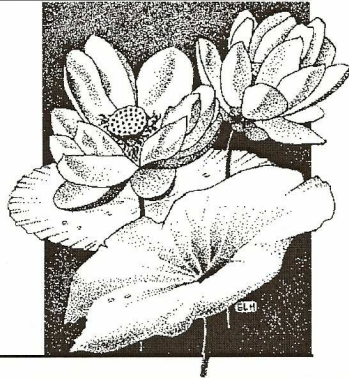


Lotus

NEWSLETTER
of the
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



February 2009

was circulated. A strong show of support for the project is needed to counteract the approximately 140 objections submitted to Council which appear to be uninformed and erroneous..

Door Prizes were drawn at the end of the evening. The book "Tending the Earth" by Lorraine Johnson was won by Joan Harlow and a wildlife calendar, "Species at Risk" was won by Joan Barrett. Kit Julian took home a copy of "They Had a Dream" and Jim Harlow won a pinecone- shaped candle.

Judging by the decibel level of the dinner conversation, a good time was had by all.

Meeting Notes

December 2008 Meeting



On December 9th, NFN filled the upstairs of the Blue Elephant to capacity and those present enjoyed a delicious buffet followed by the National Geographic film "Human Footprint"

This film took a different approach to expressing the impact of a human footprint by illustrating a person and family's lifelong footprint rather than trying to measure what one's current footprint might be.

It focussed on how much an individual uses and discards in a lifetime from diapers, clothes, laundry, lotions and beauty products to the amount of beef, pork, chicken, eggs, potatoes, fruit, soda, etc. that one consumes in a lifetime. Of course, all this is accompanied by packaging that further increases one's footprint; the overall totals were stupendous and horrifying.

A letter to the Mayor and Council expressing support for the Long Point Causeway Improvement project

January 2009 Meeting

The January meeting had to be cancelled due to inclement weather. Our speaker could not get here and members would have had difficulty too.

We've certainly been having more than our fair share of snow this year.

How are you managing with it? These "folk" don't look too happy! .



New NFN Members

NFN has gained three new members since the December Lotus was issued. Please welcome:

Rod & Lynn Keegan and
Marguerite Larmand

109 Years of North American Christmas Bird Counts

Nature Network News

More than 2,000 individual counts were scheduled to take place throughout the Americas from December 14, 2008 to January 5, 2009, which marked the 109th year of the Christmas Bird Count.

The CBC began over a century ago when 27 conservationists in 25 localities, led by scientist and writer Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. On Christmas Day in 1900, the small group posed an alternative to the side hunt, a Christmas day activity in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. Instead, Chapman proposed that they identify, count, and record all the birds they saw, founding what is now considered to be the world's most significant citizen-based conservation effort - and a more than century-old institution.

Since Chapman's 1934 retirement, new generations of observers have performed the modern-day count. Today, over 55,000 volunteers from all 50 states, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and Pacific Islands, count and record every individual bird and bird species seen in a specified area.

Last year in Canada, 11,565 participants counted over 3.2 million birds on a record-high 371 counts. The data gathered by all this work goes into a database used daily by biologists all over the world to monitor populations and distribution of North American birds. Some of it is key evidence for serious declines; recently Christmas Bird Count data provided pivotal information in the decision to list the Newfoundland Red Crossbill and Rusty Blackbird under the federal Species At Risk Act.

"Each CBC volunteer observer is an important contributor, helping to shape the overall direction of bird conservation," says Dick Cannings, Bird Studies Canada's Christmas Bird Count Coordinator.

Fisherville CBC Highlights

Linda Thrower

On January 3, 2009, the 20th annual Fisherville CBC was held, just before the arctic temperatures set in. 85 species and 19,661 individuals were recorded as compared to last year's totals of 75 species and 27,753 birds.

A first for the FishervilleCount this year was **Savannah Sparrow**. Four were found.



Species seen for only the second time were:

Snow Goose (Blue)	1	(prev 2000)
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	(prev 2003)

One Green-winged Teal was found for only the third appearance in the count.

New high counts were recorded for: (Prev)

White-winged Crossbill	1650	(6 in 1992, 5 in 1997, 1 in 2001)
Wild Turkey	463	(186 in 2007)
Lesser Scaup	184	(57 in 1995)
American Crows	404	(380 in 2006)
Pine Siskins	26	(10 in 2004)
Eastern Bluebird	48	(34 in 2005) (boxes in use)
Tufted Titmouse	21	(12 in 1995)
Gray Catbird	3	(1 in 2000)
Lesser Black-backed Gull	3	

Bald Eagles tied their all time high of 15 from the 2004 count.

Second-highest counts were recorded for:

American Goldfinch	457	(484 in 2003)
Red-bellied Woodpecker	72	(prev in 1989)
Cooper's Hawk	15	(17 in 2004)
Mute Swan	3	(5th time seen since 1994)

New low counts were recorded for:

American Kestrel	22	(26 in 2007)
Ring-billed Gull	37	(lowest since 1989 start)

Backus Heritage Conservation Area Threatened by Logging and Sale

Concerned citizens are taking action to protect the Backus Heritage Conservation Area. Rick Telfer wrote a letter to the Norfolk Mayor and Councillors on December 21, 2008, which read, in part:

I am writing to you on behalf of nearly 1,000 concerned citizens who are united within the Facebook group, "Don't sell or log our Backus Conservation Area!" Our group was recently featured in the Simcoe Reformer. Most of us either live in or originate from Norfolk. All of us have been touched by Backus.

The group continues to grow by an average of 50 members per day. Almost 1,500 additional people have been invited to join the group, with new invitations being extended every day. You may see the group, for yourselves, via the following link:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=47705208652>

We are aware that the LPRCA is an autonomous body constituted by the provincial government. However, we are also aware that Norfolk exerts significant control both within and over the LPRCA, given Norfolk's majority control in terms of both votes and funding. In short, we know that Norfolk sets the course for the LPRCA; please do not try to suggest otherwise.

Furthermore, we understand that:

1. Staff at the Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA) have suggested selling the Backus Heritage Conservation Area as a possible response to a funding shortfall in 2009.
2. The Authority is also investigating the possibility of lifting a natural heritage designation from 1,933 acres of forest for the purposes of logging.

Our group is united by two core convictions:

1. Backus is an internationally recognized historical and environmental treasure and should remain in public -- not sold to private -- hands.
2. Aside from removing trees infected with menacing insects and/or diseases, Backus Woods should never be logged.

This moment in history is no time for disposing of our heritage or for ravaging ecosystems. While we appreciate that "times are tough," we submit that "times will be even tougher" should you choose to liquidate our common history and sacrifice our natural environment on the altar of "decreasing taxpayer burden."

What we call "economics," today, is just one form of social configuration. It is historically tentative and can be changed at any time. On the other hand, the destruction of history and natural environments is permanent. Do not rob future generations of their birthrights: the right to know their origins, and the right to have a clean environment.

Earth Hour 2009

The latest edition of World Wildlife Fund's "Living Planet" proclaims Saturday, March 28, 2009 as the day on which Earth Hour will be observed this year.

The January 24 issue of the Toronto Star identified 8:30 p.m. as the starting time for the "lights out" hour.

WWF says this year its goal is to have at least half of Canada's population participate. The number of participating countries, so far, has reached 70 - double the 35 that officially took part in 2008.

Outing: Winter Birding in Haldimand County

Anne Wynia

January 17th was a snow-covered winter day with temperatures around -12 C, considered cold for this part of Canada, with a west wind blowing most of the time causing some snow drifting. However, this was no problem for the 12 people who were out because we knew it would be a good trip with our knowledgeable leaders Audrey Heagy and David Okines. Everyone dressed appropriately so there were no complaints.

We met at 1.30 p.m. at Hwy. 3 and Donly Rd. as we have for many years when John Miles was the leader although John did have greater endurance as he always started at 10.30 a.m. I always think of John when we make this trip and his enthusiasm for passing on his extensive knowledge to others.

Along Hwy 6 to Port Dover there was a Northern Harrier soaring overhead and, at the Harbour, two Common Mergansers spotted by Alan McKeown, a pair of Mallards and a Red Tailed Hawk. Of course, there were many starlings and crows.

We followed New Lakeshore Rd. and then headed up to County Rd. #3 where we all watched for many minutes the Snowy Owl. At first she sat high in a tree but quickly dropped to the ground where we were about 100 ft. from her so we took many photos as well as viewed her in David's powerful scope.



Photo Credit: Diane Salter

She looked us over carefully and many times turned her head 360 degrees checking behind her. Audrey tells me she was a young female.

Apparently, David went back on Jan. 20 and identified another young male Snowy Owl. WOWL! This was the highlight of the trip and as Dennis Price said. "I can go home now" but he did not.

As we continued we saw 4 Rough-legged Hawks sitting high in the trees and soaring over the fields. Back along the lakeshore at the Nanticoke thermal power station were Scaups, Goldeneyes, Black Ducks and Common Mergansers but the wind was cold coming off the lake.

Amazingly, some of us missed, not far off the road, 3 Bald Eagles which Audrey spotted sitting in one tree about 2 meters apart. Two were immature and one mature. A Horned Lark and many Snow Buntings were along the roadsides. A number of Canada Geese and a couple of Northern Cardinals flew past. On the ground and then on a fence post sat a Rough-legged Hawk dark phase. Peggy identified that one before we checked with Audrey.

As I had to be back for another event, Alan, Peggy and I headed back at which point south of Hwy 3 we spotted three Wild Turkeys walking in the field. The rest of the group headed to a spot where some Short-eared Owls are known to roost and were treated to a sight of two of these owls leaving the roost and heading out over the fields. One even stopped on a fence post briefly before taking flight.

Night Gliders

Darlene and Jeff Sauder

Each evening, just before dark, we put peanuts in the birdfeeder mounted on a tall pole in our backyard. Why at this time of day? Because we want to be sure that our nightly visitors will not be disappointed.

Sometimes we see them glide in and land on the pole and other times they're already in the feeder enjoying peanuts before we notice them.

Most nights, we are fortunate to be visited by Southern Flying Squirrels. They are such fun to watch, and we never tire of them. We still get excited when we see them. We have installed floodlights that shine on the feeder for better viewing, which doesn't seem to bother them at all. They can be seen anytime between dusk and dawn.

Flying squirrels are the only nocturnal tree squirrel and are the smallest of all squirrels. They do not actually fly, but glide from the top of one tree to the trunk of another. They "fly" with their legs outstretched, a fold of skin between the foreleg and hind leg acting as a combination parachute and sail.

While gliding they can turn or change their angle of descent. Just before landing, they drop their tail and lift their front quarters, slackening the tightened flap of skin, which helps them brake in mid air. They land very lightly on all four feet. If you're close enough, you can hear a slight slapping sound as they hit the tree. They immediately scurry to the other side of the tree in case a predator has followed their flight.

Once on the pole, they scurry down into the feeder, grab a peanut and either sit there eating it, or scurry back up the tree or roof of the feeder to enjoy their snack. Depending on the number of squirrels visiting on a particular night, they may chase each other up and down the pole and in and out of the feeder, sometimes knocking one onto the ground.

Although very agile and sure-footed on trees or in the air, once on the ground, the flying squirrels are relatively clumsy and very vulnerable. As quickly as they can, they clumsily make their way along the ground to the nearest tree before a predator spots them. Once on the tree, they resume their agility and their scampering and gliding.

The diet of the flying squirrel consists of nuts, acorns, seeds, berries, some insects and even birds and their nestlings or eggs. Their favourite food being acorns and hickory nuts is the reason we have them visit our backyard. The forest surrounding us has a good number of oak and hickory trees. This and the fact that there are trees close enough for them to glide from tree to tree right into the yard.

Late each summer when the acorns are in season, the backyard is usually absent of flying squirrels as they are off enjoying and storing the abundance of one of their favourite foods. (They can store up to 15,000 acorns.) The first time we noticed this was one summer, a few years ago, when we were away for a week in late August and hadn't had anybody come to fill the feeders while we were gone. On our return, there were no squirrels visiting. We were heartbroken, thinking that the squirrels had stopped coming because they felt abandoned by us. It was a happy day, actually night, when they finally returned. You can be sure that since then, we've always had someone come in to fill the feeders when we are away.

They make their homes in tree cavities, favouring woodpecker holes. They also use bird nest boxes, using shredded bark and leaves for nesting material. When cleaning out our bluebird boxes in the early spring, we have often discovered flying squirrel nests, which we leave undisturbed.

One of the flying squirrel's predators is the Eastern Screech Owl, also seen and heard in our yard.

On one occasion we had a screech owl fly right into the feeder in pursuit of a squirrel. Luckily for the squirrel, the attempt was unsuccessful. We watched the squirrel "fly" right into a nearby bluebird box. It

went straight into the hole without even landing on the box first. The owl flew up into a nearby tree and perched for a long time waiting and watching for another chance. After the owl finally left, we saw the squirrel peek out of the hole to see if the coast was clear. It was a long time before it came out, however.



Photo Credit: George Pond

May and June is usually the most reliable time to view the squirrels and we have lots of visitors come to see them. At that time of year they often bring their young to feed which results in good numbers, putting on quite a show. We have seen up to 14 at one time. With all the flights going on (one evening we counted 200 flights) it reminds one of a meteor shower. They are tame enough that when the weather permits, we can often sit on the deck just a few feet from the feeder to watch them.

They can be seen at most times of the year. Just a couple of weeks ago, on a winter evening, we had one of the best flying squirrel viewing nights in awhile, much to the delight of our guests who came in the hopes of seeing them.

That said, many people have spent an evening waiting and hoping to view the squirrels and it's not until after they've left that the squirrels make an appearance. They are wild creatures after all and can be unpredictable.

If you're interested in trying to see these little treasures of the forest, we'd be happy to have you visit and share this unique experience with us. You can contact us by phone at 519-586-3065 to make arrangements for a suitable time.

The New Endangered Species Act and It's Impact on Landowners

Bernie Solymár, EarthTramper Consulting Inc.
January 2009

As rural Ontarians we are fortunate to have a rich diversity of plants, animals and natural habitats right in our backyards. Sadly, the populations of many species are in decline because of habitat loss, pollution, disruptive land use and resource management activities, as well as the spread of invasive species. As of June 2008, there were 183 species at risk in Ontario, including mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mussels, fishes, birds, insects and plants.

In June of 2008 Ontario's new Endangered Species Act (ESA) came into effect. The new ESA is complex, and deciphering what the ESA means to rural landowners can be a frustrating experience. As a result, many rural landowners have expressed scepticism and concern over this new Act and what it might mean to their ability to farm, log, or otherwise manage their land.

As a small rural landowner, and a biologist that works with local farmers and other rural landowners, it is very important for me to understand the implications of the Act. Working with farmers, I know that economic margins are often razor thin and any threats to their livelihoods have to be taken seriously. As a member of 2 species at risk recovery teams (American Badger and Barn Owl), I respond to sighting reports and assist landowners in stewarding their land to help conserve these species.

Does the new Act mean that I can be charged for scraping a road killed badger off the road and delivering to a fellow biologist to analyse? If I am working with a farmer or other rural landowner that doesn't want the MNR to know they have a species at risk on their property, am I in contravention of the Act if I don't report it?

When it comes to issues that affect my business, and myself as a resident, I do my research and ask lots of questions so that I can make informed decisions. So I worked my way through the wording of the Act, checked out the MNR's website species at risk

www.ontario.ca/speciesatrisk

and talked to some biologists.

I thought it would be useful to share my findings with other rural landowners and have summarized some of my questions and the answers I found below:

Q: How are species determined to be "at risk" in Ontario?

A: When there is concern a species may be "at risk" in Ontario, the species is reviewed by the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO). If a species is classified as "at risk" it is added to the Species at Risk in Ontario (SARO) List in one of four categories, depending on the degree of risk.

The four categories, or classes, of "at risk" are:

Extirpated - a native species that no longer exists in the wild in Ontario, but still exists elsewhere (e.g. Karner blue butterfly)

Endangered - a native species facing extinction or extirpation (e.g. Cucumber Tree)

Threatened - a native species at risk of becoming endangered in Ontario (e.g. Fowler's Toad)

Special Concern - a native species that is sensitive to human activities or natural events which may cause it to become endangered or threatened (e.g. Monarch Butterfly)

Q: So what's different about the new Act?

A: The new Act, as outlined on the MNR's website, provides:

- 1 broader protection for species at risk and their habitats,
- 2 greater support for volunteer stewardship efforts of private landowners, resource users, and conservation organizations,
- 3 a stronger commitment to recovery of species,
- 4 greater flexibility,
- 5 increased fines, more effective enforcement, and
- 6 greater accountability, including government reporting requirements.

Q: Can the MNR enter my property to look for a species or its habitat?

A: MNR employees require permission from the landowner before entering a property to look for a species at risk or to collect more information about it.

Q: What authority do enforcement officers have to enter my property?

A: An enforcement officer may enter private property if s/he has reasonable grounds to believe an offence has occurred under the ESA. Offences could be related to the destruction of the habitat of a species at risk or the harming or killing of the species itself.

Enforcement officers may search, seize, make arrests and issue stop orders. If the landowner is found to be in contravention of the Act s/he may face legal action and be subject to a fine of up to \$250,000 for a first offence.

Q: What if I am not aware of a species at risk (SAR) on my property and have unintentionally destroyed habitat?

A: Destruction of habitat used by a SAR is an offence. However, section 39 of the Act provides an opportunity for a person who has committed an offence under the Act to demonstrate s/he exercised all reasonable care to prevent the commission of the offence; or that s/he believed in the existence of facts, that if true, would render her/his actions innocent.

Q: If the government wants to be proactive, shouldn't it be offering incentives for landowners that want to protect species at risk and habitat on their property?

A: The new ESA places a high priority on stewardship and engaging individuals in protection and recovery. Because many of Ontario's species at risk are found on private lands, the provincial government, as stated on their website, recognizes the fact that voluntary conservation efforts are essential to species at risk recovery. The Species at Risk Stewardship Program is a cornerstone of the new Act.

Through funding and outreach, the **Species at Risk in Ontario Stewardship Program** encourages the involvement of landowners and other groups and individuals in recovery activities. In 2008, \$3 million was allocated to various groups. In Norfolk County the following groups received funding under this program in 2008: the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation (Causeway Improvement Project), the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, Bird Studies Canada, the Norfolk Field Naturalists and the Norfolk Land Stewardship Council. In 2009, an additional \$5 million will be made available province-wide.

Of interest to farmers - a separate program, the **Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program**, was announced recently at the 2008 Royal Winter Fair. SARFIP provides assistance for registered farmers who carry out selected Beneficial Management Practices (within the Environmental Farm Plan umbrella), which contribute to the protection and recovery of species at risk.

Q: If I, or other rural landowners, wanted to learn more about conserving or creating habitat for a species at risk on my land where can we go for technical help?

A: There are many organizations that can help. Local ones include the Norfolk Land Stewardship Council, the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Norfolk Field Naturalists, and private consultants. They can provide expertise and suggest possible funding sources and tax incentives for private landowners.

Q: Do I have to involve the MNR in stewardship/conservation projects to protect and conserve species at risk on my land?

A: No - as long as I am not in contravention of the Act.

Q: If I, as a private consultant and member of a SAR recovery team am working with a landowner to conserve habitat for a species at risk on his/her property am I obligated to report my activities to the MNR?

A: No – as long as the landowner is not in contravention of the ESA. This allows me to work with landowners on protecting SAR and stewarding their land and provide them with confidentiality should they request it.

For more information on the new ESA and what it means to you, as a private landowner, I suggest visiting:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species>

To find out more about funding opportunities, farmers can visit::

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/260037.pdf>

Next Meetings

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

**The Ivory-billed Woodpecker: The Search
for Evidence in a Flooded Wilderness**

Dr. Dan Mennill, Univ. Of Windsor

Tuesday, April 14, 2009

**Ecological Interactions in Forest,
Riparian and Agro-forest Ecosystems**

Andrew Gordon, Univ. Of Guelph

Upcoming NFN Outings



Sat., Feb. 21 / 09

1:00 p.m.

Winter Tree Identification

Dolf Wynia and Colleen Dale
Backus 519-586-2201
Admission by donation

March Break

NFN at the Wildlife Festival

The Aud in the fairgrounds
"Hands-on" activities for kids
Entrance fee
Family friendly



Sat., Apr. 4 / 09

9:30 a.m.

Early Spring Birding at Long Point

Jody Allair 519-586-3531 x117

Wed., Apr. 15 / 09

6:00 p.m.

Amazing Amphibians

Colleen Dale

Backus
519-586-2201

\$2 per person
Family-friendly



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:

April 2009

Input cutoff date:

Fri. Mar. 27, 2009

Club Mailing Address

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2008 - 2009 NFN Directors with Contact and Project Information

		all 519-	
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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 bus 586-7773	kosalle@amtelecom.net
General Secretary	(position currently vacant)		
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
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Sanctuary	Matt Brock	586-7585	greenheron99@hotmail.com
Environment	(position currently vacant)		
Dir. + Lakeshore 2ndary Plan	(position currently vacant)		
Director-at-large	Colleen Dale	586-9726	cdale22@yahoo.ca
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