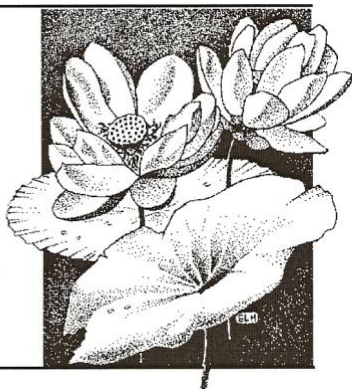


Lotus

NEWSLETTER

of the

NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS



FEBRUARY 2024



Christmas Bird Count — Fisherville Report by the Haldimand Bird Observatory

December 28th, 2023 was a warm, foggy, wet, and dreary Christmas Bird Count day but that didn't stop our 22 participants from spotting a wide assortment of species. The lack of snow and cold meant low counts of Snow Buntings (3) and the complete absence of Horned Larks and Snowy Owls, but good conditions for a few surprises instead. An American Goshawk in zone 6 was the first to be counted since 2013 and is one of only 10 individuals across all counts (occurring in 8 other years since 1989). A Little Gull spotted mixed in with Bonaparte's Gulls in zone 5 had not been counted since 2007 and is one of only 5 individuals across all counts too (detected in 3 other years since 1989). This count also featured the first Chipping Sparrow since 2012 (one of 16 individuals across all counts) and the first Killdeer since 2012 and 2015, likely due to the warm weather. Species usually counted but absent this year included Gadwall, Great Black-backed Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Peregrine Falcon, and Common Grackle. Thank you to all the participants and organizers for another successful count.

Weather: 6°C, 17 km/h winds from the Northeast, fog and drizzle throughout the day, open water.

Effort: 526.9 km and 36.8 hours by car, 28.0 km and 21 hours by foot, 143.5 total participant hours.

Owling Effort: 30.8 km and 1.3 hours by car, 0.5 km and 0.3 hours by foot, 2 total participant hours.

Other Notable Sightings:

Red-tailed Hawk (66 counted) - 66 is the second lowest total across all counts. The lowest total was 56 in 2007, while highest total was 345 in 1993. Average total over the last 10 counts is 104.

Sandhill Crane (14 counted) - 14 is the highest total across all counts. They appeared in the count for the first time in 2010 and have been detected in 8 of the 12 counts since.

Red-headed Woodpecker (1 counted in zone 7) – species has not been counted since 2009 and is one of only 21 individuals across all counts (detected in 8 other years since 1989).

Pileated Woodpecker (1 counted in zone 8) – species is only counted occasionally and last counted recently in 2014, 2016, and 2017.

Common Raven (8 counted) – not detected between 1989 and 2017 but now commonly counted, appearing in 4 of the last 5 counts.

Cedar Waxwing (67 counted) – last counted recently in 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Snow Bunting (3 counted) – low count due to lack of snow but not completely absent like 2018 and 2019.

Brown-headed Cowbird (12 counted) - Detected in every year but this is the lowest count since 1990 when 9 were detected. Average count is 501 across all years but can vary widely.

Pine Siskin (7 counted) – infrequently counted and most recently appeared in 2011, 2012, and 2014.

American Goldfinch (109 counted) – second lowest count across all counts. The lowest total was 101 in 1993 while the highest was 484 in 2003. Average across all counts is 253.

Cont'd. on p.2



**Cedar Waxwings – Photo by Member,
Charles Mitchell**



**Tufted Titmouse – Photo by Sue Drotos of
Norfolk County**

Horned Grebe	149	Killdeer	1	Winter Wren	2
Great Blue Heron	4	Little Gull	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet	11
Tundra Swan	11	Bonaparte's Gull	570	Eastern Bluebird	37
Canada Goose	1723	Ring-billed Gull	591	Hermit Thrush	2
Cackling Goose	1	Herring Gull	126	American Robin	7
Mallard	309	Rock Pigeon	378	Northern Mockingbird	5
American Black Duck	16	Mourning Dove	340	Cedar Waxwing	67
Redhead	1500	Eastern Screech-Owl	6	European Starling	1694
Greater Scaup	1675	Great-horned Owl	3	American Tree Sparrow	292
Lesser Scaup	51	Red-headed Woodpecker	1	Chipping Sparrow	1
Common Goldeneye	478	Red-bellied Woodpecker	42	Field Sparrow	2
Long-tailed Duck	1	Downy Woodpecker	54	Song Sparrow	15
Bufflehead	492	Hairy Woodpecker	5	Swamp Sparrow	6
Common Merganser	35	Northern Flicker	3	White-throated Sparrow	13
Red-breasted Merganser	397	Pileated Woodpecker	1	Dark-eyed Junco	263
Bald Eagle	14	Northern Shrike	1	Snow Bunting	3
Northern Harrier	19	Blue Jay	295	Northern Cardinal	109
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	American Crow	134	Red-winged Blackbird	2
Cooper's Hawk	3	Common Raven	8	Brown-headed Cowbird	12
American Goshawk	1	Black-capped Chickadee	136	House Finch	100
Red-tailed Hawk	66	Eastern Tufted Titmouse	14	Pine Siskin	7
Rough-legged Hawk	5	Red-breasted Nuthatch	5	American Goldfinch	109
American Kestrel	23	White-breasted Nuthatch	31	House Sparrow	707
Merlin	2	Brown Creeper	4		
Wild Turkey	59	Carolina Wren	17	Total	74 Sp
Sandhill Crane	14				



**Sandhill Cranes – Photo by Member,
Jeff Hiebert**

Christmas Bird Count — Woodhouse

Report by Adam Timpf

These are the results of the 37th Woodhouse Christmas Bird Count held on Sunday December 17th, 2023. The Woodhouse CBC is centred 7 km 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. Thirty-three field birders covered the count area plus five feeder watchers.

Conditions were wet with rain and drizzle throughout the day, temperatures around 6-7 degrees Celsius, moderate south winds (16-21 km/h), zero snow on the ground, and plenty of open water as nothing was frozen. The mild temperatures leading up to the count contributed to us setting new count highs for 4 species of waterfowl, while the rainy conditions meant low numbers of woodpeckers, raptors, and other species that took shelter.

We tallied 87 species on the day which I think is quite remarkable given the rainy conditions and is equal to the average of the last 10 years, and above the 37-year average of 83. There were 2 additional count week species: Tufted Titmouse coming to feeders that remained holed up out of the rain, and a Turkey Vulture reported the day before on ebird. No new species were added to the count.

Total Species: 87.

Average for the last 35 years = 83.

Average for the last 10 years = 87.

Total Individuals: 18,264

Average over all 37 years = 24,757.

Average for the last 10 years = 18,692.



Eastern Bluebird – Photo by Member,
Len Grincevicius

Highlights:

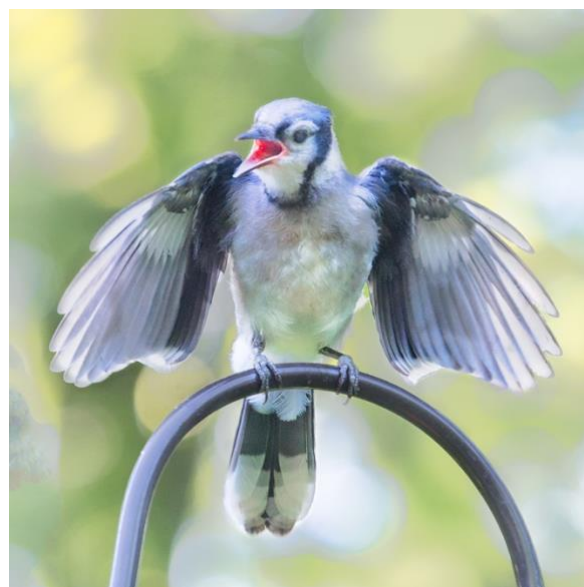
5 Canvasback are the first ones recorded since 2012
1 Red-headed Woodpecker (2nd year in a row after being absent since 2008)
1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet (rarely recorded)
1 Eastern Towhee (1st since 2017)
4 Fox Sparrow (2nd highest count and often missed)
1 Red Crossbill (3rd time ever on count)

New count highs:

105 Gadwall (81 in 2012)
9 American Green-winged Teal (8 in 2014)
100 Ring-necked Duck (28 in 2021)
40 Ruddy Duck (37 in 1998)
66 White-throated Sparrow (54 in 2005)

Low counts:

0 Rough-legged Hawk (1st miss in 37 years)
1 Belted Kingfisher (ties lowest)
0 Pileated Woodpecker (1st miss since 2008)
80 House Finch (new low, 90 in 2017)
322 House Sparrow (new low, 361 in 2022)



Blue Jay – Photo by Member, Larry Monczka

Cont'd. on p.4



**Trumpeter Swans – Photo by Member,
Jan Grincevicius**

Below is the full species list:

Horned Grebe	2	American Kestrel	12	Eastern Bluebird	39
Great Blue Heron	2	Merlin	3	Hermit Thrush	2
Mute Swan	1	Wild Turkey	155	American Robin	12
Trumpeter Swan	9	Bonaparte's Gull	212	Northern Mockingbird	1
Tundra Swan	275	Ring-billed Gull	2294	European Starling	2631
Canada Goose	4306	Herring Gull	267	Cedar Waxwing	11
Cackling Goose	22	Great Black-backed Gull	1	Myrtle Warbler	3
Mallard	945	Rock Pigeon	358	Eastern Towhee	1
American Black Duck	45	Mourning Dove	899	American Tree Sparrow	384
Gadwall	105	Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Chipping Sparrow	3
Northern Pintail	2	Belted Kingfisher	1	Field Sparrow	2
American Green-winged Teal	9	Red-headed Woodpecker	1	Fox Sparrow	4
Canvasback	5	Red-bellied Woodpecker	24	Song Sparrow	33
Redhead	471	Downy Woodpecker	53	Swamp Sparrow	13
Red-necked Duck	100	Hairy Woodpecker	15	White-throated Sparrow	66
Greater Scaup	74	Yellow-shafted Flicker	11	White-crowned Sparrow	4
Lesser Scaup	584	Northern Shrike	1	Slate-colored Junco	933
Common Goldeneye	78	Blue Jay	221	Snow Bunting	88
Bufflehead	194	American Crow	551	Northern Cardinal	172
Hooded Merganser	22	Common Raven	4	Red-winged Blackbird	7
Common Merganser	60	Horned Lark	1	Rusty Blackbird	1
Red-breasted Merganser	298	Black-capped Chickadee	242	Common Grackle	2
Bald Eagle		Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	Brown-headed Cowbird	107
Ruddy Duck	40	White-breasted Nuthatch	29	Purple Finch	1
Bald Eagle	3	Brown Creeper	8	House Finch	80
Northern Harrier	2	Carolina Wren	26	Red Crossbill	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Winter Wren	6	Pine Siskin	19
Cooper's Hawk	3	Golden-crowned Kinglet	32	American Goldfinch	188
Red-tailed Hawk	45	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1	House Sparrow	322
Peregrine Falcon	1			Total	87 Sp

NFN Donation to LPBLT Fisher's Creek Property Acquisition

At the October 2023 meeting, the membership approved a donation to the LPBLT. In November, Bernie Solymár, President, announced the donation as follows:

“The Norfolk Field Naturalists are pleased to announce a gift of \$100,000 to support the protection of the Long Point Basin Land Trust’s Fishers Creek Nature Reserve.

This generous donation is a symbol of the long-standing partnership between the two organizations, with roots that trace back to the very creation of the Long Point Basin Land Trust.

Our membership is thrilled to contribute \$100,000 to the Long Point Basin Land Trust. Our partnership is a beacon of collaboration and dedication to the environment, and we are confident that this donation will further advance the crucial work of the LPBLT in safeguarding our natural treasures.”

From left to right: Peter Carson (President, LPBLT), Jackie Ellefsen (Sr. Development Manager, LPBLT), Len Grincevicius (Director, NFN) and Bernie Solymar (President, NFN).



At the December 2023 meeting, Rick Levick, Executive Director, LPBLT, attended the December meeting to express gratitude for the donation, as follows:

“The Norfolk Field Naturalists have demonstrated their commitment to environmental conservation with a \$100,000 donation to the Long Point Basin Land Trust. The organization owes its existence to dedicated members of the Norfolk Field Naturalists and the recent contribution “exemplifies the deep-seeded commitment to biodiversity conservation in the Long Point basin.

As a land trust born from the Norfolk Field Naturalists, this generous donation is a poignant reminder of the strong partnership and shared dedication to conservation that binds our organizations. We are profoundly grateful for the Norfolk Field Naturalists’ continued support, which enables us to make a lasting impact on the preservation of our natural landscapes and biodiversity.

The donation will support the land trust’s recent acquisition of the Fishers Creek Nature Reserve, allowing for the protection and restoration of critical habitats on the property, and the creation of a wildlife corridor.”



Geese Hatching Eggs in Winter

The sight of two fuzzy goslings waddling after their mother on a dreary Wednesday afternoon in late December put Londoners in awe, but it's also raising concerns among environment experts.

Brian Salt, director of Wildlife Rehabilitation at Salthaven in London, Ont., said he's been seeing a lot of strange wildlife behaviour in the last few months.

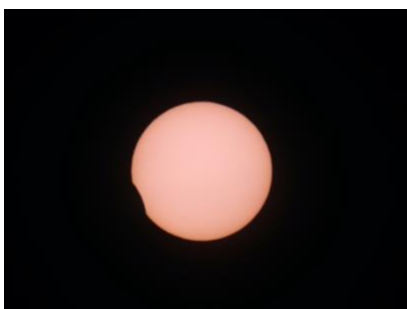
Read the rest of the article [here](#).



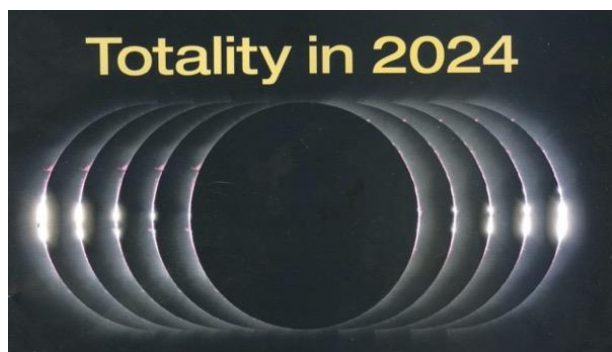
Total Solar Eclipse Over Norfolk on April 8, 2024

Article by Bernd Mueller, NFN Board Member

April we are in for an astronomical treat. There will be a total eclipse of the sun covering all of Norfolk. Some may say this happens all the time but, in reality, the last total eclipse over Ontario was in 1979 and that was way up in the north. The next one in Canada will be in 2079 again way up north and the next one close to us will be in 2099 just across the border in Michigan. So, you don't want to miss this one. As for the time of day it starts to be visible at about 14:03 hours when first contact occurs. Astronomers use the terms first, second, third and fourth contact to define the major moments of an eclipse. First contact is when you can see small bite into the sun caused by the moon moving in front of the sun.



This marks the start of the eclipse, and the excitement happens. It takes about an hour and fifteen minutes for second contact. While this is happening, take a look around you. The shadows from the trees will start of take the shape of the eclipsed sun. This is because of the pinhole effect where light going through a small opening will project an image of the sun. This can also be done on purpose by building a pinhole projector. Second contact is the really big part of an eclipse for it marks the start of totality. But backing up for a little bit about thirty seconds before totality there will be a phenomenon known as Baileys beads when light of the sun sneaks through the hills and valleys of the moon's edge and causes a twinkling effect.



Up to second contact you would, of course, have need to use some sort of protective filter to view the sun (more on this later). But now that the sun is in full eclipse it's time to take off the filters and view the sun without filters to see the corona and flares around the edge. Binoculars and telescopes are fine to use but keep in mind that the total phase only lasts for about three minutes in our area (depending on where you are). You must switch back to a filtered view on third contact when again you will see Baileys beads on the other side of the eclipsed sun; and then you will see a thin crescent of the sun as the moon moves off the disk of the sun. So now the total part is over, and you can spend the next one and a quarter hours watching the sun remerge from behind the moon. While the sun is in total phase you will also notice some of the brighter objects in the sky such as Venus and Jupiter. There may also be a bright comet visible while the sun is in totality but that hasn't been confirmed yet.



So now to how to view. The best type of filters are ones made especially for solar observing. You can get these from various sources, one being the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC.ca) or one can go to www.astrobuyandsell.com which is a website for used equipment but has a number of retailers in one spot who have a variety of safety glasses; but in my opinion the best deal is at the RASC site where you can get 10 glasses for only \$20 plus shipping. Just a quick warning – never look directly at the sun without protection of some kind making sure that it is safe protection. Some of the retailers will have kits that you

Cont'd. on p. 8

Species in Focus

Eastern Skunk Cabbage is a flowering perennial plant found throughout eastern Canada and the northeastern United States. It grows in woodlands, wetlands, or near streams and can live for up to 20 years.

Skunk Cabbage is one of the first plants to emerge in the spring due to its ability to produce heat even when the ground is still frozen. In southern Ontario, the plant usually blooms around the last week in March. The flowers are composed of a mottled maroon hood, called a spathe, that appears before the leaves. Inside the hood is a fleshy spike, called a spadix, that is actually many petal-less flowers. As the flower spike matures, it emits the scent of rotting meat to attract pollinators such as flies and carrion beetles. This unpleasant odour is carried on the air by the heat rising from the flower. Pollinated flower heads produce berries containing seeds that germinate in the next growing season to produce new plants.

References:

[National Wildlife Federation](#)

[Ontario Wildflowers](#)



Photo by Joel Springsteen

Birds Canada – Web App

Have you ever planned a hike to a park or trail and wondered what birds you might see there? Or wondered what birds you might see on a future vacation in Canada? If so, a new web-based app from Birds Canada might be for you. The app allows you to place a marker anywhere on a map of Canada and enter a date. The app then produces a photo gallery of the birds most commonly reported in the place on that date. Go [here](#).



Redhead Duck - Photo by Liza Barney

Effects of Night Light on Migrating Birds

Why do land birds migrate at night?

Birds' instinct to migrate is largely influenced by sudden shifts in temperature, available daylight (photo period), moon phases and light tail winds. The evaluation of land bird migration determined that flying conditions for long-distance travel are most favourable under the cover of darkness. These favourable conditions include less potential for predation, cooler temperatures to help maintain body temperature and less inclement weather.

How does migration influence bird-building collisions?

Artificial lighted structures can disorient night migrating birds as they tend to fly toward and hesitate to leave these lit areas. As day breaks, birds quickly descend to the ground in search for vegetated habitat where they feverishly forage for food to replenish their depleted energy reserves. This dramatic rise in the concentration of birds in built environments increases the potential for bird-building collisions.



Yellow Warbler with damaged wing

Monitoring Weather Patterns to Predict Bird Migration

To help you prepare for what could be a busy night of migration, you need to look for a combination of the following 3 influencing factors:

Northerly Migration (March through May)

- steady southerly winds
- clear moon-lit nights
- sudden increase in temperature

Southerly Migration (August through October)

- steady northerly winds
- clear moon-lit nights
- sudden decrease in temperature

Use a weather map by [VENTUSKY](#) to see an ideal visual interface of tools you can use to help you make these predictions.

Total Solar Eclipse Over Norfolk cont'd.

can use for your eyes and cellphones or small cameras. Another option is binoculars with built in filters, but keep in mind, that you will only be able to use these on the sun.

Now onto the weather for this event. Historically, the chance of cloud cover for April 8th is 60% so we may not get to see this at all; but even if it is cloudy what you will experience will still be amazing as it will get very dark, and nature will respond as if it were nighttime. This happened to my wife and I at the 2017 eclipse in Missouri and it was still an awe-inspiring event. If you need more information, there will be lots available online and *Sky and Telescope* magazine has a special edition that you can order online, or it may be on the newsstand; or you can contact me at info@norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

The Solar Eclipse

by Kitty Lou

Across the sky the Sun could see
The Moon approach, with nervous glee
A long time coming, an empirical fact
Ninety-Nine years to be exact
The Sun stood ready, her corona ablaze
Moments away from a stellar phase
Not a crescent or harvest or even a full
She wondered about gravitational pull
Now almost upon her, the Moon had a smile
"Hello old friend, it's been a while.
I'm just passing through." His face was blotching
"Let's make it quick, the world is watching"
Halfway through his celestial arc
A slow approach as the sky went dark
He braced himself and pursed his lips
And just like that came the solar eclipse!

Ontario Nature was [founded in 1931](#), by seven groups and 28 members, making it 93.

Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

Ontario Nature has released the highly anticipated Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas. Between 2009 and 2019, thousands of participants engaged in this monumental community science project, which averaged 30,000 new observations annually. The atlas dataset draws from 500,000 expert-vetted observations by more than 12,000 contributors.

To learn more, you can:

- Watch our recent atlas [webinar](#)
- Review our atlas [StoryMap](#) for some highlights
- Check out our online [field guide](#) of all Ontario's frogs, toads, turtles, snakes and salamanders
- See the publication [here](#).

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

ontarionature.org

Welcome New NFN Members

2023 - 2024 Season

Marguerite Larmand

Corrine Massey

John and Andrea Matecsa

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

Will & Morgan Partridge

Guardian Computing

For hosting our website

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

From a naturalist's perspective it's been a very strange winter with all the overcast skies, and often unseasonably warm temperatures. The volume of Sandhill Cranes and Tundra Swans in the Long Point area is a testament to the prolonged availability to waste corn in fields. Many folks have lamented that they have not seen the volume of birds at the feeders this year. But that's not all bad as it means that, with the lack of snow, they are still finding plenty of food in natural areas and gardens. Just returning from a walk with my dog, Meeko, I heard Northern Cardinals singing their territorial song (not unusual), but also American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds vocalizing, which is about a month earlier than usual. Might this signal an early spring? We can only hope!

You will recall that NFN was the benefactor of a will from a former member, Harry Lee Frishette, who left us a sizeable amount of funds. From those our membership approved a \$100,000 donation to the Long Point Basin Land Trust to help purchase the Fisher's Creek Nature Reserve and \$50,000 to Nature's Calling Environmental Education to assist in the development of an educational centre for their Forest School. The remaining \$200,000 has been invested in four laddered GICs.

We have also received another \$10,000 donation towards the Harry B. Barrett Bursary Fund. The fund, managed by the Norfolk Community Foundation, now contains around \$70,000. It has been our practice to match any donations, so the Board will again ask the membership to do so at our February meeting.

As we slide further into 2024, I hope to see you all out at our speaker presentations, as well as on our guided hikes. Maybe I'll even run into you on the trails, which I plan to spend lots of time on as the vernal pools open up, the salamanders start moving and those delicate spring ephemeral wildflowers start popping up on the forest floor.

The next BoD Meeting will be held on March 26, 2024. The report from this meeting will be in the April issue of the Lotus.

Upcoming NFN 2024 Winter Events

A **Tree Hike** is scheduled for Sunday, February 25, 2024 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Alternate inclement weather date is March 3.) Come and learn about Tree Ecology during a winter hike at the Wilson Tract, a managed Carolinian forest. NFN Member, Mary Gartshore, will take us on a crisp walk to learn how to identify trees in winter and learn more about their ecology. **More information will be emailed closer to the date.**



Black Walnut – Photo by Jan Grincevicius

Tell a friend about us.

The benefits of membership, membership forms and payment options are available at www.norfolkfieldnaturalists.org

We welcome new members. Don't keep us a secret.

NFN Meetings

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

Meetings take place at the **Simcoe Recreation Centre, 182 South Drive, Simcoe**. 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:

**April 2024
Input deadline:
Friday, March 22, 2024**

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

2023 - 2024 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	Bernie Solymár (A)
Secretary	Inga Hinnerichsen
Director Membership	Jan Grincevicius
Director Speaker Program and Field Events	Len Grincevicius
Director Publicity	Elisabeth Duckworth
Director Environment	Bernd Mueller & 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
	Nancy Furber or Faye Socholotiuk-Duym - Fisherville Count
Honorary President	George Pond
Honorary Directors	Anne and Dolf Wynia