



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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A Field Trip to the Lucchese Property

Don Bissonnette

On Sunday, February 9, 2003, four field naturalists met at Orphio Lucchese's property. It was a clear sunny day, with a light breeze, and a thin layer of snow. At -2 degrees Celsius, it was the warmest day we'd seen in weeks. This property is located in Essex, just south of Gesto. Unfortunately, Orphio could not join us for the tour.

Orphio purchased the fifty-acre property several years ago. Back then, it was a twenty-two acre bush with twenty-eight acres of cash crop land. Since Orphio appreciated nature, he immediately set aside five acres of farmland for wildlife habitat. It took a lot of money, time and work, but this five acres is now ponds, marshes, grasslands and a young woodlot.

First our group walked through the grassland. We spoke about the various bird species that have been seen here including Eastern Bluebird, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark and hawks, as well as butterflies. Then we visited the woodlot where we identified Eastern Red Cedar, White Ash, Red Maple, Red Oak, and Silver Maple.

At the edge of the bush we enjoyed the picnic area where we warmed ourselves at a fire. The woodlot has a large loop trail running through it, beginning and ending in the picnic area. When we were warmed up, we headed down the trail.

We continued to identify trees, looking at Burr Oak, Hackberry, Hawthorn, Hickory, Ironwood, Red Maple, Red Oak, Swamp White Oak, and White Elm. We found deer, squirrel tracks and several Downy Woodpeckers and Dark-eyed Juncos as well.

It was almost 5:00 p.m. when we completed the trail. The temperature had been steadily dropping since 4:00 p.m., so we were very glad to warm ourselves at the fire once more.

We said goodbye and headed for home.

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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Committees

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Speaker: E.C.F.N.C. Directors
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Annual Dinner: Heritage Committee
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Heritage: Mary Celestino, Betty Learnmouth, Margaret Jennings, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Patricia Rhoads, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Dave Kraus, JoAnn Grondin

Spring Cleaning on the Chrysler Canada Greenway

Betty Learmouth

Our ECFNC Secretary JoAnn Grondin has also acted as our ERCA liasion which entails attending meetings of ERCA's Full Authority. At a recent meeting of the Full Authority, JoAnn learned that three sections of the Chrysler Canada Greenway were available for adoption. That is, an interested group could adopt a section of the Greenway for a term of three years, agreeing to visit the adopted section on three occasions yearly for garbage collection as well as monitoring trail conditions, perhaps recommending certain activities such as tree planting or removal of exotic plant species. Our ECFNC executive readily gave its approval to JoAnn's suggestion that our organization adopt the Greenway section from Harrow east to the McCormick Side Road.

The first cleanup walk was scheduled for April 13, 2003. In preparation for our first walk, JoAnn and Shirley Grondin hiked the adopted section April 6, 2003, noting the spots where debris could be found.

On April 13, 2003 when we met in Harrow, JoAnn showed us a map of our adopted section which she had drawn, the areas marked in yellow where we should concentrate our energies. Upon JoAnn's advice we decided to skip the section between Harrow and the Ferris Sideroad, focussing our attention on the solid yellow section between the Ferris and the McCormick Sideroads. Thus four persons started east from the Ferris Sideroad while six persons walked west from the McCormick.

After two hours of steady work, we had several piles of refuse for pickup by ERCA staff. A heavy rusty box was rolled up a bank, left for the pickup crew. Three truck rims and two well rusted metal barrels were moved up another slope to the trail side. An old barbeque in three sections was rescued from the south ditch beside the trail. As well, the usual litter was collected – aluminum pop cans for recycling, bottles (glass and recyclable plastic bottles), wrappers, styrofoam, and agricultural leftovers including plastic sheeting, broken tomato baskets, and discarded fungicide containers.

Our first Greenway cleanup went well. JoAnn has indicated that our fall cleanup will be directed at the ditches where we should find more agricultural litter. Thank you to everyone who came out and especially to JoAnn who organized this efficient cleanup activity.

Hillman Shorebirds

Tom Hince posted the following message on the *Ontbirds* listserv in late April 2003: After three weeks in Texas, I returned to find that the filling of the new shorebird impoundment at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area had indeed occurred as scheduled in early April. If initial observations are any indication, its going to be a great success!

On April 23rd, there were:

75 Dunlin	175 Ruddy Ducks
120 Pectoral Sandpiper	10 Bufflehead
25 Greater Yellowlegs	12 Lesser Scaup
18 Lesser Yellowlegs	2 Redhead
4 Killdeer	8 Ring-necked Duck
	45 Green-winged Teal
12 Caspian Terns	2 Northern Pintail
4 Forster's Terns	6 Northern Shoveler
1 Great Black-backed Gull	2 Blue-winged Teal
200+ Ring-billed Gulls	8 Mallard
75 Bonaparte's Gulls	1 American Black Duck
4 Herring Gulls	10 American Wigeon
	4 Canada Geese

And I think it's only going to get better! Just a reminder to be sure to park in the designated lot at NW Hillman Marsh, and pay the entrance fee at the self serve kiosk. An annual permit is available directly from ERCA (visit their website at www.erca.org or call 519 776-5209).

Hillman Marsh is just north of Point Pelee National Park, in Essex County, Ontario about 45 minutes drive southeast of Windsor, Ontario.

To reach Hillman Marsh Conservation Area from Erie Street (Hwy 77) in Leamington, turn east at the Heinz plant (Oak Street) and continue east for 6.5 kilometres to the entrance on the right (south) side of the road. Park and walk due south along the fence line of grassy area with the predator exclusion fence. The new impoundment is about 300 yards/metres ahead of you and is accessed by a dike.

A Spring Visit to the Poison Sumac Swamp

Betty Learmouth

Eleven ECFNC members met in Don Huber's yard on the Huffman Road south of Harrow on April 26, 2003 for an opportunity to visit The Nature Conservancy of Canada's Poison Sumac Swamp property. Once our group had gathered we drove our vehicles down Mr. Huber's half-mile long lane to the parking area on the property, located in the northeast corner of the site.

The information in the following two paragraphs is quoted from page 227 of the ERCA publication Environmentally Significant Areas of the Essex Region by Micheal J. Oldham (1983). Most of this site is low-lying and swampy. Poison Sumac and Panicked Dogwood are dominant in the swampy portions. The northeast corner of the woodlot is drier, and has been somewhat disturbed by cattle grazing. The southwest portion of the site is dominated by Yellow Birch (Swamp Birch). Understory species in this area are Red Maple, Silver Maple, White Ash, Black Cherry, and Hackberry. Soils are sandy loam. Agriculture surrounds the woodlot on all sides.

This site is the only Poison Sumac swamp in the Essex Region. Undoubtedly such areas were more widespread prior to land clearing and drainage for agriculture. Two swamp-inhabiting woody plants, Poison Sumac and Swamp Birch, occur here, and nowhere else in the Region. Skunk Cabbage, another species commonly associated with swamps, is more abundant here than in any other site in the Region. The sandy soils at this site make the area suitable for a number of Carolinian species.

Upon reassembling after parking our vehicles, the golden blossoms of Marsh Marigold caught our eyes. These blooming plants were seen in the ditch on the property's north boundary adjacent to agricultural lands. In this same area, which is upland forest habitat, we found both Spring Beauty and Trout Lily in bloom. Clumps of Wild Leek were scattered about this portion of the property.

Next to some fallen limbs, we found three Wake Robin plants, the dark petals visible in the flower buds which were just ready to unfurl. Mayapple colonies were seen here as well, looking like so many green parasols on the forest floor.

As we worked our way south on the property, we located some wet spots, where we found the new yellow-green leaves of Skunk Cabbage. We found only one plant displaying the cap-like spathe, with a withered blossom inside.

Other plants located in the drier portions included Spring Cress, Running Strawberry Bush and White Trillium. Of special note were a group of twelve Sharp-lobed Hepatica. Luckily Rob Dunlop has brought along his copy of Peterson's Guide to Flowering Plants from which Rob read aloud to us the identification tips and comments on each plant species we identified. From one of the participants we learned the Sharp-lobed Hepatica is blue elsewhere, in contrast to the Poison Sumac Swamp blossoms which were white. Several photographers in the group were pleased to find these delightful plants.

A Spring Visit to the Poison Sumac Swamp continued....

Our next find in a wet area was a cluster of Spicebush shrubs in bloom. These four small trees provided a wonderful touch of yellow among the surrounding somber woodland tree species.

At the edge of a wide pool of water, we looked across at a single Poison Sumac tree. This was the same small tree we had examined during our February excursion. At that time the area was frozen but a thick shrub thicket blocked our passage beyond this point. Again we noted the Poison Sumac's gray bark, lack of twigs, and barren fruit stalks. Turning away from this wet swampy area, impassable to us with our inadequate footwear, we made our way towards the east over drier ground.

Away from the sun among some Red Cedars, we found the area to be cool and damp. The presence of deer was revealed to us by hoof prints in the soft soil. On a mossy slope around a Red Cedar, we identified several leaves of emerging Canada Mayflower which added a northern flavour to this part of the swamp. Other plants we found as we made our way east then north towards our vehicles were Wood Anemone, and Greenbrier. We noted small Marsh Marigold plants at a cool wet spot. One plant had blue-green leaves which prompted a discussion of the plant's identity. Nearby a plant with yellow green leaves looked more like a traditional Marsh Marigold plant.

We enjoyed our afternoon in the Poison Sumac Swamp and we do appreciate The Nature Conservancy of Canada's permission to enter this wonderful property. Our thanks also to Don Huber for allowing us access to his yard and laneway.

Earth Day, 2003

Betty Learmouth

Our area's fourteenth annual Earth Day celebrations were held this year on April 27, 2003 on a perfect spring day. Displays were at Ojibway Nature Centre while tree planting was held at Malden Park. Buses from the Windsor Raceway brought a steady flow of visitors to the event.

At Ojibway, displays were set up under the big white tent, entertainment was at the Earth Day stage while food was available in the picnic shelter. Ojibway Nature Centre staff offered nature walks and held an open house in the nature centre. Friends of Ojibway Prairie organized a successful children's craft this year, a huge paper fish mobile.

A number of ECFNC members were part of Earth Day celebrations. ECFNC member Patricia Rhoads of Woodland Farms brought a display which included an information board and native plants for sale including Marsh Marigolds and Columbine.

The ECFNC Heritage Committee organized another bake sale with assistance from members and friends who baked or volunteered to help at the bake table. Volunteers included Marg Calder, Donna Cowie, Shirley Dunlop, Shirley Grondin, JoAnn Grondin, Denise Hartley, Kathy Lesperance, Margaret MacDonald, Donna Roemmele, Pauline Renaud, Bonnie Ross, Mary Schultz (Shirley Dunlop's mother), and Mary Jane Winterton. As usual, all the wonderful homemade baking sold out, with \$371.00 raised for the Heritage Fund. At the display for the Heritage Fund bucket raffle, volunteers who looked after the bucket raffle were Curtis Rhoads, Rob Dunlop, Erica Schentag and Erica's friend.

Other ECFNC members helping elsewhere included Janet Tuite who assisted at the Friends of Ojibway barbecue and Bruno and Eleanor Sfalcin who were looking after The Greater Windsor Horticultural Society display. A number of ECFNC members attended to tour the Earth Day displays. Activities wrapped up in the late afternoon following another successful and well-organized event.

Ninth Annual Pelee Island Weekend, Spring 2003

Betty Learmouth

The annual ECFNC Pelee Island excursion scheduled for May 3 and 4, 2003 had all the ingredients for a perfect weekend – an informed and well organized leader, a full busload of enthusiastic and friendly naturalists, and great weather for an early May migration. This year leader Dave Kraus' wife Michelle and young son eight-month-old Justin had joined the group.

Upon arriving on Pelee Island after disembarking from M.V. Jiimaan at 11:30 a.m., Mary and John Celestino joined us, and then our bus driver dropped us off at the south end of Stone Road. We could feel the sun's warmth on the alvar as we walked toward the Lake Erie shoreline, diverted for a few minutes by migrant Nashville Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and a Painted Lady Butterfly. Of note was the quality of the water flow off the alvar into the Stone Road ditch. The water was sparkling, no suspended soil particles were clouding the water, which then passed through a culvert on South Shore Road, flowed across a lakeside lawn, and onward into Lake Erie. Mary told us the many emerging clusters of leaves were Short's Aster, the blooms of which we will have to wait until September to see.

Our group hiked northward over the exposed limestone shoreline of the Essex Region Conservation Authority's property, enjoying its stark beauty. The sun shone brightly while a cool wind whipped up Lake Erie. We noted the fossiliferous limestone and several large red granite erratics, deposited on the shoreline by glacial action over 10,000 years ago.

Ninth Annual Pelee Island Weekend, Spring 2003 continued...

While waiting for the bus to collect us from Cooper's Road, we watched energetic Yellow-rumped Warblers forage in nearby alvar shrubland while Tree Swallows chatted overhead. Mary Celestino found several Miami Mist plants to show our group. As we waited at the Cooper's Road turnabout, we were joined by a group of London, Ontario high school students who were participating in a program at The Wilds of Pelee Island Conservation Centre. They had chosen the flooded ERCA trail for their hike rather than the shoreline. Often the alvar is flooded in spring as the limestone bedrock prevents the accumulated rain water from draining away. Eventually the water will evaporate with drought conditions typical by early summer.

Our bus driver dropped us off at the Westview for lunch after which we drove to Dave's property on Victoria Road. Dave told us about his restoration effects on his property and the conservation easement recently placed on the property which will protect its natural heritage values in perpetuity.

We were entertained by Dave's description of an Eastern Fox Snake discovered raiding a Red-winged Blackbird's nest on the property. Dave could hear the racket caused by the agitated Red-winged Blackbirds that were attacking the Eastern Fox Snake. As Dave approached the tree where all the quarreling was occurring, the snake dropped a Red-winged Blackbird fledgling, descended from the tree, and disappeared. Dave felt he had saved the snake's life from the furious blackbirds.

After our visit on Dave's property, we proceeded to Lighthouse Provincial Nature Reserve, spotting Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets as we drove past Lake Henry. We strolled around the perimeter of the newly exposed sandbar in Lake Henry which has been colonized by cottonwood, phragmites and willows. Forster's Terns flew back and forth while a single individual posed off shore on a fallen weathered tree trunk. In a shallow inlet, two Spotted Sandpipers and a Lesser Yellowlegs fed quietly as a turtle basked nearby. Along the Lighthouse trail and in the vicinity of the restored lighthouse, we saw Red-breasted Merganser, Red-headed Woodpecker, Belted Kingfisher, Black-capped Chickadee, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, and White-throated Sparrow.

In the evening we enjoyed the buffet at the Anchor and Wheel Inn's dining room, decorated with a nautical souvenirs.

Sunday morning we reunited at the Westview for a hearty breakfast before departing for Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve. As we climbed aboard our bus, Pelee Island birder Rob Tymstra suggested to Dave that a stop at house number 1616 on the McCormick Road would be worth our while. As instructed, we stopped at the designated sign which is a shoreline property opposite the Nature Reserve. Scanning the shoreline, we found a flock of at least 24 Willets at water's edge. This stop also yielded a handsome Red-headed Woodpecker high in a Red Maple and Chipping Sparrows foraging along the lawn's edge.

At the Fish Point trail, Mary and John Celestino joined us. The Nature Reserve's forest floor was a green carpet, quite remarkable as the previous week's cool rainy weather had somehow provided the conditions for a perfect display of White Trillium and Dutchman's Breeches to occur simultaneously. Mary drew our attention to the leaves of Appendaged Waterleaf, the lower leaves "spotted" as if by water droplets while the

upper leaves remain unblemished. We enjoyed Wild Leek, Solomon's Seal, Herb Robert, and Yellow Violets along the trail. Dave Kraus located a singing Carolina Wren while Ann Barbour heard a House Wren.

Upon stepping off the Fish Point boardwalk, we found the West Beach to be sunny and warm. In the trees bordering the beach we spotted Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler. Following our rambling walk on the beach, we boarded our bus for our next destination, The Wilds of Pelee Island Conservation Centre.

Concerned about the lane's condition, we walked into the Conservation Centre which gave us an opportunity to watch a male Eastern Bluebird near a nesting box and a colony of Tree Swallows around their boxes.

The Wilds of Pelee Island Conservation Centre's Executive Director Ben Porchuk welcomed us and told us about the various projects taking place on the fifty-six acre property which will benefit Pelee Island snakes. This fall work will begin that will restore wetland on the property as drainage tiles on the former agricultural land are scheduled to be removed.

Ben showed us the property's office which was built by Ben and his father on the foundation of a house originally constructed in the 1920's. We followed a pathway through the alvar shrubland to the shower building, continuing on to the composting toilets. Ben explained that the composting process takes place in two large chambers, visible behind a large glass window. The final product from the toilets resembles peat moss.

We were greeted by the high school students in the kitchen area who were part way through a two week stay at The Wilds of Pelee Island where they have been working on a variety of projects. A future project for students is the construction of ten by ten foot bunkhouses which visiting groups will adopt and maintain.

A construction project now complete that students have assisted with is the ice house, a large circular earthen mound. Ben opened the ice house door and invited us to step inside to view the interior. A number of coolers were stored in the ice house, which was surprising cool and damp. We could see the rubber tires which are an important part of the ice house construction. Ice packs on the shelf help to keep the temperatures cool. A snake chamber has been constructed under the ice house, with an external entranceway provided by a plastic pipe.

Leaving the ice house, we paused on the pathway at an exposed area of limestone pavement, a visible indicator of the alvar habitat in which we were walking. Ben told us that a pair of Yellow-breasted Chats had nested on this property in 1999, but this species appears to be in decline on Pelee Island. Is the habitat no longer appropriate? Are the thickets not suitable following recent prescribed burns? Another species of interest, the White-eyed Vireo nested on the property during 1995 and 1996.

Ben showed us a large compost pile, built to attract nesting snake species. The pile is constructed in such a manner that it is soft, generates heat and has decaying matter, all conditions that attract nesting snakes. This particular pile has proven to be successful with young garter snakes and a female Eastern Fox Snake found emerging from the site. This year the compost pile will be made even more attractive to nesting snakes as old snake eggs will be introduced. Plans call for compost piles to be built on Pelee Island's two provincial reserves.

Ninth Annual Pelee Island Weekend, Spring 2003 continued ...

We were intrigued by a 'hot rock' modelled after a particular set of cement stairs that seems to attract snakes like a magnet. Under the visible steps, there is a solid mass of rocks where rodents can nest and snakes may enter.

Ben Porchuk has kindly provided more details about the 'hot rock.' In 2001, the Wilds of Pelee Island started to design heating structures for snakes. The structures consisted of several flat rocks mortared together to form large thermal masses. Snakes, especially pregnant females, gravitate to these structures. The right thickness (20 – 30 cm) ensures that they rarely warm over 30 degrees Celsius during the day and they seldom drop below 20 degrees Celsius at night time.

A cavity is created within the structure and in some cases, snakes have been known to spend weeks inside 'hot rocks,' especially Massasauga Rattlesnakes in Georgian Bay. After a couple of years of experimentation, the Wilds of Pelee Island designed a new structure in the spring of this year. The new structures are comprised of solid concrete and they are made in two halves; a top and bottom so that researchers can monitor their usage by large snakes. The plan is to place these structures in several locations on the island where the group is planning to restore wildlife habitat. These cement 'hot rocks' will thus enable the researchers to determine the large snake usage (Blue Racer, Eastern Fox Snake, Lake Erie Water Snake) of habitats before, during and after habitat restoration.

While we were visiting, the historic first concrete 'hot rock' was being poured into the mould that was built by Keith Dietrich of *Permanent Illusions*, a concrete mould specialty company from Stratford, Ontario. By July, the Wilds of Pelee Island hopes to have constructed 10 'hot rocks,' placing them in strategic locations in the nature reserves and on several private properties where habitat restoration is occurring.

These ongoing efforts to build various microhabitats on the property are a means to speed up the process of introducing imperfections to the landscape. During 1999, 100 young Eastern Fox Snakes were born on the property in a compost pile. In 2002, three individuals from the original 100 were found on the property, an encouragement for further restoration efforts.

Ben showed us a handsome yearling Eastern Fox Snake which had two "Mickey Mouse" markings that would be recorded and which would aid in the future identification of this individual when it is recovered. Each individual Eastern Fox Snake has distinctive markings rather like our fingerprints.

Reluctantly we bid goodbye to Ben and all the volunteers engaged in creating habitat for Pelee Island snakes. We had a hurried lunch at the Westview then boarded the M.V. Jiimaan for the four o'clock sailing.

Many thanks to Dave Kraus who organized another wonderful spring weekend on Pelee Island. We especially enjoyed the company of Michelle and Justin Kraus. A special thank you to Mary and John Celestino who joined us to assist with plant identification.

Hillman Marsh, May 10 - 11, 2003

Shirley Grondin

Hillman Marsh once again hosted the "Song and Shorebird Festival." The new shorebird habitat added more birding opportunities for visitors this year. A hike to the new habitat was offered each day with Saturday led by Bev Wannick and Sunday by Paul DesJardin.

Although Hillman does not have a formal banding programme, banding was done on this weekend to help educate the public on the banding process and what they should do if they find a banded bird. Seeing the birds up close is an added bonus. Since it is easy to see all their markings, it is a good way to learn your birds! The banding this year was done by some of the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory volunteers - Phil Roberts, Carl Pascoe, Bob Hall-Brooks and Jason Sodergren, and assisted by Rachael Powless, Dorothy McLeer and JoAnn Grondin. On Saturday they banded 47 birds and on Sunday 36. This was done in spite of a slow start - remember how wet each of those mornings were, but the skies cleared up by late morning both days and the birds were active.

Some of the birds banded include: Common Yellow-throat, Yellow Warbler, Gray Catbird, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, White-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, American Goldfinch, Blue Jay, Least Flycatcher, Black-and-white Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, White-crown Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Waterthrush, Tree Swallow, and Magnolia Warbler.

Additional species banded on Sunday include Bay-breasted Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler and Palm Warbler. There were many other species seen such as the Bald eagle, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Great Blue Heron, Peregrine Falcon, Dunlin, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Solitary Sandpiper, Canada Goose, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Pectoral Sandpiper, Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Shoveler, Chipping Sparrow, Scarlet Tanager, Gadwall, Ruddy Duck, Wilson's Phalarope, Least Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper and Mallard.

Visitors and volunteers were fed by the club's cafe, which served up muffins, cookies, hotdogs, pop and coffee. Thanks to volunteers Janet Tuite, Bonnie Ross, Marg Calder, Irene Girard and JoAnn Grondin for a job well done!

Second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (2001-2005)

The following article appeared in *Wildlife Watchers: Report on Monitoring*, Issue 9, Spring 2003 as a Supplement to *Seasons* (Spring 2003). Author of the article is Mike Cadman of the Canadian Wildlife Service and coordinator of the Second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. The article had a subheading "First two years of data collection yield striking results."

Thanks to a tremendous effort by Ontario's birders, the second Atlas project is going very well. After two years of field work, the more than 300,000 records provided allow an examination of how bird distribution and abundances have changed since the first Atlas, which took place from 1981-1985. Although we are comparing two years of data from the first (so caution is needed in interpreting results – particularly apparent declines), there are already some marked changes evident, and some of the highlights are included here.

Seven of the species showing the largest proportional increases have been the object of successful reintroduction programs, or otherwise are benefiting directly from human assistance. The Peregrine Falcon has gone from three squares in the first Atlas to 49 in the current project. The Trumpeter Swan was not found in any squares in the first Atlas, but has been recorded in 49 in the new Atlas; while Mute Swan is up from 17 squares in the first Atlas to 84 squares reported to date, and the House Finch has increased from 187 squares to 615 in this Atlas. Canada Goose is up to 1,233 squares already, compared to 944 in the first Atlas; and the Eastern Bluebird, benefiting from nest box programs, is already up to 792 squares, compared to 737 in the first Atlas. A big increase is apparent for Turkeys, from 19 squares in the last Atlas to 351 so far!

On the other hand, several species at risk have shown marked contractions. The Red-headed Woodpecker has been reported in only 174 squares, compared to 732 in the first Atlas. Loggerhead Shrikes have been reported in only 31 squares, compared to 145 in the first Atlas, and Northern Bobwhite has been reported in 17 squares, compared to 79. Henslow's Sparrow is down from 38 squares to only seven so far. These latter three species use grassland habitat, and their continuing apparent declines may be indicative of more wide-spread declines in birds using this habitat.

Some southern species are expanding north into the province. For example, Carolina Wren, Hooded Warbler, Orchard Oriole, Northern Mockingbird, Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Tufted Titmouse have already been reported in more squares in this Atlas than they were in the first.

Although 2002 was just the second of five project years, already there is a wealth of information in the new Atlas. However, we still need much more data to complete the picture. More complete coverage will tell us more about the current distribution and status of Ontario's birds, and the better it will be as a bird conservation tool.

More information is available on-line:

www.birdsontario.org

Click on **Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas**

Learn more about atlasing by contacting your local Regional Coordinators Karen Cedar and Paul Pratt at Ojibway Nature Centre.

K. Walter Ranta Memorial Park in Amherstburg: Background Report and Call to Action

Bert Harris

Join The Friends of Ranta Park in their efforts to preserve 100% of the park and to restore its habitat.

The Basic Facts

Ranta Park and Marina is in Amherstburg at the meeting of the Canard and Detroit Rivers. The entrance is on County Road 20 (formerly Hwy. 18), about 1/2 km. south of the sweeping 4 lane bridge over River Canard. The park measures roughly 150 x 330 metres (500 x 1,100 feet) which corresponds to an area of 5 hectares or about 13 acres. It has over 125 metres (400 feet) of frontage on the Canard River. It is bordered by Ranta public marina to the north, County Road 20 (formerly Hwy. 18) to the east, a canal and the Fortowsky strawberry farm to the south and the Canard River to the west. The park and marina are owned by the Town of Amherstburg. The park is zoned for recreational use (special class RE-4, a neighbourhood park) and the marina is zoned as agricultural land.

History

The property was originally wetland. Canals were dug on its north and south border, a large pond was created near the middle and the balance was raised with fill. Located immediately north of this land, were Allied Chemical's (now General Chemical) brine well facilities. Brine wells dissolve underground salt deposits, leaving behind layers of rock that are honeycombed with underground caverns. Land over these caverns sometimes experiences significant settling and there is even the possibility of a cave-in. Some of these caverns reach under parts of the Ranta property. Allied Chemical was therefore concerned about the safe use of this property. When a housing development was proposed for this site, they objected. Negotiations ensued and in the end Allied Chemical acquired the property and then in turn deeded it to the Township of Anderdon (now the Town of Amherstburg) but with the following restrictions.

The All-important restrictions

- (1) The property is to be used for recreational purposes in perpetuity.
- (2) No commercial activities are allowed. No stores. No services. No businesses.
- (3) No use of the property which would involve overnight sleeping. In particular no houses, no overnight camping and no overnight stays on boats.
- (4) The property was to be developed according to a plan and sketch created by M. M. Dillon Consulting Engineers.

The Terrain

The M. M. Dillon plan called for a marina along the north canal and a mundane city park for the balance of the property. How mundane? Well, the sketch showed a totally flat park with lawn, trees, pedestrian paths, picnic tables and a break wall with a guardrail. What eventually got created was a little more interesting. In 1995 the Township added some hills, a small island and a variety of trees and shrubs. They also kept the large pond and reshaped it with an irregular border and gradually sloping banks. The break wall didn't get completed. Most of the shoreline is built of concrete rubble. The marina was constructed in fairly close accordance with the original plan.

Recent History

In 1995 the Township of Anderdon prepared a Waterfront Master Plan which included a proposal for development of Ranta Park. Despite the restrictions on the property, the report proposed a new 64 boat transient marina, a

shoreline restaurant and a convenience store be built on the parkland. The plan also called for some landscaping, the aforementioned island, hills and trees. Because this part of the plan was practical, inexpensive and non-controversial and partial provincial funding was available, it was the only part of the plan for the park which was implemented. However, on Feb. 3, 2003 the Mayor of Amherstburg proposed dusting off the 1995 Waterfront Master Plan and proceeding with implementation of the transient marina on the parkland. He asked council to vote on taking the first step by spending \$25,000 for an engineering study to update the transient marina plan. The vote was a 3-3 tie and the motion was lost. This proposal was then discussed by council during the 2003 budget deliberations at which point it was dropped for lack of council support. As long as the official master plan for the park property calls for a transient marina, more parking lots, a goofy golf course and only a sliver of natural area, there is cause for concern.

Why a natural park?

A natural habitat park is usable by and of interest to the vast majority of the public.

It would provide an excellent educational resource for our children.

A quality wildlife park would be a strong tourist attraction.

The Town of Amherstburg has 16 parks, none of which is a natural habitat park.

Scientists have determined that we need a bare minimum of 12% natural areas (and preferably 20 to 30 %) to support biodiversity. Essex County has only approximately 5% natural land area.

Natural habitat restoration is relatively inexpensive and there are many sources of funding for restoration.

Public access to shoreline areas and especially natural shoreline areas is extremely limited. Amherstburg has about 46 km of Detroit River and Lake Erie shoreline. Currently the public's only access to natural shoreline is 1/2 km. at Holiday Beach.

Why here?

The property is strategically located at the mouth of the Canard River and adjacent to the Detroit River and hundreds of acres of Class 1 provincially significant wetlands. As a result, even with the mediocre habitat that existed in the park before it was buried in dredgate last summer, the park attracted a surprising quantity of waterfowl and other wildlife. Wildlife viewable in the park or in the Detroit or Canard River adjacent to the park included at-risk species such as Bald Eagle, Black-crowned Night-heron, Eastern Spiny Soft-shelled Turtle, Queen and Eastern Fox Snake and Meadow Crayfish. More common and notable visitors to the park included Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Muskrat, Painted Turtles, Double-crested Cormorants, Canada Geese, swans and many varieties of ducks and other birds. With proper restoration of the natural habitat, the park will attract an even greater quantity and variety of wildlife for public viewing.

Our Natural Park Proposal

Our vision for the park is to replicate within its borders the key natural habitat types (primarily wetland) that are present in the immediate vicinity of the park. Authentic habitats will in turn attract and support the unique wildlife associated with each of them. We also wish to design the park to provide the best possible opportunities for viewing wildlife in a natural setting with minimum disturbance of the animals.

The essential elements for a quality restoration are a pond and marshland, a natural beach, more gently sloped canal banks, more trees by the parking lot, less lawn and a greater variety of native plant species.

Our wish list includes a viewing tower, covered viewing platforms/blinds and a boardwalk.

We would like to hear your feedback and suggestions.

For more information or to help, contact us at:

Bert Harris 966-3263; e-mail: rantapark@sympatico.ca

**POINT PELEE NATURAL HISTORY NEWS
Volume 3, Number 1 (Spring 2003)**

This new issue (20 pages) contains the following:

ARTICLES:

UNUSUAL INVADERS OF LAKE ERIE - Joseph H. Leach

[A second article on invasive species in Lake Erie, this account details a number of oddball species including European Flounder, Chinese Mitten-Crab, Grass Carp, Bighead Carp, Pacu, Piranha and Suckermouth Catfish; several of these species were first recorded in the vicinity of Point Pelee.]

NOTEWORTHY BIRD RECORDS: DECEMBER 2002 to FEBRUARY 2003 - Alan Wormington

[A total of 3.5 pages detailing such species as Blue-winged Teal, Purple Sandpiper, Eastern Phoebe and Tree Swallow.]

POINT PELEE BUTTERFLIES: ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR 2002 - Alan Wormington

[A total of 47 species was recorded within PPNP, which is lower than normal; the season began on February 25 (Mourning Cloak) and ended on November 11 when the last four species were found.]

THE STATUS OF BLUE GROSBEAK AT POINT PELEE - Alan Wormington

[This account details the 47 known occurrences at Point Pelee, since the first in 1957; included is a complete listing with dates, plumage information, locations and observers.]

POINT PELEE DRAGONFLIES: ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR 2002 - Paul R. DesJardins

[For the first-ever summary, a total of 79 observations were submitted; unusual species found in 2002 include Slaty Skimmer, Painted Skimmer, Variegated Meadowhawk, Carolina Saddlebags and Red Saddlebags.]

UPDATE ON BROWN PELICANS IN ONTARIO - Alan Wormington

[Some updated information is presented, based on articles previously published in Point Pelee Natural History News and Birders Journal.]

NEWS and ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Shorebird and Duck Habitat at Hillman Marsh
Cave Swallows in 2002: A Correction
Emerald Ash Borer: A New Exotic Invader

UPCOMING EVENTS and OUTINGS:

April to September inclusive

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Included with the articles as described above are a total of 23 photographs.

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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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The Friends of Point Pelee
1118 Point Pelee Drive
Leamington, Ontario
Canada N8H 3V4

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

Point Pelee National Park Birding Excursion

Betty Learmouth

Twelve ECFNC members met at Point Pelee National Park's Visitor Centre on May 19, 2003 for a morning of birding. Those attending usually have a wide range of birding experience which is a great help to those joining the group who are currently discovering the joy of birding. Many in the group had been birding regularly through the 2003 spring migration, thus this outing was an opportunity to report on recent sightings.

Weather on the morning of May 19, 2003 was cool but sunny and clear with little wind, a marked contrast to the morning of May 13, 2003, when a fall-out of exhausted birds could be viewed easily on the Point's East Beach. Several in the group had participated in a Baillie Birdathon on May 14, 2003, seeking birds at St. Clair National Wildlife Refuge, the Big "O" property in Comber, and Rondeau Provincial Park with tallies of 99 and 100 bird species reported. Thus the group was very much "tuned into" the morning's migration on May 19, 2003.

After some discussion, the chosen route was the Woodland Nature Trail behind the Visitor Centre which offers a variety of habitats. The Tip had already been checked out by Helene and Donna and was reported to be "slow." In the mixed habitat of hard woods and Red Cedar, Orchard Oriole and Yellow Warbler were seen with a Swainson's Thrush added. Overhead three Great Blue Herons were flying southward towards the Tip. In the woodland, beyond the Botham Tree Trail, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Baltimore Oriole, Nashville Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting were quickly added to the morning's list.

A walk on the narrow trail that passes through the Red Cedar Savannah proved to be productive as a variety of species were seen well. Noted were a flycatcher species, a male Redstart displaying its tail markings obligingly, Gray Catbird, a female Eastern Towhee busily foraging amongst leaves under the Red Cedars, and male and female Orchard Orioles. For the moments when no birds were in sight, the naturalists enjoyed the spring wild flowers in the Red Cedar Savannah, particularly Starry False Solomon's-seal blooming in profusion. At one spot by the trail, Canada Mayflower was noted with its flower buds almost ready to open. Just at the Woodland Nature Trail that meanders through the sloughs, a colourful male Magnolia Warbler was noted low in fallen branches as it foraged for insects.

At the first boardwalk in the sloughs, we were treated to views of a male and female Black-throated Blue Warbler as these birds moved about in the maples nearby. Along the trail as we worked our way northwards, we saw Turkey Vulture, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, heard Eastern Pewee, observed three colourful Blackburnian Warblers, a Blackpoll Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and enjoyed the call of a secretive Wood Thrush. Along the trail the native plants in bloom included Wild Geranium, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Sweet Cicely, False Solomon's Seal, and Spring Beauty. Unfortunately, the exotic plant species Garlic Mustard is wide spread, although the arid conditions in the Red Cedar Savannah do not encourage Garlic Mustard growth.

Upon returning to the Visitor Centre, Randy reported that an entry in the observation book stated that Tom Hince had sighted a Common Eider at the Tip at 8:20 a.m., the approximate time we would have arrived at the Tip if we had taken the Park's transport instead of opting for our woodland trail walk during which we had seen or heard 34 bird species.

ECFNC Nature Quiz, 2002

At the ECFNC's Annual Meeting held in March, the nature quiz between reports has been well received as it is both educational and entertaining. Quiz compiler and ECFNC President Phil Roberts has provided The Egret with questions from the 2002 Annual Meeting. The 2003 quiz will be provided in a future issue of The Egret. Plan to attend next year's Annual Meeting to enjoy another skill testing nature quiz!

Question # 1

Which of these plants is a grass and a sedge? Actual specimens were passed around.

Question # 2

What Essex County Field Naturalist makes this sound? A tape played with the sound of an electrical tool.

Question # 3

What is the common strategy use by the birds building these nests? The first nest passed around for examination is built in a nest box. The second nest used human made material for nest construction. The third nester used a human made porch and planter for nest construction. A bonus is give to the correct identification of each species that constructed these nests.

Question # 4

What do these species have in common? Three slides were shown, including Lake Erie Watersnake, Bald Eagle and Blue Racer. A bonus is given for naming a fourth species, a colourful warbler.

Question # 5

These owls are common in Essex County. Can you identify them by sound? A tape is played.

Question # 6

What is the common method by which these seeds are dispersed? Seeds are passed around. A clue is provided. The seeds do not float. The seed pod is shown which acts as a raft from which the seed drops.

Question # 7

At 2 metres (6.5 feet) across, what is Essex County's biggest tree species?

Question # 8

What do all these birds have in common? Four slides are shown of Killdeer, Black-capped Chickadee, Bobolink, and Whip-poor-will. A bonus is given for identification.

Answers: Question # 1: A stem of grass is round in cross section while sedges are triangular. Sedges have edges, grass has joints. Question # 2: One that monitors nest boxes using an electric screwdriver. Question # 3: All these birds used human resources. The birds who build the nests were Tree Swallow, Baltimore Oriole and House Finch. Question # 4: All species are threatened / endangered residents of Essex County. The bonus question species is Prothonotary Warbler, a recently listed endangered specie. Question # 5: The owls on the tape were Eastern Screech-Owl (whinny), Eastern Screech-Owl (tremor) and Northern Saw-whet Owl (call). Question # 6: The seeds are dispersed by water. The seeds are those of the American Lotus. Question # 7: Cottonwood. Question # 8: These birds are onomatopoeic (on-o-mato-poet-ic). They are named after the sound they make. Other species included would be Eastern Peewee, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Dickcissel, Willet, and Bob-white Quail.

ECFNC Activities and Excursions, June 2003 through November 2003

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, contact Bert Harris (966-3263), JoAnn Grondin (734-0056), 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

June/July - 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 (944-0825) to register for this excursion with Lynda.

Wednesday, June 4 -- Ojibway Nature Centre - Nature Hotspots - Discover the breeding birds and other special features of our local hotspots. Meet at the Rowson's Tilbury West Conservation Area with the walk scheduled from 6 p.m.-8 p.m. \$7/trip. Call Ojibway for directions and more details.

Wednesday, June 11 -- Ojibway Nature Centre - Nature Hotspots - Discover the breeding birds and other special features of our local hotspots. Meet at the Devonwood Conservation Area with the walk scheduled from for early morning 8 a.m. -10 a.m. \$7/trip. Call Ojibway for directions and more details.

June 11 -- ECFNC Members Monthly Meeting -- Our guest speaker will be Gilles Breton, President of the local Purple Martin Society, who is a most enthusiastic supporter of Purple Martins. Meet at the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. in Room C.

Sunday, June 15 -- ECFNC Spring Excursion -- Join ECFNC member Paul Desjardins for a guided butterfly walk at Point Pelee National Park. Meet at the Visitor Centre at 9:30 a.m. At noon hour we will meet at Paula's Place for lunch. This annual excursion is always a great way to prepare for upcoming butterfly counts.

Wednesday, June 18 -- Ojibway Nature Centre - Nature Hotspots - Discover the breeding birds and other special features of our local hotspots. Meet at the Fairplay Woods with the walk scheduled from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. \$7/trip. Call Ojibway for directions and more details.

June 20 -- Ojibway Nature Centre - Bugs, Bats and Beyond - Come out after dark and be a part of Ojibway's fascinating night life. See bats, owls, moths and fireflies. A family discount is available. Friday 7:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m. \$7/adult, \$5/youth.

Sunday, June 22 – ECFNC Spring Excursion - Cleanup on the Greenway – This cleanup will be second of three that the ECFNC has agreed to do during 2003 as part of its adoption of a section of the Greenway. 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 in the early evening at 6:30 p.m. where Walker Road crosses the Greenway just by Colio Wines. We did not clean the first portion of our adopted section on our cleanup in April, so it will be our target for this cleanup.

Tuesday, June 24 - ECFNC Monthly Executive Meeting

Saturday, June 28 – ECFNC Summer Excursion – Join Randy Groundwater for an evening of viewing our night time skies at the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's new facility in Comber, Essex County. To reach the facility from Windsor follow County Road 46 to the Rochester Townline. At this intersection, turn right (south) and watch for the next concession road, South Middle Road. Turn left onto South Middle Road which is a dirt road and proceed for two kilometres. Watch for the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's (RASC) sign on the right. There is a big green barn and the white observatory building on the property. This area is the best site in Essex County for darkness as the area is farmland and woodlots. Meet at 9:30 p.m. If the evening is cloudy, Randy will give us a tour of the new facility and an inside presentation.

Sunday, June 29 - ECFNC Summer Excursion – Enjoy a naturalized garden tour at the home of Bruno and Eleanor Sfalcin followed by a visit to neighbor Camille Pelchat's naturalized pond. To avoid the heat of the afternoon we will meet in the early evening at 6:30 p.m. Bruno and Eleanor live at 3661 Howard Avenue in Windsor, which is between Devonshire Mall and Cabana Road.

July 1 – Point Pelee National Park – Canada Day

Saturday, July 5 – Ojibway Nature Centre - Windsor Butterfly Count - Attention butterfly watchers! Join us for Windsor's ninth annual butterfly tally. Help us with this exciting and valuable inventory of Windsor's butterflies. Lunch is provided by the Friends of Ojibway Prairie. \$5 participant fee to North American Butterfly Association. Saturday (sunup to sundown). Call Ojibway to register and obtain more details.

July 7 – 28 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Captivating Critters (Ages 3-4) Wildlife exploration and nature fun for the younger set. The first day of the class (July 7 and August 11) are one-hour introductory classes for parents and children. July 7 - July 28; August 11 - Sept. 8 (no class Sept.1) Monday 10:00 a.m.-.12:00 p.m. OR 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. \$22/4 weeks plus \$2 material fee.

July 7 – July 11 – Ojibway Nature Centre - Windsor Wildlife Watchers (Ages 7-11)

Discover Windsor's wildlife through activities, hikes and field studies of our natural surroundings. We will be exploring Ojibway Park, Malden Park, Spring Garden Area, Black Oak Heritage Park, Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park and Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. Early drop-off at 8:00 am and late pick-up until 5:00 pm. July 7 - July 11; August 11 - August 15 Monday - Friday 9:00 am-4:00 pm; \$103/week plus \$4 material fee .

July 8 – July 29 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Outdoor Adventures (Ages 10-15)

Learn a variety of techniques for outdoor exploration, from map reading to first aid and from tying knots to wilderness camping. Early drop-off at 8:00 am and late pick-up until 5:00 pm. Tuesday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. \$82/4 days plus \$4 material fee .

July 9 – July 30 – Ojibway Nature Centre - Young Naturalist Day Camp (Ages 7-9)

Swamp walks, nature games and crafts for children ages 7-9. Early drop-off at 8:00 am and late pick-up until 5:00 p.m.; July 9 - July 30; August 6 - August 27; Wednesday 9:00 a.m. -4:00 p.m.; \$82/4 days plus \$2 material fee.

July 9 – ECFNC Members Summer Outdoor Meeting – A highlight of this meeting to be held at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area will be the launch of Gerry Waldron's newly published book entitled *Trees of the Carolinian Forest*, published by Boston Mills Press. Gerry will present a short talk about his book, then will sign copies which will be available at \$24.95 per copy.

Following the book signing, join ECFNC President Phil Roberts for a walk around the Holiday Beach Conservation Area. A highlight of this walk will be the restoration efforts to improve Prothonotary Warbler habitat and an opportunity to view Big Creek Marsh and its wildlife in mid summer. Meet at the Education Building at 7:30 p.m. which is located near the hawk tower facing Lake Erie.

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 10 – July 31 – Ojibway Nature Centre - Kids 'n Kritters (Ages 5-6) Wildlife viewing and nature-oriented activities for children. July 10 - July 31; August 7 - August 28 Thursday 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. OR 1:00-3:00 p.m. \$22/4 weeks plus \$2 material fee

Friday, July 11 – Forest Restoration Tour: Pits and Mounds: the missing link in restoring Carolinian forests, lead by Mathis Natvik. Meet at 14738 McDonald Line in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, park on grass just off road side. From Windsor take Highway 401 to Exit #117 (Highgate). Go south on Orford-Bury Road off the exit, straight at the stop sign in Highgate. Continue 5 km. south of Highgate to McDonald Line, turn left (east), proceed 1 km to 14738 McDonald Line on right (south). Please call or fax to register: (519)-678-3866 or fax (519)-678-3291. Time: 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

July 15 – The tentative Grand Opening of Heinz Bush is scheduled for July 15 at 6:00 p.m. Directions to the Heinz Bush: If you are proceeding east along Oak Street in Leamington, pass through the intersection with Erie Street, then look for the next intersection which is Wigle Street. Turn right onto Wigle Street, proceed one block, turn left on Maxon Avenue, follow the curve which becomes Sherman Street, continuing a short distance to Ecole Saint-Michel where you can park. A pathway leads away from the school driveway along the fence, eventually entering the Heinz Bush.

July 17 - 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

July 19 - Point Pelee National Park - Parks Day

July 30 - ECFNC Monthly Executive Meeting

July 31 - Ojibway Nature Centre Prairie Days - Bugs and Blooms - A unique opportunity to explore the relationship between prairie plants and insects. Thursday 6 p.m.-8 p.m. \$7/ trip

August 5, 12, 19, 26 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Reach Out to Nature - Each morning will be filled with fascinating facts and fun activities about Ojibway's favourite wildlife. A family discount is available. Tuesday 9:30-11:30 a.m. \$7/adult, \$5/youth

Tuesday, August 5 - Forest Restoration Tour: Pits and Mounds: the missing link in restoring Carolinian forests, lead by Mathis Natvik. Meet at 14738 McDonald Line in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, park on grass just off road side. From Windsor take Highway 401 to Exit #117 (Highgate). Go south on Orford-Bury Road off the exit, straight at the stop sign in Highgate. Continue 5 km. south of Highgate to McDonald Line, turn left (east), proceed 1 km to 14738 McDonald Line on right (south). Please call or fax to register: (519)-678-3866 or fax (519)-678-3291. Time: 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

August 7 - August 28 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Kids 'n Kritters (Ages 5-6) Wildlife viewing and nature-oriented activities for children. July 10 - July 31; August 7 - August 28 Thursday 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. OR 1:00-3:00 p.m. \$22/4 weeks plus \$2 material fee

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August 13 – ECFNC Members Summer Outdoor Meeting – ECFNC Treasurer Teresa Austrin and ECFNC Vice President Joe Parent invite ECFNC members to join them at their home at 675 Mersea Road 12 to enjoy an evening with their bats. Phil Roberts will bring a mist net, light tag and bat detector as part of the equipment to enjoy this evening activity. Meet at 8:00 p.m. Directions: If you are coming from Windsor proceed along Highway 3 East. At Highway 77, north of Leamington, turn left on Highway 77 and proceed North. Proceed for about 4 miles to Mersea Road 7, turning right at this intersection, and proceed East for about two kilometres to the first stop sign which will be the intersection with Mersea Road 12. At this intersection, turn right and watch for the farm on the right and the house sign which is 675 Mersea Road 12.

August 20 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Weekday Warblers - Eliminate the confusion of fall warblers with this field trip at the peak of warbler migration. Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. \$10/trip

August 21 – ECFNC Summer Excursion – Enjoy an evening of kayaking at Sturgeon Creek or on the Pelee Marsh if water is low on Sturgeon Creek. No experience is necessary for this enjoyable event. Meet at Pelee Wings Nature Store at 6:30 p.m. Advance registration is necessary so call early. Please call trip leader Mike Malone at 326-5193 to book your spot as there is limited space available. A small equipment rental fee of \$7.00 will be collected.

August 27 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Weekday Warblers - Eliminate the confusion of fall warblers with this field trip at the peak of warbler migration. Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. \$10/trip

August 27 - ECFNC Monthly Executive Meeting

August 28 – Ojibway Nature Centre Prairie Days - Bats & Blacklights. Thursday 7:30-9:30 p.m. \$7/trip

September 3 – 28 – Point Pelee National Park – Monarchs and more hikes, Wednesday to Sunday

Sept 3 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Weekday Warblers - Eliminate the confusion of fall warblers with this field trip at the peak of warbler migration. Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. \$10/trip

Sept 6 – Point Pelee National Park – W.E. Saunders Birding Odyssey – Call PPNP for more details

Sept 10 – ECFNC Members Monthly Meeting – Our speaker will be ERCA Biologist Dan Lebedyk who will be discuss invasive wetland species including phragmites and purple loosestrife. Meet at the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m. in the Cafeteria on the first floor.

Sept 13 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Native Plant Sale, 10:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call for more information.

September 13/14 – 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. Bob Pettit will present a hawk identification workshop on September 13, 2003 at 1:30 p.m. in the Education Building. 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 13/14 - Point Pelee National Park Program – Butterfly Gardening Workshop - Contact the Visitor Centre for more details.

September 14 – ECFNC Fall Excursion – Join Richard and Cathie Smith for a visit to their 32 acre property in the Town of Essex which the Smith's call "Dragonfly Downs." Richard and Cathie have owned their property for ten years, undertaking restoration projects including pond construction, tree plantings and a prairie meadow. The Smith's address is 6965 6th Concession of the Town of Essex (the former Colchester South Township). From Essex at the Highway 3 By-Pass take the Arner Townline, County Road 23, south and watch for the 6th Concession on your right. Turn right (heading west) and watch for the second house from the Arner Townline on your left. Meet in the late afternoon at 4:00 p.m.

September 20/21 – 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. Bob Pettit will present a hawk identification workshop on September 20, 2003 at 1:30 p.m. in the Education Building. Paul Pratt will lead a fall dragonfly migration walk at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 21, 2003. 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.

Sept 20 – 21 – Ontario Field Ornithologists Annual Convention – Birds of Point Pelee – Saturday, September 20 features birding and butterfly field trips followed by an evening banquet at the Roma Club. Guest speaker Ethan Meleg will present a light-hearted and passionate look at the pursuit of bird photography, illustrated by Ethan's stunning photos. More field trips are scheduled for Sunday. Registration is \$45.00 which includes the banquet, program and field trips. To register, mail your registration made payable to the Ontario Field Ornithologists (include name, address, phone, e-mail) to Chris Escott, 1 Shouldice Court, Toronto, ON M2L 2S3

Sept 21 – ECFNC Fall Excursion – Join Dave Kraus for a walk on his Essex County property. This walk is scheduled for earlier in the fall than last year's walk. 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, 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 in the late afternoon at 4:00 p.m.

September 27 - Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Peregrine Falcon Day and Fall Songbirds, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. - Enjoy a day 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. Bob Pettit will present a hawk identification workshop in the Education Building. 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. (Note that Sunday, September 28 is a Memorial Forest day. Due to traffic congestion we will have full activities on Saturday with reduced activities on Sunday i.e, no banding demonstrations).

October 8 - ECFNC Members Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, October 15 - -- Forest Restoration Tour: Pits and Mounds: the missing link in restoring Carolinian forests, lead by Mathis Natvik. Meet at 14738 McDonald Line in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, park on grass just off road side. From Windsor take Highway 401 to Exit #117 (Highgate). Go south on Orford-Bury Road off the exit, straight at the stop sign in Highgate. Continue 5 km. south of Highgate to McDonald Line, turn left (east), proceed 1 km to 14738 McDonald Line on right (south). Please call or fax to register: (519)-678-3866 or fax (519)-678-3291. Time: 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

November 8 – ECFNC Annual Dinner – Guest speaker will be Canadian Wildlife Service Research Biologist Chip Weseloh who will speak about his research in Lake Erie's Western Basin and the Detroit River. Chip has been studying populations of colonial nesting bird species such as Double-crested Cormorants, Herring Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls for over thirty years in the region as well as conducting toxicology studies. Mark your calendar for this event booked for the recently renovated Windsor Manor Club, 1140 Goyeau Street, Windsor, ON