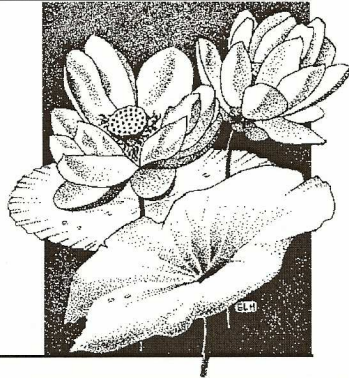


Lotus

NEWSLETTER
of the
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



August 2008

Baillie Birdathon 2008

Mike McMillan

In the five years I've done the birdathon this year, weather wise, was the best by far. Saturday May 10 was a lovely spring day.

Once again, I was able to join Jeff and Darlene Sauder, their friends, Jack and Linda, and Diane Salter for a very enjoyable day of birding. I arrived at Jeff and Darlene's house, near Walsingham, before 6:00 a.m. and we spent an hour on the back deck while the first birds of the day visited the feeders. There were plenty of sparrows— white-throated, white-crowned, house, field, and song. A bright blue indigo bunting, a brilliant orange Baltimore oriole, as well as white and red-breasted nuthatches also stopped by.

About 7:00 a.m. we headed down to Old Cut and joined a group led by Ron Ridout. During the two hours here we saw or heard about 30 species. In the air there were tree, barn and bank swallows, a Caspian tern and a bobolink. The most interesting ground birds were a brown thrasher, a hermit thrush and a grey catbird. The warblers spotted were a black and white, a black-throated blue, an American redstart, a yellow, a chestnut-sided and common yellowthroat.

After this walk the group traveled to several other locations. At the B.S.C. property we saw a lesser yellowlegs, a least sandpiper, a bufflehead, an American kestrel and great blue heron. We made stops at the Lee Brown Sanctuary and the Big Creek bridge on the 1st concession.

However, it was the Backus Woods that produced some good sightings. A blackburnian warbler, a hooded warbler, and a lovely blue-winged warbler increased the day's warbler count. A male scarlet tanager, a Louisiana waterthrush, a northern

waterthrush and an ovenbird helped to make this a good stop. Perhaps the most interesting sighting of the day was a pileated woodpecker who kept poking its head out of a hole in a dead tree. Each time it appeared it spewed about a mouthful of wood chips. Obviously spring cleaning was happening.

It was now about 1:00 p.m. so our small group of six went back to Jeff and Darlene's deck to eat our lunch. While relaxing there a pair of eastern towhees visited the feeder and a broad-winged hawk flew over.

After a short drive to a couple of spots in the afternoon which produced a vesper sparrow and a bluebird we arrived at B.S.C. by 5:00 p.m. to enjoy the wonderful buffet which the B.S.C. staff provide every year. After dinner we joined a large group for a walk around the B.S.C. property and then a walk on the causeway dike. Some of the sightings at these locations were ruddy ducks, redhead, lesser scaup, greater scaup, canvasbacks, a pie-billed grebe, a hooded merganser, a Forster's tern, a coot, a marsh wren and a savannah sparrow. We heard an American bittern and a Virginia rail but they remained in the reeds out of sight.

Later, back at Jeff and Darlene's we heard woodcocks, a screech owl and a whip-poor-will.

My tally for the day was 97 species seen and 9 heard for a total of 106 identified. With the help of so many generous sponsors I managed to raise \$3,263.43, the most ever. This will certainly help Bird Studies Canada and the Norfolk Field Naturalists. I appreciate the opportunity to have been the club's official birder this year. Thanks to all of you who helped to make this birdathon so successful.

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Long Point Causeway Project

The following paragraph, submitted by Audrey Heagy on behalf of NFN, was included in the July 15 edition of Ontario Nature Network News.

The Norfolk Field Naturalists is one of 16 groups participating in the Long Point Causeway Improvement Project. A major goal of this project is to reduce the annual road kill of turtles, snakes and frogs on the Long Point causeway, a short section of road that passes through the marshes at the base of Long Point. Earlier this year, a comprehensive feasibility study was completed outlining possible improvements to the causeway. This summer various measures are being implemented to reduce wildlife mortality on the road including installing electronic message signs, erecting and monitoring a temporary barrier fence to prevent turtles and amphibians from getting on the road, and building alternative nesting sites for turtles. Funding has been provided by the provincial and federal Species at Risk stewardship programs. For more information go to: www.longpointcauseway.com

The NFN Board received regular updates from Rick Levick about the progress of the work being done on the Long Point Causeway.

On June 6, Rick reported: "Installation of the barrier fencing and turtle nesting sites along the causeway began June 5. The first day was spent installing fencing around the CWS property, one of the hot spots for road kill along the causeway. (Ed. Note: Included was a photo of Danny Bernard, CWS, holding a 4-foot Fox Snake that was "not too pleased with us digging up his backyard!" See below.)



On June 15, Rick reported: "We're making good progress with the barrier fencing and have finished the trenching operations. About 700 metres of fencing to be installed along the west side of the causeway south of the CWS buildings will be completed this week. I'm pleased to report that turtles have begun using the alternative nesting sites less than a week after we installed them. I also saw and heard reports of motorists stopping on the causeway to help turtles across the road. As well, there appear to have been no turtles killed along the causeway in the areas where we have installed fencing.

(Ed. Note: During the last half of June, considerable media attention was given to the project with articles in the Toronto Star, on television stations and by the Canadian Press.)

Scott Gillingwater, Species at Risk Biologist, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority) also commented: "I have observed that at least four of the newly created nest mounds contain eggs, and all but one have turtle tracks across them. In addition I have observed snapping, midland painted and blanding's turtles, eastern garter, and northern ribbonsnake along the inside edge of the fence. In all cases, this past Saturday, the turtles and snakes moved along the fence and then returned to the wetland, thus avoiding the road. The weather conditions (warm, humid, and both pre and post rain) and time of year would have generally resulted in a number of turtle fatalities on Saturday, but when I left, not a single turtle was found killed in the area where the fence was installed. "

(Ed Note: On July 8, Rick made a presentation to Council-in Committee which resulted in the Norfolk County Council's endorsement of the project and its inclusion in the capital budget for Council's further consideration.)

(Ed Note: The accompanying photos, taken by Rick Levick, are used courtesy of the Long Point Causeway Improvement Project.)

In Memorium - Patricia Long

Pat Long, an NFN member passed away on Monday, July 14, 2008 in her 69th year, after complications of a heart attack suffered while biking with her husband along the Lynn Valley Trail. She will be remembered and sadly missed by her family and friends.

Butterfly Count 2008

Matt Timpf

The annual Long Point Butterfly Count was held on July 5, 2008 under hot and sunny conditions. This year's count was well covered with many returning counters, and a few new ones. While overall diversity was lower this year at 46 species (3rd lowest count in its 17 year history), total individuals were higher than average with 3425 (average=2651). Despite the low diversity, 5 new high records were set for the following species: Cabbage White, Hickory Hairstreak, Eastern-tailed Blue, Baltimore Checkerspot, and Common Sootywing. Thank you to Peter Carson and Mary Gartshore for hosting the count wrap up at their farm. We hope to see you all again next year! Following is the final tally:

Black Swallowtail - 2
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail - 134
Spicebush Swallowtail - 65
Cabbage White - 828 (previous high=318)
Clouded Sulphur - 149
Orange Sulphur - 47
American Copper - 16
Bronze Copper - 8
Coral Hairstreak - 9
Acadian Hairstreak - 3
Banded Hairstreak - 27
Hickory Hairstreak - 11 (previous high=6)
Eastern Tailed Blue - 64 (previous high=31)
Summer Azure - 74
Great Spangled Fritillary - 50
Silvery Checkerspot - 38
Pearl Crescent - 4
Northern Crescent - 147
Baltimore Checkerspot - 45 (previous high=34)
Question Mark - 3
Eastern Comma - 15
Mourning Cloak - 3
American Lady - 4
Painted Lady - 2
Red Admiral - 26
Red-spotted Purple - 12
Viceroy - 11
Tawny Emperor - 2
Eyed Brown - 3
Appalachian Brown - 13
Little Wood Satyr - 136
Common Wood Nymph - 13
Monarch - 77
Silver-spotted Skipper - 84
Southern Cloudy wing - 2
Northern Cloudywing - 9
Dreamy Dusky wing - 1

Common Sooty wing - 2 (previous high=1)
Least Skipper - 21
European Skipper - 1240
Tawny-edged Skipper - 1
Crossline Skipper - 5
Long Dash - 1
Northern Borken Dash - 10
Little Glassy wing - 2
Hobomok Skipper - 6

NFN Field Outings, Summer 2008

Audrey Heagy, Field Events Coordinator

The unsettled weather this summer put a bit of a damper on many of the NFN field outings with very low attendance.

Only two people showed up for the evening walk at the Big Creek marsh in June. It was drizzling lightly as we headed out along the dyke but the Marsh Wrens were singing vigorously. There were many signs of turtle nesting activity on the dyke. A short distance down the trail we encountered a large snapping turtle digging out a nest hole. Rather than disturb her we retreated and had a look at the newly installed barrier fence and turtle nesting islands along the causeway. We did observe some indications that turtles were using the sand islands behind the barrier fence for nest sites.

Four canoes, each with two people, went on the Big Creek canoe trip. Only the trip leaders were NFN members. Despite the forecast, the weather was quite pleasant. Yellow Warblers were abundant in the dense vegetation beside the creek. We also noted that Eastern Kingbirds like to nest in Black Alder trees overhanging the water. We saw at least 5 kingbird nests in alders, plus a fourth kingbird nest in a willow tree.

Unfortunately the date for the butterfly hike at our farm conflicted with the St. Williams Forestry Farm 100th Anniversary picnic and only one other couple showed up. Butterflies weren't as abundant as in previous years. However, some researchers from the University of Western Ontario had been able to catch a few dozen of the yellow Tiger Swallowtails and about a dozen Spicebush Swallowtails that day. They are studying the genetics of swallowtail populations in this region. One of the bluebird nest boxes contained recently hatched young.

Despite the low turnout for these events this year, we will be offering these outings again next year. Hopefully the weather will cooperate more in 2009!

NOTE

September Meeting

Topic

Ivory-billed Woodpeckers

Speaker

Dan Mennill

University of Windsor

Next Meeting

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Includes Annual General Meeting and Election of Board

NFN Meetings

Norfolk Field Naturalist meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month from September to May. The election of Directors takes place at the September meeting.

Meetings take place at the Simcoe Seniors Centre on Pond Street. They are free and visitors are always welcome. Doors open at 7:15pm; program begins at 7:30pm.

About the NFN

Norfolk Field Naturalist members participate in meetings and frequent field outings, many of which are family-friendly.

Membership fees, due in September, are \$20- Individual and \$30- Family; donations are eligible for income tax credits; Charitable Registration #0620070-52-14.

Guest speakers present programs on interesting and relevant natural history and conservation topics.

Club members receive the Lotus newsletter with articles on local natural history and club activities. It is published bi-monthly from October to June by volunteer club members. Copies of the Lotus are available at meetings but will be mailed (free of charge) to members if not picked up. Articles published in the Lotus reflect the views and opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NFN.

Next issue of Lotus:

October 2008

Input cutoff date:

Fri. Sept. 26, 2008

Club Mailing Address

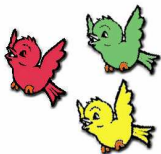
**Norfolk Field Naturalists
PO Box 995, Simcoe, ON
N3Y 5B3**

**Upcoming NFN and
Other Outings**



**Sat. August 23 /08
9:00 p.m.**

**Pterophylla at Pterophylla
Mary Gartshore or
Peter Carson 519-586-3985**



**See your new 2008-2009
brochure for details of next
year's outings.**



2007 - 2008 NFN Directors with Contact and Project Information

			<u>all 519-</u>
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