

# THE EGRET



THE ESSEX COUNTY FIELD  
NATURALISTS' CLUB

SEPTEMBER 1993 VOL. 10, #3

# THE EGRET

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## EGRET SUBMISSION DEADLINES

December Issue -- Due November 10th

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Greetings:

For many people the summer brings with it an opportunity for rest and vacation from their regular routines. For the executive of the E.C.F.N.C. and its committees, however, business goes on as usual.

In June, Carl Maiolani, my wife and I travelled to Ottawa to attend the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Annual Convention. While there we teamed up with a representative from Tree Plan Canada to explain and promote the Natural Habitat Restoration Program in Essex County. Tree Plan Canada provided funding to assist local schools and municipalities with their portion of costs in restoring their sites this previous spring. It was also helpful to the Club in setting up a professional display of N.H.R.P. activities at the convention. Delegates from all over Ontario are more aware of Essex County, the E.C.F.N.C., and showed an interest in visiting our area. This is encouraging as we attended the conference with an eye towards hosting the FON conference in the future.

The conference also marked the first time that we have been able to offer an official E.C.F.N.C. T-shirt. Designed and produced by Terry Ouellette these fashionable shirts are offered to members for a mere ten dollars. The price will allow everyone to visually support our club.

Our dealings with the Conservation Authority this summer have been both positive and critical. On one hand the E.C.F.N.C. criticized the Authority for its abrupt dismissal of its professional biologist and urged it to fill the position as soon as possible. E.C.R.A. has recently undertaken many natural habitat restoration and preservation programs and needs a qualified biologist to insure this success. On the other hand, the Club applied for funding from the Laidlaw Foundation to partially fund E.R.C.A.'s important Stewardship program which encourages private landowners to respect their natural heritage. At our Club picnic we promoted and raised a small amount of money for the Islands of Green Fund.

N.H.R.P. has taken a great step forward by hiring a seed collection co-ordinator for the fall harvest. Since club volunteers do the N.H.R.P. seed collection, the Club was given the responsibility to hire the co-ordinator. The position was advertised and after reviewing applications, the N.H.R.P. committee is proud to announce that biologist Gerry Waldron has accepted the contract which runs into December. Let us all get out into the field this fall and support Gerry in this work which is so important to the future of Essex County.

On a sadder note I must inform you that Tom Hince has stepped down from the Club's executive for personal reasons. We will miss him. He joined the executive just when it needed a new infusion of ideas and optimism. He became editor of the Egret when there wasn't one. Thank you, Tom, we look forward to your return at a future date.

Over the years the E.C.F.N.C. has let the Annual General Meeting fall to the wayside. The popularity of the members' night feature of the December meeting gradually pushed club business off the calendar. But Club members have pointed out that the Club's constitution demands an Annual Meeting, so from here on in, the January meeting will become the Annual General Meeting. This meeting will feature reports of the Directors and its committees on the previous years activities and reports on the Club's finances. This meeting will entertain any questions or motions put forward by Club members. The nomination and election of the Club's executive will take place at the Annual Meeting. Voting for candidates or general motions will be the privilege of any paid-up member or the holder of a written proxy by a paid-up member. The Annual General Meeting will give everyone a direct input into the operation and future direction of their club. Make a point to attend and ensure the meeting is a lively and fruitful one. Let the Executive explain what it has been doing in your name and let it know what you wish it would do for you.

Respectfully,

Thomas Hurst

## THE FIRST ANNUAL PICNIC

In lieu of the normal August meeting the ECFNC tried a new approach in the form of a picnic and member's day. It was hoped that this event could accomplish several goals. First to provide an unstructured forum for members to socialize amongst themselves; ie; have fun. Secondly, to introduce the Club and it's activities to the general public. Third to encourage others to join the Club, and finally to publicize and raise money for the Islands of Green Fund.

The weather on August 22nd was as perfect as Carl Maiolani promised it would be, Thus it was a joy at 7 a.m. to follow leader Tom Hince on a fall birding excursion at Point Pelee. Orioles, waxwings and flycatchers that weekend were as thick as thieves and several warbler species were in attendance. The uncommon lack of mosquitoes or flies this August day enhanced our enjoyment of observing scarlet tanagers, yellow throated vireo, northern waterthrush and both species of cuckoo. That it was obviously a good day to be out with the family was attested to by a tohee family frolicing amongst the hop trees.

The bird hike was so enjoyable that we arrived a little late for Phil Robert's bird banding demonstration at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area. Not so late, however, as to witness Phil placing a least flycatcher in Denise Hartley's open palm/ It laid there on its back motionless, captivated by Denise. But when Phil tipped her hand it flew off in a great rush. Phil explained that a passerine becomes totally disoriented when upside down and thus paralyzed. So Denise was not a hypnotist after all.

By noon the corn kettle was boiling and the barbeques were sizzling. The menu included shiskabobs, sausages, hotdogs, donated by Peggy Hurst, watermelon and cantaloupe, donated by Rick Bilinski, as well as cold drinks. I was quite entertained as Mike Malone, Peg Hurst, Carl Maiolani and Phil Roberts each in turn showed off their barbeque skills.

Close by, Terry Ouellette had set up displays on club activities under the four foot E.C.F.N.C. sign he'd created the night before. Terry, along with Carl and myself, took it upon himself to educate passersby about the club. That is when he wasn't trying to interest someone in a club t-shirt purchase. All the while Denise Hartley, our membership secretary, was on hand to scoop up any converts.

Throughout the afternoon Yvettes LePage was on hand with entertainment for the younger folks. People walked the banks of the marsh or took advantage of canoes made available by the Authority to explore by water. The Conservation Authority's summer staff was also available as an interesting alternative to the Field Naturalists' Club. It was a beautiful summer day with terns and eagles adding their presence to a fun filled afternoon.

Phil Roberts organized this event and must be commended for the wonderful job he did in making sure every aspect of the picnic ran smoothly. We would also like to thank the Conservation Authority for making its facilities available to the E.C.F.N.C. at no charge.

Well the picnic generated only a few new club members and only a small amount of money for Islands of Green; but judging by the response of the participants it certainly was a success. I, for one, hope that this becomes an annual event of the E.C.F.N.C.

## Bluebird Committee Report

Another year of Bluebird Monitoring is coming to an end. Thank You to the Monitors, and every-one else involved. Our Local population of Bluebirds is increasing.

The Ongoing Saga of the Harrow Ansi Trail.  
This year, the Harrow Ansi Trail did very well. 2 pairs had 3 broods each. Both these pairs built their first nests in late March and early April. The final, third broods fledged in the last days of August. That's 5 months of nesting! One pair produced a total of 11 fledgelings, the other produced 12.

~~The~~ Third pair of Bluebirds built an unusually high nest in a shallow box. A starling ate their first clutch of eggs. The monitor removed the shallow box, and put a deeper box on the same pole, to prevent any further mishaps with Starlings.

Within days, a pair of Tree Swallows moved in this new box. Meanwhile, the pair of Bluebirds set up house-keeping in a cavity in a nearby decaying oak tree.

In mid-June, the 4 Tree swallows fledged. Their nest box was cleaned out. Within days, the bluebirds were sitting in the top of the nearby oak with ~~3~~ 3 fledgelings. This is great, considering that well over half of the Natural cavity bluebird nests

fail, due to predators, Starlings, and English Sparrows.

In late-June, this pair of Bluebirds built a new nest in the new box. Obviously, they still liked this location, despite their earlier tragedy. This pair produced a total of 6 fledgelings; 3 in the Oak cavity, then 3 in the nest-box.

### Tree Swallows

This year, many monitors noticed some of their Tree Swallows were producing 2 broods. In many cases, they built their 2<sup>nd</sup> nest on top of the first nest, just days after the first brood fledged. In other cases, they began re-nesting immediately after the ~~first~~ ~~nest~~ faithful monitor cleaned out the first nest.

### Speaking of Cleaning

Dear monitors, please clean out your boxes before winter. All used nests contain bird droppings. In winter, rain and melting snow dissolve the droppings. This rots the boxes. Last March, we had to replace several 1 year old boxes, simply because they had rotted. This problem can easily be avoided by cleaning out each box, soon after the young fledge.

Also, remember to open up your boxes in mice-prone areas before October. Other-wise the mice will move in. Mice dirty the boxes, and ~~at~~ this also causes them to rot.

## Bauldry Boxes (See Illustration)

The idea behind these boxes, is, they are unpopular with the English sparrow, yet they are popular with Blue birds. Obviously, the Bluebirds are not afraid of a little rain.

This summer I met a land-owner with 3 of these Bauldry boxes. English sparrows are very numerous in his area, yet ~~he~~ he never saw any sparrows at his boxes. In May, a pair of Bluebirds arrived and set up house-keeping.

Another interesting fact is Tree Swallows, at least in this case, did not use these Bauldry Boxes.

In the past, some trail owners have commented that the Tree Swallows had taken all their boxes, perhaps even scaring off the timid bluebirds that had started building a nest. Perhaps if these folks convert a few of their boxes to Bauldry boxes, they will succeed in acquiring a pair of rare, beautiful bluebirds.

Of course, many trail owners are plagued with English sparrows. Perhaps, Bauldry boxes are the answer. Basically, any box can be converted to a Bauldry box, by drilling a hole in the roof, and covering this hole with screen.

## Monitor of the Year

The 1993 monitor of the year is Miss Denise Hartley, Besides being a dedicated

Monitor, she was the first person to phone in her data. If only the other monitors could be as consciencous! If your a monitor, ~~and~~ and you've sent in your data, pat yourself on the back! If you haven't sent in your data, PLEASE DO SO!

Here's the Data we need....

- Your name
- Your name of your trail, or location.
- Number of pairs of Bluebirds.
- Total number of Bluebirds fledged this year.
- Number of pairs of Tree Swallows
- Number of pairs of House Wrens
- Number of pairs of any other native cavity nesters.

Please send your data, A.S.A.P, to Betty Learmouth, or myself, Write to

Bluebird Committee  
 c/o Don Bissonnette  
 3718 Concession 3  
 R.R. #2 HARROW, ONT  
 NOR 1G0.

In the December Egret, we will show a Data Chart. This Winter, we hope to build some new boxes, and establish at least one new trail. Thanks again to every-one involved.

-Don Bissonnette



**THE HOME WORKPLACE**



# The Bluebird House That Bauldry Built

*A leaky roof means home-sweet-home to bluebirds, but turns off roost robbers like starlings.*

BARB PUSCHEL

AS LONG-LASTING metal fence posts replaced rotting wooden posts, bluebirds across America began losing their homes, and farmers began losing one of their best means of pest control. Bluebird life-style is well adapted to eating insects in open grassland areas and living in hollow trees open at the top, particularly hollow fence posts.

Concern for the bluebird population prompted citizens' groups to start putting up birdhouses. But typical birdhouses designed for the average songbird have had limited success. However, after 21 years of observation and experimentation, Vincent Bauldry of Green Bay, Wisconsin, has designed a better bluebird house.

The first thing about the new design that scandalizes many people, including professional ornithologists, is the hole in the roof. Vincent Bauldry patiently explains that fence posts have no roofs either. And just maybe the added moisture from the rain increases the eggs' chances of hatching. Wet nest sites also exclude competing bird species.

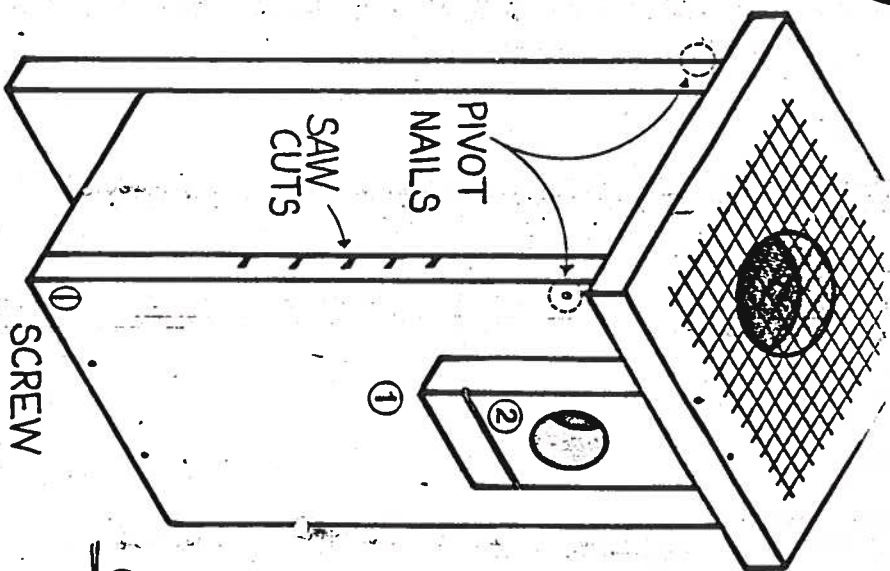
The extreme length of the box and the "collar" added to the front hole have their purpose too. They put the nest just beyond arm's length of a raccoon. The depth of the box also keeps young birds in the nest longer, until they can fly more certainly. Saw cuts on the inside of the box form a ladder.

Changing the traditional perch in front of the hole to a saw cut makes it harder for nuisance birds to sit in the doorway and harass the bluebirds. Naturally, the hole is just the right size for bluebirds and too small for competing starlings.

One side of the bluebird house swings open as an aid to yearly cleaning or checking for parasites. The finishing touches include drilling drainage holes in the bottom, painting the wood with a preservative mixture of one pint tar to one gallon of gasoline and mounting the house about six feet off the ground.

Bauldry's design has been in use since 1967 and has greatly increased the success of egg clutches. Now he

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Bluebird houses with skylights imitate hollow fence posts — the birds' natural nesting places.

and on center. Make a 3/4 inch horizontal cut 3/4 inch below the hole in the collar piece. Make five similar saw cuts below the hole on the inside as shown.

3. The box is nailed together so that the front and back lap the two sides. The bottom piece fits inside the four walls and the top piece fits over them. One side pivots out at the top for annual cleaning. Locate the side about 3/4 inch lower than the other and secure it with only two nails driven through the front and back at the top as shown. The screw at the bottom holds that side in place until cleaning time.

4. To finish the bluebird house drill drainage holes in the bottom and paint everything with a wood preservative.

**MATERIALS**

**Wood**

- 1 — 7 x 8 x 3/4" (top)
- 1 — 4 x 4 x 3/4" (bottom)
- 1 — 5 1/2 x 14 x 3/4" (front)
- 1 — 3 3/4 x 4 1/4 x 1 1/2" (front)
- 1 — 5 1/2 x 18 x 3/4" (back)
- 2 — 4 x 14 x 3/4" (sides)

**Hardware**

- 1 — 5 1/2 x 5 1/2" screen (top)
- 6 — 1 1/4" screws
- 24 — 1 1/2" nails

**CONSTRUCTION**

1. Cut a 3 3/4-inch hole in the top two inches from the center of the back edge. Staple the screen over the hole.
2. Glue and screw the 3 3/4-by-4 1/4-by-1 1/2-inch collar piece to the front, flush with the top and centered, with the 4 1/4-inch edge horizontal. Drill a 1/4-inch hole through the collar and front, 1 1/2 inches down from the top

is working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on setting up nest boxes for wood ducks based on a design similar to that of the bluebird houses. Where does he get his ideas? From Mother Nature, of course.

# TREASURER'S REPORT - MAY, JUNE & JULY

APRIL 30 BALANCES - CURRENT	316.01
BLUE BIRD	59.11
NHRP	-106.73
RESERVE	2535.87
HERITAGE	7549.07
	<u>10353.33</u>

INCOME: MEMBERSHIPS	195.-
RAFFLES	81.08
DONATIONS	757.40
SALES	17.-
GRANTS	46000.-
INTEREST	507.33 / 47,557.81

EXPENSES: TRAVEL	62.68
OFFICE SUPPLIES	12.71
TELEPHONE / FAX	51.73
DONATION TO NHRP 46,000.-	
POSTAGE	66.44
MISC. (TICKETS)	27.-
BANK CHARGES	12.05 / 46,232.61
	<u>11,678.53</u>

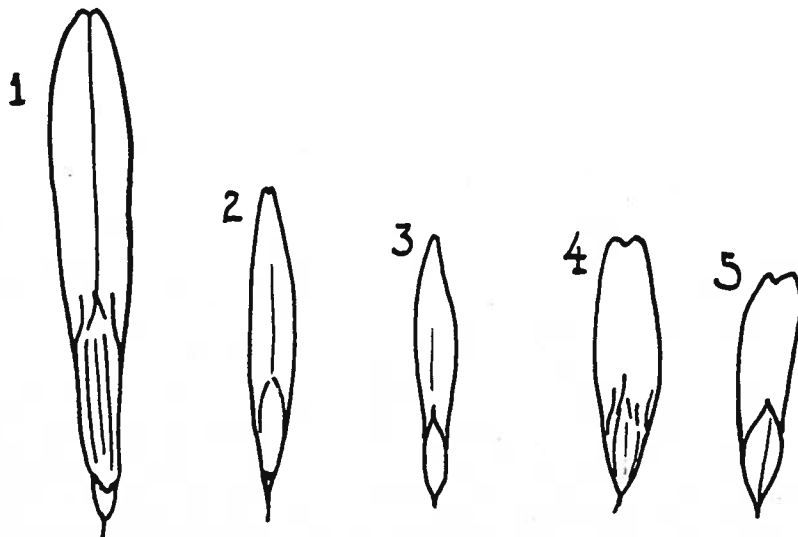
JULY 31 BALANCES - CURRENT	1095.63
BLUE BIRD	114.32
NHRP	-145.03
RESERVE	2718.17
HERITAGE	7895.44
	<u>11,678.53</u>

## Pumpkins on Trees

by Gerry Waldron

Ever heard of a Pumpkin Ash (Fraxinus profunda)? This tree is unlikely to be familiar to any club member except those inclined towards vacations in the hardwood swamps of the U.S. south. Recently, the Pumpkin Ash has been found spottily distributed in Ohio and Michigan. Now, based on specimens found at Devonwood, Maidstone, Kopegaron Conservation Areas and elsewhere, it appears we can include it in our native flora.

Where in our woods do you look for it? Like Eeyore the donkey character in Winnie-the-Pooh, the Pumpkin Ash prefers the gloomiest part of the forest - the part where water stands longest in spring and fall and where the mosquitoes lie in legions. But spare yourself and look for the tree in late fall and early winter when the forest pools are frozen. How would you recognize one when you meet it face to fascicle in a leafless state? The seeds (keys or samaras) are the most distinctive feature of the species. They are brobdingnagian; in fact, everything about the species is oversize, leaves, stems, buds, and seeds. This is not surprising - the species has twice the chromosomes of other ash species. All fall and winter the seeds sail slowly down onto the forest floor and pools where they freeze on the surface, trapped for ready examination. From the relative sizes and shapes of our native ashes you can see how distinctive this species is:



- 1 Pumpkin Ash
- 2 Red Ash
- 3 White Ash
- 4 Black Ash
- 5 Blue Ash

The pumpkin in Pumpkin Ash deserves explaining. In the morass of the Midwestern swamps the tree develops a swollen butt with vertical grooves which is vaguely pumpkinish if you ignore the bark and the tree sprouting from the top. This swollen base has not been exhibited by Michigan, Ohio and Essex County trees.

The last decade and a bit has held some surprises for students of trees in southwestern Ontario. Who believed in 1978 that not one, not two, but three species had been overlooked in our well-travelled woods? But they were there if only we had looked closely and thought laterally. First came Shumard Oak, Quercus shumardii, then Ohio Buckeye, Asculus glabra and finally Hill's Oak, Quercus ellipsoidalis. (We also lost three species: Scarlet Oak, Chestnut Oak and Mockernut Hickory which had been misidentified).

Are further surprises in store? Based on recent history we should be inclined to answer yes. Likely candidates are species whose range comes tantalizingly close to our border - trees that peter out in the woods of northern Ohio and southern Michigan. Trees like Shingle Oak, River Birch, White Basswood, and, best candidate of all, Swamp Cottonwood. And maybe those formerly included Mockernut Hickories, Scarlet Oaks and extirpated Redbuds. Maybe they really are out there waiting for a keen eye.

So if you find a tree that doesn't fit somehow; that just doesn't want to be exactly like one of the trees pictured in Native Trees of Canada, you may have something new. Bill Balkwill said it when we determined that some peculiar oaks were Shumard Oak and he said it again about Pumpkin Ash, "Well I'll be darned, I've been wondering about those for years".

Great Trees of Essex County

On Sept. 16, 1823 young English Botanist David Douglas wrote in his notes on Essex County, "The trees in the woods were of astonishing magnitude." The 25 year old Botanist was on an apprenticeship collecting for the Horticultural Society of England, and Essex County was the farthest west extension of his journey. David Douglas is commemorated by the Douglas Fir which he noted on a later trip to the west coast of North America.

He spent 9 days in Essex County in 1823 studying the forest from Amherstburg to the mouth of Pike Creek on Lake St. Clair. That year Amherstburg was only 28 years old. Douglas was awestruck by the height and girth of trees in the primeval forest which covered Essex County.

Today some of these trees are still standing: the Great Trees of Essex County. You will want to see them.

On the following list are the most accessible of the 27 trees Essex County has on the Honour Roll of Ontario Trees, recording the largest trees of each species in Ontario. The emphasis of the Honour Roll is of course on native trees. But exotics and historic trees are on record as well.

Great TreesOn public lands

2. Pin Oak
3. Common Persimmon
4. Chinquapin Oak
5. Kentucky Coffee Tree
10. Black Oak
13. Shumard Oak
14. Pin Oak

on roadside of private land with eager consent  
of owner to be listed

8. Black Alder
9. Black Oak
11. American Hornbeam
12. Horsechestnut

Harder to see - from distance only

6. Downy Hawthorn

Not viewable but irresistably interesting

1. American (Sweet) Chestnut
7. Jesuit Pear

1. American (Sweet) Chestnut  
(*Castanea dentata*)

native

in the Cedar Creek watershed  
height 78 ft. (24 m)  
diameter 3.4 ft. (103 cm)

When David Douglas surveyed the forests of Essex County, American (Sweet) Chestnuts were predominant beauties in every sylvan setting. Stately trees towering 100 ft. above the forest floor, many of an girth to a diameter of 6 ft. The rich elegance of the tree, its sturdy hardwood and delicious chestnuts, staple for both human and animal communities, placed the Sweet Chestnut at the heart of North American forests. And chestnut wood was used for just about everything.

But in 1904, the chestnut blight fungus entered North America through the port of New York on some oriental chestnut trees. During the next 50 years, the fungus spread relentlessly, decimating the American chestnut throughout its entire North American range. This was perhaps the worst catastrophe in forest history.

Still researchers say there is hope for the American Chestnut. There are survivors in three categories:

1. There are still several hundred seed-producing chestnuts which never contracted the disease and remain blight free.
2. Suckers continue to grow up from the stumps even of long-dead trees.
3. And hundreds of other chestnuts appear to have a weakened form of the blight which allows them to recover to a degree and keep growing. The blight in these trees is, in fact, sick with a virus: "the sickness is itself sick". These strains of blight fungus are called hypovirulent (less virulent or enfeebled).

Essex County's listed American Chestnut, called respectfully The Arner Chestnut, is in this last category: Sick with a hypovirulent form of the fungus. In fact the Arner Chestnut appears to have two separate strains of hypovirulent chestnut blight. Because its sickness is sick, The Arner Chestnut has been able to recover enough to keep growing to the astonishing height of 78 ft., diameter of 2.4 ft., making it one of the largest surviving Sweet Chestnuts.

So the tree has become a legend. It has also become a hero in the fight to save other chestnuts. Researchers are currently using The Arner Chestnut

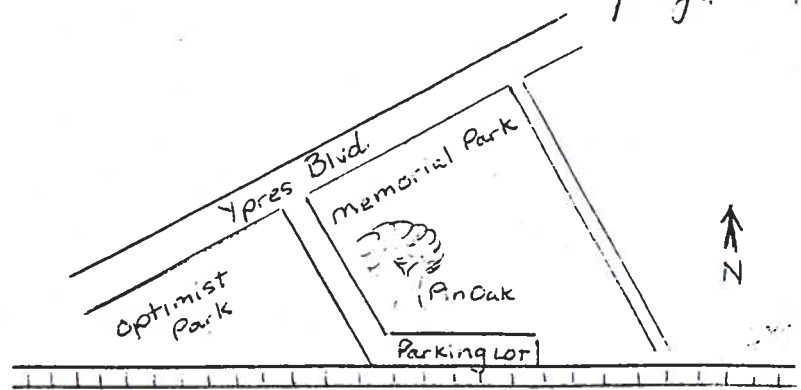


as a source of inoculum for blight-ravaged trees. The virus which weakens the American Chestnut's blight fungus spreads to the blight in the inoculated trees. While chestnuts with hypovirulent blight are not healthy, at least they survive and continue to grow.

Meanwhile, hopefully, more resistant types of Sweet Chestnut will come to the fore. So that once again this splendid tree may take its place at the heart of our regenerating forests.

Across Cedar Creek on the Southshore Stand two additional Essex County giants, Ontario's first listed Red Oak and Sassafras. They are not easily accessible.

2. Pin Oak  
 (*Quercus palustris*)  
 native



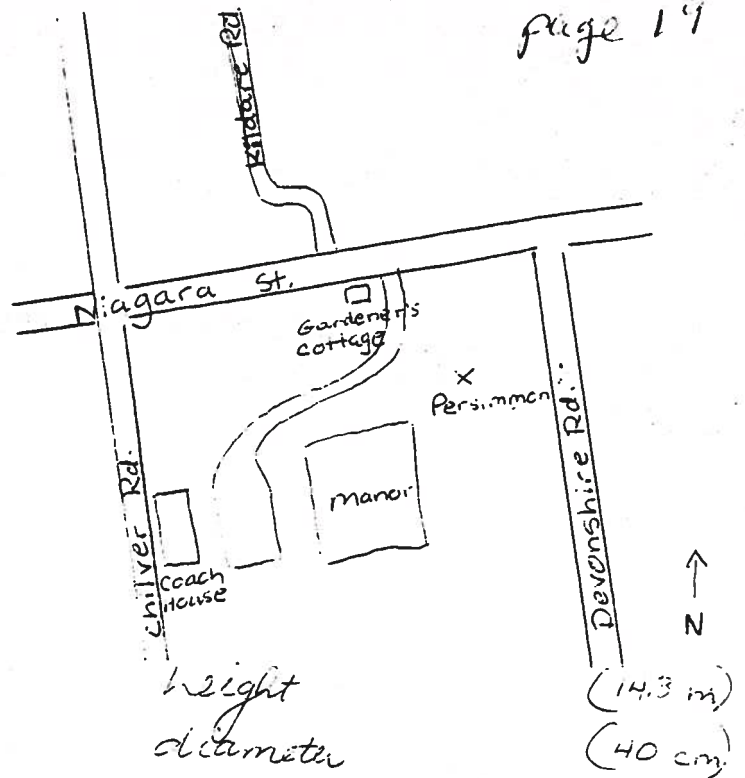
height	(27.5m)
diameter	(132cm)

This huge specimen, Ontario's largest Pin Oak, is picturequely located at the edge of Memorial Park's east playground. Memorial Park is one of Essex County's remaining stands of primeval forest, which is why it has been chosen for regeneration.

Pin Oak has the most deeply cut, sharp-pointed scars of all the oaks, giving the tree a distinctly lacy look in summer. The acorns are the smallest of the tree-sized oaks.

The name Pin may be due to the numerous small branchlets that stand out from the trunk and larger branches; these branchlets connect right into the heartwood like pins stuck in. Or the name may be from the French who first described this area, their word for thorn being "pin".

3. Common Persimmon  
(*Diospyros virginiana*)  
non-native exotic

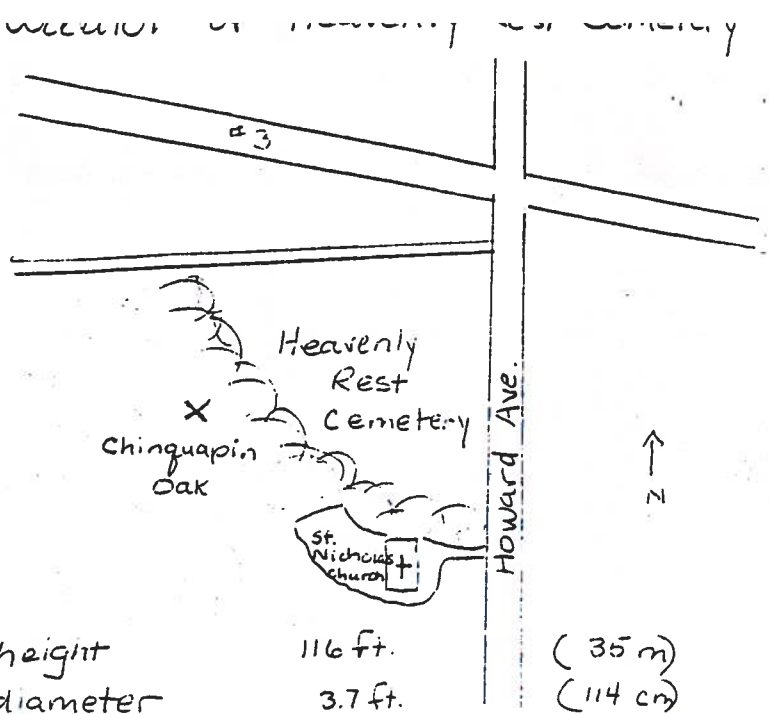


This tree is native only further south but was planted by the Walker family gardener as "an interesting exotic". The orange-reddish fruit is sweet and edible. The tree is female, producing fruit, but with no male tree nearby the seed is not fertile making the fruit also small. Most trees have both male and female flower components on the same tree though they often still require cross-fertilisation to produce fertile seed. But the Persimmon is an interesting example of a dioecious (or two houses, male and female separate trees) tree.

The nearby black bank is a remarkable pattern of rectangular blocks.

4. Chinquapin Oak  
(*Quercus muehlenbergii*)

native



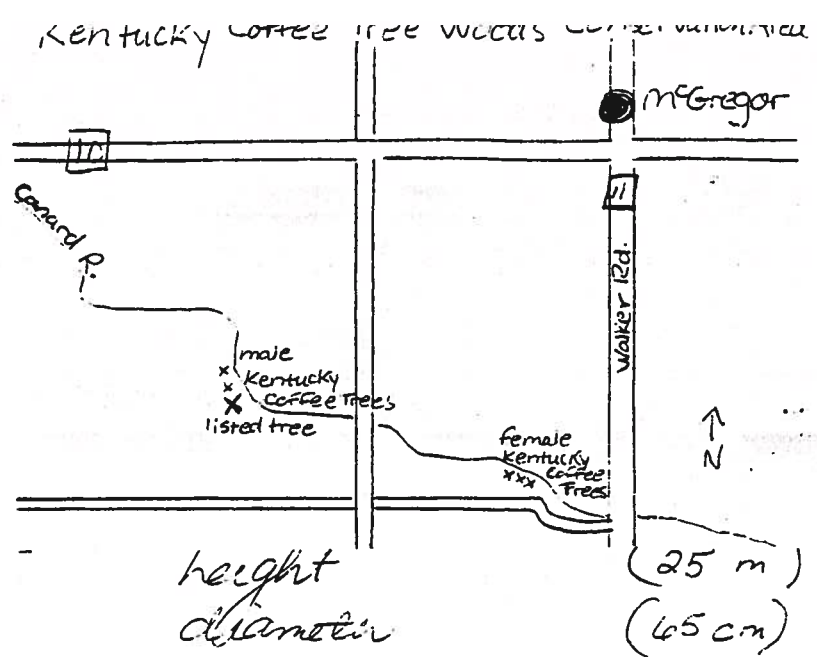
This oak is just now being listed on the Honour Roll of Ontario Trees. Being forest grown it is much taller than any other recorded Chinquapin Oaks in Ontario.

The leaves in shape resemble the American Chestnut and American Beech (interestingly, oaks are classified in the same family with chestnuts and beeches).

Chinquapin Oak has a straight tapering trunk with some buttressing at the base. It is not normally a large tree, so it is quite a thrill to see such a large specimen in our county.

## 5. Kentucky Coffee Tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*)

native



Here is Victorian order in the tree world at its best. On the west side of the road along a small tributary of the Carnard River stand 3 giant male Kentucky Coffee Trees; giant, that is, for Kentucky Coffee Tree which rarely gets larger than the largest of these 3 at nearly 80' height and with almost 2' in diameter. (The largest x on the map is listed.)

On the east side of the road .4 miles upstream stand 3 females whose seed is some of the only fertile Kentucky Coffee Tree seed being produced in Canada (where the World Wildlife Fund lists this as a threatened species). The flowers of this interesting pod tree are strongly fragrant. This attracts many insects including nocturnal moths which are probably the pollinators. The moths must travel the half mile bearing pollen which then fertilizes the female flowers. All in all a fairly complicated arrangement one might think.

Why 'Coffee Tree'? Settlers used the black seeds roasted as a bitter-tasting coffee substitute. Indians ate them like nuts. It is essential to some

the seeds since they are toxic raw.

A local biologist speculates that the Kentucky Coffee Tree may have been brought north from its Carolinian heartland by Indians carrying the beautifully polished dark seeds as game pieces.

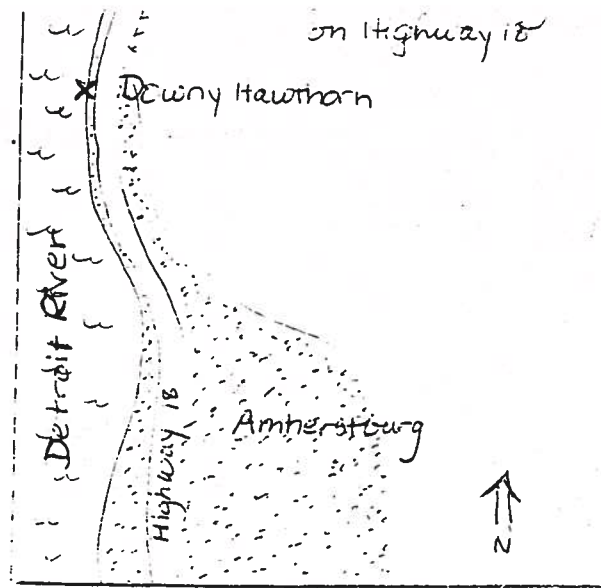
The Kentucky Coffee Tree leaves are the largest of any Canadian tree -- up to 3 ft. long and 2 ft. wide. Doubly compound, the leaves are composed of many leaflets, giving the tree a wonderful lacework in summer.

The Latin name is most interesting. Gymnocladus from 2 Greek words gymnos (naked) and klados (branch) for half the year the tree is naked being one of the last to leaf out in spring and one of the first to drop leaf in autumn.

dicicus from 2 Greek words di (two) and cikos (troupe) because male and female flowers are on separate trees.

6. Downy Hawthorn  
(*Crataegus mollis*)

native



height (6.8 m)  
diameter (62 cm)

Some ecosystems seem to be the utter delight of perfectly matched species. Case in point is the Canada River Valley and lower Detroit River banks for the Downy Hawthorns. We have seen these supposedly small trees rising far above their allowable height in the floodplains of the Canada River, and some of these trees will soon be measured for Ontario Honour Roll nomination.

North of Amherstburg stand the largest Downy Hawthorns currently listed on the Honour Roll. First is in the private yard of a unique house built handsomely around this gnarly veteran, which has stood for over a century on the banks of the Detroit River. When you have seen this tree you know you have truly seen a gnarly veteran. In fact he is so old he has lost his thorns.

Second on the list is one of a number of hawthorns displayed on a handsome estate lawn on the east side of Highway 18 as you approach Amherstburg from the north.

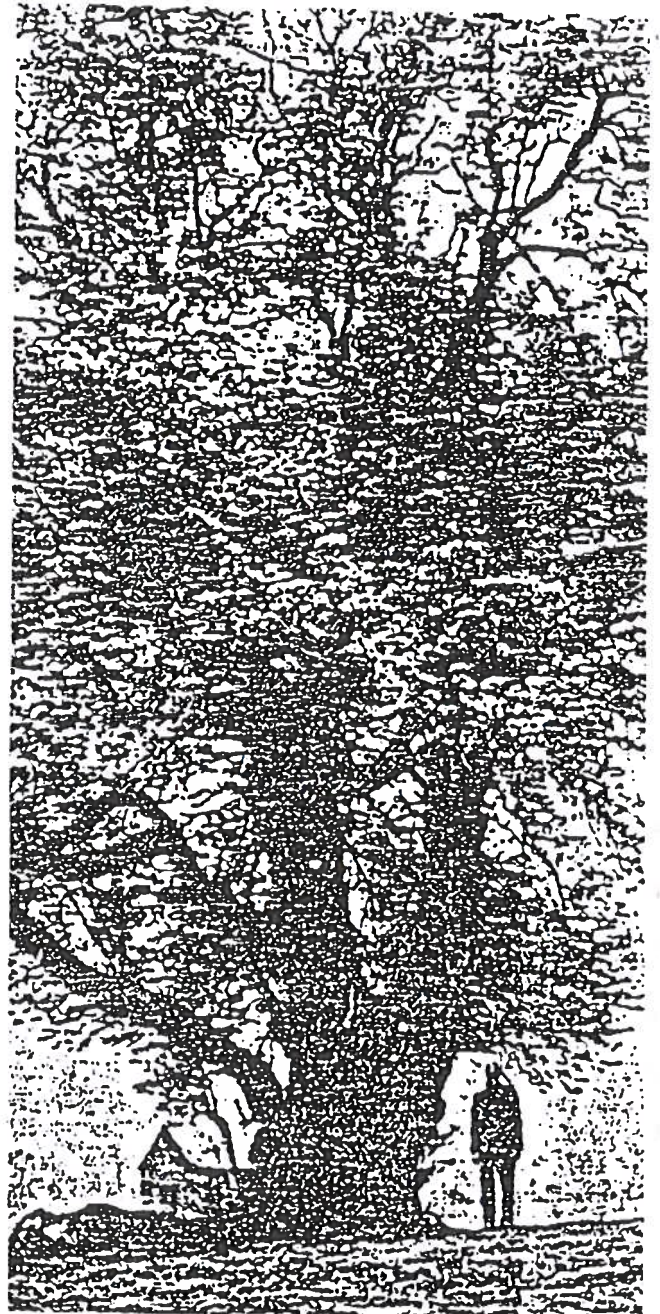
Noteworthy is that the largest Downy Hawthorn on the American list stands directly across the river.

By the way, would you not think the name "Downy Hawthorn" a decidedly oxymoron? The long, tough, sharp thorns are impressive indeed, once encountered not quite forgotten. Consequently the truly impenetrable tangles of hawthorn bushes make ideal nesting places for birds. The white to pink flowers are delicate, 5-petaled. Leaves are very glossy. The fruit (haws) are the delight of cedar waxwings, fox sparrows, ruffed grouse and small rodents. Mixed with other fruits, the haws have been made into jams; The Indians mixed

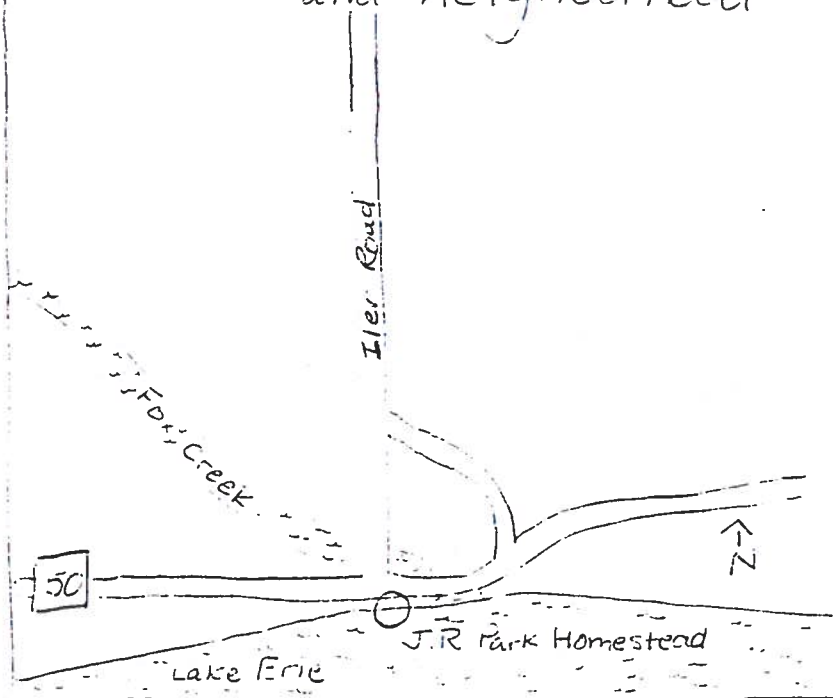
7. Pear  
(*Pyrus communis*)

"Jesuit Pear-Tree"

non-native exotic



John R Park Homestead  
and neighbourhood



This impressive tree, believe it or not, is a pear tree, the largest Honour Roll listed pear tree in Ontario, oldest of the surviving Jesuit pear trees in our area. This beautiful giant, nearly 300 years after it was planted as a seed from France, still produces delicious



The Honour Roll tree stands at the back of an historic private farm in the picturesque neighborhood of the John R. Parks Homestead, where Fox Creek flows into Lake Erie. Readily viewable is a younger Jesuit Pear tree -- whose age is estimated at a "mere" 150 years old along the main path at the Homestead. One listed Jesuit pear is about 10x as large.

When the <sup>above</sup> picture was taken some years ago, the <sup>Roll</sup> tree was 48 ft. tall and 18 ft. around. Today though many upper branches have broken, the tree still lives and produces fruit. "Every year since time before memory the pears have been put up," the farmer explains. "The fruit has something of a thick skin which protects them from insects so the tree has never been sprayed."

In 1984 Don Laing, the ERCA representative from Malden Council and employee of Harrow Research Station, wrote about the Jesuit Pear tree for his column in the Amherstburg Echo:

Here and there the light shines through, revealing that the heartwood of the tree has been hollowed away over the years by animals, insects and decay. On one side a cast-off farm implement laid up against the trunk a generation ago is disappearing into the tree as it is slowly being overgrown by the heavy bark. I cannot stand by this old landmark, gracefully approaching its last days, without thinking of what it must have been like when this plant first took root.

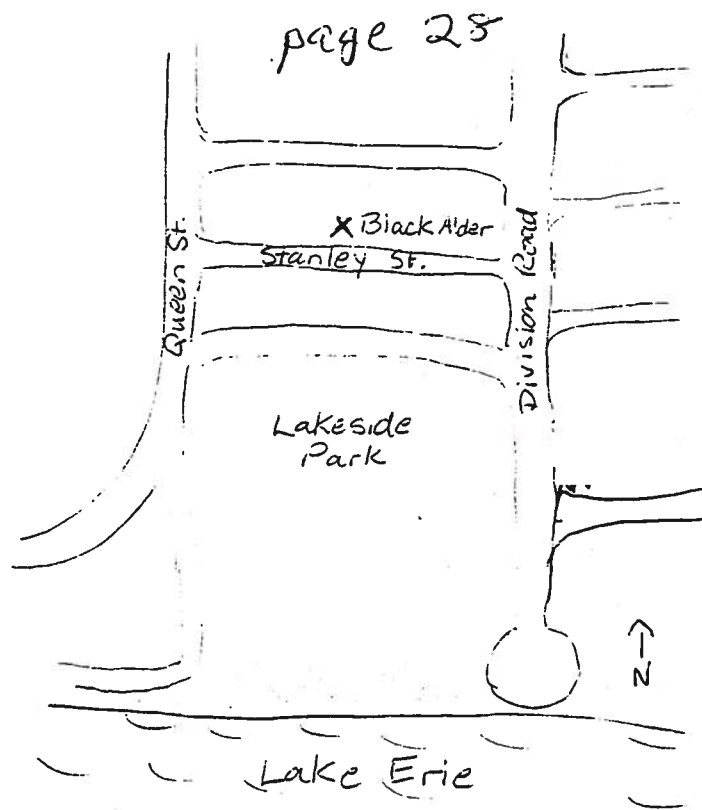
The New Settlement farm lots in Colchester South were first granted to Empire Loyalists in 1791. It is likely that this tree was the result of the activities of earlier French explorers and the missionaries who travelled with them. Certainly it is well documented that, as French soldiers moved up the St. Lawrence and into this area, the Jesuit pear soon followed their trail.

A fruit tree specialist travelling through this area in 1899 filed this account. "All of these ancient French pears are of the same type, but the fruits vary slightly, indicating that the trees were grown from seeds, although some may have come from sprouts since many of the trees throw out sprouts abundantly. The characteristics of these French pears are the great size of the trees and their vigor, healthfulness, productiveness, longevity. They attain a height of 80 ft. A girth of 8 or 10 ft. is not uncommon, while one monarch measured by the writer fell a few inches short of 11 ft. in circumference at 3 ft. from the ground. No one knows the age of most of these ancient lichen-covered giants, although one which stood until a few years ago was known to have been planted within the pickets of the palisaded fortress of Detroit in 1705."

Every "habitant" who settled in the area in those early days would have had a small orchard of apple, cherry, pear and plum trees. They certainly had no idea that the pears would be left as the sole remaining relics of their early settlements in our region.

8. Black (European) Alder  
(*Alnus glutinosa*)

non-native exotic



in the roadside yard at the  
home of Dave + Tammy De Yong  
30 Stanley St.  
Kingsville

height	( 18.4 m )
diameter	( 72 cm )

This beautiful and fruitful giant, which originally from Europe, is related to native alders which find often shrubby or small trees. Originally Black (or European) Alder was introduced to North America for the production of charcoal. Now it is planted as a shade tree and ornamental and to improve the soil in conifer plantations.

At all seasons alder trees are covered with treasures: ask any child who has one growing nearby. Nolan De Yong, who is 7 years old, told us all about his tree.

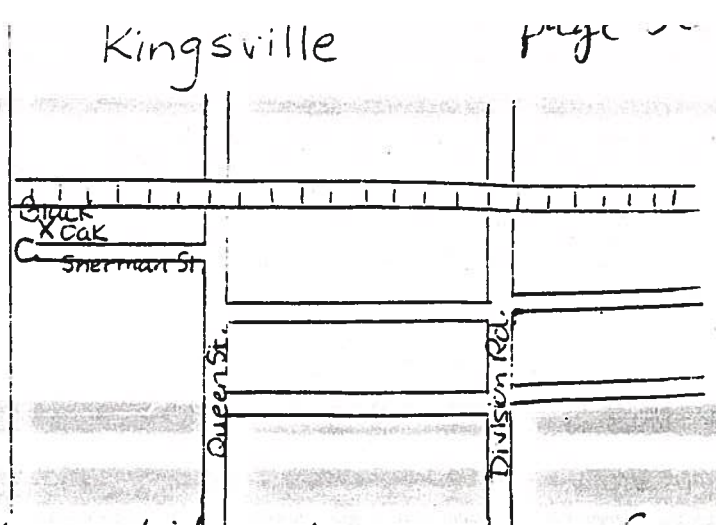
page 29

Little round woody alder cones called strobiles do not quickly go to seed and are bobbing on the tree almost year round. By winter next spring's flowers have already formed, blowing in the icy winds in protected drooping catkins that open like tassels in spring sunshine. (By the way, the male flowers are predictably much larger than the female. But never mind.)

Black Alder leaves are smooth dark green above, paler below, almost circular, coarsely toothed, with a characteristic notch at the top.

## Essex County's Largest Listed Tree

1. Black oak  
(*Quercus velutina*)  
native



in the roadside yard at the home of  
Ralph and Helen Watters  
116 Sherman St.  
Kingsville

height 82 ft. (25 m)  
diameter 6 ft. (183 cm)

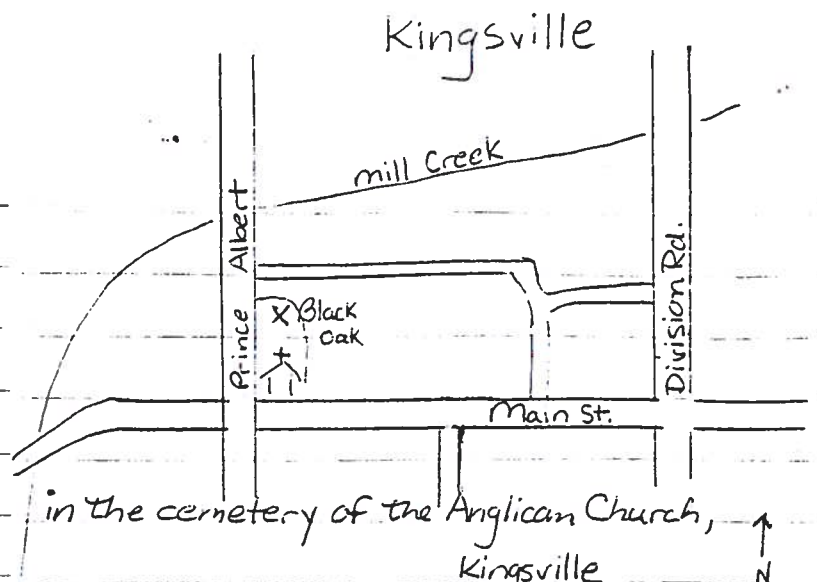
First on the list for Great Trees of Essex County and largest listed Black Oak for Ontario, this truly great tree stands at the top of primeval forest on the banks of Mill Creek. This giant was certainly already tall to the surveyor's eye when Patrick McNiffe surveyed the Mill Creek area in 1791 for a Loyalist settlement later called Kingsville. This tree monarch reigns high above a forest of huge Carolinian beauties: Tulip Trees, Sassafras, Hickories, Walnuts, Ash and Oak of many colours.

Actually Black Oak is fairly intolerant of competition and is usually found growing on poor gravelly or sandy soils. Isn't that just like a King?

The generic name *Quercus* means "tree above all others" and is the Latin name for oak. The species name *velutina* means "velvet-like" from the Latin *velles* (fleece) and *una* (resembling), referring to the downy hairiness on young twigs and leaves, in the vein cells of underside mature leaves, on acorns, and especially on buds.

Bark on old trees is often almost black. Hence, Black Oak.

1. Black oak  
(*Quercus velutina*)  
native



in the cemetery of the Anglican Church,  
Kingsville

height 53 ft. (25.8 m)  
diameter 5 ft. (154 cm)

In the graveyard behind the Anglican Church in Kingsville this great Black oak stands sentinel, the solemn demeanor and dark black, deeply furrowed bark appropriate to its post of hundreds of years. This Black oak is listed as the second largest in Ontario, the largest standing less than a mile away in what one biologist has called "the magic soil of Kingsville". Both trees are rooted at the top of the mill creek ravine, as if Black oak likes to keep the water in view without getting its roots too wet.

The Black oak root system puts down a deep tap-root from which extend several wide-spreading and deep lateral roots.

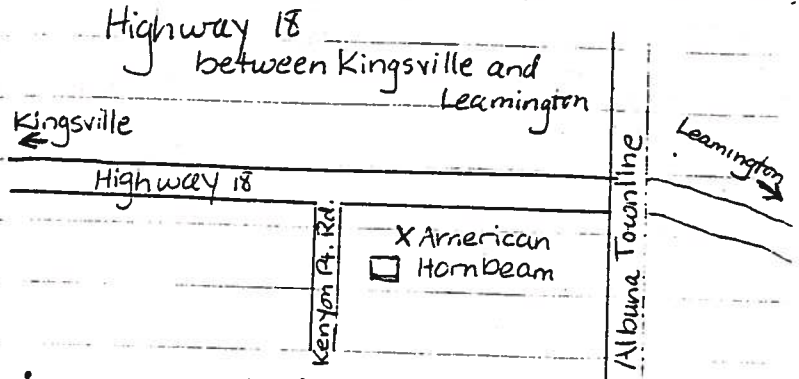
Occasionally further south in the U.S. one will see a taller Black Oak than these two in Kingsville. But rarely is a larger girth recorded, 4 ft generally considered to be the diameter limit.

Now from enormous to petite: the acorn of Black Oak is one of the smallest in the oak world. only Pin oak acorns are regularly smaller. But the acorn cap half encloses the nut and bears a slight white appearance of a minute elf

11. American Hornbeam

(alias: Ironwood, Muscledwood, Blue Beech, Water Beech  
(*Carpinus caroliniana*)

native

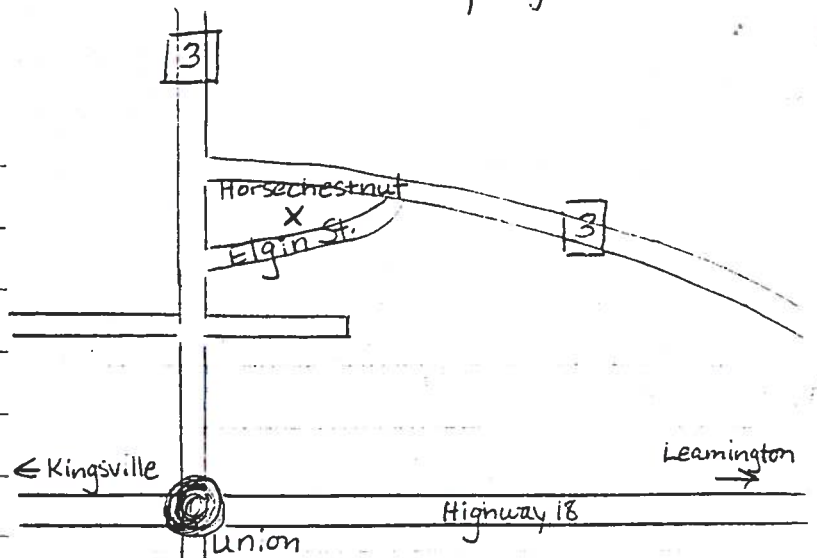


in the roadside yard at the home of  
Frank & Kristin Valeri  
Highway 18 at Kenyon Pt. Rd.  
between Kingsville and Leamington

Believe it or not this beautifully formed little tree is about as large an American Hornbeam as you will ever see. And it could be 80-100 years old. Its growth habit is for density, not size, producing perhaps the hardest wood in the Carolinian forest. Appropriately the steel gray bark has tough looking, muscle-like ridges.

height	(10.7 m)
diameter	(44 cm)

2. Horsechestnut  
(*Aesculus hippocastanum*)  
non-native exotic



in the roadside yard at home of  
Sergius and Elizabeth Brontiu  
1634 Elgin St.  
Ruthven

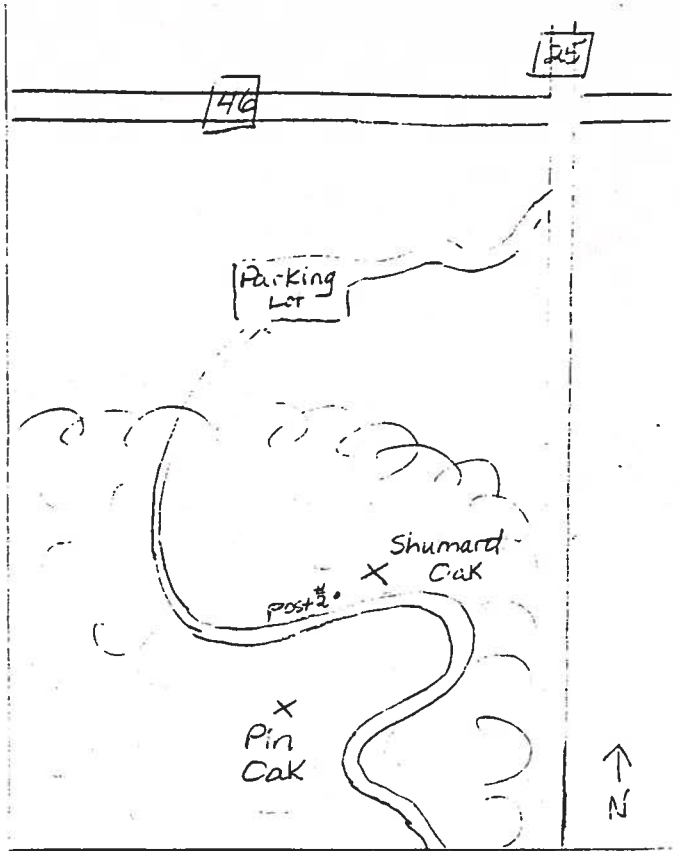
height (20.7 m)  
diameter (144 cm)

This native of Asia and SE Europe is now widely planted in central North America as a shade and street tree. It is actually not a chestnut at all but one of the Buckeyes, which have 5 radiating leaflets in one compound leaf. It may be called a chestnut because the seeds resemble the dark polished brown American chestnuts, or because the leaf scars look like horse shoes. The candlesticks of orchid-like blossoms in spring are as fragrant as a festival.



13. Shumard Oak  
(*Quercus shumardii*)

native



height ( 20 m )  
diameter ( 94 cm )

This distinguished member of the forest was only recognized as a distinct species from Red, Black, Scarlet and Pin Oaks in 1977, particularly as this branch of the oak family is widely hybridized. In fact this very tree, now Ontario's largest listed Shumard oak by nomination of then Windsor City Forester Bill Morsink in 1986 was one of the trees that helped sort out the Shumard mystery. It was described by the same Bill Morsink with these words before Shumard Oak was recognized as a separate species:

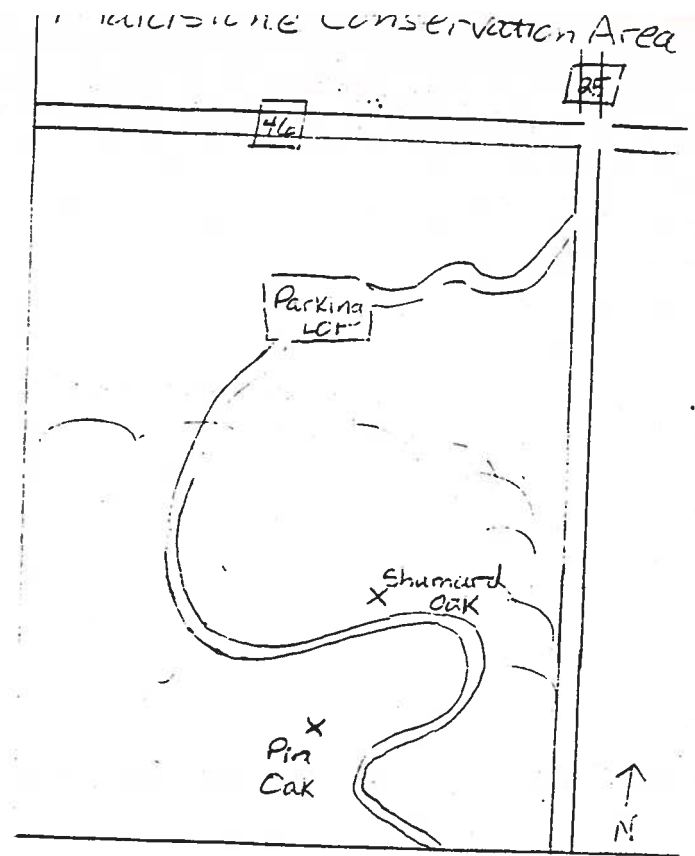
"Walking on the nature trail, I encountered some strange oaks. At post #2 for example a hybrid combination oak exists: probably black oak x pin oak."

Shumard oaks are characteristically large trees, very broadly buttressed at the base. The deeply cut leaves tend to have bottom lobes coming out from the leaf at nearly a right angle. Shumard acorns are among the largest in the oak world.

World Wildlife Fund has placed Shumard Oak on the Canadian Endangered Species List.

14. Pin Oak  
(*Quercus palustris*)

native



height	(28.4 m)
diameter	(107 cm)

Where possible, Conservation Areas, parks, and the good stewardship of concerned landowners are hopeful preserving the primeval forest trees which David Douglas described with such enthusiasm many years ago. It is only fitting to end this tour with an honourable mention of this primeval forest, the second largest listed Pin Oak in Ontario, the first being #1 on our tour.

Hopefully as we learn to venerate our great trees, we will become increasingly adept at protecting ongoing life for the remnants of primeval forest and regrowth from their seed of new forests from old.



Essex County Field Naturalists' Club  
Calendar of Events  
September to December

September&October Weekends-HAWK WATCH-Holiday Beach

Prairie Restoration Seed Collection-Tuesday Afternoons

September 18,19-HAWK WATCH SPECTACLE-Holiday Beach-guided hawk watches  
-photo workshops  
-raptor banding demonstration  
-J.D. workshops

September 25-E.C.F.N.C. fieldtrip-RAPTOR RESEARCH & BANDING DEMONSTRATION-  
Holiday Beach-meet Phil Roberts at hawk tower-9:00 a.m.

September 26-ART AND NATURALIST DAY-Holiday Beach-art and photography displays

September 29-E.C.F.N.C. Executive Meeting-Union Gas Building-7:30 p.m.

Weekday Raptor Romps-Wednesdays-September 15&22-October 6&13&27  
-call Ojibway for details

Fall Bird Migration Fieldtrips-Saturdays-September 11&25-October 2&16&30  
-call Ojibway for details

September 18-PELEE ISLAND TOUR-Saturday-call Ojibway for details

October 2&3-BALD EAGLE WEEKEND-Holiday Beach

October 13-E.C.F.N.C.Monthly Meeting-7:30 p.m.  
-Jim Flynn-Monarchs in Mexico-Union Gas Building

October 17-Ojibway Fall Colour Festival-Sunday-call for details

October 17-Friends of Ojibway Membership Meeting

October 27-E.C.F.N.C. Executive Meeting-Union Gas Building

November 7-E.W.R. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

November 13-E.C.F.N.C. ANNUAL DINNER-Tuetsonia Club  
-speaker-GERRY WALDRON:Natural Habitat Restoration in Essex County  
-cocktails at 6:00-dinner at 7:00-tickets \$20.00

November 24-E.C.F.N.C. Executive Meeting-Union Gas Building

December 8- E.C.F.N.C. Members Night-bring your slides and other items of interest  
-Union Gas Building

January 12-E.C.F.N.C. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING -Union Gas Building-7:30 p.m.

The EGRET, September, 1993, VOL.10 #3:Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists'  
Club; 3100 Howard, P.O.Box 23011 Shoppers Drugmart, Windsor, Ontario.N8Y 3X3

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