



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists

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Sixteenth Annual E.C.F.N.C. Dinner, November 4, 2000

by Betty Learmouth

Plans are underway for the E.C.F.N.C.'s sixteenth annual dinner to be held Saturday, November 4, 2000. Our guest speaker will be Ojibway Nature Centre's Chief Naturalist Paul Pratt. Paul travelled for three weeks throughout Eastern Australia in January 2000, enjoying, observing and photographing the wondrous wildlife "down under," including thirty-five species of mammals and twenty-five species of parrots. Paul promises to include slides of parrots in his presentation. Mark your calendar for this special event.

This year our dinner will be held in St. John's Anglican Church Hall that is located on Sandwich Street near Brock Street in Olde Sandwiche Towne. The church hall is located adjacent to the seniors complex at this intersection which is opposite MacKenzie Hall. Parking next to the hall is restricted to about five parking spaces. If anyone wishes to reserve a space in this handicapped parking area, please let a member of the Heritage Committee know. We are suggesting that those attending the dinner will want to park on Brock Street in the angled parking, or in the Brock School parking across from the hall. If you are not familiar with this area and its parking, you may wish to drive by in the daylight to spot the parking in the area.

Our caterer for this event will be Deb Waugh who catered our successful "Wings and Wine" event in June 1999. The Board of St. John's Church will allow us to serve beer and wine only at our dinner.

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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Meeting Speaker Co-ordinator: Patricia Rhoads
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E.R.C.A. Liaison: Teresa Austrin
Friends of Heinz Bush Liaison: Donna Sale
Point Pelee Liaison: Michael Malone, Phil Roberts (alternate)
Bluebird Committee Chairman: Don Bissonnette
N.H.R.P. Committee Chairman: Donna Sale
Special Events Coordinator: Karen Cedar
Hotline Co-ordinator: Jim McAllister
E.C.S.N. Liaison: Tom Hurst
Ojibway Liaison: Karen Cedar
Two Creeks Liaison: Richard Bilinski
General Meeting Committee: Peggy Hurst

Committees:

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Speaker: Patricia Rhoads, Gerry Waldron, Phil Roberts, Karen Cedar
Field Trip: Muriel Kassimatis, Betty Learmouth
Annual Dinner: Heritage Committee
Bluebird: Don Bissonnette, Betty Learmouth, Carl Maiolani
N.H.R.P.: Dave Kraus, Donna Sale, Gerry Waldron, Linda Kennette, Teresa Austin, Patricia Rhoads, Peggy Hurst
Heritage: Betty Learmouth, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Patricia Rhoads, Margaret Jennings

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Tickets for this year's Annual Dinner will be \$27.50, available at the September and October ECFNC Monthly Members Meetings. Take advantage of the early bird discount as after the October meeting, the tickets will be \$32.50. Tickets will be available at the Ojibway Nature Centre and Pelee Wings Nature Store.

We are looking for volunteers to assist with the set-up of the hall on Saturday morning, November 4, 2000. Please indicate to a Heritage Fund Committee member that you wish to assist with the set up of the dining room. Deb will be on hand to show us how to arrange the room.

We would welcome your contributions towards our annual fund raising silent auction. Items with a nature theme would be most welcome.



Photograph: ECFNC member Margaret Jennings on "Garlic Mustard patrol," Nature Conservancy of Canada property

Pelee Island's Stone Road's Garlic Mustard Patrol

by Betty Learmouth

On May 25, 2000, several members of the ECFNC's Heritage Fund Committee took flight, boarding a small Northland Transportation airplane at Leamington's air strip, flying to Pelee Island's airport in less than ten minutes. The low elevation gave passengers a fine view of Point Pelee National Park. We were surprised that the Pelee marsh was still so brown on this date. We had excellent views of Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Preserve, Brown's Savanna and Middle Point as the plane made its approach to the Pelee Island airport.

Evelyn from the Pelee Island Hotel picked us up, transporting us to the corner of East West and Stone Roads with arrangements made to pick us up at 3:15 p.m.

Our primary goal for the day was to pull Garlic Mustard, a European woodland plant that has invaded our Essex County woodlands. Other Garlic Mustard crews have been particularly active around Ojibway's woodlands and savannas that Ojibway Nature Centre's Assistant Naturalist Karen Cedar describes as being "clean."

Our Committee had spoken with Graham Bryan, Manager of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Lands for Nature, who alerted us that the forest in the northern portion of the Stone Road Nature Reserve had considerable Garlic Mustard growing. Thus, we immediately stepped into this beautiful mixed species forest, surrounded by such herbaceous plants as Herb Robert, Solomon's Seal, Short's Aster, Carrion-flower, and Garlic Mustard, confirming that the plant was indeed widely distributed throughout the

area. We easily pulled two bags of Garlic Mustard. The plants had mostly concluded blooming with long green seed pods well developed. The plants were placed in garbage bags to be eventually disposed in a mainland land fill once the ferry resumed its regular schedule.

Leaving the FON property, we walked south on Stone Road, spotting Mouse-eared Chickweed blooming along the Nature Conservancy of Canada's property's woodland edge just beside a telephone pole supported by a crib of stone. This plant has large white blossoms in contrast to the tiny white blossoms of Common Chickweed. Mouse-eared Chickweed can be found at scattered locations in scrub land and woodland edges throughout the Stone Road Alvar Complex. In Canada, this species is restricted to Pelee and Walpole Islands.

Proceeding down Stone Road, we stepped from the coolness of the surrounding woodland into bright sunlight. Looking at the NCC property on our left, we remarked upon the abrupt disappearance of tall trees, replaced by smaller dogwoods, Fragrant Sumac, Hop-tree and ashes. During the Stone Road Alvar Complex biological investigation in 1988 this area was designated as a savanna.

Through our monitoring of the NCC property over the past year, we have come to expect rare plants here. Shallow soil over limestone at the road's edge supports a number of species that reflect alvar conditions in this small accessible area. This savanna and another nearby have been recognized in the property's name that honours Shaughnessy Cohen as The Shaughnessy Cohen Memorial Savanna.

A closer investigation of the roadside area revealed several dozen plants of Cornsalad, a spring ephemeral blooming well, enjoying our frequent spring showers. This plant species is restricted in Canada to the Stone Road Alvar Complex. Also in this harsh habitat were numerous Small Skullcap, a tiny plant with blue flowers in its upper leaf axils. A few plants of Spring Forget-me-not, a resident of dry rocky areas had concluded their blooming, while a number of False Pennyroyal plants displayed tiny leaves. Along the edge of the NCC property to the south of the limestone/ thin soil area, we found dozens of Hairy Beardtongue in bloom, these plants thriving on Stone Road's rocky edge, the plants producing a pink haze along the road's edge.

After admiring these plants surviving in their harsh habitat, we continued along Stone Road, investigating the rich woodland on the FON property south of the schoolhouse. As expected we found Garlic Mustard, pulling a number of plants along the roadside and in the woodlands. Moving across Stone Road to the second savanna on the NCC property that extends west towards the abandoned agricultural lands, we found Garlic Mustard



Photograph: Mouse-eared Chickweed, Nature Conservancy of Canada property

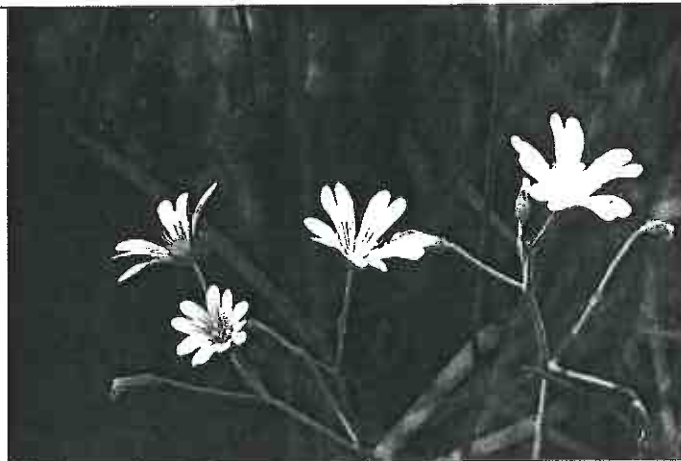
throughout this dry savanna. Working quickly, we pulled numerous Garlic Mustard plants, filling three garbage bags.

Leaving the savanna, we walked south towards the section of the FON property on which Working for Wilderness volunteers have been constructing a trail. Upon reaching the northern fire break, we were amazed at the transformation that had occurred on the alvar portion of the FON property due to last fall's very hot prescribed burn. Dogwoods, Fragrant Sumac and Prickly Ash that would be normally lush with spring growth were simply blacken trunks and limbs, while in contrast a green fresh carpet of grasses, Grey-headed Coneflower, Nodding Wild Onion and other species extended across the property.

At Blue Racer Lane, we looked for any evidence of a Yellow Horse-gentian growing close to the roadside, a plant Pelee Island summer resident Mary Celestino had discovered in late summer 1999, clipped by a mowing machine. This plant was readily visible, its many stems forming a small mound of green vegetation. Thus, unhindered by shrub vegetation, we quickly located several other plants of this species, finding two yellow blossoms on one stem. This plant species is restricted in Canada to the Stone Road Alvar Complex. As the plant's many stems grow, the stems "flop," obscured by other vegetation surrounding the plant, causing botanists to overlook this species before its distinctive tomato-like fruit appear.

Arriving at the FON trail that leads visitors through a Blue Ash savanna, we were immediately attracted to wide blue swaths of blossoms, a spectacular floral display of Miami Mist, with the plants forming lush colourful mats. Certainly our spring showers had aided this plant's remarkable display. Several wide clusters of Corn-salad were seen, adding to our pleasure.

Although our attention was temporarily diverted from our target species, Garlic Mustard, we gave the Blue Ash savanna a thorough check. On the savanna's burned over area, we could find no tall second year plants but when we looked closely at the soil beside the trail we found many leaves of newly germinated Garlic Mustard plants. The



Photograph: Miami Mist, Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Stone Road Nature Reserve

fire had knocked back last year's first year plants. These plants would have emerged this year as second year plants, flowering and then producing seed. Although the prescribed burn destroyed last year's first year plants, a store of seed in the soil existed that germinated this year. In a grove of hickories untouched by fire adjacent to a portion of the trail still under construction, we found many second year Garlic Mustard plants, easily filling three garbage bags with these plants.

While looking for a place to hide our full garbage bags, we noted a still green Basswood opposite the FON trail

on the Essex Region Conservation Authority's property. Approaching this tree, we were intrigued to note the effect of last fall's prescribed burn about the Basswood. Close to the tree's trunk which fire had not touched, tall luxuriant second year Garlic Mustard plants grew close by the tree's trunk. Beyond the tree, in a perfect circle of otherwise bare soil and just the size of the circle of shade provided by the Basswood, we noted numerous first year leaves of Garlic Mustard filling the circle. Clearly fire will set Garlic Mustard back a season, but it appears the plant will rebound successfully through germination of existing seeds already in the soil.

Our garbage bags safely stowed about Stone Road's woodlands, savannas and alvars, we waited for Evelyn to transport us back to the Pelee Island airport. Awaiting Evelyn's arrival at the corner of East West and Stone Roads, we enjoyed watching four immaculate Tiger Swallowtails nectaring on clover heads.

NHRP Tall Grass Prairie Planting

by *Betty Learmouth*

Thirty students from Ms. Mary Ewer's Grade Six class at Anderdon Public School arrived by bus at the Potter Farm. June 7, 2000 was the date chosen to participate in the planting of a one-acre tall grass prairie. Everyone walked down the farm lane to the area that had been prepared for the planting,

carrying a variety of packaged seeds for the planting. The weather was

clear and sunny with a variety of bird species in the area including Barn Swallows, Baltimore Oriole, Song Sparrow and the resident Red-tailed Hawk pursued by Red-winged Blackbirds. Butterflies observed included Giant Swallowtail, Pearl Crescent and Cabbage Whites.

Before setting everyone to work, planting coordinator Patricia Rhoads gave the students a brief introduction to tall grass prairies. Patricia explained to the students that less than one per cent of Ontario's land is devoted to tall grass



Photograph. Ken Goggin with a handful of Virginia Mountain-mint ready for sowing



Photograph: Students with equipment and prairie seeds prior to sowing



Photograph: Students sowing prairie seeds over prepared soil

prairie.

The land on which the seeds were to be spread had been "worked up" by John Lalonde on his small tractor. Patricia gave each student a handful of seeds, urging everyone to make their seeds last until they reached the far edge of the "worked up" land. The students worked carefully and methodically, distributing Switch Grass, Big Blue Stem and Little Blue Stem seeds within the marked area, allowing the wind to carry the seeds away a few feet before they settled. Then Patricia reached into the bags labeled Black-eyed Susan, Ironweed, Dense

Blazing-star, Tall Sunflower, and Virginia Mountain-mint, distributing the seeds by the handful. Again Patricia urged the students to carefully and evenly distribute the seeds, pulling the bits and pieces of the dried plant remains into small pieces. The Anderdon Public School students were joined by Suji Barnard and her friend for the seed distribution.

After the first section was seeded, a second section was seeded in the same manner, and then a third. As each section was seeded, the soil was gently worked by John Lalonde so that the seeds would be lightly covered by soil. Upon working up of the soil in each section, the students industriously set to work placing a thin layer of straw over each seeded area. Hopefully, light rains and warm weather will encourage the prairie seeds to germinate. Another one-acre prairie planting is planned for 2001 next to this year's planting.

Students remained at the site until 12:30 p.m., enjoying their lunch and the satisfaction of working on a prairie restoration site.



Photograph: Students spreading straw over sown prairie seeds

November 4 - Sixteenth Annual ECFNC Dinner to be held at St. John's Anglican Church Hall, corner of Sandwich and Brock Streets. Our guest speaker will be Ojibway Nature Centre's Chief Naturalist Paul Pratt who will present a slide presentation about the wildlife of Eastern Australia. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. Tickets available at the ECFNC September and October meetings, Ojibway Nature Centre and Pelee Wings Nature Store. Price: Early bird special \$27.50. After October 10, 2000: \$32.50

Field Trip Reports

Victoria Day Birding at Point Pelee National Park

by Betty Learnmouth

Ten ECFNC members turned up at 7:30 p.m. for a morning of birding at Point Pelee National Park's Tip and Tilden's Woods on Monday, May 22, 2000. Stepping off the train at the Tip, we saw Northern Orioles, Eastern Kingbirds, and Barn Swallows about the buildings while a flock of five chattering Chimney Swifts circled rapidly overhead. Walking along the Tip boardwalk, we searched diligently for birds, rewarded with sightings of Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Magnolia Warbler, a female Redstart, a male Orchard Oriole and Red-eyed Vireo.

On the West Beach path, we watched a Wilson's and Yellow Warbler moving rapidly about in a small willow. Although we searched the path's edge, the Northern Mockingbird spotted by Interpreter Sarah Rupert's birding group seemed to have headed for cover.

At the Tip we were pleased to have good views of an adult Red-headed Woodpecker which flew about in the trees near the lookout. Some birders were lucky enough to see a Blackburnian Warbler before it flew north. From the lookout, without the aid of a telescope, we were able to identify several Ruddy Turnstones, two Dunlin and two Spotted Sandpipers foraging about the sand at the water's edge. Hordes of Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls loafed at the Tip. Heading north along the West Beach trail our entire group were stumped

by several birds in warm buffy plumage feeding in poplars. Luckily a knowledgeable passing birder solved the mystery, identifying the birds as female Indigo Buntings. A late migrating Yellow-rumped Warbler foraged with the Indigo Buntings.

At the train stop, we enjoyed a close-up view of a nesting female Yellow Warbler as she incubated her eggs. Her nest, constructed of fine white fibres, was built in



Photograph: Helene Parks upon receiving her Silver Pin

a small shrub near the buildings. A female Northern Harrier flew south along the West Beach as we waited for the train.

Checking at the Visitor's Centre about 11:00 p.m. we noted warbler sightings at Tilden's Woods. Walking across the parking lot (which was virtually empty, much to our astonishment), we enjoyed the flute-like calls of a thrush. A House Wren sang energetically along the trail leading to the Tilden Woods turnoff, while a single Downy Woodpecker foraged on a willow tree trunk. In almost the identical spot as observed on last year's Victoria Day outing, a White-eyed Vireo moved about the shrubbery in the vicinity of its nest. Another thrush sang for us, while sharp-eyed observers watched a Blackburnian Warbler creep about a vine-shrouded tree trunk.

Returning to the parking lot at noon, we enjoyed lunch at a shaded picnic table. Friends of Point Pelee seasonal staff member Dave Martin spent his noon hour in the middle of the parking lot. Dave's sightings above the parking lot included a Cooper's Hawk, and a mixed kettle of Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks.

Throughout the morning's birding, ECFNC Birder Shirley Grondin was undertaking her Baillie Birdathon 2000 with a total of 51 species observed by noon hour. Helene Parks who had birded within the Point Pelee birding area on Saturday, May 20 and Sunday, May 21, 2000, had accumulated a total of 102 species by noon hour on Monday, May 22, 2000. After lunch, we accompanied Helene to the Visitors Centre where Helene was awarded an attractive Silver Pin for her weekend birding efforts.

A Spring Walk Through the CKWW Transmitter Woods

by Dan Bissonnette

On Sunday, May 21, 2000, about fifteen naturalists gathered at St. John's School in River Canard. Many in the group were long time ECFNC members, but some were new faces who had never been to an ECFNC field trip before. Our destination was the CKWW transmitter woods, which is the forest located on the property where the local radio station has its transmitter towers. This woods is about 50 acres in size, and is one of the largest forests in that area. In addition, this woods is situated along the River Canard, creating interesting wetland conditions.

After a five minute drive, our group arrived at the woodlot entranceway. As we made our introductions, we were greeted by a Silver-spotted Skipper and two Giant Swallowtail butterflies.

At the start of the journey, Dan Bissonnette, the trail guide, took time to point out poison ivy. He also offered a natural insect repellent made from tea tree oil called "Walkabout" which is available in health food stores.

Don commented that, relative to other forests in Essex County, this woods was in reasonably good shape. This became evident as many people marveled at the rich, lush growth and the thick overhead canopy of tree branches.

Our group saw a variety of trees throughout the two-hour hike. Some of the tree species observed included Black Walnut, Shagbark Hickory, Red Ash, American Elm, Pin Oak, Sugar Maple, Black Cherry, Swamp White Oak and American Beech.

We also noticed a variety of understory trees such as Chokecherry, Muscledwood and Ironwood. There were a number of shrubs, many of which were either blooming or bearing fruit. We observed Nannyberry, Arrowwood, Rough-leaved Dogwood, Elderberry, Prickly Ash, and Spicebush. As we hiked along the

River Canard, we also found Bladdernut and Witch-hazel, which is unique to that area of the County.

The real purpose of this outing chosen for this time of year, was to see spring wildflowers. We were not to be disappointed, as we found Bedstraw, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Blue Phlox, Virginia Waterleaf, Wild Geranium, May-apple, Jewelweed, Solomon's-seal and Purple-flowering Raspberry.

One particular high note of our hike arose when we got off the track and were headed toward the river to find our trail. As we reached the trail along the river bank, we were pleasantly surprised to discover a large grouping of Painted Trillium in full bloom.

Throughout the hike, Paul Desjardins pointed out a number of songbirds, including Red-eyed Vireo and Wood Thrush. In addition to the birds, we also noted Spicebush Swallowtail and Mourning Cloak.

As we concluded our hike, we were treated to the sight of an Indigo Bunting singing in a nearby tree. It was a wonderful conclusion to a wonderful outing.

The Essex County June 2000 Night Sky

by Betty Learmouth

Gesstwood Camp kindly gave permission for ECFNC members to gather on June 3, 2000 for an evening of astronomy with Astronomer Randy Groundwater. We met Randy at 9:00 p.m. for a slide presentation and orientation in a Gesstwood meeting room where we were joined by members of Amherstburg's Wesley United Church and Girl Guides in camp for the weekend.

Randy introduced himself as an amateur

astronomer who was encouraged as a young boy of twelve years to pursue an interest in astronomy. Randy recommended that everyone should pursue their own particular interest, especially in the sciences.

Randy began his talk by stating that 40,000,000 persons live within a few hours of Essex County, creating air and light pollution in our skies. Within the lifetime of our grandparents, most persons lived in rural areas, with dark skies a part of everyone's experience. During the last few decades our society has become technologically advanced but our general knowledge of stars is sadly lacking. In our grandparents' time, for example, everyone would know the bright star Arcturus but today few are familiar with this star's name.

Randy showed us a series of his own excellent slides which included a view of the Ambassador Bridge, illustrating the great amount of light we have become accustomed to in our urban night sky. Venus and Jupiter were the only bright spots in a sky flooded with light. A second slide taken in South Windsor revealed less light pollution, while a third slide taken in rural Essex County showed even more stars in the night sky. A slide taken at Eagle, Elgin County, looking out over Lake Erie, would be the night sky our grandparents remembered, an entirely dark sky crowded with stars.

Randy projected a series of spectacularly colourful slides, these photographs taken by professional astronomers. We looked at the galaxy Andromeda, or M31, a beautiful object that is millions of light years from our galaxy, the Milky Way. Two small oblong objects in this photograph were identified as other galaxies. Another slide was that of the famous Pillars of Creation, with small nodules identified as emerging stars. Other slides showed star clusters of various ages and a stellar explosion called the Veil

Nebula. Randy stated the universe around us is a dynamic place, constantly changing.

ECFNC member Margaret MacDonald asked Randy if he was familiar with a newly declared dark sky reserve that has been established in the Muskoka region. Randy said he was familiar with this reserve through his membership with the Texas-based International Dark Sky Association. This newly established dark sky reserve was made possible through the efforts of a Toronto amateur astronomer who is an architect by profession. Randy feels that we will see more designations similar to the Muskoka reserve.

Randy distributed two charts from "Sky Calendar" which we would find useful to view the June sky. We looked at the "Abrams Planetarium Sky Calendar June 2000" which interprets the night sky for a particular month by indicating the location of individual planets, particular stars and the phases of the moon. Then we stood to learn how to use the "June Evening Skies" chart, facing south with the term "south" at the bottom of the chart. Then we faced each direction in turn, again orienting the chart so the direction was at the bottom of the chart.

A subscription for "Sky Calendar" may be obtained from the Abrams Planetarium, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 488824 -1324 for just \$9.00 per year beginning at any time. There are helpful astronomy magazines such as "Astronomy" and "Sky and Telescope" with subscription costs considerably more than the "Sky Calendar" costs.

Once we had assembled on the Gesstwood lawn at 10:00 p.m., Randy asked us to face southward. Overhead or at the zenith we could see Arcturus, then following downward, the star Spica. Randy helped us to see these stars by pointing his flashlight beam at the star in question. We faced in each direction in turn. Facing East, we

found the rising Summer Triangle, with the stars Vega and Altair. Facing north we found the Big Dipper, noting the double star at the bend of the handle. We also located the Corona Borealis near Arcturus, the brightest star in the June sky. We looked at the rising constellation Scorpius. A single satellite passed overhead, Randy explaining that its rotating motion caught the sun's rays, with the light reflected off the satellite's skin. Another satellite flashed brightly for an instant, some lucky enough to glimpse this sighting.

Through two large telescopes, set up by Randy and Robin Smallwood, proprietor of "Universal Science" in Windsor, we viewed a globular star cluster (a group of elderly stars), double stars and the Veil Nebula. As the evening progressed, we noted we could see the stars more clearly.

We wish to thank Randy assisted by Robin Smallwood for an enjoyable and informative evening learning about and viewing the June skies. We also extend a sincere thank you to our Gesstwood host Bill Bealor who allowed us to use a comfortable Gesstwood meeting room, supplied hot coffee, and invited us to set up on the Gesstwood lawn.

As a post script to the dark sky reserve mentioned during the excursion, Gayle Carlyle of the Muskoka Heritage Foundation was a speaker at the conference "Caring for our Land and Water: Stewardship and Conservation in Canada" held at the University of Guelph, June 3 - 6, 2000. Gayle mentioned that the Muskoka Heritage Foundation had also been involved in setting up the dark sky reserve which is located on Muskoka's Torrance Oak Barrens, an expanse of bedrock barrens, treed with Red Oak, White Pine and White Ash. Casino Rama's lights are visible at the dark sky reserve but discussions are currently taking place to reduce this light pollution.

Pelee Island Excursion, June 11, 2000

by Betty Learmouth

Everyone planning to attend the ECFNC field trip to Pelee Island on June 11, 2000 was greatly relieved when the M. V. Jiimaan resumed its regular trips across Lake Erie on June 5, 2000, after a lengthy strike by the vessel's ticket agents, deck and cafeteria workers. Our leaders Mary and John Celestino met us at the West Dock where we formed a seven-vehicle caravan of naturalists including sixteen members of the West Elgin Nature Club whom we welcomed from West Lorne, Elgin County, and nine ECFNC members.

Heading north along the West Shore Road, the caravan halted for a Gray Fox that nonchalantly walked across the roadway in front of the vehicles. The group's first stop was at Vin Villa where we enjoyed a walk on the property, the old vine-covered two story ruined mansion dominating the property which is now owned by an American couple who have pledged to keep the property in its natural state.



Photograph: Sweetbriar, Vin Villa (Photograph by Joanne Reive, West Elgin Nature Club member)



Photograph: "Melanistic" Eastern Garter Snake, Fish Point Provincial Nature Preserve (Photograph by Joanne Reive)

During our walk through Vin Villa's grassy savanna, we observed Wild Garlic, Herb Robert, Sweetbriar and Hairy Beardtongue in bloom. We looked at a huge Chinquapin Oak and that species' distinctive leaves with its toothed edges. Viewing Hulda's Rock, Mary told us the sad legend associated with that landmark.

ECFNC member Paul DesJardins and others observed the insect population on the property, locating the following butterflies: Little Wood Satyr, a skipper, two black swallowtail species, a Tiger Swallowtail and a Cabbage White. One Spotted Lady Beetle, twelve Seven Spotted Lady Beetles and a Southern Lady Beetle were found on the grasses during the walk.

Our second stop was at Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Preserve where we walked on a sand bar that had been exposed due to our declining lake levels. The sand bar was covered with foot high poplars, thistles, and smartweed that can establish themselves in this environment. Dead fish lay along the shore, likely victims of shallow waters and warm water temperatures. We wondered if Turkey Vultures would consume these shoreline carcasses. Oddly, a Turkey Vulture approached as we spoke, the bird passing low over the nearby water surface,

attacked immediately by a Red-winged Blackbird. Another Turkey Vulture appeared, the two birds patrolling above nearby mature poplars, Red-winged Blackbirds in continuous pursuit.

Following lunch at the Pelee Island Winery where Pelee Islanders and visitors were enjoying a Strawberry Social with door prizes and musical entertainment, our group headed to Fish Point Provincial Nature Preserve. An Eastern Pewee sang from its perch in the woodland as we arrived. Along the woodland trail we noted woodland plants such as Appendaged Waterleaf, Carrion-flower, Wild Cucumber and an over abundance of Garlic Mustard.

A sharp-eyed naturalist spotted a "melanistic" Eastern Garter Snake on a log beside the trail. As the snake moved away, West Elgin Naturalist Brad Reive reached over the log, gently picking up the small snake for everyone to admire. A few moments later, a larger "melanistic" Eastern Garter Snake was spotted as the snake moved through the woodland near the trail. Again, Brad reached out and grasped the snake, a beautiful shiny black specimen with a white chin which we all enjoyed seeing so closely.

At the Fox Pond lookout we admired Spatterdock growing in the pond's shallow water, its large green leaves on stalks above the pond's surface. We found Summer Azures and a colourful Red Admiral resting on vegetation beside the platform. Before departing Fish Point we walked to the west side beach, catching a glimpse of Middle Island and Parry's Monument through the haze. We noted the cluster of Dwarf Hackberry on a mound of roots and sand as we left the beach.

Of particular interest to the group was the purple-flowered Indigo Bush growing in abundance along the canal embankments.

Upon arrival at the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Stone Road Alvar

Nature Reserve, Mary Celestino provided a brief introduction to alvars. Mary explained that "alvar" is an Estonian word to describe this landscape, expanses of which may be found on Manitoulin Island, the Bruce Peninsula, upper New York State, and on the north shore of Ohio. Mary told us alvars are globally rare habitats, with Pelee Island's alvar one of the most diversified with its many rare plant and animal species.

Walking along the FON's nature trail that is still incomplete but scheduled for more hand construction by FON's Working for Wilderness Volunteers, we noted Chinquapin and Blue Ash trees, and a variety of plant species. Within the Blue



Photograph: Prairie Ragwort, Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Nature Reserve (Photograph by Joanne Reive)

Ash and Chinquapin savanna we found Miami Mist (most plants setting seeds but a few blossoms still visible), Great Solomon's Seal, Spring Avens, and Purple Vetch. On the open alvar we found Small Skullcap, Venus' Looking-glass, Alumroot, Wild Garlic, Sleepy Catchfly, Corn-salad, Northern Bedstraw, Prairie Ragwort, the leaves of Nodding Wild Onion, Gray-headed Coneflower, Whorled Milkweed, Blue-eyed Grass, Pale-spike Lobelia and Yellow-horse Gentian. In the background, we heard the calls of the Rufous-sided Towhee and glimpsed an Indigo Bunting, Cedar Waxwings and Yellow Warblers. A Giant Swallowtail danced by totally ignoring one of its favourite host plants, Prickly Ash.

We noted several showy clusters of Rough-fruited Cinquefoil along Stone Road, especially on the ERCA property, the plants' yellow flowers catching our attention. Mary Celestino remarked that she had never seen so many of this plant species growing on Stone Road. On the alvar we noted a profusion of Black Medick. Did the very hot prescribed burn of Fall 1999 promote the growth of these plants?

Our day on Pelee Island ended all too quickly with naturalists resolving to return to enjoy Pelee Island's fine natural areas. We appreciated our leaders Mary and John Celestino who shared their knowledge of Pelee Island's natural areas with us. Many thanks to both of you!

Point Pelee National Park Butterfly Walk

by Paul DesJardins

Despite earlier storms and iffy weather forecasts, six ECFNC members braved the elements for Al Wormington's butterfly talk and walk on Sunday June 25. Al started his overview on butterflies, equipment and

books, around 9:30 am in the Point Pelee Visitor Center. After giving detailed instructions on how to start butterfly-watching, where to buy the equipment and which books are best, he proceeded with a wonderful slide show (all photographs in the slide presentation provided by photographer Jim Flynn) on field marks for butterflies we would see on his walk.

Al developed his superb field identification techniques based on a lot of experience and local butterfly research. He was considered a butterfly authority back in 1983 when he wrote the "Butterflies of Point Pelee National Park" for the Ontario Field Biologist. This summer a small color photograph booklet he wrote of Point Pelee Butterflies should be available for easy visitor identification and he is currently writing a larger more comprehensive book that reveals his eighteen years of intense research. Our smaller group allowed his question and answer period to resolve many collecting details before ending his indoor discussion with a close examination of the superb Point Pelee Butterfly Collection.

After reassembling the group in the crush stone parking lot we were pleased by a few Least Skippers frolicked in the sun, an Orange Crescent basking on a flower and a newly emerged Buckeye with its fresh vibrant scales. We identified a Spicebush Swallowtail zooming past us just before a friendly Hackberry Butterfly tickled a few of us while licking for body salts.

Proceeding south from the West Beach toward the Point we found only a short stretch of damp path. The rains had heavily flooded many areas in our county but most of Point Pelee was dry - the sand acted like a natural storm drain. The sun played peek-a-boo for the first hour but smiled upon us for the rest of our outing.

After describing the Giant Swallowtail's life history, somehow Al found

a small brown larva about the size of a grain of rice. Then he found a large larva about two inches long that looked just like the pictures in the books with its repellent horn-like osmateria standing out in defiance. Having demonstrated how easy it is to search, we all proceeded to find about five different instars of the Giant Swallowtails. I found an inch long larva that was small enough to still look like a bird dropping just like the books say they resemble. To finish the life cycle Al showed us the egg of a Giant Swallowtail that had just been laid on a hop tree leaf.

Al spotted three Little Yellows, *Eurema lisa*. That was my highlight for the day for I've only briefly glimpsed a Little Yellow once before on Pelee Island. These small butterflies seemed to beat their wings quicker than the other sulphurs and they have a deeper yellow than the Clouded Sulphur and lack any orange of the Orange Sulphur. Whereas books might give one or two field marks with stationary photographs, walks with Al give general impression field marks that not only identify perched butterflies but also identify butterflies in flight. Hopefully I won't forget how to identify these little sulphurs before my next sighting.

I saw a large (over an inch long) Robber Fly perched on a leaf. It was perched to hunt bees that approached his flowers. I've read these nasty critters capture from above, suck out body juices, and then discard the exoskeleton from their favorite perch. We had neither time to wait for the next victim nor time to search the killing fields but it would be interesting to confirm these gruesome feats. They seem so different from their relatives - the harmless Crane Flies; but I'm glad they don't hunt people like the Stable Flies. Instead, some species of Robber Flies actually hunt the Stable Flies. It's too bad nobody has properly identified and clarified these relationships on the Point.

On our way to the Sparrow fields many Summer Azures danced a foot above the road. Their intense blue is always a joy to watch. Once we got to the Sparrow field we searched carefully for Zebra Swallowtails because between 10 to 15 had visited the park earlier that week. Al said he had never seen any Zebra Swallowtails before this year in the park. Unfortunately, we didn't find any. Since these immigrants might form new colonies in our county - be on the lookout for a herd of zebras in your backyard especially if you have any Paw-paws (their host plant).

While in the Sparrow field I was startled when something black and white banged into me. I didn't know what hit me until a little later when we started walking back and someone found an Eastern Eyed Click Beetle in the grass. It's an 1 1/2 inch long beetle with two large fake eyes that are sure to frighten any potential predator. We brought it to the Nature Center terrarium for their educational programs.

In total we saw 23 butterfly species on Al's walk which included the rare Olive Hairstreak, *Callophrys grynea*. The butterfly counts for the day included:

- 7 Giant Swallowtail, *Papilio cresphontes*
- 1 Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, *Papilio glaucus*
- 1 Spicebush Swallowtail, *Papilio troilus*
- 2000 Cabbage White Butterfly, *Pieris rapae*
- 16 Orange Sulfur (Alfalfa Butterfly), *Colias eurytheme*
- 3 Little Yellow, *Eurema lisa*
- 2 Banded Hairstreak, *Satyrium calanus falacer*
- 1 Juniper (Olive) Hairstreak, *Callophrys grynea*
- 9 Eastern Tailed-blue, *Everes comyntas*
- 35 Summer Azure, *Celastrina neglecta*
- 9 Great Spangled Fritillary, *Speyeria c. cybele*
- 8 Northern Pearl (Orange) Crescent, *Phyciodes cocyta*
- 4 Eastern Comma, *Polygonia comma*
- 1 Mourning Cloak, *Nymphalis a. antiopa*
- 5 Red Admiral, *Vanessa atalanta rubria*
- 4 Common Buckeye, *Junonia coenia*
- 1 Viceroy, *Limenitis a. archippus*
- 1 Hackberry Butterfly, *Asterocampa celtis*
- 2 Little Wood Satyr, *Megisto cymela*
- 1 Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*

6 Silver-spotted Skipper, *Epargyreus clarus*
 1 Least Skipper, *Ancyloxypha numitor*
 8 European Skipper, *Thymelicus lineola* (larva and eggs not included in the count)

We also saw four appropriately named Scarlet-winged Lichen Moths, *Hypoprepia miniata* and a Leopard Moth, a Pelee first. Al mentioned that he'll be leading several night hikes this August on moths. I'm looking forward to them.

Visiting Don's Eastern Bluebirds

by Betty Learmouth

ECFNC Eastern Bluebird Chairperson Don Bissonnette guided eight ECFNC members and friends on July 2, 2000 around his Eastern Bluebird (EABL) trail located on Harrow Research Station lands. As on past visits to Don's bluebird trail, the excursion began at 7:00 p.m., thus we enjoyed a pleasant summer evening viewing EABLs and their habitat.

Don first showed us an EABL box situated on an esker on lands south of the Station's main buildings. EABLs are known as secondary cavity nesters, using natural cavities or nesting boxes as nesting sites. This particular box on Don's trail was facing southeast to catch the early morning sun's warmth. Nearby bare branches in the surrounding trees provided perches as did some small trees and stakes in the experimental plots.

Within a few minutes, a dusty-blue female EABL appeared. Don said she had taken an evening "time out" from her egg incubation. She perched on a bare tree branch, then flew downwards to perch on a stake in the bean field, finally flying to the box entrance, pausing,, then entering the box to brood her five eggs overnight.

Don mentioned that parasites may be a

problem for EABLs such as blue bottle blowflies and mites. Regular box maintenance is necessary to provide a clean environment in which EABLs may nest.

EABLs often have two clutches of eggs during the nesting season. Don recalled that one year a pair of EABLs nested at the end of July, fledging young on Labour Day. Spring nesting will usually result in five eggs in a clutch while a summer clutch many be three or four eggs. One in thirty nests may contain six eggs. Don remarked that only three nests on the Harrow Research Station trail have held six eggs. None survived due to various misfortunes.

Don showed us an example of the popular Peterson box, a tall box nine inches in height with which the EABLs are comfortable. This box had held a summer brood that had fallen prey to House Sparrows. The box was presently occupied by House Wrens, their box packed solidly with twigs, typical of this cavity nesting species.

We approached an EABL nesting box along a fence line on lands north of the Chrysler Canada Greenway, a small orchard nearby. Don speculated that the almost ready to fledge young could be viewed but upon opening the box, Don found they had fledged. This provided the opportunity to examine the EABL's nest, constructed of fairly course material with a fine straw to finish. This nest was about five inches tall upon its construction, now compressed to three inches.

The adult EABLs were moving about the site, the young fledglings likely hidden in the trees nearby. One adult "hover-hunted" over the nearby bean field. We noted the female EABL carrying food, while a single EABL perched on a nearby treetop was declared by Don to be a young of the

spring brood as the adults did not feed this Bunting.
 bird. The EABLs gave us fine views as they
 perched on the wire fence, joined for a few
 minutes by a brilliant blue male Indigo

Many thanks to Don for hosting us on
 his EABL trail. It was a delightful evening.

Windsor Butterfly Count 2000

Compiled by Paul Pratt for the Ojibway Nature Centre's web site

Butterfly counts are carried out in a similar fashion to Christmas Bird Counts using a count circle fifteen miles (24 km) in diameter. Counts are sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). The count circle includes Windsor, LaSalle, the lower portion of the Canard River, McGregor, Maidstone and Tecumseh. Field observers pay a small fee to participate and attempt to count every individual butterfly encountered. Garden watchers, backyard observers and children under 12 can take part for free. Join us for the 2001 count on Saturday, July 7.

In 2000 twenty-five participants found 1,195 butterflies of 50 species. The Ojibway Prairie Complex received the majority of coverage. Paul Pratt led at Spring Garden Prairie ANSI. Russ Jones led in Ojibway and Tallgrass Prairie Parks. Betty Learmouth searched the Chrysler Canada Greenway while Jeff Larson covered the LaSalle Woodlot ESA, Black Oak Heritage Park and portions of Spring Garden. David D'hondt visited the Little River area. The count was hosted by the Ojibway Nature Centre. Windsor Parks & Recreation. The Friends of Ojibway Prairie sponsored a picnic lunch which was provided by Deb Waugh.

Flight seasons for most species appeared to be normal or slightly advanced this year. The count day was very cloudy with only an hour or so of sunshine in the afternoon which reduced count totals significantly. Sixty-five species have been recorded over the past seven butterfly counts.

In 1999 66 counts were held in Canada and 321 counts in the rest of North America. Windsor reported the highest total for Canada with 56 species. Windsor also recorded the highest count (16) for Duke's Skipper in North America.

2000 NABC participants were Patricia Broad, Margaret Calder, Clarence Calder, Heather Anne Campbell, Paul Desjardins, Fox D'hondt, David D'hondt, Kristen Fawdry, Scott Gillingwater, Barbara Hayes, Merv Hayes, June Hurley, Tom Hurst, Russ Jones, Jeff Larson, Betty Learmouth, Emily Pancheshan, Nancy Pancheshan, Paul Pratt, Andy Simko, Laura Southcott, Linda Tucker, Janet Tuite, and Deb Waugh.

RESULTS for July 8, 2000

PAPILIONIDAE: Swallowtails

BLACK SWALLOWTAIL *Papilio polyxenus asterius* - 8
 EASTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL *Papilio glaucus* - 11

PIERIDAE: Whites and Sulphurs

CABBAGE BUTTERFLY *Pieris rapae* - 116
 CLOUDED SULPHUR *Colias philodice* - 12
 ORANGE SULPHUR (ALFALFA BUTTERFLY) *Colias eurytheme* -

48

LYCAENIDAE: Hairstreaks and Blues

BRONZE COPPER *Lycaena hylus* - 1
 CORAL HAIRSTREAK *Satyrus titus* - 3
 ACADIAN HAIRSTREAK *Satyrus acadica* - 15
 EDWARDS' HAIRSTREAK *Satyrus edwardsii* - 11
 BANDED HAIRSTREAK *Satyrus calanus falacer* - 6

STRIPED HAIRSTREAK *Satyrrium liparops* - 1
 hairstreak species *Satyrrium* sp. - 1
 EASTERN TAILED-BLUE *Everes c. comyntas* - 29
 SUMMER AZURE *Celastrina neglecta* - 29
 NYMPHALIDAE: Brushfoots
 GREAT SPANGLED FRITILLARY *Speyeria c. cybele* - 56
 SILVERY CHECKERSPOT *Chlosyne nycteis nycteis* - 1
 PEARL CRESCENT *Phyciodes tharos* - 17
 NORTHERN PEARL CRESCENT *Phyciodes cocyta* - 8
 crescent species *Phycoides* sp. - 4
 QUESTION MARK *Polygonia interrogationis* - 3
 EASTERN COMMA *Polygonia comma* - 1
 MOURNING CLOAK *Nymphalis a. antiopa* - 1
 AMERICAN PAINTED LADY *Vanessa virginiensis* - 7
 RED ADMIRAL *Vanessa atalanta rubria* - 10
 COMMON BUCKEYE *Junonia coenia* - 4 (record high)
 RED-SPOTTED PURPLE *Limenitis arthemis* (count period only)
 VICEROY *Limenitis a. archippus* - 6
 NORTHERN PEARLY EYE *Lethe anhedon* - 13
 EYED BROWN *Lethe e. eurydice* - 12
 APPALACHIAN EYED BROWN *Lethe appalachia* - 10
 eyed brown species - 2
 LITTLE WOOD SATYR *Megisto cymela* - 138
 COMMON WOOD NYMPH *Cercyonis pegala* - 148

MONARCH *Danaus plexippus* - 5

HESPERIIDAE: Skippers
 SILVER-SPOTTED SKIPPER *Epargyreus clarus* - 61
 SOUTHERN CLOUDY WING *Achalarus lyciades* - 6
 NORTHERN CLOUDY WING *Thorybes pylades* - 4
 WILD INDIGO DUSKYWING *Erynnis baptisiae* - 84
 COMMON SOOTY WING *Pholisora catullus* - 7
 LEAST SKIPPER *Ancyloxypha numitor* - 1
 EUROPEAN SKIPPER *Thymelicus lineola* - 18 (near end of season)
 TAWNY-EDGED SKIPPER *Polites themistocles* - 1
 CROSSLINE SKIPPER *Polites origenes* - 18 (record high)
 LONG DASH *Polites m. mystic* - 6
 NORTHERN BROKEN DASH *Wallengrenia egeremet* - 108
 LITTLE GLASSY WING *Pompeius verna* - 41 (record high)
 DELAWARE SKIPPER *Atrytone l. logan* - 34
 MULBERRY WING SKIPPER *Poanes massasoit* - 9
 HOBOMOK SKIPPER *Poanes hobomok* - 2 (near end of season)
 BROAD-WINGED SKIPPER *Euphyes viator* - 2
 DION SKIPPER *Euphyes dion* - 3
 DUKE'S SKIPPER *Euphyes dukesi* - 3
 BLACK DASH *Euphyes c. conspicua* - 5
 DUN SKIPPER *Euphyes vestris* - 9
 skipper species - 36

A Wild Indigo Duskywing was observed ovipositing on crown vetch. This species has increased in numbers as crown vetch has become more common and widespread. Caterpillars found during the count included two Monarchs on butterfly milkweed, two Eastern Black Swallowtails on wild carrot and one Viceroy on willow.



A July Evening Walk on the Spring Garden ANSI

by Betty Learmouth

Photograph: ECFNC members are shown enjoying the Spring Garden ANSI. Denise Hartley (on left) and Peg Hurst (on right) are at the end of the line. (Photograph by Linda Tucker)

Our ECFNC's July 12, 2000 meeting was an evening walk in the Spring Garden Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI), lead by Ojibway Nature Centre's Chief Naturalist Paul Pratt. While waiting for ECFNC members to assemble, Paul passed around an insect jar containing three Big Dipper Fireflies that Paul had captured in his backyard the previous evening. Paul explained that the yellow spot on this insect's abdomen is the area that the insect is able to illuminate.

Another guest at the ECFNC July walk was a medium-sized Eastern Fox Snake, captured that day by Ojibway Nature Centre's snake researcher Russ Jones. Upon its

capture, the snake had been measured, weighed, its sex determined and blood drawn for DNA analysis. A photograph of its dorsal markings had been taken for its future identification.

As ECFNC members prepared to enter the Spring Garden Prairie ANSI, Paul explained that the City of Windsor currently owns 40% of the ANSI. Some 2 1/2 million dollars had been recently budgeted by the City of Windsor to purchase the remaining 60 % of the ANSI currently owned by a number of landowners. An unnamed donor will be donating additional funds to complete the Spring Garden Prairie ANSI purchase.

As ECFNC members walked along the trail towards the Spring Garden Prairie ANSI, Paul drew our attention to a salt lick which neighbors had placed for the local White-tailed Deer. Nearby an Indigo Bunting sang and a Blue Jay called.

Snake researcher Russ Jones walked about a grassy area near the trail, locating and capturing a Northern Brown Snake, then an Eastern Garter Snake. Paul commented that the Eastern Garter Snake was preparing to shed its skin which it would be accomplished by rubbing its nose, intending that the skin would catch and peel off the snake's entire body, in the manner that humans shed socks.

The trail that ECFNC members followed is part of the West Windsor bikeway system. Paul drew our attention to a variety of plants and animals as we explored the Spring Garden Prairie ANSI.

Paul entertained us by sampling the blue fruit from a White Mulberry, a non native tree species, while telling us that the native mulberry, the rare Red Mulberry, looks quite different, resembling a small Basswood when it is seen in a woodland.

We stopped to peer at Japanese Beetles, then at galls on willows, these galls formed by the willow as a response to a fly that had lain its eggs on the willow.

At an open area, Paul pointed to some tall grass prairie species, Prairie Cord Grass and Big Blue Stem or Turkey Foot, notable for its blue joints on the plant's stem. Paul nipped off a part of a Virginia Mountain-mint, urging us to smell this aromatic prairie plant. Prairie Loosestrife was also growing in this area dominated by prairie species.

Butterflies observed here among the prairie grasses and plants included Delaware Skipper, Pearl Crescent, Eyed Brown and Common Wood Nymph.

A large Harvestman caught our attention. Paul identified the orange spots on the Harvestman as parasitic mites that were sucking the Harvestman's vital juices. Paul mentioned the Harvest Mite ECFNC members are familiar with which they call "chiggers."

At a patch of Crown Vetch, an introduced plant species, Paul paused to comment that the larvae of a rare Ontario butterfly, the Wild Indigo Duskywing, have been found feeding on Crown Vetch. The larvae's favoured food plant is Wild Indigo, a plant restricted to Essex County's Ojibway Prairie. Perhaps the Wild Indigo Duskywing will be found more often beyond the Ojibway Prairie.

Plants seen along the trail included Wild Bergamot, Butterfly-weed, and Flowering Spurge. Insects identified included a Green Emerald Weevil and Milkweed Long-horned Beetles.

As we reached the mid-way point of the evening's walk, we heard a Yellow-throated Vireo singing. Other plants identified in this area included Goatsbeard, Common Mullein, Bladder Campion, and several fern species including Interrupted, Royal, Cinnamon, Marsh and Sensitive Fern.

Paul stepped off the trail to draw everyone's attention to a single plant with long

tapered leaves, a Poke Milkweed. Nearby, a Common Elderberry had blossomed, its fruit now forming, reminding Paul of his mother's delicious elderberry pies.

Among the last plants identified as we left the Spring Garden Prairie ANSI were Prairie Dock, Early Goldenrod, Birds-foot Trefoil, Wild Parsnip, Sweet White Clover and Everlasting Pea, a colourful garden escapee.

The almost full moon shone down on us as we completed our walk. Paul urged us to be on the lookout for the early flash of the Big Dipper Fireflies in the shadows of shrubs and trees along the trail.

Our thanks to Paul for leading this enjoyable walk through the Spring Garden Prairie ANSI, a perfect way to spend a summer evening.

Counting Western Lake Erie's Double-crested Cormorant Nests

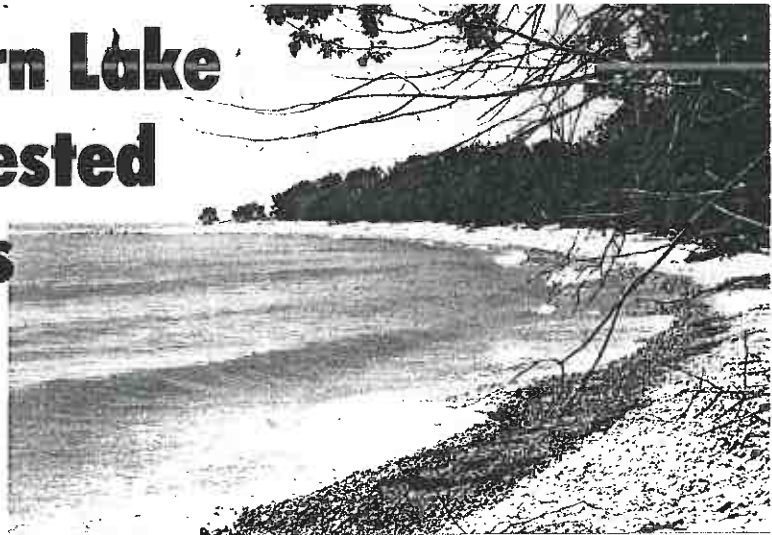
BY BETTY LEARMOUTH

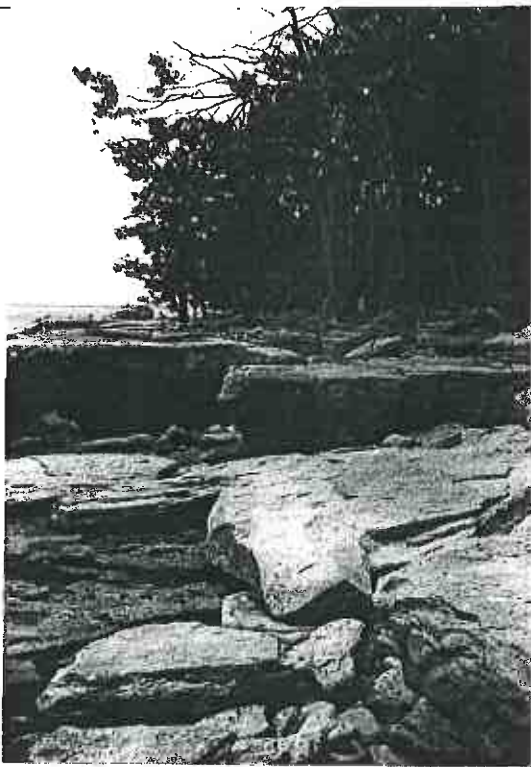
Shortly after 7:00 a.m. on June 15, 2000, while a Belted Kingfisher hovered above Colchester Harbour, members of Canadian Wildlife Service Biologist Chip Weseloh's

monitoring crew were unloading their motor boats at the boat ramp. Upon stowing all their gear, donning bright orange survival suits, the CWS crew, three volunteer monitors and two Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources biologists set off across Lake Erie. Small craft weather warnings for Western Lake Erie were in effect, but Chip stated, "We've got to get this done."

A full day had been set aside to count Double-crested Cormorant nests on Lake Erie's East Sister and Middle Islands. Chip Weseloh has been studying Double-crested Cormorant populations on Lake Erie's Canadian Islands since 1978. Chip has determined the population of Double-crested Cormorants on Middle Island was established in 1987, with fewer than 500 nests counted yearly to 1991. One thousand Double-crested Cormorant nests were counted during the 1994 nesting season, the numbers climbing to 3,000 nests in 1997. The 1999 nesting season count was tallied at 3,500 nests.

Following a two-hour ride across turbulent Lake Erie, the boats pulled into the lee shore of East Sister Island at 9:30 a.m. Birds were everywhere, Double-crested Cormorants perched in shoreline trees while Herring Gulls wheeled overhead. Upon securing the boats, everyone clamoured ashore, shedding survival suits, and preparing for the morning's count.





Photograph: Limestone cliffs, sills, and Hackberry trees, Middle Island

East Sister Island is a Provincial Nature Preserve that has seen dramatic changes in its avian population over the last decades. Chip Weseloh's count of Black-crowned Night-heron nests in 1980 totalled over 500 nests. In 1988, a census of nesting birds on East Sister Island revealed a decline of Black-crowned Night-heron nests to 20 nests. On this same count 1, 085 Double-crested Cormorant, 500 Great Blue Heron, 68 Great Egret and 500 Herring Gull nests were counted.

Chip Weseloh gathered his crew, explaining how the count would be conducted. Chip would walk the middle of the East Sister Island, the other nine counters would walk abreast on Chip's right, thus covering the eastern half of the island in one sweep. Everyone would reassemble at the far end of the island, completing the survey with a sweep along the island's west side. In order to determine which nests were counted, every Double-crested Cormorant nesting tree would be encircled with florescent tape. Hand counters would be used to determine the nest tally.

Counters walked through the forest, stopping to count nests, then encircling each tree with tape. Cormorant nests are built of several materials, twigs and other soft materials, thus the nests are compact and sturdy enough to support several young. Some trees contain numerous nests, as many as twenty-two nests or more, while smaller trees may contain one or two nests. Large nesting trees that have been used for many years are dead, limbs and trunk denuded of bark, the forest floor beneath the trees without vegetation. East Sister Island's eastern portion has been particularly damaged by Double-crested Cormorant nesting activity.

Counting Double-crested Cormorant nests is not without its hazards. The nesting cormorants are very much aware of the counters presence, regurgitating half consumed fish which fall to the forest floor with a resounding thud. If a counter lingers too long under a nesting tree, a fine mist of defecated material will rain down upon the unfortunate counter.

A few minutes into the counting a call rang out,



Photograph: Double-crested Cormorant nests, East Sister Island

"Fox Snake." The counters rushed off to see this large handsome specimen, the only one of this species sighted during the day. Though East Sister Island is small, there is both dry and wet forest on the island with a wet meadow at the far end. Oversized leaves of first year Garlic Mustard plants formed dense green carpets across the dry forest floor. The wet forest is a challenge for counters as the trees are standing in several inches of water with tall grasses growing in this swamp. In order to reach each nesting tree, counters waded through vegetation that was shoulder high, including thickets of Stinging Nettle, the regionally rare Pale Touch-me-not, and Pokeweed.



Photograph: Eastern Fox Snake, East Sister Island

At the island's far end, the counters emerged onto a brilliant white limestone cobblestone beach and berm while dozens of noisy Herring Gulls circled overhead. The berm is a nesting site for these gulls, their nests containing two or three large mottled brown and green eggs scattered over the pebble berm, well above the water line.

Zebra mussel shells had washed ashore here in such dense numbers that the counters' foot prints were left in the deep drift of shells. Counters gathered at the meeting point on the shoreline before heading inland for the third sweep, completed by 1:20 p.m. When everyone's numbers were obtained, this season's tally of Double-crested Cormorant nests on East Sister Island stood at 5,485.

Following a quick lunch, the boats were readied, and the counters boarded, with Middle Island the next destination. The boats were brought ashore at a limestone sill on Middle Island, below a limestone cliff from which chunks of limestone were collapsing. On the cliff's edge, Hackberry trees struggled to survive. One counter remarked about this dramatic scene, "It's hard to believe we're in Essex County."

The counters gathered again for their instructions from Chip. This time the crew divided, one team passing along the east shore, the other assigned to the west shore, again marking trees as nests are counted. The plan was to regroup at the island's far end, then sweep through the middle of the island, arriving back at the boats in time for a 5:30 p.m. departure.

On Middle Island, nesting Double-crested Cormorants are scattered throughout the island's woodlands, with many birds nesting on trees at the shoreline. As on East Sister Island, there is constant movement overhead, as Double-crested Cormorants, herons, egrets, and Herring Gulls wheel above. The chatter of all these birds sometimes takes on a human quality, causing counters to look toward the sounds, imagining an unknown group of persons nearby.

Only Double-crested Cormorant nests were counted on this survey, although the larger nests of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets are to be found in the same trees as the Double-crested Cormorants. Young Great Blue Herons in their nests were often seen easily while young Great Egrets were less visible, younger and smaller than the young

herons. The distinctive twig nests of Black-crowned Night-herons were seen, frequently in scrub thickets.

At 3:30 p.m., several counters were alerted by a CWS staff member to watch the interaction between a Black-crowned Night-heron and Double-crested Cormorant. Ahead, in a small tree, adjacent to its trunk, Double-crested cormorants had built nests directly above and below a Black-crowned Night-heron's nest. We noted the Double-crested Cormorant perched on the same limb as the Black-crowned Night-heron's nest with the night heron rising from its nest, squabbling with the cormorant, each taking jabs at the other. Eventually the Double-crested Cormorant flew off, the Black-crowned Night-heron remaining on its nest.

The counters emerged at the southern tip of Middle Island, where the island's curving sand spit is a resting place for Herring Gulls. The counters reentered the forest, positioned between the marked trees to the left and right. Walking through a grove of Kentucky Coffee Trees, the leaves filtered the late afternoon sun in a filigree pattern, counters experienced a unique experience as these trees are found in few places within Essex County.

Counters walked by the ruins of the island's old hotel that burned a few years ago, a single Herring Gull perched on the red clay chimney pot. Biologist Mike Oldham commented that several years ago the area around the structure (the biology crewed had stayed in the old building) was a grassy area with an airstrip nearby. Now the entire area is overgrown with sumac and small scrubs, quite unrecognizable.

Walking through these woodlands, the group noted various species of plants, including a carpet of Miami Mist now setting its seed, Short's Aster, and carpets Appendaged Waterleaf.



Photograph: Herring Gull's nest on the cobblestone berm, East Sister Island

At 5:00 p.m., the census completed, the counters heading back to the boats. The final 2000 tally for Middle Island's Double-crested Cormorant nests was 5,202.

While waiting to depart, counters were treated to views of two Lake Erie Water Snakes, one of which swam below the limestone cliff, resting on the ledge several times, providing good looks at this endangered species. Following a May 10, 2000 visit to Middle Island, Pelee Island Heritage Centre Curator Ron Tiessen commented that no Lake Erie Water Snakes were observed. Could the numerous nesting birds on Middle Island be a factor regarding a lack of observed snakes?

At 5:30 p.m., the boats and counters departed, the passage across Lake Erie completed in two hours. A visit to East Sister and Middle Islands is always a special experience, and particularly the opportunity to make a contribution towards the study of the islands' nesting Double-crested Cormorants.

Nature News and Happenings from Around Essex County, May - August 2000

May 18 - Eastern Bluebird monitor Margaret Jennings reported five Eastern Bluebird young have fledged from Margaret's boxes, with two other boxes containing tiny babies. Tree Swallows occupy three other boxes.

May 20 - Pelee Island Heritage Centre Curator Ron Tiessen visited Middle Island on this date. The Miami Mist bloom was reported as spectacular, creating carpets of blue throughout the island. Wild Hyacinth was in bloom, growing in tall thickets.

June 5 - The appeal before the Ontario Municipal Board regarding Marshfield Woods was withdrawn. All parties agreed to accept the appeal's withdrawal, thus avoiding a lengthy hearing.

June 6 - City of Windsor Parks and Recreation employee and ECFNC member Faye Langmaid presented a paper entitled "Securement in a Municipal Environment" at the conference "Caring for Our Land and Water: Stewardship and Conservation in Canada" held at the University of Guelph. During the same conference ECFNC member Ben Porchuk presented a paper entitled "Conservation in a Small, Isolated Island Community (Pelee Island)."

June 10 - While on a van tour of the Little River Watershed, four members discovered 35 Cliff Swallow nests underneath the Little River bridge at the E. C. Row expressway. This colony may be viewed by parking in Riverview Steel parking lot (a short walk to the bridge) in the Twin Oaks Industrial Park located south of the expressway.

June 14 - At the ECFNC members monthly meeting, Donna Sale presented an enjoyable program which included slides of Kakadu National Park's various habitats taken recently while Donna and her husband Peter were travelling in Australia. Following Donna's slide presentation, ECFNC members were treated to a fine Australian wildlife video that traced a year in the life of a Blue-winged Kookaburra family within a small woodland at Kakadu National Park.

June 15 - 23 - ECFNC member Alan Wormington reported sightings of Zebra Swallowtail butterflies throughout Point Pelee National Park, including the Tip. Likely 10 to 15 of these migrant butterflies were in the park.

June 17 - Oakland Audubon Society members enjoyed a morning birding walk on the Ojibway Prairie, followed by an afternoon dragonfly workshop presented by Paul DesJardins.

June 20 - Paul Pratt reported that the pair of Eastern Phoebes that had returned to nest for a second year at his home have fledged five young and are preparing to raise a second brood.

June 20 - Ojibway Nature Centre's snake researcher Russ Jones reports finding several Eastern Fox Snakes over the last few weeks. One large Fox Snake was seen in an oak tree on June 11 but was unable to be caught. A smaller Fox Snake was found on June 13 in the same tree, a record made of its markings so it may be identified if found again. A third Eastern Fox snake was later found in the old "bee tree" on the Ojibway Prairie, unfortunately the opening was too narrow for Russ to reach the snake.

June 26 - Four young Cooper's Hawks have fledged from their nest in the City of Windsor's Memorial Park. ECFNC member Paul DesJardins has been following the progress of these young birds which will now need to learn hunting skills.

June 27 - Following a session of seed cleaning, Friends of Ojibway Prairie accompanied snake researcher Russ Jones and Sarah Kuipers onto the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Preserve in search of Eastern Fox Snakes. Four Eastern Garter Snakes were found, two of which were gravid females.

June 28 - Point Pelee National Park staff members collected over sixty bags of garbage from Middle Island. The Ministry of Natural Resources research vessel based in Wheatley brought the garbage ashore today.

July 4 - Eighteen delegations spoke before the Town of Essex Council regarding the designation of Marshfield Woods as a Provincially significant Wetland at its regular meeting held on this occasion in the Civic Centre. No discussion of the presentations was permitted with Council indicating it would be proceeding through the planning process as it considers its Official Plan, expected to be completed by year's end.

July 4 - Ojibway Nature Centre snake researcher Russ Jones reported a tiny Eastern Fox Snake had been found in a neighbor's basement. The snake was brought into the Centre for a recording of its markings.

July 5 - NHRP members met at Terry Anderson's woodlot on Road 3 West in the Town of Kingsville to pick the seeds of Flowering Purple Raspberry which were determined not to be ready. A Northern Mockingbird sat on the hydro line that spans the Anderson's yard.

July 10 - Paul Pratt reported that Common Yellowthroat, Yellow, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue-winged, Mourning and Chestnut-sided Warblers were present during the breeding season at Ojibway.

July 15 - Tom Hince supplied this update to the listserv ONTBIRDS: The Dickcissel is still present, in fact, I found two more in another field nearby. The first male is 500 metres east of the intersection of Hwy. 3 and Campers Cove Rd (which is about 4 km east of the traffic light in the centre of Wheatley). It is in a small weedy field beside a new house on the south side of the road. If you are traveling east on 3, this field is just after a stretch of freshly cut wheat fields. It was still present and singing from the roadside wire on July 13th. There are also two more males (and likely females on nests with them), on Zion Rd.

July 17 - ECFNC members enjoyed an evening walk on the Spring Garden ANSI with Ojibway's Chief Naturalist Paul Pratt.

August 1 - Four Common Buckeye butterflies were seen along the Titcombe bikeway while members of the Friends of Ojibway were out removing exotic plants. Giant Swallowtail Butterflies are now conspicuous, having started their second brood on July 26. While Monarchs continue to be seen in very low numbers the look alike Viceroy is very common at Ojibway. The Ojibway Prairie is reaching its colour peak with a variety of prairie plant species in bloom including Culver's Root, Gray-headed Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan, Wild Bergamot, Flowering Spurge, Dense Blazing-star, Virginia Mountain-mint and Tall Ironweed.

August 2 - Several baby garter snakes were found today at Ojibway. The first neonate of the summer was seen on July 21 by Russ Jones.

August 5: Highlights of the Pelee Island Butterfly Count from the forty species recorded included a Harvester, *Feniseca tarquinius*, Common Ringlet, *Coenonympha tullia*, Zabulon Skipper, *Poanes zabulon*, 248 American Snouts and 46 Common Buckeyes.

August 7 - ECFNC member Todd Pepper reported this message to the listserv ONTBIRDS: At around 10:30 a.m. I saw a Least Bittern skim across the water of the inside passage along the east side dyke trail at the Hillman Marsh. It went into the cattails not to be seen again. There were also a few shorebirds about, including 3 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 2 Spotted Sandpipers and 1 Solitary Sandpiper. Lots of Goldfinches and small flocks of Cedar Waxwings everywhere along the trail. There were 2 Least Flycatchers on the west side of the trail. Not to mention the resident Bald Eagle and hundreds of D.C. Cormorants.

August 8 - Developer Don Hearn unveiled his plans for building a golf course in Marshfield Woods at the Town of Essex's Council Meeting. Mr. Hearn was accompanied by golf course designer Michael Hurdzan.

August 9 – ECFNC member Bill Balkwill reports that Eastern Bluebirds (EABL) on his farm in the Town of Kingsville continue to nest. The first nesting was underway in early May. In early August the resident Cooper's Hawk almost took one of the male EABLs which managed to escape by a feather's width into a nesting box. Other summer sightings around Bill's farm include a Wild Turkey, Sandhill Crane and White-tailed Deer with two fawns. Plants of interest in Bill's woodlot have included Pinesap, Spotted Coralroot and Indian-pipe. Bill reports numbers of Giant Swallowtails about his property while Luna Moths were seen on the evening of August 5. Across the Arner Townline on Road 4, American Kestrels nested in a squirrel's nest located in a cedar next to Morley Higgin's barn.

August 9 – Ann White, London, ON provided the daily update to listserv ONTBIRDS re the Anhinga which has settle in at a Delaware wetland near London: "Today he did some flying around the usual time, but did not disappear for long. There was heavy rain in the area, a couple of times, so that probably kept him close to "home." At 3 o'clock he was sitting preening in the tree behind the duck box with the entrance out of view, so tomorrow morning viewing should be guaranteed, as much as any viewing can be.

Today we recorded our thousandth visitor in the guest book. Though we missed quite a few, others have signed in on each visit, so that sort of balances. One of these two people, Donna Roemmele from Windsor and Gladys Fisher from Kingsville, (who came together), was the lucky winner of the big prize - UNLIMITED FREE ANHINGA VIEWING until he leaves. Donna and Gladys can toss for it."

Ojibway Snake Study Update, July 24, 2000

The rattlesnake telemetry study at Ojibway Nature Centre continues from 1999 with support from World Wildlife Federation and local support from Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation, the Friends of Ojibway Prairie, and Windsor Department of Parks and Recreation.

Last fall, two radio-tagged rattlesnakes, Bette and Cleo, were tracked to their individual hibernaculas. Bette spent from October 17 to November 4 under an old sidewalk and then made one final move (about 15 m.) to her hibernacula in a small mammal burrow under a loose canopy of hawthorns.

Cleo continued to make aboveground appearances through to December 9, 1999. Her hibernation site was another unremarkable small mammal burrow in a prairie meadow. Pulse rates from the transmitters were taken throughout the winter on both Bette and Cleo in order to obtain their body temperatures.

On April 25, 2000 Bette was observed above ground, covered in a thin layer of mud and partially concealed by dead grass. For approximately 6 weeks she made regular short (average = 8.5 m) but on June 15 she shed her skin for the first time this year and moved a large distance (30m).

Unfortunately Bette's movements brought her very close to a busy road and on the night of July 4 she crossed the street and settled in a small pocket of habitat between a resident's backyard and the road. Talk about a bad situation!

The expectation is that she will mate this year so she may lead us to one or more mature males after her next shedding! (One male found on May 15 was too small to carry a transmitter).

By June 15, 2000 Cleo still had not appeared aboveground so the decision was made to exhume her and retrieve the transmitter. After following a steep descending burrow down 94 cm her partial remains were discovered submerged at the waterline. The cause of her death is unknown but it appears she died well before springtime.

This year we are also undertaking a fox snake telemetry study. The objective is to collect and implant two eastern fox snakes; one from the Ojibway Provincial Prairie Nature Reserve (OPPNR) and one from the Spring Garden Prairie. All fox snakes encountered in the Ojibway Prairie Complex are processed in the same manner as massasaugas (measured, sexed, weighed, photographed, blood taken, etc.). Since 1999 we have collected data on 43 fox snakes though none of this year's snakes have met the criteria for an implant.

On a positive note we talked to the home owners at Bette's location and they don't mind the new "neighbour". Russ is tracking Bette's movements more closely in case she attempts to cross the road again.

Ojibway Recovery Team
Paul Pratt, Karen Cedar, Russ Jones, Sarah Kuipers
Ojibway Nature Centre
5200 Matchette Road,
Windsor, ON N9C 4E8
(519) 966-5852
(519) 966-9658 fax
ppratt@city.windsor.on.ca
<http://www.city.windsor.on.ca/ojibway/rattler.htm>

Preparing for the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas 2001-2005

by Betty Learmouth

Photograph: Abundance surveyor Mike Malone enjoying Big Creek Marsh

This nesting season birders around Ontario undertook some volunteer pilot projects to assist with preparations for the upcoming Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, beginning in 2001. A few ECFNC members participated in abundance surveys within Big Creek Marsh, an account of one survey described below. Abundance surveyors forwarded their comments regarding the various abundance surveys to the



Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas planning committee early in July 2000. The committee will decide upon the best procedure for collecting abundance of bird species, then that procedure will be included in the directives to atlasers

Thanks to Marsh Manager Graham Rose's kind permission ("Have fun!) two ECFNC members, Mike Malone and Betty Learmouth, set out to kayak within the boundaries of the Lake Erie Hunt Club property, directly to the west of Holiday Beach Conservation Area on Friday, June 23, 2000. We put our kayaks into Big Creek marsh just below the hawk tower shortly after 7:00 a.m. As we departed Mike observed the Belted Kingfisher that frequents this area. Paddling past the Lake Erie Hunt Club weir that retains water in Big Creek Marsh, we noted several adult and an immature Black-crowned Night-heron on the weir. One of the Barn Swallows from the colony on Lake Erie Hunt Club's wooden cottage flew by us. Mike spotted a raccoon on a rock close to the weir, which withdrew when the animal saw us.

We paddled closely to the shoreline, the area beside us an earthen finger dyke which is now overgrown with poplar trees, dogwood shrubs, grape vines, and Stinging Nettle. Growing adjacent to the shoreline are emergent wetland plant species, mainly arrowhead and bulrushes with a few scattered cattails. The water depth was about the length of a kayak paddle blade, perhaps 70 centimetres (16 inches).

We thought we might be able to enter the narrow waterway behind the berm, but upon reaching that area, we found the emergent wetland plants too dense, completely blocking entrance behind the berm. To the west of the berm we found a large dead tree, a favoured spot for perching herons, egrets, falcons and eagles as well as a nesting site for Tree Swallows. This is the tree that can be well seen from the hawk tower, seemingly always with a perched bird of some species during fall migration.

Passing along the shoreline, we noted several large dead trees, all magnets for perching herons, egrets and Tree Swallows. We paddled through a patch of American Lotus, a profusion of yellow blossoms visible from this site early in September.

In the distance, we could see bare earth piled up. As we came closer, we realized that dredging equipment had piled up this earth, providing a channel from a small fishing camp to the western portion of the marsh. A muskrat swam across the channel as we slowly paddled through the area. About 9:00 a.m. as we drifted in the channel and the adjacent marsh, a flash of black and white flying east along the marsh woodland edge caught our eye. Quickly focussing our binoculars, we exclaimed as we identified an adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Shortly after 9:00 a.m. we noted a kettle of Turkey Vultures over the woodlands to the south. Eventually we counted eight Turkey Vultures rising from their roost, slowly heading north.

Mike called my attention to the numerous egrets on the channel edges. Then Mike urged me to note the small size of the closest egret. When the birds flushed, Mike had his binoculars focussed, ready to call out his identification, "Snowy Egret," the bright yellow feet with contrasting black legs readily visible as the bird flew up. After the egrets had settled on nearby tree tops, Mike found a second Snowy Egret. Mike and his wife Joan spend their winters in the Mexican State of Oaxaca, where Mike conducts ecotours of mangrove lagoons, a favoured habitat for Snowy Egrets.

The channel brought us to the farthest open section of Big Creek Marsh, in view of

farm buildings on Knapp's Island. Emergent vegetation obscured the shoreline. A Pied-billed Grebe called, hidden by arrowhead and bulrushes. At ten o'clock, as the survey ended, a second grebe called from the west, the first grebe answering.

Mike suggested we cross over to the Knapp's Island shoreline where we enjoyed a patch of shade under shoreline trees before heading east. We paddled leisurely, reaching the hawk tower at 11:00 a.m. Along the way, we spotted an adult male Northern Harrier over open water, pursued by a Red-winged Blackbird. Three duck-like shapes on open water caused us to pause for a closer look. Two adult Ruddy Ducks and a single female swam closely together. As we approached the tower, the calls of terns attracted our attention. A Forster's Tern, perched on a property boundary sign, was enduring the harassment of a second tern as it chattered and swooped over its companion.

Below is the summary of the birds observed to the west of the hawk tower over a three hour period, most of the count taking place beyond the boundary of the Holiday Beach 10 kilometre by 10 kilometre square:

Species	Total 7:15 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
Pied-billed Grebe	2
Great Blue Heron	15
Great Egret	30
Snowy Egret	2
Green Heron	1
Black-crowned Night-heron	4
Mallard	28
Turkey Vulture	8
Killdeer	7
Spotted Sandpiper	2
Mourning Dove	8
Belted Kingfisher	1
Downy Woodpecker	2
Northern Flicker	5
Eastern Kingbird	4
Tree Swallow	30
Barn Swallow	1
Blue Jay	2
House Wren	2
American Robin	1
Cedar Waxwing	15
Red-eyed Vireo	1
Yellow Warbler	7
Common Yellowthroat	1
Northern Cardinal	7
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1
Song Sparrow	3
Red-winged Blackbird	30
Common Grackle	15
Baltimore Oriole	5

ECFNC Activities and Excursions

September to December 2000

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, contact Margaret Jennings (250-0705), 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 excursions. Consider volunteering as an excursion leader.

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

September 5 - 30 - Point Pelee National Park Activity - Monarch Butterfly Hikes - 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.
Witness the Monarch migration first-hand and gain insight into this phenomenon! \$20/person (includes an official Monarch Counter T-shirt)

September 7 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Fall Bird Migration (adults)
A series of five field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County. Register for the entire course and pay a discounted price of \$40.
September 7 (intro), 9, 23, October 7, 21, 28 Thursday 7:30 p.m. (intro) and Saturday mornings (field trips)
Fee: \$40 or \$9/day

September 9 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Fall Bird Migration Field trip

September 9 - 10 - Festival of Hawks at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area - Sharp-shinned Weekend, Monarchs and Hummingbirds. Enjoy a weekend of activities including guided hawk watching from the hawk tower, banding demonstrations and talks about both raptors and passerines, and live raptor displays. There will be hands-on children's activities, slide presentations including hawk identification, and environmental displays. Pelee Wings Nature Store's display will feature sales of binoculars, guide books, clothing and nature photography. Light refreshments will be served at the Blue Kestrel Cafe. ECFNC members are invited to volunteer to assist at the hands-on children's display, the display area including the ECFNC display, and the Blue Kestrel Cafe.

September 12 and 14 - Growing Native Plants from Seeds - This course will be presented by Horticulturist Henry Kock at The Arboretum, University of Guelph. Diversity is the emphasis of this full day course from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Techniques of cleaning, treating and sowing seeds and how to protect them as seeds and young plants will be discussed. Advanced registration required, please call (519) 824-4120 X 4110. The web site is www.uoguelph.ca/~arboretu

September 13 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting - Meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Holiday Beach Conservation Area classroom which is located near the Lake Erie lakeshore in the south part of the conservation area east of the hawk tower. The Holiday Beach Conservation Area is located on County Road 50 just a few minutes from the intersection of County Road 20 at Malden Centre within the Town of Amherstburg. Our speakers will be banders Allen Chartier and Phil Roberts who will bring us up-to-date on the fall migration.

September 16 - 17 - Festival of Hawks at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area - Broad-winged Hawk

Weekend and Dragonflies. Enjoy a weekend of activities including guided hawk watching from the hawk tower, banding demonstrations and talks about both raptors and passerines, and live raptor display. Hands-on children's activities, slide presentations including hawk identification, and environmental displays will be featured. Pelee Wings Nature Store will provide a display and sale of binoculars, guide books, clothing and nature photography. Light refreshments will be available at the Blue Kestrel Caf . Paul Pratt will lead a dragonfly walk at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 17, 2000. ECFNC members are invited to volunteer to assist at the hands on children's display, the display area including the ECFNC display and the Blue Kestrel Cafe.

September 16 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Visitors Centre at either 9:50 a.m. or 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person

September 17 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person

September 17 - Clear Creek - Hawk Watch - 4 p.m. For more information contact Mathis Natvik at (519) 678-3866 or by e-mail at mnatvik@hotmail.com

September 18 and 25 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Captivating Critters (Ages 3-5) - Four afternoons of wildlife exploration and nature fun. September 18, 25, October 2, 16 and October 23, 30, November 6, 13. Mondays 10 a.m. to noon or 1-3 p.m. Fee: \$20/4 weeks plus \$1 material fee

September 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Creatures of the Night (family) - NEW! Join us for an after-dark look at Ojibway's fascinating nightlife. Friday 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Fee: \$5/child, \$6/adult (family discount available)

September 23 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Fall Bird Migration Field trip

September 23 - Point Pelee National Park Activity - Natural Garden Workshop - 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. Prepare your garden for next year! Call for details.

September 23 - 24 - Festival of Hawks at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area - Peregrine Falcon Weekend and Fall Songbirds. Enjoy a weekend of activities including guided hawk watching from the hawk tower, banding demonstrations and talks about both raptors and passerines, and live raptor displays. Hands-on children's activities, slide presentations including hawk identification and environmental displays will be featured. Pelee Wings Nature Store's display will include sales of binoculars, guide books, clothing and nature photography. Light refreshments at the Blue Kestrel Cafe. ECFNC members are invited to volunteer to assist at the hands-on children's display, the display area including the ECFNC display and the Blue Kestrel Cafe.

September 23 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at either 9:50 a.m. or 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173.

September 24 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173.

September 28 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Edible and Medicinal Plants (adults) NEW! - A popular hands-on workshop to discover the wonderful variety of edible, medicinal and poisonous plants in the Windsor area. Thursday 7:30 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m. Fee: \$16/2 days

September 30 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Edible and Medicinal Plants Field Trip

September 30 - Hawk Counters workshop - The Holiday Beach Migration Observatory been chosen September 30, 2000 for a day long Hawk Counters Workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to introduce interested persons to the world of hawk watching and to encourage these persons to become "hawk watchers in training." Planning the day's itinerary is underway including an explanation as to why counting raptors is important, the importance of the Holiday Beach Conservation Area site, raptor identification slide presentations, identification of raptors from the hawk tower, and data collection. Pre-registration and a small fee will be required to ensure your place. Lunch will be included. Further details about this workshop will be available during September.

September 30 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at either 9:50 a.m. or 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person.

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

October 1 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person.

October 2 and 16 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Captivating Critters (Ages 3-5) - Four afternoons of wildlife exploration and nature fun. September 18, 25, October 2, 16 and October 23, 30, November 6, 13. Mondays 10 a.m. to noon or 1-3 p.m. Fee: \$20/4 weeks plus \$1 material fee

October 7 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Fall Bird Migration Field trip

October 7 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at either 9:50 a.m. or 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person.

October 8 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person.

October 9 (Thanksgiving) - Ojibway Nature Centre - Fall Colour Festival and Native Plant Sale - Join us Thanksgiving Day for nature walks, environmental exhibits and activities the whole family will enjoy. Special native plant and tree sale. (Thanksgiving) Monday 12:00 - 4:00 p.m. Free admission

October 11 - ECFNC Members Meeting ð University of Windsor researcher and ECFNC member Lynda Corkum, will speak about the distribution and abundance of mayflies (or fishflies) in Lake Erie. Lynda is particularly interested in emergence patterns of adult mayflies and their inland dispersal. Although the nymphs live in the mud of lakes and large rivers for about 2 years, the adults live only 2 to 3 days. Meeting place will be Room C in the Essex Civic Building at 7:30 p.m.

October 13 - 14 - Carolinian Canada has announced its Conservation Forum 2000, "The All Field Trip Conference" that will take participants to a number of significant natural sites. Friday will include a field trip in the Brantford area and an evening banquet. Featured sites to be viewed on Saturday, October 14 will be Dundas Valley, Spooky Hollow Sanctuary, Ruthven Park, and Six Nations Forest. Sunday, October 15 will be devoted to the Ontario Nature Trust Alliance Council Meeting to which observers will be welcome. The Conservation Forum base of operations will be The Best Western Brant Park Inn in Brantford. Registration for Friday and Saturday activities is \$105, for Saturday \$75. Contact Carolinian Canada, 659 Exeter Road,

London, Ontario N6E 1L3 for full details. Phone 519-873-4631 or e-mail: info@carolinian.org

October 14 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at either 9:50 a.m. or 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person.

October 15 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person.

October 15 - ECFNC Excursion to Clear Creek - Organizers at Clear Creek will be offering guided tours of the woodlands and old growth commencing at 2:00 p.m. To car pool from SilverCity, meet in the parking lot at the corner of Walker and Provincial Roads at 11:30 a.m. Bring your lunch..

Clear Creek may be reached by either Highway 3 or the 401. To reach Clear Creek by Highway 3, watch for the Bury Road sign in Chatham - Kent (just east of Palmyra), turn left, drive north and at the curve, note the Cochrane Line, turn right and proceed to the intersection of the Cochrane Line and Duart Road. To reach Clear Creek from the 401, turn south at Exit 117, proceed through Highgate, turn left on the Cochrane Line and proceed to the intersection at Duart Road.

October 21 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Fall Bird Migration Field trip

October 22 - ECFNC Fall Excursion - Join woodlot owner Forrest Elmsly for a walk in this family owned woodlot known as "For the Birds" located within the Town of Essex just off the shores of Lake Erie. Meet at 2:00 p.m. Directions: From the Town of Harrow, take Erie Road (County Road 13) south going to Colchester. Go 2 miles south to Gore Road. Turn east onto Gore Road for 1/4 mile, on the south side of Gore take laneway into woodlot at sign.

October 21 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at either 9:50 a.m. or 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person.

October 22 - Friends of Point Pelee National Park Activity - "Birds, butterflies and more." Enjoy a nature hike with a Friends of Point Pelee expert. Meet at the Nature Centre at 1:50 p.m. for a two-hour hike. To register or for more information call 326-6173. Cost \$5/person.

October 23 and 30 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Captivating Critters (Ages 3-5) - Four afternoons of wildlife exploration and nature fun. September 18, 25, October 2, 16 and October 23, 30, November 6, 13. Mondays 10 a.m. to noon or 1-3 p.m. Fee: \$20/4 weeks plus \$1 material fee

October 28 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Fall Bird Migration Field trip



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

November 4 - Sixteenth Annual ECFNC Dinner to be held at St. John's Anglican Church Hall, corner of Sandwich and Brock Streets. Our guest speaker will be Ojibway Nature Centre's Chief Naturalist Paul Pratt who will present a slide presentation about the wildlife of Eastern Australia. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. Tickets available at the ECFNC September and October meetings, Ojibway Nature Centre and Pelee Wings Nature Store. Price: Early bird special \$27.50. After October 10, 2000: \$32.50

November 6 and 13 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Captivating Critters (Ages 3-5) - Four afternoons of wildlife

exploration and nature fun. September 18, 25, October 2, 16 and October 23, 30, November 6, 13.
Mondays 10 a.m. to noon or 1-3 p.m. Fee: \$20/4 weeks plus \$1 material fee

December 13 - ECFNC Members Meeting - This meeting always features members' slide presentations. Choose 10 to 20 of your favourite slides to share with members. You may want to share a plate of Christmas goodies. Meeting place will be Room C in the Essex Civic Building at 7:30 p.m.

December 16 - Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count

December 17 - Rondeau Christmas Bird Count

December 18 - Point Pelee Christmas Bird Count

Thomas
Hurst
RR#3
Cottam ON N0R 1B0