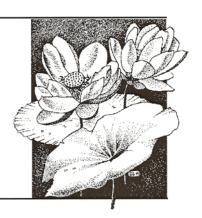


NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



#### **SUMMER 2017**





May 15, 2017

Report by: MIKE McMILLAN,

Official NFN Birdathoner

Photos by: George Pond (or as noted)



Red-throated Loon Photo: George Pond Read more about this all-time Birdathon first in George Pond's report on page 4

I picked up George Pond at 9:30 as we were to begin our Birdathon at 10:00 a.m. We headed to the Forestry Station parking lot where we rendezvoused with Diane Salter, Betty Chanyi and Anne Wynia. Together we headed to Old Cut and on the way I noticed a **Mute Swan** in the marsh along the causeway. Further on in a marsh, across from the Old Park, were a pair of **Mallards**.

At Old Cut birds were few, especially warblers. However, I did manage to see a **Downy**Woodpecker, a House Wren, a Warbling Vireo, a Gray Catbird, and a Purple Martin. The only warblers here were a Yellow, a Northern Parula, and an American Redstart. The most interesting sighting, though, was a well camouflaged Ruffed Grouse sitting on a nest on the ground about thirty feet off the main path. As we returned to our cars someone spotted a Killdeer scurrying around at the far end of the parking area.

Our next stop, the Old Provincial Park, was also not as productive as usual. Here we saw some White-throated Sparrows, a Lincoln's Sparrow, a Carolina Wren, a Rose-breasted Grossbeak, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a lovely male Baltimore Oriole. Perched on a branch of a bush was a tiny Ruby-throated Hummingbird. The only warbler was a female Black-throated Blue.

We moved on to the Port Rowan Sewage
Treatment Plant to check out the recently restored
wetland there. Our first sighting was two Black
Terns flying overhead. Swooping over the pond
were many Tree Swallows, one Rough-winged
Swallow, and several Barn Swallows. We also
spotted a Herring Gull and a Forster's Tern, but
the most exciting sighting was a Sora (a shortbilled rail, about 9 inches in length) walking out of
some reeds into the open near the viewing platform
providing us with excellent views of this bird!

Continued on page 2...

### Birdathon ...continued from Page 1

Just before leaving a **Pied-billed Grebe** swam out of the reeds at the back of the pond.

We proceeded west along Front Road to Big Creek where there were Cliff Swallows nesting under the bridge. An **Eastern Phoebe** was also spotted here. Continuing west on Front Road we noticed a Sandhill Crane flying above us across the road. On Road A, one road north of Front Road, we stopped at a wetland which was surprisingly productive. Swimming in the pond was a Bufflehead, while near the edge of the pond were a Least Sandpiper, a Semi-palmated Sandpiper, both Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, and several **Dowitchers**. Nearby, in the grass, was a Bonaparte's Gull.

A little further on Road A, we stopped at a bridge no longer in use where we heard the 'witchety, witchety' of a Common Yellowthroat. A Great Blue Heron flew past and a Cedar Waxwing was perching in a bush.

Our next stop was to check out Betty Chanyi's bird feeders. Here I was able to add to my list a White-crowned Sparrow, a Chipping Sparrow, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, and a Bank Swallow. The best sighting was a male and female Orchard Oriole.

We continued on to the Jackson Gunn Old Growth Forest a little northwest of the Sandhills hoping for a Red-headed Woodpecker. We didn't get the woodpecker but did hear the 'wheep' of a **Great Crested Flycatcher.** 

By now it was mid-afternoon and we hadn't eaten our lunch yet. We headed to Diane Salter's house to sit on her patio and watch her birdfeeders while relaxing and pooling the treats and goodies we had brought for lunch. Diane's bird feeder produced a White-breasted Nuthatch, an eyecatching male Indigo Bunting, and a Hairy Woodpecker.



**Tufted Titmouse** 

Photo: Wikipedia / Basar



Photo: Wikipedia / Elaine R. Wilson

After eating we walked to the back of her property where an Eastern Bluebird, which was nesting in a bluebird box, made an appearance for us. Back on the road we headed east to the East Quarter Line Road, a little west of the Forestry Station. On the East Quarter Line we went south almost to Front Road to see a Bald Eagle's nest on the far side of a field. An eaglet was visible standing on the nest while one of the adult Eagles was perched in a nearby tree. Just then a Northern Harrier flew low across a nearby field.

At our next stop, Audrey Heagy's birdfeeders, we were rewarded with a House Finch and a Tufted Titmouse.

Through a friend. Betty Chanyi had received permission for us to go into the Turkey Point Hunt Club. This was our next stop. The entry to the club was down a long, rough dirt road through a forest. Along this road, on our way in, a deer crossed just in front of us. While walking around the buildings and down the road through the forest we saw a Flicker, an Eastern Kingbird, a Great Crested Flycatcher, a Yellow-rumped Warbler, a Chestnut-sided Warbler and heard a Least Bittern in the marsh.

We then headed back to Port Rowan and here, at the marina, way out on the bay, we were able to identify three species of ducks: Redhead, Ruddy **Duck** and **Scaup** (probably Lesser Scaup). Our final stop for the day was at dusk at the corner of the East Quarter Line Road and Highway 24. After waiting about ten minutes we were able to hear an Eastern Towhee and an American Woodcock.

Continued on page 3...

#### Birdathon ...continued from Page 2

The following morning I picked George up at 5:15 a.m. and we headed to the Backus Woods. On the way we stopped at a deep ravine on the same East Quarter Line Road where George had, a few days earlier, heard a Louisiana Waterthrush.

After a five minute wait the Waterthrush sang. This was a good bird to get.

While driving into the Backus Woods on the 3rd Concession Road a couple of Wood Ducks flew over. Betty Chanyi was waiting for us there. With many birds singing in the early morning we heard a Red-eyed Vireo, a Pileated Woodpecker, a Scarlet Tanager, an Eastern Peewee, a Yellowbellied Sapsucker and a Veery. In the wet area where **Prothonotary Warblers** are known to nest we were fortunate to spot a Prothonotary and a Brown Creeper. At this same spot two Northern Waterthrushes, one on each side of the path, sang back and forth constantly. A Black and White Warbler was another sighting at Backus.

At the sand road one concession north of the Forestry Station Diane Salter joined us. By driving slowly along this sand road and making several stops we heard the songs of a Hooded Warbler, an Ovenbird, a Blue-headed Vireo, and a Bluewinged Warbler.

We then headed to Long Point to check out Old Cut and the Old Park one more time before 10:00 a.m. when our twenty-four hours would expire. As we arrived at Old Cut a light rain began which became steadier during our walk through the area. At about 9:10 with a steady rain falling and not hearing or seeing any new birds we decided to end our Birdathon.

My total number of species identified, seeing or hearing, was 98. I am grateful for the company of the excellent birders without whom I would not have been as successful.

When all the money is in the total should exceed \$4,000. To all of you who sponsored me, a big thank you for raising this sum of money for bird research and conservation across the country.

Tax receipts will be issued by Bird Studies Canada either by email or regular mail. Attached is a list of the birds I identified.

Thank you for your support,

Mike



Hooded Warbler Photo: George Pond

#### Mike's Bird List

Pied-billed Grebe Least Bittern Great Blue Heron Turkey Vulture Mute Swan Canada Goose Wood Duck Mallard Redhead Lesser Scaup Bufflehead Ruddy Duck Northern Harrier **Bald Eagle** Ruffed Grouse Sora Sandhill Crane Killdeer **Greater Yellowlegs** Lesser Yellowlegs

Semipalm. Sandpiper Least Sandpiper Short-billed Dowitcher American Woodcock Bonaparte's Gull Ring-billed Gull Herring Gull Forster's Tern Black Tern Rock Pigeon Ruby-thr. Hummingbird Red-bell. Woodpecker Red-naped Sapsucker Downy Woodpecker Hairy Woodpecker Northern Flicker Pileated Woodpecker Eastern Wood-Pewee Eastern Phoebe Great Cres. Flycatcher

Eastern Kingbird Blue-headed Vireo Warbling Vireo Red-eyed Vireo Blue Jay American Crow Purple Martin Tree Swallow N. R.-wing Swallow Bank Swallow Cliff Swallow Barn Swallow Bl.-capped Chickadee **Tufted Titmouse** White-br. Nuthatch **Brown Creeper** Carolina Wren House Wren Marsh Wren Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Eastern Bluebird Veery American Robin **Gray Catbird** Cedar Waxwing European Starling Blue-wing Warbler Northern Parula Yellow Warbler Chestn.-sided Warbler Bl.-thr. Blue Warbler Yel.-rumped Warbler Bl.-&-wh. Warbler American Redstart **Prothonotary Warbler** Ovenbird Northern Waterthrush Louisiana W.thrush Common Yellowthroat **Hooded Warbler** 

Scarlet Tanager Eastern Towhee Chipping Sparrow Song Sparrow Lincoln's Sparrow Swamp Sparrow White-throat Sparrow White-crown Sparrow Northern Cardinal Rose-br. Grosbeak Indigo Bunting Red-winged Blackbird Common Grackle **Orchard Oriole Baltimore Oriole** House Finch American Goldfinch House Sparrow

Total: 98

# GREAT CANADIAN BIRDATHON - Report by: George Pond

(Note: this was the second Birdathon this year for George!)

Photos also by George Pond (or as noted)

"There's a Cormorant". I said as a bird swam at the distant end of a Port Dover Marina boating channel. "That's not a Cormorant, it's a Loon," said Jeremy. "Your' right", I said. "Hey, that's a **Red-throated Loon**. Wow! That's an all-time Birdathon first for us."

Editor's note: (Wikipedia) The Red-throated Loon (North America) (Gavia stellata) is a migratory aquatic bird found in the northern hemisphere. The most widely distributed member of the loon or diver family, it breeds primarily in Arctic regions, and winters in northern coastal waters. Ranging from 55 to 67 centimetres (22 to 26 in) in length, the red-throated loon is the smallest and lightest of the world's loons. The species is protected by international treaties. Rarely found in the Great Lakes.

Seven of us, Bruce and Ann Falls, Ricky Dunn, Jeremy Hussel, Steve Wilcox, Fred Cooke, a British friend of the Falls, and yours truly were doing our annual Great Canadian Birdathon. Pouring rain had delayed our usual 10 am start but by 1:15 we had checked off our first bird, an **Orchard Oriole**, at the Bird Studies Canada headquarters in Port Rowan. Migrants were few and far between that day and we wondered if we could break 100 birds. It was May 25, 2017.

We started without Steve Wilcox, but we had Jeremy Hussel, an excellent birder with exceptional ears. A Hooded Merganser was in the BSC pond. House Wrens, Yellow Warblers, Baltimore Orioles, Cardinals, Tree swallows, Common Yellowthroats, House sparrows, Purple Martins, Grackles, all nesting birds were common as we walked along the Port Rowan Cemetery road. Rough-wing Swallows sat on the telephone wires. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were in the trees.

We had stopped along the cemetery road for the Rough-wing swallows that could usually be found there. Bruce had seen them from the car. He didn't realize that we would be walking along the road for a while so he stayed in the car.



Red-throated Loon Photo: George Pond

About 20 minutes later, wondering where the heck we were, he came, a little perturbed, puffing up the road. From that point on we made sure both cars knew the plans for the next stop. A **Bald Eagle** flew over our heads

A nesting **Ruffed Grouse** was a strange sight near the banding lab. These birds are few and far between in this area and on Long Point they never have been common. I wondered if the eggs in this nest were fertile. She had been sitting for a few weeks by this time. The Old Long Point Provincial Park was mostly covered with water and we couldn't find a place to park. We moved on. Crossing the causeway we picked up **Mute Swans**. Jeremy's car saw a **Common or Forster's Tern**. Normally by this time we would be well over sixty species; we had half that number.

When we reached the Port Royal Bridge west of port Rowan Steve Wilcox pulled in behind our vehicles. Our team was now complete. Cliff Swallows and the usual Eastern Phoebe were quickly added to our lists so we headed to Steve's house to drop off his truck. From there we checked a tiny wetland for shorebirds and picked up Killdeers, Spotted, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, the only sandpipers we would find.

Continued on page 5...

Summer 2017 Page 4 Norfolk Field Naturalists

# Birdathon - Report by George Pond ...Continued from page 4

Just down the road in a wetland valley we found **Wood Ducks** and a very unexpected Peregrine **Falcon** - a bonus bird for sure. A **Willow Flycatcher** sang from a thicket.

And so the day went. **Bobolinks** in a small pasture field were certainly a welcome sight. Dianne Salter's feeders yielded **Indigo Buntings**, **Orioles**, a **Hummingbird**, **three species of Woodpeckers** and a singing **Blackpoll Warbler** that Steve was able to find in one of the trees. A **Bluebird** near its box, a singing **Blue-wing Warbler** along the road, a **Field Sparrow** in a meadow, our list was growing at a much slower pace than Birdathons of the past; but we were having fun and enjoying the now quite lovely day. Sandwiches, wraps and other goodies courtesy the Blue Elephant in Simcoe were eagerly devoured.



Prothonotary Warbler Photo: George Pond

By the time we reached Port Dover it was late afternoon. We checked off Chimney Swifts from the Tim Horton's parking lot. We found the Redthroated Loon at the marina and headed back towards Long Point hoping for some of the marsh birds. We stopped in Port Ryerse looking for Redheaded Woodpeckers. They showed up five minutes after we left the feeders. Next year we will wait longer. Marsh Wrens, Black Terns, a distant call from an American Bittern and little else was a disappointing welcome along the Big Creek dikes but an American Woodcock and especially a pair of Nighthawks in the Provincial Park helped bolster our spirits. We ended the day with Whippoor-wills calling along the St William's sand road and returned to Simcoe for a few hours shut eye. At 5.30 the next morning we were in Backus Woods, my favourite place. Hooded Warblers seemed to be less common than usual, maybe they were yet to return from the south. **Prothonotary** Warblers and Northern Waterthrush were busy singing at the woodland pond where we usually find them but there were no Cerulean Warblers or Yellow-throated Vireos. Great Crested Flycatchers and Eastern Wood Peewees called. A Pileated Woodpecker both called and drummed noisily from one of the many dead trees and the "Rat-a-tat-tat" of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was

It is difficult to explain the mystery and the magic that I always feel when going through Backus Woods at the crack of dawn at this time of the year. The forest is literally alive with bird song and although we missed a few this year that we normally record the thrill and excitement was still there.

unmistakable.

From Backus we continued through the St William's forest sand road and added a Canada Warbler, a Mourning Warbler and a Blackburnian Warbler as well as the expected Pine Warbler and Blue- headed Vireo. Ovenbirds were common here. We returned to Backus Woods where Steve left us as he had to get to his office.

We checked out the new Port Rowan Wetlands, the Port Rowan Harbour and the lookout at Bird Studies Canada finding a handful of ducks to add to our lists

Continued on page 6...

# Birdathon - Report by George Pond ...Continued from page 5

We returned to the banding lab at Old Cut to finish off our Birdathon, but I think that most of us were already finished. We had been on the go since very early the previous morning, anticipating a 10 am start. However we did add a few more birds to our lists that had now grown to a respectable 123 birds. This was one of the shortest lists that we had ever had, although compared to many others that had completed their Birdathon at Long Point it was "In the ball park".

I am attaching a completed list of birds identified by our team. Although we had far less birds than usual the sighting of the **Red-throated Loon** made this one of my more memorable Birdathons. I returned to Port Dover two days later. It was still there and I was able to get some fairly good photos.

Thanks to you and a raft of other sponsors I have surpassed my goal and I still expect a few more dollars to come in. Birdathon has become a passion with me for many years. I believe strongly in the work of Bird Studies Canada and I know that the money donated for Birdathon all goes for various types of bird related conservation projects. Thanks again!

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

#### **George's Bird List**

Pied-billed Grebe Double-cr. Cormorant Great Blue Heron Green Heron American Bittern Mute Swan Canada Goose Mallard Wood Duck Redhead Ring-necked Duck Lesser Scaup White-winged Scoter Ruddy Duck Hooded Merganzer Turkey Vulture **Broad-winged Hawk Bald Eagle** Peregrine Falcon Ruffed Grouse Sandhill Crane Killdeer American Woodcock Common Snipe

Spotted Sandpiper

Least Sandpiper Semipalm. Sandpiper Herrina Gull Ring-billed Gull Bonaparte's Gull Forster's Tern Caspian Tern Black Tern Rock Dove Mourning Dove Black-billed Cuckoo Whip-poor-will Common Nighthawk Chimney Swift R.-thr. Hummingbird Belted Kingfisher Northern Flicker Pileated Woodpecker Red-bel. Woodpecker Yel.-bellied Sapsucker Hairy Woodpecker Downy Woodpecker Eastern Kingbird Great Cr. Flycatcher Eastern Phoebe

Yel.-bellied Flycatcher Willow Flycatcher Least Flycatcher Eastern Wood Pewee Horned Lark Tree Swallow Bank Swallow N. Rough-w. Swallow Barn Swallow Cliff Swallow Purple Martin Blue Jay American Crow Bl.-capped Chickadee White-br. Nuthatch Red-br. Nuthatch House Wren Winter Wren Carolina Wren Long-b. Marsh Wren **Gray Catbird** American Robin Wood Thrush Veerv Eastern Bluebird

Blue-gr. Gnatcatcher Cedar Waxwing European Starling Solitary Vireo Red-eyed Vireo Philadelphia Vireo Warbling Vireo Golden-wing Warbler Blue-wing Warbler Yellow Warbler Magnolia Warbler Blackburnian Warbler Chestn.-sided Warbler **Bay-breasted Warbler** Blackpoll Warbler Pine Warbler Ovenbird Northern Waterthrush Mourning Warbler Common Yellowthroat Canada Warbler American Redstart House Sparrow Bobolink Eastern Meadowlark

Red-winged Blackbird **Orchard Oriole Baltimore Oriole** Common Grackle Br.-headed Cowbird Scarlet Tanager Northern Cardinal Rose-br. Grosbeak Indigo Bunting House Finch American Goldfinch Eastern Towhee Savannah Sparrow **Grasshopper Sparrow** Chipping Sparrow Field Sparrow Lincoln's Sparrow Swamp Sparrow Song Sparrow Wild Turkey Prothonotary Warbler White-wing Scoter Red-throated Loon

Total: 123

#### The Norfolk Field Naturalists

wish to recognize with gratitude the participants in

### **The Great Canadian Birdathon**

for their fundraising efforts on behalf of NFN

Thank you!

# Thank You!

From Norfolk Field Naturalists to

Will Partridge / Guardian Computing
For hosting our website



# **BRIEFS**

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT**

Spring 2017

# A Wetland Conservation Strategy for Ontario is Released

Good news! With its new Wetland Conservation
Strategy for Ontario, the Province has confirmed
that provincially significant wetlands and Great
Lakes coastal wetlands will continue to be off limits
to development. Current policy protections will be
upheld as the government develops a new wetland
offsetting policy. Though we are disappointed with
some aspects of the final strategy, it is an
improvement over the draft version. Thank you to
all who raised your voice for wetlands. It really does
matter.

Report poaching of turtles on Long Point to: 1-877-847-7667 or OPP

#### IN MEMORIAM

On behalf of all of us at the Norfolk Field
Naturalists we would like to convey our deepest
condolences to the **Robinson Family**with regards to the passing of

#### Patricia Robinson

Pat was the wife of Al Robinson, Honorary President, and a long time member of NFN

The Board of Directors met on April 25, 2017. The following are highlights from this meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Barbara Hourigan states that the February report has already been distributed. In March, the bulk of the deposit was from Bird Studies regarding the Great Canadian Birdathon: \$6,817.95. April's deposit included many in memoriam donations for Ruth Loughton, totaling \$1,485.00.

**MEMBERSHIPS:** Diane Salter stated that there are a few new members every month and attributed this largely to social media advertising.

Bylaw Review: A few additions to the new Bylaws written by a committee of Inga Hinnerichsen, Bernie Solymar and Jan Grincevicius were discussed by the group. A hard copy of the final draft Bylaws will be mailed to all NFN members in early August along with the annual programme. Bylaws state that the membership must receive Bylaw Amendment proposals at least 30 days before the Annual General Meeting.

The annual Directors' Pot Luck and Meeting in June was cancelled because of conflicting schedules

**The next BoD Meeting** will be held on October 24, 2017. The report from this meeting will be in the December issue of the Lotus.

#### **Welcome New NFN Members**

2017 - 2018 Season

Adrian Antkiw, Rene van Dael, Jessica & Emily McGregor and John Tutt

We look forward to meeting you and hope you will participate in and enjoy all the NFN indoor presentations and field outings.

### Thank You!

From Norfolk Field Naturalists to

Jane Thomson

VER THE MOON Design Studie

**OVER THE MOON Design Studio** 

For creating our 2017 - 18
Events Brochure

# Upcoming NFN 2017 Fall Events

# Fascinating Fungi: Mushroom I.D. Hike

Saturday, September 30 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Join us on a fall hike in Backus Woods to look for and identify fungi of all shapes and sizes. Bring your camera, collecting mushrooms in this NCC property is not allowed.

Meet at the 3rd Concession Road entrance to Backus Woods.
Contact Inga at 519-875-5601

# An exciting visual of storm chasing in Ontario

Tuesday, October 10, 7:30-9:00 pm

Our Guest Speaker, David T.
Chapman's very interesting and intriguing presentation will be on the variable weather of Ontario.
Focus will be on tornadoes, crazy storm cloud structures and lightning in our area.

### Fall Colours of LPBLT's Strongman-Guiler Property

Saturday, October 21, 1:00 - 3:00 pm.

Join Lyndsay Shular for a fall tour of one of LPBLT's newest properties. Meet at the parking lot on the north side of Front Road, west of Port Ryerse. Be prepared for an uphillwalk for access. Contact Len at 519-428-6796

#### **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 2017
Input dead line:
Friday, Sep. 29, 2017

#### **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

#### 2016 - 2017 NFN Executive with contact & project information

		7 (11 0 10	
President	Inga Hinnerichsen	875-5601	daveinga@live.ca
Vice-President	Len Grincevicius	428-6796	portie_1989@eastlink.ca
Sanctuary	Peter Carson	586-3985	gartcar@kwic.com
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
Director Speaker Program	Len Grincevicius	428-6796	portie_1989@eastlink.ca
and Field Events			
Director Publicity	Sue Olmstead	583-1436	ksolmstead@kwic.com
Director Environment	Bernie Solymár	427-9969	solymar@nornet.on.ca
Director-at-large	Ken Olmstead	583-1436	ksolmstead@kwic.com
Director-at-large	Cliff Skerratt	582-0319	
Director-at-large	Vacant		

Lotus Editor (appointed) Jan Grincevicius

**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: Vacant

Honorary Directors: Harry Barrett (deceased), Jim Harlow (deceased)