



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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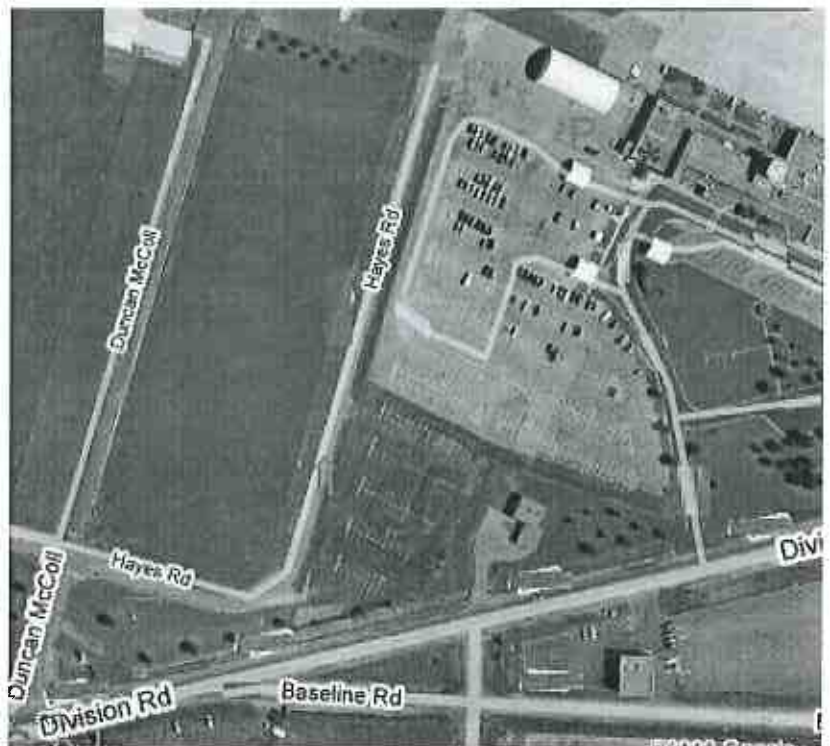


New Monthly Meeting Location!

Beginning September 2009 the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club will hold their monthly members meeting at Windsor Airport's new community room.

This spacious and comfortable room is situated at the west end of the airport terminal building.

From Division Road (County Road 42) turn north on Duncan McColl Road (1st street west of airport terminal entrance) then turn right (east) on Hayes Road (1st right) and drive to the end. Park on south side of long white garage (P). Community room * is adjacent and east of this parking area.



About the Club ...

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club was incorporated in March 1985. We are a registered charitable organization which promotes the appreciation and conservation of our natural heritage. ECFNC provides the community opportunities to become acquainted with and understand our natural world through identification, maintenance and preservation of the natural areas within 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:

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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Membership Secretary: Denise Hartley
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ERCA Liaison: Phil Roberts/Tom Hurst
Carolina Woods Liaison: Ruth Junge
Point Pelee Liaison: Phil Roberts/Mike Malone
Bluebird Committee Chairman: Don Bissonnette
NHRP Seed Collection: Bruno Sfalcin
Special Events Coordinator: Karen Cedar
Essex County Stewardship Network Liaison: Linda Menard-Watt
Ojibway Liaison: Karen Cedar
Citizens Environment Alliance Liaison: Phil Roberts
Windsor Planning Advisory Comm. Liaison: Phil Roberts
Canada South Land Trust Liaison: Tom Hurst
Detroit River Canadian Cleanup Liaison: Phil Roberts/Ian Naisbitt

Committees:

Egret Editorial: Betty Learnmouth, Karen Cedar
Speaker: ECFNC directors
Field Trip: JoAnn Grondin, Margaret Jennings
Heritage: JoAnn Grondin (coordinator), Margaret Jennings, Dave Kraus, Betty Learnmouth, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Bruno Sfalcin, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Shirley Grondin, Cathy Lapain
Annual Dinner: Heritage & Special Events Committees
Little River Enhancement Group: Ian Naisbitt, Tom Henderson

Cecile the Carolina Wren

Peggy Hurst

On Friday, January 16, 2009, I received a call from Maria at Flora Gardens asking for any help to evict a small group of birds that had moved into her greenhouses in October 2008.

They were welcome to the weed seeds on the ground, but they had discovered her newly sprouted herb seedlings, and caused her to replant several times. They would pick at the seed hulls on the cotyledons of the new sprouts, and eat some of the sprouts as well.

There were four interconnected greenhouses, and the birds would fly from one to another when pursued. Maria had found a net to protect the seedlings temporarily, so we had a few days. I suggested that she supply some bird seed, and then I called our fearless leader, Phil, who offered me a short mist net to trap the birds in.

Those days at Holiday Beach volunteering with the banders were paying off. Now, a short net is only nine metres long! I took some extendable tent poles, and the net, and set it up across from the smallest opening between structures, and we started shooing the birds into it. We caught a Dark-eyed Junco, a pair of English Sparrows, and an American Tree Sparrow.

One of the sparrows kept ducking into an empty pipe, so Maria grabbed a ladder and blocked the openings. We caught them and evicted them. Then we caught some kind of wren. I am not a bird expert, so I didn't know which wren it was, either a migratory wren or one that sticks around, so I called Tom. He wasn't at home. I put the wee thing in a box, and brought it with me.

When I did speak with Tom, he suggested that it was a non-migratory Carolina Wren. However, darkness was descending and the weather outside was frightful. It was threatening to snow, so I kept it overnight.

The next day, the forecast was for up to six inches of the white stuff, high of -8°C and I couldn't see letting it go, so I took it back to Maria, promised her it only ate bugs, and convinced her to let it continue to live in her greenhouses. Thanks to Maria and Cecile (or Cecilia), thank you, too.

The 2008 Bluebird Committee Report

Don Bissonette, photographs by Graham Brown

Success!

This past year 2008 was a good year for the Bluebirds here in Essex County. Our Club's 54 Bluebird houses hosted 16 pairs of successful Bluebirds. These pairs produced 82 fledglings. The affiliate Bluebirders hosted 15 pairs of successful Bluebirds, which produced 89 fledglings. Add up these numbers and we have 31 pairs of Bluebirds, with 171 fledglings.

In 2007, we counted 24 pairs, with 133 fledglings. That's a good increase. Thanks to all the folks dedicated to helping the Bluebirds make a comeback here in Essex County.

Grease is the Word

Over the years, our Bluebird house poles are regreased each April. We used petroleum jelly blended with cayenne pepper. The greasing prevents predation from ants, snakes, raccoons and possums.

If the weather turned warm shortly after applying the petroleum jelly, the jelly would soften up. Then it would slide down the posts. The nest would be vulnerable to predation. In 2008 we did an experiment. We only applied petroleum jelly to half of the posts. On the others, we applied general purpose tractor grease. It is similar to petroleum jelly, only thicker. The price is close to that of petroleum jelly. It comes in a toothpaste style tube, so it is easy to apply.

The results? We all found that tractor grease was superior to petroleum jelly. It never slide down the posts. I inspected many posts in the fall. The tractor grease was still as tacky as it was in April 2008.

Mystery Disappearances

Every year we have a few cases where adult birds and/or eggs and/or the nestlings disappear. This past year we had several cases. The grease on the pole is not disturbed, so the predators must be other birds.

At the Research Station's Birdhouse #4, there was one pair of Bluebirds in April 2008. Then they disappeared. A pair of Tree Swallows moved in. A few days later they also disappeared. The Tree Swallows would come and go. In early June 2008 one pair of Tree Swallows built a nest and laid one egg, then disappeared. The grease on the posts was not disturbed. Near this birdhouse are some large old Oaks. Below these branches owl pellets have been found in the grass.

Some Purple Martin landlords report that owls will harass, even kill, their Purple Martins. Perhaps owls were scaring off or killing what ever birds were moving into Birdhouse #4. Regardless of who the culprit was, we will relocate this Birdhouse.

At the Altenhof's a pair of Bluebirds built a nest and produced 5 eggs in 2008. They were scheduled to hatch May 20, 2008. On May 15, 2008, four of the five eggs were gone. The grease on the pole was not disturbed, so it must have been an avian predator. On May 21, 2008 the single egg was also gone. There was no sign of the adult Bluebirds. We'll never know who the predator was. However, suspects in this mystery are Common Grackles. One pair of Common Grackles were nesting nearby. Common Grackles are known to eat eggs and nestlings.

Another suspect in this mystery is Blue Jays. Blue Jays will feed on eggs and nestlings. Larry Dobson reported seeing Blue Jays predate a nest. His neighbours put up a few simple birdhouses. These houses quickly filled up with House Sparrows. A few times a day one or two Blue Jays would look into each house. One morning in May, Larry witnessed a Blue Jay stick its head into a birdhouse. The Blue Jay pulled out a sparrow egg and flew off with it.

Doubling Up

This past year, we saw many cases of Tree Swallows “doubling up.” This occurs when two pair of Tree Swallows are at one birdhouse. Usually, only one pair of Tree Swallows arrives at a house. Occasionally a second pair will arrive. The second pair plays the “waiting game.” During the waiting game, the second pair of Tree Swallows learns to keep a safe distance from the house. Otherwise, the first pair will chase them.

When the first pair’s nestling fledge, the second pair moves in right away. If the monitor is not there to throw out the nest, the second pair will build a small nest on top of the old nest. The second pair’s clutches are usually smaller than the earlier clutches. These nestlings fledge in late July.

This past year Dave Kraus was the “King” of the “Doubled-Up” Tree Swallows. At his Wheatley restoration site, there are 32 birdhouses. There were 16 cases of “Doubling-Up.” This produced a total of 50 successful nests of Tree Swallows.

Tree Swallows will also double up with Bluebirds. Every year we see Tree Swallows move into a house where a spring brood of Bluebirds has recently fledged. We also see bluebirds build their summer nests in houses where Tree Swallows have just fledged.

Bluebird Committee Brunch

Our third annual Bluebirders Brunch was held on Saturday, October 25, 2008. We met at the Pie Lady Restaurant in Harrow. Sixteen Bluebirders met to share data, discoveries, and delicious food. A good time was had by all. Thank you to all the Pie Lady staff. Thank you to Gerry Waldron, Caroline Kopchuk, and Mary Wilson for donating prizes.

Great Pix

Through spring 2008, Graham Brown visited some of the Bluebird trails where Graham was able to obtain some great photographs.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



Tree Swallow



Eastern Bluebird with young

All these pictures were used to make Nature Card hasty notes. These cards were sold in packs of ten, as a fund raiser for the Bluebird Committee. All monies raised went towards photocopying and lumber.

Last spring 2008, Graham visited the Howling farm where he spotted a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. In early May 2008 he photographed a Tree Swallow sitting in a flowering Redbud. In late May 2008 Graham visited the Pollard trail where a nest of four young Bluebirds was fledging. Graham took a photograph of a male Bluebird sitting with his newly fledged daughter.

Thanks to everyone who purchased packs of nature card hasty notes. We will definitely repeat this fund raiser next fall.

Mr. and Mrs. Meadow

In the June 2008 Egret, I wrote about Mr. and Mrs. Meadow. They were the pair of Bluebirds that landed on a birdhouse, just seven minutes after we put it up. They were quite tame and we took some great photographs. Their story and photographs were spread around the Internet. This past summer 2008 I was often asked, "How are Mr. and Mrs. Meadow doing?"

Just to refresh your memory, our story started Good Friday, March 21, 2008. That's the morning we set up two birdhouses in the Howling's meadow. As we were setting up the hunting perches, this pair of Bluebirds arrived and inspected the habitat. We named them Mr. and Mrs. Meadow. After lunch it began to snow. By evening there was ten inches of snow. We had a white Easter!

I returned to the meadow a few days later. Some of the snow had melted, creating bare spots. Mr. and Mrs. Meadow were still there, catching Crab Spiders in the bare spots.

In early April it was obvious that the north half of the meadow was higher and drier than the south half. Mr. and Mrs. Meadow spent most of their time in the north half, where Crab Spider hunting was best. The south half had numerous large puddles. In the north half of the meadow we had placed an upright birdhouse. In early April Mr. and Mrs. Meadow began building a nest in this birdhouse.

In late April a pair of Tree Swallows settled into the Peterson birdhouse in the south half of the meadow. They didn't mind the large puddles of water.

Mrs. Meadow produced five eggs, all of which hatched. These youngsters fledged in late May. In early June a pair of House Wrens moved into the upright birdhouse. This surprised us because this birdhouse was not in good wren habitat. Mr. and Mrs. Meadow stayed in the meadow with their fledglings.

In mid June the four young Tree Swallows fledged from the Peterson birdhouses. By then all the puddles in the area had dried up. The Meadow family was now staying in the south end, around the Peterson birdhouse. In late June the wrens has a clutch of eggs. The wrens can keep that house, thought the Bluebirds. The grass in the north end of the meadow was now over five feet tall. Not very good summer Bluebird habitat at all. They preferred the south half of the meadow, where the grass was short and the insects were easy to find.

In late June, Mr. and Mrs. Meadow began building their summer nest in the Peterson birdhouse. They produced four eggs, all of which hatched.

In July I visited the meadow a few times. The spring Bluebird fledglings were still in the area. By early August the four summer nestlings fledged. We were happy that this new site was so successful.

Best wishes for the 2009 nesting season. Thank you to everyone involved in this labour of love.

ECFNC's Bluebird Committee Report, 2008

Key to Abbreviations

Eastern Bluebird: EABL

Tree Swallow: TRES

House Wren: HOWR

Club Trails	Monitors	Houses	Successful EABL pairs	EABL Fledged	Successful Pairs TRES	Successful Pairs HOWR
Altenhof's	Don Bissonnette	7	2	7	6	0
Arner Point	Bob Tanner	3	0	0	3	0
Balkwill North	C. & M. Poisson	3	1	4	2	0
Balkwill South	C. & M. Poisson	5	2	11	2	0
Caney Creek	Bob Tanner	2	0	0	2	0
Doyle-Goddard	Bob Tanner	5	1	4	4	0
Grosso's	C. & M. Calder	3	1	4	2	1
Harrow Research Station	D. Bissonnette	5	2	13	2	0
Howling's	Denise Hartley	4	2	13	3	1
Lucchese's	Ron Muir	3	1	1	2	0
O'Neil's	Ron Muir	5	2	12	3	1
Pollard's	C. & M. Poisson	3	1	4	2	0
Sartori's	Bob Tanner	2	0	0	1	0
Sugar Bush	Don Bissonnette	3	1	9	2	1
Woodiwiss	Denise Hartley	1	0	0	0	0
	Club Total	54	16	82	36	4

Affiliate Trails						
Amherstburg	D. Mustar	2	0	0	1	0
Dunn Road	A. Michinski	25	0	0	13	13
Essex Landfill	Don Masse, Jr	10	0	0	3	0
Gail Farm	B. MacDonald	9	1	7	0	0
Kraus Farm	Dave Kraus	32	0	0	50	8
Mother Wood	C. & M. Calder	13	4	23	7	0
MacDonald's	B. MacDonald	6	0	0	6	0
Orchard View	Mary Wilson	42	5	33	25	0
Poisson's	C. & M. Poisson	7	2	9	3	1
Robert's	Phil Roberts	10	2	12	0	0
Stoney Cliff	M. Celestino	7	0	0	7	0
Viv's	V. La Croix	3	1	5	0	0
Waldron's	G. Waldron	9	0	0	5	0
	Affiliate Total	175	15	89	120	22
	Grand Total	229	31	171	156	26

Victoria Day At Point Pelee

Margaret Jennings

On May 18th, nine club members met at the Point Pelee interpretive centre for our annual Victoria Day hike.

We saw quite a few warblers: yellow, Tennessee, golden winged, bay breasted, black-poll, black-throated blue, magnolia, chestnut-sided, common yellowthroat, and redstart.

Other birds sighted were cedar waxwings, rose-breasted grosbeak, Baltimore orioles, white-eyed vireo, turkeys, wood thrush, kingbird, cowbird, catbird, chickadee, turkey vultures, robins, cardinals, and many red-winged blackbirds.

There were many spring flowers in bloom, including the may apples.

Early 2009 Spring Migration at Hillman Marsh

Report and photographs by Cherise Charron

The waterfowl are now (April 8, 2009) in Hillman Marsh in good numbers. The usual suspects have been spotted: Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Gadwell, Redhead, Widgeon, Mallard, American Black Duck, Hooded, Red-breasted and Common Merganser, Wood Duck, Canada Geese, Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveller, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Duck, and Scaup species.

Out by the observation tower in the back of Hillman I saw seven Snow Geese, plus eight Tundra Swans and Canada Geese. It was neat to see the seven Snow Geese as I had only seen single Snow Geese before. I didn't see too many Tundra Swans this year; maybe they were further east and north this year. However this year there seemed to be quite a few Ring-necked Ducks which is nice to see.



Canada Geese and
Snow Geese

Making March and early April appearances at the shorebird cell are Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, twelve Pectoral Sandpipers and Two Dunlins, one in transitional plumage, one in winter plumage.

Meanwhile back at the house in the backyard we had an interesting visitor. We had a Common Grackle with a white tail and white collar on the back of its neck. My husband had seen this bird last year and could not get a picture of it. This year we finally got a picture of this bird.

I just about forgot to mention my sighting of the Mink at Hillman on two different occasions. The mink did approach pretty close on both occasions which was pretty neat.



Common Grackles



Mink

I have included a couple of pictures of the Tip being washed away by wave action. The Tip is getting smaller as the lake is open and the ice has melted.



The Common Goldeneye photographs were taken in Wheatley.



Pt. Pelee tip

Common Goldeneyes

**Fifteenth Annual ECFNC
Weekend Trip To Pelee Island
May 2 & 3, 2009
Margaret Jennings**

Ten eager ECFNC members, including our leader, Dave Kraus, met at 7:20 am at the Kingsville dock to board the M.V. Jiimaan for our annual trip to Pelee Island. It was a lovely calm day and the ferry trip was smooth. On arrival at the Island we were met by John and Mary Celestino. We boarded the school bus which was ably driven by ECFNC member Sharon Mederios, and made our way to Sheridan Point. Here we saw snapping turtles as well as quite a few spring birds.

After check-in and lunch at the Anchor and Wheel Inn, we proceeded to Lighthouse Point. Here we found a palm warbler and many yellow-rumps. Because of the early start, many of us were tiring, so we adjourned to the Celestino cottage for drinks and relaxation before dinner. Most of us had an early night.

On Sunday morning we had breakfast at the Inn, and then set out for Fish Point. Trilliums and Dutchman's breeches were in full bloom, and we were pleased to note that there wasn't much garlic mustard here.

Over fifty species of birds were seen on the weekend, including a scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, northern orioles, yellow, Nashville, and black-and-white warblers, as well as pheasants and wild turkeys. We couldn't find a kingbird.

After a hearty buffet lunch, we made our way to the dock for the return ferry ride.

Thanks to Dave for organizing another great trip, to Sharon for driving the bus, and to the Celestinos for their warm hospitality.

**On the Ojibway Prairie, March 10, 2009
Betty Learmouth**

Despite a morning downpour on March 10, 2009, Ojibway Nature Centre walk participants hiked with umbrellas to the Ojibway Provincial Prairie Nature Preserve in search of Eastern Bluebirds. Walkers followed the left hand trail which leads to an open area beyond a Black Oak savannah. Here naturalist Karen Cedar scanned the small oaks and hickories for any sign of the Eastern Bluebirds but without success. Karen Cedar suggested the Eastern Bluebirds were hunkered down beneath clusters of protective leaves, likely at a level of about five feet.

This particular pair of Eastern Bluebirds has been observed in this area throughout the winter. Karen told us that food sources such as sumac berries were in short supply for these birds. Karen showed us Staghorn Sumac with its peculiar branching twigs that suggest this sumac's name. On the Ojibway Prairie, Smooth Sumac is the more common sumac in contrast to Point Pelee National Park where Staghorn Sumac is the common sumac species. Karen told us that

two other less common species are found in Essex County, including the uncommon Winged Sumac, and Poison Sumac encountered in the Oxley Poison Sumac Swamp.

Upon our return to Ojibway Park, we walked along the asphalt trail to view the plant species Skunk Cabbage, known from along the Ojibway Creek. Ojibway Creek was brimming with water, an unusual sight. Karen reminded us that in two months' time, the creek would be dry. Along the trail, we noted recently cut ash trees that were providing a tangle of trunks and limbs enjoyed by wintering Dark-eyed Juncos and a resident Hairy Woodpecker.

We did find the Cabbage Skunk beside the bank of Ojibway Creek, its leaves still tightly folded, tiny bright green dots against the dark wet soil. Ojibway's Skunk Cabbage do not flower, but do produce luxuriant green foliage as the spring season progresses. Karen told us that the leaves of this species have a pungent odor.

As we made our way back to the Nature Centre, Karen remarked that the flooded woodland around us provided temporary pools for the Park's Chorus Frogs during their reproductive season. Even though these vernal pools exist for a short time, Chorus Frogs lay their eggs with diminutive tadpoles quickly developing.

As the downpour continued, we noted the A Channel van had arrived for an interview with naturalist Paul Pratt, who spoke with the reporter about some of the benefits of flooding.

As we enjoyed hot drinks following our walk, we had a chance to observe the new display of spectacular photographs on the display screen behind the Ojibway Nature Centre's front desk.

Mac's Diary, or the Pelee Island Garlic Mustard Pull, May 11, 2009

The following diary is that of Mac the hound dog mix who accompanied Shirley Grondin, Margaret Jennings and Betty Learmouth on their annual visit to Pelee Island for the removal of Garlic Mustard from Ontario Nature's Stone Road Nature Reserve and Nature Conservancy of Canada's Shaughnessy Cohen Nature Reserve. Photographs by Miss Betty.

Monday, May 11, 2009

4:15 a.m. The alarm rang at my house, awakening me from a sound sleep. Miss Betty was up and about, serving me my breakfast and packing the vehicle with my dishes, my water and my Medi-Cal Preventive food.

6:00 a.m. A white vehicle pulled into my drive, with occupants Miss Shirley and Miss Margaret adding their bags to all my supplies. Finally I was instructed to hop in the vehicle and we were on our way.

7:00 a.m. We arrived at the Kingsville Ferry Terminal for the loading of our vehicle onto the M.V. Jiimaan bound for Pelee Island. This would be my first ever visit to Pelee Island.

7:30 a.m. After our vehicle was driven aboard the Jiimaan, Miss Betty led me to the upper deck which was chilly at such an early hour. Lily, the grey poodle, was also on the top deck. Her family took her into the stairwell as Lily is 14 years old and does not enjoy the cool Lake Erie air. Lily winters in Florida as an authentic Snow Bird dog.

Miss Margaret kindly spent time on the upper deck with me while Miss Betty enjoyed a toasted bagel with cream cheese and a cup of coffee in the Jiimaan's cafeteria with Miss Shirley.

9:30 a.m. The ferry Jiimaan docked on time. Miss Betty drove directly from the ferry terminal to Stone Road where Miss Shirley suggested that we walk the Nature Reserve trail which sounded promising to me. I was expecting a long leisurely morning walk. Within moments Miss Shirley exclaimed that many Garlic Mustard plants were in bloom along the trail.



Galic Mustard on alvar

Misses Margaret and Shirley stepped off the trail and began to pull these tall plants with their white blossoms. There were so many Garlic Mustard plants that the native plants in the thickets where not visible. Miss Betty joined Misses Margaret and Shirley as they pulled the invasive plant Garlic Mustard, leaving me to entertain myself. Misses Margaret, Shirley and Betty pulled and pulled and pulled Garlic Mustard plants for two hours. They barely looked up and they hardly saw the alvar plants including Miami Mist, Purple Vetch, Short's Aster, Nodding Wild Onion, Solomon's Seal, Wild Phlox, Alumroot and Mouse-eared Chickweed as they worked away, slowly making their way through thickets of Prickly Ash.



Shirley Grondin
pulling garlic
mustard

12:00 p.m. At noon there was a general announcement for all that it was lunch time. We hopped into the vehicle, with the Westview Restaurant as our destination. I ate my lunch in the vehicle which was parked in the ferry terminal parking. Late I overheard Misses Margaret, Shirley and Betty discussing the Westview's famous Sweet Potato Fries and homemade Bumbleberry Pie served with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

1:00 p.m. Following lunch, we drove to the Stonehill B&B. Again I was disappointed as I was left in the vehicle, luckily under a large shady maple tree.

3:00 p.m. We all hopped in the vehicle for a return visit to Stone Road. Misses Margaret, Shirley and Betty conducted a mop up on the Ontario Nature property, looking for any



overlooked Garlic Mustard plants. When the area was declared Garlic Mustard free, we hopped in the vehicle, parked at the old Stone Road schoolhouse, and tackled the Garlic Mustard along the road's edge. There were plenty of plants to pull which kept Misses Margaret, Shirley and Betty busy until five o'clock. Unfortunately I was unable to help as I was left tied at the vehicle so I could not wander, but I bayed and barked often so all knew that I was watching over them.

5:00 p.m. As we departed Stone Road, a vehicle appeared from the north with the driver waving for our vehicle to stop. In the front seat, was a handsome spaniel which was closely watching the road ahead. The driver inquired if anyone in Miss Betty's vehicle had seen the King Rail. Everyone looked mystified with the slow realization that the visiting birders seen earlier in the day were on Stone Road at the flooded woodland looking for this uncommon bird. Misses Margaret, Shirley and Betty had been so

focused on the pulling of Garlic Mustard, that they had neglected to inquire as to the object of the birders' interest.

Margaret Jennings



Alvar after removal
of garlic mustard

6:00 p.m. We drove to the Anchor and Wheel Inn where the vehicle was parked in a shady area so that I could eat my supper. My supper time was quite stressful as a large unfriendly brown tabby cat settled itself on the roof of the vehicle parked next to my vehicle. This tabby stared at me for the entire time that Misses Margaret, Shirley and Betty were at their dinner. Later I heard the Misses discussing their delicious dinners of pickerel and Lake Erie perch, with no mention of a brown tabby at their table.

8:00 p.m. The highlight of my evening was a walk from the Stone House B&B to the Pelee Island Heritage Centre. Along the way I met a huge chestnut horse grazing in front of the B & B which made loud noises as it expelled air through its nostrils. Opposite the ferry terminal, two hunting dogs were with a group of people chatting outside the Westview. All of us dogs made a few lunges at each other, but our leashes kept us close to our caretakers.

9:00 p.m. At mid evening, Miss Betty had me hop into the vehicle where I spent the night.

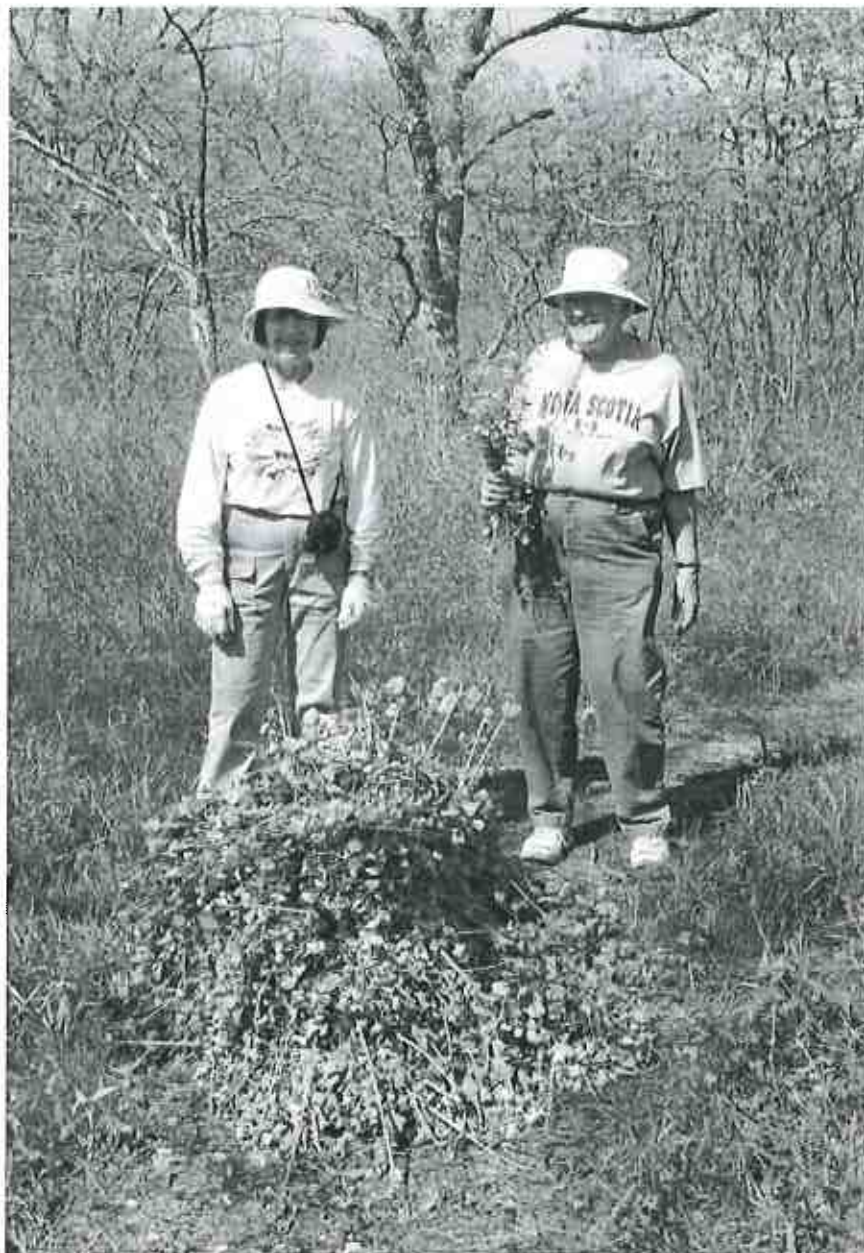
Tuesday, May 12, 2009

6:30 a.m. Misses Shirley and Betty took me for a long morning walk south along the West Shore Road, walking right along the centre line. A vehicle passed us, stopped, then backed up. It was Claire McAllister with another member of the McAllister birding group, enjoying their yearly Pelee Island birding vacation. Everyone else in the McAllister party at the rental cottage had refused to rise and shine for yet another early morning of birding. Claire reported over 150 bird species identified during their 2009 visit to Pelee Island, including the Stone Road King Rail.

8:00 a.m. Misses Margaret, Shirley and Betty enjoyed a delicious Stonehill B&B breakfast of orange juice, half a grapefruit with a slice of quick bread, Quiche Lorraine, peameal bacon, an English muffin with Becky's homemade plum jam and cups of steaming coffee. I, in the meantime, ate my dry Medi-Cal diet.

Miss Margaret checked the guest book, discovering that ECFNC members Caroline Williams and her husband Ray Look-Kan had spent the previous three days birding on Pelee Island, while enjoying Stonehill B&B hospitality.

After breakfast, we hopped in the vehicle,



Shirley Grondin and Margaret Jennings with pile of garlic mustard

arriving in good time to board the ferry MV Jiimaan. As usual, Miss Betty and I spent our time on the upper deck where we chatted to other passengers and their dogs. Miss Betty spoke with birder Alf Rider who provided more information on the Stone Road King Rail. Alf's group had good views of the bird, as well as hearing the bird call, which it does at dawn and dusk. Alf suggested that the bird is on territory, calling for a mate which it will continue to do over the next few weeks.

My first Pelee Island trip was enjoyable and I certainly intend to walk more trails on future visits as well as sample Island cuisine.

Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park, March 31, 2009

Betty Learmouth

Nature interpreter Karen Cedar lead a group of twelve participants on March 31, 2009 across Matchette Road, along Titcombe Road, past the tower line to the entrance to the Tallgrass Heritage Park, an ecologically significant area secured in years past by the City of Windsor and Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Karen drew our attention to the calls of tiny dime sized Chorus Frog as we walked along the woodchip trail. The call of the Chorus Frog is thought to resemble the sound a comb makes if a finger is drawn over the comb.

Other amphibians to listen for in early spring include the Leopard Frog and the American Toad. The Leopard Frog produces a low snoring sound while the American Toad's call is a high pitched trill.

Despite spring's cold temperatures, the Chorus Frog has a "quick turnaround" within four weeks in which this species must attract mates, lay eggs which hatch as tadpoles, followed by development into tiny frogs. Chorus Frogs use small puddles or pools in woodlands as their egg laying habitat. Green Frog tadpoles may take two or three years to develop into a frog. Green Frogs are subject to predation in their ponds while the level of predation in a puddle is likely far less than in a pond.

Karen lead the group around the Tallgrass Heritage Park's pond which is a hot spot for migrant bird species in spring. In the 1970s this area was considered as an area in which St. Clair College large equipment classes might work. Luckily that did not happen, and the area is now protected.

Unfortunately the invasive species Phragmites has taken over the pond with very little water now visible. We noted galls resembling pine cones growing on a small willow species. Karen drew our attention to an American Hazel which had elongated dangling catkins that will bloom as the spring season progresses.

Along the trail we saw several stalks to which were attached clusters of white fluff. Karen suggested that these were stalks of Thimbleweed (*Anemone virginiana*), a species of anemone. Karen said we can expect to see other species of anemone during the weeks ahead.

As we left the pond area, Karen pointed to a hole in a nearby bank, identifying the site as a fox den. The group was surprised at the den's location which is only a few feet away from the trail. Karen assured us that in a few weeks leaves would nicely conceal the site.

The group paused on Titcombe Road to look at trees growing in the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. Karen told us that these solid looking trees are Black Oaks. Within Ontario, this tree species is a rare species. Karen drew our attention to the lower limbs of this species which grow straight out from the trunk. Due to the open habitat in which Black Oak grows, this is a distinctive feature of this species. Compare the Black Oak to forest trees which do not grow in such a manner.

At the conclusion of our walk we asked about the willow species that we had seen during our walk. At the Nature Centre, across the path from the bike rack, we examined a small shrub with tiny buds which were revealing silver hairs. This is the Prairie Willow which may grow to a height of several feet. Across the Ojibway Nature Centre's entrance path, a willow at least ten feet tall was identified as a Pussy Willow. Its buds had open and had developed beyond the silver hairs with blooms forming which would attract insects on warm day over the next few days.

Black Oak Heritage Park, April 7, 2009

Betty Learmouth

On April 7, 2009, Ojibway Nature Centre's Tuesday morning hiking group gathered at the car park on Broadway off Ojibway Parkway for a one hour walk lead by natural history interpreter Karen Cedar. The original plan was to walk to an access point on the Detroit River but a strong northerly wind resulted in a change of plans. Instead the group headed towards the shelter of Black Oak Heritage Park.

A new access trail which passes close to the dog walk park has been developed for entry into Black Oak Heritage Park. Karen told us that Black Oak Heritage Park was established in 1990 to protect the black oak savanna found here which is one of Canada's most endangered habitats.

Karen said that grass cutting in this wide field through which we were walking has been reduced with prairie species emerging, especially Switchgrass. Karen drew our attention to a sandy area that is habitat to burrowing wasps which predate the Emerald Ash Borer. As Karen spoke to us about the area we were walking through, a Northern Flicker flew into a nearby cottonwood.

Our group entered the wooded area, walking along a trail where we noticed clumps of green leaves along the trail edge. Karen informed us that this plant was Garlic Mustard, an invasive species that will overwhelm native plants as it increases in number. Karen showed us how Garlic Mustard may easily be pulled. Garlic Mustard is a biennial that will bloom and develop numerous seeds in its second year.

On our walk toward the black oak savannah, we paused at an old field that is slated for restoration. Plans are to burn the area, collect and introduce prairie plant seeds from other

locations. Since this old field has been cultivated in the past, prairie species do not exist here in contrast to the grassy entry.

Upon entering the savannah, Karen drew our attention to the various widely spaced tree species about us including Black Oak, hickory species and Sassafras. The savanna is an open habitat with sunlight able to reach the savanna floor. Wildflowers grow here that are not seen at other sites within the Ojibway Prairie Complex. Of interest is the rolling topography of this site, recalling an earlier time when the area was an old lake bed.

Karen drew our attention to a small dead tree by the trail, an American Chestnut which had recently died.

Plans for the Black Oak savanna include a burn this spring which will remove the leaf litter on the savanna floor. This litter removal will enable savannah plants to flourish, producing a good seed crop. As well, shrubs such as American Hazelnut that are not a part of the savannah will be reduced by the fire.

Fire has always been a part of the savannah. A burn for the entire Park would be ideal but it is likely that only one quarter of the Park will be burned. There is a need to be sensitive to nearby plants such as Dainty Rice.

Last year a massive cleanup of debris was conducted in the park with little litter noted during our walk.

Black Oak Heritage Park has had to cope for many years with the unauthorized use of motorized vehicles into this sensitive site. Last year a blitz was held to inform businesses and individuals of the site's significance. This effort has worked well but still the problem of entry persists. We could see the damage that a Hummer had inflicted several weeks ago on various sensitive trails.

A sign of spring were tiny leaves emerging on a honeysuckle vine.

Hillman Song and Shorebird Festival

Shirley Grondin

Saturday, May 9, 2009

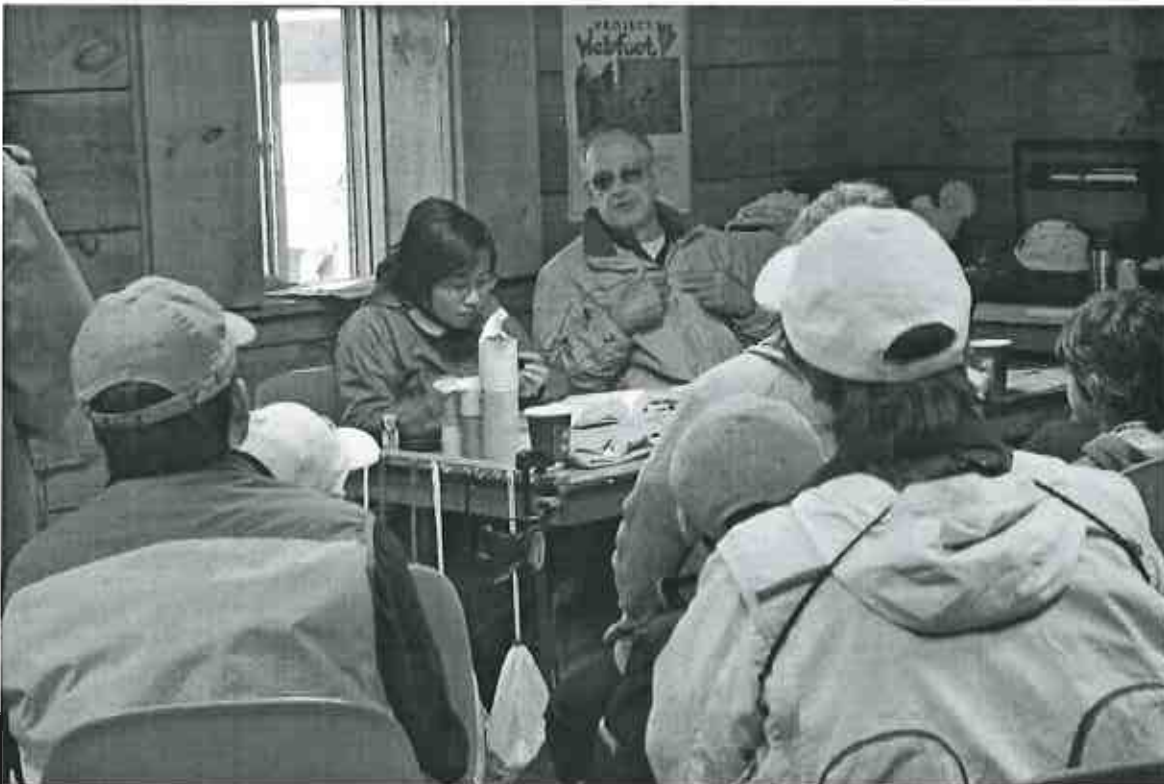
Once more we are back at Hillman Marsh for the annual festival. It is a clear day so far but the wind is brisk. Holiday Beach Migration Observatory volunteers Bob Hall-Brooks, Celia Chiu, and Steve Greidanus are banding today as well as tending the nets.

The Blue Kestrel Café is open and the coffee and muffins are ready for the early birders. Later it is staffed by Bonnie Ross and Pauline Renaud. When we are not busy with the café, we all help with the Adopt a Bird Programme. There are always repeat visitors who are waiting for birds to adopt.

Bev Wannick is upstairs with the displays and activities for the children as well as trouble shooting for any problems that arise i.e. visitors find a Little Brown Bat on the ground and it doesn't seem to be well. Bev puts it in a "recovery box" inside the centre.

A large ecotour group of journalists came by to see the banders in action. They are very inquisitive and took many pictures of the lone warbler being banded. They were also interested in seeing the net set up so accompany the banders on a net run.

The wind eventually forced the closure of the nets and we called it a day.



Sunday, May 10, 2009

Bob Hall-Brooks and Celia Chiu bird banding

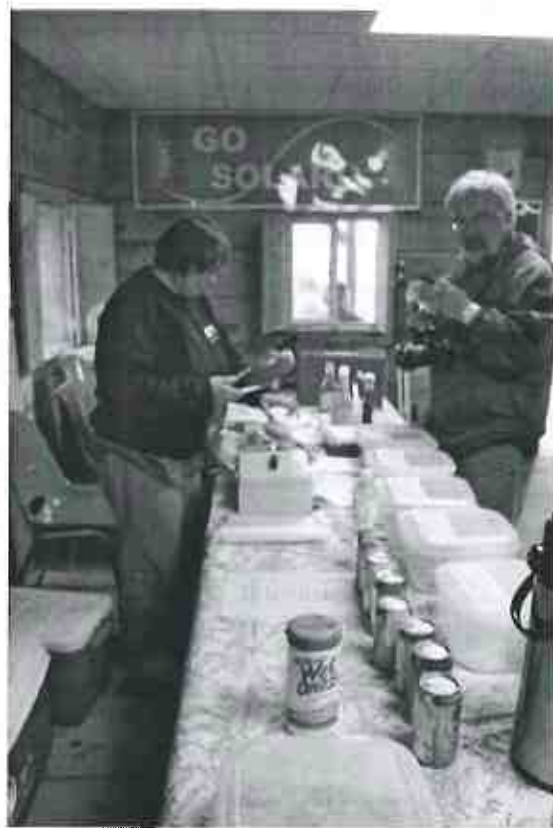
Well, it is another clear day and the wind has lessened. The banding station is staffed by Bob Hall-Brooks and Celia Chiu.

Activity at the Blue Kestrel Café is busier today. JoAnn Grondin and Betty Learmouth staff the Blue Kestrel Café later in the morning.

Our little bat from yesterday was placed outside on the back porch. He left his box and stayed on the wall near the back steps, posing for many pictures. There is more activity at the nets today and a steady stream of visitors wanting to adopt birds. Dorothy McLeer is looking after that duty today.

JoAnn Grondin and
Blue Kestrel Café

Many “thank you’s” to our loyal volunteers, Bonnie, Pauline, JoAnn and Betty. Our club could not do this event without your help. So a big thank you!



Carolina Woods, Town of Leamington, Update

Ruth Junge

As usual, at this time of year, the priority in the woodland is the eradication of the Garlic Mustard. A local scout group will be working with several interested groups in this activity on May 14, 2009.

Every summer since the bush became Town of Leamington property, I have tried to get some action from the town to prohibit dumping of grass clippings by area home owners into the perimeters of the woodland. I was apparently dealing with a well placed but unreliable member of the town’s administration who promised to take action but did nothing.

Last winter I took the problem to a councillor, Rick Atkin, who arranged with William Marck, chief administration officer, to deal with the problem. Last month the town sent letters to all residents in the area informing them that dumping would not be tolerated. Signs have also been posted.

Erna Thiessen “Friends of Heinz Bush” and I will continue monitoring the woodland and will keep the club informed as to its status.

Earth Day at Mic Mac Park

By Cathy Lapain

The weather this year was great! Attendance a little low this year, we were left with quite a few bake goods, which were donated, to a local food bank.

Thanks to those who donated bake goods: Mary Jane Winterton, Caroline Williams, Bonnie Ross, Pauline Renaud, Betty Learmouth, Cathy Lapain, Peggy Hurst, Shirley Grondin, JoAnn Grondin, Marion Doyle and Margaret Calder.

Thank you to the helpers also: JoAnn Grondin, Denise Hartley, Linda Menard-Watt, Caroline Williams, Kathy Lesperance, Pauline Renaud and Cathy Lapain.

Hillman Shorebird Migration, May 12, 2009

Report and photographs by Cherise Charron

Shorebird migration in the Hillman shorebird cell is now in full swing with sandpipers, plovers, terns, ducks, et cetera.

Some of the neat species I have seen this season were the eleven American Avocets and four Marbled Godwits on April 25, 2009. The American Avocets and Marbled Godwits were being chased around the cell by a pesky Ring-billed Gull. I can see why sometimes shorebirds do not hang around the cell for long periods.



American
Avocet

Another neat species is the Willet. One day at the cell there was a total of 74. They were hanging out in the back by the greenhouses with other shorebirds and terns. Then all of a sudden the Willets and every shorebird, tern and duck lifted off and scattered in all four directions!



Willet

Why? An adult Peregrine Falcon decided to fly through the cell looking for a meal. I waited for about fifteen minutes and the only thing that came back were five Caspian Terns.

Sometimes people wonder why they don't see birds that are reported at the cell and roving predators is one of these reasons.

The Eurasian Wigeon has also made an appearance in the back of the shorebird cell. On another day I had a quite cooperative Willet near the benches. The Willet was foraging and managed to get a juicy dew worm. But not for long! A female Mallard rushed the Willet and gobbled up the worm! It's not easy being a shorebird.

Meanwhile outside the marsh in a field on the way to the North Beach, I saw a Canada Goose with a blue morph Snow Goose. I wonder if this was the same couple that was spotted earlier at the Blenheim Sewage Lagoons?

There is still more to come as the northward shorebird migration continues. Who knows what other shorebird rarities will show up?

Ojibway Nature Centre's Spring Nature Walks, March 24, 2009

Betty Learmouth

Eleven persons and Baby Anna joined naturalist Tom Preney on Tuesday morning, March 24, 2009 for the first of ten nature walks about the Ojibway complex. As we made our way to the trail Tom remarked that already there are signs of spring at Ojibway. Common Garter snakes have been observed during some recent warm days. This species emerges early from hibernation, compared to the Eastern Fox Snake which emerges in late April.

Our well paced walk took us in a circular route through the Ojibway woodland which brought us to a Black Oak savanna, the pond, and back to the Nature Centre.

As our walk began, Tom pointed out five handsome Pin Oaks. Many Pin Oaks are to be found in the Ojibway woodland, and may be recognized by their lower limbs which grow in a particular drooping manner, close to the tree's trunk. We walked to the last bridge over the Ojibway Creek where black material was noted on twigs and branches of some shrubs. This material was identified as black knot, a widespread and serious fungal disease which affects fruit trees such as the cherry on which this fungus was noted.

A little further along the pathway, Tom showed us a rufous phase Eastern Screech Owl which had chosen a secure spot on a damaged tree trunk as its day time roost. Binoculars were shared so that all had a good view of this attractive small owl.

Some movement on the forest floor caught our attention. Bird species identified included Eastern Phoebe, Black-capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker and a nuthatch species. Overhead a Turkey Vulture floated over the woodland's canopy.

A few steps further along the trail, Tom drew our attention to a grove of large trees which Tom told us were Bigtooth Aspen. Nearby were smaller trees, identified as Trembling Aspen. Both species are late comers to the Ojibway woodland which in this area was likely an oak savanna some years in the past but has been invaded by these species.

The trail curved into an area where we noted that the trees were widely spaced. Tom told us that the trees in this area were mainly Black Oak (we did see one White Oak) and that this area is a Black Oak savanna. Some years ago this Black Oak savanna had been a picnic area but now the area has been closed to this activity with prairie restoration taking place through the efforts of the Friends of Ojibway Prairie. We identified Big Bluestem, Indian Grass, Switchgrass, Wild Bergamot, and Prairie Thistle growing at the site. In the background, the invasive non native Phragmites will be a challenge to remove.

Our walk continued to the pond where we spotted a Belted Kingfisher in flight, a species that takes up residence here each spring. Another Turkey Vulture was seen as it soared over Ojibway Creek. Tom pointed out a freshly excavated hole in the leaf litter, which a Chipmunk had recently dug.

By Ojibway Creek, a pair of White-breasted Nuthatches were seen creeping over an old willow tree's fissured bark. As we approached the creek, Tom drew our attention to the nesting boxes situated in the creek. We were treated to an Eastern Screech Owl in profile as the bird peered from its box. Thank you to Tom for showing us so many early spring delights at Ojibway Park.

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ECFNC Activities and Excursions, June '09 – Sept. '09

For further information concerning the ECFNC excursions, contact JoAnn Grondin (519-734-0056), or Margaret Jennings (519-250-0705). Let us know about your ideas for upcoming excursions. Consider volunteering as an excursion leader.



“Thank you” to those who have volunteered to lead an excursion.
We appreciate leaders sharing their time and expertise with others.

June 10 – ECFNC Members Meeting –Ojibway Nature Centre: Guided tour of Ojibway's new exhibits, signs and other improvements. If the weather cooperates, join us for a spring prairie hike. **Meet at Ojibway Nature Centre**, 5200 Matchette Road, Windsor, 519-966-5852.

July 1 – Canada Day – Free Entry to Point Pelee National Park

July 4 – Windsor's Annual Butterfly Count – Call Ojibway Nature Centre 519-966-5852.

July 8 – Canada South Land Trust pasta night at Caboto Club, 4:30-7:30 pm. Pasta, salad, rolls for \$7.50 eat-in, \$8 takeout. 50/50 draw and bake sale.

July 11 – Peche Island Day and ECFNC Members Meeting – Free shuttle boats will be available between 10:00 am and 1:00 pm to take visitors to Peche Island from Lakeview Marina. Guided tours of the island will also be available. ECFNC members are invited to help with tours as there will be an opportunity to learn about the natural heritage and wildlife of the island. To volunteer please call Ojibway Nature Centre 519-966-5852.

July 15 – ECFNC Kayaking Event – Join ECFNC Director Michael Malone for kayaking in the Pelee area. 6:00 – 8:30 pm. Limited spots are available and pre-registration is required. Many thanks to Mike and Pelee Wings Nature Store for this exciting opportunity! Register with Karen at 519-945-3592.

August 8 – Point Pelee Butterfly Count or Workshop

August 12 – ECFNC Members Meeting – Flying Squirrel Monitoring Program Presentation by staff at **Point Pelee National Park Visitor Centre at 7:00 pm.**

August 22 – ECFNC Members Bat Night and BBQ – Join Treasurer Teresa Austrin and Vice President Joe Parent at their home at 675 Mersea Rd.12 to enjoy an evening with their bats. Bring family and friends at 6pm for a BBQ, bat fun, campfire, star-gazing and sleep-over (bring your tent). Please RSVP (519-322-0004) by August 7th, and if you are partaking in dinner please bring a side dish or dessert, as well as \$5 towards the BBQ and beverages.

From Windsor take Highway 3 east to Highway 77. Turn left and go north for about 4 miles to Mersea Rd. 7. Turn right at this intersection and go east for about 2 km to the first stop sign. Turn right onto Mersea Rd.12, watch for the farm on the right and house sign 675.

September 9 – ECFNC Members Meeting - Meet in the Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 pm.

September 13 – ECFNC Excursion – Club member Dave Kraus invites ECFNC members to join him for a walk at 2:00 pm through his acres of goldenrod and asters in flower and native prairie plants. We will also walk through mature woodland and restoration areas. Address: 1515 Mersea Rd. 7. From Windsor take Highway 3 east to Highway 77 (north of Leamington). Turn north (left) onto Highway 77. Go about 3 miles to Mersea Rd. 7. Turn east (left) onto Mersea Rd. 7 and go about 5 miles (through one stop sign) to #1515 on the north side of the road.

September 19 - 20 – Holiday Beach Hawk Festival. This main weekend for the Hawk Festival will include hawk watching from the tower, workshops, guided hikes, banding, etc. Our Blue Kestrel Café will be open on both Saturday and Sunday.

October 14 – ECFNC Members Meeting- Meet in the **Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 pm.**

October 18 – ECFNC Fall Excursion – Join club member Ian Woodfield in a tour of Malden Park, a naturalized area with extensive trails, hills and ponds, including the highest point in Windsor. Meet at 2 pm at the Banquet Centre parking lot at 4200 Malden Road, Windsor.

October 22 – 23 – 2009 Carolinian Canada Forum – Saving Our Coast. Pt. Pelee National Park. Call 519-433-7077 or visit www.carolinian.org for more information.

November 7- Our 25th Annual Dinner – mark your calendars! Speaker: Paul Pratt. Topic: A Twinkle in Time: 400 Years of Astronomy. Fogolar Furlan Club. Please consider donations to the Silent Auction. Call JoAnn Grondin if you have questions or donations (519-734-0056).

**Essex County Field Naturalists' Club
Membership Form**

Individual membership \$20.00 / year _____ Family membership \$25.00 / year _____
 Student (full-time) \$10.00 / year _____ Sustaining membership \$30.00 / year _____
 Life membership \$500.00 / year _____ (tax receipt eligible)

Name _____

Street _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Phone Number _____

E-mail _____ I wish to receive the Egret by email.

Make cheques payable to: **Essex County Field Naturalists' Club**
 Devonshire Mall P.O., P. O. Box 23011, Windsor, Ontario N8X 5B5

Thank you!