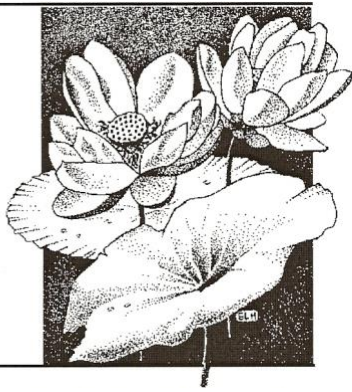


Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



FEBRUARY 2023



Christmas Bird Count — Woodhouse Report by Adam Timpf

These are the results of the 36th Woodhouse Christmas Bird Count held on Sunday, December 18th, 2022. The Woodhouse CBC is centred seven kilometres east of Simcoe, at the crossroads of Highway 3 and Cockshutt Road at Renton, and roughly covers from Port Dover to Waterford and just west of Simcoe to east of Jarvis. Conditions were windy and snowy, with some snow on the ground, but not as bad as it could have been! Twenty-nine field birders covered the count area plus nine feeder watchers. Without the dedication of these volunteers, collecting this valuable data wouldn't be possible and so a big thank you goes out to all involved. Next year's count is on Sunday, December 17th, 2023, and I hope we can continue to get great levels of participation.



Tufted Titmouse Photo by Larry Monczka (NFN Member)

We tallied 77 species on the day which is the lowest count since 2003 and far below the last 10-year average of 87. The 35-year average is 83 species, so the 77 doesn't appear so low in that context. There were three additional count week species (seen within three days of either side of count day): Peregrine Falcon, Cedar Waxwing, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. No new species were added to the count, but a House Wren found in Port Dover was only the second ever recorded. While this species is common in the breeding season, they should be well south during winter. Incredibly, exactly 20,000 individual birds were counted which is in line with the 10-year average of 19,361, and lower than the 35-year average of 24,938.

Highlights:

- 1 House Wren (2nd time on the count)
- 1 Red-headed Woodpecker (1st since 2008, a juvenile spotted by my non-birder mother!)
- 1 Savannah Sparrow (2nd record in the last 15 years)

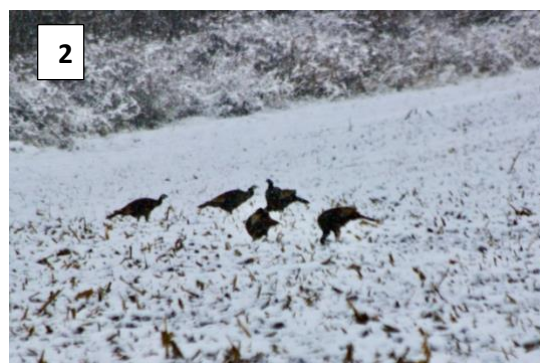
New count highs:

- 34 Cackling Goose (31 in 2001)
- 69 Hooded Merganser (67 last year)
- 7 Tufted Titmouse (4 in 2001)

Low counts:

- 0 Cedar Waxwing (1st miss in 36 years)
- 0 Great Black-backed Gull (2nd 0 in a row after 34 consecutive years)
- 91 Ring-billed Gull (46 in 1989)
- 38 Herring Gull (19 in 1988)
- 361 House Sparrow is the lowest total in count history

Cont'd. on p.2



1: Canada Geese 2: Wild Turkeys 3: Northern Cardinal 4: Mute Swan

Horned Grebe	1	Wild Turkey	157	Winter Wren	7
Great Blue Heron	3	Bonaparte's Gull	28	Golden-crowned Kinglet	13
Trumpeter Swan	11	Ring-billed Gull	91	Eastern Bluebird	43
Tundra Swan	19	Herring Gull	38	Hermit Thrush	2
Canada Goose	8165	Rock Pigeon	547	American Robin	81
Cackling Goose	34	Mourning Dove	466	Northern Mockingbird	2
Mallard	1907	Eastern Screech-Owl	2	European Starling	1387
American Black Duck	76	Great-horned Owl	1	American Tree Sparrow	293
Gadwall	63	Belted Kingfisher	6	Field Sparrow	1
American Green-winged Teal	4	Red-headed Woodpecker	1	Savannah Sparrow	1
Redhead	267	Red-bellied Woodpecker	45	Song Sparrow	32
Greater Scaup	118	Downy Woodpecker	73	Swamp Sparrow	13
Lesser Scaup	601	Hairy Woodpecker	13	White-throated Sparrow	29
Common Goldeneye	120	Yellow-shafted Flicker	3	White-crowned Sparrow	25
Long-tailed Duck	1	Pileated Woodpecker	1	Slate-colored Junco	928
Bufflehead	153	Northern Shrike	2	Northern Cardinal	192
Hooded Merganser	69	Blue Jay	222	Common Grackle	7
Common Merganser	60	American Crow	792	Brown-headed Cowbird	448
Red-breasted Merganser	654	Common Raven	7	Purple Finch	15
Bald Eagle	18	Horned Lark	217	House Finch	206
Northern Harrier	7	Black-capped Chickadee	378	Pine Siskin	8
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	Eastern Tufted Titmouse	7	American Goldfinch	234
Cooper's Hawk	6	Red-breasted Nuthatch	11	House Sparrow	361
Red-tailed Hawk	75	White-breasted Nuthatch	70		
Rough-legged Hawk	2	Brown Creeper	11		
American Kestrel	15	Carolina Wren	24		
Merlin	4	House Wren	1	Total	77 Sp

Animal Tracks in the Snow



Answers on p.9

Species in Focus

American Winter Ant

Prenolepis imparis, commonly known as “winter ants” or “false honeypot ants” are native to and found exclusively in North America. Being very calm ants, they are usually found to be foraging at very low temperatures, sometimes even below freezing.

Basic Information

Origin: Northern America - South Canada (Ontario), United States, Mexico

Habitat: Digs nests in the ground many feet deep, depending on how hot the climate of their environment is. They rarely have chambers shallower than 60 centimeters.

Colony form: Queens can form polygynous colonies, with records of ant-keepers successfully keeping colonies of even up to 9 queens.

Colony size: The worker count of multiqueen colonies usually maxes out around 10,000 ants over the course of 7-9 years. Colonies with a single queen may remain smaller.

Founding: Queens of this species are fully claustral and do not require any form of food before their workers arrive (they still need water obviously).

Workers: Monomorphic (existing in only one form).

Hibernation: Are most active during cold times of the year. There's a debate on whether they have a winter hibernation or not.

Summer inactivity: Has an estivation period during the hot months of the summer, ranging from 3 to even 8 months in hotter and more humid climates. During this time the colony shows almost no foraging activity, living exclusively from the food stored by their repletes. However, eggs are laid and brood is raised.

Reproduction: Female and male alates fly around mid-January to March, with the largest flights around early February.

Size

Workers: 3.0-4.5 mm

Queen: 7.0-8.5 mm

Males: 3.0-4.0 mm

Appearance

Worker: Workers are of a light brown coloration, with most of the workers of this species having gasters (stomachs) that make up half of their body length.

Queen: Queens are of a light brown, and when they consume foods which are colored, the coloring of the food can be seen through the gaster. Queens sometimes may have a noticeable spot of orange on their thorax.

Males: The male alates are usually much darker in color and much smaller than the queens, with a very thin and pointy gaster.

Development Period

The development period for winter ants varies a great deal, as the brood time is known to notoriously vary and take very long periods of stagnation during the founding stage.

Egg to Larva: 3-4 weeks

Larva to pupa: 3-4 weeks (4-5 weeks during founding period)

Pupa to Worker: 2-3 weeks

Diet

Is an opportunistic omnivore. Most of their food consists of liquids ranging from nectar and the sugary excretions of aphids and other plant-sucking insects over the body fluids of freshly died insects and earthworms to juices sapped from fruits and young plant sprouts.



Photo by Jeff Hiebert, NFN Member

'Hoo' Ya Gonna Call? Haldimand Wildlife Refuge Swoops in to Save Injured Owl

Article by J.P. Antonacci, Hamilton Spectator

It was still dark out early Tuesday morning as an employee at Valens Lake Conservation Area turned her car into the park's front entrance.

Her vehicle's headlights passed over what she thought at first was an unusually shaped rock.

"And then she looked at it again and saw these eyes glistening," said park superintendent Paul Karbusicky.

She screeched to a halt and discovered a baby owl who appeared to have been recently clipped by a passing car.

"He looked really rough when he was found," Karbusicky said. "Bloody beak, his eyes were shut. Looked like he was in a lot of pain."

The eagle-eyed employee carefully bundled the ailing owlet in her coat and got him off the road in the nick of time.

"She said within 20 seconds after she picked him up, this car went by and he would've been squashed," Karbusicky said.

Once the dazed owl was safely inside, park staff lined a cardboard box with a towel and set him down to rest while they debated what to do.

"Because it was a raptor, I wanted to call somebody that was more knowledgeable," Karbusicky said.

So they rang Hobbitstee Wildlife Refuge in Haldimand County, a privately run non-profit rescue that rehabilitates all manner of injured wildlife. Within half an hour, a volunteer from Hobbitstee arrived to take the owl to the group's treatment centre at Peacock Point, near Nanticoke.



"I was quite impressed with them," Karbusicky said. "They were quite quick with the response."

The owl is recovering nicely, Hobbitstee founder Chantal Theijn told The Spectator.

"Doing quite well, actually. Quite a bit more alert," she said.

"Some level of head trauma — so think like a concussion. We often see damage to eyes with this type of injury, but this little one is very lucky. Both eyes are fully functional, so we're very happy about that."

The tiny patient has no broken bones and both eardrums are intact, which Theijn said bodes well for his recovery and eventual release back at Valens Lake.

"I'm thinking it's one of last year's babies" based on the plumage being "fairly new" and without evidence of moulting, Theijn said.

"These guys are so little and they hunt at night. They can easily get caught up in the slipstream of a car and go tumbling."

Theijn expects it will take two or three weeks to get the owl flying again. The immediate prescription is lots of rest, with medication to manage the pain and reduce swelling.

Park staff will be "really happy" to have the "sweet-looking owl" fully recovered and back home in the wild when the time comes, Karbusicky said.

The baby owl is just one of Hobbitstee's current patients. Already this year, the refuge has taken in a blue heron found by the roadside, an injured goose, a fox with mange, a herring gull, and two squirrels who were hit by cars.

"That's just the last couple of days," Theijn said.

If recent trends continue, she expects Hobbitstee will again care for more than 3,000 sick or injured animals this year.

The group welcomes more volunteers — especially drivers willing to respond to calls from around southern Ontario — and donations to fund the care of the animals and support the construction of a new wildlife hospital to replace the existing treatment centre, which is located inside a converted 40-foot shipping container.

To learn more about Hobbitstee, go [here](#).

Comparison Between Great Blue Heron and Bare-Throated Tiger Heron

Great Blue Heron (North America)

Largest of the North American herons with long legs, a sinuous neck, and thick, daggerlike bill. Head, chest, and wing plumes give a shaggy appearance. In flight, the Great Blue Heron curls its neck into a tight “S” shape; its wings are broad and rounded and its legs trail well beyond the tail.

Size (both sexes)

Length: 38.2-53.9 in (97-137 cm)

Weight: 74.1-88.2 oz (2100-2500 g)

Wingspan: 65.8-79.1 in (167-201 cm)

Appearance

Appears blue gray from a distance, with a wide black stripe over the eye. In flight, the upper side of the wing is two-toned: pale on the forewing and darker on the flight feathers.



Photo by Larry Monczka (NFN Member)

Habitat

Hunting Great Blue Herons wade slowly or stand statue-like, stalking fish and other prey in shallow water or open fields. Watch for the lightning-fast thrust of the neck and head as they stab with their strong bills. Look for Great Blue Herons in saltwater and freshwater habitats, from open coasts, marshes, sloughs, riverbanks, and lakes to backyard goldfish ponds. They also forage in grasslands and agricultural fields. Breeding birds gather in colonies or “heronries” to build stick nests high off the ground.

Calls

Great Blues are most vocal on the breeding grounds, where they greet their partner with squawking roh-roh-rohs in a “landing call” when arriving at the nest. A disturbance can trigger a series of clucking go-go-gos, building to a rapid *frawnk* squawk that can last up to 20 seconds. If directly threatened, birds react with a screaming *awk* lasting just over 2 seconds. Chicks give a *tik-tik-tik* call within minutes of hatching.

Other Sounds

Both male and female Great Blue Herons snap their bill tips together as part of breeding and territorial displays, a behavior that may be analogous to a songbird’s territorial song. Paired birds often “clapper” at each other, chattering the tips of the bill together.

Range Map

Learn more [here](#).

Cont’d on p.7

Bare-Throated Tiger Heron (Central America)

This bird is a large but rather short-legged, primal-looking heron of mangroves and freshwater marshes in tropical lowlands from Mexico to northwestern Columbia. Often in areas with trees, but also around ponds in rather open marshes.

Size

It is 80 cm (31 in) in length and weighs 1,200 g (42 oz).

Appearance

The throat is bare and is greenish-yellow to orange in all plumages. The adult has a black crown and light grey sides of the head, the sides of the neck and the upperparts otherwise blackish narrowly barred buff. The median stripe down the fore-neck is white-bordered with black; the remaining underparts are dull cinnamon brown. Flight feathers are black. Under parts are cinnamon and thighs are grey. The legs are dark grey olive to slate green. During nesting the bare throat may become bright yellow to orange. The juvenile is buff coarsely barred with black, more mottled and vermiculated on wings; the throat, median underparts, and belly are whitish. The flight is heavy.

Calls

The call is a hoarse *howk-howk-howk*. Males also give a booming *hrrrowwr!* call, especially at sunset.

Habitats

The Bare-throated Tiger-Heron is a bird of tropical swamps. Along the coast, it is typically a mangrove species. It is found, however, in a variety of coastal and freshwater situations, typically characterized as forest edged aquatic habitats. It feeds in coastal lagoons, mangrove swamps, freshwater marshes, swamps, gallery forests along rivers and streams, and wet meadows.

It waits often motionless for suitable prey such as fish, frogs, or crabs to come within reach of its long bill. This is a solitary breeder, not normally found in heron colonies. The nest is a small flattish stick platform in a tree into which 2–3 green-tinged white eggs are laid.

[Range Map](#)

Learn more [here](#).

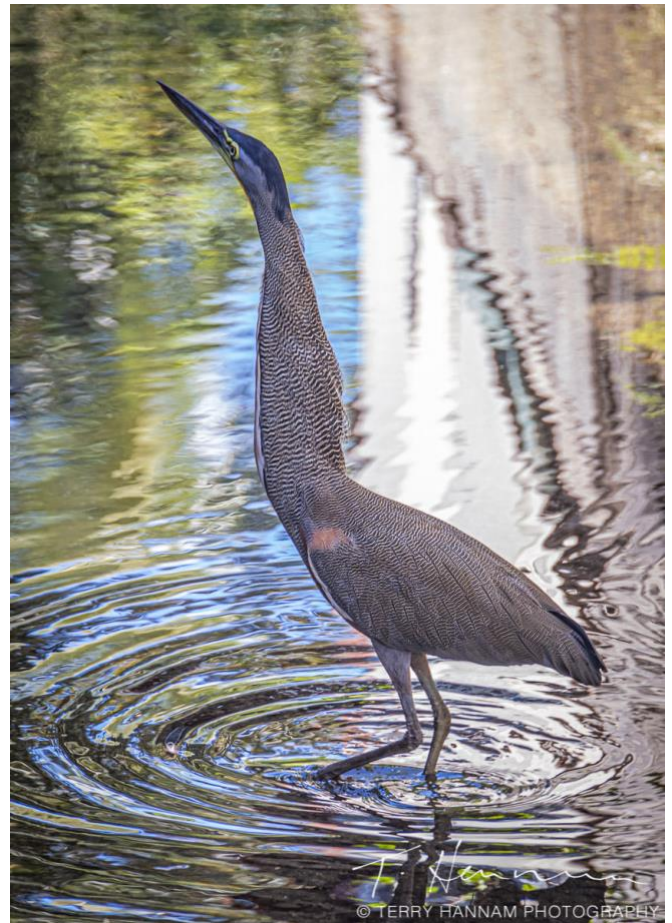


Photo by Terry Hannum (NFN Member)

Mapping Designated Conservation Lands

There is a large opportunity to expand Ontario's protected areas through Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified designated conservation lands (DCL). Forestry companies that manage FSC-certified forests must identify and set aside at least 10% of the forest. There are currently 147 of these sites totaling nearly 1 million hectares. Our [Protected Places](#) team is organizing maps of each DCL to share with regionally related member groups to increase awareness and gain more information about these sites. These maps will be shared in early spring of 2023. Stay tuned for more information!



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

Thank You!

From Norfolk Field Naturalists to
Will & Morgan Partridge
Guardian Computing
For hosting our website

I have now been a member of NFN for over 30 years and on the Board for over 2 decades! The first speaker and outings program I put together was for the 2001-2002 year! After 10 years I took over as President serving from 2013 to 2017, a role I am currently reprising following Inga's 4 years heading the organization. The pandemic in 2020 and 2021 changed things significantly for many not-for-profits and charitable organizations. NFN was not exempted. We cancelled all live speaker engagements and outings and were forced to switch to Zoom meetings, not only for our speaker program, but our Board meetings. Although we have met face-to-face in the warmer months when we could be outside, we are back to virtual meetings over the winter.

The Board of Directors met last on January 24th. It was interesting to note how our discussion topics have changed from rather simple items in the past to complicated issues. We discussed how to reverse the decline in membership numbers, the early progress towards a natural heritage strategy for Norfolk, how to enhance and deliver our Harry B. Barrett Fund to worthy students, the need to develop updated bylaws to meet the Ontario governments new requirements, how will we handle the incoming funds from the Frishette estate that have been bequeathed to us, and the germ of a plan that would see potential partnership opportunities to develop a nature and education centre in this County. These issues have provided new directives and new relevancy to our Board. We would like ideas and suggestions from our membership on how we can make your being part of this organization more relevant as well.

Covid-19 may have sent everyone and everything in a spiral, but our organization has come out of it with new energy and focus. As we plan for a return to in-person speaker programming and brainstorm some new outing destinations, what do you think we could be doing for you (or you for us ☺)? Don't hesitate to contact any of the directors to chat and toss around ideas (contact info@norfolkfieldnaturalists.org in this newsletter).

Yours in Nature, Bernie.

The next BoD Meeting will be held on March 28, 2023. The report from this meeting will be in the April issue of the Lotus.

Upcoming NFN

Watch for pop-up events.

Answers from Quiz on page 3

1. Black or Gray Squirrel tracks
2. Coyote tracks
3. Duck tracks
4. Opossum tracks
5. Muskrat tracks
6. Mink tracks
7. Raccoon tracks
8. Turkey tracks



From Nature Canada

Spotting birds requires tuning into your senses, especially those of sight and sound. [Check out this picture puzzle.](#)

From Long Point Basin Land Trust

Video:

[Make your Pond Turtle Friendly](#)

Land Tract:

[Marshall Malcolm Wetland Reserve](#)

Long Point Christmas Bird Count

This count recorded 107 different species with 44 citizen scientists participating in the 62nd event held on December 17th.

To see the Bird Count survey, go [here](#).

NFN Meetings

Norfolk Field Naturalist meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month from September to May.

Meetings take place at the **Vittoria Community Centre, 35 Oakes Blvd., Vittoria**. The meetings are free and visitors are always welcome. Doors open at 7:15 pm, programs begin at 7:30 pm.

CURRENTLY, MEETINGS ARE HELD ON ZOOM

NFN Mailing Address

Norfolk Field Naturalists
PO Box 995, Simcoe, ON
N3Y 5B3

Next Lotus Issue:

April 2023

Input deadline:

Friday, March 24, 2023

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

2022 - 2023 NFN Executive with Contact and Project Information

Email: info@norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

President	Bernie Solymár
Vice-President	Peter Carson
Sanctuary	Peter Carson
Past President	Inga Hinnerichsen
Treasurer	Luke Haze
Secretary (Interim)	Inga Hinnerichsen
Director/Membership	Jan Grincevicius
Director Speaker Program and Field Events	Len Grincevicius
Director Publicity	vacant
Director Environment	Cindy Presant
Director-at-large	Bernd Mueller
Director-at-large	Madaline Wilson
Lotus Editor (appointed)	Jan Grincevicius
Website Coordinator (appointed)	Lisa Timpf
Butterfly Count (appointed)	Adam Timpf
Christmas Bird Counts (appointed)	Adam Timpf - Woodhouse Count
	Linda Thrower - Fisherville Count
Honorary President	George Pond
Honorary Directors	Anne and Dolf Wynia