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# Egret

*the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists*

**Volume II, Number 3**

**Summer 1996**

## A Day on Middle Sister Island

by Mike Oldham (special to the Egret)

**M**iddle Sister Island is the most remote Canadian island in Lake Erie, lying 27 km west of Pelee Island and 16 km south of mainland Essex County. It is only 3.6 ha (8.9 acres) in area. The island is privately owned, but Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) biologists have permission to visit the island to conduct research. On 3 May 1996 I tagged along with CWS biologist Laird Shutt and his two technicians on a trip to Middle Sister Island.

Laird was visiting the island as part of ongoing CWS research on environmental contaminants in Herring Gulls. Middle Sister is home to several hundred breeding Herring Gulls. I have had a long-standing interest in the flora and fauna of the Erie Islands and was happy to have another opportunity to visit one of them. While identifying Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA's) in Essex County (Oldham 1983), Middle Sister was one site I was very interested in evaluating. However logistics prevented me from getting to the island to conduct fieldwork and the site was not identified as an ESA. Since the ESA report was completed I have managed to make three previous trips to the island, and Middle Sister Island has subsequently been designated as an ESA by the Essex Region Conservation Authority (Dan Lebedyk personal communication 1994).

My interest in visiting the island this time was to study and collect snails. Back in 1915 the island was visited by several malacologists (snail experts) from the United States (Goodrich 1916). Six new subspecies of terrestrial snails were described based on specimens collected on Middle Sister and several other

islands in western Lake Erie during this trip (Clapp 1916), making Middle Sister Island the type locality for some of these snails. At that time malacologists relied almost entirely on shell characteristics to describe different species and subspecies of snails, while today the internal anatomy is equally or more important in differentiating taxa. As far as I can tell no one has been back to Middle Sister Island to study terrestrial snails since the 1915 expedition, and several of the forms described then have never been examined internally. My mission then was to collect living snails for malacologist Wayne Grimm of Pakenham, Ontario, so that he could examine their internal anatomy to see how the Middle Sister snails compared to snails from Pelee Island and the Ontario mainland.

Our party left Colchester harbour at 8 a.m. We had only been gone about 10 minutes before a cold, driving rain began falling. The rain continued for the remainder of the hour-long boat ride and for our first two hours on the island. *(continued on page 4...)*

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## 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 be acquainted with and understand our natural world through identification, maintenance and preservation of natural areas of Essex County and surrounding regions. ECFNC is affiliated with the *Federation of Ontario Naturalists* (FON). □

The Egret is published quarterly. To receive information on the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club, or to submit articles, letters, reports etc., please write to: □



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**Speaker:** Gerry Waldron, Phil Roberts, Karen Cedar

**Field Trip:** Heritage Committee

**Annual Dinner:** Margaret Jennings, Betty Learmouth, Phil Roberts, Karen Cedar, Lizanne Bacon

**Bluebird:** Don Bissonnette, Betty Learmouth, Bill Balkwill

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**Tree Study:** Donna Sale, Gerry Waldron, Dave Kraus, Linda Kennette, Pat Arseneault, Bill Balkwill.



## The President's Report

In the spring edition of The President's Report I began by expressing a longing for the advent of warmer temperatures. Little did I know at the time how long I would have to wait. Most of nature's usual indicators of a new season were delayed by a week or two by cool weather. Now it is true that by the 3rd weekend in May when temperatures soared into the eighties spring had caught up with the calendar in Essex County with gusto. But by the 4th weekend I was standing in Sault Ste. Marie where tree leaves were just opening and remnant snow piles could still be found. I am not complaining, however, as the woodland wildflowers were beautiful and the bird watching was easy.

Still I hadn't journeyed to the "Soo" for pleasure but had joined eight fellow E.C.F.N.C.ers to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. We were there of course to encourage the members to attend the 1997 convention that we will be hosting next August. Our delegation was outstanding, robed in the yellow and green t-shirts that Clarine Maiolani had prepared for us. I think it is safe to say that virtually everyone at the convention was well versed as to the natural wonders of Essex County before they left for home. In turn the E.C.F.N.C. delegates had learned a great deal about organizing an enjoyable and successful convention from the Sault Naturalists. The Sault Naturalists' example will be a challenge for us to emulate in 1997 but the zeal exhibited by our delegates to the Sault instilled confidence in me that we are up to the challenge.

On Saturday afternoon I was honoured to accept the Best of Show Award on behalf of club member Gerry Kaiser at the FON Photo Salon. Be sure to look for Gerry's remarkable picture "Meeting Grandfather" in an upcoming issue of Seasons magazine. It is certainly deserving of the recognition it received.

Just prior to leaving for Sault Ste. Marie I was visited by the FON Executive Director John Lounds and staffer Graham Bryan who dropped in to impress upon me the importance of the Pelee Island Alvar property as a component of the FON Land Reserves. They also proposed that our Club become the steward of the Alvar. Among other things, becoming the steward would entail keeping a watchful eye over the site, preparing regular reports on its condition and use, as well as contributing to the creation and fulfilment of a

master development plan for the site. The FON is "keen" on the Alvar as they have proposed giving bogs and alvars special consideration among their reserves in the future. The Club Executive is excited about the prospect of having a major role in the management of a local site that is unique to Canada. Of course any management of the reserve would have to be done in consultation with and in cooperation with the FON, Pelee Island Heritage Centre, MNR, ERCA, and local residents to be successful. However, the only way we could undertake such a commitment is with the wholehearted support of all the members of the Club and with a specific commitment by a few individuals to take a leading role in this project. Thus I am looking to you the membership for direction and or involvement. Feel free to phone or write to me and express your opinion on what our role should be on the Alvar Reserve.

The 17 acre Pelee Island property (which also contains an alvar component) that our Heritage Committee has made a bid on has hosted its 3rd land value assessor. The landowner commissioned his own assessment to complement the first two commissioned by our Committee and the Nature Conservancy. Although no counter offer has yet been forthcoming, the Heritage Committee was recently successful in gaining a \$5,000 pledge from Canada Trust Co. to add to the generous pledge of \$20,000 by Mountain Equipment Co-op to purchase this property. The corporate sponsors and the Heritage Committee are to be commended for their attempt to preserve natural habitat in Essex County.

In contrast, early in May it appeared as if the efforts of many concerned individuals were for naught as a bulldozer moved into the Heinz Bush in Leamington. Fortunately with the on site intervention of Mayor Ross, a catastrophe was avoided. When later that evening Town Council proposed to rezone the woodlot as recreational before resolving rezoning requests for the remaining "Heinz" property, Nehmatallah's lawyer threatened to bulldoze the Bush. No zoning on this property was changed that evening and negotiations continue. The Heinz Bush Committee is considering its options while encouraging both parties to preserve our natural heritage.

The Club's NHRP Committee has concluded that aggressive marketing of volunteer collected seed to

private nurseries is one means of assuring a native Carolinian stock in Essex County. To this end the Committee has created a seed catalogue and delivered them to potential clients. The termination of government funding has also obliged the Committee to begin a search for alternate funding to carry on our efforts to enhance our natural habitat. While you are anxiously waiting for the seed collection season to begin you might use the time to consider various options the Committee might employ to secure funding for this important program. Like all Committees in the E.C.F.N.C., NHRP is always open to suggestions from our membership.

Finally I would like to thank Gerry, Pat, Donna, Linda, Carl and Peggy for setting up and manning our display at Ojibway Park on Earth Day. Thanks to Dave Kraus for single handedly representing us at "A Day at the River". I would also like to acknowledge the many volunteers who made the Heritage Committee's bake sale at Earth Day and the plant sale in May fundraising successes. A very special note of gratitude goes out to Ernie Kennette for his considerable assistance in completing our year end financial statements and completing the obligatory Income Information Return for Revenue Canada. For a small club like ours these year end procedures are relatively time consuming but

Ernie has proffered advice that if acted upon by the Executive should make this a less onerous task in the future.

All indications are that the Club's summer programs will be interesting and enjoyable. I look forward to sharing the natural bounties of the season with my fellow members.

Happy Trails,  
Thomas Hurst



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*continued from page 1...*

Before we reached the island, thunder and lightning made the ride even more exciting! I was thankful for the "survival suits" we were wearing (which were worth \$2,500 each!). The survival suits are designed to keep the wearer warm and afloat in the event of an accident; a useful precaution at this time of year, when water temperatures are still very cold. As we endured the cold rain, I was thinking that at least the rain might make the snails more active. Once we got to the island I found out that this was not the case, since I did not see a single snail active on the surface. All the terrestrial snails I did find were beneath rocks and logs on the forest floor. One large snails species, *Anguispira alternata*, was by far the most common, with several hundred individuals seen. This species is probably the most common terrestrial snail in the province, but large individuals on Middle Sister Island were quite unlike their mainland relatives, having much higher spired shells. Mainland *Anguispira alternata* have relatively flatter shells. The Middle Sister Island animals belong to the endemic subspecies *Anguispira alternata eriensis*.

Other species of snails were very hard to come by. I

found only two other species alive, *Vallonia pulchella* and *Zonitoides arboreus*. Both are considerably smaller than *Anguispira alternata* and both are quite common and widespread in southern Ontario. I found four additional species, but only as empty shells: *Anguispira kochi*, *Allogona profunda*, *Neohelix albolabris goodrichi*, and *Mesodon thyroideus*. These four are all fairly large snail species and it is odd that no live individuals of any of them were found. By comparison, Calvin Goodrich (1916) and companions found 12 different snail species on Middle Sister Island (though interestingly two of the species I found were not among the 12 they listed), making it one of the more diverse islands they visited. Even Core (1948) in his "Flora of the Erie Islands" remarked that on Middle Sister "snail shells are so abundant as to form a conspicuous feature". Goodrich (1916) speculated that islands with a diverse snail fauna were those without human associated livestock. At that time several of the islands were inhabited not only by humans, but also chickens, cows, and other livestock. These animals apparently were quite destructive to the snail fauna.

What has happened to Middle Sister's snails? Was there a period between 1915 and today when humans and their livestock inhabited the island? If so, there is no evidence (e.g. building ruins or foundations) left today. Could disease or predation have eliminated most species? Perhaps a severe weather event such as a flooding, drought, a severe storm or particularly long, cold winter could have wiped them out? Being such an isolated island, recolonization would be very difficult. I hope to visit some of the other small islands which were studied by Goodrich to see if they too have lost most of their snail species and perhaps shed some light on the loss of snail diversity on Middle Sister Island.

In addition to studying snails I made general natural history observations. I saw no mammals or reptiles, and suspect that there are no permanent resident species in these groups. Last year during their gull studies, the CWS biologists observed a single Red Fox on the island. The fox presumably crossed on the ice the previous winter and fed on gull eggs and chicks during the Herring Gull nesting season. He may have perished once the gull breeding season was over, since there would have been little but invertebrates to eat. Despite several highly aquatic species (e.g. turtles and water snakes) reptiles are surprisingly absent from Middle Sister Island. On most of the Erie Islands, including some much smaller than Middle Sister, snakes (primarily Eastern Garter, Water, Fox, and Brown) are quite common.

As far as invertebrates go, Isopods (pillbugs, sowbugs, or woodlice) were abundant under every log and rock, probably in greater numbers than anywhere else I've seen. All of the 12 species of terrestrial isopods which occur on the Erie Islands, with one possible exception, are old-world species introduced by agriculture, commerce, or driftwood (Dexter *et al.* 1988). Also quite common were centipedes, millepedes, beetles, spiders, and worms. Because the Erie Islands are known to have unusual and rare species in some of these groups (e.g. Beatty 1988, Will *et al.* 1995), I collected a few samples for identification. Some invertebrate groups were conspicuous by their absence. For example, I saw no butterflies, though the cool, damp weather and time of year makes that not too surprising. I also saw no slugs, despite turning many rocks and logs. On the mainland I would expect to find several slugs during such intensive searching beneath cover items.

Birds were conspicuous and common, particularly Herring Gulls, which we could hear and see constantly.

Their nests were throughout the island, but mostly near the shore, and one had to walk carefully to avoid stepping on them. About 30 to 40 pairs of Great Blue Herons nested in the tall hackberry trees near the island's centre. Other nesting species noted were Mallard (2 nests), Canada Geese (1 nest), Starling (several nests), and Barn Swallows. About 10 pairs of Barn Swallows were nesting under an overhanging cliff on the south shore, one of very few natural nesting sites I've seen. In 1920, the Common Tern population of Middle Sister Island was estimated at about 8,000 (Calvert 1920), and this species nested on many of the smaller islands. Today Common Terns no longer nest on any of the Canadian islands in western Lake Erie. I recorded 39 bird species, mostly migrants, on the island and surrounding waters. The highlight for me was a White-eyed Vireo which was feeding on low vegetation allowing excellent looks.

Despite 1996 being a late spring and the fact that the island is surrounded by the cold waters of Lake Erie, I was surprised at how many plants were already flowering. Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) was by far the dominant herb, and the ground was covered with its whitish-pink blossoms. The Middle Sister Spring Beauties are much larger than their typical mainland counterparts, many being over a foot in height with leaves more than an inch wide. Several other spring wildflowers were quite common, including Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), White and Yellow Trout Lilies (*Erythronium albidum* and *americanum*), and Wild Leek (*Allium tricoccum*). A number of rare plant species were noted: Creeping Chervil (*Chaerophyllum procumbens*), Appendaged Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum appendiculatum*), Miami Mist (*Phacelia purshii*), Short's Rock-cress (*Arabis shortii*), Kentucky Coffee-tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*), and Wild Hyacinth (*Camassia scilloides*), several of which are only found in Canada on the Erie Islands. My favourite plant group, the sedges, was conspicuous by its virtual absence, and the only species I saw was *Carex blanda*.

I was pleased to see that exotic plant species were not a major problem, and there appeared to be no Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) on the island. Of the exotics, only Purple Dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*) and Common Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) were at all common. I was puzzled by the apparent absence of three spring-flowering plant species which I had noted on previous visits: Yellow Violet (*Viola pennsylvanica*), Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), and Harbinger-of-spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*). Did I just miss them this time or have they disappeared in the nine

years since my last visit? The only plant species I found which had not been recorded previously on the island was Field Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), a rather boring addition!

The most surprising find of the trip came when I rolled over a large log and found a small, dark, wriggling salamander. I knew that no amphibians had ever been recorded on Middle Sister Island (King *et al.* 1996). The thin body and small size of the salamander identified it as the "leadback" colour phase of the Redback Salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*). Further log turning disclosed several more Redback Salamanders. Interestingly all were the leadback phase. In most mainland populations the redback colour phase predominates. Redback Salamanders have not previously been found on any of the Canadian Erie Islands although they are known from two islands on the Ohio side. Why are these tiny salamanders found on Middle Sister but not on much larger Pelee Island?

My visit to Middle Sister Island rekindled an interest in these fascinating islands in Lake Erie which have so many unanswered biological questions. I am already looking forward to my next visit!

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Laird Shutt of the Canadian Wildlife Service for providing transportation to Middle Sister Island and the Natural Heritage Information Centre, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, for supporting my fieldwork. Wayne Grimm stimulated my interest in terrestrial molluscs and his enthusiasm motivated me to revisit the island. Wayne also identified the snail specimens I collected. Mireille, Véronique, and Robert continue to tolerate my wanderlust and obsession with natural history, and for that I am most grateful.

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May 1996

#### **Appendix 1**

#### **Bird species observed on Middle Sister Island, 3 May 1996**

Double-crested Cormorant

6

Great Blue Heronca.	30 adults and 30-40 active nests
Canada Goose	4 adults, 1 nest containing 4 eggs
Mallard	3 adults, 2 nests containing 12 and 11 eggs
Red-breasted Merganser	2
Herring Gull	ca. 500
Great Black-backed Gull	1 immature
Caspian Tern	1
Great Horned Owl	1
Common Nighthawk	1
Common Flicker	ca. 6
Tree Swallow	1
Barn Swallow	ca. 20, ca. 10 active nests under cliff overhang on south shore
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Carolina Wren	1
House Wren	ca. 10
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4
Starling	ca. 30, including one entering probable nesting cavity
Rufous-sided Towhee	1
Red-winged Blackbird	ca. 20
Common Grackle	ca. 8
Nashville Warbler	1 ♂
Yellow Warbler	1 ♂
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Ovenbird	ca. 4
Common Yellowthroat	1 ♂
White-eyed Vireo	1
Veery	ca. 6
Hermit Thrush	ca. 10
Wood Thrush	1
American Robin	1
Gray Catbird	1
Brown Thrasher	ca. 5
Chipping Sparrow	2
Field Sparrow	ca. 3
Song Sparrow	ca. 5
Swamp Sparrow	ca. 30
White-throated Sparrow	ca. 50
<b>39 species</b>	

Appendix 2

Vascular plants observed on Middle Sister Island, 3 May 1996

<i>Acer saccharum</i>	uncommon
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	uncommon, east end
<i>Allium tricoccum</i>	common, MJO#18427 <sup>1</sup>
<i>Arabis hirsuta</i>	rare, east end
<sup>2</sup> <i>Arabis shortii</i>	uncommon, mainly in vicinity of light beacon, northeast part of island
<i>Arctium minus</i>	uncommon, mainly in open gull nesting areas near shore
* <i>Aster shortii</i>	abundant
* <i>Camassia scilloides</i>	locally common, scattered through woods
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	uncommon, crest of cliff along south shore, flowering, MJO#18426
<i>Carex blanda</i>	rare, west end

<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	abundant, dominant tree species on the island
* <i>Chaerophyllum procumbens</i>	locally common, mainly in woods near south shore, flowering, MJO#18420
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	rare, small seedlings at this time of year, but almost certainly this species
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	rare, south shore, first record for Middle Sister Island, MJO#18432
<i>Claytonia virginica</i>	abundant, flowering, MJO#18423
<i>Dentaria laciniata</i>	rare, small patch in shingle berm at east end, flowering, MJO#18415
<i>Descurainia pinnata</i>	rare, east end and along south shore, flowering, MJO#18431
<i>Dicentra cucullaria</i>	common, flowering, MJO#18425
<i>Elymus hystrix</i>	common
<i>Elymus villosus</i>	uncommon
<i>Elymus virginicus</i>	common
<i>Erigeron cf. annuus</i>	uncommon
<i>Erythronium albidum</i>	uncommon, flowering, MJO#18421
<i>Erythronium americanum</i>	uncommon, flowering, MJO#18433
<i>Galium aparine</i>	common
<i>Geranium carolinianum</i>	uncommon, rocky area near east end
<i>Geum canadense</i>	rare
* <i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	large tree, recently broken off at about 3m, north shore near middle of island

<sup>1</sup> M.J. Oldham collection number

<sup>2</sup> Rare in Ontario according to the Natural Heritage Information Centre (Oldham, M.J. 1994. Natural Heritage Resources of Ontario: Rare Vascular Plants. NHIC, Peterborough. 48 pp.)

* <i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>	rare, a few scattered trees, several fertile-appearing seed pods on forest floor, MJO#18447
* <i>Hydrophyllum appendiculatum</i>	common
<i>Impatiens pallida</i>	rare, mainly near light beacon
<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	uncommon, flowering, MJO#18419
* <i>Mertensia virginica</i>	rare, ca. 6 clumps seen near light beacon
<i>Nepeta cataria</i>	rare
<i>Osmorhiza</i> sp.	uncommon
* <i>Phacelia purshii</i>	uncommon, scattered
<i>Phytolacca americana</i>	rare, east end
<i>Poa</i> sp.	uncommon, mainly east end
<i>Polygonatum pubescens</i>	common
<i>Polymnia canadensis</i>	uncommon, scattered, MJO#18422
<i>Populus deltoides</i>	rare, flowering, east end, MJO#18434
<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	common, in bud, MJO#18428
<i>Ranunculus abortivus</i>	uncommon, flowering, MJO#18430
<i>Rhus radicans</i>	common
<i>Salix alba</i> var. <i>vitellina</i>	single tree, prostrate but still alive on west end
<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	rare
<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	rare
<i>Smilacina stellata</i>	uncommon
<i>Smilax hispida</i>	uncommon
<i>Stellaria media</i>	common, flowering, MJO#18416
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	uncommon, east end and south shore, MJO#18418
<i>Urtica dioica</i> ssp. <i>gracilis</i>	uncommon, MJO#18424
<b>50 species</b>	



## FON AGM & Conference May 24-26, 1996 SSM, Ontario

This year's Annual Meeting and Conference of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists was attended by 9 members of our club, including Tom and Peggy Hurst, Carl Maiolani, Denise Hartley, Cathy Crowell, Pauline and Juliet Renaud, Paul Pratt and Karen Cedar. All of these members are active in the planning process for next years' Conference which will be hosted by our club in August. Aside from taking part in all of the seminars and field trips, our members also had a keen eye out for ideas for next years' Conference. Karen was especially busy on Saturday taking notes about how things were organized. What a way to spend your birthday!!

The Sault Naturalists did a splendid job of putting on a long list of seminars and field trips. Their hospitality and attentiveness set an ambitious standard for next years' event. The Conference took place in the Soo's Ramada Inn where the accommodation, food, and location proved to be more than satisfactory and convenient.

We enjoyed seminars on Bats, Loons, Biodiversity, Marsh Monitoring and more. An enjoyable photography seminar with the evenings' guest speaker, Mr. Freeman Patterson, was also attended by some of our members. The field trips included canoe trips in a 36 foot Voyageur canoe, as well as trips to Whitefish Point in Michigan, Lake Superior Provincial Park, and St. Joseph's Island.

Over the course of our trip we saw a group total of 125 birds too. They included Pileated Woodpecker, Sandhill Crane, Red-Necked Grebe, Harlequin Duck, Upland Sandpiper, Wild Turkey, Common Raven, Sedge Wren, LeConte's Sparrow, and Kirtland's Warbler (in Grayling Michigan on the way home). A special treat included a Smith's Longspur at Whitefish Point.

We are also very proud to note that our very own Gerry Kaiser won "Best in Show" in the Photo Contest!! His name was inscribed on the Cup Trophy, which will be on display at our Annual Dinner this year.

Although I'm certain that all the members who attended had a very good time, I'd like to thank them all for taking the time and money to participate. Their



observations and recommendations will go a long way to ensuring that next year's Conference here in Windsor will be a resounding success. For the rest of you Club members who are not already involved in the planning process, NOW is the time to get involved by volunteering to be part of next year's Conference. Please contact Karen Cedar at Ojibway Nature Centre at 966-5852.

### 1997 F.O.N. Conference

One of the most enjoyable things about hosting the FON Conference will be the chance to meet people from across Ontario. One of the best ways to do this is to volunteer at the conference. People are needed to greet visitors, provide directions, solicit sponsors, help with publicity, assist with field trips and special events. We would like to see every member of the club actively involved with the upcoming conference. For more information, call Karen Cedar at 966-5852.

## FIELD TRIP REVIEW

### Along the Canard

by Betty Learmouth

Twenty-three naturalists joined Gerry Waldron and Phil Roberts and Phil's two dogs, Pelee and Fergie, for an afternoon outing on Sunday, April 14, 1996. Certainly the date said spring but overcast skies and the bleak atmosphere conveyed an impression that spring had not yet arrived in North Colchester Township. Despite the cool temperatures and lack of signs of spring the naturalists were eager to explore the banks of the River Canard near Gesto.

We walked on Phil's riverside property which includes a section of the River Canard. At this point the River Canard can be described as a "braided river" as there is not one channel but a stream network. The flood plain surrounding this network of streams was inundated by a rainfall the previous day. Luckily the flood waters had returned to a knee-deep depth in the largest stream leaving the surrounding floodplain somewhat wet and muddy. This portion of the River Canard is likely the only braided river within the county.

The Gesto section of the River Canard is well known for a lumber operation that was located here in the last century. County Side Road 15 is also known as the Campbell Sideroad, after the family that had the lumbering business. At one time Phil lived in the original Campbell home which was in poor condition and has now disappeared. We passed the site of the mill. On the floodplain we stood in an area that had no shrubs or trees. Aerial photos have shown this floodplain section to be consistently without tree cover. It is thought that this is the spot on which the sawdust was dumped from the mill operation. Perhaps the soil is too acidic for trees and shrubs. Francis Langlois suggested that the nitrogen in the black soil has also been depleted.

The naturalists hiked across a neighbour's property where land adjacent to the River Canard has not been farmed since 1976 due to its lack of productivity and tendency to erode. Hawthorns, red cedar and soft maples have grown on this land producing more wildlife habitat.

Beyond the regenerated area, we wandered on the floodplain where Buttonbush, Silken Dogwood and Prairie Rose have become well established. Lakeside Sedge is the dominant plant over much of this floodplain.

The group walked up a short slope to a level open area which Phil informed us is the site of the two acre New Canaan Cemetery in which it is estimated that sixty to seventy-five black citizens of New Canaan are buried. After the Civil War the community dispersed to other locations such as Amherstburg and the United States. The tombstones have been vandalized through the years with the wooden tombstones gradually disappearing.

The granite stones have been gathered together with plans to maintain a mowed lawn around the monuments. It is intended that the Davis family tombstone which is now in two pieces be returned to its original state. One member of the Davis family, Delos R. Davis, was the first black lawyer in Canada. Another family whose family monument still exists, the Walkers, had a pottery operaton that manufactured bricks.

Local naturalists intend to burn the open areas of the New Canaan Cemetery to promote the continued survival of prairie species which can be found at this location. Indian Paint Brush is another interesting plant species found at the site. Woodcock can be found at the site. Short-eared owls have rested on the tombstones as the pellets of this spcies have been found here. There is a public right-of-way from the Gesto Road, making return visits to this site very easy.

Many thanks to Gerry and Phil for introducing us to another special area within our County.

### The Arner Woods in Spring

by Betty Learmouth

Fifteen ECFNC members joined President Tom Hurst on May 12, 1996 for an opportunity to view the spring floral display of the Arner Woodlot located within the Cedar Creek basin. After a glimpse of an adult Bald Eagle incubating its eggs within a nearby woodlot, the group found parking spots along the Arner Townline close to the entrance to the L-shaped Arner Woodlot. The Cedar Creek area is noted for its diversity of plant species. We were rewarded with a fine display of the early blooming spring plants. Some thought the plants were not as tall or luxuriant as in past years but the

condition of the blooms was excellent due to a cool spring season.

Tom proved to be a fine guide as he spoke about the various plant species encountered. A large patch of Marsh-marigolds was found in the marsh by the entrance gate. The kidney shaped leaves are distinctive. Naturalists will want to return for an opportunity to see the yellow blossoms. The first challenge of the afternoon was to identify buttercups blooming in the woodland near the marsh. With lots of assistance from the other naturalists, Tom decided that we were viewing the Swamp Buttercup.

As we slowly wandered through the woods, we were introduced to some familiar species such as Dutchman's-britches with its delicate leaves and fascinating blossoms, the Trout Lily with its mottled leaves, the May Apple with its blossom hidden by its umbrella-like leaves, groups of White Trillium that never fail to draw exclamations of admiration and the tiny Smooth Yellow Violet.

Less familiar plant species were the fragile Wood Anemone with its small white flower, the Red Trillium with its bloom that tends to hang downwards, the Early Meadow Rue with its tiny drooping blossoms and the Wild Geranium with its blossoms still not open to brighten the woods with its pink blossoms.

Thank you Tom for a wonderful introduction to this Cedar Creek woodlot. We all wish to explore other portions of this rich woodlot with its outstanding displays of spring flowers.

## Pelee Island Weekend

by Margaret Jennings

On Saturday, May 14, 15 members of the Essex County Field Naturalists met at the Leamington dock. We were surprised to see many men in suits and ties waiting for the ferry. One of the men explained that they were attending a meeting of Masons. Then he said, "Do you know my son Paul? He's a birder." The man we were talking to turned out to be Paul Pratt's father.

When we arrived on the island, we dragged our luggage to the cottage and checked in, then got on the bus for our first adventure. The bus dropped us off at the ERCA parking lot. We enjoyed a walk along the shore. Birds seen here included Yellow and Palm Warblers, Buffleheads, a Caspian Tern, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Mallards. Rare sightings by Tom Hurst and Paul Desjardins were the elusive spotted rockbird

and the "almost" bird.

Trouble began when we left the shoreline and started along a firebreak trail through the alvar. This area was very wet and most of us were not wearing waterproof footwear. We had to make many detours through bushes. One member of the group fell several times in the primordial ooze. She landed on her binoculars, and this was the occasion for an impromptu demonstration on binocular cleaning.

On this "trail" we saw a pair of American toads mating. Birds spotted were a Solitary Vireo, Brown Creeper, Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chickadee, and White-throated Sparrow. We also found a congregation of Jack-in-the-pulpits and bushels of mayapples. A squashed baby garter snake was turning blue from sunburn. While we waited for Dave Kraus to find the bus for us we saw both white and yellow trout lilies.

A break for lunch at the hotel helped us to dry out and warm up. We were ready to set out again at 3 o'clock to Lighthouse Point. Here we found many birds, including egrets, flocks of Blue Jays, Nashville Warblers, Downy Woodpeckers, Chipping Sparrow, Winter Wren, Spotted Sandpiper, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Forster's Tern. We also found a female bullfrog and a snapping turtle. The goose is nesting on top of the lighthouse again and we considered possible ways to get the goslings down safely.

On the way back to the hotel we stopped at Dave's property where we found a solitary sandpiper, greater yellowlegs and snipe.

By the time we finished dinner it was dark and most of us were ready for bed.

On Sunday morning we had a late breakfast, then boarded the bus for Fish Point. Here the ground was covered with a haberdashery of Dutchmen's Breeches, sparkling white trilliums, and blue and yellow violets. Birds sighted here were Black-and-white Warblers, hummingbirds, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, flickers, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Brown Creeper, wood ducks, Hermit Thrush, Waterthrush, Black-throated Warbler, Philadelphia Vireo, many Kinglets, and Chickadees building a nest. On the beach swallows were zooming around and we identified Bank, Barn, Tree, and Rough-winged.

It was very overcast when the bus took us back to the cottage. By the time we packed up rain was pouring, but it didn't stop us from visiting the Trading Post! We

walked to the ferry in the rain.

Although the weather wasn't as fine as last year, we had a great time. Thanks Dave for another enjoyable trip. I'm looking forward to next year!

## Point Pelee Camping

by Tom Hurst

It did not rain. There was some fog the first evening but it did not rain. The E.C.F.N.C. has had a contingent camping in Pt. Pelee National Park since 1991 and 1996 was the first time that rain was absent from the adventure. As a matter of fact sunscreen and short pants were required equipment on the Victoria Weekend campout. The mild weather made what is always a pleasant outing a delight for participants this year.

I am sure all of us agree that Point Pelee is a special place to be in the spring. Camping there allowed us to take full advantage of our time in the Park from dawn to past nightfall. There was no frantic drive to catch the dawn chorus or the anguish of early departure to return to the civilized world. Lounging in a lawn chair after the daytripping hoards have retreated while listening to nature's chorus is definitely a slice of heaven. Apart from the world but not far from it, we easily brought many of the comforts of home with us. By golly, I even had an electric coffee maker brewing while I viewed my day's first warblers with sleep encrusted eyes. When we found ourselves in need of more lawn chairs and an end table two of our company sallied forth into the hurly burly of Wheatley yardsales to top up our equipment and provisions. Yes camping is easy at the Point.

We certainly were not isolated from other Club members. On their individual pursuits of nature we ran into Ian McInnis and Jennifer Franklin in pursuit of cuckoos, past president Peter Bondy cradling a camera, and the entire Larson family, including Brendon down for a visit, each armed with binoculars ready to scan every level of the undergrowth. Paul Pratt was gracious enough to point out a female hooded warbler which interrupted our conversation while Carl, Ruth and Denise allowed us to tag along on part of their Baillie Birdathon. It seemed everyone had decided to drop in and visit us that weekend.

We were not a large group of campers and totalled only nine at our peak. Perhaps Pelee is too close to home for most Club campers. But we enjoyed good company as we toured the park at various times

forming one group, individual treks and every combination of small groups nine individuals could compose. Being May at the Point, birdwatching was our primary pursuit followed closely by eating, napping and botanizing. Napping was a solitary activity and I was told that a Kentucky warbler only visited the campsite while I was bedded down in my tent. Meals, on the other hand, were great social occasions where food and antidotes were shared freely. Certainly one high point of the trip was when a sex crazed woodcock attempted to remove John Clark's ear and the next evening attempted to land on Vicki McKay's lap. Also for those of us still upright the view through Jean Zoch's eight inch Dobsonian reflector was a perfect ending to an exciting day.

As we know naturalists have a reputation as being a quiet mild mannered lot. So I was slightly surprised by the boisterous Quebec folk songs that rang from an adjacent campsite the first evening. I was aghast the following evening by the volume of laughter emanating from the Essex camp. Contributing to our merriment was the corrupting influence of an off duty Park naturalist, a past member from Mersea, Dearborn Audubon members and a Toronto journalist. So much for the practice of early to bed and early to rise.

Camping in May at Point Pelee National Park is something I always enjoy. The campground is already booked for May 23, 24, and 25, 1997 and the opportunity for you to participate is there for the asking. If you decide to take advantage of this privilege I will see you next spring.

## Detroit's Peregrine Falcons

by Betty Learmouth

Ten Peregrine Falcon enthusiasts ventured into downtown Detroit on Saturday, June 1, 1996 for an encounter with that city's resident Peregrines. Our hostess was Peregrine Falcon Coordinator Judy Yerkey who escorted us to two nesting sites. First we visited at the Fisher Building within the New Centre complex, then we went to a downtown nesting site near Cass.

As we approached the main entrance of the Fisher Building, Judy pointed out the newly installed falcon nesting box on the fifth floor of the Fisher. Resting on the box was the female adult Peregrine, H. Judy explained that she was close to the young but they could not see her, thus giving her a much needed rest after the first few frantic weeks of providing food for her rapidly growing chicks which were born on May 6,

1996.

Upon entering the Fisher, we found that a monitor had been placed in the Fisher's entrance so that visitors can now view the chicks in the nesting box through "live feed". The image was clear, giving good views of one large fluffy chick, then a second chick. The adult male, Speedster, flew into the box with food which the young ate. The chicks then retired to the corners of the box to rest. Speedster left with some bone debris. After a bit the chicks moved out of view of the camera. The chicks' long talons cause the chicks to lurch as they walk about the box.

On May 29, 1996 the three young female chicks at this site, J.P., Fisher and Edison, were banded. The young were taken from the wall behind the Fisher's entrance for the banding and the media photo opportunities that were provided at the same time. While these activities were occurring, a nest box was installed and a camera was put in place. The adults flew anxiously about the site during this changeover. The young peregrines were then returned to spacious new, well ventilated nesting box.

The newly installed camera will enable the Peregrine Coordinator to review the tapes for the times when she is not at this site to observe activities. Last year the young at this site were lost due to weather conditions. All appears to be progressing well with this year's young. The large fluffy young are expected to fledge in about three weeks time. It will then be a busy time for the adults who will be teaching the young skills for

survival.

Our group then headed for the forty-seventh floor of the Penobscot Building in downtown Detroit. We set up four telescopes which were aimed at the thirty-fourth floor of the nearby Book Building. A nesting box under the fire escape on that building is the home to two young Peregrine Falcons hatched on about May 18, 1996. Our group closely watched the nest box. Eventually we saw the tiny young for a few moments. We had good views of the adults as they sat on the fire escape guarding the nest box. These birds have also been very busy with their young as Judy remarked that Pop, the adult male, appears to have worn breast plumage. The female, Judy, seems to have lost weight during the care of her young.

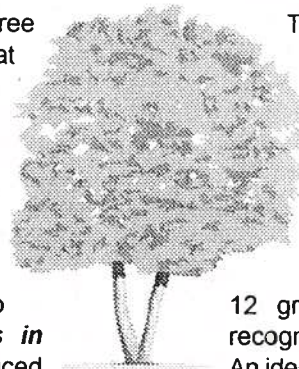
There is a third nesting site in Detroit at The Whittier Building near Belle Isle. The female, Sunrise, is incubating two eggs. Last year Sunrise was an attentive mother as she raised her single chick. The Peregrine Falcon Coordinator is uncertain about the outcome of this nest. Sunrise's mate, Seven, is an unbanded one year old male who still solicits from Sunrise, guards the nest but does not assist with incubation.

We wish to thank Peregrine Coordinator Judy Yerkey for her willingness to share her enthusiasm and knowledge about Detroit's Peregrine Falcons. Judy will be our annual dinner speaker on November 16, 1996 when she will bring us up-to-date on the 1996 nesting season.

## Hot off the Press -

### *Trees in Canada by John Laird Farrar, 1995*

***Trees in Canada*** is a guide to the many tree species, both native and introduced, that are found throughout Canada and the northern United States. It evolved from the popular ***Native Trees of Canada***, which for eight editions and over 75 years provided information on trees in non-technical language and in an easy-to-use format. The last edition, published in 1979, gave only passing mention to non-native or introduced trees. ***Trees in Canada*** includes descriptions of introduced species that are commonly planted or naturalized.



The text for the new edition has been reviewed by forest science specialists across Canada and in the United States.

A Reader's Guide shows how the book is organized and explains technical terms.

The author has ingeniously organized the more than 300 tree species into 12 groups based mainly on leaf shape and arrangement along the twig. The features that define the

12 groups require little botanical knowledge to recognize and are easily observed.

An identification key inside the front and back covers comprises an icon (a stylized drawing) for each group, a statement of the group's essential features,

and a numbered thumb tab, which allows rapid entry to the group. Dichotomous keys for the groups and large genera and winter keys for broadleaf trees and deciduous conifers are also provided.

The comprehensive and well-researched text of *Trees in Canada* is complemented by nearly 600 colour photographs and 1600 drawings of features useful for

identification of the tree species. Also included are 136 range maps and colour maps of Canada's forest regions and plant hardiness zones.

Available at Pelee Wings Nature Store (519) 326-5193

## 1996 Annual Dinner Update

by Betty Learmouth

Judy Yerkey, Peregrine Falcon Coordinator of Detroit's Peregrine Falcons, has accepted our invitation to be guest speaker at the E.C.F.N.C.'s annual dinner and auction which is scheduled for Saturday, November 16, 1996 at the Fogolar Furlan Club.

Judy has been involved with the Detroit Peregrine Falcons since the initial release of Peregrine Falcons in 1987. During 1988 Judy acted as a site attendant. The responsibilities of Peregrine Coordinator were accepted by Judy in 1989 and have continued to the present.

The Detroit Free Press featured the Detroit Peregrine Falcons in its May 30, 1996 issue. Three young female falcons, J.P., Fisher and Edison, were banded by Michigan Department of Natural Resources at the Fisher Building. These young birds were born on May 6, 1996 to Speedster and H. The article provided

information about other peregrine sites in Detroit. At the Book Building, two young were born on May 18, 1996 to Pop and Judy. Meanwhile at The Whittier Building, Sunrise and Seven have eggs in their nest. Judy Yerkey will bring us up-to-date on the nesting success of all the birds through an entertaining slide presentation.

Tickets will be available at the September meeting of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club. Seating will be limited to just 88 persons this year as the room we have reserved is not as large as in the past. The planning committee will be offering a discount to members who purchase their tickets early for this annual event. Mark your calendars as everyone is certain to enjoy this evening with Detroit's Peregrine Falcons.



## Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring, Essex County, Ontario

by Betty Learmouth

Many thanks to Phil Roberts who kindly provided the details of the banding operation for this issue of The Egret.

Bald Eagles in Essex County have noticed more activity around their nests during the 1996 nesting season. Depending upon flying conditions, Bald Eagles have been treated weekly to the sight of a small aircraft approaching each nesting site. The light aircraft has been piloted by Steve Stephenson of Project Green, an environmental program based in Windsor, Ontario. Steve's passenger is Bald Eagle monitor Phil

Roberts who reports that the monitoring of Bald Eagles has gone well this year.

When Phil accepted employment with the Essex Region Conservation Authority in 1990, Phil began monitoring three Bald Eagle nests with the assistance of other eagle enthusiasts. A fourth nest was added in 1991. Previously landowners and interested persons had provided information about the nestings to Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' personnel who were located at offices beyond Essex County.

Prior to his employment with ERCA, Phil had spent five

and one half years at the Mountsberg Wildlife Centre, south of Toronto. At Mountsberg, Phil continued to develop his long time interest in raptors, including handling and banding raptors. Monitoring of the Essex County nests has become an important activity for Phil. Phil's observations are essential to the success of the yearly banding of the Essex County eaglets.

Phil observes the County's Bald Eagles all year round but devotes special attention to the Bald Eagles' activities from February onward. Bald Eagles begin courtship, engage in nest construction and may lay eggs by late February. The Bald Eagle monitor must be aware of nest activities in order to establish such dates as incubation commencement which will indicate the nest's hatching date. Then a date for banding the young birds may be calculated.

This year the banding of Essex County's eaglets is being planned in cooperation with the Long Point Bird Observatory which has accepted the task of overseeing the monitoring of Bald Eagles in this region. Plans need to be made in advance as a number of eagle enthusiasts will converge on Essex County to assist with the banding operation which will take a day to complete. Specific tasks will be assigned to members of the banding crew to ensure the eaglets' safety and success of the day's activities.

A key player in the banding operation is Doug Baird, a former forester with the Ministry of Natural Resources, who has acted as "climber" for the banding crew over many years. Doug's role is to ascend each eagle tree. At each nest, Doug removes the eaglets and places the young birds into bags which are carefully lowered to the waiting crew at the base of each eagle tree. While the banding crew is engaged with their tasks, Doug gathers any food debris that may be in the nest such as fish scales, bones, feathers or pellets. Upon completion of the banding tasks, Doug carefully raises the eaglets to return them to their nests.

Phil's estimation of the age of the eaglets, based on the date of hatching, determines the success of this banding operation. As Doug approaches each nest, he is fervently hoping the eaglets are just six weeks of age. At that age, the eaglets will lay quietly in the nest, allowing Doug to handle them without any fuss. If the eaglets are older than six weeks, then the scenario is quite different. Older eaglets will roll on their backs to threaten the climber with their talons or they may "mantle". After the banding operation, the eaglets may resist reintroduction into the nest. Eaglets may actually jump from the nest, resulting in injuries. Hopefully

"jumpers" will not be a part of this year's Essex County banding operations.

Banding for the Essex County eaglets has been tentatively set for mid-June, just at the peak of the mosquito season. The banding crew has to focus on its various tasks despite the hordes of mosquitoes found in the County's woodlots. The eaglets are sprayed with a fine water mist in an attempt to cool the birds and reduce stress. Gross body measurements are taken such as weight, wing measurements and talon span measurements which are indicators of sex. Female Bald Eagles are larger than males with the talon size at this age providing that information. Blood samples and body feathers are collected for toxicological testing. Special colour coded bands are applied to the eaglets' legs.

Throughout all this activity, the adult Bald Eagles circle around the nest site and then move off. The adults follow the activities closely, returning to the nest site once the young are returned to the nest and the banding crew has left the area.

One landowner farmed for many years about the base of the eagle tree on his property. The eagles were accustomed to his presence and associated him with the day-to-day activities of the farm. On the day of the banding operation, this landowner did not make an appearance, as he felt the Bald Eagles would then associate him with the banding operation and might object to his presence during normal farm operations.

In past years, Essex County's Bald Eagle nests have been monitored by vehicle which could take a number of hours. Monitoring by aircraft has meant monitoring of the mainland nests may be completed within one hour. The flight begins in Windsor with a route to Amherstburg, then to Harrow and Kingsville with the monitoring concluding in the Hillman Marsh area. A flight of one hour and thirty minutes is needed to monitor the presently inactive nest site on Pelee Island with a return flight parallel to Point Pelee National Park via Hillman Marsh to Windsor.

Monitoring eagles from a small plane has its advantages as this season has demonstrated. Eagles and other raptors may be easily seen from a small aircraft. Recently a "practice" nest has been discovered in the Hillman Marsh area. Under usual monitoring conditions, this nest, hidden in the middle of a remote woodlot, would have gone undetected. Two of the Essex County nests are at locations that make the conventional means of monitoring very difficult.

Certainly monitoring hours have been reduced to a fraction of the usual hours devoted to this activity.

Why should this amount of time, energy and funds be spent monitoring Bald Eagles' nests in Essex County? Bald Eagles are an "indicator species" within an environmental situation as these large raptors are considered to be at the top of the food chain. The health of the Bald Eagles indicates the quality of the environment. Bald Eagles are an endangered species in both Canada and the United States, thus monitoring tracks the recovery of the species. Bald Eagles need a specific habitat within which to successfully rear young. Their reproductive success indicates that the surrounding habitat is providing essential nesting sites, lounging areas and good food foraging areas.

Monitors of bird populations always have interesting

experiences. On a recent take-off from the Windsor Airport, the monitor's plane almost collided with a Ring-billed Gull passing in front of the plane. Another bird encounter occurred on Pelee Island as the monitor's plane was in the vicinity of the unoccupied Bald Eagle nesting site. A young Red-tailed Hawk about two hundred feet from the plane became confused and panicked at the plane's presence. Luckily, this bird banked away from the plane. Flights around the Bald Eagles' nests entail a fly-by of the nests at about 500 feet from the passenger's side of the plane. The pilot makes a half circle then pulls away. Phil says that the weather must be sunny and calm for this particular manoeuvre as binocular viewing can be difficult in a wobbling plane. Phil has not dwelled on this aspect of airplane monitoring, but motion sickness definitely could be a hazard for eagle nest monitors who fly in small planes.

## Treasurer's Report

### Summary of Receipts and Disbursements

Year ended December 31, 1995

#### Receipts

Gifts (Cash Donations) - official receipts issued	2,912.43
- official receipts not issued	669.95
Gifts received from the Ministry of Natural Resources	6,250.00
Federal Grants	1,000.00
Interest	1,892.78
Membership	1,730.00
OTHER INCOME: Raffles	277.42
Sales - Heinz Calendar	14,283.00
- Egret Ads	425.00
- Picnic	218.93
- Dinner	2,025.00
- Auction	1,487.50
- Seeds (NHRP)	33.12
 Total Receipts	 \$ 33,205.13

#### Disbursements

FUND RAISING COSTS	
Banquet	1,746.40
Prizes	13,680.00
Bank charges - Heinz Calendar	273.67
GST	13.74
Postage	216.61
Advertisement	60.00
WSB Expenses	1,077.71



GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

Bank Charges	121.18
PST	216.57
GST	281.65
Telephone	290.58
Supplies	327.77
Postage	352.07
Printing	154.97
Insurance	260.00
Postage - Egret	171.74
Printing - Egret	421.79
Other	0.18

CHARITABLE PROGRAMS

Supplies etc.	963.97
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GIFTS TO QUALIFIED DONEES

NHRP	6,250.00
Citizen Environment Alliance	30.00
Ontario Federation of Naturalists	150.00

Total Disbursements	\$ 27,060.60
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Excess receipts (disbursements)	6,144.53
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**Statement of Assets and Liabilities**

*December 31, 1995*

**Assets:**

CASH ON HAND	50.00
CASH IN BANK	
Blue bird Committee	37.72
Current Account	797.11
Heinz Account #1	5,268.77
Heinz Account #2	36,598.11
Heritage Account	21,853.11
NHRP Account	1,167.71
Reserve Account	2,757.13
Total assets	\$ 68,529.66

**Liabilities & Equity:**

SURPLUS DONATIONS	
Balance as at January 1, 1995	62,385.89
Excess receipts to December 31, 1995	6,144.53
Balance as at December 31, 1995	\$ 68,530.41

## THE LISTENING POST

# Mother Nature's treasures unearthed



Victoria Cross

**H**is earth-marked fingers reach to adjust his hearing-aid.

"'S'cuse me while I turn you up," John Moore says.

Giant blazing stars. Gentian. Butterfly weed.

The Essex County Field Naturalists Club gathers in the Union Gas building cafeteria to share plants and tree seedlings.

Not just any plants. And not just any trees.

These are the last remnants of our community's ecological heritage, the memory of the natural landscape of Essex County.

Factories, farms and residential developments have all but wiped out our Carolinian forest, tall-grass savannah and northern prairie in a level of devastation equivalent to the destruction of South America's rainforest.

The field naturalists club is taking action to turn back time through both intervention and cultivation of native plants.

Queen of the prairie. Wild cucumber. Bloodwort.

Say the names aloud and they are almost a prayer.

"This is called wahoo," John says, unfurling the hand-lettered label on a 15-cm seedling for me to see. "It's a kind of firebush. The seeds take two years to germinate.

"It will have pink flowers."

### Gathered seeds himself

He gives the serrated, tear-shaped leaves a caress as he places the plant back in the box. The retired metalworker gathered the seeds himself and cultivated the plants at his home near Essex.

Moore has been growing plants and trees for more than 40 years.

"It's something that needs doing, so I do it. Can't depend on the government.

"We have to do it ourselves," he says, matter-of-factly dispensing with any compliments for his long years of effort.

Moore reaches into another box for more samples.

"This is what the settlers used to call a Kentucky coffee tree. They used the dense, hard beans that grow on it as a coffee substitute.

"Now if you want to attract birds to your place, over here we've got high bush cranberry."

John tells me that while other varieties of cranberry found in modern plantings are more showy, birds pre-

fer the old-fashioned bushes Mother Nature originally planted here.

May apple. Bellwort. Witch-hazel. Meadow rue. Trillium.

"A lot of these plants are 'rescued,'" Gerry Waldron of Malden says.

In addition to other community work, determined club members head into areas in which builders are uprooting greenery for new home developments and remove the plants for safekeeping and replanting elsewhere.

"That's one of the agreements we have with the Rosati family regarding the LaSalle woodlot," Waldron says.

### 'Naturalized' garden

After a brief business meeting, the group settles in for a presentation on a "naturalized" garden from Windsorites Elanor and Bruno Sfalcin.

"Anyone can grow native plants," Elanor says. "Remember that this is part of ecological restoration. Instead of fighting the natural world, you work with it."

Bleeding heart. Wild geranium. Bee balm.

"There were once 66 species of trees here," Bruno begins.

"I want to stress to you how important trees are. There is an interdependence to all living things, but trees are at the centre. Without trees, we would die."

In illustration, he flashes a slide of a foxglove plant. "This flower depends on the roots of an oak tree. Now that oak trees are not so many, this flower is rare."

Bruno also explains that naturalized gardens look different than other gardens.

The plants which are part of the natural order of our area may take some getting used to for those of us accustomed to hybrid species and more formal gardens.

### Biggest shows

"The biggest shows are in the spring and fall, not the middle of summer," Bruno says. "You have to have your eyes open at the right time."

Cardinal flower. Ladies' slippers.

The slides fly past. Bruno pauses at a delicate, sunny yellow flower.

"The compass plant!" he crows. "I searched for it.

"Then Gerry and I were out for a drive one day and there it was by the side of the road. We jumped out of the car and we hollered.

"It was like finding treasure."

## ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Further information regarding E.C.F.N.C. Excursions is available from either Muriel Kassimatis (252-4801), Betty Learmouth (944-2292, days), or Margaret MacDonald (252-3515). Let us know about your ideas for future excursions in the fall.

### JUNE - 1996

#### June 12 - E.C.F.N.C. Membership Meeting

7:30pm at Hillman Marsh. Speaker: Linda Corkum from the University of Windsor on Aquatic Insects.

#### June 13 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Damsels and Dragons. Adult evening programme on damselflies and dragonflies at 7:00pm at Ojibway Nature Centre. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### June 15 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Damsels and Dragons. Field trip for adult programme on damselflies and dragonflies. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### June 15 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Breeding Birds I. Family programme at 8:00am at Ojibway Nature Centre. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### June 16 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion

Pat and Jim Watson will be our hosts as we visit their naturalized backyard. Meet in the Jones Fine Furniture parking lot on Highway 3 as one enters Leamington from Ruthven at 2:00pm.

#### June 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Breeding Birds II. Family

programme at 8:00am at Ojibway Nature Centre. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### June 23 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion

Learn about the many beautiful moths that are found in Essex County with moth enthusiast Jeff Larson. Meet at the Cedar Creek Conservation Area parking lot at 9:00pm, then to Bill Balkwill's woodlot in Gosfield South Township.

#### June 25 - E.C.F.N.C. Executive Meeting

#### June 29 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Butterflies. Family programme at 8:00am at Ojibway Nature Centre. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### June 30 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion

Enjoy the Eastern Bluebirds of the Harrow Research Station during an evening walk with Don Bissonette, Chairperson of the Bluebird Committee. Meet in the Harrow Research Station parking lot at 7:30pm.

### JULY - 1996

#### July 2 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Budding Biologists. Field studies and hands-on nature activities for ages 10-15 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### July 3 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Young Naturalists. Wildlife explorations for ages 7-9 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### July 4 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Kids 'N Kritters. Nature fun for ages 4-6 from 10:00am until noon or from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. Contact

Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### July 6 - North American Butterfly Count

Participate in Windsor's third annual butterfly tally! Meet at Ojibway Nature Centre at 10:00am with your net, viewing container and field guide. Participant fee of \$3.50 to the North American Butterfly Association. Lunch provided by the Friends of Ojibway Prairie. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### July 9 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Budding Biologists. Field studies and hands-on nature activities for ages 10-15 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### July 10 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Young Naturalists. Wildlife explorations for ages 7-9 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### July 10 - E.C.F.N.C. Membership Meeting and Field Trip

7:30pm at Tremblay Beach Conservation Area.

#### July 11 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Kids 'N Kritters. Nature fun for ages 4-6 from 10:00am until noon or from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

#### July 14 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion

Join Erica Gunby for an early morning walk to explore the world of insects. Bring your insect guides. Meet in the Ojibway Nature Centre's parking lot at 8:00am.

#### July 16 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme

Budding Biologists. Field studies and hands-on nature activities for ages 10-15 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**July 17 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Young Naturalists. Wildlife explorations for ages 7-9 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**July 18 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Kids 'N Kritters. Nature fun for ages 4-6 from 10:00am until noon or from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**July 21 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion**

Learn about the Fogolar Furlan's wooded area and gardens with Bruno Sfalcin. Meet in the Fogolar's parking lot at 2:00pm. The location is at 1800 E.C.Row on the North Service Road.

**July 23 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Budding Biologists. Field studies and hands-on nature activities for ages 10-15 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**July 24 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Young Naturalists. Wildlife explorations for ages 7-9 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**July 25 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Kids 'N Kritters. Nature fun for ages 4-6 from 10:00am until noon or from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**July 27 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion**

Join a butterfly hike led by butterfly enthusiast Alan Wormington and sponsored by the Friends of Point Pelee. Meet at Point Pelee's Visitor Centre at 9:30am for a slide presentation and two hour walk. Alan has offered this hike for several years. There could be opportunities for photographs and good views of a variety of butterfly

species.

**July 30 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Budding Biologists. Field studies and hands-on nature activities for ages 10-15 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**July 31 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Young Naturalists. Wildlife explorations for ages 7-9 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**AUGUST - 1996****August 1 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Kids 'N Kritters. Nature fun for ages 4-6 from 10:00am until noon or from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 6 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Budding Biologists. Field studies and hands-on nature activities for ages 10-15 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 7 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Young Naturalists. Wildlife explorations for ages 7-9 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 8 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Kids 'N Kritters. Nature fun for ages 4-6 from 10:00am until noon or from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 11 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion**

The nature trails at Point Pelee National Park offer a wonderful opportunity to view a number of spider species. Join spider enthusiast Carl Maiolani at 1:30pm

in the Park's Visitor's Centre for this intriguing outing.

**August 13 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Budding Biologists. Field studies and hands-on nature activities for ages 10-15 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 14 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Young Naturalists. Wildlife explorations for ages 7-9 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 14 - E.C.F.N.C. Membership Meeting and Field Trip**

Meet at the Ojibway Nature Centre parking lot at 6:30pm for a hike through the Ojibway prairie. Meeting will be at 7:30pm at Ojibway Nature Centre. Speaker: Gerry Kaiser.

**August 15 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Kids 'N Kritters. Nature fun for ages 4-6 from 10:00am until noon or from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 18 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion**

Erica Gunby will be our guide as we explore Oakwood Bush to view the colourful summer prairie flower display. Meet Erica for this early morning walk at 8:00am in the parking lot of the Oakwood Community Centre which can be reached via Betts Street which is off Cabana Road east of Huron Church Road.

**August 20 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Budding Biologists. Field studies and hands-on nature activities for ages 10-15 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 21 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Young Naturalists. Wildlife explorations for ages 7-9 from 10:00am until 3:30pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Kids 'N Kritters. Nature fun for ages 4-6 from 10:00am until noon or from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme**

Plovers, Peeps and Phalaropes. Adult evening programme on shorebird identification at 7:00pm at Ojibway Nature Centre. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 24 - Ojibway Nature****Centre Programme**

Plovers, Peeps and Phalaropes. Field trip for adult programme on shorebird identification. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.

**August 24 - E.C.F.N.C. Excursion**

Tom Hurst, E.C.F.N.C. President, will lead an early morning Saturday walk to view migrating warblers and other bird species at Point Pelee National Park. Meet in the Interpretive Centre's parking lot at 7:00am.

**SEPTEMBER - 1996****September 11 - E.C.F.N.C. Membership Meeting**

7:30pm at Union Gas Building. Speaker: Peter Sale on Coral Reef Fish Ecology.

**OCTOBER - 1996****October 9 - E.C.F.N.C. Membership Meeting**

7:30pm at Union Gas Building.

**October 14 - Ojibway Nature Centre 20th Anniversary Celebration**

Come celebrate at Ojibway Nature Centre on Thanksgiving Day with family activities, hikes, special exhibits, entertainment, refreshments and more!

**NOVEMBER - 1996****November 16 - E.C.F.N.C. Annual Dinner and Auction**

Speaker: Judy Yerkey on the Peregrine Falcons of Detroit.

