The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists

Volume 14, Number 4 Fall 1998

Springtime on the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve

by Betty Learmouth

Seven ECFNC members joined Co Leaders Karen Cedar and Bob Wickett on June 8, 1998 for an afternoon walk about the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. The weather was perfect for a visit to the tall grass prairie, overcast with balmy temperatures. Among the naturalists who attended, several had visited the prairie on many occasions while one naturalist was discovering our wonderful prairie for the first time.

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Our Co Leaders lead us to Titcombe Road, directly across from Ojibway Park on Matchette Road. We entered the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve via the access steps over the fence. For a short distance the right hand trail was our choice, then our Co Leaders took us onto the trackless prairie where we eventually found a trail that brought us back to our starting point. We walked a triangle through the prairie, passing through various habitats, ranging from low moist prairie to savanna to drier prairie.

As we began our prairie visit, we appeared to be in a sea of green, about knee high. We were aware of Cord Grass all around, then began looking for other plant species. Behind us, at the Titcombe Road fence, Tall Meadow-rue bloomed, described by Co Leader Karen Cedar as spring's tallest blooming plant. A few early blossoms of Black-eyed Susans hinted at the spectacular summer floral display to be enjoyed in a few weeks time.

(Continued on page 1 . . .)

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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Field Trip: Heritage Committee

Annual Dinner: Heritage Committee

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

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

Heritage: Betty Learmouth, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Patricia Rhoads

The President's Report

The student's calendar is punctuated by examinations and spring break. Most employees' calendars are highlighted by busy season and vacation time, while the year of their employers revolve around fiscal periods and inventories. The calendar of the field naturalist, however, may be among the most eventful of all. Not only is their calendar marked by those events shared by others but also by those events precipitated by nature's calendar. With increasing frequency field naturalists are asked to participate in voluntary programs which have multiplied to encompass every season. So far spring is still the most demanding season. Beginning with the restoration of Eastern Bluebirds boxes, our calendar reminds us of amphibian counts, march monitoring, Baillie Birdathons, nest box monitoring and breeding bird surveys. These activities are interesting and exciting but by the end of spring one is ready for "the dog days of summer."

This year, however, I added two new events to my calendar. These consisted of two butterfly counts: one at Ojibway on July 4th and the other at Point Pelee on August 8th. These counts are similar in many respects to Christmas Bird Counts. Teams of volunteers are sent out to scour a predetermined portion of a 15 mile count circle and enumerate each individual and species found within it. There are differences between Christmas bird and butterfly counts. As well as the field guide and binoculars, one must add a net, bug jars and bug repellent to their arsenal. The day is shorter, being closer to eight as opposed to eleven hours of a CBC. The major difference, of course, is the temperature. High temperatures and humidity on both counts left the counters unsure as to whether frostbite or heat stroke were the least desirable. At times, as one watched bathers dive into Lake Erie or their backyard pools, the question as to why we would voluntarily expose ourselves to the unremitting elements on a "day off" became difficult to answer.

We were there to see butterflies, the gems of summer. Honestly, by noon at Point Pelee, I'd seen 20 plus species and would have gladly ignored the irrepressible Cabbage Whites rather than count each individual. One thing I couldn't ignore was the company. The counts drew individuals from as far away as Michigan and Ottawa, and of varied interest and backgrounds. There always seemed time between "finds" for stories and lively discussion. There was excitement and beauty. One was never sure what species were around the next corner. It could be merely uncommon such as a Snout Butterfly, or a first look at an American Copper, which put all field guide plates to shame. It was educational as many counters are relatively inexperienced, and patient leaders explained the subtle differences between cryptic skippers and barely distinguishable crescents. It became obvious that the presence of any one species was very dependent upon weather, habitat and life cycle. Butterfly watching will certainly be more rewarding for me in the future. I will do it more often and travel further afield now that I am aware of the rewards that await me. There was a feeling of accomplishment. To count every butterfly in a given area is a daunting goal. By the end of the count I was satisfied that to the best of my ability I had been thorough and accurate and had contributed to my team's success.

My glib stock answer to the question: Are you still president of the Essex County Club? is that someone has to do it. This is the case for butterfly, amphibians and bird

counts. Those counts provide the raw data necessary for scientists to understand the diversity, population trends and habitat needs of the flora and fauna of our natural environment. Without this knowledge, public policy makers cannot make intelligent decisions to protect our quality of life nor can interested parties lobby effectively in defense of nature. These counts are also media events, a handle by which the news media can focus attention on the delicate splendour of the often neglected natural world. Such reporting increases public curiosity, participation, and commitment to nature; creating new allies in our struggle to preserve it.

Despite all the taxes we pay and all the government agencies we have created, there are no public resources committed to this research. It is done only if individuals use their own time and resources to do it. So, if you and I don't do it, it doesn't get done. If it doesn't get done, we will all suffer for it.

No individual can participate in all the volunteer opportunities open to us. Timing and inclination restrict our choices. However, with so many choices there is a match out there for any field naturalist. This season provides two interesting options. The Natural Habitat Restoration Committee's seed collection program is moving into high gear. Every Saturday and on some weekdays this season, volunteers will collect the raw materials to enhance our natural habitat. To get involved, call Chair Donna Sale at 733-9972 or fax 733-9097 and indicate when your schedule allows you to join this merry group.

Another option this fall is the Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach, each weekend from the second week in September to the first week in October. As reported in the Summer Egret, the Special Events Committee plans to take an active role in this event's success. The Observatory members and hawk banders, volunteers all, have for many years worked to increase our knowledge of North American hawks. The Essex Region Conservation Authority has come to their aid by sponsoring the Festival to attract future volunteers and income for the two groups. To date, the two volunteer groups and the Authority have provided all the programs and interpreters for the Festival. This has meant stretching their modest resources to the limits, and has limited the growth of the Festival to the world class event it will one day become.

A popular Festival will bring with it financial and manpower resources that will not only ensure the observers and banders can continue their work, but should create a surplus that can be applied to other areas of local concern. Not only does the Special Events Committee hope that our members will continue to nourish Festival visitors, but also become local ambassadors at large, and amateur interpreters for them as well. Our August general meeting and subsequent ID workshop are attempts to begin the process. The skills of a "nature gek" do not arrive overnight and we do not expect amateur interpreters to be experts. The majority of visitors to the Festival are largely unknowledgeable of natural history and often appreciate any offered insights, no matter how mundane they may seem to most Club members.

I hope you are not intimidated and certainly there is a Festival role to fit the skill and temperament of any volunteer. Please send in your volunteer sheet or phone Betty Learmouth at 944-0825 to help the banders, the observers, the Authority, the Club, and the community at large.

Yours truly,
Thomas Hurst

Please recycle this newsletter!

Let a friend read it!

(continued from page 1 . . .)

As we walked through the prairie, our leaders found plants such as Fleabane, Yarrow, Phragmites, foot tall Ironweed, aromatic Virginia Mountain-mint and spikes of delicate Meadow Lobelia. A profusion of Canada Anemone bloomed beside Common Blackberry flowers. The aptly named Yellow Star-grass, only centimetres high, glowed among the blades of Cord Grass. Two-flowered Cynthia's bright yellow blossoms caught our eye. Spots of blue on the prairie were the blossoms of Blue Iris and Marsh Vetchling. Wild roses adorned the trail. Purple Milkweed, its magenta flower buds just ready to open, were seen along the trail.

Photographer Bill Langlois reported that he exhausted his film supply quickly. There were more plants in bloom on the springtime prairie than Bill had anticipated. A Virginia Ctenucha, a moth that is often encountered flying in daylight at this time of year, was photographed by Bill as it rested on a dead limb.

Ferns are very much a part of the prairie in spring. Large ferns such as the Royal Fern were readily observed. The Marsh Fern was found in slightly damp areas along the trail while the Sensitive Fern with its coarse, sturdy leaves was spotted at several locations. Bracken Fern in profusion was found in the savannas and the dry prairie. Cinnamon and Interrupted Fern were spotted as we headed towards the trail leading back towards the Ojibway Nature Centre.

As is often the case when naturalists enjoy a plant excursion, our group lingered over certain plants. Swollen sections on goldenrod stalks were noted. Co Leader Bob Wickett explained that insect eggs had been laid with the goldenrod reacting by producing excessive growth around the eggs, the result freshly developed red galls. Cord Grass, with its sharp edges, was noted and carefully handled. Co Leader Bob Wickett told us about an unwary student on a school excursion who suffered a hand cut as the result of a practical joke. He was unfamiliar with Cord Grass's ability to cut deeply if handled roughly.

Prairie seed collectors along on the excursion were thrilled that the seed collection season was once again in full swing. We could see the prairie seed pickers reaching into the vegetation along the trail as they excitedly collected the season's first seeds from Blue-eyed Grass, False Toad Flax and Canada Anemone.

Our Co Leaders then directed us to step off the trail so that we were wading through the knee high prairie. We had

GessTwood Camp Accommodations For Birders

Overnight family camping accommodation suitable for birders and hawk watchers is available at GessTwood Camp during the spring and fall, a camp and retreat centre located in Gesto, owned by the Essex Presbytery of the United Church of Canada. Ten A-frame unheated cabins and two heated cabins are available with each cabin accommodating nine persons. An early breakfast is served with a boxed lunch provided. An overnight stay is $30.00 per person per day. Please bring your own linens. Tenting sites are available at $1.00 per person with showers and flush toilets provided. The weekend of September 25 through 27, 1998 is fully booked. GessTwood is an accredited member of the Ontario Camping Association. Contact Bill Bealor at 776-5002 for more information.

seen Indian Hemp on the trail walk, now we found the delightful Spreading Dogbane, growing in thickets. The plants were at their flowering peak, the tiny bell like flowers hanging on reddish stalks. Co Leader Karen Cedar searched among the thicket for the orchid Purple Twayblade, but without success. Last season's dried seed cases on long stalks alerted us to the parasitic plant Smooth False Foxglove which was growing in association with a grove of oak trees. In this savanna setting, we found Solomon's-seal, Wild Indigo and Wild Bergamot.

We passed from the savanna to an open prairie area, carefully making our way over charred oak tree trunks which had fallen in previous spring burns conducted by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Prairie species found were Rigid Goldenrod, Whorled Loosestrife, Prairie Thistle and Ohio Spiderwort with its electric blue blossoms. The Ohio Spiderwort was the centre of attention as Co Leader Karen Cedar showed us the possible reason for the plant's name. If a leaf is broken, the edges pressed together, then separated, the sticky moisture between the two leaf sections actually resembles spider web threads.

When we rejoined the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve trail system, we found Deptford Pinks, Golden Alexanders, Hawkweed and Woodland Sunflower leaves beside the trail. The prairie seed collectors were jubilant to discover that Early Meadow-rue had set its seed. The tiny round green seeds were collected with much enthusiasm, to be stored in hastily folded paper envelopes.

Along the trail leading us back to the steps over the Reserve's fence, we found Butterfly Milkweed a few weeks from blooming, Prairie Dock's distinctive leaves, Thimbleweed in bud, Hoary Puccoon with its yellow blossoms and Purple Milkweed, its blossoms just emerging.

Birders in the group drew everyone's attention to the afternoon's sightings which included a small flock of Canada Geese, an American Kestrel, a flycatcher calling, Tree Swallows, a Northern Rough-winged Swallow, a Blue Jay, a singing male Common Yellowthroat and a female Common Yellowthroat in a brush pile, a Baltimore Oriole, and a singing Song Sparrow.

Butterfly species seen included the Pearl Crescent, Southern Cloudy Wing and Baltimore which was difficult to observe as it rested in prairie vegetation. The Baltimore's range is restricted by the host plants on which its larvae feeds. Luckily the Ojibway tall grass prairie has a population of its host plants including Turtle head and Smooth False Foxglove. We all felt very fortunate to glimpse this lovely uncommon butterfly.

Many thanks to Co Leaders Karen Cedar and Bob Wickett who shared their extensive knowledge of Ojibway Provincial Prairie Nature Reserve's plants, birds and butterflies. We intend to return often to the tall grass prairie over the coming months to enjoy the wonders of this special natural area.

1998 Festival of Hawks Weekends at Holiday Beach Conservation Area - Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

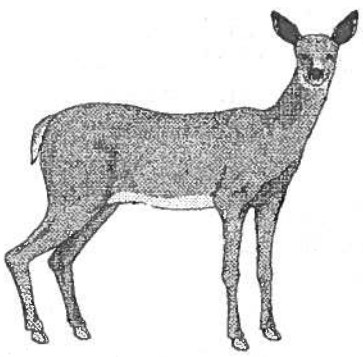
September 12 and 13: Broad-winged Hawks, Monarch Butterflies and Ruby-throated Hummingbird Weekend
September 19 and 20: Sharp-shinned Hawks and Dragonflies Weekend
September 26 and 27: Peregrine Falcons and Fall Songbirds Weekend

October 3 and 4: Bald Eagles and Fall Colours Weekend

And join us for the Golden Eagle Migration Day
Saturday, October 24: 10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for workshops, hawk I.D. (Rain date: October 31)

Weekend Programmes
Note: All programs take place at the Festival Tent area or Education Centre.
8:00 a.m.: Hawk Tower Viewing: Holiday Beach Migration Observatory members volunteer help with hawk I.D.
Until 1:30 p.m.: The Blue Kestrel Cafe: Essex County Field Naturalists' Club volunteers serve light breakfast and lunch
10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.: "Hands-on" Nature Display: Volunteers for Conservation help children of all ages learn about hawks
10:45 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.: Pelee Wings and the Festival Trailer: Binoculars, books and hawk items for sale.
11:00 a.m.: Hawk banding demonstration: Holiday Beach Raptor Banding Station volunteers give live hawk I.D. and banding demonstration.
1:30 p.m.: Hawk I.D. Workshop: Slide presentation by HBMO's Chair Bob Pettit. (Please note slide presentation is offered only on Saturdays)
3:00 p.m.: Hawk Festival closes.

Sunday's Workshops
Sunday, September 20, 10:00 a.m.: Fall dragonfly migration workshop lead by Paul Pratt of Ojibway Nature Centre
Sunday, September 27, 10:00 a.m.: Bird Song Identification with Bob Pettit of HBMO.
Sunday, September 27, 2:00 p.m. : Fall dragonfly migration workshop lead by Paul Desjardins, Essex County Field Naturalists' Club member
Sunday, October 4, 10:00 a.m.: Fall colours walk and Tree I.D. with ERCA staff
1:30 p.m.: Hawks for Junior Naturalists: Slide presentation and activity by ERCA staff
3:00 p.m.: Hawk Festival closes



A Walk on the Tulip-tree Trail, Rondeau Provincial Park

by Betty Learmouth

On June 14, 1998, eleven ECFNC naturalists and friends joined Rondeau Provincial Park interpreter Elaine Wake for a morning walk along the Park's Tulip-tree Trail located close to the Visitors Centre. This loop trail passes through park woodland over a series of boardwalks. As we walked along the trail we spoke about the wildlife we observed. Elaine's five years of experience as an naturalist/ interpreter at Rondeau Provincial Park enabled Elaine to ensure that our walk was a wonderful experience.

Within moments we were speaking about the White-tailed Deer population at Rondeau Park which is responsible for a noticeable impact upon the Park's vegetation. Elaine pointed to a small meadow near the Visitors Centre, its vegetation nipped by deer. Hopes for a display this season of flowering Woodland Sunflowers where dashed as Elaine showed us flowerless stalks. Deer had chosen the juiciest, newest, and tenderest growth to browse, thus flower buds with nectar were especially appealing.

We asked Elaine about the numbers of deer living in Rondeau Provincial Park. Elaine could give us an estimate based on the last deer drive and count, conducted in February 1995. Deer seen on that drive numbered 200 animals. Does make up 75 to 80% of the herd with Rondeau does typically giving birth to twins along with singles and triplets. Seventy-five new deer were added to the herd in spring 1995. Four years later, today's herd is estimated to be 350 plus animals.

Elaine provided some historical background to help us understand the history of White-tailed Deer in Rondeau Provincial Park. Records show that from 1881 through 1894, the year Rondeau was established as a Provincial Park, there were no deer in the park. Natural predators in southwestern Ontario such as bears and wolves had been extirpated by this time. Isaac Gardiner (his position?), in an attempt to make the park an entertainment destination, introduced campgrounds, cottages and a dance pavillon to the park as well as a display of deer in 1899. As would be expected, the deer quickly escaped into the park. By 1912 there were over 150 deer in the park, with their impact on the forest quite evident. That year marked the first year of a deer harvest/ reduction that contined through 1973, at which time the public petitioned that "nature be allowed to take its natural course" at Rondeau Provincial Park.

In 1992, Rondeau Provincial Park's deer population was found to be 593 animals. During 1993, 392 deer were removed in a hunt conducted by First Nations hunters. Twenty years of browsing impact has meant that the forest shows the effects by its lack of a whole generation of trees. Some plant species are missing entirely from the Park such as Marsh Marigold, Pickerel Weed and Lady's Slippers.

Suggestions have been made that deer be relocated to areas outside the Park. One person involved in such a relocation in the 1980's described it as being a stressful event in which not an animal survived the relocation efforts.

As we started down the Tulip-tree Trail, Elaine commented that the cool, overcast morning was encouraging bird song such as an American Redstart singing in the nearby woodland. At the first boardwalk on the Tulip-tree Trail, we were treated to good views of Tulip-tree blossoms, blooming earlier than usual as a result of our warm spring. Sometimes park visitors in the early spring mistake the previous year's conspicuous seed case as the flower. Elaine told us that Tulip-trees are very fast growing trees, that can reach 60 metres (180 to 200 feet) in height, living to one hundred years. Tulip-trees prefer a dry habitat, thus the flooding around us was causing stress to some smaller Tulip-trees which were dying.

While scanning the water of the sloughs, the term by which the wetlands within Rondeau Provincial Park's woodlands are known, we noted an oily look to the water's surface which Elaine explained was caused by decomposing plants. An anaylsis of the slough water by a high school group found the water to be very clean. The sloughs healthy ecosystem is teeming with life including many larval forms of insects. One half of Rondeau Provincial Park is wetland with the sloughs important wetlands along with the Rondeau Marsh.

In one slough we saw a grove of Pumpkin Ash, their distinctive swollen trunks emerged in water. A Midland Painted Turtle rested on a fallen log while several others poked their heads from the water. Duckweed covered the water along with Frog Bit, an introduced aquarium plant from Europe which has populated the sloughs with its small leaves. Turtles enjoy the Frog Bit as part of their diet.

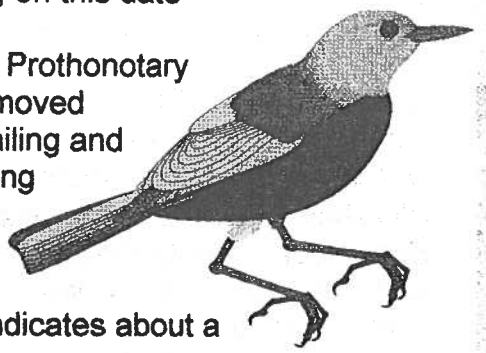
We looked closely at the logs and vegetation in another slough. Our patience was rewarded with a good view of a brown Leopard Frog and two Wood Frogs with their distinctive dark masks through the eye. A few blossoms of the Yellow Water-buttercup lingered. If we had visited a month ago, the slough would have been a yellow mat of

buttercups. We noticed that many of the tree stumps in the sloughs were encased within layers of green moss, creating stunning green sculptures in the sloughs.

Elaine spoke about the park as an important natural area in Kent County. Less than 4% of Kent County's natural areas remain with 35% of that area found within Rondeau Provincial Park. A thousand years ago the area we stood upon was Lake Erie. Lake currents offshore produce eddies which constantly deposit sand which over time have built the peninsula that is Rondeau Provincial Park. The park continues to grow yearly at a rate of 25 centimetres.

As we walked through the Rondeau Provincial Park woodlands, we noted the openness of the woodland created by the browsing of the deer herd. An interesting plant along the trail was False Hellebore, not yet browsed by the deer. Plants were widely placed across the woodland floor, showing the effects of browsing.

Rondeau Provincial Park has rare and endangered wildlife. Flying squirrels reside in the Park but naturalists have no idea of their numbers. One cottager reports that the small mammals are in her cottage attic. After several years of nest failure and no nesting, Bald Eagles have successfully nested this year, building a nest in the midst of a woodland at a large open slough. One large male eaglet, on this date estimated to be twelve weeks old, has been banded.



We were fortunate to see one of the Park's nesting Prothonotary Warblers. This male was viewed well by everyone as it moved about the trees in the slough, perched on a boardwalk railing and entered a nesting box. We heard the bird's distinctive song with its loud, clear repetitions. Elaine explained that Prothonotary Warblers prefer a habitat in which trees grow in water with very little base about the nesting tree, which discourages predators. This year a census indicates about a dozen breeding pairs in the park. Last year, there were six pairs and a lone male in the park. By contrast at the turn of the century, there were eighty pairs of Prothonotary Warblers in the park. A few other sites about Southwestern Ontario provide the required habitat for this species, such as Long Point, Hillman Marsh and a small wetland at Holiday Beach Conservation Area.

Several woodpecker species may be found at Rondeau Provincial Park. The park has a number of American Beech which start to rot before the tree starts to die, producing good habitat for woodpeckers. Large excavations in American Beech are the workings of Pileated Woodpeckers which may be seen regularly on Lakeshore Road. On a Tulip-tree we noticed a series of regularly spaced drillings, the work of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Elaine told us that 30% of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker's diet comes from sap. The information that has been learned about the sap drilling of this species is fascinating. The force of the drill is quite amazing, thus the skulls of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are reinforced with special hinges in their spines. Their tongues are three to five times the length of the bill, with the tongue attached to the bird's brain.

When we discuss woodpecker habitat, we often use the term "snag" to describe the remains of dead trees that attract woodpeckers. "Snag" is an American term which we have adopted. To be totally correct with our woodpecker habitat terminology, we should use the Canadianism "chicco." (Elaine, if you have more information on this term, please add) when we speak about dead tree remains.

Upon the completion of our walk, we admired the wildlife garden adjacent to the Visitors Centre. A variety of native trees, shrubs and flowering plants along with feeders and a small pond act as a demonstration site to encourage cottagers to naturalize their

properties for wildlife. As we stood by the garden fence, we observed a Chipmunk, a Rufous-sided Towhee, an American Goldfinch and a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird enjoying the amenities. During the winter, four woodpecker species at one time have been observed at the garden's feeders.

Many thanks to Elaine Wake who guided us along the Tulip-tree Trail, giving us insight into Rondeau Provincial Park's woodlands and wonderfully productive sloughs.

ECFNC Fourteenth Annual Dinner, November 7, 1998

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 Holidayt 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.

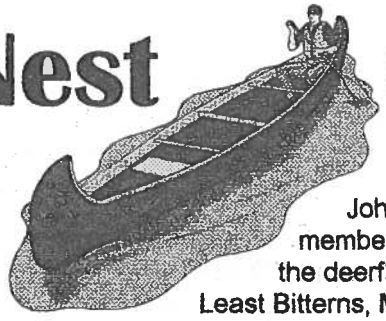
Our dinner menu this year will be Roast Chicken and Beef with accompanying vegetables, salad, rolls, and carrot cake dessert and beverage. Dinner tickets will be $27.00 per person this year as dinner prices have increased at the Fogolar Furlan. Be sure to purchase your ticket before or at the ECFNC October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

Mark your calender 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.

Glass Jars Wanted

Urgently needed are glass jars, one cup size or smaller, for donating jam to the local food bank. Please bring your jars to the ECFNC monthly meetings to give to either Betty Moore or Peggy Hurst.

Bird Nest Canoeing



by Paul Desjardins

On June 21, John Haggeman, Site Manager of St. Clair National Wildlife Area, led nine members of ECFNC on a three hour canoe trip. A pleasant breeze kept the deerflies away on this sunny day as John not only found and pointed out Least Bitterns, Marsh Wrens, Pied-billed Grebes, Black Terns, and Forster's Terns, but also spotted more than thirty nests during our journey. He gave numerous hints on finding the camouflaged nests of Pied-billed Grebes, Common Moorhens, Least Bitterns, Black Terns, and Marsh Wrens.

We could hear Marsh Wrens calling throughout a lot of the trip. John said the male creates six to ten nests with only one with eggs in it. He suggests the extras could be for attracting females or frustrating predators. John said he can't determine visually if a nest is occupied until he puts his finger in the small hole and feels the tunnel direction. He said the bees can sometimes give you a welcoming surprise if you don't knock first.

Although we stopped to count many eggs in active nests, some nests were empty. For example, the Great Horned Owls had occupied a man-made duck platform earlier in the season and had fledged two young in May. Also, one Mallard platform that John had checked three days previously had the egg shells of successfully fledged Mallards. This successful hatch was determined as the inner membrane of the shells was thick and rubbery and not excessively stained with blood. Birds hatch by pecking a ring near one end (narrowed) of the egg and popping this "cap" off, sort of like a boiled egg. When eggs are predated, they are broken with rough edges in irregular patterns. John also showed us telltale raccoon signs where a Red-winged Blackbird nest was ripped down. Ron Muir spotted a Pied-billed Grebe chick hiding about eight feet from the nest and Peggy Hurst from the bow of John and Barb Hill's canoe spotted a baby Black Tern.

Nigel Stevens, a budding naturalist of seven who helped paddle his mom and younger brother Nolan, tested the magical properties of water tension on the American Lotus. The shimmering water beads seemed to hover above the leaves no matter how he played with it using his paddle tip.

John Haggeman identified all the plants we saw and not only provided the common and Latin names but also told us their natural history and how they fit into the marsh ecosystem. We saw Musk Grass, Common Cattail, Hybrid Cattail and Narrow-leafed Cattail, Duckweed, Watermeal (the world's smallest flowering plant), American Lotus, Swamp Rose-mallow, Button-bush, an aquatic five-petalled flower called Bladderwort, Pickerelweed in bloom, Jewelweed, Swamp Loosestrife, Purple Loosestrife, and Phragmites.

John said it takes four years before Phragmites starts to decompose. Birds find the stalks difficult to bend and humans sometimes get cut to the bone from the dangerous snap (John's hands are scarred). John emphasized how Phragmites may be a far greater threat to the marsh ecosystem in some places than Purple Loosestrife. Phragmites crowds out all other plants leaving a mono marsh with one species.

I hope we don't lose some of the insect diversity we saw. I not only saw my greatest congregation

of dragonflies I ever saw on the road to the canoe launch, but during our paddling I noticed: Common Green Darners, Eastern Pondhawks, Dot-tailed Whitefaces, Blue Dashers (formerly called Blue Pirates), and Black Saddlebags. I got to add the Halloween Pennant (a rarity to Windsor) to my dragonfly life list. This distinctive pond skimmer has orange wings with dark brown bands.

I was also pleased to see that my nine marsh sightings of ladybugs were of the native Spotted Lady Beetle species. Most ladybug sightings in Canada are non-native species.

John's remarks made me realize that I've never seen an insect in Canada feeding off Phragmites australis. Have you ? Phragmites seems to always have unnaturally perfect leaves.

I want to thank John Haggeman for such an excellent opportunity to actually see marsh land bird nests.

Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve, Pelee Island

Over the next months, Essex County Field Naturalists' Club members will be hearing more about the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON) Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve, Pelee Island as the ECFNC accepts more responsibilities on the reserve as stewards of the nature reserve. The Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve is one of sixteen nature reserves owned and maintained by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and their federated clubs. A pamphlet prepared in 1993 by the FON gives some background as to the significance of this reserve. Some information is provided below.

Pelee Island provides a great diversity of plant and animal life with its distinctive geographical features. Of particular significance is the southeastern corner of the island. This uncultivated tract of land is a mixture of many natural communities - alvar, prairie, oak savannah, shrub thicket and Carolinian woodland. The habitat known as alvar arises from the Estonian language, which is used to describe an area of thin, droughty soil over flat limestone bedrock. Alvars are rare and localized in Southwestern Ontario; the alvar on Stone Road is considered on of the most significant in Ontario. In 1981, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources identified portions of the Stone Road-Mill Point region as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (an ANSI). Later, the alvar was identified as one of the most significant "Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) within the Essex Region Conservation Authority.

The FON acquired a 64 hectare (106 acre) portion fo the site in 1984. This was financed throgh a loan from the Ontario Heritage Foundation, then paid back by generous donations from FON members, Federated Clubs, and Carolinian Canada acquisition funds.

In 1987 following the FON example, the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) acquired a 36.4 hectare (90 acre) parcel of land on the east side of Stone Road, directly across from the FON property. A further acquistion was made by the Conservation Authority in 1989 which extended their property down to include the Mill Point shoreline. FON and ERCA are now the two largest landowners within the Stone Road Alvar/Mill Point site. Although the two properties do not cover all the critical habitat in the Stone Road area, they do assure increased protection against the threat of various development schemes.

The FON property includes the core "alvar" area, referring to the broad expanses of open meadows, oak savannah and limestone exposures. Alvars are typically characterized by extreme conditions: flooding and/or saturation in the spring that is

usually followed by drought in mid-summer. Drought conditions may vary from year to year, although the average amount of rainfall is 75 cm. (30 in.) The prairie and alvar plants which make this area their home are subject to these tremendous stresses and may often persist due to a lack of competition from othe herbaceous and woody species. Another adaptation is for certain plants and trees to become deep-rooted in fissure cracks.

The prairie/alvar and oak savannah communities in the Stone Road site could be considered as one of the best on the island. A prairie may be defined as a plant community dominated mostly by grasses and forbs rather than trees. Plants with prairie affinity found here include Big Bluestem (Andropogon gerardi), Nodding Wild Onion (Allium cernuum), Prairie Rose (Rosa setigera), Grey-headed Coneflower (Ratibida pinnata), Purple Milkweed (Asclepias purpurascens), Wand-like Bush Clover (Lespedeza intermedia), Downy Wood Mint (Blephilia ciliata) and Winged Loosestrife (Lythrum alatum).

The word "savannah" originates from the Carib Indian word describing a landscape of widely spaced trees. It is now the general term for any similar plant community where trees are present, but in such low density that grasses and forbs become more prominent in the ground layer.

The oak savanna communities contain such rare restricted species as Yellow Corydalis (Corydalis flavula), Miami Mist (Phacelia purshii) and Wild Hyacinth (Camassia scilloides).

The oak savannah has two dominant species: Chinquapin Oak (Quercus muhlenbergii) and Swamp White Oak (Quercus bicolor). The presence of these two oaks in a savannah community is very unusual and has not yet been observed in any other known natural community in Ontario. A Red Cedar savannah occurs in the central part of the FON property, interspersed with other significant species - such as the provincially rare Hop-tree (Ptelea trifoliata), Blue Ash (Fraxinus quadrangulata), and Burning Bush (Euonymus atropurpureus).

In Stone Road Alvar, on both the FON Nature Reserve and the ERCA property, management efforts are being directed to prevent the natural succession of shrubs and trees from closing in on the savannah communities. A prescribed burn plan was developed by ERCA with input from the FON. A portion of the FON property is scheduled to be included in the burn that will be undertaken on the ERCA property.

The Island provides a great vantage point to observe the amazing migration of birds in both spring and fall. Rare breeding birds in Ontario and Essex, such as the Acadian Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and the Yellow-breasted Chat nest in the Stone Road Alvar vicinity.

The presence of both the provincially endangered Blue Racer (Coluber constrictor foxi) and the Lake Erie Watersnake (Nerodia sipedon insularum) increases the need for protection and conservation. The Mill Point shoreline tract is the largest area of undisturbed habitat on the Island for the Lake Erie Water Snake. The large, loose rocks here are necessary for the hibernation, as well as for protective cover, for this snake.

Canada's largest and most graceful butterfly , the Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes) is fairly common at Stone Road. Its larvae feed on Prickly Ash (Xanthoxylum americanum) and Hop-tree (Ptelea trifoliata). The provincially and regionally rare Tawny Empereor butterfly (Asterocampa clyton) occurs near Hackberry trees, (Celtis occidentalis), on which its larvae feed, are found on this site.

In total 44 provincially rare and 33 regionally rare plant species occur in the Stone Road Alvar vicinity. Three plant species occur in Canada exclusively on the FON property. The 55 native "alvar" species at this site make it one of the most outstanding

alvars in Ontario.

During a two day blitz on July 7 and 8, 1998, Federation of Ontario Naturalists staff, Ministry of Natural Resources staff, Essex Region Conservation Authority staff and members of the ECFNC meet to discuss plans for trails on the FON and ERCA properties and opportunities for stewardship on the FON property. After touring the FON property for views of the various plant communities, a tentative trail was marked on the FON property that will lead visitors through woodlands, savanna and open alvar and shrubland, offering views of provincially and regionally rare trees and plants with good views of the alvar.

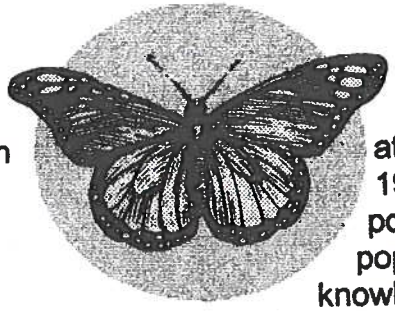
For any ECFNC member who wishes to be a member of the trail construction crew, a group of volunteers Working for Wilderness will meet and work on the trail from October 1 through 4, 1998. As of August 10, 1998, six volunteers (all members of former Working for Wilderness projects) have indicated they want to be a part of the work crew on the Stone Road alvar. The charge for this working holiday will be approximately $110.00. For further information, please contact the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2W8 Telephone 1(800) 440-2366

While touring the FON property, several plots of the invasive plant Garlic Mustard were noted. One area appeared to be living room size with two other smaller card table areas noted. The Garlic Mustard will need to be removed by hand over a period of years as the seed bank for this plant is long-lived. Ojibway Nature Centre reports that a banquet sized plot of this plant at Ojibway took constant vigilance over six years to completely remove all the plants. The ECFNC has accepted stewardship for the FON property, thus the removal of Garlic Mustard will be one of the projects for which we will plan, with an initial assault on Garlic Mustard to be make during spring 1999.

In the past, plant sampling has occured at six sites on the Federation of Ontario Naturalists property. While touring the property, fresh stakes were placed at the sampling plots in anticipation that ECFNC members will take part in a simplified sampling of alvar plants. More details about this stewardship activity will be provided.

Point Pelee National Park's Late June Butterflies

by Betty Learmouth



Six ECFNC butterfly enthusiasts met Alan Wormington at Point Pelee National Park's Visitors Centre on June 28, 1998 for a walk to view the Park's late June butterfly populati on. Alan has been observing the Park's butterfly populatio n for many years and is always pleased to share his knowledge with other naturalists. Before our walk we gathered in the Centre's auditorium for an orientation talk and slide presentation. Alan suggested a useful catalogue with suitable butterfly equipment such as nets and natural history books on many subjects that can be obtained from BioQuip Products, Inc., 17803 La Salle Avenue, Gardena, CA 90248. Some useful butterfly guides were recommended which are mentioned below.

Alan's slide presentation highlighted a number of butterfly species that are

commonly observed in the park along with species that are rare, but with luck may be seen. By viewing the slide presentation we were given a quick review of the field marks for the species we might encounter. This particular season has been very good, with 50 species of butterflies recorded so far. Point Pelee National Park has recorded 85 species of the 165 butterfly species known from Ontario: in total, there are 101 species known from Essex County. Late summer brings southern butterfly migrant species into the Park, so this season may be an exceptional one. We would likely not see a Giant Swallowtail as few were flying in late June, but we might possibly see a Pipevine Swallowtail, a southern species with a blue metallic sheen to its wings.

As we passed the train stop by the Visitor Centre, we noted a Silver-spotted Skipper nectaring on Basswood Tree blossoms. An Eight-spotted Forester, a moth species with an eye catching black and white wing pattern, caught our attention as we walked along the road towards the West Beach. We choose to walk towards the Tip, via a path that leads through an area with a population of Hop-tree, the host plant of the Giant Swallowtail larvae, and Spotted Knapweed which is appealing to a wide variety of nectaring butterflies.

We spotted Orange Sulphur, Orange Crescent, American Painted Lady, Blue-eyed Grayling which is now more well known as the Common Wood Nymph, Tiger Swallowtail, Cabbage White and Summer Azure. One Cabbage White, a female with two black dots on her upper forewings, was nectaring Hairy Puccoon flowers. Summer Azures, individuals from the season's first brood, were nectaring on dogwood blossoms. Birders are familiar with Spring Azures found in Tilden's Woods during April. The Summer Azure, a recently declared separate species, appears not to be confined to a single habitat but ranges widely, with a second brood expected shortly.

A small dark Dun Skipper was spotted, then a Mourning Cloak was seen over a sandy area. Mourning Cloak butterflies over winter as adults. Two Red Admirals were seen on Spotted Knapweed which will be even more attractive to butterflies when the blossoms open fully.

Several Hackberry Butterflies landed on our clothing as we walked along the path. We enjoyed up close opportunities to view these friendly butterflies as they examined our clothing with their extended proboscis, looking for minerals on our clothing.

Alan mentioned that an extremely rare immigrant Zebra Swallowtail had been seen several days earlier by Henrietta O'Neill, the driver of the train that shuttles Park visitors back and forth from the Tip. Henrietta had spotted this beautiful southern species on the Tip Road near the Sparrow Field.

Following our walk along the West Beach path, we made our way into the Sparrow Field towards several patches of Common Milkweed which were in full bloom, the air heavy with the blossoms' scent. Several Silver-spotted Skippers were nectaring among the blossoms, while others were whirling above the site. Several Monarchs, Tiger Swallowtails, a Great Spangled Fritillary, a worn Little Wood Satyr, a Comma, an American Painted Lady, European Skippers, an Eastern Tailed Blue, and a Snout Butterfly were spotted. Then we saw a Pipevine Swallowtail as it nectared at milkweed blossoms, its wings moving rapidly as it moved about the blossoms. We admired this rare Point Pelee visitor, eleven of which Alan had counted three days earlier. Alan drew our attention to the Pipevine Swallowtail as it rested on a grape leaf, enabling us to admire the metallic blue sheen of its wings. Meanwhile, hordes of mosquitoes buzzed around us, but we endured, thrilled to have glimpsed this beautiful Point Pelee visitor.

At the Tip, as we enjoyed the cooling breeze, a Pipevine Swallowtail flew out over Lake Erie, perhaps on its way to Pelee Island. Before boarding the train for the Visitor Centre, Alan showed us a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher's nest, the young fledged from the

nest. Our next destination was the open field area at the DeLaurier trail which yielded a Red-spotted Purple, a Banded Hairstreak, an Acadian Hairstreak and a Viceroy. In the damp ditch opposite the Fish Restaurant on Point Pelee Drive, we found a Bronze Copper and a Least Skipper.

Alan expects that his new book, The Butterflies of Point Pelee National Park , will be available by next spring. In the mean time, a Seasonal Status and Checklist of Point Pelee National Park Butterflies will soon be available. These publications will be a welcome addition to local naturalists' libraries.

Many thanks to Alan who shared his enthusiasm and extensive knowledge of Point Pelee National Park's butterflies. We enjoyed the opportunity to view and learn about the Park's remarkable butterfly population.

Useful references:

Iftner, David C. Butterflies and Skippers of Ohio. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1992.
Layberry, Ross A. The Butterflies of Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
Mitchell, Robert T. and Herbert S. Zim. Butterflies and Moths: A Guide to the More Common American Species. New York: Golden Press, 1977.
Opler, Paul A. A Field Guide to Eastern Butterflies. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992.
Pyle, Robert Michael. The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Butterflies. New York: Knopf, 1981.

The Butterflies of Point Pelee National Park: A Seasonal Guide and Checklist

by Alan Wormington

A publication of the Ontario Natural History Press, this pocket-sized, 12-page booklet includes the following information on each of the 85 species that have been recorded at Point Pelee National Park:

* resident versus immigrant status
* flight season and abundance using bar graphs
* extreme occurrence dates
* all-time maximum count for a single day

Also included is the following:

* recommended areas to find butterflies
* number of species that have been recorded during each month of the year
* blank columns to record daily observations

By mail this publication is available at the following rates:

* To Canada (Can $): $3.50 each (for 1 copy)
  $3.00 each (for orders of 2 or more)

* To USA (US $): $2.30 each (for 1 copy
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R.R. # 1, Leamington, Ontario, Canada N8H 3V4
Phone/fax (519) 326-0687

THE WILD SIDE

by Bob Wickett

The Truth About Water Fleas

Next time you are diving and the water seems a little silty, focus in on some of the particles. Chances are you will see that many of the particles are actually tiny plants and animals. The tiny plants and animals that float along in the water column are collectively referred to as plankton. More specifically, the plants are called phytoplankton and the animals are called zooplankton. Late in the summer visibility in Lake Erie tends to decrease due to the large numbers of plankton in the water. Most divers have heard this referred to as a plankton bloom. There are countless types of plankton but this month I want to focus on a type of zooplankton called Daphnia or, more commonly, water fleas.

Water fleas are tiny (less than 5 milimetres) relatives of crabs, shrimp, lobsters and crayfish that are very common in freshwater lakes and ponds. Under a microscope, water fleas look like miniature clams with a spine at one end. The body of the water flea is protected inside the translucent "clam shell", while its head and large antennae stick out the end opposite the spine (see diagram).

These primitive creatures belong to a class of animals called Branchiopoda which translated means "gill foot". They get this name because on each foot of a water flea (they have 10-12 feet) is a gill like structure that is used collect oxygen from the water. Not only do water fleas use their feet as gills, they also use their feet to collect food particles (algae, bacteria etc.) which are transferred to the mouth via a mucus filled groove along the body.

If water fleas are busy using their feet to collect oxygen and food, how do they manage to swim you might wonder. Well, with their antenna of course! Water fleas swim by means of large, powerful antenna attached to their head. Each stroke of the antenna propels the animal upward through the water. However, water fleas have little control over their movements other than up or down. Water currents do the rest.

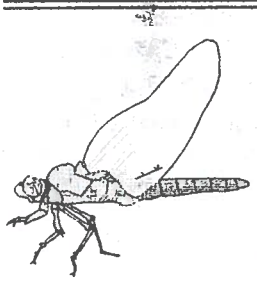
The scientific name of water fleas - Daphnia - comes from Daphne, a nymph in Greek mythology who spurned male company and spent her time in the forest with other nymphs. Similarly most populations of Daphnia include only females, which are able to persist by reproducing without the help of males. Throughout the summer when

conditions are good and food abundant, female water fleas give birth to brood after brood of young, all females and each individual genetically identical to herself. Basically, she is cloning herself over and over. Only, when conditions begin to deteriorate - whether the pond is drying up, winter is coming or food becomes scarce - do the females produce male young. The males then swim off to have sex with other females. Females are now producing eggs which, when fertilized by a male, serves to mix up the gene pool. The fertilized eggs are contained within a protective capsule or "ephippia" and are released to either fall to the bottom or float to the surface. Each ephippia contains two embryos in a state of arrested development. When conditions finally improve, the eggs hatch beginning the cycle over. Genetic diversity (a result of sexual reproduction) ensures that at least some young will survive if the environment has changed since the last generation. In harsh environments, ephippia can survive as long as ten years prior to hatching. This strange yet effective process is called cyclical parthenogenesis.

Water fleas have an important place in the scheme of things. They graze heavily of phytoplankton and algae effectively controlling its growth and preventing the lake from becoming a green soup, much like sheep in a pasture. In turn, water fleas and other zooplankton are an important food source for several small aquatic invertebrates as well as many fish species and especially young fish.

There you have it, contrary to initial reactions, water fleas are not a menace to unsuspecting divers but instead a fascinating little beastie that we have all encountered probably without realizing. Of course now I wonder how many were in that mouthful of water I swallowed last time I was diving.

NEXT MONTH: Hydra: Danger for Daphnia



Early July Dragonflies, Ojibway Park

by Betty Learmouth

Paul Desjardins, an ECFNC member who has studied dragonflies and damselflies over the past three years, was joined by ten dragonfly enthusiasts at Ojibway Park on July 12, 1989. We met in the Nature Centre's parking lot which was quite convenient as Paul was able to spread his considerable Odonata book collection across the hood of his vehicle.

Participants learned that there are numbers of books about dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata) available but no one book is comprehensive. Some books are very expensive while others are out of print, only available as expensive photocopied items. Using a copy of The Kansas School Naturalist, February 1997, which features common dragonfly species in coloured photographs, Paul introduced us to some of the species we might encounter on our walk. We discussed the equipment that is useful for enjoying dragonflies such as the new close focus Celestron binoculars. Each of us carried a copy of Odonata of the Ojibway Prairie Complex and Checklist of the Odonata of Essex County, prepared by Paul Pratt, Ojibway Nature Centre.

We walked across the lawn to the open water in front of the Nature Centre. Our first catch was a Blue Dasher (Pachydiplax longipennis), formerly known as the Blue Pirate, and a common member of the Skimmer family in our area.

Our specimen, caught by net, was placed in a plastic collection jar for easy viewing. We noted the insect's blue abdomen with its black tip, stripes on the thorax,

white face, and green eyes. Its wings were angled to the back, while its legs were angled to the front with the legs covered in spines. Dragonflies are the most maneuverable of insects, adept at capturing insects within their spiny legs which form a basket from which their victims can not escape.

Our second catch was a Ruby Meadowhawk (Sympetrum rubicundulum), another common member of the Skimmer family in this area. This individual was a young male, its body quite golden, but with age its body would turn an intense red. It was attempting to attack the larger but helpless Blue Dasher.

A female Eastern Pondhawk (Erythemis simplicicollis), another common Skimmer to this area, was laying eggs by dipping her abdomen tip on the water surface. Her body was green, while the male's body is blue which can cause an identification problem as the Blue Dasher is blue, but has distinctive blue stripes on the thorax. Above the female Eastern Pondhawk we noted a Blue Dasher, watching over the area.

As we walked down Titcombe Road, we checked the drainage ditch on the left. Several Twelve-Spotted Skimmers (Libellula pulchella) flew up and down the ditch, managing to avoid Paul's net. After all, these ancient insects have had 300,000,000 years to learn how to evade predators.

At the Titcombe Road Pond, we watched a male Ruby Meadowhawk, the dragonfly with the intense red body. Then young Christopher Maiolani captured a Yellow-legged Meadowhawk (Sympetrum vicinum), which Paul pondered as this was an early date for this common Skimmer. Later, upon checking with Ojibway Nature Centre naturalist Paul Pratt, Paul confirmed that this insect was flying earlier than expected.

There was a lot of dragonfly activity over the Titcombe Road Pond as by now it was nearly noon with the temperatures in the high twenties. We found some shady spots by the pond's edge from which we were able to enjoy all the aerial activity. Black Saddelebags (Tramea lacerata), a common Skimmer species, flew in tandem during their egg-laying activity. After the couple paused six inches above the water, the released female quickly flew down to the water surface to dip her eggs into the water before returning to her mate. All in a blink of an eye. Paul told us that this genus is the only one that does this, ensuring that the male in flight fertilizes the female's eggs.

Another dragonfly species patrolling the pond's surface were Widow Skimmers (Libellula luctuosa), a frequently found Skimmer species in this area. Its distinctive large white spots near the wing tips with black on the wing near the body make this species easy to identify. We examined a diminutive damselfly, identified by Paul as a female Eastern Forktail (Ischnura verticalis), a common Pond Damsel. We noted its characteristic green eyes and blue tip on the abdomen. This is one of four visual variations of this species.

As we stood by the pond's edge, we caught glimpses of both a Common Green Darner (Anax junius) and another smaller but distinctively marked Skimmer, the Common Whitetail (Libellula lydia). Abdomens of older Common Whitetail individuals are distinctively white, caused by sloughing off skin cells.

Our last sighting, as we walked back towards the Ojibway Nature Centre along Titcombe Road, was the sighting of a single Prince Baskettail (Epitheca princeps), one of the two remaining Emeralds in this area, coursing over our heads along with a Common Green Darner and a Black Saddlebags. Paul called our attention to the long narrow abdomen, the twelve black dots on the wings and the flight pattern which was well above our heads. We had good views of this uncommon species, an exciting conclusion to the morning's walk.

Paul encouraged us to identify each dragonfly that we see, repeating its name so

that we feel comfortable with the common species. We had an opportunity on this excursion to see eleven species well, a good foundation to build on as we learn more about these marvelous insects.

We wish to thank Paul for sharing his knowledge of dragonflies and damselflies with us, inspiring us to return to the Ojibway Ponds in a few weeks time to search for other dragonfly species.

BEEKEEPERS NEVER RETIRE

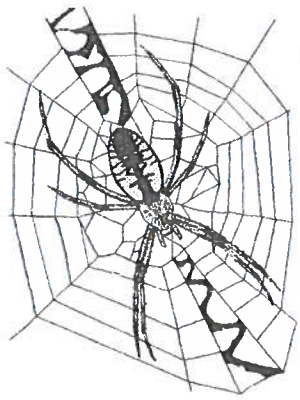
by John Moore

At approximately 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 16, 1998, my wife Betty informed me that a lady in Essex had called. She had a swarm of bees in her backyard and had called W.A. Chrysler & Sons in Chatham, who had given her my number. I decided to check it out as it was about three feet from the ground. I had to find a burlap bag and check if I had a good "super "(beehive section) to entice them to stay.

By 4:30 p.m. we were in a backyard near Essex on County Road 34. It was a lovely swarm of about ten pounds of bees in a young maple tree. I had a five gallon pail, bee smoker, bee suit, gloves, bee hat, and pruners to cut small branches. I got the smoker going and started smoking the small twigs with bees clinging to them and shaking the bees off.

Then I realized Betty said we weren't going home with bees inside a car (it's a hatchback - no trunk), so we went and got the truck and a lettuce box for transporting the swarm. I put the open box under the swarm, and instead of dropping the swarm into a bag-lined pail, I carefully fitted the open bag over the swarm on the branch and closed the bag. A new first for me! No tears, no stings, no mess and 99.9% of the bees captured.

I put a large comforter over the box of bees for transportation and back home we went. I set up a new clean super on a base and emptied the bees onto it. They seemed to move right in. When I returned with a second hive, though, they had moved back into the cardboard box. I put them back on the super and left the box upside down on top. By 6:00 p.m. I had cleaned up and left the site. It was the easiest swarm colleciton since I started beekeeping in 1980.



Spiders Rn't Us

by Betty Learmouth

Six ECFNC naturalists joined Carl Maiolani on July 19, 1998 at Ojibway Nature Centre to learn more about spiders. We gathered around a table in the Nature Centre on which Carl had arranged specimen containers containing spiders as well as a small reference library. Carl emphasized that spiders are not insects. The Golden Guide Spiders and Their Kin introduction states that "spiders are members of the phylum Arthropoda, the large group of animals with jointed legs and a hard outer skeleton. They belong, more specifically, to the class Arachnida, which includes animals with four pairs of legs, no antennae or wings, and only two body regions - a cephalothorax and an abdomen."

Carl showed us a large dead spider which we examined with a hand lens to view its eight eyes and pedipalps, leg like structures between the spider's jaw and first pair of legs. This large spider, likely a Six-spotted Fishing Spider, had been caught in a pool filtering system. When discovered by the pool's owner in its mummified condition, the spider was brought to Ojibway Nature Centre. These spiders have been seen at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area'a Trout Pond by Carl. Tom Hurst mentioned that one was seen on Frog Bit in a slough during the Rondeau Provincial Park excursion this past June.

Although Carl is interested in spiders, he is respectful of them. All spiders have fangs as they are carnivorous with insects as prey. Spiders are certainly useful as an insect control. Their prey is immobilized by an injection of venom. Spiders such as the Brown Recluse, Black Widow and Tarantula have a reputation for venomous bites to humans which may be exaggerated when we consider the size of the prey in which the spider normally would inject its venom.

We were shown a common outside spider, a Grass Spider, with a distinctive pattern on the cephalothorax and abdomen. We could see the pedipalps were enlarged, indicating this individual would be a male. The well known funnel web of this spider is not sticky as the spider is able to run across the web to its prey, inject it with venom and carry it into its funnel.

Certainly our homes are places where spiders are commonly found. If we look in any building, in any corner, in areas such as basements, we are likely to find a spider. Carl had found and brought a Cribellate or Cellar Spider which was holding an egg sac. The spider could have chosen to have left the egg sac hanging in a web. Using the hand lens, we could see individual eggs within the egg mass.

Carl had also found an egg sac with spiderlings. With the hand lens, we were able to see these tiny creatures as they climbed the specimen jar side. Oddly, the adult spiders appeared unable to climb from the specimen jars.

When asked if the well known Daddy-long-legs are spiders, Carl responded that these creatures are not spiders but spider relatives.

We have all been startled by a spider, especially Miss Muffet of nursery rhyme fame. When young naturalist Brett Lessard heard Miss Muffet's name, Brett kindly recited the Mother Goose nursery rhyme:

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating of curds and whey.
There came a spider,
And sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

It seems Little Miss Muffet was a real person, a Miss Patience Muffet. Carl read to us a paragraph from The Book of the Spider:

"Miss Patience Muffet, probably the real Little Miss Muffet, suffered greatly because her father, Reverend Dr. Thomas Muffet, or Mouffet (1553-1604), had an excessive fondness for spiders. He loved to encourage the house spider because, in his opinion, "she doth beautifie with her tapestry and hangings." Furthermore, he was keen on treating his daughter with spiders to cure many ailments. No doubt the poor girl was horribly traumatized by spiders, and thus it would be no surprise at all (though history does not record) if in fact Miss Muffet went on to develop a full-blown case of

arachnophobia."

Several useful books are available that will assist with the identification of spiders and understanding of spiders. The Internet's Arachnology Home Page with six pages of sources to explore reflects an interest in spiders such as shown by elementary school classes, particulary in Australia, which have developed their own pages on the Internet. This web page site address is <http/www.nfsia.ac.be/Arachnology/Pages/araneal.html>

After our spider discussion, we visited the Ojibway Nature Centre kitchen, to admire a small Fox Snake which had been brought to the Centre. Carl took the opportunity to check the kitchen window, spotting a small dark spider on the kitchen window screen. When Carl put his finger in front of the spider, it turned away, indicating that its eyes could see this large dark obstacle.

All our specimens in jars were released near the demonstration prairie garden. One spider descended on its drag line, then climbed the line back into the jar.

We searched for spiders in the restored prairie and trees near Sturgeon Creek, managing to find two old webs but no spiders. Perhaps a better time to view spiders would be in late August or early September. Carl mentioned that during August at Point Pelee National Park, spiders and their webs are found in abundance along the Woodland Trail. Another good spider location is the east and north side of the Trout Pond at Holiday Beach Conservation Area.

Carl recalled some incidents of spider behaviour which he has observed over the last few years. One spring morning, Carl, while waiting at the front door of a friend, watched a Garden Spider that was disturbed by the light. The Garden Spider, alarmed by the disturbance, ate its web. During an Oakwood Woodlot excursion a few years ago, Carl recalled a grasshopper caught in an orb-weaver or Argiope's web. The Argiope spider wrapped the grasshopper in web silk, before injecting venom into the prey.

Many thanks to Carl who gave us an introduction into the fascinating world to spiders. Carl provided the following titles as useful references:

Hillyard, Paul. The Book of the Spider: From Arachnophobia to the Love of Spiders. New York: Random, 1994.

Kaston, B.J. How to Know Spiders. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972, 1978. (Key to Nature Series)

Levi, Herbert. Spiders and Their Kin. New York: Golden Press, 1990. (Golden Guides)

Milne, Lorus. The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Insects and Spiders. New York: Knopf, 1980.

Fall Excursions

For futher 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 our sharing their expertise and volunteering their valuable time. Let us know about your ideas for future excursions for the upcoming winter 1999 season.

September

September - Call Donna Sale (733-9972) to participate in the NHRP fall seed collection

September - Naturalist at Point Pelee National Park will be leading Monarch walks throughout September. Please contact the Park for more details.

September 9 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting Location: Conference Room C, Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: John Haggeman, Marsh Manager, St. Clair National Wildlife Area. John will speak to us about the St. Clair NWA.

September 10 - Introduction to Fall Bird Migration, Ojibway Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Learn about the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County.

Sept ember 12 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Fall Migration Field Trip

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 hands-on nature display for children, a Pelee Wings Nature Store 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, Sepember 13 at 1:30 p.m. and a food concession each day. ECFNC members are encouraged to volunteer to assist visitors with hawk interpretation and identification and to assist at the food concession. Call Karen Cedar at Ojibway Nature Centre or Betty Learmouth.

September 14 - October 5 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Captivating Critters (ages 3-5). Four afternoons of wildlife exploration and nature fuMondays 10:00 a.m. until noon or 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Sept. 15 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Naturally Active Seniors - Seniors are invited to participate in activities to discover wildlife and fitness through nature walks, environmental discussions, and field trips. Time 10:00 a.m. until noon.

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. 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Naturally Active Seniors - Seniors are invited to participate in activities to discover wildlife and fitness through nature walks, environmental discussions, and field trips. Time 10:00 a.m. until noon.

Sept 26 - Ojibway Nature Centre Fall Migration Field Trip

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. A dragonfly workshop will be offered Sunday, September 27 at 2:00 p.m by ECFNC member Paul Desjardins.

Sept. 29 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Naturally Active Seniors - Seniors are invited to participate in activities to discover wildlife and fitness through nature walks, environmental discussions, and field trips. Time 10:00 a.m. until noon.

September 30 - ECFNC Executive Meeting

October

October - Call Donna Sale (733-9972) to participate in the October NHRP seed collection

October 1- 4 - Working for Wilderness Volunteers will be preparing a trail on the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Stone Road Alvar property. For more details regarding this working holiday, please contact Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2W8 Telephone: 1(800) 440-2366

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.

October 4-5 - Point Pelee National Park's Fall Festival. Call for more details of the events planned.

Oct 6 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Naturally Active Seniors - Seniors are invited to participate in activities to discover wildlife and fitness through nature walks, environmental discussions, and field trips. Time 10:00 a.m. until noon.

October 10 - Ojibway Nature Centre Fall Migration Field Trip

October 12 - Ojibway Fall Colour Festival - Celebrate Thanksgiving at the Ojibway Nature Centre with nature walks, a native plant and tree sale, environmental exhibits and activities the whole family will enjoy. Noon until 4:00 p.m.

Oct 13 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Naturally Active Seniors - Seniors are invited to participate in activities to discover wildlife and fitness through nature walks, environmental discussions, and field trips. Time 10:00 a.m. until noon.

October 14 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting Location and time: Conference Room C, Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: Simon Lachance, Doctoral candidate, Department of Environmental Biology, University of Guelph. Simons's talk is entitled "Insects feeding on other insects: the wild world of predators, parasites and parasitoids."

October 18 - ECFNC Fall Excursion - Enjoy a walk a Cedar Creek woodlot with ECFNC member Bill Balkwill. Meet at the Cedar Creek Conservation Area parking lot at 2:00 p.m. for directions to Bill's home.

October 19 - November 9 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Captivating Critters (ages 3-5). Four afternoons of wildlife exploration and nature fun. Mondays 10:00 a.m. until noon or 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Oct 20 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Naturally Active Seniors - Seniors are invited to participate in activities to discover wildlife and fitness through nature walks, environmental discussions, and field trips. Time 10:00 a.m. until noon.

October 23, 24 and 25 - Erie Wildlife Rescue will be the host of an international Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference featuring speakers and activities. A special event will take place at 8:00 p.m. on October 24 as the World Bird Sanctuary of St. Louis presents "Masters of the Sky." Admission to this event is $12.00 at the door, $10.00 in advance. Please call Erie Wildlife Rescue at 969-3919 for more information.

October 23 and 24 - Ojibway Nature Centre's Hallowe'en Sleepover (ages 8-12). Night hike, owl prowl, campfire, crafts, games, movies and breakfast with the birds. Pre-register by October 16. Friday 7:30 p.m. until Saturday 9:00 a.m.

October 24 - Ojibway Nature Centre Fall Migration Field Trip

October 24 - Golden Eagle Migration Day at Holiday Beach with guided eagle watching on the tower. Raindate October 31.

October 25 - ECFNC Fall Excursion - Join Muriel Kassimatis and Betty Learmouth for an excursion to view migrating Sandhill Cranes at the Michigan Audubon Society's Haehnle Sanctuary located near Jackson, Michigan, about a one and one half hour drive from Windsor. We will meet in Ojibway Nature Centre's parking lot to car pool at 1:00 p.m. Bring

a lunch as it will be early evening by the time we return. There will be an opportunity to walk trails in the Sanctuary area, then view the late afternoon fly in of the cranes.

October 28 - ECFNC Executive Meeting

November

November - Call Donna Sale (733-9972) to participate in the November NHRP seed collection

November 7 - Ojibway Nature Centre Fall Migration Field Trip

November 7 - Fourteenth Annual ECFNC Dinner at the Fogolar Furlan Club. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. with the bar open and the silent auction underway.
Dinner commences at 7:00 p.m. Guest speaker is Allen Chartier, Managing Editor of "Michigan Birds and Natural History." Allen's slide presentation is entitled "All That Glitters: A Survey of Hummingbird Diversity." Tickets are available at the Ojibway Nature Centre and Pelee Wings Nature Store.

November 6 - 7 - 1998 Carolinian Forum, Long Point. Contact Carolinian Canada, 659 Exeter Road, London, Ontario N6E 1L3. Call 519-661-2744 for more details.

November 15 - ECFNC Fall Excursion - Join woodlot owners and ECFNC members Pat and Chuck Rhoads for a visit to their woodlot. 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 flashing yellow light and the stop sign. The house number is #183 with the house on the north side of the highway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. Telephone: 975-4629

November 22 - ECFNC Fall Excursion - ECFNC member Faye Langmaid will lead a fall walk at the storm water retention pond, an important component of the Lakeview Planning area in East Windsor. This walk was well attended in April but due to confusion created by inaccurate directions several interested persons were disappointed to have missed this walk. Meet at 2:00 p.m. in the Sandpoint Beach parking lot on Riverside Drive East which is at the corner of Florence. We will then drive to the Banwell Road area near Greenpark Road for the walk.

November 25 - ECFNC Executive Meeting

November 29 - ECFNC Fall Excursion - Enjoy a late fall birding excursion with Birder Fred Urie in a West Windsor natural area. Meet in Ojibway Nature Centre's parking lot at 2:00 p.m.

December 6 - ECFNC Fall Excursion - Join Wayne Wannick for a tree identification walk through Kopegaron Woods Conservation Area located on Highway 3 between Leamington and Wheatley. Meet in the Conservation Area's parking lot at 2:00 p.m.

December

December 9 - ECFNC Monthly Meeting Location and time: Conference Room C, Essex Civic Centrer at 7:30 p.m.
Share a selection of your favourite slides or a plate of Christmas cookies during the annual Members Meeting.

December 19 - Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count. Call Ojibway Nature Centre for more details about this well attended CBC which includes early morning owling and counting at tthe Essex crow roost. Everyone is welcome. Join us for an enjoyable day of birding while learning about our wintering Essex County.birds.

December 20 - Rondeau Park Christmas Bird Count. Call Ojibway for more details.

December 21- Point Pelee Christmas Bird Count. Call the PPNP's Visitors Centre to register for this count that will census birds within and beyond the Park's boundaries. A light supper is served at 5:00 p.m. in the Visitors Centre.

December 27 - Rockwood Christmas Bird Count. Call Ojibway Nature Centre for more details about this CBC based in Rockwood, Michigan, that census winter birds in the Amherstburg area. This count is conducted until noon hour.

January

January 1. 1999 - Celebrate the New Year by participating in the Detroit River Christmas Bird Count. Many CBC'ers count for the morning, then meet in a local restaurant at noon for lunch. Call the Ojibway Nature Centre for details about this count.

ESSEX COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS

MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club is a Registered Charitable Organization

YES I WANT TO BE A PART OF THE E.C.F.N.C.

- ☐ Individual Membership $20.00/year
- ☐ Family Membership $25.00/year
- ☐ Sustaining Membership $30.00/year
- ☐ Life Membership $200.00/one payment

Name _____

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Postal Code _____ Phone No. _____

Occupation _____

Make cheques payable to:

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club
Devonshire Mall P.O.
P.O. Box 23011
Windsor, Ontario N8X 5B5

"UNAUDITED"

ESSEX COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB
SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1997

RECEIPTS	
MEMBERSHIPS	$2,580.00
RECEIPTED DONATIONS	1,503.00
OTHER DONATIONS	12,108.02
GOVERNMENT GIFTS AND GRANTS	85,340.10
DONATIONS FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS	4,000.00
CONFERENCE FEES	43,978.31
INTEREST	2,349.52
FUNDRAISING AND SALES	5,973.96
TOTAL RECEIPTS	157,832.91
DISBURSEMENTS	
BANK CHARGES	141.16
FUNDRAISING COSTS	6,169.33
PROGRAMS	46,007.60
PUBLICATIONS	1,221.65
BANQUET	300.00
MEMBERSHIP DUES	190.00
INSURANCE	355.00
ADMINISTRATION	896.30
CONFERENCE	38,348.99
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	93,630.03
EXCESS RECEIPTS	$64,202.88

"UNAUDITED

ESSEX COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB
STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES
AS AT
DECEMBER 31, 1997

ASSETS

CASH ON HAND	$50.00
CASH IN BANK	
CURRENT ACCOUNT	1,347.52
BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE	212.78
ESSEX COUNTY STEWARDSHIP NETWORK	74,784.95
SPECIAL EVENTS ACCOUNT	11,923.32
HEINZ BUSH FUND	44,369.61
HERITAGE FUND	34,256.05
NHRP ACCOUNT	8,542.01
RESERVE ACCOUNT	2,990.01
WOODLOT FUND	1,915.00
TOTAL ASSETS	$180,391.25

LIABILITIES

SURPLUS DONATIONS	
BALANCE AT JANUARY 1, 1997	$116,188.37
EXCESS RECEIPT TO DECEMBER 31, 1997	64,202.88
	$180,391.25