



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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Guest Speaker Announced for ECFNC 20th Annual Dinner

This year our guest speaker at our ECFNC 20th Annual Dinner (scheduled for Saturday, November 6, 2004) will be Bruce Kershner, forest ecologist and botanist, who is devoted to Old Growth Forests, their identification and preservation. Bruce is a resident of New York State, but has conducted a number of forest surveys in Southern Ontario. The word passionate best describes Bruce's attitude towards old growth forest and the sharing of this attitude with other naturalists. Bruce has requested that we plan a field trip for the day following the dinner to inspect a local natural area for old growth forest.

The following article appeared in the Federation of Ontario Naturalists Winter 2003/2004 issue of *Seasons* which describes the exciting recent discovery of an old growth corridor in the Niagara Gorge.

Nestled in the gorge at Niagara Glen, not far from the world-famous falls, lies a second natural wonder: a forest of old-growth trees, some even predating the War of 1812. A team of 10 botanists and naturalists lead by Bruce Kershner, a forest ecologist and botanist, discovered this "corridor of antiquity," as Kershner calls it, last June (2003) when they surveyed the area.

To the surprise of many, the Niagara Glen contains one of the larger areas of old-growth forest remaining in southern Ontario. According to Kershner, the trees found in the glen cover a remarkable 22.3 hectares. The group saw oak, tulip trees, cedars and sassafras as tall as 40 metres. "I believe it's the tallest broadleaf forest in Ontario," says Kershner. "There are ultra ancient cedars that have really weird roots that go around several boulders, but are part of the same tree. Being down in the Niagara Gorge, the trees are protected from the wind."

Along both the Ontario and U.S. sides of the Niagara River, throughout the Niagara Gorge, are ancient cedars growing on the cliffs and slopes. Some of the cedars are nearly 500 years old; others are even older.

(continued page 3)

About the Club . . .

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club was incorporated in March 1985. We are a registered charitable organization which promotes the appreciation and conservation of our natural heritage. ECFNC provides the community opportunities to be acquainted with and understand our natural world through identification, maintenance and preservation of natural areas of Essex County and surrounding regions. ECFNC is affiliated with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON). *The Egret* is published quarterly. To receive information on the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club or to submit articles, letters, reports, etc., please write to :

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Egret Editorial Committee: David D'hondt, Karen Cedar, Betty Learnmouth, Nicole D'hondt, Shirley Grondin
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Annual Dinner: Heritage Committee
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Heritage: JoAnn Grondin, Margaret Jennings, Dave Kraus, Betty Learnmouth, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Patricia Rhoads, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson

Guest Speaker Announced for ECFNC 20th Annual Dinner ... continued from page 1....

Other old-growth trees – up to 280 years old – found in the area include red, black and white oaks, black walnut, and Shumard Oak near Queenston. These are among the few Shumard oaks found in Canada and the only known old-growth Shumard oaks found north of the southern United States.

“Guide books had thought old-growth trees didn’t exist in this area. I was told not to bother with Paradise Grove [at Fort George], as the trees had all been cut down since the War of 1912. I found trees that predated the war.” Adds Kershner, “I consider the Niagara Gorge one of the top 10 quality nature preserves I’ve ever seen.”

Mary Celestino’s article Old Growth Forests in Southern Ontario (*The Egret*, Winter 2002, page 15 – 18) is an excellent introduction to Old Growth Forests, conveying the extraordinary feelings that Bruce Kershner brings to his discussion and discovery of Old Growth Forests.

Tenth Annual ECFNC Weekend Trip to Pelee Island Saturday May 1 & Sunday May 2, 2004

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

We will hopefully see: migrating waterfowl & warblers, wildflowers such as trilliums & phlox, basking turtles and snakes, bullfrogs, historic sites, and hear a chorus or two of American Toads, to suggest a few of the many enjoyable experiences on Pelee Island in spring. We may also get a chance to visit the “Wilds of Pelee Island” renewable energy and endangered species conservation education centre, and / or the new Pelee Island Bird Observatory (bird banding station).

We will have plenty of time to walk, observe, and relax on the excursions to some of Pelee’s most beautiful natural areas, including: Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve, Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve, the Stone Road Alvar Complex, Sheridan Point ESA, and possibly a few other stops along the way. Should we experience inclement weather, (however, Carl Maiolani is arranging excellent weather for us - as usual) we will visit the Pelee Island Heritage Centre. The museum presents an interesting and diverse view of Pelee Island’s rich natural and human history (as well as the new Middle Island exhibit).

I have arranged for bus transportation while on the island - no vehicles are necessary or desired on this trip. There is parking at the Leamington Dock area (for a reasonable fee) or have someone drop you off. I have reserved space on the ferry for all registered walk-on passengers attending this trip - we will need to meet and form a group before boarding and I will purchase our tickets as a group (using the deposit money).

Accommodations have been reserved at the Anchor and Wheel Inn. The recently renovated motel and bed and breakfast style rooms are very comfortable and are situated on treed, spacious grounds. Reservations are generally set for two persons per room. However, people do not need to register in pairs or groups - everyone is welcome !!!

The Anchor and Wheel Inn contains a clean and comfortable restaurant where I have arranged for our meals. We will break for meals regularly (lunch at 2 p.m. and dinner (Big Island Buffet including prime rib, veggie options, fish, etc.) at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, breakfast at 9 a.m. Sunday) and hot meals and snacks are also available on both ferry crossings.

I am requesting a \$20 deposit (which will be for accommodations, etc.) from each person to secure reservations. I will also need to collect an additional \$130 from each participant once on the island, to fully pay for the two ferry trips, bus transportation, three meals, tips, and overnight accommodations. This \$150 total cost will include all expenses for the weekend other than alcoholic drinks, souvenirs, or additional snacks or meals on the ferry. If there are any additional funds remaining after I pay for all of our trip expenses, I will donate the remaining money to the ECFNC Heritage Committee Fund which will be used to help purchase and protect Carolinian habitat in southwestern Ontario.

All interested persons need to do is: sign up with me and provide a \$20 deposit (cash or make cheques payable to Dave Kraus), show up at the Leamington Dock by 9:30 am Saturday morning with warm field clothes and

accessories (no need for rubber wading boots as the trails are elevated), overnight necessities, \$130 cash per person for me for the group trip expenses, and maybe a few additional dollars for extra snacks, etc. Please have cash to pay me for our group rated accommodations, meals, tips, & transportation.

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

To register for this trip: see me at the ECFNC meetings, call, or write:

Dave Kraus: phone: 519-324-9679

mailing address: 1360 Rd. 4 East, RR 2, Kingsville, Ont. N9Y 2E5

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

ECFNC Considers Permanent Meeting Location

ECFNC members are aware that the Club has held its regular monthly meetings in two locations over the past few years, the Windsor Family Credit Union and the Essex Civic Centre.

The movement between two meeting sites has caused some confusion, thus the consideration to move to a permanent meeting location. The suggestion is that the site be a meeting room at the Essex Civic Centre in the Town of Essex which is available without a rental fee to community groups.

We are looking for feedback on this idea. Please contact ECFNC President Phil Roberts at 969-9096 extension 439 or by e-mail at philroberts@windsorairport.net

Canada South Land Trust Picnic and Event at Holiday Beach Conservation Area

Mark your calendar for Saturday, June 5, 2004 for a Canada South Land Trust Event. Enjoy a salad and dessert picnic, learn about Holiday Beach Conservation Area's nesting Prothonotary Warblers, and assist our new Canada South Land by attending this late spring activity. Salads and desserts will be served between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00pm.

Following the picnic, there will be a guided walk to Prothonotary Warbler habitat lead by ECFNC President and CSLT member Phil Roberts. More roadways will be removed in Spring 2004 to increase Prothonotary Warbler habitat. Phil will provide an update on this restoration project and current nesting status of the Prothonotaries.

Tickets for this event are \$30.00 with an income tax receipt for \$20.00 to be issued to each participant. Please contact Betty Learmouth at 944-0825 for further information and tickets to this Canada South Land Trust event. Tickets will be available at ECFNC meetings and Ojibway Nature Centre. Everyone is welcome!

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS WORKSHOP

Calling all birds and birders! Let's keep our eyes and ears open and collect those breeding bird records. Interested but don't know how to help? Come out to Ojibway Nature Centre on March 27 at 1:00 pm for an exciting free workshop! The Breeding Bird Atlas coordinators for our area are: Paul Pratt and Karen Cedar. If you are interested please call them at 966-5852. Let's all get out and continue to collect data and maybe find something new! Just this year a Prothonotary Warbler was nesting at Holiday Beach and a new Bald Eagle nest was found on Fighting Island. For more information on the Breeding Bird Atlas see: www.ojibway.ca/atlas.htm.



A Stroll in the Zuliani Woods Margaret Jennings

On November 30, 2003, seven Essex County Field Naturalists enjoyed a stroll through the Zuliani Woods. Paul DesJardins instructed us on tree identification. Among the species seen were basswood, red oak, swamp white oak, white oak, pin oak, American Elm, sycamore and shagbark hickory. Several ash trees showed no sign of emerald ash borer. There was a lot of poison ivy. Paul showed us that the poison ivy vines have aerial roots but the Virginia Creeper has suction cups.

Paul recommended two books, *Shrubs of Ontario* by Soper and Heimburger and *Michigan Trees*.

Birds seen were Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks, Downy Woodpeckers, Mourning Doves, Ring-billed Gulls and Great Horned Owl.

Many thanks to our leaders Paul Desjardins and Larry Onysko.

Rattlesnake Tales

Staff of the Ojibway Nature Centre, City of Windsor
In *The Friends of Ojibway Prairie Newsletter*, February 2004

Research

Unfortunately construction continues to destroy habitat for the eastern Massasauga rattlesnake in our area, posing imminent danger to the population in the Windsor and LaSalle area. For this reason, it was decided that a more concentrated effort be made to assist populations of rattlesnakes in protected areas, such as the Spring Garden Prairie and the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. In early spring 2003, search efforts began to identify prime habitat for our three threatened reptiles: rattlesnakes, fox snakes and Butler's garter snakes.

Over 180 hours were spent searching 48 hectares of the 105 hectare Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. Fifty-one snakes were found, 19 of which were eastern fox snakes, a threatened species in Canada. Encountering so many of these species at risk is very encouraging news.

The City of Windsor has recently acquired more land in the Spring Garden area, and so many hours were spent documenting good snake habitat. The snake search was also very rewarding: 13 hectares were searched which resulted in 82 snakes being found, 10 of which were fox snakes. Also, parts of a dead rattlesnake were found outside of a coyote den in Spring Garden. Although this is sad for the rattlesnake, it was very exciting news for the researchers.

Many volunteers donated their time and effort towards these very beneficial searches. A Big Thank You to everyone who helped out: Bri-Anna Jaksic, Martijn Hartman, Bart Vander Aa, Bonnie Ross, Muriel Kassimatis, Shirley Grondin, Deb Jacobs, Allan Woodliffe, Deb Waugh, Jo Barten, Ray Manzerolle, John Middleton, Greg Czuchnowsky, Kelly Thibideau, Tony Braithwaite, Larry Evon, Russ Jones and Gerry Waldron.

Thank to Endangered Species Recovery Fund for their contributions which help towards protecting and ensuring future survival of the tallgrass prairie and the eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

Documenting prime rattlesnake habitat is integral to ensuring healthy rattler populations in these areas. The search for these habitats continues to be a priority in our ongoing rattlesnake research.

Outreach and Education

A very important part of preserving habitat for rare species is public knowledge and education. In 2003 the Nature Centre staff were able to take the *Living With Rattlesnakes* programme to many more schools. This unique outreach programme was designed to help raise awareness of local rare and endangered animals, such as the eastern massasauga rattlesnake. From January to March 2003 the Nature Centre staff presented this programme to 50 classes, reaching 1,254 students! The programme has been very well received by students and faculty members of all schools. Here are some of the comments received:

"I would recommend this presentation to many schools. You did a great job. Very informative and friendly. Good visuals and well organized. Thank you!"

"Great presentation! Very informative in respect to how many species we are likely to encounter, how to identify the species, etc. Interesting in regards to endangered species and amount of habitat remaining to house there creatures."

"This was an excellent presentation. It was a perfect level for the students. It gave them a lot of information about the snakes. Great hands on! Thank you!"

Along with the program, each class was given the following information resources: *Snakes of Ontario* poster, *Snakes of Ontario* card identifier, Ojibway Prairie booklet, and follow-up activities to do a review with the class. Each student received the *Reach Out to Wildlife* brochure and a Rattlesnake Recovery Team sticker. We were also able to give the principals of each school *The Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake Stewardship Guide* to be placed in their resource library so that all students have it as an educational resource. These programmes were made possible through funding from the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk.

Interest in snakes continued at the post secondary level with St. Clair College's Ecotourism class stopping by the Ojibway Nature Centre to learn about our local eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

Other programmes at the Nature Centre and at other facilities, such as Chapter's bookstore in Devonshire Mall, also continued to educate the public about living with rattlesnakes. The education efforts are paying off as many parents are calling the Nature Centre for additional information about snakes in the area, and people's sense of fear about these docile and shy animals is slowly lessening. There was also continued interest in rattlesnakes by the local media. The Windsor Star, CBC television and CKLW radio are just a few of the media encounters made this past year.

What's next

The constant construction and busy activity of the Massasauga's habitat continues to pose great concern for the continuation of the species in our area. Education of landowners and their children in schools is ongoing.

In 2004 the Nature Centre continues to highlight public education. A new school program, *It's Endangered*, hit schools in early January and will help children to learn more about the tallgrass prairie and its rare inhabitants.

This year the Friends of Ojibway Prairie have applied for an Endangered Species Recovery Fund grant. This grant will fund additional searches for snake habitat and rattlesnakes in the Ojibway Prairie Complex and will also be used to install snake proof fencing around a portion of Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve to help prevent the tragedy of snakes being hit by cars right outside this protected area.

The Ojibway Nature Centre, with the support of the Friends have applied for a Habitat Stewardship grant. The money from this grant will be used to increase public awareness and stewardship of our threatened rattlesnakes through bilingual signage, educational programmes and landowner contacts.

For more information on this topic see: www.ojibway.ca/rattler.htm and www.massasauga.ca

Point Pelee National Park Species at Risk (SAR)

Guest speaker at the February 11, 2004 ECFNC monthly members meeting was Point Pelee National Park's (PPNP) Species at Risk Biologist Vicki McKay who presented an informative PowerPoint program. The following is a summary of Vicki's presentation.

The mandate of Parks Canada Agency (PCA) is: On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's national and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorate integrity of these places for present and future generations. PCA's commitment is to protect, as a first priority, the natural and cultural heritage of our special places and ensure that they remain healthy and whole.

Canada's National Parks Act protects all plants, animals and natural objects in national parks, whether or not they are at risk. Almost half of Canada's COSEWIC-listed Species at Risk can be found in National Parks.

Species at Risk may include mammals and birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, snails, mussels, plants, lichens and mosses. Species at Risk may be designated as Extinct, Extirpated, Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern.

An extinct species is defined as any species that no longer exists anywhere in the world. An example is the Passenger Pigeon, once the most numerous bird on earth, but now gone forever due to over-hunting for food and sport and the conversion of forests to agriculture. In just fifty years of persecution, the bird was exterminated.

An extirpated species is any native species that no longer exists in the wild in its natural habitat/region, but that still exists elsewhere in the wild. The Blue Racer is such a species, once found in PPNP and other Ontario mainland locations, it is now restricted to Pelee Island.

An endangered species is any native species at risk of extinction or extirpation in all or a significant portion of its (Canadian) range. Such a species is the Henslow's Sparrow. Little of the undisturbed grassland habitat which it requires remains.

A threatened species is any native species at risk of becoming endangered in all or a significant portion of its (Canadian) range. The spiny softshell is a threatened species that is impacted by shoreline development and stabilization.

A species of special concern is any native species that we are concerned about but is not yet considered threatened or endangered. Monarch butterflies are in this category even though this butterfly species is numerous. This species is threatened by loss of habitat and increasing herbicide use. To complete its life cycle, Monarchs require milkweed, which is on Ontario's Noxious Weed List.

Point Pelee's nationally-listed Species at Risk are as follows. Plants include eastern prickly pear cactus, red mulberry, blue ash, common hoptree, butternut, dwarf hackberry, Kentucky coffee-tree (Middle Island only), wild hyacinth (Middle Island only), climbing prairie rose, swamp rose mallow, and American water-willow. Insects include monarchs. Fish include warmouth, spotted gar, bigmouth buffalo, lake chubsucker and pugnose shiner (XT – extirpated from PPNP). Birds include

eastern yellow-breasted chat, least bittern, red-headed woodpecker, short-eared owl, Henslow's sparrow (FB – former breeder at PPNP), piping plover (FB), prothonotary warbler (FB), cerulean warbler (FB), Louisiana waterthrush, red-shouldered hawk (FB), hooded warbler, peregrine falcon (M – migratory only), Acadian flycatcher (M), Kirtland's warbler (M), eastern loggerhead shrike (M), barn owl (XT), king rail (XT), northern bobwhite (XT), and passenger pigeon (extinct).

The following quote gives an indication of the understanding of plants and species at risk by the average person. "That an average adult can recognize 1,000 brand names and logos but fewer than 10 local plants is not a good sign." (Paul Hawker, "Ecology of Commerce," *Business Edge* (Summer 1994).

Human Factors that put Species at Risk

The following human factors cause species to be at risk:

- habitat loss/fragmentation;
- habitat/environmental degradation;
- persecution;
- collection for pets and science;
- harvesting for medicinal use;
- over-hunting;
- road mortality;
- introduction of invasive, non native species;
- human disturbance and
- changing land uses.

These factors are discussed below in terms of Point Pelee National Park.

Habitat Loss/Fragmentation - An example of a species that has been extirpated from PPNP through habitat loss and fragmentation is the red-shouldered hawk. This species was the most common hawk in southern Ontario in the 1800s. It requires large forested areas with nearby wetlands. However widespread forest clearing has led to its decline with the red-tailed hawk now predominating. Other PPNP extirpations as a result of habitat loss include: lynx, bobcat, mountain lion, black bear, grey wolf, river otter, porcupine, fisher, groundhog, elk and American marten.

A large amount of habitat loss and fragmentation has occurred at Point Pelee due to wetland drainage. Historically the Point Pelee wetlands encompassed 3,633 hectares. Today the marsh is only 1,113 hectares while the adjacent Hillman Marsh is approximately 370 hectares. The Hillman Marsh restoration has reclaimed 45 hectares. However, overall loss is approximately 58%. Alteration in hydrology has also resulted from wetland drainage.

Isolation - Point Pelee National Park is an isolated area as 80% of the park is surrounded by water and 20% by agricultural lands. There is little habitat connectivity, thus the Park is effectively an island. This acts as a barrier to dispersal and as well as to rescue or recolonization should a species disappear from the park.

Habitat/Environmental Degradation - Habitat and environmental degradation has occurred at PPNP due to the use of DDT which may have led to the loss of bullfrogs in the marsh. Frogs, toads and salamanders, because they can breathe through their skin, are particularly susceptible to pesticide contamination. This is a global concern.

Persecution - Certain species such as timber and Massasauga rattlesnakes have been eradicated from much of Ontario through persecution. As an example, a story is told of a French soldier who spent a night on one of the western Lake Erie islands in 1754. The soldier reported that his party killed 130 rattlesnakes before they dared to sleep.

Collection - Collection of certain species has affected populations such as the collection of five-lined skink and spotted turtle for the pet trade and science. Turtles and bullfrogs have been collected for food. The eastern prickly pear cactus has been collected for cultivation in gardens. American ginseng was likely collected from areas outside of the Park for medicinal use.

Over-hunting - Over-hunting exterminated the wild turkey from Ontario. Historical records indicate that during the winter of 1720, more than 400 bears were killed in the Point Pelee area (likely stretching from the tip to Leamington to Wheatley). Southern flying squirrels disappeared partly as a result of purposeful extermination of red squirrels.

Human Disturbance - Human disturbance may affect a species such as beach use that may disturb turtles during the nesting season. Walking off trails has resulted in wildlife being crushed beneath woody debris.

Changing Land Use - Changing land use can affect the numbers of a particular species. At Point Pelee, the eastern yellow-breasted chat nests in dense thickets and overgrown clearings in former agricultural fields. These areas are slowly returning to forest through the natural re-vegetation of long abandoned farm fields.

Natural Factors That Put Species at Risk

Species are at risk through a number of natural factors which include:

- living in a constantly changing habitat;
- a specialized life history;
- living in specialized habitats;
- living at the limit of the natural range and
- living in a small geographic range.

Lives in a Changing Habitat - The eastern prickly pear cactus lives in a constantly changing environment or in successional habitats that change from open shore and dune areas to forests over time. Small amounts of disturbance such as sand burial may help the plant grow but large amounts of disturbance, such as storm damage, may kill it.

Specialized Life History - Certain species, like the barn owl, have a specialized life history. This species typically lives for only two years, raising two broods of 3 to 8 young per year. Up to 90% of the young do not survive their first year. Habitat loss due to changed farming practices and a low tolerance for cold have led to species declines.

Lives in a Specialized Habitat - Certain species, such as the prothonotary warbler, are noted as species that live in a specialized habitat. The prothonotary warbler nests in deciduous swamp forests with mature trees with pools of open, standing water of a hectare or more with few shrubs, or this species may chose slow-moving, warm water creeks and rivers lined in large willows. Two hectare territories are preferred with tree cavities in which to nest and green moss available for nest building.

Lives at the Limits of its Natural Range - Some species are at the limits of their natural range, such as the northern cricket frog which has only ever been known in Ontario from Point Pelee and Pelee Island. It is now believed to be extirpated from Ontario, which is at the northern limits of its range.

Lives in a Small Geographic Range - Certain species have a small geographic range such as the Lake Erie watersnake which is geographically limited to the western Lake Erie islands. Lake Erie watersnakes have been found on Middle Island (PPNP), Pelee Island, East Sister Island, Middle Sister Island, Hen Island, and North Harbour Island.

Parks Canada Agency's Role in SAR Recovery

Parks Canada Agency's role in Species at Risk recovery involves the following actions: determining the status of Species at Risk within the Park; conducting research; participating in recovery teams and in the development of recovery strategies and action plans; implementing recovery actions; protection and enforcement; monitoring; and communications/education.

Past work to address threats in PPNP has included the removal of 350 cottages and facilities; the relocation of many facilities to areas outside the Park; road removal; parking barriers at beaches; Zone 1 designation of the marsh; Environmentally Sensitive Site designation (e.g. snake hibernacula); species inventories and research; contaminant studies; enforcement; and communications through the efforts of knowledgeable staff, interpretive programs, theatre presentations, publications and exhibits.

A regional perspective is needed as parks are not immune to species loss. Internal threats exist and external threats can also have impacts. Species protection must be considered in the context of the surrounding area, the Greater Parks ecosystem.

Point Pelee National Park staff participate on Recovery Teams for the red mulberry, the Lake Erie watersnake, the northern cricket frog, and the eastern foxsnake/eastern hog-nosed snake (joint team).

Vicki McKay is the Chair of the Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus - Lake Erie Sand Spit Savannas Recovery Team. These are provincially significant habitats, including sand prairie, juniper savanna, red cedar savanna, red cedar-cottonwood savanna, and dune-associated black oak savanna. These habitats, with or without the focal species, eastern prickly pear cactus, are found on four large Lake Erie sandspits: Point Pelee, Fish Point, Rondeau and Long Point. A number of agencies are cooperating on this ecosystem approach including Parks Canada Agency, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Parks, Natural Heritage Information Centre, Pelee Island Heritage Centre, and Universities.

A Species at Risk strategy is also being developed for the Park. Point Pelee literature and research is reviewed; the status of recommended actions is determined; and workshops are hosted with researchers and experts to recommend actions and priorities for species recovery in the Park.

A Species at Risk Education Strategy has also been set in motion. A steering committee of partners from the Carolinian Life Zone was established. A survey of private landowners was done to understand their attitudes and values about conservation and Species at Risk.

A Species at Risk Database is being developed which records information about PPNP species occurrences. Institutional records are also being gathered. GIS mapping and species assessments can be completed using this information.

A Turtles at Risk survey was carried out by trapping and intensive foot surveys to determine presence/absence, a population size, structure and distribution of turtle species, nest predation rates and effective nest protection methods, contaminant effects on hatching success and the effects of road mortality.

The Turtles at Risk Survey marked and recorded measurements, habitat and location of 1,599 turtles. The results of the 2001/2 survey were compared to those of a 1972/3 survey. Researchers found that painted and map turtle populations appeared stable. Snapping and Blanding's turtle population were top heavy with older individuals. Spotted turtles were not found while spiny softshell were present in low numbers, as they have always been. Stinkpot were located which was a good sign as staff feared they may have disappeared. Nest predation ranged from 63 to 100%. Future research (funding dependent) will help determine why there is little or no recruitment and what the effects of raccoon predation are on PPNP's turtle SAR.

As part of the Fishes at Risk Inventory, a two-year fish and habitat survey of the Park's marshes, ponds and off-shore areas was undertaken. This survey is examining changes in the fish community over time and will assess the status and threats to fish SAR. The inventory will identify potential recovery actions needed to minimize threats to fish SAR.

During the Fishes at Risk Inventory, spotted gar, warmouth, bigmouth buffalo (new record), and lake chubsucker were located. Pugnose shiner (previous record from 1941), channel darter (offshore), silver chub (offshore) and eastern sand darter (offshore) were not re-located.

The genetic diversity of eastern prickly pear cactus has been investigated. Cactus clones are produced when a pad breaks off and roots. DNA fingerprinting shows that all patches sampled to date are unique individuals and that genetic variation exists within patches. Future studies (funding dependent) will focus on the relationships of Ontario's native populations to each other, known transplanted patches and the nearby Ohio population.

Other cactus research determined that cactus pollinators are common insect species which are not likely to limit reproductive success. Flower features were examined to determine their importance to cactus pollinators. Pollen provides nutritious food for the broods of bee pollinators. Research is also being done to determine which species spread cactus seed.

Other cactus research has shown that eastern prickly pear cactus cannot self-pollinate. Multiple flower visitors are needed for the best pollination results. Low light conditions and excessive sand burial were found to limit seedling survival while nutrient and water availability (unless excessive - e.g. nitrogrn) did not. Cactus patches will be monitored

periodically to determine population trends.

Air photo overlays exist from 1931, 1952, 1972, 1980 and 2000, allowing researchers to map and compare the location of the red cedar savanna habitat over time as well as the losses and gains in shoreline dune habitats.

The last piping plover nesting record was in 1938. During 2002, PPNP shorelines were surveyed to determine current habitat suitability. Monitoring of shorelines began in spring 2003. The first migrating piping plover observed in six years was seen in the fall of 2003.

Red mulberry trees at four of the six core population were inspected to determine the cause of cankers and twig blight. Gradual deterioration was found to be the result of several factors including drought stress, low soil fertility, suppressed canopy position and opportunistic disease causing organisms.

A Middle Island inventory determined that 9 COSEWIC-listed SAR exist on Middle Island with a further 32 provincially-listed SAR identified. A baseline inventory of snakes, birds, plants, butterflies and dragonflies has been completed. There will be an assessment of cormorant impacts.

To Restore Species or Not?

Restoration efforts on behalf of the southern flying squirrel have gone well. Southern flying squirrels were extirpated from PPNP prior to the 1940s. Research recommended that 885 individuals are needed to sustain the Park population. During 1993/94, 99 southern flying squirrels were released. In 1999, 88 were found with an estimate of 221 in the Park. In 2001, 150 were found with an estimated population of 700 to 800 individuals – a SAR success story.

Nine or ten reptiles and amphibians have been extirpated from PPNP. The eastern hog-nosed snake disappeared following the Fowler's toad extirpation. A study is being done to determine whether extirpated reptile and amphibian species can be restored to the Park.

What can you do to Help SAR?

Everyone can help SAR. Respect nature – every plant and animal has its place – removals and additions can unbalance nature. Do not release animals into natural habitats. Pets impact wild animal population by eating them, competing for habitat, and bringing disease. Feral cats prey on native birds and are believed to be one of the reasons southern flying squirrels disappeared from PPNP.

The ability of wildlife to survive in the environment is an indication of how healthy that environment is for us live in.

Look for environmentally-friendly alternatives to herbicides, pesticides and harsh cleaning products. Many damage human health as well.

Try to avoid hitting animals on the road. This doesn't mean swerving into on-coming traffic to avoid hitting an animal. However, you can avoid roads that cut a habitat in half where animals typically cross. Be aware that on wet spring nights frogs and toads move to ponds. In spring and summer, animals seek mates and nest sites. In fall, especially on the last warm days of the season, animals are seeking wintering sites.

Landscape with native plants. Encourage local nurseries to carry native plants. Be aware that many horticultural plants escape into the wild impacting native species that live there.

Get involved in local environmental groups and projects and encourage friends to respect nature and get involved.

For more information, check the following web sites:

www.cosewic.gc.ca

www.parkscanada.gc.ca

www.rom.on.ca

www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca

www.parksontario.com

Fishes of Essex County

On February 22, 2004, ten ECFNC members met with University of Windsor Biologist Lynda Corkum in the Biology Building's fish lab for an afternoon of fish discovery. Lynda welcomed us, presenting a PowerPoint program that provided an excellent orientation to fish anatomy and fish species in the Essex Region.

First we looked at the external anatomy of a catfish and sunfish, noting the various fins which are important for identification and such features as the lateral line (helps to maintain fish balance) and the opercular flap covering the gills which may be variable. We studied various fish body forms such as elongate, deep, rounded, compressed and depressed. Fish mouths may be "superior" for surface feeding, "terminal" for filter feeders in rivers or lakes such as minnows, or "inferior" such as the catfish mouth. Tail shapes vary, ranging from round, to truncate, to emarginate and forked.

To be proficient at field identification of fishes, Lynda suggested that the fish enthusiast must practise to improve their skills. It is useful to know what fishes to expect within the region which will aid identification.

Fishes are collected and identified in various ways in our waterways. One method is to collect fish using a backpack electroshocker which produces a current that passes through the water, stunning the fish. A netter will then pick up the fish, placing them in a bucket from which the fish are counted, identified and released. Lynda showed us photographs of several persons engaged in electroshocking while wading in the Belle River at Woodslee.

Boat electrofishing is another means to sample fish species as was done during August 2003 in the Canard River and Cedar Creek. Netters collect fish that rise to the surface in response to an electric current that passes through the water.

Lynda told us of one particularly memorable incident during this survey. As Lynda was working as the netter, the crew was excitedly calling out to her but Lynda couldn't hear them due to engine noise. Once the engine was cut and everyone was able to speak easily, Lynda discovered she had brought aboard a Spotted Sucker and a Big Mouth Buffalo, each a Species at Risk in this region. Both were photographed and each had its tail clipped for species confirmation.

The following chart from Lynda's PowerPoint presentation provides a sample classification for a species of Centrarchidae (sunfishes), the bluegill. Each family name has the ending "idae."

Fishes in Essex County

(24 families; 53 genera; 83 species)

Kingdom: Animalia – animals

Phylum: Chordata – animals with a spinal chord

Class: Osteichthyes – bony fishes

Order: Perciformes – perch-like fishes

→ Family: Centrarchidae – sunfishes

Genus: *Lepomis* – common and eared sunfishes

Species: *macrochirus* – bluegill

Lynda then showed us a series of photographs illustrating each family of fishes found in Essex County, and Lynda provided some comments about each family or a particular species in that family.

Petromyzontidae (Lampreys)

Lamprey species do not have a paired jaw, unlike other fish species. The sea lamprey species needs river habitat in order to spawn. A nest is created with the eggs hatching in a few weeks. The young go downstream where they live in mud from three to seventeen years. Lynda commented that the life history of the lamprey is quite amazing. Once juvenile lamprey metamorphose into an adult, they migrate downstream to a lake where they parasitize other fishes.

The Northern Brook Lamprey is a native species which is not parasitic. At a certain point in its life, the Northern Brook Lamprey lives for eight months without feeding.

Acipenseridae (Sturgeons)

The slide that Lynda included in her presentation for sturgeons was of Nick LaPointe who is a student of Lynda's, and who is studying Fish Species at Risk in the Detroit River. Nick is shown on the Detroit River shoreline beside a sturgeon washed onto a sandy area. Sturgeon are ancient fish that were numerous in our waters in the past. A story is told of sturgeon stacked like cordwood in the Town of Amherstburg, where they were used for fuel aboard steamboats.

Lepisosteidae (Gars)

In Essex County, we have two species of Gar, the Long-nosed Gar and the Spotted Gar, which is a Species at Risk. The backbone of the gar continues right into the dorsal fin, which is most unusual. Gars are common in the Detroit River, nesting over vegetation. This family are known for their rapid growth and the eggs of this family are poisonous to humans.

Amiidae (Bowfins)

Bowfins have one long dorsal fins and are bottom-dwelling fish. The gular plate found under the bowfin's jaw is hard. Lynda reported that she has seen bowfins "sitting like a log" on the lake bottom with individuals ranging up to .5 metre in length.

Clupeidae (Herrings)

Typically marine, there are a few species that are found in freshwater as illustrated by the gizzard shad found during electroshocking at Woodslee.

Herring have a strongly compressed body, resembling a vertical pancake. This family has no lateral line which is unusual. The single dorsal fin lacks spines but the belly had a saw-toothed edge.

Hiodontidae (Mooneyes)

Characteristics of this family include a compressed body, silvery colour, large eyes, a short snout, and teeth on the tongue and roof of the mouth. This family is rare in Essex County.

Salmonidae (Trouts)

Rainbow Trout is the only trout species reported in Essex County.

Osmeridae (Smelts)

Rainbow smelt (*Osmerus mordax*) are non-indigenous to Essex County and are in decline. Smelt have a huge mouth, with the upper jaw reaching the middle of the eye or beyond. The dorsal fin originates above or in front of pelvic fin origin and an adipose fin is found. Rainbow smelt may grow up to 33 cm (13 inches).

Umbridae (Mudminnows)

The central mudminnow (*Umbra limi*) which is found in central North America is not a minnow, but is a minnow-sized fish which is named for its habit of escaping into soft sediments by burrowing. *Umbra* (Um'-bra) means "shade" in Latin, referring to the dark habitat of the central mudminnow and *limi* (lee' - mee) means "mud" in Latin.

Esocidae (Pikes)

Pikes are well known as ambush hunters. Northern Pike (*Esox lucius*) may be identified as the entire cheek and half of the gill are covered with scales while the Muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy*) has only the top half of cheek and gill covered with scales.

Cyprinidae (Carps and Minnows)

This family has a single dorsal fin and abdominal pelvic fins. Goldfish (*Carassius auratus*), Bluntnose minnow (*Pimephales notatus*), Spotfin shiner (*Cyprinella splloptera*), Rosyface shiner (*Notropis rubellus*) and Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) are all members of this family which found in Essex County. Minnows have "throat teeth" which enable these small fish to grind up snails. Lynda included a photograph of the pharyngeal teeth of the common carp which are quite amazing to view.

Catostomidae (Suckers)

The adult White Sucker (*Catostomus commersoni*) may be 30 to 50 cm (12 – 20 inches) in length. Its body is cylindrical, with a rounded snout. This species also has unusual pharyngeal teeth with which it may crush and pulverize prey. Another sucker species in Essex County is the northern hog sucker (*Hypentelium nigricans*).

Ictaluridae (Bullhead catfishes)

Bullhead catfishes have a spine on the pelvic fin such as found on an Essex County species, the brown bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*).

Percopsidae (Trout-perches)

Characteristics of this family include one large dorsal fin and an adipose fin (trout-like) and spines in the dorsal, anal and pelvic fins (perch-like).

Gadidae (Cods and burbot)

The only freshwater representative of the ocean-dwelling cod family is the burbot (*Lota lota*), which spawns in the winter.

Fundullidae (Killifishes)

The banded killifish (*Fundulus diaphanus*) is identified by 10 – 20 green-brown bars along its side, a long slender body, dorsal fin origin is in front of anal fin origin. The banded killifish may attain a length up to 13 cm (5 inches).

Atherinidae (Silversides)

The brook silverside (*Labidesthes sicculus*) is small (13 cm), silvery, translucent, and compressed. This species has a large eye and a terminal mouth with a long beak-like snout. There are two widely separate dorsal fins (1st is small with spines), and the anal fin is long and sickle-shaped.

Gasterosteidae (Sticklebacks)

The brook stickleback (*Culaea inconstans*) has no scales, with 4-6 short isolated dorsal spines and a pelvic fin with one spine and one ray. The caudal peduncle is narrow.

Cottidae (Sculpins)

The mottled sculpin (*Cottus bairdi*) has a large mouth, large fan-like pectoral fins, and grows up to 15 cm (5 inches). This species lives in rubble and gravel riffles.

Moronidae (Temperate basses)

The white perch (*Morone americana*) is a non-indigenous species (NIS) and invader, caught commercially in Lake Erie. Characteristics of this species include a deep body with two dorsal fins, 3 anal fins, and a large sharp spine on the gill cover. This species may attain a length of 58 cm (ca 23 inches), but is rarely this large.

Centrarchidae (Sunfishes)

Largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) and rock bass (*Ambloplites rupestris*) are two commonly caught bass in Essex County. Characteristics of these fishes include two dorsal fins broadly joined, 3-8 anal fins and no sharp spine on the back of the gill cover.

Percidae (Perch, walleye, darters)

The yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*) is a commonly caught sport fish in Essex County. Characteristics include two dorsal fins and two spines on the anal fin. Darters in this family such as Johnny darter (*Etheostama nigrum*) and Greenside darter (*Etheostoma blennioides*) are very pretty fishes.

Sciaenidae (Drums)

Aboriginal peoples used the large disk-like earbones of the drum for jewellery. The fresh water drum has pharyngeal teeth with which this species is able to grind up zebra mussel shells. When mating, this species makes sounds with its swim bladder.

Gobiidae (Gobies)

An illustration of a round goby in Lynda's presentation was shown on a bed of zebra mussels. Gobies rest with their fused pelvic fin on the substrate and flip from one spot to another. Gobies in Essex County include the round goby and the tubenosed goby.

Following her Powerpoint presentation, Lynda asked us to use a "Key to the Families of Essex County Fishes" which Lynda has been developing for her soon to be published guide to Essex County fishes. Lynda provided a number of fish species for us to "key out." This was a useful exercise as we were able to provide some feedback to Lynda to make the key more user friendly.

After our lab and a tea break, Lynda provided a summary of the COSEWIC Fish Species at Risk in Essex County:

Endangered – Pugnose shinner

Threatened – Channel darter; lake chubsucker; spotted Gar

Special concern – Bigmouth Buffalo; greenside darter; northern brook lamprey; orange-spotted sunfish; spotted sucker; warmouth

Lynda gave some additional comments on the Fishes at Risk. Lynda commented that the sturgeon is not on this list. The pugnose shiner (endangered) lives in clear, slow moving water in vegetation and is known from Point Pelee National Park.

Channel darter (threatened) is known from Pike Creek where it lives in silt free gravel or on rocky bottoms.

Lake chubsucker (threatened) males have an anal fin that looks like a leaf, actually a bilobed fin. This species has thick lips and is usually found in clear water on sandy bottoms or on fine gravel such as at Point Pelee National Park.

The spotted gar (threatened) has a snout that is shorter and wider in comparison to that of the Long-nosed Gar. Spots are found on all the fins.

Bigmouth Buffalo (special concern) is a huge sucker with thin lips. The scales on its body are large. This species may only be in waters at the mouth of Cedar Creek.

Greenside darter (special concern) is found in Wigle Creek.

Northern brook lamprey (special concern) prefers warm waters and is found at Point Pelee National Park.

The orange-spotted sunfish (special concern) is found in Cedar Creek, River Canard, Turkey Creek, and Wigle Creek.

The spotted sucker (special concern) is found in the Detroit River, Belle River, River Canard and Turkey Creek, preferring the mouths of rivers. This species is spotted with black dots.

The warmouth (special concern) is a secretive fish found in weedy lakes and at Point Pelee National Park. This species has teeth on its tongue.

We were delighted that Lynda prepared this special presentation and provided lab time for ECFNC members as we very much appreciated this "crash course" to understand our Essex County fishes.

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club's Eastern Bluebird Committee Report for 2003

Don Bissonnette

This year our committee collected data from 28 Eastern Bluebird (EABL) trails. These trails had a total of 181 birdhouses, hosting 24 pairs of Eastern Bluebirds which produced 100 fledglings.

Every year our statistics show a gradual decrease in the local Eastern Bluebird population. Hopefully, these statistics do not reflect reality. The decrease is due mainly to several persons not returning their questionnaires. If these delinquent blue birders had returned their questionnaires, we would have statistics for more than seventy additional birdhouses. Undoubtedly, some of these seventy plus birdhouses hosted at least a few pairs of Eastern Bluebirds.

Lose of habitat and English sparrows are still playing havoc with our local Eastern Bluebird population according to the comments on the returned questionnaires.

April Snow – Not Good!

In late March 2003, spring started out with great promise. On March 26, 2003 Bruce MacDonald was the first to report Tree Swallows at his place. Several persons called to report that Eastern Bluebirds were visiting and sometimes singing at their birdhouses.

On April 1, 2003 the thermometer shot up to 22 degrees Celsius. One pair of Eastern Bluebirds began nest building at the Harrow Research Station.

Then every day became progressively cooler. On Monday, April 7, 2003 we had snow mixed with freezing rain, and a high of minus one degree Celsius. Winter had returned. The Harrow Research Station's pair of Eastern Bluebirds stopped building their nest. It's difficult to pick up nesting materials when it's covered with snow and ice.

Days later there were several reports of dead Tree Swallows. However, there were several reports of Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows inspecting houses. The Harrow Research Station Eastern Bluebirds resumed nest building, completing their nest on April 12, 2003. The cool April weather certainly pushed the Eastern Bluebird's nesting season back by at least one week.

The rest of the spring was unusually cool and wet. Most pairs of Tree Swallows began nest building in mid to late May. In a warm spring, some Tree Swallows have completed nests by May 10.

Orphio Lucchese's Woods

On April 1, 2003 Orphio Lucchese and myself set up an Eastern Bluebird trail on his property. Over the past several years, Orphio has transformed this farm into a wildlife sanctuary. It now has a one acre wetland, a young woodlot and a grassland.

We placed the birdhouses on the grassland. At each birdhouse we planted several dead branches to serve as hunting perches. We set up three birdhouses.

We had a very enjoyable morning. When we arrived Chorus Frogs were serenading in the marsh. While we worked, a single Tree Swallow hovered above us, calling, "Tee, Tee, Tee!" A male Eastern Bluebird watched us, then flew to the nearby O'Neil pasture field. Male Red-winged Blackbirds landed on the hunting perches, often within seconds after they were planted.

Monitoring this property was enjoyable. Eastern Meadowlarks, Wood Ducks, American Kestrels, Spotted Sandpipers, Northern Harriers, Greater Yellowlegs and bats were only some of the wildlife observed here through the spring.

I spent a few visits in April chasing wasps out of all three birdhouses. I was successful as by late April each birdhouse hosted one pair of Tree Swallows.

The third birdhouse held a family of six young Tree Swallows which fledged around June 20, 2003. I cleaned out their nest on June 22, 2003.

On Monday, July 7, 2003, I had a surprise when I opened the third birdhouse. It contained an Eastern Bluebird nest with four eggs. Using binoculars, I located the adults, hunting in a nearby hedgerow. All four eggs hatched around July 17, 2003. Unfortunately, all four young died at about 14 days old. Since the deceased birds and their home were covered in

blowflies, we know that blowfly larvae infestation was the probable cause of the deaths.

The adult Eastern Bluebirds stayed on the property but they did not re-nest. They were seen until early November. Hopefully, they will return in Spring 2004 and have a successful nesting.

The Mother Wood Trail

Clarence and Marg Calder enjoyed monitoring this new trail which belongs to Penelope Potter. Over several years, Penelope has created a wildlife refuge on this former farm that now contains marshes, ponds, grasslands and young woodlots. The Eastern Bluebird trail was set up in December of 2002. Six birdhouses were set up along with twenty hunting perches.

Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Savannah Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows, and Song Sparrows were just some of the birds Clary and Marg encountered on this property. During the summer, Clary and Marg reported many butterfly and dragonfly species.

A pair of Eastern Bluebirds visited the property, but did not nest. Penelope reports that small flocks of Eastern Bluebirds visited the birdhouses during the fall of 2003 and occasionally in January 2004. Undoubtedly some of those Eastern Bluebirds will return to this beautiful property in the spring.

The Barrette Property

Jacques and Linda Barrette have their own wildlife sanctuary outside Tilbury. Their three acre property contains a large pond surrounded by birdhouses. They have been hosting Tree Swallows for three years now.

They saw their first Eastern Bluebird on their property on May 20, 2003. This bird, a male, was accidentally captured, unharmed, in a trap set out to catch House Sparrows. The Eastern Bluebird was immediately released with the Barrettes speculating that the bird would be traumatized by the trap, thus quickly leaving the property.

The Barrettes were wrong! The male Eastern Bluebird stayed and on May 28, 2003 he had claimed a birdhouse close to the pond. On May 30, the Barrettes were pleased to see he'd found a mate. They watched as the female carried nesting material to the birdhouse.

During a birdhouse inspection on June 27, 2003, three nestling Eastern Bluebirds were discovered. Unfortunately, the Barrette's discovered on July 7, 2003 that the female Eastern Bluebird was missing. The male Eastern Bluebird, now a single parent, was hustling to keep his youngsters fed.

The Barrette's assisted the male Eastern Bluebird by providing mealworms. They placed the mealworms on a large piece of cardboard, on the ground, below one of his favourite hunting perches where he quickly found them and delivered them to his youngsters.

One week later, the male Eastern Bluebird was joined by a new female. About the same time, two of the three young Eastern Bluebirds fledged. The third nestling was found dead on the nest. Soon afterwards one of the fledglings disappeared, leaving the pair with one fledgling, a male.

The Barrettes continued to feed mealworms daily until the Eastern Bluebirds left the area with the last reported date on October 21, 2003. Despite the losses of the young, the Barrettes say it was a great reward and a treat to host their first Eastern Bluebird family.

Thank You!

A big "thank you" goes out to everyone involved in this labour of love. Thank you to all the monitors. Thank you to everyone who filled out and returned their questionnaires. Thank you to those who helped build new birdhouses, whether it was physically or financially. Thank you to everyone who helped to renovate old trails. Thanks to everyone who wrote down interesting observations on the back of their questionnaires. Unfortunately, due to a lack of space, we only could report a few this issue and the remaining will appear in the June *Egret*.

As special thank you goes out to Donna Cowie who looked after Marg Jennings' three trails for most of the summer.

Remember everyone who sends a donation to the Eastern Bluebird Committee will receive a charitable receipt for income tax purposes.

Spring is on its way! Get out there! Wash and repair all your birdhouses! Plant some hunting perches! Best wishes for the 2004 nesting season.

<u>Club Trails</u>	<u>Monitors</u>	<u># Houses</u>	<u># Pairs</u> <u>EABLS</u>	<u># Pairs</u> <u>EABLS</u> Fledged	<u># Pairs</u> Tree Swallows	<u># Wren Nests</u>
Arner Point	D. Bissonnette	3	0	0	2	0
Harrow Research Station	D. Bissonnette	5	2	18	3	0
Lucchese Woods	D. Bissonnette	3	1	0	3	0
Hunter's Sugar Bush	G. Brown	5	1	4	1	0
Twin Creek C.A.	G. Brown	6	0	0	1	0
Cooper's	C. & M. Calder	4	1	5	3	1
Kurtz's	C. & M. Calder	3	0	0	2	1
Doyle Goddard	D. Cowie	5	1	4	4	0
Maidstone C.A.	D. Cowie	5	0	0	4	0
Carney Creek	D. Cowie	2	1	9	1	0
Sartori's	D. Cowie	2	1	0	0	0
Howling's	D. Hartley	3	2	9	2	0
Woodiwiss'	D. Hartley	4	2	8	3	0
Balkwill's	B. Learmouth	8	1	3	3	0
Pollard's	B. Learmouth	3	1	3	2	0
Broughton's	B. MacDonald	4	0	0	2	0
Hepner's	B. MacDonald	4	0	0	0	0
O'Neil Pasture	R. & A. Muir	5	1	5	2	0
Altenof's	D. Roemmele	6	2	0	3	1
Sub Totals - 19 Trails		80	17	68	41	3
<u>Affiliated Trails</u>						
Barrette's	J. & L. Barrette	20	1	2	12	0
Gorski's	G. Brown	11	1	4	3	0
Potter's Mother Wood	C. & M. Calder	6	1	0	4	0
Kingsville Landfill	M. Hartley	7	0	0	7	0
Kummer's	L. Kummer	5	1	6	2	2
Old MacDonald's Farm	B. MacDonald	5	0	0	2	0
Dunn Road	A. Michinski	24	0	0	12	4
Waldron's	G. Waldron	5	0	0	2	1
Swarc's	R. Swarc	28	3	20	6	3
Sub total - 9 Trails		111	7	32	50	10
Total		191	24	100	91	13

Bird Flu Erin Casasol

Are you tired and achy? Are your eyes dry and your neck sore? Are you suffering from a birding bug? Once bitten by the birding bug, you may discover that you wish to pass this virus on to others much like you would pass on the flu. First you expose yourself to others. In the case of the flu, you go to work even though you are sick. In the case of birding, you start dragging your field guides around and leaving them around the house or office lunchroom where other people are bound to find them. After awhile someone will open one to take a peek.

That is when you pounce.

"I see you are looking at a jaeger, they are what you call kleptoparasitic." You wait a beat for their confused expression. "That means that they steal food from other birds, often by chasing the other bird or holding its head underwater till it regurgitates its food."

Now you must wait and see what expression the person takes on. Are they fascinated or disgusted? If they are disgusted, how long do they remain that way? If it isn't that long, say ten seconds or so, you still have a chance. If the disgusted expression does not leave their face after longer than ten seconds then you have to try again, they are not taking the bait today.

Another way to pass on the flu is through sharing communal items such as telephones and water bottles. If you wish to pass on the birding bug you too can utilize the same technique. Place your binoculars in an area frequented by people and birds, say by a window facing some bird feeders. Nonchalantly flip through your latest issue of *Birder's World* and wait for some curious soul to walk by and notice the unattended binoculars. It is a scientific fact that if a person sees a pair of binoculars they have to pick them up and look through them. It doesn't matter how old the person is, if the pair of binoculars does not belong to them or even if they are inside and there are no birds to be seen. Binoculars are just too cool to resist. With a little instruction you can help the curious soul focus the binoculars and begin to realize that bird watching is a heck of a lot more fun when you can actually see the bird.

Finally, I leave the most devious and dangerous plan for last. This is sudden exposure. The analogy to the flu would be to sneeze on someone. With this one action the victim is suddenly inundated with germs. For the spreading of the birding bug I recommend taking someone on a daylong birding excursion. Go to an incredibly popular event such as the Hawk Festival at Holiday Beach. While there, climb to the top of the observation tower, take a peek through a scope, chat with the live raptor handlers and adopt a hawk. Top the day off with some gelato from Lakeside Deli and you have the perfect day for even the non-birder. In such an outing you are exposing the non-birder to many birding bug carriers. No immune system could take it.

So as the flu season draws nearer get your flu shot and get ready to infect those around you with the birding bug. If you carry a particularly strong strain you might be able to get your victim to join you for Christmas bird counts, so get sneezing!

Zuliani Woods Walk, by Wendy Fraser

During the Zuliani Woods walk, I was most interested in the Basswood (we saw some) as my Grandfather built an armoire and I know part of it is Basswood. So I later looked up Basswood at the local library and what I found is attached. Our leader was most knowledgeable and helped immensely. He stressed the need to get out and see examples over and over, and then you will know the trees.

I found the following article in *Americana Encyclopedia* (1997, page 337 - 338). Basswood is the name of several related trees found in the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere as far south as Mexico in North America and as far south as central China in Asia. They are also known as lindens. These ornamental trees are grown for their beautiful foliage and fragrant flowers. The leaves are heart shaped and sharp toothed. The small whitish flowers, which grow in drooping clusters, are fragrant and yield nectar. The fruit of the basswood is spherical, dry and woody. The wood, soft and light-coloured, is often used for the interior of houses and for wood carving. The tough inner bark of the tree is used in mats and cords.

The basswood belongs to the genus *Tilia*, which contains about 25 species and many hybrids. *T. americana*, *T. neglecta* and *T. heterophylla* are three common species found in the United States. The white or silver linden (*T. tomentosa*), a species poisonous to bees, is found in eastern Europe and Asia Minor.

Bucket Raffle Winners, 2003

At the February 11, 2004 meeting of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club, the following persons were the lucky recipients of various nature related books and items during a draw for the prizes in the Heritage Fund's 2003 bucket raffle. This raffle raised \$170.00 to be deposited into the Heritage Fund.

- Item # 1 - *Hawks of North America* (Book), on by Scott Johnston, Amherstburg, ON
- Item # 2 - *Naturally Ontario* (Book), won by Nancy Knowles, La Salle, ON
- Item # 3 - *Rivers* (Book), won by Judy Lund, Windsor, ON
- Item # 4 - Oh, You Silly Goose! (decorative toy), won by Julie Ostrom, La Salle, ON
- Item # 5 - *Birds of Eastern and Central North America* (Book), won by Jareed Mann, Windsor, ON
- Item # 6 - *El Nino* (Book), won by Trenton Malelett, Windsor, ON
- Item # 7 - *Land of the Loon* (CD), won by Savannah Greydanus, Blenheim, ON
- Item # 8 - *Gardening for the Birds* (Book), won by Levi Hardy, Windsor, ON
- Item # 9 - *Beginner's Guide to Shorebirds* (Book), won by ECFNC member Linda Brightmore, Windsor, ON
- Item # 10 - *Grow Wild!* (Book), won by Pat Thorpe, Chatham, ON
- Item # 11 - *Bugs and Other Insects* (Book), won by Laura Martyn, Windsor, ON
- Item # 12 - *Woodpeckers* (Book), won by Carol Guest, Town of Amherstburg, ON

Cedar Creek Update, March 2004

The Nature Conservancy of Canada now has an opportunity to protect part of the largest remaining unprotected forest in Essex County, by acquiring a 160 acre (64.7 hectare) parcel of land at Cedar Creek.

Located approximately 25 km southeast of Windsor, this property includes some of the most significant biodiversity features remaining in Essex. Cedar Creek has been identified in many studies as a key natural area and has been designated as a provincially significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) and a Carolinian Canada priority site.

The property's numerous natural features - creeks, wetlands, prairie, and upland and lowland forest - provide some of the best, and most varied, habitat in Essex County.

One of the most extensive Carolinian forests in the county is located here, as well as globally rare tallgrass prairie and savanna communities. Species at risk recorded on the property include Green Dragon, Common Green Briar, Spiked Blazing Star, and Mountain Hairgrass.

There are also eleven other species of provincial concern present. The site is one of only two sites in Canada for Violet Bushclover.

With the purchase of Cedar Creek, NCC will protect this rare forest forever, and enhance its tallgrass and Red Cedar savanna habitats.

The Opportunity

This site is irreplaceable - it is one of the largest remaining natural areas in all of southwestern Ontario.

Less than four percent of Essex and Kent Counties are in their original natural state, and there is no tree-cutting by-law in effect.

At present, the property is zoned as estate residential development, which could result in the severe degradation, or even loss, of its fragile ecosystems. If NCC is not able to find funding to protect the site and another party purchases it, it is entirely possible that this ecological gem will be lost forever.

The Cost

Purchase Price	\$970,000
Securement Costs	99,575
Stewardship	28,575
Total	\$1,098,150

Please help us to conserve Cedar Creek, as a legacy for Essex County forever.

To give or for more information:

The Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ontario Region
Orchard Park Office Centre
RR # 5, 5420 Highway 6 North
Guelph, Ontario N1H 6J2
Telephone: 1-877-343-3532 (toll free)
Fax: 519-826-9206
E-mail: ontario@natureconservancy.ca

Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp Update March 2004 Carolinian Coast Region – Ontario

The Nature Conservancy of Canada was recently successful in acquiring the last thicket swamp in Essex County at Oxley, about 5 km southeast of Harrow. This is a region where less than 3% of the original wetlands remain intact - by protection of the 55 acre site, southern portion of Oxley Sumac Swamp, NCC has ensured that residents of the area today will have a glimpse of what the first settlers to the area experienced hundreds of years ago.

The swamp has retained its quality with the passage of time. Over the years, drainage tiles for agriculture in the area were rendered useless because of the excessive moisture in the soils; logging efforts were also abandoned when equipment became mired in the wet ground. Now, the area will be preserved in perpetuity to be appreciated for the diversity of birds, plants, flora and other wildlife that thrive within this unique habitat.

Part of a provincially significant wetland, Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp is an area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) identified by a number of organizations (including Carolinian Canada, Essex County and the Ministry of Natural Resources) as a very important natural area.

Located on sand plain, it hosts three types of high-quality wetland community – wet sedge meadow, dogwood-poison sumac thicket swamp and yellow-birch-maple lowland woods.

NCC estimated that there are more than 400 species of plants alone in the natural area. Past surveys have revealed that there are thirteen species of provincial concern on the site, including the globally-ranked Duke's Skipper; species at risk include the American Chestnut tree, Spotted Turtle, Five-lined Skink and Purple Twayblade.

We are very excited about the possibilities for stewardship of this remarkable natural area, and envision restoration as a means to increase habitat where so many species at risk may thrive. Two years ago, NCC protected the northern portion of Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp; with the addition of the southern portion, more than 85% of the entire natural area is preserved. We can now begin assessing the condition of the overall natural area.

About a fifth of the new property is presently active agricultural, which NCC aims to restore over time to expand the rare swamp habitat. This is a very good opportunity for "economies of scale" as it relates to caring for the land on a long-term basis.

The Opportunity

Now that NCC has acquired the property, we are moving forward with a goal to care for its natural values so that they can be appreciated for future generations.

A key objective toward this goal is the development of a Management Plan. The plan will include a restoration component for the agricultural lands, a recovery strategy to support the species at risk present, as well as provisions for "property management" activities such as signage, fencing and cleanup.

Species inventories and monitoring, such as breeding bird and reptile and amphibian surveys, will be an important component of the Management Plan at Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp; we anticipate that both staff members and a variety of volunteers will be involved in ensuring that the site is appropriately stewarded.

The Cost

Purchase Price	\$137,500
Legal and Appraisal	23,187
Administration/Staff time	59,072
Stewardship – Short Term	23,086
Property Admin/Signage	735
Restoration	13,612
Surveys/Inventories	7,159
Staff and Volunteer Costs	1,580
Stewardship Endowment	74,115
Total	\$316,960

At this time, the property has been acquired with fund raising for stewardship underway.

Please help us protect Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp as a legacy for Essex County forever.

To give or for more information
The Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ontario Region
Orchard Park Office Centre
RR #5, 5420 Highway 6 North
Guelph, Ontario N1H 6J2
Telephone 1-877-343-3532
E-mail: ontario@natureconservancy.ca
www.natureconservancy.ca

Clear Creek Forest Progress Report 2003

Two years ago, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) protected the largest old growth forest in Chatham-Kent County. But our work didn't stop then.

With the help of more than 1,000 donors, NCC protected this extraordinary ecosystem, located about 30 km southeast of Chatham, in 2001. With only days until the entire forest was to be logged, NCC and the community mobilized to negotiate a reprieve, ultimately raising more than \$2.5 million to preserve this ecological gem forever.

Today, Clear Creek forest is an Important Bird Area, due to its large block of contiguous forest and the nearby population of endangered Acadian Flycatchers. Walking through the forest, visitors will see some of the largest, oldest trees in the Carolinian Coast Region, home to nationally vulnerable species such as Southern Flying Squirrel and Lily-leaved Twayblade. Many bird species that occur here require several hundred acres of forest in which to live, or they disappear entirely.

Though the logging marks are still visible on the trees, the work we are doing now is of a different kind. NCC's aim is to improve the natural values of the forest, through a gradual restoration of the landscape, and stewardship of existing native species. The community has played an important role through ongoing monitoring to help eliminate the use of all-terrain vehicles and to plant trees, among other activities.

In partnership with Ontario Parks (who are now the principal stewards and part owners of the property), NCC began work on a Management Plan for Clear Creek Forest shortly after it was acquired. It is NCC's goal to have such a Plan for each of the properties it manages, to identify and protect specific conservation targets. Activities in a Management Plan may include scientific evaluation, inventories, threat analysis, and hands-on stewardship, such as removing invasive species and seed collection. A Plan also identifies

work needed to manage the property itself, such as signage, development of trails, and garbage removal. The plan is monitored, evaluated, and adapted according to changes that occur over time; hands-on work is undertaken by NCC staff, and, where possible, volunteers. Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program has assisted us greatly in funding special habitat species.

NCC's overall goal at Clear Creek Forest is to create a large block of high-quality, connected interior forest habitat, so rare in this area of the province. To do this, we have two main conservation goals: restore native tree species to unforested area of the property, and enhance the habitat quality in the existing forest.

If you've ever walked through Clear Creek Forest, you may have noticed the microtopography of the forest floor.

When a tree dies of old age, it eventually topples over, taking with it the root structure and creating a "pit" – the hole where the roots once were. This is one of the main reasons for the outstanding biodiversity of the Forest – some species of trees thrive in low, wet places; other prefer higher, drier areas. The tree itself, and the soil it displaces, becomes a "mound." If the forest floor were flat, such biodiversity could not exist.

Clear Creek Forest contains a former soybean field, of about 175 acres, that is now two years into a multi-year restoration project. To start the process, we emulated nature's methods by constructing pits and mounds.

Then, with guidance from NCC staff, volunteers from local community groups, Boy Scouts and the Volunteer for Nature program (a joint effort of NCC and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists) planted trees, to assist the natural seeding process from the surrounding forest. Other volunteer activities included seed collecting, and species inventories such as butterfly counts.

Already the results have been outstanding; the area is returning to its original natural state at very little cost, and more than 500 volunteers have been involved in this innovative conservation project to date. In addition to forest restoration work, NCC has undertaken more than fifteen habitat projects for Species at Risk.

There is only one American Chestnut at Clear Creek Forest. In the early part of this century, a chestnut blight arrived from Asia which has effectively decimated the entire chestnut population in North America. At present, there is no natural resistance, but work is being done by the University of Guelph to breed resistance into these trees.

In the meantime, what we can do is to plant more in the hope that natural resistance will be found. We planted American Chestnut nuts at Clear Creek Forest in 2001, produced from trees that may be blight resistant.

In partnership with Rondeau Provincial Park, we conducted a survey of Southern Flying Squirrels, a species in decline. We found about thirty onsite, mainly males, this indicates that a much larger population exists. In order to increase their habitat, we "girdled," or removed a ring of bark, around some non-native, and invasive, Black Locust and European Poplar trees. This technique keeps the tree standing, while at the same time hastening the rotting process. In turn, this will attract woodpeckers (a cavity-nesting species); their work hollowing out the trees will give the Flying Squirrels a new home.

We're now ready to take the next step. NCC has a vision for the protection and restoration of Clear Creek Forest – we are putting together the pieces of an ecological puzzle.

In an area of less than 3% forest cover (there is still no tree-cutting bylaw in Chatham/Kent), the forest cover in the immediate area of Clear Creek is close to 20%, providing an excellent opportunity to create one of the best networks of protected woodland in the region through purchase, donations and easements.

This summer (2003), NCC negotiated an Agreement of Purchase and Sale on a fifty-acre parcel of land to the north of the existing nature reserve. The property presently contains a retired gravel pit, mature forest and a tributary of Clear Creek that is very high quality Acadian Flycatcher habitat. NCC's goal is to purchase the site and restore it into a wetland, which will have a significant positive impact on Clear Creek. Restoring the hydrology of the Creek is the best thing we can do to improve the natural values of the entire property.

The Creek today is nothing like it was hundreds of years ago. Instead of a gradual and constant flow of water, ecosystems within the forest become very wet, and very dry, often in short succession according to the rainfall in the area.

This is because the agricultural land surrounding the Forest are "tiled" – rainwater travels through underground drains and is channelled into ditches, flowing through the watershed in minutes.

By restoring the gravel pit to a wetland, NCC will be able to hold back more water, thus enabling as much as possible to let it filter through more naturally impact on numerous species downstream.

One example is the Green Dragon, a wildflower that grows along creeks and rivers. This species is threatened in Canada. When NCC conducted a population assessment at Clear Creek Forest, we found 120 – one of the largest populations in the country. The challenge, however, is that this population is not reproducing. Green Dragon requires a site that is moist, but not wet, and we estimate that Clear Creek Forest could provide habitat for 500+ plants if restored to optimum conditions.

The restoration of the Creek will also help us to remove invasive species, such as Garlic Mustard, which impeded native species' ability to thrive. Garlic Mustard grows on disturbed lands, such as floodplains; at present, the alternately wet and dry conditions from rapid storm flows through Clear Creek promote the growth of this invasive species. Rather than attempting to address this problem in isolation, NCC aims to improve the hydrology of the Creek so that the ground is more consistently moist, rendering it incompatible with Garlic Mustard. It's the most efficient way to use our resources – and the dollars that you have invested.

We protected Clear Creek Forest two years ago - with your help, we'll do it again! The overall cost of this project, including the purchase price, restoration of the gravel pit and associated charges, is \$175,000. If we can raise this amount by June 2004, we will make an impact that starts at the new property and travels all the way to Lake Erie.

Our fund raising campaign for this unique ecosystem will begin in the new year, and we are planning a tour of Clear Creek Forest in early spring 2004. Details will follow; we hope you will join us.

Thank you for your interest in the protection of Clear Creek Forest. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Wilbur at NCC, toll free at (877) 343-3532 X 223 or sarah.wilburn@natureconservancy.ca

Point Pelee Natural History News - Volume 3, Number 4 (Winter 2003)

This issue contains the following:

Articles:

Point Pelee: Its Evolution and Structure - Alan S. Trenhaile

[Ever wondered how Point Pelee was formed? The author, a geomorphologist at the University of Windsor, explains this and much more.]

Noteworthy Bird Records: September to November 2003 - Alan Wormington

[An exceptional fall migration with a total of 6 pages detailing such rarities as Eared Grebe, American White Pelican, Cattle Egret, Glossy Ibis, Greater White-fronted Goose, Ross's Goose, Brant, Harlequin Duck, Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, Piping Plover, Marbled Godwit, Red Phalarope, Sabine's Gull, Ross's Gull, Sooty Tern, Black-backed Woodpecker, Cave Swallow, Townsend's Solitaire and Dickcissel).

More Cave Swallows: The Fall of 2003 - Alan Wormington

[Another incursion into northeastern North America resulted in 14 sightings and 21 birds in Ontario; of this total, eight birds were found within the Point Pelee Birding Area. All sightings are detailed and discussed.]

Point Pelee Christmas Bird Count: December 15, 2003 - Sarah E. Rupert

[42 observers found 94 species and counted 55,522 birds; highlights included Franklin's Gull, 247 American Pipit, Red-throated Loon, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Dunlin.]

Fox Squirrels at Point Pelee: 1977, 1990 and 1997 - Alan Wormington

[As the title states individual Fox Squirrels were recorded at Point Pelee in 1977, 1990 and 1997, but their origin remains unknown; the history of the species in Ontario is also presented.]

In the Field:

Ross's Gull: Second Record for Point Pelee

Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk: New to Point Pelee

Illustrations:

Included in this issue is a total of 13 photographs and two illustrations.

Important Notice:

This is the last issue of *Point Pelee Natural History News* that will be published (Volume 3 is now complete). Your Editor has requested the termination of the newsletter since there is always a chronic lack of material, somewhat surprising considering Point Pelee is probably visited by more nature-oriented individuals than any other single location in Ontario. Although there has always been a regular source of articles such as Noteworthy Bird Records, various bird and butterfly count reports, and annual butterfly and dragonfly compilations, etc., this is not enough material to fill each issue.

A word of Thanks to the Friends of Point Pelee for both initiating and supporting the newsletter throughout.

Alan Wormington, Editor
Point Pelee Natural History News
E-mail: wormington@juno.com

There is an ample supply of all issues if anyone is interested in obtaining a complete set or getting missing issues. All issues will be available this spring, for example, at the book store inside the Point Pelee Visitor Centre. Please address all orders directly to the Friends of Point Pelee.

	In Person:	By Mail (Can)	By Mail (International)
Any single issue:	\$4	\$5	\$5 (US funds only)
Any four issues:	\$15	\$18	\$18 (US funds only)
Complete set (12 issues):	\$40	\$45	\$45 (US funds only)

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WEB PAGE:
http://www.wincom.net/~fopp/Natural_History_News.htm
[includes an index for past issues]

Christmas Bird Counts 2003-04

By Paul Pratt

CEDAR CREEK CBC

The nineteenth Cedar Creek CBC on December 20th, 2003 attracted 30 participants and 2 feeder watchers who tallied 93 species and 96,393 individuals. Record high counts were observed for Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Long-eared Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird and tied for Wild Turkey and Northern Shrike. Turkey Vulture and Short-eared Owl were recorded for count week. Unusual species included Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Merlin, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Brown Thrasher, American Pipit and Common Yellowthroat.

Weather conditions for the count were very good with little snow cover and open water on Lake Erie. At the end of the day we gathered at Tom and Peggy Hurst's for the tally and pot luck dinner.

PARTICIPANTS: Area 1 Kingsville: (65 species, 17 party-hrs) Alan Wormington, Heather Anne Campbell, Bob Sanford, Bob Horvath, Peggy Hurst (fw). Area 2 Cedar Beach: (47 species, 23 party-hrs) Betty Learmouth, Clarence & Margaret Calder, Paul DesJardins, Bob Wickett, Pauline Renaud, Ian Woodfield. Area 3 Gesto: (36 species, 22.5 party-hrs) Shirley Grondin, JoAnn Grondin, Phil Roberts (crow roost co-ordinator), Bev Wannick, Cathy Lapain, Jim McAllister, Claire McAllister, Donna Cowie, Helene Parks, one fw. Area 4 South Colchester: (74 species, 24 party-hrs) Thomas Hurst, Keith Burk, Jim Burk, Steve Pike, Randy Horvath, Ron Muir. Area 5 Harrow: (58 species, 19 party-hrs) Paul Pratt, Karen Cedar, Jacques Nicoletti, Kristen Fawdry.

AMHERSTBURG CBC

The Rockwood, Michigan Christmas Bird Count includes a small portion of Ontario along the Detroit River between Amherstburg and the mouth of the Detroit River. Eight people covered this area on December 27, 2003 and found 56 species by midday. The entire count tallied 93 species this year.

Tundra Swan 65, Mute Swan 2, Canada Goose 665, American Black Duck 43, Mallard 7, Redhead 2, Common Goldeneye 5, Bufflehead 5, Common Merganser 17, Turkey Vulture 1, Bald Eagle 1 adult, Northern Harrier 1, Sharp-shinned Hawk 1, Cooper's Hawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 4, American Kestrel 1, Bonaparte's Gull 106, Ring-billed Gull 145, Herring Gull 20, Great Black-backed Gull 4, Rock Pigeon 60, Mourning Dove 77, E. Screech-Owl 3, Red-bellied Woodpecker 4, Downy Woodpecker 12, Northern Flicker 2, Horned Lark 120, Blue Jay 12, American Crow 14, Black-capped Chickadee 9, Red-breasted Nuthatch 5, White-breasted Nuthatch 7, Brown Creeper 2, Carolina Wren 11, Winter Wren 7, Golden-crowned Kinglet 10, Hermit Thrush 1, Gray Catbird 1, American Pipit 1, Cedar Waxwing 3, European Starling 80, Northern Cardinal 24, American Tree Sparrow 26, Song Sparrow 26, Swamp Sparrow 15, White-throated Sparrow 6, Dark-eyed Junco 88, Snow Bunting 20, Red-winged Blackbird 22, Rusty Blackbird 65, Common Grackle 6, Brown-headed Cowbird 110, House Finch 20, Common Redpoll 1, American Goldfinch 23, House Sparrow 180.

PARTICIPANTS: Karen Cedar, Bert Cozens, Rene Kielbasa, Anne Muir, Ron Muir, Paul Pratt, Lloyd Sayer, Bob Wickett.

DETROIT RIVER CBC

The Detroit River bird count is held each year on New Year's Day. The CBC includes both the American and Canadian sides of the Detroit River. The totals provided on this page are for the thirty percent of the count, which falls in Canada. The Ojibway Prairie Complex and Detroit River shoreline account for the majority of coverage in Windsor. Total number of species observed: 60. Record high counts were observed for Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren and Gray Catbird.

2004 FIELD OBSERVERS: Adam Brancaccio, Clarence Calder, Margaret Calder, Karen Cedar, Paul DesJardins, Lois Dobson, JoAnn Grondin, Shirley Grondin, Bert Harris, Kathy Lesperance, Anne Muir, Ron Muir, Jacques Nicoletti, Paul Pratt, Bill Reeves, Corey Reeves, Dustin Reeves, Bob Sanford, Ian Woodfield. **FEEDER WATCHERS:** Liz Christie, Henry Herrdegen, Vira Herrdegen, Dan Loncke, JP Marentette, Mary Montsch, Fred Urie.

For a complete list of results of all Christmas Bird Counts sees: www.ojibway.ca/cbcsites.htm

Lake Erie Islands Christmas Bird Count, 2003 by John Pogacnik

The final count for the Lake Erie Islands Christmas Bird Count 2003 is 80 species and 43,766 individuals. Islands covered were Kelley's, South Bass, and Middle Bass in Ohio and Pelee in Ontario. The count was conducted on December 14, 2003. No new species were found, but a number of half-hardy species and some of uncommon migrants were found.

Unusual species include long-tailed duck (4), harlequin duck, sanderling (second count record), eastern phoebe (second count record), and American pipit (all from Pelee Island) and lesser black-backed gull, yellow-bellied sapsucker, and Lincoln's sparrow (all from Kelley's Island).

High counts were made for a total of eighteen species. Nearly every fruit eating species were at record high levels. On Kelley's Island there were very few times throughout the day that American robins or starlings were not flying overhead. A record total of 93 hermit thrushes were found. Bufflehead totals continued to rise. Before 1993, bufflehead numbers usually totaled less than 100 birds a year. Since then there has been a steady increase with this year's total being 2,691.

Gadwall 127 (previous high 12); American wigeon ; 4 (previous high 3); American black duck 199 (previous high 126); Mallard 904 (previous high 563); Pintail 5 (previous high 3); Greater scaup 51 (previous high 30); Long-tailed duck 4 (previous high 2); Bufflehead 2,691 (previous high 2143); Cooper's hawk 8 (previous high 5); Red-bellied woodpecker 42 (previous high 28); Eastern bluebird 32 (previous high 31); Hermit thrush 93 (previous high 63); American robin 4,752 (previous high 883); European starling 21,841 (previous high 16,656); Cedar waxwing 255 (previous high 161); White-throated sparrow 337 (previous high 208); Rusty blackbird 13 (previous high 5); Brown-headed cowbird 192 (previous high 19).

In addition good counts were made for:

Yellow-rumped warbler 135 (2nd highest count, high count was 174 in 1997)

Purple finch 49 (2nd highest count, high count was 65 in 1985).

Point Pelee National Park CBC, December 15, 2003

Sarah Rupert

We had a great day on Monday, December 15, 2003 - with some of the most agreeable weather in years. The snow which fell on Sunday was great - and the temperatures still allowed for open water and thus some big numbers of waterfowl in and around the park. 93 species were found on the day of the count by 42 participants.

Highlights included:

Red-throated Loon (1) - this bird was sighted off the Tip in the morning; Franklin's Gull (1) - found off the shore of Hillman Beach, this bird was original spotted around Wheatley Harbour a week before the count; Lesser Black-backed Gull (1) - this bird was present at Wheatley Harbour, along with thousands of other gulls; Dunlin (1) - one of the three shorebirds found on the day of the count (the others were Killdeer), this bird was feeding along the stream between Lake Erie and Hillman Marsh; American Pipit (247) - this was a new record high for the count - the previous high was 17. There was a great movement of these birds through the count circle on the day of the count, but have not been noted afterwards. Snow Bunting (9,290) - another record high (over the previous high of 4,700 set in 1989) - large flocks of buntings were noted in almost every part of the circle.

Another neat bird, that didn't show up until today, was a Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow. It has been feeding off and on all day at the feeder at the park Visitor Centre. The Eastern Towhee that was seen at the feeder on the count day has not been around since.

Please contact me directly if you would like a copy of the complete results of the count. They will be published in the *Point Pelee Natural History News* sometime in the future.

St. Clair National Wildlife Area CBC, January 3, 2004, by Allen Woodliffe

The 24th St. Clair National Wildlife Area CBC was held on Saturday, January 3, 2004. It seems that we had our January thaw early this year, with balmy conditions - it varied from 13C (55F) in the early morning, dropping to 10C (50F) by evening, and only light to moderate winds. Under these conditions, there were even 4 herptiles recorded—Green Frog, Leopard Frog, Chorus Frog and Eastern Garter Snake!

Twenty-one observers combed the marshes, lake edges, fields and woodlots (yes, there is more than one woodlot, 5 actually, in this otherwise fairly bleak circle) and came up with an astounding 91 species, surpassing the previous high of 82, and well above our long-term average of about 70 species. Waterfowl are critical for high numbers at this count, and the 24 species observed on count day helped achieve this record high. Almost 79000 birds were tallied, including more than 65700 individuals of waterfowl, and included several new high counts. By contrast, last year we had fewer than 5,000 individuals of only 12 species of waterfowl.

New species included White-winged Scoter (1), Lincoln's Sparrow (1) and Blue-winged Teal (1 Count Week—observed 2 days before the count and not seen since). Our combined total species since 1981 now stands at 127.

New highs were recorded for 17 species (previous highs are in brackets):

Mute Swan 227 (169)	Tundra Swan 5,430 (5,331)	Mallard 26,528 (24,739)
Canvasback 19,215 (2,400)	Redhead 2,561 (713)	Greater Scaup 3,203 (771)
Common Merganser 1,965 (715)	Cooper's Hawk 11 (9)	Killdeer 3 (1)
Great Horned Owl 16 (14)	Red-bellied Woodpecker 15 (10)	Downy Woodpecker 178 (141)
Rod-breasted Nuthatch 7 (1)	Eastern Towhee 2 (1)	Am. Tree Sparrow 1,401 (1,342)
White-crowned Sparrow 65 (45)	American Goldfinch 240 (116)	

An additional 9 species tied the previous highs: Green-winged Teal (7), Bufflehead (7), Bald Eagle (5), Long-eared Owl (2), Belted Kingfisher (2),

Winter Owling at Holiday Beach Conservation Area

Betty Learmouth

Twelve naturalists joined ECFNC member Tom Hurst on January 11, 2004 for an afternoon devoted to searching for roosting owls at Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Tom told the assembled group that he had checked out two possible areas in the conservation area the day before but had found no owls, although Tom was hopeful that as a group we would have luck.

Tom related that on the Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count held on December 20, 2003, his group had entered a privately owned pine plantation in the former Colchester South Township where sixteen Long-eared Owls were found roosting at eye level in twenty foot tall trees. Tom told us that this species migrates to Essex County for its milder winter. Another nocturnal owl species that we might encounter would be the secretive Northern Saw-whet Owl which also favours coniferous plantings for its day time roost.

At Tom's home in the Town of Kingsville, Tom reported that Great Horned Owls are now vocal in the nearby woodlot at about nine or ten o'clock in the evening. Expect Eastern Screech-Owls to be calling in March or April. Another owl species that may be seen in winter in Essex County is the Short-eared Owl which favours meadows and expanses of grassland such as the Windsor Airport. This species is active at dusk and dawn. If one stands at the Jefferson Avenue gate or the dead end of Pillette Road and the airport fence, there is a chance of seeing this species hunting in the late afternoon or at dusk.

The group headed to the pine plantation on County Road 50 which is part of the conservation area. When we all came back together after our search through the plantation, four participants reported a Sharp-shinned Hawk which flew in a southerly direction over the pine plantation. Sandra Wilson was lucky enough to see a deer. Several delightful Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported.

As the group walked along the Collison Side Road from the pine plantation back towards the upper nature trail, a flock of Cedar Waxwings perched in a small tree at the edge of a homeowner's lawn. As we hiked along the conservation area's upper nature trail, we examined the poison ivy festooned pine trees on our left where owls have roosted in the past. Paul DesJardins told us that these old trees were Black Pine, a species not native to North America.

Tom paused beside a Tamarack which had been planted in the past in what was formerly an open grassland area. This tree appears to be thriving even though it is not in its preferred habitat of "cold, wet, poorly drained sites such as sphagnum bogs and muskeg" as described in Farrar's *Trees in Canada*.

We had a brief glimpse of a Northern Harrier passing to our south below the tree line. Then we spread out to search for roosting owls through an area of scattered Red Cedars and pines. Several Hermit Thrushes were seen, obviously enjoying the shelter offered by this stand of coniferous trees.

We checked the Prothonotary Warbler habitat by the short boardwalk, then walked north along the main conservation area roadway where we encountered good numbers of Cedar Waxwings and American Robins flying back and forth across the roadway. There appeared to be at least forty Cedar Waxwings and possibly a dozen American Robins. Several White-throated Sparrows were observed as the birds moved about in the sheltering Red Cedars.

Despite the lack of owls on our walk, our group enjoyed the afternoon as the temperatures were moderate and the sun even shone as we were departing. For several persons who lingered, a Red-bellied Woodpecker was observed as it flew into the large cottonwoods near the upper parking lot.

Many thanks to Tom who lead us on a most enjoyable excursion, providing us with skills to go on our individual owl prowls. Tom suggested that next year we might consider a central meeting spot that would enable us to explore areas that had had roosting owls during the Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count.

Winter Walk at Big Creek Marsh Conservation Area Betty Learmouth

Gerry Waldron was joined by fifteen ECFNC members and friends for an afternoon walk at Big Creek Conservation Area in the Town of Amherstburg on Sunday afternoon, February 8, 2004. The day was cool with a light southwest wind, but the sun was shining so conditions were favourable for our walk.

Gerry told us that he had scouted out the walk the week before, finding coyote kill and spotting a Northern Harrier protecting its prey, displaying great reluctance to leave its kill, even though Gerry was nearby.

Our walk began at the John Moore Memorial Cairn which is surrounded by Kentucky Coffeetree seedlings, hinting at a site which will be a germplasm grove of this species in the future. Following a roadway that leads behind the property's barn we discovered tree plantings that have been carried out by the Essex Region Conservation Authority as part of a memorial forest which have commendably transformed acres of open farmland into acres of young trees. Gerry commented that cottontail rabbits are gnawing away on the bark of the young Hackberry trees but that the Kentucky Coffeetrees remained untouched. The rabbits obviously know Kentucky Coffeetrees are poisonous. In the past pioneers boiled and roasted the large oval seeds of the Kentucky Coffeetree in an attempt to make the seed suitable for brewing – as Paul DesJardin noted, "Deprivation is the mother of culinary invention." Bits of gray fur in the plantings were the remains of a Cottontail rabbit killed by a coyote. Coyote scat (compact and containing hair) was noted along the roadway.

The roadway meandered along near an arm of Big Creek Marsh, providing us with the opportunity to look at several tree species. Gerry pointed out our native Pin Oaks and a White Willow, an introduced species. We examined a grove of Cottonwoods in poor condition which Gerry told us were hybrids with European genetics which had made these trees susceptible to canker and fungus, thus the peeling bark and gnarled and stunted look of the trees.

We stopped to look at numerous hawthorns which Gerry told us indicated grazing has occurred here. Hawthorn thickets are successional in that ash eventually grows in these sites but the hawthorns do suppress the growth of other tree species. Peggy Hurst pointed out the hairy runners of Poison Ivy entwining several hawthorn trunks, the thick vines well chewed by the cottontails. Two larger trees towering over the hawthorns were Shagbark Hickory and Bur Oak.

Gerry announced he had a surprise for us and suggested we look in the surrounding trees. We backtracked looking for the surprise and eventually someone asked Gerry what we should be looking for. Gerry told us he had discovered a newly constructed Bald Eagle's nest on his scouting trip the previous week. Everyone stopped, scanning the nearby trees. Then someone said, "What is that mass of materials?" and there it was. We headed off trail for a better view of the large nest, constructed on a limb of an ash tree. This newly constructed nest is the fifth nest which the Big Creek Marsh Bald Eagles have constructed.

Passing by a thicket of Silky Dogwoods, we stepped onto the ice. Nearby was a small oak log cabin which had been dismantled at its original site along Turkey Creek and moved to its present location where it serves as a summer retreat. We could see farm buildings on nearby Knapps Island, and, in the distance to the southeast, the hawk tower at Holiday Beach Conservation Area. We walked a short distance on the ice, commenting on the number of muskrat mounds that surrounded us. Gerry remarked that anyone familiar with Big Creek Marsh over the past ten years would note that the cattails have been almost entirely replaced by non native phragmites. Gerry added that the cattails species present are also non native. We noted some Buttonbushes with fruit still attached.

Leaving the ice to walk through a woodland, we admired a White Oak, which Gerry stated was between 100 and 200 years of age, on its way to old growth status. Peggy Hurst used her arms in place of a measuring tape, estimating the tree, with its gnarly look, was a "three hug" tree. A nearby Bur Oak was estimated to be a "two hug" tree.

Gerry told us that this section of the Big Creek Marsh Conservation Area which is also accessible from nearby Concession Road B, is habitat for Early Blue or Palmate Violet (*Viola palmata*) and Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Habenaria leucophaea*) where this orchid species grows in moist spots along Big Creek Marsh.

We made our way back to the roadway, then onto the ice of the arm and thence to our vehicles. Birds seen or heard during the walk were a nuthatch, Downy Woodpeckers and a distant soaring Red-tailed Hawk.

Thank you to Gerry for leading us on another enjoyable winter walk to enjoy our wonderful Essex County nature. Gerry declared this year's walk to be positively a picnic compared to last year's scramble! And we appreciate Gerry's editing skills to ensure the accuracy of this summary.

A Visit to the Belle Isle Aquarium

Betty Learmouth

On February 29, 2004, twelve ECFNC members visited the Belle Isle Aquarium in the City of Detroit. This year the aquarium is celebrating its 100th anniversary with special events such as an outdoor concert.

The Belle Isle Aquarium has four staff members who share the duties of caring for the aquariums and a curator who oversees the entire facility. This aquarium has a fine collection of fish from around the world, but our group focused on the native fishes displayed on the west wall of the aquarium. The first display is a floor to the lower edge of the tiled ceiling exhibit of a variety of large native fishes, all of which looked quite gray in this exhibit. The fish had been provided with fallen logs and other debris under which they could rest or hide. In this large aquarium, we noted bowfin, long-nosed gar, northern pike, fresh water drum, rock bass, smallmouth bass, common carp and lake sturgeon.

The other exhibits devoted to native fishes were much smaller but were illuminated so that we were able to see that our native fishes are not drab or blue gray in colour. Long-nosed gar, bluegill and orangespotted sunfish were displayed together. Lake sturgeon and lake whitefish were together providing good closeup views of the active three year old sturgeon and a good opportunity to view the adipose fin, a tiny stub, of the lake whitefish.

A number of bowfin were displayed together with the light in the aquarium showing off the lovely colours of this native fish, especially the golden spot on the caudal fin. These fish were in nonstop motion, their dorsal fins rippling constantly.

Other fish seen in small displays were the lake chubsucker, rock bass and longear sunfish. An American eel was on display with the native fishes as was a huge snapping turtle in the company of a small group of fish that were quite aware of the turtle, moving away together from the turtle as it swam upward for a breath of air.

The Belle Isle Aquarium has a website at belleaquarium.com which is maintained by the Friends of the Belle Isle Aquarium.

Springsong and Spring Birding Festivities on Pelee Island, May 2004

The following are birding activities upcoming during May 2004 on Pelee Island:

2004 Pelee Island Baillie Birdathon - May 14th-15th

Daily guided birding tours throughout the first three weeks of May

Springsong celebration dinner - Saturday, May 15th at the Pelee Island Wine Pavilion

Guest speaker: Alistair MacLeod, Canadian author

Special Guest Birders from Cuba: Orlando Garrido and Arturo Kirkconnell,
authors of *The Guide to Cuban Birds*

Tickets: \$50

Contact: Irena Knezevic at the Pelee Island Heritage Centre pimuseum@mnsi.net

ECFNC Activities and Excursions, March through June 2004

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, contact Bert Harris (966-3263), JoAnn Grondin (734-0056), Margaret Jennings (250-0705), or Betty Learmouth (944-0825). "Thank you" to everyone who has volunteered to lead an excursion. We appreciate leaders sharing their time and expertise with others. Let us know about your ideas for upcoming excursions. Consider volunteering as an excursion leader.

- March 10 – ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting – Annual General Meeting
- March 27 – Federation of Ontario Naturalists regional Carolinian West meeting in Sarnia
- March 27 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Workshop for the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario. Time: 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Featuring: Provincial coordinator here as guest speaker. Atlas staff to answer questions, provide updates, and highlights. Summary of results in Essex County, past year's highlights, and hotspots for 2004! Plus: Owling and woodcock outings, point count extravaganzas, and more! Refreshments./ door prizes.
- March 27 – The Little River Spring Bike Tour – Time: 11:00 a.m. Place: Riverside Sportsmen Club, 10835 Riverside Drive East. For more information contact Mark Buckner (973-1116) or e-mail ceatours@mdirect.net
- March 28 – ECFNC Winter Excursion - Cleanup on the Greenway – This cleanup will be first of three that the ECFNC has agreed to do during 2004 as part of our adoption of Greenway section. ECFNC's secretary JoAnn Grondin is the organizer for these outings to our ECFNC section of the Greenway which extends from the Town of Harrow east to the McCormick Sideroad. We will meet in Harrow at 2:00 p.m. where Walker Road crosses the Greenway just by Colio Wines. Bring work gloves and wear clothing that you don't mind soiling during the cleanup.
- March 31 – ECFNC Executive meeting
- April 3 – Backyard Habitat program – *Taking Root: the Naturalized Landscape Conference* – Call Dan Bissonnette at 259-2407
- April 3 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Spring Bird Migration - A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Southwestern Ontario. Upcoming trips on April 17, May 1, 8, 15, 22. Saturday morning field trips. Cost: \$13/1 or sign up for all 6 and receive a discount.
- April 4 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Friends of Ojibway Prairie – Annual General Meeting – Featured guest speaker is Paul Pratt of the Ojibway Nature Centre. Topic: A Naturalist's Guide to Eastern Australia. Meeting will include board of directors elections, news, volunteer recognition, refreshments and more. 2:00 p.m.
- April 8 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Advanced Birding – Woodcocks and Owls - A serious birder's delight! An in-depth workshop where the identification and amazing life stories of our feathered birds will be revealed. Refreshments provided. 6:30 p.m. -8:30 p.m.; Upcoming: Shorebirds - May 6, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Cost: \$13/night
- April 14 - ECFNC Members Meeting – University of Windsor student Nick LaPointe will share his summer 2003 research project in the Detroit River with ECFNC members. Nick has provided a description of his talk: The objective of my study is to examine fish habitat associations in the Detroit River. Any species at risk found in the river were of particular interest. In order to determine these associations, we first determined substrates in less than 3 metres of water, between La Salle and Amherstburg. We then selected sites with uniform substrates of either mud, sand, gravel or weeds. Fish were then sampled using hoop nets, Windermere traps, seine nets and boat electrofishing. I will be discussing the fish caught, including species at risk and invasive species, as well as other interesting catches and sightings.
Meet in the basement meeting room at the Windsor Family Credit Union, 2800 Tecumseh Road East at 7:30 p.m. We will meet everyone at the back entrance of the Credit Union to direct you to the elevator.
- April 17 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Spring Bird Migration - A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Southwestern Ontario. Upcoming trips on May 1, 8, 15, 22. Saturday morning field trips. Cost: \$13/1
- April 20 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Friends of Ojibway Prairie Spring Cleanup -
Join the Friends of Ojibway Prairie as we help beautify our local natural areas. Refreshments provided. 1:00 p.m. Cost: Free
- April 25 – Earth Day at Ojibway Nature Centre - Fun for the entire family: Environmental exhibits, entertainment, children's activities, food and much more!! 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. Cost: FREE admission into the park
- April 28 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Weekend Day Birding at Pelee - Discover the most popular outdoor hobby in North America through a series of morning field trips at Point Pelee.
Upcoming dates May 5, 12, 19. Wednesday 8:30 a.m. Cost: \$10/trip

- May - ECFNC Spring Activity - Over the past few years, ECFNC members have journeyed to Pelee Island to pull Garlic Mustard on natural areas, particularly on the Shaughnessy Cohen Memorial Savannah and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve. If you would like to participate in this mid week activity, call organizer Bonnie Ross (969-4247).
- May - Point Pelee National Park Spring Bird Festival - Look for details in the park's spring publication
- May 1 & 2 - Annual Pelee Island trip with Dave Kraus. Please see the trip's description in this issue of *The Egret*.
- May 1 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Spring Bird Migration - A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Southwestern Ontario. Upcoming trips on May 8, 15, 22. Saturday morning field trips. Cost: \$13/1.
- May 5 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Spring Wildflowers at Spring Garden Natural Area - Learn how to identify and photograph those dazzling spring jewels. Each night will explore a different habitat at our newest city park. Meet at Titcombe Park on Malden Road. Woodland: May 5, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Prairie: May 26, 6:30 p.m -8:00 p.m. Cost: \$13/person/2 weeks
- May 5 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Weekend Day Birding at Pelee - Discover the most popular outdoor hobby in North America through a series of morning field trips at Point Pelee. Upcoming dates May 12, 19. Wednesday 8:30 a.m. Cost: \$10/trip
- May 6 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Advanced Birding - Shorebirds - A serious birder's delight! An in-depth workshop where the identification and amazing life stories of our featured birds will be revealed. Refreshments provided. Shorebirds: 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Cost: \$13/night
- May 7 - Volunteer for Nature - Nature Conservancy of Canada activity at Clear Creek Forest Reserve - The Frog Principles: Amphibian Monitoring at Clear Creek. Special features: Pit and mound and early spring floral display featuring White Trillium and Blue Cohosh. Trip description: Peer into ephemeral pools and help track the progress of restoration efforts at Clear Creek Forest Nature Reserve. Since 2001, NCC and volunteers have been planting trees and restoring forest cover using the innovative pit and mound technique. Observe and document amphibians and their habitat to help NCC staff assess the progress of enhancing habitat and biodiversity at Clear Creek Forest. NCC staff person Graham Buck will be trip leader. Meet at 2:00 p.m. with the event ending at 8:00 p.m. with the spectacular amphibian chorus. To register for this event call the Nature Registration desk at the Federation of Ontario Naturalists at the toll free number: 1-800-440-2366 ext 222. Many of the Volunteer for Nature events fill up quickly, so register soon.
- May 8 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Spring Bird Migration - A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Southwestern Ontario. Upcoming trips on May 15, 22. Saturday morning field trips. Cost: \$13/1.
- May 8/9 - Song and Shorebird Festival at Hillman March Conservation Area - Banding demonstrations are scheduled for 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. There will be a children's activity tent, a live owl, and guided walks. Light refreshments will be provided by ECFNC members. Please call Shirley Grondin at 972-5781 if you wish to volunteer to assist at the Festival.
- May 12 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Weekend Day Birding at Pelee - Discover the most popular outdoor hobby in North America through a series of morning field trips at Point Pelee. Upcoming dates May 12, 19. Wednesday 8:30 a.m. Cost: \$10/trip
- May 12 - ECFNC Members Meeting - Guest speakers Jo Ann MacKenzie and Simon Liao will present a program entitled "Birding Taiwan." Jo Ann and Simon will be visiting Southwestern Ontario in May to enjoy the spring migration during which they are volunteering to speak to several groups including the Toronto Ornithological Club and the ECFNC. Jo Ann is past president of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists and Liao is Chairperson for the Asia District of BirdLife International and is the former president of the Wild Bird Society of Taiwan. Meet in the basement meeting room at the Windsor Family Credit Union, 2800 Tecumseh Road East at 7:30 p.m.
- May 12 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Big Day Birding - An intensive day of birding for people seeking 100 plus species of birds in a single day! Alternate upcoming date: Saturday, May 22 Time: 6:00 a.m. Cost: \$25/day

- May 15 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Spring Bird Migration - A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Southwestern Ontario. Upcoming trip on May 22. Saturday morning field trips. Cost: \$13/1.
- May 15 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Native Plant Sale - Attract wildlife to your yard with flowers, trees and shrubs. Time: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- May 16 – ECFNC Spring Excursion - ECFNC member and Canada South Land Trust director Bill Balkwill will lead a walk through his woodlot to view the spring floral display. To reach Bill's home, if you are in Essex proceed south along the Arner Town Line watching for Road 2 West (Gosfield South). Turn left (heading east) and proceed a short distance to house number 1880 on your left. Proceed down the lane. Meet at 2:00 p.m. for this walk.
- May 16 – Backyard Habitat Program – The Naturalized Garden Tour in the Town of Leamington – Call Dan Bissonnette at 259-2407 for more details.
- May 19 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Weekend Day Birding at Pelee - Discover the most popular outdoor hobby in North America through a series of morning field trips at Point Pelee. Wednesday 8:30 a.m. Cost: \$10/trip
- May 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Spring Bird Migration - A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life which migrates through Southwestern Ontario. Saturday morning field trip. Cost: \$13/1.
- May 22 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Big Day Birding - An intensive day of birding for people seeking 100 plus species of birds in a single day! Time: 6:00 a.m. Cost: \$25/day
- May 24 – Victoria Day - ECFNC Spring Excursion - Enjoy the Victoria Day weekend with a morning birding excursion to Point Pelee National Park with Shirley Grondin and Betty Learmouth. Bring your guides as we will all contribute to finding and identification of the birds we see. We will meet at the Visitors Centre at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch to enjoy at the picnic tables at noon hour.
- May 26 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Spring Wildflowers at Spring Garden Natural Area - Learn how to identify and photograph those dazzling spring jewels. Each night will explore a different habitat at our newest city park. Meet at Titcombe Park on Malden Road. Prairie wildflowers. 6:30 p.m - 8:00 p.m. Cost: \$13/person/2 weeks
- May 26 – ECFNC Executive Meeting
- May 28, 29 and 30 –
Federation of Ontario Naturalists 73rd Annual General Meeting and Gathering, Toronto, Ontario – Conference highlights include fascinating field trips to explore the natural wonders of Greater Toronto, nature walks and tours of Black Creek Pioneer Village, exciting and informative sessions, afternoon BBQ social, Conservation Awards and Nature Photo Contest ceremony. Contact the Federation of Ontario Naturalist, 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2W8 AT 1-800-440-2366 ext 224 for more information. Conference brochure will be in the spring issue of *ON Nature*, formerly *Seasons*.
- May 30 - ECFNC Spring Excursion - Join in a Garlic Mustard pull at Carolina Woods (the former Heinz Bush) in the Town of Leamington. Ruth Junge is the organizer for this event. Please call Ruth (326-6630) to indicate that you will be participating. Bring your own gloves. Bags will be provided. Park at Zellers and walk around the building to the Carolina Woods main entrance which is on the west side of the woodlot. Meet at 2:00 p.m.
- June 2 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Nature Hotspots – Discover the special features of our local hotspots. For the Birds Woodlot. 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. \$7.00
- June 5 – Canada South Land Trust Event – Enjoy an outdoor salad and dessert picnic, learn about Holiday Beach Conservation Area's nesting Prothonotary Warblers, and assist our new Canada South Land Trust by attending this late spring activity. Salads and desserts will be served between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., followed by a guided walk at 6:15 p.m. in Prothonotary Warbler habitat lead by ECFNC President and CSLT member Phil Roberts. Tickets for this event are \$30.00 with an income tax receipt for \$20.00 to be issued to each participant. Please contact Betty Learmouth at 944-0825 for more information and tickets to this Canada South Land Trust event.
- June 9 – ECFNC Monthly Meeting - Location: Windsor Famil Credit Union, 2800 Tecumseh Road East at 7:30 p.m.
- June 9 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Nature Hotspots – Discover the special features of our local hotspots. Tremblay Beach Conservation Area, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. \$7.00

- June 16 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Nature Hotspots – Discover the special features of our local hotspots. Location to be announced. 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. \$7.00
- June 13 – ECFNC Summer excursion – Join Penelope Potter for a walk on her farm where prairie and pond restoration projects have attracted wildlife. We will undertake a butterfly count as well as looking for evidence of breeding bird species. Meet at 2:00 p.m. Directions: From the Town of Essex, proceed south along the Arner Town Line, watching for the sign for Concession 6 (Con 6) on your right. Penelope's house number is 6875 on the left as you are heading west along Concession 6
- June 19 – ECFNC Summer Excursion – Join Randy Groundwater for an evening of viewing our night time skies at the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's facility through a newly installed telescope on site in Comber, Essex County. To reach the facility from Windsor follow County Road 46 to the Rochester Townline. At this intersection, turn right (south) and watch for the next concession road, South Middle Road. Turn left onto South Middle Road which is a dirt road and proceed for two kilometres. Watch for the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's (RASC) sign on the right. There is a big green barn and the white observatory building on the property. This area is the best site in Essex County for darkness as the area is farmland and woodlots. Meet at 9:30 p.m. If the evening is cloudy, Randy will give us a tour of the facility and an inside presentation. We visited last June for a wonderful evening, so this year promises to be even more so with the new telescope installed.
- June 20 – ECFNC Spring Excursion – Enjoy an afternoon tour of several backyard natural habitat gardens in East Windsor. These mini natural habitat restorations include shaded woodland gardens and prairie restoration in sunny backyards as well as unique roof top gardens. Meet at 2:00 p.m. at Gerry Kaiser's home at 884 Matthew Brady. Matthew Brady is located two blocks west of Lauzon Road. Proceed north on Lauzon Road from Lauzon's intersection with Tecumseh Road East, proceed past Little River Road, watch for St. Rose Avenue at the next intersection, turn left, go two blocks to Matthew Brady and turn right and watch for Gerry's home on the right.
- June 27 - ECFNC Summer Excursion - Cleanup on the Greenway – This cleanup will be second of three that the ECFNC has agreed to do during 2004 as part of our adoption of Greenway section. ECFNC's secretary JoAnn Grondin is the organizer for these outings to our ECFNC section of the Greenway which extends from the Town of Harrow east to the McCormick Sideroad. We will meet in Harrow at 2:00 p.m. where Walker Road crosses the Greenway just by Colio Wines. Bring work gloves and wear clothing that you don't mind soiling during the cleanup.
- June 30 – ECFNC Executive Meeting
- July 29 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Prairie Days – Explore the unique relationship between prairie plants and insects. 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. \$7
Ojibway Nature Centre – Nature Hotspots – Discover the special features of our local hotspots. For the Birds Woodlot, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. \$7.00

Upcoming fall events:

- September 11 and 12 – Festival of Hawks, Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Sharp-shinned Weekend
- September 18 and 19 – Festival of Hawks, Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Broad-winged Weekend
- September 19 – ECFNC Fall Excursion – Enjoy a guided tour at Ernie and Linda Kennette's new restoration project which should be very colourful on this date with goldenrod and asters in bloom. Meet in the late afternoon at 4:00 p.m. This will allow volunteers at the Hawk Festival to attend. Directions: If you are traveling from Windsor, take County Road 46 to the corner of Manning Road (County Road 19) and County Road 46. At this intersection turn right, and watch for Wayne's Woodcraft, then watch for the next roadway just to the south of Wayne's Woodcraft and turn left onto North Talbot Road. Proceed for 1 and 1/2 miles and watch for 306 North Talbot and the sign E & L Pleasant Park Farm. Parking is available in the drive and at the second bridge.
- September 25 - Festival of Hawks, Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Peregrine Falcon Day
- November 6 – ECFNC 20th annual dinner (first Saturday in November) at the Windsor Manor Club with guest speaker Bruce Kershner. Please see article in this issue of *The Egret*.
- November 7 – ECFNC excursion – Bruce Kershner will lead a walk in an Essex County natural area to identify old growth forest.

