



# The Egret

*the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club*

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### ECFNC Monthly Meetings

Except for our outdoor meetings in July and August, monthly members' meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm 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 (1<sup>st</sup> street west of airport terminal entrance) then turn right (east) on Hayes Road (1<sup>st</sup> right) and drive to the end. Park on south side of long white garage. Community room is adjacent and east of this parking area.

## Pelee Island 2010

By Ruth Hart

On May 1st and 2nd 2010, the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club had a field trip to Pelee Island. Dave Kraus organized the trip. For most of us, our only responsibility was to arrive at the Leamington dock. Dave took it from there. That was a selling point for me: a weekend with no driving, meals all prepared, and looking at nature with friendly, similarly-minded people. What a great way to spend my May 1st birthday.

Two members had additional responsibilities on the trip. Sharon drove the bus for the group. She deserves many thanks and kudos for that task, especially since some of our sites were not all that school bus friendly. Margaret Jennings was the club's designated Baillie birdathoner.

You may remember the first weekend in May as rainy, but for us the rain kindly came down while we were on the boat or mostly asleep. The weather was overcast and pleasant in temperature. Trees were leafing out, further than usual according to Dave.

We saw so much, I didn't write nearly all of it. Many more reports could be written about this trip.

Continued on page 3

**About the Club ...**

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club was incorporated in March 1985. We are a registered charitable organization which promotes the appreciation and conservation of our natural heritage. ECFNC provides the community opportunities to 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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**Chairpersons/Liaisons:**

Membership Secretary: Denise Hartley  
Ontario Nature Liaison: JoAnn Grondin  
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 Learmouth, Karen Cedar  
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

**Pelee Island 2010** (continued from page 1)

At the quarry edge, we saw Blue Ash and a bush form of Poison Ivy, which really impressed me. I had never seen such a huge free-standing Poison Ivy plant. We saw tree-sized, vining Poison Ivy, with heavy shoots that stuck out, pretending to be tree branches. This I had seen in the Detroit River at Belle Isle, but nowhere else I could think of.

Choke Cherry was in bud, and Herb Robert was blooming. We saw yellow violets, and Blue woodland Phlox. The phlox was in bloom everywhere we went on the island, and its flowers were bigger and more profuse than I had ever seen. Buttonbush was just beginning to leaf out and there were buds or flowers on Fragrant Sumac.

We found some Red-breasted Mergansers, a garter snake, and a big black toad on dark earth. We saw Black-and-White Warblers and Yellow-rumped Warblers with their yellow "armpits."

We went next to Vin Villa which we were told was built of local stone. There we saw a Brown-headed Cowbird pair, heard a cardinal singing and a woodpecker drumming. Star-flowered False Solomon's Seal was in bloom. That plant turned out to be another dominant groundcover at many locations on Pelee Island.

Back at Anchor and Wheel Inn for lunch, an ornamental Kerria bush was blooming in the garden with other pretty spring flowers.

After lunch, we headed for Dave's property and saw a Horned Lark on the road. At Dave's lane I was amazed at the prairie rose (*Rosa setigera*), which is so prevalent on Pelee Island that Dave considers it almost a weed. The land was also full of Poison Ivy just beginning to leaf out. People with good sense stayed on the road. Dave, Joe and I pressed on and I wondered for days afterward if I would get Poison Ivy. I did not.

Sedges were blooming, revealing their identities to people more knowledgeable than me. But I looked curiously at them anyway. We saw a Baltimore Oriole in a cottonwood tree. I asked about numerous plants closely spaced and laden with last year's seeds. Dave called them leadplant (*Amorpha fruticosa*, Shrubby False Indigo).

Meanwhile, folks back at the roadside had spotted both Northern and Louisiana Waterthrush near the ditch. We saw Red Admiral butterflies dashing around as well.

The next stop was Lake Henry. On the way there, we "got" a Great Blue Heron for our list. When we got there, I saw a yellow butterfly (first sulphur of the season?). We saw cormorants.

Solomon's Seal was just beginning to bloom and wild currants were in bloom. Up high in Hackberry trees and grapevine, we got a thrilling look at a Scarlet Tanager. Down in the water we saw Blanding's Turtles with their yellow necks and painted turtles.

On to Lighthouse Point where Margaret and Margaret urged us to find more birds. We found a Hermit Thrush, Palm Warbler and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a small round bird with eye-rings which make it seem extra cute. We did not see the red crown on this one. A flock of Blue Jays

was overhead. Near the ground, we saw a Common Yellowthroat. A flicker called and a big sturdy dragonfly flew by.

We sat on drifts of shells about four feet high and two hundred feet long and looked along the shore and out at Lake Erie. Try as we might, we did not see any shorebirds there. I don't think I saw any on the whole trip. Hop-tree was in bud near the lighthouse, shrubby willows were in bloom. We heard and saw a chatty bird, it was a House Wren and we found a Red-breasted Nuthatch.

We next went to Middle Point woods. Looking for birds from the bus, we spotted Ring-necked Pheasant and Wild Turkey across the fields. At Middle Point woods, Spring Beauty and phlox decorated the roadside and little cucurbits, inedible wild cucumbers, were sprouting in the sand. At that stage, they looked just about like any cultivated squash or melon. At the beach, a Great Egret stood on shore and a Great Blue Heron was fishing in shallow water. Shiny and very dark green beetles were copulating on the shrub willows, a shiny green (solitary bee) found a willow flower, and what I think was a wasp mimic fly hovered near the willow, then landed and pumped its abdomen. On the way out, we saw a stick nest with a tail sticking out, the Bald Eagle? And a big flock of Common Grackles.

Sunday, Fish Point was our first stop. In some places there, the dominant ground cover was Dutchman's Breeches finishing up its bloom time. It seemed to me that in different places various plants grew in big patches as the dominant ground cover. We saw lots of trillium, some in full bloom and some fading to pinkish. The flowers were big, full-sized. In other woods I had seen this year the trillium flowers were small, perhaps a result of deer eating them. Toads were singing to us again.

Several low plants that I did not know, caught my eye. One had dissected leaves, and raspberry-like bud clusters. Some of the plants we saw along the way were a long-stemmed Yellow Violet, waterleaf, ramps, *Smilax hispida* with its bristles, Sanicula, and Short's Aster. I always think rare plants should look exotic to me. Short's Aster looked like other aster plants, the word "nondescript" come to mind.

Near the point and on the beach, there was lots of Star-flowered False Solomon's Seal, *Maianthemum stellatum* in bloom. We saw one that was albino, completely white and in full bloom. We saw a few others which were variegated. Also in the disturbed ground near the lake there was quite a lot of Garlic Mustard, which we did not see in the deep, rich part of the woods. On the beach there was a veritable thicket of dogbane, and a lot of little dead fish that looked like smelt. From the beach we could see Middle Island and beyond it Cedar Point in Ohio.

Our final two stops were Stone Road Alvar and Red Cedar Savannah. At Stone Road we saw among other things: more blooming phlox, Short's Aster, Fragrant Sumac, hickory, viburnum, Snowberry, Blue Ash, strawberry blooming, *Geum vernum*, spring beauty, Heuchera, and Prickly Ash. There was a sweet smell in the air, was it the Fragrant Sumac? We saw a bird's nest in a Downy Arrowwood, heard a Field Sparrow singing, and a second, frustratingly familiar song, we could not identify. We saw a Goldfinch in flight. I wondered whether I saw Baptisia and if the vetch-like plant which was abundant, was vetch and which vetch it was. Shirley and I think we heard a Leopard Frog singing in the ditch near the road.

The last stop was Red Cedar Savannah and my note taking zeal was flagging. We stopped at the Masonic Lodge where we saw a Phoebe and an all black snake, which Dave said was a melanistic Garter Snake. Toads continued to call. I stopped writing as we walked the savannah before our ferry ride back home.

Thank you Essex County Field Naturalists' Club for a great birthday.



### **Little River Corridor Park, April 13, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth

On a rainy Tuesday morning, April 13, 2010, hikers from Ojibway Nature Centre joined Tom Preney at the parking lot near the water treatment plant in East Windsor's Little River Corridor Park for a morning walk. Leader Tom Preney lead the group up the toboggan hill, then down to a bridge which passes over the old Little River channel. The old Little River channel is tree lined, providing habitat for a variety of bird species, including spring migrants such as wood warblers. We heard a Leopard Frog calling at this site and observed a migrant Bonaparte's Gull overhead.

The City of Windsor maintains a large tree nursery on former farmland adjacent to the old Little River channel. This site is easily viewed from an asphalt walking trail.

Restoration work has taken place in this portion of the old Little River Channel. Our hike first took us to three newly constructed wetlands, each with cattails, providing welcome habitat for wetland species. Within the first wetland, we observed Song Sparrows flying into the cattails while Mallards, a Mute Swan and a Canada Goose on its nest where noted. A single Green Heron was spotted in a cottonwood tree at the wetland edge. Following the walk, Tom Preney shared the group's sightings with City of Windsor's Chief Naturalist Paul Pratt who declared this Green Heron to be the first of its species reported for Ontario this spring season.

In a fourth and larger pond, Green-winged Teal were floating on the open water.

Agricultural lands around the ponds were flooded, attracting a variety of shorebirds including Pectoral Sandpipers and a Solitary Sandpiper. Killdeer flew back and forth over the site.

At another pond, near a housing development, a grebe was seen along with another Mute Swan on its nest.

On our circular hike, we observed a Red-tailed Hawk perched on the edge of the old Little River channel.

The group admired a number of shrubs and small trees in bloom along the asphalt trail leading back to the parking area, including several Redbuds, a cherry species, nannyberry and American Crabapple.

Thank you to Tom for leading the hiking group to the recently restored wetlands at Little River.

**Cedar Creek Provincial Nature Reserve, May 16, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth

Photos by Betty Learmouth

Eleven ECFNC members joined ECFNC executive member and Consulting Ecologist Gerry Waldron and his field assistant Peggy Hurst on a sunny spring afternoon at the Cedar Creek Provincial Nature Reserve on May 16, 2010 for a woodland walk. The Cedar Creek Provincial Nature Reserve was acquired through the efforts of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, with the Province of Ontario declaring the site a provincial nature reserve and overseeing the management of the area. One change noted since the field naturalists' last visit several years ago has been the removal of a residence on the property. This site is now a small parking area which is appreciated as parking on concession roads is always a problem. The parking area is off Concession 3 in the Town of Essex at House Number 2637. No signage identifies the site as a Provincial Nature Reserve.



Gerry Waldron commented that J.W. Johnson and W. Wannick's 1977 plant list for the area remains an excellent summary of the vascular plants in the Cedar Creek area. Now that the Nature Reserve exists, the site will become more and more mature over time. Prior to the purchase of the lands that became the Cedar Creek Provincial Nature Reserve, the former owner had the woodland logged.



Horse-gentian

Dominant ground cover included Trillium, Wild Geranium, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Early Meadow Rue, Blue Phlox, Virginia Creeper, and Poison Ivy.

During our walk, Gerry introduced the group to several sedges. The first was *Carex radiata*, a common species found on just about any species list. *Carex radiata* is an easy sedge to learn as the seeds radiate from the stem. Another common sedge is *Carex blanda* which Gerry said is everywhere. Fox Sedge is widespread in Canada, preferring really wet spots. Graceful Sedge is another distinctive sedge found in our woodlands.

Our walk took us through a dry woodland, then we glimpsed a water course which Gerry declared to be the middle branch of Cedar Creek. Gerry said that if we followed this water course upstream we would

The first plant we encountered was a Horse-gentian (*Triosteum augustifolium*) with solitary flowers in the axils of the leaves. This species is very rare in Ontario with a range restricted solely to the Cedar Creek watershed. The fruit are small orange berries. Another Horse-gentian (*Triosteum perfoliatum*) has broader leaves which are pierced by the plant's stem.

Gerry drew the group's attention to a plant known as False Mermaid (*Floerkea proserpinacoides*.) This spring ephemeral with its long weak stems blooms early in the spring and is the first to die back. We noted the long stems of this plant in profusion about the Nature Reserve woodland, especially in damp spots.

The Cedar Creek woodland was most attractive in the mid afternoon sun.

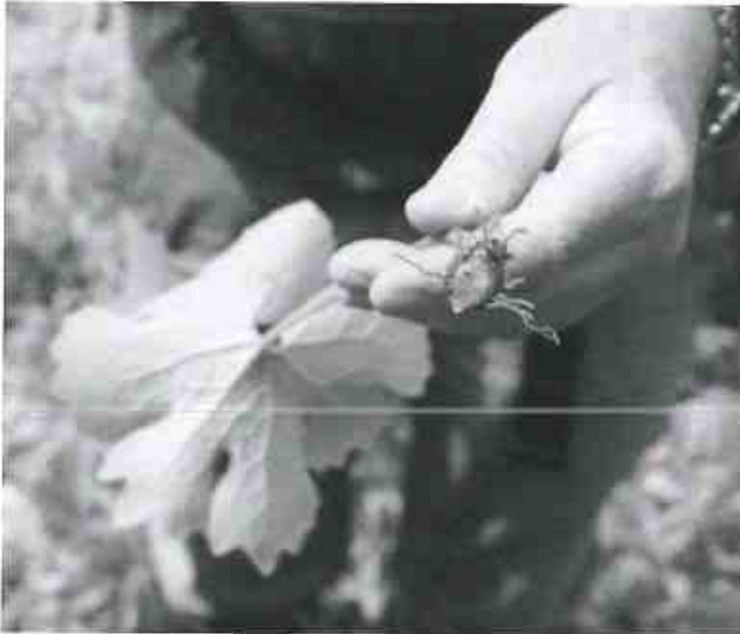
Cedar Creek, middle branch



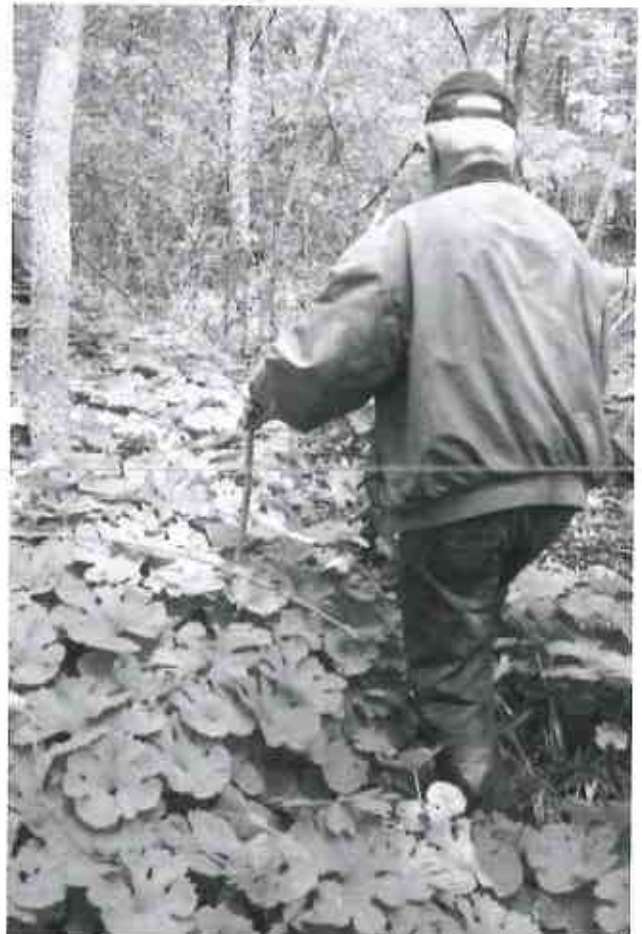
eventually arrive in Bill Balkwill's woodland. The opposite side of the creek was only a short distance away, but is quite difficult to access. Gerry felt that it is likely that very few naturalists have visited that portion of Cedar Creek due to the challenge of access.

Gerry suggested that we work our way south along this branch of Cedar Creek. As we proceeded Gerry pointed out various plant species. We observed Spring Avens (*Geum vernum*) which Gerry described as found throughout the woodland but is rather nondescript and not particularly noted. Moneywort, an alien plant from Europe, loves our flood plains where it is well established. Wild Garlic was growing in the flood plain. A thicket of Bladdernut was noted. Green Dragon was found on the flood plain, its leaves unfolding. Locally we can find two members of the Arum family, the uncommon Green Dragon and the common Jack-in-the-pulpit. Dames Rocket added colour to the flood plane. Gerry commented that this alien species was once uncommon but is now found at many locations. Gerry identified Poison Hemlock and the leaves and flowers of *Iris virginica*.

Species observed in the flood plain included Mayapple, Skunk Cabbage, Wild Phlox, Bristly Brier, False Solomon's Seal, Golden Ragwort, Bloodroot, Sweet Cicely, Periwinkle, and Nettles. The Skunk Cabbage was growing at two locations on the creek edge, its large showy leaves visible from a distance. Tall clusters of flat topped Golden Ragwort provided a dash of colour to the flood plane at several locations. The number of Bloodroot on the flood plane was a surprise. Alan Batke showed the group the root of this species with "bloody" sap. Bloodroot bloomed in April.



Bloodroot sap



Henry Driedger and Bloodroot



Skunk cabbage leaves



Golden Ragwort



As we approached a small man-made pond, Gerry identified four trees as Yellow Buckeye “Identifying Trees” has the following comments regarding Yellow Buckeye: “Opposite, compound leaves, with five leaflets spreading out in a fan shape from a central point at the end of the leaf stem. Leaflets are dark green above and yellowish green below, usually 4 to 6 inches (101.6 to 152.4 mm) long, with broad pointed tips and tapered bases. Margins may have both fine and coarse teeth. No smell is present when crushed; if the crushed leaf or stem releases a rank odor, the tree is an Ohio Buckeye. Skin of fruit husk is smooth.

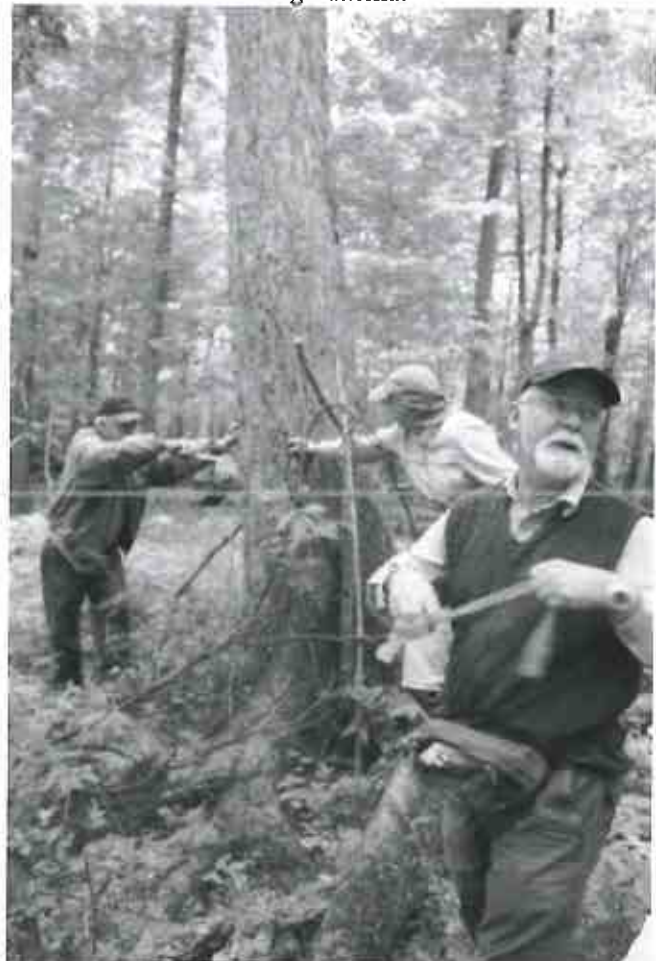
Yellow Buckeye prefers to grow in rich, deep, moist soils like those found in river bottoms or deep mountain valleys. It is found as a native from central Ohio and southwestern Pennsylvania southwest down the Appalachian Mountains to northern Georgia and Alabama.”

Approaching the site of the former residence on the Nature Reserve, Gerry was surprised to discover a single Butternut displaying what appeared to be a buttress root. Henry Driedger produced a measuring tape with which Henry and Peg Hurst measured the Butternut at chest height, calling out a measurement of 62 cm. Gerry’s publication “Trees of the Carolinian Forest” states the largest Ontario specimen at 116 cm. is found in the Niagara Region’s Short Hills Wilderness Area (1975). Butternut is listed as an Endangered Species under the Endangered Species Act [within Essex woodlands].

Butternut



Henry Driedger, Peg Hurst, Gerry Waldron measuring Butternut



Additional sightings included two Silver-spotted Skippers and a Red Admiral. Many Tiger Beetles were observed by Paul Desjardin.



Wild Turkey feather

Mary Jane Winterton kept a bird tally which included Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Flicker and Turkey Vulture. Peggy Hurst found a large feather lost by a Wild Turkey. The turkey feather reminded Alan Batke to report two hundred Wild Turkeys which wintered at the Heritage Museum this past winter.

Amphibians seen included several small American Toads and a Green Frog. A single Common Garter Snake was observed.

Everyone gathered around for Gerry's closing remarks with regard to plant identification. Most of us use colourful guides such as "Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers" as we struggle with plant identification. The chance that we will leap from the level of colourful guide books to the very technical Edward G.Voss's "Michigan Flora" is not likely for most of us. But we

can still work on our identification skills by taking small bites. We can undertake individual studies of the orchids of Ontario, or the shrubs of Ontario, or the trilliums, or the ferns or the sedges. As we travel around to book stores and museum gift shops, we should buy those specialized guides that will assist us with plant identification as many soon go out of print.

Thank you to Gerry for an enjoyable and informative walk through the Cedar Creek Provincial Nature Reserve.



## References:

Waldron, Gerry. *Trees of the Carolinian Forest: A Guide to Species, Their Ecology and Uses*. Erin, ON: Boston Mills Press, 2003.

Williams, Michael D. *Identifying Trees: An All-Season Guide to Eastern North America*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2007.

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**Early Spring Walk, Ojibway Park, March 23, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth

On a cool spring morning on March 23, 2010, Ojibway Nature Centre staff person Tom Preney lead a group of hikers along the Park's Savannah Trail. As we were leaving the Nature Centre, Tom suggested that we visit the shed veranda to view the bird feeding area. Along the way we stopped by a small area close to the Nature Centre which had recently been burned. Tom remarked that this small plot is home to Slender Bush Clover, an uncommon prairie species that had been introduced to this site. Due to upcoming construction, Nature Centre staff wish to transfer the plants at this site to another. Hopefully the early burning of the site will allow staff to determine exactly just where the plants are located.

From the shed veranda we were able to observe a male Brown-headed Cowbird feeding at seed on the ground and a number of American Goldfinch at the silo feeders which were hinting at their bright breeding plumage. Tom reminded us that the Brown-headed Cowbird will lay its eggs in the nests of other bird species. Some American Goldfinch migrate while others remain in Essex County during winter months.

Hikers headed down the trail towards the Savanna Trail accompanied by the calls of Red-winged Blackbirds. From the last Ojibway Creek bridge, hikers checked the single Skunk Cabbage spathe which had been located on a hike in early March. Skunk Cabbage was introduced into the area along the Ojibway Creek some years ago. In recent years a single spathe has been produced with luxuriant leaves indicating the location of the plant along the creek's edge.

Tom showed the hikers the famous broken tree in which an Eastern Screech Owl was seen for some months. The last few months this small owl has not been observed at the site. Tom found a sleeping raccoon in another broken tree.

Yellow catkins were seen hanging from the many American Hazelnut trees found in the Ojibway Park.

In the distance, a Red-bellied Woodpecker was heard drumming. A lone Turkey Vulture glided above the Ojibway Park tree canopy. Several unidentified shorebirds passed overhead. At least three Downy Woodpeckers moved about in nearby trees.

Tom spent several minutes “pishing” which attracted Dark-eyed Juncos, Northern Cardinal, Downy Woodpeckers and a Tufted Titmouse.

In the Black Oak Savanna the hikers viewed an injured adult deer which had been seen earlier in the winter. Despite her injury, the female deer appeared to be healthy.

Along the Savanna trail, Tom drew the group’s attention to a large Black Oak thought to be over 200 years old.

As the group headed towards the pond, Tom reported that in the last few days three species of snake have been observed including Common Garter Snake, Butler’s Garter Snake and Massasauga Rattlesnake.

A Praying Mantis egg case was found on a goldenrod stem by Tom. Tom asked if anyone knew how many young would emerge from the egg case. When no one offered a suggestion, Tom told the group from personal experience that 200 tiny Praying Mantis emerged when an egg case was left on an indoor heater.

No owls or ducks have chosen this year to locate in the Ojibway Creek nesting boxes.

Thank you to Tom for an enjoyable hike to observe Ojibway Park wildlife.

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### **Thrilling Thursday at Ojibway Nature Centre: Pond Scooping with Frogs and Turtles, May 20, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth

An enthusiastic group of young naturalists, their parents, grandparents and friends joined Ojibway Nature Centre staff person Kristen Fawdry on May 20, 2010 for an evening devoted to the pond creatures. Kristen engaged the young naturalists’ attention with a series of questions and exchanges along with beautiful digital images of pond creatures. It appeared that most of the young naturalists in the audience had attended Ojibway Nature Centre programs as they were well informed with regard to pond inhabitants.

Kristen introduced the concept of a pond and the importance of water to certain plants and animals that need water and ponds in particular for survival. Then Kristen discussed some of the creatures that frequent ponds and nearby areas: tiny fish such as Sunfish, Mallard Ducks, Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, dragonflies and damselflies, Leopard Frogs, American Toads, tadpoles, Painted Turtles, Snapping Turtles, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Raccoons and Muskrats.

Upon completion of the presentation, Kristen reviewed the right scooping technique, reminding everyone that the creatures we would be scooping are very tiny and fragile. There is a proper way to scoop so that the water is clear, allowing the scooper to see the animals move in the water.

As we began our walk to the pond, Kristen pointed to the site of the new Nature Centre and drew everyone’s attention to the changes already underway, such as the many prairie plants that have been relocated.

Along Ojibway Creek, everyone saw released goldfish, Red-winged Blackbirds, a muskrat hole and Cedar Waxwings.

At the pond from the viewing platform, everyone heard several Green Frogs calling, watched a Dragonfly skim over the pond and noted a Northern Oriole flying over the pond.

The best dipping is across the pond from the viewing platform. As the group walked around the pond, Kristen drew everyone’s attention to “spit” or a white foam on stalks of timothy grass. The spit is covering the young of the Spittlebug.

The young naturalists proved to be quite adept at scooping. Some of the creatures in the dippers included waterfleas, dragonfly nymph, baby crayfish, water boatmen, water strider, and damselfly nymph.

A medium sized American Toad was found by the pond and relocated to a drier spot. Toads do not usually live in ponds except for laying of eggs. Kristin said this toad was a female as its tympanum (ear) was smaller than its eye.

Thank you to Kristen for a lively and informative evening at the Ojibway pond.



A pair of Ospreys are nesting in Amherstburg! This is likely the first Essex County nesting in over 100 years. Osprey have been moving south into SE Michigan in recent years and the first nest for Wayne County was just recorded in 2009. Photo by Karen Cedar



**Ojibway Prairie, April 27, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth  
Photo by Betty Learmouth

On a lovely cool spring morning, Ojibway Nature Centre's Tuesday morning hikers joined Tom Preney for a hike that included the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve and the nearby Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park. Hikers stopped to admire five Redbud trees in flower beside the Ojibway Creek before crossing Matchette Road into the prairie.

From Titcombe Road, the hikers had a good view of the blackened Ojibway Prairie which was burned on April 15, 2010. An estimated 65 percent of the prairie was burned, allowing views of the many ant mounds that exist on the prairie. Tom commented that the ants are the decomposers of the prairie.



Tom remarked that migrants were returning with recent sightings of Blue Gray Gnatcatcher, Pine Warbler, and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Along the meandering left hand prairie path, hikers paused to consider the Black Locust which is found there and which provides a difficult situation for prairie managers. These trees were cut in 2009 which caused the trees to grow rapidly. Now the same trees have been burned and it is expected that the burn will further accelerate the growth of the Black Locust.

This early spring walk yielded sightings of Field Sparrow, Chipping Sparrows, Downy Woodpecker, and Tree Swallows. Canada Geese could be heard at the Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park's pond which has become choked with the invasive plant phragmites.

The group followed the trail to Werner Street, then took another trail from that access point back into the Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park. Along the trail Wild Oats or Sessile Bellwort bloomed. A garter snake was observed while an Eastern Towhee called from a thicket. Smooth Horsetail (Smooth Scouring Rush) was seen in a wet meadow.

As the group hiked past the Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park pond, the Canada Geese could be heard clearly. Tom suggested that two pairs were contesting the site for a nesting location.

Early Meadow-rue with its drooping flowers was observed along the trail.

An American Robin was seen constructing its nest. This species always uses mud in its nest construction which helps with nest identification. Nearby a Red-winged Blackbird was spotted at its nest in a willow.

Leaving the area of the power lines as the group prepared to walk along Titcombe Road towards the Nature Centre, Tom told the group about the experience a wildlife photographer had reported to Tom. He was in the area under the power lines when he heard the phragmites crackling. The photographer stood quietly with his camera ready. A coyote appeared which he photographed, obtaining some handsome images.

Tom told the group that at the Ojibway Pond a day earlier hundreds of American Toad tadpoles had been seen. These tadpoles were two weeks early.

Along Titcombe Road, a male American Goldfinch was seen perched, allowing everyone a fine view of this colourful individual. A Hermit Thrush was viewed on the prairie as it moved among the lower branches of charred shrubs. The yellow blooms of a spurge species, Cypress Spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*), caught our eye at the old road's edge.

Thank you to Tom for an informative and enjoyable walk through the Ojibway prairie complex.

## **EARTH DAY AT MIC MAC PARK**

**By Cathy Lapain**

A little cool and rainy this year, but it didn't stop people from attending the Earth Day celebrations on April 25, 2010. Thanks to all who donated bake goods for the E.C.F.N.C. bake sale. A big thank you to all of the helpers that volunteered their time on a Sunday- Jo Ann Grondin, Denise Hartley, Pauline Renaud, Kathy Lesperance, Linda Menard-Watt and Cathy Lapain.



**Spring Garden Natural Area, May 18, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth  
Photos by Larry Onysko

Seven hikers joined Ojibway Nature Centre's staff person Tom Preney for a hike within the Spring Garden Natural Area on a cool, overcast morning, May 18, 2010. The group parked at Titcombe and Malden Road, then walked across Malden Road and along Elgin Lane into the Spring Garden Natural Area. Bird calls were heard along the trail with considerable activity at the "intersection" of trails within the ANSI, especially in the nearby mature oaks. Birds identified, either heard or seen, included Northern Oriole, Wood Thrush, Philadelphia Vireo, Black-capped Chickadee, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Bay-breasted Warbler.

Near the intersection, at least four deer were observed. These animals are quite accustomed to the many persons who walk or jog through the area, flicking their tails and continuing with their browsing.

Tom lead the group around the "milk pond" which is the manmade pond in which a dairy directed unwanted milk in years past. We passed a number of small non native Russian Olive trees which have established along the trail. A surprise sighting was of a female Woodchuck in a small tree which appeared to be a mother with young. According to "Field Guide to the Mammals," Woodchucks "feed on tender, succulent plants."





Back at the intersection, birds heard or seen were Swainson's Thrush, Ovenbird, Blackburnian Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, a flycatcher species, Magnolia Warbler, Redstart, Tennessee Warbler, Indigo Bunting and American Goldfinch

Thank you to Tom for another enjoyable walk within the Ojibway Prairie Complex.



### **Oakwood Bush Spring Walk, April 6, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth

The Tuesday morning hiking group meet at the South Windsor Arena on April 6, 2010 at 10:00 a.m., then headed to the nearby trails in Oakwood Bush. Over the Easter weekend, sunny skies and warm temperatures dominated the weather with the result that forsythia was in full bloom, a hint to naturalists that it was time to head to our woodlands for the spring floral display.

Our leader Tom Preney had just returned from a weekend in the State of Tennessee's Great Smokey Mountains National Park where many visitors had spent the weekend admiring the beauty of that region. Tom brought us up to date on the successful Black Oak Heritage Park prescribed burn which occurred on April 1, 2010

Our group admired a small cherry tree in full bloom at the edge of Oakwood Bush. Tom introduced us to this woodland, commenting that it is City of Windsor's Natural Heritage Site #5. The woodland is notable for its large oaks and openings which support prairie species but

which are being taken over by the invasive plant species Phragmites. Spring wildflowers may be found throughout Oakwood Bush. Along the trail we noted mottled Trout Lily leaves emerging along with the tips of Mayapple. A small early flowering sedge *Carex pennsylvanica* was also noted.

The call of a Carolina Wren filled the woodland. Tom told the group that three species of wrens are found in our area including the House Wren, the Winter Wren and the Carolina Wren. Bird species sighted in the woodland were a Dark-eyed Junco, kinglets in a cottonwood, a Brown Creeper slowly ascending a nearby tree trunk, several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, three Black-capped Chickadees and a White-breasted Nuthatch creeping about a poplar.

We could see that spring had arrived in the Oakwood Bush as all around us leaves were appearing on the shrubs with the willow tree limbs turning yellow-green. In the leaf litter beside the trail tiny blue violet blossoms could be seen. One of the hikers discovered a tiny toad in the leaf litter beside the trail.

The group stopped near a tree containing a large nest that Tom had earlier thought may have been the Cooper's Hawk nest. There was no activity at the nest site which was disappointing to all.

Behind the Ministry of Health laboratory the group examined the Climbing Prairie Rose which had been relocated due to upcoming road construction. The transplants appeared to have survived the winter very well. As the group stood at the edge of the prairie to the south of the laboratory, a male Northern Flicker perched in a cottonwood, calling loudly. A Brown-headed Cowbird was also seen perched near the Northern Flicker. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was observed as it sat close to the Northern Flicker, then flew to another tree.

Thank you to Tom for an informative and enjoyable walk within the Oakwood Bush.

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### **Brunet Park Hike, May 4, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth

Hikers from Ojibway Nature Centre gathered at Brunet Park on May 4, 2010 for a spring morning outing with Tom Preney. Tom introduced the Brunet Park area as the largest protected area within the Town of LaSalle. A lot of mowing occurs at Brunet Park, although areas behind Brunet Park (a former landfill site) are not mowed. A pond was dug in the area about ten years ago.

The group met at the parking area off Normandy Road near the pavilion. Here a section of the La Salle trail leads into the nearby woodland. The group heard the call of a Blue Gray Gnatcatcher before setting off. Tom pointed out Sassafras with its variable leaves which had just finished flowering, offering the comment that there is a quantity of Sassafras in the woodland surrounding Brunet Park. The soil here is sandy with prairie species found in openings.

Along the trail the invasive plant Garlic Mustard was flowering. Near the trail Wild Geranium was in full bloom. The leaves of Jewelweed were present along the trail. Tom commented that

the sap of this plant is soothing for insect bites and stings. Jack-in-the-Pulpit was seen at several locations beside the trail as was Wild Black Currant.

Birds heard or seen along the trail were Blue Gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and the alarm call of a House Wren. Tom told the group that he has found Eastern Fox Snakes in trees by following the alarm call of the House Wren.

Instead of remaining on the asphalt trail, Tom lead the group off to the right on a narrow woodland trail where the group enjoyed a vast array of flowering plants in a rich woodland. Luckily, Garlic Mustard has not arrived in the woodland to this date. Some plants observed were Wild Geranium, White Trillium, Wild Yam, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Mayapple, Sensitive Fern and Poison Ivy. Tom took a few minutes to discuss the various forms in which Poison Ivy may appear i.e. as a vine, as a creeping forest floor cover, and as a shrub.

The group observed one very tall Jack-in-the-Pulpit estimated to be 14 to 16 inches in height. Individual Jack-in-the-Pulpit may vary in colour from green to dark stripes to a solid dark purple-black.

The trail on which we walked was peacefully quiet with no other persons about. Tom told the group that the Town of LaSalle has banned mountain bikes in its publicly owned woodlands, although a single bicyclist was noted in the woodland near the parking lot as the group dispersed after 11:00 a.m.

Birds heard or seen along the woodland trail included Black-and-White Warbler, Northern Oriole, and Warbling Vireo. Tom called the group's attention to the Warbling Vireo with its jumble of notes.

A Spring Azure butterfly was seen early in the hike with a Silver-spotted Skipper noted at the hike's conclusion. Tom reported the season's first sighting of a Silver-spotted Skipper on May 3, 2010.

Thank you to Tom for introducing the group to the richness of the Town of LaSalle woodlands.

**Ontario Nature 2009 Conservation Award Winner:**  
by JoAnn Grondin

Dan Bissonnette was awarded the Richards Education Award on Saturday, May 29th as part of the Ontario Nature 29th Annual General Meeting. This Award is presented to an individual who has succeeded in helping people understand the natural world and become enthusiastic supporters of conservation and environmental protection.

Dan also prepared a Priority Resolution on the Sale of Ornamental Invasive Species in Ontario which was approved at the Carolinian West Regional Meeting on Saturday, March 27th, and also at the Ontario Nature Annual General Meeting on Saturday, May 29th.

**Friends of Ojibway Prairie Annual General Meeting,****March 28, 2010**

By Betty Learmouth

Friends of Ojibway Prairie members and friends gathered on March 28, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. for the Friends' Annual General Meeting at the Ojibway Nature Centre. President Nancy Pancheshan welcomed everyone and began the meeting with a look at the Friends' activities during 2009. With the aid of a Power Point presentation, activities illustrated were Earth Day, Ojibway festivals, native plant sales, and the efforts to defeat the proposed big box development adjacent to Ojibway Park and Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. Updates regarding the fight to halt the big box development are available at [www.saveojibway.info](http://www.saveojibway.info)

The nominating committee has indicated the following individuals will be executive members for the Friends of Ojibway Prairie during 2010-2011: June Hurley, Claire McAllister, Russ Munro, Larry Onysko, Bonnie Ross, Andy Simko, and Janet Tuite.

Retiring Friends' President Nancy Pancheshan introduced Chad Menard, an architectural designer with NORR, the firm of architects, engineers and planners responsible for the new Ojibway Nature Centre's design. Chad took us on a tour of the new building through a Power Point presentation.

The view from the new centre is important. The new nature centre design will provide a view of grassland and trees which already exist close to the new building.

The existing nature centre will be operational while the new centre is under construction.

A green roof is planned for the new building. A sloped roof will be built which will allow visitors to actually see the roof. Plastic modular trays will be installed as part of a LiveRoof. An example of a sloped roof may be seen at Sault Ste Marie on a building in the United States. Check the Internet for more information concerning LiveRoof.

The new entrance will be placed away from the parking lot. This entrance will provide a large gathering area prior to entering the building. A granite wall will lead to the entrance and to the inside reception desk. This design will promote interaction with people in the building as well as allowing good visual view of everyone in the facility.

The reception area will be large with a nearby library lounge with a view beyond the nature centre. Two classrooms, each 760 square feet in size and able to be doubled, will provide welcome space for school groups. High ceilings will make the classrooms appear more spacious. A natural burning fireplace is included in the plans for the new building. An animal care room and interactive display area in the reception area will be inviting to visitors. A gift shop is to be a part of the reception area.

The new building will feature both public and private areas. Within the public area will be the animal care room, an interactive display area, a gift shop, a food preparation area, washrooms

and showers, and water fountains. The private area will include an office, a kitchen for staff, mechanical room and private entrance.

The materials used in the construction of the new centre will include granite at the entrance way which will be recycled from the construction of the Ambassador Bridge and the tunnel. Rain chains will add interest to the granite wall such as ice formation in cold weather. Richly stained white cedar will be included in the construction.

Orientation is important so that visitors always know where they are. For instance, a door will open with a window beyond. Washrooms will have a green wall that will distinguish that portion of the building from any other.

The interior view of the building is that of a more conventional building system. The open ceilings will be painted black, providing a more spacious feeling. Concrete floors will be reflective. The central column in the reception area will be a tree with limbs, bringing the outdoors inside. Construction materials will be of a local flavour such as the use of cedar planks for the reception area. Windows randomly placed will open up the interactive display area. A large screen TV will be in this area. The classrooms will feature windows six feet, eight inches tall. The entire building will be wheelchair accessible.

Nancy Pancheshan presented Chad with a “Spirit of the Land” lithograph as a token of the Friends’ appreciation of Chad’s fine presentation.

Shirley Grondin made a motion that the meeting be adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Delicious refreshments prepared by Deb Waugh were served following the Friends’ Annual General Meeting.



**ECFNC Members Annual  
Garbage Mustard Removal on  
Shaughnessy Cohen Memorial  
Savannah, Pelee Island**

Shirley Grondin, Bonnie Ross,  
Margaret Jennings

May 2010

Way to go ladies!!!

**ECFNC Activities and Excursions, June '10 – Sept. '10**

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 9 – ECFNC Members Meeting** – Speaker: Joe Crowley, Ontario Herpetofaunal Atlas Project Coordinator. **Meet in Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 pm**, County Road 42, Windsor.

**June 8 - August 31** – Ojibway Nature Centre – Summer Hiking at Ojibway. Exercise your body and brain! These brisk morning walks with one of Ojibway Nature Centre's naturalists will introduce you to the many plants and animals in our area. Explore the Ojibway Prairie Complex and meet new friends. Senior discount available. Tuesdays 10:00 - 11:00 am. \$46/13 weeks. Call Ojibway Nature Centre for details (519-966-5852).

**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.

**June 17** – Ojibway Nature Centre –Thrilling Thursday: Butterfly & Bug Hunt. Thursday evening 6:30 – 8:00 pm, Fee = \$6/adult, \$5/child. Call Ojibway for details (519-966-5852).

**June 24** – CSLT Event – Join a guided walk on the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve on Thursday, June 24, 2010 for a glimpse of early summer flowering plants. Meet at 6:30 p.m. on Titcombe Road at the prairie entrance which is across Matchette Road from the Ojibway Park parking lot. Call Betty at 519-944-0825 to indicate you will be attending and for more information. The Prairie is especially lovely this year following a prescribed burn in April. Donation to the Land Trust's Legacy Fund is welcome. Refreshments following the walk.

**July 11 – ECFNC Butterfly Walk** – Join ECFNC member Alan Wormington on a butterfly walk at Point Pelee National Park. Meet in front of the Visitors Centre at 9:00 a.m.

**July 14 – ECFNC Members Outdoor Meeting** - ECFNC Members hike through Black Oak Heritage Park to view the new trail and results of this spring's burn. Meet at Broadway Parking lot at 6:00 pm. Be ready for mosquitoes!

**July 15** – Ojibway Nature Centre –Thrilling Thursday: Adult (16+) - Prairie Exploration and Digital Photography Thursday evening 6:30 – 8:00 pm, Fee = \$6/adult. Call Ojibway Nature Centre for details (519-966-5852).

**July 21 – ECFNC Kayaking** – Join Club member Mike Malone for a kayak outing. No experience is necessary. One and two person boats will be available. There is no charge for this trip, but members are asked to register by calling Pelee Wings (519-326-5193) as it is limited to 15 participants. Meet at the Pelee Wings store at 5:00 p.m. Locale for the trip will depend on weather and lake conditions. If inclement weather or high winds are occurring, call Mike at the store to check if the outing is still a go.

**July 21** – CSLT Event - Join a guided walk on the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve on Wednesday, July 21, 2010 for a glimpse of mid summer flowering plants. Meet at 6:30 p.m. on Titcombe Road at the prairie entrance which is across Matchette Road from the Ojibway Park parking lot. Call Betty at 519-944-0825 to indicate you will be attending and for more information. The Prairie is especially lovely this year following a prescribed burn in April. Donation to the Land Trust's Legacy Fund is welcome. Refreshments following the walk.

**July 15** – Ojibway Nature Centre – Peche Island Adventure (youth ages 7-12). Join us for this rare opportunity to explore the City of Windsor's island park. Boat trips, field studies, historical hikes are all part of this unique adventure. Very limited enrollment so register early. August 4, 11, 18 OR 25. Wednesday, 9:00 am-4:00 pm. \$48/1 day. Call Ojibway for details (966-5852).

**August 13** – ECFNC Members' Outdoor Meeting – THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT! On Friday the 13th, come skulk in the shadows with Treasurer Teresa and Vice President Parent at their haunted homestead at 675 Mersea Road 12, Leamington. Bring forth family and friends at 6pm for a meal of Witches' Brew Stew and an eerie evening - braving black cats and brown bats and screech owls hooting warnings of doom! Scare-up your star-gazing scopes and spine-chilling bonfire stories and a tent if you dare to sleep under the spectral skies! RSVP REQUIRED by August 6th (519-322-0004). Undaunted dinner guests may bring a spooky side dish or devilish dessert, as well as \$5 towards the Witches' Brew Stew (chili!) and beverages. Be sure to carry an acorn in your pocket for good luck!

**August 22** – ECFNC Summer Excursion – Join Ojibway staff for a flower-filled walk on the Ojibway prairie. Meet at 10:00 am in the Ojibway parking lot.

**September 8** – ECFNC Members Meeting – Speaker: Dr. Lynda Corkum and HOT OFF THE PRESS!!! – “Fishes of Essex County & Surrounding Waters”. **Meet in Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 pm**, County Road 42, Windsor.

**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.

**September 18 and 19** – **Holiday Beach Hawk Festival**. This main weekend for the festival will include hawk watching from the tower, workshops, guided tours, banding, etc. Our Blue Kestrel Café will be open on both Saturday and Sunday. If you would like to help at the Café, please call Claire McAllister (519-254-1854).

**September 26** – ECFNC Fall Hike – Join Club member Ian Woodfield for a hike in the Spring Garden area. Meet at 2:00 p.m. by the horse paddock on Elgin Street off Malden Road. There is parking on the other side of Malden Road, across from Elgin Street.

**October 3** – ECFNC Fall Outing – Club members Joe and Betty Williams have invited us to make their cottage a base for this outing. Take the first road east of Holiday Beach (Country Club Road). Follow it to the end, turn left on Lakeside Drive. Follow this to the end. There is a trail on ERCA property, a wetland and a beach. Meet at 2:00 p.m.

**November 6th or 13th** – Please save these two evenings in your calendars. Plans are underway for our Annual Dinner to be held on one of these two nights.



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

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)

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All proceeds to benefit the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club



Photo by A. Bosman

Dr. Lynda D. Corkum is a Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Windsor and a long-standing member of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club. She is a past President of the International Association for Great Lakes Research.

Essex County Field  
Naturalists' Club

