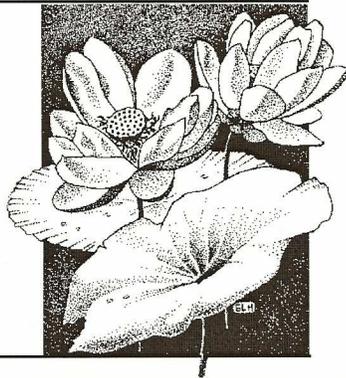


Lotus

NEWSLETTER
of the
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



October 2008

southern Ontario but the abundance map shows that it is much more abundant on the Southern Shield region in eastern Ontario, than south of the Canadian Shield. Similarly, the Dark-eyed Junco breeds across the boreal region but in Ontario is concentrated in the Far North and southern Hudson Bay Lowlands.

Meeting Notes

September 2008 Meeting

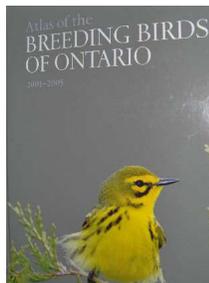
AGM

The AGM was held in conjunction with the September meeting. The proposed slate of officers was approved; the positions of Board Secretary, Field Events Director and Environment Director have not yet been allocated. The 2008-2009 Directors are shown on the back page of this issue.

September Speaker

Audrey Heagy

The speaker for the evening was Andrew Couturier, a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst with Bird Studies Canada in Port Rowan. His topic was the use of Breeding Bird Atlas data for bird conservation. He illustrated his talk with examples from the recently completed Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. The results of that atlas have recently been published in a stunning hardcover book which includes detailed species accounts and distribution maps for all birds breeding in Ontario.



The wealth of high quality data generated by bird atlas projects has been shown to be a valuable tool for informing policy decisions and protecting biodiversity. The second Ontario Atlas, covering the 2001-05 period, included more than 60,000 point counts. These data were used to produce the first bird abundance maps for Ontario. These maps reveal some very interesting patterns that don't show up on the standard breeding range maps. For example, the Red-eyed Vireo breeds all across

The abundance data has also been used to estimate population numbers for each species for all of Ontario and by region. This has allowed conservation planners to assess the proportion of Ontario population of each species in a given region, such as the "Lands Between" area which straddles the southern edge of the Canadian Shield in eastern Ontario. These data give a very clear picture of the importance of this area to a suite of species which are not the most common breeding birds in that area, but for which the area has a high stewardship responsibility because it supports a large proportion of the Ontario population of these particular species.

Andrew brought a copy of the Atlas to the meeting and several people who took the opportunity to flip through the book commented on what an impressive and informative publication it is. Copies of the Atlas are available for sale at Bird Studies Canada headquarters, the LPBO Shoppe, and on the web at www.birdsontario.org.

Attendance at the September meeting was somewhat disappointing with only 33 in attendance.

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Pterophylla at Pterophylla Nursery

Dennis Price

This NFN outing on August 23 was structured to see and hear species of katydids, crickets, and moths. It was led by Mary Gartshore and Peter Carson and held at their farm (called Pterophylla after the Common True Katydid). Fifteen of us, 8 of whom are current NFN members, gathered at the South Walsingham farm by 9:00 pm. We had excellent weather with no breeze.

To start things off, we were introduced to several good reference books. Of note were:

- **Eastern Moths** by Charles Covell in the Peterson Field Guides series
- **The Moth Book**, A Guide To North American Moths by W. J. Holland,
- **The Songs of Insects** by Lang Elliott and Will Hershberger which I purchased from Amazon, finding it to be worth the \$16.75 price. The photos are excellent and the accompanying CD recordings are something I've wanted.
- **Insects Their Natural History and Diversity** by Stephen A. Marshall, an excellent book that I also purchased from Amazon.

Another reference from my collection that is useful is **The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Insects and Spiders**.

Our first observation of the evening came while standing in the screened-in front porch. Our attention was directed to the call coming from the kitchen. Somewhere inside a Fall Field Cricket (*Gryllus pennsylvanicus*) was calling. Their common call is a series of 3-5 chirps. These are the large dark crickets that, attracted to the warmth, find their way into buildings. They make this sound by rubbing their wings together.

We then strolled outside looking and listening around the trees and shrubs in the front yard and along the road. At this point we could hear the call of the Common True Katydid (*Pterophylla camellifolia*, formerly called Northern True Katydid). It was calling from way up in the trees; it usually can't be seen. It has the loudest call among the native katydids and cannot fly. Calls may be used to attract a mate or defend a territory.

Moving along we heard an Oblong-winged Katydid (*Amblycorypha oblongifolia*) calling in amongst some shrubs and tall grass. Mary explained how having listeners triangulate on the call helps to find an insect. Several listeners point to where they hear the call coming from. Where the lines of these directions

cross is the place to look. However, this one didn't co-operate and we had to move on. One participant did find one on some shrubbery near the road. With flashlights on it we were able to get good look.

Heading back in on the property, we heard a Snowy Tree Cricket (*Oecanthus fultoni*). It calls with a series of evenly spaced groups of chirps (usually 8). This is one whose chirp rate can be used to estimate the air temperature, hence its other name a "temperature cricket". One formula is to count the number of chirps in 15 seconds and add 40 to get the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit. We did this and counted 39 chirps and added 40 to arrive at 79°F, which seemed reasonable.

An internet check reveals that there are other formulae that can be used and reasons for the difference (one reference talked about the western subspecies calling at a slower rate). In the prairie field we heard a rapid series of very loud, raspy notes from a Sword-bearing Conehead (*Neoconocephalus ensiger*).



Over by the nursery shade house a white sheet about two metres high by 5 metres was set up vertically and was well lit up with a flood light. This was used to attract insects for our viewing. It worked very well as it was covered by hundreds of flying insects - moths, crickets, a few katydids, and other odd insects.

We saw the Fork-tailed Bush Katydid (*Scudderia furcata*), a widespread species. The male has forked claspers at the tip of the abdomen, used during mating. I noticed a few Field crickets attracted to the area. Also seen was an Ailanthus Webworm Moth (*Atteva punctella*) which is attractive with its orange wings with yellow spots bordered with black. One of

the foods of this moth is the Tree-of-heaven. This introduced tree is spreading in plantings and on its own and so consequently is the moth. We spent the remainder of the outing checking out the insects at the screen.

In conclusion I want to thank Mary and Peter for a most enjoyable outing. It has got me all fired up to try a light screen at my bushlot or even at home in Hamilton. Following this I headed back to my sister's place in Waterford. As I entered their kitchen a katydid came in to land on the table! I exclaimed with excitement that I knew that "bug". It got me thinking that an outing like this can increase our naturalist awareness and thereby further enrich the lives of all the participants.

Ed. Note: Bernie Solymar sent me the summer 2008 issue of the Bluestem Banner, the Ontario Tallgrass news-letter, which contained a very favourable review of The Songs of Insects mentioned by Dennis. The reviewer, Bronwen Buck, commented: "Packed with fascinating facts, (...the sections of the book..) condense what could potentially be overwhelmingly dry material into an easily digestible format suitable for a wide audience including amateurs like myself and even children." This sounds like a winner!

IMBY (In My Back Yard) - Composting

From Nature Network News, September 2008

Fall is a time to clean up your garden and rake leaves. Wait don't throw them out - place all this dead plant material in your composter. If you have a lot of leaves you may consider running the lawn mower over them to chop them up to help speed up the rate of decomposition. Composting is a cost effective and eco-friendly way to get rid of the garden waste and turn it into black gold soil which can be placed in next year's garden. The trick is to have an equal balance of carbon and nitrogen. It is suggested to have 1/3 green material to 2/3 brown material. Oxygen and moisture will work with this mixture to make rich loamy compost. Many municipalities have composters for sale at a reasonable price but all you really need is an area in your yard to pile the unwanted plant material and let nature do the rest. Compost material is essential to healthy lawns and gardens and is packed with macro and micro nutrients which will help replenish trees and garden flowers to grow and to fend off disease. Composting is a win-win garden activity.



Sat. October 18 Workshop and AGM Canadian Chestnut Council Invitation

Ed. Note: This invitation was sent out to members who receive email distribution. For those of you not on the email distribution, you may still be able to attend this function if space is available.

Norfolk Field Naturalist Club Members,

I would like to take this opportunity to invite your club members, family and friends to the 20th Anniversary Celebration and 2008 AGM for the Canadian Chestnut Council.

The CCC has been working hard for 20 years to recover the endangered American chestnut tree. This once majestic tree originally comprised 1/4 of the tree species in Carolinian Canada and throughout its wide range in the United States. Today, few trees remain due to the devastating effects of chestnut blight.

To find out more, please join us on October 18th. The event will take place at Tim Horton Onondaga Farms, in Brant County. The day will include guest speakers, activities for children, a complimentary lunch and a wagon tour to the breeding nursery.

RSVP is required as space is limited.

Regards,
Kelly Schafer
Environmental Outreach Support
Phone: 519-823-1458
Email: schafer_kelly@yahoo.ca

Sat. October 18 Workshop Caring for Nature in Norfolk

Ed Note: The August issue of Lotus included an insert giving the outline of the Workshop "Caring for Nature in Norfolk" to be held at the Wagon Wheel Produce & Corn Maze on Saturday, October 18, 2008, from 9 am to 3 pm. The response has been excellent, the session is fully booked..

The NFN Board passed a motion to provide \$500 for this workshop. Below is the thank-you note received by the Board for this assistance.

A Thank You to NFN

Hello NFN Board,

On behalf of CCC thank you for pledging \$500 towards the *Caring for Nature in Norfolk workshop*.

A couple of things Audrey asked me to clarify -

The workshop is geared towards all rural landowners, whether an acre or 200 acres. Mainly developed for non-farmers but farmers are more than welcome.

We currently have 12 signed up. I will be putting out a media release today or tomorrow to advertise the workshop again (NFN logo will be attached). In the meantime please feel free to distribute the attached flyer far and wide.

Sponsors to date include Tallgrass Ontario, NCC, LPRCA and now NFN. We are waiting still waiting to hear from NLSC and OPG.

Cheers, Bernie

*Bernie Solymár
Workshop Coordinator
Carolinian Canada Coalition
Collaborating for a Healthy Ecoregion
519-426-7124*

*Join Us to Protect the Unique Nature of
Southwestern Ontario
www.carolinian.org*

Fall Lynn Valley Trail Wildflower Hike

Audrey Heagy



The weather forecast for the afternoon of September 14th was not good. The aftermath of Hurricane Ike was scheduled to pass through, bringing with it high winds and 100% probability of rain -- possibly as much as 100 mm. This certainly wasn't the clear, cool, sunny September afternoon I had envisioned when I scheduled this field trip in August.

Fortunately the weather forecasters were off by a few hours and so the trip went as scheduled, under sunny but hot and humid conditions. Six of us headed south from the parking lot on Blueline Road just after 1:30 pm. Two latecomers soon caught up with us but another group of three headed north from the parking lot.

The display of wildflowers was quite impressive with several late summer species such as Boneset, Blue Lobelia, and Turtlehead still in bloom, while the fall-flowering goldenrods and asters were coming in to full flower. We were able to identify several different species of goldenrod (about 20 species of goldenrod occur in Ontario!). We also saw a range of aster, with colours varying from the deep purple New England Aster, to the pale mauve Smooth Aster, to the white Calico Aster.

We were very fortunate to have Al McKeown join us for the hike as he is extremely knowledgeable about the flora of the Lynn Valley Trail. A few years back Al and Peggy McArthur researched and wrote a naturalist's guide to the habitats and plants of Lynn Valley Trail. This guide is very informative, with suggestions as to when is the best time of year to see various species in flower. It includes a detailed plant list. It is available on the Lynn Valley Trail Association website (www.kwic.com/~lynntrail/).

Several places along the trail Al pointed out clumps of native prairie grasses including Indian Grass and Big Bluestem, growing right along the edge of the dry railway bed. We also noted many shrubs loaded with colorful berries. These included native species such as Grey Dogwood, Red-osier Dogwood, Silky Dogwood, Pagoda Dogwood, and Red Cedar, and also non-native invasive species such as Autumn Olive, Buckthorn, Barberry, and Multiflora Rose. These berries will provide a banquet for the sparrows and thrushes that will stopover in this area on migration later in the fall.

I had hoped to see quite a few Monarch butterflies nectaring on the wildflowers but we only saw a few along the way. This has been a poor year for Monarchs, with no big numbers seen this summer and fall. We also didn't see much bird activity, though we did hear a few chickadees and saw a Cedar Waxwing. Other notable wildlife sightings included several small American Toads, and masses of white Woolly Aphids feeding on the European Alder.

The Lynn Valley Trail is well worth exploring at any time of year. Although the whole trail is less than 10 km, it passes through a wide variety of habitats. Each section has something of interest. The more sheltered areas provide good cover for birds in winter. Al pointed out a wetland pond beside the trail near Port Dover that has a stunning display of Yellow Flags in May. Yellow Lady's Slipper orchids can be seen in a few spots in June.

Summer is a good time to see butterflies, including the uncommon Baltimore butterfly whose larvae feeds only on Turtlehead which grows in the wet meadows beside the trail.



The level, fine-gravel surface of the trail makes for easy walking and biking. A detailed trail map showing the various access points is available on the Lynn Valley Trail Association website.

Why don't you all take a hike!

A Green Gift Idea

Nature Network News August, 2008



Ontario Nature is teaming with Trees In Trust, a web-based environmental fundraising organization, to encourage people to invest in the future of our native forests. A new online donation system allows donors to buy a piece of the forest as a gift, memorial or carbon offset.

Global warming, our carbon footprint and personal environmental responsibility have dominated the news lately. This approach to forest conservation makes the most of online public awareness campaigns and fundraising and top-of-mind environmental concerns.

"The Trees in Trust website makes it easy for people to adopt an acre of woodland, either as a gift or for themselves," says Mark Carabetta, Conservation Science Manager of Ontario Nature. "Ontario Nature's partnership with Trees in Trust will allow more people to support the protection and stewardship of woodlands in Ontario."

In exchange for an online donation (made at www.treesintrust.com), Trees In Trust provides a mapped piece of forest and a dedication certificate instantly via the web. Your dedication is then placed against a specific plot of land and held in your name in perpetuity. Ontario Nature uses the funds to steward the land and acquire additional parcels of land of similar quality.

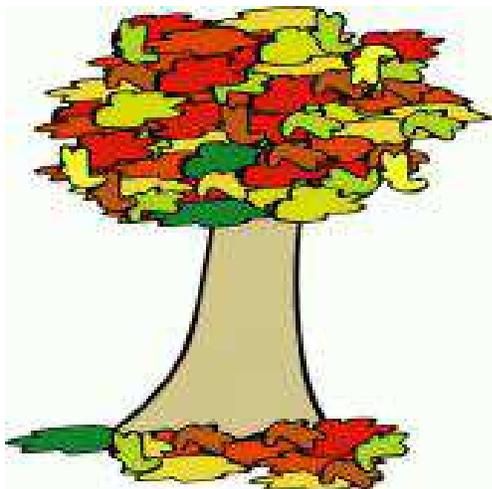
So far, Trees In Trust has partnerships with conservation organizations in three provinces including Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Ontario, and aims to expand by partnering with land trusts in every province. "I spent 30 dollars on a piece of woodland for my son's birthday." says Frank MacEachern of Charlottetown. "Once he saw where it was on a map, he was really intrigued."

Three of Ontario Nature's reserves are now on the Trees in Trust site: Altberg Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Reserve in Kawartha Lakes, Kinghurst Forest Nature Reserve south of Owen Sound and Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve in York Region. This efficient fundraising system allows conservation organizations like Ontario Nature to acquire more endangered forest and to concentrate on conservation and protection rather than spending time handling payments, producing maps and printing certificates. Charitable tax receipts are issued for dedications of 1/6 acre and above.

Ontario Nature, through a mutually supportive base of federated clubs and individual members, protects and restores nature in Ontario and connects individuals and communities to nature through research, education, public awareness and conservation action.

The organization seeks to bring about change to legislation, policies and practices and work with partners and institutions to protect Ontario's natural ecosystems and biodiversity.

For more information visit the Trees In Trust website at www.treesintrust.com



Bluebirds Around the Year in Our Backyard

Audrey Heagy and David Okines

In fall 2003 we moved into our house on a 50 acre property near St. Williams. The back half of the property is a deciduous swamp forest, and the front half is mostly rough cattle pasture which hasn't been grazed for more than 10 years and now has a lot of small shrubs and trees. Three of the neighbouring properties are forested conservation lands while one adjoining property is cropped with corn and beans. The previous owners had installed several bluebird boxes near the house. Our first fall here we regularly saw Eastern Bluebirds around the house and field, with the last record being 4 birds on December 5. (I keep a daily list of birds seen at the bird feeders and in the yard from about November through April).

In 2004, we had one pair nesting in a box outside the kitchen window. We didn't record any bluebirds near the house that fall though they were using the fields. Over the winter David made 10 side-opening boxes for Tree Swallows and bluebirds and we put them on poles in the field.

In 2005 we saw bluebirds frequently; two pairs nested, each with two broods. That fall we had up to 5 bluebirds hanging about the yard until November 14. On December 20 a single bluebird was present, and on January 2-3 **2006** we recorded two bluebirds; January 5 we had 15 in the yard. After that we began to see bluebirds almost daily. We had live mealworms on hand (probably because David had been using them to catch shrikes) so I began putting mealworms and currants out on a small tray attached to a wooden stand near the bluebirds' favorite perches. They quickly found the food and we moved the stand closer to the house each day. Within a few days up to six bluebirds fed from the tray about 20 feet from the kitchen window. Each morning the birds would appear outside our bedroom window as it was getting light and wait for us to put out about a dozen mealworms which would be rapidly gobbled up. They ate currants and raisins too but much preferred the mealworms. We tried a bluebird pudding recipe of suet, peanut butter and raisins which they liked (so did juncos, chickadees, and nuthatches).

That summer, 3 pairs of bluebirds nested. The pair nesting nearest the house continued to check for food regularly, although we had stopped putting out mealworms once the weather warmed up. We ramped up our mealworm production in the fall of 2006, anticipating more wintering bluebirds. However, we had only one pair of regulars and a maximum of 4 bluebirds over the winter of 2006/07.

In **2007** we had 2 nesting pairs. That fall, the local bluebirds didn't start coming back to the feeders until November 23, after which up to 6 birds became regular customers. They disappeared for a week in December, when the temperature dropped to -13°C, and disappeared again for shorter periods during three cold snaps in January **2008**. However, during the January thaw bluebirds started building nests in two boxes! These nest attempts were abandoned during construction.

The over-wintering group of three females and one male (all of which were banded) which had been coming to the feeder regularly, disappeared for a few weeks in early February at the start of a warm spell. On February 14, two males and a female were checking out the boxes by the house and on the 16th a flock of 8 males and a female landed briefly in the yard (the first migrants). On the 20th, the banded male and two females re-appeared looking for mealworms. This trio was seen in the yard almost daily until the weather warmed up in early April. The two females nested in adjacent boxes not far from the house; these females each raised two broods. A third pair arrived in mid-May, and also nested successfully.

Since August we've been heard and seen bluebirds regularly around the house. A few mornings in September there were more than twenty bluebirds as I walked the dogs around the field. While bluebirds often hunt for insects from perches in the backyard, we haven't had any "tame" birds coming in looking for handouts this fall. We start putting out mealworms when temperatures get down near freezing in late November (so the mealworms won't crawl away). Hopefully we will once again be lucky enough to have bluebirds in our backyard all year long.

Torontonians Visit Norkolk's Carolinian Forests and Wetlands

Anne Davidson

On Saturday, September 20, the North American Native Plant Society (NANPS) chartered a bus to bring about 60 people from Toronto for an all-day tour of Norfolk's ecologically rich Carolinian forest & wetlands that contain rare flora & fauna.

Under the leadership of Peter Carson and Mary Gartshore, the group visited the Arthur Langford Nature Reserve and the Jackson Gunn Old Growth Forest & Restoration Site.

Photo Gallery

Dedication of the Arthur Langford Nature Reserve

Ed. Note. The dedication of the Arthur Langford Nature Reserve was held on Sunday, October 5. The article should appear in the next Lotus; this issue was being readied for the printer at the time. But, I did manage to include here a few of the photos I took that day.



Next Meetings

Tuesday, November 11, 2008

**Wild and Free: A Photographic Essay
George Pond, Naturalist and
Photographer Extraordinaire**

Tuesday, December 9, 2008

**Dinner and a Movie
National Geographic's Human Footprint**

Upcoming NFN Outings

Sat. Oct. 25 /08

1:30 p.m.

St. Williams

Forestry Station

Audrey Heagy 519-586-9464

Family-friendly



Sat. Nov. 15 /08

1:30 p.m.

Spooky Hollow

Audrey Heagy 519-586-9464

Family-friendly



Christmas Bird Counts



Plan to join a local
Christmas Bird count.

\$5 fee per participant, waived for
BSC members. Or, phone in to
report the number of birds at your
feeder on count day (no fee).

Sun. Dec. 16 /08

Woodhouse Count (Simcoe area)

David Okines 519-586-9464

davidokines@aol.com

Date TBA

Fisherville Count (Haldimand Co.)

Linda Thrower 905-774-1230

giantindians@sympatico.ca

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. Visit the NFN website at:

www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

Next issue of Lotus:

December 2008

Input cutoff date:

Fri. Nov. 21, 2008

Club Mailing Address

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

2008 - 2009 NFN Directors with Contact and Project Information

		all 519-	
President	Audrey Heagy	586-9464	x243 aheagy@bsc-eoc.org
Past Pres. + Natural Areas	Peter Carson	586-3985	gartcar@kwic.com
Vice-President	Tara Crewe	586-3531	x232 tcrewe@bsc-eoc.org
Treasurer	Lynda Kosalle	res 426-0826	kosalle@amtelecom.net
		bus 586-7773	
General Secretary	David Okines	586-9464	davidokines@aol.com
Board Secretary	(position currently vacant)		
Membership	Diane Salter	586-7775	dianesalter@execulink.com
Field Events	(position currently vacant)		
Speaker Program	Bernt (Bernie) Solymar	426-7124	solyymar@nornet.on.ca
Publicity	Nina Cameron	586-8785	ninac@execulink.com
Sanctuary	Matt Brock	586-7585	greenheron99@hotmail.com
Environment	(position currently vacant)		
Dir. + Lakeshore 2ndary Plan	Peter Black	426-5036	peterblack@kwic.com
Director-at-large	Colleen Dale	586-9726	cdale22@yahoo.ca
Director-at-large	Shirley Rothery	586-9535	shirleyrothery@hotmail.com
Honorary President:	Al Robinson	Honorary Directors:	Harry Barrett, Jim Harlow
Lotus Editor	Anne Davidson	446-3589	birdyanne@gmail.com
Butterfly Counts	Douq Timpf	586-9964	timpf@nornet.on.ca