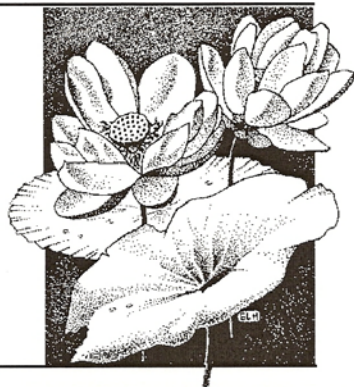


Lotus

NEWSLETTER
of the
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



JUNE 2014

SPECIAL
BIRDATHON
ISSUE

Baillie BIRDATHON

Report and photos by: George E. Pond

Editor's note: The following two reports were already sent to those who sponsored George Pond and Mike McMillan in this year's Birdathon. All other members and friends of the NFN: enjoy reading about this great fundraising event.

Dear Friends,

We almost didn't go. We had been kept awake by violent thunder storms that swept through the area during the night. The weather man was calling for the same throughout the day. However, at the moment (8 am), although the skies were dark with heavy clouds, there was no rain and no wind. The Blue Elephant restaurant in Simcoe had supplied us with water, pop, veggies and tasty wraps so we decided to meet Steve Wilcox at 10 am, as planned, for our annual "Baillie Birdathon".



On the way to Long Point heavy fog rolled in from Lake Erie, not quite pea soup, but very thick. We wondered just how many birds we could identify from 30 feet. Things were looking dismal, but the forecasted storms held off. We parked the van across from the banding station and got out. The air was filled with bird songs. The storms had grounded migrants; things were looking good. It was already a few minutes after 10 am and Steve was there so we started our count. It was amazing, one of the best migration days of the year... and to think we almost didn't go. In the parking lot we met Doug Tozer, Kris Dobney and Rosie Kirton, three of the staff of Bird Studies Canada who were also doing their Birdathon. The seven of us joined up for an hour or so. Kris took this photo of the six of us.

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BAILLIE BIRDATHON Continued from page 1

For an hour or so we birded around the parking lot and the banding station. Red-eyed Vireos, Yellow-rumped, Magnolia, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, Blackpoll, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Northern Parula and several other warblers seemed to be everywhere. We found a Yellow-throated Vireo, several Scarlet Tanagers, Baltimore Orioles, White-crowned, Song, Chipping and a very late White-throated Sparrow and a host of other birds. House Wrens and a Carolina Wren were singing up a storm.

Now we checked a cottage for a fairly rare Summer Tanager that had been hanging around for about a week. It was sitting in a small Tulip tree; a bonus bird that was nice to compare with the Scarlet Tanager. A quick stop at the causeway viewing stand produced Marsh Wrens, Swamp Sparrows, Mute Swans, Common Yellow-throats, Black and Forster's Terns, a noisy American Bittern, Pied-billed Grebes and a few others.



About 11.30 am the sun had burned away the clouds and the fog and it became quite warm and humid. Bird song seemed to suddenly drop off, but for that 1 1/2 hour I had some of the best birding that I have had in years.

We went to the Old Provincial Park for half an hour or so and added Veery, Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes. We found the resident Brown Thrasher and Warbling Vireos. Catbirds and Cedar Waxwings were abundant. Our List was growing very quickly.

By 12.30 we were at Diane Salter's home in Walsingham eating our lunch on her front porch adding Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Indigo Buntings, Orchard Oriole, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinches and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks to our list. Her feeders are amazing. A Broad-winged Hawk soared above. Later we also saw a large and beautiful Fox Snake, a species of much concern in Ontario.

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Thirty kms and half an hour later we had added Clay-coloured and Grasshopper Sparrows, both uncommon in our area, but birds that we knew were there, in a field near my home. Chimney Swifts flew over the downtown stores in Simcoe. The Townsend Sewage lagoons east of Simcoe were somewhat disappointing, but we did add Bobolink, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, White-rumped, Least and Solitary sandpipers, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher and a couple of others to our list. Overhead the skies were darkening and it looked like we might be in for a storm so we headed south and east towards the Lake Erie shore line. Along the lake we found Bonaparte's, Great Black-backed, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, Caspian Terns were fairly common, an Eastern Phoebe sang from a tree and we saw a flock of 16 or 20 Whimbrel. A lovely immature Bald Eagle was in a field feeding on a small fish or bird. It flew when I stopped the van and we could see part of the prey in its talons.



A check of the Nanticoke harbour did not reveal the hoped for Black-crowned Night Heron but was good for Double-crested Cormorants. To the north the sky was black with obvious rain; it appeared to be coming our way, so we headed west back to Long Point. On the way we picked up a Hermit Thrush in St. William's forest. We encountered just a few sprinkles of rain, but learned later that tornado-like weather had caused trees to topple close to the Townsend lagoons where we had been earlier. Lucky us. A Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe and Whip-poor-will finished the day and we returned to Simcoe for 5 hours of shuteye.

Continued on page 4...



BAILLIE BIRDATHON Continued from page 3

Breakfast was at 4 am and at 4.30 we were on the road. The customary Screech Owls did not respond to Steve's imitation. Pine Warblers and Eastern Towhees were singing by the time we drove through the St William's forest. Backus Woods once again cast its magical spell; Red-eyed Vireos, Hooded, Cerulian and Blackburnian Warblers, Eastern Wood Peewees, Great Crested Flycatchers, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks filled the air with their symphony of song. The unmistakeable Rat-a-tat-tat of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, the drum of a Pileated Woodpecker added the necessary percussion. The loud, clipped song of a Northern Waterthrush echoed across the woodland pond but we couldn't see or hear the Prothonotary Warblers that we knew were present.



Prothonotary Warblers, a Carolinian species, are very rare breeding birds in Canada with only a few pairs in places like Rondeau Provincial Park and Backus Woods here in Norfolk County. We carried on and in a different part of Backus woods we found a Louisiana Waterthrush and a Blue-wing Warbler. A Ruffed Grouse drummed. Back to the pond we went and this time a pair of brightly coloured Prothonotary Warblers were busy hunting for insects along the side of the pond. What a wonderful sight of such beautiful birds. My day is always made when I get a view of one of Nature's treasures such as these. We had made a clean sweep of the possible Woodpeckers, except for Red-headed, and so decided to drive several miles to an Old growth forest where they are known to breed.

June 2014

The trip paid off as we found a couple of birds foraging high in the trees, but time was running out and so we headed back to the Old Cut banding station to see what new migrants might have returned overnight. Another quick look from the causeway viewing stand produced a Sandhill Crane that we had somehow missed the previous day. We found a Willow Flycatcher at Old Cut, and just like that, another "Birdathon" was over.



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Norfolk Field Naturalists

As a group we tallied **155 species**, not our best, but certainly one of our best. A great deal of our success must be attributed to Steve Wilcox. His ability to hear and find the birds is truly remarkable.

Now the hard part, the collecting of pledges. Most are already in, but I still have a number of usual sponsors to hear from and I'm hoping to raise at least \$8,000 - \$8,000 that will all be used for conservation in one way or another and will help to make this world a little better, not only for us but for future generations.

I want to sincerely thank you for all your previous donations to the "Baillie Birdathon" and if you have already sent in this year's donation—"Thanks" I am finding that more and more sponsors are donating "On-line" and although Bird Studies Canada advises me immediately it often takes me sometime to update my own records.

If Bird Studies has your e-mail address your receipt will be sent by e-mail very shortly (if you have not already received it). If not, your receipt will be mailed sometime within the next few months.

Once again: "Thanks!" - and if you are still waiting to send your cheque it should be made out to Baillie Birdathon or Bird Studies Canada and mailed to me at:

George Pond, 411 Queensway W.,
Simcoe, Ont., N3Y 2N4.

Sincerely,
George E. Pond



REPORT #2

MAY 12 - 13, 2014

by: Michael McMillan photos: Wikipedia

Ricky Dunn, David Hessel, their son Jeremy and I were at the Townsend sewage lagoons when Jeremy located a Bobolink in a bush in a nearby pasture. We had decided that we would begin our Birdathon when we saw a good bird and this was it. The time was 12.20 pm and we now had 24 hours to identify as many bird species as possible.

As usual these sewage lagoons were productive for ducks and wading birds. The duck species observed were American Wigeon, Ruddy Duck, Mallard, Bufflehead, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Pintail and Wood Duck. The Waders seen were Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Dunlin and Wilson's Phalarope. In addition, a number of Cliff Swallows feeding on insects were swooping back and forth over the water.

A short drive took us to the sewage lagoons at Jarvis. Perched on a fence were a Rough-winged Swallow and a Tree Swallow.

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Long-tailed Duck male, non-breeding (top) female (bottom)

In one lagoon was an American Coot and a Long-tailed Duck. I had never seen a Long-tailed Duck before. It was one of two life birds for me on this Birdathon.

Our next stop, the Port Dover Marina, produced 3 species: a Barn Swallow, a Purple Martin and a Kingfisher. On the breakwater in the Port Dover Harbour were Caspian Terns, Common Terns, a Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gulls and a Herring Gull. In a bush at Silver Lake we spotted an Eastern Kingbird.

On our way to Port Ryerse we stopped to check out a Bald Eagle nest in a distant tree on the edge of the forest. The top of an Eagle was just visible in the nest. On the other side of the road a Red-tailed Hawk sat in a tree. At Port Ryerse I saw a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a Baltimore Oriole and out on the lake a Red-breasted Merganser.

On the beach near the marina at Turkey Point we spotted three wading birds which appeared to be Willets, right beside about half a dozen Caspian Terns. A Willet is a large wader and, at rest, rather

non-descript. So, to confirm the identification we walked toward the birds to make them fly. Once they took off, we could see the striking black-and-white wing pattern, which verified that they were Willets. Willets are scarce migrants in our area, therefore it was a special bird, although not a lifer for me because I had seen one on a previous Birdathon.

We continued to travel west. During a quick stop overlooking the Turkey Point Marsh we observed a Great Blue Heron flying overhead and four Sandhill Cranes flying from the marsh across the road near us. At the BSC property a Pied-billed Grebe was swimming in the wetland.

By the time we arrived at Old Cut some rain was falling. While the pizza Ricky had brought was warming in the oven in the kitchen of the bird banders' quarters we took a quick walk around checking for song birds. Despite the spitting rain we saw both White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, a Black-throated Blue Warbler, a Redstart, a Magnolia Warbler, a Black-and-White Warbler, a Wood Thrush and a Swainson's Thrush. By now the rain was falling harder and we hustled back inside to enjoy our supper and converse with the bird banders.

Fortunately the heavy rain fell while we ate. When it did let up we headed for the dyke on the causeway. At this stop we saw Bank Swallows and heard an American Bittern, a Least Bittern and a Marsh Wren. Further along the causeway near some boathouses a Phoebe was perched on a post.

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Willet

Our next stop was at a grassy field near Mud Creek. By now the sky was brightening and we were able to locate an Eastern Meadow Lark sitting on a post. As we were leaving three Green Herons flew in the distance.

During a brief stop at the entrance to Backus Woods off Hwy. 24 we heard an Ovenbird and a Pine Warbler.

At the Timpf property, in the waning light, we managed to see an Eastern Bluebird. Further along the East Quarter Line Road we walked into a grassy field to listen for an American Woodcock. In the distance we could hear the repetitive call of a Whip-poor-will. Then suddenly we heard the Woodcock close by and, with darkness settling in, we headed home.



Worm-eating Warbler

The next morning, shortly after 4 am, Ricky, David and Jeremy picked me up and we set off for Old Cut. Once there, the first sound heard was the repetitious song of a Carolina Wren. Initially the overcast sky made the lighting poor which, in turn, made identifying birds challenging. We did, however, manage to identify a Rose-breasted Grosbeak and a Chestnut-sided Warbler. On Lighthouse Crescent we saw a Yellow-rumped Warbler and a Cedar Waxwing. As we continued walking to the new park three Double-crested Cormorants and a Chimney Swift flew overhead. On the way to Backus Woods a quick stop on the causeway produced a Forster's Tern flying over the inner bay. In the woods we walked to the watery

spot that often has a Prothonotary Warbler. This was our lucky day because we saw, at close range, the Prothonotary and a Canada Warbler simultaneously. Other birds seen here were a Hooded Warbler, a Scarlet Tanager, a Downy Woodpecker and a Red-eyed Vireo. Because many birds were singing we also managed to hear a White-breasted Nuthatch, a Northern Waterthrush, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and the drumming of a Pileated Woodpecker.



Blue-winged Warbler

We journeyed back to the grassy field where we had heard the Woodcock the night before. Here we were able to spot Grasshopper, Song and Field Sparrows, an Indigo Bunting and a lovely Blue-winged Warbler. In addition, at this spot, we heard an Eastern Towhee and a Great-crowned Flycatcher calling.

Eventually we arrived back at Old Cut. This time we were rewarded with a Least Flycatcher, a Philadelphia Vireo, a Peewee, a Black-throated Green Warbler and another Ovenbird. However, the highlight here was a fleeting sighting of a skulking Worm-eating Warbler. This bird is only rarely seen north of the Great Lakes and was my second life bird.

A walk into the new park produced an Orchard Oriole, a Flicker, a Nashville Warbler, a Wilson's Warbler, a Warbling Vireo and a Blue-headed Vireo. With only 20 minutes remaining we headed to the old park where we added three more species: a Brown Thrasher, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a Hermit Thrush before our time ran out.

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When I added up my species I was pleased to have a total of 128. Again, I am grateful to Ricky, David and Jeremy for helping me reach this total. There is still a bit of money coming in and I am hopeful the final amount will be close to \$5,000, similar to last year. Much thanks goes to you, my sponsors, for helping to raise this money for bird research and bird 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,



The Norfolk Field Naturalists

wish to recognize with gratitude the following participants in the Baillie Birdathon for their fundraising efforts on behalf of this organization:

Margaret (Peggy) McArthur
Mike McMillan
George E. Pond
Lisa Timpf
Anne K. Wynia

Thank you!

CAUSEWAY PROJECT UPDATE

by: Rick Levick

Plans to install up to nine more wildlife culverts under the Long Point Causeway are moving ahead now that the Environment Assessment has been completed without any comments or objections from the public. The project will move forward to final design, permitting and tendering over the next couple of months. Construction of up to six of the nine proposed culverts is planned for October or November this year.

Stephen Burnett and Associates (SBA), the consulting engineers for the first three culverts installed in 2012, prepared the EA report for Norfolk County. The entire cost of the EA report and related studies has been paid for by the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation with funding received from Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) and Ontario's Species at Risk Stewardship Fund (SARSF).

As well, the annual monitoring of reptile and amphibian road mortality on the Causeway began at the beginning of May. For the past three years, Long Point Waterfowl has hired a student to carry out the monitoring program on behalf of the Long Point Causeway Improvement Project. Last year's monitoring results found the second lowest amount of reptile road kill recorded since monitoring began in 2008. This represented a reduction of more than 50 per cent. The 2013 monitoring program also found that many species of animals, including turtles, snake and frogs, were using the wildlife culverts.



Painted Turtle emerging from one of the eco-passages

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

April - June, 2014

The Board of Directors met to review ongoing business on April 29. Here are the highlights:

Treasurer's Report by Audrey Heagy:

The NFN Fiscal Year End is April 30th. There is \$17,581.00 in the bank, much of it in restricted funds. A GIC will be purchased for the Securement and Protection Fund, money for which is presently held in the general account. Annual financial statements will be ready for the September AGM. Audrey announced her intent to resign from the Treasurer's position. Barb Hourigan offered to take over with help from a professional bookkeeper.

Other business: Alan Ladd is going to take over the Field Events programming and Len Grincevicius will be organizing the Speakers in order to ease the work load of Bernie Solymár who is willing to stay on as President under these circumstances. David Curry will be in charge of Publicity. - These appointments to be verified at the AGM elections of the Board of Directors.

The Board met again on June 17 over pot luck supper to mainly discuss the schedule of outings and guest speakers for the coming season. The brochure will be published before the September AGM and mailed to all members.

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

MUSHROOM SEASON IS HERE!

These Morels were picked by Mirek and Florinda Kotisa - on their own property. The largest is 8" long



These unusually early Chicken-of-the-Woods were photographed by Inga Hinnerichsen. Look for these good edibles on dead hardwood trunks later in the summer.



Back: Inga Hinnerichsen, Barb Hourigan, Bernie Solymár, Audrey Heagy, Dave Curry. Front: Alan Ladd, Diane Salter, Peter Carson, Barb Hawke, Len Grincevicius. Also, Mary Gartshore with one of their dogs.



5th Annual butterfly & Dragonfly Festival

**Backus Heritage Conservation Area
Sunday, July 13th, 10am - 3pm**

Fun for the whole Family! Activities and exhibits all day including "Spread Your Wings" parade, crafts, games, musicians and guided hikes to look for butterflies and dragonflies. Cost is \$13 per vehicle

Upcoming NFN 2014 Summer Events

Long Point Butterfly Count Saturday, July 5, 2014

This is an "All day" event. Help tabulate species and numbers on this North America wide annual count.

Contact Adam Timpf 519-586-9964 or adam.timpf@gmail.com for details

Norfolk Sand Plain Restoration Tour

Saturday, July 12, 4pm to 7pm

Mary Garthshore and Peter Carson will show a few restoration sites of different ages since completion. Long pants, sleeves and bug repellent recommended. Meet at the dam parking lot west of St. Williams Nursery on the north side of Hwy 24 to car pool. Contact Mary or Peter at: 519-586-3985

Hummingbirds and Butterflies

Saturday, July 26, 10am to noon

This is a Family Friendly event

Watch a hummingbird banding demonstration and go for a guided hike on the field trails observing birds and butterflies.

Location: 273 Charlotteville Road 2, 2.2km east of Forestry Farm Road.

Contact: Audrey Heagy or David Okines at 519-586-9464

Sex and Song: Moths, Katydid and other Nocturnal Insects

Saturday, August 23,
7.30pm to 10.30pm

Spend an evening visiting with some of our night time neighbours. Long pants, sleeves, flashlights and bug repellent are recommended.

Location:

316 Norfolk County Rd. 60,
Walsingham (extension of Hwy 24 west of Hwy 59)

Contact: Mary Garthshore or Peter Carson at: 519-586-3985

NFN Annual General Meeting

Guest Speaker (to be announced)

Tuesday, September 9, 7.30pm
Simcoe Seniors Centre, 89 Pond Street

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:

October 2014

Input dead line:

Friday, Sep. 26, 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

2013 - 2014 NFN Executive with contact & project information

President			
Vice-President,			
Environment/Sanctuary			
Treasurer/Past President	Audrey Heagy	586-9464	aheagy@kwic.com
(Secretary - on mat. leave	Colleen Dale	512-0240	cdale22@yahoo.ca)
Director/	Diane Salter	586-7775	bigcreek@kwic.com
Membership/Publicity			
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,	Inga Hinnerichsen	875-5601	daveinga@live.ca
Director-at-large	Eleanor Chithalen	582-4382	eleanor.chithalen@gmail.com
Acting Secretary			
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