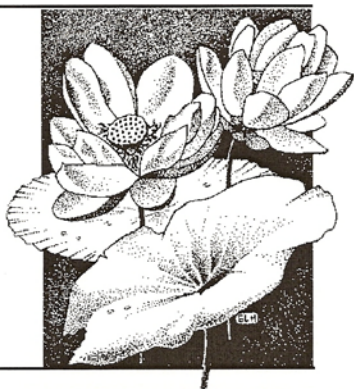


Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the
NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



OCTOBER 2015



EARLY SPRING HIKES:

Report: Inga Hinnerichsen

Photos: Len Grincevicius (L.G.)

Inga Hinnerichsen (I.H.)

The official dedication of the George and Shirley Pond Nature Reserve

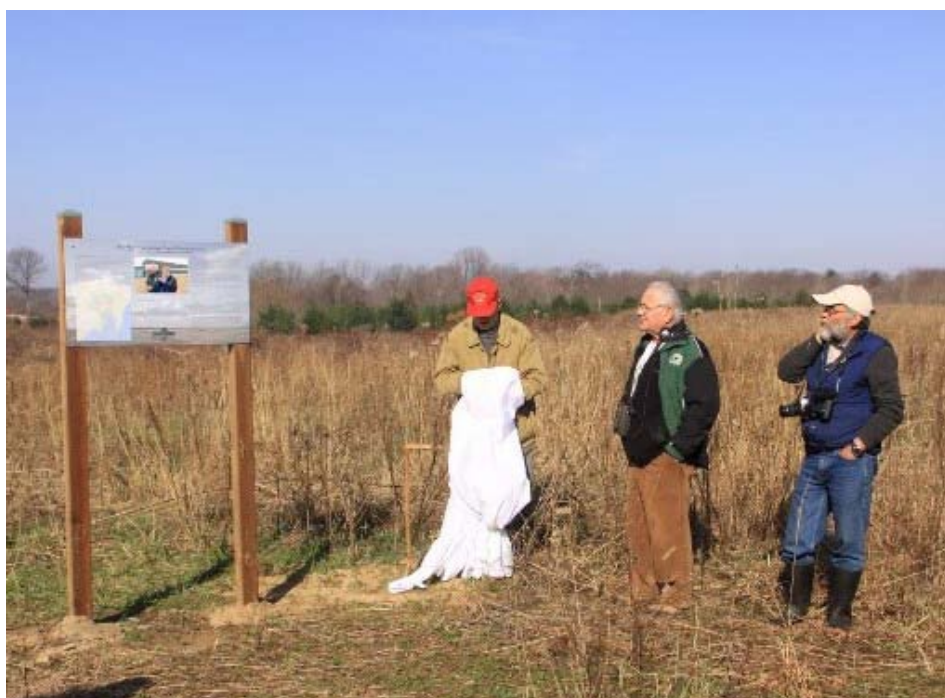
By the time this report is published we hope many of you have had the opportunity to explore this beautiful and diverse tract.

Saturday, April 18 was glorious: Calm, sunny and warm. What else do you want from a spring day after a particularly nasty winter? About 50 people attended the unveiling of the new sign at the Long Point Basin Land Trust (LPBLT) property along Front Road.

You may recall that a couple of years ago NFN donated a substantial sum to LPBLT toward the purchase of this property. Al Robinson, former president of NFN, did the honours of unveiling the sign. Peter Carson, President of the LPBLT, gave the introductory speech and George Pond replied with a few words of wisdom to the delight of all those attending.

After the dedication ceremony Mary Gartshore lead the group on a hike though the nature reserve. This roughly 80 acre former fruit orchard has already undergone a fair amount of restoration.

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Left: Unveiling the sign: Al Robinson, George Pond and Peter Carson



Right: Mary Gartshore

Photos: I.H.



Group inspecting the nature reserve

Photo: L.G.

The upland meadows have been reseeded with native flora and shallow ponds were created in the valley beyond where a formerly excavated drainage creek already existed.

Approaching the wetland, we flushed a pair of Sandhill Cranes who had been foraging in the sedges. Another large pond was teeming with activity: American Toads and Leopard Frogs were singing and several Midland Painted Turtles were basking on fallen trunks and branches.

Two snake hibernaculas have been installed on the property. We had proof of that these structures work: a small dark phase Garter Snake was peeking out between the rocks.



Left top: Bloodroot
Photo: L.G.

Bottom: Garter Snake
Photo: I.H.

Right clockwise:
Putty Root Orchid,
Round-Lobe Hepatica,
Purple-toothed Polypore
Photos: I.H.



A Hike in the Wilson Tract

A week later Mary and Peter lead us on another interesting hike in the Wilson Tract. This beautiful Carolinian forest tract is owned by the Long Point Region Conservation Authority.

This was another well-attended outing, although not much of the regular spring flora had yet emerged because of a late, cool spring. Migrant birds were also largely absent for the same reason.

Nonetheless, the forest still yielded many interesting features. Among them were both the Round-lobed Hepatica and Sharp-lobed Hepatica, blue and white forms, already flowering on the forest floor and the spiky shoots of the False Solomon's Seal poking out through the leaf litter.



We found the dry flower stalks and the overwintering green leaves of the Putty Root Orchid by the trail. Tough Purple-toothed Polypore fungi also persisted from the year before on dead hardwood trunks and branches and a gnarly burl adorned the base of a mossy tree trunk. Gelatinous masses of Salamander eggs were visible in a small pond. At the end of the hike Mary pointed out a now rare, very large Butternut tree.

“A SPARROW IS A SPARROW IS A SPARROW”

MORE BIRDATHON FUN

Story and photos by George Pond

“Hey, is that a Harris’s Sparrow?” Diane Salter yelled excitedly as we scanned a number of migrating White-Crowned Sparrows that were feeding on Betty Chanyi’s lawn. “Wow, it sure is. I haven’t seen one of those in years.” Shelia Smith answered. “Better make sure we get some photos for E-Bird documentation.” Somebody else said.



Eight of us, Peggy McArthur, Alan McKeown, Anne Wynia, Betty Chanyi, Diane Salter, Shelia Smith, Mike McMillan and I, from the Norfolk Field Naturalists, were doing our annual “Birdathon” to raise money for the work of Bird Studies Canada as well as a share that is channelled back to the Field Naturalists for its many conservation projects.

We had a fairly good day and as a group identified a respectable 121 to 125 different species.

This is always a fun day that I look forward to every year. We have a great time coming up with new names for birds, eating, kidding each other over miss-identifications, eating and eating some more, but most of all raising money for a good cause.



I’ll let the rest of the crew tell the story of our adventure and the birds that we identified, as it was their “Birdathon”; I was just along for the food. I always do my “Official Birdathon” later in the month with friends from Toronto but I wanted to share what I consider an exceptionally good “Sparrow Day”. As a group we saw, or heard, a total of twelve (12) different sparrow species. The only probable sparrow that we should have seen was a Vesper Sparrow.



We started the morning out watching a Grasshopper Sparrow and listening to A Clay-Coloured Sparrow. Both these birds were on territory in a field near Simcoe. Clay-coloured Sparrows are very uncommon in our area. Song Sparrows and Chipping Sparrows were abundant and Field and Savannah Sparrows were relatively common whenever we went by grassy meadows or brushy swale. Swamp Sparrows were common along the Long Point causeway and at other marshy areas that we went by.

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SPARROWS... continued from page 3



There were many migrating White-Crowned and White-throated Sparrows searching for food on the lawns at Long Point. The bird banders at the Old Cut banding station had captured a Lincoln's Sparrow, another migrant that would be nesting farther north.



Shelia found a very late Tree Sparrow that had probably spent the winter here and should already have started its journey north. This was indeed a bonus bird.



Obviously we saw House Sparrows but then they are not really considered as Native Sparrows being members of the Old World Sparrow or "Passeridae" family.

The icing on the cake, though, was the Harris's Sparrow. These birds nest along the Hudson's Bay coast and into the North West Territories. They generally do not migrate through this area but every year or so one or two will show up somewhere in Southern Ontario. Birders will flock from near and far to see it and add it to their yearly check list of sightings.



I wish now that we had persevered when looking for the Vesper Sparrow; and I bet that you thought that a Sparrow is a Sparrow is a Sparrow. Well I guess that you were right.

WANTED MEMBERS' SUMMER MEMORIES

Did you go somewhere interesting?
or see something beautiful?
Share your memories in the Lotus
Photos are most welcome,
comments or little stories, too.

Email them to : daveinga@live.ca
Subjectline: Lotus

FERAL CATS IN NORFOLK AND ELSEWHERE

Report compiled by Inga Hinnerichsen

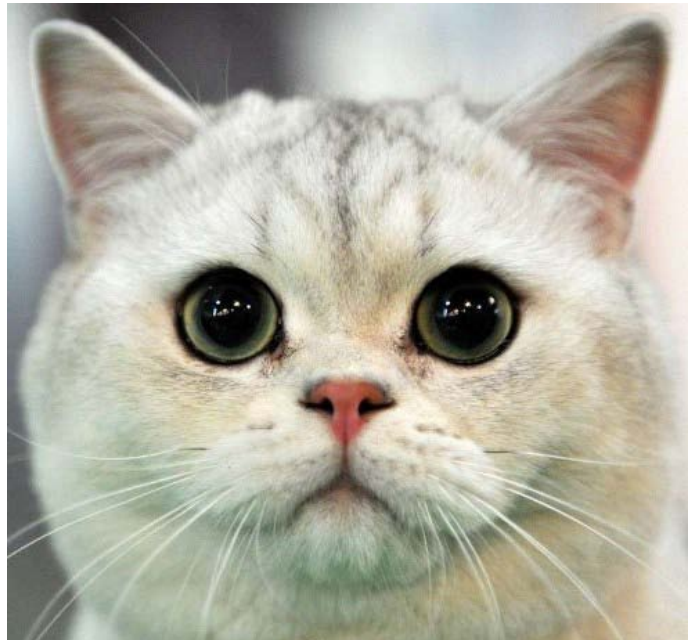
The feral cat issue is a major one in Norfolk (as it is elsewhere). Research backs that up. Feral cats are a serious threat, not just to birds, but small mammals, reptiles and amphibians as well as the health and wellbeing of livestock and humans.

"As a recent study by Scott Loss at the Migratory Bird Center of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute at the National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C. has shown, cats kill more than an estimated 3.5 billion birds and many more mammals, reptiles and amphibians every year. That means predation of cats on native birds far exceeds all other mortality factors - including habitat destruction, collisions with structures such as buildings, wind turbines, and pesticide poisoning. In Norfolk County, with county-based estimates of as high as 30,000 cats, that would eclipse all other predators (including fox, coyote, badger and raccoon) combined. Scott Petrie, former Executive Director with Long Point Waterfowl, estimates nearly 1 million birds in Norfolk County are preyed on by cats. That is a huge impact on our local biodiversity." (Quote by Bernie Solymár from a letter sent to Norfolk County Council on behalf of NFN)

Other concerns are risks to public health and safety. The following is an excerpt from a quote by Mary Gartshore:

" In today's sanitized and food safe farm environment there is no place for cats and their several diseases - rabies and toxoplasmosis to name two - both transmissible to livestock... This is one of the most significant parasitic zoonoses in humans and causes significant losses, as well, in livestock worldwide through spontaneous abortion or neonatal death. Public Health agencies worldwide continue to encourage all countries to track this disease..." In fact, cats are the most important species in the life cycle of the parasite responsible for toxoplasmosis. In three separate studies most feral cats (62% to 80%) tested positive for toxoplasmosis. Some other diseases transmitted to other animals and humans by feral (and other unvaccinated) cats are cat scratch fever, plague, ringworm and salmonellosis. Feral cats are hosts to fleas and ticks that are known carriers of diseases that can be transmitted to humans.

Sue Saunders of St. Williams commented on diseases carried and spread by cats in a Letter to the Editor in the Simcoe Reformer: "...What will be done with the (neutered and released) feral cats with health issues such as cat retrovirus leukaemia? Will they be tested for leukaemia and other lethal contagious illnesses? Releasing neutered feral cats back into the wild may not be in the best interest of the cats and may not reduce their suffering in the long run."



A Cute Natural Born Killer Photo: MSN News page
The University of Nebraska School of Natural Resources cooperating with the Counties and the US Department of Agriculture in Lincoln, Nebraska, has conducted a lengthy study on the subject of feral cats and their management. Here are a few highlights:

Biology: The life expectancy of feral cats is 3 to 5 years compared to 15 years for owned cats. They are prolific breeders and can produce up to 5 litters per year of 2 - 10 kittens per litter. The Humane Society of the US estimates that a pair of breeding cats and their offspring can produce over 400,000 cats in 7 years under ideal conditions.

Proponents of feral cats also suggest that well-fed cats do not prey on wildlife. Research shows that cats maintain their predatory instincts no matter how well-fed they are. The diets of well-fed house-based cats in Sweden consisted of 15 to 90% native prey, depending on availability.

Continued on page 6...

Fertility control: Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release (TNVR) practices are suggested as a humane and non-lethal solution to reduce populations of feral cats. Studies indicate TNVR can help to reduce the expansion of feral cat colonies. In one study, a population included about 920 cats before TNVR and 678 after. However, the estimate rose to 983 cats after including immigration and births into the colony. Models have estimated that more than 70% of a population of feral cats must be spayed or neutered before it will decline. No real-world example of eliminating a colony through TNVR exists, and evidence of large-scale colony reduction is anecdotal. Furthermore, TNVR can cost over \$100 per cat (US\$) and the cats are still able to prey on native birds and mammals, etc.

"Down Under" Australia is proposing drastic measures: Australian cat owners could have to keep their pets indoors permanently under a '24-hour cat curfew' proposed by the government. The proposal has been made by Australia's first 'threatened species commissioner', Gregory Andrews, in a bid to protect native animals facing extinction due to cat attacks, according to *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He said the government will seek public support for "24-hour containment requirements for domestic cats, particularly close to identified conservation areas of significance". The measure is already in place in some jurisdictions and could be rolled out across the country. The country is currently facing a cat crisis as it struggles to cope with huge numbers of the animals. Cats were introduced to the area about 200 years ago by European settlers and bred and spread rapidly across the Australian continent and New Zealand. According to one estimate, the approximately 20 million cats in Australia kill around 75 million native animals a day. Australia is thought to have one of the worst extinction records in the world, losing about 29 native mammal species since the European arrival. It now lists some 1,800 species as under threat.

Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, Release... or Trap and Humanely Euthanize?

This issue is a difficult one to deal with for most people because of the emotional nature of it. Decide for yourselves.

Ostrander Point wind project lawsuit

Editor's note: You may recall that NFN recently donated \$1000 to Ostrander Point Appeal Fund to assist with their legal fees re this law suit. We will be following the progress of this lawsuit.

The Ontario Court of Appeal has just granted Ontario Nature and Wildlands League, represented by Ecojustice lawyers, leave to appeal a lower court ruling that puts endangered and threatened species at further risk of disappearing from the province. The original decision upheld exemptions of many major industries such as forestry from the protection of the Endangered Species Act.

"We are delighted with this decision as it marks the first time environmental groups have won the right to appeal a case about endangered species and indicates that the court has deemed this case to be of importance to the people of Ontario." (Myrna Wood, PEC Naturalists)

September 22, 2015, Update

The Tribunal Hearing on Ostrander Point wind project booked for Sept 23-25 has been adjourned.

Due to ongoing disclosure issues related to Ministry of Natural Resources documents the Hearing has been adjourned for the second time. **The new date for resumption of the hearing will be October 27-28 and 30.**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Summer 2015

As usual, the Executive had no scheduled meetings during the summer months. The report from the next meeting in October will be in the December Lotus.

Thank You!

From Norfolk Field Naturalists to

Will Partridge

Guardian Computing

For hosting our website

NOW, WHAT DID I GET MYSELF INTO THIS TIME?!

A brief message from Inga Hinnerichsen, President



Inga Hinnerichsen, President NFN

Photo by permission of Haldimand-Norfolk SNAPD

By now you may have figured out that I'm not one to pass up a new challenge. Head first into the pool, hoping it's the deep end, not the shallow!

Those of you who missed the NFN AGM in September may not be aware of the changes in the line-up of the NFN Board of Directors:

Bernie Solymár stepped down from the position of President after many years of excellent service. A huge **Thank You** for all his hard work! He'll remain on the NFN Board of Directors as Past President. Bernie is focusing on bringing up new generations of nature enthusiasts with Nature's Calling Environmental Education, an organisation that provides fun and informative programs and events involving families and children of all ages. He's also serving on the Board of Directors of Ontario Nature besides his full-time job. Like they say: The busiest people get the most things done.

A few other Board Members also tendered their resignations: Audrey Heagy, Past President - she also served as Treasurer in the past - Barb Hawke as Director-at-Large and Alan Ladd as Director-at-Large. A pat on the back is not nearly enough to express our gratitude for their services all these years! We'll miss you all.

As it turned out, to make a long story short, I ended up taking Bernie's place as President... well, maybe not exactly. Over the years Bernie has gone far beyond the call of duty and set the bar pretty high and left a pair of big boots to fill. I might just do a Limbo under the high bar and mosey on in my flip-flops to begin with. I'm excited about my new responsibilities, honoured over the nomination, humbled to join the ranks of all those remarkable people before me, and, at the same time, a little bit scared... okay, I'll get over it. There are many very competent people on the Board who might be willing to hold my hand from time to time and offer their help and guidance in a pinch.

I will also keep my "job" as Editor of the Lotus. I'm actually very much enjoying putting it together for you every couple of months! (Keep the input coming!)

Peter Carson is staying on as Director - Sanctuary, he's also our representative on the Long Point Causeway Improvement Project. Barb Hourigan remains the Treasurer, Eleanor Chithalen continues as Secretary, Len Grincevicius is our new Vice President and Director of Speaker Program, Diane Salter is still the Membership chair person and Dave Curry looks after the publicity.

Last, but not least, we would like to extend a big, warm welcome to Sue Olmstead, a new Director-at-Large!

A couple of vacancies remain:

WANTED:

A COUPLE OF WARM BODIES

to fill the positions as

DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

No experience necessary

Attend 4 Board Meetings a year

A Director-at-Large has no "job description"

(assisting other Board Members from time to time is always appreciated)

Get to know your fellow Directors

Taking part in your club's management is a highly rewarding experience

Contact any Board Member - see list on page 8

Upcoming NFN 2015 Fall Events

Guest Speaker: Turtles at Risk

Tuesday November 10, 7:30 pm
Scott Gillingwater is a Species at Risk Biologist at the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. He will speak to us about the ongoing plight of turtles at risk and what landowners can do to protect their habitat.

Members' Night and Christmas Social

Tuesday, December 8, 7:30 pm
Members are invited to bring up to 12 electronic photos or short videos no more than 10 minutes of sightings or trips. Don't forget to bring goodies to share.

Christmas Bird Counts

Join one of the local Christmas Bird Counts and spend the day in the field identifying and counting all of the birds you see or hear. Data collected during these annual counts provides vital information on the distribution of winter bird populations

Sunday, December 20 Woodhouse Count (Norfolk County)

Contact: David Okines,
david.okines@gmail.com
519-586-9464

Sunday, December 27 Fisherville Count (Haldimand County)

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

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 2015
Input dead line:
Friday, Nov 27, 2015**

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

2015 - 2016 NFN Executive with contact & project information

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Vice-President	Len Grincevicius	428-6796	portie_1989@eastlink.ca
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Past President	Bernie Solymár	427-9969	solymar@nornet.on.ca
Treasurer	Barb Hourigan	583-1198	bbhourigan@yahoo.ca
Secretary	Eleanor Chithalen	582-4382	eleanor.chithalen@gmail.com
Director/ Membership	Diane Salter	586-7775	bigcreek@kwic.com
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Publicity	David Curry	875-5601	david.curry@hotmail.com
Field Events	Vacant		
Director-at-large	Vacant		
Director-at-large	Vacant		

Lotus Editor (appointed) Inga Hinnerichsen 875-5601 daveinga@live.ca

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