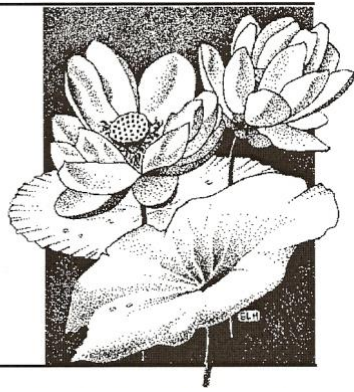


# Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



SUMMER 2020



## Mike McMillan's Report

At 12:45 p.m. on Wednesday, May 20, my wife, Marilyn, and I were driving east on the Lynn Valley Road heading to Marburg where I hoped to begin my birdathon. A week earlier I had looked for Bobolinks in a hayfield across the road from the Marburg Community Hall. At that time, I didn't locate a Bobolink, but I did see a Meadowlark. Today I had decided that if I saw or heard either a Bobolink or a Meadowlark (hopefully both) I would then start my birdathon.

A couple of minutes after arriving at the hayfield I did spot a Bobolink which flew up from the grass and travelled a short distance before disappearing back down out of view. My watch said 1:00 p.m. and my birdathon began. We failed get a Meadowlark but in the gravelly parking area behind the community hall were a pair of Killdeer which presumably had laid eggs somewhere on the gravel.

COVID-19 had made it necessary for this year's birdathon to be a solo one and Marilyn, not being as avid a birder as I am, had graciously agreed to accompany me to provide a second set of eyes for spotting birds.

A short ride from Marburg took us to Port Dover where we stopped downtown to check the sky, without success, for Chimney Swifts. At the harbour on the breakwater were plenty of Ring-billed Gulls, several Cormorants, a Caspian Tern and a couple of Common Terns. From Port Dover we headed to Hay Creek and then south towards Port Ryerse. At the bridge at Hay Creek we located an Eastern Phoebe. A little further south on the east side of the road in a dead tree an adult Bald Eagle was perched on a branch close to its nest. In Port Ryerse Marilyn spotted a pair of Red-Headed

Woodpeckers but we failed to find the Kingfisher which, each year, is usually somewhere along the creek.

Now travelling west on Front Road, we stopped at a grassy area hoping for a Meadowlark. We failed to see or hear a Meadowlark. However, a kingbird did fly by and land on a nearby fence. Near the harbour at Turkey Point were several Northern Rough-winged Swallows. Continuing west on Front Road we stopped at a point overlooking the Turkey Point marsh where there were several Mute Swans. Here Marilyn's sharp eyes spotted a Northern Flicker.

Near St. Williams we stopped to check Audrey Heagy's bird feeders. There were Chickadees, a Baltimore Oriole, a Downy Woodpecker and a Hummingbird. On a short walk of the property we saw Barn Swallows, Tree Swallows, an Eastern Bluebird, and a Yellow Warbler.



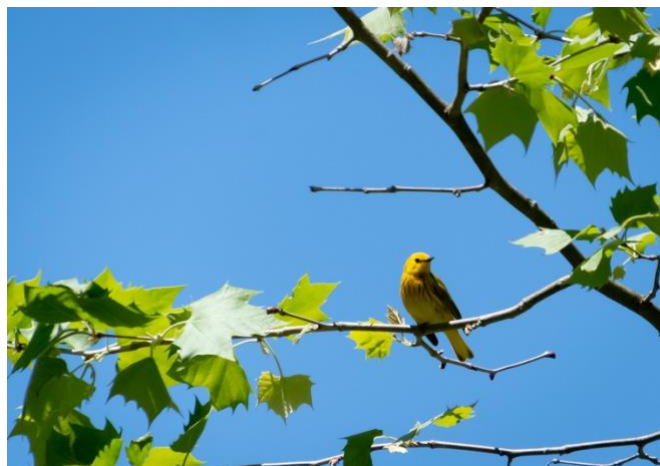
Baltimore Oriole Photo by Bernie Solymar

We then headed to Long Point where our first stop was at the Old Park. It was very quiet there. There were a few birds like sparrows or thrushes on the ground as one

Cont'd. p. 2

## Mike McMillan's Report cont'd.

would normally expect. All we managed to get there were several Catbirds and a Cedar Waxwing. Next, during a walk along Lighthouse Crescent, we saw a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. From the end of the Crescent we were able to enter the Old Cut bird banding property which had recently been opened to the public. A short walk here produced a Magnolia Warbler and a Black-throated Blue Warbler.



**Yellow Warbler**

**Photo by Len Grincevicius**

With the afternoon now fading we left Long Point and headed north to Walsingham to check out Diane Salter's bird feeders. We were rewarded with an Orchard Oriole, a House Finch, a Chipping Sparrow, a White-crowned Sparrow and a Song Sparrow.

After enjoying a take-out supper in Port Rowan, we checked the Port Rowan wetland for ducks but there were none in sight. The Purple Martin houses across the road from Birds Canada were full of Martins. During a walk along the road up to Bayview Cemetery we spotted a couple of Warbling Vireos. At Port Royal, the Cliff Swallows that usually nest under the bridge over Big Creek, were busy gathering mud from the creek banks for their nests.

Next we travelled north on Highway 59, west on Walsingham Road 5 and turned south on the Walsingham West Quarter Line. Here we saw a Field Sparrow in a grassy field and a couple of Brown-headed Cowbirds perched on an overhead wire. Our final stop of the day was at the grassy field just south of Highway 24 and the Walsingham East Quarter Line. Here we had a wonderful look at an Eastern Towhee that landed in a small bush about twenty feet from us. After waiting for dusk, we heard a Whip-poor-will begin its rolling, tiresomely repeated whip 'poor-weel' song. In a different direction we were able to pick up the repeated "beezp" of an American Woodcock. This finished our day.

We arrived home at 9:35 p.m. and were up early and out shortly after 6:00 a.m. the next morning. After driving a few streets in downtown Simcoe, we found a pigeon perched on a building on Peel Street. Pigeons are not as numerous as they once were and finding one can sometimes be a challenge. Then we drove to the northwest corner of Simcoe to a grassy field near Turkstra Lumber hoping for a Grasshopper Sparrow, but we were not rewarded.

We then headed to Backus Woods making a brief stop at a deep ravine on the Walsingham East Quarter Line north of Highway 24. We played the Louisiana Waterthrush's song a few times and were finally rewarded with one answering in the distance.

We entered Backus Woods on the sand road (the 4<sup>th</sup> Concession Road) and walked to the wet area where Prothonotary Warblers always nest. Again, today birds were scarce. I was disappointed that we failed to see or hear a Prothonotary. Nor did we hear an Ovenbird or a Hooded Warbler. We did, however, manage to hear a Red-eyed Vireo, a Pileated Woodpecker and a Wood Thrush. In addition, we had a good look at a Hairy Woodpecker. Our next stop was at Old Cut where I spotted a Veery and a Black-throated Green Warbler. On a walk down nearby Lighthouse Crescent I had a good look at a very co-operative Great Crested Flycatcher. We paid a return visit to the Old Park which yesterday had not been productive and managed to add a couple of warblers, a Bay-breasted and a Chestnut-sided to our total.

We decided to visit Diane Salter's bird feeders again hoping for a Red-bellied Woodpecker. Not only did we get the Red-bellied but also tallied a White-breasted Nuthatch.



**White-Breasted Nuthatch**

**Photo by Larry Monczka**

With time beginning to run out I decided to have another look at the Port Rowan Wetland. This time I was rewarded with a solitary duck – a female Bufflehead. Thinking that our Birdathon was finished we drove into Port Rowan and parked on the main street to get take-out food for lunch. Immediately after

**Cont'd. p. 4**

## Great Canadian Birdathon

### George Pond's Report

Because of the limitations of COVID-19, George prepared a composite report of many of his previous Birdathons and created very interesting reading, along with many of his wonderful photos. See attached pages.

### Anne Wynia and Peggy McArthur's Report

In early May, Anne Wynia and Peggy McArthur performed our 2020 Great Canadian Birdathon. We chose the best day which started out about 0°C with the sun shining, causing it to gradually warm up but the blackflies were not happy with the temperature so no biting. The leaves were just starting to flush so visibility was good. Because of the COVID-19 virus, working with our usual group of seven would not work. So, the downside was missing a few really good ears and eyes and many warblers that had not yet arrived.

Anne spotted about 15 species on our property early in the morning which included Gold Finches, Rose Breasted Grosbeaks, Mourning Doves, Northern Orioles, House Wrens, Blue birds, Phoebe, Red Bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, Chipping Sparrow, Cardinal, Chickadee, Red and White Breasted Nuthatch and Pine Warbler. The Indigo Bunting which had been at our feeders previously had left.

Anne met Peggy at the Birds Canada office where they saw the usual species of Purple Martins, Tree Swallows and Red Wing Blackbirds but no ducks. Peggy had spotted some good finds before meeting including Rock Pigeon, and Chimney Swifts. On our travels to the banding station which was closed to the public and Long Point Provincial Parks and Port Royal, we tallied up quite a few more species including Blue Winged Teal, Kingbird, Yellow Warbler, and Cliff and Bank Swallows but especially missed the Red Headed Woodpecker and Cedar Waxwings. Some species of interest were the Orchard Oriole, Flicker, Scarlet Tanager and Kinglets. Port Dover had Ring Billed and Bonaparte's Gulls, Merganser and Common Tern.

It was a beautiful day which we both enjoyed but our grand total was only 69 species.

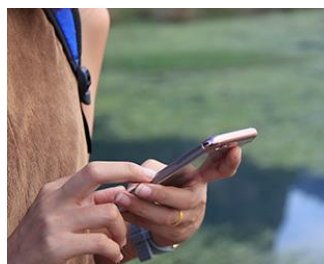


Scarlet Tanager

Photo by Diane Salter

### Tools to Help You Grow as a Birder

By Jody Allair, Director, Citizen Science and Community Engagement, Bird Studies Canada



There's no better time to get outside and get more familiar with the bird species in your neck of the woods. These days, there are no shortage of great online tools and apps to help you learn more about nearby birding locations, solving those tricky bird IDs, or document the birds you find.

For more information and the rest of the article, go to: <https://www.birdscanada.org/tools-to-help-you-grow-as-a-birder/>



## Mike McMillan's Report cont'd.

parking two Chimney Swifts flew over which I added to my list.

This was definitely the most unusual and challenging of my many birdathons. The unusually cold May seemed to play havoc with migration. The numbers of birds were just not there. Presumably there were not enough nights with southerly winds to allow birds to cross the lake.

Dob-crest Cormorant	Mourning Dove	Warbling Vireo	American Robin	Song Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	E. Whip-poor-will	Red-eyed Vireo	Gray Catbird	White-crown Sparrow
Mute Swan	Chimney Swift	Blue Jay	Cedar Waxwing	Northern Cardinal
Canada Goose	Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	American Crow	European Starling	Rose-br. Grosbeak
Mallard	Red-hd. Woodpecker	Purple Martin	Yellow Warbler	Bobolink
Bufflehead	Red-bell. Woodpecker	Tree Swallow	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Bald Eagle	Downy Woodpecker	N. Rough-wing Swallow	Magnolia Warbler	Common Grackle
Killdeer	Hairy Woodpecker	Cliff Swallow	Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Brn-headed Cowbird
American Woodcock	Northern Flicker	Barn Swallow	Bl-thr. Green Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Ring-billed Gull	Pileated Woodpecker	Black-capped Chickadee	Bay-breasted Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Caspian Tern	Eastern Phoebe	White-breasted Nuthatch	Louisiana Waterthrush	House Finch
Common Tern	Gr. Crested Flycatcher	Eastern Bluebird	Eastern Towhee	American Goldfinch
Rock Pigeon	Eastern Kingbird	Veery	Chipping Sparrow	House Sparrow
		Wood Thrush	Field Sparrow	<b>Total: 66</b>

My identified species total was 66 – the fewest by far I've ever had. I am grateful to Marilyn for helping me even though it did wear her out.

When all the money is in, the total should be close to \$4,500 which will help with bird research and conservation across the country. See the list of the species I identified.

A sincere thank you for your support.



### The NFN is looking for the following:

#### Two **DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE**

(no experience necessary)

Attends four Board Meetings and the AGM each year.

#### **SECRETARY**

Duties are taking Minutes at four Board Meetings and the AGM.

#### **TREASURER**

Not at all as daunting as it sounds. We have an accountant who does all the bookkeeping and reports. Mainly, deposit cheques; and present the reports at the Board Meetings and AGM.

Contact Inga at:

519-875-5601 or [daveinga@live.ca](mailto:daveinga@live.ca)

### The Swan — by Mary Oliver

Did you too see it, drifting, all night, on the black river?

Did you see it in the morning, rising into the silvery air –

An armful of white blossoms,

A perfect commotion of silk and linen as it leaned into the bondage of its wings; a snowbank, a bank of lilies,

Biting the air with its black beak?

Did you hear it, fluting and whistling

A shrill dark music - like the rain pelted the trees - like a waterfall

Knifing down the black ledges?

And did you see it, finally, just under the clouds –

A white cross Streaming across the sky, its feet Like black leaves, its wings Like the stretching light of the river?

And did you feel it, in your heart, how it pertained to everything?

And have you too finally figured out what beauty is for?

And have you changed your life?

## RESTORE IT AND THEY WILL COME

By Adam Timpf, NFN Member \*

One spring day last year, I was doing what I always do: walking the family dog and noting on my ebird app what birds were around. This daily ritual exercises the dog and allows me to collect data on what birds and wildlife are inhabiting our farm throughout the seasons. Not only does my property have some restored prairie fields, but I'm also surrounded by a number of Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) properties that have been restored with native grasslands and trees. This abundance of restored habitat is a mecca for wildlife, both common and rare.

This particular day was special because I heard the distinct, yet simple and short hiccup of a song produced by one of our rarest and most secretive grassland birds. A bird that I had hoped to find one day. In fact, I was studying its song all spring so that when I did hear it sing, I would recognize it instantly. I knew the habitat that NCC had created was perfect for this species. On this evening, the stars aligned, and in the distance, I heard "*tsillick*." A male Henslow's sparrow had revealed its presence to me.

I instantly knew what it was, but I couldn't believe my luck and had to see it to believe it. I was super excited and followed my ears to its general location before scanning the vegetation for the source of the song. Frustratingly, it was rather hard to spot, as the sun was beginning to set. Henslow's sparrows often sing in the evening when there is less birdsong from other species, so that a potential mate might have a better chance of hearing them. Eventually, I spotted the songster perched atop the head of a bushclover, throwing his head back every time he let out his song. NCC had provided the habitat, and the Henslow's sparrow found it.

I kept tabs on my new best friend throughout the spring and summer, hoping he would find a mate and produce the next crop of endangered Henslow's sparrows that could begin to colonize more of NCC's restored properties. Unfortunately, I don't believe he was successful in attracting a mate, but one can't be too sure since a female doesn't sing and is very hard to detect. I'm waiting

anxiously to see if Mr. Henslow returns to set up his territory this year; so far, he hasn't shown up. I'm cautiously optimistic that this species will again breed in Ontario due to the amount and quality of habitat that NCC has created and continues to restore.

### Editor's note:

The NCC property is one of our Central Big Creek Block properties in Norfolk, ON. It is 30 hectares (74 acres) of former agricultural field and was restored with a planting of mixed grasses and herbaceous and woody native species in 2011. More recent additional restoration in another section of the same field includes planting of chestnut trees.

NCC has been working on long-term management of invasive species in the field since the restoration in 2011, including garlic mustard, multiflora rose and autumn olive removal. This is the first known record of the Henslow's sparrow in the field since it was restored.

- \* Adam is a biologist and naturalist who lives in Norfolk County.  
"This content was originally published on the Nature Conservancy of Canada's blog, LandLines."



Photo by  
Adam Timpf

Throwing its head back every time it let out his song.

## MEMBERS' SPRING NATURE STORIES AND PHOTOS

**Larry Monczka**



House Wren Singing

**Felicity Fowke**



The beauty of this photo has given me a whole new appreciation for Manitoba maple. I learned that it is dioecious, which may make it is resistant to climate change and disease. It has a natural range from Manitoba to the Gulf of Mexico. We may be very grateful for “weedy, weak” Manitoba maple in the not too distant future.

**Jan Grincevicius**



Green Frog beside our pond.

**Inga Hinnerichsen**



We have a Robin's nest in our Christmas tree outside on the deck. We'll have to wait until the babies have fledged until we can sit outside on the deck again!



**Joe Stephenson**

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) — you will see I framed this flower in a black frame! This frame was in a set of a large plot of Bloodroot, about 20x40 feet.



## More Members' Photos

**Betty Chanyi**



My brown thrasher returns every year and I look forward to his imitations of all the other yard birds that hang around the farm. It makes me smile to know it is back and is singing its lovely songs.

**Larry Monczka**



Muskrat

**Lynn Kennedy**



Sightings from my yard...a spring peeper and a salamander. "I always love spotting these!"



**Len Grincevicius**



During a walk in Backus Woods in early June, found an Arrowhead Spiketail male dragonfly. It is not very common in Norfolk.

**Jan Grincevicius**



Marsh marigold in the west end of Norfolk.



## More Members' Photos

### Kathy Picard

A light rain brings out the best in spring vegetation.



From the parking lot in Backus Woods



A roadside Serviceberry

### Charlie Mitchell



The Killdeers have decided to nest in the middle of the veggie/squash garden this year.



## More Members' Photos

Joe Stephenson



Wood Poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*) — Wood-poppy is listed as endangered at both the provincial ([Species at Risk in Ontario List](#)) and federal ([Schedule 1 under the Species at Risk Act](#)) levels.

Betty Chanyi



The white-crowned sparrows are like little mice as they scamper around, digging in the flower beds or finding morsels of goodies everywhere they look. They are a stunning bird with a lovely song that greets me in the mornings and continue throughout the day. I love the sounds of spring.

Terry Norman & Robert Thom



May apple – nature's mini umbrellas



A patch of trilliums after the rain



## More Members' Photos

**Larry Monczka**



A flock of mixed black birds during migration over Big Creek.

**Len Grincevicius**



Found a very cooperative Prothonotary Warbler in Elgin County in mid-June.

**George Pond**

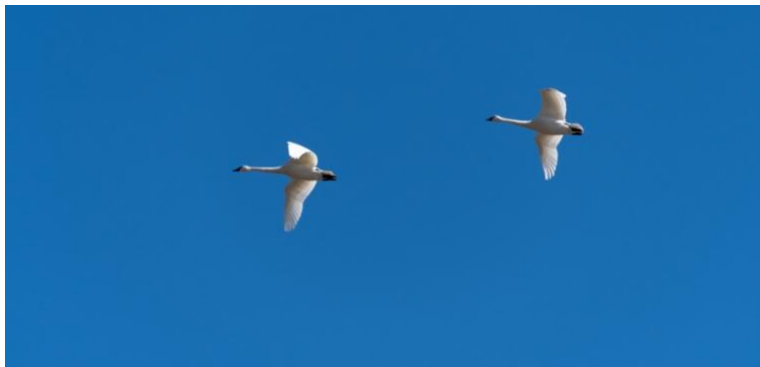


Birding was very poor this Spring. It wasn't until late in May that Long Point parks and trails or the Old Cut banding lab were open, so most birding was done by car and song. I did manage to get this one shot of a Northern Parula that pleased me a great deal.



## More Members' Photos

**Jan Grincevicius**



Tundra swans in the Long Point area.

**Terry Norman and Robert Thom**



Male Killdeer trying to lure us away with an 'injured' wing.

**Bernie Solymár**

Beautiful spring flowers in Norfolk County.



Wild Columbine



Showy Orchid



Yellow Lady's Slipper

The **Youth Circle for Mother Earth** project aims to create and support a cross cultural network of young Indigenous and non-Indigenous environmental leaders, so they become lifelong ambassadors for nature and conservation.

The project is led by Plenty Canada, Walpole Island Heritage Centre, the Indigenous Environmental Institute at Trent University and Ontario Nature. The four partner organizations have a successful history of collaborating to address environmental issues which the project will build on and complement.

To receive selected information by email, you can sign up:  
**ontarionature.org**

### **The Norfolk Field Naturalists**

wishes 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 & Morgan Partridge**  
**Guardian Computing**  
For hosting our website

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT**

The Directors' meeting scheduled for April was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, the Board dealt with a few issues by email. Here are the highlights:

- ✓ We decided to go ahead with the events brochure for the 2020-2021 season regardless of the uncertain conditions prevailing. Len has been hard at work putting together another line-up of interesting guest speakers and field events. The format of the new brochure will be different this time. It will be printed in black only on white bond. 500 copies rather than the usual 1000. Inga will confirm and coordinate with Jane Thompson. Look for your brochure and the membership renewal form in the mail in August.
- ✓ The Board decided to nominate Rick Levick for one of the Ontario Nature Awards. Peter C, assembled the background information and sent it to ON.
- ✓ Sadly, we've had to cancel all events for the spring and summer season, except the annual Long Point Butterfly Count, which will go ahead as planned in July. If all goes well, the AGM will be held in our new home at Vittoria Community Centre. Updates will be posted on our web site.
- ✓ A small change in wording on the Membership form was approved: The category formerly called "Single" is now called "Individual".
- ✓ The Carolinian East Spring Meeting was also done by conference call rather than a group meeting.
- ✓ The April 30 Financial statement reports that our total assets are \$47,221.00 divided into different GICs and our General Operating account. The Harry B. Barrett Fund is now well over the \$20,000 target. We are waiting for the report from Norfolk Community Foundation.
- ✓ Barb Hourigan, our Acting Treasurer, will be stepping down from her position on the Board of Directors in September after having served several years. Thank you, Barb!



## Upcoming NFN 2020 Summer Events

All scheduled events through to August 31<sup>st</sup> are on hold.



### Naturalists get “Plogging” to Give Mother Nature a Helping Hand

“Plogga” or “Plogging” a New Swedish trend catching on globally. It’s a movement created and followed by people with the same urge to live in a clean world! The word comes from the words picking up garbage and jogging mixed into one. Plocka (pick up) + jogga (jog) = plogga. This is exactly what Plogga is – picking up garbage on the streets or trails while getting exercise. It can be anything from a hike, bike ride to canoeing or any outdoor activity. Erik Ahlström is the founder of Plogga and for more information see:

<https://swedesinthestates.com/plogga-new-trend-will-save-planet/>

NFN members could get “Plogging” and collect litter on normal walking routes and on club outings.



## 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 2020**

**Input dead line:**

**Friday, September 18,  
2020**

## 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](http://www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org)**

### 2019 - 2020 NFN Executive with Contact and Project Information

		<u>All 519-</u>	
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<b>Vice-President</b>	Len Grincevicius	428-6796	portie_1989@eastlink.ca
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<b>Past President</b>	Bernie Solymár	427-9969	solymar@nornet.on.ca
<b>Treasurer</b>	Barb Hourigan	583-1198	bbhourigan@gmail.com
<b>Secretary</b>	Cindy Presant	586-9258	cindy.presant@gmail.com
<b>Director/Membership</b>	Jan Grincevicius	428-6796	pwdtwo_2@eastlink.ca
<b>Director Speaker Program and Field Events</b>	Len Grincevicius	428-6796	portie_1989@eastlink.ca
<b>Director Publicity</b>	Lisa Timpf	226-440-2483	lisa.timpf@gmail.com
<b>Director Environment</b>	Bernie Solymár	427-9969	solymar@nornet.on.ca
<b>Director-at-large</b>	Peter Vaughan	429-5998	peter.vaughan70@gmail.com
<b>Director-at-large</b>	vacant		
<b>Director-at-large</b>	vacant		
<b>Lotus Editor (appointed)</b>	Jan Grincevicius	519-428-6796	pwdtwo_2@eastlink.ca
<b>Butterfly Counts (appointed)</b>	Adam Timpf	429-4147	
<b>Christmas Bird Counts (appointed)</b>	Adam Timpf - Woodhouse Count	429-4147	
	Linda Thrower - Fisherville Count	905-774-1230	
<b>Honorary President:</b>	George Pond		
<b>Honorary Directors:</b>	Anne and Dolf Wynia		