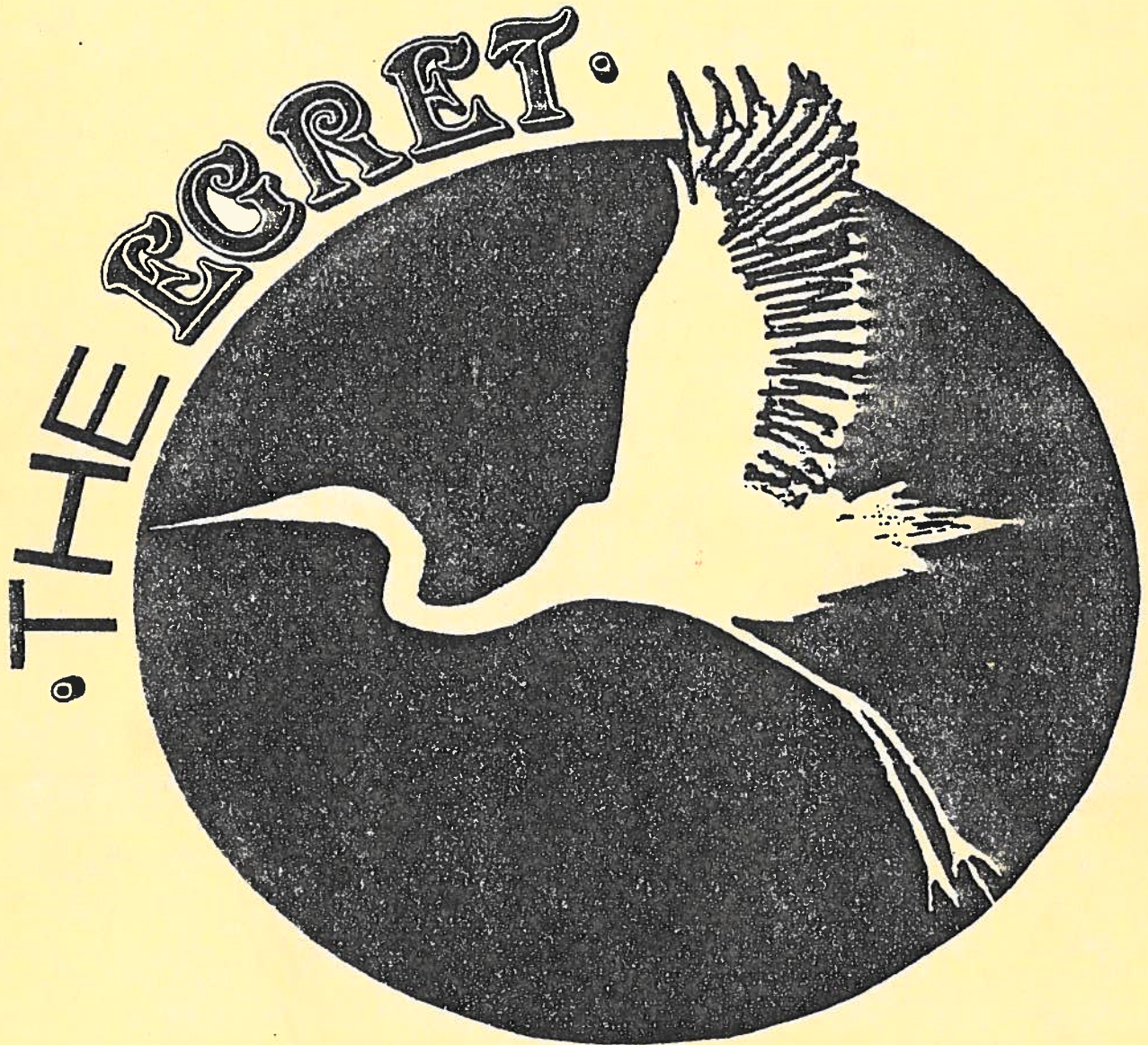


VOL.8, NO. 1
MARCH, 1990

Essex County
FIELD NATURALISTS'
CLUB





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Volume 8, Number 1, March 1991

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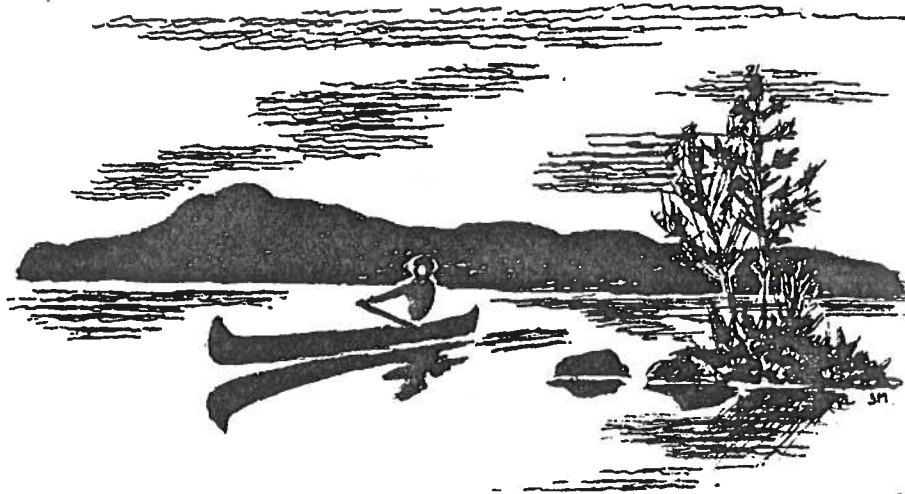
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A BRUCE RENDEZVOUS

By Kent Glauser



Muscles working smoothly against the water's yielding resistance quickly generated a wonderful, familiar sense of well-being as I eagerly propelled my canoe between the docks and out of the marina on the west shore of the Bruce Peninsula into Lake Huron. Although it was only a few minutes after 6:00 a.m., warm sunlight had already reduced the lake's surface mist to a few ephemeral wisps faintly embracing the shoreline. On this crystalline morning there was absolutely no wind, no clouds in the sky, and visibility was so extended that one could almost "see forever." The famous Fishing Islands, with their centres of dark green foliage and borders ringed with large white rocks encompassed by deep blue Lake Huron water, were strung out before me like a necklace of emeralds surrounded by pearls on a jeweler's blue velvet cloth. This promised to be a truly rare day in June.

Ah, how sweet to contemplate: it would be two hours before breakfast would be served at the lodge, two precious hours to explore the islands by myself and revel in my personal thoughts about one of nature's garden spots, the Bruce Peninsula of Canada. I paddled steadily in a northwesterly direction, angling very gradually away from the peninsula, and in so doing slowly decreased the distance between my canoe and the islands which ran parallel, more or less, to the mainland shore.

From the mainland a euphony of bird songs and calls drifted across the calm water to add audio delights to the visual rapture of the morning. The group of songbirds known as warblers, the singing, colorful gems of the bird world, are well represented on the Bruce, and I could hear many of them as I paddled on. The long list of warblers present during the June nesting season includes the yellow, common yellowthroat, Nashville, black-and-white, ovenbird, redstart, yellow-rumped, chestnut-sided, blackburnian, black-throated green, parula, mourning, black-throated blue, magnolia, Canada, golden-winged, and more. Joining the warblers in song on this zip-a-dee-do-dah morning, were red-eyed vireos, warbling vireos, cardinals, white-throated sparrows, woodthrushes, veeries, eastern wood pewees, black-capped chickadees, least flycatchers, and olive-sided flycatchers. The birds seemed to be singing just for me, it amused me to consider, since there were no other humans within sight on land or on water.

Along the mainland shoreline, in the regions of wet foreshore and nearby fens, the winnowing calls, fluttering sounds of vibrating tail feathers, and bizarre flying antics of the ludicrous common snipe could be observed. Two Bruce breeders that prefer to nest in the pebbly areas of the shoreline were also quite obvious: the obstreperous killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) —

who possesses perhaps the most fitting specific name of any bird extant — and the comparatively more decorous spotted sandpiper. One wonders though, after viewing the constant nodding, bobbing, and teetering of the spotted sandpiper, if he perhaps has his own special libation discreetly stashed somewhere in the rocks. (Birds are fun to watch, aren't they?)

The sound of a common loon focused my attention behind the canoe where the lone bird was flying between the islands and the peninsula in the same direction I was headed. It soon overtook me, calling all the way, and sailed directly over my head, not 30 feet above the water. It seemed I could see every feather on his underside. (Who needs caffeine on a morning like this?)

In our time, for the sound that most epitomizes the wild, I nominate the call of the loon. (Some may opt for the howl of the wolf, and, to them, I would admit it is a close one to judge and acquiesce only to a draw.) Unfortunately, our time presents hard times for the loon. This eminent symbol of wilderness requires a large measure of said wilderness to prosper and does not fare well when harshly intruded upon by modern humankind. It prefers to build its nests of matted rushes, twigs, and grasses in shallow areas of inland lakes. These are often the same lakes that have become lined with cottages and resound with the roar of high-speed motor boats pulling water-skiers. Under such pressures, adults desert the nest and the eggs fail to hatch. The loon has, therefore, abandoned much of its former nesting range throughout the northern United States and southern Canada in favor of remote wilderness areas. Out of the vague, misty depths of an ancient evolutionary history, the loon flies to an equally inscrutable and increasingly dubious future.

The angling course I had set eventually brought me close enough to the islands that the harsh sounds of gulls and terns emanating from them began to supplant the more soothing sounds of the songbirds on the mainland. Passing the islands one by one, I soon realized that the gulls and terns kept well defined territories. One island was entirely occupied by ring-billed and herring gulls, while the next had nothing but common terns, and so on, alternately down the line.

While paddling past some red-breasted and common mergansers, I began to plan an itinerary for a day of birding that my friends at the lodge might find interesting. It is not difficult for a group of birders to list at least 110 species of birds during a June week on the peninsula. Brewer's blackbird, western meadowlark, upland sandpiper, blue bird, ruffed grouse, pileated woodpecker, rose-breasted grosbeak, and lapland longspur enhance the list of notable nesters already mentioned. Owl devotees please be advised that the great horned, screech, barred, and

saw-whet owls breed on the Bruce, each in their own preferred habitat. Common ravens nest on Flowerpot Island just north of the peninsula and are often seen throughout the Bruce. Caspian terns have been seen frequently, in recent years, joining common terns along the shorelines. Black terns nest in a chain of shallow inland lakes which are also havens for black-crowned night herons, great blue herons, grebes, marsh wrens, tree and barn swallows, mallards, blue-winged teals, and wood ducks.

* * *

I was abruptly jarred out of my avian reverie when my paddle hit rock. The bottom of the canoe was nearly scraping the limestone below. Surprised by this extremely shallow area, I decided to strike a west-northwesterly course and slant between two of the Fishing Islands to the deeper water on the outside or lakeside of them. After completing the object of that tack, I pointed the nose of my canoe in a more northerly direction once again, staying close to the wildlife spectacle of the islands.

The sky was still perfectly clear and the surface of the water was as smooth as glass. I'll have no problems this morning, I thought, remembering the past perils to many a mariner on these deceiving and quick-changing waters. The history of the Bruce Peninsula is replete with fascinating tales about storms and shipwrecks along its shores. Both Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, the two great bodies of water that the Bruce Peninsula separates, are known for the ferocity of their squalls and storms that suddenly appear, with little or no warning, to harry the sailor. Ancient sailing ships, with their inherent limited manoeuvrability, were frequent victims of such storms. Many of these ships are well preserved in the cold waters of the lake and bay. Some lie in shallow areas near land where they can be seen from the surface through the exceptionally clear water. In fact, one can visit Flowerpot Island via a ferry that will digress from its course to the Island for a few minutes to glide over a wreck dating from the turn of the century that is plainly visible below. I have taken photos of this ship from the surface of the lake. The old vessel appears in the photos as though it had sunk not much more than a year previous.

Modern boaters are well advised to plan each leg of their cruise along the coastline of the Bruce very carefully, and know exactly where they can put in to a safe harbor if a worsening of the weather should occur. Even with such precautions, sudden fogs appear on these coasts, spawned in part by the persistent coldness of the deep waters of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, that may last for days or for only a few hours or minutes. These fogs can cause the most careful navigator a great deal of difficulty. Boats and lives are still being lost around the Bruce, even in this modern era of high-tech boating.

Probably the earliest sailing ship to come to grief in the upper Great Lakes was the Griffin. The story of the Griffin begins in 1678 when the renowned explorer Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle sent an advance party of fifteen men in canoes to Lake Michigan with a plentiful supply of trade goods to barter for furs from the Indians. La Salle then established a shipyard above the

Falls of Niagara. His purpose was to build ships capable of carrying large stores of trading goods to Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, and beyond and return with precious cargos of furs.

In August of 1679, the Griffin, the first vessel from the new yard, was ready to sail and ready to take its vanguard position in the great history of the Great Lakes. With Father Hennepin, La Salle and his men sang "Te Deum," fired cannons, and parted virgin waters with the bow of their pioneer ship. A fresh wind filled the first sails ever seen on Lake Erie. In just three days and nights of sailing, La Salle easily navigated the length of Lake Erie. He then turned northward and ascended, with considerable difficulty, the Detroit River, Lake St Clair, the St Clair River, and entered the vast inland, fresh-water sea that is Lake Huron.

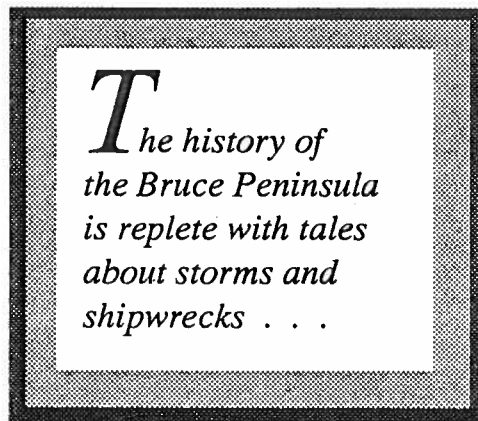
When they reached Thunder Bay on the west coast of Lake Huron — almost directly across the Lake from where I was canoeing some 300 plus years later — the wind died, then freshened to a gale, then rose to a full-blown tempest. The untested vessel tossed dangerously about on steep waves, and La Salle called on his men to pray for salvation. Father Hennepin records that all on board took to their knees in prayer, except the pilot, who cursed and swore against La Salle, blaming him for their perilous situation. But the prayers of the more pious men were heard, the seas abated, and the new "bird" of the Great

Lakes found haven behind the point of St. Ignace of Michilimackinac, in a placid cove.

Here were the palisades of the Jesuit community, the bark cabins of the Huron village, the houses of the French traders, and the clustered wigwams of the Ottawa. Intrigue abounded amidst this potentially volatile stew-pot of legal traders, coureurs de bois (or outlaw traders), soldiers, sailors, artisans, Jesuits, voyageurs, and Indians. Here La Salle discovered that some of the men he had sent forth to trade for furs the year before had instead used their share of the goods in trading for personal benefit.

In early September La Salle, eager to escape the dangerous milieu he found himself in, set sail again and found more commodious surroundings by heading westward to the entrance of Green Bay of Lake Michigan. Here he was received by a Pottawatamie chief who offered friendship. Here too, he found several men of the advance party who had remained faithful and had assembled a large store of furs. He decided to send the Griffin back to Niagara with the furs, and others that might be collected along the way, to satisfy his creditors. After she had delivered her cargo, she was to return to Lake Michigan. La Salle was not with the Griffin when she set sail. Instead, he took fourteen men in four canoes and continued on a voyage of exploration southward. The Griffin was to meet La Salle at the mouth of the river he called the Miamis, now called the St. Joseph. When La Salle arrived at the Miamis he waited for his prize ship in vain. In fact, insofar as is known, no white man ever saw the Griffin or her crew again.

Many legends and theories have evolved in the attempt to explain the fate of the Griffin. Some say it never reached beyond Lake Michigan and went down during a four-day storm that commenced shortly after it set sail for Niagara. Others claim it



foundered near the northwestern end of Manitoulin Island, which lies to the north of the Bruce Peninsula. Still others suggest that even if it did manage to pass through Lakes Michigan, Huron, and St. Clair, it probably did not survive a second passage of Lake Erie, the shallowest of the Great Lakes, with its sudden squalls that quickly form high, shortly spaced, choppy waves.

Although La Salle was extremely concerned about the fate of his men and the ship that was the first-born child of his insightful stroke-of-genius, the incident caused only a slight delay in a continuing series of transcendent adventures. He paddled on to great fame as an explorer of the New World. Among other renowned accomplishments, he reached the Gulf of Mexico by way of the Mississippi River and claimed the region drained by that great river and its tributaries for France, naming it Louisiana, for his King.

Obviously, La Salle's place in history was little affected by the tragedy of the Griffin. School children are taught about his exploits. Cities, towns, counties, and rivers are named for him. His soul must, therefore, be resting peacefully, secure in the knowledge of his immortality.

But who can recite the names of the men that vanished with the Griffin in the service of the great La Salle? Were they not as brave and sacrificing as their leader? I harbour a strong feeling of sympathy for them. Undoubtedly, their bones and ribs lie amidst the ribs and planking of their ship, somewhere in the Great Lakes, possibly near the dangerous, rocky shoals surrounding these Fishing Islands.

Regardless of where the boards of the Griffin and the physical remains of her crew came to rest, I suspect that the souls of these brave men have not yet attained a rest of their own, and are still seeking the justice of the fame and recognition they deserve. Yes, their souls are still out there, wandering erratically from shore to shore, shrouded by and unable to escape from the mists and fogs of the Great Lakes. It may be that in the hissing, whispering backwash of waves upon the Great Lakes' shores, the men of the Griffin, in fading, echoing voices, are still desperately calling, but cannot be heard above the obliterating noise of civilization. Indeed, probably no one besides me is even listening.

* * *

In the nineteenth century two rapes of natural resources occurred at the Bruce Peninsula; one was committed on land and the other on water. The waterborne rape involves the aptly named Fishing Islands. In 1822 Captain Bayfield wrote the name "Fishing Islands" across a line of small islands shown, but left nameless, on an 1815 map of the Bruce Peninsula. It was already known that the waters around these islands were home to an incredible amount of fish in terms of total numbers and numbers of species. In fact, the Fishing Islands would later be regarded by many as one of the two most prolific areas for fish in the Great Lakes, with the other being the western basin of Lake Erie. But from the day in 1834 that a Detroit company contracted with a Bruce fisherman to deliver 3,000 barrels of salted whitefish and

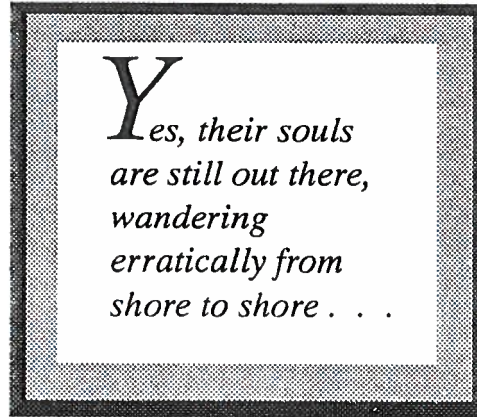
herring per year, the Bruce fishery was destined for a quick demise. Even before steamships became common on Lake Huron, the wind-powered fishing ships had efficiently seined the once teeming waters to the point of near sterility, and they would never again come close to regaining their former fecundity.

The rape by water was nearly completed during the first half of the nineteenth century; the rape by land took place in the second half. When it was finished, the landscape looked like the shock wave of an atomic blast had swept the length of the peninsula, except that the corpses had been removed. The dead were removed in the form of timbers and planks and posts and ties and tanbark. They were to become houses and furniture and broom handles and railroad beds and dozens of other products to satisfy the needs of a fast burgeoning civilization. Yes, the victims were trees which fell to unrestrained harvesting until the former abundant, verdant forests of the Bruce were brown wastelands of slash, tangled windfalls, barren stumps, and gnarled trees too distorted and puny to interest the man with the saw and the axe.

There is nothing wrong with judiciously harvesting forest products to serve the needs of society, but in those days there was seldom any

thought given to conservation or to the effects a complete cutting of the forest might have on the environment. (Apparently, mankind has not learned a lesson from his past excesses and forest devastation for short term profits continues, to this day, around the world. The only difference now is that the health of our entire planet is at risk, not just a peninsula.) There was no authority that would say: "Hey, wait a minute fellows, do selective logging here and your resource will be sustained; jobs will be maintained and secure; wildlife habitats, botanic uniqueness, and watersheds will be preserved. Do not decimate one of the most extraordinary natural areas in North America by clear-cutting nearly the entire peninsula." No political, ethical, moral, or economic restraint was in place to defend the last of the choice timber from the rapacious saw. When such a condition exists the only limit to wanton plundering of a natural resource is the limit of the resource itself. Inevitably, as the supply of logs dwindled, the lumber mills closed down one after another. In August of 1911 the whistle blew to stop work for a final time at the mill on Stokes Bay, the last operational mill on the Bruce. That final whistle signalled the end of a chapter in the history of the Bruce. (When will the whistle blow to end a sequel chapter in the history of the earth?)

Before the great harvest of trees took place the forest of the Bruce consisted of two classes: conifer woods of the Canadian zone which stood to the Northern half and along a narrow band on the Lake Huron side of the peninsula, and deciduous Alleghenian woods of the Transition zone to the southern half and along the Georgian Bay side. In the conifer class were red, white, and jack pines; white and black spruces, white cedar, tamarac, and hemlock. In the deciduous class were hard maple, beech, white elm, red oak, white and black ash, grey birch, and basswood.



Since the removal of timber from the Bruce 100 years ago, the second and third growth forests that have been allowed to regenerate have basically maintained their former constituency, but there has also been a commingling of old and new species. As settlers moved in, they brought their own favorite trees and shrubs with them. Many species like rock elm, red elm, butter-nut, the plentiful white birch, Scotch pine, various willows, and others too numerous to mention are scattered about the peninsula.

The settlers also brought with them many blooming forbs and garden plants that they were familiar with in other parts of the continent. They introduced the alien plants — the beautiful and the plain, the noxious and the benign — into a region that already contained a treasury of flowering plants. It is this floristic bounty, consisting chiefly of indigenous plants together with a few of the less obtrusive introduced species, that is, by my assessment, the essence of the modern numen of the Bruce Peninsula. For many years hundreds of photographers, naturalists, botanists, and nature lovers, myself among them of recent, have made repeated pilgrimages to the Bruce to worship at this botanical shrine. There are over 1,250 distinct

species of vascular plants, plus many varieties, on this amazing projection of land. There are 47 species of wild orchids, more than on any other location of similar size in North America excepting certain areas in Florida. During one week-long field trip to the Bruce in the month of June, I listed 149 species of wildflowers in bloom, including 27 orchids. Over 40 species of ferns and ten species of insectivorous plants are known to reside on the peninsula.

There are several reasons why the Bruce Peninsula is home to an exceptionally large number of vascular plants in general, and an abundance of orchids and other rare and curious plants in particular. Several types of unusual habitats are present, some of which are considered quite "extreme," such as alvars, marl fens, limestone bedrock shores, escarpment cliffs, sand dune shorelines, and limestone pavement. Another factor favorable to the growth of many orchid species is a condition known as "cold-bottom," in which waters remain cold as they flow underground, not far below the surface, from the higher east side to the lower west side of the peninsula.

The Bruce Peninsula is a fairly narrow strip of land jutting between two large bodies of water that greatly influence growing conditions. The coastal strip along Lake Huron is warmer in winter and cooler in summer than the centre. It is southward and westward facing and protected from north winds. On the other side, or east side, the Niagara escarpment forms high, scenic cliffs along Georgian Bay. Spring comes much later on the north and east-facing narrow coastal strip and escarpment.

The centre of the peninsula is mostly flat and subject to much greater day-to-night extremes of temperature than the coastal strips. On sunny days, daytime temperatures can quickly climb to over 15 degrees Fahrenheit higher in the protected, sandy,

sparsely wooded areas of the centre than on the coasts. I have often worked up a good sweat while hiking and botanizing on the interior, and had to don a jacket to ward off the chill when I returned to the cool breezes of the coast.

The great variety of habitats and climatological and geological factors, occurring in relatively small intervals, supports a disproportionately high number of vascular plants near their southern, northern, or eastern limits. Nine species are represented that are regarded as Great Lake disjuncts — the majority of their range being in western North America.

It is estimated that the Bruce has over half of the world's population of dwarf lake iris (*Iris lacustris*), and most of Canada's population of tuberous Indian plantain (*Calcalia tuberosa*). Both grow mainly on the west side of the peninsula near Lake Huron. The west side is also best for orchids. Here in early June hundreds of large yellow lady's slippers (*Cypripedium calceolus* var. *pubescens*) cover the ground in many places.

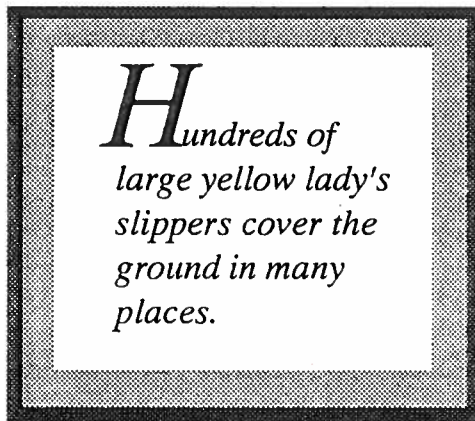
Later in June the much less common showy lady's slipper or Queen lady's slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*), the largest and often considered the most beautiful of wild orchids, unfolds its regal splendor. This is one of the few northern wild orchids that are truly showy enough to be worn as a corsage on your anniversary —

but please do not pick them for that or any other purpose. One or two flowers grace the top of each stout stem. Pure, brilliant white petals and sepals surround an inflated lip of deep pink with a backdrop of soft emerald green foliage. If you have never seen the showy lady's slipper before and come upon a clump of several flowers in full bloom, I guarantee that you will suck in your breath as you did when you first peered over the rim of the Grand Canyon, or saw your first yellow-breasted chat, or first held your own newborn child.

Some other orchids that appear in June are pink moccasin flower, calopogon, rose pogonia, white bog-orchid, heartleaf twayblade, and the not so common, common twayblade (*Listera ovata*). The common twayblade is a European species that was first discovered on the Bruce in 1968.

Another species that deserves special attention is the rare ram's head lady's slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*). This shy, northern orchid is the smallest of the lady's slippers and can be found at Dorcus Bay in the northwestern part of the peninsula, often hiding under low hanging boughs of evergreens. Late May through early June is the best time to observe this delicate, short-lasting beauty.

Some authors have claimed that the blossom of the ram's head orchid is in prime condition for only a single day. This is not true. In fact, in cool weather the flower remains fresh for up to a week, or until pollinated. A very small black bee of the genus *Dialictus* has been identified as the pollinator. When fertilization occurs a hormonal reaction takes place within two hours which causes the dorsal sepal to fold down over the entry to the lip. With such an immediate response, this dainty siren of the North seems to be saying to late-arriving suitors, "That's it; the job is done; scram bud!" Then, within one day, she becomes a faded crone.



Two more species of orchids, Hooker's orchid (*Platanthera hookeri*) and Alaskan rein orchid (*Piperia unalascensis*), seldom draw oohs and aahs from the average tourist on the Bruce. These inconspicuous though intriguing plants are sought mainly by the botany votary, albeit not for their beauty, as are the cypripediums, but for the fact that they are so rare. The Hooker's orchid is especially endangered on the Bruce. A subdivision of homes has recently been planted squarely in one of its last strongholds. Fortunately, the Alaskan rein orchid is not nearly as threatened, but its wispy stem, dotted with tiny flowers, can easily be overlooked. Its flowers are so small that, in truth, they are pollinated by mosquitoes!

The "Calypso" is the first orchid to bloom in the spring and is regarded by many as the most captivating on the Bruce. The intricate and delicate beauty of this early maiden, residing in mossy, shaded, enchanting environs far from populated areas has created a mystique bespeaking romance and adventure for all who seek it. The Calypso orchid (*Calypso bulbosa*) blooms in May, but stays fresh well into June on Flower Pot Island north of the peninsula. This is where I first saw it and experienced a rush of excitement, as have countless naturalists who have come before me.

In the vanguard of this long parade of "Calypso" worshipers was the legendary John Muir. A biographer has written that John claimed two supreme moments in his life. One was when he found the Calypso orchid on the Bruce Peninsula and the other was his meeting with Emerson. I suspect though, because he was so closely attuned to the magnificence and mystery of nature, that his life was actually a nearly continuous series of supreme moments.

Indeed, the renowned environmentalist John Muir, whom we usually associate with Yosemite and the wonders of the West, botanized the Bruce when he was a young man in his twenties. In 1864 John and his brother Dan wandered this still largely unspoiled natural paradise and became spellbound by its seemingly limitless amplitude of the beautiful, the rare, and the bizarre in the botanical world.

The abundant insectivorous plants on the Bruce justify the use of the term bizarre. Insectivorous plants are actually carnivores, and obtain at least some of their nutrition from trapped insects, spiders, and microscopic organisms. No meat-eating plant species actually pursues its prey, of course. However, some actively move specialized structures for capturing prey animals, while others take a passive role and only provide inert structures that effectively spell doom for the unwary.

Among the active carnivorous plants are sundews, butterworts, and bladderworts. Three species of sundews *Drosera anglica*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, and *Drosera linearis* can be found at Dorcus Bay, which is now part of the new Bruce Peninsula National Park.

Although it may be hard to envisage a carnivore being delicately beautiful, sundews certainly fit that description. Their

leaves are studded with rays of striking red tentacles (actually modified hairs) protruding in several directions. Each tentacle is tipped with "dew," a sticky secretion that attracts, entangles, and digests. The sundew actively seals the fate of its victims by curling its tentacles and leaf around them. In late June this femme fatale produces lovely, small, white, five-parted flowers that seem to further enhance its masquerade as a harmless, charming coquette.

An example of a passive carnivorous plant is the Northern pitcher-plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*). It has bright red or green "pitchers" ranging in size from four to eight inches long when mature. In June it produces intricately shaped, mysteriously beautiful, long-stalked maroon flowers. The pitchers are actually modified leaves that collect pools of rainwater. A potential prey is attracted by intoxicating nectar that is secreted by glands on the pitcher's red lip. The partially stupefied prey struggles haplessly on slippery, downward-pointing hairs inside the pitcher walls until it eventually slides into the pool of lethal, enzyme-laced water below.

The pitcher-plant's predatory trap is not infallible. Some ants, larger insects, and spiders are often able to

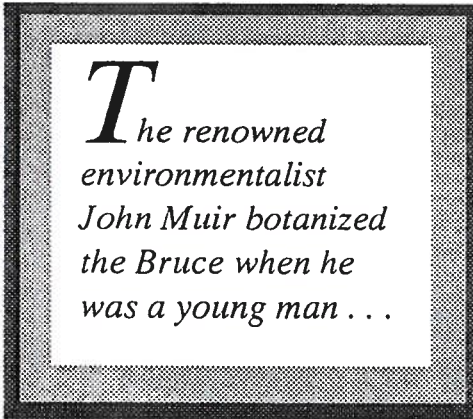
escape. There is even a species of mosquito that lays its eggs in the pitcher's pool. The resultant wrigglers live on insect remains in the pools and are immune to the enzymes present. They often spend the winter within the pitchers in a frozen state to emerge as adults the next spring!

Of the 40 plus species of ferns found on the Bruce, probably the most interesting is the walking fern (*Camptosorus rhizophyllus*). Walking ferns are usually found on the moss-covered limestone rocks of the Niagara escarpment, growing in the shade of beech-maple forest. Less frequently it occurs on outcroppings of sandstone, quartzite, and other rock types.

Fern fronds are usually thought of as being greatly dissected, broad, and growing upright, or vertical to the ground. The fronds of the walking fern, however, are long, narrow, entire, and spear-like, with slender tips and heart-shaped bases, and they grow horizontally, hugging the ground. In autumn many of the frond tips bend toward the soil and produce new plantlets. As each new sporophyte takes root, the colony slowly "walks," one frond length step at a time, across the ground. Often the tip of the old frond remains attached to the young sporophyte giving the matted appearance. . .

* * *

For some reason that was not yet apparent, my thoughts were interrupted by an ascending sense of anxiety. The rhythm of my steady paddling had put me in a nearly robotic state, in which my body, paddle, and canoe were as one unit, working in auto-pilot, so to speak. On this calm, pleasant morning, holding the canoe on course was so easy that my mind was enjoying the freedom to ruminate on some of my favorite subjects: the birds, flowers,

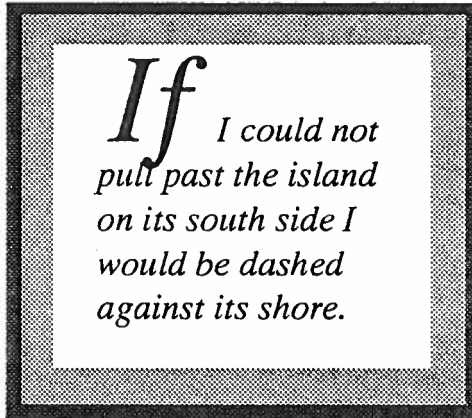


and history of the Bruce Peninsula and the larger history of the Great Lakes.

After my concentration had faltered, it took a few seconds to realize that the canoe was no longer bathed in direct sunlight. I quickly turned to look over my left shoulder and, to my amazement, a dense fog bank had rolled in behind me and to my left. The sky above was no longer blue but had taken on a hazy grey color. The gems in the necklace of islands behind me were already beginning to disappear. Before I had time to collect my thoughts and assess what was happening, a blast of damp air from the southwest struck me in the face and began pushing the canoe around as though it were so much flotsam. Quickly a thick, dark fog closed off my view of the mainland, the sun, and the Fishing Islands. I could feel my heart racing in anticipation of the struggle ahead of me to return to the safety of the marina.

I turned the canoe around with some difficulty and began paddling in a south-southwesterly direction, or a few degrees to the south of the waves that were already forming and bearing in on me from the southwest. My plan was to proceed on the outside of the Fishing Islands, since I was in no danger of being blown out into the lake, and then, when I thought I was abreast of an opening in the island chain, make a dash through the opening to the calmer water between the islands and the mainland. Remembering the incident earlier in the day when my paddle had struck rocks lying just under the surface on the other side of the Fishing Islands, I reasoned that I needed to proceed to a point south of those shallows before turning east to make my run to safety. But the wind increased in velocity and the waves increased in size much faster than I thought possible. Twice the bow of the canoe was caught by the wind which ignominiously whipped me around 180 degrees, and I found myself facing the wrong direction. Despite the fact that I had taken a position amidships to attain better control, it took tremendous effort to turn the canoe around again to face the wind. I soon found that I had to point the bow directly into the wind to prevent being whirled around repeatedly. The drift effect produced by the wind and waves caused the canoe to progress in a southeasterly direction, or just about in the direction I wanted to go. Soon, however, I felt as though the canoe was slipping eastward, in spite of my struggle to hold course.

I could not see, but I could hear the waves pounding on the limestone bulwarks of one of the islands near to my left side. If I could not pull past the island on its south side I would be dashed against its rocky shore. I had made a serious mistake by not heading for the mainland at once and taking my chances in the shallows, but it was too late to attempt that action now. One of the Fishing Islands, a once smiling, beguiling siren that I had glided intimately by minutes before, had become a growling monster whose threatening jaws I now sought desperately to escape.



At this point, unexpectedly, the fog thinned and visibility increased from a few feet to nearly 100 yards, confirming my suspected dangerous proximity to the island shore. But something else, equally startling, came into view at the same time. A strange-looking sailing ship, the likes of which I had never seen before, except in paintings or in books, stood at anchor to my starboard bow. Her crew was dashing energetically about the deck, climbing the two square-rigged masts, securing the sails, and preparing to weather the blow. Most of the sails were already reefed and the remainder were quickly being rolled up by the adroit, squirrel-like deckhands aloft. The ship seemed to be. I would estimate, about 60 feet in length with a high, railed quarterdeck. On her bow, above the beakhead, I could just make out what appeared to be a reproduction of a strange beast with a bird's head and the body of an animal. Above the quarterdeck stood a gilded spread eagle. The ship proudly displayed five cannons. Although she appeared to be an ancient vessel, she was shipshape and extremely well cared for, a tribute to her sprightly crew.

Some of the crew kept looking my way and shouting in French. I recognized the language but understood very little of what the men were saying. Soon a tender was lowered to the water and two men climbed in. At that moment I realized the odds on my avoiding disaster on a rocky shore had, to my great relief, just improved considerably. But the struggle was far from being over.

Two men rowing a small boat have much more control in heavy weather than one man in a canoe, and soon the Frenchmen manoeuvred their boat in front of me, presented their stern to my bow, and threw me a line. I carefully climbed over the thwarts of my bouncing, bucking canoe and attached the line to the bow. I returned to my proper position just in time to get situated and get my paddle back into the water as the line drew taut. The two men strained at their oars, while I laboured against the now breaking seas with my paddle, in a frantic struggle to avoid being cast upon the island's rocky ramparts. Working as a team, we slowly pulled away from the frothing shore and left the sight and sound of its sinister fury behind us, obscured in the mist.

The fog thickened once again, nearly erasing from sight the two unspeaking sailors ahead of me. How they knew where I wanted to go I'll never know, but the men safely steered a course between the islands and through the fog as though they were being guided by radar or had the eyesight of angels.

Once inside the chain of islands, the rowing and paddling became a bit easier, and we increased our speed. How long my two benefactors and I laboured across the waters I could not say, because it required all my concentration to propel the canoe, while at the same time lessening the tendency of the line to alternately slacken and then slam taut, jerking both rowboat and canoe. Eventually, the man in the stern of the tender stopped rowing and, to my surprise, untied his end of the line between us

and threw it toward the canoe. A second later the outline of the marina came into view through the mists, and I realized why I was being returned to my own fate. We had reached our goal.

Without saying a word, the two Frenchmen rowed past me in the opposite direction, so close their oars nearly scraped the canoe. "Merci! Merci!" I cried. The men remained silent, but smiled broadly as they rowed by and quickly disappeared into the fog behind me. I've seen expressions just like that, I thought, on the faces of men and women, young and old, who had just accomplished something that brought them great joy and satisfaction. I've seen them at high school and university graduations, at little league games, at Olympics and Special Olympics, at hospitals, at work places of all types, and on numerous mountain and canyon trails.

* * *
The breakfast bell at the lodge was ringing as I entered the marina and docked. After securing the canoe I immediately began to pace the dock, glad to be able to stretch my legs and relax my aching muscles. Two workmen from the marina had seen me tie-up and were, I'm sure, curious about my welfare. As they approached, the fog thinned once again, and I could see frowns that indicated their disapproval as well as their concern.

"Kind of a nasty day to be out in a canoe, eh?" one of the men observed.

"Well . . . ah . . . yes, but early this morning it was beautiful and there was no wind." They wouldn't know, I thought to myself; no one around here was up as early as I was. "But," I continued "the important thing is, did you see the big old sailing ship and the small boat with two men in it?"

"What ship? No boats large or small have gone out this morning in this blow." Without further comment, the men looked at each other with expressions that clearly revealed a mixed reaction of amazement and incredulity. Apparently unconvinced, they quickly dismissed my assertions with a shrug and went on about their business, working on the boats.

As I lingered on the dock, feeling a bit put down and frustrated, the fog disappeared as quickly as it had come in, rolling back first from the lake and then over the mainland. The day was once again just as bright and sunny as it had begun, except that now there was a gale force wind blowing.

I turned toward the lake and carefully studied the row of Fishing Islands and the waters before them, between them, and beyond them. There were no ships, no small boats, no Frenchmen; just blue sky, blue water, green trees, white rock, and white foam.

I looked down at the canoe. The lines I had used to tie the canoe to the dock — my lines — were thin, smooth, flexible, white, and made of nylon. But there was another line that was thick, rough, stiff, brown, covered with dark smudges and stains, and frayed at the ends, tied to the bow and draped over the gunnels and thwarts. It appeared to be made of hemp. I remember hemp lines from my childhood days of boating with my parents, but most modern boaters have never seen one. It was very obviously situated on the canoe, and yet the marina crew did not seem to have noticed it. Then a stunning thought struck me. Perhaps the workmen gave no indication of having seen the

strange line, because I was the only person who could see it!

My arm, leg, and back muscles, that had been quaking since arriving at the marina due to the extreme effort of the run to safety, now began to shake violently. Only then did I realize the wind had changed from the southwest to the west-northwest, and the temperature had dropped considerably. The wind shift explained why the fog had rolled back so suddenly. Clear, cool, dry air was sweeping down from its origins in the mountains of British Columbia and Alberta, across the northern reaches of what was once tall grass prairies and now are wheat fields in Canada's central plains, over Ontario's land of dark forests, sculptured rocky outcroppings, cold streams, and cold lakes to

arrive fresh and clean to my awaiting lungs. Even though this cool but delicious air was causing me to shake uncontrollably, I stood facing the torrent with arms outstretched, head held back, and shouted, "I love it!"

While hurrying up the short trail to the lodge I tried in vain to think of a believable excuse that would explain my tardiness to everyone at the breakfast table. I had told my wife Dolores that I was going bird watching when I left the cabin early in the morning. To preclude a probable veto, I had deliberately neglected to mention that I intended to do it from a canoe.

Everyone was nearly finished with eggs and pancakes and looked up inquiringly as I entered the lodge dining room. I had not thought about my dishevelled appearance until I started walking toward my place at the far end of the dining room. The sudden awareness of my rumpled and damp clothing served to increase my growing self-consciousness. It seemed to take several minutes to cross the floor, zigzagging between the tables ringed with staring faces.

"Where have you been?" my wife and friends demanded, when I finally reached our table and quickly sat down. "It's not at all like you to be late for breakfast."

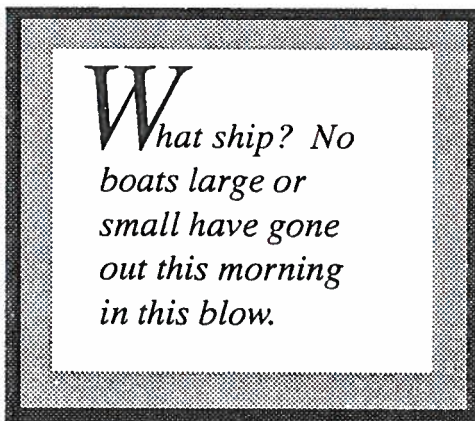
"Well . . . I . . . I guess . . . I guess I had a rendezvous to keep," I stammered sheepishly, yet with a hint of a smug expression on my face. "A rendezvous with the Griffin!"

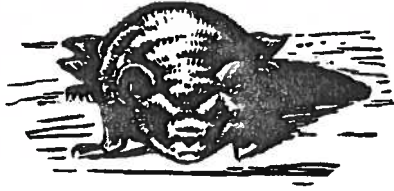
Addendum

Fact or fiction? The rescue by the Griffin was, of course, fiction. But it was great fun to imagine, wasn't it?

I did confidently embark alone in a canoe, very early one beautiful morning, pretending to be a daring seventeenth century voyageur. When the wind commenced and the fog came in, as I described, I quickly returned to the twentieth century and narrowly avoided being driven against a rocky shore.

The portrait of the Griffin was derived from several different sources. I could find no mention of a tender being carried on board, so I invented one. The historical accounts and descriptions of the plants and birds are as accurate as my research and personal experience can provide. The lodge, marina, Fishing Islands, sun and fog, calms and gales all exist at one of my favorite places on earth, Canada's Bruce Peninsula.





WE MUST BE BATTY

By Peggy Moore

At 11 p.m., Friday, July 6, 1990, Tom Hurst and I pulled into the driveway of Pinery Provincial Park. We had no hope of obtaining a campsite for the night, but we weren't really there to sleep. We had made the trip to share in Brian Hickey's studies of red and hoary bats for his doctoral thesis at York University.

Parked inconspicuously near the road was a small vanwagon bearing York's insignia on the door. The back was filled with batteries and computers and photography supplies. The researchers at this site were photographing and audio-recording bats in flight as they foraged for moths under the lights.

Another group closer to the gate was trapping the moths flying overhead to compare the species in the area in relation to bat preference.

Contact via walkie talkie brought Brian driving up to guide us into the park to another research site. At the entrance to the Riverside camping area, Brian and his assistants were physically trapping specimens for measuring and banding. High powered spotlights would pick out the reflective wing bands as the bats hunted over the parking area.

Bat detectors, which are receivers tuned to the high pitched squeal of the bats, gave us an immediate warning of the bats' approach. Small stones thrown into the air would draw bats, expecting a moth, down near us. This was not close enough though, so Tom and I volunteered to attempt to trap a bat or two by manning the mist net. Two long poles joined by about 30 feet of fine black netting were positioned and held across an unused stretch of pavement. A body manned the spotlight while listening to the receiver, and another body stood out of range of the net and poles and tossed pebbles into the air. When a bat swooped down low, someone hollered "Swing," and we swung.

Surprisingly enough, we caught a red bat on our practice swing. The small angry creature snarled and growled while it was weighed (at 18 grams), measured and banded. It was so cute that I wished I had had a pre-exposure rabies shot so I could hold it. I had to settle for rubbing its soft, little head. It was the only bat caught that evening.

The research teams were spending the summer as nocturnal beings, but by 2 a.m., Tom and I were feeling a little tired. Unable to find a motel, we slept surprisingly well in the car, got a campsite the next morning and napped and enjoyed the park that day.

Paul Pratt and Karen arrived in time for the Saturday night



Illustrations of hoary bats by Charles Paul May, courtesy Macmillan of Canada

session. Onlookers were invited to swing the net and caught a hoary bat, to the delight of the children. Hoary bats, at 35 grams, weigh about twice that of red bats, so this lucky creature received a radio transmitter. This was glued onto a spot on its back carefully shaved by Brian. Its range would be recorded over six weeks or for as long as the battery held out.

The ferociousness of a "trapped in the hand" bat is amazing. Snarling and snapping, nipping at Brian's hand, this delightful creature paused to partake of a fat moth caught on a window, licked its lips, licked Brian's fingers and then continued its tirade of outrage.

Another red bat was caught, measured and banded that evening. I misjudged the range of the net pole and received a dent on the head.

We also spent some early evening hours helping researchers set up nets to trap whip-poor-wills, a secondary project they were involved with.

About 5:30 a.m. we decided to pack it in and headed to our tent. After what seemed to be only moments we were up and packing for the return home. Having a captive naturalist in Paul, we stopped in a quarry in the hamlet of Hungry Hollow to look for fossils and queen snakes before heading home.

SUMMARY OF PAST CEDAR CREEK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

By Paul D. Pratt

The first count was held January 5, 1986 on an unofficial basis without publication in American Birds. One of the main incentives of starting a count was to enable a census of the large Crow roost located on the fringe of Essex. The first "official" count was held December 20, 1986. The 1987 count was held during a period of exceptionally mild weather and produced a record high of 85 species. Highlights included Mountain Bluebird, Eared Grebe, 42 Killdeers and large numbers of water birds. Cold weather reduced the total in 1988 but produced an exceptional House Wren. Despite another bout of very cold weather, the 1989 count recorded 80 species, including Eastern Phoebe and Swainson's Thrush. The 1990 count recorded 81 species during snow, rain and dense fog, including Orange-crowned Warbler and Dickcissel.

109 species have been recorded on the past six counts. Cedar Creek holds the all-time Canadian records for numbers of American Crow and Swainson's Thrush.

RESULTS:	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Horned Grebe			2			
Eared Grebe			1			
Great Blue Heron	1	5	24	1	3	5
Tundra Swan		6	8		2	
Mute Swan					3	
Snow Goose			1		1	
Canada Goose	8,554	5,810	3,964	4,904	8,346*	7,002
Wood Duck		10			4	
American Black Duck	5	5	15	2	7	5
Mallard	21	71	2,807	8	174	123
Northern Pintail			4			
Gadwall			2			
American Wigeon			2			
Redhead			12	2		
Greater Scaup			2			1
scaup species					15	
Common Goldeneye	4	3	7	1	30	7
Bufflehead		3	1		2	1
Hooded Merganser			5			2
Common Merganser	106	10	167	189	616	93
Red-breasted Merganser	1	11	139	6	314	8
duck species					1,556	1
Turkey Vulture					4*	
Bald Eagle	4	2	2	1	2	2
Northern Harrier	19	13	27	2	20	4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	3	4	6	5	2
Cooper's Hawk	6	3	7	4	7	5
accipiter species	1				1	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	5	1	3	5*	3*	3
Red-tailed Hawk	84	67	39	86	69	40
Rough-legged Hawk	22	8	10	11	25	2
buteo species						1
American Kestrel	21	61	60	34	19	31
Peregrine Falcon	1					
Ring-necked Pheasant	7	4	24	17	11	13
Killdeer			42		2	3
Common Snipe				1	2	1
Little Gull			2			1
Bonaparte's Gull		1,089	5,620	1	7	1,859

RESULTS:	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Ring-billed Gull	3	267	3,071	18	10	3,432
Herring Gull	40	559	1,043	120	718	786
Glaucous Gull					1	
Great Black-backed Gull	4	43	137	15	33	68
gull species	4		262		276	44
Rock Dove	383	573	623	771	287	404
Mourning Dove	1,081	1,836*	2,016*	1,579	1,802*	725
Eastern Screech-Owl	13	56*	48*	52*	49	44
Great Horned Owl	4	26	24	29	23	10
Long-eared Owl	4	14	11*		2	13
Short-eared Owl	3	1	2			3
Northern Saw-whet Owl		4*	1			
Belted Kingfisher		2	4	2	3	2
Red-headed Woodpecker	1	9*	2*		6*	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	5	10	5	7	2	6
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		1	2*			1
Downy Woodpecker	91	164	123	162	127	129
Hairy Woodpecker	3	10	9	7	5	7
Northern Flicker	14	50*	36*	18	43*	31
Eastern Phoebe					1	
Horned Lark	3,152	99	1,065*	164	2,142*	317
Blue Jay	164	712*	195	219	440	269
American Crow	20,653	48,090*	49,380*	54,675*	5,900	69,689**
Black-capped Chickadee	3	341	10	2	4	285
Boreal Chickadee		1				
Tufted Titmouse			1			1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	6	14	2	2	6	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	55	37	56	29	60	50
Brown Creeper	16	22	24	42	6	36
Carolina Wren	1	3	6	12	7	23
House Wren				1*		
Winter Wren	5	4	4	3		3
Golden-crowned Kinglet	5	38	61	46	21	3
Eastern Bluebird	3	3	16	19	5	9
Mountain Bluebird			1*			
Swainson's Thrush					1**	
Hermit Thrush		5	6	2	17	7
American Robin	27	3	33	6	4	10
Gray Catbird	1					
Northern Mockingbird	1				4	1
Brown Thrasher			1	2*		1
Cedar Waxwing	102	79	79	2	60	28
Northern Shrike	1	1				
European Starling	3,390	5,797	3,515	1,970	1,835	2,921
Orange-crowned Warbler						1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	5	2	8		21	8
Northern Cardinal	184	202	302	317	216	381
Dickcissel						1
Rufous-sided (Eastern) Towhee		7*	2	6	4	3
American Tree Sparrow	1,858	531	363	411	692	546
Chipping Sparrow		11*				
Field Sparrow	14	33	32	4	8	18
Vesper Sparrow	1	1				
Savannah Sparrow		4				
Fox Sparrow	1				3	
Song Sparrow	111	287	301	246	275	283

RESULTS:	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Lincoln's Sparrow		1				
Swamp Sparrow	68	90	77	71	60	79
White-throated Sparrow	97	195*	91	38	84	60
White-crowned Sparrow	20	16	17	8	8	14
Dark-eyed Junco	859	783	435	236	314	423
"oregon" junco	2				1	
Lapland Longspur	8		30	1	11	
Snow Bunting	1,048		986	630	3,185	4
Red-winged Blackbird	40	15	41	7	42	22
Meadowlark sp.			11	1	9	1
Rusty Blackbird	157	2	11		17	
Common Grackle	5	7		2	8	7
Brown-headed Cowbird	633	252	135	109	81	41
Purple Finch	3	18	59	8	60	6
House Finch	67	99	369	580	662	646
Common Redpoll	451					
Pine Siskin		23	86		21	1
American Goldfinch	235	432	171	185	130	96
Evening Grosbeak	26	4		5		
House Sparrow	4,490	5,804	3,204	1,954	2,153	1,956
TOTAL SPECIES	71	78	85	69	80	80
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	48,486	74,874	81,604	70,084	33,192	93,190
NUMBER OF						
FIELD-OBSERVERS	26	28	29	30	25	30
FEEDER WATCHERS		2	1	1	1	2
PARTY-HOURS (daylight)	117	103	126	107	106	105
(owling)		12	22	7	6.5	10.5
(feeder watching)		3	1	1	2	4

BOLD High count

* High Count - Canada n/a 10 9 5 8 n/a

** Record High Count - Canada n/a 1 0 1 1 n/a

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

for Atlas of the Mammals of Ontario

This project is a volunteer-based program to compile a mammal atlas for Ontario in a similar fashion to the recently completed *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario*.

The project is sponsored by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Ontario Federation of Hunters and Anglers. Participants will survey the thirty-four 10 X 10 km squares found in the Essex region to document the presence of mammals over the next five years.

Please contact the **Regional Coordinator, Paul Pratt** at the **Ojibway Nature Centre (966-5852)** if you would like to become involved in this project.



MARK DOWN
ONE MALE . . .
TWO FEMALES

17TH ROCKWOOD, MICHIGAN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 22, 1990

By Tom Carpenter, compiler

Despite a dismal forecast, the weather turned out all right – warm with light winds in the morning, colder and windier in the afternoon, but with no precipitation!

Record high numbers of 11 species were seen (* in the list); most of these can be attributed to the mild conditions during the weeks preceding the count.

Especially notable were the large numbers of blackbirds (an almost unimaginable total of 1,125 **Rusty Blackbirds!**) and **Mallards** (9,337). A late corn harvest in conjunction with the mild winter probably facilitated these concentrations.

Two species were found which were new to the count – 6 **Dunlin** and a **Common Snipe**. This brings the total number of species counted over the history of the count up to 128. The total number of individuals counted was the second highest in the count's history.

The total species counted – 81 – was close to the count's average number of 79 (range 69-91). The mild conditions were probably partially responsible for the low number of species; birds were very dispersed and hard to locate.

Also, the food crop was not great. Poison Ivy berries were notably absent, resulting in low numbers of Northern Flickers and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Other berries were very spotty. Parties that evaluated the wild food crop in their areas indicated they were either excellent or poor, with no responses in between.

Several species were much less abundant than usual (noted by "low" in the list), the most noteworthy being Redhead with only one counted.

Thanks go to Cynthia Naegeli for making the necessary arrangements to count birds on the Enrico Fermi property, to Ken Smith for issuing permits allowing parking in the restricted areas of Lake Erie Metropark, and to Bob Wittersheim for hosting the tally at the Oakwoods Metropark Nature Center. Helen Horton located and received counts from 12 feeders. Pamela Frucci was instrumental in arranging access to feeders and private property on Grosse Ile.

Participants in the Canadian area of Amherst Point, part of the town of Amherstburg, and the shoreline in-between, were Dick Benoit, Hank Hunt, Bonnie Foley and Anne Barbour. The next count will be on Saturday, December 21, 1991. Anyone interested in helping, contact Anne Barbour at 726-6560.

Numbers higher than usual are underlined.
* = a record high number.
Species seen in the Canadian territory, as well as their numbers, are in bold print.

Great Blue Heron 57 (2)	Hairy Woodpecker 11
Tundra Swan <u>513*</u>	Northern Flicker 17 (1)
Mute Swan 132 (6)	Horned Lark (low) 8 (5)
Can. Goose <u>2,419</u> (1,301)	Blue Jay 159 (26)
Wood Duck 3*	American Crow 43 (6)
Green-winged Teal <u>9*</u>	Black-capped Chickadee <u>104</u> (5)
Black Duck <u>562*</u>	Tufted Titmouse 40
Mallard <u>9,337*</u> (116)	Red-breasted nuthatch 7
Gadwall 26	White-breasted Nuthatch 51 (6)
Canvasback 2,709	Brown Creeper 9
Redhead (low) 1	Carolina Wren 3 (1)
Greater Scaup 101	Golden-crowned Kinglet 10 (1)
Lesser Scaup 2	Hermit Thrush 5
Com. Goldeneye 122 (3)	American Robin 7
Bufflehead <u>57</u>	<u>Gray Catbird</u> 1
Hooded Merganser 1	Cedar Waxwing 37
Common Merganser 1,055	Northern Shrike 1
Red-breasted Merganser 23	European Starling 6,000 (339)
Ruddy Duck 3	Yellow-rumped Warbler 6
Bald Eagle 2	Northern Cardinal 104 (10)
Northern Harrier 2	Am. Tree Sparrow (low) 268 (21)
Sharp-shinned Hawk 3	Field Sparrow 1
Cooper's Hawk 7*	Song Sparrow 77 (11)
Red-shouldered Hawk 1	Swamp Sparrow 30 (5)
Red-tailed Hawk 60 (4)	White-throated Sparrow 25 (1)
American Kestrel 47	Dark-eyed junco (low) 168 (44)
Ring-necked Pheasant 9	Snow Bunting (low) 27 (3)
Bobwhite 6	Red-winged Blackbird 236
Killdeer 1	Eastern Meadowlark 1
American Coot <u>70*</u>	Rusty Blackbird <u>1,125*</u>
Dunlin 6	Common Grackle <u>429*</u>
Common Snipe 1	Brown-hd. Cowbird <u>5,318*</u> (3)
Bonaparte's Gull 472 (83)	Purple Finch 6
Ring-bill. Gull 2,532 (60)	House Finch 518* (105)
Herring Gull (low) 319 (34)	Pine Siskin 9
Gt Black-back'd Gull 47 (7)	American Goldfinch 178 (30)
Rock Dove 536 (90)	House Sparrow 1,878 (203)
Mourning Dove 2,120 (123)	
Screech Owl 8	
Great-horned Owl 7	
Belted Kingfisher 3	
Red-headed Woodpecker 1	
Red-Bellied Woodpecker 8	
Downy Woodpecker 79 (1)	

Total Species 81 (33)

HAWK-BANDING AT HOLIDAY BEACH

by Anne Barbour

In the second season of hawk-banding at Holiday Beach, 415 raptors were banded. Totals were as follows:

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	325
	Male 127
	Female 198
COOPER'S HAWK	33
	Male 20
	Female 13
RED-TAILED HAWK	19
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	4
NORTHERN HARRIER	6
AMERICAN KESTREL	25
MERLIN	3
<hr/>	
TOTAL	415

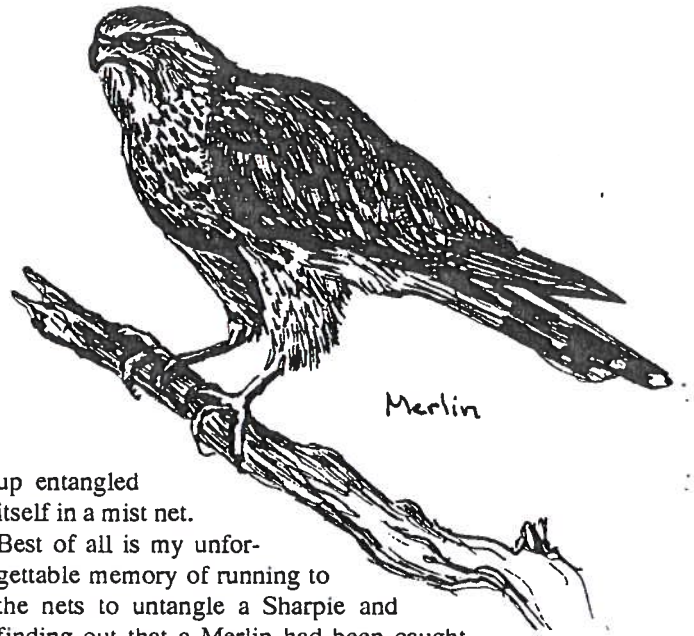
Five birds that were caught had already been banded, 4 at Hawk Cliff. Two of these took 2 days to reach Holiday Beach, and two took 4 days. It is still unknown where the other bird came from. The total is quite a bit higher than 1989's total of 18, but circumstances were considerably different.

In 1989, Tom and Art Carpenter conducted banding on weekends on an experimental basis to see if numbers would warrant banding on a daily basis. Also, because of the late arrival of bands from the government, the weekend banding was begun quite late in the season.

This past fall, Art and Tom had the help of another bander, Alfred Knutsen. Through their joint efforts, the blinds were manned almost daily between Sept. 7 and Nov. 11.

The first site in the open area east of the gatehouse was not as productive as expected, because of the predominance of southerly winds that kept the raptors down by the shore's edge. Determined not to miss the main migration, the banders moved the main set-up to a private field closer to the shoreline. Heavy rains and tornado-like winds also played havoc with the operation. These are just two examples of how, in any scientific endeavour, the outcome may be projected, but can never be fully foretold, and should never be expected to run as smoothly as planned!

As a volunteer, I mainly helped catch bait birds (Starlings, House Sparrows, Cowbirds and Rock Doves) and helped minimally at the blinds. I can attest, though, to the thrill one experiences watching a large buteo fall out of the sky and plunge toward the caged prey, only to be caught itself, in the mist nets; or to the astonishment of having a Sharp-shinned Hawk, able as they are to veer through the trees, fly through the backdrop of pine trees behind the blind, pass directly over one's head (while chatting at the picnic table), head straight for its prey, only to end



up entangled
itself in a mist net.

Best of all is my unforgettable memory of running to the nets to untangle a Sharpie and finding out that a Merlin had been caught instead! Holding that Merlin, and having him look me straight in the eye, made all those dreary times of checking bait traps suddenly worthwhile.

Hopefully, the fall of 1991 will be even more successful. Tom Carpenter will be speaking at our club's June 12th meeting. If anyone is interested in sharing in some of the memorable moments that hawk-banding can provide, be sure to attend the meeting in June and offer Tom your services. Any help would be most welcome, since Al Knutsen will not be assisting Art and Tom in the fall of 1991.

EARTH DAY '91

RUSCOM SHORES CLEAN-UP

On April 22, 1990, millions of people around the world participated in a variety of activities — both practical and symbolic to commemorate and celebrate our care for this planet.

It was the start of a decade during which people would get involved in order to help save the environment.

Once again we will be showing our care this year. On Sunday, April 21, club members are invited to join in the spring clean-up at Ruscom Shores Conservation Area.

Meet at the parking lot at 10 a.m. Garbage bags will be provided there. Bring a friend. If it's a nice day, bring a picnic.

Let's show ERCA that the club really cares about Ruscom Shores!

Record year for Gold Eagles, Peregrines 1990 RAPTOR TOTAL TOPS 114,000 BUT SOME SPECIES' COUNTS LOWER

By Will Weber, Editor

Raptor total numbers were up significantly for the fourth consecutive year. The 113,361 raptors represented the greatest total since the great broad-winged year of 1984, and the second highest total since record keeping began in 1974.

In 1990 broad-wingeds (76,271) made up 67% of the total raptor flight. In 1984, broad-wingeds (110,221) were 78% of the total. A record 87 golden eagles were counted. Peregrine falcons (38) were observed in record numbers for the second straight year. In addition, merlins (63) were just two birds short of last year's record total. American kestrels (5,375) and northern harriers (1,184) reached second-highest-ever totals.

Turkey vultures (8,645) were unexpectedly down by almost 5,000 birds from last year. Sharp-shinned (14,007) continued in a declining trend of four years, down about 1,800 from last year and 4,600 from the 1987 record number. Cooper's Hawks (751) were down more than 10% from 1st year and red-taileds (6,331) were down to their lowest total in five years. Unfavorable wind patterns in much of November may have directed these and other migrants on other routes.

The only single daily tally record total this year was for golden eagles. Seventeen birds on Nov. 12 exceeded the previ-

Will Weber, editor of The NORTHWIND, which is the newsletter of the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, has generously given The Egret permission to reprint articles of interest to ECFNC members. We appreciate his assistance.

ous best day by 7 birds. There was early season talk on the tower of a possible invasion year for goshawks as evidenced by early high numbers at other sites. This did not materialize at Holiday Beach. The total of 20 for the season was the same as last year.

It is difficult to draw specific conclusions about population changes without reference to long-term trends, seasonal weather patterns, data from other watch sites and other variables that are not accounted for in these figures. Our own coverage defined by hours observing at the site was the lowest in four years and down 13% in hours and 8% in days from last year. Reduced coverage (time spent observing) may partially explain at least the 1990 declines and some of the instances of three, four or five year low numbers for many species. Still, we can observe patterns in our data that are suggestive of potential environmental trends bearing continued scrutiny. Reduced numbers of any species in a year that, overall, provided near record totals is a concern.

Non-raptor migration summary

WEATHER FINE, BUT RARITIES FEW

By Allen Chartier,
Non-Hawk migration Chairman

Regular cold fronts presented good migration conditions, but, in spite of this, 1990 was an uneventful year. No new species were added to the list and there were a few rarities, but nothing spectacular. Our coverage was down in hours, which may have had some effect on the totals.

Common loons were below average at 26, half of last year's figure. A pied-billed grebe was present Sept. 27. Three double-crested cormorants Dec. 2 were late. Cattle egrets were again present, including a color-marked individual similar to color-marked birds seen this year at Pt. Mouillee. Do these birds nest in Michigan or Ontario?

A green-backed heron Oct. 7 was a record late bird. Tundra swans totalled 942. 80 snow geese were reported Oct. 31. Puddle ducks were down or stable, while diving ducks were up. There were 2,945 black ducks on Nov. 29. Pintails were in numbers one-third of last year's low. 234 green-winged teal on Sept. 15 was a record number. A record number of wood ducks (233)

were present August 30. Lesser scaup were seen regularly, possible due to the prevalence of zebra mussels in Lake Erie. 8 ring-necked ducks were seen on Oct. 11. This was a record number and a record early date. Large numbers of canvasbacks flew west to east over the site on Dec. 2. Ruddy ducks were present much of October and November. Five sandhill cranes were observed.

Good mudflats enticed in shorebirds, including second local records for white-rumped and stilt sandpipers. Common snipe and long-billed dowitchers were present late in the season. Killdeer and dunlin were still present on Dec. 2. A record 56 Caspian terns were seen August 26. Four long-eared owls were in their roost through mid-November. A late nighthawk flew by Oct. 4. Hummingbirds, expected to be at the two-year cyclic low, were still quite high at 211. How is the tower affecting counts?

See NON-RAPTORS — Page 16

Continued from Page 15

NON-RAPTORS REPORT

Only 16 red-headed woodpeckers were recorded, way down from the 30-50 birds per season we used to see. On August 6, 1,530 purple martins almost beat last year's total. On Sept. 5, 13 cliff swallows was a record for a day and the season.

It was an average year for blue jays with about 240,000, 100,000 less than last year. A record 51,470 passed by on Sept. 30. A crow with white wing feathers was seen Nov. 18. Carolina wrens summered in the park. 196 bluebirds was the second best season total. A mocking bird appeared Oct. 30. Record numbers of American pipits (369) passed through including 132 on Sept. 11 which was a record single day. Northern shrikes were seen Nov. 6 and 13.

Cedar waxwings were near normal, numbers totalling 8,263 for the season. Fair numbers of warblers and vireos passed through. 363 Lapland longspurs was a record season total. Snow buntings were down. The second and third local records for Brewer's blackbirds were recorded August 30 and Oct. 24. Finches were scarce. 1,466 purple finches were average. House finches tripled. One flock of 100 redpolls was the season total. Pine siskins were scarce until mid October. The total was only 428.

American goldfinches were respectable at 20,000+ but this was only 55% of last year's numbers. 12 red crossbills Oct. 17 were early. Only a few evening grosbeaks passed through in early November.

Observations were contributed by Dick Benoit, Allen Chartier, Esther Cusick, Freeman Davis, Bob Hawker, Hank Hunt, Mike Kielb, JoAnne McIntyre, Bob Pettit, Carl Sibert, Dave Stimac, Will Weber, Wayne Wilson and Laurie York.

(According to The NORTHWIND, the foregoing was a summary of Allen Chartier's Fall Bird Migration report. More details are promised in the Spring newsletter.)

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

Reprinted from The NORTHWIND

One alarming non-ornithological trend at Holiday Beach (Migration Observatory) was the decline in the hours and number of days that our observation site was staffed. Holiday Beach Migration Observatory is a non-profit, completely volunteer organization. Our research and public education programs are the result of a very modest budget and a very generous contribution of individual personal effort, but we require lots of people giving up a little time on a predictable and regular basis. We are always seeking more active participation from people who want to add purpose to their birding and who have the interest and skills to expand our scientific efforts.

We need more official observers and assistants to assure that the tower is staffed with a competent observer each full day of the migration season. It helps to have basic bird identification experience, but we can help you sharpen your skills while you learn the job. Often itinerant birders with extraordinary skills visit the site and assist in spotting and identifying the birds, but they have little knowledge of our record-keeping requirements. We most need people who can make a regular weekly commitment on a particular day to count and record birds at the tower. Some daily teams of two or more people share alternate weeks, split the time of daily coverage or rotate at the site through tasks of counting non-raptors, counting raptors and recording data.

If you are interested in making a regular commitment to the Fall 1991 Holiday Beach raptor count, contact Dick Benoit (313) 882-5917.

ERCA seeks public input

RUSCOM, TREMBLAY STUDIES NEARLY COMPLETE

By Betty Learmouth

A status report on the Master Plans of Ruscom Shores and Tremblay Beach Conservation Areas was given at the Feb. 21 meeting of the Essex Region Conservation Authority's full authority.

Chris Alsop, who is preparing the plans, indicated that most of the biological and cultural background on Ruscom Shores has been obtained except for the archeological site information. Five archeological proposals have been received as tenders were invited for this work.

Work will begin now to obtain biological and cultural background on Tremblay Beach. Public input was requested by Feb. 21.

As well, a survey directed at the whole county to determine

the public's interest in using and/or potential recreational facilities and programs at areas belonging to ERCA has been designed with the assistance of the University of Windsor Business Resource Centre. The survey should be completed by March 20, at an approximate cost of \$2,200.

The information derived from this sample will be used to prepare the concept development plans for both sites.

It is anticipated that draft concept plans will be ready for public review at an open house in the third week of April.

ERCA plans workshop

The Essex Region Conservation Authority is planning a workshop for May 1 to be focussed on "Islands of Green."

Contact ERCA for more details including information about the speakers.

THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE

By Don Bissonnette

Background

The Eastern Bluebird is a member of the thrush family and a cousin of the American Robin. The male is blue with a bright orange breast. The female's head and shoulder's are gray and her breast is pale orange.

They are cavity nesters, choosing abandoned woodpecker holes, rotted-out tree branches and nest boxes.

Years ago, the Eastern Bluebird was a common sight in rural Ontario. In many places they were more numerous than the American Robin.

Nature enthusiasts noticed the Bluebird population dropping in the 1940s. By 1970, the Eastern Bluebird population was only 10 per cent of what it had been in 1930.

One reason for the decline is lack of environment. Lack of environment also means lack of feeding areas and nesting sites. Bluebirds need grassy areas with small trees and shrubs nearby. Today, natural areas in any form are too few and far between.

Predators multiplied

Another reason for their decline is the introduction of European Starlings and English Sparrows. These hardy, aggressive birds seek out our native birds' nests where they eat eggs and hatchlings. As well, both Starlings and English Sparrows are cavity nesters. They not only eat young Bluebirds, but also take over the nest and raise their own young there.

The use of dangerous pesticides in the '40s and '50s could very well have been another factor in the Bluebird population decline.

Raccoons a threat

Another threat has come from the rise in the raccoon population. In the past 50 years or so, Ontario's raccoon population has risen dramatically. Raccoons raid birds' nests and eat eggs and young. Since Bluebirds usually nest three to 10 feet off the ground, they are in easy reach of raccoons. More raccoons mean more predation on Bluebird nests.

In the past few years, many conservation-minded people have built Bluebird nestboxes. Some models have been modified to discourage predators. Today, the Eastern Bluebird is making a slow comeback.

A New Effort to help Bluebirds

Presently our club is organizing a Bluebird Committee. This committee is headed by Anne Barbour, Betty Learmouth, Bill Balkwell and Don Bissonnette. Our ERCA advisor is Gerry Waldron. The goal of this committee is to create habitat for, and to study, the uncommon Eastern Bluebird.

The committee has chosen more than 20 sites on which to establish Bluebird nestbox trails. Each trail will have four to 10 nestboxes, so approximately 100 nestboxes are needed. Nesting Bluebirds are territorial, so the nestboxes must be properly spaced.

These sites were chosen for two reasons. First, they were ideal Bluebird environments; and secondly, they recently had Bluebird nestings and/or significant Bluebird sightings in the area.

The committee applied to the Ministry of Natural Resources for a Community Wildlife Involvement Program grant. However, the Ministry of Natural Resources cannot fund this project at this time. The committee can re-apply in June.

The committee has also applied to Canada Trust's "Friends of the Environment" Fund.

The committee is looking for other ways to raise money. Hopefully nestboxes can be built as soon as possible, since Bluebirds are early nesters. In Essex County, pairs have been seen nest-building as early as mid-April.

The committee has located a small carpentry company, which will sell us unassembled nestboxes. With taxes, each kit is \$8.33. The company is using recycled wood, which keeps the cost down.

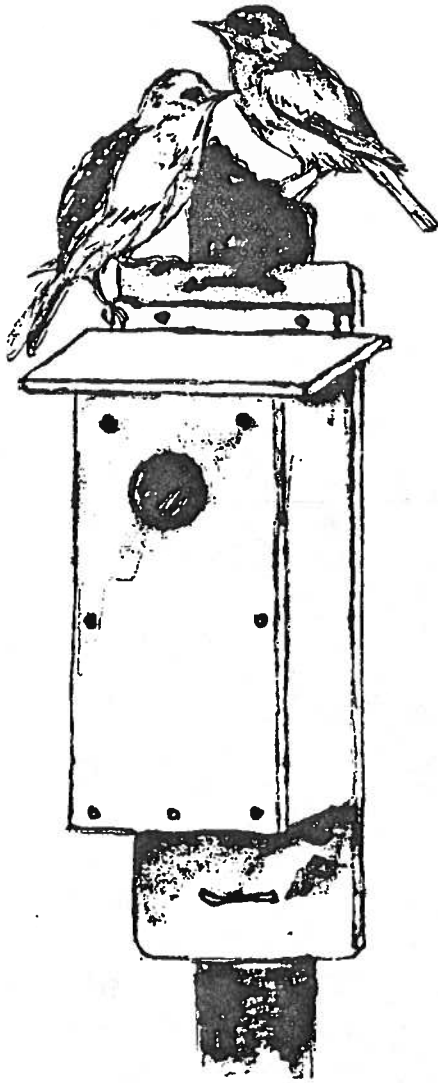
Members needed

If the company comes up with adequate money, it will be looking for members. Members will be asked to:

1. Assemble the nestboxes.
2. Set the boxes out on the trails.
3. Monitor the boxes through the nesting season.

If you would like to join this educational, rewarding project, please inform Betty Learmouth, Anne Barbour, Bill Balkwell or Don Bissonnette.

The committee is also looking for a source for some inexpensive, metal fence posts. The aim is to mount the nestboxes on metal posts since they prevent raccoon predation.



Editor's Note: The story and photograph below were reprinted from the February, 1991 edition of *Windsor This Month* with the kind permission of Publisher Jerry Woloschuk and Editor Betty Strosberg. Unfortunately we are unable to reproduce the color of the original.

WTM

CELEBRITY CONCOCTIONS

WTM PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN MacKAY

PAUL PRATT

Paul Pratt is a rare breed. A city naturalist with the Department of Parks and Recreation since he arrived from his native Samia in 1975, he is responsible for natural heritage appreciation, protection and interpretation in the city of Windsor. Pratt, who manages the operation of Ojibway Park, Black Oak Heritage Park, Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park and the Ojibway Nature Centre, is a nationally recognized birding expert, entomologist and nature photographer. An honours science graduate with a degree in biology from the University of Waterloo, he served as a summer naturalist for the Ministry of Natural Resources in Algonquin Provincial Park from 1969 to 1972, and as a resource analyst in Rondeau

Provincial Park from 1972 to 1975. He has conducted birding tours for the past 10 years throughout Canada and the U.S., as well as Mexico, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Cuba. This month, the ubiquitous Pratt leaves for two weeks to observe birds, reptiles and amphibians in the Amazon Basin. For the past two years, he has been the co-holder of the World Series of Birding out-of-state record, sighting 199 species in New Jersey last May. Pratt's photographs have been published in *Equinox*, *Seasons* and *Nature Canada* magazines, and in such books as *Islands of Green*, *Wildflowers of Canada* and *Robert Bateman Naturalist Diary 1990*. He is the founding director of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club, charter and life member of Ontario Field Ornithologists, chairperson of the Convention & Visitors Bureau Birding Committee and founding

director of Friends of Point Pelee. A highlight of Pratt's efforts over the past year was the selection of Windsor to host the 1992 North American Prairie Conference, which is expected to attract some 500 delegates from throughout North America. For WTM, he offers a recipe that is strictly for the birds.

SUET LOG

One small log with one-inch holes drilled at random intervals.

Pack holes with ground suet (available at most grocery stores). Mix in some peanut butter and bacon drippings for variation, if desired. Suspend log with cord or chain. Attracts downy woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatches and black-capped chickadees.



CONSERVATION CORNER

COMPLETING THE CIRCLE

By Johanne Ranger

In this day and age of environmental awareness and care, there is a lot of information out there to help us be more "environmentally friendly," or at least, less harmful. The best way is to practise the 3 R's, Reducing, Reusing and Recycling.

The Essex and Windsor communities have been lucky to have a Blue Box program for a few years now. It has been very successful. But the recycling program can only be fully successful if we buy recycled products. That will complete the circle of recycling.

Tin and glass products are easily available, even if they are not obvious. A lot of manufacturers have been recycling these products for years.

The "new kid on the block" of recycled products is paper. A large variety of products are now available and quality keeps getting better. But there is some caution needed here. Some products are better than others; that is, some products are less environmentally harmful.

What to look for:

There are many labels put on recycled paper products. Look for "Post-Consumer" products, with the higher the percentage, the better. Post-consumer is defined as paper that has been used by consumers and collected from businesses, offices and private homes. Such items include corrugated cartons, fine paper and newspapers.

The other label to watch for is "De-inked" or "Bleached." The process of separating the ink and paper is a chemical one. The resulting sludge is toxic and must be treated. Once treated it can be sold as fertilizer, compost, etc. New methods of de-inking that do not use chemicals are now being developed. The same goes for bleaching. The chemical process results in toxic effluents. Safer methods of bleaching, which do not use chlorine,

have been developed and are being used. Find out which method of de-inking or bleaching was used, or even better, insist on unbleached paper.

Where to look for recycled paper:

There are a number of companies producing recycled paper of various quality. The more you buy, the higher the demand, and the more can be produced. Try to buy Canadian-made recycled paper. Canadian pulp and paper mills must be made aware there is a high demand for recycled stock.

In the Windsor and Essex County area, the following stores stock recycled paper products:

Green Earth Environmental Products, Windsor;
Phone 253-4302; stocks fine paper products.

As well, check your local Loblaws, Zehrs and other grocery stores. A lot of them now carry toilet paper, paper towels, and even tissues made from recycled paper.

Also available by mail order are a variety of products from the following companies. Write for their catalogues.

The Paper Source, \$1 for catalogue
Fallbrook, Ontario
K0G 1A0

Phone: 613-267-7191

Evergreen Paper,
181 King St.,

Parkhill, Ontario

Phone: 519-294-0073

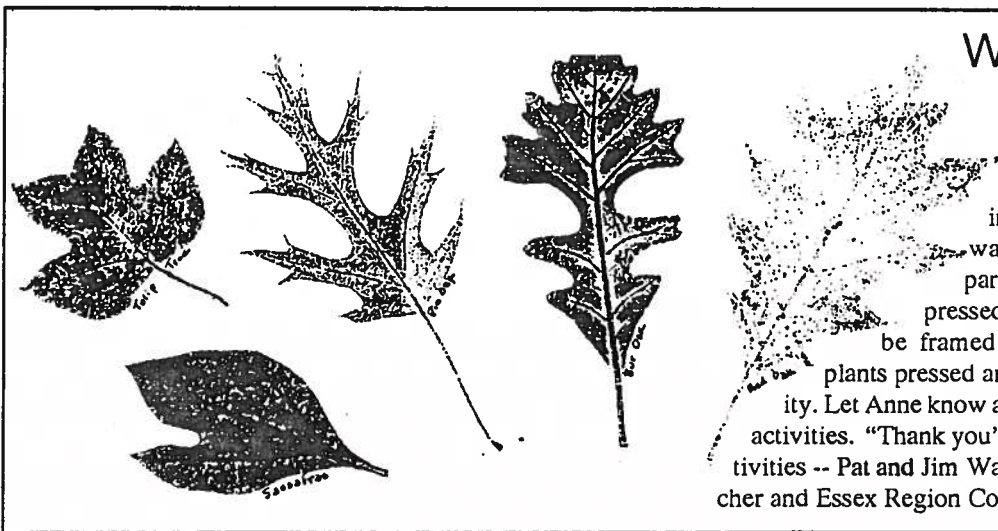
For Earth's Sake, \$2 for catalogue

80 Baker St.,

Guelph, Ontario

NIH 4G1

Phone: 519-837-3242



WORKSHOP ON PRESSED PLANTS

Anne Barbour conducted a workshop Jan. 27, on creating pressed plant prints and it was enthusiastically received by participants. Future workshops on pressed flower arrangements that can be framed are being considered. Prairie plants pressed and printed are another possibility. Let Anne know about your interest in these craft activities. "Thank you" to the leaders of our winter activities -- Pat and Jim Watson, Anne Barbour, Joe Durocher and Essex Region Conservation staff.

ONTARIO RARE BREEDING BIRDS ATLAS

By Cathy Watson

Last year I suggested the Essex County Field Naturalists Club should participate in the Ontario Rare Breeding Bird Atlas Project. Lots of people willingly signed up to participate in this project, but nothing came of it. As regional co-ordinator it was my responsibility that things did not get going when they should have.

However, this year promises to be bigger and better than ever. We are counting on lots of help from our membership.

You don't need to be an expert birder to join in the fun! This project is unique in that certain targeted species (yellow-breasted chat, white-eyed vireo etc.) will be sought after their breeding season.

The project will run like the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. We need volunteers to monitor "squares" of Essex County in hopes of finding and confirming the location of our rare breeding

species. The project involves going out to monitor the "square" during the breeding season on a regular basis (as much time as you are willing to afford). You will be listening to calls, looking for breeding signs or you may even be lucky enough to catch the parents feeding their young.

Perhaps you may be interested in participating in field trips to "blitz" areas that aren't covered. Dates for these trips are listed in the events section of the Egret.

Interested in spending a little time searching for our rare feathered friends? Your help is needed! Who knows what else you might find while out enjoying nature. (Don't just look up though, the Mammal Atlas is also coming soon.)

If you are interested, please feel free to call Cathy Watson at 1-326-1617 anytime (I have an answering machine.) I will also have sign-up sheets at the March and April meetings.

HOW OLD IS THE CLUB?

Bill Langlois, one of the club's life members, says he has been asked about the club's history on a number of occasions and he suggested that new members of the Essex Field Naturalists might be particularly interested in an account of the club's origins. Bill easily obtained the information from his stash of Egrets – he claims to have every one since its inception. He even supplied copies of his own and wife Frances' original 1984 membership cards. Here then is an slightly abridged account of the club's history as contained in the first Egret.

THE ESSEX COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB — A SHORT HISTORY

By Jim McAllister

On January 31, 1984, the first organizational meeting of the club took place. At the meeting were people who had expressed an interest in a club that joined wild flower enthusiasts, birders and other nature lovers (and) that offered something that other nature clubs did not provide -- field excursions. It was to fill a need and not to compete with any other club.

Everyone I talked with was very enthusiastic about the idea and the unqualified offers of help from Barb Ouellette, Mike Oldham, Paul Pratt and others was proof that the idea had support and a first meeting was set. The dozen who attended was further proof that there were many able people available to launch this ambitious undertaking. The group continued to meet at approximately two-week intervals up to the first public meeting on April 11th at the Windsor Public Library.

Considerable ground was covered in those preliminary meetings. A constitution was drawn up thanks to Tom Hince and Alan Wormington; a fee structure arrived at; and all those other things that clubs in formation have to do were done – make and distribute posters (thanks to Bev Christiansen and John Pilkington), put together an information pamphlet (thanks to Mike Oldham), settle on a name for the club and conduct a name search (thanks to Laurie Jago of Community Legal Aid), try to find a name for the newsletter that is agreeable to everyone (impossible!), plan field trips, plan the agenda for the first meeting and incorporate in order to achieve charitable donation status. (Incorporation should be accomplished by the fall.)

It was decided to centre the club in Windsor because of the large membership potential here but choose the name Essex County Field Naturalists' Club to reach out to everyone in the area. The executive has representation from across the county.

To date we have had two wildflower walks; one to Kopegaron Woods on April 28th and the second to Ojibway Park on May 16th; and one nature walk at Ojibway on July 14th that concentrated on insects. Beginning in the fall, field trips will be offered on a more regular basis and suggestions are certainly welcome,

At the first meeting Tom Hince showed slides of Point Pelee where he is a naturalist and followed this with a very interesting and informative tutorial on owls, complete with film and stuffed specimens. . .

An executive was elected at the June meeting and our membership has reached 75. We have a committee searching for a permanent location for our monthly meeting. Hopefully it will be set for our September meeting. The ECFNC is off to a very promising start.



A FIELD TRIP TO THE WATSONS

By Don Bissonnette

On Saturday, January 19, 10 members of the Essex County Field Naturalists Club met at the home of Jim and Pat Watson, on the outskirts of Leamington. It was cold, yet clear, sunny and calm.

The front yard and backyard are both fully landscaped with trees, shrubs and perennial beds, all designed both for beauty and for bird habitat. There were many bird feeders and lots of birds. The numerous perennials are purposefully not cut back, so as to provide feed for birds. Sure enough, many birds were seen hopping among the dried flower stalks, looking for seeds. Many of the perennials had nameplates so we spent some time studying horticulture.

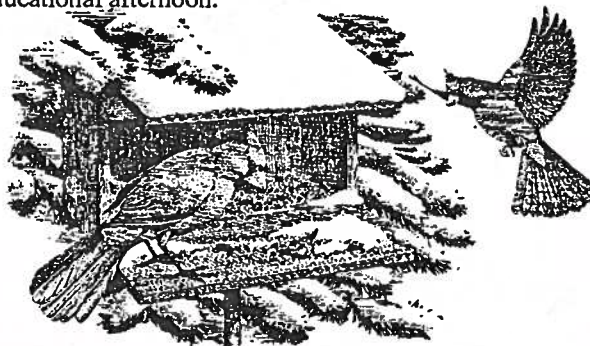
We thought the birds were very plentiful, however, Jim and Pat mentioned that there were fewer birds than usual. The reason was a sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*). We watched this spectacular bird flying swiftly nearby.

We then took a hike on their neighbour's farm. Here we found Carolinian woodlots and cedar hedges. There were more birds and different trees. We came to a stand of humungous oaks that

most of us agreed were the largest we'd ever seen. Owls appear common in this area as we found many pellets.

We returned to the Watsons' kitchen and warmed ourselves with coffee and snacks while watching the chickadees, house finches and downy woodpeckers in the backyard.

The Watsons have invited us back for a spring field trip. Again, "Thank You" to the Watsons for the enjoyable and educational afternoon.



A VISIT TO SANDWICH WEST TOWNSHIP WETLANDS

By Betty Learmouth

Record high temperatures of +11C and blue skies greeted a group of naturalists who joined Joe Durocher for a visit to some wetlands along the Detroit River. Joe is a councillor for Sandwich West (now the Town of LaSalle) and one of the town's two representatives on Essex Region Conservation's full authority. He is a long-time resident of the township with a particular interest in its history.

Our group stopped at the Marentette Marsh, adjacent to the Marentette Drain. The township was able to acquire a piece of property that extends from Highway 18 to the Detroit River. The property's width is 200 feet, but the original property was 300 feet and extended for four miles away from the river. The original property belonged to Joe's grandmother.

We walked to the Detroit River shore and enjoyed a wintery view of the river as chunks of ice floated by in the nearest channel which separates the mainland from Grassy Island. This island was formed in the 1920s as a dumping place for glass. Today it is covered in wetland vegetation and deciduous trees. Beyond Grassy Island we could see Fighting Island, the northern portion of which is maintained as a hunting preserve for the executives of BASF Corporation. The view beyond Fighting Island was of the factories of Zug Island and the River Rouge complex.

The bay directly in front of us, Joe told us, is shallow and the spawning grounds of such fish as carp and pickerel. Several fishing shanties marked the edge of the bay and the channel bank.

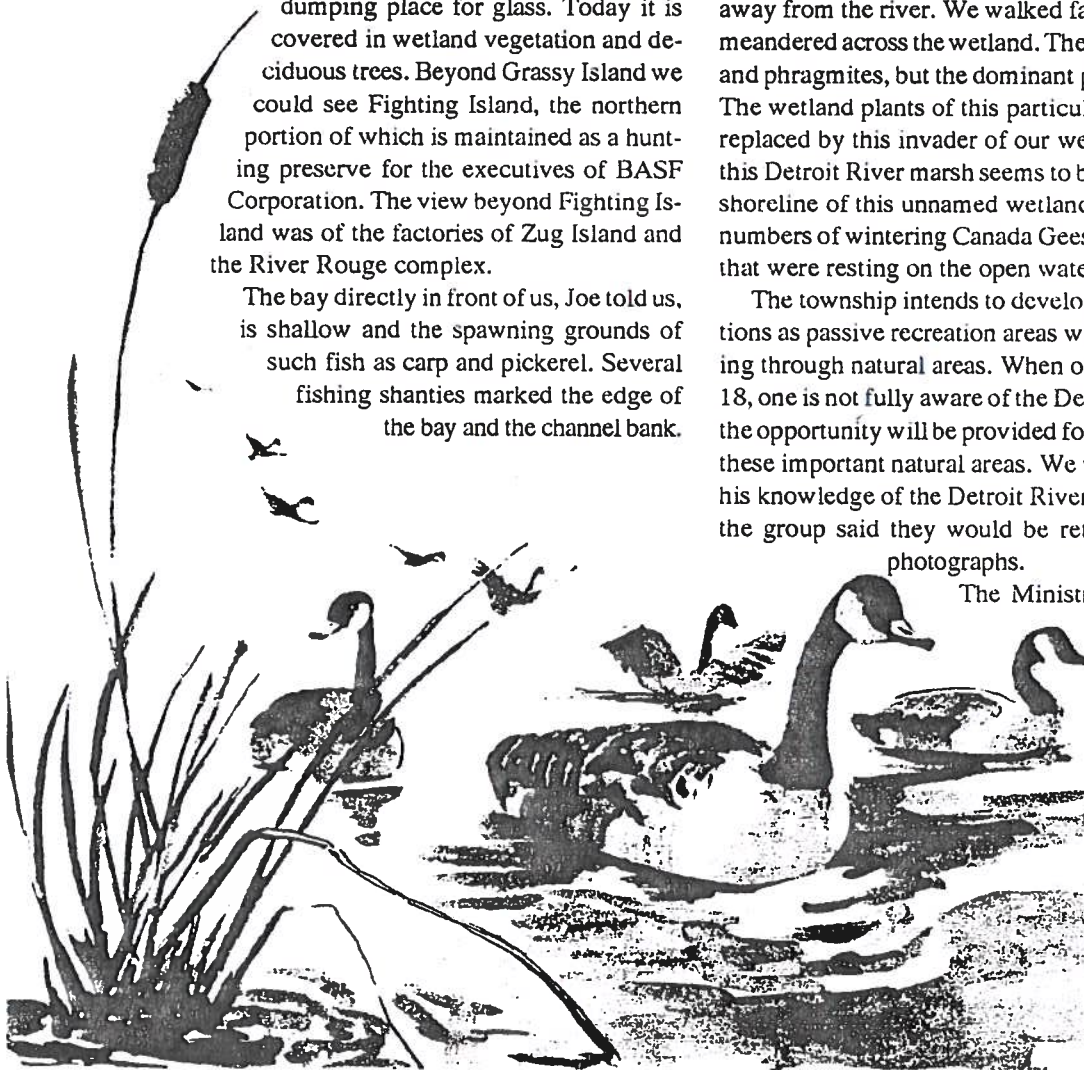
Perch catches have declined, but pickerel are caught regularly, particularly off the northern tip of Grassy Island.

Our next stop was at the Turkey Creek Marsh, which is privately owned. We walked through a wooded area and then onto the ice for a panoramic view of the cattail marsh. The Turkey Creek Marsh is an important spawning area for fish and it provides good recreational opportunities for canoeists, fishermen, birdwatchers and nature photographers. With traffic passing only a short distance away, we were in a natural area that is used by a number of wintering hawks and other wintering birds during the cold months of the year. There is a proposal for "channelization" or dredging for the upper portions of Turkey Creek and one wonders how this project will impact on the fragile environment of the marsh.

The third wetland we explored was another property acquired by the township in its southern portion. It was surveyed under the old French system and is a long piece of property extending away from the river. We walked fairly briskly along a path that meandered across the wetland. There were a few areas of cattails and phragmites, but the dominant plant was Purple Loosestrife. The wetland plants of this particular marsh have literally been replaced by this invader of our wetlands and the infestation of this Detroit River marsh seems to be almost complete. From the shoreline of this unnamed wetland we were able to view large numbers of wintering Canada Geese and a flock of Mute Swans that were resting on the open water of the river channel.

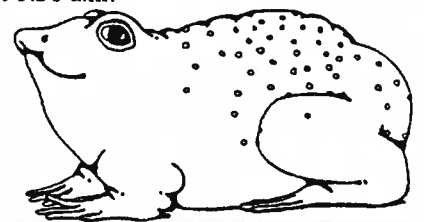
The township intends to develop both of its wetland acquisitions as passive recreation areas where visitors can enjoy walking through natural areas. When one is driving along Highway 18, one is not fully aware of the Detroit River wetlands and now the opportunity will be provided for the public to enjoy access to these important natural areas. We wish to thank Joe for sharing his knowledge of the Detroit River marshes with us. Several of the group said they would be returning to walk and to take photographs.

The Ministry of Natural Resources assessed the Detroit River Marshes in 1985. The wetland is comprised of six individual units totaling 575 hectares in size. There is a great variety of plants and animals found in the Detroit River marshes and to recognize this, the marshes have been designated Provincially Significant and given the rank of a Class 2 wetland.

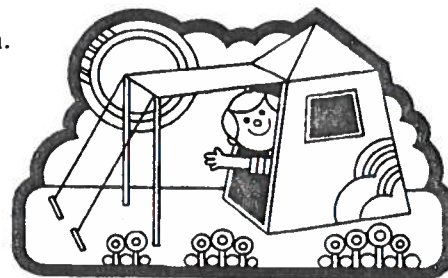


ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

- Sunday, March 24:** Waterfowl tour sponsored by Friends of Point Pelee; leader - Johanne Ranger; contact Lea Martell at 326-6173 for details.
- Wednesday, March 27:** ECFNC executive meeting.
- Saturday, April 6:** Essex Region Conservation Authority bird-box building workshop; 2 p.m. at the authority headquarters in Essex.
- Tuesday, April 9:** Spring Bird Migration Field Course; 7:30 p.m. at Ojibway Nature Centre.
- Wednesday, April 10:** ECFNC monthly meeting; Marlborough Community Centre, 7:30 p.m. Topic: ERCA: Past, Present and Future. Speaker: Mike Turton, community relations supervisor with the Essex Region Conservation Authority.
- Saturday, April 13:** Field trip; Ojibway-sponsored Spring Bird Migration Field Course.
- Sunday, April 14:** ECFNC field trip -- Explore Hillman Sands and look for artifacts; leader, Richard Bilinski. Meet 1:30 p.m. at Richard's house on Hwy. 3, between County Roads 12 and 15. Sign at road.
- Tuesday, April 16:** Spring Wildflowers; lecture 7:30 p.m. Ojibway Nature Centre.
- Sunday, April 21:** ECFNC activity -- Earth Day Cleanup at Ruscom Shores; leader, Richard Bilinski; Meet at Ruscom Shore, at 10 a.m.
- Sunday, April 21:** Spring Wildflowers: Ojibway-sponsored field trip at 1 p.m. to Sinclair's Woods, Kent County.
- Wednesday, April 24:** Birding for Beginners; 7:30 p.m. at Ojibway Nature Centre.
- Wednesday, April 24:** ECFNC executive meeting
- Saturday, April 27:** Spring wildflower tour sponsored by Friends of Point Pelee; Leader - Vicky Johnston; contact Lea Martell at 326-6173 for details.
- Saturday, April 27:** Field trip; Ojibway-sponsored Spring Bird Migration Field Course.
- Saturday, April 27:
to Sunday, May 19** Essex Regional Conservation Authority Birding at Hillman Marsh; Thursdays to Sundays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Sunday, April 28:** General start-up meeting for Ontario Rare Breeding Birds Atlas project; 7:30 p.m. at the home of Cathy Watson, 13 Robinson St., Leamington; 326-1617.
- Wednesday, May 1:** Essex Region Conservation Authority workshop on "Islands of Green." Contact ERCA for more details.
- Wednesday, May 1:** Weekday Birding at Pelee; Ojibway-sponsored field trip at 8:30 a.m.
- Thursday, May 2:** Foul and Loathsome Creatures (frogs, toads etc.); lecture 7:30 p.m. Ojibway Nature Centre.
- Saturday, May 4:** Foul and Loathsome Creatures; Ojibway-sponsored field trip to Rondeau Provincial Park. Meet 5 p.m. at Rondeau.



- Sunday, May 5:** Spring Festival at Ojibway 1 to 5 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 8:** Weekday Birding at Pelee; Ojibway-sponsored field trip at 8:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, May 8:** ECFNC monthly meeting; Marlborough Community Centre, 7:30 p.m.; Topic: Ecology of the Western Great Lakes Basin; Speaker: Joe Leach.
- Saturday, May 11:** Field trip; Ojibway-sponsored Spring Bird Migration Field Course.
- Sunday, May 12:** ERCA-sponsored Mother's Day wildflower walk; 2 p.m. at Kopegaron Woods Conservation Area.
- Friday, May 17 to 19:** Federation of Ontario Naturalists' annual meeting in Orillia, Ontario. The conference includes workshops and field trips. For information and registration forms contact: FON office, 355 Lesmill Rd., Don Mills, Ont. M3B 2W8.
- Wednesday, May 22:** Weekday Birding at Pelee: Ojibway field trip at 8:30 a.m.
- Friday, May 24, 25, 26:** ECFNC camping and birding at Point Pelee; leader Johanne Ranger; set up camp Friday evening; leave by 2 p.m. Sunday.
- Saturday, May 25:** Field trip; Ojibway Spring Bird Migration Field Course.
- Sunday, May 26:** Field trip: Ontario Rare Breeding Birds Atlas project; Meet 9 a.m. at Visitor Centre, Point Pelee; emphasis on Point Pelee.
- Wednesday, May 29:** ECFNC executive meeting.
- Saturday, June 8:** Ojibway-sponsored field trip to Oak Openings Metropark, near Toledo, Ohio. Meet 8 a.m. at Ojibway.
- Sunday, June 9:** Field trip: Ontario Rare Breeding Birds Atlas project.
- Wednesday, June 12:** ECFNC monthly meeting; Marlborough Community Centre, 7:30 p.m. Topic: Holiday Beach Hawk Tower: Speaker: Tom Carpenter, State University of Ohio, Bowling Green.
- Thursday, July 4: to Sunday, July 7** 20th annual conference of the Canadian Nature Federation in Red Deer, Alberta. The conference includes trips to mountains, parklands, grasslands, badlands and workshops. For information and registration forms contact: Jennifer O'Brien, 20 Riverview Park, Red Deer, Alta., T4N 1E3.
- Saturday, July 6:** Meeting on Ontario Rare Breeding Birds Atlas project. Time and place to be announced.
- Wednesday, July 10** ECFNC monthly meeting: Speaker: Ian Naisbitt: Topic: Little River Cleanup Project. This will be an outdoor meeting at a Little River site to be announced in the next Egret.
- Saturday, July 27:** Meeting on Ontario Rare Breeding Birds Atlas project. Time and place to be announced.
- Saturday, August 3:** Meeting on Ontario Rare Breeding Birds Atlas project. Time and place to be announced.



BAILLIE BIRDATHON

FUND-RAISERS SOUGHT

Last year a group of Essex County Field Naturalists raised \$430 for the club by participating in the Baillie Birdathon which is sponsored by the Long Point Bird Observatory. A fund-sharing agreement divides the money club members raise between the Long Point facility and the local club.

Local participants were Richard Bilinski, Gladys Fisher, Bonnie Foley, Tom Hince, Tom Hurst, Brendon Larson, Betty Learmouth, Carl Maioliani, Jim McAllister, Peggy Moore and Cathy Watson.



The Baillie Birdathon is usually held in May and any club member can participate. Forms for sponsors will be available at the April meeting or contact Tom Hurst for more information.

Tree Planting for Little River Wetland

Students of Concord School will be planting trees in the Little River Wetland during the week of April 10-13.

A pre-Earth Day activity will be the cleanup at the Little River Wetland that will occur on April 20. For more details about this project please contact Ian Naisbitt at Concord School (974-3450).

FOR REFERENCE

Bird hotline 252-BIRD
ERCA 776-5209
Ojibway 966-5852
Point Pelee 322-2365

NEWSLETTERS AVAILABLE

If you would like to receive the newsletters of the Ontario Rare Breeding Bird Program, the Ontario Herpetofaunal Summary and the newly begun Mammal Atlas, write to Mike Cadman, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 355 Lesmill, Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2W8.

The EGRET, Volume 8, Number 1, March, 1991; newsletter of the Essex
County Field Naturalists' Club; P. O. Box 3421, Tecumseh, Ontario, N8N 3C4

Address correction requested

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