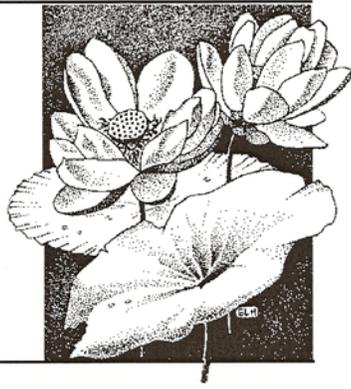


Lotus

NEWSLETTER
of the
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



FEBRUARY 2017



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT WOODHOUSE

Report by: David Okines

Greetings Counters,

These are the results of the 30th Woodhouse CBC held on Sunday December 18th 2016.

The Woodhouse CBC is centred 7 km east of Simcoe, at the crossroads of Highway 3 and Cockshut Road at Renton in Norfolk County and roughly covers from Port Dover to Waterford and just west of Simcoe to east of Jarvis.

Weather: The weather this year was certainly different from last year. Freezing rain overnight made for treacherous driving and walking. Overnight until nearly dawn there was freezing rain, then dry but cloudy all day. Nearly all standing water was covered in ice. Temperatures varied overnight between -1 and -9 with a daytime high of -1 for a short time before it dropped again. The wind was mostly calm or light until the afternoon when it increased slightly from the north west. The freezing rain curtailed a lot of owling so owl numbers are lower than normal this year.



Sandhill Crane Photo: Len Grincevicius

A big **Thank You!** to Madaline Wilson for hosting the roundup and to the Norfolk Field Naturalists for sponsoring the Woodhouse CBC.

Total Species: 84 with no Count Week species (average for the last 29 years = 78, average for the last 10 years = 85)

Total Individuals: 20,460 (average for the last 29 years = 29,269, average for the last 10 years = 23,783)

Number of participants: 39



Long-tailed Duck Photo: George Pond

Continued on page 2...

Christmas Bird Count

...continued from Page 1



FOX SPARROW
George Pond

NEW SPECIES TO THE COUNT: None

COUNT WEEK SPECIES: None

RECORD HIGH: (previous high)

Horned Grebe	9	(5)
Long-tailed Duck	8	(5)
Golden Eagle	2	(1)
Sandhill Crane	284	(174)
Horned Lark	805	(708)
American Robin	101	(59)
Fox Sparrow	11	(4)

RECORD LOW: (previous low)

Great Blue Heron	1 (= lowest)	Average 5
Northern Mockingbird	1 (= lowest)	Average 3
Common Grackle	1 (= lowest)	Average 3

SPECIES ABOVE AVERAGE (last 10 year average)

Greater Scaup	395	(135)
Hooded Merganser	27	(16)
Greater Scaup	396	(135)
Bald Eagle	14	(7)
Northern Harrier	21	(13)
Sharp-shinned Hawk	10	(6)
Rough-legged Hawk	15	(10)
Merlin	3	(1)
Wild Turkey	291	(129)
Great Black-backed Gull	17	(11)
American Pipit	27	(8)
White-crowned Sparrow	39	(7)
Slate-coloured Junco	1839	(1000)
Snow Bunting	1496	(435)
House Sparrow	1046	(885)

SPECIES WELL BELOW AVERAGE (last 10 year average)

Great Blue Heron	3	(5)
Mallard	779	(2191)
American Black Duck	40	(183)
Redhead	123	(558)
Common Goldeneye	97	(148)
Bufflehead	167	(279)
Common Merganser	247	(583)
Red-breasted Merganser	274	(699)
Bonaparte's Gull	14	(112)
Ring-billed Gull	318	(1316)
Rock Pigeon	253	(628)
Black-capped Chickadee	321	(420)
Golden-crowned Kinglet	15	(29)
Eastern Bluebird	23	(52)
Cedar Waxwing	9	(60)
Song Sparrow	17	(53)
Swamp Sparrow	5	(18)
Red-winged Blackbird	11	(28)
Rusty Blackbird	2	(12)
American Goldfinch	194	(308)

NOTABLE ABSENTEES

Tundra Swan	1st time since 2009
Lesser Scaup	1st time since 2007
Ruffed Grouse	7th year in a row
Northern Shrike	1st time since 2003
Brown Creeper	1st time since 2007

ALSO WORTHY OF MENTION

Turkey Vulture	1 (10th record)
Red-shouldered Hawk	1 (1st since 2011)
Sandhill Crane	284 (2nd record)
Iceland Gull	1 (2nd record)
Glaucous Gull	2 (6th record)
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1 (4th record)
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1 (1st since 2009)
Common Raven	1 (2nd record)
Eastern Tufted Titmouse	2 (1 or more or none)
Hermit Thrush	2 (10th record)

Hermit Thrush

Photo:
George Pond



Christmas Bird Count

...continued from Page 2

FULL SPECIES LIST AND TALLY

Horned Grebe	9		
Great Blue Heron	1		
Turkey Vulture	1		
Mute Swan	3		
Canada Goose	6461		
Cackling Goose	2		
Mallard	779		
American Black Duck	40		
Gadwall	19		
Redhead	123		
Greater Scaup	396		
Common Goldeneye	97		
Long-tailed Duck	8		
Bufflehead	167		
Hooded Merganser	27		
Common Merganser	247		
Red-breasted Merganser	274		
Bald Eagle	14		
Northern Harrier	21		
Sharp-shinned Hawk	10		
Cooper's Hawk	6		
Red-shouldered Hawk	1		
Red-tailed Hawk	101		
Rough-legged Hawk	15		
Golden Eagle	2		
American Kestrel	17		
Merlin	3		
Ring-necked Pheasant	1		
Wild Turkey	291		
Sandhill Crane	284		
Bonaparte's Gull	14		
Ring-billed Gull	318		
Herring Gull	121		
Iceland Gull	1		
Glaucous Gull	2		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1		
Great Black-backed Gull	17		
		Rock Pigeon	253
		Mourning Dove	547
		Eastern Screech-Owl	8
		Great-horned Owl	1
		Belted Kingfisher	3
		Red-bellied Woodpecker	32
		Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1
		Downy Woodpecker	80
		Hairy Woodpecker	8
		Yellow-shafted Flicker	3
		Pileated Woodpecker	3
		Blue Jay	270
		American Crow	572
		Common Raven	1
		Horned Lark	805
		Black-capped Chickadee	321
		Eastern Tufted Titmouse	2
		Red-breasted Nuthatch	22
		White-breasted Nuthatch	60
		Carolina Wren	11
		Golden-crowned Kinglet	15
		Eastern Bluebird	23
		Hermit Thrush	2
		American Robin	101
		Northern Mockingbird	1
		European Starling	1410
		American Pipit	27
		Cedar Waxwing	9
		American Tree Sparrow	777
		Field Sparrow	1
		Fox Sparrow	11
		Song Sparrow	17
		Swamp Sparrow	5
		White-throated Sparrow	9
		White-crowned Sparrow	39
		Slate-colored Junco	1835
		Lapland Longspur	5
		Snow Bunting	1496
		Northern Cardinal	225
		Red-winged Blackbird	11
		Rusty Blackbird	2
		Common Grackle	1
		Brown-headed Cowbird	319
		Purple Finch	1
		House Finch	172
		American Goldfinch	194
		House Sparrow	1046
		Total	84 Sp



Rusty Blackbirds Photo: George Pond



Sandhill Cranes Photo: Len Grincevicius

NATURE DOWN-UNDER THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Another travel chronicle by Inga Hinnerichsen
Photos also by Inga, or as noted

The Top End (Tropical North Australia) has 2 seasons: "The Wet", December to May, and "The Dry", June to November. Torrential monsoon rains flood the outback and occasional cyclones pummel the coastlines during "The Wet" making ground travel almost impossible. The rains end and the floods subside during "The Dry". Rivers shrink leaving landlocked billabongs and waterfalls are not much more than a trickle. By October - November the outback is parched, only the hardiest of plants remain green, including a variety of Eucalypts and Spinifex grass, that have successfully adapted to this feast-and-famine climate. On the east side of the coastal dividing mountain ranges the tropical rainforests remain lush all year.



The ever-present Rainbow Lorikeets

Our trek took us from Cairns to the high plateau of the Atherton Tablelands, north to Cooktown and back to Daintree and Cape Tribulation. Various campsites along the trek provided lots of nature viewing. Tiny lizards (unidentified) and large Lace Monitors, up to 1.5m long, were common, but again, no snakes... probably a good thing. Most mammals and marsupials are more active after dark. They tend to snooze away the hot mid-day hours in shady hideaways. "Spotlighting" is a way to observe nocturnal wildlife.

Late one evening at a campsite in Atherton we had a very interesting visitor: A Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo appeared climbing down from a nearby tree. This small 'Roo spends most of its life in the tree canopy. It sat on the ground watching us for a moment and climbed back up its tree.



Lumholtz' Tree Kangaroo
by Joseph Smit (Wikipedia)

A boat trip on Daintree River yielded an impressive Estuarine Crocodile, a.k.a. Salt-water Crocodile or 'Saltie'. This dominant male was well over 4m long. They can easily take large prey, like cattle, that come down to the river for a drink. It's smaller cousin, the Fresh-water Crocodile, is not a threat to humans... normally. While we were there, a Danish tourist was climbing down a river bank to get a better photo of a "Freshie", slipped and fell on top of the poor creature, which bit him in the arm.

It made the news.

My objective on this trip was to identify as many Australian birds as possible. This time I was prepared: I had listened to CDs with bird calls and I brought along a few field guide books, including "Birds of Australia" by Graham Pizzey. Easier said than done. My total was a meager 106 species, barely a drop in the bucket! I'm not going to bother with a complete bird list here, instead I'll relate some facts about a few species I fancy.



Bush stone-curlew and Beach stone-curlew
Photos by JJ Harrison and "Summerdrought" (Wikipedia)

Nature Down-Under ...Continued from Page 4

One of them is a large bird of the shorebird group: the Bush stone-curlew. (See photos on previous page) Despite its name it doesn't look like our Curlews or Willets. It is much larger and has a short, stout bill - not curved - and it doesn't behave like a shore bird either. It lives upland and it's nocturnal! Because of its habits it is hard to spot, most people have only heard its call, an eerie wail in the dark. The early settlers were spooked by it believing there were evil spirits out there in the night. We spotted this bird a few times as it appeared out of the dark flying low to the ground. The Bush stone-curlew has a close relative: The Beach stone-curlew. Unlike its upland nocturnal cousin, this bird forages along deserted beaches during the day. We spotted one during one of our previous trips, this time it was absent. The Beach stone-curlew is an uncommon bird in the northern and eastern coastal areas.



Australian Bustard



Tawny Frogmouth

Another of their upland relatives is the Australian Bustard. We saw them near Mount Carbine. The male Bustard is known for its peculiar display behaviour: He inflates a large, pendulous breast sac swinging and twisting it as he balloons his throat with his bill skyward and roars like a lion. Mount Carbine is a hidden gem along the inland road to Cooktown. A few years ago we stayed at the campground over night, but had to leave the next day to catch a flight. We always wanted to come back for a longer stay.

There was a tungsten mine near the small hamlet, active in the 1970's and 80's. The mining company developed the area for their employees c/w a swimming pool and a facilities building, tennis court and basketball court, community hall, a large fountain complex with a rock memorial and stone barbecue fire places. All of this is now abandoned. The terraced and landscaped hill is now a campground run by Robert and Jennifer, whom we already met on our first trip. They are avid birders and a great source of knowledge on local birds. They will happily give out a map showing good birding spots and a checklist of close to 200 species inhabiting the surrounding area. Many of the birds are nectar feeders, among others the tiny Olive-breasted Sunbird. It hovers like a Hummingbird, but doesn't fly sideways or backwards. It constructs a beautiful hanging nest with a hooded entrance.

I'm particularly fond of nocturnal birds (you may have noticed!) The Tawny Frogmouth is about the size of an Eastern Screech Owl. At night you can hear its resonant call "oom-oom-oom-oom..." It roosts during the day close to a tree trunk where its mottled brown plumage blends perfectly with the bark of the tree. To further avoid detection it squints its eyes to minimize any glint.

We found the best bush camp just south of Cooktown near the hamlet of Helenville behind a famous watering hole called The Lion's Den. At the far end of the campground is a secluded corner surrounded by lush rainforest. Brush Turkeys and Yellow-footed Scrubfowl, both of the Mound-builder group, forage in the leaf litter and the trees are alive with many other birds. A small stream flows right behind the site. It provided many refreshing swims in the heat of the day. - No Salties this far inland! Only a few Lace Monitors.



IN MEMORIAM
HARRY B. BARRETT

1922 - 2017

**First President of Norfolk Field Naturalists
and Honorary Director**

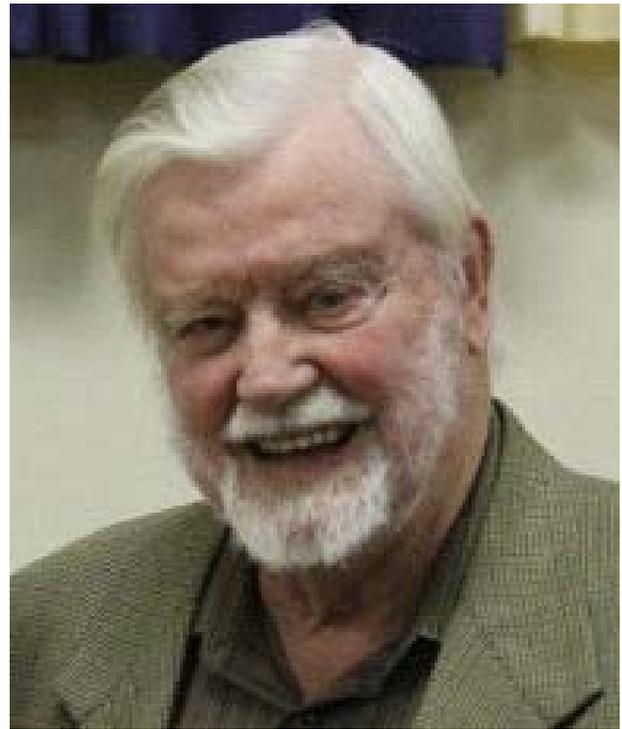
On January 26th, 2017, the NFN and the entire community of Norfolk County lost one of its greatest. Harry B. Barrett was a philanthropist, historian, naturalist, family man and a dear friend of so many.

In 1962 Monroe Landon, another of our great naturalists, called a meeting at his house. The objective was to revive the old naturalist club, which had fallen by the wayside during the war years. As one of the founding members of Norfolk Field Naturalists Harry B. Barrett was appointed the first President of the new club. In 2012 the NFN celebrated its 50th Anniversary and is today going strong after all these years. As a token of deep gratitude for his long and dedicated service to the NFN Harry B. Barrett was bestowed with the Honorary Directorship.

After finishing his general education he joined the local militia in 1939 and the Royal Canadian Navy in 1941 and was discharged as a lieutenant in 1945. With a BSA degree in Animal Husbandry from the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, he joined his father in the management of the family farms.

In 1959 Harry began teaching Agriculture in Hagersville High School and two years later in Simcoe Composite School. In 1969, he was asked to head up Fanshaw College, Norfolk School of Agriculture.

During his long, rich and productive life Harry B. Barrett was, among other things, the founding president of the Dover Mills Heritage Association, president of the Norfolk Historical Society and founding director of the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation. He served on the executive of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the Ontario Historical Society and the Ontario Heritage Foundation and the Norfolk Heritage Association.



Harry B. Barrett at the NFN 50th Anniversary Gala

He served as a provincial appointee on the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, also Chairman of the Niagara Escarpment Committee instrumental in promoting the idea of Bruce Trail. He was a long standing member of the Lynn Valley Trail Association. An exceptional birder, he was a big supporter and donor raising funds for Long Point Bird Observatory and BSC participating in the annual Birdathons until a few years ago. He was a life member of BSC and assisted with banding. He rarely missed an NFN event.

Harry B. Barrett was the recipient of many prestigious awards recognizing his commitment and dedication to the conservation of nature in Ontario. Recently he was inducted into the Norfolk Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Adding to his achievements, Harry B. Barrett was the author of several interesting and informative books, including *The 19th Century Journals and Paintings of William Pope*, *Lore and Legends of Long Point*, *Murray and me*, *The Navy and me*, *The Parish of St. Paul's*, *They had a Dream*, *Alligators of the North* and *The Nature of Norfolk*.

On behalf of Norfolk Field Naturalists we would like to extend our deepest sympathy to the Barrett family. Harry B. will be sadly missed by all of us. He was laid to rest at a private ceremony and a public celebration of his life will take place in May.



ON continues to fight for Snapping Turtles and Bull Frogs

Ontario is one of only two provinces that still has a snapping turtle hunt and we want that to change. Right now, snapping turtles can be hunted year round in some parts of the province and from July 15 to September 15 in other parts. The daily bag limit is 2 and the possession limit is 5. The proposal is to reduce the season to run from August 15 to September 15, with a daily bag limit of 1 and a possession limit of 2. A change for the better, but certainly not what is needed.

- Snapping turtle populations cannot sustain even small increases in adult mortality.
- Turtles are the most threatened taxa globally.
- Snapping turtles face many threats; hunting adds to the cumulative impact.
- The hunt contradicts proposed provincial and federal management objectives, which aim to sustain populations.
- The snapping turtle is a **species at risk**. How can Ontario justify a hunt for a species that is on the road to extinction?

MNR is also proposing to continue the hunting of bullfrogs, a species threatened by agrochemicals, road salt, road mortality and invasive species.

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

**Report poaching of turtles on Long Point to:
1-877-847-7667 or OPP**

Thank You!

**From Norfolk Field Naturalists to
Will Partridge / Guardian Computing
For hosting our website**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Winter 2017

The NFN Board of Directors met on January 24, 2017. The following are highlights of this meeting:

Treasurer's Report: Barb reported deposits totalling \$ 610.00 in December/January.

It was decided to reimburse Adam Timpf by \$150.00 for his expenses with the Long Point Butterfly Count and Madaline Wilson by \$100 for hosting the round-up dinner after the Christmas Bird Count. The maturing GICs held by NFN will be rolled over as usual.

Directors' reports: Membership - Diane reports an up-to-date listing of 89 paid-up members, including family memberships.

Speaker programme - Len noted that the booking of four spring and three fall speakers is underway, with some leads for 2018 already. Keeping in touch with other Carolinian and Field Naturalist groups is good for speaker recommendations.

Field outings - Bernie noted that there have been so many inquiries about the Owl Prowl event that he is concerned about too many people attending. Bernie reports that the spring event for members only will be a single day in the Elgin/Lambton area on June 3rd.

Committee reports: NCEE - : Bernie reported on various new camps for elementary school students.. All activities will take place outside. A Forest School is set to open for kindergarten-age children, with teacher Colleen Dale. NCEE is looking for property for this venture. A barn dance fund raiser will be held. There will be a celebration of pollinators on Earth Day (April 22nd) There will be a Silent Auction fund raiser during the NFN Movie Night.

Constitution and Bylaws: The constitution and bylaws presently in place are unwieldy and obsolete. They will be archived and replaced. A subcommittee consisting of Bernie Solymar, Inga Hinnerichsen and Jan Grincevicius will meet in March to condense and update the contents using Federal Government standard bylaws guidelines.

The next BoD Meeting will be held on April 25, 2017.

Upcoming NFN 2017 Winter Events

Backus Woods in Winter:

Tree Ecology Hike

**Saturday, March 11, 2017,
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.**

NCC ecologist Brett Norman will take us on a crisp winter walk in the North Tract of Backus Woods to learn how to identify trees in winter and their ecology.

Meet at the Backus Woods parking lot off of Hwy #24, 1 P.M.

Dress for the season!

Contact Bernie at 519-428-0706.

Raptor Migration Monitoring

**Tuesday, March 14, 2017,
7:30-9:00 pm**

Bruce Mackenzie (BSC's Stu Mackenzie's father) will talk of the work being done by the Niagara Peninsula Hawk Watch, which monitors raptor migration. Since 1990 this organization has been in place to study, educate and promote the enjoyment of hawk watching.

Bonnieheath Farm and ALUS

**Tuesday, April 11, 2017,
7:30-9:00 pm**

Anita and Steve Buehner, NFN members, are owners/operators of Bonnieheath Estate Lavender and Winery. Anita will talk about running their farm in a nature friendly way and how ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) was involved in the set-up of their operation.

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:

April 2017

Input dead line:

Friday, March 24, 2017

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

2016 - 2017 NFN Executive with contact & project information

		All 519-	
President	Inga Hinnerichsen	875-5601	daveinga@live.ca
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Director-at-large	Ken Olmstead	583-1436	ksolmstead@kwic.com
Director-at-large	Cliff Skerratt	582-0319	

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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 (deseased), Jim Harlow