



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' meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm at Ojibway Nature Center, 5200 Matchette Road, Windsor, 519-966-5852.

Visit our Website at essexcountynature.com

A great big *Thank You* to everyone who submitted articles and photos to the Egret this month. We always appreciate your submissions and couldn't run this newsletter without them! Special thank you to Betty Learmouth!

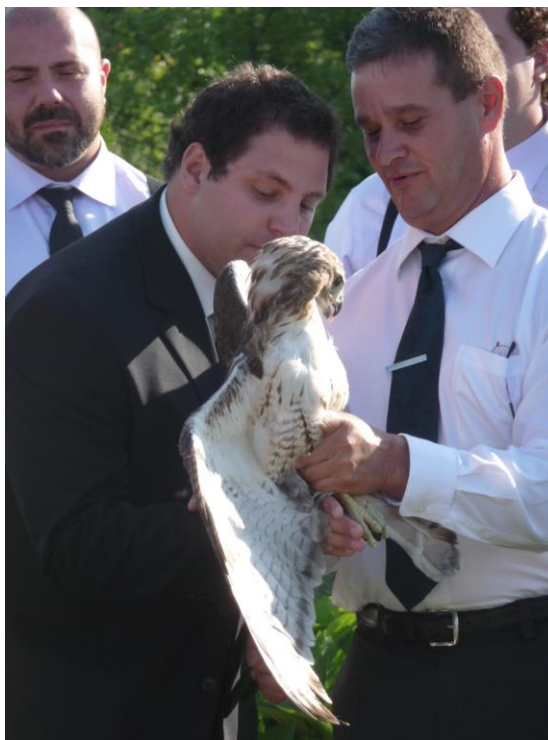
Upcoming ECFNC Activities

Sept. 14th and 15th – Blue Kestrel Café at the Hawk Festival, Holiday Beach.

October 9th – Members Meeting – Christine Madliger: Tree Swallows and Stress!

November 2nd – The 29th Annual Dinner! Get your Tickets now!

December 11th – Members Meeting – A year in review



Current and Former Presidents of the Field Nat's hawk wrangling for a wedding! Congratulations to all the Field Naturalists who found love this summer! Photo: Mackenzie Browning

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

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Ontario Nature Liaison: JoAnn Grondin
ERCA Liaison: Phil Roberts
ERCA Conservation Areas Advisory Committee for park management: Sarah Baldo and Tom Preney
Bluebird Committee Chairman: Don Bissonnette
Essex County Land Stewardship Liaison: Linda Menard-Watt
Ojibway Liaison: Tom Preney
Citizens Environment Alliance Liaison: Phil Roberts/Jesse Gardner Costa
Windsor Essex County Environmental Committee: Phil Roberts/ Jesse Gardner Costa
Canada South Land Trust Liaison: Dave Kraus
Detroit River Canadian Cleanup Liaison: Steve Marks/Phil Roberts

Committees:

Egret Editorial: Sheeva Nakhaie (chair), Betty Learmouth,
Field Trips: The Executive
Heritage: JoAnn Grondin (coordinator), Dave Kraus, Betty Learmouth, Jim McAllister, Bruno Sfalcin, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Shirley Grondin, Cathy Lapain
Little River Enhancement Group: Ian Naisbitt (chair), Jesse Gardner Costa
Fish Book: Dave Kraus
Website: Sarah Baldo, Sarah Renaud, Sheeva Nakhaie (co chairs)
Social Media: Sarah Renaud, Russ Jones and Steve Marks
Arising Issues in the County: Phil Roberts

Ojibway Introduction Butterfly Walk, June 29, 2013**By Betty Learmouth**

Fourteen adults and four enthusiastic children joined Paul DesJardins for a butterfly walk on Saturday, June 29, 2013 at the Ojibway Prairie.

American Copper. Photo: Larry Onysko



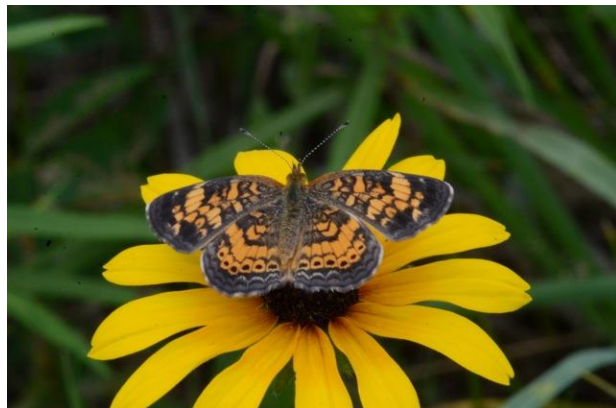
Despite dark skies, Paul DesJardins declared the turnout of butterfly watchers to be amazing. The number of butterfly species observed was quite exciting for everyone.

The group met in the parking lot at Titcombe Road and Malden Road at 10:00 a.m. The first area to be explored was a recently retired baseball diamond playing ground. Here was a single Colic Root plant in bloom which is a plant species at risk. Across a small drain is another retired ball diamond where

many Colic Root were discovered following a strike by outside workers several years ago. This was an extraordinary discovery of many plants, revealed by not mowing the area. The first butterflies of the day were seen in the grass of the unmowed meadows.

Butterfly watchers continued their walk along Titcombe Road which proved to be productive. The butterfly watchers turned into the Ojibway Prairie, walking as far as the wet area with its thicket of phragmites. The return walk revealed butterfly species not seen on the first walk along Titcombe Road.

The following is a summary of the butterflies seen with numbers in brackets following the species name: Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (3); Orange Sulfur (1 seen at gas station); Clouded (Common) Sulfur (1); Cabbage White Butterfly (7); Acadian Hairstreak (2); Summer Azure (1); Eastern Tailed-blue (9); Great Spangled Fritillary (14); Silvery Checkerspot (4); Baltimore (2); Northern Pearl (Orange) Crescent (3); Pearl (Summer) Crescent (9); Mourning Cloak (1); Question Mark (1); Painted Lady (1); Viceroy (3); Red-spotted Purple (1); Common Wood Nymph (5); Northern Pearly Eye (1); Little Wood Satyr (54); Monarch (1); Silver-spotted Skipper (1); Southern Cloudy Wing (3); Northern Cloudy Wing (8); Least Skipper (6); Delaware Skipper (4); Dun Skipper (2); Hobomok Skipper (5); Crossline Skipper (4); Tawny-



Left: Male Delaware Skipper. Right: Northern Crescent. Both photos: Larry Onysko

edged Skipper (1); Little Glassy Wing (18); European Skipper (12); Northern Broken Dash.

The following is a summary of the dragonflies seen with numbers in brackets following the species name: Common Green Darner (1); Prince Baskettail (1); Slender Spreadwing (1) Halloween Pennant (1); Common Pondhawk (1); Twelve-spotted Skimmer (9); Common Whitetail (5); Ruby Meadowhawk (1) Black Saddlebags (3).

Peg Wilkinson
By Betty Learmouth

Peg Wilkinson, a former Essex County Field Naturalists' Club Treasurer, passed away on July 5, 2013 at Windsor's Malden Continuing Care, where Peg had been a resident since Spring 2013.

Peg's home reflected her enjoyment and love of nature. Peg's backyard was full of plants which she nurtured over the years. Neighbour and Field Naturalists' member Connie North shared Peg's interest in plants and gardening, with no fence between the two neighbours.

Peg was a long time member of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club, assisting with raising monies for nature heritage preservation. Peg was the ECFNC's treasurer when a donation was made to the Nature Conservancy of Canada towards the purchase of the forty acre Shaughnessy Cohen Memorial Savanna on Pelee Island adjacent to Ontario Nature's Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve.

Peg enjoyed visits to the family cottage at Port Albert on Lake Huron, which Peg painted mauve, her favourite colour. When temperatures soared in Windsor, Peg headed to her cottage with its many windows that opened to Lake Huron's breezes. Over the years, Peg's cats traveled to Port Albert with Peg to enjoy summer holidays.

Peg enjoyed travel with other Essex County Field Naturalists' Club members, including visits to Texas, Florida and Bonaire in the Caribbean Islands, where Peg enjoyed tropical nature.

Peg was buried in Stratford's Avondale Cemetery on July 8, 2013.

A Visit to the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve, August 25, 2013
By Betty Learmouth

Fourteen ECFNC members and friends joined field naturalist Tom Preney on August 25, 2013 for a walk in the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. Tom commented that our visit to the Ojibway Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna would engage all our senses. "Listen to the chorus of singing insects. Feel the towering plants as they brush against you. Take a deep breath and smell the fresh air. Look at the variety of life surrounding you."

Tom announced that he had a special treat for the group. Twelve newly hatched Eastern Foxsnakes would be released on the prairie during our walk. These beautiful creatures were born at the Ojibway Nature Centre. Tom carried the young snakes in a soft bag as the group walked across the prairie.

At the entrance to the Ojibway Prairie, a Band-winged Meadowhawk was pointed out by Paul DesJardins. This rare sighting was only the third record of this attractive dragonfly for the Ojibway Prairie Complex. The colourful insect was quite cooperative and allowed photographers to snap some photos. Other insect species observed were Common Green Darner, Black Saddlebags, Ruby Meadowhawk, Praying Mantid, Cicada Killer, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Great Spangled Fritillary, Silver-spotted Skipper, Summer Azure, and a single Monarch.



Far Left: Big Blue Stem. Near left: Spotted Joe-Pye-Weed and Praying Mantid. Above: Tall *Coreopsis*. All photos: Betty Learmouth

While watching a busy group of bumble bees, Tom reminded the group that the Rusty-patched Bumble-Bee is a newly listed endangered species in Ontario, with only three specimens found in the last six years. "This bumble bee has a rusty patch on its abdomen and is very distinctive. It hasn't been found in the Ojibway Prairie Complex yet, but you never know."

Help this bee and other native bees because they pollinate the crops that feed us all. The Rusty-patched Bumble-Bee is active from April to October in gardens, farmland, savannah sand-dunes and woods. If you spot this bee: Take a photo, record the place and date and post to the Rusty-patched Bumble Bee project Facebook Page. Find out more: www.beefriend.org

Some of the plant species observed along the trail included Cordgrass, Big Blue Stem (towering above the visitors), Switchgrass, Indian Grass, Flat-topped Aster (an amazing number of plants ready to bloom), Tall Coreopsis, Tall Ironweed, Prairie Thistle, Spotted Joe-Pye-Weed (gorgeous pink blooms), Purple Milkweed, Smooth False Foxglove (in bud with a hint of spectacular yellow blooms shortly), various species of goldenrod, Sneezeweed, Gray-headed Coneflower, and Great Lobelia.

The highlight of the walk was releasing the baby Foxsnakes back to their home in the tallgrass prairie. The group was awed by their cuteness, velvety skin and their ability to disappear in the leaf litter.



To conclude the walk, Tom lead the group to the a small wet area in Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park which was providing habitat for Green Frog and Leopard Frog adults and larva. We

finished the afternoon with a BBQ. Thank you to Tom for a most enjoyable walk on the Ojibway Tallgrass Prairie.

Water, Water Everywhere

Tim Byrne, the Essex Region Conservation Authority's local water specialist was a guest on CBC Radio on July 24, 2013.

Tim stated that as of July 24, 2013, Essex County had ten to thirteen inches of rainfall. This is two and one half times the normal rainfall for our area which is three or four inches. The County is in a super saturated state.

There have been wet periods, during World War 11, 1983-1984 and 1997-1998.

All this rainfall is getting to be normal. Throughout the world there have been changes and shifts.

There has been flooding this past July 2013 in McGregor and along Walker Road, also roadways in Leamington and on private property.

Luckily our rainfall has not been as significant as in Toronto. It's just a matter of luck. Tim said that if we receive a cloud burst, we will have flooding. Municipalities and staff are watching closely.

Some tips from Tim include knowing your property. Do not allow debris to accumulate. Keep your yard clean. Keep kids and pets away from moving water.

It's a Bug's Nightlife Here

An article from *The Windsor Star*, July 3, 2013 written by Ted Whipp

Weather has been perfect for fireflies looking for mates

Talk about a hot date after dark. Our muggy wet nights are the ideal romantic evening for fireflies.

"Lately they're having quite the time of it," Paul Pratt, of the Ojibway Nature Centre, said of the fireflies' night life this summer. "They just love all this warm weather and our warm humid nights. It's perfect weather for them to be out and about."

And love is the operative word here, according to Pratt. All those teeny-tiny flashes of light in the night can only indicate one thing: fireflies want to hook up and let each other know they're ready, willing and waiting for a mate.

People are seeing the bugs send out their love signals. And visitors report noticing more fireflies this year, mainly because of the night-time conditions, Pratt says. They're especially visible at the nature centre, located away from the ambient night light of the nearby urban area.

A nature centre employee described it best, Pratt said. The staff member said, “It’s like seeing fireworks.”

For fireflies, fireworks are what it’s all about. Males send out a pattern of light to attract a mate, including the Big Dipper fireflies common here. The male fly about a metre off the ground and suddenly rise in the air during their flash of light for about a half second before pausing and repeating the show with a streak of light.

“It looks like they’re drawing the letter j for the females down in the grass.”



Big Dipper Firefly. Photo: Paul Pratt

Fireflies belong to a family of beetles called Lampyridae and are usually seen as adults from late June through early August. In their earlier stage, Big Dipper larvae feed on earthworms. By the time we notice them, they’re adults, focused on getting lucky.

During the daylight hours, they retire to tall grasses and bushes as they wait to light up the night. Fireflies make light without heat, Pratt said. Their green, yellow or orange light depend on the species. There’s so much interest, the nature centre has devoted an entire page on its website ojibway.ca to the life of the area’s fireflies.

All very cool stuff for people sitting on the patio at night and naturalists interested in a bug’s life.

Fireflies

By Betty Learmouth

On July 24, 2013, Naturalist Paul Pratt was interviewed on CBC Radio. Paul stated very firmly before his interview that he loves summer. Paul then spoke about Fireflies which thrive on the wet conditions Essex County has been subject to over the past few weeks.

Fireflies like wet open habitats and tall grassy areas which are more luxurious this year. The Big Dipper Firefly is out this year by the thousands with their flashing which can be seen in any grassy area.

Paul remarked that the rain we are receiving this summer is much more than normal.

There are quite a few Firefly species in various colours such as yellow and green. Different species of Firefly can be identified by their flashing patterns.

Fireflies sometimes catch and eat other Fireflies but the immature Fireflies prey on worms and snails.

Dry, wet, cold and hot weather is the norm now. Paul commented that he hoped that our Fireflies can adapt.

The peak of Fireflies is mid June through July. By early August, numbers will drop off.

Where Have All the Beautiful Monarchs Gone? Migration may be threatened

An article from *The Windsor Star*, July 12, 2013 written by reporter Sharon Hill



Monarch butterfly numbers are so dangerously low they will be a rare sight this summer and their annual migration could disappear, a U.S. monarch butterfly expert said Thursday.

“It seems incredible to me that that could happen, but the passenger pigeon went down the drain and it had been a very abundant bird and its breeding distribution was almost the same as the monarch,” said Lincoln Brower, who has studied monarch butterflies for 58 years.

We won’t lose the butterfly because they maintain non-migrating populations but Brower said the spectacular migration is endangered. Tiny monarch butterflies that have never made the trip can fly more than 3,000 kilometres in the fall to Mexico for the winter.

There were record low numbers of them in Mexico where they overwinter; which may have to do with last summer’s wide-spread drought. Reports from butterfly counts such as the one in Windsor (July 6, 2013) are showing very low numbers of monarchs in Canada and in the United States.

Paul Pratt, a naturalist at the Ojibway Nature Centre, said three were seen in the annual butterfly count July 6, 2013, the second lowest in 20 years.

Last year there were 44 seen in the local count despite a hot day.

“I haven’t seen a single one all summer,” Pratt said.

Usually in Windsor, monarch butterflies start making an appearance by the end of May.

"They're a beautiful butterfly and they do this spectacular migration," Pratt said, recalling the vast numbers that can take flight off the tip of Point Pelee National Park in the fall.

"That would be a very sad thing to go the way of the dodo bird."

Brower, 82, a professor at Sweet Briar College in Virginia, said this is the worst drop in the migration population he has encountered in the more than half century he's been studying monarchs. Brower has been predicting a collapse of the migration for several years.

Brower blames genetically altered crops that allow farmers to spray weed killer directly on plants such as corn and soybeans without killing them. But that kills milkweed, which the caterpillars of monarch butterflies feed upon.

Then consider that last year's widespread drought likely dried up that vital food source. On top of the dwindling amount of milkweed on their journey north, there's illegal logging in the Mexican forests and there can be winter storms that wipe out huge numbers of butterflies.

They will need a mild winter in Mexico to have a hope of bouncing back, Brower said.

"It looks kind of scary. I don't know whether they will be able to recover or not." During the winter, one butterfly count in Mexico found a record low of 2.94 acres of overwintering monarch butterflies compared to the average of 22 acres from 1994 to 2003, Pratt said.

That count looks at the number of acres occupied by butterflies instead of trying to count all butterflies.

"To make matters worse, the first generation of those butterflies ran into a cold front in the southern United States which slowed development," Brower said.

Usually there are three or four generations of monarch butterflies as they move north before the fall migration. This year, Brower said, the butterflies may only get two generations, which wouldn't help them build their numbers.

"We're very worried about how significant the migration will be this fall. It could be an all-time historical low," Brower said.

By the Numbers

The number of monarch butterflies seen at the Ojibway Nature Centre in the early July counts can be affected by weather and has bounced back and forth but it appears this year's low number is not a fluke, Pratt said.

10 in 2004	9 in 2005
54 in 2006	83 in 2007
16 in 2008	6 in 2009
78 in 2010	4 in 2011
44 in 2012	2 in 2013

The Art of Monarch Rearing*It takes love, milkweed and a whole lot of passion**In the Windsor Star, August 21, 2013. Article written by Emma Loop*

A retired Windsor woman is spending her summer ditch-diving, armed with a black garbage bag, to save an iconic local insect.

Linda Dufour, sitting on her shaded backyard deck Tuesday afternoon, said she scours her downtown neighborhood for milkweed plants. It's the only thing the more than 60 monarch caterpillars she's raising will eat.

"Just everything about them I find amazing," she said. Behind her house, which she and her husband built themselves in 1980, bird feeders hang above the wildflower beds.

Two five-foot milkweed stems grow along the fence, which Linda said she's trimmed of their lower leaves to prevent ants from eating baby caterpillars. Across the yard, five stems of harvested milkweed sit in a blue bird bath.

On the deck, 55 bright sage cocoons with gold spots hang from the tops of three glass aquariums. Three full grown caterpillars crawl around nearby, choosing a spot to hang out for the next week.

And another three penny-sized, younger caterpillars chomp away at milkweed plants in a fish bowl.

Dufour, 57, said these caterpillars all came from the one monarch she helped to raise last year after noticing the butterflies weren't coming around as usual. "All the caterpillars were disappearing once they hatched," she said, adding that she thinks other insect predators ate them. "We used to have so many butterflies in this backyard, and now there's hardly any."

When she spots milkweed growing along fences or train tracks, she said she goes home to throw on her gear: long-sleeved clothes, gloves, and old running shoes. She said she's trying to avoid poison ivy.

Dufour, self-educated in caring for monarchs, said she often spends at least one hour per day cleaning the tanks and feeding the hungry caterpillars. She feeds them twice a day when they reach adulthood.

She hopes having more butterflies to lay eggs will bring the species back to the area in bigger numbers. And she isn't the only person who's noticed.

Paul Pratt, a naturalist at Ojibway Park, said monarchs "have had two really bad years in a row."

Ojibway's butterfly count in July was the second lowest count in 20 years, Pratt said, with staff only spotting three monarchs. He said on average, once they flutter south for the winter, monarchs cover 20 acres of forest in Mexico. "This March, it was only 2.9 acres," he said.

Weather is partly to blame. Last year, a drought in the American Midwest fried the milkweed along their migratory path, Pratt said. “Then this year, when the butterflies came north, it was below freezing in Texas.

He said illegal logging in the Mexican forest where monarchs overwinter has made the butterfly’s survival difficult as well. Plus, pesticides used in farm fields is killing milkweed, he said.

“The migratory monarch could just disappear,” he said.

But Pratt said monarchs are hardy and their numbers could “bounce back” with a good spring.

Dufour hopes city employees will be cautious of milkweed when mowing, and maybe even plant some in local gardens.

Pratt encourages gardeners to plant a butterfly specific milkweed with a “beautiful” flower that doesn’t take over yards. “If everyone had milkweed in their garden, the monarchs might make a significant increase in their population.”

Upcoming Events and Activities!

Sept. 14th and 15th – Blue Kestrel Café at the Hawk Festival, Holiday Beach. Many volunteers are needed to help with this event – setting up and taking down the food tent each day, manning the food booth, barbecuing, etc. Please call Claire McAllister if you would like to help with this event – 519-254-1854. Free entrance to Holiday Beach can be arranged for volunteers. Even if you can't help out at the café, attend this event; it is very interesting and informative – stop by to say hello, or purchase a muffin or hotdog, or make use of the many learning opportunities offered at the Hawk Fest. See bird banding up close, attend informative walks, attend a hawk identification class - take in as many of the activities that you can that the festival has to offer.

Thrilling Thursdays at Ojibway – May through November, Ojibway Nature Centre will be open in the evening on the last Thursday of each month. Please sign up early for these special programs we will be offering.

Cost: \$6/adult, \$5/child (family discount available)

September 26 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.) – Snakes & Other Endangered Species

October 31 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.) – Fall Colours

November 28 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.) – Out of this World Astronomy

October 9th – Members Meeting – Join **Christine Madliger**, a PhD candidate at the University of Windsor. Her topic is “Stressing Out About Habitat Change: What Hormone Levels Can Tell Conservation Biologists”. With habitats increasingly facing natural and human-induced changes, it is important to be able to detect when animal populations are being disturbed. Christine will use examples from her research on Tree Swallows to discuss how measuring stress hormones can provide conservation biologists with an early warning signal and a highly sensitive way to monitor populations of interest. The meeting starts at 7:30 pm at Ojibway Nature Centre.

November 2nd – The 29th Annual Dinner – Our guest speaker is **Maurice Bottos**. He will speak on “Insects of the Night”. For more information, please see the flyer on a separate page.

Thursday, December 5, 2013. Canada South Land Trust. Dr. Oliver Love will discuss Snow Buntings and the research that Dr. Love has been involved with. Dr. Love says that his team has made great progress with regard to their study and has many interesting things to tell us about. Dr. Love's talk will take place on Thursday, December 5, 2013 in Room C of the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served. This event is a fund raiser for the Land Trust and your donation of \$20.00 is appreciated.

December 11th – Members Meeting – Join us as club members show their vacation and work pictures of their adventures. We also get to enjoy delicious homemade desserts. Meet at 7:30 pm at Ojibway Nature Centre.

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club
Membership Form – Due January 1, 2013

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 _____

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

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!

Thank you!

Make cheques payable to: Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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