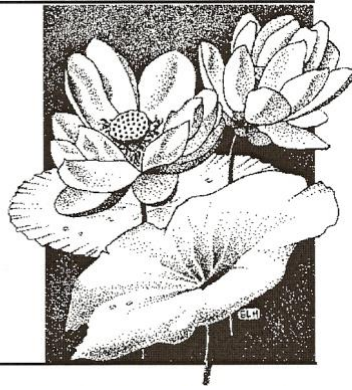


Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



APRIL 2018



Restoration Work at St. Williams Conservation Reserve

By Inga Hinnerichsen

In the past year I have helped out with ongoing work at the St. Williams Conservation Reserve. The forest reserve consists of mainly two tracts: the Turkey Point Tract and the Nursery Tract stretching north from Hwy. 24 between Forestry Farm Road and East Quarter Line Road.

As the glaciers were melting after the last ice age and water levels began to drop, the receding shoreline left behind a series of sand dunes. Eventually, these dunes were overgrown with local vegetation.

The area was cleared by early settlers and heavily eroded by the late 1800s. In the early 20th century it was planted largely with pine varieties to prevent further erosion and as lumber crop trees. Small pockets of Black Oak savannah remained on higher, dry ground.

Part of the ongoing work in the Conservation Reserve are efforts to restore these areas of oak savannah. Over time, pine saplings and other invading species have begun to take over and crowd the oaks. Some areas have been selectively logged to open the canopy, allowing more sunlight to encourage new growth. In the past few years, during

the winter and early spring months, there have been work bees organized by the St. Williams Conservation Reserve Community Counsel. The volunteer crews have been removing young pines in several areas and clearing truckloads of garbage along the 6th Concession Road, a stretch of sand road between Forestry Farm Road and East Quarter Line Road, which some people are considering to be a convenient garbage dump, unfortunately. Recreational use by motorized vehicles is allowed in part of the reserve. Elsewhere, trails, old logging roads and fire roads are reserved for equestrian and foot traffic.



Starting the Burn

Photo by Inga Hinnerichsen

Last Spring, we prepared three separate tracts for prescribed burns. The areas had been surveyed in advance. Species at risk, such as Flowering Dogwood and Spotted Wintergreen, had been

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flagged. Standing hollow snags were also marked. Each area had been circumscribed by cleared borders to prevent the fire from spreading to other areas. Our task was to rake old dry debris away from the flagged saplings and plants to prevent the fire from damaging the protected species. The ground around the snags was also cleared in case the fire would ignite the dry insides where it would smolder risking the start of a forest fire.



Burning Around Flagged Trees Photo by Inga Hinnerichsen

The objective of the burn was to clear dense undergrowth, mostly Red Maple saplings, Autumn Olive and other invasives. The Red Maple is becoming one of the dominant species in the



Red Maple Saplings Burning
Photo by Inga Hinnerichsen

Carolinian forest. Clearing the undergrowth also allows the grasses and other herbaceous plants typical to the oak savannah to return to the area freshly fertilized by the ashes from the burn.

A professional crew conducted the burn. First, they burned a swath along the lee side of the area against the dividing border making it even wider. Next, they moved over to the windward side. The low fire moved rapidly across the tract fanned by the wind behind it.

This Spring, the St. Williams Conservation Reserve Community Counsel is planning another prescribed burn. Volunteers are always welcome to help out with the work. An afternoon in the forest with likeminded people, fresh air and some exercise makes for good times.

Anyone interested in these projects, please, contact Audrey Heagy at: coordinator@swcr.ca

Swifts and Swallows

Swallows, swifts, and nightjars are “aerial insectivores” — birds that specialize on eating flying insects. They spend most of their time flying overhead. Over the last 40 years, aerial insectivores have undergone steeper declines than any other group of birds in Canada.

These birds will only recover if they are valued as an integral part of our neighbourhoods and ecosystems. Across the country, Bird Studies Canada is engaging communities in monitoring, stewardship, and conservation for aerial insectivores. Our biologists are also playing a key role in drafting strategies to identify priorities and direct future action for these species.

For more information, go to:
birdscanada.org/volunteer/ai/index.jsp?lang=EN



Spring

By Mary Oliver

All day the flicker has anticipated the lust of the season, by shouting. He scouts up tree after tree and at a certain place begins to cry out.

My, in his black-freckled vest, bay body with red trim and sudden chrome underwings, he is dapper. Of course, somebody listening nearby hears him; she answers with a sound like hysterical laughter and rushes out into the field where he is poised on an old phone pole, his head swinging, his wings opening and shutting in a kind of butterfly stroke. She can't resist; they touch; they flutter. How lightly, altogether, they accept the great task, of carrying life forward! In the crown of an oak tree they choose a small tree-cave which they enter with sudden quietness and modesty. And, for a while, the wind that can be a knife or a hammer, subsides. They listen to the thrushes. The sky is blue, or the rain falls with its spills of pearl. Around their wreath of darkness, the leaves of the world unfurl.

For more poetry, go to:
occupypoetry.net/mary_oliver



Solo Art Show

Artist Cindy Presant

Birds, Beasts & Beauty of Norfolk

May 12-13, 10am-4pm

**1028 Hwy 59, Long Point Causeway
Port Rowan**

Soapstone carvings, drawings and paintings

Telephone: 519-586-9258 Free refreshments

Garage gallery is wheelchair accessible

BRUCE PENINSULA — NATURE WEEKEND

May 25 – 27, 2018

Birding Field Trips — General Nature Field Trips —
Bucket Raffle and Bird Quiz

Limestone cliffs and sand beaches, hardwood forests and cedar swamps, fens and alvars – this variety of ecosystems on the Bruce Peninsula makes it a special place for naturalists.

South Peel Naturalists' Club extends an invitation to join us to explore the Bruce Peninsula. This annual weekend event provides the opportunity to see the best of the Bruce with expert leaders and in the company of fellow naturalists.

The cost per person for the weekend:

- \$20 registration fee to cover cost of bucket raffle prizes and lodging for volunteer leaders
- \$236 (+ 13% taxes) for two nights' accommodation at Evergreen Resort, Mar, ON (includes all meals and snacks)

For further information: mail@spnc.ca or contact Donna at 905 815 0933 or Audrey at 905 820 2571



Bruce Trail Conservancy

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is the proud recipient of the 2017 Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Special Achievement in honour of the Bruce Trail Conservancy's unique and lasting conservation work over the past 50 years.

Carden Alvar Provincial Park

Is one of Ontario's newest provincial parks. An alvar is a habitat of thin or absent soil cover on top of a limestone base. One type of alvar is dominated by native grasses and flowering plants and is among the rarest grasslands in the province. Visit: ontarioparks.com/parksblog/carden-alvar-provincial-park-one-of-ontarios-newest-parks

Herbicide Key to Success in Eradicating Phragmites

Reprinted with permission from Monte Sonnenberg, Simcoe Reformer

Progress is being reported in the campaign to roll back the phragmites invasion that is threatening the Long Point ecosystem.

Several years of aerial spraying with the herbicide glyphosate followed by controlled burning has reclaimed large areas of the Long Point biosphere for native plants and animals.

“They are winning the battle in Long Point,” reports Dr. Janice Gilbert, a wildlife biologist who sounded the alarm on phragmites several years ago.

“It gives me great pleasure to see the ecosystem recover once we apply the right tools.”

Key to the success in Long Point is glyphosate – the active ingredient in the broad-spectrum herbicide RoundUp.

Glyphosate is in general use in the United States for phragmites control. However, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) in Ottawa restricts the use of glyphosate in aquatic areas. It is being used in Long Point under a special permit.

Elsewhere in the Great Lakes, phragmites eradication relies on other methods. Gilbert has been involved with phragmites control along the Lake Huron shoreline for the past several years.

That campaign involves chopping the hearty reed beneath the water line and hoping it drowns. Gilbert said it is hard, painstaking work, adding it is difficult to make a dent in the problem with this method.

Phragmites reed is a devilish plant. Agriculture and Agrifood Canada describes it as the worst invasive plant in the country.

Phragmites is a problem because it replaces native plants with a dense, nearly impenetrable monoculture. The reed grows 15 feet tall. Each seed head produces 2,000 seeds. These can travel more than 10 kilometres on the wind.

Phragmites roots grow to a depth of eight feet. The roots produce a toxin that kills surrounding plants. There are concerns it is expanding its range into Ontario woodlots

Roots grow out from the plant to a great distance. Each root is crowded with rhizomes, each one capable of putting up a new shoot.

Efforts to eradicate phragmites often help spread it. Root pieces stick to machinery that is then transported to new locations. Each fragment represents a potential new stand of phragmites.

The eradication campaign in Long Point was the subject of a recent master’s thesis at the University of Toronto.

In her report, Anamika Ray, a member of the Faculty of Forestry, says research indicates that glyphosate spraying over aquatic areas is safe.

She cites The Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health, which said that “Glyphosate is of small acute toxicity to aquatic inveterbrates, fish and wildlife, and that the risk to aquatic organisms is negligible at suggested application rates.”

Ray also cites an as-yet unpublished study that says glyphosate shows up in only trace amounts in aquatic areas one hour after it is applied. The amounts detected, Ray reports, are below limits prescribed by Health Canada.

In her report, Ray says phragmites eradicators in Canada should have the same weapons at their disposal as the team in Long Point and in the United States.

“The inability to conduct chemical control in aquatic areas is crippling efforts to control phragmites and is critically endangering unique wetland biospheres,” Ray writes.

“Since 80 per cent of the phragmites biomass is underground, rhizomes can persist through most disturbances. Herbicide is the only known method to effectively kill phragmites roots and rhizomes and leave the area in a condition which can support other plants.”



Photo from Wikipedia

Roadsides Not Best Place for Planting Monarch-Critical Milkweed, Study Finds

By Colin Perkel (Reprint from Hamilton Spectator)

Efforts aimed at reversing a steep decline in the monarch butterfly population by planting traditionally unloved milkweed need to take into account the size and location of the planted patches, new Canadian research indicates.

The study, out of the University of Guelph, finds that restoring milkweed along roadways is less effective than doing so on agricultural lands. Milkweed is critical to the survival of the monarch population because it's believed to be the only plant the butterflies feed on as caterpillars.

"Roadside patches, which received half the number of eggs compared to agricultural landscapes, may potentially pose a number of threats to monarchs because of vehicle collision and accumulation of noxious chemicals," the study's authors write.

"A better strategy may be for managers to develop incentive programs with landowners to plant and maintain milkweeds in agricultural landscapes."

The research, published in the journal *Biological Conservation*, looked at what monarch butterflies prefer when it comes to laying eggs on milkweed.

Milkweed plants on farm land, according to the two-year study carried out primarily by now graduated master's student Grace Pitman, have more than three times the amount of monarch eggs than those growing in urban gardens and roadsides. That might be because female monarchs can find the plants more easily in agricultural fields.

"Based on these findings, it will be important to develop programs with landowners and other pollinator initiatives or ecosystem service programs to actively restore milkweed in agricultural landscapes," the authors write. "Ideal areas for planting milkweed patches are crop margins, field corners, and other marginalized cropland within close proximity to crop fields."

At the same time, small patches in gardens and urban parks can still be useful for adult monarchs to lay eggs and find nectar for themselves, the paper states.

Most monarchs migrate thousands of kilometres along various routes through the United States between Mexico and Canada, where they are mostly found in southern Ontario, southwestern Quebec,

and the most southerly parts of Manitoba and British Columbia. They are considered an indicator species of the overall health of the environment.

However, monarch populations are estimated to have plunged by 90 per cent or more across North America over the past two decades. Part of the decline has been blamed on the attempted eradication of the otherwise prolific milkweed, which has traditionally been viewed, or officially listed, as a noxious weed, even poisonous to livestock.

For several years now, conservationists have been pushing milkweed restoration as a way to counter the monarch decline, arguing the plant can easily be controlled in an agricultural setting. Roadsides, which are plentiful in the monarch range, have featured prominently in the restoration push.

"It looks like it's not the best place to attract females to lay eggs," study co-author Ryan Norris, an associate professor in the department of integrative biology, said from Guelph, on Wednesday. "Whether females don't like roadside habitats, or they do like them but are getting killed, is something that needs to be looked at further."

Small, low-density milkweed patches of under 16 square metres in agricultural landscape appear to be most useful, in part because they tend to be home to fewer predators that feast on monarch eggs or larvae than medium-sized patches, the study finds. Large patches may be important for male monarchs to search for mates, but they might interfere with females trying to lay eggs.

One big unknown, Norris said, is whether more eggs translate into more adult monarchs and what impact pesticides might have on survival rates.

"That's a trickier thing to measure," Norris said. "It's much harder than going around counting eggs."





Expanding Backus Woods

In southwestern Ontario's Norfolk County lies an incredible natural oasis known as Backus Woods. A haven for species at risk, Backus Woods provides important habitat for Prothonotary and Cerulean warblers, Louisiana waterthrush, Eastern foxsnake, Blanding's turtle and Jefferson salamander.

Now, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has an opportunity to expand the 1,850-acre (749-hectare) Backus Woods protected area by acquiring two surrounding pieces of land in the east and southeast. Together these properties total 173 acres (71 hectares).





Of the \$1.8 million needed to conserve and care for these lands, two thirds has already been pledged, and we need your help to raise the final third by the end of June 2018. Contact Pia Kaukoranta, Development Coordinator, Nature Conservancy of Canada, at 416-932-3202, ext. 2222 for more information.

For more information, visit the [Backus Woods Nature Destinations page](#).

Help NCC expand Backus Woods today!

Spring Quiz

Can you identify what's in these photos? (answers on page 7)

1	2	3	4
			

Backus Woods, Monroe Landon Woods or Lake Erie Farms Trails

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) strives to maintain safe and enjoyable nature trails for the community in Norfolk.

Please contact NCC at 519-586-7773 or ontario@natureconservancy.ca to report any vandalism or trail hazards (ie: fallen trees) on NCC's Backus Woods, Monroe Landon Woods, or Lake Erie Farms trails.

Canada Investment

Recently, the Government of Canada announced the greatest single investment ever made to protect Canada's land, freshwater and oceans. The budget creates hope that Canada will meet its commitment to protect at least 17 percent of lands and inland waters by 2020.

The budget will invest \$1.3 billion over five years to support biodiversity and protect species at risk. The budget includes \$500 million, which will be matched to create a new \$1 billion Nature Fund to secure private land, support species protection, and help build Indigenous capacity to conserve land and species.

The Government of Ontario is being pressured to also do its part

There is a unique opportunity to protect water features across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Including the region's moraines, headwaters, river valleys and wetlands. The Government of Ontario has initiated a public consultation on a study area for potential Greenbelt expansion. The proposed study area includes ground and surface water features in Simcoe, Dufferin, Brant and Wellington Counties and Waterloo Region.

Yes, In My Backyard — Increasing local participation in protected areas establishment

To see this booklet, go to: view.publitas.com/ont-nature/yes-in-my-backyard/

For further info on these topics, and more, visit:
ontarionature.org

Thank You!

**From Norfolk Field Naturalists to
Will Partridge / Guardian Computing
For hosting our website**

Answers to Spring Quiz on Page 6

❶ Fox Sparrow ❷ Brown Snake ❸ Morels ❹ Yellow
Lady's Slipper

The Board of Directors met on February 27, 2018 to review ongoing and new business.

Treasurer's Report: Based on the January reports from Whitton Accounting Services we currently have a total of about \$11,200 usable funds including \$6,199.46 from last year's Great Canadian Birdathon. An additional \$15,573.19 is tied up in the Rowanwood fund.

Membership: Diane Salter reported a steady trickle of a couple of new members monthly.

Speaker Program and Outings: Len Grincevicius has started working on the 2018-19 season line-up of more exciting, interesting events.

Lotus: Jan Grincevicius has been able to work out a way to reduce the cost per copy by almost half. Some fine-tuning remains.

NCEE: Bernie Solymár has been able to find a new home for the NCEE at the Ryerson Camp. Funding is required for the Rooted in Nature Festival in July.

Harry B Barrett Fund: NFN has signed the agreement with the Norfolk Community Foundation and deposited the "nest egg" of \$10,000 to start the Fund. More donations have started to build up and the Board of Directors will meet in the near future to develop strategies for fundraising for this fund.

Other Business: The NFN participated in the Norfolk Wood Lot Owners' AGM again this year with a display. We will also be hosting the Ontario Nature Carolinian East Spring Meeting at the St. Williams Forestry Station Interpretive Centre. This meeting is an update of the activities of all the member clubs and Ontario Nature.

The next Board of Directors Meeting will be held on May 22, 2018. The report from this meeting will be in the Summer issue of Lotus.

Welcome New NFN Members**2017 - 2018 Season**

**Marianne Kalich, Ann Grant and
Grant and Ruthanne Foster**

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

Upcoming NFN 2018 Summer Events

Sunday, May 13, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Mother's Day Spring Wildflower Hike

Go on a leisurely stroll through the south tract of Backus Woods. Colleen and Bernie will identify and discuss the diversity and natural history of spring ephemeral flowers along the wooded trail. Meet at the Backus Woods parking lot on Concession 3 (by the Turkey Cairn). *Contact Bernie at 519-427-9969.*

Saturday, May 19, 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Spring Migrants in Backus Woods

Local naturalist, Mary Gartshore, will lead us on a leisurely hike in Backus Woods, which has over 80 breeding species, including 11 species at risk. With Mary as our hike leader, we know we are going to get lots of additional natural history lore! Don't forget your binoculars! *Contact Bernie at 519-427-9969.*

Sunday, June 10, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Guelph Arboretum

The Arboretum at the University of Guelph has beautiful gardens, trails, natural areas, many varieties of trees and wildflowers, as well as wildlife. We will meet at the north end parking lot by Winner's Store in Simcoe and car pool from there. Please bring a lunch with you. There are self-guided tours or 1½ hour guided tours led by staff. The cost for this is \$5.00 per person with a minimum of \$60.00 for a group. The guided tour needs to be arranged at least two weeks in advance so please let Len know if you plan to attend. *Contact Len at 519-428-6796.*

Norfolk Sand Plain Restoration Tour

Mary Gartshore and Peter Carson will take participants to several restoration sites which represent various habitats and stages of maturity. Planning, execution and results will be discussed and illustrated. Bug repellent, long pants, cameras, binoculars and appropriate weather wear are suggested. Meet at the dam parking lot just west of St. Williams Nursery on the north side of Highway 24 to car pool. *Contact Mary or Peter at 519-586-3985.*

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:

**Summer 2018
Input dead line:
Friday, June 22, 2018**

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

2017 - 2018 NFN Executive with Contact and Project Information

		<u>All 519-</u>	
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Director-at-large	vacant		
Director-at-large	vacant		
Director-at-large	vacant		
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Christmas Bird Counts: (appointed)	David Okines - Woodhouse Count	519-586-9464	
	Linda Thrower - Fisherville Count	905-774-1230	
Honorary President:	George Pond		
Honorary Directors:	Anne and Dolf Wynia		