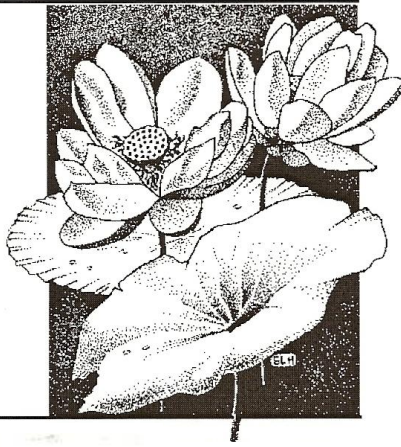


Lotus

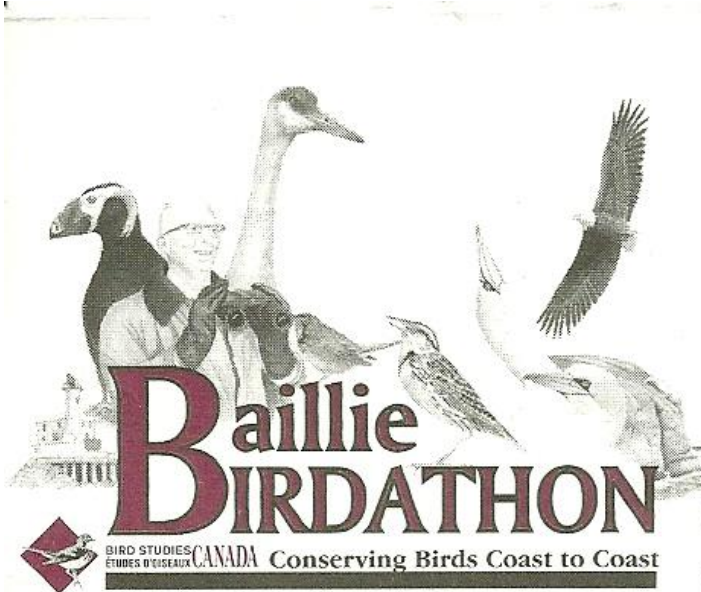
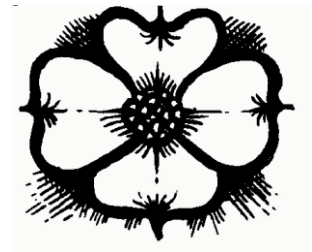
NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



OCTOBER 2013



By: **Michael McMillan**, Official "Birdathoner"
Photos: **George Pond**

At 3:30 pm, on May 16, I stood in a grassy field near Mud Creek on the East Quarter Line road northeast of Port Rowan peering through my binoculars at a **Meadowlark** sitting in a nearby bush. My Birdathon had begun. For the fourth consecutive year this location had produced a Meadowlark, a bird that is becoming increasingly rare in Norfolk because of the loss of pastures and grasslands. Before leaving this location I also saw a **Turkey Vulture** soaring overhead, numerous **Tree Swallows**, a lovely blue and orange **Eastern Bluebird** and a deep orange and black male **Baltimore Oriole**.

A little earlier in the afternoon I had joined Ricky Dunn, David Hussell and their son Jeremy for another Birdathon. From Mud Creek we headed south and made a quick stop just east of Port Rowan at a spot overlooking the bay where we spotted a solitary **Common Tern** flying low over the water and a **Barn Swallow** swooping around nearby feeding on insects.

During a stop at the former Port Rowan sewage lagoons several **Bank Swallows** were perched on an overhead wire and a **Savannah Sparrow** sat on a post. A group of **Least Sandpipers** flew from one end of the pond to the other flashing in the bright sunlight. Also, on the mud flats, was a **Killdeer** with several babies. As we drove away from the lagoons, an **American Woodcock** standing at the side of the road flew away.

At the back of the BSC property, through our scopes, we were able to identify two **American Coots** and one species of duck, a **Canvasback**, bobbing out on the bay. At the BSC wetlands was a female **Wood Duck** with nine babies in tow. A trip along the cemetery road beside BSC produced a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, a **Magnolia Warbler**, a **Palm Warbler**, a **Song Sparrow**, a **Swamp Sparrow** and a **Clay-coloured Sparrow**. The Clay-colored was special because it is not usually seen this far east. This was only the second one I have ever seen.

Continued on page 2



Baillie Birdathon

Continued from page 1

Along the causeway, we stopped to observe a **Kingfisher** perched on a fence near some boathouses. Then suddenly a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** flew overhead. During another short stop we identified several **Pied-billed Grebes** and a **Forster's Tern** on the water as well as a **Cormorant** in flight.

Our next stop was at Old Cut where we were able to add the following birds to our list: **White-throated Sparrow**, **Black & White Warbler**, **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, **American Redstart**, **Catbird**, **Veery**, **Ovenbird**, **Eastern Wood Peewee**, **Scarlet Tanager**, and **Warbling Vireo**.

After a short break for dinner at David and Ricky's nearby cottage we headed to the dyke on the causeway. Immediately we noticed a **Nighthawk** overhead, the first one I had ever seen locally. This is another bird in decline in southern Ontario. Also seen flying were a **Black Tern** and seven **Sandhill Cranes**. As we walked on the dyke I had a good look at a **Common Yellowthroat** sitting on a reed. This warbler's black mask identified it as a male. We also heard a noisy **Marsh Wren** and the distinctive slow, deep 'oong-ka choonk' of an **American Bittern** hidden somewhere in the reeds.

By now darkness had set in and we drove to the sand road just north of the Forestry Station where a **Whip-Poor-Will** was calling.



The next morning, following a quick breakfast, we were on the road by 5:15 am heading to the Backus Woods. On the fourth concession road just outside the woods we scanned a freshly tilled field for **Horned Larks**. After a few minutes Jeremy located one. Backus was not very productive, but we did manage to hear a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** tapping and the singing of a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, a **Wood Thrush** and a **Red-eyed Vireo**.

We then headed west to the Big Creek Bridge on the fifth concession where we checked off a **Phoebe**. On the West Quarter Line past the Timpf property we stopped at a grassy field now owned by the Nature Conservancy Canada. There was much sparrow activity. We spotted a **Field Sparrow**, a **Grasshopper Sparrow** and a **Vesper Sparrow**. In the distance the faint gobbling of a **Wild Turkey** could be heard. Around the corner in a field beside the sand road we had an excellent look at a **Brown Thrasher** and a **Great-crested Flycatcher**. Nearby an **Eastern Towhee** was singing.

As we headed back on the West Quarter Line we decided to walk into a wooded area with a deep gully hoping to hear a Northern Water Thrush. We failed to get the thrush but did see a male **Indigo Bunting** sitting in a bush. This eye catching bird is a rich deep blue *all over*. Once back on the road we spotted two **Flycatchers**, an **Olive-sided** and another **Great-crested**, in the same tree.

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Baillie Birdathon Continued from page 2

At the edge of a small pond on the Front Road were four **Dunlins** and a **Greater Yellowlegs**. At the Big Creek bridge were **Cliff Swallows**. A **Great Blue Heron** stood on the grass by the pond at the Lee Brown Sanctuary. Also on the Front Road five **Turkey Vultures** were standing in a field

Heading back to Long Point we drove down Hastings Drive. Along this sandy road was a lovely male **Scarlet Tanager**, a **Least Flycatcher**, four **Kingbirds**, a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** and, out on the water, a solitary **Red-breasted Merganser**. However, the most interesting sight along Hasting Drive, standing on a log on the beach, was an **Osprey** with a fish. Ospreys are not very common locally.

We then backtracked to Old Cut and then walked into the Provincial Park. This excursion gave us a **Hooded Warbler**, a **Lincoln Sparrow**, a **Blackpoll Warbler**, a **Blackburnian Warbler**, a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, a **White-crowned Sparrow**, a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** and a bird I had never seen before, a **Yellow-throated Vireo**.



Hooded Warbler

Our next stop was the Old Provincial Park. While sitting at a picnic table enjoying lunch we were rewarded with a **Black-throated Green Warbler**, a **Northern Parula Warbler** and a **Cedar Waxwing**.

Our plan was to finish the Birdathon at the Townsend Sewage Lagoons. So we headed to highway 24. Just east of the Turkey Point Road two mature **Bald Eagles** sat in a tree back from the road. We made a brief stop at Port Ryerse to look for Woodpeckers. Although unsuccessful, we did see three **Rough-winged Swallows** on a wire.

At the sewage lagoons we increased our duck count with **Lesser Scaup**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Northern Shoveller**, **Mallard**, **Blue-winged Teal**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Gadwall**, **American Widgeon**, and **Ring-necked Duck**. We added two shore birds, a **White-rumped Sandpiper** and an eye catching **Wilson's Phalarope**. Jeremy's persistence in scanning a nearby field paid off when he finally located a **Bobolink**, our final bird. This was the third consecutive year we have seen a bobolink at this spot.

My thanks go to Ricky, David and Jeremy. Without them, my total of 120 species would have been much less. I am optimistic that, once all the money is in, we as a team, should approach \$5,000 which will help bird research and conservation across the country.

Tax receipts will be issued by Bird Studies Canada either by email or regular mail in the summer.

Thank you for sponsoring me!

Ontario Nature News

The Android app for the
Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas
is now available

Download for free at:
www.ontarionature.org/protect/species/app.php

The buzz on Hummingbirds

Story + Photos by: Inga Hinnerichsen



The annual Hummingbird banding demonstration hosted by David Okines and Audrey Heagy is, no doubt, one of the most popular of our summer field events. Forty plus hummingbird enthusiasts of all ages showed up on the 27th of July despite the occasional spits of rain.

The three captured birds were carefully banded, weighed and measured by David, who spiced up the demonstration with plenty of wry humour and fascinating Hummingbird trivia. After the birds were released by delighted young onlookers most of the group went for a walk along the trails on the farm. The wet summer had made the sweet Dewberries very juicy! A small Brown Snake was curled up under a piece of sheet metal and a some Cedar Waxwings were flitting among the trees.



Did you know...

- The **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** (*Archilochus colubris*) is the only species of hummingbird that regularly nests east of the Mississippi River in North America.
- This hummingbird is from 7 to 9 cm long and has a 8 to 11 cm wingspan.
- Their weight can range from 2 to 6 g, with males averaging 3.4g against the slightly larger female which averages 3.8g. A male and a female together weigh about the same as a copper penny.
- As in all Hummingbirds, the toes and feet of this species are quite small. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird can only shuffle if it wants to move along a branch, though it can scratch its head and neck with its feet.
- The adult male has a ruby red throat patch and a dark forked tail. The female has a dark rounded tail with white tips and generally no obvious throat patch.



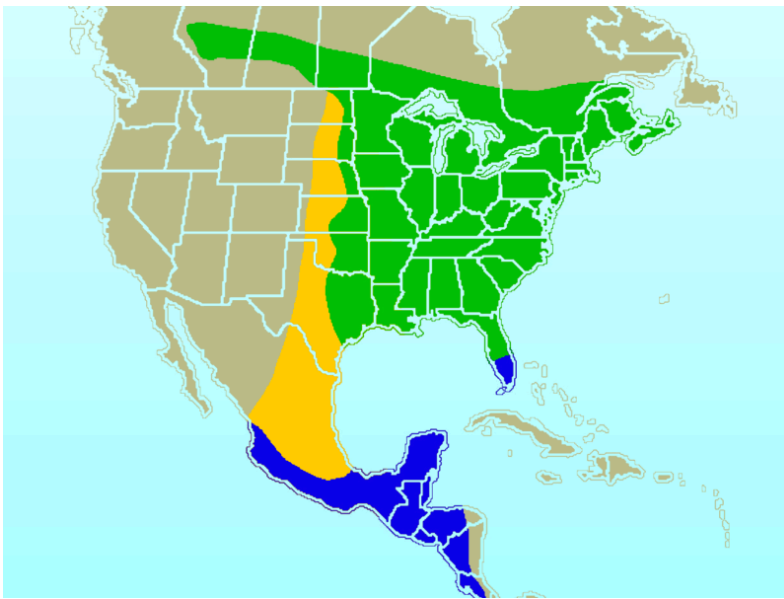
- The female builds a nest (by then the male is long gone) usually on top of a small branch in a shrub or a tree. She lays 2 eggs the size of small jelly beans. She is the sole caretaker of the young birds.
- Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are solitary. Adults of this species are not social, other than during courtship (which lasts only a few minutes)
- Both males and females of any age are aggressive towards other hummingbirds. They may defend territories, such as a feeding territory, attacking and chasing other hummingbirds that enter.

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Ruby-throated Hummingbirds - did you know...

Continued from page 4

- While active during the day they feed frequently, not only on nectar from flowers and feeders that we supply, but also on tiny insects providing them with protein.
- At night they conserve energy by entering a hypothermic torpor.



Range map (Wikipedia)

Green: Summer range Blue: Winter range
Yellow: Migratory range

- In late summer to early fall they fatten up for migration. This is important because, they must first fly across Lake Erie and then the Gulf of Mexico. This feat is an impressive 500-mile, non-stop flight over water. In recent years the workers on the drilling platforms in the Gulf have started to put out feeders to let the migrating Hummingbirds refuel during this trip.
- A hummingbird is the only known bird that can fly backwards.
- During hovering and regular flight Ruby-throated Hummingbird wings beat 55 times per second. The normal straight-line flight is about 40kph (25mph);
- During display flight these amazing tiny dynamos can reach speeds of up to 65kph (40mph).

- A Hummingbird heart beats about 250 times per minute while at rest, and about 1,220 per minute while flying. Human hearts beat on average 70 times a minute at rest.
- Males establish a territory before the females arrive. He courts females that enter his territory by performing courtship displays.
- The oldest known Ruby-throated Hummingbird to be banded was 9 years and 1 month of age. Almost all hummingbirds of 7 years or more in age are females, with males rarely surviving past 5 years of age.
- The vocalizations of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are rapid, squeaky chirps, and are used primarily for threats.
- During the courtship displays, the male makes a rapid *tik-tik tik-tik tik-tik* sound, apparently with his wings.

My young friend
Elijah is delighted
to release a
banded female
Ruby-throated
Hummingbird



Long Point Butterfly Count

Sets New North American Record!

Report and photos by: Adam Timpf



American Snout



Edward's Hairstreak

The 22nd Long Point Butterfly Count was held on July 6th 2013 with warm temperatures and under partly cloudy skies. Although butterfly numbers of most species were relatively scarce, the dedicated group managed to find a respectable 2184 individuals of 49 species (average of 2572 and 49 respectively since 1992). The species total doesn't include the single larvae of Giant Swallowtail or the White Admiral form that is considered the same species as Red-spotted Purple.

More often seen during late summer, 3 American Snout were found near Turkey Point. This was a new species for the count bringing us to 77 species since the count began. The 1004 Edward's Hairstreaks found near St. Williams beat our previous record of 73. This also doubles the North American high making the Long Point Butterfly Count the new record holder! This is a great example of how quickly an insect population can explode when conditions are perfect. Other highlights include 2 Gray Comma (previous high 1), 12 Crossline Skipper equals our previous high, and the 2 Striped Hairstreak were the first since 2007. On the downside, only 4 Monarchs were seen, the lowest ever recorded on the count. Hopefully they are able to bounce back and we will see more next year.

A big thanks to Peter Carson and Mary Gartshore for hosting the wrap-up and to everybody else who was able to attend: Ron Allenson, Gregor Beck, Kathryn Boothby, Amanda and Haila Colibaba, Sarah Dobney, Audrey Heagy, Jim Heslop, Barry Jones, Karin Cassidy, Kevin Kavanagh, Adam Lambert, David Okines, Nathan and Jeremy Snow, Alicia Vaciny. I hope to see everyone again next year and hopefully we can attract even more participants. It's always the first Saturday in July, making next year's count July 5th, 2013.

Long Point Butterfly Count July 6th, 2013

English Name	Number
Black Swallowtail	1
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	44
Spicebush Swallowtail	13
Cabbage White	261
Clouded Sulphur	35
Orange Sulphur	8
American Copper	11
Bronze Copper	3
Coral Hairstreak	11
Edward's Hairstreak	1004
Banded Hairstreak	2
Hickory Hairstreak	1
Striped Hairstreak	2
Eastern Tailed-Blue	7
Summer Azure	37
American Snout	1
Great Spangled Fritillary	18
Silvery Checkerspot	19
Pearl Crescent	8
Northern Crescent	333
Baltimore Checkerspot	40
Question Mark	1
Eastern Comma	6
Grey Comma	2
Mourning Cloak	14
Painted Lady	1
Red Admiral	8
Red-spotted Purple	16
Viceroy	6
Tawny Emperor	17
Northern Pearly-Eye	6
Eyed Brown	24
Appalachian Brown	1
Little Wood-Satyr	30
Common Wood-Nymph	40
Monarch	4
Silver-spotted Skipper	78
Northern Cloudwing	2
Least Skipper	3
European Skipper	18
Peck's Skipper	2
Tawny-edged Skipper	1
Crossline Skipper	12
Long Dash	3
Northern Broken-Dash	11
Delaware Skipper	1
Hobomok Skipper	2
Broad-winged Skipper	1
Dun Skipper	15
Total Individuals	2184
Total Species	49

BOOK REVIEW:

The Once and Future Great Lakes Country

An Ecological History

JOHN L. RILEY

PREFACE BY RAMSAY COOK

**A passionate, wide-ranging history of the
landscapes around the Great Lakes.**

North America's Great Lakes country has experienced centuries of upheaval. Its landscapes are utterly changed from what they were five hundred years ago. The region's superabundant fish and wildlife and its magnificent forests and prairies astonished European newcomers who called it an earthly paradise but then ushered in an era of disease, warfare, resource depletion, and land development that transformed it forever.

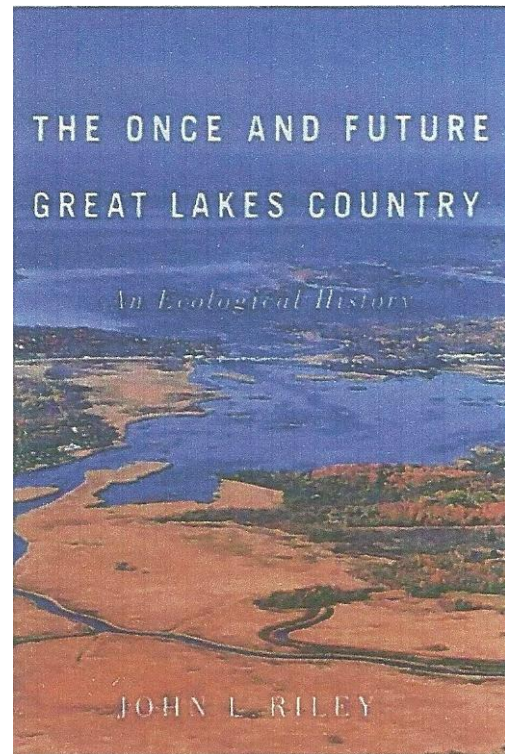
The Once and Future Great Lakes Country is a history of environmental change in the Great Lakes region, looking as far back as the last ice age, and also reflecting on modern trajectories of change, many of them positive.

John Riley chronicles how the region serves as a continental crossroads, one that experienced massive declines in its wildlife and native plants in the centuries after European contact, and has begun to see increased nature protection and re-wilding in recent decades. Yet climate change, globalization, invasive species, and urban sprawl are today exerting new pressures on the region's ecology.

Covering a vast geography encompassing two Canadian provinces and nine American states, ***The Once and Future Great Lakes Country*** provides both a detailed ecological history and a broad panorama of this vast region. It blends the voices of early visitors with the hopes of citizens now.

"John Riley has written the book I once thought I might write ... His knowledge, practical experience, and determination make this a singular work that combines historical scholarship, scientific understanding, and subtle, low-key advocacy." Ramsay Cook, from the Preface.

John L. Riley is senior science advisor, Nature Conservancy of Canada. He has had careers as a botanist, geologist, ecologist, and conservation professional with the Royal Ontario Museum, the Ontario Geological Survey, and Ontario Nature. He lives in Mono, Ontario.



SPECIFICATIONS

McGill-Queen's Rural, Wildland, and Resource Studies Series

October 2013

978-0-7735-4177-1 \$39.95T cloth

6.125 x 9.25

504pp

colour section, 16 maps, 8 drawings,

3 b&w photos

Electronic edition available

WELCOME ABOARD!

New members of the NFN Board of Directors

Director-at-Large Eleanor Chithalen

Director-at-Large Bev McLeod

Director-at-Large David Curry

**We are very pleased to have you with us and
look forward to working with you**

Upcoming NFN Autumn/Winter Events

Ontario's Freshwater Mussels

Tuesday, November 12, 2013
7.30 pm

Speaker: Dr. Todd Morris, DFO

Dr. Morris will provide an overview of this fascinating group and what role they play in the aquatic ecosystems.

Dive into the world of one of North America's most endangered groups.

Aboriginal Trail Marker Trees in Southern Ontario

Christmas Social

Tuesday, December 10, 2013
7.30 pm

Speaker: Paul O'Hara

Aboriginals marked trees along their paths to point to camps, water sources, river fords, etc. Remarkably, some of these trees still remain on the landscape.

Bring a snack or refreshment to share during the members' festive social following the presentation

Christmas Bird Counts

Sunday, December 15, 2013
Woodhouse Count (Norfolk)

Contact: David Okines,
519-586-9464
davidokines@aol.com

Saturday, December 28, 2013
Fisherville Count (Haldimand)

Contact: Linda Thrower
905-774-1230
giantindians@3web.net

NFN meetings

Norfolk Field Naturalist meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month from September to May.

Meetings take place at the Simcoe Seniors Centre, 89 Pond Street.

The meetings are free and visitors are always welcome.

Doors open at 7:15 pm, programs begin at 7:30 pm.

NFN Mailing Address

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

Next Lotus issue:

December 2013

Input dead line:

Friday, November 29

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

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Butterfly Counts: (appointed) Adam Timpf 586-9964

Christmas Bird Counts: (appointed) David Okines - Woodhouse Count 519-586-9464
Linda Thrower - Fisherville Count 905-774-1230

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