 10 and 16 days old.

The parents were able to keep up with feeding all nine at first, but, as the youngsters grew, so did their daily feeding requirements. Keeping all the youngsters fed was complicated by too many cool rainy spells, where flying insects are difficult to find.

Happy Birthday to the Bluebird Committee!

The Bluebird Committee has been around for 20 years. Yes, in the winter of 1991-92, some of us began planning for this Bluebird Committee. Our goal was to preserve and expand the local miniscule Bluebird population. Thank goodness, there's a big difference between "extirpated" and "almost extirpated". Along the way, we've learned so much about Bluebirds and other wildlife, habitats and people too! Hopefully, local Bluebirds and this committee will be around for a while. Thanks to everyone who contributed to our achievements and steadfastness.

Boy, has the world changed in the last 20 years! I could write a book about those changes. One big change is how much time people spend outdoors. People of all ages spend a lot more time indoors now, compared to 20 years ago. People spend many hours a week on internet sites, 'skyping', 'tweeting' and playing games on video or computers. Most people didn't have home computers 20 years ago.

On a positive note, people can look up education websites on obesity, diabetes, circulation problems and (oh wait, they wouldn't have these problems if they'd spend less time sitting at the computer!)

People are definitely more tech savvy and less outdoorsy. Over the past few years, some people have asked me about becoming Bluebird monitors. But the questions and comments they give me point to the fact that people are more indoorsy and less outdoorsy than 20 years ago. Look at these questions and comments and judge for yourself:

1. I don't like mosquitos. I'll monitor a trail as long as there are no mosquitos or flying insects, I'm creeped out by any sort of flying insect.
2. Have any of the landowners built sidewalks along the Bluebird trails? No? What about a gravel path? I'm outdoorsy, but I don't own rubber boots. I don't want my new white running shoes ruined. I don't plan on buying rubber boots. Ask the landowners to install sidewalks on gravel paths along the Bluebird trail, then I can monitor?

3. I'm afraid of snakes. I'll monitor a Bluebird trail if you're sure there are no snakes of any kind. If I find a snake, you'll have to find someone else to monitor because I'm not going back.
4. I use my cell phone a lot, mostly for texting. I find a lot of places in the county have bad reception. I don't like it when my calls get dropped. I'll monitor a trail, if you're sure I'll have good reception there.
5. I'm going to quit monitoring that trail, it's too hot! Find someone else to monitor it. (I asked, "what time of day are you monitoring"?) The answer: After lunch, usually 12:30-2:00. (I suggest, "You are retired, monitor in the mornings, or evenings".) Response: I don't think it'll make much difference; the mornings and evenings are also hot.

Thanks to everyone involved in this labor of love. Best wishes with the 2012 Nesting Season!

Sincerely,
Don Bissonnette



*Tree Swallow, Photo courtesy of
Graham Brown*



*Tree Swallow nestlings, Photo courtesy
of Bob Tanner*

E.C.F.N. Club Bluebird Committee Production Chart 2011

CLUB TRAILS	Monitors	Houses	Success. BB Pairs	BB's Fledged	Success. Tr. Sw. Prs.	Tr. Sws. Fledged	# Pairs H. Wrens
Altenhof's	Don Bissonnette	7	3	16	4	19	4
Bailey's	Denise Hartley	2	0	0	2	12	0
Balkwill North	C & M Poisson	3	0	0	4	18	1
Balkwill South	C & M Poisson	5	1	4	2	7	0
Caney Creek	Bob Tanner	2	1	4	2	11	0
Doyle-Godard's	Bob Tanner	6	3	11	3	17	1
Grosso's	C & M Calder	3	0	0	3	16	0
Harrow R. Stn.	Don Bissonnette	4	2	12	2	11	1
Howling's	Denise Hartley	2	0	0	1	5	0
Lucchese's	Ron Muir	3	1	4	2	10	0
O'Neil's	Ron Muir	6	2	13	3	14	1
Pollard's	C & M Poisson	3	0	0	2	11	1
Sartori's	Bob Tanner	2	0	0	1	5	1
Sugar Bush	Bob Tanner	2	0	0	1	5	1
Woodiwiss'	Bob Tanner	3	2	10	2	9	1
Totals		53	15	74	34	170	12
AFFILIATE TRAILS							
Ambassador B.	Dennis Shady	2	0	0	2	9	0
Amhurstburg	Dan Mustar	3	0	0	1	4	0
Balga's	John Balga	3	0	0	3	12	0
Batke's	Alan Batke	1	0	0	1	5	0
Braithwaite's	Don Bissonnette	1	0	0	1	5	0
Breton's	Gil Breton	49	0	0	42	154	0
Brown's	Graham Brown	1	0	0	1	6	0
Coulter Side Rd.	Don Bissonnette	4	0	0	3	11	0
Dunn Farm	Leo Dunn	5	0	0	2	10	0
Dunn Road	Alex Michinski	27	0	0	17	66	10
Essex Landfill	Don Masse	4	0	0	0	0	0
Ford's	W & N Ford	5	0	0	4	20	0
Fryer's	Bob Tanner	2	0	0	1	6	0
Knapp's	Marie A Knapp	4	0	0	1	5	0
Kraus Farm	Dave Kraus	40	0	0	30	123	5
Mother-Wood	C & M Calder	13	4	20	9	37	0
Poisson's	C & M Poisson	7	1	4	4	12	2
Santarrosa's	Don Bissonnette	2	0	0	1	4	1
Smith's	Alex Smith	4	0	0	1	5	0
Stoney Cliff	M. Celestino	7	0	0	7	32	0
Transfer Station	Graham Brown	7	0	0	7	29	0
Tuckette Farm	Don Bissonnette	2	0	0	2	12	0
Viv's	Vivian LaCroix	4	1	3	3	16	0
Waldron's	Gerry Waldron	12	0	0	8	41	0
Wilamette Farm	Dom Bissonnette	2	0	0	2	11	0
AFFILIATE TOTALS		208	6	27	152	635	19
CLUB TOTALS		53	15	74	34	170	12
GRAND TOTAL		256	21	101	186	805	31

Member Meetings in Review

By: Teresa Austrin

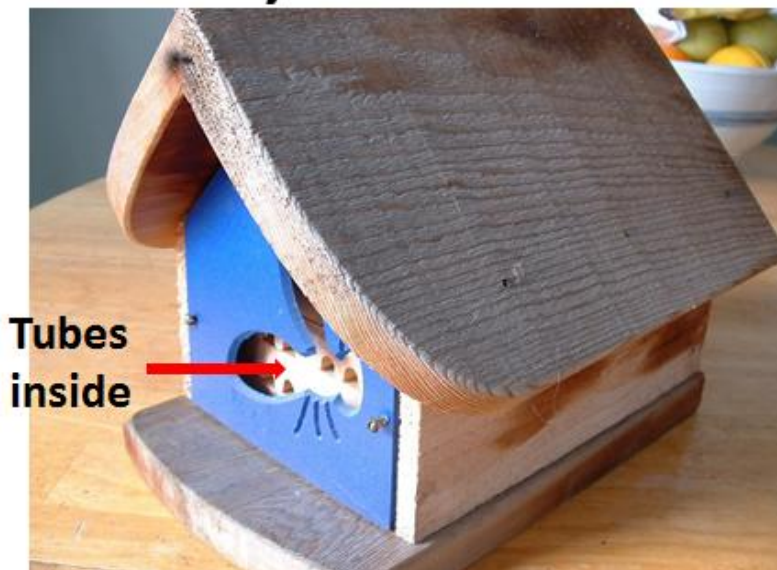
A Journey of Avian Proportions
MUCH GRATITUDE to Dr. Scott Rush for travelling from Ohio on January 11, 2012 to share his expertise regarding bird migration with the Club. His research provided a fascinating exploration of the unique ecosystems that the avian population relies upon for their breeding and migrating practices. A resounding reminder for us all that the effective management of wildlife habitat is crucial for the success of our winged friends.



More Bees Please

MANY THANKS to Vic Bernyk for a tremendous presentation on February 8, 2012 and for sharing his vast knowledge of bees and native plants. The Club members thoroughly enjoyed the event, as the meeting room was "a-buzz" afterward. For those that are interested in creating habitat for these marvelous creatures, Mr. Bernyk has kindly provided the plans so please look for instructions in the next issue of the Egret or contact Sheeva Nakhaie (sheeva.nakhaie@gmail.com) if you would like to have them now.

Fancy Bee House



Introducing... ***Project Pawpaw***
By Dan Bissonnette of the Naturalized Habitat Network

The Naturalized Habitat Network of Essex County & Windsor has recently launched a new educational initiative called "Project Pawpaw". As its name suggests, this initiative will focus on one of our region's least known and least appreciated native tree species, the Pawpaw. For those not quite familiar with this species, the Pawpaw is a slender native tree that is found naturally in the eastern United States, as well as Essex County and in other areas in southern Ontario. The name 'Pawpaw' can be applied to either the tree or its edible fruit.

After being out of the public spotlight for many years, the Pawpaw has experienced a modest renaissance across its U.S. range. Its fruit has a unique custard flavour and can be enjoyed raw or used in a variety of dishes. At the same time, studies from Perdue University have found its fruit to be high in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. The Pawpaw has become a recognized part of community supported agriculture, particularly in West Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio.

Yet the Pawpaw's fortunes in its American range stand in stark contrast to its circumstances here in Ontario, where it is one of our least recognized native trees. Due to a combination of wide scale deforestation, this tree's sensitivities, and our own lack of awareness of this species, the Pawpaw's presence in southern Ontario has become greatly diminished over the past century. This species has been especially impacted in Windsor and Essex County, where there are now less than ten remnant sites where it can be found. Where the Pawpaw was once an integral part of life in our region, this species would appear to be nearly gone and forgotten.

So just how can we pull this species out of obscurity and move it forward in a meaningful way? Can we count on a visit to a web site, a marketing promotion at a garden centre, a brochure or the the armchair advice of a local gardener? Quick fixes such as these could never adequately address the Pawpaw's unique requirements, much less overcome a century of neglected stewardship.

On the contrary, bringing the Pawpaw out of obscurity will require comprehensive education. Secondly, this effort would also need to instil a strong sense of value of the Pawpaw beyond that of a mere garden commodity, as an essential part of our natural and historical heritage. Essentially, if we could integrate the Pawpaw in an environmentally sustainable way, then we could, with proper community support, strengthen this species' presence in our region while creating a new local food crop at the same time. With this sense of vision, we launched Project Pawpaw in December of 2011.

By drawing on such eclectic sources as the Pawpaw Research Program at Kentucky State University and insights from local ecological consultant Gerry Waldron, as well as tours of working Pawpaw farms in southern Ohio, Project Pawpaw will blend both agricultural and environmental aspects. Over one year in the making, this initiative is the first of its kind to take place in Canada.

Beginning in March and continuing into April, we will be offering a series of training seminars on Pawpaw cultivation that will be offered throughout Windsor and Essex County. Each two hour training session provides a comprehensive overview of this species, along with its unique requirements and cultivation techniques. These seminars are open to both home gardeners and professional growers and cover everything from planting recommendations to harvesting techniques and kitchen preparation. Qualifying participants will also receive their own Pawpaw seedlings, as well as ongoing consultation throughout the growing season.

Admission for each session is \$10 for advanced registration or \$12 for same day registration. Our training sessions include the following times and locations:

Saturday, March 3 - Morning session in LaSalle
Saturday, March 10 - Morning session in Puce
Tuesday, March 13 - Evening session in Belle River
Wednesday, March 14 - Evening session in Amherstburg
Saturday, March 17 - Morning session in Kingsville
Saturday, March 24 - Morning session in South Windsor
Monday, March 26 - Evening session in LaSalle
Wednesday, March 28 - Evening session in South Windsor
Thursday, March 29 - Evening session in Leamington
Saturday, March 31 - Morning session in Essex
Monday, April 2 - Evening session in East Windsor
Wednesday, April 4 - Evening session in Tecumseh
Thursday, April 5 - Evening session in Essex
Saturday, April 7 - Morning session in Comber
Tuesday, April 10 - Evening session in Maidstone

For an electronic version of this listing, e-mail the Naturalized Habitat Network at nathabnet@primus.ca or download the file from their Facebook site. To find out more about this special initiative or to register, contact us at 519-259-2407.



Hudsonian Godwit by Betty Learmouth

Point Pelee/Comber, Fall 2011 Sighting Summary Cherise Charron

Poor shorebird habitat conditions continued into the Fall in the Essex area. It's been a very rainy year. Water levels at the Hillman Marsh remained high throughout Fall.

In October, Ellen Smout and Martin Blagdurn of London, discovered many shorebirds in a farmer's field off of County Road 77 in Comber. And what a find it was! Hundreds of shorebirds were present: particularly numerous were Black-bellied and American Golden Plovers. Also present were Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitchers, Semi-palmated Sandpipers and Semi-palmated Plovers.

The stars of the show were the Hudsonian Godwits of which up to 20 were reported. It was quite a sight viewing the shorebirds fly around the fields, watching the flash of white on wings and rumps of various birds, the black and white wings of the Hudsonian Godwits, and white stripes on the back of the Dowitchers. Shorebirds were in the fields probing for food.

Lots of southwest winds in the Essex area brought some birders down to Point Pelee tip for gulls, loons, ducks, and perhaps jaegers. On November 6 at the Point Pelee tip parking lot, I was fortunate enough to observe and photograph a juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake at a fairly close range. On November 13, 2011, a juvenile male King Eider landed off the tip. It was seen by Blake Mann, Marianne Balkwill, Steve Pike and Alan Wormington. As well, there was one very cooperative Sanderling and one Ruddy Turnstone.

On the dragonfly front I had three Carolinian Saddlebags. I was able to observe the underside of a Carolinian Saddlebag while it was "obelisking" Obelisking is when a dragonfly points the tip of its abdomen directly at the sun to avoid overheating by reducing surface area exposed to solar radiation. It was the neat pattern underneath and the orange-yellow stigmas and wings' leading edge of orange veins that make this dragonfly stand out.



Carolina Saddlebag by Betty Learmouth

For identifying dragonflies, I recommend the book *Dragonflies of the North Woods*, by Mead Kurt and published by Kollath and Stensaas Publishing of Duluth, Minnesota. The price is \$20.00 and the book is available from Pelee Wings.

Great Gray Owl and Other Sightings

Field Reporter Cherise Charron

On December 23, 2011, a Great Gray Owl was reported in the Town of Kingsville. I saw the report of the Great Gray Owl on ONTBIRDS when I got home from work. Despite working the afternoon shift, I decided to try for this owl early in the morning on December 24, 2011.



There were a number of people looking on the McCain Side Road, people came from all over Ontario and from several States from the United States, including: Michigan, Ohio and New Hampshire. Barb Charlton who was working on a Big Year List was also searching for the Great Gray.

Eventually a van rolled by and told the group the Great Gray Owl was on Concession 2, west of the church. We all jumped in our cars to catch a glimpse of

this magnificent bird. There were cars parked on both sides of the road and people on the shoulders of the road watching the owl in a tree on a farmer's property.

The owl was quite a sight. The Great Gray Owl launched itself from its perch and landed in the tall grass to catch its prey. The owl sat for a couple of minutes and then lifted off and flew directly toward us and landed about 30 feet away in a tree!

What a wonderful Christmas present for the birders from near and far observing this owl from the far North! You could hear the clicking of shutters as people took photos of the owl as it sat scanning the area for its next prey. The owl even flew into the side of the ditch in search of prey, giving people an even closer look at it.

The Great Gray Owl was seen well by many up until January 11, 2012. A couple even came up from Florida to get a view of this owl! What a treat it was to see this owl species this far south, as usually one must head further north to the Ottawa/Algonquin area to view this Northern bird. The owl even appeared in *The Windsor Star* and on CBC. The owl has become quite the celebrity.



In owl-related news, this year we have had a Snowy Owl invasion. There have been reports of Snowies all over the northern parts of the United States and southern parts of Canada, including Southwestern Ontario. Snowy Owls have

been observed just outside Point Pelee National Park and a Snowy Owl was sighted in the area of McCain Side Road. One Snowy Owl was observed on December 28, 2021 as a Count Week (CW) species and part of the Holiday Beach Christmas Bird Count

Later in the day I checked out Jack Miner's. Canada Geese were just starting to come in and were landing amongst the corn cobs set out by workers at Jack Miner's. In among the Canada Geese I counted ten Cackling Geese and three of these Cacklers had white neck collars. Aleutians perhaps, or just regular Cacklers that happen to have white neck collars? Still, it was nice to see these smaller geese with the big Canada Geese.

Over in the Point Pelee area at Sturgeon Woods creek on December 27, 2011, I observed a Black-legged Kittiwake with some Ring-billed Gulls, on one of the boat slips. The Kittiwake was not well and passed away on the 29th of December. Alan Wormington collected the body to take to the Royal Ontario Museum for their collection. A photo of the Kittiwake's back pattern can be seen on ONTBIRDS photo gallery for December.

A Brief History of the Christmas Bird Count

Provided by Betty Learmouth

Dick Cannings, coordinator of Christmas Bird Counts for Canada provides us with a little background information on the Christmas Bird count (CBC).

"The CBC began over a century ago when 27 conservationists in 25 localities, lead by scientist and writer Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. On Christmas day in 1900, the small group posed an alternative to the side hunt, a Christmas day activity in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. Instead, Chapman proposed that they identify, count and record all the birds they saw, founding what is now considered to be the world's most significant citizen-based conservation effort – and a more than century-old institution.

"Since Chapman's retirement in 1934, new generations of observers have performed the modern-day count. Today over 60,000 volunteers from all 50 states, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and Pacific Islands, count and record every individual bird and bird species seen in a specified area.

"The 112th CBC is expected to be larger than ever, expanding its geographical coverage and accumulating information about the winter distribution of various birds. The CBC is vital in monitoring the status of resident and migratory birds across the Western Hemisphere, and the data, which are 100% volunteer generated, have become a crucial part of Canada's biodiversity monitoring database."

Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count, December 17, 2011

Betty Learmouth

Christmas Bird Counts are popular in Essex County. Birders have a choice of four local bird counts, two American counts that include a little Canadian soil along the Detroit River, and a few counts in nearby Chatham/Kent. The Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count is well attended by a faithful group who come out year after year to enumerate bird species within a 15 mile radius of Essex County's Cedar Creek. The Cedar Creek count circle is divided into five count areas.

This year nine Christmas Bird Counters (CBCers) scouted in Area 2 of the Cedar Creek Count; this area extends southward from County Road 35 (the Talbot Trail) to Lake Erie. McCain Sideroad is the eastern boundary with the Arner townline closing the area as the western boundary. This is a large area so it is divided into two sections with the Greenway as the dividing line between the southern and northern area.

This year's participants in the southern portion were: Jennifer Colburn, Paul DesJardins, Carl Maiolani, Pauline Renaud, and Bob Wickett. Bob and Jennifer canoed the Cedar Creek for their sightings. Participants in the northern portion were Marg Calder, Betty Learmouth, Kathy Lesperance, and Larry Onysko.

Participants in the northern portion of Area 2 gathered at 8:30 a.m. Overcast, foggy conditions prevailed with light snow in pellet form falling.

The first stop was at the woodland south of Concession 2 in the Town of Kingsville. Here the CBCers found birds hiding in a grove of old cedars, including a flock of Dark-eyed Juncos and Northern Cardinals.

A visit to Jack and Bill Balkwill's farm included sightings of two Red-bellied Woodpeckers, two Downy Woodpeckers, nine Blue Jays, one White-breasted Nuthatch, one Brown Creeper, fifteen American Goldfinch, and one Brown Creeper. Away from the house, there was no bird activity as the CBCers accompanied Bill and Jack on a tour of the tallgrass prairie and pond site, the woodland edge as well as the moss covered laneway. Four Tundra Swans were noted passing overhead.

Following lunch, the CBCers drove east along County Road 35 to visit Mrs. Moore's property which includes a pine plantation. The plantation provides welcome cover and food for wintering birds. The CBCers were delighted to find a flock of Dark-eyed Juncos and at least three American Robins. Overhead a Rough-legged Hawk was soaring quite low.

The CBCers drove a few doors to the east to visit the attractive naturalized backyard of the Bosveld residence. Mr. Bosveld told us that three Wild Turkeys roam through the neighbourhood, usually having a rest over the noon hour on the Bosveld's porch. Luckily the birds had not traveled far since their lunch hour, as they were discovered sauntering across the neighbor's

lawn. These birds travel one kilometer to the east for their night time roost to another home owner's porch.

Following the tour of the Bosveld property, we took a driving bird tour of the concession roads to the south of County Road 35. The CBCers were pleased with their observations which included two American Kestrels observed on telephone lines. A swirling flock of birds over corn stubble turned out to be a flock of Horned Larks, estimated to be 300 individuals. Raptors perched in small trees at residences were identified as Sharp-shinned Hawks.

At 5:00 p.m. the CBCers made their way to Peg and Tom Hurst's residence for a buffet supper. Delicious clam chowder, chili, baked ham, lasagnas, Greek salad, and various desserts were enjoyed by all. Thank you to the Hursts for their hospitality! Thank you to Paul Pratt for being the evening's compiler and to Karen Cedar for recording the various reports.

Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count summary: Canada Geese 1,871; Cackling Goose 1; Mute Swan 2; Tundra Swan 29; Gadwall 12; Black Duck 4; Mallard 100; Northern Shoveler 3; Green-winged Teal; Canvasback 2; Redhead 5; Ring-necked Duck 1; Greater Scaup 20; Lesser Scaup 1; Bufflehead 104; Common Goldeneye 165; Hooded Merganser 7; Common Merganser 161; Red-breasted Merganser 285; Merganser sp. 25; Ring-necked Pheasant 3; Wild Turkey 216 compared to 29 in 2010; Horned Grebe 1; Great Blue Heron 14; Bald Eagles of varying ages 8; Northern Harriers 22 with two observed by Tom Hurst sitting in a tree; Sharp-shinned Hawk 8; Cooper's Hawk 17; Red-shouldered Hawk 1; Red-tailed Hawk 70; Rough-legged Hawk 3; American Kestrel 12; Merlin 1; Sandhill Crane 31; Killdeer 11; Bonaparte's Gull 2,287; Ring-billed Gull 1,362; Herring Gull 152; Great Black Backed Gull 10; Rock Pigeon 242; Mourning Dove 750; Eastern Screech-Owl 13; Great Horned Owl 8; Short-eared Owl 3; Belted Kingfisher 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker 61; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Downy Woodpecker 153; Hairy Woodpecker 16; Northern Flicker 40; Northern Shrike 1, Blue Jay 354; American Crow 63: compared to thousands when the Town of Essex roost existed; Horned Lark 485; Black-capped Chickadee 147 compared to 596 last year 2010; Tufted Titmouse 13; Red-breasted Nuthatch 4; White-breasted Nuthatch 43; Brown Creeper 37; Carolina Wren 26; Winter Wren 3; Golden-crowned Kinglet 40; Eastern Bluebird 13; Hermit Thrush 1; American Robin 17; Northern Mockingbird 1 which was seen flying down centre of road; European Starling 3,034; White-eyed Vireo 1 seen at John R. Park Homestead in a tangle of grape vines, seen by Jim Burke who thought it was a kinglet; Cedar Waxwing 3; Yellow-rumped Warbler 13; American Tree Sparrow; Chipping Sparrow 5; Field Sparrow 2; Song Sparrow 54; Swamp Sparrow 14; White-throated Sparrow 48; White-crowned Sparrow 10; Dark-eyed Junco 675; Lapland Longspur 1; Snow Bunting 141; Northern Cardinal 346; Red-winged Blackbird 12; Common Grackle 105; Brown-headed Cowbird 478; Purple Finch 8; White-winged Crossbill 38 in a row of coniferous trees in Oxley; House Finch 112; American Goldfinch 277; House Sparrow 1,846; Total species observed: 88

Thank you to these CBCers:

Area 1: Bob Sanford, Alan Wormington

Area 2: Margaret Calder, Jennifer Colbourne, Paul Desjardins, Betty Learmouth, Kathy Lesperance, Carl Maiolani, Larry Onysko, Pauline Renaud, Bob Wickett

Area 3: Jim Burke, Keith Burke, Tom Hurst, Dale Larson, Dan Mennill, University of Windsor students Samantha Malette, Bradley Poisson, and Brenda Graham

Area 4: JoAnn Grondin, Cathy LePain, Ron Muir, Shirley Grondin

Area 5: Cindy Cartright, Karen Cedar, Kristen Fawdry, Glenn Gervais, Paul Pratt (compiler), Caroline Staddon

Point Pelee Christmas Bird Count, December 19, 2011

By Betty Learmouth

Canadian Broadcasting Company reporter Sara Elliot attended her first Christmas Bird Count on December 19, 2011 at Point Pelee National Park and recounted her experience “on air” on December 21 and 22, 2011. Bob Steele interviewed the enthusiastic Christmas Bird Counter on his afternoon program *The Bridge* while morning host Tony Doucet spoke with Sara on his program *The Early Shift*.

Sara said she was at the Pelee tip washrooms “bright and early” at 7:30 a.m., which she assured the interviewer was very early for her. Sara joined up with Paul Pratt’s group who were all bundled up, with the wind whipping along the west side of the tip. The Christmas Bird Counters surveyed the tip, both the East Beach and West Beach and offshore as well as the woodland all the way to the Visitor Centre.

Paul Pratt provided some background information on Christmas Bird Counts. The counts originated in 1900 as a protest to the Christmas shoot. This year is the 112th year of the Christmas Bird Counts with an estimated 60,000 participants across North America, Central America and South America. Paul estimated that he has likely participated in 200 Christmas Bird Counts. Paul DesJardins was also interviewed and remarked that every birding excursion changes with the weather.

To help with their bird count, Paul Pratt used a ‘pishing’ noise to stir up birds hiding in the trees and make them more visible to surveyors. Other birds interpret a ‘pish’ sound as an alert that an owl is nearby. Sara did not have a pair of binoculars, but Paul Pratt had a scope with him that she was able to make use of. In all, the group found 47 bird species (including woodland species American Robin, Hermit Thrush and Brown Creeper).

In addition to the birds that were observed that day, just outside the women’s washroom Paul discovered two bats sleeping together. One was a Silver-haired Bat with dark chocolate brown fur and hairs in the middle of its back tipped with white, the other an Eastern Pipistrelle. Shortly afterwards, a Big Brown Bat was found. Later in the day a fourth bat species was discovered, a Northern Red Bat. Sara enthusiastically described the bat sightings as a life time experience.

POINT PELEE BIRDS — ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR 2011

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This 2011 summary pertains to the official Point Pelee Birding Area, which is a standard 15-mile diameter CBC circle centred slightly north of Concession Road D. The area includes all of Wheatley and Wheatley Provincial Park to the northeast, and all of Seacliff and Leamington to the northwest.

It was an excellent year at Point Pelee, with many significant sightings to report. A total of 290 species was found, which is well above the long-term annual average of 280.4 species dating back to 1980 inclusive (n=32). Remarkably it was the second-highest total ever attained at Point Pelee, exceeded only by the 301 species that were found during the remarkable year of 2005. In contrast the lowest annual totals were tallied in both 1989 and 1984, when only 271 species were found in each of those years.

The following short list pertains to species that were *not* recorded at Point Pelee during 2011, but are normally somewhat regular in occurrence. For example, they typically occur at least two or three times during a 5-year period. If anyone is aware of any of these species being observed at Point Pelee during 2011, please send me the details.

Eurasian Wigeon
Black Vulture
King Rail
Purple Sandpiper
Sabine's Gull
Short-eared Owl — *first time not recorded since 1983*
Cave Swallow

For the full report, including important avian observations with date and location, please visit:
www.ojibway.ca/pointpeleebirds2011.pdf

The Birds of Point Pelee

Point Pelee bird sightings (both current and historical) can be sent to:
wormington@juno.com

The Point Pelee database is used for multiple purposes: Annual Summaries (such as this current one for 2011); seasonal sightings that are published in *North American Birds*; and for a major publication which is currently in progress — *The Birds of Point Pelee*.

Eighteenth Annual ECFNC
Weekend Trip to Pelee Island

Dave Kraus

Saturday May 5 & Sunday May 6, 2012.

Leave at 10:00 am Saturday from Leamington Dock
aboard the M.V. Jiimaan (be at the dock by 9:20 am)
We will return to Leamington Dock by 5:45 pm Sunday

We will very likely see: migrating waterfowl & warblers, wildflowers such as trilliums & phlox, basking turtles and snakes, bullfrogs, historic sites, and hear a chorus or two of American Toads, to suggest a few of the many enjoyable experiences on Pelee Island in spring. We should also get a chance to visit the Pelee Island Bird Observatory (PIBO bird banding station) and some of the recently acquired Nature Conservancy of Canada properties: Red Cedar Savannah ESA, Stone Road Alvar ANSI, Brown=s Point and woods, and Brown=s Road Alvar. We will have plenty of time to walk, observe, and relax on the excursions to some of Pelee's most beautiful natural habitats, including: Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve, Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve, the Stone Road Alvar Complex, Sheridan Point ESA, and many other stops along the way. Should we experience inclement weather, we can visit the Pelee Island Heritage Centre, tour the island in the comfort of our rented bus driven by ECFNC member Sharon Medeiros, or possibly take in the hospitality at ECFNC members John and Mary Celestino=s Mill Point cottage.

I have arranged for bus transportation while on the island - no vehicles are necessary or desired on this trip. There is parking at the Leamington Dock area. I have reserved space on the ferry for all registered, walk on passengers attending this trip - we will meet in the ticket office at the dock on Saturday morning.

Accommodations have been reserved at the Anchor and Wheel Inn. The motel and bed and breakfast style rooms are comfortable and are situated on spacious grounds. Reservations are generally set for two persons per room. However, people do not need to register in pairs or groups - everyone is welcome and will be comfortably accommodated !!!

The Anchor and Wheel Inn contains a clean and comfortable restaurant where I have arranged for our delicious meals. We will break for meals regularly (lunch ~ noon and dinner ~ 6:00 pm on Saturday, breakfast ~ 8 am and lunch ~ noon Sunday) and hot meals and snacks are also available on both ferry crossings.

The total cost will be \$ 175 this year. This cost will include: the two ferry trips, weekend bus transportation, four hot meals, overnight motel accommodations, and all taxes and tips. The \$ 175 cost will include all expenses for the weekend other than alcoholic drinks, souvenirs, and snacks or meals on the ferry.

All interested persons need to do is: sign up with me and then show up at the Leamington Dock by 9:20 am Saturday morning with warm outdoor clothes and accessories, overnight necessities, \$ 175 cheque (payable to David Kraus) or cash per person, and a few additional dollars for extra snacks, etc. if desired.

I will contact each person that registers should any time or location changes for the ferry occur, otherwise the above outline is the basic schedule, rain or shine. I will hand out more detailed schedules on the Saturday morning of the trip, but with our own driver and rented bus, we can be flexible and able to see many more sites now.

To register for this trip: see me at the ECFNC meetings, call, or write:
Dave Kraus phone: 519 825 7491
mailing address: 1515 Mersea Road 7, RR 3, Wheatley, Ont. N0P 2P0
email address: david_kraus@gecdsb.on.ca

I look forward to your company on this ECFNC outing !!!

Essex County Ecology Research and Researchers



Snow Bunting Plumage Quality: From feather to father? *Sarah Guindre-Parker, MSc Candidate, University of Windsor*

Even upon arriving to their Arctic breeding grounds in late May, many male Snow Buntings still have wintering plumage characteristics; they are noticeably still brown in hard-to-reach areas such as the head and back. This is because instead of molting into their breeding plumage twice per year like many passerines, Snow Buntings only molt once a year (at the end of the breeding season). They then rub away their feather tips in the following spring to reveal their breeding plumage. With a bit more effort, the males of our breeding population will wear away the remaining brown feather ends to reveal their striking black and white breeding plumage in time for the arrival of females.

A male's breeding plumage is particularly important because the colouration of feathers can play an important role in reproduction. Over the past two years, I have taken feather samples from the white breast and black back of these Arctic-breeding birds and quantified the colouration of these two body regions using spectral analyses – I measured the proportion of light reflected back when a light source shines on these feathers. Simultaneously, I tracked breeding efforts of these individuals at East Bay Island, Nunavut. This study has revealed that males with a whiter breast and a darker back are able to fledge more chicks. These results suggest that feather colouration, or perhaps even contrast, plays an important role in reproduction. Next time you see a male Snow Bunting in his wintering plumage, pay close attention to his feathers; looking past the brown feather tips may just tell you about his future reproductive abilities.

Executive Resignations



Teresa Austrin

O treasurer! angelic voice and golden hair,
outstanding member we do declare
(2011 outstanding achievement award winner)
O treasurer! a friendly face to meet and greet,
a departing executive, it's bittersweet
for she's not truly left, there's still work to be done
A treasure! who will surely be missed by everyone
- Jesse Gardner Costa

Karen Cedar

There once was a gal on the Board
And into the Club her heart poured
But now is her time
To sing nursery rhymes
And enjoy Life's greatest reward

The ECFNC Executive will miss you Karen ! Many
blessings to you and wee Leia !! – Teresa Austrin



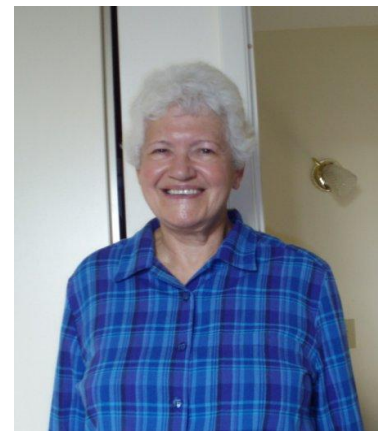
Denise Hartley

There once was a girl named Denise
Whose membership role she did cease
She was truly the best
And will sadly be missed
Much thanks to her, best wishes and peace !!! - Teresa Austrin

Margaret Jennings

There once was an Executive Member
Who gave us notice last December
She's leaving her post
To move to the Coast

Margaret Jennings - we'll fondly remember
THANK YOU Margaret for your many years of dedication to the
Club !! You made every field trip an extra special encounter and
we truly appreciate your fine recording skills and the many hours
you spent on Minutes! The best of luck to you back home in Nova
Scotia ! – Teresa Austrin



ECFNC Activities and Excursions, March - June '12

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, contact JoAnn Grondin (519-734-0056), or Margaret Jennings (519-250-0705). Let us know about your ideas for upcoming excursions. Consider volunteering as an excursion leader.

“Thank you” to those who have volunteered to lead an excursion.
We appreciate leaders sharing their time and expertise with others.

March 14 – ECFNC Annual General Meeting – Join us for committee reports and a review of the club’s activities the past year. Board of Directors elections and a thought-provoking game with prizes makes this meeting a highlight of the year! Meeting begins at 7:30pm at the Ojibway Nature Centre.

March 23- Canada South Land Trust - Annual dinner and fund raising silent auction- at the Caboto Club in the Windsor Room. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$35. Donations to the silent auction are welcome. Guest speaker is Tom Hince who will present a programme entitled *Birding in Australia*. Call Betty at 519-944-0825 for tickets and further information.

March 31 - Owl Hike for Earth Hour. Keep the lights out and join us for a night hike at Ojibway Park. 8:00 – 9:00 pm. \$4/adult, \$3.50/child. Preregistration is required. Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, [519-966-5852](tel:519-966-5852), www.ojibway.ca.

April 10 – May 15- Spring Hiking at Ojibway. Exercise your body and brain! These brisk morning walks with one of Ojibway Nature Centre’s naturalists will introduce you to the many plants and animals in our area. Explore the diversity of spring wildflowers and bird migration. Please join us and invite a friend! Senior discount available. Tuesdays, 10:00 – 11:00 am. \$26/6 weeks. Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, [519-966-5852](tel:519-966-5852), www.ojibway.ca.

April 11 - ECFNC Members Meeting - Guest Speaker: Dawn Banning, The Heart of the Boreal Forest www.dawnbanning.com

Experience a glimpse of the Boreal Forest as seen through the eyes of this local landscape artist and canoe adventurer. Her presentation will include a slideshow of unforgettable photographs from her 2011 Boreal Expedition, as well as the unveiling of her first studio paintings to be submitted to the Smithsonian's Visions of the Boreal Exhibition. "Visions" is a fusion of art, science and indigenous perspectives of the largest terrestrial ecosystem on Earth with a united theme of wilderness travel, which has been (and continues to be) the inherent human experience of the Boreal Forest for thousands of years. Dawn will share with us the details of her month long journey through some of Canada's most glorious and rugged wilderness, and how it inspired her both personally and in her work. Meeting begins at 7:30 pm at the Ojibway Nature Centre. For those interested in a pre-meeting owl prowling/hike of the Ojibway trails, please arrive at 6:30 pm.

April 22 - Earth Day 2012 – Buy Local Food Challenge. I Like My Food, Naked, Near & Natural! This year the Earth Day Committee wishes to bring fresh ideas to *Earth Day Windsor Essex* by introducing our community to the numerous environmental benefits to locally grown, organic food. 10:00am – 3:00pm, Mic Mac Park. Contact Averil Parent at [519-253-7111](tel:519-253-7111) Ext. 290 or oraparent@city.windsor.on.ca for more information.

Volunteers and baking contributions are needed for ECFNC's fundraising bake sale at Earth Day. All baked goods must be clear wrapped or put in clear bags. Preferably in 6's or 12's if making squares or cookies. Contact Cathy Lapain at [519-776-6097](tel:519-776-6097) (leave message) or by e-mail at aclrab@xplornet.com.

April 28 - ECFNC Excursion – Join club member Don Bissonette and members of the Purple Martin Club for a bluebird tour. Meet at 9:00 am in the Greenway parking lot on the Arner Townline one km. north of Co. Rd. 20. No pets please. Rain date May 5.

April 29 – ECFNC Excursion – Join club members Gerry Waldron and Peggy Hurst at the newly acquired Nature Conservancy property on the Canard River. This is known as part of the Canard River Kentucky Coffeetree Woods Environmentally Significant Area. We will look for Harbinger-of-spring, one of our earliest flowering native plants, and also hybrid Trout Lilies, as this is one of very few locations where this hybrid can be found. Meet at 1:30 in the Canard River Conservation Area parking lot between Walker Rd. and Howard Ave. on the 8th Concession south of Co. Rd. 10. If coming south on Howard go past Fox Glen Golf Course to the flashing light and turn left on Co. Rd. 10. Take the first crossroad south (right turn) and proceed to the parking lot just before the Canard River bridge. If coming south on Walker go to McGregor and turn right on Co Rd. 10. Proceed to the 8th Concession and turn left to the Canard River. This is a good chance to become familiar with an interesting and accessible property.

May date to be announced – ECFNC Spring Excursion – Bonnie Ross will again be organizing an inspection and maintenance tour of the Shaughnessey Cohen Memorial Savannah and the Ontario Nature Stone Road Reserve on Pelee Island. This is an overnight trip with several hours of work on the nature reserves and an opportunity to enjoy other areas of the island. Call Bonnie at 519-969-4247.

May 5 – Canada South Land Trust - Ainslie Woodland Walk. Enjoy a walk to observe spring migrants and flowering plants in the Ainslie Woodland located within the Town of Leamington at 2:00 p.m. Directions: From Staples proceed south on County Road 77, watching for Concession 10. Turn left and proceed east along Concession 10 for 3 kilometres to the woodland and the lane access which is on the north side of the concession. Watch for number 1129 and drive along the lane to the back of the woodland. Donations are welcome towards the Canada South Land Trust Legacy Fund. Refreshments will be served.

May 5&6 – ECFNC Annual Pelee Island Trip – Join Club member Dave Kraus in this wonderful weekend on Pelee Island. See details in separate article. For more details or to register call Dave at 519-825-7491.

May 9 – ECFNC Members Meeting – Guest Speaker Jonathan Choquette- Jonathan Choquette will be speaking out about snakes and the parkway project. Meeting begins at 7:30pm at the Ojibway Nature Centre.

May 9 – An Intimate Evening With Margaret Atwood. The Pelee Island Bird Observatory will host An Intimate Evening With Margaret Atwood May 9 at the Beach Grove Golf and Country Club. One hundred tickets are being sold at \$100 apiece. A charitable tax receipt will be issued for a portion thereof. The evening will begin at 6:30. Ms Atwood will socialize with the guests for about an hour. At 7:30, her husband, Graeme Gibson, chair of the PIBO, will give a brief presentation about PIBO's work and its accomplishments thus far. Dinner will follow, after which Ms Atwood will be pleased to sign copies of her many books, which will be

June 13 – ECFNC Members Meeting – Dr. Trevor Pitcher – Trevor Pitcher will be speaking to the membership about his research on salmon and on fish hatcheries. Meeting begins at 7:30pm at the Ojibway Nature Centre.