

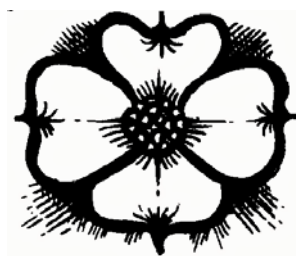
Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



OCTOBER 2014



CONSERVING ENDANGERED REPTILES

By: Inga Hinnerichsen / Gregor Beck

Photos by: Gregor Beck (or as noted)



Long Point Region
Conservation Authority

January 25, 2014, brought blizzard conditions making road travel impossible or very hazardous at best. The **Reptiles At Risk Advanced Workshop** had to be postponed, although a handful of hardy souls had braved the conditions to attend this event.

The rescheduled event was staged instead on August 6th at the Backus Conservation Education Centre, presented by **Scales Nature Park** in partnership with **Long Point Basin Land Trust (LPBLT)**, **Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA)** and **Norfolk Field Naturalists (NFN)**.

Roughly 50 reptile enthusiasts of all ages attended the event. The presenters from Scales Nature Park, Kelsey Crawford, Miranda Virtanen and Damien Millen gave an outline on all Ontario reptiles and their conservation status. At the end of the evening the participants had the rare opportunity to acquaint themselves hands-on with many live snakes and turtles.

Since 2008 the LPBLT has been conducting an in-depth conservation, monitoring and outreach program on reptiles in the central Carolinian Region.



Hog-nosed Snake and Spotted Turtle

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CONSERVING ENDANGERED REPTILES

...continued from page 1

The following are excerpts from an update compiled by **Gregor Beck**, LPBLT's Director of Conservation Science, for release to the media earlier this summer:

"Over the last few years, hundreds of volunteers and dozens of landowners have been reaching out to help conserve the reptiles of the Carolinian Region. Many of these conservation-minded community members have been lending a hand by participating in LPBLT's **Conserving Carolinian Reptiles** project. Its goals are protecting local turtle and snake populations and engaging the public in conservation actions. The project is critically important since six of seven turtle species and half of the dozen snake species in the area are listed species at risk. By submitting reptile sightings, volunteers are helping us learn more about these ancient creatures, and helping us plan effective, locally-tailored conservation solutions."



Eastern Fox Snake

Highlights of this project results include:

- By the end of 2013, project participants had reported observations of over 4,400 turtles and snakes;
- 427 instances of reptiles being protected from vehicle strikes, including protection for 237 at-risk reptiles;
- installation of 60 reptile habitat features, such as turtle nesting structures and savanna habitat restoration - many of which have been used by reptiles;
- over 80% reduction in road mortality of reptiles at Long Point Provincial Park as a result of the installation of the seasonal wildlife barriers.

"The project's success in helping turtles and snakes is a testament to the hundreds of community volunteers and landowners who believe in the importance of protecting the diverse flora and fauna of our region," noted Beck. "The Land Trust thanks these volunteers, partners, visitors and landowners who help our native wildlife on a daily basis. This is a great example of neighbours helping our wildlife neighbours and species at risk!"



Map, Blandings, Snapping and Spotted Turtle hatchlings
Photo: Scott Gillingwater

This project is undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the federal Department of the Environment, the John & Pat McCutcheon Charitable Foundation, individuals and partners. Assistance for this project was provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Long Point Basin is home to 19 species of reptiles, including 12 snake species and 7 turtle species. The Long Point Basin includes Norfolk County, western Haldimand County, eastern Elgin County, and adjoining parts of Oxford and Brant Counties. The area is in the heart of the biologically-diverse Carolinian Region of Canada.

For more information about reptiles of the Long Point Basin and Ontario, please visit www.LongPointLandTrust.ca.

The Land Trust website contains numerous free resources about conservation and reptiles, including factsheets and videos.

CONSERVING ENDANGERED REPTILES

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Quick tips to help reptiles:

- Drive carefully, watch for wildlife on roads. Slow down near woodlands and wetlands.
- Be especially watchful in early summer when females seek nesting locations, and in early fall when young emerge.
- Boat slowly near wetlands and in shallow water areas to avoid collisions with reptiles.
- Protect and restore natural habitats, including hedgerows, buffer strips along streams, woodlands and wetlands.
- Report suspected poaching of reptiles, or other illegal activities, to the OMNR TIPS line: 1-877-TIPS-MNR (1-877-847-7667)
- Injured turtles, even with broken shell, can be helped. Veterinarians in Jarvis and Burford will treat them or send them to special facilities: Toronto Wildlife Centre, Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre (in Peterboro) and Georgian Bay Turtle Hospital (opening soon) For a listing of authorized wildlife rehabilitation centres, visit: www.ontario.ca/ministry-natural-resources-forestry Search: "wildlife rehab"



Construction of a hibernaculum

You can help LPBLT learn more about the status of local reptile populations and plan effective conservation program by reporting your observations of reptiles.

Go to: www.LongPointLandTrust.ca and click on the Turtle!



Did you know... (Reptile Trivia)

The largest (i.e. longest) snake found in Norfolk County (and Ontario) is the *endangered* and very rare **Gray Ratsnake** which can grow to a maximum length of 2.5 metres (8 feet). Also *endangered*, the **Eastern Foxsnake** can grow to 1.7 metres in length (over 5 ½ feet).

The smallest snake in Norfolk County (and Ontario) is the tiny **Red-bellied Snake**. This species reaches a maximum length of 40cm (16 inches). The more common **DeKay's Brownsnake** can be slightly larger, with a maximum length of 50cm (20 inches).

The *non-venomous* **Eastern Foxsnake**, **Gray Ratsnake** and **Milksnake** (*special concern*) will all vibrate their tails when threatened. These constrictors are excellent at rodent control.

The **Eastern Hog-nosed Snake** is found in sandy parts of Norfolk County and, despite its theatrics, is also harmless to humans. When threatened, it may puff out and flatten its neck (in a "cobra-like" act), gape its mouth and hiss, and it may even roll over and play dead.

Ontario's only lizard, the adorable **Five-lined Skink** (*endangered, Carolinian population*), regrettably does not occur in Norfolk County. It occurs elsewhere along the Lake Erie shoreline, such as Rondeau Provincial Park.

The largest turtle in Ontario (and Norfolk) is the **Snapping Turtle** (*special concern*). The carapace (i.e. upper shell) can reach nearly 50cm (20 inches). They also have a very long neck and tail adding to their total length considerably. The diet of the Snapping Turtle is mainly plant material and scavenged carrion (i.e. dead animal remains).

The smallest turtles in Ontario and Norfolk County are the *endangered* **Spotted Turtle** and the *threatened* **Eastern Musk Turtle** ("Stinkpot"), both of which could sit on the palm of one's hand – up to 12 centimetres (5 inches).

Hatchling turtles are tiny! Small Snapping Turtles are about the size of a loonie or toonie and **Midland Painted Turtles** are sometimes not much bigger than a quarter!

LONG POINT BUTTERFLY COUNT

Report by: Adam Timpf

This year's Long Point butterfly count was held on July 5th, 2014. We had an uptick in participation this year with 31 observers and had all parts of the circle well covered. Despite this, and nearly ideal weather conditions on the day, most groups commented on the lack of butterflies.

With everyone's hard work we still managed to find 3731 individuals of 52 species. If it wasn't for the 2108 Edward's Hairstreaks, our individuals total would be far under the long term average of 2622 individuals. 52 species is slightly above the long term average of ~49.



Edward's Hairstreak Photo: Wikipedia

Notable sightings:

- 2108 Edward's Hairstreak. This will likely be a new North American high count surpassing the 1004 record set by our count last year.
- 71 Banded hairstreak. New count high. Previous high was 57 in 2006.
- 1 Meadow Fritillary. 5th time recorded on count.
- 4 Gray Comma. New count high. Previous high was last year with 2.
- 1 Milbert's Tortoiseshell. 4th time recorded on count.
- While below our long term average of 50, our 36 Monarch's is well up from our low count last year of 4.

Thanks for helping out this year, and I hope you can make it out next year when the count will be held on Saturday July 4th.

RESULTS OF 2014

LONG POINT BUTTERFLY COUNT

Black Swallowtail	3
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	58
Spicebush Swallowtail	11
Cabbage White	227
Clouded Sulphur	155
Orange Sulphur	27
American Copper	1
Coral Hairstreak	9
Acadian Hairstreak	2
Edward's Hairstreak	2108
Banded Hairstreak	71
Striped Hairstreak	1
Eastern Tailed-Blue	42
Summer Azure	48
Great Spangled Fritillary	63
Meadow Fritillary	1
Silvery Checkerspot	15
Pearl Crescent	12
Northern Crescent	384
Baltimore Checkerspot	25
Question Mark	2
Eastern Comma	10
Grey Comma	4
Mourning Cloak	8
Milbert's Tortoiseshell	1
American Lady	4
Painted Lady	2
Red Admiral	55
Red-spotted Purple	24
Viceroy	22
Tawny Emperor	26



Black Swallowtail Photo: George Pond

Continued on page 5...

RESULTS OF 2014 BUTTERFLY COUNT

...continued from page 4

Northern Pearly-Eye	7
Eyed Brown	17
Appalachian Brown	12
Little Wood-Satyr	44
Common Wood-Nymph	33
Monarch	36
Silver-spotted Skipper	60
Northern Cloudywing	8
Juvenal's Duskywing	1
Wild Indigo Duskywing	1
Least Skipper	5
European Skipper	25
Peck's Skipper	1
Tawny-edged Skipper	2
Crossline Skipper	1
Long Dash	4
Northern Broken-Dash	17
Delaware Skipper	9
Hobomok Skipper	2
Dion Skipper	4
Dun Skipper	21

Total Individuals 3731

Total Species 52



European Skipper

Photo: George Pond

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THE OWL'S NEST

By: Linda Thrower (Edited for space allocation)



Eastern Screech Owl chicks (Dreamstime Stock Images)

One very cold moonlit night in February many years ago my husband, a friend and I hauled a ladder down to a frozen pond to reach the duck box in the middle of it. An Eastern Screech Owl had been living in it for quite a few years. As do many homes, a box requires repairs every so often. The roof had a leak in the middle of it and water would drip on top of the owl's head as it was sunning itself in the early morning. My husband climbed the ladder while our friend held it in place on the ice. As I stood watch the owl came out of its box and flew around twice, then settled in a tree watching what was going on with its home. None of us were sure how it would take to the disturbance, but it seemed to be just curious about the activities.

Off came the roof and a new one was nailed on. We had also brought some wood shavings so this owl could have a new interior as well. Owls do not bring any nesting materials into their boxes, they just use the pellets that they cough up to add comfort to their homes. As my husband began cleaning out the contents of the box he asked: "What do you want me to do with this stuff?" Since this nesting box was situated only about 100m from a bird banding station I began to wonder if this little owl was eating banded birds. I asked that we carefully remove the contents to be examined at a later time. Now I had a very stinky container full of pellets from many years, it was about 8 to 10 cm thick. We took down the ladder and in no time the owl was back at home sitting on its new clean wood shavings.

Continued on page 6...

Norfolk Field Naturalists

Over the next few years the contents of the owl box were on display at naturalist clubs, Girl Guide camps, schools and many other interested organisations. Even though it was now frozen everyone said the same thing: "Wow, does that ever stink!" Funny, the Screech Owl didn't seem to think so.

Once the contents were done with the Show-and-Tells they returned into the freezer for such a time when I could pick it apart. It took me years, but finally this summer I took it out to see what I could find - besides the stink, that is.

The largest item in the box was a very old Wood Duck egg. Obviously this owl had evicted the Wood Ducks and moved in. Someone else may have tried to live in the box at some point, because among the pellets were 14 acorns that a squirrel had tucked away for the winter. Even the wasps had made an attempt at staying in the box, but there was only one paper wasp nest.

Layer after layer of pellets revealed more and more. There were numerous feathers, but not from the Wood Duck, these were tail and wing feathers belonging to Blue Jays and Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers. It looked like this little owl had an appetite for some large birds. The final feather count was 35. Besides the Blue Jays' and Woodpeckers' feathers there were some that looked like they may have come from some kind of Sparrow judging by the colour and size and a few white feathers, tail feathers? I couldn't be sure. Only one Cardinal feather - maybe they are tastier than those of the Blue Jays and the Woodpeckers! There was a single Crayfish claw as well, maybe from the Wood Duck? It was under a few layers of pellets, but not on the bottom, so I wonder about that one, too. I found the top part of a Hairy Woodpecker's beak, but no bottom. One small piece looked like it could have been a Downy Woodpecker's beak.

As you would expect, there were lots of mouse bones: 40 skulls (minus bottom jaw), 69 lower mandibles, 5 ribs, 1 larger rib one and hundreds of leg and assorted mouse bones. 11 larger leg bones presumably from a Blue Jay or a Woodpecker, plus 3 legs of a smaller bird complete with claws.

After all that, the question remained: Was there any bird bands in all those pellets? The answer is YES. There were 8 bands found in the contents of this owl box. Here's the list of what banded birds the owl had been eating:

- 1 Swamp Sparrow banded on 10/12/2000
- 1 Blue Jay banded on 10/18/2001
- 1 Black-capped Chickadee banded on 07/18/2001
- 1 Black-capped Chickadee banded on 09/18/2003
- 1 Black-capped Chickadee banded on 10/12/2005
- 1 Song Sparrow banded on 10/07/2001
- 1 Song Sparrow banded on 04/22/2005
- 1 Slate-colored Junco banded on 10/19/2004

I find it strange that 5 of these birds were banded in October... maybe this little owl started to feel the cold, or maybe it sensed that the banding station wasn't going to be open for much longer. Get those little birds now! I would have thought that at least one of the bands would be from a Woodpecker, but no bands on those meals. However, I did get the answer to those white feathers: They were all that was left of a Junco. My guess about the Sparrow feathers was correct; all those birds were banded 100m away from the owl box. One owl feather didn't look like it belonged to a Screech Owl, it is brown with stripes, and this owl was gray. Of course I could be wrong, I can't say that I know all owl feathers.

So, that's how I spent my summer. I hope you used yours for something equally as interesting as picking apart this owl's nest!



E. Screech Owls



Dreamstime Stock Images / George Pond

IN MEMORIAM

This summer the Norfolk Field Naturalists lost one of our Founding Members

Alex Landon

The Landon family is a long-time supporter of the NFN. Monroe Landon, one of the founders, Alex & Doris, and son Zeb, have all served in volunteer capacities within our Club.

We would like to convey our deepest condolences to the **Landon family**, and sincerely appreciate being named the charity for donations in honour of Alex's life.

The Norfolk Field Naturalists

wish to recognize with gratitude all those who made donations in the memory of **Alex Landon** on behalf of this organization:

Hilde & Silke Acx	Wallace Hammond
Irma & Herb Goetz	Sprucedale Academic Staff
Margaret McArthur	c/o Deb Debackere
Tom & Irene Landon family	Steven & Annette Scheers
Ron & Marilyn Robinson	G.J. McKie
Petra & Wenzel Woeschka	Harry & Joan Barrett
Deb Wilson	Don Gardner
Rod Murton	Francine Seaman
Lois Taunton	Marlaine Koehler
Louise Hammond &	Paul & Mary Ann Colman
Charles Fick	Aynsley Morris
Andy & Barbara Madill	Marni Sims
Paul & Lisa Malcomson	James Cruise
Orie & Ivy McGregor	Alex and Patricia Ferguson
Becky & Gary Schaefer	Alan and Doris Ladd
John & Marion Anstee	Paul and Marguerite Maguet
Margaret Whitford	Alan & Patricia Robinson
Betty Chanyi	Anonymous
Catherine Landon & Family	Anonymous

IN MEMORIAM

The Norfolk Field Naturalists also recently lost another of our Founding Members

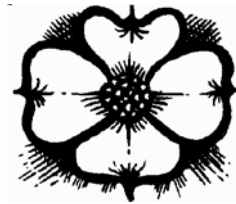
Barbara Browne

(Mrs. B. W. Anderson)

Her long-time involvement with NFN includes the original designs for the Dogwood logo and the Lotus on the newsletter, an expression of her artistic talent and love of nature.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the **Browne family**, the **Anderson family** and her extended family, including the **Barrett family**

We respect her wish for no donations.



The Norfolk Field Naturalists

wish to recognize with gratitude one more participant in the Baillie Birdathon for her fundraising efforts on behalf of this organization:

Barb Hourigan - Thank you!

A big **THANK YOU!** from the NFN also goes to **Jane Thompson** again for her excellent, creative work on the NFN events brochure

and.... **El March**

who designed & hosted the original website of the Norfolk Field Naturalists at no charge to the membership.. She is a nature lover & wanted to do this to get us on line.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Summer, 2014

The NFN Board of Directors did not meet during the summer months. Our next meeting is scheduled for the 28th of October. The report from this meeting will follow in the December issue of Lotus.



Upcoming NFN 2014 Fall Events

Fall Hike in Spooky Hollow

Saturday, October 25, 1 pm - 3 pm.

Enjoy the serenity of autumn along the Marion Chivas Trail.

From HWY 24, turn south on Charlotteville East 1/4 Line Rd., right on Ch.ville Rd 2, left on Spooky Hollow Rd. Park on the road at the entrance to the trail.

Contact Bernie: 519-428-0706

Meeting & Guest Speaker

Tuesday, November 11, 7.30 pm

UWO researcher Jenna Siu will speak about the

Effects of Habitat Fragmentation on Swallowtail Butterflies



Members' Night and Christmas Social

Tuesday, December 9, 7.30 pm

Members are invited to bring up to 12 digital photos or a short video (max. 10 minutes) Also bring festive treats for the Social



Christmas Bird Counts

Data collected during these annual counts provides vital information of the distribution of winter bird populations.

Sunday, December 14

Woodhouse Count

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

Sunday, December 28

Fisherville Count

Contact: Linda Thrower, 905-774-1230
linda1@295.ca

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 2014

Input dead line:

Friday, Nov. 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

2013 - 2014 NFN Executive with contact & project information

President	Bernie Solymár	All 519-427-9969	solymar@nornet.on.ca
Vice-President, Environment/Sanctuary	Peter Carson	586-3985	gartcar@kwic.com
Past President	Audrey Heagy	586-9464	aheagy@kwic.com
Treasurer	Barb Hourigan	583-1198	bbhourigan@yahoo.ca
(Secretary - on mat. leave)	Colleen Dale	512-0240	cdale22@yahoo.ca
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Acting Secretary			
Director-at-large	Vacant		
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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