



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists

Volume 14, Number 2

Summer 1998

Crowds of walkers, cyclists, dog walkers and roller bladders enjoying a glorious spring afternoon on March 29, 1998, caused a traffic jam at Sandpoint Beach. Despite the crowd and the confusion about the meeting spot, nineteen ECFNC members met Faye Langmaid, Faye's husband Paul and Alex, the dog, for a walk about the newly created storm water retention pond at the Banwell Road extension. The group carpooled east along Riverside Drive East to Green Park Boulevard, turned right onto Green Park Boulevard to Little River Road, turned left and parked by the pond.

A Walk on the East Side

by Betty Learmouth

Landfill site which looms above the newly created storm water retention pond. The storm water retention pond has been constructed as a means to control water runoff in the Lakeview Planning area. It is anticipated that the area will eventually be a community of 20,000 persons, comparable to the nearby Forest Glade community. The City of Windsor Department of Parks and Recreation expects that the area adjacent to the water retention pond will be an important green area for recreation to the east of the now established and well used Little River Corridor that links to the popular Ganatchio Trail. Eventually this new East Windsor housing area will be crossed by greenways that will enhance recreational opportunities for the local residents.

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For many of the excursion's participants, the site was a surprise as most were unaware of the existence of the former Riverside

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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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General Meeting Committee: Peggy Hurst

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Speaker: Patricia Rhoads, Gerry Waldron, Phil Roberts, Karen Cedar

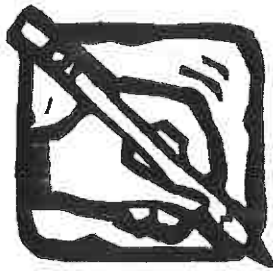
Field Trip: Heritage Committee

Annual Dinner: Heritage Committee

Bluebird: Don Bissonnette, Betty Learmouth, Don Tupling, Carl Maiolani

N.H.R.P.: Dave Kraus, Donna Sale, Gerry Waldron, Linda Kennette

Heritage: Betty Learmouth, Muriel Kassimatis, Margaret MacDonald, Lois Thurgood, Jim McAllister, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Patricia Rhoads



The President's Report

It's not been quite a year since the E.C.F.N.C. hosted the FON-Annual General Meeting. Nevertheless I have had occasion recently to consider its 'anniversary'. During the last weekend in May seven fellow Club members and I attended the sixty seventh AGM hosted by the Guelph Field Naturalists. Our Guelph counterparts did a fine job of organizing an informative and enjoyable event. I must say that part of the pleasure of attending this conference was the knowledge that I was not responsible for any aspect of its implementation.

Watching the Guelph Naturalists scurrying about to accommodate their guests' needs caused me to reflect upon our memberships committed efforts the previous year. Hosting a meeting of this scale involves a great deal of work. I can never state too often how proud I am of how you met the challenge in 1997. Participants and FON staff stopped me several times in order to praise the organization and friendliness of last year's conference.

Although the Guelph Field Naturalists chose not to follow our August meeting date precedent they did appropriate one innovation we found successful. Not one but two outdoor Barb-B-Q's were blessed with perfect weather. The inclusion of a music concert by the folk group Tamarack was a popular new event for the FON-AGM. The resources afforded by the University of Guelph, famous for its biology programs, insured that the concurrent sessions and field trips were of the highest quality.

The concensus among participants was that Guelph's choice of quest speakers was the highlight of the conference. Bob MacDonald host of CBC's 'Quirks and Quarks' banquet speech was professional and extremely entertaining. The two presentations by noted artist Robert Bateman struck a resonant chord in all those in attendance. In his keynote address he used his own autobiography as a framework to outline changes in the natural environment and its advocates during the past sixty years. His personal and international reflections built an effective argument for his primary message. There is a price tag on nature. Mr. Bateman reminded us of the inherent value of the natural world and insisted we realize in order to preserve these values we must be willing to pay for them. Whether it is buying organic over chemically grown produce or giving of our time and money to environmental projects we must be willing to pay a daily premium to assure a future quality of life on this planet.

Part of the 1997 Conference aftermath is that the coffers of the ECFNC are slightly fuller. Not resting on her accomplishments as chair of the Conference Committee; Karen Cedar has created the Special Events Committee. She and her associates plan to use the Conference profits to undertake special projects for the Club. Initially the Committee plans to have a greater involvement in the Hawk Festival and develop a lottery calendar to aid the Heritage Committee in its quest to purchase Essex County natural habitat. Future considerations include improved membership services and activities. The Special Events Committee welcomes your suggestions and participation. Let us make the most of this new opportunity.

The NHRP Committee has been busy collecting seeds and participating in two native plant sales. For the first time NHRP allied itself with the Greater Windsor

Horticultural Society and the Friends of Ojibway Prairie for some needed fundraising. Our May Meeting Club plant sale was omitted this year and there is concern that this event was missed by our members. NHRP is reconsidering and would like your opinion. A fall tree sale is also being considered.

Presently all funding for membership services such as The Egret and Monthly Meetings are funded by membership dues. Although new memberships are up; renewals are down. The ECFNC dues are still a bargain and your continued support appreciated.

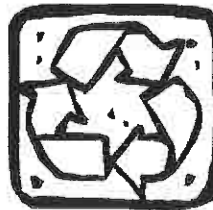
Despite what the 'Windsor Star' reported, the purchase of Peche Island by Windsor is not a 'fait accompli'. The Ministry of Natural Resources has not yet accepted the one million dollar offer. Perhaps it is time the Minister heard from you.

The Essex Region Conservation Authority is renewing its drive to create a 'Friends of' group for every watershed in the region. I encourage everyone to join the group closet to you. It is an opportunity to accomplish specific improvements in your own backyard.

In closing let me again thank all of you for making Essex one of the finest clubs under the FON umbrella. I hope everyone has a pleasant summer and I look forward to meeting you on the trail. I am particularly anticipating your company at the July 11th Bar-B-Q. It will be fun and relaxing. For Patricia's sake please notify her of your intention to attend as soon as possible.

Please recycle this newsletter!

Yours truly,
Thomas Hurst



Let a friend read it!

(continues from page 1 . . .)

The pond's excavation provided fill to cap the 25 acre Riverside Landfill site at which dumping ceased in 1958, with closure in the 1960's. More fill is presently being added to the old site from basement excavations of new homes under construction in the area. Trees such as poplars, ash and Manitoba maples once covered the landfill site but have been removed with new tree and shrub plantings planned along with orchards and other agricultural crops to be planted on the site's lower levels as a reminder that the area was once agricultural lands. A winter toboggan hill is planned for the steep side of the landfill site.

Faye displayed a series of maps and drawings of the storm water retention pond which showed its unique construction. The pond is a more reasonably priced way to control storm water in the future development by natural means rather than by the traditional but considerably more expensive storm water sewers. Water runoff received into the storm water retention pond will be from area roadways, driveways and lawns. There is a need to slow the water to remove sediments suspended in the water. The group stopped at a large inlet pipe that is angled into the pond where a barrier has been constructed between the pond, the inlet entrance with plantings of willow whips and root wads along the barrier. The bottom of the pond at the inlet entrance is undulated as another effort to slow the rush of water. Faye pointed toward two posts, just visible in the pond beyond the inlet, that hold a coco log dam in place which is essentially a fibrous mat which the both slows the water and filters it. Plantings such as dense shrubbery will be undertaken in the area of the inlet to discourage persons from approaching this area.

Around the pond's perimeter, suitable wetland plants have been planted to aid in the establishment

of native vegetation. Shawn Taylor, a Toronto biologist, was employed to design this habitat enhancement work with approval of plantings given by Ojibway Nature Centre's naturalist Paul Pratt. Within the pond itself, at depths of up to 12 feet, the pond's bottom has been constructed to undulate in a further attempt to encourage debris to be dropped. Christmas trees, known as tree tangle wreaths, have been sunk in the pond to provide habitat for fish. Fish and other aquatic life have been introduced into the pond which will be compatible with this pond setting. Numerous aquatic plants have been introduced into the pond. All this work has been based on similar successful projects.

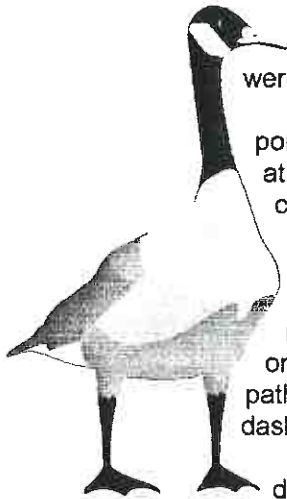
The plantings such as grass and the Carolinian trees on the pond's slopes are slowly taking hold.

Area condominiums will likely have well tended gardens with the retention pond and its nearby areas retaining a more naturalized look. Two nearby woodlots are important protected green areas as are the trees in several hedgerows that were once a feature of the agricultural lands in the area.

During Faye's tour, Faye led the group around the storm water retention pond's perimeter on a meandering gravel path that passes by the landfill. Pausing at that location, Faye pointed to a large pipe which is part of the leachate collection system at the landfill. At strategic points, leachate collection is undertaken, with links to the sanitary sewer, then on to the pollution control plant.

Birders in the group were watching and listening for bird activity about the retention pond. Sightings included a pair of Buffleheads and five Canada Geese on the pond, Song Sparrows, Northern Cardinals in the vegetation along the pathway. A single Tree Swallow flew above the pond and a male American Kestrel dashed past the departing group to a perch on a tree top on the pond's far edge.

Many thanks to Faye who lead our walk and provided much insight into this developing area in East Windsor.



ECFNC Fourteenth Annual Dinner, November 7, 1998

by Betty Learmouth

Plans are underway for our fourteenth annual ECFNC dinner to be held again this year at the Fogolar Furlan, 1800 E.C. Row (North Service Road), Windsor, Ontario. Our guest speaker this year will be Allen Chartier of Inkster, Michigan who has a special fascination for hummingbirds, having seen nearly half of the world's approximately 350 species, and has photographed many spectacular species. Allen has conducted a study of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area since 1976 where Allen has been a hawk watcher at the site for 22 years.

Currently Allen is engaged in a passerine banding programme at Holiday Beach. Allen is Managing Editor of "Michigan Birds and Natural History," author of the "Hawks of Holiday Beach" and co-author of the newly published "Birds of Detroit." Recently Allen was elected to the Michigan Bird Records Committee.

Allen has entitled his talk "All That Glitters: A Survey of Hummingbird Diversity." Allen submitted the following summary of his talk: Nearly everyone holds a special fascination with the jewels of the bird world: the hummingbirds. This presentation will focus on the great diversity of hummingbird plumage and adaptation, with slides from North America, Central America, and the Andes of South America. A detailed look will be taken at the migrations of the only eastern North American



species, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, based on a 20-year study conducted at Holiday Beach Conservation Area, Essex County, Ontario.

Our dinner menu this year will be Roast Chicken and Beef with accompanying vegetables, salad, rolls, and carrot cake dessert and beverage. Dinner tickets will be \$27.00 per person this year as dinner prices have increased at the Fogolar Furlan. Be sure to purchase your ticket before or at the ECFNC October 14, 1998 meeting as tickets after that date will be \$32.00. Tickets will be available at the August, September and October meetings. Ojibway Nature Centre and Pelee Wings Nature Store will have tickets for purchase.

Mark your calendar for this fun filled evening. As in the past, a silent auction will be organized, a great opportunity to do a little pre-Christmas shopping. Donations towards the fund raising silent auction are most welcome. Members of the Heritage Committee should be contacted for further information.



Birding Little River Corridor

by Betty Learmouth

April showers on April 19, 1998, did not discourage thirteen naturalists from joining birder Randy Horvath for a two hour stroll through the various habitats that have yielded good birds at Little River Corridor. The trail system

may be accessed by driving along the City of Windsor's Lauzon Road between Tecumseh Road East and Riverside Drive East. Turn onto Little River Road, drive over the Little River bridge, then proceed to the parking area beside the City of Windsor Parks and Recreation maintenance building.

The group met Randy in the parking lot, walked north around the toboggan hill, then headed south along the old river bed of Little River, following the trail on the east side of the old channel. When Little River was channelized a number of years ago, the old river channel was abandoned. With improvements such as additional tree planting and pathway development adjacent to the old Little River channel, the area has become a popular recreational spot for rollerbladers, cyclists, walkers and birders.

Randy has been birding at Little River for several years, with the result that he has tallied 176 bird species as of March 31, 1998 (see attached list). As we walked about the area, Randy gave us tips as to when to come, where to look and what bird species to expect. At least four naturalists were new to the area and others had visited only once or twice, thus the walk was enjoyable despite a lack of birds.

At the back of the toboggan hill, we looked down the pathway towards the Bertha Street Bush, a small but productive natural area in which Randy saw a Philadelphia Vireo and a Worm-eating Warbler last year. The wooded area on the steep slope to the right of the bridge can turn up such species as Fox Sparrows and even a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher has been seen there. The old river channel vegetation is always worth checking. We saw a single Yellow-rumped Warbler as we approached the old channel

bridge, the excursion's only warbler but all this should change with the anticipated rush of spring migrants during the next few weeks.

Look for Green Herons along the old channel, with the possibility of observing young in nesting season. Wood Ducks and Blue-winged Teal may also be seen in the old river channel. Several turtle species, including Midland Painted, Blanding's and Snapping, may be observed on basking logs on a warm spring day.

Randy pointed out the landmarks to those new to the area. The Rotary Ganatchio Trail Extension links the Little River Corridor to the Riverside Drive East section of the Ganatchio Trail. Large tracts of agricultural lands still exist adjacent to Little River with several established Red-tailed Hawk territories. Flooded agricultural lands can provide habitat for various shorebirds such as Least Sandpiper, both Yellowlegs species and Short-billed Dowitcher. Spotted Sandpiper is a breeding species on these cultivated lands with bordering hedgerows. These open areas provide winter habitat for Horned Larks, Snow Buntings, and Lapland Longspurs.

To the east of the old river channel is an open grassy area, a storage area for the Parks and Recreation Department which Randy has dubbed the Sparrow Field. At the south end of the Sparrow Field is the Sora Pond and, to its left, the Woodcock Field. We walked to the edge of the Sora Pond, a small cattail marsh, but did not see a Sora or Virginia Rail. Randy felt we were a little early, but recommended returning to look for these birds, especially the Sora which Randy has seen regularly in this small wetland. American Woodcock have been seen in the Woodcock Field in spring if one is willing to walk about to flush this bird.

Walking in single file, we explored the east trail along the old river bed channel, although we encountered more energetic teenage male mountain bikers, than birds. This trail is excellent for warblers during migration, the flowering apple trees making it particularly attractive. Gray Catbirds frequent the thickets along the watercourse, Waterthrushes and Ovenbirds can be found along the slopes. Once Randy found a Whip-poor-will at rest here. American Woodcock feathers were scattered over the trail at one point, this bird a victim of the resident Great Horned Owl which Randy has seen roosting along the old river bed. We could hear the sound of a Downy Woodpecker drilling. The grayness of the afternoon was brightened by a cherry tree in full bloom by the channel's bank.

At the intersection of the foot path and the Ganatchio Trail, Randy pointed to thickets that cover the area south to the CN tracks and Penang Lane, a birding area that can turn up some very good birds. We turned right and followed the asphalt trail back towards the parking lot. Several pairs of Mallards flew overhead, then two Green Herons flew from Little River east over the old river channel. We had been advised to watch for this species, usually observed at Little River before the first season record at Point Pelee National Park.

Many thanks to Randy who introduced us to a new birding area. Despite a quiet birding day at Little River, we enjoyed seeing the various habitats and learning about the many uncommon birds that may be found in the Little River Corridor.



Little River Wetland Sightings

April 1, 1995 to March 31, 1998

Species	Date First Seen
Pied-billed Grebe	April 17, 1995
Double-crested Cormorant	September 13, 1996
Great Blue Heron	April 22, 1995
Great Egret	May 17, 1996
Green Heron	April 22, 1995
Black-crowned Night-Heron	June 3, 1995
Canada Goose	April 5, 1995
Wood Duck	April 11, 1995
Green-winged Teal	April 17, 1995
American Black Duck	February 24, 1996
Mallard	April 5, 1995
Blue-winged Teal	April 11, 1995
American Widgeon	October 3, 1997
Canvasback	February 7, 1996
Ring-necked Duck	October 31, 1996
Lesser Scaup	March 14, 1997
Common Goldeneye	January 18, 1998
Bufflehead	October 28, 1997
Hooded Merganser	November 3, 1997
Ruddy Duck	October 22, 1997
Turkey Vulture	April 5, 1995
Osprey	September 22, 1997
Northern Harrier	April 15, 1995
Sharp-shinned Hawk	April 22, 1995
Cooper's Hawk	November 6, 1995
Northern Goshawk	February 24, 1996
Red-tailed Hawk	April 15, 1995
American Kestrel	April 17, 1995
Peregrine Falcon	February 24, 1996
Ring-necked Pheasant	April 17, 1995
Northern Bobwhite	October 14, 1996
Virginia Rail	May 20, 1995
Sora	May 3, 1995
American Coot	April 15, 1995
Black-bellied Plover	May 30, 1997
Killdeer	April 5, 1995
Greater Yellowlegs	April 19, 1997
Lesser Yellowlegs	April 20, 1996
Solitary Sandpiper	May 6, 1995
Spotted Sandpiper	May 6, 1995
Upland Sandpiper	April 20, 1995
Least Sandpiper	August 9, 1996
Pectoral Sandpiper	April 11, 1995
Dunlin	April 26, 1997
Short-billed Dowitcher	May 16, 1997
Common Snipe	April 11, 1995
American Woodcock	April 20, 1995
Bonaparte's Gull	April 11, 1995
Ring-billed Gull	April 5, 1995
Herring Gull	February 7, 1996
Caspian Tern	April 22, 1995
Common Tern	May 3, 1995
Forster's Tern	April 17, 1995
Rock Dove	April 5, 1995
Mourning Dove	April 5, 1995
Black-billed Cuckoo	May 17, 1996
Eastern Screech-Owl	September 17, 1997
Great Horned Owl	January 15, 1996
Short-eared Owl	February 13, 1996
Common Nighthawk	May 30, 1997
Whip-poor-will	September 17, 1997
Chimney Swift	May 6, 1995
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	May 17, 1996
Belted Kingfisher	April 5, 1995
Red-bellied Woodpecker	November 1, 1995
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	April 17, 1995
Downy Woodpecker	April 5, 1995
Northern Flicker	April 5, 1995
Olive-sided Flycatcher	April 27, 1995
Eastern Wood-Pewee	April 20, 1995
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	April 24, 1995
Alder Flycatcher	September 11, 1997
Willow Flycatcher	May 27, 1995
Least Flycatcher	August 12, 1995
Eastern Phoebe	April 5, 1995
Great Crested Flycatcher	September 16, 1995
Eastern Kingbird	May 20, 1995
Horned Lark	April 11, 1995
Purple Martin	August 12, 1995
Tree Swallow	April 17, 1995
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	May 6, 1995
Bank Swallow	May 26, 1996
Cliff Swallow	August 12, 1995
Barn Swallow	May 3, 1995
Blue Jay	April 11, 1995
American Crow	April 5, 1995
Black-capped Chickadee	November 1, 1995
Tufted Titmouse	November 1, 1995
Red-breasted Nuthatch	April 11, 1995
White-breasted Nuthatch	November 1, 1995
Brown Creeper	April 5, 1995
Carolina Wren	November 23, 1996
House Wren	May 6, 1995
Winter Wren	April 15, 1995
Golden-crowned Kinglet	April 5, 1995
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	April 11, 1995
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	April 22, 1995
Veery	May 20, 1995
Gray-checked Thrush	May 27, 1995
Swainson's Thrush	May 20, 1995
Hermit Thrush	April 11, 1995
Wood Thrush	May 6, 1997
American Robin	April 5, 1995
Gray Catbird	May 20, 1995
Brown Thrasher	April 15, 1995
American Pipit	March 26, 1996
Cedar Waxwing	May 27, 1995

Northern Shrike	November 6, 1995	Canada Warbler	May 20, 1995
European Starling	April 5, 1995	Summer Tanager	May 3, 1996
Blue-headed Vireo	May 6, 1995	Scarlet Tanager	May 20, 1995
Warbling Vireo	May 20, 1995	Northern Cardinal	April 5, 1995
Philadelphia Vireo	September 16, 1995	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	May 17, 1996
Red-eyed Vireo	May 20, 1995	Indigo Bunting	May 20, 1995
Blue-winged Warbler	May 22, 1997	Eastern Towhee	April 22, 1995
Golden-winged Warbler	May 14, 1996	American Tree Sparrow	April 5, 1995
Tennessee Warbler	September 15, 1996	Chipping Sparrow	April 17, 1995
Orange-crowned Warbler	October 14, 1996	Clay-coloured Sparrow	May 16, 1997
Nashville Warbler	May 27, 1995	Field Sparrow	April 15, 1995
Northern Parula	September 16, 1995	Vesper Sparrow	April 13, 1995
Yellow Warbler	May 3, 1995	Savannah Sparrow	April 13, 1995
Chestnut-sided Warbler	May 20, 1995	Fox Sparrow	April 5, 1995
Magnolia Warbler	May 20, 1995	Song Sparrow	April 5, 1995
Cape May Warbler	May 14, 1997	Lincoln's Sparrow	October 14, 1995
Black-throated Blue Warbler	May 6, 1995	Swamp Sparrow	April 20, 1995
Yellow-rumped Warbler	April 20, 1995	White-throated Sparrow	April 15, 1995
Black-throated Green Warbler	May 20, 1995	White-crowned Sparrow	May 20, 1995
Blackburnian Warbler	May 20, 1995	Dark-eyed Junco	April 5, 1995
Pine Warbler	May 5, 1996	Lapland Longspur	February 12, 1998
Prairie Warbler	May 18, 1996	Snow Bunting	February 12, 1998
Palm Warbler	May 6, 1995	Red-winged Blackbird	April 5, 1995
Bay-breasted Warbler	May 20, 1995	Eastern Meadowlark	April 11, 1995
Blackpoll Warbler	May 20, 1995	Rusty Blackbird	April 8, 1996
Black-and-white Warbler	September 3, 1995	Common Grackle	April 5, 1995
American Redstart	May 20, 1995	Brown-headed Cowbird	April 5, 1995
Worm-eating Warbler	May 17, 1997	Orchard Oriole	June 5, 1997
Ovenbird	September 3, 1995	Baltimore Oriole	May 20, 1995
Northern Waterthrush	September 3, 1995	Purple Finch	September 26, 1995
Connecticut Warbler	May 20, 1995	House Finch	April 15, 1995
Mourning Warbler	June 3, 1995	Common Redpoll	October 28, 1997
Common Yellowthroat	May 6, 1995	American Goldfinch	April 11, 1995
Hooded Warbler	September 13, 1996	House Sparrow	April 5, 1995
Wilson's Warbler	May 20, 1995	Total Species:	176



Butterflies, Hummingbirds and Friends

by Betty Learmouth

Displaying utter disdain towards the day's inclement weather, eleven ECFNC members and their friends, met at the Detroit Zoo on March 8, 1998 in the Wildlife Interpretive Gallery (WIG) which is housed in the oldest building on the Zoo's grounds. Extensive renovations have transformed this old building's interior, which formerly housed an avian exhibit and caretaker's apartment, into a beautiful exhibition building which was opened to the public during December 1996.

Our first activity was to tour the WIG's art exhibit, for which many pieces were

especially commissioned to be displayed in this gallery. We enjoyed a series of paintings, African and Inuit sculptures and fabric wall hangings, all depicting wildlife and issues relating to wildlife. The art display's last item, which caught everyone's eye, was a sea anemone rendered with silver zippers. It was appropriately placed just at the entrance to the aquarium exhibit.

Luckily, we encountered the WIG's fish keeper as he was preparing to undertake some routine cleaning and maintenance of the aquarium. The keeper told us that non-endangered salt water fish from Australia and Hawaii are on display in the aquarium. Before transferring the fish to the WIG aquarium, the fish are held at the Belle Isle aquarium to ensure that they are healthy and will survive in their new home. Water quality is always a concern, thus a complex filtering system maintains a healthy environment.

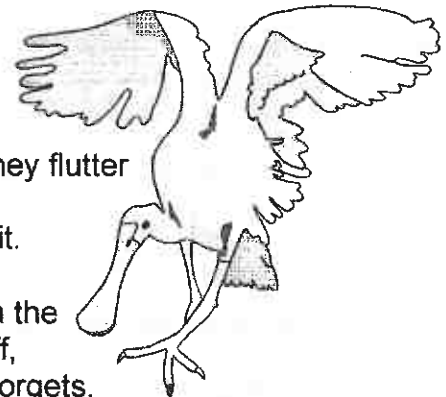
The many fish such as the Threadfin Butterfly Fish, the Pyramid Butterfly Fish and the Emperor Angelfish were stunning as they swam about the man-made coral head. Two Batfish, the largest and the most docile fish in the aquarium, swam together. One Batfish is at least twelve years old, a cataract visible in one eye. In the wild, the keeper commented that this elderly fish would like be snack food. To view the aquarium from a totally different angle, we descended to the Gallery's first floor, from which the Clown Fish may be observed as they patrol their territory.

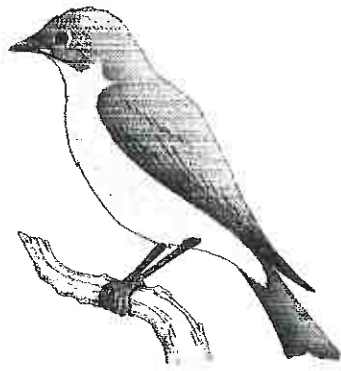
We passed through the double doors into the butterfly/hummingbird exhibit. These doors ensure all flying creatures are confined to this attractive exhibit. The area is full of tropical plants, including lantana which is especially appealing to nectaring butterflies. Orchids and azaleas were in bloom throughout the exhibit. No butterfly host plants are found in the exhibit. Instead, butterfly chrysalids are brought weekly to the exhibit

where they are placed in a special area where the chrysalids may transform into butterflies. Giant Swallowtails, Blue Morphs, Zebra Longwings, Owl Butterflies, and other butterfly species delight visitors as they flutter above the walkway and lush foliage.

We especially enjoyed the hummingbirds in the exhibit. Three species from the south-west, Anna's, Costa's and Black-chinned, perched on stems within the foliage, sat on the tips of banana leaves, hovered over feeders, or dashed off, chattering excitedly. The males had exquisitely coloured gorgets, with the females' plumage more subdued. One female Costa's Hummingbird was observed on her nest, incubating recently laid eggs.

Our last hour was spent in the exotic bird display which is a long curved exhibit building adjacent to the butterfly/hummingbird exhibit. The birds in this display are selected for their ability to interact successfully with other species. Species with placid dispositions chosen for the exhibit were Scarlet Ibis, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Sunbittern, Boat-billed Heron, various duck species, and several plover species as Spur-winged and Crowned Plovers. The birds in the exhibit were from various continents, thus there were numerous species that were unfamiliar and a challenge to identify. With the assistance of a friendly exhibit docent (guide), we enjoyed identifying and observing such species as Orange-headed Thrush, Lilac-breasted Roller, Fairy Bluebird, and Inca Terns. Others in the group went on the Penguinarium after the exotic bird display. Everyone agreed a visit to the Detroit WIG was a wonderful way to spend a rainy March afternoon.





Eastern Bluebird Committee Report

by Don Bissonnette

This past winter was extremely mild, thanks to El Nino. Eastern Bluebirds were quite plentiful all winter here in Essex County. Many of our resident Eastern Bluebirds did not migrate. Mild winters mean fewer casualties. To date (early May), most Bluebird monitors report good numbers of nesting Eastern Bluebirds.

This winter many of our original Eastern Bluebird houses needed repairing and replacing. Unfortunately we didn't get around to all of the boxes. The main reason was a hand injury to our fearless leader. Eventually we'll get all our bird houses in shipshape order.

Thank you!

A big thank you goes out to Joe Parent, Teresa Austrin and Hank Hunt. Joe and Teresa recently joined the Eastern Bluebird Committee. These two young people built and donated three Peterson Eastern Bluebird houses to the Committee. These donated bird houses were put up in early April. Within seven days, the monitor reported that one pair of Eastern Bluebirds had built a nest in one of these donated Eastern Bluebird houses. Also in early April, Hank Hunt donated two "Essex Model" Eastern Bluebird houses. Within two weeks, each of Hank's bird houses had a bluebird nest!

Heat Controlled or Light Controlled?

In March, it was obvious that spring was coming early. A lot of people said to me, "The Eastern Bluebirds will nest early this year." This was not the case. Some male Eastern Bluebirds did sing in late February. However, nest building started, as always, in late March and early April. Also, the first reports of Eastern Bluebird eggs came, as usual, in the first ten days of April. This is because Eastern Bluebird reproductive cycle is photosensitive, which means controlled by the length of daylight.

News From the Trails

In mid-March, two male Eastern Bluebirds were seen fighting on the Kurtz trail. These two males were sitting close together on a thicket of dogwood. Suddenly, one began chasing the other. They flew almost straight up. When they were about twenty feet above the ground, they faced each other. The birds began pecking each other, and tumbling to the ground. Once on the ground, the fight continued for ten more seconds. Both males spread their wings and tails, while continuing to peck each other. Suddenly, one male flew off, very quickly. The victor flew to a nearby branch, and preened his feathers.

Almost every monitor went out last fall or winter to inspect their Eastern Bluebird boxes. Most reported seeing small flocks of Eastern Bluebirds hanging around the trails. It's important to note that wintering Eastern Bluebirds use our ECFNC bird houses for warmth on cold winter nights, as do Black-capped Chickadees and Nuthatches.

On Friday, March 17, 1998, the start of a House Sparrow nest was discovered in one of the Doyle trail bird houses. This nest was cleared out. On Thursday, March 23, 1998, the monitor inspected this same bird house. It contained a completed four inch high Eastern Bluebird nest, which held four Eastern Bluebird eggs. Until now, we always believed an Eastern Bluebird nest

took four or more days to build. However, this nest presents a mystery. Did this Eastern Bluebird pair build this nest in record time, only two days, then begin to lay eggs? Or, did they begin to lay their eggs before the nest was completed?

Another possibility here is "egg dumping." Eastern Bluebirds and many other birds are known to practice egg dumping. In egg dumping, a female Eastern Bluebird flies to another female Eastern Bluebird's nest. She lays one egg, and quickly returns to her own territory.

Egg dumping is possible with Eastern Bluebirds until brooding as most pairs of Eastern Bluebirds travel quite far, for hours at a time from their nests. This would allow another female to sneak into the nest.

Scientifically, egg dumping has some advantages. It's more likely that an egg dumping female's lineage will continue, compared to a non-egg dumping female. Even if the egg dumping female's own nest is a failure, or predated, some of her young are still alive and well in somebody else's nest. Literally, an egg dumper doesn't believe in putting all her eggs in one basket!

Spring Cleaning?

At this time of year, many of us clean out our homes and garages. Please remember the Eastern Bluebird Committee when you do so! One man's scrap is another man's gold! Any scrap wood, 3/4 " to 1" thick, can be used to build or repair bird houses.

Partial containers of wood stain are useful as we are now staining all our bird houses. We are looking for browns, cedar reds or anything close to the colour of tree bark.

If you would like to donate any stain or wood to the Eastern Bluebird Committee, please call me at 738-3279.

Good luck to all the Eastern Bluebird monitors.

Spring Birding at Point Pelee National Park

by *Betty Learmouth*

Beautiful weather and the opportunity to enjoy the spring migration at Point Pelee National Park attracted a large group to the ECFNC's early morning birding excursion on May 18, 1998. Birders Muriel Kassimatis and Betty Learmouth welcomed twelve ECFNC members and friends as well as the fifteen students attending Linda Corkum's University of Windsor's Great Lakes Ecology field course. We met at the Interpretive Centre, then boarded the train to the Tip where many sightings had been recorded over the last few weeks of migration.

The group walked along the West Beach path towards the Tip where we encountered singing Yellow Warblers and a lone Indigo Bunting. In the glaring early morning light, the Indigo Bunting was a dark silhouette. At the Tip, we were fortunate to see a variety of species including a Ruddy Turnstone, a Black-bellied Plover, and an unidentified "peep," along the wet sand of the west side of the spit. Loafing Bonaparte's Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, several Great Black-backed Gulls and a good number of Forster's Terns were on the Tip's drier sand. Offshore, four Great Blue Herons flew north along the East Beach.

We walked back from the Tip through the woodlands which yielded a number of Baltimore Orioles sightings plus a look at a foraging Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at the train stop. Our walk continued along the roadway towards the Interpretive Centre. Luckily, with the assistance from all the



excursion's participants, we were able to locate and observe a variety of woodland bird species including a Black-billed Cuckoo, a Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbirds, Tree Swallows, Blue Jays, a singing House Wren, a Swainson's Thrush, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, a Red-eyed Vireo, a Warbling Vireo, numerous Yellow Warblers, a Black-and-white Warbler, several Scarlet Tanagers, Brown-headed Cowbirds, several Orchard Orioles, nest building Baltimore Orioles and a flock of American Goldfinches. Bird song was all around us, including the call of the Common Yellowthroat and Wood Peewee. Tree foliage was well advanced in the surrounding woodland, with climbing Virginia Creeper adorning tree limbs and trunks.

After lunch, we gathered for a walk through Tilden's Woods with its display of spring flowers including Wild Geranium and Appendaged Waterleaf. A Great Crested Flycatcher called and flew from its perch atop a dead tree snag. We stopped to admire the Prickly Pear Cactus display in a sandy dry section of the path way leading back to the Interpretive Centre.

Our excursion ended with the sighting of an Eastern Screech Owl that had been roosting near Marker 3 of the Woodland Nature Trail for the past week. The owl, a lovely gray phase individual, had found a roost in a small tree just a few feet from the trail. Luckily, Bob Wickett had thoughtfully brought his telescope so that everyone was able to view the owl well.

We concluded our excursion at 1:30 p.m., pleased to have had the opportunity to introduce Point Pelee National Park's spring migration to students who were studying in our area. During the excursion, several of our ECFNC members were able to view birds that they had not seen previously.

Spring Birding at Spring Garden Prairie

by Donna Roemmele



On Mother's Day, May 10, 1998, a group of nine nature lovers made our way to the Spring Garden Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) for a morning of birding under the able leadership of Paul Desjardins. We were pleased to have the Vandenberg's, birders from Maple Ridge, B.C., join us and share their knowledge of birds and plants.

White-crowned Sparrows, a pair of House Wrens, Brown-headed Cowbirds and an American Goldfinch were the first birds to be sighted. Carl identified the song of the Warbling Vireo in the distance, but we had no luck spotting it. Muriel heard the "witchity-witchity" of the Common Yellowthroat coming from a swampy area. Cardinals and Blue Jays provided sound and colour as we made our way toward the pond.

Through the phragmites surrounding the pond, we saw Red-winged Blackbirds, Mallards and the inevitable Canada Goose. Muskrat homes made of mounds of reeds were identified as "Muskrat push-ups" by our western Canadian friends.

Both Barn and Tree Swallows swooped about and a Baltimore Oriole flew back and forth across our path. A Red-breasted Nuthatch and a Downy Woodpecker were busy on the tree trunks. We saw a murder - of Crows, that is! Paul explained, to our surprise, that a flock of crows is known as a murder of Crows.

The woodland was beautiful in its spring dress. Wild Geraniums were abundant and many kinds of ferns were identified such as the Interrupted, Sensitive, Royal, Ostrich and Cinnamon Ferns. Both

pink and white Wild Honeysuckle grew along the trail. Early Buttercups and May-apples were in evidence.

We spent some time examining many kinds of Solomon's Seal. Those with the expertise, Paul and the Vanderberg's, were able to identify four kinds: Great Solomon's-seal (many blooms clustered), Solomon's-seal (two flowers together), False Solomon s-seal (flowers at the end), and Starry False Solomon's-seal (star shaped flowers).

A grove of Sassafras made up of both mature trees and saplings caught our eyes. Their newly opened leaves grew in clusters at the ends of the twigs. Butterflies are attracted to Sassafras and this grove is a must to be visited during the annual Ojibway butterfly count in July.

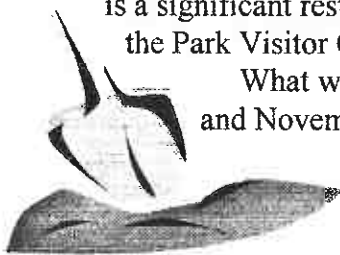
With our eyes on the moist ground, we found deer and raccoon tracks as well as the little body of a shrew which, no doubt, would provide a meal for a fellow woodland creature.

Just as we were about to give up on birding we came across a hive of activity. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a Chestnut-sided Warbler, an American Redstart and a Black-and-white Warbler were busily dashing about catching insects. With a feeling of accomplishment, we headed for home.

Volunteer Opportunities at Point Pelee National Park



The project is to restore the east main road from the maintenance compound to the Interpretive Centre parking lot, thereby creating additional forested habitat within Point Pelee, especially enlarging the extent of habitat available to forest nesting birds. This is a significant restoration project for the park. Details of the project are available at the Park Visitor Centre.



What we are looking for are volunteers that could assist us during October and November of this year. We will have the asphalt and road bed removed by this time, and require assistance to transplant tree, shrub, and herbaceous species into the bare sand left behind. We will be using seeds gathered through collection, seedlings from the park nursery, and saplings, etc. available nearby along the old road edge. The work will involve collection/distribution of seeds, planting seedlings, but mostly digging up and transplanting saplings. Equipment would be supplied by the park (shovels, wheelbarrows, gloves, etc). Larger trees will be planted with the help of a backhoe. We can use people during the weekdays, or on weekends; for one hour, one day, one week, or the whole time. We need to get the area planted as soon as possible to keep the growth of exotic vegetation to a minimum over the first couple years.

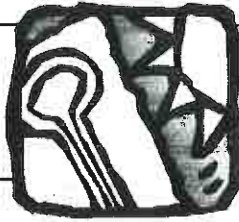
If any members, or anyone members may know, are interested in volunteering for this worthwhile project, please contact Mike Malone at 326-5193 business or 326-6060 evenings, who will be coordinating the list of interested persons/time(s) available. We would appreciate a response to Mike by August 15, 1998, so that we can plan adequately for implementation of the project in early October.

Thank you!

Dan Reive, Chief Park Warden, Point Pelee National Park
519-322-2365 Ext. 207



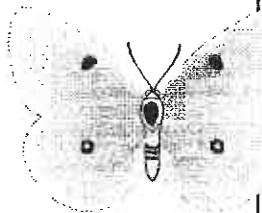
Summer Excursions



For further information concerning ECFNC excursions, contact Muriel Kassimatis (252-4801) or Betty Learmouth (944-0825). Many thanks to everyone who has volunteered to lead an excursion. We appreciate that our leaders are sharing their expertise and volunteering their valuable time. Let us know about your ideas for future excursions for the upcoming fall season.

July

July 4 - Annual Butterfly Census at the Ojibway Nature Centre. This will be the fifth annual butterfly count hosted by the Ojibway Nature Centre. Call the Centre to register and for full details of the day's activities.



July 7 - August 25 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme - Budding Biologists (Ages 10 - 15). Join us for wildlife viewing, field studies and hands-on nature activities. Tuesday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Fee \$22.00 per day.

July 8 - August 26 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme - Young Naturalist Day Camp (Ages 7-9). Swamp walks, wildlife viewing, nature games and crafts for children ages 7-9. Wednesday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Fee \$22.00 per day.

July 9 - August 27 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme - Kids 'N Kritters (Ages 4-6). Nature fun for the younger set. Wildlife exploration and nature-oriented activities for children. Thursday 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon or 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Fee \$6.00/2 hours plus \$1.00 mat fee.

July 11 - ECFNC Summer Programme - Join ECFNC members for a Saturday afternoon get together and evening bonfire/picnic at Patricia and Chuck Rhoads' home in Woodslee. Gather from 2:30 p.m. onward with activities in the afternoon planned for children such as a hay ride, games, a splash pool and lawn horse shoes. In the evening there will be a fire with such activities as sugaring for moths. There is a woodlot on the property with insect repellent advised if you would like to walk through the trail. A donation of \$5.00 will cover your BBQ food, plates and drinks. Bring a salad or dessert per family for the buffet. Call Patricia at 975-4626 for more details. Patricia and Chuck's home is on County Road 46 (old Highway 98) about one kilometre from the intersection with the Belle River Road in Woodslee with the flashing yellow light and stop sign. The house number is #183 with the house on the north side of the road.

July 12 - ECFNC Summer Excursion - Dragonfly enthusiast and ECFNC member Paul Desjardins will conduct a dragonfly workshop at Ojibway

Nature Centre. Meet in the Centre's parking lot at 10:00 a.m. This workshop was well attended last year with good numbers of dragonflies and damselflies observed as well as some interesting behaviour. Be sure to bring your binoculars.

July 19 - ECFNC Summer Excursion - Carl Maiolani will introduce us to the fascinating world of spiders. Bring your hand lens. Meet Carl at 10:00 a.m. in Ojibway Nature Centre's parking lot.

July 20 - 24 - Ojibway Nature Centre Programme - Windsor Wildlife Watchers (Ages 7-12). Discover Windsor's wildlife through activities, hikes and field studies of our natural surroundings. We will be exploring Ojibway Park, Malden Park, Spring Garden Area, Black Oak Heritage Park, Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park and Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



July 29 - ECFNC Executive Meeting.

August

August 1 - Butterfly Count at Point Pelee National Park. Join the census of Point Pelee National Park's butterflies on this Civic Holiday weekend. Call the

Interpretive Centre to register and learn about the day's activities.

August 9 - ECFNC Summer Excursion -



Pelee Island's Stone Road Alvar is famous for its August floral display of

Gray-headed Coneflowers and Nodding Wild Onions. The Ministry of Natural Resources controlled burns of the last few years have encouraged the alvar's rare plants to flourish. We will meet with Pelee Island summer resident and naturalist Mary Celestino for a look at the alvar plant restoration on the Celestino's property, then we'll enjoy a tour of the alvar and its unusual plants. We have reserved space for five vehicles on the ferry which departs from Kingsville at 8:45 a.m. and returns at 3:30 p.m., with everyone at the dock one half hour before ferry departure. Please call Betty Learmouth as we will car pool. An itinerary of the day's activities will be provided. This season's fees are higher with the cost per vehicle \$17.50 each way, \$7.50 per adult each way and \$6.25 for seniors 65 years and older each way.

August 12 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting - Learn about the hawks and eagles that will begin a spectacular fall migration through Essex County in just a few weeks. Several hawk identification experts will share their knowledge. Meet at the Ojibway Nature Centre at 7:30 p.m.

August 16 - ECFNC Summer Excursion - Allen Woodliffe,

District Ecologist, Ministry of Natural Resources in Chatham will be our guide as we explore the famous Walpole Island tall grass prairies. We intend to meet Allen at the Walpole Island Heritage Centre at 9:30 p.m. for an orientation to the Walpole Island First Nation (WPFN) before a visit to the Sandpits area prairie trail. We'll stop for lunch at The Penalty Box Restaurant in the Sports Complex. After lunch we will visit the Pottowatomie Prairie with our return to Windsor scheduled for 3:00 p.m. We will car pool for this excursion with the meeting place at the SilverCity parking lot at Walker and Provincial Roads at 7:30 a.m. We do not yet have permission from the WPFN to visit Walpole Island but expect that permission will be received as we have forwarded a letter (May 25, 1998) to the WPFN with our itinerary and indicating that Allen will be our leader. Please call Betty Learmouth for further information. This particular excursion was attended by over seventy naturalists during the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Conference, August 1997, hosted by the ECFNC at the University of Windsor.

August 20 - Ojibway Nature Centre's evening programme entitled Plovers, Peeps and Phalaropes. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Nature Centre.

August 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre's field trip Plovers, Peeps and Phalaropes.

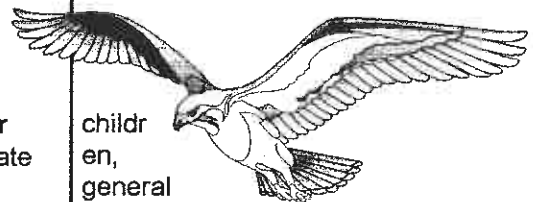
August 23 - ECFNC Summer Excursion - Participate in a late August visit to the Belle Isle Nature Centre and its natural area with the Nature Centre's Naturalist Susan Campbell as our guide. A prairie restoration around the Nature Centre will be a highlight of our visit. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot of the Windsor Board of Education

Building at 451 Park Street West. We will car pool through the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel to the Belle Isle Nature Centre, arriving at 10:00 a.m. Bring a lunch and beverage which we'll enjoy at noon before heading home.

August 26 - ECFNC Executive Meeting

August 29 - ECFNC Summer Evening Excursion - Enjoy a Saturday evening of mothing with local moth experts Jeff Larson and Maurice Bottos. Late August is the perfect time to see large and colourful sphinx, tiger and underwing moths. Meet at 8:30 p.m. in the Town of La Salle's Municipal Buildings parking lot, the corner of Malden Road and Normandy, just a few doors from the Malden Plaza. We'll then drive to Brunet Park where Jeff and Maurice will have set up for several hours of mothing.

August 30 - ECFNC Hawk and Eagle Workshop - Enjoy a morning of learning about the Holiday Beach Hawk Watch site and the hawks that will pass through this area over the next three months. Your newly acquired skills will be useful as a volunteer at any of the upcoming Festival of Hawks weekends. Volunteers are needed for a variety of activities including the Hand's on Nature Display for



children, general interpretation of the hawk migration and the food concession. Meet at the hawk tower at Holiday Beach Conservation Area at 9:00 p.m. for the workshop. Be sure to wear a hat and a long sleeved shirt, bring sunblock, beverages

and a lunch. For further information contact Karen Cedar at Ojibway Nature Centre.

September

Sept 9 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting

Sept 12 and 13 - Festival of Hawks Weekend, Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Special emphasis for the weekend will be Broad-winged Hawk, Monarch butterfly and Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration. Activities will include guided hawk watching at the hawk tower, hawk banding demonstrations and talks, a hand's on nature display for children, a Pelee Wings display of binoculars, art and nature books, a hawk identification workshop at 1:30 p.m. on September 12, a Hawks for

Junior Naturalists on Sunday, September 13 at 1:30 p.m. and a food concession every day run by the ECFNC for which you may volunteer to assist. Food concession volunteers are asked to contact Betty Learmouth.

Sept 19 and 20 - Festival of Hawks Weekend, Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Special emphasis for the weekend will be the Sharp-shinned Hawk and dragonfly migration. All the above activities will continue with a dragonfly workshop offered at 10:00 a.m. by Paul Pratt on Sunday, September 20. A Hawks for Junior Naturalists slide presentation will be offered at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 20.

Sept 26 and 27 - Festival of Hawks Weekend, Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Special emphasis for the

weekend will be the Peregrine Falcon and fall songbird migration. All the above activities will continue with a bird song identification workshop offered on Sunday, September 27 at 10:00 a.m. by Bob Pettit. A Hawks for Junior Naturalists slide presentation will be offered at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 27.

October 3 and 4 - Festival of Hawks Weekend, Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Special emphasis for the weekend will be Bald Eagles and fall colours. All the above activities will continue with a fall colours and tree identification walk offered by ERCA staff. at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 4. A Hawks for Junior Naturalists slide presentation will be offered at 1:30 p.m.

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