



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists

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Raffle Winners Delighted by Their Prizes

by Betty Learmouth

The long – awaited ECFNC raffle draw was held on December 11, 2002 as part of the members' meeting. First prize was a splendid queen sized quilt in the elongated log cabin design which had been designed, quilted and donated by ECFNC member and quilter Sue Aylesworth. This attractive quilt with its magenta and green design was won by ECFNC member Linda Kennette who was quite overwhelmed that she had won the quilt. Second prize was a quilted butterfly wall hanging quilted by ECFNC member and quilter Shirley Grondin. ECFNC member Heidi Plante was the pleased recipient of the "stained glass" wall hanging which will be hung in Heidi's family's dining room. Russ Munro donated the framed Inuit seal skin stencil entitled "Char Fishermen," by artist Niviaksiak. The happy recipient of the Inuit stencil was Christina Rhoads.

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:

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

Membership fees:
Individual \$20/year
Family: \$25/year
Sustaining: \$30/year
Life: \$500

**Information**

ECFNC Website
<http://city.windsor.on.ca/ojibway/ecfn.htm>

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Ojibway Nature Centre
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Point Pelee National Park
322-2385

ERCA
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Vice-President: Joe Parent (258-5173)
Secretary: JoAnn Grondin (734-0056)
Treasurer: Teresa Austrin (258-5173)

Directors: Ralph Benoit (252-8288), Karen Cedar (966-5852),
Denise Hartley (735-1926), Dave Kraus (324-9679), Betty
Learnmouth (944-0825), Michael Malone (326-5193), Phil Roberts
(776-8315), Gerry Waldron (736-1276)

Chairpersons/Liaisons:

Membership Secretary: Denise Hartley
Public Information Officer: Joe Parent
Meeting Speaker Coordinator: Patricia Rhoads
Egret Editor: David D'hondt
F.O.N. Liaison: Phil Roberts
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

March 1, 2003

Letter to the Editor:

Re: ERCA Clean Water/ Green Spaces

I would gladly pay a twenty-dollar levy to ERCA's Clean Water/Green Spaces Campaign if I knew that the money would go to good use. Unfortunately, as long as ERCA is governed by a Board of Directors made up of local Politicians, that is not likely to happen. The majority of these Politicians have no interest in or understanding of protecting our health and well being by protecting our water and green spaces. Their primary objective has and will continue to be, to ensure that their representative municipalities have no restrictions placed on their ability to develop their lands as they see fit. This shortsighted view serves only the business community at the expense of the rest of the population. A good example is the Town of Essex who's Mayor has publicly stated that he won't give a dime to ERCA's Clean Water Campaign because ERCA defied its normally opposing Essex at an Marshfield Woods. and continues to pay taxpayer dollars in a in the sky Golf Course world.

The people who the targets of much perpetuated primarily by sit on its Board. These basically powerless the public scapegoats mismanaged the Clean Water/ Green we are told that we now wetland coverage from

years ago. That is an absolute falsehood. Throughout Essex County, Forests, Prairie, Wetland and Prime Agricultural Land are consistently being lost to unbridled development interests. Most of these development applications, be they on Big Creek, Cedar Creek, Canard River, the LaSalle Woodlot and countless others have been approved by ERCA.

The only exception has been Marshfield Woods. It was only when fierce public opposition and the brilliant work of Dr. J Spellman's Wetland Identification forced ERCA to jump on board. ERCA's credibility was at stake and the Politicians knew it. If ERCA weren't going to fight to protect the headwaters of Cedar Creek, what would they fight for? They would have much preferred to sell out. It is this very issue that so enrages these same Politicians today. Bitter about having been dragged kicking and screaming to the OMB to fight against one of their own development approvals, the collective will of these Politicians has been to ensure that nothing of this magnitude ever occurs again. In the New County Official Plan and in individual Municipalities Official Plans currently awaiting approval, they managed to offer zero protection



submissive role by OMB hearing on Ironically, Essex has paid hundreds of thousands of desperate effort for a pie but nothing for the natural

work for ERCA have been misdirected criticism the same Politicians who employees of ERCA are pawns who have become for a misdirected and Conservation Authority. In Spaces Campaign Flyer have 7.5 % forest and a low of 2.7% several

for our natural areas and zero opportunity for citizens to oppose any future development schemes.

What these Politicians fear the most is that all over Essex County, envisioned citizens are taking up the fight to protect farmland, forest, wetland, air, water and earth. The sacred domains that were once under the sole control of these Politicians are being breached. As their ivory tower begins to collapse they cling ever more desperately to each other. We need to replace the ERCA board with individuals who have a proven track record of environmental stewardship and protection. We need to educate the population on how and why we need to protect our sacred earth. The old status quo isn't working and we will never see clean water and green spaces under the current system. What could be more important than clean water/air and green spaces for us to leave as a legacy for our children?

Gerry Kaiser
884 Matthew Brady St.
Windsor, Ontario, N8S-3J8
944-0650

FENG SHUI GARDENING WORKSHOP IS A FIRST FOR ESSEX COUNTY

A seminar on the ancient practice of feng shui will be presented in Essex later this month. This seminar, which will emphasize feng shui principals within the garden, is a first for the Town of Essex, as well as the entire county. Feng shui (pronounced feng shway) has been used in China, Japan and elsewhere for literally thousands of years. This originated from the observation that people can be affected, either positively or negatively, by the placement of their surroundings. It eventually evolved into a time-honored practice of arrangement that promotes health, harmony and prosperity. It is for these reasons that Feng Shui has recently attracted growing attention in the Western Hemisphere. This workshop will feature Robin Keller, a design consultant specializing in Feng Shui. After receiving her Bachelors of Science in Interior Architecture over ten years ago, Robin furthered her studies by exploring Feng Shui. She now offers her consulting services to residential and corporate clients. Working from her office in Southfield, Michigan, Robin will be bringing her unique perspectives, along with her tips and secrets, to Essex. This is being organized by the Backyard Habitat Program of Essex County & Windsor. This may seem like an unusual match, since this non-profit group is more recognized for promoting native plants and attracting wildlife. Many might wonder if a garden can be considered natural and contain Feng Shui elements at the same time. "Many people wonder if Feng Shui principals can actually fit into a natural garden." Said Dan Bissonnette, the Program Coordinator. "The answer is a definite 'yes'. They can be very much in harmony, since both foster a sense a sanctuary for both wildlife and people." "Although I have to admit," Bissonnette added, "this creates the ultimate 'east meets west' situation in gardening. The results can be imaginative and intriguing." This workshop is scheduled for Saturday, March 15, at the Essex County Civic Centre. The cost for this morning presentation is \$25.00. Seating is limited and can be reserved by calling 322 - 5700, ext. 16. To members of media, for more information, call me at the above number, or at my home on Tuesday, at 726 - 4656.

Come and See Ontario Nature Volunteers & FON in Action!

ONV is coming to your neighbourhood between May 15 and 19 and you're invited! ONV is a program of the FON that undertakes on-the-ground conservation projects. Meet volunteers from across Ontario working to complete a visitor access trail at FON's Stone Road Nature Reserve. Learn how the Ontario Nature Volunteers program can help your club accomplish projects in your area. ONV exists to serve your group, whether it's sending volunteers to help you finish projects, providing conservation leadership training to your members, or acting as a resource to get your projects off the ground. We hope to see you there!

Please contact the Ontario Nature Volunteers Coordinator at the FON in advance of the trip dates to arrange your visit: 416-444-8419 ext. 222, toll free 1800-440-2366, or by e-mail at vn@ontarionature.org.

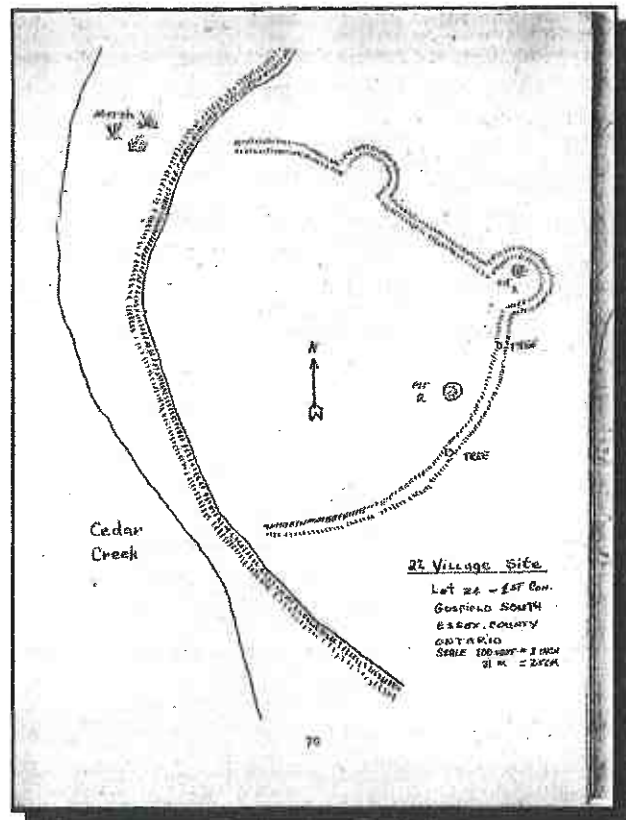
A Winter Walk at Cedar Creek

by Betty Learmouth

Drawing: The sketch of the palisade trench at Cedar Creek comes from the publication *The Story of Great Lakes Prehistoric and Historic Sites and Their People*, by Al Plante. This site is referred to as a pre-contact village site with earth ring.

Ten ECFNC members joined Consulting Ecologist and ECFNC member Gerry Waldron for a walk at Cedar Creek on January 19, 2003. Referring to a topographic map of the area, Gerry showed us our proposed route. We would visit two ERCA properties, a piece of private property along a branch of Cedar Creek, and possibly the Indian palisade site, if time permitted.

Before we set off east across the ice, Gerry showed us how to distinguish European High Bush



Cranberry from the native High Bush Cranberry. Gerry crushed some brilliant red berries from a High Bush Cranberry in the hedge that surrounds the entrance way to the Cedar Creek Conservation Area's parking lot. The odour of the European species berries was disagreeable, lingering on our fingers long after our short identification lesson.

With temperatures at minus eight degrees Celsius and accompanying gusty winds, we were happily unaware of the true afternoon temperature on Cedar Creek's open expanses. We walked briskly across the ice towards ERCA's Arner Point property. Sections of the ice were bare and slick, while others were crusty with frozen snow, making the walking strenuous. At the edge of the Arner Point property, we paused as Gerry discussed the exotic and invasive phragmites that surrounded us. Gerry stripped away the leaf sheath of one tall stalk, showing the golden stalk beneath, an indicator that this was the European variety. By contrast, the native phragmites has a brown stalk beneath the leaf sheath, and the seed head is sparse compared to the luxuriant seed head of the exotic variety.

We had been warned to expect to "scramble," and we were put to the test a number of times over the next two hours, beginning with the eroded bank before us. With many helping hands, we all reached the top of the bank, anxious to explore the wooded area before us.

We noted the flower buds of a Flowering Dogwood, a portent of spring. Gerry found a small American Chestnut, its upper branches festooned with prickly seed pods which Gerry assured us would be empty. Sadly, this appears to be the last American Chestnut at Arner Point as the large American Chestnut nearby has died, its companion had collapsed into the Creek some years previously, and the small American Chestnuts throughout the woodlot have been grazed by deer. We were cheered somewhat by the sight of Wild Turkey tracks in the snow near the old dead American Chestnut.

Gerry indicated that we needed to cross through a stand of phragmites to the woodlot to our north. We slipped down a bank, made our way through the phragmites, scrambled up another eroded slope, then went in search of a large old Tulip Tree. This singular specimen towered over us. Gerry measured its circumference and then calculated its height. His instrument (a hypsometer) indicated the Tulip Tree was over 37 metres in height. Gerry doubted the calculation, informing the group that the tree measured just 32 metres which resulted in requests for a forester to double-check the calculations!

Leaving the Tulip Tree and a nearby large American Beech while noting the thicket of blueberries on the woodland edge, we scrambled down the slope, crossed through the phragmites, and climbed up the slope to continue our walk which took us past a large Black Gum at the property's tip. We clambered down to the ice, setting off to a southern branch of Cedar Creek. We could feel the chilling winds on this exposed walk, gladly climbing the highest slope yet to the sheltering woodland above. Gerry lead us to the "giant" Sassafras, an elderly tree of truly immense proportions. Leaving the Sassafras, we headed towards Essex County's largest Red Oak, a huge gnarled specimen that we were delighted to see.

Then it was decision time. We gazed to the east at yet another distant eroded bank. The time was 3:55 p.m., with a considerable walk to the Aboriginal People's palisade in the woodlands above the eroded bank, followed by the return walk back to our vehicles. The remains that we would see would be an obvious circular trench with two wing-like trenches extending out from the main trench which dates from the 1600s. We decided that time and weather conditions were against extending our walk. By 4:20 p.m. we had arrived back at our vehicles after an exhilarating walk.

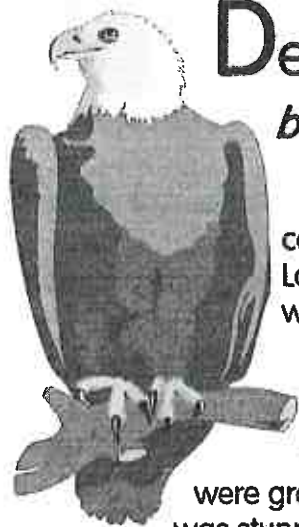
Following our walk, Gerry provided some details concerning the trees we had seen. The

Sassafras was initially measured in 1978 when it was found to be 114 cm. dbh (diameter breast height) which earned it a place in *Ontario's Honour Role of Trees* as the largest Sassafras in the province. The tree was still growing slowly in 2001 as its measurement was 127.8 cm. dbh. This year the giant's measurement is 128.3 cm. dbh. Gerry estimates that the Sassafras could be one hundred years old, but its true age is unknown.

The elderly Red Oak is still slowly growing as well. In 2001, Gerry's records show that this tree measured 186 cm. dbh. Measurements taken in 2003 indicate the tree is now 187.3 cm. dbh which means that this venerable specimen is nearly two metres across at chest height. This tree is thought to be two hundred years old.

The largest Red Oak in Ontario is to be found in Harwich Township within Chatham-Kent. It was first nominated to *Ontario's Honour Role of Trees* in 1984 by Allen Woodliffe when it measured 194 cm. dbh. A large old Black Oak of 172 m. dbh grows behind the Anglican Church in Kingsville on Main Street, well worth a visit by any naturalist who enjoys large old trees.

We wish to thank Gerry for leading our Cedar Creek winter excursion which provided us with an opportunity to observe some inaccessible parts of Cedar Creek, experience the rigors of winter on the ice, and enjoy some remarkable Essex County trees.



Detroit River Birding

by Paul DesJardins

I led an ECFNC outing to Detroit and Little River on February 16, 2003. It was cold. Only Ian Woodfield showed up. We didn't see anything unusual from Lakeshore Park (two Bald Eagles) and the Marina was okay but very very windy. We had to cover up our faces to avoid frostbite.

Most of the birds were on the far side near Peche Island but some good birds were taking shelter behind the pier where the Mallards usually look for handouts. A dozen Canvasbacks, a dozen Redheads, 3 Greater Scaups and 7 Lesser Scaups were about 20 to 30 feet away. The looks using my scope were great. Amongst them was one adult male White-winged Scoter. The gray iris was stunning but with my scope I could see through the tube through the male's swollen bill and I could see the narrow protruding red-orange bill-beak tip and overhanging flared red top-bill edge. It was better than any of my many bird books that I brought. For some reason ice cubes stuck to its feathers (unlike other nearby species). I wasted most of our time appreciating that one bird. I didn't even check the far away birds carefully. It was too cold.

We drove to Little River and saw a Kingfisher along the canal. We also saw a male American Kestrel perched 30 feet from the Little River Bridge. After getting great scope looks he flew closer where the scope was at its closest focusing distance (15 feet away). It perched for a less than a minute before it dropped to the ground. We heard a poor little squeaking sound then saw the kestrel mantling something. Next it flew to perch 80 feet away to eat its dinner - a black mouse about four inches long and a tail about two inches long. Maybe a Meadow Vole, *Microtus pennsylvanicus*?

Anyway, soon we checked where Randy Horvath told us the Saw-whet Owl was roosting. Sure enough it was right where he said it would be. Randy hadn't seen the Long-eared owls on Friday

although he searched the area thoroughly. There were five in the Little River area and one was reported dead of unknown causes near the tree stump cut log field. Ian and I walked most of the creek on the frozen ice and flushed one that was 8 feet away on the bank. It flew downstream about 130 feet and perched watching us from a horizontal limb. We got good looks but didn't feel like searching for more of them when we might flush them from a well protected perch on such a cold day.

Overall, it was a good day, even if only one person showed up.

April 2003 Guest Speaker

Helen Murphy

by Betty Learmouth



Our speaker at our ECFNC's April 2002 meeting will be University of Windsor student Helen Murphy. Helen's research topic is entitled "The effects of habitat fragmentation on the population biology of the dioecious tree *Gleditsia triacanthos* (Honey Locust)." Helen has kindly provided information about her research topic as well as biographical background.

Helen writes: The purpose of my research is to examine the interaction of plant population biology and landscape ecology, within a context of conservation science. The study involves investigation of the population biology of *Gleditsia triacanthos* at approximately 20 sites throughout its range from Mississippi, at the southern limit of the species' range through to Point Pelee and Pelee Island at the northern limit. Honey Locust is ranked by conservation authorities as very common and secure in its global distribution and abundance, but very rare to rare in Ontario. The aim of my project is to characterise the species in terms of habitat fragmentation, geography, and location in the species' range, population and floral sex ratios, reproductive success, and demographic limits to survivorship, fertility and fecundity. I am also measuring fluctuating asymmetry, an indicator of environmental and/or genetic stress, in the species at all sites to determine if populations at peripheral areas of the range or in small patches suffer increased stress, and whether this is then related to individual and population fitness in terms of growth and reproduction.

I began the research for my PhD in July 2001. Prior to that I had completed my Bachelors degree with Honours at James Cook University in North Queensland with majors in Zoology and Environmental Science. My Honours thesis was titled "The effect of climate and resource quality on decomposition of rainforest leaf litter." Between 1997 and 2001 I worked as an environmental scientist for a consulting company based mostly in Queensland and then in Perth, Western Australia. During this time I completed a

Masters in Environmental Law. My Masters thesis was titled "How effective is the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999 in protecting migratory birds listed in International Agreements from the impacts of development."

ECFNC Annual Dinner, November 1, 2003

The Annual Dinner Committee has set the date of November 1, 2003 for this year's dinner as this date was available at the Windsor Manor Club, 1140 Goyeau Street, Windsor, ON. In the last year, this two story building has been completely renovated with the spacious upper hall available for larger groups. A talented new chef is on staff who specializes in international cuisine. Mark your calendars for this exciting upcoming ECFNC event.

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2002.

ASSETS

Current Assets

Windsor Credit Union – Current Account 11	\$1,748.49
TD Canada Trust - BBC	330.36
Woodslee Credit Union – Essex County Stewardship	52,338.78
Woodslee Credit Union – ECSN – term deposit	20,642.39
TD Canada Trust – Heinz Bush	0.00
Canada Trust – term deposit – Heinz Bush	0.00
TD Canada Trust – Heritage Fund	3,439.87
TD Canada Trust – Life Memberships	6,342.61
TD Canada Trust – Marshfield	0.00
Windsor Family Credit Union – Marshfield	4.45
TD Canada Trust – NHRP # 1	12,394.48
Windsor Family Credit Union – Special Events	8,045.48
Windsor Family Credit Union – Woodlot Owners	0.00
Windsor Family Credit Union – Natural Area Protection Fund	11,735.84
Windsor Family Credit Union – S. Cohen Trillium grant	11,761.38

Total Cash	128,784.13
TD Canada Trust – Term deposit – Heritage Fund	9,473.99
TD Canada Trust – GIC – Heritage Fund	8,000.00
Windsor Family Credit Union – GIC – Special Events	3,000.00
Accounts receivable	0.00
Allowance for doubtful accounts	0.00
Total receivable	0.00
Prepaid Expense and Deposits	0.00
Inventory	0.00
Total Current Assets	149,258.12
Capital Assets	
Equipment - Trailer	5,382.20
Office furniture and equipment	0.00
Accumulated mortgage – furniture and equipment	0.00
Net - furniture and equipment	0.00
Total Capital Assets	5,382.20
TOTAL ASSETS	154,640.32
LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	
Account payable	0.00
Bank loan – Current Portion	0.00
GST charged on sales	6.21
GST charged on sales – Rate 2	0.00
GST paid on purchases	-1,294.22
GST owing (Refund)	-1,288.01
Total Current Liabilities	-1,288.01
Long Term Liabilities	
Bank loans	0.00
Mortgage Payable	0.00
Total Long Term Liabilities	0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	-1,288.01
EQUITY	

Retained Surplus

Retained Surplus	151,652.36
Current Earnings	4,275.97

Total Retained Earnings	155,928.33
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TOTAL EQUITY	155,928.33
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LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	154,640.32
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ECFNC's Birding Hotline Update

The ECFNC Birding Hotline has been discontinued but ECFNC members will still be able to keep up-to-date with local bird sightings by looking on the Ojibway Nature Centre's web site at www.ojibway.ca. Our ECFNC hotline was maintained over the years by former ECFNC President Jim McAllister who started the birding hot line in the mid 1980s, shortly after the establishment of the ECFNC. In recent years, Jim has retired, which has meant Jim has been away from home for considerable lengths of time. That has been a problem for hotline maintenance. ECFNC executive members decided at the January 28, 2003 that sightings could be forwarded to the Ojibway Nature Centre with postings to be placed on the Centre's website. On the website's home page look on the right for the Nature Hotline which is a listing of the latest bird and wildlife sightings and natural history news in the Windsor area.

We wish to thank Jim for his attention over the years towards the updating and maintenance of the ECFNC Birding Hotline. Jim's dedication to the Birding Hotline is very much appreciated.

ESSEX COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

2002 BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE REPORT

This year our number of young bluebirds fledged continued to decline. Habitat loss, poor monitoring and house sparrows are the main reasons for this decline. Still, on a positive note, the numbers would have been even smaller, if we hadn't got this committee up and running 12 years ago.

10 bluebird committee members collected data for 20 club trails. These trails had a total of 86 bird houses. These trails hosted 25 pairs of bluebirds, which produced 79 fledgling.

We also collected data from 9 affiliate trails. These trails had a total of 105 bird houses. These houses hosted 10 pairs of blue birds, which produced 37 fledglings.

TROUBLE WITH NEW LAND-OWNERS

This past spring, one of our club monitors met a new land-owner on one of his trails. This new land-owner told the monitor to stay off his property. He also added that he had asked the former owner to pass this information on to us. Unfortunately, the former owner never did let us know.

Unfortunately, this is the 3rd time the bluebird committee has experienced this! To prevent this from happening again, I wrote about it in the December newsletter. In a nut shell, I asked all the property owners, in the event of selling your property, to please educate the new owners about the bluebird committee. Or, let us know if we should re-locate the bird houses.

HEART-BREAK TRAILS

This is the term we bluebirders give to certain unsuccessful trails. Heart break trails give the monitor such promise in March. There is good habitat, good bird houses and the bluebirds are inspecting the houses.

However, by mid April, the monitor is heart-broken. Numerous house sparrows have killed, or chased away the bluebirds. Tree swallows arrive but they also are harassed by the sparrows.

Over the past few years, 3 trails have proved to be heart-breakers. These trails were the Cincurak's, the Fire-Fly Fields, and the Rocky Ridge trails.

This past December, I removed all the houses from these 3 trails. All of these houses were washed and re-stained. A few needed repairs so I used wood donated by Eric Broughton, Carole Kopchuk and Gerry Waldron.

THE MOTHER-WOOD TRAIL

On December 27, Graham Brown, John Gavloski and myself took these recycled bird houses to Penelope Potter's property and set up a new trail. This is the mother-wood property.

Over the years, Penelope transformed her farm into wild-life habitat. With the help of E.R.C.A. and N.H.R.P., it is now 75 acres of wet-lands, prairies and young wood lots.

It was a nice day to be working outside. It stayed around 0° Celsius with just a few inches of snow on the ground. Penelope and her niece, Larissa Harding (great grand-daughter of Gladys MacRae!) helped set up this new trail.

We saw a male Northern Harrier, lots of deer tracks and a few cotton-tail bunnies.

We enhanced the habitat by adding hunting perches. We planted wooden stakes and dead branches to serve as hunting perches. Each bird house has several hunting perches.

John and I returned to finish the project on the morning of December 28, 2002. Penelope joined us. When we completed the job, Penelope invited us in for tea.

Suddenly, about 75' in front of us, a large buck white-tail deer leaped up. He had been resting among some tall grasses and weeds. He ran into a neighbour's wood lot. Truly, a highlight for all of us!

I hope to set up some more trails in February and March.

WINTERING BLUEBIRDS

In mild winters, there will be many reports of wintering bluebirds in Essex County. So far, this has been a very cold winter. There have been a few reports of bluebirds in December, but none for January.

On Saturday, January 25, 2003, I was surprised to see 2 male bluebirds, about 1 mile from my home. They were flying among some shrubs on the ditch bank.

On the next day I saw them again. They were joined by a 3rd bluebird. I couldn't determine if #3 was a male or female, because it stayed in dense shrubs.

Thanks goes out to 'The Desk Top'. This is an office supply store in Kingsville. They've done a lot of free photocopying for the Bluebird Committee over the past few years.

ESSEX COUNTY PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION

This new club invited me to their pot-luck dinner on Sunday, August 18th. What an enthusiastic, fun group. I gave a talk about our bluebird committee's work. I also passed out the usual educational hand-outs. If you would like to join this club, telephone Gilles and Judy Breton at 975-0167 (Gilles parle le français!).

SUCCESS AT ARNER POINT

It has been six years since we had bluebirds fledge at Arner Point. Almost every winter and early spring, bluebirds are present at this site. Some times the bluebirds would move on. Other times an attempted nesting would end in failure.

In early spring, yours truly took over as monitor. In March, I inspected and cleaned all houses. Two were wet inside. Further inspection revealed cracks in the roofs.

Bluebirds will become discouraged if the interior of their home is damp. I took down these houses and replaced them with new ones. I also spaced the houses further apart.

A pair of bluebirds settled in one of the new houses. This was a 'mud-room' bird house, which was designed, built and donated by George Coker. This pair fledged 3 youngsters. The last time Arner Point had a successful bluebird nest was way back in 1996.

In the past few years, we never considered the Arner Trail to be 'unsuccessful'. Bluebirds used these houses but not for nesting. Often, Arner Point had wintering bluebirds. They used our houses for sleeping. Also wintering nut-hatches and chickadees may have slept in them.

Well, that is all the news for now. Best wishes for the 2003 nesting season. Thanks to everyone involved in this wonderful labour of love. If anyone would be interested in becoming a bluebird monitor, please contact me at 738-3279.

E.C.F.N. BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE REPORT FOR YEAR 2002

Trail Monitor # Bird Houses # Pairs of BB # BB'S Fledged # Tree Swallow Nests # House Wren Nests

Broughton's					
B MacDonald	4	0	0	1	0
Hepner's					
B. Macdonald	4	0	0	0	0
Cincurak's					
C & M Calder	3	1	0	0	0
Cooper's					
C & M Calde	4	1	4	0	2
Firefly Fields					
C & M Calder	2	1	0	0	0
Kurtz					
C & M Calder	3	1	5	2	1
Arner Point					
D. Bissonette	3	1	3	2	0
Harrow R. Station					
D. Bissonette	5	2	8	3	0
Maidstone C.A.					
D. Cowie	5	0	0	4	1
Howling's					
D. Hartley	5	2	1	3	0
Altenof					
D. Roemmele	6	2	1	2	2
C. Balkwill					
E. Learmouth	9	5	7	4	1

Pollard					
E. Learmouth	3	2	3	1	0
Hunter's Sugar Bush					
G. Brown	3	1	5	0	0
Vienna Woods					
G. Brown	6	2	1	3	0
Woodiwiss'					
G. Brown	3	1	0	1	1
2 Creeks CA					
G. Brown	6	0	0	1	0
Caney Creek					
M. Jennings	4	1	1	0	0
Doyle-Goddard					
M. Jennings	5	2	4	3	0
Sartori's					
M. Jennings	3	0	0	3	0
Sub-Total	86	25	79	34	8
J. Gorski					
G. Brown	11	1	4	3	0
Kingsville T.S.					
M. Hartley	7	0	0	6	0
Kummer					
L. Kummer	4	1	4	1	3
Lacroix					
V. Lacroix	2	1	3	1	0
Macdonald's					
B. Macdonald	8	0	0	3	0
Waldron					
G. Waldron	6	0	0	2	0
Orchard View GC					
M. Wilson	50	4	22	15	0
Dragon Fly Downs					
R. Smith	15	3	4	3	1
JDS Garden Centre					
S. Rhoades	2	0	0	2	0
Sub-Total	105	10	37	36	4
Total	191	35	116	70	12

May - ECFNC Spring Activity

Over the past few years, ECFNC members have journeyed to Pelee Island to pull Garlic Mustard on natural areas, particularly on the Shaughnessy Cohen Memorial Savannah and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve. If you would like to participate in this mid week activity, call organizer Bonnie Ross (969-4247).

Growers of Local Sources of Native Plants

The following is list of growers of native plants in our local area:

Essex County

Linda Kennette

723-2262 by appointment only

e-mail: elkennet@jet2.net

Specialty: A diversity of native shrubs and trees

Donna Sale

733-9972 by appointment only

Specialty: Native wildflowers including Swamp Rose Mallow, Cardinal Flower and Butterflyweed.

Patricia Rhoads

975-4629

E-mail: woodlandfarm@hotmail.com

Website: www.woodlandfarm.ca includes price lists of native stock available

1984 County Road 46

Woodslee, ON

By appointment only.

Specialty: A wide selection of native wildflowers, shrubs, 40 tree species and aquatics.

Ojibway Nature Centre

966-5852

E-mail: ojibway@city.Windsor.on.ca

5200 Matchette Road

Windsor, ON

Specialty: Prairie plant species and seeds

Williams Nurseries Ltd.

326-6911

Fax: 326-5200

315 Road 12, R.R. # 3

Leamington, ON

Specialty: Native shrubs and trees grown from seed materials collected by NHRP

Chatham-Kent

Orford Ridges Native Plants

Mathis Natvik

14738 McDonald Line

R.R. #1

Muirkirk, ON N0L 1X0

519-678-3866

Fax: 519-678-3291

e-mail: nmatvik@hotmail.com

Mathis has a catalogue which can be forwarded electronically, listing available native trees and shrubs, nut trees, wildflowers of prairies, meadows and woodlands, native grasses and wetland plants.

May 9/10 – Join in Pelee Island's Springsong: Celebration of Birds and Birding. See description of activities in this issue of *The Egret*.

Home Place

Essays on Ecology by Stan Rowe

"The essays in Home Place centre on the theme of Earth as the life-giving, life-sustaining milieu of people. This outward-looking viewpoint is the corrective for in-turned concerns about self and society fostered by the Western tradition. Nature's beauties and bounties have made possible humanity's ideas, social institutions, artistic achievements, and scientific knowledge. Yet the Planet's improbable air-water-land matrix - enveloping home to myriad organisms as well as to humans - has been taken for granted and treated with disdain. 'Attend to context - or else' is ecology's primary warning." -From the Author's Note

Originally published in 1990, this revised edition of *Home Place* reopens an important chapter in writing about Nature and Ecology. The essays in Home Place range from the personal - a search for a childhood vision of pristine grassland, the boy who goes from hunting to respecting the wildlife around him - to theory on land use, environmental law, agriculture, education, and technology as it affects the relationships between humanity and the Ecosphere.

Home Place is even more important today than when it was first released. This new edition has been factually updated with added notes from the author. There is also a newly added Foreword by Wes Jackson of The Land Institute, in Salina, Kansas. Over the years, as an environmental activist and teacher, author Stan Rowe has made a definitive mark on writings about Ecology and about the interaction humans have with the environment. Each issue related in this collection of essays artfully circles back to the notion that people are not the sole expression of importance on Planet Earth. Humans are dependant parts of the Ecosphere, from which we evolved and by which we are sustained. Home Place is part of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Henderson Book Series. As a former trustee of the CPAWS, Stan Rowe will donate the royalties of this book to support the organization.

Stan Rowe is Emeritus Professor of Ecology at the University of Saskatchewan. Inspired by living and working in the western grasslands and forests, he has long been a strong voice for the preservation of natural areas and for the ecocentrist movement. A prominent Canadian ecologist, Rowe won the J. B. Harkin Conservation Award in 1994 for his significant contribution to protecting Canada's parks and wilderness areas. The Canadian Botanical Association established an award in his name, honouring Rowe's contribution as the first Chair for the Ecological Section of the Association. Rowe is the author of numerous articles, reviews and essays. He is currently retired and living in New Denver, B.C. where he is active in promoting his wholistic world view.

Home Place is available from the publisher NeWest Press, 201-8540-109 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 1E6 Telephone (780)432-9427 or e-mail Erin Creasy at <erin@newestpress.com> or contact your local bookstore. Home Place information: ISBN: 1-8963000-53-7 paperback . 256 pages . 5 3/4"x 8 1/4" . \$24.95 CDN . \$19.95 US

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

Income Statement January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002

REVENUE

Revenue

Donations	13,152.40
Memberships	1,685.91
Revenue from Fund Raising	1,068.47
Sales – Plants	2,424.01
Sales – Trees/Seeds	3,519.38
Sales – Books	5,783.29
Grant – MNR	0.00
Grants	16,500.00
Administration Fees Revenue	2,294.75
Interest Revenue	982.96
Miscellaneous Revenue	3,652.60
Total Revenue	51,063.77
TOTAL REVENUE	51,063.77

EXPENSE

General & Administration Expenses

Accounting expenses	992.00
Advertising & Promotions	916.46
Administration Fees	170.29
Bluebird Committee Supplies	92.97
Annual Dinner	1,981.00
Conference and Education	25.00
Courier and postage	554.95
Donations	1,000.00
Dues and Membership Fees	470.00
Egret	1,817.03
Fund Raising Expenses	0.00
Insurance	787.00
Interest and Bank Charges	71.41
Office Supplies	367.26

S. Cohen Memorial Savannah Expenses	4,727.07
Printing and Copying (Special Events)	16,472.36
OMB Hearing Expenses	8,401.58
Meeting Expenses	62.23
Miscellaneous	1,297.35
Seminars	0.00
Seed Coordinator/Collection	5,076.35
Telephone	237.39
Transportation & Travel Expenses	268.00
Wetland Fund Expenses	1,000.00
Total General & Administration Expenses	46,787.80
TOTAL EXPENSE	46,787.80
NET INCOME	4,275.97

John Neville, Nature Recordist

Our May 2003 ECFNC monthly meeting speaker will be John Neville, Nature Recordist who will be travelling to the Lake Erie region during May with his wife Heather where John will give six presentations. John has had a life long interest in birds which began in the Midlands of England. In 1993 John attended a field recording workshop, becoming a regular supplier to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Library of Nature Sounds since that time.

John has recorded his own productions which include *Birds of the Kootenays* (1994), *Bird Songs of the Creston Valley* (1995), *Bird Songs of the Okanagan* (1996), *Songs and Sounds of the Canadian Rockies* (1997), *Bird Songs of Canada's West Coast* (1999), and *Bird Songs of the Great Lakes* (2002). These recordings are all available in CD or cassette format.

Among John's publications is an article that appeared in the FON's *Seasons* in the Winter 2002 issue entitled "How to record bird song." Over the years John has been interviewed on CBC Radio, and has presented for birding festivals and various conservation groups.

John's recording company Neville Recording has various recordings of *Bird Songs of the Great Lakes* (wholesale price list U.S.) available:

NR06 Bird Songs of the Great Lakes - CD each \$8.40 U.S. - 20 or more \$7.00 U.S.

NR06 Bird Songs of the Great Lakes - cassette each \$6.00 U.S. - 20 or more \$5.00 U.S.

Contact Neville Recording, 138 Castle Cross Road, Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2G2

Phone or fax 250-537-4121; e-mail – songbird@saltspring.com; website: www.nevillerecording.com

Ninth Annual ECFNC Weekend Trip to Pelee Island: Saturday, May 3 & Sunday, May 4, 2003

Photograph: View of the restored lighthouse at Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve, May 2002. Photograph by Dave Kraus

Leave at 10:00 a.m. Saturday from Leamington Dock aboard the M.V. Jiimaan (be at the dock by 9:30 a.m.) We will return to Leamington Dock by 5:45 p.m. Sunday

We will hopefully see many migrating waterfowl and warblers, wildflowers such as

trilliums and phlox, basking turtles and snakes, bullfrogs, historic sites, and hear a chorus or two American Toads, to suggest a few of the many enjoyable experiences on Pelee Island in spring. We may also get a chance to visit the "Wilds of Pelee" renewable energy and endangered species conservation education centre, and/or the new Pelee Island Bird Observatory (shorebirds and banding station). We will have plenty of time to walk, observe, and relax on the excursions to some of Pelee's most beautiful natural areas, including Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve, Lighthouse Provincial Nature Reserve, the Stone Road Alvar Complex, Sheridan Point ESA, and a few other stops along the way. This time of year is my favourite on Pelee, as it is a chance to witness the awakening of rare and diverse flora and fauna.

I have arranged for bus transportation while on the island – no vehicles are necessary or desired on this trip. There is parking at the Leamington Dock area (for a reasonable fee) or have someone drop you off. I have reserved space on the ferry (M.V. Jiimaan) for all to meet and form a group before boarding and I will purchase our tickets as a group (using some of the deposit money) in order to receive a 10 % group discount over and above senior and youth discounts – a group ticket purchase is also necessary in order for me to reserve space for our group.

Accommodations have been reserved at the West View Motel. The newly renovated motel style rooms generally have two beds and one bathroom and reservations are tentatively set for the two persons per room. However, people do not need to register in pairs or groups – everyone is welcome! Any family wanting a room with two double beds (or more), or anyone else wanting more or less than the two persons per room (possibly with accompanying cost adjustments), please let me know and arrangements can easily be made to accommodate your wishes.



Image Not Available

The West View Tavern contains a clean and modern homestyle restaurant where I have arranged for our lunch on Saturday and breakfast on Sunday. The motel and tavern are also within a five minute walk to other restaurants, ice cream stand, Trading Post collectibles store, grocery store, bakery, liquor/beer store, West Dock (ferry access), and the Pelee Island Heritage Centre. The Pelee Island Heritage Centre is next door to the motel should we have inclement weather or should anyone wish to skip an excursion and visit the museum instead. The museum presents an interesting and diverse view of Pelee Island's rich natural and human history (as well as the new Middle Island exhibit).

We will break for meals regularly (lunch at 2:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, buffet breakfast at 9:00 a.m. and lunch at 2:00 p.m. Sunday) and hot meals and snacks are also available on both ferry crossings. Costs for lunch and dinner on Saturday, breakfast and lunch Sunday, snacks, etc. will be the responsibility of each individual. I have arranged for a group "Big Island Buffet" dinner (including veggie options) at the Anchor & Wheel Inn on Saturday evening for those who wish to participate. Anyone who does not wish to participate can make arrangements for their dinner at any of the other island restaurants.

I am requesting a \$20.00 deposit (which will be applied to your fees for accommodations, etc.) from each person to ensure reservations. I expect I will need to collect an additional \$70.00 from each participant (a little less for seniors) once on the island, to fully pay for the two ferry trips, bus transportation, and overnight accommodations. Including all costs for the rooms, island transportation, ferry transportation, snacks and meals, the complete weekend trip will probably cost each person about \$150.00 (including the \$20.00 deposit).

All interested persons need to do is: sign up with me and provide a \$20.00 deposit (cash or make cheques payable to Dave Kraus), show up at the Leamington Dock by 9:30 a.m. Saturday morning with warm field clothes and accessories (no need for heavy rubber wading boots as the trails are elevated), over night necessities, and I recommend about \$130.00 cash per person should cover your expenses for the weekend - even for a hearty appetite. The restaurants do take a few of the major credit cards for Saturday's lunch and dinner, Sunday's breakfast and lunch, but please have cash to pay me for our group rated accommodation and transportation.

I will contact each person that registers should any time or location change for the ferry occur, otherwise the above outline is the basic schedule, rain or shine. I will hand out more detailed schedules on the Saturday morning of the trip.

To register for this trip: see me at the ECFNC meetings, or write 1360 Road 4 West, RR 2, Kingsville, ON N9Y 2E5 or phone Dave Kraus at 519-324-9679

I look forward to your company on this ECFNC outing!!!

April 13 – ECFNC Spring Excursion - Cleanup on the Greenway

Three sections of the Greenway have lately become available for adoption which entails a commitment of three yearly inspections by the adopting organization. ECFNC's secretary JoAnn Grondin has offered to be the organizer for these outings to our ECFNC section of the Greenway which extends from the Town of Harrow east to the McCormick Sideroad. We will meet in Harrow at 2:00 p.m. where Walker Road crosses the Greenway just by Colio Wines.

Oaxaca Diary, February 10 -18, 2003

by Betty Learmouth

Quest Nature Tours (Toronto, ON) offered a nature tour to Mexico's Oaxaca State's central and coastal areas from February 10 through February 18, 2003 with ECFNC member Mike Malone as the trip's leader and organizer. Mike has lead three previous Quest Nature Tours as well as birding tours for Massachusetts and National Audubon Societies to Oaxaca.

Mike and his wife Joan have been winter residents in the Pacific Ocean coastal Oaxaca town of Puerto Escondido for the past twenty-two winters. From December through March, Mike runs his ecotour business *Hidden Voyages Ecotours*, then he and Joan return to Leamington, ON where Mike and Joan are the proprietors of Pelee Wings Nature Store.

The Quest Nature Tour began in Oaxaca City, following a four hour flight from Toronto, ON, then a short one hour flight southwest from Mexico City to Oaxaca City. At our welcoming dinner, Mike provided background information about the area we would be visiting. Seven hundred bird species have been recorded in the State of Oaxaca due to a great habitat diversity provided by both Atlantic and Pacific slope mountain ranges. Of particular note are the twenty-seven endemic bird species known only to Oaxaca.

Mike told us that Oaxaca is the poorest of Mexico's thirty-four states. Ninety-five percent of the state is mountainous with most of the state's human population living in the three central valleys where high altitude ensures a comfortable climate. Scattered small communities are found in the mountainous region with coastal communities such as Puerto Escondido dependent upon the rich Pacific Ocean fishery and tourism.

The following is a day by day account of the activities enjoyed by the participants of the Quest Nature Tour. As you read about the trip's activities you might consider joining other Essex County Field Naturalists' Club members next winter 2004 on a similar trip which Mike says he would be happy to lead at cost to ECFNC members.

Day 1 - February 11, 2003

Our first birding excursion from Oaxaca City was an early morning visit to a rural area in Teotitlan Valley near the village of Tlacoahuaya. Above us loomed a rocky face while natural habitat of shrub and thorn bushes covered the lower slopes accessible by a hillside trail. As the sun warmed the site, birds moved back and forth giving us good looks at Gray-breasted Woodpecker, Boucard's Wren, and White-throated Towhee, all endemic species.

By mid-morning we had made our way to a reservoir above the town of Teotitlan del Valley where artisans are noted for fine rug weaving. At this "oasis" in the arid landscape we enjoyed ducks, passerines, raptors, and shorebirds including Violet-green Swallows, Black Phoebe, and Say's Phoebe.

Following our visit to the reservoir, some of our group chose to continuing birding along the roadside above the reservoir, while others visited the artisan's cooperative called *The Bug in a Rug* at which eleven families prepare rug designs, dye yarns with natural dyes and weave colourful rugs. Lunch was at an attractive open air restaurant "La Hacienda" where we enjoyed typical

dishes of the region while Wilson's Warbler entertained us as they foraged about the trees and shrubs on the restaurant's terrace. On our return to Oaxaca City, we took a few minutes to detour to a small community where a truly giant tree, a 2,000 year old water cypress dominates in that town's square. Before the landscape of the region was altered, it is thought that the area was a swamp.

Following the local custom, our group took a two hour break before joining Mike at four o'clock for an excursion to the "San Felipe del Agua" Park in the hills above Oaxaca City. On our walk along the shallow water course which took us through scrub and oak forest, we observed some colourful butterflies, Berylline Hummingbird, Tufted Flycatcher, Audubon's Warbler, Western Tanager, Black-vented Oriole and several flocks of Cedar Waxwings, a species which Mike commented seems to have invaded Oaxaca this winter.

Day 2 - February 12, 2003

Early on February 12, 2003 our group was on the terraces below the Zapotec Monte Alban archeological site overlooking Oaxaca City. Monte Alban's main plaza has been excavated and restored for viewing and was declared a UNESCO cultural site in 1997. Below the plaza, the terraces are unexcavated, where natural habitat regeneration has been encouraged due to fencing which has excluded grazing goats that denude the landscape. Looking across the valley, we found a Red-tailed Hawk, this bird perched in a tree at the base of the hillside. At 8:15 a.m. we observed a White-tailed Kite above us, flying back and forth, and hovering as it searched the natural vegetation for prey just below the plaza. Among the species observed along the trails around Monte Alban and on the plaza were Ash-throated Flycatcher, Rock Wren (perched about the plaza), Orange-crowned Warbler, Rufous-capped Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and White-throated Towhee.

After our usual mid afternoon break, we joined our local guide Eugenio Cruz and trip guide Mike for a walking tour of Oaxaca City's historic centre, viewing Santo Domingo Church with its 16th Century art and paintings, the restored archeological museum and the botanical garden with its native plants, the Benito Juarez, and the busy central square. Our walk allowed us to enjoy the old French colonial residences in the historic centre which have been restored and are now business locations for art galleries, libraries, shops and restaurants.

Day 3 - February 13, 2003

We traveled to the La Cumbre or "the summit" of Sierra Norte to enjoy a day of birding in oak and pine forests at cooler and higher altitudes. The mountain municipality in which we spent our day has been working with the World Wildlife Fund on a natural habitat protection and ecotourism project. We checked in at the ecotourism office, then headed down a winding mountain road. The trees on this humid mountain slope were festooned with epiphytes or air plants that included lichens, liverworts, mosses, bromeliads with their spiky green leaves and red flowers which attract hummingbirds, and pink and yellow orchids. Among the birds observed here were Sharp-shinned Hawk, a White-eared Hummingbird feeding its young, 60 Gray-Silky Flycatchers, a flock of about 12 Gray-barred Wrens (an endemic species) flying across the road way, Warbling Vireo, Crescent-chested Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, and Cedar Waxwings.

Day 4 - February 14, 2003

February 14, 2003 was a travel day over winding roads from Oaxaca City to Puerto Escondido through the magnificent Sierra Madre del Sur mountain range. Our Mexican chauffeur Gaudencio proved to be a competent driver throughout a long day's drive. We took time to bird along quiet mountain side roads where the endemics we found in the pine forest included Red Warbler (a gift to all for Valentine's day) and Rufous-capped Brush-finch. Other species included Broad-billed Hummingbird, Magnificent Hummingbird, Olive Warbler, Hermit Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and Painted Redstart. The White-fronted Magpie Jay and Orange-fronted Parakeet was seen in the montane cloud forest (preserved by the growers of shade tolerant coffee plantations) as we descended the Pacific slope of the Sierra Madre del Sur to our destination of Puerto Escondido.

Day 5 – February 15, 2003

Early February 15, 2003, we drove a short distance north from Puerto Escondido along the coastal highway to Laguna de Manialtepec, a large mangrove lagoon at the mouth of Rio Manialtepec where Mike conducts lagoon ecotours. Mike has his own comfortable carpeted ten seat tour boat which is usually operated by a local fisherman which then enables Mike to move freely around the boat during the tour. Mike's fisherman assistant Lalo is familiar with conditions within the lagoon as well as being an excellent spotter. Manialtepec lagoon is dominated by Red Mangrove which grows in the brackish waters of the lagoon, some to a great size. Pacific Ocean wave action creates a barrier beach which holds the water flow of the Manialtepec River within the lagoon during the dry season, while creating an area of fresh water habitat. Looming over the whole site is the coastal mountain range, covered with deciduous forest, looking quite gray at this time of year as the trees have lost their leaves during the dry season.

As Mike said several times, Laguna de Manialtepec is always changing. When Mike and Joan returned to Puerto Escondido in December, the water depth in the lagoon was at the highest level Mike had seen it over the last twenty-two years. A few weeks before our visit the local cattlemen had had an opening dug in the barrier beach by "campesinos" or farm workers, allowing the lagoon to drain. The cattlemen wished to lower the water levels so their pastures adjacent to the lagoon would dry. The eighty fishermen in the nearly small community who fish the lagoon for their living were powerless to stop the cattlemen's actions.

It was evident that the greatly reduced water levels had affected life in the lagoon dramatically. We could see the water level was well below the normal as the exposed mangrove roots revealed. As well, the oxygen in the lagoon had been depleted, resulting in the death of thousands of mullets, an important commercial fish. The mangrove swamp is the nursery for the fishery so the impact on fish and other species was serious. Mike took photographs of the dead and dying fish as the fishermen, lead by Lalo, intend to forward a package to government officials showing the devastation to the lagoon's fish stock.

Mike told us that a leaf miner had damaged the Red Mangrove leaves, reducing the number of leaves on the mangrove trees, increasing visibility into the centre of individual trees, enabling us to see a roost of Boat-billed Herons as well as both Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Herons. Due to the dead and dying fish in the lagoon, we saw unusually high numbers of Laughing Gulls and Magnificent Frigatebirds as these birds whirled over the lagoon's main channel.

As our fisherman pilot guided the boat through the lagoon channel, Mike pointed out a variety of birds to us including coots, egrets, gallinules, herons, hummingbirds, ibis, kingfishers, parakeets, raptors, sandpipers, stilts, storks, terns, and warblers. Of special note were the close

views of both adult and immature Bare-throated Tiger-herons and two colourful Gray-necked Wood-Rails. Due to the low water levels, the Gray-necked Wood-Rails were foraging at the edge of the mangrove swamp rather than in a more secluded place. In a side channel we passed under an overhanging branch on which a Lesser Nighthawk was resting at its daytime roost.

After our usual afternoon siesta, we drove south for a short distance from Puerto Escondido to private property on the point of land known as Punta Zicatella, where well to do Mexicans have built vacation homes. The secluded homes had been built on land that had been previously cleared of natural vegetation. In 1998 the landowners declared Puente Zicatella as an ecological preserve as deciduous forest had been allowed to regenerate, resulting in the return of wildlife. We enjoyed observing such endemic bird species including Doubleday's Hummingbird, White-lored Gnatcatcher, and Orange-breasted Bunting. A spiny lizard and whiptail were seen basking in the late afternoon sunlight.

Our last stop in the late afternoon on February 15, 2003, was to the mouth of the Rio Colotepec, the source of Puerto Escondido's water supply. Here we noted congregations of egrets, gulls, shorebirds, skimmers, and terns on the sandbars scattered within the river bed. Suddenly an immature Peregrine Falcon appeared, flying in from the barrier beach towards the sandbars, causing the throngs of birds to rise and wheel in the setting sun. We lost sight of the Peregrine in the ensuing confusion. Mike commented that Peregrine Falcons are often seen in this area and at Laguna de Manialtepec.

Day 6 – February 16, 2003

Early morning on February 16, 2003 found us back at the Rio Colotepec for a better look at the birds on the sandbars. We had good views of Reddish Egrets in white phase, Black Skimmers, and an opportunity to distinguish between Elegant, Sandwich and Royal Terns. Mike found a single Forster's Tern with a "mask" that helped with its identification.

The land beside the river where we stood to watch all the activity on the sandbars is communal land of 360 hectares belonging to all the families in the nearby village. Four families are managing the land as an ecotourism project to protect its natural features. Several signs asked us to respect the land. Over the past two years these families have been working with a non governmental organization to set up a crocodile and green iguana reintroduction program. We stopped at a private home where one family is actively engaged in managing a hatchery for these reptiles. Mike interpreted for us as our host Galo showed us how crocodile, iguana and land tortoises' eggs are successfully incubated and how the young are cared for before release into the wild. These families also provide a night time tour of the Colotepec lagoon which is home to 380 crocodiles counted on their last census.

Following our visit with the young iguanas and land turtles, we headed to the Centro Mexicano de la Tortuga in the seaside community of Mazunte. Here we learned about the various species of Pacific turtles and efforts to preserve these turtles, all of which are endangered except the Pacific Olive Ridley. Following the tour of this complex, we enjoyed lunch overlooking the San Augustinillo beach as Osprey soared overhead. With the aid of Mike's telescope we were able to view Brown Boobies on a rocky island offshore.

Day 7 – February 17, 2003

For our last morning outing in Puerto Escondido, Mike has made arrangements for us to embark on a pelagic trip onto the Pacific Ocean to a distance of fifteen kilometres. Luckily, there was no wind to cause choppy conditions so the trip was a go. There were swells but our experienced fisherman guide Ebe at the helm guided his sport fishing craft carefully over the long swells, providing a comfortable ride for us. The swells we were passing over were likely generated three or four days prior by poor weather to the west.

Our pelagic trip lasted four hours with excellent opportunities to view both marine animals and birds. We saw several species of shearwaters once we were at a distance from shore. Mike took a number of pictures as an aid to determining their identification. Several smaller birds skimming the ocean's surface were likely petrels.

Luckily, our fisherman guide had excellent eyes, pointing out a number of turtles before any of us saw them. We saw two pairs of Olive Ridley turtles copulating as well another six or seven individuals resting on the ocean's surface. Fins on the water's surface were identified as those of a Manta Ray. Of considerable interest was a Yellow-bellied Sea Snake, a common venomous species, this individual about half a metre in length just beside the fishing craft. The tail of this species is laterally flattened.

Numbers of leaping dolphins attracted our attention so we made our way to an area where a school of fish had attracted the dolphins, some of which leapt well above the water's surface. Others raced across our boat's bow or played beside the boat. Dark fins protruding from the ocean surface were identified by our fisherman guide as the dorsal and tail fin of a twelve foot marlin which slipped below the surface as we approached.

Late in the morning we made our way back to shore, our fisherman guide dropping us off at the Manzanillo beach area where we lounged under umbrellas as we ate our box lunches and enjoyed swimming and a little inshore snorkeling, during which a puffer fish with electric blue spots was the highlight.

In the late afternoon, we made our way back to Laguna de Manialtepec for a sunset cruise. Mike told us the break in the barrier beach has closed that day so that the water levels in the lagoon would now slowly return. We saw many of the bird species seen on February 15, 2003, but also some surprises were in store for us. A small raptor perched seemed unfamiliar to Mike until the bird flew. It was a common Short-tailed Hawk which in flight has distinctive creamy underparts but is rarely seen perched. We had a good opportunity to see its hooded head and bright yellow talons. Another good sighting was a single wild Muscovy Duck as the bird flew over the mangroves. As we drifted by coconut palms to which vultures were returning for their night roost, we noted several coconut trunks with woodpecker holes. Pausing, we were able to find two foraging Golden-cheeked Woodpeckers, an Oaxaca endemic species.

Just before sunset, we stepped ashore on the barrier beach to celebrate the sunset and the end of an exciting nature tour in Oaxaca. Mike brought the cooler ashore, poured Mexican wine into our glasses, as we then sipped our wine and watched the sun dip below the Pacific. As we headed back to the boat launch, we stopped several times to view the red glow on the lagoon's surface and the mangrove trees silhouetted against the glowing sky.

Day 8 – February 18, 2003 – Homeward Bound

We were up at our usual time to be served breakfast at a beachside café on the Puerto Escondido's surfing beach before our flight at 8:00 a.m. to Oaxaca City. Our friendly waiter told us he

had been walking his dog along the beach the previous evening in the surf when he felt a stabbing pain in his foot. Apparently a Yellow-bellied Sea Snake had been caught in the surf, lashing out at our waiter. He went immediately to hospital emergency where he was given three injections to counteract the snake's venom.

Our Aerotoucan flight circled over Puerto Escondido and the harbour before heading over the coastal mountains and on the Oaxaca City. It was a treat to look down on the rugged landscape we had traveled through a few days early. Our departure from the Oaxaca City airport to Mexico City gave us one last view of the Zapotec Monte Alban archeological site and its terraces where we had enjoyed birding upon our arrival in Oaxaca.

Birds seen on this trip totaled 176 species. Mammals included Common Dolphin, Spotted Dolphin and Red-bellied Squirrel. Reptiles seen included Whiptail spp., Spiny Lizard spp., Rock Iguana, Barking Gecko (on the ceiling of the Puerto Escondido hotel's restaurant), Pacific (Olive) Ridley Sea Turtle, and Yellow-bellied Sea Snake.

Mike forwarded an e-mail on February 27, 2003 which read: Lalo met for five hours with state, federal and municipal agencies to draw up a management plan for the lagoon which they may sign into effect next month. Opening of the barrier beach will be banned, as will jet-skis and outboard motors will be limited to 48 horsepower. Restaurants will need black-water treatment systems.

References:

Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. A guide to the birds of Mexico and northern central America. Oxford University Press, 1995. (0-19-854012-4)

Sacks, Oliver W. Oaxaca journal. National Geographic, 2002. (0-7922-6521-1)

POINT PELEE NATURAL HISTORY NEWS

Volume 2, Number 4 (Winter 2002)

This new issue (16 pages) contains the following:

ARTICLES:

ANOTHER CAVE SWALLOW INVASION: THE FALL OF 2002 - Alan Wormington
[Details are presented on the ten birds that occurred in Ontario during November; also included is a summary of the 200+ birds recorded along the Atlantic Coast from Connecticut to Florida, and a comparison of the

1999 and 2002 invasions]

NOTEWORTHY BIRD RECORDS: SEPTEMBER to NOVEMBER 2002 - Alan Wormington
[a total of 4 [] pages detailing such species as Eared Grebe, Brown Pelican, Cattle Egret, King Eider, King Rail, Red Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger and Cave Swallow.]

VERMILION FLYCATCHER: NEW TO POINT PELEE - David R. Don [An account on the discovery of a

Pelee Island Endangered Species T-shirts Available

The Wilds of Pelee Island Outdoor Conservation Centre offers a selection of T-shirts with an endangered species theme. A summary of T-shirts available is as follows:

T-shirt Design	Sizes available	Price
Pelee Island Species at Risk – Blanchard’s Cricket Frog (Available in Green/Brown only)	XL, L, M and S	\$20.00
Pelee Island Species at Risk – Blue Racer Snake (Available in Blue only)	XL, L, M and S	\$20.00
Pelee Island Species at Risk – Lake Erie Water Snake (Available in Black only)	XL, L, M and S	\$20.00
Pelee Island Species at Risk – Smallmouth Salamander (Available in Black only)	XL, L, M and S	\$20.00

For shipping, add \$5.00 extra for 1 to 5 shirts or for 6 to 10 shirts, add \$10.00 extra. Call Ben Porchuk (519-642-1309) to order your Species at Risk T-shirts.



A Winter Visit to the Poison Sumac Swamp

by Betty Learmouth

Despite a bitter wind and overcast conditions, fourteen ECFNC members and friends met on January 12, 2003 in Mr. Don Huber's yard on the Huffman Road outside of Harrow for an opportunity to visit the Poison Sumac Swamp. The Nature Conservancy of Canada had kindly provided permission for our group to enter the property, while Mr. Huber allowed us to gather in his yard before our drive back to the Poison Sumac Swamp along his cedar lined laneway. The ground was frozen with few small snow drifts which our vehicles handled without any problems.

Upon distribution of an article written by the late Essex County botanist Wilfred Botham which appeared in *The Plant Press: Field Botany of Ontario* (June 1985 issue), we set off to seek wintering birds for which the Poison Sumac Swamp is famous. For the last seventeen years, birders participating in the Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count (CBC) have found the Poison Sumac Swamp to be one of the best spots for "good" birds in mid December. We hoped that some of their luck would come our way.

Just a few steps into the northern part of the natural area which is dry upland forest, we spotted a female Red-bellied Woodpecker which moved about in the limbs overhead. Blue Jays were heard calling, causing us to wonder what all the fuss was about. Was there an owl nearby? We meandered through the woodland/wetland, avoiding the wet edges, finally emerging on a frozen surface which gave us a better and wider view across an extensive dogwood thicket. We were fortunate to see four or five Northern Flickers and a Red-tailed Hawk that moved through. The going ahead looked wet and slow through the dogwood thickets, so we opted for a walk on the roadway beside the swamp.

From this vantage point along the swamp's edge, we saw one American Goldfinch, a distant adult Bald Eagle, three Red-tailed Hawks flapping over the surrounding agricultural lands, a Northern Harrier, three Northern Cardinals and a second adult Bald Eagle which passed directly above us, heading north. As the Bald Eagle glided over us, we were examining the dainty footprints of a mink which had ventured down to the open water of a ditch that passes along the swamp's northern boundary.

Ron Muir said our experiences were typical of those the CBCer's had experienced during the count on December 14, 2002. The birds appeared to be in pockets, just as we had found on our excursion.

Luckily, Bill Balkwill was along for the walk and was able to identify the trees that we were observing. In the drier upland forest we saw two fine American Beech, one of which was displaying some characteristics of old growth as the limbs looked particularly gnarled. Other trees in this drier habitat included maples, large gnarled White Mulberry, Butternut Hickory, Red Cedar and Black Walnut.

Working our way to the south, we skirted some wet spots and eventually came to a frozen flooded area. Some of the trees we observed in this wetter habitat included Blue Beech, viburnum shrubs, Spicebush and Yellow Birch. We were particularly interested to see and examine the Poison Sumacs which we found in this wet area. This small tree is rare in Canada, occurring in Essex County in this one location. The tree's bark is gray and smooth, with the leaf scars readily apparent

on the few stout branches. A few small pale fruits were still clinging to fruit stalks. We were intrigued by this seemingly innocuous-looking small tree which can produce a severe allergic reaction.

In a muddy spot just at the frozen area's edge, we were fortunate to see the protruding shell-like spathe of five Skunk Cabbage. With two days of fine weather earlier in the week, it appeared these plants had pushed their spathe (hood-shaped specialized leaves) tips through the soft mud. According to Wilf Botham's article, "the most abundant herb in the swamp is skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*). This dominates the herb layer from one end of the swamp to the other. It numbers in the thousands, if not tens of thousands. Undoubtedly more than half of the skunk cabbage in Essex County is in the Poison Sumac Swamp." The skunk cabbage spathe is expected to be seen at its best in early spring from February through April.

Coyotes had been in the area as their tracks and scats were noted on the ice around bits of deer hide. Tracks of two coyotes were noted heading to the east across the agricultural lands.

ECFNC's members appreciated this opportunity to explore The Nature Conservancy of Canada's newly acquired property within the Poison Sumac Swamp. Thank you to The Nature Conservancy for extending a welcome to the ECFNC and to Mr. Don Huber for allowing us to gather in his yard.

Springsong: Celebration of Birds and Birding

May 10

Featuring Farley Mowat, with an introduction by Margaret Atwood

Dinner at the Pelee Island Wine Pavillion, 6:15 p.m.

Tickets \$50. Call (519) 724-2068 for reservations and info or e-mail pimuseum@mnsi.net

May 9 - 10

2nd Annual Pelee Island Baillie Birdathon

Noon May 9 to Noon May 10

Registration at the Pelee Island Heritage Centre

The Botham Cup will be awarded the winning team

May 10

Stone Road Alvar, Carolinian Heritage Plaque Unveiling

2 p.m. at Stone Road: a Carolinian Canada event with tour to follow

For the first three weeks of May the Pelee Island Heritage Centre is offering professionally led daily birding walks. For information call Ron Tiessen at 724-2291 or e-mail pimuseum@mnsi.net

Albino Crow Sighting

by Linda Kennette

Our property is located just several kilometers northwest of the Town of Essex. As a result, we are often visited by a large number of crows from the famous Essex Crow Roost, during the fall and winter seasons.

Although crows will probably never win any popularity contest, their social behaviour often proves to be quite entertaining. They definitely communicate loudly with each other when there is a hawk nearby. In addition to the continuous cawing, the crows repeatedly take turns harassing the hawk, until it finally accepts being escorted out of the area by the crow patrol.

On a lighter note, the crows provide us with comic relief whenever we notice them chasing each other from tree to tree. Many crows will apply teamwork strategies, trying to steal bits of food or stale bread from the one poor soul who has managed to escape with a tasty morsel in its beak.

One day, I was amazed by the intelligence of crows as I observed several of them strolling around in the yard. A particular crow caught my attention. It seemed to be watching a cottontail rabbit that was also in the yard, minding its own business, lazily chewing on a mouthful of clover. The crow waddled up to the rabbit, stood still for a moment and then suddenly jumped on the spot! Totally frightened, the rabbit fled. The crow turned to watch the rabbit escape, appearing to be quite content with the outcome of its practical joke.

We have had an interesting sighting this winter. Before Christmas, my husband Ernie noticed that there was a white bird perched on a poplar in the backyard, along with many crows. At first, he thought it was a seagull, but upon closer observation, we both concluded that it had to be a crow—an albino crow.

Ernie ran to find the camera and managed to get one shot of the albino crow. Unfortunately, he did not have time to change the lens on the camera. We were both disappointed when we had the photographs developed; it was very difficult to identify the bird as being a white crow due to the distance of the shot.

Several weeks ago, Ernie looked out through the window and called out for me in excitement. The albino crow had returned and was actually strolling around the yard with all the other crows! This time, the camera was prepared for action. Focusing through his telephoto lens, Ernie slowly walked toward the window so as not to startle the flock (crows are usually very sensitive to any type of movement). Ernie's patience and ability to remain



invisible to the birds proved to be an asset (as seen in the accompanying photographs). He managed to successfully snap several good shots of the albino crow on the ground and in flight, just as the flock noticed him and flew away.

At the Ojibway Nature Centre, Paul Pratt studied the photographs and confirmed that our white bird was indeed an albino crow. He stated that our sighting was a rare event, adding that it had been 30 years since an albino crow was last sighted among the flock of the Essex Crow Roost.

If you happen to be driving in the Essex area during the next few weeks, keep a watchful eye on the crows as they fly overhead or are gathered in the fields--you just might be lucky enough to notice a flutter of white feathers among all the black plumage.

ECFNC Activities and Excursions

March 2003 through July 2003

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.

March

March 12 – ECFNC Members Annual Meeting – A good opportunity to learn about the ECFNC's activities over the last year and enjoy presentations by the chairs of the ECFNC's various committees as well as skill testing natural history quizzes with prizes. Meet in the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. in Room C.

March 17, 24, 31, Apr 7 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Captivating Critters (ages 3-5) - Wildlife exploration and nature fun for the younger set. Feb 3, 10, 17, 24; Mar 17, 24, 31 Apr 7; Apr 14, 28, May 5, 12
Cost: \$21/4 weeks plus \$2 material fee Times: Monday, 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

March 26 – ECFNC Monthly Executive Meeting

Friday, March 28 – 3rd Annual Thames River Symposium at the Chatham Cultural Centre in historic downtown Chatham. This one day workshop brings watershed groups together to learn about and discuss the Thames and its natural, cultural and recreational values. The cost of the symposium is \$20.00 per person and includes lunch and refreshments. As space and meals are limited, please contact Valerie Towsley at 519-354-7310 or e-mail ltca@mnsi.net if you plan to attend by March 24th. Payment may be made at the door or in advance by sending a cheque payable to the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority, 100 Front Street, Chatham, ON N7L 2Y8. Presentations of interest to naturalists include Recovery Plan for Aquatic Species at Risk in the Thames River (presenter Scott Gillingwater,

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority) and Skunk's Misery /Bothwell Forest: Woodland Jewel of the Thames (presenters Dave Martin, environmental consultant and Michelle Kanter, The Nature Conservancy of Canada). Historic walking tours of downtown Chatham and the Thames River are planned for the afternoon.

March 29 – Carolinian West Regional Meeting – A meeting of the FON clubs within our region will be held in the old Schoolhouse in Spring Garden Conservation Area near Aylmer. Meeting from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. includes an update on club activities, Bickford Oak Woods update, general updates on Volunteer for Nature, Breeding Bird Atlas, Provincial Parks Act and FON's Smart Growth Initiative. An election will be held for a regional director from this region, and in the afternoon an update will be provided on FON activities, an update on the Nature Network, and an update on FON board activities.

April

April 6 – Watch for more details of an event with David Suzuki in our area organized through the efforts of the ECFNC, the CAW and the Essex Region Conservation Authority.

April 9 – ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting – Guest speaker and University of Windsor student Helen Murphy will discuss her research topic is entitled "The effects of habitat fragmentation on the population biology of the dioecious tree *Gleditsia triacanthos* (Honey Locust)." Meet in the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. in Room C.

April 10 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Advanced Birding – A serious birder's delight! An in-depth

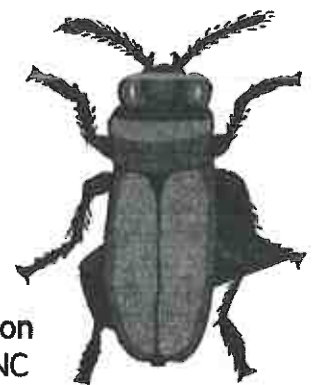
workshop where the identification and amazing life stories of our featured bird will be revealed. Refreshments provided. Woodcock and Owls: April 10, 2003; 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Cost: \$12/person

April 13 – ECFNC Spring Excursion – Cleanup on the Greenway – Three sections of the Greenway have lately become available for adoption which entails a commitment of three yearly inspections by the adopting organization. ECFNC's secretary JoAnn Grondin has offered to be the organizer for these outings to our ECFNC section of the Greenway which extends from the Town of Harrow east to the McCormick Sideroad. We will meet in Harrow at 2:00 p.m. where Walker Road crosses the Greenway just by Colio Wines. Several cars will be driven to the McCormick and Greenway intersection so we do not have to retrace our steps. This first walk will be an inspection and general cleanup of the section.

April 17 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Advanced Birding – A serious birder's delight! An in-depth workshop where the identification and amazing life stories of our featured bird will be revealed. Refreshments provided. Sparrows ; 6:00 p.m – 8:00 p.m. Cost: \$12/person

April 20 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Celebrate spring hikes – All ages will enjoy observing the fresh start of spring. Topics will include birds, frogs, wildflowers and more!! Sunday, 2:00 p.m. Cost: \$3.adult or \$2.50/child

April 26 – ECFNC Spring Excursion – Poison Sumac Swamp – Our ECFNC members first visited this



Nature Conservancy of Canada property in January 2003. This second visit will provide an opportunity to view spring wildflowers and migrating bird species. There is no designated leader for this trip. Bring your guidebooks and we will all work together on species identification. We will meet at 1655 Huffman Road in Don Huber's yard. To find the Huffman Road if you are leaving Harrow and headed east, watch for the Ridge Road. Turn right on the Ridge Road and proceed to the curve, noting the sign for the Huffman Road. Turn left on the Huffman Road and turn right into Mr. Huber's yard. Meeting time is 2:00 p.m. Please be aware there are no trails on this Nature Conservancy of Canada property. We appreciate The NCC giving us permission to enter the property.

Sunday, April 27 – Ojibway Nature Centre - Earth Day - Fun for the entire family: Environmental exhibits, entertainment, children's activities, food and much more!! Sunday 12 p.m.-4:00 p.m. Free admission into the park

April 14, 28, May 5, 12 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Captivating Critters (ages 3-5) - Wildlife exploration and nature fun for the younger set. Cost: \$21/4 weeks plus \$2 material fee Times: Monday, 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

April 30 – ECFNC Monthly Executive Meeting

May

May - ECFNC Spring Activity – Over the past few years, ECFNC members have journeyed to Pelee Island to pull Garlic Mustard on natural areas, particularly on the

Shaughnessy Cohen Memorial Savannah and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve. If you would like to participate in this mid week activity, call organizer Bonnie Ross (969-4247).

May – Point Pelee National Park Spring Bird Festival – look for details in the park's spring publication

May 1 – Ojibway Nature Centre Activity – Spring Wildflowers – Learn how to identify and photograph those dazzling spring jewels. This night's excursion will be to a woodland habitat from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Fee \$13/person/two weeks

May 3/4 – Join Dave Kraus for another wonderful weekend on Pelee Island. Please see the trip's description in this issue of *The Egret*.

May 4, 11, 18, 25 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Celebrate spring hikes - All ages will enjoy observing the fresh start of spring. Topics will include birds, frogs, wildflowers and more!! Sunday, 2:00 p.m. Cost: \$3.adult or \$2.50/child

May 9/10 – Join in Pelee Island's Springsong: Celebration of Birds and Birding. See description of activities in this issue of *The Egret*.

May 10/11 – Spring and Shorebird Festival at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area - Banding demonstrations are scheduled for 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There will be a children's activity tent, a live owl, and guided walks. Light refreshments to be provided by the ECFNC. Please call Shirley Grondin at 972-5781 if you wish to volunteer to assist with the Festival.

May 14 - ECFNC Monthly Members

Meeting – Join John Neville of Neville Recording, Salt Spring Island, B.C. for a programme entitled "Why do Birds Sing?" John's program is a one hour audio presentation using sound clips from *Bird Songs of the Great Lake*. The soundscape is supported with slides and geared towards birders. John will present information about birds, why they sing, anecdotes and interpretation of the natural recordings he has made in the area. The main focus of the presentation will be the sound recordings. The ECFNC presentation by John will be one of six presentations to be made about Lake Erie in May 2003. Meet in the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. in Room C.

May 15 – Ojibway Nature Centre Activity – Spring Wildflowers – Learn how to identify and photograph those dazzling spring jewels. This night's excursion will be to a prairie habitat from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Fee \$13/person/two weeks

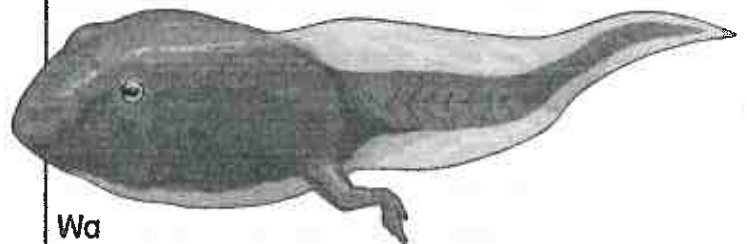
May 15 – 19 – Volunteer for Nature – The goal of this program is to provide people with opportunities to work outdoors, enjoy being part of a team, learn new skills and participate in hands-on conservation projects in Ontario's spectacular natural places. The Federation of Ontario Naturalists hosts Ontario Nature Volunteers expeditions, which are 3 to 16 day working vacations that take place across the province. Locally Pelee's Hidden Places: Trail Construction is offered. The description of the trip is as follows: Experience the meaning of biodiversity on Pelee Island. Listen to the symphony of bird songs as scores of species migrate northward, watch for the endangered Blue Racer Snake and explore a unique alvar community. Complete the last section of gravel trail through FON's Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve and assist the Wilds of Pelee with a wetland restoration project to benefit the island's

reptiles and amphibians. Cost: \$220. To obtain more information contact the Volunteer for Nature Registration desk: 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, ON M3B 2W8 Telephone toll free: 1-800-440-2366 ext 222 or e-mail vfn@ontarionature.org or consult the Website at www.ontarionature.org

May 17 - Ojibway Nature Centre Activity – Native Plant & Tree Sale – Attract wildlife to your yard with flowers, trees and shrubs. Time: 10:00 a.m to 2:00 p.m.

May 19 – ECFNC Spring Excursion - Enjoy the Victoria Day weekend with a morning birding excursion to Point Pelee National Park with Shirley Grondin and Betty Learmouth. Bring your guides as we will all contribute to finding and identification of the birds we see. We will meet at the Visitors Centre at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch to enjoy at the picnic tables at noon hour.

May 23 – 25 – Federation of Ontario Naturalists 2003 AGM & Conference – in Port Elgin, Ontario – Theme: From Georgian cliffs to Huron shores – Join the Owen Sound Field Naturalists to explore the many exciting attractions the Bruce Peninsula has to offer. Conference highlights include observations and insights by Doug Larson about his travels to old growth cedar and cliff ecosystems; fascinating field trips along the Bruce Peninsula, including trips to FON Nature Reserves; early morning bird walks and exciting and informative sessions.



Watch for the conference brochure in the spring issue of the FON's Seasons or contact Jennifer Baker, Federation of

Ontario Naturalists, 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills,
Ontario M3B 2W8 Phone 1-800-440-2366
extension 224 or e-mail
jenniferb@ontarionature.org Web:
www.ontarionature.org

May 28 - ECFNC Monthly Executive Meeting

June - ECFNC Spring/Summer Excursion - ECFNC member Lynda Corkum will again share her mayfly research with us. This year we will register members and friends who wish to attend this event, then we will call those who wish to attend when it appears that the mayflies will be at their peak. The following is Lynda's e-mail on February 5, 2003 in response to our request for Lynda to offer this excursion to view the mayflies at Oxley Harbour: "I'm smiling because one would think by now that I would know when the peak swarm would occur. It has been so cold this winter that I would guess a late emergence. Mayflies typically come out in a full moon (June 14th or July 13th). I have had swarms as early as June 12 and as late as July 17th. Seems a bit of a gamble, but I'll pick the July date for this year." Please call Betty Learmouth (944-08250 to register for this excursion with Lynda.

June

June 1 - ECFNC Spring Excursion - Join our ECFNC President Phil Roberts for a late spring visit to the Holiday Beach Conservation Area to enjoy the activity around Big Creek Marsh and in particular our nesting Prothonotary Warblers. Meet Phil at the Education Building at 2:00 p.m. for an orientation. To find Holiday Beach Conservation Area from Windsor proceed along Howard Avenue to County Road 20. At this intersection,

turn right and proceed to Malden Centre. At this intersection, turn left and proceed to the Holiday Beach C.A. entrance on your right, then follow the park road all the way to the Education Building located near the hawk tower.

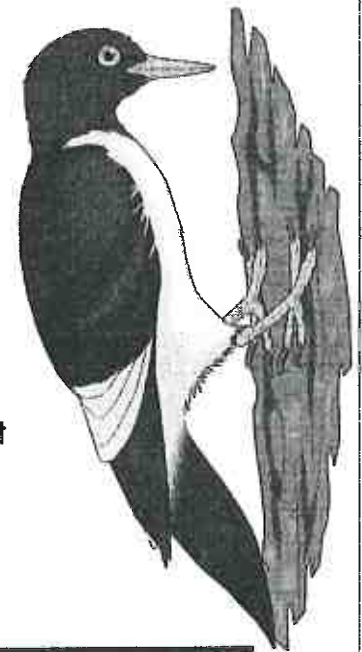
June 8 - ECFNC Spring Excursion - Join ECFNC member Ruth Junge for a walk in the Heinz Bush, a protected woodlot within the Town of Leamington. Ruth will provide us with a historical look at efforts to preserve this woodlot. Meet at 7:00 p.m. in the Roma Club parking lot on Seacliff Drive which is on your left if you were driving to Point Pelee National Park from Leamington.

June 11 - ECFNC Members Monthly Meeting - Speaker to be announced - Meet in the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. in Room C.

June 25 - ECFNC Monthly Executive Meeting

July

July 10 - Essex Region Conservation Authority Activity - Holiday Beach Tiny Tots Nature Discovery Program and Nature Day Camp - 10:00 am - 12:00 noon - Suitable for children aged 3 - 6. Discover nature with your kids! Bring your child to dip net in the pond and learn about the lives of our aquatic friends. Sing songs and do nature



crafts. Children must be accompanied by an adult! Maximum - 20 participants. Cost \$6.00/child. (Note: a second child from the same immediate family can receive a \$2 discount.)

July 17, 2003 - Essex Region Conservation Authority Activity - Hillman Marsh Enviro-Challenge

10:00 am - 3:00 noon - Suitable for children aged 8 - 12. Learn to orienteer, take a guided nature

hike around the new Shorebird Habitat. Build a bird nesting box to help provide habitat in this important conservation area. Bring a bag lunch. Maximum - 20 participants. Cost \$15/child.

Note: a second child from the same immediate family can receive a \$5 discount). Pre-registration and payment is required at least 2 days prior to the program. The Essex Region Conservation Authority reserves the right to cancel any program up two days prior to its scheduled date if the minimum registration requirement is not met.

Nov 1 - Annual ECFNC Dinner - Mark your calendar for this event booked for the recently renovated Windsor Manor Club, 1140 Goyeau Street, Windsor, ON