



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists

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Song and Shorebird Festival

by Betty Learmouth

The third annual Song and Shorebird Festival was held this year at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area on May 11 and 12, 2002. Chief organizer for this event was ERCA staff person and ECFNC member Bev Wannick. Banding of passerines is a highlight of this Festival weekend. On hand were banders Martin Wernaart and Terri Groh, assisted by apprentice bander Bob Hall-Brooks. ECFNC volunteers who looked after the Nature Café were Marg Calder, JoAnn Grondin, Shirley Grondin, Betty Learmouth and Bonnie Ross. Activities were underway by 9:15 p.m. on May 11 beside the Hillman Marsh Nature Centre.

The first bird banded was a male Yellow Warbler, with "early birds" Ken and Judy Smith of North Bay, Ontario enjoying the banding demonstration. Ken and Judy were concluding a three week birding holiday in Essex County. Also on hand was Wheatley Bed and Breakfast hostess Bea Patterson, accompanying her guests Carolyn Keefe of Canastota, New York State and Brenda Best, of Durhamville, New York State.

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 Coordinator: Patricia Rhoads
 Egret Editor: David D'hondt
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 E.R.C.A. Liaison: JoAnn Grondin, Phil Roberts (alternate)
 Friends of Heinz Bush: 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 Coordinator: Jim McAllister
 E.C.S.N. Liaison: Tom Hurst
 Ojibway Liaison: Karen Cedar
 Two Creeks Liaison: Richard Bilinski
 General Meeting Committee: Peg Hurst

Committees

Egret: David D'hondt, Karen Cedar, Betty Learnmouth, Carl Maiolani, Nicole D'hondt, Shirley Grondin
 Speaker: Patricia Rhoads, Gerry Waldron, Phil Roberts, Karen Cedar
 Field Trip: Margaret Jennings, Betty Learnmouth
 Annual Dinner Committee: Heritage Committee
 Bluebird: Don Bissonnette, Betty Learnmouth, Carl Maiolani
 N.H.R.P.: Dave Kraus, Donna Sale, Gerry Waldron, Linda Kennette, Teresa Austrin, Patricia Rhoads, Peggy Hurst
 Heritage: Mary Celestino, Betty Learnmouth, Margaret Jennings, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Patricia Rhoads, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Dave Kraus, JoAnn Grondin

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Windsor Star reporter Doug Schmidt arrived at 9:30 a.m. looking for photo opportunities. Doug took a number of photographs of Heather and Rose Pizzuti of Windsor with the Great Horned Owl "Fuzzy Winks," accompanied by Bev Wannick. Doug also took photographs of banded passerines, including a colourful duo, a female and male Yellow Warbler which appeared in *The Windsor Star*, July 13, 2002.

Mist nets to capture birds to bring to the banding demonstrations were set up in a small wooded area of to the southeast on th ERCA property. Terri Groh accompanied by son Ben were checking the nets frequently, bringing a variety of passerines to the banders. Terri commented that the tiny wooded area is important to the passerines that pass through our County.

The banders had set up a table beside the Nature Centre. Robert Taylor, author and artist from Winnipeg (and long time spring visitor at Point Pelee) was also at the table. Following the banding of each passerine, Bob carefully took measurements of bills and other measurements that would assist with his wood carving of passerines.

ECFNC members Donna Roemelle and Mary Jane Winterton spent several hours walking about the Conservation Area. Upon their return to the Nature Centre at 11:45 a.m., Donna and Mary Jane reported an adult Great Horned Owl with young in a broken tree in nearby Hillman Marsh. At 1:50 p.m. Terri Groh gave the last passerine banding talk, discussing the sex and age and identification of several passerine species. Terri's subjects included Swamp Sparrows (2), Swainson's Thrush, Common Yellowthroat and Yellow Warbler.

May 12, 2002 was slow getting underway for the group of anxious banders. By 12:30 p.m. the rain had passed, the mist nets were open, supervised by Martin. Apprentice bander Bob Hall-Brooks undertook the banding duties, methodically measuring the banded birds and recording data. Two passerine species of interest were White-throated Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow. Bob commented on the shortness of the White-throated Sparrow's wing cord as the measurement for one individual was 70



Photograph: Heather and Rose Pizzuti of Windsor with the Great Horned Owl "Fuzzy Winks" with Bev Wannick holding the owl.

mm. The next bird banded, a Swamp Sparrow, had an even shorter wing cord measurement, just 57 mm. A summary of the Festival's banding activities appear below.

Species	Nos.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	13
Golden-winged Warbler	1
Yellow Warbler	16
Black throated-green Warbler	1
Nashville Warbler	2
Common Yellowthroat	15
Magnolia Warbler	4
American Goldfinch	1
Swamp Sparrow	11
Magnolia Warbler	4
American Goldfinch	1
Swamp Sparrow	11
Northern Waterthrush	1
Ovenbird	1
Red-winged Blackbird	11
Northern Cardinal	3
Gray Catbird	3
Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Baltimore Oriole	1
House Sparrow	2
White-throated Sparrow	10
Veery	2
Song Sparrow	1
Swainsons thrush	1
Tree swallow	1
American robin	2
Common grackle	1
Trailis flycatcher	1
Philadelphia vireo	1
Chestnut sided warbler	1
Total	108

Previously Banded Birds

Gray catbird	2
Common Yellowthroat	2
American Robin	1
Yellow Warbler	2
Warbling Vireo	1
Total	8
Total including retrapped birds	116

November 9 – Mark this date for our 18th annual ECFNC dinner.

The Annual Dinner Committee is pleased to announce that Wildlife Biologist Ben Porchuk has accepted our invitation to be this year's guest speaker.

September 11 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting

Dan Bissonette, Coordinator of the Backyard Habitat Program of Essex County and Windsor will be our speaker. Meeting to be held in Room C at the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m.

BIRDING AT POINT PELEE NATIONAL PARK

by Betty Learmouth

Thirteen ECFNC birders and a dog met for the ECFNC annual Victoria Day outing at Point Pelee National Park on May 20, 2002. Participants enjoyed a walk on the Woodland Nature Trail, the temperatures continuing cool as had been experienced throughout most of this spring birding season. By ten o'clock, the group was at the Woodland Trail boardwalk, enjoying good looks at a male Prothonotary Warbler as it foraged along a moss covered log. This proved to be a highlight of the morning along with the Scarlet Tanager, Canada Warbler, Wilson's Warbler and Brewster's Warbler.

Species seen or heard during the walk were Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula (a female), Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Prothonotary Warbler, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Brewster's Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, White-throated Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Baltimore Oriole.

Backyard Habitat Tour

by Betty Learmouth

Ten ECFNC members met at the Kaiser family home on May 26, 2002 to enjoy the ongoing natural habitat restoration efforts around the Kaiser's East Windsor home. Slowly the front lawn is disappearing as paths and berms appear. Gerry Kaiser had just turned up sod for a new path, flipping it and was waiting for the plant material to break down so the soil may be used for a new berm. Native plants such as Hepatica, Bloodroot, Wild Phlox, native Blueberry, Bearberry, Bunchberry, Wintergreen and Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus were growing on the first mound. Trees growing nearby were Flowering Dogwood, Witchhazel, and Tulip Tree, although Gerry noted the Tulip Tree does not appear to enjoy its particular location.

Along the length of the driveway, woodland plants are growing successfully, with established trees along the fence line producing good shade. Plants in the driveway woodland include Baneberry, Wild Yam, Spotted Joe Pye Weed, Jewelweed, Meadow Rue, Red Trillium, Wild Cucumber Vine, Herb Robert, Michigan Lily, Horse Balm and Solomon's Seal. Native

trees and shrubs include Chokecherry, Flowering Dogwood, Spicebush, and Witchhazel.

Everyone was intrigued with the Kaiser's arbour entrance to the backyard which features a roof top garden established in 2001. Gerry set up a ladder for easier viewing of the garden which features succulents and moss. Reinforced, the arbour rood is able to bear the added weight of planter box, soil and plants.

Kaiser's backyard receives full sun which makes this area suitable for prairie plants which include sunflower species, Prairie Dock, asters and goldenrod. Gerry remarked that the prairie plants in summer are spectacular, towering over the viewer. Backyard trees include Tulip Tree (this individual is 5 to 7 years old, likes it location, growing two feet per year), Sassafras, Kentucky Coffee Tree, Hop Tree, Ohio Buckeye and Paw Paw. A Trumpet Vine attracts hummingbirds.

The group then moved to Betty Learmouth's naturalized backyard habitat, also in East Windsor. This naturalized garden has not had a plan but has evolved through the years. Naturalization began twenty years ago when a native Red Oak was planted in a backyard that was an expanse of well manicured lawn. Luckily the previous owner had brought in wonderfully rich fertile La Salle soil.

In the early 1990s the first native plants were introduced, rescued from the La Salle woodlot and a demolished woodlot on Walker Road. These plants were placed along a privacy fence and under shrubs which provided the obligatory shade. In 1999, 2001 and 2002 more native plants were placed under the Red Oak with its low untrimmed branches which now provides shade necessary for a woodland garden. Some of the species thriving in this restored woodland backyard habitat include Wild Geranium, Mayapple, Canada Moonseed, Wild Yam, Early Meadow Rue, Tall Meadow Rue, White Trillium, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Jewelweed, Boneset, Great Lobelia, False Starry Solomon Seal, Michigan Lily, Spiderwort, Kidney-leaved Buttercup, Trout Lily, Perfoliate Bellwort, and Spring Beauty. Native trees, shrubs and vines (in addition to the Red Oak) are Redbud, American Hazel, Witchhazel, Gray Dogwood, Chokecherry, Elderberry, Spicebush, Virginia Creeper, and Trumpet Vine.

This spring a naturalized garden was planted along the north wall of Betty's house, beside the walk to the side door. A Columbine purchased from NHRP which had done very well in this exposed location for the last few years (assisted by regular watering during summer drought) helped make the decision to remove the lawn in this location. Although the area is shaded throughout the day, it receives the hot afternoon sun after three o'clock. With regular watering, these plants (Tall Meadow Rue, Wild Geranium, a sedge, Kidney-leaved Buttercup, and Boneset) have all done well this spring and summer, despite their exposure to more sun and wind than they would experience in their traditional woodland setting. An extra effort to be certain an oak leaf mulch keeps the soil damp has assisted these plants.

Gerry has some tips for restoration gardeners. If you decide on a woodland restoration in a shady spot, remove and replace the "Windsor" clay with appropriate soil where you intend to plant. Use any left over plant material to continually enrich the soil. For instance, Gerry recycles Christmas trees, stumps and other bits of tree material. Never use chemicals in a naturalized area. If a plant is invasive, be sure to remove it from the naturalized garden. Bring home oak leaves, mixing these leaves with the soil. Oak mulch can be produced over the winter by mixing the leaves with water and left to disintegrate.

Lee Symmes Municipal Award Presentation

by Betty Learmouth

Before an audience of 600 persons assembled for a gala dinner on June 1, 2002 during the Annual Meeting and Conference of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists held in Port Rowan, ON, the Lee Symmes Municipal Award was presented to the City of Windsor's Department of Parks and Recreation. On hand to accept the award was Lloyd Burrige, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation for the City of Windsor. Eight members of the ECFNC were in the audience and were delighted to learn of the award given to the City of Windsor's Department of Parks and Recreation.

Federation of Ontario Naturalists' President Dawna Monk Vanwyck made the following comments regarding this Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Conservation Award:

The Federation of Ontario Naturalists protects Ontario's nature through research, education and conservation action. Community involvement is at the heart of our organization. Each year, the FON Conservation Awards recognize excellence by honouring those who have worked to protect Ontario's nature.

The Lee Symmes Municipal Award is presented to a community which has exhibited leadership and achievement in planning or implementing programs that protect and regenerate the natural environment within a community.

The Lee Symmes award is presented this year to the City of Windsor Parks and Recreation Department. The nomination was supported by the Little River Enhancement Group, The Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, and the Essex County Field Naturalists Club, who note that they are "delighted to have this opportunity to state whole-hearted support of the city of Windsor Department of Parks and Recreation's nomination. The Department has contributed greatly to the preservation of biological diversity through its efforts to preserve our unique natural heritage, insuring that regional, provincial and nationally significant landscapes have been preserved."

This is a long-term record of achievement, and we should note that this department received this award in 1985. The accomplishment is not just evident in natural area retention, but also in the conversion of traditional parkland to naturalized areas, the management of traditional parkland through the introduction of integrated pest management programmes, the construction of biologically functioning wetland areas as part of storm water management, the enhancement of the Detroit River shoreline through fish habitat rehabilitation projects - to name a few. The nominators note that this work is undertaken with "the dogged determination of the department in the face of political opposition and reduced financial resources" that would have made it much easier to buckle to the pressures and give up the fight for a number of natural areas to development pressure. They note, "What makes this accomplishment truly unique is that it goes beyond the actions of individuals to a departmental culture."

Nature Hot Spot: St. Clair National Wildlife Refuge

by Betty Learmouth

Ojibway Nature Centre's Chief Naturalist Paul Pratt was joined by an enthusiastic group of naturalists on June 8, 2002 to explore the St. Clair National Wildlife Refuge located in Chatham- Kent. St. Clair N.W. R. marsh manager John Haggeman joined our group as co-leader, suggesting the group drive down the nearby road to the Triangle Marsh (after its shape) where we might see rails. St. Luke's Hunt Club acquired this property in 1985, subsequently flooding it, turning a corn field back into a productive wetland where rails and Northern Harriers now reside.

John played a tape of a rail's call from the road's edge but had no response, remarking that other waterfowl were also silent. At our next stop as the tape played, Paul Pratt exclaimed and we all looked, spotting a single Virginia Rail moving across an open area from one stand of cattails to another. A second adult Virginia Rail followed, then, one at a time, five tiny black puff balls. Since this is now the second year of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, John would be able to indicate the breeding status of Virginia Rail as "Confirmed" for the St. Clair National Wildlife Refuge atlas square.

We lingered to watch as an adult Virginia Rail continued to forage among the cattail stalks. Around us, wildlife was active including a soaring Turkey Vulture, a Forster's Tern and a singing Willow Flycatcher. John remarked that Turkey Vultures had nested in the past in an old nearby barn, now torn down. A cooperative Bullfrog provided a good view of this large individual. White Water-buttercup bloomed in profusion in the wetland's quiet waters.

Back on the dirt road leading to the wildlife refuge, we stopped as John showed us a Moorhen and Common Coot together. Other birds observed were Green Heron, Black Terns (appearing to be on nests), Canada Geese with young, and an Eastern Kingbird. Several turtles crossed the road as we looked about. John thought ducks in flight would be Mallards, calling them bachelor flocks as these ducks were likely males which had abandoned females. These drakes would remain in the marsh, molt, spending their time safely in the marsh during their molt as they would be flightless. John remarked that St. Clair is important as a refuge for such ducks that need a safe place during molt. Nearby we enjoyed viewing Small Yellow Lady's-Slipper in bloom.

Following the refuge trail, we were treated to a fine view of an adult Yellow-headed Blackbird, perched at the top of cattails. John stated that on a windy day it is difficult to see this species as they are unable to perch on the vegetation in this manner. When the bird flew, Paul remarked on its white wing patches. Other observations in the same area included a male Wood Duck, numerous Midland Painted Turtles basking on logs, two immature Pied-billed Grebes with an adult, a male Common Yellowthroat and a Common Garter Snake. John said he also had a sighting for Butler's Garter Snake for the refuge.

Two alert birders observed individual Least Bitters flying over the marsh, these birds dropping into the vegetation. Around us, Marsh Wrens were merrily singing. One individual

was observed gathering cattail "fluff" which John told us would be used for the bird's real nest, rather than for one of up to a dozen dummy nests that this species builds before constructing its final nest. Several lucky persons saw a King Rail cross the path ahead, bringing our rail tally to eight.

On the trail's shoulder, we noted areas being prepared for prairie plant restoration. Insects along the trail included Eight-spotted Forester, Red Admiral, Mourning Cloak, Eastern Pond Hawk, Green Darner, and White-faced Dragonfly. Many of the perched dragonflies were newly hatched, their wings still glossy and rainbow like.

Back at the refuge headquarters, John showed us a collection of skins of various bird species found on the refuge. We noted the difference in size between the endangered King Rail that several of us saw and the Virginia Rail that we all saw exceedingly well.

Leaving John, we headed home, stopping at Lighthouse Cove for lunch where we observed a several Monarchs in flight eastward along the Lake St. Clair shoreline while numerous (Paul DesJardins counted 135) Map Turtles basked on fallen tree trunks at the mouth of the Thames River.

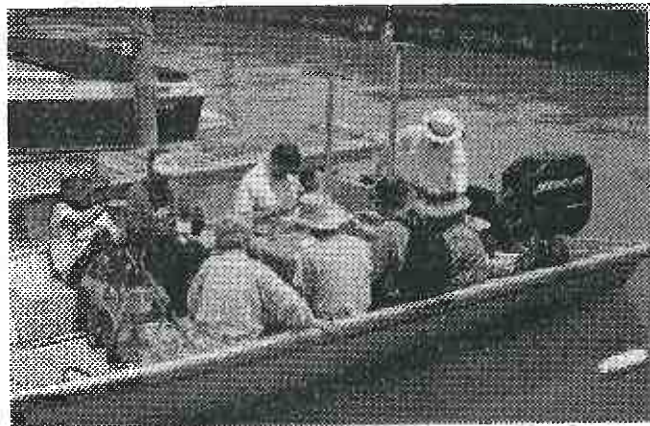
We appreciated the fine leadership that Paul and John provided for a memorable morning at the St. Clair National Wildlife Refuge.

Field Naturalists Tour Peche Island

by Ruth Hart

On Sunday afternoon, June 9, 2002, ECFNC members met at the City of Windsor's Lakeview Marina for a trip to Peche Island. Our trip was lead by Faye Langmaid of the City of Windsor's Department of Parks and Recreation and Tom Henderson of the Detroit River Cleanup Committee. Faye's husband, Paul Laing, graciously transferred twenty-five ECFNC members to the island in three trips on a small barge, owned by the City of Windsor. Faye gave three tours, launching one group as the next was on its way. When the last group arrived, Paul began ferrying the groups back again, beginning with the first. This all worked out very well, thanks to the energy of our guides, good planning and good cooperation on the part of all the participants.

As she led us on the first part of our walk, Faye gave us some history of Peche Island, pointed out work done by the City of Windsor to improve the island for recreational uses and

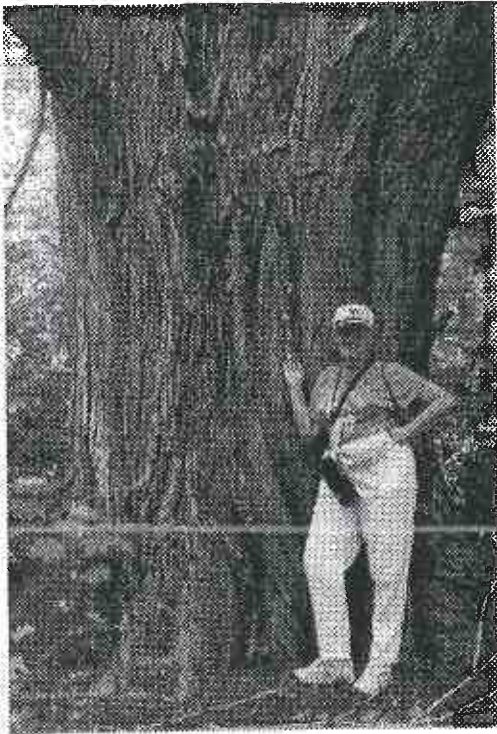


Photograph: ECFNC members preparing to depart the Lakeside Marina for Peche Island.

oriented us to the island's geography. Peche Island is about ninety-six acres of sand on a clay spit. She said that the first Europeans described it as a "nude island" meaning that there were no trees on it. The island was used by native people for fishing. There is native creation myth for the island.

During much of the 19th century, twenty-five acres of the island was farmed by the Laforet family who lived there. The Laforets never had clear title to the land and were eventually forced out. At the end of the 19th century, Peche Island was owned by Hiram Walker. In addition to his large cottage and greenhouses, he cultivated 50 acres, had canals dug, and got electricity, phone and plumbing connections with the mainland. The plumbing connections are still in use, the canals have been dredged, the ruins of the house and greenhouses still remain as do many exotic (nonnative) plants that he brought to the island. Norway Maples, for example, do not just "remain," but are continuing to expand their domain. After Hiram Walker's death, Peche Island was deeded to his daughter who eventually sold it. The island was owned for a time by the Detroit-Windsor Ferry Company which later became Boblo Excursions.

In 1972, the Province of Ontario acquired Peche Island and a small parcel on the mainland and regulated it as a provincial park. In the 1990s, the province proposed to dispose of the island, and it fell under the regulations and policies of the City of Windsor. In 1996, a



Photograph: ECFNC member Marg Calder under the large white oak tree.

management study was done by ERCA in association with the City of Windsor and Parks Ontario. The summary of the report, which Faye gave us, refers to the island as a "natural area with a wetland component" and says that the island "does have local and regional environmental significance." There was thought of private development on the island, but eventually it was purchased by the City of Windsor for use as a park.

At this time it is maintained with Human Development and Resources Canada (HDRC) grants and Lakeview Marina user fees, rather than local tax money. Since acquiring the island, the Department of Parks and Recreation has improved it for recreation. They have dredged the canals, thus allowing fresh water and canoe access to the island's interior, cleared walking trails, removed unsightly tires which had been used to stabilize the shoreline, and provided picnic tables and firewood in specific locations. A natural sand spit forms the western point of the island. It is much used as a wading beach.

Well, what kind of plant and animal life did we see on Peche Island? I guess I confess to a certain disappointment after the novelty of arriving there by boat. Here is a list of the plants which we noticed

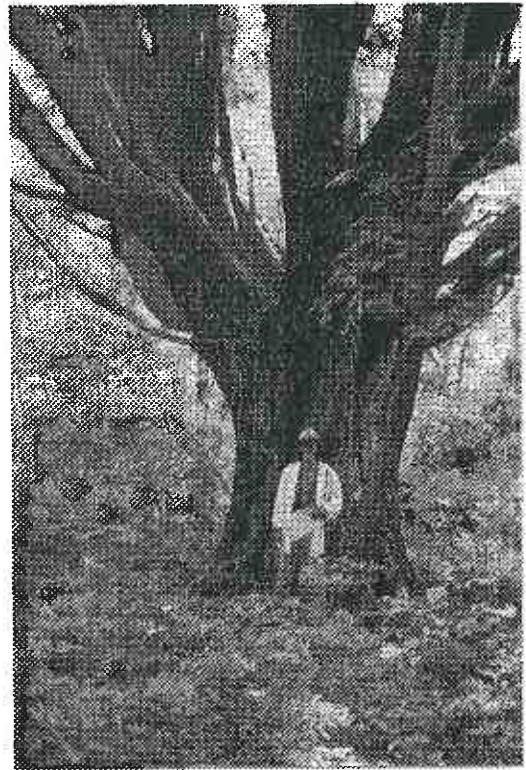
more or less in the order we saw it: orchard grass, fleabane blooming, Virginia Creeper with very large leaves, cottonwood with catkins and much fluffy seed, grapevine, Norway maple, an unidentified maple, viburnum, honeysuckle, deadly nightshade, dogwood, buckthorn, phragmites (along the shore of the island), willows (at least three different kinds), white mulberry (Faye says there is also red), a large white oak, a very large silver maple, a stemmed white fungus, basswood, bedstraw (*Gallium* sp.), box elder, ash sp. (according to Gerry Waldron's *Tree Book*, Peche and Pelee Islands are the only places one can find blue ash in Essex County), a nut from a butternut tree (again, according to Waldron, butternut is not found in most of Essex County; it is mainly found in the southern part), an interesting multi-stemmed oak, poison ivy, sedges (at least two different kinds along the trail), carrion-flower (in the walking path on the loop back), tall meadow rue, sumac, jewelweed (in the trail), elderberry, dogbane, a rubus (probably a blackberry), a few elms, common milkweed, alder (probably European), a (so far) small amount of garlic mustard, a thin viney stemmed plant 1-2 feet tall with alternative leaves (similar to a thin stemmed plant in my yard which proved to be a young autumn olive. However, bittersweet is a truly vining plant with alternative leaves which I have seen on Peche Island in the past).

Both the carrion-flower and the jewelweed were right in the path, which made me wonder if they used to be more common and are now shaded out. Faye told us that there are Kentucky Coffeetrees on the island which the Department of Parks and Recreation was trying to rescue from the shade of the expanding Norway maples.

What about this notion of a "nude island" described by the early Europeans? There is a dense growth of trees now. Have a century of canals and two centuries of cultivation totally and absolutely changed the flora of this place? (Interestingly, an unfootnoted paragraph from a book entitled *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* relates the story of besieged Detroiters in the fall of 1763, canoeing upstream to Peche Island on a quest for wood).

The list of birds we identified was not particularly long or unusual: Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal, Yellow Warbler, Mourning Dove, American Goldfinch, Wood Thrush (heard), Red-eyed Vireo (heard), House Wren, Great-crested Flycatcher, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Oriole (a pair in a silver maple), Tree Swallows (over the river, near the south shore), House Finch (heard), American Robin and a pair of Mallards.

Paul DesJardins identified dragonflies and damselflies, all common ones, he said, and two



Photograph: ECFNC member Ruth Hart under the large white oak tree.

ladybird beetle species, one native and one non-native of the seven species found in this area.

We saw lots of mussel shells, both in the dredged spoils and even more along the beach on the north shore. That was rather spectacular. The waves, I suppose, had piled the shells in along windrows, two to three feet high. The shore was white with shells, and the view of the river was especially beautiful.

I'd like to go back to Peche Island and see more of it and in different seasons. I'd like to know what more of the plants are. I'd like to know more about what Hiram Walker and others did with the island. When Faye told us about Peche Island's history, she said that so far no archeological studies had been done. There is lots more to be learned about Peche Island and probably something to be learned from Peche Island as well.

Counting Double-crested Cormorant Nests

by Betty Learmouth



Photograph: Double-crested Cormorant nest counters on the cobblestone beach at East Sister Island.

A crew of Double-crested Cormorant nester counters converged on the Colchester Harbour boat ramp shortly after 7:00 a.m. on June 12, 2002 to participate in this annual count which is organized by Canadian Wildlife Service Biologist Chip Weseloh of the Downsview, Ontario office. The Boston Whalers were launched, the boats prepared for the day's activities including the safe storage of over \$200.00 of bright yellow and orange flagging tape. Counters included other CWS staff members from Downsview and Ottawa, local volunteers including Parks Canada

staff Matthew Smith and Dan Dufour, and Bruce S. from Wyandotte, MI, a biology student who is spending the summer as a volunteer with the CWS, receiving valuable instruction related to the various colonial nesting bird monitoring techniques.

As the boats departed Colchester Harbour, a Fox Snake swam across the marina channel. Within minutes of departure, the engine of one boat failed, resulting in a tow back to the marina for the disabled craft. Chip instructed the Canadian volunteers to step ashore, while the other CWS staff and Bruce were driven out in the remaining Boston Whaler to East Sister Island Provincial Nature Reserve to begin the day's count. Luckily Lake Erie was not too choppy, so our one operating boat was able to be back in Colchester Harbour to ferry our party to East Sister Island by late morning. We came ashore on East Sister Island, carrying our gear onto the rocky berm. Our immediate impression of the island were of the numbers of birds

about, especially the Double-crested Cormorants seen perched on the island's tallest trees, many of which were dead or dying, shining silvery grey in the noon sunlight.

Chip gathered all seven counters together, distributing yellow flagging tape to everyone, along with small note pads and pens. The first group to arrive had divided East Sister Island into four sections, marked by lines of orange flagging tape. Already the first group had counted Double-crested Cormorant nests in Section 1 and had begun Section 2. The second group would join the first in Section 2, everyone moving in unison across the designated section, counting cormorant nests, recording the nest number seen in each individual nesting tree. Flagging tape was tied around each trunk where cormorant nests were counted, ensuring every tree with nests was included in the count, eliminating double counting. We were advised to record other nests, the large twiggy nests belonging to Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets, visibly different from the smaller compact nests of the Double-crested Cormorants and the smaller, loosely constructed nests of Black-crowned Night-herons.

Counting Double-crested Cormorant nests is not without its hazards. When a counter looks upwards towards a nesting tree, it is best not to be underneath the tree as agitated adults will both defecate a fine spray and regurgitate partially digested fish on unwary counters. Although counters are aware of the birds' reaction to their presence, several counters did receive full hits, fish scales clinging to T-shirts as a testimony to the perils of Double-crested Cormorant nest counting. Double-crested Cormorants bird colonies are full of the noise of communicating birds, odd sounds that sometimes sound like human voices.

Nest counters are absorbed in the task assigned but as the counters move across the island, trees, plants and the conditions on East Sister may be observed. Hackberry appears to be one of the most common trees on East Sister, the larger trees selected as nesting trees. Two Red Mulberry trees were seen, the second in Section 4, a large healthy specimen with abundant unripened fruit. Pokeweed was growing in profusion, especially in damp areas. These areas also supported shoulder high thickets of Pale Jewelweed and Stinging Nettle. Several specimens of Miami Mist were found near the Red Mulberry in Section 4, growing in the vicinity of an outcropping of eroded dolomite.

One Double-crested Cormorant nest counter found a dead Eastern Brown Snake. Counters were uncertain if this species had been seen on the East Sister Island previously. (Confirmation was later received that this species is historically known from Easter Sister Island and a 2002 snake survey confirmed this species). A handsome melanistic Common Garter Snake was admired by the counters.

When all the numbers were added together, the total of Double-crested Cormorant nests on Easter Sister totalled 4,749. This compares to 5,485 nests counted in 2001. Counters suggested that the numbers were down due to less nesting habitat as some large nesting trees had collapsed. As well, counters remarked that some trees flagged in 2001 with orange flagging tape were not used this year as nesting sites.

As an added note to this report of activities on East Sister Island, Don Hector, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Biologist in the Chatham office, added an interesting event which occurred in November 2001. Several staff members had gone to the island in November 2001 to determine if they could locate the hibernaculum of a Lake Erie Water-Snake.

Earlier in the season, Lake Erie Water-Snake researcher Deborah D. Jacobs had

implanted an East Sister Island Lake Erie Water-Snake with a radio transmitter. With their telemetry receiving equipment, the OMNR staff were able to locate this hibernating snake which appeared to be under a huge berm of beach cobblestones. The OMNR staff went behind the beach cobblestones, through a tangle of Pokeweed stems and discovered a rotting tree root system, partially covered by the cobblestones. This snake had made its way through the decomposing root system, likely finding a suitable chamber in which to hibernate in the old roots. Don also added that a hibernating Lake Erie Water-Snake was found to be hibernating in November 2001 in the forest floor of Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve with no visible entrance determined for this snake.

Late Spring Damselflies and Dragonflies

by Betty Learmouth

Paul Desjardins lead a small but enthusiastic group of damselfly and dragonfly watchers, or Odonata watchers, at Ojibway Park on June 16, 2002. The Ojibway Creek, nearby restored prairie, and the pond area with boardwalk access, all produced insects that the group was able to view well.

Seven species of Odonata were observed, despite overcast and cool conditions. Most were seen clinging to grasses in the restored prairie beyond the asphalt walking trail. Paul explained that since the weather was cool, the males knew the females would not be at the creek, thus they were not patrolling over their territories. If the air temperature had been 80 – 85 degrees Fahrenheit, then we would have observed Odonata in flight, engaged in various behaviours including fighting for territory and dogfights.

The Eastern Fork-tail, a Pond Damselfly, was seen in its three forms – the gray adult female form, the orange immature form and the male adult form with its distinctive abdominal blue tip and green thorax. We saw several Eastern Pondhawks, the females and immature males look very much alike, with the male turning blue from green as the insect ages. The exclamation mark field mark on the thorax of the Fragile Fork-tail was seen by everyone. One Blue Dasher was seen, a female with stripes on its thorax. Several handsome Twelve-spot Skimmers were observed resting on prairie grasses and dried debris. Dot-tailed Whitetails were seen at the pond where lily pads provided perches. Two Common Green Darners flew from their perches in the prairie vegetation once the temperature rose in the late morning.

Paul commented that more has become known about the life history of Odonata in the last few years. Common Green Darners migrate into our area in early spring, lay eggs, the nymphs develop into adults which migrate in impressive numbers from this area in September. Other fall migrants include Black Saddlebags, and certain gliders including the Spot-winged Glider and Wandering Glider. Point Pelee National Park and Holiday Beach Conservation Area are good places to watch the fall dragonfly migration.

Paul referred to the new Stokes guide to Odonata which is written for beginning Odonata watchers. Of the 89 species described in the new guide, 59 are found in our area. The guide

looks at Odonata anatomy as well as behaviours. Large clear colour photographs provide a good source book to a beginning Odonata watcher. As dragonfly watching becomes more popular, we can expect to see more of these useful accessible guides.

Dragonflies were studied well at the first half of the last century. One entymologist, Edmund Walker, who was born in Walkerville but moved away and who obtained his education outside Windsor, wrote a series of three books on Odonata, dying before the third volume was completed. Upon his death, the third volume was completed from Walker's notes by a dragonfly enthusiast from Great Britain. These books proved to be the best information about Odonata for decades as behaviours were described, making these books decades ahead of their time.

Since we were looking rather closely at prairie foliage, we found other interesting insects. Paul had already found some tiny dark beetles with yellow spots on the Ojibway Provincial Prairie with which he was unfamiliar. Steve Marshall's ladybug website (Steve is an entymologist at the University of Guelph), identifies this species as *Brachiacantha ursina*. During our walk, Paul found other tiny dark beetles that could be Lady Beetles.

The Polished Lady Beetle, a native species (orange, round and small) was spotted on grasses near the trail. Finding this beetle reminded Paul that he has now seen twelve species of native lady beetles since becoming a participant in the Canadian Nature Federation's lady beetle count and watch which began in 1997. The previous week Paul had found a Hieroglyphic Lady Beetle, another native species that was recorded just forty times during the five year survey. Paul hopes that he will eventually see another native species, the Twice-stabbed Lady Beetle, which has been recorded at Point Pelee. Alien species found on our walk were the Seven-spotted Lady Beetle from Europe and the Asiatic Lady Beetle which has become well known to everyone due to its considerable numbers and its habit of nipping.

Other insect sightings included Yellow-mantled Snipe Fly, Pearl Crescent, Little Wood Satyr and Spicebush Butterfly. A water spider (later identified as a Six-spotted Fisher Spider) in the small pond was viewed by everyone and several interested visitors. Bird species sighted or heard were Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-heron, a Canada Geese pair with four young, Red-tailed Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, and Gray Catbird.

We wish to thank Paul for sharing his enthusiasm for Odonata with us as we searched through the prairie and over the pond for these fascinating insects.

Reference:

Stokes Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies, by Nikula Blair and Jackie Sones with Donald and Lillian Stokes. 1st ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 2002. (0-316-81679-5)

NHRP Seed Collection

Call Donna Sale at 733-9972

Down the West Beach of Point Pelee for Butterflies

by Betty Learmouth

A group of ECFNC members met Alan Wormington in the auditorium of the Point Pelee National Park Visitor Centre on June 23, 2002. Alan spoke about equipment, books and the butterflies we might see on our upcoming walk.

Alan showed us the net he prefers to use when netting butterflies, a short handled one that is easily carried and fits nicely into a trunk. Good equipment may be ordered on-line via BioQuip.com For instance, a good standard insect net with a 15" diameter net is only about \$12 US and should be ordered with an extra bag in case the original one should ever get torn. As well, BioQuip offers an excellent selection of books for the naturalist.

Alan's recommendation for useful books to add to the butterfly enthusiast's library included *The Butterflies of North America*, *The Butterflies of Canada*, and *Butterflies Through Binoculars*. Other useful titles include *The Ontario Butterfly Atlas*, *The Butterflies of Indiana*, *Butterflies and Skippers of Ohio* (contains excellent colour plates illustrating all SPECIES), *Butterflies of Point Pelee* and *The Butterflies of Point Pelee National Park: a Season Guide and Checklist*, the last two authored by Alan.

Following an excellent slide presentation of butterfly species we might expect to see (photographed by Jim Flynn), we headed out to the West Beach. The following butterfly species were observed: Cabbage White, Summer Azure (laying eggs on dogwood), Giant Swallowtail (laying eggs on Hop-tree), Little Wood Satyr, Tiger Swallowtail, Orange Sulphur (laying eggs), Spicebush Swallowtail (nectaring on Hairy Puccoon), Question Mark (laying eggs), Orange Crescent, and Viceroy. Alan suggested that the Point's butterflies were avoiding the morning heat by staying "under cover" in the vegetation. Unfortunately, the number of species observed was far less than expected; it seems that so far this season the populations of butterflies are unusually low in Essex County. But Spotted Knapweed, due to bloom soon, should attract many butterflies in the coming weeks.

Bird species observed were Killdeer with young, Eastern Kingbird, American Redstart, Orchard Oriole, and Cedar Waxwing, while an out-of-season Black-throated Blue Warbler was heard.

Our sincere "thank you" to Alan for sharing his enthusiasm for Point Pelee National Park's butterfly population with our members.

October 9 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting

Our guest speaker will be Doug Sweet of the Belle Isle Aquarium in Detroit who will present a slide presentation on the freshwater mussels of our area. Location: Essex Civic Centre, Room 6 at 7:30 p.m.

A Walk on the Spring Garden Prairie

ANSI

by Betty Learmouth

Over forty ECFNC members and Spring Garden neighbors and three dogs (happy and cheerful to be going along) joined City of Windsor employees and ECFNC members Karen Cedar and Faye Langmaid on July 10, 2002 for an evening walk on the Spring Garden Prairie within the Ojibway Prairie Complex. North winds had cleared the heat and humidity hanging over Essex County. Mosquitoes were few in number as heat in early June had dried up the pools of water in which larvae might have hatched.

Faye, who arrived on her bicycle (a faster journey by bicycle from her home to the site than by car) along with her husband Paul, provided some background about the Spring Garden Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). A steel plant was planned for this area in the 1920s. In anticipation of this major development, the Ojibway area was subdivided and many lots were sold off to numerous buyers. Luckily for us the plant was relocated to Pittsburgh and the area was never developed.

Sidewalks were actually laid in the proposed development areas. These historic walkways may be seen today in Oakwood Bush, the La Salle Woodlot, in other parts of the Town of La Salle and in the South Cameron Bush. Over the years, regeneration has occurred in the biologically diverse areas we now enjoy in West Windsor and the Town of La Salle. Photographs and maps of these areas as they appeared upon clearance for development may be viewed at the Hiram Walker Community Museum. Faye commented that these historic materials are well worth viewing.

Faye distributed a hand-out which showed the old subdivision plans in the Spring Garden ANSI. Faye oriented her first tour group to a bike trail intersection which connects to Amy Lynn Avenue in Huron Estates. On the reverse of the handout, we saw the identified vegetative communities and agreed upon development boundary edge which was determined by Ministry of Natural Resources, Essex Region Conservation Authority and City of Windsor biologists and planners in 1996.

In 1999 the plans to reassemble Spring Garden ANSI as one parcel of open space were discussed in public meetings. The City along with others has developed a strategy for acquisition of the lands based on appraisal of the fair market value (FMV) of the lands. However, some property owners have appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board as they feel they have a right to develop their holdings and they also feel they should be compensated to a greater value than FMV. A pre-hearing is scheduled for late August 2002. If these lands were to be purchase from their present owners, the estimated cost is between 4.5 million (the current FMV appraisal) versus the estimated 13 million dollars that some of the owners have stated is the true value of their lands. The road ahead for the Spring Garden ANSI will likely have many twists and turns before the area is secured.

Faye remarked that the group present this particular evening obviously supports the preservation of the Spring Garden ANSI, enjoying the walk on the area's gravelled trails. Faye said that not all persons agree with naturalists. Many would suggest asphalt trails are preferable, but asphalt trails invite different users (for instance, skate boarders and roller bladders) who would not likely stop to admire the plants and wildlife.

Faye told us the Spring Garden ANSI is noted for its plant biodiversity, its moths, bugs,

beetles and butterflies. Spring Garden has the highest butterfly species count in Canada due to the rare plant species with which these butterflies associate.

After a short walk towards "Bethlehem," one of the streets marked on our grid map, Faye spoke about the area where we were standing. This area needs to be burned, but this management tool is not possible as the City of Windsor does not own this portion of the ANSI. The city only owns approximately 60% of the ANSI, while the remaining 40% is privately owned with the private holdings spread all over the ANSI. A lot of emotion is associated with these holdings, as many of the owners inherited them or acquired them as new Canadians. The hope is that negotiated settlements will occur. However there is a possibility that the OMB will order the City to expropriate the lands.

Reuniting at the crossroads, Karen Cedar and Faye Langmaid exchanged groups. Karen, a naturalist at the Ojibway Nature Centre, told us the Ojibway Prairie Complex is a 600 hectare parcel consisting of Ojibway Provincial Prairie Reserve, Ojibway Park, Black Oak Heritage Park and the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Tallgrass prairie including wet prairie, mesic prairie and dry prairie and oak savanna are protected. The Spring Garden ANSI (117 ha) is a sandy dry habitat with "hot spots," with a number of rare and endangered species found here. The Ojibway butterfly count started here seven years ago to census the unique butterflies associated with this special habitat.

A full biological inventory and study of the Spring Garden Prairie ANSI has been completed. This document is available from the City of Windsor for anyone interested to examine it.

Karen lead us on the trail around the Spring Garden Prairie pond, which is choked with the invasive phragmites, allowing us only a glimpse of a patch of water. Surprisingly the pond is not natural, rather it was dug a number of years ago and used for the disposal of milk solids by a local dairy. We noted few flowers blooming but Karen invited us to return in a month's time to view a sea of flowers, predominately yellow blossoms. The prairie colours at this time of year (early July) should have been pink and white, but the cool spring had delayed the prairie's growth. Karen told us that prairies thrive in the heat, not damp cool weather.

Karen showed us Cord Grass, a tallgrass prairie species that was flowering and will reach six feet in height. Another spectacular prairie species is Tall Sunflower which attracts American Goldfinch as its seeds mature. According to Karen, the Prairie Thistle really should be renamed the Goldfinch Plant as the goldfinches use the white seed fibre for nesting material while feeding the seeds to their young.

Karen said dirt bike drivers love the sandy soil at Spring Garden Prairie ANSI but their activities cause considerable damage. There are 700 plant species in the ANSI which creates a huge seed bank which could regenerate in 5 to 10 years if allowed to remain undisturbed. This would enable the savanna habitat to return.

Our group stopped under a grove of Trembling Aspen, listening to the leaves of that species and to those of Large-leaved Aspen as the trees "sang in the breeze." Fern species viewed along the pathway included Sensitive, Bracken, Interrupted, Cinnamon and Royal Ferns.

Dusk was settling as we headed back to our vehicles at the corner of Titcombe and Malden Roads. Fireflies flickered in the vegetation beside the path, prompting speculation about the various species in our area. Karen suggested so many fireflies were active as their season was compacted by our spring weather.

Our thanks to our leaders Faye and Karen who gave us insight into this special place, the Spring Garden Prairie ANSI. Faye kindly proof read the article ensuring the correctness of its content.

Eighteen Annual ECFNC Dinner

by Betty Learmouth

The Annual Dinner Committee is pleased to announce that Wildlife Biologist Ben Porchuk has accepted our invitation to be this year's guest speaker. Ben is the director of The Wilds of Pelee Island Outdoor Conservation Centre. "Pearls, Perils and Parallels: Pelee Island and the Okanagan Valley" is the title of Ben's talk which will high light a number of fascinating species at risk from both regions and some of the overlaps we have in conservation challenges.

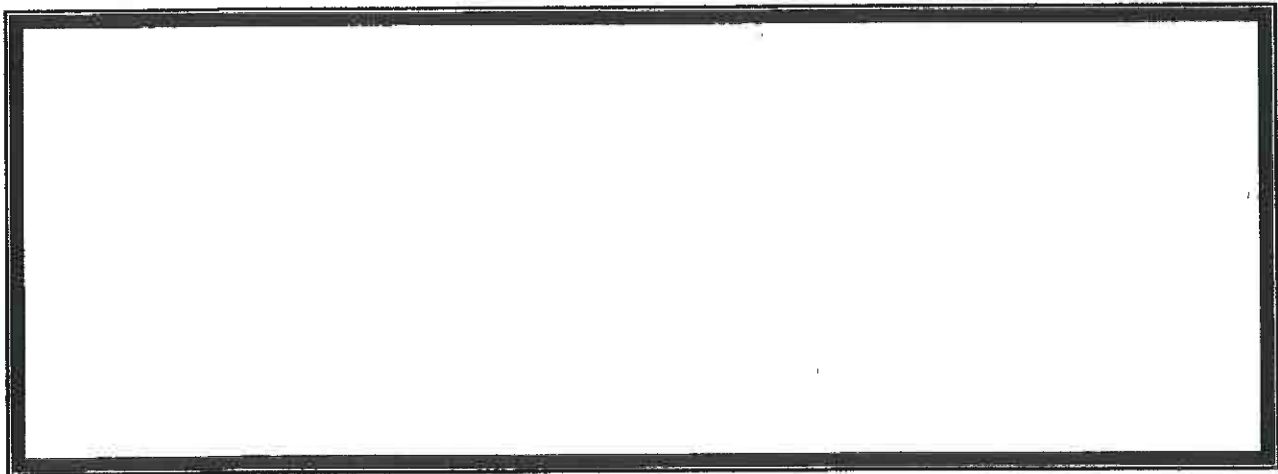
Our dinner will again be held in St. John's Anglican Church Hall that is located on Sandwich Street near Brock Street in Olde Sandwiche Towne. The church hall is located adjacent to the seniors complex at this intersection which is opposite MacKenzie Hall. Parking next to the hall is restricted to about 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 again be Deb Waugh. The Board of St. John's Church will allow us to serve beer and wine only at our dinner.

Tickets for this year's Annual Dinner will be \$27.00, available at the September and October ECFNC Monthly Members Meetings. Take advantage of the early bird discount as after the October 31, 2002, the tickets will be \$32.00. 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 Friday, November 8, 2002. 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. Charitable income tax receipts will be provided.



POINT PELEE NATURAL HISTORY NEWS

Volume 2, Number 2 (Summer 2002)

The new issue (20 pages) contains the following:

ARTICLES:

THE TIGER BEETLES (Cicindelidae) OF POINT PELEE NATIONAL PARK, ONTARIO --

by Stephen A. Marshall

[a detailed account on the three confirmed species for Point Pelee, plus an additional five species recorded nearby.]

NOTEWORTHY BIRD RECORDS: MARCH to MAY 2002 -- by Alan Wormington

[a total of eight pages covering the remarkable spring of 2002, with details on such species as Brown Pelican, Little Blue Heron, Ross's Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Mississippi Kite, American Avocet, Laughing Gull, Mew Gull, Barn Owl, Vermilion Flycatcher, Fish Crow, Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Kirtland's Warbler, Lark Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak and Painted Bunting]

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW: SECOND RECORD FOR POINT PELEE, THIRD FOR ONTARIO --

by Robert Curry

[While camping at Point Pelee, Bob Curry and Dave Bissell were awakened by a calling Chuck-will's-widow, only the third to be recorded in Ontario; the date was May 11, 1964]

IN SEARCH OF A CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW NEST -- by George D. Bryant

[an account on the attempt to find a nest at night, with the use of a flashlight; no nest, but an otherwise entertaining episode]

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW: A NEST IS FOUND! -- by Alan Wormington

[a brief account on the discovery of a nest at Point Pelee near White Pine Picnic Area on June 5, 1977; the nest contained two eggs.]

THE DECLINE OF GRASSLAND BIRDS: SOME INSIGHTS AND COMMENTS -- by Alan Wormington

[A recent paper published in Ohio Birds provides some significant information that can be applied to southern Ontario including Essex County; the article also includes an important clue as to the possible

source of Henslow's Sparrows in Ontario]

IN THE FIELD:

Sandhill Crane: A New Breeding Species for Point Pelee

Lark Sparrow: A Record-Early Spring Migrant

Prothonotary Warbler: A Record-Early Spring Migrant

American Redstart: A Record-Early Spring Migrant

Hermit Warbler: Second Record for Point Pelee

Painted Bunting: New to Essex County

Spring Migration 2002: The Best Ever?

NEWS and ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Bermuda Lesser Nighthawk: A Correction

New Publication: Wildflowers of the Erie Islands

American Birding Association: 1999 Members Survey

UPCOMING EVENTS and OUTINGS:

August 2002

September 2002

October 2002

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Included with the articles as described above are a total of 24 photographs.

ALAN WORMINGTON Editor,
POINT PELEE NATURAL HISTORY NEWS
e-mail: wormington@juno.com

WEB PAGE:

http://www.wincom.net/~fopp/Natural_History_News.htm

[includes an index for past issues]

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Friends of Point Pelee e-mail: fopp@wincom.net

Shorebird Habitat: A 'Shore' Thing

Shorebirds will soon have a place to call their own as construction has begun on a Shorebird Habitat at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area. Located just minutes from Point Pelee National Park, Hillman Marsh Conservation is already a renowned spring birding site attracting visitors from around the world to view rare and endangered species of migrating birds. Some commonly spotted migrants include the Black-bellied Plover, Dowitchers, Dunlin, and the Ruddy Turnstone. Rarer migrating birds that can be seen in the spring include the America Avocet, Stilt Sandpiper, Willet and Marbled Godwit, just to name a few. Interest in creating a shorebird habitat around the Hillman Marsh Area has steadily increased over the past number of years.

The entire project consists of approximately 87 acres of land adjacent to the west of the Hillman Marsh Conservation Area in Leamington. Approximately 50 of these acres will be controlled through the construction of dykes and a pumping system, and will be flooded in the winter and drained in the early spring to create mudflats. This management technique will control unwanted vegetation and sustain food sources for waterfowl during the spring and fall. Additionally, approximately 12 acres of tallgrass prairie habitat will be planted to provide a nesting area for waterfowl, and a habitat for butterflies and songbirds.

The land for the Hillman Marsh Shorebird Habitat has now been acquired by the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) and the initial stages of development have begun. In fact, 25 acres of trees were planted at the site this past spring. This is a natural extension of ERCA's ongoing reforestation efforts, and this forest will provide habitat for many woodland species while buffering the shorebird and prairie components of the project from human interference.

In addition to the significant environmental benefits associated with this project, there are substantial economic benefits to be derived as well. Touristics, an independent consultant, has estimated that the cumulative impact of direct expenditures from visitors outside Ontario in the first 10 years of this project will exceed \$2 million. It is hoped that the Hillman Marsh Shorebird Habitat will be completed in time for the 2003 spring birding season.

Ducks Unlimited Canada is the major partner in this important habitat restoration project. Private contributions will also be key to funding this project. ERCA was extremely grateful to receive a donation in the amount of \$21,600.00 from the Kathleen-Mary and Walter Barron Family Foundation. Fundraising efforts for the Shorebird Habitat will be continued throughout the year by the Essex Region Conservation Foundation. Residents can also help raise funds for the construction by purchasing 'It's a Shore Thing' t-shirts and canvas bags - available at the Hillman Marsh gift shop or at the Essex Region Conservation Authority office in Essex. Contact ERCA for more information at 776-5209 ext. 352.

The above information was provided by the Essex Region Conservation Authority. Please note that both the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club and the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory assisted with the funding application process for this project through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. An application was prepared in mid summer.

ECFNC Activities and Excursions

September 2002 - December 2002

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, contact Margaret Jennings (250-0705) or Betty Learmouth (944-0825). "Thank you" 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 1 – Hawk watch season begins at the hawk tower at Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Everyone is welcome every day of the watch.

September - NHRP Seed Collection – Call Donna Sale at 733-9972

September 4 – 30 – Point Pelee National Park Program – Monarchs and more hikes – Wednesday through Sunday – Witness the migration of butterflies, birds and other animals. Meet at the Visitor Centre for 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. hike. Fee: \$210/person

September 5 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Bird Migration – A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County. Introductory class at 7:30 p.m. Register for the entire course and receive a discount.

September 7 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Bird Migration – A field trip to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County. Register for the entire course and receive a discount.

September 11 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting – Dan Bissonnette, Coordinator of the Backyard Habitat Program of Essex County and Windsor will be our speaker. Meeting to be held in Room C at the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m.

September 7 and 8 – Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Sharp-shinned Hawk Weekend, Monarchs and Hummingbirds, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. - 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, an art display 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 Café. 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 8 – Backyard Habitat Program of Essex County & Windsor - Natural Gardens Bus Tour – Back by popular demand! This year's tour will focus on gardens in the Learnington area. Meet us at the Point Pelee Administration Building which is located at the corner of Point Pelee Drive and Robson Road, just beyond Erie Shores Golf Course. Seating is limited, so register early. \$10/person. Time: 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. Call Dan Bissonnette at 519-322-5700 ext. 17 or e-mail at byhew@wincom.net

September 14 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Native Plant and Tree Sale – Attract wildlife to your yard with flowers, trees and shrubs. Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

September 14 and 15 - Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Broad-winged Hawk Weekend and Dragonflies, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. 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, an art display 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

Café. Paul Pratt will lead a dragonfly walk at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 16, 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 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Captivating Critters (Ages 3 –5) – Four mornings or afternoons of wildlife exploration and nature fun. Please note there will be no classes Thanksgiving Monday or Remembrance Day November 11. 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Fee: \$22/4 weeks

September 19 – Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Earth Stars to Truffles - Discover the magical world of mushrooms. Thursday 7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. \$17/2 days

September 21 and 22 - Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Peregrine Falcon Weekend and Fall Songbirds, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. - 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, an art display 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 Café. 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 21 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Bird Migration – A field trip to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County.

September 21 - Backyard Habitat Program of Essex County & Windsor – Native Plant Sale – A number of local growers will come together to offer some great end-of-season specials. Join us at the parking lot of the Point Pelee Administration Building. A variety of trees, shrubs and wildflowers will be available. Time: 9:30 a.m. till 1:00 p.m.

September 21 - Point Pelee National Park Program – Butterfly Gardening Workshop – Transform your garden into a butterfly sanctuary! Learn how to select the best plants and create the right conditions to

attract a variety of butterflies. No registration is necessary. This event is open to everyone and is free with your admission at the gate.

September 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Earth Stars to Truffles - Discover the magical world of mushrooms. Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Fee: \$17/2 days

September 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Colour Hikes - All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Sunday at 2:00 p.m. \$3/tour for adults and \$2.50/tour for children

September 25 – ECFNC Executive Meeting

September 28 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Backyard Birdwatching – Great tips on how to identify your feathered backyard visitors and keep them coming back. Saturday 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Fee:\$3 (New!)

September 29 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Colour Hikes - All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Sunday at 2:00 p.m. \$3/tour for adults and \$2.50/tour for children

October - NHRP Seed Collection – Call Donna Sale at 733-9972

October – Second month of hawk watching at Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Every one is welcome every day of the watch.

October 6 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Colour Hikes - All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Sunday at 2:00 p.m. \$3/tour for adults and \$2.50/tour for children

October 6 - ECFNC Fall Excursion – Join Dave Kraus for a walk on his Essex County property. Dave has an approximately 2 acre wetland/pond, about 13 acres of diverse reforested/shrubs/wildflowers area, an approximately .5 acre newly planted native tallgrass prairie (hopefully!), a 5 acre diverse, mature woodlot, wide wooded fence rows, numerous nesting structures for Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows,

House Wrens, and Eastern Screech Owls. There are also usually many hawks flying over/hunting over the reforested area in the fall. Directions: Hwy 77 north from Leamington (or south from Windsor/401), turn east (toward Wheatley) on Mersea Rd. 7 (Concession 7), drive about 3 km to stop sign at Mersea Road 12, continue east along Road 7 about 1.5 km. Dave's property is the goldenrod fields on the north side. The driveway (for parking) is across from house number 1518. There is a NHRP sign and an ERCA sign with Dave's name on it in the fields on either side of the driveway. Meet at 2:00 p.m.

October 9 - ECFNC Monthly Members

Meeting – Our guest speaker will be Doug Sweet of the Belle Isle Aquarium in Detroit who will present a slide presentation on the freshwater mussels of our area. Location: Essex Civic Centre, Room c at 7:30 p.m.

October 12 – Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Bird Migration – A field trip to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County.

October 13 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Colour Hikes - All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Sunday at 2:00 p.m. \$3/tour for adults and \$2.50/tour for children

October 14 – Ojibway Fall Colour Festival – Join us Thanksgiving Day for nature walks, environmental exhibits and activities the whole family will enjoy. Monday 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. Free admission

October 19 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Bird Migration – A field trip to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County.

October 20 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Colour Hikes - All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Sunday at 2:00 p.m. \$3/tour for adults and \$2.50/tour for children

October 21 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Captivating Critters (Ages 3–5) – Four mornings or afternoons of wildlife exploration and nature fun. Please note there will be no classes Thanksgiving Monday or Remembrance Day November 11. 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Fee: \$22/4 weeks

October 27 - ECFNC Fall Excursion – Join Phil and Sue Aylesworth for a guided tour of their property with its 16 acres of restoration (including prairie and native trees) which has successfully attracted wildlife including herons, egrets, turtles, frogs and toads, huge crayfish and many snakes. Directions: If you are coming from Windsor, drive east along County Road 46 to the intersection of the Belle River Road and County Road 46 in Woodslee. At this intersection turn right, watching for the next intersection at South Middle Road which also has a large Vickerd Transport sign. At this intersection, turn left and proceed two kilometres. The Aylesworth's house number is #346 while the house colour is blue and there is a pond in front. Meet at 2:00 p.m.

October 27 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Colour Hikes - All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Sunday at 2:00 p.m. \$3/tour for adults and \$2.50/tour for children

October 30 – ECFNC Executive Meeting

November – Third month of hawk watching at Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Everyone is welcome every day of the watch.

November 2 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Bird Migration – A field trip to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County.

November 3 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Reach out to Wildlife – Touch a live snake and discover fascinating details about our local wildlife. Get a free poster too! Sunday 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Fee: \$5/adult and \$4 for children (New!)

November 9 – Mark this date for our 18th annual ECFNC dinner. The Annual Dinner Committee is pleased to announce that Wildlife Biologist Ben Porchuk has accepted our invitation to be this year's guest speaker. Ben is the director of The Wilds of Pelee Island Outdoor Conservation Centre. "Pearls, Perils and Parallels: Pelee Island and the Okanagan Valley" is the title of Ben's talk which will high light a number of fascinating species at risk from both regions and some of the overlaps we have in conservation challenges. More details in the dinner announcement in this issue of *The Egret*.

November 10 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Backyard Birdwatching – Great tips on how to identify your feathered backyard visitors and keep them coming back. 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Fee:\$3 (New!)

November 16 - Ojibway Nature Centre Program – Fall Bird Migration – A field trip to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Essex County.

November 17 – ECFNC Fall Excursion – Join ECFNC member Todd Pepper, General Manager of the Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority, for a guided tour of the Regional Landfill site in the Town of Essex. We will be looking at the restoration activities on the site, preservation of natural areas, use of the site by wildlife as well as how the landfill is managed. The meeting place will be at the corner of County Road 18 and the Ferris Sideroad. Easy access to this location is from the Town of Essex south along the Amer Townline. Watch for the Regional Landfill sign at the corner of the Amer and County Road 18, turn right and proceed along the paved road to the intersection with the Ferris Sideroad. Meeting time is at 2:00 p.m.

November 24 - ECFNC Fall Excursion – Join naturalist Mathis Natvik for a guided walk in the beautiful Clear Creek Forest in the eastern section of Chatham-Kent, now protected by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Efforts are underway to restore lands adjacent to Clear Creek Forest. Mathis will provide an update on the past season's work. We will meet Mathis at 2:00 p.m. If you wish to carpool, meet in the parking lot of SilverCity at 12:00 a.m. Bring a 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.

November 25 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Captivating Critters (Ages 3 –5) – Four mornings or afternoons of wildlife exploration and nature fun. Please note there will be no classes Thanksgiving Monday or Remembrance Day November 11. 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Fee: \$22/4 weeks

November 27 - ECFNC Executive Meeting

December 11 - ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting – Members Night – Share a selection of your favourite slide, photos in a photo album, a special collection or a plate of Christmas goodies. Meet at 7:30 in Room C of the Essex Civic Building

December 21 – Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count. Mark your calendar for the upcoming CBC's.

December 22 – Rondeau Christmas Bird Count

December 23 – Point Pelee National Park Christmas Bird Count.

January 1, 2003 – Detroit River Christmas Bird Count

