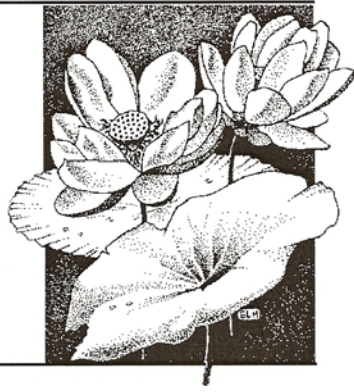


Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



DECEMBER 2015



Diane Salter at the windswept tip of Long Point

TALES FROM THE TIP

Story and photos by Inga Hinnerichsen

"Is anyone interested in spending a week at the Long Point Tip?" Diane Salter inquired during one of our watercolour painting sessions in Port Rowan. Diane had won the "Trip to the Tip" as a Birdathon prize supporting the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO). Wow. I jumped at the chance! It turned out that three of us, Diane, Karin Jonasson and I plus Stu McKenzie and Ron Ridout clambered into the aluminium craft used to ship supplies and bird banders to and from the Tip on the morning of October 6. The boat was loaded with gear and supplies, both ours and the banders'. We had to bring food for the week + drinking water (and wine), sleeping bags, clothing for all weather conditions and cameras, binoculars and other toys.

Diane also brought bird seed and feeders plus a few small solar lights, which were helpful in finding your way to the facilities after dark. Those of you who haven't been out at the Tip might not know that there are other buildings besides the Light House. Nearby are the old light house keepers residence, now accommodations for bird banders and a large workshop including facilities for banding. The old foundation where one of the previous light houses was standing prior to being washed away in a storm is still visible. Winter storms regularly re-shape the contours of the Tip. Nestled against the dunes on the lake side of the Tip is the guest cabin. It is outfitted very comfortably for 6 - 7 people.

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Norfolk Field Naturalists

There are a mud room, kitchen and living space downstairs and a sleeping loft upstairs. The kitchen has a propane stove and fridge and a hand pump for washing-up water at the sink. A small solar panel charges a battery for recharging your cell phone, tablets, camera battery, etc. No indoor plumbing, but a short distance down a path is a convenient outhouse. We compared names for the facilities from around the world: Down Under it's called "Long Drop", the Germans call it "Plumpsklo" (the toilet that goes splat!)



The Cabin at the Tip

We were lucky, the early October weather was glorious, except for one night when a front came through with high winds shaking the cabin. Diane had selected this time as being the best for migratory birds. See our Bird List at the end of this article. Every day we kept watch from the large deck outside the cabin and during our regular walks on the beach and the trails. Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks and many other raptors were hunting smaller birds. The LPBO banders caught an un-banded Peregrine Falcon in their nets; it must have come from way up North to have escaped banding! A mob of Turkey Vultures came up along Long Point every day, but stopped at the Tip, obviously puzzled about what happened to the land?



A juvenile Bald Eagle soaring overhead

They circled for a while and turned back towards the base of Long Point. The Vultures, and other migrants who depend on thermals, don't like to fly over water.

The Junipers dotting the Tip were teeming with Kinglets, both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned, Eastern Phoebes and many other small birds keeping the banders very busy. On one of the best days they caught and banded well over 300 birds. Out on the very end of the Tip a large number of Gulls held court and a juvenile Bald Eagle was feasting on the carcass of a Black-backed Gull. A school of smelt in the bay caused a virtual feeding frenzy: Gulls, Common Terns, Cormorants and other water fowl joined in the feast.

Below Right:
Feeding frenzy
on the bay



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You'd expect that the environment out there on the Tip would be pristine, but sadly this is not the case. Hulks of rusting unidentified pieces of machinery, refrigerators, the ever-present old tires and plastic balloons plus other jetsam and flotsam is littering the beaches and the dunes. One can only hope that future generations, with education and increased awareness of the environment, will stop treating the Great Lakes as garbage dumps. Some of the trash had been put to good use, though: The hulk of an old refrigerator was used as a garbage bin and a bird had built a well-protected nest inside an abandoned hibachi. Someone had brought a white plastic chair to the beach and left it there. Young cottonwood saplings were now growing up through the seat slats.



A bird's nest inside an abandoned hibachi (upper right corner) safe under the closed lid

One day Karin and I spent the afternoon smearing watercolour on paper and experimenting with printing various items we found lying around, including a dry dead fish (Japanese Gyotaku-style), and Stable Flies - there was an endless supply of the pesky flies both inside and outside. In the month of April, 2016, we will have an art show at the Port Rowan Public Library titled "Images from the Long Point Tip".



Sandy Laccaria



Greater Fringed Gentian



Right:
Jade collecting
birds from the
nets

Time passed, one beautiful day after another. On October 10th I even ventured for a swim in Lake Erie: Refreshing!

We were up each morning with the sun, a quick breakfast and a beach walk out to the end of the Tip. On the way back to the cabin we'd watch the banding crew pick the morning catch of birds out of the nets. The trail to the cabin winds its way through the sparse vegetation on the tip. Scattered gnarled Cottonwoods and dense Junipers dominate the landscape. Reeds and sedges put up a fight against invading Phragmites in the wetlands. A crew of four men were also fighting these invaders. A few late flowering plants could still be spotted between other withering stems: Greater Fringed Gentians (*Gentianopsis crinita*), Grass-of-Parnassus (*Parnassia glauca*) and even a small Lady's Tresses Orchid (Genus *Spiranthes*). Several mushrooms dotted the dunes. I later identified them as Sandy Laccarias (*Laccaria trullisata*), an edible species common in the Great Lakes sandy shore lines. They would have made a tasty accent to our dinners! There were signs of other wildlife as well: Fresh paw prints on the beach every morning left by both Coyotes and Raccoons during their nocturnal forays searching for some tasty morsels. Mice made good use of the fallen bird seed. Large spiders excavated perfectly round burrows kicking the sand into a circular pattern around them. A very late Monarch and its caterpillar had unfortunately "missed the boat".

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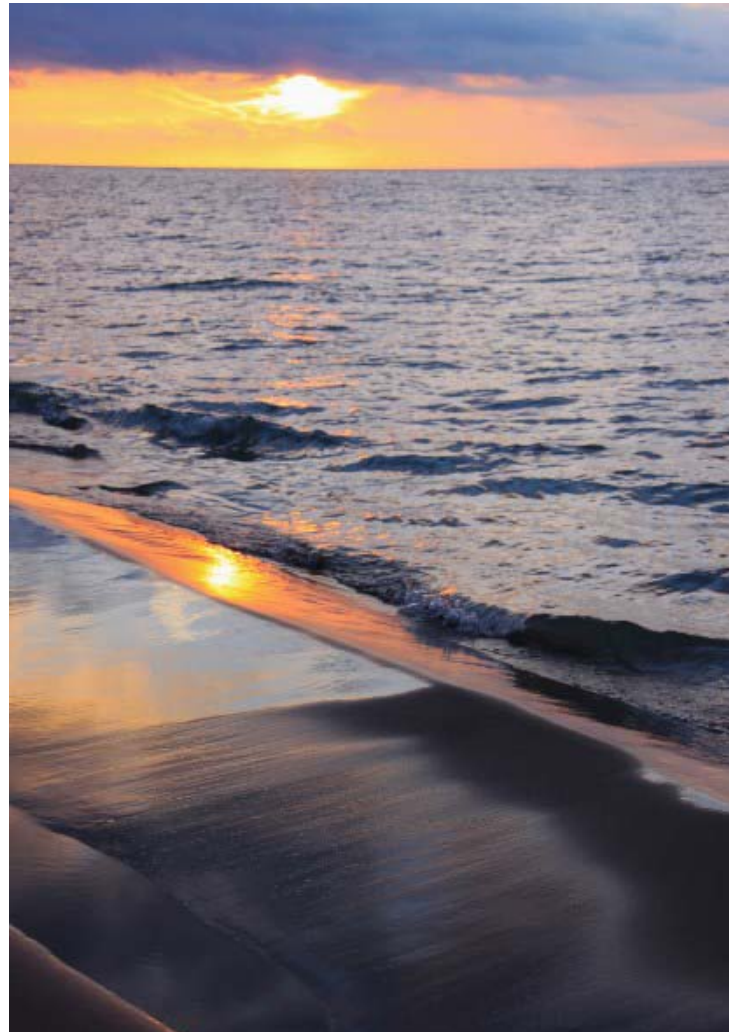
Tales from the Tip ...continued from Page 3

As the evening fell over the Tip we would gaze at the sunset over the distant mainland in the west. The banders played recorded calls of the Saw Whet Owl in the night expecting the migration to begin as we neared the new moon. Upstairs, in my bunk, I could see the light house flash every 8 seconds.

Here's our bird list for the week:

Eastern Phoebe	Ringbilled Gull
Common Loon	Herring Gull
Double-crested	Black-backed Gull
Cormorant	Common Tern
Great Blue Heron	Belted Kingfisher
Turkey Vulture	Downy Woodpecker
Bald Eagle	Great Crested Flycatcher
Golden Eagle	Blue Jay
Northern Harrier	House Wren
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Cooper's Hawk	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Red-shouldered Hawk	Wood Thrush
Broad-winged Hawk	American Robin
Red-tailed Hawk	Grey Catbird
American Kestrel	American Redstart
Merlin	Rusty Blackbird
Peregrine Falcon	
Killdeer	Canvasbacks
Sanderling	and Lesser Scaups on the
Bonaparte's Gull	boat ride back

Did you know that you can rent the cabin on the Tip? Contact Stu McKenzie at the Long Point Bird Observatory c/o BSC for more details.



Sunrise on Lake Erie

Thank You!

From Norfolk Field Naturalists to

Will Partridge

Guardian Computing

For hosting our website

Thank You!

From all of us at NFN to

Angelle Van Kleef

for providing coffee, juice and tasty cookies
at our meetings

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

2015 - 2016 season:

Rick Levick

Al and Sylvia Pippard

Jill Shea and Glenn Panton

Christine Vaughan

We are looking forward to meeting you and hope you will participate in and enjoy all the NFN indoor presentations and field outings!

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY
...and the Weird and the Wonderful, too.
Story and photos by Inga Hinnerichsen



The Good: Blewit (*Lepista nuda*)

Enter the mysterious world of Fungi. For the longest time they were considered plants, but in the late 1960's they were classified as their own Kingdom. Just like plants, the Kingdom contains Families which contain Genera which in turn contain Species. It is estimated that there are over a million species of fungi worldwide.

Science has barely scratched the surface of the potential of their use in pharmacology. Penicillin is derived from a mold fungus. Psilocybin is a hallucinogen found in over 140 species and has been found helpful in treating depression, anxieties and other mental disorders. Fungi might even be able to clean up oil and chemical spills. Fungi help us make bread, cheese, beer and wine, besides making delicious accents to our meals. But beware! Many mushrooms contain lethal toxins.

What we normally refer to as "mushrooms" are really the fruiting bodies of the fungus, much like flowers on a plant. The major portion of the fungus is under ground or inside tree trunks, live or decaying. It can spread out into large areas, some as large as a football field.

This hidden part is called a *mycelium* and consists of thread-like filaments, some thick as shoe laces, others more like spider silk.

When conditions are perfect for a species - temperature, humidity, amount of daylight hours, etc., it will produce its fruiting bodies. As we experienced this past season the conditions were far from perfect for most fungi. It was much too warm and dry. As the expression goes, it was "slim pickin's".

Mushrooms come in all different sizes, shapes and colours. Many of them are microscopic, others are molds and slimes. They may be cup and funnel shaped or lacy, crinkly and finger-like. Others are tough as wood, lasting for years. Many are the familiar stem-and-cap form.

The Good. Among the many good mushrooms the Blewit is perhaps one of the most beautiful. This common species fruits in late summer, early fall. You can find large groups of Blewits in the woods, often along paths. The cap, stem and the gills on the underside of the cap are varying shades of lilac.

The Bad. Amanitas are the first "baddies" that come to mind. This is a group of elegant, tall-stemmed mushrooms most of which are poisonous, a few of them deadly. These include the Destroying Angel and the classic "Toadstool", the Fly Agaric, with its red or orange cap with white dots. The Amanitas can also be identified by the cup at the base of their stems and a frilly collar, the veil, around the top of the stem.



The Bad: False Death Cap (*Amanita citrina*) and Destroying Angel (*Amanita virosa*)

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The Good, The Bad... Continued from Page 5

The Ugly. The Old Man of the Woods fits this category. He is black-brown, scaly, looking old even as a youngster. Strangely enough, it is a good edible!



The Ugly: Old Man of the Woods (*Strobilomyces strobilaceus*)



The Wonderful: Tooth Comb (*Hericium coralloides*) Indigo Milky (*Lactarius indigo*)
photo by Martin Hlauka (Wikipedia)



The Weird. When the *mycelium* of this particular *Entoloma* fungus comes into contact with the *mycelium* of the Honey Mushroom weird things happen. The normally smooth soft grey cap and stem of the *Entoloma* becomes a misshapen gnarled clump known as Aborted Entolomas. Late in the fall you might see clumps of grey mushrooms appear on your lawn. They quickly deteriorate into a slimy, black mess. When young, they are edible - with one condition: Do not ingest any alcoholic beverages 2 days before, during or 2 days after eating these mushrooms! Any traces of alcohol in your system combined with them will make you very sick. - Their name? Alcohol Inky or Tippler's Bane.



The Weird: Tippler's Bane (*Coprinus atramentarius*)

Normally you would not associate the colour blue with edible vegetables - except blueberries. The Indigo Milky of the genus *Lactarius* is another exception. Its shallow funnel-shaped cap and stem are pale blue. If you cut this fungus a bright blue latex will ooze out.

These are just a few of the more than million fungi, but it's a start.

Helpful hints for Mushroom Hunters:

- Make sure collecting is allowed where you plan to go
- Have at least 2 Mushroom Guide books for cross referencing
- Learn how to make a spore print
- The mushroom must be 100% identified before eating it
- Go with an experienced mushroom hunter the first few times



Aborted Entoloma (*Entoloma abortivum*)

Ostrander Point Wind Project Lawsuit

Editor's note: You may recall that NFN donated \$1000 to Ostrander Point Appeal Fund to assist with their legal fees re this law suit. Here's some follow-up:

Due to ongoing disclosure issues related to Ministry of Natural Resources documents the Hearing was adjourned for the second time. It resumed on October 27. A witness for the prosecution, Ms. Karen Bellamy is a manager with the Peterborough office of Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. After arguments lasting most of the day the Tribunal ruled that Ms. Bellamy would be qualified as a witness of fact but not as an expert witness on Blanding's Turtles. Much time was spent on the documents disclosed as a result of the Tribunal's order and also on the documents disclosed as a result of Freedom of Information requests made by South Shore Conservancy and PECFN. The Tribunal was adjourned until such time as the documents are released and Council has an opportunity to look at them.
(to be continued...)

Youth Summit success

The Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership brought together 95 youth from 57 communities across Ontario. Teens had the opportunity to participate in pollinator and wildflower workshops, discussions about how to 'be the change', canoeing and much more.

Expanding access to our nature reserves

This summer Ontario Nature worked with a sustainable trails contractor to build 1.6 kilometres of new hiking trail at Reilly Bird Nature Reserve located in the Deep River area in the Upper Ottawa Valley.

Wetlands hang in the balance

In partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada, Ontario Nature hosted a successful workshop on October 26th examining wetland policy and biodiversity offsetting. With more than 85 participants, we shared information about policy gaps and opportunities to feed into the strategic plan for Ontario wetlands that the province is currently developing.

After the summer break the Board members met on October 27, 2015. Here are the highlights: Before the meeting Rick Levick gave us a short overview of his trip to Raleigh, NC, where he attended the International Conference on Ecology and Transportation. NFN had donated \$1000 to cover part of Rick's expenses during this trip. We will hear more about the conference plus updates on the Long Point Causeway Improvement Project later in the 2016 season.

Our Treasurer, Barb Hourigan, reported that NFN's total assets are \$52,894.63. The GICs held by the NFN, some of which will mature in January, 2016, will remain in place.

A motion was passed that any amount donated over and above the "Single" or "Family" membership fees shall be tax-receiptable. Several other groups are involved in the newly formed Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance, which is developing strategies to battle the invasive plant. Norfolk County and Nature Conservancy Canada are already taking steps in its eradication. After a discussion the Board didn't feel it necessary for NFN also getting involved.

The Thames-Talbot Land Trust is raising funds to purchase lands abutting the Hawk Cliff Natural Area in Elgin County. NFN will donate \$500 towards this purchase.

Bernie Solymár has also resigned from his Directorship with Ontario Nature due to increased responsibilities elsewhere. He will remain as the NFN Representative to ON.

The next NFN Directors' Meeting will be on January 26, 2016. The report will be in the February Lotus.

WANTED - Photos for the NFN web site

Bring your best nature shots on a memory stick or CD, jpg format, to the **January or February (at the latest) Members' Meeting**

Or by email - File size max. 600 x 800 pixels, Send max. 5 photos per email

We'll convert old photos or slides to digital files for the Archives as well.

CD's and hard copies will be returned to you **Please**, name the jpg files with the subject matter, no names on the image.

Len's email address: portie_1989@eastlink.ca

Upcoming NFN 2015-16 Winter Events

Christmas Bird Counts

Join one of the local Christmas Bird Counts and spend the day in the field. Data collected during these annual counts provides vital information on the distribution of winter bird populations

Sunday, December 20

Woodhouse Count (Norfolk County)

Contact: David Okines, 519-586-9464
david.okines@gmail.com

Sunday, December 27

Fisherville Count (Haldimand County)

Contact: Linda Thrower, 905-774-1230
linda1@295.ca

Guest Speaker:

Barn Swallows

Tuesday, January 12, 7:30pm

Bird Studies Canada's Kristyn Richardson will share the research BSC is conducting to fill knowledge gaps in our understanding of Bank and Barn Swallow habitat use

Winter Birding in Haldimand County

Sunday, January 17, 2pm to 6pm

We'll observe many wintering raptors, including Short-eared Owls, and waterfowl in open water along the Lake Erie shoreline. Bring binoculars and wear warm clothing.

Meet at Port Dover at the base of the dock on the west side of the harbour at 2pm sharp.

Contact Jody at 519-586-3531 ext.117 or Adam Timpf at 519-586-9964.

Guest Speaker:

Managing Problem Geese in Norfolk

Tuesday, February 9, 7:30pm

Rebecca Dancey is the "Goose Management Technician" with Norfolk County's Community Service Department. Unwanted geese have become a huge problem in urban parks. Rebecca will discuss what is being done locally to alleviate this.

NFN Meetings

Norfolk Field Naturalist meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month from September to May.

Meetings take place at the **Simcoe Seniors Centre, 89 Pond Street.**

The meetings are free and visitors are always welcome. Doors open at 7:15 pm, programs begin at 7:30 pm.

NFN Mailing Address

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

Next Lotus issue:

February 2016

Input dead line:

Friday, Jan 22, 2016

About the NFN

Norfolk Field Naturalists members participate in meetings and field outings, many of which are family-friendly. **Membership fees are \$20 Individual and \$30 Family.** Donations are eligible for income tax credits. Charitable registration # 11905869RR00001

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. Copies of the Lotus are available at meetings, by mail or by email and posted on the NFN web site. Articles published in the Lotus reflect the views and opinions of the authors, but not necessarily those of the NFN.

www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

2015 - 2016 NFN Executive with contact & project information

		<u>All 519-</u>	
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Director-at-large	Vacant		

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Butterfly Counts: (appointed) Adam Timpf 586-9964

Christmas Bird Counts: (appointed) David Okines - Woodhouse Count 519-586-9464
Linda Thrower - Fisherville Count 905-774-1230

Honorary President: Al Robinson

Honorary Directors: Harry Barrett, Jim Harlow