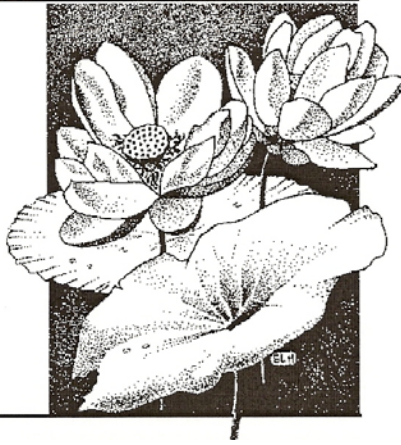


Lotus

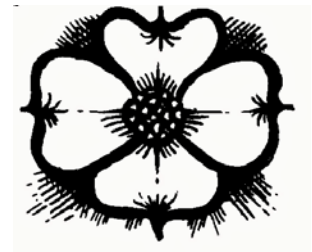
NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



February 2014



Report on the Woodhouse Christmas Bird Count Compiled by: David Okines

Greetings Counters,

These are the results of the 27th Woodhouse CBC held on December 15, 2013. The Woodhouse CBC is centered 7km east of Simcoe, at the crossroads of Highway 3 and Cockshutt Road at Renton in Norfolk County and roughly covers from Port Dover to Waterford and just east of Simcoe to Jarvis.

Weather

The weather this year was very different from last year. Overnight snow resulted in about 20cm accumulation by dawn. Fortunately there was very little more snow during the day and the sun even tried to come out occasionally. Most of the standing water was frozen, and there was some ice build-up along the shore of the lake. Temperatures varied from a low of -9 to a high of -3.

Total species: 86 + 4 Count Week

(Average for the last 26 years = 81, average for the last 10 years = 85)

Total individuals: 26,001

(Average for the last 26 years = 27,082, average for the last 10 years = 23,907)

Number of participants: 32

NEW SPECIES TO THE COUNT

Peregrine Falcon 1 (1 previous CW bird 2012)

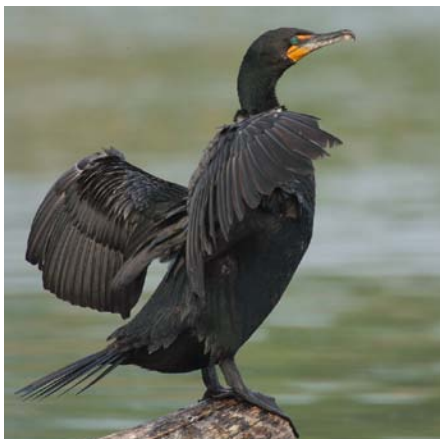
RECORD HIGH - (previous high)

Snow Goose	3 (2)
Common Goldeneye	680 (393)
Bald Eagle	17 (13)
Merlin	3 (2)
Snowy Owl	3 (1)
Red-bellied Woodpecker	44 (34)
Eastern Towhee	3 (2)

RECORD LOW - (previous low)

Ruddy Duck	1 (= lowest) Average 5
Great Black-backed Gull	2 (= lowest) Average 18
American Pipit	1 (lowest) Average 6

Continued on page 2...



Double-crested Cormorant, Ring-necked Duck & Snowy Owl (Photos: Wikipedia)

COUNT WEEK SPECIES

Double-crested Cormorant	1 (4th record)
Turkey Vulture	1 (7th record)
American Coot	1 (7th record)
Brown Creeper	1

SPECIES ABOVE AVERAGE (26 year average)

Great Blue Heron	8 (5)
Mute Swan	5 (1)
Canada Goose	7325 (3170)
Cackling Goose	15 (1)
Mallard	2665 (1462)
American Black Duck	211 (95)
Hooded Merganser	21 (4)
Common Merganser	1080 (342)
Red-breasted Merganser	296 (179)
Northern Harrier	29 (12)
Wild Turkey	148 (30)
Mourning Dove	1004 (613)
Belted Kingfisher	9 (4)
Yellow-shafted Flicker	14 (9)
Horned Lark	557 (128)
Eastern Bluebird	76 (32)
American Robin	28 (12)
Myrtle Warbler	7 (3)
Field Sparrow	6 (3)
Song Sparrow	91 (34)
Swamp Sparrow	21 (7)
White-throated Sparrow	23 (16)
Slate-coloured Junco	1586 (868)
Snow Bunting	643 (230)
Northern Cardinal	198 (152)



Eastern Bluebird (Photo: Wikipedia)



Snow Bunting

Northern Goshawk

Photos: Wikipedia

SPECIES WELL BELOW AVERAGE (26 year average)

Tundra Swan	8 (57)
Greater Scaup	42 (3413)
Lesser Scaup	35 (363)
American Kestrel	15 (36)
Bonaparte's Gull	52 (181)
Ring-billed Gull	272 (1874)
Herring Gull	47 (222)
Black-capped Chickadee	195 (509)
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8 (21)
White-breasted Nuthatch	35 (72)
European Starling	1325 (2955)
Cedar Waxwing	35 (86)
Brown-headed Cowbird	110 (449)
House Finch	223 (668)
House Sparrow	973 (1419)

NOTABLE ABSENTEES

Canvasback	
Ruffed Grouse	4th year in a row
Brown Creeper	CW only
Purple Finch	
Common Redpoll	
Pine Siskin	

ALSO WORTHY OF MENTION

Northern Goshawk	1 (7th record)
Wilson's Snipe	1 (7th record) same spot as the last 4 years
Glaucous Gull	1 (5th record)
Short-eared Owl	1 (last time on count day was back in 2000)
Gray Catbird	3 (6th record)
Fox Sparrow	1 (7th record)
Red Crossbill	1 (2nd record) last in 1988

Continued on page 3...

FULL SPECIES LIST & TALLY

Double Crested Cormorant	CW
Great Blue Heron	8
Turkey Vulture	CW
Mute Swan	5
Tundra Swan	8
Canada Goose	7325
Cackling Goose	15
Snow Goose	3
Mallard	2665
American Black Duck	211
Redhead	916
Ring-necked Duck	1
Greater Scaup	42
Lesser Scaup	35
(Scaup Spp)	1127
Common Goldeneye	680
Bufflehead	211
Hooded Merganser	21
Common Merganser	1080
Red-breasted Merganser	296
Ruddy Duck	1
Bald Eagle	17
Northern Harrier	29
Sharp-shinned Hawk	6
Cooper's Hawk	5
Northern Goshawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	82
Rough-legged Hawk	11
Peregrine Falcon	1
American Kestrel	15
Merlin	3
Wild Turkey	148
American Coot	CW
Wilson's Snipe	1
Bonaparte's Gull	40
Ring-billed Gull	272
Herring Gull	47
Glaucous Gull	1
Great black-backed Gull	2
Rock Pigeon	445
Mourning Dove	1004
Eastern Screech-Owl	44
Great Horned Owl	2
Snowy Owl	3
Long-eared Owl	1
Short-eared Owl	2
Belted Kingfisher	9
Red-bellied Woodpecker	44
Downy Woodpecker	65
Hairy Woodpecker	15
Yellow-shafted Flicker	14
Pileated Woodpecker	2
Northern Shrike	5
Blue Jay	348

American Crow	622
Horned Lark	557
Black-capped Chickadee	195
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8
White-breasted Nuthatch	35
Brown Creeper	CW
Carolina Wren	6
Winter Wren	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	14
Eastern Bluebird	76
Hermit Thrush	2
American Robin	28
Gray Catbird	1
Northern Mockingbird	2
European Starling	1325
American Pipit	1
Cedar Waxwing	35
Myrtle Warbler	7
Eastern Towhee	3
American Tree Sparrow	572
Field Sparrow	6

Savannah Sparrow	2
Fox Sparrow	1
Song Sparrow	91
Swamp Sparrow	21
White-throated Sparrow	23
White-crowned Sparrow	8
Slate-colored Junco	1586
Lapland Longspur	8
Snow Bunting	643
Northern Cardinal	198
Red-winged Blackbird	17
Rusty Blackbird	5
Brown-headed Cowbird	110
House Finch	223
Red Crossbill	1
American Goldfinch	294
House Sparrow	973

Total: 88 Sp + 4 Count Week

Huron Fringe

Birding Festival

May 23 - June 1, 2014



One of North America's
Premier Birding Festivals.

Program and on-line registration available
February 1, 2014 at www.friendsofmacgregor.org or by
calling 519-389-6231 or 519-389-9056.

MacGregor Point Provincial Park • Port Elgin, ON.

Fleeting Treasures from Down Below

Part 2

By Florinda Kotisa

The mushrooms discussed in Part 1 of this article (see the December 2013 issue of Lotus) appear sporadically. If you don't go mushrooming regularly but want to be sure to see some specimens, the fall is sure to meet your expectations. The rains and the cool weather bring on a bounty of mushrooms. Honey mushrooms (*Armillaria Mellea*) grow in profusion on stumps and also at the base of living trees. Honey refers to the colour of its cap rather than its taste. Nevertheless, it is eminently edible. By now, you probably know what is coming next. Yes, it has a poisonous look alike, the deadly Galerina (*Galerina autumnalis*). However, this mushroom has brown spores, is much smaller and fragile and does not grow as prolifically as the Armillaria.

Scaly Pholiota (*Pholiota squarrosa*) also fruits at the same time as the Honey mushroom. It is a lovely scaly orange-brown mushroom that also grows in clusters. Alas, it too is poisonous.



Scaly Pholiota Photo: Florinda Kotisa

If you happen to find the Jack-o-Lantern (described in Part 1), although poisonous, pick a couple of specimens anyway, take them home and sit with them in a dark closet and enjoy the show!

The Aborted Entoloma (*Entoloma abortivum*) also grows in abundance as it is thought that the Entoloma mushroom aborts when it is infected by the mycelium of the Honey mushroom, producing a

white fluffy fruiting body resembling a misshapen Puffball. Entolomas should generally not be eaten as there are several poisonous varieties which are hard to distinguish. However, the only one that aborts is of the edible variety. We saw several examples of both Aborted Entolomas and another fine edible, the Blewit (*Clitocybe nuda*), on the mushroom hike with Inga. Blewits vary from bright purple to lavender and pinkish buff colour and their caps are convex with inrolled edges when young.



Aborted Entoloma (above)

Blewit (below)

Photos:

Inga Hinnerichsen



Another distinctive mushroom that appears in late fall is the Shaggy Mane which many people will recognize. Shaggy Manes (*Coprinus comatus*) are delicious but have to be cooked quickly as they deliquesce or turn into an inky mush within hours. In the same family is Inky Cap or Tippler's Bane (*Coprinus atramentarius*) so named because it should never be eaten if alcohol is present in your system (several days before and after eating the mushroom) as it contains a compound that behaves in a way similar to Antabuse. For some of us, that puts it in the poisonous category!

Continued on page 5...

FLEETING TREASURES... Continued from page 4

There are also numerous coral fungi that look like they have floated off some tropical reef. Similar to these corals are tooth fungi. The Comb Tooth (*Hericium americanum*), right, is a beautiful cascade of white spines flowing out from the sides of dead hardwoods.

These are just some of the mushrooms that I enjoy on my walks. Take some time to look down the next time you are in the woods. My eyes are usually riveted to the ground in search of these ephemeral and infinitely interesting species. After 30 years of mushroom identification, I am still as besotted by them as when I first started. But then, I sometimes miss seeing the birds!



Comb Tooth Photo: Florinda Kotisa



Shaggy Mane Photo: Wikipedia

Some points to consider if you wish to eat mushrooms:

- Be 100% sure of your identification. More importantly, learn the poisonous look-alikes first. Besides having several mushroom guide books, it is best to go on forays with someone experienced in mushroom identification
- Always take spore prints when you are beginning to learn mushrooms
- Along with the physical characteristics of the mushroom, learn the habitat and climatic conditions that produce the mushrooms
- Always cook wild mushrooms. A famous restaurant in Toronto got into serious trouble when an innovative chef put raw morels in a salad
- Eat only a small amount the first time because you may have an allergic reaction to the unique proteins found even in the best edibles.

Receive the LOTUS

IN FULL COLOUR

by email - greener and cheaper than snail mail

Notify Diane Salter

Phone: 519-586-7775 Email: bigcreek@kwic.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

2014 season:

Kathleen Pickard

Larry Monczka

We are looking forward to meeting you and hope you will participate in and enjoy all the NFN indoor presentations and field outings!

WOLF - COYOTE - COYWOLF - COYDOG?

Email by Shelia Smith

Trail Cam photos by Alan McKeown

Al McKeown has been capturing some interesting images with a trail cam somewhere in Norfolk County. This is the second fall/winter that the sandy-coloured coyote has starred in some of his shots. I thought you would like to see them. There is now quite a bit of variation in both colour and size of these animals in this area. I had one here that looked much like a red wolf. Farmers and hunters in this area have long referred to these atypical coyotes as "brush wolves" or, sometimes, "coydogs."

The National Geographic Society came out with a piece indicating that researchers have found wolf DNA in some coyotes. It is thought that as coyotes moved east, some mated with eastern wolves...best known from around Algonquin Park.* These wolves are much smaller than the huge Timber, or Grey Wolves of the far north and west which may be almost 1m tall at the shoulder and weigh 140 pounds. These big canines don't tolerate coyotes, which average 40 lbs or less, as I witnessed on a winter trip to Yellowstone. And, the coydog theory goes out the window when you realize that coyotes mate once a year, in late winter. Domestic dogs may breed twice a year but not necessarily in late winter.** And most domestic dogs are not equipped to survive one of our winters.

While some less intelligent individuals have perhaps crossed dogs and coyotes and dogs and wolves in captivity, it doesn't strike me as being a common practice...at least to go to all that trouble and then turn the animals loose. So, whatever the reason, we are getting some interesting, and often bold, coyotes.

Cheers! Shelia

**Editor's note: This cross breed is referred to as Coywolf in the National Geographic program. These animals are just as highly intelligent and adaptable as their Coyote ancestors and have spread out in both rural and urban environments in Eastern Canada and Northeastern USA.*

***Editor's note: Coydogs may still be possible, although unlikely, in nature: The female Coyote comes into heat once a year, female dogs twice, but staggered any time over the year. Whereas the males of both species may jump to the opportunity to breed any time!*



This handsome Coyote was caught on
Dr. Alan McKeown's trail cam

**Have you seen anything interesting?
...or been somewhere beautiful?**

**Share your photos
with your fellow NFN Members
in the LOTUS**

**Email to : daveinga@live.ca
Subject line: Photos for Lotus**

New Challenges, New Field Guide Books

By Bernie Solymár

We wouldn't be naturalists if we didn't have a dog-eared copy of Peterson's or Sibley's Field Guide to the Birds on our book shelf or in our cars.

Here is another excellent field guide to introduce us to an exciting animal group.

ROM Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles of Ontario

By Ross D. MacCulloch, 2002, \$15.74. Available from www.amazon.ca

Our amphibians and reptiles hold a fascination for young and old alike – and lots of fun to encounter – whether it's I.D.ing the songs of frogs and toads on a spring day, basking turtles in a marsh on a summer day or encountering snakes near home or on a hike. This guide is researched, written, and designed specifically for the Ontario reader and visitor. It is the most authoritative, easy to use, and beautifully designed guide available, with range maps, great photographs and includes every one of the 23 amphibians and 20 reptiles in the province. Nice and compact, the guide fits easily in the back pocket but be aware the "at risk" status of some species are out-of-date.



Northern Watersnake Photo: Inga Hinnerichsen

The Norfolk Field Naturalists

wish to recognize and extend our warmest gratitude with regards to the donation to NFN in memory of

Arthur Loughton

by **Donald and Nancy Walker**

MOTHER NATURE AT WORK (Brownie Points for the Coyotes)

by: Ross Bateman

Published with the permission of Ross Bateman and Simcoe Reformer

First published on 09 Jan 2014 in the Simcoe Reformer, Letters to the Editor

Recently, the reformer published an article asking "What did your cat do last night?"

The story pointed out that a new Environment Canada study estimates that human-related activities cause more than 269,000,000 bird deaths each year. The very existence of house cats is considered human-related, and the study concludes that cat predation is the leading cause of this astounding number of avian casualties.

There are a few tips in the article on how to reduce the dangerous habit of your pet cat, but there is still the more difficult issue of the wild feral cats - all of them carnivorous - that roam the countryside on-the-hunt. 1.4 million of them are prowling Canada, with a healthy proportion of that in county, according to a recent presentation to Norfolk Council.

There are other animals in the wild with the cats, and in many places, this would include coyotes. It's easy to Google the diet of the coyotes. This includes insects, mice, some deer (that a Reformer commentary suggests are over-populated) and a special favourite, these invasive animals (see above), a species often loved at home that, out there, are killing all these wild birds.

I've noticed that when the lonesome calls of the coyote packs are heard at night, the cats are never seen in the nearby fields and ditches during those weeks. And coincidentally, the reverse is true.

In the Coyote we have a natural control in the countryside of an unnatural feline affliction that is excoriating the avian population. One could hope that anyone of conscience who might take to the field with gun-in-hand would think about this natural move by Mother Nature to turn towards balance.

Upcoming Winter/Spring Events

Great Backyard Bird Count

Sunday, February 16, 2014

9.00 am - 12.00 pm

The **GBBC** is an annual event creating a real-time snapshot of birds across North America.

Meet at Bird Studies Canada, Port Rowan, bring binoculars, dress for the weather.

Registration:

email education@birdscanada.org
or phone: 519-586-3531 ex.128

Winter Tree Ecology Hike

Sunday, March 2, 2014,

1.00 to 3.00 pm

At Backus Woods North Tract

Meet at the parking lot off Hwy 24 Hike with NCC's Tom Bradstreet and Brett Norman learning how to identify trees in winter. - Dress warmly according to the weather!

Contact: Bernie 519-428-0706

Highlights from a Naturalist's Life

Tuesday, March 11, 2014,

7.30 pm

Speaker: Don Scallen

Don is the Vice-President of the Halton/North Peel Naturalist Club. He will be speaking of some of the things he's passionate about, such as turtle tallying, silk moth rearing, Spotted and Jefferson salamander breeding habits in the spring

Digging up Dirt on Badgers in Norfolk

Tuesday, April 8, 2014,

7.30 pm

Speaker: Josh Sayers

Josh and a small team of researchers have been observing and collecting data on Badgers over the past few years with the aim of answering the questions necessary for their conservation in the province.

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:

April 2014

Input dead line:

Friday, March 28, 2014

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. Charitable registration # 11905869RR00001

Guest speakers present programs on interesting and relevant natural history and conservation topics. Club members receive the Lotus newsletter with articles on local natural history and club activities. Copies of the Lotus are available at meetings, by mail or by email and posted on the NFN web site. Articles published in the Lotus reflect the views and opinions of the authors, but not necessarily those of the NFN.

www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

2012-2013 NFN Executive with contact & project information

President	Bernie Solymar	All 519-426-7124	solymar@nornet.on.ca
Vice-President, Environment/Sanctuary	Peter Carson	586-3985	gartcar@kwic.com
Treasurer/Past President	Audrey Heagy	586-9464	aheagy@kwic.com
Secretary	Colleen Dale	512-0240	cdale22@yahoo.ca
Director/ Membership/Publicity	Diane Salter	586-7775	bigcreek@kwic.com
Field Events	(vacant)		
Speaker Program	(vacant)		
Director-at-large	Barb Hawke	586-8375	bhawke@kwic.com
Director-at-large	Alan Ladd	426-8504	
Director-at-large, Director-at-large	Inga Hinnerichsen	875-5601	daveinga@live.ca
Acting Secretary	Eleanor Chithalen	582-4382	eleanor.chithalen@gmail.com
Director-at-large	Bev McLeod	428-3464	firebird50@hotmail.com
Director-at-large	David Curry	875-5601	david.curry@hotmail.com
Director-at-large	Barb Hourigan	583-1198	bbhourigan@yahoo.ca

Lotus Editor (appointed) Inga Hinnerichsen 875-5601

Butterfly Counts: (appointed) Adam Timpf 586-9964

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

Honorary President: Al Robinson

Honorary Directors: Harry Barrett, Jim Harlow