Essex County FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

VOL.2 NO.3
SEPT. 1985

THE EGRET

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL by Mike Oldham.....2

THE COSMOS FINCHES ARE BACK by Bill Morsink.....4

EXTINCT IS FOREVER by Brendon Larson.....5

SE MICHIGAN AND SW ONTARIO HAWK WATCH by Brian Eaton.....8

WILF BOTHAM RECEIVES FIRST ANNUAL ECFNC AWARD.....16

BIRD SIGHTINGS SUMMARY (JUNE/JULY/AUGUST) by G. Tom Hince.....18

CICADA SAGA by Susan Morrison.....21

THE OTHER SERPENT IN OUR GARDEN by Gerry Waldron.....23

BOOK REVIEW: A GUIDE TO ENJOYING WILDFLOWERS by Betty Learmouth.....26

ONTARIO HERPETOFAUNAL SUMMARY by Mike Oldham.....28

BUTTERFLIES by Susan Morrison.....29

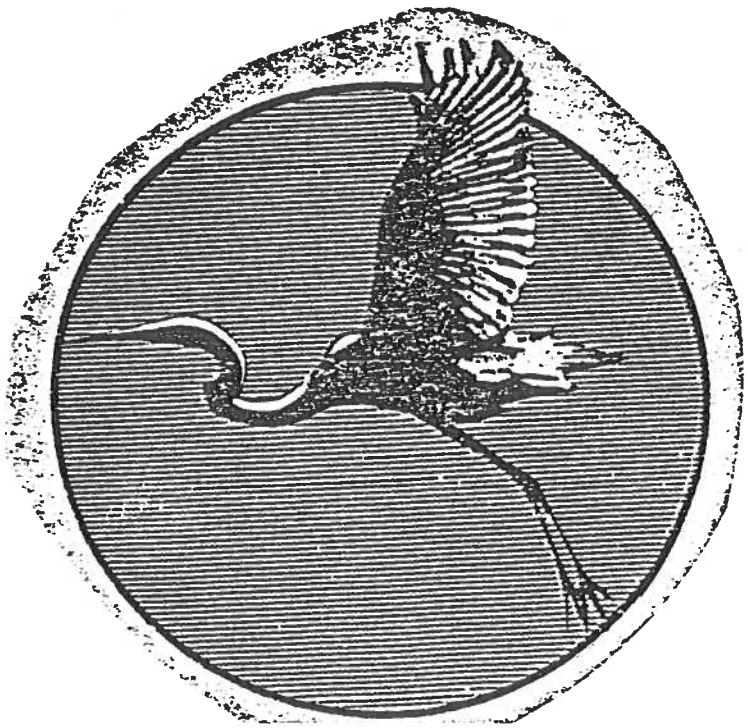
TEASING WEASELS AND OTHER CURIOSITIES by G. Tom Hince.....30

THE EATEN AND THE EATER by Deb Gorman Smith.....33

MAMMAL SCRAMBLE by Deb Gorman Smith.....34

CLUB CALENDAR by Deb Gorman Smith.....35

1986 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL.....36



EDITORIAL

As usual, summer has sped by and fall is again upon us. Starting with our first annual dinner on September 11th, we plan to have a full slate of indoor and outdoor activities for members. Fall is an exciting season for the naturalist, so please get out and enjoy the out-of-doors before the cold weather sets in.

You will notice a change in format with this issue of the EGRET. The change is to make production of the newsletter somewhat easier, and in response to some members who found the print a little too small and difficult to read in earlier issues. Let me know your ideas about the EGRET: what would you like to see more of? less of? Which articles did you like? dislike? Ideas and suggestions are always appreciated. This is your newsletter, and it will be what you make it.

I hope you find the articles in this issue interesting. I would like to thank the authors for their contributions, particularly those who responded to my last minute pleas for material. Once again material is needed for the winter issue; deadline for articles is 30 November (but you don't have to wait until then!). If possible articles should be typed, double-spaced on 8½ by 11 inch paper, but legibly written articles are also fine. Artwork is also needed, so if you have any artistic talents at all, please feel free to submit your sketches, etc.

Putting together the EGRET has been a rewarding and educational experience for me, and I hope the effort has been worthwhile. In the coming year I would like to turn my efforts to other projects I'm involved with, and consequently a new editor for the newsletter is required for 1986. This job requires no particular qualifications or expertise, just a willingness to spend two or three days, four times a year, putting together each issue. Access to a typewritter and photocopier are useful but not essential. You will have to patiently, but persistently, coax articles from the membership, but to date there has always been sufficient material to put out each issue. I will be glad to help out my successor with the first couple of issues. Anyone who would like to tackle putting out the EGRET in 1986, please give me a call at 776-5209.

A reminder that your 1985 membership expires in December, and it is not too early to renew for 1986. Dues are $10 annually for an individual and $15 for a family. A handy form can be found on the last page of the EGRET. Support your club and renew today.

Some of the ongoing club activities require member input. The club hotline, 252-BIRD, can only be as good as the information provided to Jim McAllister. So please, if you see something of interest (and it doesn't have to be just birds), give Jim a call at 254-1854. Similarly Tom Hince's seasonal bird reports depend on your input for completeness. Why not send Tom a summary of your bird sightings this fall? The club is always looking for ideas for field trips, leaders, and guest speakers -- do you have any ideas or suggestions? If so contact Jim McAllister or another member of the club executive.

Mike Oldham

THE COSMOS FINCHES ARE BACK
by: Bill Morsink

It was during the last weekend in July, when I heard the familiar voices in my backyard birch tree. Two yellowish birds would dart from the tree, swoop down on the cosmos flowers and start feeding on the seeds. They are like acrobats from a country fair, dangling upside down and downside up from the ropes. Their bright little voices cheered me up and their flight back and forth from the cosmos plants to the birch tree kept me occupied for a while.

The little visitors had no trouble identifying this plant; they discovered that the cosmos seeds are similar to the thistle seeds and apparently provide as much sustenance as the thistles. At least they came back day after day to my paradise.

Cosmos plants are annuals, which belong to the composite family,the same family to which the thistles belong.Cosmos plants flower at the beginning of July and continue to flower throughout August intoSeptember. Their flowers are purple composites, much like coreopsis or daisies. These cosmos plants florish in full sunlight, but require ample soil moisture. I use them as a three foot high background screen.

Meanwhile, I wondered how these birds learned about the food value of my cosmos plants. While I pondered this question several weeks went by. Then one morning inAugust I heard a whole chorus of little voices; not one but five birds darted down onto the cosmos plants. The cosmos finches visited my backyard well into September as long as my plants produced the seeds.

The only other time I noticed these creatures is during the winter when they visit my birch tree for their seeds. Their plumage is much duller at this time. If I keep planting my cosmos seeds I might develop a purple coloured strain of cosmos finches over the years. But how would I separate them from the new purple house finches? Only Time will tell.

EXTINCT IS FOREVER!

Amid the crowds of people at the Cincinnati Zoo stands a small, quaint stone building with a red tile roof. Three-quarters of a century ago this was the final home of what had become the world's rarest bird.

Her name was Martha, and as far as anyone knew, she was the very last of the multitudes of Passenger Pigeons that once swept across the skies. When Martha died on September 1, 1914, she carried with her the last genes of her kind, a wild heritage that, only a century earlier was shared by what may have been the most abundant bird of all time.

We did not learn our lesson with the Passenger Pigeon. We have continued to create needless havoc among the animals that share our earth. Habitats are ruined by the draining of ponds and cutting down of forests. Their whole environment is polluted! Harmless creatures are murdered for the fun of it and articles of clothing such as fur coats and crocodile purses are produced from rare species. Meanwhile, oil spills pollute our oceans and beaches where many species live.

Presently, in the tropics, a forest the size of Great Britain is being cut down every year. Scientists estimate that they have named or have knowledge of only a sixth of the species in these regions! Right now, it means we are losing one species daily from the face of the earth! By the late 1980's it is going to be one an hour!, no matter what we do. It is imperative that we try to turn it around before we reach absolutely astronomical rates of extinction.

Even during such cataclysmic times as the great dying off of dinosaurs, only one species was lost every thousand years. In other words, we have triggered an unprecedented animal die-off that will occur within our lifetimes.

Are there any endangered species in Ontario? Yes, there are fourteen species that are on the road to extinction. Nearby, for example, on Pelee Island, there is a small population of Lake Erie Water Snakes (Natrix sipedon insularum) - the only place in the entire world where they live.

In Africa, the wildlife population has declined by seventy percent since the turn of the century. No country or continent is immune to this deadly path of annihilation carved by man!

Why should you care? For some, such as myself, the exquisite beauty of nature is reason enough. Whether it be an intricately spun spiderweb, a butterfly emerging from its coccoon (pupae), or a peregrine falcon diving at 400 kilometres (220 miles) an hour, they derive great pleasure. More important is the loss of genetic stock - the chemical blueprints of organisms. Many of these species have never been seen or studied before. They all consist of chemicals which could possibly be a cure for cancer and other far-reaching diseases. Many medicines have been discovered through the study of this genetic stock.

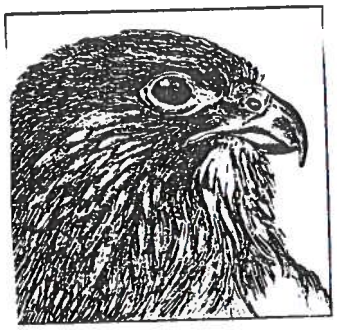
But what is being done about this dilemma? Fortunately, there are signs of hope. Some tropical countries have begun putting aside land for national parks. In Canada, an attempt is underway to protect wetlands which house twelve of the fourteen endangered species. Many organizations have arisen to this cause, such as the World Wildlife Fund and the Canadian Nature Federation. On account of these organizations the Peregrine Falcon and Whooping Crane, to name a couple, still exist.

Who cares?

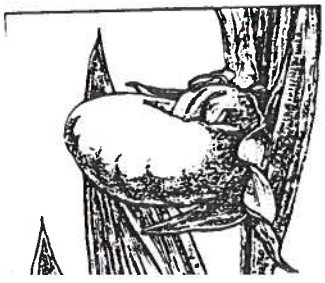
Who cares if Peregrines still soar over
golden prairie fields..?
if Sea Otters frolic in west
coast bays..?
if Musk Oxen may yet be seen
silently roaming the frozen barrens
of the north?

Who cares if there are Cougars left to prowl
noiselessly among shadowy
mountain crags..?
if Small White Lady's Slipper orchids
grace our forest floors..?
if White Whales still sing in the
St. Lawrence?

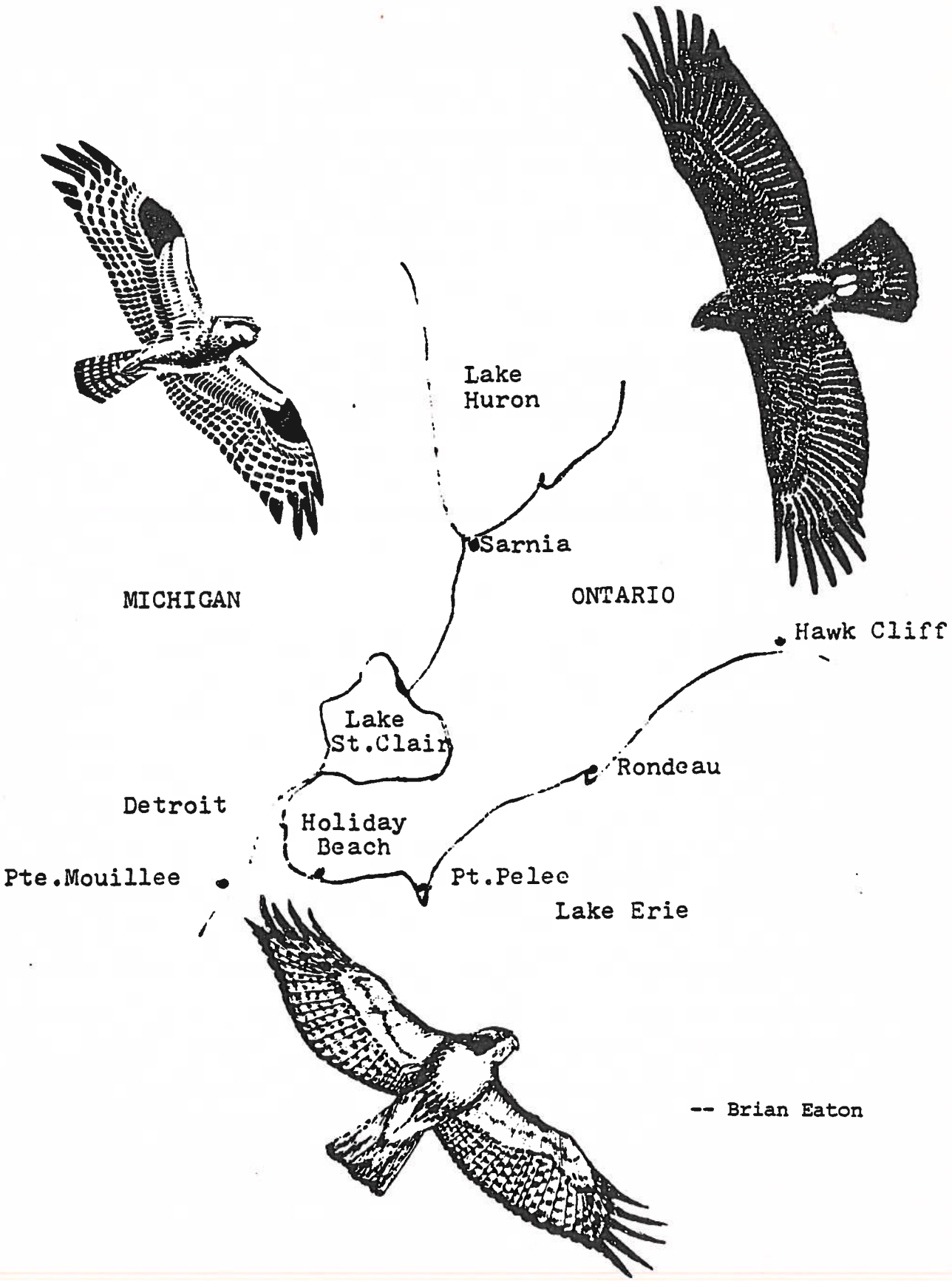
I do, and I hope you do to?



Brendon Larson



S. E. MICHIGAN and S. W. ONTARIO HAWK WATCH - AUTUMN 1985



-- Brian Eaton

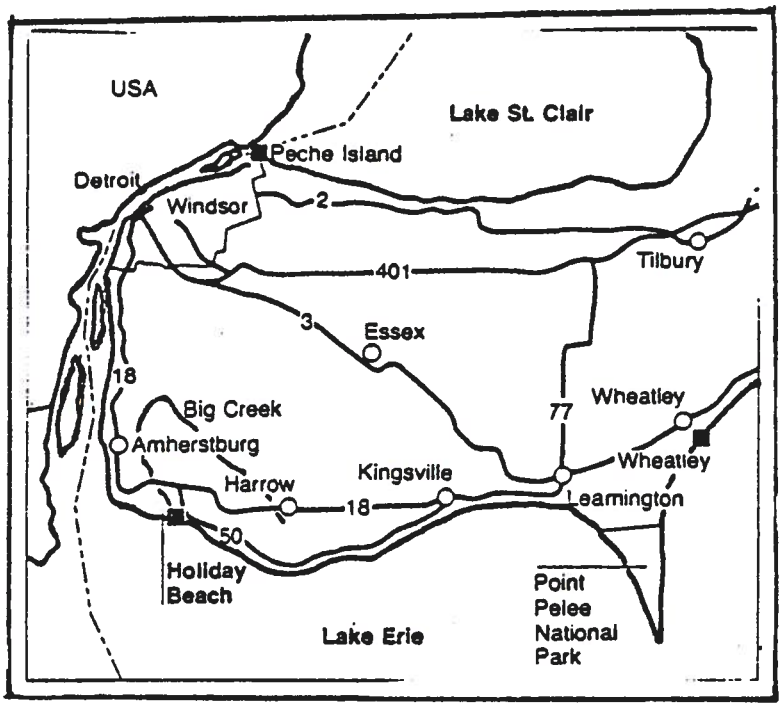
S.E. MICHIGAN and S.W. ONTARIO HAWK WATCH

This Hawk-watching group is affiliated ~~to~~ with, and sends it's accumulated data to, the Hawk Migration Association of North America, (H.M.A.N.A).

Though it is currently centred on Holiday Beach Provincial Park, where almost all of the group's hawk-counting is done, it is hoped to expand to cover other areas in the region, if, and when, sufficient volunteers can be found.

Holiday Beach Provincial Park.

The Park is situated at the western end of Lake Erie, in South-western Ontario, 8 miles south-east of the town of Amherstburg.



From Michigan, via Detroit, cross the Ambassador Bridge to Windsor, Ontario, and follow the signs to Highway 18. Travel south on Highway 18 through Amherstburg, and continue to Malden Centre. Turn south at the crossroads in Malden Centre, on to County Road 50, and follow this road for a mile or so to the Park gates.

From Leamington, Kingsville, Harrow etc., take Highway 18 westwards, to Malden Centre.

Visitors travelling westwards on Highway 401, may continue on Highway 3, through Windsor, joining Highway 18 near the Ambassador Bridge. Alternatively, shortly after the 401 joins Highway 3, there are traffic lights, and travellers could turn south on Howard Avenue here. Follow Howard Avenue southwards for 14 miles or so, to it's junction with Highway 18, then turn west, on to Highway 18 and proceed to Malden Centre, following further directions as above.

Note ;- Holiday Beach Provincial Park is clearly signposted, on Highway 18, at Malden Centre.

Most Hawk-watching is done from a car park in the south-western corner of the park, and it is reached by following the paved park road southwards from the gate. Follow the road across the creek, and make right turns whenever there is a choice. Hawk-watchers usually stand at the westernmost end of this car park, where the road turns southwards towards the beach, and just before it turns easterly to return to the park entrance. On most days in September, October and November, at least one observer should be encountered, and he or she will willingly answer questions on what has been seen, or what is expected.

Hawk Migrations.

Holiday Beach Provincial Park is an outstanding area to observe the Fall migration of hawks of many species, and they may be seen, in numbers, on most days between the end of August and the early days of December.

Many birds of prey rely on thermals, (rising masses of warm air), to aid their migration. They "ride" these thermals to gain height, then, as the thermal dissipates, they glide, losing height, until they find another thermal. By alternately soaring and gliding, hawks are able to travel long distances with a minimum of physical effort.

Since these columns of rising warm air do not occur over water, hawks tend to follow migration routes which take them over land, or at worst, over narrow stretches of water.

Through observations, many Hawk Migration routes have become clearly defined, World-wide, and we are indeed fortunate to be favoured with one such route here in South-western Ontario.

In the Fall, many southward migrating hawks, which balk at crossing large bodies of water, are confronted by Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Seeking a land "bridge", or at least a narrow water crossing, the hawks fly westwards, passing over Holiday Beach on their way to the Detroit River, which then becomes their "gateway" to the south.

Hawk passage here is enhanced by winds with a northerly element, and such winds push the birds southwards, concentrating them along the Lake Erie shoreline.

History.

The history of hawk-watching at this site is brief, covering only 11 seasons, but this in no way diminishes it's importance.

Some counting was done in the mid-1950's, at Malden School, 2 miles north of the park, but in 1974 counting was formalised by members of the Detroit and Oakland Audubon Societies.

Concerned by the precipitous decline of the Peregrine Falcon and other hawk species, due to the widespread use of DDT and similar pesticides, the Hawk Watch was set up to monitor the health of raptor populations.

In the 11 seasons of this particular hawk watch, since 1974, the amount of coverage has increased from a modest 27 days in the first year, to over 90 days in 1984.

The Hawks.

Hawks of 15 species are seen in each Fall season, and single hawks of two other species have been added to our list, in recent years.

The hawk migration scene is constantly changing, and species that dominate one part of the season, may be completely absent from another.

In September, Kestrels, Sharp-shinned Hawks and Broad-winged Hawks dominate the skies, and Ospreys and Northern Harriers reach maximum numbers. Broad-winged Hawk movements are often dramatic, and in 1984, over 110,000 were counted, including over 95,000 on September 15th. On that day, the biggest in the history of this Hawk-watch, an unprecedented 54,000 Broad-wings overflew the park in an 18-minute spell, in mid-afternoon, a phenomenal aerial display.

By October, most of the Broad-winged Hawks are gone, and the "limelight" is held by Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks, with smaller numbers of Red-shouldered and Cooper's Hawks. Sharp-shinned Hawks and Kestrels continue to migrate in good numbers, to around the 20th. of the month, but their appearances are irregular and more weather dependant after that. Towards the end of October, a few Goshawks, Golden Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks begin to show up.

Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks are the most numerous hawks in November, but Golden Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks continue to trickle through. After mid-November, only good migrating conditions bring hawks such as "Red-tails", "Red-shoulders" and a few Northern Harriers, and in some years, these sporadic movements continue into the early days of December.

Peregrine Falcons and Merlins are scarce and largely unpredictable, but they do occur from mid-September to the end of October. Numbers of these two falcon species usually reach the high 'teens in each Fall season, at this location.

A bonus to the Fall Hawk Migration, is the appearance of locally nesting Bald Eagles in and around the park area, and in nearby Big Creek. These majestic birds are recorded almost daily by members of the Hawk-watch, and have provided many memorable close-up views.

The spectacular aerial displays of abundant hawks, and the subsequent appearance of "quality" birds, makes hawk-watching here a pleasurable experience throughout the Fall, and there's always a chance that some rare Western or Southern "wanderer" will fly over the park. In 1979, observers at Holiday Beach were rewarded with our only Black Vulture to date, and in 1981, a Swainson's Hawk was added to our list.

Apart from the Texas Gulf area, which attracts migrant Hawks from both Eastern and Western North America, Holiday Beach is probably the most productive hawk-watching area in the USA and Canada.

<u>Migration of non-raptor species through Holiday Beach</u>.

Though counting hawks is the primary function of this Group, other avian and non-avian species are recorded, when time and opportunity permit.

There can be dramatic movements of Blue Jays, (mid-September to mid-October), and Crows, (October-November), and both species have exceeded single-day totals of 20,000.

Early September sees the migration of Hummingbirds, and on one day in 1984, 520 were counted in a 3½-hour period.

Shorebirds, Waterfowl, Gulls, Warblers, Blackbirds, Sparrows and many other species may be seen in the park at some time or other, throughout the Fall period, so the birding is never dull, even on days with no hawks.

The temporal migration of hawks and other species, is presented demographically on the following pages. In addition, hawk numbers for the years of this Hawk-watch, (1974-1984), are also tabled.

Volunteers.

Finally, if you are fascinated by hawks, mildly interested in hawks, or currently have no interest in them, please take time to consider how you might help this particular Hawk-watch.

The Group needs more observers in order to expand it's activities, and to assist in more clearly defining local hawk-migration routes. There is no mystique in learning to identify hawks, it just takes a little practice. Come and give it a try, you will find the Hawk-watchers friendly and helpful. Choose a day when the winds are out of the North, North-east or North-west, and a quick check of the information in this booklet, will tell you what kind of hawks you may expect to see.

The information gathered here, and at many similar locations throughout North America, helps us monitor the health of hawk populations, and hopefully will alert us to any future decline. Subsequent generations will thank us for helping to preserve a unique part of our Natural History Heritage.

If you would like to help, or have any comments or suggestions, please phone, or write to :-

Dick Benoit,
853 University,
Grosse Pointe,
Michigan. 48230.
1-313-882-5917

Brian Eaton,
463 Walnut Drive,
Amherstburg,
Ontario, N9V 3C6
1-519-736-7916

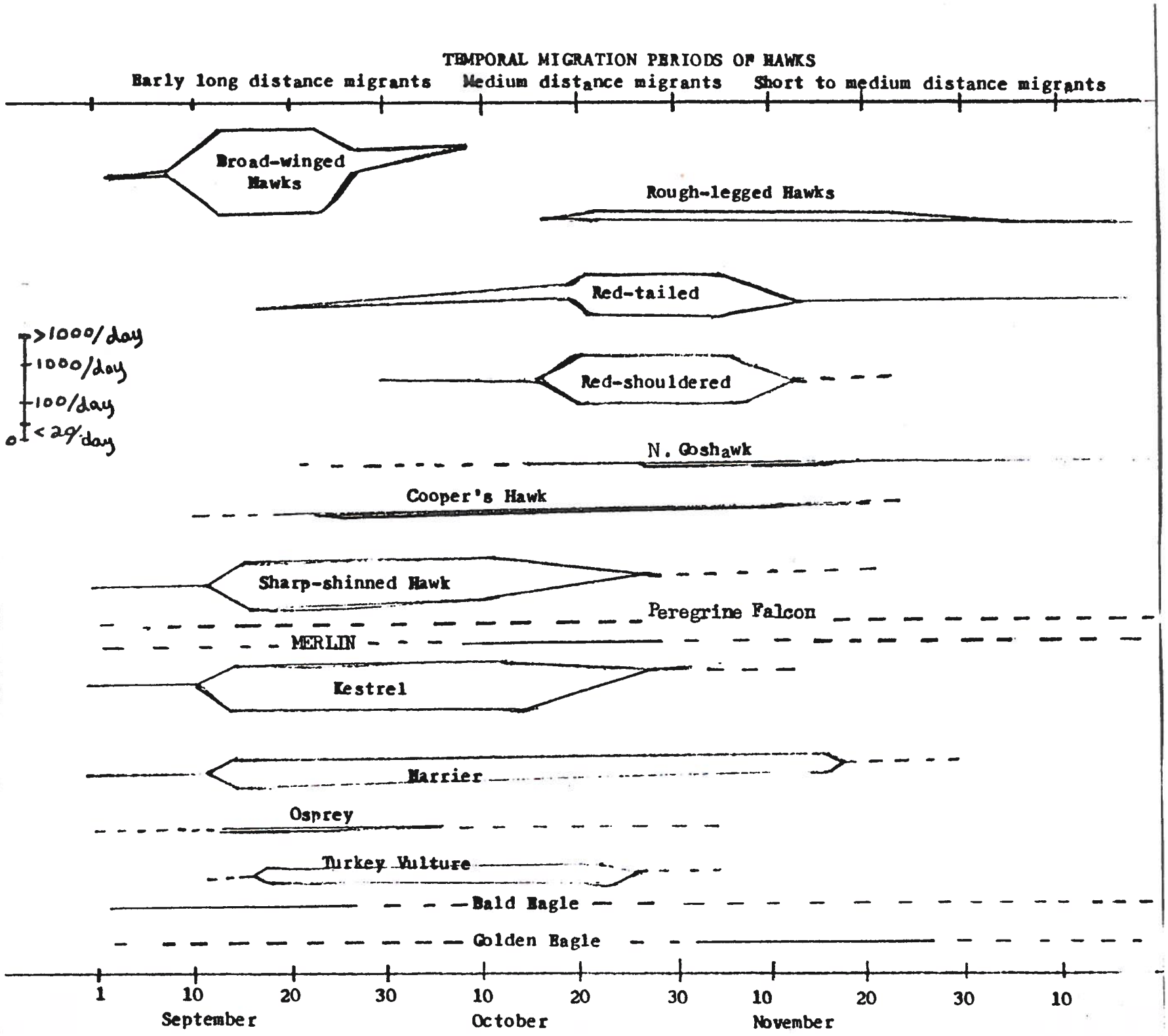
Mike Kielb,
1731 Hatcher Cresc.,
Ann Arbor,
Michigan, 48103.
1-313-995-4357

AUTUMN HAWK MIGRATION COUNT

HOLIDAY BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK, ONTARIO

AR	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
UNT DAYS	27	±50	62	74	81	79	77	81	84	86	92
ECIES											
rkey Vulture	1,128	570	2,099	3,185	2,868	5,073	5,210	4,418	4,132	5,873	6273
ack Vulture	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
rthern Goshawk	0	6	5	11	13	26	8	39	56	32	42
arp-shinned Hawk	5,999	+10,600	14,275	17,783	10,601	12,898	12,469	16,753	10,106	11,926	12,313
oper's Hawk	88	52	216	209	352	539	316	547	527	453	666
d-tailed Hawk	831	+1,900	4,075	5,664	8,001	5,372	8,262	6,636	4,783	5,019	7,654
d-shouldered Hawk	116	64	555	861	1,041	638	575	530	783	841	1,304
oad-winged Hawk	38,154	±25,500	27,013	23,259	23,250	19,061	16,617	71,185	29,615	35,800	110,221
ough-legged Hawk	6	55	56	307	268	107	197	134	137	122	50
ainson's Hawk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
olden Eagle	0	6	5	15	37	21	22	30	13	12	20
ald Eagle	1	0	3	6	16?	23	33	12	9	13	15
orthern Harrier	194	219	408	635	383	395	694	599	576	423	556
sprey	62	28	95	100	74	56	81	68	79	48	65
eregrine Falcon	2	0	9	9	12	11	6	13	15	20	16
erlin	2	3	7	17	17	7	5	20	10	32	20
merican Kestrel	1,040	1,623	3,059	3,211	3,458	3,255	3,416	3,058	2,607	2,112	2,165
nidentified accipiter	-	-	-	-	-	142	122	123	84	15	58
nidentified buteo	-	-	-	-	-	818	368	465	332	241	186
nidentified eagle	-	1	-	-	-	0	0	1	0	2	1
nidentified falcon	-	-	-	-	-	13	7	18	17	5	7
nidentified type unkn.	±377	374	507	734	413	22	18	62	16	5	4
ther Hawk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	±48,000	41,122	52,387	56,006	50,804	48,478	48,426	104,712	53,897	62,994	141,636

ll count numbers taken from Detroit Audubon's Flyway.
he 1975 totals include localities in southeastern Michigan and southwestern Ontario,
he park was also closed for over a week due to mosquito/encephaltis concern.


TEMPORAL MIGRATION PERIODS OF HAWKS
Early long distance migrants
Medium distance migrants
Short to medium distance migrants
Broad-winged Hawks
Rough-legged Hawks
Red-tailed
Red-shouldered
>1000/day
1000/day
100/day
<29/day
0
N. Goshawk
Cooper's Hawk
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Peregrine Falcon
MERLIN
Kestrel
Harrier
Osprey
Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle
Golden Eagle
1
10
20
30
10
20
30
10
20
30
10
September
October
November

WILF BOTHAM RECEIVES FIRST ANNUAL ECFNC AWARD

At this year's first annual ECFNC fund-raising dinner, the club executive decided to present an award to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to nature study in Essex County. It is hoped that the award will be given on an annual basis. The award winner receives an engraved plaque, and an honourary life membership in the ECFNC.

This year's worthy recipient of the club award is local naturalist and club member Wilfred Botham. Wilf is best known for his botanical endeavours, but is an accomplished naturalist in virtually all fields. Birdwatching has taken Wilf on several nature tours to distant parts of the globe, and his frequent visits to Point Pelee have made him well-known to staff and regular visitors. What makes Wilf's accomplishments even more impressive is that he has neither a degree in biology nor any formal training in that field; he is largely self-taught. How many club members know the calls and identity of our local crickets, grasshoppers, and cicadas? Wilf does, and he learned them from an album purchased many years ago from Cornell University.

Wilf's main interest is plants, and he has laboriously catalogued the plants of this county since the mid 1930's! His first botanical specimens were collected in 1937 on Pelee Island, and since that time most of his several thousand collections have been made in Essex County. Wilf's private herbarium has now been largely donated to the National Museum in Ottawa, where it forms part of their large research collection.

The culmination of Wilf's work on the local flora was the publication of his book: "Plants of Essex County: a preliminary list". This monumental work, the first flora of Essex County since 1914, lists all the plants known

from the county, their flowering times, places in the county where they occur, and the location of supporting specimens. Plants of Essex County not only includes vascular plants, but contains lists of mosses, lichens, liverworts, and fungi which Wilf has identified in the County. A number of Wilf's discoveries have been first records for the province or country. His most recent find of that calibre was made this spring in Tilbury West Conservation Area, where he found a sedge (Carex crus-corvi) never before seen in Canada. Wilf is still actively updating his book, and we look forward to many more exciting discoveries in the years to come. A tireless field worker, even today, Wilf takes great pleasure in getting out into the natural world, and is always eager to share his extensive knowledge and experience with others.

Wilf's diverse interests extend beyond the field of natural history, to philosophy, poetry, linguistics, and other areas, and he has strong views on hunting, and a phoenetic language among other things. It is with great pleasure that the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club bestows its first annual award on Wilfred Botham, a worthy recipient indeed.

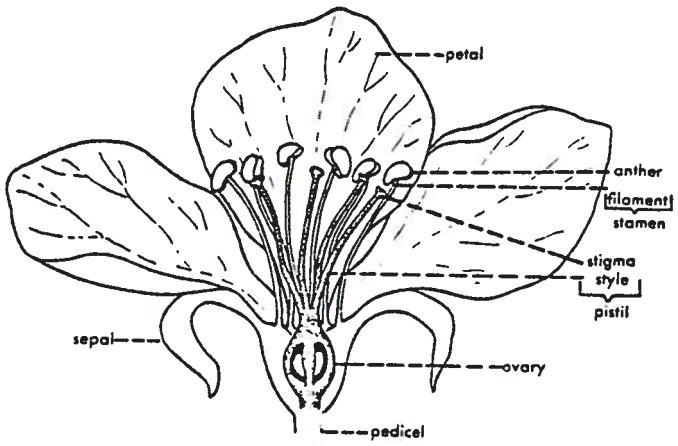


Diagram of a flower, in section, to show structures. Since it has both male and female organs it is called a "perfect" flower.

BIRD SIGHTINGS SUMMARY (June/July/August)

MIGRATION

Following the very early spring of 1985 it was not too surprising that very few migrants were still to be seen in June. Nearly all passerine migration seemed to be over by June 3rd. After this date only a handfull of migrants occurred with the latest being an adlut male Black and White Warbler at Pelee on June 20th. Just a few days after that (June 26) the first fall migrants arrived. This honour as usual belonged to post-breeding shorebirds. Both Lesser Yellowlegs and Least Sandpiper both arrived on this date. From then to about the second week of July shorebird numbers slowly escalated. Both Harrow and Kingsville Sewage lagoons had low water and excellent habitat. Observers should be aware that Kingsville is now expanding to five lagoons from three (at least) and that later this fall as construction continues on the new ponds there may be good habitat.

Passerine migration started to be noted in mid to late July with the first Tennessee Warblers and Least Flycatchers passing through Pelee. Fall migration of passerines was extremely heavy through Pelee during mid to late August. Large groups of warblers and flycatchers were very common. As the end of August approached several interesting finds occurred in this group including Cerulean, "Lawrences", and Prairie Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrush. Also very interesting at this time was the appearance of several juvenile Laughing Gulls.

SIGHTINGS

These sightings are comprised of all the records made available to me by contributors. If you do not see your records here is is because I did not see them! All you have to do is submit the records to see them published (within reason). The next report period will be about the end of November so lets see your fall records. Although only about 75 species are mentioned here many more species have been seen during this period. The emphasis of this report is unusual species, high counts, low counts, early and late dates of significance. The groups used here are lumps of species for convenience and they follow the most recent AOU checklist order.

Red-throated Loon - Glossy Ibis: The only sighting of Red-throated Loon was on June 2nd on Pelee Island (CL). Pied-billed Grebes returned again ton nest at Stoney Point. Avery interesting report was of a White Pelican seen at Pelee marsh July 22 (LO). The observer is familiar with egrets and saw the large size, short tail, black wing tips and long beak. Unfortunately the report could not be confirmed. Cormorants returned to Lighthouse Point on Pelee island and started to appear at the Tip of Pelee in small groups of up to forty individauls in mid August. American Bittern was heard at Pelee throughout the summer and likely nested. Least Bittern was seen occasionally at both Hillman Marsh and Stoney Point throughout the summer. Fall migrants were seen several times in late August in the Pelee Marsh. A very large concentration of Great Blue Herons could be found at Hillman in late August and early September. Maximum high count was 93 on Sept. 4. At the same location on Sept. 4 was an immature Little Blue Heron (PW, TH).

Tundra Swan - Ruddy Duck One of the very unusual summering birds this year was a Tundra Swan that persisted at Essex Sewage Lagoons. One of the few records of Mute Swan at Point Pelee occurred on July 18 when 7 were seen off Sturgeon Creek (AC). Little did these birds know that they were being viewed by Windsor Stars Leamington correspondent Alan Cairns. The result- media coverage with their photo appearing in the Star later in the week. A single Canada Goose hung around Hillman Marsh most of the summer. It was unbanded and apparently unpaired. The Cinnamon Teal found in late May by Alan Wormington paraded for a lucky few into early June after which it was not seen. Among other interesting summering ducks were: Lesser Scaup(2) at Essex; Common Goldeneye at Essex; Ruddy Duck at Essex and Cottam; and a Hooded Merganser on the East Beach of Pelee July 28 (MJO).

Turkey Vulture - Sandhill Crane A number of early migrant raptors appeared in August at Pelee. Included in these were: Bald Eagle on Aug. 27; Sharp-shinned Hawk on Aug.22; Broad-winged Hawk on Aug.11 (2 adults); Red-tailed Hawk on Aug.22 (5); and- American Kestrel on Aug.22. Very surprising was an early movement of hawks with a very favorable North wind on September 2nd. The tally included 9 species of raptors and was as follows: Osprey (5); Bald Eagle (1- 3rd year); N. Harrier (14); Sharp-shinned Hawk (160); Coopers Hawk (6); Broad-winged Hawk (19); Red-tailed Hawk (4); American Kestrel (177); Peregrine Falcon (1). A Sandhill Crane seen flying over Pelee June 12th may have been one of the three birds seen several times in mid-May (RD).

Black-bellied Plover - Black Tern Golden Plovers put in a surprising summer appearance at Lighthouse Point with three birds July 12-16(AW, MM). The first fall migrants appearred at Pelee on September 2nd (CL). A Black-bellied Plover on the East Beach at Pelee June 24 was likey summering. The origin of two birds at Harrow (June 26- July 16) and three birds at Lighthouse Point (July 16) was likely the same. Fall migrants appeared at Pelee in August. A Ruddy Turnstone was at Harrow June 26- July16 (AW). Forty-four (44) Solitary Sandpipers at Harrow and Kingsville (inclusive) on July 16th was a good count. A breeding plumage Hudsonian Godwit at Harrow on June 5th was one of very few spring sightings of this species and also quite a late date (TH,AW). Peak numbers of shorebirds at Harrow and Kingsville (combined) were as follows: Lesser Yellowlegs July 6 (314); Pectoral Sandpiper July 16 (67); Least Sandpiper July 16 (502); S.-B. Dowitcher July 6 (56); Stilt Sandpiper (about 60 in early August). All these totals belong to the hard working Alan Wormington. A male Ruff at Harrow July 4-6 was a good find (AW et al). The 18 Buff-breasted Sandpipers in Pelee's onion fields were on schedule August 31st (AW et al). Several more small groups were seen in early September (m.ob.).

Most interesting were the number of Laughing Gulls that turned up. Alan Wormington (now the keeper of the southeast shoal light off the Tip of Pelee) saw four birds in early August. Three of these were juvenilesand one was in second-winter plumage. On the Great Lakes juveniles of this race species are even more unusual - adults and sub-adults are more typical. AW found another 2nd-winter bird at Pelee Aug24 and a juvenile at the Marentette Beach area August 29-31. There was another juv. at the Tip of Pelee Sept.5 (TH, PW). A Franklins Gull was reported- in the Onion Fields Aug.31(Ted Maddeford). A most impressive gull roost in the Onion Fields through late August included about 550 Caspian Terns and 5ooo plus Common Terns. A first-summer Black Tern, very unusual in the Province, was at Harrow July 6 (AW).

Rock Dove - Marsh Wren Two Olive-sided Flycatchers at Pelee in August were fairly normal (Aug23/Aug27). A high count of Empidonax flycatchers (250) on Aug.21 was quite impressive. An Acadian Flycatcher August 11th was one of few fall sightings for Pelee (TH). Also in good numbers were Yellow-bellied Flycatchers with 15 on Aug.21 the best count. A juvenile Tufted Titmouse at Pelee July 21 was one of few records in recent years (AW). Both species of nuthatches put on a southward push in late July and through August. White-breasteds peaked at 20 at Pelee on August 17th (TH). Red-breasteds put on an even larger movement through the entire month with a peak of 120 plus on Aug.21 (m.ob.).

The three reports of Carolina Wren all came from Pelee (Aug.20/21/23) This was encouraging after this springs poor showing. A Sedge Wren behind the Pelee visitor centre August 11th was extremely unusual.

Golden-crowned Kinglet - Yellow-b. Chat A Hermit Thrush on the Woodland Trail at Pellee Aug.31 was very early (KO). A Northern Mockingbird was seen between July29 and August 8th, at the Tip of Pelee. Two juvenile White-eyed Vireos August 11th at Pelee were encouraging. A late Philidelphia Vireo was at Pelee June 7th. Among the mass of warbler migration at Pelee the following were of note: Blue-winged - single birds on Aug.11/14/23/31; Golden-winged - three birds on Aug20 and singles on Aug. 23/27; Lawrences (the rare hybrid of the previous species) - one female Aug.27 (TH); Prairie - singles on Aug. 11/14; Cerulean - one on Aug.14; Prothonotary - two birds on both Aug.20 and 27th plus a single on Aug. 21/23; Louisiana Waterthrush - one record Aug.27; Connecticut - singles on Aug.31/Sept.2.

Summer Tanager - House Sparrow As expected there was little movement in this group. The Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Stoney Point appeared in even greater numbers with perhaps as many as 20-25 pairs. A migrant was found on the North Dyke of Pelee Sept.5 (PW). Of note were the pair of Brewer's Blackbirds that nested at Lighthouse Point (AW).

Purple Finches put on a small showing in august with 60 at Pelee on August 21st. Quite early were a smattering of Evening Grosbeaks at Pelee through late August- 21st (1), 26(3), 27(2), 31(2). Rounding out sightings was a strange green parrot that frequented the Tip area of Pelee throughout the summer. A photograph finally pinned down the identification of the bird as a Green Conure - obviously and escapee.

Contributors: Alan Wormington, Tom Hince, Peter Whelan, Jeff Larson, Jeff Blikton, R.Eden, C. Lemieux, M.J.Oldham, Peter Bondy, Paul Pratt, Jim McAllister, Ralph Thomas,Karl Overmann, Larry Oliver, Alan Cairns, Russ Dowhand, Mike Matheson, Ernie Carhart and to anyone else who I forgot my apologies.

Special note: Please excuse the many errors in this article. I apologize for this but compiling the records organizing and writing them up to keep them as up to the minute sometimes comprimises typing quality!! Also if you were expecting more on breeding birds (i.e. the"Atlas") please look for an upcoming article by Paul Pratt on the final year of the OBBA.

G. Tom Hince

CICADA SAGA

While sugaring for moths on a balmy August night, I found a cicada preparing for its first moult into adulthood. The evening produced no moths, so I returned to the tree with a portable fluorescent light to watch the unfolding drama.

This particular species, the Dogday Harvestfly (Tibicen canicularis), leaves the ground where they've resided over the previous three years feeding on tree root sap. Another species, the Periodical Cicada, takes 13 to 17 years to reach this stage.

Their motions are knight-in-armour stilted as they make the journey upward. Settling on a spot on the tree bark, a crack appears on the back approximately shoulder blade level on us. Gradually, it widens until it is large enough for the adult to work free of its confines. The contrast in colour from the old polished mahogany nymphal skin to translucent adult is striking. The emerging adult has a translucent quality of pastel pinks and sea foam greens. Its crinkled wings glow with a beautiful "Margaritta" green hue. The cicada gently arches back, ballerina style, until just the tip of the tail is holding it. Then it slowly leans forward to grasp the old skin to lift free.

It hangs, using gravity to assist in expanding the crinkled wings, to dry them to a shiny celophane with delicate leaded veins. During the 2½ hour process, the pastel colours gradually deepen until they are a dark green with black markings.

Dogday Harvestfly Resting After Molt.

This Dogday Harvestfly is aptly named as it sings on the hot, dog days of summer, sounding like a small circular saw cutting through wood.

You can find these fascinating insects in coniferous and mixed woodland. The next time you take a walk in the woods, look around, perhaps you will find the abandoned skins clinging in mute testimony of dramas past.

Susan Morrison

The Other Serpent in Our Garden

Most of us have encountered the common land reptile of our area, the snake. The reactions to this meeting range from murderous intent to enlightened delight. If we were to encounter the other land reptile found here our reaction would likely be one of astonishment, for few people are aware that a lizard is a member of our fauna. Certainly lizards are more typical of warmer climates and arid environments but our native Five-lined Skink finds parts of Ontario entirely to its liking.

This is no loutish iguana-sized lizard but a trim speedster with a maximum size of 205 mm (8 in.). It has five light coloured stripes on a black ground colour and bright blue tail when young but the colours become duller with age; the stripes darken and the ground colour lightens. Mature males have a red or orange colouration on the sides of the head during the breeding season in May and June.

For such an infrequently seen animal the range is rather large, extending past Parry Sound in the north and Kingston in the east. On the rocky outcropings of the Canadian Shield it is said to be locally abundant. Hereabouts the spots to find skinks are all sandy areas. Rocky outcroppings are rarer than skinks in most of Southwestern Ontario. These sandy areas include Rondeau Park, POint Pelee and Ojibway among others.

I've had my best luck viewing them on the boardwalk accesses to the west side of Point Pelee. Here they like to sun themselves on the boards at just about any time of the day. Here too they find their preferred habitat of dry ground with moisture nearby. The female lays eggs in a moist location such as the interior of a rotten log. She may guard them until they hatch. Meanwhile the males will be foraging during the day for the normal diet of insects, spiders, sowbugs and other invertebrates.

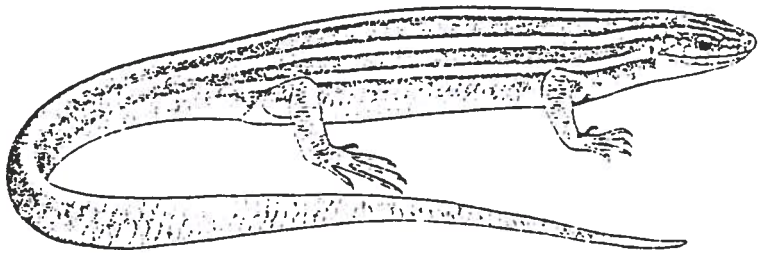
The secret to seeing a skink close up is to surprise them while they are sluggish. This usually means going after them in the cool of the morning or on cool, cloudy days. Like other cold-blooded animals their speed and awareness are directly related to their body temperature. Look under the boards, stones and similar cover in the drier open areas. Don't waste your time out on the areas of pure beach sand, they prefer some vegetation about. Try to replace the boards, etc. in the position you found them to reduce disturbance to the environment. The underside of a board or stone can be a whole world to some organisms. This method of hunting skinks works for the Point Pelee naturalists when they need some for displays in the Visitors Centre.

One warning: it is best not to try and pick a skink up especially if the handiest portion is the tail or all you may be left with is a tail that still seems very much alive. The blue tail breaks off readily and the thinking goes that the trashing after breaking and the bright colour may distract a predator's attention from the duller coloured body allowing the skink to escape. Amazingly the lizard can then regrow another somewhat truncated version of its first tail. Whether this new tail has the bright blue colour of a juvenile one is something I have never been able to discover.

When the excitement of being chased by predators and naturalists has subdued for another season the skink finds a snug log to spend the winter under or in sandy soils it may dig a burrow to hibernate in.

If you don't see our other serpent this summer don't chastise yourself too hastily. I have to confess that I had never seen one either in all my years of rambling until I was almost literally taken by the hand and deposited in front of one. However, perhaps beginners luck will work for you.

--Gerry Waldron



BOOK REVIEW

Stokes, Donald W. and Lillian Q. Stokes. A Guide to Enjoying Wildflowers. Boston: Little, Brown, 1985. 371 p. $25.95 (hardback)

Amateur naturalists in eastern North America all carry and use the time-honoured wildflowers guide "A Field Guide to the Wild Flowers" by Roger Tory Peterson. A guide such as this primarily indicates how one flowering plant may be distinguished from another. The entry for each plant is concise but adequate to identify the plant.

"A Guide to Enjoying Wildflowers" will complement the Peterson guide and will increase any naturalist's enjoyment of wildflowers. The authors indicate that their guide will assist the reader to discover the "whole lives" of some fifty common and well-loved groups of plants of our woods, fields, disturbed dry places, swampy areas and open water.

Among some of the fifty genera of plants included are Trillium, Skunk Cabbage, Milkweed, Loosestrife, Jewelweed, Iris, Goldenrod, Geranium, Violet, Chicory, Cattail and Bindweed. Your particular favourites are certain to be included.

Each genus is discussed under five headings: introduction, wild and garden relatives, what you can observe, flower watching, and through the seasons.

The introduction may indicate certain beliefs about the plant, various uses of the plant and whether it is native in Europe or to North America. A watercolour illustration of a representative species of each genus accompanies every introduction. The browser will especially enjoy these plates and will be enticed to dip into the text. Wild and garden relatives of each genus are discussed.

Particularly useful to the naturalist are the sections entitled "what you can observe" and "flower watching". The authors suggest examining flowerheads for insects associated with particular plants. You might wish to observe the time at which flowerheads open and close each day. The authors urge you to examine seeds and seed pods to understand seed dispersal. Root structures are explained for a better understanding of how plants adapt to their environments.

Each plant has a flower map, indicating which parts are petals and sepals, which one is the female and male parts, and how the flower works, i.e. how pollination takes place.

The section "through the seasons" identifies each genus as an annual, biennial, or perennial, suggests the period of flowering, indicates when seed dispersal takes place and mentions the form in which the plant over-winters.

This book is highly recommended as it will prove to be essential reading for any naturalist who finds delight in our common wild plants. This guide is the sixth in the Stokes Nature Guides and it should prove to be popular as the authors enthusiastically share their discoveries with fellow naturalists.

"A Guide to Enjoying Wildflowers" is available from the Friends of Point Pelee Nature Nook book shop.

Betty Learmouth

ONTARIO HERPETOFAUNAL SUMMARY

In an earlier issue of THE EGRET (Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 27) I outlined a new project to document Ontario's reptiles and amphibians. The eventual aim is to compile an atlas of Ontario reptiles and amphibians, as is currently being done for birds. This year, thanks to grant from the World Wildlife Fund, we have printed up sightings cards (see copy below), to facilitate the recording of data. Contributors are asked to fill in cards for reptiles and amphibians sighted or heard. For a supply of sightings cards or for further information, contact me at 776-5209.

Mike Oldham

Species			County/Region	
Year	Date	Time h.	Township	
Location (give full details)			UTM Grid Reference	Map No.
			Number of Individuals Observed	
Name and Address of Principal Observer(s)			Additional Information on Reverse (eg. habitat, weather, reproduction, etc.)	

Return completed card by 31st December to:

ONTARIO HERPETOFAUNAL SUMMARY
c/o Essex Region Conservation Authority
360 Fairview Avenue West
Essex, Ontario N8M 1Y6 (519) 776-5209

BUTTERFLIES

Butterflies have been seen in abundant supply this summer. From the Giant Swallowtail, Spicebush Swallowtail, vast numbers of friendly Red Admirals, down to the tiny black Sootywing and the minute Spring Azure.

I experimented by growing flax this year, and found that the Spring Azures were very fond of it. It amazed me to watch these petite blue fliers attend the matching blue flowers of the flax. When stationary on the plant, I couldn't distinguish between the petal and the butterfly, even at the three-foot distance.

Monarchs have had a strong showing this August, perhaps if the weather cooperates, we will have a spectacular migration off the tip of Point Pelee in September.

Keep a lookout won't you? Don't hesitate to phone in your findings to our Hotline number (252-BIRD). (To report sightings, call Jim McAllister at 254-1854.)

-- Susan Morrison

TEASING WEASELS AND OTHER CURIOSITIES

When I first encountered other naturalists in my early teens, a whole wealth of knowledge became uncovered. Of the useful nature study techniques I gleaned from those days, "squeaking" has been one of the most rewarding. An active member of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club, Monty Brigham, was the patient instructor.

"Squeaking" is facilitated by sucking two sandwiched fingers with two precisely pursed lips. First take index and middle finger of one hand and hold them together but separate enough from the rest of your hand to hold against your mouth easily. Second pucker your lips slightly and place the two fingers parallel and against ones lips gap to gap. Then pucker and slowly increase suction until "squeaking" begins. The higher the pitch, the better in most cases. Do not worry if your lips get sore! That is normal after the first few efforts.

Why squeak? Squeaking like other calling techniques attracts a whole realm of small birds such as warblers, sparrows and especially blackbirds. In addition, if done properly, it can attract predatory birds (owls, hawks) and mammals (weasels, etc.). The "proper" noise to produce is a very high pitched squeak, not too loud with long squeaks like an injured mammal or bird. The theory I have heard most often expounded is that the greedy predator cannot resist the sound (your squeak) of any easy meal. Here's an example of some interesting encounters I have had over the years.

One of the first and most surprising encounters was in 1970 north of Ottawa on the Luskville plain. It was a sunny but bitterly cold day in early February and the reason for my presence was an elusive Great Gray Owl. A small group of us were searching for it through knee deep snow along a cedar dominated creek valley. I sat down on a sunny log centered in a clearing and did my best squeak that I felt would be irresistable to the owl. After about only 5 squeaks, a half inch long spot of black came bounding across the snow towards me. Only when it stopped about 15 feet away did I notice that the black spot was attached to the snowy tail and body of an upright weasel in winter dress. For about 2 seconds we looked at each other - neither I am sure fully under-

standing what had happened - I expected a Great Gray Owl and the weasel expected a mouse! No doubt somewhere closeby , my Great Gray Owl was eating the weasel's mouse! After a few seconds, the weasel scurried off and I returned to my squeaking only to attract the weasel's attention again! This time I kept squeaking and he came foot by foot right up to the tip of my Kodiak encased and now crystallized feet. At that point I stopped squeaking. He looked me square in the eye and as he turnedtail for the last time I was sure he said "Humph!".

Since that time I have, on about 30 occasions, squeaked in weasels. Once I watched a weasel snatch a sluggish House Wren near the ground in the woodland swamp at Point Pelee. It stashed its prize securely under leaves upon hearing my squeaking and sauntered right up to my feet defiantly. On another occasion a weasel with a mouthful of vole did the same thing except it ran up my leg causing me to jump and the weasel to flee! I should mention that I now stop squeaking when the weasel reaches my feet.

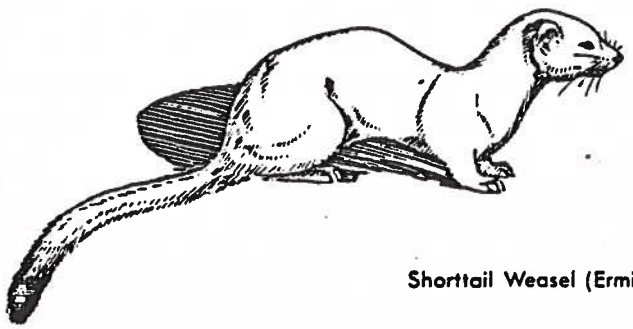
Squeaking is also very useful for birds of prey. Most owls especially Barred, Great Horned and Long-eared and many hawks especially Goshawk, Sharp-shinned and Coopers can be lured in for excellent views. As most birds of prey have keen eyesight, it is best to stay well hidden but with a good field of vision to obtain views. One of my most exciting events in 20 years of birding was with this method. A few years ago, Simon Gawn and I were walking a snowmobile trail through Cedar Swamps on the Arnprior Christmas Bird Count, I squeaked while he surveyed for incoming curiosities. After two minutes of hard squeaking, I was about to cease when Simon exhalted "big owl - keep squeaking!". After only a few more squeaks, a magnificent Great Gray Owl came cruising in straight at us at eye level - like a torpedo with wings. It flopped to an uneasy halt no more than fifteen feet away at eye level in open view. As we stood there in disbelief, one of the earlier squeaking victims, a Hairy Woodpecker, divebombed it causing it to duck nervously and bob its head. The owl just ruffled its feathers and sat there for five minutes examining us while we continuously parrotted expletives that are unrepeatable here! Then he turned and disappeared on a whisper of wings.

For owls, the best time to squeak is dawn or dusk, near a spot with perches that will give away owls as silhouettes should they alight. A spotlight or flashlight can then be used to get better views.

Aside from weasels, other predatory mammals can be lured too. On one occasion in the Rockies, I lured a Coyote to within about 15 feet. Many times particularly in the Point Pelee marsh, Mink have been attracted. More rarely Marten, Fox, Bobcat and Fisher have been spotted by lucky callers.

Squeaking can be done at any time of year in almost any location. It is a useful technique for wildlife observation that almost anyone can do. If you have never tried it, give it a whirl but be patient - somewhere not too far away a potential victim is waiting! Good luck!

By: G. Tom Hince



Shorttail Weasel (Ermine)

THE EATEN AND THE EATER

Ecosystems consist of a variety of organisms that produce food. These are called producers. The producers are green plants that use light energy from the sun to form their own food. This process is called photosynthesis.

Herbivores are animals that eat plants because their body cannot make their own food. They have four large front teeth called incisors for chewing. A rabbit is a herbivore.

Animals that eat herbivores are called carnivores. All carnivores have large claws to catch their prey with. They have four specialized large teeth called canines for tearing meat. Hawks and owls are carnivores that do not have canine teeth. What do they use instead? A wolf is a carnivore.

Omnivores are animals that eat both meat and plants. Bears and raccoons are omnivores.

Insectivores are organisms that eat insects. Frogs long, sticky tongues are used for catching insects. Which group do you fit into?

MAMMAL SCRAMBLE

Unscramble the following words to make the name of a mammal or words that are associated with mammals. Have fun!

END _____
OXF _____
TAME _____
ABT _____
DLIW _____
TLAI _____
STUN _____
SNKUK _____
SMEOU _____
TESN _____
RURYF _____
ATEM _____
SEDSE _____
ETRE _____

RTEDROAP _____
MLAMMA _____
NOAOCRC _____
KPHCMINU _____
RILEQURS _____
TONIRHINABE _____
RWAM LOOBDED _____
VEIL RTHBI _____
TITCOAILNO TAIBBR _____
VORERBHEI _____
ROEVRNCAI _____
MNIOEOVR _____
MHNUA _____
EEENNDDAGR _____
STPALN _____
CRTASK _____

CLUB CALENDER

Hotline 252-BIRD
Ojibway 966-5852
Pt Pelee 322-2365

	First week	Second week	Third week	Fourth week
SEPT	5. Fall Bird Migration Field Course 7:30 Ojibway Nature Centre	11. ECFNC Dinner Meeting Croatian Centre 14. ECFNC Field Trip Hawk Migration at Holiday Beach	19. Mycology Ojibway N.C. 7:30 20. Owl Prowl Maidstone C.A. 7:30	25. Trees of Essex Cty. Fox Creek C.A. 7:00 26 Nature Photography Ojibway N.C. 7:30 29. Fall Hike Canard Valley C.A. 1:00
OCT.	2. Bird Feeder Building Essex Civic Centre 7:00 4. Owl Prowl + Hike Maidstone C.A. 7:00	6. Harvest Festival Fox Creek C.A. 10-5. 9. ECFNC Monthly Meeting Marlborough 7:30		25. Haunted Hike Maidstone C.A. 7:00 27. Fall Open House Ojibway N.C. 10-5.
NOV.	2. ECFNC Fall Hike Meet Maidstone C.A. 9:00 Bring lunch.		13. ECFNC Monthly Meeting Marlborough 7:30	23. OFO Field Trip Niagara Falls 27 Natural Christmas Craft Funshop Essex Civic Centre
DEC.	7+8 Christmas in the Country Fox Creek C.A. 12-4	11. ECFNC Monthly Meeting Marlborough 7:30 14+15 Christmas in the Country Fox Creek C.A. 12-4		Christmas Bird Count Pt. Pelee.