

Essex County
FIELD NATURALISTS'
CLUB

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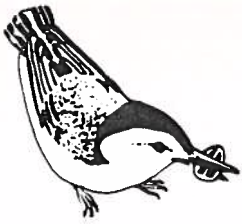


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FEEDERWATCHING AT THE BARBOURS': 1988-89

Anne Barbour



Officially, winter may begin on Dec. 21. However, as participants of Long Point Bird Observatory's Feederwatch program, the Barbour residence found that last winter began on November 22 with day 1 of the first count. With a variety of seed and suet offerings spread in several locations all visible from the diningroom window, breakfast inside was shared with our avian friends outside.

A flurry of activity from House Sparrows on the ground was precipitated by Blue Jays who would land on the perch of the mixed seed feeder to perform their 'scoop and search' technique: digging in with their beaks and scattering seed on the ground, presumably searching for specific preferred delicacies.

Two White-breasted Nuthatches come and go at Ethan's 'restaurant', a feeder he made at Cub camp. No bird could possibly resist this attractive feeder, decorated with pictures of birds, knife and fork in hand, wearing napkins around their necks, a plate with steaming food and a description of the enclosed meal: YUM-YUM! The sunflower seeds within have now attracted a female Red-bellied Woodpecker who, unlike the Nuthatches, does not use the perch, but clings to the tree trunk and reaches sideways to pick out a seed which she carries off to peck open high up in a nearby ash.

A Downy Woodpecker arrives, but passes right by the hanging bag of suet, so cannot be counted this time. A Brown Creeper has done the same thing! This is not good; the experts will have to be consulted (Audubon Society, John V. Dennis, Paul D. Pratt) on how to make the offerings more appealing to fussy diners. For Downies, the answer proved to be patience: once the suet was discovered, feeding at it became regular.

However, a frustrating aspect of the 'Feederwatch' rules, made the game of watching certain species, Downies and Cardinals in particular, quite challenging. Although males and females of these 2 species can easily be distinguished, for many years they cannot, and instructions for counting were quite clear: to count all

species in the same way. That meant that 2 Downies could only be counted if they were seen at the same time. It became a game at home with the boys: who would be first to spot both Downies at the feeders at once? As winter wore on, the game got better; one day, we excitedly noticed 2 females at once, then 2 males at once, so we knew there was the potential for 4 Downies at once. This eventually happened, and all 4 remained daily diners to the end. The unofficial high, tallied on an in-between-count-day in mid-February, was 3 males and 3 females who were seen all at once at feeding stations, or nearby waiting their turn.

For the little Brown Creeper, a large hanging bag of suet proved to be much too intimidating. Although the Creeper was often seen moving about on feeder trees, it took several counts before this tiny bird was enticed to taste a morsel of the offerings. However, once attracted to pudding mixtures rubbed on the bark of tree trunks, the Creeper returned daily. It showed definite preference for melted fat mixed with rolled oats or cooker rice, rather than cracked corn or mixed seed. Perhaps these soft grains most resembled the Creeper's natural food of insects and their eggs.

Over the months, as word of a consistent food source circulated amongst the avian community and numbers increased, a pattern of feeding companions emerged. First to arrive in the morning twilight and last to partake in the evening dusk were the Cardinals, Juncos and American Tree Sparrow. These dining companions seemed to prefer a quiet, uncrowded table and so rose early to avoid the bad table manners of the raucous Jays, nervous House Sparrows, persistent Starlings, and innumerable Mourning Doves.

American Goldfinches always congregated in their largest group first thing in the morning. Only then were counts of 40 or more attained, with Goldfinches filling every available perch, waiting on nearby branches, and scattered on the ground. Throughout the rest of the day, the Goldfinches visited the feeders with a dozen or so in regular attendance, but not so urgently as in the morning when everyone wanted to eat at once.

Usually, not until things had quieted down somewhat would the Woodpeckers, Nuthatches and Creepers take their turn. And though there was little conflict among their flock, the Nuthatches were always the gentlemen, giving up their spot when someone else arrived; or, if in the process of creeping down the tree, found the 'Restaurant' already attended, seemed to tip their hat apologetically and move off, often down to the base of the tree where they might find a sunflower seed on the ground.

Some of the most exciting feederwatching moments came when, right in front of our eyes, all the birds would instantly scatter, and a Downy or Nuthatch left alone would freeze in place against the trunk of a tree. Upon searching the trees, we could usually find a hawk perched somewhere in the vicinity, no doubt thinking this a good stake-out for a possible meal. Indeed, one day, a Mourning Dove that was separated from the rest of the flock, narrowly missed being captured in mid-air by a Cooper's hawk that seemed to swoop down out of nowhere. Our cheers were for the raptor who had to work hard for his meal, but in a moment the encounter was over and the unsuccessful hawk flew off. The memory itself still takes this author's breath away.

Unfortunately, not all Feederwatch memories are good. One experience was so bad that when it happened, I considered discontinuing the project. The worst possible thing that a birder could ever experience, happened. A favourite bird, a Brown Creeper, the one I had worked the hardest trying to entice to my offerings, was caught by our cat. Having just admired the pair of Creepers eating rice and oatmeal puddings on separate trees, I returned to my housework, so smug that I had managed to attract this elusive species. Minutes later, I glanced out the window again only to see our cat batting a tiny body about near the base of one of the pudding trees. I caught my breath and raced to the door, praying that it was a mouse; but my worst horror was confirmed: a Brown Creeper lay immobile at my feet. I picked it up tenderly, stroking its curved beak, its soft body still warm in my hand. As I turned it over, it left a spot of blood on my palm, as if marking me as the culprit. That did it:

the well-spring opened and I cried and cried. My vanity and selfishness in trying to attract this beautiful, wild bird to an unnatural food source had caused its death. The cat was belled soon afterwards, but my mental torment over whether a 'naturalist' should interfere with nature by using the excuse of 'generosity' stayed with me a long time, and haunts me infrequently still.

I knew I could not stop my feeding program even if I had wanted to though, and a few days later, I felt somewhat pardoned when the remaining Creeper returned to the rice pudding.

In retrospect, 10 thin sheets does not seem like much to show for a winter's worth of watching one's feeder, but I know that last winter's watch, because I had a purpose, brought me more pleasure and taught me more about birds than my 12 previous winters combined.

This fall, as I sharpen my 2B pencil, I hope there will be many other Essex County residents doing likewise!

	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>Count</u>									
		<u>#1</u>	<u>#2</u>	<u>#3</u>	<u>#4</u>	<u>#5</u>	<u>#6</u>	<u>#7</u>	<u>#8</u>	<u>#9</u>	<u>#10</u>
1.	Mourning Dove	1	5	6	6	19	87	74	18	30	53
2.	Red-bel Wpkr.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3.	Downy Wpkr.		2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4
4.	Blue Jay	9	6	9	7	16	7	16	13	9	3
5.	Am. Crow			2	7	8	3	3	3	2	2
6.	W-b Nuthatch	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
7.	Brown Creeper						2	1	1	1	
8.	Am Robin										1
9.	Eur Starling	1	9	8	39	36	7	27	15	24	8
10.	Nor Cardinal	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
11.	Am Tree Sparrow			1		1		1			1
12.	Dk-eyed Junco	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
13.	Red-w Blackbird										4
14.	Com Grackle										10
15.	Cowbird					1				1	8
16.	House Finch		1				2	1			3
17.	Am Goldfinch	17	7	7	11	19	27	36	75	77	29
18.	House Sparrow	12	28	29	53	63	39	36	44	59	13
19.	Cooper's Hawk	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Totals of individuals per count		52	64	70	131	171	182	205	178	212	146

Project Feederwatch.

Managed in Canada by Long Point Bird Observatory

P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario. NOE 1MO. Canada.

ROSS' GULL

Wilfred Botham

The following article is taken from Wilf Botham's notes.

Sun. 9 March 1975 - Lynn Vernon stopped in on his way home from Point Pelee and Hillman. He brought a clipping about the Ross' Gull discovered at Newburyport, MA. He wants to go there to see it. We had heard about it last Mon., on the radio. Peterson had gone up to see it - his first sighting of the bird.

Mon. 10 March - Lynn phoned. He is going to the east coast Fri. morning and offered me a ride. I will phone him back Wed. evening at 2100.

Wed. 12 March - We heard about the Ross' Gull again, on the radio. The bird was first seen in early Jan., then lost. On 2 March it was found again and has been seen every day since. It depends on the tide when the bird can be seen - the tide is 50 minutes later each day. This evening Lynn phoned at 2050. He wants to leave Thurs. evening.

Thurs. 13 March to Sun. 16 March - From Essex County, ON, to Essex County, MA. At 1910 Lynn picked me up. We drove some distance beyond Buffalo, where we spent the remainder of the night in a Holiday Inn - 0100-0600 NY time. I did not get to sleep for two hours and was cold all night. We started out in the dark about 0630 and by the time we could see what kind of country was passing us it was a rather desolate sight. Slightly uneven terrain, with many wet areas, and dead tree stubs standing in them. Wads of last year's tent caterpillar homes were extremely numerous the whole way to the Atlantic. I was nodding from sleepiness when we passed the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge so missed seeing a Pileated Woodpecker which Lynn observed flying into a tree not far from the Thruway. There were hundreds of geese in the Refuge, also swans, ducks, coot, etc. The countryside became more rolling as we moved along at maximum speed - 55 mph - it became hilly, with hills far apart, but finally the hills got closer and closer together until they were as close as possible - if they were to be still separate - and remained that way until the end. The dead trees gradually became less common, and the remainder of the trip was very pleasant. All the way

across NY and MA we noted small dense clumps of reed - plume grass - beside the road every few miles. This Thruway - Thomas E. Dewey - is a toll road: when one enters the Thruway a card is received from a booth attendant: on leaving the Thruway the card is handed in and the toll paid, which Lynn said amounted to about two cents a mile. Gas over there is 55-62 cents a gallon, much more expensive than here in ON.

When we crossed into MA we had driven 575 miles. Shortly thereafter a sign read that we were at the highest elevation in MA - 1724 feet. Some distance short of Boston we left the Thruway and drove north to the mouth of the Merrimac River, to Salisbury on the north side of the Bay, arriving at about 1430, and obtained a motel for two nights. Lynn phoned Cathy. I phoned Marie, who said it was snowing, and blowing a blizzard in Essex County, ON. We drove in Salisbury State Park, near the motel. The park is sandy on the ocean side, grass marsh crossed with tide channels on the land side, the Bay is straight ahead. The tide channels are of many widths, some can be jumped across, at least at low tide, others are several meters wide. The tide comes and goes twice a day, actually a moon day, the moon being about 50 minutes later each day. In the Bay we saw a common loon and a number of ducks, mostly greater scaup. We drove around to the Newburyport side, crossing a bridge beside which a new bridge is being built, much higher than the old, presumably to allow boats to pass beneath. It was on that side that the Ross' Gull had been seen a number of times, at what is called the Seawall; there it was that the great Peterson saw his first Ross' Gull. When we arrived we found several MI people of our acquaintance were there, besides a large crowd of strangers. It was not long before someone shouted Black-headed Gull, and I got a fleeting glimpse of my first lifer of the trip. Towards dusk we drove back to Salisbury State Park, where I picked up some scraps of seaweed, Ascophyllum nodosum (Knotted Wrack), and Fucus vesiculosus (Bladder Wrack), as I learned later. There were no shells worth collecting. A snowy owl was standing at the edge of the marsh. Then to the motel and bed.

We had been hearing predictions of snow and at about dusk it began. We could hear it hitting the motel windows, and the wind was strong, so the outlook for to-

morrow was bleak. It was not much more cheering when we looked out in the morning, blowing snow and cold. However, before noon the snow had ended and the sun was shining. Only about 3 inches of snow had fallen, and many pickup trucks with snowplows in front soon had all roads clear. The remainder of the day was pleasant for which we were very thankful. During the day we shuttled back and forth between Salisbury and Newburyport several times. On the latter side we found a crowd at the Seawall again, but we drove farther, across a bridge, to Plum Island, a narrow strip of land about ten miles long that parallels the mainland east of the Bay. The mouth of the Bay is narrow and is protected by stone walls jutting into the ocean, on both sides. From the Bay end of Plum Island we saw a Barrow's Goldeneye, another lifer. Later, with a group of other birders, we returned to that spot, when we saw a flock of Common Eider - one more lifer. The most common duck on the Bay was Black, then good numbers of Greater Scaup and Old Squaw. Back on the Salisbury side we went to the marsh, not much there so we drove over to the stone breakwater point, where a crowd had gathered. There we got 2 Great Cormorant and 4 Purple Sandpiper - both lifers. Soon a report came that a Ross Gull was over on the marsh side, but by the time we arrived back there the bird had flown to the far side of the marsh. However another lifer was seen - an Iceland Gull. A number of us drove around to the other side of the marsh, where we met Paul Miliotis, the man who had re-discovered the bird 2 March. He said this is where the bird is most often seen. We did see the bird but I was unable to note its fieldmarks due to its distance from us. I took their word for the identification. In this group were George Bryan from Windsor, along with Bob Curry and 4 others from the Hamilton area. They and we drove to Plum Island and up the island for several miles. All except a small part of the island next to the Bay is the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. To the left of the road were dunes between us and the ocean, the dune area ranging from about 20 to 100 meters in width. On the right a wide marsh where ducks and geese were numerous. The Plum Island road was rough so we had to drive very slowly. We left the car and walked along a dike a short distance in the marsh. Here a skunk was walking along unconcernedly at the

base of the dike. I gathered that the reason for this side trip was to look for the Ipswich Sparrow. Lynn and I did not see it but we learned later that the others did. We saw a couple of Yellow-rumped Warblers. The dune area of this Refuge is forbidden territory, as numerous signs proclaimed. It is a fragile habitat and tramping would destroy the vegetation. Later we drove back to the Salisbury side to where we had seen the Ross' Gull. We walked farther along over the marsh beside the Bay, making our way over narrow places in the tidal channels. We were working our way towards a large flock of Bonaparte Gulls, among which I guess the others hoped to see the Ross' Gull again. They saw the Ross' Gull, also several Little Gulls and a Black-headed Gull. I saw only the Little Gulls, besides the Bonapartes. By then the sun had almost set, so back to the motel. Sometime during the afternoon we had seen a Tufted Duck - another lifer - on one of the tidal channels, in company with several Greater Scaup.

This mouth of the Merrimac River is only a little farther north than Essex Co., ON. Halfway between Wallaceburg and Sarnia would be about its latitude. It is 12 degrees farther east than home, which means the sun rises and sets 48 minutes earlier than it does here.

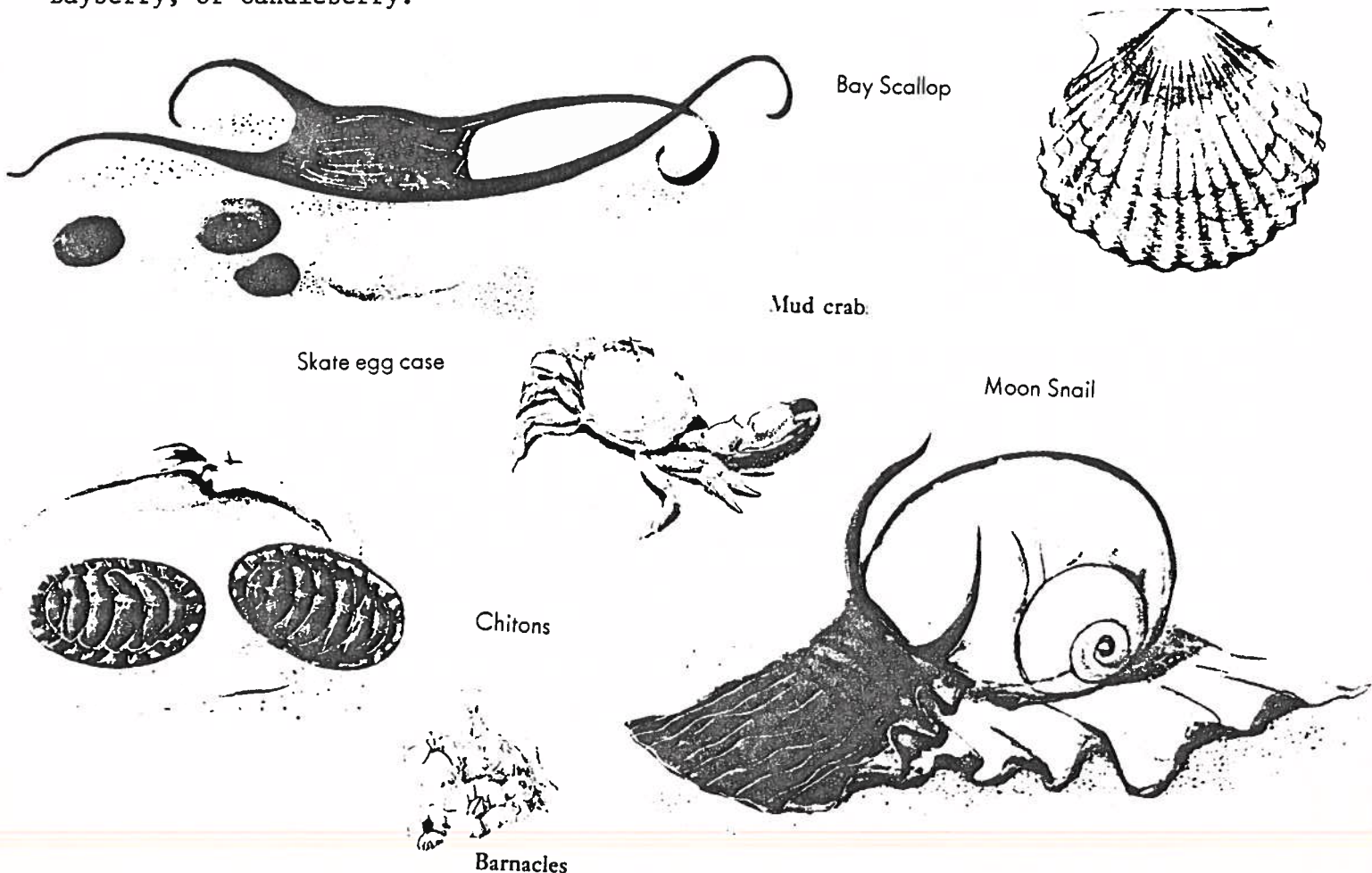
Next morning, Sun., we left for home just as the sun rose at 0700, fast time. It was a beautiful day, temperature higher than the preceding days, sunny in the morning, clouding over later, but still a good day. We had more than realized our expectations; I had added 8 to my bird lifelist, and although I did not see the Ross' Gull well enough to identify it myself, I did see it.

Two dry plants that I collected on the sand have since been identified as Beach Wormwood, Artemisia stelleriana, and Beach Heather, Hudsonia tomentosa.

On the homeward drive we spent 2.5 hours in the vicinity of Utica NY, where Lynn had learned a hawk owl had been around for many weeks. No luck for us, although others reported seeing it that day. I saw the Niagara Pen. in daylight, with its mile upon mile of orchards and vineyards. On both sides of the international border were unbelievable numbers of Hydro towers and lines. Once on 401 it was nearing

sunset and one of the last things naturewise seen were five deer bounding across a field. I did not count the Redtail Hawks seen on the trip, but 50 would not be an exaggeration. We arrived back at our home shortly after 2100, Sun., 16 March. I had seen 46 species of birds on the trip, and we had been away for 3 days. Oh yes, it had been my first sight of an ocean.

Sat. 22 March - Jim Wilson Sr. and Jim Jr. returned from a weeklong trip to the east coast. They brought things they had collected on beaches, and gave some to me. They had been in their van in Salisbury State Park when we left Sun. morning, we could probably have seen the van had we looked in that direction. After seeing the Ross' Gull and other birds they had gone on to Cape Cod, New Jersey, etc. They had bought a book about the outer lands, that pictured and described the wildlife to be found on the beaches. Jim lent the book to me, so I spent the greater part of the night identifying the things he had given me. Some of them are: Channeled Whelk and its egg cases, Moon Snail, Acorn Barnacles, Slipper Snail, Bay Scallop, Chiton, Surf Clam, Mud Crab, Spider Crab, Erect Moss Animal, Sea Lace, Skate egg cases, Bayberry, or Candleberry.



PHAINOPEPLA

Wilfred Botham

The following article is taken from Wilf Botham's notes.

Thurs. 1 Jan. 1976 - Lynn Vernon was here when I returned from Point Pelee, where I had been trying to see as many birds as possible to begin my 1976 list (I saw 38 between home and Point Pelee, second highest ever for the first day of the year - it was 40 in 1971), Lynn had just returned from Elgin Co. where he had seen a Phainopepla! It had been seen last Sat., on a Christmas Bird Count. Tom Hayman and Norm Chesterfield had gone down on Mon. and had seen it. Lynn gave us instructions on how to find it.

Fri. 2 Jan. - The weather report was for a possibility of freezing rain so I put off any plans for going after the Phainopepla. The report proved false, there was no freezing rain, no rain of any kind and no snow of any amount.

Sat. 3 Jan. - To Elgin Co. and back - 154 miles - 0900-1430 - I decided that I must go and look for that bird. Marie rode with me. It was a good day for driving - cloudy, but the roads were bare and dry, there was no rain, and no snow except for a flurry near the end of the outgoing trip. We drove about three miles past Eagle in Elgin Co., on #3 Hwy., then south on Coyne Road for about a mile, and there was the small yellow mailbox and the evergreen-lined lane, with a pole on the ground across the entrance, to discourage people from driving in, just as Lynn had told us. A young couple from Pt. Huron were just leaving. They said the bird was there. Mr. Foster, the owner, had come out to the mailbox. He told me he has a home east of Leamington on #3 Hwy. He used to work for the Imperial Tobacco Co. His first ancestor had named Leamington Spa, obviously the Spa part of the name was later dropped. His wife owns the place they are now on. It is 162 acres and goes back to 1816, he told us. The house is about 75m back from the road and there is a sort of valley from the house to a Con. road to the south which is maybe 150m away. In this "valley" are several apple trees, a patch of sumac, some multiflora rose, and a scattering of junipers. I drove over to the road on the south and walked in, but the bird had

momentarily been lost sight of. About 6 people were waiting for it to reappear, Mrs. Foster among them. Because it was cool I went back to the car for coat and boots. When I rejoined the group the bird had reappeared. It flew into a juniper, then to a multiflora rose, where I think it took some fruit. Then it flew to the ground, then back to the juniper. It moved around a good deal, sometimes disappearing when one did not watch it closely. Sometimes it would perch on an outer twig of an apple tree and remain there for several moments. It was a male, its color was quite dark but the wings were sort of reddish-brown on the outer part, beyond where the white spot is supposed to be. On this bird the white spots were very indistinct. The crest was always erected and was always comb-like, that is, spaces between the feathers. In shape it was like a small cardinal, except its beak was thin, not finch-like. The bird is in the silky flycatcher family, although some taxonomists lump them with the waxwings. There are three other silky flycatchers in Middle America, and one where northeast Africa and southwest Asia meet, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

The only sound we heard from this bird was a pleasant low, short whistle, sometimes repeated quickly several times.

Mr. Foster had joined us in the field and Mrs. Foster had returned to the house. The other visitors also left shortly. As they were leaving in came Al Patterson and his son Larry. We had become acquainted with them when they lived in Essex Co. Larry is working for Wm. Gunn, Aird Lewis and John Livingston, who have formed an association to do environmental studies in the north for oil companies. They are based at Edmonton. Larry has been in Inuvik for part of the study.

Mr. Foster told us there may have been 500 people in to see the bird since its discovery a week ago. Among the visitors had been Don and Joan Gunn, they had driven over the pole at the entrance and up to the house, and over the pole again on their way out! I suppose they had camera equipment they did not want to carry any farther than necessary. Mrs. Foster told us later she had seen more camera and scope equipment than ever in her life before.

Mr. Foster went back to the house, leaving the field to Al, Larry and me. No

other visitors arrived, but Mrs. Foster came out again and said she wanted to shake the hand of the man who had been to Inuvik. She said the Eskimo were beautiful people. She talked to us for about 15 minutes, her words came pouring out in a happy torrent, accentuated by much hand motioning, and pushing back of wisps of hair that persisted in falling across her forehead. She said she would like to meet Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, etc. "They are all beautiful people." "Tom Hayman is a beautiful person." She talked much about the environment, that we must see to it that greedy people do not destroy it. "Bird watchers are beautiful people." "This little bird is God's messenger." She asked Larry the correct pronunciation of Inuvik; he said the natives put the accent on the first syllable.

When Mrs. Foster returned again to the house we three also left for our respective homes. I must have been there for an hour and a half. It had been a great adventure, both for seeing this bird visitor from the southwest US, and talking with all the interesting people.

CLUB NEWS UPDATE

The winners of our June 14, 1989 raffle were John E. Dick of Wheatley and Peg Wilkinson of Windsor and an E.C.F.N.C. member. The first draw was for a selection of natural history books and the second draw was for a bluebird box constructed and donated by Don Bissonnette.

Our Heritage Fund has now reached the sum of \$748.00 in its savings account after our various raffles and donations. Our next raffle will be drawn on December 13, 1989 and the prize will be a lovely framed watercolour painting of a Wood Duck by Jo Barten.

E.C.F.N.C.'s fifth annual dinner is scheduled for Saturday, November 11, 1989 at the Serbian Community Centre, 6770 Tecumseh Road East. Items for auction and door prizes are welcome. Dinner chairperson is Bonnie Foley. Bonnie may be contacted during the day at 256-8277.

Feederwatch North reports that there are eight participants in the Windsor-Essex County area who are registered for Feederwatch. Please see Anne Barbour's article for more information.

E.C.F.N.C. members are invited to collect, clean and prepare a wide variety of wildflower seeds to be used for tallgrass prairie restoration projects at the Ojibway Nature Centre. Volunteer work will continue through September to mid-October.

House Calls in the Wild

In Canada, a growing partnership between veterinarians and animal-rescue volunteers may help broaden the scope of wildlife research

By Tom Pawlick
Photographs by Ron Watts



Cradling their patients, members of an animal rehabilitation group called Erie Wildlife Rescue (above) nurse injured and sick wild animals. Such volunteer efforts have always been controversial, but many groups are now drawing praise.

An Erie volunteer feeds formula to an orphaned gray squirrel (right). Helping individual creatures often has little impact on populations, but it provides a powerful educational tool. New links to vets also yield data on animal diseases.

I HAD TO transport a skunk with a broken pelvis once," recalls animal rescue worker Sandy Moor with a groan. "Boy, is that great for clearing sinuses!" Owls, she says, are much less trouble. "But they can really scratch up your arms."

Without taking her eyes off the road, Moor nods toward the back seat of her station wagon. There, among a jumble of blankets, Havahart traps and cans of cat food, are boxes containing two injured birds. As she guides the makeshift animal ambulance across the flat farmland of southwestern Ontario, her patients—a screech owl with a damaged iris and a long-eared owl whose legs were paralyzed when it was hit by a car—scratch at the walls of their cardboard cages.

The car slows as Moor swings into a spot at the Kingsville Animal Clinic. Inside, veterinarian Tony Braithwaite is in surgery, repairing the badly injured beak of a pet green-and-gold macaw worth \$5,000. On the operating table next to the anesthetized bird lies a tube of Crazy Glue, a first-rate beak adhesive.

After he has attended to his regular customer, Braithwaite will examine the owls without charge. Moor, a volunteer with an animal rescue group called Erie Wildlife Rescue, will help him, restraining the birds' wings as the ophthalmoscope and X-ray camera loom. When the injured raptors have recovered, they will be released back into the wild.

This joint rescue operation is not simply an isolated case of goodwill. Signs of similar teamwork are becoming more plenti-

ful throughout Canada, where a fragile but growing alliance is being forged between animal-loving amateurs, practicing veterinarians and conservationists. Now, animal rescue groups, which in years past have been attacked by some wildlife managers as naive or even misguided, seem to be winning greater support even among former critics.

In turn, many rescuers have become more pragmatic, and veterinarians more attuned to the problems of wildlife. The result: as vets increasingly team up with people like Moor to volunteer their services, they're learning more about how disease spreads among wild animals. And that could be a boon to wildlife managers concerned with the health of entire populations, not just individual creatures.

Erie Wildlife Rescue, founded 11 years ago in the Windsor, Ontario, satellite town of Amherstburg, now boasts 400 members, making it one of the largest and most efficient among Canada's expanding network of animal rehabilitation groups. This grass roots movement, which actually sprouted several years ago in California, already is widely accepted in Canada by vets on the local level. It also comes at a time when wildlife-oriented faculty members at Canada's leading veterinary colleges are pushing for greater emphasis on wild-animal studies. "The rehab groups generate public concern, which is a potent force," says Canadian Wildlife Federation Executive Vice-President Kenneth Brynaert, who currently serves on the curriculum advisory council of Ontario Veterinary College at Guelph University.

By working on common animals, veterinarians gain experience that could help them save rare species

But as Brynaert and many others point out, the major problems facing wild animals today are far beyond the scope or capabilities of even the most devoted animal rehabilitators. Though the volunteers' work is valuable as a tool for calling attention to pressing wildlife concerns, they say, real solutions lie in habitat conservation and broader protective measures involving whole populations of animals.

Even so, groups of volunteers already are playing a role in the big picture of

an eyedropper, she laughs as she runs down the list of her menagerie-in-residence: three dogs, six cats, four raccoons, seven woodchucks, four red-tailed hawks, three screech owls, three kestrels, one bald eagle, nine skunks, one American bittern, one long-eared owl, one baby red fox and innumerable gray squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits and songbirds.

Phillips took over as director of Erie Wildlife in 1979 and became chairman in 1985, when founder Robin Malott moved out of the area. She shares the founder's deep concern for the welfare of wildlife, notably for road-injured animals that lie in the street and suffer. "We have doctors. Our kids have Children's Aid. Domestic pets have the SPCA," says Phillips. "But there was nothing for injured or orphaned wildlife."

But, she adds, Malott went a step further than some earlier rescuers. From the beginning, she had realized compassion was not enough. To offer animals more than tender loving care—and also to prevent inexperienced hands from inflicting further damage to injured animals—the group needed the help of a trained veterinarian. So Malott turned to Braithwaite, the son of a conservationist in Zimbabwe, who needed no coaxing.

From the bedlam of the first few months, the group quickly developed a system for handling the growing patient volume. One year after the volunteers started, their workload had jumped from 50 to 150 cases, and by the third year it had more than doubled to 379. Last year, with the help of several more vets, they handled 2,100.

Now, volunteers distinguish between injured animals and orphans. Only the injured ones are taken to vets, and then only if their hurts are beyond first-aid. One volunteer, often Phillips, mans a 24-hour telephone hotline, fielding calls from the public and dispatching drivers such as Moor to fetch animals in need. (Ordinarily, wild animals—even those that appear to be in trouble—should be left in the wild. Would-be rescuers also face possible health risks when handling wild animals.) Drivers then deliver the animals according to species to team captains.

The Phillips home is constantly flooded with calls and visitors bearing sick or injured wildlife, especially during spring and early summer. Many of the patients

acquire nicknames during their convalescence, but no matter how attached the family may get to them, all animals judged capable of survival ultimately are set free. Others are euthanized by the vet. Death is natural; says Phillips, her goal is not "to save every sparrow."

Over the years, the volunteers have been labeled a "bunch of little old ladies with nothing better to do," she says, adding that her work has even cost her friends. Many biologists and wildlife managers still tend to dismiss rehabilitators as mere "bunny lovers," for instance. Though the groups spark public interest, "they're viewed by many professional biologists as superfluous to the big picture of populations, as more of a humanitarian gesture than a meaningful wildlife management tool," says Charles Dauphine, chief coordinator of endangered species for the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Countering legitimate concerns such as these remains a continuing problem for organizations like Erie. Is any rescue effort worthwhile when there is usually no assurance an animal returned to the wild will survive? Does publicity about rescue groups lull the public into believing, often wrongly, that solutions to more serious problems are under way? Do such programs do more for the human rescuers than the species themselves? And is there a risk that poorly trained amateurs, ignorant of wildlife laws and permit requirements, do more harm than good?

These are not easy questions. Yet Phillips insists her aim is more realistic than many critics of rescue operations think. Because human activities have depleted the area's marshes and wetlands, robbing animals of habitat, she believes she performs a valuable service. "Here," she says, "nature needs a second chance."

Beyond that, animal rehabilitators often function as counselors or sounding boards for people wanting to express frustration or anger over mankind's abuse of nature. Erie Wildlife's workers also see their role as educators, notably to dispel "Disney" myths—the perception that all animals are cuddly—and other stereotypes, particularly among children. With information booths in shopping malls, school talks and summer programs for students, the group tries to realistically portray na-



Assisted by Erie volunteer Sandy Moor, veterinarian Tony Braithwaite prepares a herring gull for an X-ray (above). All over Canada, vets and volunteers have joined forces to save suffering wildlife.

Veterinarian Braithwaite examines X-rays of the gull's wing (right) for possible joint fractures. Treating gulls and other plentiful creatures can shed light on the proper care of rare or imperiled species.

species preservation. Rehabilitators make up a largely untapped field force capable of gathering massive amounts of raw data. Their more gifted members may even contribute practical medical or biological discoveries, venturing where vets and biologists can't afford to go.

Nancy Phillips, Erie Wildlife's 59-year-old director and "animal overseer," lives in nearby Anderdon with her husband Larry, four children and a noisy assortment of wildlife, most of which is housed in the garage. Feeding animal formula to an orphaned baby gray squirrel through

The volunteers sometimes act as educators, helping to dispel 'Disney' myths that all animals are cuddly and safe

ture's dangers along with its beauty.

"It behooves us as veterinarians to help these people," says Braithwaite, who was quick to see the potential of a small army of part-time Saint Francis. "The hands-on contribution they can make to our understanding of even common maladies can't be ignored." One example is the macaw with the cracked beak. Braithwaite was able to help the bird largely with experience he got mending turtle shells and other bird beaks for Erie Wildlife. "You

vital functions, says Braithwaite. In the event of an outbreak of disease or population loss, he says, volunteers combing the countryside will be among the first to know it. Already, examples of such nature-monitoring abound. Erie volunteers were among the first to notice that wild turkeys, reintroduced in other areas of the province, also had appeared in Essex County, and that woodchucks, rare locally, were showing up in greater numbers. Says Braithwaite, "We should be humble and realize that veterinarians and wildlife managers can learn from these groups."

The tendency to underestimate the potential of amateurs may lessen as the veterinary community becomes more interested in wildlife and more accepting of the rescuers. Signs of both already have emerged. Today, says the CWF's Kenneth Brynaert, the veterinary community is reexamining the scope of its responsibility: "Just as lawyers donate some of their time to legal aid, this is an opportunity for vets to make a public commitment, to be perceived as getting involved in something besides making money."

At the same time, the high quality of some of the rehabilitators' work has made supporting them more respectable. For example, Katherine McKeever's owl rehabilitation efforts in the Niagara Peninsula, documented in her book, *Care and Rehabilitation of Injured Owls*, and the work of Kit and Robin Chubb at the Avian Research Foundation in Verona, Ontario, have spurred widespread amateur interest in wild bird rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, veterinary colleges have begun responding to the groundswell of public interest in wildlife. Several schools, including Ontario Veterinary College, already have introduced courses in wildlife disease. Ontario also has linked up with other schools to launch the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Laboratory, which pools research data from all over the country.

For years, many veterinary students have been curious about wildlife disease, says N. Ole Nielsen, dean of Ontario Veterinary College, "but a lack of curriculum and jobs in that area steered them toward domestic species. Now that's changing. We're nourishing their interest."

The potential for hands-on vet work in

the wild is also being felt in other parts of Canada. Though groups like Erie Wildlife have yet to emerge in Saskatchewan, "there's an upsurge of interest within our college and within agencies that manage wildlife in western Canada," says Ted Leighton, head of veterinary pathology at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon.

Wildlife officials there are worried about the spread of disease, made more likely by habitat destruction and crowded animal populations. They are also on the lookout for disease transmission resulting from game ranching—the practice of raising non-native species on private holdings. The meningial worm of Ontario, for example, is a benign parasite in eastern whitetail deer, but it is not normally found in the West, where it can kill moose or caribou. "If a game ranch brings it here," says Leighton, "it could devastate our western wildlife." However, he says, rehabilitators, working with local vets, could help in the detection of such outbreaks.

If the spirit of voluntarism hasn't yet caught on in Saskatchewan, chances are it will soon: rehabilitation groups are springing up all over the country, from Errington, British Columbia, home of the North Island Wildlife Recovery Association, to Ottawa, where the 50 volunteers of the Coalition for Wildlife opened a wildlife hotline in June. And while no one is keeping track of their numbers in all of Canada, their proliferation in Ontario alone already is so great that the province is considering laws to govern them.

Whether the animal rescue movement will assume a greater role in its budding partnership with the science and veterinary communities is anyone's guess. But considering the momentum already behind it, whatever direction the movement takes, it's not likely to slow down.

Before she got involved with animal rehabilitation, explains Nancy Phillips, she was blind to the wildlife spectacle all around her, even to the splendid red-tailed hawks scouring roadside hayfields for mice. "But one day," she says, "it was as if I was turned on to the beauty of the Earth. From that day, I see everything." ■

Tom Pawlick is Assistant Editor of Legion magazine in Ottawa and has written a book on acid rain called *The Killing Rain*. Ron Watts is a photographer based in Toronto.



Rescued from the streets of downtown Windsor, mallard ducklings separated from their mother navigate a bathtub in Nancy Phillips' house (above) until they are strong enough to make it on their own.

A great horned owl that lost a talon sports a brilliant dab of antibiotic spray on its injury (right). Erie Wildlife Rescue volunteers release all animals judged capable of surviving in the wild.

wouldn't mind risking the loss of a gull or two before you're obliged to save something like a peregrine falcon," he says.

One of the most valuable contributions the volunteers are likely to make, he predicts, will be in the care, handling and rearing of endangered species. "When the day dawns that we have a rare species program . . . in which individuals must be raised and then released in the wild to restock, these folks will be the experts."

Rehabilitators also gather enormous amounts of data, which can be used to establish normal levels for many species'



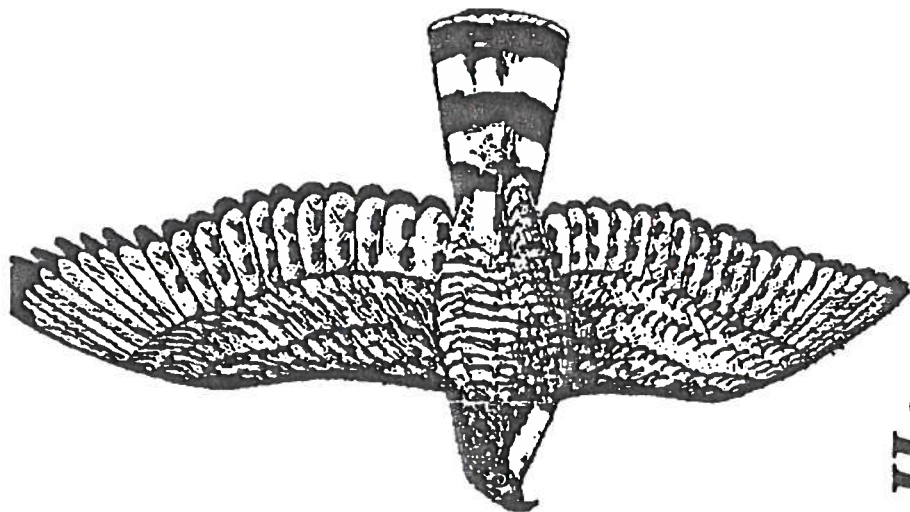
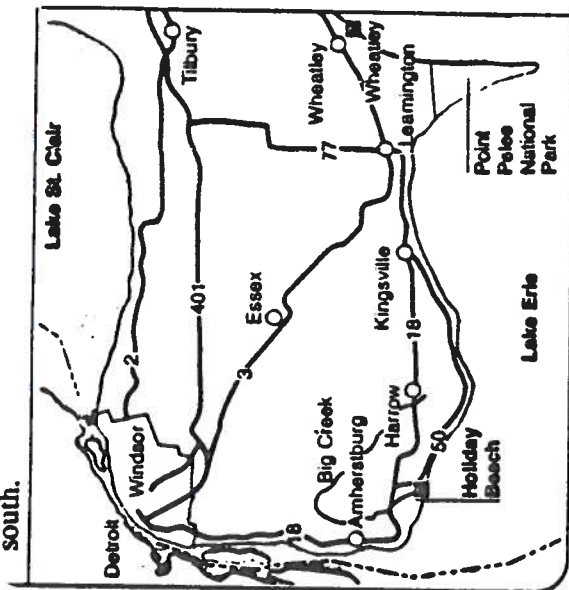
History

No doubt migrant birds have thronged the skies over *Holiday Beach* for millenia. Casual observers have recorded large numbers of hawks at this and nearby sites since the 1960's. More systematic observations began in the 1970's when it became evident that hawks, and other birds were experiencing dramatic population declines due to pesticides like DDT. A national organization, the *Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMNA)* was formed to coordinate studies and observations across the continent. Since 1974, volunteer observers have been present with increasing regularity and we are approaching our goal of coverage during all daylight hours of days when migration is taking place. The information collected is analyzed locally and in cooperation with HMNA to help learn more about bird migration and populations.

Holiday Beach Migration Observatory was founded in 1986 as a way to broaden the goals of the raptor census to include public education, site improvement and conservation and broader scientific study of the migration phenomena in this area. The 37' observation tower at the site was erected in 1988 is a direct result of HBMO efforts.

HBMO in brief

Holiday Beach Migration Observatory is a non-profit, volunteer organization formed to promote the study and protection of migrating birds. Activities focus on fall migration of raptors and other species passing through southern Ontario in the vicinity of **Holiday Beach Conservation Area (HBCA)**. This site is in Essex County, Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Erie near the Detroit River. Observers here attempt to record exact numbers of all migrant bird species which fly over the site in daylight hours from late August to December. Migrant birds are readily observed here as they skirt the north shore of Lake Erie before crossing the Detroit River and heading south.



HOLIDAY BEACH MIGRATION OBSERVATORY

Birds you may see

A decade of observations suggest Holiday Beach is the premier North American site for observing large numbers of hawks, vultures and other families of birds in migration on a predictable basis. In the 1986 fall season, almost 700,000 birds were recorded, including 84,135 raptors and 323,000 blue jays. A total of 172 species were seen at the site while the all-time species list is 251. A separate checklist of species recorded is available.

The chart below indicates the raptor species observed along with average season numbers and peak migration dates.

TYPE OF RAPTOR	YEARLY AVERAGE	PEAK DATES
Broad Wing	39515	Sep 12 To Sep 20
Sharp Shinned	13638	Sep 12 To Oct 9
Red Tail	6089	Oct 9 To Nov 22
Turkey Vulture	4968	Oct 1 To Oct 21
Kestrel	3114	Sep 02 To Oct 9
Red Shouldered	789	Oct 10 To Nov 20
Harrier	461	Sep 02 To Nov 28
Cooper's	460	Sep 15 To Oct 28
Rough Legged	143	Oct 28 To Nov 28
Osprey	77	Aug 30 To Oct 3
Goshawk	28	Oct 1 To Nov 20
Golden Eagle	21	Oct 17 To Nov 21
Bald Eagle	19	Aug 30 To Nov 12
Merlin	17	Sep 13 To Oct 17
Peregrine	14	Sep 19 To Oct 6

Peak Dates and Average Numbers of Raptors at Holiday Beach

Your support is needed

Holiday Beach Migration Observatory is an open membership organization. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, *The Northwind*. Dues also support public education efforts, site improvement and scientific studies. Annual summaries of observations are compiled and are available for purchase. The organization conducts workshops and members are available as speakers for meetings or special events. Any one is welcome to join the migration study activities at the site. Experienced birders who can contribute to identification and census of migrants are especially sought as the organization seeks to refine and expand its research activities.

HBMO Officers

President	Will Weber
Vice Pres.	Laurie Yorke
Secretary	Kay Sibert
Treasurer	Carl Sibert
Non-Hawk Mig.	Allen Charrier
Hawk Mig.	Dick Benoit (313) 882-5917

For more information call 313-665-4407. HBMO, 1120 Clair Cir., Ann Arbor, MI 48103. Send membership inquiries and dues to Carl Sibert, 14220 Brentwood, Livonia, MI 48154 USA. Regular annual dues are US\$ 8/year.

Observing the migration

Migration observation is concentrated from August to December. Most activity is observed between 8 AM and 3 PM. Counters attempt to record the numbers of all migrant species that pass over the site while also noting the status of resident populations of such species as bald eagles, egrets, cormorants, ducks, gulls, terns, swallows and gulls. Virtually, any day of the fall, some migrant hawks will be seen, but the best days for observation occur when there is a wind with a northerly component and the weather is changing from warm to cooler. Rain generally reduces migration while impending storms sometimes increase the number of birds. Most birds pass over the site from east to west on their way to island hopping across the Detroit River before turning south along the west shore of Lake Erie. The tower at the southwest corner of the Conservation Area is where most counting is done.

What to bring

Good binoculars, sun glasses, warm clothes and a field guide are basic requirements for migration watching. An official HBMO counter is usually present to help identify birds with which you may be unfamiliar.

SEARCH for the



H	B	R	O	A	D	W	I	N	G	E	D	O	L	I	D
A	Y	A	T	B	E	A	C	H	M	I	G	R	A	T	I
O	N	N	L	U	O	B	S	E	R	V	A	T	O	R	V
E	E	O	S	D	R	E	D	T	A	I	L	T	A	B	L
L	E	R	T	S	E	K	N	A	C	I	R	E	M	A	I
G	S	T	H	E	D	A	E	D	T	H	I	S	P	A	R
A	K	H	E	A	S	S	G	Y	E	R	P	S	O	A	R
E	H	E	N	A	H	W	K	L	V	W	A	T	N	E	C
N	H	R	I	S	O	I	T	E	E	U	I	I	N	I	
E	9	N	R	7	U	4	E	A	C	H	L	R	A	U	T
D	E	G	G	E	L	H	S	U	O	R	R	T	U	M	N
L	A	O	E	B	D	O	U	T	E	A	S	O	U	O	O
O	O	S	R	H	E	A	W	M	H	K	S	F	L	R	Y
G	O	H	E	V	R	E	R	N	T	H	I	S	S	I	E
T	E	A	P	M	E	A	R	K	I	N	G	I	T	O	N
E	O	W	F	T	D	E	H	E	M	A	J	O	R	M	I
G	R	K	W	A	H	S	R	E	P	O	O	C	A	T	O
R	Y	S	I	T	T	E	S	I	N	N	O	R	T	H	A
S	H	A	R	P	S	H	I	N	N	E	D	M	E	R	I
C	A	O	T	H	E	C	O	U	N	T	R	U	N	S	D
A	N	I	L	Y	F	R	O	M	S	E	P	T	O	D	E

American Kestrel
 Bald Eagle
 Broad-winged
 Cooper's Hawk
 Golden Eagle
 Merlin
 Northern Goshawk
 Northern Harrier
 Osprey
 Peregrine
 Red-shouldered
 Red Tail
 Rough-legged
 Sharp-shinned
 Turkey Vulture

Find and circle the RAPTORS listed. They may be spelled vertically, horizontally, diagonally, even backwards. Put the remaining letters, from left to right, in a line. Separate them into words that will form 3 sentences describing the HAWK-WATCHING that takes place every fall at Holiday Beach Conservation Area in Essex County.

Birding In And Around Rondeau-Part One

by ALLEN WOODLIFFE

If Point Pelee, Ontario, didn't exist, Rondeau Provincial Park would be one of the most famous birding locations in the world. Eclipsed, as it is, publicity-wise, by neighbouring Pelee, Rondeau deserves more popularity and esteem as a choice birding spot than it has received.

In planning a birding vacation, spring or fall, to the southwestern corner of Ontario (the southernmost sector of Canada) both locations should be included in one's itinerary. In fact, there are some species of birds more likely to be found at Rondeau (e.g. Pileated Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, White-breasted Nuthatch, Prothonotary Warbler) than at Pelee. Inside-the-park camping facilities are better at Rondeau. And, if you're planning a mid-May visit, you'll find Rondeau much less crowded by birders than Pelee, and, often, just as heavily populated by birds.

It's less than a two-hour drive along Hwy.3 from Pelee to Rondeau.

Naturalist Allen Woodliffe, for years a member of Rondeau's Interpretive Staff in various capacities, has put together the following article on the area's birding opportunities.

 Rondeau Provincial Park is one of three major sandspits along the north shore of Lake Erie. Its numerous quiet trails bring the visitor into contact with a lush, southern deciduous forest, miles of woodland slough, an extensive rich marsh, open oak savannah, grassy beach dunes and approximately eight kilometres of sandy shoreline, the last three of which act as a narrow barrier, at the south tip of the park, separating the surf of Lake Erie from the shallow waters of the Rondeau marsh and harbour. This diversity of habitat, along with its southern location, is primarily why the Park produced the greatest number of breeding birds in Ontario (146 species) according to the recently completed Atlas of Breeding Birds of Ontario.

Together with the numbers of regular, non-breeding migrants and the rare and accidental species, the checklist of birds for Rondeau and area stands at 334 species, a number exceeded by only one or two similar-sized areas in eastern Canada.

One can enjoy an interesting and productive birding trip to Rondeau almost any time of year. Even Christmas Bird Counts regularly produce more than 90 species. However, the best time is during the spring migration which peaks during the middle two weeks of May, or the fall migration which is spread out over a much longer time period but generally peaks during the last week of August and early September.

I'd like to "show you around" to the best places to find birds in and around Rondeau, beginning with highlights inside the park boundary and later on, covering hotspots in the vicinity.

Rondeau may be reached by leaving Highway 401 at interchange 12 and driving south about 20 km on county road 15, which becomes #59 Highway. Follow 51 right to the park entrance. This is a Provincial Park, so there will be a "going rate" fee at the gate. Ask for a park map and a bird checklist. Also, find out if the Visitor Centre, which is approximately 6 km south of the gate, is open. There, you can get up-to-date information on birding news as well as other information on natural history in and around the park.

Whether you have three hours to spend, or three days, I would recommend that your first birding stop should be the east side of South Point Trail at the end of Lakeshore Road. This trail has produced many of the park's rarities, such as Eared Grebe, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Tricolored Heron, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Harlequin Duck, Glossy Ibis, Piping Plover, Purple Sandpiper, American Avocet, Golden Eagle, Common Black-headed Gull, Laughing Gull, Little Gull, Black Skimmer, Sandhill Crane, Bewick's Wren, Sage Thrasher, Summer Tanager, Swainson's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Kirtland's Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Sharp-tailed Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow and Harris' Sparrow. Almost

anything is possible, especially during migration, and the trail deserves a lot of careful attention.

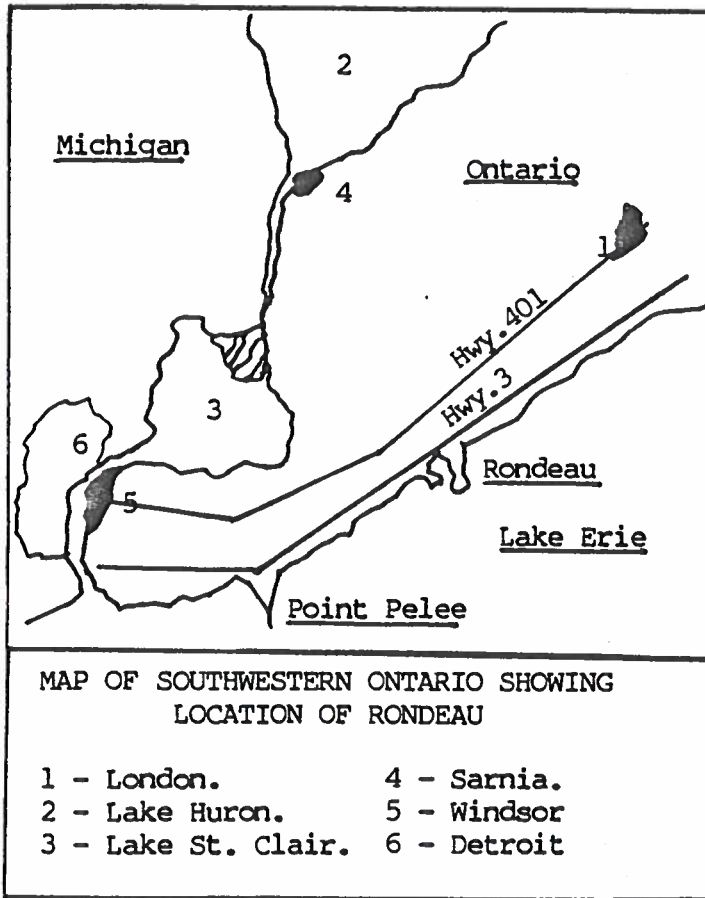
At the beginning of the trail, the low vegetation is fairly thick so items like Gray Catbird, Rufous-sided Towhee, Brown Thrasher and Yellow Warbler can be found. The densest brush along the first 300 metres of the trail consistently produces Connecticut Warbler during the last week of May. As the vegetation opens up farther along, Field Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker and Eastern Wood-Pewee predominate, with Warbling and Yellow-throated Vireos singing in the background. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers frequently nest here. The open, grassy areas provide the right environment for American Woodcock to display. Occasionally, Eastern Bluebird and Eastern Phoebe will be found here. Pine Warblers are sometimes found along the segments of the trail where oaks and white pine dominate. A diversion from the trail to the southeast beach will often turn up large flocks of gulls. Here, on rare occasions, Laughing, Franklin's or Little Gulls may occur with the commoner Herring, Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls. Shorebirds may also be mixed in.

After about one km, the trail emerges at the lakeshore and turns west to a boardwalk which crosses a wide slough. Belted Kingfisher and Green-backed Heron are frequently seen here. About 150 metres beyond the end of the boardwalk, follow the beach and walk out to at least the edge of the forest and marsh. At this most southern part of the park you get an increasing mixture of forest and wide, marshy slough to the north, with the lake on the south. This can produce a fine variety of species, from virtually any or all species of possible warblers during migration to numerous Swamp and Song Sparrows, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Double-crested Cormorant, a variety of both surface and diving ducks plus Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers. After about 500 metres, you will be at the marsh. This provides an excellent opportunity to get a look at the park's resident Bald Eagles. They nest in a tree near the forest edge, about 3 km north of this spot. They are frequently seen flying over the marsh or lake.

American Coot, Common Moorhen and Marsh Wren are dominant vocalists and you may get a glimpse of them in openings in the cattails. Virginia Rail and Sora are likely to be heard, as are American and Least Bittern.

The narrow sand barrier beach seldom gets more than 40 m wide. You can follow it for the next 2.5 km to the Erieau channel if you have the time and energy. In season, the shoreline should have Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone, while the bay/marsh edge, with a softer medium

and occasional mudflats, will likely have Semipalmated and Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, Semipalmated Plover, Short-billed Dowitcher, Black-bellied and Lesser Golden-Plover, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. Piping Plover used to nest on these beaches and single birds may be seen on rare occasions. In late August and early September,



you might see Baird's or Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Occasionally, a Willet might be found. By the third week in May, Whimbrel are seen passing through.

Large numbers of gulls often rest out along this south beach. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls have recently made this area one of their newest Ontario nesting locations. Thousands of Bonaparte's Gulls congregate and sometimes a Little Gull or a Laughing Gull may be found with them. A few non-breeding Bonaparte's stay all summer and usually a few Great Black-backed's linger as well. Common, Forster's and Black Terns are seen here regularly. So does the Caspian Tern although it has not been confirmed as breeding. This entire stretch of beach can be a rewarding area to spend some time. Many of the rarities, mentioned on Page 1, have appeared in this wide open habitat. And, in late fall or winter, this is an excellent spot to find a Snowy Owl.

After you have finished this area, return to where you left the South Point Trail. Here, as an alternative to returning to your vehicle, continue the loop by following the trail north through the beech-maple forest. At least a short walk should be taken along this more wooded section. It is where Rondeau's specialties can be most easily found. The big slough on the east side of the trail is almost certain to have Prothonotary Warbler from the first week of May until they migrate at the end of August. Acadian Flycatchers have traditionally been found most frequently in the mature American Beech trees with their spreading lower branches. High water levels and severe windstorms in recent years have caused some of the mature trees to topple and thus the habitat is less suitable for Acadians. Where damage has been minimal, it is still a good bet. Where damage has been severe, thus causing much openness and extensive shrubby undergrowth with raspberry patches, Yellow-breasted Chat, White-eyed Vireo, Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warbler and Common Yellowthroat can be found. Higher up, look for Rose-breasted Grosbeak, both species of cuckoos, Scarlet Tanager, Great Crested Flycatcher and Yellow-throated Vireo. In the more mature section of woods, at the north end of the trail, is where you are most likely to find Pileated Woodpecker, Cerulean Warbler, Wood Thrush, White-breasted Nuthatch and American Redstart. During migration, the usual assortment of warblers, vireos and flycatchers are seen regularly. Rarities seen during migration, over the past few years, include Kirtland's and Townsend's Warblers. Worm-eating, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers are seen annually. Summer Tanager is seen almost every year as well, and a pair remained throughout the breeding season in 1985.

After about 3 km you will reach the north end of the trail. Here, turn right along the gravel road and go about 500 metres to the Visitor Centre. You can now follow either the Harrison Trail or Lakeshore Road south back to your vehicle. Cooper's Hawks have nested regularly along the Harrison Trail and, in the evening, Chuck-will's-widow is most often heard along here. The entire loop I've described is about 8 km plus the distance you walk out and back along the south beach. If you decide to go all the way around, you will likely have walked much more because few birders walk in a straight line. Even if you have the time and energy for only a portion of the tour, you'll see a lot of species, especially in migration. On a particularly good day in mid-May a few years ago (one of those cloudy, drizzling days when birds are everywhere) I recall taking more than eight hours to do the loop. In the process of doing so, I tallied 130 species.

The Tulip Tree Trail is a short, one km loop starting at the Visitor Centre parking lot. The open area around the Centre has Warbling Vireo, Eastern Kingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, House Wren and Northern Oriole. The trail goes through pine/oak and beech/maple forests. Boardwalks cross several sloughs. White-eyed Vireo and Pine Warbler sometimes occur near the trail entrance. Often seen are Red-bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers. The biggest slough often has Wood Duck and Prothonotary Warbler. The park's first Hooded Merganser breeding record happened here. Winter Wren was also noted, combining north with south.

BIRDING IN AND AROUND RONDEAU::: PART TWO

by Allen Woodliffe

Another relatively short hike is along the Spicebush Trail. It is a 1.5 km loop set in a lush beech/maple forest with swampy areas on the west side. The east side has a nesting population of Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Oriole, Blue Jay, American Robin, Scarlet Tanager, American Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Wood Thrush, Hairy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch and Red-bellied Woodpecker. Occasionally, the Acadian Flycatcher occurs here. The wetter, more open and scrubbier west side is an excellent place to see Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Eastern Kingbird and Green-backed Heron. After dark, this trail's parking lot is the most reliable place in the park to call successfully for Eastern Screech-Owl, although they can often be found throughout Rondeau.

One trail that isn't as noticeable when travelling through the park is the Marsh Trail which takes the hiker or cyclist into the heart of the 1000-hectare marsh. This trail deserves careful scrutiny. Rare birds that have turned up here include Sage Thrasher, Sandhill Crane, Tricolored Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Avocet, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Dickcissel, Le Conte's Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Mockingbird, Peregrine Falcon, Common Black-headed Gull and Little Gull. Additionally, there are the local "goodies" like Least and American Bittern, Bald Eagle, King Rail, Common Moorhen and Forster's Tern.

The Marsh Trail begins just west of the main picnic ground along Rondeau Road, south of the park store. From Rondeau Road, follow the gravel road that goes between the two picnic shelters and you'll see the trail entrance sign and parking area. This trail follows a single track road which goes to the very south end of the park. It is a straight "out and back" trail, with only a couple of short side trips as possibilities. The total length is 7 km each way. In spring or fall, it may be comfortable any time of day, but during the heat of summer, it can be uncomfortably warm after 10 A.M. Use of a bicycle is an excellent way to complete the tour.

Birds at the beginning of the Marsh Trail are Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Oriole, Warbling Vireo, Eastern Kingbird, Barn Swallow and, perhaps, Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Bluebird. Once you go more than 150 m beyond the parking lot, you will quickly realize that the habitat is quite different than most other areas of the park. Wet, shrubby woods are on the left and, depending on water levels which can fluctuate drastically from year to year or even season to season, there will be open water, mudflats or cattail marsh on the right. Various species of ducks, gulls and shorebirds can be found here.

The trail, at least for the first 1.5 to 2.0 km, alternates between wet areas and drier, wooded ones. These wooded sections are the beginnings of higher, drier ridges which support mostly oaks and pines. These ridges were, in times gone by, old shorelines of Lake Erie. By following these ridges, you can gain access to other areas of the marsh. The commonest species are likely to be Eastern Kingbird, Yellow Warbler, Swamp Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Rufous-sided Towhee, Red-headed Woodpecker, Mallard, Wood Duck, Great Crested Flycatcher and, occasionally, Green-backed and Great Blue Herons. The trail continues south and, at about the halfway point, opens up considerably. You will come upon a large parking lot past which the trail is elevated by about 2 metres. It follows what was an old ridge which had material added to it from the adjacent dredge cut. The extra elevation provides a much better view of the surrounding area.

The wet area to the east is now more distinctly marsh with a few remnant ridges evident, while the area to the west is extensively cattails with only a bit of shrubbery showing. This is a prime spot for Willow Flycatcher often atop the shrubs.

The cattails beyond are filled with melodies of a multitude of Marsh Wrens and Red-winged Blackbirds while Sora, Virginia Rail, American Coot and Common Moorhen are sometimes heard. Savannah Sparrows are often seen running along the road ahead. Both Black and Forster's Terns cry from above reacting to the threat you are perceived to be. Mallards and Wood Ducks are the two commonest ducks although Black Ducks and Blue-winged Teal are also observed regularly. In early spring, there may be thousands, even tens of thousands of Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal plus smaller numbers of Gadwall, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, both scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck and all three mergansers. The waterfowl migration usually begins by late February, peaks during the middle two weeks of March and, by mid-April, is virtually over, with only those that breed and a few lingerers present.

Pied-billed Grebe plus Least and American Bittern can be heard throughout the marsh at this point. Seeing them is a different matter. King Rails are heard fairly frequently, as are Virginia Rails and Soras. The open areas to the east of the trail are filled with wild rice by late July. By late August, when the seed of the wild rice is falling, Soras by the hundreds can be heard in early evening.

About .7 km south of the big parking lot, a culvert crosses under the trail. If you walk about 150 metres beyond the culvert and look off to the left, at right angles to the trail, you should see a large nest at the top of a tree. This is a nest formerly used by the park's resident pair of Bald Eagles. The nest they have been using throughout the mid-'80s, is along the same ridge but approximately .4 km to the north. It is below the line of tree-tops and, once the foliage is out, is very difficult to see. You may be fortunate enough to see one of the adults flying around the marsh and may be able to follow its flight back to the tree.

A little beyond this point in the trail is a road that goes off to the east. It goes to the next main ridge and a slough not surprisingly called Long Pond. It can be almost full of ducks during migration. Osprey show up here by late summer.

The main trail continues for another 2 km past the Long Pond road. The marsh doesn't change a lot, except to get more extensive and more open. These open areas sometimes display enough mudflat to make it good for shorebirds, and for gulls to rest. Ring-billed, Herring, Bonaparte's and Great Black-backed Gulls are the normal fare, but once in a while, Little, Common Black-headed, Franklin's or Lesser Black-backed Gulls may show up. Forster's Terns, which nest in cattail stands in the south west portion of the marsh are regular. So are Common and Black Terns. In late fall and early winter, this is an excellent place from which to view Snowy Owls.

There are several areas within a short distance of the park that rate mention also.

The Morpeth cliffs provide a fine vantage point for hawk migration in the late summer and fall. On good days, when the north winds blow, thousands of hawks can be seen, mostly Broad-winged Hawks, as they follow the north shore of the lake. And the cliffs provide a good opportunity to see waterfowl, especially Common Loons, Horned Grebe, Greater Scaup, scoters and mergansers, both spring and fall. To get to the cliffs, follow Highway 51 out of the park for about 1 km until it turns abruptly to the north. Here, leave the highway and continue straight on county road 17 for approximately 3.5 km, until it begins to turn away from Lake Erie. Almost anywhere along this stretch can be a good observation post for hawks, depending on how close to the shore they are migrating.

If, instead of going to the cliffs, you take Highway 51 and follow it toward Highway 3, you will notice water and marsh on both sides of a causeway. This can be a productive spot for herons, egrets, shorebirds, surface ducks and geese. The area on both sides is a privately owned sanctuary, so posted signs must be respected. Park along the road, south of the causeway and walk out along it. This spot has turned up American White Pelican, Little Blue Heron, Hudsonian Godwit, Ruff and Sandhill Crane. Take your time and examine it closely.

About 2.5 km beyond the causeway, you'll come to the crossroads community of New Scotland. Turn left on the paved road, which is county road #11, and follow it 7.5 km until you come to Shrewsbury. Go straight, through the stop sign, continue another 1.5 km until the road makes a sharp right turn.

At this point, we should mention that a number of Shrewsbury's side streets lead to the edge of Rondeau Bay. Usually, there will be some marsh and mudflats worth a look. American Coot, Common Moorhen, Great Egret, Great Blue Heron and Marsh Wren should be readily visible. Wet, grassy fields should produce Virginia Rail, Sora and King Rail. Some of the older buildings around the village were once sources of our most recent Common Barn-Owls in the area. Since two of these buildings were destroyed, we've had no evidence of this species, although there are still several suitable buildings and old trees present.

Back to the Shrewsbury corner, make your right turn, on to a gravel road, go about 2 km, and now turn left on to a hardtop road. Follow this for 3 km, to the first stop sign, and turn left on county road #12, also known as the Erieau Road. Follow this road 2.5 km to the community of Erieau. On the way, you'll notice fields of black muck with carrots and onions growing. These fields can be excellent for shorebirds, especially plover, Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpipers and, occasionally, Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

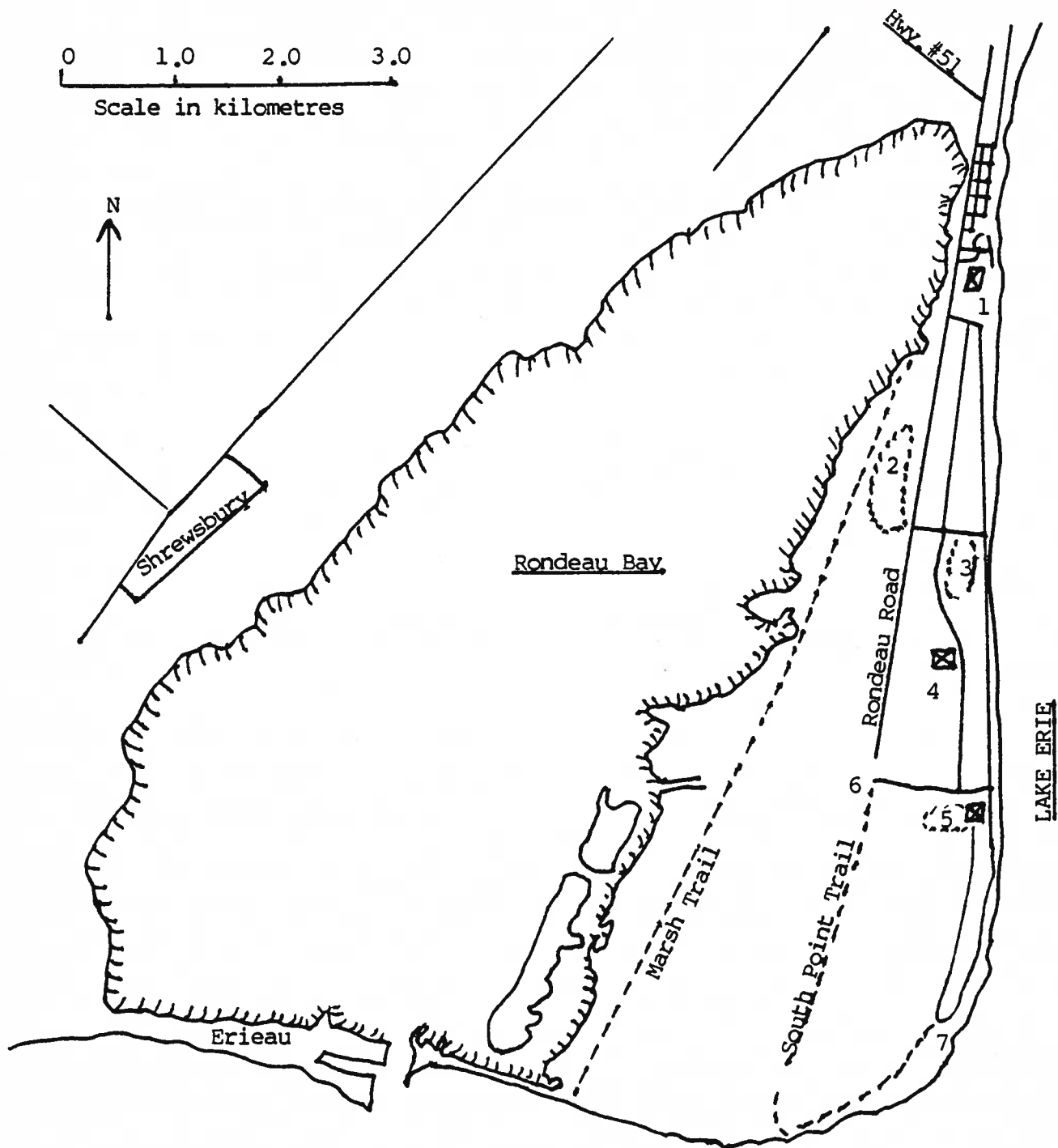
Just beyond the bend in the road which takes you into Erieau, on the right, you'll see McGeachy's Pond Conservation Area, managed by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority. This small pond, with some marshy vegetation, and a small island in the middle, is worth investigating. Water levels fluctuate and it can be excellent for shorebirds, wading birds and waterfowl. Almost all the shorebirds on the park checklist (more than 30 species) have been found here at one time or another. Some birds that have nested here are Black Tern, Common Tern, Virginia Rail, King Rail, Sora and Common Moorhen. Snowy Owls have been noted in early winter. Rarities which this small area, plus adjacent fields, have produced are Marbled Godwit, Glossy Ibis, Snowy Egret, Eurasian Wigeon and Burrowing Owl!

Continue towards Erieau. Approximately .5 km along, and just beyond the first bend after McGeachy's Pond, is an old railway bed on the left that follows the edge of Rondeau Bay. If water levels are low, it can be an excellent place for observing gulls and shorebirds.

In the village of Erieau, follow the one way road along the lakeside cottages to a T-intersection. Turn right and continue to the Erieau channel. There may be a number of gulls and terns on the far breakwater and adjacent rocks. Double-crested Cormorants are sometimes seen. The pier leading out to the lighthouse usually has some algae-covered portions exposed and there may be some shorebirds, especially in autumn. Sanderling are commonest, but Ruddy Turnstone are possible and Purple Sandpiper and Red Phalarope have been found. A moderate to strong northeast wind will expose the most algae.

After a good autumn storm, it is wise to check the harbour area, either at the channel^{or} where the fishing tugs tie up. King Eider, Harlequin Duck and Red-necked Grebe have been found occasionally. One year (1981) as a result of hurricane winds in August, Ontario's third and most cooperative Black Skimmer put in an appearance for several days!

Now, for the Blenheim sewage lagoons. Leaving Erieau, follow county road #12 for 7.5 km to Highway #3. Turn right (east) heading towards Blenheim and, at the next intersection, about 3 km away, turn left (north). There is a car wash on the north side of the highway at this intersection. After .8 km, you'll cross a set of railway tracks. You will see the lagoons just ahead on the right. The lagoons are private property and you must obtain a permit from the Town of Blenheim to legally gain access. The town office is located in the Municipal Building on the north side of the main street between the only two sets of traffic lights. If you can't call for your permit in office hours, write ahead to Municipal Offices, Blenheim, Ontario, NOP 1A0. Birding potential is well worth obtaining a permit.



1 - North Campground.
2 - Spicebush Trail.
3 - Black Oak Trail.

4 - Group Campground.
5 - Visitor Centre and
Tulip Tree Trail.

6 & 7 - Parking Areas

MAP OF RONDEAU PROVINCIAL PARK SHOWING FEATURES OF MOST INTEREST
TO VISITING BIRDERS

Having obtained permission to enter the lagoon property, take your time and check all four ponds. The amount of vegetation and water in each one will vary but at least one or two will be productive. Shorebirds seem to know these rich nutrients provide good sources of food and sometimes the mudflats will be alive with a good variety of them. The only ones known to nest are Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope. Ruddy Duck, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal and Mallard all nest. In early May, Lapland Longspurs in full breeding plumage can sometimes be seen in adjacent fields. Ring-billed, Herring and Bonaparte's Gulls are common and Franklin's, Little and Laughing Gull have been seen. Black, Common, Caspian and Forster's Terns may be expected. Other items recorded here include Piping Plover, Ruff, Eurasian Wigeon, Snowy Egret, Red-necked Phalarope, Eared Grebe and Red-necked Grebe.

Now - about accommodations. Camping facilities are available inside Rondeau Provincial Park. There are two motels in the Blenheim area - The Queen's Motel, Highway #3, Blenheim, Ont. NOP 1A0, 'phone 519-676-5477 and the Silver Motel, R.R.# 2, Blenheim, Ont. NOP 1A0, 519-676-5156. There are several dining and fast food facilities in Blenheim and a store at Rondeau Park.

To obtain a bird checklist, write to Ministry of Natural Resources, Rondeau Provincial Park, R.R.# 1, Morpeth, Ont. NOP 1X0 or call 519-674-5405.

So why not give birding at Rondeau a try? If you're heading for Point Pelee, stop at Rondeau first. Maybe you will decide the crowds at Pelee really aren't worth the trouble, especially when you can enjoy about the same calibre of birding in a quieter, more relaxed setting. You might decide to go no further!

As we said at the beginning of this series, Rondeau's birding potential well exceeds its publicity. Some of our very best birding experiences have occurred in and around Rondeau. We thank Allen Woodliffe for this comprehensive and expert look at its potential.

Allen is working on a publication, "The Birds of Rondeau - An Annotated Checklist." He would appreciate receiving any news and results of your experiences in the Rondeau area. Write to him: c/o Ministry of Natural Resources, P.O.Box 1168, Chatham, Ontario. N7M 5L8.

Continued from page 12

CLUB NEWS UPDATE

Our club will be participating in the Jack Miner Migration Festival at which we will have a table in the Lion's Hall on Mill Street. If you would care to volunteer a few hours of your time on either October 21 or October 22 to promote our club and sell calendars, books and postcards with a waterfowl theme, please contact Betty Learmouth during the day at 944-2292.

Anne Barbour will be preparing a display at the Main Public Library to promote our club and upcoming dinner. Look for this display during October.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada describes in its recently issued 1988 annual report the following information concerning the acquisition of Sinclair's Bush, Kent County: Most of this 114-acre (46 ha) wooded area is being protected through private stewardship landowner agreements. However, a core 5-acre (2 ha) area was threatened by development which would have ruined the integrity of the area. The Denure property was acquired by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority under the Carolinian Canada Program with funds being provided on a matching basis by the Province of Ontario, Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The Conservancy's share was made possible through generous donations from Union Gas Limited, Essex County Field Naturalists and individual supporters.

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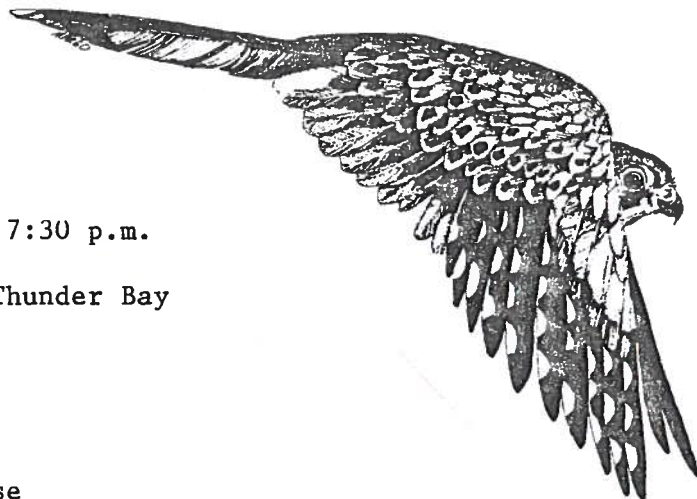
ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Hotline 252-BIRD
E.R.C.A. 776-5209
Ojibway 966-5852
Point Pelee 322-2365



- Sept. 7 - Fall birding workshop
Ojibway Nature Centre
7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 9 - Fall birding field trip
- Sept. 13 - E.C.F.N.C. Monthly Meeting
Marlborough Community Centre - 7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Anne Barbour
Topic: Astronomy
- Sept. 15 - Weekday Raptor Romps Field Trip
Contact Ojibway Nature Centre for details.
- Sept. 15-17- Hawk Watch '89 at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area
Friday night - 6:45 - "Run with the hawks". A 5 km twilight run through
Holiday Beach C.A.
7:30 - An evening barbecue
9:00 p.m. - Guest speaker : Mr. John Robinson, Canadian Wildlife Service.
Topic: The introduction of one of our endangered species into Southwestern
Ontario - the majestic Bald Eagle.
- Saturday - Hawk watching all day at the Hawk Tower.
Regular raptor identification sessions throughout the day at the Hawk
Tower.
Wildlife wood carver Al Heron will demonstrate his skills with the
chainsaw.
Interpretation Centre will be open all day.
10:00 a.m. - Bicycle tour
12:00 - 3:00 p.m. - Barbecue
9:00 p.m. - Guest speakers Dr. Tony Braithwaite and Nancy Phillips of
Erie Wildlife Rescue will speak about rehabilitation for birds of prey.
- Sunday - Hawk watching all day at the Hawk Tower.
Regular raptor identification sessions throughout the day at the Hawk
Tower.
Wildlife wood carver Al Heron will demonstrate his skills with the
chainsaw.
Interpretive Centre will be open all day.
10:00 - 1:00 p.m. - Pancake breakfast at the Hawk Tower.
- Sept. 19-23 -International Plowing Match
- Sept. 21 -Fall wildflowers workshop
Ojibway Nature Centre
7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 23 - Fall birding field trip
- Sept. 23 - Holiday Beach Migration Observatory will conduct a "Chips and Chirps"
workshop beginning at 7:00 a.m. at the Hawk Tower.
Leader: Allen Chartier
- Sept. 24 - Fall wildflowers field trip
1:00 p.M.

- Sept. 27 - Executive meeting 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 29 - Weekday Raptor Romps
Slide presentation 1:30 p.m.
Ojibway Nature Centre
- Sept. 30 - E.C.F.N.C. Field Trip
Fall birding on Pelee Island
Leader: Paul Pratt
We have booked space for six cars and twenty-four persons. Please contact Betty Learmouth (944-2292, days) to indicate whether you will be a driver or a passenger. You will receive an itinerary for the day. Our leader expects that we will be birding from the ferry and at Fish Point. Peregrine Falcons will be migrating at this time.
- Sept. 30 - E.R.C.A. event
Call of the owls
Devonwoods C.A. - 8:15 p.
- Oct. 1 - E.C.F.N.C. Field Trip
Trees of the Harrow Research Station
Leader: Don Bissonnette
Meet at 2:00 p.m. in the Research Station parking lot.
Don has recently conducted an inventory of the trees of the Research Station grounds.
- Nov 3*
Oct. 6 - E.C.F.N.C. Field Trip
Astronomy with Anne Barbour
Time: 8:00 p.m. at Anne's home
Telephone 726-6560 for details
- Oct. 11 - E.C.F.N.C. Monthly Meeting
Marlborough Community Centre - 7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Vicky Johnston
Topic: Ringed-billed Gulls of Thunder Bay
- Oct. 13 - Weekday Raptor Romp
- Oct. 14 - Fall birding field trip
- Oct. 15 - Ojibway Nature Centre Open House
Time: 1:00 -5:00 p.m.
Participate in a wildlife walk, build a bird feeder or enjoy the fall colours. 10 % off on bird seed.
- Oct. 21 - Holiday Beach Migration Observatory will conduct a "Chips and Chirps" workshop at the Hawk Tower.
- Oct. 22,22 - Jack Miner Migration Festival, Kingsville
- Oct. 25 - E.C.F.N.C. executive meeting - 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 27 - Weekday Raptor Romp
- Oct. 28 - Fall birding field trip
- Nov. 2 - Wildlife around us - mammal watching
Ojibway Nature Centre - 7:30 p.m.



- Nov. 5 - E.C.F.N.C. Field Trip
A walk to the pre-historic beaver dam, Gosfield South Township
Leader: Bill Balkwill
Meet at the Cedar Creek C.A. parking lot at 2:00 p.m. Wear comfortable walking footwear.
- Nov. 9 - Wildlife around us - mammal watching
Ojibway Nature Centre - 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 11 - Fifth annual E.C.F.N.C. dinner and auction at the Serbian Community Centre, 6770 Tecumseh Road East, Windsor
Speaker: Brock Tension
Topic: Bats
PLEASE NOTE: Saturday evening
- Nov. 26 - Slide presentation and talk by a young couple who moved from a comfortable urban life to a remote British Columbian wilderness area where they lived for a length of time. They are currently touring Canada to share their experiences.
Location: Essex Civic Centre, Essex
Time: 2:00 p.m.
- Nov. 29 - E.C.F.N.C. executive meeting - 7:30 p.m.

Continued from page 26

CLUB NEWS UPDATE

Located near Blenheim in southwestern Ontario, the site consists mainly of an upland American beech-sugar maple forest. As the largest forested area in Kent County, Sinclair's Bush is especially significant. Seven provincially rare species occur here including the pawpaw tree, tulip tree, Carrey's sedge, and the winged monkey flower, which is found at only one other site in Canada.

We have good news for birders who wish to visit the Kingsville sewage lagoons as the area will now be open on a trial basis. Fall dates are August 1 to September 25 and spring dates are from April 20 to June 20.

The lagoons are located approximately 1/2 mile west of Kingsville, just west of "Adam's Golden Acres Motel" on the north side of Highway 18. The access road is beside a two storey grey house with a large, round spire. Leave your car at the highway and walk ten minutes to the lagoons. Three of the ponds are deep and pond-like with waterfowl, gulls and herons likely to be seen and the other two lagoons are more shallow with marsh vegetation and play host to shorebirds, Sora Rails, moorhens and coots.

These lagoons are now accessible through the efforts of a request by the merchants of Kingsville and especially by the endeavors of Mike Malone of "Pelee Wings", Kingsville.

The Junior Egret for younger readers is well established as the latest and third issue has just appeared with over thirty pages of activities and stories. This publication would make an entertaining Christmas gift for any child. The subscription rate is just \$5.00/year.

"You Can Do It!" is an environmental activist handbook for children 6 to 12 years of age. To obtain a copy please write to "You Can Do It!", Canadian Wildlife Federation, 1673 Carling Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 3Z1

The EGRET, Volume 6, Number 3, September, 1989; newsletter of the Essex County
Field Naturalists' Club, P.O. Box 3421, Tecumseh, Ontario. N8N 3C4
Address correction requested.

Peggy Moore
R.R. # 3,
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