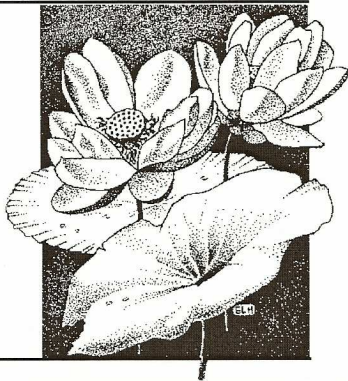


# Lotus

NEWSLETTER  
of the  
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



December 2009

and has a white stripe over the head. It is stout, carries itself close to the ground and waddles. The



badger is the 2nd largest member of the weasel family, the wolverine being the largest. It lives underground part of the time, and has long sharp claws making it an excellent digger. In sand, one can dig a metre a minute! The kits are born in burrows,

Badgers are nocturnal and nomadic. There are 3 subspecies in Canada, the jacksoni being present in Rainy River, Bruce/Grey and Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant-Oxford. There are many gaps in the knowledge of them because they are so secretive. Fewer than 200 are believed now present in Ontario and they have been classified Endangered.

Research Methods: Danielle's research bypassed the traditional methods often used such as ear piercing or tattoos. Because much of the research has to be done with dead animals, she and her group used a Wildlife Forensic approach to examine genetics, stable isotopes and trace elements (e.g. "CSI for badgers"). Trace elements in the landscape go into tissues from the food ingested and can identify where a badger has been, knowing how these elements are distributed across an area.

Danielle's team was fortunate enough to trap a badger which they implanted with a tracking device to help discover its hunting range. Even with that, the animal was so elusive that it was only seen once by Danielle during the study. Badgers dig a lot of burrows. If they locate a good hunting spot, they will dig a burrow for overnight. Hair snares were also used at 39 burrow entrances. Trace elements in the fur tell where they have travelled and also provide genetic data. Badgers dig their prey, so foraging burrows are also found. They normally hunt for small mammals such as groundhogs, squirrels, chipmunks, voles, but reports of eating turkey eggs and digging out bank swallows have been received.



## Meeting Notes

### **October 2009 Meeting**

#### Announcements & Sightings

St. Williams Conservation Reserve is holding an open house the weekend of Oct 17-18 to talk to visitors about their operating plans and their trail plans.

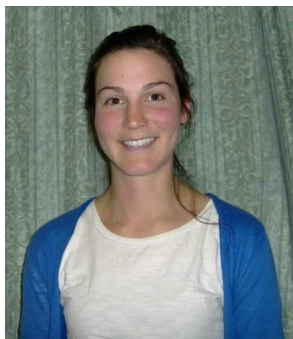
The first Black-throated Gray Warbler ever seen in the Long Point area was located at Port Ryerse on Oct 11 & 12. It had not been seen again on the 13th (the meeting day)

A sharpie took a pigeon in town; 15 turkeys were seen on the Lynn Valley Road; bluebirds are still present; kestrels are about.

#### October Speaker

**Danielle Ethier** graduated from University Of Guelph in ecology and is now at Trent. She and her colleague Josh Sayers spent last summer surveying and researching American Badgers in southwestern Ontario. Danielle discussed her topic under 4 major headings:

- Background
- Research Methods
- Preliminary Results
- Outreach campaign



Background: The elusive badger is bigger than a raccoon, has similar fur, but has no conspicuous tail

The female badger that was trapped and implanted in mid-June built 27 known burrows in a 7 kilometer circle. Even with the tracking device there were 22 nights in the 3.5 month study when they had no idea where the badger was - likely underground deeply enough to prevent transmission. They did find and see her two kits and did know that another badger was nearby.

Preliminary Results: In the summer of 2009, they estimate that 19 badgers were identified through unique genetics, confirmed burrows and confirmed sightings. They are funded to continue the study next year. With the road kills, the number for this area historically may be 55.

Outreach Campaign: The study requires landowner help and co-operation; the badgers found were on private land. Information about badgers is available online at [www.ontariobadgers.com](http://www.ontariobadgers.com) and sightings can be reported there or to the toll-free hotline 1-877-715-9299. In addition, there are "Have You Seen A Badger" posters, media releases, hats, pictures, iPod covers, and magnets, etc. to publicize the study and help to locate badgers.

## November 2009 Meeting

### Announcements and Sightings:

The Christmas Bird counts are approaching. Check Lotus for dates.

Recent sightings included swans, Sandhill Cranes, a dead garter snake on the road.

### **November Speaker**

In 1998, **Dr. Lyle Friesen**, a songbird biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, began studying the effects of forest fragmentation and encroaching development on Wood Thrushes near Waterloo, ON.



Camouflaged infrared video cameras, filming 24/7, were installed near nests to record predation by raccoons, mice, hawks and other nest robbers.

We heard Lyle say "It's a jungle out there!" on more than one occasion as we viewed his videos. Since 1996, the Wood Thrush has been declining across its breeding range. The nests are relatively easy to find and to monitor but finding the data in hours of filming is the difficult part. Nests being filmed are visited each morning to determine whether they are different from the previous day (more or fewer eggs, nest damage, etc.) to know which tapes to hunt in to find overnight predation footage. 35% of the nests were parasitized by cowbirds.

Lyle's presentation was fascinating and much of the action was very fast. It was difficult to jot notes as looking away from the screen could cause you to miss something exciting.

We saw a 5:30 am film of a cowbird entering a nest after the thrush left to eat. Several films of cowbirds at nests showed strong defence by the female or both adult thrushes and the persistence of the cowbird. In one film, while being hit hard by both thrushes, the cowbird remained in the nest, which was rocking from the force of the hits by the thrushes, and laid its egg all within 45 seconds.

We saw a nest on a sapling dumped by a high wind, another shaken so badly by wind that the eggs smashed together .

A flying squirrel alarmed a female in a nest with 2 5-day old chicks so badly that she did not return in the night. Mosquitoes were attacking the young and, although she fed them next day, one died. She left the nest and the second died. The flying squirrel never actually went to the nest itself, it just got too close.

We saw a persistent White-footed Mouse which found the eggs too big, a red squirrel that made the eggs disappear one by one, a chipmunk that took an egg and came right back for the second, a raccoon that took a nest with 4 eggs, ripping the nest right out of the tree.

We saw fantastic film clips of avian predation by a Blue Jay, a Red-tailed Hawk, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, and several films of Goshawk at thrush nests. One showed the two remaining chicks jump out of the nest after a Goshawk took a sibling.

It was a riveting presentation and well received by the 39 members present.

## New Members

NFN welcomes these new members:

Carolyn Allen  
Bob & Annie Horton

Monroe Landon Woods, part of the Southern Norfolk Sand Plain natural area, is one of the top-ranked sites for birds in Norfolk. At-risk birds including [Acadian Flycatcher](#), [Cerulean Warbler](#), [Hooded Warbler](#) and [Louisiana Waterthrush](#) can find suitable habitat here. Southern [Flying Squirrel](#), a provincially rare species, is also now protected on this property. "Selling to the Nature Conservancy of Canada provides an opportunity to assure continued protection and care for Monroe Landon Woods," said Alex Landon.

The Southern Norfolk Sand Plain natural area is part of the [Carolinian Life Zone](#) – one of the most biologically diverse regions in Canada and one of two areas containing the highest densities of species at risk in the country. Norfolk County supports 60 species considered at risk nationally under the Species at Risk Act and 221 provincially rare species. "The Landons have owned and managed this property for 72 years," remarked Chris Maher, NCC Ontario's Regional Vice President. "By entrusting it to NCC they are ensuring the long-term protection of it. We're more than happy to oblige, and the Landons' donation will help us do that."

## Family heritage now protected in Norfolk

Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)  
*Photos courtesy NCC*

A remarkable property near Simcoe, Ontario, the Monroe Landon Woods, which has benefited from more than 70 years of family care, is now part of our national heritage. The dedication ceremony occurred on Sunday, October 4, 2009. The Nature Conservancy of Canada, entrusted to lead the program, has committed to raising matching funds for each federal dollar received.



The 132-acre (53-hectare) woodlot contains one of the finest stands of Tuliptrees in Norfolk County, as well as dunes, forest and seasonal wetlands. Species at risk benefiting from this conservation project include American Chestnut, Butternut, Flowering Dogwood and Broad Beech Fern. The project received financial support from the Government of Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Alex and Doris Landon.

"With our investment of \$225 million in Environment Canada's Natural Areas Conservation Program, we are taking real action to ensure a healthy future for species at risk and for sensitive ecosystems like those found at Monroe Landon Woods," said Minister Diane Finley.



*Alex Landon listening to Larry Lamb's Tribute to Monroe Landon*

### \*\*\* Help Needed \*\*\*

**We're looking for willing volunteers to help with various tasks, regularly or occasionally. For example, if you are coming to one of the indoor meetings can you offer to pick up the refreshments (costs reimbursed) or help with setting up the chairs or equipment? Contact Audrey or one of the other Board Members.**

## Digital Photography Workshop

Audrey Heagy

Digital photography proved to be a very popular workshop topic and we had to limit registration to 22 participants. Ron Ridout, the workshop leader provided lots of good technical information on topics ranging from use of the various manual settings found on many digital cameras, to tips on composition and lighting for nature photos. Most participants felt that their photographic skills would definitely improve as a result of the workshop. The lunch provided as part of the workshop fee also received rave reviews.

We will be organizing another workshop on digital photography in the future for those on the waiting list and others. Several workshop participants suggested that a workshop on the use of PhotoShop software would be of interest.

## Master Gardener Workshop

Anne Davidson

NFN members Diane Salter, Dennis Price, (new member) Jackie Cave, who is also a Master Gardener and I attended the "Norfolk County - In the Carolinian Zone" all-day Master Gardeners workshop. June Frederick, the Niagara Region Director of Master Gardeners told us that the excellent brochure we all received - "The Great Ontario Garden Guide" - is now supported by a new web site at [mgoi.ca](http://mgoi.ca) for questions and local contacts. After Dolf Wynia's opening remarks emphasizing the amount of forested area in Norfolk compared to other areas of Ontario, Brian Craig and **Paul Gagnon**, Mary Gartshore and Bernie Solymar spoke.

We saw how reforestation and restoration in Norfolk is contributing to the Carolinian Canada Zone "Big Picture" of connected landscape. A map showed how little of Ontario is protected by reserves; another map showed the forested areas of Ontario with many gaps between them; a third map showed the ultimate objective, i.e., connected forest across southern Ontario from Windsor to the north shore of Lake Ontario within the Carolinian zone.

Agricultural clearing has left much of southern Ontario either bare of forest or with fragmented "islands" of forest.. **Reforestation and restoration projects are being positioned to fill gaps between fragmented forests** and contribute to the "connected landscape corridor" being achieved step by step. Reforestation sites are carefully selected to improve connection rather than add another fragmented "island" area.

"The Song of the Dodo" by David Quammen was recommended reading for explaining how "islands" (either in water and on land) can lead to extinction of flora and fauna species.

We heard about the importance of using native plants and the harmful effects that can result from using imported plants and trees; too, many present were surprised to learn that earthworms can be destructive rather than helpful. Another point that generated interest was the recommendation that planting be in north-to-south rows to maximize sunlight on plants.

Gardeners were advised not to plant fruits and vegetables that can be bought cheaply from local market gardeners. As an example, planting backyard apple trees is a waste of time and money. Buying apples locally is cheaper than purchasing and applying chemicals properly and reduces the amount of chemicals in use. Fruit and vegetables need specific treatments of chemicals at specific times - something that is done well by big growers.

***Ed. Note: The following article is an example of the way restoration properties are evaluated and planted .....***

## Walkabout at Rothery's

Audrey Heagy

**Paul Gagnon**, Lands and Waters Supervisor at the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, led the walkabout at the rural property of Shirley and Mike Rothery. This 50 acre private property includes mature forest and former farmland. When the farmer who had been renting the land for growing corn retired, the Rothery's decided to restore the bare fields to natural habitats. They contacted Paul at the conservation authority to learn about the various tree planting and ecological restorations services available, and the various habitat restoration and reforestation incentive programs available to farm and non-farm landowners.

As with all real estate matters, location is very important and influences both whether a property is a priority for ecological restoration and what species should be planted. Habitat restoration of this property was a high priority because it is situated very close to the St. Williams Conservation Reserve, one of the largest forested areas in southwestern Ontario. The slight gradient of the field meant that the moisture regimes of the sandy soil ranged from dry on the ridge, to moist closer to the road. Thus the choice of

trees planted varied across the field. Black and red oaks, white pine, and bitternut hickory were planted on the drier zones. Some black gum was planted in the wettest area. Both seedlings and nuts were planted.

Since this was an ecological restoration project designed to reforest the area and create natural habitats of high value to wildlife, plantings were done in pods rather than in the row plantings used to create tree plantations. Shrub, flower and grass species were also planting. Root cuttings of fast growing shrub species such as sassafras were planted to create dense shrub thickets that will provide cover for wildlife and shade conditions for forest tree species. Seeds of wildflowers such as butterfly weed and brown-eyed Susan were planted to provide a food source for insect pollinators. Prairie grasses were also sown in some areas as once established they can out-compete the many non-native grasses that could otherwise invade the field. Because these grasses remaining standing over the winter they also provide seeds and shelter for many wintering birds.

## First Annual Kids For Turtles Camp a Huge Success!!

Colleen Dale

On Saturday October 24<sup>th</sup>, 21 very eager and excited kids gathered at the Backus Education Centre for the first annual Biodiversity Camp hosted by Kids For Turtles - Long Point-Norfolk Chapter. The two-day camp was geared towards ages 8-12 and the goal was to foster awareness and appreciation for the rich biodiversity of living things and their habitats and to get the kids engaged in outdoor activities.

Participants arrived Saturday morning and despite the gloomy weather, they were full of enthusiasm and bright smiles. To kick-start the camp Crystal Robertson, a wildlife biologist, gave a very fitting presentation on local turtle species and brought in a showcase of turtle shells for the kids to handle.

Next up was James Cowan from the Canadian Raptor Conservancy and his two live Barn Owls! Not only did he bring them out for us to see, but flew them around the classroom to demonstrate the silent flight of these amazing birds.



After learning about owls, we thought what would be better than to dissect some owl pellets? Everyone picked their way through a pellet a ball of undigested fur and bone that owls cough up, and matched the bones they found on a chart to determine what animal the owl had eaten. To finish off the morning, Jody Allair from Bird Studies Canada gave an engaging presentation about the migration of birds, bats, butterflies and dragonflies.

After lunch, we were joined by another special guest, Sally Gable, a local artist who inspired the kids to create their own unique pieces of art. The afternoon was spent sketching and painting various animals and designing spirit masks using items they collected from nature.



Sunday morning began with a bird banding demonstration by two local banders, Martin Wernaart and Terri Groh. Many birds were banded including: Juncos, Chickadees and Nuthatches. The kids were thrilled to see the birds up close and even got to hold them. With no time to spare, we loaded on a bus to Acorus Restoration where Stephanie and Paul Morris took us on a tour of their farm and played games that demonstrated the importance of protecting wildlife habitats. After a hot bowl of chilli and garlic bread, Sunday afternoon was spent in Backus Woods on a 'Biodiversity Bingo' scavenger hunt getting down and dirty in search for all kinds of things like salamanders, tree fungus and woodpecker holes.

All in all, the camp was a fun and educational experience for everyone involved and we look forward to offering it again next year.

Kids For Turtles would like to say a big **Thank-You** to all the volunteers who helped make this such a wonderful experience for everyone. Special thanks to Becky Solymar and Pilar Manorome who helped plan camp activities and volunteered both days as camp assistants. Also thanks to The Apple Place in Simcoe for providing apple cider donuts and apple cider, and to TD Friends of the Environment for their generous funding of the event.

*Colleen Dale is the newly hired Kids for Turtles Coordinator, a committee of the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation, representing one of 15 UNESCO-designated biosphere reserves in Canada.*

## **Kids for Turtles and Local Schools Clean Up Long Point Beaches**

Bernie Solymár, Co-Chair, Kids for Turtles

On Sunday, September 20<sup>th</sup> a group of 15 Kids for Turtles members, parents and friends met at Hasting Beach to participate in the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up. An initiative of the Vancouver Aquarium and TD Friends of the Environment, the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup is a national conservation initiative that allows all Canadians to have a positive impact on their local environment. More than just a program to pick up trash, data is collected from each cleanup which then allows the organizers to determine the major (and minor) causes of shoreline litter in each region. Last year alone, over 63,000 Canadians registered for the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, and in only one week participants removed 135,467 kg of litter from 1,280 of Canada's shorelines.

On that sunny Sunday in September our little group collected 77.7 kg of garbage (plus 45 old tires) and 16.7 kg of recycling over the length of the beach along Hastings Drive and along the Canadian Wildlife Service's property along Big Creek Marsh! We also found a dead painted turtle with fishing line and lots of old balloons with ribbon still attached.



The following Thursday, forty-five Grade 9 to 12 students from Valley Heights High School and seventy-eight Grade 7 and 8 students from Port Rowan Public School tackled Long Point Beach from The Causeway Restaurant to (and including) Long Point Provincial Park. They collected another 106 kg of garbage and 1.4 kg of recycling. Of note, were the 1200 cigarette butts and lots of spent firecrackers collected!

Under the capable supervision of Terri Groh, our Coordinator and Kids for Turtles Committee member, we are thrilled to have participated in the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup and anticipate many more years of involvement in this worthwhile project.

Thanks to Norfolk County's Roads Department for doing a special pick-up of garbage bags we deposited along Hastings Drive, to the Long Point Ratepayer's for covering the cost of bussing the Valley Heights students to Long Point, and to Jeff and Rebecca Bouck, owners of The Causeway Restaurant and atPlay Adventures, for their generous donation of ice cream to over 100 kids that participated in our first annual "Long Point Shoreline Cleanup".

## **Great Trees of Norfolk County**

Audrey Heagy

*Photo Credits: Ruth Ann Logan*

On a cloudy but warm Sunday afternoon in mid-November a group of seventeen tree enthusiasts gathered in Simcoe to check out some of the noteworthy trees found during the Norfolk Great Tree Hunt of 2008.

The tree hunt project was a collaborative effort involving the NFN, Norfolk Woodlot Owners Association, and Norfolk County. The Ontario Trillium Foundation provided a grant so we could hire a summer student to coordinate the project and pay for other project expenses.

The November outing was mostly a driving tour of roadside trees though because the weather was so pleasant we did walk around at a few sites, including Lynwood Park in Simcoe, the LPRCA's Smith Tract west of Walsh, and the St Williams Forestry Station.

Participants learned how to calculate the point score for a great tree and saw some of the largest specimens of white oak, black oak, honey locust, white birch, cucumber magnolia and pawpaw in the County.

The group on the tour were very knowledgeable and provided many interesting information about some of the trees. For example, the large spiny honey locust trees had grown from seeds brought from New Jersey by the early settlers.

The trees on the tour were only a small sample of the many Great Trees of Norfolk, which has a high diversity of native trees as well as a wide array of planted non-native tree species. The highest scoring tree of each species is considered a "Great Tree". The "Greatest of the Great" is a huge Eastern Cottonwood tree on private land in North Walsingham Township.

The first Great Tree Tour proved to be a very enjoyable and educational outing for all involved. We will be planning additional Great Tree outings in the future, featuring different sets of trees and in various seasons. If you would like to help organize one of these outings please contact Audrey Heagy.



***Participants gather around this great white oak tree in Lynwood Park, which likely started growing here long before the first white settlers arrived in this region***



***Each Great Tree is assigned a score based on the tree's diameter in centimetres times its height in metres divided by 10. Here we measure the tree's circumference to calculate its diameter.***



***Allan Boughner holds the plaque presented to him for nominating this great tree, a great silver maple tree located along St. John's Road, east of Walsh. With a diameter of 194 cm and a height of 35 metres, this very impressive roadside tree was the highest scoring tree (679 points) seen on the November NFN tour.***

## Next Meetings

**Tuesday, January 12, 2010**  
**Principles and Practices of Large-Scale  
Ecological Restoration In  
Southern Ontario**  
Mary Gartshore, Pterophylla

**Tuesday, February 9, 2010**  
**Short-eared Owls and Chimney Swifts:  
BSC Conservation Project Highlights**  
Elisabeth Van Stam & Hazel Wheeler BSC

## Upcoming NFN Outings



### Christmas Bird Counts:

All day in the field or report  
your birdfeeder sightings  
\$5.00 fee waived for BSC  
members

**Sun., Dec. 20 / 09**

**Woodhouse (Simcoe area)**

David Okines 519-586-9464  
[davidokines@aol.com](mailto:davidokines@aol.com)

**Sat., Jan 2 / 10 (tentative)**

**Fisherville (Haldimand Co.)**

Linda Thrower 905-774-1230  
[giantindians@3web.net](mailto:giantindians@3web.net)

**Sat. Jan 16 / 10 2 pm - 6 pm**

**Winter Birding in  
Haldimand County**

David Okines & Audrey Heagy  
519-586-9464

**Sat. Feb 20 / 10 1:00 p.m.**

**Winter Tree Identification**

Dolf Wynia / Colleen Dale  
Admission by donation  
Backus Heritage Conserv. Area  
519-586-2201

## 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 #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. 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](http://www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org)

## Next issue of Lotus:

**February 2010**

**Input cutoff date:**

**Wed. Jan. 27, 2010**

## Club Mailing Address

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N3Y 5B3

## 2009 - 2010 NFN Directors with Contact and Project Information

|                                    |                        | all 519-                    |  |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
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| <b>Past Pres.</b> + Natural Areas  | Peter Carson           | 586-3985                    | <a href="mailto:gartcar@kwic.com">gartcar@kwic.com</a>                     |
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| <b>Membership</b>                  | Diane Salter           | 586-7775                    | <a href="mailto:bigcreek@kwic.com">bigcreek@kwic.com</a>                   |
| <b>Field Outings</b>               |                        | (position currently vacant) |  |
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| <b>Publicity</b>                   | Nina Cameron           | 586-8785                    | <a href="mailto:ninac@execulink.com">ninac@execulink.com</a>               |
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