



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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Oakwood Bush, January 26, 2010

Betty Learmouth

Six hikers/naturalists joined Ojibway Nature Centre staff person Tom Preney for a morning walk in the Oakwood Bush on January 26, 2010.

As the group headed toward the trails, Tom remarked that Oakwood Bush has both oak woodland and prairie species within the site. There are also remnant sidewalks dating from the 1920s running north/south through the woodland which allow for easy access. Birding along the sidewalks can be rewarding as nearby residences have backyard feeders. During spring time migration, the ephemeral pools of water within the woodland attract many migrating birds.

Oakwood Bush has a resident Red Fox which is seen quite regularly although our group did not encounter the fox or Wild Turkeys which also live in the woodland.

As we entered the woodland, Tom pointed to fallen ash trees around us which had been cut as dead trees near trails are a hazard.

Along the trail, we stopped to watch several Downy Woodpeckers as these birds worked their way around dead branches and tree trunks. House Sparrows flew into a nearby tangle of brambles. A Tufted Titmouse flew from its perch in a large tree. Tom commented that the population of this species has rebounded since the loss of many birds to the West Nile virus. This species is a cavity nester.

Along the trail we recognized a number of plant species including Evening Primrose, Culver's Root, and Wild Yam Root.

Black-capped Chickadees and Northern Cardinal were observed in a tangle of vines.

We were delighted when Tom drew our attention to a Cooper's Hawk which had perched close to the trail. We had a fine view of this adult male's dark gray wings. Tom commented that this particular bird is accustomed to walkers and activity in the woodland. Eventually the raptor flew a short distance to another perch.

The trail we were walking on was an old sidewalk. Other old sidewalks may be found in woodland locations such as Brunet Park.

Other sightings along the sidewalk trail included several Burning-Bush Euonymous or Eastern Yahoo, an elderly Swamp White Oak, and colourful orange mushrooms. Fruit capsules still remained on the Burning-Bush Euonymous.

Tom took a few minutes to show us some plantings behind the Ontario Ministry of Health laboratory where certain species at risk such as Climbing Prairie Rose have been relocated due to future highway construction. Tom told us a nearby unmowed site has a number of prairie species such as Little Bluestem.

Thank you to Tom for leading us on an informative and enjoyable hike to Oakwood Bush.

Reminder! New Meeting Location!



Our monthly members' meeting are held at Windsor Airport's new community room 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. 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.

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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Club**

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Speaker: ECFNC directors
Field Trip: JoAnn Grondin, Margaret Jennings
Heritage: JoAnn Grondin (coordinator), Margaret Jennings, Dave Kraus, Betty Learmouth, 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

POINT PELEE BIRDS — ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR 2009
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This 2009 summary pertains to the Point Pelee Birding Area, which is a standard 15-mile diameter CBC circle centred slightly north of Concession Road D. The area includes all of Wheatley and Wheatley Provincial Park to the northeast, and all of Seacliff and Leamington to the northwest.

We continue to mention in these annual summaries that the amount of birding activity at Point Pelee continues to decline. This was again evident in 2009. The month of May was about as busy as it normally gets, but for the remainder of the year it continues to be a mystery as to why so few birders are visiting Point Pelee — especially during the fall season. That said, there was a spurt of activity during the weekend of October 3-4 when the Ontario Field Ornithologists held their Annual Convention at Point Pelee; in total there were 260 registered participants.

Despite the ongoing decline of visiting birders, 2009 still ranks as an excellent year at Point Pelee with many significant sightings to report. A total of 286 species was found, which is above the long-term annual average of exactly 280 species dating back to 1980 inclusive ($n = 30$). During these 30 years the highest annual totals were 301 species (in 2005) and 289 species (in both 2003 and 1981). In contrast, the lowest annual totals were 271 species (in both 1989 and 1984).

For the first time the 2009 total includes Wild Turkey, which is a result of recent introductions. Wild populations of the species were extirpated at Point Pelee around 1878, and elsewhere in southern Ontario around 1902. Locally Wild Turkey is now found in wooded areas throughout the Point Pelee Birding Area, particularly within Point Pelee National Park where a large population appears to be well established.

The following list pertains to species that were *not* recorded at Point Pelee during 2009, but are normally somewhat regular in occurrence. For example, they typically occur at least two or three times during a 5-year period. If anyone is aware of any of these species being observed at Point Pelee during 2009, please let me know.

Harlequin Duck
American White Pelican
Cattle Egret — *first time not recorded since 1998*
King Rail
Western Sandpiper
Purple Sandpiper — *first time not recorded since 2003*
Pomarine Jaeger
Parasitic Jaeger — *first time not recorded since 2003*
Long-tailed Jaeger — *first time not recorded since 2003*
Sabine's Gull — *first time not recorded since 2004*
Black-legged Kittiwake — *first time not recorded since 2003*
Brewer's Blackbird

Finally, the following sections detail the most significant observations that were made during 2009. There were, of course, many other sightings of note including early and late migration dates, unusual wintering and summering records, breeding records, record-high counts, etc., but these are too numerous to be detailed here.

Thanks to everyone for providing their sightings throughout the year, even if they could not be included in this summary.

— **ONTARIO RARITIES at POINT PELEE in 2009** —

Listed below are provincial rarities as designated by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC). The final status of these records await decisions by that body, at least for those sightings that were in fact documented and submitted to the OBRC for review.

Little Blue Heron

May 4-5 — one adult, Wheatley Provincial Park to Pelee Marsh at DeLaurier Trail (Robert B. Falconer, D. Corrinne M. Falconer *et al.*)

May 15 — one first-year immature, flying N at Tip (Jeffrey H. Skevington, J. Michael Tate *et al.*)

White-faced Ibis

May 11 — one adult, NW Hillman Marsh (Barry S. Cheriére *et al.*)

— this is the 4th record for Point Pelee, and 8th record for Ontario.

Black Vulture

April 11 — one, Tip area (Christopher E. Street, Stacey J. Carnochan *et al.*)

Mississippi Kite



*Mississippi Kite flying over
Ander's Field on May 22, 2009*

- Robert Curry

May 11 — one adult, DeLaurier Trail to Sanctuary Picnic Area (G. Tom Hince *et al.*)

May 11 — one first-year immature, Tip to DeLaurier Trail (Jean Iron, Ronald J. Pittaway *et al.*)

May 13 — one first-year immature, Ander's Field (Eric W. Holden)

May 22 — one first-year immature, Ander's Field (Robert Curry, Glenda J. Slessor *et al.*)

Piping Plover

September 27 — one juvenile, Tip (Ross Mackintosh *et al.*)

California Gull

February 11 — one *albertaensis* adult, Concession Road D (Alan Wormington)

May 9 — one nominate *californicus* adult (or near-adult), Tip (James M. Pawlicki, David A. Gordon, Richard V.Z. Salembier)

— these are the 7th and 8th records for Point Pelee (2nd and 3rd in spring).



Adult California Gull at the Tip on May 9, 2009 – James M. Pawlicki

**Black Swift**

May 17-18 — one, flying over Visitor Centre (EWH, Brandon R. Holden, Susan K. Holden, Lauren F. Rae *et al.*)

— a **NEW** species for Point Pelee — **#386**. Black Swift is an exceptionally rare species in eastern North America, with only a few documented occurrences.

Point Pelee's first-ever Black Swift flying over the Visitor Centre on May 17, 2009 - Brandon R. Holden

**Ash-throated Flycatcher**

November 6 — one immature, Tip (Henrietta T. O'Neill *et al.*)

— this represents the 2nd record for Point Pelee (the first was on November 24-25, 1962).



Second-ever Ash-throated Flycatcher for Point Pelee at the Tip on November 6, 2009. – Alan Wormington

Bell's Vireo

May 15 — one, Post Woods (Gerard J.D. Phillips *et al.*)
- this is the first Point Pelee record since 2004.

Fish Crow

April 26 — two, flying over Tip (Stephen T. Pike, Dale H. Larson *et al.*)

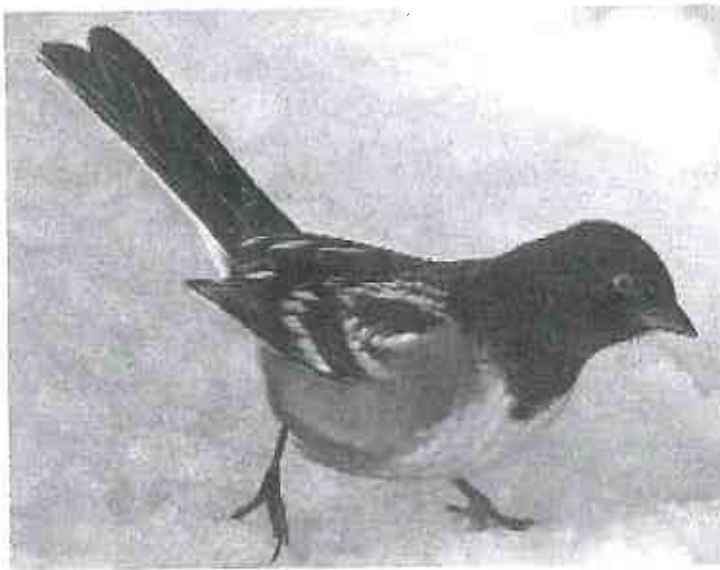
Cave Swallow

November 16-17 - three, west side of Tip (Sarah E. Rupert *et al.*)

Kirtland's Warbler May13- one female, Sanctuary Area (Serge Beaudette *et al.*)

Spotted Towhee

January 1–March 26 — one *arcticus* adult male, Tip area (AW *et al.*)
- 3rd record for Point Pelee; this bird was originally found on November 11, 2008.



*The overwintering, long -staying Spotted Towhee at the Tip
on February 3, 2009 – Alan Wormington*

Lark Sparrow

May 7 — one, west side of Tip (C. Cloutier)
May 14 — one, SW Woodland Nature Trail (Bernard Beneteau, Larry Rocheleay)

Henslow's Sparrow

April 17 — one, West Beach (Mike Irwin)
April 25 — one, Black Willow Picnic Area (STP, Blake A. Mann *et al.*)
May 1 — one, Old Maintenance Compound (William G. Lamond, AW *et al.*)

Blue Grosbeak

April 27 — one female, Sparrow Field (BRH, LFR)

May 14 — one first-year male, Tilden's Woods to NE Woodland Nature Trail (Mark W. Hubinger, Joanne A. Hubinger *et al.*)

May 19 — one female, NE Woodland Nature Trail (David J. Milsom *et al.*)



*A rather unusual photo of the Blue Grosbeak at NE Woodland Nature Trail on May 14, 2009
The owner of the camera is not known - Mark W. Hubinger*

— **ADDITIONAL RARITIES of NOTE (not OBRC)** —

Greater White-fronted Goose

March 6-14 — two *frontalis* adults (pair), Hillman Marsh (Dean J. Ware *et al.*)

October 2 — one adult, flying south off Tip via east side (Mark E. Chojnacki, Linda J. Nuttall)

Ross's Goose

March 5-8 — six white-morph adults, Hillman Marsh to Wheatley Harbour (AW *et al.*)

March 8 — four white-morph adults, fields south of Hillman Marsh (DJW)

— this is a different group from the six birds as listed above.

March 9 — 22 white-morph adults, fields south of Hillman Marsh (DJW)

— this group presumably includes the ten birds as listed above.

March 10-15 — 44 white-morph adults, Hillman Marsh to Pelee Marsh (AW *et al.*)

— this group presumably includes the 22 birds as listed above, and represents by far the largest flock ever recorded in southern Ontario.

Brant

October 24 — one immature, Tip (AW, Richard P. Carr, BAM)

Eurasian Wigeon

March 15-19 — one male (unbanded), Concession Road D to NW Hillman Marsh (AW *et al.*)

March 16 — one male, Lake Erie at Sturgeon Creek, flying offshore from NW to SE (AW)

April 29–May 1 — one male, NW Hillman Marsh to Leamington Airport (John Lamey *et al.*)

King Eider

November 26 — two females, flying south off Tip via west side (AW)

Red-necked Grebe

November 13 — one, west side of Tip (SER)

Eared Grebe

November 23 — one, Lake Erie at Sturgeon Creek (AW)

Snowy Egret

August 15 — one juvenile, NW Hillman Marsh (Randy H. Holland)



Snowy Egret flying past NW Hillman Marsh on August 15, 2009 – Randy H. Holland

American Avocet

April 25 — 11, NW Hillman Marsh (DJW *et al.*)

May 2 — 14, Wheatley Harbour (AW)

— this flock was first seen well offshore over Lake Erie, arriving from the southeast before flying towards the direction of Hillman Marsh.

May 3 — 27, Wheatley Harbour (Gary A. Houghton, Genny L. Houghton *et al.*)

— these birds were present from 11:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., and were later seen 55 km to the west at Lakewood Beach (west of Holiday Beach) at 5:45 p.m. (AW).

Red Phalarope

October 2 — one juvenile, Wheatley Harbour (DJM)

October 3 — one juvenile, flying south at East Beach (William J. Crins, Paul D. Pratt *et al.*)

— presumably the same bird was involved in both of these observations.

Laughing Gull

- March 24-26 — one adult, Wheatley Harbour to Tip (DJW *et al.*)
May 16 — one adult, Tip (JHS, JMT, Ronald G. Tozer)
May 25 — one adult, NW Hillman Marsh (BRH, DJW)
May 28 — one adult, NW Hillman Marsh (BRH)

Franklin's Gull

- October 2 — one adult, Seacliff Beach (AW)
October 10 — two first-winter immatures, Wheatley Harbour (Cherise A. Charron)

Black-headed Gull

- July 23 — one adult, SE Onion Fields (AW)

Snowy Owl

- January 11 — one immature, Onion Fields (Gerald Peltier *et al.*)

Yellow-throated Warbler

- April 24 — one, Tip (Laura Monforton, LR)
April 29 — one male, West Beach (JMT, Edward P. LeBlanc, Robert J. Cermak *et al.*)
April 29 — one, Pioneer Beach (STP, Julie Liptak, RPC)
May 3 — one male, Pioneer Picnic Area (MEC, LJN)

Dickeissel

- August 12 — one adult male, NW Hillman Marsh (Brad M. Ouellette)

Western Meadowlark

- May 5 — one, west side of Tip (Kevin A. McLaughlin, Robert L. Waldhuber, G. Brock May)

Yellow-headed Blackbird

- May 1 — one, Concession Road E (Ken Friesen)

Pine Grosbeak

- March 17 — two, flying south at NW Hillman Marsh (Peter S. Burke, Ian M. Richards)

White-winged Crossbill

- January 11 — 180, SE Wheatley (GTH)
— this represents a record-high count for Point Pelee.
January 19 — 115, Wheatley Provincial Park (AW, Adam J. Hall, Rosalee A. Hall)
January 20 — 30, 26 at Visitor Centre + 4 at Tip (BRH, John Pleizier)
January 23 — 12, flying south over DeLaurier Homestead (AW, HTO)
- all of the above sightings are sample counts made at Point Pelee, birds which were part of a widespread incursion of the species into southern Ontario

— SIGNIFICANT MIGRATION DATES —

With a history of bird study dating back to 1877, it seems remarkable that *any* record-early or record-late date could be established at Point Pelee. Yet every year we continue to push the biological limits of these migration categories.

RECORD-EARLY SPRING:

- Semipalmated Plover — one on April 25 (JMT *et al.*) — *ties record-early*
 Whimbrel — one on April 28 (BRH, LFR) — *5 days record-early*
 California Gull — one on February 11 (AW) — *40 days record-early*
 — this bird arrived with the first big influx of Ring-billed Gulls, which numbered about 2500 birds.
 Thayer's Gull — one on February 12 (AW) — *3 days record-early*
 Iceland Gull — one on February 18 (AW) — *3 days record-early*
 Black-billed Cuckoo — one on April 27 (Neeltje VanderLaan, EPL) — *ties record-early*
 American Crow — two on February 10 (AW) — *ties record-early*
 — these two birds (an apparent pair) were flying north (and high) over Hillman Marsh during a period when other species were also arriving at Point Pelee; numerous additional American Crows were recorded immediately after February 10, also migrating north over the area.
 Gray-cheeked Thrush — one on April 24 (AW, RPC, HTO) — *1 day record-early*
 Blackpoll Warbler — one on April 26-28 (EPL, JMT, RJC *et al.*) — *1 day record-early*
 Wilson's Warbler — one on April 27 (Marianne B. Reid *et al.*) — *3 days record-early*
 Swamp Sparrow — one on March 6-14, at Tip (AW *et al.*) — *6 days record-early*

RECORD-LATE SPRING:

- Long-billed Dowitcher — one on May 15-18 (JI *et al.*) — *1 day record-late*
 Red-necked Phalarope — one on June 4-5 (CAC, RPC) — *7 days record-late*
 California Gull — one on May 9 (JMP, DAG, RVZS) — *47 days record-late*
 Thayer's Gull — one on May 26 (BRH) — *ties record-late*
 Worm-eating Warbler — one on May 28 (BRH) — *2 days record-late*

RECORD-EARLY FALL:

- Greater White-fronted Goose — one on October 2 (MEC, LJN) — *28 days record-early*
 Northern Mockingbird — one on July 22, at west side of Tip (AW) — *6 days record-early*

RECORD-LATE FALL:

- Red-tailed Hawk — three on January 28 (AW) — *5 days record-late*
 — these birds were migrating west over Sturgeon Creek, on a cold day with strong NW winds after a major snowfall.
 Snowy Owl — one on January 11 (GP *et al.*) — *3 days record-late*
 — wintering birds are highly territorial and usually remain for extended periods, but this probable late-fall migrant was seen on one day only.
 Yellow Warbler — one on October 17 (Jerry S. Jourdan) — *3 days record-late*

— SIGNIFICANT SEASONAL RECORDS —

American Golden-Plover

June 21 — one alternate-plumaged adult, fields at SW Hillman Marsh (AW)

- this observation is difficult to interpret, since the bird could have been a very late spring migrant, a non-breeding summer visitor, or a very early fall migrant; previous summer records at Point Pelee all pertain to first-summer immatures (birds in “basic” plumage)

White-crowned Sparrow

June 21 — one, Shuster Trail at SW Tilden’s Woods (AW, HT) — this represents the first-ever summer record

The Birds of Point Pelee

Point Pelee bird sightings (current or historical) can be sent to:

wormington@juno.com

The Point Pelee database is used for multiple purposes: Annual Summaries (such as this current one for 2009); seasonal sightings that are published in *North American Birds*; and for a major publication which is currently in progress — *The Birds of Point Pelee*.



Dense Blazing Star

Naturalists on the Prairie. See: article Ojibway Prairie, January 31, 2010: Winter Wildflower Walk

Ojibway Park, December 15, 2009
Betty Learmouth

Five hikers joined Ojibway Nature Centre staff member Tom Preney on December 15, 2009 for a morning hike around Ojibway Park. As we were departing the Nature Centre we noted signs of digging in the demonstration garden. The site will be required during the new centre's construction, thus the need to relocate various prairie plant species. Unfortunately the large Paw Paw will be lost.

Some plants from the demonstration garden may be directed toward plantings planned at Prince Edward School on Giles Boulevard in the City of Windsor. Due to the efforts of Susan Walker the school has received a grant of \$10,000 for restoration planting.

The hikers gathered on the porch of the Nature Centre's storage shed to observe the winter bird activity at the feeders including Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees and Northern Cardinals.

Tom told us that a Coyote had frequented the area around the shed, attracted by cat food that was meant to be an aid to the capture of a homeless cat. The Coyote became bolder over a period of several weeks, coming closer to the Nature Centre several times a day. One noon hour, as a horrified visitor watched from the Nature Centre's observation window, the Coyote carried off an adult Groundhog. Shortly afterwards, the Coyote disappeared.

In response to a hiker's question concerning the number of deer in the woodlands and savannas in the neighborhood, Tom suggested that a population of about 150 deer may be in the area. Just the previous day Tom had encountered three deer on an Ojibway trail. One deer was a twelve point buck with its companions a four point and a spike. The twelve point buck poised quite closely to Tom who did not have his camera.

Luckily two deer were noted grazing in a nearby thicket and, as we watched, a third deer was located. The twelve point buck from the previous day was not one of the three bucks before us, although one of the three did have a fine set of antlers which were quite white. The animals moved about in a thicket, surprising well camouflaged behind gray tree trunks, shrubs and tall winter grasses. Every so often we could hear a distinctive clacking sound as the deer touched and rattled each other's antlers.

Our hike continued onward to the Black Oak savanna. Along the trail we noted a large red gall on a bramble stalk. We stopped to examine the fluffy seed head of Long-headed Thimbleweed.

The trail through the Black Oak Savanna will soon receive wood chips to make the trail more solid. Tom pointed to the rubbings on Little Leaf Lindens where the deer have rubbed their antlers. We noted areas on either side of the trail where many young Black Oaks are growing. Tom remarked that these trees will thin themselves over time.

Tom remarked that Tufted Titmouse appear to be making a recovery following the losses due to West Nile Virus. Eight Titmouse have been observed at one time at the Centre's feeders.

As we passed the old willow near the Ojibway Creek, we observed the prairie species flagged with orange tape that have been relocated to this site.

As we completed our hike, Tom told us that a Gray-phased Eastern Screech-owl is a resident of a nesting box close to the Nature Centre. Often at 4:30 p.m. the owl will appear at the box entrance.

Thank you to Tom for an informative hike through Ojibway Park.

Mark your calendar for the **Song & Shorebird Celebration at Hillman Marsh on May 8 and 9, 2010**. Banders from the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory will be on hand to band warblers and other migrating songbirds. Banders have documented the return of songbirds to the small woodland at Hillman Marsh, demonstrating the importance of natural heritage to our bird populations. Returning Yellow Warblers and Gray Catbird have been retrapped to confirm their return to their nesting territory.

Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count, December 19, 2009

Betty Learmouth

Photographs: Betty Learmouth

As December 19, 2009 approached, participants in the Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count watched the weather. Luckily the weather looked promising for the CBC with cloud forecast for the earlier portion of the day with snow later in the day. Temperatures were expected to hover around the freezing mark.

In the northern portion of Area 2, CBCers Marg Calder, Cherise Charron, Betty Learmouth, Kathy Lesperance, and Larry Onysko arranged to meet at 8:45 a.m. with the day's plan to make several stops along County Road 34, then drive the concession roads southward into the Town of Kingsville. The afternoon would be devoted to a visit to the Balkwill Lands woodland followed by a visit to woodlands to the south of the Balkwill Lands. Marg Calder kindly volunteered to keep our tally. Overnight, a light dusting of snow had covered the ground in a white blanket.

The group started off east along County Road 34, stopping at an apartment complex with lots of cedars that provide shelter for wintering birds such as Dark-eyed Juncos and Northern Cardinals. The next stop was to be at Mrs. Betty Moore's pine plantation where we intended to walk the perimeter of the pine plantation.

House Sparrows, House Finches and a Brown-headed Blackbird fluttered about Mrs. Moore's front yard feeders. Along the eastern edge of the pine plantation in the lee of a light northeast wind, the group found a mixed flock of Black-capped Chickadees and Dark-eyed Juncos. Then we were treated to a view of four Red-breasted Nuthatch together in one small dying pine. A little pishing attracted the birds for a good look by all.

At the back of the plantation, we found the small wetland frozen. The wind was chilly with no lingering passerines.

After our visit at Mrs. Moore's we drove a few doors to the east to the Boisvold's feeders where we located more wintering birds including Downy Woodpeckers.

After driving through North Ridge, we turned south onto the side road, where an American Kestrel flew from the power line. On the first concession road south of the Highway 3 Bypass, we spotted a Red-tailed Hawk as it flew across the concession road. At noon we took our lunch break at Rosa's Restaurant where Marg did a tally of our morning sightings.

At 1:00 p.m. we headed south along the Arner Townline to Concession 2 in the Town of Kingsville. Bill Balkwill and Jack Balkwill welcomed us and invited us to look around for wintering birds. Around the Balkwill residence we found 19 Dark-eyed Juncos, 10 American Tree Sparrows, 2 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 12 House Sparrows, 2 Blue Jays, 2 European Starlings, and 2 Northern Cardinals. We enjoyed a walk to the pond and along Lanes 1 and 2 in the woodland, but found no activity.

Leaving the Balkwill Lands after 2:00 p.m. we were fortunate to encounter 10 Horned Larks on the agricultural lands. Earlier in the week, on the Lakeshore CBC held December 14, 2009, no Horned Larks had been observed.

We drove down to the Arner Townline to a woodland area where we intended to walk along several access roads. As we pulled into our parking area, two dark animals in the nearby alfalfa field caught our attention. We decided the animals were muskrats. After snipping off a few bits of alfalfa, we watched as the two muskrats carried the green stalks across the track, over a bank and towards a small creek that passes through an area dominated by Red Cedar.



Balkwill Pond in winter

Then our attention was turned to a large dark bird flying over the woodland in a westerly direction. Cherise identified the birds as a juvenile Bald Eagle. Within the woodland we found a flock of 15 Cedar Waxwings.

We completed our walk in the woodland and began our drive of the concession roads. By now a light snow/drizzle had begun. As we slowly passed a house with a small natural area nearby, Kathy exclaimed that she had spotted an American Robin. We backed up our vehicle so that all had good views of this bird as it fed. On another concession road, we were lucky to observe a flock of 50 Snow Buntings as they whirled over a field of corn stubble.

After checking all our concession roads, we headed to the Hurst's residence for the day's compilation. Marg worked with Paul DesJardins who had done the count in the southern portion of Area 2 with Pauline Renaud and Ian Woodfield.

A delicious pot luck buffet was served which included finger foods, chili, lasagna, salad and desserts enjoyed by the CBCers.

Compiler Paul Pratt reminded everyone that this count was the 25th annual Cedar Creek Count, making the count as old as the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club which also celebrated its anniversary in 2009. In 1986 a pre-count was held during January 1986 with the first official count held during December 1986.

Before the compilation got underway, Dean Ware introduced his daughter Allison to everyone. Allison had entered the Robert Bateman art contest sponsored by TD Canada Trust. Allison's art work, a painting of a Giant Swallowtail, won over 3,000 applicants. Allison's Giant Swallowtail was chosen to illustrate the TD Canada's 2010 desk calendar for the month of July. Allison, who is eight years old, was the youngest competitor in the contest.

As each area called out its numbers, Karen Cedar entered the data with the numbers appearing on a screen. White-winged Scoter was a new species for the count. The Essex American Crow count was expected to tally about 5,000 individuals. Numbers of crows wintering in Chatham/Kent have increased considerably.

Upon the completion of the tally, Paul Pratt stated 156 bird species have been observed over twenty-five years. This year 83 bird species were counted. Paul felt the numbers and species would have been higher if the snow had been deeper.

Thank you to Peggy and Tom Hurst who once again welcomed everyone into their home for the 25th Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count compilation.



Counters left to right: Cherise Charron, Larry Onysko, Kathy Lesperance and Marg Calder on Old Logging Road, Balkwill Lands

Holiday Beach Christmas Bird Count, December 27, 2009

Betty Learmouth

Christmas Bird Counts attract more and more participants each year. Local birders look forward to this annual winter bird census event and others, including university students home for the holidays, take part. The past season for CBCs began December 14, 2009 concluding January 4, 2010. This year was the 110th anniversary of Christmas Bird Counts.

Within Essex County there are a number of counts including the North Shore CBC, the Cedar Beach CBC, the Point Pelee CBC, the Rockwood, Michigan CBC, the Holiday Beach CBC and the Detroit River, Michigan CBC. Further afield in Chatham-Kent and Lambton County, birders participate in the Blenheim CBC, St. Clair N.W.A. CBC and Wallaceburg CBC.

For many years local birders lamented that Big Creek Marsh and environs were not a CBC circle. To the east of Big Creek Marsh is the Cedar Creek CBC and to the west is a portion of the Rockwood Michigan CBC, both encroaching on a 15 mile radius circle about Big Creek marsh.

Luckily six years ago Paul Pratt discussed this situation with Dick Cannings, Bird Studies Canada's Coordinator of Canada's CBCs. Dick gave the go ahead to a Holiday Beach CBC. The new count would not be a full circle. The two nearby CBCs cause the Holiday Beach CBC to resemble an apple that has had two bites taken from it, leaving the core. As well, the Holiday Beach CBC must take place on its own designated day. Due to the number of established counts on certain days of the calendar, the Holiday Beach CBC moves about the calendar.

Early in December 2009, Holiday Beach Migration President Bob Pettit, urged the compiler of the Holiday Beach CBC to begin organizing for the count. An invitation was sent out to those who had participated in the past with many responding and indicating the area in which they would like to count. As always persons new to the count offered to assist. Bob Pettit kindly offered various sheets for the use of counters including a species checklist, a check list of uncommon winter birds, and a sheet for party and weather information.

Twenty-eight persons took part in the 5th annual Holiday Beach Christmas Bird Count along with one feeder watcher.

Eight areas were identified that would be the areas in which counters would count. These included a watch from the hawk tower, the Holiday Beach Conservation Area, the Meadows to the Lake Erie County Club, the area along County Road 20 to and including the Big Creek Conservation Area, Boblo Island and the Lakewood Lands along Lake Erie, the area north of County Road 20 to Texas Road and over to Howard Avenue, the area north of Texas Road to County Road 8 and over to Howard Avenue, and the area north of County Road 8 within the Town of LaSalle.

The weather for the Holiday Beach CBC on December 27, 2009 was favourable with cloud and some sun in the morning. Snow flurries occurred both in the morning and afternoon. Winds were light from the southwest with temperatures hovering about the freezing point.

At 5:00 p.m. counters gathered at the Brews and Cues Restaurant on the Ojibway Parkway for supper and to hand in their sheets to the compiler.

The final tally of bird species for the Holiday Beach CBC was 67 species including a Northern Mockingbird which was seen during the Count Week at Gerry Waldron's property. Other unusual winter birds included a sighting of a Snow Goose and a Brown Thrasher seen in the Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Altogether 12,027 individual birds were counted.

Thank you to all the Holiday Beach Christmas Bird Count participants who did a great job: Margaret Calder, Richard Carr, Karen Cedar, Cherise Charron, John Craft, Larry Evon, Kristen Fawdrey, Shirley Grondin, Denise Hartley, Theresa Lemire, Kathy Lesperance, Dan Loncke, Dan Lumm, Dorothy McLeer, Ron Muir, Jacques Nicoletti, Larry Onysko, Todd Pepper, Bob Pettit, Paul Pratt, Claude Radley, Nina Radley, Chris Spagnuolo, Caroline Staddon, Janet Tuite, Bev Wannick, Fangwei Wu.

Winter Birds, Black Oak Heritage Park, January 12, 2010

Betty Learmouth

Five hikers/naturalists joined Ojibway Nature Centre's staff person Tom Preney on January 12, 2010 for a morning hike through Black Oak Heritage Park.

While waiting for everyone to gather, weekend birding sightings were shared. At Point Pelee participants of the winter birding excursion offered by the Ojibway Nature Centre and led by Chief Naturalist Paul Pratt, were treated to the sighting of a single Purple Sandpiper as this shorebird flew along the shoreline. Other sightings of interest were two Great Horned Owls observed and three Bald Eagles perched in one tree. At the Ojibway Nature Centre's bird feeders, a Fox Sparrow is now a regular visitor. Participants of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club flushed three Long-eared Owls during an owl prowling led by Tom Hurst on January 10, 2010. These owls had been located on December 19, 2009 during the Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count.

Winter birds were the highlight of the morning walk at Black Oak Heritage Park. Foraging juncos and sparrows were spotted around prairie Switchgrass behind the dog walk. Within the wooded area, the group followed the pink flagging tape, indicating the trails which will soon be wood chipped.

A female Red-bellied Woodpecker was spotted as she moved about in the nearby trees. A nest made entirely of sticks was identified as a hawk's nest. We could hear the calls of a White-breasted Nuthatch and a Black-capped Chickadee. A single male Northern Cardinal was brilliant red in the morning sunlight.

A large hornet's nest was visible in one of the trees. Tom told the group that the nest was empty with the queen hornet spending the winter in the safety of a log. In the spring, the queen wasp would lay eggs to again begin the cycle of her colony.

With a light snow cover, we were able to observe a variety of tracks. Tom pointed to deer tracks, indicating that the animal has been trotting as the hooves appeared to be spread apart. We saw the tracks of White-footed mice with the tail mark visible.

In the Black Oak Savanna we stopped to look at the dying American Chestnut beside the trail. We could see leaves on last year's sucker stalks. Nearby a White-breasted Nuthatch worked its way around tree branches, calling continuously. Black-capped Chickadees flew in to monitor the activity.

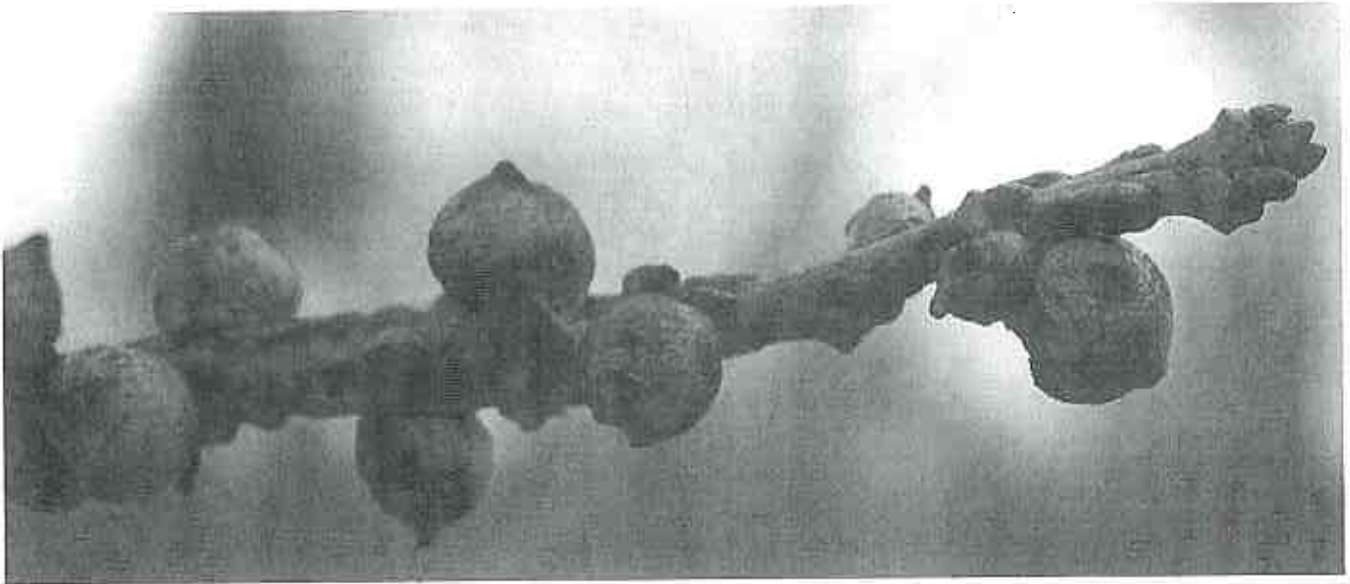
We were able to view a pair of Northern Cardinals in a hawthorn thicket. Then Tom drew our attention to a Hermit Thrush looking for berries which had been consumed by other birds earlier in the season. We had a good view of the thrush, especially its rufous tail.

Walking on the last portion on trail, we saw a female Downy Woodpecker. We were fortunate to observe a second Hermit Thrush on a branch over the trail, especially its eye ring. A single Tufted Titmouse flew off as we left the woodland.

Thank you to Tom for leading an enjoyable and informative walk at Black Oak Heritage Park.



*Cherise Charron
at Holiday Beach Christmas Bird Count
Photograph: Denise Hartley*



Beaked Bullet Gall on oak branch

Ojibway Prairie, January 31, 2010: Winter Wildflower Walk

Ruth Hart

Photographs: Graham Brown

On January 31, Essex County Field Naturalists went to Ojibway Provincial Prairie Nature Reserve to observe native prairie plants in winter. We began by looking at two grasses dominant in tallgrass prairies: Indian Grass and Big Bluestem. Most of the seeds of these two grasses had shed. The remaining stem of Indian grass was thin and delicate looking. Big Bluestem without its seeds was slightly thicker than Indian Grass and branched (the turkey toes giving rise to the common name of "turkey foot".) When we found Indian Grass with a few seeds, Shirley Grondin showed us how she harvests them in the fall by sliding her hand up the stem to the top. The seed drops off into her hand. Two other grasses we saw were Switchgrass which has roundish widely spaced seeds held on stalks away from the main stem, giving it an airy appearance and Prairie Cordgrass whose remaining seeds are closely pressed to the main stem, giving the stem a thick appearance compared to the others.

The prairie is normally maintained by periodic burning. During the past six years since the last burn, a lot of Black Locust had grown up. Last year (2009) the Black Locust was cut down in a misguided attempt to control it. The result was a forest of thin thorny suckers less than half an inch in diameter, tall as a person and only a few inches apart. In another part of the prairie, Trembling Aspen was cut at the same time although cutting the aspen did not result in such incredibly vigorous suckering.

We saw many forbs, flowering plants which are not grasses and not woody. It was fun to identify the remaining seed heads of plants which are colorful flowers in summer. People familiar with the area often remembered where flowers were in summer and recognized the winter seed heads in part by their location. All were quite distinctive, as they are in summer, just not as colorful. Plant remains of different species do have characteristic colors though, various shades of brown-yellowish to reddish-browns, grays and even black.

Grey-headed Coneflower had lost all its cone forming seeds, leaving a hard gray central shaft. Tall Coreopsis has small dark heads, on a typical specimen these are up above surrounding plants. Dense Blazing Star was first recognizable to me with some remaining seeds - a kind of cattail shaped seed head - after seeing that, I came to recognize the bare, bumpy unbranched seedless stems of characteristic height and unusual, rather dark color.

In dry parts of the prairie, around the Black Oaks, we saw Smooth False Foxglove. These seed heads are like the flowers in general appearance, but very black in color, much darker than the rest of the plant. A wet summer meant that they had bloomed well and we saw a lot of them in the little areas where they grow.

Shirley Grondin (left) and Gord Willcox (right) examine prairie plants



Along the trail, in the same areas, were reddish-brown, bushy little plants with seed heads that looked to me like so many French knots. These were the remains of the *Gerardia*.

We saw White Goldenrod, Silverrod, around a black oak on a ridge with extremely dry soil. This plant looks amazingly like the fresh one with its light colored dry flower remains evenly, but sparsely spaced, around the stem.

We saw more typical looking goldenrods. In one place, Paul Des Jardins was able to point out to us all three types of goldenrod gall: Spindle Gall (a spindle-shaped thickening of the stem), Apple or Ball Gall (a nearly spherical thickening of the stem) and Bunch Gall (sort of a mess toward the top of the plant, seemingly in the flower head although it is again the plant's stem that is affected.) The Bunch Gall is said to affect only Canada Goldenrod. The Spindle Gall is caused by a particular moth species and the Apple Gall and Bunch Gall are each caused by their own fly species. I have read that the bunch galls form a home for many other insects and spiders, which are often bigger and usually more conspicuous than the actual gall forming insect. Bunch galls should be particularly interesting to examine closely in summer or early fall.

Paul also pointed out Beaked Bullet Gall on oak twigs. This gall is the size of a musket ball and has a little nipple or beak. It is caused by a species of wasp.

We looked at one prairie shrub, the Prairie Willow. It was a small shrub, less than 3 feet high although I read that it can reach 10 feet. We saw the Pine Cone Willow Gall, another gall caused by a fly species. I don't think we saw this gall on the Prairie Willow though, but on another willow species. Another unusual shrub at Ojibway was Smooth Sumac. It looked very much the same in size, shape and flower as the common Staghorn Sumac, but without the furry hairs of Staghorn Sumac.

We didn't spend time on the ferns although fertile fronds of Sensitive Ferns were very noticeable because the black spore bearing structures stood out against lighter grays and browns.

All in all, it seems there is just as much to see at Ojibway in winter as there is in summer.

Mark your calendar for the upcoming field trips as listed in the Activities and Excursions. There is something for everyone. Enjoy learning about Eastern Bluebirds. Explore Pelee Island. Visit a privately owned woodland to view spring ephemerals. Explore a Provincial Nature Reserve within the Cedar Creek watershed. View a restoration site that includes tallgrass prairie. Walk the Greenway in June.

2nd Annual Canada South Land Trust Dinner**Guest Speaker Dr. Oliver P. Love****Friday, April 9, 2010****Caboto Club
Windsor, Ontario.**

Dr. Oliver P. Love has kindly accepted the Land Trust's invitation to be guest speaker at the Land Trust's dinner planned for Friday, April 9, 2010 .

Dr. Love is Assistant Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Windsor, joining the faculty in 2009. Dr. Love has entitled his talk:

Monitoring Canadian Snow Buntings: From Arctic Breeding Grounds to Southern Wintering Grounds.

Dr. Love has provided the following summary of his presentation: Snow buntings are the archetypical Canadian snowbird arriving early in the high Arctic in spring to breed, and magically appearing on Southern wintering grounds just as heavy snow begins to fall. Although these robust birds would seem to have the ability to deal with any problems sent their way, recent surveys by the National Audubon Society have reported that US populations have declined by 64% in the past forty years. To understand whether Canadian populations are experiencing these declines, and to understand the potential mechanisms behind these population crashes, we are tracking the success of the species across the entire year by directly monitoring breeding ecology in the Eastern Arctic, migratory timing and routes, and wintering populations in Southern Canada. We are combining field data with historical analyses of population dynamics to understand whether changes in agricultural practices and climate are behind potential declines. This information will give Canadians a better understanding of how the changing Arctic and Temperate world affect the persistence of this important species.

Dinner will be served in the Marconi Room of the Caboto Club. Doors open at 6:00p.m. with a silent auction on display. Dinner served at 7:00 p.m. Dinner tickets are \$35.00 and are available by calling Betty Learmouth at 516-945-0825. Donations towards the silent auction are welcome.

Prize Winners
Essex County Field Naturalists' Club Raffle
December 2009

Prize #1

Golden Guide Whales & Other Marine Animals (Book)
 Zack Eaton

Prize # 2

Woodland & Hill Birds (Book)
 Kayla Daguerra

Prize #3

A Birder's Guide to Point Pelee (and surrounding Region) (Book)
 Christine Gross

Prize # 4

The Hopes of Snakes (Book)
 Richard Robinson

Prize #5

Do Not Feed the Bears (Book)
 Evon Gaziano

Prize # 6

Birds in Love (Book)
 Donna Waring

Prize #7

The Big Storm (Book)
 Victor

Prize #8

Our Three Bears (Book)
 Cathy Owen

Prize # 9

Survival in Space (Book)
 Kevin Langlois

Big Creek Watershed Update

Betty Leammouth

On November 17, 2008, an Open House was held at the Town of Amherstburg's Verdi Club to collect comments and concerns regarding the Big Creek Watershed Plan.

Comments from the audience were received by the Essex Region Conservation Authority, Ontario Ministry of Transport, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Members of the audience suggested a number of topics of interest to local residents including appropriate tree planting, septic tank inspections, livestock impact within the watershed, overall protection of the watershed, pollution within the watershed, water quality and habitat, controlled use of fertilizers, improvement of water quality, stricter enforcement of existing legislation and regulations, support of landowners stewardship projects, eradication of invasive species i.e. phragmites, consideration of drainage issues, consideration of water level issues, restrict development within the watershed, and keeping the public informed with regard to the study.

On November 9, 2009, a second open house was held to update the public with regard to activities during the previous year. The committee has met with landowners and has initiated studies, thus is at the beginning of the process. Researchers reported on water quantity and quality studies.

Of interest to field naturalists were the remarks by researchers who provided comments with regard to the natural heritage within the watershed. ERCA Biologist Dan Lebedyk remarked that researchers have found some remarkable properties with data still being compiled. Dave Martin and Dean Ware collected faunal data related to bird species.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources staff member Erin Sanders is the wetland evaluator collecting wetland data.

The Provincial Policy Statement is being applied to significant wetlands, woodlands and species at risk. Site visits have taken place in spring, summer and fall. The Ecological Land Classification (ELC) and Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (OWES) are standard protocols used. Dan Lebedyk remarked upon the amount of diversity with so many ELC polygons (or different natural communities) such as the 120 polygons found on ERCA property within the watershed. A massive amount of information has been collected which can be overlaid, including species at risk such as the Prothonotary Warbler and critical habitat. The location of all invasive phragmites is shown. The compilation of floral species is still occurring with access to the Natural Heritage Information Centre data base.

Some highlights of the floral field work include hundreds of thousands of American Lotus; a population of Perfoliated Horse Gentian; a population of Nodding Wild Onion in two locations; a large number of Swamp Rose Mallow; significant stands of Wild Rice and other species such as Shumard Oak, Kentucky Coffee Trees, Shellbark Hickory, Red Mulberry, Goldenseal, Green Dragon and Hoptree. A group of eight foot tall Kentucky Coffee Trees were located in association with a very old tree reported to be the largest in the region.

Dave Martin remarked on the diversity of wildlife found within the watershed representing 231 species in a huge diversity of communities. Of note are 11 species of reptiles. Butterfly and skipper numbers were low due to cool summer 2009 conditions.

The following summary was provided:

Fauna	
Birds	138 species
Breeding birds	87 species (56% of Essex total)
Summer visitors	11 species
Spring migrants	40 species
Mammals	15 species
Reptiles	11 species
Amphibians	6 species
Butterflies and Skippers	37 species
Dragonflies and Damselflies	24 species
Total	231 species

Within the Significant Species summary, G1-G3 reflects rarity on a global basis. White Pelican was observed during Summer 2009 resting on the Big Creek Marsh.

Significant Species	
Species at Risk	16 species
S1 to S3 Species in Ontario	19 species
G1 to G3 Species	2 species
Very Rare in Essex County	6 species
Rare in Essex County	6 species
Partners in Flight Conservation Priority Species	17 species
Area Sensitive Species	17 species
New Species for the Big Creek watershed	4 species

Dave Martin showed a series of images of wildlife within the Big Creek watershed photographed by Dean Ware and Dan Laing. The majority of the world's population of Eastern Fox Snake is found here in Essex County. Stinkpot Turtle was identified within the watershed. This tiny species rarely comes out of water. The researchers suspect the turtle observed was a female as she was crawling up a driveway, possibly towards a nesting site.

Blue-spotted Salamander was identified and is now known in Essex County from the Big Creek watershed and Pelee Island.

Dragonflies of note identified were the Halloween Pennant Dragonfly and the Citrine Forktail which has a rank of G2 in Ontario.

The Least Bittern was found to breed in the Big Creek Marsh. Dean Ware provided an image of a nest constructed within cattails and including three eggs. Muskrat homes are hugely important to wildlife in the Big Creek Marsh. A photograph by Dean Ware shows the eggs of a Pied-billed Grebe atop a muskrat house.

Erin Sanders, wetland evaluator, presented on aspects of the Big Creek watershed. Erin explained that the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System defines a wetland as lands that are seasonally or permanently flooded by shallow water and lands where the water table is close to the surface. In either case, the presence of abundant water has caused the formation of hydric soils and has favoured the dominance of either hydrophytic or water tolerant plants.

Within the Upper Big Creek Wetland, some 46.5 hectares of wetland, mostly Swamp with some Marsh was determined to exist. Water flows only at certain times. The wetlands are mainly Silver Maple Swamp and Buttonbush Swamp. Seventy-nine plant species were identified. Seven non-native species were identified. This wetland habitat provides a home to 4 threatened and 9 at risk species.

The Upper Big Creek Wetland has the capacity to provide services such as recharge groundwater, attenuate floods, pollution uptake and short-term water quality improvements.

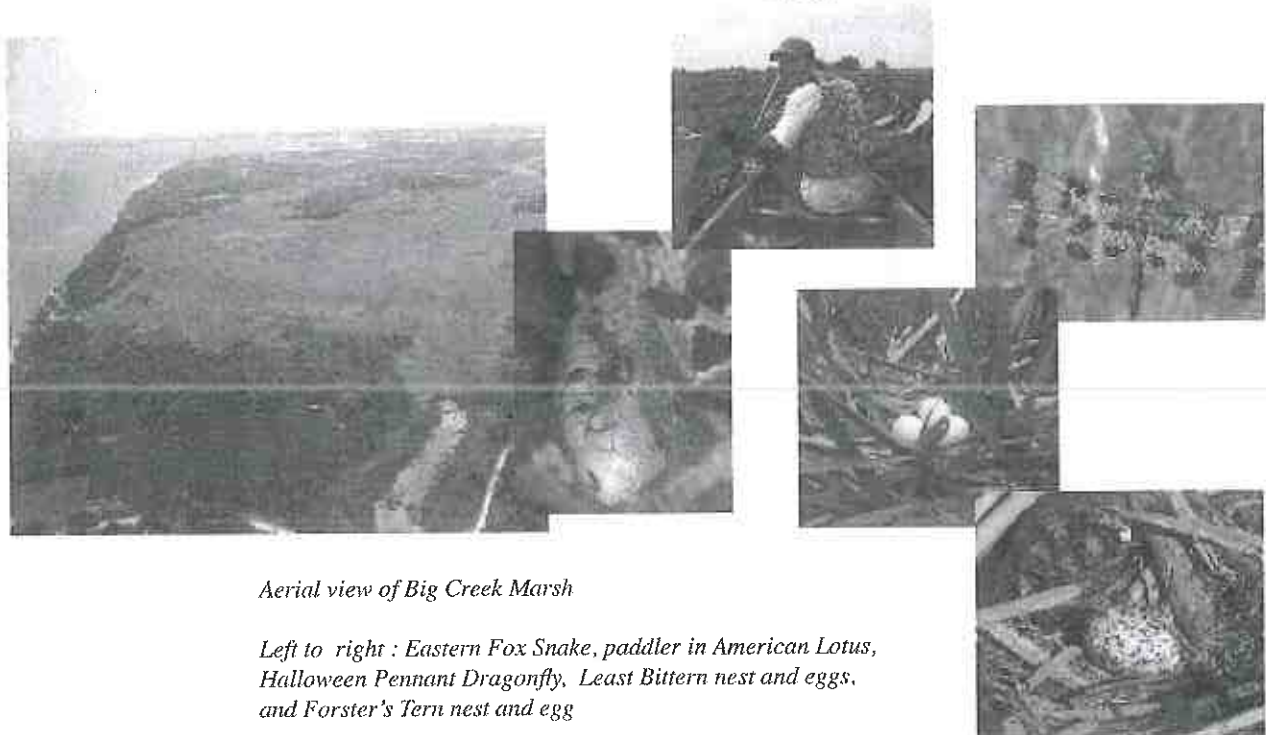
Erin provided a summary of the Big Creek Marsh (lower Big Creek). This wetland comprises 1046.5 hectares with mostly Marsh with some Swamp on the edge of the Marsh. Dominant plants species of the Big Creek Marsh are Cattails, Duckweed and Silver Maple. One hundred and seventy-one plant species were identified. Nineteen are non-native. Big Creek Marsh provided habitat for 12 endangered and threatened species and 21 species at risk.

Big Creek Marsh has the capacity to provide groundwater recharge, attenuation of flooding, and diversity of species. Big Creek Marsh provides significant staging and waterfowl breeding area and is one of the largest Marshes on the North Shore of Lake Erie.

A database of the fish species for Big Creek has been compiled. Acknowledgement of the hawk migration will be included in the report.

Erin stated that with regard to adjacent upland areas surrounding the Big Creek watershed, these boundaries will be sent to ERCA and to the Town of Amherstburg. It will be up to ERCA and the Town of Amherstburg to regulate protection.

Presenters thanked everyone who opened their properties to the researchers.



Aerial view of Big Creek Marsh

Left to right : Eastern Fox Snake, paddler in American Lotus, Halloween Pennant Dragonfly, Least Bittern nest and eggs, and Forster's Tern nest and egg

**Sixteenth Annual ECFNC Weekend Trip to Pelee Island
Saturday May 1 & Sunday May 2, 2010**

Leave at 10:00 a.m. Saturday from Leamington Dock
aboard the M.V. Jiimaan (be at the dock by 9:20 a.m.)
We will return to Kingsville Dock by 5:45 p.m. Sunday.

We will very likely see: migrating waterfowl & warblers, wildflowers such as trilliums & phlox, basking turtles and snakes, bullfrogs, historic sites, and hear a chorus or two of American Toads, to suggest a few of the many enjoyable experiences on Pelee Island in spring. We should also get a chance to visit the Pelee Island Bird Observatory (PIBO bird banding station) and some of the recently acquired Nature Conservancy of Canada properties: Red Cedar Savannah ESA, Stone Road Alvar ANSI, Brown's Point and woods, and Brown's Road Alvar. We will have plenty of time to walk, observe, and relax on the excursions to some of Pelee's most beautiful natural habitats, including: Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve, Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve, the Stone Road Alvar Complex, Sheridan Point ESA, and many other stops along the way. Should we experience inclement weather, we can visit the Pelee Island Heritage Centre, tour the island in the comfort of our rented bus driven by ECFNC member Sharon Medeiros, or possibly take in the hospitality at ECFNC members John and Mary Celestino's Mill Point cottage.

I have arranged for bus transportation while on the island - no vehicles are necessary or desired on this trip. There is parking at the Leamington Dock area. I have reserved space on the ferry for all registered, walk on passengers attending this trip - we will meet in the ticket office at the dock on Saturday morning.

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

The Anchor and Wheel Inn contains a clean and comfortable restaurant where I have arranged for our delicious meals. We will break for meals regularly (lunch ~ noon and dinner ~ 6:00 pm on Saturday, breakfast ~ 8 am and lunch ~ noon Sunday) and hot meals and snacks are also available on both ferry crossings.

The total cost will be \$ 170 this year. This cost will include: the two ferry trips, weekend bus transportation, four hot meals, overnight motel accommodations, and all taxes and tips. The \$170 cost will include all expenses for the weekend other than alcoholic drinks, souvenirs, and snacks or meals on the ferry.

All interested persons need to do is: sign up with me and then show up at the Leamington Dock by 9:20 am Saturday morning with warm outdoor clothes and accessories, overnight necessities, \$ 170 cheque (payable to David Kraus) or cash per person, and a few additional dollars for extra snacks, etc.

I will contact each person that registers should any time or location changes for the ferry occur, otherwise the above outline is the basic schedule, rain or shine. I will hand out more detailed schedules on the Saturday morning of the trip, but with our own driver and rented bus, we can be flexible and able to see many more sites now.

To register for this trip: see me at the ECFNC meetings, call, or write:
Dave Kraus phone: 519 825 7491
mailing address: 1515 Concession 7, RR 3, Wheatley, Ont. N0P 2P0
email address: david_kraus@gecdsb.on.ca

ECFNC Activities and Excursions, March 2010 - June 2010

For further information concerning 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.

March 10 - ECFNC Annual Members Meeting - Enjoy an evening of updates from the various ECFNC committees as well as a stimulating quiz with prizes. **Meet in the Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 p.m., County Road 42, Windsor.**

March 13 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Winter Birding Field Trip. Fee is \$15. Call Ojibway Nature Centre (519-966-5852) for location and time.

March 16 or 18 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Wildlife Discovery. Youth aged 7-11 discover how plants and animals survive in the wild in this hands-on camp. Program runs Tuesday or Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with early drop off at 8:00 a.m. and late pickup until 5:00 p.m. Fee is \$31. Call Ojibway Nature Centre (519-966-5852) to register.

March 17 or 19 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Frogs, Snakes and You. Children aged 3-6 enjoy a morning or afternoon filled with activities about slimy, scaly critters. Program runs from 10:00 a.m. to noon OR 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Fee \$11/2hours. Call Ojibway Nature Centre(519-966-5852) to register.

March 23 - May 25 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Spring Hiking at Ojibway. Exercise your body and your mind! These brisk morning walks with one of the Ojibway Nature Centre's naturalists will introduce you to the many plants and animals in our area. Discover the many signs of spring while visiting our local natural areas. Tuesdays from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Fee is \$39/10 weeks. Call Ojibway Nature Centre (519-966-5852) to register.

March 25 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Thrilling Thursday: Owl Prowl - Thursday evening 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Fee: \$6/adult, \$5/child. Call Ojibway Nature Centre (519-966-5852) for details.

March 28 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Friends of Ojibway Prairie - Enjoy a presentation by an architect concerning the newly designed Ojibway Nature Centre at the Friends Annual General Meeting. Meet at 2:00 p.m. Refreshments to be served.

April 9 - Canada South Land Trust Annual Dinner - Enjoy a delicious dinner in the Marconi Room of the Caboto Club. Tickets are \$35. A silent auction will be a part of the evening's activities. Guest speaker will be Dr. Oliver Love who has entitled his talk *Monitoring Canadian Snow Buntings: From Arctic Breeding Grounds to Southern Wintering Grounds*. Call Betty at 519-944-0825 for more information and tickets.

April 14 - ECFNC Members Meeting - Brett Groves will discuss Eastern Fox Snakes. Check website for updates, www.ojibway.ca/activity.htm. Meet in Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 p.m., County Road 42, Windsor.

April 15 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Thrilling Thursday - Deer Hike and other Animal Clues (including owls)

- Thursday evening 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Fee \$6/adult, \$5/child. Call Ojibway Nature Centre (519-966-5852) for details).

April 19 - May 10 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Possum Pals 9Ages 2-4) - Children not ready to leave the pouch? Join us for this exciting and fun parent/tot adventure in nature. Mondays, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Fee: \$31/4 classes.

April 15 - 18 - Enviro Expo - In the new Caesars Windsor Convention Centre learn how to green your life. For more information go to enviro-exp.org. Entry fee:\$5. Bill Clinton will be guest speaker on April 15.

April 25 - Earth Day at Mic Mac Park. ECFNC members will again be participating with our bake sale and display. Please bake, bake, bake. Due to health concerns, all baking is to be wrapped individually or in clusters. If you are able to help at the sale table, please call Cathy Lapain at 519-776-6097. Enjoy over 40 environmental exhibits, crafts, entertainment, food and more from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Free admission.

May date to be announced - ECFNC Spring Excursion - Bonnie Ross wil again be organizing an inspection and maintenance tour of the Shaughnessy Cohen Memorial Savannah and the Ontario Nature Stone Road Nature Reserve on Pelee Island. This is an overnight trip with several hours of work on the nature reserves and an opportunity to enjoy other areas of the Island. Call Bonnie at 519-969-4247.

May 1 - ECFNC Spring Excursion - Join ECFNC member Don Bissonnette for a Saturday morning bluebird tour. Due to the properties that will be visited, we ask that you not bring dogs. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the Greenway parking lot on the Arner Townline in Arner.

May 1 and 2 - ECFNC Annual Pelee Island Trip - Join ECFNC member Dave Kraus in this wonderful weekend on Pelee Island. See details in a separate article on page 23. For more information or to register, please call Dave Kraus at 519-825-7491.

May 8 - Canada South Land Trust Spring Walk - Enjoy spring migrants and flowering plants in the Ainslie Woodland located within the Town of Leamington. Directions: From Staples proceed south on County Road 77, watching for Concession 10. Turn left and proceed east along Concession 10 for 3 kilometres to the woodland and the lane access which is on the north side of the Concession. GPS setting is N42 08.757 and W0 82 33.503. Meet at 2:00 p.m.

May 8 and 9 - Hillman Spring Shore & Songbird Celebration at Hillman Marsh - We will again have our Blue Kestrel Cafe open on both days from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. If you can help for a portion of either day, please call Shirley at 519-972-5781. If you can't help out at the Cafe, stop by for a home baked muffin or hotdog and enjoy the event. Join expert naturalists to celebrate shorebirds and songbirds as they migrate through the internationally renowned shorebird habitat. See songbirds up close and personal as they are banded indoors by experts. Not to be missed!

May 12 - ECFNC Members Meeting - Speaker to be announced. Check website for updates, www.ojibway.ca/activity.htm Meet in Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 p.m., County Road 42, Windsor.

May 16 - ECFNC Spring Excursion - Join ECFNC members Gerry Waldron and Peg Hurst for a walk around our newest provincial nature reserve located in Colchester South in the Town of Essex. We may see signs of the resident beaver. Meet at 2:00 p.m. in the Greenway parking lot on the Arner Townline at Arner. We will then drive the the Cedar Creek Provincial Nature Reserve.

May 20 - Ojibway Nature Centre - Thrilling Thursday: Pond Scooping with Frogs & Turtles - Thursday evening 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Fee: \$6/adult, \$5/child. Call Ojibway Nature Centre (519-966-5852) for details.

May 24 - ECFNC Spring Excursion - The Point Pelee birding walk has become a regular spring event for ECFNC members and friends. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Interpretative Centre. We will bird for the morning and eat lunch at the picnic tables. You can bring your own picnic lunch or support the Friends of Point Pelee by buying lunch (grilled hotdogs) at their food booth.

May 28 - May 30 - Ontario Nature's 79th Annual General Meeting and Carolinian Canada Coalition's 2010 Forum and Annual General Meeting at Lambton College and Inn, Sarnia. Cruise the St. Clair River with the experts. Find out what's new in managing rare species, coastal ecosystems and biodiversity hotspots. Visit Lambton's World Class Natural Areas in Carolinian Canada. Participate in hands-on workshops. Hear about a lifetime of aquatic adventure with keynote speaker Jack Imhof while dining on locally grown food. Registration will open soon. Contact information: Carolinian Canada Coalition at infor@carolinian.org or 519-433-7077 or Ontario Nature at 1-800-440-2366 or victoria@ontarionature.on

June 6 - ECFNC Spring Excursion - Join ECFNC member Dave Kraus for a hike on his 55 acre property. Thirty acres are in diverse natural habitats including several wetlands, mature woodlot, pit and mound tree plantations, tallgrass prairie, and old field habitat. There likely will be amphibians calling, and many actively nesting bird species such as kestrels, goldfinches, catbirds, thrashers, wood ducks, tree and barn swallows, purple martins, cuckoos, solitary sandpipers, etc. There should also be a variety of native wildflowers in bloom in the various habitats. From Windsor take the Highway 3 by pass east to County Road 77, turn left (north) onto County Road 77 and proceed north about 7 km. to Mersea Road 7, turn right (east) and travel about 6 km. to house #1515 on the north side of the road. Meet at 2:00 p.m.

June 9 - ECFNC Members Meeting - Speaker to be announced. Check website for updates, www.ojibway.ca/activity.htm. Meet in the Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 p.m., County Road 42, Windsor.

June 13 - ECFNC Late Spring Excursion - Join ECFNC member Wayne Wannick for an informative walk along the Greenway. Meet at 2:00 p.m. in the Greenway parking lot on Walker Road in Harrow. We will walk on the Greenway west of Walker Road.

September 9 to 12 - The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society is hosting the 2010 32nd North American Bluebird Society Conference at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington, Ontario. Possible nature hikes and wine tours for early arrivals. Visit the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society web site or speak to Don Bissonnette for further information.

**Essex County Field Naturalists' Club
Membership Form - Due January 1, 2010**

Individual Membership \$20.00/year _____
Student (full time) \$10.00/year _____
Family Membership \$25.00/year _____
Sustaining Membership \$30.00/year _____
Life Membership \$500.00/year _____

Name _____

Street _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Phone Number _____

E-mail _____ I wish to receive The Egret by mail _____

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

See the Ojibway Nature Centre's Website at <http://www.ojibway.ca/events.htm> for upcoming opportunities to enjoy the spring migration season. Spring Bird Migration Field Courses are offered on April 17, May 1, May 15 and May 22, 2010. Weekday birding is offered on April 28 and May 12, 2010. A Big Day Birding is offered on May 5 or May 19, 2010.
