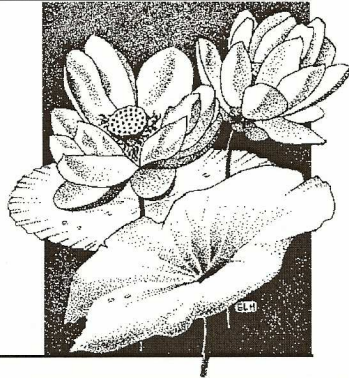


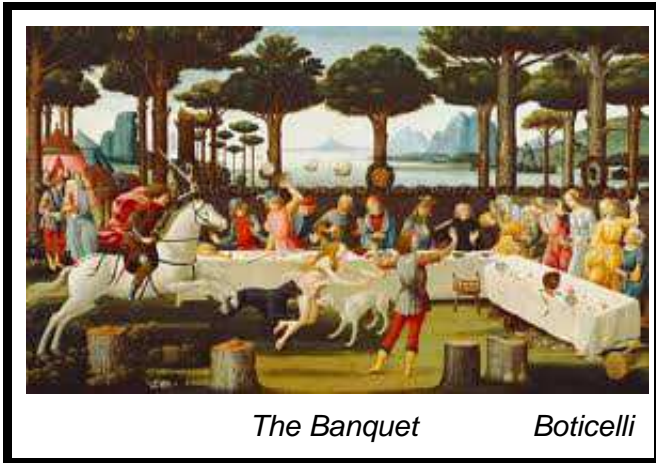
# Lotus

NEWSLETTER  
of the  
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



February 2012

**This is the NFN's BIG YEAR**  
**Mark your calendars for the**  
**SPECIAL EVENTS**



*The Banquet* Boticelli

## ***50th Anniversary Gala***

**Reserve Saturday, October 20,  
and search for your best bib and  
tucker in order to wind up NFN's  
50th year with a great party.**

The Party Planning Committee has gone through several ideas but in order to accommodate the number of club members past and present and their friends, the Board has decided that we need the large venue that the Port Rowan Community Centre provides. If any one has pictures or slides of past NFN events and people would you please consider loaning them to The Committee so that we can make copies for decorative display during the gala.

Contact, Shirley Rothery 519-586-9535

## **HELP WANTED**

**Below is a list of 50th Anniversary projects and contact info. PLEASE consider helping your Club and call one of the below contacts to offer your time!**

**50th Anniversary Edition of The Lotus (June edition)** – help in perusing archives for selection of articles from the past, helping the editor determine content, write an article on your memories of bygone days, etc. TO VOLUNTEER contact Anne Davidson at 519-582-4382

**BioBlitz (June)** – volunteers will survey St. Williams Conservation Reserve to record as many species as possible in a 4 hour period. Need volunteers to run BBQ at end of day and other duties as assigned. TO VOLUNTEER contact Bernie Solymar at 519-428-0706

**Spirit Walk (September)** – combining nature and art, high school students will be recruited to act out various plant and animal “spirits” that will pop out of the woods on guided walks through the forest. Help needed to plan, make costumes, rehearse with students, etc. TO VOLUNTEER contact Madaline Wilson at 519-586-8777

**Anniversary Dinner (October)** – will feature speakers, dinner, silent auction. Help needed in planning, decorating, advertising, ticket sales, etc. TO VOLUNTEER contact Shirley Rothery at 519-586-9535

**Woodhouse  
Christmas Bird Count**

David Okines

These are the results of the Woodhouse Christmas Bird Count held on December 18th 2011. The Woodhouse CBC is centered 7 km east of Simcoe, at Renton in Norfolk County and roughly covers from Port Dover to Waterford and just east of Simcoe to Jarvis.

The weather this year was good; it was mostly cloudy with some light snow flurries all day with up to a centimeter of snow on the ground. The temperature ranged from -3 to +2 with a light westerly wind.

Total Species: 87 +2 Count Week (average for the last 24 years = 81)

Total Individuals: 22,856 (average for the last 24 years = 28,351)

# of participants: 39

**NEW SPECIES TO THE COUNT**

Golden Eagle 1  
Brant 1 (CW)

**RECORD HIGHS - (previous high)**

Cackling Goose 31 (6)  
Gadwall 29 (24)  
Northern Shoveler 18 (5) 5th record  
Hooded Merganser 25 (15)  
Bald Eagle 9 (5)  
Merlin 2 (1)

**RECORD LOW: (previous low)**

Sharp-shinned Hawk 1 (2) Average 6  
Rough-legged Hawk 3 (3) Average 15  
Mourning Dove 227 (233 back in 1987)  
Golden-crowned Kinglet 1 (2) Average 31  
Snow Bunting 1 (2) Average 374  
Purple Finch 1 (= lowest)

**COUNT WEEK SPECIES**

Little Gull (6th record)  
Brant (new for count)

**SPECIES WELL ABOVE AVERAGE (24 year average)**

Mute Swan 5 (2)  
Canada Goose 6729 (4066)  
Mallard 2552 (1735)  
Bufflehead 421 (205)  
Red-breasted Merganser 410 (219)

Bonaparte's Gull 605 (203)  
Eastern Screech Owl 40 (20)  
Red-bellied Woodpecker 26 (13)  
Brown Creeper 10 (6)  
Carolina Wren 10 (5)  
Eastern Bluebird 54 (38)  
Northern Mockingbird 4 (2)  
White-winged Crossbill 13 (7)  
Pine Siskin 46 (37)

**SPECIES WELL BELOW AVERAGE (23 year average)**

Black Duck 53 (108)  
Canvasback 2 (8)  
Greater Scaup 25 (3856)  
Common Goldeneye 77 (124)  
Common Merganser 204 (418)  
Northern Harrier 8 (14)  
American Kestrel 22 (40)  
Wild Turkey 5 (48)  
Herring Gull 110 (248)  
Great-horned Owl 5 (9)  
Downy Woodpecker 73 (105)  
American Crow 533 (999)  
Horned Lark 22 (154)  
Black-capped Chickadee 285 (550)  
Red-breasted Nuthatch 3 (23)  
White-breasted Nuthatch 45 (78)  
European Starling 1995 (3293)  
Cedar Waxwing 45 (95)  
Slate-coloured Junco 639 (1020)  
Rusty Blackbird 1 (8)  
Red-winged Blackbird 5 (26)  
Brown-headed Cowbird 45 (488)  
House Finch 193 (749)  
Common Redpoll 6 (65)  
American Goldfinch 224 (349)  
House Sparrow 775 (1571)

**NOTABLE ABSENTEES**

Ruffed Grouse 3rd miss ever and two years running  
White-crowned Sparrow 2nd miss since 1994  
Common Grackle 4th year in a row

**ALSO WORTHY OF MENTION**

American Wigeon 2 (5th record)  
Red-shouldered Hawk 2 (= 2nd best count)  
Grey Partridge 3 (6th record)  
Wilson's Snipe 1 (5th record) same spot as last year  
Yellow-shafted Flicker 14 (3rd Highest)  
American Pipit 1 (7th record)  
Yellow-rumped Warble 3  
Rusty Blackbird 1 (9th record)

## The Woodhouse CBC

Shelia Smith

(Reprint of December 31, 2011 "Countryside")

The season turns a corner for me with my participation in the Woodhouse Township Christmas bird count. In 1900, Christmas bird counts were substituted for annual Christmas "side hunts." Side hunts involved competing groups, or sides, who endeavored to bring back the largest number of feathered and furred specimens. Today, there are thousands of counts and thousands of people who take part, without weapons, following some rules that make the collected data the oldest and largest "snapshot" we have of winter bird populations.

Every count covers a fifteen mile diameter circle centered on the same spot each year. Once a date is set, it can't be changed. Participants are assigned a territory within the circle. Woodhouse is centered on Renton and takes in Waterford, Simcoe, Port Dover and Vittoria. Betty Chanyi and I have been covering an area that includes Vittoria and the lakefront west of Port Ryerse for several years.

This year Betty "let" me drive despite the fact that when I picked her up she was wearing a snowmobile suit that made her look a bit like race car driver Danica Patrick. The day, December 18, dawned with about as much snow as we'd seen. The trees were covered in snowy meringue; sunlight set off sparkles in the air and illuminated the lake and ground fog with gold. It was beautiful, though not very cold.

I suspected we might have a hard time finding small landbirds like cardinals because there was/is still easily accessible wild food. That turned out to be true as feeders were generally not very productive. But, the conditions were right for counting waterfowl. Huge flocks of ducks, called "rafts," kept forming and disappearing on the open water of Lake Erie. Betty set up her scope and the first raft we censused held at least 1400 redhead ducks, almost all sleeping in. But there were also rafts and lines of mergansers and other ducks which were more active. These were attended by flocks of butterfly-like Bonaparte's gulls. And closer to shore, chubby black and white buffleheads bobbed up and down like corks. We could only estimate the numbers. I took some photos which helped a bit but, as many of these birds dove, flew or otherwise changed position, it wasn't easy.

We'd been told to watch for a pair of bald eagles along Front Road and found them preening in a distant tree. But they weren't our best eagle sighting. Later in the day, we were driving along when Betty said, "Look, there's an eagle right by that house!" And

so there was. This backyard eagle was not the least intimidated by an artificial great horned owl or the electronic calls which were supposed to sound like an owl. There didn't seem to be anything around for the big bird to eat and it only moved its head slowly, watching us through fierce, yellow eyes.



Of course, we always miss some things. We were lamenting our inability to turn up wild turkeys, a kestrel or maybe a flock of cedar waxwings when I heard a mockingbird. This grey-and-white beauty was dining on frost-ripened apples still hanging on a tree. We learned later, during our supper gathering at the Landon's in Simcoe, that at least one other mockingbird had been seen. It's another species that is increasing in southern Ontario.

We stopped at another spot, amazed at an exceptional number of osage orange fruit scattered across the ground. They looked, from a distance, like snowy grapefruit. Osage oranges are pithy seed balls and not good to eat. Osage orange was once widely planted to form hedges and windbreaks and there are still a few hedgerows of this odd tree. We saw no birds and had reached the point of enjoying the day and assorted holiday decorations.

As light faded to blue, we decided to check Silver Lake in Port Dover on our way back to Simcoe. We would report our sightings there, if any, separately from our area total. In addition to huge numbers of geese, there were several ducks diving. I got out of the car to try to identify them. Goose music filled the air. The ducks dove, flashed white bellies and their secondary wing feathers or speculums, in the gathering dusk. They were gadwalls, a rather plain dabbling duck which doesn't dive much. But this flock of about 25 seemed almost to be dancing, perhaps displaying, as all kept their white speculums prominently displayed. It was one of those magical moments and we lingered, watching.

I have to confess that gadwall, mockingbird, thousands of ducks and gulls, osage oranges, even the backyard eagle all took second place to seeing and photographing a magnificent white-tail buck. I'm sure we will remember this year's count as the year when the deer posed for us. It was great luck and as usual great fun.



## Woodlot For Sale



26-acre Carolinian woods for sale in Forestville. Landlocked, but access through right-of-way off Charlotteville Rd 1.

For additional details phone Scott Guthrie at 416-744-3989 or sdmgu3@hotmail.com

## Normandale Fish Culture Station Outing Saturday January 14, 2012

by Shirley Rothery (Article and photos)

A blustery, snowy day preceded the day of this outing and so it was with amazement that I greeted the 58 people who turned out. I think half of the attendees were curious about the new facilities at the station and the other half were avid Long Point fishermen.



*Inside the old main station*

Paul Fraser, hatchery technician and our tour guide, led us through the old main station first. Here we enjoyed peeking at newly hatched embryos with their egg sacks still attached. Paul said that shortly these would be absorbed and become one of the fish's

interior organs. When these fish become fry some of them will be released in the Credit River and Paul would be happy to have volunteers to help with the release. The main station is scheduled for demolition, although Paul hoped that part of it would be retained and used as work space and as an interpretive centre. At this station water from the nearby creek is pumped to the roof where air is incorporated and then it enters the building and is heated in gas hot water tanks before being streamed through the fish tanks. This technology contrasts sharply with the new technology we would see later at the new substation.

A lot of the work at the station, cleaning, sterilizing, counting and calculating weight, removing sick or dead fish, is repetitive and monotonous and attempts to speed up the work have resulted in some clever



*All eyes on Paul Fraser's pictures and explanations.* One example was a device that looked like a frisbee (actually a lid from a gallon pail) that had holes punched around the perimeter that helped sort injured or deformed fry from healthy fry ... when a net full of fry are placed on what Paul's fellow employees call the "Fraserbee" and a small amount of water is poured on , the healthy fry swim out the holes while the unhealthy fry remain in the centre to be picked and discarded. This invention saves a significant amount of time.

We crowded into a small section of the new main facility under construction at this site before going on to the recently completed substation on the Front Rd. just West of the Turkey Point Rd..The new substation will eventually be home to the station's valuable brood stock - mature fish used to produce eggs and sperm to produce another generation. Having their own brood stock will eliminate the need to annually collect mature fish for this purpose from the wild, a difficult and time consuming task. At the moment the sub station is housing fish displaced by the construction at the main site and the brood fish are being held at another facility in the province.

Paul is an enthusiastic presenter but he went into raptures over the computer automated features at the new substation, features that will eliminate some of the monotony and laboriousness of a technician's job.



***Inside the new substation on the Front Rd***

Calculating the number and size of the fish has been computer assisted. The system also calculates the amount of food necessary to achieve the growth rate being targeted. The food is blown in a pipe and then blown over the appropriate tanks. No more hand feeding.



***Food is blown to the fish down the black pipe and then directed across the whole tank by the aluminum trough.***

The light in the station can also be altered to mimic the light levels of the various seasons. They have discovered that the fish hatch at 9 degrees but they do not eat and put on weight until the temperature raises to 14 degrees. The water at this station comes partly from the nearby headwaters of Gibson's creek and partly from wells on the site and it is heated by ground source heat pumps. Water purification is also very modern and clean water leaves the station and is returned to Gibson's Creek and eventually enters Lake Erie crossing over Turkey Point beach.

We thank Paul for a visit packed with information.

## **Carolinian Canada Coalition**

Barb Hawke

CCC (Carolinian Canada Coalition) is working on a 600 km Lake Erie Community Stewardship Trail and has had several workshops locally since 2009. Our disappearing ecosystem in this unique part of Canada has been a concern for many and the CCC believes that as the population expands, this project can be part of a solution. The primary goal is to create a trail to promote an understanding and respect for the ecosystem as well as promote stewardship efforts for its longevity along with sustainable funding and long-term support. Information gathering has taken place to learn from other similar groups such as Bruce Trail Conservancy, Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Hike Ontario and Ontario Trails Council. Locally, there have been several meetings to obtain input from local clubs, businesses, land-owners, citizens etc.

Input included: promoting respect for the trail and landowners, showing diversity of the land and local cultural, historical and natural sites, connection with existing trails, mobility promotion for all abilities and modes of transportation, protection of sensitive areas, awareness of the uniqueness and allowances for research, tourist information available but blending with the landscape, promoting safety and enjoyment of the area.

Going forward, it is hoped that more networking will tap into the expertise of existing local groups and interested parties for their awareness, input and support. A thoughtfully placed trail can then keep all considerations in mind. Change will come with time whether we want it or not. If we are a guiding part of change, we can have a positive influence into the future. If you live, work or play in this area, your concerns are important and should be reflected in this process. Protect, restore and support. Please consider attending future meetings and refer to the website for further information. These functions are free for a priceless future.



## Winter Birding in Haldimand County

Adam Timpf (Photos by Diane Salter)



With excellent winter weather on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, a large contingent of naturalists met in Port Dover for an afternoon of birding with Audrey Heagy and David Okines. Starting at the pier, the group studied the many gulls and waterfowl and many were able to pick out a few Black Ducks amongst the more abundant Mallards. Briefly stopping by the pier was a small group of American Pipits, a small songbird not often found in winter.

Next the group headed for Silver Lake in Port Dover to look for interesting birds amongst the many hundreds of Canada Geese. Of note were several groups of the smaller Cackling Goose, a sometimes difficult species to distinguish. There was also an interesting hybrid goose that was a presumed Canada X Greater White-fronted Goose since it showed characteristics of both species. Adding to the waterfowl total, several Gadwall were spotted here as well.

The group then departed to look for Bald Eagles at a known winter hangout at the corner of South Coast Drive beside the Nanticoke Generating Station. Several eagles were immediately spotted and no fewer than 4 birds were seen sitting and soaring right

over the vehicles! A brief scan of the lake at this location produced some more waterfowl and a Northern Mockingbird was briefly seen skulking in dense brush, refusing to give a nice view. Shortly after leaving this spot a Glaucous Gull flew over the lead car with only a lucky few seeing this pure white gull.

Driving the roads looking for more raptors, the group added Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, and American Kestrel. A Northern Shrike, a predatory songbird, cooperated by providing nice scope views to all. Stealing attention away from the shrike, a Northern Mockingbird flew into the area and provided much better views than the first one. Seeing both these species at the same location was a real treat for everyone. The group also stopped to look at a large flock of Snow Buntings in a field. They were quite far from the road, but their black and white colouration was still striking at a distance.

Saving the best for last, the group searched for the much sought after Short-eared Owl, a major draw for this field trip. Checking several haunts unsuccessfully, the group finally found 2 birds on

Concession Rd 3, west of the Kohler Rd. - just north of Rainham Centre. They provided excellent scope views on fence posts and trees, and hunted over the fields with their deep “bat-like” wing beats. This was the highlight for most of the participants and was an excellent end to the day, bringing the species total to 39. Many thanks go to Dave and Audrey for making the trip such a success.

- Blue Jay
- American Crow
- Horned Lark
- Northern Mockingbird
- European Starling
- American Pipit
- American Tree Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Slate-coloured Junco
- Snow Bunting
- House Sparrow

Total Species 39



Trip List

- White-fronted/Canada Goose cross
- Canada Goose
- Cackling Goose
- Mute Swan
- Gadwall
- American Black Duck
- Mallard
- Greater Scaup
- Bufflehead
- Common Goldeneye
- Common Merganser
- Red-breasted Merganser
- Bald Eagle
- Northern Harrier
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Rough-legged Hawk
- American Kestrel
- Wild Turkey
- Bonaparte's Gull
- Ring-billed Gull
- Herring Gull
- Great Black-backed Gull
- Glaucous Gull
- Rock Pigeon
- Mourning Dove
- Short-eared Owl
- Belted Kingfisher
- Downy Woodpecker
- Northern Shrike

**Great Backyard Bird Count  
Feb 17-20, 2012**

Warmer temperatures and lack of snow in parts of North America are setting the stage for what could be a most intriguing 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, coming up February 17-20.

Bird watchers across the U.S. and Canada are ready to tally millions of birds in the annual count coordinated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Audubon, and Canadian partner BSC.

Anyone can participate in the free event, and no registration is required. To learn more about how to join the count, get bird ID tips, downloadable instructions, a how-to video, past results, and more - visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

The count also includes a photo contest and a prize drawing for participants who enter at least one bird checklist online.

## Next Meetings

**Tuesday, March 13, 2012**

Unique & Diverse Flora of  
West Australia  
Ed Addison, Naturalist

**Tuesday, April 10, 2012**

The buzz on Native Plants  
Jane Bowles, UWO

### Upcoming NFN Events

**Sat. Feb. 18**  
**1pm - 3:30pm**  
**Winter Tree ID**  
**Hike**



**Dolf Wynia 519-875-3350**  
**or LPRCA 519-586-2201**

**Sat. Apr. 14**  
**6pm - 8pm**  
**Amazing**  
**Amphibians**



**Bernie Solymar 519-426-7124**

**Sat. Apr 21**  
**start 9:30am**  
**Field Trip to**  
**Beamer**  
**Conservation**



**Area For Hawk Watching**  
**Diane Salter 519-586-7775**  
**or bigcreek@kwic.com**

**Sunday**  
**May 14**  
**2pm - 4pm**  
**Mothers' Day**



**Spring Wildflower Walk**  
**Colleen Dale 519-512-0240**

### 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:**

**April 2012**

**Input cutoff date:**

**Fri. Mar. 30, 2012**

### Club Mailing Address

**Norfolk Field Naturalists**  
**PO Box 995, Simcoe, ON**  
**N3Y 5B3**

### 2011 - 2012 NFN Directors with Contact and Project Information

<b>President</b>	Bernie Solymar	426-7124	solymar@nornet.on.ca
<b>Vice-President</b>	Tara Crewe	586-3531x163	crewe@bsc-eoc.org
<b>Treasurer/Past President</b>	Audrey Heagy	586-9464	aheagy@bsc-eoc.org
<b>Secretary</b>	Colleen Dale	512-0240	cdale22@yahoo.ca
<b>Membership</b>	Diane Salter	586-7775	bigcreek@kwic.com
<b>Field Events</b>	(Acting) Audrey Heagy	586-9464	aheagy@bsc-eoc.org
<b>Speaker Program</b>	(Acting) Bernie Solymar	426-7124	solymar@nornet.on.ca
<b>Publicity</b>	Inga Hinnerichsen	875-5601	daveinga@live.ca
<b>Sanctuary/Natural Areas</b>	Peter Carson	586-3985	gartcar@kwic.com
<b>Workshops</b>	Shirley Rothery	586-9535	shirleyrothery@hotmail.com
<b>Environment</b>	(position currently vacant)		
<b>Director-at-large</b>	Barb Hawke	586-8375	bhawke@kwic.com
<b>Director-at-large</b>	Alan Ladd	426-8504	doris.ladd@norfolkcounty.ca
<b>Director-at-large</b>	Rick Dowson	426-9774	mrrick@bellnet.ca
<b>Director-at-large</b>	(position currently vacant)		
<b>Honorary President:</b>	Al Robinson		
<b>Honorary Directors:</b>	Harry Barrett, Jim Harlow		
<b>Lotus Editor</b>	Anne Davidson	582-4382	birdyanne@gmail.com
<b>Butterfly Counts</b>	Adam & Matt Timpf	586-9964	adam.timpf@gmail.com