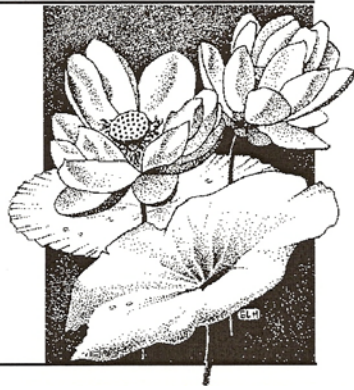


Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



SUMMER 2015



THE GREAT CANADIAN BIRDATHON

REPORT #1

Story and photos by: **George Pond**

By popular demand we are including as many as possible of George's beautiful bird photos.

Bruce and Ann Falls, Steve Wilcox, Jeremy Hussell and I, were doing our annual Birdathon to raise money for Bird Studies Canada and other related conservation projects. Four of us have been doing this for years. Jeremy was our rookie, but by no means a rookie birder; his young ears, sharp eyes and great ability to identify birds was a tremendous asset as he and our expert Steve found bird after bird that the rest of us could well have missed.

Because of other commitments we had picked May 26 and 27 to do our 24 hour Birdathon, knowing that it was a late date for migrating songbirds but still hoping for a good smattering of late arrivals. We would be disappointed this year and by the time we left the Long Point Peninsula we had only tallied a couple of migrants instead of the usual 20 or 30 - but that's birding.

With the lack of migrants we were forced to concentrate on breeding birds and under Steve's great leadership were able to come up with a very respectable group list of 130 birds.

Continued on page 2...

"Turn down the next road! Yesterday there was a flock of **Black-bellied Plovers** in a field and a single **Golden Plover** with them," Jeremy Hussell said, as we continued to search for birds on our Great Canadian Birdathon. Surprisingly the flock of about 75 of these beautiful tundra nesting shorebirds was still there and Jeremy soon had the Golden Plover, with its completely black underside, in the telescope for us all to see. The lighter head and white belly region of the Black-bellied Plovers were also easy to pick out. These birds were in the same plumage as when I photographed them in the High Arctic last July.



That first day we travelled much the same route as other years starting at 10am and covering the Long Point Old Cut "Banding" area, the Old Long Point Provincial Park, The Long Point Causeway viewing stand, the Front Road west of Port Rowan, the Bird Studies Canada headquarters property, the restored wetlands at the old Port Rowan lagoons, the Jackson Gunn old growth forest, bird feeders at Diane Salter's home, the Townsend lagoons, Port Ryerse waterfront, Avalon Park, Port Dover and Nanticoke harbours, the Nanticoke Creek near Cheapside, back to Long Point, the St. Williams forest and home for 4 hours of sleep.



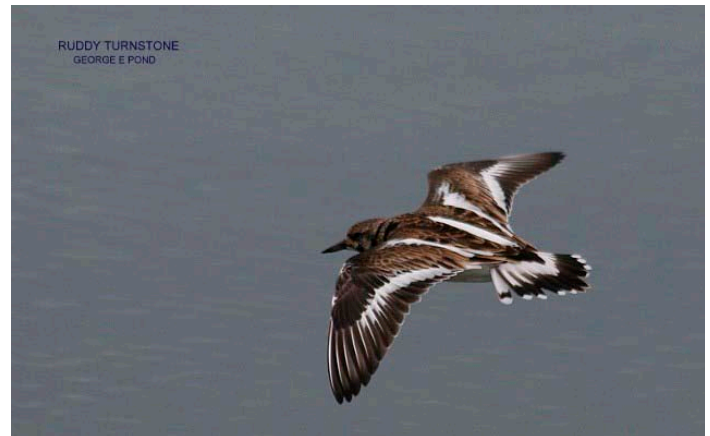
At 4 AM the following morning we headed for the Backus woods and the dawn chorus, checked a couple of feeders and back to the Old Cut banding area hoping, but to no avail, for some migrants.

Although Steve and Jeremy had no trouble walking, the rest of us are hampered, by age, and are only able to walk short distances; fortunately Steve had planned well and most of our birding was within a couple hundred metres of the car, a real blessing.

Highlights in Backus Woods, my favourite forest, included **Prothonotary Warbler**, **Yellow-throated Vireo**, **Scarlet Tanager**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, **Cerulean Warbler**, **Hooded Warbler**, **Pileated Woodpecker**, **Great Crested Flycatcher**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and **Northern Waterthrush**.

The Old Growth forest was good for **Red-headed Woodpeckers** which are now hard to find in our area. Jeremy knew of a **Least Bittern** nest in the Bird Studies Canada wetlands.

Although we had missed most of the migration of songbirds, we were still within the window of shorebird migration and we always like to search the lakeshore for **Whimbrel** and from a high overlook at Avalon Park we found a flock of about forty birds. Whimbrel pass through Southern Ontario from about May 19 to May 27 each year and flocks of 5 to 200 can sometimes be found resting for a few minutes or hours before continuing their long journey to the Arctic tundra. There were about 15 **Ruddy Turnstones** with the flock at Avalon.



I had set a goal of \$6,000 for this year's Birdathon, but hoped to match last year's of over \$8,000 and with any luck we (You and I) will do just that. So far we are over \$7,000 and I still have a number of usual sponsors to hear from. If you haven't sponsored me yet and would like to just make your cheque out to Bird Studies Canada and mail it to me at: George Pond 411 Queensway W, Simcoe, On. N3Y 2N4 or: Google the Great Canadian Birdathon, "Sponsor a Participant" and donate online. It's easy.

I haven't given you a blow by blow description of our adventure like I sometimes do as some people have asked for more pictures of pretty birds identified. I hope you enjoy them.

Continued on page 3...

BIRDATHON #1... continued from page 2

Thanks again for all your great support and know that the money is all used for bird related research, important natural area land acquisitions and other bird related conservation projects. I like to think that we are helping to make this world a little better, not just for ourselves but for our children, grand children and all future generations. I hate to think of a world without birds, not just for their beauty but for the good they do.

Thanks again! Sincerely,
George Pond



This is a list of birds identified during 2 Birdathons:

The left check marks are from May 9, 2015,
with Mike McMillan and group. **Total: 101**

The right check marks are from May 26 and 27, 2015,
with George Pond and group. **Total: 130**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Common Loon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Least Sandpiper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carolina Wren	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Common Yellowthroat
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pied-billed Grebe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dunlin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marsh Wren	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wilson's Warbler
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lesser Yellowlegs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	House Wren	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

REPORT #2

Story by Michael McMillan,
More photos by George Pond

On May 9, at 6:30 a.m. I arrived at George Pond's house in Simcoe to join George, Peggy McArthur, Alan McKeown, and Shelia Smith to begin my Birdathon.

A couple of minutes after leaving George's we made our first stop at a grassy field on Luscombe Drive just north of Highway 3 at the west end of Simcoe. Immediately I had my first three birds. An insect-like buzz was coming from a **Grasshopper Sparrow** perched on a long blade of grass. Somewhere in the distance, was the faint buzz of a **Clay-colored Sparrow**. Above us a **Tree Swallow** swooped in a circle before stopping to rest on a wire.



Just before we turned west on Highway 3 from Luscombe Drive a **Wild Turkey** exploded into flight out of a ditch. We headed south on Hillcrest Road and then turned west onto the 5th Concession. At a brief stop along this road the familiar "witchity-witchity" of a **Common Yellowthroat** came from a nearby wet area. On another concession road near Turkey Point Road, a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** flitted at the edge of a forest alongside the road.

Shortly after arriving at Bird Studies Canada at Port Rowan, we were joined by the other members of our group: Diane Salter, Betty Chanyi, and Anne Wynia. A quick scan of the wetland here yielded two **Green Herons**. Across the road numerous **Purple Martins** gathered around an eye-catching futuristic looking martin house. I had never before seen a martin house like this one.

The group all piled into three vehicles and headed to Old Cut. Along the causeway a solitary **Mute Swan** was visible on the bay side.

Summer 2015



A walk around Old Cut produced a **White-throated Sparrow**, a male **Scarlet Tanager**, a **Red-eyed Vireo**, a **Blue-headed Vireo**, a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, an **American Redstart**, a **Magnolia Warbler**, and a **Black-&- white Warbler**.

On a quick walk along Lighthouse Crescent I saw a **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, a **Palm Warbler** and a **Purple Finch**. Just as we were leaving Old Cut, we noticed several **Pine Siskins** at the bird feeders. I haven't often had Pine Siskins on the Birdathon because, by mid-May, they are usually further north.

Our next stop on Long Point at the Old Park was productive. Here we saw a **Brown Thrasher**, an **Eastern Wood Pewee**, several **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, a **Gray Catbird** and a **Warbling Vireo**. **Warblers** seen here were a **Black-throated Green**, a **Bay-breasted**, and a **Cape May**. Several people got excellent pictures of the Cape May Warbler as it posed close by in the bright sunlight. While we were in the park a **Loon** and a **Broad-winged Hawk** flew over.

During a quick stop at the lookout over the marsh on the causeway we spotted three **American Coots** and an **Eastern Kingbird**. Several **Barn Swallows** were nesting under the lookout.

Continued on page 5...



At the old Port Rowan sewage lagoon, now a restored wetland, were three kinds of **ducks**: **Redheads**, **Buffleheads** and **Mallards**. Nearby, a **Pied-billed Grebe** could be heard.

At a stop at a grassy field on the Front Road west of Port Rowan a **Bobolink's** head was visible poking out of the grass. A **Meadowlark** was perched in a distant tree.

Further west at the Port Royal bridge over Big Creek, the faces of **Cliff Swallows** peered from their mud nests attached to the underside of the bridge. A **Rough-winged Swallow** sat on a tree branch over the creek while a **Phoebe** periodically bobbed its tail from its perch on another tree branch. Further on, at the Lee Brown Sanctuary, were several **American Wigeons**.

Further west again, in a ploughed field amongst a group of **Ring-billed Gulls** were two **Bonaparte's Gulls**. Soon we arrived at the Jackson-Gunn Old Growth Forest where, in the distance, we heard a **Pileated Woodpecker** and, from the road, we were fortunate to have a good look at a **Red-headed Woodpecker** bouncing from tree trunk to tree trunk. On the ground nearby was a **Veery**.



Heading back east on the Front Road we stopped at Betty Chanyi's house where, at her bird feeders, we added several more species – a **White-crowned Sparrow**, a **House Finch**, **American Gold Finches** and a young **Orchard Oriole**. Betty's feeders also provided the best bird of the day, a **Harris' Sparrow**, a bird that was out of its territory because it should not be as far east as southern Ontario.

By now it was far past normal lunch time so we headed to Diane Salter's to enjoy our lunch on her deck while keeping an eye on her feeders. We were rewarded with an **Indigo Bunting**, a **White-breasted Nuthatch**, and a **Downy Woodpecker** while a **Great Blue Heron** flew past overhead.

Our first stop following lunch was at the Timpf property where an **Eastern Towhee** sang from its perch high up in a tree. Here I added an **Eastern Bluebird** and a **Swamp Sparrow** to my list.



Back at BSC those who had been car pooling picked up their own vehicles and we headed east. During a short stop in the parking area of the Backus Woods the clear “teacher-teacher-teacher” of an **Ovenbird** rang out. It is usually easier to hear this bird than to see it.

Just west of Port Ryerse a **Bald Eagle** soared over a field. Our Port Ryerse stop was quite productive. We found two **Kingfishers** along the creek. On some rocks not far off the lakeshore were **Forster's Terns**, **Caspian Terns** and a **Common Tern**. Far out on the water bouncing on the waves was a **Red-breasted Merganser**.

After a futile stop at the pier in Port Dover we headed to the Townsend Sewage Lagoons for our final stop of the day. On the mudflats here were several **Semi-palmated Sandpipers**, a **Least Sandpiper**, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** and a **Dunlin**. On the water were **Ruddy Ducks**, **Northern Shovelers** and a **Blue-winged Teal**. A **Solitary Sandpiper** flew by very closely to us.

My total for the day was **101 species**. I am grateful to the group for allowing me to join them. It was an enjoyable day for me doing my Birdathon with them. Without their help I would not have identified as many species. There is still some money to come in, but I am hopeful the final amount will exceed \$4,700. I am thankful to you, my sponsors, for raising this sum of money for bird research and conservation across the country.

Tax receipts will be issued by Bird Studies Canada either by e-mail or regular mail in the summer. Refer to the list on page 3 of the birds I managed to identify by seeing or hearing them.

Thank you for sponsoring me,
Mike

BIRDATHON #2

A different perspective by Anne Wynia

First, I just want to thank those who sponsored me in the Great Canadian Birdathon.

We had one of the most beautiful days for birding ever. It was summer weather, but the bugs were not biting, the trees were just starting to leaf out, the birds were singing and blossoms were sending out their pleasant aromas. Our group of 7 (Mike McMillan's group), several of whom are really good identifiers by song, saw 101 species. Many very colourful, like the Northern Orioles, Gold Finches, Red-headed Woodpecker, Bluebirds, Indigo Buntings, Scarlet Tanagers, Redstarts, Warblers such as Yellow, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green and Blue as well as Cardinals, Flickers and Wood Ducks. At the sewage lagoons were Scaups, Shovelers, Buffleheads, many other ducks, Dunlins, other shore birds like various Sandpipers, Yellow Legs, etc. The most unusual one at a feeder was a Harris' Sparrow, which is not very colourful like most sparrows, but with a black unmistakable face.

We always bring a delicious picnic lunch enjoyed by all at our friend's deck while watching the many, many birds at her feeders. About 5 o'clock we stopped at the Twins ice cream store in Port Rowan for ice cream where the owners gave each woman a red rose for Mothers Day.

Of course, we looked for chimney swifts there, but "no cigars". For those of you who are not familiar with these birds they look like flying cigars.

At our own feeders we have many Orioles, both Orchard and Northern, Pine Siskins, Indigo Buntings, Eastern Towhee, Woodpeckers and White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows etc. Just to let you know what a wonderful day we had.



Summer 2015

The Norfolk Field Naturalists

wish to recognize with gratitude the following participants in

The Great Canadian Birdathon

for their fundraising efforts on behalf of this organization:

Betty Chanyi, Peggy McArthur, Mike McMillan, George Pond and Anne Wynia.

Thank you!

Conservation Through Education

REPTILES AT RISK

Wednesday, July 29

Fun for all ages! 2:00 to 3:00pm

Advanced Workshop, 6:00 to 8:30pm

**Backus Heritage Conservation
Education Centre**



Rooted in Nature

Outdoor Family Festival

Looking for a fun experience that you and your kids can enjoy and remember for years to come?

**Backus Heritage Conservation Area
August 14th to 16th, 2015**

www.naturefest.ca

For more info, call Bernie at: 519-428-0706

Thank You!

From Norfolk Field Naturalists to

Will Partridge

Guardian Computing

For hosting our website

Sponsor a Youth to Attend 2015 Youth Summit

Help us invest in Ontario's next generation of naturalists by sponsoring a young person to attend Ontario Nature's Youth Summit for Biodiversity & Environmental Leadership. Your sponsorship of \$300 will cover the full cost of one person's participation, including attendance at workshops, accommodations and meals. Contact Sarah Hedges at sarahh@ontarionature.org to learn how you can become a youth sponsor.

Ontario Nature Welcomes 3 New Member Groups

The **Friends of Huntley Highlands**, the **Friends of the Salmon River** and the **Green Durham Association**. Now 155 groups strong, Ontario Nature's Nature Network continues to grow.

For further info on these topics, and more, visit:
www.ontarionature.org

IN MEMORIAM

On behalf of all of us at the Norfolk Field Naturalists we would like to convey our deepest condolences to the **Hussell Family** with regards to the passing of

David Hussell

IN MEMORIAM

On behalf of all of us at the Norfolk Field Naturalists we would like to convey our deepest condolences to the **McLeod Family** with regards to the passing of

Beverly McLeod

The NFN would also like to extend our warm gratitude to the following donors in memory of Beverly McLeod:

Hospital Staff Fund, Strathroy On
Barb Ballantyne, Hillburgh On
Anne Goulden, Sarnia On
Jennifer Walker, Simcoe, On

The NFN Board of Directors met twice since the April issue of Lotus, on April 28 and again on June 9. The following is a combined report from these meetings.

Treasurer's Report: Barb Hourigan reported that the NFN had received a grant of \$2,500.00 from the Bradstreet Foundation and \$7,997.00 from BCS re last year's Birdathon and \$90.00 other donations. The bookkeeper, Jen Whitton, is working on the NFN Year End (April 30)

Membership: Diane Salter reported paid memberships: Singles 45, Families 42, Contributing Members 8, Sustaining Members 5; Life Member 1.

Speaker Program: Len Grincevicius has booked guest speakers for the next season - all but 2 have been confirmed.

Field events: Bernie Solymar reported that all spring events have been very well attended.

Committees: Peter Carson reported that Rick Levick has been successful in raising \$500,000.00 for 2 new large culverts for the LPCIP (Causeway Project). The Nature's Calling Environmental Education outdoor program and the plans for the "Rooted in Nature" festival are proceeding well.

Butterflies of Haldimand-Norfolk: The checklist is now available. A big "Thank you" goes to Adam Timpf for his work on this update.

Next Meeting: The AGM will be held on Tuesday, September 8, 2015, at 7.30 at the Simcoe Senior's Centre.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

2015 season:

Paul & Lucy Personnic,

A belated, but just as warm a welcome to:

Sue and Ken Olmstead

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

Upcoming NFN 2015 Summer/Fall Events

Turkey Point Ravines Hike Friday, July 24, 7pm to 9pm

Audrey Heagy will lead this evening hike through the scenic ravines. Meet at the pull-out on Turkey Point Road south of Front Road.

Contact Audrey at 519-586-9464 or aheady@kwic.com

Sex and Song: Nocturnal Insects Saturday, August 15, 7:30pm to 10:30pm

Learn about Orthoptera (Crickets and Katydid) at Mary's and Peter's farm, 316 Norfolk County Road 60. For more info call 519-586-3985

Backus Woods at Night Saturday, August 29, 7:30pm to 9:30pm

Experience the sights and sounds of nocturnal wildlife during this night hike. Meet at the 3rd Concession Rd. entrance into Backus Woods.

Bring a flash light.

Contact Bernie at 519-428-0706 or solymar@nornet.on.ca

AGM with Guest Speaker Tuesday, September 8, 7:30pm Backyard Biodiversity An Introduction to the Secret Life of Lichens

Dr. Troy McMullin, who is a researcher at the University of Guelph, will help us to explore the often overlooked but beautiful and fascinating world of lichens.

Mushroom Identification Hike Saturday, October 3, 1 to 3pm

Learn how to identify mushrooms. Meet at the 3rd Concession entrance to Backus Woods
Contact Inga at 519-875-5601.

Guest Speaker: Nature in Belize Tuesday, October 13, 7:30pm

Margaret Pickles is a Science Professor at Niagara College. She will give a presentation about the diverse nature of Belize. This country, that is half covered by rain forest, provides habitat to a wide range of animals and over 540 species of birds.

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:

October 2015

Input dead line:

Friday, Sep 25, 2015

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

2014 - 2015 NFN Executive with contact & project information

		All 519-	
President / Field Events	Bernie Solymar	427-9969	solymar@nornet.on.ca
Vice-President, Environment/Sanctuary	Peter Carson	586-3985	gartcar@kwic.com
Past President	Audrey Heagy	586-9464	aheady@kwic.com
Treasurer	Barb Hourigan	583-1198	bbhourigan@yahoo.ca
Secretary	Eleanor Chithalen	582-4382	eleanor.chithalen@gmail.com
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Director-at-large,	Inga Hinnerichsen	875-5601	daveinga@live.ca
Director-at-large	Alan Ladd	426-8504	
Director-at-large	Vacant		
Director-at-large	Vacant		

Lotus Editor (appointed) Inga Hinnerichsen 875-5601 daveinga@live.ca
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