

**Essex County
FIELD NATURALISTS'
CLUB**

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THE EGRET, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1985

newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club, P.O. Box 3421, Tecumseh, Ont. N8N3C4

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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Junior Naturalists' Camp at Ojibway Park

July 15 to 19 and August 12 to 16 for ages 7 to 9
 July 22 to 26 and August 19 to 23 for ages 10 to 12
 Call Ojibway Park at 966-5852 for further details

E.C.F.N.C. Field Trips

Field trips for the summer will be announced at monthly meetings, and on the "bird hotline" number, 252-81RD. At least one ECFNC hike will be held each month, covering a variety of different topics. If you have ideas or suggestions about club hikes, or would like to volunteer to lead a hike (you don't need experience), call Pete Bondy at 735-2376.

Point Pelee Film Night

All three parts of the excellent nature film, "Flight of the Condor", will be shown from 6 to 9:30 p.m. on Saturday July 13 at the Point Pelee Visitor Centre. Admission to the Park is \$4.00 per car. If you haven't seen this outstanding production, here's your chance.

E.R.C.A. Events

Sunday, June 16, 10 am to 5 pm, John R. Park Homestead, "Pioneer Day"
 Saturday, July 13, 10 to 11:30 am, Hillman Marsh, "Marsh Walk"
 Sat. and Sun., Aug. 10 and 11, 10 am to 5 pm, Park Homestead, "Art & Craft Fair"
 Saturday, August 17, 10 am to 3 pm, Madstone C. A., "Plant Identification Workshop"
 Call ERCA at 776-5209 for further details

TOWATO FESTIVAL

Co-sponsored by Point Pelee National Park, August 3 and 4, call the Park at 326-3204 for details

Have you wondered how long it takes plants to grow or what they look like while growing underground before the leaves push through the soil? Most small seeds can be grown on a damp paper towel on a saucer or small dish. Place a soaking wet paper towel or blotting paper on your dish. Sprinkle seeds over the top of the paper. You only need about 10 to 20 depending on the size of your dish. Then place on the dish with the seeds on it in a warm sunny spot such as on a window sill. Good seeds to grow this way are lentils, radishes and alfalfa. Make sure the paper is moist all the time. In about a week you should have some nice sprouts that can be added to a salad.

Another project you can do is grow a potato vine. This will take a longer time, but will give you a plant. Pick a potato that has lots of eyes on it. Put the potato in a jar so the potato will stand up with the eyes at the top. Add a little bit of water - just so the potatoes base is in water. Place the jar and the potato in a dark, cool place and wait for the roots to appear in a few days. Shoots will sprout from the eyes. Pinch out some of the shoots. Now you will get one or two strong shoots. Now you can plant your potato and watch the shoots grow up just like an ivy.

You can experiment with all kinds of seeds. Try growing your apple, orange, grapefruit or grape seeds. Just remember plants need sunlight and water! Have fun!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we approach the summer season, we conclude what I feel has been a very active half year. The many events and monthly club meetings have been well attended and the attendance and membership is climbing.

There will be some club activity over the summer on which Pete Bondy will elaborate elsewhere in these pages. I would encourage as many as possible to assist Paul Pratt in the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project which concludes this year. This is very necessary work but fun and quite interesting too.

Our next monthly meeting will take the form of a fund raising dinner. The date will probably be September 11th but details of time and place have still not been worked out. The cost will be \$10-12 per plate for adults and \$5 for children. We hope to apply any profits to the purchase of a club projector and screen. We hope to have charitable donation status soon so we will be able to issue receipts for any monies donated over and above the cost of the dinner. You will be phoned over the summer.

Although the birding was somewhat disappointing this year, a number of our members participated in the Baillie Birdathon and raised close to \$300 for our club. We plan to have a monthly raffle on some lovely items that a few of our younger members have crafted. These proceeds can be used to make up any deficiencies in the coffee fund (it's now in the

black, excuse the pun) and to provide a small gift to our speakers.

This is your club and your newsletter. Feel free to submit articles - they would be welcomed. Any comments or recommendations on how to improve the club of course are always welcome. Enjoy your summer.

Jim McAllister

EDITORIAL

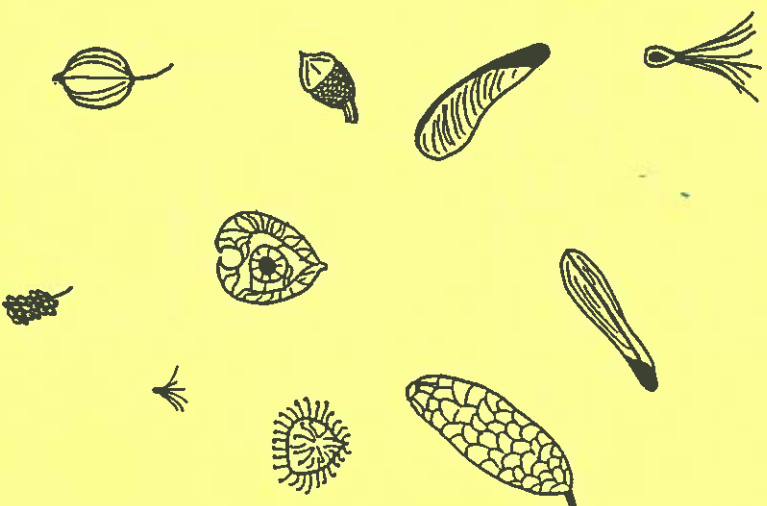
The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club now has a "BIRD HOTLINE", in other words a club number that members can call to find out the latest bird sightings, other natural history news, and announcements of upcoming club events. Jot the number, 252-BIRD, down in a conspicuous place, and call to find out about the next field trip and the speaker for the next indoor meeting. We hope all club members will take advantage of this new service the ECFNC offers; please feel free to contribute to the hotline too.

Mike Oldham

Other plants have fruits that birds and animals eat. The seeds are eaten along with the fruit and are distributed that way. Some plants that have seeds in a fruit are: wild grapes, wild cherries, raspberries, strawberries, mayapples and baneberry. You should not eat any fruits or berries in the woods or fields because some are poisonous to people but not poisonous to birds or animals.

Can you match the seed drawing with its name? Good Luck!

- wild grapes
- white pine
- white elm
- milkweed
- mayapple
- white ash
- cottonwood
- pin oak
- silver maple
- burdock



(Seeds not drawn to scale.)

JUNIOR NATURALISTS

SEEDS

All plants have some form of a seed or a way to reproduce. If a plant did not produce seeds sometime during its life, then that particular kind of plant or species would eventually become extinct. Different plants and trees have developed ways to make sure that their seeds are dispersed in order to grow.

Some seeds are what we call parachutes. They have a light parachute attached to the seed so it will float with the wind. Examples of these are dandelions, cattails, milkweeds and cottonwood trees. Remember seeing bits of fluff flying through the air? Try to catch them and see what plant they came from.

Other seeds are hitchhikers. They need an animal or person to catch a ride on. These seeds have tiny hooks on them so they can become securely fastened to animal coats or peoples sweaters and mittens. Examples of hitchhikers are burrs from burdock, Enchanter's nightshade and bedstraw.

Some trees have nuts that fall onto the ground to grow or are buried by squirrels and if forgotten about will grow into a new little tree. Have any ideas about what trees fit into this group? How about acorns from oak trees, chestnuts or hickory nuts.

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. Patricia Halladay
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RENEWED MEMBERS

Ted and Eileen Hanifan
Richard Benoit
Bob Boyle
Albert Wilson

Russ Monroe
Margaret Jennings
Don Wilkes
Irene Strachen
Dale Larson
Jeff Larson
Peg Wilkinson

Long Live the Manitoba Maple?????

Last week I was asked by the Conservation Authority to assist with their tree planting program. Well, that was fine, after all a chance to be out in the field was great and a hard days work never hurt anyone. One of our first customers, a farmer from the local area, was instructing us on the locations to plant his trees. Off to one side of his field happened to be a windrow composed mainly of Manitoba Maples. We were to plant his new seedlings under the Manitoba Maples because as he said "those garbage trees are going!" While I was busy planting away it started to dawn on me that perhaps we have unjustly treated the Manitoba Maples and Poplars. After all, if we stop to think, these trees are incredibly hardy and able to thrive under the most strenuous conditions. Along the edges of parking lots, squeezed into a small patch of soil, we find the dependable Manitoba Maple. Walking through any large city we can find them sandwiched between two buildings and growing famously. Lets face it, obscure areas with lots of pollution, minimal soil quantities, poor lighting and practically no water retention properties are favourable conditions for these highly resilient trees. Along our back fences, squeezed alongside our garages in the alleyways, sprouting up through cracks in the sidewalks, they are not to be destroyed. So why do we despise them so? After all do they not contain some rather favourable qualities? They grow fast, can be planted anywhere and thrive! Wasn't it Darwin himself who said that only the fittest survive, and do we not admire and promote such qualities? I think somewhere we've gone wrong? No, its just too easy for us, its right there under our noses and that's just not how we work. Instead we'll go to the trouble of ordering a rare ornamental that comes from no closer than 30,000 miles away. Its maximum temperature tolerance will be between 80-82°F and it will have to be watered no less than 14 times a day. So we'll nurture and pamper our little tree till at last we conquer the so-called unadaptable qualities of the non-native tree. Four trees later and a

May 1, Mary-Lou Chomyshyn found the first Harris' Sparrow at Pelae in nearly a decade. About fifty lucky observers got to see the bird as it paraded around Delaurier Trail with a large group of White-crowned Sparrows. The other highlight was a Lark Sparrow on the North Dyke road at Pelae found May 10 by Gus Yekis tour group. The bird was eventually seen by several hundred patient observers as it hopped around backyards at the road's edge.

The Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Stoney Point returned in even larger numbers with estimates as high as 15-20 pairs. Other "Yellowheads" were at Pelae March 6th and May 13th.

A very early Orchard Oriole was at Kingsville April 20th. Among the many Northern ("Baltimore") Orioles at Pelae was a lone female Northern ("Bullocks") Oriole. This bird was once considered a separate species. It is very differently marked and was identified at Pelae May 20 and 24 near the Tlp.

Finch sightings were poor with only a speck of the great wave that hit central Ontario. A few Slaskins, Purple Finches and a small flock of White-winged Crossbills, March 15 at Pelae were the only suggestion of a movement.

Contributors:

Peter Bondey, Mark Brunton, Mary-Lou Chomyshyn, Mike Chomyshyn, Bob Curry, Mirielle Delisle, Bill Fielding, G. Fisher, Bill Foott, Lorraine Foott, Linda Guzman, Tom Hince, Devin McLaughton, Jim McAllister, Sue Morrison, Mike Oldham, Karl Overmann, Paul Pratt, Terry Pratt, Ron Ridout, Dennis Robert, Ralph Thomas, Doug Toser, Ron Toser, Pat Watson, Alan Worthington, Gus Yekis and many, many others.

Thank-you to all contributors -- Good birding!!!

A late Eastern Bluebird at the Tip of Pelee May 25th attracted attention to itself by an absence of tail feathers. Swainson's Thrush (April 19) and Wood Thrush (April 21) at Pelee were both very early arrivals. The big thrush movements of most years did not occur in 1985.

Catbird on April 23 at Pelee was about average for arrival. And the six reports of Mockingbird on the Point during April and May were fairly typical.

Vireos/Warblers: All six regular vireos and twenty-seven species of warblers were recorded in April during the "hot" spell. Though many species were seen very few individuals were present, however.

White-eyed Vireos were distinctly low in numbers compared to the past 6 or 7 years. Philadelphia Vireo April 21st and Warbling Vireo April 23rd at Pelee were both record early dates for Ontario.

The warbler migration as stated was generally poor. Though southern species were present they seemed to be in lower numbers and when found were hard to locate due to dense foliage. Following is an approximate summary of approximate numbers of southern warblers at Pelee. Blue-winged (35); Golden-winged (15, including a very early April 21st bird at the Tip); Yellow-throated (April 21 - one south of the visitor centre); Prairie (6, including an early individual, April 23); Cerulean Warbler (20+); Prothonotary (4); Worm-eating (7); Louisiana Waterthrush (4); "Brewster's" (5); Kentucky (14); Hooded (18) Chat (15). Other noteworthy records included; Connecticut Warbler (18+ - good number, included an early May 9th arrival); Northern Water-thrush (April 20, early); Black and White (April 6, early); Orange-crowned (April 20, early) Yellow (April 20, early); Parula (April 20, early) Magnolia (April 27, early) and Chestnut-sided (April 30, very early).

Tanagers/Buntings/Sparrows/Blackbirds/Finches: Six Summer Tanagers during late April - mid May were about normal for Pelee. Three Indigo Buntings at the Tip, April 20 were a record early date for the park. Among the regular but rare sparrows there were four Clay-colored, about 10 Grasshopper, seven Henslow's and three Le Conte's Sparrow. As usual most of these skulkers turned up at the "sparrow field" near Pelee's Tip.

Two of the highlights of the 1985 migration came from this group. On

slight decrease in the bank account we've finally got our tree to bloom in its multicoloured flowering pattern. Of course this puts us up one notch on the status rating in the neighbourhood. All the way down the block people will be talking about the Jones' with their multicoloured ornamental blooming in the front yard. For some reason you don't get the same effect should the Jones' have decided to landscape their yard with alternating Manitoba Maples and Poplars. Surely the Jones' must be out of their mind!!! Most definitely their yard would be used as a bad example for miles around. People would drive by, stare and point with utter disgust. When you think about it, isn't our main objective with the newly planted ornamental to try and get it to establish itself? So why go through the money and tremendous effort to establish the non-native when we already have these easy to obtain, easy to grow trees? Ahhh! I guess its the human nature in us all to desire the challenge and prestige that comes with doing the difficult. Who knows, maybe the people 30,000 miles away are trying to establish the.....Manitoba Maple!!!!!! How else does the world go round!!!!!!!!!!!!



by Shannon Managhan

ANSI'S (AREAS OF NATURAL AND SCIENTIFIC INTEREST)
IN ESSEX AND KENT COUNTIES

PART II

PRAIRIE REMNANTS ADJACENT TO OJIBWAY PRAIRIE PROVINCIAL MATURE RESERVE

These sites were selected to provide added representation to the vegetation types of the Ojibway Prairie. The 250 hectares of remnants

include:

1. Springarden Road Prairie
2. Ojibway Black Oak Woods
3. Prairie Remnant North of Tilcombe Road
4. Ojibway Park
5. Area Southeast of the Nature Reserve
6. Prairie site Northwest of Ojibway Prairie

Vegetation types include forb prairie, Black Oak forest, open grassland, scrub, and tall grass prairie.

SINGLAI'S BUSH

With less than 32 forested land remaining in Kent and Essex Counties, this 50 hectare Sugar Maple bush 5 kilometres west of Rondeau represents the best example of upland woods in the site district. Dominated by Sugar Maple and American Beech on a clay plain, Singlaid's Bush contains stands of mature Tulip Trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and examples of Paper (*Asimina triloba*), Appendaged Hecetleaf (*Hydrophyllum appendiculatum*), Broad Beach Fern (*Thelypteris hexagonoptera*), and the only Canadian location for Winged Monkey Flower (*Mimulus alatus*). Singlaid's is also well known for its excellent displays of spring ephemerals.

The site comprises the back woodlot of 10 different farms and survived over the past 100 years because of its use as a supply of wood for construction and winter heating.

first and second-summer Little Gulls including a nice concentration of five, flying together off the Tip of Pelee, May 21. Several of these Little Gulls could be seen regularly through May at the same location. Gull highlights included; adult Laughing on May 14 at Wheatley and May 20 at the Tip of Pelee; Franklin's Gull May 6 at Kingsville; Iceland Gull, March 8th at Hillman; Kittiwake (last winter) April 6th at Leamington Harbor; 3 or 4 Tyeber's Gulls mostly at Wheatley; Lesser Black-backed Gull April 15, May 3 and 14 at Hillman and Wheatley; and about 6 or 7 Glaucous Gulls mostly at Wheatley and on the East Beach at Pelee.

The only unusual tern reports were several erroneous reports of Arctic Terns at the Tip of Point Pelee. Observers were overzealous with newly arrived flocks of Common Terns which were definitely not Arctic!!!

Owls/Goatsuckers/Woodpeckers/Flycatchers: Owl sightings were slim with one short-eared and two Saw-whet reported outside resident species. The most interesting goatsucker reports were of the extremely rare Chuck-wills-widow. Singing birds were heard May 9th at Hillman Marsh at dawn and May 10th at the base of the Pelee Boardwalk at dusk. The rare southerner continues to breed at Rondeau again this year. An early Whip-poor-will landed on Pelee Island April 12th.

Both Acadian and Olive-sided Flycatchers put in fair showings on their northward migrations. The local southern breeding Acadian was spotted 8 times - mostly by call and the boreal breeding Olive-sided 7 times on its trek to more northern sites. An Eastern Kingbird April 21 was very early at Pelee. Outstanding among this group were two Scissor-tailed Flycatchers seen at the Tip of Pelee - one May 20 and one May 29. Both were behaving similarly by flying off the Tip against south winds. Apparently once they landed they realized where they were and wanted to return!!!

Swallows/Parids/Wrens to Thrushes: Record early Tree Swallows were at Pelee March 13th in search of almost non-existent insects! An early Bank Swallow was at Cedar Creek May 6th. Several reports of Chimney at Pelee in May were made by call. When the call was finally cracked down it proved to be a talented Northern Oriole! Fooled again! Only two reports of Carolina Wren were received. This species appears to be in very bad shape in our region. A good number (10+) of Sedge Wren reports were received, all from Pelee.

Merlin sightings at Pelee through May.

King Rails put in a totally unexpected strong showing at several sites. At Hillman Northwest at least two and possibly four birds were present; at least two and possibly four birds were also at Northeast Hillman and another pair was at Stoney Point! Let's hope these birds have a successful breeding season. Soxa and Virginia Rail continued to be seen fairly easily at Stoney Point through May. This site is a boon for observing these normally elusive species.

Cranes/Shorebirds: Sandhill Cranes a very rare bird locally occurred on three days in May. A group of three birds were seen at Pelee, Comber and Stoney Point flying on May 12 and 13. This was followed by an individual at Pelee, May 18.

Local sewage lagoons in Harrow provided good shorebirding through late April and May. Up to 2000 shorebirds (mostly Dunlin) were at Harrow in early May and Stoney Point had concentrations up to 1000 individuals at the same time. Essex, Kingsville and Comber had high water levels most of this period and therefore few shorebirds.

The following is a synopsis of the highlights:

Ruff - one May 1 (Comber), two May 2 (Comber); Greater Yellowlegs - one May 30 (Hillman - very late); Lesser Yellowlegs - two May 29 (Stoney Point - very late); Solitary Sandpiper - one May 28 (Hillman - very late); Lesser Golden-plover - one May 27 (Hillman - very late); Willet - one May 8 (Pelee) - two May 10 (Pelee), - one May 11 (Harrow); Whimbrel - 300+ May 20 (Pelee); Marbled Godwit - one May 15-29 (Hillman - very late); Red Knot - 20 May 20 (Pelee - high); Sanderling - 250+ on May 21 (Pelee); White-rumped Sandpiper - one April 28 (Comber - extremely early) - 36 May 29 (Harrow - high); Hudsonian Godwit - two May 14 (Stoney Point, Harrow) - two May 18 (Harrow); Pectoral Sandpiper - one May 29 (Harrow - late); Stilt Sandpiper - six May 19 (Harrow - high); Ruddy Turnstone - 1700+ May 21 (Pelee - high); Red-necked Phalarope - one May 16-21 (Harrow) - three May 29 (Fighting Island).

Gulls/Terns: Once again as in 1984, only relatively small concentrations of adult Bonaparte's Gulls occurred in the Pelee-Hillman area. However several thousand immatures lingered through May. Among these were a smattering of

OXLEY POISON SUMAC SWAMP

This 40 hectare site north of the town of Oxley is the only Poison Sumac swamp in Essex County and is a surprise to anyone visiting it for the first time. Vegetation communities represented are Dogwood-Poison Sumac swamp, sedge meadow, Yellow Birch-Red Maple lowland forest, and upland woods. It is the only County location for Swamp Birch (*Betula pumila*), Poison Sumac (*Rhus vernix*), and Showy Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*). Other rare species include Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*), and Two-flowered Cynthis (*Krigia biflora*).

The site is privately owned by four individuals and the greatest threat to its integrity is draining for agriculture. It is presently surrounded entirely by agricultural land.

MIDDLE ISLAND

Middle Island is the southernmost island in Canada and its 46 hectares support several communities including Hackberry, Hackberry-Black Maple, Hop Tree-Blue Ash-Hackberry-Chinquapin Oak, and ponds. Rare flora and fauna includes Wild Hyacinth (*Camassia scilloides*), Miami Mist (*Phacelia purshii*), Creeping Chervil (*Chaetophyllum procumbens*), the endangered Lake Erie Water Snake, and a large colony of Black-Crowned Night-Herons. The site is privately owned.

Biological inventory work was conducted in 1984 at Cedar Creek and Sinclair's Bush by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Several members of the E.C.F.N.C. were extremely helpful with the Cedar Creek work. The wealth of knowledge possessed by Wilf Botham and Mike Oldham proved invaluable. Both spent many hours during the summer tromping the woods and both made their field notes and collections available. In Wilf's case this represented 23 seasons of botanizing at Cedar Creek. One direct result of their help was the production of a location map for the 68 provincially rare species found at the site, the highest total for any natural area in Ontario. As well, a list of the butterflies and moths of Cedar Creek was compiled from information supplied by Mike Matheson, John Pilkington, and Paul Pratt. John's contribution represented 11 seasons of field work at Cedar Creek.

In 1985, Big Creek Marsh, Oxley Poison Swamp, and the St. Clair Marshes will be inventoried. Any information on the cultural history or the natural history, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, butterflies, moths, flowering plants, ferns, mosses, fungi, or liverworts, of these sites, would be much appreciated and would be duly acknowledged in the reports. Information should be forwarded to the Chatham District Office of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

A final reminder is that anyone visiting any of the ANSI sites noted above should respect the owners' privileges and permission should be obtained before entering any of the properties.

Gary Allen
District Botanist
Chatham District
Ministry of Natural Resources



Columbinum Aquilegion canadensis

Cormorant/Herons: The first Cormorant sighting was on April 5th at Pelée.

Mike Oldham's report of the nesting colonies on Lake Erie shows 200-300 birds at Lighthouse Point on Pelée Island (24 April); 58 nests on East Sister with more probably present (April 23); and no nests on Big Chicken Island where they have nested for years (April 23). Good numbers (up to 38) of Great Blue Herons frequented Hillman Marsh through early May as did many (up to 42) Black-crowned Night Herons. Among rarer herons Cattle Egrets put in the best showing with one at Hillman from April 20th until mid May, two at Stoney Point from May 5-15th and two at Essex, May the seventh. A Snowy Egret at Hillman briefly May 12 and a yellow-crowned Night Heron, May 7 at the same spot rounded out rarer species. Least Bittern were seen occasionally in marshes at Stoney Point, Hillman and Pelée throughout May.

Ducks/Geese/Swans: Most water fowl species arrived in late February and continued to increase in numbers until mid-March. Good concentrations of dabbling ducks were best seen at Hillman Marsh and concentrations of geese at Miner's.

A concentration of Tundra Swans included 775 at Pelée, March 10th and 850 at Jeanette's Creek in Kent County March 6th. One of the most exciting finds this spring was a group of 19 White-fronted Geese at Hillman Marsh by Alan Worthington and Alan Ryff on March 8. Such a group is unprecedented in our area. After this group moved in another group of 5 of this western species turned up March 22nd. Rounding out the goose picture were up to 14 Snow Geese at Miner's through March. A late "Blue" phase bud was at Essex Sewage Lagoon into late May.

Another exciting find, also a western species, was an eclipse male. Cinnamon Teal at Hillman Marsh May 29, 30, 31. This off track individual competed with four male Blue-winged Teal for the attentions of the same female! Other interesting sightings included a late common Goldeneye at Essex May 20 and Common Merganser May 17 at the tip of Pelée. In the breeding category Gadwall appeared well established along the Detroit River Islands (25 pairs+) and Northern Shoveler was in suitable habitat on Fighting Island May 22.

Hawks/Grouse/Balls: An extremely early Osprey was at Desautel in Point Pelée on March 17th. Bald Eagles appear to be doing well with the Arner and Big Creek nests both active and two individuals sighted regularly at Hillman through May. Also optimistic were the good number of Peregrine Falcon and

BIRD SIGHTINGS....March 1 through May 31, 1985

This is the second in a regular series of columns summarizing bird observations in Essex County. The first column covered the winter period and this one will cover "spring" though migrants had arrived before March 1st and continued after May 31! There was a massive amount of data to be looked over for this article so I have made some corner cutting measures. For instance, in many cases observers are not cited for two observations to save space and time. Local observers who contributed where possible are included in the general contributors section. For the next column any observations should be submitted to me by July 25th at Tom Hince, Point Pelee National Park, R.R. #1, Leamington, Ontario.

Weather/Migration: To quote one observer of birds for over 30 years...."this spring was the dullest and poorest I can recall." Throughout the month of May this type of response was agreed upon by many observers. A combination of climatic factors may have caused this to be such a poor year. March and early April had about average weather but late April was characterized by extremely warm temperatures, clear skies and south winds. This trend continued albeit, undisturbed for almost three weeks into mid-May when a few days of rain and cooler temperatures hit. Then shortly after we were back to the same trend until the month's end. All this great weather was actually too good for migration with most birds just sailing straight over migration traps such as Point Pelee. Believe it or not what we actually needed was bad weather. What all this added up to for the birders were below normal numbers of birds and species of birds, though most of the regular species did turn up.

The other major problem was vegetation. In a normal year the lake retards vegetation growth on Point Pelee well into May when the lake starts to warm up. This year however, the warm temperatures and sunny skies caused the lake to warm early and the leaves to pop out two weeks early. This meant the few birds that were there were hard to see.

Sightings: (Please note that many of the commoner species in Essex County have not been included).

Loons/Grebes: There were two sightings of the scarce Red-throated Loon both at Point Pelee May 20 and 29. Common Loon, Pied-billed and Horned Grebes were reported in small numbers. Pied-billed Grebes appear to be breeding at Stoney Point again.

Remember that article you were going to write for THE EGRET?
It could have been on this page.

Send articles for the Fall issue by August 31 to: Mike Oldham

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(519) 776-5209

A New Trillium for Canada ???

On 2nd May a local naturalist was poking around in a Maidstone woodlot hoping to see some Dicentra Canadensis (Squirrel Corn), when he suddenly beheld a sight that almost threw him for a loop. It was a patch of what he took to be Trillium cernuum (Nodding Trillium), a plant that had been reported in the county by several people, including this writer, but never confirmed to my knowledge. After some studying of the plant books the possibility of these plants being T. flexipes was, in some respects, even more exciting - they had never been recorded from Canada. The species grows all across southern Michigan, and in Ohio, so it would not be surprising if it were found in Essex County. The surprising thing is that it has not been found long before now. We have been told that this species is the one that would be expected in the county, rather than T. cernuum, which is a more northern species. One reason for its not being found earlier is its habit of growth. Like T. cernuum its flower is more or less hidden beneath the leaves. This patch contained about 75 stalks, 45



BUTTERFLY AND HUMMINGBIRD FLOWERS

Some of our members expressed their interest in finding the kinds of flowers that would attract our wild Hummingbirds and Butterflies. There are many, so I've compiled a small list of the kinds most frequently found in nurseries and plant outlets.

Red Salvia - heavy nectar producers, brilliant colour.

White Nicotena or Flowering Tobacco - this plant opens in the evening to emit a heavenly scent. Hummingbirds and Sphinx Moths love this one.

Columbine - beautiful to look at. A must for Hummers.

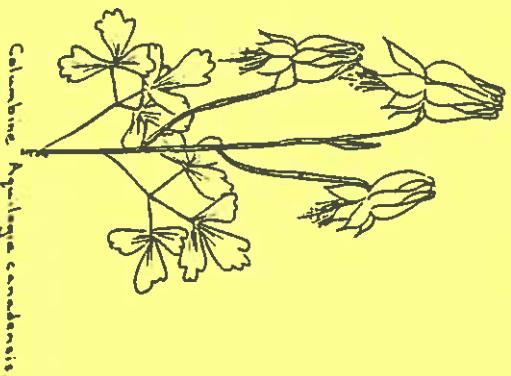
Shrimp Plant or Bella Perone - Hummers and Butterflies.

Maecurium - bright colours.

Sweet William - the name tells all about the scent.

Snapdragons - colour variety. Butterflies will seek these out time and time again. Dianthus - colour and scent.

Dill - Black Swallowtail Butterflies are attracted to this plant to lay their eggs on. I've watched as many as three to a plant compete for the best branch.



Columbine Aquilegia canadensis.

--- Susan Morrison

Redwing as it returns to its marsh habitat. Other chapters are devoted to courtship, nest building and the relationship with offspring.

Beyond the breeding season, Nero describes the communal flocking which occurs, females and young in one group, adult males in another. These birds leave Canada for major wintering blackbird/starling roosts in the United States.

Redwings from the Great Lakes area mostly winter in the central areas of Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama. There are some 150 known winter roosts and some of these roosts contain 20 to 30 million birds.

Unfortunately, Redwings are one of the major agricultural pests and nuisance birds over much of eastern and central United States, California and southern Canada. Nero describes the damage created by Redwings and the various attempts to control and lessen damage inflicted on various crops (ripening corn, green oats, barley, flax, sunflowers, rice and other crops), particularly in late summer and fall.

Naturalists will find much of interest when they read this book. Nero's description of many hours of observation reveal how bird behaviour is slowly revealed to a patient observer. Naturalists who have read and enjoyed Nero's "The Great Grey Owl", also a Smithsonian nature book, will want to read this latest publication for the insight it offers regarding the behaviour of one of our most familiar and beautiful birds.

by Betty Learmouth

of them with flowers. About 10m away was a small patch with 4 plants, 3 of them with flowers. It was not located until later in the week. On the 3rd of May the discoverer and another naturalist looked at the large patch, but still did not see the smaller patch, although they must have almost stepped on it. A day or two later the second naturalist, along with a third naturalist, went in to see the patch. They found the small patch, but were unable to locate the large patch. This makes one wonder how many more patches might be in the county awaiting discovery.

As of 15 May we are holding our breaths while the experts decide which species it is: T. cernuum, or T. flexipes.

What about the earlier reports of T. cernuum? Might they be T. flexipes?

One specimen is at CAN, the herbarium in the National Museums of Canada, Ottawa. I am sure some curious naturalist will be giving it another, closer look. That is, if the present find proves to be T. flexipes.

BY WILF BOTHAM



Trillium Update

On 7 May Wilf and I showed the Trillium patch to Dr. Tony Reznicek, a professional botanist from the University of Michigan. Tony was also puzzled by the patch, and reserved judgement until consulting Fred Case, a Trillium expert from Michigan. Two weeks later we had our answer: the plants were somewhat unusual, large-flowered plants of Trillium cernuum (see pictures). This was a significant find, as Nodding Trillium is now confirmed for Essex County. Trillium flexipes may still occur in the county, awaiting discovery, and we would appreciate hearing from local naturalists who may have seen "nodding" Trilliums.

by Mike Oldham



BOOK REVIEW

Nero, Robert. Redwings. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984. 160 p., paper. \$13.45

The author, a staff member with the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources, has written a book that describes the behaviour of Redwings during the breeding season. Much of the material was obtained by the author as he observed Redwings at a small marsh for his doctoral thesis. These observations were at the University of Wisconsin during the early fifties. Observations made by other researchers during the past three decades have also been incorporated into the book.

Despite the fact that the observations described by Nero were made for a thesis, the author has set out to write a popular book that may be read and enjoyed by all naturalists. A number of photographs illustrate the behaviour described and sketches by wildlife artist James Carson contribute to the book.

Before launching into a discussion of Redwing behaviour, Nero describes the Icteridae or blackbird family as found in North America. Some twenty species including the Yellow-headed Blackbird, the Bobolink, the Common Grackle, the Brown-headed Cowbird and the Northern Oriole, inhabit North America, but the Redwing is one of the most interesting of the family, one of the most studied and probably the most numerous of all bird species in North America.

Much of this book is devoted to descriptions of the behaviour of Redwings as the birds progress through their reproductive period. Thus, the reader will find chapters on the territorial song and territorial behaviour of the

MARITIME ODYSSEY-Part III

The Earliest Spring in Memory?

When Mother Nature gave us summer temperatures for six days in a row in April, from the 18th to the 23rd, she may have broken all records. (I have not heard the official word on this.) I do know that the first-flowering dates for many plants have been earlier this year than in the past 20 or more years. As of 15 May, 50 species have been found in flower earlier than my previous first dates. On those six days in April the temperature hovered around 27°C for several hours each day. I hear it was even higher in the city.

The first-flowering dates started to topple on the 21st of April, when the Thaspium trifoliatum flavum (Meadow Parsnip) in our yard opened a few flowers. My earliest date for that species had been 8 May. It is even more dramatic when one recalls that up until those six days growths had been delayed. The Harbinger-of-Spring, for instance, did not begin to flower until the 17th of March. It has been known to flower in February.

There is a time each spring when deciduous woodlots fill in with leaves until no sky can be seen through the woodlot, as viewed from a short distance away. Over the past 50 years I have noted this phenomenon and it usually happens in the first or second week in May. It can occur in the last week of April, and it may have been delayed until the third week in May in a few years. This year that event occurred on 23rd April - the last day of that 6-day "summer" - the day before the last week in April!

-----Wilfred Botham

Since the 1950's, Halifax has been transformed into a lovely city that has kept intact those things that made it endearing and eliminated most of those seamy and grubby aspects, like the old waterfront that combined with the weather, made for a depressing scene. The countryside seems much the same, if not more prosperous and the ride from Truro to Halifax through rolling farmland and coniferous forest is quite enjoyable especially via the new freeway. To really experience the Maritime feeling however, I would recommend driving the country roads.

Instead of following the Trans Canada Highway on Cape Breton which is very busy in the summer, we headed north along the west coast to Dunvegan before heading back south following the Margaree river to Lake Ainslie. Despite the lovely setting, the midgets or "no-see-ums" made life so unbearable for us, we headed for Cape Breton Highlands National Park the next morning.

The drive along Bras d'Or lake through Baddeck and along the Cabot Trail into the park is truly magnificent especially when the weather was perfect as it was for us the week we were in Cape Breton. Seeing ospreys hovering and diving is a very common sight in this part of the world and

gullmots, great and double crested cormorants, gulls and storm petrels.

One of the highlights of our trip was the ferry ride from North Sydney to Argentea, Newfoundland. I would strongly recommend this trip not only because it eliminates a long drive across Newfoundland but it also offers the chance to see the rugged south coast and a great diversity of wild life. As well, it is reputed to be the best trip for birds in the Western Atlantic. When the weather cooperates, the voyage will be an unforgettable experience.

A check of the shed roofs of North Sydney harbour might yield a lesser black backed gull among the many herring and greater black backed gulls. Within an hour of setting sail, pelagics are seen gliding between the waves. Fulmars, shearwaters (greater, sooty, manx and cory's), Wilson's and Leach's storm petrels, kittiwakes, pomarine and parasitic jaegers and perhaps a skua can be seen on a crossing.

The sky was so clear and the moon so bright the night we crossed, one could literally read on deck. About a couple of dozen people remained on the top deck that night, six of whom it turned out were birders. Trying to identify the different species developed a bond among us that lasted during our stay in Newfoundland and for one Michigan couple continues to the present. With the dawn came our first sightings of whales (finbacks, blue and dolphins), sightings that continued for hours, well into Placentia Bay. The magic of these wonderful creatures is such that within minutes of

THE E.R.C.A. HERBARIUM

Over the past fall, winter, and spring, staff at the Essex Region Conservation Authority (mainly Mark Brunton, June Lammon, Shannon Maneghan, and Mike Oldham) have been busy setting up a herbarium. For those of you that are a little confused with the term herbarium, it is a collection of plants, pressed, mounted on a piece of stiff, white paper, identified, and labelled, then filed in their proper evolutionary order and stored in cabinets. Most of the specimens in the E.R.C.A. herbarium are from Essex County, with a few from surrounding areas. Eventually, we would like to have a sample of all the plant species growing wild in Essex County, but we are still a long way from this goal. Currently, there are about 900 specimens in the herbarium, with a couple of hundred more waiting to be mounted and labelled. We intend the herbarium to be a reference collection for staff and public alike, and visitors are welcome. If you would like help in identifying a particular plant (please press between newspaper a sample of the twigs, leaves, flowers and/or fruit) or would just like to see samples of some of the plants growing in Essex County, call E.R.C.A. at 776-5209 to arrange a visit to the herbarium. We still need help mounting pressed plants, so if you have a free morning or afternoon, and would like to help, please let us know.

Shannon Maneghan

Mike Oldham

often yields both the black backed and northern three toed woodpeckers.

For a unique northern experience, it is possible either to continue north to L'Anse aux Meadows and take the ferry to Labrador or take the ferry from Lewisporte to Goose Bay. The latter trip takes a day and a half during which most of the pelagic species can be seen including northern and red phalaropes, red necked loons along with the three species of jaegers are almost guaranteed from August onward into fall.

We concentrated on the southwest corner for our last couple of days in Newfoundland. The provincial parks offer very good camping and trails that lead through salt and fresh water marshes, bogs and mixed forests. Lots of raptors like bald eagles, goshawks, peregrine falcons and owls can be seen here but golden eagles, gyrfalcons and snowy owls are only seen in winter.

The ten days had passed all too quickly and there was considerable reluctance to leave. There were so many islands like St. Pierre and Miquelon to see and towns like Heart's Delight and Cupids to visit and boat trips like the ones to Labrador and along the south coast to take, that one leaves with a feeling of unrequited love. If you like adventure, have a taste for the unusual, like seafood, have about a month for a holiday and want to avoid tourists then visit Newfoundland. It's a holiday you'll always remember and treasure.

Jim McAllister

the first sighting, there were a couple of hundred people on deck craning for a look and bemoaning their lack of binoculars. The spouting and diving of these animals will not soon be forgotten.

Having just done the Cabot Trail, I wasn't prepared for the ride from Argentia down the west coast of the Avalon Peninsula to Cape St. Mary's bird sanctuary. In many respects it is even more spectacular. The islands and rocky outcrops of Placentia Bay and the rugged coast, on a sunny day, provide a drive to rival the best drives anywhere. The fly in the ointment is the sad state of the road which will either jar your fillings loose or put your poligrrip to the test. I have since learned that this road will soon be paved. Although the main highways in Newfoundland are by and large pretty good, you are placing your life and that of your car in serious jeopardy once you leave the paved roads.

This coast is very lightly populated and the whole Avalon Peninsula provides a landscape that is unlike any I had seen, very rocky with stunted spruce and balsam and dotted with hundreds of what I thought were lakes but was soon set straight ("Dem's ponds boy: lakes is what you get in your boots"). You soon come to expect the unusual in this province that has no snakes, skunks, porcupines, poison ivy, poison oak or hay fever pollen and where frogs, deer and moose have been introduced.

The road into Cape St. Mary's passes through what is called the "barrans", a treeless expanse of bogs and fens.

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The sanctuary here is probably the best spot anywhere to view Gannets, thick and thin billed murres, razorbills, Gullmots and Kittiwakes from land, up close. The sheer cliffs rise 300 feet out of the sea but provide enough nesting sites for tens of thousands of birds. John Pratt, the sanctuary naturalist, will scope a cory's shearwater for you, the only place in North America they can be seen from land, and tell you every birding hot spot on the island, what species you can expect to see and even help you arrange boat tours. This is a great spot to begin a tour of Newfoundland.

Just 30 kilometres south of St. John's at Witless Bay (love those names) is another fabulous bird sanctuary that consists of Gull, Green and Great Islands and is home for hundreds of thousands of alclids. In addition to tens of thousands of puffins flying, diving and swimming around you, it is possible to come within a few feet of a Gray seal as we did. Both of these sanctuaries should not be missed.

Leaving the Avalon peninsula, we followed the Trans Canada Highway to Terra Nova National Park. Along with the St. John's area this is the best spot in North America to spot European strays like Greenhanks but then this part of the world is closer to Britain than it is to New York. This is a very large park that presents a great variety of trails and habitats, most of the boreal species like pine siskins, pine Grosbeaks and arctic species like redpolls, wheatears that we only hear about are to be found here. Add to these the northern Gulls (Ivory, Thayer's, Iceland), dovesies and

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all the water fowl like elders, scoters, barrow's goldeneye and harlequin ducks and you have a variety of avifauna including the alclids that someone from the middle of the continent can see in one place for a fraction of what it would cost to see them elsewhere. The bonus in Newfoundland is the variety of landscape and vegetation the interesting geology and the marvellous people who are a national treasure. Even large Iceburgs can be seen in summer.

Everyone advised us not to miss Gros Horne. It is fully one day's drive from Terra Nova through largely boreal forest that gives some idea of the immensity of the island and its largely uninhabited nature. There are four people per square mile but then 40% live around St. John's. You can drive for miles and not see a sign of habitation. You are advised to keep your gas tank full because you never know when the next station will appear. The entire western part of Newfoundland is dominated by mountains that are not as rugged or as high as the Rockies but are awesome nonetheless. Gros Horne mountain itself is over 2,500 feet high and its top will reward the climber with a magnificent panorama of the west coast with its fjords and still partially snow capped mountains. Caribou and Arctic wild flowers are abundant here while rock and willow ptarmigan are strong possibilities. Driving along the coastal road is also scenically rewarding and the boat ride into the fjord at Western Brook Pond is very worthwhile. The mile walk into the fjord winds through bog and stunted boreal forest that