



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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ECFNC Monthly Meetings

Except for 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. We also have monthly outings, posted in the 'Activities and Excursions' section of this newsletter as well as on our website. 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!

Upcoming ECFNC Activities

April 13th – Nature Conservancy of Canada Talk

April 24th – Earth Day Bake Sale

April 30th to May 1st – Pelee Island Trip

May 7th – Garlic Mustard Pull

May 11th – Ontario Nature Talk

June 8 – Massasauga Rattlesnake Recovery



Join fellow naturalists on an overnight trip to Pelee Island organized and lead by Dave Kraus (more info under Activities and Events – page 25)

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

c/o Ojibway Nature Centre
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Point Pelee National Park
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Ontario Nature Liaison: JoAnn Grondin
ERCA Liaison: Sarah Baldo
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: Jesse Gardner Costa
Windsor Essex County Environmental Committee: Jesse Gardner Costa
Canada South Land Trust Liaison: Dave Kraus
Detroit River Canadian Cleanup Liaison: Claire Sanders and Steve Marks

Committees:

Egret Editorial: Sheeva Nakhaie (chair), Sarah Baldo, Betty Learmouth, Jessica Rose
Field Trips: The Executive
Heritage: JoAnn Grondin (coordinator), Dave Kraus, Betty Learmouth, Jim McAllister, Bruno Sfalcin, Gerry Waldron, Shirley Grondin, Cathy Lapain
Little River Enhancement Group: Ian Naisbitt (chair), Jesse Gardner Costa
Fish Book: Dave Kraus, Jesse Gardner Costa
Website: Sarah Baldo, Kory Renaud (co chairs)
Social Media: Kory Renaud and Sarah Baldo

President Report for 2015

By Jesse Gardner Costa

Dear Club Members,

2015 was another successful year ; we've continued a number of projects and continue to build connections throughout the county.

Last year's achievements and this year's plans:

30 years of Field Naturalists! – We celebrated 30 years (31 unofficially) in November with the Citizen's Environment Alliance with our very own Paul Pratt as guest speaker. It was a great event put on by the organizers of our heritage committee . Both groups had a great time and the talk was excellent. The club's current status in the community is a testament to all the hard work and dedication put into this group by its members over our 30 years. Our current executive hopes to build on this legacy and continue to promote and explore Essex County. Here's to another 30 years!

Riparian Buffer Restoration Big Creek – *This section is unchanged from 2014. The project continues.* The project is currently underway. ERCA and the MNR will be providing "the boots on the ground support" to restore riparian zones along big Creek. Work will hopefully continue in the Spring. As an aside, we're still looking for willing landowners to allow this type of restoration work to occur on their properties. So far we have a small number of stakeholders that serve as a proof of concept but we're always looking for more. If you or someone you know would like to be a part of this project, please contact Linda Menard Watt on the executive.

Ojibway Shores – *As a recap: the last natural shoreline along the Detroit River was slated to be clear-cut and filled in fall 2013. The Windsor Port Authority held a public meeting on July 3rd and was met with an overwhelming response from the public (over 500 people!), including many of our members.*

In the aftermath of this meeting, the Windsor Port Authority decided not to clear-cut the area and have committed to work with the environmental community (Field Naturalists', Citizens Environment Alliance, Detroit River Canadian Cleanup), and ERCA. We haven't heard much from our local MP's since the initial meetings.

We spent 2014 and some of 2015 taking catalogue of all the species on the property. We've had experts go out onto the property, some of our members have also taken inventories (You may have participated in one of our many outings to Ojibway shores) and we also collected data on the day of our 2014 & 2015 BioBlitzes.

We've begun writing the report for the Port Authority, our writing team includes the City of Windsor, Gerry Waldron, ERCA, Detroit River Canadian Cleanup and the Field Naturalists to compile the data and present it to the Port Authority as soon as possible. Our hope is that this data will be considered for protection/enhancement of Ojibway Shores in light of the Gordie Howe Bridge development immediately adjacent to the property.

We're still waiting to hear what the ultimate fate of the property will be, though recent developments seem favourable. The 'environmental coalition' consisting of many environmental NGOs continue to meet and strategize on what the next steps should be.

2015 Bioblitz – Bigger and Better! Nearly 400 people participated this year. We had ~50 experts covering a variety of taxa, Although we've yet to tally our species found, early estimates suggest we'll surpass the 1121 species we found the year before. We were much more organized thanks to our volunteers and partners. The day ran smoothly and there were lots of activities thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Bioblitz organizing committee. Tom and I have been working on a summary of the event and the report will be available on the website and facebook and we can email it out to members if they want a copy. Thanks again to all who supported this event.

We're taking a break this year to focus on the 2 reports we need to finish. This should also give us more time to plan for our 2017 International Bioblitz! The hope is to organize with the international wildlife refuge and hold the world's first ever international BioBlitz. The committee is always looking for volunteers to get involved in any way they wish.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the continuing efforts of our excellent executive members. We're slowly organizing ourselves to better involve members in planning and activities. There will be a number of new initiatives this year that include our membership; we hope to build a larger network of active members to improve not only our club but our contributions to the city and county. It's been a great year working with this executive and I hope to involve more of the membership this year.

Thank you for your dedication and support,

Jesse Gardner Costa

A Selected History of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club (1984-1989)

By: Jeremy Hatt

The Creation of ECFNC

In 1983, conversations about the need of a naturalist club in Essex County were on the rise. Other regions of Ontario already had long-established nature clubs and for an area so rich in biodiversity despite significantly diminished natural areas, it was clear that a club was necessary to bring like-minded people together to form a more singular voice for nature in Essex County.

One of the people who were privy to these discussions was Jim McAllister, who would ultimately act as the catalyst for the Club's inception. In January of 1984, having heard from others showing interest in such a venture, Jim decided to turn ideas into action and began making phone calls to friends and colleagues who might be willing to help start a club. Within days, a first organizational meeting was planned and on Jan. 31, 1984, nine people assembled to discuss what would eventually become the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club.

These nine naturalists, expert and amateur, who together embodied a wide range of interests and expertise, were Peter Bondy, Tom Hince, Jim McAllister, Mike Oldman, Barbara

and Terry Oulette, Paul Pratt, Terry Priddle, and Alan Wormington. The meeting was held at Jim and Claire McAllister's home.

The meeting was long and there was plenty to discuss at that first gathering but everyone brought a great deal of energy to the table and eagerly cooperated toward the common goal of establishing a club. An excerpt from the minutes of the first organizational meeting reveals the extent of business these nine individuals tackled:

- need for such a club, conflicts with other clubs (eg. Sun Parlor Nature Club)
- affiliation with other clubs (Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Ontario Field Ornithologists)
- overall club objectives
- specific ways of reaching these objectives
- meeting place and location
- fee structure
- legal complications (eg. Incorporation)
- newsletter (frequency, format, content, mailing)"

The selection of a suitable name for the Club was vital. The original suggestion was the Windsor Naturalists' Club but eventually the room agreed that all of Essex County should be included to reach and represent a wider number of people and not have those living in rural areas feel left out.

The overall objectives were simple: education, conservation, enjoyment, and growth. Specific objectives encompassed many of the things ECFNC are known for today, and the organizers wanted to make sure the Club had both a social component and a spotlight on conservation. These objectives as covered in the first organizational meeting minutes included, "Identifying and preserving wildlife and habitat, reaching out to young people, organizing outings, showing films and slides, liaising and supporting other nature groups, instructing members in nature photography, promoting nature art, educating the public on and promoting research about flora and fauna of the area, becoming involved in environmental issues, collecting and preparing materials for educational purposes, and identifying and promoting wildlife areas in southwestern Ontario and southeast Michigan."

Of course, a task as immense as establishing a county-wide nature club cannot be completed in a single day and organizational meetings continued on a bi-weekly basis from February to April of 1984. They mostly took place at Jim and Claire McAllister's residence and often included nature walks and barbeque. As time went on, the group expanded to involve additional people interested in helping form ECFNC. This included people like Phil Roberts, who later served as President for 10 years and Bev Wannick, an employee of Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) at the time.

Bev remembers those first meetings fondly. "It was thrilling for a young person to be part of. I felt really excited. We wanted to be able to share the love of nature and educate people so that they would care for and love nature, too. We wanted to have a newsletter. We had these goals of leading monthly walks of some kind to get people really excited and learning about nature."

Bev also stressed how important it was to see members of the community and staff from Ojibway Park, ERCA, and Point Pelee National Park come together and discuss ways to integrate their work and take advantage of a newly found strength in numbers. Naturally, some challenges presented themselves during this process. The important matter of agreeing on a name for the newsletter proved to be quite difficult ("Impossible!", as Jim McAllister wrote in his President's letter in the first issue). One admirable suggestion by Alan Wormington was The Hooded Warbler but ultimately voters favoured "The Egret" as the name

of the newsletter and logo for the Club. Once the decision was made, Bev Wannick approached Patty Kristy, a local artist and employee of ERCA at the time, to illustrate a series of logo options. The agreed upon logo is the striking image of a white egret contrasted against a simple black circular background that we still see on the newsletter and Club website today. Years later in 1989, another local artist, Beverley Boudreau, was approached to provide sketches of a Great Egret, which would be used as a poster for ECFNC to sell and distribute. This poster is still handed out to speakers as a gift for presenting to the Club and a beautiful tribute to ECFNC's official bird.

The Great Egret, a species that has become a symbol of conservation, is a fitting logo for a club that has grown into a successful, thriving force and for a county that boasts one of the largest Great Egret roosts in Ontario at Holiday Beach Conservation Area.

Legal Matters

For a nature club to successfully operate on a large scale, a number of legal procedures needed to be undertaken to obtain charitable status. First and foremost was setting up a structure for ECFNC by drawing up a constitution. These by-laws, contained in a 12-page document, were written by Tom Hince and Alan Wormington. The by-laws are extensive and include all matter of management of the Club from the number of Board of Directors, meeting quorum at executive meetings, voting, duties of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, membership and dues, and public meetings and outings. These by-laws are still used by the Executive today.

The next order of business was for the Club to be incorporated. The original Executive submitted an application to the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. On Dec. 4, 1984, ECFNC was granted incorporation.

Revenue Canada Taxation documents on the subject of Operating a Registered Charity were circulated and reviewed before applying for status. Community Legal Aid (CLA), a service run out of the University of Windsor, was employed to aid in this process. CLA conducted a name search to ensure the validity of "Essex County Field Naturalists' Club" during March of 1984. In June of 1986, a law student working for CLA notified Jim McAllister by mail that an application for status as a registered charity had been submitted. Later that summer, a letter from the Head Office of Revenue Canada Taxation sent by Mrs. D. Campanale, Director of Charities Division, was received stating that ECFNC qualified for the tax-exempt status of a registered charity. On August 11, Jim received a notice from CLA congratulating the ECFNC on officially obtaining charitable status, a process two years in the making.

A final piece of legal business was taken care of in 1988. The process began in 1986 when ECFNC became an affiliated member of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON; now simplified to Ontario Nature). FON offered liability protection for non-profits and charities and the Executive agreed to obtain general liability insurance for the Club moving forward.

The First Five Years

At the same time the organizers were working out the details of forming the Club, promotion was needed to ensure a good turnout at the first public meetings planned for the spring of 1984. Brochures designed by Patty Kristy were distributed by Bev Wannick and John Pilkington, and potential members were phoned and approached on the trails to attend the first meeting of ECFNC. Wanting to balance affordability with earning enough money for operating costs, an inexpensive fee structure was instituted: \$10 for individual members and \$15 for a family at the same address.

ECFNC hit the ground running. On April 11, 1984, the first public meeting was held at the Windsor Public Library with an attendance of around 40 people. The excitement in the room

of being part of a newly formed naturalists club was palpable. Tom Hince was the first presenter. A park naturalist for Point Pelee National Park at the time, Tom presented a slide show of Point Pelee. He followed up with a tutorial on owls at the succeeding meeting in May, complete with a film and stuffed specimens for members to study and hold.

Attendance gradually growing each month, the June meeting was well-attended and Terry Pratt presented with a slideshow on a recent trip he had taken to Costa Rica. The June meeting turned out to be important in the Club's history since it was when ECFNC's first Executive was elected. By the fall of 1984, membership was already over 75 people and a permanent location for public meetings was established at the Marlborough Community Center.

Four core positions were filled on the Board of Directors on that night in June: President (Jim McAllister), Vice-President (Bev Wannick), Secretary (Peter Bondy), and Treasurer (Ralph Thomas) as well as eight other executive members: Terry Pratt, Mike Oldman, Mark Brunton, Deb Gordon Smith, Gary Allen, Sue Morrison, John Pilkington, and Phil Roberts. Five committees were also established including a Program Committee, Newsletter Committee, Field Trip Committee, Membership Committee, Advertising Committee, Phone Pool Committee, Refreshment Committee, and Typing Committee. Many of the Club's first directors and committee members continued to volunteer with ECFNC for many years and some are still actively involved in significant ways today.

Email was not available yet in this pre-personal computer age so the Phone Committee was given the task of contacting all members to remind them of the place and time of meetings and any other upcoming events and outings. Barb Ouelette was the chairperson for this committee and also responsible for providing refreshments at public meetings with Terry Ouelette, a tradition still occurring today.

Outings have always been a staple of ECFNC and the Field Trip Committee wasted no time planning outings for its members. The committee included Bev Wannick, Deb Gordon Smith, Paul Pratt, and Gary Allen. The first outings comprised of spring wildflower walks in Kopegaron Woods on April 28, 1984, and another to Ojibway Park the next month on May 16, as well as a walk focused on finding insects at Ojibway Park on July 14. By 1985, monthly walks were offered. Subsequent outings ranged from informal walks geared towards socializing and meeting other members to more ambitious outings like canoe trips on Cedar Creek or a camping weekend in May of 1985 at Point Pelee (50¢ per night per person!).

Making sure to pursue all objectives set out by the Club, ECFNC quickly became involved in citizen science projects. The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas was finishing up its 5 year run in 1985 and Paul Pratt helped organize volunteers to cover areas of Essex County that needed coverage. Already established Christmas Bird Counts were advertised in The Egret and ECFNC members have always made significant contributions to this long-running project across North America. In fact, members organized the first annual Cedar Creek CBC in 1985 and it has been going strong ever since.

1985 was also the first year members of ECFNC took part in the Baillie Birdathon (now called the Great Canadian Birdathon) to raise funds that would directly benefit the Club. The first team of participants raised \$300 for ECFNC, money that went toward a coffee fund and providing a small gift to speakers.

Another major event was organized in 1985 on September 11, when ECFNC held its first annual fundraising dinner at the Croatian Centre in Windsor. 106 people attended this first dinner, which went on to become one of the Club's chief events and has hosted many distinguished speakers through the years. Tickets were \$10 per plate for adults and \$5 for

children. Dick Benoit of the Detroit Audubon Society was the presenter and gave a talk on hawk migration at Holiday Beach.

The first ECFNC annual award was handed out at this event, an award that honours an individual who has devoted time to enhancing the Club and has made substantial contributions to the study of nature in Essex County. Wilfred Botham was the first recipient of the award for his immeasurable knowledge (gained not from a degree but rather was largely self-taught) and willingness to share it. Bev Wannick remembers fondly taking part in hikes with Wilf. "He was so wonderful, he knew everything. We could barely go very far down a trail because he saw everything and talked about everything he knew. It was just amazing." One of Wilf's many contributions to the study of nature after a life of studying botany was publishing a book titled "Plants of Essex County: a preliminary list", an exhaustive list of all known flora in Essex County and descriptions of where they occur. Along with a plaque, Wilf also received an honorary life membership and an account in *The Egret*. Wilf passed away in 1989. On October 13, 1990, Point Pelee National Park honoured Wilf by naming a trail after him, the Botham Trail.

A busy time for the Club establishing further activities to offer its members, 1985 was also the year that the Club developed a "Bird Hotline", a number members could call to get reports of rare and interesting bird sightings in the county, or to contribute their own sightings. The hotline was also used for dispensing information on upcoming events and was a number that members could dial for any questions or concerns they had about the Club. This hotline replaced the Phone Committee but was eventually discontinued with the dawn of more convenient technology.

In 1986, a marginal increase in membership dues was necessitated by cost of printing the newsletter (many of which were 30 pages or more and dispensed to an increased membership), hall rentals, auditor's fees, postage, and telephone calls. The new membership fees were \$12 per individual, \$18 per family, and a lifetime membership could be purchased for \$100. Three lifetime memberships had already been sold. Eventually, additional costs were alleviated by ECFNC receiving its charitable status as donations could now be made by members and the public. Fundraising projects were underway. One example was the manufacturing of crests and hats featuring the ECFNC logo, which were sold at monthly meetings. Crests were \$2 a piece and hats \$5.

The Club now well-established, the Executive was beginning to branch out into new ventures, some of which were directly involved in activism. ECFNC was evolving from a social club to an organization that was involved in conservation, letter-writing campaigns, and even protests in later years.

A definitive move in this direction was the creation of the Committee to Investigate the Acquisition and Management of Property, formed in 1987. Two years later, the formation of a separate general fund was established for the future acquisition of land and to preserve special areas of interest in Essex County. It would eventually expand into its own committee. Betty Learnmouth recalls how the fund first got started. "We had a bake sale and we raised some money and I said, 'you know we really should set up [a fund] so that if something comes up we've got money down the line.' So that's how the Heritage Committee first started." Money raised from raffles, events, bake sales, and auctions was placed in a separate bank account. In 1990, an announcement was made in *The Egret* by Cathy Watson that a committee was being formed to determine how and when money from the Heritage Fund could be used and the Heritage Committee was born.

From 1986 to 1989, efforts from the Club to stop hunting at Point Pelee were taken on by ECFNC in cooperation with other nature groups like FON. Efforts took the form of a letter writing campaign. The campaign also received media attention after the President of the Club in 1989, Peter Bondy, did an interview for the CBC on the matter. After a long campaign, hunting was finally stopped in Point Pelee in 1989 and a letter of thanks from ECFNC was sent to Lucien Bouchard, Minister of the Environment, thanking him for his efforts and for listening to the voices of concerned citizens.

1989 would prove to be a landmark year for ECFNC. At this time, two natural areas were under threat of development and the Executive decided the Club must intervene. The next series of years would see an expansion in the Club's activities toward activism while continuing to serve as a place for people to socialize and learn. ECFNC's involvement in protecting the Sandwich West Woodlot, Ruscom Shores Conservation Area, and Heinz Bush will be detailed in the next installment of the selected history of ECFNC.

The Presidents

Jim McAllister served as President for two years. He led ECFNC from an organizational meeting of nine people all the way to a group of about 200 members by the time he decided to pass the presidential torch. Jim shepherded the Club with steadfast determination through its infancy, through several important decisions that set its course, through a lengthy legal process, and through rapid growth following the first public meeting.

Like many other naturalists, birding was one of the inspirations for Jim becoming more actively involved in pursuits like helping form ECFNC. A teacher at the time, he was curious to see what some of his colleagues were so excited about while talking about birding at Point Pelee. He decided to check it out for himself. "One of the first birds I saw was an orange variant of a Scarlet Tanager. It was beautiful. So I told my wife about it and my wife said, 'well, let's take a trip to Point Pelee and we can bird all day and have a picnic in the afternoon'. We saw a lot of rare birds. Then we started to take trips. It got me across Canada to the west coast, got me to Alaska, got me to Inuvik. Inuvik was a 10,000km round trip."

This passion for nature is reflected in Jim's leadership of the Club. Yes, it was a Club for socializing, sharing knowledge, and bringing a community together, but he also knew it would become an organization that provoked attitudinal change around conservation and protect properties from development and the wildlife that uses them. This foresight is alluded to in his last President's report published in Vol. 2, No. 4 of The Egret: "As naturalists we must continue to educate and speak out on those matters which concern us all, while recognizing that the environment will always be under attack and we must be ever vigilant and tenacious."

In the same President's report, Jim started by writing, "At the end of December a new board and a new president will take over and this I think, will signify an evolution of the club from shaky toddler to self confident youth." With Jim's leadership, a dedicated Board of Directors, and participation from enthusiastic members, ECFNC spent little time on shaky legs. Rather, it began its life already bounding across the field.

Deb Gordon Smith took over as President in 1986 and served until June of 1987. She had already served on the Executive for two years and contributed to the Club Calendar in The Egret.

What Deb brought to the forefront during her Presidency was her passion to engage youth. With help from other members like Bev Wannick, 1986 and 1987 saw a push to encourage young people from across the county to get involved in the Club and learn about nature and conservation.

From the first issue of The Egret, Deb Gordon Smith wrote the Junior Naturalist's Club section, appearing at the end of each issue. This eventually led to a separate publication started in 1986, The Junior Egret. Editors/contributors included Deb, Bev Wannick, Shannon Managhan and Anne Barbour. Annual subscriptions to The Junior Egret were \$5. The publication was successful for a number of years and there with 17 members to the Junior Naturalists by 1989 but the project was eventually discontinued. In Vol. 4, No. 1 of The Egret in 1987, an entire section of the newsletter was dedicated to writings from senior students of the Writer's Craft program at W.F. Herman Secondary School. Writings ranged from poetry to short nature essays.

In Vol. 4, No. 3 of The Egret, Deb announced her resignation as President due to a move to Oshawa. In her report, she writes, "It is with a great deal of sadness we leave this area and all the wonderful people we know here, but the anticipation of a new start is very great." Though only serving as President for a brief time, Deb's engagement of youth left a mark on the Club. A testament to her commitment, youth engagement paid off handsomely for Brendon Larson, a Club member and student in Grade 11 at Harrow District High School. Brendon participated in a Canada-wide Science Fair in Winnipeg and won the Forestry Division competition in 1988 with his project titled, "Succession at Arner Point". Brendon received a \$1,000 university scholarship for winning and proved how important it is for ECFNC to involve those in their formative years.

Peter Bondy, who was Vice-President at the time of Deb's departure, took over as interim President in 1987. Already heavily involved in the Club since its inception, Peter easily fell into the leadership role. Eventually, with encouragement from fellow members of the Executive who praised his abilities as interim, he was persuaded to make it official. He ended up being the President of the Club for 3 years.

Working in Sales and Marketing in the plastics industry in Windsor, Peter brought his business acumen to the Presidency and set out a goal to increase membership. He knew that to survive as a Club, you needed a strong membership base. Ads for the public to attend the ECFNC meetings were placed in newspapers and even aired on the radio on CKLW. ECFNC also made appearances with a booth at many events around the county. Flyers were also distributed to the University of Windsor and St. Clair College to encourage more students to get involved.

A fond memory for Peter was when he was approached by the Mayor of Detroit to represent ECFNC at the release of Peregrine Falcons into the city of Detroit, Michigan. Peregrine Falcons can still be seen regularly hunting around downtown Detroit and Windsor and have successfully bred on the Ambassador Bridge for years. Peter would go on to join the Friends of Point Pelee, eventually spending time as President of the organization. In 1989, Peter stepped down as ECFNC President and Tom Hurst was nominated into the position.

The Egret

Vol. 1, No. 1 of The Egret was released in the fall of 1984. Edited by Mike Oldman with support from Bev Wannick, this first issue immediately cemented the newsletter as a crucial facet of the Club's activities; a way to communicate directly to members, advertise upcoming events, and dispense knowledge of natural history in the county and beyond. The first issue included a letter from the Editor, a short history on the beginning of the Club by Jim McAllister, 1983 highlights of the Breeding Bird Atlas in Essex County by Paul Pratt, an article on rare plants in the county by Wilf Botham, a poem on Point Pelee National Park by Kathy Brazil, a Grey Fox sighting in Windsor by Paul Pratt, a piece on the sycamore tree by Bill Morsink, and

an article on a trip to the Maritimes by Jim McAllister. As previously mentioned, the first issue of The Egret also included a section for youth in its back pages titled “Junior Naturalist Club”, written by Deb Gordon Smith. The Junior Naturalist section included a crossword puzzle and instructions on how to craft a corn cob donkey.

With the Club still finding its financial footing in its first year, money was not available to cover the cost of printing and mailing the newsletters to all its members. ERCA graciously donated mailing and printing costs for the first two issues in 1984.

The first four issues of the Egret (1984 and the spring and summer issues in 1985) were stapled together in a smaller 8” by 6.5” booklet. The format of the newsletter was changed for Vol. 2, No. 3, when it was decided that The Egret would be updated to a standard 10.5” by 8” publication. It was straightforward to photocopy and distribute The Egret in this format and larger print made for easier reading. In the pre-digital age, hard copies of The Egret were mailed out until years later when email delivery made the process more economical and better for saving paper.

Producing The Egret was quite a cumbersome process in the early years of the Club compared to what it is today. As Betty Learmouth described, “Of course those were pre-computer days so this was cut and paste.” Given that it would be years before computers made editing and printing a simpler process, typed and handwritten articles were given to the Editor to cut out and paste to create the layout. In some cases, photographs and graphics had to be pasted on the handwritten or typewritten sheets and then photocopied to combine them with the text. In the September 1985 issue of The Egret, Mike Oldman announced that he would be stepping down as the Newsletter Editor to pursue other projects. The Editor for the first six issues of The Egret, Mike left behind an impressive body of work and set a high standard for future newsletters. He went on to write many articles appearing in later copies. In his final editorial, Mike Oldman thanked the many contributors to The Egret and wrote that, “Putting together The Egret has been a rewarding and educational experience for me, and I hope the effort has been worthwhile.”

In 1986, Betty Learmouth took over as Editor of The Egret with Russ Munro as Co-Editor. “I was new to typing but I quickly had to learn how,” Betty recalls of her introduction to Editorship. Betty filled the role as Editor for an impressive five years and was responsible for putting together 20 issues.

December 1990 would be her final newsletter, the longest-serving Editor to date. Betty became Vice-President of the Club and went on to write countless articles for The Egret, including several detailed outings reports. “That was one thing we wanted to do is make these places known so that others could go enjoy them,” Betty said of her informative reports. A look through past issues of The Egret throughout the years of the Club reveals Betty as a member who has dedicated immeasurable hours to ECFNC.

The next installment of the selected history of the Essex County Field Naturalist’s Club will appear in a future issue of The Egret.

Author’s note: My sincere thanks go out to everyone who helped with writing this article and providing valuable personal insight into the Club’s history. Jim McAllister, Tom Hurst, Bev Wannick, Betty Learmouth, Dave Kraus, and Peter Bondy graciously agreed to being interviewed. It was a great pleasure to meet with them and discuss the Club (quotes and information provided by Tom Hurst, Phil Roberts, and Dave Kraus will appear in the next installment of the Club’s history). Thank you to Alan Wormington who provided answers for some details on the early years of ECFNC through email correspondence. I also extend my

thanks to Tom and Peggy Hurst, Dave Kraus, and Jim McAllister for lending me their old copies of the The Egret. Finally, thank you to Carl Maiolani for lending me the by-laws, minutes of Executive meetings, and financial documents of the Club. Much of the content of this article comes from past issues of The Egret.

Truly ubiquitous, yet never to be taken for granted...

The Eastern Garter Snake

By: Steve the Snake Guy (Steve Marks)



An Eastern Garter Snake – Photo by Tom Preney

Eastern Garter Snakes are easily the most recognisable of Ontario's snake species. Even those not very familiar with snakes will often be able to describe one. But if this is indeed the case, why can't people remember their name?

Garter snakes are named for their appearance - stripy, like the sleeve garters of days gone by, which men used to use to hold their shirt-sleeves and cuffs in place! Today, traditional barbershop quartets still use these as part of their costume.

So the name is *garter*. Not "garder", "gartner", "garner", or "garden snake". Snakes are certainly not capable of manual labour, so "gardener snake" is definitely out of the question! People have been getting the name wrong for years, and will undoubtedly continue to do so... Now, as recognisable as they may be in their stripy form, eastern garter snakes actually come in a huge variety of colours and pattern variations! Typically, they have three long pale yellow stripes running the length of their bodies, from the neck to the tail. There are striped ones alright, but some of them have the dorsal stripe missing. Some of them have no stripes at all! They come in green, brown, black, orange, red, yellow, blue, and varieties of these and more colours! Within Essex County, and a few other spots in Ontario, albino specimens (missing most colour pigments) and melanistic specimens (nearly all black) have been documented. One unusual phenomenon that is fairly well known in this species is melanism. Melanistic snakes are all, or nearly all, black. This theoretically facilitates rapidly attaining optimum temperatures while basking, so the snake can spend more time in hiding than exposed to predators and the elements. More often than not, these black garters have white under their chins. These animals are usually associated with islands (like Pelee Is.) or peninsulas, where the gene flow is reduced. There are, however, examples found randomly distributed.

Garter snakes don't appreciate being grabbed. In fact, they quickly flee whenever encountering people, viewing us as a very real threat to their safety. If they are caught, they will often thrash around in an effort to escape and musk or bite in defence. Musk, which exudes from their cloaca, is theoretically to cause predators to spit out the snake because of the really bad

taste and smell, so the snake can make a run for it. Biting, as in all snakes that resort to it, is a defensive mechanism that achieves the same goal.



A melanistic garter snake – Photo by Tom Preney

As the title suggests, these animals are found nearly everywhere in our Province. They range all the way to the shores of Hudson's Bay! Here in Essex County, they are in our natural areas, our farmland, and even deep within our towns and cities and in people's back yards! As a visitor or resident of our yards, we should understand the role they play in ecology, so that we can understand how beneficial it is to have them around! Garter snakes are predators. They prey upon many different kinds of animals. While earthworms and frogs and toads are definitely the most commonly observed prey items, all sorts of animals have been recorded having been eaten by garter snakes, including insects and larvae, rodents, fish, eels, leeches, spiders, snails, crayfish, salamanders, and even nestling birds and eggs! Naturally, predators are a necessary part of nature, which help to keep populations of other species normal, which helps prevent diseases from surfacing in those species.

Garter snakes belong to the genus *Thamnophis*. In Ontario, there are four members of this genus. The only one of these that the average person could expect on their property, however, is the topic of this article. This species is harmless to humans. When you're fortunate enough to encounter one, take advantage of the opportunity! One doesn't often get a chance to interact with wildlife so closely! Encourage young people to appreciate the snake, and take a photo to remember the occasion! You certainly don't have to catch it – just watching it explore can be an awesome experience! Use your smart phone to record sightings with the Ontario Nature Reptile and Amphibian Atlas app! Citizen science really helps!

The Eastern garter snake is the most commonly encountered snake in the Province, and a contender for the truly most common species, but that doesn't mean we should take them for granted. This species is almost certainly in decline, although they certainly aren't in trouble –

yet. There are many pressures on these animals. Pollution, habitat destruction, poisons, prey species decline, road mortality and direct persecution all contribute to the decline in snakes, including garter snakes. Please join in the efforts to protect garter snakes, and indeed all native wildlife into perpetuity!

Reflections from a Dragonfly

By: Ian Naisbitt

16 February 1991 to 2016

Little Reggie (Lil' Reg) the Dragonfly is 25 years old this year and with his small group of friends they looked back and reflected on their accomplishments.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." — MARGARET MEAD

In 1991, the Little River Enhancement Group (Lil' Reg) was created by educators and representatives of the City of Windsor, Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy, Essex Region Conservation Authority, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Habitat 2000 Club at the former Concord Public Elementary School. Accordingly, Lil' Reg "adopted" the Little River Watershed, which drains portions of the Town of Tecumseh and the City of Windsor into the Detroit River. Local schools and community volunteers have helped with Lil' Reg's efforts to improve the quality of the watershed ecosystem. Our umbrella group coordinates beneficial environmental activities throughout the river basin using a multi-stakeholder approach in the Windsor-Essex community. Local volunteers have participated in 37 river cleanups and 88 planting events; we have planted over 34000 trees and shrubs. In 2007, Lil' Reg restructured and became a committee of Essex County Nature. Today, we continue to work with our partners to achieve our objectives:

- Support the creation of greenways/ natural corridors/ nature trails;
- Encourage the protection and restoration of natural habitat areas;
- Collaborate in the revision of land-use planning documents;
- Address water quantity and quality issues;
- Promote community involvement and public education;
- Assist other community groups and projects.

Elementary and secondary school students, their parents, grandparents and teachers are to be commended for their time and effort over the years to make this a success story. Additionally, there are countless community volunteers that helped us and are deeply appreciated by Lil' Reg. This intergenerational group of volunteers has made a difference in the ecosystem health of the Little River Watershed. Friends of Lil' Reg have attended hundreds of meetings, open houses, workshops and brain storming sessions to have input into planning documents.

We have made a difference by participating in cleanups, plantings and nature trail developments at various sites **within the Little River Watershed**:

City of Windsor: Ford Natural Corridor, Twin Oaks Business Park, East Riverside/ Blue Heron Lake and Hill, Little River Corridor Park, Canadian Sign, Windsor Campgrounds, Hayes Farm, Derwent Park, Lakeshore Woods Park, Teedie-Hawthorne Park, Cloverleaf at E.C. Row Expressway and Lauzon Parkway (north-west quadrant); connecting the Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) at the Windsor International Airport (YQG);

Town of Tecumseh: Weston Park, McAuliffe Woods Conservation Area and McCarthy Farm/ Downing Drain.

Our partnership has also planted trees **outside of the Little River Watershed:**

Amherstburg: Essex Region Conservation Authority's Demonstration Farm;

Essex: Gesstwood Retreat – Camp Centre and the Grosso Farm;

Lakeshore: former Maidstone Sanitary Landfill Site;

Tecumseh: Millennium Park and A. V. Graham Public School;

Windsor: Malden Park, David Suzuki Public School and Realtor Park.

Recently, Lil' Reg requested that the City of Windsor create a new park in the Twin Oaks area. It will add to the greenway system of "natural corridors" that have been established in the Windsor-Essex community. This network of nature trails encourages people to get outside and make that much needed connection with nature and rivers.

The reason Lil' Reg has been so successful in improving the ecosystem health of the watershed is due to their extensive partnership. A "Tip of the Cap" to our partners:

- Browning-Ferris Industries/ Progressive Waste Solutions;
- Casino Windsor – Code Green;
- City of Windsor;
- County of Essex;
- Detroit River Canadian Cleanup;
- Essex County Nature;
- Essex Region Conservation Authority;
- Ford Motor Company of Canada/ Essex Engine Plant;
- Greater Essex County District School Board/ Concord Public Elementary School;
- Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change Canada;
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry;
- Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change;
- Unifor Local 200;
- Windsor International Airport.

Our group has benefitted from the financial support from the following organizations:

- Canadian Tire Corporation;
- Canadian Wildlife Federation;
- City of Windsor;
- Essex County Nature;
- Essex Region Conservation Authority;
- Evergreen Foundation;
- Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change Canada;

- Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change;
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry;
- Riverside Sportsmen's Club;
- Windsor – Roseland and Windsor – St. Clair Rotary Clubs;
- SEEDS Foundation, Alberta;
- Shell Environmental Fund;
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation;
- WindsorEssex Community Foundation.

Awards and Honours (1990 – 2016)

This list of awards and honours is shared between the former Concord Public Elementary School and the Little River Enhancement Group:

Provincial/ Regional Acclaim:

1992: Environmental Award from the Ontario Horticultural Association.

2016: Volunteer Conservation Award from Essex Region Conservation Authority.

National Acclaim:

1990: National Wildlife Week Runner-up Award from the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

1991: National Wildlife Week Best Entry and Overall Winner Award from the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

1995: Earth Award from the Society of Environment and Energy Development Studies (SEEDS) Foundation Alberta.

2001: Environmental Award from the Canadian Tire Corporation.

2003: The Great EcoKids Challenge from Earth Day Canada.

International Acclaim:

1991: Champion Defenders of the Planet Award from Dayton Hudson Corporation in conjunction with United Earth and the United Nations Environment Program, New York City.

To commemorate our special celebration this year, the Little River Enhancement Group is planting the “Lil’ Reg 25th Anniversary Grove” of 25 trees along the Ganatchio Trail and placing a granite boulder with our logo on it in the grove.

Little Reggie the Dragonfly and Friends are pleased with their accomplishments and we will continue to improve the ecosystem health of the Windsor-Essex community.

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Before Photograph April 1989



After 2 Years and 5 Cleanups



Detroit River/Ojibway Park Outing

By: Jeremy Hatt

On January 9th, 30 participants joined leaders Kory Renaud, Jeremy Bensette, and Jeremy Hatt on an outing along the upper Detroit River and Ojibway Park. The trip was a joint venture of ECFNC and the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO).

Mild temperatures and sunny skies made for a beautiful day, the last before a drastic change in weather the following day, which saw a significant drop in degrees and a dumping of snow across the county. Warmer temperatures meant fewer birds but the group's spirits were high and everyone had a great time socializing. The best winter birding on the Detroit River is experienced when Lake St. Clair freezes over, concentrating large numbers of waterfowl along the river where water stays open due to thermal discharge and strong currents.

Our group met at Lakeview Park Marina, where the Detroit River meets Lake St. Clair. The marina has seen many good rarities in winters past including Trumpeter Swan, King Eider, Red-necked Grebe, and Black-legged Kittiwake. It's also a reliable place to see uncommon waterfowl like Long-tailed Duck and all three scoter species and is a popular hangout for photographers looking to take pictures of Bald Eagles. One rarely visits the marina without seeing eagles, which take advantage of the open water for fishing and an unlimited supply of waterfowl in colder winters. Up to 50 have been counted at one time here before.

Though waterfowl were scattered, our group managed to find low numbers of expected *Anatidae* like Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Mallard, American Black Duck, Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser. Highlights included a Ring-necked Duck pair, four Hooded Mergansers, two Great Blue Herons, and two Bonaparte's Gulls. From Lakeview Park Marina we drove east to Sand Point Beach. Many more waterfowl were present here and after carefully scanning rafts upon rafts of ducks, we added American Coot to our list as well as a Great Black-backed Gull.



**Birders enjoying the Ganatchio Trail –
photo by Kory Renaud**

Our next stop was Little River Corridor. This is an excellent location for waterfowl when Lake St. Clair is frozen since warm water expelled from the Little River Pollution Control Plant keeps the water open throughout the winter. Wood Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Belted Kingfisher have been found overwintering here in previous years. Once again, mild temperatures resulted in a lack of waterfowl on the river so our group took to the Ganatchio Trail hoping to find some passerines. We had good looks at a few common species like Blue Jay, Northern Cardinal, Black-capped Chickadee, American Tree Sparrow and American Goldfinch. Sharp-eyed members of the group also had brief looks at a Red-tailed Hawk and a Cooper's hawk.

During a break for lunch, many members of the party went to see a Snowy Owl that had been reported from a nearby suburb. It's not every day you get to see a Snowy Owl perched on a roof! While birders were observing the owl, the owners of the home that it was

perched on came outside, completely oblivious to its presence. ECFNC member Dan Loncke pointed out their visitor and they were ecstatic to see such a beautiful bird on their house!

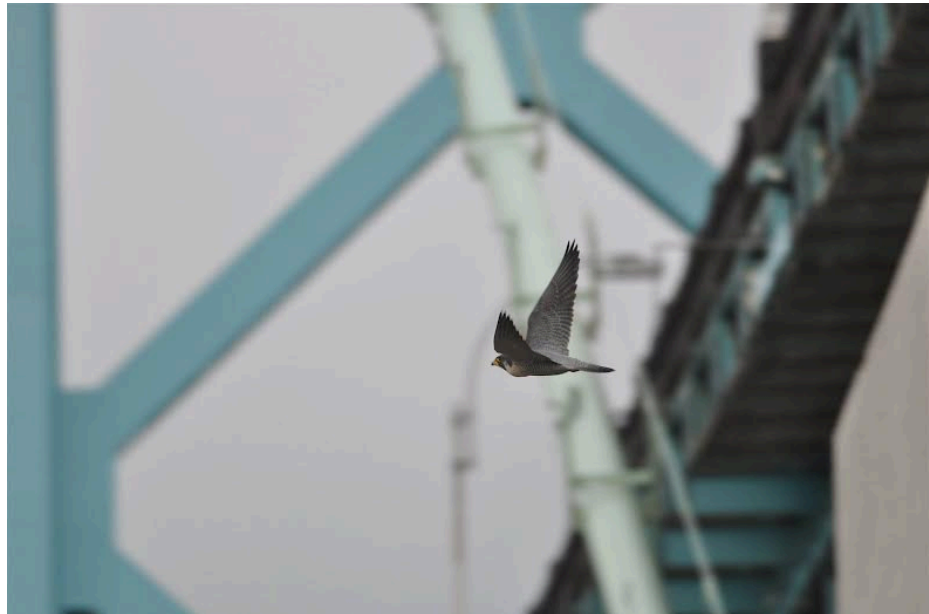


Snowy Owl – photo by Kory Renaud

In the early afternoon, our convoy of cars met underneath the Ambassador Bridge at University Avenue and Huron Church Road. Though this might not seem like a high-quality birding destination, it's where the resident Peregrine Falcon pair's nest is located and always worth a stop. Within seconds, the falcons afforded excellent looks as they called to each other and flew from beam to beam beneath the bridge. They eventually flew

up to land next to the "A" and the "B" of the Ambassador Bridge sign providing a nice photo op.

Members of the group then noticed a number of Canvasback flocks beginning to fly over. Waves and waves of these birds flew over in loose V formations for about twenty minutes and our final tally was 4,070 birds. Seeing this many Canvasbacks in such a short span of time was a highlight of the outing and a good reminder of how important our area is for this species. Lake St. Clair and the lower Detroit River are designated as Important Bird Areas by



Peregrine Falcon at the Ambassador Bridge – photo by Kory Renaud

Bird Studies Canada and Birdlife International for their large concentrations of waterfowl that stage here in the fall and winter. The lower Detroit River holds greater than 1% of North America's population of Canvasback and in previous years, an average of 8,000 have been counted on the Rockwood Christmas Bird Count in Michigan. In 2014, an estimated 50,000 birds were reported to eBird from the Detroit River mouth at Lake Erie!



Canvasbacks flying over the Ambassador Bridge – Photo by Kory Renaud

Our final stop was Ojibway Park to observe the feeders and see what other woodland species we could scrounge up. We found Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Finch, and many Dark-eyed Juncos. A few lucky members of the group spotted the Fox Sparrow that frequented the feeders over the winter. It was nice to see families out enjoying the weather

and children feeding birds from their hands...a good way to inspire the next generation of naturalists!

We finished with a list of 44 species, which was a commendable count considering the weather. Complete lists from each location were inputted into eBird and shared with those in attendance.



Tufted Titmouse – Photo by Kory Renaud

Second Annual WEP Birds Depths of Winter Summary

By: Dan Greenham

Windsor-Essex-Pelee Birds (WEP Birds) is an online forum created by ECFNC member Kory Renaud for reporting and discussing bird sightings in the Windsor, Essex and Pelee areas. WEP Birds is open to all levels of birding expertise, from beginners to "experts". Visit www.wepbirds.com to learn more.

Anybody who knows a birder knows that birders love lists. At the very least, most keep a life list of the species that they have seen in their lifetimes. A lot of birders also keep regional lists of birds seen in one geographic location such as Ontario, Pelee, or Ojibway Park. Many individuals, and indeed provinces as a whole, maintain a winter list of birds encountered during the period of December 1 through the month of February. A message on a Nova Scotia birding list last year alerted me to an even more challenging variety of winter listing known as the Depths of Winter List (DOWL) which only counts species encountered during the month of February.

The start of February 2015 was a particularly nasty one for us in Essex County with snow and frigid temperatures enveloping us from all angles and pinning many of us indoors. During a text exchange with fellow members of WEP Birds regarding a storm at the time the idea to try a DOWL in our area was born and met with great enthusiasm. The thought was that, at the very least, it would be a fun thing to do. At best, and this has been proven to be true (or at least I think so), it could spur persons interested in natural history and ornithology to get out and about when the weather is most challenging. We all need a bit of a shove to get into the field when the weather turns for the worst, don't we?

In 2015, the WEP Bird community's collective observations uncovered 97 species. I think that I can safely speak for all involved that this total shattered the glass ceiling of our expectations. An early Eastern Phoebe in the Spring Garden area, a Red-throated Loon in Kingsville, and a Brown Thrasher easily stood proud as highlights to a very successful first campaign. This was a harbinger of better things to come.

This year, the WEP Bird community discovered an incredible 116 species. A total of 26 new species were found this year and brought our two-year total to 123. Much of this increase can be directly attributed to the terrific number of geese, swans, and ducks that spent most of the winter in our area. They are usually less common this time of year. A Marsh Wren, Eastern Meadowlark, and an early American Woodcock stand out from the crowd as well.

The many days of above average temperatures, little snow, and less ice cover on the lakes could point to a reason for such a sharp increase in the number of sightings. While I am inclined to believe that as well, it behooves us as responsible observers to look at a longer term average before jumping to conclusions. I would like to hopefully believe that there were also many more people involved and contributing sightings.

The true success of this endeavour is due in large part to the WEP Bird community and the tremendous sense of communal purpose generated there. A good number of individuals contributed sightings, some who are very well known already, and some who might be newcomers to WEP Birds and birding in general. We thank all who became involved for their time and contributions. And we hope that some of you who followed from the sidelines this year will join us next year when the calendar turns to February.

A complete list of species seen in February in 2015 and 2016 can be found at <http://www.wepbirds.com/depths-of-winter---february-sightings>.

An Exciting Sighting

Submitted By Karen Hass



On Sunday, Dec. 27/15, my partner John and I checked out the Vollmer Centre pond (one of my favourite places to bird).

While looking at the regulars ... geese, gulls and a Kestrel, out of the corner of his eye, John noticed a bird fly in that was about the size of a Red-tailed Hawk. I got my bins on it and saw that no, it was a Peregrine Falcon! We were very excited and got good views and I managed to get some decent photos of the bird.

Although I submitted my report to eBird that day, I didn't get home until a few days later to download my photos.

I put 2 up on the Ontario Birds Facebook group and immediately was corrected in my ID by Lev Frid and Reuven Martin.

The bird was a GYRFALCON!!! A Lifer for both John & I. What an awesome bird!

Apparently, this isn't a bird you see regularly and we were VERY lucky to have spotted it.

Gyrfalcon – Photo by Karen Hass

Great Canadian Birdathon

This May, the time you spend birding can help the very birds you're looking at. Join the Great Canadian Birdathon and conserve birds and biodiversity across Canada!

It's so easy to participate. All you have to do is gather your sponsors and go birding or just sponsor someone else that is participating. You can even donate a portion of the funds you raise to your local naturalist club. Over the years participants have directed a portion of what they raise to our very own Bluebird Committee. There is potential to get up to 50% back if the "birder" raises \$5001.00 or more-see chart below.

To Club Programs

Great Canadian Birdathon & Bird Studies Canada

\$ 1.00-3000	25%	75%
\$ 3001-3500	30%	70%
\$ 3501-4000	35%	65%
\$ 4001-4500	40%	60%
\$ 4501-5000	45%	55%
\$ 5001-up	50%	50%



Club birder to be announced! Any volunteers????

Visit birdscanada.org/birdathon to learn more.

Happy Birding!



1991 to 2016

25 Years

And still going strong!

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." — Renowned anthropologist MARGARET MEAD

37 River Cleanup Events

88 Planting Events

Over 34000 Trees and Shrubs in the Ground

Bald Eagles nesting in the Watershed!

Activities and Events

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, visit www.essexcountynature.com, or contact the executive (please see contact page). Let us know your ideas for upcoming excursions. Consider volunteering as an excursion leader!

April 13th – Nature Conservancy of Canada – 7:30pm – NCC in southwestern Ontario; an overview of how NCC works and how we focus our efforts, highlighting a few key areas and current projects, including Pelee Island, Essex County mainland, and Norfolk County. Our approach to ecological restoration, properties to visit and volunteer opportunities will be profiled.

April 24th – Earth Day Bake Sale - Please join us at Malden park for a Heritage Committee fundraiser 10:00a.m. To 3:00p.m. Looking for volunteers to donate bake goods and also help out at the booth. (You don't need to belong to the Heritage Committee). Please contact Cathy Lapain at aclapain@gmail.com. We need a lot of bake goods to make this fundraiser a success, so please donate generously. If you can't help by donating bake goods or helping out at the booth, please drop by and buy some goodies! **If you are donating cookies or squares please packaged in 6's or 12's for easy pricing. Please cover all baked goods with clear plastic wrap.**

Thanks! See you there!



April 30th - May 1st – 22nd Annual Pelee Island Trip - 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 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 (including the new habitat restoration work completed on my property).

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, and/or lounge at the Anchor and Wheel Inn.

I have arranged for bus transportation while on the island - no vehicles are necessary on the 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 at 9:30am.

Accommodations have been reserved at the Anchor and Wheel Inn. The motel and bed and breakfast style rooms are rustic, but 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 based on their wishes and availability.

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 at 11:45am and dinner at 5:30 pm on Saturday, breakfast at 8:30am and lunch at 12:45pm Sunday) and hot meals and snacks are also available on both ferry crossings.

The total cost will be \$ 185 this year. This cost will include: the two ferry trips, weekend bus transportation, four hot meals, overnight room accommodations, and all taxes and tips. The \$ 185 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, \$ 185 cheque (payable to David Kraus) or cash per person, and a few additional dollars for extra snacks, etc. if desired. The trails are elevated and dry, but you may wish to bring rubber boots to access my property or the bird banding station if it has been rainy. Carl will hopefully arrange for good weather as usual!

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 ferry trip, but with our own driver and rented bus, we can be flexible and able to visit various sites depending on the weather and the group's wishes.

To register for this trip: see me at the ECFNC meetings, call, or email/text:

Dave Kraus phone: 519 825 7491

email address: david.kraus@publicboard.ca

text: 519 257 8674

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

May 7th – Garlic Mustard Pull – 10:00am - Come one, come all. May 7th will be a lovely day for a little exercise and a lot of good when you join me to pull out the Garlic Mustard that threatens the native plants in the Heinz Woodlot. Last year, Patricia McGorman, Henry Driedger, and Linda and Ernie Kennette joined my sister, Linda Code and I, and we made a difference! We filled many garbage bags, did a little bending and stretching, and admired the plants coming up in areas where last year there was nothing but Garlic Mustard. The thing about Garlic Mustard, you have to do this for a few years to win the battle. Every year we will have less to remove, and we may even get a chance to skip a year. The seed remains viable for at least 7 years. Its a biennial, which means it makes a rosette the first year and seeds the second. That also means if we have a warm early spring, we can pull out some of next years plants as well. There is a corner we missed last year that I plan to tackle personally, but the

woodlot is small and we should be able to, with a little of your help, cover the whole thing. Garlic mustard comes up before the native plants, and makes a chemical that impairs the ability of the good guys to germinate. If we don't pull it, it will eventually become the only ground cover. That is not a pretty sight. The E.C.F.N.C. worked very hard to protect this green space, please don't let our labours, and raffles, and door to door fundraising be for naught. We start at 10, park behind the old Zellers (turn left (east) just before the Canadian Tire) on Erie Street south in Leamington. If it is drizzly, I will still be pulling. If it is raining, I will be out there the 15th. Come one, come all. Give your mother a bag of Garlic Mustard for Mother's Day. Yes, you can eat it!

For additional details or better directions, email me at pjihurst@gosfieldtel.com or call [519-839-4635](tel:519-839-4635).

May 11th –Ontario Nature - 7:30pm– Megan Anevich and Erin Mallon from Ontario Nature (formerly Federation of Ontario Naturalists - FON) will be speaking about Ontario Nature and their upcoming plans for stewardship of the Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve. Please join us for this informative talk and learn more about Ontario Nature. Our club is a subcommittee of Ontario Nature. Meet at the Ojibway Nature Centre at 7:30 pm.

June 8th- Massasauga Recovery at Ojibway Prairie Jonathan Choquette will be giving a talk about his work to recover the local population of Massasauga Rattlesnakes. The Ojibway Prairie population of Massasaugas (*Sistrurus catenatus*) is one of only two populations of this species remaining in Canada's Carolinian zone. It is geographically isolated from its Canadian counterparts by over 300 km, is genetically unique, and is the only representative of a tallgrass prairie population of this species in Canada. Historically, Massasaugas were distributed across much of Essex County, however, by about the 1960s they had become eliminated from all but the Ojibway/LaSalle region. Since then, things have only been getting worse for our little rattlers; the range of the Ojibway population has declined by an estimated 95% over the past 40 years! We are now at the point where less than a dozen adults remain. Although hundreds of hectares of suitable habitat have been protected within the Ojibway Prairie Complex and Greater Park Ecosystem, much of this is unoccupied by Massasaugas, and natural recolonization is hindered by roads, development and small population size. In order to prevent complete extirpation of the Ojibway population, and the ensuing collapse in Massasauga distribution and genetic variation in Canada, intensive recovery work is of great necessity. Since 2013, I have worked with Wildlife Preservation Canada to implement strategic recovery and monitoring actions recommended in the Recovery Strategy for the Massasauga in Canada. These actions include long-term monitoring, threat reduction, habitat protection and enhancement, public outreach, and population augmentation. Results from some of our recovery work to date will be presented. For example, last year, our field team observed three different Massasaugas using the habitat enhancement structures we created! We also started studying the hibernation habitat below-ground to help us choose the best sites for future releases. But there is still lots of work to do in order to secure the recovery of this ecologically and genetically unique component of Canadian herpetofauna.

**Essex County Field Naturalists' Club
Membership Form – Due annually**

Individual membership \$20.00 / year _____ Family membership \$25.00 / year _____

Student (full-time) \$10.00 / 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 _____

Please contact me to volunteer at ECFNC events!

Thank you!

Make cheques payable to: **Essex County Field Naturalists' Club**

c/o Ojibway Nature Centre

5200 Matchette Rd.

Windsor On, N9C 4E8