



# The Egret

*the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club*

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### 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

- June 10 –Walking tour of Dave Kraus' property, Leamington
- June 13 –Member's Meeting – Guest speaker: Dave Kraus, From Farmland to Natural Habitat.
- June 27 –25th Anniversary and Gayle's Grove plaque dedication/unveiling ceremony at the David Suzuki School.
- June 30 –Butterfly ID Hike with Paul Desjardins, Titcombe Road off Malden Road, adjacent Ojibway Prairie
- July 6 – Summer Outdoor Meeting, Bat Night at Hillman Marsh C.A.
- August 8 –Summer Outdoor Meeting, Trip to Point Pelee to tour restored savannah sites.
- September 15 – 16 – Hawk Festival, Holiday Beach with ECFNC's Blue Kestrel Café
- September 22 - Peche Island Day.
- September 28-30 - Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory for the fall migration! This trip will only run if we have sufficient interest.

**See Activities and Excursions (page 17) for details.**

## 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:

### Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

Devonshire Mall P.O.  
P. O. Box 23011  
Windsor, Ontario N8X 5B5

### Information

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519-966-5852  
**Point Pelee National Park**  
519-322-5700  
**Essex Region Conservation Auth.**  
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## ECFNC Contacts

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Secretary: JoAnn Grondin (519-734-0056)  
Treasurer: Cathy Lapain (519-776-6097)

Directors: Dave Kraus (519-825-7491), Linda Menard-Watt (519-734-1879), Ron Muir (519-736-6507), Sheeva Nakhaie (519-995-5311), Gerry Waldron (519-736-1276), Carl Maiolani (519-972-1399), Sarah Renaud ([sarah.renaud@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.renaud@gmail.com)), Sarah Baldo (519-300-0039)

### 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 Sfalcin  
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/Jesse Gardner Costa/Ian Naisbitt

### Committees:

Egret Editorial: Sheeva Nakhaie, Jesse Gardner Costa, Betty Learmouth, Karen Cedar  
Field Trip: Sarah Baldo, Sarah Renaud  
Heritage: JoAnn Grondin (coordinator), Dave Kraus, Betty Learmouth, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Bruno Sfalcin, 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

**18<sup>th</sup> Annual Pelee Island ECFNC Trip May 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> 2012***Louise Potts*

This year the Annual ECFNC Trip to Pelee Island started with beautiful aerial views across Essex County and Lake Erie with Great Lakes Flights As the MC Jiimaan was out of commission, Paul Mancini, Pelee Transport Manager arranged for a float plane to ferry passengers to and from the island. The float plane carried the first 5 passengers to the Island at 9.30am, with the last flight scheduled to leave Windsor at 2pm. For those of you who don't know, the flight lasts a mere 15 minutes and despite the cross winds of the early morning providing for a bumpy landing, all flights arrived uneventfully! By 2.30pm all 23 members of the group (Marg Calder, Sue Dennis, Henry Driedger, Mariette Girard, Dave Kraus, Denise Hartley, Maxine Hartley, JoAnn Grondin, Shirley Grondin, Jeff Lambe, Patty Minello, Therese McCloskey, Sharon Medeiros, Cheryl Nantais, Louise Potts, Sarah Renaud, Kory Renaud, Bonnie Ross, Barb Sandre, Linda Menard-Watt, Pat Wollocombe, Ian Woodfield and Kendall Woodfield) had arrived and were ready to start the weekend. The weather had brightened up and stayed clear for the rest of Saturday and Sunday, which was much appreciated by all.



Black-and-white Warbler  
By Jeff Lambe

The first groups to arrive on the island took to birding both at Sheridan Point and the Wheel and Anchor Inn while enjoying coffee. The Wheel and Anchor Inn patio afforded an extra treat with a Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole captured in one binocular view. The Baltimore Oriole proved a constant companion throughout the weekend with viewings sighted at Sheridan Point, Fish Point Nature Reserve and the PIBO banding station. Meanwhile the bus riders from the airport spotted a Red-tailed Hawk carrying a snake back to its nest, saw Kingbirds and became very familiar with a pheasant who welcomed each new group to the island. Lunch was served the Wheel and Anchor Inn with the last flight quickly eating after their arrival the group all headed to Fish Point Nature Reserve.



Dave Kraus  
By Jeff Lambe

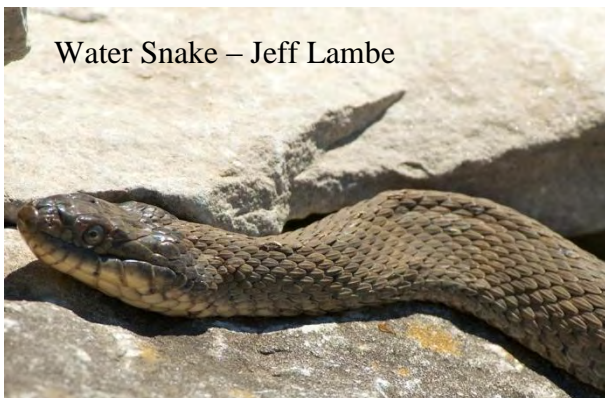
The walk through the nature reserve out to the beach provided a wide array of rare plant sightings and a chance to nibble on some Sweet-cicely. The Trilliums were just starting to turn pink in the forest and while the sun was shining it was quite cool and breezy in the woods. Once out on the beach not only were native Honey Locusts, Hop Trees and Chinquapin Oak present, but the heat had returned leaving the breeze behind. Out enjoying the lake were three Red-breasted Mergansers. The sheltered shoreline provided for some of the best birding of the weekend with a number of Warbler species present including the Cape May, Palm, Yellow-rumped and Yellow. There were also plenty of Red-bellied Woodpeckers to be seen and heard. The calm along the beach was also attracting Red Admiral and Snout butterflies. With the walk along the beach taking a few hours the

group decided to head back to the Anchor and Inn before dinner was served, a delicious selection from the Big Island Buffet. The festivities of Saturday night concluded with a super moon, the largest of 2012 brightly shining but shamefully obliterating the meteor shower scheduled for the evening.

Sunday morning started early for some members of the group, however it was rewarded with new sightings. Kory (birder extraordinaire) and Sarah Renaud (new ECFNC executive member) who both have little over a year of experience in birding, spotted two more warbler species; a Wilson's and an Orange-crowned Warbler both down at Sheridan Point.

After Mariette Girard "opened" the bus, Sunday morning got well under way. The group headed back to Fish Point to observe the PIBO banding station in operation. The group saw a Black-and-white Warbler, two Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet banded. Meanwhile the forest had other entertainment in store when a large tree came crashing to the forest floor not far from the group "...if a tree falls in the forest..."!!! PIBO had t-shirts for sale, with proceeds funding their activities on the Island, \$25 while on the island, or, \$30 at Pelee Wings Nature Store on the mainland.

On the way to the Stone Road Alvar ANSI the group saw a Common Muskrat in South Bay. The Mill Road shoreline also provided some new species to view; an Eastern Fox Snake, which had taken an unusual basking position with its head tucked under the limestone shale and a Lake Erie Water Snake which was basking in full on the limestone. Before stopping at Lighthouse point, we took a stroll on the beach at the Nature Conservancy property at Middle Point. It certainly was breezy! On the way down to Lighthouse Point at least two families of Canada Geese and their offspring were enjoying a Pelee Island resident's landscaped pond. Once down at Lighthouse point we enjoyed many painted turtles basking in the sun. Those who made it down past the lighthouse saw a Red-winged Blackbird nest. After Lunch the first group to fly back to Windsor were escorted back to the airport to catch their 2.40pm flight. On the way back from the airport Kory spotted a Bald Eagle in one of the fields along Victoria road. While some of the last remaining members birded at Sheridan Point, Dave headed back to his naturalising property where he saw three juvenile American Woodcocks and also found a Woodcock egg in his laneway.



Water Snake – Jeff Lambe

With the last group now remaining on the island awaiting their 6.40pm flight back to Windsor another trip was made out to ERCA's Stone Road Alvar property. Henry Driedger knew of Rock Elms which were growing on the property and wanted to collect some seeds to propagate. Unfortunately it was apparent that the Rock Elms had not seeded this year. However, we did sample the fragrant sumac leaves, and saw a grove of prickly ash trees. These trees provide a real barrier to larger animals with their large thorns, however along with the hop tree are very important for

the Giant Swallowtail butterfly as their caterpillars use only these two trees for food. On the way back to the bus Dave spotted a few remnant sampling plots from work he had done with ERCA in 1992. He had been investigating the best type of material for snake habitat, sheets of plywood or sheets of tin. Believe it or not, both the tin and the plywood sheets we looked under had a variety of snakes taking refuge; Eastern Fox Snakes – both an adult and a hatchling from 2011, Garter snakes, both Melanistic and Striped and Brown Snakes, all living under one roof!

As we got back to the airport to bid farewell to the island Dave spotted a hummingbird and a Swallowtail butterfly. Then it was a 15 minute flight and back to Windsor. I think it goes without saying that we extend hands of gratitude to our driver for the weekend, Sharon Medeiros and our

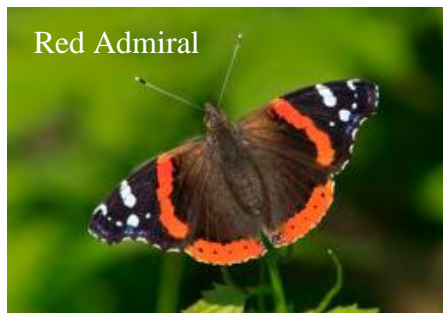
photographer Jeff Lambe. Remember to book your calendars for next year, first weekend in May (May 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>). Thanks to Dave as well for organising such an interesting and unique opportunity to view Pelee Island.



Pelee Island 2012 Group

### **Butterfly Invasion, Spring 2012**

*Betty Learmouth and Alan Wormington*



Red Admiral

Warm, southern air from the United States and strong winds in mid March into April 2012 brought many of butterflies into Essex County. The butterflies were everywhere; Red Admiral butterflies were especially plentiful.

Coverage of the butterfly invasion was provided by the *National Post* on May 8, 2012. Columnist Peter Kuitenbrouwer spoke with Glenn Richardson, president of the Toronto Entomologists' Association. According to Glenn, "There are hundreds of Red

Admirals flying northwest every single day. There's millions of them. Because of the winter that wasn't in eastern North America, we got a huge explosion of butterflies, what we are referring to as an invasion of butterflies. Normally when you go for a walk you might see one Red Admiral - not 500."

On May 4, 2012, Antonia Guidotti, an entomology technician at the Royal Ontario Museum, wrote in a blog post that warm weather in the overwintering grounds of Texas, and in Ontario provided favourable conditions for the Red Admirals. On May 7, 2012, Ms. Guidotti added: "The breeding conditions were ideal for them in the southern United States. In March and April the winds were coming from the North.

In mid-April the wind started coming from the south. The butterflies were able to get on the current and come on up here.”

Ms. Guidotti says the early arrival means we will likely see at least two generations of Red Admirals, who feast on nettles and lay their eggs over the summer months. (These butterflies live up to 10 days to two weeks). “We don’t count them or measure them. But people who have been observing butterflies for 30 or 40 years have never seen so many as they have this year.”

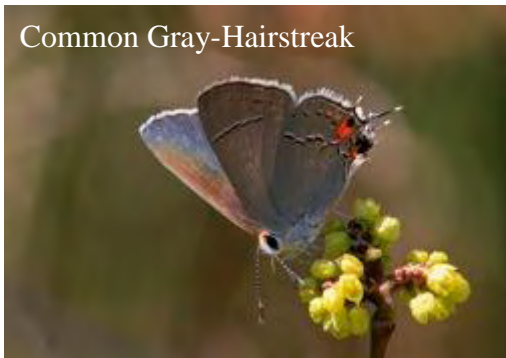
In addition to Red Admirals, American Painted Ladies, Question Marks (700 seen), and Variegated Fritillary (156 seen) butterflies have been spotted in large numbers. At Point Pelee, Ontario’s southernmost point, 6 Sleepy Orange butterflies were spotted. This butterfly is native to Florida and has only been seen four times in Ontario in the past 125 years. As well, 51 Little Sulphur butterflies, and a few Dainty Sulphurs were spotted. Mr. Richardson predicts: “The early dates this year indicates that by the end of summer we will see butterflies that we have never seen before.” All butterfly counts were provided by Alan Wormington, a local naturalist.



Dainty Sulphur

Coverage of the butterfly invasion by *The Windsor Star* was on May 9, 2012. County reporter Sharon Hill interviewed naturalist Alan Wormington who stated: “They’re everywhere. There are millions of them.” Alan told Sharon Hill that he saw 4,000 Red Admirals on April 16 at Point Pelee National Park. In other springs he’d see 10 or 20, sometimes none. “I’m telling people this is a once-in- a-100 year event.”

Common Gray-Hairstreak



According to Alan, a drought in Texas last year killed the many of the butterflies’ (and caterpillars’ parasites. When the spring rains came, butterflies were able to reproduce in large numbers. Favourable wind conditions allowed the butterflies to get a head-start moving north on what he calls the “Butterfly Highway” from Texas to Ontario. The warm winter

and warmest March ever recorded in the United States meant butterflies were able to over-winter much further north than normal, so they were closer to us before they started flying north. “That just allowed everything to go berserk. Everything just was producing like crazy because it was hot summer weather.”

As the butterflies move north they lay eggs along the way and in 45 to 60 days there will be new butterflies emerging, making it easy for anyone to be a butterfly watcher this year. Don’t miss this rare opportunity in the county!



Common Checkered-Skipper

### **Life in the Concrete Canyon – An Unnatural History**

*Gerry Waldron, Peggy Hurst and Scott Hughes*

The concrete canyon in question is not downtown Toronto, although the natural history of that locale is no doubt interesting enough. Instead, the subject is the channelized portion of Turkey Creek between Dougall Avenue in the east and Huron Church Road in the west. This is known as the Grand Marais Drain. The 2.6 km canyon was constructed of concrete in 1971 to alleviate recurrent flooding in south Windsor. The capacity of the Drain is so great that it has never been exceeded no matter how heavy the rainfall. Before the creek bottom was removed during channelization, this was one of the most polluted waterways in the Great Lakes basin, with lots of really nasty stuff in the sediments, like chromium, zinc,



cadmium, and PCB's from the industry located upstream.

Today, the Drain is deteriorating due to the relentless erosive action of water and ice. Over one million dollars was spent on repairs in 2011. The City engineering department faces a tough decision, maintain the status quo with expensive maintenance or return the channel to a more natural state. The latter option would create a green ribbon through the City and create wildlife habitat and other amenities. Even in its present seemingly

sterile state, wildlife uses the Drain for passage. Deer use it; a pair of Beavers ascended it a couple of years back and briefly made a home in the stormwater ponds near Central Avenue.

Surveyor Patrick McNiff's map "District of Hesse" dated 1789 & 1790 depicts the headwaters of Turkey Creek as a ribbon of wetland known as the "Grand Marais" (Big Marsh for you hard core Anglophones) from which Grand Marais Road takes its name. The Grand Marais wetland is illustrated as running east to the mouth of Little River making the future site of Windsor a virtual island. It is easy to envision the Detroit River shortcutting across here in late glacial times before establishing its present course to the north. In the 19th century, a canal from the navigable portion of Turkey Creek to the mouth of the Little River was proposed to follow the Grand Marais.

The depression occupied by the Grand Marais can still be observed in the stretch between Dougall Avenue and Walker Road, as for example, north of the Fogolar Furlan Club. To drain the Grand Marais and surrounding land, Turkey Creek has been extended east as a dug channel, a ditch really, as far as Pillette Road (a trace of the former channel can be seen in nearby Robert Park) and the old Creek channel west of Dougall has been supersized.

The original flow of Turkey Creek must have been reasonably consistent because in 1780 the French settlers in Petite Cote (what is now part of LaSalle) established a water powered gristmill near the present Sprucewood Avenue bridge. Today the flow fluctuates wildly. This was particularly evident in 2011 when we received twice our average rainfall.

In 2011, as part of an engineering study of the Grand Marais Drain, we had the good fortune to study the Drain's existing natural heritage. The following Problem/Opportunity statement was developed to guide and direct the study, "In order to maximize the potential benefits to the surrounding community, this study will identify alternative means and measures for restoring the concrete-lined segment of the Grand Marais Drain; (sic) with a focus on exploring the potential for establishing improved connections between the communities on either side of the Drain and for making recreational, aesthetic and habitat improvements within the channel corridor."

Many other explorers preceded us into this urban feature. Most famously, cartoonist Bob Monks, who actually canoed it with Windsor Mayor Frank Wansborough in an amusing segment on his CBC television show.

Look into the Drain from one of the bridges crossing it – not much life is apparent. But on closer examination, plant life, with its attendant fauna, is revealed. Here, living things are alternately flooded and desiccated. The north bank can reach those mythic egg-frying temperatures during the summer. The resident plants are necessarily tough – many are weedy in nature and many are exotics. Several are escaped landscape plants such as European Ash, Privet, Winter Creeper, Bearberry Cotoneaster and Everlasting Pea. The oddest species we found was Millet, probably carried in from a nearby bird feeder.



Several native rushes and sedges make their home in moist cracks along the low water channel. Although deeply submersed in torrential currents during periods of heavy rain they look happy enough. We observed small fish of an unknown species which is proof that water quality is O.K. for some forms of aquatic life at least some of the time; however this is no mountain freshet.

Remarkably a single tree of Butternut, an Endangered Species, grows not exactly in the canyon but to one side of the bridge abutment for California Avenue. The bridges and tunnels themselves have a few startling features besides providing a canvas for the most prolific, monumental and colourful graffiti in the Windsor. Some of this 'art' is not for those with

delicate sensibility. Strange isn't it how this expression of youthful individualism looks so conformist in execution. But we leave that to the sociologists; for the naturalist, there are small stalactites to wonder at and, more surprisingly, miniature mineral terraces similar to those found around mineral springs in places like Yellowstone Park. These are uniform grey in colour, having been created by minerals leaching from the concrete rather than from colourful subterranean deposits.

Although a dangerous place when flooded, in dry periods our canyon is safe enough. And we did not note any "No Trespassing" signs. So take a memorable stroll; there are several access points for the spray, the best being on the north side of the Huron Church bridge. Stick with the cooler times of the year or take along some water. Drinking from Turkey Creek is still not recommended.



**Earth Day at Malden Park**  
*Cathy Lapain*



Friends of Ojibway Prairie and Club members Bonnie Ross and Shirley Grondin help volunteers plant native prairie wildflowers



**Peregrine Falcon Update***Betty Learmouth*

Marion Nash of the Canadian Peregrine Foundation was interviewed on CBC Radio's morning program "The Early Shift" (May 18, 2012) with regard to the upcoming banding of the Ambassador Bridge's young Peregrine Falcons. Just a few days earlier monitors had observed four young Peregrine Falcons which was amazing as the nest had been carefully watched with just three young birds seen. Parents of these young falcons are *Freddie* and *Voltaire*.

Ms. Nash described how the chicks would be banded. A bucket lift would be used to lower the chicks who would be placed in a special carrier. The carrier would be taken to a secure banding area where both U.S. and Canada bands would be applied. The band numbers and information will be entered on a national banding data base.

Ms. Nash explained that her interest in Peregrine Falcons began in Toronto where an adult pair nested outside her office window. The young from this nest got into all types of trouble upon exiting the nest. One young falcon even found its way into a boiler within a downtown building.

Monitoring of newly fledged chicks will turn the expected 80% to 90% mortality to just 20% mortality. Young falcons have not developed their flight muscles, thus their initial flying success is low. The first Peregrine Falcon chick to receive a name was *Twitter*.

A second interview with regard to the young Peregrine Falcons was heard later on CBC Radio's "The Bridge," May 18, 2012. Pud Hunter of the Ministry of Natural Resources was the bander who provided some background information for listeners.

Peregrine Falcons were extirpated from the province in 1980. Through successful reintroduction, the population of Peregrine Falcons in Ontario is now thought to be in sixty to seventy territories. The successful recovery of the Peregrine Falcon in Ontario is due to a rehabilitated population, pesticide control and management.

The City of Detroit has had Peregrine Falcons at various sites for a number of years.

Mr. Hunter said that the Bridge Company supplied the equipment and operator to bring the babies down from the bridge. The adults were alarmed that the babies were removed from the nesting site but they stayed near the equipment while the babies were banded.

The three other young have been named *Viper*, *Eddie* and *General Brock*. Watch local media for further updates on this family of Peregrine Falcons.

**ECFNC walk at new Nature Conservancy property on the Canard River**  
*Cathy Lapain*





Baby great horned owls



**Planting Event Report***Ian Naisbitt*

On Friday, April 27, volunteers from the Essex County Field Naturalists Club (ECFNC), CAW Local 200 and the Retired Teachers of Ontario lent a hand to the Essex County Stewardship Network (ECSN) and Dr. David Suzuki Public School students to plant 100 trees on the school playground. This event was part of the Arbor Week celebrations in the Windsor-Essex region. Every child from junior kindergarten to grade 8 participated!

The trees were planted in two groves: one in the front of the school to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the ECFNC; one at the west side of the school as a memorial to Gayle Smith, a school neighbour who loved nature. Plaques will be placed at both locations on June 27 to celebrate these special occasions.

Thankfully, the weather cooperated: sunny and clear skies with a brisk breeze, temperatures started at 3 C in the morning and rose to 12 C in the afternoon! Perfect weather for planting!

After the holes were augered, intermediate students delivered loaded wheelbarrows of topsoil and mulch to each hole, which helped the planters get the job done. Students from the primary and junior grades, with their intermediate helpers, placed the bare root tree in the hole; adult volunteers assisted the students by trimming the root system to fit into the hole or enlarging the hole with a shovel to accommodate the root system. The original soil was replaced; topsoil added and compacted lightly. Adults and intermediate students used shovels and rakes to tidy up the job. Once all the soil was replaced in the holes, mulch was spread around the base of each tree. The final job was to water the trees, so they had a good beginning. The students did an outstanding job to get the trees into the ground! Some of the species of trees planted: silver, sugar and red maple, Kentucky Coffee Tree, red oak and serviceberry.

Future generations of Suzuki School students and neighbours will appreciate the shade provided by these trees and undoubtedly, each tree will be the focus of science, math and art lessons.

The Essex County Stewardship Network and the Gayle Smith Memorial Fund provided the funding to purchase the trees, topsoil and mulch for the event. As well, a special thank you to Brett Groves for coordinating this ECFNC special planting event. We look forward to working with the ECSN and Brett on projects in the future.

## **Point Pelee is Fired Up for Restoration!**

*Jenny Kehoe*

Point Pelee was ablaze this March – not only because of the record high temperatures, but because of prescribed burning in the Park’s savannah.

The Park is restoring the Lake Erie Sand Spit Savannah – a habitat in need of help. In decline over the last century because of the loss of natural processes including fire, severe ice, thunder, and wind storms, Point Pelee is re-introducing prescribed burning as one of the methods to restore this open, grassy habitat.

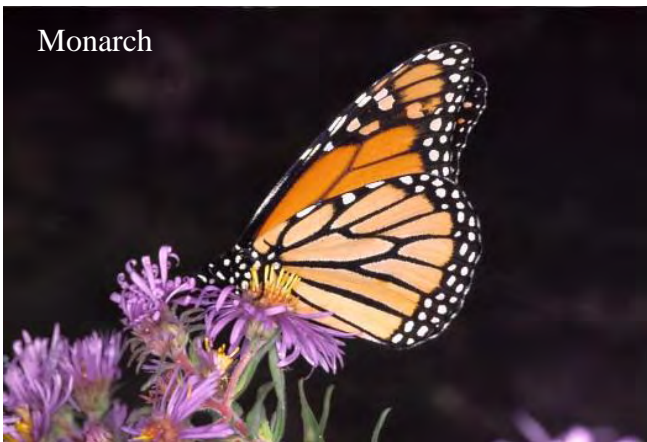
### **Good conditions for prescribed burning:**

- ✓ Light winds
- ✓ High temperatures
- ✓ Reptiles are still hibernating
- ✓ Native plants are dormant
- ✓ Breeding birds are in wintering grounds



Prickly pear cactus

Monarch



Sections of Sparrow Field and small patches of the West Beach were aglow on March 21 and March 22. Light winds, high temperatures, and dry conditions combined to create ideal conditions for the prescribed burns. The timing of prescribed burns at Point Pelee is during winter months, when most species are dormant or in overwintering grounds. This ensures breeding birds, hibernating reptiles, and native plants will not be negatively affected.

The savannah supports 25% of the Species at Risk found in the Park. Sun-loving species like the eastern prickly pear cactus, common hoptree, yellow-breasted chat, five-lined skink, and monarch butterfly will benefit from restoration, which aims to open areas that have become overgrown with invasive plants.

This summer, volunteers, including First Nations, local businesses, local residents and school groups will lend a helping hand by planting native plants in the savannah restoration sites.

To get involved, please contact Jenny Kehoe, Public Outreach and Education Officer at Point Pelee National Park.

519-322-5700 x 3338

Burning to know more about Point Pelee’s savannah restoration? Join Parks Canada staff for a special Essex County Field Naturalists tour of restoration sites at Point Pelee on Wednesday, August 8, 7 p.m. Learn about the restoration methods, the interesting monitoring tools, and how to lend a helping hand.



Venus (black spot at upper right) transiting across the sun. June 5, 2012. Photo by Paul Pratt.



Local astronomers: Greg Mockler, Peter McMahon, Paul Pratt observing Venus transiting across the sun from Point Pelee National Park. June 5, 2012.



**Essex County Ecology Research and Researchers  
Wetland Reclamation in the Athabasca Oil Sands Region**

*Kaitlin Kennedy, MSc Candidate, University of Windsor*

While wading in a wetland in the boreal forest north of Fort McMurray, Alberta, I sometimes forget that I'm standing on the second largest oil deposit in the world. As birds chirp around me and insects buzz pass, I forget that the wetlands I research were once part of a vast open pit, a tailings pond, or an area to store overburden. The Athabasca Oil Sand deposit is one of the largest oil reserves in the world but it has often been cited as Canada's greatest environmental issue. Extraction and processing

requires large volumes of water and generates large volumes of tailings material, so utilizing this tailings material in a wet-landscape reclamation strategy has become an industry goal. However, researchers need to first determine whether this strategy will create wetlands of equal function and productivity to natural wetlands.

My research focuses on midges-- a member of the fly family which are an abundant food source for ducks, tree swallows, bats, and fish. If you enjoy fly fishing, you may recognize the midge group if you look at your fly lure. My goals were to determine whether these midge communities differed in diversity, pupal size, or abundance in wetlands created using oil sands process water compared to reference wetlands. I also conducted a laboratory study in which I exposed midges to various concentrations of toxins that are in the oil sands process water. Overall, I found that there was really not much difference between midges that inhabited in oil sands process water compared to those that inhabited reference wetlands. Furthermore, my laboratory study indicated that midges that were exposed to toxins had about equal survival and growth to those that were not exposed. I also found that water quality parameters such as dissolved organic carbon and conductivity were more important in determining the community composition of midges than the type of water (process water or fresh water). Overall, the midges inhabiting reclaimed wetlands in the Athabasca oil sands region are doing quite well.

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**Essex County Field Naturalists' Club**  
**Membership Form – Due January 1, 2012**

Individual membership \$20.00 / year \_\_\_\_\_ Family membership \$25.00 / year \_\_\_\_\_  
Student (full-time) \$10.00 / year \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining membership \$30.00 / year \_\_\_\_\_  
Tax Receipt Eligible: Life membership \$500.00 / year \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \_\_\_\_\_  
Publications: Wildflowers of the Canadian Erie Islands by Mary Celestino \$15 \_\_\_\_\_  
Fishes of Essex County and Surrounding Waters By Lynda D. Corkum \$25 \_\_\_\_\_  
[www.fishesofessexcounty.com](http://www.fishesofessexcounty.com)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_  
Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  I wish to receive the Egret by email.

Please contact me to volunteer at ECFNC events!  
Make cheques payable to: **Essex County Field Naturalists' Club**  
Devonshire Mall P.O., P. O. Box 23011, Windsor, Ontario N8X 5B5

*Thank you!*



## **ECFNC Activities and Excursions, June - September '12**

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, contact Sarah Renaud (sarah.renaud@gmail.com) or Sarah Baldo (519-300-0039). Let us know your ideas for upcoming excursions. Consider volunteering as an excursion leader.



### **June 10 – Walking Tour of Dave Kraus’s property, Leamington, ECFNC Spring Excursion -**

Club member Dave Kraus has a wonderful property where he is restoring farmland to a natural habitat. See beautiful fields of prairie wildflowers, a large pond, and some constructed pit and mound habitat. This should be an excellent afternoon to see wildflowers, trees, birds, and perhaps some frogs and snakes. It is amazing what old farmland can become with some care and effort! 2 pm at 1515 Mersea Road 7. Directions: Hwy 3 to Hwy 77 (north of Leamington), north on Hwy 77 to Mersea Road 7, east on Mersea Road 7 to 1515.

**June 13 – ECFNC Member’s Meeting** – Guest speaker: Dave Kraus, From Farmland to Natural Habitat. Join us at the Ojibway Nature Centre at 7:30 p.m. for a talk by club member Dave Kraus. Dave will speak about the natural habitat restoration he has conducted on his property. Witness the transformation as Dave shows us photos of his property prior to restoration to what it is today – fields of wildflowers, a large pond, and constructed pit and mound habitat.

**June 27 – ECFNC 25th Anniversary and Gayle's Grove plaque dedication/unveiling ceremony** at the David Suzuki School. Thanks to all the volunteers that assisted in planting the 100 trees this spring (Judy Wherry & Dr. David Suzuki Public School students; Brett Groves & Essex County Stewardship Network; ECFNC members; CAW Local 200; and Ian Naisbitt & The Retired Teachers of Ontario). Ceremony at 10:45 am at David Suzuki School which is located at 6320 Raymond Street in the City of Windsor. From Tecumseh Road East, drive north on Jefferson Avenue and when you reach the traffic light at Raymond Street turn right/ east. Suzuki School is on the left side of Raymond. You are encouraged to walk, cycle or car pool to this event.

**June 30 – Butterfly ID Hike, ECFNC Summer Excursion** – Learn or practice your butterfly ID skills on this 2 hour walk with Paul Desjardins. This is a great opportunity to brush up on your skills in advance of the Butterfly Count (see below). Hike will take place from 10:00 a.m.-noon. Where to meet: Western end of Titcombe Park parking lot just off Malden Road. Where the Titcombe path (formerly Titcombe Road) meets the parking lot of Titcombe Park (Ojibway prairie).

**July 2-23 - ‘Possum Pals at Ojibway Nature Centre.** For parents and tots ages 2-4. Children not yet ready to leave the pouch? Join us for this educational and fun parent/tot adventure in nature. Mondays, from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm or 1:00 –3:00 pm. Fee: \$34/4 weeks. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**July 4 – August 22 - Summer Hiking at Ojibway.** Exercise your body and your brain. These brisk morning walks with one of Ojibway’s naturalists will introduce you to many native plants and animals. Senior discount available. Wednesdays, from 10:00 – 11:00am. Fee: \$35/8 weeks. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**July 5 - Evening Hike at Ojibway.** Come out for a guided hike with an Ojibway naturalist. Search for bats, owls, moths and fireflies. Family discount available. Thursday, 6:30 – 8:00 pm. Fee: \$6 /adult, \$5/child. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852

[www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**July 6 – Bat Night, ECFNC Members’ Meeting/Excursion** – Come out and learn about Ontario’s bats! Bat night will be led by Lesley Hale, a Science Specialist working for the Ministry of Natural Resources. She will introduce us to the world of bats in Ontario, including sampling and surveying bat populations. Embrace the night with family, friends and fellow naturalists.

Meet at 7:00pm at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area. From Windsor, take Hwy 3 East past Leamington to Oak St. (Mersea Road 2). Turn left (east) and Hillman Marsh Conservation Area will be approximately 4 km on the right.

**July 7 – Butterfly Count, Ojibway Nature Centre Event** – Meet at Ojibway Nature Centre at 9:00 a.m. \$5 to participate (children under 12 are free) and lunch is included thanks to the Friends of Ojibway Prairie. Butterfly counts are carried out in a similar fashion to Christmas Bird Counts using a count circle fifteen miles (24 km) in diameter. Counts are sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. Visit <http://www.ojibway.ca/naba.htm> for more information.

**July 17 - August 14 - Kids ‘n Kritters at Ojibway Nature Centre.** For children ages 4-6. Go wild at Ojibway! Look for wildlife in the park and enjoy nature-oriented activities, guided hikes, pond studies and creature features. Tuesdays, from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. Fee: \$150/5 weeks. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**July 17 - August 14 - Outdoor Explorers at Ojibway Nature Centre.** For youth ages 7-12. Come explore Ojibway Park and discover our pond, forest and prairie wildlife. GPS orienteering, guided hikes, art activities and creature features are all part of this unique program. Tuesdays, from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. Fee: \$154/5 weeks. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**July 19 – Canada South Land Trust Prairie Walk** – Join a guided walk on the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve for a glimpse of summer flowering plants. Meet at 6:30 p.m. on Titcombe Road at the prairie entrance which is across Matchette Road from the Ojibway Park parking lot. Call Betty at 519-944-0825 to indicate you will be attending and for more information. Donation to the Land Trust’s Legacy Fund is welcome (\$20.00). Refreshments following the walk.

**July 30 - August 26 (no class August 6)– Captivating Critters at Ojibway Nature Centre.** For children ages 3-5. Wildlife exploration and nature fun for the younger set. The first class is introductory for parents and children. Mondays, from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm or 1:00 –3:00 pm. Fee: \$34/4 weeks. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**August 2, 9, 16 OR 30 - Peche Island Adventures with Ojibway Nature Centre.** For youth ages 7-12. Join us for this rare opportunity to explore the City of Windsor’s island park. Boat trips, field studies, historical hikes are all part of this unique adventure. Very limited enrollment so register early! Thursdays, from 9:00 am – 4:00pm. Fee: \$48 for one day. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**August 8 – Tour of Point Pelee restored savannah sites, ECFNC Members' Meeting/Excursion –**

Come out to Point Pelee National Park for this very special event! We will be lead through the park by experts in ecology and conservation to view restoration work has been conducted (including manual removal of invasive species, prescribed burning, and planting of native grasses and flowers). We will have the opportunity to observe the differences between the control plots and the newly opened savannah restoration sites. The savannah habitat at Point Pelee protects 25% of the Species at Risk in the Park. The visit will certainly be dynamic, interesting, and educational.

Where to meet: Visitor Centre at 7:00 p.m.; remember, it takes approximately 20 minutes to reach the Visitor Centre after entering the park.

**August 11 - Nature Photography: Bugs and Blooms at Ojibway Nature Centre.** Discover the fun of macro photography with this hands-on workshop held during the peak of prairie flowering. Plant and insect identification, photo composition, angles and working with colours will all be covered. Bring your photo equipment and dress for the weather. Saturday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Fee: \$19. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**August 20-24 - Wildlife Watchers at Ojibway Nature Centre.** For youth ages 7-12. Discover Windsor's wildlife through activities, hikes and field studies including a boat trip to Peche Island. Discover 100 different species of local plants and animals. Friday is a tour of Malden Park with optional swimming at Mic Mac and a barbeque lunch (provided). Early drop-off at 8am and late pick-up until 5pm. Monday to Friday, 9:00 am – 4:00pm. Fee: \$174 for 5 days. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**August 25 – Nectar Festival at Ojibway Nature Centre** - Learn about the sweet lives of hummingbirds, butterflies and other nectar lovers. Join us for hummingbird banding and tips on how to attract these jewels to your yard. Banding will start around 9:00 am and displays, activities and treats will run until noon. Free admission and parking. Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**September 10 – October 29 - 'Possum Pals at Ojibway Nature Centre.** For parents and tots ages 2-4. Children not yet ready to leave the pouch? Join us for this educational and fun parent/tot adventure in nature. Mondays, from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. Fee: \$57/7 weeks. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**September 10 – October 29 - Captivating Critters at Ojibway Nature Centre.** For children ages 3-5. Wildlife exploration and nature fun for the younger set. The first class is introductory for parents and children. Mondays, from 1:00 – 3:00 pm. Fee: \$57/ weeks. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**September 11 – November 27 - Fall Hiking at Ojibway.** Exercise your body and your brain. These brisk morning walks with one of Ojibway's naturalists will introduce you to many native plants and animals. Senior discount available. Tuesdays, from 10:00 – 11:00am. Fee: \$53/12 weeks. Preregister at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Rd. Windsor, 519-966-5852 [www.ojibway.ca](http://www.ojibway.ca)

**September 15 – 16 – Hawk Festival, Holiday Beach – ECFNC’s Blue Kestrel Café** will be open on this weekend for the Hawk Festival. The Festival includes lots of interesting things – hawk watching, workshops, guided tours, banding, vendors, etc. Our Café sells coffee, pop, muffins, cookies, hot dogs, etc. Claire needs help for this event, including setting up and taking down the food tent on both days, plus driving to the teaching building to make the coffee, selling our products, etc. It is very hard work to organize this event and many volunteers are needed to help make it run smoothly.

Please call Claire McAllister if you would like to volunteer – 519-254-1854. If needed, Claire can arrange for free entrance to the park when you are volunteering.

**September 22 - Peche Island Day**. Activities will run from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Peche Island Day is a free event and everyone is welcome to attend! Cancellation subject to adverse weather conditions. Picnic lunches are okay, however no garbage should be left behind. Bike or bus to the event. Limited parking available offsite. Boat Boarding at Lakeview Park Marina, 9200 Riverside Drive E. Boat transportation will be provided to and from the island beginning at 10:00 am. If you have a life jacket, please bring it. The last boat bringing people to the island will leave at 1:00 pm. Marked trails for self-guided tours. Guided tours of the island also available. Light snacks and beverages available for purchase. Volunteers are needed for this event which is a joint effort of ECFNC, City of Windsor, CEA, DRCC, BASF, MNR, University of Windsor and Windsor-Essex County Canoe Club.

Call Karen at 519-966-5852 or email at [kcedar@city.windsor.on.ca](mailto:kcedar@city.windsor.on.ca) if you are able to volunteer.

**Exciting trip opportunity! – September 28-30, 2012**

We have the opportunity to travel to the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory for the fall migration! Accommodation is available in the Grebe Lodge, located in Cabot Head Provincial Nature Reserve, near Tobermory. The Lodge sports an open-concept common room, with an enormous central fireplace and large windows offering expansive views overlooking beautiful Georgian Bay. There are 2 large bedrooms with bunk beds, and a well-equipped kitchen. The Lodge is "off grid", running on solar power with propane appliances. Trip participants are responsible for their own transportation to and from Grebe Lodge as well as their own meal preparation. We will visit the bird observatory, observe bird banding, hike along Bruce Trail and relax by the fireplace! The cost for this trip is around \$40 per person. If you are interested in this trip, please contact Sarah Renaud ASAP to reserve your place. This trip will only run if we have sufficient interest.

More info: <http://bpbo.ca/>

Contact: Sarah Renaud 519-712-9554 [sarah.renaud@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.renaud@gmail.com)

**December 6 – Canada South Land Trust** – Join Todd Pepper for a presentation entitled “Bird Banding and Community Development in Loma Alto, Ecuador.” Todd will speak at 7:30 p.m. in Room C of the Essex Civic Centre. Your donation of \$20.00 would be welcome towards the Land Trust’s Legacy Fund. Please call Betty at 519-944-0825 for further details.