



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists

ECFNC VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL 1998 FESTIVAL OF HAWKS

By Betty Learmouth

The Holiday Beach Conservation Area is the site of the annual Festival of Hawks which is held over four weekends during September and October. The Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) welcomes three groups, the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club, the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory and the Holiday Beach Banding Association, all of which have come together

to make contributions towards a popular Festival which this year attracted hawk enthusiasts and bird watchers from across Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Guided hawk watching at the hawk tower is a focal point for the Festival but the busy area around the festival tent, the ERCA trailer and the classroom is the spot where volunteer ECFNC members will be found. By mid morning on each Festival of Hawks day, Zulu, the Red-tailed Hawk and Chomper, the Great Horned Owl were on display. Visitors enjoyed observing and learning about these birds. About mid morning, banders brought captured and banded birds of prey from the banding station for hawk banding demonstrations and talks. Of course, a crowd soon gathered.

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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:



The EGRET
 Devonshire Mall
 P.O. Box 23011
 Windsor, Ontario
 N8X 5B5



Information

ECFNC Birding Hotline
 252-BIRD

N.H.R.P.

733-9972

Fax 733-9097

Ojibway Nature Centre
 966-5852

Point Pelee National Park
 322-2365

Egret e-mail

vulpes_dhondt@hotmail.com

E.C.F.N.C. Contacts:

President: Tom Hurst (519) 839-4635

Vice-President: Dave Kraus

Secretary: Jo Ann Grondin

Treasurer: Peg Wilkinson

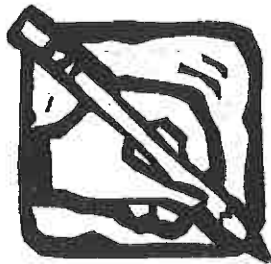
**Directors: Denise Hartley, Phil Roberts, Michael Malone,
 Donna Sale, Karen Cedar, Gerry Waldron, Patricia Rhoads**

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- Public Information Officer: Pam Simpson
- Meeting Speaker Co-ordinator: Patricia Rhoads
- Egret Editor: David D'hondt
- F.O.N. Liaison: Phil Roberts
- E.R.C.A. Liaison: Michael Malone
- Friends of Heinz Bush Liaison: Donna Sale
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- Field trip Committee: Heritage Committee
- General Meeting Committee: Peggy Hurst

Committees:

- Egret:** David D'hondt, Karen Cedar, Betty Learmouth, Carl Maiolani, Nicole D'hondt, Shirley Grondin
- 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, Jim McAllister, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Patricia Rhoads



The President's Report

In my role as President of the ECFNC I often find myself climbing on the proverbial "soap box" and asking others to give their time and resources for the benefit of our natural heritage. So often, in fact, that I wonder whether my continuous pleas have become an annoyance rather than an effective means of rallying support for a cause. Despite this concern I will continue "crying wolf" because in regards to our natural environment the wolf is always at the door. Whether it is a matter of habitat destruction or a lack of research or restoration sources, the issues confronting us are without end.

Fully aware that my verbosity plays a very small part in the scheme of things I have been encouraged by an increased willingness of individuals to get personally involved in the struggle to protect our quality of life. With each passing year the number of people willing to collect native seed, plant trees, count birds, amphibians, and butterflies seem to increase. I was particularly pleased by the volunteer turnout at the 1998 Holiday Beach Conservation Area's Festival of Hawks. While it is true some individuals still carry an inordinate share of the workload, this year's Festival was much more "visitor friendly" due to the efforts of new participants. Thanks to their efforts the research programs at Holiday Beach were supported and numerous people were introduced to one of nature's annual miracles. Education is our most powerful tool in securing the protection of that which Field Naturalists' value most.

On the protection front crowded council chambers over the future of Ruscom Shores Conservation Area, the La Salle Woodlot, and the Heinz Bush indicate a greater willingness by individuals to publicly demonstrate their regard for the natural world. More recently, my belief that many residents share a respect for natural values was

reinforced by the public response to the proposed golf course in Marshfield Woods ESA. With short notice dozens of individuals took time to attend Colchester South Council meetings and/or write to council to express their support for this ESA. As a result what appeared to me as a "done deal" was deferred for reevaluation by the newly elected amalgamated council in 1999. The battle is not won yet but continued public participation in the process is vital to ensure a positive outcome.

Organizationally the local environment has benefited from the creation of new groups. Project Green and the Essex County Stewardship Network have both brought new resources on the scene and have introduced projects that are beyond the limited means of the ECFNC. As well, I have noted that the Citizens' Environmental Alliance, an established environmental watchdog, has devoted more of its resources to the natural habitat sector. Less well known are the several "Friends of ..." groups that have recently come into existence. The newest edition is the Friends of Sturgeon Creek in Mersea Township. Let me tip my hat to Club Director Mike Malone and ERCA for spear heading its inaugural meeting on November 23, 1998. If it can accomplish only a fraction of what Lil' Reg has done we all will reap the benefit of a healthier watershed in our region.

It is a great comfort to witness the growing number of individuals who are willing to work for the environment in which we live. But this comfort is over shadowed by the unrelenting pace of habitat destruction. It seems just as one restoration project is undertaken, another mature habitat is crushed by the bulldozer. The only long term solution is for the Essex-Windsor region to develop a comprehensive land use planning scheme which makes the preservation and enhancement of our natural environment a

key priority. It is self defeating to wait until the developer is "at the door" to speak up for a piece of our natural heritage. We must plan now to create a sustainable natural ecology in our region's future. Only by identifying goals and establishing legal safeguards will biologists and developers be able to co-operate in their efforts to improve our economic and ecological future. At this moment public advisory groups such as the Natural Habitat Task Force, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the Detroit River Cleanup Committee are looking at the problem from a regional perspective and outlining priorities needed to integrate our Carolinian remnants into a functioning ecosystem. We must ensure that land use management plans now being developed by our municipal governments incorporate the principles and protections that will proactively insure a future for nature in Windsor and Essex. Public participation now will save us the pain of many Marshfield-like situations in the future.

Provincially, the F.O.N. has sent out an urgent pleas to all its members to speak out about the developments in the Lands for Life process. The Lands for Life Commissions have

recommended that only eight percent of all the vast wilderness of Northern Ontario be protected for their natural value. The F.O.N. is convinced that 15-20 % is the bare minimum necessary to ensure a viable wilderness for future generations to enjoy. We are urged to write, phone and lobby our local MPPs to correct this historic blunder before Pelee's migratory birds have no where to go to breed. Our future is being shaped today and I hope you will be part of the process.

Yours truly,
Thomas Hurst

**Please recycle
this newsletter!**



Let a friend read it!

P.S.

Don't forget that your opportunity to be a key player in the future of the ECFNC is fast approaching. Nominations for the Club Executive will be accepted from now until March 4, 1999.

(continued from page 1 . . .)

For events such as the Festival of Hawks to run well, volunteers are essential to make visitors welcome. On the first Festival of Hawks day, September 12, 1998, a number of ECFNC members and friends volunteered to assist. At the Festival trailer, Pat Watson, Peggy McEwan, Peggy Hurst and Hank Hunt were on hand to answer visitors' questions and help with trailer sales.

Bev Wannick, ERCA's Community Relations Technician and an ECFNC member, had prepared a wonderful hands-on children's activity centre for this year's Festival. Young participants could explore a variety of activities including examining pond life through telescopes, creating raptor art prints or enjoying the raptor nest. During the morning Mr. Pikor's Grade 3 class from Grant School in Ferndale, Michigan enjoyed the activities with the assistance of ECFNC

member Lynda Corkum.

As usual the food concession was well looked after by ECFNC members. At mid morning, Thelma Walker and Muriel Kassimatis arrived to oversee serving of coffee and muffins, then prepared the vegetables for the noon hour barbecue. Brian Maiolani ably looked after the barbecuing of the shiskabobs and smokies. At noon hour Andy Nicholas and Paul Valentine took over the duties in the food concession area.

On Day 2 of the Festival, September 13, 1998, the weather was hot and sunny which attracted good numbers of visitors. Several informative hawk talks by the banders included presentations by Holiday Beach Banding Association Co-ordinator and ECFNC member Phil Roberts. ECFNC members enjoyed the talks as they volunteered in nearby areas. Several Red-tailed Hawks,

relocated from the Toronto International Airport, were subjects of raptor banding talks, then were "adopted" and released.

Peggy Hurst looked after the ECFNC display while Hank Hunt assisted visitors at the HBMO display and sale area. Erica Jung was the interpreter at the hands-on children's display where young participants could view water fleas, a water scorpion and backswimmers through telescopes. The food concession was well cared for by Shirley Grondin, Ruth Junge, Andy Nicholas, and Sharon Nicholas with Brian Maiolani the chief cook at the barbecue. On both days Mike Malone brought the popular Pelee Wings Nature Store display with a selection of binoculars, books, prints, and clothing.

Weather for Days 3 and 4, September 19 and 20, 1998, of the Hawk Festival continued clear and warm. Special visitors on display were American Kestrels, a Broad-winged Hawk, a Peregrine Falcon and a young Harris's Hawk, brought by Mel Dennis. Bev Wannick and Phil Roberts both gave hawk banding talks to our visitors. ECFNC members who volunteered at the Blue Kestrel Cafe were Clary and Margaret Croft, Margaret Jennings, Donna Cowie, Barb Hill, Ruth Junge, Karen Cedar, and Brian Maiolani who continued to be our chief cook throughout the weekend. Peg Hurst and Denise Hartley looked after our ECFNC display which included the newly developed Holiday Beach mug featuring a Golden Eagle by artist Dave Stimac and the ECFNC Great Egret. Jessie Iwasio, Patricia Rhoads, Karen Cedar, and Erica Junge assisted at the children's hands-on display. The HBMO display was handled by Hank Hunt. Ojibway Nature Centre's and ECFNC member Paul Pratt presented a dragonfly workshop. The Pelee Wings Nature Store display was looked after by Mike Malone.

Days 5 and 6, September 26 and 27, of the Hawk Festival were cooler but still bright and sunny. Many of Saturday's visitors were birders who enjoyed the hawk banding demonstrations such as the twenty-eight members of a Cleveland Erie Park excursion

to Holiday Beach. The morning's first talk was attended by sixty-five persons including ECFNC member Lynda Corkum who adopted a Sharp-shinned Hawk. ECFNC members and friends who volunteered September 26, 1997 were Mary Jane Winterton, Shirley Wheeler, Brian Maiolani, Donna Cowie, Margaret Jennings, Hank Hunt and Peggy Hurst.

September 27 got off to a late start due to an early morning thunderstorm, but all that was quickly forgotten when bander Phil Roberts brought a hatch year female Peregrine Falcon for a talk at 10:00 a.m. ECFNC member Carl Maiolani adopted this beautiful young falcon, only the third Peregrine Falcon to be captured and banded at the Holiday Beach Banding Station (see photograph 2). Hawk watchers on the hawk tower observed thirteen Peregrine Falcons over the day's watch. The highlight of the afternoon's banding talks was a vocal Merlin which was adopted by a member of a Cincinnati Zoo excursion. ECFNC members who enjoyed the day as volunteers were Margaret Croft, Ruth Junge, Juliet Renaud, Pauline Renaud, Dan Bissonnette and "chief cook" Brian Maiolani. ECFNC



member Paul Desjardins lead a fall dragonfly workshop. Mike Malone brought the Pelee Wings Nature Store's display of hawk and nature related sale items.

Rain on October 3 dampened the Festival of Hawks. Despite the conditions, faithful ECFNC volunteers "checked in" to the Festival, but the decision was made only to serve coffee and muffins for a few hours at the Blue Kestrel Cafe. Despite the damp conditions, visitors who had traveled from West Virginia, Ann Arbor, Cleveland, and Kitchener were on the site, staying well into the afternoon. Bev Wannick presented a birds of prey workshop under the Festival tent



at mid morning. At noon hour, HBMO President Bob Pettit gave a raptor identification slide presentation to a full classroom audience.

Sunday, October 4, 1998 was the Festival of Hawks final day. Zulu and Chomper arrived about ten o'clock. Organizers remarked that the morning was quiet. At the banding station, the banders were unable to attract birds. By noon hour, the displays and the Blue Kestrel Cafe was busy. Mel Dennis brought his young Harris's Hawk for the birds of prey display. ECFNC volunteers included Ruth Junge, JoAnn Grondin, Don Bissonnette, chief cook Brian Maiolani, Peg Hurst, and Erica Junge. Joan Walker brought the Pelee Wings Nature Store display. Overhead Turkey Vultures, Sharp-shinned Hawks and other raptors migrated in a partially cloudy sky which provided good viewing as the volunteers took time out to watch the migration.

Many thanks to all the ECFNC members and friends who volunteered at this year's Festival of Hawks. Everyone's efforts ensured that the Festival was a success. It is worthwhile to note that many visitors return year after year to enjoy the hawk watching, raptor talks and displays. The volunteer contribution of each ECFNC member and friend adds to the enjoyment of all who attend the Festival of Hawks.

Annual Pelee Island Weekend

The annual Pelee Island weekend will be held again this coming year on Saturday, May 1 and Sunday, May 2, 1999. Dave Kraus will have details in the March newsletter. Mark your calendars for another enjoyable spring weekend spent exploring our own Pelee Island.



Field Trip Review



Walpole Island Field Trip

by Don Bissonnette



On Sunday, August 16, 1998, members of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club visited Walpole Island. The focus of the trip was to learn about Walpole's prairies.

Five of us met at the SilverCity movie complex and carpooled up. This group detoured Chatham and drove through Prairie Siding and Paincourt. Along the way, we saw an Emu farm and fields of hemp.

We reached the Walpole Island Heritage Centre at 9:30 a.m. Within minutes, the rest of our group arrived. We met our leaders, Allen Woodliffe, District Ecologist from the Ministry of Natural Resources office in Chatham and Clint Jacobs, the Heritage Centre's Natural Heritage Coordinator. Six others joined us including Paul Ashley, site manager of the Long Point National Wildlife Area, John Haggeman, site manager of the St. Clair N.W. A. and a member of the Sydenham Field Naturalists, Graham Buck of the Kitchener-Waterloo F.N. Club, Todd Farrell of the Huron Fringe F.N. Club, Marian Reaume of the Dresden Horticultural Society, and Sylvia Deleary, a member of the Walpole Island Council.

Sylvia Deleary welcomed us on behalf of Council. Allen Woodliffe and Clint Jacobs gave us an orientation. Walpole Island is a great place for botanical field trips. It has many plants, ninety-eight of which are provincially rare. Small White Lady's-slipper is its most famous rare plant. Then we set out to visit the Sandpits area. This area is a blend of forest, oak savanna, and tallgrass prairie. It is managed by the local Council.

Our trail started in a forest. As we walked along, the forest gave way to the oak savanna. There was no clear line between the forest and the savanna. Instead, it was a gradual transition.

A savanna is an open wooded area where fifty per cent or less of the ground is shaded by tree canopy. Here, we found plants such as Meadow-rue, Wild Indigo, Smooth False Foxglove, the native Canada Hawkweed, Solomon's-seal, False Solomon's-seal, Smooth White Lettuce, Yarrow, Pale Sunflower, and Joe-Pye-Weed. Some of these plants were in flower.

Most of the trees in this savanna were Black Oak, Pin Oak, White Oak, and Sassafras. There were also bushes of sumac and hazelnut. We encountered birds such as American Goldfinch, Downy Woodpecker, Wood Peewee, and a Ruby-throated



Photo by Don Bissonnette

Hummingbird.

As we continued along the path, the trees became further spaced. The savanna gradually evolved into a tallgrass prairie. A prairie is an area of native grasses and wildflowers, with one or less trees per acre.

The prairie was beautiful. Most of the wildflowers were in full bloom. Many of the shade-loving savanna plants were absent. Instead, we found heat tolerant species such as Culver's-root, Rough Blazing-star, Dense Blazing-star, Butterfly-weed, Hairy Pinweed, Spreading Dogbane, Missouri Ironweed, Virginia Mountain-mint, Interrupted Fern, Groundnut, Prairie Dock, Boneset, Tall Coreopsis, Big Bluestem, and Tall Sunflower.

Our trail lead us through an old river channel. Here, the low rich soil is usually damp. As a result, the plants grow to maximum heights such as the Prairie Dock reaching eight feet tall. Allen introduced us to Panic Grass, Prairie Thistle, Carrion-flower, and Grass-of-Parnassus. Despite its beauty, Allen reminded us that this prairie has a few non-native invaders, such as Phragmites, White Sweet Clover and Black Locust.

We returned to the Heritage Centre for a hearty catered lunch. Then, we set out for the Potawatomi Prairie. Half the Potawatomi Prairie is owned by the Council. The other half is privately owned. "Potawatomi" means "People of the Place of Fire." This is the largest remnant prairie on the Island.

As we stepped out of our vehicles, our noses were hit with the sweet smell of mint. This prairie has a lot of Virginia Mountain-mint, and it was blooming.

The Potawatomi Prairie had many of the same species as the Sandpits area prairie. However, because of the soil's low moisture content, the plants were dwarfed. Most of the plants were less than two feet tall.

We found a few new plants such as Gray Goldenrod, Skinner's Gerardia, Sneezeweed, Little Blue Stem, Prairie Milkweed, Rhodelle's Goldenrod, and Prairie Loosestrife. Allen pointed out a single albino Dense Blazing-star in the midst of a large group of regular ones. Despite being vertically

challenged, this was still a beautiful prairie. We saw Monarch butterflies feeding on wildflowers. They are especially fond of Blazing-stars.

Allen told us about the birds found on these Walpole Island prairies. Walpole Island has the largest population of Northern Bobwhite in Ontario. For most of the year, they are secretive. However, in spring, the males become bolder. They perch in high places, and call loudly. They are claiming territories and seeking mates. April and May are good months for seeing Walpole's Bobwhites.

Walpole Island prairies were one of the last places in Ontario to see the rare Henslow's Sparrows. King Rails have also been seen on Walpole Island prairies, usually close to the wetlands.

Our day was done by 3:00 p.m. We discussed returning next spring to see the Small White Lady's-slipper and the Northern Bobwhite.

A big "thank you" goes out to the native peoples of Walpole Island. Thanks for sharing your treasured prairies with us. Also, many thanks to Allen Woodliffe for being such a great teacher and field trip leader.



Photo by Don Bissonnette

Greater Sandhill Crane Migration in Michigan, Fall 1998

by Betty Learnmouth

Fourteen ECFNC members carpoled to the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary in Jackson County, Michigan, on October 25, 1998 to view the Greater Sandhill Crane fall migration. We arrived mid afternoon at the site which is found by exiting at Exit 147 off I-94 West, driving up Race Road to the intersection of Seymour Road, turning left, then watching for the Sanctuary entrance on the right. We looked briefly at the cranes' night time roosting site which is the Mud Lake Marsh, with viewing from a slight rise which gives an excellent view to the north. The marsh is surrounded by woodlands, making it a particularly attractive area.

Paul Desjardins suggested that we should look for foraging Greater Sandhill Cranes in the nearby agricultural lands. We enjoyed our drive about the area, a mix of farms, cultivated lands, woodlots and protected sanctuary property. We eventually located a group of 39 Sandhill Cranes, apparently feeding in the corner of a large agricultural field, recently harvested of its corn crop. The birds appeared to be adults, all a blue-gray colour. When viewed through the telescope we could see a patch of red on the forehead of each bird. This red forehead is actually a patch of bare skin, rich in capillaries, which acquires a deeper colour when the bird wishes to send a warning that it is angry or defensive.

After our viewing of the foraging birds, we drove back to the sanctuary which by this time was becoming quite busy. The benches on the viewing hills were all occupied with dozens of visitors and birders standing about. Looking through our binoculars, we could see a few cranes in the marsh. Ducks and geese were observed as they flew about the wetland.

Approaching five o'clock, we noticed groups of cranes gliding into the marsh from the north. Wave after wave of these birds descended into the marsh as hundreds upon hundreds of birds came to the nighttime roost

area. We were far enough away that the sound of their voices did not reach us. Greater Sandhill Cranes are noted for their voices which will carry over a mile. The cranes have a four foot long windpipe coiled into two feet of neck which results in a long resonance chamber which gives their voice its unique timbre.

Other birds glided into the marsh from the east and west. One group from the west was quite vocal as they joined other cranes in the marsh. Finally, some birds glided directly over our heads as they flew from the south towards the wetland. We enjoyed hearing the distinctive call of the Greater Sandhill Crane as they vocalized to each other in the air as they approached the wetland. An interpreter at the site commented that one of the birds in a flock overhead was an immature as its call was different. With the afternoon light rapidly fading, flocks of Canada Geese streamed towards the wetland.

During this year's visit, we noted the Jackson Audubon Society has provided a helpful bulletin board display for visitors with useful information about the cranes. The Mud Lake Marsh is a migration roost for several thousand Sandhill Cranes as they migrate from Michigan breeding areas to Florida. As well, seven pairs of Sandhill Cranes raised young in this marsh this past year.

The Jackson Audubon Society has developed a pamphlet which provides fast facts on Michigan's cranes. In 1931, due to wetland drainage, market hunting, and human disturbances, southern Michigan's cranes declined to seventeen pairs. Local Michigan Audubon Society members in the Jackson area recognized that protected lands were vital to the preservation of the Sandhill Cranes. In 1955, Harold Wing persuaded Casper Haehnle to donate 497 acres to the Michigan Audubon following the death of his daughter. Today the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary totals 900 acres due to land gifts and purchases.

Ron Hoffman, the Haehnle Sanctuary chairman, told the members of the Monroe, Michigan, Erie Shores Birding Association (ESBA) during a program that he presented to that group during September 1998, that the success

of Michigan's cranes may be their undoing. The ESBA October newsletter carried a summary of the talk. As the cranes' numbers increase, they become more of a problem. Cranes need a lot of nourishment. They are omnivorous and eat snails and grasshoppers but their favourite food is corn, with wheat a close second. Not only do they forage in farmers' fields after the harvest, but are known to feast on newly sprouted grain in the spring, and to lead their young to lawns and gardens as well.

Solutions to the problem are being sought with hope for an organized effort that will be acceptable to property owners, conservationist, and sanctuary interests. The possibility of a short hunting season controlled by sanctuary members in a manner similar to Ducks Unlimited is a real possibility.

A Woodland Walk in Woodslee

by Betty Learmouth

Mild november weather attracted twenty-five friends and members of the ecfn, including six children, for a sunday afternoon walk in chuck and patricia rhoads' fifty acre woodlot in woodslee. Since the woodlot is at the back of the rhoads farm, chuck transported the adults by hay wagon down the farm lane. We enjoyed the gentle ride along the cedar windbreak to the Woodlot. Some of the children chose to ride their bikes.

As we arrived at the woodlot's edge, a small flock of mourning doves flew off. Our first stop was at a section of the woodlot where american beech grow. We admired the dark grey trunks of these majestic trees, with a check in trees in canada by john laird farrar to verify our identification.

A short walk from the american beech grove, a keen sighted naturalist had spotted a gray phase eastern screech-owl perched on a tree stump about two feet above the woodlot floor. The owl was aware of the dog that had accompanied us as the owl watched the dog through narrowed eyes. Since the owl was just a few feet from the trail, everyone had a good view at this

Small nocturnal owl, noting its prominent ear tufts.

The trail vanished, so we tramped on through the woodlot, towards a huge chingaupin oak, estimated to be 150 years old. On the woodlot floor, we found the tree's distinctive leaves, coarsely toothed and tapered at both ends. The hike through the woodlot was a perfect way to spend a mild afternoon in november. As we wandered through the woodlot, we searched through the leaves on the woodlot's floor, identifying swamp white oak, pin oak, shumard oak, and basswood.

We noted wildlife about the woodlot. Deer tracks of various sizes were seen along the edge of the winter wheat crop. A red-tailed hawk circled briefly above the woodlot. In a cavity of the upper limb of an oak, an unidentified animal, likely a raccoon, slept. Two naturalists who took the alternate route back to the wagon reported eastern cottontails. Our walk ended at the newly excavated pond on the woodlot's edge.

Following an enjoyable afternoon walk, we gathered in the rhoads' barn for hot beverages and goodies. Many thanks to chuck and patricia for their hospitality.

Return to the East Riverside Community Planning Area

by Betty Learmouth

Thirteen naturalists and friends joined Faye Langmaid on November 22, 1998 for a return visit to the stormwater management pond located in the East Riverside Community Planning Area on Little River Boulevard at Banwell Road. We met at Sandpoint Beach, drove east on Riverside Drive to Greenpark, right on Greenpark, then left onto Little River Boulevard, parking on the roadway adjacent to the pond.

Faye distributed selected photocopies from the Secondary Plan for the East Riverside Planning Area, a large area comparable to the size of the lands from the City of Windsor's Ouellette Avenue to Walker Road, with Tecumseh Road and Riverside Drive as north and south boundaries. About 15,000 to 20,000 persons live in that area, with the potential

projected population of the East Riverside Community to be as large. Unlike mid city Windsor, the East Riverside Community has two landfills, with the whole planning area lower than nearby Lake St. Clair. Therefore, the area must be made flood proof. One way to deal with the area's excess water has been to construct a stormwater management pond with 25 acres of land devoted to the project surrounding a 10 acre pond.

We stood on the newly asphalted path which encircles the pond as Faye explained that water runoff from roads in the area would flow into the pond through three outlets. The water would be cleansed of suspended particles by flowing through tree root wads, coco fibre logs and over a pond bottom designed to cause particles to be dropped. Plants that will aid in cleansing the water have been planted in the lake.

Through the spring and summer, geese came to area to feed, pulling up the newly planted aquatic plants. Scare tactics were used to discourage the geese, with plans made not to mow surrounding areas as tall vegetation will discourage the geese from grazing about the pond.

Stormwater management ponds are relatively uncommon in Ontario. Cities such as Edmonton, Regina and Saskatoon have such ponds as a means to control volumes of water on flat terrain which can become overwhelmed with huge amounts of water created by natural occurrences such as thunder storms. If terrain is rolling or has more prominent features, the need is not so great. The City of Windsor has twenty-three pump stations to aid in the movement of water off our flat landscape. Faye pointed out the pond's pump station which will move water to the Rendezvous Pump Station and on into Lake St. Clair.

Upon reaching the south edge of the pond, we walked up an access road on the landfill which provided a good view towards Lake St. Clair and the new homes that were under construction everywhere, west to

Tecumseh and east towards woodlots that will be retained with housing surrounding these green areas. The work on the landfill associated with capping this large area is nearly completed. The entire area will be seeded with a toboggan hill to be developed and an area set aside where crops will be planted to remind residents of the area's agricultural past.

As we completed our walk, we noted that the pond level was low, a result of this year's drought. Newly planted Carolinian trees around the pond were lost this past year, despite watering. These trees will be replaced. Water quality in the pond is now monitored with samples taken from various sections of the pond. Other plans for the area include a bridge, benches and a gazebo. Developers realize that attractive recreational areas near their newly constructed homes will help potential home owners make a decision to live in these new neighborhoods. Sidewalks will be a part of this new development as it is essential to provide safe walking spaces for everyone.

Faye pointed to areas surrounding the pond that have varied features such as grassy slopes, sandy areas on steep edges to discourage entry, marshy edges with thick vegetation to prevent close approach to the pond, as well as willows planted close to the water's edge which will provide a natural barrier as they grow.

During the walk we watched Red-tailed Hawks and an American Kestrel hunting about the hedgerows in the gusty wind. Several pairs of Mallards were seen in the pond along with a single Bufflehead. A few Mourning Doves and a flock of Tree Sparrows flew from the hedgerow as we headed back to our cars.

Many thanks to Faye who made the walk around the stormwater management pond so interesting, providing us with insight as to how proper planning can ensure that a neighborhood will be an attractive and desirable place to live. We were accompanied by dogs "Alex" and "Hobbs" who brought us safely back to our starting point.



by Betty Learmouth

14th Annual E.C.F.N.C. Dinner

Saturday, November 7, 1998, the Club held its 14th annual dinner in the Dante Costa Room of the Fogolar Furlan Club. Greeting guests at the reception desk were Muriel Kassimatis, Margaret MacDonald, and Peg Wilkinson. As in previous years, members and friends arrived from six o'clock onward to examine and bid on the one hundred and twenty donated items towards the fund raising silent auction. By the time dinner was served at 7:20 p.m., eighty-five naturalists had arrived to enjoy the evening together. Fall centre pieces of colourful fall leaves and yellow "mums," arranged by Margaret Jennings and Muriel Kassimatis, brighten each dining table.

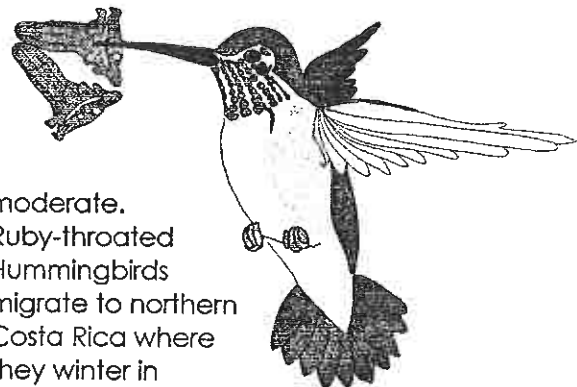
Master of Ceremonies for the evening was Dave Kraus, our Club's Vice President. Upon conclusion of dinner and a final opportunity to bid on the silent auction items, Dave called us together at 8:45 p.m. Our guest speaker, Allen Chartier, was introduced by Betty Learmouth. For twenty-two years Allen monitored the fall hawk migration at Holiday Beach with a special interest in the Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration through the Holiday Beach Conservation Area. For the past two seasons, Allen has been the song bird or passerine bander at Holiday Beach C.A.

As Allen began his slide presentation, Allen asked, "What makes a hummingbird special?" Is it iridescent plumage, a long bill, or an ability to hover? Through a series of beautiful slides of various bird species, Allen showed us that other species have iridescent plumage (Common Grackles and numerous other species), long bills such as the Red-billed Scythebill of Central and South America, and both Osprey and kingfishers hover. Surprisingly, the tiny weak feet of this family of 365 species make it unique. Allen took us on a whirlwind trip through various tropical habitats in which

hummingbirds are found such as Ecuadorian and Venezuelan paramo, cloud forests, and dry tropical lowlands. We marveled at the diversity of hummingbirds from the Ecuadorian Hillstar to the Brown Inca to the Collared Inca. In southwestern United States, naturalists may find such hummingbirds species as the common Anna's Hummingbird or the more restricted Allen's Hummingbird.

In eastern North America, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird migrates spring and fall through our area, one of a few hummingbird species to migrate. Jewelweed, which blooms from August through September, is an important food source for this migrating hummingbird species. Other food sources include False Dragonhead or "Obedient-plant," tiny insects within flowers, Trumpet-creeper and even Purple Loosestrife. This tiny bird migrates from early August through early October, October 12 the latest observed date for its migration. Peak migration dates have been observed on September 5 and September 15. Likely these dates correspond to a migration dependent upon age or sex difference.

The preferred time for hummingbird migration at Holiday Beach appears to be between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. By contrast, studies at Hawk Mountain, show that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds tend to migrate through that site between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. At Holiday Beach, 40% of the hummingbirds migrate before 9:00 a.m. with a preference for northwest winds, preferably



moderate. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds migrate to northern Costa Rica where they winter in

disturbed and marginal second growth wooded areas.

Paul Pratt thanked Allen Chartier for a most enjoyable and informative talk. The evening concluded with a thank you from Master of Ceremonies Dave Kraus to everyone for attending along with a special mention of the evening's organizers. Door prizes were then drawn and one guest at each table was able to take home the centre piece.

Many thanks to our members and friends who attended our annual dinner and supported our fund raising silent auction. We were delighted to receive a selection of attractive silent auction nature related items from our members and friends, businesses and publishers. This year we had a record number of donations to our silent auction which raised \$1,727.50.

Special thanks to committee members Margaret Jennings, Muriel Kassimatis and Carl Maiolani who set up the room prior to the dinner. Margaret Jennings, Muriel Kassimatis, Margaret MacDonald, Sylvia Thys, and Peg Wilkinson ably assisted at the reception desk prior and following the dinner. Dave Kraus was our effective MC for the third year.

Donations to the Silent Auction

We wish to thank our members and friends who contributed the following donations:

Bird box construction book / Donated by Randy Robinson
 Bird feeder / Donated by Mike Malone and Joan Walker, Pelee Wings Nature Store
 Butterfly garden kit / Donated by Mike Malone and Joan Walker, Pelee Wings Nature Store
 Cardinals, robins and other birds. (Book) / Donated by Peg Wilkinson
 Evergreen tree / Donated by Chuck and Patricia Rhoads
 Hand knitted afghan. / Donated by Thelma Walker
 Hand knitted cap / Donated by Sylvia Thys
 Hummingbird pendant / Donated by Vicki Trivett
 A field guide to the birds of Australia / Donated by Peg Wilkinson
 Framed watercolour, a view of a typical Essex County walking trail, donated by Mary DeMarco
 Framed spider portraits / Donated by Peg Wilkinson
 Framed American Woodcock portrait / Donated by Peg Wilkinson
 Fish mobiles / Donated by W.F. Herman S.S. Art Department
 China pelican / Donated by Sylvia Thys
 Nature photo cards of Essex County / Donated by Ann Barbour
 Potted Basswood tree / Donated by Don Bissonnette
 Quilted Bald Eagle wall hanging / Donated by Hank and Lydia Hunt
 Selection of jams and pickles in a basket / Donated by Betty and John Moore
 Selection of paw paw trees and bird box construction book / Donated by Randy Robinson
 Two pairs of hand knitted birder's mittens / Donated by Sylvia Thys
 Two nature theme T-shirts / Donated by Muriel Kassimatis

We wish to thank these businesses and organizations which so

generously donated the following nature related items:

Bird seed / Donated by the Ojibway Nature Centre, Windsor, ON
 An extra large Caribou T-shirt / Donated by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Don Mills, ON
 A small gray fleeced lined sweat-shirt / Donated by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Don Mills, ON
 Black-capped Chickadee wooden nesting box / Donated by Native America, Hauppauge, N.Y.
 Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs: Eastern Region (Compact disks) / Donated by Yule-Hyde Associates, Brampton
 Compact disks including Sunshowers, Dance of the Hummingbird, and Whispering Woods / Donated by Solitudes Limited, Toronto
 Federation of Ontario Naturalists Frogs of Ontario T-shirts (2) / Donated by the 1997 FON Conference Committee
 Giff package / Donated by the Windsor Essex County & Pelee Island & Visitors Bureau, Windsor
 Hummerfest hummingbird feeder / Donated by Nature Products, Inc., Wakefield, R.I.
 Selection of 1998 nature theme calendars. Donated by Wyman & Son Limited, Carleton Place, ON
 The 1999 Robert Bateman Naturalist's Calendar (2 copies) / Donated by Madison Press Books, Toronto
 30 copies of Kansas School Naturalist (issues devoted to dragonflies and damselflies) / Donated by Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas
 Eagles of the Maritimes (books) / Donated by Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, Amherstburg, ON

We wish to acknowledge these publishers who generously contributed the following publications:

Alcock, John. In a desert garden: love and death among the insects. 1997. Donated by Norton, New York
 All the birds of North America. 1997. Donated by HarperCollins Canada Limited, Toronto.
 Austin-Smith, Peter. Bald Eagles in the Maritimes. 1994. Nature Watch East, Canning, N.S. Donated by Holiday Beach Migration Observatory.
 Benidickson, Jamie. Idleness, water and a canoe: reflection on paddling for pleasure. 1997. Donated by University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
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 Bishop, James. Epitaph for a desert anarchist: the life and legend of Edward Abbey. 1994. Donation by Athenaeum, New York.
 Blackmar, Amy. Going to ground: simple life on a Georgian pond. 1997. Donated by Penguin Putnam inc., New York
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 English, Susan. Northern Rockies: a best places guide to the outdoors. 1997. Donated by Raincoast Books, Vancouver, B.C.
 Gentle, Victor. Bladderworts: trapdoors to oblivion. 1996. Donated by Gareth Stevens, Milwaukee, WI
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 McAlister, Ian. The great bear rainforest. 1997. Donated by Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., Madeira Park, B.C.
 Mlodinow, Steven G. America's 100 most wanted birds: finding the rarest regularly occurring birds in the lower 48 States. 1997. Donated by Falcon Press, Helena, MT
 Montgomery, M.R. Many rivers to cross: of good running water, native trout, and the remains of wilderness. 1995. Donation by Simon & Schuster, New York.
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ECFNC NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Your membership fees help the club provide field trips, speakers at our monthly meetings and our quarterly newsletter, The Egret. Memberships expire December 31, 1998, unless you have recently renewed or joined the Club in October through December, 1998. Please show your support and renew your membership today!

1998 Eastern Bluebird Committee Report

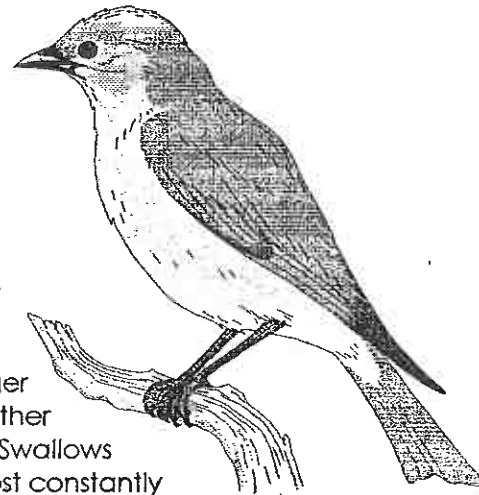
by Don Bissonette

The 1998 season has been the best year yet for Essex County's Eastern Bluebirds. This fall the Eastern Bluebird Committee collected data from 21 ECFNC Eastern Bluebird trails, and thirteen affiliate Eastern Bluebird trails. Added together, these 34 trails had a total of 227 Eastern Bluebird boxes. There were a total of 52 nesting pairs of Eastern Bluebirds. These pairs had a total of 54 successful nests, which produced 232 fledgelings. Thirty-seven of these nesting pairs were on our club trails. Our club trails were home to 71% of the nesting pairs of the County's Eastern Bluebirds.

The Eastern Bluebirds had a lot going for them this year. First, the winter was mild. Many of our Eastern Bluebirds did stay put. They didn't endure the hardships of migration. Those that did migrate probably didn't travel far, thus minimizing stress. Secondly, the whole year was drier than usual. Dry summers create higher grasshopper populations. Grasshoppers are a big part of the Eastern Bluebird's diet, so none went hungry this summer. And last, but not least, every year a few more people learn about Eastern Bluebirds. A few more people set aside habitat for them. A few more people set out Eastern Bluebird boxes.

This year, the Eastern Bluebird Committee counted 116 successful Tree Swallows nests, and 54 successful House Wren nests. Unfortunately, there were 12 unsuccessful Tree Swallow nests. Most of these were blamed on the June 10, 1998 cold snap.

During cold snaps, insect activity slows down. This is especially true for flying insects. Despite the adults' constant hunt for food, some nestlings do perish from starvation. Unfortunately, cold snaps are a double-edged sword for Tree Swallows between five and nine days. At this age, they are not fully feathered. They suffer with the



cold,
not
just
hunger

. Mother
Tree Swallows
almost constantly
brood their newly

hatched young. When the nestlings are five days old, their appetites have increased. The mother joins her mate to hunt for food, and only broods periodically. Each day she spends more time hunting, and less time brooding.

Unfortunately, during cold snaps, the mother can not brood the young as much as they need. All her time goes to hunting. Since young between five and nine days old are not feathered, they quickly lose precious body heat. Some of these Tree Swallows that lost their broods around June 10 did renest. This resulted in several nests in which the tree Swallows fledged around July 25, 1998.

Many Eastern Bluebird monitors reported they need new bird houses, or they need houses relocated. Hopefully, we'll get to all these projects this winter. Over the past few years, a few Eastern Bluebird Committee members have gotten together almost every Sunday in January and February. They work on the Eastern Bluebird trails. This coming year on Sundays during February, we could use your help. If you are interested, call me at 738-3279.

Last winter many of our 1/2 inch pine bird houses were replaced with one inch pine bird houses. Almost all of our Eastern Bluebird were in these new one inch pine bird houses. When given a choice, they prefer thicker.

Most monitors reported that Eastern Bluebirds have a definite liking for the Peterson Eastern Bluebird houses. If you would like to build some of these houses for the

Eastern Bluebird committee, please telephone me, and I'll mail you the plans. We are in need of 20 bird houses.

Last winter, the Eastern Bluebird Committee was really impressed with the "tree-branch" model Eastern Bluebird houses. Several models were put up. In two cases, the tree-branch models were visited by Eastern Bluebirds within minutes of being put up! However, all our "tree branch" models were found to be very popular with House Sparrows. Oh well, nothing ventured, nothing gained. We won't be building anymore of those.

I have been corresponding with Allison McCormick of Royal Oak, Michigan. Allison monitors 49 Eastern Bluebird houses at Island Lake Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. Like us, the Island Lake Recreation Area had its best year yet for Eastern Bluebirds this past year. They hosted 22 pairs of Eastern Bluebirds which produced 171 fledglings. One pair of Eastern Bluebirds produced three broods. Unfortunately, the June 10 cold snap hit this recreation area much harder than it hit Essex County. They lost four nests of Tree Swallows, a total of 23 nestlings. However, Allison pointed out that nationwide in the United States, the Tree Swallows did well this year.

Like us, Allison finds that Eastern Bluebirds really like Peterson Eastern Bluebird houses better than the usual upright houses. Of Allison's 49 birdhouses, 24 are Petersons. This year, 20 of the 25 birdhouses used by Eastern Bluebirds were Peterson's.

Most of Allison's birdhouses are "paired."

This means the birdhouses are in pairs. The distance between each paired house is five to six feet. Allison finds the Tree Swallows will guard not only their own house, but the neighbouring house from House Sparrows. Since most of her paired houses contain a pair of Eastern Bluebirds, and a pair of Tree Swallows, the Eastern Bluebirds get protection from House Sparrows.

We tried this years ago. Unfortunately, most of the pairs were 10 feet to 15 feet apart. When swallows nested in one of these paired houses, they never defended the second house from House Sparrows. Obviously, ten to fifteen feet is too far. This winter we will try pairing some houses, especially where sparrows are troublesome.

I have also been corresponding with Jean Lister of Thunder Bay, Ontario. Jean, along with other volunteers, runs an Eastern Bluebird recovery program. She also recommends pairing the bird houses. In the Thunder Bay area, Eastern Bluebirds usually have only one brood a year. The Eastern Bluebirds begin nesting in mid to late May. They are almost in synch with the local Tree Swallows, which begin nesting in late May and early June. Most of her paired houses are seven feet to nine feet apart. Like Allison, she finds the Tree Swallows are defending their Eastern Bluebird neighbors. Jean uses mostly Peterson birdhouses.

A big "thank you" goes out to all Eastern Bluebird monitors. Don't forget to wash out your houses this winter. Also, make repairs if you are able. Best wishes for 1999's nesting season.

Once Upon a Trail

by Betty Learmouth

When Eastern Bluebird Committee Don Bissonnette Chairperson submitted his 1998 Eastern Bluebird Nest box Summary for the December 1998 Egret, I turned back to my own notes of the past nesting season, to be reminded that 20 young Eastern Bluebirds (EABL) had fledged on my trails in 1998, four more than in 1997 and ten

more than in 1996. Could this success be directly linked to actions taken on my part regarding all those timely tips from the Eastern Bluebird Committee Chairperson, such as "grease your poles"?

The bluebird trails I have monitored over the last few years are on two private properties between the Second and Third Concession of Gosfield South (now the Town of Kingsville) near the Arner Townline with a

third property in Colchester South Township (now Essex) between the Fourth and Fifth Concession, just across from the Gosfield South Township property nearest to the Arner Townline. All properties lie within the Cedar Creek watershed with a tributary of Cedar Creek draining these properties. The habitat includes agriculture lands on which corn, soya beans and timothy have been grown. The land along the Cedar Creek tributary in Gosfield South Township is fragile farmland which is presently over grown pasture with a number of shrubs and small trees. In the background of the Gosfield South properties are woodlots, with the Colchester South property entirely a woodlot in which cattle are grazed in late spring. All these properties have supported EABL populations for a number of years along with other wildlife. This past winter, some nesting boxes were replaced and many were repositioned. When monitoring these properties, I can always expect some surprises as these various habitats support a variety of wildlife. ECFNC members may enjoy reading about these sightings in our County.

The first official monitoring day this past year was April 11, 1998. At the back of the Colchester South property, a male and female EABL were observed in courtship. The male carried a large black "blob," likely a caterpillar, to the female perched on another branch. He offered her the "blob" and she accepted. I felt fortunate to have seen this courtship behaviour.

On the Gosfield South property nearest to the Arner Townline, a new Petersen's box built and donated to the EABL Committee by ECFNC members Teresa Austrin and Joe Parent was occupied by EABL's as a newly constructed nest was in the box. As I walked away from the new box, a pair of EABL's flew across nearby agricultural land to a second box in the same neighborhood. The birds had flown in from the direction of the Arner Townline where they had likely been foraging near the woodlots at the corner of the Arner and the Fifth Concession, Colchester South. In another box on the lower part of the property, I discovered the body of a female EABL. Monitors infrequently report the death of adult

birds, this the second such discovery on my trail since I had begun monitoring.

A glimpse of a coyote's hind quarters as it disappeared into a Teasel thicket on the Gosfield South property was the day's first wildlife on April 17, 1998. Two of the EABL trail properties are usually quiet except for the landowners looking after their crops so I was not surprised to see this coyote as I had observed this species here during monitoring on previous years.

Not all the boxes on my trails were occupied by birds. Several older boxes which were not very appealing to EABL's have been occupied by families of White-footed Mice for several years. As I passed Mouse Box # 3, I was surprised to note an adult EABL perched near the box. Upon opening the box, I found an EABL nest on top of a large White-footed Mouse nest. I thought this situation demanded immediate action, so I attempted to evict the mice. I removed the EABL nest intact, cleaned out the mouse nest, then replaced the EABL nest in the now empty box. One adult mouse absolutely refused to budge from the top of nesting box, despite its newly installed occupants.

When I checked on the nest in the box donated by Teresa and Joe, I found a single EABL egg. The adult EABL's I had seen flying in from the Arner Townline the previous week where near their box.

Across the Arner Townline, an single egg was in the box of the two EABL's observed in courtship a week earlier. The view from this box was towards the Fourth Concession, Colchester South, where a woodlot with large oaks had been attracting roosting Turkey Vultures the last few years. On this particular evening, the Turkey Vultures appeared to have settled for the night shortly after 7:00 p.m. but something disturbed them, so thirty-five of these large birds were circling and drifting over the area.

Leaving the Turkey Vultures, I drove over to the third property on the Third Concession of Gosfield South where the young boys who lived there walked around their property with me. We heard American Woodcock singing and a Great Horned Owl called. The boys reported an EABL had sat on the fence near

where they drove their go-carts, the season's first report of an EABL on this property.

As I arrived at the trails on April 17, 1998, two Red-tailed Hawks flew off from a clump of trees. Anxious to see how the EABL's were faring in Mouse Box # 3, I headed towards this box first. The mice had moved back into the box, the EABL's were not to be seen, although a box across the timothy field had a new nest and one egg. On the property across the Amer Townline, five eggs were now in the nest of that pair of EABL's. From this spot, I could see nine Turkey Vultures over their roost, with at least one bird perched. New foliage was making the viewing more difficult.

During the next monitoring on May 3, 1998, the female EABL in Teresa and Joe's box sat tightly on her eggs. Five eggs were in the nest box occupied by the EABL's that had roamed before settling down to domestic duties. As I left the trail, I flushed a pair of Ring-necked Pheasants. In the past, I had heard a pheasant call, so I was pleased to see this pair.

My notes indicate that the next monitoring date was May 18, 1998, much too long an interval if a monitor wishes to keep a close check on nesting boxes. Unfortunately, at the Colchester South box, the box was empty with no signs of fledged young. Luckily, in Teresa and Joe's box, three young EABL's were doing well, their primary feathers showing a hint of blue. Five fluffy EABL's were thriving in the neighboring box. As I was leaving that area, an American Woodcock whirled upward from the woodlot's edge.

At the property where the young boys lived, young EABL's were discovered in a EABL box which is attached to a hickory tree trunk, well above eye level, a difficult box to monitor but a box which the EABL's use almost yearly. This box is owned by the landowner so it remains at this location, a constant problem to monitor.

During the next visit on May 25, 1998, the EABL young in the box on the young boys' property were observed to be thriving. Teresa and Joe's box was empty, but the signs of recently fledged young were evident. Just before fledging, young EABL's defecate in the box, coating the box's back wall with

whitewash. Five beautiful EABL's were on the verge of fledging in the neighbouring box. In the nest suspected to belong to the ousted EABL's from the White-footed Mice box, a single large young EABL appeared to be enjoying considerable attention from its parents.

The notation "Heifers out!" appeared in the May 25, 1998 notes. The EABL trail in Colchester South Township is located on an active dairy farm. Yearly, in late May or early June, at least six or more yearling heifers are released into the farm's woodlot. For several visits after the release of these young Holstein cattle, I am overwhelmed by the attention that these animals lavish on their visitor. Upon spotting me in their woodlot, they rush over, snuffle my backpack, and walk closely to me as I check the various boxes on the property. We have long conversations as we walk about the property, mostly on my part, as I caution the friendly heifers to walk slowly, avoid pushing, shoving and kicking up of heels, and never to run. After a few weeks, the heifers appear to lose interest in visitors, spending their time elsewhere out of sight in the woodlot. The notes for that date mention that a congregation of 30 Turkey Vultures were seen circling above their roost.

Following EABL monitoring, I visited the nesting Bald Eagles in the Cedar Creek watershed. This pair moved to their present nesting location on the northern most tributary of Cedar Creek this past spring, constructing a huge nest which is estimated to be four feet across. On this particular night, the birds were perched on a snag to the east of the nest, one above the other. Leaves on the nest tree obscured the nest.

Notes for June 2, 1998 indicated the young EABL's from the hickory tree box had fledged but the exact number of fledglings still remained unknown. In Teresa and Joe's box, Tree Swallows had constructed a nest with egg incubation already underway. As I walked along the edge of the soya bean field towards the neighbouring box, a Red-tailed Hawk flew into the trees ahead of me with a large snake, possibly a Fox Snake, dangling from its talons. Then the hawk flew to the edge of the agricultural lands where it

landed. When it flew a third time, the hawk was without the snake.

At the neighbouring nest box, the five young EABL's seen the week before had fledged, tell tale whitewash on the box's rear wall. In the box used by the ousted EABL's, two unhatched eggs were discovered buried in the old nest, with the single young successfully fledged.

For the first time in quite a few years, I meet the property's landowner as he was checking his corn crop. The landowner was interested to hear about the success of the EABL's on this property which the landowner had bought over ten years ago from a developer who had proposed a golf course on this land. The neighbours successfully objected to the golf course plan, with the land remaining in agricultural production, the fragile lands adjacent to the Cedar Creek tributary being retired from agriculture. Fox Snakes are seen about farm buildings in the area so the landowner was not surprised to hear the account of the hawk with its prey.

June 17, 1998 notes have an asterick by a comment that two recently fledged EABL's were seen with adults at the property where the young boys live. The adults had begun a second brood, accompanied by two young, now confirmed, from the hickory tree nesting box. This was the second incident in two years of adults observed with young from the first brood. At the other Gosfield South property, the Tree Swallows were nesting successfully in Teresa and Joe's box. As I walked by the nearby trees to check the box, an adult male Orchard Oriole exhibited agitated behaviour indicating nesting nearby. The sighting was the first time this species had been observed on the trail.

At the lower portion of this property, I surprised a coyote which was hunting along the drainage ditch next to the timothy field. I suspected the coyote was hoping to find a Eastern Cottontail nest, similar to one I had once discovered along this same drainage ditch.

It must have been late on the evening of June 24, 1998 when I monitored the trails, likely an attempt to enjoy some cool evening breezes, as it is noted that the fireflies were

very pretty in the woodlot of the Gosfield South property where the two boys lived. The second EABL brood were underway on this property with one egg in the nest with the young from the first nesting still accompanying the adults. On the Colchester South property, the pair there had nested again after the loss of their first brood, the nest box noted to be "full of downy young."

The weather on Canada Day was still warm but cooler than the last few days. At the property with the adults and their accompanying first brood young, three eggs were now in the nest. The nearest box had been taken over by House Wrens, with the young visible in their twig nest.

On the Gosfield South property where the Orchard Oriole had been observed on June 17, 1998, I was fortunate to see the adult male Orchard Oriole accompanied by one or two young as the birds dispersed from the nest site. The birds were moving through the area where the coyote had been seen along the edge of the timothy field, about a quarter mile from the original nest site.

While checking on the five young Tree Swallows in Teresa and Joe's box, a Cooper's Hawk was noted overhead, slowly circling while pursued by seven Tree Swallows. The hawk eventually moved off to the east towards Bill Balkwill's woodlot, Tree Swallows still nipping at it.

Butterflies were noted on flowering plants along the bluebird trail on the Colchester South property. Various species of skippers were seen on the Teasels' mauve blossoms with several Great Spangled Fritillaries nectaring on blossoms of Common Milkweed.

This balmy evening I chose to visit the Bald Eagles at their nest site on Cedar Creek. Cedar Creek's surface was perfectly calm, the evening light enhancing the colour of the water and surrounding trees. As usual the adults were perched on snags along the waterway. Two canoeists, wearing orange life preservers and paddling a red canoe, paddled west towards the perched eagles. One eagle decided the canoeists were too close, flying out over Cedar Creek, directly in front of the canoeists. The canoeists stop

paddling, their paddles in mid air. Likely, they still speak about this close view of an adult Bald Eagle on Cedar Creek. After mesmerizing the canoists, the eagle flew to the nest, lingered for a moment with the single young, then left to perch to near its mate.

On July 2, 1998, Margaret Croft joined me on a visit to the trail to view EABL's. The young accompanying the adults appeared to have dispersed that day, but we did see tiny young in the nest on that Gosfield South Township property, plus we had good looks at a pair of Brown Thrashers flying near the nest site. Walking to Teresa and Joe's box to look at young Tree Swallows, we watched an American Kestrel fly along a hedge row, the first sighting all season of that species on the trail. At Cedar Creek, we saw the adult and immature Bald Eagles, with the almost ready to fledge eaglet fully in view on the nest.

With the EABL nesting season drawing to an end, reports from other EABL trails in the area indicated that monitors were enjoying a good year on their trails with successful EABL nestings. All monitors acknowledge they enjoy their trails both for the assistance they give to the local EABL population as well as for the

opportunities they have to view other Essex County birds and wildlife.

An unusual sighting on a nearby EABL trail in Colchester South Township was a report from Muriel Kassimatis and Thelma Walker of a Dickcissel heard calling on their trail in late May, in an area of grassland and newly planted small trees. These monitors presumed the bird was moving through their area, so they were startled a few weeks later when two adult Dickcissels were observed feeding a single fledged young. Unfortunately, the birds dispersed before they could be viewed by local birders.

EABL monitors are anticipating the upcoming 1999 nesting season, wondering about the surprises that await them on the trails. Will our EABL's return in record numbers? Will newly established trails be successful? Will the Dickcissels return to Colchester South? How large will the Colchester South Township Turkey Vulture roost grow? Where will the Cedar Creek Bald Eagles nest in the coming year? Monitors will have to be patient for a few more months before the EABL's return to our trails.

Putting Some Stablimenta in Your Life

If you own a home or cottage you have probably had the disheartening experience of finding a dead bird below a window or patio door. It is nice to see birds up close, even in hand, just like Audubon, but to think that the luckless bird had likely travelled hundreds, even thousands, of miles over jungle, oceans, desert, mountains and God knows what else, evaded predators, storms and other natural threats only to die an ignominious death against a sheet of glass. Better that your cat had caught and eaten it. In fact, more birds die by striking glass than are killed by pet cats and ferrets combined.

Some bird strikes are so direct that an impression is left on the glass which is vaguely reminiscent of the image on the shroud of Turin except that it is the image of a bird,

perfect down to every feather, a miracle itself, although not from the bird's perspective. Why birds fly into glass and break their necks is another story; this article presents a bulletproof solution to the problem - a solution as near as your neighbourhood office supply store, drugstore or well-stocked supermarket. The cost? Not much more than a Tim Horton's extra-large coffee.

Have you noticed that some web-spinning spiders construct a white-coloured zig-zag design in the centre of their web? Haven't you thought, "Why would they do that; won't it defeat the purpose by making the web visible?" Now with the exception of the human appendix, most things in nature have a purpose or they are weeded out in the starkly (let's face it,

terrifyingly) utilitarian process of natural selection. Recent research suggests that these patterns on the webs are actually stop signs for birds, put there to keep them from plowing through the web which does neither spider nor bird any good at all.

The patterns are called stabilamenta (singular: stabilamentum) and our club rachnidologist, Carl Maiolani, tells me they can also be spirals and other designs. Our common Garden Spider, *Argiope riparia*, locally known as the 'Banana Spider' because of its yellow on black markings, makes a zig-zag.

Some entrepreneurs have taken note of the research on birds and stabilamenta and have produced plastic sheets with stabilamenta printed on them. You press the sheets onto the outside surface of the window where they will stay all spring, summer and fall and, for all I know, right through the winter too, warning birds to veer away. It is a remarkable sight to see a bird powerdiving towards a window suddenly pull up short at the sight of one of these commercially produced stabilamenta. Joan Walker and Mike Malone will be happy to sell you one or more at Pelee Wings Nature Store but what if

you have a lot of problem windows or are insolvent or just plain cheap? Here's the trick. Buy a bottle of Wite-out (sic) - the stuff we covered typing mistakes with before word processors came along. There is a brush attached to the cap of each bottle and with a minimum of skill you can paint a stabilamentum on the outside of each window. This lasts and lasts - you may need to use a razor blade when you feel like removing it.

You will be amazed at how well these work. Before I discovered stabilamenta, my home was known as the 'graveyard of the flyway'; I seriously considered studying taxidermy. The success rate has been 100%; that is, no window with a stabilamentum on it has had a bird strike. It doesn't get any better than that, even with a statistical analysis. So there you go, problem solved. Except now you have a new problem. Explaining all those white zig-zags to your neighbours, friends and family.

Gerry Waldron
Happy Bird Farm

Letter to the Editor

November 24, 1998

To: The Editor, the "Egret" newsletter

Dear Sir:

There appears to be a lot of confusion about the relationship between the "National Audubon Society," a conservation organization of 101 years, and the Audubon Co-operative Sanctuary Program," a group started seven years ago. This came to my attention when proponents of a golf course at the Marshfield Environmentally Sensitive Area stated that because they were meeting criteria for the Sanctuary program that they would be exonerated after cutting

down the woodlot there. A letter in the "Egret" one year ago (Volume 13, # 4) on the ACSP repeats the misinformation.

I spoke to the Public Affairs director from the "National Audubon Society" in New York City requesting their policy on such matters and was sent the following reply which should help to clear the confusion. Here is their reply:

Warm regards,

Mike Malone
Pelee Wings Nature Store
Leamington, Ontario

To whom it may concern:

The National Audubon Society is in no way connected with the "Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program." There has been a certain amount of confusion with this

program, a product of "Audubon International," which is also known as the "Audubon Society of New York State, Inc." This organization is not associated with the National Audubon Society, nor any of Audubon's chapters, affiliates or allied State organizations. It is a completely separate entity.

"Cooperative Sanctuaries" should not be confused with bird sanctuaries in the traditional sense or any of the bird sanctuaries or Audubon Centers operated by the National Audubon or its chapters.

On occasion, Audubon chapters work with local golf courses to help them adopt green practices, but no Audubon chapter has ever helped build a golf course and they never certify golf courses. Frequently, they protest the building of golf courses, especially those in environmentally sensitive areas.

It is perfectly legal for any organization to use the name Audubon - it is not trademarked, and the Audubon Society is not the first organization to adopt the name. This office receives calls every week from Audubon International's clients asking for a site visit or other service. They are surprised to find that they are not dealing with the National Audubon Society.

If you would like, I'd be happy to send our official statement to your local paper to make sure your community is dispelled of any misconception they may have that this organization is in any way affiliated with us.

Sincerely,

John Bianchi
National Audubon
212/97913026

Golf Course Statement

Questions have arisen concerning a golf-course certification program being conducted by the Audubon Society of New York State, Inc. and Audubon International. The National Audubon Society wants you to know that the Audubon Society of New York State, Inc. and Audubon International are separate organizations not affiliated with the National Audubon Society. The golf-course-certification program is not a program of the National Audubon Society.

If you have concerns about the golf-course-certification program being conducted by the Audubon Society of New York State, Inc. and Audubon International, or if you believe the program is being abused or conducted improperly, please contact Nancy Richardson, Signature Program Director, Audubon International, 230 2nd. Street, Suite 311, Henderson, KY 42420, 502/869-9419

John Flicker
President
10/1/96

Prairie Fire!

by Don Bissonnette

Most of us grew up believing any fire in a natural area was disastrous. Smoky the Bear told us so. Now we hear about prairies being deliberately set on fire. The native peoples of the Great Lakes area tell us they have been burning the prairies for centuries. They say the fire keeps the prairies healthy and productive.

Native Peoples Need Prairies

First, the native people needed prairies for the plants. Many of the plants were used medicinally. Some, such as Wild Indigo, were used to make dyes. Some native people collected Groundnut, a relative to the peanut, for food. Secondly, the native people needed prairies for hunting. Grasslands are good habitat for Bobwhite, prairie chickens, rabbits and deer. Prairies are also attractive to waterfowl during spring and fall migration. Waterfowl graze on grass, especially in the spring, when the grass shoots are sweet and

tender. The native people knew this, and often hunted waterfowl where prairies meet waterways.

Thirdly, the native people use the prairies for pow wows. A pow wow is a peaceful gathering of two or more bands of Indians. The attendants at pow wows feast, dance and trade goods. Sometimes, a pow wow is so much fun it will last for days.

The Disappearing Prairie

The trouble with prairies is that they keep shrinking. The main reason is that they are constantly invaded by nearby forests. Animals and the wind deliver seeds from the forests to the prairies. These seeds quickly become trees and shrubs. They grow quickly in the rich prairie soil. Over time, these trees shade the prairie. This kills off many prairie plants because they do not tolerate shade.

Another fate every prairie deals with is its own thatch. Thatch is the layer of rotting plant material sitting on top the soil. Each fall the thatch layer gets thicker. As the thatch gets thicker, the top soil gets cooler. Since most prairie plants need a warm top soil, the thatch kills them off. As the prairie plants disappear, non-prairie plants move in.

The Benefit of a Prairie Fire

To keep a prairie healthy, the native people have controlled fires every two or three years. The fire helps the prairie in three ways. First, the fire instantly kills off young trees and shrubs. It also kills off many non-prairie plants. Secondly, the fire quickly converts the thatch layer into ashes. The dark ashes hold heat, and help the topsoil heat up quickly in spring. This is beneficial to the prairie plants. They need sufficient heat in April to grow.

Thirdly, each time it rains, some particles of ash are washed down into the top soil. These ashes become fertilizer for the prairie plants' roots.

Preventing Wildfire

Occasionally, the native people encountered unplanned prairie fires. Like us, they did not like wild fires. These fires were caused by lightning or an uncontrolled campfire. The native people used controlled fires to prevent wildfires. A controlled fire burned the thatch layer. If a wildfire appeared in the area, it quickly died out because it lacked fuel - the thatch. By preventing wildfires, they prevented fire damage to themselves and their dwellings.

Benefits to Wildlife

Keeping a prairie healthy is beneficial to wildlife. As mentioned before, prairies are habitat for Bobwhite, prairie chickens, deer, and rabbits. A multitude of small birds need prairies. Field sparrows, Horned Larks, Henslow's Sparrows, kingbirds, Mountain Bluebirds, shrikes, Brewer's Blackbirds and goldfinches are just a few of the birds that call prairies their home. Large birds, such as hawks and owls, do a lot of their hunting over prairies, and other open areas. Sandhill cranes often rest and feed on prairies during migration.

Every prairie holds a multitude of insects. At first glance, any prairie visitor is amazed at the number of butterflies. Closer inspection reveals a multitude of insect species. Certain species of spider also prefer prairies. Prairies in the Great Lakes area are also home to Butler's Garter Snake, Massasauga Rattlesnake and Eastern Fox Snake.

The Egret Needs Pictures!

If you are sending in an article to be published in The Egret, please send in your drawings, photographs, sketches, clipart, etc.



Winter Excursions



For further information concerning the 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 leaders sharing their time and expertise with others. Let us know about your ideas for upcoming spring excursions.

December

- December 9 - ECFNC Monthly Meeting** - Location and time: Conference Room C, Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. Share a selection of slides or a sample of your Christmas baking at the annual Members' Night.
- 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 an American Crow count at the Essex crow roost. Everyone is welcome, especially beginning birders or birders who have not participated in a CBC. You can attend for part or all of the day. Join us for an enjoyable day of birding and learn about our wintering Essex County birds.
- December 20 - Rondeau Park Christmas Bird Count.** Call Ojibway Nature Centre for more details.
- December 21 - Point Pelee National Park Christmas Bird Count.** Call 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 21-23 - Ojibway Nature Centre Wee Winter Wildlife (Ages 4-6).** Explore our winter wonderland through games, crafts and outdoor fun. Time: 9:00 am to noon or 1:00-4:00pm. Fee: \$9/half day
- December 21-23 - Ojibway Nature Centre Winter Wildlife Detective (Ages 7-11)** Don't hibernate! Come and help us uncover the secrets of our winter wildlife. There will be an early drop-off at 8:00 am and a late pickup until 5:00 pm. Time: 9:00 am to 4:00pm
Fee: \$22/day
- December 27 - Rockwood Christmas Bird Count.** Call Ojibway Nature Centre for more details about the Rockwood CBC which is based in Rockwood, Michigan and includes a portion of the Town of Amherstburg. The count is for the morning only.
- December 28-30 - Malden Park. Wee Winter Wildlife (Ages 4-6)** Explore our winter wonderland through games, crafts and outdoor fun. Time: 9:00 am to noon or 1:00 - 4:00pm.
Fee: \$9/half day
- December 28-30 - Malden Park Winter Wildlife Detective (Ages 7-11)** Don't hibernate! Come and help us uncover the secrets of our winter wildlife. There will be an early drop-off at

8:00 am and a late pickup until 5:00 pm. Time: 9:00 am to 4:00pm. Fee: \$22/day

January

- January 1, 1999 - Detroit River Bird Count.** Celebrate the New Year by participating in the Detroit River CBC which is a census of wintering birds from La Salle's Turkey Creek to the East Windsor waterfront. This count can be a half day with lunch at noon in a local restaurant. Call the Ojibway Nature Centre for more details.
- January 7 -** Ojibway Nature Centre Discover the variety of winter bird life in Essex County. Introductory program at 7:30 p.m
- January 9 -** Ojibway Nature Centre Saturday morning winter birding field trip. Fee \$8/1 or \$31/all
- January 10 - ECFNC Winter Excursion -** Join Tom Hurst, our ECFNC President, for our annual owl prowl at 540 County Rd. 34, home of John Moore. Meet at John's house at 2:00 p.m. Dress warmly for this two hour search for owls in the pine plantation.
- January 13 - ECFNC Monthly Meeting -** Location and time: Ojibway Nature Centre at 7:30 p.m. Speaker and topic: Betty Learmouth will give a slide presentation that looks at natural areas of Southern California including the jewel of the California's state parks system, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, and the federal park Joshua Tree National Monument. Desert plants seen in flower during March 1997 will be a highlight.
- January 17 - ECFNC Winter Excursion -** Join ECFNC members for a visit to Kensington Metro Park (north east of Ann Arbor, Michigan) for an opportunity to enjoy the Park's wintering birds. If you just happen to have a supply of sunflowers and peanuts with you, you'll likely attract some hungry Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and Downy Woodpeckers. We'll meet in the Ojibway Nature Centre parking lot at 12:00 noon for car pooling and directions. Don Bissonnette has offered to help us with tree identification along the trail. Muriel Kassimatis and Betty Learmouth will be the trip organizers. Be sure to bring a beverage and snack.
- January 23 -** Ojibway Nature Centre Saturday morning winter birding field trip.
- January 24 - ECFNC Winter Excursion -** This excursion will be our second annual visit to the Detroit Zoological Park, with emphasis on the Wildlife Interpretive Gallery with its aquarium, lovely indoor butterfly/hummingbird exhibit and the tropical aviary exhibit. Be sure to bring your binoculars for viewing the butterflies and birds. Meet in the Ojibway parking lot at 12 noon for car pooling and directions. Admission is \$8.00 US per person and parking is \$3.00 US per vehicle. There is an admission discount with CAA so if you have that membership, please bring it along. If we enter in a group or groups, we can also use the CAA discount. Muriel Kassimatis and Betty Learmouth will organize this tour.
- January 27 -** ECFNC Executive meeting

February

- February 6 -** Ojibway Nature Centre Saturday morning winter birding field trip.
- February 7 -** **Ojibway Nature Centre Winter Festival** - Enjoy cross country skiing, skating and winter wanders through the park. A 10% discount on all bird seed and feeders. Time: 12:00 noon - 4:00 p.m.
- February 10 -** **ECFNC Monthly Meeting** - Location and time; Ojibway Nature Centre at 7:30 p.m. Speaker and topic: Gerry Kaiser will present a slide presentation of Lake Superior's north east shore from Pukaskwa National Park to the Sleeping Giant Provincial Park.
- February 14 -** **ECFNC Winter Excursion** - Explore the Ojibway prairie on Valentine Day with a staff member from the Ojibway Nature Centre. Meet in the Nature Center at 2:00 p.m. for a two hour walk on the prairie.
- February 14, 21 and 28 - ECFNC Excursions** - You can assist with maintenance on ECFNC Eastern Bluebird trails. Boxes need to be relocated, repaired and cleaned. Call Don Bissonnette (738-3279) who is organizing these Sunday afternoon workshops.
- February 20 -** Ojibway Nature Centre Saturday morning winter birding field trip.
- February 24 -** ECFNC Executive meeting

March

- February 28 -** **ECFNC Winter Excursion** - Meet Faye Langmaid at the new Malden Park building off the Malden Road entrance for a walk around Malden Park. Learn more about recent changes at this large new West Windsor park. Meeting time is 2:00 p.m.
- March 10-** **ECFNC Monthly Meeting** - Location and time: Ojibway Nature Centre at 7:30 p.m. Annual meeting with presentations from the ECFNC's various committees. An excellent opportunity to learn about each committee's activities during the last year:
- March 21 -** **Friends of Ojibway Prairie Annual meeting.** The meeting will be held at 2:00 p.m. at the Ojibway Nature Centre, beginning at 2:00 p.m. Enjoy a review of the year's activities, a guest speaker and social hour.
- March 31 -** ECFNC Executive meeting.

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