

Lotus

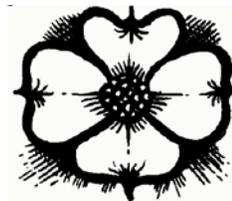
NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



APRIL 2013



REPORT ON THE FISHERVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Compiled by: Linda Thrower
Photos from Wikimedia Commons

It was a nice day for the 23rd Annual Fisherville Christmas Bird Count, especially for January 5th. The temperature ranged from -3°C in the early morning to 0°C just before noon. The day began partly sunny, the cloud cover over the lake took the glare away so the waterfowl were countable. Just after noon the West winds increased to 20 kph that brought flurries late in the day, but with all the warm temperatures of this winter the lake was 95% open water. As always, this year's count had a lot of record high numbers for some species and not so many lows. There are also a few new species and some species that have not been seen in a while.

Fisherville saw its first **Common Loon** since 2004. The **Double-crested Cormorants** were found in their highest numbers since 1999 with 5 spotted this year. **Snow Geese** were seen in their highest numbers since 1990 when there were 8 spotted; this year 5 white phase were seen and 1 blue phase for a total of 6. The 23 **Mute Swans** seen this year was the highest number since this count started in 1989. The swans must like the open water of the lake because the 134 **Tundra Swans** was also a record number. You know it's a good swan day when you have all 3 species of swans! **Trumpeter Swans** were not to be outdone and the two seen were also the most ever for this species. Even the **Gadwalls** were enjoying the day with their highest numbers since this Fisherville count began with 137 seen. **American Wigeons** were once again on the count with 1 being seen, a first since 2007. **Canvasbacks** were also back on the count, again a first since 2007. **Redheads** were the waterfowl of the day with the sun reflecting off their heads, being out in their highest numbers since this count started with over 5000 spotted on the lake. Two **Ring-necked Ducks** were seen, a first since April 2013

1999. **Red-breasted Mergansers** were found in their highest numbers since the count started. New to the Fisherville Christmas Bird Count are 50 **Black Scoters**. **Bald Eagles** were flying in their highest numbers as well. **Killdeers** are back on the count, a first since 2005. With all the open water the **Belted Kingfishers** tied last year's number at 2. **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** were out enjoying the day in their highest numbers since 1989. **Northern Mockingbirds** hit record numbers since 2001. **American Pipits** were back on the count with the highest numbers since 2003. **Mourning Doves** hit their highest numbers since 2000. **Horned Larks** were also in their highest numbers since 2003. **Eastern Meadowlarks** are back on the count, a first since 2010. **Slate-colored Juncos'** numbers were their highest since 2003. There were even a few confused **Chipping Sparrows** out on this January day in their highest numbers since the count began. **Field Sparrows** and **Fox Sparrows** were found on this count, both for the first time since 2005. To top off the sparrow count, the **Savannah Sparrow** was a first for this count. Hiding in those sparrows were the first **Lapland Longspurs** on this count since 2009. **Snow Buntings** were found in their highest numbers since this count began as well.

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American Wigeon (Photo: Peter Massas)

Fisherville Count

...Continued from page 1

With all those high numbers were there any lows this year? Yes, **Pine Siskins** were found in their lowest numbers since 1991 as well as the fewest **Golden-crowned Kinglets** since 1989.

Species seen on this day and their numbers were as follows :

Common Loon - 1
Double-crested Cormorant - 5
Great-Blue Heron - 24
Snow Goose (w) - 5
Snow Goose (b) - 1
Cackling Goose - 1
Canada Goose - 6853
Mute Swan - 23
Trumpeter Swan - 2
Tundra Swan - 134
Gadwall - 137
American Wigeon - 1
American Black Duck - 190
Mallard - 1590
Canvasback - 4
Redhead - 5904
Ring-necked Duck - 2
Greater Scaup - 4906
Black Scoter - 50
Bufflehead - 584
Common Goldeneye - 119
Common Merganser - 675
Red-breasted Merganser - 1859
Ruddy Duck - 1
Bald Eagle - 22
Northern Harrier - 19
Sharp-shinned Hawk - 8
Coopers Hawk - 6
Red-tailed Hawk - 134
Rough-legged Hawk - 14
American Kestrel - 31
Peregrine Falcon - 1
Ring-necked Pheasant - CW
Wild Turkey - 263
American Coot - 5
Killdeer - 2
Bonaparte's Gull - 9
Greater Black-backed Gull - 172
Ring-billed Gull - 395
Herring Gull - 346
Rock Pigeon - 471
Mourning Dove - 908
Eastern Screech-Owl - 6
Great Horned Owl - 5
Short-eared Owl - 2

Belted Kingfisher - 2
Red-bellied Woodpecker - 83
Downy Woodpecker - 100
Hairy Woodpecker - 17
Northern Shrike - 8
Blue Jay - 358
American Crow - 276
Horned Lark - 379
Black-capped Chickadee - 456
Tufted Titmouse - 20
Red-breasted Nuthatch - 15
White-breasted Nuthatch - 77
Brown Creeper - 2
Carolina Wren - 6
Winter Wren - 2
Golden-crowned Kinglet - 5
Eastern Bluebird - 52
Hermit Thrush - 3
American Robin - 1
Northern Mockingbird - 27
European Starling - 2316
American Pipit - 7
American Tree Sparrow - 1279
Chipping Sparrow - 5
Field Sparrow - 3
Savannah Sparrow - 1
Fox Sparrow - 1
Song Sparrow - 24
Swamp Sparrow - 4
White-throated Sparrow - 4
White-crowned Sparrow - 10
Slate-colored Junco - 728
Lapland Longspur - 5
Snow Bunting - 2559
Northern Cardinal - 251
Red-winged Blackbird - 39
Eastern Meadowlark - 2
Rusty Blackbird - 6
Yellow-shafted Flicker - 3
Brown-headed Cowbird - 392
Purple Finch - 2
House Finch - 204
Common Redpoll - 174
Pine Siskin - 1
American Goldfinch - 417
House Sparrow - 1390

Total Species - 91
Individuals : - 37606



Now the people who were nice enough to get out of their very warm beds and count the birds were as follows :

Luke Stephenson
Aaron Allenson
Richard Skevington
Steve Thorpe
Bill Read
Jerry Guenther
Jim Smith
Beth Powell
Mary & Roy Galli
Garnet Mathews
Cindy Cartwright
George Pond
Rick Dawson
Allan Aubin
Ernie & Tammy King
Wes Raymond
Adam & Matt Timpf
Tom Thomas
Chris Street
Hugh McAthur
Julia Weaver
Randy Wilson
Fred Kopier
Rob Smuck
Owen Smuck (age 4)
Jim Heslop
Bob Stamp
Francis Smuck
Alan & Linda Thrower
Audrey Heagy
David Okines
Diane Salter

Thank You All So Very Much for all of Your Efforts !



Left: Golden-crowned Kinglet (ph: Gary Irwin)

Above: Savannah Sparrow (ph: Cephas)

SALAMANDERS IN CRISIS

An Overview of why Salamander Conservation is Needed.

By Matt Ellerbeck - Salamander Conservationist

Editor's Note: This article has been edited in length to fit space allocation.



Spotted Salamander with egg mass (Photo: Bernie Solymár)

Although they are rarely given much thought, and often overlooked when they are, salamanders are in a terrible crisis. Around half of all the world's salamander species are listed as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Sadly for some salamanders it is already too late, as both the Yunnan Lake Newt (*Cynops wolterstorffi*) and Ainsworth's Salamander (*Plethodon ainsworthi*) have already gone extinct. Salamanders have been on the earth for over 160 million years. Even those species that are not experiencing population declines deserve attention and conservation to ensure that they remain healthy and stable.

One of the biggest issues affecting salamanders is the loss of their natural habitat. Many areas that were once suitable for salamanders have now been destroyed for developmental construction and agriculture. Where natural habitats do still exist, they are often fragmented or degraded. Salamander populations are affected since gene flow between the populations is prevented. Habitat fragmentation

often eliminates crucial requirements which are critical to the survival of salamander populations. They include spaces that can be utilized for thermoregulation, prey capture, breeding, and over-wintering.

Breeding sites, often in the forms of vernal pools are particularly important. According to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), there is some evidence that certain salamander species have individuals that return to the pond in which they were born once they reach maturity. Therefore, destruction of a breeding pond may result in loss of the entire population returning to that site.

Degradation occurs when the natural habitat has been altered to such a degree that it is unlikely that any remaining salamanders species would be able to survive. As amphibians, salamanders have extremely absorbent skins. Industrial contaminants, sedimentation into waterways, sewage run off, pesticides, oils, other chemicals and toxic substances can all be absorbed by salamanders. They can also cause deformities to occur. A study conducted at Purdue University found that out of 2,000 adult and juvenile salamanders 8 percent had visible deformities.

According to Save The Frogs, Atrazine (perhaps the most commonly used herbicide on the planet, with some 33 million kg being used annually in the US alone) can reduce survivorship in salamanders. For example, Roundup and many other surfactant-loaded glyphosate formulations are labeled for non-aquatic use. Salamanders also routinely use non-aquatic areas and could easily be exposed to glyphosate formulations that contain harmful surfactants through direct application and not just incidental drift.

Habitats are often isolated and cut off from one another by the roads and highways that now run through them. Countless numbers of salamanders are killed on roads and highways every year. The Wetlands Ecology and Management (2005) population projections for spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*) life tables imply that an annual risk of road mortality for adults of greater than 10% can lead to local population extirpation.

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Reducing road mortality is paramount to preserving salamander species. (*The Long Point Causeway underpasses will reduce road kill along this busy road through primary reptile and amphibian habitat*)



Salamander eggs at vernal pool (photo: Bernie Solymár)

Chemical run-off from vehicles also contaminate roadside ditches and pools. According to Steven P. Brady (2012) survival in roadside pools averaged just 56%, as compared to 87% in woodland pools. Salamanders are also threatened when they are harvested from the wild. Salamanders are taken for the pet trade, for food markets (mudpuppies), and for use as fishing bait.

There is much about salamanders that scientists do not know. Aspects of the biology, ecology, and lifestyles of many species is a mystery. This undoubtedly means human interference is negatively affecting salamanders in ways in which we don't even know. The intricate relation between all species and the vital roles they play within ecosystems is also being altered. Such alterations can have serious consequences to not just salamanders, but many other animals as well (including humans).

To find out how you can help please see:
www.savethesalamanders.com

Note by Bernie Solymár:

This article is factual for the most part, although I'd argue with Matt re. supposed impacts of herbicides – at least in reference to Ontario species, which spend their lives in woods and associated ponds and vernal pools. Fortunately, in our area, these habitats are unlikely to be impacted by herbicides – directly or indirectly – as in agricultural run-off.

REPORT ON NFN WINTER ACTIVITIES

All 3 meetings in January, February and March featured excellent guest speakers and were well-attended.

Don & Marg Werden and Kathryn Boothby told us about the habitat restoration projects on their properties with great before-and-after photos.

Tony and Gillian Davey put their personal spin on their African Safari experiences with some very entertaining videos.

Deanna Lindblad gave an enthusiastic presentation with photos from her visits to several research stations in the US specializing in butterfly conservation and management.

Winter Birding in Haldimand County

The leaders, Audrey Heagy and David Okines, were joined by ca. 20 birders braving the windy winter conditions. The group kept warm with a pit stop for hot beverages and the afternoon was a success.

- Read more about it in our feature article in the June Lotus!

Normandale Fish Culture Station Tour

Despite blustery winter weather this outing was well attended. The tour only included the facility on Front Road because of ongoing construction at the new site. Paul Fraser of MNR is also happy to take small groups on guided tours at any time.

Owl Prowl at Hay Creek

About 60 people turned out for the Owl Prowl, hosted in partnership with NCEE. Although we were unsuccessful in getting any Screech or Great Horned Owls to return our "calls", it was still a beautiful night – calm, clear and a gorgeous (almost full) moon to light our way. Everyone had a good time.

Backus Woods Winter Hike

A total of 15 participants plus 2 leaders headed out for the tree ID hike at Backus Woods (including one couple with 5 kids ranging in age from 5 months to 9 years). Tom and Brett did a good job pointing out ID features of many different tree species.

SEND US YOUR BEST SHOT!

We would like to share our Members' nature / landscape photos in the next issues of LOTUS

Email to: daveinga@live.ca

Email subject line: Photos for LOTUS

(to avoid being deleted as junk mail)

KEY NOTE SPEECH
AT THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
BY: JOHN RILEY
Senior Science Adviser for
Nature Conservancy of Canada
PART 2

Editor's note: Due to its length this presentation is published in 3 parts in the February, April and June LOTUS issues. Maps, photographs and other illustrations, which were part of this presentation will be included in John Riley's book "The Once and Future Great Lakes Country" to be published this year.

Continued from the February issue of LOTUS:

Galinee echoed Champlain's earlier code for plenty, QUOTE "an abundance of fruiting trees, and grapes so plentiful that one could live on them." They gathered QUOTE "walnuts and chestnuts, which were there in great quantity. We had...in our granary 23 or 24 *minots* [bushels] of these fruits, besides apples, plums and grapes." They made red wine that winter and, overall, the country was QUOTE "open, interspersed with beautiful *prairies*." Thirty years later Hennepin would use similar language to describe the land between lakes Erie and Huron; QUOTE "scattered groves and forests... made up of walnut-trees, chestnut-trees, plum-trees and pear-trees, loaded with their own fruit and vines."

- This is Galinee's map detail for this part of the country. You can make out S.W. Ontario for the first time, but you can see that all his writing is upside-down, because Galinee mapped the lands farthest from New France – the south – at the top of his map.
- Grazing by wildlife, and deliberate and accidental Native ground fires, kept the best drained uplands of southern Ontario predominantly in open prairie and oak woodlands. The Norfolk Sand Plain, Long Point and Turkey Point are an ancient delta built by post-glacial meltwaters flowing off the Ontario Island to the north, dumping its sandy sediments where it hit the quiet waters of proto-Lake Erie. Other landscapes, such as the clay plains of southwesternmost Ontario and the

limestone alvars of other parts of southern Ontario, were also kept treeless by the stresses of spring flooding and late-summer drought, in addition to ground fires.

Open habitats were not invented by Natives but they were adopted, expanded and cared for by them. In 1987, Julian Szeicz and Glen MacDonald, at McMaster University, cored lakes at the north end of the Norfolk sand plain. The pollen showed that oak savanna had started here between 6800 and 4500 Before Present, coinciding with the warmer climate at that time and with the settling there of Natives. There are nineteen known Native encampments near those lakes, and no doubt that fire was used to keep the land open. Of course, these open systems, so attractive to wildlife, were the same light soils that Natives could farm successfully. Natives were gone completely by the time of Galinee's visit.

To date, it has been acknowledged by paleoecologists that just over five percent of Ontario south of the Canadian Shield was directly converted by Native farming, clearing and settlement, an area about the same extent as all the sandy uplands near water that were arable using Native tools.

Native land care, however, extended those impacts to three or four times that area of land, primarily through firing the land to keep it clear and improve wildlife habitat, and by regular coppicing of trees to ensure a steady supply of fire-wood and pole-wood. This was an occupied landscape.

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Vitis Riparia (River Bank Grape) Photo: Wikipedia

KEY NOTE SPEECH

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Let's move forward in time. A century and a half after Native land care ceased, Norfolk was still "open woods," as Elizabeth Simcoe called it in 1795. In the same year, the surveyor William Chewett visited Long Point. "Long Point," he said, at "the eastern extremity, for five miles...is formed of low, narrow ridges of sand hills....[of] scrubby cedar, juniper, willow and small scrubby pine....Eight miles farther to the west, the sand hills are higher, in narrow ridges and ponds of water between them, the timber is small scrubby cedar, juniper, willow, small basswood, small pines and innumerable quantities of the sand cherry....Four miles farther to the west...the timber is small white oak, a larger sort of pine, basswood and elm."

In the same year, William Hambly surveyed part of Norfolk. Walsingham Township had "uneven and scrubbed timber, chiefly oak and small pines" and, farther inland, "oak plains." There was "level sandy pinery" and "oak and chestnut timber." On a sketch map of Turkey Point, Governor Simcoe noted QUOTE "white oak plains extending to the River Thames." In 1807 George Heriot wrote, "the townships of Woodhouse and Charlotteville...[were] thinly timbered...[and] cultivation is facilitated from the want of underwood."

Mahlon Burwell surveyed the Talbot Road through Norfolk in 1809. He was instructed QUOTE to note "particularly the white and yellow [red] pine fit or not fit for masting," which meant trees more or less than "3 ft diam." He found some "beech, maple and chestnut" but, overall, it was "small pine with sassafras," and "white oak and hazle," and "open sandy plain." He found only four places where white pine were more than 2.5 feet in diameter.

Doctor John Howison came to Norfolk in 1821. "The forests dwindled...and natural groves and copses met the eye in their stead....It may be cropped without cutting down a single tree." He wrote, "Partridges spring from the copses and deer often bound across the path. Immense flocks of the passenger...pigeon frequent [the area]."

The great naturalist William Pope walked the sand plains southeast of St. Thomas in 1834, "the most miserable poor land I ever saw." However, he came again in 1842 and wrote, "The oak plains appear to be pretty much settled about here—not very arduous clearing this kind of land."

There were trials: "Locusts and grasshoppers... ravage... the sandy dry soils...[and] the oak plains."

He settled in 1859 near Port Ryerse.

Pope described the sand plain north towards Simcoe: "Oak plains, exceeding fertile when first cleared...[but] I should imagine very soon exhausted." Like other newcomers, he viewed the plains with suspicion because treelessness had meant sterility in their home countries.

Outweighing this, however, was the convenience of land that could be plowed directly, which was well understood by more experienced settlers.

Continued on page 7...



Oak savannah (Photo: Wikipedia)

NFN needs your help!

**no experience required
(only a healthy dose of enthusiasm)**

**Dedicate max. 3 - 4 hours a month to help with
various tasks assisted by other Board Members.**

**ALSO WANTED: 2 persons to replace our retiring
Refreshment & Treats Servers at our monthly
indoor meetings**

**Get involved with your club, it is a
greatly rewarding experience!**

Contact any Director - See the back page

KEY NOTE SPEECH

... continued from page 6

1834 Pope wrote, "Indians...set fire to the brushwood in order to clear the land that grass might more freely grow which furnished plenty of food for deer. Thus these animals were enticed from all the surrounding forests." The Scottish farm reviewer Patrick Shirreff said the same thing in 1833 in describing the "oak openings" near Brantford, about how QUOTE "fire passes over the plains every year or two....[and] prevent[s] the growth of the trees." Shirreff learned more about prairies and oak openings in Michigan the following year. QUOTE "It is quite certain fire sweeps over them, at present almost every autumn....I have no theory to offer instead of fire for the origin of prairies."

In the absence of fire, by the mid-1800s, many great trees had grown. QUOTE "One tulip tree near Kingsville yielded six thousand board feet of lumber. Chestnut trees have also been known to equal this. One thousand pipe staves have been made from one oak tree.

A giant walnut in Metcalf...measured thirty-six feet in circumference." The timber was exported, and the cutting and slash fires meant that some parts of Norfolk retained their open character.

By 1908, E.J. Zavitz would call it "waste land." His crew mapped the QUOTE "scrub oak with scattering white pine," and the prairie indicators like dwarf chinquapin oak, New Jersey tea, and blue lupine. They set up Ontario's first government tree nursery and proceeded to blanket those areas in pine. Decades later, the Ontario Wildlife Director Doug Clarke would call this "a cult of the little pine." A recent survey shows that the sites Zavitz planted to pine had once supported at least five endangered or threatened plants, seven animals, and dozens of other rarities. Only fragments of old Norfolk survived.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE JUNE ISSUE OF LOTUS



Wild Lupines (Photo: Inga Hinnerichsen)



Environmental Education

SPRING EVENTS

Celebrate EARTH DAY

Backus Heritage Conservation Area

Saturday, April 20th, 12 – 3 P.M.

Join us for an afternoon filled with family fun activities

BACKUS WOODS

Family Nature Hike

Saturday, May 11th, 10 A.M.

Look for salamanders, identify frogs and birds and learn about spring flowers.

Meet at the parking lot off 3rd Concession

For more info contact:

Colleen Dale, Nature Educator, at:

info@naturecalling.ca or: 519-410-7376

2nd Annual NFN BioBlitz and BBQ on Long Point Saturday, May 25, 2013

"A BioBlitz is an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area".

This year, we have a choice of joining in the

birders

and local biodiversity and many species as possible in a 4-hour period on Long Point.

On our return we'll have a de-brief session followed by a "BBQ on the Beach".

Bring binoculars, camera and field guides. Sound like fun? It will be!

**Only 15 spaces
are available for each group!
Pre-registration is required**

Contact Bernie Solymár at:
519-426-7124 or: solymar@nornet.on.ca

Upcoming NFN Spring Events

Amazing Amphibians

Saturday, April 13, 2013

6.00 to 8.00 pm

This "ribbiting" adventure starts inside the Backus Conservation Education Centre and continues into Backus Woods to look and listen for our coldblooded friends.

Niagara Glen Field Trip

Saturday April 27, 2013

9.00 am to 4.00 pm

Hike through varied terrain, bring sturdy footwear and your bag lunch. For car pooling, meet at the NE corner of the Walmart parking lot in Simcoe at 9.00 am sharp

Spring Wildflowers of Backus Woods

Saturday, May 4, 2013

10.00 am to noon

Meet at the parking lot on Concession Rd. 3

Meeting & Presentation

Tuesday, May 14, 2013

7.30 pm

Simcoe Seniors Centre

**Touring The Night Sky
with Ron Brecher, award-
winning astro-photographer**

2nd Annual BioBlitz & BBQ

Long Point

Saturday, May 25, 2013

**See the more detailed notice
on page 7**

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 at 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:

June 2013

Input dead line:

Monday, May 27

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. Non-profit registration # 119058691

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

2012-2013 NFN Executive with contact & project information

President	Bernie Solymar	All 519-426-7124	solymar@nornet.on.ca
Vice-President, Sanctuary/Natural Areas	Peter Carson	586-3985	gartcar@kwic.com
Treasurer/Past President	Audrey Heagy	586-9464	aheagy@bsc-eoc.org
Secretary	Colleen Dale	512-0240	cdale22@yahoo.ca
Membership/Publicity	Diane Salter	586-7775	bigcreek@kwic.com
Field Events	(vacant)		
Speaker Program	(vacant)		
Environment	(vacant)		
Director-at-large	Shirley Rothery	586-9535	shirleyrothery@hotmail.com
Director-at-large	Barb Hawke	586-8375	bhawke@kwic.com
Director-at-large	Alan Ladd	426-8504	
Director-at-large	Rick Dowson	426-9774	mrrick@bellnet.ca
Director-at-large, 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