

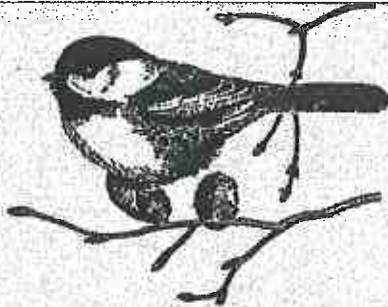


The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

Saving Wallaceburg Sycamore Woods

Larry Cornelis, Sydenham Field Naturalists member

The Wallaceburg Sycamore Woods borders the southwestern corner of the community of Wallaceburg. The Sydenham Field Naturalists, the Wallaceburg Trails Committee and a group of concerned citizens are working cooperatively to save this special ecological gem.

For over two centuries the tree cover of Chatham-Kent has been in continual decline leaving the county today only 2.7% forested. Because of this, even small and isolated woodlots are significant and their preservation is imperative.

This is especially true of the Wallaceburg Sycamore Woods because of its unique characteristics. Fortunately, this approximately 10 acre Carolinian forest has remained untouched for many decades and even exhibits 'old growth' features. These include very large Shumard and Swamp White Oaks with balding near the base indicative of trees at least 150 years old, undulating 'pit and mound' topography and large decaying logs on the forest floor. Besides the tree cover it has a healthy shrub layer (e.g. Spicebush) and a ground cover of spring wild flowers and other perennials (e.g. Running Strawberry-bush). A flora inventory found a very high density of American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) with 25 mature individuals and several very young trees. Other tree species include Basswood, Bitternut and Shagbark Hickories, Cottonwood, Silver Maple, American Beech, etc. Casual observation indicates many species of fauna including foxes, bats, snakes, White-tailed Deer and numerous bird species from Great Horned Owls to Indigo Buntings. Another very significant aspect of the Wallaceburg Sycamore Woods is the amazingly low number of non-native plants. Removal of these 'exotics' should be a relatively easy task.

This woodlot is at imminent risk of being cleared unless funds can be raised for acquisition. Woodlots of this quality once cleared are irreplaceable. It is therefore extremely urgent that this

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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Special Events Coordinator:	Karen Cedar
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Citizens' Environment Alliance:	Mark Buckner
Planning Advisory Committee:	Mark Buckner
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Committees

Egret Editorial Committee: David D'hondt, Karen Cedar, Betty Learmouth, Nicole D'hondt, Shirley Grondin
Speaker: E.C.F.N.C. Directors
Field Trip: JoAnn Grondin, Bert Harris, Margaret Jennings, Betty Learmouth
Annual Dinner: Heritage & Special Events Committees
Heritage Committee: JoAnn Grondin, Margaret Jennings, Muriel Kassimatis, Dave Kraus, Betty Learmouth, Jim McAllister, Patricia Rhoads, Bruno Sfalcin, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson

remnant of our natural heritage be preserved.

The Community Group plans on raising the approximate \$60,000.00 required and also are willing to act as long term stewards of the property. The present owner and the Chatham-Kent municipal council have been extremely cooperative in assisting in the project.

There is a real opportunity here to educate and demonstrate to present and future generations what once existed as the natural vegetation of this area.

Significant progress towards raising the needed funds must be made by early 2006.

Your support in the saving and preservation of the Wallaceburg Sycamore Woods would be greatly appreciated.

Donations may be forwarded to Larry Cornelis, R.R.#2, Port Lambton, ON N0P 2B0. Make your cheque payable to the *Sydenham Field Naturalists*. Call Larry at (519) 627-8785 for more information.

Festival of Hawks, 2005

Betty Learmouth

Day 1: Saturday, September 10, 2005

Activities were underway at the Festival of Hawks as a caravan of cars whirled into the Education Building parking area at 8:30 a.m. This year Ontario Field Ornithologists organizers had included Holiday Beach Conservation Area as a designated field trip. Trip leaders had planned ahead so that participants might enjoy the banding activities at Holiday Beach. Leader Todd Pepper and excursion participants were welcomed by Bob Pettit and Jason Sodergren with passerine bander Carl Pascoe providing a close-up view of a Gray-cheeked Thrush. The group divided with some heading towards the raptor blind with Phil Roberts and others to the passerine blind. At the passerine blind, OFO participants were treated to wonderful close-up views of a male After Hatch Year Golden-winged Warbler.

The usual activities were noted in the festival tent area including displays in the ERCA trailer, the hands-on children's activities, the live raptor display with Fuzzy Winks, the Great Horned Owl, the Pelee Wings Nature Store display brought by Joan Walker and the Blue Kestrel Café with volunteers Shirley Grondin, Cathy Lapain, and Helene Parks. In the Education Building, Carl Pascoe and Rachel Powless had set up a number of colourful displays and albums depicting the diversity of bird species encountered at Holiday Beach Conservation Area.

At 10:00 a. m. passerine bander Carl Pascoe brought several banded song birds to the stage area near the festival tent for a talk and release, including Swainson's Thrushes, a female Hatch Year Black-throated Blue Warbler, a Magnolia Warbler and a female Hatch Year Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

At 11:10 a.m. Rachel Powless spoke about the Monarch migration, asking the question "How do they do it?" Monarchs can travel up to 100 miles per day or on average 50 miles per day or 12 miles per hour on a journey that takes nine to twelve weeks to complete. Holiday Beach Migration Observatory is able to tag Monarchs but in the three years of the program no tag from a Holiday Beach Monarch has been found in Mexico.

Last year was very poor for Monarchs as the eggs laid did not develop into adults. This year, on the other hand, has been incredible as Monarchs are everywhere with a prediction to be an average or better than average year for Monarchs. Last winter there was no hard freeze in the Monarch wintering ground so numbers were not lost as has occurred during other winters.

Monarchs must have milkweed to survive as the caterpillars pass through four or five instars during which they shed their skins, becoming bigger and bigger. Compared to our growth from birth to adult, the growth of a Monarch by its fourth or fifth instar would be the equivalent of a school bus.

Rachel demonstrated the banding of a Monarch with the assistance of Megan Brien of Malden Centre.

Raptor bander Phil Roberts presented a raptor talk and demonstration to a good crowd touching on a variety of topics related to raptor banding such as lures, handling raptors through the use of Heinz and Pringle's cans, safety issues

for both the raptor and the raptor bander and characteristics of the Sharp-shinned Hawk, one of which Phil showed to the assembled crowd. Phil discussed the difference in size between male and female Sharp-shinned Hawks, the eye colour changes in the first three years, "noodling," and the fascinating trait of hawks to always maintain eye contact with prey through their gyroscopic abilities.

At 11:45 a.m., Carl Pascoe joined forces with Phil Roberts as Carl showed the group several passerines while Phil made some comments regarding identification. The passerines displayed included a Magnolia Warbler, Swainson's Thrushes, and Red-eyed Vireo. The first Swainson's Thrush was an After Hatch Year individual while the second was a Hatch Year bird. Phil pointed out the orange through the throat and around the eye which was visible on the After Hatch Year bird. At 12:30 p.m., Carl brought a Ruby-throated Hummingbird to the festival stage for release.

Following a PowerPoint presentation in the Education Building, Rachel Powless gave a talk on banding Monarchs. Rachel had on hand special tags which have been obtained from Dr. Taylor of the University of Kansas. In February and March, Dr. Taylor travels to Mexico, where he meets with Mexicans who have gathered tags on the Monarch wintering ground, paying \$5 for each tag recovered.

Rachel touched on some interesting facts about Monarch migration. These butterflies are strong, resilient creatures. Scales on their wings do not come off. This present year has been exceptional for Monarchs, compared to last year which was cold with few eggs laid, many of which died. Also a heavy frost in Mexico will affect the Monarchs as the Monarchs will start to mate immediately, the result being that millions will die as there will be no milkweed plants in Texas on which to lay eggs when the butterflies arrive there on their northern migration.

Sarah Benoit of Maidstone, Ontario assisted Rachel in the banding of a Monarch as a reporter from *The Harrow News* took photographs and notes.

Bob Pettit presented his popular raptor identification workshop at 1:30 p.m.

ERCA staff at the gate reported 109 vehicles entered the Conservation Area on this date.

Hawkwatchers on the tower reported the following raptors for this date.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Nos.</u>
Osprey	2
Northern Harrier	14
Sharp-shinned Hawk	314
Cooper's Hawk	12
Broad-winged Hawk	22
Red-tailed Hawk	2
American Kestrel	35
Merlin	6
Unidentified raptor	1
Total	408

Day 2: Sunday, September 11, 2005

Ontario Field Ornithologists were again on hand, lead by ECFNC member Todd Pepper and Allen Chartier who had presented a program on Ruby-throated Hummingbirds to the OFO members attending the banquet the previous evening.

At 11:05 a.m., the morning's banding demonstration was underway with Phil Roberts bringing a handsome immature Northern Harrier to the festival stage which was adopted by Kathy Evans. This adoption was followed by a series of Sharp-shinned Hawk adoptions.

Following Phil's talk, passerine bander Carl Pascoe spoke to a good crowd at the Festival tent area. A Hatch Year Carolina Wren was shown and Carl mentioned an individual trapped 42 days ago that was re-trapped. Other passerines included in Carl's talk included a Black-throated Blue Warbler, a Warbling Vireo and a White-throated Sparrow.

A little later, Carl brought a Hatch Year Ruby-throated Hummingbird which weighed 3 grams. Carl told the group that it takes a long time for a person to learn to be a hummingbird bander as there must be someone to teach the skills required plus there are many specialized aspects to banding hummingbirds.

Carl provided some tips as to feeding hummingbirds. The liquid mix is 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. Colouring is not necessary. Feeders may be set up in April and remain until the first frost. Unusually late hummingbirds in the season may be Rufous Hummingbirds.

Rachel Powless gave her Monarch presentation and banding demonstration, wrapping up the day's activities. In the Education Building, Rachel had set up a colourful Monarch display as well as other displays depicting many of the raptors and passerines banded by banders with the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory.

The usual activities including the ERCA trailer display, the children's hands-on activities and the live raptor display drew visitors throughout the day. ECFNC volunteers included Shirley Grondin who barbecued the hot dogs and Cathy Lesperance and Jo-Ann Grondin who looked after sales of coffee, muffins and hot dogs. Joan Walker was on hand with the Pelee Wings Nature Store's display.

ERCA staff reported 111 cars entered the Conservation Area on this date.

The following raptor species were reported from the hawk tower:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Nos.</u>
Turkey Vulture	4
Osprey	4
Northern Harrier	16
Sharp-shinned Hawk	319
Cooper's Hawk	15
Broad-winged Hawk	126
Red-tailed Hawk	3
American Kestrel	20
Merlin	5
Peregrine Falcon	1
Total	513

Day 3: Saturday, September 17, 2005

Volunteers were on hand early to set up the Festival tent area while remarking that the weather had become cooler with a light North wind.

Passerine banders reported many migrants with four banders on hand to handle the rush. At 9:40 a.m. bander Carl Pascoe brought a feisty Great Crested Flycatcher to the Festival tent area for everyone to admire. The flycatcher's rufous wing and tail feathers were stunning.

Visitors to the Festival tent area included a couple from Toronto who had discovered the festival on the Internet, another couple from Comox, B.C. and a couple from Goderich who had been on Pelee Island, found the Festival's brochure and decided to drop in. As well, twelve Scouts, their five leaders and two guests from St. Andrew's 60th Scouts LaSalle were on hand to enjoy a talk about the Great Horned Owl, Fuzzywinks.

At the scheduled 11:00 a.m. raptor talk, Jason Sodergren displayed a handsome Broad-winged Hawk which delighted the assembled audience. The talk's second raptor was a Northern Harrier displayed by raptor bander Cory Balkwill who discussed the species' hunting techniques.

At 11:20 a.m. there was great excitement as volunteers and visitors alike looked overhead to note kettling and streaming Broad-winged Hawks as they moved in off Lake Erie in a Northwest direction. The raptors were low at first, gradually becoming more distant.

At 1:00 p.m. Rachel Powless gave a talk on tagging Monarchs. Rachel's talk was followed by Bob Pettit's raptor ID talk at 1:30 p.m.

The ERCA trailer display, the hands-on children's display and the live raptor display were looked after by Bev Wannick and Dorothy McLeer. The Adopt a Hawk and Adopt a Passerine program were looked after by Kathy Evans and Jason Sodergren. Colourful raptor and hummingbird displays were available in the Education Building. Bob Pettit gave his hawk Identification workshop at 1:30 p.m. in the Education Building.

Volunteers at the Blue Kestrel Café included Shirley Grondin who barbecued the hot dogs with Marg Calder, Donnie Cowie and Bonnie Ross looking after serving the coffee, muffins and hot dogs. Joan Walker was in charge of the display from the Pelee Wings Nature. Store.

At the end of the day, the passerine banders reported a record 236 birds banded of which there were a record 30 hummingbirds (5 were missed), 3 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, one Great Crested Flycatcher as well as Bay-breasted Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Swainson's Thrush, Gray-checked Thrush, Veery and Red-eyed Vireo. Birders acknowledged that it was an amazing migration day.

ERCA staff reported 102 vehicles entered the Conservation Area today.

Hawkwatchers reported the following raptors migrating past the hawk tower.

Species	Nos.
Turkey Vulture	18
Osprey	6
Bald Eagle	10
Northern Harrier	23
Sharp-shinned Hawk	533
Cooper's Hawk	12
Broad-winged Hawk	3,785
Red-tailed Hawk	10
American Kestrel	224
Merlin	5
Total	4,626

Day 4: Sunday, September 18, 2005

Volunteers on hand to set up the Festival site were treated to a special sight. Before sunrise, the morning was magical with the full moon shining through a grey fog bank. During the night, the moon's clear light had apparently awoken every volunteer who each thought morning had arrived.

Passerine bander Carl Pascoe started the day off at 10:00 a.m. with a Male Hatch Year Ruby-throated Hummingbird which he displayed to visitors, noting the single dark feather in its gorget. A second bird displayed before release was a Philadelphia Vireo, an insect eater as indicated by its hooked bill.

Also at 10:00 a.m. Paul Pratt was on hand for the scheduled dragonfly walk. A number of students were also on site, four from the University of Guelph and one University of Windsor student, enrolled in the newly offered third year Ornithology course. At 10:45 p.m., Dorothy McLeer spoke about the Great Horned Owl, Fuzzywinks. The ERCA trailer display was open throughout the day as well as the hands-on children's display

At 11:00 a.m. Phil Roberts gave a raptor talk indicating that raptor banders are sampling the raptor population. Phil discussed Sharp-shinned Hawks, an accipter that is often trapped and banded at Holiday Beach, making this species "the bread and butter bird" for banders. Male and female accepters have certain traits which help to identify each sex. Unfortunately, this species is experiencing a slow decline in its numbers. Certain raptor species which were almost lost such as Peregrine Falcons and Merlin are now increasing in numbers.

Bands are constructed of a light alloy, available in seventeen sizes. Anyone recovering a banded bird may call 1-800-BIRD-BAND to report their find. Bands fit nicely, and are designed to not go over the ankle or knee of the leg to which they are applied. Over 1,000 bands are usually applied in the course of a year at Holiday Beach.

Carl Pascoe arrived at the Festival tent area at 12:40 p.m. to speak about and release a banded Ruby-throated Hummingbird, followed by a female Restart. Raptor banders brought a Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel and Sharp-

shinned Hawk for a talk, adoption and release. Rachel Powless provided a Monarch talk and tagging session followed by a release of a Cedar Waxwing at 1:20 p.m.

ERCA staff reported 115 vehicles into the Conservation Area today.

Volunteers on hand at the Blue Kestrel Café were Shirley Grondin who looked after hot dog barbecuing, and Jo-Ann Grondin, Denise Hartley, and Barb Hill who looked after serving coffee, muffins and hot dogs. Joan Walker brought the Pelee Wings Nature Store's display with a variety of books, clothing and photographs. Other activities including the hands-on children's display, the live raptor display and the Education Building displays were available throughout the day.

The following birds of prey were reported by hawk watchers on September 18, 2005.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Nos.</u>
Turkey Vulture	2
Osprey	8
Northern Harrier	3
Sharp-shinned Hawk	156
Cooper's Hawk	12
Broad-winged Hawk	12
Red-tailed Hawk	6
American Kestrel	40
Merlin	2
Peregrine Falcon	1
Total	242

Day 5: September 24, 2005

Volunteers were on hand early to set up the Festival tent area as Blue Jays streamed over head at tree level, flying from east to west. By the end of the day, counters would report that 28,000 Blue Jays flew over the site.

All the usual activities took place during the day including the ERCA trailer sales, the hands-on children's display, the live raptor display and the exhibits in the Education Building. Volunteers at the Blue Kestrel Café included Shirley Grondin who barbecued the hot dogs, while the sales of muffins, coffee and hotdogs was looked after by Cathy and Tom Ayles and Cathy Lapain.

At 10:25 a.m., bander Carl Pascoe brought a Nashville Warbler and Philadelphia Warbler for a talk and release. These two species were followed by a Blackpoll Warbler and a Gray-checked Thrush. Carl showed us the Blackpolls undertail coverts and which are distinctive for each warbler species. Birders frequently view warblers from underneath so it makes sense to know the undertail covert characteristics of each warbler species. Blackpoll Warblers are noted as long distance migrants, consequently their wings are longer, adapted to this long migration over open water.

Following Carl's talk, Phil Roberts spoke at 10:55 a.m. to a large group that grew from fifty persons to over seventy persons. We heard that raptors arrive in cans at the demonstration talks as it is safer for both the raptor and bander. In fact, the cans can be used as raptor identification. Heinz cans hold male Sharp-shinned Hawks, while the Pringle cans will contain the female Sharp-shinned Hawks. Phil showed a second year female Sharp-shinned Hawk, indicating that the banders are now seeing a mix of ages, not just hatch year birds. Adult male Sharp-shinned Hawks are the last to come through Holiday Beach on their migration. Then Phil proceeded to talk about a banded Northern Harrier and Red-tailed Hawk.

Carl Pascoe was on hand at 12:05 p.m. for a talk and release of a Nashville Warbler, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Tennessee Warbler and Magnolia Warbler. At 12:50 p.m., Phil Roberts brought a Red-tailed Hawk to the Festival tent area for adoption by Matthew Caron. Then Rachel Powless gave a Monarch talk at 1:15 p.m. and Bob Pettit provided his raptor ID workshop at 1:30 p.m.

Activity as reported on September 25, 2005 by tower hawk watchers is summarized below.

Species	Nos.
Osprey	1
Northern Harrier	3
Sharp-shinned Hawk	253
Cooper's Hawk	7
American Kestrel	4
Merlin	1
Peregrine Falcon	1
Unidentified raptor	1
Total	271

Monarch Watch

Betty Learmouth

Guest speaker Rachel Powless provided up to date information on Monarchs to twenty-seven ECFNC members and friends at Club's September 14, 2005 meeting. Rachel and her husband Carl Pascoe are Holiday Beach Migration Observatory members who have contributed much to that organization over the last few years with their interest in passerine banding. Rachel's interest in Monarchs began in 2003 when Allen Chartier, then HBMO's Ruby-throated Hummingbird bander, presented a program on that species in Ohio.

At the Ohio meeting, Allen heard about a Monarch tagging program, *Monarch Watch*, which was headed by Dr. Chip Taylor at the University of Kansas. Monarch Watch is a cooperative study of the Monarch's fall migration. Allen brought the information back to Rachel who felt it would fit very nicely with HBMO's existing fall migration study of raptors and passerines.

Rachel told us the time period during which the most Monarch eggs are laid in Ontario is between July 20 and August 3. These eggs will become the adult Monarchs that undertake the long journey to Mexico. Some fourteen milkweed species have been identified as host species to Monarchs. Our area is particularly important to the Monarchs. Monarchs range to Timmins, further west to 50 miles north of Winnipeg and east into Quebec. Below 38 degrees latitude the summer climate is too hot for milkweed species that Monarchs prefer. Monarchs appear to be drawn to certain colours, particularly purple and yellow.

Some milkweeds have high levels of cardenolide which can be used to fingerprint Monarchs, determining which species of milkweed the caterpillars feed upon, thus actually pin pointing the origin of a particular adult Monarch.

Male and female Monarchs can be identified by examining their wing markings. Male Monarchs show scent glands on the lower hind wing. These glands have been noted to be larger in the last few years. Female Monarchs have exhibited thicker, more prominent veins as well.

Tagging of Monarchs should not be undertaken until the goldenrod blooms at which time Monarchs will show directionality.

Monarchs can be observed mating in flight as the male will pick up the female and carry her. The female will then lay up to 500 eggs with the highest record being over 1,200 eggs. In response to a question from Bruno Sfalcin, Rachel replied that 5 of each 500 eggs is thought to become an adult Monarch. Rachel showed us a closeup photograph of a Monarch egg which take 3 to 5 days to hatch. Eggs are laid on the underside of milkweed leaves. Tiny caterpillars chew their way out of the eggs, then consume 15 to 20 milkweed leaves, shedding their skins 4 to 5 times in preparation for entering the chrysalid stage. After shedding their skins, the caterpillars are glossier and brighter, then become duller before shedding their skin to enter another instar stage.

At a certain point, the caterpillar is ready to find a place to form the J position before the chrysalids stage. The J position is held for six to eight hours, then the wiggle/jiggle stage occurs for three to five minutes as the chrysalids form. The

chrysalids undergoes several stages of development including a clear stage and eventually, a black stage. At this stage, called the eclosion, which occurs during the day, the adult Monarch emerges in a time period of two or three minutes. The Monarch "pumps" and becomes its full size within three to four minutes. The size of the adult is related to the quality of the milkweed that was consumed.

Through *Monarch Watch*, tags are applied to the widest part of the lower wing called the discal cell. In the past, a tag was folded over the wing, but if this was not done properly, the Monarch would be unable to fly.

This fall's Monarch migration is underway and will continue through November 1, over an eight to twelve week period. Monarchs may travel 140 k/ day or 50 miles per day, even up to 100 miles per day. Monarchs are thought to orientate themselves on migration by the sun, or the earth's magnetic field, or, possibly by some other means we do not know about.

Some 120 million Monarchs were found at the colonies in Mexico during the winter of 2001-2002.

Several White Monarchs are regularly reported yearly in North America by one enthusiast who has been raising Monarchs in Wisconsin for ten years. In Hawaii, ten percent of the population is white. Other related species but little known are the Queen Monarch found from Georgia to California and the Soldier of Central and South America. The Viceroy is a mimic of the Monarch.

Holiday Beach Conservation Area has been registered as a Monarch Waystation through *Monarch Watch*, the thirty-second in North America. Using the Monarch Watch website, tag numbers may be checked.

On September 1, 2005, an ultralight airplane visited Leamington and Point Pelee National Park for two days. The ultralight journey began in Quebec and will conclude in Paplotzin, Mexico as the ultralight follows the Monarch migration southward. Rachel attended the ceremonies in Leamington, speaking with pilot Vico.

Following the PowerPoint presentation, Rachel demonstrated Monarch banding with the assistance of Heidi Plante. Rachel stated Monarchs are very resilient. Their scales do not come off as do those of other species. These butterflies taste with their legs, their touch on a finger feels like Velcro.

In response to a question regarding the expected life span of an individual Monarch, Rachel explained that females in migration at this time are not sexually mature. They will mature in March 2006, then lay eggs, thus the life span is typically eight months. The generations from egg laying in April/May and June/July leap frog into Ontario, then the next generation will begin the journey southward, feeding all the way. During migration, Monarchs will travel with the aid of thermals in the same manner as raptors.

This year will be an average to possibly above average season for Monarchs. More information on Monarchs is available on the *Monarch Watch* website at <http://www.monarchwatch.org/>

Thank you to Rachel for a wonderful talk on our splendid Monarchs and to Carl for his technical expertise and to Shelby who pointed out all really important things during Rachel's PowerPoint presentation.



A Monarch is banded by Rachel Powless with help of Heidi Plante. Note Shelby on right, rear.

All Around the Mulberry Bush

Betty Learmouth

A group of "Volunteers for Nature" converged on the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp property on October 1, 2005 for a few hours of work, the goal of which was to remove the alien plant species White Mulberry. The weather was wonderful, clear and sunny.

Heather Arnold, the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Southwestern Ontario Stewardship Coordinator, explained to us that portions of the recently acquired southern portion of the Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp are in need of our assistance. The Red Mulberry population in the Swamp is under threat due to the common White Mulberry. Both species flower at the same time, thus the pollen of the two species can be mixed, creating hybrids. The result is the loss of the pure Red Mulberry species.

The Red Mulberry is likely one of the most endangered trees in Canada. It is threatened by land use changes as well as by the White Mulberry which was brought to North America from China for its use in the silk industry. White Mulberry has also been planted as an ornamental. A Recovery Plan exists for the Red Mulberry, recommending that the White Mulberry be cut and removed from sites of concern, such as the Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp.

Prior to our work session, White Mulberries along the property's western boundary had been flagged. At the Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp, the Red Mulberries are found in the interior of the site, so our chance of encountering a Red Mulberry during our work was unlikely.

Bronwen Smith, Conservation Volunteer Coordinator with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, gave us instructions as to how we should work in our small teams. Using a variety of available hand tools, we could eliminate the White Mulberries in several ways. One technique would be to girdle a tree with a girdling tool or with a small hatchet, stripping away the inner bark and preventing the flow of nutrients to the roots. The girdled area is quickly painted with the herbicide Roundup which is tinted red so its use is known. The area is then tagged so that the site may be monitored.

Another technique is to cut the White Mulberry below its lowest branch, then quickly applying Roundup to the flat surface within the allotted fifteen minutes of making the cut. The herbicide is then drawn down into the tree's roots. Autumn is thought to be the most effective time to undertake cutting of the White Mulberry.

Our crews worked for several hours clearing a number of White Mulberries. Piles of tree limbs were gathered to be hauled to a central dumping location. Despite our efforts, there are still numbers of White Mulberries that need to be removed.

Beside the White Mulberries, the Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp has other restoration needs. A tomato field on the eastern boundary is to be converted from its present use to a swamp wet meadow. In a sandy area on the western boundary, a grove of Black Oaks are the remaining species that inhabit this oak savanna. The native plant seed bank appears to be exhausted as the site has been invaded by agricultural weed species. Heather Arnold told us the site has been examined and may simply be restored to goldenrod and asters as the site is an isolated one with no other savannahs nearby.

At the conclusion of the afternoon's work, we took advantage of the wash station, scrubbing our hands to remove any residue such as the oil of poison ivy or any contact with the herbicide.

There was time to walk on the property so we made our way through the Black Oak savannah into the swamp, wading through Jewelweed, Nettles and Giant Ragweed. Heather pointed out the Poison Sumac shrubs which surrounded us. We noted clusters of white berries among the shiny leaves. Several shallow pools were nearby and are typically found throughout the Swamp. Heather told us that the Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp is virtually impenetrable at this time of year with its thickets of dogwood and Poison Sumac. As we departed, we noted Skunk Cabbage shoots underfoot.

Thank you to Heather Arnold and Bronwen Smith for providing a safe and rewarding experience for our group of volunteers.

Birding the Retired Essex County Landfill Site No. 3

Betty Learmouth

As Todd Pepper, leader of the birding excursion to the retired Essex County Landfill Site No. 3 (Maidstone Landfill), waited for participants on October 2, 2005, Todd spotted Orchard Orioles on the hydro lines at the landfill's entrance, a species which had bred on the landfill property this past season. Also noted were American Goldfinch and Mallards in a nearby pond.

We drove our vehicles further into the site, parking at the base of the landfill to walk beside the serpentine storm-water retention pond. Just off shore was a sandbar on which 24 Killdeer called, fed and rested. A juvenile Song Sparrow perched in a small nearby ash tree, displaying its white throat and streaky breast. Todd had brought his telescope along so we had good views of this sparrow. A shy Great Blue Heron slipped out of view while two Canada Geese were spotted on the pond.

Large dead elms with their roots and limbs had been pushed to the pond's edge where these trees will provide fish habitat. We were attracted by two sparrows with white outer tail feathers that were chasing each other. While we watched these Vesper Sparrows, Todd told us about an Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas incident this past season in the Gesto area when he played a tape of the Vesper Sparrow call at an agricultural field. A single Vesper Sparrow walked a distance along a furrow towards the sound of the tape and upon seeing the birders, Todd and Paul Pratt, turned and walked back along the furrow.

In the distance to the North, Todd spotted a Red-tailed Hawk soaring above a woodlot. Across the pond, several Eastern Meadowlarks caught our attention. Two nearby sparrows were identified as a juvenile and adult Savannah Sparrows. Movement along the dry edge of the pond turned out to be at least three American Pipits. Todd told us this species was a new one for his landfill list.

Walking further along the pond, we admired a swath of prairie grasses which included Big Bluestem and Indian Grass. This was the area where the Dickcissels nested this past season. Todd pointed out the male Dickcissel's favourite perches including a post in a clump of Phragmites and several small dead trees.

Recently Randy Horvath reported a juvenile Dickcissel at Little River on the listserve Ontbirds to which Todd had replied that it could be a juvenile from the retired landfill.

We found a second sand bar in the pond on which over sixty Killdeer and one American Pipit were foraging. Then a flycatcher was spotted on one of the dead trees which Todd identified as an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Todd told us that the Olive-sided Flycatcher was also another new bird species for his landfill list, bringing the observed bird species for the site to approximately ninety species.

The flycatcher disappeared but we were entertained by the American Pipits which perched in one of the dead trees, providing good looks at this species with its elongated body and thin neck, quite a different look from the sparrows we had been watching.

At this point, we headed up the side of the landfill to walk along the trail that meanders over the landfill. This year, as part of an experiment, the site has been mowed to promote grass growth and also to reduce thistles. The landfill, retired in mid 1997, is collecting more leachate than expected so efforts are being made to reduce leachate. Hopefully this effort will reduce landfill expenses by decreasing the amount of leachate that will be trucked off the site for treatment.

Looking for more bird species, we checked the grove of trees planted at the top of the landfill. Tree species here included hawthorn species, Honey Locust, Trembling Aspen, willow species, Russian Olive and Devil's Walking Stick. We found a single American Robin perched in one of the trees. Todd commented that normally we would see a Northern Harrier moving over the landfill hill but mowing has changed that grassland habitat.

Todd suggested that we walk along the edge of the landfill's seven acre woodland. As we headed that way, two sparrows flew up and around us which Todd identified as Grasshopper Sparrows that had bred on the site this past season. Todd had his new National Geographic guide so we were able to see the difference in the shape of this species' head and bill compared to the expected sparrow forehead and bill silhouette.

As we walked along the landfill slope adjacent to the woodland, Todd mentioned that when he took over the management of the site in 1989, the woodland was full of debris that had blown into the site. Now the woodland is clean and doing well with spring ephemerals blooming in profusion. The slope adjacent to the landfill has slumped as the materials underneath have settled. A ditch at the base of the landfill has been filled so that surface water from this adjacent slope can make its way into the woodland, rather than into the leachate collection system. We noted Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, a thrush species and a White-throated Sparrow at the woodland. Walking back towards our vehicles, we observed two Red-tailed Hawks, ten Horned Larks, several Eastern Meadowlarks and we heard Killdeer calling.

Thank you to Todd for sharing his enthusiasm for birds with us and for showing us around the retired landfill site with its varied terrain that is providing habitat for an impressive number of bird species.

Young Tree Maintenance at the Essex Landfill Restoration Site

Betty Learmouth

Eleven ECFNC members joined Gerry Waldron on October 16, 2005 for an afternoon of tree maintenance at the Essex Landfill restoration site. Formerly agricultural land, the site is now covered in asters, goldenrods and young trees. We could see the yellow leaves of poplars and maples as well as the dark red of the oaks as we made our way from one tree to the next.

Gerry gave us a quick demonstration as to how we should trim these young trees. If there are two stems, then it is best to chose the one that looks the straightest, clipping the other and placing a guard around the stem to discouraged rodents.

Peggy Hurst, who has worked on the site restoration with Gerry, provided more background information. The site was planted about five years ago in a heavy rain with the assistance of the McGregor Scouts. The entire site is approximately 60 acres in size but was planted in sections with a variety of planting techniques employed. Plantings have been done around pits and mounds at the back of the restoration site, as well as planting of flowering prairie plants. Seeds have been thrown about the site and machine planting has done by the Essex County Stewardship Network's tree planting equipment. Last fall, sections around the property were replanted when Roundup was accidentally sprayed on plantings.

Even ephemeral ponds are a part of the restoration site. Drainage tiles in the area were broken and crushed, then a backhoe operator made a series of shallow wetlands which can be easily spotted as cattails are growing in each pond. A number of bird houses have been placed on the site by Louise Masse along with tree perches for American Kestrels.

Gerry was very pleased to have had such a good turnout for the tree maintenance. There is lots to be done on the site, so mark your calendar for next young tree maintenance afternoon on March 26, 2006.

Receive *The Egret* by E-Mail

The ECFNC Egret Editorial Committee is offering *The Egret* by e-mail as over half of our members have e-mail. Receiving *The Egret* by e-mail will reduce the cost of printing and mailing to the ECFNC membership.

Simply e-mail Karen Cedar at keedar@city.windsor.on.ca or Betty Learmouth at bettlear@mnsi.net with a message that you would like *The Egret* to be sent to you electronically. You can then print your copy or read it on-line. The next issue of *The Egret* will be distributed on March 8, 2006.

Celebrate Earth, Celebrate Ojibway

Betty Learmouth

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

All chairs were occupied in the large performance room on the second floor of Mckenzie Hall on the evening of October 22, 2005. Everyone had been brought to the Hall by a scheduled choral concert and multimedia performance of the Great Lakes Women of Gaia. Attendees were swept into the spirit of the evening as they took their seats, picked up a percussion instrument that had been placed upon each chair and immediately became part of the music and chanting. Who would believe that unrehearsed music making could draw an audience together in mere seconds.

In the introduction to the evening's programme, Barbara J. Billey had written that "this choral concert and multimedia performance by the *Great Lakes Women of Gaia* celebrates the gift of the Ojibway Prairie Complex to our community and to the many rare plants and endangered species that inhabit the area.

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."

The choir sang a selection of songs, all celebrating our wondrous Earth. They were joined by the audience to sing *The Longing Suite* with music and words composed by Carolyn McDade. Below are the words of *The Longing Suite* which was accompanied by a visual display of insects, plants and reptiles photographed in the Ojibway Prairie Complex. The audience stood to sing the names of endangered species that call the Ojibway Prairie Complex their home.

The Longing Suite

I sing the longing spun in my living faith
Daily our wand'ring through the fields of grace
I sing the tremor sung in the spark and the web
Singing I bow and rise, blossom and bread

We are the Monarch afloat on earth's golden air
Our light wings soaring in silent prayer.

We are the prairie, dense blazing star burning bright.
With fat bees hov'ring for nectar sweet.

We are the Savannah, red hickory, chestnut and oak
A standing nation of sheltering arms.

We are the lilies, our blossoms waxen and white
Small frogs afloat on our drifting pads.

We are the wildflowers, our colours dance in the wind,
A brilliant garden of rareties*

We are Ojibway, an ancient remnant of green,
A vital seed bank of nature's wealth.

Scarlett Ammannia
Slender Bush-clover
Butler's Garter Snake
Pink Milkwort
Southern Cloudy Wing
Purple Twayblade Orchid
Monarch
Shumard Oak

American Chestnut
Dense Blazing Star
Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake
Tall Green Milkweed
Giant Spreadwing Dragonfly
Yellow-breasted Chat
Bald Eagle
Prairie Rose

Kentucky Coffee-tree
Eastern Fox Snake
Wild Indigo Dusky Wing
Willow Aster
Blanding's Turtle
Hooded Warbler
Colicroot
Grey Fox

Let them continue on, Let them continue on,
Continue, continue, continue, continue,
Oh, let them continue on.

*In 1893, John Macoun, Dominion Botanist for Canada described Ojibway flora as "a garden of rarities."

ECFNC member Claire McAllister spoke about Ojibway. Claire said, "Ojibway is truly such an awe inspiring place, a jewel, a gift in our community. Some of you among us tonight may know Ojibway well but for those of who do not, Ojibway has an abundance, an incredible richness in natural and cultural heritage.

Ojibway has one of the most remarkable and at the same time endangered ecosystems in Ontario and perhaps in all of Canada. The Ojibway Prairie Complex has 350 hectares of what once covered over 90 million hectares (the size of British Columbia) reaching from central United States, Kansas north into Manitoba, east through Ohio with a narrow strip extending into Southwestern Ontario.

One tenth of one percent of this vast prairie is left in North America.

In this amazingly small area Ojibway's Tallgrass Prairie and its associated Black Oak Savannah offer an amazing variety of wild grasses, wildflowers and animal species, many rare and threatened and not found anywhere else in the world.

In 1892, John Macoun, a Canadian naturalist penned Ojibway "a garden of rarities" and truly it is with an estimated 600 vascular plant species of which 104 are rare, 3,000 insect species, 16 mammals, 121 species of birds of which 72 are breeding species, 58 species of dragonflies and 54 species of butterflies. Ojibway achieves top butterfly counts in Canada and for some species in North America.

We need to be ever mindful and thankful to our First Nations Peoples, the first stewards of this land along with the more recent visionaries in our community who loved Ojibway, saw its beauty, recognized its heritage value and its wealth of organisms to protect and preserve this sacred place.

The great thing about Ojibway is it can be enjoyed in all four seasons and is different in each.

I invite and encourage all of you to walk this ancient land formed thousands of years ago. The Tallgrass Prairie will delight your senses.

Every week from May to October well kept trails will take you through prairie where a succession of new wildflower species come into bloom. Wildflowers of every colour and design such as the sunburnt orange flowers of the butterfly milkweed, the purple spikes of dense blazing star or the modest gray-headed coneflower. Your breath may be taken away as you chance to come upon a small grouping of fringed gentian standing out amidst the graying grasses of autumn in all its lavender blue splendor, delicately white and fringed around its petals edges.

Among the wildflowers you may encounter a variety of butterfly species gathering nectar. Maybe even a glimpse of the provincially rare Southern Cloudy Wing or the Wild Indigo Dusky Wing or yet our beloved, bejeweled Monarch floating delicately from prairie thistle to gray-headed coneflower.

Patches of three metre tall big bluestem and Indian grass among others are found lining the pathway and interspersed among the wildflowers.

If you wander into the Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park adjacent to the Provincial Prairie Reserve, one could see the Complex's largest populations of Slender Bush Clover found no where else in Canada.

You may come upon the Giant Spreadwing Dragonfly or one of the several varieties of orchids found in the park such as the elegant White Fringed Orchid or Purple Twayblade orchid.

In the park's forest woodland, one may encounter many migrant or breeding species of birds such as the rare Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush or Yellow-breasted Chat. You may be rewarded as I was late last spring when I came upon a pair of Great Horned Owls that had nested in one of the towering oaks. Two Great Horned Owl chicks were peeking out of their nest for those below fortunate enough to have binoculars to see.

Take one of these woodland paths in fall and see the drama of vibrant colours unfolding, the rich coppery browns, all shades of yellows, brilliant to deep golden to fiery reds that can light the imagination.

One can almost always delight in surprises there. Perhaps a Golden-crowned Kinglet, a White-breasted Nuthatch, a Winter Wren or a Black-capped Chickadee will seem to guide you along the way. A White-tailed Deer may suddenly appear and as quickly fade into the shadows. The silence of an early morning winter walk through newly snow laden trails is magical.

Ojibway has something for everyone such as festivals and Earth Day celebrations, education programs and nature walks, fun arts and crafts for younger and school age children. Ojibway is a place for research, seeking secrets still hidden within, yet to be discovered.

The Friends of Ojibway, among other responsibilities, collect, clean and sort wildflower seeds for restoration projects, for home backyards, schools and commercial establishments. You could be a volunteer for the Friends of Ojibway.

Ojibway is last of all a place of refuge and of solitude. It is a place for inspiration, reflection, renewal and more.

We invite all of you here tonight to visit, experience and explore this wondrous and magical place. Our hope is that this concert helps to inspire all of us to honour, care for, protect and preserve this precious garden of rarities, this ancient remnant of green, this vital seed bank of nature's wealth."

The evening closed with a haunting song entitled *We of Earth* with a line of the song adopted from the City of Windsor motto "The river and the land sustain us."

We of Earth, we declare our responsibility to the whole, to the future, we of Earth declare

... to the prairie's whispering grasses
... to the radiant, dew-misted wildflowers
... to the ancient oak savannah
... to the land, which holds and sustains us
... to the grace of wilderness enduring
... to the splendor of Ojibway

Concert goers were reluctant to depart, joining in a few moments of joyful music making on the percussion instruments. Finally everyone reunited in the foyer to enjoy refreshments and support the Great Lakes Women of Gaia by the purchase of a selection of their CD's.

Carolinian West Regional Meeting Fall 2005

HOST GROUP: Lambton Wildlife Inc.

GROUP CHAIR: Brenda Lorenz

PRESENT

Lambton Wildlife Inc. – Larry Cornelis, Malcolm Boyd, Gord Catterson, Kevin Crowell, Peter Banks, George Krause, Don Smith, Ann Smith, Janet Bremner, Sydenham Field Naturalists – Tom Chatterton, Brett Groves

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club – JoAnn Grondin Little River Enhancement Group – Betty Learmouth

McIlwraith Field Naturalists – Anita Caveney, Katherine Turner St. Thomas Field Naturalists – Pat McLean

Friends of the Coves – Vanessa Kinsley Naturalized Habitat Network – Dan Bissonnette

Sarnia Urban Wildlife Committee – Brenda Lorenz, Dave Shortt, Nikki May Friends of Pinery Park – Alf Rider

Friends of Rondeau – Anne McArthur

STAFF and BOARD

President Steve Hounsell Nature Network Manager Jennifer Baker

GROUP UPDATES

Group Representatives presented group updates. I just outlined any special projects or upcoming dates below:

- Lambton Wildlife Inc. was busy with a successful urban tree inventory project, in partnership with the Sarnia Urban Wildlife Committee. They are also held a very successful forest monitoring session with EMAN. Both worked well as public outreach events and projects.
- The Sydenham Field Naturalists have been busy working to preserve a small woodlot on the outskirts of Wallaceburg. The group has been successful in their fundraising efforts to date. They need to raise \$63,000 and donations from groups are welcome.
- The Naturalized Habitat Network is busy working on their annual conference on April 1, 2006. The event is part of *Doors Open to Ontario Nature* to help recognize Ontario Nature's 75th anniversary.
- The Friends of Pinery Park have hired a consultant to look at updating the exhibits in the Visitors Centre and continue to try and raise funds for special events and for activities within the park.
- The Little River Enhancement Group continues to be busy with tree and shrub plantings. The group has also been busy writing letters and attending open houses related to the proposed expressway and border issues around Ojibway prairie.
- The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club is co-hosting a greenway presentation with Ontario Nature, Little River Enhancement Group and DRCC. They also clean up the Chrysler Canada greenway and are monitoring previous tree planting projects. They continue to oppose the Schwartz plan to place an expressway through Ojibway prairie with other groups in the area.
- The Friends of Rondeau have undertaken tree planting projects within the park. They have also installed a boardwalk/platform near the Visitor's Centre through the oak savannah/dunes with funds from the Shell Environmental Fund.
- The McIlwraith Field Naturalists is working on public outreach by hosting a series of nature study sessions at the public library. The group has also distributed the large bequest from Helen Spencer towards the Thames Talbot Land Trust as well as to the UTRCA's community forestry program.
- The St. Thomas Field Naturalists help out with hawk migration at Hawk Cliff as well as the butterfly count. They have also helped with butterfly tagging at Hawk Cliff.
- The Friends of the Coves have been successful with their new backyard habitat education and restoration project, which includes working with high school students. They are also working on implementing the Coves subwatershed plan with help from the City of London.
- The Sarnia Urban Wildlife Committee worked with Lambton Wildlife on an urban tree inventory project (Neighbourwoods) and helped obtain funding from Shell.

SOUTHERN ONTARIO GREENWAY – Jennifer Baker

Please let me know if you would like a copy of the presentation. Additional Greenway information is available on Ontario Nature's website – www.ontarionature.org.

ONTARIO NATURE CONSERVATION UPDATE – Jennifer Baker

Please let me know if you would like a copy of the presentation.

NATURE NETWORK UPDATE - Jennifer Baker

Please let me know if you need more information or if you'd like a copy of the presentation.

ONTARIO NATURE BOARD UPDATE – Brenda Lorenz and Steve Hounsell

Steve announced that Ontario Nature's new Executive Director, Caroline Schultz has recently started. She has a strong background in conservation and fundraising which will benefit the organization. Wendy Francis is the new Conservation and Science Director and also comes with skills that are very helpful to the organization.

Steve provided a good history and update on the attempt to set up a fundraising foundation.

SUGGESTED SPEAKERS

Name	Topic	Home Location	Contact Information
Emily Slavic	Reptiles & Amphibians	Rondeau Prov Park	naturalist (519) 674-1768
Sue Read	Peregrine Falcons in London	London	(519) 472-2887
Rachel Powless	Monarch Butterflies (banding)	Windsor - Holiday Beach	Migration Observatory Lmohawk@aol.com
Dr. Dan Mennill	Duels and Duets: an adventure in research on temperate and tropical birds University of Windsor – ornithologist and biology professor dmennill@uwindsor.ca		

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

- getting a more detailed update on one of the host group's projects or events

NEXT MEETINGS:

Spring 2006 – March 25

Hosted by: Friends of Pinery Park

Fall 2006 – October 28

Hosted By: Little River Enhancement Group & Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

Many thanks to Lambton Wildlife for hosting the event and for providing a great lunch! Suggestions for future agenda items gratefully accepted - contact Ontario Nature.

Twenty-first Annual ECFNC Dinner

Betty Learmouth

Nine-four friends and members of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club gathered on November 5, 2005 in the Udine Hall at the Fogolar Furlan Club. Doors opened at 6:00 p.m. for the bar and bidding on the silent auction. The room was attractively decorated with red tablecloths and colourful plush Christmas bear centre pieces, donated by Juliet and Pauline Renaud.

At 7:00 p.m. our Master of Ceremonies ECFNC Vice President Joe Parent welcomed everyone to our twenty-first dinner. The menu was penne in tomato sauce, roast chicken, Italian sausage, roast potatoes, steamed Essex County cauliflower and broccoli, green salad, and rolls. ECFNC members provided a variety of sweets for the dessert table.

Following dinner, MC Joe Parent called upon President Phil Roberts to introduce this year's recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award. Phil stated that ECFNC member Bill Balkwill and his brother Jack have had a long standing interest in the protection and promoting the preservation of our natural heritage. Author Gerry Waldron in his book *Trees of the Carolinian Forest* notes that Bill's opinions "were especially helpful. Despite his self-described status as a "simple farmer," Bill's observations and analysis are the envy of any university-trained practitioner." Gerry has noted that "Bill Balkwill, the regional authority in Essex County [of hawthorns], has identified more than thirty-two forms and counting."

Phil stated that through the efforts of Bill and Jack, their fine 45 acre woodlot in the Town of Kingsville has been managed for biological diversity. Working in partnership with the Canada South Land Trust, Bill and his brother Jack are placing a conservation easement agreement on the natural heritage on their property for its preservation in perpetuity. This action makes the Balkwill brothers pioneers in the Essex Region. Phil then presented the Outstanding Achievement Award wall plaque to Bill.

Our guest speaker Dan Mennill was introduced by Betty Learmouth. Dan is a new member to the University of Windsor's Biology Department and the very first ornithologist to teach and conduct research in the Biology Department. Presently Dan is teaching a third year level biology class in ornithology to 50 students.

Dan's research has centred on understanding bird song, whether it is an ornament or an armament for his four chosen study species, the Black-capped Chickadee, House Finch, Rufous-and-white Wren and Eastern Whipbird.

At Queen's University field station north of Kingston, ON, Dan has researched the linear dominance of Black-capped Chickadees and has studied the singing behaviours of this species. From his research, Dan stated that Black-capped Chickadee song is an armament that males use to defend their breeding territories from other males and also an ornament that males use to attract females.

Dan has studied the House Finch at a Montana site. This species is non-territorial with males not defending their territory. Dan stated that song for this species appears to be an ornament, only important for attracting females.

Tropical bird species will coordinate songs with both male and female singing together, in contrast to chickadees and finches where only males sing. Dan has studied the Rufous-and-white Wren at a site in northwest Costa Rica. This species sings in duet, taking melodious songs and combining them. Dan has considered the question of why both male and female sing in the tropics, whereas only males sing in Canada. It appears that song is an armament for the Rufous-and-white Wren, where females sing to defend their territory from other females, and males sing to defend their territory from other males.

The Eastern Whipbird which is found in eastern Australia is a duetting species. The song of this species is the male's whistle, a male whip crack, followed by the female response of two notes. Dan has studied sixteen populations where he has determined that the female Whipbirds all sound very different while the males all sound the same. This raises the question as to why the males sound so similar. It appears that song is an armament for the Eastern Whipbird and it may be an ornament.

Dan concluded his talk, stating bird songs may be a form of audio warfare, even "machine guns of the bird world."

In response to a question concerning the present abundance of Black-capped Chickadees, Dan responded that Essex County is experiencing an irruption, an event that occurs every five to ten years. Typically juvenile Black-capped Chickadees disperse 10 to 12 kilometres from their nesting sites in the southern Boreal forest and settle into flocks. This year, juvenile chickadees have been moving much greater distances, even from Thunder Bay to New York State, perhaps due to a lack of food in the north or else due to abundant nest success last summer coupled with a lack of space available in flocks in the north.



ECFNC President Phil Roberts (left) congratulates Bill Balkwill, recipient of 2005 Outstanding Achievement Award. Photograph by Wayne Wannick.

Dave Kraus thanked Dan Mennill for his most interesting and thought provoking presentation. Dan's homepage is at www.uwindsor.ca/dmennill

MC Joe Parent thanked everyone for attending this year's ECFNC dinner and supporting fund raising for natural habitat protection by participating in the silent auction. (The silent auction raised \$1,200.00). A special "thank you" to those who set up the hall, assisted at the reception desk and to everyone who provided the delicious desserts. Thank you to our MC Joe for again guiding us through the evening.

Silent Auction Donations, 2005

ECFNC Members' Donations Thank you to our ECFNC members for their support of the silent auction.

- As Long As There are Whales, by Evelyne Daigle (Tundra Books, 2004). Donated by Shirley Grondin. (Book)
- As We So Love: Songs and Chants, by Great Lakes Women of Gaia. (Compact Disk). Donated by Betty Learmouth
- Backyard and Beyond: A Guide for Discovering the Outdoors (Book). Donated by Peg Wilkinson.
- Barn Owl Beanie (Plush toy). Donated by Betty Learmouth.
- Basket of Jams and Jellies. Donated by Betty Moore.
- Baskets of Jams and Jellies. Donated by Shirley Grondin.
- Beastly Abodes: Homes for Birds, Bats, Butterflies & Other Backyard Wildlife (Sterling Pub. Co., 1995) Donated by Cathy Lapain. (Book)
- Beatrix Potter's Country World Postcard Collection. Donated by Wendy Fraser.
- Birds (Fog City Press, 2002) Donated by Cathy Lapain. (Book)

Bluebird Picture Frame. Donated by Cathy Lapain.

Build Your Own Birdhouses and Feeders, by John Perkins (Firefly Books, 1997) Donated by Shirley Grondin (Book)

Canadian Feathers, by Pat Barnstead (Book). Donated by Pelee Wings Nature Store.

Caterpillar Spring, Butterfly Summer (Reader's Digest Children's Books, 2003) Donated by Shirley Grondin.

Plush Christmas Bears, donated by Juliet and Pauline Renaud.

Common Birds of Ontario (Book). Donated by Ojibway Nature Centre.

Creation, a Novel, by Katherine Govier (Book). Donated by Margaret Calder.

Desk pad, shopping lists, bookmarks, playing cards. Donated by Betty Learmouth.

Durrell, Gerald. A Practical Guide for The Amateur Naturalist. Donated by Teresa Austrin.

Eagle Flight. Donated by Phil Roberts.

The Encyclopedia of North American Birds, Michael Vanner (Parragon Publishing) Donated by Cathy Lapain. (Book)

Endangered Spaces: the Future for Canada's Wilderness (Book). Donated by Teresa Austrin.

Feeder and bird feed. Donated by Ojibway Nature Centre.

Forests; A Book of Postcards. Donated by Christine Gross.

Great Horned Owl portrait, framed. Donated by Lydia Hunt.

Hire a Biologist. Donated by Gerry Waldron and Peggy Hurst.

Hummingbirds; A Beginner's Guide, by Laurel Aziz (Firefly Books, 2002) Donated by Shirley Grondin.

"Learning to Fly" (Limited Edition Plate). Donated by Dave Kraus and the Wetland Fund.

Mossy dish, donated by Wendy Fraser.

National Audubon Society Birdfeeder Handbook, by Robert Burton. Donated by Juliet and Pauline Renaud.

Niger Seed (4 kilograms). Donated by Pelee Wings Nature Store.

Peregrine Falcon photograph by Robert Taylor. Donated by Shirley and Rob Dunlop.

Peregrine Falcon Populations (book). Donated by Doris Applebaum.

Photo-cards (6). Donated by Anne Barbour.

Porcelain dessert plates (4). Donated by Juliet and Pauline Renaud.

Plate Rack. Donated by JoAnn Grondin.

Practical Astronomy, by Storm Dunlop (Firefly, 2004) Donated by Wendy Fraser. (Book)

Raging Planet; Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and the Tectonic Threat to Life on Earth, by Bill McGuire (Barrons) Donated by Shirley Grondin. (Book)

Songbird Bird Feed. Donated by Ojibway Nature Centre.

Tote Bag with Bird Motif. Donated by Cathy Lapain.

Trees of Carolinian Canada. Donated by author Gerry Waldron.

Trees of Point Pelee National Park. Donated by author Gerry Waldron.

12 Volt Air Compressor. Donated by Bill Balkwill.

Wild Wild World: Questions and Answers (Parragon Publishing, 2001) Donated by Cathy Lapain. (Book).

Window Bird Feeder, a Duncraft Cardinal Classic. Donated by Pelee Wings Nature Store.

Publishers' Donations

Thank you to the many publishers that supported our silent auction fund raising efforts in 2005.

The Birder's Life List & Master References. Donated by Lee Valley Tools.

Every Grain of Sand: Canadian Perspectives on Ecology and Environment. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2004.

Gibson, Graeme. The Bedside Book of Birds ~ An Avian Miscellany. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2005.

Hickman, Pamela and Pat Stephens. Animals and Their Mates: How Animals Attract, Fight for and Protect Each Other. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2005.

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- Miscellaneous donations
- Point Pelee National Park T-shirt in a bag. Donated by Friends of Point Pelee.
- Birding! At Point Pelee National Park (game). Donated by Friends of Point Pelee.
- Tote bag with butterfly motif.

Holiday Beach Passerine Banding 2005 - Chickadee Data

Carl Pascoe

Holiday Beach Migration Observatory passerine bander Carl Pascoe has kindly provided *The Egret* with the results of this year's banding of Black-capped Chickadees (BCCH) which were noted in good numbers at the banding station.

The total number of Black-Capped Chickadees banded in 2005 was 171. The first banding occurred on August 1, 2005 and then none until October 26, 2005 when 26 were banded. There was a station record day of 56 banded on November 3, 2005.

According to our 'big black book' *Identification Guide to North American Birds* by Peter Pyle the skulls begin to be complete by October 1 so if you have a completely ossified skull after that date you cannot classify the bird as an after hatch year by this criteria alone. There is a secondary method for ageing the bird by using the amount of white around the edge of the outer most tail feathers (r6). There is a spectrum to this pattern with a broad range of subjectivity and I have found the reliability for this method of ageing to be at best difficult. To compound the problem if a hatch bird had lost some of its tail

feathers and grown in new ones, then the new one have the AHY pattern. Only in the most extreme cases have I used this as criteria for ageing a bird as AHY after the 1st of October.

Because the ageing becomes less reliable as the fall season progresses more and more of birds must be aged as Unknown. Only when windows are remaining and matching tail feather (plumage) criteria are met do we still age the birds as Hatch Year.

Here is the breakdown for 2005 with percentage indicated:

- After Hatch Year = 8 (one of those was the Aug 30th bird) (<5%)
- Hatch Year = 71 (41.5%)
- Unknown = 92 (54%)
- Average weight of 10.65 grams

Some other Chickadee highlights of the season

A Black-capped Chickadee was the 2000th bird banded at the Passerine Station for the season. It was banded on November 7, 2005.

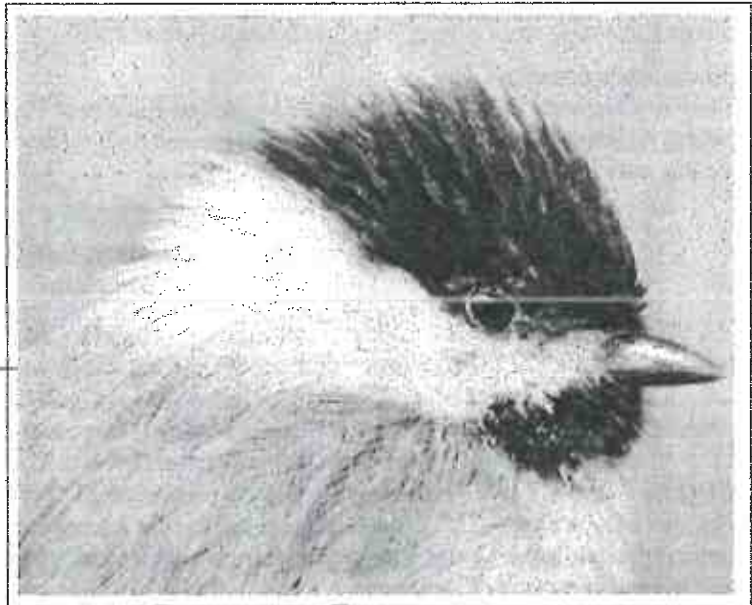
According to Rachel, (now known as Rachel's Chickadee Law at HBMO) "There is never just one." They seemed to run in gangs this year and if you found one in a net there were sure to be more.

These feisty little dynamos seem to take great pleasure in seeing how tangled they can get in the net. When they first fly into the net they appear to roll around several times and then grab as much net as they can with their feet. Just to add to the fun the darlings will peck and nip at any exposed flesh until your fingers are sore.

2005 appears to be our second Black-capped Chickadee irruption since we started fall banding at Holiday Beach. Because there are only two seasons where we have had large numbers of Chickadees we cannot show any pattern or draw general conclusions from the data. It can be assumed that they had a good breeding season in both 2001 & 2005 causing a greater dispersal and thus more birds at Holiday Beach. Many other stations also reported larger than average numbers of Chickadees this year.

Our Chickadee banding data for previous years indicates that our normal capture rate is nothing like this year. Our last big year of Chickadee banding was in 2001 when 162 were banded. The chart below summarizes the banding of Black-capped Chickadees (BCCH) since 1997, the first year of passerine banding at Holiday Beach.

<u>Year</u>	<u>BCCH banded</u>
1997	0
1998	9
1999	12
2000	4
2001	162
2002	9
2003	0
2004	5
2005	171
Total	372



Background to the Lake Erie Trophic Status Project

Jan Ciborowski

Lake Erie is the most rapidly changing and perhaps best known of the Great Lakes. Because almost 7 million people live on or near the shores, it has suffered the greatest amount of human-related stress. But it has also shown the greatest amount of recovery in response to restoration efforts.

Lake Erie seemed to be recovering well from the effects of severe pollution that was worst during the 1960s and 1970s. Sewage, phosphate-laden detergents and run-off from cropland and livestock farms resulted in huge blooms of algae. The decaying algae used up all the available oxygen by late summer each year and produced extensive 'dead zones' in western and central Lake Erie.

The effects of the pollution controls put into place in the 1970s were seen by the early 1990s when, water became clearer, algae disappeared from the shorelines, mayflies began to reappear in the mud, and the walleye and perch populations became abundant. Zebra mussels appeared in Lake Erie at about the same time. Many scientists gave them much of the credit (or blame) for the changes in water quality.

By the mid 1990s, the water at some times became as clear as that of Georgian Bay. When we experienced 2 years in a row of low water levels, we also observed formation of a dead zone in central Lake Erie at the end of the summer. Even though algae levels were very low in the middle of the lake, the US EPA and Environment Canada discovered that phosphorus levels in the water were surprisingly high. And the fishery wasn't doing as well as previously. Something seemed to be wrong with the lake. Perhaps the food web had been disrupted by the arrival of zebra mussels and round gobies.

In 2002, the US EPA provided funds for a large-scale research project to study the links in the Lake Erie food web. Twenty-six researchers made frequent sampling trips on ships provided by Environment Canada and the EPA. The analysis of those data is now nearing completion. Many of the results will appear in January 2006 in a special issue of the *Journal of Great Lakes Research*.

ECFNC and Ojibway Nature Centre Winter/Spring Activities and Excursions

For further information concerning ECFNC excursions, please contact JoAnn Grondin (734-0056), Margaret Jennings (250-0705) or Betty Learmouth (944-0825). Thank you to all who have volunteered to lead an excursion. Let us know about your ideas for future excursions. Considering volunteering as an excursion leader.

December 14 – ECFNC Members Night – Share a selection of favourite slides or a plate of cookies 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 Paul Pratt at Ojibway Nature Centre for details and to be assigned to a group in one of the count areas. This CBC is conducted within a 15 mile radius of Cedar Creek. Everyone is welcome.

December 18 – Rondeau Park Christmas Bird Count – Call Ojibway Nature Centre for more details.

December 19 – Point Pelee National Park Christmas Bird Count – Call Park Interpreter Sarah Rupert for more details.

December 27 – Lakeshore Christmas Bird Count – Call June Hurley at 979-8126 for more details. Meet at June's house for a noon hour compilation and a bowl of homemade chili.

December 28 – Holiday Beach/Big Creek Christmas Bird Count – Essex County's newest CBC is located between the Cedar Creek CBC and the Rockwood CBC in a shape that resembles an apple core, offering birding around Big Creek Marsh, Holiday Beach Conservation Area, the shores of the Detroit River, River Canard and a portion of La Salle. Call Betty Learmouth for more details and to be assigned an area.

December 29 – Ojibway Nature Centre -Wee Winter Wildlife at Ojibway Park (ages 3-6) – Explore our winter wonderland through games, crafts and outdoor fun. Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Fee

January 1, 2006 – Detroit River Christmas Bird Count. This count along the shores of the Detroit River on its Canadian portion is part of a Michigan CBC which is typically a morning count. Call Ojibway Nature Centre for more details.

January 7 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Winter Birding – A series of trips to observe the variety of winter bird life in Essex County. Saturday 8:30 a.m. \$13/each.

January 11 – ECFNC Monthly Members Meeting – Our guest speaker will be Jan Ciborowski of the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Windsor who will be giving a talk entitled “Factors influencing energy flow at the base of the Lake Erie food web: The Lake Erie Trophic Status project.” Jan will describe some of the changes that we’ve seen in Lake Erie water quality in the late 1990s, including issues related to the dead zone and how it forms. Jan’s talk will describe some of the different explanations that were developed to explain the changes, and how well our recent findings fit these explanations. Think of this as Lake Erie – possible causes of the dead zone. Please see article on page — for background information. Meet in Room C at the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m.

January 15 – ECFNC Winter Excursion – Tom Hurst has kindly agreed to lead his popular annual owl prowl again this year. Please meet at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area entrance at 2:00 p.m. Depending on location of owls, Tom has said we may do our search at Holiday Beach or drive to another location. To locate the Holiday Beach Conservation Area, proceed along Howard Avenue from Windsor, at the Malden Community Centre, turn right on to County Road 20, proceed to the intersection in Malden Centre, turn left onto County Road 50 and look for the Conservation Area entrance on your right

January 16 – March 6 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Captivating Critters at Ojibway Park (ages 3-5) – Wildlife exploration and nature fun for the younger set. Monday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

January 21 Ojibway Nature Centre - Winter Birding – A series of trips to observe the variety of winter bird life in Essex County. Saturday 8:30 a.m. \$13/each

January 22 – ECFNC Winter Excursion – Join Bernie Heaton, a resident and former landowner of the southern portion of the Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp, for a winter hike in the swamp. Be aware that the hike could be strenuous if there is a lot of snow. Meet at 2:00 p.m. Bernie’s home is at #676 on County Road 50. Directions: If you are coming from Windsor, follow Walker Road to the intersection at the light in Harrow. Turn left onto County Road 20, watch for the Ridge Road on your right, turn and follow the Ridge Road to County Road 50. Turn left onto County Road 50 and watch for Bernie’s drive on the left. Bernie’s home is east of the Oxley Golf Course. Bernie’s entrance drive is quite lengthy so there should be room for everyone to park but car pool if you are able.

February 4 – Ojibway Nature Centre - Winter Birding – A series of trips to observe the variety of winter bird life in Essex County. Saturday 8:30 a.m. \$13/each

February 5 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Winter Festival – Cross-country skiing, free family activities and winter wanders through the Park. A 10 percent discount on bird seed/feeders. Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details. Sunday 12:00 – 4:00 p.m.

February 8 – ECFNC Monthly Meeting – Our guest speaker will be ECFNC member Lynda Corkum of the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Windsor who will bring us up to date on Lynda’s goby research. Lynda’s talk is entitled “Potential control of the round goby using pheromone signaling.” Meet in Room C at the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m.

February 12 – ECFNC Winter Excursion – Join Consulting Ecologist Gerry Waldron for an exploratory winter walk on the new acquired Ontario Parks property within the Cedar Creek watershed which was purchased with the assistance of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. We will meet in the Greenway parking lot at Arner at 2:00 p.m. To find the parking lot, proceed south along the Arner Town Line (County Road 23) from the Essex by-pass to the hamlet of Arner at the intersection of Highway 20 and the Arner Town Line. Watch for the Greenway signs. Parking is on the left or east side of the Arner Town Line.

February 26 - ECFNC Winter Excursion – Late February is a great opportunity to see a spectacular display of waterfowl waiting in the Detroit River for the ice to clear in their nesting grounds. Join Paul DesJardins at 2:00 p.m. in the parking lot of Ojibway Nature Centre for a guided tour to the best viewing spot for water fowl.

March 2 – Annual meeting of Canada South Land Trust, Essex Civic Centre

March 5 - Annual meeting of Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, Ojibway Nature Centre

March 8 – ECFNC Members Annual Meeting – This meeting is the annual meeting of the ECFNC with reports from the various committees. The popular nature quiz will return this year with more exciting prizes. Meet in the Essex Civic Centre, Room C at 7:30 p.m.

March 13 or 15 or 17 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Frogs, Snakes & You at Ojibway Park (ages 4-6) – Enjoy a morning or afternoon filled with activities about slimy, scaly critters. 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Fee.

March 14 or 16 – Ojibway Nature Centre – Pond Pals at Ojibway Park (Ages 7-11)- Join us for swamp walks and nature fun. 10:00 a.m – 12 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Fee.

March 20 – May 15 - Ojibway Nature Centre – Captivating Critters at Ojibway Park (ages 3-5) – Wildlife exploration and nature fun for the younger set. Monday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m or 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Fee.

March 26 – ECFNC Activity – Meet ECFNC member Gerry Waldron at the active landfill restoration site in the Town of Essex for tree maintenance including pruning and placement of tree guards on young trees. Please bring your own shears. Meet at 1:00 p.m. for full instructions from Gerry and/or Peggy Hurst. Directions: Proceed south from the Essex by-pass on County Road 23 (Arner Town Line) 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.

April 1 – Annual conference of the Naturalized Habitat Network scheduled as part of Ontario Nature's *Doors Open to Ontario Nature*.

ECFNC Makes Donation Towards Wallaceburg Sycamore Woods

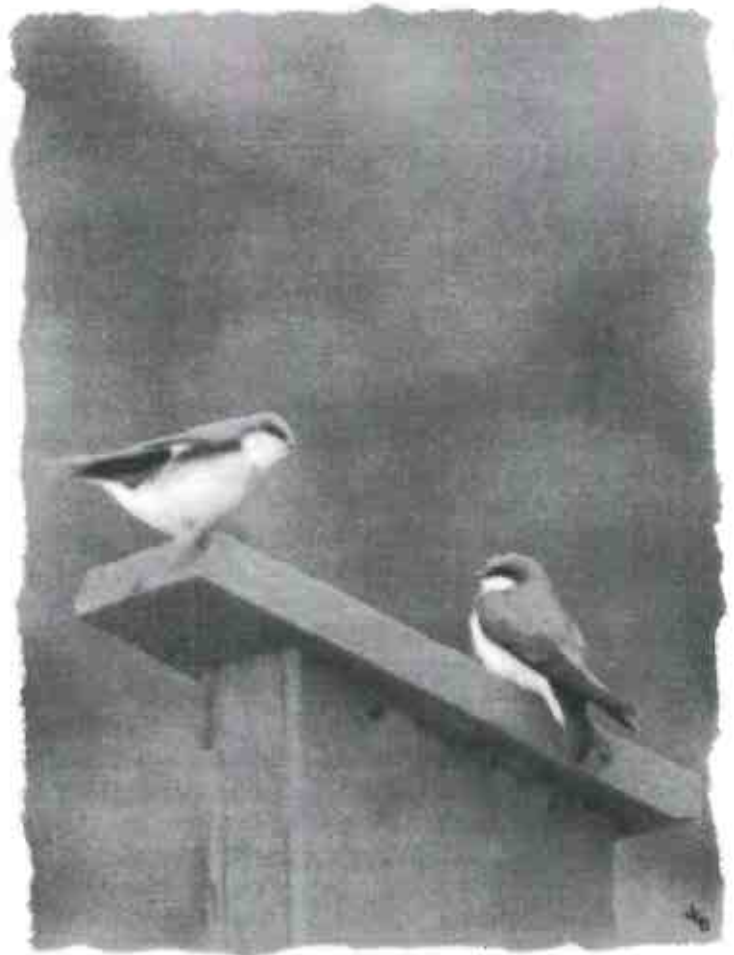
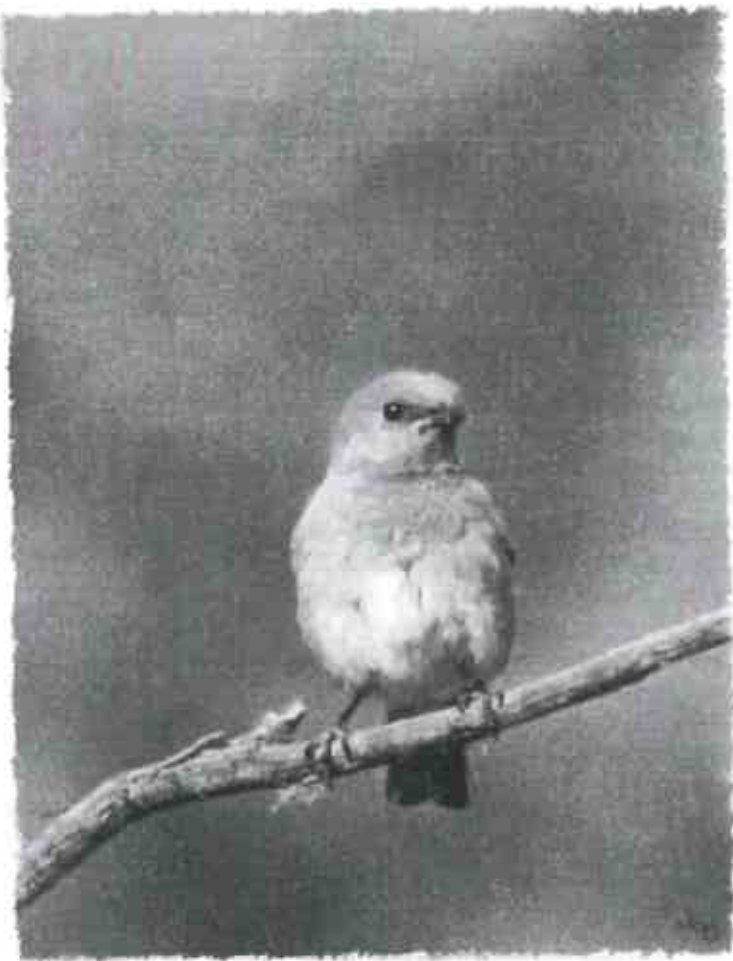
At a meeting of the Heritage Fund Committee on November 17, 2005, Jim McAllister made a motion to donate \$2,000.00 to the Sydenham Field Naturalists' appeal for assistance to purchase the Wallaceburg Sycamore Woods. Dave Kraus seconded the motion and all were in favour.

On December 6, 2005, the ECFNC were in agreement with the donation. ECFNC Treasurer made a motion that the decision of the Heritage Committee be supported and Mark Buckner seconded the motion. All were in favour.

ECFNC President Profiled in Windsor Life Magazine

Our President Phil Roberts was featured in the the Anniversary 2005 issue of *Windsor Life Magazine*, a periodical that is delivered to 80,000 homes in the City of Windsor. Phil decided at age six that the life of a naturalist would be ideal. Phil has realized his dream, working as an Environmental Specialist at Windsor's Airport and as a volunteer in a number of capacities.

Earlier this year, Phil was honoured by his employer Serco for his environmental work at the Windsor Airport..



Help support your
Bluebird Committee.
Buy a pack of "Nature Cards."
Each pack contains 9 cards
featuring these photographs.
Each card is blank inside
with a matching envelope.

Graham Brown took
these photographs on our
trails this spring for this fund
raising project. Cost of each
card pack is \$15.95 including
taxes and mailing.

Send your cheque payable to
Don Bissonnette
3718 Concession 3
RR # 2, Harrow
Ontario N0R 1G0
Please allow 3 weeks for
delivery.

Essex County
FIELD NATURALISTS'
Club

Devonshire Mall P.O., P.O. Box 23011, Windsor, Ontario N8X 5B5

Membership Renewal 2006

A reminder that your Essex County Field Naturalists's Club 2005 membership fees are now due. Please make your cheque payable to the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

Province _____

Postal Code _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

_____ Individual Membership \$20.00 / year

_____ Family Membership \$ 25.00 / year

_____ Sustaining Membership \$30.00 / year

_____ Life Membership \$500.00

