



The Egret

the Newsletter of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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ECFNC Monthly Meetings

Effective January 2012 monthly members' meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Road, Windsor, 519-966-5852. Exceptions are July and August which are outdoor meetings (locations to be determined) and November which is our Annual Dinner.

WE ARE MOVING!

We have enjoyed the use the Windsor's Airport Community Room and December 14, 2011 will be our last meeting there. Effective January 11, 2012 we will be having our monthly meetings at the newly reconstructed Ojibway Nature Centre! To celebrate we will go out on an owl prowl before the meeting.

December 14 –Members Meeting – Members night. Bring your photos and desserts. Meet at the Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 pm.

January 8 - Winter Excursion - Owl Prowl with Tom Hurst. Join Club member Tom Hurst at 2:00 p.m. at the entrance to Holiday Beach Conservation Area.

January 11 –Members Meeting – To celebrate our new meeting location we will be having a pre-meeting owl prowl at 6:30pm. Meet at the Ojibway Nature Centre. Guest speaker: Scott Rush - There and Back Again: An Unexpected Journey of Avian Proportions. Regular meeting at 7:30 pm at Ojibway Nature Centre.

February 8 –Members Meeting – Guest speaker: Vic Bernyk,– Bees and Native Plants. Meeting at 7:30 pm at Ojibway Nature Centre.

February 12 - Winter Excursion - Join ECFNC member Paul Desjardins for our annual winter waterfowl excursion.

March 14 - Annual General Meeting. Meeting at 7:30 pm at Ojibway Nature Centre.

About the Club ...

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club was incorporated in March 1985. We are a registered charitable organization which promotes the appreciation and conservation of our natural heritage. ECFNC provides the community opportunities to become acquainted with and understand our natural world through identification, maintenance and preservation of the natural areas within Essex County and surrounding regions. ECFNC is affiliated with Ontario Nature/Federation of Ontario Naturalists. *The Egret* is published quarterly. To receive information on the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club or to submit articles, letters, reports, etc., please write to:

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club

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Information

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ECFNC fax # 519-839-4795

Ojibway Nature Centre
519-966-5852
Point Pelee National Park
519-322-5700
Essex Region Conservation Auth.
519-776-5209

ECFNC Contacts

President: Phil Roberts (519-776-8315)
Vice-President: Dave Kraus (519-825-7491)
Secretary: Margaret Jennings (519-250-0705)
Treasurer: Teresa Austrin (519-322-0004)
Directors: Don Bissonnette, Karen Cedar (519-966-5852), Jesse Gardner Costa, Denise Hartley (519-735-1926), Linda Menard-Watt (519-734-1879), Ron Muir (519-736-6507), Sheeva Nakhaie, Gerry Waldron (519-736-1276)

Chairpersons/Liaisons:

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

Committees:

Egret Editorial: Betty Learmouth, Karen Cedar, Jesse Gardner Costa
Field Trip: JoAnn Grondin, Margaret Jennings
Heritage: JoAnn Grondin (coordinator), Margaret Jennings, Dave Kraus, Betty Learmouth, Muriel Kassimatis, Jim McAllister, Bruno Sfalcin, Gerry Waldron, Peg Wilkinson, Shirley Grondin, Cathy Lapain
Annual Dinner: Heritage & Special Events Committees
Little River Enhancement Group: Ian Naisbitt, Tom Henderson
Fish Book: Teresa Austrin, Jesse Gardner Costa, Dave Kraus, Phil Roberts

ECFNC Annual Dinner, November 5, 2011

By Betty Learmouth
Photos by Larry Onysko

Fifty-nine friends and members of the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club gathered on Saturday evening, November 5, 2011 in the Fogolar Furlan's Dante Costa Room for the ECFNC's Annual Dinner. Doors opened at 6:00 p.m. The silent auction was arranged and ready for bids on a variety of donated items including books, jams and jellies, jewellery, outdoor equipment and more. Master of Ceremonies for the evening was ECFNC board member and vice president, Dave Kraus. We were all happy to welcome past club members Donna and Peter Sale who were in town and able to join us. Peter also donated a copy of his new book, "A Dying Planet" to our silent auction.

A delicious buffet dinner was served at 7:15 p.m. Broasted chicken was accompanied by bow tie pasta in a tomato sauce. Colourful fall vegetables on the buffet included corn, green beans, and slices of sweet potato along with an Italian tossed green salad. A variety of desserts such as cookies, cupcakes, squares, coffee cake and fruit were provided by ECFNC members.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Outstanding Achievement Award by ECFNC President Phil Roberts. Phil announced that this year's recipient of the Award is Teresa Austrin, who has worked incredibly hard as the Club's Treasurer, and more recently, as a recruiter of new executive members. Teresa has promoted the sale of Lynda Corkum's book *Fishes of Essex County and Surrounding Waters* since its publication twelve months ago. Teresa's dedication to the club and its activities made it difficult to keep her unaware of her nomination. Luckily Phil Roberts' quick thinking allowed the executive to maintain the ruse until presentation time. Congratulations Teresa!



Teresa Austrin
and Phil
Roberts with
Outstanding
Achievement
Award

Our guest Dr. Doug Larson was introduced by one of his former botany students, David Kraus. Dr. Larson taught at the University of Guelph for many years, during which time he discovered the oldest living forest in Canada, the remarkable elderly cedar trees growing on the Niagara Escarpment. Dr. Larson is now retired, having “quit being a professor” a few years ago. Dr. Larson is now enjoying bringing his “Storyteller Guitar: Tales of Art, Science, and History” to a variety of groups, including Essex County Field Naturalists’ Club members.

Dr. Larson discussed his guitar which he had built himself with certain woods including American Chestnut which form the sides of the guitar and are cut from one panel of American Chestnut wood. Dr. Larson has written his own songs which he sings, accompanying himself on the guitar. As well, Dr. Larson has a whole range of stories to tell, including stories of our forests, the American Chestnut, the Passenger Pigeon and our bees. He really drove home the need for people to start thinking about conservation and the effects of extinction on both wild and human communities. Thank you to Dr. Larson for an enjoyable presentation.

Thank you to the organizers of the dinner who promoted the dinner and set up the silent auction. Thank you to those who donated items to the silent auction and to all who attended the dinner.



Dr. Doug Larson presenting his stories and songs

ECFNC 27th Annual Dinner, Saturday, November 5, 2011

By JoAnn Grondin, Heritage Committee Coordinator

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank several people for their help with our 27th Annual Dinner.

Set up: Shirley Grondin, Pauline Renaud, and JoAnn Grondin.

Desserts: Margaret Jennings, Shirley Grondin, Eleanor Sfalcin, Sandra Wilson, Peg Hurst, Theresa Benoit. Betty Learmouth and JoAnn Grondin.

Reception Desk: Donna Cowie and Helene Parks. And, Margaret Jennings for arranging this.

Cashiers: Shirley Grondin, Bonnie Ross and Pauline Renaud.

For a spectacular job: our MC Dave Kraus.

Guest speaker : Dr. Doug Larson. Doug's informative talk on "A Storyteller Guitar" and the many issues he encountered in making his guitar with all the proper kinds of wood was very interesting and very entertaining.

Dave Kraus for introducing our guest speaker and Jesse Gardner Costa for thanking him.

Congratulations to Teresa Austrin, our Outstanding Achievement Award recipient.

A special thank you to Pauline Renaud for drawing the names of the door prize winners.

The people who donated door prizes: Margaret Jennings, Theresa and Ralph Benoit, John and Maria Potts, Cathy Lapain, Marion Doyle, an anonymous donor, and JoAnn Grondin.

For the donation of silent auction items: Bonnie Ross, Erica Froome, Bushnell Outdoor Products, Pauline Renaud, Cathy Lapain, Cyndi Lucier, Peter Sale, The Wizard Gift Corporation, Claire McAllister, Shirley Grondin, Betty Moore, Vicki Trivett, John and Maria Potts, Doug Larson, an anonymous donor and JoAnn Grondin. (Please see the separate list of auction items/donators)

Thank you to Karen Cedar for her great coordinating with the Fogolar Furlan.

Thank you to all who attended. Thank you so very much. It is great to see so many people pull together for such a great Club! I apologize if I have missed anyone.

No.	Article/Name	Donated by
1	The Encyclopedia of North American Birds	Bonnie Ross
2	Scenic Tour Backpack	Erica Froome
3	Spotting Scope 15 x 45 Zoom	Bushnell Outdoor Products
4	The Ultimate Guide to Rocks and Minerals	Pauline Renaud
5	Rain Forest	Pauline Renaud
6	Turtles - An Extraordinary Natural History 245 Million Years in the Making	Pauline Renaud
7	Wildlife Cardinal Wall Clock	Cyndi Lucier
8	Candle Garden	Cathy Lapain
9	Handmade Tote Bag	Cathy Lapain
10	Jam - 8 jars in brown basket	Cathy Lapain
11	Pinot Grigio White Wine - Pelee Island Winery and 2 wine glasses.	Cathy Lapain
12	Canadian Wildflowers Through the Seasons	Anonymous
13	Bold Romantic Gardens	Anonymous
14	The Natural Garden	Anonymous

15	Bringing Home Nature	Anonymous
16	The Illustrated Guide to Ornamental Shrubs	Anonymous
17	Annual Gardening	Anonymous
18	The Great Seed Mystery for Kids	Anonymous
19	Birds of Columbia	Anonymous
20	Birds of Venezuela	Anonymous
21	A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago	Anonymous
22	Seabirds - An Identification Guide	Anonymous
23	A Guide to the Wildflowers & Ferns of Kentucky	Anonymous
24	Ornamental Grasses	Anonymous
25	Our Dying Planet	Peter Sale
26	Advice from a Bear - Print	The Wizard Gift Corporation
27	Advice from a Moose - Print	The Wizard Gift Corporation
28	Advice from a Tree - Print	The Wizard Gift Corporation
29	Advice from a Lake - Print	The Wizard Gift Corporation
30	3 small prints with note pads - Advice from a Bear	The Wizard Gift Corporation
31	Advice from a Tree - Guided Journal	The Wizard Gift Corporation
32	Come Home to Your True Nature - 2 CD Set	The Wizard Gift Corporation
33	33A - 33C Land & Sea Nature Series - Floating Beaver	The Wizard Gift Corporation
34	34A - 34F Land & Sea Nature Series - Fossil Rock Dragonfly	The Wizard Gift Corporation
35	Land & Sea Nature Series - Dinosaur Fossil Rock	The Wizard Gift Corporation
36	Reserva Marina - de Galapagos Shirt	Claire McAllister
37	Blue Footed Booby Print	Claire McAllister
38	The Encyclopedia of Birds - Volume 2	Claire McAllister
39	Fruit - Edible, Inedible	Claire McAllister
40	6 Citrine Votives	JoAnn Grondin
41	Glass Photo Coasters	JoAnn Grondin
42	Welcome Bear	JoAnn Grondin
43	Field Guide to Mushrooms	JoAnn Grondin
44	The Fascinating World of Butterflies & Moths	JoAnn Grondin
45	Growing Trees from Seeds	JoAnn Grondin
46	The Chronicles of Narnia	JoAnn Grondin
47	Pierre Berton - The Invasion of Canada 1812 - 1813	JoAnn Grondin
48	Pierre Berton - Flames Across the Border 1813 - 1814	JoAnn Grondin
49	Fragile Earth - Views of a Changing World	JoAnn Grondin
50	Penguins	JoAnn Grondin
51	Canadian Churches	JoAnn Grondin
52	The History of Astronomy	JoAnn Grondin
53	Cats of Africa	JoAnn Grondin
54	Great Caves of the World	JoAnn Grondin
55	New Concise World Atlas	JoAnn Grondin
56	4 jars of Jams	Shirley Grondin
57	4 jars of Jams	Shirley Grondin
58	Small purse with tea	Shirley Grondin

59	Jigsaw Puzzle	Claire McAllister
60	Coasters	Cathy Lapain
61	Coasters	Cathy Lapain
62	10 jars of jams/jellies	Betty Moore
63	Fuzzy eagle toy	Vicki Trivett
64	Amber necklace	John & Maria Potts
65	Bird pin	John & Maria Potts
66	Trees (book)	John & Maria Potts
67	Feng Shui (book)	John & Maria Potts
68	Story Teller Guitar	Doug Larson

What's The 'Buzz'?

By Susan Walker

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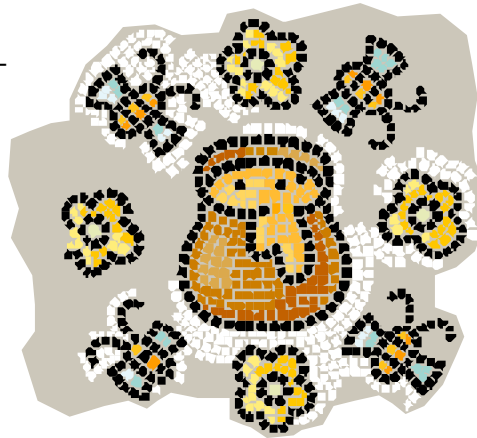
By now we have all heard that pollinator populations are on the decline across North America, honey bees in particular. So getting local folks interested and/or active in beekeeping is a serious matter. Many of our local native plant species need pollinators to visit them in order to reproduce, not to mention the many pollinated foods we eat to survive.

The trouble is, there is no ONE single place to get your local beekeeping news. And if you don't search for yourself, you may end up missing information or events.

That's where WindsorEssexBeekeepers@hotmail.com comes in. Here is how it works. The idea is that one person, who wants to share news, or an event, or even a story or comment, would send an email to WindsorEssexBeekeepers@hotmail.com and their email would then be sent back out to the group of participants in the email group. Perhaps you know about an upcoming talk, information session, workshop, a good article to read, a recipe, a county fair with honey for sale, etc. Send it to WindsorEssexBeekeepers@hotmail.com and it will be forwarded on to everyone in the group. The email group relies on its own members for information, so the more members, the better.

This is a 'honey hub' for everyone. And we mean everyone - from those who are simply curious about local beekeeping or local foods, to those who run profitable businesses centered around honey bees and their honey and everyone in between.

If you, or others you know, have an interest in local honey, honey bees, and beekeeping, then sign up to be part of the Windsor Essex Beekeepers email group. Just send an email to the above address and you will be added the group.



Spring Garden Natural Area Hike, October 4, 2011

By Tom Preney

Photos by Larry Onysko

Ten hikers took part in our Ojibway hiking group tour of Spring Garden Natural Area. It was a beautiful fall morning hike and after walking for a few minutes, the hikers were greeted by many migrating birds; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Eastern Towhee and Ruby-crowned Kinglet to name a few. Along the trail we admired the flowers of the Willow-leaf Aster, an at risk species in Ontario.

In a small sandy clearing I spotted a Summer Azure; a small butterfly covered in morning dew which glistened like crystals on its delicate wings. After stopping to take a few pictures of the Summer Azure the group walked up the hill to the Grand Marais Drain and watched a flock of American Goldfinches fuel up on thistle seeds.

Further along the hike the group walked around the perimeter of the Spring Garden Pond and discovered a large adult Eastern Foxsnake stretched out and basking on the trail. This was not your ordinary looking Foxsnake, the colour was much paler, almost white. I explained that this colour morph was referred to as a hypomelanistic (lacking black pigment similar to albinism but not as extreme). This inherited colour phase is quite rare in wild snakes. One member of the group was able to snap a few photographs before the snake retreated into the Phragmites. The group felt honoured to have witnessed such a rare find.

On the way back to the parking lot I found a small Northern Brownsnake – sometimes referred to as a Dekay's Brownsnake – basking on a gravel bike path. This common species is seldom encountered due to its secretive nature. However, on warm autumn days these snakes can be seen as they retreat to their hibernation sites. On our future fall hikes we look forward to more animal encounters!

hypomelanistic Eastern Foxsnake



Northern Brownsnake



Holiday Beach Conservation Area's Festival of Hawks, 2011

By Betty Learmouth

The 2011 Festival of Hawks was held this year on September 17, 18, 24 and 25. The first weekend included children's activities at the Education Building and the Halton Conservation display of raptors (Turkey Vulture, Barred Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Swainson's Hawk, and Eastern Screech-Owl) near the base of the tower. The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club provided refreshments for the first weekend.

Groups returning the second weekend included photographer Gerald Peltier and his display of raptor images, native plant grower Vic and Darlene Bernyk and their display of native plants, the Canadian Peregrine Foundation, the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory (HBMO) display of hats and guide books, and the Pelee Wings Nature Store with their display of books, clothing and optics.



Vendors at Hawk Festival. Photo by Larry Onysko

Holiday Beach Migration Observatory President Bob Pettit welcomed everyone to the Festival at 9:15 a.m. on September 17, 2011. The Festival's four days featured a variety of happenings which delighted those attending the Festival. Banders at the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory passerine banding station and the raptor banding station brought birds to the hawk tower base for talks.

Festival participants on September 17, 2011 were treated to close up views of various warblers (with comments by banders) including Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, American Redstart, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Wilson's

Warbler. A project organized by Holiday Beach Migration Observatory enabled attendees at the Festival to “adopt” a song bird, thus supporting HBMO.

At 10:35 a.m. on September 17, 2011, Festival participants were treated to the sight of twenty migrating Broad-winged Hawks passing the hawk tower. Official counter Steve Kolbe called out a few moments later that a Swainson’s Hawk (a western raptor species) was flying low past the hawk tower. President Bob Pettit reported that this sighting was his first for a Swainson’s Hawk at the Holiday Beach site.



Bob Pettit with songbird. Photo by Betty Learnmouth.

During the next 60 minutes, groups of low flying Broad-winged Hawks moved past the hawk tower, providing excellent looks at these birds as they kettled, then streamed off, heading westward towards the Detroit River and then southward on their long migration journey.

Hawk banders brought Sharp-shinned Hawks late in the morning from the raptor banding station for the popular hawk talks and adoptions through the Adopt a Hawk program which supports HBMO activities. At noon on September 17, 2011, a raptor talk was held at the Education Building, after which a Peregrine Falcon and Red-tailed Hawk were adopted and released. Bob Pettit presented a raptor identification workshop in the Education Building at 12:30 p.m. and again on each day of the Festival.

Chestnut-sided Warbler. Photo by Betty Learnmouth.



Activities continued on Sunday, September 18, 2011 with song bird and raptor talks along with three walks. Paul DesJardins lead a dragonfly walk at 10:15 a.m. while Paul Pratt lead a walk for the Ontario Field Ornithologists. At 1:00 p.m. Tom Preney lead a amphibian/reptile walk.

The weekend of September 24/ 25, 2011 was organized by the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory. The Ontario Purple Martin Association (formerly the Essex County Purple Martin Association) brought their display. Organizer John Balga reported he had 57 pairs of Purple Martins in his backyard with over 200 young fledged in 2011. This species is in decline across the province.

Refreshments for the weekend were provided by Roland Klekner and Frank Doby. Raptor and song bird talks continued throughout the day with the University of Windsor Ornithology class in attendance. Students and those attending the Festival enjoyed a Red-tailed Hawk presentation.



Bob Hall-Brooks presenting to University of Windsor students.. Photo by Larry Onysko.

On September 25, the Festival's last day, flocks of migrating Blue Jays flew past the tower. Raptor talks continued covering Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, and Red-tailed Hawks. Song bird talks included Blackpoll Warbler, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Blue Jay, Brown Creeper, American Redstart, Black and white Warbler and Red-eyed Vireo.

Thank you to many volunteers who contributed to the success of the 2011 Festival of Hawks.

Holiday Beach Hawk Festival September 25, 2011

By Ruth Hart

Photos by Larry Onysko

10:00 AM Dragonfly and butterfly walk led by Paul Desjardins around the pond.

- Multiple gray insects the size of aphids on marsh mallow: They jumped like leafhoppers.
- Eastern Forktail: The abdomen of the male Eastern Forktail has a neon blue tip, the thorax of the male is green and black. Very small and delicate looking damselfly. Female is blue. Immature is orange.
- Fragile Forktail, Tule Bluet, Familiar Bluet and Orange Bluet are also expected here, but we did not see them today.
- Smartweed Caterpillar: a colorful caterpillar
- Bronze Copper butterfly: Orange and black. Underside of fore wing is orange. Underside of hindwing is light gray. Habitat: wet areas
- Least Skipper: Orange below, black above. A weak flyer.
- Leopard Frog
- Water Snake
- “woolly bear” caterpillar
- Multiple Spotted Lady Beetles: A native species. Orange with many black spots.
- Caterpillar with bristles and bright yellow stripes on willow.



Bronze Copper on Wild Carrot

We moved to the parking area and then to gun club entrance in search of more dragonflies and butterflies in a different habitat.

- White larva of sawfly on dogwood. Very like a caterpillar in appearance, sawflies are in the order hymenoptera.
- Cabbage White butterflies: The female has 2 black spots and the male has one black spot on each forewing. We saw a lot of these in all the places we went.
- Black Saddlebags dragonfly
- Common Green Darner dragonfly
- Mayfly: Although we think of many mayflies emerging together earlier in the year, mayflies can emerge anytime in open water season. They are unique in having 2 adult (winged) stages. The first set of wings is smoky and the second set is clear and shiny.
- Common Buckeye: This butterfly species is quite variable in size. It has prominent eyespots on both fore and hindwings and a white bar on each forewing. We saw a few. One was nectaring on goldenrod flowers.
- Clouded Sulfur: common solid yellow butterfly.
- Elusive clubtail. Thought of as difficult to find, but not uncommon in Detroit River area.

- Autumn Meadowhawk: The Ruby meadowhawk has black legs. The Autumn meadowhawk has yellow/orange legs, not black. Autumn meadowhawks fly later in the season. Mature males of both species are red.
- Eastern Pondhawk: Females and immature males are green in color. Adult male is blue.
- Asian Praying Mantis: Larger than the European Praying Mantis.
- Black Swallowtail female: The female has blue spots along margin of hindwings. The male has yellow spots. Spicebush swallowtails look the same at this distance, but habitat and location (weedy and low) make it more likely a Black Swallowtail.

2:00 PM Reptile and Amphibian Walk led by Tom Preney
Once again, we went around the pond.

- Leopard frog: Leopard frogs can vary in color from bright green to olive brown, depending on environmental factors such as temperature and humidity. We saw several Leopard frogs on the trail. Northern Pickeral frogs look very similar, but are not found in Essex County.

Do not handle frogs since their permeable skin will absorb salts and chemical from your skin which may harm them. Leopard frogs can travel half a kilometer from their water source. They get much of their moisture from morning dew. The location of breeding and hibernation can be up to 1km apart. Ontario has 24 amphibian and reptile species, 18 of which are considered to be species at risk. The biggest threats are: habitat loss, roads, human persecution (killing snakes) and poaching for the pet trade.

Bullfrog



- Bullfrog: Can recognized as different from the leopard and green frogs even when it is small because it has no fold of skin running down its back. Male and female bullfrogs can be differentiated by the size of the tympanum. The tympanum of the male bullfrog is larger than its eye. The tympanum of the female bullfrog is smaller than or equal to the size of its eye.

- Summer azure butterfly
- Pond snail shell
- Northern Watersnake basking on a branch in the water. The snake was hard to see because it was lined up with the branch. Snakes hibernate in holes made by crayfish and by small mammals. The watersnakes feed on fish and on frogs.
- American Snout butterfly
- Sounds of katydids and crickets.
- Eastern pondhawk laying eggs by dipping its abdomen into the water.

Northern Watersnake



- Northern Map Turtles with their heads sticking out of the water.
- Autumn Meadowhawk-a red dragonfly with rusty colored legs.
- Green Frog: A newly transformed (from tadpole to frog) green frog. It was small, not much larger than a wood frog and from above, was uniformly dark in color.
- A young bullfrog, newly transformed this year. It looked exactly like the adult, only smaller.

Notes from the hawk tower:

- Several Sharpshinned hawks
- 1 Northern Harrier
- 1 Merlin
- A couple American Kestrels
- Many, many blue jays

Notes from the banding presentation:

- Hatch year black-throated blue warbler
- Hatch year female Cooper’s hawk. Sex is determined by wing cord length-wrist to tip.
- Redtail hawk. Hatch year. Cannot determine sex in this species by weight or size.
- Swainson’s Thrush plain with buffy eye ring
- Gray-cheeked Thrush, like Swainson’s, but no eye ring.

Lake Erie Metropark October 1, 2011 - Hawk watch at the boat ramp:

- American Kestrels-Greg says the wind doesn’t bother them, they like to fly in wind.
- Sharp-shinned Hawks
- 1 juvenile Bald Eagle-very large and dark
- 1 Broad-winged Hawk-shape is cross-like, very straight across the bottom of the wings
- Turkey Vultures

Ojibway Fall Festival, October 10, 2011

Photos by Betty Learmouth

Guided hike



Visitors at pond.



A Call Down the Path: Trail Marker Trees in Ontario

Photos and Article by Paul O'Hara

It was a couple of years ago. I forget what I was searching for now. Something tree-related - dreams of discovering more grainy black and white shots of loggers enveloped in Southern Ontario old growth. I was scanning the Niagara Falls online digital library when I saw a photograph that has been burned into my brain to this day. It was labeled:
The Old Indian Trail - Marker Tree, Townline Rd. (at Thorold – Stamford)

Go check it out. It shows a mature, roadside White Elm on the Haldimand Clay Plain near Thorold with its side branches pulled down, the trunk and main branches drawing the shape of an 'M', the lateral branches forming the crown. Aboriginals had purposefully modified the tree at one time – early to mid 1800s I would guess - to point along an ancient footpath. The tree was well known in the community, ravaged by Dutch Elm Disease in the early 70s, but saved as a snag until a windstorm brought it down December 28, 1982.

Wow, I thought, dumbfounded and flooded with questions. Where do I find out more about Indian trail marker trees? Are there more photos of tree markers I could find? Are there marker trees standing on the landscape of Southern Ontario today?

My first couple of questions would be answered with a little more surfing. I came across two links about trail marker trees, both from the United States. The first one is run by the Mountain Stewards (mountainstewards.org) of the Southern Appalachians, the second, a link to the Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society (greatlakestrailtreesociety.org) run by artist and trail marker tree researcher, Dennis Downes* from Illinois. Both sites show numerous photos of trail marker trees standing in the U.S. today, but most of them didn't look like the Old Indian Trail Marker Tree in Thorold. Most were modified to point in one direction and, not surprisingly in the U.S., most of them were oak.

Downes' site dug deeper into the background on how marker trees were formed and provided tips on what constitutes a true trail marker tree (Apparently, there is some debate over what constitutes a true marker as there are a lot of bad examples out there – folks calling any old misshapen tree a trail marker.). True markers were modified near the ground. A sapling was bent over and its leader was tied down with rawhide, grapevine or secured with heavy rocks. The lateral branch pointing directly upwards was retained while the rest were removed. Over time the tree settled into the bend, the rawhide was removed or withered away, and a 'nose' was often left to point the way. As the tree grew, the diameter of the main trunk remained larger than the lateral branch forming the crown. Other trees, like the branches on the Thorold marker, were just pulled down and secured. Either way, marker trees were meant to look very purposeful, distinguishing them from naturally bent trees.

I learned that marker trees were used by Aboriginals to point to all kinds of things: villages and camps, water sources and river fords, or to mark boundaries between Aboriginal tribes. It is thought that the practice of marking trees was taught to the first Europeans, and it is plausible that they and not the First Nations formed some of the markers remaining on today's landscape.

Apparently, trail marker trees were common in pre-settlement times, most now lost to habitat destruction and the practice of removing ill-formed trees in woodlots.

My quest to find marker trees in Southern Ontario lead me to spend a winter revisiting my old haunts in Hamilton, Halton and Niagara Regions to no avail. It was only when I started asking friends and fellow botanists that I started to get somewhere. None of them really knew about marker trees before. I just shared what little I had discovered and for some, a little light bulb went on above their heads as they recounted seeing a similar looking tree at such and such place. Some of the leads were dead ends, but some led me to the most magical trees I have ever seen.

A friend told me about seeing markers at her partner's cottage in the Kawarthas. Another told me about a tree in a Caledonia hedgerow. I learned of a grafted, double-trunked Sugar Maple that stood in Binbrook along the Welland River, believed to be a boundary marker between Iroquoian tribes (that is, until some kids started a fire under it 10 years ago and burnt it to the ground). This past summer, my friend and tree colleague, Gerry Waldron, showed me a couple



of amazing marker trees in Windsor-Essex (see photos). One of them is the most impressive tree I have seen (on line or in person) to this day. And last fall I stumbled across a couple Sugar Maple markers less than 100m apart in north Burlington pointing in the same direction along a path from the Niagara Escarpment to Lake Ontario - the only marker trees I have discovered on my own thus far.

Perhaps early colonists to Southern Ontario modified the smaller trees, but it is thought that, because of the bends, the growth on marker trees is slow and the trees are older than they look. What is clear is that marker trees exist in Southern Ontario, and that marking trees was an ingenious practice employed by the Anishinabe (Ojibway) and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Peoples of Southern Ontario.

Gerry Waldron and Shagbark Hickory
at Maidstone Conservation Area



Gerry Waldron and White Oak at
Kingsville Golf and Curling Club

There is something so beautiful, sophisticated, and poetic about trail marker trees. It is incredible to think in this age of frenzied, electronic communication, that living, natural messages so simple and practical are still standing on the landscape today – a centuries old tap on the shoulder pointing us the way home. Reaching back to a time before the car, before roads and traffic lights, when sticking to the forest trail was crucial to survival, and a wrong turn could spell danger or death. For these reasons, I would argue that our oldest trail marker trees are the most historically important trees in Ontario today.

I am continuing my search to find and document more trees, seeing it as a project with a 10 or 20-year horizon. Yes, researching and walking old Aboriginal trails is helpful, but again, I have found the best way to find out more about these special trees is just to ask

around. And so I am appealing to naturalists across Ontario: Do you know of a trail marker tree where you live? In your wanderings, do you remember seeing a tree like these? Do you know of a marker tree that once stood where you live, a document describing it, or someone who may know of a marker tree in your area? If so, I would be very pleased to talk to you by phone or email, please and thank you.

I just learned of a trail marker tree that was chopped down this year, unknowingly, by a property owner along the shoreline of Lake Erie at Port Dover. Once the trees are dead - or removed - we lose their untold stories, stories that tell us about who we are and where we come from, stories we can share with future generations about this very special land, and the incredible people that walked and marked its forest paths.

Paul O'Hara, blueoak@sympatico.ca (905) 540-9963

* Dennis Downes' new book *Native American Trail Marker Trees: Marking Paths Through the Wilderness* is available through the Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society at www.greatlakestrailmarkertreesociety.org. It is the first comprehensive book on trail marker trees ever published.

Birding Report, June - September 2011

Photos and Article by Cherise Charron



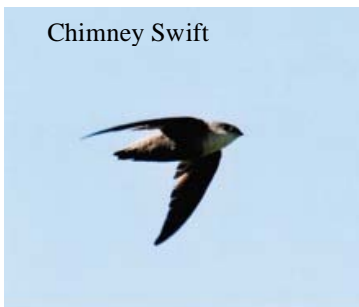
White-rumped Sandpiper



Red Knot

Dean Ware observed some migrating stragglers in the Hillman Marsh shorebird cell as late as the third week of June. Late comers were of the White-rumped Sandpiper, Red Knot and Snowy Egret varieties. Although tardy to the party we hope they had a successful summer.

Record high rainfall in the spring and summer of 2011 seemed to have an effect on some of the fauna. Numbers of dragonflies and butterflies were lower than previous years. As well, high water levels well into September minimized available shorebird habitat.



Chimney Swift

Despite the weather, Chimney Swifts look to have had a successful year. I observed them throughout Leamington, Kingsville and Essex. Driving to and from work I had observed Chimney Swifts along Highway 3.

On the home front, I observed an adult and immature Indigo Bunting making a pit stop in our backyard. On two separate nights we observed Common Nighthawks migrating over our backyard. On September 2, there were four Nighthawks, one had quite a bit of moult with its flight feathers. On September 11 we had an additional three Nighthawks.

On September 14, 2011, I was driving along Highway 3 near Essex County Road 18 when I looked up at some birds passing overhead and realized they were Broad-winged Hawks. I turned into Essex County Road 18 and pulled off on the shoulder to watch the hawks flying over the trees. The birds would fly slightly to the west and form kettles of 50 to 70 birds. Briefly after kettling, the hawks would peel off the kettle and head south, perhaps towards the lake. There were approximately 200 hawks observed from 4:22 p.m. to 4:27 p.m! Bringing up the rear riding high in the air was a lone Sharpie. What an amazing sight! After the birds passed I got back in the car and headed home.



Common Nighthawk

ECFNC Activities and Excursions, Dec. '11 to March '12

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

*****Help is needed with organizing field trips.*****

Please contact Margaret Jennings by email anytime (margaretjennings100@msn.com) or by phone (519-250-0705) after January 7.

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

December 14 – ECFNC Members Meeting – Members night. Bring your photos and desserts. Meet at the Windsor Airport Community Room at 7:30 pm.

January 8 - ECFNC Winter Excursion - Owl Prowl with Tom Hurst. Join Club member Tom Hurst at 2:00 p.m. at the entrance to Holiday Beach Conservation Area. The group may drive to another location. This outing is an excellent introduction to the techniques for observing owls, especially the long eared owls which often roost in the Holiday Beach area.

January 11 – ECFNC Members Meeting – To celebrate our new meeting location we will be having a pre-meeting owl prowling at 6:30pm. Meet at the Ojibway Nature Centre.
Guest speaker: Scott Rush, Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research, University of Windsor – There and Back Again: An Unexpected Journey of Avian Proportions. From the islands and shores of Lake Erie, to the forests of the southeastern United States, assemblages of breeding and migrating birds often require contrasting habitats. Effectively managing these diverse communities entails that the requirements of multiple species be considered. Using examples from the Lake Erie Islands, Ohio's Metroparks and southeastern forests, Dr. Scott Rush (University of Windsor) will discuss how avian populations can influence, and be influenced by habitat management. The presentation will provide a journey through unique ecosystems and discuss some of the issues facing avian populations. Regular meeting begins at 7:30pm at the Ojibway Nature Centre.

February 8 – ECFNC Members Meeting – *Guest speaker: Vic Bernyk, Native Trees and Plants, www.nativetreesandplants.com, 519-736-4695 – Bees and Native Plants.* Much has been written about the loss of honeybees which of course are very important pollinators of crops. Some of the suggested reasons for CCD (colony collapse disorder) have included mites, pesticides, sound frequencies etc. The verdict is out to explain all the different situations. The good news is there are many other native bee pollinators (still relatively healthy) in southern Ontario which can and are offsetting what honeybees can and cannot do. Actually there are 6 major groups of bee pollinators. This presentation will illustrate the importance of native plant diversity to keep these bee populations healthy. Meeting begins at 7:30pm at the Ojibway Nature Centre.

February 12 - ECFNC Winter Excursion - Join ECFNC member Paul Desjardins for our annual winter waterfowl excursion. Paul checks out the locations for waterfowl prior to the trip and leads us to the best viewing areas. Meet in the Ojibway Nature Centre parking lot at 1 pm.

March 1 - Canada South Land Trust - Annual General Meeting to be held in Room C of the Civic Centre with updates on Land Trust activities. Following the business portion of the meeting, Bob Pettit has volunteered a presentation on the Galapagos Islands with images of wildlife obtained on a recent visit to these wondrous islands. Meet at 7:30 p.m. with refreshments following the meeting. Call Betty at 519-944-0825 to indicate you will be attending. All are welcome.

March 14 – ECFNC Annual General Meeting – Join us for committee reports and a review of the club’s activities the past year. Board of Directors elections and a thought-provoking game with prizes makes this meeting a highlight of the year! Meeting begins at 7:30pm at the Ojibway Nature Centre.

March 23 - Canada South Land Trust - Annual Dinner and Silent Auction to be held in the Windsor Room at the Caboto Club. Guest speaker is Tom Hince who will present a program with images of birds and wildlife viewed during a month long tour of Australia during Fall 2011. Tickets are \$35.00. Donations to the silent auction are welcome. Call Betty for further information at 519-944-0825. All are welcome.

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Essex County Field Naturalists’ Club
Membership Form – Due January 1, 2012

Individual membership \$20.00 / year _____ Family membership \$25.00 / year _____
 Student (full-time) \$10.00 / year _____ Sustaining membership \$30.00 / year _____

Tax Receipt Eligible: Life membership \$500.00 / year _____ Donation _____

Publications: Wildflowers of the Canadian Erie Islands by Mary Celestino \$20 _____
 Fishes of Essex County and Surrounding Waters By Lynda D. Corkum \$25 _____

Name _____

Street _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Phone Number _____

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

Please contact me to volunteer at ECFNC events!

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

Thank you!