



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

Inside this issue ...

21st ECFNC Annual Dinner	1
ECFNC Contacts.....	2
Field Naturalist's Kingsville Retreat.....	3
A Walk with the Bluebirds.....	4
Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas Wrap Up.....	6
Gesto Square Bashing.....	7
Lake St. Clair Atfassing Hotspots.....	12
Dickcissel Country.....	13
Big Creek Marsh Atfassing Hotspots.....	14
Looking In All the Right Places.....	16
Camp Cedarwin, July 14, 2005.....	17
Prairie Day, August 2, 2005.....	18
ECFNC Field Naturalists' Club Events.....	20
Celebrate Earth, Celebrate Ojibway.....	24
Bugs, Bats & Beyond	24
Living with Rattlers.....	25
Telescope For Sale.....	25
Ojibway Fall Colour Festival flyer.....	26
Field Naturalilsts Dinner flyer.....	27

Twenty-first ECFNC Annual Dinner

Saturday November 5, 2005

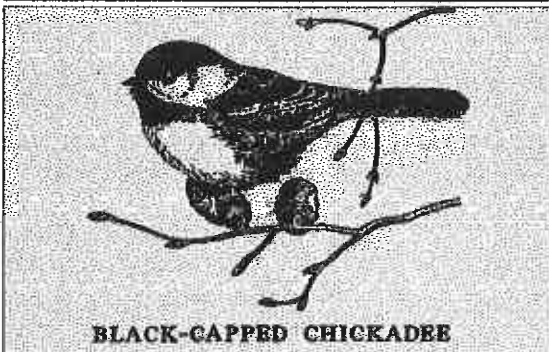
Fogolar Furlan Club, Udine Hall
1800 E.C. Row (North Service Road), Windsor, ON
Doors Open: 6:00 p.m. Dinner: 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Daniel Mennill, Guest Speaker

Dr. Daniel J. Mennill, Assistant Professor, University of Windsor, has accepted the ECFNC's invitation to be our guest speaker at our twenty-first dinner scheduled for Saturday, November 5, 2005 at the Fogolar Furlan Club.

Daniel has chosen to title his talk *Duels and Duets: An Adventure in Research on Temperate and Tropical Birds*.

Daniel has carried binoculars and microphones to many parts of the world to study the ecology and evolution of vocal communications in birds. He will present highlights of his research on bird song, with slides and sound recordings from Ontario, United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, and Australia. He will compare the voices of temperate and tropical animals and describe how state of the art research technologies have expanded our understanding of songbird behaviour. His talk will highlight the astounding complexity of vocalizations produced by the world's finest singers. *Continued page 3 ...*



BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

About the Club . . .

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club was incorporated December 9, 1984. 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 Ontario Nature/Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

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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Annual Dinner: Heritage & Special Events Committees

Heritage Committee: JoAnn Grondin, Margaret Jennings, Muriel Kassimatis, Dave Kraus, Betty Learnmouth, Jim McAllister, Patricia Rhoads, Bruno Sfalcin, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson

Speaker Announced for Twenty-first ECFNC Annual Dinner continued...

Born in London, Ontario, Daniel got hooked on bird-watching during his undergraduate research at McMaster University. He combined his love of biology with his love of music by conducting doctoral research on the ecology and evolution of bird song at Queen's University. After receiving his PH.D., Daniel foraged south to research avian vocal behaviour in Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology and Auburn University's Biology Department. He joined the biology faculty at the University of Windsor in January 2005. He now lives in Windsor, traveling seasonally to northern Ontario and Costa Rica to study birds with his wife and collaborator, Stephanie Doucet.

Field Naturalist's Kingsville Retreat

Enjoy cooling summer breezes and views of Lake Erie across the private lane, or sit on your secluded deck, on the very edge of one of Essex County's best treed ravines with a permanent stream below. Listen to the water, watch the birds, or retire to the gazebo and the hot tube, where you can lie back and listen to the night sounds or watch the stars. It's easy to forget you are only minutes from Windsor. The property (slightly over an acre) is well planted, including numerous native trees and shrubs sourced from Essex County. A mixture of domesticated and wildflowers combines with the Redbuds, Dogwoods and other flowering shrubs to provide colour through the seasons.

The house is a single-level, 3-bedroom, 2-bath custom home, 2150 sq. ft., with a Cape Cod appearance on the outside, and a contemporary open plan inside. A 2-car garage is attached. Vinyl siding and Anderson vinyl windows ensure low maintenance, while inside finishes include carpeting, quality trim details, and lever-style hardware on all doors. The house is dominated by an enormous stone fireplace (gas) in the central cathedraled living room. This provides a cozy ambiance on the coldest winter day. Large windows in all rooms take full advantage of the views and ensure this is a bright and cheerful home.

The spacious hickory kitchen has an adjoining breakfast nook looking out to the ravine, and the master bedroom, a second bedroom and the living room all provide direct access to the spacious deck. The master suite comprises a 15 x 20 ft. bedroom with one closet wall and a 9 x 19 ft. ensuite (with whirlpool tub, twin vanities and a huge tiled shower). It is separated by the public rooms from the other bedrooms and a second bath making this an ideal home for a family, or a couple who like their guests to be comfortable and private. Other rooms are a den or dining room and a laundry. There are ample closets throughout and a large pantry off the kitchen.

It's only 15 minutes from Point Pelee or Cedar Creek, but with pairs of binoculars kept handy in the breakfast nook, out in the gazebo, or even inside the whirlpool bath, you may never want to trouble to leave home again! This lovely home is on the market now, with a closing date next June, at \$380,000.00 It seems made for an Essex County Field Naturalist, so plan on moving in and sharing with the fox, the rabbits, the possums, the coon, the deer and all the birds and butterflies too numerous to mention. They'll assume you are sharing it with them, but you can still call it your own little piece of Carolinian Canada. *For more information, phone 733-9972. Donna and Peter Sale*

A Walk with the Bluebirds

Margaret Calder

On a beautiful summer evening, Betty Learmouth took me for a drive to the County. There I gazed on nature at its finest, baby bluebirds. The next thing, I got a call from Don Bissonnette suggesting that Betty thought I would like to become a monitor.

"I don't know much about that," I said.

"It's easy," says Don. "You clean the boxes, grease the poles, check and record bluebirds, Tree Swallows and wrens. Bluebird nests are made of grass, very neat with a deep cup in the centre, their eggs are blue. The Tree Swallow nests are much the same but lined with white feathers, their eggs are white. The little wren's nest is made of twigs (how do they carry them?) and their eggs are brown. Oh, and by the way, most trails are wet."

Off we go to Canadian Tire to purchase rubber boots, along with a backpack filled with water, a brush, a bar of soap (for wasps), vasoline, and cayenne pepper. We started on our journey to be monitors of bluebird trails. This was seven years ago and not only did we learn about birds, but also gardening and birthing of foals plus much more.

We have tried eight trails so far, six of which we gave up for one reason or another, mostly poor habitat for Bluebirds.

On one trail, we got our yearly supply of rhubarb plus invaluable information on gardening. Our garden proudly shows off some of the plants from this trail. My prize, a nice patch of Prickly Pear Cactus, is on the south side of the house.

On another trail, we witnessed Red-tailed Hawk and its young, followed the next year by the Great Horned Owl. On this trail we also got an education in ponies. One morning we arrived just in time to see a new born foal stand for the first time. The next year as we were making our way to the pony pasture, mid way up our calves in mud (that's what the rubber boots are for), I caught sight of a large log. Once out of the mud and on solid land, I exclaimed, "Oh my, a new born foal." Much to the owner's surprise, he thought he had two more weeks before he had to bring Ma to the barn for the birth.

On many of our walks, we are accompanied by the family dog, who most often will flush the elusive woodcock from its nest.

A couple of trails went by the wayside to "bulldozer." You know we humans need new homes and barns.

Over the years we have had happy and sad moments on this journey. We have seen bluebirds at all stages of development, from just out of the egg to a new fledgling. This year, for the first time, we witnessed this great event. As we approached a nest box, a bird flew out, landed on a perch, and with an astonished look on its face, surveyed his new world.



We have had to take adult birds out of the nest, have lost new babies and also eggs, but you still go on.

A funny sight one morning was a large head looking out of a box. I gave it all the space it needed, but Clarence being a "boy" tried to outwit the snake. Guess who won?

Three years ago we got what I call the mother lode of all trails, "Mother Wood Trail." This is Penelope Potter's property, fully explained in other articles, so on with our journey.

This trail has been a classroom for us. I cannot believe how much I have learned and greatly appreciate the opportunity to monitor this trail.

The first year, no bluebirds nested but meadowlarks and bobolinks did so. It was interesting to watch a pair of cowbirds attempting to lay eggs among the many nests of the Red-winged Blackbird. We have been able to sharpen our butterfly identification skills and study dragonflies. We learned the different frog calls, and this year with the help of Paul DesJardins and Penelope, we believe the Wood Frog was there.

Upon completing our second year of monitoring the Mother Wood Trail, not only were we awarded the prestigious "Top Producer Award" from the Club, but we were treated to a spectacular display of close to fifty bobolinks. They flew from one part of the field to another as we approached. Quite a sight.

This year is again proving to be interesting, yet disappointing in some ways. We do not have as many meadowlarks and bobolinks, but we did have a pair of Green Herons in the area. We had several pair of bluebirds at the start of the season, prompting Penelope to purchase three more nest boxes. At the start of the year, we had three nests going, but one did not get used. Don calls them dummy nests, but I tried an experiment. I decided to remove the nest, to give a new lady a choice. To our surprise, another perfect nest in Box # 4, but not used. I like to think that this has served as a classroom for bluebird nest construction.

We had another first this year. One morning on checking our new babies, we noticed a black film floating above the babies. "Oh my, we will lose them." I exclaimed. On to our fearless leader Don who explained that most likely what we saw was the down coming off the young as their feathers were developing. (By the way, one of these birds was the guy on the perch).

Now here is a good one. Two bluebird eggs are in a nest. Next week, there are two Tree Swallow eggs. During the third week, another Bluebird egg is added and all four adults are about. Then the next week, all eggs are gone. Oh, the mysteries of a monitor. We also caught sight of a new fawn this year.

We are still monitoring (middle of July), in the high heat and with expectations. We still have bluebird eggs and young to watch over.

Each morning after we monitor and record, it's our time to go off to Arner Stop for the best breakfast in Essex County. Another year on the trail. Anyone out there who would like to give a trail a try? You don't know what you are missing. Happy trails to you. *Margaret & Clarence*

Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas Data Collection: Wrapping Up

This fifth and final year of data collection for the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas created a flurry of activity. Atlas coordinator for Essex County, Paul Pratt, reported that atlasers in Essex County this year submitted 1,346 hours and 2,400 breeding records, the second highest regional total for the entire province. Paul has kindly provided the following update in an e-mail dated July 29, 2005

The top 10 birds reported for the Atlas in Region 1 are as follows. No species reached 100 percent as only one species, Herring Gull, was recorded on Big Chicken Island (square 17LG42). European Starling just missed the list.

Species	Percent
Red-winged Blackbird	97%
Common Grackle	97%
Northern Cardinal	97%
Tree Swallow	97%
Baltimore Oriole	97%
Eastern Kingbird	94%
Barn Swallow	91%
Mallard	91%
Northern Flicker	91%
American Robin	88%

The species with the largest increase in distribution compared to the last atlas include:

Species	Percent
Cooper's Hawk	from 0% to 77%
Wild Turkey	from 0% to 61%
Carolina Wren	from 14% to 86%
House Finch	from 22% to 83%
Cliff Swallow	from 8% to 63%
Black-capped Chickadee	from 14% to 69%
Canada Goose	from 34% to 86%
Orchard Oriole	from 28% to 72%
Turkey Vulture	from 31% to 72%

Tufted Titmouse, Eastern Bluebird, Mute Swan, Sandhill Crane and Hairy Woodpecker also show notable gains.

Unfortunately there are also many species that have been recorded in fewer squares compared to the last atlas. This group tentatively includes: wetland birds such as Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, American Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Virginia Rail, Moorhen, Coot, Black Tern and Marsh Wren; urban breeders such as Chimney Swift and Common Nighthawk; and second growth or open woodland species such as Brown Thrasher, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Eastern Towhee, and Field Sparrow.

Congratulations on your hard work!

Gesto Square Bashing, June 2005

Betty Learmouth

June 5, 2005

Sunday evening, June 5, 2005 was the initial square bashing event in the Gesto area. The purpose of the visit was to look around for more bird species to add to those already noted for this 10 x 10 kilometre area. This effort would be on behalf of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, now in its fifth and final year for gathering data. Three eager atlasers turned out despite a very busy weekend with many activities taking place, high temperatures and threats of an evening storm.

Atlasers checked out the restoration site with its cattail marsh and nearby lawns at the Colchester North School, noting Killdeer, Barn Swallow, Rock Pigeon, a pair of Cowbirds, and Red-winged Blackbirds which were seen carrying food or "CF" for the official record. The next stop was at a farm several doors away to the east.

The attraction at this farm was lovely undulating pasture land in which horses were resting in a little hollow near a meandering tributary of the River Canard. We stood at the edge of the roadway and waited, scanning the pasture for any active birds. This was a technique employed on the June 1, 2005 Nature Hotspot walk in Kingsville where atlasers just relaxed for a few minutes while watching the large meadow at Jack Miner's for bird activity.

As Shirley Grondin commented, "Just be patient." Our reward a few moments later was a sighting of a brilliant Eastern Meadowlark as it flew into an area to our left. At the same time, at the far back of the meadow, a male Bobolink was observed clinging to a woody stem. Our plan now would be to return in one week's time to bump up the sighting from "observed in suitable habitat" to "territory." Hopefully by month's end, we would be able to confirm that young were produced by these two species.

Our next destination was the Gesstwood Camp site for which we had obtained permission to walk about the property. As we approached the area we noted a concrete bridge which we decided to investigate for Cliff Swallows. This occurred in front of Cynthia Casagrande's home, prompting Cynthia to walk down her drive to investigate these possible damsels in distress. When Cynthia heard about our atlasing project, she kindly shared her property's sightings. In an instant we confirmed Eastern Bluebirds which had nested on



Golden pasture land in Gesto

Cynthia's property in 2003. Other species seen by Cynthia in suitable habitat have been Red-tailed Hawk (a pair nest building in 2005), American Woodcock (every year), Eastern Screech-owl, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Brown Thrasher, Tufted Titmouse (a pair), and Gray Catbird. Just two days previously on June 3, 2005 a Wild Turkey had walked through Cynthia's property, adding a new species to our Gesto list.

Our short conversation with Cynthia had been so productive that we considered a house to house canvas but then decided we should return to our original plan. Bird activity at Gesstwood was quiet with the best sighting a male Indigo Bunting. We were able to complete our evening survey and head home before an approaching storm.

June 9, 2005

Thursday evening, June 9, 2005, three atlasers visited a woodland on South Malden Road which was to have been surveyed as part of the Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count but was not visited. The landowner gave his consent to a summer atlas survey and indicated an interest in the birds observed. Driving into the parking area, we noted a Spotted Sandpiper which flushed from a pond edge. A Bobolink was seen in a nearby small grassland.

We found the woodland road which follows the perimeter of the woodland with another trail through the interior of the woodland which we did not explore on this first visit. The landowner reported that his swamp forest had lots of birds so we were optimistic. Atlaser JoAnn Grondin spotted a male Eastern Towhee, which was joined by a female. So a good beginning to our walk on a hot evening but the heat appeared to have depressed most bird activity. Butterflies observed included Summer Azure, Tiger Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, 2 Giant Swallowtails and Pearl Crescents.

Upon emerging from the woodland, we spotted a pair of Spotted Sandpipers at the pond. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird flew across the large pond into the woodland.

June 12, 2005

On June 12, 2005 at 6:00 p.m., four atlasers met at the Colchester North Public School where we discovered the hedge row to the east of the school had several bird species including a pair of Northern Orioles, a pair of Downy Woodpecker and a pair of Warbling Vireos. Then we moved down the road to the pasture land.

Upon arriving, Shirley Grondin noted swallow activity with adult Cliff Swallows flying in and out of a nearby culvert. An inspection of the culvert revealed a small colony of these colourful swallows. A check of the records for this species in the Gesto square indicated that this species was not reported in the first atlas project.

We lingered at the pasture land, enjoying the breeze and the birds around us. Savannah, Song and Field Sparrows were heard singing. The Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlarks were relocated. A neighbor on a bicycle stopped by, pointing out his nesting box which is home for an active colony of Purple Martins.

June 14, 2005

The next visit to the Gesto square occurred on June 14, 2005 from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. The spot chosen to explore was the access lane to an old African Canadian cemetery to the east of the hamlet of Gesto. Along the way, a pair of agitated Killdeer were observed as well as Kingbirds which hovered nearby. At the cemetery, Gray Catbirds and a pair of Song Sparrows fussed along the mowed pathway. A farm road was discovered which passed by the cemetery, allowing access to the River Canard.

At this point, the River Canard was flowing very slowly as the water levels were low after two weeks

of drought conditions accompanied by high temperature. The highlight of spending a few minutes watching from the stream crossing was a sighting of a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak which flew upstream carrying food.

The mowed pathway around the cemetery passed close to the bank of the River Canard, allowing a glimpse of the floodplain below. The atlasser descended on to the bone dry floodplain with its lush growth of sedges and other floodplain plant species. In a nearby willow, a single foraging Black-capped Chickadee was noted, adding another bird species to the current Gesto list.

June 16, 2005

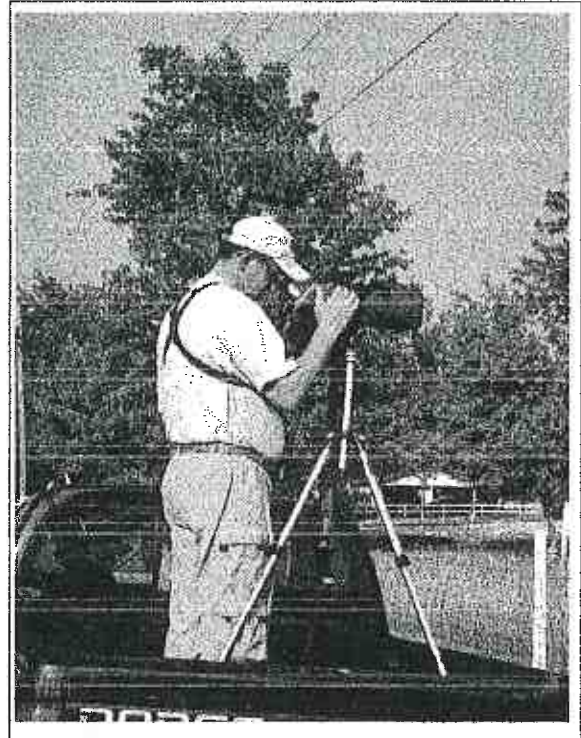
Three atlassters met June 16, 2005 at 7:00 a.m. at the large privately owned woodland on South Malden Road. We entered the woodland along the perimeter trail, "pishing" to catch the attention of the neighborhood birds. We could hear single call notes behind us so Shirley Grondin walked back a few paces, discovering an agitated male and female Rose-breasted Grosbeak together. The male Eastern Towhee seen on a previous visit flew in from an inner woods location.

At the back of the woodland we found a number of Black-capped Chickadees, and one was seen carrying food. On this morning we chose to walk the centre trail of the 57 acre woodland which proved a good choice. We heard the call of a White-breasted Nuthatch, and then we were treated to the loud call of the Ovenbird "teacher, teacher, teacher." Atlasster Caroline Biribauer, who had spent time monitoring interior forest habitat on the Niagara Escarpment, assured us we would not likely see the Ovenbird. A visit in a week's time would, we hoped, elevate the breeding status of these two bird species to territory. Earlier on this walk, we had elevated Wood Peewee to territory status based on its call which we had heard a week earlier.

June 19, 2005

Sunday night, June 19, 2005, three atlassters met at the Colchester North School, including regional coordinator Paul Pratt. Paul quickly located the Baltimore Oriole's nest in the elm tree in which the orioles had been noted on earlier visits. We then proceeded to the pasture field a few doors to the east where we enjoyed good views of Bobolinks and an Eastern Meadowlark which was perched high in the pasture's lone oak tree. Paul remarked that he had never been fortunate enough to find the nest of a meadowlark as the birds do not leave the nest directly but travel ten or fifteen feet from the nest before "jumping up." After hearing the song of a Savannah Sparrow, Paul reviewed the characteristics of this grassland species which resembles a "baby" Song Sparrow with its shorter tail, fine streaking, and pink feet brighter than those of a Song Sparrow.

Following our weekly visit to this productive Gesto grassland, we drove to Gesstwood Camp where we had permission to walk. Manager Bill Bealor had forgotten we were planning a visit so had come over to speak with us which was most fortunate as Bill was able to provide us with good information including an update on the Red-headed Woodpeckers which had been on the property during 2004. Bill kindly showed us a nesting Eastern Phoebe which was incubating eggs in its nest atop a wooden window frame on the main camp building.



Todd Pepper viewing Gesto pasture lands

Bill's wife had recently reported a Scarlet Tanager in the tree nursery.

During our walk around the property we heard Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Peewee, Red-eyed Vireo and Indigo Bunting. New bird species for the property were a singing Yellow-billed Cuckoo and a Rough-winged Swallow that flew out from under a concrete bridge on the South Malden Road. We looked under the bridge, noting drainage holes which this species will adopt as its nesting site.

As we were concluding our walk, we met Bill again near his residence where we enjoyed the feeder activity including Ruby-throated Hummingbirds which were estimated as six or eight in the neighborhood. Bill also told us about the "baby" Wild Turkeys that has gotten into the garbage recently so we were able to elevate this species to a confirmed status. As we were preparing to leave we noted Eastern Bluebirds on the nearby Hydro wires. Paul Pratt reported stopping on the way home at a large field where he heard a Vesper Sparrow which we could add to our list of birds observed in the Gesto square.

June 20, 2005

On June 20, 2005, an atlasser spent time at sunset at the Essex Civic Centre, hoping to observe Common Nighthawk and Chimney Swift in this corner of the Gesto square which includes a tiny portion of the Town of Essex. Luckily at dusk a single fast flying Common Nighthawk was seen skimming over Fairview Avenue. The swifts were not observed but Green Herons (new for the Gesto square) made an appearance at small trees across the Essex by-pass, with two flying together towards Tulley's Bush and a third flying towards the Essex sewage lagoons.

June 23, 2005

At 7:00 a.m. on June 23, 2005, two atlassers entered the privately owned woodlot on South Malden Road, walking along the centre trail to mid woodlot, pishing and hoping for the Ovenbird to respond. Luckily, despite a cool morning, the Ovenbird did call and its breeding status was elevated to Territory. The other target species was White-breasted Nuthatch but there was no response to our pishing. A thrush called several times, possibly a Wood Thrush.

June 26, 2005

Four atlassers turned out for the regular June Sunday night square bashing in Gesto. As usual the first stop was the Gesto pasture land which was golden and lush in the early evening light. Even nearby Killdeer with young glowed in the light. An unidentified bird in the grassland caught Paul Pratt's attention. During the last few days, Dickcissels have been sighted at the retired Maidstone landfill site. Paul stated that this bird certainly exhibited suspicious behaviour but went unidentified. A lucky sighting was that of a Cooper's Hawk that flew along the distant back fence line, landing in a red cedar, then flying off to disappear behind a barn with agitated swallows in hot pursuit.

Our next stop was Gesstwood Camp where we had several target species to upgrade. Walking through the woods near the buildings we heard Red-eyed Vireo which moved that species to Territory. Paul commented that this species will sing on its nest as will Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Atlasser Todd Pepper commented on the many hummingbirds seen in the southern portion of the Gesto square. Todd had located a nest simply by just looking up at the right moment. Paul mentioned that Gesstwood manager Bill thought there were six or eight hummingbirds in the neighborhood but when banders have banded at feeders they have discovered that there were three times the number of hummers as estimated. Later on the walk, a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen perched on a bare branch.

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was heard calling from the Gesstwood woodland which elevated that species

to Territory. Altogether four Yellow-billed Cuckoos were heard during our walk. Paul commented that Black-billed Cuckoos are more commonly seen in the province but here, in Essex, Yellow-billed appears to be the more frequently encountered cuckoo species.

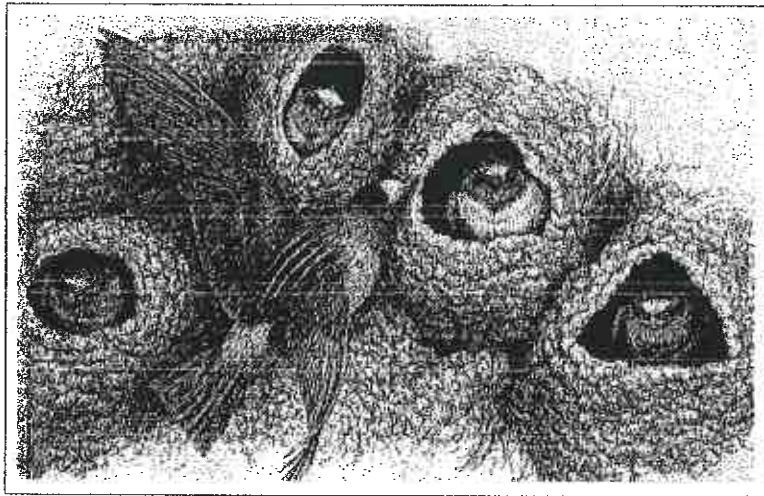
Other species heard calling were Indigo Bunting (alarm call), Eastern Towhee (new to us for Gesstwood), Great Crested Flycatcher, and Hairy Woodpecker which was a new species for the entire Gesto square, not recorded during the first atlassing project. The call of a Tufted Titmouse from the tree nursery attracted Paul who went off to investigate, using his Eastern Screech-owl call to entice adults and young begging for food, thus confirming the nesting of this species for the square. Later this Titmouse family was seen at the Bealor feeder.

We spoke about Eastern Screech-owl and that the status of this species in the Gesto square could be marked as Pair as a pair were heard during a winter owl survey on March 13, 2005. There still is the opportunity to confirm nesting Screech-owls as we need to remember that young in the nest have been waiting all day to be fed. The young will call at dusk (Paul provided us with an imitation of the calls) which would alert atlassers.

We drove north from Gesstwood, to check on the Vesper Sparrow that Paul had located in a large bean field the previous Sunday. Todd played his Vesper Sparrow tape, attracting an individual quite closely so that we both heard and saw this species well, elevating its status to Territory. A quick check of the Gesto grassland did not shed any more light on the mystery bird seen earlier.

Gesto resident Phil Roberts provided atlass coordinators with his sightings for the square which included a Sora at his pond, a Cerulean Warbler in a large swamp woodland and nesting American Kestrels.

Atlasser Todd Pepper has worked in the southern portion of the Gesto square, adding a number of species including Yellow-breasted Chat and Acadian Flycatcher. Todd reported that he had observed Chimney Swifts over the Essex Civic Centre on July 6, 2005, adding yet another species for the Gesto square.



Cliff Swallow young in nests & adult

Lake St. Clair Atlassing Hotspots

Betty Learmouth

Nine Ontario Breeding Bird Atlassers joined Atlas coordinator Paul Pratt at 6:00 p.m. on June 22, 2005 at the Ruscom Shores Conservation Area on Lake St. Clair with plans to continue on to Tremblay Beach Conservation Area. These two C.A.'s provide habitat for a number of breeding bird species. In this last year of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, both squares in which these Conservation Areas are found needed extra work to confirm breeding for a number of species. For the Ruscom square only a few species had been confirmed as breeding species. Even though the attending atlassers had work to be done in their own squares, joining Paul always provides pointers to assist individual atlassers.

Two hours before this outing, Paul had sent out an e-mail indicating that Keith Burke, an atlasser in Chatham/Kent, had discovered Dickcissels in several fields in that municipality. This species has also been noted in Michigan and Ohio this summer so Dickcissels could be here in Essex County as well. Atlassers will need to return to fields in their squares for a closer second look. (Paul found Dickcissels nesting at the Maidstone Landfill two days later).

With so many eyes looking in many directions, some 34 species were tallied during the walk including tiny Killdeer chicks seen on the Fourth Concession by atlasser Todd Pepper. There are varying levels of breeding evidence for the atlas project, several of which were noted during the Ruscom walk. A Double-crested Cormorant seen overhead by JoAnn Grondin was recorded simply as seen in breeding season (no evidence of breeding). American Goldfinches heard singing were noted as Possible and a note of S for Singing was placed on the record card. Several American Robin nests were discovered (in a poplar tree and above the railing of the observation tower), thus confirming the nesting of this species in the Ruscom square.

Within moments the sighting of a Willow Flycatcher escalated from Possible to a Confirmed status. The bird was spotted, then a second was observed, elevating the status to Probable. Luckily Paul waded out through the Purple Loosestrife to check a rose bush, discovering a nest with three eggs, confirming the nesting of this species. The code NE would be entered for this record of the Willow Flycatcher in the Ruscom square.

Some interesting sightings occurred as the group walked about the Conservation Area. Stopping at the large ditch on the left of the trail, Paul pointed out a Map and Painted Turtle swimming in the water. Picking up a broken egg shell by the trail, Paul commented that it appeared to be the shell of a Red-winged Blackbird with its characteristic squiggles. Broken shells are carried away from the nest site by the adults. A male Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen perched on a hydro line along the residential roadway. Noted beside the trail as we made our way back to the parking lot was a Brown Thrasher. Altogether three Woodchucks were seen, one in the residential area and two at the C.A. entrance.

We gathered around a picnic table in the parking area with Paul, did a tally of species seen, their codes and recorded our party time of two hours. Paul commented Todd Pepper should perhaps receive extra party hours for his off trail efforts.

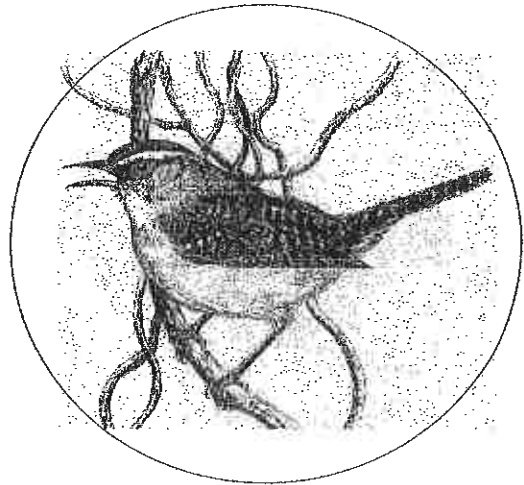
Then it was on to Tremblay Beach Conservation Area to check the sewage lagoons. Again, the Stoney Point square was in need of extra coverage for the atlassing project but has been adopted during this fifth year. In the first sewage lagoon, Swans swam with a downy young. The second lagoon was a complete surprise with some intriguing waterfowl and shorebird sightings.

Paul counted 16 Green-winged Teal which appeared to be loafing at the site. As well, a Lesser Scaup was seen along with an American Widgeon and a pair of Blue-winged Teal. Many Mallards were present including three females with downy young. Shorebirds included Black-bellied Plover (an individual in immaculate breeding plumage), three Lesser Yellowlegs, several Least Sandpipers and two Pectoral Sandpipers. Paul surmised that the shorebirds had nest failure or could not find a mate, and were now making their trek southward. For the atlas project, Mallards were observed with young in the partially dry lagoon. Other species around the lagoons included a pair of Eastern Kingbirds, singing Marsh Wrens in the cattails, and Canada Geese with young.

This outing was very productive with good pointers for the atlasers. For instance, the use of telescopes is a good way to confirm nesting status without intruding on a particular species. Sedge Wrens should be looked for in late summer.

At the very end of the evening Paul attempted to use his tape recorder to entice rails but strong winds off Lake St. Clair cancelled that activity.

Thank you to Paul for this opportunity to see a variety of habitats and to obtain some good practical atlasing advice as the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project wraps up its data collection.



Dickcissel Country

Betty Learmouth

A e-mail sent out by Atlasser Coordinator Paul Pratt to Essex County birders, atlasers and friends drew ten anxious birders to the retired Maidstone landfill on June 27, 2005. An eruption of Dickcissels had recently been noted as Dickcissels had been found in the nearby Municipality of Chatham/Kent as well as Michigan and Ohio. Now they had been found in Essex County, in this county's largest grassland, the retired 420 acre Maidstone landfill.

Paul Pratt, aware of the habits of Dickcissels and suspecting that Dickcissels were at the landfill, had searched for and found that species there on June 24, 2005. Todd Pepper, general manager of the Essex Solid Waste Authority, gave the group his permission to enter the landfill and kindly accompanied the group in their search for this grassland specialty.

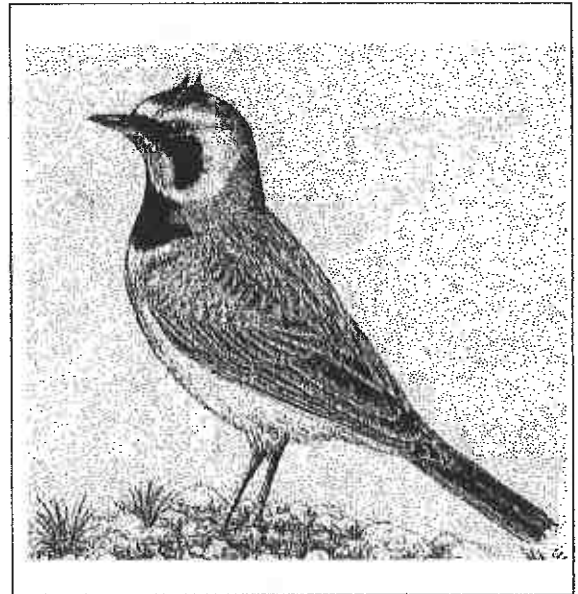
The group entered the landfill, walked along the roadway at the northern base of the landfill near the serpentine ponds, watching for activity while noting the fly-bys and perched birds including Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Meadowlark, and Horned Lark. Then Paul caught the sounds of a Dickcissel's song, spotting the bird atop a small shrub. The scope was put in place for good looks at this attractive bird. Paul commented that in states like Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska, this species is abundant, the fields full of this delightful bird. The number of Dickcissels at the landfill are unknown but it appears that there are at least two males and a female and likely more. Certainly the Dickcissel the group viewed was on territory, singing from its elevated perch.

Upon walking up the roadway leading to the higher portion of the landfill, Todd told us that we were now at the highest point in the county, higher even than Malden Park but eventually the active Essex landfill will be higher. From this vantage point, we noted a female Kestrel, Eastern Kingbirds in conflict with each other, Savannah Sparrows calling all around, and a Horned Lark carrying a grasshopper, then flying off to the north, only to disappear out of sight.

We stood quietly listening for the song of the Grasshopper Sparrow, another grassland species that had been found at the landfill. Paul could hear bits and pieces of its song and had begun walking towards the sounds. Luckily, Todd located the sparrow with his telescope on a bit of dried thistle, calling Paul back from his search. A second sparrow popped up, thus elevating the status of this unusual species to Pair.

Thus, within an hour, the group enjoyed the opportunity to see and hear a range of grassland species, including rare sightings for Essex County. The landfill grassland is spectacular with its winding trail and undulating terrain. As well, the site contains a six hectare remnant woodlot and a sixteen acre restoration site which was the first NHRP planting in Essex County. Todd told us the grasslands are to be maintained, providing habitat for a variety of species that depend upon this habitat which is uncommon in Essex. As we left the landfill, we enjoyed one last look at the beautifully marked male Dickcissel on its perch as well as a nearby Willow Flycatcher.

Thank you to Paul and Todd for the arrangements that enabled our group to enjoy the retired Maidstone landfill and the array of species that call the site home.



Big Creek Marsh Atlassing Hotspot

Betty Learmouth

Nine Ontario Breeding Bird Atlassers and friends joined Atlas Coordinator Paul Pratt at Holiday Beach Conservation Area on the evening of June 30, 2005 for a look at the breeding birds of Big Creek Marsh. Target species were Sora, Virginia Rail and King Rail, species with poor coverage in Essex County for the current atlassing project.

Upon arrival at the hawk tower Paul announced that he had just added a new species to Square 35, the Holiday Beach square. Paul had parked beside the memorial forest on County Road 50 with its young trees surrounded by grasses, and had heard Field Sparrow.

Beside the Holiday Beach C.A.'s Trout Pond, atlassers found a newly fledged Tree Swallow begging for food in a willow as adults flew about in an agitated manner. A number of large Bullfrogs were visible in the Trout Pond along with a swimming turtle.

The atlassers climbed to the top of the hawk tower, enjoying a cool evening breeze and a panoramic view of Big Creek Marsh which currently has been in the news. A lack of water in the marsh resulted in an outcry to

the Town of Amherstburg council and the Ministry of Environment. We did find the marsh dry but covered in marsh vegetation, including great expanses of American Lotus and other emergent vegetation, with a few scattered water pools. Conditions here were not good for rails which prefer water and emergent vegetation.

Thousands of Ring-billed Gulls had discovered that the soggy marsh bottom was entirely to their liking, and had established a roost on the flats. Periodically, as we watched, the gulls would rise and swirl over the flats along with Forster's Terns, two adult Black Terns with young, and three Common Terns that whirled past the tower towards Lake Erie. At one pool, we observed the celebrity adult male American White Pelican in breeding plumage, a bird seen at Big Creek for over a month. Great Blue Herons flanked the pelican while adult Bald Eagles foraged nearby and Green-winged Teal loafed in shallow pools.

Leaving the tower, and walking past the Trout Pond, atlassers were shown a Northern Watersnake swimming near the shoreline by a young fisherman. Shirley Grondin spotted a nest at eye level in a dogwood. Tiny downy babies, perhaps five days old, were in the nest, likely Red-winged Blackbird young as an adult Red-winged called in alarm overhead.

Some atlassers walked the upper nature trail where they spotted Chimney Swift, Northern Flicker, Willow Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, American Robin carrying food, Gray Catbirds, Yellow Warbler on its nest, and Indigo Bunting. An Eastern Phoebe's nest was found at the park office.

Other atlassers made their way to Carp Crossing to assess that marsh habitat for rails. A surprise for all was a mink seen crossing the causeway which reminded Paul that during atlassing at Little River, a family he met there were quite excited to see five young with an adult mink. Looking east at Carp Crossing, there were cattails on the right which looked to be good rail habitat, that is, the cattails were flooded. Unfortunately, Paul said, the cattail habitat was too far away. Playing the tape would not persuade the rails to call in response as the rails would realize the calls were from a territory that was not adjacent to their own territory. Paul's suggestion that an atlasser should set up a telescope on Carp Crossing, focus on the cattails and simply wait and watch. Another suggestion was to return at midnight on a warm muggy quiet night to play the tape. This technique may cause one Virginia Rail after another to join in a chorus of rails.

A brief stop at the ERCA farm demonstration site yielded a Savannah sparrow atop a sign in one of the plots, the fifth Green Heron we had seen and a second Red-winged Blackbird nest with young.

Our next destination was the end of the Lake Erie County Club (LECC) drive from which we could readily access ERCA's East Beach property. Here we again glimpsed a second Mink at marsh edge as it scampered along a fallen tree. Paul stated the marsh to the west of the East Beach laneway appeared to be good Virginia Rail habitat. We could see emergent bulrush vegetation with water surrounding the entire area, but our tape did not entice any response. As we left the area, the setting sun was a brilliant red ball reflected on the marsh surface.

The evening's final stop was on the LECC causeway where Paul again played the tape without success. We were entertained throughout by young diving Pied-billed Grebe (a species already confirmed for square 35) and five foraging Great Egrets. Paul told us all very young rails are little black fuzz balls. Again Paul discussed the optimum conditions for successfully calling rails which preferably includes an overcast night that is muggy and full of mosquitoes. Darkness was descending as we completed our rail search. Overhead Black-crowned Night-herons were flying about, their evening activities just beginning. Fireflies twinkled in the hedgerows as we drove homeward.

Looking In All the Right Places

Betty Learmouth

Ontario Breeding Bird Atlassers and friends met on July 6, 2005 at the Tremblay Beach Conservation Area to increase the coverage for square 78. Early July is an excellent time period for confirming species as fledged young are about while adults are carrying food for young still in the nest. A quick look on the lakeshore and watching activity in the parking lot produced desired nesting evidence. Sightings included confirmation for Spotted Sandpiper seen with young while Bald Eagle was observed off shore. A buffy, stub-tailed juvenile Forster's Tern was seen standing along the lake shoreline. At the parking lot a House Wren and male Northern Cardinal were seen carrying food.

During the walk to the Stoney Point sewage lagoons, two species were confirmed as nesting. Paul Pratt spotted a newly fledged Rough-winged Swallow beside an adult on an overhead hydro line. Rough-winged Swallow is a solitary nester, locating a drainage pipe under a bridge for its nesting site. As the group approached the sewage lagoon, a newly fledged Cooper's Hawk flew into a small shrub, moved about, then flew laboriously to a nearby oak on the agricultural land.

At the first lagoon, we noted Mute Swans with a single young as seen on our previous visit. Eastern Kingbirds and Marsh Wrens observed on that visit were not about as we watched and listened. Over the lagoon we spotted Bank Swallows and Forster's Terns, a species that breeds in Lake St. Clair cattail islands near Mitchell's Bay.

At the second lagoon, we were again treated to a wonderful array of wetland bird species. To our surprise, an American Avocet in breeding plumage was feeding in the shallow waters. Paul commented that male and female American Avocets have different bill shapes. This individual with its slightly upturned bill appeared to be a male as contrasted with those of females which have abruptly upturned bills.

Other sightings included Mallards with two groups of young, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, one Spotted Sandpiper, and 100 Killdeer. Early southward bound migrants included 50 or 60 Least Sandpipers, 9 Lesser Yellowlegs, one Greater Yellowlegs, 33 Short-billed Dowitcher, 3 Black-bellied Plovers, and one Semipalmated Plover.

Upon returning to the first lagoon, the Marsh Wren was found singing. Paul Pratt and Todd Pepper watched the wren fly into the cattails, determining where the nest was located. They agreed on a location with Todd making his way down the lagoon embankment and into the towering cattails. Then Paul called out clearly for all to hear, "Todd's got the nest." Paul stood off to one side, instructing the atlassers to look over Todd's hat which was actually all we could see of Todd due to cattail density and the fact that Todd was standing well below us at the lagoon's edge.

Paul told the atlassers to then look at the cattails' sausage like brown heads just beyond and above Todd's hat. Then we could see the nest, a woven globular structure supported by at least four cattail stalks. Todd emerged from the cattails with muddy feet and another confirmed breeding species for square 78.



In the distance, beyond the lagoons, an American Crow was observed pursued by blackbirds. At the Conservation's Area's parking lot, we stopped for a moment to watch a Snapping Turtle, freshly emerged from the marsh, the mud on its shell not yet dry.

Lighthouse Cove is also in Square 78, so we took this opportunity to visit a relatively unknown Lake St. Clair 10 acre shoreline wetland owned by the Paternoster Club. As we parked by the main house, a young skunk walked around the corner. A few minutes later a Groundhog scampered across the lawn.

A discussion about bird species recently seen with resident Father Bob Wurm revealed that an American Woodcock had been resting on the property's roadway the night before, making this sighting a new species for the square. During a circular walk through the wetland, Green Heron, Chimney Swift, Northern Cardinal and Indigo Bunting were noted. Paul played a tape of Sora and Virginia Rail calls, but received no response, commenting that these species are still found at nearby St. Clair National Wildlife Area.

As we completed our walk, a Blue Jay's warning call caught our attention. Paul walked toward the Blue Jay, discovering a large Eastern Fox Snake which made its way under a coniferous tree and out of sight. Paul commented the centre of this snake's range is right here in Essex County, making our area the best place in the entire world to see this threatened species.

Thank you to Father Wurm for leading us through the Paternoster Club's wetland, with its colourful sunset view over Lake St. Clair.

Camp Cedarwin, July 14, 2005

Paul Pratt

The field trip started at the ERCA parking lot by Cedar Creek at 6:00 p.m. The group consisted of myself, Bob Sanford, Todd Pepper and Dean Ware. The first confirmed species was an Eastern Phoebe seen flying to the bridge carrying food in its mouth (I think we just ignored the numerous Cliff Swallows here which had been confirmed on an earlier trip). A very agitated female Rose-breasted Grosbeak was calling from the edge of the parking area.

Along the lane into Camp Cedarwin we passed White Mulberries laden with fruit that were attracting Baltimore Orioles, Catbirds, Robins, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and a Downy Woodpecker. A male Indigo Bunting sang and gave agitated calls but did not lead us to a nest.

In front of the camp buildings there is an extensive stand of cattails along the Cedar Creek. Many Common Yellowthroats, and later, a Marsh Wren, were heard singing here. Dean spotted a young Wood Duck and a family of Mallards.

During a walk through the woods, we heard Tufted Titmouse, Eastern Peewee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Wood Thrust and an Eastern Screech-owl that answered my whistled imitation. A Hairy Woodpecker called and then conveniently perched on a dead limb for all to see.

The luck with woodpeckers continued with the sighting of a juvenile Red-bellied Woodpecker. We watched as an adult flew in carrying food which was fed to the youngster.

A male Yellow-throated Vireo flew into a large oak and was joined by a female. We watched the pair for a while as they moved from tree to tree around the camp clearing. Later a young bird was heard calling up in a large hickory while the parents foraged in an adjacent tree.

Dean has done quite a bit of atlassing in this square over the past six weeks and the rest of us birded the area this past weekend so this square can be considered to be adequately covered. Twenty-five point counts have also been done in this square. We managed to add one new species (Marsh Wren) and upgraded about six others on the walk.

Prairie Day, August 2, 2005

Betty Learmouth

Weeks of drought and high temperatures combined to provide excellent conditions to observe insects in the Ojibway Provincial Prairie Nature Reserve during the evening of August 2, 2005. Ojibway Nature Centre's naturalist Paul Pratt was our leader and was joined by five prairie enthusiasts.

Our evening began with the sighting of a handsome Red-spotted Purple resting over the Ojibway Nature Centre's outdoor water fountain. Paul commented that this butterfly, when seen further north, is known as the White Admiral due to its striking white markings. Walking along Titcombe Road's gravel surface, several predatory Tiger Beetles alluded capture by speedily leaping away from approaching naturalists. Just beside the walk over to the Provincial Nature Reserve, Paul noted a red spiny insect on a Giant Ragweed leaf, commenting that this small insect was a nymph of a true bug. True bugs belong to the Order Hemiptera which number about 4,500 species in North America and over 40,000 worldwide.

Paul chose the Ojibway Prairie trail that runs off to the right where we found ourselves surrounded by a myriad of prairie plant species. These included Culver's Root with its flower stalks resembling white candelabras, the rare Great Plains Goldenrod with its ultra narrow leaves, Virginia Mountain Mint, Canada Bluejoint Grass, and Royal Fern. Paul commented that Cord Grass will produce a nasty cut if an unwary persons runs a finger down the blade. Insects are aware of this trait which helps to protect the grass blades from insect damage. Dense Blazing Star was in bloom with Early Goldenrod and Tall Ironweed commencing to bloom. Paul identified the rare Purple Milkweed with its smooth, non-warty seed pod which distinguishes this species's seed pod from that of Common Milkweed which is "warty."

Insects noted along this portion of the trail included Monarch, Common Green Darner dragonfly, a young grasshopper with wings that resembled little buds, and Robber Flies which use their legs like baskets to capture prey.

Along the next section of the trail, the group noted such plant species as a small Swamp White Oak, Prairie Switch Grass, Big Bluestem, American Hazelnut with filberts, Tall Coreopsis, Sensitive Fern, Marsh Fern, Cowbane and Grey Dogwood.

Insects observed included Common Wood Nymph and Tiger Swallowtail, and a Twelve-spotted Dragonfly. Paul told us that he had recently been on the prairie with insect researcher Steve Marshall of the University of Guelph during which a Cicada Killer was seen carrying a cicada. Cicada Killers are very large wasps, 30-40 mm in length, which, when seen flying with prey, are quite a sight, causing great excitement amongst insect watchers.

We can all look forward to a new guidebook, likely in the next year, of the true bugs of Ontario which Steve has been working on for a number of years. The publisher has stated to Steve that no more additions or photographs will be accepted as the guidebook needs to go to press. Ontario flower flies will be the subject of another soon to be released guide, this one authored by Jeff Skevington.

Plants seen beside the trail's next section included Joe-Pye-Weed, Queen Anne's Lace with its mystery "centre," Dense Blazing Star, a willow with galls, Canada Goldenrod, Boneset which looks as though its stem has "punched" through its leaves, Heal-all and Common Milkweed. Paul told us that a Henslow's Sparrow had been reported earlier from this section of the Ojibway Prairie. Two Eastern Bluebirds and a Red-tailed Hawk harassed by Purple Martins were observed by the group, with no sign of the Henslow's Sparrow.

We did see a large black wasp nectaring on nearby blossoms which Paul remarked was providing the wasp with energy. This wasp is a predator of katydids, paralyzing its prey and carrying the katydids back to the wasps' burrows where the katydids become the food host for young wasps. A Black Swallowtail was noted nectaring on Dense Blazing Star while a Tiger Swallowtail was a fly-by.

At this point in our walk, we had reached a section of the prairie with a profusion of blooming Culver's Root, which was most attractive in the evening light. Plants of interest by the trail included Prairie Loosestrife, Dodder, Showy Tick-trefoil, Wild Bergamot, Prairie Dock, Thimbleweed, Bastard Toadflax, and Indian Hemp. Butterflies about the blossoms included Viceroy and Summer Azure. A geometer moth was noted as well a Common Green Darner.

Then Paul urged us all to listen for the call of a Sedge Wren in the prairie to our right. Sedge Wrens turn up late in the nesting season, moving into open tall grassy areas or an open sedge meadow. Their preference is for "green spots." Last year, Paul found a colony of Sedge Wrens late in the season in a hayfield near the radio towers in the River Canard watershed. Another clue to the presence of Sedge Wrens is their habit of singing at night.

As we made our way back along the trail, we saw Eastern Kingbird and an Indigo Bunting. Bright green Dogbane Beetles were found on Indian Hemp. These colourful beetles pretended to be dead, lying on the palm of Paul Pratt's palm, not moving even a leg. A few calls from nearby insects reminded Paul to tell us about the evening song after dusk in the Ojibway Prairie when a chorus of katydids including the Northern True Katydid, field crickets (*Gryllus* sp.), ground crickets (*Allonemobius* sp.) and tree-crickets including the Snowy Tree Cricket, may be heard.

Departing the Ojibway Prairie, we noted the sun had set but two dragonfly species were still flying, the Common Green Darner and Shadow Darner. Paul remarked that there are two populations of Green Darners. Each year, in April, a population migrates into our area from the south, lays its eggs with the insects maturing in August, then these insects migrate south. Large congregations of these migrants may be seen gathering in late summer at Point Pelee, Rondeau and Holiday Beach. Our local population of Green Darners emerges from ponds in late May, mates, with the young maturing in a year's time to begin their life cycle again.

Thank you to Paul for providing us with an opportunity to learn more about the Ojibway Prairie and the insects that inhabit our prairie.



Prairie insect watchers Paul Pratt (rear), Mary Monsch and Paul DesJardins

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club's Events, Meetings and Other Activities September 2005 through December 2005

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, contact Bert Harris (966-3263), JoAn Grondin (734-0056), Margaret Jennings (250-0705), or Betty Learmouth (944-0825). Thank you to those who have volunteered to lead an excursion. Let us know about your ideas for upcoming excursions. Consider volunteering as an excursion leader.

September 1 – September 30 – Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Daily hawk watching from the hawk tower. All are welcome.

September 7 – October 2 – Point Pelee National Park – Monarchs and More hikes, Wednesday to Sunday

September 3 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Bird Migration – A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life that migrates through Essex County. Register for the entire course and get a discount. Meet at the Point Pelee Visitor Centre. Time: 8:30 a.m. to noon. Fee: \$13/week.

September 10 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Native Plant and Tree Sale – Attract wildlife to your yard with flowers, trees and shrubs. Join us at 9:00 a.m. for a one hour workshop “Gardening for the Birds.” Cost is \$5. Call Ojibway to register. The plant sale is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

September 10/11 – Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach Conservation Area - Sharp-shinned Hawk Weekend, Monarchs and Hummingbirds – Enjoy a weekend of activities including guided hawk watching from the hawk tower, banding demonstrations and talks about raptors, passerines and Monarchs as well as live raptor displays. There will be hands-on children's activities and slide presentations.

On Saturday, September 10, 2005, Rachel Powless will give a talk on Monarch tagging at 1:00 p.m. followed by Monarch Crafts at 1:30 p.m.

At 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 10, 2005, Bob Pettit will present a raptor identification workshop in the Education Building.

Rachel Powless will present a Monarch natural heritage talk at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 11, 2005, followed by Monarch tagging at 2:00 p.m. and Monarch Crafts at 2:30 p.m.

Pelee Wings Nature Store's display will feature sales of binoculars, guide books, clothing, and nature photography. Light refreshments will be served at the Blue Kestrel Café. ECFNC members are invited to volunteer to assist with the hands-on children's display, and at the Blue Kestrel Café.

September 14 – ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting – Rachel Powless of the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory will provide us with the latest update on Monarchs and their migration. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room C of the Essex Civic Centre.

September 17/18 – Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach Conservation Area - Broad-winged Hawk Weekend, Dragonflies and Butterflies – Enjoy a weekend of activities including guided hawk watching from the hawk tower, banding demonstrations and talks about raptors, passerines and Monarchs as well as live raptor displays. There will be hands-on children's activities and slide presentations.

On Saturday, September 17, 2005, Rachel Powless will give a talk on Monarch tagging at 1:00 p.m. followed by Monarch Crafts at 1:30 p.m.

At 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 17, 2005, Bob Pettit will present a raptor identification workshop in the Education Building.

At 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 18, 2005, Paul Pratt of Ojibway Nature Centre will lead a fall Dragonfly Migration Walk.

Rachel Powless will present a Monarch natural heritage talk at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 18, 2005, followed by Monarch tagging at 2:00 p.m. and Monarch Crafts at 2:30 p.m.

Pelee Wings Nature Store's display will feature sales of binoculars, guide books, clothing, and nature photography. Light refreshments will be served at the Blue Kestrel Café. ECFNC members are invited to volunteer to assist with the hands-on children's display, and at the Blue Kestrel Café.

September 17 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Bird Migration – A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life that migrates through Essex County. Meet at the Point Pelee Visitor Centre. Time: 8:30 a.m. to noon. Fee: \$13/week.

September 17 – The Eighth Annual State of the Detroit River Boat Tour will be held on this date. Board at 11:30 a.m. for a four hour tour. Call Derek Coronado at 519-973-1116 for details and reservations.

September 21 – 22 – 4th Tallgrass Prairie and Savannah Forum, Brantford, Ontario – Theme: Old Prairies and New Prairies – Check website for more details – www.tallgrassontario.org

September 24 – Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach Conservation Area - Peregrine Falcon Day, Fall Warblers & Songbirds – Enjoy a day of activities including guided hawk watching from the hawk tower, banding demonstrations and talks about raptors, passerines and Monarchs as well as live raptor displays. There will be hands-on children's activities and slide presentations.

On Saturday, September 24, 2005, Rachel Powless will give a talk on Monarch tagging at 1:00 p.m. followed by Monarch Crafts at 1:30 p.m.

At 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 24, 2005, Bob Pettit will present a raptor identification workshop in the Education Building.

Pelee Wings Nature Store's display will feature sales of binoculars, guide books, clothing, and nature photography. Light refreshments will be served at the Blue Kestrel Café. ECFNC members are invited to volunteer to assist with the hands-on children's display, and at the Blue Kestrel Café.

Sunday, September 25 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Reach Out to Wildlife – Discover fascinating facts about our local wildlife. Topic: Endangered Spaces. Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Fee: \$4/person

September 25 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Colour Hikes – All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. for an hour long hike. Fee: \$4/person

September 28 – ECFNC Executive Meeting

October 1 – October 31 – Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Daily hawk watching from the hawk tower. All are welcome.

October 2 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Colour Hikes – All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. for an hour long hike. Fee: \$4/person

October 2 – ECFNC Fall Excursion – Join ECFNC member Todd Pepper for a tour of the retired Maidstone Landfill which boasts a spectacular grassland and the highest point at present in Essex County. The site is a magnet for many bird species. To find the retired landfill, proceed from Windsor west along County Road 42 past the airport. Watch for the sign for the Puce River. The next intersection within a few metres will have a sign for the Lakeshore dog pound, the landfill and the 401. Turn right and watch for the entrance to the retired landfill on the left. Meet at 2:00 p.m.

October 4 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Friends of Ojibway Fall Cleanup – Join the Friends of Ojibway Prairie as we help beautify our local natural areas between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Refreshments are provided.

Saturday, October 8 – Canada South Land Trust event – Support the work of our local Land Trust by attending a banding workshop and luncheon at the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory's passerine banding facility located in the Holiday Beach Conservation Area. A fee of \$30.0 allows you "behind the scenes" with bander Carl Pascoe and his assistants, as well as enjoying morning coffee, muffins and a delicious lunch at noon. The blind is open at sunrise but you can arrive when it suits you at 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 am. Call Betty Learmouth for more details and to make your reservation. All participants will receive a charitable income tax receipt of \$20.00 for their support to the Land Trust.

Sunday, October 9 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Reach Out to Wildlife – Discover fascinating facts about our local wildlife. Topic: Endangered Species. Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Fee: \$4/person

October 9 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Colour Hikes – All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. for an hour long hike. Fee: \$4/person

Monday, October 10 – Ojibway Nature Centre's Fall Festival – Enjoy indoor and outdoor activities on Thanksgiving Day from noon until 4:00 p.m. including children's activities and a special prairie hike to enjoy fall colours.

October 12 – ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting – Dawn Laing of the Bird Studies Canada will provide us the latest update on the Destination Eagle project. Meet in the Cafeteria in the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m..

October 16 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Colour Hikes – All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. for an hour long hike. Fee: \$4/person

October 16 - ECFNC Activity - Join ECFNC member Gerry Waldron at the active landfill restoration site in The Town of Essex for maintenance of trees including pruning (please bring your own shears) and placement of trunk guards on young trees. Meet at 1:00 p.m. for full instructions from Gerry. Directions: Proceed south from the Essex by pass on County Road 23 (Arner Townline) watching for County Road 18 on your right with the sign for the landfill. Turn right at this intersection and meet at the entrance to the landfill. We will then drive to the restoration site.

October 22 – Great Lake Women of Gaia – An evening of music at Mackenzie Hall to celebrate the Ojibway Prairie. See further details on page 24 of this newsletter.

October 23 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Colour Hikes – All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. for an hour long hike. Fee: \$4/person

October 26 – ECFNC Executive Meeting

October 29 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Bird Migration – A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life that migrates through Essex County. Meet at the Point Pelee Visitor Centre. Time: 8:30 a.m. to noon. Fee: \$13/week.

October 29 – Ontario Nature's fall meeting for Carolinian West (13 member nature organizations in Elgin, Essex, Lambton, and Middlesex) will take place in Sarnia

October 30 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Colour Hikes – All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. for an hour long hike. Fee: \$4/person

November 1 - 30 – Holiday Beach Conservation Area – Daily hawk watching from the hawk tower. All are welcome

November 5 – ECFNC Annual Dinner – This year's dinner will be held in the Udine Hall at the Fogolar Furlan Club. Mark your calendar for this exciting event. Our speaker is Dr. Daniel Mennill, Assistant Professor, University of Windsor. Daniel's talk is titled "Duels and Duets: An Adventure in Search of Temperate and Tropical Birds." Doors will open at 6:00 p.m. with the silent auction underway. Dinner will be served at 7:00 p.m.

Donations of door prizes and to the silent auction would be appreciated. Please call Betty Learmouth before the dinner to make arrangements for pick up or delivery. Volunteers to help with the set up of the dinner and to assist during the dinner are welcome.

Dinner tickets will be available at Club meetings, Ojibway Nature Centre and Pelee Wings Nature Store.

Sunday, November 6 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Bird Migration – A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life that migrates through Essex County. Meet at the Hawk Tower, Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Time: 8:30 a.m. to noon. Fee: \$13/week.

November 6 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Reach Out to Wildlife – Discover fascinating facts about our local wildlife. Topic: Backyard Visitors. Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Fee: \$4/person

November 6 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Colour Hikes – All ages will enjoy our spectacular fall colours on these guided hikes at Ojibway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. for an hour long hike. Fee: \$4/person

November 19 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Bird Migration – A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life that migrates through Essex County. Meet at the Tip parking lot, Point Pelee. Time: 8:30 a.m. to noon. Fee: \$13/week.

November 20 – ECFNC Fall Activity – Join Greenway cleanup coordinator JoAnne Grondin to assist with our last cleanup on the Greenway. We have cleaned our two sections of the Greenway three times yearly for the last three years. Meet at 2:00 p.m. in the Greenway parking lot which is off Walker Road in Harrow. Dress warmly and wear clothing suitable for the cleanup.

November 30 – ECFNC Executive Meeting

Thursday, December 1 – Canada South Land Trust event – Contribute towards the preservation of our natural heritage by supporting a fund raising event in the Essex Civic Centre. A supper will be held at 6:00 p.m. in the Centre's cafeteria, followed by a slide talk on the threatened Spiny Soft Shell Turtle presented by Scott Gillingwater, Chair of the Ontario Spiny Soft Shell Turtle Recovery Team. Call Betty Learmouth for reservations for this event. Tickets are \$30 which includes a \$20 charitable income tax receipt for your donation.

December 3 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Fall Bird Migration – A series of field trips to observe the incredible variety of bird life that migrates through Essex County. Meet at the Tip parking lot, Point Pelee. Time: 8:30 a.m. to noon. Fee: \$13/week.

December 14 – ECFNC Members Night – Share favourite slides or a plate of goodies or an album of pictures of a special event. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room C of the Essex Civic Centre.

December 17 – Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count – Call Ojibway Nature Centre for details and to be assigned to a group in one of the count areas. The count is conducted in a radius of 15 miles from Cedar Creek. Everyone is welcome.

December 18 – Rondeau Park Christmas Bird Count

December 19 – Point Pelee National Park Christmas Bird Count

December 27 – Lakeshore CBC (to be confirmed)

December 28 – Rockwood CBC (to be confirmed)

January 1, 2006 – Detroit River Christmas Bird Count. Call Ojibway Nature Centre for more details.

Celebrate Earth, Celebrate Ojibway

"The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust" (The Earth Charter, 2000).

A choral concert and multimedia performance by the Great Lakes Women of Gaia will be held on Saturday, October 22, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Mackenzie Hall, 3277 Sandwich Street, Windsor, Ontario in celebration of the gift of Ojibway Prairie Complex to our community and to the many rare plants and endangered species that inhabit the area. This event is free and open to the public.

Women from Canada and the United States gather as part of the Great Lakes Women of Gaia singing songs that reflect their reverence for and commitment to the Earth. Proceeds from the sale of their CD "O Beautiful Gaia, Love Songs to Earth" are dedicated to educate, advocate, and act toward the preservation and restoration of our land and waters.

In gratitude to the Sisters of St. Joseph of London whose generous donation has made this event possible.

For more information, please call: Joan Tinkess at (519) 253-0139.

Bugs, Bats and Beyond!

Erin Casasola

On a dark and stormy Friday night twenty-two brave souls headed deep into Ojibway to see some frightful creatures. Actually that sentence is stretching the truth. On August 19th at 7 pm some eager hikers of all ages came to Ojibway to learn more about nocturnal animals. The weather was perfect and it was not actually dark until the end of the hike around 9 pm. As for the creatures, the general consensus was that they were pretty cute and not at all frightful.

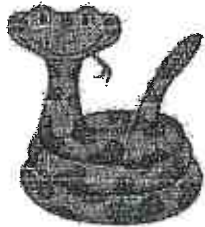
The evening began with a PowerPoint presentation featuring nocturnal and crepuscular animals. Visitors then tested their skill at identifying animal calls. The deer call stumped everyone. Tom Preney then gave a special presentation on the adaptations of the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake for hunting at night such as heat-sensing pits and a vertical pupil. People were then given an opportunity to pet a royal python that also has heat-sensing pits. Martin, the Nature Centre's resident Massasauga rattlesnake, put on quite a show in his tank illustrating how active they are at night. A large variety of natural objects were passed among the visitors for a special up-close look. The huge cecropia moth and the tiny brown bat delighted everyone.

On our hike we found the fras of promethea moth caterpillars under a red oak tree. Fras is a term for caterpillar droppings. At the pond, numerous green frogs were spotted and their familiar "rubber band" call was heard. Various insects were out and the cicadas were calling fiercely. Loads of toads hopped across our path and a shadow darter dashed by catching mosquitoes. A screech owl call was played but apparently the owl was not awake yet - the screech owl started singing after the program ended! The highlight for most hikers was the display of bats flying around behind the Nature Centre. The bats dived and swerved, snatching up mosquitoes and any other insect that crossed their path. The evening was a huge success and we hope that the experience will encourage people to step out for more hikes after sunset.



Living with Rattlesnakes Workshop at Ojibway Nature Centre

Erin Casasola



On Wednesday July 20th Ojibway hosted a Living with Rattlesnakes Workshop. Landowners who share space with our local eastern massasauga rattlesnake were invited to attend the workshop. Fourteen people attended this family event. The goal of the workshop was to inform landowners about rattlesnakes and to encourage them to take an active role in reversing the rattlesnake's decline.

A PowerPoint presentation facilitated the participants with differentiating between fox snakes and rattlesnakes. Photos of both adults and juveniles and even some garter snake photos helped people practice their identification skills. By the end of the twenty-five photos people were quite proficient.

The presentation continued with tips on natural landscaping and how to discourage rodents from entering yards. A registered physiotherapist, Sonya Vani, also gave a short presentation on how to protect your joints and back while gardening and enjoying the outdoors.

We were very fortunate that night to have a wild rattlesnake as part of our demonstration on how to safely move a snake. The young rattlesnake had been caught earlier in the day by Nature Centre staff and demonstrated to the participants how rattlesnakes are quiet and timid.

While the group watched Nature Centre staff demonstrated how to move the snake using a broom handle into a garbage can. The snake's calm demeanor surprised most. After being exposed to so much misinformation on rattlesnakes they were expecting something a little more exciting. The quiet little rattlesnake made a lasting impression.

Everyone present also had the opportunity to handle a live snake. The Nature Centre's resident constrictor was very accommodating and everyone had an opportunity to pet and hold him. This as well helped to create a greater level of comfort and confidence among the participants.

According to the surveys collected after the program everyone who attended felt their questions were well answered and that they could play a role in helping to conserve the massasauga rattlesnake. This sort of response was exactly what we were hoping to accomplish. While we would want all the people of Essex County to feel they can have a hand in helping this misunderstood animal, it is critical that the people who are most likely to encounter them feel the desire to help.

The surveys also revealed that people felt much more confident in identifying a rattlesnake after the workshop. Participants' confidence also greatly improved in regards to avoiding snakebites and first aid for snakebites. Of all the activities, the hands-on demonstrations were the most popular. Such a positive response is extremely encouraging. We plan on hosting more workshops and also adding more hands-on opportunities for the participants.

Bausch & Lomb Telescope For Sale

For Sale: A Bausch & Lomb Telescope Elite 77mm spotting scope with a Bausch & Lomb Professional Tripod Model 68-4000 and a 29-60x zoom eyepiece, magnification model 61-7700. The scope and tripod are in excellent condition as this equipment was used indoors only. Original boxes and manual, etc. Asking \$500. Contact Heather Kuhn at 948-2659.

Ojibway Fall Colour Festival



Monday, October 10th

12:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Special Prairie Hike at 1:00 pm



Admission Free

Exhibits

Fall Fun

Crafts

Friends of Ojibway

Fall Cleanup

Tuesday October 4th

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Lunch provided

Fall Colour Hikes

Sept. 25, Oct. 2, 9, 16,

23, 30 and Nov. 6

Sundays 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

\$4.00 per person

**Ojibway Nature Centre
5200 Matchette Road
Windsor**



Essex County Field Naturalists' Club Annual Dinner

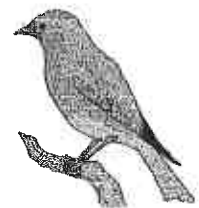
Fogolar Furlan Club – Udine Hall
1800 E.C. Row (N. Service Rd.) Windsor

Saturday, November 5, 2005

6:00 pm cocktails 7:00 pm dinner



Guest Speaker: Dan Mennill
Duels and Duets:



“an adventure in research on temperate and tropical birds”

Door Prizes
Giant Silent Auction

Menu

Antipasto Verde
Crusty Italian Dinner Rolls
Pasta with Tomato and Basil Sauce
Tossed Salad
Roast Chicken and Italian Sausages
Roasted Potatoes and Seasonal Vegetable
Fruit & Sweets
Coffee & tea
Cash bar

Vegetarians: we will have Eggplant Parmigiana.
Please indicate when you purchase your ticket

Tickets: \$30

Available at Ojibway Nature Centre
5200 Matchette Road, Windsor 966-5852

